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RPF Secunderabad excels in recovery of missing valuables

Hyderabad: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Secunderabad division excelled in 'Operation Amanat' aimed at enhancing passenger experience and security by restoring passenger valuables including luggage and mobile phones worth nearly Rs. 17.13 lakh this year. Under the ambit of 'Operation Amanat,' the primary objective is the retrieval and restoration of passenger belongings and valuables, surpassing their conventional duties to assist passengers in need. In 2023, RPF Secunderabad retrieved and restored passenger luggage and valuables on 982 occasions, including items like laptops, purses, luggage bags, and mobile phones with an estimated worth of Rs. 1.97 crore. In the current year, 63 instances were recorded and properties worth Rs 17.13 lakh were restored.

HMRL clears air, says no change in Metro timings in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: There is no change in the timings of Metro Services, the L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad) Limited (L&TMRHL) said on Saturday. Responding to reports in some sections of the media claiming extension in Metro service timings, the L&TMRHL clarified that the operating hours remain from 6 am to 11 pm. However, on a trial basis for the convenience of passengers, extended service hours were being facilitated only on Fridays and Mondays. On Fridays, the last train departs at 11:45 pm instead of 11 pm while on Mondays, the first train departs at 5:30 am instead of 6 am. This will offer an additional 30 to 45 minutes of service. A final decision is expected to be taken depending on the demand and feasibility of the maintenance schedule of track and trains.

Girls outperform boys in TS EAPCET 2024 Results



GNS News Agency, May 18

Hyderabad: Girls have outperformed boys in the Telangana State Engineering, Agriculture and Pharmacy Common Entrance Test (TS EAPCET) 2024 results that were announced here on Saturday. Girls recorded a qualifying percentage of 90.18 in the A&P stream, while the boys got 88.25 per cent. Similarly, 75.85 girls qualified in engineering stream as against 74.38 per cent of boys.

S Jyothiraditya of Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh and Aloor Praneetha of Madanapalli, Andhra Pradesh, secured the first rank in the engineering and A&P streams respectively. In all 2,40,618 students who appeared for the engineering stream test held from May 9 to 11, 74.98 per cent qualified. As for the A&P, 89.66 per cent qualified out of 91,633 students who took the tests conducted on May 7 and 8. Releasing the results, Principal Secretary to Government (Education department), Burra Venkatesham said the government would shortly announce the admission counselling schedule and academic calendar. The process of granting affiliation to private engineering colleges was underway and would be completed before the web counselling, he said, adding that enough seats were available in the engineering programmes.

Congress govt in Telangana has nothing to boast of in 6 months, says Vinod Kumar

GNS News Agency, May 18

Hyderabad: BRS leader and former MP B Vinod Kumar said Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who completed six months in power, had nothing to claim as his flagship programme so far. Addressing a news conference at Telangana Bhavan on Saturday, he said farmers were the worst-hit because of the ill-advised moves of the State government. They were moving from pillar to post in the harsh summer in pursuit of crop investment from private sources to take up Kharif operations.

The State government failed to give timely crop investment assistance to Rabi farmers. Because of the unfulfilled promise of crop loan waiver, banks were also not coming forward to meet their credit needs. It would be a big solace for the farmers if the government could implement Rythu Bharosa by extending crop investment assistance of Rs 7,500 per acre as promised well before the Kharif operations started in the State, Vinod Kumar said. Highlighting the importance of fulfilling the farmers' need for crop investment assistance in time, he said BRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao had introduced Rythu Bandhu being fully aware of the financial distress the farming community was undergoing in the State. Rythu Bandhu was replicated by many States and even by the Centre. In fact, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also all praise for the initiative, which was the first of its kind in India, he said. Vinod Kumar demanded that the Chief Minister ensure the Congress' promise of giving a bonus of Rs 500 per quintal of paddy be extended to all varieties grown in Telangana instead of restricting it to only a few varieties. He wished that the government would be able to take the right decisions at the crucial Cabinet meeting being held on Saturday.

Warning issued in Telangana over counterfeit erectile dysfunction drug 'Pulmosil Injection' containing Fungus

GNS News Agency, May 18

Hyderabad: Authorities in Telangana have cautioned public about availability and sale of a counterfeit version of Sildenafil, a drug supposed to cure erectile dysfunction. The Drug Control Administration (DCA) asked druggists to stop its sale notify its officials about this particular batch of injections being sold under the brand name of 'Pulmosil Injection' 10 mg/12.5 ml (with batch number KFA0300, Mfg Dt 06/23 with expiry date of 05/25) purportedly manufactured by the Sun Pharmaceutical industries in Turkapally village on Hyderabad city outskirts. The DCA Director General VB Kamalasan Reddy said authorities have found fungus in sealed vials of the counterfeit version of the product in question. In the light of these grave findings, the DCA issued a 'spurious / counterfeit drug alert and a stop use notice' regarding the counterfeit version of Pulmosil.

Telangana CM meets filmmakers Ram Gopal Varma, Anil Ravipudi, Harish Shankar

GNS News Agency, May 18

Hyderabad: As the Telugu Film Directors' Association (TFDA) is preparing for a grand celebration of Director's Day on May 19, 2024, renowned filmmakers like Ram Gopal Varma, Anil Ravipudi and Harish Shankar met with Chief Minister Revanth Reddy at his residence in Hyderabad on Friday. The members of the Telugu film industry invited the CM to be a part of the special programme organized to celebrate Directors' Day. During their meeting with Revanth Reddy, the members of Telugu film fraternity also posed for pic-



tures with the CM and greeted him with a flower bouquet. The event will be held on May 19 at LB Stadium in Hyderabad. The star-studded event will honour late filmmaker Dasari Narayana Rao for his immense contributions to Indian cinema. Stars like

Chiranjeevi, Prabhas, and Allu Arjun are expected to attend the special event. Reportedly, Prabhas donated a huge sum of money to the Telugu Film Directors Association for Director's Day celebrations. Dasari Narayana was a film direc-

tor, producer, screenwriter, actor, lyricist, and politician. He worked predominantly in Telugu films apart from Hindi cinema. His works emphasised on social injustice, corruption and gender discrimination. Dasari Narayana directed 150 Telugu movies and holds the Limca World Record for directing most number of films worldwide. He directed his first film in the early 1970s.

He won many prestigious awards, including the National Award, the Filmfare and received honours from the Andhra Pradesh government. He passed away on 30 May 2017. He was 75 when he breathed his last.

Arvind Kejriwal's personal secretary Bibhav Kumar, accused of assaulting AAP MP Swati Maliwal, arrested

New Delhi, GNS News Agency, May 18

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar was arrested on Saturday in connection with the alleged assault on AAP MP Swati Maliwal. Kumar was detained from the chief minister's residence by a Delhi Police team around noon. He was taken to the police station for interrogation and arrested. Later, Kumar moved the Tis Hazari Court seeking bail in the Maliwal 'assault' case.

However, the court reserved its order in the interim bail matter of Kumar. Maliwal has alleged that Kumar assaulted her at Kejriwal's residence on May 13 when she had gone to meet the Delhi Chief Minister. The detention came after Kumar at 9.52 am wrote to SHO Civil Lines police station that he was willing to cooperate in an FIR lodged against him. Kumar said he had not been issued any notice in the FIR and had learnt of it from the media. He added that he had also last night filed a complaint against Maliwal on her alleged forceful entry into the CM house on May 13 and alleged threats and abuses she hurled at him but no FIR had been registered in that. Kumar said police was willing to cooperate in the probe. Kumar's lawyers who reached the police station said they had moved Tees Hazari court to procure a copy of the FIR by Swati Maliwal against Kumar. In the email he earlier wrote to



the Delhi Police, Kumar gave addresses where he could be reached for questioning. Meanwhile, a fresh set of CCTV footage from Kejriwal's house showed Maliwal being normally escorted out by the CM staff. She was not seen agitated in the video. The AAP has alleged that the BJP was using Maliwal to frame Kejriwal. BJP chief JP Nadda has trashed the charges saying the AAP is built on a mountain of lies. The Tribune News Service brings you the latest news, analysis and insights from the region, India and around the world. Follow the Tribune News Service for a wide-ranging coverage of events as they unfold, with perspective and clarity.

No objection to action against grandson Prajwal Revanna if he is found guilty: Former PM Deve Gowda on sexual abuse case

Bengaluru, GNS News Agency, May 18

Breaking his silence over the sexual abuse charges levelled against JDS MP Prajwal Revanna, party Supremo H D Deve Gowda on Saturday said he has no objection to the action taken against his grandson if he is found guilty. He also said the cases against his son and JD(S) MLA H D Revanna, who is facing charges of sexual harassment and kidnap of a woman, were "created", but refrained from commenting further, as the matter was subjudice. Addressing reporters, Gowda, who turned 92 today, said, "... I don't want to comment on things that are going on in the court regarding Revanna. Prajwal Revanna has gone abroad, regarding that Kumaraswamy (Gowda's other son and state JD(S) chief) has on behalf of our family said it is the duty of the government to take action in accordance with the law of the land."

"There are several people connected to this (sexual abuse case), I don't want to take anyone's names. Kumaraswamy has said that those who are involved in this matter, action should be taken against all of them, and the affected women should get justice and compensation." "There is no objection from us for taking action against Prajwal. But people have come to know (facts) about the allegations made against Revanna, how the case has been created. In one case he has got the bail, in another case there is judgment day-after-tomorrow... I don't want to comment on it," he added, concurring with Kumaraswamy's statement that if found guilty no one should be spared. Gowda had recently announced his decision not to celebrate his birthday and had requested his well-wishers and party workers to wish him from wherever they are. Prajwal (33) is facing charges of multiple instances of sexually abusing women. The scandal has raised a political storm with the ruling Congress and BJP. JD(S) engaged in a slugfest. He reportedly left for Germany on April 27 and is still at large. An Interpol Blue Corner Notice has been issued against him, in an effort to bring him back. He was BJP-JD(S) alliance's joint candidate from Hassan Lok Sabha segment, which went to



polls on April 26. Asked whether there was a conspiracy to defame and scuttle his family politically, Gowda said, "It is true... over all what all has happened, several people are involved. I won't take names. Kumaraswamy will say on what action to be taken." Responding to a query on BJP leader and advocate G Devaraje Gowda's allegations that Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar is behind the circulation of pen drive containing explicit videos involving Prajwal Revanna, Gowda said Kumaraswamy will respond to all of this.

Fish Prasadam to be distributed from June 8 at Exhibition Grounds in Hyd

The preparations are in full swing for the distribution of fish prasadam on June 8 at the Exhibition Grounds in Hyderabad. The Battina family, who are known for distributing this special prasadam every year, have made a key announcement regarding the upcoming event. As per tradition, the organizers are gearing up to distribute the fish prasadam on Migrasira Karthi day.

Arvind Kejriwal, others to march towards BJP HQ tomorrow, 'today Bibhav, next Raghav,' claims Delhi CM



New Delhi, May 18

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a digital press conference on Saturday said that he along with senior party leaders will march towards the BJP headquarters on Sunday at 12 pm. Kejriwal has continued to observe silence in the Swati Maliwal 'assault' case at CM's residence. The Delhi Police on Saturday arrested Kejriwal's close aide Bibhav Kumar in the case.

"The BJP has one by one sent our party leaders to jail, they have today arrested Bibhav, next they will arrest Raghav Chadha who has just come back, following they will arrest Saurabh Bhardwaj and Atishi." "Tomorrow I will be going to the BJP headquarters along with senior party leaders. Arrest anyone you want to," said Kejriwal. Kumar was picked up from the chief minister's residence by a Delhi Police team, a day after Maliwal recorded her statement before a magistrate at the Tis Hazari court.

Mamata Banerjee contradicts her stand on INDIA bloc

GNS News Agency, May 18

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday contradicted her stand on the Opposition INDIA bloc as she gave a subtle hint about the participation of Trinamool Congress if the INDIA bloc-led government comes to power at the Centre in New Delhi. Her subtle hints come just days after she said that Trinamool Congress would provide outside support if the Opposition INDIA bloc forms the government. "In West Bengal, there is no alliance. In Bengal, there is only a confused alliance between Congress and CPI(M). We are with the INDIA bloc at the national level. This time we are confident of the formation of the INDIA-led government and for that Trinamool Congress is more than enough," the Chief Minister said at Arambagh Lok Sabha constituency in support of the party candidate Mitali Bag.

Speaking at the event, Banerjee expressed doubts that the BJP was trying to create tension over certain temples in the state. "I am asking the administration to keep a special watch on the temples. After their conspiracy in Sandeshkhali, they might create tension over certain temples. Do not allow that. The administration will have to take the responsibility of preventing tension at any place," the Chief Minister said. She also criticised Union Home Minister Amit Shah for the latter's recent advice to the people to invest in stock markets. "He cannot make such comments when the elections are on. This is a clear violation of the Model Code of Conduct. Whether you invest in the stock market or not is up to you. But remember that BJP is not returning to power this time," Banerjee added.

Narayanan Vaghul, legendary banker and former ICICI Bank chairman, passes away at 88

GNS News Agency, May 18

Mr Vaghul is survived by his wife Mrs Padma Vaghul, children Mohan & Sudha, and grandchildren Sanjay, Kavya, Anuv and Santosh. He was admitted to Chennai's Apollo Hospital's multidisciplinary critical care unit in the wee hours of the morning, and was declared dead at 12.38 p.m. Narayanan Vaghul was born in the pre-independence era in 1936 in rural south India. His family moved to Chennai (then Madras) where he studied at the famous Loyola College. Banking was not Mr Vaghul's first choice as a career. He initially wanted to join the civil services but did not make the cut in his first attempt. However, he cleared the examination to enter the newly formed State Bank of India (SBI), which he later remarked, he had attempted as a "practice test." His father then nudged him to take up the SBI job and he joined the bank in 1955. He later quit SBI due to intense political pressure. He was described as uncompromising and honest to the core. At SBI he was introduced to ace banker R.K. Talwar who shaped his life and banking career. After SBI he joined the National Institute of Bank Management where he subsequently became its Director.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Anti-BJP protests

THE crackdown on protesting farmers at the Shambhu border in February is casting a shadow on the BJP's poll campaign in Punjab. Party leaders and candidates are being shown black flags and stopped from entering villages, particularly in Malwa and Majha. These disruptions prompted state BJP chief Sunil Jakhar to lodge a complaint with the state's Chief Electoral Officer last week, alleging that the AAP government had failed to ensure a level playing field for all candidates. The Punjab Police have claimed that they are taking steps to ensure the safety of the contestants, including those belonging to the BJP, but the latter is not convinced.

Farmers from the state had launched the Dilli Chalo agitation earlier this year, seeking a legal guarantee for the minimum support price (MSP). However, they were prevented from reaching the Capital by the authorities in BJP-ruled Haryana, which resorted to a heavily-handed approach. The MSP issue has remained unresolved despite a series of talks between the Centre and some farm unions. The BJP has its task cut out in the state, where it is going solo after its efforts to mend fences with its old ally, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), proved futile. The SAD had parted ways with the NDA in 2021 amid the farmers' agitation over the contentious farm laws enacted by the Centre. Even the repeal of the laws did not help the BJP win over the state's farming community, as seen in January 2022, when protesters forced PM Modi to go back without addressing a poll rally in Ferozepur. With its nominees also facing the heat in parts of rural Haryana, the saffron party can't afford to ignore the anger and anguish of the region's farmers. At the same time, the alleged infringement of the candidates' right to campaign needs to be probed and accountability fixed for the lapses.

Punjab BJP chief Sunil Jakhar hits out at farmer union leaders: 'Why no questions to AAP?'

GNS News Agency, May 18

Punjab BJP chief, Sunil Jakhar, farmer union leaders, protests, Aam Aadmi Party, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, compensation, crop losses, Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, leadership, documentation, Aadhaar, bank account, railway station, Barnala, traders, conflict, law, defamed, income, political system, Parliament, Shubhkaran Singh, Balbir Singh Rajewal. Sunil Jakhar also hit out at the Congress for not raising the issue of how farmers were not adequately compensated. Mincing no words, Punjab BJP chief Sunil Jakhar on Wednesday hit out at farmer union leaders in the state and questioned protests against BJP leaders in rural areas, asking why similar treatment was not being meted out to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) or Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

"I want to pose a few questions before farmer union leaders. AAP had announced in its manifesto that they would give Rs 20,000 per acre compensation in case of crop losses due to natural calamities. Last year, when the crops got damaged due to floods, Punjab CM had announced compensation... However, in reality, the compensation given to farmers was Rs 6,800 per acre (given by the Centre). Where is that Rs 20,000 per acre compensation? And why is no farmer union leader questioning AAP leaders or Punjab CM?" Jakhar said, addressing the media in Chandigarh.

