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Major fire breaks out in sofa making unit at Nampally

Hyderabad: Fire broke out in a sofa making unit at Nampally on Thursday evening. No casualties were reported in the incident. According to the police, the fire started around 5 pm at a sofa making unit located in Subhanpura locality of Nampally. On noticing the fire the local residents rushed out of their house for fear of the fire spreading to the residential houses. On information, two fire tenders were rushed to the spot. The firefighters battled the fire for around one hour and extinguished it. The firemen faced problems in reaching the spot as the roads were quite narrow and vehicles were parked on the way to the fire mishap spot.

Heavy Rains Cause Flooding in Nandyal District

The Nandyala district is currently facing severe flooding due to heavy rains in the region. Streams and bends are overflowing, with the Kundu river in Miduthur Mandal 49 Bannur overflowing and causing vehicles to come to a standstill. The situation has led to significant difficulties for the residents of the area. In addition, heavy rain in Midturu at midnight has led to the Kakiredu river near SC Colony flowing fiercely. A car attempting to cross the stream overturned, but fortunately, the two people inside the car were able to escape unharmed. The police have been called in to rescue the car using tractors.

Hoping for a fresh start between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, Revanth Reddy dials Chandrababu Naidu



GNS News Agency, June 6

Telangana Chief Minister and Congress leader A Revanth Reddy Thursday spoke to Telugu Desam Party chief and BJP ally N Chandrababu Naidu for clinching a landslide victory in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections. With Naidu set to be sworn in as Chief Minister, Reddy said the two states should continue cordial relations and cooperate with each other to resolve pending matters related to the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014 in a friendly atmosphere. Reddy called Naidu over the phone and spoke with him for several minutes. The TDP chief is likely to send invitations to Reddy as well as other Telangana leaders to attend his swearing-in ceremony. Sources said Reddy wants to make a fresh start with Naidu to discuss and resolve several pending issues between the states, including bifurcation of assets. He said he will not let ego or prestige come in the way of resolving issues with Andhra Pradesh. Reddy had earlier said that the Congress supports Andhra Pradesh's demand to be granted Special Category Status, which was promised during the bifurcation. At least 14 issues are pending between the two states - including clearing power dues that they owe each other; bifurcation of 91 institutions like AP State Finance Corporation; and division of cash balance and bank deposits - since Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated to create the state of Telangana on June 2, 2014. In the past, former Telangana CM K Chandrashekar Rao and former Andhra Pradesh CM Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy held a couple of meetings to resolve the issues but could not come to a conclusion. Reddy was with the Telugu Desam Party for several years, and was elected twice on a TDP ticket from Kodangal in 2009 and 2014. He was close to Naidu before he quit in October 2017 and joined the Congress. He said he wants to work closely with Naidu and the Andhra government and maintain cordial relations. Sources said he is keen to hold meetings with the state to resolve as many issues as possible.

Nitish Kumar's party messages stand on UCC, seeks review of Agnipath scheme

GNS News Agency, June 6

PATNA: The Janata Dal (United) on Thursday demanded a review of the Agnipath recruitment scheme for the military to remove its deficiencies but underlined that the party's support to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the Centre was unconditional and without pre-conditions. "A section of voters have been upset over the Agniveer scheme. Our party wants those shortcomings which have been questioned by the public to be discussed in detail and removed," JD(U) leader and party's principal spokesperson KC Tyagi said, a reference to the simmering anger among the youth over the controversial scheme for the short-term induction of soldiers.

3.6 Crore Indians visited in a single day choosing us as India's undisputed platform for General Election Results. Explore the latest updates here! The Agnipath scheme was a



major departure from the military's decades-old recruitment system that was scrapped in June 2022. Agnipath seeks to recruit soldiers for only four years, with a provision to retain 25% of them in regular service. Those recruited under the new scheme are called Agniveers. In response to questions, Tyagi, who attended an informal meeting of the newly-elected MP meetings with chief minister Nitish Kumar in New Delhi, also outlined his party's stand on the demand for a nationwide caste census, special status for Bihar and a uniform civil code. He, however, did not speak on the backroom

negotiations with the BJP for cabinet berths or its decade-old demand for a special status for Bihar.

"There is no pre-condition, there is unconditional support. But it is in our mind and heart that Bihar should be given special status. Bihar suffered after the state's bifurcation (in 2000) and this can not be corrected without granting it special status," Tyagi said. With 12 seats, the JD (U) is the third largest constituent of the 15-member National Democratic Alliance that endorsed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a third term on Wednesday, next only to the BJP which got 240 seats and fell short

of the majority mark by 32 seats and the N Chandrababu Naidu-led Telugu Desam Party. According to reports, Nitish Kumar's JD (U) wants two to three cabinet berths in PM Modi's new cabinet. Party leaders declined to comment. Bihar minister Ashok Choudhary said chief minister Nitish Kumar has convened a meeting with party MPs on Friday "where all issues will be discussed."

Asked about the Uniform Civil Code, Tyagi said his party was not against it but wanted all communities to be taken on board. "We are not against Uniform Civil Code (UCC), the CM (Nitish Kumar) has written to Law Commission chief... there should be a discussion with all the stakeholders - be it various CMs, different political parties, different sects - and the issue should be resolved," he said. Asked about the national caste census, Tyagi said no political parties had spoken against the demand for a nationwide caste census.

Rahul Gandhi demands JPC probe into 'biggest stock market scam' via exit polls



GNS News Agency, June 6

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Thursday demanded a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) inquiry against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and others who he said were involved in the "biggest stock market scam". He also questioned the connection between the fluctuations in the market and the recent exit polls. Addressing a press conference, he also said stock markets rose after "fake" exit polls and then crashed the day Lok Sabha polls votes were counted on June 4. Retail investors lost Rs 30 lakh crore and this is the "biggest stock market scam", Gandhi said.

"For first time we noted that during polls, Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman commented on the stock market," he said. Gandhi also put up three questions related to the stock market "scam". He asked why PM Modi and Shah "advised the people of the country to invest in the market". He also questioned the PM's and the Home Minister's interviews "only to those Adani channels against which SEBI is carrying out an investigation". "In such a situation, what is the role of those channels?" Gandhi asked. Lastly, he expressed doubts over the connection between the BJP, "fake" exit polls and foreign investors. Gandhi alleged that "people higher up in BJP carried out this stock market scam".

NEET exam results: 67 students share top rank, demand re-exam



GNS News Agency, June 6

Several aspirants of the medical entrance exam NEET have alleged inflation of marks which led to a record 67 candidates bagging the top rank, including six from the same exam centre. The National Testing Agency (NTA), however, denied any irregularities and said the changes made in the NCERT textbooks and grace marks for losing time at the examination centres are some of the reasons behind the students scoring higher marks. The results announced by NTA on Wednesday evening saw 67 students sharing rank one, including six from same examination centre in Haryana.

"After the NEET exam, now the NEET result is also in controversy. After the NEET results were declared, questions are being raised on six students from the same centre getting 720 out of 720 marks. Apart from this, many other irregularities related to the NEET exam have also come to light," the Congress wrote on X. "First due to paper leak and now due to result error, the future of lakhs of youth of the country is getting ruined. It is clear that this government cannot get any paper done without leaking it. Sir claims to stop wars in foreign countries but he is unable to even stop paper leaks in the country," the party added. Detailing the reason behind inflation of marks, the NTA said it received representations raising concerns about the loss of time during conduct of the examination. "Such cases and representations were considered by NTA and the normalisation formula, which has been devised and adopted by Supreme Court, vide its Judgment dated 13.06.2018, was implemented to address the loss of time faced by the candidates of NEET (UG) 2024.

The loss of examination time was ascertained and such candidates were compensated with grace marks. So, there marks can be 718 or 719 also," it said in a statement. Asked about the allegations of unclear implementation of grace marks, a senior NTA official told PTI that the question paper was prepared using a new NCERT textbook. However, some students had old NCERT textbooks. "We received a representation on this issue as well due to which NTA had to assign five marks to all students who had marked one of the two options. Because of this reason, marks of a total of 44 students increased from 715 to 720, which resulted in an increased number of toppers," the official said.

After several court cases and representations raising concerns over loss of time during exam were received, a committee was formed to look into the matter, the official said, adding that the committee went through everything and the loss of time was ascertained. "Such candidates were compensated with grace marks. Therefore, the marks of students at some centres are high because it is likely they all benefitted from grace marks," the official added. According to experts, the mark inflation in NEET UG 2024 result is expected to make securing a spot in medical school this year more difficult. Some aspiring students have turned to online platforms to demand the cancellation of the results and a re-examination. "Several students are raising some valid points. How come students with same sequence roll number scored the same marks. This is a serious issue. We don't want such doctors to serve our country. This must be investigated," said Anubha Shrivastava, a lawyer and president of India Wide Parents Association. An aspirant took to X and said, "67 students scoring 720 out of 720 marks in the results released after the NEET exam paper leak raises suspicion. This is playing with the future of lakhs of candidates of the country, due to which there is anger among the students. The government should conduct a high-level investigation". Another X user Nitish Rajput said NTA awarded grace marks according to the court order but the students argue this sudden decision is unjust as the agency has not mentioned any methodology to award these 'grace marks'.

Telangana BJP MPs to head to Delhi today to participate in NDA leaders meeting



GNS News Agency, June 6

Telangana BJP leaders to head to Delhi today for a meeting of NDA MPs, including Bandi Sanjay, DK Aruna, and Raghunandan Rao. The meeting, scheduled for tomorrow, will be attended by BJP MPs, with leaders such as Kishan Reddy and Laxman already in Delhi for discussions with Prime Minister Modi. A meeting of NDA allies took place at the Prime Minister's residence on Wednesday, with plans for a separate meeting with party leaders who won as MPs on Friday. The focus of these meetings will be on determining cabinet positions and distribution of posts among the NDA allies. Sources within NDA have suggested that Chandrababu's TDP and Nitish's JD(U) are likely to receive key ministerial roles in the cabinet reshuffle. There are also talks of a possible reassignment of portfolios, with speculation that Union Home Minister Amit Shah may not continue in his current role. Chandrababu Naidu himself has confirmed that TDP will be joining Modi's cabinet, adding to the anticipation surrounding the upcoming changes. The priority, according to NDA sources, is to complete the process swiftly and avoid any political uncertainties. The final decisions on cabinet appointments are expected to be made in the coming days.

Supreme Court directs Himachal Pradesh govt to release surplus water

GNS News Agency, June 6

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has directed the Himachal Pradesh government to release surplus water on Friday so that it reaches the national capital "uninterruptedly" and is made available to the Delhiites for drinking purposes. A bench headed by Justice P.K. Mishra said, "We direct that Himachal Pradesh shall release 137 cusecs of surplus water available with it on Friday so that the water reaches Hathni Kund barrage and reaches Delhi through Wazirabad. As and when surplus water is released with prior information by the state of Himachal Pradesh, the state of Haryana shall facilitate the flow of surplus water so released." The bench, also comprising Justice K. V. Viswanathan, noted that Himachal Pradesh has no objection to releasing the surplus water available with it. The apex court said that the Delhi government should adhere to the measures suggested by the Upper Yamuna River Board to prevent wastage of water since there is an acute shortage of drinking water in the national capital. Posting the matter for further hearing on June 10, it ordered for filing of a status report and compliance affidavits in the meantime. In an earlier hearing, the top court ordered the river board to convene an urgent meeting on June 5 to address the water crisis in the city, stressing that the problems of scarcity of water for the citizens of Delhi should be properly addressed.

Pro-Khalistan slogans in Golden Temple mark Operation Bluestar anniversary

GNS News Agency, June 6

Amritsar: Carrying posters of Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale, radicals on Thursday raised pro-Khalistan slogans in the premises of the Golden Temple here to mark the 40th anniversary of Operation Bluestar. Operation Bluestar was a military action ordered by late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to flush out militants led by Bhindrawale holed up in the Golden Temple complex. Operation Bluestar was carried out between June 1 and 8, 1984,

13-year-old girl gang-raped in Jashpur; 2 arrested, 4 minors detained

GNS News Agency, June 6

Jashpur: Six persons, including four minors, have been held for allegedly raping a 13-year-old girl in Jashpur in Chhattisgarh, a police official said on Thursday. The incident took place on June 4 under Sanna police station limits when the teen girl was returning home in the night after attending a wedding, Superintendent of Police Shashimohan Singh said.

"The victim's father lodged a complaint on Wednesday after which an FIR was registered. As per the complaint, the girl was stopped by accused Manoj Kumar

(24) and two minor boys. She tried to escape but they dragged her into a forested patch and raped her. Three others, including accused Praveen Painkra (21) and two minors, arrived there and raped her," the SP said. She reached home in the early hours of Wednesday and narrated the ordeal to her parents, who approached police, he said.

Three special teams were set up and all the accused were rounded up by Thursday morning. Kumar and Painkra were arrested and the four minors, in the 16-17 age group, have been detained. Further probe into the crime is underway," the SP said.

Congress convenes CWC meet on June 8 to discuss poll result

GNS News Agency, June 6

The Congress has convened a meeting of its working committee on June 8 to discuss the Lok Sabha poll result. The meeting has been convened by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and he will chair it. Party leaders will discuss the outcome of the Lok Sabha election, sources said. The meeting will be held at 11 am at the Congress headquarters on Saturday. The Congress has emerged as the second largest party in the election and improved its tally to 99, from 52 in 2019 Lok Sabha poll. It will be after a gap of 10 years that the Congress will have the Leader of Opposition's position in the Lok Sabha, a post it failed to get as its tally was below the requisite 10 per cent of total seats in the House both in 2014 and 2019.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Naidu's comeback

IN a remarkable turn of events, N Chandrababu Naidu has been catapulted from political obscurity to the pivotal role of 'kingmaker' — along with Nitish Kumar and Tejashwi Yadav — after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. This shift not only underscores their political acumen but also highlights the fluid dynamics of our democracy. The TDP's impressive performance in Andhra Pradesh, securing 16 LS seats, combined with the BJP's failure to achieve a majority, has propelled Naidu into a central position. His alliance with the BJP and Janasena signifies not just his strategic resurgence but also his enduring appeal to the electorate. The NDA won a landslide victory in the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in Andhra Pradesh, bagging 21 parliamentary and 164 Assembly seats.

This re-emergence into prominence that also puts him in the king's position in the state is laudable. Naidu's tenure as Chief Minister from 1995 to 2004 was marked by economic reforms and a tech-driven vision, earning him the moniker 'CEO of Andhra Pradesh'. Next, after a decade in the Opposition, Naidu made an impressive comeback in 2014, but the political landscape proved challenging. His alliance with the BJP was short-lived and the TDP suffered a heavy defeat in the 2019 elections. Adding to his woes, his 52-day incarceration last year in a skill development scam seemed to mark the end of his political career.

Today, with a majority eluding the BJP at the Centre, hectic parleys to garner the required numbers are on, and even INDIA bloc leaders are reportedly wooing Naidu. But he has reaffirmed his allegiance to the NDA — for now. India will be closely watching Naidu's moves as a power-broker. They will undoubtedly be instrumental in determining the country's political direction.

Despite loss of 9 seats, BJP's vote share in Karnataka falls only 1%; Congress gains 56%

GNS News Agency, June 6

Despite losing nine Lok Sabha seats and seeing its winning margins fall in 13 seats, the Karnataka BJP has lost only 1.41 percent of votes, compared with its performance in the 2019 polls. For the ruling Congress, the vote share has increased 56 per cent but its government's guarantee schemes, promised in the run-up to last year's Assembly polls, did not work as well as the party had anticipated they would. While the Congress managed to win only one seat in 2019, the BJP set a record by bagging 25 of the 28 seats and also had the support of Sumalatha Ambareesh, the independent who won the Mandya seat. The Congress has increased its tally to nine seats and reduced the BJP's to 17. In 2019 the party secured 1,12,03,016 votes and this time it polled 1,75,54,381 votes—an increase of 63,51,365 votes. For the BJP, compared with the 2019 elections, there was a dip of 2,55,755 votes. In 13 of the 19 seats it won, the party's margin has decreased from the 2019 levels, including in many of its strongholds in coastal Karnataka. For instance, former BJP state chief Nalin Kumar Kateel beat the Congress's Mithun Rai by 2,74,621 votes in Dakshina Kannada in 2019. This time, after the BJP replaced Kateel with Capt. Brijesh Chowta, the victory margin is 1,49,208. However, the saffron party has gained more votes in Mysuru, Bengaluru South, Bangalore North, Shivamogga and Tumakuru.

