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Academic calendar for Telangana schools: Exam schedule, Holidays, and Timings

Hyderabad: The school bells will ring early from the next academic year. The School Education department that announced the academic calendar for 2024-25 has advanced the timing for primary and upper primary schools to 9 am instead of earlier 9.30 am. The schools will reopen on June 12.

As per the academic calendar, primary and upper primary schools will have timings from 9 am to 4 pm and 9 am to 4.15 pm respectively. In case of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, the timings for primary and upper primary schools are 8.45 pm to 3.45 pm and 8.45 am to 4 pm respectively.

In age of LED bulbs, lantern lights up just one house in Bihar: PM Modi

GNS News Agency, May 25

Patliputra (Bihar): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday accused the Rashtriya Janata Dal and Congress of undermining constitutional principles by conspiring to allocate SC/ST/OBC quotas to their vote bank and also emphasised that RJD's lantern lights up just one house, keeping the rest of Bihar in a state of darkness during their reign. Addressing a massive election rally in the Patliputra Parliamentary constituency, PM Modi highlighted Bihar's role in championing social justice, saying the people of the state have fought a long battle for the right to reservation for SC-ST-OBC communities.

"However, I would like to reveal a bitter truth today. The RJD-Congress and their allies are betraying these very communities. The Constitution and Baba Saheb Ambedkar clearly stated there should be no reservation based on religion. Yet, the RJD-Congress are conspiring to allocate SC-ST-OBC quotas to their vote bank, undermining constitutional principles," he said.

PM Modi added: "Every caste, including Yadav, Kurmi, Kushwaha, Kalwar, Teli, Suri, Kanu, Nishad, Paswan, Ravidas, and Musahar, has been robbed of their rightful reservation. These actions are not just unconstitutional but also a grave injustice to the children of Dalits, backward classes, and tribals, whose admission quotas have been unfairly reduced in favour of Muslims. This is a stark violation of the principles of social justice and the Constitution."

Taking a dig at the INDIA bloc, Prime Minister Modi said that while he is working hard throughout the day to build a self-reliant India, the opposition alliance "has no work but to lie and abuse him" day and night.

"In this election of 2024, on one side there is Modi who will work hard for you 24 hours a day. On the other hand, there's the INDI coalition that lies to you 24 hours a day. On one side, there is Modi who is working 24x7 to build a developed and self-reliant India by 2047 and on the other side is the INDI alliance, which has no work. People of the country have rejected them and that is why they are busy abusing Modi day and night," he mentioned. The choice, said PM Modi, is clear - people can stay "with progress and development with Modi" or "constant negativity" with the INDI Alliance. "In this age of LED bulbs, there is also a lantern here in Bihar. A lantern that lights up just one house. This lantern has spread only darkness in Bihar," said PM Modi while taking an indirect dig at the RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav.

PM Modi's comments assume significance considering that Yadav's daughter Misa Bharti is contesting from the Patliputra constituency. In 2019, Ram Kripal Yadav of BJP defeated Bharati by a considerable margin and both are pitted against each other once again this time. Asserting that India needs a strong leader, PM Modi said the INDI Alliance plans to have five different PMs in five years. "You know who are the contenders? A parade of family members: sons and daughters from the Gandhi, SP, National Conference, NCP, TMC, AAP, fake Shiv Sena, and RJD families. Their aim is to play musical chairs with the Prime Minister's seat, driven by dynastic politics rather than national interest," he said. PM Modi asked the locals to keep the famous 'Maner ladoos' of the region ready for June 4 - the day results will be declared. "New records would be set in Patliputra and across the nation as the whole country is saying 'phir ek baar... Modi sarkar!'"

India General Elections 2024 Phase 6 57.7% voter turnout recorded till 5 p.m., West Bengal leads with 77.99%

West Bengal recorded the highest voter turnout (77.99%) followed by Jharkhand (61.41%), Uttar Pradesh (52.02%), Odisha (59.60%), Jammu and Kashmir (51.35%), Bihar (52.24%), Haryana (55.93%), and Delhi (53.73%). A voter turnout of 49.2% was recorded till 3 p.m. on May 25 in 58 constituencies in six States and two Union territories where polling is underway in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

West Bengal recorded the highest voter turnout at 70.19% while, Uttar Pradesh recorded the lowest at 43.95%, according to the Election Commission. Besides Delhi, polling is underway in 14 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, all 10 seats in Haryana, eight seats each in Bihar and West Bengal, six seats in Odisha, four seats in Jharkhand and one seat in Jammu and Kashmir. Simultaneously, polling is being held for 42 Assembly constituencies in Odisha and the Karnal Assembly bypoll in Haryana. Polling for the Anantnag-Rajouri seat in Jammu and Kashmir, which was postponed from phase three due to adverse weather conditions, is also underway. Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti, who is contesting from the Anantnag-Rajouri seat in Jammu and Kashmir, staged a sit-in outside Bijbehara police station on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway in Anantnag district against alleged detention of her party workers and polling agents. Ms. Mehbooba's daughter and PDP leader Iltija Mufti alleged polling was being deliberately slowed down at a booth in the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency, a charge denied by the administration.

PM Modi slams INDI Alliance for betrayal, says Cong regimes kept the region in ruins

GNS News Agency, May 25

New Delhi: Addressing a poll rally in UP's Ghazipur on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the INDI Alliance of betraying the land of freedom fighters, and blamed the successive Congress and Samajwadi Party regimes for the flourishing mafia in the region, adding that this has become a thing of past under Yogi Adityanath's government. Holding the grand old party responsible for the backwardness of the region that boasts of many eminent personalities, even after seven decades of Independence, PM Modi said that past Congress governments ensured that development doesn't reach here.

PM Modi said the development of the region was never a priority for the Congress as even schemes like 'One Rank, One Pension' got cleared



only after the NDA government came to power. He said the Congress has great expertise and experience in blocking projects as well as snatching the rights of others.

"Congress had vowed not to develop this area. The people were forced to live in poverty. Gahmari Babu first raised the problem of extreme hardships before Jawaharlal Nehru in the Parliament, but even then the Congress politicised the matter," PM Modi said. "Gahmari Babu, with tears in his eyes, had

then explained how people of the region had to pick wheat from animal dung," the Prime Minister said recalling his statements, adding that things changed only after the NDA came to power and started providing free ration to the poor. Slamming the Samajwadi Party, he said that 'goondas' and mafias mushroomed and thrived during its rule while common men were reduced to margins.

The Prime Minister also hit out at the INDI Alliance parties for their al-

leged attempts to usurp the rights of OBCs, SCs, and STs and hand them over to the Muslim community. He claimed that the Opposition was banking on 'vote jihad' and also referred to the Calcutta High Court, which struck down the West Bengal government's decision to include more than 70 Muslim groups in the list of OBCs. "Till the time I am alive, I won't allow anyone to snatch the rights of OBCs," he asserted.

Hailing the region's rich legacy, the Prime Minister said, "More than the historians, the nation's borders are aware of Ghazipur and its contributions to securing the frontiers."

"The land of Ghazipur tells the tales of valour and bravery. The tradition of Ghazipur and Gamhar village... The name itself is enough. The entire country is indebted to this land where brave soldiers emerge from every house," he pointed out.



EC releases absolute numbers of voters turnout for first five phases

GNS News Agency, May 25

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India on Saturday said that they have decided to further expand the format of the release of turnout data to include the absolute number of voters in every parliamentary constituency as it announced these figures for the five phases completed so far. "The Commission feels duly strengthened by the Supreme Court's observations and verdict on the process of release of turnout data by the Election Commission of India. This brings upon the Commission, a higher responsibility to serve the cause of electoral democracy with undeterred resolution." "The Commission has therefore decided to further expand the format of the release of turnout data to include the absolute number of voters in every parliamentary constituency, which of course is discernible Parliamentary Constituency wise by all citizens themselves by applying the turnout percentage to total electors, both already made available in the public domain," it said.

The absolute number of voter turnout for the first five phases is 507,297,288. In the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls, the turnout was 110,052,103, the second phase witnessed a turnout of 105,830,572 voters, the third phase 113,234,676, the fourth phase 122,469,319 and the fifth phase a 55,710,618 turnout.

"The process of collection and storage of votes polled is rigorous, transparent, and participative. The Commission and its officials across the states have been disseminating voter turnout data in the best possible manner, taking into account statutory considerations," the EC said in a statement. It claimed that the whole exercise of

the release of turnout data from the date of commencement of polls on April 19 has been accurate, consistent and in accordance with election laws and without any discrepancy whatsoever. "The Commission has informed in the public domain and also to individual political parties the detailed process of recording and release of turnout data and the manner of custody and usages of form 17C," it said. It underlined that there has been no delay in the release of voter turnout data. Voter turnout data was always available 24x7 on the facilitative Voter Turnout App from 9.30 a.m. on the poll day of each phase. "The EC publishes estimated voter turnout on two hourly basis till 1730 hrs (5.30 p.m.). After 1900 hours (7 p.m.) when the polling parties start arriving, data is continuously updated. By midnight on the poll day, the Voter turnout app will show the best estimated 'Close of Poll (COP)' data in percentage form," it added.

RS Praveen Kumar demands dismissal of Jupally from Cabinet



Police had been prevailing on the BRS workers to opt for a compromise in every case. The bulldozer culture was also fast catching up in the district.

GNS News Agency, May 25

Hyderabad: BRS leader and former IPS officer RS Praveen Kumar on Saturday demanded that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy drop Minister Jupally Krishna Rao from the cabinet. Addressing a news conference at Telangana Bhavan, he said the faction culture of Rayalaseema districts was gaining ground in

Nagarkurnool. He wanted the government to probe the Kollapur murder case by constituting a special investigation team. He said the deteriorating law and order situation in district and the growing political violence was taken up with the Director General of Police almost 10 days ago, but no corrective measures were taken so far.

He alleged that the murder of BRS functionary Sridhar Reddy was the handiwork of the henchmen of Jupally. The parents of the slain BRS activist had alleged the involvement of Jupally's followers in the murder. But no arrests were made so far. No action was initiated against the accused. The police did not book even register an FIR against the accused as Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy happened to be holding the portfolio of home as well. He said that Jupally's men were indulging in intimidating tactics in view of the local body polls that were nearing.

Police had been prevailing on the BRS workers to opt for a compromise in every case. The bulldozer culture was also fast catching up in the district. Kollapur should be declared as a disturbed area, he insisted. Action should be taken against the local police who failed in protecting lives. Praveen Kumar also condemned the Congress sponsored attack on the BRS town president Nagaraju in Ramayampet town of Medak district on Saturday.

Telangana roasts amid rising temperatures

Hyderabad: With the monsoon season still a couple of weeks away, Hyderabad is experiencing elevated heat, as temperatures spike across the state. On Saturday, almost all places in the State capital experienced scorching temperatures above 40 degree Celsius. Miyapur topped the charts at 43 degree Celsius, followed closely by Musheerabad at 42.8 degree Celsius, and Uppal and Kukatpally at 42.6 degree Celsius. In Telangana, mercury surpassed the 45°C mark in various areas, with Jagtial recording the highest temperature at a blistering 45.9°C, followed by Adilabad and Nirmal at 45.6°C, and Nizamabad at 45.3°C.

Severe cyclone likely to hit Bengal; NDRF teams deployed, Army & Navy on alert



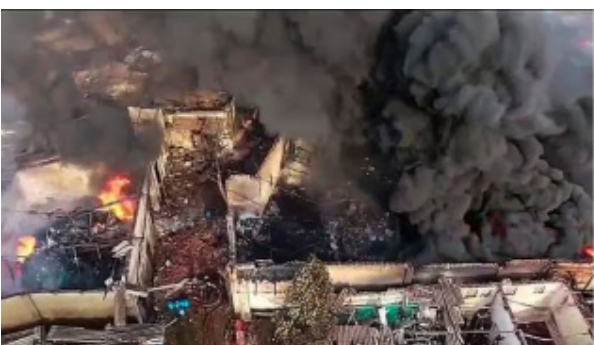
GNS News Agency, May 25

India Meteorological Department on Saturday forecast wind speeds of up to 110-120 kmph gusting to 135 kmph in the severe cyclonic storm that is "very likely" to strike the West Bengal coast on Sunday midnight (May 26). IMD has also issued a very heavy rainfall warning for West Bengal, Odisha and the north-eastern states in the wake of the cyclone. "The Depression over the east-central Bay of Bengal moved north-northeastwards with a speed of 15 kmph during the past 6 hours, intensified into a Deep Depression and lay centred about 380 km south-southeast of Sagar Islands (West Bengal) and 530 km south-southeast of Canning (West Bengal) at 5:30 a.m.," IMD said.

The IMD report expects major damage to thatched houses, agricultural crops, uprooting of trees and flooding of low-lying areas in North & South 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal. Power and communication lines are also expected to get damaged in the cyclone fury. Meanwhile, the National Crisis Management Committee met under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba on Friday to review preparedness for the impending cyclone. The Cabinet Secretary assured the Government of West Bengal that all Central agencies are on full alert and will be available for assistance.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has deployed 12 teams and five additional teams are kept on standby. Rescue and relief teams of the Army, Navy and Coast Guard along with ships and aircraft have been kept in readiness. Regular alerts and advisories are being sent by DG, Shipping to the ports of Kolkata and Paradip. Emergency teams have been deployed by the Ministry of Power for immediate power restoration. The Cabinet Secretary stressed that all necessary preventive and precautionary measures may be taken by the State Government and Central Agencies. The aim should be to keep the loss of lives to zero and minimise damage to property and infrastructure such as power and telecom, and in case of damage, the essential services should be restored in the shortest possible time. He said that it must be ensured that the fishermen at sea are called back and people from vulnerable areas are evacuated well in time. He asked the Government of West Bengal to review the placement of large hoardings in the areas likely to be affected by the cyclonic storm.

Children among 4 killed in Rajkot game zone fire; rescue operations underway



GNS News Agency, May 25

At least four people including children were killed in a massive fire that broke out at a game zone in Gujarat's Rajkot city on Saturday evening, officials said. Efforts are underway to control the blaze and rescue those trapped inside.

The blaze erupted at a temporary structure at the TRP game zone, and among the victims were children who were present at the spot in large numbers due to ongoing summer vacation. Four people have died.

The exact toll will be known only after the rescue operation is completed," said Rajkot Municipal Commissioner Anand Patel. He said that the immediate focus of the administration is on relief and rescue operations.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel tweeted that the city administration has been instructed to carry out immediate rescue and relief operations at the game zone.

