



ECI Holds Meeting To Discuss Strategies To Increase Voter Turnout In LS Polls 2024

HT News Network

NEW DELHI, APR 5: With an aim to increase voter turnout in the ensuing Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission organised a conference on Friday with municipal commissioners and district election officers (DEOs) of 11 States and Union Territories which had low voter turnout during the previous elections.

During the meeting, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar Directed Municipal



Commissioners and District Election Officers (DEOs) to create a movement in which people are self-motivated to vote.

Municipal Commissioners from major cities and select District Election Officers (DEOs) from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh deliberated together to chart a path towards enhancing voter engagement and participation in identified urban and rural PCs, the ECI said in a statement.

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Jummat-ul-Vida Prayers Held With Religious Fervour In Kashmir

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 5: Jummat-ul-

Vida, the last Friday of the holy month of Ramzan, was observed with religious fervour across the

Kashmir valley. Barring historical Jamia

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NEWS BRIEF

Women Arrested For Stealing Gold In Ganderbal

GANDERBAL APR 5: Ganderbal Police received a written complaint from one complainant namely Kaiser Ahmad Waza son of Gh Mohi-ud-Din Waza resident of Tawheed Chowk Ganderbal stating therein that his Sister-in-law came to his house as a guest and has stolen Gold ornaments which were kept in the Locker of his room.

In this regard, Case FIR No. 64/2024 under relevant sections of law was registered at PS Ganderbal and further investigation was set into motion.

Acting Swiftly on the directions of SSP Ganderbal Sandeep Gupta-IPS, a Special Police team was constituted

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ACB arrests Patwari for demanding bribe in Kathua

SRINAGAR, APR 05: ACB traps and arrested a Patwari for demanding and accepting bribe of Rs 3000 for issuance of Virasati Intqal and legal heir certificate in Kathua district on Friday.

According to a statement, ACB received a written complaint from a resident of Machhedi alleging that Gulshan Singh, Patwari, Halqa Machhedi is demanding bribe of Rs 5000 from him for issuance of Virasati Intqal mutations and legal heir certificate.

The statement reads that the complainant applied through online portal of revenue department and met Patwari for issuance of the same. "The

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Abdullah Placating Anti-National Forces: Chugh

JAMMU, APR 5: BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh who is also the party incharge for J&K today took strong exception to former J&K chief minister Farooq Abdullah's comments on screening of the film, Kerala Files, on DD and the film carries a nationalist message which should be told to the entire nation.

Chugh said like Kashmir Files, the Kerala Files also exposes a section of the society which has nefarious designs to execute.

He said the film narrates how gullible girls were being motivated by groups like ISIS to tread the anti-national path.

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Congress 2024 poll manifesto promises restoration of statehood to J&K

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 05: In its manifesto for 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the Congress on Friday promised to restore full statehood to Jammu & Kashmir, but the party remained silent on abrogation of the Article 370 and revocation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from the Union Territory.

According to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the manifesto for 2024 Lok Sabha polls was released by Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, who was flanked by senior leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in Delhi.

"We will immediately restore full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. We will amend the Sixth Schedule

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HC Directs J&K Admin To Hear Overstaying Occupants Of Govt Accommodations Before Taking Action

HT News Network

JAMMU, APR 4: The Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court on Thursday direct-



ed the administration to hear the former legislators who are overstaying at government accommodations before taking any action.

A bench of Chief Justice N Kotiswar Singh and Justice MA Chowdhary issued the direction while hearing a petition seeking eviction of former ministers and legislators overstaying in government accommodations in Jammu and Srinagar. It directed the directors of estates in Jammu and Srinagar to deal with each of the 43 occupants and pass

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Wildlife Department Issues Advisory Amid Rising Man-Animal Conflict Incidents

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 05: In view of the increased incident of man-animal conflict, the wildlife department has issued an advisory, asking people to follow it to prevent any loss of life.

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After Mustard Fields, Now Wild Tulips In Pampore Karewas Attract Tourists

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 05: After mustard fields, wild tulips in Karewas of the Saffron town of Pampore have become the centre of attraction for tourists and locals alike.

Against the picturesque backdrop of mustard flowers in yellow, the wild tulips in shades of pink and white create a cap-



tivating spectacle for visitors exploring the Pampore Karewas.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), tourists often make a stop at the Pampore Karewas along the national highway as they get drawn by the enchanting allure of the wild tulips. Many take the opportunity for photoshoots amidst the blooming flowers.

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Army Foils First Infiltration Bid Of 2024 In Kashmir; Two Militants Killed

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 5: Two suspected militants were killed on Friday as the Army foiled the first infiltration attempt of this year along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district.

Army said the infiltration bid was foiled by alert troops in the morning hours when terrorists were trying to infiltrate through Sabura Nala in Uri sector. As the suspected movement of infiltrators was noticed by the Army and when challenged they opened fire triggering an encounter.

"Two terrorists have been eliminated," the Army said. Two AK rifles, four hand grenades and other war-like stores were recovered during the operation. The identity and affiliation of slain militants

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Cong-Led Governments In Past Exploited Hindu-Muslim Communities For Vote Bank Interests: Jitendra



HT News Network

JAMMU, APR 5: Union Minister and BJP Candidate for Udhampur, Lok Sabha consti-

tutionary Dr Jitendra Singh on Friday said that Congress-led governments in the past exploited the Hindu and

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Paris Olympics: Bilquis Mir From J&K Becomes First Woman To Represent India As Jury Member, Calls It 'Proud Moment'

HT News Network

NEW DELHI, APR 5: Bilquis Mir from Jammu and Kashmir is set to become the first woman from India to represent the country as a jury member at this year's Summer Olympics, which is to be hosted by Paris from July 26 to August 11.

Gir's appointment as a jury member for the Paris Games was official conveyed through a letter from the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to the Jammu and Kashmir administration.

"Bilquis Mir, water sports promoter, developer, athlete, jury member of Indian Kayaking and Canoeing association has been nominated as the member of the jury to officiate at the Paris Olympics games. She is the first person from India to be

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CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

ECI Holds....

An array of innovative voter awareness campaigns, including rolling out public transport and sanitation vehicles adorned with essential election messages, incorporating voter awareness messages into utility bills for widespread dissemination, collaborating with Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) and voter awareness forums, and utilising various platforms, including hoardings, digital spaces, kiosks, and Common Service Centres (CSCs), to disseminate voter education materials, were also outlined by ECI in the conference.

Addressing the event, Kumar said, "A total of 266 Parliamentary Constituencies (215 Rural and 51 Urban) with low voter turnout have been identified, and all concerned Municipal Commissioners, DEOs, and State CEOs have been called today to find ways to reach out to voters in a targeted manner."

He emphasised a three-pronged strategy of providing facilitation at polling stations like queue management, shelter parking in congested areas, targeted outreach and communication, and involvement of critical stakeholders like RWAs, local icons, and youth influencers to persuade people to come to polling stations. CEC Kumar directed them to prepare a booth-wise action plan for enhanced participation and behaviour change. He asked all MCs and DEOs to prepare different strategies for urban and rural areas and plan interventions accordingly for different target audiences.

He also urged the authorities to act in a manner that instills pride among the voters in participating in the democratic festivities and called for a movement in which people are self-motivated to vote.

11 States and UTs, namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, the NCT of Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Telangana, Gujarat, Punjab, Rajasthan, J&K, and Jharkhand, had a voter turnout lower than the national average of 67.40% in the 2019 General Elections to the Lok Sabha. Out of the total 50 Rural PCs across 11 states identified with lower voter turnout than the national average in 2019, 40 PCs are from Uttar Pradesh (22 PCs) and Bihar (18 PCs). In UP, 51-Pulphur PC recorded the lowest turnout of 48.7%, while in Bihar, 29-Nalanda PC recorded the lowest turnout of 48.79%.

The conference was chaired by Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, along with Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Shri Sukhbir Singh Sandhu. (Agencies)

Jumat-ul-Vida....

Masjid, the congregational prayers were held in all mosques and Shrines all across the Kashmir valley.

The largest congregational prayers were held at Hazratbal Shrine on the banks of Dal Lake in Srinagar which also housed the holy relic of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), where thousands of people including men women, and children thronged on the occasion of the Jumat-ul-Vida.

The authorities had made elaborate arrangements for the peaceful conduct of the prayers all across the valley.

Reports of congregational prayers were also received from Jenab Sahab Saura, Khan-e-Kah-e-Moula, Charar-e-Sharief, Dastageer Sahib in Khanyar, Sultan-ul-Arifeen, Naqashband Sahib in downtown and Syed Sahib at Sonwar Bagh.

Special prayers were held for the peace and prosperity of the Kashmir Valley and the betterment of people across the country.

Meanwhile, thousands of people holding placards took out a procession in Sankoo-Kargil in Ladakh Union Territory after the Jumat-ul-Vida prayers on the occasion of "Al-Quds Day" in solidarity with the people of Palestine. (UNI)

Congress....

of the Constitution to include the tribal areas of Ladakh," the party manifesto said.

The party has steered clear of talking about abrogation of Article 370 and revocation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from J&K, even as both were part of its manifesto in 2019 Lok Sabha polls. In the 2019 manifesto, the party had promised that nothing will be done to change the constitutional position of J&K. "We also acknowledge the unique history of the State and the unique circumstances under which the State acceded to India that led to the inclusion of Article 370 in the Constitution of India.

Nothing will be done or allowed to change the constitutional position," the party had said in its 2019 manifesto. In the said manifesto, the party had also promised that the AFSPA and the Disturbed Areas Act in J&K will be reviewed and suitable changes will be made in the text of the laws to balance the requirements of security and the protection of human rights. Recently, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the Centre will consider revoking the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in Jammu and Kashmir and that footprints of central armed forces will also be reduced.

HC Directs J&K....

specific individual orders, either for cancellation of accommodation and eviction or for allotment, thereof, by giving specific reasons for doing so.

"We make it clear that if the accommodation of any individual mentioned in this report is continued, specific reasons supported by necessary materials must be provided before this court so that this court will examine whether the authorities have taken an appropriate and fair decision regarding the government accommodation being presently provided to these 43 persons," the bench said.

After hearing advocate Sheikh Shakeel Ahmed

and others, appearing for the petitioner, and Senior Additional Advocate General SS Nanda, representing the Jammu and Kashmir government, the bench also directed that the directors of estates in Jammu and Srinagar will hear these 43 people individually before passing any order.

