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2024 Lok Sabha elections

## CAMPAIGNING FOR FIRST PHASE ON APRIL 19 ENDS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

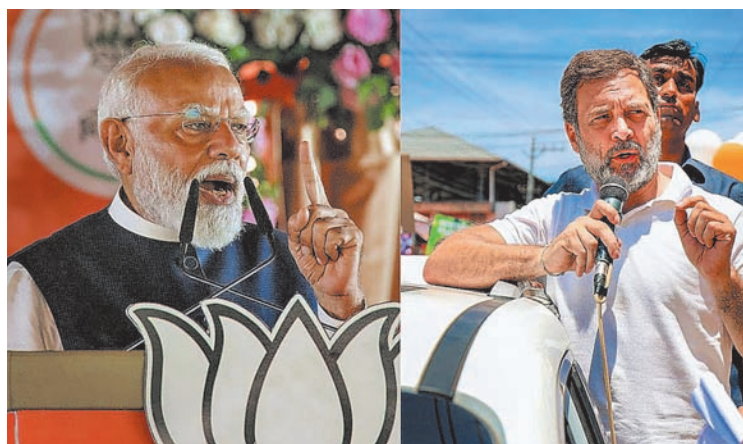
The last day of the campaigning for the first phase of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections which will take place on April 19 witnessed intense electioneering by the top leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday.

As many as 102 parliamentary constituencies across 21 states and UTs will go to vote on April 19 - the first of the seven-phase election in the world's largest democracy.

The states and UTs in Phase 1 include Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Jammu and Kashmir, Lakshadweep and Puducherry.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who addressed public meetings in Assam's Nalbari and Agartala, unveiled BJP's "Viksit Vision" for the Northeast.

Congratulating people on Ram Navami and calling it a "historic occasion", PM Modi mentioned how, after a wait of 500 years, Lord Ram has finally graced the magnificent temple in Ayodhya.



"From a humble tent to this majestic abode, his blessings by the sun's rays mark a historic moment. Here in the sacred Northeast, where sunlight first touches, we witness this symbolic dawn of a new era. As the sun's rays illuminate, so does the resolve for a Viksit Tripura and a Viksit Bharat, propelling the nation forward on this auspicious day," said PM Modi.

Meanwhile, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, who began the day by addressing a joint press meeting in Ghaziabad along with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, also addressed public meetings in Karnataka. "I am here to tell the

unemployed youth of Karnataka, Congress party is going to do a historic work for you," he assured people in Mandya. As per the Election Commission of India, the largest electorate in the world - 96.88 crore are registered to vote for the forthcoming general elections in India.

The commission has specifically asked all its observers to strictly ensure that polling stations contain all amenities for voters especially to combat heat.

"Silence period will begin from 6 PM today (April 17, 2024) for Coochbehar (SC), Alipurduars (ST), Jalpaiguri (SC) PCs of West Bengal

where polling is scheduled on 19th April, 2024. During this time, Election campaigning is prohibited," posted Chief Electoral Office, West Bengal, on X.

### BENGAL GOVERNOR SAYS WILL BE IN COOCH BEHAR ON POLLING DAY, EC OPPOSES MOVE

Kolkata: West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose has announced his intent to camp in the Cooch Behar Lok Sabha constituency in north Bengal on April 19, the day the constituency goes to polls in the first phase, but the poll panel has urged him to refrain.

Sources said that the Governor took the decision after considering the record of poll-related violence in previous elections.

As per the schedule, said Raj Bhavan sources, the Governor will start for Cooch Behar from Kolkata on Thursday morning and will leave the constituency in the evening after the elections are over.

However, later in the day, a communique was sent from the Election Commission to the Governor's office, suggesting he refrain from being in Cooch Behar on the polling day, since that would amount to a violation of the model code of conduct. However, there was no reaction from the Governor's House yet to the EC message.

## The scenario of the country and the state changed during the BJP rule: MP Chief Minister

Chhindwara | Agencies

Balaghat, Dindauri, Jabalpur: When the Congress government came to power in Madhya Pradesh for 15 months in the 2018 assembly elections, a Chhindwara model also came. There was a preparation to implement this model in the entire Madhya Pradesh, but the people here are troubled by this Chhindwara model of development. The people of Chhindwara are yearning for development. They are not getting basic facilities. He has been citing the example of Chhindwara model. Since 1977, the people of Chhindwara have kept him on their forehead.

Helicopters have been landing at his houses for 44 years, but he never made the people of Chhindwara sit on the helicopter. Now the BJP government has decided that in case of emergency, they



will be taken to big hospitals by helicopter. Congress conspired to not allow Shri Ram temple to be built in Ayodhya, but the decision of the Supreme Court opened the way for Shri Ram temple. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said these things. He held public meetings in Dhanora of Chaurai Assembly in support of BJP

candidate Vivek Bunty Sahu in Chhindwara Lok Sabha, Rampayali of Varasivani Assembly in support of BJP candidate. Bharti Pardhi in Balaghat Lok Sabha, and Dindori in support of BJP candidate Faggan Singh Kulaste in Mandla Lok Sabha. During this, the Chief Minister also conducted a road show in Dindori.

## Dubai floods ground over 30 flights, airlines scramble amid chaos

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Over 30 flights, including those operated by Air India Express, Air India, IndiGo, Emirates and SpiceJet airlines, to and from India have been cancelled due to severe flooding in Dubai, triggered by the heaviest rainfall witnessed in decades.

The Dubai airport, one of the world's busiest, on Wednesday also advised pas-



sengers not to head to the hub "unless absolutely necessary". Footage circulating on social media showed the airport's runways flooded

and planes attempting to navigate through pools of water. IndiGo, in a tweet, announced the cancellation of all flights to and from Dubai due to operational challenges arising from adverse weather and road conditions.

The airline spokesperson told reporter that a total of 13 flights were cancelled from and to Dubai on Wednesday and passengers were informed accordingly.

## MAMATA BANERJEE VOWS TO SCRAP NRC FROM ASSAM

Guwahati: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee reiterated on Wednesday that if the Opposition alliance is voted to power at the Centre, it will scrap the National Register of Citizens (NRC) from Assam, besides repealing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). "The BJP has tortured people on the pretext of CAA and NRC. The whole country saw the bloodbath in Delhi, Guwahati, Silchar etc. They (BJP) have committed enough atrocities on common people. If we come to power, we will scrap CAA and NRC," Banerjee said while addressing a rally in Assam's Silchar in support of Trinamool Congress' Lok Sabha candidate, Radheshyam Biswas. It needs to be mentioned here that Assam is the only state in the country where the NRC, first compiled in 1951, was updated on the orders of the Supreme Court in August 2019.

## 'Surya Tilak' illuminates Ram Lalla in Ayodhya, mesmerising pictures surface

Ayodhya | Agencies

The lights dimmed at noon but the sun rays filtered through to kiss the forehead of Lord Ram and performed 'Surya Tilak' - an event that had been much awaited.

This phenomenon lasted for a duration of approximately three minutes, during which the 'aarti' was performed amidst the blowing of conch shells.

The ritual, known as Surya Abhishek or Surya Tilak, involved the sunrays directly touching the forehead of the deity. This symbolic gesture created a divine atmosphere within the temple premises



on the birthday of the Lord

Ram. Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, (IIT-R) were tasked with creating the Surya Tilak mechanism, a unique feature of the Ram Mandir. The IIT team had conducted two successful trials in preparation for the Surya Abhishek ceremony, which took place on Ram Navami on Wednesday.

The team had developed a specialised apparatus equipped with high-quality mirrors and lenses to ensure that the sun rays are precisely directed onto Ram Lalla's forehead at the designated time.

## IMF EXPECTS INDIA TO REV UP GLOBAL GROWTH AS CHINA FALTERS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Multilateral institutions such as the IMF and UNCTAD view India as a potential driver of global economic growth going ahead, as the country has become the fastest-growing emerging economy while China's GDP growth has been pegged at 4.6 per cent in 2024 and expected to slow down further to 4.1 per cent in 2025.

The IMF's World Economic Outlook report, released on Tuesday, has not only raised India's growth forecast by 0.3 percentage points to 6.8 per cent for 2024-25 but also sees the country as a bright spot "supporting global growth over the medium term and spill over to other countries".

With China having fallen behind after the crash in its real estate sector and US sanctions triggering an economic slowdown, the IMF report views India and other G20 large emerging market countries such as Brazil playing a bigger



role in the global trading system and pushing global growth going ahead.

The IMF report also vindicates India's economic policy as it attributes the robust growth

rate to a "strong domestic demand", which has been created by a huge increase in government expenditure on large infrastructure projects such as highways, railways, ports and power plants along with a revival in rural demand.

Stepped-up allocations for agriculture, rural employment schemes such as MNREGA and special programmes for women self-help groups have helped to bolster rural demand and create a larger market for industrial products.

During the 10-year tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, over 90,000 kilometres of national highways have been built which is almost twice that constructed in the preceding 10 years, according to official figures.

Government investment in highway infrastructure shot up more than four-fold to a staggering Rs 2.4 lakh crore in 2022-23 from Rs 51,000 crore in 2013-14. The latest UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development) report, released on Tuesday, forecasts global economic

## Baby born with no rectal opening treated successfully

Thane (Maharashtra) | Agencies

In a rare case, a one-year-old male child born without an anus and other complications has been successfully treated by the doctors at the Wockhardt Hospitals in Thane, officials said on Wednesday.

Child specialists Bhavesh Doshi and Nitu Mundhra treated the child with a condition called 'Ano Rectal Malformation' (ARM), meaning the baby had no rectal opening.

Additionally, the child's tongue was stuck to the floor of the mouth (tongue-tie), and he had a twisted penis with the urinary outlet not in the correct place or Hypospadias.

The newborn's parents -- identified as the Sallian couple -- were shocked to learn of these issues in their first child, when the doctors admitted to the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), and put



on parenteral nutrition as breastfeeding was not feasible.

Mundhra said ARM is rare, seen just once in about a lakh deliveries, and in the delivery room, all the newborn babies are thoroughly examined from head to toe to detect any abnormalities, especially if they are born with a problem.

"In this baby, when we detected ARM, we checked him thoroughly and found the tongue-tie which could affect his feeding and lead to speech difficulties and also Hypospadias. After counselling the parents, the baby underwent multiple surgeries," said Mundhra. These included five procedures

like colostomy, anal reconstruction, colostomy closure to address issues of ARM, plus the surgery for Hypospadias and tongue-tie.

The ARM correction was done in three surgical steps, comprising a temporary opening to allow passage of stool and enable the baby to feed. Two months later, a four-hour-long operation was performed to create a new anus at the normal position, and after two more months, another surgery was performed for colostomy closure. During this surgery, the opening created in the abdominal wall was closed and the baby now passes motions normally from the opening, said the medicos.

Eight months after the surgery, the child underwent a major surgery for Hypospadias to get the urinary opening in the normal position, which was also successful and the child can now pass urine without any difficulty.

## INDIA Alliance Will Wipe Out BJP From Ghaziabad To Ghazipur": Akhilesh Yadav

Lucknow | Agencies

The BJP will be wiped out from Ghaziabad to Ghazipur, declared Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday, just two days before the national elections are set to begin across the country. Yadav, with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi by his side, said every promise made by the BJP turned out false and that the "wind from the West" would change the country in the first phase of elections.

"Today, we are in Ghaziabad and this time INDIA alliance will wipe out BJP from Ghaziabad to Ghazipur. Today, farmers are upset as all the promises of BJP turned out to be fake," said Yadav.

Ghaziabad on Uttar Pradesh's western periphery votes on April 26 while vot-



ing in Ghazipur in eastern UP will be held on June 1.

