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GHMC Khairtabad zonal head shunted over demolition row

Hyderabad: The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation commissioner in-charge Amrapali Kata issued the relieving orders for GHMC Khairatabad zonal commissioner Bhorkhade Hemanth Sahadeorao with immediate effect.

This action followed the zonal commissioner's decision to demolish alleged illegal structures, including a shed, near the Lotus Pond in the Film Nagar area, which is situated in front of the former Andhra Pradesh chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's residence.

Eid-ul-Adha celebrated across Hyd



GNS News Agency, June 17

Hyderabad: A pious atmosphere prevailed across the city as Muslims celebrate Eid-ul-Adha, popular as Bakrid, on Monday. The festival is celebrated on the 10th of the Islamic month of Zul-hijja every year.

Scores of people dressed in festive attire gathered at mosques and idgahs across the city and attended the Eid prayers in morning. At the Eidgah Mir Alam, the prayers were led by Maulan Rizwan Qureshi, Khateeb Mecca Masjid. About one lakh people attended prayers here. A mad rush was seen at the cattle markets till early hours of the day with people flocking to purchase the sheep. The price of sheep came down by a thousand rupees due to huge arrivals late last evening. Eminent personalities extended greetings to the community on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha. At the Mir Alam Eidgah and other important places where gatherings were witnessed, officials of the police department were present and they extended their greetings to the community.

Former Karnataka CM BS Yediyurappa To Appear Before CID In POCSO Case



GNS News Agency, June 17

Karnataka's former Chief Minister and BJP leader, BS Yediyurappa, is scheduled to appear before the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) at 11 AM today for an inquiry related to a POCSO case filed against him.

On Friday, the Karnataka High Court prohibited the CID from arresting Yediyurappa in connection with the POCSO case and mandated his appearance before the CID on June 17. After arriving in the state on Sunday, Yediyurappa stated that the people would teach a lesson to those "indulging in conspiracies" against him. A Bengaluru court issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against him on Thursday for allegedly molesting a minor girl. The former chief minister faces charges under the POCSO Act and IPC Section 354A (sexual harassment) following a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-old girl. The complaint alleges that Yediyurappa attempted to molest the girl on February 2 when they visited his residence to seek assistance in a cheating case. Yediyurappa has dismissed the allegations as "baseless" and vowed to contest the charges legally. The victim's mother, who filed the complaint, passed away last month at a private hospital due to lung cancer.

Chandrababu inspects Polavaram project, express concern over status of the project

GNS News Agency, June 17

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu recently visited and reviewed the Polavaram project, which is considered to be the lifeline of the state. During his visit, Naidu expressed his concern over the current state of the project, stating that it has gone completely awry. He mentioned that looking at the project, one feels pain and agony as it is crucial for the development of Andhra Pradesh. Naidu also highlighted the history of the Polavaram project, noting that after winning the 2014 elections, seven mandals of Telangana in the Polavaram flood area were merged into Andhra Pradesh. He explained that this was made possible through a special ordinance of the then NDA cabinet. Naidu emphasised that the project was already facing crisis and allegations when it was initiated by YSR in 2005. Furthermore, Naidu acknowledged that Polavaram was declared as a national project after the division of the state. He urged for proper attention and resources to be allocated towards the completion of the project in order to ensure the welfare and development of Andhra Pradesh.

15 dead, 60 injured in West Bengal train collision, toll likely to rise

GNS News Agency, June 17

New Jalpaiguri/Kolkata: At least 15 passengers died and 60 others were injured, after three rear coaches of the Sealdah-bound Kanchanjunga Express derailed on Monday morning as a goods train collided with it in West Bengal's Darjeeling district, officials said. The toll could rise, as multiple agencies of the State and Centre were simultaneously working on war footing along with locals to rescue passengers who could still be trapped inside, they said. The deceased include the pilot and co-pilot of the goods train, a senior railway official said.

The injured are being taken to the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital, police said. The three rear compartments derailed under the impact of the collision from behind by the locomotive of the goods train near Rangapani station, about 30 km from North Bengal's New Jalpaiguri station, the official said. In a post on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the "railway accident in West Bengal is saddening. Condolences to those who lost their loved ones". "I pray that the injured recover at the earliest. Spoke to officials and took stock of the situation. Rescue operations are underway to assist the affected. The Railways Minister Shri @AshwiniVaishnav Ji is on the way to the site of the mishap as well," he said. The railway accident in West Bengal is saddening. Condolences to those who lost their loved ones. I pray that the injured recover at the earliest. Spoke to officials and took stock of the situation. Rescue operations are underway to assist the affected. The Railways Minister Shri... — Narendra Modi (@narendramodi) June 17, 2024. The PM also announced that an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh would be given to the next of kin of each deceased, while the injured would be provided Rs 50,000. Meanwhile Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Monday left for West Bengal to take stock of relief operations following the train accident. According to preliminary information received from rail officials, the passenger train was stationary on the tracks when the goods train rammed into it from behind. While two rear compartments of the Kanchanjunga Express were immediately thrown off the tracks under

Forest staff's plea for weapons goes unheard

Hyderabad: Despite increasing attacks on forest staff and their requests to sanction arms for self-protection and to set up forest stations, the State government is yet to respond. Forest staffers have for long been demanding arms and ammunition for self-protection. The demand had escalated after the brutal killing of Chandrugonda Forest Range Officer Ch Srinivas Rao by Gutti Koya tribals in Kothagudem in November 2022.

The attacks have not stopped. On June 3, A forest beat officer (FBO) and watcher were injured after being assaulted by some youngsters, who were allegedly in an inebriated condition at a check post at Thalapur village in Jannaram mandal. Last Friday, a Forest Range Officer, a section officer and two other staff members of the department suffered injuries when they were attacked by local villagers at Kalpole forest area under Mugal mandal in Nizamabad district.



the severe impact, another bogie was seen precariously hanging mid-air with the engine of the goods train tucked underneath. Inclement weather in the region posed an additional challenge to the rescue operations, the officials said. The accident triggered haunting memories of the Coromandel Express disaster near Bahanaga Bazar in Odisha a year ago, which killed nearly 300 people and injured over a 1,000 others.

The 13174 Kanchanjunga Express was bound for Sealdah from Agartala when the accident occurred around 9 am, the railway official said. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in a post on X, said: "Shocked to learn, just now, about a tragic train accident, in the Phansidewa area of Darjeeling district. While details are awaited, Kanchenjunga Express has reportedly been hit by a

goods train." "DM, SP, doctors, ambulances and disaster teams have been rushed to the site for rescue, recovery, and medical assistance. Action on war-footing initiated," she added. Long-distance train services from north Bengal and the northeastern part of the country were affected due to the accident. Shocked to learn, just now, about a tragic train accident, in Phansidewa area of Darjeeling district. While details are awaited, Kanchenjunga Express has reportedly been hit by a goods train. DM, SP, doctors, ambulances and disaster teams have been rushed to the site for rescue... State government officials said additional bus services were being introduced from the region on an emergency basis to transport the affected commuters. Preliminary reports from the ground suggested that the loco pilot of the goods train may have overshot its signal.

Congress's Sarcastic Post Mocking PM Modi And Pope Francis Sparks BJP Outrage

GNS News Agency, June 17

A sarcastic social media post by the Congress party's Kerala unit, mocking a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pope Francis at the G7 summit in Italy, has ignited outrage from the BJP. The now-deleted post featured a photo of PM Modi with the Pope, captioned, "Finally, the Pope got a chance to meet God!" This comment referred to PM Modi's previous assertion that he believed he was "sent by God" for a purpose. The BJP swiftly condemned the post, accusing Congress of disrespecting both PM Modi and the Pope.

Kerala BJP president K Surendran criticized the Congress, suggesting the Kerala Congress's social



media handle was run by "radical Islamists or Urban Naxals" and demanded accountability from senior Congress leaders like Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi. Kerala BJP general secretary George Kurian labeled the post as offensive, highlighting its impact on the Christian community in Kerala,

where Christianity is a major religion. BJP IT Cell head Amit Malviya accused Congress of a pattern of disrespecting various faiths and demanded an apology from Sonia Gandhi, emphasizing her Catholic faith. In response, the Congress referenced Pope Francis's remark about the harmlessness of joking about

God, defending their post as satirical and targeting PM Modi's public relations strategies. Amid the backlash, the Kerala Congress deleted the post and issued an apology for any distress caused, clarifying they did not intend to insult any religion or religious figure, while maintaining their right to criticize political figures like PM Modi. Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee Vice-President VT Balram defended the post as satire aimed at PM Modi's self-aggrandizing statements. Congress also challenged the BJP to apologize for failing to protect Christian communities during incidents of violence, such as those in Manipur, and criticized PM Modi for his silence on such issues.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah calls meeting to review Manipur situation



Ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023 after a tribal solidarity march in the hill districts of the state to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

GNS News Agency, June 17

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will on Monday review the security situation in Manipur which has been witnessing ethnic violence for over an year. Senior officials from the central and state governments and other security forces will attend the high-level meeting, officials said. On Sunday, Manipur Governor Anusuiya Uikey had called on Shah here and is believed to have discussed the prevailing situation in the Northeastern state. Ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023 after a tribal solidarity march in the hill districts of the state to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Since then, over 220 people belonging to both Kuki and Meitei communities and security personnel have been killed in the continuing violence. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while tribals, which include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mainly in the hill districts.

On June 10, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat expressed concern over peace eluding Manipur even after one year and said the situation in the strife-torn north eastern state must be considered with priority. Addressing a gathering of RSS trainees in Nagpur, he said, "Manipur is waiting for peace for the last one year. There was peace in Manipur 10 years ago. It felt like gun culture had finished there. But the state has suddenly seen violence". Bhagwat said the situation in Manipur will have to be considered with priority and there is need to get over election rhetoric and focus on problems facing the nation. "The unrest either got triggered or was triggered, but Manipur is burning and people are facing its extreme heat", the RSS chief had said.

Giving ample water, Delhi facing crisis because of inefficient govt: Haryana CM

GNS News Agency, June 17

New Delhi : Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Monday dismissed charges of any discrimination against the national capital in terms of water supply and blamed it on the "inept and inefficient" AAP government for the city's severe water woes, for the past couple of days. Saini told media persons in Kurukshetra that the Haryana government was releasing more water than earlier to mitigate water woes in the capital but the AAP government's approach to the crisis has only aggravated the situation. He termed the Delhi administration as "inept and inefficient" for its failure to build a system of water distribution despite being 10 years in power.

"In the past 10 years, they didn't build any mechanism for water distribution to city residents. Under the AAP regime, the middlemen and corrupt officials are making money. Rather than engaging in a blame-game, they should look within and reform the system," Haryana CM said, rejecting the charges levelled by AAP leaders. "They have cheated the people of Delhi by making false poll promises. They should focus on creating a robust system and clamp down on the rampant corruption," he added.

Notably, AAP and BJP have been engaged in a war



of words over Delhi's water woes. AAP government has accused BJP-ruled Haryana of not releasing adequate water, thus forcing it to reel under crisis. AAP's Sanjay Singh called it a 'BJP-sponsored water crisis'. On the other hand, Delhi BJP leaders have mounted widespread protests against the Delhi government, in many areas of the capital facing severe water deficit. While the city reels under a water crisis, the role of the private tanker mafia and corrupt officials has also come into play.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

4 years since Galwan

Four years since the first face-to-face military confrontation between India and China in over five decades, the shadow of the Galwan valley clash of June 15, 2020, looms large, hugely impacting the strategic calculus of the two countries. India lost 20 Army personnel in the clash in eastern Ladakh. Beijing has acknowledged only four casualties, though western researchers put the figure at 40. A resolution of the border stalemate, especially the standoffs in critical areas, remains a contentious issue. A series of military and diplomatic engagements have yielded little. There's now a sense of permanence to the massive military build-up on both sides. Heavy weaponry has been inducted by India to counter the relentless offensive posturing by China; land and air connectivity is seeing an upgrade along the entire Line of Actual Control. The trust deficit has only widened. It is to no one's advantage.

To Beijing's call for normalisation of ties beyond the border dispute, New Delhi has steadfastly held on to its stance that the relationship cannot be normal without restoring the status quo ante along the border as of April 2020. Is there a way forward? Amid the entrenched positions, it is difficult to imagine any toning down of the belligerent posturing and rhetoric by Beijing. The prospects of a constructive dialogue on critical regional and global issues appear remote amid the border tensions. For India, the options are limited. It has to stay the course on bolstering its defences, reducing dependence on Chinese imports and protecting its digital sovereignty. The appointment of the Chinese ambassador to New Delhi after 18 months may suggest a willingness to explore a fresh start to reduce the tensions. But as experience has shown, India cannot afford to lower its guard.

As Dalits rally against Gondal BJP MLA's son, Gujarat's largest wholesale market shuts in solidarity with him



GNS News Agency, June 17

As Dalits held a rally to demand strict action against BJP MLA Geetaba Jadeja's son Jyotirajsinh alias Ganesh Jadeja and others in a case of caste-based atrocity, Gondal's Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC), Gujarat's largest wholesale market, remained shut on Wednesday. No auction or loading or unloading of agricultural commodities happened at the APMC in Gondal town in Rajkot district as traders, commission agents and labourers observed a strike in support of Ganesh. The Dalit rally started from Ambedkar Chowk in Junagadh city and is scheduled to culminate in Gondal.

"The Gondal APMC is Gujarat's biggest marketing yard and is on course to become the country's biggest. The main reason for its success is the peace and security here and that the yard owes its success to a large extent to Jayrajsinh Jadeja (Ganesh's father) and his family. The entire Gondal is Ganesh's family and when baseless allegations are levelled against him, the entire Gondal town, Gondal taluka and Gondal APMC has observed a strike to show solidarity with Ganesh and his family," APMC chairman Alpesh Dholariya, who is also president of the Rajkot district unit of the ruling BJP, The Gondal APMC recorded an annual turnover of Rs 4,388 crore in the financial year 2023-24. In May 2024, the turnover was Rs 466.57 crore. That works out to a daily turnover of around Rs 15 crore. Jayrajsinh has dominated political space in Gondal since 1998. He or his family members have since contested all the six Assembly elections in Gondal seat. Jayrajsinh, who is out on bail in the Nilesh Raiyani murder case, was elected thrice—in 1998, 2002 and 2012—but lost in 2007. His wife Geetaba Jadeja won the Assembly seat in 2017 and 2022. Ganesh, the 25-year-old son of this powerful couple, was booked by the "A" Division police in Junagadh on May 31 on the basis of a complaint filed by Sanjay alias Chandu Solanki, 25, president of the city unit of the National Students Union of India, the Congress's student wing. In his complaint, the Dalit leader alleged that Ganesh and others assaulted him after he had a verbal altercation with them at Kalwa Chowk in Junagadh on the night of May 30 over the manner in which the MLA's son and the others had been driving their car. Solanki also alleged that he had been kidnapped and taken to a deserted farm in Gondal, where Ganesh was present. The FIR quotes Solanki as saying that some of the accused threatened him with a firearm, made him remove his clothes and apologise as the others shot videos of the incident. Ganesh and others were picked up by the Junagadh district police on June 5.