It directed the officials to inform the court of the rentals these 43 people have been paying as they have ceased to hold offices and why they have not been charged rental at commercial rates since they are not holding any office as of now.

The court said while passing separate orders for the occupants, authorities will keep in mind the provisions of the J&K Estates Department (Allotment of Government Accommodation) Regulations, 2004, and various orders passed by the court.

When the petition came up for hearing, Advocate Ahmed drew the attention of the bench towards the latest status report — dated February 23 — and apprised it, saying that almost all the overstaying ex-legislators have their own houses in Jammu and Srinagar but the estates department is not evicting them because of their political clout.

The advocate highlighted the cases of former chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, former deputy chief minister Kavinder Gupta, former minister Sajjad Lone, and argued dual standards have been adopted by the estates department on political considerations, and the law of the land has been disregarded, as evictions were earlier carried out selectively.

After conclusion of arguments from both sides, the bench directed the department to complete the court's orders within a period of one month. It will also furnish details by way of filing an affidavit on or before May 8, it said.

Wildlife Department....

As per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the department appealed to people to follow the preventive measures, which include the Dos and Don'ts issued by the department.

The wildlife department asked the people to stop moving into the forest alone, particularly women and children, who are most vulnerable to leopard and bear attacks.

It said the movement towards the forest during the evening and morning hours should be restricted as "it is a peak activity time of wild animals, particularly leopards. Don't go near or chase the wild animals if sighted from a distance."

The advisory said the livestock in the pastures inside forests should be attended to by at least three to four people. "Any type of bell or sound-producing device should be put around the neck of a few cattle," it said.

The advisory called for avoiding dumping kitchen waste near houses and building concrete 'leopard-proof' cattle sheds. "Dumping kitchen waste invites dogs which in turn invites leopards," it said.

The wildlife department said the people living in the vicinity of forests should complete outside activities during day time only.

It said the bushes and shrubs near the vicinity of the houses should be removed. "Such vegetation clearance will increase the visibility and help the leopard keep away from the houses," the wildlife department said.

The advisory said the people should construct "leopard proof" cattle sheds using wooden material or concrete structures. "A pet dog in the house can also alarm the presence of predators in the vicinity of the houses," it said.

The wildlife department suggested people not to make noises on spotting a leopard. "As such the wild animals feel insecure and can cause damage," it said.

The wildlife department also issued contacts of control rooms established to tackle man-animal conflicts.

Pertinently, the valley has been witnessing a surge in the number of man-animal conflicts.

In Budgam, two minors were killed by the leopard who was later killed by the wildlife department.

CSIR IIIM....

and standardize agro-technologies for mass-producing quality tulip bulbs in open field conditions, leveraging the favorable agro-climatic conditions of the Kashmir valley to enhance income generation for farmers through cut flower as well as bulb production for sustainable production of planting material thus empowering farmers for import substitution.

Dr Zabeer Ahmed, Director CSIR IIIM Jammu, who inaugurated the opening of the tulip experimental field said that under CSIR Floriculture Mission, the Institute has been hand-holding farmers, self-help groups, florists, nursery growers, and agri-entrepreneurs for production, value addition and trade of the different cut, loose and ornamental crop cultivars for alleviating their economic status and overall development of the remunerative agrarian sector.

He said since the launch of the Mission in 2020 more than 2000 farmers across different districts of J&K have benefited through various verticals of the Mission.

He said under the mission as part of our research endeavour for sustainable quality planting material production to reduce dependency on imported bulbs by exploring the feasibility of growing Tulips locally and identifying suitable locations for indigenous bulb production.

"We are trying to develop protocols for production of the crop varieties that can be grown for a prolonged period and in different agro-climatic conditions", he added.

Dr. Shahid Rasool, Nodal Scientist, CSIR Floriculture Mission under the cultivation and scien-

tific production of cut and loose flowers in Jammu and Kashmir will benefit farmers and stakeholders associated with the floriculture industry.

The Tulips are not being commercially grown by the farmers in the region and are presently being imported from Holland.

He highlighted that the favorable climatic and soil conditions of Kashmir Valley make the region suitable for Tulip cultivation and offer huge economic opportunities establishing the region as a center for high-quality flower production. (UNI)

After Mustard....

Local youth, who have long been involved in selling Kashmiri saffron to tourists, said thousands of visitors are flocking to the Pampore saffron fields to witness the wild tulips in full bloom. Excursions from schools are also common, with students relishing the chance to immerse themselves in the beauty of the tulips.

Mukesh, a tourist from Kerala, praised Kashmir's natural splendour, describing it as a 'true paradise on earth'. He said the saffron fields have diverse attractions, which are mesmerising during autumn with their full bloom, while the springtime spectacle of tulips beckons tourists once again.

Vikram, another tourist from Uttar Pradesh, echoed Mukesh's sentiments. He praised the breathtaking beauty of the Pampore Karewas adorned with tulips. "I stopped my vehicle to have the sight as the irresistible allure attracts everyone passing by," he said.

Tourists said Kashmir remains a safe haven for travellers across the country and urged everyone to experience the beauty of the tulips in Pampore and other scenic spots in the region. They lauded the natural charm of Kashmir and the warm hospitality of its people, inviting everyone to visit at least once.

Meanwhile, officials said there is a unique botanical spectacle occurring in the saffron fields of Pampore, where the wild tulips, identified as Tulipa Stellata, thrive alongside saffron.

This naturally occurring perennial herb, belonging to the family Liliaceae, boasts six identical flowers, featuring three petals and three sepals.

Army Foils First....

could not be established immediately. This is the first infiltration bid of 2024 in Kashmir that was foiled by the Army. The security forces along the LoC are on a high alert ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

A senior Border Security Force officer had recently said that chances of infiltration from across the LoC increase during important events like the upcoming general elections. (UNI)

Cong-Led....

Muslim communities for their vote bank interests.

"Congress-led governments in the past exploited the Hindu and Muslim communities for their vote bank interests, it is for the first time after independence that Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave the same esteem to every section of society," said Dr Singh addressing a series of public meetings during his election campaign in the upper and peripheral reaches of Kishtwar in areas like Bonjiwah, Kuntwara, Dachhan, Marwah, Warwan, etc. He said that neglected by Congress, Prime Minister Narendra Modi transformed Kishtwar into North India's "power hub".

Dr Singh said, that right from the time of independence when Kishtwar was part of erstwhile district Doda the elected representatives of Congress and allies from here always enjoyed considerable clout and the local MLA was invariably a Minister in the State Cabinet while the MP from here always a Minister in the Union Cabinet.

"Despite this, he said, it will be a question to be asked why Kishtwar did not receive the kind of attention that it deserved till Prime Minister Modi took over in 2014," he said adding that while as for the entire region of Kishtwar is concerned, from a neglected remote area, it has emerged as North India's power hub and has undergone amazing transformation in the last 10 years which is to be seen to be believed.

Dr Singh said today that Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar is all set to emerge as North India's major "power hub" generating around 6,000 MW of power after the completion of the ongoing power projects.

He said that 6 to 7 major Hydropower projects have come in the region in a short span of 9 to 10 years ever since Shri Narendra Modi took over as Prime Minister.

Elaborating on this, he pointed out that the largest capacity project is Pakal Dul with a capacity of 1000 MW. Its estimated cost, as of now, is Rs.8,112.12 crore and the expected timeline of completion is 2025. Another major project is the Kiru Hydroelectric project with a capacity of 624 MW. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 4,285.59 crore and the timeline in this case is also 2025, he said.

The Minister further informed that at the same time, the 850 MW Rattle project has been revived as a joint venture between the center and UT of J&K. In addition, the existing Dulhasti power station has an installed capacity of 390 MW, while the Dulhasti II Hydroelectric project will have a capacity of 260 MW.

Dr Jitendra Singh said these projects shall not only augment the power supply position thereby making up for the shortage of power supply in the UT of J&K, but the huge investment being made for construction of these projects is also a boost for direct as well as indirect opportunities for the local people.

For six long decades, said Dr Jitendra Singh,

the successive governments at the Centre and the State had ignored Kishtwar region because of their vote bank politics.

For example, he said, for several years, people here had been agitating and demanding a Degree college for Paddar but Congress and National Conference governments deliberately ignored this demand. It was only after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over in 2014 that a Degree college was sanctioned for Paddar under the Centre's scheme RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan).

Citing another example, Dr Jitendra Singh said that before 2014, road travel to Kishtwar was cumbersome and on the slightest landslide, the Doda-Kishtwar road got blocked. But today, the road travel time from Jammu to Kishtwar has reduced from over 7 hours in 2014 to less than 5 hours now. Similarly, he said, during these 9 years, Kishtwar has come up on the Aviation Map of India and has been sanctioned an airport under Centre's UDAAN Scheme, which nobody had ever imagined.

Similarly, Dr. Jitendra Singh said, new national highways, a series of Degree Colleges, mobile towers en route Machail Yatra and other remote areas have also come up during the Modi government, he said.

As for Machail, Dr Jitendra Singh said, mobile towers have been set up, multiple toilet complexes constructed and solar plants installed for regular power supply, and all this happened only after 2014. Not only this, the motorable road to Machail is under fast-track construction and the day is not far when Kishtwar to Machail travel would be just about 1 1/2 to 2 hours, he added. (UNI)

Paris Olympics....

appointed as a jury member at the Paris Olympics," the IOA stated in the letter to the Jammu and Kashmir administration.

Chuffed to bits at her appointment as a jury member for the Summer Olympics, which is considered the pinnacle of sports, Bilquis said it was like a dream coming true for her as the Olympics is the 'ultimate destination' not just for athletes but for sport promoters like herself.

Sharing her thoughts on her appointment as a jury member for the Summer Games, Bilquis said she started her journey as a canoeist from Dal Lake in 1998 and went on to represent the country in the country.

She said she is the former coach of the women's canoeing team that will represent India at the Paris Games this year, adding that she was also a jury member at last year's Asian Games at Hangzhou, China.

Recalling the days prior to the revocation of the constitutional privileges in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370, she said it was very difficult for a Kashmiri girl to take up sports back in the day but she took up canoeing in earnest, negotiating and overcoming the many challenges that came along the way.

She said she found her true calling as a canoeist, which was a sport virtually unheard of in Jammu and Kashmir at the time, and went on to represent the country at the world championships.

