

15 officers given new postings in Hyd

Hyderabad: The State government on Wednesday transferred 15 IPS officers and gave them new postings. The officers with their new postings are Mahesh Muralidhar Bhagwat – Additional DGP (L&O) Telangana, Swati Lakra – Additional DG Organizations and Home Guards, Vijay Kumar – Additional DG, Personnel and will also hold the additional charge of Additional DG Sports and Welfare. Similarly, Sanjay Kumar Jain – Additional DG TGSP Battalions, M Stephen Raveendra – Additional DG, GreyHounds, G Sudheer Babu – Commissioner of Police Rachakonda, Dr Tarun Joshi – Director Anti-Corruption Bureau, S Chandrasekhar Reddy – Inspector General Multi Zone – I, K Ramesh Naidu – Inspector General – Railways and Road Safety, V Satyanarayana – Inspector General – Multi Zone – II, Rakshita K Murthy – DCP CAR Headquarters Hyderabad, D Uday Kumar Reddy – Superintendent of Police, Medak, R Giridhar – Superintendent of Police Wanaparthy, B Bala Swamy – DCP (East) Hyderabad and G Chandra Mohan – DCP (South West) Hyderabad.

Mr Telangana Mohd Sohail dies in road accident near Siddipet

Siddipet: In a tragic incident, well-known bodybuilding champion from Siddipet and Mr Telangana winner Mohd Sohail (23), a resident of Siddipet, died in a road accident.Sohail, who was driving the bike, lost control and hit an oncoming auto-rickshaw carrying scrap near Mirudoddi.Both Sohail and Khadir sustained serious injuries in the mishap.They were shifted to a private hospital in Hyderabad. He died while undergoing treatment on Wednesday.Sohail had won many district-level, State-level and South India-level bodybuilding championships in his short career.He had also won the Mr Telangana championship.

CM Revanth seeks quick resolution for land acquisition delays for national highways

GNS News Agency, july 10

Hyderabad: With farmers refusing to give up their lands for various national highway projects citing low compensation compared to market value, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday directed District Collectors to negotiate directly with farmers and convince them in this regard. He asked them to adopt a humanitarian approach by offering maximum possible compensation as per the laws.

During a video conference with district collectors from the Secretariat here, the Chief Minister said union Minister Nitin Gadkari had given in-principle approval to the unified numbering of the northern and southern sections of Regional Ring Road (RRR). A tripartite agreement between the State and Central governments along with National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) would be signed to formalise this.

The meeting also discussed the alignment and administrative issues concerning the RRR. In the northern part of the RRR, Yadadri Bhongir Collector Zendage Hanumant Kondiba reported court stays due to alignment errors. Revanth Reddy instructed the filing of a counter by next Friday to lift the stay. With regard to land acquisition for Nagpur-Vijayawada corridor in Khammam district, Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao, who participated in the meeting through video conference, said all efforts to convince the local farmers were underway.He informed that the NHAI officials suggested converting the Khammam-Ashwaraopet route into a State highway, considering the Tallada-Devarapalli Greenfield Highway works. However, the Chief Minister differed with the NHAI officials and wanted to continue with the route as a national highway.

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, who also participated through video conference, proposed the construction of service roads and underpasses at major villages along the Nagpur-Vijayawada corridor to facilitate local farming activities. NHAI project member Anil Chaudhary assured to consider these suggestions, including the development of gravel roads for movement of agricultural vehicles.Regarding forest department land transfers for roads like the Armoor-Jagtial-Mancherial and Vijayawada-Nagpur corridors, Revanth Reddy asked District Collectors to acquire forest lands and allocate government lands as an alternative to overcome obstacles. He called for coordination between the Revenue and Forest departments in this regard. The Chief Minister also instructed NHAI officials to commence the Hyderabad-Manneguda road project at the earliest and also expedite expansion of the Hyderabad-Vijayawada National Highway, as land acquisition for its six lanes has been completed. NHAI officials assured that work would start within two months.

In Austria, PM Modi reaffirms that 'this is not time for war'

GNS News Agency, july 10

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 10 said he held a "fruitful discussion" with Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer during which they discussed in detail the ongoing disputes in the world, including the Ukraine conflict and situation in West Asia, reaffirming that "this is not the time for war".Mr. Modi, who arrived here from Moscow after meeting **Russian President Vladimir** Putin on Tuesday night on a two-day visit - the first by an Indian prime minister in over 40 years, also said India and Austria identified new possibilities to further strengthen mutual cooperation and prepared a blueprint for cooperation the coming for decade."Today, Chancellor Nehammer and I had a very fruitful discussion. We have identified new possibilities to further strengthen our mutual cooperation. We have decided to give a strategic direction to our relationship. A blueprint for



cooperation has been prepared for the coming decade," Mr. Modi said in a joint media appearance with Chancellor Nehammer after their talks."Chancellor Nehammer and I have spoken at length about ongoing conflicts around the world, be it the conflict in Ukraine or the situation in West Asia. I have said before that this is not the time for war," the Prime Minister said.Asserting that solutions to problems can't be found on the battlefield, Mr. Modi said India and Austria emphasise dialogue and diplomacy, and for

that, they are ready to give

any support required.Mr.

Modi said both India and

Austria strongly condemn

terrorism and agree that it is not acceptable in any form. "This cannot be justified in any way," he said.

India's role in Russia-Ukraine peace process more than important: Austrian ChancellorIndia is an influential and credit-worthy country whose role is more than important when it comes to the Russia-Ukraine peace process, Mr. Nehammer said and offered his country as a site for dialogue as a neutral country."We had very intensive talks about the Russian aggression against Ukraine. For me as the Federal Chancellor of Austria, it is particularly important to get to know India's assessment and to under-

stand it and to familiarise India with European concerns and worries," he said.

"Moreover, the conflict in the Middle East was a major topic," he added.He said India's participation as a founding member of a BRICS organisation in the Swiss peace summit in June over Russia-Ukraine was was an important signal."And today, we've been talking about an even stronger commitment and the possibilities of reviving the peace process." "Prime Minister Modi and myself discussed the unique position of India in the socalled Global South. India is an important, influential and credit-worthy country. India is the biggest democracy in the world. And therefore, India's role, especially for Austria, is more than important when it comes to the peace process and future peace summits," he said.Mr. Modi said he was happy that he got the opportunity to visit Austria at the very beginning of his third term.

Dr. Jitender appointed as new DGP of Telangana



GNS News Agency, july 10

Hyderabad: The State government on Wednesday appointed Dr. Jitender, a 1992 batch IPS officer, as the Director General of Police, (Coordination) while he will also hold the post of Director General of Police (FAC) Head of Police Force – HoPF.The present DGP Ravi Gupta is transferred and posted as Special Chief Secretary to Government, Home Department.

Telangana High Court advises restraint in phone tapping case



GNS News Agency, july 10

In a recent hearing at the Telangana High Court regarding the phone tapping case, the court has advised all parties to exercise restraint in the matter. In a recent hearing at the Telangana High Court regarding the phone tapping case, the court has advised all parties to exercise restraint in the matter. The court has emphasized on not delving into personal lives and refraining from disclosing names, phone numbers, and photos of judges and their family members. Stating that the centre will file a counter on the 23rd of this month, the High Court has adjourned the next hearing to the 23rd of this month after hearing arguments on both sides. It is evident that the High Court is taking a cautious approach to this sensitive case and is urging all parties involved to handle the matter with care.

Muslim women have right to seek maintenance from spouse, rules SC



irrespective of religion.A Bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih, which pronounced a separate but concurrent verdict, said Section 125 of the erstwhile CrPC, which deals with wife's legal right to maintenance, covers Muslim women.

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Arvind Kejriwal directly involved in AAP getting Rs 100 crore kickback, claims ED

GNS News Agency, july 10

The Enforcement Directorate chargesheet in the Delhi liquor policy case mentions that Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal was directly involved in his party receiving Rs 100 crore kickback in lieu of the policy.

As per the ED, Arvind Kejriwal conspired with the members of the 'South Group' and others such as Vijay Nair to receive kickbacks to the tune of Rs 100 crore for "providing undue benefits to private entities by way of formulating and putting in use a tailor-made liquor policy". Nair, according to the ED, was acting on behalf of the top leaders of the AAP, including Kejriwal."In this manner, Arvind Kejriwal is directly, knowingly and actually involved in the generation, acquisition and possession of the proceeds of crime of Rs 100 crore," reads the ED chargesheet. The ED further claimed that out of this Rs 100 crore, approximately Rs 45 crore was used by the AAP for its campaign for Goa election in collusion with Kejriwal."Arvind Kejriwal has concealed this proceeds of crime by way of using cash transfers/Hawala transfers from the point of generation till the use," the chargesheet reads.

"Hence, the accused Arvind Kejriwal, is actually and knowingly involved in the dfferent procees and activities connected with the offence of money laundering, i.e. generation, acquisition, possession, concealment, transfer, use and claiming it to be untainted as defined u/s 3 of PMLA, 2002," it added.

GNS News Agency, july 10

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that a Muslim woman can seek maintenance from her husband under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), which is applicable to all married women "We are hereby dismissing the criminal appeal with the major conclusion that section 125 would be applicable to all women and not just married women," Justice Nagarathna said while pronouncing the verdict. The Bench said maintenance is not charity but the right of married women and it is applicable to all married women irrespective of their religion. The top court dismissed the petition of one Mohd Abdul Samad, who has challenged the order of the Telangana High Court refusing to interfere with the maintenance order of the family court. He has contended that a divorced Muslim woman is not entitled for maintenance under Section 125 of CrPC and has to invoke the provisions of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986.

Shiv Sena sacks key accused Mihir Shah's father Rajesh Shah as party's deputy leader

GNS News Agency, july 10

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who heads the Shiv Sena, on July 10 sacked Rajesh Shah, whose son Mihir Shah was allegedly involved in the BMW hit-and-run, as the party's deputy leader. A one-line notice by Shiv Sena secretary Sanjay More said Rajesh Shah has been relieved from the post of the party's deputy leader. Mr. Shah, however, continues to be a member of the Shiv Sena.

"A BMW car driven by Mihir Shah allegedly rammed into a two-wheeler in the Worli area of south-central Mumbai on July 7, resulting in the death of Kaveri Nakhwa (45), who was riding pillion, while her husband Pradeep survived with injuries," police have said. According to them, Kaveri Nakhwa was dragged for around 1.5 km by the speeding car before Mihir pulled it over, swapped the seat with his driver, and fled in another vehicle. The driver allegedly ran over her while reversing the BMW. Mihir Shah was arrested on July 9.BMC razes illegal alterations in bar visited by main accused hours before accident"The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is demolishing unauthorised alterations made at the city-based bar that was visited by the main accused in the BMW hitand-run case hours before he allegedly took the wheel of the car involved in the crash that killed a woman," officials said. The establishment — Vice-Global Tapas Bar against which the action was being taken, is located in Juhu suburb. "The BMW car driven by main accused Mihir Shah allegedly rammed into a two-wheeler from behind in Worli area of south-central Mumbai on Sunday morning, resulting in the death of Kaveri Nakhwa (45), who was riding pillion, while her husband Pradeep survived with injuries," police have said.A civic official said the BMC's K-West ward office team reached the Vice-Global Tapas Bar this morning and started demolishing some of

The civic body had conducted an inspection of the

the additional alterations made inside the establishment.



bar on Tuesday to check if any unauthorised additions and alterations were made there. "Detailed measurements were taken at the bar during the inspection, the official said. The bar was given a notice before the demolition process began," he said.Earlier, the State Excise Department sealed the bar. It was visited by Mihir Shah and his friends on Saturday night, hours before he allegedly took the wheel of the car involved in the crash."

Maoist party condemns Hussein's arrest

GNS News Agency, july 10

Karimnagar: The CPI (Maoist) party on Wednesday condemned the arrest of Mohammed Hussein, founder member of Singareni Karmika Samakhya (Sikasa), a frontal organization of the extremist party.Maoist State Committee official spokesperson Jagan, in a statement released to the media, termed Hussein's arrest illegal and said Hussein was leading a normal life after being released from jail 10 years ago. BRS condemns police high-handedness against journalists in Telangana



GNS News Agency, july 10

Hvderabad: The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) on Wednesday condemned the police high-handedness against journalists who were covering the student protests at Osmania University. The party demanded the immediate release of a vernacular television channel journalist and cameraman who were detained by the police from Osmania University.BRS working president KT Rama Rao expressed outrage over the incident, stating that freedom of the press is essential in a democracy. He said the illegal detention of journalists and the police treatment of them by grabbing their collar, is highly deplorable. Rama Rao also reminded the mistreatment of a pregnant woman journalist at the Yellamma temple in Balkampet a couple of days ago, questioning the protection for journalists under the current administration. Senior BRS leader T Harish Rao echoed these sentiments, condemning the police's behaviour. He questioned what was wrong with the journalists covering the news at Osmania University as part of their duty. "Arresting journalists and forcibly taking them to the police station is a violation of the right and freedom of the media.

INDIAN CHRONICLE

Indian Chronicle English Daily Portrayal of disabled

THE Supreme Court has made a bold and welome intervention by issuing guidelines to govern how eople with disabilities are portrayed in films and other risual media. The landmark verdict underscores that anguage that disparages persons with special needs narginalises them further. It supplements the barriers n their social participation. Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud has called for authentic as well as repectful representation, and not stereotyping that beittles their experiences. There have been jokes made n the disabled for comic relief, and this understanding s obsolete, he notes. The lack of familiarity has beer attributed to the inadequate representation of the disbled in the dominant discourse. The CJI's message is rystal clear — distinguish between 'disability humour' vhich helps in understanding the disabled, and 'disblement humour' that denigrates them. The apex court as aptly concluded that creative liberty cannot include he freedom to lampoon, stereotype, misrepresent or isparage those already marginalised. There is no delying that terms such as 'cripple' and 'spastic' have ecquired devalued meanings in societal perceptions. Filmmakers now have a responsibility to move away rom disrespectful tropes and caricatures. The creative ens must shift focus to sensitive, inclusive and realistic epresentation. The new guidelines align with the antiliscrimination and dignity-affirming objectives of the Constitution as well as the Rights for Persons with Disbilities Act, 2016. The legislation seeks to protect and romote the rights and dignity of persons with disabiliies. Reclaiming their rightful space continues to be a truggle for them. Unequal hiring and promotion, lack f access to training, occupational segregation, neglitible attention to their requirements at restrooms and ublic offices — this is their reality.