"Instructions have been given to the Municipal Corporation and the administration for immediate rescue and relief operations in the fire incident in the game zone in Rajkot. It has been instructed to prioritise arrangements for immediate treatment of the injured," Patel tweeted.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Two-state advocacy

A coordinated move by Ireland, Norway and Spain to recognise the Palestinian state may be largely symbolic, but it reflects growing public outrage in Europe over the devastation and civilian death toll in Gaza, as well as Israel's deepening isolation. This decision followed discussions among several European nations, rooted in the belief that a fresh thrust for a two-state solution is essential. The diplomatic move in favour of Palestinian statehood signals a significant shift in Europe against Israel's excesses in Gaza, widely condemned as genocidal. Notably, Norway, a key player in the Oslo Accords of 1993, has emphasised that recognising Palestine is crucial for peace in West Asia, asserting that a two-state solution is in Israel's best interest. Ireland and Spain have echoed this sentiment, underscoring the need to break the cycle of violence that has worsened since the October 7 attack by Hamas and the subsequent Israeli counter-assaults. Hopefully, it will inspire other Western countries to follow suit and step up international pressure for a ceasefire and meaningful negotiations. Salmaan Rushdie has also pitched into the already muddled debate. India has maintained a consistent policy, advocating for direct negotiations to establish a sovereign, independent Palestine coexisting peacefully with Israel. It has reiterated its long-standing support for a two-state solution, though Prime Minister Modi's tweet condemning the initial Hamas attack was interpreted by some observers as a shift in its stance. Meanwhile, the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants against the Israeli PM and Defence Minister and three Hamas leaders for alleged war crimes. With the International Court of Justice hearing South Africa's appeal to stop Israel's attacks in Rafah, the global clamour for accountability and justice is growing.

FedEx scamsters strike again: Bengaluru software engineer held in 'digital arrest', loses Rs 1 crore



GNS News Agency, May 25

In yet another FedEx scam, a 40-year-old software engineer in Bengaluru lost Rs 1 crore in just two days to cyber fraudsters who held her in "digital arrest" by first informing her of a parcel containing narcotic substances sent in her name and then coercing her into transferring the amount over several transactions by posing as investigators. The victim, a private firm employee living in the NRI Layout near Ramamurthy Nagar in Bengaluru East, received a call from an unknown number on the morning of May 16. The caller, posing as a FedEx logistics executive, informed her that a parcel sent in her name to Taiwan contained 200 gm MDMA, several passports, and clothing, resulting in a customs case at Mumbai airport.

Shortly after that, she received another call from a man pretending to be a Customs officer. He heightened her panic by stating that a case under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act had been registered against her, as her name and mobile number appeared in the sender's address. The scamsters then instructed her to join a Skype call, lock herself in a room, and not inform anyone. During the Skype call, they collected her Aadhaar number and connected her to what appeared to be the Mumbai police crime branch, with a background resembling a police station. The fraudsters soon turned off their camera but insisted she keep her camera on. Several people spoke to her, simulating a formal interrogation regarding the alleged charges. Though she pleaded innocence, the scammers claimed that Aadhaar's verification revealed that her bank accounts were implicated in money laundering. They further intimidated her by labelling it a high-profile, sensitive case and demanded she transfer money to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) accounts for verification. They assured her that her money and assets would be legalised after this process. The next day, she received a WhatsApp call instructing her to transfer Rs 16 lakh to an account. Complying, she was then directed to her bank, where she transferred another Rs 75 lakh while being continuously monitored. After returning home, she was coerced into transferring an additional Rs 9.3 lakh. Expecting her funds to be returned within 30 minutes after verification, she waited in vain. When she realised she was being cheated, she reported the incident to the police the following day and they began a probe after filing a case.

What is "digital arrest"?

Online fraudsters often contact potential victims, claiming that they have sent or are the intended recipients of a package containing illegal items such as drugs or fake passports. These criminals may use images or identities of law enforcement personnel to appear legitimate, and they typically demand money from the target in exchange for a "compromise" and closure of the case. In some instances, victims are falsely "digitally arrested" and coerced into remaining visible over platforms like Skype until the criminals' demands are met. In the backdrop several such FedEx frauds, the logistics company in a statement to The Indian Express had said, "FedEx does not request personal information through unsolicited phone calls, mail, or email for goods being shipped or held, unless requested or initiated by customers. If any individual receives any suspicious phone calls or messages, they are advised not to provide their personal information. Instead, they should immediately contact the local law enforcement authorities within the vicinity or report to the cybercrime department of the government of India."

Smart meters to be installed at Gujarat govt offices to 'dispel misinformation', win people's confidence



GNS News Agency, May 25

Amid widespread protests against prepaid smart electricity meters, Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Limited (GUVNL) has decided to install the devices in public offices, including that of panchayats, talukas, districts and other local bodies and government departments, alongside conventional meters and invite consumers to see the functioning of the two before proceeding with installation in residential areas. GUVNL has also decided to install "check meters" — conventional meters running alongside smart meters — for every consumer who insists on the same as against the guidelines that mandate five per cent check meters.

The decision taken to "win the confidence" of consumers and "dispel misinformation" comes after a high-level government meeting, comprising top officials from all four state-owned power distribution companies — Madhya Gujarat Vij Corporation Limited (MGVCL), Paschim Gujarat Vij Corporation Limited (PGVCL), Uttar Gujarat Vij Corporation Limited (UGVCL) and Dakshin Gujarat Vij Corporation Limited (DGVCL) — was held in Gandhinagar in the aftermath of the continuing protests.

GUVNL Managing Director Jai Prakash Shivhare told The Indian Express that the four power utilities "wanted to win consumers' confidence" but were also "ready to accept the challenge" from them who could point out faults in the prepaid smart meters. Hence, the companies have been directed to install the prepaid smart meters in government offices along with the check meters to allow people to visit and understand the working of the prepaid smart meters "to their satisfaction". "The prepaid smart meters are for the benefit of the people. We have installed 50,000 smart meters across the four utilities in the state and the work was going on smoothly until some people with vested interests began to mislead people with misinformation in viral videos. So, we have decided

to first install the prepaid smart meters in frequently visited public offices and government departments, where the check meters will be placed alongside. We will put up boards to attract the visitors to see the functioning of the two meters for themselves. They will see no difference in the meter reading. It will allow us to win the confidence of the people," Shivhare said. Additionally, GUVNL is also considering installing demo smart meters along with check meters for the common electricity usage in residential colonies to allow consumers to understand the working.

"We are in no hurry to install individual smart meters. The four utilities have already reached out to consumers before installing these smart meters, but since there has been so much misinformation spread, we are considering installation of demo smart meters with check meters for the common electricity meters of residential colonies, which will allow us to dispel misinformation. We would also like to get suggestions from people," he added. With the protests against prepaid smart electricity meters spreading across cities of Vadodara, Surat, and Rajkot, the power distribution companies in all four zones have currently put on hold the installation of new meters. MGVCL officials confirmed that since the power utility had reached its first phase target of 25,000 meters in seven districts in its jurisdiction, it had decided to "put on hold" new installations in residential areas. Vadodara residents continued the protests at various offices of the Gujarat Electricity Board. In the intervening night of Tuesday, Akota residents allegedly vandalised the MGVCL office after an interruption in the power supply. In Fatehgunj, protests continued as residents queued up outside the MGVCL office contending that they were being "overcharged" and threatened to "snap their meter wires". Dismissing the allegations of overcharging, Shivhare said the utilities were "prepared for the challenge". "We have data on our systems right from the first billing cycle of a consumer that could be as far back as 20 years ago. So, there is absolute transparency. While we are out to win the confidence to take the consumers along in this change, we are also up for the challenge if anyone can point out faults in smart meters. So far, from across the four utilities, not a single claim of overcharging has been true. We have checked each complaint we have received and tallied with the data, that has shown consumer usage and proportional charges. If anyone can point out a genuine discrepancy, we will accept the challenge."

Air-conditioning breaks down at Pune airport: Passengers lose their cool as they swelter amid heatwave

GNS News Agency, May 25

Pune airport heatwave Passengers are also wondering about the delay in operationalising the new terminal building, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March 2024 but is still awaiting regulatory approval to start flight operations. Passengers at Pune International Airport have been experiencing sweltering conditions over the past few days due to a malfunction in the terminal building's air-conditioning system.

Amid the ongoing heat wave in the city, several flyers took to social media to express their frustration at having to wait for hours in high temperatures. Passengers questioned the delay in operationalising the new terminal building, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March 2024 but is still awaiting regulatory approval to start flight operations. "Why aren't AC's not functioning at Pune Airport. Both staff and passengers are sweltering in this heat... this is unacceptable," A Lakshmi, a flyer, posted on X. "No air-conditioners working at Pune Airport in this heat. Probably the first airport I have seen in India using desert coolers which were completely ineffective," wrote another passenger, Prakash, on Wednesday morning. "The new terminal building has been ready for six months. It's been inaugurated over two months ago. What's delaying its operationalisation?" he wondered.

Pune Airport director Santosh Dhoke told The Indian Express that the main chilling plant of the centralised air-conditioning system at Pune Airport's existing terminal building developed a major fault, owing to which the management has been struggling to maintain the desired temperature inside the existing terminal



building. "The main chilling plant has developed a major fault. We have contacted the Kirloskar Chillers and their team is working on it," said Dhoke. He said that even though two other chillers were operational, they had a lower capacity. As a result, the temperature remained slightly higher than the desired level in the summer heat. "People who walk in from outside feel comfort if the indoor temperature is in the range of 21 to 22 degrees Celsius. The functional chillers, due to low capacity, can lower the temperature down to only 25-26 degrees Celsius. Hence, the visitors may feel some discomfort. We have employed some extra standing coolers and are working to resolve the AC issue as soon as possible. It should be resolved today," said Dhoke. The delay in operationalising the new terminal building—with better facilities and higher capacity—due to the awaited regulatory nod is causing frustration among Pune flyers, as the current terminal building is handling passengers beyond its capacity.

Death toll in Ghatkopar hoarding crash rises to 17; 10 injured victims still in hospitals

GNS News Agency, May 25

Ghatkopar hoarding collapse, Mumbai news, Indian Express View of the site of the hoarding collapse, that is being cooled by the fire brigade personnel at Ghatkopar, in Mumbai. Over a week after a hoarding collapsed on a petrol pump at Pant Nagar in Mumbai's Ghatkopar suburb, the death toll in the incident has risen to 17, with a 52-year-old man succumbing to injuries at KEM Hospital. According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), Raju Sonawane, 52, had been undergoing treatment at the civic-run hospital since his rescue from the accident site. He was declared dead at 11 pm

Ten days since the accident, 10 victims are still receiving treatment at civic-run hospitals—eight of them at Rajawadi Hospital and two at KEM Hospital. Seventy other victims who were rescued from the debris of the hoarding collapse have been discharged from different hospitals. While 14 bodies had been recovered within 24 hours of the May 13 crash, the bodies of two others—Manoj Chansoria and Anita Chansoria—were plucked out nearly three days later. Speaking to The Indian Express, a senior Mumbai Fire Brigade official said the Chansoria's car had been the hardest to recover because it was trapped under one of the five huge girders that the 120-ft hoarding rested atop. "The car where the body had been recovered was situated in the middle of the accident site. The car was badly crushed, almost flattened, under the pressure of one of the five girders, beneath which the vehicle got buried. The metal girder is huge and heavy and we were facing immense difficulties in cutting the structure. We used the gas cutters to cut the girder and pressed three fire hose lines to ensure supply



According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), Raju Sonawane, 52, had been undergoing treatment at the civic-run hospital since his rescue from the accident site. He was declared dead

of water to prevent a spark, and thereby a fire," an officer said

When the girder was finally cut, the rescuing agencies pulled the car from beneath using a bulldozer. "The car was in an extremely bad state. First, we cut the doors of the car and later cut open the roof, through which we extracted the bodies of the victims," said the officer, adding that the bodies were "almost decomposed". The BMC called off the search operation on the morning of May 16, while the final "make up" call—withdrawal of all the vehicles of first responders including vans of the fire brigade—was sounded on May 18.

Angry over not being served dosa first, Mumbai man abuses woman, minor 6yr7ytdaughter; booked under Pocs

GNS News Agency, May 25

A criminal case was lodged against the two men under several sections of the IPC and sections 11 and 12 of the Pocs Act. (File Photo) A criminal case was lodged against the two men under several sections of the IPC and sections 11 and 12 of the Pocs Act. A Mumbai man who lost his cool after a dosa vendor served dosas to a woman and her 12-year-old daughter first, and not him, was booked for allegedly abusing and passing obscene comments against the duo. The incident occurred on Tuesday in Mumbai's Kandivali (East). The police said the man was booked under stringent provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocs) Act and the Indian Penal Code (IPC), adding that he is yet to be located. According to the 36-year-old homemaker's complaint, she went to a local dosa vendor near Centrium Mall on Tuesday evening with her daughter. Some customers were eating dosas at the stall. The woman said she placed an order for a parcel. A few minutes later, when the vendor handed over her parcel, the accused who was waiting for his dosa to be served got angry, she said.

Using a derogatory term against the woman, he allegedly asked the vendor if he had intentionally served the woman first. "On this indecent comment, when the woman confronted him, asking him, 'Don't you have a mother or sister?', he started abusing her and her daughter and used obscene language for them as well," a police officer said. When the woman's brother-in-law reached the spot, the accused and his friend assaulted, threatened, and abused him, the officer added. When people started gathering at the scene, the accused and his friend escaped, the police said.

Punjab and Haryana HC issues notice to singer Gurdas Maan in 2021 case

GNS News Agency, May 25

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Tuesday issued notice to the state of Punjab and Punjabi singer Gurdas Maan on a criminal revision petition in connection with a case where Maan has been accused of hurting the religious sentiments of the Sikh community. The petition sought to set aside the orders of a trial court accepting the cancellation report filed by the police in the case. The case pertains to an August 2021 first information report (FIR) where Paramjit Singh Akali, a member of Sikh Youth Power of Punjab, alleged that Maan made certain comments that hurt the religious sentiments of a community while performing in the Urs of Sai Murad Shah Ji at the premises of Dera Baba Murad Shah Ji Trust. Maan was subsequently booked in the case.

The petition was filed by Harjinder Singh alias Jinda and others against a February 22, 2024 order passed by the subdivisional judicial magistrate in Nakodar whereby the protest petition was dismissed and the cancellation report filed by the police after investigation was accepted. The petitioner through counsel Ramandeep Singh Gill and A S Chahal argued that Maan pointed towards Dera Mukhi during his performance whereas in Gurbani the word Satguru is used to refer to one pious God. Referring to Dera Mukhi as Satguru has hurt the sentiments of the Sikh community, the petitioner claimed.

It was also argued that the trial court had ignored the fact that Maan had uploaded a video on his Facebook page wherein he explained his act and apologised. The petitioner said that the video was with the trial court, but without going into the material and cogent evidence available before it, the cancellation report was accepted. Hearing the matter, the bench of Justice Sandeep Moudgil issued notice in the matter and adjourned the hearing to June 13.

