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No change in TGSRTC logo, clarifies Sajjanar

Hyderabad: Putting to rest the widespread reports circulating on various social media platforms about a new logo for the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC), the management on Thursday issued a statement clarifying that it has not released any new logo officially until now.

Many citizens raised objections when a purported newly-designed logo, sans iconic Charminar and Kakatiya Kala Thoranam, of TGSRTC started making rounds across multiple social media outlets.

Woman protests bad roads in Hyderabad by sitting in water-filled pothole at Nagole

Hyderabad: Fed up with the substandard state of the road along the Nagole and Uppal stretch in the city, a woman on Thursday expressed her frustration by sitting in a water-filled pothole. Registering her protest against the civic authorities, she demanded the roads be fixed at the earliest. Videos of the incident went viral on social media platforms which showed the traffic police constables persuading her to stand up. Grabbing the eyeballs both on the road and online, she brought attention to an issue that has been bothering scores of motorists for at least over a year. According to the social media posts, the woman is from Anand Nagar in Nagole.

Revanth Reddy visits Maha Buddha Vihar, lauds the Buddha teachings



GNS News Agency, May 23

Telangana's Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, visited the Maha Buddha Vihar in Secunderabad on Thursday to express his support for the teachings of Buddha and the importance of spreading his message of peace and mindfulness. During his visit, CM Reddy praised the enduring significance of the Buddhist doctrine, which has remained relevant for over 2,500 years.

In his remarks, CM Reddy stressed the need to respect Buddhist monks in Telangana and highlighted the value of approaching tasks with a meditative mindset. He announced plans to allocate funds from the Special Development Fund for the construction of a meditation hall and the establishment of a school to support the propagation of Buddhist teachings. Addressing the rise of intolerance and jealousy in society, CM Revanth Reddy underscored the relevance of Buddha's teachings in today's world, where competition often overshadows mindfulness and peace. He pledged support for initiatives aimed at spreading Buddha's message to all members of the community, affirming his government's commitment to providing necessary assistance for such endeavors.

Bulldozers will be used against mafia in Odisha: Yogi



GNS News Agency, May 23

Chilika: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Yogi Adityanath on Thursday appealed to the people of Odisha to vote for a double-engine government in the State. If the double-engine government is formed in Odisha, bulldozers will be used against all kinds of mafia, he said. Addressing his first election rally in Odisha in Chilika Assembly constituency under Puri Lok Sabha seat, Yogi said, "Give us strength to form a double-engine government in Odisha so that we can clear the path by running bulldozers on 'land, sand, forest and cattle' mafia in the State, as we did in Uttar Pradesh."

The term "double-engine" is used by the BJP leaders to refer to the party being in power at the Centre as well as in a State. The UP Chief Minister said his counterpart in Odisha is now surrounded by bureaucrats who are running the governance in the State instead of it being run by the elected representatives.

Collector asks to expedite shifting paddy to rice mills

GNS News Agency, May 23

Mancherial: Collector Badavath Santosh asked officials to expedite the process of shifting paddy produce procured through centres to rice mills. He convened a review meeting with officials concerned and contractors of vehicles hired for transporting the grains here on Thursday. Santosh said that the grains purchased through the centres were being shifted to rice mills as per capacity of the vehicles by tagging the produce. He told the contractors to make efforts to ensure sufficient lorries and drivers to transport the produce from the centres and to mills. He said that vehicles would be hired if required.

The Collector instructed the officials to prevent shortage of lorries with meteorological forecast rains resulting in drenching of the produce at the center. He stated that 240 vehicles were needed to transport the grains in three sectors of the district. He said that steps were taken to provide sufficient hamali workers. He told the officials to track the shipping of the grains by tagging the mills. He further asked the officials to reach targets set for procurement centres and rice mills.

Haryana's farmers suffered Congress-led betrayal, says PM Modi in Bhiwani

GNS News Agency, May 23

Bhiwani (Haryana): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday slammed the Congress model of governance, saying that the party has converted Haryana into "a machine of loot" by deceiving the state's farmers and youth. "Haryana's farmers have suffered Congress-led betrayal," said PM Modi while addressing a massive rally in Bhiwani on the last day of the campaigning for the sixth phase of elections on May 25. He also said that the "inherently unstable" opposition INDI alliance only spreads the politics of communalism, casteism, dynasty and adheres to the 'five PMS-five year' formula. "Your vote will decide our country's future, not just the PM. INDI alliance promises five PMs in five years, showing instability," said PM Modi. "The people of the country have already understood the intentions of the INDI alliance which explains well the alliance's condition. The INDI alliance bubble has burst in just five phases and



you must have seen that after the third phase when they started raising questions on the Election Commission. All anti-India forces are active, but Modi will not bow down to them. Modi still has a lot of work to do to repay your debt," he added. Asserting that people now "know the true face of Congress", PM Modi accused the party of prioritising vote banks and also slammed its INDI Alliance partner TMC for granting OBC reservations to illegal immigrants from the minority community in West Bengal. "In West Bengal, they have issued OBC certificates to Muslims overnight and that too to infiltra-

products in the state. He also mentioned showcasing Bajra-made products from Haryana to international delegates during the G20 meeting, highlighting the efforts of Haryana's farmers. Going down memory lane, PM Modi, recalled spending a lot of time in the state when former CM Manohar Lal Khattar was the party's general secretary. "I have eaten a lot of Haryanvi food. The whole world is watching the success of Haryana's ghee and butter," he said. Calling upon all voters to wholeheartedly support the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections, PM Modi acknowledged the contributions made by Chaudhary Bansi Lal to the development of Mahendragarh and Bhiwani. The Bhiwani-Mahendragarh constituency is set to witness a tough contest between BJP's sitting MP Dharambir Singh and Congress legislator from Mahendragarh, Rao Dan Singh, who belongs to the Ahir community. Haryana will go to the polls for 10 parliamentary seats on May 25.

Deve Gowda asks grandson Prajwal to return, face probe into sexual abuse allegations

Bengaluru, GNS News Agency, May 23

JD(S) patriarch and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda on Thursday issued a 'stern warning' to his grandson and suspended party MP, Prajwal Revanna, asking him to return to the country and face probe into sexual abuse allegations, while asserting there will be no interference from him or other family members into the inquiry. He asked Prajwal, the party's Hassan MP who is facing allegations of sexual harassment of many women, to return to India and surrender before the police. Prajwal had flown reportedly to Germany in the last week of April. The JD(S) supremo reiterated that his grandson should be given the harshest punishment under the law "if found guilty".

"At this juncture, I can do only one thing; I can issue a stern warning to Prajwal and ask him to return from wherever he is and surrender before the police. He should subject himself to the legal process," the 92-year-old veteran politician said in a statement. Gowda made it clear it was "not an appeal that I am making, it is a warning that I am issuing." "If he does not heed this warning, he will have to face my anger and anger of all his family members. The law will take care of the accusations against him, but not listening to the family will ensure his total isolation. If he has any respect left for me, he has to return immediately," Gowda said. "I wish to also make it clear that I will ensure that there will be no interference in the inquiry against him from me or my family members. There is no emotion in this regard in my mind whatsoever, there is only the cause of justice for those who have suffered as a result of his alleged actions and misdeeds," the former PM added. He recalled he had spoken to the media about Prajwal Revanna on May 18.

"It took me some time to recover from the shock and pain he (Prajwal) has inflicted on me, my entire family, my colleagues, friends and party workers. I have already said he should be given the harshest punishment under



the law if found guilty," the nonagenarian leader said. Stating that he was aware that people had spoken 'harshest' words against him and his family in the last few weeks, apparently over the issue, Gowda said he would not wish to stop them, criticise them and argue with them saying "that they should have waited until all the facts were found out". He also cannot convince people that he was unaware of Prajwal's activities, or that he has no desire to shield him, unaware of his movements, and also about his foreign trip. "I believe in answering to my conscience. I believe in God and I know the Almighty knows the truth," the JD(S) patriarch said. He also opted "not to comment on political conspiracies, exaggerations, provocations and falsehoods that have been maliciously spread in recent weeks". "I am very sure people who have done it will have to answer to God and pay for it heavily one day. I place my truth and my burdens at the feet of the Lord," he said. The former prime minister underlined that it was of utmost importance for him to earn back the trust of the people.

MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy Moves High Court, Seeks Anticipatory Bail in EVM Vandalism Case



GNS News Agency, May 23

In a major development, MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy has approached the Andhra Pradesh High Court

seeking anticipatory bail in the case of vandalizing the EVM during the state elections. The Central Election Commission had earlier issued orders to arrest Pinnelli and his followers, leading to a massive search operation launched by the police in both Telugu states. As the police continued their hunt for Pinnelli for two days, the MLA decided to seek anticipatory bail to avoid arrest. The Andhra Pradesh High Court has agreed to hear his petition, and arguments are currently underway on the matter. During the court proceedings, Pinnelli's lawyer pointed out that the entire incident was sparked by a video posted on Twitter Telugu Desam Party leaders. The lawyer argued that the allegations against Pinnelli and his brother were baseless and urged the court to grant them anticipatory bail. The case has now become a topic of discussion, with the police actively trying to apprehend Pinnelli and his brother.

6 dead, 48 injured as blast rips through chemical factory in Thane district



Thane, GNS News Agency, May 23

At least six persons were killed and 48 injured following an explosion at a chemical factory in Maharashtra's Thane district on Thursday afternoon, officials said. As a boiler exploded at Amudan Chemicals located in Phase 2 of Dombivli MIDC area around 1.40 pm, its impact and the resultant blaze affected adjacent factories. As per the preliminary information, those killed were working in neighbouring factories, said Maharashtra industries minister Uday Samant.

"Unfortunately, six lives got lost in the Dombivli incident, and 48 got injured. My deepest condolences to the families who lost their loved ones," said Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis on X. "Injured are being treated at AIMS, Neptune and Global hospitals, and every kind of assistance is being provided. Praying for their speedy recovery. Various teams and administrative officials are on the spot for rescue operations," he added. Besides fire brigade, police and local officials, the NDRF, too, was taking part in the rescue operation, officials said. Minister Samant told PTI that the plant where the explosion took place was not in operation for the last few months and had restarted only a few days ago.

Samant, local MP Shrikant Shinde and MLA Raju Patil visited the site inside the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) area, some 40 km from Mumbai. The blast was so loud that it was heard a kilometre away, an eyewitness said. Glass windows of adjoining buildings cracked while many houses in the vicinity were damaged, officials said. Thick clouds of smoke could be seen hovering over the factory. Speaking to reporters at Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said a massive rescue and relief operation was under way at the site and he had directed the district collector to conduct a detailed inquiry into the incident. Plans were afoot to shift hazardous chemical factories from Dombivli to Ambarnath MIDC in the district, the CM said in reply to a question.

Bengaluru rave party case: Telugu actresses Hema, Ashi Roy test positive for drug use



The blood samples of 59 men tested positive for drugs while the blood samples of 27 women tested positive.

GNS News Agency, May 23

Mumbai: Telugu actresses Hema and Ashi Roy's blood samples have tested positive for the consumption of drugs at a rave party in Bengaluru. The rave party bust happened near Electronics City in Bengaluru. The blood samples of the attendees at the busted rave party were sent to a laboratory for testing, as per Bengaluru City Police Commissioner B Dayananda. Bengaluru rave party case: Blood tests confirm drug use by two Telugu actresses Hema and Ashi Roy. The blood samples of 59 men tested positive for drugs while the blood samples of 27 women tested positive.

Both Hema and Ashi Roy were present at the party. Hema, who was detained by the cops, used the excuse of going to the washroom to record a misleading video. She reportedly pleaded with the police not to arrest her and to keep her identity concealed. The rave party case, which was initially handled by the Electronic City Police, was transferred to the Hebbagodi Police station before being taken over by the Central Crime Branch. The rave party reportedly had MDMA pills, crystals, hydro cannabis and cocaine at the venue.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Deadly turbulence

THE 1,800-metre descent of a Singapore Airlines airplane amid severe turbulence, which left a 73-year-old British man dead and 71 injured, is shocking. Marking the airline's first fatality in 24 years, it underscores the growing threat of disturbance in modern air travel. Turbulence, particularly the clear-air variety that is suspected in this incident, is a formidable threat despite advances in meteorological technology. Experts say that it is most hazardous as it often strikes without warning or visibility to pilots near jet streams and other atmospheric boundaries. The unpredictability makes it vital for passengers to heed the seatbelt sign at all times, as unbuckled individuals are at a higher risk of suffering injuries during such sudden episodes, even as turbulence fatalities are very rare.

The emergency landing in Bangkok and the treatment of injured passengers, including six in a critical condition, illustrate the severity of the incident as also the potential for harm by bumpy rides. A thorough investigation, as promised by Singapore's Prime Minister, should unravel the causes of and circumstances around the deadly drop, thereby helping understand and mitigate such risks. It is believed that climate change is exacerbating turbulence. Scientists at Reading University have noted a significant increase in severe turbulence over the past four decades, attributing the rise to changing wind patterns driven by global warming. As air travel soars, so does the likelihood of encountering turbulent zones, complicating flight planning and passenger safety. The aviation industry must adapt to these new realities. Enhanced forecasting tools, rigorous training for crew and stricter adherence to safety protocols are essential. Airlines must also prioritise passenger education, ensuring the importance of staying buckled up throughout the flight.

Redemption for Ahmedabad's key Ashram Road, but at a snail's pace

GNS News Agency, May 23

The city's history written all over, the arterial Ashram Road links the Satyagraha Ashram that Mahatma Gandhi founded in 1915 in Kochrab, a suburb in the southern end of Ahmedabad, to the ashram he moved into in 1917 in Sabarmati, a suburb in the north end. Over the years, the 64-year old commercial artery has become the address for not just the Gujarat Vidyapith, founded by Mahatma Gandhi in October 1920, the MJ Library for which he donated books, but also the Gujarat High Court and several single-screen cinemas. It already had along its path a 15-century mosque and the iconic Le Corbusier-designed Mill Owners' Building.

Running along the Sabarmati river, the Ashram Road remained the Central Business District (CBD) till the redevelopment of the Chimanlal Girdharlal Road or the CG Road in the early 1990s. This road that runs parallel to the Ashram Road is today symbolic of the affluent western Ahmedabad. Due to congestion and parking issues, many public buildings began to move out to the far western Ahmedabad, like the High Court that moved to Sola, nearly 6 kms away, on the SG Road in 1999. Gradually the single screen cinemas Natraj and Dipali closed down, to make way for commercial complexes.

"The road which was once known for being the most happening in terms of movie theatres, has lost its sheen over the years as these closed down. Today smaller malls have movie screens taking away the business from the traditional cinema halls," says Manubhai Patel, President, Multiplex Association of Gujarat. However, after the inauguration of the Sabarmati Riverfront – built by reclaiming land on the banks of the river – in 2012, the Ashram Road was back in the spotlight with multinational food joints opening outlets here. Another big reason for the focus on Ashram Road is the fact that it is the only way to access the river from the western side of the city. Besides two younger political parties, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have their state offices on this road. A year ago, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) took up the Ashram Road redevelopment project, called the 'Gaurav Path'. This road covers a length of 10.5 km from Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) on the Vasna-Paldi crossroads at the southern end, through Usmanpura-Vadaj junction. It is likely to end just after the RTO, to enable the Gandhi Ashram Memorial and the Precinct Redevelopment Project to consolidate the spaces along the two sides of the road.