IIT Gandhi Nagar study explores how errors influence our brain's learning mechanisms

GNS News Agency, july 10

What exactly happens in our brains when we experience an error and how do these errors influence our learning? A recent study published in the PLOS Biology journal provides fresh insights on this question. A team of researchers from Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar have explored the impact of various errors on our brain's learning mechanisms. Their findings reveal that different error sources activate distinct learning mechanisms, and these mechanisms can be flexibly combined to improve future movements.

'Consider a tennis player attempting to hit a topspin in breezy conditions," explained Dr Pratik Mutha, an associate professor in the IIT's Department of Cognitive and Brain Sciences and a senior author of the study. "While the player might initially make errors and miss their shots, they eventually succeed by adjusting their actions. A number of mechanisms contribute to this improvement."One such process might involve the use of conscious and verbalisable strategies to select a different action, avoiding the recurrence of the error. For instance, a tennis coach might provide specific instructions on positioning the racquet or swinging the arm to execute an accurate topspin despite the breeze.In addition to such "explicit" learning based on verbal cues, there exist other tacit or "implicit" mechanisms that lead to a more gradual refinement of movements outside conscious awareness. Such implicit processes are insensitive to verbal prompts and lead to more incremental improvements with practice, according to the study. Dr Mutha's research group explored whether these distinct learning mechanisms are stimulated by different error sources encountered by the brain during movement. The researchers focused on "sensory prediction errors (SPEs)" and "task performance errors (TPEs)" in their work. SPEs occur when there is a mismatch between the sensory information the brain expects to get and what it actually receives. For instance, the tennis player might anticipate their racquet swinging in a particular way, only to find its trajectory somewhat altered by the breeze. On the other hand, TPEs occur when the intended goal is not achieved, such as the player missing the ball entirely, indicating that the action was unsuccessful. In a series of experiments, the team used novel perturbations to induce specific errors, which then triggered learning in the participants. They found that different error signals set in motion distinct learning processes in the brain. "Our study indicated that implicit, subconscious learning is driven only by SPEs. Moreover, contrary to some theories, we also found that TPEs did not activate the implicit system," said Anushka Oza, a co-first author of the study.Adarsh Kumar, another co-first author and a former PhD student, added, "TPEs led to a change in peoples' volitional movement strategy, whereby participants consciously adjusted their actions to avoid repeating the error. Remarkably, when asked to turn off strategy use and ignore the TPE even if it affected task performance, participants demonstrated complete compliance. In contrast, with SPEs, participants compulsively adjusted their movements despite being told to disregard the error."The team also noted that when both SPEs and TPEs are present, these two learning mechanisms combine in interesting ways. According to Dr Mutha, automatic adjustments (driven by SPEs) and volitional strategy changes (triggered by TPEs) together set the stage for rapid learning and adaptation to new environments."Understanding the source of errors and the neuro-computational mechanisms they stimulate is crucial for optimising learning," said Apoorva Sharma, a co-author and former IIT student pursuing her PhD at Yale University in the US. "This has clear implications for designing training programmes for athletes and performing artists and designing better rehabilitation programmes for individuals with neurological disabilities, such as stroke."Having established the divergence in the learning mechanisms stimulated by different error signals, the team now aims to probe its neural foundations. The researchers plan to use brain stimulation techniques to determine if targeting specific brain regions can selectively enhance or suppress one of these mechanisms. Their ultimate goal is to maximise learning and its retention over time in humans.

Ajit Pawar says corruption allegations were to defame him, Sule reminds they were levelled by BJP and its leaders



GNS News Agency, july 10

Ajit PawarPawar said, "I want to tell that I have never changed any political party from the day I began my career in politics. From the first day, public has been my priority and I have worked only in their interests."Gearing up for the assembly elections, NCP chief and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday said his rivals levelled allegations of corruption in the past to defame him but none of them have been proved right. However, NCP (SP) working president Supriya Sule reminded him that the charges were made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and his team, so Ajit Pawar should tell this to his alliance partners in Mahayuti and MVA.In a video, Ajit Pawar, who is also the finance minister, highlighted the popular decisions taken by the state government for the benefit of women and farmers. "My rivals have criticised the budget tabled by me in the assembly but they are merely doing politics

while I focus on the development of the state and work in the interest of public. Those doing more work face opposition, so is with me. In the recent past, there were false allegations of corruption made against me. Not a single allegation has been proved and neither would they be proved right," he said. Pawar said, "I want to tell that I have never changed any political party from the day I began my career in politics. From the first day, public has been my priority and I have worked only in their interests."The NCP chief said his party would contest the forthcoming assembly elections only on development issue."Opposition might mislead you but don't fall for it. I have been working in the interest of public since long and in 2014 had declared Krishi Sanjivni Yojana that reduced electricity bills for farmers. I initiated many industrial projects, urban development projects and did makeover of cities. There is long list of development work that I have carried out," he said adding he would need support of the people for the development of state.

NCP Working President Supriya Sule, during her visit to Baramati constituency said, "Allegations of corruption against Ajit Pawar were levelled by BJP. It is under BJP's rule that raids by ED and Income Tax were conducted on the residences of my sisters. So it is the BJP who should reply whether their allegations were true or false."The allegations were levelled by none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis along with his team, she said.Sule further said that the Mahayuti budget for state was merely to woo voters ahead of assembly elections.

Ready to return site if compensation is paid for land lost, says Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah

GNS News Agency, july 10

The MUDA scam was different from the row over the compensatory site given to his wife, Siddaramaiah said.The MUDA scam was different from the row over the compensatory site given to his wife, Siddaramaiah said. (File Photo)The row over Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam took a turn Thursday as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah offered to return the site given as compensation to him by MUDA.

Estimating the value of 3 acre 16 guntas land owned by his wife Parvati at Rs 62 crore, he said that MUDA was free to cancel the allocation of the alternate site provided the compensation was paid. "MUDA illegally acquired our land. They later admitted to their mistake and offered us sites under the 50:50 scheme," he said. Under the 50:50 scheme, land losers receive 50 per cent of the sites developed and the civic body retains the remaining half. The MUDA scam came out earlier this week following complaints that several people received larger sites than they were entitled to, and some received alternate sites at localities such as Vijayanagar, J P Nagar, and RT Nagar – where the guidance value of land was higher than in places the layouts were made – resulting in losses to the tune of hundreds of crores for MUDA.

The MUDA scam was different from the row over the compensatory site given to his wife, Siddaramaiah said. "MUDA should have compensated with the same extent of land they acquired. Can I let it go just because I am the CM?" he said. The alternate site measuring 38,284 square feet – 0.88 acre – was sanctioned after his wife petitioned MUDA in 2021, when the BJP was in power, the CM



CM, A S Ponnanna, to mount a defence against the allegations made against the CM. "The compensation received by his wife is being depicted as a big scam," he said. Although Parvati received less than the land she lost, she did not contest the compensation, he added.Ponnanna pegged the value of the compensatory site offered at around Rs 15-16 crore. The BJP, meanwhile, has pressed for a CBI probe over alleged irregularities at MUDA. However, Siddaramaiah has shrugged off the demands.During the recent BJP state-level executive committee meeting, BJP Parliamentary Board member B S Yediyurappa said the party would expose all the scams of the Congress government. Apart from the row over the MUDA scam, the Congress is also under attack over the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation scam, which saw the resignation of B Nagendra as minister from the Siddaramaiah Cabinet

West Bengal most preferred destination for UG courses, says Bratya Basu



GNS News Agency, july 10

West Bengal Education Minister Bratya Basu said Wednesday that the state has become one of the most preferred destinations for higher education as over 87,000 undergraduate applications have been received by the higher education department's admission portal, which was launched on June 19.

In an X post, Basu said a total of 87,010 applications have been received from various states including Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Bihar and Maharashtra. The students have submitted applications in colleges affiliated to the state universities."Up from Jammu & Kashmir right down to Kerala, students are preferring Bengal as their destination for Higher Education. We welcome them with wide open arms," said the education minister.

According to a senior official at the state higher education department, about 5 lakh applications have been received through the portal till Wednesday. The state government's recently launched 'centralised admission portal' is a part of various state government colleges and universities. The portal has been developed for admission to 7,230 undergraduate courses in government and government-aided general degree colleges and universities including 16 universities, 461 colleges and a few other higher education institutions across West Bengal.Through this portal, a candidate will be able to search for courses, colleges, and universities across the state and access all relevant details such as course-wise eligibility criteria, vacancies, formula for merit-index calculation, and elective subjects offered by any college or higher education institution.

Karnataka government extends property tax discount deadline to July 31



GNS News Agency,july 10 The government order mandates that the discount e available in municipalities, municipal corporations,

Karnataka High Court cancels posting of Dr Basappa as Mysore University registrar



GNS News Agency, july 10

Mysore University Karnataka High CourtDr Mahadevan had challenged a March 15 government notification that appointed Dr Basappa to the post. His counsel argued that as per Karnataka State Universities Act, only a senior faculty could be appointed to that post. The Karnataka High Court has cancelled the appointment of a new Registrar (Evaluation), Dr Basappa, at the University of Mysore. The order dated June 18 was passed by a bench consisting of Justice B M Shyam Prasad, in response to a petition by Dr K M Mahadevan, who had previously held the post.

Dr Mahadevan had challenged a March 15 government notification that appointed Dr Basappa to the post. His counsel argued that as per Karnataka State Universities Act, only a senior faculty could be appointed to that post, whereas Basappa was an assistant professor serving only from October 2022, while there were 58 other professors in the same university.Basappa's counsel argued that he was actually an associate professor, and that he should be considered as senior faculty since he was the chairman of the Department of Organic Chemistry.

It was also argued that as per the doctrine of pleasure the government was at liberty to remove an incumbent. The counsel for Dr Mahadevan countered that Basappa was only appointed to the chairman post since there was a vacancy of a professor in the department, and a provision for appointment on rotation.Regarding the applicability of doctrine of pleasure the court stated, "In view of the opinion rendered by the Vice Chancellor (that Basappa would not be senior faculty), the circumstances in which the file is closed and reopened to await the decision in another file, and ultimately leading to replacement of the petitioner with the appointment of the third respondent just on the eve of the Election Code of Conduct regime, this court must opine that neither public interest nor administrative interest is established, and if the impugned notification fails, on this score there must be judicial intervention or otherwise the Universities' institutional autonomy could be in jeopardy."The bench added, " The Government should have considered all aspects before displacing the petitioner with the third respondent's (Basappa) appointment....the third respondent could not have been eligible to be appointment as the Registrar [evaluation] only because he is appointed as the Chairman of the Department of Organic Chemistry."

and town panchayats throughout the state. Property taxThe government order mandates that the discount be available in municipalities, municipal corporations, and town panchayats throughout the state.

The Directorate of Municipal Administration recently announced the extension of the 5 per cent discount on property tax payments for the fiscal year 2024-25. Originally offered only in April, this discount will now be available until July 31, 2024, across all urban local bodies (ULBs) in Karnataka. The extension followed a thorough review of a proposal by the Directorate of Municipal Administration. The proposal highlighted the need for improved tax payment compliance and suggested that an extended discount period would incentivise more property owners to pay their taxes promptly. The government order mandates that the discount be available in municipalities, municipal corporations, and town panchayats throughout the state. The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike in March had also announced the extension of the 5 per cent rebate on property tax until July 31, 2024.

To tackle forest fire: In 15 yrs, Himachal earned Rs 109 cr by selling chir pine resin

GNS News Agency, july 10

The Himachal Pradesh State Forest Development Corporation (HPSFDC) has been minting money by selling the extracted resin from chir pine trees over the past 15 years. So far the HPSFDC has earned Rs 109.65 crore. including the highest revenue of Rs 10.89 crore in 2010, followed by Rs 10.83 crore in 2014. However, over the past few years, the revenue has been decreasing. Since 2015, the revenue generated through selling resin has been recorded between Rs 9.42 crore and Rs 6.62 crore. The chir pine trees are occasionally blamed for forest fires in the hill state during summers. While the bark of the tree doesn't catch fire easily as it has a very high ignition temperature, the needles and resin-filled cones of the chir pines do. Forest fires mostly occur during the pre-monsoon summer season when there is a lot of moisture in the area due to snowmelt water.

Of the total 37,948 sq km of forest area in the state, 2,800 sq km is under pine cover. In the past three months, 2,362 forest fire incidents were reported in the state — almost three times higher than the last year which saw 631 fire incidents. This year, the maximum forest fires of 533 were reported from Dharamshala in Kangra district alone, followed by 186 such incidents in Shimla.To tackle the problem, the Himachal Forest Department hands over resin blaze (a cut mark through which resin is collected from chir pine trees) to the HPSFDC, which was formed in 1974. In return, the forest department charges a royalty for each resin blaze. While the current royalty rate for a single blaze is Rs 45, last year, the department collected 14,72,021 such blazes. "Resin extracted from the pine

tree is widely used for making adhesives, coatings or other construction material. There are two resin and turpentine factories in the state - Nahan in Sirmaur district and Bilaspur district. The installed capacity of the two factories is 1.11 lakh quintals per annum. Quientals of collected resin transported to these factories, it was refined and further sold in the market. HPSFDC is a company controlled by the state government. For the extracted resin from pine trees on the forest land, HPSFDC has also paid a royalty of Rs 166.81 crore to the state forest department between 2015 and 2024. Indeed, pine trees catch fire swiftly," Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCR), Himachal Pradesh, Rajiv Kumar, said.Sources said, "Before HPSFDC in 1974, the resin was extracted by private contractors who would exploit forests unnecessarily.'

However, concerns have been raised over the declining revenue over the years. The last earned revenue in a double-digit was Rs 10.83 crore in 2014. From 2014 to 2023, the revenue decreased to a single digit. In 2023, Rs 6.62 crore was earned through 14.72 lakh blazes.A senior forest officer said, "There are many reasons behind this. The foremost reason is the increasing number of forest fire incidents. Hundreds of pine trees burnt in one fire mishap. Meanwhile, diversion of forest land for developmental activities, including the construction of roads, highways, government buildings, etc., is also a reason. The process of afforestation takes a long time."Three species of pine trees — Pinus roxburghii, Pinus wallichiana and Pinus gerardiana — are abundant in the state.