Man arrested for defacing Delhi Metro coach, signboards with threats to Arvind Kejriwal; 'intention to defame AAP,' say police

GNS News Agency, May 25

Arvind Kejriwal threats The accused wrote messages using abusive language to Arvind Kejriwal on the walls of a metro coach and signboards at Rajiv Chowk and Patel Chowk stations. The Delhi Police have arrested 33-year-old Ankit Goel for defacing the walls of a Delhi Metro coach and signboards with threats against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The CCTV footage from metro stations, which allegedly shows Goel writing on the signboard, led to his arrest. A senior police officer told The Indian Express, "As per the preliminary interrogation, it has not come to the fore that he was directed by anyone to write on the metro walls. He did it on his own will... he is evading questions from interrogators. He stated that he was disgruntled with a few local Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders and hence, decided to carry out the act. His intention was to defame the party". Goel, who hails from Bareilly and is an employee of a Delhi-based bank, had written messages using abusive language to Kejriwal on the walls of a metro coach and signboards at the Rajiv Chowk and Patel Chowk stations. The message had also raised questions about the Jal Board's audits and the "kickbacks" received by AAP leaders from the liquor policy. The threats had prompted the AAP to file a letter to the Election Commission of India. The party leaders had also blamed the BJP for "hatching a plan to attack and cause harm to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal". "This person's words are like those of the BJP... this has been done at Patel Nagar and Rajeev Chowk Metro stations both inside the platform and outside but no action has been taken yet,

Rent-free housing for employee establishes legal landlord-tenant relationship: Karnataka High Court



GNS News Agency, May 25

A single-judge bench of Justice Sanjay Gowda on May 9 dismissed the petition filed by a watchman who approached the high court after his employer company had obtained an eviction suit in its favour. It also imposed a cost of Rs 50,000 on him. A single-judge bench of Justice Sanjay Gowda on May 9 dismissed the petition filed by a watchman who approached the high court after his employer company had obtained an eviction suit in its favour. It also imposed a cost of Rs 50,000 on him. The Karnataka High Court recently ruled that providing rent-free accommodation as part of employment would establish a legal landlord-tenant relationship. A single-judge bench of Justice Sanjay Gowda on May 9 dismissed the petition filed by a watchman who approached the high court after his employer company had obtained an eviction suit in its favour. It also imposed a cost of Rs 50,000 on him.

The company argued that its watchman had been in rent-free accommodation under the terms of his employment. Still, he refused to vacate the property after reaching the age of superannuation in 2016. The watchman argued that the company was non-existent and that the eviction suit was not maintainable as they were in adverse possession of the property. He also argued that he had not been employed by the company but was engaged in vegetable selling and gardening and that he had also restored the property, which was in a dilapidated state.

The bench noted that the company had produced bank statements and other documents to prove that it was, in fact, an existing company. The bench also observed that documentation proved that the petitioner was actually employed as a watchman and would be subject to an eviction suit as a landlord-tenant relationship existed. The bench explained, "Coupled with the salary register and bank statement which establishes regular payment of salary to the petitioner, proves without any doubt he was an employee of the respondent....rent-free accommodation as a term of employment would create a jural relationship of a landlord and tenant even between an employer and employee...the suit for eviction was perfectly maintainable and the plea of adverse possession....was false and specious." The court observed that the watchman had falsely pleaded adverse possession against an employer who provided him with rent-free accommodation, a regular salary, and a Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India policy.

Congress MLA denied anticipatory bail in money laundering case

GNS News Agency, May 25

dharam singh chhoker The court of sessions judge Subhas Mehla said that Chhoker had challenged the non-bailable warrant, but failed to get remedy from any court, including the Supreme Court.

Observing the prosecution's allegation that Congress MLA Dharam Singh Chhoker is not cooperating in a probe into a money laundering case, a Gurgaon court denied him bail. The court of sessions judge Subhas Mehla said that Chhoker had challenged the non-bailable warrant, but failed to get remedy from any court, including the Supreme Court. Citing the observations of the two courts, and in the light of sections 24 and 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, the court said it is of this opinion that there was no case for granting him relief.

It is alleged that Mahira Homes had collected Rs 363 crore from homebuyers for the construction of 1,500 flats — to be delivered in 2021-2022. From the company accounts, funds were allegedly siphoned off as advance loan to other firms as well as diverted for personal use and purchase of several properties. Chhoker is the director of the firms of Mahira Infratech Pvt Ltd — as mentioned in a reply filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The prosecutor argued that the investigation in the matter is in progress, and that the petitioner is required to



know about the proceeds of crime and involvement of other persons. "The petitioner is a highly influential person and has the potential to tamper with the evidence and influence witnesses; he has been evading the process for long as several opportunities given to him to explain and submit the documents pertaining to funds received in the guise of loan and advances — money collected from homebuyers. He has, however, failed to give any plausible reply and has been summoned 14 times by the ED to join the investigation, but he failed to do so....," the central agency said.

Disguised as mango seller, how Delhi cop tracked down man wanted in 20-year-old murder case

GNS News Agency, May 25

mango seller delhi murder Disguised as a mango seller, Nain headed to Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri where he found the accused, Sipahi Lal, operating under the alias Gurdayal and selling chhole-bhatore with his nephew at Ramleela Ground. The Delhi Police then arrested him. In 2004, a cereal vendor from Delhi's Shalimar Bagh was kidnapped and brutally murdered. Five men were involved in the crime. While three of them, including the main accused, were arrested and, two men vanished and could never be traced. Twenty years later, it was ASI Sonu Nain of the crime branch who sniffed out one of them. Disguised as a mango seller, Nain headed to Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri where he found the accused, Sipahi Lal, operating under the alias Gurdayal and selling chhole-bhatore with his nephew at Ramleela Ground. The Delhi Police then arrested him.

The case dates back to October 31, 2004. The victim, Ramesh Chand Gupta, was allegedly abducted by vegetable vendor Mukesh Vats — who had lent money to the former — along with his four employees Lal, Kamlesh, Rajesh and Shareef Khan, and murdered, said police. According to court documents, Gupta had left home on the night of Karwa Chauth, mentioning to his family that he was going to meet Vats. Both of them knew to each other as they worked in close proximity at Azadpur Mandi. Gupta's family never saw him again. Gupta's brother Jagdish Kumar, suspecting Vats to be behind the incident, filed a case of abduction with the police.

On questioning, Vats allegedly broke down. The five men had allegedly abducted Gupta and taken him to Karala village near Rohini, said police, adding that Gupta was allegedly tortured with an unknown spray — which rendered him unconscious several times — and later



killed. Eventually, the content of the spray resulted in his death. However, the five men also allegedly stabbed him several times to ensure he was dead. According to court documents, Gupta died of asphyxiation, shock, and an open wound to his throat. The five then dumped Gupta's body in a drain, which police later recovered after Vats's arrest.

While Vats, Khan, and Kamlesh were awarded life imprisonment for the murder, Rajesh and Lal were never traced. Lal managed to escape by repeatedly changing his location and identity.

He first went to Etawah, to his sister's place, to hide... He then moved to Mainpuri seven to eight years ago, and opened a chhole-bhatore shop along with his nephew," said DCP Rakesh Pawaria (Crime). During a renewed effort to apprehend the absconding criminals under the directions of the Election Commission of India (ECI), ASI Nain of the crime branch received a tip about Lal's whereabouts that eventually led to his arrest.



officer, managed to swim to safety. The water level in the dam backwaters is very low and because of that.

2022 security breach in mind, Punjab lines up officials to ensure smooth passage for PM



GNS News Agency, May 25

The Prime Minister's convoy was held up in Punjab's Ferozepur district ahead of the 2022 Assembly elections in Punjab. The Prime Minister's convoy was held up in Punjab's Ferozepur district ahead of the 2022 Assembly elections in Punjab. Having burnt their fingers during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Punjab ahead of the 2022 Assembly elections when his security was allegedly breached and the cavalcade was left stranded on a flyover for half an hour, the state government has said that officials will ensure the entire route taken by the PM during his proposed visit is clear of any interruption so that there is no repeat. Modi will address a rally for BJP candidate Preet Singh Kaur in Patiala on May 23 in the late afternoon. On May 24, he will address rallies in support of BJP candidates in Jalandhar and Gurdaspur. However, Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) leaders announced Tuesday that they would peacefully oppose Modi's visit to Punjab.

During the PM's security breach in 2022, when Congress' Charanjit Singh Channi was the chief minister of Punjab, a group of farmers agitating against the Centre's three contentious farm laws gathered at the flyover to be taken by the PM's convoy on their way to National Martyrs Memorial in Ferozepur from Bathinda airport on Janu-

ary 5, prompting the Special Protection Group (SPG) to halt the convoy. Modi returned without addressing a rally in Punjab, while the issue reached the Supreme Court and several Punjab officers were indicted for the "lapse." This time, however, the Punjab Home Department and the state police have already held a series of meetings with Deputy Commissioners of Patiala, Jalandhar and Gurdaspur, and besides ordering the deployment of a heavy posse of police and central security forces, Chief Secretary Anurag Verma ordered that all district administration officials should be assigned duties to ensure proper arrangements are in place, officials said.

"The government is not taking any chances. The issue had become a problem for the state government after the Centre wrote letters to the state to take action against officers. The SC also intervened. This time, we will ensure his entire route is clear of any possible interruption. All officials of the district administrations of three districts have been assigned duties to ensure the PM's smooth passage. They have also been that it is not just the duty of the police but also the civil administration. Officials of all departments concerned attended meetings in Chandigarh and district administration officials of the three districts joined through video conferencing," a senior Punjab government officer said. After the security breach in 2022, the Supreme Court appointed a committee to look into the matter. The committee indicted then Punjab chief secretary Anirudh Tewari, police chief S Chattopadhyaya, SSPs Harmandeep Singh Hans and Charanjit Singh, Additional DGPs Nageswara Rao and Naresh Arora, IGs Rakesh Aggarwal and Inderbir Singh and the then deputy IG Surjeet Singh for the lapse. The report indicted the Punjab Police for being "casual" and "negligent" and called the incident "a colossal failure in planning and coordination". Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla wrote several letters to the then Punjab chief secretary Vijay Kumar Janjua to submit an action taken report, highlighting the delay by the state government in acting against the erring officers.

When officials pressed Jayalalithaa to attend 1992 Mahamaham festival, which ended in stampede that killed 48

GNS News Agency, May 25

Former Tamil Nadu top cop Walter Isaac Devaram has said in his autobiography that it was after the insistence of bureaucrats and police officers, including Devaram himself, that J Jayalalithaa attended the 1992 Mahamaham festival in Kumbakonam. The event had ended in a stampede in which 48 people were killed. The tragedy had been a significant political setback for Jayalalithaa, who was in her first stint as chief minister at the time. Most of the blame for the incident fell on Jayalalithaa and her close aide V K Sasikala, with many alleging that their presence at the spot had led to the tragedy as the administration focused on them instead of the crowd.

It had sparked a widespread public outcry, with Jayalalithaa's administration facing allegations of inefficiency and insensitivity. Devaram, the then additional director general of police in charge of law and order, coordinated the security arrangements for the event. In his autobiography, Munnar to Marina, The Journey, he describes the lead-up to the incident: "When the Mahamaham came up for discussion at a meeting with her (Jayalalithaa), the Chief Secretary, the Home Secretary, the DGP, and other senior officers, including me, requested her to grace the occasion." "She was emphatic that she would not like to undertake the visit as it would put a heavy strain on the police. But all the officers pressed for her presence as the festival coincided with her birth star, 'Maham'. Finally, she relented and agreed to reach the spot just before the auspicious time and leave immediately after the holy dip," Devaram wrote. After the tragedy, the state government faced criticism for inadequate crowd control and insufficient safety protocols.

According to Devaram's account, organisers were expecting "a much larger influx of pilgrims than at the previous Mahamaham" and had planned accordingly. "Everything pointed to a more successful festival bandobast than the one in 1980," Devaram wrote of the event that takes place once in 12 years. A temporary helipad had been set up 3 km from a water tank where devotees take a holy dip on the occasion of the festival. Arrangements had been made to take Jayalalithaa and Sasikala straight from the helipad to the tank and back after the holy dip. On the day, everything started smoothly, writes Devaram. The Mahamaham tank filled up hours before the auspicious time, and Devaram was in the police control room. The arrangement allowed pilgrims to enter from the east and west and exit from the north and south. "An hour before the auspicious time, I took up my position alongside the head priest on the southern bank, just as I had done in 1980. I was to fire a Very Pistol (flare gun) as soon as the head priest gave the nod, the flare announcing the auspicious moment to the pilgrims," he wrote.

When the helicopter arrived, DGP Sripathi received the CM Jayalalithaa and Sasikala. They were escorted to the tank, where a small area was cordoned off. 10 minutes before Zero Hour, they were guided down the steps. At the auspicious time, Devaram fired the flare gun and the crowd took three dips in the tank and moved to the exits, to be replaced by those who were awaiting their turn. "This process was going on when the Chief Minister's entourage left the tank, accompanied by the Chief Secretary and the DGP," he wrote. "It was only a while after the Chief Minister had left the tank that I, on the southern bank, became aware of the tragedy that had taken place on the northern bank, which was the main exit point," he said. Several accounts from journalists at the time had blamed police for ignoring the deaths so as not to create panic in Jayalalithaa's presence. It was also alleged that they did not even remove the dead and the injured for almost half an hour after the stampede.

Devaram said the tragedy was caused by the "hasty descent of those waiting on the bank getting in the way of those leaving the tank". After initiating the rescue operations, Devaram said he radioed the DGP and informed him of the tragedy. "The helicopter was yet to take off (back to Chennai); but the DGP decided not to inform the Chief Minister of what had happened, knowing full well that she would insist on returning to the tank to convey her sympathy and supervise the relief operations. Such a



move would only have created mayhem, resulting in more deaths... She was informed of the tragedy only after the helicopter reached Madras..." Devaram wrote that Jayalalithaa did not punish any official over the incident. "Under similar circumstances, heads would have rolled, at least the DGP's and mine; definitely mine, as I was in direct charge of the entire bandobast arrangements. But the Chief Minister, in all her magnanimity, instead of blaming the police as is often done, took the blame on herself, thereby pacifying the public, silencing the opposition, and moderating the press," he wrote. Speaking to The Indian Express Tuesday, Devaram said Jayalalithaa was upset after hearing the news and had apologised for the deaths. "At the event, she was in one corner... She and Sasikala took the dip and left immediately... Nobody was at fault. Everyone did their work. In spite of that, the tragedy happened," said Devaram, 84. He went on to become the DGP, and has been known for famous investigations, close encounters with LTTE leader Prabhakaran and forest brigand Veerappan. He has also faced allegations of extra-judicial acts.

Molestation charge against Bengal Governor: Kolkata Police issues summons to 4 Raj Bhavan officials



Police have summoned four officials of the Raj Bhavan in connection with its ongoing probe into the alleged molestation of a woman employee by West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose, an officer said. The officials had seen the woman leaving the governor's office "weeping", he said. "These four officials were present in the Raj Bhavan when the alleged incident of molestation took place. We have called them for questioning," the officer said. The woman, while recording her statement in front of a magistrate under IPC Section 164, had named the four officials. On May 2, the contractual employee of the Raj Bhavan alleged molestation by Bose following which the Kolkata Police started a probe. Three officials of the Raj Bhavan appeared before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court on Tuesday and secured anticipatory bail over an FIR lodged against them. The CMM court judge granted anticipatory bail to the three officials on a bond of Rs 500 each. The three officials appeared before the court and prayed for anticipatory bail. Earlier, a case was lodged against three officials of the Raj Bhavan for allegedly wrongfully restraining the woman. Under Article 361 of the Constitution, no criminal proceedings can be instituted against a governor during his/her term in office.

