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Drinking water supply to be disrupted for two days in Hyd

Hyderabad: Due to urgent repair works of the NRV valve of the second pump in the Kondapur pump house of the Krishna Drinking Water Supply Scheme Phase-II, drinking water supply will be disrupted in several parts of Hyderabad city for two days. The officials of Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) urged people in the affected areas to use water sparingly. The Krishna Drinking Water Supply Scheme Phase-II supplies water to several parts of the Greater Hyderabad city. However, the NRV valve of the second pump in Kondapur pump house came under an unexpected repair and the officials took up restoration works on a warfooting.

Kothagudem police playing key role in preventing ganja smuggling: SP Rohith Raju

Kothagudem: The district police have prevented smuggling of nearly 5000 kg of ganja in the past six months, informed Superintendent of Police B Rohith Raju. The SP along with district Collector Jithesh V Patil participated in an awareness rally here on Wednesday marking Anti-Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking Day. He administered a pledge for the participants to work for a drug-free society on the occasion. Rohith Raju said that the district police was effectively dealing with the illegal transportation of ganja through the district, which borders the States of Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. More than 30,000 kg of seized ganja has been burnt in the district so far.

TJUDA calls off protests after talks with Health Minister



GNS News Agency, June 26

Hyderabad: The Telangana Junior Doctors Association (TJUDA), which was leading the indefinite medical strike in teaching hospitals and had temporarily paused the protests on Wednesday, has called-off their protests following successful talks with Health Minister, Damodar Raja Narasimha on Wednesday. The Health Minister along with senior health officials held detailed discussions over the demands raised by TJUDA. With the State government, as part of efforts to meet the demands of the protesting junior doctors, according an administrative sanction of Rs 204.85 crore to take up construction of hostels in teaching hospitals, the junior doctors called off their stir.

The State government has released a Government Order (GO RT No 244) dated June, 26, 2024, sanctioning Rs. 204.85 crore for the civic works at for medical students and other civil works within the campuses of Osmania Medical College (OMC), Gandhi Medical College (GMC) and Kakatiya Medical College (KMC) in Warangal. Out of the Rs 204.85 crore, a total of Rs. 80 crore has been allocated for construction of ladies hostel, Rs 35 crore for men's hostel, Rs 6 crore for construction of a dental hostel and 90 lakh for repairs of renovation of boys hostel and laying CC roads at OMC. Similarly, Rs 42 crore has been allocated to construct a ladies hostel, Rs 23 crore for men's hostel and Rs 14.50 crore for construction of Senior Residents Hostel Block at Gandhi Medical College campus. The State government has also sanctioned Rs 2.75 crore for construction of an internal cement concrete road at KMC, Warangal. Speaking on the occasion, the Health Minister said that the members of TJUDA thanked the State government for sanctioning Rs. 204 crore for developing infrastructure. "We have taken concrete measures to address the issues raised by junior doctors. Regarding the construction of new building at OGH, the matter is still in courts and we are very hopeful for an early resolution of the issues," he said.

YSRCP Leader Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy Arrested



GNS News Agency, June 26

Former MLA and YSRCP leader Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy has been arrested by the police after the High Court rejected his anticipatory bail pleas in multiple cases. He was taken into custody at Narasaraopet and brought to the SP office, with a possible move to the Macherla court.

The arrest comes in connection to the vandalism of EVMs and assault on individuals who tried to stop him during the general elections. The High Court denied protection from arrest in four cases registered against Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy, the YSRCP candidate of Macharla Assembly Constituency. The bench's decision on Wednesday rejected all four anticipatory bail petitions, overturning the interim orders that had been previously granted.

Prajwal Revanna's bail plea rejected in sex tapes case

GNS News Agency, June 26

A Bengaluru court rejected former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna's bail plea in the sex tapes case on Tuesday. The special court for public representatives said that Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code (rape charges) had been added to the case, and considering the gravity of the crime, bail should not be granted. The 33-year-old former MP, who was arrested on charges of rape and sexual abuse against several women, by a team of Karnataka Police at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport from Germany on May 31. He was then remanded to judicial custody. A fourth case was registered against Revanna on Tuesday in connection with sexual harassment, stalking, and criminal intimidation on Tuesday. The case was registered after Revanna was accused of recording a video call and sharing it with others.

Lok Sabha Speaker's resolution on Emergency triggers Opposition protests

GNS News Agency, June 26

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on June 26 read out a resolution condemning the imposition of the Emergency and termed the decision by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi an attack on the Constitution, triggering a wave of protests by the Opposition in the House. Mr. Birla's reference to the Emergency, shortly after his election as Lok Sabha Speaker, also saw a face-off between the government and the Opposition in the first session of the Lower House. "This House strongly condemns the decision to impose Emergency in 1975. We appreciate the determination of all those people who opposed the Emergency, fought and fulfilled the responsibility of protecting India's democracy," Mr. Birla said amid vociferous protests by Opposition parties. Opposition MPs, including from the Congress, were on their feet, raising



slogans against the reference to the Emergency. "June 25, 1975 will always be known as a black chapter in the history of India. On this day, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency in the country and attacked the Constitution made by Babasaheb Ambedkar," the Speaker said.

"Democratic values ??and debate have always been supported in India. Democratic values ??have always been protected, they have always been encouraged. Indira Gandhi

urged members to observe silence for a while and later adjourned the proceedings for the day. Soon after the House was adjourned for the day, BJP members staged protests by waving placards and raising slogans outside the Parliament.

Rahul Gandhi, earlier in the day, joined Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju in escorting the newly-elected Birla to the Speaker's chair. During the Lok Sabha proceedings, congratulating Mr. Birla for being elected speaker of the Lok Sabha for a second term, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi said he hoped the Opposition would be allowed to raise the voice of people in the House. He also said the Opposition wanted the House to function "often and well" and added that it was very important that co-operation happens with trust.

First urban civic polls in 20 years witness over 80% turnout in Nagaland

GNS News Agency, June 26

As polling was being held across 214 wards in different urban bodies in 10 districts, a 20 per cent turnout was recorded in the first two hours. As polling was being held across 214 wards in different urban bodies in 10 districts, a 20 per cent turnout was recorded in the first two hours. Civic elections were conducted for the first time in two decades in Nagaland Wednesday — with the inclusion of 33 per cent reservation for women candidates — as three municipalities and 22 town councils saw voter turnout of more than 80 per cent, an official said. This was the first time that these long-pending elections were held with women's reservation, which tribal organisations have opposed for several years citing customary Naga laws. Nagaland State Election Commissioner T. John Longkumar said: "It was a good election and overall a peaceful election process. Though the exact final figures are not available yet, it is roughly above 80 per cent." Polling, however, was not held in six districts of the state, in the Eastern Nagaland area. Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO), an apex body of seven Naga tribal communities living in the six districts, announced a boycott and said nobody from the region would participate in the elections. ENPO has been demanding a 'Frontier Nagaland Territory' for years, alleging underdevelopment and negligence. The areas in eastern Nagaland where ENPO announced its boycott have 14 town councils. About the boycott call, the State Election Commissioner said: "We had taken all measures to conduct the polls in all areas of the state. That situation is different. The NGOs decided they would abstain from voting. Meanwhile, individuals filed nominations — 79 of them, in fact. But all of them withdrew on the last day of withdrawal." Polling began at 7.30 am and continued till 4



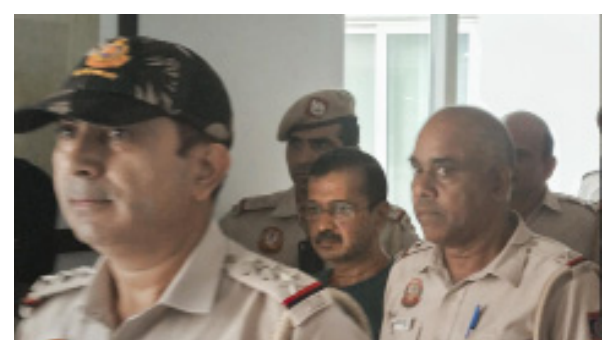
pm. The State Election Commissioner said: "There was no major violence. Some miscreants pelted some stones at some rivals' roofs before 6 am. There is no official report on these incidents yet. Apart from these, there is no report of violence anywhere." Tight security was maintained to ensure that no major incident of violence or poll violation occurred, said the official. Urban local body polls were held for the first and last time in Nagaland in 2004, in line with the provisions of the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2001. In 2006, this Act was amended to include 33 per cent reservation for women. It was this 2006 amendment that became a subject of controversy. The opposition to it, led by tribal bodies, was on the grounds that the reservation for women was in contravention with Naga laws, as enshrined in Article 371(A) of the Constitution, which accords special status to Nagaland for the protection of traditional religious and social practices of the Nagas. The polling on Wednesday was held across 214 wards in urban bodies in 10 districts. As per the state poll body, 2.23 lakh people, including 1,13,521 women, were eligible to vote in the urban polls. Eleven political parties and 523 candidates are contesting.

Arvind Kejriwal arrested by CBI in Delhi excise scam case

GNS News Agency, June 26

A court in New Delhi on June 26 sent Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to CBI custody for three days after the probe agency arrested him in a corruption case linked to the alleged Delhi Excise policy 'scam'. The court has also allowed Mr. Kejriwal to meet his lawyer for 30 minutes everyday. Special Judge Amitabh Rawat passed the order on an application moved by the CBI. The probe agency formally arrested Mr. Kejriwal earlier in the day after getting permission from the court. The Aam Aadmi Party national convener is lodged in prison in the Excise policy-linked money laundering case being probed by the Enforcement Department. "CBI application is allowed for three days," the judge said. In the application seeking Mr. Kejriwal's custody, the CBI told the court that he was required to be quizzed to unearth the larger conspiracy in the matter. It also said that the Delhi Chief Minister was required to be confronted with evidence and other people accused in the case.

The application was moved by the central probe agency after the AAP leader was produced before the court from Tihar Central jail. The excise case pertains to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's now-



scrapped excise policy for 2021-22. Lt Governor V.K. Saxena recommended a CBI probe into the alleged irregularities. Subsequently, the ED filed a case on August 22, 2022, taking cognisance of the CBI FIR that was lodged on August 17, 2022. The New Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22, introduced in November 2021, aimed to revolutionize the liquor retail landscape in the capital. Its objectives were to maximize revenue for the state, combat the sale of counterfeit alcohol, and enhance the consumer experience. However, the policy encountered vehement opposition and allegations of procedural irregularities, ultimately leading to its annulment on August 1st, 2022.

President Murmu to address joint sitting of Parliament on Thursday



GNS News Agency, June 26

The President will reach the Parliament in a procession from the Rashtrapati Bhawan, escorted by the horse-mounted presidential bodyguards. The President will reach the Parliament in a procession from the Rashtrapati Bhawan, escorted by the horse-mounted presidential bodyguards. President Droupadi Murmu will address the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, where she is expected to unveil the priorities of the newly-elected government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Murmu's address to the joint sitting of Parliament will also be the first after the constitution of the 18th Lok Sabha. The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha began on Monday and the 264th session of the Rajya Sabha will begin on June 27. The President will reach the Parliament in a procession from the Rashtrapati Bhawan, escorted by the horse-mounted presidential bodyguards.

She will be received by Prime Minister Modi and the presiding officers of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha at the Gaja Dwar of the Parliament building from where she will be escorted to the Lower House chamber with the traditional sceptre 'Sengol' in the lead. According to Article 87 of the Constitution, the President is required to address a joint session of Parliament at the beginning of the session after each Lok Sabha election. The President also addresses a joint sitting of both Houses in the first session of the Parliament every year. The government outlines its programmes and policies through the President's address. It also highlights the steps taken by the government the previous year and spells out priorities for the upcoming year. Following the President's address, the ruling party will move a motion of thanks in both Houses of the Parliament which will be debated by members. Prime Minister Modi is likely to reply to the debate on the motion of thanks on July 2-3. Murmu is expected to provide an overview of the Modi government's policies over the past 10 years, covering achievements in various sectors such as economy, defence, healthcare, education, and social welfare, among others. A resurgent Opposition is expected to corner the government on a range of issues such as NEET-UG irregularities, cancellation of UGC-NET, terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, train accidents in the country, and rising prices of essential commodities. In the recently held general elections, the ruling BJP-led NDA retained power for a third consecutive term by winning 293 seats, much below expectations of the BJP which was hoping for over 400 seats for the ruling alliance. The Opposition emerged stronger in the elections with the INDIA bloc winning 233 seats, which include 98 of the Congress, almost double of the 52 seats it had won in 2019.

Irrigation Dept to focus on 15 projects that need last push in Telangana



GNS News Agency, June 26

Hyderabad: The Irrigation Department will be paying special attention this year to the ongoing projects facing challenges in the final stage of their implementation. The department has identified some 15 such projects that need a significant final push for their completion. More projects are likely to be added to the list for securing necessary resources to ensure that they are successfully completed under a time bound programme. Over 70 percent of works on them were completed, but lacked further progress.

Top brass of the department, who reviewed the progress of works on such projects here on Wednesday, felt the need for adequate funding besides a focused approach to their implementation so that the ayacut was contemplated under them would get irrigation facility. Official sources said projects listed under the special category would require Rs.8,600 crore for completion. The department officials have decided to request the government for allocation of these funds on priority in the budget this year.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Assange released

WIKILEAKS founder Julian Assange's release from prison marks the culmination of a long-running saga of international intrigue. An Internet publisher with disdain for government secrets, he gained massive attention for the 2010 release of classified documents relating to the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The material, published on his website, included a video showing civilians being killed by fire from a helicopter in Iraq. One of his collaborators, US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning, was sentenced to 35 years in prison before then President Obama commuted the sentence. His plea deal with the US comes as a relief for 52-year-old Assange, who has spent the last five years in a British jail, fighting extradition. Earlier, facing charges of rape in Sweden, which he denied, he spent seven years in refuge in Ecuador's London embassy. Assange's activism made his case a cause célèbre among press freedom advocates, who insisted his work in exposing US military misconduct is exactly what journalists are expected to do. His supporters see him as a champion of free speech, exposing abuses of power and hypocrisy. In the US, he's projected as a villain for recklessly endangering national security. The British government signed an extradition order in 2022. Last month, two judges said Assange could appeal to address the question of whether, as a foreigner on trial in the US, he would enjoy the protections of freedom of speech under the First Amendment. Under the plea deal, Assange will plead guilty to a single charge of breaching the espionage law and travel home to Australia, which Canberra has been pushing for. It's difficult to predict how the saga would play out in the coming US presidential elections.

EVM verification a bid to placate party workers: Sujay Vikhe-Patil



GNS News Agency, June 26

The decision to apply for a verification of 40 Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in Ahmednagar was more to calm down the BJP party workers following his defeat than a personal wish, former BJP candidate from the constituency Dr Sujay Vikhe-Patil said. "I do not have anything to achieve over here. However, considering the aggressive sentiments of party workers, especially since I lost by a narrow margin, I decided to apply for the verification," Vikhe-Patil said. In a major upset in Ahmednagar constituency, Nilesh Lanke of the NCP-Sharad Pawar faction had cut short BJP candidate Sujay Vikhe-Patil's chances of being re-elected for a second term as MP.

