

# absolute india

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Grooms, seniors, youth, first-timers, transgenders celebrate festival of democracy in 5 LS seats

Cong Corporator slams K'taka CM, says gang behind daughter's murder

## TO..FOR..BY..THE PEOPLE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The first of the seven-phased Lok Sabha elections recorded a high voter turnout of over 60 per cent despite the heat wave.

The voting percentage is likely to go up after forms from other polling stations would be obtained as polling is scheduled till late in many constituencies and voters reaching the polling stations till the end of polling hour have been allowed to cast their vote.



Final figures will be known by Saturday

after the scrutiny of form 17A.

On Friday, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India Rajiv Kumar and other election commissioners constantly monitored the progress of polling from ECI headquarters in Nirvachan Sadan, where a state-of-the-art control room was set up. Similar control rooms were set up at state and district levels too. From bustling city centres to remote villages, the polling stations witnessed a colourful convergence of voters spanning generations and varied backgrounds.

In Chhattisgarh, Left Wing Extremist (LWE) affected areas embraced the power of the ballot over the bullet, choosing the path of peace and democracy. Around 56 villages in Bastar polled their vote in a polling booth set up in their own village for the first time for a Lok Sabha election. In Andaman and Nicobar

Islands, voters belonging to the tribal communities also came out in large numbers. Shompen tribe of Great Nicobar made history by casting their votes for the first time in a general election. In phase 1, polling has been completed for 10 States/UTs to elect the 18th Lok Sabha along with polling for the state legislative assemblies of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

### MANIPUR'S TWO LS SEATS RECORD 68 PER CENT VOTING

**Imphal:** Amidst stray incidents of violence, including vandalisation of polling booths, firing, and clashes, around 68 per cent of 15.44 lakh voters cast their votes in two Lok Sabha seats (one partially) in ethnic violence-hit Manipur on Friday, officials said. Police officials said that incidents of vandalisation of polling booths, damage to the EVMS by angry voters, firing between rival groups, and clashes among the rival party supporters were reported from Bishnupur, Imphal East and Imphal West districts, leaving six people injured. Election officials said that they are collecting the details of the incidents in different parts of the state. Given the nearly year-long ethnic violence, unprecedented security arrangements, comprising central forces, state police and Manipur Police commands, were made in the state to foil any incidents of violence.

Hubballi | Agencies

In a major embarrassment to the Congress government, as the political slugfest over the murder of a student on Thursday in Karnataka intensified on Friday, the girl's father Niranjan Hiremath slammed CM Siddaramaiah.

Niranjan Hiremath, who is a Congress Corporator, accused CM Siddaramaiah of making a statement which would bring disrepute to his family. Earlier, after holding a meeting with the police department, while talking to the media about the case, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had stated that any murder takes place due to personal reasons. "It is the duty of the government to maintain law and order. The government will carry out its duty," CM Siddaramaiah told the Press. Speaking to the media, Niranjan Hiremath stated that along with the arrested accused Fayaz Kondinakoppa, four other persons were involved in the case and they should be arrested. "We have given names of all four persons to the police and an investigation is being done," he



revealed. "Those four people are outsiders. The incident had not taken place in just one day. The gang had conspired for a long time. They had planned either to trap her or to execute her. They have been threatening her in that backdrop. However, the girl had not heeded to their threats," Niranjan Hiremath stated. "Neha did not tell us all this but we knew that she was scared of some activity around her. We did not see fear for her life in her and did not enquire much. The CCTV footage shows her walking with confidence in the campus before the murder. If she was scared she wouldn't have gone to college," he said. "Hon'ble CM Siddaramaiah someone is misguiding you. I am a Congress Corporator. You have to understand this. My family is undergoing a crisis, we are in tears.

### 51 PC VOTER TURNOUT TILL 5 PM IN RAJASTHAN

**Jaipur:** Voting in 12 Lok Sabha seats in Rajasthan came to an end at 6 p.m. on Friday with a turnout of 50.87 per cent recorded till 5 p.m. While 50.27 per cent of votes were registered via EVM, postal ballot polling stood at 0.62 per cent.

Ganganagar recorded the highest turnout at 60.29 per cent, followed by Churu (56.52 per cent), Alwar (53.31 per cent), Jaipur (56.57 per cent), Nagaur (49.92 per cent), Bikaner (48.87 per cent), Sikar (48.85 per cent), Jaipur Rural (48.67 per cent), Dausa (45.63 per cent), Bharatpur (45.48 per cent), Jhunjhunu (44.97 per cent), and Karauli-Dholpur (42.53 per cent). A few incidents of clashes were reported from the state during polling on Friday.

### WORLD'S HIGHEST POLLING STATION IN HIMACHAL

**Shimla:** World's highest polling station Tashigang, located at a height of 15,256 feet above sea level, in Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul-Spiti district, which is part of the Mandi parliamentary constituency, has 52 registered voters, said Assistant Election Officer Harsh Negi on Friday.

There were 45 voters in Tashigang in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Of these, 27 were men and 18 women voters. In the 2021 Mandi parliamentary by-elections, there were 48 voters, which included 29 men and 22 women. And in the 2022 assembly elections, there were 52 voters comprising 30 men and 22 women.

Tashigang in the Spiti Valley remains covered with snow for six months in a year. There is a shortage of oxygen there. Before 2019, the highest polling station was Hikkim (14,400 feet) located close to Tashigang. But in 2019, Tashigang was made a polling station. For years, Hikkim (14,400 feet), close to Tashigang, was one of the highest polling booths.

## Open "Mohabbat Ki Dukaan" By Defeating Hatred: Rahul Gandhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As polling began in the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls on Friday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi urged voters to strengthen democracy and open 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' in every corner of the country by defeating hatred.

"Today is the first phase of voting! Remember, each and every vote of yours is going to decide the future of India's democracy and its generations," Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on 'X'.

"Go out and strengthen democracy by applying the balm of your vote on the wounds inflicted on the soul of the country in the last 10 years," he said.



Open 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' in every corner of the country by defeating hatred, the Congress leader added.

Gandhi also shared a graphic of the key Congress guarantees to the people, including the right to apprenticeship, a legal guarantee of MSP and a nationwide caste census. The 2024 Lok Sabha polls kicked off Friday with polling being held for the first

phase scheduled in 102 seats spread across 21 states and Union territories.

Among those in the fray are Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, Sarbananda Sonowal and Bhupendra Yadav, Gaurav Gogoi of the Congress, the DMK's Kanimozhi and K Annamalai of the BJP.

Assembly elections in Arunachal Pradesh (60 seats) and Sikkim (32 seats) are also being held simultaneously.

While the BJP-led NDA under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a stronger majority, the constituents of the opposition INDIA bloc are hoping for a rebound after facing reverses in the 2014 and 2019 elections.

### INDIA DELIVERS BRAHMOS MISSILE SYSTEM TO PHILIPPINES

**New Delhi:** India on Friday delivered the Brahmos supersonic cruise missile system to the Philippines, as part of the \$374.9 million contract signed between the two countries in 2022.

A video that has now gone viral on social media shows sweets being shared after an Indian Air Force C-17 aircraft landed at the Clark Air Base, a Philippine Air Force base on Luzon Island.

Defence experts maintain that this deal for a shore-based version of an anti-ship cruise missile with a range of 290 km was the first major international export order for the Indian defence sector.

India has delivered this missile system to the Philippines amid the ongoing tension between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea.

Considered one of the most accurate and successful missile programmes globally, the Brahmos supersonic cruise missile is a joint venture between India and Russia.

Wardha (Maharashtra) | Agencies

Criticising the Congress and the INDIA bloc, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that the unwavering faith of the people in 'Modi's Guarantee' is giving sleepless nights to the Opposition alliance leaders.

"Every vote of the family members who came to Wardha to bless me will inspire me to work harder. The Congress and the INDIA bloc are against development and the farmers and, because of that, the condition of farmers is quite miserable. It takes courage to give guarantees as it is not just words, but efforts made for every moment," PM Modi said here at a rally amid thundering applause and slogans like 'Modi Modi' and 'Jai Shri Ram'.



The rally was organised in Wardha to garner support for BJP candidate Ramdas Tadas and another nominee, Navneet Kaur-Rana from the Amravati constituency. "In 10 years, we have lifted 25 crore people out of poverty. Water connection was provided to 11 crore people, 4 crore people benefited from Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. More than 50 crore people were connected with the bank and the government worked to deliver electricity to every vil-

lage. Before 2014, there was an atmosphere of depression in the country but the situation has changed drastically in the last 10 years," PM Modi said.

PM Modi added that 3 crore new houses will be built in the next five years as proposed in the party's manifesto. PM Modi also promised that people above 70 years of age will get free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh and if there are any problems, he will fulfill the guarantees.

"We have a close eye on the development of Vidharbha region which lagged during the Congress regime. Now, there is a network of roads and railways in Vidharbha," said PM Modi. PM Modi also made a mention of the functioning of the MahaYuti government comprising BJP, Shiv Sena, and NCP for the development of Maharashtra.

## AIR INDIA SUSPENDS FLIGHTS TO AND FROM DUBAI TILL APRIL 21

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Suspension of Tata-owned Air India flights to and from Dubai will continue till Sunday, the airline said on Friday.

Following severe flooding in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Air India suspended its flight operations on Wednesday.

"We regret to inform cancellation of its flights to and from Dubai due to continued operational disruptions at Dubai Airport," it said in a statement issued on Friday.

"We are doing our best to get affected customers on their way by re-accommodating them on flights as soon as operations resume.



Customers booked on our flights with valid tickets for travel till April 21 will be offered a one-time waiver on rescheduling and full refunds for cancellation," it said.

However, IndiGo, which had also suspended flight operations on April 17, due to flooding at Dubai airport said that they had resumed their operations at 1.30 p.m. on Thursday.

On Tuesday, the UAE, a Gulf federation of seven emirates, was lashed by downpours described by its National Centre of Meteorology as the heaviest rainfall in the past 75 years.

As a result, the federal government announced extending remote working for all state employees.

## SENIOR IPS OFFICER NALIN PRABHAT TO HEAD NSG

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Nalin Prabhat, a 1992 batch IPS officer of Andhra Pradesh cadre, has been appointed as the Director General of the National Security Guard (NSG).

"Nalin Prabhat, presently working as an Additional Director General in the CRPF, has been appointed as the Director General of the National Security Guard (NSG) in Level-16 of the pay matrix from the date of joining the post and up to August 31, 2028, i.e., date of his superannuation or until further orders, whichever is earlier," read the official order.

The Central government has also appointed Sapna Tewari, an Odisha cadre IPS officer of 1992 batch, as the Special Director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB).

"Sapna Tewari, Additional Director, Intelligence Bureau, has been appointed as the Special Director (Level-16 in the pay



matrix), IB, on 'in-situ' basis by temporarily upgrading the post of Additional Director held by the officer for a tenure of two years from the date of assumption of charge up to the date of her superannuation, i.e., April 30, 2026, or until further orders, whichever is earlier," the order read.

## Indian Railways to run record 2,742 more trains to clear summer travel rush

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian Railways will operate a record-breaking 9,111 trips across the country to cater to the anticipated surge in travel during the summer season, the Ministry of Railways said on Friday.

This translates to an increase of 2,742 trips over the 6,369 trips offered during the summer of 2023. The additional trains have been planned to connect key destinations across the country, ensuring seamless travel on major railway routes, the ministry said.