The Congress is yet to announce its candidate for the high-stakes contest on the Amethi Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh on May 20. Senior leader Rahul Gandhi kept up the suspense during a press conference today and was non-committal when asked about who will the party field against BJP's Smriti Irani.

"This is BJP's question, very good. Whatever order I will get, I will follow it. In our party, all these (selections of candidates) decisions are taken by the Congress Election Committee," Gandhi said when asked who the Congress will field from Amethi.

He added that he is a soldier of the party and will abide by the decision the committee takes.





# PIL IN SC SEEKS EXPERT PANEL TO EXAMINE FEASIBILITY OF 3-YR LLB IMMEDIATELY AFTER CLASS 12

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A public interest litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking direction to the Centre and the Bar Council of India (BCI) to form an expert committee to ascertain the feasibility of starting a 3-year Bachelor of Law Course after Class 12.

The present duration of 5 years i.e. 10 semesters for the Bachelor of Law Course is unreasonable and the inordinate duration is arbitrary and irrational and hence, violates Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, said the PIL, adding that the students can easily study 15-20 subjects in 3 years.

"The undue 5 years' time is arbitrary and irrational for many reasons. Firstly, the length of time is not necessary to give a Bachelor's degree, secondly, the prolonged period of 5 years is not suitable for students, thirdly, the 5 precious years are not proportional to study law and fourthly, this puts excessive financial burden on the students to complete such a



lengthy degree," stated the plea filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay.

Had there been a lesser time of 3 years to finish the bachelor's degree, the student could have gotten 2

undisturbed years to obtain practical knowledge in a court or law firm or to pursue a Master's degree or to prepare for a judicial exam, it added.

The plea, filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey, claimed that the unreasonable 5 years length of the law course has been set under the pressure of college management so as to make the most amount of money they could from the course. The course fee of private law colleges and even the National Law Universities is exorbitant and lower as well as middle-class students find it very difficult to pursue a Bachelor of Law with such an exorbitant fee structure and that too for 5 years (10 semesters)," it said.

Further, the petitioner stated that the Bachelor of Law (LLB) course can be compared with the Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com) and Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) but not with the Bachelor of Engineering or Technology (B. Tech). Even if it is compared then even, the Indian Institute of Technology gives a B.Tech degree in 4 years, it noted.

# Adani Family further infuses Rs 8,339 crore in Ambuja Cements, increases stake to 70.3 per cent

Ahmedabad | Agencies

The Adani Family on Wednesday said it has fully subscribed to the warrants programme in Ambuja Cements by further infusing Rs 8,339 crore, increasing its stake in the building material company to 70.3 per cent.

This follows the investment of Rs 5,000 crore on October 18, 2022, and Rs 6,661 crore on March 28 this year by the promoter of the company, thereby infusing a total amount of Rs 20,000 crore in Ambuja Cements post-acquisition.

The funds' infusion will be instrumental to accomplish the capacity of 140 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) by 2028 by the cement vertical, the company said in a statement.

"This infusion of funds provides Ambuja capital flexibility for fast-tracked growth, capital management initiatives and best-in-class balance sheet strength," said Ajay Kapur, Whole Time Director and CEO, Ambuja Cements Ltd.

"It is not only testament to a steadfast belief in our vision and business model but also reinforces our commitment to delivering long-term sustainable value creation to our stakeholders and this shall propel us towards setting new benchmarks accelerating our growth and continuing to deliver on operational excellence, business synergies, and cost lead-



ership," Kapur added. The additional investment will fortify the company's financial position, providing it with enhanced capabilities to pursue its ambitious growth plans and capitalise on emerging opportunities in the market. Further, it will also enable various strategic initiatives including debottlenecking capex to enhance operational performance, as well as bringing efficiencies across resources and supply chain, said the company. Earlier this week, Ambuja Cements announced the acquisition of My Home Group's 1.5 MTPA cement grinding unit in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, for Rs 413.75 crore.

The acquisition takes Adani Group's total cement capacity to 78.9 MTPA.

Ambuja, with its subsidiaries ACC Ltd and Sanghi Industries Ltd, has taken the Adani Group's cement capacity to 78.9 MTPA with 18 integrated cement manufacturing plants and 19 cement grinding units across the country.

# Shivakumar 'kidnapped' 9-year-old girl for property, claims former PM Deve Gowda

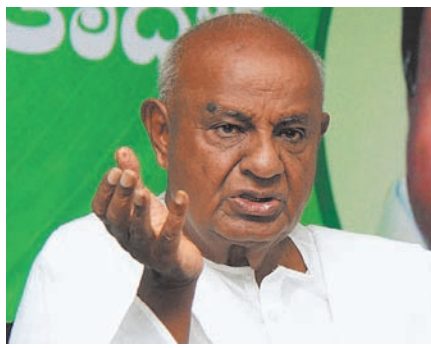
Chikkamagaluru | Agencies

In a sensational allegation against Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, JD-S supremo and former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda on Wednesday accused the Congress leader of having a 9-year-old girl kidnapped to get her father's property transferred to his name.

Interacting with media persons here, Deve Gowda made the allegation in response to a question on Shivakumar's appeal to the community to strengthen his hands.

"Why? They (Shivakumar) got a 9-year-old girl kidnapped and got the property in their name, that's why," he said, adding that he has records to prove his allegations.

Deve Gowda also said that the owner of the property had won his case in the Supreme Court and Shivakumar had suffered a setback. Elaborating on the allegations, he said: "One person from the US had purchased the property to establish an IT company near Bidadi town in the outskirts of Bengaluru. These persons went to him with the false sale deed. They approached the High Court and the Supreme Court. The courts did not entertain them. Later, they got the daughter of the person kidnapped." Their 9-year-old girl was abducted and kept in the house located next to the Gangamma Thimmaiah hall in Bengaluru. They kept the girl blindfolded for



nine days and told her father that if he wanted his child, he needed to give the property to them. The mother pleaded with her husband to give away the property to them and bring back the child. When the father went to meet his daughter where she was kept, they brought her before him and removed her blindfold. As soon as the child saw her father, she was taken inside again. I have records in front of me," Deve Gowda alleged.

Gowda's son, and former CM H.D. Kumaraswamy, who is contesting as the NDA candidate from Mandya, had also made the same allegation earlier and Shivakumar had refuted them. With Deve Gowda himself repeating the allegations, the issue has again come into focus ahead of the coming Lok Sabha elections.

# Trinamool manifesto promises to repeal CAA, discontinue NRC, not implement UCC

Kolkata | Agencies

The Trinamool Congress on Wednesday released its manifesto for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, promising to repeal the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and discontinue the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam if the party is voted to power.

The manifesto also vows not to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the country, a promise made by the BJP in its election manifesto.

Trinamool's manifesto aligns with the war cry raised by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee against the NRC, CAA, and UCC at almost all her recent public meetings. She claims the three issues are interlinked and part of the BJP's ploy to end the social and cultural diversity that exists in the country.

The promises in the Trinamool manifesto are branded as 'Didir Shopho' (Didi's promise), seen as a counter to 'Modi Ki Guarantee'. The manifesto was read out by for-



mer West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra, currently the Chief Economic Advisor to the state government. Mitra said the party promises to replace the Ayushman Bharat

health scheme with a better version, guaranteeing coverage of up to Rs 10 lakh.

The manifesto also promises to increase the number of scholarships

for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes by three times.

"The old age pension for those aged 60 and above will be increased to Rs 1,000 per month," the manifesto read. It also promised to cap the price of petrol, diesel, and LPG cylinders to ensure affordability, besides abolishing the 'price stabilisation fund' to manage rate fluctuations.

"All graduates and diploma holders up to 25 years of age will be provided one-year apprenticeship with a monthly stipend. Student Credit Cards of up to Rs 10 Lakh will be provided to those pursuing higher education," the manifesto promised.

The party also promised to provide financial aid to all women at the national level, in line with the 'Lakshmir Bhandar' scheme in West Bengal, which is a financial dole introduced by the state government for all women.

It also promised to offer scholarships to girl students in line with the 'Kanyashree' scheme in West Bengal.

# PIL in Delhi HC seeks permission, facilities for CM Kejriwal to govern from jail

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A petition has been filed before the Delhi High Court advocating for Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's ability to continue governing from judicial custody in the liquor policy case.

Filed by advocate Shrikant Prasad, the PIL petition seeks to facilitate virtual conferencing arrangements for CM Kejriwal to engage with cabinet ministers, ensuring uninterrupted governance.

The PIL also seeks to restrain media houses from sensationalising news about CM Kejriwal's potential resignation and the imposition of President's Rule in the capital.

Moreover, it targets Virendra Sachdeva, BJP Delhi president, alleging that his protests and statements create undue pressure for Kejriwal's resignation, disrupting peace and traffic flow with politically motivated intentions.

Prasad's petition stresses the commendable track record of Delhi's gov-



ernance, particularly in the education and healthcare sectors over the past seven years. It contends that the pres-

ent circumstances in the national capital violate fundamental rights under Articles 21, 14, and 19 of the

Indian Constitution.

Asserting that neither the Constitution nor any law prohibits ministers, including chief ministers or prime ministers, from governing from jail, Prasad's plea stresses the urgency of the matter, citing the need to ensure continuity in governance for the welfare of the people.

"As the makers of the Constitution were vigilant enough that there might be a situation when the politics of the country will enter into the worst and at that time just to keep the public fundamental rights upheld it is very much required that there is no compulsion or any obligation for resignation, otherwise gravest repercussions may arise by repeating the same modus operandii for making any minister resigned," Prasad says.

The petition urges expedited consideration from the court, citing the exceptional governance of Delhi amidst CM Kejriwal's incarceration, attributed to alleged political motives and false implications in the liquor policy case.

# Will highlight attacks on dignity of J&K's people, says Mehbooba Mufti

Srinagar | Agencies

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) President and former J&K Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday said she will highlight "attacks on the dignity of people" in her election campaign.

Campaigning in Kulgam district which is part of the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat from where she has announced to fight the election, she said: "I don't believe in playing the blame game. We are passing through very difficult times. Our resources, our land and our dignity are being attacked every day. I think we should talk about it. I don't want to go into what former J&K Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah or someone else has said." She noted that she



had attended the INDIA bloc meeting in Mumbai where the National Conference President, Dr Farooq Abdullah, was also present and she told him that whatever he decides on seat sharing, they will accept it as he is their elder.

"The NC later said that the PDP is finished. Is the PDP finished? Even if Farooq

Abdullah and Omar Abdullah had to field NC candidates only, they should have given me a call and told me that it is in the interest of J&K as the NC can put forth the point of view better than the PDP. But, they started showing us down by claiming that the PDP was a spent force," Mehbooba Mufti said.

# SEVERAL TRAINS AFFECTED IN PUNJAB AS FARMERS SQUAT ON TRACKS

Chandigarh: Farmers on Wednesday squatted on railway tracks at the Shambhu railway station in Punjab, hampering the movement of at least 35 trains.

The farmers have kept the national highway at the interstate border blocked near Shambhu to mark protest over the demands, including a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) by the Centre, since February 13.

As the protesters were moving ahead to block the railway tracks, the police tried to stop them, which led to a scuffle between them. After breaking barricades, they sat on the track. The farmers have also been demanding the release of three arrested farmers. A day earlier, the arrested Navdeep Jalbera's father Jai Singh called on people to reach in maximum numbers to block the railway tracks to pressurise the government to release "unlawfully detained innocent farmer youths".

Shambhu is the gateway to Punjab from the national capital via Haryana.