In setback to Kerala Governor, nominations he made to university are quashed by High Court



GNS News Agency, May 25

Thiruvananthapuram, Arif Mohammed Khan, Kerala University, Kerala High Court, Kerala Governor, Indian express news, current affairs Referring to the names nominated by the Governor, the court said that "no single factor of the nominated students is shown superior" to those of the petitioners. (File) In a setback for Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan in his recurring stand-off with the CPI(M) government over matters related to universities, the Kerala High Court Tuesday quashed the four nominations he made to the senate of Kerala University last year. The CPI(M) and its student wing had said that the four students that the Governor nominated were activists of the RSS's student wing, ABVP, and alleged that they were recommended by the Sangh Parivar. It was also alleged that the Governor's nominees did not have an outstanding academic track record. Subsequently, stu-

dents who had figured in the list forwarded from the university to Raj Bhavan, but were not among those nominated by the Governor, approached the court alleging that he had dropped eligible names. Referring to the names nominated by the Governor, the court said that "no single factor of the nominated students is shown superior" to those of the petitioners.

The Bench of Justice Mohammed Nias C P said, "It is trite that there is no unbridled power vested with the Chancellor (the Governor) while making the nominations. If the nomination made is contrary to the requirement of the statute or if relevant factors were not considered or if irrelevant factors were considered in making the decisions, the nominations will have to be interfered with by the Constitutional Courts." The judge said any arbitrary use of power violates not only the rule of equality enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution, but also the rule of 'discrimination' inbuilt in Article 16. "An unguided, unfettered and unbridled power is foreign to the exercise of any power, constitutional or statutory. Even in the exercise of discretionary power, the requirements of reasonableness, rationality, impartiality, fairness and equity are inherent to such exercise and can never be according to any private opinion," the court said. Kerala Higher Education Minister R Bindu said the state government is acting to protect the "democratic rights of the students and safeguard secular values in the education sector." "I hope this verdict will put an end to unnecessary controversies," she said.

Safai karamchari 'dies by suicide' on JNU campus; probe on

GNS News Agency, May 25

JNU, JNU Safai karamchari suicide, JNU suicide news, JNU Safai karamchari dies by suicide, Jawaharlal Nehru University, JNU news, indian express news Administration Block JNU, where protests used to be held, New Delhi. Express Photo by Tashi Tobgyal New Delhi 260119 *** Local Caption *** Administration Block JNU, where protests used to be held, New Delhi. The body of a 55-year-old man was found hanging from a tree near Paschimabad building on the Jawaharlal Nehru University campus, said police on Tuesday, adding that he allegedly died by suicide.



Police said the deceased — identified as Vijay — worked as a 'safai karamchari' at the university on a private contract. We have launched an investigation to ascertain the reason behind the alleged suicide, they added. Expressing condolences, JNU Registrar Professor Ravikesh said in a statement: "The university is deeply saddened by the loss of one of the outsourced staff yesterday (Monday) and extends heartfelt condolences to his family members. In light of this tragedy, the university is committed to providing support to the family during this difficult time. The salary of the deceased employee was being paid by the vendor concerned regularly."

"In view of this unfortunate incident, the university has directed the vendor concerned to extend all necessary help, including any ex-gratia payment, to the family of the deceased employee on an urgent basis," he added. "Police have started an investigation into the incident. We request everyone to remain vigilant and also refrain from spreading unverified information. Further, we request all to respect the privacy and dignity of the deceased and his family during this difficult time," the university said in the statement. A senior police officer, meanwhile, said that the spot was inspected and proceedings under Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) Section 174 have been initiated. Further enquiry is underway, the officer added.

BJP implicating TMC over attack on RKM premises in Jalpaiguri: Mamata

GNS News Agency, May 25

Mamata Addressing an election rally in support of TMC candidate from Barasat Lok Sabha seat Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Banerjee said she had always been supportive of the RKM and other socio-religious organisations. Taking a strong view of the BJP's charges that the TMC was involved in vandalism of properties of Ramakrishna Mission in Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday accused the saffron camp of falsely implicating her party over an incident triggered by property dispute.



Addressing an election rally in support of TMC candidate from Barasat Lok Sabha seat Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Banerjee said she had always been supportive of the RKM and other socio-religious organisations. The chief minister said she renovated the residence of Sister Nivedita in Kolkata and the birthplace of Swami Vivekananda. "I don't discriminate among religions. I work for renovating places of worship of all religions," she said. "I may go for defamation for maligning me and TMC by spreading misinformation against our party. If anything

happens in the state, the report comes to me as the head of administration. I did not get any such update. We have great respect for religious organisations like RKM and others," she said. Miscreants had vandalised the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission in Jalpaiguri district and threatened monks and employees at gunpoint to leave the place, an RKM official said Monday.

Kerala to UP, students in Delhi have a single complaint: 'Away from home, how do we vote?'



GNS News Agency, May 25

"Every advertisement says vote, it never says you can vote from where you are," says David (20), a student at St Stephen's College from Aizawl, Mizoram. He has a voter ID but wasn't aware of the rules to change his address. He adds that going back home to vote is expensive. David isn't alone. There are hundreds of students, who migrated from small cities and towns to study in Delhi's universities, who are missing out on voting in the 2024 Lok Sabha election owing to geographical constraints. "I have always been studying away from home so I could never get my voter ID made. I did my Bachelor's from Banaras Hindu University. Then I came to Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) for my Masters... now I am in my second year of PhD," says Nitish (24) from Bihar's Araria.

He is the secretary of AISA at JNU. A student of Hindu College from Calicut, Kerala, who refused to be named, tells The Indian Express, "It's the responsibility of political parties... they didn't even release a notification or a poster for us to know about the change in address rule." Balagopal Menon, who is pursuing his PhD from IIT-Delhi, says he is concerned about missing out on voting. "I travel a lot because of my fieldwork. I was really hoping to vote through postal ballot but that isn't an option available to students." Kulbushan, a UPSC aspirant living in Mukherjee Nagar, has decided to head home to Deoria to vote. "My location is not fixed. I stay in Karol Bagh or Mukherjee Nagar. That's why I got my voter ID card made based on my permanent address." Akshat Ranjan, a journalism student at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, says it's difficult for students to vote as many live in hostels and PGs and don't have proof of residence. He suggested that college and hostel ID cards could be considered as proof. Some student bodies have appealed to the Election Commission to simplify the process for student voters. Delhi University Students' Union president Tushar Dedha says, "I have written an application to the Chief Election Commissioner requesting to allow postal ballot voting for DU students who hail from different parts of the country." Ayush Rajput, president of the Electoral Literacy Club at Hindu College, says, "We arranged an awareness campaign, 'Mera Pehla Vote', to educate first-time voters... we made students pledge to vote in the college auditorium."

In this Gurgaon condo, voters assert 'national pride' over regional identity



GNS News Agency, May 25

They come from different places, speak in different tongues, eat different food, and celebrate different festivals. When they meet, they speak in English and at times, broken Hindi. They are from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan. In this city, their regional identities take a backseat and they are businessmen, CEOs, software engineers, and IT consultants.

At M3M Golf Estate in Sector 65, a condominium across 56 acres of land with a golf course and surrounded by the Aravallis, the Lok Sabha election is different — the issues that dominate the polls across the country have not made it past the gates. Gurgaon votes on May 25, in the sixth phase. The government, in a bid to increase polling among urban residents, has set up 52 booths in 31 high-rises across the city as polling in urban centres has been lower than that in rural areas. Sitting near a small library at the society club on a Sunday evening, Alok Khandelwal, an IT consultant, can't recollect the last time he voted. "People here are a little reserved about voting as we have to stand in a queue at a booth in this heat. We wanted to request the administration to set up one (a booth) on the premises, but that didn't materialise," says the 41-year-old from Rajasthan's Alwar. "Also, governments have little impact on us as we work hard and fend for ourselves." Khandelwal believes Prime Minister Narendra Modi has helped elevate India's image on the global stage.

His wife, Nishma, a software engineer from Kerala, chimes in: "Even though there are issues, Modi evokes pride in people... My identity as a Malayali or support for the INDIA bloc back home won't stop me from supporting BJP." She says her sole apprehension about the BJP comes from the accounts of her relative, a government employee, who has told her the "government goes after those critical of its rule." Sitting near the couple, Panckaj N Umrana, a businessman, declares that he's not into politics. "I don't support anyone. I pay taxes to the tune of Rs 1 crore and don't get anything in return," the 40-year-old, who has not voted since 2014, says. Umrana, who was born and raised in Kanpur and later Lucknow, is disenchanted particularly after he lost his family to Covid-19 — he blames the government for "poor management". However, he still believes in Modi. "I don't blame Modi. Our system is at fault," he says. Umrana, who has lived in the city for 14 years, is waiting for his seven-year-old son to complete school so he can send him abroad for stud-

ies and subsequently work. "There is a marketing gimmick that India has ease of doing business and is emerging as a power. The BJP has employed intelligent people to shape this narrative," he adds. Entering the granite tower and stepping into the well-lit hallway, Soma Parveen takes the service lift reserved for workers. She cleans three houses every day for Rs 16,500. She takes the smaller gate to enter and exit the society. Last August, a few miles away from her rented one-room home in Badshahpur, she recalls, the slums of migrant labourers were set on fire during the Nuh violence. "We were scared," she says. "Panckaj sir (her employer Panckaj Umrana) asked if we wanted to live with them till the situation calms down..." She says the "violence disrupted our lives for days" and then it was normal again. Though Soma wanted to go to West Bengal to cast her vote, she couldn't afford the trip. However, she says, if there is anyone she supports here, it would be the Congress. Back home, she says, she would prefer TMC. "We have been getting the same wages over the last five years. I asked for a hike in one of the houses I work in and was told to quit," she says. Soma emphasises that there aren't any communal flare-ups in her village in Bengal. "The BJP isn't in power in our area, maybe that is why..." she says.

Sudhir Malik is all set to cast his vote for the "nation". "I don't like Rao Inderjit Singh (BJP's Gurgaon candidate who is seeking re-election). He hasn't done much here. But I am focusing on the Centre and want to bring Modi to power again," he says. Born in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi, the 65-year-old businessman has been in the city for 20 years. On the violence last year, Malik says such incidents send a wrong message to the world. "We have a good image in front of the world now... The respect I get when I go to other countries is immensely different from what I would get 10 years ago," he insists. Bijan Halder, who cleans cars and also walks the dogs of residents, went back home to West Bengal's Farakka to cast his vote. His wife and infant daughter accompanied him. "It is my right and responsibility as a citizen to cast my vote. It doesn't matter that it costs a lot and I miss a few days' work," the 27-year-old says. He earns, he says, Rs 15,000 a month. Halder enters the society with a card — after his employers grant access — that's renewed every six months. Dr Renuka Ganesh (49), a clinical psychologist from Nagpur, and her husband Ganesh Krishnan (53), a Tamilian, assert their regional identities, but insist it "doesn't surpass national pride". Though she was born and raised in Maharashtra, Dr Renuka is from Visakhapatnam, and her father is affiliated with the RSS. "I am a Marathi first, but I believe (Hindu) identity instills more patriotism," she adds. Her eyes glow as she speaks of the Modi government. "The roads have improved under this government. When I visit my daughter in Chennai, the city's progress is stagnant," she says. "They (Tamil Nadu) need a regime change and K Annamalai (BJP TN president) shows promise," she says. Her husband agrees: "In these two South Indian states (Kerala and TN), something new has to come. They have to align with national development." Krishnan, who was born in Thiruvananthapuram, says if the INDIA bloc wins, the country will disintegrate. "We need a stronger Centre," he says. "If I had voted in Thiruvananthapuram, I would have supported (BJP's) Rajeev Chandrasekhar..."

'We get water once in 2-3 days, but it's not drinkable': Across Delhi, why water is a key poll issue

GNS News Agency, May 25

Sitting outside his home in Central Delhi's Baljeet Nagar, Ramakant waits for the water tanker to chug up the steep narrow lane of his neighbourhood. "Pipes have been laid in this area but the water doesn't reach us," the 63-year-old complains. Unlike the posh localities of Rajinder Nagar and Karol Bagh which surround their settlement of unauthorised colonies and jhuggi-jhopdi (JJ) clusters, Ramakant and his neighbours are dependent on tankers. "We have to go to the JE's office every time we need one," he says.



Around 18 km away in North Delhi's Burari, Shaligram Gupta, Rama Shankar Tripathi and Prahlad Singh buy water cans, each costing Rs 20, for their daily consumption as supply in their locality is "irregular and contaminated". "We get water once in two-three days, but it is not drinkable... only sometimes it is clean," they complain. With the Lok Sabha election in Delhi three days away — and temperatures soaring to as high as 47 degrees Celsius in some parts — irregular water supply and its quality are top issues for those living in JJ clusters, slums and unauthorised colonies. Many households are forced to rely on tankers or buy cans to meet their daily needs. Often, tempers flare and fights break out over the precious resource. Only last month, in Northeast Delhi's Shahdara, a 34-year-old woman was stabbed to death following a quarrel over using water from a community tap. The Capital depends on neighbouring states to meet around 90% of its drinking water demands. The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) gets raw water from four sources: 389 MGD (million gallons per day) from the Yamuna river; 253 MGD from the Ganga; 221 MGD from the Ravi-Beas river; and 90 MGD from groundwater. The water is then treated before distribution. Water from all these sources, however, amounts to 953 MGD, falling short of the city's estimated demand of 1,380 MGD. The DJB's 'Summer Action Plan 2024' states that "production of about 1,000 MGD of potable water is targeted to be achieved during the summer by optimising all resources".

of five has to buy bottled water for their daily chores. "We have to buy at least two big water jars costing Rs 50 each per day... spending around Rs 3,000-Rs 4,000 per month on water... that's a significant sum for poor people like me..." he says. In Southwest Delhi's Naraina Vihar, Suraj (40) complains about the water quality at his home. "Forget drinking, we can't even bathe with the supplied water," he claims. "Though visibly clean, the water is very hard, even soap doesn't foam easily." A visit to Southwest Delhi's Masoodpur village revealed another issue with the water supply — leakage in pipes. "Only half the supplied water reaches our taps, the rest is wasted due to leaking pipelines..." says a government employee who lives in the urban village. He claims it takes several complaints to fix these leakages. To deal with the issue, the DJB installed flowmeters, devices that measure the water pressure in pipelines and in turn, provide information on the quantity of water supplied, across the capital. Some families have no extra money to buy even a water can. Kiran, a sweeper living in Central Delhi's Motia Khan, has been saving "penny after penny to support her children's education". "Only we know how we survive, doing odd jobs like cleaning and picking garbage to support our family..." She says even though "the water is non-potable", her family has no other option but to consume it. "We often fall sick as a result but what else can we do?" she asks.

Chilkur Balaji Temple head priest CS Rangarajan supports ailing Muslim Carnatic singer

Hyderabad: In a heartwarming display of communal harmony, Chilkur Balaji Temple head priest CS Rangarajan facilitated support to Shaik Imdad, a Muslim classical Carnatic singer, who recently suffered a massive heart stroke.

On learning about Imdad's health, Rangarajan reached out to the Helping Hand Foundation and facilitated assistance to the singer. The foundation promised to extend medical help besides supporting his children's education till the time he finds ground to get back to normalcy. The 45-year-old Imdad is a classical Carnatic devotional vocalist and has performed on several occasions at the Chilkur Balaji Temple.