"States like Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are giving Rs 125/quintal bonus over and above MSP [minimum support price] of wheat. Why is no such bonus being given by the Punjab government and why are no questions being put to them?" Jakhar asked. "The farmer is in distress and he needs a solution to get his/her income increased but the question is of leadership. Who should guide them properly to understand all the aspects and pose questions accordingly?" Jakhar asked. He also hit out at the Congress for not raising the issue of how farmers were not adequately compensated. "If I talk about the Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana of the Union government under which Rs 6,000 per annum is given to farmers... it was started in 2018-19 when 23 lakh farmers registered from Punjab. But at present, there are only 8.5 lakh who are taking this benefit. In all other states, the number of farmers registered with this scheme is increasing but in Punjab, it is the contrary," Jakhar said. "It is the state's responsibility to get the Aadhaar, bank account etc linked so that farmers can get money.

The state has to assist farmers in completing the required documentation. So why is the state not being questioned? This is causing Rs 900 crore per annum loss to the small farmers. And if BJP workers try to go to villages to help small farmers complete this formality, the unions do not allow them. So whose loss is this? Union leaders themselves should take initiative in getting more farmers registered and help them get the benefits," Jakhar added. "Farmers are sitting on the tracks at Shambhu railway station due to which 69 trains are being cancelled daily. This is causing immense loss to the masses, and especially the business community. Also, see what has happened in Barnala today," Jakhar said, referring to the day-long bandh called by the traders against the farmers.

"Such situations are a cause of concern for Punjab and I highly condemn such incidents," Jakhar said, adding that the "law is the same for everyone." "Farmers should not be defamed anymore and rather union leaders should set their egos aside and take steps in a direction to help them increase their income," he said. "They (union leaders) should contest polls to be part of the political system or at least support a party they like... Congress or AAP or any other party if they are opposing BJP. At least they should tell that political party to raise their issues in Parliament and help them increase their income," Jakhar further said.

"The farmer is upset and his problem needs to be resolved but leaders must guide them properly. We cannot afford the killing of our youngsters like Shubhkaran Singh. We cannot afford the loss of business of our community in Punjab," Jakhar asserted. In 2022, Jakhar said, farmer union leader Balbir Singh Rajewal and his members had contested elections. "They can try again if they think that no political party is supporting their issues," he added.

BMC launches final girder for Bow String bridge to connect coastal road with Mumbai sea link



GNS News Agency, May 18

The second and final girder of the Mumbai Coastal Road's bow-string bridge was launched by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Wednesday morning. Once vehicular movement starts, the Bandra Worli Sea Link (BWSL) can be accessed directly from the Coastal Road due to the latest launch. The steel girder, weighing 2,400 metric tonne, was launched at 6.07 am on Wednesday. This is the final girder, 2.8 metre away from the first girder. This girder will cater to the north-bound (Marine Drive to BWSL) traffic once made operational. How was the final girder launched? "The super-sized structure was erected from a barge anchored in the sea and was placed on the mono-piles; the manner in which we had launched the first girder. The entire girder was launched from the sea since there wasn't an adequate land strip available for launching it near the worksite," said an official. The arch-shaped girder is 136-

metre-long. The girder, a prefabricated structure, was manufactured in Haryana and transported to the Nhava Sheva port in Raigad, 65 km from Worli, where it was assembled. Following this, the girders were transported from the port to the Worli work site in a barge that arrived at the worksite on Sunday evening. What's next? The first girder was launched on April 26, and officials said now that both the girders have been launched, waterproofing and concreting work is underway. Later, the asphalt roads will be created. The completion of the remaining work will take a month more, officials told. At present, the coastal road is operational only between Worli and Marine Drive and is catering to south-bound traffic only during the weekdays. The second (southbound) arm is expected to be opened after the lifting of the model code of conduct. The making of this bridge was a major hurdle that the civic authorities had to overcome for completing the project. The fishing community had demanded that the gap between the pillars on which the bridge is being created should be 200 metre, while the BMC's recommendation was 60 metre for safe passage. The fisherfolk went on a strike and the BMC had to revise the plan and remove one pillar to provide a wider navigation span for the boats. Since the engineers could not erect an additional pillar and the distance between the existing monopiles increased, the civic body resorted to the design of a 'Bow-String' girder bridge. The speciality of these kinds of arch bridges is that the spans are held together through high-tension chords instead of having a base support like that on pillars. The chords form an arch shaped girder from the outside and hold the ends of the bridge tightly with the surface.

Rajasthan Police book 10 Ludhiana cops for abducting youth, implicating him in false drugs case

GNS News Agency, May 18

The Rajasthan Police have booked at least 10 police personnel in Ludhiana for allegedly abducting a 22-year-old youth, bringing him to Punjab and implicating him in a false narcotics case. The FIR was registered at the Jhanwar police station of the Jodhpur district on the statement of Prema Ram, whose complaint stated that Ludhiana police abducted his son Manveer in March this year, brought him to Ludhiana and then showed false recovery of 2 kg opium from him. The father stated that the police claimed in their FIR that they arrested his son from Ludhiana when he was actually abducted from Rajasthan and taken away in an Innova car. The alleged abduction was captured in the CCTV footage procured from toll plazas. The father alleged that when he contacted senior officers in Ludhiana, no one listened to him, while the junior officers demanded a bribe of Rs 15 lakh to release his son. The father stated that his son had been taking coaching for civil services in Jaipur for three years. He left his home in Hemnagar of Jhanwar around 4 pm on March 6, saying he was going to Jodhpur for work. However, he went missing. He said that on March 7, CCTV footage from a toll plaza captured his son being taken away in an Innova vehicle towards Punjab, which had turbaned men in it. He further said that he got to know that on March 8, the Ludhiana police registered an FIR stating that they arrested a man from Sherpur Chowk of Ludhiana with 2 kg opium.

The father alleged that the Ludhiana police registered a false FIR against his son, claiming they saw a



suspicious man near Apollo Hospital at Sherpur Chowk in Ludhiana with a black polythene in his hand. The police issued a press release stating that the CIA-2 staff of the Ludhiana police arrested a man with 2 kg opium who had come from Rajasthan to Punjab to supply opium via public transport and tried to flee after seeing the police. The father said the Ludhiana police said in the release that he was a student who indulged in opium smuggling to meet his expenses and make easy money. He alleged that Ludhiana police threatened them that if they disclosed this to anyone, the entire family would be implicated in a false drug case.

When contacted, Ludhiana police commissioner Kuldeep Singh Chahal said the Rajasthan Police registered the FIR following a court order. "We will investigate and reply accordingly. If the police personnel are found guilty, action will be taken against them," he said.

Infosys Prize age limit reduced to under 40 to attract more young research talents

GNS News Agency, May 18

The Infosys Science Foundation Wednesday announced that it had reduced the age limit for nominations to under 40 years for the Infosys Prize in order to encourage more young talents to take up research. Further, the foundation has also created a separate prize category for Economics, which was earlier part of Social Sciences. From 2024, the six categories that the Infosys Prize will be awarded in are: Economics, Engineering & Computer Science, Humanities & Social Sciences, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, and Physical Sciences. The foundation has added a new direction to the Infosys Prize after 15 years and having awarded 92 researchers so far. The jury consisting of Prof Arvind, Prof Kaushik Basu and Prof Shrinivas Kulkarni among others have already begun the nomination cycle for the Infosys Prize 2024 and the foundation is expected to announce the winners in November later this year and the award ceremony will be held in January 2025.

In order to foster research collaborations with Indian researchers, the ISF now requires all winners who are based outside India to spend time at Indian institutes of their choice. They will be requested to spend 30 days (in a maximum of two trips) at a host institute in India, to build networks and spark conversations with research



groups here. The objective is also to transform early collaborations into mutually beneficial long-term partnerships. Kris Gopalakrishnan, president of ISF said, "This change in the direction of the Infosys Prize stems from our vision to create a generation of young academicians who are passionate about pursuing a career in scientific research and provide a longer runway for individuals to develop their work that would have the potential to benefit society at large. We believe that this redirection will help serve as a catalyst for future innovation and mobilize young individuals towards shaping a better tomorrow."

'Feeling sidelined,' Chandigarh Congress stalwart Subhash Chawla joins BJP



GNS News Agency, May 18

"Feeling sidelined" within the Congress, the party's former Chandigarh unit president Subhash Chawla joined the BJP on Wednesday. The BJP announced his joining

at 1 pm. Along with Chawla, his son Sumit Chawla also joined the saffron party.

Often termed as a "soft-spoken and humble politician", Chawla served as the mayor of Chandigarh twice. He was part of the Congress for over four decades. A source said, "Chawla was feeling sidelined within the party. And thus this decision." Sources said that Chawla had tried to join the Chandigarh Congress president in the party's Lok Sabha election campaign but was not invited to many events. "He was feeling humiliated as despite being a hardcore Congress worker, he was not being given the respect he deserved," a source said. In 2022, Chawla resigned as president of the Congress's Chandigarh unit, a post he had held since his appointment in February 2021, ahead of the civic polls. With Chawla, scores of his supporters also joined the BJP. People would often consult Chawla for clarifications about bylaws of the civic body.

Panic in Gujarat town adjoining Somnath Temple after leopard 'sighted', efforts on to cage it



GNS News Agency, May 18

The forest staff caged one leopard from Nakhada, a village some 25 km away from Veraval town late on Tuesday. The forest staff caged one leopard from Nakhada, a village some 25 km away from Veraval town late Forest department officials in the Gir Somnath district of Gujarat have been attempting to cage a leopard reportedly crouching in Veraval town near the famous Somnath temple for the last few days and making the local residents jittery.

Khimanand Pampaniya, range forest officer (RFO) of Veraval range in Junagadh territorial forest division, told The Indian Express that residents of Mafatiyapara alerted the forest staff on Saturday that a leopard was sighted the previous night. "Our staff went to the area but save for the accounts of the locals, they did not find any direct or indirect evidence of leopard presence there. Residents alerted us again on Monday that a leopard was sighted in the locality at 3 pm that day. We again scanned the area but could not locate the animal. Given the anxiety among local residents, we mobilised a trap cage to the locality on Monday night," Pampaniya said.

The RFO said while the staff had been trying their best to capture the leopard, it had thus far remained at large as Veraval, the district headquarters of Gir Somnath and also a big fisheries harbour, is heavily populated. "Due to human presence, our staff is struggling to entice the animal into the trap cage," he said. "A nullah in which sewage water flows crosses Mafatiyapara and has tall vegetation and keeps the area boggy. Vegetation might provide shelter to leopards and make the task of wildlife rescuers difficult. Rescuers may find it difficult to tranquilise leopard in such an area where there are deep pools of water," Pampaniya said, adding that they wrote to the chief officer of Veraval municipality to remove vegetation from the stream. Meanwhile, the forest staff caged one leopard from Nakhada, a village some 25 km away from Veraval town late on Tuesday. "There were complaints from residents of Nakhada village that a leopard was roaming in the area, posing a threat to their safety. Therefore, we placed a trap cage and rescued the leopard," the RFO added.

Seven schools received 'hoax' bomb threat emails in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur



GNS News Agency, May 18

As many as seven schools including two run by the government, received bomb threats over mail which were found to be a 'hoax' following a police investigation, officials said on Wednesday. "Most schools reported the threat to police on Tuesday after it came to their knowledge, as the schools were closed on Sunday and Monday," Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Harish Chandra said. Five private schools and two government schools have received bomb threats through an email in the last 72 hours, he said. The schools that received the bomb threat include Gulmohar Vihar Public School in Hanumant Vihar, KDMA school in Gujaini, Sanatan Dharm Education Centre in Kaushalpur, the Chintal's school in Singhpur Kachar, Virendra Swaroop School in Civil Lines Kendriya Vidyalaya Cantt and Kendriya Vidyalaya in Armapore estate. The officer claimed that following a preliminary investigation it was found that the threats were a hoax. "The Cyber Crime officials have been alerted and the instructions were issued to launch the investigation into the matter after registering the FIR," the ACP said. "We are also trying to ascertain patterns between the hoax bomb threats received by schools in Lucknow, Bengaluru, Jaipur and Delhi-NCR," he said. Similar "hoax" threats were received in schools of Lucknow, Bengaluru, Jaipur and Delhi-NCR earlier this month, said police.

Man stabs Hubballi girl to death for rejecting his advances, second incident in less than a month

GNS News Agency, May 18

A 21-year-old woman was stabbed to death in Karnataka's Hubballi city on Wednesday morning by a man who is said to have threatened to kill her "like Neha Hiremath". The incident occurred at Veerapura in the Bendiger police station limits around 5.30 am, according to police. The police said that Girish alias Vishwa knocked on the door of Anjali Ambigera's home around 5 am. Although her sisters asked her not to open the door, as Vishwa persisted, Ambigera opened it to tell him off. However, as soon as Ambigera opened the door, Vishwa allegedly stabbed her in the neck. He is learnt to have chased her inside the house, where she was living with her sisters and grandmother, before stabbing her multiple times.

Man 'forced to clean' sewer outside Delhi mall dies; 3 men booked



GNS News Agency, May 18

sewer deathA housekeeping supervisor working with the company, Rajpal, lodged a police complaint alleging that the company executives would force the sweepers to clean the mall's sewers. (Representational image/File)A 32-year-old man died and another fell ill allegedly after inhaling noxious gases while cleaning a sewer outside a mall in Delhi's Rohini Sector-10, the police said. The police identified the duo as Hare Krishna Prasad (32) and Sagar (20) and said that they worked as sweepers for a company that was in charge of the mall's cleaning and maintenance. A housekeeping supervisor working with the company, Rajpal, lodged a police complaint alleging that the company executives would force the sweepers to clean the mall's sewers. Rajpal also named the mall plumber, the mall maintenance supervisor and the facility manager as the main

accused. Subsequently, the police booked the three men under several sections of the Indian Penal Code on charges including negligent conduct with respect to poisonous substances, causing death by negligence etc along with Section 9 of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act.

"I was outside the mall in the afternoon when I saw a man go inside the sewer without any protective gear," an eyewitness told The Indian Express. "After some time, there was some chaos and another person went inside the sewer in a panic. When they did not come out, a third person brought some pipes and ropes and went inside. He pulled the two people out using ropes," she added. "A mall guard then rushed to the spot and began pouring water on the men's faces to revive them, but that did not work. They were then rushed to the hospital nearby," the eyewitness recalled. The men were rushed to Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital where Prasad was declared dead on arrival and Sagar was treated for breathing issues. The chairman of the Delhi Commission for Safai Karamcharis, Sanjay Gehlot, expressed dismay over the incident. "Not a month goes by when a labourer does not lose his/her life to such work. We have made several requests to the Delhi government regarding this and given them directions as well but have seen no implementation. The Delhi government does give Rs 25 lakh as compensation... but how do we air our grievances and give them directions? I hope the compensation is given to the family as soon as possible so that they are given some closure," Gehlot said.

From Amritpal Singh namesake to Congress supporter, a look at who's contesting from Khadoor Sahib constituency



GNS News Agency, May 18

An Amritpal Singh namesake, a Congress supporter, an auto driver and a flour mill owner are just a few among the 43 candidates who will contest the Lok Sabha elections from the Khadoor Sahib constituency in Punjab. Khadoor Sahib was in the news recently after Waris Punjab De (WPD) chief Amritpal Singh said he would be contesting the elections from the constituency as an Independent. Among the 21 Independent candidates is Amritpal Singh, who claims to be an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) spokesperson from Nihal Singh Wala. He has been campaigning for AAP's Faridkot candidate Karamjit Anmol and has even uploaded videos on Instagram. However, his affidavit to the Election Commission states that he does not have an Instagram account. Singh's nomination form includes a photo featuring him wearing headgear that is similar to the one used by the WPD chief.