# IIT-K and BFI forge partnership to accelerate healthcare innovation in India

Kanpur | Agencies

The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT-K) and Blockchain For Impact (BFI) have announced a strategic partnership, under the BFI-Biome Virtual Network Programme to nurture innovations and driving advancements in healthcare in India.

As part of this collaboration, BFI will support IIT Kanpur in promoting entrepreneurial initiatives through the Startup Incubation & Innovation Centre (SIIC), IIT Kanpur.

According to an official release, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed at IIT Kanpur by Prof. Kantesh Balani, Dean of Resources and Alumni (DoRA), IIT Kanpur; and Dr. Gaurav Singh, CEO BFI. As part of this programme, BFI has pledged to allocate over \$150,000 across three years to develop programmes specifically tailored to healthcare-focused startups at IIT Kanpur's Startup Incubation and Innovation Centre (SIIC). This collaboration leverages IIT Kanpur's estab-



lished leadership in fostering entrepreneurship and BFI's commitment to advancing biomedical research. By combining these strengths, the part-

nership aims to develop impactful solutions that address critical gaps in India's healthcare landscape. Prof. Kantesh Balani, DoRA, IIT Kanpur, said,

"I am very optimistic about the partnership between IIT Kanpur and BFI. This MoU will help us share knowledge, support startups effectively, and improve our capacity-building efforts."

Dr. Gaurav Singh, CEO of BFI, stated, "Meeting the IIT Kanpur incubatees was incredibly inspiring. Their boundless energy and unwavering dedication to healthcare innovation are truly awe-inspiring. IIT Kanpur's exceptional support for these entrepreneurs aligns perfectly with our shared mission of accelerating impactful solutions in biomedical research. Through diverse initiatives in biomedical research and innovation, district full-stack partnerships, and process-driven funding programmes, we are actively addressing critical gaps in India's healthcare landscape." This partnership between IITK and BFI signifies a significant step forward in advancing healthcare innovation in India. By bringing together diverse expertise and resources, this collaboration holds immense promise for improving public health and ensuring equitable and accessible healthcare for all.





ELECTION CAMPAIGN ENDED ON 6 SEATS OF MP THIS EVENING Amit Shah visited Ram temple in Chhindwara

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Voting is going to be held in six parliamentary constituencies in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh. All the candidates in these areas are putting their full strength into their campaign. The election campaign has ended at 6 pm.

In the first phase of Lok Sabha elections in the state, voting is to be held in six Lok Sabha constituencies - Sidhi, Shahdol, Jabalpur, Mandla, Balaghat and Chhindwara on April 19 from 7 am to 6 pm, there the elections will be held from 6 pm on April 17. The promotion stopped.

Voting is to be held in the three assembly constituencies of Balaghat



Lok Sabha constituency - Baihar, Lanji and Paraswada only from 7 am to 4 pm, hence the election campaign in these areas stopped from 4 pm on April 17.

Chief Electoral Officer Anupam Rajan said that there is a provision to stop the election campaign in the Lok Sabha constituency before 48 hours of the scheduled end of voting. After the expiry of the time limit for canvassing, persons from outside the area, who are not voters in that constituency, have to leave that area. An intensive campaign is run for this.

There are 29 Lok Sabha seats in the state, for which voting is to be held in four phases. The first phase of voting will take place on April 19.

Team Absolute | Chhindwara

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who is on a visit to Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh, visited the historic Ram temple here on Wednesday on the occasion of Ram Navami. While his road show took place during his stay, he also gave the mantra of victory to the party leaders.

Union Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday reached the Ram temple located at Oot Khana in Chhindwara on the occasion of Ram Navami and visited it. This is a historical and approximately 400 years old temple and



has a close association with Shankaracharya.

The Union Home Minister had reached Chhindwara on Tuesday evening. He had a historic road show here.

Shah also seemed satisfied with this road show and he also wrote on his blog, "The zeal and enthusiasm of Chhindwara road show is

giving the message of BJP's massive victory. Heartfelt gratitude to the people of Chhindwara for this immense love and support."

BJP sources say that after the road show, Amit Shah held a closed room discussion for a long time with key BJP leaders Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, State President Vishnu Dutt Sharma, state election in-charge Mahendra Singh, current situation of Chhindwara and gave some instructions and also talked about working on a new strategy.

MP's daughters brought glory to the state

Team Absolute | Bhopal

27 candidates from Madhya Pradesh have achieved success in UPSC, which is considered to be the toughest examination. Two daughters from Rewa and Dhar districts also did wonders. Vedika Bansal, resident of Rewa district, has made both the districts proud by securing 96th rank and Mahi Sharma, resident of Dhar district, has secured 106th rank.

CM Mohan wrote on social media platform I pray to Baba Mahakal for your bright future and best wishes. Will meet you all soon. I have full confidence that your knowledge, energy and ability will play an important role in taking the country and Madhya Pradesh on the golden path. Ashutosh Tiwari, Rewa. Vedika Bansal, resident of Narendranagar of the city, has secured 96th rank in UPSC. Vedika, who belongs to a business family, had till now no one in the



government job. Vedika says that if hard work is done with concentration then it is not difficult to reach the goal. He told that the first attempt was in 2019, but it was a disappointment. She was not successful in the second attempt also. He cracked UPSC in the third attempt and secured 96th rank.

Mahi Sharma, resident of village Rajgarh of Sardarpur tehsil of Dhar district, made the district proud. Mahi's father Raju Sharma is a grocery businessman. He has passed UPSC in his second attempt itself. Mahi has

released a video and given the credit of her success to her parents and teachers as well as her guru Devendra Satpura. He said that no matter how difficult the destination is, success is achieved through hard work. After doing B.Sc. from Holkar College, Indore, Mahi stayed in Delhi and prepared for UPSC. Teacher Devendra Satpura told that Mahi wanted to become an IAS but this time she has been selected for IPS. But she is confident that she will definitely become an IAS in future.

Congress national spokesperson Devashish Jararia resigned 'PARTY LEADERS TOOK RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY POLITICAL MURDER'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Congress national spokesperson and former candidate from Madhya Pradesh's Bhind Lok Sabha seat Devashish Jararia has resigned from the primary membership of the party.

He alleged that the leaders in Congress have taken the responsibility of my political murder. Devashish Jararia had contested the Lok Sabha elections from Bhind parliamentary seat as a Congress candidate in the year 2019, but he had to face a crushing defeat. In this Lok Sabha election, Congress party did not give him ticket and made Phool Singh Baraiya its candidate in his place, due to which he is said to be angry.

In a letter written to the party's national president Mallikarjun Kharge, Devashish Jararia has said that the party had contested the last elections from Bhind parliamentary constituency and after the election results were declared, the leaders had instructed to keep busy preparing for the next elections. After which he remained busy in his campaign and when his turn came to get the ticket, his ticket was canceled. After this, neither any big leader talked to him, nor did the candidate consider it appropriate to contact him. Besides this, they are also not being invited to the programs of the area.

Devashish Jararia further wrote that it seems that the leaders in Congress have taken the responsibility of my political murder and have thrown it out like a fly in milk. What is my fault? Worked hard day and night for the party. By playing group game the Congress was not settled within the



Congress itself. The one who commits internal attacks in Congress is the one who is questioned the most. Which is not in my character. The party talks about the respect and rights of Dalits, tribals, women and backward classes, but my rights were robbed. Devashish has alleged that there is no similarity between the words and actions of Congress.

Dalits, tribals, women, OBC class are not getting responsibility within the party. While working for the party, I have come to the conclusion that the party has no policies and no willpower. I waited for a month, but it is better to leave a place where there is no respect, hence I am resigning from the primary membership of the party.

SUCCESSFUL KIDNEY TRANSPLANT IN SUPER SPECIALTY HOSPITAL REWA

First government institution to perform kidney transplant in Vindhya region

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The first kidney transplant was done on March 29 in the newly built kidney transplant unit of Super Specialty Hospital, Rewa. Super Specialty Hospital Rewa has become the first government institution to perform kidney transplant in Vindhya region. The kidney was provided to the female patient (age-43 years) by her husband.

Nodal Officer Nodal Transplant Unit Dr. Rohan Dwivedi said that the female patient has been discharged on April 17. The female patient is healthy and the female patient has been advised to follow up and stay in touch with the nephrologist. SOTO Nodal Officer Dr. Pushpendra Shukla said that the procedure was complex



but was completed successfully with the cooperation of the entire team. The first 3 months after transplant are important for the patient, hence

the patient should remain in constant touch with his doctors and keep following up. It was informed that the super specialty hospital is committed

to provide services to kidney transplant patients in future. Kidney transplant services will continue to be provided in future also.

BJP will achieve historic victory on all 29 Lok Sabha seats of the state: VD Sharma

Katni/Panna | Agencies

In the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress party is not seen anywhere in the contest in Madhya Pradesh. The situation of Congress in Khajuraho Lok Sabha constituency has become such that it is supporting organizations like Forward Bloc. The Forward Bloc organization adopts leftist ideology and supports Naxalism and Maoism. Congress has already left the field in Khajuraho. The people here have also rejected the candidate of Indi alliance.

The people of entire Madhya Pradesh including

Khajuraho have decided to make BJP win with a historic majority under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. BJP will win the elections on all 29 Lok Sabha seats of Madhya Pradesh with historic votes and Narendra Modi will become the Prime Minister of the country for the third time. This was said by Bharatiya Janata Party state president and MP Vishnuudutt Sharma while addressing the workers at the Lok Sabha election office of Mudwara assembly constituency of Katni district after getting the membership of Bharatiya Janata Party to about 400 workers

including the acting district president and councillor of Congress.

Sharma said that the Congress Party has no existence left. Congress cannot contest the elections on its own and hence has already left the field in Khajuraho. Then supported the Samajwadi Party included in the Indi alliance. This is the same Samajwadi Party, which had opened fire on Kar Sevaks and Ram devotees. While Samajwadi Party was rejected by the people of Khajuraho region, now Congress has supported the Forward Bloc organization which supports Naxalism and Maoism.

Bhojpuri actress Yamini Singh visits Mahakaleswar with brother, seeks divine blessings



Team Absolute | Mumbai

On the occasion of Ram Navami, Bhojpuri actress Yamini Singh on Wednesday visited Mahakaleswar Jyotirlinga in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, and sought blessings of Lord Shiva.

Taking to Instagram, Yamini who has recently wrapped up her two films 'Uttaran' and 'Jaisi Saas Waisi Bahu', shared a divine picture from the temple premises.

She is seen wearing a beautiful magenta-pink saree with golden motifs on it. Yamini is holding a puja thali in her hands. The post is captioned: "Jai Shri Mahakal". In the Stories section, she dropped a snap with her brother, sitting in the car. The geo-tag is of 'Mahakaleswar Jyotirlinga'. She captioned it as: "Bro". On the work front, Yamini is known for movies like 'Patthar Ke Sanam', 'Lallu Ki Laila', and 'Premgeet'.

AIIMS Bhopal's Dr. Anshul Rai's "Gum Massaging Brush" gets copyright from the GOI

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Under the leadership of Professor (Dr.) Ajai Singh, Executive Director, AIIMS Bhopal, Dr. Anshul Rai, Additional Professor, Department of Dentistry, through his research, has developed a "Gum Massaging Brush" prepared from Neem wood and bottle gourd loofah. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion of India Government of India has granted the Copyright to "Gum Massaging Brush". The most common disease related to mouth in the world is gum disease; it includes bleeding gums, swelling, bad breath, loose teeth and pain. The main reason for this is not cleaning the mouth properly. Till now all the brushes in the world have been made for teeth. This is the world's first new brush designed for gums. The main reasons for increasing gum disease are eating too much sweet and junk food, not brushing properly or eating too many times. Due to this, the



blood supply to the gums reduces, the gums become flabby and swell, due to which they start bleeding. Gum massage brush is made using neem wood and bottle gourd loofah. The cost of mak-

ing it was also very low because neem wood and bottle gourd loofah were easily available. No plastic was used at all which is usually used in brushes. After doing research with a larger sam-

ple size, it can be launched in the market soon. For this innovative technology, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal, Professor (Dr) Ajai Singh has congratulated Dr Anshul Rai for his success.