State BJP spokesperson M G Mahesh attributed the setbacks to various factors, including the selection of candidates. "We could have selected better candidates in a few of the constituencies. It could have worked for us. The Congress has got five seats in the Kalyana Karnataka region, which we ignored, especially the Lingayat community there. The Congress campaign on the Constitution was not countered properly in Karnataka, which has also impacted the results," he said. However, Mahesh said the Congress government's guarantee schemes had not made any impact in the Lok Sabha elections. "The guarantee schemes have not made any difference, if you look at detailed data. Women have voted for the BJP in good numbers. While the winning margins may have reduced, the BJP's total votes have not seen a major fall. It shows that the BJP has a lot of potential in the days to come," he said. B S Shivanna, a former Congress general secretary, opined that women's votes did not swing towards the ruling party. "We were expecting 15 seats but we believe that guarantee schemes did not provide the votes we targeted. This also shows that it is still a male-dominated society where the man dictates whom to vote for. The best example is Mandya, where (H D) Kumaraswamy won with a margin of 2.84 lakh votes," he said. The Election Commission's data shows that former speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri, who had replaced Anant Kumar Hegde after the latter was denied the BJP ticket, is the winner with the largest margin in the state. He polled 3,37,428 votes more than his nearest rival, former Congress MLA Anjali Nimbalkar, who secured 4,45,067 votes. With this sixth win, the Uttara Kannada constituency has reinforced its status as a BJP stronghold. Anant Kumar Hegde won in 2019 with a margin of 4,79,649 votes. While there was speculation that the BJP might suffer a backlash for dropping Hegde, who also stayed away from the election campaign, Kageri won, though with a smaller margin than the former. "Our party is not based on any individual. It is based on ideology and voters have stood with the party," Kageri said after winning the election. In an old political battle between families, two women debutantes were in the fray in Davangere this time as former Union minister G M Siddeshwara's wife Gayithri Siddeshwara contested on a BJP ticket against Congress minister S S Mallikarjun's wife Prabha Mallikarjun. Prabha tasted victory with a margin of 26,094. G B Vinay Kumar, a ticket aspirant from the Congress, contested as a rebel candidate and bagged 42,907 votes. "It became a close contest because of Vinay Kumar. Otherwise Prabha Mallikarjun would have won with a healthy margin," said a local Congress leader. The JD(S), which had an alliance with the BJP, secured only 21,63,203 votes; last time it polled 33,97,229 votes. Former chief minister and JD(S)-BJP alliance candidate Kumaraswamy managed to defeat the Congress's Venkataramane Gowda alias Star Chandru in Mandya by 2,84,620 votes.

Rohit Pawar floats 'another balloon' of MLAs crossing over, NCP punctures it



GNS News Agency, June 6

While NCP (SP) legislator Rohit Pawar said on Wednesday that 18-19 MLAs belonging to Ajit Pawar-led NCP were eager to cross over to their side, the latter dismissed his claim as kite flying. (File) WHILE NCP (SP) legislator Rohit Pawar said on Wednesday that 18-19 MLAs belonging to Ajit Pawar-led NCP were eager to cross over to their side, the latter dismissed his claim as kite flying. Enthused by the election results in the state which put Maha Vikas Aghadi much ahead of Mahayuti, Rohit Pawar, like in the past, tried to float another balloon of possible migration of MLAs to the Sharad Pawar camp.

"At least 19 MLAs of Ajit Pawar's party are in touch with our party chief. Also, 12 MLAs of Ajit Pawar's party are in touch with BJP. In next few days, the picture regarding what decision the MLAs take will become clear,"

Rohit Pawar told ABP Majha, a Marathi news channel. He also laid down conditions for giving entry to the MLAs belongs to Ajit Pawar-led NCP. "The decision regarding who should be taken in the party and who should not be, will be taken by our party. Those who have used bad language while criticising our party chief will not be taken in the party. But those who have not said anything about our party chief will be given entry," Rohit said. The MLA added, "We want to tell our party chief that he should give priority to only those MLAs who had remained loyal to party during its difficult times. But those who quit our party for their personal gains and those who were forced by BJP to enter its fold should be given second priority only." Reacting to Rohit Pawar's claim, Umesh Patil, chief spokesperson of NCP, said, "He (Rohit Pawar) thinks politics is a child's play. And therefore he keeps making childish comments." Patil said Rohit Pawar has been making such claims on and off. "He has indulged in such kite flying in the past as well. This might be their strategy to cause fissures in our ranks. But such strategies will not work as all MLAs are strongly supporting Ajit Pawar," he said. Patil said MLAs and the party is as united as it was before. "One loss will not deter us. Also, it should be remembered that 53 MLAs of the party had on their own decided to come along with Ajit Pawar when the party had decided to join hands with BJP. And these MLAs included Rohit Pawar as well," he said. Patil said on Thursday that party national chief Ajit Pawar has called a meeting of all MLAs to deliberate on the happenings of the past few days and also about the forthcoming assembly elections.

DNA analysis confirms swapped blood belonged to minor's mother: Pune police tell court

GNS News Agency, June 6

Pune police investigating the Porsche crash case submitted in the court on Wednesday that it has received a forensic report confirming that the blood sample that was sent for alcohol tests as that of the juvenile accused in the case belonged to the minor's mother. The Indian Express was the first to report on May 30 that the blood sample that was swapped with that of the minor's was that of the mother, as confirmed by reliable sources.

The minor's mother, father as well as three accused persons linked to Sassoon General Hospital—Dr Ajay Taware, Dr Shrihari Halnor, and Atul Ghatkamble—were produced before a court by Crime Branch seeking an extension to the police remand. The court granted the investigators an additional three days. Assistant Commissioner of Police Sunil Tambe told the court that on Tuesday they arrested two fresh suspects in the case who were involved in the swapping of blood and allegedly acted as middlemen between the father of the juvenile and the three accused linked to the Sassoon Hospital. "We have arrested two more persons and it is important that the five arrested accused including the mother, father, Dr Taware, Dr Halnor, and Ghatkamble are interrogated in their presence so that we can establish a chain of events that led to the commission of crime (of blood swapping)," submitted ACP Tambe.

"There has been considerable progress in the case in the past ten days. This morning, we received a report from the forensic laboratory that has confirmed that the



blood sent for the testing indeed belonged to the mother," submitted Tambe. Defence lawyers Vipul Dushing, Rushikesh Ganu and Ruturaj Ranaware who represented Dr Taware, Dr Halnor, and Ghatkamble opposed the remand request stating that the police had enough time to question the accused. "Police have been submitting the same grounds for past three times to seek the police custody. The new arrests should not require the presence of our clients as police have already seized all the electronic devices and have had enough time to quiz them in the new arrestee's presence as they were arrested 48 hours ago," submitted the lawyers. Advocate Prashant Patil, appearing for the minor's father and mother, said the father has been in the police remand since May 21 in other crimes that are linked to the case. He pleaded that they should be sent to magisterial custody and that they will cooperate with the investigation.

Supriya Sule's Baramati win is a cause for concern for Maharashtra's ruling alliance in Assembly polls



GNS News Agency, June 6

Proving her mettle by winning Baramati by 1.58 lakh votes, Supriya Sule has not only defeated her sister-in-law Sunetra Pawar, wife of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, but also increased headache for the ruling Mahayuti in six Assembly segments in the Lok Sabha constituency. Ajit Pawar had claimed that the NCP (SP) executive president had won the Lok Sabha seat thrice in the past thanks mostly to his own contributions to her election campaigns. He also challenged Sule by pitting his wife Sunetra against her. Sule, daughter of NCP founder and Ajit Pawar's uncle Sharad Pawar, bagged 7,32,312 votes as against 5,73,979 votes polled by Sunetra and won by a margin of 1,58,333 votes. Before the split in the NCP, Sule bagged 6,86,714 votes in 2019, 5,21,562 votes in 2014 and 4,87,827 votes in 2009—a steady increase in every election she contested. Sule has

also managed to get more votes than Sunetra in five of the six Assembly segments, including Ajit Pawar's Baramati Town. The other segments in the Lok Sabha constituency are Indapur, represented by Datta Bharne of the NCP; Daund, represented by Rahul Kul of the BJP; Khadakwasla represented by Bhimrao Tapkir of the BJP; Purandar, represented by Sanjay Jagtap of the Congress; and Bhor, represented by Sangram Thopte of the Congress.

The ruling Mahayuti comprises Ajit Pawar's NCP, Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and the BJP. Incidentally, there was not a single legislator for Sule's NCP (SP) in any of the six segments but she had the support of the alliance partner Congress in Purandar and Bhor, where she got margins of around 35,000 and 44,000, respectively. Vijay Shivtare of the Shinde-led Shiv Sena is an aspirant for the party ticket in Purandar in the forthcoming Assembly elections. However, Sule's highest margin, of around 47,000, came from Baramati Town, which Ajit Pawar has won several times. Sule also got a margin of 26,000 in Indapur, which is represented by Ajit Pawar loyalist Datta Bharane and is also a stronghold of BJP ticket aspirant Harshvardhan Patil, a former legislator. Sule managed to get a margin of around 26,000 votes in Daund. It was only in the BJP stronghold of Khadakwasla that the NCP (SP) leader trailed, by around 21,000 votes, which is also much smaller than the vote gap she had with her nearest rivals in the past elections.

Votes polled by Supriya Sule in the past four Lok Sabha polls

Tempo carrying inflammable chemicals catches fire in Surat, flames spread to nearby house

GNS News Agency, June 6

A tempo carrying barrels containing inflammable chemicals caught fire in Surat on Tuesday, leading to the driver of the vehicle to abandon the vehicle inside a residential society. The fire also spread to a nearby house and damaged household items in two floors along with the electrical distribution box. Sources in the fire department of the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) said the incident happened at the Gangeshwar society in the Varachha area.

A fire official said since the temperature had gone up, the inflammable chemicals caught fire. Surat recorded a maximum temperature of around 36 degree Celsius on Tuesday. The flames engulfed the entire vehicle apart from spreading to the nearby house, the official added. After being informed, the fire department and the police rushed to the spot. A total of ten fire tenders reached

the spot. People staying in nearby areas were shifted to safer places by the fire department as a safety measure. The flames were brought under control in two hours but by then, the fire had managed to damage household items.

Talking to The Indian Express, Varachha Fire officer Sudhirkumar Gadhi said, "We got information at 1.10 pm on Tuesday afternoon and rushed to the spot. We saw that the flames were reaching around 20 feet high. We called in more vehicles and used foam mixed with water to douse the flames. We also disconnected the power supply." Gadhi said, "The cause of fire may be high temperature in the atmosphere and leakage, leading to subsequent mixing of different chemicals in the barrels." He added, "After talking to the residents of Gangeshwar society, we came to know that the tempo was entering the society when the barrels caught fire."

No social media, 8-10 hours of studying, Punjab boy says how he scored 720/720, bagged joint AIR 1



GNS News Agency, June 6

Shaurya Goyal from Punjab bagged All India Rank (AIR) 1 by scoring a perfect 720/720 in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), the results for which were announced Tuesday. Nationally, 67 candidates have been ranked No. 1 with the perfect 720/720 score in the all-India pre-medical test for students pursuing medical studies. Shaurya, 17, who belongs to Budhlada town of Mansa district in Punjab, said that his parents, who are both doctors, motivated him to pursue NEET. He now aims to pursue an MBBS from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi. His father, Dr Sunil Kumar Goyal, is a surgeon, while his mother, Dr Shalika Goyal, is a gynaecologist.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Shaurya said: "After Class 10, I moved to Chandigarh and joined Helix Institute to prepare for NEET. I was very consistent and studied 8-10 hours daily. I followed the schedule properly per the institute teachers' guidance and did not miss any mock tests."

He further said that he did not use social media at all for two years while preparing for the NEET. "I had a simple keypad phone, not a smartphone. I watched movies or listened to music when I felt like relaxing," said Shaurya, a student of Manu Vatika School, Budhlada, who likes playing cricket and badminton when not studying. His father said that he and his wife moved to the tricity to ensure that Shaurya felt at home while preparing for the NEET and didn't get distracted. "He never asked for a smartphone, knowing it would lead to distractions. He would use our phone or his laptop for studies or attending online classes. He was self-motivated to be a doctor," said the proud father.

'I'll talk to him': After Fadnavis offers to quit, CM Eknath Shinde blames poll setback on Opposition's 'lies'



GNS News Agency, June 6

Eknath Shinde Devendra Fadnavis Maharashtra BJP Lok Sabha election results 2024 "The Opposition was chanting 'Modi Hatao'. But the voters have given them a reply," the Sena leader said, adding that Modi would become prime minister for a third time. (X/ ANI) After Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis offered to quit over the ruling alliance's Lok Sabha poll debacle, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday talked about collective responsibility and attributed the Opposition's victory to its "false narrative" that the BJP would alter the Constitution. Shinde also said that he would speak to the senior BJP leader.

"We all, the three parties, worked together in the elections. There is a collective responsibility for the defeat in the elections. If we look at the percentage of votes, Mahayuti got more than two lakh votes in Mumbai. The narrative that the Constitution will be altered is a temporary and false one set by the Opposition to get votes. Some voters fell prey to that narrative. We will surely clear the confusion from their minds," Shinde said in New Delhi, where he said he had reached to extend his Shiv Sena's support to Narendra Modi. "The Opposition was chanting 'Modi Hatao'. But the voters have given them a reply," the Sena leader said, adding that Modi would become prime minister for a third time. "Even if Devendraji has expressed his feelings, I will talk to him. We are not people who get tired after a failure. We are moving forward with the development agenda," he said, adding that success achieved by misleading the public would be temporary.

"We failed to clear the confusion among the people due to the Opposition's propaganda. In Mumbai, Mahayuti got two lakh more votes. The original voters appeared to be with the alliance," Shinde said. "Modiji has a development agenda. The reasons for the defeat will be determined. In the last two years, the government has made many good decisions in the state. Although the seats have decreased in this election, the votes have increased," the chief minister added.

Two-year-old child killed, four injured as boulder falls on house in Dhoolpet

Hyderabad: A two-year-old boy died, and four other persons were injured when a big boulder fell on a house at Allah Banda in Dhoolpet on Tuesday night. According to the police, the family of Shaikat Ali, (40) a native of Bihar, stayed at an asbestos roofed house at Allah Banda. On Tuesday a little past midnight, the family was asleep in the house a big boulder from the adjacent small hill fell on the roof and landed in the house.

Silver lining in Punjab loss for BJP: Highest ever vote share of 18.5% with leads in 24 Assembly segments, including hotbed of farmer unrest



GNS News Agency, June 6

Though the BJP could not win even a single seat in Punjab in the Lok Sabha elections 2024, its vote share of 18.5 per cent is its highest ever, with or without an alliance partner. Its candidates came first in as many as 24 Assembly segments in the Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur, Bathinda, Ferozepur and Patiala constituencies. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP had won in Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur. The Congress won seven of the 13 seats in Punjab this time while the Aam Aadmi Party and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) won three and one each. Two Independents won the other two seats. Though the BJP's Patiala candidate Preet Kaur finished third, she got the most votes (37,340) in the Rajpura Assembly constituency, which remained a hotbed of farmers' protests. Even though farmers are currently protesting at the Shambhu border, which is about 20 km away from Rajpura, this constituency has remained a regular centre of farmer activities. She led in the Dera Bassi Assembly constituency by a margin of 9,121 votes and in Patiala city with a margin of 18,513 votes. Dr Dharamvir Gandhi of the Congress won in Patiala by a margin of 14,831 against Aam Aadmi Party's Balbir Singh.