Gujarat, Gujarat development work, Gujarat development pace, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad's commercial artery, Mahatma Gandhi ashrams, Sabarmati Riverfront, arterial Ashram Road links, Satyagraha Ashram, Gujarat Vidyapith, gujarat news, indian express news A view of Ashram road in Ahmedabad. (Express Photo by Nirmal Harindran)The AMC invited bidders for the project, but found no takers despite inviting bids thrice in the last one year. "We quoted the project cost as per government approved prices, but the feedback received points at lack of financial viability. We hoped for some response while bidding the third time over, but unfortunately that too did not happen," a senior AMC official told. The last date to apply for the third time tender process was March 14. With the Model Code of Conduct in place, a decision in this regard is expected only after the results of Lok Sabha elections are declared on June 4. "We are planning to club this project with two or three other similar projects increasing the project cost from Rs 35 crore to around Rs 200 crore," the official said. According to the official, the Ashram Road project would be offered along with a similar project in other parts of Ahmedabad to a single bidder, as per the plan. The project with an estimated total cost of around Rs 35 crore has two phases, the first stretch from Paldi cross road to Dandi Kooch circle (around 5.2 km) is slated to have heritage pathways showcasing Ahmedabad's past, replicas of Gandhian heritage and symbols of Ahmedabad's textile heritage. The second phase would extend up to the Regional Transport Office (RTO) on the north end with the same features, including a larger share of space for the pedestrian. Stressing on the preference for greenfield (fresh) projects over brownfield (expansion) ones, Prof Rutul Joshi from CEPT University said, "

'Prima facie involvement seen': HC rejects bail to accused held for murder of journalist in Ratnagiri district



GNS News Agency, May 23

Ratnagiri journalist murder, Bombay HC, Bombay HC ejects bail, journalist murder accused, central refinery project, environmental violations, indian express newsThe court noted that it was a case where prima facie involvement of the bail applicant can be seen, and it clearly shows that the applicant is an influential person having contacts with politicians. THE BOMBAY High Court recently rejected the bail plea of Pandharinath Amberkar, booked for killing journalist Shashikant Warishe in February last year allegedly for opposing a central refinery project in Ratnagiri district alleging environmental violations.

The court noted that it was a case where prima facie involvement of the bail applicant can be seen, and it clearly shows that the applicant is an influential person having contacts with politicians. Amberkar, a prime accused, was arrested on charges including murder and destroying evidence and had alleged to have rammed Warishe's scooter with his SUV and run him over on February 6, last year. Charges under Maharashtra Media Persons and Media Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss to Property) Act, 2017 were also levelled against him.

Warishe worked with a local Marathi newspaper Mahanagari Times and had been covering issues related to the setting up of the Ratnagiri Refinery & Petrochemicals Ltd (RRPCL) in Barsu, a project which had faced stiff opposition from locals.

According to Ratnagiri police, on February 6, 2023, the accused immediately fled from the scene as locals rushed to help and he was taken to the local hospital in an unconscious state where he succumbed to his injuries the next day. As per prosecution, the deceased used to cover and write news reports regarding potential and possible adverse effects of the proposed project on the soil and agricultural lands in the region. He had also written reports making allegations against Amberkar that he had purchased various lands in the vicinity of project time in his own name as well as in the name of his relatives.

Amberkar's lawyer N N Gavankar argued that prosecution's case was unbelievable and based on circumstantial evidence and there was nothing to show that he was acquainted with the deceased, which the court said had 'no substance.' However, senior advocate Gayatri Singh, who represented Arvind Nagale, brother-in-law of Warishe, argued that Amberkar was furious with the deceased for publishing an article against him and exposing his alleged criminal background. Singh added that the material on record suggested Amberkar drove his four-wheeler at a very high speed on the wrong side and that even after it collided with the two-wheeler of the deceased, he dragged Warishe's scooter for 275 feet with the two-wheeler under the SUV. Singh along with Additional Public Prosecutor P H Gaikwad for police opposed the plea. She said Amberkar, known supporter of the refinery project, is 'notorious' for his illegal activities and is an 'influential person with political clout and therefore is capable of influencing the witnesses. Therefore his bail plea be rejected.' A single-judge bench of Justice Madhav J Jamdar noted that Amberkar, referring to Warishe's news report, had expressed his intention to eliminate someone and that until it was done, he would not sleep peacefully. "This is a case where prima facie involvement of the applicant can be seen. The prosecution case clearly shows that the applicant is an influential person having contacts with politicians. If the applicant is released on bail, there is a likelihood of the applicant influencing the witnesses. Therefore, considering the circumstances on record, no case is made out for grant of bail," the bench held.

'Not a vote bank... so no regularisation in 10 years': Guest teachers at Delhi government schools as contract ends



GNS News Agency, May 23

"Das saal hogaye inko wada kiye hue... Abhi tak ek bhi guest teacher ko inhone regular nahi kiya (It has been 10 years since the Delhi government has promised us... Not a single guest teacher has been regularised)," said a 37-year-old guest teacher whose contract ended just a week ago. Inflation is the same for every citizen, the guest teacher added. Last week, the All India Guest Teachers' Association (AIGTA) wrote to the Directorate of Education (DoE), stating: "Issuing an order to render the guest teachers unemployed by prematurely terminating their contracts in this manner is unfair. The guest teachers are expressing anger over the fact that their contract was extended till June 30 and then they were terminated prematurely on May 10... the guest teachers are feeling humiliated. Such orders seem to lower the prestige of the Education Department, while raising questions over the... coordination and intentions of the Department officials... Why should they be paid less if they are putting in the

same efforts as that of a permanent teacher?"

The daily remuneration of a post graduate teacher (PGT) teacher and a trained graduate teacher (TGT) ranges between Rs 1,403 and Rs 1,445. Our salary has not been increased within at least six years, said a guest teacher at a government school. While the AAP has time and again promised to regularise the positions of guest teachers in Delhi government schools, many believe that this would not happen as they are not the "vote bank" of the party. "The fight for regularisation has been continuing for quite some time now. They (the Delhi government) do not take the issue of guest lecturers seriously as they believe that most of us don't vote here, in Delhi. Most of us come from neighbouring states... maybe that's why our issues are not given importance... as we are not part of the vote bank this election (Lok Sabha)," said a guest teacher who has been teaching in Delhi government schools for the past decade. Echoing the same concerns, Arun Dedha, AIGTA president and a guest teacher, said: "We will raise this issue during the Vidhan Sabha elections... we feel like this issue might not get as much attention during the Lok Sabha polls." Speaking to The Indian Express, several guest teachers who have been working at Delhi government schools for more than five years shared the situation on ground. "Imagine a middle-class person running their house without salary for two months. This year, not only have the contracts been terminated, but there is no Mission Buniyaad for guest teachers to be paid on a daily basis. Many of us are facing difficulties in running our families... This is the fate of nearly 16,000 guest teachers at present," said Dedha, who has also been a guest teacher at a government school in Delhi's Trilokpuri for nearly 11 years now.

Rs 100 crore: Why a third of Delhi's MPLAD funds is still unutilised

GNS News Agency, May 23

In the last 10 years, Lok Sabha members elected from Delhi's seven constituencies have not utilised Rs 100 crore from their entitled Rs 311.5 crore funds under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) scheme. The Parliamentarians were unable to avail Rs 81 crore from the central government while they failed to spend Rs 19.75 crore that was dispersed by the government. The MPLADS is a scheme that was set up by the Centre in 1993 to enable MPs to recommend developmental works for creation of assets and amenities in sectors such as drinking water, primary education, public health, sanitation and roads. Each MP is entitled to Rs 5 crore annually, released in two equal instalments. This means that the MPs have Rs 25 crore at their disposal, which are to be spent over five years. However, the period of 2019-2024 saw the entitlement of the MPs reducing from Rs 25 crore to Rs 17 crore due to Covid pandemic. An official responsible for the functioning of MPLAD funds said that, in principle, the MPs are entitled to get Rs 5 crore per year. However, they have to approach the district administration and provide them with information about the projects they want to pursue under the MPLAD scheme. The district administration then approaches the Ministry of Statistics and Programme to execute the recommended projects so that the funds under the scheme are released. The MPLAD funds are released by the central government only after the Parliamentarian send their demands. Once that is done, the funds are allocated to the district administration to execute the works. Each MP has an exclusive account with the ministry where they can keep track of the progress of the work on their MPLAD-funded project. The MPs also have to

provide a monthly progress report (MPR) of the project, failing which the money is not released. If the MP recommends work and the district administration is not able to complete it, the money remains unutilised and is transferred to the next financial year.

In the 16th Lok Sabha elected in 2014, the total entitlement for seven MPs in Delhi was Rs 187.5 crore, out of which they received Rs 185 crore while Rs 2.5 crore remained unutilised. Out of the amount that they received, the MPs were not able to spend Rs 16.82 crore on any project. In the 17th Lok Sabha, elected in 2019, the entitlement was Rs 124 crore out of which the MPs managed to get only Rs 45.5 crore while Rs 78.5 crore remained unutilised. Out of the amount that they received, the MPs could not spend Rs 2.93 crore on any of the projects.

The MPs received only Rs 17 crore from 2019-2024 due to the Covid pandemic and the fund disbursal remained suspended from April 6, 2020 to November 9, 2021; no funds were allocated to the scheme for financial year 2020-21. For the remaining period between November 10, 2021 and March 31, 2022, Rs 2 crore was allocated under the scheme to each MP. Data shows that a majority of the works recommended by the MPs in the 17th Lok Sabha (2019-2024) remained incomplete and the total entitlement stayed unutilised. While the MPs were entitled to get Rs 124 crore, they only received Rs 45.5 crore. The reason given by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme on its website shows that the monthly progress report of the projects were not provided by the MPs and thus, the pending amount wasn't released. Out of Rs 45.5 crore, Rs 2.93 crore wasn't spent. Thus, several projects were left incomplete.

Barabanki court acquits 2 in 2018 gangrape case



GNS News Agency, May 23

2018 gangrape case, 2018 gangrape case accused acquitted, Barabanki court, gangrape case lack of evidence, threatening, sexual assault, indian express newsOn the basis of court directives, an FIR was registered against the two accused on several charges including gangrape, trespass, and criminal intimidation on February 20, 2019.

A COURT in Barabanki on Saturday acquitted two youths accused in a 2018 gangrape case due to lack of evidence. The court also directed that a case be registered against the woman (aged 35) for retracting her earlier statement. The two accused were out on bail. According to the prosecution, the alleged incident occurred on February 20, 2018, when the woman was alone at home. Around 9 pm, the two accused, armed with sharp weapons, allegedly barged into the house. The woman's minor daughter was also present there.

The accused allegedly threatened and assaulted the victim before committing the crime. When the victim's husband returned home a while later, the accused had fled. Subsequently, the woman and her husband went to the police station to file a complaint, but alleged that the police did not register a case. They later approached the court and obtained an order directing the authorities to register an FIR into the matter. On the basis of court directives, an FIR was registered against the two accused on several charges including gangrape, trespass, and criminal intimidation on February 20, 2019. The victim's statement was recorded before the magistrate. Subsequently, the police arrested the accused and filed a chargesheet in the case. Government Counsel for Barabanki, Varun Mishra, said that during cross-examination, she retracted her earlier statement, leading to her being declared hostile by the court.

Country's highest temperature seen in Delhi as Najafgarh sizzles at 47.8°C; all schools ordered shut in Ghaziabad

GNS News Agency, May 23

Delhi's Najafgarh recorded a temperature of 47.8 degrees Celsius on Sunday as a severe heat wave persisted in northwest India for the second day in a row. According to India Meteorological Department (IMD) officials, this was the highest temperature recorded in the country this year, followed by 47.7 degrees Celsius in Agra. To be sure, Najafgarh has an automatic weather station, unlike Delhi's base observatory at Safdarjung, where the maximum temperature was recorded as 44.4 degrees Celsius, four degrees above normal. The minimum temperature, at 28.2 degrees Celsius, was two degrees above normal.

While most schools in the region are shut for summer vacations, Ghaziabad District Magistrate Indra Vikram Singh ordered all schools up to Class 8 in the district to remain shut. The maximum temperature in Ghaziabad on Sunday was 44.4 degrees Celsius. IMD has issued a red alert in the city on Monday as well as Tuesday due to severe heat wave conditions in the city. The rise in temperature in Delhi has been consistent, with Saturday seeing a maximum of 43.6 degrees Celsius. On Friday, it was recorded as 42.5 degrees Celsius. Both the figures are from Safdarjung Observatory. IMD officials said no respite from the heat was expected this week, attributing the rise in temperature to the lack of rain coupled with dry winds. The maximum temperature is expected to be 44 degrees on Monday and 45 degrees on Tuesday. Hot surface winds at speeds of 25-35 kilometres per hour have been forecast on Monday. IMD also issued a seven-day forecast, urging people to ensure "extreme care for vulnerable people" due to the heat wave. It said there was a very high likelihood of developing heat-related illness and heat stroke in people of all ages, and a significant health concern for vulnerable individuals.

How a death at an upscale Ghaziabad locality led police to the case of a date gone awry

When policemen arrived at an apartment in DLF Ankur Vihar in Ghaziabad on May 8, they were hit by a stench. Inside, they found a man's body. His wrists and feet were tied and he was gagged with his own shirt. He had been strangled. Nobody knew the man. A resident had called the police because the smell had made it unbearable for neighbours. The flat, police learnt, belonged to a woman and had been vacant ever since she moved to Delhi. The story behind the murder started to unfold, police said, when they asked the flat owner to come in. She identified the dead man as Sakendra, police said. She had given him the keys to the flat to "do some repairs and clean the place". He did all sorts of jobs, she told police. He was a dailywage labourer, at times a rookie carpenter, and even a mason. "Once we started to crack the case, the details were unusual," DCP (Rural) Ghaziabad Vivek Chandra Yadav told The Indian Express. "... the two men had a sexual encounter after meeting on a dating app. The accused murdered the other man as he believed the latter had recorded a video..." Police then scanned Sakendra's call detail records and found his phone had been switched off for six days. His last call was on May 2. When they traced this call, it led them to Faem, a 38-year-old dailywage labourer in Delhi. Simultaneously, police scanned CCTV footage of a camera installed in a building opposite the vacant flat at DLF Ankur. "

Mohali NIA court frames charges against 10, including HM overground worker, in narco-terror case



GNS News Agency, May 23

The accused were charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), the Arms Act and the Indian Penal Code (IPC). (File Photo)The accused were charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), the Arms Act and the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The special court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in Punjab's Mohali framed charges against 10 people, including a Kashmir resident, in a case related to narcotics and terrorism. The accused were charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), the Arms Act and the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Special NIA judge Manjot Kaur charged Hilal Ahmed Shergoiji, Bikram Singh, Maninder Singh, Ranjit Singh, Jaswant Singh, Gurjant Singh alias Ashish, Ranjeet Singh alias Rana, Gagandeep Singh, Gursant Singh alias Gora, and Manpreet Singh under sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 201 (destruction of evidence), 419 (cheating by

personation), 471 (using as genuine a forged document), and 489-C (possession of forged or counterfeit currency or banknote) of the IPC. Hilal Ahmed, Bikram Singh, Ranjeet Singh alias Rana, Gagandeep Singh, Gursant Singh, and Manpreet Singh, who are in custody, were produced through video conferencing.

While framing the charges the court observed, "Arguments on framing of charge have been heard. Record perused. After going through the record and documents accompanying therewith and hearing learned Public Prosecutor for the NIA and defence counsels, prima-facie offences are made out against the accused for which they are charge-sheeted; contents of the charge are read over and explained to all the accused (accused Hilal Ahmed, Bikram Singh, Ranjeet Singh alias Rana, Gagandeep Singh, Gursant Singh alias Gora and Manpreet Singh through video conference in presence of their counsels), to which they pleaded not guilty and claimed trial".

