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Malkajgiri MLA protests at Gautam Nagar

Hyderabad: Malkajgiri MLA Marri Rajasekhar Reddy on Monday afternoon lodged his protest over incomplete civic work in Gautam Nagar. Alleging negligence by GHMC, he demanded officials complete the work at the earliest.

Informing that the road has been in bad shape for around six months, he added that this was causing inconvenience to colony residents and commuters. "The Chief Minister who claims Praja Palana should respond to this issue," he said.

Before the politician registered his dissent, on June 21 visited the construction site of the road under the bridge (RUB) at Gautam Nagar along with local corporator and GHMC engineering officials. "To overcome the frequent traffic congestion because of the railway gate, authorities were asked to take up work for RUB," he wrote in a tweet.

Talks between protesting medicos, Telangana govt fail; strike to continue

Hyderabad: The talks between protesting junior doctors, who have boycotted their regular medical duties from Monday onwards, and State Health Minister, Damodar Raja Narasimha have failed to yield any positive results on Monday.

With a majority of their demands not addressed, the members of Telangana Junior Doctors Association (TJUDA) have decided to continue with their indefinite boycott of medical services including outpatient facilities, elective surgeries and inpatient ward duties.

PM Modi, senior Ministers take oath as members of 18th Lok Sabha

BRS to move Supreme Court on disqualification of turncoat MLAs



GNS News Agency, June 24

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and members of his Council of Ministers, including Rajnath Singh and Amit Shah, took the oath as members of the 18th Lok Sabha as its first session began on June 24. Mr. Modi returned to power for his third consecutive term in office earlier this month. He and his Council of Ministers were sworn in on June 9. This is also his third term as a member of the Lok Sabha, he retained his Varanasi seat, which he has been winning since 2014. As the leader of the House, he was the first one to be sworn in. While he was taking the oath, opposition members rose to their feet, holding copies of the Constitution. When Shah came to take the oath, they again held up the copies of the Constitution but remained seated. Among the Council of Ministers, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman are members of the Rajya Sabha, while Ministers of State George Kurian and Ravneet Singh are not members of either House.

While Rajnath Singh was re-elected from the Lucknow seat in Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Shah returned from

Gandhinagar in Gujarat and Mr. Gadkari from Nagpur in Maharashtra. All three took the oath in Hindi. Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Power Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Jitan Ram Manjhi and Minister for Fisheries and Animal Husbandry Rajiv Ranjan (Lalan) Singh also took the oath as members of the new Lok Sabha. Manjhi and Rajiv Ranjan (Lalan) Singh belong to NDA partners Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) and JD-U respectively.

Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries H.D. Kumaraswamy took the oath in Kannada, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in Odia, Ports and Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal in Assamese, Civil Aviation Minister K. Ram Mohan Naidu and Coal and Mines Minister G. Kishan Reddy in Telugu and Consumer Affairs Pralhad Joshi in Kannada. Union Minister of State for Power and New and Renewable Energy Shripad Y. Naik took the oath in Sanskrit. Before them, senior members Radha Mohan Singh and Faggan Singh Kulaste (both from the BJP), who will assist the pro-tem speaker in administering the oath to the newly elected MPs, were sworn in as members of the new House. They will help Pro-tem speaker B. Mahtab run the House when the members take the oath on June 24 and June 25. Opposition members K. Suresh (Congress), T.R. Baalu (DMK) and Sudip Bandyopadhyay (TMC), who were called to take oath as they were also appointed as panel of chairpersons like Mr. Singh and Mr. Kulaste, did not turn up. The Congress has taken objection to Mr. Mahtab's appointment, contending that the claim of eight-term member Mr. Suresh, a Dalit leader, was overlooked. The INDIA bloc has said its leaders would not join the panel of chairpersons as a mark of protest.



GNS News Agency, June 24

Hyderabad: The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has decided to move the Supreme Court seeking disqualification of the party MLAs who defected to the ruling Congress, defying the people's mandate in the recent Assembly polls. The party leadership took the decision in consultation with the legal experts in view of the completion of three months of Khairatabad MLA Danam Nagender switched allegiance to the Congress. According to a previous judgement of the Apex Court, the Assembly Speaker must decide on disqualification petitions within three months. As per Paragraphs 30 and 33 of this judgment, the High Court must take immediate action on such matters.

A hearing regarding Danam Nagender's disqualifi-

cation is scheduled in the High Court on June 27. If the High Court does not rule in favour of disqualifying Nagender, the BRS will approach to the Supreme Court without delay. Along with Nagender, the party plans to challenge the defections of other MLAs who have switched parties in the Supreme Court. Responding to BRS MLAs quitting the party and joining the ruling Congress, BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Monday stated that the party will not be deterred by such defections. He reminded that the power of people is always stronger than the people in power.

"We have faced several defections of MLAs in the past in 2004-06 when Congress was in Government. Telangana responded strongly by stepping up the people's agitation and eventually Congress had to bow its head. History shall repeat itself," he said on 'X'. Former Ministers L Ramana and Rajesham Goud along with BRSV (student wing) president Gellu Srinivas Yadav slammed the Congress over its double standards with regarding to defection of elected representatives. "Is this Rahul Gandhi's Congress or Revanth Reddy's Congress? While Rahul Gandhi is demanding for immediate disqualification of MLAs upon defection, Revanth Reddy is encouraging them," Ramana said. He called Jagitial MLA Sanjay Kumar's decision as unethical. BRS had won 39 of the total 119 Assembly seats in the elections held last year, while Congress came to power with 64 seats. However, the Congress' number increased to 65 after the party won the Secunderabad Cantonment bypoll following the demise of BRS MLA G Lasya Nanditha in a road accident earlier this year. Since the Assembly elections held in December last year, five out of 39 BRS MLAs have left the party. While Danam Nagender, Kadiam Srihari and Tellam Venkat Rao joined the Congress before the Lok Sabha polls, Banswada MLA Pocharam Srinivas Reddy and Jagitial MLA Sanjay Kumar defected to the party during the last week.

'Abolish NEET, revert to old system': Mamata Banerjee writes to PM Modi

GNS News Agency, June 24

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, urging him to abolish the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) exam and "take immediate steps" to revert to the previous system where state governments conducted their own medical entrance tests. "I am constrained to write to you regarding the recent developments involving the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) Examination. The allegations of paper leak, taking bribes by certain people and the officials involved in the conduct of the Examinations, opening of window to accommodate certain students to apply for examinations, grace marks etc, are some of the serious issues which need complete attention and requires a thorough, clean and impartial probe..." Banerjee wrote in her letter, a copy of which is with The Indian Express. "Such instances jeopardise the career and aspirations of lakhs and lakhs of students who look forward to get admission into these medical courses. Such instances not only compromise the quality of medical education in the country but adversely affect the quality of medical facilities/treatment in the country," Banerjee said.

In her letter, Banerjee pointed out that states were allowed to conduct their own entrance examinations for medical courses before 2017 and this system functioned smoothly. "In this regard, this is also to point out that before 2017, the states were allowed to conduct their own entrance examinations and the central government also used to conduct its own examinations for admission into the medical courses. This system was functioning smoothly and without much problems," the letter read. "This was better attuned to the regional curricula and educational standards. The state government usually spends more than Rs 50 lakh per doctor on education and internship. Therefore, the state should be given freedom to select medical students through Joint Entrance Examination," Banerjee added.



"The decentralised system was later changed to a unitary and centralised system of examination (NEET) so as to take complete control of all the admissions in the country in the medical courses without any involvement of the state governments. This is completely unacceptable and violates the true spirits of the federal structure of the country," Mamata Banerjee said. "Further, the present system has led to massive corruption which benefits only the rich who can afford to pay, while the meritorious students belonging to the poor and middle class suffer and are the biggest victims..." she added.

"Therefore, I strongly urge upon you to consider and take immediate steps to restore the previous system of conducting this examination by the state governments and abolish the NEET examination. This will help restore normalcy and confidence of the aspirant students in the system," she urged PM Modi through her letter. This year's NEET-UG results have sparked a controversy following allegations of irregularities involving grace marks, errors, paper leaks etc. The subsequent furor has seen a re-test being held for 1,563 students, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) taking over a probe into the 'irregularities', the National Testing Agency chief being shunted out, and the Centre setting up a panel to plan exam reforms.

It added that the socio-economic criteria introduced by the Human Resources Department of the Haryana government was clearly an act of arbitrariness and discrimination created by similarly situated persons and no person ought to be given benefits.

NDA is "National Disastrous Alliance", says KTR

GNS News Agency, June 24

Hyderabad: Questioning the logic behind the union government postponing different national level exams at the last minute, BRS working president KT Rama Rao stated that the Centre's incompetence was proving to be disastrous for students. "National Disastrous Alliance for a reason," he said, coining a new name for NDA, in a post on social media.

Centre notifies rules under anti-paper leak law, mandates National Recruitment Agency to prepare SOPs for tests

New Delhi, GNS News Agency, June 24

The Centre on Monday made public the rules under the recently-notified anti-paper leak law, mandating the National Recruitment Agency (NRA) to prepare norms, standards and guidelines for the computer-based tests among others. The rules were notified within days of operationalising The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 -- the first-ever national law against the use of unfair means to rig recruitment exams conducted by various public bodies. The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024 was passed by Rajya Sabha on February 9 and Lok Sabha passed it on February 6. The Act aims to prevent unfair means in the public examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), the Staff Selection Commission (SSC), the railways, banking recruitment examinations and the NTA among others. It has provisions for a minimum of three to five years of imprisonment to curb cheating and those involved in organised crimes of cheating will face five to 10 years of imprisonment and a minimum fine of Rs 1 crore.

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Rules, 2024, dated June 23 and made public on Monday, has provisions for "engagement of services of other government agencies by public examination authority", "preparations of norms, standards and guidelines" and "reporting of incidents of unfair means or offences" among others.

"The National Recruitment Agency, on behalf of the central government, shall in consultation with the stakeholders, prepare norms, standards and guidelines for the



computer-based test mode of examination, which shall be notified by the central government," read the rules.

These should cover "standard operating procedure for registration of public examination centres", "space requirement within the computer based test centres", "layout of the seating arrangement", "specifications and layout of computer nodes", "specifications for the server and network infrastructure" and "specifications for electronic platform for conduct of computer based test" among others. Pre-examination activities, such as pre-audit for the examination readiness of the public examination centres, candidate check in, biometric registration, security and screening; seat allocation; question paper setting and loading; invigilation in the examination; post examination activities and guidelines for providing scribes will also be part of the drafted norms.

Weavers' suicides in Telangana are murders by State Govt, says KTR

GNS News Agency, June 24

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao held the Congress government responsible for the recent suicides of weavers, describing them as "government murders." He demanded that the State government restore the schemes initiated by the previous BRS government for weavers' welfare and provide an ex gratia of Rs.25 lakh each to the bereaved families. In an open letter to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday, Rama Rao stated that the handloom sector, which thrived for the last 10 years, was now in crisis under the Congress administration. He said the government's partisan decision to stop welfare programmes of the BRS regime left weavers jobless, leading to the shutdown of power looms and pushing workers into severe financial distress.

The BRS working president pointed out that at least 10 weavers from different parts of the State committed suicides, which were a result of the State government's neglect and policy reversals. He reminded that the previous BRS government initiated schemes like as Cheneta Mitra, Netannaku Cheyuta, thrift fund, yarn subsidy and Netanna ku Bima, which had provided substantial support to the weavers. The previous BRS government had also placed orders for all government needs including

cloth requirement for government schools and hospitals, besides implementing the Bathukamma sarees scheme, which ensured employment for weavers for at least eight months in a year.

"The previous BRS government worked tirelessly to modernise looms, waive loans and establish market linkages, ensuring continuous employment for weavers. These efforts had significantly reduced suicides and brought stability to the industry," he added. Rama Rao urged the Congress government to continue these programmes and implement their own manifesto promises, including a 90 per cent subsidy on power looms and weaving equipment.

He appealed to the Chief Minister to act with humanity and provide livelihood for the weavers by placing fresh government orders. He said the tragic suicides of 10 weavers due to lack of employment and mounting debts must serve as a wake-up call for the Congress administration, demanding swift action to alleviate the crisis in the handloom sector. Despite numerous appeals, he said there was no response from the State government, forcing desperate weavers to take their own lives. "If these measures are not taken immediately, the BRS will launch a State-wide protest to support the weavers and safeguard the rights," he warned.

S C upholds striking down of 5 per cent additional marks in Haryana CET

GNS News Agency, June 24

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday upheld the Punjab & Haryana High Court's decision to strike down the award of 5 per cent additional marks in the Common Eligibility Test (CET) under the garb of socio-economic criteria. A vacation bench, headed by Justice Abhay S. Oka, refused to entertain a batch of special leave petitions filed by the Haryana Staff Selection Commission and state government assailing the validity of the high court's May 31 judgement.

Dismissing the pleas, the Bench, also comprising Justice Rajesh Bindal, said that it found absolutely no error in the impugned judgment of the high court. In its decision, the Punjab & Haryana High Court said that once reservations have already been provided statutorily under the EWS category, as well as on account of social backwardness by providing reservation for Backward Class, further granting benefits under socio-economic criteria would lead to breach of 50 per cent ceiling limit imposed by the Supreme Court and recognised by the Constitution framers.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Exam mess

LATE in the day, but the Centre has finally cracked the whip. The National Testing Agency (NTA) chief has been shown the door, the Central Bureau of Investigation has been tasked with the probe into the alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG examination and a committee constituted to suggest an overhaul of the examination system. The last-minute cancellation of the NEET-PG examination, though, underscores an unchanged component of the entire process — insensitivity. What could have been announced a day or two in advance was done just hours before the candidates were supposed to take the test. The inconvenience, hassle and mental trauma such decisions result in were hardly factored in. Earlier, the CSIR-UGC-NET examination was postponed and the UGC-NET cancelled a day after it was conducted. A relook at the testing procedures and a fresh start have been the need of the hour for some time, and this aspect is finally being addressed. Comprehensive recommendations that leave no scope for error and suggest absolute integrity must be on the agenda.

The decisions come on the eve of the commencement of the Parliament session. A resurgent Opposition is expected to take up the issue strongly. The Centre would do itself and the entire student community a favour by being transparent about the NTA mess. The issue has transcended political one-upmanship. Fixing inadequacies and regaining trust in the institutions is of paramount importance.

A larger question demands an informed debate: When a staggering 24 lakh students compete for a mere one lakh medical seats, what's apparent is the lack of opportunity and a failure to match aspirations. The issues of education and unemployment are the core challenges that confront the nation.

Delhi Police arrest 2 'Thak-Thak' gang members, recover diamond jewellery stolen from Agra

GNS News Agency, June 24

The Delhi Police on Tuesday arrested a man and a woman allegedly involved in the theft of gold and diamond jewellery worth lakhs from a diamond merchant in Agra. According to the South District Special Staff, the arrest of the two led to the recovery of 23 stolen diamond jewellery. The police said Kunal, 23, and an unnamed 38-year-old woman are active members of the Thak-Thak gang, known for robbing and snatching valuables from moving vehicles. Their modus operandi involved moving in groups of two or four on motorcycles or scooters and using tactics to divert the attention of their targets, mostly luxury cars, the police said.