Ganesh and 10 other accused arrested in the case are in judicial custody, the Junagadh police said, adding that during his interrogation, the MLA's son had rejected the allegations against him. The Gondal APMC sets a benchmark price for groundnut, a major kharif and summer crop in Gujarat. It also sets benchmark prices for dried red chillies and coriander seeds. It is also a major market of onion, garlic, cotton and jeera (cumin seeds).

However, no one from Jayrajsinh's family is on the board of directors of the APMC. When asked if such strikes could adversely affect the reputation of the APMC, its chairman said, "Not at all. No one has been made to shut the marketing yard. People have struck work and observed a bandh on their own. The commission agents association as well as labourers association wrote to us on Tuesday stating that the Jadeja family is part of their Gondal APMC family and that when baseless allegations are levelled against the Jadeja, they wouldn't work

Baramati likely for second round of family battle in Assembly election as local NCP(SP) pushes for Yugendra Pawar against Ajit Pawar



GNS News Agency, June 17

It seems the battle for Baramati in Maharashtra is far from over after the Lok Sabha elections where the constituency witnessed a stiff contest between Pawar family members – Supriya Sule and Sunetra Pawar, wife of Ajit Pawar. The state is set to witness second round of tussle during the forthcoming Assembly elections likely to be held in September for which both the factions of Nationalist Congress Party – one led by deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar and the other by Sharad Pawar – have already started rolling up their sleeves. However, this time it would be a challenge for Ajit Pawar who will have to retain his Baramati Assembly seat that saw NCP (SP)'s Supriya Sule dominating during the Lok Sabha election.

The party workers of NCP (SP) under Sharad Pawar, who are all pumped up, reached out to the party chief to field Yugendra Pawar, grandnephew of Sharad Pawar, in Baramati which is represented by his uncle Ajit Pawar. "Yugendra played an important role in the Lok Sabha elections and the NCP (SP) got the lead in the Baramati assembly segment which otherwise always rallied behind Ajit Pawar. Thus, Yugendra is the right candidate for NCP (SP) in Baramati in the forthcoming Assembly elections," said a party worker, who along with others, met the NCP (SP) chief on Tuesday. Sharad Pawar, however, said the decision on party candidates will be taken up later on. Yugendra Pawar, son of Ajit Pawar's elder brother Shrinivas, agreed that the party cadres are very excited after the party's performance in the Lok Sabha election which prompted them to request the NCP (SP) chief to give him candidature in Baramati Assembly seat. "They expressed their feelings and it is very difficult to make them control it. I have been working in Baramati

taluka and have a lot to learn. I was very active in the taluka during the Lok Sabha elections as there was a challenge to the ideology of the NCP (SP) chief. I will continue to do so whenever the challenge comes up and has not given any thought beyond that as of now," he said.

Asked whether he had discussed the issue with Sharad Pawar or Supriya Sule, Yugendra said, "The issue has never come up in our discussions". Yugendra said his fight with his uncle Ajit Pawar will draw national attention but it won't be good optics for the family. "Family is important... Just because Ajit Pawar fielded his wife against Supriya Sule, does not mean we should do the same," he said. Yugendra revealed that he and other family members were against an electoral fight within the Pawar family when Ajit Pawar decided to field his wife Sunetra against cousin Supriya Sule in the Lok Sabha elections. "It was a very difficult situation for all of us. Now also, we hope not to have a fight within the Pawar family but don't know what is in store during the Assembly elections. There are a few more months for Assembly elections and anything can happen till then. I am hoping for the best possible situation for us and I will take up whatever responsibility is entrusted upon me by my grandfather," Yugendra said. Yugendra, who campaigned for Sule, said he met Ajit Pawar a couple of days ago. "I touched his feet, but there was no communication between us," he mentioned. Asked whether Ajit Pawar had tried to rope him in during election campaigns, Yugendra said, "Many times he had called..." Another NCP (SP) leader from the region said the situation in Assembly elections is going to be completely different from that of Lok Sabha elections, considering Ajit Pawar's likely candidature from Baramati where he is the sitting MLA.

"It is going to be a tough challenge in Baramati but as a rival political party we will have to field formidable candidates in the constituency. Thus, the demand for fielding Yugendra Pawar is proper and let Ajit Pawar realise how it feels to contest elections against a family member," he remarked. In the recently held Lok Sabha elections, NCP (SP) working president Supriya Sule who is also the daughter of Sharad Pawar, defeated Sunetra Pawar by over 1.5 lakh votes to register her fourth consecutive win. She got lead in five of the six Assembly segments, including Baramati town which is represented by Ajit Pawar in Assembly for decades.

'Will PM Modi and Amit Shah visit Manipur now?': Uddhav Thackeray after Mohan Bhagwat's remark



GNS News Agency, June 17

Days after RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat flagged the crisis in Manipur, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray asked on Wednesday whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister Amit Shah will visit the Northeastern state. On Monday, Bhagwat expressed concern over peace eluding Manipur even after one year and said the situation in the strife-torn Northeastern state must be considered with priority. While addressing a press conference, Uddhav said, "At least after a year, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat spoke about Manipur because they also bore the brunt of it. Will PM Narendra Modi and Union Minister Amit Shah go to Manipur now?" Manipur has been witnessing violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities since May last year during which as many as 200 people have been killed and thousands have been displaced following large-scale arson.

"Now Kashmir is burning, attacks are taking place. Lives are being lost. Who is responsible for the terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir? Where are those who have been speaking about Kashmir during the elections?" asked Uddhav referring to the recent militant attacks in the Union Territory. The former Maharashtra chief minister also sought to know what was the difference on the ground after the abrogation of Article 370, which provided special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Uddhav Thackeray is not the first Opposition leader to comment on the remarks made by Mohan Bhagwat, the Congress, NCP (SP) and RJD have also said PM Modi should listen to the RSS chief and visit Manipur. He also said there were no differences in the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, comprising the Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and the NCP (SP), over candidates for the upcoming elections to four constituencies of Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLC).

Uddhav said the issue between his party and the Congress has been resolved and there has been a compromise on Nashik teachers and Konkani Graduate seats and soon the details of it will be announced officially. He added since he was not in the country after the Lok Sabha elections, a dialogue could not take place with Congress. "It is a fact there was a 'loose connection' (among the MVA partners). I had gone to London after the LS polls and during this time, all parties declared their candidates and nominations had to be filed within the stipulated time. Sometimes it is better to have the nominations filed instead of not filing it and hence it was filed. Now the issue has been resolved," Uddhav said.

Delhi High Court issues notice on batch of pleas concerning NEET-UG results

GNS News Agency, June 17

Delhi High Court NEET UG The high court was informed that the issues raised in the various writ petitions could be broadly categorised into three categories—awarding of "grace/compensatory marks, alleged paper leak and some anomalies in the answers to certain questions". The Delhi High Court on Wednesday issued a notice on a batch of petitions concerning issues pertaining to the results of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for undergraduate medical admission declared earlier this month. Appearing for the National Testing Agency, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta submitted before a single-judge bench of Justice Neena Bansal Krishna that there were various writ petitions being filed in different high courts on issues concerning the NEET-UG results and that some matters had also been listed before the Supreme Court.

Mehta said the NTA was in the process of filing a transfer petition to get all these writ petitions consolidated before the Supreme Court. "We are filing transfer petitions in the Supreme Court because there is a likelihood of conflicting views by different high courts. Can you lordship consider waiting for a week or two, we will file a transfer petition," the solicitor-general said. The high court was informed that the issues raised in the various writ petitions could be broadly categorised into three categories—awarding of "grace/compensatory marks, alleged paper leak and some anomalies in the answers to certain questions". The court issued a notice to the NTA, which sought time for filing a reply. The matter has been listed for hearing on July 5.

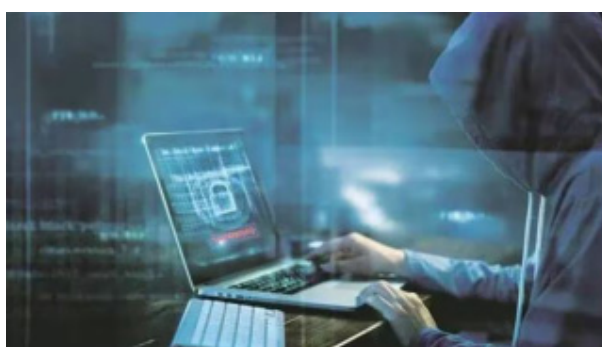
One of the petitions before the high court, filed by a NEET-UG candidate, concerns a question that had two



correct options in the answer key. The plea sought that equal marks be awarded to those who did not attempt the question as has been done for those who attempted either of the two correct answers. "On 03.06.2024, the respondent (NTA) published the final answer key.

It was observed that for question no. 29 of Test Booklet Code R5, both options 2 and 4 were considered correct, contrary to the instructions that stated only one option could be correct... Not awarding marks in case of a wrong question and forcing candidates to mark one, in the case of a question having two correct answers, is antithetical to the instruction that only one answer shall be right. It is submitted that it is extremely arbitrary for the respondent to expect candidates to attempt a wrong question, when there is negative marking and each mark can make a difference of hundreds of ranks, if not thousands," the plea stated. The plea further stated that the declared results were "arbitrary" and based on unfair grace marks given without the application of mind.

Panic in Mangaluru as many parents get blackmail calls about students being 'kidnapped or held for rape'



GNS News Agency, June 17

Many parents in Karnataka's Mangaluru coastal city have complained of threats and blackmail calls demanding huge ransoms in return for releasing their wards—first-year pre-university college students—who the callers claimed to have been kidnapped or arrested in gang-rape cases. The police, which have booked a case, said on Wednesday that the parents started receiving the threats on Tuesday afternoon. "Parents started receiving calls claiming that their children had been either held in a gang-rape case or kidnapped. The callers, who spoke in Hindi, demanded Rs 5 lakh to release the students or to clear their names in the cases," a police officer said.

The officer said the calls were made from the numbers +923354533015 and +48699532787. "Many of the parents panicked because the Truecaller app showed the numbers as belonging to the Central Bureau of Investigation and even showed images of uniformed police officers," the officer said. When the parents contacted colleges, they were relieved to learn that their children were attending classes. The police suspect that someone who accessed details of the students and their parents from their colleges was behind the calls. Commissioner of Police Anupam Agarwal said the cyber police were investigating the origin of the calls and that parents need not panic. They should avoid answering unknown international calls, as such fraudulent calls are often made from abroad, and report any suspicious calls to the nearest police station or directly to 1930, he added.

'Go to Pakistan' jibe triggered Mangaluru stabbing incident: Police

GNS News Agency, June 17

The people involved in sloganeering were chased by a group of Muslim youth after the procession ended. The people involved in sloganeering were chased by a group of Muslim youth after the procession ended. Provocative slogans asking Muslims to "go to Pakistan" during a victory procession taken out to celebrate the BJP returning to power at the Centre sparked the stabbing of two BJP supporters near Mangaluru on Sunday, the police said.

Addressing a news conference on Tuesday, Mangaluru Police Commissioner Anupam Agarwal said that provocative slogans were raised during the procession near Boliyar. "Some youth raised provocative slogans at an auto stand, which was too hurtful. Essential meaning (of the slogans) was that you (Muslims) are all part of Pakistan and the arrival of [Prime Minister Narendra] Modi has scared you," he said. This was circulated in local WhatsApp groups. When the procession reached the mosque, the BJP supporters started dancing in front of it with increased fervour and raised slogans, which agitated the community members. After the procession ended, three people went again and raised slogans which led to the stabbing incident, Agarwal said. The people involved in sloganeering were chased by a group of Muslim youth after the procession ended. "The BJP workers came under attack during which one was stabbed in the stomach and one in the back. Both are currently out of danger," Agarwal said. Following the incident, the Boliyar mosque management has also filed a complaint, he added.

'We stand firm on our position': Ajit Pawar-led NCP backs Muslim reservation in education

GNS News Agency, June 17

Ajit Pawar NCP Muslim reservation On its 25th foundation day on Monday, the Ajit Pawar-led NCP had emphasised the need to bring the Muslim and backward class community back to the party saying they had drifted away during the Lok Sabha elections. The Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) said on Wednesday that it stands firm on the issue of Muslims getting reservation in education, the second National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partner to say so after the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). "Progressive ideology is not limited to designing policies for giving reservations only. Progressive ideology of 'Shiv, Shahu, Phule and Ambedkar' takes an inclusive stand in the society. It is a consideration of equality. Our decision of giving 5 per cent reservation to Muslims was accepted by the high court. However, later, the issue was pushed back. We stand firm on our position that the Muslim community should get reservation," NCP's chief spokesperson Umesh Patil said. On its 25th foundation day on Monday, the Ajit Pawar-led NCP had emphasised the need to bring the Muslim and backward class community back to the party saying they had drifted away during the Lok Sabha elections. Ajit Pawar too had maintained that while joining hands with the BJP, he had made it clear to the leadership that the party would stick with the 'Shiv, Shahu, Phule, Ambedkar' ideology, irrespective of joining hands with the BJP. The BJP has always opposed Muslim reservation saying that it cannot be given on the basis of religion. In addition, throughout its Lok Sabha campaign, the party had accused the Congress of giving reservations to Muslims by cutting the Other Backward Class (OBC) quota.

Busy finishing opposition': Sanjay Raut jabs Amit Shah over terror attacks in J&K



GNS News Agency, June 17

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Wednesday criticised Union home minister Amit Shah over the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir, alleging that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader "was busy wiping out the Opposition". Raut also claimed that during Shah's tenure as home minister, the highest number of security forces and civilians were killed in Jammu and Kashmir. "In Amit Shah's tenure, the highest number of security forces and civilians got killed in Jammu and Kashmir. When he was taking oath in Delhi, 10 people were killed. Today, again, CRPF jawans were killed. Instead of doing his work, he is busy finishing opposition. If he will put all his efforts into eliminating terrorists, then this will be good for the nation," Raut was quoted as saying by ANI.