"I have come to know that Amritpal Singh from our party has filed nomination papers from Khadoor Sahib. He was part of our campaign till recently and also an office bearer. I will check what has happened and why he has filed nomination papers," AAP MLA from Nihal Singh Wala Manjit Singh Bilaspur said. While it is an open secret that political parties often find namesakes of their opponents to cut into votes on the day of polling, it is rare to find such candidates being politically active themselves. Like Parminder Singh, who has been actively campaigning for the Congress's Khadoor Sahib candidate Kulbir Singh Zira, and is still contesting as an Independent candidate from the constituency. "It is our internal matter," Parminder said when asked why he was contesting from Khadoor Sahib against Zira. The social media account Parminder mentioned in his nomination papers is full of photos from Zira's campaign. Parminder disconnected the phone when asked about his election issues.

While Gursimran Singh from Mohali said he was contesting the elections from Khadoor Sahib as he has "a good friend circle here" and wanted to highlight the issue of unemployment, Vijay Kumar, an auto driver in Tarn Taran, said he was yet to decide on the issues he would raise. Vijay's nomination papers were rejected in the 2017 Assembly and 2019 Lok Sabha elections but he secured 500 votes in the 2022 Assembly election from Tarn Taran. Kuldeep Singh, who is from the Rangreta Singh Sabha, a Dalit organisation, said that he has been contesting elections to raise the issues of the Scheduled Caste and Backward Class communities. Sarabjit Singh said that he was a farmer and his agenda was to highlight the "failure" of the AAP government in delivering its promises. "No one is safe here. People are running away from Punjab. I want to raise the problems of the people," Sarabjit said.

* Lakhbir Singh, who runs a vegetable shop in Kapurthala, said he was contesting as a Dalit Samaj Party candidate. However, he was not sure about his issues in this election. * Surjit Singh, a flour mill owner from Bhikhiwind, said that he worked with all mainstream parties but they disappointed him when it came to solving people's problems. "People come to me and ask me to contest the elections. I secured 1,200 votes in the 2019 election from Khadoor Sahib and 500 votes from Khemkaran in the 2022 Assembly elections," Surjit said. * Arun Kumar said he was disappointed with traditional parties. "I have been in politics for 20 years. I am a social worker and I have a water filters business. I want to fight corruption," Arun said. * Vikramjit Singh alias Bhagat Singh Doabi claims to be a journalist and is known for his anti-Amritpal Singh posts and speeches on social media. * Paramjit Singh is contesting as an Independent for the Bhartiya Aam Janta Party and Ekta Party. "It is my first election and our agenda is the upliftment of poor people," he said. * Mahinder Singh of the Valmiki Mazhabi Sikh Morcha said that he is fighting for the Dalit community. Mahinder contested from Hoshiarpur and Khadoor Sahib in 2009 and 2014. * Anokh Singh said that he quit AAP a month ago and decided to contest after he was denied a ticket. * United Trade Union, Punjab has fielded Harjinder Singh, a driver by profession. "Drivers have been contesting all 13 constituencies of Punjab. Punjabi drivers get looted in all states whereas drivers from other states are welcomed here. We have been fighting for our rights," Mahinder said. Punjab will go to polls on June 1. AAP has fielded Cabinet minister Lajjit Singh Bhullar from the Khadoor Sahib constituency.

Delhi HC seeks ex-AIIMS official's response to CBI plea against order on providing info in 'corruption' case

GNS News Agency, May 18

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought the response of a former chief vigilance officer (CVO) of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences to an appeal filed by the CBI against an order that refused to interfere with the Central Information Commission's decision asking the agency to give certain information related to an alleged corruption investigation. A division bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora, which issued a notice to Sanjeev Chaturvedi, the former AIIMS CVO, observed that the matter calls for an "examination" and listed the matter for hearing on August 27.



The CBI has challenged a January 30 order of a single-judge bench that said there was nothing on record to demonstrate that the "investigation regarding malpractices in purchase of cleaner disinfectants and fogging solution in JPNA Trauma Centre, AIIMS, New Delhi, will expose the officers and other persons involved in the investigation, which can endanger their life or would jeopardize any other serious investigation". Acting on former CVO Chaturvedi's complaint, the Central Information Commission in 2019 directed the CBI to disclose information regarding the agency's investigation, including file notings, to him. Chaturvedi claimed before the single-judge bench that the CBI had taken no action on the information he had sought.

In its appeal, the CBI has sought that the single-judge bench's judgment be set aside, stating that the agency was included under section 24 of the Right to Information Act as its investigation "remains a secret and any disclosure" of it would result in the defeat of the very purpose of its inclusion in the RTI Act. "That the Hon'ble Single Judge, while passing the impugned judgment, failed to consider that in the course of investigation carried out by CBI, communications are made to a public officer in confidence and disclosure of the same would

be prejudicial to the public interest...public interest demands that the proceedings of enquiry/investigation should not be made available under the RTI Act, as it might endanger the safety of informants and might also deter the informants from giving information to the investigating agency. This would defeat the very purpose of enquiry/investigation into crime, in particular, crime relating to corruption, as it would lead to exposing the information collected by the Appellant-CBI with great efforts using their men and resources, giving a chance to persons to tamper with evidence and to destroy the money trail apart from paving the way to influencing the witnesses," the appeal states. While section 24 (4) exempts the CBI from the application of the RTI Act, it also states that "information pertaining to the allegations of corruption and human rights violations shall not be excluded under this subsection". The single-judge bench, however, had said that in appropriate cases, the CBI can establish that information sought is "sensitive in nature" and on considering the nature of sensitivity, keeping in mind the object of RTI Act section 24, it would be open for the CBI's central public information officer to refuse such information.

Behind the journey of those who have established themselves as ARTrepreneurs

GNS News Agency, May 18

At 22, Nandini Ghodele takes care of all expenses of her four-member household through her artwork. Ghodele, whose mother is a mehendi artist, who only takes up work occasionally, and father a former RTO agent, spent one year at an engineering college before taking up art full time. "I have been painting since I was a child, but I never knew I could earn money through it. I was really good at academics and envisioned a 9 to 5 job. But one year into engineering, I realised, it would never make me happy," said Ghodele. She dropped out of college and started applying to art schools. Her dream almost came true when she got into a college in Germany. "But the loan didn't come through and it was the start of a really difficult time for me, as it took a toll on my mental health. It spiralled into depression and I tried to end it all, but my parents really stood by me," said the Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar resident. In 2022, at the beginning of the New Year, Ghodele started taking steps to turn her life around and working on her first project. "I decided to do mural work on the wall of a railway station. It was my first project, so I funded it myself, got permission from authorities and did it to get some start," said Ghodele. That was the beginning and Ghodele has not looked back since then. She designed a poster for the movie Pardah by K Rohit Ramswami, a wall graffiti for a tea store chain across Pune and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, and also painted the wall of the amphitheatre of a multinational company in Hyderabad.



Instagram. The amount increased to Rs 15,000 to 20,000 per month. It is obviously never the same every month. Then the needle moved to 25,000 to Rs 40,000 a month. This month, I earned a lakh," said Ghodele.

After getting exposure through the world of social media, Shantanu Deshmukh, a 25-year-old from a small village in Akola district, decided to take the plunge and come to Pune to fulfil his dream of making it big as an artist. Once a dance content creator on TikTok, which shut down a few years ago, he switched to making portraits of celebrities on peepal leaves. This offbeat medium of art helped him garner traction on Instagram and he started getting commissions and invited by celebrities like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma. Deshmukh has to support his father, who has terminal cancer, and tried to find ways of making his art a financially viable livelihood. Now, he earns between Rs 15,000 and Rs 25,000 and sends some money to his family. From regular canvases to 3D portraits and textiles to name a few, Deshmukh now creates art on several mediums. Kokila Bhattacharya, an illustrator, visual artist, designer, and activist, has always been fascinated by art. "My parents told me I started drawing before I started speaking. I'm an introvert so the latter is still second nature," said Bhattacharya. Bhattacharya, 30, initially thought of pursuing art professionally, but after getting into the National Institute of Design (NID), she dropped out in a year. "It was 10 years ago. I was disenchanted by institutions, and wanted to work in the social sector," she said. Most of Bhattacharya's work revolves around socio-political issues and advocacy, and she doesn't work for for-profit organisations. She has worked with the Bhopal museum that honours the stories of survivors and has delivered talks done around it, and with environmental non-government organisations as well. Simultaneously,

Mumbai hoarding collapse accused last traced to Lonavala, his phone switched off: Police

GNS News Agency, May 18

The accused in the Ghatkopar hoarding collapse, which killed at least 14 people on Monday afternoon, was last traced to Lonavala near Pune on Tuesday after he fled the city apprehending arrest, said the Mumbai police. According to the police, Bhavesh Prabhudas Bhide, 51, the director of Ego Media Private Limited, which had the contract for the hoarding on a 10-year lease, was not at his house in Mulund when the police team reached. The police traced his last location to Lonavala and sent a team there, but he was not found there either, an officer said. "He switched off his phone following which he has been untraceable. We have deployed seven teams to trace him and should arrest him soon," added the officer. An officer said they would summon officers from the Government Railway Police (GRP) and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to get information about when Bhide was given the hoarding on lease and what action was taken against him if permission was not granted. Bhavesh Mumbai Hoarding Collapse Bhavesh Prabhudas Bhide is the main accused in the Ghatkopar hoarding collapse. The hoarding, measuring 120 x 120 feet against the permitted size of 40 x 40 feet, was situated beside a petrol pump at Pant Nagar on the Eastern Express Highway (EEH). It collapsed at 4.30 pm on Monday after gusty winds and the season's first spell of rainfall lashed the city. Most of the victims were either refuelling or seeking refuge when the billboard collapsed, and more than 100 people got trapped under-



neath it. After the hoarding collapse, the Pant Nagar police registered an FIR against Bhide on Monday night under sections 304 (culpable homicide), 338 (causing grievous hurt), 337 (causing hurt by negligent act), 34 (common intention) Indian Penal Code (IPC). During the probe, the police found that Bhide had a rape case registered against him earlier this year and a cheating case in 2016 at the Mulund police station. Bhide contested Assembly elections in 2009 from Mulund and mentioned that he had been fined 21 times for putting up hoarding without permission under the Mumbai Municipal Corporation (MMC) Act till 2009.

Suspended Congress MLA Sandeep Jakhar speaks for BJP candidate



GNS News Agency, May 18

Sandeep Jakhar, a suspended Congress MLA, spoke in support of BJP candidate Rana Gurmeet Singh Sodhi in Abohar.

nephew of state BJP president Sunil Jakhar, Tuesday organised a poll campaign for BJP Lok Sabha candidate from Ferozepur Rana Gurmeet Singh Sodhi in Abohar.

Farmers from different unions namely BKU Rajewal, BKU (Ugrahan), BKU (Dakaunda), etc., gathered on either side of the road near Abohar rais-

ing slogans as the convoy of Sodhi passed the area. Sandeep, who won the Abohar Assembly seat on a Congress ticket, was suspended by the party in August 2022, weeks after his uncle joined the BJP. Sandeep stays with a joint family in Panjkosi village. He had removed the Congress's flag from his house after his uncle dis-

played the BJP flag atop. Following this, Sandeep was suspended. Sandeep, who on Tuesday spoke at length in the first poll rally of Sodhi in Abohar, told The Indian Express, "I have been suspended by the Congress, so I went to the BJP candidate's poll rally to extend my support because I need development in my constituency. The AAP government is not doing any work, so I feel the BJP-led Union government can help develop the area if voted to power again. Hence, I raised issues concerning the area before him (BJP candidate). "I had asked for more funds for the development of border villages, and relaxed farming norms for those having land across the barbed wire. ROBs in Abohar, funds for infrastructure development. Agro-based industry and many more. So, I feel if the BJP candidate is voted to power, he can help solve these issues."

Kashmiri journalist Asif Sultan, who remained behind bars despite court relief, gets bail



GNS News Agency, May 18

Jammu and Kashmir Asif Sultan bail A journalist with a Srinagar-based English magazine, Kashmir Narrator, Sultan was working as an assistant editor when he was arrested by the police in September 2018 under UAPA after his story on slain militant commander Burhan Wani was published in the magazine. Two months after he was detained in a five year old case, Kashmiri journalist Asif Sultan has been granted bail by a court in Srinagar. Sultan has been behind bars since 2018 – first in a Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act case, and then in a case filed under the Public Safety Act.

The court, however, set strict bail conditions, barring him from using encrypted messaging apps or proxy networks, and to buy a new mobile phone or a SIM card only after permission from the court. "There can be no dispute at all that so far as the investigation into allegations of commission of offence under the UAPA, 1967 is concerned, that there is compelling state interest in tackling such serious crimes. However, mere use of this statutory provision would not ipso-facto warrant rejection of applications of bail, ignoring the other binding requirements," Additional Sessions Judge Sandeep Gandotra said in

his bail order.

"In the humble opinion of this court, the occurrence took place more than five years ago and sufficient time of approximately two and a half months (72 days) has been given to the investigating agency for the custodial interrogation of the accused applicant... Further detention of the accused person/applicant in custody shall not serve any purpose," it said. A journalist with a Srinagar-based English magazine, Kashmir Narrator, Sultan was working as an assistant editor when he was arrested by the police in September 2018 under UAPA after his story on slain militant commander Burhan Wani was published in the magazine. His colleagues and family claimed he was arrested for his journalistic work. The police, in their chargesheet, however accused Sultan of "hatching a criminal conspiracy" and "harbouring militants". The police chargesheet was filed in a case of a gunfight in which a policeman was killed by militants in Srinagar's Batamaloo neighbourhood. The militants had managed to escape after the gunfight.

In April 2022, the J&K High Court granted bail to Sultan in the UAPA case on the grounds that "investigative agencies failed to establish his links with any militant group". However, the police booked Sultan again under the PSA, which allows the government to detain any person without trial for a period of up to two years. On December 7 last year, the J&K High Court quashed Sultan's detention under PSA, calling it "illegal and unsustainable". When he was ultimately released from Uttar Pradesh's Ambedkar Nagar district jail on February 28 this year, he was re-arrested the next day. This time, he was picked up in connection with a 2019 case over an agitation by inmates inside the Srinagar Central Jail. The inmates had protested against shifting of some prisoners outside the state, and allegedly set some furniture on fire.

SC rejects plea for termination of over 27-week pregnancy, says foetus has fundamental right to live

GNS News Agency, May 18

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain the plea of a 20-year-old unmarried woman seeking termination of her over 27-week pregnancy, saying the foetus in the womb also has a fundamental right to live. A bench headed by Justice B R Gavai passed the order while hearing the woman's plea challenging the Delhi High Court's May 3 order refusing to allow termination of her pregnancy. "We can't pass any order contrary to the statute," the bench, also comprising justices S V N Bhatti and Sandeep Mehta, told her counsel. "The child in womb also has a fundamental right to live. What do you say about that?" the bench asked. The woman's counsel said the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act talks about the mother only. "It is made for mother," he said. The bench said the duration of pregnancy was over seven months now. "What about the right of the child to survive? How do you address that?" the bench asked. The counsel said the foetus is in the womb and till the child is delivered, it is the right of the mother. "The petitioner at this stage is under severe traumatic condition. She can't come outside also. She is taking classes for NEET exam. She is under highly traumatic condition. She can't face the society at this stage," he said. The lawyer argued that her mental and physical well-being should be considered.

"Sorry," the bench said. In its May 3 order, the high court had noted that on April 25, the court had directed the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to constitute a medical board to ascertain the condition of the



foetus and the petitioner. "A perusal of the report (of medical board) shows that there is no congenital abnormality in the foetus nor is there any danger to the mother to carry on with the pregnancy which will mandate termination of the foetus," the high court had said. "Since the foetus is viable and normal, and there is no danger to the petitioner to carry on with the pregnancy, foeticide would neither be ethical nor legally permissible," it had said. Before the high court, the petitioner had said that on April 16, she felt discomfort in the abdomen and got an ultrasound scan done and it showed she was 27 weeks pregnant, which was beyond the legally permissible limit of 24 weeks. Under the MTP Act, termination of pregnancy of a duration exceeding 24 weeks can be allowed in case of substantial foetal abnormality as diagnosed by a medical board or if an opinion is formed in good faith for the purpose of saving the life of the pregnant woman.