All zonal railways spread across India have geared up to operate these additional trips, catering to the summer travel rush from states like Tamil Nadu,

Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi.

Planning and running of additional trains is a continuous process for which inputs are taken from all the communication channels like media reports, social media platforms, and the Railway Integrated helpline number 139, apart from details of waitlist passengers in the PRS system, to assess the demand of trains on a particular route. Based on this requirement, the number of trains and number of trips are augmented, according to the official statement. During the summer season, Zonal Railways have also been instructed to ensure the avail-



ability of drinking water at railway stations. Elaborate crowd control arrangements are made at all major and important railway stations. Senior officers are stationed at these stations to monitor all the activities to regulate the crowd in a systematic manner, the statement added.

RPF personnel have been deputed at originating stations to ensure a queue system for entry in General Class coaches. RPF staff are also deployed in the CCTV Control Room to keep a close watch on the crowded areas and render real-time assistance to passengers. Passengers can book their tickets in these additional trains through Railway Ticket counters or the IRCTC website/app.





# CANT RISK PARALYSIS JUST TO GET BAIL: CM KEJRIWAL TO DELHI COURT ON ED'S ALLEGATIONS OF DELIBERATELY INCREASING SUGAR LEVELS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, on Friday accused the ED of misrepresenting the diet chart prepared by his doctor, and opposed the agency's allegations of deliberately increasing sugar levels, saying that he cannot risk "paralysis" just to get bail.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja of Rouse Avenue Court reserved her verdict for Monday on CM Kejriwal's application seeking consultation with a doctor for April 22, and directed Tihar Jail to file any reply, if required, by Saturday.

"The ED claimed that I want to increase my blood sugar levels to get bail. Am I going to risk paralysis to get bail? Whatever food I had was as per the diet chart prepared by the doctor prior to arrest," Senior Advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for CM Kejriwal, said.

The AAP argued that the ED is being "petty" and "politicising" his food.

On Thursday, the probe agency had alleged that CM Kejriwal was deliberately eating mangoes and other high-carb food in Tihar Jail to raise his blood sugar levels to build a case for bail.

The Delhi Chief Minister is in judicial custody till April 23 for his



alleged involvement in the excise policy case.

The ED has alleged that CM Kejriwal is consciously consuming items like tea with sugar, banana, sweets (1/2 pieces), poori, aloo sabji, etc. on a regular basis, despite being a Type 2 diabetes patient, "knowing very well that consumption of such items results in an increase in sugar levels." The agency also said that this is being done to create a medical emergency "to obtain sympathetic treatment from the court on medical grounds." CM Kejriwal on Friday

moved a fresh application seeking direction to jail authorities to administer insulin and allow him to consult with doctors through video conferencing daily for 15 minutes for his acute diabetes and fluctuating blood sugar levels.

CM Kejriwal's counsel said that his client had mangoes thrice and aloo puri only once.

"The allegation is that I have been consuming mangoes... Out of 48 meals sent from home, only three times mangoes were there... No mangoes have been sent after April 8.

The mangoes have been made to look like sugar bullets. Their sugar level is much less than brown rice or white rice," Singhvi told the court.

"I only use sugar free in my tea. How petty, political and ridiculous ED can be? Their statements are completely false and malicious. Just because you have a lot of influence in the media you are able to publish that I am having aloo puri even though this meal was sent once during pooja," he told the court.

Singhvi further argued, "Am I a gangster that I cannot even be allowed to have 15 minutes VC consultation with my doctor? We have had democracy for 75 years but I am seeing such an approach for the first time."

The ED opposed Singhvi's submission, claiming that the content of CM Kejriwal's diet did not match the prescribed diet of the doctor.

It further opposed CM Kejriwal's application seeking consultation with a doctor, saying that the jail had sufficient medical facilities.

"What has ED got to do with this hearing? It is between me and jail and court? They are having a media trial and the Press is publishing anything it wants," Senior Counsel Ramesh Gupta for CM Kejriwal argued.

# PM 'cursing' Congress out of despair: Maharashtra Cong Chief

Wardha/Nagpur | Agencies

Taking umbrage at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statements attacking the Congress at an election rally in Wardha, the state party Chief Nana F. Patole countered them as "false and politically motivated", here on Friday.

At the poll meeting, PM Modi slammed the INDIA bloc and Congress of being anti-development and anti-farmers owing to which the condition of the tillers had deteriorated in the state.

Refuting the contentions, Patole termed the PM's statements as false, baseless, and politically driven, arising out of despair as the Bharatiya Janata Party sees a defeat in the 2024 elections.

Patole emphasised that massive and magnificent development of the country took place on all fronts in the 60 years of Congress rule from Independence till the Modi government came to power, they started 'cursing' the Congress, and are now forced to seek votes in the name of religion and Lord Ram.

"India stood tall and strong before the world... If there was an air of depression in the country as alleged, then such all-around progress would not have been achieved during the successive Congress regimes.

However, the BJP is only seeing gloom everywhere and blaming others for its failures," said Patole.

The Congress Chief added that the PM's statements seem to convey an impression that everything started happening in the



country only after 2014 to misguide the people.

"In the Wardha rally, PM Modi made unfounded accusations against the Congress, Rahul Gandhi, and the INDIA bloc. The BJP, which has continuously insulted great icons like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, B. R. Ambedkar and others, has lost the right to seek votes in their names," said Patole.

Taking a potshot, Patole pointed out how a 'Jal Pujan' was performed in December 2016 for a grand memorial to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in the Arabian Sea off Mumbai, but even after eight years not a single brick has been laid for it, though the BJP invokes the great Maratha's name to seek votes.

# Wall collapse near historic Ahmedabad site: 2 dead, 3 injured, vehicles buried under debris

Ahmedabad | Agencies

The collapse of a wall near the historic site of the Dada Hari Ni Vav (stepwell) in Asarwa, Ahmedabad, has resulted in two fatalities and three injuries, with over five vehicles reported buried under the debris.

The fire brigade, upon receiving the distress call in the afternoon, dispatched two teams to the scene.

Despite early intervention by locals, the fire brigade continued the search operation, assessing the site for any additional victims and examining the structural integrity of the surrounding area to prevent further mishaps, sources said.

The residents of the area who were the first responders



pulled five victims from the rubble before professional aid arrived.

The bodies of Mansi Kuniram Jatav (55) and Siddique Pathan (40), were pulled out of the debris. Three injured individuals,

Ganpatsinh Gajusinh Vaghela (50), Mahendra Sindhaji Thakor (37), and Shaheed Nizamuddin (40), were transported to the Civil Hospital by ambulance and are currently receiving critical care.

# TWO DEAD, SEVEN MISSING AS BOAT CAPSIZES IN MAHANADI IN ODISHA'S JHARSUGUDA

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

Bhubaneswar: Two persons died while seven others were missing after a boat carrying more than 50 passengers, including women and children, capsized in the Mahanadi River in Odisha's Jharsuguda district on Friday, officials said.

Official sources claimed that all the passengers were from the Kharsani area of neighbouring Chhattisgarh and going to Patharseni in the Ambabhona block of Odisha's Bargarh district.

The people were crossing the Mahanadi at Sharda in Lakhapur block of Jharsuguda when the boat overturned in the middle of the river at around 3 p.m. Fire services personnel from Ambabhona Fire Station and locals have so far rescued 30 passengers while the search is on to trace seven missing people - four women and three children.

Expressing grief over the tragedy, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced an ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh for the next of kin of the victims. He also instructed the district administration to provide all necessary medical assistance to rescued persons.

# Gujarat: Over 250 taken ill due to food poisoning at wedding, hospitalised

Veraval | Agencies

At least 250 guests at a wedding ceremony were taken ill due to suspected food poisoning in Mathasuliya village in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district.

After consuming buttermilk served at the event on Friday, people exhibited acute symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting, sources said.

Health officials are investigating the source of contamination to prevent further incidents.

Emergency services were called to the scene as health condition of many worsened, necessitating immediate medical attention.

The affected individuals were admitted to a nearby hospital today for treatment and observation. "The village hospital faced challenges in dealing with the aftermath of a massive food poi-



soning incident at a wedding. With over 250 affected individuals seeking medical help, the facility quickly became overwhelmed due to insufficient bed capacity," sources said. Many victims were forced to sleep on the floor or make do with hospital benches due to the lack of

available space. Additionally, the hospital struggled with a staff shortage, complicating efforts to provide adequate care to all those affected," the sources said. Some patients are doing fine now, while others are still admitted.

# Pak-born Bangladeshi national held in Tripura with Indian documents

Agartala | Agencies

A 25-year-old man was arrested in Tripura while attempting to cross into Bangladesh illegally, officials said here on Friday, adding that he claimed to be a Pakistani-born Bangladeshi national who had travelled across India.

The official said the youth, named Ayan Alam was detained by border villagers at Jalefa in South Tripura district on Thursday night and was handed over to the police later.

Alam's mobile phone, a few thousand rupees and some Indian documents, including an Aadhaar card, were recovered from his possession. The documents were being examined to corroborate the truth of his confession and his Pakistan connection, the official told the media.

"During interrogation, the detainee said that he was a Pakistan-born Bangladeshi citizen. Thorough interrogation revealed that he was from Mayarampur village of Brahmanbaria



district of Bangladesh," the official said.

Alam confessed that his parents had shifted from Bangladesh to Pakistan 25 years ago and he was born in Pakistan, the official said. Quoting the youth, the official added that the Pakistani authorities had taken action against his family due to the non-availability of valid documents and Ayan's father returned to Bangladesh with him in 2011. His mother, four brothers and four sisters, however, stayed back in Pakistan.

The official said that during questioning, Ayan also confessed that he illegally entered India (through the West Bengal border) from Bangladesh in 2014 and then moved to Kerala, where he worked for a company for two years before moving to Delhi. The youth claimed that recently he had gone to Kashmir and had unsuccessfully tried to cross into Pakistan. He then returned to the national capital where the Delhi Police Special Branch detained him on March 15.

# Logistics man of Lawrence Bishnoi syndicate nabbed in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A 20-year-old member of the Lawrence Bishnoi syndicate was arrested for allegedly providing logistic support to the gang after receiving instructions from its leaders, an official said on Friday.

Police said that they have also recovered seven stolen bikes from the possession of the accused, identified as Sunny a.k.a Prince, a resident of Katewara, which were meant to be supplied to gang members to execute the crime.

According to police, on April 14, specific input was received regarding the movement of an active gang member of the Lawrence Bishnoi, Kala Rana and Kapil Mann gangs in the Bawana area.

"A raid was conducted and Sunny was nabbed. When frisked, a loaded single-shot



country-made pistol and two live cartridges were recovered from his possession," said the Deputy Commissioner of Police (outer-north) Ravi Kumar Singh. On interrogation, Sunny disclosed initially that he was enticed by the criminals of his village in Katewara and he got involved in illegal

activities such as weapon possession and delivery later on. "As his association expanded through social media, he came in contact with many more members of the gang. He used to facilitate logistic support, including motorcycles, to the gang members," said the DCP.

# Assam: 30-year-old man abducted, kidnappers post pictures on social media

Guwahati | Agencies

A relative of an executive member of Assam's North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) in Dima Hasao district was allegedly kidnapped by a proscribed group.