Rakesh Choudhary, a resident of East Delhi's Shakarpur, claims, "The water is black and smelly like it's being supplied straight out of sewer lines... You can't drink it... we can't even store it or use it for other purposes." Water is supplied in the area around 5 am for two hours. A helper at a tailoring shop earning Rs 12,000, Choudhary adds that despite their low income, his family

Campus safety & security in education institutes



GNS News Agency, May 25

Hyderabad: US universities have many protocols to ensure students' safety and security, providing a secure learning environment through measures that range from robust campus police departments to state-of-the-art emergency alarm systems. The safety protocols established by US universities are particularly crucial for international students and their families, who may be unfamiliar with the local environment and legal systems.

These measures are designed to address emergencies and alleviate international students' apprehension regarding personal safety while studying abroad. At smaller colleges, collaboration between local police services and campus authorities is common practice to maintain security. Larger university campuses typically have dedicated police departments to oversee the campus, ensuring a comprehensive approach to campus safety.

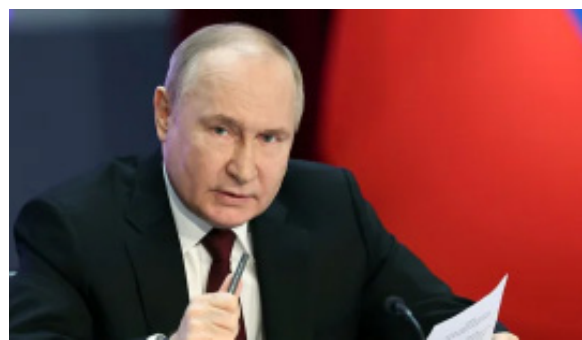
In addition to campus police, US universities also have campus safety teams that provide: 4 Late-night security and safety services 4 Access to emergency phones 4 24-hour hotlines 4 Apps that can help students directly reach out to an emergency services desk when in need. Campuses also provide professional mental health counsellors and can be contacted for counselling services, including trauma. Universities prioritise all community members' wellbeing regardless of size, offering training and specialised support for international students facing unique challenges. The 'blue light' emergency system is one of the features of campus safety measures adopted by many universities. It allows students to alert security personnel quickly in the event of danger. Also, escort services are frequently available for international students who may feel uncomfortable walking alone, especially at night, further enhancing safety and providing peace of mind. Universities actively encourage engagement with campus safety offices to empower international students to safeguard themselves.

These offices provide a wide range of services, including emergency phone stations, escort assistance, and safety mapping tools tailored to the needs of international students. International students must familiarise themselves with these resources and stay informed about campus safety procedures through annual safety reports. Especially after dark, when visibility is reduced, taking precautions becomes crucial. Utilising the buddy system, requesting campus security escorts, and parking in well-lit areas are simple yet effective ways to minimise risks. Moreover, maintaining vigilance and securing personal belongings, such as locking doors and windows, are fundamental practices for ensuring individual safety. In today's digital age, international students must exercise caution when using social media to prevent inadvertently sharing sensitive information.

Avoiding geotagging, refraining from disclosing empty residences, and adjusting privacy settings are recommended strategies to mitigate potential risks associated with online presence. A proactive approach to safety involves careful planning and awareness of one's surroundings, particularly for international students adjusting to a new cultural and social environment.

Walking confidently, avoiding isolated paths, and utilising campus maps contribute to a sense of security while navigating the campus environment. Staying informed about local crime rates and campus safety initiatives is essential for international students to make informed decisions about their safety. Beyond statistics, factors such as community services funding and healthcare resources provide valuable insights into overall safety measures and support systems available within the university environment. Before choosing to apply to a university, international students can set up an appointment with the admissions and international student counsellors to inquire about the safety policies and other services provided to them. Students should refer to the university safety website resources page to understand safety procedures and protocols. When students arrive at a university, they should attend any orientation programmes offered and familiarise themselves with the location of the campus security, classrooms, and other important buildings and facilities. Students should also save essential emergency numbers and have them handy to use when needed. By prioritising safety and fostering a culture of awareness, US universities endeavour to create an inclusive and secure environment conducive to international students; academic success and personal growth.

Russia warns of direct clash with West over Ukraine military aid



GNS News Agency, May 25

President Vladimir Putin's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has touched off the worst breakdown in relations between Russia and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, according to Russian and U.S. diplomats. Just two days after U.S. lawmakers approved billions of dollars in additional military aid to Ukraine, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the United States and NATO were obsessed with the idea of inflicting "strategic defeat" on Russia.

Lavrov said Western support for Ukraine was putting the United States and its allies on the verge of a direct military clash with Russia. "The Westerners are teetering dangerously on the brink of a direct military clash between nuclear powers, which is fraught with catastrophic consequences," Lavrov told a Moscow conference on non-proliferation. "Of particular concern is the fact that it is the 'troika' of Western nuclear states that are among the key sponsors of the criminal Kyiv regime, the main initiators of various provocative steps. We see serious strategic risks in this, leading to an increase in the level of nuclear danger."

Since the war began, Russia has repeatedly warned of rising nuclear risks - warnings which the United States says it has to take seriously, though U.S. officials say they have seen no change in Russian nuclear posture. Putin casts the war as part of a centuries-old battle with a decadent West which he says humiliated Russia after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 by enlarging NATO and encroaching on what Moscow considers to be Russia's historical sphere

of influence. Ukraine and its Western backers say the war is an imperial-style land grab by a corrupt dictatorship that will lead Russia into a strategic dead-end. Western leaders have vowed to work for a defeat of Russian forces in Ukraine, while ruling out any deployment of NATO personnel there. As relations have deteriorated, Russia and the United States have both voiced regret about the disintegration of the web of arms-control treaties which sought to slow the Cold War arms race and reduce the risk of nuclear war. Russia and the United States are by far the world's biggest nuclear powers, holding more than 10,600 of the world's 12,100 nuclear warheads. China has the third largest nuclear arsenal, followed by France and Britain. Lavrov said that given the current crisis there was no basis for dialogue with the United States on arms control. "In the context of an all-out hybrid war being waged against us, there is no basis for dialogue with the United States on arms control and strategic stability in general," he said. He accused the West of trying to impose restrictions on the nuclear arsenals of Russia and China while developing non-nuclear capabilities in an effort to achieve unilateral military superiority.

Lavrov said the West was building a global missile defence system which could decapitate a rival, basing nuclear weapons in Europe, basing medium- and shorter-range missiles in regions around the world and preparing to deploy weapons in space. In February, Putin said Russia opposed the deployment of nuclear weapons in space, and his defence minister denied Washington's accusations that Russia was developing a nuclear capability for space. The United States says it is developing its defence capabilities in accordance with international agreements. It says it wants only the peaceful use of outer space and that its missile defence plans are defensive. Lavrov also accused the West of waging a propaganda campaign to discredit Russia. The West's "goal is to divert attention of the international community from real threats in outer space, to achieve the allocation of additional financial resources to build up their national military space capabilities," Lavrov said. "Our priority remains the development of an international legally binding instrument that establishes reliable guarantees to prevent the deployment of weapons in outer space."

Columbia University cancels in-person classes after rabbi warns Jewish students to go home amid anti-Israel protests

GNS News Agency, May 25

Columbia University on Monday announced the cancellation of in-person classes following the arrest of over 100 people protesting against Israel on the school campus. In a statement posted on University's website on Monday, President Nemat Minouche Shafik asserted that she is "deeply saddened by what is happening on our campus", adding that the classes would take place on virtual mode to "deescalate the rancor and give us all a chance to consider next steps."

While essential personnel have been directed to report to work as per the university policy, faculty and staff have been advised to work remotely. "Our preference is that students who do not live on campus will not come to campus," the president stated. The decision came after several organisations and Jewish leaders appealed to Columbia to ensure safety of students in the wake of reports of antisemitic and derogatory remarks and acts occurring on and around its campus. Following the protest, a campus rabbi also suggested Jewish students return home for their own safety. In the statement, Shafik further stated that university administrators, a working group of Deans and faculty members will try to bring the ongoing crisis to a resolution in the coming days.

"That includes continuing discussions with the student protestors and identifying actions we can take as a community to enable us to peacefully complete the term and return to respectful engagement with each other," she stated. She urged those impacted due to protests to report such events through university channels, promising action against any language used to hurt or terrify people, including antisemitic remarks. As students across an array of communities have conveyed fears for their safety, Columbia University has introduced additional actions to address those concerns. "These tensions have been exploited and amplified by individuals who are not



affiliated with Columbia who have come to campus to pursue their own agendas," the statement stressed. Tensions on college campuses have been escalating since Israel launched war against Hamas following the October 7 attack on its territory that killed 1,200 Israelis. Over 34,000 Palestinians have died in the Israel-Hamas conflict, according to an Associated Press report. The situation at Columbia University took a turn for the worst when students established a "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" on campus last week in protest of Israel's continuous military activity in Gaza. The university sought the assistance of New York police to disperse the pro-Palestinian camp. According to Shafik, who testified on Wednesday before a House Committee probing campus antisemitism, the incident happened after the university threatened to suspend protestors for refusing to disband their camp. "The individuals who established the encampment violated a long list of rules and policies," she stated. Police detained over 100 protestors, including the daughter of Minnesota Representative Ilhan Omar, Isra Hirsi. While President Joe Biden and White House have condemned antisemitism on college campuses, the Columbia student demonstrators declared that they will keep peacefully demanding "divestment from genocide".

Bangladesh minister claims MP who went missing in Kolkata has been killed

GNS News Agency, May 25

A Bangladeshi MP of the ruling Awami League, who had been missing in Kolkata, has been killed, claimed a Bangladesh minister. Three-time MP Anwarul had come to Kolkata on May 12 and had gone to meet his friend in the city. He had told his friend that he was going to New Delhi to meet some VIPs. A Bangladeshi MP, Anwarul Azim, has been confirmed dead in Kolkata by the West Bengal Police, said a Bangladeshi Minister. Anwarul, an MP of the ruling Awami League, had come to Kolkata for medical treatment on May 12, following which he was reported to be missing. A general diary was filed by the Kolkata Police on May 18 following his disappearance. Following the filing of an initial complaint at Kolkata's Baranagar Police Station, the last location of the Bangladeshi MP was traced near the city's Newtown area, according to police sources. The three-time MP Anwarul was killed in a flat in the Newtown area, where he went to meet someone, said the police sources.

Anwarul Azim, also the president of Kaliganj Upazila Awami League, went to meet his family friend Gopal Biswas at his home in Kolkata around 7pm on May 12, sources told India Today. The next day, on June 13, Anwarul left Gopal's home to visit a doctor at 1:41 pm, saying he had to see a doctor. He also said that he would return in the evening. He boarded a taxi in front of the Calcutta Public School at Bidhan Park. After leaving, Azim, in the evening, informed his friend Gopal that he was going to Delhi and would call him after reaching there. The lawmaker cautioned his friend not to call him too. On May 15, Azim in another WhatsApp message informed



Gopal that he had reached Delhi and was with VIPs. He also added that there was no need to call him. He forwarded the same message to his personal assistant, Rouf. On June 17, after Anwarul's family could not reach him, they called up Gopal, saying they could not contact him. The family filed a police complaint in Dhaka the same day. The MP has been untraceable since then. During the enquiry, a person confessed before the police in Bangladesh that he had killed Anwarul Azim.

The same was conveyed to the police authorities in Kolkata too, police sources told India Today. However, the dead body has not been recovered from anywhere in Newtown yet. Further investigation is being conducted by the Bidhanagar Police Commissionerate regarding the matter. Subsequently, a search operation has been launched to trace the three-time Awami League MP in Kolkata.

China, Japan to discuss resuming talks after 6-year hiatus

GNS News Agency, May 25

A senior official from the Chinese Communist Party plans to meet with leaders from Japan's ruling parties to discuss resuming regular talks. The visit, planned for later this month, is the first of its kind since 2018. A senior Chinese Communist Party official plans to visit Tokyo this month to meet with leaders from Japan's ruling parties and discuss resuming regular talks between the parties for the first time since 2018, Japanese broadcaster NHK reported on Wednesday. Arrangements are being made for Liu Jianchao, who leads the Communist Party's body in charge of managing ties with foreign political parties, to travel to Japan for a meeting on May 29, NHK reported citing sources.

He will talk with the Liberal Democratic Party's Secretary-General Toshimitsu Motegi and



Natsuo Yamaguchi, the chief representative of its junior coalition party Komeito, among others. They are expected to discuss the resumption of consultative meetings between senior officials of the two countries' governing parties which used to be held around once a year but have not taken place since 2018, the broadcaster said. Representatives for the LDP and Komeito de-

clined comment. The CCP did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Ties between Asia's top two economies have been strained by issues including Tokyo's concerns about China's maritime activities in the East and South China Seas, and Beijing's protests against Japan's release of treated water from the crippled Fukushima

nuclear plant into the ocean. Liu's visit is set to come on the heels of a planned trilateral summit between political leaders from China, Japan and South Korea expected to take place in South Korea early next week - the first such summit since 2019. Liu has kept a busy schedule since taking up his post in 2022.

Israeli military intelligence chief resigns over October 7 Hamas attack

GNS News Agency, May 25

The head of Israel's military intelligence directorate resigned on Monday over the failures surrounding Hamas' unprecedented Oct. 7 attack, the military said, becoming the first senior figure to step down over his role in the deadliest assault in Israel's history.

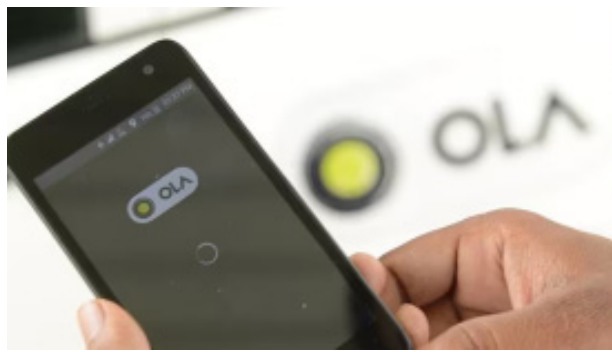
Maj. Gen. Aharon Haliva's resignation sets the stage for what's expected to be more fallout from Israel's top security brass over Hamas' attack, when militants blasted through Israel's border defenses, rampaged through Israeli communities unchallenged for hours and killed 1,200 people, most civilians, while taking roughly 250 hostages into Gaza. That attack set off the war against Hamas in Gaza, now in its seventh month. "The intelligence directorate under my command did not live up to the task we were entrusted with. I carry that black day with me ever since, day after day, night after night. I will carry the pain with me forever," Haliva wrote in his resignation letter, which was provided by the military. Shortly after the war, Haliva had publicly said that he shouldered blame for not preventing the assault as the head of the military department responsible for providing the government and the military with intelligence warnings and daily alerts. The military said in the statement that the military chief of staff accepted Haliva's request to resign and thanked him for his service. Haliva, as well as other military and security leaders, were widely expected to resign in response to the glaring failures that led up to Oct. 7 and the scale of its ferocity. But the timing of the resignations has been unclear because Israel is still fighting Hamas in Gaza and

battling the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah in the north. Tensions with Iran are also at a high following attacks between the two enemies. While Haliva and others have accepted blame for failing to stop the attack, others have stopped short, most notably Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has said he will answer tough questions about his role but has not outright acknowledged direct responsibility for allowing the attack to unfold. He has also not indicated that he will step down.