Raut urged Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar and Andhra chief minister Chandrababu Naidu – both key allies of the NDA government in the Centre – to seek Amit

Shah's resignation. "Chief Minister's (Manipur) convoy attacked by Naxals, the country is in danger from Amit Shah who is again home minister in Modi government," he said. "Nitish Kumar and Chandrababu Naidu must seek Amit Shah's resignation because the government is formed with their support." Earlier, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray had targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the attacks in Jammu and Kashmir. He had sought to understand the point of abrogating Article 370. The legislation, which granted special status to the region, was revoked on August 5, 2019, less than two months after PM Modi was elected to serve his second successive term. "Lives are being lost. Who is responsible for the terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir?" Thackeray asked. "I am concerned about the future of the country and not about the future of the NDA government," he added. On Sunday, terrorists attacked a bus carrying pilgrims in Reasi, causing it to veer off the road and fall into a deep gorge, killing nine and injuring 41. Two days later, terrorists attacked a joint checkpost in Doda, injuring six security personnel. On the same night, one Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Jawan and one terrorist were killed in another encounter in Kathua district that broke out after ultras attacked a house in Saida Sukhal village in Hiranagar. The Jammu and Kashmir police have said that the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba is believed to be behind the attack. The Jammu and Kashmir police have said that the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba is believed to be behind the attack in Reasi, reported ANI. The J-K police have formed 11 teams to investigate the attack. A team from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) is also assessing the situation in Reasi.

Samyukt Kisan Morcha protests against Shivraj Singh Chouhan as Agriculture Minister

GNS News Agency, June 17

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Wednesday protested against the NDA government's decision to allocate the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare to Shivraj Singh Chouhan and held him responsible for the killing of six farmers in Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur in June 2017. In a statement issued on Wednesday, the SKM said the farmers were "murdered" while participating in the massive struggle for MSP at the C2 plus 50 per cent formula given by the Swaminathan Commission, comprehensive loan waiver and against the growing trend of farmers' suicide. The SKM also announced that a meeting of its general body will be held in Delhi on July 10 which will be attended by the leaders of the constituent farmer organisations from all over India. "The decision symbolizes arrogance and insensitivity exhibited by the former regimes of 2014 and 2019 with an absolute majority to the BJP. It has aroused wrath among the farmers and the rural people across the country," the SKM said.

Six farmers were killed in June 2017 in Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur after a group of farmers was fired at by the policemen and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawans. The SKM, which led the protests against the now scrapped farm laws, said the NDA government did not take any decision to address the acute agrarian crisis and the farmers' suicide in the first Cabinet meeting or on the long pending demands on MSP, among other things.

"The hype being created in the name of releasing ₹20,000 crore of arrear in the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, which is an existing scheme with grossly inadequate sum of average ₹500 per month per farmers' household will not satisfy farmers since it camouflages the unwillingness of the state to provide remunerative MSP and the policies



of corporate takeover of agricultural sector," the SKM said. "There is no illusion among the farmers of a change in the corporate policies on agriculture. Farmers have to prepare for another stint of vibrant and massive struggles by joining hands with workers, small traders and petty producers and extending across India," they said, adding the SKM is determined to build greater unity of the people and put pressure on the NDA government to replace its "corporate driven policies" with farmer and worker centric policies for the development of people. Commenting on the incident of actor and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut being slapped by a CISF personnel, they said, "SKM while not justifying slapping of Kangana Ranaut MP by a women security personal flays her arrogant and malicious utterances against the historic farmers' struggle. A delegation of the SKM will also visit the families of Lakhimpur Kheri martyrs on June 13 and will ensure continuation of legal assistance to the farmers, who were wrongly implicated in the case by the BJP led state government after the incident. This story has been published from a wire agency feed without modifications to the text. Only the headline has been changed.

Women candidates outnumber men in Kohima; 238 in fray overall

GNS News Agency, June 17

Women candidates (24) in the fray for the June 26 urban local bodies (ULB) in Nagaland outnumber men (17) in the state capital Kohima. Overall, 238 women or over 35% of 669 candidates are contesting the polls being held in the state for the first time since 2004. In April, the state government assured the Supreme Court that the elections to the state's 36 councils would be held with a 33% quota for women by June 2024. The assurance came in response to a People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) plea. The ruling Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) has fielded the highest number of candidates (256) including 96 women. Seventy-five women are contesting as independents.

As many as 23 women have filed their nominations in Mon, Longleng, Shamator, and Kiphire districts, where an umbrella body of tribal groups boycotts central and state elections to press for its demand for an autonomous territory. People in these six eastern districts abstained from the April 19 parliamentary elections.

Rosemary Dzuvichu, who spearheaded the fight for the implementation of the quota for women in civic bodies, said the participation of women candidates in reserved and unreserved wards is an important phase for Naga women. "After 20-plus years, the outcome of the ULB elections will herald the development of our towns. The active participation of women in urban decision-making bodies is what we envisioned when we formed the Joint Action Committee on Women's Reservation (JAWCR). Our struggle has been long but worthwhile." Aleno Nienu, 50, a single mother of four contesting from a reserved ward in Phek town as a Naga People's Front (NPF) candidate, said the women who get elected irrespective of political affiliation should remember that women's quota was brought about with much sacrifice. "We should respect the privilege and strive to give our best to our communities," she said. Nienu said the state faced violence from those who opposed reservation while thanking the Naga Mothers Association, which formed JACWR to fight for 33% women reservation. "I am also grateful to the state government for implementing women's reservation and enabling this opportunity," said Nienu, who is contesting against an NDPP candidate. Thenuso Sekhose Yhome, who is contesting a general seat in Kohima on an NDPP ticket, said Nagaland's towns have missed a lot of opportunities due to the almost two-decade struggle for women's reservation. Tokheli, who was the first woman chairperson of a village council in Nagaland and is contesting a



general ward in Dimapur, said reservation or no reservation she cannot abandon her supporters.

BRS minority leader wants Shadikhana works in Khammam expedited

GNS News Agency, June 17

Khammam: Muslims in Khammam city have been demanding the State government to expedite the works of an under construction second Shadikhana in the city. The BRS district minority wing president Mohammed Tajuddin said that the Shadikhana was sanctioned during the previous regime in June 2023.

Former deputy Chief Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali laid the foundation stone for the works. The construction work was taken up with an estimated cost of Rs 4 crore on one acre and 12 guntas land at the Sequel resorts area. The second Shadikhana was sanctioned to cater to the needs of the growing Muslim population in the city in addition to an existing Shadikhana at the old municipality office. The second Shadikhana works reached basement level and then the construction was stopped for reasons unknown. Steel bar frames erected for the construction of pillars were being exposed to weather and getting rusted and it could affect the quality of the construction.

It is said that the government has neglected the construction of the Shadikhana and it shows the government's indifferent attitude towards Muslims, he lamented.

Who is Mohammed Arif, terrorist whose mercy plea President Murmu rejected?



GNS News Agency, June 17

President Droupadi Murmu has rejected the mercy plea of Mohammed Arif alias Ashfaq, the Pakistani terrorist who was convicted for conspiring to attack Delhi's Red Fort 24 years ago. In November 2022, the Supreme Court had dismissed his review petition, upholding his death sentence. The mercy petition from Arif, received on May 15, was turned down on May 27, the officials said, quoting the President's secretariat order of May 29, reported PTI.

In 2022, the Supreme Court had noted that the Red Fort attack was a threat against India's unity, integrity, and sovereignty. It added that there were no mitigating

circumstances in the convict's favour. The attack took place on December 22, 2000. Three army personnel of the 7 Rajputana Rifles unit stationed inside the Red Fort, were killed in the attack. Mohammed Arif was arrested four days after the attack. He is a Pakistani national and a member of terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). He was first found guilty of a conspiracy to attack the army personnel in October 2005. He was then sentenced to death. Arif and three other LeT terrorists entered India in 1999. He hatched the plan to attack Red Fort in a house in Srinagar.

The three terrorists -- Abu Shaad, Abu Bilal and Abu Haider -- who had also entered the monument, were killed in separate encounters. The Delhi high court upheld his death sentence in September 2007. In 2011, the Supreme Court confirmed his death sentence. After his review petition was dismissed in August 2012, he filed a curative petition in January 2014. A constitution bench of the apex court had in its September 2014 judgement concluded that in all cases in which death sentence was awarded by the high court, such matters be listed before a bench of three judges. Before the September 2014 verdict, the review and curative petitions of death row convicts were not heard in open courts but were decided in chamber proceedings by circulation. In January 2016, a constitution bench had directed that Arif shall be entitled to seek re-opening of the dismissal of the review petitions for an open court hearing within one month.

What's next for Amaravati, the dream capital of Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu?

GNS News Agency, June 17

On October 22, 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for Amaravati, envisioned as the 'futuristic capital' of Andhra Pradesh. However, it never took final shape due to a shift in political power as the YSRCP formed the state government in 2019. Eight years and seven months later, with the Telugu Desam Party-led alliance forming the government in Andhra Pradesh, chief minister Chandrababu Naidu vowed that there would not be three capitals, but only one—Amaravati. "In our government, there will be no games under the guise of three capitals. Our capital is Amaravati. Amaravati is the capital," Chandrababu Naidu said on Tuesday.

This was Naidu's dig at his political rival and YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. The former chief minister in December 2019 had brought a proposal for three capitals in Andhra Pradesh, designating Kurnool as the judicial capital, Visakhapatnam as the executive capital, and Amaravati as the legislative capital under Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority Repeal Act, 2020. As the first chief minister of the bifurcated state from 2014 to 2019, Naidu proposed Amaravati as the capital city. Located between Vijayawada and Guntur, and spanning 29 villages, it was planned to be environmentally sustainable.

Naidu had acquired around 30,000 acres of land from farmers for the construction of Amaravati through land pooling. But the plan encountered a major setback in 2019 as TDP lost power to the YSRCP. After forming the government, Reddy scrapped the Amaravati capital project in favour of a new proposal for three capitals.

In fact, in May 2022, the CID registered an FIR against Chandrababu Naidu, along with former minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Ponguru Narayana for alleged irregularities in the construction of an internal ring road in Amaravati. On September 9, 2023 Naidu was arrested in Nadyal and sent to 14 days judicial custody till 23 September in connection



to the alleged multi-crore corruption case. During Naidu's earlier tenure, ₹10,500 crore was already spent on Amaravati's development. Real estate experts from the state estimated that an additional ₹10,000-12,000 crore was needed for building projects.

The initial plan envisioned the city spanning 217 square kilometres, divided into six clusters including civic and entertainment areas. The civic cluster alone was to cover 1,600 acres. The city was designed to feature over a dozen urban plazas, all powered by renewable energy. Inspired by Singapore, the 'sustainable city' was planned to be connected by e-buses, water taxis, metros, and bicycles. The project of converting the city into a capital also comprised construction of flats for bureaucrats, legislators and staff of the state's secretariat.

As Naidu has asserted that he will continue with the city as capital, land prices in Amaravati have surged. Government backed entities such as National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), Central Public Works Department (CPWD), have already acquired land in Amaravati. The revised cost of the project is expected to go up to ₹40,000 crore, double than the estimated cost of ₹21,000 crore by the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) during Naidu's stint in the previous term.

President Murmu rejects mercy plea of LeT terrorist Mohammed Arif, convict in 24-year-old Red Fort attack case

GNS News Agency, June 17

The mercy petition of Pakistani terrorist Mohammed Arif alias Ashfaq convicted in the nearly 24-year-old Red Fort attack case has been rejected by President Droupadi Murmu, officials said on Wednesday. The Supreme Court had dismissed a review petition by Arif on November 3, 2022, affirming the death penalty awarded to him in the case.

However, a death row convict can still knock on the doors of the top court seeking commutation of his sentence on the ground of prolonged delay under Article 32 of the Constitution, feel experts. The mercy petition from Arif, received on May 15, was turned down on May 27, the officials said, quoting the President's secretariat order of May 29. The Supreme Court, while upholding the death sentence, noted that there were no mitigating circumstances in Arif's favour and emphasised that the attack on the Red Fort posed a direct threat to the country's unity, integrity, and sovereignty. The attack, which took place on December 22, 2000, saw intruders opening fire at the 7 Rajputana Rifles unit stationed within the Red Fort premises, resulting in the deaths of three Army personnel. Arif, a Pakistani national and a member of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), was arrested by Delhi Police four days after the attack. "Appellant-accused Mohd. Arif alias Ashfaq was a Pakistani national and had entered the Indian territory illegally," the top court's order of 2022 had said.

Arif was found guilty of conspiring with other militants to carry out the attack, with the trial court sentencing him to death in October 2005. The Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court upheld the decision in subsequent appeals. The trial court had said that the conspiracy to attack the Red Fort was hatched at the house of two conspirators in Srinagar, where Arif had illegally entered in 1999 along with three other LeT militants. The three militants -- Abu Shaad, Abu Bilal and Abu Haider -- who had also entered the monument, were killed in separate encounters.

Despite multiple legal challenges, including review and curative petitions, Arif's plea for mercy was rejected, highlighting the severity of the crime and the threat it posed to national security. The Delhi High Court had confirmed the trial court's decision in September 2007. Arif then approached the Supreme Court challenging the high court's verdict. The top court had in August 2011 also



However, a death row convict can still knock on the doors of the top court seeking commutation of his sentence on the ground of prolonged delay under Article 32 of the Constitution, feel experts.

sided with the order of awarding the death sentence awarded to him. Later, his review petition came up before a two-judge bench of the apex court which dismissed it in August 2012. A curative petition was also rejected in January 2014. Thereafter, Arif had filed a petition submitting that review petitions in matters arising out of the award of death sentence be heard by a bench of three judges and in open court. A constitution bench of the apex court had in its September 2014 judgement concluded that in all cases in which the death sentence was awarded by the high court, such matters be listed before a bench of three judges. Before the September 2014 verdict, the review and curative petitions of death row convicts were not heard in open courts but were decided in chamber proceedings by circulation. In January 2016, a constitution bench had directed that Arif shall be entitled to seek re-opening of the dismissal of the review petitions for an open court hearing within one month. The apex court had rejected the review petition in its verdict delivered on November 3, 2022. This decision comes after President Murmu rejected another mercy petition last year in a separate case, demonstrating a firm stance on cases of heinous crimes.

Tripura Police constable among 2 arrested with heroin worth Rs 25 crore



GNS News Agency, June 17

Tripura heroin seizedAs per preliminary estimates, the seized heroin concealed in 177 plastic cases was estimated to be worth around Rs 25 crore in the illegal drugs market. (X/ DrManikSaha2)The Tripura Police on Monday arrested two men, including a police constable, with possession of over 2 kg of heroin at Damcherra in the North Tripura district. This area is situated right across the Tripura-Mizoram interstate border.