The court said, "Let the evidence of the prosecution be summoned for June 6. The accused, who are in custody, be produced through video conferencing on the said date." This case was first registered on April 25, 2020, at Police Station Sadar, Amritsar City, relating to the arrest of Hilal Ahmad Shergoiji, the seizure of a truck and the recovery of Rs. 29 lakh from his possession. According to the police, Shergoiji was an overground worker and a close associate of Riyaz Ahmad Naikoo, the then commander of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen in Kashmir, and had come to Amritsar to collect funds that were proceeds of narcotics sale, for furthering terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir. The NIA, which took over the investigation and registered the case again on May 8, 2020, filed a charge sheet in the case in 2021.

In poll season, Zira farmers say don't want any politician to visit as a protest to complete 22 months

GNS News Agency, May 23

It is over 45 degree Celsius and a group of about 20 protesters, the majority of them over 60 years of age, is sitting on a wooden platform under a shaded tree. A few metres away is the second gate of the Zira liquor factory in the Mansurwal Kalan village in Punjab's Ferozepur, which has been lying closed since July 24, 2022. Villagers of Mansurwal Kalan and surrounding areas started their protest against Malbros International Pvt Ltd, owned by a former Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Deep Malhotra, after they found polluted water while digging a tubewell bore in the gurdwara of nearby Miayanwala Kalan village in the first week of July 2022.

The Sanjha Zira Morcha (SZM), which is spearheading the protest, has decided not to allow entry of any politician at the site. "As we were not being heard and the factory owner wasn't being held accountable, we decided to start an indefinite dharna which will complete 22 months on May 24. Though the Punjab government announced in January 2023 to close this unit, the matter is still in court and we haven't got anything in writing as well. So until nothing comes in black and white, we will not lift our dharna from outside the unit," said Roman Brar, Convenor, SZM. The protesters under the Sanjha Zira Morcha have also put up banners saying no politician should visit them to seek votes during the Lok Sabha elections. "As environment is not the agenda of any political party, they should not visit us. Our villages are suffering a lot already," said Brar. Rataul village resident Gurdev Singh said, "We have no hope from candidates of mainstream parties. No one dared to take a stand for the villagers as everyone sides with the corporates... What can we expect from the AAP government which is surrounded by the excise policy controversy in Delhi?"

"Our anger will be shown in polls only but we don't want any politician to come and appeal," Chamkaur Singh, of Mansurwal Khurd village, told. SZM's Brar said, "The liquor factory has been closed since July 24, 2022... now for the first time, we found that the water level hasn't gone down in the nearby villages, otherwise it used to go down every year. They used to pump out fresh water and pollute underground water by releasing polluted water into the ground. As the factory is lying closed, the after-effects are visible." While the villages come under the Zira constituency, which is part of the Ferozepur district, Zira falls under the Khadoor Sahib Lok Sabha seat. Even as the structure of multiple huts can be seen on the narrow lane in agriculture fields, two temporary huts with tarpaulin sheets have been built where protesters sit or set up the stage as per the weather conditions. Nirmal Singh Bhalla, a protester from Sodhiwala village sitting at the spot, said more huts can be built quickly whenever needed. His village is about 6 km from the



protest spot and Bhalla, who is in his early 60s, comes on a bicycle almost every day. "This AAP government had acted dubiously as earlier they had been supporting the liquor factory owner who is a former Akali Dal MLA and later when they saw the anger of the public, they took a U-turn and announced to close the unit. However, we have seen the face of the government and even other political parties as well... As of now, no party is talking about the environment," said Harminder Singh from Sekhwan village sitting at the dharna. While villagers from seven to eight villages started the dharna, later they got support from the Samyukta Kisan Morcha and many other organisations. As many 40-50 protesters are always at the spot during the day and 10-20 stay back at night and on Sundays or some planned days, the gathering gets bigger. A nearby gurdwara sends langar and protesters make tea on the site. Funds are collected from villagers to run this dharna and even to fight the litigation in the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Ferozepur District Court and National Green Tribunal, said protesters.

In December 2022, a confrontation between the protesters and police took place after which a few of the morcha members were arrested and jailed only to be released a few days later. However, a few police cases lodged during that time haven't been quashed. "Our protest will continue until we don't get in writing about the closure notice of this factory. We are ready to pay this price for seeking clean drinking water," said Gurbhej Singh from Longodeva village which is 8 km from the protest site. Villagers of the area earlier complained of ailments like hepatitis B, kidney failure, stomach and skin infections etc. "We have no demand for a road, school or dharamshala. Our only demand is clean drinking water and focus on environmental issues... we are not asking for the moon... as politicians are not keen to even talk about these subjects... so they should refrain from visiting us," said Brar. He added, "As of now, water is being provided via tankers in the nearby villages as groundwater is unfit for drinking".

20,000 litres of liquor seized in Gurgaon since Model Code of Conduct came into effect

GNS News Agency, May 23

The Gurgaon administration in Haryana has seized 20,104 litres of illegal liquor worth Rs 61.16 lakh since the Lok Sabha elections 2024 Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into effect on March 16, said officials. As of May 16, the police department had seized 17,174 litres of illegal liquor worth Rs 53 lakh and filed 370 FIRs. Meanwhile, the enforcement team seized 2,930 litres of illegal liquor worth about Rs 7.7 lakh and filed 11 FIRs against those found violating the poll code.

Deputy Commissioner and District Election Officer Nishant Kumar Yadav said five flying squad teams are working in each Assembly area to ensure that the election process remains legal. Voting in the district will be held on May 25 during the sixth phase of Lok Sabha elections 2024. Union minister and sitting MP Rao Inderjit Singh of the BJP is up against Raj Babbar of the Congress in Gurgaon, one of the 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana. Deputy Excise and Taxation Commissioner Amit Bhatia said that the district administration is fully vigilant in view of the Lok Sabha elections. Various flying squad teams and the police administration are conducting checks at checkpoints on the roads leading in and out of the city and district to seize cash, illegal liquor, and other items.

Deputy Commissioner Yadav said action would be



taken if anyone carried more than Rs 50,000 in cash. He advised that if you are carrying a large amount of cash, make sure to have a transaction slip from the bank; otherwise, the cash may be confiscated. Similarly, people carrying expensive gifts, gold, silver, or other valuable items should be aware of their details. Meanwhile, booth level officers are distributing voter slips and invitation letters door-to-door to encourage voting in the elections. Decorated invitation cards have been prepared to attract voters. The card includes a message: "Sending an invitation to remind you, dear voter, don't forget to come and vote on the 25th." Inspired by wedding card designs, the card says, "You are cordially invited to vote in our Lok Sabha elections."

Himachal police book BJP candidate Davinder Kumar Bhutto and son in forgery, cheating case



GNS News Agency, May 23

The Himachal Pradesh police have booked the BJP's Kutlehar Assembly bypoll candidate, Davinder Kumar Bhutto, who was among the six Congress MLAs disqualified for cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha polls, and his son Karan Bhutto in a forgery and cheating case. The case pertains to a government contract of the Public Works Department (PWD) obtained a few months ago in Kangra district.

"We have lodged an FIR against Davinder Kumar Bhutto and his son. We have collected all relevant records from the PWD department. The collected documents are being scrutinised. The two will be summoned to join the investigation once the documents have been examined

from all aspects, including forensic examination. Nothing more can be revealed at this stage." Superintendent of Police Shalini Agnihotri told The Indian Express. The FIR was registered last week at the Dehra police station under sections 406 (forgery of documents) and 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code.

Sources said that Davinder Kumar Bhutto and his son Karan Bhutto, a government contractor, had allegedly forged documents to procure a government contract. When the alleged forgery came to light, the contract was cancelled, the sources added. Davinder Kumar Bhutto and five other Congress MLAs cross-voted in favour of BJP candidate Harsh Mahajan in the Rajya Sabha elections in February, leading to the defeat of Abhishek Manu Singhvi, candidate of the ruling Congress. The six Congress MLAs were subsequently disqualified from the Assembly for defying the party whip. They then joined the BJP, which gave them party tickets to contest the June 1 bypolls in the six constituencies—Kutlehar, Lahaul & Spiti, Gagret, Sujampur, Dharamshala, and Badsar. When contacted, Davinder Kumar Bhutto said, "This is nothing but vendetta politics on the part of the state government. The matter related to the government contract was pending in the Himachal Pradesh High Court in Shimla. The high court had recently dismissed the case and given a decision in our favour. I also have information that the Congress government in the state will register another case against me in Una district."

Mayawati casts her vote in Lucknow, says voters' silence indicates change would come

GNS News Agency, May 23

Amid the fifth phase of polling in Lok Sabha elections across six states and two Union Territories on Monday, BSP chief Mayawati said she feels that there would be a change this time citing the "silence" of voters. Among the first few leaders to cast their vote in the Uttar Pradesh capital of Lucknow, Mayawati said it has been observed during the Lok Sabha elections 2024 that, unlike in the past, when an election was contested on the issues of the welfare of the country and its people, this year political parties are indulging in allegations and counter-allegations. Saying it is not the right trend, Mayawati appealed to political parties to focus on public welfare.

"Mujhe to lag raha hai is baar zaroor badlav hoga. Kyunki janta jo hai, woh silent si hai. Woh zyada kuchh khul kar bol nahi rahi hai, woh dekh rahi hai (I feel that there would be change this time because the public is a bit silent. They are not saying much but are observing everything, which is going on)," said Mayawati while replying to the questions of media persons after voting. On being asked about the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s "Abki Baar 400 Paar" slogan and even the Opposition INDIA alliance claiming it would form a government, Mayawati said all political parties are making their claims but only results would tell the truth. On the question of the



Opposition targeting her for her action against nephew Akash Anand, the BSP chief said she is not concerned about what others say. She added she said whatever she had to say on the issue on social media. In Uttar Pradesh, four key candidates are in the fray during the fifth phase of polling of the Lok Sabha elections 2024. While Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is contesting from the Lucknow Lok Sabha seat, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is trying his luck from Rae Bareilly, Union Minister Smriti Irani from Amethi, and Karan Bhusan Singh is fighting the polls from Kaiserganj.

Having a defective water meter? Replace it on your own, else face double the tariff rate



GNS News Agency, May 23

Having a defective water meter? Well, then you will have to replace it on your own within a month, or else you will be charged double the water tariff, if one goes by a recent notice by the civic body. The notice under the subject "Replacement of defective water meter" says that as per Chandigarh Water Supply Bye laws (1st Amendment) 2016, replacement of faulty or defective or lost or theft meters will be done by consumer at their own cost. This goes to burden the consumers whose meters are lost or defective from the back end. According to the Chandigarh civic body, there are 44,000 defective meters in the city. The notice specified that "it will be the responsibility of the consumer to get the faulty/ defective meter replaced within one month from the issue of notice for defective meter, otherwise recovery on panel rate that is double the applicable tariff will be charged from the consumer. They will be exempted from the water meter rent". Vinod Vashisht, convener, City Forum of Residents Welfare Organisations (CFORWO), felt that "double tariff shouldn't be charged". "Under such circumstances, normal practice is that billing is done as per average past consumption and not the double tariff," he said.

The Chandigarh Municipal Corporation also mentioned that in case the water meter is installed by them, then too it will be the consumer who will have to shell out money. "It is also informed that water meter will be in-

stalled by the Municipal Corporation, Chandigarh, at the expense of the consumer after getting it tested from the Municipal Corporation Laboratory, Chandigarh," the notice read.

With application for change of defective meter, one needs to submit self-attested ID proof, water bill and new purchased water meter bill. Chandigarh Mayor Kuldeep Kumar told The Indian Express, "I will surely get it checked. If someone's water meter is defective, that is not how you burden the consumer... what is his fault? It is the civic body that has to bear the expenses for the defective water meters. Last year, the MC had decided to replace 44,000 water meters that have been lying defective for the last seven years in Chandigarh. The agenda of the same had come up last year in the House meeting. According to civic officials, because of these defective water meters, consumers were getting panel average water bills. It was mentioned that the civic body will be replacing these water meters at the cost of consumers. The cost will come to around Rs 2,500 per meter depending upon the quality and make of the water meter. As per the decision that hasn't gone down well with the people, the defective water meters are to be replaced by the consumer. The officials said that maximum they could do was to avoid harassment being faced by the consumer for purchase and getting the same tested from MC lab. The civic body has proposed to replace the water meters by itself, but the expenses regarding the cost of the water meter, testing charges and installation of water meters will be borne by the consumer and same will be recovered through the water bills. A senior official of the Chandigarh civic body told "This decision was approved by the General House itself last year." In 2000, the civic body had approved a similar agenda that consumer will buy their own water meters, following which Consumers Association Chandigarh approached the Punjab and Haryana High Court against the decision of the civic body. It was in 2001 that the High Court directed the MC to install water meters by itself up to half an inch diameter and directed them to refund the cost of the water meter to the consumer through bimonthly bills.

Mallepalli Laxmaiah inaugurates Association of Buddhist Tour Operators office in Thimphu

GNS News Agency, May 23

Thimphu: Senior Journalist and Vice-President of Association of Buddhist Tour Operators (ABTO) Mallepalli Laxmaiah inaugurated the association office at Thimphu on Sunday.

According to an association press release the office is located on the premises of I-Desire Tours and Travels, Basesa Expressway in Thimphu which would facilitate the Buddhist tourists intending to travel to prominent Buddhist destinations in India and South Asian countries. The association would also ensure coordination between the tour operators and the respective countries for hassle free travel to promote Buddhist tourism.



Airstrike kills 20 in central Gaza as Israeli leaders air wartime divisions



GNS News Agency, May 23

Deir Al-Balah: An Israeli airstrike killed 20 people in central Gaza, mostly women and children, and fighting raged across the north on Sunday as Israel's leaders aired divisions over who should govern Gaza after the war, now in its eighth month. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has faced criticism from his own War Cabinet, with his main political rival, Benny Gantz, threatening to leave the government if a plan is not formulated by June 8 that includes an international administration for postwar Gaza. US national security adviser Jake Sullivan was expected to meet with top Israeli leaders on Sunday to discuss an ambitious US plan for Saudi Arabia to recognise Israel and help the Palestinian Authority to govern Gaza in exchange for a path to eventual statehood. Netanyahu, who is opposed to Palestinian statehood, has rejected those proposals, saying Israel will maintain open-ended security control over Gaza and partner with local Palestinians unaffiliated with Hamas or the Western-backed Palestinian Authority. Gantz' withdrawal would not bring down Netanyahu's coalition government, but it would leave him more reliant on far-right allies who support the "voluntary emigration" of Palestinians from Gaza, full military occupation and the rebuilding of Jewish settlements there.

Even as the discussions of postwar planning take on new weight, the war is still raging with no end in sight. In recent weeks, Hamas has regrouped in parts of northern Gaza that were heavily bombed in the early days of the war and where Israeli ground troops had already operated. The airstrike in Nuseirat, a built-up Palestinian refugee camp in central Gaza dating back to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, killed 20 people, including eight women and four children, according to records at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the nearby town of Deir al-Balah, which received the bodies. A separate strike on a street in Nuseirat killed another five people, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service. In Deir al-

Balah, a strike killed Zahed al-Houli, a senior officer in the Hamas-run police, and another man, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.