Lanke emerged victorious and won the Ahmednagar Lok Sabha seat with a margin of 28,929 votes. Lanke had polled 6,24,797 votes while Vikhe-Patil (son of state revenue minister Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil) polled

5,95,878 votes. There were 24 candidates in the fray and a total of 13,22,195 valid votes were polled. Ahmednagar district collector S Salimath confirmed that Vikhe-Patil had deposited money amounting to Rs 19 lakh for the verification of 40 EVMs. "As per the ECI directives, the losing candidate may apply for checking and verification of EVM within 7 days of counting. The charge is Rs 40,000 +GST (18%) per set of EVMs," he said. The collector said that after 45 days (election petition period) the Election Commission of India will issue a schedule of the verification process. "The EVM engineer will verify in the presence of the candidate," Salimath added.

Vikhe-Patil said they have sought verification of five EVMs each at Rahuri, Shevgaon, Ahmednagar and Karjat-Jamkhed assembly constituencies and the remaining from Parner and Shrigonda. Vikhe-Patil claimed that the party workers were keen on understanding details at certain voting booths. "There has been significant developments and solutions had been arrived at some of the booths that had faced issues in the past. Hence to satisfy our party workers, I decided to apply for the verification and checking of EVMs at some of these booths," he said. Here it may be noted that this election was not a cakewalk for Vikhe-Patil despite his family being a dominant force in the cooperative sector and political scene in Ahmednagar for over six decades. Resentment and anger over onion prices among farmers and not lifting the ban on exports apart from the Maratha reservation issue were among the key factors that led to Vikhe-Patil's defeat in the LS polls.

Additional MAH CET announced for boost enrolment for BBA, BCA, BMS and BBM courses



GNS News Agency, June 26

With only 45% candidates appearing for the first ever MAH CET (Maharashtra Common Entrance Test) for BBA, BCA, BMS and BBM, the government has approved an additional CET for these courses. (File) With only 45% candidates appearing for the first ever MAH CET (Maharashtra Common Entrance Test) for BBA, BCA, BMS and BBM, the government has approved an additional CET for these courses. With only 45% candidates appearing for the first ever MAH CET (Maharashtra Common Entrance Test) for BBA, BCA, BMS and BBM, the government has approved an additional CET for these courses.

For the academic year 2024-25, the government announced that the CET will be held for undergraduate courses—Bachelor of Computer Application (BCA), Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS) and Bachelor of Business Management (BBM). So far the MAH CET was conducted only for postgraduate courses. The UG test was conducted accordingly by the Maharashtra State Common Entrance Examination Board on May 29. A total of 1.08 lakh seats in government, aided and unaided management institutes and departments were to be filled through this test.

However, less than 50% of the total intake actually registered and appeared for the exam. After the applications opened, the total registered students were 56,748 and of these, 48,135 finally appeared for the exam. The results were tentatively to be declared on June 17 but have been postponed as of now.

On June 20, the CET Cell announced an additional CET for the aforementioned four courses in order to meet the intake. The commissioner of State Common Entrance Test Cell said, "As a large number of candidates could not participate in the said Common Entrance Test, the candidates, parents or institutions are requested to register for the additional Common Entrance Test by visiting the office in person, submitting the application form through e-mail or by telephone."

PMPML conductor gives Rs 2 lakh 'supari' to kill his elderly neighbour



Police said the accused conductor, identified as Sagar Shashikant Sonar (32) of Padmavati, suspected that his 67-year-old neighbour Sonu Pandu Hode was performing black magic to harass him and grab his house.

GNS News Agency, June 26

During investigation, policemen Amol Pawar, Kiran Kamble and Amit Padmale identified Sagar Kumbhar as the man who attacked Hode with a knife. (File Photo) During investigation, policemen Amol Pawar, Kiran Kamble and Amit Padmale identified Sagar Kumbhar as the man who attacked Hode with a knife. The police have arrested a conductor of Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Limited (PMPML) for allegedly giving 'supari' (blood money) to kill a senior citizen.

Police said the accused conductor, identified as Sagar Shashikant Sonar (32) of Padmavati, suspected that his 67-year-old neighbour Sonu Pandu Hode was performing black magic to harass him and grab his house. Along with Sonar, police have arrested two more persons including Taurus Karale (43) and Sagar Satish Kumbhar (41), both residents of Bibvewadi, in the case. Police said that Sonar was suspecting that his neighbour Hode was allegedly harassing him by performing black magic like "Karni, Bhanamati" and was also trying to take possession of his house. So he allegedly gave a 'supari' of Rs 2 lakh to Karale to kill Hode. Police said Karale further gave Rs 50,000 to Kumbhar for executing the murder.

On June 15, Kumbhar allegedly tried to kill Hode by slitting his throat with a knife on the footpath behind Ranka Jewellers in Padmavati on the Pune-Satara Road. Hode received an injury on his neck during the incident. He lodged an FIR in this connection at the Sakhnagar police station.

During investigation, policemen Amol Pawar, Kiran Kamble and Amit Padmale identified Sagar Kumbhar as the man who attacked Hode with a knife. The police then arrested Kumbhar from his house on June 19. Subsequently, they also arrested Sonar and Karale. Police booked the three accused under section 307, 120 (b) and 34 of the Indian Penal Code. Police sub inspector Yuvraj Pothare, who is investigating the case said, "Sonar is a conductor and Karale is a driver with PMPML. So far we have not found any previous criminal record of accused Kumbhar. A court sent the accused persons in police custody for three days for further investigation," he said.

Minor's father gets bail in one case, but will remain in prison for other offences

GNS News Agency, June 26

Two IT engineers were killed after a speeding Porsche car driven by a 17-and-a-half-year-old boy in an inebriated state hit their motorcycle at Pune's Kalyani Nagar junction around 2.30 am on May 19. A first information report (FIR) regarding the accident was lodged against the minor boy at the Yerwada police station on the same day. Another FIR was lodged on May 20 against his father and six others including the owner, managers of two restaurants in Pune where liquor was allegedly served to the minor boy and his friends before the accident. They were booked under sections 77, 75 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and sections 3, 5, 199A of the Motor Vehicle Act. As per this FIR, the father had allegedly handed over the grey Porsche car to his minor son despite knowing that he had no driver's training and did not have a driver's license. Police also said that the minor's father was aware that he was consuming alcohol. The minor's father and hotel personnel were arrested in this case, while the other accused were released on bail, while the minor's father was subsequently arrested in other FIRs. But today, the father was also granted bail in this case, said his lawyer Prashant Patil. He also got anticipatory bail in an FIR lodged at the Chandan Nagar police station, lawyer said. After the Porsche car crash incident, police had booked the minor's father in six FIRs, of which three at Yerwada police station are linked to the accident, while other three cases at different police stations are related to financial disputes. The father is currently lodged in Yerwada jail under judicial custody and he would not be released on bail due to the other pending cases against him, police said. He was also arrested in the Porsche car accident case for allegedly playing a role in replacing the blood sample of his minor son.

A police investigation had revealed that when the



minor boy was taken to the Sassoon hospital for medical examination after the accident, his blood sample was allegedly replaced with his mother's blood. Police arrested the minor's father, mother, along with Dr Ajay Taware, the former head of the forensic department of Sassoon Hospital, Dr Shrihari Harnol, who was the casualty medical officer at the time, and a Class IV employee Atul Ghatkamble, for allegedly changing the minor's blood sample by taking financial favours. The trio have since been placed under suspension and are currently in judicial custody. The police had further arrested two "middlemen" Ashpak Basha Makandar of Dhanori and Amar Santosh Gaikwad of Yerwada in this case. Police said Makandar took Rs 4 lakh from the minor's father at a hotel in Kalyani Nagar and gave it to the Sassoon staffers for changing blood samples. Police said they have recovered Rs 2.5 lakh from Dr Halnor, Rs 50,000 from Ghatkamble. Police are trying to recover the remaining Rs 1 lakh. Also, the minor's father and grandfather, who too is under judicial custody at Yerwada jail, were arrested in the third FIR lodged by a driver employed by the family, who alleged that the duo kidnapped and forced him to take the blame for the May 19 accident.

Bihar verdict unlikely to affect 10% Maratha quota in Maharashtra: Experts



According to experts the verdict over Bihar quota is based on facts and not purely on Indra Sahnii judgment of setting reservation limit at 50 per cent.

GNS News Agency, June 26

The Patna High Court's decision to set aside the Bihar government's notifications to raise reservation in government jobs and educational institutions from 50 to 65 per cent is unlikely to have an impact on 10 per cent reservation extended to Marathas in Maharashtra, opine experts and officials. According to experts the verdict over Bihar quota is based on facts and not purely on Indra Sahnii judgment of setting reservation limit at 50 per cent.

"Facts in every case are different. Though I have not read the detailed order as of yet, the case related to 10 per cent reservation in Maratha is different on facts from the one in Bihar. We, in Maharashtra have studied the social and educational backwardness of the community and in Bihar it was a survey. Hence, it will not be applied to Maharashtra if this verdict is based on facts," said Justice (retd) Sunil Shukre, Chairperson, Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission. In February 2024, Maharashtra legislature unanimously passed the bill granting 10 per cent reservation to Marathas in education and jobs. It was the Shukre commission report based on which the Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Act, 2024 was drafted, identifying the Marathas as socially and educationally backward.

A PIL has already been filed in the Bombay High

Court against this 10 per cent reservation and the court has sought the state government's reply in the case. Shukre said that he cannot comment on what will be the verdict in an ongoing case in Maharashtra but can only say that facts seem to be different in both the cases.

Rajendra Kondhare of Akhil Bharatiya Maratha Mahasangh (ABMM), who is one of the interveners in the ongoing Bombay High court case against Maratha quota said that the Bihar verdict will have no impact on Maharashtra. "The Bihar government did caste census and based on those numbers of each community increased the reservation. The court has observed that proportionate reservation can only be in terms of political reservation and not elsewhere," said Kondhare. He added that the social and educational backwardness was studied in Maharashtra and not in Bihar's caste census. "The court has not touched upon the issue of 50 per cent upper limit of reservation, keeping it open. Hence, it cannot be applied for Maharashtra," he said. Expert in issues related to the Maratha community and social activist Dr Balasaheb Sarate who is fighting a legal battle for the reservation said that the grounds on which Bihar government's decision got struck down are different.

"The Bihar government merely counted the population and increased the reservation quantum. It did not prove the social and educational backwardness and moreover did not undertake a review of the present situation to justify the increase in reservation," said Sarate. Sarate added that in Maharashtra, the state backward class commission has submitted the report proving the social and educational backwardness of the community. "A satisfactory reason which will survive the test of law should be given before increasing the reservation. Maharashtra has fulfilled it," he said.

Justice (retired) Dilip Bhosle, who headed the advisory board set up by Maharashtra government on the issues related to Maratha reservation, too mentioned that one has to read the judgment to understand whether it is being done on facts or only on the issue of crossing 50 per cent limit. "Because facts are different in both cases. In that it should not affect Maharashtra's matter. But we will have to go in detail of the order," he said. Meanwhile, opposition in Maharashtra has raised the issue saying the Bihar verdict should not be taken lightly. "We have been saying that caste census in the country is the only way to deal with the issue of reservation. We said this in assembly as well while the bill for 10% reservation was being passed," said Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole.

Mumbai's minimum temperature at night surpassed 25°C for 623 days between 2014 and 2023: Study



GNS News Agency, June 26

In the wake of heatwave warnings across the nation and globe, an analysis of climate experts has revealed that there have been as many as 623 days when the minimum (night) temperature of Mumbai surpassed 25 degrees Celsius mark between 2014 and 2023. In metric terms, 623 days is equivalent to 21 months. The analysis has been done by India-based climate research group 'Climate Trends' and New Jersey based non profit body 'Climate Central'.

Night temperature below 25 degrees is considered to be healthy and normal. However, during the analysis, the 25 degree mark was kept as a benchmark, considering that human health and sleep cycles are affected in a negative manner if the night temperature rises 25 degrees. According to the data furnished by the research groups, the maximum number of days when Mumbai recorded high night temperature was in 2021 with 74 days, followed by 73 days in 2022, 68 days in 2017 and 64 in 2018. The research data furthermore states, if heatwave conditions and factors like global warming stayed within controlled limits then the number of days when night temperature would surpass 25 degrees mark would have been 16 and 19 days in 2021 and 2022, 22 days in 2017, and 22 days in 2018.

Data also shows that Mumbai's night temperature has increased by an average 65% between 2018 and 2023, which is the third-highest in Maharashtra.

Ulhasnagar and Kalyan have seen the highest increase in night temperature by 72.7% by recording 705 days of night temperature, surpassing 25 degrees, followed by Thane which has recorded a 70.3% increase by recording 674 days of high night temperature during the past decade. Meanwhile, experts have attributed the rapid concretization of mega-cities behind the changing trend of increasing night temperature. Roxy Mathew Koll, climate scientist from the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, said urban heat island effect is most visible in the night-time temperatures since cities turn into urban heat islands when buildings, roads, and other infrastructure absorb and re-emit heat, causing cities to be several degrees hotter than surrounding rural areas. "The high-rise buildings and concrete setup in the cities do not let the excess heat escape during the night. As the temperatures do not cool down, the heatwave continues into the night. Open green spaces and natural environments with trees can help release the heat faster at night. However, in India, we do not appreciate natural space as much as we appreciate skyscrapers. Add some haphazard city planning, poor architecture and unsustainable construction to it, the recipe for an urban heat island is complete," Koll said.

Aarti Khosla, director of Climate Trends said, "Like day temperatures, night temperatures have also shown constant and steady rise over the last few years. Warm nights have been punishing this summer with several cities shattering five decades of records. It's evident that cities will bear the highest brunt, which will get worse due to urban heat island effect. Several studies have already established that by the turn of the century, without very large reductions in fossil fuel burning, night-time temperatures will not fall below 25°C in some places during hot weather, impacting one's ability to recover for the next day. If we do not act now, nights would continue to be hotter, longer and sleepless, especially for the vulnerable." Furthermore, data shows that cities such as Pune and Nashik have recorded an increase by a paltry 0.7% and 3% between 2018 and 2023.

BBMP to launch PACE, a new app to report potholes in Bengaluru



GNS News Agency, June 26

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is all set to launch a new app, 'PACE' (Pothole Assistance Citizen Engagement), a platform to report potholes on the city streets. Bengaluru roads, known for their infamous potholes, have proved to be detrimental for the lives of motorists, especially during the monsoon. The city has also witnessed multiple pothole-related deaths which highlights the BBMP's repeated failure to fix the pothole menace on Bengaluru roads.

In view of the growing pothole crisis, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar announced the launch of the

new app. However, a formal launch date is yet to be fixed. The app enables and empowers the citizens to report potholes more efficiently and improve the overall road maintenance system. According to BBMP officials, citizens can report about potholes by clicking a photo and submitting it on the app. The information is further sent to the contractor responsible for fixing the pothole through the engineer concerned. Once the pothole is fixed, the contractor will then upload a photo of the completed work following which a message will be sent to the complainant to confirm the resolution of the work.