"After setting the target they used to stop the targeted vehicles by diverting the attention of the driver or passengers. They either puncture the rear left tyre of the vehicle with a poker at any traffic signal or pour oil etc. on the bonnet of the targeted vehicle. Sometimes, they threw eggs on the windshield of the targeted vehicle," said Ankit Chauhan, Deputy Commissioner of Police, South. When the drivers would exit the car to inspect the damage, the gang members would steal valuables from the car, he added. On June 18, a tip-off about the movement of a gang member in Pushp Vihar, Saket, prompted the police to act. The police set a trap and intercepted a woman. When they searched her, they found several pieces of diamond jewellery. She confessed to committing a theft in Agra a few days ago with her associates and revealed that another gang member, Kunal, was on his way to meet her. Kunal was subsequently arrested, and more stolen jewellery was found in his possession. The police recovered 23 diamond jewellery pieces from the two.

The police said the interrogation of the suspects allegedly revealed their involvement in the theft of jewellery and cash from a car in Loha Mandi in Agra on June 15. A case was registered at Loha Mandi on June 16 about the theft of 36 diamond jewellery pieces worth Rs. 1 crore, Rs. 1 lakh in cash, and a laptop. According to the police, the arrested have a history of criminal activity. The woman, a resident of Inderpuri, was booked in a theft case in Bhopal. Kunal, from Madangir, was involved in multiple cases, including robbery and theft, across Delhi.

Karnataka Government introduces new rules for school transport vehicles

GNS News Agency, June 24

The Karnataka Government has announced amendments to the Karnataka Motor Vehicles Rules, tightening regulations for vehicles engaged in the transport of school children. These amendments, published in the Karnataka Extraordinary Gazette on June 15, 2024, come into effect immediately.

Under the new rules, officially titled the Karnataka Motor Vehicles (Conditions for Vehicles engaged in Transport of School Children) (Amendment) Rules, 2024, vehicle owners and drivers must obtain specific documentation to register their vehicles as school cabs.

This documentation can be a letter from the head of the school or parents, detailing necessary information as outlined in the annexure of the rules. The required letter must be presented to the Registering Authority for the vehicle to be registered or altered as a school cab.

The amendments, made under the authority of sections 96(2) and 212 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, aim to enhance the safety and regulation of school transport services. A committee, as specified in the original rules, will conduct meetings with drivers and parents to enforce compliance and address any issues related to the transportation of school children.

The state government had invited objections and suggestions from the public within 30 days of the draft publication in March. However, no objections or suggestions were received, paving the way for the finalisation of these rules.

Mizoram awaits Centre's nod to initiate biometric enrollment for 33,000 Myanmar refugees



GNS News Agency, June 24

The Mizoram government is waiting for instruction from the Centre to initiate biometric enrollment for over 33,000 Myanmar refugees in the northeastern state, a home department official said. The official said that a new biometric enrollment portal has already been prepared. "We are waiting for an instruction from the Centre. We will start the process of collecting biometric data of Myanmar nationals once we receive the instruction," the official told PTI. Earlier, Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma had said that biometric enrollment portal has been in place for collection of the data and it will be utilised in near future. In April last year, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs had directed Mizoram and Manipur, which share borders with Myanmar, to capture the biometric and biographic details of "illegal immigrants" in their states. In June last year, it directed the states that the campaign be

completed by the end of September and directed both to prepare a plan and initiate the process. Although the Mizoram government had initially processed the Centre direction by conducting training and appointing nodal officers, the Council of Ministers in its meeting held in September last year decided not to conduct biometric and biographic enrollment for Myanmar refugees citing it is not advisable to undertake biometric and biographic preparation due to the state assembly polls to be held in November that year. Lalduhoma said that the Myanmar and Bangladesh nationals, who took refuge in the state, feared deportation due to the Centre's directive to collect biometric data from them. During his meeting with Shah in January, the latter had assured him that no refugees would be deported until peace is restored in the neighbouring countries, the chief minister said.

According to the state Home department, a total of 33,835 Myanmar nationals, including 12,901 children, are currently taking shelter in different parts of the state with Champhai district hosting the highest number of Myanmar refugees at 14,212. At least 10,552 people live in 111 relief camps spread across six districts, while 9,269 others live outside relief camps by joining relatives or friends as well as staying in rented houses, it said. More than 1,800 Bangladeshi nationals are also taking shelter in southernmost Mizoram's Lawngtlai district, it said. Besides, around 8,000 internally displaced people from Mizoram are also currently taking shelter in Mizoram, the home department said. This story has been published from a wire agency feed without modifications to the text. Only the headline has been changed.

Ex-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, other US delegation meet Dalai Lama in Himachal's McLeod Ganj

GNS News Agency, June 24

Former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, house foreign affairs committee chairman Michael McCaul, and other members of the congressional delegation arrived at the Dalai Lama's residence on Wednesday to meet with the Tibetan spiritual leader. The delegation visited the Dalai Lama's residence in Himachal Pradesh's McLeod Ganj, with the head of the delegation, Michael McCaul, saying President Joe Biden would soon sign a bill that aims to press China to resolve the Tibet dispute.

The Resolve Tibet Act calls on Beijing to resume talks with Tibetan leaders, which have been halted since 2010, to resolve their governance disagreement with China peacefully. The bill aims for the two countries to reach a negotiated settlement regarding Tibet. It also urges China to address the desires of the Tibetan people concerning their historical, cultural, religious, and language identity. Ahead of the meeting of the American delegation with the Dalai Lama, deputy Speaker of Tibetan Parliament-in-exile, Dolma Tsering Teykhang said the visit of the US lawmakers show "Tibet is not alone." On Tuesday, a group of US representatives, including Nancy Pelosi, arrived at Kangra airport in Dharamshala. It also includes Rep Mariannette Miller-Meeks, Speaker Emerita, Rep Gregory Meeks, Rep Nicole Malliotakis, Rep Jim McGovern, and Rep Ami Bera. Officials from the Central Tibetan Administration welcomed the American delegation upon their arrival. Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, McCaul said, "We are very excited to see His Holiness tomorrow to talk about many things, including the Bill we passed out of Congress, which basically says that the United States stands with the people of Tibet." The US House of Representatives passed the Resolve Tibet Act, which is now awaiting Biden's signature to become law. This bill challenges Beijing's claim that Tibet has always been part of China and calls on China to stop spreading false information about Tibet's history, people, and institutions, including the Dalai Lama. Additionally, it urges



China to initiate discussions with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders regarding Tibet's governance. US politicians have frequently visited Dharamshala to support the Dalai Lama's efforts to gain international support for preserving the language and culture of Tibet, his homeland nestled in the mountains. The Dalai Lama escaped to India in 1959 following an unsuccessful rebellion against Chinese control in Tibet. Chinese authorities oppose any meetings he holds with officials from other nations.

China's response Beijing, which views the Nobel peace laureate the Dalai Lama as a dangerous "splittist" or separatist, on Tuesday expressed strong concern about the visit and the bill anticipated to be signed by Biden. Foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said, "We ... urge the US to fully recognise the anti-China and separatist nature of the Dalai clique, abide by its commitments on Tibet-related issues, refrain from any form of contact with it, and stop sending erroneous messages. We urge the US side to honour its commitment of recognising Tibet as part of China and not supporting Tibetan independence, and not to sign the above-mentioned bill." Beijing stated that it would take strong actions to protect its sovereignty, security, and development interests.

Continuous surveillance, monitoring of app: How Delhi Police arrested 3 for duping doctor of Rs 2 lakh

GNS News Agency, June 24

The Delhi Police have arrested three members of a gang for allegedly duping investors after promising high returns from share market trading. The police action was initiated after the chief medical officer (CMO) of Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital was defrauded of Rs. 2.02 lakh by the fraudsters. In his complaint, the CMO said he was defrauded by Yajuvender Singh, 38, whom he met via Telegram and WhatsApp. The doctor alleged he initially paid Rs. 12,500 for a share market trading course and advisory services. He was promised monthly returns of 5 to 7 per cent. However, he incurred significant losses following Singh's advice.

The doctor said he was then convinced by Singh that he did not know how to trade and that he (Singh) would do it on his behalf. The doctor said he then transferred Rs. 1.90 lakh to Singh, who then immediately blocked him. Realising he was duped, the doctor then lodged a complaint at the Cyber North Police Station. An FIR was registered on June 12 and a dedicated team led by Arvind Yadav, Sub-Inspector was formed to probe the matter. The team performed a detailed technical analysis, tracing nearly 100 mobile numbers and bank transactions. The detailed technical analysis of the call detail records (CDRs) of almost 100 mobile numbers and IMEIs along with a thorough search of the money trail in several bank accounts were continuously carried out. The police then obtained access details from platforms such as PhonePe, Paytm, Rapido, Porter, Swiggy, Zomato, and Bluedart, and conducted raids based on the information collected. However, the fraudsters frequently changed locations.

"The continuous efforts of the investigation team bore fruits when detailed CDR analysis along with details of one of the apps used by the accused led to his booking location being identified via latitude and longitude. The police team then mounted continuous surveillance of suspect mobile numbers and using the coordinates provided by the app, which zeroed in on the location of one of the accused in the area of Ashok Vihar in Phase-III of Gurgaon," said Manoj Kumar Meena, Deputy Commissioner of Police (North).

On June 13, Singh was arrested after a raid, and his interrogation led to further raids in Hisar where his accomplices Gaurav Jain, 36, and Amit Garg, 38, were held. In their statements, the men allegedly confessed they



operated an illegal racket, promising high returns from share market trading. "Yajuvender used to create groups on WhatsApp and Telegram for sharing market trading courses and advice. After getting as many followers as they could, they would promise the clients that they would receive lucrative returns after completing the course. After receiving the money, they would make fake Excel sheets of trading activities for the victims. When the victims demanded their money back, they would block these investors and change all their mobile phones, SIM cards, and locations. They would then split the spoils between them," explained DCP Meena.

No plan to track dengue, malaria

GNS News Agency, June 24

Hyderabad: The Health Department is yet to finalise a fool-proof surveillance and reporting system for dengue and malaria, even as the present weather conditions have become ideal for surge in vector-borne ailments in Hyderabad and other urban centres of Telangana.

Post-Covid pandemic, a trend has emerged wherein every year, there is consistent rise in dengue infections across the State. Private healthcare establishments including clinics, nursing homes and corporate hospitals receive and treat a majority of dengue infections.

However, the health wing is yet to finalise the modalities to ensure private facilities share their dengue related data, which is vital for surveillance and to take up measures to contain mosquito breeding.

Who was Shiladitya Chetia, Assam IPS officer who shot himself dead minutes after wife's demise?



GNS News Agency, June 24

In a tragic incident, Assam home secretary Siladitya Chetia on Tuesday shot himself dead with his service weapon inside the ICU of a private hospital in Guwahati where his wife passed away minutes earlier.

"In an unfortunate turn of events, Sri Siladitya Chetia, IPS 2009, Secretary Home and Political took his own life this evening, a few minutes after the attending physician declared the death of his wife who was battling cancer for a long time. Entire Assam Police family is in deep grief," DGP GP Singh said in a post on X. Siladitya Chetia is survived by two sisters. He had lost his mother and mother-in-law in the past few months, news agency PTI reported.

Agamonee Barbaruah had been receiving medical treatment at Nemcare Hospital in Guwahati city. "She had been battling for around two years and had received treatment elsewhere as well. For the last two months, she had been receiving conservative treatment here and he had taken up a separate room in the hospital," The Indian Express quoted MD of the hospital Dr Hitesh Baruah as saying. "In the last three days, we had informed him that her condition was deteriorating. Today at 4.30pm, the attending doctor informed him of her passing. The doctor and a nurse were in the room with him and he requested them to step out, saying that he wanted to pray. Around 10 minutes later, a loud sound was heard from the room," he said. Shiladitya Chetia (44), a DIG-rank IPS officer from the 2009 batch, had been serving as secretary, home and political with the Assam government. Reports claimed that Shiladitya Chetia had been on leave for the past four months to tend to his ailing wife, Agamonee Barbaruah. Shiladitya Chetia had earlier served as SP of Tinsukia and Sonitpur districts. He reported that Shiladitya Chetia had made a steady rise in his career as an IPS officer from the Assam cadre. Before his current posting, he had served as commandant of the 4th Assam Police Battalion. His father, Pramod Chetia, reportedly had also been a DIG rank police officer and passed away a few years ago MD of the hospital Dr Hitesh Baruah said Shiladitya Chetia and his wife had been staying at the hospital for close to two months.

Pension benefit to sickle cell anemia affected people in J'khand's Khunti



People suffering from sickle cell anemia will get a monthly pension of ₹1,000 in Jharkhand's Khunti district, an official said

GNS News Agency, June 24

The Khunti district administration for the first time in Jharkhand has approved pension benefits for persons suffering from sickle cell anemia under Swami Vivekananda Nishakt Swawlamban Protsahan Scheme, he said. A brainchild of Khunti Deputy Commissioner Lokesh Mishra, the social security cell of Khunti has initiated the programme.

In the first phase, nine beneficiaries have been identified from different blocks three each from Khunti and Karra, two from Murhu and one from Torpa block, according to an official statement. "Under this scheme, an amount of ₹1000 per month will be given to the beneficiaries for life," it stated. In case any sickle cell case coming to light or identified later on it will be covered under this scheme, the release said. Sickle cell screening of 99,165 persons has been conducted so far in the district. Out of which 114 were found to be carriers of sickle cell and a total of 46 persons were found to be suffering from sickle cell anemia-thalassemia disease, it said.

"Among them, nine persons who have been suffering from 40 per cent or more sickle cell anemia-thalassemia disease are being given pension under Swami Vivekananda Nishakt Swawlamban Protsahan Yojana on the basis of disability certificate," the release stated. At a time when life expectancy of people has increased due to health facilities, the tribal population is suffering from various diseases in Jharkhand.

Sickle cell anemia is one of the very widespread diseases in the state, the release said. Sickle cell anemia is considered to be a hereditary blood-related disease in which red blood cells contort into a sickle shape. The cells die early, leaving a shortage of healthy red blood cells and can block blood flow causing pain. An awareness regarding remedies and treatment of the disease is required in remote areas, health experts said. Khunti administration operates sickle cell mobile medical vans in remote rural areas of the district and conducts sickle cell screening. Sickle cell anemia-thalassemia-Day Care Centre is also being run in Sadar Hospital, Khunti, with the objective of providing proper medical facilities to people suffering from sickle cell anemia, the release said.

No provision in law to penalise victim of prostitution: Karnataka High Court



GNS News Agency, June 24

The Karnataka High Court has ruled that there is no provision in the relevant laws that would lead to the prosecution of a victim of prostitution. The observation came on June 10 by a bench of Justice M Nagaprasanna in response to a petition to quash the case. In 2013, the police intercepted a vehicle after a tip-off that it was ferry-

ing girls to put them into prostitution. It later emerged that the main accused had taken the victims after paying them Rs 10,000.

The counsel for one of the girls argued that the case should be quashed, contending that she was a victim at the hands of others and should not be prosecuted by illegal proceedings. On the other hand, the State counsel argued that the alleged victim should not be allowed to approach the court 10 years after the incident, and she should come out clean in a trial.

The bench agreed with the contentions of the victim's counsel, explaining, "There is no provision under the law, which penalises a victim who indulges in prostitution. What is punishable is sexual exploitation for commercial purposes and to earn or make a living upon it against such person/s. In the light of the admitted fact that the petitioner/accused No 8 is a victim and notwithstanding the fact that she is a victim of prostitution, if further trial is permitted to continue it would become an abuse of the process of law and result in patent injustice."