In Ludhiana, the BJP's Ravneet Singh Bittu led in the urban Assembly segments of Ludhiana East, Ludhiana South, Ludhiana Central, Ludhiana West and Ludhiana North Assembly segments with a margin of 9,537, 4,396, 17,295, 14,535 and 22,310 votes, respectively. However, Bittu faced a rout in rural areas as he lost to Punjab Congress chief Amarinder Singh Warring by 20,942 votes. In Ferozepur, the BJP's Rana Gurmeet Singh Sodhi finished third but led in the Abohar Assembly constituency by a margin of 32,526 votes. He also led in the Balluana Assembly constituency by a margin of

16,082 votes. In Ferozepur city, the lead was only 390 votes. BJP state president Sunil Jakhar hails from Abohar and Balluana, which are predominantly rural constituencies dominated by Hindi-speaking people due to their proximity to the Rajasthan and Haryana border. Previously, during the alliance with Shiromani Akali Dal, the BJP used to contest from Abohar, Fazilka, and Ferozepur constituencies. However, the BJP lagged behind in Fazilka. The BJP's Sushil Kumar Rinku lost in Jalandhar by a huge margin of 1.75 lakh votes to the Congress's Charanjit Singh Channi. But he led in the Jalandhar Central Assembly segment by 3,733 votes and in Jalandhar North by 5,986 votes. Rinku got around 2.13 lakh votes in total. The BJP's Taranjit Singh Sandhu Samundri finished third in Amritsar. However, he led in the urban Assembly segments of Amritsar North by 18,684 votes, Amritsar Central by 10,694 votes, and Amritsar East by 1,195 votes. All of these constituencies are urban. The BJP had been contesting from these seats even before ending ties with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD). The Congress's Gurjeet Singh Aulja won in Amritsar while the AAP's Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal came second. Anita Somparkash of the BJP finished third with 1.99 lakh votes. She obtained a lead of 11,074 votes from Mukerian and 4,043 votes from Hoshiarpur Assembly seats while her lead from the Hoshiarpur assembly segment was 1,707 votes. Dr Raj Kumar Chabbewal of the AAP won in Hoshiarpur with a margin of 44,111 votes over Yamini Gomar of the Congress. Bathinda Parampal Kaur Sidhu of the BJP, who finished fourth in Bathinda, got a lead of 518 votes in the Bathinda Urban Assembly segment in a surprisingly good show in the deep pockets of Malwa. Harsimrat Kaur Badal of the SAD won in Bathinda, while Gurmeet Singh Khudian and Jeet Mohinder Singh Sidhu of the AAP and the Congress came second and third, respectively. Parampal got 1,10,762 votes in total. Gurdaspur

The BJP's Dinesh Singh Babbu came second in this seat but led in the Sujapur Assembly segment by 26,781 votes, Bhoja by 12,816 votes, and Pathankot by 21,454 votes. Interestingly, he fell behind in the Batala constituency, which is a Hindu-dominated area. Despite talks of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor, the BJP candidate received only 5,981 votes from Dera Baba Nanak, the closest segment to the corridor. Fatehgarh Churian is another segment where the party candidate received only 6,973 votes, even though the party's senior leader, Fateh Jung Bajwa, hails from there. Bajwa's brother, Partap Singh Bajwa, is the Congress MLA and the leader of the Opposition in the Punjab assembly.

Average winning margin in Maharashtra drops to 1.09 lakh votes in Lok Sabha polls

GNS News Agency, June 6

The Modi wave in 2014 and 2019 led to a substantial increase in the average winning margins of candidates in Maharashtra. However, the recently completed elections have shown that while the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi has been a dominant force in the electoral arena, its success has led to a significant decline in the average winning margin. The average winning margin in the state's 48 Lok Sabha seats stood at 1.09 lakh votes, a substantial decline from 2019, when the average was 1.82 lakh votes. In 2014, the figure was 1.87 lakh, compared to 77,898 in 2009.

This time, the BJP had the most resounding victories, with an average margin of 1.6 lakh votes in the nine seats it won. In 2019, this average was 2.17 lakh votes across 23 seats. The party posted its highest victory margin of 3.57 lakh votes in Mumbai North, where its candidate, Piyush Goyal, won. This margin, however, is significantly lower than in 2019, when Gopal Shetty won by 4.64 lakh votes in Mumbai North. The lowest victory margin for the BJP this time was in Satara, where Udayanraje Bhosale won by 32,771 votes. The Congress, which won the highest number of seats at 13, had an average winning margin of 90,432 votes. Its highest winning margin was in Chandrapur, where Pratibha Dhanorkar won by 2.6 lakh votes, and the lowest margin was in Dhule, where Shobha Bacchav won by 3,831 votes. The average win-



ning margin for the Shiv Sena (UBT) was 1.12 lakh votes, with its highest margin being 3.29 lakh votes in Osmanabad, where Omprakash Nimbalkar won. The party's lowest margin was in Mumbai North East, where Sanjay Dina Patil won by 29,861 votes. The NCP (SP) had an average winning margin of 89,571 votes. Its top performer was Supriya Sule, who won the Baramati seat by a margin of 1,58,333 votes, while the lowest margin was in Beed, where Bajrang Sonawane won by 6,553 votes.

The Shiv Sena had an average winning margin of one lakh votes. Its top performer was Shrikant Shinde, who won the Kalyan seat by 2.09 lakh votes, while the lowest margin was in Mumbai North West, where Ravindra Waikar won by 48 votes.

Reality check for AAP govt in Punjab: Drubbing sees its candidates ahead in only 33 of 117 Assembly segments

GNS News Agency, June 6

Among the 15 cabinet ministers of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab, at least eight were not able to secure a lead for party candidates in their respective Assembly segments in Lok Sabha election results 2024. The AAP won 92 seats to come to power in Punjab in 2022, but now it has secured a lead in only 33 of the 117 Assembly segments in Lok Sabha elections. With wins in three of the 13 Lok Sabha seats, the AAP came second best to the Congress, which won seven seats. The allies in the INDIA bloc at the national level contested Lok Sabha elections 2024 separately in Punjab.

The AAP acting president, Budh Ram, who is sitting MLA from Budhlada, could not ensure victory for party candidate, cabinet minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian, who lost in the Bathinda Lok Sabha constituency. SAD leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal emerged victorious from Bathinda. Khuddian trailed from his Lambi segment also. The cabinet ministers who could not ensure victory included Dr Baljit Kaur from Malout, a segment won by Sarabjit Singh Khalsa, and Harbhajan Singh ETO, from Jandiala for cabinet colleague Laljit Singh Bhullar as radical Amritpal Singh led from the segment. Bhullar himself trailed from his Patti segment.

Lal Chand Kataruchak's Bhoja went the BJP way, even though the Gurdaspur Lok Sabha seat was won by Congress's Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa. Bram Shankar Jimpa's Hoshiarpur and Balkar Singh's Kartarpur in Jalandhar both went to the Congress. Anmol Gagan Mann's Kharar in Anandpur Sahib LS constituency. Dr

Balbir Singh secured a lead from Patiala (rural); however, he himself contested from Patiala Lok Sabha unsuccessfully. Cabinet minister Kuldeep Dhaliwal lost in Amritsar, but he secured a lead in his Ajnala Vidhan Sabha segment. The AAP came first in Dirba, represented by Finance Minister Harpal Cheema; Barnala, represented by Gurmeet Singh Meht Hayer; Harjot Bains' Anandpur Sahib; Chetan Singh Jauramajra's Samana, and Aman Arora's Sunam. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann secured lead in Dhuri. The sentiment against incumbent AAP MLAs was palpable in several Assembly segments. Their inaccessibility, non-payment of Rs 1,000 to women, MLAs seen with heavy security, pictures of the Chief Minister in dispensaries, and sacks of rations were also part of the narrative in rural Punjab. Malvinder Singh Kang emerged victorious from Anandpur Sahib. In Patiala, the AAP only led in Sanaur, Samana, Patiala (rural) and Shutrana. In Ludhiana, Ashok Parashar Pappi lost in all nine segments. In Amritsar, the party led in Ajnala and Amritsar (South). In Sangrur, it led in Lehra, Dirba, Sunam, Bhadaur, Barnala, Mehal kalan, Dhuri, and Sangrur. In Fatehgarh Sahib, it led only in Bassi Pathana, Khanna, and Amaragarh. In Bathinda, the AAP led in Mansa and Sardulgarh. Bholath, represented by Congress MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira, who also contested unsuccessfully from Sangrur, went the AAP way. Other segments included Phagwara, Sham Chaurasi, Chabbewal, Faridkot, Kotkapura, and Muktsar. The Congress led in 40 segments, the BJP in 19, and the SAD in 11. Eight segments were led by Amritpal, and seven by another radical, Sarabjit Singh Khalsa.

Asked about NDA's fate, TMC's Abhishek Banerjee says 'answer lies in the question'



GNS News Agency, June 6

TMC General Secretary and newly elected MP Abhishek Banerjee leaves his Kalighat residence for New Delhi to attend the INDIA alliance meeting, in Kolkata. TMC General Secretary and newly elected MP Abhishek Banerjee leaves his Kalighat residence for New Delhi to attend the INDIA alliance meeting, in Kolkata. Trinamool Congress Number 2 Abhishek Banerjee said on Wednesday it was ironic that leaders of the BJP asked for 30 seats from voters in West Bengal during the Lok Sabha election campaign and predicted the fall of the Mamata Banerjee government, but now media persons are asking if the NDA government will survive.

Abhishek Banerjee, who won the Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha seat for the second time, made the job at the Bharatiya Janata Party at the Kolkata airport before leaving for Delhi to attend the INDIA bloc meeting. When asked whether the National Democratic Alliance will be able to form a government at the Centre, Abhishek said, "The answer lies in the question. A month ago these BJP leaders who were flying down to Bengal said 'Give us 30 seats and Didi's government will fall'. Now see the irony. You media people are asking me if the NDA government will survive. Never underestimate the power of a common man".

Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress won 29 out of 42 Lok Sabha seats in Bengal and thwarted the BJP which got 12 seats. The Congress got 1 seat. In 2019, the BJP got 18 seats, the TMC 22, and Congress managed to win 2 seats. Reacting to Lok Sabha election results 2024, Banerjee said, "I must say the kingmaker is the general public and not any political leader. Those

who voted against the price hike, BJP's tyranny, communal and divisive politics — every poor and the common man who voted are the actual kingmakers".

When asked about the course of action the INDIA bloc would take after it won 232 Lok Sabha seats, Banerjee said, "Let there be deliberations first. Let all INDIA bloc leaders meet first and then accordingly I will speak after the discussion. Too early to talk about our plans. Let us come to some conclusions first. Leaders are coming to Delhi from all parts of India. Let us first talk". The 36-year-old TMC leader said he was going to Delhi after his party received an invitation for the INDIA bloc meeting. "Yesterday, our party chairperson Mamata Banerjee said that if an invitation came, I would go. After the press meeting yesterday, an invitation came and therefore I am going to attend the meeting," said Banerjee.

On being asked about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in on June 8, he said the media should ask the BJP about its slogan of 'Ab ki Baar 400 Paar'. "I want to ask every Central BJP leader, rather humbly request them, to make such bizarre predictions in every Bengal polls because ultimately what you predict goes in our favour," said Banerjee. "It's the culmination of everything. What has the government (Centre) done? You have seen the rallies of the BJP for the last 3 months. They were asked to put forth their report cards or the development work done. They failed to do so. That is why the BJP resorted to divisive and communal politics and people gave them a befitting reply. So, I salute everyone who uprooted this communal force that only used a section of the judiciary, agencies, and the media to oppress and bulldoze opponents. It's a learning lesson for them that the Prime Minister or Home Minister won't have the last word, the common man will," said Banerjee when asked about central investigative agencies' role during the polls. Asked about results in Uttar Pradesh, Banerjee said it "shows the people's anger was at its peak against the BJP". "You (BJP) made Ram Mandir an agenda throughout the country claiming that you (BJP) brought the Lord inside the temple. How can you say that? Can a human being do that? No wonder Ayodhya defeated you. Prabhu Ram aaye to insaaf aaya (As Lord Ram came, he brought justice)". Abhishek Banerjee, the Trinamool Congress national general secretary, on Tuesday broke West Bengal's record for the highest victory margin with over 7 lakh votes in the Diamond Harbour constituency.

Charanjit Singh Channi wins Jalandhar Lok Sabha seat with record margin: a peep into history

GNS News Agency, June 6

Congress candidate Charanjit Singh Channi won the Jalandhar Lok Sabha seat with one of the highest margins in Punjab on Tuesday. The former Punjab chief minister, who contested the Lok Sabha elections for the first time, claimed this was the largest victory margin on the Jalandhar Lok Sabha seat from the first parliamentary polls in 1952 to date. According to information on the Election Commission of India's website, Channi's victory margin of 175,993 votes is the highest ever. In the Lok Sabha elections 2024, Channi secured a 39.43 per cent vote share against 21.64 per cent for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Sushil Kumar Rinku, resulting in a significant gap of 17.79 per cent between the winner and the runner-up.

Channi said the people of Jalandhar have rejected all turncoats who switched parties frequently before the elections. During his campaign, he highlighted this issue prominently and said, "Log inha dal badluan nu muh ni lagan ge" (People will not take these turncoats seriously)". There were only four occasions before the Lok Sabha elections 2024 when the victory margin on the Jalandhar Lok Sabha seat was over one lakh votes. From 1999 to 2019, Congress had an unbeaten run in Jalandhar in all general elections, except for a defeat in the 2023 by-election when the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidate, defeated the Congress nominee with a margin of over 58,000 votes.

In 2019, Congress's Santokh Chaudhary won with a 37.90 per cent vote share against SAD-BJP candidate Charanjit Singh Atwal, who secured 35.90 per cent of votes, with a winning margin of 19,515 votes. In 2014, Chaudhary garnered a 36.56 per cent vote share against the SAD's Pawan Kumar Tinu, who received 29.74 per cent, resulting in a winning margin of 70,981 votes. In 2009, Congress's Mohinder Singh Kaypee secured a 45.34 per cent vote share with 408,103 votes against the SAD's Hans Raj Hans, who got 41.29 per cent with 371,658 votes, yielding a winning margin of 36,445 votes. In 2004, Rana Gurjit Singh won against the SAD's Naresh



Gujral with a margin of 33,463 votes. Gujral is the son of former prime minister I K Gujral. In 1999, Congress's Balbir Singh won with a margin of 34,566 votes (47.48 per cent) against the SAD's Prabhjot Kaur. In 1998, I K Gujral won with a margin of 131,016 votes against Congress's Umrao Singh. In 1996, the SAD's Darbara Singh won against Congress's Umrao Singh with a margin of 18,555 votes. In 1991-92, Congress leader Yash won against the BJP's Jugal Mahajan with a margin of 113,813 votes. In 1989, Janata Dal leader I K Gujral won against Congress's Rajwinder Singh with a margin of 80,358 votes. In 1984-85, Rajinder Singh Sparrow of the Congress won against the SAD's Pritam Singh with a margin of 69,643 votes. In 1980, Rajinder Singh Sparrow won against Janata Party (JNP)'s Sarup Singh with a margin of 72,321 votes.

In 1977, the SAD's Iqbal Singh won against Congress's Swaran Singh with a margin of 118,108 votes. In 1971, Congress leader Swaran Singh won against the SAD's Iqbal Singh with a margin of 93,469 votes. In 1967, Swaran Singh of the Congress won against Swatantra Party (SWA) leader S P Singh with a margin of 31,480 votes. In 1962, Swaran Singh of Congress won against Kartar Singh of SWA with a margin of 69,081 votes. In 1957, Swaran Singh of Congress won against Chanan Ram of the Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) with a margin of 100,962 votes. In 1951-52, Amar Nath of Congress won against SAD's Ajit Singh with a margin of 34,458 votes.

Minority Report Card: Of 78 Muslims contesting Lok Sabha polls, 24 go past the winning line

GNS News Agency, June 6

Of the 78 Muslim candidates who contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, only 24 have managed to win across the country, a number that keeps going down over the years. In 2019, only 26 Muslim candidates were elected as Members of Parliament, four belonging to the Congress and TMC each, three from the BSP and SP each, and one each of the NCP and CPI(M). This year, Congress candidate Imran Masood from Saharanpur won by a margin of 64,542 votes while Iqra Choudhary, a 29-year-old Samajwadi Party candidate from Kairana, secured victory over BJP Pradeep Kumar by 69,116 votes. Ghazipur saw SP veteran Afzal Ansari go past the BJP's Pars Nath Rai, securing a lakh more votes than his rival, while AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi retained his Hyderabad seat by a margin of 3,38,087 votes over his nearest rival BJP's Madhavi Latha Kompella. In Ladakh, Independent candidate Mohammad Haneefa secured a victory by a margin of 27,862 votes while another Independent candidate Abdul Rashid Sheikh, aka Engineer Rashid, won the Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla seat, bagging 4.7 lakh votes. In Uttar Pradesh, Samajwadi Party's Mohibullah won the Rampur seat by securing 4,81,503 votes, while Zia Ur Rehman won in Sambhal by a margin of 1.2 lakh votes. Mian Altaf Ahmad of the National Conference won in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag-Rajouri seat by 2,81,794 votes against former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti. In Srinagar NC candidate Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi secured 3,56,866 votes.