The victim is identified as Prasanjit Naidang, the younger brother of Monjit Naidang, Executive Member of NCHAC. He was allegedly kidnapped by a group purportedly named United Dimasa Liberation Army (UDLA). picture of the victim in their custody on social media platforms. The pictures went viral on Friday.

Superintendent of Police in Dima Hasao district, Mayank Kumar told reporter on Friday: "We have also received information about the kidnapping of Naidang. An investigation was



launched following a police complaint. However, I can not say much about the matter as of now because the group claiming to kidnap the victim did not have much existence in the region."

The police officer said that an investigation team has been probing details of the alleged proscribed group. Meanwhile, the family has lodged a police complaint of kidnapping.

"Prasanjit Naidang, the 30-year-old victim, was recently married," Kumar added. Further investigation is underway.

# Congress, CPI-M not part of INDIA bloc in Bengal: Mamata Banerjee

Kolkata | Agencies

Trinamool Congress supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claimed on Friday that the Congress and the CPI-M are not constituents of the opposition INDIA bloc in Bengal.

"In Bengal, the Congress and the CPI-M are clandestine partners of the BJP. They are not the constituents of the INDIA bloc in the state. So do not vote for them in West Bengal, as that will mean helping the BJP indirectly," the Chief Minister said while addressing an election rally in Murshidabad.

She also launched a scathing attack against the



Election Commission of India (ECI) for the latter's emphasis on the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPE) over the state police.

"How can you conduct the polls by totally discarding the

state police? Is this a ploy to ensure that people don't vote freely," the Chief Minister questioned.

She also explained why she is against the implementation of the Centre's

Ayushman Bharat scheme. "There are lots of restrictions on availing the benefits of this Central scheme. Even the owner of a two-wheeler cannot avail of its benefits. We want the scheme to be for all," the Chief Minister said.

CM Banerjee also appealed to the migrant workers from the minority community who came home for Eid not to leave the state before casting their votes.

"The migrant workers who came home for the Ramadan month should not leave the state without casting their votes. If you do not cast your votes, your names will be deleted from the Aadhaar list and enrolled in the lists for the NRC and CAA," the Chief Minister claimed.

# Another MLA set to leave BRS to join Congress

Hyderabad | Agencies

Another MLA is set to say goodbye to the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

T. Prakash Goud, the BRS MLA from Rajendranagar constituency in Greater Hyderabad, called on Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Friday.

He is likely to join the ruling party in a day or two along with his followers.

Prakash Goud was elected from Rajendranagar in the recent elections for the fourth consecutive term. He has won all the four elections from Rajendranagar since 2009, when the constituency was created in the delimitation process. He was first elected as Telugu Desam Party (TDP) candidate. He

was re-elected on TDP ticket in 2014 but later defected to TRS (now BRS). He was re-elected on a BRS ticket in 2023. If Prakash Goud joins the Congress, he will be the fourth BRS MLA to do so in less than a month. Earlier, D. Nagender from Khairatabad constituency in Hyderabad, Kadiam Srihari from Station Ganpur in Warangal district and Tellam Venkat Rao, from Bhadrachalam in Khammam district had defected to the Congress party.

Nagender, a former minister, has been fielded by the Congress as its candidate for Secunderabad Lok Sabha seat. The ruling party has also given Warangal MP ticket to Kadiam Srihari's daughter Kadiam Kavya after she pulled out of the contest as BRS candidate.





## COUNTRY NEEDS A STRONG GOVERNMENT FOR GROWTH: PM NARENDRA MODI



**Team Absolute | Bhopal**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that India needs to have a strong

government, especially at a time when the world has been facing a war-like situation. The world has witnessed the Israel-Hamas conflict, Russia-

Ukraine war, and the recent Iran-Israel tensions, with concerns emerging from many sections over their impact on global peace and stability. Speaking at a rally

in the Damoh Parliamentary constituency in Madhya Pradesh, PM Modi said a strong government can take the country towards growth, and the development in the last 10 years is an indicator of that.

The polling in the Damoh Lok Sabha seat in the Bundelkhand region will be held in the second phase of polling on April 26.

"During the Covid pandemic, lakhs of Indian citizens were stuck in different parts of the world, and they were all brought to their homes safely," PM Modi said.

"Wherever Indian citizens face problems, be it during Covid pandemic, or in war-struck countries, I have made it sure that every citizen of the country returns home safely. It could happen because you (people) had elected a strong government. India needs a strong government in such a scenario," PM Modi said.

Targeting the Congress, PM Modi said the party had been in power for the last several decades but their primary priority was to add up to the bank balance.

## Presiding officer suspended for sharing pics from polling booth



**Team Absolute | Bhopal**

A presiding officer in the Jabalpur Lok Sabha constituency in Madhya Pradesh was suspended on Friday after he clicked photographs inside a polling booth and shared them on WhatsApp.

Ratan Dagar was on duty at a polling station in the Panagar Assembly segment under the Jabalpur parliamentary constituency. As per official sources, Dagar clicked photographs inside the polling booth and shared them on WhatsApp, which is a violation of the

election rules. Meanwhile, 45 per cent voter turnout was recorded till 1 p.m. in the six Lok Sabha constituencies where polling is being held in the first phase on Friday -- Chhindwara, Balaghat, Mandla, Sidhi, Shahdol, and Jabalpur.

## In U-turn after joining BJP, Chhindwara Mayor backs Congress's Nakul Nath

**Team Absolute | Chhindwara**

On the day of polling in the high-profile Chhindwara Lok Sabha seat in Madhya Pradesh on Friday, the city's mayor Vikram Ahake, who recently joined the BJP, urged people to vote for Congress' Nakul Nath.

"Soon after joining a political party, I was feeling suffocated. I felt that I was not doing the right thing with a person who has developed Chhindwara," Ahake said in a video message shared on social media. Nakul Nath always devoted himself to the constituency's betterment, be it the education sector, providing treatment to people, or carrying out development works, said Ahake. "In the future, I will get a lot of opportunities to do politics. I don't know what will happen to me, but if I don't stand with my



leader Kamal Nath and Nakul Nath today... as they have done a lot for me... I appeal to the voters to ensure the victory of Nakul Nath (and his father Kamal Nath) with a huge margin," Ahake said in the video message. The BJP has fielded Vivek Bunty Sahu against Nakul Nath and many senior party leaders visited the constituency to campaign for him. Chhindwara is among the six Lok Sabha seats where polling is underway in the first

phase of the parliamentary elections. The Chhindwara mayor joined the BJP on April 1 in the presence of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and the state party president Vishnu Dutt Sharma in the state capital. Of the 29 Lok Sabha seats in MP, Chhindwara is the only constituency that the BJP had lost in 2019. Former MP chief minister Kamal Nath had won from this seat nine times.



**Stars:** Along with Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and Cabinet Minister Udaypratap Singh, Minister of State for Public Health and Medical Education Narendra Shivaji Patel participated in the road show in support of Narmadapuram-Narsinghpur Lok Sabha candidate Darshan Singh Chaudhary and appealed for huge victory votes to BJP. Patel said that the zeal and enthusiasm of the crowd gathered in the road show is giving the message of BJP's massive victory.

## SHIVRAJ SINGH CHAUHAN FILED NOMINATION PAPERS

**Team Absolute | Bhopal**

Bharatiya Janata Party is the only party which is the world's largest party of ideological and cultural ideas. I am a public servant and I thank the central and state leadership including Prime Minister Narendra Modi for giving me the opportunity to serve the people of Vidisha-Raisen. Vidisha-Raisen is the swing of my childhood, the flowerbed of my youth and the Kashi of my old age. During our days of struggle, we struggled to serve the public and even went to jail during the Emergency. Even today, daughters are being strangled to death for the desire to have grandchildren. I have a lot of respect for daughters. When I became the Chief Minister, I came up with the Ladli Lakshmi to Ladli Brahmin scheme, so that the standard of living of sisters and daughters could be improved. Tried to uplift the farmers and students through many schemes.

Former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan said this while



addressing a public meeting in Raisen. Chauhan said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country is on the

path of continuous development and India will become a world leader by 2024. India's voice is being heard in the world and the countries of the

world are saluting Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Lok Sabha election in-charge Dr. Mahendra Singh was especially present in the public meeting. Chauhan said that regarding the resolution letter of Bharatiya Janata Party, Rahul Gandhi said that there is nothing in it for the poor. Rahul Gandhi neither understands Hindi nor English. Everything is clearly written in the resolution letter, but Rahul Gandhi did not understand. Now we cannot explain Rahul Gandhi by writing in Italian language.

Sonia Gandhi left Rae Bareilly and Rahul Gandhi left Amethi seat and chose Wayanad. Congress never did anything for the country. Under the double engine government, development is being carried out at a fast pace in the country and the state. During the Congress rule, there was neither electricity nor water available during the time of Bantadhar, but the state government has worked to make every village of the state happy by providing facilities from education to irrigation to the farmers.

## The bride cast her vote before bidding farewell in Mandla

**Mandla | Agencies**

There is tremendous enthusiasm among the voters in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh. In Mandla parliamentary constituency, a bride took up the responsibility of her franchise before bidding farewell.

A scene that made everyone happy was seen at polling station 112 of Narayanganj in Maili village of Mandla parliamentary constituency of Madhya Pradesh.

Here Asha Rani Singrore came to vote before her departure. Voting is taking place in six parliamentary constituencies of the state and there is enthusiasm in every section regarding



voting. Be it youth, elders or

women, everyone is exercising their franchise.

## SUNIL GARG APPOINTED AS CHIEF ADVISER OF AGARWAL MAHASABHA



**Bhopal:** State president of Madhya Pradesh Agarwal Mahasabha DP Goyal, appointed Sunil Garg as a Chief Adviser of Mahasabha. His tenure will be as per the presidential. Sunil Garg is a chair person of Shri Ram Advertising agency.

## Workshop on ISN Evidence Synthesis and Meta-Analysis inaugurated at AIIMS Bhopal

**Team Absolute | Bhopal**

A two-day workshop on ISN evidence synthesis and meta-analysis was inaugurated today by Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal, who emphasized the paramount importance of evidence-based medicine in the current medical landscape. In his address, Prof. Singh underscored the critical role of systematic reviews and meta-analysis in advancing medical research and clinical practice. "Systematic reviews and meta-analysis offer a structured approach to distill and synthesize disparate research findings, empowering healthcare professionals to deliver optimal patient care grounded in the best available evidence" he added. Prof. Singh also highlighted the commitment of the research cell at AIIMS Bhopal to promote rigorous research in this domain, recognizing it as pivotal for enhancing healthcare out-



comes. Joining the inaugural session virtually, Prof. (Dr) Meenu Singh, Executive Director of AIIMS Rishikesh, emphasized the evolving significance of systematic reviews and meta-analysis over the past two decades. She stressed the imperative for healthcare professionals to leverage these methodologies effectively in their practice, aligning with contemporary medical advancements. Prior to the inauguration, Prof. (Dr) Shikha Malik, in

her welcoming address, unveiled plans for new courses to be initiated soon within the pediatric department. She expressed gratitude for the unwavering support and motivation provided by Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh, which will catalyze increased research activities within the institution. The workshop is organized by department of Pediatrics, AIIMS Bhopal in association with International Society of Nephrology. In the ever-evolving landscape of medicine, evidence synthesis and meta-analysis have emerged as indispensable tools for healthcare professionals seeking to navigate the vast expanse of medical literature and distill rigorous evidence to inform clinical decision-making. Delegates from different parts of the country including AIIMS Bhopal and various medical colleges across the state are participating, reflecting a collective commitment to advancing medical research and practice.