Palestinians reported more airstrikes and heavy fighting in northern Gaza, which has been largely isolated by Israeli troops for months and where the World Food Programme says a famine is under way. The Civil Defence says the strikes hit several homes near Kamal Adwan Hospital in the town of Beit Lahiya, killing at least 10 people. Footage released by the rescuers showed them trying to pull the body of a woman out of the rubble as explosions echo in the background and smoke rises. In the urban Jabliya refugee camp nearby, residents reported a heavy wave of artillery and airstrikes. "The situation is very difficult," said Abdel-Kareem Radwan, a 48-year-old in Jabaliya. He said the whole eastern side has become a battle zone where the Israeli fighter jets "strike anything that moves."

Mahmoud Bassal, a spokesman for the Civil Defence, said rescuers had recovered at least 150 bodies, more than half of them women and children, since Israel launched the operation in Jabaliya last week. He said around 300 homes have been "completely destroyed." Meanwhile, Netanyahu's critics, including thousands of protesters who took to the streets again on Saturday, accuse him of prolonging the war and rejecting a ceasefire deal that would release hostages so he can avoid a reckoning over the security failures that led to the attack. Polls show that Gantz, a political centrist, would likely succeed Netanyahu if early elections are held. That would expose Netanyahu to prosecution on longstanding corruption allegations. Netanyahu denies any political motives and says the offensive must continue until Hamas is dismantled and the estimated 100 hostages held in Gaza, and the remains of more than 30 others, are returned. He has said it's pointless to discuss postwar arrangements while Hamas is still fighting because the militants have threatened anyone who cooperates with Israel. Netanyahu also faces pressure from Israel's closest ally, the United States, which has provided crucial military aid and diplomatic cover for the offensive while expressing growing frustration with Israel's conduct of the war. President Joe Biden's administration recently held up a shipment of 3,500 bombs of up to 2,000 pounds (900 kilograms) each and said the US would not provide offensive weapons for a full-scale invasion of the southern Gaza city of Rafah, citing fears of a humanitarian catastrophe. But last week, after Israel launched what it says is a limited operation in Rafah, the administration told legislators it would move forward with the sale of \$1 billion worth of arms, tank ammunition, tactical vehicles and mortar rounds, according to congressional aides.

Green credits: Govt nod to 12 projects, 24 under consideration



GNS News Agency, May 23

The Centre has approved 12 greening projects under the Green Credit Program (GCP), which was notified last year as a market-based mechanism designed to incentivize voluntary environmental actions across diverse sectors, officials aware of the development said. Estimates of 24 plans submitted by different state forest departments are under consideration, the officials said.

The government has been pushing the public-sector undertakings (PSUs) to take a lead in registering for the programme, especially in mining heavy states, and is developing guidelines for third-party verification of projects under the scheme, sources added. The GCP, notified on October 13, 2023, seeks voluntary participation in "environmental positive actions" such as afforestation, water conservation, waste management among others from PSUs, private industries, non-profits and individuals. The GCP's governance framework is supported by an inter-ministerial Steering Committee, and The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), Dehradun, which serves as GCP administrator, responsible for programme implementation, management, monitoring, and operation.

Those investing in these initiatives will earn green credits in return which they can trade on a platform. The

greening activities will happen on degraded land parcels and state forest departments have identified over 10,000 hectares of degraded land so far. Over the past few months, the Environment Ministry has held meetings with the PSUs to push for registration under the initiative, with a special focus initially on states such as Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, where large forested areas have been diverted for mining.

Those interested in undertaking plantations have to first register on a government portal and the state departments then identify plots. A plantation plan and cost estimate are submitted to ICFRE, which clears final proposal. ICFRE is working on evolving a mechanism for third-party verification of greening projects, sources from the government body said. "We are looking at a timeline of another month to finalise a draft on third-party verification. We are also deliberating on whether stakeholders who register under the scheme should be included in the monitoring committee," the source said. Under the green credit rules, the ICFRE can deem an entity a 'designated agency' to carry out verification of activities executed under the programme. Discussions are also underway on evolving a definite mechanism on linking the green credits to the compensatory afforestation compliance of industries, a senior government official said.

The GCP has provided for exchanging the credits meeting compliance of compensatory afforestation. This refers to the legally mandated afforestation that industries and government agencies have to undertake on non-forest land equivalent to the size of forests that are felled. Speaking on registration seen under the GCP so far, senior forest department officials from Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh said that PSUs such as the NTPC have registered for the greening programme in all three states. Other PSUs which have registered in these states include Western Coalfields Ltd and Power Grid Corporation of India in Maharashtra, South Eastern Coalfields Ltd and Indian Oil in Chhattisgarh and Coal India in MP.

Whoever from Mahayuti might sit in CM's chair, strings always pulled from Delhi, Gujarat: Cong

GNS News Agency, May 23

The Congress on Sunday accused the BJP of carrying out a "special vendetta" against Maharashtra and claimed that no matter who from the Mahayuti sits in the chief minister's chair, "the strings are always pulled from Delhi and Gujarat". Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh asserted that the Congress party does not believe in playing favourites and "we believe in the equitable development of the entire country". "The Anyay Kaal of 'Hum Do, Humaare Do' has been characterised by a special vendetta against Maharashtra. Whoever from the Mahayuti might sit in the CM's chair, the strings are always pulled from Delhi and Gujarat," Ramesh said in a post on X. "The Congress party does not believe in playing favourites - we believe in the equitable development of the entire country. New infrastructure projects, special investment zones, and modern industry should benefit all Indians, and not one state alone," he said.

When the industrialisation of Gujarat was underway in the 1970s and 80s, projects like Gujarat State Fertilisers and Chemicals Limited (GSFC), Gujarat Refinery, and IPCL were set up without taking away projects from other states, the Congress leader said. "Unfortunately, to please its masters, the BJP has decided that Maharashtra does not deserve any new projects or Central support: An International Financial Services Center (IFSC) has been set up only in GIFT City in Gujarat. Mumbai has been the financial capital of India for 200 years, but the outgoing PM has repeatedly refused to set up an IFSC in Mumbai," Ramesh said. Dr Manmohan Singh in 2006 had begun the effort to set it up in Mumbai and land in BKC had already been set aside for the IFSC but it was reallocated to the bullet train, costing Mumbai potentially 2 lakh jobs, Ramesh claimed.

"Mumbai and Surat have worked together to develop India's diamond industry for decades, with Surat handling cutting and polishing, and Mumbai handling trading and export. However, the BJP and its puppet masters decided to build the new Bharat Diamond Bourse in Surat," he said. It is another matter that this move has failed entirely, with many diamond merchants moving their operations back to Mumbai, Ramesh added. Major indus-



trial investments like the Tata-Airbus manufacturing plant, and the (now-failed) Vedanta-Foxconn chip factory, were all diverted from Maharashtra to Gujarat, he claimed. Ramesh further said the Textile Commissionerate Office, based in Mumbai for 80 plus years, was suddenly shifted to Delhi last year, for no clear reason whatsoever, despite the fact that the Mumbai metropolitan region (MMR) remains a huge hub of textiles. The Dattopant Thengadi National Board for Workers Education & Development was also shifted from Nagpur to Delhi in 2021, he said. "The unfortunate fact is that the BJP is completely lacking in vision, and is unable to build anything. They can either sell PSUs or issue threats. Through the UP CM, they decided that Bollywood must be shifted away from Mumbai," he said. Instead of focusing on building a new media industry, instead of providing infrastructure or safety or any number of other incentives that could spark a cinema boom in UP, they decided instead that threats and arrests in Mumbai would be sufficient, Ramesh said. "Despite all the pressure exerted by the BJP, the industry with over 100 years of history in Mumbai dating back to Dadasaheb Phalke is not going anywhere," he said.

Ramesh asserted that the Congress has always believed that every state and Union Territory must walk the path of development together as Indians. "Our vision of 'unity in diversity' stands in stark contrast to the BJP's habit of picking favourites and dishing out step-motherly treatment to the rest. On June 4, the people of India are sure to teach them a lesson," the Congress leader said.

Dr Reddy's, Sun Pharma, Aurobindo recall products in US due to manufacturing issues

GNS News Agency, May 23

Dr Reddy's Laboratories is recalling close to 20,000 cartons of a medication used to control blood phenylalanine levels in adults and children. Dr Reddy's Laboratories is recalling close to 20,000 cartons of a medication used to control blood phenylalanine levels in adults and children. Drug makers Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Sun Pharma and Aurobindo Pharma are recalling products in the US market due to manufacturing issues, as per the latest Enforcement Report of the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA).

Dr Reddy's Laboratories is recalling close to 20,000 cartons of a medication used to control blood phenylalanine levels in adults and children. Princeton (New Jersey) based Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Inc. is recalling Javygtor (sapropterin dihydrochloride) Powder for Oral Solution (100mg) due to it being a "Sub-potent Drug", USFDA stated. The company is also recalling another lot of sapropterin dihydrochloride for the same reason, it added. The USFDA said the drug maker initiated the Class I recall in the US on April 8 this year. As per the US health regulator, a Class I recall pertains to defective products that can cause serious health problems.

The USFDA said Sun Pharma is recalling 11,016 vials of Amphotericin B Liposome for Injection, used to treat fungal infections, in the US market. The company's US-based arm initiated the Class II recall on April 19 this year due to "Out of specification for assay", the USFDA stated. Similarly, "Aurobindo Pharma is recalling 13,605 bottles of Clorazepate Dipotassium Tablets (3.75 mg and



7.5 mg), used to treat anxiety, in the American market. The company's US-based arm is recalling the affected lot due to "Discoloration: Dotted and yellow spots on tablets", USFDA stated. The company initiated the Class II recall on April 24 this year. The USFDA stated that another drug firm FDC Ltd is recalling 3,82,104 units of Timolol Maleate Ophthalmic Solution, used to treat glaucoma, in the American market.

The Aurangabad (Maharashtra)-based drug firm is recalling the affected lot due to "Defective Container". As per the USFDA, a Class II recall is initiated in a situation in which use of, or exposure to, a violative product may cause temporary or medically reversible adverse health consequences or where the probability of serious adverse health consequences is remote. The US generic drug market, estimated to be around USD 115.2 billion in 2019, is the largest market for pharmaceutical products.

UK PM Sunak faces revolt over plans to scrap Graduate Route visa: Report

GNS News Agency, May 23

London: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is considering restrictions to the UK's post-study visa which allows graduates to stay on and work for up to two years after their degree course as part of efforts to curb soaring legal migration figures despite strong opposition from some of his ministers, a report claims on Sunday. According to "The Observer" newspaper, Sunak is facing a Cabinet revolt over plans to scrap the Graduate Route scheme, the definitive factor for choosing UK universities among Indian students who have topped the tally of these post-study visas since it was launched in 2021.

Downing Street is said to be considering "further restricting or even ending" the route despite the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) declaring it was not being abused and that it should continue as it helps UK universities make up for financial losses on the domestic front. "Sunak is now finding himself caught between the demands of right-wingers with one eye on the Tory leadership and Conservative moderates who fear the consequences of a lurch to the right on the party's reputation and election chances," claims the newspaper, quoting sources close to ministers who oppose scrapping the visa.

Sunak's Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt and Foreign Secretary David Cameron are among those in the Cabinet said to be leading a revolt over the issue. It comes as university and business chiefs have warned that any curtailment of the post-study offer would make the UK less attractive to overseas students, including Indians. "Studying at university is one of our biggest export successes. Attracting international students boosts local economies and losing competitiveness would put support for undergraduate teaching and innovation at risk," said John Foster, Chief Policy and Campaigns Officer for the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). "With the MAC finding that the Graduate Visa is achieving the government's own policy objectives and is not being abused, it's time to put its future beyond doubt and end this period of damaging speculation," he said. Universities UK (UUK), the leading representative body



for UK universities, has also called upon the government to end the "toxic" uncertainty caused by the government's decision to review the visa route. "We hope and expect that the government now listens to the advice they have been given and provides categorical reassurance that the Graduate visa is here to stay," said UUK chief executive Vivienne Stern. MAC Chair Professor Brian Bell, who concluded the rapid review into the scheme earlier this week, has said that "our evidence suggests that it's the Indian students that will be most affected by any restriction on the Graduate Route".

The influential committee which advises the UK government on migration found that Indians accounted for 89,200 visas between 2021 and 2023 or 42 per cent of the overall grants, and the visa was stated as the "overwhelming decision point" for their choice of a higher education destination. "The uncertainty caused by the review has been chaotic. We urge the government to accept the MAC's findings and ensure the Graduate Route remains a stable and permanent fixture in the UK's immigration system," said Vignesh Karthik from the National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) UK. In a general election year, expected in the coming months, the Sunak-led government sees curbing high legal and illegal migration figures as a priority area and with the latest set of quarterly immigration statistics due next week, further clampdowns are on the horizon.

Nurse dies after zipline cable snaps at a resort near Bengaluru

GNS News Agency, May 23

The deceased, Ranjitha N, a resident of Attibele, visited the resort along with her 18 colleagues from a private hospital where she was employed. She is survived by her husband and two children. The deceased, Ranjitha N, a resident of Attibele, visited the resort along with her 18 colleagues from a private hospital where she was employed. She is survived by her husband and two children. (Representational)

A 35-year-old nurse ziplining at a resort on the outskirts of Bengaluru lost her life after the cable snapped. The resort allegedly had no safety measures or even a first-aid centre. The incident took place around 11.15 am on Sunday at the Jungle Trailz resort in Bettahalli village near Harohalli in Karnataka's Ramanagara district. Police booked the owner and workers of the resort and later arrested manager Putta Madu.

The deceased, Ranjitha N, a resident of Attibele, visited the resort along with her 18 colleagues from a private hospital where she was employed. She is sur-



vived by her husband and two children. An officer from the Harohalli police station said, "After breakfast, Ranjitha and others were participating in different activities. This was a 100-m-long inclining cable and as Ranjitha crossed half-way, the cable snapped and she fell and hit the ground. Ranjitha and three others fell and she was shifted to Dayanand Sagar Hospital, where doctors declared she was brought dead."

Israel launches strikes across Gaza as U.S. envoy meets Netanyahu



GNS News Agency, May 23

CAIRO/JERUSALEM, May 19 (Reuters) - Israeli planes and tanks pounded areas across the Gaza Strip, residents said, as White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday amid U.S. calls for a more focused military campaign. Sullivan was expected to press for Israel to go after Hamas militants in a targeted way, not with a full-scale assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah, the White House said before the discussions. Israel has been pushing into the city that it says is the last bastion of Hamas forces. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have fled the area that was one of their few remaining places of refuge. "Across the Gaza Strip, there is no safety," said Majid Omran who told Reuters his family had fled Rafah and just returned to what was left of their home in the southern city of Khan Younis that they had fled nearly five months ago.