In West Bengal's Baharampur seat, first-time contender Yusuf Pathan pulled off an upset by beating Congress veteran and six-time MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury by 85,022 votes. In the Basirhat constituency, under which Sandeshkhali falls, TMC's Haji Nurul Islam defeated BJP candidate Rekha Patra by nearly two lakh votes. In Uluberia, too, TMC's Sajda Ahmed went past BJP's Arunoday Paulchowdhury by a margin of over two lakh votes. In Jangipur, the Trinamool's Khalilur Rahaman went past Congress's Murtoja Hossain Bokul by over 1 lakh votes. Murshidabad also saw the TMC dominate with Abu Taher Khan going past CPI(M)'s Md Salim by over a lakh votes. In Maldaha West, the Congress's Isha Khan Choudhary defeated the BJP's Sreerupa Mitra Choudhary by a margin of 1.2 lakh votes. In Lakshadweep, Congress's Muhammed Hamdullah Sayeed scraped through, going past Mohammed Faizal Papp of the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) by just 2,000 votes. The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML)'s Navskani K also secured a victory in Tamil Nadu's Ramanathapuram. In Kerala's Ponnani, IUML's Dr M P Abdussamad Samadani defeated CPI(M)'s K.S Hamza. The Congress's Shafi Pambal, in Vadakara, defeated CPI(M)'s Shailaja Teacher by a margin of over a lakh votes. IUML also managed to win the Malappuram constituency, where E T Mohammed Basheer defeated CPI(M)'s V Vaseef by over 3 lakh votes. In Bihar, the Congress's Tariq Anwar won from Katihar, going past Janta Dal (United)'s Dulal Chandra Goswami by a margin of almost 50,000 votes. In Kishanganj,

Students lead cleanliness drive at DPS Flamingo Lake in Nerul



GNS News Agency, June 6

A clean-up drive at DPS Flamingo Lake in Nerul resulted in the collection of 450 kg of garbage, mostly plastic on Saturday. Ahead of World Environment Day on June 5, DY Patil University's Climate Action Lab (D-CAL) partnered with the 'Rotary Club of Navi Mumbai - Joy of Giving' to organise this event. The initiative, themed 'Dharti ki Awaaz,' aimed to inspire mindful environmental action. The participants included 300 students from DY Patil University, highlighting the involvement of the next generation in climate action.

Notably, many non-biodegradable idols of gods and goddesses were collected and sent to DY Patil's Institute of Design and Creativity for Refurbishment. This aspect of the drive underscored a broader goal of not only cleaning the environment, but also promoting sustainable

practices. Rajlakshmi Patil, who founded D-CAL, led this drive to combat climate change through student and community engagement. The clean-up drive also exemplified their mission of fostering lasting, positive environmental change. Joining them was the Rotary Club of Navi Mumbai-Joy of Giving, a group of passionate individuals from diverse fields led by president Mahesh Gera, dedicated to societal and community impact. The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) supported the event, providing dustbins around the lake for visitors' convenience. Additional support came from the Forest Department, NRI Coastal Police, and the Mangrove Cell, along with communities like the Navi Mumbai Environment Preservation Society (NMEPS), NatConnect Foundation and Environment Life.

Sandeep Sareen and Anupam Verma of NMEPS, and Dharmesh Barai of Environment Life, guided the clean-up efforts with their expertise. Deputy Municipal Commissioners Somnath Potare and Dr. Ajay Gadade, along with Assistant Municipal Commissioner Shashikant Tandel, visited the lake to encourage the volunteers. The event's success, marked by the collection of 450 kilograms of waste, was a significant step towards a cleaner and more mindful future. The dynamic team of the Rotary Club of Navi Mumbai, committed to making a difference in all walks of life, resolved to continue their meaningful participation and collaboration with like-minded institutions and communities, aiming for a truly sustainable impact.

Karnataka HC rejects plea against liquor restrictions



GNS News Agency, June 6

The Karnataka High Court also issued a direction that the petitioner and similar establishments should not be restricted from serving food at bars and restaurants. The Karnataka High Court has rejected the plea of an establishment belonging to the Bruhath Bangalore Hotels Association (BBHA), which had been filed against liquor prohibition beyond the MLC polling date (for the Three

Graduates and Three Teachers constituencies). The order was passed by a bench consisting of Justice Hemant Chandangoudar on Friday. The petition in question was against two orders dated May 15 and May 17 issued by the police commissioner and the deputy commissioner, respectively, which restricted the sale of liquor from 4 pm on June 1 to 4 pm on June 3, and from 6 am on June 6 till the end of the day. The MLC polls are set for June 3, with the results to be declared on June 6.

The petitioner argued that although the returning officer had instructed the prohibition of liquor sale on the polling date and counting date, this direction was contrary to that. On the other hand, the returning officer had filed an affidavit explaining that the phrase "polling date" had to be understood in the context of Section 135c of the Representation of the People Act which bars liquor sales 48 hours before the polling date. The bench noted that the orders were in accordance with the Representation of the People Act, communications from the Election Commission, as well as the Karnataka Excise rules. Based on this, the petition of the BBHA member was rejected.

'Money siphoned brazenly': In one day, 9 bank accounts created, Rs 94.73 crore Karnataka funds transferred

GNS News Agency, June 6

The investigation into the siphoning of Rs 94.73 crore of government funds from the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation has revealed that all the money was diverted from the corporation in one day and was transferred to 15 fictitious accounts, of which nine were created on the same day. Documents accessed by The Indian Express show that on March 31, the money was transferred to fictitious accounts opened in RBL Bank (formerly Ratnakar Bank), Hyderabad, in the names of reputed organisations.

According to the Special Investigation Team (SIT) investigation, on March 31, with the financial year ending, Rs 50 crore was transferred from the treasury to the corporation's primary account with Union Bank of India. The account already held Rs 187.33 crore at the time. A board meeting was held on the same day where it was decided that that Rs 50 crore would be saved as a fixed deposit for 12 months. On the same day, a Rs 45 crore loan was availed by showing the Rs 50 crore fixed deposit as security. "All these transactions have happened in a single day. Besides bank officials, there were a lot of people within the corporation who have been involved," a police officer said.

The new bank accounts were opened consecutively. "Even a small-time thief would have attempted to have a foolproof plan, but in this case, the money was siphoned brazenly. There are clear transactions and a document trail," a police officer who is part of the investigation said. The misappropriation came to light after P Chandrashekar, a corporation official involved in auditing and coordinating with Union Bank of India died by suicide on May 26, detailing the fraud and the people involved in a six-page note he left behind.

The controversy over Chandrashekar's death saw the BJP demanding the resignation of Scheduled Tribes Welfare Minister B Nagendra, alleging that he was involved in the conspiracy, an allegation he denied. While



the corporation Managing Director A Rajeshekar lodged a complaint against six bank officials, the bank said in a statement that it has filed a complaint before the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said the state would not transfer the case to the CBI. "If there is a bank fraud above Rs 100 crore, the case is registered by the CBI. A police officer said that an influential politician has used the money for real estate deals. "The money was siphoned using benami accounts and was withdrawn with benami names to buy land in Karnataka to develop the layout," the officer alleged.

In a statement to Indian Express, Happiest Minds Technologies Private Limited said that it has no connection to the bank account or to the branch mentioned with Rathnakar bank (RBL bank). "This deliberate attempt to link our company to such activity is a blatant fabrication. We have always upheld the highest standards of business ethics and corporate governance. We are deeply disappointed that our name has been erroneously dragged into this matter. We are confident that a thorough investigation will reveal the truth and expose those responsible for these false and baseless accusations. We are also pursuing all legal avenues available to us to protect our Company's reputation," it said in this statement.

Pune Porsche crash case: Deputy CM Ajit Pawar defends MLA Sunil Tingre, says allegations against him are 'baseless'

GNS News Agency, June 6

Pawar told reporters that Tingre may have reached the police station after getting information about the accident which is a common practice. Pawar told reporters that Tingre may have reached the police station after getting information about the accident which is a common practice. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and national president of Nationalist Congress Party Ajit Pawar defended party's Vadgaon Sheri MLA Sunil Tingre who is facing public scrutiny over his conduct in Porsche crash case that killed two IT engineers on May 19. Pawar told reporters that Tingre may have reached the police station after getting information about the accident which is a common practice. Tingre had reached the Yerwada Police Station around 3.30 am on May 19 - an hour after the accident - and stayed there until 6 am. Opposition leaders have accused him of trying to influence the probe in favour of the accused, who is a minor.

A letter in which he recommended Dr Ajay Taware, who was arrested for swapping blood sample of the minor accused, for appointment as the Medical Superintendent of the hospital has also emerged, raising more questions about Tingre's connection to the alleged wrongdoings that have come to light so far. "In Maharashtra, public representatives who stay locally do visit the spots if an untoward incident happens. You must be aware that some time ago Tingre had also visited the spot when there was a slab collapse in his constituency," said Pawar. He said that the Porsche crash incident happened late night and Tingre had reached the spot after receiving information about it. "Tingre had received a call, and he has shared in public whose call he received after which he reached the police station. He did not order anyone to protect anybody... Did anyone try to pressure the administration to stop, or did anyone stop the police from registering an offence? Nothing of the sort has happened all that was required has taken place in this case," said Pawar. The deputy CM said that some people are attacking him as well in the case but he has never tried to shield anyone of any wrongdoing. "You all know me I always take a strict stance about such things even if they are my workers," said Ajit Pawar.

He said that in this case it appears that officials in different government departments have made some "mistakes" and the departments concerned have taken action against them after certain things came to light. Pawar stated that he did not speak to the Pune Police Commissioner soon after the incident as is being alleged by opposition leaders and social workers. "I am always in touch with Pune CP but in this case, I did not call him. Had I spoken to him I would have told him to take strict action



because that's what an elected representative should do," Pawar mentioned.

Mumbai police arrest four Lawrence Bishnoi gang members plotting attack on Salman Khan

GNS News Agency, June 6

Mumbai: Navi Mumbai Police on Saturday arrested four members of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang who were planning to attack actor Salman Khan's car in Panvel.

For this, the police said there was a plan to order weapons from a Pakistani arms supplier. An FIR has been registered against more than 17 people including Lawrence Bishnoi, Anmol Bishnoi, Sampat Nehra and Goldy Brar.

According to police, they had received information that jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, along with his Canada-based brother Anmol Bishnoi and partner Goldie Brar, had conspired to kill actor Salman Khan by purchasing AK-47, M-16 and AK-92 and other sophisticated weapons from a Pakistani arms dealer. According to the information, their objective in this plan was to stop Salman Khan's car or raid the farmhouse. Police also said that the Lawrence Bishnoi gang had made this plan a month before the arrest of two shooters for firing outside actor Salman Khan's house.

The arrested accused have been identified as Dhananjay alias Ajay Kashyap, Gaurav Bhatia alias Nahvi, Waspi Khan alias Wasim Chikna and Rizwan Khan alias Javed Khan, according to the Navi Mumbai Police.

Karnataka government creates SIT to probe Rs 94 crore fund misappropriation at ST corporation

GNS News Agency, June 6

The Karnataka government on Friday constituted a special investigation team (SIT) of the state police, working under the director general of police of the criminal investigation department (CID), to investigate the siphoning of Rs 94 crore of funds from a bank account of the state scheduled tribes development corporation. The move comes even as the Opposition BJP has been demanding a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the scam and officials of the Union Bank of India have reportedly written to the central agency to probe the misappropriation of funds from the bank. The irregularities came to light after the May 26 suicide of an official of the development corporation, P Chandrashekar, who was involved in the auditing of funds, alleging fraud in the usage of funds in a six-page death note.

While an unnatural death case was registered in Shivamogga district, a managing director of the corporation filed a complaint in Bengaluru accusing six officials of the Union Bank of India of being involved in the scam. The police have registered a case under several sections of the Indian Penal Code related to criminal breach of trust, cheating, forgery etc. The SIT has been constituted to investigate the case of the death of the official and the fraud. It will be headed by senior IPS officer Manish Kharbikar, the additional director general of police for economic offences at the CID. Other officers in the team are Shivprakash Devaraju, deputy commissioner of police (traffic); Hariram Shankar, superintendent of police (state intelligence); and Raghavendra Hegade, superintendent of police (CID). The government order states that all cases regarding the financial misappropriation in the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled



Tribes' Development Corporation will be probed by the SIT. "The Special Investigation Team shall carry out a comprehensive investigation of the cases and financial affairs and other related affairs of the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Development Corporation, and submit the investigation report to the Government through the Director General and Inspector General of Defense, Bangalore at the earliest," says the order. On Saturday, two corporation officials, former MD J J Padmanabh and accounts officer Parashuram G Durugannavar, were taken into SIT custody. The preliminary probe in the case has revealed that Rs 94.73 crore of government money was siphoned in just one day and transferred to nine fictitious accounts that were also created on the same day. The money was transferred to accounts in the Ratnakar Bank Limited (RBL) in Hyderabad. The Opposition BJP has demanded the resignation of Youth Affairs, Sports and Scheduled Tribes Welfare Minister B Nagendra stating he was part of the conspiracy, an allegation he has denied. The BJP has threatened to launch a protest from June 6 if the government fails to sack Nagendra from the cabinet.

Pune blood banks facing shortage of supplies, scorching weather blamed

GNS News Agency, June 6

Pune is facing considerable shortage of supplies at some of its blood bank centres, with even the government-run Sassoon General Hospital admitting that they need donors. Doctors attribute the reason to scorching weather conditions, colleges being closed for vacations, and an extended election season and are encouraging donors for walk-in voluntary blood donations. There are 37 blood bank centres in Pune and not less than 45,000-50,000 units of blood and blood components are required monthly.

Dr Somnath Khedkar, in charge of Sassoon General Hospital's blood bank centre, said they too have been facing a shortage in stocks. "Usually during summer months there is a shortage as people travel during holidays and colleges are shut," Dr Khedkar said, adding that they have their list of voluntary blood donors and have reached out to them. At least 40-50 blood units are required at Sassoon General Hospital on a daily basis, according to Dr Khedkar and the shortage has been felt for the past fortnight or so. "We have reached out to many voluntary blood donors," Dr Khedkar said. When contacted Dr Chandrakant Mhaske, Dean, B J Government Medical College and Sassoon General Hospital said they would also organise blood donation camps. Anticipating a shortage, some hospitals organised camps ahead of the summer season. "We conducted 18 blood donation camps in March," Dr Poornima Rao, senior consultant at Sahyadri Group of Hospitals' blood bank centre said.

She has appealed to work-from-home IT firm employees to donate. "Most companies still have employees who are working from home. Hence we are encouraging them to come out and donate," Dr Rao said. "On Friday there was a requirement of 120 blood component units. Among the patients who require the blood and blood components are those who are undergoing organ transplants or have haematology related disorders," Dr Rao added.

Dr Snehal Mujumdar, director, Transfusion Medicine, at Ruby Hall Clinic admits that there has been a shortage across some centres in the city. "However, we have tried our best to ensure that a stock out never happens. We have a minimum stock maintenance schedule and arrange blood donation camps before a stock out happens," Dr Mujumdar said, adding that the requirement was around 80 to 120 blood component units. "This means that one donor's blood (350 or 450 ml) is separated into two to three blood components. Hence it can suffice the needs of two to three patients. For instance, patients suffering from anaemia would require red blood cells or those with dengue or viral infections need plate-



lets. Hence in this manner we also try to judiciously utilise the whole blood unit," the doctor explained, adding that they were conducting 7-15 blood donation camps every month.

According to Dr Sanjeev Ketkar, honorary consultant at Deenanath Mangeshkar hospital and research centre's blood centre, whole blood for preparing components can be donated every three months (four times in a year by males and thrice by females). Anticipating that there would be a shortage, hospital authorities conducted 1,629 blood donation camps in April and had doctors, nurses and staff donating blood voluntarily to avoid shortages.

Amid increasing heat, Gurgaon DC asks employers, RWAs to ensure coolers, ORS among other facilities for workers

GNS News Agency, June 6

Weather: Heatwave in Gurugram A man splashes water on his face on a hot summer day amid heatwave, in Gurugram.