## Only BJP government can do all round development of Bundelkhand: Vishnudatt Sharma

**Team Absolute | Khajuraho**

The BJP government is continuously developing the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During the time of Congress Party which ruled the country for years, the people of Bundelkhand had to yearn for drinking water. Congress made the people of Bundelkhand yearn for even drinking water, and only indulged in corruption in the name of development of Bundelkhand. After the coming of BJP government in Madhya Pradesh in 2003 and Bharatiya Janata Party government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, the

development of Bundelkhand has gained momentum. Now the Prime Minister has gifted the Ken-Betwa Link Project worth Rs 44 thousand 605 crore to create a green and prosperous Bundelkhand.

If anyone can truly develop Bundelkhand, it is the BJP government. State President of Bharatiya Janata Party and Khajuraho MP Vishnudatt Sharma said this on Friday while doing road show and public relations and dialogue in various villages including Amanganj of Gunnaur assembly constituency of Panna district.

BJP State President Shri Sharma said that after the formation of the Bharatiya Janata Party government at

the Center in 2014 under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, India has started on the path of development. During the tenure of the Congress Party which ruled the country for 65 years, no work was done for the upliftment of the poor in the country.

Sharma said that even today the Prime Minister has said in the meeting in Damoh that the poor of the country who do not have permanent houses will also get permanent houses built in the coming days. State President Shri Sharma said that in the last ten years, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, permanent houses have been provided to 4 crore poor people.





EDITOR'S SPECS

## Muslims to support INDIA bloc in LS polls

All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) spokesperson and Welfare Party of India leader Syed Qasim Rasool Ilyas has called on Muslims to support the INDIA bloc in the Lok Sabha elections. "Muslims should save democracy, they should uphold secularism, and that is why they should support the INDI Alliance," he said on Thursday. Ilyas said the Congress has made a lot of mistakes, "but now it seems they are trying to learn from them. If they implement what they have mentioned in their manifesto, there will be change". Urging secular parties to publicly endorse the issues of the Muslim community, the AIMPLB spokesperson said that political parties "often take a backstep when it comes to Babri Masjid issue or any other Muslim issues". Earlier addressing a media briefing on the 14th foundation day of the Welfare Party of India, he said: "We feel that the upcoming parliament election is very crucial in deciding whether the democracy will prevail or the country will drift towards autocracy..." Ilyas further said that his party has decided to contest on a "limited number of seats despite operations spreads over ten different states across the country". "We are fielding our candidates in only four constituencies -- Murshidabad and Jangipur in West Bengal, Dhule in Maharashtra and Domariyaganj in Uttar Pradesh. In the remaining 539 constituencies, we will extend our support to the INDI Alliance...we consider them as the only alternative to save democracy, protect constitutional rights and save the nation and its secular values," he added. Ilyas is the father of former Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student leader Umar Khalid.

# 'He-Rose': When Arjuna meets Achilles, and both are unarmed...

Sukant Deepak

At the heart lies a profound inquiry into the nature of heroism. Drawing parallels between iconic figures such as Arjuna from the Mahabharata and Achilles from the Iliad, the theatre production 'He-Rose' challenges conventional notions of heroism, inviting audiences to contemplate the interplay between vulnerability and courage.

While one may wonder how the Bhagavad Gita and Iliad come together, one of the points of any storytelling -- and particularly the Indian tradition of plural storytelling -- is this expansion of the unspoken.

'He-Rose, a collaboration between the French school ENSATT and the Indian theatre troupe Adishakti Laboratory (Auroville), the play, being presented by The Cultural French network in India and the National School of Drama (NSD) that premiered in Lyon, France a few months ago will be staged at Tagore Theatre in Chandigarh on April 17.

Written by Nimmy Raphael and directed by Vinay Kumar of Adishakti and assisted by Amaud Guennad of ENSATT, the play depicts the tragic saga of two mythological heroes, Arjuna from Veda Vyasa's Bhagavad Gita and Achilles from Homer's 'Iliad' is about two personalities from two different cultures in a realm between glory and tragedy.

Talking to IANS, Kumar, who has been doing theatre for around three decades now says, "Why cannot two stories collide, create an argument, like two storytellers from two distinct continents, talking to each other, or exchanging notes, and just looking at the futility of war. Would they not conclude that the collateral is too much to bear? Did Yudhishtira say at the end of the war that he did not want to inherit a kingdom of widows?" he asks.

Interestingly, both Arjuna and Achilles encounter a certain level of non-heterosexual behaviour. Arjuna discovers the femininity within while Achilles also discovers the masculinity of patriarchal understanding, and both of them break, and that's why they have second thoughts about fighting.

Stressing that war always brings out archetypes, and that is the reason why a nation and pride are all interconnected, Kumar points out that while European culture, which is primarily pegged on the 'Iliad' as a kind of history, consistently goes back to it, "we live in a country where myths hold significant importance".

"While there may be other characters in the play, the spotlight is primarily on Arjuna and Achilles. The most striking point is when Arjuna does not want to fight, seeing who is on the opposite side.

"In Achilles' case, the realisation that killing is not anymore about valour or a masculine archetype, but rather it (killing) is death. It is slow. There is slashing, cutting, killing, heaving, dismembering -- and if that does not move you, then you have a problem. But the moment they both encounter their feminine side, that exact sensitivity, both these archetypal male bodies do not want to continue on the path of bloodbath," he adds.

Considering the production derives from two major works, one wonders if there were any apprehensions in heavily reinterpreting them. "We are not looking at the notions of righteousness from everybody's perspective. In all our plays derived from mythology, what we try to do is draw out the fact that the nature of all mythical stories is to bring a philosophical debate -- which is plural. And



that is pragmatically inclusive. The moment that plurality of stories goes, you lose everything. So, our plays are primarily focusing on myth as a kind of starting point for the past. The present does not teach you anything, the future does not hold anything. Only the past teaches you," asserts Kumar.

The writer of the play, Nimmy Raphael, who has been with the theatre group for the past 23 years, insists that the entire human civilization or the very idea of human civilization is pegged on a very thin line. "Stories allow you to have a jacket to start the debate. It is a framework, and also the continuity of it."

Adding that the characters of Arjuna and Achilles have always fascinated her, and there is a need to re-look at our notions of heroes as being heroic is not valour, she says: "Both go back to war after a pause. So then, what is the understanding that we have of

human progress, the humanity that we talk about? If we were to all go and do what is our dharma, then there is no humanity, no?"

For her, the play largely talks about the fact who is benefiting, and who takes the brunt of all the catastrophe. Where do women come in war? "I do not think there is any decision-making that goes to women. They always come in the end. Yes, women and children come at the end, but they suffer the most."

Admitting that it is the utopia that we are thinking about, Raphael stresses, "I do not think the responsibility of the world lies in the artist. Because in that case, we would have been politicians."

## international

## Israel attacks Iran's Isfahan town

Tel Aviv | Agencies  
Israel has attacked Iran's Isfahan town, after which the latter activated its air defence system and suspended flights. It comes few days after Iran had attacked Israel in response to an alleged attack on the Iranian consulate in the Syrian capital of Damascus leading to the killing of seven top officers of the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps including General Mohammed Reza Zahedi.

Iranian air defences were activated in the skies over the area, according to Iranian semi-official Fars News Agency.

Three explosions rocked the east of Isfahan and near the Isfahan International Airport.

Israeli media reported that a missile strike targeted Isfahan town. It said that several senior officials were present in the Kirya military headquarters in Tel Aviv on Friday morning.

However, Iran said that there



were no missile attacks but only drone attacks.

Iranian state media on Friday reported that several small flying objects had been shot at in the skies over the central province of Isfahan.

The Iranian media reported

that flights to Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz had been suspended as of Friday morning.

The British government is stressing the need for "de-escalation and moderation" amid reports of a retaliatory attack by Israel against Iran.

Cabinet minister Mel Stride said the UK recognizes Israel's right to defend itself, while also pressing its ally to "work hard towards de-escalation."

Iran said it fired air defence systems early on Friday to shoot down drones spotted at a major air base and nuclear site near the city of Isfahan, raising fears of a wider conflagration in the region.

Unnamed US officials said Israel carried out the airstrikes, according to reports, days after Israel was targeted by a barrage of Iranian drones and missiles.

British Foreign Secretary David Cameron is discussing the developments with counterparts at the G7 foreign ministers meeting in Italy, Stride said.

The Work and Pensions Secretary told Times Radio: "I think what we should say first and foremost, of course, is this is an evolving situation. These are unconfirmed reports as at the moment.

## Japanese autoworkers escape Pakistan suicide bombing unhurt

Islamabad | Agencies

A pair of suicide bombers targeted a vehicle carrying Japanese autoworkers in southern Pakistan on Friday, in another attack aimed at foreigners in the volatile South Asian country. The early morning bombing occurred in the city of Karachi when at least five employees of Pakistan Suzuki Motors were travelling together to work from their residence, local police chief Azfar Mahesar said. The first suicide bomber detonated his explosive-laden vest near the vehicle, while the second one opened fire at the car before he was gunned down by guards, Mahesar added. All the Japanese nationals escaped unhurt. A security guard and a passer-by were wounded in the attack, which comes weeks after five Chinese workers and their local driver were killed in a suicide car bombing in the country's north-west.

The Pakistani Taliban, a group different from their Afghan counterparts in organization but follows the same



hardline Islam, was found to be behind the March attack against the Chinese.

A Pakistani staffer at Japan's embassy in Islamabad confirmed the Japanese workers were targeted and said diplomats were in touch with local authorities.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Zardari condemned Friday attack.

More than 80,000 Pakistani civilians and security forces have been killed in violence since the start of war against al-Qaeda in neighbouring Afghanistan in 2001.

There has been an uptick in violence since the Afghan Taliban regained power in Afghanistan in 2021.

## Russia admits losing supersonic bomber, Ukraine says it was shot down

Moscow | Agencies



The Russian Air Force lost one of its Tupolev Tu-22M supersonic heavy bombers on Friday. The Ministry of Defence in Moscow announced the crash was presumably due to technical causes but Ukraine said the plane had been shot down.

According to Moscow, the aircraft crashed in the Stavropol region of southern Russia while returning from a combat mission. The four crew members had ejected and three have so far been rescued. The aircraft had no ammunition on board, the ministry added. The reported crash site is around 600 kilometres behind the front line in Ukraine. Russian and Ukrainian military bloggers shared spectacular but unverified videos on social media which allegedly show the long-range bomber spinning in the air with its engine on fire. The commander of the Ukrainian Air Force, Mykola Oleshchuk, announced that this was the first time such an aircraft had been successfully shot down with a missile. The claims of both sides regarding the incident could not be independently verified.

According to the Ukrainian Air Force, Russia used several Tu-22Ms in air attacks early on Friday. They fired six cruise missiles at Ukraine but two were intercepted, the statement added.

## 7 killed in fire in Indonesia's Jakarta

Jakarta | Agencies  
Seven people were killed in a fire at a frame shop house on Mampang Prapatan Raya Street in Indonesia's capital city Jakarta, according to police.

"There are five adults and two children who were found in a warehouse on the second floor," said Mampang Police Chief Commissioner David Kanitero, adding that all the bodies have been evacuated on Friday, Xinhua news agency reported.