As per preliminary estimates, the seized heroin concealed in 177 plastic cases was estimated to be worth around Rs 25 crore in the illegal drugs market. The arrested have been identified as Sahidul Rehman, a police constable from Sepahijala district, and Jasimuddin. North Tripura Superintendent of Police Bhanupada Chakraborty said, "We took them to the court on Tuesday and the court

sent them to police remand for the next seven days."The BJP-led government has been continuing its crackdown on drugs since it first came to power in 2018. Shortly after becoming chief minister in 2022, Dr Manik Saha said at the 70th North Eastern Council (NEC) plenary meeting in Guwahati that Tripura was being used as a "corridor" for drug trafficking from Myanmar and Bangladesh. As per police data, Tripura has the second-highest number of drug seizures and destruction in the Northeast after Assam. In March this year, Saha expressed concern over the increasing number of HIV and AIDS cases in the state. He mentioned that there has been a concerning rise in the use of intravenous drugs, particularly among students and youths, and that 150-200 new cases of HIV and AIDS were being reported every month. CM Saha said the total number of patients with HIV and AIDS registered with the government was 5,330, including 1,033 women and 558 students until January this year. He recently reiterated the drug menace and urged teachers, parents and social clubs to monitor the situation closely. To tackle the drug menace, the government has already set up drug de-addiction centres in eight districts, while private de-addiction and counselling centres have also recently started coming up. According to a police official, tight vigil is being kept on the Tripura-Mizoram interstate boundary to prevent the seepage of contraband and drugs, while the Border Security Force (BSF) is maintaining a tight vigil along the 856 km of Indo-Bangla international border shared by Tripura. However, many parts of this border stretch are still unfenced due to local disputes.

Jammu terror attacks: Congress questions PM Modi's silence, 'hollow claims of return of peace, normalcy'

GNS News Agency, June 17

The Congress on Wednesday termed the BJP's "Naya Kashmir" policy a "failure", saying that the BJP's "hollow claims of return of peace and normalcy" in Jammu and Kashmir have been debunked by the three terror attacks in the region in the past three days. "BJP's loud-mouth chest-thumping and hollow claims of return of peace and normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir have been thoroughly exposed. The fact that BJP did not even bother to fight elections in Kashmir valley is a testament to the fact that their "Naya Kashmir" policy is an abject failure," party spokesperson Pawan Khara said in a statement.

The Congress stated that while the Prime Minister found time to respond to congratulatory messages from Pakistani leaders, he remained silent on condemning the terror attacks in J&K. "A spate of terror attacks has gripped Jammu and Kashmir in the past three days, whilst PM Modi is busy posting responses to congratulatory tweets by Pakistani leaders? Nawaz Sharif and Pak PM PM Shahbaz Sharif. Why has he not spoken a single word on the dastardly terror attacks? Why has he maintained a stoic silence. Did the victims not deserve a word from the self-proclaimed divine prime minister," Khara said.

Stating that "Rajouri and Poonch have become hotbeds of cross-border terrorism in the last two years", Khara added, "now terror has also spread to neighbouring Reasi



district, which was considered relatively peaceful."Meanwhile, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray questioned whether the PM and Home Minister would visit J&K, adding that "if he can't handle these things, then has no right to be the PM again."

The Jammu region has faced three attacks since Sunday, including the killing of a CRPF jawan during an encounter in Kathua district on Wednesday. The Jammu and Kashmir Police, meanwhile, killed a militant during the continued operation in the district. On Tuesday evening, the police had killed another militant in the Saida village of Kathua. Shortly after that, militants attacked a joint checkpoint of police and security forces in the Doda district. These developments follow the incident on Sunday when militants attacked a bus carrying pilgrims in the Reasi district, resulting in the deaths of nine people.

NDA crippled, Modi will have to change his attitude, says Rahul Gandhi in Wayanad

GNS News Agency, June 17

Calling the newly-sworn in National Democratic Alliance dispensation "crippled", Congress MP Rahul Gandhi said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will have to change his attitude. "The Opposition has dealt a fatal blow to the BJP. Even Prime Minister Modi's attitude will have to change, because the people of India have sent him a clear message," Rahul told voters at Ernanad assembly constituency under Wayanad, which has voted him as MP for the second consecutive time. This is his first visit to the constituency since his election.

He further said: "From our perspective, the role of the Opposition will continue. The Opposition will prepare an alternative vision for the people of India, which will be a pro-poor, compassionate vision. We will fight for that vision. We are committed to making India a fairer society and more productive society."Rahul, who has also won from Rae Bareilly in UP, also addressed the topic of quitting one of the two seats. Under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, an MP can represent only one seat at a time and in cases where a person is elected from two, they must let go of one. On this topic, the Congress leader admitted that he had a "dilemma" before him. He, however, remained vague on which seat he would choose to keep.

Referring to the prime minister's interview to CNN News-18 last month, in which the leader claimed that "he had been sent by God", Rahul said: "The question is will I be a member of Wayanad or will I be a member of Rae Bareilly. Unfortunately, unlike the prime minister, I'm not guided by God. I'm a human being. For me, it's much simpler. My God is the poor people of India. My God is the people of Wayanad. For me, it's easy. I just talk to the people and my God tells me what to do. Back to the question of Wayanad or Rae Bareilly, what I will commit to you is that both Wayanad and Rae Bareilly will be happy with my decision."During elections, Modi said (his party would get) 400 and more seats. Later, 400 seats disappeared, then he said 300 seats. Then he said I am not biological and that after his mother died, he realised that he wasn't a biological person."

He further said: "I don't take any decisions. I've been put on the earth by the Paramathma and he makes all the decisions. Modiji has a strange Paramathma. His Paramathma makes him take all decisions in favour of Adani and Ambani. Paramathma tells Modi this morning that you are going to give Mumbai airport to Adani. Now, you have given seven airports. Now, you give power plants."The fight in this election was about the Constitution, he said. "One side (there were) millions of Indian people saying that we want our tradition, we believe in our history, in our language and we will define our future. On the other side, the prime minister and Amit Shah, who said no," he said. The BJP-led government had a "fundamental misunderstanding", Rahul said. "They thought that just because they have political power, the Enforcement



Directorate and Income Tax Department can dictate to the people of India what to do. The people of Kerala, the people of UP and all other states have shown the prime minister that you cannot dictate to the people of India what we want."

Through this election, the people of India had told them to "not touch the Constitution, which is our voice". "Before elections, we heard BJP leaders saying that they will change the Constitution", Rahul told the gathering. "After the elections, we saw the prime minister bowing before the Constitution. Hatred has been defeated by love and affection. Arrogance has been defeated by humility."Through the election, the citizens of India had sent across the message that "every single tradition is going to be protected," he went on to say. "In fact, the prime minister barely escaped in Varanasi. He would have been defeated in Varanasi. BJP was defeated in Ayodhya. Even the people of Ayodhya have sent a message to the BJP that we are against hatred."Rahul is scheduled to address another public meeting at Wayanad's district headquarters Kalpetta in the afternoon before leaving for Delhi.

Encounter in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua leaves 1 CRPF personnel, 2 militants dead

Hours after a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel died following an encounter with militants during a search operation in the Kootah area of Kathua district, the Jammu and Kashmir Police on Wednesday killed a second militant hiding in the area.

The slain militant had managed to flee on Tuesday night after the death of his accomplice. The police and paramilitary forces had then launched a search operation in the Kootah area. The two militants had entered a house in the village last night and asked for water, following which they opened fire and injured a civilian.

'Willing to work with India to push bilateral relations': Chinese Embassy in New Delhi



GNS News Agency, June 17

A day after Chinese Premier Li Qiang congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his re-election for a third term, spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on Wednesday said that Beijing was willing to work with India to push forward bilateral relations in the right direction. China and India are important neighbouring countries. Relevant border issues should be handled properly. A sound and stable #ChinaIndia relationship is in the interest of both countries, and conducive to the

peace and development in this region and beyond. China is willing to work with India to push forward bilateral relations in the right direction," a post on social media platform X read. Li had said that the sound and steady development of China-India relations is not only conducive to the well-being of the two peoples but also injects stability and positive energy into the region and the world. China and India are important neighbouring countries. Relevant border issues should be handled properly. A sound and stable #ChinaIndia relationship is in the interest of both countries, and conducive to the peace and development in this region and beyond. China is willing to... External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, after taking charge for a second term, had said that India's focus will be on finding solutions to the ongoing border issues with China. Talking to reporters on the occasion, he had said, "Our focus with regard to China will be on finding a solution for the border issues that still continue. With Pakistan, we would want to find a solution to the issue of years-old cross-border terrorism... How do we find a solution so that... that cannot be the policy." Relations between the two countries had hit a low ever since the eastern Ladakh border standoff on May 5, 2020, following a clash in the Pangong Tso (lake) area near Galwan.

Emissions of planet-warming nitrous oxide gas rose 40% between 1980 and 2020, says study

GNS News Agency, June 17

Emissions of planet-warming nitrous oxide gas rose by 40 per cent between 1980 and 2020, a study by the Global Carbon Project said on Wednesday. China (16.7 per cent), India (10.9 per cent), US (5.7 per cent), Brazil (5.3 per cent) and Russia (4.6 per cent) were the top five emitters of the gas more potent than carbon dioxide and methane. However, the per capita emissions vary. While India has the lowest per capita emission of 0.8 kg N₂O/person, the kg N₂O/person figures for the other top emitters are China 1.3, US 1.7, Brazil 2.5 and Russia 3.3.

nitrous oxide While India has the lowest per capita emission of 0.8 kg N₂O/person, the kg N₂O/person figures for the other top emitters are China 1.3, US 1.7, Brazil 2.5 and Russia 3.3. (Wikimedia Commons) High levels of nitrous oxide in the atmosphere can deplete the ozone layer and compound effects of climate change, the study said. On the earth, excess nitrogen contributes to soil, water and air pollution. Agricultural production and livestock rearing were the two key human-driven sources of nitrous oxide. In the last decade agricultural production, chiefly owing to the use of nitrogen fertilisers and animal manure, contributed to 74 per cent of the total anthropogenic nitrous oxide emissions, according to the study. "Agricultural emissions reached 8 million metric tons in 2020, a 67 per cent increase from the 4.8 million metric tons released in 1980," said the study.

The world's farmers used 60 million metric tonnes of commercial nitrogen fertilisers in 1980. By 2020, the sector used 107 million metric tonnes. That same year, animal manure contributed 101 million metric tonnes for a combined 2020 usage of 208 million metric tonnes, as per the study. Among the 18 regions considered in this study, only Europe, Russia, Australasia, and Japan and Korea had decreasing nitrous oxide emissions. Europe had the largest rate of decrease between 1980 and 2020, resulting from reduced fossil fuel and industry emissions. China and South Asia, on the other hand, had the largest increases in nitrous oxide emissions from 1980 to 2020



at 92 per cent.

"Nitrous oxide emissions from human activities must decline in order to limit global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius as established by the Paris Agreement," said the report's lead author, Hanqin Tian, the Schiller Institute Professor of Global Sustainability at Boston College. "Reducing nitrous oxide emissions is the only solution since at this point no technologies exist that can remove nitrous oxide from the atmosphere." Nitrous oxide is also emitted from natural sources such as oceans, inland water bodies and soil. These sources contributed to 11.8 per cent of the global emissions of the gas between 2010 and 2019.

Agriculture activities and related waste generation, biomass burning, fossil fuels and industries together contributed to around six per cent of the global nitrous oxide emissions in 2010-2019, the study noted. The study involved examination of global data for all major economic activities that lead to nitrous oxide emissions and 18 anthropogenic and natural sources and three absorbent "sinks" of global nitrous oxide. The Global Carbon Project analyses the impact of human activity on greenhouse gas emissions and earth systems and quantifies emissions of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide—three major planet-warming gases—to inform public policy and international action.

Congress' Jairam Ramesh says PM Modi deprived the people of Odisha of their fair share by slashing central funding

GNS News Agency, June 17

The Congress on Wednesday accused the Centre of steadily reducing Odisha's central funding in recent years and asked whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi will continue to deprive the state of its fair share. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh posed questions to the prime minister ahead of the swearing-in ceremony of Mohan Charan Majhi as the CM.

"The previous government of the 'one-third' Pradhan Mantri had steadily reduced Odisha's Central funding in recent years. According to CAG reports, central transfers as a percentage of revenue receipts have been consistently decreasing from 57 per cent in 2017-18 to 38 per cent in 2021-22," Ramesh said in a post on X. Similarly, the CAG noted that the state's share of Union taxes, as a percentage of revenue receipts of the state, has been continuously decreasing from 2018-19 to 2021-22, he said. Ramesh also pointed out that grants under the recommendation of the Fifteenth Finance Commission have also decreased recently. "Will the 'one-third' Pradhan Mantri continue to deprive Odisha of its fair share?" the Congress general secretary asked. He said the Sitalapalli rail wagon factory has been in cold storage ever since it was sanctioned by the UPA government in 2013. The previous government undertook zero work on this project and then finally dropped it in 2018, he alleged.

"When the current Railway Minister, a Rajya Sabha Member from Odisha, took office, he promised to take the project up again. In September 2021, an official of the East Coast Railway said that the project would be implemented on a PPP model. Till date, however, there has been no progress in this much-awaited project," Ramesh said. The Congress leader further said that two other projects, the Gopalpur-Rayagada Railway Line and the Rairakhole-Gopalpur Railway Line, have also suffered the same fate. Will these projects see the light of day before the current government collapses, he asked. Noting that 293 people were killed and over 1,000 injured in the horrific collision of three trains in Balasore last year, Ramesh said that while three railway officials were eventually held responsible, one can hardly absolve the Central government of their role in this mishap. "In the last ten years, the railways have struggled with high staff vacancies across the country. In November 2022, the Railway Workers' Union had even organised a sit-in demanding



new recruitment so that staff would not be forced to work overtime and would receive the rest they required," he said. The Railway Ministry itself admitted in an RTI that there were 2.74 lakh vacancies, including 1.7 lakh vacancies in the safety category, he said. "This hasn't changed despite a track record of accidents: a similar accident had occurred in May 2022 due to improper wiring and a cable fault, but the Railway Ministry did not implement any corrective measures. The government clearly has blood on their hands," Ramesh alleged. However, even after such disasters, staff vacancies continue to remain rampant and the Railway Minister was re-appointed to his position, he said. "During the elections, the BJP's now MP Sambit Patra stated that even 'Lord Jagannath is a devotee of Modi'. This statement is deeply insulting to crores of Lord Jagannath's devotees across the world. After the incident, Patra rendered a half-hearted apology, making the excuse that his statement was just a 'slip of tongue'," Ramesh recalled. "However, this is not an isolated instance but part of a larger pattern - the 'one-third' Pradhan Mantri himself has claimed that he was not biologically born but sent to Earth by the Creator himself. Can he tell us where he claims to fit in the pantheon of Indian Gods? Does he truly believe Lord Jagannath to be his devotee?" he said. Ramesh further said that when it was built during World War II, the Amarda airstrip had the longest runway in Asia. "Plans to revive the airport were first floated in 2021 and then approved in 2022 but no development has occurred till date. Will this project be revived before the 'one-third' Pradhan Mantri resigns?" Ramesh asked. The BJP has stormed to power in Odisha, ending 24 years of rule of the BJD by securing 78 of 147 assembly seats.