In the wake of the increasing heat in the city, Gurgaon Deputy Commissioner Nishant Kumar Yadav on Friday issued an order directing employers to ensure adequate facilities for workers.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Gurgaon recorded a maximum temperature of 46.5 degree Celsius and a minimum temperature of 29.8 degree Celsius

Gaza ceasefire out of the question unless Hamas is destroyed: Netanyahu



GNS News Agency, June 6

JERUSALEM Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday there could be no permanent ceasefire in Gaza until Hamas was destroyed, casting doubt on a key part of a truce proposal that U.S. President Joe Biden said Israel itself had made. Biden said on Friday that Israel had proposed a deal involving an initial six-week truce with a partial Israeli military withdrawal and the release of some hostages while the two sides negotiated "a permanent end to hostilities". However, Netanyahu's statement on Saturday said any notion that Israel would agree a permanent ceasefire before "the destruction of Hamas' military and governing capabilities" was "a non-starter".

Peace talks have sputtered for months, with Israel demanding the release of all hostages and the destruction of Hamas, while Hamas demands a permanent ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the release of many Palestinian prisoners. Hamas said on Friday it was ready to engage "positively and in a constructive manner" but one of the group's senior officials Mahmoud Mardawi said in a Qatari television interview that it had not yet received the details of the proposal.

"No agreement can be reached before the demand for the withdrawal of the occupation army and a ceasefire is met," he said. Hamas remains committed to Israel's destruction. The war began on Oct. 7 when fighters from

the Islamist Palestinian group rampaged into southern Israel from Gaza, killing more than 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and seizing more than 250 as hostages, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's ground and air campaign in Gaza has left the territory in ruins, led to widespread starvation, and killed more than 36,000 people according to Palestinian health authorities, who say most of the dead are civilians. Last month Netanyahu defied calls from world leaders by sending Israeli troops into Rafah, the last place in tiny, crowded Gaza that they had not yet entered in force, displacing more than a million Palestinians who had been sheltering there. Israel said Rafah, on the frontier with Egypt, was the last main stronghold for Hamas in Gaza and its campaign to destroy the group could not succeed until it had entered the city. In the United States, Israel's main ally, the extent of civilian suffering in Gaza has put pressure on Biden to stop the war. The president is hoping to win a second presidential term in the November election.

"It's time for this war to end and for the day after to begin," Biden said on Friday, calling on Israel's leadership to resist pressure from those in the country who wanted the war to go on "indefinitely". Inside Israel, anger at the Oct. 7 attack has generated widespread support for the war in Gaza although there is also pressure on the governing coalition to bring back the remaining hostages. Opposition leader Yair Lapid urged Netanyahu to agree a hostages and ceasefire deal, saying his party would support it even if right-wing factions in the governing coalition rebelled, meaning a deal would likely pass in parliament. "The government of Israel cannot ignore President Biden's consequential speech. There is a deal on the table and it should be made," Lapid said in a social media post on Saturday.

Finding language to describe an end to hostilities has proven a major sticking point throughout. Mediators have previously pushed for the two sides to agree to a sustained period of calm as a compromise. Israel says a permanent ceasefire is not possible against a group that wants to destroy it and that launched the Oct. 7 attack. Hamas says it will not agree any deal that allows Israel's military campaign in Gaza to continue.

South Africa election ends three decades of ANC dominance

JOHANNESBURG, GNS News Agency, June 6 South Africans angry at joblessness, inequality and power shortages have slashed support for the African National Congress (ANC) to 40% in this week's election, ending three decades of dominance by the party that freed the country from apartheid. A dramatically weakened mandate for the legacy party of Nelson Mandela, down from the 57.5% it got in the previous 2019 parliamentary election, means the ANC must share power with a rival in order to keep it - an unprecedented prospect.

"We can talk to everybody and anybody," Gwede Mantashe, the ANC chair and current mines and energy minister, told reporters in comments carried by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), dodging a question about who the party was discussing a possible coalition deal with. Vote tallying from Wednesday's poll was entering its final stages on Saturday, with results from 99.53% of polling stations giving the ANC 40.21%. The main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), had 21.80%. uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), a new party led by former president Jacob Zuma, managed to grab 14.60%, while the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), led by former ANC youth leader Julius Malema, got 9.48%.

"We have achieved our mission: ... to bring the ANC below 50%. We want to humble the ANC," Malema told journalists at the results centre. "We are going to negotiate with the ANC" for a possible coalition deal, he said, although that would not be quite enough to clinch a majority without including another party on the current count. The ANC has won every previous national election by a landslide since the historic 1994 vote that ended white minority rule, but over the last decade its support has dwindled as the economy stagnated, unemployment rose and roads and power stations crumbled. MK's strong performance, especially in Zuma's home province of KwaZulu-Natal, is one of the main reasons the ANC failed to secure a majority.

Analysts say one option for the ANC could be a "government of national unity" involving a broad spectrum of many parties, rather than a formal coalition between a few - an arrangement similar to the one set up after 1994's



historic all-race vote. Political parties' share of the vote determine their seats in the National Assembly, which elects the nation's president. Investors in Africa's most industrialised economy will hope the uncertain picture can quickly become clear and that the country avoids an extended period of wrangling if the main political players struggle to agree how they can cooperate. Some parties have questioned what they say are vote-counting inconsistencies that may lead to some results being contested. Electoral commission chair Mosotho Moepya told a news conference on Saturday that "every concern raised in these objections will be considered and we will do so carefully". Despite the ANC's result, President Cyril Ramaphosa could still keep his job, as the former liberation movement was on course to get about twice as many votes as the next party. But he will be weakened and could face calls to quit both from opposition parties and critics in the deeply-divided ANC. However, Mokonyane - one of the ANC's top officials - backed him to stay on as party leader, and analysts say he has no obvious successor. A deal to keep the ANC in the presidency could involve opposition backing in exchange either for cabinet posts or for more control of parliament, perhaps even the speaker. "One of the positions we are going to demand from the ANC is ... the speaker of parliament," Malema said. The election commission has pencilled in a final results announcement

Sri Lankan cops arrest suspected handler of 4 ISIS suspects arrested in India

GNS News Agency, June 6

Sri Lankan police's Criminal Investigation Department arrested Pushparaja Osman, 46, on Friday in Colombo. He was a suspected handler to the four ISIS suspects who were arrested at the Ahmedabad airport in Gujarat.

Sri Lankan Police have arrested the suspected handler of the four of its nationals who were arrested at Ahmedabad airport in India for their alleged links with the banned Islamic State (ISIS) outfit. The Criminal Investigation Department arrested Pushparaja Osman, 46, on Friday in Colombo. Sri Lanka Police recently announced a cash award of Rs 2 million for any credible information on his whereabouts. Police had issued a wanted notice and a video of him seeking information from the public.

The CID arrested him and he was believed to have made telephone contact with the four people arrested at the Ahmedabad airport, police said. The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad arrested four Sri Lankans with links to ISIS at the airport in Ahmedabad. The four men took an Indigo flight from Colombo to Chennai on May 19. Commenting on the investigations so far the police spokesman Nihal Thalduwa said that police were unable yet to verify that the four are linked to ISIS. "If they had promoted the ISIS ideology in Sri Lanka is yet to be established," he said.

Last month, the Sri Lankan authorities launched a high-powered operation to investigate the four Sri Lankans arrested in Gujarat. The authorities say they would take

no chances with possible ISIS activities on the island after the 2019 Easter Sunday attack which killed over 270 people. The investigations focused on if the local jihadi group which carried out the attack was having links with ISIS at the time.

Among the arrested individuals in Gujarat, Mohammed Nusrat is a businessman involved in importing telecommunication devices and electrical equipment from countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Dubai. Nusrat operated within Colombo, where he sold these imported goods. Mohammad Nafran, 27, who was also arrested, has been identified as the son of the first wife of Niyas Naufer aka 'Potta Naufer' the notorious underworld criminal who was sentenced to death for the killing of High Court Judge Sarath Ambepitiya. The other two Sri Lankans are 35-year-old Mohammad Faris from Maligawatte, Colombo and 43-year-old Mohammad Rashdeen from Colombo 13. Mohammad Faris had worked as a 'Nattami' or cart puller in Pettah and was arrested by the Colombo Crimes Division on March 11, 2023, and November 1 of the same year. On May 21, his close associate Hameed Amir was arrested by the Terrorist Investigations Division. Mohammad Faris left for Chennai, India on May 19. The other suspect is Mohammad Rashdeen, a three-wheeler driver. Security forces suspect that he is linked to trafficking crystal meth or ICE. On September 16, 2022, Rashdeen was arrested by the Foreshore Police and was later released on bail.

US shifts focus to China risks; Zelenskiy arrives at Asia defence meeting



GNS News Agency, June 6

SINGAPORE, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin tried to refocus attention on China's threat in the Asia-Pacific on Saturday, seeking to alleviate concerns that conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza have distracted from America's security commitments in the region. Just hours after Austin spoke at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived in Singapore, where he will address delegates at the security forum on Sunday. In a statement on the social media platform X, he said that he had come to gather support from the Asia-Pacific region for a peace summit planned for June 15-16 in Switzerland. He said he planned to hold several meetings, including with Singapore's President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, Timor-Leste President José Ramos Horta, Austin, and Singaporean investors. Austin met his Chinese counterpart, Dong Jun, on the sidelines of the conference on Friday in a bid to cool friction over issues ranging from Taiwan to China's military activity in the South China Sea.

There has been increasing concern that Washington's focus on helping Ukraine counter Russia's invasion and support for Israel's war in Gaza, while trying to ensure that the conflict does not spread, has taken away attention from the Indo-Pacific. "Despite these historic clashes in Europe and the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific has remained our priority theatre of operations," Austin said in his speech, which appeared aimed at underlining the administration's legacy in the region as President Joe Biden's first term in office nears its end. "Let me be clear: The United States can be secure only if Asia is secure," Austin said. "That's why the United States has long maintained our presence in this region." Austin underscored the importance of alliances in the region. "And ... peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and not coercion or conflict. And certainly not through so-called punishment," Austin said, taking a shot at China. In response, Chinese Lieutenant General Jing Jianfeng said the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy was intended "to create division, provoke confrontation and undermine stability". "It only serves the selfish geopolitical interests of the U.S."

South African party which freed country from apartheid loses 30-year majority

GNS News Agency, June 6

The African National Congress party lost its parliamentary majority in a historic election result Saturday that puts South Africa on a new political path for the first time since the end of the apartheid system of white minority rule 30 years ago. With more than 99 per cent of votes counted, the once-dominant ANC had received just over 40 per cent in Wednesday's election, well short of the majority it had held since the famed all-race vote of 1994 that ended apartheid and brought it to power under Nelson Mandela. The final results are still to be formally declared by the independent electoral commission that ran the election, but the ANC cannot pass 50 per cent. At the start of the election, the commission said it would formally declare the results by Sunday, but that could come earlier. While opposition parties have hailed the result as a momentous breakthrough for a country struggling with deep poverty and inequality, the ANC remained the biggest party by some way. However, it will now likely need to look for a coalition partner or partners to remain in the government and reelect President Cyril Ramaphosa for a second and final term. Parliament elects the South African president after national elections. "The way to rescue South Africa is to break the ANC's majority and we have done that," said main opposition leader John Steenhuisen. The way forward promises to be complicated for Africa's most advanced economy, and there's no coalition on the table yet.

Steenhuisen's Democratic Alliance party was on around 21 per cent of the vote. The new MK Party of former President Jacob Zuma, who has turned against the ANC he once led, was third with just over 14 per cent of the vote in the first election it has contested. The Economic Freedom Fighters was in fourth with just over 9 per cent. More than 50 parties contested the election, many of them with tiny shares of the vote, but the DA and MK appear to be the most obvious for the ANC to approach, given how far it is from a majority. Which coalition the ANC pursues is the urgent focus now, given Parliament needs to sit and elect a president within 14 days of the final election results being officially declared. A flurry of negotiations are set to take place and they will likely be complicated.

Steenhuisen has said his centrist party is open to discussions. The MK Party said one of their conditions for any agreement was that Ramaphosa is removed as ANC leader and president. That underlined the fierce political battle between Zuma, who resigned as South African president under a cloud of corruption allegations in 2018, and Ramaphosa, who replaced him. "We are willing to negotiate with the ANC, but not the ANC of Cyril Ramaphosa," MK Party spokesperson Nhlamulo Ndlela said.

MK and the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters have called for parts of the economy to be nationalized. The Democratic Alliance is viewed as a business-friendly party and analysts say an ANC-DA coalition would be more welcomed by foreign investors, although there are questions over whether it is politically viable considering the DA has been the most critical opposition party for years. An ANC-DA coalition "would be a marriage of two drunk people in Las Vegas. It will never work," Gayton McKenzie, the leader of the smaller Patriotic Alliance party, told South African media. Despite the uncertainty, South African opposition parties were hailing the new political picture as a much-needed change for the coun-

try and runs counter to the trend of history and the shared aspirations of regional countries for peace, development and win-win cooperation," said Jing, deputy chief of the Joint Staff Department of China's Central Military Commission. Some U.S. officials say Beijing has become more emboldened in recent years, recently launching what it described as "punishment" drills around Taiwan, sending heavily armed warplanes and staging mock attacks after Lai Ching-te was inaugurated as Taiwan's president. Indonesia's president-elect, Prabowo Subianto, told the meeting that his nation was willing to send peacekeeping troops to Gaza to maintain a ceasefire, if needed. He said U.S. President Joe Biden's three-phase proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza was a step in the right direction.

"When needed and when requested by the U.N., we are prepared to contribute significant peacekeeping forces to maintain and monitor this prospective ceasefire as well as providing protection and security to all parties and to all sides," Prabowo said. Prabowo, currently defence minister, takes over the presidency of the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation in October. The United States has provided tens of billions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine since Russia's February, 2022 invasion, and the U.S. Congress appropriated \$61 billion more last month. It has also continued to arm Israel, and the same bill provides \$26 billion to in additional support for that country. In another session, South Korean defence minister Shin Won-sik declined to say whether his country would change its laws, which prohibit arms exports to nations in conflicts, to more directly provide aid to Ukraine.

In the last year, South Korea has transferred artillery ammunition to the United States and signed historically large arms deals with Poland; both of those countries provide security assistance to Ukraine. About \$8 billion in U.S. funding is set aside for countering China in the Indo-Pacific as part of the supplemental funding bill passed by lawmakers. Philippine President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr on Friday denounced illegal, coercive and aggressive actions in the South China Sea, a disputed ocean territory that China has been flooding with coastguard ships in recent months. The Philippines, a sprawling archipelago with strong historical ties to the United States and close geographical proximity to China, is at the centre of an intensifying power struggle between Washington and Beijing. Austin said the harassment faced by the Philippines was dangerous and reiterated that the United States' mutual defence treaty with Manila was iron clad. He said the aim was for tensions between Beijing and Manila not to spiral out of control. "America will continue to play a vital role in the Indo-Pacific, together with our friends across the region that we share and care so much about," Austin said. Jing, the Chinese general, said these alliances contributed to instability in the region. "It is natural for neighbours to bicker sometimes, but we need to resolve disagreements through dialogue and consultation rather than inviting wolves into our house and playing with fire," he said.



try of 62 million, which is Africa's most developed but also one of the most unequal in the world. South Africa has widespread poverty and extremely high levels of unemployment and the ANC has struggled to raise the standard of living for millions. The official unemployment rate is 32 per cent, one of the highest in the world, and the poverty disproportionately affects Black people, who make up 80 per cent of the population and have been the core of the ANC's support for years. The ANC has also been blamed — and now punished by voters — for a failure in basic government services that impacts millions and leaves many without water, electricity or proper housing. Nearly 28 million South Africans were registered to vote and turnout is expected to be around 60 per cent, according to figures from the independent electoral commission.

Spelling Bee finalists, mostly of Indian descent, visit White House

Washington: Bruhat Soma, the Scripps National Spelling Bee's Indian-American winner, along with the seven other finalists was invited by the White House for a visit, a lifetime experience for these young talents. Bruhat, a 12-year-old seventh-grade student from Florida, emerged victorious in the prestigious Scripps National Spelling Bee on Thursday, earning more than \$50,000 in cash and other prizes.