VOTING FOR FIRST PHASE WILL BE HELD IN THE STATE ON APRIL 19 FROM 7 AM TO 6 PM

Bhopal : Chief Electoral Officer Anupam Rajan said that the voting process will be held from 7 am to 6 pm on April 19 in the state. Voting will be held from 7 am to 4 pm in all the polling stations of Baihar, Lanji and Paraswada assembly constituencies of Balaghat parliamentary constituency.

Rajan said that the process of mock poll will start from 5:30 am, one and a half hour before voting starts. This process will take place in the presence of the candidate or his authorized agent. If a candidate or his agent does not appear at the polling station at 5:30, he will be made to wait for 15 minutes. After this, the process of mock poll will be started in the presence of polling parties and other members.

There is a provision to conduct mock poll with minimum 50 votes, in which NOTA will also be included. Before starting the process of mock poll, the ballot unit and VVPAT will be kept in the VVPAT compartment. The control unit will have to be placed on the table of the presiding officer or the table of the polling officer.





EDITOR'S SPECS

## Employment skilling initiative

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with digital infrastructure provider Lightstorm for employment enablement and skill development programme in the country. The collaboration aims to address the skill gap among underprivileged students and support underserved youth, women, and job seekers from tier II and III cities. It will provide extensive placement assistance, including job readiness facilities, for students pursuing degrees in arts, science, and commerce. Top performers will also get internship placements, further enhancing their professional development and employability. "We firmly believe that every individual, regardless of their background, deserves access to quality education and opportunities for personal and professional growth. We are proud to partner with and support Lightstorm's initiative in providing underprivileged students with necessary tech skills, facilitating inclusive economic development," said Mangala Sunder Krishnan, Professor Emeritus, Department of Chemistry, IIT Madras. The 'Employment Enablement Programme through Skill Development' is a meticulously designed curriculum that aims to upskill students with essential topics that are highly practical and relevant in the current job market. It includes networking essentials, ITIL fundamentals, ticketing tools, production support fundamentals, Linux and Windows basics, storage and backup fundamentals, middleware technologies, and soft skill training. "I am thrilled to announce our partnership with IIT Madras. With its curriculum, placement assistance, and internships, this comprehensive educational programme will empower individuals from diverse backgrounds and foster inclusive workforce and economic growth," said Amajit Gupta, Group CEO and Managing Director, Lightstorm.

# Correction and consolidation ahead, trade cautiously

Arun Kejriwal

The week gone by had four trading sessions in which markets gained on two and lost on two. At the end of it all, benchmark indices ended virtually flat but gave loud indications that all is not well. As one reads the news, Iran has attacked Israel with suicide drones and missiles and also declared that as far as they are concerned this was in retaliation to the attack on their embassy, and it's all over. While the UN Security Council has called for an emergency session which will be held late in the night, the outcome would be known only when one reads the newspapers tomorrow or the Internet.

BSESENSEX lost 3.32 points or 0.00 per cent to close at 74,244.90 points while NIFTY lost 5.70 points or 0.03 per cent to close at 22,519.40 points. The broader markets saw BSE100, BSE200 and BSE500 gain 0.22 per cent, 0.12 per cent and 0.15 per cent. BSE MIDCAP gained 0.19 per cent while BSE SMALLCAP lost 0.35 per cent.

What is significant is the fact that new highs were made on the first two days of the week. The high on BSESENSEX was 75,124.28 points while it was at 22,775.70 points on NIFTY. Looking at the developments, which will be discussed later, for the immediate week, these highs look too far away and unlikely to be crossed in a jiffy.

The Indian Rupee lost 11 paise or 0.13 per cent to close at Rs 83.41 to the US Dollar. Dow Jones too had a torrid week and lost on four of the five trading sessions and was flat on one. Suffice to say that at the present moment, the high of 39,887 points made on March 21 looks like a distant dream. Rate cuts, an expectation which was driving markets, have been dashed to the ground. This has happened because the economy is in fine fettle and inflation which has been a key concern, is refusing to moderate. In such a scenario, rate cuts in the immediate short term should be ruled out.

Our markets began their upward journey with expectation of results for the five state assemblies which were to be declared in the first week of December 2023. The benchmark indices on Friday, November 24, 2023, were at 65,970.04 points on the BSESENSEX and 19,794.70 points on NIFTY. At the end of the next week on December 1, they had moved to 67,481.19 points and 20,267.90 points. Exit polls were announced post-market closing on Friday, December 1, and results were declared on Sunday, December 3. In the week ended Friday, December 8, markets had moved to 69,825.60 points and 20,969.40 points respectively.

Gains in the two-week period were 3,855.56



points or 5.84 per cent in BSESENSEX and at 1,174.70 points or 5.93 per cent on NIFTY. Since then we have moved up much further, discounting the outcome of the general elections and gaining another 6.3 per cent on the BSESENSEX and 7.39 per cent on NIFTY.

Call it by any name, markets need a correction as there is virtually no space for further upside right away. Shares of Bharti Hexacom Limited who had issued shares at Rs 570, were listed on Friday, April 12. Shares ended day one with a fantastic appreciation and closed at Rs 813.75, a gain of Rs 243.75 or 42.76 per cent. The issue was an OFS of 15 per cent of the equity capital which was offered by the Government of India. The remaining 15 per cent of the equity or 7.5 crore shares are locked in for six months from the date of listing. One could be sure that looking at the share performance, the government would look to sell these shares when the opportunity arose.

In what could be termed as sheer coincidence, Vodafone Idea Limited, yet another telecom player is tapping the capital markets with its follow-on offer for Rs 18,000 crore in a price band of Rs 10-11. The issue would open on Thursday, April 18, and close on Monday, April 22. The share price on BSE closed at Rs 12.96. The

top end of the band offers an arbitrage of Rs 1.96 or 17.8 per cent while at the lower end of the band, the arbitrage is Rs 2.96 or an attractive 29.6 per cent. The company has allotted shares worth Rs 1,200 crore to a vendor, ATC, a tower company towards pending dues at Rs 10. This was done about three weeks ago and I strongly believe this should be the price at which the company would allot shares to all applicants.

The present shareholding of the company is 32.3 per cent for the Vodafone group, 18.1 per cent for the Aditya Birla group and 33.1 per cent for the Government of India, while the public shareholders hold 16.5 per cent.

This issue would keep the markets engrossed and there would be various arbitrage opportunities available. While the share is traded in futures and options, it is currently in the banned stage as overall exposure has crossed the limits of the exchange for the scrip.

The Mauritius double tax treaty has seen a change being introduced where the PPT (principal purpose test) has been made a key for the purpose of lower tax being applicable or not.

The ramifications of this treaty are yet to be known, but on the

very first day itself, there was large selling by FPIs who sold shares worth Rs 8,000 crore on a net basis. Details of the policy have begun to trickle in on Friday.

The current global scenario, US FED and expectations of interest rates being cut being dashed, geo-political news being disturbed with first Ukraine-Russia, then Israel and Gaza and now Israel and Iran with the Houthis thrown in as a bonus, is keeping the pot boiling.

Crude is once again threatening to move towards the three-digit mark with gold having made a new high. All of this points to uncertain times and the fact that global markets cannot make new highs in such times. We need stability and a period of consolidation.

TCS has declared results for the 4th quarter and year ended March 24. There is improvement and order flows have certainly improved.

Looking at the large size of TCS, one cannot take this as indicative of the entire IT space and one certainly needs to know how the mid-tier and small IT companies would fare. One would have to wait for results from some more companies before coming to a decision.

Coming to the markets, expect them to remain volatile and under pressure. As of the time of writing this article, all indications are towards a gap-down opening on Monday. One will have to burn the midnight oil or have an early rise tomorrow to see the outcome of the UN Security Council special session outcome. Irrespective of anything, there is an escalation of tension and this leads to uncertainty. Uncertainty is bad for markets.

The strategy for the week ahead, which has four trading sessions with a festival holiday on Wednesday, is to sell on sharp rallies and buy only on sharp dips. The focus should be on large-cap and select mid-cap stocks.

As markets are overdue for correction and consolidation, allow markets to find their own levels. There is no need to push the pedal in buying. Trading and buying opportunities would be available. In terms of resistance, the highs made on Tuesday at 75,124 and 22,775 points acted as strong resistance. Similarly, the previous lows made at 21,900 points and around 72,000 points would act as strong supports.

Trade cautiously. (Arun Kejriwal is the founder of Kejriwal Research and Investment Services. The views expressed are personal)

## international

## Record rainfall in UAE disrupts travel at deluged Dubai airport

**Cairo** | Agencies  
Dubai airport, one of the world's busiest, on Wednesday advised passengers not to head to the hub "unless absolutely necessary," after the city in the United Arab Emirates suffered flooding from the heaviest rain-fall seen in decades.



The airport said flights are being delayed and diverted.

"We are working hard to recover operations as quickly as possible in very challenging conditions," the airport added in a social media post.

Footage circulating on social media showed the airport's runways flooded and planes attempting to navigate pools of water.

Emirates, Dubai's flagship

carrier, said it has suspended check-in at the Dubai airport for departing passengers until midnight due to what it called "operational challenges" caused by bad weather and road conditions.

At least 20 flights, due to depart from Dubai airport, were cancelled on Tuesday, affecting destinations, includ-

ing India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom, the UAE newspaper The National reported.

Roads leading to the airport remained blocked and flooded, it added.

The government of Dubai said it had extended remote working for all its employees until Wednesday, and urged

private sector institutions to do the same.

On Tuesday, the UAE, a Gulf federation of seven emirates, were 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 to Wednesday.

At least one person died after his car was swept away by floods in the emirate of Ras Al Khaima, police said.

The man, a UAE citizen, was in his 70s.

In neighbouring Oman, at least 18 people died after the country was hit by torrential rains.

## Iran's President again warns Israel against counterattack



**Berlin** | Agencies

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi has once again warned Israel against mounting a military counterattack following Iran's recent air assault on Israel. During a telephone call with Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Raisi warned that "the slightest action" by Israel against Iran's national interests "will have extensive and painful consequences." Details of the call were published on the web portal of Iran's presidential office. Iran has recently warned Israel several times of a military

response to its large-scale attack, in which hundreds of drones and missiles were fired towards Israel on Saturday night. The Iranian response to any further Israeli action would be "at least 10 times more drastic" than the first attack, the country's Security Council said in a statement.

So far, Iran has chosen the least severe form of punishment for Israel, the Council said in its press statement. Israel's military leadership has said that Israel does not intend to leave Saturday's large-scale Iranian attack unanswered.

## 10 killed in Russian attack on Ukraine's Chernihiv: Zelensky



**Kiev** | Agencies  
Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called for more air defence support from Western partners after a Russian missile attack killed at least 10 people on Wednesday.

"This would not have happened if Ukraine had received sufficient air defence and if the world had been determined enough to counter Russian terror," Zelensky wrote on Telegram.

The search for victims among the rubble is continuing.

According to Zelensky, 10 people have been found dead so far.

Another 20 people have been injured in the attack on the northern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv, he said.

Earlier, Mayor Oleksandr Lomako spoke of eight dead and 18 injured.