"This is a proud moment not just for me or the UT of Jammu and Kashmir but the entire country. I consider it an honour to represent my country as a member of the prestigious jury at the Paris Olympics. I was also a jury member at the Hangzhou Asian Games. This isn't just a moment of triumph

for me but all girls or women who aspire to excel in sports. Only two jury members from Asia has been picked this time (for the Summer Games), with the other being from Japan," Bilquis said.

She cleared the exam for being a jury member at top sporting events in 2008 and earned praise for her conduct and performance in the panel at last year's Hangzhou Asian Games.

Thanking her parents, family members and well-wishers, who supported her along the way, Bilquis said, "I started my career as a canoeist in 1998 from Dal Lake, when it was a challenge for a girl to even wear a tracksuit. I represented the UT at national events for 12 years before featuring for my country in the world championships. I was even the coach of the (women's) national team for 10 years. I qualified for this exam in 2008, in Germany, where I was selected as the second-best judge." (Agencies)

Women Arrested....

under the supervision of Gh Hassan-JKPS Hqr's Ganderbal lead by SHO PS Ganderbal Inspector Manzoor Ahmad. After strenuous efforts & with the help of technical inputs, the Police Party apprehended the accused at Harisingh Highstreet Srinagar.

During preliminary investigation, the accused confessed to the crime & admitted that she has stolen the Gold ornaments and sold them for money. Further, upon her disclosure, Cash Rs/-1,85,500 (Rupees One Lakh Eighty Five Thousand & Five Hundred only) and Scooty recovered from her possession were seized on the spot. The accused arrested & has been put behind the bars.

The General Public hailed & appreciated the efforts of Ganderbal Police for Swift action & in solving the Burglary case within few days only. People are requested to cooperate with J&K Police & share inputs of Burglars/Thieves present in the society so that they can be nabbed effectively in future also.

ACB arrests....

Patwari received an amount of 72000 as advance and further demanding balance 73,000 from complainant for issuance of the documents."

It reads that as the contents of complaint prima facie disclose the commission of offence punishable U/s 7 of the PC Act 1988, accordingly a Case FIR No. 02/2023 was registered at Police Station ACB Central and the investigation taken up.

"During the course of investigation a trap team was constituted which laid a trap and caught the accused Patwari red-handed while demanding and accepting the bribe amount of 73000 in presence of independent witnesses. He was arrested on the spot after completing all legal formalities."

It added that after the arrest of the accused, searches were also conducted in the residential house of the accused in Ram Nagar Colony, while further investigation in the case is going on.

Abdullah Placating....

Chugh said earlier the similar groups had raised voice against the Kashmiri Frs. People like Abdullah didn't want the truth about Kashmiri Pandits to be told to the people

The Abdullahs have their own international agenda to pursue which cannot negate the development envisioned by the Modi government.

Wular Premier League Set to Soar High: General Secretary SAT Calls for Unity and Support

■ Aashiq Hussain

SOPORE, APR 05: In

anticipation of the imminent kickoff of the highly awaited Wular Premier League (WPL), the General Secretary issues a rallying cry to all stakeholders, emphasizing unity and collaboration as the keys to success. With the fervor and enthusiasm surrounding the league's commencement, the Chairman, General Secretary and accountant urges everyone, especially the youth, to remain steadfast and optimistic, assuring them that their concerns will be addressed with transparency and inclusivity.



In a statement released today, the General Secretary underscored the importance of collective effort in propelling the WPL to new heights. "We recognize the diverse opinions and emotions surrounding the initiation of the WPL. However, we are committed

to fostering an environment of open dialogue and understanding," the General Secretary remarked. Furthermore, the General Secretary extended an olive branch to those who may harbor reservations about the league's inception, promising to engage with them in a spirit of trust and cooperation. "We invite all dissenting voices to come forward and join us in shaping the WPL into a

platform that caters to the aspirations and interests of all," the statement affirmed. The WPL is poised to be a beacon of sporting excellence and community engagement, with stakeholders eager to witness the talent and passion that will unfold on the field. As preparations reach their crescendo and anticipation mounts, the General Secretary calls upon the entire community to stand united behind the WPL, ensuring its ascent to unprecedented heights of success and acclaim. For further inquiries and information, please contact the office of the General Secretary SAT M Ashraf Mir.

Team HEADLINES TODAY Extends Warm Greetings to the Muslim Ummah on the Occasion of Lailat-ul-Qadr

DR. AB QAYOOM

Srinagar, April, 05: As the blessed month of Ramadan progresses, we find ourselves approaching the pinnacle of spiritual opportunity, the sacred night of Lailat-ul-Qadr. Team HEADLINES TODAY extends heartfelt greetings and best wishes to the Muslim community worldwide on this auspicious occasion. Lailat-ul-Qadr, often referred to as the Night of Decree, holds immense significance in Islam. It is the night when the Quran, the final revelation, was sent down to Prophet Muhammad

(peace be upon him). It is a night of profound blessings and mercy, wherein the worship of Allah is more rewarding than a thousand months. In the words of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), "Whoever spends this night in prayer out of faith and in the hope of reward will be forgiven his previous sins." (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1901; Muslim, 760). The significance of Lailat-ul-Qadr is beautifully encapsulated in the Quranic verse from Surah Al-Qadr (97:1-5), where Allah declares: "Verily, We have sent it (this Quran) down in the



Night of Al-Qadr (Decree). 2. And what will make you know what the Night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is? 3. The Night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is better than a thousand months

(i.e., worshipping Allah in that night is better than worshipping Him a thousand months, i.e., 83 years and 4 months). 4. Therein descend the angels and the Rookh [Jibreel (Gabriel)] by Allah's Permission with all Decrees, 5. (All that night), there is peace (and goodness from Allah to His believing slaves) until the appearance of dawn." It is a night of mercy, forgiveness, and divine blessings. A night when the gates of heaven are opened, and prayers are readily accepted. As believers, it is incumbent upon us to seize this opportunity by engaging

in worship, supplication, and acts of charity. We urge everyone to remember the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who advised us to seek Laylat al-Qadr in the last ten nights of Ramadan, particularly during the odd-numbered nights. Let us dedicate ourselves to prayer, reflection, and seeking forgiveness during these sacred nights. May Allah accept our prayers, forgive our sins, and shower His blessings upon us all. Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed Lailat-ul-Qadr. Team HEADLINES TODAY"

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India Will Enter Pak To Kill Terrorists Who Flee There: Rajnath Singh

HT News Network

New Delhi: India will enter Pakistan to kill anyone who escapes over the border after trying to carry out terrorist activities in the country, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh told CNN News18 on Friday.

Mr Singh's comments come a day after Britain's Guardian newspaper published a report alleging the Indian government killed 20 people in Pakistan since 2020 as part of a broader plan to eliminate terrorists living on foreign soil.

The foreign ministry did not respond to a Reuters' request for comment on the report, while Pakistan's foreign ministry refused to comment.

"If they run away to Pakistan, we will enter Pakistan to kill them," Mr Singh told the channel in response to a question about the report.

"India always wants to maintain good relations with its neighbouring countries... But if anyone shows India the angry eyes again and again, comes to India and tries to promote terrorist activities, we will not spare them," Mr Singh said.

Relations between the countries have worsened since a 2019 suicide bombing of a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) convoy in Jammu and



Kashmir's Pulwama was traced to Pakistan-based terrorists, leading India to carry out an airstrike on a terrorist base in Pakistan.

Pakistan said earlier this year it had credible evidence linking Indian agents to the killing of two of its citizens on its soil.

India said it was "false and malicious" propaganda.

The report in the Guardian comes months after Canada and the US accused India of killing or attempting to kill Khalistani terrorists in those countries.

Canada said in September that it was pursuing "credible allegations" linking India to the death of a Sikh separatist leader shot dead in June -

claims that India said were "absurd and motivated".

A top Canadian official said in January that India was cooperating in the matter and bilateral ties were improving.

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The US similarly said in November that it had thwarted an Indian plot to kill a Sikh separatist leader and announced charges against a person it said had worked with India to orchestrate the attempted murder.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said India will investigate any information it receives on the matter.

ازنیات پھگام
عنوان درخواست منجانب زید احمد کمار ولد عبدالرشید کمار ساکن لاری پورہ نسبت اجرائی لیگل بیر (وارث جائز) سرٹیفیکٹ
اشتہار بمراد آگاہی
ماملہ مندرجہ الصدمہ میں پٹواری علقہ سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی۔ مطابق رپورٹ پٹواری وڈ پینٹر سرٹیفیکٹ سال کی پیشینگی جان دختر زید احمد کمار کمار ساکن لاری پورہ مورخہ 28/07/2020 کو فوت ہو چکا ہے متوفی اپنے پچھلے مندرجہ ذیل وارثان جائز چھوڑ گیا رشتہ بمراد متوفی
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2.. سلیمہ بانو زوجہ عبدالرشید کمار // گھریلو کام
3.... نزار احمد کمار ولد عبدالرشید کمار // بھائی متوفی
4. بھراج احمد کمار ولد عبدالرشید کمار // بھائی متوفی
5.... جازق احمد کمار ولد اشفاق احمد کمار // بیٹا متوفی
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نائب تحصیلدار پھگام

ازنیات پھگام
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ماملہ مندرجہ الصدمہ میں پٹواری علقہ سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی۔ مطابق رپورٹ پٹواری وڈ پینٹر سرٹیفیکٹ سال کی پیشینگی جان دختر زید احمد کمار کمار ساکن لاری پورہ مورخہ 17/04.2012 کو فوت ہو چکا ہے متوفی اپنے پچھلے مندرجہ ذیل وارثان جائز چھوڑ گیا رشتہ بمراد متوفی
1.. زید احمد کمار عبدالرشید کمار باپ متوفی
2.. دلشادہ زوجہ زید احمد کمار ولدہ متوفی
3.... امرت جان دختر زید احمد کمار بہن متوفی
4.. آمل احمد کمار ولد زید احمد کمار بھائی متوفی
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EDITORIAL

Kashmir's Escalating Man vs. Wild Crisis - A Catastrophe Unfolding

Beneath the veneer of tranquility lies a growing crisis that threatens both human lives and wildlife populations. The escalating conflicts between humans and wild animals have reached alarming proportions, resulting in casualties on both sides and plunging the region into chaos.