THURSDAY 11 JULY 2024

Farmers are backbone of rural economy, their interests cannot be compromised at any cost: Dhananjay Munde



GNS News Agency, july 10

Thanks to a good monsoon, the drought risk experienced last year has been avoided for the Kharif season 2024-25. In an interview, Maharashtra Agriculture Minister Dhananjay Munde said the state is anticipating a 20to 25 per cent increase in post-harvest crop production. Excerpts.

Q. What challenges are confronting the government this Kharif season 2024-25?

Dhananjay Munde: The region experienced a 12day dry spell after the monsoon arrived, causing concern. Heavy rainfall was received in June for the first three days, followed by another dry spell. This year, the dry spell only lasted for 12 days, compared to the 20 to 25 days experienced last year during the monsoon season. The state suffered a severe drought last year which led to significant challenges for farmers. This year, the goal was to avoid a similar situation due to changing climate patterns. Fortunately, most districts received moderate to good rainfall.

Q. How is the Kharif sowing going on?

Dhananjay Munde: Currently, 66 per cent of kharif sowing has been completed across Maharashtra. The sowing of soybean, cotton, moong, udit, and intercrop tur is 99 per cent completed. Paddy plantation is mainly restricted to Eastern Vidarbha and Konkan regions. After initial setbacks, the rainfall has been good, recording 106 per cent, which has helped farmers engage in field activities actively. We anticipate an increase in the area under the Kharif crop by 1.10 lakh hectares, bringing it close to 152 lakh hectares.

Q. Can you provide quantifiable data on post-harvest production?

Dhananjay Munde: Honestly, it's difficult to determine the exact crop production at this stage. It's still too early. However, if the favourable rain pattern for crops continues and there are no natural disasters, we anticipate a 20 to 25 per cent increase in Kharif crop production

Q. Are you ruling out dopar perni (resowing of seeds)?

Dhananjay Munde: In early June, we issued an advisory urging farmers to take their time with sowing their crops. We advised them to wait for at least 100 mm of rainfall before starting sowing. These precautions helped to prevent the need for a second sowing. In the past, farmers often hurriedly sown their seeds after the first rainfall, only to find that the lack of subsequent rain negatively affected the seeds and seedlings, causing them to wither due to the lack of necessary water. This second sowing usually leads to additional expenses for farmers.

Q. What measures are you taking to address farmers' financial problems?

Dhananjay Munde: Farmers should have easy access to crop loans in time. Secondly, crop insurance should be hassle-free. Thirdly, they should not be subjected to exploitation by private money lenders. The government is strictly monitoring all three issues to lend a helping hand to farmers.

crops. For example, while the MSP for soybeans is Rs 4,600 per quintal, farmers have been receiving only Rs 4,050. A few years ago, soybean prices were much higher, reaching up to Rs 7,000 to 9,000 above the MSP. Therefore, it is crucial for the state government to intervene through crop insurance policies and financial support to mitigate the price gap. In the budget announced for 2024-25, we have allocated Rs 5,000 per hectare of financial assistance for farmers which will be provided for up to two hectares of land. Whether it involves procurement or financial aid, the state government must step in and assist farmers in overcoming the challenges they face after harvest and in dealing with post-harvest and post-marketing losses.

Q. In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, farmers' unrest was apparently overlooked. Did the Centre or the State give priority to consumers who constitute a bigger vote bank than farmers?

Dhananjay Munde: I believe it's important to find a balance between the needs of farmers and consumers. We should strive to address the rights and challenges of both groups and not disadvantage farmers.In Maharashtra, there may be 1.56 crore farmers, and each farmer has an average family size of five persons. We should not underestimate their population and their role in society. Furthermore, farmers and the agriculture sector should be viewed differently. They are the backbone of our society and cannot be judged solely by numbers.

Q. Are you guaranteeing MSP for farmers during the 2024-25 Kharif season?

Dhananjay Munde: It is guaranteed under the rules that farmers are entitled to MSP. I believe that farmers should not only recover their investment expenditure but also receive an additional 50 per cent profit. Even the most developed nations, such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Japan, provide substantial subsidies for farmers and the agriculture sector. The Dr Swaminathan Commission Report, which emphasised higher remuneration through MSP, never contested subsidies for farmers. As we are an agriculture-driven economy, it is important for us to support farmers generously. The well-being of farmers cannot be compromised, as they drive the rural economy in Maharashtra.

Q. How do you explain the rise in fertiliser prices, which adds to the investment expenditure of farmers?

Dhananjay Munde: The prices of fertilisers are influenced by international market rates, but the Centre has stepped in to provide subsidies to maintain stable prices. Sometimes, we also face artificial price hikes. To tackle these issues, Maharashtra is one of the first states to promote the use of nano urea and nano diammonium phosphate (DAP). These nano fertilisers reduce the use of traditional urea and DAP by almost 50 per cent, making it more cost-effective for farmers. A 500ml bottle of nano urea has the same impact on crop nitrogen levels as a bag of traditional urea. Additionally, it is effective in covering a larger surface area of the crop without harming the soil or underground water, as often seen with conventional methods

Q. Have the changes been made? Are farmers satisfied with it?

Dhananjay Munde: During the Kharif season, four lakh farmers have adopted nano urea. Over the next three years, it is expected that more farmers will start using it as they see its benefits. The goal is for the use of nano urea to spread naturally through word of mouth, as we don't want to force it on farmers. Farmers are aware of what's best for their crops. Once they realise the benefits of nano urea, such as healthier crops and increased production, it is expected that there will be a growing demand for it in the coming years.

Amritsar jail inmate's death throws light on prisoners' long wait for Pakistan to confirm nationality



GNS News Agency, july 10

Jaffar Alam was an inmate at Amritsar Central Jail in Punjab. On June 30, the 55-year-old 'Pakistani national' was allegedly attacked by another inmate, also a 'Pakistani national', inside the jail and died later. Following Alam's death, the jail authorities sent a letter to the Pakistan embassy requesting it to take back his body. The authorities, however, are not holding out hope for a response as Alam had already spent 15 years in jail awaiting confirmation of his nationality."Earlier too, we have buried the dead bodies of Pakistani nationals whose nationality was not confirmed by their country. They died waiting," an official at Amritsar Central Jail said.On Monday, July 1, India had urged Pakistan to expedite the nationality verification process of 75 civilian prisoners and fishermen in India's custody who are believed to be Pakistani nationals whose repatriation is pending for want of nationality confirmation from the country.Sources said that the names of Alam and the man accused of attacking him, Shahid Ali, 32, were on this list. With Alam's death, the number has reduced to 74. Last year, it was 62.

Alam was arrested under The Foreigners Act in 2009 and had already completed his sentence in 2012. Since then, he had been awaiting his release. However, Pakistan had not confirmed his nationality despite repeated communication from the Amritsar jail authorities.

Similarly, the accused Ali had also completed his sentence under The Foreigners Act and was waiting for the Pakistan government to confirm his identity. Now, he will face a fresh case under murder charges."These are prisoners who were arrested without any passport after entering India from Pakistan. Such prisoners are often sentenced to one year to two years by the court. They are mostly people who cross the border by mistake. However, they remain in jail until the Pakistan government confirms their identity to take them back. We start communicating with the Pakistan embassy as soon as such prisoners come to us," an officer at Amritsar jail explained.Alam and Ali had even provided their addresses to the police while they were arrested. While Alam claimed he was a resident of Musa Colony in New Karachi, Ali said he was from Lahore."Most of these prisoners are not of sound mind. Many of them are not wanted by their families. Or their families are too poor to pursue the case with Pakistan authorities to get them back. Also, it depends upon the Pakistan embassy to take back such prisoners after the completion of their sentence. Many such factors delay the process of their release even after the completion of their sentence and they remain stuck here in Amritsar jail," the officer added. When the Punjab

and Haryana HC intervened

In January this year, during an inspection visit at a Faridkot observation home that houses undertrial and convicted juveniles, Punjab and Haryana High Court judge Justice N S Shekhawat saw that two Pakistani boys who had been acquitted by the Juvenile Justice Board on April 18, 2023, were still there. The boys were apprehended near the Indo-Pak border in Tarn Taran on September 1, 2022, and had been booked under Section 3 of The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, and Section 14 of The Foreigners Act, 1946, for allegedly illegally crossing the international border.

"Chances of mistakenly entering into the territory of India in foggy days can also be not ruled out and it can also be not ruled out that due to non-wiring or gate at the spot, juveniles could not make out the difference of territory of two nations," the board had observed while acquitting the boys. Hearing a suo motu plea following the case of the Pakistani boys, Chief Justice G S Sandhawalia and Justice Lapita Banerji had sought a list of Pakistani nationals who have completed their sentences but are still languishing in Punjab jails.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court's intervention saw the Indian authorities rush to repatriate the boys to Pakistan. After the Pakistani authorities at Attari declined to take custody of the duo citing lack of documents on March 29 and April 19, they were finally sent back on April 27.Meanwhile, Additional Solicitor General of India Satya Pal Jain informed the Punjab and Haryana High Court that the process of repatriating 30 'Pakistani' civil prisoners, who have already completed their sentence and are currently lodged in the Central Jail, Amritsar, is under active consideration with the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and the exercise would be undertaken with consultation of all the stakeholders for which some time would be required. Under provisions of the 2008 bilateral Agreement on Consular Access, India and Pakistan exchange lists of civilian prisoners and fishermen in each other's custody twice every year, on January 1 and July 1. India has shared the names of 366 civilian prisoners and 86 fishermen in its custody who are Pakistani or are believed to be Pakistani. Similarly, Pakistan has shared the names of 43 civilian prisoners and 211 fishermen in its custody, who are Indian or are believed to be Indian. Meanwhile, the Indian government has also asked Pakistan to provide immediate consular access to the 47 civilian prisoners and fishermen in Pakistan's custody who are believed to be Indian and have not been provided consular access so far. Among the prisoners are those whose nationality has been confirmed but are in jail as they cannot pay the fine. Lawyer and human rights activist Navjot Kaur Chabba said she has helped such prisoners. "We paid Rs 4 lakh fine for two such Pakistani women whose sentence was over but they did not have the money to pay the fine," Chabba said."It is sad to see that someone died in jail because his nationality was not confirmed. Nobody who has completed his/her sentence should be kept in jail on both sides of the border. Governments on both sides should make efforts for such prisoners," Chabba added.As many as 2,639 Indian fishermen and 71 Indian civilian prisoners have been repatriated from Pakistan since 2014. This includes 478 Indian fishermen and 13 Indian civilian prisoners who have been repatriated from Pakistan since 2023 till date.

When troops of 8 Sikh battalion led by Subedar Nirmal Singh fought off Pakistani counterattacks on Tiger Hill



Q. During the last Kharif season, farmers could not receive the minimum support price (MSP) for cotton and soybean, leading them to sell their crops below MSP.

Dhananjay Munde: The domestic market has been severely impacted by the international drop in soybean and cotton prices. It is evident that farmers have been unable to fetch good prices for their soybean and cotton

Q. The issue of farmer suicides is often discussed, but it remains unresolved. What do you think?

Dhananjay Munde: It is a stain on our progressive state, which prides itself on economic progress and growth. I acknowledge that even the loss of a single farmer's life due to financial distress, failed crops, or any other reason is a matter of grave concern. I believe it is a disgrace. Our government is dedicated to the well-being of farmers. Financial assistance, along with proper guidance, can help improve the situation.

Amritpal can meet family but won't be allowed to leave Delhi: Parole order for taking LS oath

GNS News Agency, july 10

Jailed radical preacher Amritpal Singh who is being brought to Delhi on parole to take oath as a Lok Sabha member will be allowed to meet his family but will not be permitted to leave the "territorial jurisdiction" of New Delhi.During his stay in the national capital, neither Singh nor his relatives or family members could make a statement in any form of media, according to the conditions laid down in his parole order issued by the district magistrate of Punjab's Amritsar from where he was arrested on April 23 last year.

The Khalistani sympathiser, who won the Khadoor Sahib Lok Sabha seat in Punjab in the recent parliamentary elections while being lodged in a jail in Assam's Dibrugarh district, is scheduled to take oath on Friday.Singh, 31, will be flown in from Assam to Delhi to take oath and his parole period of four days starts from July 5, urces said on Wednesday. The parole order, which mentions 10 conditions, stated that the period of temporary release would include the time taken from the central jail in Dibrugarh to New Delhi and back

He will "not enter the territorial jurisdiction of any place other than New Delhi during the period of temporary release", it stated."Amritpal Singh or any of his relatives shall not be permitted to videograph any statement of Amritpal and circulate any such statement in any electronic form," according to the order.He will also "refrain from doing any action or making any statement that is prejudicial to national security", it stated.

"The relatives of Amritpal, as defined under Section 2 (c) of the Punjab Detenue (Condition of Detention) Order, 1981, shall be allowed to meet him during the period he is housed in New Delhi," the order stated. On deployment of security personnel for Singh, the order stated he will be accompanied by such a number of police personnel as is deemed appropriate by the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Amritsar (Rural).

These personnel will be there with him from the date



and time of his temporary release from the jail, and till the time he returns to the prison for continuation of his period of detention, it stated. For the time period, when Singh is present within the precincts of the Parliament, "he shall be accompanied by such number of police personnel, or other security personnel as permitted by the Secretary General, Lok Sabha," the order stated.

It added that for the period, when Singh is not required in the precincts of the Parliament, he shall be 'housed at such place in New Delhi as is deemed appropriate by the SSP, Amritsar (Rural), after taking into account various security considerations". On Wednesday, Amritsar District Magistrate Ghamshyam Thori told PTI, "Amritpal Singh has been granted parole for up to four days or less beginning July 5 with certain conditions that have been communicated to jail superintendent, Dibrugarh." Singh, who heads the "Waris Punjab De" outfit and styled himself after slain Khalistani militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, was jailed along with nine of his associates under the National Security Act.He was arrested in Moga's Rode village after he and his supporters on February 23 barged into the Ajnala police station breaking barricades, brandishing swords and guns, and clashed with police personnel in an attempt to free one of his aides from custody. PTI SUN ANB

GNS News Agency, july 10

On the 25th anniversary of the re-capture of Tiger Hill, it is fitting to remember the handful of soldiers of the 8 Sikh battalion who foiled repeated counterattacks launched by Pakistani troops under Capt Karnal Sher Khan and ensured that Tiger Hill remained in Indian hands.The name of Subedar Nirmal Singh, from Gurdaspur district in Punjab, holds special importance as he was the last JCO left alive who foiled the Pakistani counterattacks and finally died in the battle. The Sikh battalion lost 14 men in those repeated counterattacks with four Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) dead and two officers wounded.