12 Punjabi youths lodged in Armenia Jail, kin seek govt intervention

GNS News Agency, June 24

Family members of 12 Punjabi boys lodged in an Armenia jail have sought urgent intervention from the Indian authorities after a viral video brought their plight to light. The families met Rajya Sabha MP Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal, who has taken up their case with the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Embassy in Armenia.

Roshan Lal, brother Ram Lal, currently detained in Armenia, told Seechewal that travel agent Ladi Gill in Armenia extorted lakhs of rupees from several families, promising to transport Punjabi youths to Italy. Roshan Lal said Ladi Gill took Rs 9 lakh from him to arrange Ram's journey and Rs 3.5 lakh was paid to the agent facilitating travel from Punjab to Armenia. He said Ram, along with six other youths, was apprehended by the Armenian army on the same day. Six of the 12 youths are Punjabis hailing from Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and one from Kolkata. Roshan recounted that his brother travelled to Armenia in December 2023, where Ladi Gill, along with Munir from Kolkata, escorted them to the Armenia-Georgia border by March 11, 2024. "At the border, seven boys were made believe that they were crossing over to Georgia when they were intercepted by the army just one kilometre from the Armenian border, leading to their detention," he said.

Similarly, 20-year-old Gurjant Singh from Uttar Pradesh travelled to Armenia on December 19, 2023, on the promise of a lucrative job in Armenia by agent Malkit Singh, who took Rs 4.5 lakh. Upon arrival, Gurjant Singh



met another agent named Rahul, who claimed to facilitate his journey to Portugal for Rs 3.5 lakh. However, Gurjant was apprehended while attempting to cross the Georgian border on April 5, 2024. Rajasthan native Bajrang Lal was also detained alongside Gurjant Singh. Additionally, 23-year-old Ajay from Sangatpur village in Shahkot, who intended to travel to Italy, was caught at the Georgia border in March 2024. According to these families, the boys were lured by promises of lucrative opportunities abroad but were instead deceived by unscrupulous travel agents who dumped them lakhs of rupees and left them stranded in Armenia. Seechewal assured the families to secure the release of the trapped youths. He emphasised the need for stringent action against fraudulent travel agents and urged Punjab residents to approach overseas opportunities through legitimate channels.

Heatwave to continue, rain likely in parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh: IMD

GNS News Agency, June 24

As scorching heat persists in Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecasted a brief respite by light to moderate rain. According to the latest weather predictions, isolated places in Haryana and Chandigarh are likely to experience light to moderate rain on Tuesday, extending to a few places from June 19 to 20. In Punjab, similar weather conditions are expected with rain at a few places from June 18 to 20.

The IMD further predicts rains accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds (speeds reaching up to 30-40 kmph) across Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh from June 18 to 20. However, despite intermittent showers, maximum temperatures will remain exceptionally high over southern and western parts of Punjab and Haryana, hovering around 45-46°Celsius. Northern regions, including Chandigarh, are experiencing maximum temperatures of 43-45°Celsius. The IMD forecasts minimal change in maximum temperatures over the next 24 hours, with a slight decrease by 2 to 3°Celsius expected in the following three days.

IMD officials said continuing the trend, temperatures are likely to reach 44-46°Celsius over southern and western Haryana and Punjab in the next 24 hours, while northern parts, including Chandigarh, may see temperatures ranging from 43-45°Celsius. These conditions are indicative of ongoing heat wave to severe heat wave conditions prevailing over Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh until June 19, with warm night conditions anticipated in isolated places during the next 48 hours. Relief from the



intense heat wave is anticipated from June 20th 2024 onward, coinciding with the expected cessation of warm night conditions. Faridabad recorded a maximum temperature of 45.2 degrees Celsius, while Gurugram recorded a high of 44.1 degrees Celsius. Mahendragarh recorded a high of 43.5 degrees Celsius, while Hisar sweltered at 44.4 degrees Celsius. Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states, recorded a maximum of 43.1 degrees Celsius, according to the MeT Department here. Meanwhile, Rohtak sizzled at 44.9 degrees Celsius, while Ambala and Karnal registered respective maximums of 43.4 degrees and 42.6 degrees Celsius. Samrala in Punjab was also in the grip of severe heat at 45.8 degrees Celsius, while Pathankot recorded a high of 45.4 degrees Celsius. Amritsar, Ludhiana, Patiala, Gurdaspur and Ferozepur also sweltered under severe heat, recording respective maximum temperatures of 45.4, 42.9, 43.8, 43 and 44.8 degrees Celsius.

UP govt to set up farmer producer cell to expedite agri schemes



GNS News Agency, June 24

The Uttar Pradesh government has decided to set up a farmer producer cell to ensure that all the benefits of schemes reach the farmers. The cell will serve as an agency to accelerate online registration of active Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) in the state as well as connecting them with online marketing platforms and facilitating licensing, and equity grants for them. The government will run a three-month-long campaign on mission mode to expedite the process. The government has

directed the Agriculture Department to strengthen FPOs and expedite the process of connecting them with ONDC and e-NAM through the proposed producer cell.

Notably, 3,240 FPOs in the state are operating under the Atma Nirbhar Krishak Samanvit Vikas Yojana and are registered on the Shakti portal. A detailed action plan has been prepared to strengthen FPOs in the state. The framework established for this includes promotion, creating a transparent agricultural market, input licensing processes (fertilisers, seeds, pesticides), mandi licences, GST licences, FSSAI licences, and onboarding onto the ONDC platform for market linkage. Moreover, it will assist in completing various processes such as equity grants, input licences, seed licences, seed dealership licences, and fertiliser licences.

To encourage FPOs, the producer cell will organise meetings at various levels with the government and prepare a detailed progress report outlining the entire campaign. This report will be monitored at different levels, ensuring transparency and clarity on the actual progress of the work. The State Level Consultative Committee (SLCC) and District Level Monitoring Committee (DMC) will supervise the activities related to the campaign.

Animals, birds in deep water; locals help them quench thirst

GNS News Agency, June 24

The dam in Parch village in Mohali dried up due to the continuing heatwave, leaving hundreds of animals and birds at the mercy of locals who are trying to arrange water for them. The residents of local villages are using water tankers to fill the small water bodies, which are made after digging up the surface of the reservoir. Parch Dam was constructed in 1993 for storing the rainwater which comes down from the Shivalik Hill ranges. The water would be used for the irrigation purposes and also acts as a lifeline for hundreds of animals and the birds who come to the dam reservoir for drinking water. Gurpartap Singh, a bird lover, told The Indian Express that they have been involved into rescuing the wild animals and also rescued snakes which were dying due to water scarcity. He added that his team, with the help of local villages, created some temporary water bodies and filled them with water using tankers for the birds and animals.

"The desilting had not happened in the dam due to which its water storing capacity had decreased and the water dried up in the reservoir. The de-silting is needed immediately so that in the coming monsoon season the dam reservoir fills to its full capacity," Gurpartap added. Gurwinder Singh, a local resident, told The Indian Express that they are working to save the animals with no help from the irrigation department. He added that they also requested Khalsa Aid, an NGO, to help them with water tankers. "Many people are coming forward and arranging the water tankers to fill the temporary water bodies, but the irrigation department which takes care of the dam is nowhere," he added.

Gurdeep Singh Deeba, another local, told The Indian Express that they have been demanding the desilting of the dam for long but all their efforts went in vain. He added that in case there is excess rain the dam could leak and also result in flooding. "Now the dam had dried up, but in case excess rain it will overflow due to its lowered water holding capacity, the administration should do something," Gurdeep added. The dam is located in



the foothills of Shivalik ranges and is a home to many bird species. The animals include deers, jackals, swamp deer, rare snakes, are frequent to the dam for drinking water. Apart from Parch, the area has dams in Siswan and Jayanti Majri villages. Forest Range Officer Balwinder Singh told The Indian Express that this year the dam dried up in advance due to poor rain. He added that they are working with the help of locals and now the situation is under control. "In the last three days, we arranged at least 22 water tankers and filled the water bodies which we created, the animals can drink water," he added. Some locals said that around 600 animals had died at the dam, Balwinder Singh dismissed the claim, adding that some animals died due to scarcity of water, but the number is not as high as 600.

BJP panel faces protests from own party workers over 'post-poll violence'

GNS News Agency, June 24 A FOUR-MEMBER BJP central team visiting West Bengal to take stock of the post-poll violence situation faced protests from its own party workers in South 24 Parganas district on Tuesday. The protesting party workers complained and claimed that senior leaders of the state BJP unit did not stand by them when they were allegedly displaced from their homes due to post-poll violence. The incident took place at Amtala in Diamond Harbour constituency where the central BJP team, led by former Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Deb, had gone to listen to the grievances of its party workers.

As soon as the convoy stopped at Amtala, party workers aired their grievances to the central leaders. Biplab Deb was seen speaking to the disgruntled party workers and assured of them of justice. "The Mamata Banerjee-led TMC government is doing what the Left Front didn't do in its 34-year rule. She must ask her party workers to mend their ways or else we will mend their ways," Deb told mediapersons later. Later in the day, the team visited Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district and spoke to party workers who alleged widespread post-poll violence by workers of the ruling party. Speaking to mediapersons in Sandeshkhali, BJP central team member Brij Lal said, "There is no law and order in West Bengal. This is what the team has understood after visiting various places in the state during the past three days. We will submit our report to the central leadership. The women in Sandeshkhali have braved the attacks of TMC workers and come out to narrate their ordeal. We will ensure that they get justice. We will move court if required to restore law and order in West Bengal."



The central team will submit its report to party's national president J P Nadda later this week. Senior party leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said, "The entire country is watching the misrule of Mamata Banerjee government. Our party workers have been forced to stay away from their houses. This is not only unfortunate but unthinkable." On Monday, the team visited Cooch Behar in north Bengal, where they met alleged victims of post-poll violence. Senior TMC leader Santanu Sen claimed that protests by BJP workers revealed that their leaders were disconnected from them. "Complaints of post-poll violence against the TMC by the BJP are nothing but a drama."

They have lost connect with the people and now making baseless allegations to stay relevant in politics. In reality, they have been rejected by the people in Bengal," said the TMC leader.

Water crisis extends to Lutyens' area: NDMC vice-chairman blames Jal Board

GNS News Agency, June 24

Delhi water crisis, lutyens delhi water shortage, water shortage in Delhi, Acute Delhi water shortage, New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), Lutyens' Delhi, Delhi Jal Board, Wazirabad water plant, indian express news Residents filling water from Delhi Jal Board's water tanker amid water crisis in New Delhi At Vivekanand Camp in Lutyens' Delhi, residents line up every morning with drums, buckets, containers and rubber pipes. As soon as the tanker arrives, people scramble to collect enough water for their daily needs. "The tanker comes for only five minutes daily, leaving insufficient time for everyone to gather the water they need," said Shanti, who lives with her family of six.

The water crisis, however, extends beyond slum clusters like Vivekanand Camp to major hospitals — Ram Manohar Lohia, Kalawati, and Lady Hardinge — and areas including Gole Market, Bengali Market, Tilak Marg, Parliament House, President Estate, Chanakyapuri, embassies, the Prime Minister's House, and Members of Parliament flats, said officials of the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC).

NDMC vice-chairperson Satish Upadhyay and NDMC member Kuljeet Chahal, who are members of the BJP, placed the blame squarely on the Delhi Jal Board (DJB). The Jal Board supplies the NDMC with 125 MLD of water daily from three water treatment plants —



Wazirabad, Chandrawal, and Sonia Vihar — but currently, the supply is between 70 to 80 MLD. To mitigate the shortfall, the NDMC said it has deployed 10 tankers, each with a capacity of 10,000 litres, to areas facing a shortage. "The NDMC has also installed surface water tanks with a capacity of 10,000 litres each in major JJ clusters like Sanjay Camp and Vivekanand Camp," said Upadhyay. "In the last 10 years, the Delhi government has not improved water reservoirs or undertaken comprehensive desilting of the Yamuna River to enhance water retention capacity," he added. In response, the Delhi government in a statement said, "... To prevent misuse of water, DJB officials have been directed to conduct daily inspections... we appeal to the BJP to stop making baseless allegations and jointly appeal to the Haryana government to release adequate amount of water for Delhi till the onset of monsoon."

RERA serves showcause notices to two companies

GNS News Agency, June 24 Hyderabad: The Telangana Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) served show cause notices to two companies Hastina Realty Private Limited and Sonesta Infra for selling units without registering their projects with TGRERA.

In the notice, TGRERA directed the firms to respond within a week as to why action should not be initiated

against them for violating the RERA rules. Hastina Realty Private Limited was selling plots at its project "Brisa" situated at Pharma City, Kadthal town on Srisaillam Highway without registering the project with TGRERA. Similarly, Sonesta Infra, which is situated at Jayabheri Pine Valley, Gachibowli, has been marketing and selling units without registering with TGRERA.

25 lakh tree saplings, 31 lakh shrubs: Green boost for Delhi this monsoon



GNS News Agency, June 24

Gopal Rai said Tuesday that though the AAP government had promised to plant 2 crore trees in five years, it managed to meet the target in four years. Meanwhile, instructions have also been given to all the departments concerned to conduct a third-party audit to check the survival rate of the saplings planted in Delhi under the tree plantation campaign. Earlier, Rai had said that audit reports for trees planted before the Covid pandemic show that the survival rate of plants was between 60-75%. Delhi Lieutenant Governor (L-G), Vinai Kumar Saxena, meanwhile, also passed directions to agencies carrying out the drive. Planting fruiting trees, such as bananas, guavas, jamun, mangoes and ber etc, in the Ridge and other forested areas, to ensure that animals and birds get a sustainable habitat. This, the L-G said, would reduce man-animal conflicts, and arrest the monkey menace in the city. — Use planters made of dry cow dung instead of plastic bags for saplings, provide organic fertiliser, and find a use for cow dung generated in the city. — Stop planting along footpaths and plant trees on central verges instead. — He also directed that stretches where sprinklers can be installed be identified and taken up to ensure that plants are watered at site and tankers don't add to pollution and cause traffic jams. Distribute saplings free of cost. Plantation along railway tracks. Plantation along the boundary of school premises. Identify land where people can plant trees under the 'ek ped ma ke naam' initiative launched by the Prime Minister. — Ensure at least 90% survival rate for saplings.

tree saplings, tree saplings plantation, Delhi monsoon, Gopal Rai, V K Saxena, Vinai Kumar Saxena, delhi news, India news, Indian express, Indian express India news, Indian express India Environment minister Gopal Rai said Tuesday that though the AAP government had promised to plant 2 crore trees in five years, it managed to meet the target in 4 years. Archive Nearly 25 lakh tree saplings will be planted in the city in the coming months, alongside 31 lakh small shrubs and other plants.

With the monsoons expected to hit Delhi by the end of this month, drives to plant trees are being planned across the city. The Delhi government Tuesday said nearly 8 lakh saplings will be distributed to people free-of-cost as part of its target to plant 64 lakh trees, shrubs and other small plants in the city. Delhi environment minister

Delhi's Malcha Mahal taken off Delhi's haunted walk circuit; here's why

GNS News Agency, June 24



the Ridge. So, the conservation plan is currently on hold. Otherwise, the monument would have been restored by now," said an official.