He blitzed through 30 words in 90 seconds Thursday night and judges determined that he spelled 29 of them correctly — nine more than his competitor, Faizan Zaki. On Friday, the White House invited them to attend an event on the South Lawns where President Joe Biden welcomed the Kansas City Chiefs to celebrate their championship season and victory in Super Bowl LVIII. Bruhat, sporting a yellow championship T-shirt and a red tilak on his forehead, was joined by seven other finalists, including four others of Indian descent, and their parents. The four other Indian Americans were: Rishabh Saha, 14 and Shrey Parikh, 12, from California; Aditi Muthukumar, 13, from Colorado; and Ananya Rao Prasanna, 13, from North Carolina. They did not meet the president but saw other champions — the Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs. All the finalists were seen taking pictures on the White House lawns and were excited about visiting the office-cum-residence of the US President.

India's GDP grows at 7.8% in Q4FY24, full-year growth pegged at 8.2%



2022-23," said the government. This indicates that the Indian economy has outperformed economists' expectations, despite facing global challenges. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the Q4 GDP growth data for 2023-24 shows robust momentum in the nation's economy which is "poised to further accelerate." "Thanks to the hardworking people of our country, 8.2 per cent growth for the year 2023-24 exemplifies that India continues to be the fastest growing major economy globally. As I have said, this is just a trailer of things to come..." PM Modi tweeted. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the remarkable GDP growth rate is the highest among the major economies of the world. "India's growth momentum will continue in the third term of PM Shri

She said, "It is worthwhile to note that the manufacturing sector witnessed a significant growth of 9.9% in 2023-24, highlighting the success of the Modi government's efforts for the sector. Many high-frequency indicators indicate that the Indian economy continues to remain resilient and buoyant despite global challenges." Sitharaman added that India's growth momentum will continue in the third term of PM Modi-led government. Increased infrastructure spending and robust urban demand have been identified as key drivers behind India's strong economic growth, despite global headwinds. Ankita Amajuri, an economist at Capital Economics, had earlier attributed the "stellar performance of the economy" to sustained momentum in domestic demand. Meanwhile, on Wednesday, S&P Global Ratings upgraded India's sovereign rating outlook from "stable" to "positive," citing expectations of continuity in economic reforms and fiscal policies, regardless of the Lok Sabha election results.

Q4 GDP growth: India's GDP growth stood at 7.8% in the March quarter, while the full-year growth has been pegged at 8.2%. India's GDP growth in the fourth quarter stood at 7.8%. India's gross domestic product (GDP) for the fourth quarter of the current financial year grew by 7.8% year-on-year, according to data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Thursday. This is better than what most economists had predicted. In the same period last year, GDP growth was 6.1%, and in the previous quarter, it was 8.4%.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had forecasted a 6.9% growth in real GDP for Q4FY24, with a full-year projection of 7.6%. It may be noted that the Real Gross Value Added or GVA has been estimated to grow at 6.3% in the final quarter of FY24. The country's real GDP for FY24 is estimated to be 8.2%, compared to 7% in FY23.

"Real GDP has been estimated to grow by 8.2% in FY 2023-24 as compared to the growth rate of 7.0% in FY 2022-23. Nominal GDP has witnessed a growth rate of 9.6% in FY 2023-24 over the growth rate of 14.2% in FY

Thermal plants fire up coal as capacity addition lags, private sector interest wanes



A growing demand-supply mismatch in the power market, triggered by a slowdown in the pace of new capacity addition of coal-fired power plants at a time when the lack of effective storage options to counterbalance the variability of the surging renewable capacities, has increased the pressure on the country's grid managers. With soaring temperatures forcing power demand to surge, failure to augment baseload capacity is compounding problems posed by the variability of renewable energy.

India's coal-fired thermal capacity grew to 218 GW in FY24 from 205 GW in FY20, a 6 per cent growth, data on NITI Aayog's energy dashboard showed. At the same time, generation by coal-fired thermal plants grew by 34 per cent from 960 billion units (BU) to 1,290 billion units (BU) and the average plant load factor (PLF), or capacity utilisation, jumped from 53 per cent to 68 per cent. In April, the average PLF of coal-fired thermal plants stood at 76 per cent and is likely to be higher in May given that peak demand met touched 250 GW on May 30, against the anticipated peak demand of 235 GW for the month of May. In contrast, solar capacity has more than doubled to 81 GW whereas average capacity utilisation has decreased slightly from 17 per cent to 16 per cent. Wind capacity also grew by 22 per cent to 46 GW, while capacity utilisation grew slightly from 20 per cent to 21 per cent.

The mismatch between growth in generation and capacity addition comes at a time when the Ministry of Power has been increasingly relying on thermal plants to meet demand in peak hours, like late evenings, when renewable sources like solar do not generate electricity. For instance, over the last few weeks, it instructed fifteen imported coal-fired and all gas-based thermal plants to be operational during the summer months, with temperatures hitting record highs.

Over the last five years, though, against the government's own targets, thermal capacity addition has seen an average annual shortfall of 54 per cent. Notably, the private sector, which has a better track record at setting up new projects within timelines, accounted for just 7 per cent of all new capacity added in the same period. With healthy growth in power demand and minimal storage infrastructure for renewable energy, India is increasingly relying on thermal power to meet peak demand in summer months. Despite significant renewable energy capacity added over the last five financial years, the share of coal-fired power generation increased to 75 per cent of total power generated from all sources in FY24 from 71 per cent in FY20. While the government aims to add another 80 GW thermal capacity over the next eight years, experts point to the possibility of the slow pace of capacity addition and an underwhelming response from the private sector leading to more shortfalls, which in turn can stress existing thermal capacity, especially as utility-scale adoption of energy storage systems is expected to take some more years.

RK Singh, the Union power minister, in November 2023, told industry stakeholders that the government plans to add 80 GW thermal power capacity by FY32. "Power demand of the country has increased at an unprecedented rate due to rapid growth of the economy. India needs 24x7 availability of power for its economic growth; and we are not going to compromise on availability of power for our growth. This power cannot be achieved by renewable energy sources alone. Since nuclear capacity cannot be added at a rapid pace, we have to add coal-based thermal capacity for meeting our energy needs," Singh said at a stakeholder interaction in November. Still, going by the government's own targets for thermal capacity addition, the annual shortfall has averaged 54 per cent over the latest five financial years. According to data with the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), nearly 24 GW

of thermal capacity was added against a target of 50 GW. In FY24, 6.2 GW was added against a target of 14.7 GW, a shortfall of 58 per cent. The most capacity added in the last five years was in FY20, which was 6.8 GW with a shortfall of 34 per cent.

The contribution of the private sector over the last five years was just 1.7 GW, or 7 per cent of the total thermal capacity added. In FY21 and FY23, the private sector added zero thermal capacity. The absence of the private sector is also apparent in capacity that is currently under-construction—of the total 29.4 GW distributed across 22 projects, private capacity under-construction is just 1.6 GW held by one project owned by a subsidiary of Adani Power Limited. A total of 26 private projects with a capacity of almost 24 GW are currently either on hold or not likely to be commissioned. R Shankar Raman, CFO of Larsen & Toubro Limited, India's largest construction company that also builds power plants, in a recent earnings call said that "all the power investment has ceased because all the power producers, the private capital who backed it, are all in NCLT in different forms". In addition to insolvency proceedings plaguing the private sector, the estimated capital cost for setting up of new coal-fired thermal capacity has also gone up to Rs 8.34 crore per MW. For contrast, the cost for setting up 1 MW of solar power can be half as much.

"The cost of putting up a power plant has definitely gone up because we have seen a lot of international banks walk away from financing coal-fired projects. When you borrow from international banks, the interest rate is much lower but when you borrow from local institutions, then the interest rate can go up to double digits. That means that you're really not able to finance your project at the cheaper level. But countries like China continue to add huge capacities. In the last couple of years, China has added almost 218 GW coal-fired capacities, which is half of India's current total power generation," Deepak Kannan, Global Head of Coal Pricing at S&P Global Commodity Insights, told "I don't blame anybody for sticking to coal because that is the only way out from a policy perspective. For the industries, you still have to rely on coal for 24x7 power supply, especially in developing economies. It makes more sense for the government to promote solar power in villages where they don't run motors throughout the day or in homes where you run a few appliances but require less battery capacities," Kannan added. Leading power cos send mixed signals

Leading private companies in the power sector have thus far sent mixed signals. In addition to the under-construction capacity of 1.6 GW in Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh, Adani Power also plans to add 1.6 GW more in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh. Tata Power Company Limited, on the other hand, does not plan any greenfield investment in thermal capacity in the next 2 to 3 years, executives confirmed in the QY4FY24 earnings call. "Well, as you know, we have seen the FDRE (firm and dispatchable renewable energy) projects are going to be the new future. And the number of bids that are expected are very large, where you get a certainty of getting renewable power. There is huge pressure. It is not only about supply, but there is a huge pressure from the customer side also that they want to transition to clean energy, whether it is industry or commercial or even residential consumer," Praveer Sinha, CEO of Tata Power, said in the earnings call on May 8.

The future of FDRE, which employs energy storage systems to consistently supply renewable power to consumers, is yet to be settled with industry leaders sharing varied views on the economic feasibility of battery energy storage systems (BESS). Many see utility-scale adoption of BESS only from 2030 onwards. "The sharp growth in electricity demand is necessitating a rethink from the Government on thermal capacity addition, with push for investments in new thermal power projects including by the private sector, with the target of adding 80 GW of new thermal power capacity by 2032 to meet the growing energy needs. Given the long gestation period, it is imperative for the power generation companies to initiate work on these projects over the next 18 to 24 months to meet the 2032 timeline," ICRA noted in a power sector update late last year. The growth in generation and capacity addition mismatch comes at a time when the Power Ministry has been increasingly relying on thermal plants to meet demand in peak hours when renewable sources like solar do not generate electricity. Over the last few weeks, it instructed 15 imported coal-fired and all gas-based thermal plants to be operational during the summer months, with temperatures hitting record highs.

Govt appoints Saurabh Garg as full-time MoSPI Secretary



Saurabh Garg, Saurabh Garg, who currently holds the charge of Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, has also been given charge of Secretary, National Statistical Commission (Image Credit: Saurabh Garg/X). Just a month after the government named 1991-batch Odisha cadre IAS officer Saurabh Garg to hold additional charge of Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), it announced his full-time appointment as MoSPI Secretary on Thursday along with a one-year term beyond his superannuation in July this year. Garg, who currently holds the charge of Secretary, Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, has also been given charge of Secretary, National Statistical Commission (NSC).

With this order, the government also announced the appointment of 1991-batch AGMUT cadre Amit Yadav as Secretary of Department of Social Justice & Empowerment. The shuffling of bureaucrats comes just three days after the government on May 27 had announced that Garg's successor, Yadav, will take charge as Officer on Special Duty, Department of Social Justice & Empowerment till Garg's superannuation in July and then take over as secretary. The order, however, does not make a mention of the appointment to the position of Chief Statistician of India, which is usually held by the same official as the MoSPI Secretary. The government is likely to consider completing the appointment process for Chief Statistician of India separately after Lok Sabha election results, an official said.

Garg, a post doctorate in international economics and development from John Hopkins University and an IIM Ahmedabad alumnus, has earlier held key roles including Chief Executive Officer, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), Principal Secretary for Agricul-

ture and Farmers' Empowerment in Odisha, where he worked on the direct income scheme for farmers — KALIA or Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation. He had earlier also served as Joint Secretary, Ministry of Finance. Before Garg, the charge of MoSPI Secretary was held by GP Samanta till April 15, 2024. Samanta, who was an adviser in the Reserve Bank of India's Department of Statistics and Information Management, was appointed as Chief Statistician of India-cum-Secretary MoSPI for two years in April 2021. He was then given a one-year extension in April 2023.

The Chief Statistician of India is an appointment in the rank of Secretary to the Government of India. CSI, while holding the charge as Secretary, MoSPI, also heads the National Statistical Office and has the charge of Secretary of the National Statistical Commission. MoSPI undertakes several crucial surveys including the Annual Survey of Industries, Consumption Expenditure Survey Periodic Labour Force Survey along with compiling GDP and retail inflation data for the country.

BSNL puts 27 land parcels across 11 states, UTs on the block; invites bids

BSNL, BSNL network, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL), Indian express business, business news, business articles, business news stories. The move comes at a time when Union Telecom Secretary Neeraj Mittal has written to all secretaries and chief secretaries of ministries and govt departments urging them to ask Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and organisations under them to take benefit of "outright" sale of BSNL properties. In a major push to government's asset monetisation programme, the state-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has put on block 27 land parcels across 11 states and Union Territories.

The record accessed by The Indian Express shows that these land parcels include telephone exchanges, vacant land, administrative buildings, and staff quarter compound etc. These are spread across Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. The BSNL had invited bids for auction of land parcels in these states through e-tender followed by e-auction, vide a Request for Proposal (RFP) on May 16, 2024. Following this, a pre-bid virtual meeting for all the land parcels has been called on June 3, 2024. The combined reserve price of these 27 land parcels is pegged at Rs 476 crore.

In addition to these, the BSNL has also drawn a list of over 500 land parcels and buildings at various locations across several states, which it intends to sell in coming days, a source said. The combined area under these properties is pegged at around 1 crore square meters. Besides, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL), another state-run telecom operator, has also drawn up a list of properties to be offered for sale in Delhi and Mumbai. The move comes at a time when Union Telecom Secretary Neeraj Mittal has written to all secretaries and chief secretaries of ministries and govt departments urging them to ask Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and organisations under them to take benefit of "outright" sale of BSNL properties. Union Cabinet in 2019 has approved the revival plan of BSNL/MTNL which also includes monetisation (of) its surplus land/building assets. BSNL has an asset base spread over the country and MTNL has properties located in Delhi and Mumbai. Most of the properties are at prime locations. The properties are offered through outright sale to government departments/PSUs/ government organisations," Mittal said in a letter



In a major push to government's asset monetisation programme, the state-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has put on block 27 land parcels across 11 states and Union Territories.

sent on May 21.

He added that a dedicated website has been developed, which lists all the properties of the BSNL/MTNL available for sale. "I would, therefore, request you to issue instructions for wide publicity of the website in various departments/PSUs/organisations under your ministry. This would help government organisations, who are in need of such properties in availing benefits from the scheme of direct sale from PSU to government organisations," he said.

Harikishan Sharma, Senior Assistant Editor at The Indian Express' National Bureau, specializes in reporting on governance, policy, and data. He covers the Prime Minister's Office and pivotal central ministries, such as the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Ministry of Cooperation, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Ministry of Rural Development, and Ministry of Jal Shakti. His work primarily revolves around reporting and policy analysis. In addition to this, he authors a weekly column titled "STATE-ISTICALLY SPEAKING," which is prominently featured on The Indian Express website. In this column, he immerses readers in narratives deeply rooted in socio-economic, political, and electoral data, providing insightful perspectives on these critical aspects of governance and society. .

How rhubarb conquered Germany, then the world

In the past month, millions of people have found themselves stumbling through the contorted and catchy syllables of a song about, of all things, a woman named Barbara and some rhubarb-loving barbarians who drink beer while getting their beards barbered. In German. The hyper-compound words of the popular German tongue twister about Barbara, her "bombastic" rhubarb cake and her hirsute customers shot to inexplicable and extreme popularity this spring, a few months after a pair of comedic musical content creators from Berlin posted a rap version late last year. Their silly ditty has more than 47 million views on TikTok; for a brief moment on some online streaming charts, Barbara beat out Beyoncé. Beyoncé.

"There is a prejudice that, first, Germans don't have any sense of humor, and second, they do not have fun, and third, their language sounds very aggressive," said Bodo Wartke, the rap's lyricist who, along with Marti Fischer, the composer, created the viral "Barbara's Rhubarb Bar" tune. They spoke on a recent day in their Berlin studio as they giggled and tripped over their own stanzas — which exploit a feature of German grammar that crams nouns together into strings of syllables.

But lost in translation, as global copycats stumble through the alliterative story of Barbara, the bar she opens and the pie that made her famous, is a quirk not only of language, but also of German gastronomic culture. Rhubarb is much more than a word in German that sounds a lot like "Barbara"; it is an object of springtime fixation, part of a nationwide fanaticism for eating a small group of particular produce exactly in season.