The BBMP officials also said that to ensure timely redressal of complaints, the issue will be escalated to the higher authorities if the complaint remains unaddressed or missed. The system also helps take prompt action against the contractors if they fail to address a complaint on time. "The PACE app also features an automated billing system, eliminating the need for contractors to submit work bills manually. All records are maintained within the app, ensuring a seamless and efficient process," a BBMP official said. Earlier, the BBMP had launched the 'Fix My Street' app for citizens to report civic and infrastructure-related issues. However, the app received a lukewarm response, facing several criticisms from citizens, which rendered it ineffective.

Singer Lucky Ali files complaint before Karnataka Lokayukta over alleged land grabbing by kin of IAS officer

GNS News Agency, June 26

Popular singer Lucky Ali, 58, has fired a fresh salvo in a long standing property dispute with the realtor family of the husband of a Karnataka IAS officer by filing a complaint before the Karnataka Lokayukta of land grab and dereliction of duty against the IAS officer, her husband and brother-in-law along with police and revenue officials. The singer posted an acknowledgement of the complaint he has filed with the Lokayukta on his X handle. "Land grabbing by IAS officer and her husband and political brother-in-law and through lots of money exchange," Lucky Ali commented about the complaint on his social media handle. The long-pending civil dispute has been in the news even in the past. On December 5, 2022, Lucky Ali had alleged land grabbing by the IAS officer. The long-pending property dispute is essentially between Lucky Ali and Madhusudhan Reddy – the brother-in-law of IAS officer Rohini Sindhuri. In December 2022, Lucky Ali had alleged that his property was being "encroached on illegally" with help from the IAS officer and urged Karnataka Director General of Police to "stop this illegal activity". Sindhuri has maintained that the dispute has nothing to do with her. In 2022, the IAS officer said, "He is just trying to throw mud at me," she said while pointing out that an injunction was issued in 2016 against Lucky Ali restraining him from "interfering with plaintiff's possession" of the property.

Her brother-in-law has claimed that the property was purchased in 2012 from Lucky Ali's brother Mansoor Ali and that he has all documents to prove his claim on the land. The disputed property is located near Kenchenahalli, in Yelahanka, in north-east Bengaluru. Ali said in his tweet in 2022 that it was a "Trust Property" and is "(sic) being encroached on illegally by Sudhir Reddy (and Madhu Reddy) from the Bangalore Land Mafia. With the help of his wife who is an IAS Officer by the name of Rohini Sindhuri."

He accused the IAS officer's family of misusing state resources for their personal gain. He alleged that they had "forcibly and illegally" come inside his farm and refused to show relevant documents. He also said that he was "getting no help from the local police". The dispute is the latest episode in a property saga that dates back to the acquisition of over 150 acre of land in 1969 on the outskirts of Bengaluru by Lucky Ali's father, the famous comedian Mehmood Ali – who died in 2004. The land acquired by Mehmood was passed on to his six children through trusts created in their names on account of them



being minors in the 1970s.

The property saga involves a maze of litigation that began when Mehmood's children became adults – beginning in the 1990s. At the root of the cases, that have been fought by the Ali siblings – among themselves and with third party real estate developers – is the alleged sale of the entire parcel of land held by Mehmood's family to two realtors in 1991 by a General Power of Attorney holder for the family, S Raghunath. According to court records for the cases involving the Ali properties over the last three decades, members of the family – including Lucky Ali alias Maqsood Ali, the second of five of Mehmood's sons – initially challenged the sale of the land to the realtors but later arrived at a compromise in court in 2008 where the realtors – Green Orchards Homes Ltd and Yeshwanth Shenoy – gave certain portions of the land back to the family, including to a trust in the name of Maqsood (Lucky) and his brother Maqdoom. Under the compromise deal for the Ali estates, conveyance deeds were reportedly executed in favour of the Ali family members and also third parties like the family of Sudhir Reddy, the husband of the IAS officer Rohini Sindhuri, in 2011 by the realtors who bought the property of Mehmood Ali in 1991. At the root of the dispute at present are differing claims by Sudhir Reddy, his brother Madhusudhan Reddy, and Lucky Ali over the ownership of a portion of land in the Vasudevapura region of Yelahanka. Meanwhile, Lucky Ali has himself given the GPA and property development rights to another realtor for the disputed property. A number of cases are incidentally pending in the courts over the ownership of the Ali estates and the transfer of rights or sale of the land that has occurred over the last three decades.

'No leave till July 31': Haryana Police to IPS officers, as new crime laws come into force from July 1

GNS News Agency, June 26

The state police has taken the measure to ensure that supervisory officers are available to resolve "many unforeseen problems which may crop up" in view of the changes. The state police has taken the measure to ensure that supervisory officers are available to resolve "many unforeseen problems which may crop up" in view of the changes. With Haryana police headquarters getting flooded with leave requests from its IPS officers and supervisory officers posted in districts for June and July, the state police have urged the officers "not to ask for leave except in emergency" till July 31.

According to sources, state police chief DGP Shatrueet Kapur has imposed a leave restriction on the officers in view of the three new criminal laws replacing the colonial-era Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Indian Evidence Act of 1872 that will come into effect in the country from July 1. The state police has taken the measure to ensure that supervisory officers are available to resolve "many unforeseen problems which may crop up" in view of the changes. In these circumstances, the state police have requested the IPS officers not to ask for leave except in emergency till July 31.

The Indian Express has learnt that the police headquarters on Wednesday sent a communication to all senior IPS officers ranging from district Superintendents of Police (SPs) to the Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) ranks on the matter. In the letter, the state police on behalf of DGP Shatrueet Kapur, said that the headquarters is receiving leave applications from IPS officers and supervisory officers posted in districts for June and July. According to sources, 11 senior IPS officers are currently on leave. The leave period of most of these officers ends this month, while one woman officer's leave is till January 21. One ADGP ranked officer, heading an important assignment in the state bureaucracy, is on leave



till July 7, while another officer has taken earned leave till October.

Five officers, who are currently on leave, are in the IGP rank. One of these officers is looking after a police commissionerate in the state. Three SP-level officers, including two district police chiefs, are also on leave. Meanwhile, Haryana Chief Secretary T V S N Prasad has said that the state is fully prepared to roll out the new laws from July 1 with extensive training provided to the Judiciary, Police, and Prosecution over several months. He said all jails within the state possess appropriate and adequate technical infrastructure, with around 300 desktops readily available. Recognising the importance of virtual court proceedings, the authorities have already installed 149 video conferencing systems across jails and court complexes and will be procuring 178 more. He said that efforts have been made to cover all sections of society to sensitize key stakeholders. On Thursday, Prasad also inaugurated a one-day online training programme for IAS and HCS officers of the State on the three new criminal laws – the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA).

Kejriwal, Soren treated as 'Tom, Dick or Harry': Kapil Sibal's swipe after Delhi CM's bail stayed

GNS News Agency, June 26

Kapil Sibal India Arvind Kejriwal in a post on X, Sibal said, "Judge: Granted anticipatory bail in alleged sexual abuse case to Yediyurappa saying: He is no Tom, Dick or Harry. H D Ravanna granted bail in alleged kidnapping case." It is strange police were restrained by a court from arresting former Karnataka chief minister B S Yediyurappa, while Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren – both arrested in separate cases – were being treated like any "Tom, Dick or Harry", Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal said Friday.

Earlier this month, the Karnataka High Court restrained the police from arresting Yediyurappa in a Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) case registered against him. While passing the order, the court had reportedly said he is a former CM and not some Tom, Dick and Harry. The Delhi high court Friday granted interim stay on the trial court's order giving bail to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam. In a post on X, Sibal said, "Judge: Granted anticipatory bail in alleged sexual abuse case to Yediyurappa saying: He is no Tom, Dick or Harry. H D Ravanna granted bail in alleged kidnapping case." "Arvind Kejriwal, Hemant Soren regarded as Tom, Dick or Harry! Strange," the senior advocate and Supreme Court Bar Association president said. The high court has also issued a notice to Kejriwal seeking his response on ED's plea challenging the trial court's June 20 order by



It is strange police were restrained by a court from arresting former Karnataka chief minister B S Yediyurappa, while Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren – both arrested in separate cases – were being treated like any "Tom, Dick or Harry", Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal said which he was granted bail. "Till the pronouncement of this order, the operation of the impugned order shall remain stayed," a vacation bench of Justice Sudhir Kumar Jain said. The court said it was reserving the order for 2-3 days as it wanted to go through the entire records. Kejriwal and Soren have been arrested in corruption cases.

75 bodies received for autopsy in 3 days amid heatwave

GNS News Agency, June 26

Amid a severe heatwave, the district health department here has received at least 75 bodies for post-mortem within a period of three days from June 18-20, according to officials. Senior health officials of the Gautam Buddh Nagar said usually the number of bodies received for post-mortem in a day averages around seven or eight and described the fatalities as "unexpected". The department, however, could not conclusively say if these deaths were directly caused due to the heatwave. "There has been an increase in the number of post-mortem cases and this increase is quite unexpected. Normally, there are 7-8 cases per day. On June 18, we received 28 bodies. On June 19, we received 25 bodies and by the evening of June 20, we had received 22 bodies," Gautam Buddh Nagar's Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Suneel Kumar Sharma said. Of these bodies, he said hospitals had received 20 as "brought dead" and 10 of them were "unidentified". "We received 10 bodies in hospitals that were brought dead on June 18, eight on June 19 and another two by evening of June 20. Three unidentified bodies were received on June 18, five on June 19 and two by evening of June 20," the CMO said. In view of the "unexpected" rise in cases, the staff deployment for post-mortem duty has also been increased.

"Usually, we would have six to seven cases during the day and maybe one at night. This was manageable



by one doctor. But in the last three days as the number of cases rose, services of three doctors were required," Sharma said. On the heatwave impact, the CMO said there is no doubt the weather is extreme and it's "not usual heat". "This heat is something else, the content of humidity in the weather has also risen of late. This is painful heat and chances of death increase in it." "The impact of heat is not equal on everybody. Those who are completely healthy can bear it. If you live in rural areas and spend time under trees, maybe then also you can bear the heat," he said. "But here in cases of construction workers, security personnel, even traffic police and volunteers, they need to use a cap on their head, consume ORS and not stay in the open for long. Such measures can help save lives," the senior doctor added.

Disclose marks of students, show answersheets: Aaditya Thackeray on MH-CET

GNS News Agency, June 26

Aaditya Thackeray MH CET A Aaditya said 54 mistakes have come to fore in this exam and questioned as to why despite so many issues, the CET cell commissioner has still not been transferred.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray on Friday sought transparency in the recently conducted Maharashtra Common Entrance Test (MH-CET) engineering exams and demanded that the marks of the students be disclosed and answer sheets be given to them. Addressing a press conference in Mumbai, he said the CET was held in a "weird" way and examinations for two papers were held in 30 batches. Of this, one paper was held in 24 batches. "We demand that the answer sheets be shown to the students and the marks be disclosed to them. Toppers of the exam should also be announced," he said.

The MH-CET is conducted by the Maharashtra government. Its primary purpose is to facilitate the admission process for professional courses such as engineering, management, pharmacy, agriculture, law, medical, AYUSH and fine arts. Aaditya said 54 mistakes have come to fore in this exam and questioned as to why despite so many issues, the CET cell commissioner has still not been transferred. There were 54 mistakes in the papers and students raised 1,425 objections. Thackeray claimed adding that in one paper, which had multiple select questions, all four options of answer were wrong

The students' results were declared in the form of percentile, the former minister said. "Since one paper was conducted in 24 batches, there were instances that some papers were difficult, while others were easy. Those who secured less marks have got more percentile and the ones securing more marks have got less percentile," said Thackeray adding that the percentile was formulated in the wrong way. "54 mistakes have been made by this CET cell. Answer sheets have also disappeared in three days.



Now marks are not shown but instead percentiles are being shown.. Why are you not showing the answer sheet? Why are you hiding things? Why is there no transparency? Who is the topper in each batch is also not known. Don't take the exam again, CET cell should return the money to the students who have raised objections and declare the marks instead of percentile," Aaditya said further demanding that the money taken from the students for objection should be returned. Students have claimed that their percentile declared on the result day do not match with the marks. One of the students said, "I have scored 124 marks and 60 percentile whereas someone I know who has scored 121 marks but have percentile over 90. This is only because we were in different slots of the test. This is unfair." Students know about their marks because a few days before the result, the answer-key is declared by the CET cell along with response given by the candidates in order to verify and raise objections if any. "As per the answer-key, I had scored good marks. But when the result was declared in percentile, I am finding it difficult to take admission to engineering. Now when I demanded that my answers should be shown again, the CET Cell has turned down my request," said the student.

'Neither any action against Dharmendra Pradhan, nor any action by him': Tripura Congress on NEET-UG, UGC NET paper leaks

GNS News Agency, June 26

Congress Working Committee member Sudip Roy Barman demanded the Union Education Minister's resignation. Congress Working Committee member Sudip Roy Barman demanded the Union Education Minister's resignation. As a part of the countrywide protests over purported irregularities in the NEET-UG examination and possible compromise in the integrity of the UGC National Eligibility Test (NET) that was cancelled earlier this week, the Tripura unit of the Congress hit the streets of Agartala on Friday.

The party also demanded the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and burnt an effigy of Pradhan. While speaking to the media, Congress president Ashish Kumar Saha said neither has any action been taken against Pradhan nor has he himself taken any action. "Incidents of paper leaks are being reported

in the country. The youths are worried. While cases are being filed in the courts across states, the education minister is saying there is no corruption," said Saha.

Congress Working Committee member Sudip Roy Barman demanded the Union Education Minister's resignation. He also said the examinations should be scrapped and fresh ones should be conducted to give scope to meritorious students.

"Nearly 70 cases of paper leak incidents have taken place across the country in the seven years of the Modi government. There is no conviction against those who are guilty and involved in earning money through paper leaks. This is a corrupt government. The Modi government is a paper leak government. Not a single word has come from Modi," he said. The protests come a day after CPI(M) student wing Students Federation of India (SFI) burnt effigies of the Union Education Minister and de-

'Nothing objectionable': Gujarat High Court okays release of 'Maharaj'



GNS News Agency, June 26

The Gujarat High Court on Friday greenlit the release of the film Maharaj, saying that upon viewing the movie, it had "found nothing objectionable that would hurt the religious feelings of petitioners or a sect". The court granted Netflix and Yash Raj Films the liberty to release the movie minus formal receipt of the court's order, which will require some time to be made available, Justice Sangeeta Vishen said. The members of the Vaishnavite sect Pushtimargi had moved the Gujarat High Court earlier, objecting to the movie's release on the grounds that they apprehend excerpts of the movie contain "scandalous and defamatory language, which affects the Pushtimargi sect as a whole". They also said the film's release "is likely to incite feelings of hatred and violence against the Pushtimargi sect, which would be in breach of the code of ethics under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021".

The movie, the debut film of Junaid Khan, is based on an 1862 libel case heard and decided by British judges. The case was filed by religious leader Jadunathji against social reformer Karsandas Mulji. Jadunathji was one of the leaders of the Pushtimargi sect. He filed the case after Mulji claimed in an article, published in a weekly newspaper he edited, that the religious leader had alleged sexual liaisons with his female followers and men were expected to show their devotion by offering their wives for sex. The case was dismissed. While the petitioners

had contended that the movie is based on the trial, deducing from the pre-release posters of the movie, Yash Raj Films contended that the movie was based on a 2013 book written by Gujarati author Saurabh Shah about the 1862 libel case.