The Archaeology Department of Delhi recently issued directions disallowing any activity at the central ridge area. The order by the department read: "It is informed that the Central Ridge (including Malcha Mahal monument) is a sub-judice matter under the High Court of Delhi. To avoid any contempt of the order, it is hereby directed that no activities, including heritage walks, may be undertaken at the Malcha Mahal monument till the final verdict of the court." Officials said more than 20 walks have taken place under the haunted walk initiative, which saw participation by 500 people from across the city, and even abroad. Of these, 80% were for Malcha Mahal. "Malcha Mahal was very popular because it is located inside a forest area. The location gives a chilling experience with bats, monkeys and other animals around, besides the birds. A large number of bookings came for Malcha Mahal." The last walk at Malcha Mahal took place in March. "It is a court matter; plus, public safety is important... We may add other monuments in its place," said a senior official from the tourism department. Besides Malcha Mahal, other monuments covered under the haunted walks series are Feroz Shah Kotla and Khooni Darwaza.

Malcha Mahal, Delhi Malcha Mahal, Delhi Tourism department, delhi Haunted Heritage Walks, delhi news, India news, Indian express, Indian express India news, Indian express India Malcha Mahal is a Tughlaq-era hunting lodge in Ridge area. Archive In May 2023, the Delhi Tourism department kicked off its ambitious "Haunted Heritage Walks" scheme to give Delhiites a chance to explore monuments with an air of mystery around them as well as to encourage tourists to look beyond the well-known Qutub Minar and Humayun's Tomb during their Delhi stay.

The flagship venue for this initiative was the Malcha Mahal — the Tughlaq-era hunting lodge in the Ridge area that served as a home for a family claiming to be descendants of a Lucknow nawab for decades. A little over a year later, the department has decided to discontinue the walks at Malcha Mahal since the monument is developing cracks, said officials.

A senior Delhi government official said, "The directions have been given keeping in mind the dilapidated and poor condition of the Malcha Mahal... The monument has never been restored or conserved... We have noticed that cracks are developing on the structures, walls and the terrace..." The official further said that though many did not visit the monument in the recent past due to the scorching heat, the approaching monsoon would have likely increased the foothall. "People love to visit monuments and parks during this time due to the pleasant weather. And in monsoons, the structures can get more fragile and collapse. So, keeping in view public safety, the government has decided to ban entry into the premises." Officials said people can still visit the ridge area and view the monument from outside, but they cannot go near the monument premises or enter it. "The archaeology department had made a proposal for conservation of the monument but before it could be implemented, a court case was filed with regard to constructing roads inside

Citing Kant package rules, Yamuna Authority plans to cancel plot allotment to Supertech, ATS over unpaid dues

GNS News Agency, June 24



Trouble may be in store for two prominent builders with the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) planning to cancel the allotment of their plots as they have not submitted their land dues despite getting relief under the Amitabh Kant package. Officials said that ATS Realty Private Limited and Supertech Township Project Limited have not paid their dues despite multiple chances.

Both builders have their projects in Sector 22D of YEIDA area. Officials said a report in this regard will be placed before the YEIDA board on June 22 to take a final decision. If the board approves the proposal, this will be the first action by the Authority against any builder under the Kant package. "Yamuna Authority gave both builders many chances to submit the dues, so that the registration of flats can begin as intended under the Kant package. However, ATS and Supertech township did not reply to our letter. So, we will now place this matter before the board, seeking action against the builders, which will involve cancel-

lation of their plots," said Dr Arun Vir Singh, CEO, Yamuna Authority. When contacted, Supertech Chairman R K Arora said the plots can't be cancelled as the Allahabad High Court has already issued a "no-coercive order" since the land is in dispute. "This action of YEIDA will be illegal if they do this," he told. There are around 2,400 units in the ATS project and 3,200 units in Supertech project. Singh said that if the proposal is approved by the board, the land parcel, excluding the residential portions, will be cancelled to recover the land dues of the authority. The data available with the authority shows that ATS Realty owed Rs 668.14 crore to YEIDA as land dues for an area of 4.09 lakh square metres (around 101 acres

land), which was allotted to the company in June 2013.

However, after applying the Kant relief package formula, a total of Rs 136.77 crore relief was granted to the builder, bringing down the net dues on ATS to Rs 531.37 crore. Communicating this to the developer, Yamuna Authority, through its letter dated February 29, 2024, asked it to pay Rs 132.84 crore, which is 25% of the outstanding dues, to start the registration process. Similarly, the total land dues on Supertech for its 22D project was Rs 677.79 crore for an area of 4.07 lakh square metres (around 100 acres), which was allotted in August 2011.

However, after deducting Rs 128.68 crore

relief granted as per Kant package, the net dues on the company is now Rs 549.11 crore. On February 29, the authority wrote to Supertech to pay Rs 137.28 crore as 25% of net dues to start the registry. However, the company did not deposit the money despite the 60-day period for payment expiring on April 28.

The Kant package provides several waivers to builders, including a two-year zero-period relief, taking into account the Covid period, which translates to around 20% waiver of total outstanding land dues. Under the zero-period waiver clause, interest and penal interest will not be levied on the builder for two years, and the installments will be shifted beyond it.

Battling 107°F fever with ice and water: Inside RML Hospital's heat stroke unit



GNS News Agency, June 24

Daily-wage worker Raju Kumar is lying on a bed, connected to a ventilator. The 35-year-old migrant worker from Jhansi breaks stones at a road construction site in Mahipalpur. He has had a heat stroke and after several hours in the critical care unit, doctors are finally hopeful he may make it. It is around 2 pm on Tuesday and a large number of patients have lined up outside the Emergency of Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital near Rashtrapati Bhavan, waiting. A group of 10 doctors are busy triaging patients, based on their condition. The hospital has divided its emergency response into three sections: the 'Red Zone' is exclusively for critical patients, the 'Yellow Zone' is for patients who are out of danger, and the 'Green Zone' is for people with minor injuries.

Raju was put in the 'Red Zone' as soon as he arrived in the morning. Doctors immediately diagnosed him as having suffered a severe heat stroke. "He works as a daily wage labourer," 30-year-old Anjana Kumari, his wife says. "He was working all day on Monday and was fine when he returned home around 7-7.30 pm." The couple lives in a jhuggi in Mahipalpur. "We have a fan in our jhuggi which wasn't working. My husband went to sleep but soon, there was a power cut in our entire area. It was suffocating inside our home. Raju woke up and went out to sleep in the open. But he couldn't sleep and after a few hours, he started feeling uneasy," she recalls. Anjana brought him to the RML Hospital around 10 am. Once admitted to the emergency, his body temperature was more than 107 degrees Fahrenheit — which is unprecedented. This was his rectal temperature, say doctors, which is measured using a special instrument after inserting it in a person's rectum. The rectum is near the body's core, where internal organs are located which is why it is the most accurate way of measuring a person's temperature.

Raju also had seizures. "He was vomiting and also had uncontrolled diarrhoea. He didn't sweat though," she says. Doctors immediately moved him to the heat stroke unit where he was put in a bathtub filled with ice and cold water to regulate his body temperature. This specialised

unit for heat stroke patients was, in fact, launched at RML hospital on May 8 as the temperatures started soaring in Delhi. Two bathtubs, an ice maker and two ventilator beds were included in this unit. One of the ventilator beds also has an inflatable tub in case more than two heat stroke patients require an immersion procedure to lower their body temperature. Till now, around 20-25 patients have been admitted to the unit. Anjana recalls that doctors kept her husband in the tub for around half an hour before he was shifted to the 'Red Zone'. "Doctors said he will take time to heal. They told me he won't be able to walk for some time and will need a lot of care," she says. Doctors say Raju arrived at the hospital very late, 12 hours or more after the heat stroke.

Head of Emergency Medicine at RML hospital, Dr Seema Balkrishna Wasnik, says heat stroke patients coming in late makes their management a big challenge. "They do not understand the symptoms and don't rush to the hospital," she says. "Considering the soaring temperatures, the treatment requires that the patient must be immersed in ice and cold water immediately." On Tuesday, the heat stroke unit saw four patients who were later put on a ventilator in the Intensive Care Unit. In the 'Yellow Zone', 36 patients were suffering from high fever after heat-related illnesses. Seven patients with heat stroke were admitted to the Emergency Cardiac and Stroke System of the RML hospital. Wasnik says the RML's heat stroke unit is the first such exclusive facility in North India and was specially launched to look after patients of heat-related illness. "We had anticipated that because of the rising temperatures, we may face an emergency situation," she says. Wasnik says a lot of such patients reach the hospital in critical condition. "They are mostly from poor backgrounds exposed to heat, many are those going on pilgrimages, others are security guards, ragpickers, those living on top floors of the house," she explains. When they arrive (at the hospital), they have symptoms like seizures, are unconscious, the heart is not functioning properly, pulse rate is irregular, are severely dehydrated, and have an electrolyte imbalance. She says in the unit, the hospital's specialists use the immersion procedure to lower body temperatures of patients. "When we immerse these patients in a bathtub filled with ice, we have to keep their faces out because most of them are already unconscious. This procedure helps bring down the body temperature to 102 Fahrenheit within 20-30 minutes," she says. "The routine procedure of giving paracetamol injections doesn't work in such patients. She says they are seeing patients aged between 20 and 80 years. "... majority of them are between 60 and 65 years with co-morbidities," she says. Meanwhile, Raju is still unconscious. His wife was silently weeping while sitting on a chair right outside the 'Red Zone'. "Will he be cured?" she keeps asking.

Optometry course name changed midway, Delhi Skill university students boycott exam, stage protest

GNS News Agency, June 24

Optometry course, Delhi Skill university, Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University, Dheerpur, delhi news, India news, Indian express, Indian express India news, Indian express India A notice was later put up, which said students and teachers were brought to a consensus with authorities.

Protesting against a change in the nomenclature of their programme from Bachelor of Optometry to Bachelor of Science Optometry by the Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University, Dheerpur, 67 students in the second semester and 60 students in the fourth semester boycotted their exams scheduled at 10 am and 2 pm Tuesday. Students and parents also gathered inside Campus Director Monica Chopra's office. "We were not informed about the change. We found out two weeks ago when the exam registration started. How is it possible to change the name of the course midway? There is no validity for this course," said a student. Several students alleged they were threatened with suspension for demanding written proof related to the course's validity. When asked about the changes, DSEU Vice-Chancellor Professor Ashok Kumar Nagawat said, "The nomenclature change is part of the universalisation of several Bachelors courses in DSEU, the name of the degree has no significance... the University has full academic autonomy and the courses are UGC approved. This step is being taken under the New Education Policy and will allow multiple lateral exits and entry for students."

Registrar Professor Gagan Dhawan said the course syllabus will remain the same. "The focus lies in improving the skill set and making students industry-prepared.

'We demolished homes where beef was found': Inside the MP village where bulldozers came a day after police

GNS News Agency, June 24

Eleven demolished homes, and 16 that are yet untouched, paint a picture of contrast at a neighbourhood in Bhainswahi village, in Madhya Pradesh's Mandla district. The homes were razed by authorities on June 15 after police, in an operation targeting cattle smuggling, said they had found beef inside fridges, animal hides in sacks, and bones in pickup trucks there. While authorities maintain the 11 structures were built on government land, 16 homes in the same neighbourhood — which authorities acknowledge are also illegal but where beef was not recovered — are still standing. "We demolished the homes where beef was found and left the others alone for now. Which homes to demolish is not part of our protocol. It is decided by the revenue department. We were taking action against cattle smugglers. Leather companies in Jabalpur which bought animal hides and local tribal people who bought cow meat from this gang will be investigated. The NSA will be invoked against five accused who are repeat offenders," said Inder Baldev, SHO of Nainpur police station. All the homes belong to members of the Qureshi community. One person has been arrested, while 10 are absconding. Mandla District Collector Saloni Sidana told The Indian Express that authorities "have not targeted specific homes". "The local administration has been serving notices to residents of this village since 2022. It is very difficult for the authorities to operate here. In 2016, a policeman serving a warrant in this village was beaten to death. We managed to remove the illegal structures only after residents fled (dur-



ing the police crackdown). This area was earmarked as semi-forest land for cattle grazing and it was illegally occupied," she said. Asked why 16 homes adjacent to the demolished ones were spared, she said, "We did not demolish the other homes as there were constraints — it was Eid and given the sensitivity, we left them. We will take action against all illegal structures in this village soon. This exercise is being carried across the district and we have demolished 32 structures in the last one month." The police raids follow a freak accident four days prior, when a dhaba owner in Dithori village, on the outskirts of Mandla, spotted a cow being dragged by a rope attached to a white Bolero pickup, at around 9 am.

Some locals intercepted the truck and questioned the two occupants, Sev Prasad Dhurve and Bhainswahi resident Salim Qureshi. The police recovered five cows, including one that died later, leading to protests by local outfits. This case led the police to Bhainswahi, which already has a history of violence linked to cattle smuggling. At Nainpur police station here lies a bust of constable Kamla Prasad Yadav, who was killed while serving an arrest warrant in a cattle smuggling case. So far this year, 12 cases of cattle smuggling have been registered at this station. Said a woman officer who was part of the raids, "We cleaned up that village and residents can finally rest easy." Bainswahi village has around 1,100 residents comprising tribal and Muslim communities. There are around 80 Muslim households across the village. On July 14, around 27 homes, allegedly on 15,000 square feet of government land.

Trump blasts Biden for rewarding 'sham marriages' at expense of soldiers 'dying on the streets'



GNS News Agency, June 24

Donald Trump has blasted Joe Biden for rewarding "sham marriages" at the expense of military veterans "dying on the streets." The former president on Tuesday, June 18, called out Biden's new executive order. Biden has revealed his plan to speed up work permits for non-citizens who graduate from colleges in the United States. He has also decided to ensure that certain undocumented immigrants are able to apply for lawful permanent residency if they are married to Americans. "We are supporting people that come in illegally."

Calling the plan a "lawless executive action," Trump said it will simply grant "mass amnesty to millions of illegal aliens." "All an illegal alien has to do is sign up for his new program - it's a sham marriage or college degree - and they can expect amnesty and taxpayer support," Trump said, according to New York Post. He added, "We are supporting people that come in illegally, but our soldiers, our veterans, are dying on the streets of these horribly-run Democrat cities," he added. "Our country is un-

der invasion. We should not be talking amnesty. We should be talking about stopping the invasion." Trump went on to say that migrants have been "living in luxury hotels" in Democrat-run cities, and "literally wounded" veterans are being left on the streets. "They're wounded from what's taken place, from the trauma, but they're wounded and they're laying in the streets of San Francisco and Los Angeles and New York and Chicago and Oakland and all over the place, and you have other people living in luxury hotels," he said. "You tell me, is this country screwed up, or what?" A deluge of illegals will be given immediate green cards around 500,000 non-citizen spouses and approximately 50,000 of their children will be allowed to apply for permanent resident status without having to leave the country. When a person enters the US illegally and then marries an American, they will be allowed to go back to their home countries and then apply for permanent residency in the US. However, many spouses of US citizens may have chosen to go through this process as in some cases, they might be subject to a 10-year or 20-year ban on reentry. Trump has now said that the program is unfair to immigrants who leave the US and go through that process.

"You have people that have been working for 10 years to try and come in legally, and they just keep working," he said. "Under this program, a deluge of illegals will be given immediate green cards and put on the fast track to rapid citizenship so they can vote," he claimed. Citing his polling numbers with Hispanic voters, he said, "I think a lot of them are going to vote for me." He went on to promise that if he is elected in November, on the first day of his presidency, Biden's executive order would be "ripped up and thrown out."