Judges are neither princes nor sovereigns, their decisions must be transparent: CJI Chandrachud at J20 Summit in Brazil



GNS News Agency, May 18

Artificial intelligence used for judicial decision-making must also be transparent and give reasons for its outcomes, Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud said. "As judges, we are neither princes nor sovereigns who are above the explainability requirement ourselves. We are now having conversations about the explainability of the artificial intelligence decision-making mechanism, which means that AI cannot decide in a black box and there must be an explanation of why it decided the way it did," the CJI said. "Judges are after all perhaps the only public functionaries who are perched on a raised platform, who punish for contempt, and make important decisions about the lives of others in discrete private chambers, without the fear of electoral losses," he added. The CJI was speaking at the J20 Summit (of heads of Supreme Courts and constitutional courts of G20 members) in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro. The CJI said that courts are essentially "service providers and enablers of rights-affirming societies".

"The decision itself and the road leading up to it must be transparent, understandable to everyone with or without a legal education and must be broad enough for everyone to walk alongside," he said. The CJI said that digitisation and technology can help better justice delivery mechanisms in the process before and after a court decision is delivered. "One is streamlining of the pre-decision processes and the other is the post-decision measures that improve access to and engagement with the decision itself," the CJI said. CJI Chandrachud also spoke about the worrying aspect of disinformation about court processes. "In India, it is quite common for judges to en-

gage with a bar and play the devil's advocate, in order to extract their best response. However, this is sometimes mistaken as the opinion of the bench and misleading clips of the proceedings are circulated on the internet. Fortunately, we have a robust network of legal journalists who live-report the proceedings and help dispel disinformation," he said. With all high courts across the country and the Supreme Court adapting to virtual courts, video clips of observations by judges or courtroom exchanges often go viral on social media, with many of them edited or cut in misleading ways. While underlining that correct and accessible information is an antidote to disinformation, the CJI lauded the Brazil Supreme Court's Program to Fight Disinformation.

CBI arrests Dheeraj Wadhawan in Rs 34,000 cr bank fraud case

GNS News Agency, May 18

The CBI has arrested former DHFL director Dheeraj Wadhawan in connection with a Rs 34,000-crore bank fraud case, officials said on Tuesday. Wadhawan was taken into custody from Mumbai on Monday evening, they said and added that he was produced before a special court in Delhi on Tuesday that sent him to judicial custody. He was already charge-sheeted by the CBI in connection with the case in 2022, they said. Wadhawan



was earlier arrested by the agency in connection with the Yes Bank corruption case and was on bail, they said. The CBI had registered the DHFL case related to the alleged defrauding of a consortium of 17 banks to the tune of Rs 34,000 crore, making it the biggest banking loan fraud in the country, they said.

'Will benefit entire region': Jaishankar on US sanctions warning over India-Iran Chabahar port deal



GNS News Agency, May 18

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Wednesday, while reacting to the warning issued by the United States a day after India and Iran signed a 10-year contract to operate the strategic Iranian port of Chabahar, asserted that the agreement will benefit the entire region.

Speaking at an event organised by the Calcutta Citizens' Initiative in Kolkata, Jaishankar said, "We have a long association with the Chabahar port but we could

never sign a long-term agreement. The reason being there were various problems on the Iranian end, it's a JV (joint venture), partners changed, conditions changed. Finally, we were able to sort this out and get the long-term agreement done. A long-term agreement is necessary, because without it, you cannot really improve the port operations, which we believe will benefit the entire region." "I did see some remarks were made, but I think it's a question of communicating, convincing and getting people to understand that this is actually for everybody's benefit. I don't think people should take narrow view of it, and they have not done so in the past. If you look at US's own attitude to Chabahar, the US has been appreciative... We will work at it," Jaishankar told the reporters.

Chabahar is a deep water port located in the Sistan-Baluchistan province of Iran. It is the closest Iranian port to India, and is located in the open sea, providing easy and secure access for large cargo ships. During the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Iran in May 2016, a Trilateral Agreement to establish the International Transport and Transit Corridor (Chabahar Agreement) was signed by India, Iran and Afghanistan.

Hepatitis A outbreak in Kerala: 12 deaths so far, 4 districts on alert

GNS News Agency, May 18

"Directions have been issued to strengthen grassroots-level action plans in these districts," Kerala health minister Veena George said. (Photo: Veena George/ Facebook) "Directions have been issued to strengthen grassroots-level action plans in these districts," Kerala health minister Veena George said. (Photo: Veena George/ Facebook) Kerala is seeing its worst outbreak of the Hepatitis A virus in recent years, with the state reporting 1,977 confirmed cases and 12 deaths in the first four-and-a-half months of this year, government data showed. Apart from the confirmed cases, another 5,536 suspected cases have been reported in the state this year, and 15 more deaths are suspected to have been caused by the virus. The Hepatitis A virus (HAV) affects the liver, and is transmitted through contaminated food and water, or through direct contact with an infectious person.

State Health Minister Veena George has put out an alert for the four districts – Kozhikode, Malappuram, Thrissur and Ernakulam – from where the most number of cases were reported. "Directions have been issued to strengthen grassroots-level action plans in these districts. Water sources in all affected areas will be chlorinated, and restaurants have been told to supply only boiled water. Eateries will be inspected to ascertain whether all employees have mandatory health cards," she said. According to state health department data, the number of cases reported until May 13 this year is higher than the number reported in the whole of 2023 (1,073 cases), 2022 (231), 2021 (114), 2020 (464), 2019 (1,620), 2018 (1,369), and 2017 (98).

Public health expert Dr N M Arun said the quality of water in the state has come down significantly in recent years. "HAV mainly spreads through the faeces of infected persons. In many places, leaky water pipelines



get exposed to waste pipelines. This becomes glaring during the summer, when water supply becomes erratic," he said. According to Arun, a large number of those infected with the virus in Kerala are people who may have got some form of immunity from asymptomatic infections in their childhood. "A large number of people in Kerala, where dependence on catering services for food is widespread, are exposed to contaminated food. Besides, we have a vulnerable population due to pervasive lifestyle diseases and alcoholism," he said. One of the most-affected areas is Vengoor panchayat in Ernakulam, where around 200 people have been infected with HAV since April 17. The panchayat has seen one death and 41 people are currently in hospital, where the condition of four of them is said to be critical. Panchayat president Shilpa Sudheesh said the health department has found that the outbreak there was caused by contaminated water supplied by the state water authority. "There was no proper chlorination of the water," she said. On Tuesday, the panchayat formed a relief committee to mobilise funds to meet the medical bills of those on life support. "Many families have pledged or sold their properties to pay hospital bills. We are asking people to contribute to the relief fund," Sudheesh said.

US warns of sanctions after India, Iran seal Chabahar deal

GNS News Agency, May 18

A day after India and Iran signed a 10-year contract to operate the strategic Iranian port of Chabahar, US State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel has said that any entity considering business deals with Iran need to be aware of the potential risk of sanctions. When asked if the Chabahar port had an exemption, the spokesperson replied in the negative. While there was no official word from the Ministry of External Affairs, sources downplayed the comments by saying that the spokesperson was not fully aware of the facts. Chabahar port had got a waiver from the US sanctions under the US administration led by President Donald Trump. The US and Indian officials will have to discuss on the issue of waiver, what is expected to be extended to the pact as well.

But Patel initially gave a formulaic answer, when he told reporters at his daily news conference on Monday while responding to questions, "We're aware of these reports that Iran and India have signed a deal concerning the Chabahar port. I will let the government of India speak to its own foreign policy goals vis-a-vis the Chabahar port as well as its bilateral relationship with Iran. I will just say, as it relates to the United States, US sanctions on Iran remain in place and we'll continue to enforce them." "You've heard us say this in several instances, that any entity, anyone considering business deals with Iran, they need to be aware of the potential risk that they are opening themselves up to and the potential risk of sanctions," Patel said. But, when pressed whether the port deal has an exemption specifically, he said, "No". Chabahar is a deep water port located in the Sistan-Baluchistan province of Iran. It is the closest Iranian port to India, and is located in the open sea, providing easy and secure access for large cargo ships. During the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Iran in May 2016, a Trilateral Agreement to establish the International Transport and Transit Corridor (Chabahar Agreement) was signed by India, Iran and Afghanistan. India is participating in the development of the first phase of the Shahid Beheshti Terminal, Chabahar Port in cooperation with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. India has so far supplied six Mobile Harbour Cranes (two 140 tonnes and four 100 tonnes capacity) and other equipment worth USD 25 Million. The Indian company, India Ports Global Limited (IPGL), through its wholly owned subsidiary, India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone (IPGCFZ), took over the operations of the Chabahar Port from December 24, 2018. Since then, it has handled traffic of more than 90,000 TEUs of Container traffic and more than 8.4 MMT of Bulk and General Cargo. The port has also facilitated the supply of humanitarian assistance, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Till date, a total of 2.5 million tonnes of wheat and 2,000 tonnes of pulses have been transhipped from India to Afghanistan through Chabahar Port.



In 2021, India supplied 40,000 litres of environment friendly pesticide (Malathion) to Iran to fight locust menace through the port.

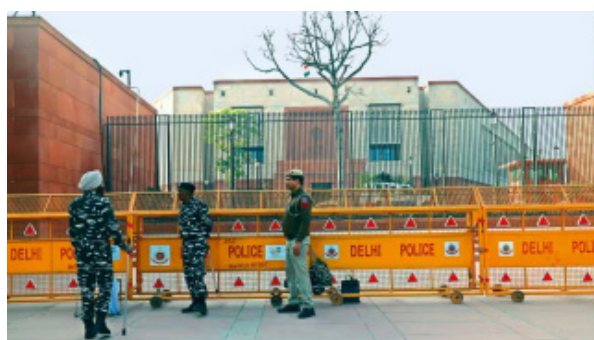
INDIA allies CPIM, Congress hold protests in Agartala to demand jobs, safety of women

GNS News Agency, May 18

The protest march by the INDIA allies was a part of the weeklong (May 13 to May 18) statewide agitation started on Monday. The protest march by the INDIA allies was a part of the weeklong (May 13 to May 18) statewide agitation started Amid the Parliamentary elections, the INDIA alliance partners — CPI(M) and Congress — on Tuesday took out a protest march in Tripura's capital city of Agartala to demand jobs, civic amenities, safety for women and others.

The protest march by the INDIA allies was a part of the weeklong (May 13 to May 18) statewide agitation started on Monday. The march was led by party secretary Jitendra Chaudhury. The weeklong agitation has been called to demand pro-people steps, including provision of work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and the Tripura Urban Employment Programme, clearing pending wages of the workers among others. "There is no existence of the state government in Tripura. Footsteps of famine are being heard in the rural and hill areas. There is no job in the villages for the past six months but the government is silent. The fuel crisis in the state surpassed the previous records. Protesting against all these issues, we have started an agitation from Monday (May 13) which will continue till May 18," said Chaudhury. He further added that like petrol pumps, long queues of vehicles are also seen near the CNG stations and raised doubt on the situation as CNG comes from Tripura and not from any other state.

CISF lists out phased takeover of Parliament security



GNS News Agency, May 18

cisf, cisf security Parliament, Parliament security duty, Parliament security CISF, indian parliament, delhi police, parliament security, cisf parliament security, indian express Security personnel outside the Parliament House building during the last Winter Session.

The security of Parliament complex, including the vehicular access and pass issuing section, will be taken over by the CISF personnel, a process that started on Tuesday and will be completed over the week, the Parliament Security office has said. This has come days after the Home Ministry appointed a panel to assess whether personnel of the CISF (Central Industrial Security Force) should fully take over — right from managing security arrangements to issuing passes to regulating movement of MPs, VIPs, officials and the media. An order issued by the office of the Joint Secretary (Security), Parliament House, on Monday quoted a letter from the DIG-CISF, Parliament House Complex, wherein the latter had listed out the security takeover in a phased manner.

As per the order, the pass checking at flap gates of all the buildings in Parliament House Complex has been handed over to the CISF at 6am on Tuesday. The order suggested that anti-sabotage check is to be handed over at 6am on May 15, Dogs of dog squad (to be handed over at 6am on May 15), CCTV control rooms (6am on May 15), vehicular access control at Talkatora gate and Parliament Library gates (6am on May 20), and Communication Control Room, and pass section for both the Houses, deployment and transport branch, and recep-

tion counters (LS and RS) at 6am on May 20. Sources said it is not clear who will be in charge of lobbies which include the chambers of both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha as well as the main reception. Last week, The Indian Express reported that the Home Ministry on May 3 constituted a seven-member panel headed by CISF DIG Ajay Kumar to furnish a report on security requirements "at the earliest". The panel had one representative each from Intelligence Bureau, Delhi Police and Parliament Security, apart from Amandeep Singh Dhaliwal (commandant CISF), Brij Raj, Deputy Commandant, CISF, and Narendra Singh (21C, SSF, MHA). With this move, the CISF replaces the Parliament Security Service that came into existence with the formation of the Watch and Ward Committee on September 3, 1929, an initiative taken by Vidhalbhai Patel, then president of the Central Legislative Assembly. The committee has been working independently under the Lok Sabha Speaker. While a joint secretary (security) looks after the entire Parliament House complex, the director (security) of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat has operational control over the Upper House, and the director of the Lok Sabha Secretariat over the lower house. So far, the Parliament Security Service has been "solely responsible for management of access control and regulation of people, material and vehicles within the historical and prestigious Parliament House complex". Security at the complex has so far been taken care of jointly by the CISF and the Parliament Security Service, which functions under the Watch and Ward Committee, an organisation trained to provide security to Parliament House and regulate movements of MPs and Last month, the CISF was brought in to replace 150 personnel of the Delhi Police, who had deployed alongside the Parliament Security Service. The change was prompted by a major security breach on December 13 last year, during which a few people managed to enter the Parliament Hall and open smoke canisters. Pointing out that Parliament security is a part of the Lok Sabha secretariat, former Lok Sabha Secretary General P D T Achary has told The Indian Express that any change should be under the direction of the Speaker, not MHA. "Parliament security is a part of the Lok Sabha Secretariat and its job is to protect the interest of MPs and facilitate things for them. This cannot be performed by any outside security agency," Achary has said.

Disasters triggered over half million internal displacements in India in 2023: Report

GNS News Agency, May 18

India experienced over half a million internal displacements due to floods, storms, earthquakes, and other disasters in 2023, a sharp dip from around 2.5 million displacements in 2022, according to a global report released. Deadly floods left behind a trail of destruction in the Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand last year. The glacial lake outburst flood in Sikkim in October 2023 led to the collapse of a hydroelectric dam, killed more than 100 people, and affected more than 88,000. In Delhi, identified as a "flood displacement hotspot", the Yamuna River overflowed after heavy rains on July 9, 2023, prompting authorities to evacuate residents from their homes. The report by the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) said around 27,000 displacements were recorded in the national capital. On July 9, Delhi recorded 153 mm of rainfall in just 24 hours, the highest single-day rainfall since July 25, 1982. Overall, South Asia reported around 3.7 million internal displacements in 2023, with disasters causing 3.6 million, the lowest figure since 2018.

Researchers attributed the decline in displacements due to disasters partly to the El Nino event, which brought below-average rainfall during the monsoon and a weaker cyclone season. However, floods and storms continued to displace people, often in the same areas. At 3,52,000, India's flood displacement figure was the lowest since 2008, with the largest event triggering about 91,000 displacements in Assam in June, affecting 20 districts. Cyclone Biparjoy, which formed in the Arabian Sea in early June, led to widespread flooding across Gujarat and Rajasthan, causing 105,000 displacements as it moved inland. Cyclone Mocha, the largest disaster displacement event of 2023 in South Asia, triggered 1.3 million displacements in Bangladesh, mainly in Cox's Bazar district. Forecasting and early warnings allowed authorities to initiate emergency procedures before Mocha's landfall, aiding pre-emptive evacuations from densely populated areas.