Put another way: Song or no song, every spring across Germany, rhubarb goes completely viral. The vegetable (yes, it is a vegetable) is part of a trio of produce that includes strawberries and a particular asparagus variety that peaks in early spring. Warm weather sets off a frenzy for all things featuring them in a country that still

adheres to consumption along the rhythms of the seasons. In the United States, the convenience of purchasing a summer peach and winter squash year round in the supermarket may have rendered the idea of seasonal produce nearly obsolete. But in Germany, the conception of each foodstuff as a limited-time-only treat is seen not as inconvenient, but rather, as a way to whet appetites.

Come spring, green markets are piled with rhubarb stalks, which are consumed as cake, pastries, preserves and, above all, in a fizzy drink called schorle, a spritzer. While rhubarb may be enjoying its pop culture moment, the true star of the German spring is spargel, or asparagus. There is a ghostly pale version of the vegetable grown under a mound of dirt to suppress chlorophyll production, rendering the plant mild in flavor with a fibrous skin. During the season, Spargelfest, which semi-officially ends on June 24, multicourse spargel-only menus sprout at restaurants. One dish is on every last one: blanched spargel served under a slathering of hollandaise, beside a clutch of new potatoes, a slab of schnitzel and a slice of lemon. "Rhubarb is very well connected to the springtime. It's the seasonal food," said Tobias Hagge, 43, who sings with and manages the Real Comedian Harmonists, who, like Wartke and Fischer, specialize in amusing songs — including a circa-1930 ballad about a woman named Veronika, whose beauty makes asparagus grow. (Wink.) In its heyday nearly a century ago, the song, with its double-entendre, rivaled Barbara's popularity, Hagge said. Today, it is his group's most-requested tune. "With Germans, we have a very unique relationship to asparagus," Hagge added. "A lot of foreigners don't get us." On a recent Sunday afternoon in Beelitz, an area just southwest of Berlin known for its prodigious spargel crop, nearly a dozen buses and hundreds of cars packed the parking lot at a roadside asparagus attraction: Winkelmanns Asparagus Farm.

Kajal Aggarwal explains why married actresses in Bollywood get meatier parts but South actresses are 'stereotyped': 'If we're offered, we would take...'



Actor Kajal Aggarwal says female actors in the South Indian film industries are trying hard to change the system, which often offers female stars "strong" parts once they are married or become mothers. Kajal, who predominantly appears in Telugu and Tamil films, says things are different down South as compared to the Hindi film industry. In an interview with Galatta Plus, journalist Baradwaj Rangan noted how the Hindi film industry will offer a role of an action heroine to Deepika Padukone in *Fighter* and a leading romantic part to Alia Bhatt in *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani*, which isn't the case in the Tamil and Telugu film industries, where a married woman will play a "strong" role like the one Kajal plays in her latest, *Satyabhama*. Kajal is playing a cop in the film. They also spoke about Vidya Balan's *Tumhari Sulu*, where her character wore her sexuality proudly but that wasn't the case when the film was remade in Tamil as *Kaatrin Mozhi*, starring Jyothika.

When asked the reason, Kajal said, "We still have a little bit of stereotyped attached. I am hoping that we get rid of it soon. I also feel it is now that this entire new

generation of actresses are married and have children." Baradwaj then pointed out how the Hindi film industry has had examples in Sharmila Tagore and Hema Malini, who continued to act in such parts after marriage, but it hasn't happened to that extent in the South film industries. Kajal also insisted that as moviemakers, they need to step up and present such stories to their audience where women can be seen in varied parts. Not blaming the audience, Kajal admitted that they are ready for it but the makes need to catch up. Kajal, who got married in 2020 to Gautam Kitchlu and became a mother two years later, said things are changing today and lauded Nayanthara for still managing to headline romantic as well as action parts on her "own terms." "If we are offered, we would take the meatier roles, maybe the pivotal roles in films. Things are changing. Like Nayanthara for example, I love how she conducts her filmography, I love her choices. She is an exception, who gets these parts, on her terms and conditions. So that is great." The actor then gave an example from her life and detailed how she was back on set after delivering a baby pulling off one of the toughest parts of her career in *Indian 2*, headlined by Kamal Haasan and directed by Shankar. "I had my commitments before I got married—in COVID—which I honoured and travelled a lot for it. It was difficult for my husband to understand that initially because he has never seen what our industry is about. I finished the films that I had to do, got pregnant, and right after I delivered my child, I did *Indian 2*, which has possibly been the hardest role of my life.

"It was physically demanding, I had to be strong to do that. I was horse riding! That was still a 'strong' role, which I had signed four years ago. I am glad Shankar sir waited for me and asked me to come in his last schedule. Yet, it was so hard for me," she added.

Imtiaz Ali recalls how the Bhagvad Gita changed his life as a 10-year-old, says he'd read it daily: 'It was so easy to understand'

Imtiaz Ali's fans find his films to be philosophical and deeply spiritual, and in a recent interview, the filmmaker opened up about reading religious texts as a child, and how they deeply influenced him. He shared that he read the *Rig Veda* as a child, and was first introduced to the *Bhagvad Gita* when he was around 10 years old. The *Jab We Met* director said that his introduction to *Bhagvad Gita* happened because that was the only book he could afford to buy from a railway station book store, but it impacted him deeply.

He recalled the incident, and shared that he was only 10-years-old when he was travelling via train all alone. Since Imtiaz had a few bucks on him and he wanted to buy some reading material for his journey, he entered a book store at the station. "The only book that was available cheaply then, this is so ironic, that was *Bhagvad Gita*. It was a thick, small book. So, I thought I will buy this, it was the only thing I could afford," he shared with Ranveer Allahbadia. "I knew that when people see me reading this book, they will think that it is a weird choice. Of course, I had heard about *Bhagvad Gita*. I thought this is good, this will give a good impression also. But after all of this, when I actually started reading it, it was so easy to understand. There was hardly anything in



it that I did not understand, but there were a lot of things that I read 5-10 times," he said. Imtiaz said that after this, he would read a few pages of *Bhagvad Gita* every day. "Bhagvad Gita has been an important thing in my life. It has been the small book that has always been kept on my side table," he shared and added, "It was miraculous that I was lucky to get exposed to it." Imtiaz said that not just this, he reads other religious texts as well and is "deeply entertained" by them. "They offer quite interesting things," he said, adding that he'd read the *Rig Veda* daily for a long period in his life.

Gully Boy cinematographer Jay Oza reveals the Ranveer Singh scene which makes him 'angry': 'Zyada mood mein aagaya tha'

Can cinephiles read too much between the lines, which the makers would have never even intended to? Maybe, as cinematographer Jay Oza reveals how he shot a crucial *Gully Boy* scene with Ranveer Singh, Amruta Subhash and Vijay Raaz going a little "pseudo" in his approach, which would have impressed film school students but makes him "angry" today.

In an interview with *Film Companion*, Oza opened up about filming *Gully Boy*'s confrontation sequence between Ranveer Singh and Vijay Raaz where he used an additional bulb as a symbolic representation of the strained father-son relationship. In the interview he was joined by Thar cinematographer Shreya Dev Dube, who mentioned the "power" of his lighting in the scene. To which Oza said, "I did this after seeing the performances. It was a tiny set. Generally, the actors would do their rehearsal and then they would get into costumes. I saw Amruta ma'am's performance in that scene... There are subtle things that actors do in the background, that actually make you cry. She was trying to think whether she should go towards her son's side or her husband's. She just



In an interview with *Film Companion*, Oza opened up about filming *Gully Boy*'s confrontation sequence between Ranveer Singh and Vijay Raaz where he used an additional bulb as a symbolic representation of the strained father-son relationship.

stopped in the center. "I thought now she would be my point to display both the worlds as she is in the center. So behind, I put one tube light and one bulb till those two worlds are not merging. Before this, there was a closure scene of Safeena in normal lights, where they both physically come together. Here, Murad comes close to the father, but the father rejects him." Oza said it was in the second take where he added the light bulb—which remains even in the film—and added how when he looks at it today he finds it

"artificial". He said, "And now it annoys me. But this little bulb outside, just that glint behind Murad. But this can be a bit pseudo as well, 'Bhai kya ghabab idea bana diya'."

"I now know that a good artist must realise when to stop. Uss din kuch zyada mood mein aagaya tha, but aaj mujhe itna gussa aa raha hai woh bulb dekh ke, I am like kya kar raha tha bhai! But if I go to a film school and tell them they would be like, 'Waah (claps) this is cinema!'" Released in 2019, *Gully Boy* was headlined

by Ranveer Singh, who played a Mumbai street rapper rising to global glory. In the *Zoya Akhtar* directorial, which was India's official selection for the Oscars, Ranveer was joined by Alia Bhatt. Oza is known for films such as *Raman Raghav 2.0*, *Gully Boy*, *Toofaan*, and his work on the *Prime Video* series *Made in Heaven*. He is also working on *Shah Rukh Khan's* son *Aryan Khan's* debut series *Stardom*. The show is set in the world of entertainment and backed by *Red Chillies Entertainment*. They recently wrapped up filming.

Sanjeeda Shaikh 'feels lucky, blessed' to have overcome the trauma of her separation from Aamir Ali: 'Some men demotivate you'



Actor Sanjeeda Shaikh, who was recently seen in *Sanjay Leela Bhansali's* *Heeramandi*, is a proud mother to her four-year-old daughter Ayra Ali. In a recent interview, Sanjeeda opened up about motherhood, and said that even though she often experiences mother's guilt, she finds her strength from her daughter. When asked about being a single mother, Sanjeeda immediately responded, "What is a single mother? I am a mother."

"I just tell everyone that a mother is a mother, single or not does not matter. My responsibilities won't change. As a mother, what I have to do, I will do it," she shared with *Hauterrfly*. Sanjeeda was previously married to ac-

tor Aamir Ali, and they got divorced in 2021. Now, Sanjeeda shared that she "feels lucky" to have emerged from the setback. "I feel I am very lucky (to have emerged from) whatever happened with me. Maybe I felt then that I the most depressed person, or I am very sad, or, 'What is happening with me, what is happening with my life?' But to overcome all of that and to be happy with this version of myself, I am blessed," she said. Sanjeeda, when talking about mother's guilt, said that she always carries it with her. "There's always this little guilt. It's a sweet guilt," she said. Sanjeeda also spoke about moving on in life and said that she does not go seeking for love but acknowledged that it is "beautiful to have that one person in your life who motivates you." She added that there are some partners who negatively impact your life and it's best to cut ties with them. "There are men, and there are partners who try to demotivate you, who tell you that you can't do anything. Or they will say you will not be able to do this. It's better to be away from such people. There are phases in every relationship where you are happy, and then there are some when you are not, and then you take a call for your life and that's what I did for myself, because I started loving myself and I started prioritising myself and that is very, very important," she said.

Film producer body, management agencies hold 'preliminary meeting' to tackle Bollywood stars' rising entourage cost

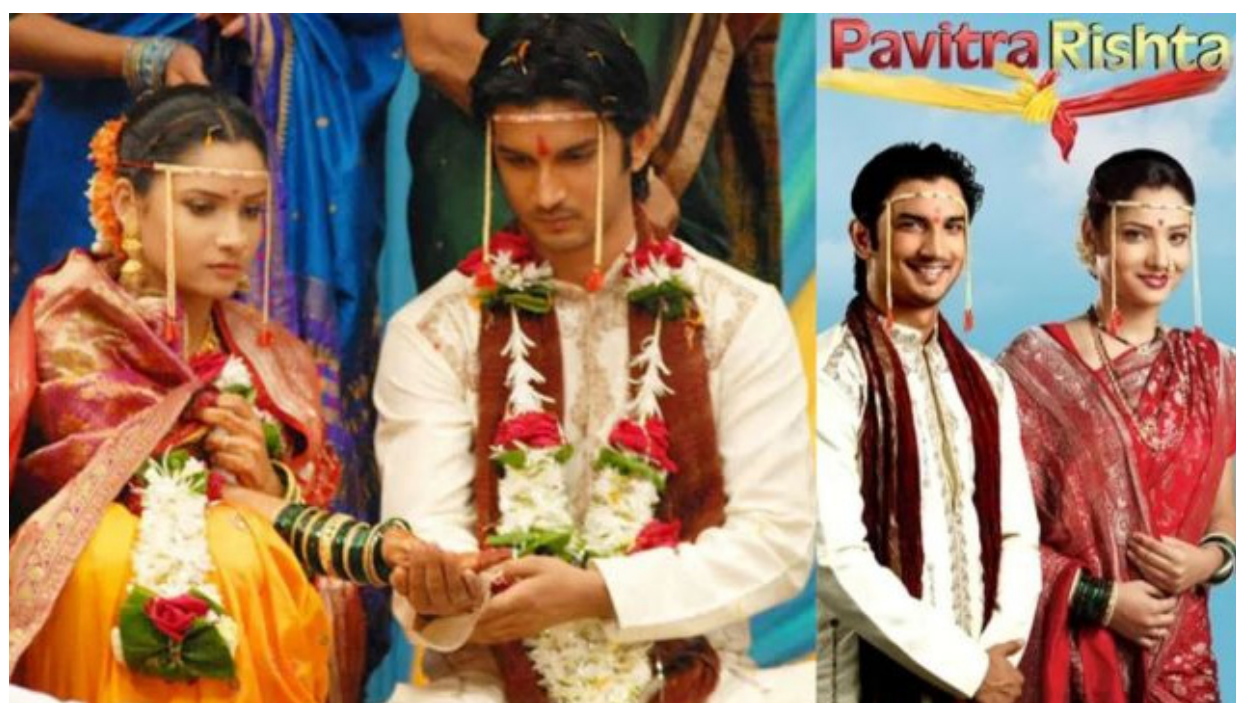
Various film producer bodies and heads of the biggest talent management agencies in Bollywood began the first round of meetings earlier this week to tackle the menace of entourage cost, which has severely burdened productions and forced everyone except a star to take a huge pay cut. It has extensively reported how exorbitant star fees and outrageous demands of actors and their entourages—make up, hairdresser, stylists, spot dada—have dented the film business, ballooning up budgets and stripping off dignified pay for artistes in other departments. com has now exclusively learnt that a "preliminary meeting" was held recently with major producer bodies like The Producers Guild of India and Indian Motion Picture Producers (IMPPA) in attendance.

"There was a preliminary meeting that was held, where basic problems were highlighted. The Producers Guild of India, Indian Motion Picture Producers (IMPPA), Telugu and Tamil active producers association was there. The big meeting might happen in the next two weeks. The stakeholders will work out possible solutions for it," said a source close to the development. Another source shared with *Indianexpress.com* that several talent man-



agement agencies, currently under fire for enabling rising entourage costs, assured the producers present in the meeting that they would restructure to come up with "possible solutions" and come back with a plan. As the next meeting is expected to take place in June, key stakeholders have already begun talks internally to arrive at a "sustainable" solution as the Hindi film industry finds itself dealing with a huge crisis of funds, with fingers pointed towards star fees and overhead costs.

Ankita Lokhande remembers Sushant Singh Rajput as Pavitra Rishta completes 15 years: 'My journey wouldn't be complete if I...'



She added, "I am forever indebted to Ekta Kapoor and Balaji Telefilms for giving me a role of a lifetime right in the beginning of my career. Main rahoon ya na rahoon, the love I have received, Archana and *Pavitra Rishta* has received from each one of you will keep me alive forever in your hearts, and I don't think there's anything more precious than that."

Ankita Lokhande completed 15 years in the industry on Saturday along with her TV show *Pavitra Rishta*, which marked her acting debut. She played the role of Archana, which till date lives in the hearts of many. Her show, also starring Sushant Singh Rajput in the lead, became one of the top-rated Hindi television programs after its broadcast in 2009, making both actors household names. Celebrating the show, Ankita took to her Instagram handle to share a long note. She also remembered and thanked the late Sushant Singh Rajput for mentoring her through the process.

Sharing a montage of several scenes from show, she wrote, "15 years ago, I started my journey as Archana in *Pavitra Rishta*. Little did I know that even after years, I will continue to get so much love for my role, which has even become my identity. I sometimes feel I was destined to be Archana. I had her in me, and I continue to have her in me. She has taught me a lot about life."