Recent incidents in Central Kashmir's Budgam district, where children have been mauled by wild animals, serve as grim reminders of the catastrophic consequences of this crisis. These incidents not only highlight the vulnerability of innocent lives but also underscore the urgent need for comprehensive action to mitigate the escalating tensions between man and wildlife.

In the latest episode in Fatehpore area of Ganderbal district on Wednesday, there was a reported leopard attack. The incident resulted in injuries to several individuals, including two officials of the Wildlife Department and two women prompting authorities to launch efforts to track and capture the leopard to prevent further incidents. Residents in the area have been advised to exercise caution and take necessary precautions to avoid encounters with the wild animal.

The loss of human lives in these confrontations is deeply tragic, with families left devastated and communities shaken to their core. Equally distressing is the toll on wildlife officials who risk their lives in their efforts to protect both people and animals. The injuries sustained by these brave individuals serve as a stark reminder of the dangers they face in the line of duty.

Beyond the immediate physical harm inflicted, these incidents also leave lasting psychological scars on those affected. The trauma endured by victims and witnesses alike reverberates throughout the region, sowing fear and uncertainty among residents who once called these landscapes home.

Addressing this crisis requires a multifaceted approach that balances the needs of both human populations and wildlife habitats. Enhancing community awareness and education on coexisting with wildlife, implementing effective mitigation measures, and strengthening wildlife protection laws are crucial steps in restoring harmony in the region.

As Kashmir grapples with the escalating man vs. wild crisis, it is imperative for all stakeholders, government agencies, local communities, and conservation organizations, to come together in a unified effort to address this pressing issue. Failure to act decisively risks further loss of life and perpetuates the cycle of tragedy unfolding in the heart of this beautiful region.

Aitikaaf: A Sacred Journey Towards Spiritual Refinement and Divine Grace



■ **Aubaid Akhoun**

In the serene ambiance of the last ten days of Ramadan, Muslims worldwide immerse themselves in an ancient and deeply spiritual practice known as Aitikaaf. This period of seclusion and intense devotion offers a unique opportunity for believers to strengthen their faith, seek divine forgiveness, and reconnect with their Creator away from the distractions of daily life.

"The one who secludes himself for worship in the mosque during Ramadan with sincere faith and hope for a reward from Allah, all of his previous sins will be forgiven."

Sahih Bukhari

Origins and Significance of Aitikaaf

Aitikaaf is highly recommended, during the last ten days of Ramadan, which are considered the most blessed and spiritually charged days of the month. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) used to observe Aitikaaf every year during the last ten days of Ramadan, and it is recommended for Muslims to follow beloved Prophet's Sunnah (way of life).

Aitikaaf, rooted in the Islamic tradition, finds its significance in both the Quran and Hadith. It is a time-honored spiritual retreat aimed at fostering a closer relationship with Allah through dedicated worship, contemplation, and the recitation of the Quran. This practice exemplifies the profound commitment to faith and the pursuit of spiritual purity.

The Essence of Aitikaaf

At its core, Aitikaaf is more than just physical seclusion; it is a journey of the heart and soul towards divine presence. By withdrawing from the chaos of worldly engagements, believers embark on a spiritual voyage to purify their hearts, reflect on their lives, and seek the mercy and blessings of Allah.



It is an opportunity to transcend earthly desires and attain a state of peace and contentment.

Enhanced Spiritual Connection

Aitikaaf serves as a conduit for deepening one's connection with Allah. In the tranquility of the mosque, away from worldly distractions, worshippers can engage in sincere supplication, meditate on the meanings of the Quran, and perform additional prayers. This uninterrupted devotion allows for a profound spiritual awakening and reinvigoration of faith.

A Means of Divine Forgiveness

One of the most cherished outcomes of Aitikaaf is the opportunity for forgiveness. The Hadiths promise immense rewards for those who dedicate these days to worship with pure intentions, highlighting that even previous sins can be forgiven. This prospect of spiritual cleansing and renewal underscores the mercy and compassion of Allah towards His servants.

The Social and Community Aspect of Aitikaaf

While Aitikaaf is a personal journey, it also reinforces the sense of community and brotherhood among Muslims. Observing Aitikaaf together in a

mosque creates a powerful sense of unity and shared purpose, as all participants are bound by their common goal of seeking Allah's favor. It is a reminder of the Ummah's collective spiritual aspirations and the strength found in unity.

Updated Guidelines and Considerations

In observing Aitikaaf, it is essential to approach with sincerity and adhere to its traditional practices while remaining open to contemporary interpretations that respect the essence of this spiritual retreat. Participants should ensure that their seclusion does not hinder their responsibilities towards their families and communities. It's crucial to maintain a balance, ensuring that the spirit of Aitikaaf is upheld without causing undue hardship.

Conclusion: A Journey of Spiritual Renewal

Aitikaaf remains a profound spiritual practice that offers Muslims a pathway to divine closeness, introspection, and spiritual growth. It is a testament to the timeless nature of Islamic worship practices and their relevance in guiding the faithful towards moral and spiritual excellence. As we observe Aitikaaf, let us embrace the opportunity to renew our faith, purify our hearts, and contribute positively to our communities, holding firm to the rope of Allah.

By embracing the spirit and practice of Aitikaaf, we not only follow in the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) but also partake in a transformative experience that elevates our spirituality and brings us closer to achieving inner peace and divine favor.

About the Author: Aubaid Ahmad Akhoun, a fervent educational columnist, motivational speaker, and a keen observer of Islamic traditions, continues to inspire with his insights into Islamic teachings. As the Associate Editor of 'Education Quill' and the EDP Head at SKIE Classes in Khanyar, his work spans educational advancements and spiritual enlightenment. Follow his journey on Instagram at UBI9305 for more inspirational content. akhoun.aubaid@gmail.com

Kite Flying: A Potential Threat to Human Life



■ **By Mool Raj**

Kite flying is no longer an enjoyable leisure. It has become dangerous pastime. In the wake of the macabre incident of deaths, there is need to apprehend the criminals involved in the dangerous sport. Kite flying has been prohibited through the prohibition of dangerous Kite flying activities ordinance due to increasing death and injuries.

The disadvantages of kite flying have transcended the spirit of pleasant sport. It has shown determination to end this deadly activity that once was celebrated with great fanfare. The Casualties caused by Kite flying have accrued noisome and horrible impact on society. As per reports, kite flying has claimed many precious lives in the last couple of months and

injured dozens of people which is really gruesome figure.

Undoubtedly, the fatalities due to kite flying are colossal failure of governance. Earlier, kite flying was the celebration of arrival of spring season. It was festivity marking the gathering of relatives and friends. It also promoted the tourism as the guest used to visit India to enjoy the Besant festival. But, with time, fun sport took the form of blood sport. Greed overpowers the pleasant sport. To get more profit, the manufacturers started using metal strings to augment the enthusiasm and rivalry during kite flying. Aerial firing has become the permanent feature of Basanat. Children run after stray kites that cause accidents. The usage of metallic string has increased the ratio of electrocution. The scenario is really horrible. Furthermore, the usage of Nylon and plastic Manja, Chemical string, prominently, kite Manja coated with cotton thread with a mix of glue and crushed glass are redoubtable mixture which causes death of commuters, because of this deadly mixture make the thread unbreakable that cut the neck of innocent riders. There is dire need for the



judicious decision to adopt zero-tolerance policy against the kite flying violators. crackdown is ongoing across the province. The kite flying should be prohibited. Therefore, there is a dire need to curb this menace with iron hands. Simply, banning kite flying is not a perfect solution as people resort to surreptitious and stealthy kite flying and manufacturing practices. Moreover, the community is insensitive to the perils of kite flying. Given the grim situation, it

has become necessary to eradicate this nasty practice by using all possible measures. No one can gain say the fact that human life is most precious and no compromise can be done at the cost of human life.

Banning kite-flying requires whole of society approach. The community should play its proactive role in the eradication of this menace. The campaign should include but not limited to conduct awareness seminars, walks and exercising of dialogue at academ-

ic institutions to sensitize students and community about the hazards of kite flying. Pamphlets and awareness books should be distributed among citizens and students. People can also be educated through announcements on electronic, print and social media about the potential tragedies of this fun sport. The punishment of kite flying offence is not enough. So, punishment should be enhanced keeping in view the role of violators. There should be commensurate

punishments for manufacturers, vendors and kite flyers. Police require stringent measures to curb the manufacturing, transportation, dispatching, vending, and flying of kites.

However, in order to escape arrests, people are now involved in online sale of Manja string and kites. So, police should monitor online sale sites to identify the culprits and apprehend the accused involved in deadly business. Moreover, police should take words from courier services, and transporters to not cater the delivery relates to kites and chemical string.

Given the grievous hurt and death caused by kite flying, it is an undeniable fact that it is no longer a recreational activity. Though some segment of society views that there should be some relaxation for safe kite flying keeping the sentiment and enthusiasm of people rather having a broad prohibition of kite flying. But, the perils are galore. Kite flying is not only dangerous for people but also for birds and other animals. The responsible must be taken to task and crackdown against the violators must be sustained and culminated to the logical end.

The author is a columnist and freelance writer

Scientists warn of lethal bird flu pandemic, say could be '100 times worse' than COVID

HT News Network

New York [US], Apr 05: The bird flu pandemic with the potential to be "100 times worse than COVID" may be on the horizon after a rare human case was discovered in Texas, experts have warned, the New York Post reported on Thursday.

The H5N1 avian flu has spread rapidly since a new strain was detected in 2020 affecting wild birds in every state, as well as in commercial poultry and backyard flocks. But the recent cases detected in mammals, with cattle herds across four states becoming infected and on Monday, federal health officials announced that a dairy worker in Texas

caught the virus.

"And now we're getting dangerously close to this virus potentially causing a pandemic." He noted that the H5N1 virus has already been detected in species throughout the world and "has shown the ability to infect a range of mammalian hosts, including humans."

"So therefore, in my view, I think this is a virus that has the greatest pandemic threat [that is] playing out in plain sight and globally present," Kuchipudi said.

John Fulton, a pharmaceutical industry consultant for vaccines and the founder of Canada-based BioNiagara who organized the meeting, also expressed his concerns, the Mail reports, the New York Post reported.



"This appears to be 100 times worse than COVID — or it could be if it mutates and maintains its high case fatality rate," he said. "Once it's mutated to infect humans, we can only hope that the [fatality rate] drops." Around 52 per cent of humans who have

contracted H5N1 since 2003 have died, according to the World Health Organization.