The Hamas attack, which came on a Jewish holiday, caught Israel and its vaunted security establishment entirely off guard. Israelis' sense of faith in their military — seen by most Jews as one of the country's most trustworthy institutions — was shattered in the face of Hamas' onslaught. The resignation could help restore some of that trust. The attack set off the devastating war that has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to local health officials, at least two-thirds of them children and women.

It has devastated Gaza's two largest cities, and driven 80% of the territory's population to flee to other parts of the besieged coastal enclave. The war has sparked a humanitarian catastrophe that has drawn warnings of imminent famine. The attack also sent shock waves through the region. Tensions have rocked the Israeli-occupied West Bank, as well as cities and towns within Israel itself. On Monday, Israeli police said that a car had slammed into pedestrians in Jerusalem, wounding three lightly, and security camera video showed two men exiting the car with a rifle before the fleeing scene. Police later said they arrested the two men.

Ola, Uber start subscription based plans for auto drivers: What changes for you? Will rides be cheaper?



Ride-hailing platforms Ola and Uber are offering subscription based plans for auto-rickshaw drivers on their platforms. This will replace charging a booking fee or commission on every transaction. Ola has rolled out the model in Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad while Uber launched the same in six cities starting with Chennai, Kochi and Visakhapatnam, Economic Times reported citing people in the know.

The move could help Ola and Uber bypass 5%

goods and services tax (GST) applicable on auto-rickshaw rides facilitated by them, the report added, but it could lead to disputes between the operators and tax authorities with lack of clarity. Ola and Uber followed a commission-based revenue model where the platform keeps a share of the fare for every ride and passes on the rest to driver partners. As per the model, these platforms charge a per-day or per-week fee to driver partners to get discovered by customers.

What Uber said on the new model?

An Uber spokesperson confirmed the change as per the report and said that the service is in more than half a dozen cities as it "wants to give the optionality to its riders since many companies are already operating on this model". "In a highly competitive scenario, by deploying the SaaS model and not paying the 5% tax, some companies are gaining a cost arbitrage... This makes it imperative for their competitors to also deploy the same model," a senior executive said as per the report. Discover the complete story of India's general elections on our exclusive Elections Product! Access all the content absolutely

India exports over 45,000 tonnes onion after lifting ban New Delhi

India exports over 45,000 tonnes onion after lifting ban New Delhi. The world's biggest vegetable exporter banned exports of the bulb last December and then extended it in March, after a rise in prices triggered by sluggish production.

India has exported more than 45,000 tonnes of onion since the ban on outbound shipments was lifted early this month, a top government official said. These exports provided relief to farmers after curbs were imposed to keep domestic supplies steady ahead of general elections. The world's biggest vegetable exporter banned exports of the bulb last December and then extended it in March, after a rise in prices triggered by sluggish production.

"Since the ban was lifted, more than 45,000 tonnes of onions have been exported, mostly to the Middle East and Bangladesh," Nidhi Khare, Secretary of the Consumer Affairs Ministry, told PTI. To keep onion prices affordable during the election period, the government on May 4 lifted the ban but imposed a minimum export price (MEP) of USD 550 per tonne. Khare said the forecast of a good monsoon this year will ensure better sowing of kharif



(summer) crops, including onion from June onwards. State-owned agencies have started procuring onions from the recent rabi (winter) harvest to build a targeted 5,00,000-tonne buffer stock for the current year, she added. The country's onion production is expected to fall 16 per cent from a year earlier to 25.47 million tonnes in the 2023-24 crop year due to lower output in key growing regions like Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, according to the Agriculture Ministry's first estimates.

Consumer confidence highest in India among 29 countries in May, monthly survey shows

The consumer confidence improved in India in the month of May according to a monthly survey. The study also showed that India had the highest consumer confidence among the 29 countries surveyed. The survey was conducted by London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG), a stock exchange and financial information company, and Ipsos, a market research and polling company. According to the survey, India's national index score for consumer sentiment stood at 67.8 percentage point, highest among 29 countries, which included the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Japan. India is followed by Indonesia (63.2), and Mexico (61.0), the only countries with a National Index score of 60 or higher. The survey showed that only nine other countries stand in the list of National Index above the 50-point mark: Singapore (58.0), Thailand (55.8), the U.S. (54.3), Sweden (54.1), United Kingdom (52.8), the Netherlands (51.9), Brazil (51.7), Poland (50.3), and Australia (50.3).

As per the survey, in May 2024, India recorded an improvement in the overall sentiment, with the upside of 0.8 percentage points. Consumer sentiment is measured across 4 sub-indices with the sentiment showed a mix bag of performance for the period under review. The PCSI Employment Confidence ("Jobs") Sub-Index moved up 1.9 percentage points and PCSI Economic Expectations ("Expectations") Sub-Index was up 1.7 percentage points. The PCSI Current Personal Financial Conditions ("Current Conditions") Sub-Index, however, was down 0.6 percentage points with the PCSI Investment Climate ("Investment") Sub-Index too down 0.1 percentage points.

"India is the most buoyant market across all markets covered in the survey with a National Index score of 67.8 percentage points and we also see an upturn in consumer sentiment in May which augurs well for growth and attracting more FDI – as we see the sentiment for the economy and jobs is seeing a major boost. The Indian economy and been showing a lot of resilience and is largely defined by domestic consumption and though it



has been on the radar of global companies for pumping in most investments, as India is a highly growth oriented Market," said Amit Adarkar, CEO, Ipsos India. "Also with the new financial kicking in, hiring is back on grid and the job market is looking up. Though the sentiment around personal finances and for investments and savings continues to be somewhat depressed, which could impact consumption around discretionary spends and put a strain on daily spends of households," he added. The survey is conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online survey platform and IndiaBus platform specifically for India. The survey is first reported each month by LSEG as the Primary Consumer Sentiment Index (PCSI).

The sample in India consists of approximately 2,200 individuals of whom 1,800 were interviewed face-to-face with remaining being in virtual mode. The report claims the data from every country is weighted so that the composition of the sample reflects the demographic profile of the adult population as per the most recent census data. "The global indices and averages reported here reflect the average result for all the countries and markets in which the survey was conducted. They have not been adjusted to the population size of each country or market and are not intended to suggest 'total' results."

Paytm Q4 results: Net loss widens to Rs 550 crore following banking unit wind down

Fintech firm One97 Communications Ltd that owns Paytm widened its loss to Rs 550 crore in the fourth quarter of FY22, according to the company's regulatory filing. The company has reported a consolidated loss of Rs 167.5 crore during the year-ago period. The revenue from operations of Paytm declined 2.8 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to Rs 2,267.1 from Rs 2,464.6 crore in the corresponding quarter of the financial year 2023.

However, the company's loss narrowed to Rs 1,422.4 crore for the fiscal year 2024 against a loss of Rs 1,776.5 crore in FY23. For FY24, the annual revenue of Paytm increased by about 25 per cent to Rs 9,978 crore from Rs 7,990.3 crore in FY23. The company has estimated a loss of 300-500 crore due to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s action against its banking unit Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL). The RBI had barred PPBL from accepting deposits, credit transactions, or top-ups in any customer accounts, wallets, and FASTags from March 15 onwards. Revenue from the payments busi-



ness having roughly 69 per cent, rose 7 per cent YoY, but was down 9 per cent sequentially. As per the company, following the RBI's strictures, a number of lending partners halted loans given out via the platform, thus impacting its ability to earn fee income. "Our Q4 FY 2024 results were impacted by temporary disruption on account of UPI (Unified Payments Interface) transition etc and permanent disruption because of PPBL embargo."

University of Birmingham undertakes project to prevent caesarean section deaths in India and Tanzania



GNS News Agency, Feb 1

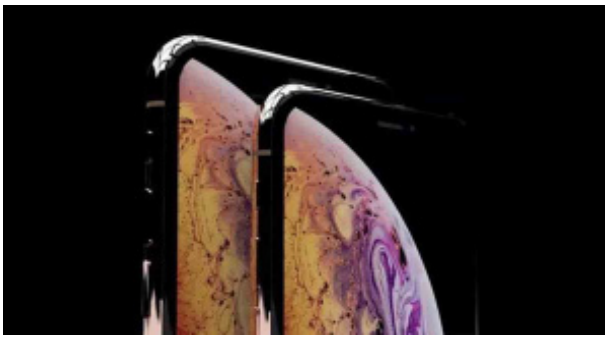
A research team at the University of Birmingham in the UK is spearheading a pilot project aimed at helping save lives of women giving birth by caesarean section in developing countries like India and Tanzania. In low-and middle-income nations, maternal fatalities after caesarean sections are 100 times higher than in high-income ones, with up to a third of all newborns dying, according to a review published in The Lancet. The review titled 12 million pregnancies has considered 196 studies from 67 low-and middle-income countries. Backed by the £2.2 million Medical Research Council funding, the C-Safe project will – target healthcare professionals, pregnant women and health systems – initially focusing on India and Tanzania, a press release issued by the University of Birmingham said on Friday.

The five-year programme aims to reduce the risk of post-natal death – for both mothers and babies – as well as life-long health problems that affect women's quality of life and ability to safely have more children, it said. "Many issues contribute to the high burden of unsafe and unnecessary caesarean sections in LMICs. There is no single solution to this complex problem, and we need a concerted strategy to improve the safety of such proce-

dures and ensure they are only done when needed," Shakila Thangaratnam, Professor of Maternal and Perinatal Health at the University of Birmingham, and co-Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Global Women's Health said. "We will work with women, their support networks, and healthcare providers to develop interventions that reduce the risk of caesarean sections in LMICs – ultimately helping to save thousands of lives. "C-Safe will ensure caesarean sections are done for the right reasons, as well as improving their safety and promoting safe, respectful care in labour resulting in vaginal births, including safe delivery with instruments," she explained.

The intervention will use a comprehensive training programme for health workers, whilst empowering local opinion leaders and mothers in four hospitals each in India and Tanzania – covering 30,000 births in total, the release stated. From 1990 to 2017, a quarter of all women who died while giving birth in low- and middle-income nations underwent a caesarean section, according to Lancet. The reasons for poor outcomes after caesarean section in low-and middle-income nations include unsafe practices in performing the procedure and sub-standard care in labour not ending in vaginal birth – leading to complicated caesarean sections in advanced labour, according to the press release. Additionally, attitudes towards caesarean section and use of vacuum or forceps, marginalisation of midwives, dysfunctional teamwork, a culture of blame and medico-legal concerns, influence of family members and communities in decision-making, poor communication skills between women and healthcare providers and amongst clinicians, and inability to determine why caesarean sections are performed worsen the problem, it elaborated. The five-year programme will promote safe caesarean section through improving procedures around operations and reducing the number of unnecessary procedures by increasing vaginal births. The research team includes doctors, midwives, experts in study design, patient and public involvement groups, trainers and policymakers, it added.

Apple might soon repair Face ID without replacing the iPhone



stores and authorized providers would perform same-unit repairs when a phone suffers from Face ID issues instead of replacing the device. As described by Apple in an internal memo, the move will reduce the carbon footprint of its products by decreasing the number of whole-unit repairs. If it happens, it also means owners of iPhone XS models and newer won't need to set up a new iPhone and possibly lose data just because of a Face ID problem.

It's not clear yet when this new repair process will be implemented. The company has only told technicians they will receive training and documentation at a later date. The news comes a few months after Apple announced the new "Self Service Repair" program, another move that could also make repairs easier. Through the initiative, Apple will instruct customers how to fix their devices at home while selling them the parts and tools. Customers will also receive recycling credit when they return their used parts after fixing their devices. Apple said the "Self Service Repair" program would launch early this year in the US and then expand to other countries.

Washington: Authorized Apple service technicians may be able to make Face ID repairs on iPhone XS and newer phones without needing to replace the entire iPhone. As per The Verge, the tech giant may soon grant Apple Stores and Apple Authorized Service Providers access to a new TrueDepth Camera service part that consists of Face ID and front camera modules. As a result,

This hack will make your laundry smell like heaven (naturally)



Forget about those traditional dryer sheets and detergents with all their fragrances and chemicals. Instead, there's a simple trick using essential oils that'll leave your clothes smelling like a field of lavender, without any toxic stuff. Shayna Terese Taylor, shares this hack on her Instagram reel. For a calming and refreshing laundry scent, she crafts a natural alternative using 10 drops each of lavender and bergamot essential oils. Absorbed by reusable cotton pads and placed in a mesh bag, this DIY sachet releases its fragrance during the wash cycle, leaving clothes smelling fresh. She reveals, "You can also add in some extra drops into your laundry detergent when you wash the clothes too!" Rashmi Chopra, founder and managing director, Ecloset, says, "Essential oils like lavender and bergamot can be effective in neutralising odours and imparting a fresh scent to clothes, but their effectiveness compared to conventional dryer sheets or detergents can vary depending on personal preference and the concentration used. "While dryer sheets and detergents typically provide a consistent and familiar scent, essential oils offer a more customisable and natural alternative." Chopra recommends that when using essential oils in laundry, there are some potential drawbacks and considerations to keep in mind.

"Certain essential oils, especially those with strong colours like dark greens or reds, may stain light-coloured fabrics if not properly diluted or dispersed. Additionally, some fabrics may be more prone to retaining oil residues, potentially affecting their texture or appearance over time."

Can the use of essential oils in the laundry process impact the longevity or quality of clothing over time? The use of essential oils in the dryer or laundry process may impact the longevity or quality of clothing over time, Chopra reveals, particularly if oils are not properly diluted or if fabrics are not compatible with certain oils.

She explains, "Oils with high concentrations of natural compounds like citral or limonene may have a slight

degreasing effect, which could affect the durability of fabrics or contribute to colour fading with repeated use. "Safety concerns or precautions to keep in mind when using essential oils in the laundry safety concerns and precautions should be taken into consideration when using essential oils in the laundry, asserts Chopra, especially in terms of potential skin sensitivities or allergic reactions. "It's important to properly dilute essential oils in a carrier substance, such as water or a mild detergent, to minimise the risk of skin irritation. Additionally, individuals with known allergies or sensitivities to specific essential oils should avoid their use altogether or perform patch tests on a small area of fabric before using them in larger quantities."

The invisible signs of multiple sclerosis

Hyderabad: May 30th is World MS Day and it is important to raise awareness of Multiple Sclerosis, a complex and often mTThis chronic condition of the Central Nervous System (CNS)—encompassing the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves—particularly impacts young individuals in their prime.

Symptoms:

The Iceberg Metaphor: MS symptoms vary widely, from minor visual disturbances to total paralysis, significantly impacting daily life. Using an iceberg as a metaphor, the visible symptoms of MS are just the tip, while the larger, hidden part represents the numerous invisible challenges faced by those with the disease. Despite appearing "normal" to onlookers, MS patients endure many unseen struggles. Heat Sensitivity: Arti, a vivacious 40-year-old, experiences a burning sensation in her feet that often forces her to abandon social activities. Managing heat sensitivity is crucial, as increased body temperature can worsen MS symptoms, causing fatigue and discomfort. Conversely, cold weather also poses challenges, often isolating patients indoors. Fatigue: Fatigue is the most commonly reported and debilitating symptom of MS. Despite its prevalence, it remains poorly understood and underemphasized due to its subjective nature, making it difficult to measure and manage.