Nestled between Tingel and Sando nala, the daunting Tiger Hill commands attention with its steep rocky slopes. Rising to a towering height of over 16,500 feet, the mountain stands as one of the region's grandest, providing a commanding view of the Mushkoh region and partially encompassing the Matayin Bowl, along with the picturesque Drass village and the vital national highway. Its snow-covered terrain presented arduous challenges, with certain areas posing exceptional difficulties for climbers. The Tiger Hill complex spans an impressive stretch and at its pinnacle, the width narrows to a mere five metres, while notable features such as India Gate and Helmet expand to about 30 metres in breadth.In an earlier conversation with The Indian Express, Brig MPS Bajwa (retd), the Commander of 192 Mountain Brigade which captured Tiger Hill, had recalled how he had planned the operation.

"Instead of four battalions which we had initially planned, the final task came down to 18 Grenadiers and 8 Sikh. We decided to approach the top from the most difficult side. I selected the ghatak platoon of 18 Grenadiers for the task and got the mountaineers from highaltitude warfare school to train them. The GOC was sceptical saying it was a very difficult task," he said. The brigade commander also selected the 8 Sikh for a tough task saying that it had to live up to the reputation of the regiment. The battalion had not fared well in an earlier engagement with the enemy with the consequence that the morale was low and senior officers in the chain of command were sceptical about the chances of its success.Brig Bajwa said 52 soldiers with two officers and four JCOs of the 8 Sikh were held in reserve in the battle. "These are the men who turned the whole battle. Let me tell you it was the 8 Sikh which turned the tide of the battle. Let anyone say otherwise. I also got tremendous support from the artillery firepower of the Bofors as that was the only asset I could play with," Brig Bajwa said.He went on to say that full credit must be given to the 18 Grenadiers, particularly Lt (now Colonel) Balwan Singh, who led the men of the Ghatak platoon and climbed to the top. He was later given Mahavir Chakra while Yogender Yadav got Param Vir Chakra."These men reached the top but came under heavy fire from the Pakistanis who had made well-entrenched defences. This was when the 8 Sikh troops were pushed in and they kept hanging on at the top. I gave them a motivational talk

on the radio and told them not to give an inch in the face of repeated Pakistani counterattacks. With two officers wounded and three JCOs killed, Subedar Nirmal Singh was the only leader left and I told him that he had to ensure that the honour bestowed on Sikhs by Dashmesh Pita (Guru Gobind Singh) was not let down.

"They (8 Sikh battalion) lost 14 men in the Pakistani counter attacks and both their officers were wounded and all four JCOs killed," Brig Bajwa said.Subedar Nirmal Singh was born on May 6, 1957, in a village in Gurdaspur district. He was enrolled in the 8 Sikh in 1976. On July 4, 1999, he was among the badly wounded in the Pakistani counterattack but retained command of his troops and was in touch with the Brigade Commander (Brig MPS Bajwa) on the wireless who kept motivating him to beat the Pakistan attacks. In the heavy hand-to-hand fighting, Subedar Nirmal Singh led his men despite being seriously wounded and finally died when he got shot in the head. He was awarded the Vir Chakra posthumously."Before getting killed due to a direct hit on his head, Subedar saab had told us to shout our Jaikara (war cry) 'Bole So Nihal Sat Sri Akal' with all our might and rush the attacking enemy and the officer leading them. had suffered four bullet wounds and fired two magazines of my Light Machine Gun (LMG) into the enemy as hand-to-hand fighting broke out. I pounced upon the tall, well-built man dressed in a tracksuit and leading the Pak troops. There was chaos all around with abuses being shouted on both sides but I managed to kill him," Havildar Satpal Singh who also earned a Vir Chakra in the same battle told The Indian Express.Little did he know at the time that the man with whom he had engaged in hand-tohand combat was Capt Karnal Sher Khan of the Northern Light Infantry (NLI) of the Pakistan Army and who received Pakistan's highest gallantry award, Nishan-e-Haider, on the recommendation of the Indian brigade Commander Brig Bajwa who put a chit in the pocket of the dead Pakistani Captain's tracksuit.



'Court can order CBI investigation without even hearing accused': Punjab and Haryana HC transfers probe in multi-crore fraud case



GNS News Agency, july 10

Punjab and Haryana High Court CBI investigationThe bench of Justice Jasjit Singh Bedi said, "This Court can order an investigation by the CBI even after a report under Section 173(2) CrPC is submitted and the accused need not be heard before such an order is passed." Observing that the Court can order an investigation by the CBI without even hearing the accused, the Punjab and Haryana High Court recently directed the Central investigating agency to probe an alleged multicrore fraud in Punjab mentioned in a two-year-old FIR. The bench of Justice Jasjit Singh Bedi said, "This Court can order an investigation by the CBI even after a report under Section 173(2) CrPC is submitted and the accused need not be heard before such an order is passed.""All that the Court is required to examine before issuing such directions is that the accused persons were powerful and well-connected and that the investigation had been conducted in a biased manner so as to either weaken the prosecution case or to demolish it. Such directions could also be issued in cases where there are interstate ramifications... Further, ordering of such an investigation by the CBI would not amount to monitoring of the same as the CBI is free to conduct such an investigation in accordance with law," Justice Bedi added.

The HC was hearing a petition filed by one Suneet Kaur, against the state of Punjab and others, seeking an independent probe into a multi-crore fraud case, wherein accused persons allegedly forged an affidavit to receive crores of compensation on land acquired by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) for the Delhi-Katra expressway. It was submitted before the HC that the complainant and accused persons were parties to a land dispute; however, a forged affidavit was submitted to the SDM for compensation when the land was acquired stating that there was "no litigation on the land". As a result, the authorities released over Rs 28 crore in favour of the accused persons as compensation. The petitioner contended that the Punjab Police did not investigate in a fair manner, hence an independent probe should be conducted.Justice Bedi on hearing the matter held that a perusal of the record would also reveal that the Ludhiana SDM, through whom the money was released into the accounts of the accused, has neither chosen to file a complaint against the accused under Section 195 of the CrPC for filing false affidavits and nor has he been made a prosecution witness."It is thus apparent from the record that the investigation has not proceeded in a fair and unbiased manner. In fact, it has been conducted with a view to weaken the case of the petitioner/complainant, said the HC.Thereafter, the HC directed the CBI "to conduct the investigation in FIR No. 207 dated October 15, 2022... The same be completed as expeditiously as possible but preferably within a period of six months."

Telangana phone-tapping case: HC judge, family were under surveillance during BRS regime: Police

GNS News Agency, july 10

Mobile phones of some political leaders and several others including a High Court Judge and his family were put under surveillance during the previous BRS regime by the accused in the phone-tapping case, the Hyderabad Police said in a counter affidavit filed in the Telangana High Court.The city police also mentioned that the accused police officers had obtained CDRs (Call Detail Records) and IPDRs (Internet Protocol Detail Records) of phone numbers of A Revanth Reddy (Telangana PCC president and now chief minister) and others. The accused also prepared profiles pertaining to the family members, relatives and close personnel and party associates of Revanth Reddy, they said.

A charge sheet has been filed against six accused including a suspended DSP of the Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB), two Additional Superintendents of Police and a former Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), who have been arrested by Hyderabad Police since March 13 for allegedly erasing the intelligence information from various electronic gadgets as well as for alleged phone tapping during the previous BRS regime. In the affidavit submitted in High Court on Wednesday, which is hearing the case on its own on the phone tapping, the city police said former SIB chief T Prabhakar Rao (who is absconding) formed a informal team "Special Operations Team" within the SIB for carrying out certain specific tasks related to political surveillance to benefit the then ruling political party and its leaders. Suspended DSP D Praneeth Kumar alias Praneeth Rao of SIB and his team developed profiles of hundreds of people, intercepted hundreds of phone calls of several persons, it said. The accused made requests to telecom service providers for CDRs, IPDRs and interception requests in violation of the Indian Telegraph Act and IT Act, and obtained CDRs and IPDRs, and thereafter on anticipating the change in government, destructed all the evidence of their illegal activities, it said. The accused had obtained CDR and IPDR of phone numbers of the High Court Judge and his wife, it said, adding that they obtained CDRs for the period from September 10, 2022 to September 9, 2023 and the IPDR obtained was from August 8, 2023 to September 7, 2023. The accused deliberately



committed all interception violations though they were fully aware that it is against the provisions of the Telegraph Act.All the accused resorted to do the work of political intelligence to suit the needs of the then ruling BRS party, it said."Instead of the mandated intelligence collection, all the accused in collusion with their associates in conspiracy have brazenly violated all norms set by the department and put surveillance over targeted political leaders, their staff, family members, journalists, a High Court Judge and his family, businessmen and their employees, bureaucrats both serving and retired, only for the purpose of serving the needs of a political party in power at that time and its leaders for their ulterior personal agenda of retaining power by winning the elections " the affidavit said The High Court was further informed that the arrested accused did not cooperate well during the probe and also the scope of investigation is very deep, and that it will be continued further against the absconding accused and against their associates. On the discovery of new facts against the arrested accused and on further investigation of the case against the absconding accused and their associates, supplementary charge sheet will be filed, the affidavit said. The arrested accused along with others have been accused of developing profiles of several persons unauthorisedly and monitoring them clandestinely and illegally in SIB and using them in a partisan manner to favour a political party at the behest of some persons and also conspiracy in destroying the records to cause the disappearance of evidence of their crimes, police earlier said.

BJP is a 'parasite', 'ate up' regional parties: Jairam Ramesh



GNS News Agency, july 10

Hitting out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Thursday said the PM called for consensus outside Parliament but opted for confrontation within it, and if anybody was a "parasite", it was the BJP as its track record shows how it had "eaten up" the regional parties. In an interview with PTI a day after the Parliament session ended, the Congress general secretary, in charge communications, said the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha had shown that a "new, aggressive, revived, rejuvenated" Opposition had emerged in the form of INDIA bloc.

"The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha and the simultaneous session of Rajya Sabha has certainly seen two things — a new, aggressive, revived, rejuvenated Opposition in the INDIA group which is the way it should be in a democracy, but at the same time we have also seen no change in the attitude, approach, behaviour of the non-biological PM," Ramesh said in a swipe at Modi.The Congress leader claimed that the 2024 election result was a decisive, personal, political, and moral defeat for Modi but that was not reflected in the way he allowed Parliament to be conducted."He (Modi) called for consensus outside Parliament but opted for confrontation within Parliament. There is no evidence that it is going to change, but there is evidence that the Opposition is going to be aggressive, active, pro-active," Ramesh said.

"We hope the government realises that this is a mandate for a coalition government, it is a mandate for taking people along and it is also a mandate for listening to all other parties that are not part of the NDA," the Rajya Sabha MP said.Asked about Prime Minister Modi's remarks calling the Congress "parjeevi" (parasitic) party, Ramesh slammed the BJP and pointed to the ruling party's track record in dealing with allies."Only a parasite can use that word. Look at the track record, of how the regional parties have been eaten up by the BJP. Today, the BJD, you see the climate change... has stood with the INDIA group in the Rajya Sabha throughout the session. So if anybody is a parasite, it is the BJP," he said. Replying to nearly 18-hour long discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in the Lower House, Modi had made the "parjeevi" barb at the Congress."I don't know if the Congress allies have done an analysis of the polls. This election is also a message for these allies. The Congress will be known as the parjeevi Congress party from 2024," Modi had said."Parjeevi" is one who feeds on the body it resides in and the Congress eats up the votes of the party it allies with while prospering at the cost of its ally, the PM had said.Ramesh also accused the BJP of twisting Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi's remarks during his address in the Lok Sabha.Gandhi had launched a no-holds-barred attack on the BJP, accusing the ruling party leaders of dividing people on communal lines. Gandhi's remarks drew massive protests from the treasury benches and a rare intervention from the prime minister, who accused the Congress leader of calling the entire Hindu community violent.

Asked about the BJP's allegations, Ramesh said, "It's a typical distortion that the prime minister excels in doing it. Throughout the election campaign, he distorted and he defamed, that's not surprising what he did. Rahul Gandhi made perfectly legitimate remarks which were that the non-biological PM and his colleagues do not speak on behalf of the Hindu faith and the Hindu way of life." "We are all Hindus, we are all proud of it. The way the non-biological PM and his colleagues have conducted themselves, propagating prejudice, hatred, bigotry, violence, it goes against the tenets of this great faith that has sustained our culture and civilisation for thousands of years," he added.Ramesh also weighed in on the row over Gandhi's remarks on the Agnipath military recruitment scheme in the Lok Sabha.

'The evidence is very clear, that Rajnath Singh contradicted what Rahul Gandhi said, but the facts are entirely in support of what Rahul Gandhi said. Let them do whatever they have to do, all the facts will come out. The facts are completely contrary to what Mr Rajnath Singh claimed, it was he who misled the House," Ramesh said."The fact is the non-biological PM cannot run away from the fact that a former Army Chief of Staff has written in his memoir that it was a surprise for the Army and it came as a bolt from the blue for the air force and the navy. The majority of the armed forces are opposed to the contractual system that has been introduced in the name of Agniveer," he said. On whether any action may be initiated against Gandhi for his remarks in the House, Ramesh said they will try to unsettle him no doubt but his principle has been "daro mat" (don't be scared)."Remember there is no comparison between the mandate Mr Rahul Gandhi got in Rae Bareli to the mandate the prime minister got in Varanasi," he said. On his claims that the government will not last, Ramesh said the government is entirely dependent on support from "two Ns — Nitish Kumar and N Chandrababu Naidu"."This mandate was not for the BJP, the BJP could not cross 240 and talked about 400. This was a personal rejection of the non-biological PM. I find that the constant reference to 'ek tihaai' (one-third) pradhan mantri has irked him, though in his characteristic style he twisted it. I was saying 'ek tihaai PM' and not 'ek tihaai government',' Ramesh said.