"We took our children, grandchildren, and daughters and we came and lived above the rubble of our home. Because there is no place to take refuge here," Omran told Reuters inside the wrecked property as a woman cooked over a fire. Israeli forces also pushed deeper into the narrow alleyways of Jabalia in northern Gaza overnight and into Sunday, returning to an area that they said they had cleared earlier in the conflict, residents said. The Israeli military has said its operations in Jabalia - the largest of Gaza's eight historic refugee camps - are precise and meant to stop Hamas from reestablishing its grip there. The Israeli military said it was "operating to identify armed terrorist cells and ... conducting dozens of strikes to assist the forces operating on the ground" in the Jabalia area. Ahead of Sunday's talks, an Israeli official said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his senior aides would try to reach agreement with Sullivan about the need for press ahead with the Rafah push. Past U.S. misgivings about the feasibility of Israel's humanitarian measures may have been allayed by the evacuation around half of the city's Palestinians in 12 days, said the official, who spoke to Reuters on condition of

anonymity. "We've shown that this is not only necessary, but doable," added the official. The official said Israel would also air concerns about dozens of tunnels it says its forces have found under Rafah, running into next-door Egypt - which has condemned the military sweep. "These tunnels are used by Hamas to supply itself with weapons and ammunition, and could potentially be used to smuggle out of Gaza hostages or Hamas senior operatives," Deputy Israeli State Attorney Noam Gilad said during a hearing at The Hague on Friday, in a rare detailing of allegations that Egypt's state information service previously dismissed as untrue. Netanyahu has said the operation in Rafah, where Israel believes that as much as a quarter of Hamas' fighting forces are holed up, could be completed within weeks.

Washington worries for the hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians sheltering there, and has cited a need not just to evacuate them but also to ensure adequate alternative accommodation. At least 28 Palestinians were killed on Sunday, Gaza health officials and Hamas said, most of them in a strike on a house in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip. The Gaza Civil Emergency Service said in a statement rescue teams have so far recovered the bodies of 150 Palestinians killed by the army in recent days, and that 300 houses had been struck by Israeli aerial and ground fire. The Oct. 7 Hamas assault on Israel that sparked the war killed 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies. About 125 of the 253 people abducted in the raid are believed to remain in captivity in Gaza. At least 35,386 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli strikes since Oct. 7, according to the enclave's health ministry. Aid agencies have warned of widespread hunger and shortages of fuel and medical supplies. The U.S. military said on Friday trucks had started moving aid ashore from a temporary pier built by its forces, the first to reach the besieged enclave by sea in weeks.

The Popular Resistance Committee (PRC), an armed group that fights alongside Hamas in Gaza, released a statement saying the pier had been built to ease political pressure on Israel, and that any Israeli or U.S. troops on its territory would be considered a legitimate target. On Saturday, Hamas also raised concerns about the pier, warned against any foreign military force in Gaza, but made no direct threats. In March, when President Joe Biden announced his country's pier construction plans, he said: "No U.S. boots will be on the ground." Coming soon: Get the latest news and expert analysis about the state of the global economy with Reuters Econ World. Sign up here. Reporting and writing by Nidal al-Mughrabi. Additional reporting by Dan Williams in Jerusalem and Mohammed Salem in Gaza. Editing by Andrew Heavens. Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles., opens new tab A senior correspondent with nearly 25 years' experience covering the Palestinian-Israeli conflict including several wars and the signing of the first historic peace accord between the two sides.

New Taiwanese president calls on China to stop its threats

GNS News Agency, May 23

TAIPEI, GNS News Agency, May 23 Taiwan President Lai Ching-te asked China on Monday to stop its military and political threats, saying in his inauguration speech that peace is the only choice and that Beijing had to respect the choice of the Taiwanese people. Lai, addressing the crowd outside the Japanese-colonial-era presidential office in central Taipei, repeated a call for talks with China, which views the proudly democratic island as its own territory and has never renounced the use of force to bring it under Beijing's control.

"I also want to urge China to stop intimidating Taiwan politically and militarily, and to take on the global responsibility with Taiwan to work hard on maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and in the region, to ensure the world is without the fear of war breaking out," he said. "We also want to declare this to the world: Taiwan makes no concessions on democracy and freedom. Peace is the only option and prosperity is our goal for long-term peace and stability." China's foreign ministry, asked about the inauguration, said that Taiwan independence is a "dead end", and that no matter under what banner, secession is doomed to fail. China repeatedly called Lai a "separatist" who risked war in the run-up to his election in January. Taiwan has faced pressure from China, including regular air force and navy activities near the island, since the election victory by Lai, 64, who is widely known by his English name, William.

Lai, who took over from Tsai Ing-wen having served as her vice president for the past four years, said people must be realistic about the threat and Taiwan must show its determination to defend itself. "Fellow citizens, we have the ideal to pursue peace, but we must not have illusions," he said. "Before China gives up using force to invade Taiwan, citizens must understand this: Even if we accept all of China's claims and give up our sovereignty, China's ambition to annex Taiwan will not disappear." Lai received loud applause after reiterating that the Republic of China - Taiwan's formal name - and the People's Republic of China are "not subordinate to each other", a line Tsai also took. Taiwan's defence ministry, in its daily report on Monday about Chinese military activities in the previous 24 hours, said six Chinese aircraft had crossed the Taiwan Strait's median line, which previously served as an unofficial boundary but that China says it does not recognise. At least one of the aircraft got within 43 nautical miles (80 km) of the northern Taiwanese port city of Keelung, according to a map provided by the ministry. Such incursions have become relatively common in recent years. Item 1 of 6 Taiwan's new President Lai Ching-te and new Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim wave during the inauguration ceremony outside the Presidential office building in Taipei.

[1/6] Taiwan's new President Lai Ching-te and new Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim wave during the inauguration ceremony outside the Presidential office building in Taipei. In attendance at the ceremony are former U.S. officials dispatched by President Joe Biden, lawmakers from countries including Japan, Germany and Canada, and leaders from some of the 12 countries that still maintain formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, such as Paraguay President Santiago Pena. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken congratulated Lai, saying the United States looked forward to working with him "to advance our shared interests and values, deepen our longstanding official relationship, and maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait". At the end of the ceremony, Lai



China's foreign ministry, asked about the inauguration, said that Taiwan independence is a "dead end", and that no matter under what banner, secession is doomed to fail.

and Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim, formerly Taiwan's de facto ambassador to the United States, led the crowd in a sing-along to pop songs as they danced onstage with the other performers. Lai wore a purple tie, representing a butterfly native to Taiwan, and a yellow pin on his lapel of mustard flowers, a common plant in fields across the island. He received seals symbolising his presidential power from the parliament speaker, including the seal of Republic of China and the seal of honour, both brought to Taiwan after the Republican government fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing the Chinese civil war to Mao Zedong's Communists.

Late Sunday, widely read state-backed Chinese newspaper the Global Times said Lai could become "more and more provocative" once he takes office. "So in the long term, the state of cross-strait relations will not be optimistic," it said in an online commentary. Lai's domestic challenges loom large too, given his Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lost its parliamentary majority in the January election. On Friday, lawmakers punched, shoved and screamed at each other in a bitter dispute over parliamentary reforms the opposition is pushing. There could be more fighting on Tuesday when lawmakers resume their discussions. Coming soon: Get the latest news and expert analysis about the state of the global economy with Reuters Econ World. Sign up here. Reporting by Yimou Lee and Ben Blanchard; Additional reporting by Eduardo Baptista in Beijing; Editing by Lincoln Feast, Peter Graff and Gerry Doyle. Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles., opens new tab Yimou Lee is a Senior Correspondent for Reuters covering everything from Taiwan, including sensitive Taiwan-China relations, China's military aggression and Taiwan's key role as a global semiconductor powerhouse. A three-time SOPA award winner, his reporting from Hong Kong, China, Myanmar and Taiwan over the past decade includes Myanmar's crackdown on Rohingya Muslims, Hong Kong protests and Taiwan's battle against China's multifront campaigns to absorb the island.

Slovak prime minister's condition remains serious but prognosis positive after assassination bid



GNS News Agency, May 23

Slovakia's populist prime minister, Robert Fico, remained in serious condition on May 19 but has been given a positive prognosis four days after he was shot multiple times in an assassination attempt that has sent shockwaves across the deeply polarized European Union nation, the defense minister said. "The worst of what we feared has passed, at least for the moment. But his condition remains serious," Robert Kalinak told reporters outside the hospital where Fico is being treated. "His condition is stable with a positive prognosis."

Mr. Kalinak added that the hospital treating the Slovak leader in Banská Bystrica, a former coal mining town of 16,000 situated 29 kilometers (17 miles) from where Fico was attacked, will continue to issue updates on his health status. On May 19 afternoon, Mr. Kalinak revealed new details about the ongoing investigation saying there may have been a "third party" involved in "acting for the benefit of the perpetrator", in what was previously described by the authorities as a "lone wolf" attack. The official did not provide additional details.

"The situation is turning out to be even worse than we expected," Mr. Kalinak said. "Plus other indications that these facts of Wednesday's attack have been discussed in a wider circle. All of this is shocking information, and for many of us, it would be much easier if we could talk about just one person." Milan Urbani, deputy director of the hospital, told reporters that "Based on the doctors' morning consultation, we can conclude that the patient is currently out of a life-threatening condition. His condition remains very serious, and he needs a long time to rest to recover. We firmly believe that everything will go in a good direction."

Mr. Fico, 59, was shot in the abdomen as he greeted supporters on Wednesday outside a cultural center in the town of Handlova, nearly 140 kilometers (85 miles) northeast of the capital, Bratislava. Video showed the Slovak premier approach people gathered at barricades and reach out to shake hands as a man stepped forward, extended his arm and fired five rounds before being tackled and arrested. On Friday, Mr. Fico underwent two hours of surgery to remove dead tissue from his gunshot wounds, but he was not healthy enough to be transferred to the capital, officials said on May 18. The country's Specialized Criminal Court in the town of Pezinok on May 18 ordered the suspected assailant, who is charged with attempted murder, to remain behind bars. Prosecutors

said they feared he could flee or commit other crimes if freed, a court spokesperson said. The suspect can appeal the order.

Little information about the would-be assassin has been disclosed after prosecutors told police not to publicly identify him or release details about the case. Unconfirmed media reports have named him and said he was a 71-year-old retiree known as an amateur poet who may have once worked as a mall security guard. Government authorities have given details that matched that description. They said the suspect didn't belong to any political groups, though the attack itself was politically motivated. Slovakia's interior minister, Matus Sutaj Estok, said on May 19 that the attack on Mr. Fico is an "attack on democracy in any normal country". "At a time when democracy is being attacked, it must be the security forces that have to give a clear signal that they are prepared to protect the population of the Slovak Republic," he said.

Mr. Fico said last month on Facebook that he believed rising tensions in the country could lead to the killing of politicians, and he blamed the media for fueling tensions in the country of 5.4 million. Slovakia's three-party coalition government has also partly accused the media of fueling the vitriolic discourse that has beleaguered the EU country in recent years and led to deep social divisions. Andrej Danko, chairman of the government's smallest coalition partner, the Slovak National Party, said May 19 he is expecting a government meeting early next week to discuss media laws and journalistic ethics, including how journalists report on domestic politics.

In his address on May 19, Mr. Kalinak also stressed that lessons must be learned from the violent attack on Mr. Fico, who has long been a divisive figure in Slovakia and beyond. "This must be a memento. If we don't learn, we're heading for hell," he said. "We need to bring this situation back to what we can consider standard." Mr. Fico's government has made efforts to overhaul public broadcasting — a move critics said would give the government full control of public television and radio. That, along with his plans to amend the penal code to eliminate a special anti-graft prosecutor, have led opponents to worry that Fico will lead Slovakia down a more autocratic path. Before Mr. Fico returned to power last year, many of his political and business associates were the focus of police investigations, and dozens have been charged. His plan to overhaul the penal system would eliminate the office of the special prosecutor that deals with organized crime, corruption and extremism. At the St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Banská Bystrica on Sunday, churchgoer and lawyer Pavel Bachleda called the assassination attempt "a great tragedy" but also expressed concerns about how Fico and his Smer, or Direction, party has conducted itself in recent years. "I would say partly also his actions, his actions in the previous months and years, have brought about the situation in our country," he told The Associated Press. "You get the impression that they concentrate more on revenge, political revenge than on real things that our country needs."

Iran helicopter crash: Who is Ebrahim Raisi, Iran's president whose helicopter suffered a 'hard landing' in foggy weather?

GNS News Agency, May 23

Iran's hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi has long been seen as a protégé to Iran's supreme leader and a potential successor for his position within the country's Shia theocracy. News of his helicopter making what state media described as a "hard landing" on May 19 immediately brought new attention to the leader, who already faces sanctions from the U.S. and other nations over his involvement in the mass execution of prisoners in 1988. Mr. Raisi, 63, previously ran Iran's judiciary. He ran unsuccessfully for president in 2017 against Hassan Rouhani, the relatively moderate cleric who as president reached Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

In 2021, Mr. Raisi ran again in an election that saw all of his potentially prominent opponents barred for running under Iran's vetting system. He swept nearly 62% of the 28.9 million votes, the lowest turnout by percentage in the Islamic Republic's history. Millions stayed home and others voided ballots. Mr. Raisi was defiant when asked at a news conference after his election about the 1988 executions, which saw sham retrials of political prisoners, militants and others that would become known as "death commissions" at the end of the bloody Iran-Iraq war. After Iran's then-Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini accepted a U.N.-brokered cease-fire, members of the Iranian opposition group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, heavily armed by Saddam Hussein, stormed across the Iranian border from Iraq in a surprise attack. Iran blunted their assault. The trials began around that time, with defendants asked to identify themselves. Those who responded "mujahedeen" were sent to their deaths, while others were questioned about their willingness to "clear minefields for the army of the Islamic Republic," according to a 1990 Amnesty International report. International rights groups estimate that as many as 5,000 people were executed. Raisi served on the commissions.

The U.S. Treasury in 2019 sanctioned Raisi "for his administrative oversight over the executions of individ-

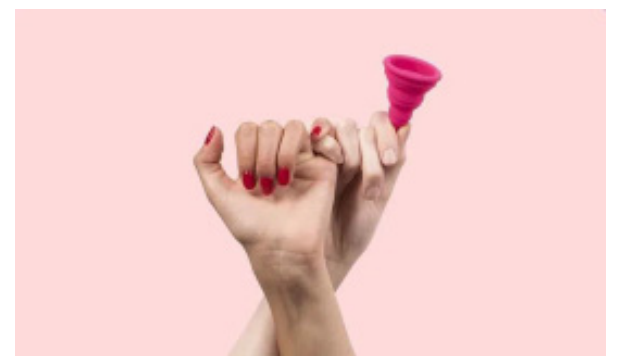


als who were juveniles at the time of their crime and the torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment of prisoners in Iran, including amputations." It also mentioned his involvement in the 1988 executions. Iran ultimately is run by its 85-year-old supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. But as president, Raisi supported the country's enrichment of uranium up to near-weapons-grade levels, as well as it hampering international inspectors as part of its confrontation with the West. Mr. Raisi also supported attacking Israel in a massive assault in April that saw over 300 drones and missiles fired at the country in response for a suspected Israeli attack that killed Iranian generals at the country's embassy compound in Damascus, Syria — itself a widening of a yearslong shadow war between the two countries. He also supported the country's security services as they cracked down on all dissent, including in the aftermath of the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini and the nationwide protests that followed. The monthslong security crackdown killed more than 500 people and saw over 22,000 detained. In March, a United Nations investigative panel found that Iran was responsible for the "physical violence" that led to Amini's death after her arrest for not wearing a hijab, or headscarf, to the liking of authorities.