Senior advocate Jal Unwalla along with advocate Ketki Jha, appearing for Netflix, argued on Friday that while the petitioners had held up the release of the movie on "presumption" that it is based on the 1862 verdict, the petitioners had failed to disclose in their petition that there has been a book on the judgment in the public domain since 2013, calling the petitioners' act to be one of "suppression". After hearing the petitioners, the release of the movie was stayed on June 13, a day before its slated release, with the stay continuing until Friday.

Justice Vishen on Friday recorded, "Having viewed the film, this court found nothing objectionable that would hurt the religious feelings of petitioners or a sect. The core message of the film, as has been rightly contended by the respondents (Netflix and YRF), focuses on the social evil and the fight against the same by social reformer Karsandas Mulji who himself was from a Vaishnavite community... Except the apprehension of the petitioner, the film, in no manner, affects or hurts the religious feeling. The film concludes by saying that 'a sect is far more important than any individual or incident'. Treating this incident as an exception, the Vaishnav sect continued on the path of the religion. The sect and its followers continue to grow and remain a proud and integral part of the social, cultural and religious fabric of India." The court also observed that the petitioners' apprehension of public disorder was misplaced as a book on the case was published in 2013, which is in the public domain and no untoward incident has been reported. The court held, "Thus, the primary grievances raised by senior counsel Mihir Joshi (representing petitioners) that the film runs down the religion or defames or insults or is derogatory to any religion has no force. Thus this court is constrained to come to the conclusion that apprehensions of petitioners are based on surmises... This court arrives at the prima facie conclusion that film Maharaj is based on events that led to the filing of the libel case and is not targeted or hurting the sentiments of Pushtimargi sect."

Nitish Kumar probably left INDIA bloc fearing Ram temple wave, it proved unfounded: Dipankar Bhattacharya



GNS News Agency, June 26

JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar might have left the INDIA bloc out of "fear" that the Ram temple was going to drive a wave in favour of the BJP but this proved to be incorrect, CPI (ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya has said. In an interview with PTI editors at the agency's headquarters, the Left party's leader said Kumar's "fear" was unfounded particularly after seeing the Lok Sabha election results of Uttar Pradesh. Kumar's Janata Dal (United) was in an alliance with the Rashtriya Janata Dal-Congress-Left 'Mahagathbandhan' grouping in Bihar and a constituent of the opposition INDIA bloc, but jumped to the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) just before the 2024 general elections. "I don't think that we (the bloc) let him go. Nitish Kumar keeps saying 'ab idhar idhar nahi karenge' (I will not change sides anymore). So, he does it of his own volition," Bhattacharya said.

In January, Kumar had ditched the Mahagathbandhan and the INDIA bloc and formed a new government with the BJP, which he had dumped less than 18 months ago. The Bihar chief minister's crossover to the NDA was his fifth in a little over a decade. "Honestly, I don't really know why he left, because he was the chief minister, he is now the chief minister. I think, if somebody says that he was not made the convener. There is no convener of the INDIA bloc till date," Communist Party

of India (Marxist Leninist) Liberation general secretary said. "Probably, you know, there was an element of fear. Though there was no genuine basis for this fear. After the Ram temple inauguration, a lot of people thought that there was such a wave in this country. So, for him the survival instinct is the most important instinct, and probably that's what he did. But as UP tells us, that was an unfounded fear," he said. The BJP won 33 of the 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh in the 2024 polls, down from 62 in 2019, while INDIA bloc member Samajwadi Party got 37 seats, up from five in 2019. Bhattacharya also claimed that the JD(U) joining the NDA had in fact benefitted the BJP in Bihar. "I think the BJP was particularly clear. Without Nitish Kumar, the BJP probably would have been limited to less than 10 seats (in Bihar)," he said. Both the BJP and the JD(U) won 12 Lok Sabha seats each in the state that sends 40 members to the Lok Sabha.

Asked about viral videos of Kumar touching the feet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a recent NDA meeting and checking the his finger for the indelible ink at the inauguration of the Nalanda University in Bihar on Thursday, the CPI(ML) leader said, "I would rather go by what he (Kumar) said yesterday. So what he said was quite perfect for a Bihar chief minister." "So, there was Narendra Modi who was trying to hog all the limelight and claim all the credit for Nalanda. And, there was Nitish Kumar who was telling him that this is a UPA-era project and so many people before you have actually contributed to it," Bhattacharya said. "So, in his own way, he was reminding, putting Narendra Modi in his place. Reminding him of the actual chronology. (Union home minister) Amit Shah would call it. So, the chronology of Nalanda he (Kumar) explained," he said. Bhattacharya, however, added that it is very difficult to say whether Kumar would stick with the NDA. "Nitish Kumar has done 'idhar udhar', as he calls it. It can be actually a part of the Indian political acrobatics. It's very difficult to say. When he does that, why he does that, and when will be the next time that he will do it again," he said.

India, UK ministers to address India Global Forum at election inflection point

GNS News Agency, June 26

Recently re-appointed Union Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting, Electronics & IT Ashwini Vaishnav will make his first intervention on an international stage at the annual India Global Forum (IGF) in London starting on Monday. His virtual address will outline the Modi 3.0 government's immediate priorities and the opportunities for global partners to participate in the Viksit Bharat initiative of becoming a developed nation by 2047. On the UK side, Foreign Office Minister in charge of South Asia Lord Tariq Ahmad will lay out the Conservative Party led government's highlights of the bilateral partnership.

The week-long event comes at an inflection point, soon after the Indian general election and at the peak of the UK's campaign for the July 4 general election. In keeping with the non-partisan outlook of IGF London, Opposition shadow foreign secretary David Lammy is set to lay out his vision for strategic ties between India and the UK under any future Labour Party led government. "As we enter a new era in UK-India relations, we need new ideas — not just for these two nations, but for global partners," said Manoj Ladwa, Founder and Chairman of UK-headquartered India Global Forum. "IGF London will be a catalyst for ideas, collaborations, and conversations, driving innovation, economic growth, and social progress worldwide. Leveraging this bilateral relationship's unique shared values and strengths, we aim to tackle global challenges and create a collaborative platform for a brighter future," he said.

The stalled free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations



amid the election cycles of both countries and the 2030 Roadmap for UK-India relations will feature high on the agenda of a varied set of sessions for the forum. In a session entitled 'It's a Woman's India', former minister of women and child development Smriti Irani will reflect upon the evolving role of women in India's socio-economic landscape as she spotlights government initiatives aimed at empowering women in India. To explore how businesses can best invest in and benefit from India's growth story, experts including Kiran Mazumdar Shaw of Biocon, and Sanjeev Sanyal, Member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, will be among many offering their insights. Now in its sixth year, IGF London has been addressed by both British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Opposition Leader Keir Starmer in the past. It will culminate in the annual UK-India Awards, which celebrate individuals and organisations driving the bilateral partnership forward.

'Sangh Parivar's upper caste politics...': Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan slams Modi govt over pro-tem Speaker appointment

GNS News Agency, June 26

Pinarayi Vijayan pointed out that the post of deputy speaker — which conventionally goes to the Opposition — had been deliberately kept vacant throughout the 17th Lok Sabha. (Photo: Pinarayi Vijayan/ X) Pinarayi Vijayan pointed out that the post of deputy speaker — which conventionally goes to the Opposition — had been deliberately kept vacant throughout the 17th Lok Sabha. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Friday joined the Opposition chorus against the appointment of Odisha's Bhartruhari Mahtab as the pro-tem Speaker of the Lok Sabha. In a statement, Vijayan protested the appointment of Mahtab as the pro-tem — or interim — Speaker of the Lower House instead of Congress's Kodikunnil Suresh, the parliamentarian with the most terms in the House. President Droupadi Murmu made the appointment on Thursday. While Mahtab is a seven-time MP, Suresh has been MP eight times. A Dalit, Suresh is the most senior Congress leader in Kerala.

In his statement, Vijayan said the appointment violated parliamentary norms and that convention demands that Mavelikkara MP Suresh, as the longest serving Lok Sabha member, should be appointed to the position. "The Union Government should make clear why Mavelikkara MP Kodikunnil Suresh (Congress) was neglected in the appointment despite him being the longest serving member of the House. Has BJP got an answer to those who suspect that Sangh Parivar's upper caste politics had worked behind this decision," Vijayan said. By making the appointment, the BJP had shown an "arrogant disregard" towards parliamentary democratic norms and precedents.



He also pointed out that the post of deputy speaker — which conventionally goes to the Opposition — had been deliberately kept vacant throughout the 17th Lok Sabha. "It shows that the BJP will not accept anyone in the Opposition. It can be seen only as a challenge to Indian democracy," the chief minister said. Objecting to Mahtab's appointment the same day, All India Congress Committee general secretary and that party's communications in charge Jairam Ramesh said that "by convention, the MP who has served the maximum terms is appointed Speaker pro-tem for the first two days when oath is administered to all newly elected MPs". The senior-most MPs in the 18th Lok Sabha are Kodikunnil Suresh (INC) and Virendra Kumar (BJP), both of who are now serving their 8th term. The latter is now a Union Minister and hence it was expected that Kodikunnil Suresh would be the Speaker pro-tem. Instead, a seven-term MP, Bhartruhari Mahtab has been appointed Speaker pro-tem," said Ramesh.

Congress politicising pro-tem Speaker issue: Kiren Rijiju

GNS News Agency, June 26

Lok Sabha pro-tem Speaker, pro-tem Speaker row, pro-tem Speaker controversy, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, Congress, pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab, President Droupadi Murmu has appointed Mahtab, a seven-term Lok Sabha MP from Odisha, as the pro-tem Speaker, who administers oath/affirmation to the newly elected members of the Lok Sabha. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday slammed the Congress for politicising the appointment of Lok Sabha pro-tem Speaker and asserted that conventions were followed in selecting BJP leader Bhartruhari Mahtab who has the longest uninterrupted tenure as a member of the Lower House.

President Droupadi Murmu has appointed Mahtab, a seven-term Lok Sabha MP from Odisha, as the pro-tem Speaker, who administers oath/affirmation to the newly elected members of the Lok Sabha. Congress accused the BJP-led government of "destroying parliamentary norms" by ignoring the claim of Suresh, an eight-term Lok Sabha MP, to the post. Rijiju claimed that Suresh, though an eight-term MP, was not a member of the Lok Sabha in 1998 and 2004 and hence did not have an uninterrupted tenure in the Lok Sabha.

"Do you think such an argument is even valid," the minister shot back when asked about Congress' claims that Suresh was ignored for the post as he was a Dalit. The minister accused Congress leaders of "spreading lies" and making "misleading statements" on the issue. "We expected the Parliament proceedings to start on a good note. But, even before the start of the first session of the Parliament, Congress resorted to spreading lies and misleading everyone through social media posts," Rijiju said. The minister cited past precedents to claim that the UPA government had ignored the seniority principle in 2004 when it had appointed eight-term member Balasaheb Vikhe-Patil as the pro-tem Speaker, when nine-term MP George Fernandes was a member of the Lok Sabha.

Even claims of P M Sayeed and Giridhar Gamang to the post of pro-tem Speaker were ignored by the Con-



gress on earlier occasions, Rijiju said. The minister also cited a Supreme Court order of 2018 that maintained that the convention of senior-most lawmaker being appointed as pro-tem Speaker had no "legal force." "I have to say it with great regret that I feel ashamed that the Congress party has talked like this. First of all, they created an issue about the pro-tem Speaker. This post of pro-tem Speaker is very temporary. They play their role till the election of the new Speaker. They do not have to do any business transaction," Rijiju said.

Kejriwal, Soren treated as 'Tom, Dick or Harry': Kapil Sibal's swipe after Delhi CM's bail stayed

GNS News Agency, June 26

It is strange police were restrained by a court from arresting former Karnataka chief minister B S Yediyurappa, while Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren — both arrested in separate cases — were being treated like any "Tom, Dick or Harry", Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal said Friday. Earlier this month, the Karnataka High Court restrained the police from arresting Yediyurappa in a Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) case registered against him. While passing the order, the court had reportedly said he is a former CM and not some Tom, Dick and Harry. The Delhi high court Friday granted interim stay on the trial court's order giving bail to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam. In a post on X, Sibal said, "Judge: Granted anticipatory bail in alleged sexual abuse case to Yediyurappa saying: He is no Tom, Dick or Harry. H D Ravanna granted bail in alleged kidnapping case." "Arvind Kejriwal, Hemant Soren regarded as Tom, Dick



or Harry! Strange," the senior advocate and Supreme Court Bar Association president said. The high court has also issued a notice to Kejriwal seeking his response on ED's plea challenging the trial court's June 20 order by which he was granted bail. "Till the pronouncement of this order, the operation of the impugned order shall remain stayed," a vacation bench of Justice Sudhir Kumar Jain said.

India says peace at Chinese border key as direct flights remain stalled

GNS News Agency, June 26

India's foreign ministry said peace on its border with China was critical for relations to become normal, reacting on Friday to a Reuters report that New Delhi was not keen to restart direct flights with China amid a stand-off on their Himalayan frontier. China has been pressing India to restart direct passenger flights after a four-year halt, but New Delhi is resisting as the border dispute continues to weigh on ties between the world's two most

populous countries, Reuters reported on Thursday.

Asked about the lack of direct flights, foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said "peace and tranquillity on the border is important" for ties with China to become normal. He did not elaborate. India-China relations have been tense since the biggest military confrontation in decades on their disputed Himalayan border killed 20 Indian and at least four Chinese soldiers in June 2020. Thousands of troops remain mobilised on each

side. Direct India-China flights peaked in December 2019 with a total of 539 scheduled flights. Flights were halted four months later as the COVID-19 pandemic escalated, but they have not resumed even though India lifted COVID restrictions on international air routes a year later and China lifted all COVID travel measures in early 2023. Since the border clash, India has made it difficult for Chinese companies to invest, banned hundreds of popular apps and severed passenger routes.

UAE to allow abortion, its law is more liberal than in nine US states



GNS News Agency, June 26

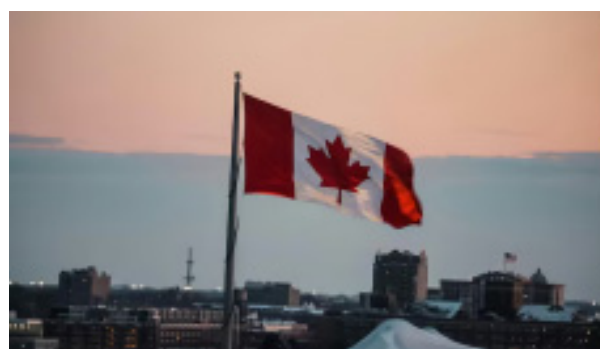
With the UAE on course to permit abortions in cases of rape and incest, the relaxation apparently makes the Arab country's law more liberal than provisions in nine American states. These US states don't allow medical termination of pregnancy, even in cases of rape and incest. Since the US Supreme Court eliminated the federal constitutional protections for abortion in 2022, 14 states have banned the procedure in almost all circumstances. Since the US Supreme Court eliminated the federal constitutional protections for abortion in 2022, 14 states have banned the procedure in almost all circumstances. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is on course to permit abortions in cases of rape and incest, and could result in the Islamic country's abortion laws being more liberal than those in as many as nine US states. Since the US Supreme Court eliminated the federal constitutional protections for abortion in 2022, 14 states have banned medical termination of pregnancy in almost all circumstances. In contrast, the UAE Cabinet has approved a resolution allowing abortions in cases of rape and incest, provided the incident is reported immediately, and the procedure is carried out within 120 days of pregnancy.