For comparison, COVID currently kills less than 0.1% of those it infects — though at the start of the pandemic, the fatality rate was around 20 per cent.

Symptoms of the bird flu are similar to those of other flus, including cough, body aches and fever, the New York Post reported.

Some people may not develop noticeable symptoms, but others can develop severe, life-threatening pneumonia.

The dairy worker in Texas who was infected has reported "eye redness (consistent with conjunctivitis)" as their only symptom, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention noted. "The patient was told to isolate and is

being treated with an antiviral drug for [the] flu," the CDC said.

The agency and "the whole US government is taking this situation very seriously," CDC Director Mandy Cohen told the Washington Post. She maintained that the virus does not pose much of a risk to the general public, noting that the dairy worker was in direct contact with infected cattle, and the US Department of Agriculture has said there are currently no changes that would make it more transmissible to humans. "While cases among humans in direct contact with infected animals are possible, this indicates that the current risk to the public remains low," the department said in a statement over the weekend.

ADC Kupwara inspects various arrangements for celebration of holy festivals

HT News Network



KUPWARA, APRIL 05: On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Ms. Ayushi Sudan, ADC Kupwara, Mohd Rouf Rahman today visited different holy places of workshop to take stock of arrangements put in place by District Administration for celebration of holy festivals of Jamat-ul-Vida, Shab-e-Qadr and Eid-ul-Fitr.

On the occasion, the ADC visited Jamia Masjid Kupwara, Masjid-i-Murshideen, Eidgah Kupwara and Eidgah Goose during which he interacted with the Auqaf/Intizamia Committees. He took stock of the arrangements regarding Sanitation, Power Supply, Drinking Water, Health Facilities and Security/Traffic regulation for the upcoming Holy Days of Shab-i-Qadr and Eid-ul-Fitr.

The ADC also visited Gujjar & Bakerwal Hostel Goose where he interacted with the students and wished them a very happy Eid ul Fitr.

The ADC also extended his Good Wishes to the people of Kupwara on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr and other festivals of Ram Navmi and Baisakhi to all communities.

Bukhari greets people on Shab-e-Qadr

HT News Network

Srinagar, Apr 5 (KNS): Apni Party President Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari has extended warm greetings to the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Shab-e-Qadr, urging them to pray for peace and prosperity in the region.

In his message, Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari said, "The sacred night of Shab-e-Qadr, also known as the Night of Power, holds immense significance as it was on this auspicious occasion that the Almighty Allah chose to reveal the Holy Quran to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) for the guidance of mankind. This auspicious night provides us with an opportunity to seek Allah's mercy and blessings." "Appealing people to pray for the peace and prosperity of this land, on this revered occasion, Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari said.

Quds Day observed in Kashmir to express solidarity with Palestinians

Ubaid mehdi

Budgam /05/04 /2024 Budgam: Massive rallies were held in parts of central Kashmir on 'Youm-e-Quds' in which thousands of people participated and expressed solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine.

After Friday congregational prayers, people carried out a massive protest rally in Central Kashmir's Budgam. It was later joined by thousands of others. Both Shias and Sunnis were seen at the rally. The rally was organized by Anjuman-e-Shari Shian.

The biggest rally was held in Magam town of Budgam in which thousands of female protesters participated. Locals told the news that this rally was organized by Anjuman Shari Shain Jammu and Jammu Kashmir Shia Association. Protesters were carrying banners and placards that read, "Palestine needs more hands to help them; to pray for them, pray for the



children of Gaza, down with Israel and US, etc. Large number of women also took an active part in the rally. "Quds Day is not only a day of Palestine, but it is also the day of every oppressed," a group of female protesters said. "We are observing this day to lend our support to oppressed people of Palestine," one of the speak-

ers said and requested Muslim nations to shun differences and initiate steps for the freedom of Palestine. "Quds Day symbolizes the valor, resistance, revolution and voice of the oppressed nations of world," said a protester. Many protesters were holding portraits of Imam Khomeini and Imam Khamenei.

Punjabi Actor Binnu Dhillon & renowned singers performed in Aryans "Roshan" in association with MH One

HT News Network

Srinagar 5th April Punjabi Actor Binnu Dhillon enthralled the audience of Aryans Group of Colleges in its 17th Cultural Extravaganza "Roshan" at Aryans Campus in association with MH One. Thousands of Students, Alumni of Aryans Group attended this mega cultural function. Dr. Anshu Kataria, Chairman, Aryans Group, presided over this event. Deputy Superintendent of Police, Rajpura, S. Buta Singh was special guest.

In this cultural extravaganza, world renowned artists including Amar Noorie, Alaap Sikander, Sarang Sikander, Satwinder Bitti, Ash Singh, Navjeet, Gursewak and Gurman Maan etc also performed. The event was hosted by Anchors Minto (Comedian) & Preetraman Kaur (Artist). Actor Binnu Dhillon & Actress



Bhawna Sharma also launched the trailer of "Jeonde Raho Bhooteji" which is a Punjabi horror and comedy film. It stars Binnu Dhillon, Smeep Kang, and B. N. Sharma, and was directed by Sumeep Kang. The film is scheduled to be released on April 12, 2024.

Amar Noorie performed on "Nachatra Le Aayi Ve", "Mere Deor Da Viah"; Alaap Sikander sang "Khoya Khoya

Chand", "Nazran Ton Gir Gayi Ki Kariye", Sarang Sikander enthralled audience with "Theek Hai Na Tu", "Yaar Gawaune", Satwinder Bitti mesmerized audience with "Akkhaan Meech Ke, Gabhru", "Lai Ja Mainu Pind Waleya" while Gurman Maan performed on "Chaklo Dharlo" & Ash Singh sang "Roosi Asla", "Do Raaniya" etc,

Illegal extraction & transportation of minerals Police seizes 5 vehicles, arrests 5 drivers in Kulgam

Farooq Rather

April 05: Acting tough against the persons involved in illegal extraction and transportation of minerals, police have seized 5 vehicles and arrested 5 drivers in Kulgam.

A Police party of Police Post Frisal seized 5 vehicles (3 tractors, 1 tipper and 1 excavator) & arrested 4 drivers at Gundchahal for illegal extraction and transportation of minerals. The accused drivers have been identified as Mohd Hussain Tantray son of Mohd Abdullah Tantray, Mohd Ashraf Bhat son of Ghulam Ahmad Bhat, Shah Nawaz Ahmad Lone son of Ghulam Muhammad Lone and Ishtiyaq Ahmad Khanday son of Abdu Aziz Khanday all residents of Shirpora and Sartaj Ahmad Mir son of Ali Mohammad Mir resident of Hassanpora, Bijehara. Accordingly, a case vide FIR No. 20/2024 under relevant sections of law has been registered in Police Station Yaripora and further investigation have been taken up. People are requested not to indulge in any kind of illegal mining activities from any Nallah as it is the violation of Government rules. Persons found indulging in illegal mining activities shall be dealt as per law.

Police solves theft case in Ganderbal, accused arrested

HT News Network

Ganderbal April 05: Police in Ganderbal have solved theft case by arresting an accused person involved in the commission of crime.

On 02-04-2024, Police Station Ganderbal received a written complaint from one complainant namely Kaiser Ahmad Waza son of Gh Mohi-ud-Din Waza resident of Tawheed Chowk Ganderbal stating therein that his Sister-in-law came to his house as a guest and has stolen gold ornaments which were kept in the Locker of his room. Upon this information, a case vide FIR No. 64/2024 under relevant sections of law was registered at PS Ganderbal and further investigation was set into motion.

Acting Swiftly on the directions of SSP Ganderbal Shri Sandeep Gupta-IPS, a special police team under the supervision of Shri Gh Hassan-JKPS Hqrs Ganderbal lead by SHO PS Ganderbal was constituted. After strenuous efforts & with the help of technical inputs, Police party apprehended the accused at Hari Singh Highstreet Srinagar. During preliminary investigation, the accused confessed to the crime & admitted that she has stolen the gold ornaments and sold them for money. Upon her disclosure, cash of Rs/-1,85,500 and scooty recovered from her possession were seized on the spot. She has been arrested in the instant case and further investigation is going on. Our consistent actions against anti-social elements should reassure the community members that we are making every effort to keep our society free of crime. Police has resolved to act as per law against those who indulge in criminal activities.

RBI remains optimistic on growth: Abheek Barua

HT News Network

Srinagar: Given the recent global resilience in economic activity, there has been a tendency to keep monetary policy tight to take on the last mile challenge on inflation by global central banks. The RBI seems to be moving in lockstep with that. Despite its emphasis that inflation is moderating, the RBI kept its policy rate and stance unchanged in today's policy announcement. The central bank remained optimistic on growth — pegging it at 7% for FY25 — and said this provides space for monetary policy to remain tight and focus on inflation. Consequently, the chances of a rate cut have been pushed forward into the second half of FY25. The RBI also reiterated its preference for a stable rupee and therefore significant depreciation due to recent global volatility seems unlikely. On the other hand, the RBI also signalled that it has enough appetite for building FX reserves and therefore expected rupee appreciation in the coming quarters (due to bond inflows among other things) could also face resistance. (KNT)

Cong manifesto 'bundle of lies', prepared to create confusion, mislead voters: Kavinder

HT News Network

Jammu, April 5 (KNS): Kavinder Gupta, a senior BJP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister, strongly criticized the Congress' Lok Sabha poll manifesto today, labeling it a bundle of lies. He alleged that the Party, which has ruled the country for several decades, failed to fulfill any of the promises made in its earlier manifestos for both assembly and parliamentary elections.

In a statement issued here today, the BJP stalwart expressed disdain towards the Congress' manifesto, stating that it aims to create confusion and mislead voters. He highlighted the irony of the situation, pointing out that the Congress is seeking people's mandate while promising to "do wonders" if voted to power again.

"After being in power for several decades, the Congress is now promising miraculous changes if given another chance. The fact that the Congress has named its manifesto 'Nyay Patra' implies an acknowledgment of the injustice ('Anyay') it inflicted



during its 55-60 years of rule in the country," he said.

Kavinder emphasized that the Congress has a track record of not fulfilling its promises from previous manifestos, both at the assembly and Lok

Sabha levels.