The Ukrainians do not lack determination in their fight, Zelensky added.

"We need sufficient determination from our partners and sufficient support that reflects this determination," he said.

Regional governor Vyacheslav Chaus said that three missiles struck near the Chernihiv city centre and that civilian infrastructure was damaged.

Chernihiv is located around 150 km north of Kiev, not far from the border with Russia.

When Russian forces invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Chernihiv was attacked but not captured.

In the past two years, it has been subject to frequent Russian artillery fire and aerial assaults.

## Indian woman in Pakistan refuses to leave without her kids

**Hamza Ameer** | Islamabad

Farzana Begum, an Indian national hailing from Mumbai, is currently in Pakistan fighting for the custody of her children, has refused to return to her native country, stating that her children's lives are in danger. Farzana Begum married a Pakistani citizen, Mirza Mubin Elahi, in Abu Dhabi in 2015.



Later, the couple came to Pakistan in 2018 and have two sons aged seven and six.

Farzana's case gained public limelight after she allegedly tortured her husband over a dispute regarding the custody of her sons and some properties in the name of her sons.

Farzana rejects her husband's claims that he had divorced her, stating: "If he has divorced me, then there must be a certificate."

"Me and my children's lives are in danger in Pakistan over a property dispute. I am confined to my house in Rehman Gardens, Lahore, and my children are enduring hunger," she said.

Farzana called on the government of Pakistan to provide her with protection until the case was resolved, refusing to leave to her native country without her sons.

"There are some properties in Lahore which are in the name of my sons. My hus-

band has possession of mine and my children's passports," she added.

Farzana is the second wife of Mubin Elahi.

Elahi already has a Pakistani wife and children, who Farzana alleges are plotting to bully and intimidate her to return to India and snatch control of properties, which she says belong to her two sons.

Advocate Mohsin Abbas, lawyer of Farzana, said: "Mubin Elahi is spreading false rumours that Farzana's visa had expired even though her passport was in his possession."

The case has become the talk of the town, as Farzana is unclear about the status of her visa, and is adamant that she will not

leave without her sons.

"I would never return to India without my sons," Farzana said.

While Farzana has been vocal about the case and her stance, Elahi has been quiet and has not clarified his position on the matter.

Farzana also rejects the accusation of her husband that she tortured him, stating that Elahi is making false allegations to get away from the core issue of the custody of her sons and possession of their properties in Pakistan.

"I know that Elahi is delaying the process to make sure my visa gets expired and I am forced to leave Pakistan. But I will not leave without my sons," Farzana asserted.

## 71 killed, 67 injured in rain-related accidents in Pakistan

**Islamabad** | Agencies

Heavy rains and lightning caused havoc in different areas of Pakistan causing 71 deaths and injuries to 67 others since four days, an official told the media on Wednesday.

An official from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said that the northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was the worst-hit region where 32 people lost their lives in different incidents, including roof collapse and lightning incidents.

According to the official, 15 children and five women were among the deceased in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where 41 others were also injured and 1,370 houses were damaged, Xinhua news agency reported.

The official added that 23 people lost their lives and seven were wounded in eastern Punjab province, eight were killed and eight others injured in southwest Balochistan province.

At least eight people were killed and 11 others injured and 47 houses were destroyed in heavy rains in the Pakistan-



controlled Kashmir during the period, the official said. The NDMA issued an advisory on Wednesday, saying that intense rainfall and thunderstorms are likely to hit the country from April 17 to April 29.

"Pakistan may expect a series of moderate to intense weather systems. Weather

patterns are anticipated to bring heavy rain, thunderstorms, and hailstorms, posing significant risks to various parts across the country," said the NDMA.

The NDMA feared that the expected rainfall may trigger flash floods in vulnerable areas, including low-lying areas.





# 'Ayarams Gayarams' flourish in Maharashtra as parties hand out tickets to them

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections, political defectors have hit the jackpot in Maharashtra as the parties of both the MahaYuti and the Maha Vikas Aghadi have rolled out the red carpet for them.

Seven such leaders, who either left their parties or made a 'ghar wapsi' (return), have succeeded in getting nominations for various Lok Sabha seats. Archana Patil, a former BJP leader and the wife of party legislator Rana Jagjit Singh Patil, joined the NCP led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and was nominated from the Dharashiv constituency against her estranged brother-in-law and Shiv Sena-UBT nominee Omraje Nimbalkar.

Three-term MP and former Shiv Sena deputy leader Shivajirao Adhalrao parted ways with the party and joined the NCP, which fielded



him from the Shirur constituency against the NCP-SP nominee and sitting MP Amol Kolhe.

Adhalrao had represented Shirur in the 2004, 2009, and 2014 elections as the Shiv Sena (united) candidate but lost to Kolhe in the 2019 elections. Thereafter, he deserted Uddhav

Thackeray and joined the Eknath Shinde camp.

Congress legislator from Umred, Raju Parve left the party and joined the Shiv Sena. He was nominated from the Ramtek constituency where the Sena dropped the sitting MP Krupal Tumane, and will face

Congress candidate Shyamkumar Barve. BJP leader Karan Pawar left the party and joined the Shiv Sena-UBT. He was nominated from the Jalgaon constituency against BJP candidate Smita Wagh. In Beed, Bajrang Sonawane deserted Ajit Pawar and joined the NCP-SP led by Sharad Pawar. He has been fielded from the Beed constituency against the BJP's Pankaja Munde. NCP legislator Nilesh Lanke from Pamer constituency in Ahmednagar district made a 'ghar wapsi' to the NCP-SP, which nominated from the Ahmednagar constituency against BJP nominee Sujay Vikhe-Patil.

Two days ago, BJP leader Dhairyashel Mohite-Patil, who is the nephew of former Deputy Chief Minister Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil, left the party and joined the NCP-SP. He has been nominated from the Madha constituency in Solapur against BJP nominee Ranjit Singh Naik-Nimbalkar.

# Constituency Watch: It's Nitin Gadkari's 'Vikas' vs Congress' Vikas Thakre in Nagpur

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The BJP is relying on development brought in by Union Minister and sitting MP Nitin Gadkari in Maharashtra's high-profile Nagpur Lok Sabha constituency while the Congress is banking on the contacts and relations of its candidate Vikas Thakre with different sections of the society.

The Lok Sabha campaign in Nagpur will come to an end on Wednesday as the polling is slated for April 19.

Union Minister Gadkari, who was elected in the 2014 and 2019 elections defeating the Congress nominees Vilas Muttemwar and Nana Patole respectively, is pitted against Congress nominee Vikas Thakre.

Besides the slew of development initiatives taken by him during his two terms as a Union Minister, the Nagpur MP is also banking on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantee. On the other hand, Vikas Thakre, who is a sitting MLA, is riding on Congress' five guarantees and approaching the voters with an argument that mere bridges, and metros "do not mean development".

For Union Minister Gadkari, the organisational strength, and the active participation of Deputy Chief



Minister Devendra Fadnavis and the activists of RSS in the campaign apart from his pro-development image with "friendship" cutting across party lines and various sections of the society are a few positives which came handy for his outreach with voters. More importantly, the people have a direct connection with him due to his several public and social projects.

However, the few negatives in his campaign include the status quo and strong opposition from various quarters against the infrastructure development, public protests following the damage caused due to recent floods in Nagpur due to unseasonal rains and lack of adequate job opportunities.

Congress nominee Vikas Thakre is counting on his political rise from a corpora-

tor to a legislator and his image as a leader who fights for the public cause. Thakre is cashing on his contacts and relations in every section of society and also the teams which were developed at every ward level. However, he had to struggle to bring together various factions in the Congress urging the leaders to keep aside their egos for the defeat of the BJP.

In addition, Vikas Thakre had to cope up with organisational constraints and a lack of strong poll machinery to take on BJP's 24x7 functional network.

Interestingly, Union Minister Gadkari hopes to win with a higher margin on the development plank while Vikas Thakre is confident to muster support from the voters affected by inflation, unemployment, and farmers' distress.

# EC asks political parties to share details of aircraft, helicopters used in campaigning

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has asked political parties to furnish details of aircraft and helicopters being used for campaigning, including their origin and destination and details of people ferried in them, reported news agency. A letter by Tejas Samel, deputy election officer of Mumbai Suburban district, dated April 12, said such information has to be furnished three days before the journey to the district election office, but that duration has now been reduced to 24 hours.

The details should also include the make of the aircraft/helicopter and people travelling in them.

The letter said this information has to be furnished under the Model Code of Conduct in force for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections 2024, which has to be sent to the ECI.

Lok Sabha elections 2024 in Maharashtra, which has 48 seats, will be held in five phases between April 19 and May 20.

Meanwhile, a top officer on Tuesday said that more than 4,100 police personnel, along with four companies of Central Armed Forces, and 1,837 home guards, will be deployed at 2,765 polling booths across Nagpur city on April 19 when votes will be cast for the Lok Sabha constituency.

Union minister and sitting BJP MP Nitin Gadkari is in the fray from this constituency against



Congress MLA Vikas Thakre.

The RSS headquarters is situated in Nagpur city, the second capital of Maharashtra.

"4,161 policemen, four companies of Central Armed Forces, and 1,837 home guards will be assigned to guard 2,765 polling booths across Nagpur city," city police commissioner Ravinder Singal told reporters.

He said city police have seized various drugs, 3,000 litres of liquor, and cash collectively amounting to Rs 85 lakh since the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into effect on March 16.

Police have also seized eight firearms, while preventive action has been taken against 1,625 individ-

uals, he added.

A total of five seats, including Nagpur, Gadchiroli-Chimur (ST), Bhandara-Gondiya, Chandrapur, and Ramtek (SC) in the east Vidarbha region will vote in the first phase of general elections in Maharashtra.

Separately, Nagpur (Rural) Superintendent of Police Harsh Poddar said 151 officers, 2,676 police personnel, and 1,574 home guards will be deployed in the district which has 1,745 polling booths, including 52 critical ones.

Additionally, three companies of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPEF) will be stationed at sensitive polling stations.

# Two BSP MLAs from Rajasthan join Shiv Sena in Mumbai

Team Absolute | Jaipur/Mumbai

In a setback to the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Rajasthan, two party MLAs -- Manoj Kumar and Jaswant Singh Gurjar -- joined the Shiv Sena in Mumbai on Tuesday in the presence of Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

While Kumar is the MLA from Sudalpur, Gurjar is the legislator from Badi in Rajasthan.

In the Assembly elections held in Rajasthan in December last year, the BSP won two seats. While Kumar defeated Congress' Krishna Poonia, Gurjar got the better of BJP's Giriraj Malinga. To recall, in the 2008 Assembly polls, the BSP won six seats but all its legislators



joined the Congress a year later. Similarly, in 2018, the BSP won six seats but all its MLAs later joined the Congress.

# Two Bangladeshi nationals held for illegal stay

Team Absolute | Palghar

Police have arrested two Bangladeshi nationals from Vasai in Maharashtra's Palghar district for staying in the country without valid documents, an official said, reported news agency. The anti-human trafficking cell of the police picked up the two Bangladeshi nationals, including a woman, from Pragati Nagar locality of Nalasopara in Vasai on Monday evening based on a tip-off, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime) Madan Ballal told agency. The accused were identified as Aakash Arif Khan (26) and Laboni Poridin Mandal (22). They did not have any documents for travel or stay in India, he said. During their interrogation, the duo revealed that they were doing menial jobs in the locality for livelihood. An FIR under the the Foreigners Act, 1946, and the Passport



(Entry into India) Rules, 1950, was registered at the Tulinj police station against them on Tuesday, the official said. Earlier last month, the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) has apprehended five Bangladeshi nationals from Navi Mumbai for residing in the country without valid documents, according to officials. The arrested persons named Aahat Jamal Sheikh (22), Rebul Samad Sheikh (40), Ronney Soriful Khan, aged 25, Julu Billal Sharif aged 28 and Mohammad Munir Mohammad Siraj Mulla (49) were working as masons in Navi Mumbai. They are from two districts in Bangladesh, a police official said.