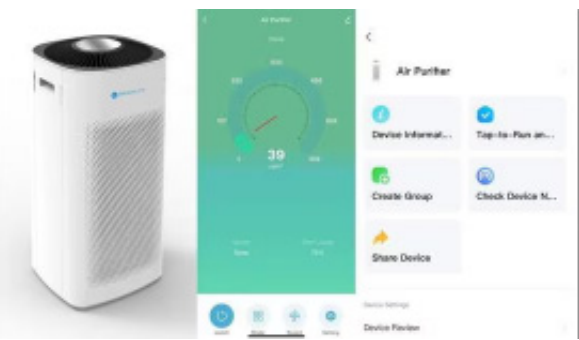
Celebrating menstruation! Festival in 11 countries from May 21

GNS News Agency, May 23

Thane: Maasika Mahotsav, a week-long festival that aims to destigmatise periods through sports, arts and cultural programmes, will be celebrated from May 21 in 11 countries. As many as 33 organisations will be involved in celebrating the 8th edition of the festival through programmes in 15 States in the country. The festival aims to challenge menstrual taboos, eradicate period poverty and spark meaningful conversations about periods around the globe, Thane-based NGO Muse Foundation stated in a release. Listing the highlights this year, Muse Foundation founder Nishant Banger said the festival will be celebrated for the first time in Puducherry,



With washable MESP filter, Nirvana Being's air purifier saves money and e-waste



trum cleaning capabilities if you may. The fact that MESP filters can be washed periodically, means little resistance to airflow – input and subsequently, output. You'll theoretically encounter more efficient room air purification, and since the fans don't have to speed up again and again, there's logically lower power consumption over the period of usage.

Setting this up is simple, though the app for this to be a smart home device, takes some effort to get to. The app is called Smart Life, but the QR code on the purifier itself only takes us to a broken webpage (at least it did, when we were setting this up). Following the on-screen guidance will get you to set this into pairing mode (select Wi-Fi as the mode of setup) and takes a few minutes to connect with the home Wi-Fi network. We've not received any firmware updates in the duration we tested the Nirvana Being MESP Portable Air Sterilizing Purifier With Washable Filter. The app is easy enough to navigate but doesn't feel premium in the way Dyson's companion app does, for example. For a purifier that costs a similar amount of money, we'd expect an app that's more refined and visually appealing. A very noticeable shortcoming, which is nevertheless surprising it even exists in this era, is the fact that the MESP Portable Air Sterilizing Purifier doesn't power on or resume its earlier state of use, in case of a power cut. Be it for a few seconds, or a handful of minutes. It requires manual intervention to power on the purifier, every time the electricity supply drops.

The Nirvana Being MESP Portable Air Sterilizing Purifier With Washable Filter in auto mode takes about 10 minutes to bring the AQI reading from a very unhealthy 362 on the meter in an active living room, to a properly healthy 57. It is at this point I noticed how sensitive this purifier is to even the slightest of changes in the air composition around it – walk past it or open a room at the far end of the hall, and depending on how it detects changes, the fan speeds up for different durations. This active response is good for rooms that tend to have constant activity. The big light ring around the touch control console at the top is a visual indicator of what's happening. You'd want the colours to be green or blue (good and excellent, respectively), and not orange or red (polluted and poor). At this point, I must point out there are three fan speed modes – low, medium and high, and anything other than low, is perceptively audible to occupants even in medium sized hall. At night, the trick is to shift this to sleep mode (it too can be automated too in the app, with specific time guidance), and then it is whisper silent with the console lights off. For large bedroom spaces, this is the ideal mode for a peaceful sleep. Design, form factor, filter layers and extensive smart connectivity features see quite a bit of creative approach, but it is not often we see underlying technology changes with indoor air purifiers. The shift from HEPA (it works effectively, just that it must be replaced periodically) to MESP filter tech means you've a filter layer that simply needs to be washed under running water to be cleaned (do not forget to thoroughly dry this, before putting this back in the purifier), and the company claims this has a life of 10 years or so. Average that with swapping out HEPA filters once a year at least, and assuming the average cost of the replacement filters to be around ₹3,000 per change, that's an expense of around 30,000 over the same period.

AI's 'Her' moment: OpenAI's GPT-4o and Google's Project Astra make real-life strides

"Well, you seem like a person, but you're just a voice in a computer." "I can understand how the limited perspective of an un-artificial mind would perceive it that way. You'll get used to it."

Theodore Twombly fell in love with a digital assistant Samantha in the 2013 hit 'Her'. The lifelike assistant, voiced by Scarlett Johansson, displayed a sense of humour, intelligence, and empathy that made her seem human to Theodore (played by Joaquin Phoenix). But last week, when OpenAI showcased the new strides it took with its new GPT-4o (the o standing for 'omni'), it signalled that such artificial intelligence (AI)-based assistants are no longer merely the stuff of science fiction films and literature.

And a day later, when Google showed the progress it has made on its virtual assistant, it marked a tangible direction that AI could take for end users — to create lifelike assistants that can be helpful for a number of real-life scenarios, from giving suggestions on how one can comb their hair by looking at their picture, to empathising with them. Siri and Alexa never really managed to cement their place as useful digital assistants, primarily due to their inability to pick up on the nuances of conversation. But Google and OpenAI's new announcements could change what it means to be a virtual help altogether.

For a large part of the population which is facing a loneliness crisis, it remains to be seen the shape and place such assistants occupy in people's lives. And of course, questions about the lens with which they're made, with the assistants' voicings in demos being that of women (lending to the idea of how technologies developed in patriarchal societies are likely to view women) are some things which would need to be contended with as such assistants reach the phones and computers of more people in the coming years. But that aside, OpenAI says that its new model accepts as input any combination of text, audio, image, and video and generates any combination of text, audio, and image outputs. It can respond to audio inputs in as little as 232 milliseconds, with an average of 320 milliseconds, which the company says is similar to human response time in a conversation.

"...we trained a single new model end-to-end across text, vision, and audio, meaning that all inputs and outputs are processed by the same neural network. Because GPT-4o is our first model combining all of these modalities, we are still just scratching the surface of exploring what the model can do and its limitations," OpenAI said in a blog post. In a demo video released by OpenAI, its assistant responded almost instantly to the questions, it could sing too, and offer tips on how a person could comb their hair before they went for an interview by looking at their face through the phone's front camera.

At Google I/O, the company's annual developer conference, the company showed that unlike common perception it had not fallen behind OpenAI in the AI race. The company showed a very early version of what it hopes could become a universal smartphone assistant. Google is calling it Project Astra, and it is a real-time, multimodal



In a demo video shared by Google, an Astra user in Google's London office asks the system to identify a part of a speaker, find their missing glasses, review code, and more

AI assistant that can see the world, remember where one has left a thing and even answer if a computer code is correct by looking at it through the phone's camera.

In a demo video shared by Google, an Astra user in Google's London office asks the system to identify a part of a speaker, find their missing glasses, review code, and more. It all works practically in real time and in a very conversational way. There are, however, some fundamental differences in the approach that OpenAI and Google have taken. OpenAI's assistant displayed a wide range of emotions and tonalities in its voicing — from slight giggles, to subdued whispers depending on what was being asked of it. In contrast, Google's assistant was more straight-forward, there is no range of emotional diversity in its voice. While the developments feel fascinating because of how tangible they feel, it is still early days for the technology and it is not without its share of limitations and challenges. OpenAI, for instance, said that GPT-4o is still in the early stages of exploring the potential of unified multimodal interaction, meaning certain features like audio outputs are initially accessible in a limited form only, with preset voices. The company said that further development and updates are necessary to fully realise its potential in handling complex multimodal tasks seamlessly. "GPT-4o has also undergone extensive external red teaming with 70+ external experts in domains such as social psychology, bias and fairness, and misinformation to identify risks that are introduced or amplified by the newly added modalities. We used these learnings to build out our safety interventions in order to improve the safety of interacting with GPT-4o. We will continue to mitigate new risks as they're discovered," OpenAI said.

Paracetamol overdose poses severe risk of acute liver failure: Study



According to a recent study by the University of Edinburgh, liver damage can be induced by Paracetamol, a common painkiller. New information on how the popular painkiller damages the liver is revealed by studies conducted on mice. The findings provide important information about overdosage toxicity, which is sometimes fatal and difficult to cure.

The finding could help guide research into treatments to mitigate the negative effects of the drug, which is the leading cause of acute liver failure in the West. Researchers at the University of Edinburgh studied how paracetamol affected liver cells in both human and mouse tissue. Their findings showed that under certain circumstances, paracetamol can damage the liver by interfering with the structural junctions that are essential for the proper functioning of neighbouring cells in the liver.

Tight junctions are connections between cells in the cell wall that, when broken, damage the structure of liver tissue, impairing cell function and possibly even causing

cell death. Although this type of cell destruction has been linked to liver diseases such as cancer, cirrhosis and hepatitis, it has not previously been linked to paracetamol toxicity.

The researchers now aim to develop a reliable method of using human liver cells as an alternative to animal testing. They will then look at how different doses and times of paracetamol affect toxicity in the liver and identify potential targets for new drugs. Scientific Reports has published the study, which involved researchers from the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service and the Universities of Edinburgh and Oslo. It received partial funding from the Chief Scientist Office and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council.

Paracetamol is the world's most popular pain reliever since it is affordable, safe and effective when used as directed. However, drug-induced liver damage remains a significant clinical problem and a barrier to the development of safer medicines. The findings highlight the need for caution in the use of paracetamol and may provide insight into ways to reduce the harm that can result from inappropriate use. Dr. Leonard Nelson from the Hepatology Laboratory and Institute for Bioengineering stresses the significance of these findings in understanding and preventing Paracetamol-related harm. While research on Paracetamol toxicity has a long history, recent advancements in biosensor technology offer new avenues for understanding its mechanisms, as noted by Pierre Bagnaninchi from the MRC Centre for Regenerative Medicine.

Buckle up your baby for safety



prevent parents of older babies from buying baby car seats are that all baby car seats are the same and are not required for older children.

While baby car seats vary in size, features, design, and safety standards, it is important to first know and then choose the right baby car seat. Rear-facing car seats are recommended for infants and toddlers because they provide better support for the baby's head, neck, and spine. Once babies reach the maximum height or weight limit allowed by the car seat manufacturer, they need to be put in forward-facing or booster seats," said Dr Mallaiah.

It can be an arduous task to choose the right baby car seat if there isn't any guidance. "Research indicates that using an appropriate car seat can significantly reduce the risk of injury by approximately 70 per cent and the risk of death by 28 per cent, as compared to relying solely on seat belts for securing children," said Rajesh Vohra, CEO, Artsana India (Chicco). When it comes to ensuring the safety of children during car travel, various types of car seats are recommended based on age and size. For infants from birth until 2 years old, a rear-facing car seat is advised, accommodating children ranging from 40 cm to 87 cm in height. As they grow older, children between 2 to 12 years old should transition to a forward-facing car seat, suitable for heights between 76 cm to 150 cm. For further protection, a booster seat is recommended for children aged 7 to 12 years, with heights ranging from 125 cm to 150 cm. Finally, once a child reaches 12 years of age, they can transition to using a seat belt for optimal safety during car rides. Each stage of car seat usage is designed to provide appropriate protection for children as they grow and develop.

Unrestrained travel significantly increases crash fatalities and despite this risk, many compromise on child safety by carrying infants in their laps or arms during rides. Prioritising child safety extends beyond immediate concerns, emphasising a holistic approach. LifeCell's stem cell banking offers a solution to secure your child's future by preserving stem cells from umbilical cord blood.

Stem cells have the proven ability to treat over 90 blood-related medical conditions and can replace or repair affected cells, offering transformative possibilities for future medical treatments. LifeCell, a leading name in stem cell banking, provides solutions to safeguard the health and well-being of your family. With efforts like these, it is now possible to keep your baby in a safety net throughout their lifetime. The Safest Lap is a reminder to parents to never compromise when it comes to the safety of their baby. By raising awareness about the importance of choosing the right baby car seats and debunking common myths surrounding their usage, the campaign encourages parents to choose the Safest Lap in their car.

When Karisma Kapoor spoke about losing 25 kilos with simple diet tweaks



Throwbacks are the flavour of the season, so what's better than revisiting some of the revelations made by celebrities about their diets and how they aimed to make them sustainable? When we stumbled upon this 2015 video of Karisma Kapoor discussing her diet with celebrity nutritionist Rujuta Diwekar, we couldn't help but notice how small tweaks can make a big difference not only to your goals but also to your energy and stress levels.

Kapoor, in a conversation with Diwekar, talked about losing 25 kilos with just eating fish curry and rice every night for dinner. "I lost 25 kilos eating fish curry with rice every night. When I tell my friends they are surprised that you can eat carbs at night and still lose weight. You have taught me how to eat right, how to eat what I like, eat carbs, and lose weight the correct way," Kapoor said in the interview posted on Diwekar's official YouTube page.

She added, "It has become a way of life for me, and I endorse it wherever I go. I tell people to not starve themselves and resort to Nimbu Paani (lemonade) and some leaves, etc. That kind of weight will all come back." On some of her favourite snacks, Kapoor mentioned that poha is a great with chillies thrown in, and upma with lots of vegetables is an even healthier option. "I love eating all that. So, you don't feel deprived. You don't feel that I can't eat these Indian yummy snacks. It is not just boiled carrots, cucumbers, etc. You can eat normal household food and still be on your fitness journey."

She also advocated for fruits like bananas and sapotas (chikoo), which are often perceived as fruits that contribute to weight gain. "Bananas and chikoo are nutritious and give you great energy levels when you are working, or a bit stressed out or have a busy day or taking

a flight. It is such a great option as it fills you up, and you will get all your nutrients and energy too!" said Kapoor.

Taking a leaf out of her diet dairy, here are nutrition experts explaining the significance of sticking to simple diet tweaks. Embracing a diet centered around home-cooked meals like fish and rice for dinner showcases the efficacy of wholesome, balanced eating habits. "While this approach may work for some, individual responses to dietary changes vary," said Nupur Patil, nutritionist, Nupur Patil Fitness. Patil mentioned that simple diet tweaks, such as increasing vegetable intake, opting for lean protein sources, and limiting processed foods and sugary beverages, can further enhance results. Snacking healthily can be both enjoyable and fulfilling. "By nourishing your body with these nutrient-rich options, you'll not only sustain your energy levels but also enhance them," said Shivani Bajwa, founder, YogaSutra Holistic Living. Avoid consuming too many fried and oily foods and keep a watch out for artificial sweeteners in sugar-free items, pointed out Dr Vikas Jindal, consultant, dept of gastroenterology, CK Birla Hospital, Delhi. "

Aditi Rao Hydari ended up crying twice while shooting a scene with Amitabh Bachchan: 'When he walks into a room, you want to stand up'



told that I would be doing Wazir. I never thought I would get an opportunity to work with him. It was incredible to be around him. I can't even describe how insane it was. He has this presence... as soon as he walks into a room, you feel like standing up," she said during a chat with Humans of Bombay. "But he's also got this amazing child-like excitement when he's on the set. He was on a wheelchair throughout that film, and he used to whirl around on it on the set. It was just so amazing to see him like that," she mentioned.

She also noted that Bachchan never leaves the set to rest in his van. Aditi recounted an instance that showcased his "kindness and generosity." "We were doing a scene wherein he is speaking to me, and I am just listening, and it had a huge dialogue. The camera was on him and over my shoulder. When he was delivering his lines, I was just watching him and I started crying. And then, it was my turn (to be filmed). I just assumed, him being a senior actor, somebody else would give me cues or he would do it in a plain manner. I was stupid to have assumed that because he's a true artist and he loves what he does. He did the scene for me again with full emotions, with his complete heart, in the same way that he did it for his own take," she added. "It just moved me to tears again. And I was like, 'that's so incredible.' Despite working for so many years, you are so excited and you want to help your little co-star. That was so generous and kind," Aditi noted. She also mentioned that part of her excitement for Wazir came from knowing it was produced by "another cinema legend," Vidhu Vinod Chopra. "He saw my screentest and he was like, 'I like this girl.' I don't think he even saw the full screentest. He watched a little bit and he was like, 'we want her in the film.'"