Pain: Pain, another hidden symptom, presents an ongoing challenge for MS patients. It is resistant to conventional pain relief and stems from nerve damage, leading to persistent discomfort and significantly affecting the quality of life.

Payal Rajput accuses Rakshana producer of threatening to ban her from Telugu cinema for not promoting film over 'unpaid dues'; producers council responds

After Payal Rajput levelled allegations against him, director-producer Prandeep Thakore revealed that he has already lodged a complaint against her with the Telugu Film Producers Council. Actor Payal Rajput said that though Rakshana's filming happened in 2019 and 2020, the film remains unreleased to date. Actor Payal Rajput has accused the producer of her delayed film Rakshana of threatening to ban her from Telugu cinema because she refused to promote the film without the "clearance of dues". Meanwhile, the producer revealed that he has already lodged a complaint against her with the Telugu Film Producers Council (TFPC), Hindustan Times reported.

In a social media post on Sunday evening, Payal, who rose to fame through movies such as RX 100, Venky Mama, Shava Ni Girdhari Lal, Head Bush and Mangalavaaram, explained her side of the story. "I have a film, Rakshana, shot in 2019 and 2020, originally named 5Ws. The release was delayed and now they're trying to benefit from my recent success without clearing dues and demanding a promotion. My team communicated my unavailability due to prior commitments, but they threatened to ban me from Telugu cinema," she mentioned in the statement. "Our team attempted to negotiate for digital promotion of Rakshana with Payal, suggesting clearing dues with compensation first. However, they refused to compromise, using my name in a way that tarnishes my image, which is unacceptable." "In recent meetings, they used inappropriate language, stating that the distributor asked for Payal to showcase certain assets, and if she didn't, they wouldn't accept the film. We are now considering legal action because they are not settling the payments and planning to release the film without my authorisation or consent," she added. Meanwhile, in a media statement released on Monday, the TFPC noted that the producer



of the project had filed a complaint against the actor with the council in March. In the complaint, the film's director-producer Prandeep Thakore alleged that Payal was not allotting him dates to promote the film, which was a violation of the agreement between the two parties. "Thakore mentioned that he planned to release his movie Rakshana on 19.4.24 and requested Payal to give dates for promotions of the film, but she refused to do so saying that the film is four years old and advised to release it in OTT," the statement mentioned further.

The statement also claimed that the producer was willing to pay the Rs 6 lakh due, provided she participated in the promotions, but she failed to do so. Asserting that Thakore contacted the actor's manager on Saturday morning to "resolve the issue amicably," TFPC noted that his efforts were, however, unsuccessful. The council also condemned Payal's claim that there were attempts to ban her from the industry, noting that the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce (TFCC) and TFPC "put in all efforts to convince the artiste through her manager for over one and a half months to honour the agreement; but, in vain."

Manisha Koirala meets UK PM Rishi Sunak

Actor Manisha Koirala recently met with UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at 10 Downing Street. She was representing her country, Nepal, as it celebrated 100 years of its 'friendship treaty' with the UK. Manisha took to Instagram and shared pictures from her meeting with the PM. "It was an honor to be invited to 10 Downing Street to celebrate United Kingdom - Nepal relations and 100 years of our friendship treaty. It was such a pleasure to hear the Prime Minister @rishisunakmp speak fondly of our country #nepal. I took the liberty of inviting the P.M. and his family to come trek to Everest Base Camp," Manisha wrote in the caption.

She also expressed her elation over learning how most attendees during the meet had watched her latest release, Heeramandi. "Can you believe that most of the attendees had seen #heeramandionnetflix and loved it? I was thrilled," she added. Meanwhile, on the acting front, Manisha is being lauded for her role as Mallika Jaan in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's debut web series Heeramandi.

A few days ago, in a lengthy note on Instagram, Manisha chronicled her journey of resuming work after battling ovarian cancer, portraying an important character in the lavish period drama, and getting her due as a female actor thanks to streamers. The note read, "Heeramandi has been a significant milestone. As a 53-year-old actor who has bagged an important role in a high-profile web series, I am overjoyed that I'm not stuck playing insignificant peripheral roles, thanks to OTT platforms and changing audience profiles. Finally, female actors, technicians, and other professionals have started getting the long overdue and well-deserved good quality of work and respect in a professional environment. I am fortunate to be a part of this evolving era." Manisha recalled the doubts and anxiety that plagued her when she started shooting for Sanjay Leela Bhansali's directorial. She added, "Today, when I am receiving so many accolades, I can't help but remember the doubts and anxiety that plagued me when I was about to start shooting. Still recovering from the dreaded C, would my body be strong enough to deal with the intense shooting schedules, heavy costumes, and jewelry, and perform a role requiring so much nuance and effortless effort?" She also shared the challenges faced during performing particular sequences. "The fountain sequence proved the most physically challenging. It required me to be immersed in a water fountain for over 12 hours. That tested my resilience! Even though Sanjay had thoughtfully ensured that



the water was warm and clean, over the hours, the water turned muddy, (because my team members, the Cinematographer, and the art director's team were getting into the water to work around the scene.) Every single pore in my body was soaked in that muddy water. Even though I was beyond exhaustion by the end of the shoot, I felt a deep happiness within my heart. My body had taken the stress and remained resilient. I knew I had passed a critical physical test," Manisha continued. The actor concluded her post by expressing gratitude for all the love showered on her. She stated, "To you, who think your time has come and gone, whether it's due to age, illness or any setback, never give up! You never know what could be waiting for you around the bend! I'm deeply grateful for your love and generosity of spirit! #50andfabulous #heeramandionnetflix #netflix #grateful #hope." In the show, Manisha shared screen space with Sonakshi Sinha, Richa Chadha, Sanjeeda Shaikh and Aditi Rao Hydari among others.

Pakistani actor Mahira Khan meets her doppelgänger, internet calls them 'twins'

Pakistani actress Mahira Khan, who was seen in Raees, alongside Shah Rukh Khan, recently crossed paths with her doppelgänger, social media influencer Kurasah Anwer Sheikh, at an airport. Kurasah took to Instagram to share the uncanny encounter, posting a picture of the two posing for the cameras. The photo instantly sparked a wave of reactions from followers, with many noting the striking resemblance between the two women.

In the image, Mahira sports a chic monochrome suit while Kurasah opts for a vibrant green kurti. The comment section was flooded with observations about their similarities, with one user jokingly asking if they were sure they weren't sisters. Others exclaimed "Omg Duplicate copy," "2 beauties in 1 frame. Same Same but different," and "Twins." Kurasah Anwer Sheikh has previously garnered attention for her remarkable likeness to the Zindagi Gulzar Hai actor. This chance meeting between the two has only served to fuel the fascination surrounding their shared features.

Meanwhile, Mahira has been in the spotlight recently for an incident in which an object was thrown at her on stage during an event. Responding to the situation, Mahira shared a video clip on Instagram along with a lengthy note, emphasising the importance of maintaining safety in such settings. "No one should think it's ok to throw something on stage, even if it's a flower wrapped



Following her split from ex-husband Ali Askari, Mahira tied the knot with businessman Salim Karim last year. She shares a 13-year-old son named Azlan with Ali.

up in a paper plane," she wrote. Following her split from ex-husband Ali Askari, Mahira tied the knot with businessman Salim Karim last year. She shares a 13-year-old son named Azlan with Ali. On the work front, Mahira's fans look forward to seeing her alongside Fawad Khan and Sanam Saeed in the upcoming Netflix series Jo Bachay Hain Sang Samait Lo. The show is an official adaptation of Farhat Ishtiaq's bestselling Urdu novel.

Sarabhai Vs Sarabhai once again: Ratna Pathak Shah, Rupali Ganguly play Maya and Monisha, fans demand 'encore'

Ratna Pathak Shah and Rupali Ganguly are back as Maya Sarabhai and Monisha Sarabhai, taking their fans down the memory lane. The duo, who first essayed the characters in 2004, reprised their characters for a Flipkart ad campaign. The show Sarabhai Vs Sarabhai was a fan favourite and continues to enjoy a cult following.

Ratna, as the 'high society' Maya Sarabhai, sneers at the discounted groceries her middle-class daughter-in-law Monisha has to offer. She says, "Yeh kya hai discounted items, dry fruits at 45% off. Monisha beta yeh sab tumhare maayke see aaya hai na." Monisha explains the discounts while offering her a favourite — 'moongfali ki chutney'. A disdainful Ratna replies, "Peanut butter Monisha, moongfali ki chutney is just so down market."

This special collaboration between Rupali and Ratna caught the attention of their fans who flooded the ad's comments section. A user wrote, "Love them together. Best ad ever." Another user wrote, "Best ad" followed by a laughing and heart emoji. Another set of fans expressed their desire to see the duo again on the television screen. "Love to see both of you again"

Talking about the show, Ratna had earlier told Humans of Bombay in an interview, "Everybody talks about



the acting in Sarabhai. Of course, it is the more visible thing, but it's the writing, the direction that made the program work. And the way it was presented by the producers and everyone. It was a show which was confident of itself. It came out with a bang. That made a difference." Sarabhai vs Sarabhai aired between 2004 and 2006 and returned with a second season on Hostar in 2017. Sarabhai Vs Sarabhai, written by Aatish Kapadia, was directed by Devan Bhojani and was produced by Jamnadas Majethia's Hats Off Productions. It also starred Satish Shah, Sumeet Raghavan and Rajesh Kumar.

Neena Gupta confesses she wasn't happy shooting Panchayat 3 in peak summer due to cast's date issues: 'I was complaining to myself'

As fans eagerly await the release of Panchayat Season 3, the show's cast is busy with promotions, sharing various behind-the-scenes anecdotes. In a recent interview, Neena Gupta shared how they shot the new season in blazing heat due to date issues of cast members. While she wasn't thrilled with the arrangement, she accepted it in the interest of the show.

Talking to Mirchi Plus, Neena said, "I am happiest when I am working. At that time, I am not bothered about sand, 47-degree heat, and all if the work is good. When we did Season 3 of Panchayat, we again shot in peak summer because of date issues of people. We would keep wet cloths on our faces and necks. No matter how many umbrellas you have, when you are getting ready for a shot, before 'sound' and 'action', some time is taken to get the shot ready."

Explaining the situation further, she said, "In one shot, I was standing under the blazing sun, and the director announced 'sound, action,' so the umbrellas were removed. But it took some time to get the shot started, and I was burning. I was complaining to myself, saying, 'Ye kya hai? (What is this?)' Then I realized, and this is very important in life, that you can't run away from this, you have to give the shot. So, accept it, and the moment I did that, I was okay." During the interaction, Neena was



asked about her film choices and how she has portrayed strong women in the past. While Neena agreed that she is now in a position to pick and choose her roles, it wasn't the case for most of her career.

She said, "I didn't have an option to choose my characters for most of my life. That phase has passed. Now, I do what excites me, but I can't do something that is very wrong and harmful. For instance, I recently got an offer to star in an advertisement, and ads give you a lot of money, sometimes even more than films. But I refused it because it was for a brand that is not good for our health."

Vir Das says even a great actor like Ranbir Kapoor cannot recreate Raju Srivastav's comedic brilliance on screen: 'Actors struggle to be themselves'

Comedian Vir Das highlighted the essential difference between an actor and a stand-up comic, and said that the best actors in the world cannot recreate a genius bit of comedy because it is intrinsically tied to the personality of the performer. He cited the example of the late comedian Raju Srivastav, and a bit that he used to do about going for a meal at a five-star hotel. Appearing on The Streaming Show podcast, Vir said that even a great actor like Ranbir Kapoor cannot replicate the bit because what made it resonate with audiences was the fact that Raju Srivastav was face and voice behind it. He said, "Raju Srivastav's greatest bit is this five-star hotel mein lunch bit. Please find it and watch it on YouTube. The waiter is judging Raju Srivastav, and he's judging the waiter for being in a five-star restaurant. If you transcribe that whole bit, and you gave it to the best actor in the world, you give it to Ranbir Kapoor, they wouldn't be able to do it. What makes that bit work is being Raju Srivastav. It's not even the writing that can help you."

Vir was responding to the host's complaints about actors attempting to play comic's on screen, usually to unimpressive results. Explaining the primary difference between actors and comedians, he continued, "An actor is a person who doesn't know how to be themselves, and a comedian is someone who is completely themselves."



That is the essential difference between the two of us. Many actors find it hard to be themselves in life, or in an interview. Stand-up comedians fail unless we are ourselves. Our big struggle is to spend 20 years trying to be who I am (in real life) on stage. That's the big struggle. But actors have to get beyond baba ka juice and wheat-grass smoothie and all that... For an actor to have a sense of self is very hard." Vir is coming off the most successful stand-up special of his career, Vir Das: Landing, which won an International Emmy. Coincidentally, Ranbir is coming off the most successful film of his career, the controversial Animal.

Mohanlal says 'Thalapathy' Vijay personally contacted him to play role of his father in Jilla: 'It's fortunate that he...'

In his 44-year career as an actor, Mohanlal has appeared in over 350 films across Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi and Kannada languages, winning hearts everywhere. From Mani Ratnam's epic political drama Iruvar and Ram Gopal Varma's gangster saga Company to Chakri Toleti's Unnaipol Oruvan, Giriraj's Mythri and Koratala Siva's Janatha Garage, Mohanlal's performances in non-Malayalam films have mostly been met with rave responses.

Among these, RT Neason's Jilla (2014), in which the Malayalam superstar shared the screen with "Thalapathy" Vijay, stands out for its blockbuster success. Cinema Anatomy | 34 films, first State Award, exceptional performances and superstardom: How Mohanlal, at 26, altered the course of his journey in just

one year

Revolving around the conflict between a crime boss and his adopted son, played by Mohanlal and Vijay, respectively, Jilla ran for over 100 days in theatres and reportedly grossed over Rs 85 crore. Despite the story and treatment not being particularly fresh or significant, the on-screen chemistry between the two stars was widely acclaimed. Recently, Mohanlal opened up about the movie and shared that Vijay had personally contacted him to play the role in Jilla. On his 64th birthday on Tuesday, during a special episode of the sixth season of the Bigg Boss Malayalam reality show, which Mohanlal hosts, a contestant mentioned that Jilla was one of her favourite films of his. Responding to the contestant's words, Mohanlal said, "Part of the credit should go to Vijay."

No wrestling trials before Olympics, quota winners to go to Paris bar injury



GNS News Agency, May 25

In its latest flip-flop in pursuit of stability, the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) declared that there will be no trials to choose India's representatives for the 2024 Olympics. The WFI insisted this was a one-off exemption and should not be considered a precedent for the future.