Meanwhile, five injured are still in intensive care at a hospital.

The fire broke out in the shop stocked with wood, paint, and paint thinner on Thursday evening. It was extinguished after 24 fire engines with 110 personnel were deployed.

## G7 meeting to end with debate on China and global issues

Capri | Agencies

The spring meeting of the foreign ministers of the Group of Seven (G7) economically strong democracies is set to end on Friday with discussions on the situation in the Indo-Pacific region and global issues such as food, energy and cybersecurity. In view of China's increasingly aggressive behaviour in the Indian Ocean and Pacific region, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock had already stated at the start of the meeting that the effects are not only being felt by the G7's Pacific countries -- the United States, Canada and Japan -- but also in Europe.

The G7 meeting is being held on the Italian Mediterranean island of Capri. Italy currently chairs the G7 group. Other members are the US, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Japan and Germany.

The discussions at the meet-



ing on Capri, which has been running since Wednesday evening, were dominated by concerns about the threat of a conflagration in the Middle East following the Iranian attack on Israel last weekend.

It is eagerly awaited how far the G7 ministers will go in their final declarations on the isolation of Tehran, as demanded by Baerbock and others.

The second major G7 topic was the intensified Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure and the efforts to strengthen the air defence of the embattled country.

The host of the meeting, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, plans to comment publicly on the results after the end of the consultations.

## US shoots down Palestine's bid for full UN membership

Arul Louis | United Nations

An isolated US has shot down Palestine's bid to get full UN membership using its veto at the Security Council undermining the keystone of a two-nation solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The veto nullified the votes of 12 countries in the 15-member Security Council on Thursday to upgrade Palestine from an observer to a full member. The UK and Switzerland abstained.

Officially, it was a revival of the application Palestine made in 2011, which did not make headway then and was banished to limbo.

A two-state solution to the Palestine-Israel crisis would require the recognition of Palestine as a nation.

Algeria, an elected member of the Security Council -- and its only Arab nation, sponsored the resolution for Palestine's full membership even though the Security Council committee on membership reported that there was no unanimity on the matter.



"This is our legal duty, a political duty and a security duty," Foreign Minister Ahmad Attaf said earlier, "a duty at the scale of humanity and civilisation".

The votes it garnered were a sign of hope despite the defeat, Algeria's Permanent Representative Amar Bendjama said after the voting.

"We will return, stronger and more vocal, and we will be back (with) overwhelmingly majority of the General Assembly," he said.

Explaining the US veto, Deputy

Permanent Representative Robert Wood asserted his country supports a two-nation solution with Israel and Palestine as independent nations side-by-side but the time was not now.

"President (Joe) Biden has been clear that sustainable peace in the region can only be achieved through a two-state solution, with Israel's security guaranteed," he said, and that his country "has worked vigorously and with determination to support Palestinian statehood in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement that would permanently resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict".

But Palestine has not met the threshold for statehood because, for example, "Hamas -- a terrorist organisation -- is currently exerting power and influence in Gaza, an integral part of the state envisioned in this resolution", he said.

Reacting to the veto, Palestine's Permanent Observer Ryad Mansour said, "The people of Palestine will not disappear. We will not disappear. The people of Palestine will not be buried."





# BJP will cross 400 LS seats: Nitin Gadkari

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Nagpur Lok Sabha BJP candidate and Union Minister Nitin J. Gadkari along with his wife Kanchan and other family members voted at a polling station near their house in the state's second capital, here on Friday.

Minister Gadkari, who is aiming for a hat-trick here, said that this time the BJP will definitely achieve '400-paar' (400-plus LS seats), and expressed '100 per cent confidence' that he would easily sail through in Nagpur with over 5-lakh margin.

"Not only that, we are also targeting a record voting turnout this time, from 54 per cent in 2019 to 75 per cent in 2024. I appeal to all the people to step out and exercise their right to vote, and celebrate the greatest festival of democracy," urged the Union



Minister. The winner in the 2014 and 2019 LS elections, this time Gadkari is pitted against his main rival, INDIA-

MVA-Congress nominee and MLA Vikas Thakare, who exudes confidence that he will trump his BJP opponent.

The first phase of the Lok Sabha 2024 elections started in five LS seats in Maharashtra in Nagpur, Chandrapur, Bhandara-Gondiya, Ramtek (SC) and Gadchiroli-Chimur (ST) at 7 a.m. with thousands trooping out to vote at various polling stations. Leaders of various political parties have called upon the people to come out and complete their voting before the summer day temperatures start soaring.

Meanwhile, Five Vidarbha seats in Maharashtra recorded at least 54.85 per cent polling till 5 pm on Friday, election officials said.

The five Lok Sabha constituency-wise percentages in the first phase are: Ramtek 52.38 per cent; Nagpur 47.91 per cent; Bhandara-Gondia 56.87 per cent; Gadchiroli-Chimur 64.95 per cent and Chandrapur is 55.11 per cent.

## Bhujbal announces decision to opt out of Nashik contest as MahaYuti unable to reach consensus on candidate

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra minister and veteran NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal on Friday announced he was opting out of the fray for the Nashik Lok Sabha constituency, so that the MahaYuti partners can soon seal a seat-sharing agreement for the seat.

He, however, made it clear that his decision, in no way, signals discontent against the NCP leadership, saying that he would campaign for the candidate to be finalised by the MahaYuti for Nashik.

With Bhujbal's announcement, the ball is now in the court of the other MahaYuti partners - the BJP and the Shiv Sena - to decide. Apart from Bhujbal, the BJP has staked its claim citing its strength, while sitting Shiv Sena MP Hemant Godse had already launched his campaigning demanding his renomination.

Bhujbal's move has stunned the NCP leadership as it was engaged in talks with the Shiv Sena and BJP over its claim on the Nashik seat. The founder of Samata Parishad with a strong presence in the OBC community which constitutes about 33 per cent of the state population, his decision may



impact the prospects of the NCP and MahaYuti adversely, as the OBCs could feel that its tallest leader has been victimised.

"I was told that after the Holi festival, I should be ready to contest from the Nashik seat as my name was recommended by the BJP's central leadership. I had a meeting with our party chief Ajit Pawar who also said that the party is in favour of contesting the Nashik seat. However, three weeks have passed but the deadlock continues, and therefore, I decided to opt out of the race. However, I strongly feel that the

MahaYuti should soon solve the deadlock as the Maha Vikas Aghadi nominee had already started his campaigning," he said.

He added that if the deadlock continues, the MahaYuti will have to make greater efforts to win the seat.

Bhujbal reiterated that he had started his preparations after he was informed that the BJP central leadership wanted him to contest from Nashik due to his bright prospects.

"I am thankful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and my party leaders also for considering my name for Nashik seat. I will campaign wholeheartedly for the MahaYuti candidate in Nashik and also in other constituencies," he said.

Bhujbal figured in the headlines during the Maratha reservation protest by Manoj Jarange-Patil after he opposed giving Kunbi certificates to the Maratha community from the OBC quota. He was isolated in his NCP but stuck to his stand saying that giving Kunbi certificates from the OBC quota was an encroachment on its reservation quota. He also opposed the state government's move to conduct a survey of Kunbi records across the state.

## Employer booked as Dalit man claims caste discrimination at workplace

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The police have registered a case against the owner of an event management company in Mumbai after one of its employees accused her of caste discrimination at workplace, an official said on Friday, reported news agency. The 23-year-old complainant told the police that the owner of the company, located in Goregaon area, passed a snide remark showing caste discrimination on April 14, the birth anniversary of Dalit icon Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar.

The man received a WhatsApp message from his employer that day asking him whether he belonged to the SC (Scheduled Castes) community, the official said citing the complainant.

When the man replied in the affirmative, the company owner said she didn't employ people from the "backward" community, he said.

In the WhatsApp exchange, the employer said



"main Jai Bhim wale ko job pe nahi rakhti (I don't employ Dalits)," the complainant alleged.

The man, who had joined the company as a marketing executive, informed his parents about the experience and then approached the Goregaon police station with a complaint, the official said.

Acting on the complaint, a case was registered against the company owner under the Scheduled Caste and

Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, the official said.

As the man lives in the Vokola area, the case was transferred to the Vakola police station for further investigation, the official said. Meanwhile, a purported screenshot of the WhatsApp exchange between the man and his employer went viral on social media.

## Yes Bank Co-Founder Rana Kapoor gets bail in bank fraud case

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A special court here on Friday granted bail to Yes Bank co-founder Rana Kapoor in the Rs 466.51 crore bank fraud case, paving the way for him to walk out of jail after four years.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Rana Kapoor in March 2020 in a money laundering case, and he has been charged in eight cases related to fraud at the bank.

The banker has now secured bail in all the cases.

Rana Kapoor's lawyer Rahul Agarwal said they were trying to complete the bail formalities to facilitate his release as early as possible. The court has granted bail to Rana Kapoor



in the CBI's case against him and Avantha Group promoter Gautam Thapar for allegedly indulging in criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust, cheating and forgery for diversion of public money to the tune of Rs 466.51 crore.

## ED issues PAO in money laundering case involving builder Lalit Tekchandani

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued a provisional attachment order (PAO) regarding movable and immovable properties, including a villa at Aambey Valley, various residential and business premises in Mumbai, land parcels in Raigarh district, and FDs valued at Rs 113.5 crore, linked to a builder named Lalit Tekchandani and his associates under the PMLA in a case of cheating prospective homebuyers.

The agency has already frozen/seized investments in shares, mutual funds, and fixed deposits worth Rs 43 crore in this case.

The ED initiated the investigation based on two FIRs registered by the police in Maharashtra.

The FIRs alleged that Supreme Construction & Developer Pvt Ltd, a company represented by Tekchandani and others, collected huge funds from prospective homebuyers in a housing project at Talaja in Navi Mumbai.

"The probe revealed that Supreme Construction collected funds amounting to more than Rs 400 crore from more than 1,700 homebuyers in a housing project at Talaja. Delays in the project left these homebuyers in the lurch without flats or refunds," an ED statement said on Thursday.



Tekchandani was arrested by the ED on March 18 under the provisions of the PMLA. He is presently under judicial custody.

"His interrogation revealed that the funds received from the homebuyers were laundered by the builder for personal gains and creation of assets in various names, including family members," the ED statement said.

Tekchandani allegedly alienated the properties of Supreme Construction despite his exit from the ownership and directorship of the company with the assistance of the other accused persons.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A team of 12 women officers of the Indian Army, Navy, and Indian Air Force recently completed a nearly four-week (27 days) sailing expedition in the Arabian Sea. The expedition, which took the Tri-Services women crew from Mumbai to Lakshadweep and back, was marked by a flagging ceremony at Marve, Mumbai, said an army official on X. The all-women crew went on this voyage in preparation for an upcoming global circumnavigation competition scheduled for September this year. The expedition was organised by the Army Adventure Wing and the Army Aqua Nodal Centre of the College of Military Engineering, and aimed to hone the crew's skills for the challenging journey ahead. "This unique expedition not only exemplifies the spirit of adventure but also underscores the significance of fostering inclusivity & diversity in military endeavours," the ADG PI wrote on X.

Reacting to the post, people



expressed pride. "All the very best ....Do us proud...Bon Voyage ladies," read a comment.