North Korea's Kim Jong Un hails Russian ties as Vladimir Putin reportedly plans visit



GNS News Agency, June 17

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un hailed the country's expanding relationship with Russia as reports suggest that Russian President Vladimir Putin will soon visit the country for his third meeting with Mr. Kim. Military, economic and other cooperation between North Korea and Russia have sharply increased since Mr. Kim visited Russia last September for a meeting with Mr. Putin. The U.S., South Korea and their partners believe North Korea has supplied artillery, missiles and other conventional weapons to Russia to support its war in Ukraine in return for advanced military technologies and economic aid.

Mr. Kim has been pushing to boost partnerships with Russia and China in a bid to strengthen his regional footing and launch a united front against the United States. During their September meeting at Russia's main space launch site, Mr. Kim invited the Russian president to visit North Korea at "a convenient time," and Mr. Putin accepted. On June 12, Mr. Kim sent Mr. Putin a congratulatory message commemorating Russia's National Day, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency. "Thanks to the significant meeting between us at the Vostochny Spaceport in September last year, (North Korea)-Russia friendly and cooperative relations devel-

oped into an unbreakable relationship of comrades-in-arms," Mr. Kim said in the message.

Mr. Kim's comments came as media reports said Mr. Putin is expected to visit North Korea as early as next week. If realised, it would their third summit meeting. Their first summit happened in Vladivostok in April 2019. Japanese public broadcaster NHK, citing unidentified diplomatic sources including high-ranking Russian officials, reported on June 12 that Mr. Putin is preparing to visit North Korea and Vietnam next week.

NHK said Mr. Putin is expected to seek stronger military ties with North Korea as Russia faces a shortage of weapons in its war with Ukraine, while North Korea is believed to want help with space technology in the wake of its recent failure to put a second spy satellite in orbit in late May. Earlier this week, Russia's Vedomost newspaper carried a similar report. Neither Russia nor North Korea have confirmed reports of a planned trip. Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a briefing in late May that "the visit is in the pipeline, and we will make an announcement in due time," according to Russian news agency Tass. Russia and North Korea are locked in separate confrontations with the United States — Russia over its invasion of Ukraine and North Korea over its advancing nuclear programme. Both North Korea and Russia have denied allegations of arms transfers, which would be a violation of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions. In March, South Korean Defence Minister Shin Wonsik said North Korea had already shipped about 7,000 containers filled with munitions and other military equipment to Russia. In return, Mr. Shin said that North Korea had received more than 9,000 Russian containers likely filled with aid. Recently, tensions on the Korean Peninsula have risen again as North Korea launched trash-carrying balloons toward South Korea, prompting the South to resume propaganda broadcasts at border areas.

Glum Conservatives in U.K. try to shift the mood with promises as polls near



GNS News Agency, June 17

U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Tuesday implored British voters, and his own party, to throw him a lifeline in the July 4 election, putting the promise of lower taxes at the heart of the Conservative Party's election manifesto. Mr. Sunak acknowledged that "people are frustrated with our party and frustrated with me," but argued that the Conservatives are "the only party with the big ideas to make this country a better place to live." With the Conservatives trailing the left-of-center Labour Party in opinion polls, opponents said Mr. Sunak was making unrealistic and unaffordable promises in a desperate bid to stave off defeat. The launch of the Tories' manifesto, its main package of pledges, came a day after Mr. Sunak was forced to deny rumours that he could quit even before polling day as the Conservatives are alarmed over his lackluster campaign. Mr. Sunak insisted he had not considered resigning and said he was "not going to stop fighting for people's votes."

Mr. Sunak held the manifesto launch at Silverstone motor racing circuit in central England, home of the British Grand Prix, and it could be one of his last big chances to get his spluttering campaign back on track. His central pitch was the claim that a government led by Labour's Keir Starmer would raise taxes, while a Conservative one would lower them. The party pledged 17 billion pounds in tax cuts by 2030, to be paid for largely by slashing welfare costs. The main tax cut is a two percentage point reduction in National Insurance, a tax employees pay to qualify for a state pension. The Conservative government has already cut it twice, from 12% to the current 8%, and the new pledge would take it to 6%. Mr. Sunak said the Conservatives would pay for lower taxes by "controlling the unsustainable rise in working-age welfare that has taken off since the pandemic." The Labour Party points out that the tax burden has risen to its highest level in decades during 14 years of Tory rule. Labour campaign chairman Pat McFadden called the Conservative manifesto a "desperate series of unfunded commitments" and "the most expensive panic attack in history." On July 4, British voters will elect lawmakers to fill all 650 seats in the House of Commons, and the leader of the party that

can command a majority — either alone or in coalition — will become Prime Minister.

Mr. Sunak's surprise decision to call a summer election, several months earlier than most people expected, was intended partly to catch the opposition unprepared. But it's the Conservatives who have seemed off-balance from the moment Mr. Sunak stood outside 10 Downing Street in the rain on May 22 to announce the start of the campaign.

The Conservatives were already on the defensive after jettisoning two Prime Ministers without an election in quick succession in 2022: first Boris Johnson, felled by scandals, then Liz Truss, who rocked the economy with drastic tax-slashing plans and lasted just seven weeks in office. The party's prospects worsened last week when populist firebrand Nigel Farage announced that he would run for parliament at the helm of the right-wing party Reform U.K., vowing to be a "bloody nuisance" to the established parties. While Reform, with its anti-establishment and anti-immigration rhetoric, is aiming at attracting disaffected voters from both Conservatives and Labour, it's likely to take more votes from Mr. Sunak's party. Mr. Sunak then flew home early from commemorations in France of the 80th anniversary of D-Day so he could resume campaigning. The photos of centenarian Second World War veterans and an array of world leaders including U.S. President Joe Biden attending the solemn ceremony on Omaha Beach without him were a publicity nightmare. Mr. Sunak quickly realised his error and apologised.

Paul Goodman, a former Conservative lawmaker who is now a member of the House of Lords, said the irony is that apart from the D-Day gaffe, "the Conservatives have run a perfectly decent, conventional campaign," but have little to show for it. "They've launched lots of policies, they've had some hits on Labour," he said. "Rishi Sunak actually did pretty well in the debate (against Mr. Starmer) last week. ... All of this appears to have made no difference at all." Labour, eyeing a return to power, is running a cautious campaign centered on the single word "change." Mr. Starmer's core message — which dismays some in his left-of-center party — is that he has transformed Labour from its high-taxing, big-spending days into a party of the stable center. "Politics is a relative business," said Philip Cowley, professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London. "You don't have to be liked, you just have to be more popular than the other guy. And that's what the Labour Party by and large are managing to pull off." While opinion polls giving Labour a double-digit lead may change, University of Strathclyde polling expert John Curtice said Mr. Sunak was facing a steep mountain to climb even before he called the election. "Arguably the Tories' days were numbered the moment that Liz Truss fouled up," he said. "Because no government that has presided over a market crisis has survived at the ballot box."

South Africa is forming a unity government. What happens next?



The African National Congress (ANC), which lost its 30-year-old parliamentary majority in last month's vote, must now share power for the first time since the end of white minority rule if it wants to continue governing South Africa. Having opted for a government of national unity over a traditional coalition formation, the party of the late Nelson Mandela is racing to cobble together a patchwork bloc made up of its erstwhile rivals. The ANC has until the first session of the new parliament, scheduled for June 14 to forge its new political alliances before lawmakers sit to choose a president, who is expected to be from the ANC as it is the largest party.

Given its poor election performance, the ANC will need to bring in at least one large rival among its prospective partners. It is talking to parties spanning the political landscape, from the free-market Democrat Economic Alliance (DA) to the Marxist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). But major ideological differences and in some cases, long-standing animosity are complicating matters. The DA, the largest opposition party, has said it will not join a formation with the EFF or former President Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) party, which came in a surprising third in last month's vote. The EFF has said it will not enter a government that includes the DA or the Freedom Front Plus — two parties that draw support from among South Africa's white minority. MK, in turn, has said it will not partner with the ANC if it is headed by President Cyril Ramaphosa, a rival of Mr. Zuma's who replaced him in 2018. The ANC says Mr. Ramaphosa's position is non-negotiable. Parliament convenes to elect President

parliament from sitting. Despite outperforming expectations and winning 55 seats, MK claims fraud marred the polls, which observers and the electoral commission said were free and fair. After the first session of the National Assembly, the newly elected president is sworn in at an inauguration ceremony. He or she will preside over the seventh administration since the end of apartheid and the advent of multi-racial democracy.

The negotiations to form the government of national unity will determine the composition of the executive branch, which is expected to undergo a major overhaul. Political parties will negotiate conditions, including preferred portfolios, positions and cabinet candidates, which the newly elected president will announce in the days following his or her inauguration. Key ministries such as finance, energy, foreign affairs and public enterprises are among the most coveted portfolios. Prior to the election, Public Enterprises Minister Pravin Gordhan, Minister in the Presidency Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Trade, Industry and Competition Minister Ebrahim Patel all indicated they planned to step down. South African law dictates that the President, who has the sole discretion to appoint the cabinet and deputy president, may select no more than two people from outside the National Assembly. Once the cabinet is announced, the President, in conjunction with the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, determines a date for the Opening of Parliament Address. This address outlines the new administration's governing priorities and marks the beginning of the new five-year parliamentary term.

The 400-seat National Assembly will hold its first session on June 14 where lawmakers will swear the oath of office before electing their Speaker, Deputy Speaker and the country's President. Since the ANC fell short of a majority, having won 159 seats, it will need to draw upon the support of its new political allies to retain the presidency.

Under South African law, candidates for president are nominated by members of parliament. If only one candidate is nominated, he or she is then elected. However, in the case of multiple candidates, lawmakers cast secret ballots with a candidate requiring support from a majority of members to be declared president. Mr. Zuma's MK party has applied to the country's top court to block

'Duped' Sri Lankans fighting in Russia-Ukraine war



GNS News Agency, June 17

When Sri Lanka's economy crashed in 2022, people sought work abroad wherever they could find it — including ex-soldiers who joined forces fighting in Ukraine after Russia's invasion. Now the veterans — some of whom swapped their life savings for what they thought would be lucrative, non-combat jobs — are desperate to come back home. "What we ask is to help bring back our husbands," said Renuka Karunaratne, 49, who said her husband was duped into going to Russia by a devious agent.

Colombo's parliament set up an inquiry last month to track at least 2,000 battle-hardened Sri Lankans who reportedly enlisted on both sides of the Ukraine war, including in the regular armed forces and mercenary groups. With no communication for months, and reports of at least 16 Sri Lankans killed and 37 wounded, distraught families are pleading with politicians for help. The government says around a dozen Sri Lankans are being held prisoners of war in Ukraine, after being lured there in pursuit of work. Advertisements shared on WhatsApp groups of retired military personnel promised monthly salaries of more than \$2,100, 13 times the average income in Sri Lanka. Promises were also made of plots of land in Russia, where foreign fighters and their families could settle. Ms. Karunaratne said she and her husband paid \$10,000 to an employment agent to get the job. "We have sold everything we owned, including jewellery," she said while demonstrating outside the Russian embassy in Colombo last week. An unprecedented economic crisis in early 2022 saw Sri Lanka run out of foreign exchange to import food, fuel and other essentials — and ultimately default on its external debt. Nilmini Chandima Dissanayake, 41, said hardship stemming from the downturn pushed her ex-soldier husband to go to Russia, more than 6,000 kilometres (3,700 miles) away. "My husband was in the commando regiment for 22 years," Ms. Dissanayake told AFP. "He had retired, he did some odd jobs, but found it was not enough to manage." She has not heard from him since May 1, one month after he arrived in Moscow to take up what he thought was a non-combatant role. "His last call was to plead to get him back home, to save his life," she said.

and Moscow has been on a global quest for more forces to fight. Sri Lanka has maintained a large military relative to its 22-million population since the end of a decades-long civil war against the separatist Tamil Tigers in 2009. Moscow is believed to have hired thousands of foreign combatants, many of them from South Asia. Neither Russia nor Ukraine will say how many foreigners are serving in their militaries or how many they are holding as prisoners of war. "Dangerous Colombo's parliament set up an inquiry last month to track at least 2,000 battle-hardened Sri Lankans who reportedly enlisted on both sides of the Ukraine war, including in the regular armed forces and mercenary groups. In parliament, Sri Lankan deputy defence minister Premitha Tennakoon did not specify how many citizens were fighting on each side of the conflict. Colombo has remained neutral in the Ukraine war, but reports that Russian authorities supported the recruitment of ex-soldiers from Sri Lanka have sparked tensions. Police have arrested two retired Sri Lankan generals for illegally acting as recruiting agents for Russian mercenary firms, as well as six people who allegedly helped them with logistics. State minister for foreign affairs Tharaka Balasuriya said Sri Lanka was pushing Ukraine to release prisoners of war, and would send a delegation to Moscow. "If Sri Lankans are in a dangerous situation, it's the duty of the government... to ensure that they are safely returned," Mr. Balasuriya said. The Sri Lankan foreign ministry said on June 11 that Moscow agreed not to recruit anymore Sri Lankans to their military. Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ali Sabry raised the issue with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on the sidelines of the BRICS ministerial meeting in Moscow on June 10, the ministry said. "It was also agreed that no further recruitment from Sri Lanka will be done," the ministry said. Moscow will accept a delegation from Sri Lanka on June 26 to "review these issues in detail and take suitable action to arrest the situation", the ministry statement said. Russian ambassador Levan S. Dzhagaryan said "a lot" of visas had been issued to Sri Lankans, but insisted that they had not told the embassy why they wanted to go to Moscow.

Israel, Hamas committed war crimes, says UN

GNS News Agency, June 17

Both Israel and Hamas committed war crimes in the early stages of the Gaza war, a U.N. inquiry found on June 11, saying that Israel's actions also constituted crimes against humanity because of the immense civilian losses.

The findings were from two parallel reports, one focusing on the October 7 Hamas attacks and another on Israel's military response, published by the U.N. Commission of Inquiry (COI), which has an unusually broad mandate to collect evidence and identify perpetrators of international crimes committed in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel does not cooperate with the commission, which it says has an anti-Israel bias. The COI says Israel obstructs its work and prevented investigators from accessing both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel's diplomatic mission to the U.N. in Geneva rejected the findings. "The COI has once again proven that its actions are all in the service of a narrow-led political agenda against Israel," said Meirav Eilon Shahar, Israel's Ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva. Hamas did not immediately respond to a request for comment. By Israel's count more than 1,200 people were killed and 250 taken hostage in the Oct. 7 cross-border attacks that sparked a military retaliation in Gaza that has since killed over 37,000 people, by Palestinian tallies. The reports, which cover the conflict through to end-December, found that both sides committed war crimes including torture; murder or willful killing; outrages upon personal dignity; and inhuman or cruel treatment. Israel also committed additional war crimes including starvation as a method of warfare, it said, saying Israel not only failed to provide essential supplies like food, water, shelter and

medicine to Gazans but "acted to prevent the supply of those necessities by anyone else". Some of the war crimes such as murder also constituted crimes against humanity by Israel, the COI statement said, using a term reserved for the most serious international crimes knowingly committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilians. "The immense numbers of civilian casualties in Gaza and widespread destruction of civilian objects and infrastructure were the inevitable result of a strategy undertaken with intent to cause maximum damage, disregarding the principles of distinction, proportionality and adequate precautions," the COI statement said. Sometimes, the evidence gathered by such U.N.-mandated bodies has formed the basis for war crimes prosecutions and could be drawn on by the International Criminal Court. The COI's findings are based on interviews with victims and witnesses, hundreds of submissions, satellite imagery, medical reports and verified open-source information. Among the findings in the 59-page report on the Oct. 7 attacks, the Commission verified four incidents of mass killings in public shelters which it said suggests militants had "standing operational instructions". It also identified "a pattern of sexual violence" by Palestinian armed groups but could not independently verify reports of rape. The longer 126-page Gaza report said Israel's use of weapons such as MK84 guided bombs with a large destructive capacity in urban areas were incompatible with international humanitarian law "as they cannot adequately or accurately discriminate between the intended military targets and civilian objects". It also said Palestinian men and boys were subject to the crime against humanity of gender persecution, citing cases where victims were forced to strip naked in public in moves "intended to inflict severe humiliation".