China coast guard boards Filipino navy vessels, seizes guns in South China Sea, says Philippine military

GNS News Agency, June 24

The Philippine military said Wednesday that the Chinese coast guard rammed and boarded Filipino navy boats and seized their guns in the South China Sea this week in a confrontation that saw a Filipino sailor lose a thumb. The incident off Second Thomas Shoal, which hosts a tiny Philippine garrison stationed on a deliberately beached old warship, is the latest in a series of escalating confrontations between Chinese and Philippine ships in recent months as Beijing steps up efforts to push its claims to the disputed area. "The Chinese Coast Guard personnel illegally embarked on our RHIBS (rigid-hulled inflatable boats)," Rear Admiral Alfonso Torres told reporters in the first official Filipino account of the confrontation. "They got some (guns)," said Torres, adding the firearms had been stored in the boats crewed by Filipino sailors, who were under orders not to display their weapons in Monday's confrontation. The Chinese coast guard later "deliberately punctured" the Filipino boats, he said. Philippine military chief General Romeo Brawner alleged the Chinese boarders were armed with swords, spears, and knives.

"This is the first time that we saw the Chinese coast guard carry bolos (a type of single-edged sword), spears, and knives. Our troops had none of those," Brawner told reporters. Brawner said the seized guns were intended for Filipino troops manning the BRP Sierra Madre warship on the shoal. "We fought back with our bare hands," Brawner said, noting the Filipino sailors were "outnumbered" by the Chinese coast guard contingent that comprised eight boats. "Illegally rammed (The Second Thomas Shoal lies about 200 kilometres (120 miles) from the western Philippine island of Palawan and more than



1,000 kilometres from China's nearest major landmass, Hainan island.

Beijing claims almost the entirety of the South China Sea, brushing aside competing claims from several Southeast Asian nations including the Philippines and an international ruling that its stance has no legal basis. It deploys coast guard and other boats to patrol the waters and has turned several reefs into militarised artificial islands. It has in recent months stepped up moves against Philippine vessels in the area around Second Thomas Shoal. Speaking to reporters from Palawan -- the major land mass closest to the shoal -- Torres said the latest confrontation began when one of the Filipino boats was "illegally rammed" at "high speed" by a Chinese coast guard boat. A Filipino Naval Special Operations Group member aboard the Filipino boat lost a thumb when the Chinese vessel landed on top of the bow, he added. Brawner also flew to Palawan on Wednesday to visit the injured soldier, the military said.

Israel and Lebanon escalate rhetoric as US tries to prevent war

GNS News Agency, June 24

BEIRUT/JERUSALEM, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz warned on Tuesday that a decision on an all-out war with Hezbollah was coming soon, even as the United States tries to avert any escalation. U.S. envoy Amos Hochstein was sent to Lebanon to try and cool tensions following an increase in cross-border fire along Lebanon's southern frontier that has escalated to Hezbollah hinting it could attack Haifa, Israel's third-largest city. Iran-backed Hezbollah has been trading fire with Israel for the last eight months in parallel with the Gaza war. Last week, the group fired the largest volleys of rockets and drones of the hostilities so far at Israeli military sites, after an Israeli strike killed the most senior commander yet.

Katz said in an X post that in the wake of threats by Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the group's head, to damage Haifa's ports that are operated by Chinese and Indian companies, "we are getting very close to the moment of deciding on changing the rules of the game against Hezbollah and Lebanon." "In an all-out war, Hezbollah will be destroyed and Lebanon will be severely beaten," he added. Israel's military later said "operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon were approved and validated, and decisions were taken on the continuation of increasing the readiness of troops in the field." Israel, Katz said, would pay a heavy price but the country was united and it must restore security to the residents of the north. Hezbollah says it will not halt its attacks unless there is a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. A Pentagon spokesperson said the United States did not want to see a wider regional war in the Middle East. Hochstein, special envoy to U.S. President Joe Biden, said he had been dispatched to Lebanon immediately following a brief trip to Israel because the situation was "serious." "We have seen an escalation over the last few weeks. And what President Biden wants to do is avoid a further escalation to a greater war," Hochstein said on Tuesday.

[1/6] A fire blazes on the Israeli side of the Israel-Lebanon border following attacks from Lebanon, amid cross-border hostilities between Hezbollah and Israeli forces, in northern Israel. Ayal Margolin Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab. He had met the head of Lebanon's army earlier on Tuesday and spoke to reporters following a meeting with parliament speaker Nabih Berri, who heads the armed Amal movement, which is allied to Hezbollah and has also fired rockets on Israel. The U.S. and France are engaged in diplomatic



efforts to secure a negotiated end to the hostilities along Lebanon's border. HAIFA FOOTAGE Meanwhile, Hezbollah published a 9-minute 31 second video of what it said was footage gathered from its surveillance aircraft of locations in Israel, including the city of Haifa's sea and air ports. Haifa is 27 km (17 miles) from the Lebanese border. Haifa mayor Yona Yahav said Hezbollah's video was "psychological terror on residents of Haifa and the north." "Whether diplomatically or militarily one way or another, we will ensure the safe and secure return of Israelis to their homes in northern Israel. That is not up for negotiation. Oct. 7 cannot happen again anywhere in Israel or on any of Israel's borders," Israeli government spokesman David Mencer said. He added that Israel was "impeding Hezbollah's military buildup and their stockpiling of weapons for terror against Israelis." Hezbollah began trading fire with Israel on Oct. 8, a day after its Palestinian ally Hamas attacked southern Israel, sparking the Gaza war. Tens of thousands of people have fled both sides of the border. Hochstein urged Hamas to accept a U.S.-backed proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza, which he said "also provides an opportunity to end the conflict across the Blue Line", a reference to a demarcation line between Lebanon and Israel where parts of the international border are disputed. Hochstein met caretaker Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, who told him that "Lebanon does not seek escalation", according to comments issued by Mikati's office. The increase in attacks last week was followed by a brief respite during the Eid al-Adha Muslim holiday, which concludes on Tuesday. Hezbollah announced a drone attack against an Israeli tank on Tuesday afternoon - its first announced attack since Saturday.

Putin gets lavish welcome in North Korea with vows of support



SEOUL, GNS News Agency, June 24- Cheering crowds and lavish ceremonies greeted Russian President Vladimir Putin in Pyongyang on Wednesday, where North Korean leader Kim Jong Un expressed "full support" for Russia's war in Ukraine and pledged stronger strategic ties with Moscow. An honour guard including mounted soldiers, and a large crowd of civilians gathered at the Kim Il Sung square by the Taedong River running through the capital, video broadcast by Russian media showed. The scene included children holding balloons, and giant portraits of the two leaders with national flags adorning the square's main building. Kim and Putin then rode to the Kumsusan Palace for summit talks.

"We highly appreciate your consistent and unwavering support for Russian policy, including in the Ukrainian direction," Russian state news agency RIA quoted Putin as saying at the start of the talks. Putin said Moscow is fighting the hegemonic, imperialist policy of the United States and its allies, Russian media reported. Kim said North Korea-Russia relations are entering a period of "new high prosperity".

"Now the situation in the world is becoming more complicated and changing rapidly. In such a situation, we intend to further strengthen strategic communication with Russia, with the Russian leadership," Kim said. North Korea "expresses full support and solidarity to the Russian government, army and people in carrying out a special military operation in Ukraine to protect sovereignty, security interests, as well as territorial integrity," he said. Putin arrived at Pyongyang's airport earlier in the day. After Kim welcomed him with an embrace, the two shared "pent-up inmost thoughts" on the ride to the state guest house, North Korean state media said. Putin is on his first trip to the North Korean capital in 24 years, a visit likely to reshape decades of Russia-North Korea relations at a time when both countries face international isolation. The countries' partnership is an "engine for accelerating the building of a new multi-polar world" and Putin's visit demonstrates the invincibility and durability of their friendship and unity, North Korea's state news agency KCNA said. Russia has used its warming ties with

North Korea to needle Washington, while heavily sanctioned North Korea has won political backing and promises of economic support and trade from Moscow.

[1/7] Russian President Vladimir Putin is welcomed by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un upon his arrival at an airport in Pyongyang, North Korea, in this image released by the Korean Central News Agency June 19, 2024. KCNA via Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab. The United States and its allies say they fear Russia could provide aid for North Korea's missile and nuclear programs, which are banned by U.N. Security Council resolutions, and have accused Pyongyang of providing ballistic missiles and artillery shells that Russia has used in its war in Ukraine. Moscow and Pyongyang have denied weapons transfers.

Kim greeted Putin, shaking hands, embracing and talking beside the Russian leader's plane. The pair then rode in Putin's Russian-made Aurus limousine to the Kumsusan State Guest House. Likely given the hour, the welcome was a relatively subdued affair, with Kim greeting the Russian leader on the red carpet without the grand ceremony the North put on for Chinese President Xi Jinping on his 2019 visit. State media photos showed streets of Pyongyang lined with portraits of Putin and the facade of the unfinished and vacant 101-story pyramid-shaped Ryugyong Hotel brightly lit with a giant message "Welcome Putin."

Wednesday's agenda includes a gala concert, state reception, honour guards, document signings and a statement to the media. Russia's Interfax news agency quoted Putin's foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov as saying. In a signal that Russia, a veto-wielding member of the U.N. Security Council, is reassessing its approach to North Korea, Putin praised Pyongyang ahead of his arrival for resisting what he said was U.S. economic pressure, blackmail and threats. In an article on North Korea's official ruling party newspaper, he promised to "develop alternative trade and mutual settlement mechanisms not controlled by the West" and "build an equal and indivisible security architecture in Eurasia." Putin's article implies that there is an opportunity for North Korea's economic growth within an anti-West economic bloc led by Russia, which is a message that is likely appealing to Kim Jong Un, wrote Rachel Minyoung Lee, an analyst with the 38 North programme in Washington. "If Pyongyang views Russia as a viable longer-term partner for improving its economy - as irrational as this may seem to some - there is even less of an incentive for it to try to improve relations with the United States," she said in a report.

Putin also issued a presidential order on the eve of the visit saying Moscow was looking to sign a "comprehensive strategic partnership treaty" with North Korea. Ushakov said it would include security issues. Ushakov said the deal would not be directed against any other country, but would "outline prospects for further cooperation".

In South China Sea dispute, Philippines' bolder hand tests Beijing

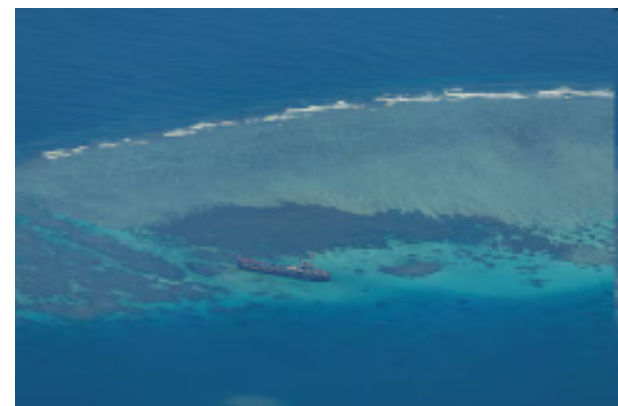
MANILA/HONG KONG, -GNS News Agency, June 24 Huddled in the presidential situation room in February last year, senior Philippines officials faced a stark choice. Military and intelligence leaders watched as coast guard officers showed photos of what the agency said was a military-grade laser that China had pointed at a Philippines ship in disputed waters days earlier.

Eduardo Ano, the national security adviser and chair of the South China Sea taskforce, had to decide whether to release the pictures and risk Beijing's ire, or refrain from aggravating his giant neighbour. The public deserves to know, the retired general told the officials. "Publish the photographs." The previously undisclosed meeting marked a pivotal moment, as Manila began a publicity blitz to highlight the intensifying territorial dispute in the South China Sea, where the ramming of ships, use of water cannons and ensuing diplomatic protests have sharply raised tensions.

"It was a turning point and the birth of the transparency policy," National Security Council spokesperson Jonathan Malaya, who attended the meeting and recounted the exchange, told Reuters. "The goal was to eventually impose severe costs to Beijing's reputation, image and standing." Malaya said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr had directed officials to "civilianise and internationalise" the dispute, which they had achieved by using the coast guard and routinely embedding foreign journalists on missions. "This became an important component of building international support for the Philippines, because our audience is also foreign governments," he added.

This account of the Philippines' policy switch and its implications is based on interviews with 20 Philippine and Chinese officials, regional diplomats and analysts. They said publicising China's actions, combined with Manila's deepened military alliance with the U.S., had constrained Beijing's ability to escalate matters at sea but raised the risks of Chinese economic retaliation and U.S. involvement. The February 2023 meeting occurred days after Marcos granted the U.S. access to four more military bases in the Philippines, rekindling defence ties that had suffered under his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte. "China has few escalatory options left without triggering the U.S.-Philippines mutual defence treaty and risking a military confrontation between Chinese and U.S. forces," said Ian Storey, a security scholar at Singapore's ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute. Marcos has also pursued a diplomatic offensive, gaining statements of support for the Philippines' position from countries such as Canada, Germany, India and Japan.

China claims 90% of the South China Sea as its sovereign territory, but is opposed by five Southeast Asian states and Taiwan. The South China Sea is rich in oil and gas. About \$3 trillion in trade passes through it annually. U.S. access to Philippine bases could prove important in a war over Taiwan. China, whose claims to most of the sea were invalidated by an international tribunal in 2016, says Philippine vessels illegally intrude into waters surrounding disputed shoals. It has warned Marcos, who took office in June 2022, against misjudging the situation. "This is brinkmanship, poker," said Philippine legal scholar Jay Batongbacal. "Brinkmanship is taking things to the edge, trying to see who loses his nerve. Poker is a game of bluffing and deception - one could be doing both at the same time." In response to Reuters questions, China's foreign ministry said the Philippines had been stoking tensions with "provocative actions at sea in



an attempt to infringe on China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights".

China, it said, would defend its interests while handling the dispute peacefully through dialogue. A U.S. State Department spokesperson said Manila's transparency initiative had succeeded in calling greater attention to China's "disregard for international law" and actions that endangered Philippine service members. The spokesperson would not comment on the risk of U.S. military involvement but said the U.S. would support the Philippines if it faced economic coercion from China.

The conflict is over Scarborough Shoal and Second Thomas Shoal, where the Philippine navy maintains a rusting warship, BRP Sierra Madre, that it beached in 1999 to reinforce Manila's sovereignty claims. A small crew is stationed on it. Chinese ships have sought to block resupply missions, by encircling Philippine vessels and firing water cannons that in March shattered a boat's windshield, injuring its crew. Manila released footage of the incident; China said it acted lawfully and professionally. In February, Philippine ships recorded Chinese counterparts placing a barrier across the entrance to Scarborough Shoal. This week, both sides traded accusations over a collision involving their vessels near Second Thomas Shoal. Philippine Coast Guard spokesman Jay Tarriela taunts Chinese officials and state media on X, sometimes posting drone footage of maritime clashes. "If I were doing anything incorrect, I would have been shut down," he said. Tarriela said the transparency drive had worked, by galvanising support for Manila while the threshold of China's aggression had not changed, despite an increase in incidents. "They are still depending on their water cannon ... they are still stuck with that kind of tactic," he said. The number of Chinese vessels around Second Thomas Shoal during Philippine resupply missions has grown from a single ship on average in 2021 to around 14 in 2023, the Center for Strategic and International Studies said in January. Last month, China's coast guard came within metres of the Sierra Madre and seized supplies air-dropped to troops stationed there, according to Philippine officials. China, whose navy patrolled nearby, said Filipino soldiers pointed guns at its coast guard; Manila said they just held their weapons. "That keeps a lot of us awake at night," the Philippines' ambassador to Washington, Jose Manuel Romualdez, told Reuters. Manila also wants to avoid the kind of economic pressure it faced around a decade ago, when protracted Chinese customs checks caused Philippine bananas to rot on Chinese docks. China was the Philippines' second-biggest export market in 2023, taking nearly \$11 billion worth or 14.8% of all its shipments.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman confident of India Inc aligning to country's developmental goals

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 27 exuded confidence that India Inc will align itself to the developmental goals of the nation with an objective of making the country a developed nation or 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 on the 100th anniversary of independence.