Among the 14 American states, nine states — Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Okla-

homa, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas — do not even permit abortions in cases of rape or incest, according to a report by the healthcare research nonprofit Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF). In comparison to the recent changes in the Arabian nation in this regard, several US states maintain stringent restrictions on abortion. Let us have a look at the states and their provisions.

Arizona: Abortion is banned after 15 weeks of pregnancy with no exceptions for rape or incest. A near-total ban may be briefly enforceable until a repeal of the state's 1864 abortion law takes effect in the fall. Mississippi: Abortion bans have exceptions for rape and incest, but a report to law enforcement is required. Idaho: The six-week and total abortion bans contain exceptions for rape and incest, applicable only during the first trimester in the total ban, and the assault must be reported to law enforcement. Indiana: The total abortion ban allows exceptions for rape and incest up to 12 weeks of pregnancy. North Dakota: Abortion in the case of rape or incest is applicable up to six weeks of pregnancy. West Virginia: The total ban includes exceptions for rape and incest, allowing abortion up to eight weeks for adults and 14 weeks for minors, with mandatory reporting to law enforcement. The UAE's Cabinet Resolution No. (44) of 2024 connected to Medical Liability law states that abortion is allowed "if the pregnancy is the result of intercourse with a female against her will, without her consent, or without adequate volition" and "if the person who caused the pregnancy is an ancestor of the woman or one of her mahram [ineligible for marriage] relatives". Dr Paul Bosio, chief medical officer at Corniche Hospital in Abu Dhabi said that the new Cabinet resolution aimed to preserve the health and safety of women and society and was a significant positive development. "This resolution now adds pregnancies through coercion, invalid consent or incestuous relationships as possible indications, as well as giving the mother the full consent and authority to request the procedure," he was quoted by The National as saying.

Two Khalistanis lose fight to get off Canada's no-fly list



GNS News Agency, June 26

An appellate court in Canada has rejected the attempt by two Khalistani extremists to get off the Canadian no-fly list. The court said there were "reasonable grounds" to suspect the two would threaten transportation security and commit an act of terror. A Canadian court has thrown out a bid by two Khalistani extremists to get off Canada's no-fly list because there were reasonable grounds to suspect they would commit an act of terror.

The Federal Court of Appeal in its ruling this week dismissed an appeal by Bhagat Singh Brar and Parvkar Singh Dulai after they lost a constitutional challenge of their no-fly designations under Canada's Secure Air Travel Act. The Canadian Press reported. This was a unanimous decision of a three-judge panel. Federal Court of Appeal Justice David Stratas, writing the ruling on behalf of the panel, said Brar and Dulai had their Charter rights breached when they were added to the Secure Air Travel Act's (SATA) no-fly list in 2018, reports The National Post, a Canadian newspaper.

Dulai runs a channel called 'Channel Punjabi' from

Surrey and 'Global TV' from Chandigarh. Both the channels spread Khalistani propaganda, they said. The National Post said that the ruling saved the federal Canadian government's no-fly list from a constitutional challenge. The ruling says the act empowers the public safety minister to ban people from flying if there are "reasonable grounds to suspect they will threaten transportation security or travel by air to commit a terrorism offence." The appellate panel found that based on confidential security information, the minister "had reasonable grounds to suspect that the appellants would travel by air to commit a terrorism offence." In 2019, Brar and Dulai went to the Federal Court of Canada to have their names struck from the list. The limits imposed on Dulai, he ruled, "were the result of evidence-based suspicions that he could fly abroad in order to plot a terrorist attack." "The Government of Canada must enact laws that protect national security and intelligence activities in a way that respects rights and freedoms and encourages the international community to do the same," Noel ruled. In their appeal, both Brar and Dulai argued the impairment of their rights as a result of being placed on the list was not "minimal" and therefore unjustified. However, the appellate court ruled the legislation was justified and that confidential portions of the court process were procedurally fair. Lawyers for Brar and Dulai did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the court's ruling, said PTI. The appellate court's ruling comes amid strained ties between Canada and India over the Justin Trudeau-led government's refusal to act against Khalistani elements in the country. The Trudeau government survives on the support of Jagmeet Singh's party, the New Democratic Party. Khalistanis like Dulai are reportedly linked to Jagmeet Singh.

Muslim-majority Tajikistan prohibits hijab use, curbs Eid custom

GNS News Agency, June 26

Tajikistan, where 96% of the population follows Islam, has officially prohibited the hijab for women, calling it an "alien garment". It has also included hefty fines for offenders, equivalent to lakhs of Indian rupees. Along with hijab, the Emomali Rahmon regime has also cracked down on the Eid custom of Idi. Muslim-majority Tajikistan has prohibited the use of hijab (Arabic headcover for women), terming it an "alien garment". Tajikistan has also banned 'Idi', the custom of children seeking money during Eid. The move to prohibit the hijab in the Central-Asian nation is the latest in a series of measures by the government to promote a secular national identity. With around 10 million Muslims, more than 96% of the Republic of Tajikistan follows various sects of Islam.

Terming the hijab as "an alien garment", Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon gave his assent to the bill to regulate and prohibit the Arabic veil, reported AKIpress, the Bishkek-based news agency. The new law also includes hefty fines for offenders, ranging from eight thousand to 65 thousand somoni, which is equivalent to Rs 60,560 and Rs 5 lakh. Government officials and religious authorities, who fail to abide by the new laws, face much higher fines of the equivalent of Rs 3 lakh and Rs 5 lakh, respectively, reported the Tajik agency Asia-Plus News. The President of the Central-Asian nation, Emomali Rahmon, also signed laws prohibiting 'overspending' and the custom of Idi, associated with Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha and Nowruz festivals, said the report.

The head of the Religion Committee, Sulaiman Davlatzoda, told Tajikistan's Radio Ozodi, that the reason for the ban Idi, a children's custom, was to ensure "proper education and ensuring their safety during Ramadan and Eid al-Adha". The press release by the Tajik President said the move aimed to 'protect ancestral values and national culture'. This development fol-



lows years of an unofficial ban in Tajikistan, whose President called the hijab a "foreign clothing" in an address in March.

A move that has been met with widespread criticism from human rights organisations and Muslim advocacy groups, is the latest in a series of measures by the Tajik government to promote a secular national identity. Throughout the unofficial ban, the Rahmon regime had long been critical of the hijab, viewing it as a threat to the country's cultural heritage and a symbol of foreign influence. In 2015, President Emomali Rahmon launched a campaign against the hijab, stating that it was a sign of poor education and incivility. The clampdown on the hijab began in 2007 when the Tajik Education Ministry banned both Islamic clothing and Western-style miniskirts for students. The ban was eventually extended to all public institutions. This comes even as the government's campaign to promote the Tajik national dress, including through automated phone calls. Several Muslim-majority countries, including Kosovo, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, have banned the burqa and hijab in public schools and universities or for government officials.

White House stunned by Netanyahu's criticism in video: 'Perplexing, inaccurate'

GNS News Agency, June 26

The White House expressed deep disappointment over criticism from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of the United States on Thursday amid tensions between the two allies over Israel's war in Gaza. Netanyahu on Tuesday issued an English-language video in which he said Blinken had assured him that the Biden administration was working to lift restrictions on arms deliveries to Israel, an exchange the top US diplomat declined to confirm.

In a rare account of normally private diplomatic conversations, Netanyahu also said he told Blinken that it was "inconceivable" that in the past few months Washington was withholding weapons and ammunition to Israel. White House national security spokesperson John Kirby addressed the comments in a briefing with reporters, saying the US had directly expressed displeasure to Israel. "We didn't know that video was coming. It was perplexing to say the least, certainly disappointing, especially given that no other country is doing more to help Israel defend itself against the threat by



Hamas," Kirby told reporters, adding that the comments were "deeply disappointing and vexing" to the US. "I think we've made it abundantly clear to our Israeli counterparts through various vehicles our deep disappointment in the statements expressed in that video and our concerns over the accuracy in the statements made," Kirby added.

"The idea that we had somehow stopped helping Israel with their self-defense needs is absolutely not accurate," he said. The White House response came as national security adviser Jake Sullivan held meetings with Netanyahu's

top two aides to discuss the Gaza conflict and other issues. Similar talks were expected between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the Israelis.

Israeli national security adviser Tzachi Hanegbi and Ron Dermer, Israel's minister for strategic affairs, spoke with Sullivan as a larger, more formal "strategic dialogue" meeting was being rescheduled, according to a White House official who spoke on the condition of anonymity. Blinken said weapons shipments - except for one with large bombs - were moving as usual given Israel faced security threats beyond

Gaza, including from Hezbollah and Iran. He declined to comment on his private exchange with Netanyahu during a news conference on Tuesday. "There is one shipment of high payload munitions that we have put under review and that remains under review. That's not a bottleneck. That's a policy review," said State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller. The United States in May paused a shipment of 2,000-pound and 500-pound bombs due to concern over the impact they could have on densely populated areas, but Israel was still due to get billions of dollars worth of US weaponry.

Israel's vaunted Iron Dome may not withstand Hezbollah war, warn US officials



GNS News Agency, June 26

US officials have serious concerns that in the event of a full-blown war between Israel and Hezbollah, the vaunted Iron Dome could be overwhelmed. The picture shows Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system launching to intercept rockets being fired from Lebanon. The picture shows Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system launching to intercept rockets being fired from Lebanon. In the event of a full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militant group could potentially overwhelm Israel's air defences, including the highly-regarded Iron Dome system, according to three US officials who spoke to CNN. This warning comes as Israel prepares for possible land and air incursions into Lebanon.

The Iron Dome missile defence system, developed by Rafael Advanced Defence Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries with US support, has been a cornerstone of Israel's air defence since its introduction in 2011. The Iron Dome played a crucial role in tackling the barrage of missiles from Palestinian militant group Hamas in October last year. Here's a video that shows Iron Dome in action against Hamas attack. However, the Iron Dome is primarily tailored for low-altitude, slow-moving projectiles. This makes it potentially vulnerable to the more sophisticated, precision-guided munitions that Hezbollah has been stockpiling from Iran over the years. US officials are concerned that Hezbollah's extensive arsenal of missiles and drones could pose a significant challenge to the Iron Dome. The Iron Dome is designed to intercept and destroy short-range rockets, mortars, and artillery shells fired from distances of 4 to 70 kilometres. The system has a remarkable track record, having successfully intercepted over 5,000 projectiles, including rockets,

mortars, artillery shells, aircraft, helicopters, and UAVs.

However, a senior US administration official told CNN, "We assess that at least some Iron Dome batteries will be overwhelmed (in the event of war with Hezbollah)." An Israeli official said this outcome would be more likely if Hezbollah launched a large-scale attack using precision-guided weapons. The fears are not unfounded. Earlier this month, Hezbollah released a video purportedly showing a drone striking and damaging an Iron Dome battery in northern Israel. Although the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) reported no damage, the incident has raised alarms about the system's vulnerability, especially in northern Israel. In preparation for a potential conflict with Hezbollah, Israeli officials have informed the US of plans to shift resources from southern Gaza to northern Israel. This strategic repositioning underscores the seriousness of the threat posed by Hezbollah, which has an arsenal of approximately 1,50,000 rockets and missiles, including thousands of precision munitions. Diplomatic Efforts and Regional Implications

The potential for a wider conflict has prompted diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalation. US special envoy Amos Hochstein has been actively involved in advocating for a ceasefire and negotiating parallel diplomatic deals between Israel and Hezbollah. However, cross-border attacks have continued to escalate, with Hezbollah launching rockets and drones in solidarity with Hamas since the Gaza war erupted in October 2023. US officials are particularly concerned about the broader regional implications of a conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. The involvement of other Iran-backed proxy groups and the safety of US troops in the Middle East are other concerns. There are questions about the willingness of other regional players to support Israel if it initiates a greater conflict. Both Israel and Hezbollah have ramped up their rhetoric. Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah has warned that in the event of war, "no rules and no ceilings" would apply to Hezbollah's response. He also threatened that targets in the eastern Mediterranean, including Cyprus, could be at risk if Israel uses its bases to strike Lebanon. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has issued a stern warning as well, stating that Israel would "turn Beirut into Gaza" if war breaks out. Despite these threats, analysts believe that neither side is eager for an all-out war, recognising the severe risks and potential for regional destabilisation.

Antony Blinken says Israel 'very serious' about Lebanon offensive: Report

GNS News Agency, June 26

The escalating tensions between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah have prompted concerns about a broader conflict in the region. During a recent trip to the Middle East, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reportedly informed an Arab counterpart that Israel appears intent on launching an incursion into Lebanon, as per a report by CNN.

In response, the Arab official emphasised that Hezbollah has vowed to continue its strikes on Israel until Israeli operations in Gaza cease, the report mentioned. Antony Blinken, however, told Israeli officials of the need to avoid further escalation in Lebanon amid the ongoing war in Gaza. The escalating tensions between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah have prompted concerns about a broader conflict in the region. Israeli officials have communicated to the US that a primary objective of any offensive would be to push Hezbollah back, creating a buffer zone to allow tens of thousands of displaced Israelis from the northern region to return home.

The US has been wary of an Israeli incursion for months, with earlier intelligence assessments predicting a possible offensive by early summer. The US has also criticised Israel for strikes that have impacted the Lebanese army, rather than Hezbollah targets, heightening tensions between the allies. Domestic political pressures are mounting on the Israeli government to address the northern security situation. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant underscored the urgency during an operational

assessment at the IDF's Northern Command, stating, "We are achieving readiness on land and in the air."

He emphasised the necessity of changing the northern situation to ensure the safe return of Israeli citizens to their homes. International concerns are growing over the potential for a full-scale conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, which could draw in other proxy groups. US officials fear for the safety of thousands of American troops stationed in the Middle East, who could become targets for Iran-backed proxy groups if a war breaks out. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah issued a stark warning on Wednesday, asserting that if war is "imposed" on Lebanon, Hezbollah will fight with "no rules and no ceilings," indicating that nowhere would be safe from their attacks, including the eastern Mediterranean where over 1,000 US troops are currently stationed. Nasrallah also threatened to target Cyprus if it permitted Israel to use its airports and bases for strikes on Lebanon. Hezbollah's ground force, estimated to be between 40,000 and 50,000 fighters by the Congressional Research Service, could potentially exceed 1,00,000 according to Nasrallah. Many of these fighters, including the elite Radwan Force, have gained extensive combat experience in Syria. Despite the historical state of conflict, the Israel-Lebanon border has remained relatively quiet since the 2006 war, with only sporadic clashes that typically resolved quickly. However, the situation has dramatically shifted since Hamas' attack on October 7, leading to increased rocket and drone attacks from Hezbollah and frequent IDF strikes in southern Lebanon.