Tripura HC orders parents of accused people in NDPS case to run anti-drug campaign for a month

GNS News Agency, july 10

The court also directed the officer in charge of the Gandatuisa police station, subdivisional magistrate and the block development officer to extend all possible assistance to the family members of the accused duo.The court also directed the officer in charge of the Gandatuisa police station, subdivisional magistrate and the block development officer to extend all possible assistance to the family members of the accused duo. The Tripura High



Indian Navy chief meets newly appointed Bangladesh Army chief; discusses new avenues for cooperation

GNS News Agency, july 10

Indian Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi has met with the newly appointed army chief of Bangladesh General Waker-Uz-Zaman, and discussed the robust bilateral ties and explored new avenues for cooperation between the two armed forces. Admiral Tripathi began a fiveday visit to Bangladesh on June 30 to consolidate the bilateral defence engagement and explore new avenues of cooperation in the maritime domain. This visit is Admiral Tripathi's first official visit abroad after he took the reins of the Navy two months ago"During his ongoing visit to Bangladesh, Adm Dinesh K Tripathi, CNS, interacted with General Waker-Uz-Zaman, Chief of the Army Staff, Bangladesh Army, at Bangladesh Army Headquarters, Dhaka," the spokesperson for the Indian Navy said in a post X on Thursday."The two principals discussed longstanding and robust ties between the two nations and initiatives for enhancing defence cooperation and exploring further avenues in areas of training and joint exercises between the armed forces of Bangladesh and India," the post said.Lieutenant General Waker-Uz-Zaman was last month named Bangladesh's next Army chief for a three-year term and assumed charge on June 23, the Defence Ministry said.

Admiral Tripathi, during his visit, also interacted with Air Marshal Hasan Mahmood, the Chief of the Air Staff, Bangladesh Air Force. "During the interaction, the longstanding and strong ties between the two nations were highlighted, and initiatives for enhancing cooperation in the field of training, joint exercises and interoperability were discussed," the post said.Admiral Tripathi also held bilateral discussions with his counter-



part, Admiral M Nazmul Hassan, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Bangladesh Navy, in Dhaka.

Naval cooperation between India and Bangladesh has been traditionally strong, encompassing a wide span which includes operational interactions through Port Calls and bilateral Naval Exercises, along with Capacity Building, Capability Enhancement and Training initiatives, a statement from the Indian Navy said, adding that the visit of the Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy, will further strengthen the strong bonds of friendship between the navies of both countries. During his visit, Admiral Tripathi also interacted with Major General Tarique Ahmed Siddique (Retd), the Security Advisor to Bangladesh's Prime Minister, at Dhaka and discussed with him enhancing the long-standing relations between the two nations through defence cooperation. The Indian Navy chief also called on Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who said the ties between India and Bangladesh could be seen as a model of bilateral ties for the South Asian reaion

Court has ordered community service for the parents and other family members of two men charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, asking them to run a month-long anti-drug campaign in their villages.Justice Arindam Lodh pronounced the order on Tuesday while hearing a bail petition filed by Jibanjoy Tripura and Sananjoy Tripura, who were booked in the case in Dhalai district on April 15.

The court also sought reports from the district magistrate and other authorities concerned and said the decision on the next course of action in the case would be taken on the basis of such reports."In the premises of the order dated 02/07/2024 the Hon'ble Judge has directed that the parents and the family members of both the accused persons must start a campaign against the trading and the use of drugs in their own areas/villages. In the process, the family members were directed to take advice from the elderly people of the village and also to meet the young people who are more vulnerable to drugs," read the order. The court also directed the officer in charge of the Gandatuisa police station, subdivisional magistrate and the block development officer to extend

all possible assistance to the family members of the accused duo. The police officer was asked to take photographs and make videos of the campaign with the help of the local administration. Paralegal volunteers working in the Gandatuisa subdivision have been asked to supervise the process and help the families organise meetings."All the aforesaid authorities along with the DM (district magistrate) & Collector of Dhalai are directed to submit their respective individual reports before the next date of hearing, which is on 05/08/2024, and on receiving such reports and considering those, the next course of action in this case shall be decided." the order further said.Speaking to reporters about the order, Additional Public Prosecutor Samrat Ghosh said, "As per section 4 of the Act, community service has been added. Now, along with punishment, community service is done as a corrective measure. Justice Arindam Lodh passed the order which is very innovative and first of its kind in the state.'

DPIIT has recommended removal of Angel Tax ahead of Union Budget

GNS News Agency, july 10

Union Budget 2024, DPIIT, Angel Tax removal, DPIIT Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, Angel Tax industry hurdle, foreign direct investment (FDI) in startups, Finance Ministry, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Section 56(2)(viib) Income-tax Act, Angel Tax for startups, income tax on unlisted company shares, Finance Act 2023, nonresident investor Angel Tax, startup funding challenges, Angel Tax introduction 2012, Indian startup layoffs 2023, decline in startup funding 2023, capital formation in India, DPIIT recommendations Union Budget, income from other sources tax startup.Angel tax – which is income tax at the rate of 30.6 per cent – is levied when an unlisted company issues shares to an investor at a price higher than its fair market value. (Representational Photo/Express Archives)

Ahead of the presentation of Union Budget 2024 later this month, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has recommended the removal of the contentious Angel Tax, DPIIT Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said during a press briefing This comes after the industry said that Angel Tax is creating a hurdle in capital formation amid an already slowing foreign direct investment (FDI) in startups and recommended that it should be removed during the Budget presentation.

"The DPIIT has recommended the removal of Angel Tax. Although, the final decision will be taken by the Finance Ministry," Singh said in response to a question regarding DPIIT's stance on Angel Tax. The Confedera-

tion of Indian Industry (CII) in its Union Budget recommendation last month suggested the removal of Section 56(2)(viib) of the Income-tax Act colloquially known as the 'Angel Tax' stating that the step "would greatly aid capital formation in the country". Angel tax - which is income tax at the rate of 30.6 per cent - is levied when an unlisted company issues shares to an investor at a price higher than its fair market value. Earlier, it was imposed only on investments made by a resident investor. However the Finance Act 2023 proposed to extend Angel Tax even to non-resident investors from April 1, 2024.With the latest amendment, the government had proposed to also include foreign investors in the ambit, meaning that when a start-up raises funding from a foreign investor, that too will now be counted as income and be taxable. Angel Tax was first introduced in 2012 to deter the generation and use of unaccounted money through the subscription of shares of a closely held company at a value that is higher than the fair market value of the firm's shares. The industry has argued that the government is wrong in citing the difference between valuations and actual performance as a sign of money laundering, adding that investors fund startups based on their future potential. Taxes levied on the difference between issue price of unlisted securities and its fair market value (FMV) has hurt funding, industry said. The changes in the Angel Tax provisions came at a time when an estimated 100 Indian startups laid off over 15,000 employees in 2023, as funding winter that began in 2022 persisted.





Kenya president spoke to IMF chief after pulling tax hikes: Report



GNS News Agency, july 10

Kenyan President William Ruto spoke by phone with International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva in the days after he withdrew \$2.7 billion in proposed tax hikes in response to deadly protests, two diplomatic sources told The finance bill containing the tax increases was central to policy reforms agreed by Kenya with the IMF as part of a lending programme worth \$3.6 billion.

Analysts say its withdrawal a week ago is likely to result in Kenya missing key programme targets, although the government does not urgently need cash from the IMF after it was able this year to repay a bond that was originally worth \$2 billion by issuing a new seven-year bond. The IMF has been a major target of the ire of young Kenyan protesters, who have accused it of being the driving force behind the proposed tax hikes. The two sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, did not provide details about Ruto and Georgieva's phone call. However, they said there was agreement among major donors that the IMF needed to show flexibility on programme targets as Kenya looked to fill the gap caused by the bill's withdrawal.

One of the sources added that the government should show a commitment to reducing wasteful spending, cracking down on corruption and increasing accountability in exchange for that flexibility. The IMF reached a staff level agreement with Kenya in early June on a policy package needed to complete the lending programme's seventh review, expected to unlock a disbursement of several hundred million dollars, but the deal has not yet received approval from the fund's Executive Board."We remain deeply concerned by the recent tragic events in Kenya and maintain close ongoing and constructive dialogue with the Kenyan authorities," an IMF spokesperson said when asked about the call.Ruto's spokesperson did not respond to requests for comment. Since shelving the bill, Ruto has pledged to include austerity measures in a supplemental budget, but has also suggested that the government will need to significantly increase borrowing in the 2024/25 fiscal year. An IMF spokesperson said last week that its main goal has been helping Kenya overcome its economic challenges and improving its people's well-being."I think the IMF will continue helping Kenya, but the disbursements are more likely to resume toward the end of this year," said Pavel Mamai, managing partner and portfolio manager at Promeritum Investment Management."The IMF will basically ask Kenya to regroup and present a new reform plan."At least 39 people have been killed in the protests since mid-June, according to a government-funded human rights organisation. Anti-government demonstrations have continued since Ruto pulled the bill, although with lower turn-

Xi and Putin set out ambitions for Eurasian security club

GNS News Agency, july 10

China's President Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin pressed their case on Thursday for closer security, political and economic cooperation between countries of the vast Eurasian region as a counterweight to Western alliances.

They were speaking on the second and final day of a summit in the Kazakh capital Astana of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), a club launched in 2001 by Russia, China and Central Asian states and now including India, Iran and Pakistan."SCO members should consolidate unity and jointly oppose external interference in the face of the real challenges of interference and division," Xinhua news agency quoted Xi as saying, warning against the West's "Cold War mentality".President Putin, in his address to the SCO, reiterated Russia's call for "a new architecture of cooperation, indivisible security and development in Eurasia, designed to replace the outdated Eurocentric and Euro-Atlantic models, which gave unilateral advantages only to certain states".

He once again blamed the West for the war in Ukraine and said Russia was ready to freeze the conflict if Kyiv and its backers accepted Moscow's terms for talks.Putin said last month the proposed new Eurasian security pact should be open to all countries across the region, including current NATO members. But the aim, he said, should be to gradually remove all external military presence from Eurasia, a clear reference to the United States.The SCO nations represent new key buyers of Russian commodi-



ties such as oil and gas, as Western sanctions imposed over the Ukraine war have forced Moscow to pivot towards Asia.Putin also hailed on Thursday the increasing use of national currencies - instead of the dollar - in trade between SCO countries and called for the creation of a new payment system within the group.Western sanctions have left Moscow cut off from traditional payment systems such as SWIFT, while hundreds of billions of dollars in Russian foreign reserves remain frozen."The multi-polar world has become reality," Putin said. "More and more countries support a fair world order and are ready to vigorously defend their legal rights and traditional values."Separately, India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sidelines of the SCO gathering and agreed to step up talks to resolve issues on their border which have soured ties since an armed clash in 2020

Israel weighs Hamas's latest response to Gaza cease-fire proposal as diplomatic efforts are revived

'Isolate and expose' countries that harbour terrorists: India at SCO summit



GNS News Agency, july 10

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday called on the global community to isolate countries providing safe havens to terrorists. Speaking at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) of Heads of State Summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, Jaishankar stated, "The global community must isolate and expose those countries that harbour terrorists, provide safe havens, and condone terrorism."

In a veiled attack on Pakistan, Jaishankar said, "Cross- border terrorism requires decisive response and terrorism financing and recruitment must be resolutely countered."Jaishankar, representing Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the meeting, emphasized one of the SCO's foundational goals: combating terrorism. "Many of us have had our experiences, often originating beyond our borders. Let us be clear that if left unchecked, it can become a major threat to regional and global peace. Terrorism in any form or manifestation cannot be justified or condoned," he stated. The summit was attended by Chinese President Xi Jinping, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Russian President Vladimir Putin, among others.

Jaishankar stressed the need to "isolate and expose those countries that harbour terrorists, provide safe havens and condone terrorism," a pointed reference to

Pakistan and its ally China, which has frequently blocked United Nations proposals to blacklist Pakistan-based terrorists."We should also take proactive steps to prevent the spread of radicalisation among our youth," he added, noting that a joint statement issued during India's presidency last year highlighted New Delhi's shared commitment.He highlighted that the SCO offers a unique platform for unity, collaboration, and prosperity, based on the ancient principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, meaning 'The World is One Family'. Jaishankar later posted on X, "Delivered India's statement at the Summit of SCO Council of Heads of States on behalf of PM Shri @ narendramodi ji. Thank the leaders present for conveying their best wishes to Prime Minister @ narendramodi on his re-election for a third successive term."

Describing the SCO as a principle-based organization driven by consensus among its member states, Jaishankar noted that the group holds a "prominent place in our foreign policy". He emphasized India's deep civilizational ties with the region's people, highlighting India's focus on Central Asia's interests and aspirations through greater exchanges, projects, and activities.During India's SCO presidency, cooperation has been peoplecentric, exemplified by events like the SCO Millet Food Festival, SCO Film Festival, SCO Surajkund Craft Mela, SCO Think-Tanks Conference, and International Conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage. "We will naturally support similar endeavors by others," he added.Jaishankar also congratulated Kazakhstan for successfully hosting the summit and extended India's best wishes to China for its upcoming SCO presidency. Additionally, he expressed "deepest condolences" for the tragic death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and others in a helicopter crash. The SCO, which now includes nine member states-India, Iran, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan-has become an influential economic and security bloc. Belarus recently joined as the 10th member, and Kazakhstan hosted the summit as the current chair of the group.

Pro-Palestinian protesters breach security at Australia's Parliament House to unfurl banners

GNS News Agency, july 10

Pro-Palestinian protesters breached security at Australia's Parliament House to unfurl banners from the roof on Thursday as a senator quit the government over its direction on the Gaza war. Tensions over Israel's war against Hamas dominated Parliament's final sitting day before a five-week break. The four protesters were arrested after draping the words "war crimes" and "genocide" as well as the Palestinian rallying cry "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" for more than an hour over the building's facade known as the Great Verandah. Inside the building, Afghanistan-born Sen. Fatima Payman, the only Australian federal lawmaker ever to wear a hajib during sittings, announced she had quit the ruling Labour Party over her refusal to toe the party line on Gaza.