Another user wrote, "Excellent - Apparently they are also preparing for a Circumnavigation Expedition sometime next year !!! Best wishes !!!"

"Jai Hind," read another remark.

The training expedition formally ended on Friday. The women sailors have over 6000 nautical miles of training under their belt in preparation for the 'Around the World Sailing Competition,' a landmark event in India's military history, according to officials. The journey from Mumbai to Lakshadweep was divided into four

legs, each offering unique challenges and learning opportunities. Throughout the expedition, the women sailors faced varying wind conditions, scorching heat, and choppy waters, demonstrating not just their physical strength but also their mental stability and teamwork, according to a report.

## Adultery a ground for divorce, not for granting child custody: High Court

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Adultery can be a ground for divorce but not for granting custody of a child, the Bombay High Court said while granting custody of a nine-year-old girl to her mother. A single bench of Justice Rajesh Patil on April 12 dismissed the petition filed by the man, son of a former legislator, challenging an order passed by the family court in February 2023 granting custody of his daughter to his estranged wife.

The couple got married in 2010, and their daughter was born in 2015. In 2019, the woman claimed that she was removed from their home. The petitioner, however, alleged that his wife had left of her own volition.

The petitioner's counsel, Indira Jaising, submitted to the court that the woman had multiple affairs, and hence, it would not be proper to hand over the custody of the child to her.

Justice Patil noted that the allegations of adulterous behaviour would have no bearing or doubt while deciding the matter of the child's custody. "Not being a good wife does not necessarily mean she is not a good



mother. Adultery can be a ground for divorce, however, the same cannot be a ground for not granting custody," the court observed.

The man, in his plea, claimed that it was in the child's best interest to live with him and his parents, as she was not happy with her mother and there were some behavioural changes in her.

Jaising told the court that the authorities at the girl's school had written emails to the petitioner's mother, raising concerns about her behaviour.

The high court, however, refused to accept this and questioned why the school got in touch with the paternal grandmother when the parents were

well-educated. It noted that the petitioner's mother was a former legislator aspiring to contest the Lok Sabha elections.

"According to me, the school authorities have no reason to inform about the issues relating to the girl to the grandmother, who is a politician, when both the parents of the child are available, well-educated, and in fact, the mother of the child is a doctor," the court said.

Justice Patil noted that the girl was only nine, which is a pre-puberty age, and in such custody matters, the court must consider the welfare of the child as paramount.

The girl was taken care of by her maternal grandmother, and her aca-

demical record during her custody with the mother was also good, he said. "Therefore, according to me, there is no reason to change the custody from the wife to the husband," the court said.

The bench directed the petitioner to hand over his daughter's custody to the wife by April 21.

In 2020, the woman lodged a police complaint against her husband and her in-laws, alleging harassment, assault, and criminal intimidation. She claimed that her daughter was taken away from her.

The woman also filed a complaint under the Domestic Violence Act before a magistrate's court and an application before the family court seeking custody of her daughter.

The man also filed a petition in the family court seeking divorce from the woman and custody of the daughter.

In February 2023, the family court handed over custody of the girl to the mother and allowed access to the father.

## Heads turn as world's tiniest woman votes in Nagpur

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Heads turned and people smiled as the world's shortest woman, Jyoti Kishanji Amge, turned up to cast her vote in the Lok Sabha elections, here on Friday morning.

A beaming but tad shy, Jyoti - who is all of 62.8 cm (2 feet, ¼ inch) tall - arrived with her family members carrying her in arms to avoid the huge crowds at the polling station in a school near her home.

As soon as she reached the venue, attired in a glowing red Barbie-style dress, wearing blood-red lipstick and some trinkets on her fingers and wrists, the paparazzi virtually mobbed her till she entered the polling booth, giggling at all the commotion and attention lavished on her.

"This is my second Lok Sabha election voting, and I have already voted twice, even for the Maharashtra Assembly elections... I always exercise my right to vote and it is also my duty to the country," a thrilled Jyoti told reporter after casting her vote, proudly displaying her tiny inked finger to the media.

Just last month, as a global celeb in her own (birth)right, Nagpur-born Jyoti had made a fervent appeal on behalf of the Election Commission of India (ECI) and Maharashtra Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), urging people to vote.

"Voting is our duty and right... With our vote, we can ensure that we elect a good



leader to represent us," said the 30-year-old petite dame, who is the Brand Ambassador for Missionsky India Human Rights Association.

Incidentally, on her 18th birthday on December 16, 2011, Jyoti was officially declared the shortest living woman on the planet by the Guinness World Records, catapulting her to instant stardom, and making her a darling of India's Orange City.

Her vertical growth is stunted owing to a genetic condition called 'primordial dwarfism', but she has stood tall and worked in Indian and Hollywood films, and television shows. She was the subject of documentaries and media articles world over.





## AMANDA HOLDEN REVEALS SECRET ABOUT HER NUDE APPEARANCE

Los Angeles | Agencies

**A**manda Holden revealed on Friday a huge secret about her nude 'life drawing' stunt which happened on her Heart FM breakfast show in early April. The Britain's Got Talent judge, 53, stripped in front of Jamie Theakston and showbiz reporter Ashley Roberts to become a nude model for a group of artists.

While Jamie urged Amanda, who kept on only her white heels, to 'put a top on', Ashley insisted: 'She looks amazing!'

However, on Good Morning Britain on Friday, Amanda cheekily revealed all was not as it seemed on the day, reports [dailymail.co.uk](#).

She told Kate Garraway and Adil Ray: 'Was I in the nude? I might have had a little SKIMS...'

SKIMS is clothing company by Kim Kardashian selling shapewear, underwear, and loungewear.

Amanda continued: 'Do you think I would get my kit off with Jamie Theakston in the studio? In all seriousness.'

Adil joked back: 'Well, I don't know the terms of your contract, to be honest!'

Amanda replied: 'They ain't paying me that much! Although, we could discuss it.'

Kate added: 'I've been in that studio, it's very chilly in that studio. You wouldn't want to be naked, would you?'

Amanda answered: 'Definitely not, no. It is always flipping cold. What is it with the heating?'

'I think Ashley Tabor-[King] likes to keep us all awake at Global, so the air conditioning's on full blast in the mornings.' The confident star put every inch of herself on display as she removed her clothes for the life drawing session.

Los Angeles | Agencies

**J**ust hours after Taylor Swift's fans shelled out for her new album *The Tortured Poets Department*, the star has been accused of trying to con them by dropping 15 surprise new tracks. Despite already splashing out for multiple versions of the record in a bid to get their hands on all four bonus tracks, fans will have to part with even more hard-earned cash when the super-sized record goes on sale.

After releasing her new album at midnight ET (2am UK time), Taylor took to Instagram to announce her latest record was actually a surprise 'double album,' after sparking a flurry of speculation by posting a countdown clock on social media, reports [dailymail.co.uk](#).

Captioning the post, the pop superstar told her followers that she'd written 'so much tortured poetry in the past two years' that she wanted to share it with her fans.

Sharing the double album was called *The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology*, she wrote: 'It's a 2am surprise: *The Tortured Poets Department* is a secret DOUBLE album. I'd written so much tortured poetry in the past 2 years and wanted to share it all with you, so here's the second installment of TTPD: *The Anthology*. 15 extra songs. And now the story isn't mine anymore... it's all yours.' While the deluxe version is not yet available for Taylor's website, there were four different versions of the original album available, each containing a different bonus track, are priced at £13.99 (\$17.38).

The vinyl version, including bonus track *The Manuscript*, costs £33.99 (\$42.23), while a 'phantom clear vinyl' is priced the same.

**TAYLOR SWIFT SPARKS BACKLASH BY DROPPING 15 MORE TRACKS JUST TWO HOURS**



## Still not over: Jimmy Carr

Los Angeles | Agencies



**J**immy Carr has opened up about the death of his mother Nora, saying he is still not 'over it yet'. The comedian's mother passed away from pancreaticitis in 2001 aged 57 and the pair were always very close, reports [dailymail.co.uk](#).

Speaking on *The Development* by David podcast with David McIntosh, Jimmy said: 'I lost her when I was about 26. I don't think I'm over it yet. Grief is the price we pay for love. I was so close to my mother, I couldn't imagine anything worse than losing her. The benefit of losing her is a sense of freedom, pushing the f\*\*k it button.'

Jimmy likened a person's death to the time before they were born, saying there isn't any difference between the two. He said: 'You get mortality, in a way. We die and we're the lucky ones because we get to live. Mark Twain said it brilliantly, I wasn't alive for billions of years before my birth and it didn't inconvenience me in the least. This is why life is so special, it's this little shaft of light in the middle of it all.'

'It's not an easy thing to lose a parent. Grief, we don't talk about it enough. Society is set up to kind of hide it away.' Jimmy's parents Nora and Patrick - known as Jim - moved to England from Limerick, Ireland and raised Jimmy and his two brothers in Slough. The comic has been estranged from his father since Nora's death and said in November 2021 he hadn't spoken to his dad in 21 years.

## Ne-Yo confirms romances with multiple women

Los Angeles | Agencies

**N**e-Yo acknowledged he's in romantic relationships with multiple women Thursday. 'This is the first time that I've been in a relationship or situation like this,' the 44-year-old musical artist told TMZ of his love life while at The Grove in Los Angeles after he was asked a series of questions about the practice of polygamy.

The three-time Grammy winner was walking hand-in-hand with both of his partners at the time he spoke with the outlet, reports [dailymail.co.uk](#).

The Camden, Arkansas-born entertainer was asked his thoughts on polygamy being legalized, to which he responded, 'Legalizing polygamy? I didn't know it was illegal.' The R&B stalwart said that when it comes to issues related to love and romance, 'You should let people do whatever the hell they want to do.' The So Sick singer, who is set to tour Australia later this year, added, 'Can't see how it's hurting anybody.'

Ne-Yo said that while he would be in favor of legalizing polygamy, he likely wouldn't get involved with the politics of the issue.

'To be honest, I don't need the government to tell me what I can and can't do in my personal life,' he said.

Asked if the issue could influence his future work, the *Time of Our Lives* vocalist said he has to be emotionally moved on an issue prior to producing material on the matter.

'I mean the songs come out depending on the situation and the circumstance,' the *Because of You* artist said. 'I don't force it when it comes to music, it happens organically.'

Asked if he endorsed the polygamous lifestyle, Ne-Yo said, 'I don't recommend anything to anybody - what works for me might not work for you, or vice-versa.' The women who were with the musical artist at the time smiled and laughed when asked by the outlet their thoughts on the issues at hand.



## Kourtney defends sister Kim Kardashian on 'shady' bikini snap for birthday tribute



Los Angeles | Agencies

**K**im Kardashian took to Instagram on Thursday to mark her sister Kourtney's 45th birthday with a bikini snap that left fans divided, reports [dailymail.co.uk](#).

The SKIMS mogul, 43, shared a photo of her with Kourtney and younger sister Khloe, 39, as they splashed in the ocean wearing matching black bikinis, taken on their recent getaway to Turks and Caicos.

The snap caused a stir, with many claiming Kim intentionally picked a photo in which she looked the best,

while many others praised Kourtney's postpartum figure, calling her the most 'natural looking' of the sisters.

Kourtney - who gave birth to son Rocky roughly five and a half months ago - didn't seem to mind and responded underneath a comment which read, 'Now you know she's not going to like this photo... lol it's her bday Kim... lol.'