Vaishnav bats for further simplification of economic laws at 'NITI for States' platform launch



The Union IT, Communications, and Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnav Thursday stressed on the need to further simplify economic laws in a modern and relevant way at the launch of NITI Aayog's 'NITI for States' platform. It is an integrated platform hosting numerous documents and datasets required for the government's Viksit Bharat action plan. During his keynote address, Vaishnav outlined four pillars of the government's approach towards policymaking, namely – physical, social, and digital infrastructure, inclusive growth, boosting manufacturing, and simplification. Expanding on the fourth pillar of simplification, Vaishnav said that over 1,500 "archaic laws" have been addressed by the government, like the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 which was recently replaced by the Telecommunications Act, 2023. "Now, with the same comprehensiveness, we need to further simplify economic laws in a modern and relevant way based on our growth requirements," he added.

Vaishnav also underscored the role of NITI Aayog in the process of simplification. "NITI has the flexibility of a think tank to onboard 2,000 good lawyers and give each of them one law to explore how it can be simplified. According to a study, there are around 35,000 such laws which require simplification. If we address all those laws, in the next five years we can create a legal framework to reach the goal of Viksit Bharat," he explained. In August, 2023, the Parliament passed the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023, which declassified 183 provisions of 42 central acts administered by 19 ministries and departments.

The NITI for States platform is a multi-sectoral live

repository of over 7,400 best practices, 5,000 policy documents, 900 datasets, and 1,400 data profiles. The documents and datasets are available across ten sectors including agriculture, education, energy, health, livelihoods and skilling, manufacturing, MSME, urbanisation, and water resources. The platform was launched in the presence of NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam and other members of the apex public policy think tank.

"We are embarking on a new journey. The destination is known. The path is not known, but I think this is one way. These are all guideposts. I'm sure if we work hard, we will fulfil the vision of our Prime Minister to be a Viksit Bharat," CEO Subrahmanyam said at the launch. The platform is supported by the government's language AI tool Bhashini to currently provide access in 8 Indian languages, which will later increase to 22 languages. It also hosts training modules for capacity building in governance and 4 help desks on electric vehicles (EVs), procurement, land, and urbanisation. The platform has been integrated with eOffice by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), which is under the Ministry of Electronics And Information Technology (MeitY).

Subrahmanyam said that all documents and datasets uploaded on the platform have been analysed, dissected, and curated. "We all keep talking about data-driven decision making. The point is, unless data across sectors can be integrated and used usefully, it is quite useless as far as integrated data-based decision making is concerned. The NITI for States platform has brought data from across various fields at one location in an interoperable and comparable manner," he added.

The platform was launched alongside the Viksit Bharat Strategy Room at the NITI Aayog Bhawan in New Delhi. The strategy room, which was developed by the National E-Governance Division, also under MeitY, allows for interactive visualisation of documents and datasets uploaded on the NITI for States platform. The strategy room also allows for interactions through voice-enabled AI. Subrahmanyam also said that NITI Aayog is working on a design to fit the strategy room "into a briefcase or a suitcase with a projector and a touchscreen" to scale the technology. "I think all 7,000 blocks in India at some point in the future should have this kind of a tool," he added.

'Unusual surge': Govt restricts imports of gold jewellery and parts

free trade agreement (FTA), gold jewellery, gold jewellery exports, Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Least Developed Countries (LDC), Indian express news, current affairs. The duty was hiked taking into account a sharp surge in imports was recorded in December and January which reflected the misuse of the duty arbitrage with other gold items. Amid scrutiny over surge in gold imports which has lately featured in inter-departmental consultations, the Commerce and Industry Ministry on Tuesday restricted jewellery and parts imports with immediate effect with an exception to imports from UAE under the free trade agreement (FTA), a notification issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) showed.

The Indian Express has learnt that investigative agencies responsible for curbing smuggling activities have been concerned about the surge in gold imports especially from Least Developed Countries (LDC) countries and countries with which India has an FTA. It is learnt that the rise has been mainly seen on account of importers making use of lower tariffs from these countries. A government official said that jewellery imports under the five Harmonised System of Nomenclature (HSN) code have not been banned and only put under authorisation to ascertain the reason behind an unusual surge in imports and better monitor the geographies from where the imports are taking place.

"The imports in these categories never happened in such quality. We suddenly saw an unusual surge. A part of it was coming from FTA countries in zero duty. A part was also coming by paying duty. Because of the unusual surge, the commerce ministry consulted with different departments including the Department of Revenue, we decided to put it under a restricted list to better monitor the importers and the countries involved. It is an import authorization. Traditionally, if jewellery parts are around \$50 million and it surges to \$1.5 billion, then one has to look into it," the official said. This comes after official data showed that the imports of jewellery parts that have now been put under restricted category jumped 30 times to \$1,551 million in 2023-2024 compared to \$52 million during 2022-2023. Meanwhile, jewellery imports in other



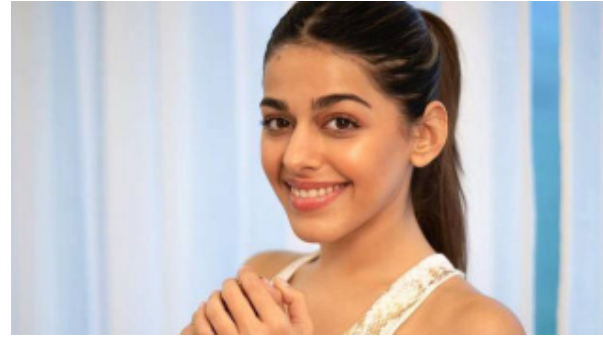
restricted categories which consist of jewellery studded with precious and semi-precious stones such as diamonds and pearls happened for the first time during the last financial year. India's total gold imports has also been on the rise, taking the goods trade deficit in April to a 5-month high of \$19.1 billion. This was largely driven by gold imports that jumped by a sharp 208.99 per cent to \$3.11 billion in April this year compared to \$1 billion in April last year. The Indian Express had earlier reported that just a week before the presentation of Budget 2024-25, the Finance Ministry had hiked import duties on a specific, relatively unheard category of the jewellery segment called gold findings, which are small components such as hooks, clasps, clamps, pins, screws used to hold the whole or a part of a piece of jewellery in place. The duty was hiked taking into account a sharp surge in imports was recorded in December and January which reflected the misuse of the duty arbitrage with other gold items. Government officials were also concerned about duty evasion. Notably, gold and silver bars attract a 15 per cent import duty, while gold and silver findings earlier faced 11 per cent import duty. Due to the difference in HSN codes for gold and silver bars as compared to gold and silver findings, importers were making use of the duty arbitrage to import gold in the form of findings and coins, rather than bars. Elevated gold price along with high import duty on the metal are seen as one of the key reasons behind the increased cases of smuggling.

IRDAI allows policyholders to cancel policies, get refund

Irdai, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India, IRDAI allows policyholders to cancel policies. Indian express news, current affairs. Any loss that is reported under a general insurance product that exceeds Rs 50,000 or more (in the case of motor insurance) and Rs 1 lakh or more (in the case of other than motor insurance) needs to be mandatorily surveyed by a registered surveyor and loss assessor," IRDAI said. Giving more flexibility and freedom to policyholders, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has said retail policyholders can cancel an insurance policy at any time during the term by informing the insurer and get the refund for the remaining policy period. "In case the policyholder cancels the policy, he/she is not required to give reasons for cancellation. The insurer can cancel the policy only on the grounds of established fraud, by giving minimum notice of 7 days to the retail policyholder," IRDAI said on Tuesday while announcing a host of reforms in the sector. Every insurer should have a retail product which is identified and designated as base product defining the necessary minimum coverage in each line of business, it said. If the customer cancels the policy, the insurer should refund proportion premium for unexpired policy period, if the term of the policy is up to one year and there is no claim made during the policy period, it said. The refund premium for the unexpired policy period should be made in respect of policy with the term more than one year and the risk coverage for such policy years has not commenced, it said in a master circular. The regu-

latory said no claim should be rejected for want of documents. All the required documents should be called at the time of underwriting the proposal. "The customer may be asked to submit only those documents that are directly related to the claim settlement such as claim form, driving license, permit, fitness, FIR, untraced report, fire brigade report, post mortem report, books of accounts, stock register, wage register and repair bills (only in cases where cashless is not available), wherever applicable. "Under no circumstances can the insurer cancel statutory Motor Third Party Liability insurance or any other compulsory insurance mandated by law except in case of double insurance or total loss," IRDAI said. The regulator said every retail customer should be given Customer Information Sheet (CIS) with every policy explaining in simple words, basic features of a policy at one place. It should contain in brief the scope of coverage, add-ons, basis of sum insured, sum insured, exclusions, deductibles, special conditions & warranties, endorsements, information regarding the claim procedure, claims intimation and processing. IRDAI said motor insurance customer should be given the options as first choice under motor insurance. These include Pay as you Drive/ Pay as you Go/ Pay as you Use insurance cover and comprehensive cover that includes coverage for depreciation. The insured's declared value (IDV) of the vehicle will be deemed to be the 'Sum Insured' and it will be fixed at the commencement of each policy period for each insured vehicle, it said.

Here's why you should do yoga in the morning like Alaya F



Alaya F is one of the most promising young fresh faces. As the starlet continues her quest to conquer the industry, she posts a lot of sneak peeks of her daily life on Instagram. She posted a reel that showcased her morning routine, which includes skincare, having healthy juices, playing with her pet pup, reading, scheduling things on her laptop, and then getting down and doing some yoga. She captioned her reel, "Started this week with peace and productivity". Her happy, calming reel was a treat to watch and got us thinking of the benefits of morning yoga. We spoke to an expert about yoga and making it a part of your morning routine.

"As a yoga teacher, I am often asked what is the best time to practice yoga? I personally like to practice yoga early in the morning as it helps me start my day right. It sets a positive tone for the day and prepares my mind and body to overcome any challenge the day has to offer," he said. Practicing yoga any time of the day brings you numerous benefits such as improved mobility, flexibility, stamina, sleep quality, heart health, immunity etc. However, practicing yoga in the morning has some added advantages because of the calmness, clarity of thoughts and fresh air early morning brings along with it, added Sharma. "Morning time is also considered the best time to practice yoga by many yoga practitioners because the human mind is far more active and receptive in the morning time compared to other hours of the day. Morning yoga can instantly make you feel calmer and more at peace with yourself. I personally recommend practicing yoga in the morning but it is also not necessary. Any time is a good time to practice. Do not let the time constraint stop you from doing yoga," he said. According to Harvard Health Publishing, there are various benefits to practicing yoga. Yoga helps with better sleep, which helps heart health, and aids the avoidance of depression and obesity. Yoga also encourages slow, deep breathing, which helps lower blood pressure and heart rate.

Menstrual Hygiene Day: Things teenagers need to understand about menarche

Navigating adolescence is like sailing through a sea of change. Among the many changes a young girl undergoes, one of the most significant is menarche – the first menstrual cycle. This milestone is a crucial part of the journey toward womanhood. However, it is also accompanied by a lot of questions, concerns, and apprehensions. "Getting your period is a natural and healthy part of growing up. It's not something to be embarrassed about, and it's definitely not a taboo topic. Society has evolved in its understanding of menstruation, and we should all contribute to breaking the stigma around it," said Dr Neha Pawar, consultant, gynaecology, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital Mumbai. Menarche, the onset of menstruation, marks the beginning of a woman's reproductive journey, and while it can be a confusing and sometimes overwhelming experience, it is essential to understand the changes happening within your body. So, this Menstrual Hygiene Day, observed annually on May 28, let's dive into what every teenager needs to understand about menarche. Menarche is a normal part of development

Firstly, it's crucial to recognise that menarche is a normal and natural process. Every girl goes through it at some point in her life. It typically occurs between the ages of 10 and 15, but this can vary, said Dr Neema Sharma, director-obstetrics and gynaecology, Fortis Hospital, Vasant Kunj.

During menarche, your body undergoes several changes. Physical changes such as breast development, growth spurts, and the appearance of pubic and underarm hair are common. "Alongside these physical changes, you may experience emotional fluctuations. It's important to understand that these changes are part of growing up," said Dr Sharma. Experts urge that it is important to note that periods may be irregular at first. "It's common for menstrual cycles to be irregular during the first few years after menarche. This is because the body is still establishing a regular hormonal pattern. Keeping track of your menstrual cycle using a calendar or period-tracking app can help you identify any irregularities or patterns over time," said Dr Garima Sawhney, senior gynaecologist and co-founder, Pristyn Care. A period usually lasts between three to seven days, with the menstrual cycle repeating every 21 to 35 days. "However, it might take a year or two for the cycle to become regular. Initially, it might be unpredictable and might differ in duration, flow, and accompanying symptoms," Dr Pawar said. Understanding the menstrual cycle is a monthly process that prepares your body for pregnancy. "It involves the shedding of the uterine lining, resulting in menstrual bleeding. It typically lasts 28 days, but again, it can vary from person to person. Learning about the menstrual cycle can help you predict and understand your periods better. Keep track of your cycle using a calendar or a period tracking app to monitor any irregularities or changes," mentioned Dr Sharma.

Maintaining menstrual hygiene

Proper menstrual hygiene is vital for your overall

This is why you need to include fish oil in your diet

Fish oil supplements have become a mainstay in many health-conscious routines. But what exactly makes this fishy friend such a nutritional powerhouse? Packed with omega-3 fatty acids, these essential fats offer a wealth of potential benefits for your body, from brainpower to heart health. Whether you're a seasoned supplement taker or just curious about the hype, discover if incorporating fish oil into your diet could be the catch of the day for your health.

How can adding fish oil to your diet be beneficial?