# Maha BJP files FIR over fake list of party candidate for Palghar seat

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The BJP has registered an FIR at the Marine Drive police station here against an unknown person for forging and fabri-

cating the letterhead and publishing a fake candidate list for the Palghar Lok Sabha constituency.

As per the "fake list", the party has nominated Prakash Nikam from Palghar

seat.

Incidentally, the BJP and Shiv Sena are yet to reach a consensus on a seat-sharing agreement over the Palghar constituency. Both have staked their claims.

# Unseasonal rains claim 10 lives, 150 animals in Marathwada region

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Unseasonal rains in Maharashtra's Marathwada area have claimed the lives of 10 people and 150 animals in the week starting April 9, according to a state revenue department report. The eight impacted districts are Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Jalna, Beed, Parbhani, Latur, Nanded, Dharashiv, and Hingoli. The rains, which began on April 9, have caused substantial devastation, including the deaths of humans and animals, as well as damage to over 450 houses in 481 villages throughout the region, a report stated. According to the report, crop damage has also been significant, affecting around 5,256.86 hectares of land belonging to 9,127 farmers. According to the data, Beed district suffered the most agricultural losses, totalling 1,693.80 hectares. Tragically, the rains took the lives of ten people, with Beed district reporting the most deaths (three), followed by Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Parbhani, and Latur districts, each with two deaths, and Hingoli district with one, the report further added. Furthermore, 152 animals, including 117 milch animals, died as a result of the inclement weather, compounding an already severe situation for farmers and towns in the region, the PTI report additionally stated. In an earlier PTI report dated April 12, a state government official recounted that Parbhani received the most rainfall on Wednesday and Thursday, measuring 33.4 mm, while Latur received 14.3 mm. "Apart from these two districts, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar received 1.6 mm, Jalna got 3.3 mm, Beed 7 mm, Dharashiv 7.9 mm, Nanded 8.9 mm, and Hingoli 7.2 mm," the official told news agency PTI on Friday.

Rain was earlier forecast for several locations throughout the state by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

"Light rains with gusty winds of 30-40 kmph are likely to occur at isolated locations across central Maharashtra districts, Marathwada, and the Vidarbha region," the Regional Meteorological Department had said on X. Previously, in their afternoon alert on April 11, the India Meteorological Department's (IMD)



senior official said that "Thunderstorms with lightning and light to moderate spells of rain with gusty winds reaching 30-40 kmph are very likely to occur at isolated places in districts of Nanded, Latur and Dharashiv in next three to four hours."

# After HC rap, Maharashtra govt agrees to grant financial benefits to martyr's widow as spl case

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government on Wednesday informed the Bombay High Court that will be granting financial benefits to the family of an Army Major who was killed in the line of duty in Jammu and Kashmir four years ago.

According to the report, the widow of Major Anuj Sood, Aakriti had moved HC seeking monetary benefits for ex-servicemen under 2019 and 2020 government resolutions.

Reportedly, Major Sood was martyred on May 2, 2020, when he was rescuing civilian hostages from terrorist hideouts in J&K. He was awarded the Shaurya Chakra posthumously.

Per the report, the Maharashtra government had initially said Sood's family was not eligible for the benefit and allowance as the resolutions were only for those born in Maharashtra or have lived in the state continuously for 15 years.

A division bench of Justices Girish Kulkarni and Firdosh Pooniwalla had previously told the government to consider her case as an exceptional one



and extend benefits. Reportedly, the court had told the government is they could not do so, they would pass appropriate orders.

On Wednesday, Advocate General Birendra Saraf told the bench that the government has decided to extend benefits to the Sood family as a special case and will be giving them a sum of Rs 1 crore (Rs 60 lakh to Aakriti and Rs 40 lakh to Sood's father) and also Rs 9000 monthly payment to Aakriti.

According to the reportedly, the bench lauded the government's decision and said the government gave respect to a difficult situation.

"These are real human agonies. Always there is an exception...It is a special case. We highly appreciate the stand taken by the chief minister and the state government in considering the petitioner's case as a special case and granting benefits," the court said.

According to the report, the bench disposed of the petition noting the amount shall be disbursed as expeditiously as possible.

Reportedly, Aakriti Sood, in her plea, challenged the communication she received from the government on August 26, 2020, denying benefits. She said that the resolution had said that Sood was neither born in Maharashtra nor residing in the state for the last 15 years.

According to the report, the plea contended that the family has been residing in Maharashtra for the last 15 years as wished by her late husband. She added that Sood always intended to reside in Maharashtra's Pune.

# Former state minister Eknath Khadse receives Muktai threat call; probe on

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Former Maharashtra minister and Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar) leader Eknath Khadse received a threat call from an unidentified person, police officials said on Wednesday. As per a report, the caller threatened Khadse with dire consequences and the cops have begun an investigating the case.

The report by the news agency stated that Khadse had received the threat call on Monday from an unknown number after which he approached Muktai Nagar Police in Jalgaon district.

The official, citing the complaint, told PTI that the caller mentioned the names of the gangsters Dawood Ibrahim and Chhota Shakeel while threatening Khadse. He added that the caller has not been traced yet.

Following Khadse's complaint, a non-cognisable offence was registered under the relevant provisions against the unidentified person. He said that a probe is on into the case. Veteran leader Eknath Khadse, who is



presently in the NCP (SP), announced earlier this month that he would be returning to his parent political party--BJP--soon.

He announced on Saturday that he will rejoin his parent party in New Delhi next week, more than three years after he left the BJP over conflict with the state leadership and joined the unified NCP led by Sharad Pawar.

Due to a land deal dispute, Khadse was forced to leave his position as a minister in the former Devendra Fadnavis cabinet in 2016 and later due to certain happenings, he left the party.



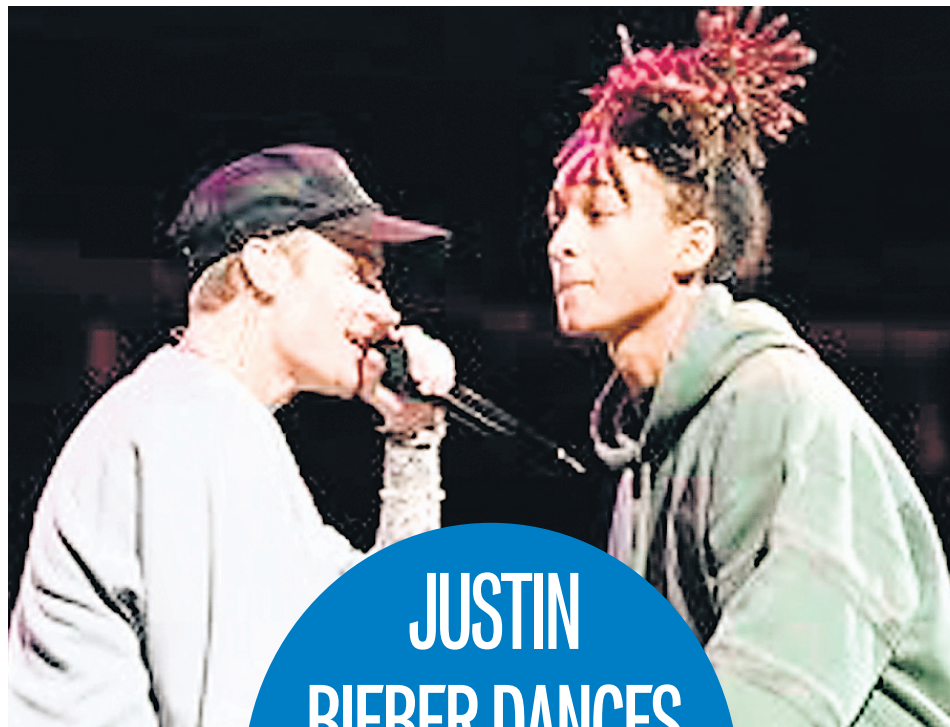


# Henry Cavill and Natalie Viscuso are expecting their first child



Los Angeles | Agencies

**M**an of Steel star Henry Cavill and his girlfriend, television executive Natalie Viscuso are set to welcome their first child. Henry recently spoke to entertainment outlet Access Hollywood at the New York City premiere of his upcoming film Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare where he shared the news. "I'm very excited about it. Natalie and I are both very excited about it. I'm sure you'll see much more of that," the actor told the publication when she asked him about embracing fatherhood. Cavill, 40, and Natalie, who is in her late 30s, made their relationship Instagram official in April 2021 when they shared a photo of themselves playing chess on their respective profiles.



## JUSTIN BIEBER DANCES WITH JADEN SMITH

Los Angeles | Agencies

**J**ustin Bieber took some time during his Coachella weekend to dance with his friend Jaden Smith on Saturday, April 13. The "Peaches" popstar, 30, had a sweet moment with Jaden, 25, while they enjoyed some downtime at the music festival in Indio, California. The two were filmed by an onlooker, who caught the two having fun in the middle of the festival.

Justin Bieber danced over a white t-shirt, pastel blue shorts, and sneakers while he enjoyed the festival. The two musicians notably collaborated together on the 2010 song "Never Say Never." Jaden also opened for Justin during his Justice World Tour. Besides enjoying some of the artists at the festival, Justin also made a surprise appearance during rapper Tems' set, where he performed his Wizkid collaboration "Essence" along with the rapper. Jaden's dad Will Smith made a guest appearance to rap his song "Men In Black" during J. Balvin's set. Justin's wife Hailey Bieber shared a few clips from Tems' set. In one of the videos on her Instagram Story, she sweetly wrote, "Oh hey baby," while he was on stage. Justin looked very happy to be performing with Tems and Wizkid.

## 'THE SOPRANOS' STAR STEVE BUSCEMI JOINS CAST OF HORROR-COMEDY

Los Angeles | Agencies

**T**he makers of the horror-comedy streaming series 'Wednesday' have cast actor Steve Buscemi for the show's second season.



However, exact character details are currently being kept under wraps, but sources say Buscemi will play the new principal of Nevermore Academy, reports Variety. A few details are available about the new season of 'Wednesday', aside from the fact Jenna Ortega will return as the titular Addams Family daughter going through her teenage years. The first season ended with Wednesday successfully solving a series of grisly murders while also thwarting an attempt to destroy Nevermore and its students. Buscemi is a highly-celebrated actor, known for his ability to take on drama and comedy roles in equal measure. He has starred in films like 'Reservoir Dogs', ' Fargo', 'The Death of Stalin' and numerous Adam Sandler productions. He has also starred in shows like 'Boardwalk Empire', 'Miracle Workers', season 5 of 'The Sopranos', and made memorable guest appearances on shows like '30 Rock' and 'Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt'. He is an eight-time Emmy nominee, including multiple nods for 'Boardwalk Empire' and for starring in and directing 'The Sopranos'. He won the Emmy for best short-form variety series in 2016 for 'Park Bench with Steve Buscemi'.



## Charlize Theron Brings Daughter August Out for Rare Public Appearance

Los Angeles | Agencies

**C**harlize Theron is rarely seen out with her children, August and Jackson, but she recently stepped out with August, 7, for a mommy-daughter date! While attending a fashion show in New York City, the 48-year-old movie star was photographed holding her daughter's hand as they walked into the Brooklyn Museum on Monday, April 15.