Ms. Sitharaman said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has clearly indicated that the goal of Viksit Bharat is to be attained to provide the future generations a better India. Addressing a session on 'Viksit Bharat @ 2047: Viksit Bharat & industry', organised by FICCI, the minister said that industry's role is critical in achieving the goal by 2047.

"You were with India during the freedom struggle, you built industry and capacity despite the colonial pressure... So Indian industry has always kept that spirit up and against terrible odds kept moving along on national interest. I can't see how they will be left out in this game of building a developed India by 2047. So it should be natural to India's industry to align itself with India's developmental interests, and after all industry will be the first contributor as much as the first beneficiary..." the Minister said. The Finance Minister also assured the industry that reforms will continue in the third term of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government. The new government will be formed after the general elections due in April-May and the BJP is confident that Prime Minister Modi will return to power with a greater majority.

Ms. Sitharaman said that India has moved up to become the fifth largest economy and is on the way to become the third largest global economy. Even after Covid, she emphasised that the government showed its commitment by ramping up capital expenditure. Indian industry can now surely move forward with a great speed globally as investments are coming in. It is time for the

Indian industry to also capitalise, the finance minister said.

She said that several reforms were undertaken by the government during the last 10 years and the trend will continue. She said that the reforms to be undertaken by the next Modi government will touch on factors of production.

The Minister further said today, without digital infrastructure, no country can move at a pace at which it wants to achieve developmental goals for its own citizens. India, she said, has shown how making investment in creating the digital infrastructure at the bottom, and scaling it up, led to creation of 'India Stack' "...other than the traditional factors of production like land, labour, capital and the enterprise, I would put digital infrastructure as an important factor, without which we will not be able to scale up and bridge the gap with those who are still aspiring to move forward," the Minister said. Ms. Sitharaman also told the gathering that the government is focussing on areas like space and artificial intelligence (AI).

"We have emphasised that India should become a global hub for AI and we will set up centres of excellence for the same," she said, adding, a great leap forward has been made in logistics. Whether it is logistics, agriculture productivity or tourism, India has immense potential and government is committed to its policy. "That is why the prime minister is confident that in the third term we will be the third largest economy. It's because of the push which he likes to give in these areas, not just fiscal, but legislative and other measures as well," the Minister said. Renewable energy has better prospects for not just solar or wind, but the government is also looking at renewing its commitments to hydroelectric power, she said, and added that in green hydrogen and green ammonia, big investments are happening in India.

'Consumption expenditure survey: Full findings to be out by June'

The Government will release the complete findings of the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2022-23, in about three months' time, a top Statistics Ministry official told The Hindu. The full report will now come soon after the general elections and a tad before an ongoing survey for 2023-24 concludes.

Last Saturday, the ministry had released a brief fact sheet on the results of the survey, with official data on household consumption published after an 11-year hiatus. The sheet had included estimates of Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) spliced across income classes, urban and rural India, States and Union Territories, with trends in the composition of such expenditure. "The full Survey report, with unit-level data, is being assimilated and it shall be put in the public domain in three months or so... by June," the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said in response to a query. "And the consecutive survey that was initiated last August will be completed this July, for which we expect the results to be ready by early 2025," the official added.

As the HCES is used for updating several macro-economic indicators, including poverty incidence, Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the Gross Domestic Product or GDP, two consecutive surveys are being undertaken to enable a choice of appropriate period for the revision



of the 'base year' for those indicators. "This is more important as the HCES now covers 405 items, compared to 347 in 2011-12 and we have done away with some obsolete items. There are also changes in the questionnaire and the canvassing approach, so comparability with 2011-12 needs to be done cautiously, while the 2022-23 and 2023-24 surveys will follow the same approach, enabling a better sense of consumption trends," the official observed. "Accounting for the time taken to compile results and work on the changes to the index, the new updated CPI series will probably take until July-August 2025 to be released," reckoned Madhavi Arora and Harshal Patel, economists at Emkay Global Financial Services.

'Some parts of market little overvalued, rest is at very good valuation': Swarup Anand Mohanty

Swarup Anand Mohanty, Vice Chairman & CEO, Mirae Asset Investment Managers, the Indian arm of Mirae Asset of South Korea, says some parts (of the stock market) may be a little overvalued but enough companies are available at great prices for a fund manager to build a portfolio. In an interview to HITESH VYAS and GEORGE MATHEW, Mohanty, who manages assets worth Rs 1.61 lakh crore, says, "There is a shift (of money) to financial assets. But not at the cost of the banks. Maybe people have realised that this (financial asset) is a good area for investing."

New players are coming into the mutual fund space. How do you see competition?

Gone are those days when the brand was really overpowering. If you look at the early days of mutual funds, those were the days when parents' brand meant everything. But now it has become a business of the product. If you are a big name, you start with a credential, but then the product or the track record has to fall into place. Some large players are finding India to be good but simultaneously there are players who are leaving also, which is very sad. India is such an amazing country for the future and wealth creation in India is really happening at a very rapid pace. This is the market. I don't understand why people leave. It is very easy to leave India and trust me, re-entering (in India) will not be as easy as it was.

How do you see consolidation in the mutual fund industry?

Consolidation is a continuous process. While some parts will consolidate, I think the wealth growth is such that it is encouraging a lot of Indian players now to also start their own asset management company. We have seen a lot of Indian players seeking licences. I also feel a lot of global players are coming in but with a better and a different approach. They are coming in as a partner or are coming in as a small owner of a large name and gradually increasing their stake. A lot of investors are now beginning to start looking at mutual funds. Some are even pulling out their deposits from banks to invest in mutual funds. Do you think this phenomenon will continue? I don't agree that bank deposits are coming to us (mutual funds) yet. Data will show you that against one SIP (systematic investment plan), there are 10 FDs (fixed deposits). That is not happening, and with the change in taxation, the money has only grown with the bank. But what is happening, and it started probably in demonetisation, and got hastened during Covid, is that there is a shift to financial assets. But not at the cost of the banks. Maybe people have realised that this (financial asset) is a good area for investing and also because financial literacy has grown.

What are the reasons for a big jump in the number of folios and monthly SIPs?

We just have 4.3 crore folios as against 9 crore demat accounts. India is probably the only country where mutual fund folios are less than demat accounts. So, yes, to answer your question, this (number of folios) used to be just 2.3 crore before Covid, but post-Covid, in four or five years, we have added more than two crore. So, finally, there is a change but we have a lot of catching up to do.

So, people are slowly becoming more of investors than savers?

Yes, we are beginning to see that transition because every month we are seeing the SIP numbers consistently growing. So, today if you say Rs 19,000 crore of fresh SIPs per month, it is a sizable amount. You can start saying that the retail investors are beginning to take this (SIP) route to approach the capital market, which is a good way.

What is your assessment of India's growth in FY25? What would be the drivers of growth?

If you go back to pre-Covid, India was mostly a service sector-led economy and post Covid we have seen broadening of the economy. We are seeing some distinct green shoots of manufacturing finally happening. Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes have definitely led to the groundwork for manufacturing which is probably the biggest welcome change for India. If you look at the pre-Covid time, the banking sector, which constitutes 37 per cent of Nifty 50, was plagued with NPAs (non-performing assets) and low credit offtake. Covid kind of cleaned up the balance sheets of most of the banks and today they stand as a far stronger unit than earlier. Nobody has the payment systems like India. The government push towards infrastructure will start yielding results in sometime. All this will begin to play out. The caveat can be we can do a lot more in labour and land reforms. And the icing on the cake will always remain the demography. We have to address two very important points. First is employment. If the unemployment grows then with our demography there could be an impact. The second part, from a personal perspective, is that more should be allocated to healthcare in the Budget because malnutrition is also growing.

How do you look at capital market? Is it overvalued or adequately valued?

It is overvalued in pockets. The market has run up in small pockets. If you look at the last two to three years in particular, you would have seen a good rally in public sector units (PSU), defence, capital goods and some heavy metals have done well. Maybe some part of the market you can say is overvalued. Also, I think there has been a significant run up in smaller companies.

Human trials may reveal efficacy of new Rs 100 cancer pill: Docs



be seen as cancer cure.

Dr Shyam Aggarwal explained that the research shows the effect of cell-free chromatin (fragments of chromosomes released from cancer cells after chemotherapy) on normal tissues causing a cascade of inflammation leading to side effects such as mucositis, low blood counts, etc. "Use of a combination of copper and resveratrol (a commercially-available nutraceutical) has been shown to degrade circulating cell-free chromatin, leading to reduction of toxicity in some human studies. Other human studies are underway," he said.

The study claims that the pill can halve the side effects caused by chemotherapy, while also reducing the odds of getting cancer by 30 per cent. The researchers used a pro-oxidant combination of copper and resveratrol (found in peanuts, cocoa, grapes) known to damage DNA by generating oxygen radicals," Dr. Rajeev Jayadevan wrote in his post on X. "Whether this will translate into real world outcomes for people with cancer (beyond mice), what toxicities could occur from its pro-oxidant, DNA-damaging effect, is yet to be determined," he said. However, Dr. Rahul Bhargava, Principal Director & Chief BMT, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram, called it a great breakthrough in the field of medical research. Indian researchers are creating history. If the drug works, it will be a great benefit for cancer patients. "The tablet is promising and shows potential to be effective, but human trials are yet to be completed, which could take about five years," he told IANS. The tablet is awaiting approval from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and is expected to be available in the market by June-July.

New Delhi: Only human trials will help understand the efficacy of the new Rs 100 pill developed to prevent recurrence of cancer, said doctors on Wednesday. According to a report by NDTV, researchers at the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) in Mumbai claimed to have discovered a treatment to prevent relapse of cancer that would cost only Rs 100. The study on mice showed that the pill, named 'R+Cu', containing a pro-oxidant combination of resveratrol and copper, generated oxygen radicals in the stomach to curb cancer recurrence.

The experimental mice study "is not a substitute for established treatments, which continue to result in cures in a substantial proportion of cancer patients," Dr Shyam Aggarwal, Chairman, Department of Medical Oncology, at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital told IANS. In a post on X, Dr. Rajeev Jayadevan, Co-Chairman National IMA Covid Task Force called it an exaggerated claim. While calling the research interesting, praiseworthy, he said it cannot

Networking like a pro: Here's how industry leaders built their networks

Have you ever used a reference to get a new job? or attended a conference to gain new insights? or just sought career advice on social media? If you answered affirmatively to any of the above, you've actively engaged in professional networking — the importance of which in today's world cannot be overstated. Nevertheless, embarking on the journey of building a professional network can appear daunting, with questions like "Where should I start?", "How can I leverage this network to advance my career?" and "What are the dos and don'ts?" surfacing. To shed light on these inquiries, we've reached out to industry leaders and experts across various sectors.

What are the benefits of building a professional network?

Building a strong professional network is crucial for both personal and career growth, said Anshul Agrawal, director, Mysore Deep Perfumery House & ZedBlack. This is regardless of whether you're employed, running a business or navigating student life. "The saying 'your network is your net worth' holds true," he added. Sharing his own experience, Agrawal said during his time studying at IIT, his networking efforts helped him secure a job opportunity in 2007. "Having formed close connections with seniors who had interned at the organisation, I gained valuable insights into the company. Using this information, I successfully applied and was selected for the position." This sentiment resonates widely. In fact, according to a 2017 LinkedIn survey, 80 per cent of professionals consider professional networking important for career success, with 70 per cent of them stating that they were hired in a company where they had a connection. Similarly, Meenu Anand, a leading HR professional, cultivated a strong network to gain deep insights and establish a strong foothold in her sector. As someone who struggled to keep updated with the emerging trends and best practices in human resources, networking allowed her to stay ahead of the curve. "With the help of meetings, events and social media platforms, I have been able to gain access to recent market trends, fresh perspectives, new ideas and gain visibility within the sector," she said. Not only this. Entrepreneurs, too, have a lot to benefit from professional networking, such as Manish Bansal, director and CEO of Window Magic, who attributes the success of his brand to his network. "As a businessman, building a professional network helped broaden my circle of influence among a larger section of society, and enhanced the trust and credibility of my brand. Opportunities for panel discussions and speaker engagements also arose through networking that made me forge stronger ties with other professionals and industries, which have all aided in maintaining the imagery and salience the brand enjoys."

This holds true. Research published by the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2016 found that networking is responsible for the success of 78 per cent of startups. According to the study, entrepreneurs who participated in a greater number of networking activities were more likely to experience positive outcomes such as increased profitability, revenue growth, innovation, capitalisation and talent acquisition. Tips to build a professional network

building a professional network, career networking tips, benefits of professional networking, how to network effectively Discover how networking can help build valuable connections, land dream jobs, and gain career insights. The first step, as per Ambreen Virk, CHRO, MyTrident, is to have clear goals. "Whether it's finding a job, seeking mentorship, gaining industry insights or expanding your client base, having set priorities will ensure your networking efforts are aligned to the outcome," she advised. Virk also recommends building a network "as early as possible". "While it is never too late to start, building a network while you're still in college can help achieve your career goals." Next is to identify the right platform for networking, from social media to offline interactions. "Finding communities where like-minded individuals converge is essential. While LinkedIn is an effective networking platform, platforms such as Toastmasters International, Entrepreneurs Organization, YPO (Young Professionals Organization), Lions Club, and Rotary Club offer unique networking opportunities," Agrawal said, adding that "it's not just about joining, but actively participating and getting involved." Agrawal emphasises the importance of quality over quantity. "Have you heard the phrase: 'you become the average of the five people you spend the most time with'? Well, aligning yourself with individuals who share common goals is crucial for personal and professional development."

However, building a professional network is an ongoing process, said Prachi Kaushik, founder and director, Vyomini. "Professional networking requires constant effort, patience, and the zeal to grow. Connecting once is not enough. Keeping in touch, following up and convers-



Embarking on the journey of building a professional network can appear daunting, with questions like "Where should I start?", "How can I leverage this network to advance my career?"

ing beyond the limits of requirement builds a relationship based on trust, shared ideas and understanding. So, be consistent and real with the people you wish to build your professional networks with."

Additionally, giving back to your network is equally important, said Rajesh Bharatiya, CEO, Peoplify. "As you progress in your career, don't forget to pay it forward by helping others in your network. You can do this by offering mentorship to juniors, making introductions between connections, sharing job opportunities or resources, whenever possible. By helping and supporting others in your network without expecting immediate returns, you are practicing good karma and cultivating positive relationships that'll create future opportunities for advancement and success in your career. Sheenu Arora, director of human resources, Eros Hotel, Nehru Place, New Delhi, shared the following to help you navigate the world of networking effectively:

1. Attend networking events: Actively participate in networking events and sessions to expand your network. Exchange business cards for sharing contacts and follow up with personalised messages or email communication.