"My family did not flee from a war-torn country to come here as refugees for me to remain silent when I see atrocities inflicted on innocent people," Payman told reporters."Witnessing our government's indifference to the greatest injustice of our times makes me question the direction the party is taking," she added. The first-term senator defied her government colleagues last week by supporting a minor party's motion that demanded the Senate "recognise the state of Palestine". Australia does not recognise a Palestinian state. The government is committed to a two-state solution in which Israel and a future Palestinian state can coexist, in peace and security, within internationally recognised borders, the policy states.



a police statement said.

The protesters triggered a security crackdown in Parliament House that prevented many members of the public entering the building. The public galleries of both the House of Representatives and the Senate were kept empty as a precaution. House Speaker Milton Dick said he was "deeply concerned" by the protests and had ordered an upgrade of security. Police were investigating how the protesters gained access to a secure area.Albanese told Parliament he condemned the protest. Peaceful protest has an important place in our society, but this was not a peaceful protest," Albanese said."These actions have done absolutely nothing to advance any cause. Indeed, they have hurt the cause that those engaged in this reckless activity believe they are advancing," Albanese added.Opposition leader Peter Dutton demanded to know who allowed protesters into the building and described their message as anti-Semitic."We need to understand the gravity of this situation, because these images will be beamed around the world," Dutton told Parliament.

GNS News Agency, july 10

Israel's Cabinet was set to convene Thursday to discuss Hamas's latest response to a US-backed proposal for a phased cease-fire in Gaza, as diplomatic efforts aimed at ending the nine-month war stirred back to life after a weekslong hiatus.Fighting, meanwhile, has intensified between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah, with the militant group saying it fired more than 200 rockets and exploding drones into northern Israel to avenge the killing of a senior commander in an Israeli airstrike the day before. The relatively low-level conflict has literally set the border ablaze, and raised fears of a potentially even more devastating war in the Middle East. Hezbollah has said it will halt its attacks if there is a cease-fire between Hamas — a fellow Iran-backed ally — and Israel.

The United States has rallied world support behind a plan that would see the release of all of the scores of hostages still held by the militant group in return for a lasting truce and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. But until now, neither side appears to have fully embraced it.Hamas suggested "amendments" last month, some of which the U.S. said were unworkable, without providing specifics. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has confirmed that the original proposal was an Israeli one, but has raised doubts over whether it would end the war - a key Hamas demand. Hamas confirmed Wednesday that it had sent another response to Egypt and Qatar, which are mediating the talks, without providing details.A US official said the Biden administration was examining the response, calling it constructive but saying more work needed to be done. The official, who wasn't authorized to comment publicly, spoke on condition of anonymity.

An Israeli official said Netanyahu would convene a Cabinet meeting Thursday to discuss the latest developments surrounding the negotiations. The official, who wasn't authorized to discuss the meeting with media, spoke on condition of anonymity. Israel would likely hold additional consultations before making a final decision on any amended proposal.Hamas political official Bassem Naim said that the group has neither accepted nor rejected the American oposal, and has "responded with some ideas to bridge the gap" between the two sides, without elaborating. Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas's top political leader, has shared suggestions with Egyptian, Qatari and Turkish officials, the group said in a statement late Wednesday.US officials have said the latest proposal has new language that was proposed to Egypt and Qatar on Saturday and addresses indirect negotiations that are set to commence during the first phase of the three-phase deal that US President Joe Biden laid out in a May 31 speech. The first phase calls for a "full and complete ceasefire," a withdrawal of Israeli forces from all densely populated areas of Gaza and the release of a number of hos-



tages, including women, older people and the wounded, in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. The proposal called for the parties to negotiate the terms of the second phase during the 42 days of phase one. Under the current proposal, Hamas could release all of the remaining men, both civilians and soldiers, during the second phase. In return, Israel could free an agreed-upon number of Palestinian prisoners and detainees. The releases wouldn't occur until "sustainable calm" takes effect and all Israeli troops withdraw from Gaza. The third phase would see the return of the remains of hostages. The transition from the first to the second phase has appeared to be the main sticking point. Hamas is concerned that Israel will restart the war after the first phase, perhaps after making unrealistic demands in the talks. Israeli officials have expressed concern that Hamas will do the same, drawing out the talks and the initial cease-fire indefinitely without releasing the remaining captives.

In a lengthy television interview last month, Netanyahu said that he was prepared to make a "partial deal," but was committed to continuing the war "after a pause" in order to annihilate Hamas. Later, speaking before Israel's parliament, he said Israel remains committed to the deal outlined by Biden. The war began when Hamas-led militants launched a surprise attack on October 7 into southern Israel, attacking multiple army bases and farming communities and killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians. They abducted another 250 people. more than 100 of whom were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November. Militants are still holding around 80 hostages and the remains of 40 others. Israel launched a major offensive in response to the Oct. 7 attack that has killed more than 37,900 Palestinians, according to health officials in Gaza, who don't say how many were civilians or militants. The war has caused vast destruction across the territory, displaced most of its population of 2.3 million - often multiple times - caused widespread hunger and raised fears of famine.

Payman will remain in the Senate as an independent lawmaker. She is the first government lawmaker to leave since Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's administration was elected in 2022.Police said the four protesters were expected to be charged with trespassing.They have been banned from Parliament House for two years,

Joe Biden gets backing of Democratic governors after weak debate performance

GNS News Agency, july 10

The Democratic governors of New York, Minnesota and Maryland on Wednesday said they would support U.S. President Joe Biden's reelection bid after a candid discussion with him about his weak performance in last week's debate."The president has always had our backs. We're going to have his back as well," Maryland Governor Wes Moore told reporters after a meeting with Mr. Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris at the White House that included 24 Democratic governors and the mayor of Washington, D.C., some

joining online. Mr. Moore said the governors were frank in relaying negative feedback from constituents about Mr. Biden's poor performance during the debate with Republican rival Donald Trump. He said there was clearly work to do before the Nov. 5 election, but Biden had made it clear he would stay in the race."The president... he's our nominee. The president is our party leader," Mr. Moore



said. There has been growing talk among Democrats in recent days that 81-yearold Biden should drop out of the race.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul said she felt confident after the meeting and all the governors pledged their support to Mr. Biden. The president is "in it to win it," she said.Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, the chair of the Democratic Governors Association, said Mr. Biden's debate performance on Thursday was bad but he

felt Mr. Biden was fit for office."Obviously we, like many Americans, are a little worried. We're worried because the threat of a Trump presidency is not theoretical," Mr. Walz said, adding that the previous Trump presidency was marked by "chaos, destruction."Nearly a dozen of the State leaders attended the meeting in person, but only three spoke with reporters afterwards.California Governor Gavin Newsom, who participated in person, posted his reaction on social platform X: "I heard

three words from the President tonight - he's all in. And so am I."Mr. Biden's campaign said the president reiterated his determination "to defeat the existential threat of Donald Trump at the ballot box in November" and discussed the importance of electing Democrats up and down the ballot."All participants reiterated their shared commitment to do everything possible to make sure President Biden and Vice President Harris beat Donald Trump in November," it said.



SBI announces initiatives to mitigate risks in agriculture loan portfolio



The country's largest lender SBI on Thursday announced 11 new initiatives - including enhancement of its digital banking features and opening of 35 new Agricultural Centralised Processing Cells - to mitigate risks in its agricultural loan portfolio.On the occasion of the 69th Foundation Day, State Bank of India announced these initiatives to widen the bank's accessibility to address the banking needs of its potential customers, the lender said in a statement.SBI has enhanced its digital payment experience, with the introduction of two exciting features like tap-and-pay on the BHIM SBI PAY app and end-to-end digital loans against mutual funds on the YONO app. it added. The bank has also announced an initiative, which is a fully digital end-to-end journey for SBI Surya Ghar Loan, it said, adding that the users can opt for credit to install solar rooftops under the central government's PM Surya Ghar Scheme, offering loans for up to 10 KW capacity. The entire process will be managed on SBI's digital platform from applicant registration on the MNRE/REC portal to loan disbursement.

Acknowledging the significant contributions and global presence of the Indian diaspora in shaping the nation's growth story, SBI opened a second Global NRI Centre (GNC) in Patiala, Punjab.To enhance its service to NRI clients, its Chairman Dinesh Khara inaugurated the second Global NRI Centre (GNC) in Patiala on Bank Day.SBI's dedicated GNCs reflect the bank's unwavering commitment to strengthening its ties with the global Indian community."These centres serve as hubs of excellence, providing specialised services to NRI customers. With a network of 434 specialised NRI branches in India, foreign offices in 29 countries, and partnerships with 45 exchange houses and 5 banks in GCC countries, SBI is well-equipped to offer comprehensive services to its NRI clientele worldwide," the statement said.In another move, SBI has launched comprehensively redesigned High Court branches aimed at enhancing services for the legal community. This initiative underscores SBI's commitment to providing tailored financial solutions that cater specifically to the unique needs of lawyers and legal professionals, it added. The redesigned branches are equipped to offer top-tier services, including financial management, transaction facilitation, and personalised financial advice. With regard to home loans, the bank has made processing such loans more transparent. Home loan borrowers will now receive automated email and SMS notifications regarding the status of their loan application at various processing stages. This initiative aims to enhance customer satisfaction and convenience, it said

In Koo's demise, a stark reminder: a global social network needs more than just tech

Before it could really fly, the yellow bird was dead. Government officials gave it initial flight, and while it did gain some early traction in 2021, Koo – India's answer to X (formerly Twitter) – has shut down, highlighting the existential challenges a company has to overcome in building a successful social networking platform.For a country that prides itself for being, in many ways, the software capital of the world, a successful global social networking platform has somehow eluded India forever. Koo was the first hoped it could change that, but it faced some fundamental issues.

It takes a lot of capital to build a social media platform in a world which is already dominated by such offerings by deep-pocketed big tech platforms from the US. Hiring the right talent, maintaining online systems, and putting together a team of content moderators are some of the obvious cost centres for a social networking platform. Then there are costs of following regulations in various jurisdictions, which again requires a team of lawyers, and policy professionals who could work with various lobby groups to influence regulations. For a small company, that is often a cost they simply can not afford in the building stage, and it is fair to believe that VCs wouldn't want to bankroll these operations either.

Those who closely follow tech regulations in India would vouch for the intricate web of lobbying that goes behind the scenes to ensure that companies and governments agree to trade-offs that they are both okay with. India is no different. So called industry bodies, which more often than not are nothing more than big-tech mouthpieces, require consistent engagement from companies, apart from membership money. If one can't afford that, it is likely that their viewpoint may never reach the government. Beyond the big lobby groups, a number of boutique consultancy firms have also mushroomed in India that world works by publishing reports which further a narrative which is sympathetic to big tech companies, because more often than not they are the ones funding such research work. If they haven't funded it, it is likely that a consultancy firm wants to get their attention, and funding by aligning the research work they put out.It is easy to get lost in this world, which is largely dominated by the likes of Meta and Google who splurge millions of dollars in lobbying. This is a big factor of having adequate money.In their announcement about Koo shutting down, the app's co-founders alluded to the issue of this capital problem.



explored partnerships with multiple larger internet companies, conglomerates and media houses but these talks didn't yield the outcome we wanted. Most of them didn't want to deal with user generated content and the wild nature of a social media company," the co-founders said in their post.

For Koo, it thought that its focus on local language content could be that differentiator. "We saw a big gap between the languages the world speaks and the fact that most social products, especially X/Twitter in India are English dominant. In a world where 80% of the population speaks a language other than English, this is a strong need," the co-founders said. At the height of its sour relationship with X, several government officials tried propping up Koo as an alternative. There was some initial traction too. "Koo used to have a 10% like ratio, almost 7-10x the ratio Twitter had – making Koo a more favourable platform for creators. At our peak we were at about 2.1 million daily active users and ~10 million monthly active users, 9000+ VIPs, that included some of the most eminent personalities from various fields." co-

Saffron won't make your baby fair, so why is it advised during pregnancy?



Unlike what pregnant women are made to believe, drinking saffron milk regularly won't make the baby fair. But it is still recommended during pregnancy. Why?

Answering the same, Dr Surabhi Siddhartha, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist, Motherhood Hospital, Kharghar said that saffron doesn't possess any magical properties to improve the baby's skin tone. "However, it is known to be loaded with antioxidants and can help reduce inflammation and promote overall well-being for both mother and baby, making it a good addition to a woman's diet," said Dr Surabhi."Skin colour is determined by genetic factors, not dietary intake of specific foods during pregnancy," added Dr Seema Sharma, consultant, obstetrics and gyneacology, Apollo Cradle Children's Hospital, Moti Nagar, New Delhi.Childbirth educator Radhika Kalpatharu told indianexpress.com that saffron improves digestion, which weakens during pregnancy. As such, having saffron infused in milk or porridge will give you relief from digestive issues including constipation," said Kalpatharu.

Saffron contains anti-depressant agents that control mood swings and anxiety, mentioned Kalpatharu. "It ensures that the mom — and as an extension, the baby — remain happy," said Kalpatharu. Dr Surabhi too agreed and shared that saffron is believed to "have mood-enhancing properties which can help alleviate stress and anxiety during pregnancy".

According to Kalpatharu, saffron also tends to manage blood pressure issues during pregnancy. "Morning sickness is one of the major problems during the first trimester. Having saffron in a moderate amount will ease the feeling and give you relief from nausea," said Kalpatharu.As the baby grows in the womb, the mother's body muscles stretch and adjust the space. 'During this procedure, the mom can get severe cramps and pain in the back, stomach, and legs. Consuming saffron moderately can give you relief in this painful period," said Kalpatharu.

Mothers may face anemia during pregnancy. According to Kalpatharu, moms are advised to have ironrich food and supplements during pregnancy. "Having some amount of saffron daily will ensure you maintain the iron and hemoglobin levels and stay healthy in this beautiful journey," said Kalpatharu. The childbirth educator also mentioned that hormonal changes, growing tummy, and breathlessness may make you feel exhausted after getting up in the morning. "If you have saffron milk before going to bed, it will help you have a relaxed good night's sleep," said Kalpatharu. Agreeing, Dr Sharma share that saffron's "mild sedative effects can contribute to more restful and consistent sleep patterns". Pimples, breakouts, and pigmentation are common issues during this period. "Consuming saffron regularly eliminates skin problems and improves skin tone (not colour)," said Kalpatharu.Pregnancy may weaken your immune system. According to Kalpatharu, consuming saffron regularly ensures that you are protected from allergies and infections due to changes in weather and other general infections. "If you consume saffron moderately and with your gynecologist's advice, it will turn out to be the best thing to have during pregnancy with tremendous benefits for mom and the baby," said Kalpatharu.