For the evening, Charlize wore a black, long-sleeved top with a tan maxi skirt that featured black lettering. Though the event was indoors, the Bombshell actress wore a pair of sunglasses and kept her hair tied back in a neat bun. As for her daughter, August was dressed in a blue and white jacket and a white dress. She accessorized with a black clutch purse.

It appeared that Charlize's eldest daughter, Jackson, 11, didn't tag along for the outing.

Charlize has raised her daughters as a single mom since adopting them in 2012 and 2015. Last year, the Oscar winner opened up about raising her children now that they're growing up. The three have bonded over their love for Taylor Swift, and Charlize took August to one of Taylor's concerts in 2023. Meanwhile, Jackson chose to see the Eras Tour concert movie with a group of friends.



## Orlando Bloom pokes fun at fiancée Katy Perry's malfunctioning attire

Los Angeles | Agencies

**B**ritish actor Orlando Bloom made fun of his fiancée Katy Perry's outfit before it "broke" live on 'American Idol'. The actor took to his partner's Instagram post to mock her look, comparing it to a cooking utensil, reports Mirror.co.uk.

'Firework' singer Katy, 39, had posted snaps of her attire to the social media platform and while most were extremely complimentary of the metallic top, Orlando was less so. He jibed: "Glad I could bend that frying pan with my bare hands for you baby." Katy couldn't help but respond with a witty comment of her own, jokingly hitting back, "@orlandobloom wow good one and I didn't even write it this time."

As per Mirror.co.uk, actor Alexander James Rodriguez couldn't help but get in on the couple's banter. He commented: "@orlandobloom hehe let's hope it's not bent around your ear later." Her next upload showed the moment the outfit in question failed to keep covered and "broke".

She shared a clip of the dress malfunction, which happened during Roman Collins' powerful rendition of James Brown's 'It's a Man's Man's Man's World' on 'American Idol'.

Katy laughed off the situation at the time stating, "That song... um... broke my top off... I guess it is a woman's world."

## ZENDAYA SAYS SHE DOESN'T KNOW IF 'EUPHORIA' WILL RETURN

Los Angeles | Agencies

**L**ooks like nobody is really sure about when 'Euphoria' will return with its season 3. Forget ardent fans, even Hollywood star Zendaya claims that she, too, is unaware of when the third season will begin production.

Although the 'Euphoria' star is an executive producer of the hit HBO series, she said she's "not in charge" of whether or not the third season will really happen, reports Variety.

But of course, Zendaya wants to play Rue again. "If it's right for the characters and everything turns out the way it should, of course," Zendaya told Variety at the 'Challengers' premiere in Los Angeles Tuesday night (Pacific Standard Time). "But it's beyond me."

As per Variety, HBO announced the postponement of 'Euphoria' Season 3 on March 25, saying that the network and creator Sam Levinson "remain committed to making an exceptional third season."

"In the interim, we are allowing our in-demand cast to pursue other opportunities,"



an HBO spokesperson said. Three days later, Storm Reid, who plays Rue's younger sister Gia, was the first cast member to speak publicly about the postponement. She expressed optimism that season 3 would eventually happen. "I would hope the viewers, the audience will be able to finish the show," Reid said. "I think we should handle the show with care. We've put our hearts and soul into it." The delay was due, in part, to creative differences. Levinson first proposed a five-year time jump which would feature Rue becoming a private detective. Zendaya proposed that Rue, now sober, becomes a pregnancy surrogate.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Ivy Getty





## IPL 2024

# DELHI CAPITALS THRASH GUJARAT TITANS' BY SIX WICKETS, MOVE TO SIXTH PLACE IN POINTS TABLE



Ahmedabad | Agencies

Cameos from Jake Fraser-McGurk, Abishek Porel and Shai Hope helped Delhi Capitals thrash Gujarat Titans by six wickets to register a resounding win

at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Wednesday. After Ishant Sharma took two crucial scalps in power-play while Mukesh Kumar shined with 3-14 to lead an impressive bowling show, along with superb bowling to bowl out GT for just 89, DC finished

off the chase in 8.5 overs to get a massive boost in net run rate. The big victory at Ahmedabad sees DC jump from ninth to sixth place in points table and leapfrog GT in the process. Chasing a paltry 90, Fraser-McGurk got going from the word go by lofting

Sandeep Warrier for six and four, before slashing twice off Spencer Johnson for the same result. His short yet cracking knock ended at 20 off 10 balls after flicking to mid-wicket off Johnson. Warrier got his first scalp in the third over with a well-directed bouncer which Prithvi Shaw ballooned to short third man. Porel was delightful in punching, and pulling for a four and two sixes before being castled by Warrier. Hope nailed his flicks, and flat-bat shots to pick three quick boundaries, before reverse-sweeping to backward point off Rashid Khan. Rishabh Pant continued his impressive time by flat-batting a drive off Noor Ahmed for four, before dancing down the pitch to clear long-off for six. Sumit Kumar thumped Noor for a brace of fours, second of which came off a bottom-edge, which also turned out to be the winning runs for DC to complete the chase in 53 legal deliveries and see their net run-rate rise from -0.975 to -0.074.

### Brief scores

Gujarat Titans 89 in 17.3 overs (Rashid Khan 31; Mukesh Kumar 3-14, Ishant Sharma 2-8) lost to Delhi Capitals 92/4 in 8.5 overs (Jake Fraser-McGurk 20; Sandeep Warrier 2-40) by six wickets

# Rafael Nadal makes winning return in Barcelona



Barcelona | Agencies

Rafael Nadal made a winning return at the Barcelona Open, where the 12-time champion defeated Italian Flavio Cobolli 6-2, 6-3. Nadal is playing just his second tournament of the year and first since January, when he made the quarterfinals of the ATP 250 in Brisbane.

"Every time it is more difficult and especially when you are at an advanced age,

it makes things even tougher," Nadal said of his return as quoted by ATP tour.

"I'm going through tough moments but at the same time, when I'm able to be on Tour for a few days and practise with the guys and then be able to compete a little bit, it means a lot to me. Still enjoyable enough to keep going. I'm happy to start with a victory without a doubt," he added.

The 37-year-old was playing his first clay-court match

since winning his 14th Roland Garros trophy in 2022. Tuesday's victory marked his 475th win on the surface, ATP reports.

The 92-time tour-level titlist will next meet fourth seed Alex de Minaur, whom Nadal leads 3-1 in their ATP head-to-head series.

Nadal boasts a 67-4 match record at the ATP 500, where he first won the title in 2005 and most recently triumphed in 2021.

# ITTF World Cup: Manika, Sreeja suffer group stage exit

Macao (China) | Agencies

Indian paddlers Manika Batra and Sreeja Akula suffered second-round group stage exit after going down to the top Chinese paddlers, Wang Manyu and defending champion Chen Meng respectively at the ITTF World Cup in Galaxy Arena here on Wednesday. World No. 39 Sreeja lost 1-3 (4-11, 4-11, 15-13, 2-11) to reigning Olympic champion and world no. 4 Chen Meng of China and finished second in the group. Manika Batra, too, finished second after losing 0-4 (6-11, 4-11, 9-11, 4-11) to world no. 2 Wang Manyu of China. Earlier both the paddlers won their respective first-round group stage matches on Tuesday. There are sixteen groups in each of the men's and women's singles competitions. Group stage matches comprise four



games, with the ratio of wins to losses determining the final rankings that will further help to book a berth for the knockout stages.

# 'This seems to be God's plan': Shah Rukh Khan's pep talk at KKR's dressing room

New Delhi | Agencies

Despite Kolkata Knight Riders' (KKR) disappointing loss to Rajasthan Royals, franchise co-owner Shah Rukh Khan came down in support of his team and said, "this seems to be God's plan".

Addressing KKR members and the coach Gautam Gambhir in the video shared on social media, the star Bollywood actor can be seen saying, "We did not deserve to lose; this seems to be God's plan". He later said that "wins and losses are a part of the game, and now all the team members should focus on the next game."

"The main thing is the energy in all of us. I think we have great energy on the field, we have lovely energy here, and personally, also, everybody is bonding together. So please



continue so. All the best. Honestly, it was a very proud day, the way we all played. I think all of us, I won't even take individual names, that's been taken. GG (Gautam Gambhir), don't feel down. We would all be bouncing back. It's God's plan for today," the actor said in his speech. "As Rinku says, I think this is what we would like then. We'll be back with more and better god's plans. Thank you, everyone, God bless you all," he added.

The actor is often seen in the stadium cheering for his team. On Tuesday, Jos Buttler scored a sensational unbeaten century as Rajasthan mounted the joint-highest successful chase (224) to prevail over Kolkata by two wickets in Match 31 of the Indian Premier League at the Eden Gardens.

# BMW Open: Bhambri-Olivetti duo stuns Monte-Carlo Masters champions



Munich | Agencies

Yuki Bhambri and his French partner Albano Olivetti pulled off a major upset as they knocked out reigning French Open finalists Sander Gille and Joran Vliegen 4-6, 7-6, 10-6 in the opening round of the BMW Open, here on Wednesday.

After losing the first set, the Indo-French pair bounced back in the next two sets and defeated Gille and Vliegen, who won the Monte-Carlo Masters last week. Bhambri-Olivetti reached the semifinals of the Marrakech Open,

where they lost to second-seeded Lucas Miedler and Alexander Erlar of Austria. Currently ranked 59 in the ATP rankings, Bhambri quit men's singles in January to focus on doubles. Meanwhile, Rituja Bhosale advanced to the pre-quarterfinals of the Chinese women's singles W50 Shenzhen, a hard-court event. Rituja partnering with YeXin Ma of China also reached the quarterfinals of the event. Rituja will next face Liu Fangzhou of China, whereas, in women's doubles, Rituja and Ye Xin Ma will take on Prarthana Thombare and Arianne Hartono.

# Sheetal Devi gives world champion a scare as armless archer bags silver



New Delhi | Agencies

Para Asian Games gold medallist Sheetal Devi honed her archery skills while competing alongside able-bodied archers. She was at it again as the armless archer competed at the Khelo India national ranking meet for women at the DDA Yamuna Sports Complex. A strong medal contender at the Paris Paralympics in August this year, Sheetal finished behind Haryana's Ekta Rani in the final shoot-off in the sub-junior girls' section. The teenager from Jammu lost 138-140 but not before giving Ekta, a world youth champion, a

mighty scare. While Ekta bagged the prize money of Rs 50,000, Sheetal received a cash prize of Rs 40,000. "This result will help me more going ahead in the international platforms and the Olympics," said Jammu girl Sheetal. Her personal coach Abhilasha, added, "Taking part in the national ranking tournament, alongside able-bodied competitors, is giving training and competition exposure which is much-needed prior to the Olympics.

"We have to go abroad for exposure but we are getting the same experience here itself. Domestic-level tournaments like these are helping the cause. This is

helping Sheetal's Olympic preparation," said Abhilasha. For Ekta, it was a challenging experience for sure. A gold medallist at the Archery Youth World Championships 2023 in Ireland, Ekta said: "I have faced-off with Sheetal previously so I had the match experience against her. We faced off in Patiala last December as well. It feels good to play against her because she is an armless archer and it gives a lot of motivation as well." The Khelo India ranking archery tournament was conducted in three categories - senior, junior and sub-junior in recurve and compound. Eighty-seven archers competed in this event.

# 37-field line-up for first ever Rifle/Pistol Olympic Selection Trials

New Delhi | Agencies

Palak's quota win at the ongoing Rio qualifiers has completed the athletes' field for the upcoming first-ever Olympic Selection Trials (OST) in the Rifle and Pistol disciplines.