The IDMC said South Asia's cyclone season was



less intense in 2023 than in previous years because of El Nino, but storms still triggered 1.8 million movements, about half of the region's disaster displacements. Government-led pre-emptive evacuations accounted for at least three-quarters of this figure. According to the report, disasters triggered 26.4 million displacements in 2023, the third highest annual total in the last 10 years. No country is immune to disaster displacement, said Alexandra Bilak, the director of IDMC. "But we can see a difference in how displacement affects people in countries that prepare and plan for its impacts and those that don't. Those that look at the data and make prevention, response and long-term development plans that consider displacement fare far better," she said. Extreme weather events such as floods and heatwaves are becoming more frequent and are projected to increase manifold in India in the future due to climate change, according to a 2022 report by researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar. The increase in the concentration of heat-trapping greenhouse gases has heightened instability in the atmosphere, leading to increased convective activity, thunderstorms, lightning, and heavy rain events. According to meteorologists, cyclonic storms are intensifying rapidly and retaining their intensity for longer durations due to global warming.

Donald Trump's former personal attorney testifies against him in hush money trial

GNS News Agency, May 18

The former United States President and the Republican presidential nominee this year has pleaded not guilty and denies all kinds of charges levelled against him. It wasn't until after a decade in the fold, after his family pleaded with him, after the FBI raided his office, apartment and hotel room, Micheal Cohen testified on Tuesday, that he finally decided to turn on Donald Trump. The complicated break led to a 2018 guilty plea to federal charges involving a payment to the porn actor Stormy Daniels to bury her story of an alleged sexual encounter with Trump and other, unrelated crimes. And it's that insider knowledge of shady deals that pushed Manhattan prosecutors to make Cohen the star witness in their case against Trump about that same payment, which they say was an illegal effort to influence the 2016 presidential election. "To keep the loyalty and to do the things that he had asked me to do, I violated my moral compass, and I suffered the penalty, as has my family," Cohen testified Tuesday. But defence attorneys sought to portray Cohen as motivated by vengeance on his former boss, confronting him on the witness stand with his own profane social media about Trump and wanting to see the former president in handcuffs. The most stunning moment came outside the courtroom on Tuesday, when House Speaker Mike Johnson showed up with Trump, who used his powerful bully pulpit to turn his political party against the rule of law by declaring the trial illegitimate. He and other GOP lawmakers are serving as surrogates while Trump himself remains barred by a gag order in the case following an appeals court ruling on Tuesday. "I do have a lot of

surrogates, and they're speaking very beautifully," Trump said before court as the group gathered in the background. "And they come ... from all over Washington. And they're highly respected, and they think this is the greatest scam they've ever seen." The Republican presidential nominee has pleaded not guilty and denies that any of the encounters took place. As prosecutors laid out their case, Cohen testified about purposefully mislabelled checks, false receipts and blind loyalty that placed Trump at the centre of the scheme. The testimony, somewhat dry for a man who was defined for years by his braggadocio as Trump's problem-zapper, underscored the prosecution's foundational argument — that the case isn't about the spectacle of what Trump was paying for, but rather his effort to illegally cover up those payments. Cohen has testified in detail about how the former president was linked to all aspects of the hush money scheme, and prosecutors believe Cohen's testimony is critical to their case. But their reliance on a witness with such a chequered past — he was disbarred, went to prison and separately pleaded guilty to lying about a Moscow real estate project on Trump's behalf — could backfire, especially as Trump's attorneys continue to cross-examine him. Blanche spent no time on Tuesday asking about the allegations at the centre of the trial, instead working to raise doubts about Cohen's credibility and his motivation for helping prosecutors try to put Trump behind bars. Amid rapid-fire objections from prosecutors, Blanche probed Cohen's hyperfocus on Trump, suggesting he's attempted to parlay his insider knowledge into a reduced prison sentence and court supervision for his own crimes,

Why Hindu groups in US are furious at a Democratic think tank



GNS News Agency, May 18

Indian American Impact, a Democratic think tank, has become the subject of anger of Hindu groups over its choice of panellists for the annual gala 'Desis Decide'. The American Hindu groups say the guests criticised Indian-American candidates and officials, and argue their presence at the event goes against its goal. The only Hindu organisation invited to the think tank's gala was a non-profit that itself targeted American Hindus, it has been alleged.

Several Hindu groups in the US have expressed discontent over a Democratic think tank's annual gala, citing concerns over the inclusion of individuals and organisations allegedly involved in attacking Indian-American candidates and officials. Objections were raised against two panellists from the Indian-American Muslim Council and Hindus for Human Rights. The two-day event, named 'Desis Decide', organised by the think tank -- Indian American Impact, is set to kick off on Wednesday. Deepak Raj, a prominent Indian-American, is among the co-founders and funders of Indian American Impact think tank. Indian American Impact has gained significant influence in Democratic circles. In statements issued separately, various Hindu groups voiced their frustration over the invitation extended to individuals and organisations with what they term as a "questionable past". They accused the event of bias and for overlooking the rise of Hinduphobia in the United States.

Hindu groups argue that such entities have publicly targeted Indian-American candidates and elected officials, which contradicts the mission of Indian American Impact to strengthen the political presence of the Indian-American community. "Where Impact's core mission is building Indian-American political presence at all levels, it's frustrating and confusing that Impact would platform

organisations which have publicly attacked Indian American candidates," said Rajiv Pandit, a board member of the Hindu American Political Action Committee, reported PTI. The controversy revolves around a panel titled 'Building Bridges, Amplifying Impact: Interfaith Advocacy', with objections raised against two panellists in particular -- Safa Ahmed from the Indian-American Muslim Council and Ria Chakrabarty from Hindus for Human Rights, reported news agency PTI. Pandit highlighted a range of attacks directed towards Indian-American political figures, including accusations of double standards and xenophobic remarks about dual loyalty. Notable targets mentioned include Raja Krishnamoorthi, Sri Kulkarni, Shri Thanedar, Niraj Antani, Padma Kuppa, Jenifer Rajkumar, and Bhavini Patel. Jenifer Rajkumar, the first Punjabi-American elected to New York state office, attended the Sikh Day Parade as the Guest of Honour in New York City. After the event, an image shared by Jenifer Rajkumar where Khalistani flags are seen in the background. Hindu Action said that the only 'Hindu' organisation being invited to 'Desis Decide' -- the voter mobilisation summit in Washington DC -- is a non-profit that targets Democrat members of Congress who dare to speak up for American Hindus. "You know that there is a problem of anti-Hindu bigotry in sections of the Democrat think-tank," the Hindu ACTION said. Moreover, Hindu ACTION criticised the lack of representation, noting that the only Hindu organisation invited targets Democratic members of Congress who advocate for American Hindus. Tahir Aslam Gora, president of the Progressive Muslims' Institute of Canada, expressed shock at what he perceives as the gala's brochure maligning India and its government, arguing that India under Prime Minister Modi is inclusive and dedicated to uplifting all communities. Geeta Sikand, a Hindu activist, lamented the absence of authentic Hindu organisations at the summit, accusing the event of bias and overlooking the rise of Hinduphobia in the United States. She emphasised the need for dialogue on anti-Hindu hate crimes, citing FBI reports showing a doubling of such incidents in the past year, yet none of the invited organisations have voiced support for HR 1131 (A Bill Regulating judicial proceedings in certain cases, for the protection of officers and agents of the government, and for the better defence of the treasury against unlawful claims) or condemned attacks on Hindu places of worship. The Hindu American Foundation, CoHNA, and Hindu Action were notably absent from the summit's guest list, prompting further criticism from Sikand regarding the exclusion of voices representing Hindu advocacy.

Laid-off H-1B workers can stay beyond 60 days in US, says USCIS

GNS News Agency, May 18

Amid a slew of lay-offs by tech companies in the US, which has impacted thousands of employees, including Indians, the USCIS clarified that laid-off H-1B visa holders could stay in the US beyond 60 days. This is what H-1B visa holders need to do to stay in the US beyond the grace period.

Employees on H-1B visas who have been laid off have the option of staying in the US even beyond 60 days, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reveals. Tech companies like Google, Meta, Apple, Dell, Twitter, Amazon and Microsoft, among many others, have fired thousands of non-immigrant employees living in the US, including many Indians. There is a general assumption that the laid-off staffers have to leave the US within 60 days. But the USCIS has clarified on this in its latest statement. "When non-immigrant workers are laid off, they may not be aware of their options and, in some cases, may wrongly assume that they have no option but to leave the country within 60 days," stated the USCIS in its latest release. The tech industry continues to grapple with lay-offs, with news of new job cuts surfacing every month. So far, a total of 237 tech companies have laid off 58,499 employees in 2024. According to the press release, when a non-immigrant worker's employment ends, either voluntarily or involuntarily, they typically may take one of the following actions, if eligible, to remain in a period of authorised stay in the United States: If a non-immigrant takes any of these actions during the 60-day grace period, they can stay in the United States for more than 60 days, even if they lose their previous non-immigrant status. But if they don't take any action during this time, they and their dependents might have to leave the US within 60 days, or when their authorised period ends, whichever comes sooner. Additionally, H-1B non-immigrants may begin working for a new employer as soon as the employer properly files a new H-1B petition (Form I-129) requesting to amend or extend H-1B status with the USCIS, without waiting for the petition to be approved.

The timely filing of a non-frivolous application to



change status will "toll," or stop, the accrual of unlawful presence until the application is adjudicated, if the applicant did not work without authorisation, either before the application was filed or while it was pending, and the applicant maintained their status prior to the filing of the request for change of status. During the 60-day grace period, workers can apply to change their non-immigrant status. Options may include: Becoming a dependent of a spouse (eg, H-4, L-2). Some dependents may be eligible for work authorisation. Changing to student (F-1) or visitor (B-1/B-2) status. Note that B-1/B-2 visitors cannot work in the US. Seeking a new employer-sponsored status (eg, TN, E-3, H-1B1). Timely filing of a petition by a prospective employer can pause unlawful presence accrual, but it doesn't grant work authorisation until approved. Premium processing may be available for some petitions. More options for STEM professionals are detailed on our website. Workers can decide to leave the US despite the option to extend their authorised stay. If H-1B or O workers leave after losing their job, their employer (or petitioner for O workers) must pay for their transportation back to their home country. For O workers, both the employer and petitioner are responsible. Once abroad, H-1B holders can look for US jobs and return for the remaining H-1B period. They can also apply for other eligible classifications from abroad and return to the US after approval.

Indian is first international UN employee killed in Gaza conflict; Guterres condemns attack

GNS News Agency, May 18

United Nations: An Indian working for the United Nations in Gaza has become the first non-Palestinian staffer to be killed during the current Gaza conflict when his vehicle was attacked on its way to a hospital in Rafah. The victim was identified as Col. Waibhav Anil Kale, who had started working a month ago as a security coordinator for the UN in Gaza, according to The Washington Post, which quoted unnamed informed sources.

Kale, who worked for the UN Department of Safety and Security (DSS) joins the roster of more than 200 Indians who have died in the service of the UN. The majority of them — 179 — are peacekeepers but many other Indian civilians, who like employees of the DSS are not peacekeepers, have died working for the UN in various capacities in trouble spots. Earlier, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's Spokesperson Farhan Haq, who announced the death, did not identify him pending notification to his family and government. Haq said that Guterres condemned the attack and called for a full investigation. Another UN employee was injured in the Monday attack, he said. The blame for the attack has not been fixed because the situation remains murky in Rafah. Haq did not say who carried out the attack. Al Jazeera broadcast clips showing windows with bullet holes on the attacked vehicle flying UN flags and bearing large UN markings. From the na-

ture of the damage, it did not appear to have been an air or heavy artillery attack. He said that Monday's victim was the first international employee of the UN killed in Gaza since October 7, although 188 Palestinian employees of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the UN arm for humanitarian services for Palestinians, have been killed. "We will be working with the authorities on the ground to get restitution for all of those who have been killed," Haq declared. The Post said that according to its sources, Kale was a 46-year-old father of two teenage children. Other media reports said that he had earlier worked for the Indian Army. Israel Defense Forces said that according to an initial inquiry, Monday's attack happened in an active combat zone and that it was not made aware of the vehicle's movement. Haq said that the DSS staffers were in the vehicle with clear UN markings that was in a convoy engaged in "their regular work [for which] they go to different locations to assess security conditions. And this was the European Hospital in Rafah." Asked what the UN was doing to seek justice for the UN employees killed in the conflict, Haq said, "In all cases, we are going to set up measures for accountability." "A lot of that, as you know, requires ultimately for an end to the conflict so that we can work these out," he said. Guterres reiterated his call for a humanitarian ceasefire and the release of the hostages taken by Hamas.

India's goods exports up 1% in April, trade gap widens \$19.1 billion



Amid weak global demand in the western countries, India's goods trade gap widened to a four-month high of \$19.1 billion in April as imports surged over 10 per cent to \$54.09 billion while export inched up 1 per cent to

\$34.99 billion, data released by the commerce and industry ministry on Wednesday (May 15) showed.

Goods export in April this year at \$34.99 billion was 1.09 per cent higher compared to the \$34.62 billion in April 2023. However, imports surged at a much faster pace, widening the trade gap to \$19.1 billion in April this year compared to \$14.34 billion in April last year. Imports in April surged 10.25 per cent to \$54.09 billion compared to \$49.06 billion during the year ago period. On a sequential basis, imports in April declined by \$3.19 billion while exports shrunk by \$6.71 billion, the official data showed. While exports in March stood at \$41.7 billion, import came in at \$57.28 billion. As far as services exports are concerned, India registered a sharp 14 per cent jump in April to \$29.57 billion compared to \$25.78 billion in April 2023. Imports also jumped 21.56 per cent to \$16.97 billion compared to \$13.96 billion.

'Lubricants market to grow well ... EVs both an opportunity and challenge': CEO of Gulf Oil India

Petroleum-based lubricants used in internal combustion engines (ICE) face a threat from the rising adoption of electric vehicles (EVs), which run on batteries instead of engines. Gulf Oil Lubricants India Ltd, part of Hinduja Group-owned Gulf Oil International, is a leading player in the domestic lubricants market and is valued at around Rs 4,500 crore in the stock exchanges. In a conversation with Aggam Walla, Ravi Chawla, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Gulf Oil India, talked about navigating the EV threat, Gulf's acquisitions in the EV space, and the role of lubricants in improving fuel economy. Edited excerpts:

Your FY23 annual report mentioned how the global acceptance of EVs is a risk that could impact your lubricant business. How would you assess this risk going forward?

The lubricant market, at least in India and in Asia, is going to grow well. When we say good growth—automobiles grow by 7-8 per cent, normally lubricants will grow half of that as a percentage of volume. A recent study by Klein said that the lubricant market will continue to grow by 3 per cent in volume for the next 10 years, even with the current rate of EV penetration. We believe that growth will be slightly higher, so for the next 10-12 years there is no problem. In fact, 75 per cent of lubricants consumed today—in industry, in construction, and in automobiles—will not be affected by EVs. For us, EV penetration is both an opportunity and a challenge. First opportunity is EVs requiring EV fluids—transmission fluid, brake fluid, greases, coolant—so we're already there with 7 or 8 OEMs. We are confident we will be in a leadership position in EV fluids, which is not a very large volume— not even 1 per cent— but still a play is there.

How are EV fluids different from regular fluids?

EV fluids are quite similar to the lubricants we do, but we have to tweak the additives we use—the chemicals and the construction—to look at thermal and electrical properties. For example, transmission fluid in EVs will have additional formulation that will improve the thermal properties because of heat transfer from batteries. The brake fluids and greases are similar to one another. Then, there are hybrid vehicles, which also use the normal engines so they have both. There are different types of EV fluids for hybrid and fully-electric cars. It's an extension of our current products— most of the technology is available. It's all about testing the fluids and then launching them. Still, it's a very small volume— today it'll be around 1,800 kilolitres. Within four years, we are expecting it to be between 12,000 to 15,000 kilolitres.

Can you give me an overview of Gulf's EV play?

Given our brand distribution and our customers, like OEMs and those in the infrastructure sector, we believe we should be in the EV value chain. Today, India is about 30-40 per cent of Gulf Oil worldwide, so it is a focus market for us. In the last three years, we have made three investments. One, which we made at a global level, is UK-based Indra Renewable Technologies that deals with EV chargers and has an 8 per cent market share in the UK. We want to bring this charger to India and localise it.



In addition to that, we have invested 26 per cent in Noida-based ElectreeFi, which makes charging software. They've already tied up with various vehicle OEMs and some utilities. The third investment we made was in October—a 51 per cent stake in Ahmedabad-based Tirez Chargers, a charger manufacturing company. They have about 8-10 per cent market share in fast chargers and they do slow chargers too. Today, Tirez is looking at how it can continue keeping its market share in the DC charging market, which is going to become a billion dollar opportunity in the next five to six years.