How much to have?

Dr Surabhi mentioned that pregnant women should be cautious about the quantity of saffron to be used daily. "Follow the instructions given by the expert who will guide you regarding the safe quantity of it to be had daily. 2-3 stands of saffron can be added to milk. Drinking saffron milk will be a personal choice. Saffron can also induce side effects in pregnant women such as nausea, anxiety, and bleeding nose, so be careful and don't have it on your own until the expert recommends it to you," said Dr Surabhi.

Can you drink your fruit and vegetables? How does juice compare to the whole food?



"We were just months away from beating Twitter in India in 2022 and could have doubled down on that short term goal with capital behind us," they said. "A prolonged funding winter which hit us at our peak hurt our plans at the time and we had to tone down on our growth trajectory. We needed 5 to 6 years of aggressive, long term and patient capital to make this dream a reality."

A conservative mosh pitIt is also ostensibly argued that making a social media platform is not much of a tech challenge anymore, as it might have been a decade ago. There are enough platforms to take inspiration from – as Koo liberally did from Twitter. The real challenge is to offer users an alternative that may fulfil a need which isn't already being met by another, more thriving platform. "We

founders said.

But, that was not sustainable. Social media is a game of scale. They're not just competing with other apps, but also with essential bodily needs like sleep. They will only work if users actively choose to log in, and engage with and outrage over - content that is served to them. In fact, for a large portion of X users, it became a point that because Koo was promoted by those from the ruling party, they would never use it - in that sense, the government endorsement may have actually backfired. The endorsement itself was a half-baked attempt. At no point did any government official ever commit to Koo exclusively. Take Truth Social as an example – even as it becomes a mosh pit of questionable conservative commentators, its main pull is that it is the major gateway into the mind of former US Donald Trump, who no longer posts on platforms like X or Facebook. For those who follow him religiously and buy into the ideology that comes with that, Truth Social is a must have app. In Koo's case, it did not have the benefit of such exclusivity. X remains a polarising platform, with prominent voices from across political ideologies. There was little incentive to post or engage with content on Koo, because the same can be done on X, and would fetch much greater engagement and outrage.Koo's focus on creating a platform catering to local languages was commendable, and could perhaps work at some point in the future. Not just yet, though.

Now, users will be able to make UPI payments to UAE merchants

New Delhi: The Indian Government has been pushing UPI globally for faster digital payments. Now, UPI will be available in the Middle East country UAE as well.NPCI International Payments Limited has partnered with Network International, a large digital commerce company in the Middle East and Africa for this. Now Indian travelers or NRIs in UAE will make Unified Payments Interface (UPI) payments through QR code through Point of Sale machines.NPCI International CEO Ritesh Shukla said that the increasing acceptance of UPI payments among UAE merchants will be convenient not only for Indian travellers, rather, it will promote innovative digital payment solutions at the international level.

According to the NPCI release, "The number of Indian travelers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is estimated to reach 98 lakh in 2024. Around 53 lakh Indians are likely to reach UAE alone." The Government of India, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and NPCI International are working together to promote UPI on the global platform. UPI is officially accepted in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, UAE, Singapore, France, and Bhutan.According to NPCI data, the number of transac-



tions on the UPI platform in June was 13.9 billion. It has seen an increase of 49 per cent on an annual basis. During this period, the average number of transactions through UPI was 463 million per day and the average transaction value was Rs 66,903 crore per day.The reason for the increase in UPI transactions is the linking of RuPay credit card with UPI and the launch of UPI in foreign countries as well. Less than 5 per cent of Australians eat the recommended serves of fresh produce each day (with 44 per cent eating enough fruit but only 6 per cent eating the recommended vegetables).Adults should aim to eat at least five serves of vegetables (or roughly 375 grams) and two serves of fruit (about 300 grams) each day. Fruits and vegetables help keep us healthy because they have lots of nutrients (vitamins, minerals and fibre) and healthpromoting bioactive compounds (substances not technically essential but which have health benefits) without having many calories.So, if you are having trouble eating the rainbow, you might be wondering – is it OK to drink your fruits and vegetables instead in a juice or smoothie? Like everything in nutrition, the answer is all about context.

It might help overcome barriersCommon reasons for not eating enough fruits and vegetables are preferences, habits, perishability, cost, availability, time and poor cooking skills. Drinking your fruits and vegetables in juices or smoothies can help overcome some of these barriers. Juicing or blending can help disguise tastes you don't like, like bitterness in vegetables. And it can blitz imperfections such as bruises or soft spots.Preparation doesn't take much skill or time, particularly if you just have to pour store-bought juice from the bottle. Treating for food safety and shipping time does change the make up of juices slightly, but unsweetened juices still remain significant sources of nutrients and beneficial bioactives. Juicing can extend shelf life and reduce the cost of nutrients. In fact, when researchers looked at the density of nutrients relative to the costs of common foods, fruit juice was the top performer.

So, drinking my fruits and veggies counts as a serve, right? How juice is positioned in healthy eating recommendations is a bit confusing. The Australian Dietary Guidelines include 100 per cent fruit juice with fruit but vegetable juice isn't mentioned. This is likely because vegetable juices weren't as common in 2013 when the guidelines were last revised. The guidelines also warn against having juice too often or in too high amounts. This appears to be based on the logic that juice is similar, but not quite as good as, whole fruit.Juice has lower levels of fibre compared to fruits, with fibre important for gut health, heart health and promoting feelings of fullness. Juice and smoothies also release the sugar from the fruit's other structures, making them "free". The World Health Organisation recommends we limit free sugars for good health.But fruit and vegetables are more than just the sum of their parts. When we take a "reductionist" approach to nutrition, foods and drinks are judged based on assumptions made about limited features such as sugar content or specific vitamins.But these features might not have the impact we logically assume because of the complexity of foods and people. When humans eat varied and complex diets, we don't necessarily need to be concerned that some foods are lower in fibre than others. Juice can retain the nutrients and bioactive compounds of fruit and vegetables and even add more because parts of the fruit we don't normally eat, like the skin, can be included.teeth Juice is acidic and does contain sugars, but it is possible proper oral hygiene, including rinsing, cleaning and using straws can mitigate these risks. (Photo: Getty Images)

So, it is healthy then?

A recent umbrella review of meta-analyses (a type of research that combines data from multiple studies of multiple outcomes into one paper looked at the relationship between 100 per cent juice and a range of health outcomes.Most of the evidence showed juice had a neutral impact on health (meaning no impact) or a positive one. Pure 100 per cent juice was linked to improved heart health and inflammatory markers and wasn't clearly linked to weight gain, multiple cancer types or metabolic markers (such as blood sugar levels).Some health risks linked to drinking juice were reported: death from heart disease, prostate cancer and diabetes risk.But the risks were all reported in observational studies, where researchers look at data from groups of people collected over time. These are not controlled and do not record consumption in the moment. So other drinks people think of as 100 per cent fruit juice (such as sugar-sweetened juices or cordials) might accidentally be counted as 100 per cent fruit juice. These types of studies are not good at showing the direct causes of illness or death.

What about my teeth?

The common belief juice damages teeth might not stack up. Studies that show juice damages teeth often lump 100 per cent juice in with sweetened drinks. Or they use model systems like fake mouths that don't match how people drinks juice in real life. Some use extreme scenarios like sipping on large volumes of drink frequently over long periods of time.Juice is acidic and does contain sugars, but it is possible proper oral hygiene, including rinsing, cleaning and using straws can mitigate these risks.Again, reducing juice to its acid level misses the rest of the story, including the nutrients and bioactives contained in juice that are beneficial to oral health.

So, what should I do?

Comparing whole fruit (a food) to juice (a drink) can be problematic. They serve different culinary purposes, so aren't really interchangeable. The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating recommends water as the preferred beverage but this assumes you are getting all your essential nutrients from eating. Where juice fits in your diet depends on what you are eating and what other drinks it is replacing. Juice might replace water in the context of a "perfect" diet. Or juice might replace alcohol or sugary soft drinks and make the relative benefits look very different. On balanceWhether you want to eat your fruits and vegetables or drink them comes down to what works for you, how it fits into the context of your diet and your life.









Ranga Reddy

Javed Akhtar recalls AR Rahman's strange yet unique practice: 'Whenever we entered the music room, he would light a candle...'



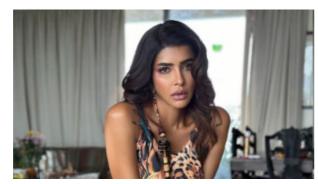
Javed Akhtar and AR Rahman's collaboration has given the Indian music industry some of its finest songs. Akhtar, who has worked with Rahman in projects like Lagaan, Swades and Dil Se..., recently recalled two statements by the Oscar winning composer which he remembers till date.

Calling Rahman an unusual man, Akhtar told O2india, "Rahman is a very unusual man. He is not a usual person. Let me share something unique yet strange. Once we entered the music room. This was when we began working together. There used to be a candle in the room. After entering the room, he used to light the candle. I used to wonder what is the need of the candle when the room is lit? However, I never asked him anything. One day, I think he noticed my curiosity and told me the reason behind his habit of lighting a candle. He said, 'Everything is mechanical here. Everything is a machine. There should be something that's not a machine. Something real. This candle is not a machine. Its light is not a machine. It is not a bulb. It makes us realise that there are other things in life which is beyond machines."

Recalling another incident, the veteran lyricist shared, "Though he is younger to me, he said something very wise to me which I will never forget. We were working for a producer, who made useless suggestions for a song. After he left, I felt irritated and commented, 'How can he talk such nonsense? That too with so much confidence? Rahman replied, 'No worries. We must listen to them. We should not compromise with our work, but at the same time when we listen to different opinions and try to satisfy them without losing our standard, we will do different kind of work. If we do only what we like, then there will be a similarity in the work. Our work will become monotonous.' What a wise thing to say? These two statements of Rahman, I will never forget." Just recently, on the 23rd anniversary of Lagaan, Javed Akhtar had taken to his X handle to share a special note. His post read, "Today it is 23rd year of Lagaan release. I can never forget my music sessions with the director Ashutosh saheb who is also a dear friend and the musical genius AR Rahman whose each composition made me stand on my creative toes to reach the level of the tunes. I would like to thank both of them."

Lakshmi Manchu on playing heroine to younger actors at a time when actresses complain about ageism in industry: 'Girls stick to one hero...'

Lakshmi Manchu, who is the daughter of veteran actor Mohan Babu, has had an interesting journey in the movies. Lakshmi, who secretly joined Hollywood to make her dream of becoming an actor come true, is today one of the fewest actresses in Indian cinema who plays the lead role opposite younger actors, unlike majority of the films where a 50-year-old hero romances someone in their 20s.Lakshmi was cast opposite Aadhi Pinisetty, an actor 5 years younger to her, in the 2013 film Gundello Godari, which was a hit at the box office. In the 2015



Munjya director Aditya Sarpotdar on why Alia Bhatt, Shraddha Kapoor were first considered for the supernatural thriller

Munjya has raked in over Rs 100 crore at the domestic box office without much promotions. The movie doesn't even boast an impressive star cast, but can surely boast of strong word of mouth.We sat down with the film's director, Aditya Sarpotdar, to discuss the horror comedy's success and more. In the end credit scene of Munjya, we see a crossover between Munjya and Bhediya. Is there a possibility of seeing Munjya in Stree 2? Aditya says that there is a possibility. Talking about the cross-connection between different characters in the Maddock horror-comedy universe, Aditya said, "There is a plan on how Munjya will come into this whole universe, just like how Bhediya after the first film will come into the universe. There are these larger plans in mind. But the larger point was that we connect Bhediya to Munjya and that's why you see Varun Dhawan in a scene and not Rajkummar Rao or Shraddha Kapoor. The idea was to have a stronger connection because I am sure that the Bhediya sequel is being planned where there will be a larger connection between Bhediya and Munjya. We will then have a few more characters come into this universe where there will be these cross-connections and integrations in other films.'

There was also chatter that either Alia Bhatt or Shraddha Kapoor would star in Munjya, but that didn't happen. Opening up about the changes being made in the original draft of Munjya's script, Aditya shared, "Yogesh Chandekar, the writer of the film, had seen this film as a female protagonist film where the conflict was that she was in love with her best friend who was a teenager. It was that angle that was being brought in the narrative.""When I came onboard and read the script, I said that I did not identify with the social referencing in the film as I don't understand it and it wouldn't be right for me to comment on it either. I saw the film about these two guys who are in a position in life, in the same space where they were in love with an older girl. The hero respected and looked at her in a very sensitive manner. He believed in consent, rather than this guy who was obsessed and crazy about this girl he was in love with and went to the extent of getting her killed," he added.

During the conversation, Aditya revealed why he didn't want Munjya to be "female-centric". He said, "I wanted these two parallels together. I thought people would understand it better if there are two guys in the same direction. Dinesh (Vijan) understood this. Yogesh also agreed with this approach. I was adamant about not casting an older man because love at first sight and the referencing with an older man gets awful and it is somehow very cliched now. We keep seeing these old men falling in love with younger girls. I wanted a 19-year-old



who feels he's fallen for an elderly girl. He is at a stage in life where he doesn't necessarily understand what life is and that's his journey. That's how Abhay came on board. He fits the part. He looks that age and is believable."