According to dietician Deepali Sharma, clinical nutritionist at the CK Birla Hospital, Delhi, adding fish oil to your diet can be beneficial in several ways for both your heart and overall health:

* Heart health: Fish oil is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential fats that can help lower your bad cholesterol (LDL) and triglycerides, while potentially raising your good cholesterol (HDL). This can help reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

* Keeping blood pressure in check: Omega-3s may also help lower blood pressure, further reducing your risk of heart problems.

* Healthy arteries: Omega-3s can help prevent the buildup of plaque in your arteries, which can harden and narrow them, leading to heart disease. By keeping your arteries clear and flexible, fish oil can contribute to a healthier cardiovascular system.

* Sharpened vision: Omega-3 fatty acids play a role in eye health and a lack of them can increase your risk of eye diseases like macular degeneration. Including fish



Remember, if your menstrual pain is severe or disrupts your daily life, consult a healthcare professional for guidance, said Dr Neema Sharma, director-obstetrics and gynaecology, Fortis Hospital, Vasant Kunj

well-being during menstruation. "Use clean and absorbent menstrual products like pads, tampons, or menstrual cups. Change them regularly to avoid discomfort and prevent infections. Ensure that you dispose of used products responsibly and maintain good personal hygiene by washing your genital area with mild soap and water," Dr Sharma said. Coping with menstrual discomfort

It is common to have mild to moderate pain or discomfort, known as dysmenorrhea, during the menstrual cycle. Also, many girls experience discomfort during their periods, such as cramps, bloating, and mood swings. "You can alleviate these symptoms by applying a heating pad or taking a warm bath, engaging in light exercises, practicing relaxation techniques, or using over-the-counter pain relievers, as advised by your healthcare provider. Remember, if your menstrual pain is severe or disrupts your daily life, consult a healthcare professional for guidance," said Dr Sharma. Communication is key. Open communication with trusted adults, such as parents, guardians, or healthcare professionals, is essential during this time. "Don't hesitate to ask questions or share your concerns. They can provide guidance, and support, and address any issues you may have regarding menarche or menstrual health. Remember, there are no silly or embarrassing questions when it comes to your well-being," Dr Sharma noted. Dr Sawhney expressed that it's important to prioritise self-care, seek support from trusted friends, family, or mentors, and practice stress-management techniques like exercise, deep breathing, or engaging in hobbies. "If emotional challenges persist, consider speaking to a healthcare professional," said Dr Sawhney.



oil in your diet can help support healthy vision.

* Brainpower for babies: Omega-3s are crucial for early brain development in babies, especially during the first trimester of pregnancy. They continue to be important for cognitive function throughout life.

What is the recommended dosage?

For optimal absorption, it's best to take fish oil with water after a full meal, such as breakfast, lunch, or dinner, said Sharma. The recommended dosage is typically limited to 3 grams per day. However, the exact dose may vary depending on your individual needs and should be determined by a healthcare professional, such as a doctor or registered dietitian. They will consider your specific health condition and recommend an appropriate dosage. Should anyone avoid including fish oil in their diet? People with seafood allergies should avoid fish oil, warned Sharma.

Karan Johar says star fees breaking back of producers, entourage cost is the 'least' of their concern: 'Stars not in touch with reality'

Filmmaker Karan Johar says the rising entourage cost isn't the biggest worry for producers in the film industry as that can still be controlled, but what is harming the health of the film economy is the exorbitant fees of movie stars. The filmmaker, known for mounting big scale films, said it's high time actors "review" their remuneration so that films can be mounted seamlessly. has extensively reported how exorbitant star fees and outrageous demands of actors and their entourage—make up, hair-dresser, stylists, and other crew members—have dented the film business, ballooning up budgets and stripping off dignified pay for artistes in other departments.

At the trailer launch of his upcoming production Kill, Indianexpress.com asked the filmmaker about the issue. Karan Johar, who also runs a talent management agency, said high star fee isn't always "viable", which makes it difficult to mount a film. "The entourage cost is the least of our worry. It's the main remuneration of the actors that has to be looked into. It's very critical for all the actors to understand exactly how the times are, how the climate of our movies are, how tough and difficult it is to maneuver through making a motion picture of any magnitude or size.

"It is very difficult, there are so many costs—the PnA (Publicity and advertising) costs and if the above the line cost, which is what comes from the actors, is not viable, then it becomes important to mount a film. Every single movie star today has to review what they're asking for." The filmmaker said often there will be certain producers who will pay exorbitant fee to actors just so their films are made, but the practice will eventually "cause a lot of damage to the entire system."

Panchayat's Pankaj Jha questions film industry for delayed recognition of Irrfan Khan, says everyone else is a 'mimicry artist'



Pankaj Jha, who was recently seen in the Amazon Prime Video web series Panchayat, recently shared why he feels like a misfit in showbiz. In a recent conversation with the indianexpress.com, Pankaj questioned the industry for not recognising a talent like Irrfan Khan, and taking years before applauding his talent. "This is like a disease," he said. While the entertainment industry is known for glitz and glamour, Pankaj told us that this world is nothing like it looks from the outside and the culture is more like a disease where one completely loses himself. He said, "There are two journeys in life. One, where the whole universe gets to know you, and two, where you understand who you are. When I was in Mumbai and getting many offers, I was doing film after film, but for some reason I wasn't very satisfied with my life. I had this feeling that I don't want this life, I don't want to become like everybody else. This is not my journey. I cannot carry that personality, it would simply make me feel uncomfortable. Then I will have to pretend like the others, act in a particular way, lose myself. This is where Osho helped me and saved me from falling in that life."

He added, "People, working in cinema should be treated like common people. It's just another job. I don't understand why they (actors/stars) turn out to become this very complicated people. This is like a disease. I saved myself, I do painting, writing, I don't depend on movies. I stay away from all that." Pankaj, who made his debut with Mira Nair's Monsoon Wedding, went on to act in films like Gulaa and Black Friday, among others. In the



He added, "They (actors) can take all the entourage they want, that is not the problem. While it's adding to our costs, the real issue is the mothership cost. They've to look at that. There can be backend deals, percentage of profits, slabs of box office as per performance based remuneration. All that is possible, but every actor has to look within because a lot of them are not really in touch with reality."

Various film producer bodies and heads of the biggest talent management agencies in Bollywood began the first round of meetings last week to tackle the menace of entourage cost and star fee, which has severely burdened productions and forced everyone, except the lead stars, to take a huge pay cut. As the next meeting is expected to take place this week, key stakeholders have already begun talks internally to arrive at a "sustainable" solution as the Hindi film industry finds itself dealing with a huge crisis of funds, with fingers pointed towards star fees and overhead costs.

same interview, Pankaj Jha also said that the only actor worth applauding was Irrfan Khan. He also questioned the film industry for making him struggle for so long.

"I believe actors should refrain themselves from watching films. What happens is they start to mimic it. Today, I feel every actor is mimicking someone. There was only one actor in the industry who was real, that was Irrfan Khan. He has set a benchmark for actors and everybody is trying to reach that benchmark but it is not easy to reach," he said. He added, "We should question the industry why it takes them so much time to recognise true talents like Irrfan Khan." Irrfan Khan, who died in 2020, was first seen in a small role in Mira Nair's 1988 film Salaam Bombay. Then he was seen in the television series Laal Ghaas Par Neele Ghode, and Darr. In the 90s, he acted in several television serials. He also appeared in an episode of Sssshhh... Koi Hai in 2001. In the same year, Asif Kapadia cast him as the lead in The Warrior, a historical drama, and this film changed the trajectory of his career. In 2004, he featured in a short film, Road to Ladakh, which received rave reviews at international festivals. In the same year, the actor played the title role in critically acclaimed Maqbool. He later appeared in films like The Namesake, Life in a... Metro, A Mighty Heart, The Darjeeling Limited, Slumdog Millionaire, Acid Factory, Life of Pi, and The Lunchbox, among others. The 2020 film Angrezi Medium was his last film, which released on March 11, 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country.

BTS' Jin to hug 1000 fans at FESTA, addresses controversy around hug event: 'It was my idea'

BTS Jin aka Kim Seokjin, who was recently discharged from his mandatory military service after 18 months, has organised a special meet and greet session for his fans who will get to hug him in person on June 13. After celebrating his reunion with his bandmates, the oldest member of K-Pop band, took to Weverse to make the announcement and clarify certain misunderstandings that surrounded the hug event.

As soon as Jin was discharged, there were reports that he was being forced to work on June 13, as well as, to hug 1000 fans. Jin, who went live to greet his fans, first spoke about his experience in working with the military and later addressed the controversy. He said, "I need to talk about FESTA. I gave a good idea, but it received a lot of criticism. I took a look at it so let me try to explain. I took a draft with me from the start. Since I am in charge of FESTA myself this time, I contacted the organiser around October, November last year. But they were honest and said they already planned everything so there wasn't much left to do." "They asked me if I had any ideas. I said

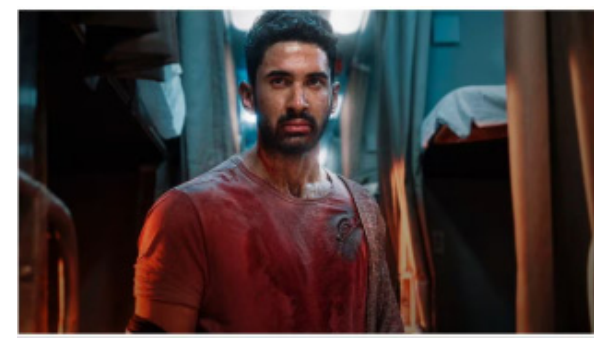
I wanted to do a free hug event, but they said no. So I asked what they planned on doing, and they said, 'We usually rent a park, don't we? We plan on doing it there' and insisted on it for about a month."

"From the company's side, there were safety issues for these types of events, so I asked them to do it indoors. The plan was to hold the event and give hugs to the winners. Although the company said it would be hard to do it the day after being discharged. I told them I wanted to hug 3000 people. Then it became 1000 people. After that, I don't think I paid much attention to it." "Soon after the live, he penned a note for his ARMY and wrote, "I worked hard to prepare for FESTA. I said this to make my free hug idea stand out better, everyone. I think the meaning of what I was trying to say was conveyed incorrectly." He added, "Also, there will be a lot of huggers tomorrow, so please pass as quickly as possible. It will probably be difficult to have a conversation, so I expect that it will proceed smoothly if you just give a quick hug and pass by. Please be kind."

Newcomer Lakshya turns from 'rakshak' to 'rakshas' in Karan Johar's gory actioner.

After premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) last year, Karan Johar's action-packed venture Kill is set to release in India. The makers unveiled the film's trailer on Wednesday. The film stars newcomer Lakshya Lalwani, marking his Bollywood debut, alongside TV personality and choreographer Raghav Juyal as the antagonist. The trailer begins with Lakshya, a soldier, proposing to his girlfriend Tanya Maniktala on a train. However, their romantic journey soon turns into a nightmare when a group of goons attack the train. The violent saga begins after Raghav's character abducts Tanya's character. To save the love of his life, the not-so-ordinary soldier goes on a killing spree. What follows are gory visuals of Lakshya ruthlessly killing the goons, turning the train red. He is so merciless that even Juyal's character is forced to say, "Aise kaun marta hai? (Who kills like this?)"

The film's synopsis on TIFF's official website reads, "In Nikhil Nagesh Bhat's relentless martial arts thriller, a passenger train bound for New Delhi becomes a bloody battleground of brutal close-quarters combat as a pair of commandos square off against a 40-strong army of in-



vading bandits." Kill premiered in the Midnight Madness section of the Toronto International Film Festival in 2023. The film earned a spot among the ten selected films for screening at the film festival. Produced by Dharma Productions and Guneet Monga's Sikhya Entertainment, Kill is directed by Nikhil Nagesh Bhat. Lakshya was previously set to debut in the movies with Dostana 2, also starring Janhvi Kapoor and Kartik Aaryan. After shooting for a month, the film was shelved.

Karan Johar speaks up about Kangana Ranaut slap incident, says he 'doesn't support verbal or physical violence'

Filmmaker Karan Johar on Wednesday commented on the slap incident involving actor and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut and said he doesn't support any kind of "verbal or physical" violence. Last week, Kangana was slapped by a by a CISF constable at Chandigarh airport reportedly due to the actor's comments on farmers' protest. In attendance to launch the trailer of his next actioner Kill, Karan Johar was asked to comment on the incident. When asked about the slap incident, Karan told reporters, "Dekhiye, I do not support any kind of violence, verbal or physical."

Karan and Kangana have been at loggerheads ever since she called him the "flagbearer of nepotism" on his talk show Koffee with Karan in 2017. Over the years, the actor has frequently criticised Karan for furthering nepotism in the film industry and has also addressed him as "movie mafia" on many occasions. After the incident, the film star had lashed out at those who had made snide remarks about the incident. Kangana had said those cheering for the violence against her must introspect about their own "psychological criminal tendencies."

Composer Vishal Dadlani, who has been a vocal



anti-establishment voice, had claimed he would be glad to offer the CISF personnel a job, in case she needed one after the incident. In two separate Instagram stories, the composer had said if Kaur is "removed" from her services, he would ensure she is "gainfully employed." Based on a complaint lodged by the CISF, the Mohali police had registered an FIR against Kulwinder Kaur under Sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 341 (wrongful restraint) of the Indian Penal Code.

Karan Oberoi says he 'almost died in jail, didn't eat anything for a week': 'I saw my life flash in front of my eyes'

Actor Karan Oberoi, who was once known for his television roles and his musical band 'Band of Boys', recently opened up about the time when he was jailed in 2019. Karan was accused of rape and extortion and spent over a month in custody. In a recent interview, Karan said that he wanted to give up on his life when he was going through this time and at one point, he "almost died" in jail. The case against him is still going on. In a chat with Siddharth Kannan for his YouTube channel, Karan said that he was tasked with the responsibility of cleaning toilets while in jail. "It was a dark phase in my life. It was like visiting pataal lok (hell) for me. Like how did I land here? There were people around me who had murdered so many people. There too, there were some hardened criminals, who were protecting me," he said.

Karan said that he didn't eat and sleep for days when he first landed in jail and was getting delirious. "When you don't know if you are going to survive tomorrow because you can possibly die in these conditions... I didn't eat anything for the first seven days. For the first nine days, I didn't sleep. I was getting delirious. In that delirious state, I was starting to feel like I might not be able to finish this journey," he said. He further shared, "I almost died because of asphyxiation in an episode. I don't want to discuss it but I thought this is the end, I could see my life flash in front of my eyes. I have claustrophobia and they



put me in a place... kaal kotri mein daal dia tha and I thought this is the end of my life." Karan Oberoi was accused of rape and extortion in 2019. The woman claimed that she was raped between January 2017 and February 2018, and said that the actor had promised her marriage. He was arrested the next day. After a month, he was given bail by Bombay HC. While he was in jail, the woman filed a second FIR for assault and claimed she was threatened to withdraw her complaint. She was later arrested by Mumbai Police on charges of criminal conspiracy and filing false information in an FIR. In 2023, she was fined Rs 20,000 by Bombay HC after her lawyer failed to complete the necessary legal formalities for the case.