Will Gulf's EV strategy continue to focus on acquisitions? Also, what could your next acquisition look like?

We have invested about Rs 150 crore from India in these three companies. Indra is a global majority share, but we have been a part of that with 7.5 per cent. ElectreeFi, which is a software company, was around Rs 16 crore and Tirez was a major move, which was over Rs 100 crore. We want to go capital-light and leverage the Gulf brand and distribution. We also want to be strategic partners. There is a core competency in these companies, like Tyrex already has many installations and customers. What we can help in the journey as a strategic partner is to not only support them in terms of investments to expand, but also to create a technology roadmap, service network, and synergize with our customer base. We are currently looking at the two-wheeler space in India, something like battery swapping can be looked at. But, at the moment, we obviously feel that the policy has to come out.

Recently, some study pointed out that oil intensity, that is the volume of oil consumed per unit of GDP, has come down in recent years and is on track to fall further. Any comments?

Lubricant is one part of oil. When we say oil consumption is coming down, it obviously means petrol, diesel, and other things. So definitely, oil consumption can come down as a large pie and people are conscious of that. In our case, we try to do better lubricants and improve quality as lubricants also help in fuel economy. With the right quality lubricant, you can save up to 2-3 per cent of fuel consumption. We also make a product called AdBlue, which is not an oil— but a urea-based product. AdBlue is compulsory for all BS6 vehicles. AdBlue reduces NOx emissions and helps to deal with tailpipe pollution.

AI-Vistara merger awaiting foreign direct investment, other approvals: Singapore Airlines

Singapore Airlines Group on Wednesday said the proposed Air India and Vistara merger, which is awaiting foreign direct investment and other approvals, will strengthen its multi-hub strategy as well as allow it to continue directly participating in the fast-growing Indian aviation market. The group posted a 24 per cent rise in net profit at 2,675 million Singapore dollars for FY 2023-24, helped by robust air travel demand.

In a release, the group said it has reported the highest full-year operating and net profits in its history as robust demand for air travel drives record passenger revenue and load factors. About Air India-Vistara merger, the group said foreign direct investment and other regulatory approvals are pending. Vistara is a joint venture between Singapore Airlines and Tata, which also owns Air India. "Once completed, it will give SIA a 25.1 per cent stake in an enlarged Air India Group with a significant presence in all key Indian airline market segments, including domestic, international, full-service, and low-cost.

"This will strengthen SIA's multi-hub strategy, and allow the group to continue participating directly in this large and fast-growing aviation market," the release said. The merger, announced in November 2022, was approved by the Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore in March. In September 2023, the deal received approval from the Competition Commission of



India (CCI), subject to certain conditions. On the outlook, the Singapore Airlines Group said the demand for air travel remains healthy in the first quarter of FY2024/25, supported by a strong pick up in forward bookings to North Asia and South East Asia. Passenger yields will likely continue to moderate due to increased capacity injection by airlines, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, it noted. However, it also mentioned that the airline industry continues to face challenges including rising geopolitical tensions, an uncertain macroeconomic climate, supply chain constraints, and high inflation in many parts of the world.

financed vehicle (SDV) technology. Kia said it accentuated the dynamism of the new EV6 under the company's design philosophy named "Modern Contrast." The company's Star Map lighting design is applied on the front and rear lamps, along with the addition of newly designed wing-shaped bumpers, reports Yonhap news agency.

The challenges of egg freezing that no one told you about

It was 2019 when television czarina Ekta Kapoor welcomed her first baby, Ravie, through surrogacy, and gave all of us a new phrase to reckon with: egg freezing. Ekta opted to freeze her eggs at the age of 36 and at 42, she was a mother. It doesn't matter if you are married or not; and to top it all, you have the liberty to embrace motherhood at whatever age you want. That's living life according to your terms.

While it does come with a hefty price tag, little do we know of the other problems attached to the process of egg freezing. Egg freezing, also known as oocyte cryopreservation, is a method used to preserve a woman's eggs for potential future use.

This is how Dr Niti Kautish, director and head of Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Fortis Escorts Hospital, Faridabad explained what egg freezing is: "Egg freezing is a medical procedure in which eggs from woman's body are extracted and then frozen and further stored in order to conserve them as a method to preserve the fertility potential of women in their reproductive age." There are often queries related to egg freezing and one of the main questions people often ask is whether it is similar to IVF (In vitro fertilization). Dr Kaustish said that while egg freezing gives you an option to reproduce later in life as you have your eggs stored and preserved, IVF helps you get pregnant right away. Dr Sunita Tandulwadkar, Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, IVF and Endoscopy Centre, Ruby Hall Clinic Pune, said: "IVF is a type of fertility treatment where eggs are retrieved, fertilised outside the body with semen sample and implanted. "Egg freezing preserves unfertilised eggs for future use. Fusion with sperms is not done. This is usually done for girls who are unmarried and still want to conceive a baby. It may also involve career-oriented or medical reasons. Embarking on the journey of egg freezing can be a significant decision for any woman looking to preserve their chances of giving birth in the future. The process, while intricate, can be broken down into steps that make it easier to understand and navigate. Preliminary phase: The first step in the egg freezing cycle typically involves the use of birth control pills for about 2 to 3 weeks. This phase aims to synchronise the growth of follicles in the ovaries, ensuring they mature simultaneously, which is crucial for the subsequent steps. Stimulation phase: Next comes the stimulation phase, which typically lasts between 10 to 12 days. During this time, you'll administer daily hormone injections to yourself. These hormones are similar to the ones your body naturally produces but at higher doses. Their purpose is to encourage your ovaries to produce multiple eggs rather than the single egg that usually develops each month. Throughout this period, you'll have several monitoring appointments—about 6 to 9—to check

on the progress through blood tests and ultrasounds.

Trigger injection: Once the follicles are ready, you'll take what's known as a trigger injection. This shot is the cue for your eggs to go through the final maturation stage, preparing them for retrieval. Egg retrieval: The egg retrieval is a short procedure, often performed under anaesthesia to ensure comfort. A specialist, guided by ultrasound, uses a needle to collect eggs from the ovaries. Recovery is typically quick, with most individuals returning to their routine within 1 to 5 days. Vitrification (Freezing): After the eggs are collected, they undergo vitrification—a rapid freezing technique that protects them from ice crystal damage. This is the actual freezing part of the process, where the eggs are stored in liquid nitrogen until you decide to use them. Thawing and fertilisation: When ready to use the eggs, they are thawed, fertilised with sperm, and resulting embryos are observed for a few days. Embryo transfer: The healthiest embryo is selected and transferred to the uterus in the hope of achieving pregnancy. Not that egg freezing is ineffective; of course, it has brought happiness to many lives. However, you need to take the leap after being well aware of the challenges. While egg freezing empowers you, by giving you a choice to embrace motherhood on your own terms, the emotional toll is what no one talks about. Dr Nandita Palshetkar, Director of Bloom IVF India and President of IVF Society of India, said, "Challenges of egg freezing include the emotional toll and uncertain success rates. Women can cope better by seeking counselling to navigate the emotional aspects."

Financial aspect: Egg freezing can be expensive, including the cost of medications, monitoring, and the actual freezing procedure. Insurance coverage for fertility preservation may vary, and not all plans cover the full cost. Multiple cycles may be required: Success rates with egg freezing vary, and it's not guaranteed that a single cycle will yield enough viable eggs for future use. This might lead individuals to undergo multiple cycles, increasing both the financial and emotional burden. Success rates: While the success rates of egg freezing have improved over the years, there's no guarantee that the frozen eggs will result in a successful pregnancy. The age at which the eggs were frozen and the quality of the eggs are critical factors influencing success. Emotional and psychological impact: The decision to freeze eggs is often influenced by factors such as career goals, lack of a suitable partner, or medical reasons. However, the process itself can be emotionally challenging. It may bring up concerns about fertility, and the uncertainty of future success which is stressful. Health risks and side-effects: The medications used to stimulate egg production can have side-effects, ranging from mild to more severe. These may include mood swings and bloating.

Can intuitive eating help you with your weight-loss journey?

Ditch the diet culture. It's time to trust your instincts and try intuitive eating. The basic idea is that you should eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full. Intuitive eating is where trust and self-awareness come into play (Photo: Pexels/ Gustavo Fring) "That's the last slice of pizza for me. I am going on a diet!"

Honestly, we have all used and abused this sentence ad nauseam. Every time lip-smacking dishes call us, and we go on a binge-eating spree, we feel guilty and give in to the latest diet fad on the block. From intermittent fasting to keto diet, many trending diets hog our attention. Usually, we don't mind trying them in the hope that they will help us lose those extra calories. However, instead of focusing on such diets, you should trust your instincts and try intuitive eating, which promotes a healthy attitude towards food and body image. Intuitive eating is the opposite of traditional dieting. Intuitive eating is an eating style that makes you the master of your body and its hunger signals, promoting that you are the best person to make your food choices. The basic idea behind intuitive eating is that you should eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full. No one knows what's right for your body better than you.

Mumbai-based nutritionist Nupur Patil tells India Today, "Intuitive eating is a balance between body and soul. It is where trust and self-awareness come into play. It helps you get over a rigid diet culture and focus on embracing food choices that nourish and delight you without guilt or judgement." Rooted in science, it reconnects us with our primal instincts, restoring harmony to our relationship with food and the body. Unlike restrictive diets, intuitive eating honours individual needs and preferences, fostering a sustainable journey towards holistic well-being," she adds. Giving more insights, clinical nutritionist Kiran Dalal from Fortis Hospital, Faridabad, says that intuitive eating focusses on selecting foods that satisfy both physical and emotional needs and abandoning the notion of 'good' or 'bad' foods. This looks like a good idea, doesn't it? But we don't just eat because of hunger. Before digging deep into intuitive eating, it's good to know...

Why we eat even when we're not hungry? Sometimes, we eat even when we're not hungry because of reasons like stress, boredom, or seeing tempting food," says Ahmedabad-based psychiatrist Dr Sarthak Dave. He adds, "To stop this, you can pay more attention to why you are eating. If you realise that you are not hungry, you can find other ways to deal with your feelings or distractions instead of eating." The four types of hunger: Dalal mentions that there are four types of hunger: Physical hunger: The body's natural signal for nourishment. Deal with it by eating balanced meals at regular intervals and paying attention to hunger cues. Emotional hunger: Eating in response to emotions rather than physical hunger. Address emotional needs through non-food activities.

Environmental hunger: Eating due to external cues like the sight or smell of food. Practice mindful eating, being aware of environmental triggers, and making conscious choices about what and when to eat. Challenge learnt behaviours by examining eating patterns and making intentional changes to align with true hunger signals. But, coping with food cravings is not easy. Dr Dave says, "Changing how we eat involves both your body and mind. In your mind, it's important to understand why you eat certain foods and when. This means being aware of your feelings, stress, and habits that make you eat unhealthy things." "When you really want to eat something, you should know that feeling won't last forever. You can find other things to do instead of eating, like going for a walk or talking to a friend. It's also helpful to talk about

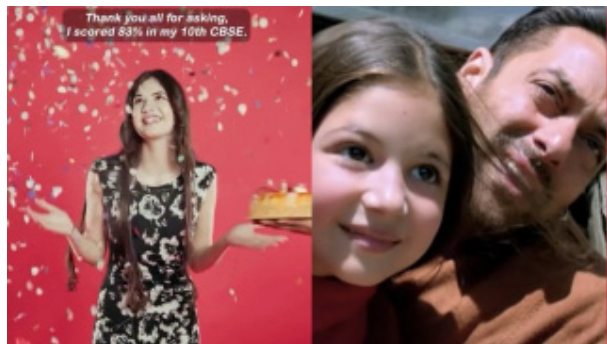


your feelings with a therapist. You should also recognise that a lot of your cravings are social media-driven," he adds. Remember to treat yourself with kindness; everyone slips up now and then. With time and practice, you can get better at managing these eating habits and cravings and find healthier coping methods. Intuitive eating vs dieting Dalal explains that intuitive eating and dieting have different approaches and outcomes, and what works best depends on the individual's needs and preferences. It's important to consider factors like long-term sustainability, psychological well-being, and overall health when choosing between the two. She adds, "Intuitive eating isn't aimed at weight loss but fostering a healthy relationship between food and the body. It may indirectly aid weight management by promoting healthier eating habits and appetite control through tuning into hunger and fullness cues." Intuitive eating doesn't focus on weight loss (Photo: Pexels/ Andres Ayerton) Choosing foods satisfying both physical and emotional needs can lead to a balanced diet. Patil adds, "It's essential to approach the practice of intuitive eating with mindfulness, as transitioning from dieting may initially trigger discomfort or anxiety." "How to eat intuitively?" Intuitive eating starts with a sacred commitment to self-discovery and compassion," shares Patil. Patil asks people to embrace the basic principles: "This path to self-liberation celebrates food as nourishment, pleasure, and sustenance, fostering a profound sense of empowerment and well-being," says Patil. Adding to this, Dalal mentions: Allow yourself to eat all types of food, without guilt or judgement. Challenge thoughts that label foods as 'good' or 'bad' and recognise that all foods can fit into a balanced diet. Choose foods that both nourish you and satisfy your taste buds. Find alternative ways to cope with emotions rather than turning to food for comfort. What's good? Giving a nod to intuitive eating, Dalal shares that it is generally considered a healthy approach to eating. Improved psychological well-being: Intuitive eating can lead to a healthier relationship with food, decreased risk of disordered eating behaviours, reduced anxiety about food, and improved body image.

Better eating habits: Tuning into hunger and fullness cues promotes mindful eating, helping individuals make balanced food choices and avoid overeating or under-eating. Sustainable weight management: While not primarily focused on weight loss, intuitive eating may indirectly support weight management by promoting healthier eating patterns and attitudes towards food.

Increased satisfaction and enjoyment: Choosing foods based on satisfaction rather than strict rules can lead to a more enjoyable eating experience and greater satisfaction with meals. Emotional well-being: Learning to cope with emotions without turning to food can improve emotional resilience and overall well-being. Reduced stress: Letting go of dieting mentality and food rules can reduce stress related to food choices and eating behaviours.

Bajrangi Bhaijaan actor Harshaali Malhotra scores 83 percent in Class 10 board exams, shares video shutting down her trolls



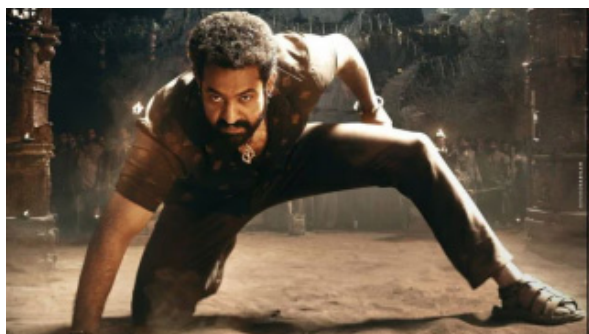
83% in her exams.

Her caption read, "From perfecting my Mudras to acing my academics, I managed to strike the perfect balance between my Kathak classes, Shoots and Studies. And the result? An impressive 83% score! Who says you can't have your feet in both the reel and the real world? A heartfelt thank you to everyone who believed in me and continues to offer their unwavering support." In the video, Harshaali shared screenshots of trolls who questioned her focus on her education. The actress also spoke to HT about the milestone. Harshaali revealed she was expecting only 80 percent marks, but was surprised to exceed her expectations. Talking about handling academics and her passion for dancing, she said, "I used to focus on studies from Monday to Friday. On Saturday and Sunday, I used to do Kathak and shoot reels." Addressing her trolls, Harshaali said, "My result is an answer to all the people questioning my focus on studies." Harshaali rose to fame for playing a Pakistani girl in *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, which remains one of the biggest hits of Salman Khan.