However, all the Paris-bound grapplers will be monitored for fitness at a Ranking Series tournament in June, and at a training camp thereafter. The WFI kept doors open for last-minute drama adding a rider that any wrestler found wanting in fitness could be replaced through trials before July 8, the last date for submitting entries. This was necessitated as 53kg hope Antim Panghal has not competed at any event in the last 18 months and her fitness remains uncertain, though the federation did not name any wrestler. The six quota winners – 5 in women and 1 in men – will head to Paris without having to undergo another round of selections, it was announced after the executive body meeting on Tuesday. This effectively means Vinesh Phogat will contest in the 50kg division, Antim Panghal will line up in 53kg and Tokyo silver medalist Ravi Dahiya will not get a shot at a second medal, with Aman Sehrawat scheduled to compete in men's 57 kg. Anshu Malik (57kg), Nisha Dahiya (68kg) and Reetika Hooda (76kg) are the other quota winners, expected to travel to Paris. Head coach Virender Dahiya and men's freestyle head coach Jagminder Singh were consulted ahead of the selection committee meeting.

PTI reported that the no-trials decision wouldn't necessarily be a precedent. "It was unanimously decided by the selection committee that all the quota-earning wrestlers have been exempted from the selection trials for 2024 Paris Olympic Games only as a one-time exception in current peculiar circumstances, but this decision will not be applicable for any other future selection criteria for which the WFI Regulations for Selection of Wrestlers for participation in the National Coaching Camp/International Competitions should be followed," it quoted the minutes of the meeting. In established wrestling nations with prolific medal counts – from USA to Japan, Iran to Russia – trials are held to choose the in-form wrestler after quotas are secured. The Wrestling Federation of India, which had never warmed up to that system and followed the practice of sending quota winners till Tokyo, had announced in 2021 that trials would be held to pick the 2024 squad. Vinesh had recently asked for clarity on the schedule for trials while the WFI said it had received requests from other quota winners to not hold trials.

"We discussed the issue and both chief coaches were also of the view that trials could lead to injuries and impact India's medal chances. So we have decided not to hold trials," WFI president Sanjay Singh was reported as saying by PTI, after the meeting. The wrestlers will be kept on their toes though at the Budapest Ranking Series from June 6-9. Singh added, "We have to ensure that no wrestler carries any injury into the Olympics. So, instead of trials, the Indian coaches will assess the quota winners at the Ranking Series event and at the following training camp in Budapest. If the coaches find that someone is not fit, we may then look for a replacement in that particular category. We will hold a selection trial before July 8 in that weight class." The decision to not conduct trials will leave a bunch of wrestlers dismayed after four top finishers were informed in each category to stay prepared for a possible ultimate trial, after the Sonepat and Patiala qualifiers in March. Those likely to feel aggrieved are Sarita Mor in 57kg and Tokyo medalist Ravi Dahiya in men's 57kg. However, the quota-earners had argued that there was very little time left for the Olympics, with challenges of making weight twice, and fear of injury looming. They would rather enter preparation mode and test themselves at international invitationals.

Ricky Ponting says he is perplexed about the treatment Virat Kohli gets in India

GNS News Agency, May 25

IPL match 2024 playoffs scenario: RCB can still qualify for the IPL playoffs, but they will need some help from other teams. (PHOTO: PTI) Royal Challengers Bengaluru batter Virat Kohli tosses his bat after his dismissal during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 T20 cricket match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Gujarat Titans, at M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru, Former Australia captain slammed the critics who feels Virat Kohli should not be picked in India's T20 squad. The legendary cricketer says the former India captain should be the "first pick" in India's playing XI in the T20 team because of his class and experience.

"He (Kohli) is the first pick for me for India. So, class and experience like that, you can't replace. It's funny with Virat. I think people in India just always try to find a reason not to pick him or a reason why he's maybe not as good as some of these other guys in the T20 game," the former Australian captain and Delhi Capitals head coach told ICC. Kohli's sublime form in the ongoing IPL has seen him leading the run-chart with 708 runs from 14 innings. Ponting says Kohli should open the innings with captain Rohit Sharma at next month's T20 World Cup in the West Indies and USA.

Orange Cap Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli plays a shot during an Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 T20 cricket match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Chennai Super Kings, at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, in Bengaluru, "They (selectors) have still got a decision to make (on the opening pair) because (Yashasvi) Jaiswal is in that squad and one thing they haven't got a lot in their team is left-hand bat-



ters. So they've got a decision to make with Jaiswal (batting position), but I'm pretty sure that they'll go with Kohli and Rohit Sharma (as openers)," said Ponting. "He can play his role at the top. And if you've got the right guys around him scoring (like) Suryakumar (Yadav)... Rohit Sharma's going to have a high strike rate. These other guys can go in there and play their way." Kohli has scored a century, his eighth overall, this IPL season and five half-tons, a feat that has helped PCB make a dramatic turnaround to make the playoffs with six straight wins. Ponting does feel that the strike rates might have taken precedence over averages in recent times, but Kohli's utility to the Indian team can never be underestimated. "The mantra I think for the teams three or four years ago, was making sure that someone at the top of the order made 80 or 100, even if it took them 60 balls, it didn't really matter. I think it's sort of shifting now to be more of a strike rate based game where you can have a massive impact on a game with a 40 off 15 balls rather than getting an 80 off 55 balls sort of thing," added Ponting.

KKR's Mitchell Starc goes full blast to deliver when it matters in Qualifier 1

GNS News Agency, May 25

KKR's Mitchell Starc celebrates the wicket of Shahbaz Ahmed at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. (Express photo by Nirmal Harindran) KKR's Mitchell Starc celebrates the wicket of Shahbaz Ahmed at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. Synopsis: Mitchell Starc blew away the SRH's vaunted top order with pacy swing, leaving them wobbling at 39 for 4 in 5 overs, a position from which they never quite recovered. Venkatesh Iyer and Shreyas Iyer capitalised on the decent start provided by Sunil Narine to chase down the 160-run target in just 13.4 overs. Sometimes, it pays to be brave. Like KKR were with the new ball. Mitchell Starc and Vaibhav Arora kept the ball full, had the ball swing late, and triggered a stunning collapse in the Powerplay. SRH were 4 down in five dramatic overs, and later once Heinrich Klaasen too fell, it was clear that the writing on the winner's wall was going to be in Bengali, unless something sensational happened in the chase. It didn't and KKR sealed a spot in the final of the IPL 2024. At one point in the game, at the KKR dugout Gautam Gambhir, who said recently that people don't come to see him smile but win, even allowed his face to crease into what seemed like a smile before he quickly ironed it out. It was the other man who wore only wry smiles in the first half of an uneventful tournament, Mitch Starc, who did the main damage, picking up three of the first four wickets. A couple of months before the tournament began, Starc had dismissed talk of him using change of pace in T20s and announced that he was going to stick to his strengths: full, pacy and swingy. The first ball was interesting: well outside the off stump, away from the reach of the left-hander Travis Head. On air, former Australian opener Matthew Hayden had begun to slip into his hasty verdict

that it was a mistake as it showed that Starc wasn't going to stick to his strengths of attacking the stumps. He needn't have feared as the next ball was a cannon fired at the stumps. It still wouldn't have been enough but it also shaped away late – and that combo was venomous enough to head in. The moustached opener had shaped into an almighty on-the-up heave but the ball curled away to flatten out the off and the middle stumps. SRH now needed their other aggressor in Abhishek Sharma to strut around, but he too was done in by the brave decision to keep the ball full. It was Arora, who has the ability to shape the ball either way, with the blow, curving one from the off and middle line. Unsurprisingly, Sharma went for the big aerial off drive but the late movement had the ball slice off the outer half for a simple catch at covers. Two down for nothing, and SRH had begun to wobble. Mitchell Starc cleaned up Travis Head for a duck. (Express Photo by Nirmal Harindran) Mitchell Starc cleaned up Travis Head for a duck. (Express Photo by Nirmal Harindran) Starc would keep them over with twin blows in the fifth over of the innings, his third straight over with the new ball – a no-brainer of a decision for the captain. Couple of balls in the over, once he realised that Nitish Reddy was planting his front foot out for a free swing, Starc bounced at him to induce a top-edged skier that was pounced by the wicketkeeper. Next ball, the final ball of his spell, he had the left-hander Shahbaz Ahmed tentatively poke at a length ball outside off to drag it on his middle stump. And Starc would point his finger at a team-mate as he rushed to celebrate the wicket. It was classic Starc, with a high-arm action, crisp release with an upright seam, and the confidence to hit full lengths as he was getting the ball to swing.

Ravi Shastri and Wasim Akram among 54 named as Cricket Australia's Multicultural Ambassadors



GNS News Agency, May 25

(L-R) Wasim Akram, Alana King, Wasim Akram, Usman Khawaja and Mel Jones are among 54 who has been named as Cricket Australia's Multicultural Ambassadors for two years. (L-R) Wasim Akram, Alana King, Wasim Akram, Usman Khawaja and Mel Jones are among 54 who has been named as Cricket Australia's Multicultural Ambassadors for two years. Former India coach Ravi Shastri and legendary Pakistan cricketer Wasim Akram has been named as Cricket Australia's Multicultural Ambassadors for two years.

Engaged for an initial two-year period, the diverse lineup of ambassadors reflects a broad spectrum of cultural backgrounds, with representatives from Indian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Indigenous Australian, Bangladeshi, Nepali, and Afghani communities. The list of ambassadors includes many past and current players, as well as industry and community leaders, who will champion diversity and support the goals outlined in the Multicultural Action Plan. Inaugural ambassadors include Usman Khawaja, Mel Jones, Wasim Akram, Ravi Shastri, Lisa Sthalekar, Kishwar Chowdhury, Alana King, Peter Varghese, Swati Dave and Fawad Ahmed. "We are thrilled to welcome such a dynamic and diverse group as

Multicultural Ambassadors. Their collective leadership, expertise and passion will be instrumental in driving meaningful change and fostering a more inclusive cricketing community," said Cricket Australia CEO Nick Hockley.

"The Multicultural Ambassador Program represents Cricket Australia's unwavering commitment to creating a sport that reflects contemporary Australian society and embraces individuals from all backgrounds. "Through collaboration and collective action, the program aims to ensure that cricket remains a welcoming and inclusive sport for all." Australia's Test opener Usman Khawaja has lauded Cricket Australia's initiative and said: "As a sport we need to take the next step to ensure we get a greater and more equitable representation of the community as a whole by creating opportunities, celebrating our shared love for the game, and inspiring members of all backgrounds to get involved." Former Australia women cricketer Lisa Sthalekar feels cricket has the power to unite people from all backgrounds. "It's a role that allows me to celebrate and promote the diversity that makes our sport so vibrant and inclusive," she said. "I am committed to fostering an environment where everyone feels welcome and inspired to be a part of the game," added Sthalekar.

RCB's Swapnil Singh, a late bloomer in IPL, nearly left to play in Bangladesh League

GNS News Agency, May 25

Swapnil Singh, at the age of 33, is enjoying his best IPL season while playing for Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB). An IPL late bloomer, he nearly left for Bangladesh to play 50-over league cricket when his career was going nowhere three years ago. The spin-bowling all rounder has taken six wickets for RCB with an economy rate of 8.76 and even opened the bowling at times. He has played in each of the six games RCB won on the spin to qualify for the playoffs after languishing at the bottom of the table. This isn't Swapnil's first outing with an IPL team but it is the first time he has got a long run and made an impact.

Swapnil made his IPL debut for Punjab Kings in 2016 and then played two games for Lucknow SuperGiants (LSG) last year. He was first a net bowler for LSG. It was during practice sessions for LSG two years ago that the former Baroda all-rounder caught the attention of coach Andy Flower. When the Zimbabwean moved to RCB at the start of this season, Swapnil got another chance to find his feet in the IPL. Nearly two decades after making his first-class debut at the age of 14, Swapnil's career has got a second wind. A roommate of Virat Kohli during their days as India Under-19 cricketers, Swapnil is now a trusted teammate of the former India captain in the RCB set-up.

"It feels great to see that my brother is getting his due. It took so long for him. He has proved that hard work pays off," Swapnil's younger brother Jyotsnil said. IPL 2024: Swapnil Singh celebrates Cameron Green of Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Swapnil Singh of Royal Challengers Bengaluru celebrates the wicket of Pat Cummins (c) of Sunrisers Hyderabad during match 41 of the Indian Premier League season 17 (IPL 2024) between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bengaluru held at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Hyderabad on the 25th April 2024. The brothers moved from Lucknow to Baroda when Jyotsnil was three and Swapnil 11. Their father took the decision believing they had a brighter cricketing future outside their home state, known for not always rewarding merit. After playing for over a decade for Baroda, Swapnil moved to Uttarakhand. Baroda were looking for fresh legs and his career seemed to have plateaued in 2021. On the IPL front, he wasn't a regular. This was when he mulled over moving to Bangladesh. Sound advice from former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan, his mentor, made him stay back. The call up to be a net bowler for LSG came from his Baroda teammate and close friend Deepak Hooda. The first time he cut the call because he was disappointed at receiving a net-bowler offer from an IPL team. But Hooda called again and insisted that it was a good move. However, the confirmation from LSG took time.

"He was not sure and was in two minds. He had one offer to play league cricket in Bangladesh. He felt he would have gained from the experience instead of being a net bowler in the IPL," Pathan told this paper. Swapnil told RCB Bold Diaries that when a week passed with no update from LSG, he called Pathan again. Pathan in turn called his former India teammate Gautam Gambhir, the then LSG mentor. "I called Gautam and said, tu dekh le ek baar is ladke ko? (take a look at this boy) Gautam said, ok, tu bol raha hai toh theek hai (ok I will, since you are asking me to). He was picked and there he met Andy Flower, who liked his approach," Pathan said. After Flower moved to RCB, Swapnil was asked to appear for trials. "Before RCB picked me in the auction, they had organised a trial-cum-camp. I spoke to Andy sir and told him all about how my (domestic) season had gone. I told



him, 'Just give me one chance. This might be my last chance. Just have faith in me,'" Swapnil told RCB Bold Diaries.

However, Swapnil thought he had hit a hurdle when RCB didn't pick him in the first round of the auctions. "I thought I would play out the ongoing domestic season and if needed, I would end my career after playing the next season because I did not want to keep playing all my life," he said. But RCB eventually bought him and his fortunes changed. "Jab paseena zameen par girta hai, zameen usse zaroor waapisi karti hai (when you work hard and sweat it out you are rewarded for it) and Swapnil is the perfect example for others. It's an inspirational story, everyone talks about big cricketers but the stories of players like Swapnil can inspire many," Pathan added. If Swapnil can continue to contribute in RCB's dream run when they play Rajasthan Royals in the Eliminator on Wednesday, his fairytale season will encourage journeyman cricketers to never give up.

Ajesh wins Brilliant Trophy Open Online Chess Tournament

GNS News Agency, May 25

Hyderabad: Ajesh JR of Chennai clinched the title in the Brilliant Trophy Open Online Chess Tournament on Tuesday. Ajesh with 11 points sealed the top spot in the tie-break ahead of Gopalkrishna Maheswari of Meerut and Kartavya Anadkat of Ahmedabad with 10.5 points each, who finished in the second and third places respectively.



Results: Top Ten Places: 1. Ajesh JR, 2. Gopalkrishna Maheswari, 3. Kartavya Anadkat, 4. Krishna Rallabandi, 5. Mahendra Teja, 6. KVK Karthik, 7. Gowtham Rammooorthy, 8. Indrajit Majumdar, 9. Niranjan Jayakrishnan, 10. PKaryasheel; Best Woman: Sahasra Rallabandi, Best Veteran: Ramindra Sahu, Special Prize: KSSRA Praneeth.