Reacting to the assurance made by the Congress regarding the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood in its manifesto, Kavinder criticized the move, likening it to "uprooting the dead issues" considering the Supreme Court's verdict last year in favor of scrapping Article 370.

The senior BJP leader stated that the Congress is intentionally misleading people. "It should also address the scams that occurred during its regime, such as the looting of billions of dollars from the country. People will not give it any importance. The BJP's commendable work will overshadow the Congress' attempts," he added.

In a scathing attack on the Congress regarding the Bofors Scam during the Rajiv Gandhi government in 1986, Kavinder demanded accountability, asking the Congress to explain how, even after Rajiv Gandhi's demise, the Gandhi family and others were allegedly involved in fraudulent activities. He warned that such anti-national behavior would not be tolerated, and the Congress would face the consequences after the Lok Sabha elections. (KNS)

"2014 To 2024 Was Just An Appetiser, Prepare For The Main Course": PM Modi

■ HT News Network

Jaipur: Highlighting the work done by his government in the last 10 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said it was just an "appetiser" and the main course is yet to come.

Addressing a rally in Churu, his second election rally in Rajasthan in three days, PM Modi also accused the Congress of insulting the Army and dividing people and said this represented the "identity" of the opposition party.

He further said that the country now is a "new India", which strikes within enemy territory - an apparent reference to counterstrikes in Pakistan after terror attacks in India. "Naya Bharat ghar mein ghush kar maarta hai."

"Today even the enemy knows that this is Modi, this is the new India," the Prime Minister added. "No matter how much has happened, whatever has happened till now is a trailer. What Modi has done so far from 2014 to 2024, it was just an appetiser. Be prepared for the main course," he said.

"There is a lot to be done... there are a lot of dreams. We have to take the country far ahead." Attacking



the Congress, PM Modi said the country was in a bad condition when the party was in power.

"The economy had collapsed due to the Congress' big scams and loot. India's reputation in the world was declining... Even after so many decades of Independence, people were struggling for basic necessities of life," he added.

"People thought that nothing could change, everyone was immersed in despair. In this despair and frustration, in 2014, you gave a chance to the son of the poor to serve you. Disappointment and frustration cannot come close to

Modi. I decided that the situation has to change," the Prime Minister said, adding that India is his family.

In a big crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic when the whole world thought India would be ruined, "we Indians made the country the fifth-largest economy in the world", he said.

"I could have also said that the whole world has faced a disaster, what should I do? Maybe the countrymen would have accepted it, but Modi did not choose that path," the Prime Minister added.

Today, "Modi's guarantee" is

being discussed in the country, he said, adding that Rajasthan is an example of how Modi's guarantees were fulfilled and at what speed.

"I gave a guarantee that cylinders for the poor will be cheaper, it has been fulfilled. An inquiry will be conducted against the Congress paper leak industry, it has been completed," PM Modi said.

The former Congress government in the state had stalled the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project but after the BJP came to power, not only has the project been approved but work has also started on it, he added. "Whatever the BJP says, it fulfils." "Unlike other parties, the BJP does not just issue 'Ghoshna Patra', it brings 'Sankalp Patra'," PM Modi said, adding that most of the promises made in the BJP's 'Sankalp Patra' in 2019 have been kept.

He also attacked the Congress for its stand on the Ayodhya Ram temple issue.

"Just now journalists were saying that the Congress has issued an advisory. They are so scared, they have told all Congress units to keep their mouths locked whenever Ayodhya Ram temple is discussed," the Prime Minister claimed.

"Not Warranted": Supreme Court Puts On Hold Banning Of UP Madrassas

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: In a big relief to about 17 lakh madrasa students in Uttar Pradesh, the Supreme Court today paused an Allahabad High Court order scrapping the UP Board of Madarsa Education Act, 2004. This allows about 16,000 madrassas in the state to continue functioning under the 2004 law.

A bench led by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said that the high court decision was prima facie not correct and issued notices to the UP and central governments, and the Madrasa board.

The high court had last month declared the 2004 law "unconstitutional" for violating the principle of secularism and directed the government to accommodate the madrasa students in the formal education system. The Supreme Court put it on hold on Friday, saying that the aims and objectives of the Madrasa Board are regulatory in nature and that the establishment of the board itself will not affect secularism. "The high court, in striking down the provisions of the Act, directed the relocation of the students. This would affect the 17 lakh students. We are of the view that the direction of relocation of students to other schools was not warranted," said the Chief Justice.

If the purpose of the PIL is to ensure that madrassas provide secular education in core subjects such as mathematics, science, history, and languages, the solu-



tion would not be to repeal the provisions of the Madarsa Act 2004, he added.

The central and state governments backed the high court judgment in the Supreme Court, with the centre saying suspected entanglement of religion and other relevant issues must be debated.

Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing the madrassas, said religious education cannot mean religious instruction and that the high court order will leave 10,000 madrasa teachers and 17 lakh students in lurch. But the state government said it has made arrangements for the teachers and students.

Mr Singhvi argued it is wrong to say madrasa education doesn't have quality, isn't universal in nature, and is not broad-based. Singling out the madrassas for a ban is discriminatory and the Supreme Court had said so in the Aruna Roy vs Union of India, 2002 verdict, he pointed out.

Rahul Gandhi's Bet On India's Record Market Rally Made Him 28% Richer

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: Rahul Gandhi's wealth rose more than 28% in the past five years, aided by his stock investments amid a bull run in Indian equities.

Mr Gandhi, who is being positioned as a challenger to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the national elections that begin April 19, has invested in 25 stocks, including bluechips such as ITC Ltd. and Hindustan Unilever Ltd., according to an affidavit filed with the Election Commission of India. He also invested in small- and mid-cap companies such as Tube Investments of India Ltd., which have seen a sizzling rally in recent months. Rahul Gandhi, who is contesting from Wayanad in Kerala, didn't hold any stocks directly in 2019, according to an affidavit filed at that time. His stock exposure comes as Indian equities surge on investor optimism in world's fastest-growing major economy. His stocks portfolio was valued at 43.36 million



rupees (\$519,970) as on March 15, while investments in mutual funds stood at 38.13 million rupees. His overall assets rose to 204 million rupees, from 159 million rupees five years ago. The South Asian nation's market, currently the world's fifth largest at \$4.5 trillion, briefly overtook Hong Kong earlier this year. According to Jefferies Financial Group Inc's estimates, India's stock market value is set to reach \$10 trillion by 2030.

Free Healthcare, Rs 1 Lakh For Poor: Key Highlights Of Congress Manifesto

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: Congress today released its manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections with a focus on unemployment, women's empowerment and a socio-economic caste census, among other things. "The Constitution of India shall remain our sole guide," the manifesto read.

Congress will conduct a nation-wide socio-economic caste census to "enumerate the castes and sub-castes and their socio-economic conditions". Based on the data, the Congress said, it will strengthen the agenda for affirmative action. The party said that it will pass a constitutional amendment to raise the 50 per cent cap on reservations for SC, ST and OBC categories.

The Congress said it will respect and uphold the fundamental right to practice one's faith and the rights guaranteed to religious minorities under Articles 15, 16, 25, 26, 28, 29 and 30 of the Constitution. It said it will also uphold the rights of linguistic minorities guaranteed under Articles 15, 16, 29 and 30 of the Consti-



tuition. Under current provisions, pension for senior citizens, widows and persons with disabilities under the National Social Assistance Programme is 200-500 per month. Congress said it will raise this amount to 1,000 per month.

The Congress has promised universal and free healthcare in public health centres such as hospitals, clinics, primary health centres, mobile healthcare units, dispensaries and health camps. Free healthcare will include

examination, diagnostics, treatment, surgery, medicines, rehabilitation and palliative care.

The Congress manifesto promises a new Right to Apprenticeship Act to provide a one-year apprenticeship with a private or a public sector company to every diploma holder or college graduate below the age of 25. Apprentices will get 1 lakh per year.

The Congress said it brought in the Right to Education (RTE) Act in 2009 which "transformed" education for children between the ages of 6 and 14. The party said it will amend the RTE Act to make education from Class I to Class XII in public schools compulsory and free.

The Congress said it will launch a Mahalakshmi scheme to provide 1 lakh per year to every poor Indian family as an unconditional cash transfer. The poor will be identified among the families at the bottom of the income pyramid. The Congress promises one-third reservation for women in state Assemblies that will be elected in the next round of Assembly elections in 2025.

Kiren Rijiju Predicts Arunachal Pradesh's Lok Sabha, Assembly Polls Results

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: The achievements of the Modi government over the past 10 years mean the on-ground situation in Arunachal Pradesh is "very favourable" for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha election, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju told NDTV Friday evening.

Mr Rijiju, 52, expressed confidence the BJP will retain the state's two Lok Sabha seats, and predicted a clean sweep in the Assembly election that will be held simultaneously.

"In the entire northeast, the wave is very clear. The achievements of the Modi government over the past 10 years have made the situation very favourable for the BJP and its allies."

"As far as Arunachal Pradesh is concerned, we are confident of winning both seats... by a record margin. The people are aware of the ground situation and want to give Modi another opportunity. We are likely to perform better than last time... in the Assembly election also, we are likely to make a clean sweep. We will have absolute majority."

"I have been representing this constituency since 2004, and I feel peoples' confidence (in the Modi



government) has only grown since then," he told NDTV.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha election the BJP picked up the Arunachal West and East seats, and then dominated the state poll. It won 41 of the state's 60 seats - a jump of 30 from 2014.

Mr Rijiju is the MP from the Arunachal West seat, which he won by defeating the Congress Nabam Tuki by a massive margin of nearly 175,000 votes. He won this seat in 2014 also, beating another Congress candidate - Takam Sanjoy - by over 40,000 votes.

He has been nominated to defend his seat in this election, in which he faces a familiar, and very experienced, rival - the six-time MLA and two-time former Chief Minister Mr Tuki.

On his contest with Mr Tuki, the Union Minister, said, "He is definitely a senior person in Arunachal

Pradesh politics and very experienced. So, I won't take it lightly..."

However, Mr Rijiju underlined the "very favourable" situation for the BJP and said Arunachal would do its bit to ensure the party, and its allies, achieves its target of winning 400+ seats.