India to grow 7 pc in FY25, says RBI whose balance sheet alone is 2.5X of Pakistan GDP



GNS News Agency, June 26

Indian economy is projected to grow at 7 per cent — the fastest among major economies across the world — in the current fiscal year, underpinned by a sustained strengthening of macroeconomic fundamentals, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its latest annual report on Thursday. While the central bank expected headline inflation to moderate further, it flagged risks to food inflation saying that it remains vulnerable to supply-side shocks. The RBI's balance sheet size surged 11.08 per cent to Rs 70.48 lakh crore (about USD 845 billion) as of March 31, 2024. This was nearly 2.5 times that of Pakistan's entire GDP of close to USD 340 billion. The Indian economy, it said, expanded at a robust pace in 2023-24 (April 2023 to March 2024 financial year), with real GDP growth accelerating to 7.6 per cent from 7.0 per cent in the previous year — the third consecutive year of 7 per cent or above growth pace. The economy showed resilience in FY24 (2023-24 fiscal) despite persistent headwinds.

The GDP growth is robust on the back of solid investment demand which is supported by healthy balance sheets of banks and corporates, the government's focus on capital expenditure and prudent monetary, regulatory and fiscal policies, it said, adding the Indian economy is navigating the drag from an adverse global macroeconomic and financial environment. Also, MSPs for both kharif and rabi seasons 2023-24 ensured a minimum return of 50 per cent over cost of production for all crops, it said. Indian economy, the report said, is well-placed to step up growth trajectory over the next decade in an environment of macroeconomic and financial stability.

"As headline inflation eases towards the target, it will spur consumption demand especially in rural areas," it said. It further said the external sector's strength and buffers in the form of foreign exchange reserves will insulate domestic economic activity from global spillovers. The report, however, added that geopolitical tensions, geoeconomic fragmentation, global financial market volatility, international commodity price movements and erratic weather developments pose downside risks to the growth outlook and upside risks to the inflation outlook. "The real GDP growth for 2024-25 is projected at 7.0 per cent with risks evenly balanced," it said. On its finances, RBI said its balance sheet in FY23 (April 2022 to March 2023) stood at Rs 63.44 lakh crore. With finances normalised to pre-pandemic level, RBI said its balance sheet increased to 24.1 per cent of India's GDP at end of March 2024 from 23.5 per cent a year back. The central bank's income rose 17.04 per cent in FY24 while expenditure reduced by 56.3 per cent. This together with a jump in interest income from foreign securities led to RBI's surplus surging by 141.23 per cent to Rs 2.11 lakh crore, which it transferred to the central government last week. In addition, the RBI provided Rs 42,820 crore towards the contingency fund in FY24.

The RBI saw a gain of Rs 83,616 crore from foreign

exchange transactions during the year, while interest income from foreign securities rose to Rs 65,328 crore, which allowed it to increase the size of its contingency fund. The annual report is a statutory report of the RBI's central board of directors. The report covers the working and functions of the Reserve Bank of India for the April 2023-March 2024 period.

In the financial sector, RBI said unclaimed deposits with banks witnessed a 26 per cent jump year on year to Rs 78,213 crore at the end of March 2024 while the amount with the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund stood at Rs 62,225 crore. Banks including cooperative banks transfer unclaimed deposits of account holders lying in their accounts for 10 or more years to RBI's Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund. The number of frauds in the banking sector went up to 36,075 in 2023-24 year-on-year, but the amount involved reduced by 46.7 per cent to Rs 13,930 crore, the report said. The RBI report also said that with an aim to curb frauds and enhance the payment experience further, the introduction of real-time payee name validation before the actual fund transfer will be explored in compliance with newly enacted "The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023". During 2023-24, the amount involved in frauds was Rs 13,930 crore, down from Rs 26,127 crore a year ago. The number of frauds increased to 36,075 during 2023-24 from 13,564 in the preceding financial year.

An assessment of bank group-wise fraud cases over the last three years indicates that while private sector banks reported maximum number of frauds, public sector lenders continued to contribute maximum to the fraud amount, said the Annual Report for 2023-24. "Frauds have occurred predominantly in the category of digital payments (card/internet), in terms of number. In terms of value, frauds have been reported primarily in the loan portfolio (advances category)," the report said.

While small value card/internet frauds contributed maximum to the number of frauds reported by the private sector banks, the frauds in public sector banks were mainly in loan portfolios. Further, an analysis of the vintage of frauds reported during 2022-23 and 2023-24 shows a significant time-lag between the date of occurrence of a fraud and its detection. "The amount involved in frauds that occurred in previous financial years formed 94 per cent of the frauds reported in 2022-23 in terms of value," the report said. Similarly, 89.2 per cent of the frauds reported in 2023-24 by value occurred in previous financial years. The annual report for 2023-24 said that the Indian economy is navigating the drag from an adverse global macroeconomic and financial environment. The Indian economy, the report said, is well-placed to step up growth trajectory over the next decade in an environment of macroeconomic and financial stability. "As headline inflation eases towards the target, it will spur consumption demand especially in rural areas," it said. Headline inflation softened to 5.4 per cent during 2023-24 from 6.7 per cent, driven by the fall in core inflation — consumer price index or CPI excluding food and fuel — to 4.3 per cent from 6.1 per cent a year back. According to RBI, the external sector's strength and buffers through foreign exchange reserves will insulate the local economic activity from global spillovers. "Geopolitical tensions, geoeconomic fragmentation, global financial market volatility, international commodity price movements and erratic weather developments pose downside risks to the growth outlook and upside risks to the inflation outlook," it said. The RBI also emphasised that the Indian economy would have to navigate challenges posed by rapid adoption of AI/ML (artificial intelligence/machine learning) technologies as well as recurrent climate shocks.

Nissan warns owners of older vehicles not to drive them due to risk of exploding air bag inflators

Nissan is urging the owners of about 84,000 older vehicles to stop driving them because their Takata air bag inflators have an increased risk of exploding in a crash and hurling dangerous metal fragments. Wednesday's urgent request comes after one person in a Nissan was killed by an exploding front-passenger inflator, and as many as 58 people were injured since 2015.

"Due to the age of the vehicles equipped with defective Takata air bag inflators, there is an increased risk the inflator could explode during an air bag deployment, propelling sharp metal fragments which can cause serious injury or death," Nissan said in a statement. Nissan said the "do not drive" warning covers certain 2002 through 2006 Sentra small cars, as well as some 2002 through 2004 Pathfinder SUVs, and 2002 and 2003 Infiniti QX4 SUVs. Owners can find out if their vehicles are affected by going to nissanusa.com/takata-airbag-recall or infinitiusa.com/takata-airbag-recall and keying in their 17-digit vehicle identification number.

The company says owners should contact their dealer to set up an appointment to have inflators replaced for free. Nissan also is offering free towing to dealers, and in some locations mobile service and loaner cars are available. "Even minor crashes can result in exploding Takata air bags that can kill or produce life-altering, gruesome injuries," the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said in a statement. "Older model year vehicles put their occupants at higher risk, as the age of the air bag is one of the contributing factors." Nissan originally recalled 736,422 of the vehicles in 2020 to replace the Takata inflators. The company said around 84,000 remain unrepaired and are believed to still be in use. Nissan said it has made numerous attempts to reach



the owners with unrepaired Takata inflators. The death was reported to NHTSA in 2018, the company said. The person killed was in a 2006 Sentra, according to Nissan. The death is one of 27 in the US caused by the faulty inflators, which used volatile ammonium nitrate to create a small explosion to inflate air bags in a crash. The chemical can deteriorate over time when exposed to high temperatures and humidity. It can explode with too much force, blowing apart a metal canister and spewing shrapnel. More than 400 people in the US have been hurt. Worldwide at least 35 people have been killed by Takata inflators in Malaysia, Australia and the US. Potential for a dangerous malfunction led to the largest series of auto recalls in US history, with at least 67 million Takata inflators involved. The US government says many have not been repaired. About 100 million inflators have been recalled worldwide. The exploding air bags sent Takata into bankruptcy. Honda, Ford, BMW, Toyota and Stellantis and Mazda have issued similar "do not drive" warnings for some of their vehicles equipped with Takata inflators.

said. "There is a compelling case for the removal of the wheat import duty," said Pramod Kumar, president of the Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India. "That is the best possible way to ensure sufficient supplies in the open market." "The considered view is that the wheat import duty should be removed after June, so that the private trade can import wheat," said a government source aware of the matter. "And to protect our farmers' interest, the duty should be reinstated before wheat planting starts in October," added the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the likely course of action by the next government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party is widely expected to win the election,

Is the profile of Delhi's heritage walks changing?



Delhi is home to heritage sites such as Humayun's Tomb, the alleys of Shahjahanabad, Qutub Minar and numerous other monuments, some preserved and some in ruins. And it's not unusual to hear of heritage walks organised by historians and culture enthusiasts.

But this industry is witnessing a diversification in the walk leader community. While curated walks are no longer exclusive to historians, influencers, too, are turning into amateur walk leaders. Social media is seeing a trend in the "romanticising" of the city, its past, its culture, and its aesthetics, much of which is replete with misinformation and false narratives. Presenting a glorified facet of history, it deviates from reality itself.

"I started City Tales as an Instagram page to document my explorations in 2019 and began leading walks in 2022," says Rameen Khan, 36, who approaches heritage walks through history-based storytelling. An MBA by qualification, Rameen has been leading heritage walks in Mehrauli Archaeological Park, Purana Qila and Safdarjung's Tomb. "I have no academic background in history and I make sure to tell this to people," says Rameen. He's critical of walk leaders who use an intellectual aura to build credibility. This practice of presenting incorrect facts is harming the industry, he adds. For instance, the false narratives surrounding Malcha Mahal that the monument is haunted, takes away from its Tughlak-era history of being a hunting lodge, and the explorations into the mysterious royal family that lived there in the ruins, until recently. Author Rana Safvi, who has led numerous walks in Delhi, says, "There are two kinds of walks taking place today. The first led by people who have a background in history and are well-read, and the other curated by leaders who are unaware of actual history and provide half-baked information gathered from the internet but say it with so much authority that it seems true." Shah Umair, a numismatist, popularly known as Sikkawala, started leading heritage walks to places like Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah and Purani Dilli post the pandemic. Shah, who owns a creative agency in Gurgaon and pursues walk-leading as a passion, says, "The people coming in are not well-read and just gather information from Wikipedia, which is making the industry suffer... People have come for my walks, recorded my script, and

then conducted their own walks with the plagiarised content." Recognising a need for a local from Delhi-6, Anas Khan started leading heritage walks in 2021, using stories to talk about the city's culture and history. An anthropologist, Anas began Unzip Delhi, a platform to hold walks in Old Delhi, including places such as Ghalib Ki Haveli, Zafar Mahal and the northern Ridge. Anas asserts that newcomers should be offered support and resources to prevent the dissemination of misinformation and allow for a healthy growth of the heritage walks community. He adds, "Storytelling is justified once the storyteller tells the audience that their content may not be factually correct and it is a folk tale." The absence of a disclaimer would mean distorting history, reiterates Anas. Realising how amateurs are making careers out of such walks, INTACH organised a Heritage Storytellers Training Program for walk leaders in April 2024. The aim was to help enthusiasts become better walk leaders and storytellers and ensure that standards are maintained.

Instagram reels comprising beautiful shots of a historic site are often accompanied by the caption "Romanticising Delhi." "Romanticisation represents the positive facet as the only fact. The trend of compiling "aesthetic" photographs or video clips in a reel might make people visit the place but they are often disappointed when they see it in reality," says Anas, who is in his late 20s. The other downside is that such a trend diverts from the current reality of Delhi. Anas says, "I thought it's high time that those who have seen the city through the glorious of tales of the past, should also get a glimpse of how certain areas of the city have highly congested alleyways, without proper living amenities," Khan wrote on Instagram, after a walk he conducted in the slum-cluster of JJ Colony in Old Delhi. Rameen has observed that people come to heritage walks with a misplaced sense of romanticism, mystery and sometimes, fear. "This trend makes people believe that the past was an age of great art, peace, and prosperity, while it was also an era of bloodshed and misery," he says. "It is the walk leader's responsibility to debunk the romanticism instead of perpetuating it." Heritage conservator and author Swapna Liddle explains that the heritage walk culture began pre-independence when history professors like Percival Spear took his students of St. Stephens College to monuments. "This grew with The Conservation Society, Delhi, and with the India Habitat Centre and INTACH walks, heritage tours opened up to a wider public," she says, "Today, packaging of heritage walks has become important. People choose walks depending on how slickly they are packaged, which demands that the walk be packaged superficially with attractive visuals. Unfortunately, this detracts from the substance and dilutes the history aspect." Ultimately, Liddle, who has been leading walks for more than 25 years, says "The diversification of the heritage walk industry has been great as far as the idea of unique methods of approaching the city are concerned." While storytelling and creativity in the walks is acceptable, the audience should differentiate between creativity and history, she adds.

Rohit Roy says he lost 16 kgs in 45 days with Keto diet: 'But didn't take much time to gain it back'



A key challenge in the Ketogenic diet is the potential for rapid weight regain after exiting the diet, said Rahul Kamra, founder, Ketorets

Rohit Bose Roy has been making some candid confessions on his podcast, Unstoppable — about himself and, his co-actors. In keeping with the same, he recently admitted to following the Ketogenic or Keto diet in a conversation with actor and fitness buff Bhagyashree. "I lost 16 kilos in 45 days with Keto diet. But I didn't take much time to gain it back," said Rohit, 55. Taking a cue, we decided to learn more about the Keto diet, and how sustainable it is for weight loss.

What is Keto?

This diet aims to bring the body into a state of Ketosis, which is the "metabolic state where the body uses fat as its main energy source rather than carbs. To attain this metabolic state, one must drastically reduce carbs while consuming fats and moderate amounts of protein," said Rahul Kamra, founder, Ketorets.

What does it include?

Keto emphasises a diet high in fats, moderate in proteins, and low in carbohydrates. It includes specific foods suitable for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians, focusing on eliminating sugars, starches, legumes, and lentils to maintain Ketosis.

Is Keto for all?

The Ketogenic diet is suitable for individuals looking to manage conditions such as epilepsy, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, diabetes, and lipids. "It's also important to note that Ketosis is a natural metabolic state. Interestingly, newborn babies are often in Ketosis, which demonstrates the body's innate ability to function effectively in this state. Furthermore, fasting — a practice as old as humanity — also induces ketosis, underscoring that it's not an unfamiliar state to our physiology," said Kamra.

Why does weight loss from Keto tend to come back?

A key challenge in the Ketogenic diet is the potential for rapid weight regain after exiting the diet. According to Kamra, this often happens if the reintroduction of carbohydrates and proteins isn't managed meticulously. "Carbs and proteins should be reintroduced gradually to avoid a sudden spike in insulin, which can lead to insulin resistance, undoing the benefits of Ketosis. This phase, known as the Metabolic Revival Phase in the Ketorets Method, aims to establish a 'new normal' that aligns with sustained health and weight management goals. If one simply returns to their pre-Keto eating habits, it begs the question: why start the weight loss journey at all? The goal is not to revert but to evolve into a balanced lifestyle that maintains the advantages gained," Kamra elaborated. Things to keep in mind Many people eventually give up the Ketogenic diet due to its severe carbohydrate restriction, which can be challenging to follow over time.