Aditi Rao Hydari recently opened up about working with Amitabh Bachchan in Bejoy Nambiar's Wazir and dubbed it as an amazing experience. Actor Aditi Rao Hydari said that Amitabh Bachchan never leaves the set to rest in his van while the shooting is going on.

Actor Aditi Rao Hydari is currently basking in the success of her latest project, director Sanjay Leela Bhansali's period drama streaming series Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar, where her performance and dance sequences have been receiving immense praise from all quarters, even though the show has got mixed reviews. Ever since she made her on-screen debut in 2006, Aditi has worked with legends, including Mani Ratnam, Aamir Khan, Sanjay Dutt, Arvind Swami, Vijay Sethupathi, and Prakash Raj, in significant projects.

Recently, she opened up about working with Bollywood's Shahenshah Amitabh Bachchan in Bejoy Nambiar's Wazir. Dubbing it as an amazing experience, she said, "I was literally jumping up and down when I was

'24-carat gold-plated sushi, 1.5 lakh per kg truffles': Farah Khan treats Bharti Singh-Haarsh to fancy lunch; comedian says, 'Isse accha main gold chain bana lu'

Screenwriter and comedian couple Haarsh Limbachiya and Bharti Singh never fail to make their fans laugh with their relatable humor. In her recent vlog, Bharti and Harsh shared their experience of dining with Farah Khan at a fancy Asian restaurant in Mumbai. Bharti, being fully desi, was looking forward to some Indian cuisine, but Farah took the couple to an Asian restaurant. Dishes like black fungus udon and 24 carat gold-plated sushi and truffles, which cost 1.5 lakhs per kilogram, left the comedian perplexed.

In the beginning of the vlog, Bharti wished for Farah to take them to an Indian restaurant. She, however, was left disappointed when she learnt that Farah is taking her to an Asian restaurant. She said, "My mood got off knowing we are going to a fancy restaurant. Farah mam often brings desi food. She always got me yakhini and all. I just hope she takes us to a desi restaurant." However, after reaching the restaurant, Bharti was surprised when Farah Khan ordered her an edible 24-carat gold-plated sushi. She also embarrassingly admitted that she didn't know what a truffle was until Farah introduced her to it at the restaurant. She said, "I should feel embarrassed, I had no idea what truffle was. It's worth Rs 1.5 lakhs per kilogram. Isse accha main gold chain bana lu (It's better



that I buy a gold chain.)"

Bharti was left in shock when she was introduced to "black fungus udon", but she was impressed with the dish and found it delicious. She also fell in love with the tiramisu served at the end as dessert. On the way home, Bharti spoke about her experience and said, "Dada 1400 rupay ka fungus kha ke aayi hu main. Mereko soch soch ke yeh hu raha hai, main ghar jaake kya bolungi ki fungus kha ke aayi hu." (What will I tell them at home that I ate fungus today.)"

Dharmendra gets angry at media after casting vote during Mumbai Lok Sabha Elections 2024: 'Jo mujhse bulwana chahte ho...'



Veteran actor Dharmendra stepped out to cast his vote during the Lok Sabha Elections 2024 on Monday in Mumbai. The 88-year-old actor smiled at the paparazzi as he walked towards the polling booth, however, Dharmendra lost his cool at the media while leaving. A video of the same surfaced online where the veteran actor is seen getting angry over a question posed by a mediaperson. In the video, Dharmendra is seen saying, "Acche shehri bano, desh bhakt bano, maa baap see

pyaar karo... aap ko malum hai jo mujhse kehelwana chahte hai (Be a good citizen, love your parents, you already know this... still trying to put words in my mouth)." The incident happened as Dharmendra was returning after casting his vote. Dharmendra's wife Hema Malini, who is also a BJP MP, was seen at the polling booth with daughter Esha Deol. The actress was wearing a peach colored saree. Since morning many Bollywood celebrities have been spotted at the polling booths including Akshay Kumar, Suniel Shetty, Farhan and Zoya Akhtar, Janhvi Kapoor, Sanya Malhotra, Anil Kapoor and Varun Dhawan, among others. On the work front, Dharmendra made his comeback on the big screen with Karan Johar's Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani last year. He was seen opposite Shabana Azmi and their kiss on-screen went on to become the most viral scene from the film. This year, Dharmendra was seen in Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon starter Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya. He will be next seen in Sriram Raghavan's Ikkis, which also stars Agastya Nanda and Jaideep Ahlawat. The film is expected to released in 2025.

Naseeruddin Shah says he moved into a hut to 'inhabit his character', ran away after spotting a scorpion: 'To hell with method acting'

Before starring in Shyam Benegal's legendary film Manthan, whose restored version was recently screened at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival, Naseeruddin Shah featured in another critically acclaimed classic by the filmmaker, Nishant. In a recent interaction, Shah shared an interesting anecdote from the sets of Nishant, involving a black scorpion. He also mentioned how most of the lead actors in Nishant became stars after the film's release, while he struggled to find work.

Speaking to Film Companion, Naseeruddin Shah shared how he was left scratching his head after the success of Nishant didn't result in any work for him. He said, "Nishant performed well at the box office and everybody who starred in it became a star. Shabana Azmi was a star, Smita Patil became a star, Girish Karnad started doing lead roles, Amrish Puri started playing villain roles... everybody got work the only guy who didn't get work was me. I got a handful of good reviews but that's about it. I was twiddling my thumbs and thinking what did I do wrong but I was very proud of my performance in Nishant."

Since Shah believed in method acting, he shared an anecdote from the shooting of the film in a village, where he packed his bags to live in a hut to get into the character's skin. However, an unwanted guest cut this stay short.

Yami Gautam-Aditya Dhar welcome son Vedavid: 'Thrilled to announce...'. Here's what Vedavid means in Sanskrit



Uri: The Surgical Strike director Aditya Dhar and actor Yami Gautam, who tied the knot in an intimate wedding ceremony in June 2021, have been blessed with a baby boy. The couple, who collaborated on films together including Article 370, made a joint announcement on Instagram to confirm the arrival of their bundle of joy, whom they have named, Vedavid. According to the post, Yami gave birth to her son on Akshay Tritiya (May 10). Dad-to-be Ranveer Singh was the first to congratulate the couple. He wrote on Instagram, "Bahut bahut sara pyar".

Sharing a mystical picture of a mother and son, in-

spired by Indian mythology, the couple wrote, "As we embark on this beautiful journey of parenthood, we eagerly anticipate the bright future that awaits our son. With every milestone he achieves, we are filled with the hope and belief that he will grow to become a beacon of pride for our entire family as well as our beloved nation." The words on the creative read, "We are thrilled to announce the arrival of our son, Vedavid, who graced us with his birth on the auspicious day of Akshay Tritiya. Please show him with all your blessings and love." Yami and Aditya got married in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh in the presence of 20 guests during COVID-19 pandemic. Their wedding announcement — posted on Instagram by the couple — came as a surprise for many. But according to PTI, the Vicky Donor actor said keeping the most special day of their life private was ideal for them. "It was as simple as possible. Aditya and I are simple people and we like to keep it like that. We are private and reserved and only wanted to share it with the world when the time was right. Even if there was no pandemic, I assure you it would have been the same wedding. Nothing would have been different (sic)," Yami said. The unusual choice of their son's name has piqued the interest of the netizens who have started looking up the internet to find the meaning of Vedavid. According to WisdomLib, the Sanskrit name refers to one who is "well-versed in the Vedas."

Kapil Sharma's onscreen wife Sumona Chakravarti on her absence from The Great Indian Kapil Show: 'Doing my own things'

Actor Sumona Chakravarti says she has been on her own journey and doesn't have an answer about her absence from the celebrity comedy talk show The Great Indian Kapil Show, hosted by her frequent collaborator Kapil Sharma. The actor, who has been part of Sharma's shows since 2013, said she is touched by the love of fans who have missed her on the ongoing ensemble Netflix series. Chakravarti featured on Colors' Comedy Nights with Kapil (2013-2016) and The Kapil Sharma Show on Sony TV (2016-23).

Asked why she isn't a part of The Great Indian Kapil Sharma Show, she told PTI: "I don't have an answer to this. The show that I was part of, which was on another channel, ended last year in July. Since then, I've been on my own journey, doing my own things, networking, and meeting people." Sharma partnered with streaming service Netflix for a new venture The Great Indian Kapil Sharma Show, which features Sunil Grover, Krushna Abhishek, Kiku Sharda, Rajiv Thakur, and Archana Puran Singh. Chakravarti, also known for the TV serial Bade Achhe Lagte Hain, said people often keep coming up to her saying they miss her. "I know fans have missed (me on the show), I've seen their messages. I meet people everywhere, the moment you step out of the house, your neighbors tell you (they miss seeing you on the show). That is exactly what motivates you to do something different. When I was in London last year, I had so many Indians telling me that they liked me in Bade Achhe Lagte Hain. It's really nice to see the love coming whether it's for Bade Achhe... or Comedy Nights.... It's great and you know you are doing something right. Nobody expected me to do well in comedy (but I did it)" she added.

The 35-year-old actor, who is gearing up to participate in the stunt reality show Khatron Ke Khiladi 14, said going forward she wants to try something different in her career. "This year some exciting stuff will happen with fiction. I was busy with theatre. Now, this (Khatron Ke Khiladi) is happening. So, it's about doing something different now," she said. The actor said she is blessed to have garnered acclaim for her role as Natasha Kapoor in Bade Achhe Lagte Hain, headlined by Ram Kapoor and Sakshi Tanwar, and for director Anurag Basu's 2012 film Barfi!, in which she played the role of Ileana D'Cruz's friend. "Bade Achhe Lagte Hain gave me a name, it was



my claim to fame. I had worked a lot before but Bade Achhe Lagte Hain made me famous, and I owe a lot of my career to that show. For Barfi!, we didn't even have the script but the idea was to work with Anurag da. I took up the film thinking, 'This will be an amazing crash course as an actor'. I knew I'd get to work with Ranbir (Kapoor), with Priyanka (Chopra Jonas). Unfortunately, I didn't have a scene (with them) but it was amazing to be a brick on the wall. You learn so much by just having a film like 'Barfi' on your resume," she said. Chakravarti is thrilled about her participation in Khatron Ke Khiladi 14, which features celebrity contestants facing their worst fears to win the coveted title.

The actor said her mother has been an ardent admirer of the Rohit Shetty-hosted show and she would often insist Chakravarti to participate in it. "Every year she would be like, 'Why don't you do this show?' I would be like, 'Why you want me to be in an uncomfortable situation?' "I know there's a certain image that has been created in people's minds because of my body of work, so I thought Khatron Ke Khiladi is a great platform, where I get to do things that I would really like to do, like going on adventures. It's also a platform that will present my real self, how I deal with situations," she added. The upcoming installment of Khatron Ke Khiladi also features Shilpa Shinde, Asim Riaz, Krishna Shroff, Shalini Bhanot, Abhishek Kumar, Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia, Karan Veer Mehra, Kedar Aashish Mehrotra, Aditi Sharma, Gashmeer Mahajani, and Niyati Fatnani. The show will soon air on the Colors TV channel.

Akshay Kumar votes for the first time after giving up Canadian citizenship; Dharmendra, Janhvi Kapoor, Farhan Akhtar cast votes too

As the city of Mumbai geared up for polling in the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, several Bollywood celebrities took to social media and the streets to urge citizens to fulfil their duty by exercising their right to vote. Leading by example, prominent stars such as Akshay Kumar, Farhan Akhtar, Zoya Akhtar, Janhvi Kapoor, Rajkumar Rao, Dharmendra and Sanya Malhotra were among the early voters who cast their ballots on Monday.

Akshay, who recently gave up his Canadian citizenship, arrived at a polling booth in Mumbai dressed in casual attire. The actor, who cast his vote as an Indian citizen for the first time since giving up his Canadian citizenship, emphasised the importance of voting for a strong and developed India, stating, "I want my India to be developed and strong. I voted keeping that in mind. India should vote for what they deem is right." Akshay humorously responded to a paparazzo who asked if he had waited in line to vote, asking, "Toh kya line tod le nikal jaon?" Farhan Akhtar, his sister, filmmaker Zoya and his mother and screenwriter, Honey Irani, proudly displayed their inked fingers after casting their votes in Mumbai. "My vote is for good governance, the government that looks after all the people, and gives us a better city. I just heard from somebody that young people are complaining that it's too hot but it's not hot at all, so please do step out, do vote," he told PTI outside the polling booth. Farhan took to social media to share a photo of his inked finger and encourage citizens to vote for candidates who represent their values and address their concerns. "Come on Mumbai. Time to step up and do your duty as a citizen. Get involved and vote for the candidate you know is representing your values and concerns. The candidate who will address your issues and speak for you when the time comes. Every vote matters. Jai Hind," he captioned the

photo. Janhvi Kapoor, donning a simple pink salwar kameez, cast her vote at Mumbai's St Anne's school, "Please come out and vote."

Meanwhile, Rajkumar emphasised the responsibility of voting for the nation's growth and development. He told ANI, "It is a big responsibility towards our country, we should vote. Through us, if people can get influenced then of course that's the biggest thing that we can do to make people aware of the importance of voting. So I'm very happy that the Election Commission chose me to be the national icon and I appeal to all to please come out and cast your vote... We all want our nation to grow, to shine. It's already shining. I'm sure it's going to shine even more." Sanya Malhotra, known for her role in the film Dangaal, displayed her inked finger after casting her vote in Mumbai. Filmmakers Nikhil Advani and Kunal Kohli also exercised their democratic rights at St. Anne's School in Bandra. Veteran actress Shubha Khote voted at a polling station in Mumbai and explained her decision not to opt for home voting, hoping to inspire others to come out and vote. She said, "I have voted for the right candidate. I did not opt for home-voting and voted here so that people get inspired and come out and vote." Lagaan director Ashutosh Gowariker, also took to his social media handle to urge Mumbaiers to cast their vote. "Vote because you have a choice! Vote because you have a voice! Vote because it is your duty! Vote because it is your right! #Election2024 #LokSabhaElection2024 #Vote #Votingday." Gowariker wrote on X (formerly Twitter) alongside a photo of himself. Kiara Advani, who made her Cannes debut this year, is back in Mumbai. In paparazzi videos, widely shared on social media, the actor is heard greeting the paps and asking them, "Vote diya (Did you cast your vote)?" When asked if she was going to cast her vote, Kiara replied, "Abhi karungi (I'll go now)."

Abhishek Sharma pips Virat Kohli in six-hitting competition, leaves Sehwag and Cummins speechless



GNS News Agency, May 23

Sunrisers Hyderabad batter Abhishek Sharma celebrates his half century during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 T20 cricket match between Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) and Punjab Kings (PBKS), at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Uppal, in Hyderabad. Sunrisers Hyderabad batter Abhishek Sharma celebrates his half century during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 T20 cricket match between Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) and Punjab Kings (PBKS), at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Uppal, in Hyderabad.

Abhishek Sharma's consistency and his power-hitting has left his Sunrisers Hyderabad skipper Pat Cummins and former India opener Virender Sehwag speechless. On Sunday, he blazed away to a 28-ball 66 in SRH's four-wicket win over Punjab Kings. The youngster has scored 467 runs at the strike rate of 209.41, the most by any batsmen in the ongoing tournament.