Harshaali Malhotra, who played Munni in Salman Khan's hit *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, impressed fans with her acting skills and now, the actor has shared her results of her Class 10 board exams. Harshaali shared in the caption that this was a befitting reply to those who questioned her dedication towards her studies as she is an active content creator. Harshaali shared that she scored

Jr NTR donates Rs 12.5 lakh to Andhra Pradesh temple ahead of Devara song release

The news of Jr NTR's benevolent contribution was brought to light by his ardent fans on social media platforms. A fan page dedicated to the actor shared the heartwarming update, sparking a wave of appreciation and admiration among his followers. In addition to his recent donation to the temple, Jr NTR has a track record of extending his support to various causes. Earlier, he contributed Rs 25 lakh to the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's Relief Fund to aid flood victims, showcasing his commitment to philanthropy. Meanwhile, fans eagerly anticipate the release of *Devara: Part 1*, and now, the excitement has peaked with the announcement of the film's first single, 'Fear Song'. The track is scheduled for release on May 19. Composer Anirudh Ravichander's musical prowess is expected to set social media abuzz, as fans eagerly await updates from the much-awaited film. *Devara Part 1* marks the return of Jr NTR to the silver screen. The actor has not appeared in any films since *SS Rajamouli's*



RRR in 2022. Directed by Koratala Siva, *Devara: Part 1* marks Jr NTR's first collaboration with Bollywood actor Janhvi Kapoor. The action-packed drama is slated for a nationwide release on October 10, 2024.

Asif Ali and Biju Menon fight for power in this promising buddy cop film



Titled *Thalavan (The Head in Malayalam)*, the film delves into the intricacies of hierarchy within the police force, as depicted through the characters of Inspector Jayashankar (Biju Menon) and Sub Inspector Karthik (Asif Ali). It sets the stage for a tense confrontation between the seasoned veteran and the ambitious newcomer in an unassuming town, which is witnessing violent crimes. Directed by Jis Joy, *Thalavan* promises an engaging narrative about the dynamics of control and ego between its lead characters. Asif Ali's Karthik, with a history of multiple transfers in a short span of time, is completely opposite to Biju Menon's Inspector Jayashankar, who is portrayed as a grounded and experienced officer.

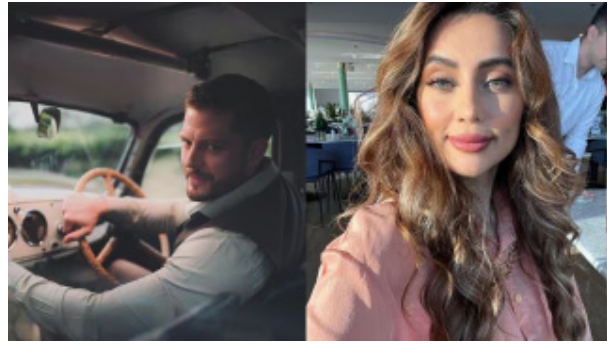
While *Thalavan* marks the first collaboration between director Jis Joy and Biju Menon, Asif Ali reunites with the director following their successful previous ventures. The film also boasts a talented ensemble cast, including Dileesh Pothan, Anushree, Miya, and Kottayam Nazeer, among others. The technical team of the film features music composer Deepak Dev, cinematographer Sharan Velayudhan, and editor Sooraj ES. *Thalavan* is set to be released on May 24, 2024.

"Two swords can't fit into the same sheath" is an adage that has been the core idea of numerous buddy cop films, where the two lead characters, despite their own conflict, come together to solve a tricky case. That's exactly the premise of the upcoming Malayalam film *Thalavan*, which has Asif Ali as a new upright cop in town and Biju Menon as a veteran senior officer. The trailer of the film has been released on YouTube, offering viewers a glimpse into the power struggle between two contrasting police officers portrayed by the two brilliant actors.

Heeramandi actor Jason Shah opens up about his break-up with Anusha Dandekar: 'Was trying to fit me in a box'

Actor Jason Shah has been making headlines for his performance in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's web series *Heeramandi*. Jason played the role of British officer Cartwright in the show. Now, as Jason Shah continues to soak up the appreciation he is receiving for *Heeramandi*, he has also opened up about his break up with VJ-actor Anusha Dandekar. In a chat with *Times Now*, Jason shared the reasons behind their break up.

Jason said that his break up with Anusha has led to a big spiritual change. Further sharing what caused the break up, Jason said that he rushed into the relationship and she didn't really understand him. "The other person didn't really understand me, and I felt they were trying to make me fit in their box. And that is not going to happen, right?" he said. He blamed miscommunication for the breakdown of their relationship. Before *Heeramandi*, Jason has featured on TV shows like *Jhansi Ki Rani* and



Bigg Boss. He reportedly parted ways with Anusha Dandekar in 2021 and the two only dated for a brief period. Back then, when he was asked about their breakup, he had stayed mum about it.

Alia Bhatt's name added to 'blockout' list: What is the celebrity 'blockout' over the war in Gaza?

Actor Alia Bhatt's name was added to the 'Blockout list' after her appearance at this year's Met Gala on May 6. She followed up the appearance with the *Gucci Cruise Show 2025* in London on May 13. Alia has been accused of being 'complicit' for her silence on humanitarian crisis in Gaza and not driving attention towards the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict. Some social media users are calling out celebrities for what they say is inaction in the face of a humanitarian crisis in Gaza — and they've taken to a "blockout" to pressure the stars to take a stand. For the blockout, users put a block on seeing any and all content from the accounts of certain celebrities on social media platforms including X, TikTok and Instagram. Some have posted about the celebrities they've blocked, using a hashtag such as #blockout, #blockout2024, or

#celebrityblockout, while others have shared posts from users lambasting attendees of high-glamour events like the Met Gala and contrasting it with the situation in Gaza.

Blockout participants say it's a protest because the celebrities either haven't spoken up or haven't said enough against Israel's actions in Gaza during its war with Hamas. Since the war erupted on Oct 7 with Hamas' deadly attacks, Israel's military has killed more than 35,000 people in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants. On social media platforms, users see content from people they follow, as well as from those chosen for them by algorithms. In both instances, users can select options to mute or block a person or account.

Madhuri Dixit was a bigger star than 'heroes' of her films, was paid more than Salman Khan; shocked India with her 'provocative' songs



Madhuri Dixit redefined the Bollywood actress — she could be both sensual and coy in the same film, played the vengeful widow and melted the screen with her million-dollar smile. Even in the '80s, she didn't fear kissing a much older actor (Vinod Khanna in *Dayavan*) on-screen, creating an uproar, nor did the idea of looking into the eye of her mother-in-law and defying her (Beta), in the '90s, ever make her uncomfortable. Madhuri Dixit Nene was more than just the 'Dhak Dhak girl' — the moniker in itself meant she was desired by the whole nation even as producers were willing to put money on her — the versatility in her roles, and her choices of groundbreaking scripts, which can be called 'bold' in the late '80s and the '90s, makes her an actor ahead of time, who managed to break the mould of the conventional heroine, despite her commercial success and gaudy, loud costumes. There is no denying that Madhuri was the commercial star who every director wanted to work with, but every once in a while she proved to be 'different' and 'unconventional' in her own right. Madhuri didn't merely play characters; she embodied them, infusing each role with depth and nuance. In an era dominated by stereotypes, she dared to break free, choosing roles that challenged societal norms and celebrated women's agency.

One such standout performance was in the iconic film *Tezaab* (1988), where she portrayed the feisty Mohini. Her portrayal of a young woman navigating love amidst adversity resonated deeply with audiences, establishing her as a leading lady to reckon with. In the later part of her career, she shattered stereotypes with her portrayal of Chandramukhi in *Devdas* (2002), infusing the character of a tawaf with empathy and resilience, transcending the typical portrayal of courtesans in Indian cinema. Madhuri consistently demonstrated her ability to take risks and defy expectations. In 1989, while experiencing her first blockbuster success with *Ram Lakhan*, she simultaneously took on the gangland drama *Parinda*. In 1991, she starred in the emotional love triangle *Saajan*, directed by Lawrence D'Souza, and the introspective *Prahaar*, directed by Nana Patekar. Two years later, she delivered the iconic "Dhak Dhak" dance number in *Beta* and played a vision-impaired dancer in the understated *Sangeet*. Even at the height of her success, as seen in *Dil Toh Pagal Hai* (1997), she continued to challenge herself, working with Prakash Jha on one of his earliest films — the woman-oriented character drama *Mrityudand*. Her performance in the film is considered one of her best. The story centres on Ketaki, played by Madhuri, an educated and strong-willed young woman who is married into a family of zamindars, living in genteel poverty. Unwilling to conform to the traditional expectations placed upon her, Ketaki's voice of dissent inspires other women in the family to question their own roles and status within society. One of the key strengths of *Mrityudand* lies in its subtle approach to addressing feminist themes.

Her ability to seamlessly transition between commercial blockbusters and more introspective films not only broadened her range as an actress but also contributed to her enduring appeal and influence in the Indian film industry. The 1994 film *Anjaam*, directed by Rahul Rawail, featuring Madhuri and Shah Rukh Khan, initially failed to make an impact at the box office but eventually garnered a cult following for Madhuri's portrayal of a woman who rises to the occasion. The film revolves around the struggles of a woman, portrayed by Madhuri, who avenges the murder of her husband. *Anjaam* tackles the critical issue of violence against women. While the film may have been underrated during its release, its powerful storytelling and strong performances, particularly by Madhuri, eventually led to its recognition as a 'rare' gem in Hindi cinema.

Madhuri and Juhi Chawla's 2014 film, *Gulaab Gang* may not be considered a cinematic masterpiece, but there's undeniable excitement in witnessing the diva confidently kneeling villains with a swagger. Her portrayal of the lead character exhibits a sense of dignity and showcases her versatility as an actress. What's particularly noteworthy is her willingness to take on a film that defied expectations, working with a rookie director (Soumik Sen) and a lower budget than she was accustomed to in the action genre. During a press conference held in Mumbai, Madhuri spoke about choosing *Gulaab Gang* and why it was a pathbreaking film. She said, "I'm trying to think of any movie in the past that in that setting of a Bollywood potboiler, has women in the key roles. A movie with all the masala, all the dialogue-baazi, and yet with a female protagonist and antagonist. A woman playing that kind of a role was fascinating, I thought because it changes the rules in one go. It's like throwing down a bowling ball and

watching the pins go flying." Abhishek Chaubey's *Dedh Ishqiya* sees Madhuri falling for another woman, played by Huma Qureshi. Abhishek had admitted that the initial "explicit" version of the script featuring lesbian themes made Madhuri hesitant about the project. It was a choice not many actors of her stature would make, considering "same-sex" love was still considered a taboo both onscreen and in life. It is the pre-Section 377 era we are talking about. In an interview with entertainment journalist Raja Sen, Abhishek said, "She (Madhuri) told me about her fears, and I addressed it: This is exactly how I'm going to treat it. If you're observant, you'll get it fairly easily. However, if you aren't watching carefully, you don't get it, and that's it. It doesn't harm your enjoyment of the movie. There were absolutely no inhibitions. She was all systems go."

Madhuri's rise to stardom was nothing short of meteoric. After a brief setback, her journey began with a series of successful films, starting with *Dayavan* and *Tezaab* in 1988. The following year, she delivered powerful performances in *Tridev*, *Parinda*, and *Subhash Ghai's Ram Lakhan*, establishing her as the leading lady in Bollywood, who would guarantee box-office success. With each hit, her star power grew exponentially, and the film industry took notice. Madhuri's demand skyrocketed as she showcased her talent and versatility, leading to an impressive number of releases — nine in 1989 and ten in 1990. This also meant that she not only overshadowed her male co-stars but also charged a higher fee for her films — something that was unfathomable at that time. In one of their biggest films together, *Beta*, Anil Kapoor played a naive son, blind to his stepmother's evil intentions, while Madhuri portrayed a strong woman, challenging her husband's mother. Her performance, especially in the suggestive song "Dhak Dhak" was the most striking aspect of the film. "Beta should have been called 'Beti,' people tell me," Madhuri once said. Anil naturally felt overshadowed by the spotlight on his costar. "She only started *Dil* because Anil didn't have dates at the time, and Aamir Khan, who had a string of unsuccessful films following his 1988 debut hit, *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* — "was a nobody," trade analyst, Amod Mehra told *The Caravan*. Mehra recalled how as her superstar status grew, "Nobody wanted to take on Madhuri anymore."

Even if these actors weren't threatened by Madhuri herself, they might have taken issue with the strong characters she played. "Most of her roles were that of canny, independent women — bright students or feisty professionals who didn't tolerate nonsense, especially from their leading men. Mainstream directors such as Subhash Ghai — even in the loud, testosterone-filled *Khalnayak*, ostensibly a vehicle for Sanjay Dutt — always ensured that they wrote substantial parts for her," he urged. Madhuri became the reigning queen of Bollywood in the '90s. Once producers realised that her name on the marquee ensured a strong box-office opening, she began to outshine her heroes. For instance, in *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!*, not only did she enjoy higher billing than the hero, Salman Khan, but she was also paid a then-astounding Rs 2.7 crore for the film, more than almost anybody else at the time, reported *The Indian Express*. "This is what happens when the heroine becomes bigger than the hero," Mehra commented, adding "Stories and films have to be built around her stature. So they become heroine-oriented films — which then don't work at the box office." In an old video clip, that surfaced on Reddit, Madhuri, a guest on Anupam Kher's talk show, engages in a candid conversation. Anupam brings up the subject of Madhuri earning more than her co-star Salman in *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!* With a big smile, Madhuri playfully responded, "Well, agar yeh baat chahi hai toh chalne do," humorously implying that she didn't mind if people believed the speculation. In a 2006 interview with *Filmfare* magazine, SRK, who worked with Madhuri in *Devdas*, *Dil Toh Pagal Hai* and *Hum Tumhare Hain Sanam*, expressed his admiration for Madhuri's exceptional talent and stardom. Despite his own celebrated career, he regarded her as a role model, referring to her as the "most solid man" he had encountered in the industry. He praised her solid thinking, emotional resilience, and strong belief system, emphasising the unique qualities that set her apart. SRK acknowledged that he felt his own abilities did not measure up to Madhuri's, stating, "She is the only one I feel I am not as good as." When one thinks of iconic Bollywood dance numbers, Madhuri's "Dhak Dhak," "EK Do Teen" and "Choli Ke Peeche" are among the first to come to mind. The numbers pushed the boundaries of traditional Bollywood dance, blending traditional elements with contemporary influences and heralding a new era of sensuality in songs. Her performance in "Dhak Dhak" marked a significant departure from the typical Bollywood dance routines of the time. The fusion of traditional Indian dance elements with a sensual twist showcased her versatility as a performer and her ability to woo the audience with the movement of her hips and bust and those big expressive eyes. The song's catchy rhythm, combined with Madhuri's expressive and suggestive dance moves, captivated audiences and changed the way dance was perceived in Bollywood. However, the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) initially raised concerns over certain scenes in the song deeming the dance steps to be deliberately "provocative" and unsuitable for audiences at the time, leading to a discussion on potential censorship of the song.

Adhyayan Suman says people questioned his short screen time in Heeramandi: 'You had five scenes, why are you acting like a hero?'

Actor Adhyayan Suman, who was recently seen in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Heeramandi*, has been actively promoting the Netflix series for a few weeks now. Adhyayan was the one of the two actors on the show who got to play two characters in the series and the actor has been thanking Bhansali for giving him an opportunity to showcase his talent. In a recent interview, Adhyayan said that while he has been getting a lot of praise from fans all over the world, he has also received a few messages where people have put him down.

"There were also, maybe 2-3 people who said 'bro, you had like 5 scenes in the show, why are you acting like a hero?' I thought I wouldn't want to discuss this but maybe I should because it was quite funny because there was so much love, I don't want to bring out the hate part which is very nominal," he shared with *News 18 Showsha*. Adhyayan said that even though the show was

all about the women, he had a small but meaty part in the series as it begins with his character, Zorawar, being given away as a newborn baby. He insisted that one does not need to wait for leading parts to make an impression. "You might get that one scene that might change your entire destiny as an actor," he said. When asked about the second season of *Heeramandi*, Adhyayan said that Bhansali has "unofficially" spoken about it. "Heeramandi 2 is something that sir has spoken about and he has unofficially said I want to work with these actors again, Season 2 will get made. There can be nothing greater than this for us. And nabaws will be a lot more this time so that's exciting," he said. However, in a recently released video by IMDB, Bhansali said that he will never be able to make *Heeramandi* again, casting a shadow of doubt over the second season. "We've made it, I've enjoyed making it, and I'm thankful to God that we made it... It was a very difficult project."