The mom-of-four wrote back, 'I LOVE this photo! It is me and my sisters having the best time on a trip with our kids... and the memories to last forever! And I LOVE this body that gave me my 3 big babies and my little baby boy.'

Kim penned a sweet caption to her sister underneath the snap, writing, 'Happy Birthday Queen.'

'There's no one on this planet that I have spent more time with and have all of the same memories with growing up than you and I cherish them all.'

She went on, 'Sharing a room and friends and cars and our lives together for four decades has been the most magical journey to have you by my side.'

Amanda Holden reveals a huge secret about THAT nude appearance

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Karlie Kloss





## IPL 2024: Rahul, de Kock help Lucknow overpower Chennai by eight wickets

Lucknow | Agencies

**K**.L. Rahul and Quinton de Kock added 154 runs for the opening wicket as Lucknow Super Giants beat Chennai Super Kings by eight wickets in the highest successful run chase at Ekana Cricket Stadium here on Friday.

Chasing a modest target of 177, Lucknow openers Rahul and de Kock gave a good start and added 32 runs in the first four overs. After Deepak Chahar's three-run first over, Tushar Deshpande was smashed for nine in the second over and LSG raced away to 32 runs in four overs.

With the talk around Rahul's strike rate in T20s especially in IPL, the LSG skipper raced to 34 off 20 with some classy strokes and led his team to 54 for no loss in the Power-play, along with de Kock, for their joint second-best Power-play score of the season. LSG and Rahul would have gained loads of confidence with plenty of strokes that he scored playing the aggressive role in the chase. He has belted out his mighty pulls, classy drives, and perfectly timed pick-up shots to set up the chase nicely. Rahul was nicely placed on 46 off 27 and de



Kock scored 34 off 27 balls after the end of nine overs. LSG were 84 for no loss after nine -- their best opening stands this IPL -- and they needed 93 off 66.

Until this match, CSK were the stranglers of the middle overs in this IPL, something that they showed in their last game against Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede. Their economy rate of 7.03 in the middle overs before this match was well below the next best -- Delhi Capitals' 8.04, and CSK had also taken 21 wickets in this phase, only behind DC's 22. Pathirana had done a lot of work in the middle overs to make that happen but on Friday, like the rest of the bowling attack, the Sri Lankan was not as effective.

### Brief scores

Chennai Super Kings 176/6 in 20 overs (Ravindra Jadeja 57 not out, Ajinkya Rahane 36; Krunal Pandya 2-16, Marcus Stoinis 1-7) lost to Lucknow Super Giants 180/2 in 19 overs (K.L. Rahul 82, Quinton de Kock 54; Matheesa Pathirana 1-19, Mustafizur Rahman 1-43) by eight wickets.



## MI skipper Hardik Pandya fined for slow over-rate offence

Mullanpur | Agencies

**M**umbai Indians (MI) captain Hardik Pandya has been fined Rs 12 lakh for maintaining a slow over-rate during the IPL match against Punjab Kings (PBKS) at the

PCA New International Cricket Stadium on Thursday. "As it was his team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over rate offences, Pandya was fined Rs 12 lakhs", a BCCI statement

read. On Thursday's match, Mumbai Indians survived Ashutosh Sharma's stunning assault of 25-ball 61, also his first fifty in the IPL, to get crucial two points. MI is currently sitting seventh on the points table with three wins in seven games.

## Casper Ruud races into Barcelona Open quarterfinal

Barcelona | Agencies

**C**asper Ruud of Norway sailed into the quarterfinal of the Barcelona Open after beating Jordan Thompson 6-1, 6-4 for his 26th win of the season.

With his victory, the third-seeded Ruud moved clear of Jannik Sinner for the most tour-level triumphs in 2024. Ruud raced into an early 5-0 lead and hardly looked back from there on Pista Rafa Nadal. He closed out the opening set before clinching a decisive break in the seventh game of the second, ultimately wrapping a 73-minute victory, ATP reports.

The Norwegian who has reached three finals already this year (Los Cabos, Acapulco, Monte-Carlo), Ruud will take on Matteo



Arnaldi next, who earlier downed Marco Truogelli 6-3, 6-0 to secure his last-eight spot.

## Formula 1: Norris stuns with wet pole for Chinese Grand Prix Sprint race in Shanghai

Shanghai | Agencies

**L**ando Norris will start from pole position in Saturday's F1 Sprint in Shanghai after having his fastest lap removed and then reinstated in a thrilling rain-affected qualifying session. Norris' best time of 1:57.940 was a full 1.3 seconds ahead of Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton and came after the McLaren driver's time was initially deleted for exceeding track limits at Turn 16 before quickly being reinstated.

With the Shanghai International Circuit having recently been resurfaced with a layer of bitumen, the track proved extremely slippery as rain intensified in the closing stages of the session. Several drivers slid and ran wide in the damp conditions, and



Charles Leclerc was lucky to avoid damage as his Ferrari tapped the wall following a high-speed spin, reports Xinhua.

Behind the front two, Fernando Alonso ended the session third for Aston Martin, with championship leader Max Verstappen only fourth in his Red Bull after

having run wide at the end of his first push lap.

Carlos Sainz took fifth for Ferrari, ahead of Verstappen's teammate Perez in sixth. Leclerc recovered from his mishap to finish seventh, with Norris' teammate Oscar Piastri in eighth.

Valtteri Bottas will start the Sprint ninth for Sauber, with

teammate Zhou Guanyu delighting the partisan crowd by ending the session tenth at his home circuit.

George Russell was a notable casualty of the rain that began to intensify towards the end of Q2, failing to get a banker lap in early and finishing up 11th. The Haas twins of Kevin Magnussen and Nico Hulkenberg ended up 12th and 13th, with RB's Daniel Ricciardo 14th and Alonso's teammate Lance Stroll 15th.

Further down the field, the five drivers condemned to start 16th to 20th after having fallen in the first segment were the Alpines of Pierre Gasly and Esteban Ocon, Williams' Alex Albon, Yuki Tsunoda in the second RB, and Albon's teammate Logan Sargeant.

Reflecting on the achievement post-session, Norris said: "I'm extremely happy, first of all. A big thanks to the whole team. It was tricky, you're always nervous going into a session like this, especially for quali when you almost know it's going to rain.

Just as had happened in the morning's practice session, a dry patch of grass on the infield of Turn 5 appeared to have been set alight by sparks from passing cars, forcing the start of Q2 to be delayed while marshals extinguished the flames.

The Chinese Grand Prix weekend is the first of six in 2024 to feature a Sprint event, with Saturday morning's 19-lap race to be followed by the qualifying session for Sunday's Grand Prix.



## SWIATEK HOLDS OFF MERTENS IN STUTTGART, TO FACE RADUCANU IN QF

Stuttgart | Agencies

**I**ga Swiatek began her clay-court 2024 season with a win as she defeated Elise Mertens 6-3, 6-4 in the second round of Stuttgart Open.

World No.1 Swiatek, playing her first match on the dirt since she won last year's Roland Garros title, needed 1 hour and 33 minutes to hold off 30th-ranked

Mertens and claim a spot in the Stuttgart quarterfinals for the third straight year, WTA reports.

Two-time defending champion Swiatek remains undefeated at the Tennis Grand Prix, improving to 9-0 at the event with her latest win over Mertens of Belgium.

Swiatek will next face 2021 US Open champion Emma Raducanu in the

quarterfinals. The Briton defeated Linda Noskova 6-0, 7-5 to move into the last eight.

The showdown between the Grand Slam champions will be a rematch of their 2022 Stuttgart quarterfinal, which Swiatek won 6-4, 6-4.

Four-time major champion Swiatek also defeated Raducanu 6-3, 6-1 at Indian Wells last year to take a 2-0 lead in their head-to-head.

## SUKANT KADAM REACHES SPANISH PARA BADMINTON QF

Victoria (Spain) | Agencies

**A**ce para shuttler Sukant Kadam reached the quarterfinals of the Spanish Para-Badminton tournament where he will face compatriot Abhijeet Sakhuja.

Sukant kickstarted the tournament positively with an easy win over Germany's Nils Boening. The match, which was completely dominated by the Indian, lasted only 26 minutes and the score read 21-11 and 21-15.



In the second match of Group C, Sukant defeated France's Pierre Delsol in straight games 21-10 and 21-9 in 23 minutes to secure his place in the round of 16.

In the pre-quarterfinal, Sukant had a close game with Denmark's Mads Voigt Eriksen. The first set went in favour of the Dane. The Indian shuttler outplayed his opponent in the last 2 games and made a strong comeback winning the game 19-21, 21-13 and 21-14.

# 'Want to make an impact early on when the ball does something', says Bumrah

Mullanpur | Agencies

**A**fter Mumbai Indians edged Punjab Kings by nine runs in a thrilling IPL 2024 clash at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium on Thursday evening, fast-bowling spearhead Jasprit Bumrah said his aim is always to make an impact with the new ball, citing it as the time when the ball does some movement.

Bumrah took out Rilee Rossouw and Sam Curran in his first over, before taking out Shashank Singh to pick 3-21 in his four overs, which was instrumental in keeping PBKS away from chasing 193. Bumrah, now the leading wicket-taker in IPL

2024 with 13 scalps in seven matches, was adjudged as Player of the Match.

"Of course, you want to make an impact early on when the ball does something. Because in this format, probably the ball does swing for the first two overs. When I want to bowl more, I do play Test cricket.

"That is where all my desires for bowling more gets over. In this format, when the ball swings for the first two overs, you do want to make an impact and when the opportunity comes, I'm happy to contribute," said Bumrah after the match.

Bumrah also admitted that it is a little difficult being a bowler in a format where scales are more tilted

in favour of batters, but feels backing himself to do well is the key to shine against rampaging batters.

"Obviously this format is a little difficult for the bowlers because the batsmanship is going up. With the time restrictions (over-rate penalties) as well and the Impact Player rule, that does not help the bowler too much because the batting line-up becomes deeper and deeper and the bowler becomes half the bowler when you get an extra option.