The first two of the four trials are scheduled here at the Karni Singh Shooting Range from April 18, 2024 and a total of 37 marksmen and women will take aim in the eight Olympic events, four each for each discipline.

A 10-day detail has been announced by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), the governing body for shooting in the country, for the same, with each event seeing five qualified shooters based on the Olympic selection policy criteria. The two women's pistol events are the only ones which have seen common shooters, three of them in fact, make the trials cut.



Palak and Surbhi Rao from the Rio squad will join Rhythm Sangwan, Esha Singh and Manu Bhaker in the women's air-pistol line-up, with the latter three also having qualified for the women's 25m pistol trials, the first of the eight finals on the roster, slated for April 20.

That will be followed by the men's 25m Rapid-Fire Pistol (RFP) T1 final. The second trial match for both these

events concludes on April 22.

The men's and women's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) event follows next with the T1 finals scheduled on April 24. The 3P concludes with the T2 finals on April 26. The first 10m Air Rifle and Air Pistol men's and women's finals take place on April 25, while they also conclude the OST on April 27, with their T2 finals scheduled one after the other.





## Amitabh Bachchan, A.R. Rahman to be conferred Mangeshkar family awards

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan shall be conferred the 'Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Puraskar' at a function scheduled here on April 24, while music maestro A. R. Rahman shall be bestowed the 'Master Deenanath Mangeshkar Award,' next week, the organisers said.

The award is given by the Master Deenanath Mangeshkar Smruti Pratishthan, Pune, nurtured by the eminent Mangeshkar family, and shall be given away to Bachchan on

his 82nd death anniversary, along with a musical tribute.

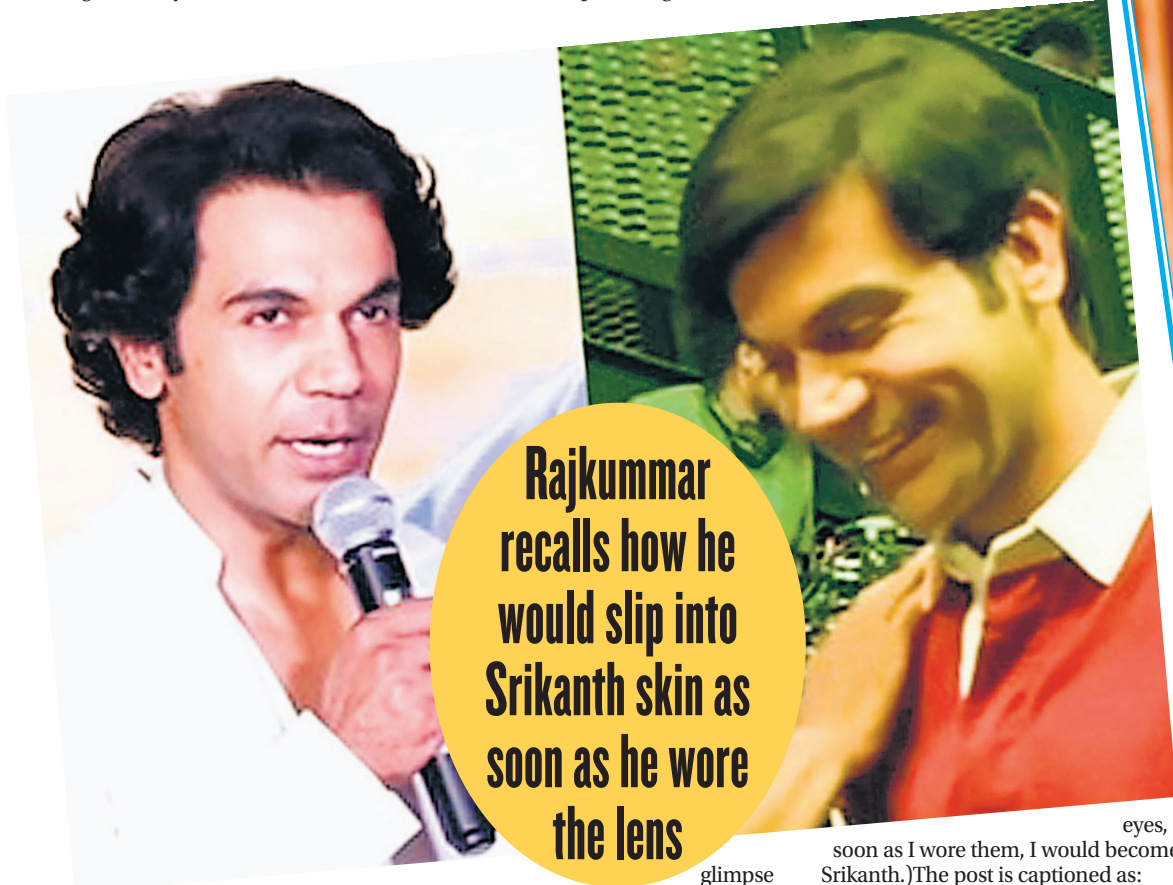
Earlier, the inaugural award was given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi (2022), followed by veteran singer Asha Bhosale (2023), for their path-breaking, spectacular and exemplary contributions to the country, its people and society.

Besides Bachchan and Rahman, the other prominent awardees in different categories are: 'Ghalib' as Best Marathi Play of the Year, NGO Deepstambh Foundation Manobal of Jalgaon, litterateur Manjiri Phadke, comedian Ashok Saraf, actress Padmini Kolhapure, singer

Roopkumar Rathod, journalist S. B. Torsekar, actor Atul Parchure, producer-actor Randeep Hooda.

The awardees' list was announced by siblings Hridaynath Mangeshkar and Usha Mangeshkar, and the honours shall be done at the hands of Asha Bhosale on April 24.

Prominent singer Vibhavari Apte-Joshi and her team will pay a musical tribute to Lata Mangeshkar that evening, being organised by the Pratishthan and Hridayesh Arts.



Rajkumar recalls how he would slip into Srikanth skin as soon as he wore the lens

Team Absolute | Imphal

Rajkumar Rao, who is playing the visually impaired industrialist Srikanth Bolla in the biopic 'Srikanth-Aa Raha Hai Sabki Aankhein Kholne', shared what all went into playing this role, giving a glimpse of some behind-the-scenes moments from the shoot of the movie.

Taking to Instagram, Rajkumar shared a Reel video, which includes a

glimpse from the trailer launch of the movie.

In the video he says: "Koshish yahi thi ki mai jab set par aahun to mai Srikanth hun. Jab tak pack up na ho mai Srikanth hi rahun. Ham ek lens pehente the aankh me, jaise hi wo lagta tha mai Srikanth ho jata tha. Fir set pe koi aata tha, nahi aata tha mujhe pata nahi hota tha. But I think that's the only way I could do this part." (The effort was that whenever I came on the set, I became Srikanth. That till pack up, I remain as Srikanth. I used to wear a lens in my

eyes, as soon as I wore them, I would become Srikanth.) The post is captioned as: "Behind the scenes. Srikanth in Real for Srikanth on Reel... The trailer offered a tantalising glimpse into the remarkable portrayal of Srikanth's indomitable spirit portrayed by Rajkumar. The movie promises to be an extraordinary journey, encapsulating themes of determination, resilience, and triumph. The trailer not only showcases the journey of a visually impaired man but also a story of his unique character and wit and how he goes on to make his disability his strength and not a weakness."

## Parineeti Chopra seeks blessings at Siddhivinayak Temple

**Mumbai:** Actress Parineeti Chopra on Wednesday visited the Siddhivinayak Temple to seek blessings for the success of her recently released movie 'Amar Singh Chamkila'.

Directed by Imtiaz Ali, the film stars Diljit Dosanjh in the titular role. It charts the untold true story of Punjab's original rockstar of the masses, the highest record-selling artist of his time, Amar Singh Chamkila. Parineeti plays the role of Amar Singh Chamkila's wife -- Amarjot Kaur.

The visuals show the diva wearing a sleeveless white ethnic suit. She opted for a natural makeup look and accessorised with silver jhumkas.

Parineeti is seen holding a puja thali, while she offers prayers to Lord Ganesha. There is an orange tika on her forehead.

Shot in real locations, the film promises to transport the audience to the vibrant and rhythmic world of Punjab's folk music, right to the rustic Akhadaas (live music performances in villages) where Chamkila's voice would once roar.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

A picture of Bollywood superstar Hrithik Roshan from the shoot is going viral on social media. The picture shows Hrithik in his role of RAW agent Major Kabir Dhaliwal. He can be seen wearing a body hugging full sleeves turtleneck t-shirt which he paired with a black military vest jacket and a pair of black cargos. The actor can be seen sipping on espresso in the picture.

'War 2' is a sequel to the 2019 Hrithik Roshan and Tiger Shroff-starrer 'War'. The film belongs to the fabled spy-universe which also includes films like 'Ek Tha Tiger', 'Tiger Zinda Hai', 'Pathaan' and 'Tiger 3'. Hrithik also made an appearance in the Salman Khan-starrer 'Tiger 3', which released on Diwali last year. 'War' was directed by Siddharth Anand who also directed Hrithik in 'Fighter'. However, for 'War 2' Siddharth Anand took an exit, and the film is now helmed by Ayan Mukerji.

'War 2' also stars NTR Jr. Earlier, this month NTR Jr landed in Mumbai to start shooting for the film.

Hrithik flaunts chiselled body, for his role of RAW agent in upcoming movie



BRINGING A LITTLE PINK, LOTS OF FEMININITY, JUHI PARMAR DROPPED A SNEAK PEEK INTO HER LOOK

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The 'Bigg Boss 5' winner, Juhi Parmar on Wednesday dropped a sneak peek into her look of the day. The 'Kumkum' fame actress took to Instagram and shared a string of pictures wearing a baby pink co-ord set. For the makeup, she opted for rose-pink lips and blushed cheeks. Juhi half-tied up her hair and accessorised with golden hoops.

The post is captioned as: "Bringing a little pink, lots of femininity and the colour girls love... #Promotions #YehMeriFamily".

Juhi portrays 'Neerja', a soft-hearted but stern mother in the family drama 'Yeh Meri Family'.

Narrated through the lens of 11-year-old Rishi, 'Yeh Meri Family 3' also features Anngad Raaj, Hetal Gada, and Rajesh Kumar in pivotal roles.

TO ENDLESS LAUGHTER, FAIRY DUST AND HAPPINESS ON LOOP ADITI B'DAY WISH FOR SIDDHARTH



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Aditi Rao Hydari on Wednesday posted an adorable birthday wish for her fiance-actor Siddharth, wishing for endless laughter, fairy dust and happiness on loop.

Aditi and Siddharth got secretly engaged to actor Siddharth, recently. She made the announcement on social media in March by dropping a snap flaunting their engagement rings. Now, on the occasion of Siddharth's 45th birthday, Aditi, who was last seen in 'Hey Sinamika' shared a series of unseen black and white pictures.

The photos show Aditi holding his beau's hands, while the duo strikingly poses for the cameras. The rest of the pictures show them candidly laughing and hugging each other. The post is captioned as: "Happiest birthday my manicorn... To endless laughter, fairy dust and happiness on loop... More power to you and everything that you do... Squishes from your forever cheerleader." Dia Mirza too took to her Instagram Stories and shared a picture of Aditi and Siddharth. She wrote: "Happy Birthday Hero... Keep spreading your magic @worldofsiddharth Thank you Addu, for making this amazing human a part of our lives @aditiraohydari."

Nayanthara penned a birthday wish saying, "Happy birthday genius... have a great bday & an amazing year ahead".

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Urvashi Rautela