Vinesh Phogat pleads WFI to announce official trials format for Paris Olympics: 'Other federations did it in December-January'



GNS News Agency, May 18

Vinesh Phogat on Wednesday took to her social media to plead the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) to announce their official trials format for the Paris Olympics, with two months left in the summit event. Phogat, who secured a quota in the 50Kg women's category at the Asian Olympic Qualifier last month, wrote an open letter highlighting the need to keep the wrestlers 'assured' ahead of the big event. Starting by congratulating her Indian peers on locking a quota for the mega event and thanking the well-wishers for their unwavering support, Phogat wrote, "Despite being just under three months away from the Paris Olympics, the Wrestling Federation of India has yet to announce an official trials format, including the date, time and venue. It is to be noted that all other federations have announced the qualification pathway and trials process with the clear format way back in December 2023 or latest January 2024." The Commonwealth and Asian Games gold medalist pressed on the need to provide absolute clarity to the athletes who are involved in the process. "At this crucial stage, it is essential that all the qualified athletes have absolute clarity on the pathway and process towards the Olympics. Such clarity not only ensures fair competition but also

maximises our country's chances of securing medals and achieving excellence performance on the global stage. I request the Sports Ministry of India, IOA, Sports Authority of India and Wrestling Federation of India to prioritize this matter and promptly announce the dates, time, venue and exact format for the trials officially. Our athletes have worked tirelessly to earn their quotas, and they deserve the assurance and support of a transparent and well-defined selection process," she added. India secured six quotas for Paris 2024 - five of which came through the women's contingent. Alongside Vinesh, Antim Panghal, Anshu Malik, Reetika Hooda and Nisha Dahiya are the women representatives while Aman Sehrawat sealed lone male spot.

Wrestlers' plight is a matter of frustration for the wrestlers to have secured a quota for the Games and yet, not be able to focus their attention on the mega event. Instead, they have to shift their attention towards yet another trial. Aman Sehrawat expressed his frustration over the matter. "So many times I have cut my weight. How many times do I have to do it? It causes a lot of weakness. I don't understand do I think of now winning trials again or start preparing for the Olympics? I think the work I need to put in for good preparation will be affected if I am asked to go through the trials again," Aman told PTI in a recent interview. "By the time trials are finished, the Olympics will be almost there, so when do we start preparations? In my opinion, trials should not be held," he added. Enquired earlier this week if the Indian Olympic Association held any say in the matter regarding the trials, the WFI chief Sanjay Singh had pressed that it wasn't the case. "Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) will decide which wrestler will participate in the Paris Olympics, not IOA, and there will be fresh trials as well," Singh told IANS. "We have got approval/authority/recognition from the UWW (United World Wrestling). And it will be our duty to pick the team. How can IOA take that call," he added.

Neeraj Chopra's homecoming: Ahead of Paris 2024, the reigning world champion bags gold at Federation Cup

GNS News Agency, May 18

It was a mere 82.27m effort that won Neeraj Chopra the gold medal at the Federation Cup 2024 athletics meet as he continued his road to the Paris Olympics. While the Tokyo Olympics gold medalist and the reigning javelin throw world champion started the competition as the favorite, he wasn't in the lead for the first three rounds as DP Manu stayed upfront with a 82.06m throw. It was in the fourth round that Neeraj took the pole position while Manu finished with a silver. Uttam Balasaheb Patil bagged the bronze medal with a 75.49m attempt. For Neeraj, it was his first outing at the Federation Cup since 2021, when he had clinched a gold with a throw of 87.80m. "It was nice to compete in India after so long. Thanks to all the fans who came out to support us today," Neeraj said afterwards. The 26-year-old had arrived in Bhubaneswar on the back of a second-placed finish at the Doha Diamond League. An impressive throw of 88.36m - just 2cm short of Jakub Vadlejch - earned the Indian a silver to kickstart the javelin season. With the Paris Olympics in the view, Neeraj admitted that he wanted to break the elusive 90m mark this year. "People have been asking me this question since 2018 when I threw 88.06 at the Asian Games," Neeraj said in Doha. "A lot of



things happened after that, my elbow injury, the surgery and now I have been stuck between 88 and 90m. "But I really want to break the barrier this year. Even last year, I had said that Doha is famous for 90m. But, we were not lucky due to too much headwind.

Maybe tomorrow we'll have a good day. Obviously, it is the Olympics year and India is a big country and everyone expects gold always. My focus is to just stay healthy and concentrate on my technique. And yes, if I stay healthy everything will be good."

Ahead of T20 World Cup, Sandeep Lamichhane declared innocent of rape charges by Nepal High Court



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Sandeep Lamichhane proven innocent in rape case after being sentenced to prison by the District Court earlier this year, and instructed to pay compensation to the alleged victim, the cricketer was granted bail of Rs 2 million, reversing the decision of the Kathmandu district court. Nepal leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane, on Wednesday, was acquitted of rape charges in a case dating back to 2022 after he was accused of assault by an 18-year-old woman. Lamichhane, who was convicted of rape by the Kathmandu District Court in January and sentenced to eight years in jail, was proven innocent in the Nepal High Court and freed of all the charges raised against him. "The district court's verdict has been overturned, Sandeep Lamichhane has been acquitted," setopati.com quoted the High Court's deputy registrar and spokesperson, Bimal Parajuli, as saying. "He had to be cleared and the high court has set him free. He was not guilty," Sabita Bhaduri Baral, a lawyer for the player told Reuters after the court verdict, details of which are yet to be released. The verdict means that Lamichhane, who wasn't picked in the provisional squad named by Nepal for the T20 World Cup, might make the cut yet with the deadline from ICC for final squad submission being May 25. After being sentenced to prison by the District Court earlier this year, and instructed to pay compensation to the alleged victim, the cricketer was granted bail of Rs 2 million, reversing the decision of the Kathmandu

district court. The 23-year-old was also barred from leaving the country until the final verdict of the court in the case. In February, the Scotland cricket team players had refused to shake Lamichhane's hands after their 3-wicket loss to Nepal. The Scottish players shook hands with every Nepal player, except Lamichhane as part of a silent protest to the spinner's continued presence and participation in the ICC's Cricket World Cup League 2 series which also includes Namibia. Lamichhane had been made aware of the protest beforehand. Lamichhane was the first cricketer from Nepal to play in the Indian Premier League (IPL) when he made his debut for the Delhi Capitals in 2018. The leg-spinner was also a much sought-after cricketer in other big-ticket T20 leagues around the world, including the Big Bash League (BBL) in Australia, the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and the CPL.

Shreyan wins Brilliant Trophy Juniors Online Chess Tournament

Hyderabad: Shreyan Bag of Alui Deshbandhu Board Primary School, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal won the Brilliant Trophy Juniors Online Chess Tournament. He scored 10 points from as many rounds, while Vaibhav Srivastava and Akhil Repalle got second and third places respectively with 9.5 points each. Results: Top Ten Places: 1. Shreyan Bag, 2. Vaibhav Srivastava, 3. Akhil Repalle, 4. Rounak Jakhota, 5. Sai Sri Nandagopal, 6. K Dinesh Reddy, 7. Abheek Panigrahi, 8. Adhyayan Banerjee, 9. Lasya Tummupudi, 10. Altamash Mirza; Age category prize winners: U-15: Boys: 1. Aarav Roy, 2. Hriday Mundada; Girls: 1. Rushitha Haju, 2. Sahasra Karimella; U-13: Boys: 1. Yashraj GajananRathi, 2. Maheedhar Undra; Girls: 1. Sruti Viswanatha, 2. B Akanksha; U-11: Boys: 1. Thamizh Amudhan Yugender, 2. Shashwat Singh; Girls: 1. Ishika Aranya, 2. Manimanjari;

DNA test proves an athlete is not a dope cheat: 'I said let the truth come out' Shalu Chaudhary, 800-m runner, recalls



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"Woh toh nasha karti hai." 800 metre runner Shalu Chaudhary still hurts while recalling disparaging comments aimed at her after news spread about a failed dope test nearly two years ago. "Most people don't know the difference between performance enhancing drugs and narcotics. 'Nasha' is a word that can ruin the image of a woman for good. In villages, it is difficult to get rid of the stigma," Shalu tells Shalu's is a rare example of an athlete opting for a DNA test to clear her name after a 'positive dope test'. Last month the forensic department of King's College in London found her urine sample was 'mixed with that of another female'. The appeal panel of the National Anti-Doping Agency set aside a four-year ban. Shalu, a national medal winner, is back to training, determined to win a medal at the 2026 Asian Games in Japan. "I had not consumed anything which was banned or performance enhancing. When you have done nothing wrong, why should you pay the price? I kept telling my lawyer that I am a clean athlete even after I was banned initially. So my lawyer told me 'let us get a DNA test done'. I said 'ok, let the truth come out'. I don't hold any grudges against anyone," Shalu says. She spent Rs 1.5 lakh for the DNA test, money she borrowed from the family. Her father, a sub-inspector, was convinced his daughter was not one to take shortcuts in life.

Proving her innocence took over a year-and-a-half. The DNA test results which exonerated her were out in February this year. NADA informed her about the failed dope test in August 2022. "The letter from NADA reached my village home address. My family had shifted out of Majri village (North-West Delhi) to Rohini, closer to training centres. Our neighbours who are relatives opened the letter and informed my father. I was training at Ooty back then," Shalu says. Only when she reached Delhi a couple of days later - a brief stopover before she was to travel to Gujarat for the National Games - did her parents inform Shalu about the 'positive test'. "I had received an email a couple of days earlier, but I don't have the habit of checking it daily," Shalu says.

What followed was a nightmare. She was ineligible

Cricket South Africa slammed for naming only one black player in T20 World Cup squad: 'We have gone backwards'

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Former South Africa sports minister Fikile Mbalula has questioned Cricket South Africa's (CSA) make up of the T20 World Cup squad - calling out the inclusion of only one black player - Kagiso Rabada - among the 15 named by the Proteas. CSA's current target requires the national team to field as many as six players of color in their squad during a season, of which at least two must be black African. The 15-man provisional squad named by South Africa last month included six players of color - Rabada, Reeza Hendricks, Bjorn Fortuin, Keshav Maharaj, Tabraiz Shamsi and Ottien Baartman - but Rabada is the only black African included. While Lungi Ngidi will be travelling alongside the team, the pacer has been named as a reserve, which doesn't fulfill the target set for the national side.

Pointing the same, South Africa's former sports minister Fikile Mbalula criticised the board on X. "Only 1 African player selected in the Proteas Team for the upcoming T20 World Cup 2024 Team. Definitely a reversal of the gains of transformation and doesn't reflect fair representation of all South Africans in the national cricket tea," Mbalula wrote. Former CSA and ICC president Ray Mali furthermore suggested that the squad is an indication of the game going backward in the country. "I believe a lot has been achieved, but I believe we have gone backwards in terms of cricket - we have taken a step backwards instead of going forward," Mali said on SABC Sport. "I cannot understand why we can't have a (larger) number of black players in the South African cricket team at this day and age - no, it's not acceptable." In his scathing attack of the selection, Mali went on to add that the decision was a betrayal of the black Africans in the country. "We have betrayed the people who asked us to negotiate unity for this country. Players are mentored or monitored right from their early days up to the top, so you know which players will represent South Africa," he said. Coach shifts blame to domestic pipeline it is worth noting that at this point, Cricket South Africa doesn't have an appointed selection committee. The decision-making rests in the hands of the two coaches - Shukri Conrad (Tests) and

to participate in the National Games. Her hopes of qualifying for the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou went up in smoke. She was struck off a list for an annual sports quota stipend worth lakhs of rupees from the Delhi government. Shalu went into depression and even stopped talking to her fiancé Sandeep Sehrawat, a sprinter who had started training with her. The roka ceremony was done but Shalu going incommunicado was putting a strain on the relationship. "I could not get out of my room for days. I was used to getting up early and heading for training. But now I had nowhere to go. For an active athlete to suddenly have to stop training is difficult. It not only affects the body but the mind too. I didn't step out of the room to even eat," Shalu says. She lost eight kilograms and her confidence dipped. "I went to the Prahlapur sports complex in Rohini to jog. But people would take pot shots. So I stopped going to the stadium also. I was so upset that I stopped talking to my fiancé. He was worried about my state," Shalu said. Sehrawat backed Shalu all the way. He went out of his way to be patient and cleared the air when uninformed people spoke about her being addicted to 'nasha'. "We trained at the same venue. Sandeep knew what I drank and ate during training. He was clear that I had never consumed anything which contained prohibited substances. My parents and in-laws too had questions about what happened." The family was celebrating Sehrawat getting a call up for a coaching course when bad news struck. "I had just got admission for the NIS (National Institute of Sports) diploma course. We were both so excited. But the joy was short-lived," Sehrawat, who is now a certified coach, says. In the midst of the personal turmoil, the both sets of parents believed it would be better for them to tie the knot. On the day the DNA results were out, Shalu recalls Sehrawat being so overjoyed and loud that even the neighbours gathered to find out what happened. "I was cooped up in my room upstairs and when I heard the shouts I knew it was good news," Shalu says of the day her ordeal ended.

"The disciplinary panel of NADA had banned Shalu for four years while rejecting our plea to conduct a DNA test. However, the appeal panel considered our arguments and agreed to conduct a DNA test. We had argued that the sample of the athlete was left unattended during the collection process and there was a possibility of manipulation. A DNA test proved that the sample was tampered with. NADA needs to ensure that doping control officers know how to go about their job. Such lapses can have a devastating effect on an athlete's future," lawyer Parth Goswami says. Shalu wasn't planning a comeback, but Sehrawat convinced her that she had enough in the tank for one major medal. "It is not about proving anything to anyone, but fulfilling her potential as an athlete," he says. With dark days behind her, Shalu has started taking baby steps on the track. "I am a clean athlete. That is what matters."



Rob Walter (ODIs and T20Is), who consult with the director of cricket Enoch Nkwe. When white-ball coach Rob Walter was enquired about the composition of the squad last month. To which he responded, "number one imperative is to create a winning team". Walter blamed the domestic pipeline for not providing with options to compose a more diverse squad. "The system needs to really up the ante so that in six months, 12 months, or two years' time, and in particular when we reach the 2027 [ODI] World Cup at home, that the demographics and the representation in our team starts to look a bit different." What's evident is the lack of batting options for the Proteas - a batting-heavy side - among the black Africans. Temba Bavuma, who had skippered the team in the last two editions of the tournament (2021 and 2022), has been unable to leave a mark in the top order with only 421 runs to his name since 2021 at a woeful average of 17.54 and a sub-standard strike rate of 110.78. Following his failures with the bat at last year's ODI World Cup - a format he had been particularly successful in - CSA, opting for Aiden Markram to lead the team in the ODI and T20I series against India, had given signs of a possible captaincy change. That has been followed by a snub from the T20 World Cup squad. Speaking to The Indian Express last year, Bavuma's childhood coach Geoffrey Toyana had delved into the complexities of persisting with Bavuma - South Africa's first black captain. Owing to the socio-political realities in the region that also reflect in sport. "When somebody like that does something special, the whole country tends to get around him."

Michael Schumacher's watches fetch millions at auction

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Eight watches belonging to Formula One legend Michael Schumacher raked in four million Swiss francs (\$4.4 million; ₹4.1 million) at an auction in Geneva. The seven-time F1 champion was an avid watch collector. But he has not been seen in public since a serious skiing accident in 2013. The watches were put up for sale by Schumacher's family to coincide with the 30th anniversary of his first Formula One Drivers Championship win in 1994. "Collectors were so happy to discover these timepieces filled with history," said Christie's Head of Watches

in Europe, Remi Guillemin. What watches were auctioned? The timepiece with the highest hammer price was a vintage pink Patek Philippe that sold for \$2,711,500. Two of the other watches in the lot were personalized gifts that were given to Schumacher by Ferrari's team principal at the time the German drove for the Italian outfit, Jean Todt. One was a custom-made platinum watch from F.P. Journe known as the Vagabondage 1 that sold for \$1,646,700. The watch features an 18-carat white gold and a red watch face emblazoned with a Ferrari logo, Schumacher's racing helmet and a number 7 to honor the driver's seven World Championship victories.