"The plan (assuming he is elected for a third term) is very simple... to contribute to state growth. The good news is that a lot of the infrastructure has been built... so now we will focus on skill development and employment for youth. Arunachal is poised for a big leap." He has been nominated to defend his seat in this election, in which he faces a familiar, and very experienced, rival - the six-time MLA and two-time former Chief Minister Mr Tuki. On his contest with Mr Tuki, the Union Minister, said,

AAP's Atishi Gets Election Commission Notice Over BJP Poaching Attempt Claim

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India has sent a notice to Delhi minister Atishi over an alleged poll code violation, days after she claimed the BJP had threatened her with arrest if she didn't switch sides. Stating that the BJP has complained about her remarks, the poll body asked the AAP leader to file her response by 5 pm this Saturday.

The EC said since she's a minister, voters tend to believe what she says in public, and if contested she must be able to back her remarks on a factual basis. "You are hereby called upon to furnish your para-wise response to the matter latest by 17.00 hrs of 6th April, 2024," said the EC. Atishi took to Twitter and said she received the notice half an hour after TV channels flashed the news. "That means the Election Commission first plants a notice in the media and then I get the notice. My question is whether the Election Commission has become a subsidiary organization of BJP," she said.

"If you do not conduct free and fair elections today, history will remember the Election Commission wrongly," she further said addressing the Election Commissioners. Atishi, who is among the top leaders tasked with running the AAP affairs following Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest last month, earlier this week claimed the BJP had offered her to switch sides to save her political career. "The BJP has approached me through someone very close. They have



asked me to join the BJP and said this will save my political career. They have threatened that if I don't switch over, ED (Enforcement Directorate) will arrest me within a month," she had claimed Tuesday. The claim prompted a defamation notice from the BJP camp and a demand for a public apology.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said she didn't provide evidence of who approached her, how, and when. "The AAP is undergoing a crisis in Delhi, which is why they are making such baseless allegations out of frustration. But we will not let her get away with this," he had said. They also filed a complaint with the Election Commission, calling Atishi's remarks misleading and unverified.

The model code of conduct is in place across the country due to the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, which is a three-month exercise this time and dubbed by the world as its largest festival of democracy.

India To Export Essential Goods To Maldives Despite Strained Ties: Report

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: India has allowed limited exports of essential commodities, including sugar, wheat, rice, and onions, to the Maldives, the government said on Friday, even as ties between Male and New Delhi remained tense amid rising Chinese influence. India, a leading exporter of rice, sugar and onions, has imposed various curbs on exports of these food commodities to keep a lid on local prices ahead of the general election. Shipments of these commodities in the 2024/25 financial year which started on April 1 to Maldives "will be exempted from any existing or future restriction/prohibition on export," the government said in a notification.

Hema Malini, BJP's Mathura Candidate, Declares Assets Worth ₹ 123 Crore

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: Actor and three-time BJP MP Hema Malini has total assets worth approximately 123 crore, according to her affidavit submitted to the Election Commission. Hema Malini will contest the Lok Sabha elections again from Uttar Pradesh's Mathura constituency. She has liabilities worth approximately 1.4 crore.

In the affidavit, she mentioned acting as her profession, and rent and interest gains as sources of income. The sources of income of her husband and actor Dharmendra Deol, who is a former MP, are earnings from acting, pension, and interests. Hema Malini won from Mathura in both the 2014 and the 2019 general elections. She is looking for a hat-trick this time. She has liabilities of approximately 1.4 crore, while her husband's liabilities are at 6.4 crore. His assets are valued at 20 crore.

US threatens policy shift if Israeli excesses continue

■ HT News Network

WASHINGTON: The United States on Thursday issued its strongest public rebuke toward Israel since it launched an invasion of Gaza, seeking for the first time to leverage US aid to influence Israeli military behavior.

President Joe Biden, a staunch supporter of the Israeli offensive until now, called for an immediate ceasefire in a call with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, conditioning support for its offensive on concrete steps to address the safety of aid workers and Palestinian civilians.

The rebuke followed an attack on a World Central Kitchen charity convoy this week that killed seven food aid workers.

The White House had described Biden as outraged and heartbroken by the attack but, prior to Thursday's call, the president had made no fundamental change in Washington's steadfast support for Israel



in its conflict against Palestinian Hamas militants.

During the call, Biden "underscored that an immediate ceasefire is essential to stabilise and improve the humanitarian situation and protect innocent civilians," the White House said.

It said Biden "made clear the need for Israel to announce and implement a series of specific, concrete, and measurable steps to address civilian harm, humanitarian suffering, and the safety of aid workers".

He "made clear that US policy with respect to Gaza will be determined by

our assessment of Israel's immediate action on these steps," the White House said in a statement.

The statement reflected a sharp change in Biden's tone and, for what appears to be the first time, a set of strings attached to continued US support. Biden staunchly supported Israel, even when other governments sought to put more pressure on it. His comments marked the first time the US has suggested it would condition its continued support.

During a briefing with reporters after the call, White House spokesperson John Kirby declined to elaborate on what specific changes the US would make on its policy toward Israel and Gaza. He said Washington hopes to see an announcement of Israeli steps in the "coming hours and days". US First Lady Jill Biden is reportedly one of the most 'heartbroken' by the civilian deaths in Gaza and has been urging her husband to end the war, the US media reported on Wednesday.

Taiwan earthquake rescuers face threat of landslides, rockfalls as death toll at 12

■ HT News Network

Rescuers in Taiwan faced the threat of further landslides and rockfalls in their search on Friday for a dozen people still missing from this week's earthquake, as the death toll rose to 12 and some of the stranded were brought to safety.

Searchers discovered two more bodies after Wednesday's quake of magnitude 7.2 struck the sparsely populated, largely rural eastern county of Hualien, stranding hundreds in a national park as boulders barrelled down mountains, cutting off roads.

As some 50 aftershocks rattled the area overnight, some felt as far away as Taipei, rescuers said about 400 people cut off in a luxury hotel in the Taroko Gorge national park were safe, with helicopters ferrying out the injured and bringing supplies.

"Rain increases the risks of rockfalls and landslides, which are currently the biggest challenges," said Su Yu-ming, the leader of a search team helping the rescue effort. "These factors are unpredictable, which means we cannot confirm the number of days required for the search and rescue operations."

Taiwan's fire department said two bodies were found in the mountains, but did not immediately update the death toll. It put the number of missing at 18, three of them foreigners of Australian and Canadian nationality.

False Ads, Trafficking Scams: Centre's Advisory On 'Fake Jobs' In Cambodia

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: The Centre has urged Indians, looking for work in Cambodia, to exercise caution when accepting any job opportunities and warned of false job advertisements and trafficking scams.

Indians are being "lured by fake promises of lucrative job opportunities in Cambodia" and "are falling into the trap of human traffickers", the Centre said in its advisory. On Thursday, in its advisory for Indians looking to work in Cambodia, the Ministry of External Affairs, or the MEA, said that one must go through authorised agents only and thoroughly check the employers' backgrounds before migrating.

"It has come to attention that Indian nationals, lured by fake promises of lucrative job opportunities in Cambodia, are falling into the trap of human traffickers. These Indian nationals are coerced to undertake online financial scams and other illegal activities."

The MEA, through its mission in Phnom Penh, is working with Cambodian authorities to assist affected Indians, it said.

This comes days after reports claimed at least 5,000 Indians are being held against their will in Cambodia after being promised employment and are being forced to scam Indians back home by posing as law enforcement officials and catfish accounts on dating apps.

The sheer scale of the fraud - the Centre pegs the proceeds of crime generated over the past six months at a whopping 500 crore - prompted the two countries to join forces to bring it all down.

So far, 250 Indians have been rescued and brought back to India by joint efforts of the MEA and Cambodian authorities, including 75 in the last three months.

The Indian Embassy is "promptly responding to complaints from Indian nationals who were lured with employment opportunities to that country but were forced to undertake illegal cyber work," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

IMF Says "8% Growth Forecast For India Not Ours", Distances From Top Exec

■ HT News Network

Washington: The recent remarks of Krishnamurthy Subramanian, Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund, about India's growth figures does not represent the views of the IMF and were in his role as India's representative at the global body, the IMF has said. "The views conveyed... by Mr. Subramanian were in his role as India's representative at the IMF," Julie Kozack, IMF spokesperson, told reporters in Washington today.

She was responding to a question on recent remarks by Mr. Subramanian, in which he projected a growth rate of 8 per cent for India, which is different from the last growth rate projections by the IMF. Mr. Subramanian, at a event in New Delhi on March 28, had said Indian economy could grow at 8 per cent till 2047, if the country redoubles the good policies that it has implemented over the last 10 years and accelerate reforms.

"So, the basic idea is that with the kind of growth that India has registered in the last 10 years, if we can redouble the good policies that we have implemented over the last 10 years and accelerate the reforms, then India can grow at 8 per cent from here on till 2047," he had said. Laboration, Indian travellers can now use the PhonePe app for instant, seamless, and secure payments across over 8,000 merchants in Singapore, enhancing their experience in the island city.

"Partnering with STB will facilitate ease of transactions for PhonePe users who now can just pay directly from their existing bank account by scanning a QR code when visiting the island city," Ritesh Pai, Chief Executive Officer, PhonePe, International Business for PhonePe Private Limited, said. The IMF spokesperson clarified, "We do have an Executive Board. That Executive Board is made up of executive directors who are representatives of countries or groups of countries.

Israel wrecking Gaza healthcare, says MSF

■ HT News Network

GENEVA: Israel is systematically destroying Gaza's healthcare system, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said on Thursday, describing scenes of carnage that no hospitals in the world would be able to handle. The medical charity said children were turning up in hospitals with gunshot wounds from drones, while many patients were being crushed under rubble then suffering severe burns. The MSF said deadly attacks on humanitarian staff showed either deliberate intent or reckless incompetence. Amber Alayyan, MSF deputy programme manager for the Middle East, said the healthcare system in Gaza before October was imperfect but robust and improving. "Now we're seeing the systematic and deliberate destruction of the healthcare system," she told a press conference at MSF's headquarters in Geneva. Alayyan said the vast majority of injuries seen by MSF medics in Gaza were explosive injuries: the effects of bombs hitting homes. "You get crush injuries to the abdomen, to the thorax; amputations are required for the legs and arms; and on



top of that, patients suffer severe burns," she said. "No healthcare system in the world can cope with the volume and type of injuries, and the medical conditions, that we're seeing on a daily basis. "You could add 1,000 field hospitals; you're not going to be able to replace the healthcare system that was in Gaza before the war."