Priyanka Chopra showers love on pic of brother Siddharth Chopra, fiancée Neelam Upadhyaya: 'Angels'



Priyanka Chopra's little brother Siddharth Chopra, who recently got engaged to his longtime girlfriend Neelam Upadhyaya, shared a couple of photos on his Instagram handle from their recent outing. In the photos, the couple can be seen posing for the camera. While many took to the comments section to ex-

press their love for the couple, the one comment that stole the show was that of Priyanka Chopra. Soon after the couple shared the photos in a joint Instagram post, Priyanka Chopra was quick to drop a comment. She wrote, "Angels" followed by a heart-eyed emoticon. In one of the photos, the couple could be seen posing for the camera

in casual outfits, another photo was a selfie of the couple taken by Priyanka's little brother Siddharth. Sharing the photos, the couple wrote, "V". Siddharth and Neelam got engaged in April this year, around when Priyanka Chopra had come to attend the store launch event of Bvlgari in Mumbai. She also took part the Holi celebrations of her

extended family in Noida along with her husband Nick Jonas. The news of their engagement made headlines after the couple took to their respective Instagram handles to share photos from their intimate engagement celebrations. The photos featured Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas in Indian outfits. Malti Marie also featured in other photos. Sharing the photos, the couple wrote, "Rokafied." Priyanka Chopra too shared photos of the couple on her Instagram Stories and wrote, "They did it. Congratulations Siddharth Chopra and Neelam Upadhyaya all our love and blessing. Rokafied." Previously, Siddharth Chopra was engaged to Ishita Kumar. However, the couple called off the wedding within a few months of their grand engagement ceremony for reasons best known to them.

'Texas is heartbeat of US cricket but New York is where money is': Thiru Kumaran, former India player traces his journey as grassroots coach in Dallas



they left their countries. Cricket was also seen as a connector to their roots. It gave kids the chance to socialise with like-minded people. At schools most of them take up basketball and American football, but these sports don't come naturally to us. You need to be at least 6ft to be a decent basketball player here. And if it is American football, you need to be really strong. As Indians we don't have that. So cricket was ideal. There is a beautiful connection between Indians and cricket, even in a place like Texas where there are not favourable conditions to play throughout the year. But once they pick up the bat or ball, kids don't ever want to keep it down. It is in our blood it goes.

Infrastructure wise, though, there is still plenty to do. In Texas, we still don't have turf pitches. We play on concrete pitches by rolling a mat on top of it. The grounds are maintained by the city. The adult league and the youth league share the ground space, but soon we are going to face a nightmare. The youth league is picking up pace and has around 51 teams in Dallas alone and next year it will be even more. But we don't have enough grounds. We have private investors showing interest and hopefully we will have more grounds to play. As a coach, my priorities here are totally different to what it would have been at grass-roots level in India. Since there is no proper organisation, there is no real cricket culture. You also have to deal with over-enthusiastic parents who feel they can coach just by watching the game on television.

So at our academy with Halhadar Das (former Odisha captain), a lot of time and focus goes into building a cricket culture — punctuality, professionalism, loyalty. Since there is no professional set-up, it is giving space to amateurish stuff. As much as playing, the practice sessions are important but sometimes parents and kids take it casually. They will skip but want to turn up and play the game straightaway. And if we don't allow them, they move to a different academy and the story repeats there. This culture has to change. The process that goes into making a cricketer is still missing. And here, the academies are doing what the state associations do in India. In the last two-three years a number of academies are popping up to cater to the interest of the Indian diaspora. Earlier, ours was the only one in Texas, but there are two more now. But the issue is, we are all restricted in terms of coaches. When you don't have coaches, you can't operate an academy. There is huge disappointment among the Indian diaspora in Texas that none of India matches of the T20 world cup are scheduled here. Texas has been the heartbeat of the sport in the US. But, all the money is in New York. We are disappointed, but to get money into the game, you need to have cricket in New York. It makes sense from an operational point of view. Every year, cricket is growing in the US. Major League Cricket receives good turn-out and is already a hit among the cricket-starved South Asian population. There is no question about it. Just before the T20 World Cup began, the MLC got List A status, which is huge. But from my experience, I still believe you still need someone strong to run cricket. You have MLC, which is a private entity, trying to take over the sport, instead of working closely with the USA Cricket.

How Igor Stimac's side squandered a golden chance to reach next stage of Fifa World Cup qualifiers

India's best-ever chance to go into the third round of the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers, at a time when the main tournament has expanded to a 48-team event, came crashing on Tuesday. They had an underwhelming run in their group of Qatar, Kuwait and Afghanistan during the second round. Their last match against Qatar may have ended contentiously, but it was their overall performance throughout the group stage that led to their ouster. India's first match of the World Cup qualifiers was an away game against Kuwait. Essentially, Stimac's team was in a race against Kuwait to be the second team to qualify from Group A along with Qatar. A 75th minute goal from Manvir Singh broke the deadlock and gave India the win. It was a crucial game where the Indians showed up and managed to get a result on the road — a rare occurrence. It gave hope that India's debut appearance in the third round of the World Cup qualifiers was a go. "I am not surprised by the outcome, but I always maintain respect for our opponents. Nevertheless, I have complete confidence in our team and their abilities," Stimac stated. A home game against the Asian champions was always going to be a tough outcome. Especially considering Qatar were deep into their preparations to defend their AFC Asian Cup. Qatar scored within the first five minutes of the first half, then the second half and then scored in the 86th minute to complete a controlled 3-0 win over India. An expected result but one win out of two games, would have been



something Stimac would have taken before the start. "Qatar were the better team. The physicality and the basic skill, the passing quality, final-third execution, it's all there. They like to get behind you and put good crosses. It's really difficult to play against them but I appreciate our boys' commitment," said Stimac. "The result was not my priority today," he added. Two games against Afghanistan were always going to be make or break. Any chance of getting out of this group depended upon favourable results here. A crushing draw in the neutral venue of Saudi Arabia against a second-string Afghanistan team. No open play or set-piece goals. The match was an indictment of where India stands when players come a week out of the Indian Super League and join the national team. "I'm disappointed with the result at the end because we created 3-4 really good chances and we couldn't score which is obvious. The problem has been following us for many years," he said. After a goalless draw, India really needed this win to ensure that their attempt to reach the third round was still in

their hands. A home game in Guwahati was finally where things would go to plan, right? Wrong. One of the worst losses in the tenure of Igor Stimac followed. India were leading thanks to a Sunil Chhetri penalty kick in the 38th minute. They held onto that lead till the 70th minute, when Rahmat Akbari scored for Afghanistan. The visitors then received a penalty in the 88th minute which they converted for a famous win. "Yes, we lost the game, of course. I accept the responsibility. I'm the coach at the end of the day. But we are second in our group. We are playing decent football. As I said two days ago, we're going to qualify," said Stimac.

Sunil Chhetri's final international game added an extra motive for India to take the win against Kuwait. Seeing that their last game would be against Qatar, this game came with all the pressure that India had deservedly piled onto themselves. India missed clear chances and a capacity crowd in Kolkata saw the national team slump to a 0-0 draw at home. And now only a win against Qatar would guarantee India a

spot in the third round. "Now, we can understand how much we miss beating Afghanistan. We can now see how important it is that we are on top of our game and win points in the games we are expected to gain points from," said Stimac. A series of missed opportunities led to this must-win game against the defending Asian Champions. The group leaders for their part, had already qualified for the next round and had selected a second-string team. India led at half-time by a goal and were playing quite well. And when it seemed like victory was theirs, a controversial goal, one that should have likely been disallowed, was given to Qatar. Twelve minutes later, they scored again to take the lead and knock India out of the World Cup qualifiers. "I'm not looking for an excuse, but when you have 25 boys working very hard and living the dream to achieve something and you get that dream killed because you didn't make sure to stop such things from happening, that is not something the coaches or players should work on," said Stimac.

Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz set to team up in Paris Olympics



GNS News Agency, June 17

Rafa Nadal teams up with Carlos Alcaraz. Rafael Nadal and recent French Open winner Carlos Alcaraz will be teaming up to play doubles in the Paris Olympics. Royal Spanish Tennis Federation (RFET) on Wednesday said that Rafael Nadal and recent French Open winner Carlos Alcaraz will be teaming up to play doubles in the Paris Olympics. "One pair, which I think everyone knows and was hoping for is Carlos Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal and the second pair is yet to be de-

ecided, it hasn't been 100% confirmed yet," said Spain coach David Ferrer while announcing the squad. "We'll wait a bit before announcing that. But Rafa and Carlos will be playing together in Paris," he added. Nadal already has a gold medal in the Olympics which was held in Beijing in 2008 while this will be Alcaraz's first foray into the event as he returns to Roland Garros where he was crowned French Open champion on Sunday. Nadal's participation was up in the air with the 14-times French Open champion still not at his best following injuries but Ferrer said the 38-year-old would team up with 21-year-old Alcaraz. Two weeks ago, Nadal had gone down 3-6, 6-7(5), 3-6 in the first round of the French Open to Alexander Zverev. "I don't know if this is the last time, I'm not 100% sure. But if it is, I enjoyed it. For me, it is so special to feel the love of the people in the place I love the most," Nadal said on court after the match. "It's a big percentage chance that I will not be back here. I have some goals in front (of me), I hope to be on this court for the Olympics, but we will have to wait and see." The other players selected are Pablo Carreno Busta and Alejandro Davidovich Fokina while Marcel Granollers, who is ranked world number two in doubles, is also in the squad.

AIFF president Kalyan Chaubey wants probe into controversial Qatar goal against India in World Cup qualifier

GNS News Agency, June 17

All India Football Federation president Kalyan Chaubey on Wednesday called for a probe into Qatar's controversial goal against India in a World Cup 2026 Qualifier match at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

"Victory and defeat are part and parcel of the game, we have learned to accept gracefully, although one of the two goals scored against India yesterday night left a few questions unanswered," Chaubey said in a statement. "We have written to FIFA Head of Qualifiers, AFC Head of Referees, and the match commissioner, regarding the grave supervision error that practically cost us a place in the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers Round 3. Given its severity, we call upon concerned officials for a thorough investigation. We have urged them to explore the possibilities of sporting compensation to address the injustice and we trust that FIFA and AFC will take necessary steps," he added. The controversial goal in question came in the 73rd minute of the match in which India were leading 1-0 at the time. Abdullah Alahrah's free-kick saw Yousef Ayem attempt a header, which was saved by In-



dia skipper and goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu. As Gurpreet lay on the ground, the ball seemed to have crossed the line, but Hashmi Hussein kicked it into the field of play with Aymen slotting it into the net. South Korean referee Kim Woo-Sung did not spot it and allowed the goal. The decision could not be reviewed due to the absence of VAR. India would ultimately lose the match 2-1 ending their quest to qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Will Australia yield to temptation vs Scotland to eliminate England? 'It'll be in our interest', says Josh Hazlewood

GNS News Agency, June 17

Australia's captain Mitchell Marsh greets England's Chris Jordan at the end of their ICC Men's T20 World Cup cricket match at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, Saturday, June 8, 2024. (AP Photo) Australia's captain Mitchell Marsh greets England's Chris Jordan at the end of their ICC Men's T20 World Cup cricket match at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados.

After chasing down the paltry target of 73 runs posted by Namibia inside the first six overs on Wednesday, the Australian cricket team could possibly yield to temptation and take it easy against Scotland in their next group game. The reason? It could make life difficult for the England cricket team, who are currently in a scramble to make the cut for the Super 8 at the ongoing T20 World Cup. At least that's what Australia's Josh Hazlewood has implied in a press conference on Wednesday. However, he stopped short of saying that Australia would actually try to beat Scotland in a slower-than-needed fashion. England are currently in 4th spot in Group B, having accumulated just one point from two matches. Their Net Run Rate is at -1.800 while Scotland have five points and a NRR of 2.164 with one more game remaining. This means that England will need to win their last two games against Oman and Namibia by certain margins so that their NRR is boosted. "In this tournament you potentially come up against England at some stage again and... they're probably one of the top few teams on their day and we've had some real struggles against them in T20 cricket, so if we can get them out of the tournament that's in our best interest as well as probably everyone else," Josh Hazlewood said at a press conference after Australia's win over Namibia on Wednesday. "It'll be interesting to see. We've never really been in this position before as a team, I don't think, so whether we have discussions or not, we'll just try and play it again the way we did tonight. That'll be up to people, not me." "If we can get them out of the tournament, that's in our best interest" ?? Australia bowler Josh Hazlewood says he'd be open to the possibility of easing up on Scotland in their last group game to help knock out England. pic.twitter.com/bfXEH9evjR Hazlewood went on to add: "Whether you get close and you just knock it around and drag it out... There's a few options there but... to take confidence from winning and winning well, I think that's almost more important than potentially trying to knock someone else out. They've still got a lot to do on their behalf as well, so I think it'll become clearer the closer we get to that sort of stuff." Hazlewood went on to point out that it was strange that run rates from the group stages do not carry over to the Super 8 stage. "It's a little bit strange that it doesn't go through the tournament. This is probably the first T20 World Cup I've played that's set up this way, or first World Cup in general that's set up this way, so it's a little bit different. I think the work that you do in the round games and if you go through undefeated and have a good net run-rate, doesn't really account for much once you're in the Super Eights. So, yeah, it's a



strange one but that's how it is."

'Suryakumar Yadav has been a close friend... he got a chance to play for India later than I expected:' USA cricketer Saurabh Netravalkar

USA's Saurabh Netravalkar was the key man behind the United States win over Pakistan in the ongoing T20 World Cup 2024. The left-arm seamer not only bowled a composed super over defending just 18 runs but also picked up crucial wickets during the game of Mohammad Rizwan and Iftikhar Ahmed.

Ahead of the United States clash against India The 32-year-old recalled his playing days for Mumbai State side and revealed Suryakumar Yadav and him were close friends. "Suryakumar has been a close friend, actually. I've seen him since our under-15 days; we kind of grew up playing for Mumbai together. He was always special, scoring double hundreds and stuff in under-15 and under-17 matches," Netravalkar said speaking on Star Sports. "He got a chance to play for India later than I expected, but I'm really happy for him. I'm excited to meet him, and it's an opportunity to play not just against him but also against a lot of the guys we played with. I don't know how to get Surya out, but I think I'll just try to do my role, what the team needs me to do," Netravalkar added. Netravalkar used to play for Mumbai Ranji team till 2014 when dark thoughts about future hit him. "How much cricket can I play? Till 35, maybe... but there is no guarantee. There is no growth too." A software engineer who even designed his own cricket app, he decided at age of 22 to take up the scholarship from a US university. The move, he thought, would be the end of his cricket career.