This may lead to a reversion to previous eating patterns, such as consuming more carbohydrates, which results in weight gain. Kamra emphasised ensuring a comprehensive intake of nutrients within the diet's constraints is essential for overall health. "It is important to include a range of healthy fats, proteins, and low-carb vegetables in the diet, even if it emphasises a high-fat and low-carb intake," said Kamra. Although protein is necessary for Ketosis, too much of it might interfere with the state by converting to glucose through a process known as gluconeogenesis. "Aim for a reasonable dose of protein from foods like tofu, eggs, fish, chicken, and meat," said Kamra. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to the Ketogenic diet; what works for one individual might not work for another. It's critical to pay attention to your body. Seeking advice from a qualified healthcare expert can offer tailored direction and assistance.

India set for wheat imports after six years, to shore up reserves

India is poised to begin wheat imports after a six-year gap, to replenish depleted reserves and hold down prices that leaped following three years of disappointing crops, sources say, as the approaching end of general elections removes a key hurdle. New Delhi is expected to abandon a 40% tax on wheat imports this year, officials and other sources told Reuters, paving the way for private traders and flour millers to buy from producers such as top exporter Russia, albeit in modest volumes.

As the new-season wheat harvest rolls in, the government is likely to wait until after June to scrap the import tax, in time for Russia's harvest, the sources

Zeenat Aman recalls her first meeting with Aap Jaisa Koi singer Nazia Hassan: 'I was not keen to make small talk with fans'



Zeenat Aman, who celebrated 44 years of Qurbani on Thursday, took to her Instagram handle to share an interesting anecdote about how a reluctant fan meet introduced her to Nazia Hussain, the singer of her popular song "Aap Jaisa Koi". The yesteryear actor shared a long note recalling a 15-year-old Nazia, whose voice "revolutionised how we South Asians disco".

On Friday, the actress shared a clip of the popular disco song and recalled in the caption, "There was a family of three waiting for me in the lobby of my London hotel, but I was not keen to make small talk with fans. I had just wrapped a day of shoot, and all I wanted was silence, a hot shower and my bed. Yet my convent school education would not allow me to be rude. So I smiled sweetly and took a seat... with my thoughts wandering to the luxurious suite that awaited me just a few floors above."

"The lady was elegant. Her name was Muniza. And with her were her two teenaged children. A quiet girl named Nazia and a boy named Zoheb. I hadn't planned to entertain them for long, but soon found myself drawn into deep dialogue with Muniza. They were a charming and cultured family of Pakistani origin, and to my surprise I found myself inviting them to join me in my suite. That night I learnt that Nazia and Zoheb were pursuing music, and I even enjoyed a brief demo of young Nazia's pipes," she added. Later, when Zeenat Aman collaborated with Feroz Khan for Qurbani, the actress, who was in touch

with Nazia Haasan, introduced her to the actor-director. She wrote, "You can picture the rest... Feroz was blown away by Nazia's voice, and under the guidance of music composer Biddu, 15-year-old Nazia Hassan went on to record the mega hit Aap Jaisa Koi." She further wrote, "Yesterday marked 44 years of Qurbani. A film that captivated the South Asian audience, and whose music still plays on dance floors. Qurbani had a star studded cast - Vinod, Feroz, Amjad, Amrisha, myself - but to me there is only one breakthrough performance in the film. And that's Nazia's. It may be my face and figure that come to mind when the familiar tune of Aap Jaisa Koi begins to play, but the song belongs entirely to that young Pakistani girl who revolutionised how we South Asians disco." Zeenat, who always felt protective of Nazia Haasan during film events and promotions, lost her too soon. "Nazia died too young. A true shooting star who blazed hot, bright and fast. On this occasion, I remember her with love and gratitude," she concluded. The 1980 film Qurbani, directed and produced by actor Feroz Khan, was declared a blockbuster. Apart from Zeenat and Feroz, the film also starred Vinod Khanna, Amjad Khan, Shakti Kapoor, Aruna Irani, Amrisha Puri, and Kader Khan. Meanwhile, "Aap Jaisa Koi" which marked the debut of Nazia Hassan, became a big hit, and gained cult status in India and Pakistan. It is regarded as a filmi disco song that revolutionised Pakistani pop, Indi-pop, and Bollywood music.

Chandrika Dixit aka 'Vada Pav Girl' says she initially dismissed Bigg Boss OTT 3 call as fake: 'Thought it's some fraud'

From selling vada pav on the streets in Delhi, Chandrika Dixit has made it to the Bigg Boss house. Famously known as the 'Vada pav girl', Chandrika Dixit became an overnight sensation after videos of her selling vada pav went viral on social media. She will now be seen on Bigg Boss OTT 3, hosted by Anil Kapoor. In an interview with Indianexpress.com, the contestant opened up about what she is looking forward to do in Bigg Boss OTT Season 3, which goes live from Friday. "I was offered Bigg Boss in April-May through email, which I initially dismissed as fraud! I thought it's better to focus on work and not on all these things which keep coming!"

The Delhi-based contestant said she likes to take decisions herself and "not under anyone's pressure," something she hopes to do even on the show. "I will continue to do just that on the show, I will stand by what is right." When Chandrika Dixit first went viral for her vada pav, the Instagram influencers cashed in on the virality and kept her newfound audience base hooked with everyday happenings of her life and especially business, which kept going through a lot of drama as authorities said she didn't have the permit to run her food cart.

Chandrika recalled that it as a phase of "mental torture" where people accused her of wrongdoings. "It wasn't like mine was the only cart in Delhi! I can't stand anything wrong. When only my cart was threatened to be taken away multiple times, I just couldn't take it and took action in my own capacity. Now it is all fine, but if there arises any problem again, I will fight, I won't back down. The phase made me stronger. It was mental torture, there was high pressure, crowd of 600 people including vloggers, people accusing you, calling you good or bad. You shouldn't judge me without knowing me." The mother



of one said people often have a misconception that an influencer's life is easy and they only have fun. "But one has to work hard night and day to make one small reel. Even if we are upset, we have to have a fake smile in front of the camera. It is not easy at all. I live that life now and realise it is hard. Earlier, I used to think how tough can this really be - all I have to do is dance for the camera and get famous. But it is tremendous hard work. Everyone is doing something for their family."

Chandrika said she will miss her son while being away on Bigg Boss OTT 3 and will play for him. "If I feel like my morale is going down, I will think of him and march forward," she said, and added how the season of actor Sidhart Shukla was her favourite, while she liked the game of Bigg Boss OTT 2 winner Elvish. Being a chef herself, when asked what food items she would associate with Bollywood stars, Chandrika said, "Anil Kapoor matches my vada pav - it is spicy and jhakkas. Salman bhai is daal chawal roti sabzi, the comfort food for all, the simplicity. Shah Rukh sir has done a lot of romantic films, so he is chocolate."

Tom Hardy shines in this movie about men and their motorcycles

In this movie about men and their motorcycles, their leather-clothed tough exteriors and their supposedly soft hearts, their gruff manners and their childish laws, the person who stands the tallest is Jodie Comer.

As Kathy, the wife of Benny - the good-looking, silent and smouldering child rebel among some grown-up renegades (you know the type) - Comer brings in an outsider-insider perspective to the incestuous world of bikeriders. In the great American tradition of lonely riders behind or on wheels, covering empty landscapes to nowhere, serenaded by music and cigarette smoke, this particular bike group calls itself the Vandals.

The film sees no need to explain who or why they are, just putting them out there - and we are supposed to do so as well. Writer-director Jeff Nichols has crafted a fictional story inspired by a photo-book of the same name as The Bikeriders, by Danny Lyon. In the film, Mike Faist fills in for Lyon, acting as a college student who is trying to capture the lives of the Vandals with Kathy as the narrator. The fact that we don't know the backstory of the Vandals is disconcerting for the first half of the film, espe-

cially as it is driven by their loyalty to each other and especially to their leader, Johnny (Hardy). His word is their command, their lives are spent talking, walking and dreaming motorcycles, and there is little life throws their way that can't be handled by the thunderous roar of their bike engines. It's almost in the same manner that Kathy meets Benny, having walked into a bar across town and run into Vandals. "A respectable woman", as she calls herself, Kathy is not used to being among such a raucous, openly flirtatious and "gamely" touchy group of men, and feels nervous and wants to leave. But one glance of Benny (a hot, hot Butler) bent over the pool table, his muscled bare arms glistening, his blonde hair framing a beautiful face, is all it takes to melt all her good intentions. Soon, she is at the back of Benny's bike and, as the Vandals race down an expressway, Kathy admits "it took my breath away". She leans just so against Benny's shoulder, ready to move the few remaining centimetres and rest her cheek there. If this half of the film is a set-up, it's what happens when the club expands (not really clear why it holds such attraction), other elements get mixed in, Johnny realises things are slipping out of his control,

Vikramaditya Motwane reveals AK vs AK was originally designed to star Aamir Khan; Saif Ali Khan turned it down, Shahid Kapoor shot for it later

Filmmaker Vikramaditya Motwane has revealed that his 2020 black comedy thriller AK vs AK, which starred Anurag Kashyap and Anil Kapoor, was originally on paper written as a film to be headlined by Kashyap and superstar Aamir Khan. In the Netflix film, Kashyap played an eccentric filmmaker who kidnaps the daughter (Sonam Kapoor) of an ageing film star (Anil Kapoor) after a public feud between the actor-director. Talking to The Comment Section, Motwane spilled the beans on how AK vs AK underwent several casting changes and revealed how the makers had even approached Saif Ali Khan for the same, who turned it down.

"It was always AK vs AK, so we had to go and cast an actor who'd fit it. We got this idea in 2014 by Avinash (Sampath, co-writer) and all of us were excited. He had sent it as AK vs AK, which was supposed to be Anurag Kashyap vs Aamir Khan and I immediately thought Aamir toh ye kame wala nahi hai so let's not go there." Then we discussed which AKs we could go to. Then the AK got dropped and we went to meet Saif for the same, he didn't do it. Then we shot with Shahid in Mumbai for the film, which was great, fantastic. I wish that would have stayed." Motwane recalled it was Kashyap, who thought Anil Kapoor would be the perfect fit for the part. The filmmaker said they needed to take an actor who is older so that the clash of "these two different worlds" would be clear.

"Someone having to prove a point. Cinematically



Anil Kapoor had a point to prove that he was still relevant. Then I went to Amsterdam where Avinash lives and in three days we made it into an Anil Kapoor kind of a film. I came back shaky, said, 'Sir ek hai kuch, will you read it?' I was expecting he would read the script and throw it away!

"But he called me and said he had really liked it and wanted to do it. It just happened very quickly. Anurag wrote the dialogues for himself, so all that self-deprecating humour is all him," Motwane said. The filmmaker has wrapped up filming the screen adaptation of the 2019 book Black Warrant: Confessions of a Tihar Jailer. He has also directed the 'screen life' thriller Control, starring Ananya Panday. Both the projects await a release date.

Tahira Kashyap says Ayushmann Khurrana, other men should also be made feel guilty for choosing work over children



She added, "Women are wired in a way that they always feel guilty about choosing their work over their children. I did choose a meeting over my kids' PTA. I have made these hard choices. I remember I had a conference that day and my son's first performance in a musical theatrical was also on the same day, I had to miss it.

Tahira Kashyap, after writing several books and directing short films, is all set to make her feature directorial debut with Sharmajee Ki Beti - starring Sakshi Tanwar, Divya Dutta, and Saiyami Kher in the lead roles. The film revolves around three women of varying ages and background, facing different conflicts in a big city. As Tahira chooses a women-led film to be her feature film debut, she also talks about how the society often brings the mom guilt in women for choosing their career over their family and children, sharing her own little conflicts with their men, including her husband Ayushmann Khurrana, are not questioned about managing work and family all at once.

In an exclusive conversation with the indianexpress.com, the writer-director said, "I was having this conversation the other day that how we ask a woman about how they manage everything when they have children. I really wish that Ayushmann and other men are asked 'Aap shoot mein kaise chale jate hai, 3 film kaise shoot kar lete hai aur apke toh 2 bachche hai ghar pe.' They should be given guilt about all of this and not just women."

She added, "Women are wired in a way that they always feel guilty about choosing their work over their children. I did choose a meeting over my kids' PTA. I have made these hard choices. I remember I had a conference that day and my son's first performance in a musical theatrical was also on the same day, I had to miss it. But, thankfully, they had three shows of that theatrical so I got to go to one of those. So irrespective of someone pointing it out, the guilt is always there. I just want to know how are men wired. And these questions should be asked to them time and over again because apparently they do not feel guilty. Toh humein puchte rehna chahiye jab tak unke mann mein guilt aa na jaye because women are anyway feeling guilty." As Tahira Kashyap's film Sharmajee Ki Beti deals with three women who are more or less somewhere trying to find the middle path between personal and professional life like Sakshi Tanwar's character Jyoti Sharma, who is a teacher struggling to bond with her daughter due to her busy life, or Divya Dutta's character Kiran, whose husband feels disconnected and Saiyami Kher, who is trying to make it big in cricket, but has a demotivating boyfriend, the writer-director shares how she manages all of her roles - mother, wife, writer, director - and also keeps her individuality untouched, while staying financially independent despite being "in the shadow of Ayushmann Khurrana" as the world believes.

Tahira, who enjoys being a mother, wife and a home-maker, says, "Honestly, writing is my work. It is passion driven but it is also paying me. For me, it is very important

to be financially independent and for me to have my own source of income." "I don't want to fight if people think I am an extension of Ayushmann Khurrana", said Tahira. She added, "I am sure there must be some influence of my husband being a star. I had a big problem with my surname, a major part of me fought with my surname. I was like, 'Who am I? Am I Tahira Kashyap, Tahira Kashyap Khurrana or Tahira Khurrana. So a major part of me went fighting what should people address me and I was so complexed about that. And the day I let it be and I was okay with myself, and my growth, it didn't matter to me. And I think that's when people started looking at me for the person that I am. You could think that I am an extension of someone but once you meet me and you have a communication with me, perhaps what you will take back home is Tahira and not just so many other surnames attached to it."