With 41 sixes to his name already in this year's IPL, the 23-year-old has broken the record of Virat Kohli by hitting the most number of sixes by an Indian in the tournament history. Kohli has smashed 38 sixes in the IPL 2016, and in this current season the RCB opener has hit 37 maximums and he is second in the list after Abhishek.

Abhishek Sharma of Sunrisers Hyderabad plays a shot during match 57 of the Indian Premier League sea-

son 17 (IPL 2024) between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Lucknow Super Giants held at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Hyderabad on the 8th May 2024. Abhishek Sharma of Sunrisers Hyderabad plays a shot during match 57 of the Indian Premier League season 17 (IPL 2024) between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Lucknow Super Giants held at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Hyderabad on the 8th May 2024. (Sportzpics)"Abhishek is amazing. I wouldn't want to bowl to him. It's scary as he plays with freedom, not only against pacers but also against spinners," Pat Cummins had said at the post-match presentation. Festive offer SRH highest total Sunrisers Hyderabad batter Abhishek Sharma celebrates his half century during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 T20 cricket match between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Mumbai Indians, at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Uppal, in Hyderabad, Wednesday, March 27, 2024. (PTI Photo)

"He has played an excellent knock again. What has impressed me the most is his consistency. Because with a youngster you don't expect it. Yes, they would perform in one or two games but Abhishek has been consistent throughout the tournament and has maintained his strike rate as well." "Not many players can hit 28-balls 66. He is leading the six-hitting chart as well. He looks stylish as well," said Sehwag. Abhishek has maintained that he has been massively benefitted after working with batting great Brian Lara, who was involved with the franchise in the past. "I have done some work with him, he's in touch. That's helping me now," Abhishek said. His fifty came off 21 balls, the slowest of the three half-centuries he has made this season, summing up his belligerence. Abhishek's previous two fifties came off 16 balls versus Mumbai Indians and 19 balls against Lucknow Super Giants. "My days are going good so I should utilise it for my team. I wanted to contribute as the target was big today. I think I have told this before, during Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy I was clear how I was going to play and dominate in the IPL. "I'm just waiting for the loose balls, I am going hard against them and trying to put them (bowlers) under pressure," Abhishek added.

'Just have a throw': Pat Cummins admits his role in Johnny Bairstow's stumping at Lord's

GNS News Agency, May 23

Australia captain Pat Cummins has admitted his role in the controversial stumping of England's Jonny Bairstow at Lord's. In the third season of the documentary The Test, Australia captain Pat Cummins says he encouraged wicketkeeper Alex Carey to stump the English middle-order batter. Cam Green was bowling and bowled a bouncer and he (Bairstow) ducked underneath it and then just walked out of his crease," Cummins said to the program, via ESPN. "So I just said to Kez (Carey) the ball before, I said 'Kez, just have a throw.'" With England on 193-5 and chasing a mammoth target of 371, Australia wicketkeeper Alex Carey underarmed the ball at the stumps after Bairstow left his crease at the end of an over. Following the Bairstow stumping, Carey endured significant abuse from crowds and on social media, and the Australian cricketers recollected how the gloveman lost his form and confidence.

Pat Cummins and Alex Carey's unbeaten 50-run stand for the eighth wicket helped Australia beat New Zealand in Christchurch. Pat Cummins and Alex Carey's unbeaten 50-run stand for the eighth wicket helped Australia beat New Zealand in Christchurch. Usman Khawaja added: "Everyone projected on Kez and didn't project on anyone else. It was all on Kez.

"Looking back on it, I just feel so bad for him what he went through at the time and what his family would have gone through being there at the time. It would have been so hard." However, the matter did not end there and Aus-



tralia spinner Nathan Lyon revealed that Bairstow had confronted the Kangaroos in the players' lunchroom. Speaking on the Willow Talk Cricket Podcast last year, Lyon had said, "There were a few Australian guys and a few English guys in the lunchroom, and I hobbled up on my crutches and stood in the middle of it and tried to calm things down a little bit," Lyon laughed. "Jonny had a few words here or there. That's all part of it, I'm all for it." "The emotions in the change room were quite remarkable," Lyon continued. "Everyone was gobsmacked but found it hilarious because you walk through that Long Room, and you're more chance of getting sued than punched. "So you look at it like that and all these guys abusing you and you're like, 'What's going on here?'" "It was quite funny in all respects."

Sunrisers Hyderabad put chasing demons to bed

GNS News Agency, May 23

Synopsis: Abhishek Sharma's blitz in the Powerplay, with Rahul Tripathi's support, followed by smart batting from Nitish Reddy and Heinrich Klassen helps Sunrisers Hyderabad end league stage on a high. Throughout their campaign, SRH has looked like a near-perfect team batting first, but have often crumbled chasing totals. The hunt for 215 started in similar fashion when Arshdeep Singh bowled a peach of a delivery to get rid of Travis Head. But then comeback man Rahul Tripathi and Abhishek Sharma tucked into Punjab bowlers.

Abhishek, with his sublime bat-swing, slammed six sixes taking his tally to 41 sixes for the season, the most thus far Punjab tried to restrict the partnership with slower ones, but it didn't work. By the time Harshal Patel got Tripathi, the damage had already been done. In between overs, Nitish Reddy's swing made contact with the ball, it went flying into the stands. The young all-rounder found an excellent blend between attack and defence which made sure SRH maintained the momentum even after the Powerplay. A successful chase of 215? with 5 balls to spare! ??@SunRisers finish their final league stage game with a 47-wicket win at home ??

Nitish's partner in the middle phase, Heinrich Klaasen walked out to a loud cheer from the crowd and didn't disappoint. The South African seemed intent on testing his six-hitting ability. As soon as a spinner came on, Klaasen transferred his weight onto the backfoot and targeted the long-on region. After a while, it was controlled aggression as the South African took the hosts close before getting bowled trying a scoop shot against Harpreet Brar. But Sanvir Singh hit the boundary to seal SRH's fifth home win of the season. The Punjab opener has threatened to play a blistering innings throughout the season. Prabhsimran and Atharva Taide stitched a 97-run opening partnership to put SRH under pressure. While the left-handed Taide relied more on timing, Prabhsimran cleared his left leg to access the leg side. Anything pitched up was hit through the mid-wicket region and from time to time, he played a couple of cheeky scoops. On a wicket which was not providing any movement, Bhuvneshwar



Abhishek Sharma stars in facile 200-plus chase as Punjab Kings beaten by four wickets despite Prabhsimran Singh's heroics.

Kumar and Pat Cummins were either too full or too short. It was T Natarajan who got the first breakthrough, getting Taide in the 10th over. However, Rilee Rossouw, the only overseas Punjab player in the XI, played his part. His timely cameo gave further impetus to the innings. However, SRH got lucky when Prabhsimran tried to heave a ball from Vijayakanth Vijayakanth on the leg-side and the ball hit the foot and looped in the air to brush the glove before keeper Klaasen grabbed it. Captain for the day, Jitesh Sharma provided the finishing touch with a 15-ball 32 to help Punjab get to 214. Brief scores: Punjab Kings 214/5 in 20 overs (Prabhsimran 71, Rossouw 49, Taide 46; Natarajan 2/33) lost to Sunrisers Hyderabad 215/6 in 19.5 overs (Abhishek 66, Klaasen 42) by 4 wickets.

Manchester City, the first team to four straight league titles, was unstoppable and irrepressible



GNS News Agency, May 23

When the final whistle blew, as the stewards formed a human barricade to deny the ecstatic Manchester City fans from spilling onto the ground, as their talisman of the season, Phil Foden, soaked in the hugs of his teammates, Pep Guardiola quietly rushed into the tunnel, with an ascetic detachment from celebrations. Maybe, he had exhausted his emotions, he was leaping and high-fiving when City scored each of their three goals that kept tension and suspense at bay, he had flung a water bottle in angst when his team conceded a goal, a sumptuous scissor kick that could swell the fame of Mohammed Kudus, or violently slapping his fists to suggest that Tomas Soucek goal was off the arm. And it was chalked off.

Guardiola had run his emotions, just as the team had run their emotions too. Maybe, deep inside he, and his men, knew they would march to the title; that all the noise from outside of drama and nerves, was just noise. Maybe, he views feats of history with coldness. A man who likes the journey and process rather than destination and results. But when he begins to count of the treasure chest of feats he has achieved—the trebles with Barcelona and Manchester City, the gopeller of tika taka, the most radical football philosophy of this century, the intellectualization of the managing art, the most efficient proponent of false nines and inverted full-backs, the best manager of this century perhaps, the 21st century Cruyff—the most recent could be the most magnificent too. The moment he sealed his legacy in English football.

To win four titles in a row anywhere in the world is difficult, but not unprecedented—Guardiola himself was part of the Barcelona side that won all four seasons from 1990-1994, Bayern Munich have claimed 11 on the spin—but in England it has been an elusive shore. A raft of legends have only watched it from afar, the title slipping through their palms. So, like the Invincibles of Wenger, the Magnificos of Guardiola have achieved something imperishable and immortal in England football, a feat he only seems capable of bettering or improving, that is if success does not breed boredom in him. The day his City was crowned champions for the tenth time in their history, and the sixth in seven years of Guardiola, he was symbolically coronated as one of the finest managers of the league ever, from Herbert Chapman through Matt Busby and Bill Shankly, Arsene Wenger and Alex Ferguson, inhabiting some other space beyond normal

Satwik-Chirag react to an early wake-up call and saunter to a dominant title in Bangkok

GNS News Agency, May 23

So in what was destined to be a stroll in the park at the Thailand Open Super 500 final, the Indians managed to get themselves in a few tangles against the 4th best Chinese pairing of Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi, ranked World No 29. But at the stroke of the 15th point, they'd had enough of the mock drill, and quickly raced to a 21-15, 21-15 title victory in 46 minutes. But Shetty, the meticulous mental jotter of all low-key vicissitudes, would bring up that early shake-up they were forced into. In the opening set, Satwik-Chirag went from 5-1 up to 7-10 down. "At one point we led 5-1 but then we went down 7-10. It was a wake-up call that we needed to get back. They fought but they were not able to come back. We were always leading," he would say. For a large part of their careers and ahead of every big title they've won, Satwik-Chirag have needed these wake-up trings to get their act together. The Chinese flatter game on the day where they struck good, deep lengths to midcourt, were micro-triggers, though it was never in doubt that the Indians would saunter past to their second Thailand title, the site of their first major tournament victory five years ago. But the jolt was necessary to keep them on their toes. There's a film dating back to before this duo were born, a full-length movie of brilliant buffoonery before memes got mainstreamed and humour was sold short as clips, called Andaa Apna Apna. It had "Tilu ko roz subeh dande dene hai" (Tilu must be caned daily),



a reference to daily dosage of striking one of the lead characters on his head at regular intervals, so he would regain lost memory. Satwik-Chirag haven't forgotten winning since they first picked that breakthrough title in Bangkok in 2019. But they tend to often need the rug to be slightly tugged from under their feet, so they don't forget to get cracking on court. Sometimes, tournament final losses are a punch to the gut before they collect themselves. At other times, little-known Chinese steal a micro-lead at start of a game to get them to be alert. The Tilu-treatment tends to work.

The upcoming Chinese are uncharacteristically sluggish, in that they've gone from World No 42 to World No 23 in this last year of dawdling on the circuit, and not stepped up. But they have one wicked weapon – their control over the low, flat game as Chen and Liu conjured fast exchanges with pushes that travelled quickly to midcourt. It often caught Shetty awkwardly in the ribs, testing his forehand defense as he had to squat

notions of sporting exceptionalism. The only questions that remain are if he is the finest ever the league has seen, or his side the most dominant side in the league's history.

Such questions have no clear answers. But he and his team (rather teams) have recast the league in their image, and infused it with their ideals and beliefs. Every team wants to play like City—the league has embraced the possession style, the precedence of technique over physique and flair, and the obsession with the ball. Every manager wants to be like Pep Guardiola; every manager is rushing to their academy to fish out their own Phil Foden, the boy from Stockport down the road to Etihad adjudged the player of the season and whose blood and thunder brace sewed the historic moment for them; the scouts are scanning the La Liga for their next Rodri, the defensive midfielder with the passing vision of a playmaker and the striking finesse of a striker. Both were the most towering figures of the season. Not just because they scored in the title-decider, but because they sustained their impact throughout the season. Foden netted 19 goals and conjured eight assists; Rodri belted eight himself and plotted nine goals. His attacking output was better than the men who are paid to conjure attacks, the stalwarts Kevin de Bruyne and Bernardo Silva. And all this without compromising on his defensive duties. Little wonder that City has never lost a game whenever he has started, and little coincidence that City's worst phase came when he was sitting out due to suspensions or injuries. "He's able to do everything. The tempo he has, his character when the situation is going wrong, to step forward, go backwards, the ability to play short and long," Guardiola would compliment him.

His versatility was all the more valuable in a season where Guardiola veered further away from his idealism. This was perhaps the most physical Guardiola side, the tallest and perhaps the most direct. It lacked the counterpunching vigour of last season or the passing purity of the classical Guardiola sides. The triumph was a statement of their steely resolve rather than a doctrine of style or beauty. They did not blow their prime contenders away this season, but stuttered and scraped past them. A goal against Arsenal was elusive in both legs; nerves were shred in both games against Tottenham Hotspur, and didn't beat Liverpool and Chelsea. But they still wreaked goalmouth havoc, scored goals when it mattered, stitched an undefeated run of 23 games.

The lone quibble could be that they were less fluent and beautiful than his other avatars of Guardiola's City, more machine-like. Fewer cutbacks, more goals from outside the box, more dribbling (Jeremy Doku would have struggled to get into most Guardiola teams of the past) and ball-carrying than passing and possessing, more frenzied, a less aesthetic version. If you had not seen Guardiola on the touchline, you wouldn't believe it's a team he has coached. Yet, they were unstoppable and irrepressible and that is the English premier league reality of our times. And the rest of the teams are merely living through it.

low. The Chinese also seemed to be aping Shetty's swivel serve and Satwik's lobs to the back, and resembled potential sparring simulators of the Indian game, for the top Chinese pair of Liang-Wang ahead of Paris. But there was little in their attack to truly trouble the Indians. Still, Satwik tried a few disguised serves, and beautifully cut pace on his midcourt shots, leaving the Chinese short on reach as the shuttle dipped. When needed both Indians pulled out the big smashes, burying them middle of the court, but it was one of those finals where they were barely tested. Chirag sent returns long a few times and promptly checked his aggression in the next rally to restore leads. And he was largely responsible for the smooth gear-switch from Point 15 onwards to race to the finish. He didn't need to be at his best, so he wasn't. But the Indians always looked in control. "Good match. I knew they would keep on playing fast, fast. If we relax they will keep on fighting till the last point. But it was the best match of the tournament (for us). We kept everything calm, under control," Satwik would tell BWF. The regular title celebrating headlines will keep them chuffed. But Shetty admitted they wouldn't be lulled into complacency on this home stretch before Paris. "Not just us. All athletes want to go out there and get that trophy (Olympic medal)," he told the media later. The Chinese fourth string was the toughest match they faced this week, and the Indians managed to make it look clinical and simple, not going into a decider the whole week and not crossing the 40-minute mark till the final. But with none of the top pairings standing in their way, this might be the easiest title Satwik-Chirag won. A tiny wrangling over the early lead though, was a timely reminder of past reverses, and mid-match melts, in a year where they made four finals but didn't quite win a Super 1000 title. In the next ranking update, and with none of the top pairings playing this last week, they will reclaim the world No 1 ranking, reestablishing themselves as the best currently in a wildly fluctuating men's doubles field.