"We see gunshot wounds now in children from quadcopters - drones with guns," she added. The MSF said Israel was acting with impunity in the Palestinian territory, adding the UN Security Council's call for a ceasefire needed to be backed up with action. MSF International's secretary general Christopher Lockyear said nearly 200 humanitarian workers had been killed in Gaza.

Trump loses bid to delay hush money proceedings

■ HT News Network

NEW YORK: A New York judge has denied Donald Trump's bid to delay his April 15 trial on charges stemming from hush money paid to a porn star until the US Supreme Court reviews claim to presidential immunity in a separate criminal case.

The court is scheduled to hear the former US president's arguments that he is immune from federal prosecution for trying to overturn his 2020 election defeat to Democratic President Joe Biden on April 25.

His defence lawyers in the New York case in March asked Justice Juan Merchan to delay the trial until that review was complete, arguing it was relevant because prosecutors were seeking to present evidence of statements Trump made while he was president from 2017 to 2021.

In a court ruling on Wednesday, Merchan said Trump had waited too long to raise the issue. "Defendant had myriad opportunities to raise the claim of presidential immunity well before March 7, 2024," Merchan wrote.



Todd Blanche, a lawyer for Trump, declined to comment.

Trump, the Republican candidate to challenge Biden in the Nov 5 election, has pleaded not guilty in each of the four criminal indictments he faces.

The New York case could be the only one to go to trial before the election.

He is accused of falsifying business records to cover up his former lawyer Michael Cohen's \$130,000 payment to porn star Stormy Daniels for her silence before the 2016 election about a sexual encounter she says she had with Trump in 2006.

Trump denies any such encounter with Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford.

Greek judge refers nine Egyptians to trial over deadly migrant shipwreck

■ HT News Network

Nine Egyptian men who were aboard a migrant boat that sank off the coast of Greece last year, killing hundreds of people, are to face trial next month, accused of people smuggling, Greek judicial sources said on Friday.

The circumstances of the sinking of the Adriana in June remain a source of dispute between the Greek authorities and groups supporting the rights of survivors and migrants - meaning the trial could be the first opportunity to officially hear the accounts



of some of those present at the time. Survivors have accused the Greek coastguard of capsizing the boat. The authorities, which monitored Adriana for hours, say it overturned when a coastguard vessel was about 70 metres away.

The coastguard service has denied any wrongdoing. It remains unclear what happened in the time between the coastguard being alerted to the presence of the vessel and when it capsized. In a report in December, EU border

agency Frontex - which had spotted the boat from the air before the coastguard - said that Greek authorities failed to reply to its follow-up calls and its offers for assistance. It said it could not conclude what caused the Adriana to capsize. The overcrowded fishing trawler was carrying hundreds of migrants from Pakistan, Syria and Egypt when it sank off the southern town of Pylos, in international waters, on its way from Libya to Italy. Some 104 men survived and only 82 bodies have been recovered. It was the worst disaster in years and again highlighted.

Pakistani man convicted of UK cop's murder

■ HT News Network

LONDON: After two decades of evading justice, a Pakistani man was convicted on Thursday of murdering a UK police officer in 2005. PC Sharon Beshenivsky was a 38-year-old mother of three who was shot dead outside a travel agency in Bradford while responding to an armed robbery call. She was shot at point blank range.

Piran Ditta Khan, 75, who has been wanted by British authorities since 2006, was found guilty at Leeds Crown Court after previously pleading guilty to robbery. He was the last of seven men involved in the robbery to be convicted. Khan was convicted of murder by a majority of 10-1 after 11 jurors deliberated for almost 19 hours over four days. He was also found guilty of two counts of possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life, also by a majority of 10-1. He was unanimously convicted of two counts of possession of a prohibited weapon.

The incident unfolded on Nov 18, 2005, when Sharon Beshenivsky and PC Teresa Milburn responded to an alarm call at a travel agency on Morley Street in Bradford. Upon arrival, they were met with gunfire by three assailants, resulting in Beshenivsky's fatal shooting and injuries to Milburn.

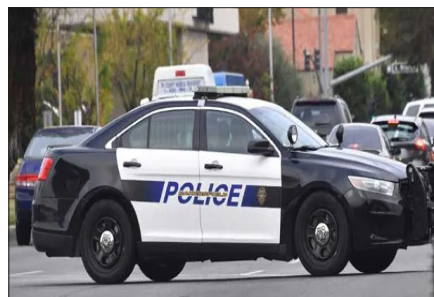
Thieves In US Steal \$30 Million From A Vault Without Setting Off Any Alarm

■ HT News Network

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) are investigating one of the largest cash heists in the city's history after as much as \$30 million was stolen from a money storage facility. According to CBS News, the break-in took place on Easter Sunday at the Gardaworld facility in Sylmar where cash from businesses across the region is handled and stored. The robbery somehow went undetected until the next morning, with no sign on the outside of

the safe that anything was amiss.

As per CBS, the thieves gained access to the building and entered the vault without setting off the alarms. Officials said that very few people would have known about the cash being stored at the facility, therefore, they are investigating whether the group had inside knowledge of the facility. "The LAPD and the FBI have a joint investigation into an alleged burglary that occurred on Sunday evening, March 31, 2024. No additional information related to the incident is being released," the agencies said in a joint statement.



Separately, according to The Independent, an employee who works at the facility said that there were multiple questions

surrounding the mysterious break-in. "It's just mind blowing that you would never suspect it. \$30 million in the Valley, gone. How? Why? I'm still trying to process it," the employee said. "Was it an inside job? Was it just one person? Was it a group? You know, there's a lot of questions," he added. Officers from the LAPD and the FBI are investigating the robbery. No arrests have been made yet and a manhunt is underway for those responsible. Meanwhile, previously the largest cash heist in Los Angeles happened on September 12, 1997, when \$18.9 million.



Suryakumar Yadav links up with Mumbai Indians at Wankhede

BENGALURU: Suryakumar Yadav has linked up with Mumbai Indians in what is sure to come as a boost to Hardik Pandya's misfiring team at IPL 2024.

Suryakumar, one of the pillars of the Mumbai side over the years, has not featured in IPL 2024 so far as he was at the BCCI's National Cricket Academy recovering from the ankle surgery he had earlier this year. It is still unknown if he will be fit for Mumbai's next match, against Delhi Capitals at the Wankhede Stadium, though he did bat in the nets and train with the others on Friday*.

"Surya came in earlier than the team and spent close to an hour batting in the nets," a

Mumbai statement said. "Following his long batting session, Surya did some training and mobility drills followed by catching up with his teammates and speaking with Mark Boucher, head coach, and Kieron Pollard, batting coach, during the course of the practise."

Suryakumar last played a competitive match in December, scoring a 56-ball 100 in the third T20I against South Africa in Johannesburg. He picked up the ankle injury during that match.

Apart from the ankle surgery, he also underwent surgery for a sports hernia in this period. As a result, he was ruled out of India's three-match T20I series

against Afghanistan at home, their last T20I assignment before the World Cup in June.

Mumbai have lost their all three matches so far and are at the bottom of the IPL 2024 points table.

Kuldeep Yadav has picked up a groin niggle, which had ruled him out of Delhi Capitals's previous two matches in IPL 2024. ESPNcricinfo has learned that Kuldeep has been advised rest as a precautionary move, but there is no confirmation yet on when he will be ready to play again.

The injury is probably not serious, considering Kuldeep has been travelling with the Capitals squad and is currently

in Mumbai where they play their next match - against Mumbai Indians on April 7.

Kuldeep played Capital's opening two matches this season - both away games, against Punjab Kings and Rajasthan Royals - and picked up three wickets. But he missed their next games in Visakhapatnam, their second home venue: against Chennai Super Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders. While the Capitals won against CSK, they sorely missed Kuldeep in their 106-run defeat against KKR, after which their head coach Ricky Ponting said he was "almost embarrassed".

The Indian selectors will be monitoring Kuldeep's progress

closely, given he is a frontrunner to take one of the spin slots in India's squad for the T20 World Cup, which starts on June 1 in the West Indies and the USA.

Kuldeep entered the IPL after a successful five-match Test series against England, where he bowled more than one match-turning spell. Kuldeep played from the second Test onwards and finished with 19 wickets, including a five-for in the final Test in Dharamsala, where he was named the Player of the Match.

After Sunday's game, Capitals' next match is against Lucknow Super Giants in Lucknow on April 12.

Teenager Meso in South Africa squad for ODIs against Sri Lanka; Tryon out with injury

LONDON: Karabo Meso, the 16-year-old wicketkeeper-batter, has earned her maiden ODI call-up, figuring in the 14 for South Africa's three-match series against Sri Lanka from April 9 in East London.

Chloe Tryon, who missed the third T20I, has been ruled out of the series to continue her rehabilitation for a back injury. Annerie Dercksen, who was part of the T20I series that South Africa lost 2-1, has been left out. Delmi Tucker, the allrounder, has replaced her in the side.

"It's a big loss with the injury of Chloe as an all-rounder, that's why Delmi has come into the squad and she can give you the offspin option and with her batting," Hilton Moreeng, South Africa's head coach, said. "In these conditions, we never know this time of year what to expect on our surfaces. So we make sure that we have all our angles covered and overall we're just excited to make sure that we finish off on a high and go into our off-season."

Meso made her South Africa debut in the second T20I against Sri Lanka in Potchefstroom, where she came in at No. 8 and was dismissed for a two-ball



duck by Chamari Athapaththu. In the third match, she arrived at the crease with one ball left in the innings and did not make a run. Tucker, meanwhile, has played seven ODIs, 14 T20Is and one Test. In seven ODIs, she has 53 runs and three wickets.

The ODI series will be part of the ICC Women's Championship, which determines qualification for the 50-over World Cup. South Africa are currently second on the table with 20 points, with ten wins in 15 matches.

"It's a very simple equation for us, there's six points to play for and Sri Lanka showed now in the last two to three days what they are capable of, so it's now to make sure that we can get that right because every game there's a lot more to play for," Moreeng said. "Qualification is key for the 2025 World Cup. It's going to be a challenge but everyone is looking forward to it and we have a very strong squad on home soil."

After the opening ODI in East London, South Africa and Sri Lanka face-off in the second game in Kimberley on April 13 and then the third in Potchefstroom on April 17.

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