Tahira says she is proud of the relationships in her life. "These are the relationships that I have nurtured and I am so proud. We have been together since high school. We have been dreaming for each other and are the biggest cheerleaders of each other. So today, if my partner is doing well, it is my personal victory and I am not going to shy away from that. If people want to feel that I am an extension of him, it's their own perception, I am not going to fight it because these people don't hold any place in my life. I have my own journey and he is equally proud of my journey. So if today somebody calls me Ayushmann's wife, or Viraj aur Virushka's mother, I take pride in it. They are my family members and they are doing well. Today, if you are calling me their mother or wife, I am simply proud of it. There has been a time when we have seen the tough days too. We have seen that together. It has not always been pleasant so we are very sure of each other's journey and that's all matters. So, even if the world perceives me to be in Ayushmann's shadow, I am okay with it because I know of my relationship with him," said Tahira. Tahira too had her own struggles trying to set herself apart as an individual and not just Ayushmann's wife. She shared, "When you are sure of yourself and your energy is not being spent on demarketing that line that 'this is me' and 'this is him'. I wouldn't say I didn't waste my time doing this. A good part of me in my 20s, I was just doing that. When you are young, you feel more complex, but as you age I think you become more forgiving about people also. There is no effort that goes into the demarcation that 'this is my individual journey'. I think the demarcation is already there in terms of our career choices. I am a writer-director and he is an actor and that's enough to demarcate our professional lives. In personal life, he has his father role and I have my mother role. So there is nothing for me to work towards and create a line of divide ki 'yeh mai hu, tumhe mujhe respect karna padega.'"

'MS didn't know I existed in 2008; So, I made it my life's goal to get his wicket: Ravichandran Ashwin recalls how he got himself noticed by Dhoni



"We were playing the Challenger Trophy, and I bowled an unbelievable spell. MS would struggle through that spell in Nagpur. Once, when he tried to play, the ball went through his gates. I got him out in the final. From then on, I think he saw somebody with skill, and the relationship matured," he said. "One of MS' usual qualities is that, if he decides this horse (a player) is not ready to race, he will not use you. He needs to know you're a horse. But, once he knows you're a horse, only when you feel like giving up, he will look past you. That is MS Dhoni; he believes in you," he added. Earlier this month, in a high-profile transfer move, Ashwin rejoined the India Cements, paving way for his return to the Chennai Super Kings fold. As part of the deal, Ashwin is all set to take charge of the Chennai Super Kings High Performance Centre, which is coming up in the outskirts of the city and is expected to be fully functional before the start of the next IPL season. The transfer move means there is a strong possibility that Ashwin could reunite with CSK at the big player auctions scheduled for the end of this year. With this being a big player auction, a trade off between CSK and Rajasthan Royals is ruled out as they won't be able to retain him. In case, CSK are not able to acquire Ashwin at the auctions, the only other possibility is they make a trade post the player auctions.

GNS News Agency, June 26 Ravichandran Ashwin on Thursday shared an interesting incident which helped him get noticed by MS Dhoni. Ashwin, who got his IPL breakthrough in the 2010 edition with Chennai Super Kings under Dhoni revealed how he got the latter's attention. "It's an evolving relationship. MS didn't even know someone like me existed in 2008. And because of that, I made it my life's goal — from 2009, it was to get the wicket of MS Dhoni. When a person has a goal like this, he will go crazy when an opportunity to achieve it pops up," he said in a launch event for his book I Have the Streets — A Kutti Cricket Story.

Argentina's Emiliano Martinez dubs pitch a 'disaster' after winning 2-0 against Canada in Copa America opener

GNS News Agency, June 26

Argentina shot stopper Emiliano Martinez hit out at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium pitch, labelling it a disaster after the La Albiceleste defeated Canada in their opening match at the Copa America. "Coming here against a strong Canada, with good forwards and on a field that is a disaster made it a little difficult for us. We have to improve in that aspect. Otherwise, the Copa America will always be at a lower level than the European Championship," the 2022 World Cup Golden Gloves winner said. Coach Lionel Scaloni had also blasted the pitch, saying, "The start looked like the match with Saudi Arabia [at the 2022 World Cup], with the difference that we played on a more decent pitch that time." "With all due respect, thank goodness we won. Otherwise, it would have been a cheap excuse. We have known for seven months that we are going to play here and they changed the turf two days ago. It is not good for the show. It is not an excuse, the stadium is beautiful and with synthetic turf it must be spectacular, but with today's turf it is not suitable for this kind of players," he added.

In the match, Argentina who are the defending champions, edged past Canada with the help of second half goals from Julian Alvarez and Lautaro Martinez. Canada timed their pressing to perfection to fashion a few chances



in the first half, though it was Argentina who went closest to scoring through Angel di Maria but he squandered a golden opportunity after a driving run from his own half. Scaloni's side made the breakthrough four minutes after the restart as Lionel Messi played a sublime pass to Alexis Mac Allister, who poked it away from advancing Canada goalkeeper Maxime Crepeau and into the path of Alvarez for a simple finish. Canada pushed hard after going behind but the introduction of veteran centre-back Nicolas Otamendi gave Argentina some much-needed stability at the back, before substitute Martinez slotted in from a Messi pass in the 88th minute to wrap up the win.

The sooner Kalyan Chaubey leaves, the better it is for Indian football: Igor Stimac slams AIFF president

GNS News Agency, June 26

Former India football team coach Igor Stimac who was sacked on Monday slammed All India Football Federation president Kalyan Chaubey, saying that Indian football was imprisoned and the situation would only get better if Chaubey leaves his post. "The sooner Kalyan Chaubey leaves AIFF, the better it is for Indian football. Football is the most popular sport in the world, but India is the only place where football is not growing," Stimac said.

"In my career, I've not been sacked till now, this was the first time. And it was wrongly so — in my reply to AIFF I've done the same. It was impossible for me to continue without enough support, I was fed up of the lies, the unfulfilled promises and being surrounded by people who are only thinking about their own interests," the 56-year-old said from Croatia in a press conference. The 56-year-old revealed that he was given a final warning before the Asian Cup merely for trying to convince the AIFF about the importance of the FIFA World Cup qualifiers. Stimac said that the meeting resulted in him going to the hospital and undergoing a surgery to treat a heart condition. "After I told them that the World Cup Qualifiers were more important than Asian Cup, I received a final warning from AIFF. When I received the final warning on December 2,



no one knows this, I finished in the hospital. I was disturbed with everything going on; stressed from the obvious problems. I had an immediate surgery on my heart. I wasn't ready to speak to anyone or find excuses. I was ready to put myself on the line to prepare my team for the Asian Cup to give the best shot," Stimac said. Stimac was sacked following the team's failure to reach the third round of the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers. A day later, the Croat had threatened to file a lawsuit against the AIFF in the FIFA Tribunal if his outstanding dues were not cleared in 10 days.

India set to tour South Africa in November to play 4-match T20I series



dismissal of Afghanistan's Gulbadin Naib during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup cricket match between Afghanistan and India at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, TThe Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and Cricket South Africa (CSA) on Friday announced that India will travel to South Africa in November to take part in a 4-match T20I series.

The series will begin on November 8 in Kingsmead Stadium in Durban, with the next game on November 10 in Gqeberha's St George's Park. The series will then move to the highveld with Supersport Park in Centurion for the third match on November 13 and Johannesburg's Wanderers Stadium will host the last match on November 16. This will add to the Men in Blue's packed schedule after the 2024 T20 World Cup with BCCI announcing a spate of home fixtures.

GNS News Agency, June 26

India vs South Africa T20I series India's Kuldeep Yadav, second right, celebrates with teammates after the

Tiki-taka is put on backburner as Spain turns to speedy wingers



GNS News Agency, June 26

Spain's first goal against Scotland in a European Championship qualifier game in 2011 featured a sequence of 42 patient passes in 94 seconds. The build-up began with Sergio Busquets rolling the ball to Xavi Hernandez at the centre of the park and ended with David Silva slotting home a cutback from Jordi Alba. Every Spanish player, including goalkeeper Victor Valdes touched the ball in the intricate passing marathon that embodied the soul of tiki taka. Death by pace is the new metaphor, reality and identity of Spain. The two-time European champions' first goal of Euro 2024, against Croatia took only three passes and six touches in six seconds. The left-back Marc Cucurella gathered a loose ball halfway in his own half, took a couple of touches, slashed the ball to Rodri, who diverted it to the path of Fabian Ruiz, buzzing near the central circle. He took a glance upfield, spotted the run of Alvaro Morata through the central channel, and sliced a low through ball into the sizable space between the two centre-backs. The Spanish marksman cut away from the lax defenders sniffing him and screamed his shot past the goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic.

The two goals might be the outer limits of two distinct philosophies. But they fittingly capture the shifting sands in Spanish football. Not that they have u-turned from the ideals of the most radical football vision of this century — passing and possession is still the essence of their game — but they have espoused more directness to their game. That they had less possession than their opponents for the first time in 136 games might be an aberration, for they still topped the possession charts, completing most passes (667) in the Euro qualifiers. A more instructive statistic is that they had the fourth-most crosses per game (26.3) of the 53 nations competing in the qualifying group. Crossing, in the tiki taka heyday, had a heretical value. No longer though. Not just manager Luis de la Fuente, but his predecessors such as Luis Enrique had sought more directness and verticality. "The philosophy has always been similar but each coach has their own touches. (De la Fuente) wants to be a bit more direct, always using possession to damage the opponent. You have to change the chip (our approach)," Rodri once observed.

De la Fuente is a pragmatist, and not an ideologue. Unlike club managers, their country counterparts are forced to produce the best results from a given set of

players in a limited time-frame. So he went for the most viable options. "If we have players with the pace of Lamine Yamal, Nico Williams, Ferran Torres or Ayoze Perez, it makes no sense not to use those options," de la Fuente reasoned.

So just as Luis Aragonés judged the best way forward was to pin his game on the two generational midfielders in the country and weave an environment where they could fully express their creativity and imagination, de la Fuente decided to build his team around two of the fastest players at his disposal, Yamal and Williams. As recently as the Qatar World Cup, Spain's prerogative was to squeeze in as many playmakers as possible. The axis of the team was Pedri and Gavi, both of Barcelona. Both are important still, the latter missed the tournament due to an injury, but the wind beneath Spain's wings are the two wingers. Everything would gravitate towards them, both with explosive speed and an exotic array of skills. Both could go inside or outwards, both could cross, dribble and score goals. The game against Italy was a classic example, where the wingmen, especially Williams, ran rings around Italy's full back. So speedy and guileful that Italy summoned Andrea Cambiaso to support the stupefied Giovanni Di Lorenzo, but to little effect as the ploy afforded more offensive liberty for the overlapping Cucurella. The goal against Italy too originated from Williams' snap-second burst down the left. Williams, the son of Ghanaian immigrants, their journey to Spain involving crossing parts of the Sahara on barefoot, was Italy's chief tormentor.

Only 85 seconds had passed when he tore down the left, reached the byline and looped a delicious ball inside to Pedri, who shot feebly to Donnarumma. On the opposite flank, Yamal snaked inside to create multiple chances but for Morata to fluff. He then cut inside and trimmed the far post with a curling beauty. The pair top the dribbling charts (Yamal 7, Williams 6) too. Tiki-takians barely dribbled.

The midfield, helmed by the immaculate Rodri, is still their foundation, the heat zones would tell that they spent most of the time ping-pong the ball at the centre of the pitch. But whereas they would progress like compact triangles, each within hugging distance of the other, through the central channels, they are more spread out now. When the ball is played to the flanks, they spread out even further to make the pitch look large and to create space for the wingers. The team too is tuned-up to foster the best atmosphere for the pair. Morata is a modern centre forward rather than a false nine. All three midfielders are excellent ball-carriers and passers. The Euro, thus, has seen a volte-face in Spanish football norms. Not really, the coach explained: "We are making a team with many ways of playing. Our rivals know we can hurt them with possession, with positional attacks built with many passes or also — if they give us the chance — we will run very fast." The defenders of Croatia and Italy would readily vouch for "running very fast". Death by pace has replaced death by pass. But a death still for the defenders.

Lionel Messi proves he can make magic even on 'springboard of a pitch' as Argentina win Copa America clash

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Lionel Messi inspired the Argentine football team to a 2-0 victory over the Canadian team as their Copa America title defence got off to a flier on a rocky runway of a pitch. It was Messi's magical through ball that led Julián Alvarez to scoring Argentina's 49th-minute opening goal. Not satisfied with that, he then aided Lautaro Martínez to double their lead in the 88th-minute.

"It's been a long time since we've done this, but we had patience to retain possession of the ball and it was hard to find the good open spaces," Messi was quoted as saying by The Associated Press. "It was physically intense." The pitch at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium came in for plenty of flak from both sets of players and staff. THE Associated Press reported that grass was installed at the venue after a Major League Soccer game on Saturday was played on the usual artificial turf. The venue will host a FIFA World Cup game in 2026. Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez criticized the grass surface installed at Mercedes-Benz Stadium. "The field was a disaster," he said. "It seems like a springboard with the ball jumping. They need to improve this. If not, Copa America will always be at lower level than the Euro." Argentina coach



Lionel Scaloni added: "Thank goodness we won. Otherwise it would have been a cheap excuse. They knew seven months ago that we will be playing here and they changed the surface a few days ago. It's not an excuse, but this wasn't a good field. Sincerely, the field is not apt for these players." The Canadian players also did not hold back. Kamal Miller said: "It felt like walking on a stage, as if it was hollow." Despite the nature of the pitch, Messi extended his own record in the tournament with his 18th assist.

Jumpers Shaili and Eldhose shocked as WA marks Slovakia's Jumps Fest results as 'uncertified'

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The setting was inspiring, right next to 500-year-old Cathedral of St. Elizabeth — one of the oldest Gothic cathedrals in Europe — and it was Shaili Singh's first street competition. There was peppy music too at the JBL Jumps Fest, held on Alzbeta Street in the Slovakian city of Kosice on Thursday night, and athletes were given the option of choosing their own musical numbers.

Shaili chose a Punjabi song for her jumps and, since Italy's Olympic high jump champion Gianmarco Tamberi had promised the Indians that he would be watching their events, she was clearly in the mood. The 20-year-old Asian silver medalist, currently the country's No. 1 long jumper, produced a 6.43m in the fifth round, to take the silver behind Bulgaria's former under-20 World champion Plamena Mitkova (6.70m) in the meet, a World Athletics Continental Tour (bronze) event.

Meanwhile Commonwealth Games champion Eldhose Paul took the men's triple jump bronze with 16.45m while Praveen Chithravel, the Asian Games bronze medalist and national record holder (17.37m, May 2023), was sixth and last with 15.92m, his poorest result this season. Since the Jumps Fest was a category 'C' event, the Indians were hoping to pick crucial points which could help them secure berths to the Paris Olym-

pics through the World rankings route.

But the athletes were left shattered on Friday with the World Athletics marking all the results of the JBL Jumps Fest as UNC (uncertified) though it did not offer any explanation for this move. Which means that the world-ranking points picked from Slovakia would not be added to their Road to Paris rankings. "The jumps were held on a slightly elevated runway but this is a WA Continental Tour event so I don't think that could be the reason for the 'UNC'... surely they would have looked into it before the meet," Robert Bobby George, Shaili's coach, told The Hindu from Geneva on Friday.

"Shaili will be competing in Atletica Geneva in Geneva on Saturday but now it will be tough for her to qualify for the Olympics. Tomorrow's event will be her seventh competition in a little over a month, in about seven countries. She is young, I don't want to push her hard, it could lead to injuries. I've told her to just enjoy the competition... this European tour will be a good experience for her." Adille Sumariwalla, the president of the Athletics Federation of India and also World Athletics vice-president, has now written to world body about the 'UNC' issue.

"I'm making some enquiries, have written to WA... I'm not in India," Sumariwalla told The Hindu.