"But I feel like all of those things are not in your control. What you can do is try to prepare to the best of your ability and back yourself in any situation because all of that will then put you in a good space of

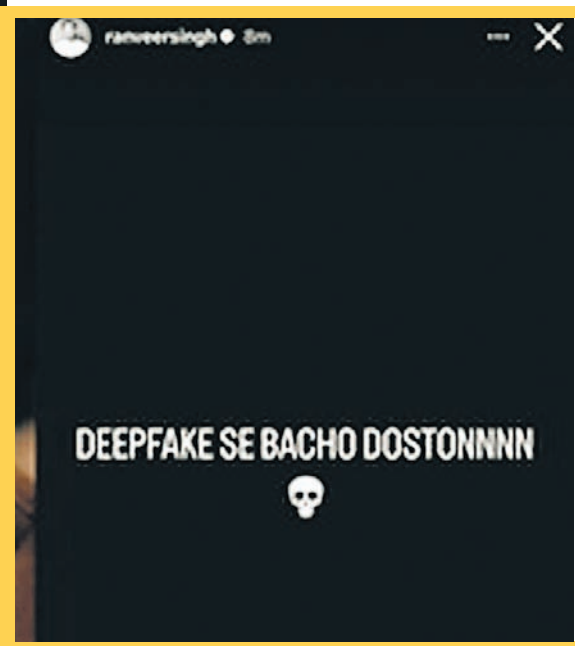
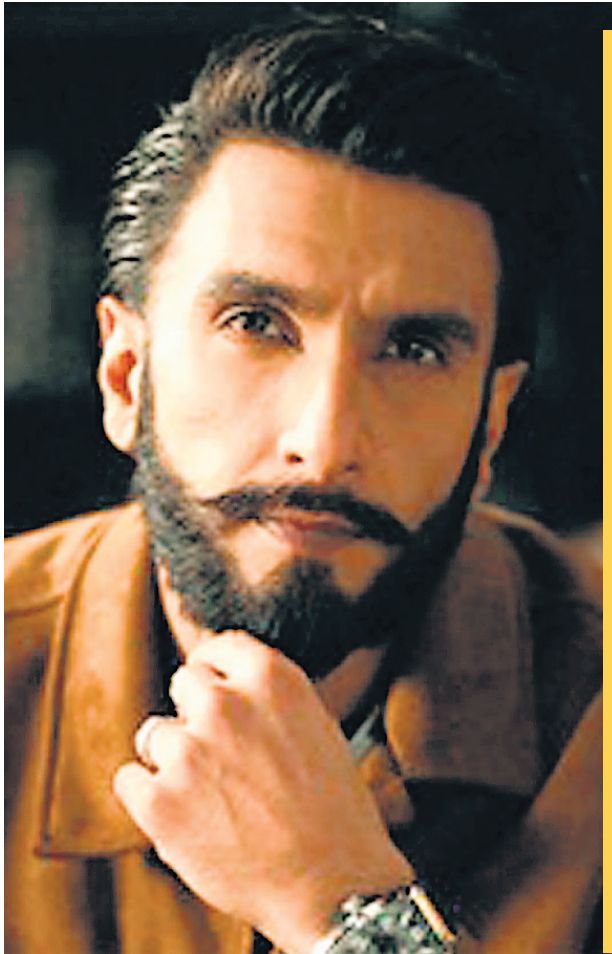
mind and you can go out there and execute with a smile on your face," he added.

Bumrah signed off by saying he does send out advice whenever he's asked to. "Whenever there's an opportunity, I do relay a message from wherever I am. But sometimes in the heat of the moment, it's difficult to pass on lot of messages.

"But yes, I am always there if anybody needs help because you don't want to give too many messages as well because the bowler is already under pressure and when too many messages come, you don't land here or there, you land in the middle."







## 'Deepfake se bacho doston': Ranveer Singh

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After his deepfake video went viral on the internet, criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi over unemployment and inflation, actor Ranveer Singh has reacted to it, saying, "deepfake se bacho dostonnnn".

An AI-generated video of the 'Band Baaja Baaraa' actor shows him endorsing the Congress for the Lok Sabha polls.

The video is originally from the actor's recent visit to Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, along with Kriti Sanon for Manish Malhotra's fashion show at Namoo Ghat.

In the deepfake video, we can hear Ranveer's altered voice, saying, "Modi ji ka purpose yahi hai, unka uddesh yahi tha ki wo celebrate kare hamara dukhi jeevan, hamari berozgari, or hamari mehngai ko. Kyunki jo bharatvarsh hai wo anyay kaal ki taraf aise badh rahe hain, itni speed se badh rahe hain, lekin hame hamare vikas or nyay ko maangna kabhi nahi bhoolna chahiye."

Now, reacting on the same, the actor took to social media and said: "Deepfake se bacho dostonnnn".

However, fans took to the comment section and wrote: "Overacting se aap bacha lo".

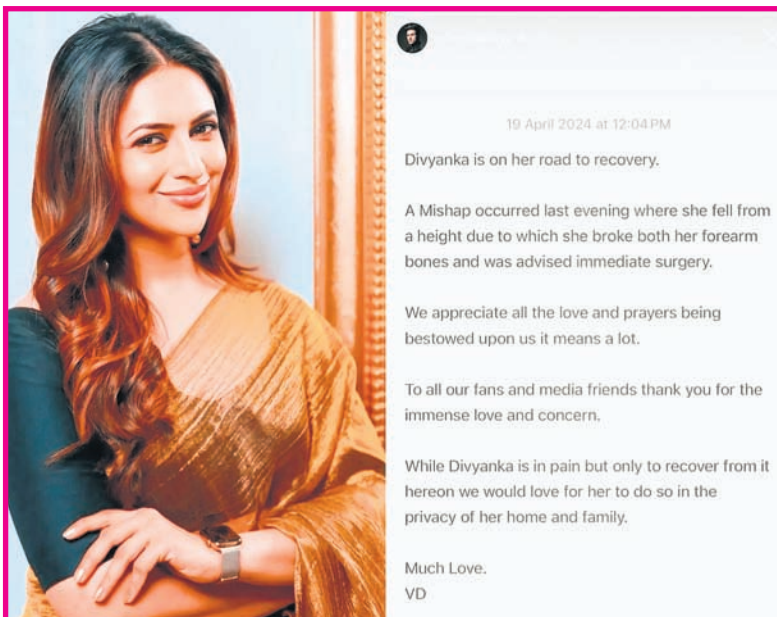
A user said: "None can fake true imposter".

A user wrote: "Bhai Don 3 mein aap bhi SRK ka deepfake hi kar rahe ho".

Few days back, Bollywood's 'perfectionist' Aamir Khan's fake advertisement by a political party went viral on the internet.

The actor has filed an FIR with Mumbai Police against a fake Congress advertisement. The said advertisement has a deep fake video of Aamir created by artificial intelligence, and it targets the ruling BJP over their promise of Rs 15 lakh in the account of every citizen.

It is an alleged AI-generated deep fake video that uses a clip from an episode of the Aamir Khan-hosted TV show 'Satyamev Jayate', which was telecast 10 years ago.



## DIVYANKA SUFFERS FOREARM FRACTURE IN ACCIDENT; ON THE PATH TO RECOVERY: VIVEK DAHIYA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Divyanka Tripathi Dahiya, who fell from a height and broke her forearm bones, is on the path to recovery and has been advised to undergo immediate surgery.

On Thursday, Divyanka's husband, Vivek Dahiya took to social media and shared an X-ray image of the 39-year-old actress's arm, revealing that she has fractured her arm and will undergo surgery on April 19.

PR also took to their Instagram and wrote: "We're sorry to announce that Vivek's live session scheduled for tomorrow has been postponed till further notice. Divyanka had an accident few hours back and now under medical care. Vivek is with her as she recovers. We thank you for your understanding and support. And join us in wishing Divyanka a speedy recovery. Vivek is eager to reconnect with all of you soon. - Team Vivek."

On Friday, Vivek took to his Instagram stories and penned a note, giving an update about his ladylove's health.

The note read: "Divyanka is on her road to recovery. A mishap occurred last evening where she fell from a height, due to which she broke both her forearm bones and was advised immediate surgery. We appreciate all the love and prayers being bestowed upon us. It means a lot."

"To all our fans and media friends, thank you for the immense love and concern. While Divyanka is in pain but only to recover from it here on we would love for her to do so in the privacy of her home and family. Much Love. VD," added the note.

Divyanka and Vivek tied the knot in July 2016.



## Every vote make a difference to country's future, says Kangana Ranaut

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress nominee from the Mandi Lok Sabha seat in Himachal Pradesh, Kangana Ranaut, appealed to voters on Friday to participate in the festival of democracy, exercise their right to vote, and "make a difference in our country's future".

"Today marks the first phase of voting -- let's show up in numbers and cast our votes for a brighter India," she wrote on X, adding "every vote matters!" In a unique electoral showdown in the Mandi constituency, the battleground shifts between "royalty" and "stardom", as Congress legislator Vikramaditya Singh, the scion of the erstwhile royal family, challenges Bollywood's queen, Kangana Ranaut.

Amid the clash of heritage and stardom, the sprawling constituency, one of the toughest and covering almost two-thirds of the state, braces for a riveting electoral spectacle.



## BEFORE MARRIAGE OUR GOAL WAS TO SPEND QUALITY TIME TOGETHER: VICKY KAUSHAL

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Vicky Kaushal reminisced about the moments spent with his wife Katrina Kaif on Valentine's Day, when they were just dating, and what is the significance of the day for them after tying the knot.

Vicky appeared on the stage of 'Kapil Show', along with his brother Sunny Kaushal.

Host Kapil Sharma joked about Valentine's Day plans before and after marriage, prompting Vicky to share: "Before marriage, our goal was to spend quality time together. It has still been the same post marriage that we get maximum time with each other."

Agreeing with Vicky, Kapil remarked, "I agree. For me, Valentine's day is everyday."

Teasing Sunny with his witty joke, Kapil added: "Do you believe that Valentine's Day is everyday or is it only on 14th Sharvari (February)."

Sunny and Sharvari Wagh are reportedly in an alleged relationship.

## Kajol's note for Nysa's 21st b'day: 'Wish I could wrap her up, store back in my stomach'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A day ahead of her daughter Nysa's 21st birthday, actress Kajol on Friday penned an adorable note about her motherhood journey, saying how her baby makes her grateful and awed by her love, and unflinching support.

Kajol is married to superstar Ajay Devgn. They tied the knot in February 1999. The couple has two children -- daughter Nysa and son Yug. Taking to the social media, Kajol dropped an unseen throwback picture featuring little Nysa wearing a green frock and sitting on her mother's lap. Along with the picture, the actress, who was last seen in 'Lust Stories 2', penned a heartwarming note, which read as: "Tomorrow is Nysa's 21st birthday but today is about me and how I became a mom. How she made my greatest wish come true and how she makes me happy every single day since then just by being herself. How she makes me grateful and awed by her love and her unflinching support."

"I can be wrong but I can never be in the wrong. How she makes me laugh and laugh and how I love to stand on my soapbox and boast about what all my baby does and says. How I felt for the first time and every time since when she calls me 'mama'. Its like a call to arms for a very loved cause," shared Kajol. Kajol added: "How I wish sometimes I could wrap her up and store her back in my stomach for a day just to feel my heart back in the body it started out from. Love is such an ordinary term to describe what you feel for your children. Its so much much more. So yes today is about me. Taking a bow now."



## Vidya Balan urges hubby Siddharth to give Atharav Bakshi's a chance to sing

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Vidya Balan, who was left stunned by 'Superstar Singer 3' contestant Atharav Bakshi's rendition of the song 'Humari Adhuri Kahani', expressed her desire to advocate for him to her husband Siddharth Roy Kapur and other producers, urging them to give him a chance to sing. Vidya appeared on the stage of the kids' singing reality show along with her 'Do Aur Do Pyaar' co-star Pratik Gandhi.

Atharav from Hazaribagh, Jharkhand won hearts with his magical version of the song 'Humari Adhuri Kahani', accompanied by his team captain Pawandeep Rajan on the piano.

Praising the performance, Vidya said: "Atharva, thank you so much; your performance touched my heart deeply, and I am blessed to have witnessed your singing. At 12, you've managed to evoke such strong emotions in me, I had goosebumps throughout your song, and I am so emotional right now. Honestly, I'm at a loss for words. Your talent is exceptional, and I'm truly moved." "Right now, I'm filled with the urge to reach out to my husband Siddharth and all the producers I know and insist that they give you a chance to sing. You truly deserve it. And this is one of the amazing things that I like about the kids here, they give their 100 per cent, which is very inspirational for us," added Vidya.



Niharika Gandhi