2. Offer support: Networking is a two-way street. Be willing to offer support as and when needed. Share your expertise or learnings with others in your network if it helps strengthen connections.

3. Stay consistent: Engage regularly with network professionals on platforms like LinkedIn to stay connected. Be part of relevant groups and participate in discussions to gain visibility and build relationships.

4. Follow up: Don't hesitate to follow up after initial interactions. Sometimes, if you haven't heard back, a polite follow-up can reignite the conversation and lead to further opportunities.

5. Listen intently: Networking is not just about speaking and presenting yourself. Take the time to listen to others and be open to hearing their interests and insights. Authentic connections are built on mutual understanding and respect.

Don'ts:

1. Be discouraged by rejection: Not every networking interaction will lead to immediate success. Don't be discouraged by rejection and keep pursuing opportunities. The right connections will come in time.

2. Oversell yourself: While it's important to highlight your skills and experiences, avoid overselling yourself. Focus on adding value to your connections and building mutually beneficial relationships.

3. Approach networking selfishly: Don't approach networking solely as a means to gain something for yourself. Instead, focus on building genuine relationships based on mutual respect and shared interests.

In essence, Bansal noted that nurturing a professional network is like raising a child. "You must devote time, effort, give it care and qualitative attention, and above all keep adding value to the network — just like you would do to your child — to help the network grow and flourish."

When Sonakshi Sinha accepted 'conservative' dad Shatrughan Sinha doesn't want her to go to husband's house: 'He is possessive'



missed that he was conservative and asserted that he was "quite modern." "I am quite modern but that doesn't mean I am liberal to the extent of going for designer clothes, or no clothes. When I say designer clothes, you know what I am trying to say," he added. Poonam then revealed that despite the Dabangg actor being in showbiz, as a protective mother, she often had objections to Sonakshi wearing "short" clothes. "Even today, I tell her, 'Look this is not going. It is too short.' And Sonakshi will say, 'Okay, I will pull it down a little bit.'" This kind of thing goes on and on between us," she joked.

Film producer Pahlaj Nihalani recently addressed rumours that Sonakshi's father Shatrughan Sinha might not attend her wedding ceremony due to purported strained relations between them. Pahlaj Nihalani, a close family friend of Sonakshi Sinha's, recently confirmed her wedding and his attendance at the event. Sonakshi then added that her mother was only fulfilling dad's wishes who shot over her shoulders to make sure everything was fine. "By designer clothes, he meant revealing clothes. I'm in a field where I have to eventually do wear something which is glamorous but I have always maintained that glamour doesn't always mean skimpy clothes. Luckily for me today I am in a position to say that I will wear what I am comfortable wearing and what I am not comfortable wearing. If someone wants me in their film, they can take me. If not, then they want someone who can go beyond that level, he can always go to someone else. It is not a compulsion." Shatrughan clarified that it was not just him but Sonakshi was equally possessive about her doting father. "I am possessive about the apple of my eye, Sonakshi, and let me also tell you that even she is very possessive about me. In fact she was so possessive that she won't let her mother sit next to me. She would say, 'Yahan se hato yeh papa ka hai. Yahan sirf main baithungi.'" She always advises me on three things that I must not do. She told me, 'Cigarette nahin peene ka, beer nahin peene ka aur ladki se baat nahin karne ka. Mummy se bhi nahin. Sirf mujhse baat karo,'" added the actor. It was reported that Sonakshi and Zaheer are getting hitched on June 23. While the couple remains silent, wedding bells are ringing loud with confirmations from family and friends like Poonam Dhillon, Yo Yo Honey Singh, and Daisy Shah.

With the news of Sonakshi Sinha and her beau Zaheer Iqbal tying the knot making headlines, several old interviews of Sonakshi, where she is seen speaking about her possessive father and veteran actor, Shatrughan Sinha, not wanting her to marry, have surfaced online. During her 2011 appearance on India's Most Desirable, hosted by Simi Garewal, Sonakshi candidly revealed that her father pampered her to the extent that he wanted to build a house for her where she could bring her husband.

"I am the apple of his eye. He doesn't want me to go to my husband's house but I should bring my husband to our house," said the Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar actor, adding that it was because of her father and his strict nature that men were afraid of making a pass at her. "I am not using it as an excuse to scare the men away. I am not a Hitler. Love has a time and place and it will happen for me. I am not pushing or avoiding it," she said.

The actor made no bones about stating that her father was indeed "conservative." Poonam Sinha, Shatrughan's wife and Sonakshi's mother, in an audio-visual message, played during the show, echoed similar sentiments. "He is as conservative as any father can be. I would say he is much more. Coming from the background that he comes from which is Bihar. They are conservative." The Kalicharan actor in a video message dis-

'Wait till Sonakshi Sinha, Zaheer Iqbal have a child': Swara Bhasker predicts new wave of backlash, says attacks on interfaith couples won't end soon

Actor Swara Bhasker spoke about the trolling she had to face because she married a Muslim man. She said that interfaith couples will have to face such backlash for the foreseeable future, as she spoke about the trolling that Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal have been facing ahead of their wedding on June 23. The couple is reportedly organising a party for their friends and families in the evening, after completing legal formalities earlier. Sonakshi and Zaheer's wedding has drawn further attention for her family's non-committal statements. In an interview with Connect Cine, Swara Bhasker, who herself experienced social media backlash when she tied the knot with activist Fahad Ahmad, spoke about how common such a thing is for interfaith couples. "One of the biggest myths of modern India is 'love jihad', where a Hindu girl marries a Muslim man. This applies to me as well," she said. "An interfaith couple can actually get beaten up in certain cities on Valentine's Day."

Asked about Sonakshi and Zaheer's relationship in particular, she said, "Lots of experts offered their opinions during my wedding as well. But we're talking about two consenting adults here. What they do in their private lives, whether they get married or not, it's up to them. It's nobody's business if they're living together, getting mar-



ried in a court, or having a nikaah, or an Arya Samaj wedding. It's between the man and the woman, and their families. It's Sonakshi's life; she's chosen her partner. Her partner has chosen her. Now it's between them and their families. I find this a very time-waste debate." Swara said that such conversations are more prevalent in India and South Asian countries, where people enjoy sticking their noses in other people's business. "Wait and watch, when they have a child, there will be a separate debate around the child's name. We've seen it happen with Kareena and Saif's kids, and with my kid. It's completely idiotic, but this isn't going to end anytime soon," she said.

'Diljit Dosanjh crushed it': Jimmy Fallon opens up on 'electrifying' Tonight Show performance, reveals 'everyone was dancing'



Aa Gaye Oye." Fallon attempted the Punjabi greeting "Sat Sri Akal," much to the amusement of viewers. These videos, featuring Diljit and Jimmy, have garnered love from fans and celebrities alike. In a new backstage video shared by Diljit, Fallon was full of praise for his "electrifying performance." He exclaimed, "You crushed it. You were fantastic. It couldn't have been better. Everyone was dancing. Please come back.

"One love," the Amar Singh Chamlika actor captioned the Instagram post. The video also gives netizens a peek into Diljit's "Main Hoon Punjab" performance. The host joined him on stage and reacted, "That is how you do it!" Diljit Dosanjh made his debut on Jimmy Fallon's The Tonight Show Diljit Dosanjh made his debut on Jimmy Fallon's The Tonight Show.

Actor Priyanka Chopra commented on one of the videos, expressing her amusement with, "It's the Oye for me." British Indian singer Jassi Sidhu expressed his joy, stating that Dosanjh has "made Punjabi music mainstream." Another fan commended him for "opening doors for thousands of passionate people around the globe who come from humble backgrounds." Fans applauded Dosanjh's commitment to his identity, noting how he proudly wears traditional Punjabi attire and a turban. Another video shows Dosanjh and Fallon exchanging gloves backstage. The singer receives a customised pair of gloves with the logo of Jimmy's show. Dressed in his traditional Punjabi attire, Dosanjh charmed viewers with his spirited rendition of Punjabi music on this esteemed international platform. Fallon had earlier introduced him as "the biggest Punjabi artist on the planet." The singer captivated the audience with electrifying performances of his hit songs "Born to Shine" and "G.O.A.T.," encouraging fans to attend Diljit's ongoing Dil-Luminati music tour throughout North America.

"One love," the Amar Singh Chamlika actor captioned the Instagram post. The video also gives netizens a peek into Diljit's "Main Hoon Punjab" performance. The host joined him on stage and reacted, "That is how you do it!"

After making the audience groove to his hit tracks, "G.O.A.T." and "Born to Shine", during his debut appearance on The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon, Punjabi singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh, has been making waves on social media with his backstage camaraderie with host Jimmy Fallon. His appearance on the show marks a significant milestone for Punjabi music on an international stage. In one video, Dosanjh teaches Fallon Punjabi phrases, starting with his iconic catchphrase, "Punjabi

Did Shraddha Kapoor make relationship with rumoured boyfriend Rahul Mody official with Instagram pic?: 'Dil rakh le...'



Actor Shraddha Kapoor is gearing up to return to the big screens with Stree 2 in August. The actor enjoys a huge social media following, but has historically remained tight-lipped about her personal life. But on Wednesday, the actor appeared to make her relationship with rumoured boyfriend Rahul Mody official. The two have been spotted together a few times, giving rise to speculations. But now, Shraddha seems to have finally let the cat out of the bag. Sharing a picture with Rahul, Shraddha wrote on her Instagram stories, "Dil rakh le, need to vaapis de de yaar (Keep my heart, but return my sleep buddy)." She also added the song "Neend Churayai Meri" from the movie Ishq while she shared the photo.

As per reports, Shraddha and Rahul have been dating for some time now. The couple seem to have gotten close while they worked together on the film Tu Jhoothi

Main Makkaar. Even though Shraddha and Rahul have wanted to keep their relationship private, the two grabbed a lot of attention when they were spotted together in Jamnagar at Anant Ambani-Radhika Merchant's pre-wedding celebrations earlier this year. In 2023, Rahul and Shraddha were also spotted on a dinner date. Rahul, who co-wrote Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar, was a good friend of Shraddha's even before they worked together on TJMM. What further fueled speculations was Shraddha wearing an 'R' alphabet locket during one of her public appearances. She was previously said to be dating photographer Rohan Shreshtha. On the work front, Shraddha has Stree 2 coming up. The film will be released in theatres in August, and continues Maddock's shared universe of horror comedy movies, following the surprise hit Munjya.

Suniel Shetty opens up about converting barren land in Khandala into 'priceless' property, rejects 'big businessman' image: 'I won't settle for anything ordinary'

Actor Suniel Shetty said that he has always strived to provide a better life for his family, and not to build a business empire. The actor, who has been working in the film industry for over 30 years, said that although people might think of him as a "big businessman", that's far from true. Chatting with Bharti Singh and Haارش Limbachiya on their podcast, the actor spoke about his career, and how a lot of his decisions were emotionally motivated. But even when his films failed, he never "lost heart". Suniel Shetty said he has been fortunate that "lakshmi" (wealth) has been kind to him, offering him ways to grow in life despite the odds. "There is a perception that I am a big businessman, which actually isn't true. I do my bit and I live within my means. You will never see me driving four cars, I drive one and I will enjoy it for two years. If I want a house, I want that one, I won't settle for anything ordinary. When I can afford it, I will do the best.



You spend the most time in your house, so if the house doesn't invite you, there is no point," he said.

"People today say, 'You must see Suniel Shetty's farmhouse,' I built it 16 years ago! Back then, its financial valuation was perhaps (nothing) but my idea was to grow up with my children, Athiya and Ahan, to spend time with them over the weekend, do farming, all the trees there are planted by us. What had rocks before, there are

more than 400 trees there. The house was built for this. That it is valuable now is a different story," he added. The actor said he never plans to sell neither his farmhouse nor his Mumbai residence, as he looks at them as emotional investments rather than financial. "I didn't plan this, I will never even sell it so its value is zero from a price perspective. But from a personal perspective, it is priceless. Same for this house where I live, for the

outside world it will have a price but not for me. I would never want to sell it. I always wanted to give to kids where they feel happy and you continue to do what you are meant to do. Never stop doing for people, you will only get more." On the work front, the actor has two films in his line-up, Welcome to the Jungle 3 headlined by Akshay Kumar and Hera Pheri 3, which is reportedly caught in a legal mess and will go on floors later.

Anil Kapoor opens up about hosting Bigg Boss OTT 3, following in the footsteps of Salman Khan and Amitabh Bachchan: 'I have never played safe in life'

Actor Anil Kapoor has been a part of the entertainment industry for 45 years, and while his journey has seen its share of ups and downs, he is now venturing into the reality television space as the host of Bigg Boss OTT 3. At the show's press conference, Anil Kapoor told Indianexpress.com why he chose to take up hosting despite having fostered a successful career in Bollywood.

He said, "I am at the stage of my career where I want to do something I have never done before. I have done non-fiction in a way, in a film called Slumdog Millionaire, which was a global success. I have done films, OTT, and TV, and this was one thing I had not done, so thought why not try it? I am excited and very happy to do it." He also added, "Anything can happen in life, you should be ready. You should never be scared of failures, if I had been scared,

I would not have been around for 45 years." Considering big names have been associated with the show in the past, Anil shared that if he were to ever participate in a show like Bigg Boss, he would like to have Kapil Sharma and Salman Khan as his co-contestants, and would want Amitabh Bachchan to host that season. Given the controversial nature of the show, Anil was asked how he plans to navigate through the daily controversies. He said, "The biggest of stalwarts have hosted Bigg Boss in the past, and they have only gained



more respect after the show. It is on you, how to handle those controversies, there are times when someone comes into that kind of a situation that it has to be the true scent of the show and of yourself too. So it depends from person to person."

"I have never played safe in life. Even when I did 24, people told me I was a big screen actor, so why would I choose TV? When I did The Night Manager... I have always played a good man on screen, but suddenly in that OTT show, I was the worst man in the world. So you have to challenge yourself," he added.

Virat Kohli pips Ranveer to become most valued celebrity; SRK jumps to third rank



GNS News Agency, June 24

Mumbai: Cricketer Virat Kohli has regained the top position to become India's most valued celebrity with a brand value of USD 227.9 million in 2023 but remained short of the peak of USD 237.7 million in 2020, as per a report. A jump of nearly 29 per cent in the overall brand value in the year from USD 176.9 million in 2022 has ensured Kohli overtakes actor Ranveer Singh, who slipped to second spot with a brand value of USD 203.1 million, the report by consultancy firm Kroll stated.

However, Kohli's brand value is yet to reach the levels of USD 237.7 million seen in 2020, as per Kroll's Celebrity Brand Valuation Report 2023. Riding on the success of films like Jawaan and Pathaan, 58-year-old actor Shah Rukh Khan has jumped to third place in the rankings with a total brand value of USD 120.7 million in 2023. The Badshah of Bollywood was valued at USD 55.7 million in 2022, which placed him at the tenth spot on the list.

The firm's managing director for valuation advisory services, Aviral Jain, said Khan is making an "incredible return" into the league of India's top five celebrity endorsers for the first time since 2020. More than doubling of Khan's brand value has led to other celebrities slipping previous spots in the list of top brands. This includes Akshay Kumar coming in at fourth in 2023 with a brand value of USD 111.7 million from third in 2022, Alia Bhatt slipping to fifth from fourth with a valuation of USD 101.1 million and Deepika Padukone with a valuation of USD 96 million at sixth spot in 2023 from being fifth on the list in 2022.