She added, "I am forever indebted to Ekta Kapoor and Balaji Telefilms for giving me a role of a lifetime right in the beginning of my career. Main rahoon ya na rahoon, the love I have received, Archana and *Pavitra Rishta* has received from each one of you will keep me alive forever in your hearts, and I don't think there's anything more

precious than that." Recalling the contribution of her Sushant in her career, she wrote, "But my journey wouldn't be complete if I didn't have Sushant's support. I didn't even know how to act when I started *Pavitra Rishta*. He taught me, and I will always be thankful for him. The show started a new kind of storytelling. Hindi television par Marathi culture ko dikhaaya. Isse pehle kabhi koi aisa show aaya nahi tha. People could resonate with the show because of the innocence the show and the people involved in it had." Sushant Singh Rajput, who too featured as the lead for the first time after making his debut as the second lead in the TV series *Kis Desh Mein Hain Mera Dil*, shot to fame for his character Manav in the series. Sushant later quit the show to try his luck in Bollywood. He made his Hindi film debut with the 2013 film *Kai Po Che!* which was quite loved. He then starred in the films *Shuddh Desi Romance*, *PK*, *MS Dhoni: The Untold Story* and *Chhichhore*, among many others. The actor passed away at his residence in Mumbai on June 14, 2020. His film *Dil Bechara* released posthumously on Disney Plus Hotstar. Ankita, on the other hand, featured in supporting roles in films *Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi* and *Baaghi 3*. Her latest film was *Swatantrya Veer Savarkar*, where she played the role of the wife of Randeep Hooda's character.

Dinesh Karthik officially announces retirement from all forms of cricket



GNS News Agency, June 6

Dinesh Karthik on Saturday officially announced his retirement from all forms of cricket. He had made his India debut when he was 19 in an ODI against England at Lord's in September 2004 and has played in as many as 6 IPL teams. His last match came in the 2024 edition of the IPL where his team Royal Challengers Bengaluru lost to Rajasthan Royals in the Eliminator on May 22. After the match, he was given a guard of honour by his teammates. "I've been overwhelmed by the affection, support and love I have received in the last few days. My deepest gratitude and sincere thanks to all the fans who have made this feeling possible. Having given it plenty of thought for sometime now, I have decided to move on from playing representative cricket. I officially announce my retirement and put my playing days behind me as I square up for the new challenges that lie ahead," the former Royal Challengers and India player posted on X. "I'd like to thank all my coaches, captains, selectors,

teammates and members of the support staff who have made this long journey pleasant and enjoyable. Among the millions that play the sport in our country, I consider myself among the lucky few to have had the chance to represent the nation, and luckier still to have earned the goodwill of so many fans and friends."

"My parents have been pillars of strength and support over all these years, and I wouldn't be what I am without their blessings. I also owe plenty to Dipika, herself a professional sportsperson who often put her career on hold to walk my journey with me. Of course, to all the fans and followers of our great game, a massive thank you! Cricket and cricketers, wouldn't be the same without your support and good wishes," he added. Having represented the country in 180 games across three formats in which he scored 3463 runs with a lone Test hundred and 17 half-centuries, Karthik also had 172 dismissals to his credit, most of them behind the stumps with a few in the outfield. Ahead of the T20 World Cup squad announcement, Karthik forced himself into the selection debate for the wicket-keeper batter's role with head-turning performances for RCB but that one final comeback wasn't meant to be as selectors went for younger talent.

Having played for as many as six teams in the IPL since the tournament's inception in 2008, Karthik can be proud of his record in the world's premier T20 league. He finished as an IPL winner with close to 5000 runs over 17 seasons besides taking 145 catches and effecting 37 stumpings. His 330 runs at a strike rate of 183 in 2022 earned him a recall to the Indian team for the T20 World Cup but that happened to be his last time in national colours.

Treesa Jolly-Gayatri Gopichand outpaced by Japanese in semifinal but not embarrassed at Singapore Open

GNS News Agency, June 6

After two attractive three-set wins against World Nos 2 and 6 came the swift second set swatting against World No 4. The 23-21, 21-11 loss that Treesa Jolly-Gayatri Gopichand suffered against Japanese Nami Matsuyama - Chiharu Shida wasn't scarring, and this week will get counted as a big positive even, because this pairing has the stomach for a fight especially against reputed pairs. But it was also the perfect example of how things can roll downhill in a matter of minutes, as the top combinations stamp their class and hand out dismissive Exit signs in tame semifinal finishes. As learning curves go, the second set saw a nothing-game from the Indians who went down 6-20 as errors piled up and neither the body smashes that had been working swell in the first, nor the net interceptions fetched any points. At 2-11 and the first set narrowly lost, the rotation was stuck in buffering mode and the Japanese were collecting points like a happy Pokémon hunt. The Indians would then suddenly make pointed attacks on Matsuyama and pick 5 points in a row. It showed they could've countered the Japanese had they fought faster than the 6-20 quicksand. For they had fought back minutes earlier in the opener.

The Japanese, perhaps wised by an earlier defeat to Treesa-Gayatri or having watched the two Koreans bogged by the Indians' placement play, decided to strike with pace up front. In the first set, the Indians fell back 2-8, even as easy errors were gifted before nerves settled. But what was falling into place quickly for the Indians was their rotational swirls. Crucial to that is Gayatri getting a few winners in, because Treesa can morph into dangerous with one leaping smash. Gayatri hit the groove soon enough and started toggling with the Japanese pace. They like an even tempo even if it's fast exchanges, and that's exactly what the Indians began disrupting. With good reflex defense, Treesa-Gayatri dragged the Japanese into lifting high. Though they had to drop back, the high lifts earned them extra time and slowed the speed of repartee. Then, Gayatri would cleverly go flat, varying the length so suddenly that the Japanese were confused,



going from leading 8-2 to 12-9. Treesa took her time to realise that her hard hits would come back unflinching, because that's the Japanese defense. But as is the case with this pair, she was at the heart of the counter when she subtly varied her attack to a soft drop to make it 10-12 for Indians. That singular point would mess with Matsuyama for a longish time, as she couldn't quite read if Treesa would hit deep or float it to the front court. She often fell short reaching for the soft plonks.

15-16 was another outstanding long rally from the Indians as they defended well, sent back calculated lifts scattering the Japanese, and Treesa killed with a smash down the middle. The Indians also picked up a bunch of points with Treesa's body attacks angled into the Japanese torsos, as they snapped at the rival heels to reach 18-19. Gayatri overhit at this point to hand the Japanese a set point, but made amends neatly opening up the front court to finish with a whip to make it 20-20. Treesa then struck wide, and promptly returned with a wickedly smart serve variation. But the Indians couldn't tug the opener away from the experienced Japanese fourth seeds. In the second they were blitzed before the dust settled on the opener. To make the Super 750 semifinals alongside Top 5 names was swell. But there will be more losses than wins at this stage of their career. Not allowing the defeats to shred their confidence is what weekends will be all about, as they head to Indonesia next.

India's two superb field goals against Germany is a welcome sign for Paris Olympics

GNS News Agency, June 6

Their impotence was one of the biggest concerns to emerge from a forgettable tour. They couldn't score, couldn't put pressure on Australia's defence and couldn't win enough penalty corners to allow captain Harmanpreet Singh to showcase his might. The forwards knew they had a little more than two months to fix this problem. "So, after the tour, we had a meeting," India forward Sukhjeet Singh said. Frank words were spoken and ideas were exchanged. When they left the room an hour or so later, an understanding was reached. "If you enter the 'D', then you have to have an outcome," Sukhjeet recalled.

The 'outcome' needn't necessarily be a goal - it could even be a shot or winning a penalty corner. In short, not letting an attack go to waste, the forwards walked their talk. And Sukhjeet, as was the case in Antwerp last weekend, was at the heart of most attacking moves. The 27-year-old outwitted a defender to win a penalty corner, which Harmanpreet Singh converted, and then started a move from the left flank and finished it with a beautiful strike as India defeated world champions Germany 3-0 in a Pro League match in London. Sukhjeet didn't reveal all that was spoken in that meeting after the team returned from Perth. But he did hint that all players, young and old, juniors and seniors, could voice their thoughts without worrying about hierarchy.

It wasn't always like this. Frankly airing opinions wasn't the culture in the team, coach Craig Fulton recently said at The Indian Express Idea Exchange. "One of the bigger problems in India (hockey) though is that of the hierarchy. The more junior you are as a player, the less say you have. I don't subscribe to that," Fulton had said (full interview to be published on Monday, June 3). He added: "If that's the case, you are in a flawed system. I have tried to crack that wide open: of course you need seniors but you want a safe space where players can share without any worries. That we have achieved from my side and also from seniors which is great. The culture change seems to have had a positive impact. It's telling

that the most impactful forwards heading into the Olympics are also among the youngest, not necessarily age-wise but in terms of international experience. The older guard - Mandeep Singh, Lalit Upadhyay and Akashdeep Singh who have been a part of the team for a major part of the last decade - haven't exactly been able to influence the proceedings as they once did. But Sukhjeet, Abhishek and Gurjant Singh - the scorer of India's third goal on Saturday - have done enough to impose themselves on opposition defences. They did it against the current and former Olympic champions, Belgium and Argentina respectively, and flummoxed the world champions (albeit not at full strength) on Saturday. For the first goal, in the 16th minute, Sukhjeet won possession near the 23m line and passed to Hardik Singh. He continued his run into the 'D' and was there to receive the ball back from Hardik on top of the circle, turned to face the goal and invited a tackle from behind from the German defender. The referee didn't hesitate to award a corner - India's only PC of the match - and Harmanpreet put India ahead against the run of play. Eleven minutes into the third quarter, Sukhjeet swung the momentum in India's favour yet again. He got the ball on the left flank, played it forward to his strike-partner Abhishek while continuing to run inside the 'D'. Abhishek dribbled and swerved past the defence near the baseline and passed the ball back to Sukhjeet, who took one touch and unleashed a powerful tomahawk with the second to give German goalkeeper Alexander Stadler no chance to save. If the first two goals were all about decisive and brave play inside the 'D' - an element that's been missing for a while - the third was all about combinations and silky, one-touch passing with seven out of 10 outfield players involved in the play. The move started with Harmanpreet's forward pass to Manpreet Singh, who played it to Vivek Sagar Prasad on his right. Vivek passed it to Lalit Upadhyay, who spotted a fine overlapping run on the wings by Sanjay. The defender saw Jarmanpreet Singh positioned near the baseline and found him with a neat pass. Jarmanpreet looked up a couple of times and crossed the ball towards the goal.

India submit two bids for hosting World Chess Championship



GNS News Agency, June 6

The title clash to be played between teen prodigy D Gukesh and defending champion Ding Liren of China in November-December this year. "Three bids to host the FIDE World Chess Championship Match-2024. Chennai, Singapore, New Delhi (in order of submission)," Sutoovsky wrote on X. "All meet the criteria. Next week FIDE Council to discuss it - representatives of the bidders invited to share details and take questions. Final decision in June," he added. Three bids to host the FIDE World Champi-

onship Match-2024. Chennai, Singapore, New Delhi (in order of submission). All meet the criteria. Next week FIDE Council to discuss it - representatives of the bidders invited to share details and take questions. Final decision in June. Gukesh, 17, became the youngest-ever challenger for the world title by winning the Candidates Tournament last month.

D Gukesh Chess Grandmaster D. Gukesh of India during his Round 14 match against Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura of USA at the FIDE Candidates 2024 chess tournament, in Toronto, Canada, Sunday, April 21, 2024. Gukesh, who has been mentored by five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand, bettered Russian legend Garry Kasparov's 40-year-old record to become the youngest Candidates champion. The Russian great was 20 when he qualified in 1984 to clash with compatriot Anatoly Karpov. India has hosted the prestigious showpiece in 2000 and 2013. In the 2000 edition, Anand claimed the first of his five world titles by winning the event played in a tournament format with 100 players. Anand defeated Alexei Shirov in the final. The total prize money awarded by FIDE would be around USD 2.5 million (Rs. 20 crore plus) after the fund was increased from the USD two million (Rs. 17 crore) in 2023.

Gautam Gambhir will be a good coach: Sourav Ganguly

GNS News Agency, June 6

Former Indian cricketer Sourav Ganguly backed Kolkata Knight Riders coach Gautam Gambhir and said he would be a good choice to become the national team coach after Rahul Dravid. "If he has applied, Gambhir will be a good coach," Ganguly told reporters at an event in Kolkata. Gambhir has recently helped KKR win their third Indian Premier League trophy after 10 years.

Earlier this paper has reported about India considering Chennai Super Kings' Stephen Fleming as the head coach. However, Ganguly had a different view "I am in favor of an Indian coach," he said. Earlier, Ganguly also posted a cryptic Tweet about the coaching matter. "The coach's significance in one's life, their guidance, and relentless training shape the future of any person, both on and off the field. So choose the coach and institution wisely...." The next head coach will begin his tenure soon after the T20 World Cup in the USA and Caribbean next month. The incumbent Rahul Dravid, whose tenure began in December 2021, has decided against seeking an extension.

Dravid, who was given a six-month extension post the 50-over World Cup in October-November, has his contract expiring after the T20 World Cup next month. The former India captain has the option of re-applying for the post. Meanwhile, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has received more than 3,000 applicants for



the post but The Indian Express understands that most of them are from fake names including former cricketers and politicians. Key parameters to become Indian coach - The Coach will be responsible for developing a world-class cricket team which delivers sustained success in all conditions and formats, inspiring current and future generations of cricketers and stakeholders with their approach to the game. - The Head Coach will have overall responsibility for the performance and management of the India Men's team in all three formats of the game. - The Head Coach will lead a team of specialist coaches and support staff and will be responsible for defining their roles, performance and ongoing development.

'Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli open the innings, a left-arm spinner will...': Irfan Pathan cautions drawbacks of not having left-hander as opener



GNS News Agency, June 6

Ahead of the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the USA India has a slight dilemma about their batting order. While Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rohit Sharma as openers would provide a left-hand right-hand option there is a school of thought that the team should open with Virat Kohli who has been in majestic form in the recently concluded Indian Premier League for Royal Challengers Bengaluru. "If Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli open the innings, a left-arm spinner will come in straight away, and

you need to counter that. Without a left-hand batter, you will struggle, especially in a big game," former Indian cricketer Irfan Pathan would analyze on Star Sports.

"But if Virat bats at number 3, it opens the slot for Jaiswal. A right-hand, left-hand combination is crucial, especially when the ball is moving or spinning. Most teams have left-arm spinners who can take the ball away from right-handers. This is why you need a left-hander at the top of the order," Pathan added. Would have gone with younger core. Another former cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar though said he would have gone completely with a "younger core set of players" but since Kohli and Rohit are in the squad there is no choice for the Indian team but to open with them. "It is impossible to have Virat Kohli batting at number 3, because then you don't get the full value of Virat. And Rohit Sharma, as well, has to open. So, India, in a way, have forced itself to have only one kind of combination, two right-handers. Unfortunately, Jaiswal will have to sit out," he said. "I would have gone completely with a new lot; then, you would have had a lot more flair and it would be something different. India have trusted the seniors, a move that hasn't worked over the years. Let's hope it works this time," Manjrekar concluded.

'When the time is right': Chris Woakes posts a heartfelt message on return to international cricket

GNS News Agency, June 6

England cricketer Chris Woakes has revealed his absence in international cricket in recent times is due to the death of his father. "The last month has been the most challenging of my life when unfortunately my Dad passed away at the beginning of May," he posted in a story on his Instagram account on Saturday. "I've spent the last few weeks with the people most important to me, my family. We're all obviously grieving and trying to get through what is undoubtedly the hardest moments in our lives," he added. He also wrote he would be back when the time was right. "I will be back playing cricket for Warwickshire, who my Dad loved dearly when the time is right for me and my family." The 35-year-old did not feature for Punjab Kings in the recently concluded Indian Premier League. He was also left out of England's squad for this month's Twenty20 World Cup in the United States and West Indies. The 35-year-old, who was part of England's T20 and one-day international World Cup-winning teams, has played 48 tests, 122 ODIs and 33 T20Is, taking 353 international wickets.

Despite the absence of a high-quality all-rounder



like Woakes England does have a well-rounded squad. England team is not only respected for its bowling innovations and big-hitting accelerations but is also reasonably well-behaved and a non-cribbing side. That is why, unlike in the game's older formats, no one quite grudges their big wins. They also don't bottle up in this format. England squad: Jos Buttler (c), Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Jonathan Bairstow, Harry Brook, Sam Curran, Ben Duckett, Tom Hartley, Will Jacks, Chris Jordan, Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Reece Topley, Mark Wood.