Wicketkeeper-batsman M S Dhoni, who announced his retirement from cricket recently, moved up one spot on the list with a brand value of USD 95.8 million while retired cricketer Sachin Tendulkar held on to the eighth place in the list with a brand value of USD 91.3 million. Salman Khan also moved up one spot to become the tenth most valuable celebrity brand in 2023 with a value of USD 81.7 million in 2023. The overall valuation of the top 25 celebrity brands stood at USD 1.9 billion in 2023, which was 15.5 per cent higher than the year-ago period. Among the others in the top 25, Jain said actor Kiara Advani had a meteoric rise to rank 12, while Katrina Kaif debuted on the list at rank 25. The firm said its assessment represents the brand value of a celebrity based purely on their earnings potential from product brand endorsements, including full-fledged endorsements, purely digital and one-time campaigns, and website appearances. It has not considered merchandising earnings in the analysis because earnings from brand endorsements would be the largest contributor to a celebrity's brand.

Kane Williamson denies New Zealand Cricket central contract but open to accept it in future

GNS News Agency, June 24

Williamson New Zealand's captain Kane Williamson walks from the field after he was dismissed during the men's T20 World Cup cricket match between the West Indies and New Zealand at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy, Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago, Wednesday. New Zealand's batting talisman Kane Williamson has declined the national contract however, he assures his commitment to the Blackcaps going forward whenever needed and also left the door open to potentially accepting the central contract in the future.

"The 33-year-old has opted to take advantage of a particular set of circumstances this summer in which very little international cricket is being played in New Zealand during the January window," stated New Zealand Cricket in their statement. Apart from January Williamson would remain available for selection. Players who are contracted by NZC need to be available for both the country and the domestic Dream11 Super Smash competition.

"Pursuing an overseas opportunity during the New Zealand summer means I'm unable to accept a central contract offer," Williamson said. "My life outside cricket has changed however - spending more time with my family and enjoying experiences with them at home or abroad is something that's even more important to me," he added. NZC CEO Scott Weenink said the Blackcaps prefer to select nationally contracted players however, they are willing to make an exception in the case of Williamson. "we're happy to make an exception for our



greatest ever batter - especially as he remains so committed to the team," Weenink said. Williamson has represented New Zealand in 100 Tests scoring 8743 runs at an average of 54.99. He also has been a consistent performer in white-ball cricket. In 165 ODI's he amassed 6811 runs at an average of 48.3 and in 93 T20Is he scored 2575 runs at 33.01. In addition to Williamson in the statement released New Zealand Cricket it is also mentioned fast bowler Lockie Ferguson probably denying the central contract. "Ferguson has also indicated he won't accept a central contract offer when the contracting process opens," quoted the release. "An announcement covering the final list of contract offers is likely next month," the statement concluded. Recently retired left-arm seamer Trent Boult was the first big name to deny a national contract and play franchise league around the world while keeping himself available for ICC events for New Zealand.

Cristiano Ronaldo needs to find prime finishing form to justify place in Portugal's starting XI

GNS News Agency, June 24

Portugal scraped past a valiant Czech Republic via goals made possible because of their opponent's mistakes - an own goal by centre-back Robin Hranac and a 92nd-minute strike from 21-year-old centre forward Chico Conceicao who capitalized on an error by the same defender. As the camera panned in on a delighted Cristiano Ronaldo hugging Conceicao, one couldn't help but wonder if the Porto youngster might eventually come for the keys to the kingdom. Because on the night against Czech, the once lethal CR7 looked like he was struggling to adjust to the pace of the game with mistimed headers, erratic runs that would leave him in an offside position and shots that would find the back-netting in his prime, saved by the keeper. In one word, he came out of this match looking a bit ordinary, a small part of his aura depleted. There were moments of fine touch, especially in the first half. He rolled back the years with a slick backheel pass to Vitinha.

But he just wasn't his usual exceptional self that fans have come to associate with the star playing his 6th straight Euro since his debut in the 2004 edition of the championships, a full 20 years ago. It is this longevity, along with his goalscoring form that has kept Ronaldo from receiving the same sort of flak that someone like Belgium's Romelu Lukaku has to face due to his unpredictable finishing skills, the latest coming after his misses against Slovakia in a match that the Red Devils lost 1-0. On Tuesday night, Ronaldo's finishing was a cause for concern for the Portugal side and their coach Roberto Martinez, who will have much to think about after the final whistle. In the match largely dominated by Portugal, the players did create enough chances for their talisman, which if he was in his prime form would all result in goals. But for a striker who has spent 18 months in the Saudi League where the level of competition is lower and margin for error far wider, it's going to take a lot more than a few international friendlies and some qualifiers for Ronaldo to hit his stride.

Case in point, in the 8th minute Portugal's brightest spark Rafael Leao cut inside from the left and floated a ball towards Ronaldo who was completely unmarked. The veteran striker who must have anticipated Leao to move into the box instead of crossing, got the timing of his header wrong and the ball went well wide of the Czech goalkeeper. Next, in the 32nd minute, Ronaldo, who looked to be in a tight offside situation, was set free into the box by a beautiful threaded pass by ex-Manchester United teammate Bruno Fernandes. With only the goalkeeper to beat, Ronaldo's shot was saved by the onrushing Jindrich Stanek as another opportunity trickled



by. Again, in the first added minute of the first half, Ronaldo came very close with a turn and a low sharp shot which was kept out by the goalie.

The missed chances continued in the second half as Ronaldo rose up to meet a cross in the early exchanges but shot it well over the bar. After a few minutes, he had an opportunity with a free kick, just 30 yards out of the Czech goal but although he managed to beat the wall, the ball went straight into the grasp of the goalkeeper. Portugal would continue with their dominance despite these near chances. A goal from Lukas Provod put the Czech Republic in the lead. But Portugal's relentless approach counted for a mistake from the Czech defence that allowed an equalizer.

Ronaldo almost redeemed himself after an anonymous performance throughout the second half by hitting a bullet header into the opposition's bar, the rebound of which was headed into the net by Diogo Jota. But VAR intervened and revealed that the Al Nassr player was offside so the goal wouldn't stand. Ultimately, it was Chico, the son of Sergio Conceicao, a player who played his last international match in Portugal colours in 2003, the year Ronaldo made his international debut, who made the difference in 2024. While Martinez might not want to court controversy by outrightly dropping Ronaldo from the starting lineup, he might start to at least substitute the player when he needs more attacking options from the bench. On Tuesday, Ronaldo continued to stay on the pitch till the final whistle even though he had failed to create much of an impact while the lively Leao was subbed off. With Ronaldo's almost god-like stature in the sport, the transition might be a few years away but it'll be sooner rather than later that Portugal will have to look past their favourite son. With matches against Turkey and Georgia coming up, two sides which played a scintillating end-to-end attacking game on Tuesday, Ronaldo might have to channel his prime finisher form to justify his place in this Portugal lineup, at least as a striker.

Fringes to Olympics via French Open door: How journeyman Balaji got his lucky break



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EARLIER THIS month, Sriram Balaji, the World No. 62 and the third-highest-ranked Indian doubles tennis player, arrived in Paris uncertain if he was playing the French Open at all. Typically fickle Parisian weather meant there were enough withdrawals by singles players in the doubles category for Balaji, alongside Mexican partner Miguel Reyes-Varela, to make it into the main draw. He would leave the French capital with three solid Grand Slam matches under his belt - his best-ever finish at a Major - and more importantly, ensuring his return ticket to Paris next month. Balaji has been picked by World No. 4 Rohan Bopanna to partner him in the men's doubles category for the upcoming Paris Olympics, ousting the higher-ranked Yuki Bhambri to make it to his first Games.

Perhaps it is strengths specific to Balaji's game, perhaps it was the match he played against Bopanna in the third round (taking him to the wire, with Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden, second seeds, escaping in the deciding set tiebreaker). Perhaps Bopanna's decision was premeditated. Yet, there is little doubt that Balaji's leap of faith, to arrive at Roland Garros even though he was uncertain to play when he could have earned prize money and ranking points elsewhere, paid off in extraordinary fashion. "When I got there, we were sixth out (as alternates) so I was not sure we'll get into the draw," he tells The Indian Express from London, where he has travelled to play a Challenger event on grass. "And as soon as we got into the draw, it was like a bonus for us. We didn't have anything to lose. We were just playing free and just focusing on every point by point and then it worked actually."

For players outside the very elite, they often go through the dilemma of travelling to Majors despite being uncertain they will even play. The financial burdens can be high for very little return. But Balaji, currently based out of Frankfurt, Germany, says he did not mind the uncertainty, being able to experience the Grand Slam at-

mosphere was enough. "It's not easy," he says. "The cuts have been so high and there are a lot of single players too so making the draw at the Majors has been tough. Anything could happen. If we don't get in, then I was ready for it. I was okay to miss one week of playing challenges or just sit there in a slam, you know, where also you get to practice with very good players." "There's no 'faith' or anything, but that's the risk you're supposed to take. If it works, it works. I got into the draw and was happy and I think I made maximum use of it... Fortune favours the brave, I guess," he adds with a self-aware chuckle. Now 34, Balaji had been somewhat of a promising junior before his career tailed off due to injuries and the typical malaise of making the tough transition to the seniors. Even as he accepted his limitations and switched track to doubles, his parents continued to provide as much support as they could - his father was a Customs officer in his hometown of Coimbatore. His may seem like the case of a typical tennis journeyman; this is essentially a sport that only does enough to support its top 100 players. But his run at the French Open and Olympics call-up has renewed faith. It was the third-round match against Bopanna that showed many of Balaji's strengths on clay; while Bopanna will claim that did not sway his decision, it's hard to think it did not have any impact. Balaji is quite certain that it was not the turning point though. "No, no, no, it wasn't just the match. He also told me, one or two weeks before, he hinted that I'm one of the potential partners, me or Yuki," he said.

Balaji insists it was his results on slow clay at Challenger events, and his consistency, that got the job done for him. He elaborates on how playing styles may also be complementary, which may be why Bopanna opted to partner him instead of the more-experienced, higher-ranked Bhambri. "Both of us have big serves, so hopefully we make the maximum use of it. And then Bops has big returns also, an overall big game," he says. "So if one or two returns crack, and if we can break them, and keep holding our serves, the match can turn." That aspect of Bopanna's game was visible at Roland Garros: the same venue set to host the Olympics. The 44-year-old, with limits to his movement, prefers to end rallies quickly with his big serve and forehand combination. But throughout their matches in Paris, Ebden - who has formed a solid partnership with the Indian as the more athletic baseliner - struggled to hold serve and let rallies roll long enough for them to be outside of Bopanna's comfort zone. That will be an area where the Indian duo may have an edge at the Games. Balaji's career has never quite seen the kind of highs of that of Bopanna. He is currently enjoying his highest-ever ranking, and making main draws of big tournaments has been rare. The last month has been the most significant of his career so far, but the next few hold the potential to be life changing.

Neeraj Chopra wins at Paavo Nurmi Games: Finland meet was an important stopover en route Paris, and Neeraj does enough

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Neeraj Chopra's hallmark celebration involves him waiting till the javelin enters its downward path and then turning around to face the fans and raising his arms and exulting. A no-look statement even before the javelin hits the green patch. This happens when he inherently knows it's a big throw. His competitors often have to play catch up once this happens. On a cool evening in Turku, Chopra's arms went up in the air once he released the javelin in the third round. He didn't turn around this time, but followed the 800 gram spear till it landed. With 85.97 metres, Neeraj took back the lead from Finland's Oliver Helander, one of the three homeboys at the Paavo Nurmi Games. Returning to competition after skipping the Ostrava Golden Spike event because of an adductor muscle niggle (not an injury, as he insisted), Neeraj did a Neeraj thing - did enough to win. 83.62m, 83.45, 85.97, 82.21, X and 82.97 was a consistent series of throws. A nearly 86-metre throw for a win bodes well before the Paris Diamond League meet in early July, his final competition before the Paris Olympics. Yet, there was a shake of the head, a pursed lip looking skywards at the end of the competition. Perhaps the last two rounds soured his mood a bit. Maybe he anticipated a better throw, he could have been unhappy with the release angle. Perhaps he had to strain himself more than he expected to emerge with the win, even though three potential challengers at the Paris Olympics either withdrew or didn't enter.

Despite 2022 World Champion Anderson Peters having a poor day, the Finns were putting up a fight, so this wasn't an easy day for Neeraj. In the fourth round, Toni Keränen, another Finnish thrower, moved into second place with a personal best 84.19 metres to push down Helander to third spot. With two more rounds remaining the two Finns were the ones Chopra had to watch out for. A bigger throw from Neeraj was on the cards, to put some distance between him and the eager Finns, backed by a good turnout. But excess elevation and a sudden drop in altitude saw the javelin just cross the 80 metre mark. Neeraj frowned and stepped on the line to trigger an intentional foul.



In the final round, the 20-year-old German Max Dehning the wunderkid and the youngest to throw over 90 metres (who had an underwhelming outing with a best of 79.84m) was the only athlete other than Neeraj to produce a legal throw. Neeraj competitive juices flowed till the very last round. He signalled to the spectators, demanding a resounding cheer. He bellowed and then took a deep breath. Helander and Dehning and others clapped as he picked up speed on the runway. 82.97 metres flashed on the screen, his second best throw of the day. He completed all his six throws without any visible discomfort. With just over a month of the Paris Olympics, Turku was an important stopover for Neeraj. His last competition, not on his schedule initially, was the Federation Cup in Bhubaneswar. He won gold with 82.27 metres and skipped his last two attempts, so Tuesday was a big upgrade.

He participated in Bhubaneswar, four days after the Diamond League. Just a week later, he said that he was skipping Ostrava meet to not take any risks. An 88.36 metres at the Doha Diamond League in May was a bright start for Neeraj. The defending champion will enter the Paris Olympics with four competitions under his belt. That he can clinch a win even when not at his best was proven once again in Turku. That in itself is a big win, even if there was no big throw from the 26-year-old Indian superstar at the Paavo Nurmi Games.

Kane Williamson steps down as New Zealand captain after T20 World Cup debacle

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Kane Williamson has stepped down as captain of New Zealand's white-ball teams and opted out of a national contract for the 2024/25 season following the Black Caps' early exit from the T20 World Cup. Williamson's decision marks the end of an era for a New Zealand team which made the semi-finals of the previous three T20 World Cups and the 2021 final but ultimately missed out on a maiden white-ball title. Fast bowler Lockie Ferguson has also indicated he will not take up a national contract, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said on Wednesday, following the team's failure to make the Super Eight phase at the ongoing tournament. One of the world's top batsmen and a campaigner of more than 350 internationals in Tests, one-day and T20 cricket, Williamson will continue to play for New Zealand in all three formats. However, he

has opted to take up a contract outside of New Zealand in January, meaning he will be unavailable for part of the home summer. "Pursuing an overseas opportunity during the New Zealand summer means I'm unable to accept a central contract offer," the 33-year-old said in a statement. "Playing for New Zealand is something I treasure, and my desire to give back to the team remains undiminished." My life outside cricket has changed however - spending more time with my family and enjoying experiences with them at home or abroad is something that's even more important to me. "Williamson's likely destination in January is a T20 franchise league, with competitions running in several countries including Australia, South Africa and the United NZC said Williamson would be available for eight tests leading into Christmas and the ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan in February.