Aditya Sarpotdar then opened up on why Abhay Verma was cast in Munjya, even after considering actors like Rajkummar Rao and Ayushmann Khurrana. He said, "We auditioned a lot. We were looking for new, younger talent. We didn't want to cast someone older. It would be very easy to approach Rajkummar Rao or Ayushmann (Khurrana), but we stuck to wanting to cast a 19 or 20year-old boy. We reached out to all the casting agents and auditioned multiple boys, including The Archies group of boys, the young stars and aspiring actors who are from the web space. You see a lot of them in this age group doing content on OTT. What the producer was also clear about is that we wanted to put this guy as the poster boy on a film, so we didn't want somebody who has been there, don't that. So we went for a completely fresh talent."Munjya is based on a Maharashtrian folklore. When asked if the makers ever thought that it would be a limiting idea as people beyond Maharashtra are not very familiar with the story, Aditya says, so was Kantara, as it was specifically rooted in one state. Aditya says Kantara's success gave them the courage to tell a rooted story. He said, "Since it was a story from Maharashtra, and not only a story, but a folklore story of Maharashtra, it gave me more confidence that this film will be loved by a bigger audience. This confidence came from a couple of things that were happening around us in the last 2-3 years. The way Kantara became euphoric, the way people loved that movie in spite of it being totally local and rural in its own sensibility and how that whole cultural referencing in the movie went crazy in the country. So I knew that if it (the story) is rooted, if it's a story of the land and the culture it comes from and if it is exiciting and interesting then people will watch it."

Arbaaz Khan asks Shabana Azmi if she encouraged Javed Akhtar to sever ties with his dad Salim Khan: 'He was much happier after...'

Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar changed the face of the Indian film industry with their hit-making streak in the 1970s, rising up the ranks of Bollywood to command as much respect and remuneration as some major movie



movie Dongaata, she was cast opposite Adivi Sesh, an actor who is 7 years younger to her.

However, this is a very rare practice in Indian cinema. Sharing her view on the same, Lakshmi Manchu told indianexpress.com, "It's a patriarchal society. The boys are the one spending more to get out there. You are playing to the fantasy I think. We as women, if we like one hero, for the rest of our life, we are with that one hero (as a fan). But, our boys are not like that. Whoever is the hottest heroine, is their new favourite. So I think it is about our (women) mentality of always being one hero's fan... why weren't you other hero's fan? Even this is really difficult for women to think if you really think about it. That's just my take on it."

'The problem of ageism has been there in the film industry since the beginning. Several actresses over the years have expressed their displeasure in being a victim of ageism. Actors like Shefali Shah have played the role of a mother to Akshay Kumar at the age of 28 in the film Waqt: The Race Against Time. Akshay was 32 at that time.Meanwhile, young stars like Manushi Chhillar said age is not an issue for them when they are cast against superstars like Akshay Kumar. In an interview with Times Now, Manushi said, "Akshay Kumar is a superstar, and I want to work with him. For me, it doesn't matter what his age is. I had fun working with him."Apart from the age gap between the lead actors, there have also been cases where actresses are not given age-appropriate roles. In 2019, there was a massive outrage when Taapsee Pannu and Bhumi Pednekar were roped in to play older roles. Neena Gupta had reacted to the casting and said, "I was just thinking about this hamari umar ke role toh kamsekam humse kara lo."

Disha Patani calls Kalki 2898 AD director Nag Ashwin 'creative genius,' thanks Prabhas for being the 'sweetest co-star ever'



Though Disha Patani plays a brief role in Nag Ashwin's Kalki 2898 AD, she thoroughly enjoyed shooting the film with Prabhas. The actor, who portrays the character Roxie, took to her Instagram stories to praise the filmmaker as a "creative genius" and thanked Prabhas for being "the sweetest co-star."

Though Disha Patani plays a brief role in Nag Ashwin's Kalki 2898 AD, she thoroughly enjoyed shooting the film with Prabhas. The actor, who portrays the character Roxie, took to her Instagram stories to praise the filmmaker as a "creative genius" and thanked Prabhas for being "the sweetest co-star."

Disha shared a photo of Prabhas and Nag from inside a flight. She wrote, "Thank you @nag_ ashwin for creating this crazy sci-fi world in the most beautiful way, integrating Indian history and science, you're truly a creative genius sharing conversations with you about anime was my highlight of being on your set. Thank you bhairava @actorprabhas for being the sweetest co-star ever and taking care of everyone. Shout out to the women in charge @priyankacdutt @swapnaduttchalasani for bringing it to life, you guys are inspirational @djordjevla you're a magician."She added, "Honoured to be a part of such a legendary cast, hats off to the whole team who worked sleepless nights to create this spectacle. And lastly, thanks to my team D who worked so hard to bring Roxie to life I'm grateful to be a part of this beautiful journey. let's goo #kalki2898ad"Disha shot for Kalki 2898 AD in Italy. The Yodha actor had shared some behind-thescenes photos from the shoot and was seen posing for a selfie with Prabhas. She also shared visuals of the beautiful shooting location.Directed by Nag Ashwin, Kalki 2898 AD stars Prabhas, Amitabh Bachchan, and Deepika Padukone in the lead roles. The film has surpassed Rs 700 crore globally.

stars. But their partnership came to an abrupt end, and while both of them have spoken about why they split, neither has given concrete reasons. Javed Akhtar's wife, actor Shabana Azmi, said that she still doesn't know why they broke up, as she was asked about the rumours that she might have played a role in the split.

Shabana appeared as a guest on Arbaaz Khan's chat show, The Invincibles Series, where she addressed the subject. Arbaaz, the son of Salim Khan, said, "Salim-Javed were at the peak of their careers, and around the same time, you entered Javed saab's life. And shortly afterwards, at the peak of their careers, they split. A lot of people tried to find answers as to why they would've split. Some went so far as to suggest that because Javed saab was a writer and poet, Shabana encouraged him to pursue a solo career. You might have heard these rumours too; I heard them as a child. How did you react to that?"

She said, "Arbaaz, will you believe it, that till today I don't know why Salim-Javed have split. Since I thought it was a personal decision, I shouldn't get involved in it. But I think what was happening is that he was going through some change. He had started writing poetry, he was moving into another kind of world. I don't know what happened and why they ever split, but I do know that he was a much happier person having taken this huge risk. There is no merit or 'dismerit' meri taraf se."In the past, both Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar have addressed their decision to separate. Javed said in a chat with BBC News Hindi, "Shuru mein jab hum nakaam log the, struggle kar rahe the, toh bilkul ek the. Koi humare aur dost nahi the, hum hi baith ke subah se shaam tak kaam karte the. Shaam ko bhi saath the, raat ko khana bhi saath hota tha. 24 mein se 15-16 hours toh saath hi hote the. (In our earlier unsuccessful days, we were struggling, we were one. We did not have any other friends, we would work together from morning to evening. We would even have dinner together. Out of 24, we would spend 15-16 hours together)."

In a earlier chat with ETC, Salim Khan had recalled, "Every box has an expiry date- this also had one. We were near Javed's house one evening when Javed told me he wanted to split, that he'd been thinking about it for some time now. I got up, shook hands with him and started walking towards my car. He also started to walk with me, but I held him, turned him towards his house and said, 'I can look after myself.' I came back home and didn't tell anyone about it. The next evening, calls started coming in asking about the split. I asked Javed whether he told anyone, he said only a few friends knew. It was only after a few days that I announced the split."

Anna Ben asked Nag Ashwin about her character's return in Kalki 2898 AD's sequel. This is how he responded

Among the actors featuring in cameo roles in Nag Ashwin's dystopian epic Kalki 2898 AD is Malayalam actor Anna Ben, who plays the character Kyra. Though it's hinted that Kyra dies at the end of the film, various fan theories suggest otherwise. In a recent interaction, Anna addressed the speculations about her being part of Kalki's sequel.

When asked if she would be part of the sequel, Anna told News 18, "I've also been wondering the same. During the shoot, I became friends with the ADs. They were rooting for my character and were also hoping that my character comes back at some point. I asked Nagi sir about it but he didn't say anything because he's a man of few words. He just smiled and told, 'I don't know. Maybe. Let's see.' So, I guess we'll have to wait and watch. I'll be very happy if she comes back."Nag Ashwin's dystopian epic Kalki 2898 AD doesn't just feature the country's biggest actors – Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, Amitabh

Bachchan, Kamal Haasan – in lead roles, it also features artists from different film industry to make it a true blue pan-Indian film. These include filmmakers Ram Gopal Varma and SS Rajamouli, along with actors Dulquer Salmaan, Vijay Deverakonda, Mrunal Thakur and Disha Patani.

During the interaction, Anna also spoke about Kalki's pan-India approach, she said, "It's an amazing thing that we could have an Indian film that could represent us at a global film. It's an Indian film in every sense of the word. Right from the casting to the technicians involved, every industry is involved in the making of this film. Every actor has done a fantastic job and we can all be proud of that."She also called the cameo of her fellow Malayalam actor Dulquer Salmaan as her favourite. "Dulquer's a national star and not just a Malayalam star now. His involvement in the project has shifted many things because he has a huge fan base here," she said.



Coach Gautam Gambhir's challenge will be to manage egos and insecurities

GNS News Agency, july 10

Gautam Gambhir India head coachGambhir was an active player till a few years ago, and has shared a dressing room with some of the senior players still in the team. What was expected for more than a month was finally confirmed on Tuesday when Gautam Gambhir was announced as the head coach of Team India. A gritty lefthanded opener, who was once ranked the best Test batsman, Gambhir has tasted success both as a captain and mentor in IPL. That has hastened his appointment to the most high-profile and high-pressure coaching job in world cricket, but Gambhir seems to have all the credentials to succeed in his new job."I'm honoured to be back, albeit wearing a different hat. But my goal is the same as it has always been, to make every Indian proud," he posted on Gambhir was an active player till a few years ago, and has shared a dressing room with some of the senior players still in the team. He has had a history of confrontation and conflict with some of the cricketers – the name of Virat Kohli comes to mind – and Gambhir would do well to keep his personal likes and dislikes aside while guiding the Indian team.

India is my identity and serving my country has been the greatest privilege of my life. I'm honoured to be back, albeit wearing a different hat. But my goal is the same as it has always been, to make every Indian proud. The men in blue shoulder the dreams of 1.4 billion Indians...He is taking up the job when Indian cricket is in a bullish mood, having just won the T20 World Cup. But the atmosphere will not take much time to take a turn if initial results in his tenure don't go as desired. This is where the head coach needs to keep calm and keep the team in a good headspace. Rohit Sharma and Rahul Dravid had a very fruitful relationship, in which the latter largely stayed in the background and let the players take the plaudits. A similar arrangement is likely to bear fruit with Gambhir as well. Helming a national team full of superstars is a lot different from being in charge of a franchise made up of players from various countries. Managing egos and insecurities is as important as the technical and tactical aspects of the game. Gambhir will have to take everyone together to make India a dominant force in

If we're boring you, you can watch something else: Coach Didier Deschamps defends France's style of play

GNS News Agency, july 10

Deschamps France Coach Euro 2024France head coach Didier Deschamps, center, talks to players during a Group D match between the France and Poland at the Euro 2024 soccer tournament in Dortmund, Germany, Tuesday, June 25, 2024. French coach Didier Deschamps said on the eve of the semifinal match against Spain that he does not care if France play boring football and asked the critics to "watch something else."

"If we're boring you, you can watch something else, it doesn't matter. It's a very particular European Championship, with less goals than normal. We have the chance to make France happy, in a delicate situation for the country. If (others) are bored, I don't really care," he said.

France are yet to score from open play in this Euro, having notched up two own goals and a penalty. They have also won just 3 matches in the tournament compared to Spain's 5.France has underwhelmed and captain Kylian Mbappé is frustrated as he tries to adapt to wearing a vision-limiting face mask after breaking his nose in the opening match.Also being called out for France's lack of a cutting edge in attack is Antoine



Griezmann, who has played in two positions — central midfield and on the right wing — and was even dropped for the group closer against Poland."We have 100% blind faith in (Mbappé and Griezmann) we know they are players that can change a match in an instant," midfielder Adrien Rabiot said on Monday."We will need them ... we are all very surprised as we know Antoine's quality. I don't know how to explain it, maybe he is a bit less well physically. We were expecting a lot more from Antoine but we are behind all of our players."

Too many playmakers, struggling Harry Kane among Gareth Southgate's problems ahead of England-Netherlands semifinal



To fill Virat Kohli's shoes is very tough and very hard: Ruturaj Gaikwad



GNS News Agency, july 10

Ruturaj Gaikwad on Virat KohliRuturaj Gaikwad on Tuesday said it would be tough to fill the recently-retired Virat Kohli's shoes in the number 3 position in T20Is, adding that he will just focus on making contributions with the bat, regardless of positions. Ruturaj Gaikwad on Tuesday said it would be tough to fill the recently-retired Virat Kohli's shoes in the number 3 position in T20Is, adding that he will just focus on making contributions with the bat, regardless of positions.

"This is a big topic and I think it's not the right point to think about it. To even compare with him (Kohli) or try to fill in his shoes is relatively very tough and very hard," Gaikwad said before the 3rd India vs Zimbabwe match."As I had said in the IPL as well, it is difficult to fill my best shoes as well. Definitely, you want to start your career, you want to start the way you want, you want to play your own game. So that's the priority right now. Focus on one game, focus on how you can contribute towards the team in whichever position you play and make sure you are on the winning side more often than not," he added.

Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja an-

Why England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford kept looking at his waterbottle before each penalty kick by Switzerland

ence," he added.

GNS News Agency, july 10

Apart from the instructions on the bottle, Pickford also used an array of delaying tactics, keeping the Swiss penalty takers waiting before he went to goal. (Reuters)Apart from the instructions on the bottle, Pickford also used an array of delaying tactics, keeping the Swiss penalty takers waiting before he went to goal. England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford was the star in the penalty shootout against Switzerland that paved the way for the Three Lions to reach their second consecutive Euro semifinal. However, fans have now noticed that the England keeper had a bit of assist from a water bottle on which instructions were written on which way to dive to save the ensuing Swiss penalties.The first to fall to this tactic was Manchester City and Switzerland defender Manuel Akanji



nounced their retirement from the T20I setup after win

ning the T20 World Cup in June which has opened the

doors for the next generation of players to vie for those

positions.Gaikwad, the Chennai Super Kings skipper has

batted at No. 3 position for India in the first two T20Is

against Zimbabwe but he said he has no preference and will bat wherever the team requires him."No, wherever

the team wants, I will bat there. There is no problem.

There is not much difference between the opening and the number 3 because you have to play the new ball. So

there is not much difference," he said.Gaikwad who led

CSK in the IPL this year, said that captaincy has gotten

him to be a bit more involved in the game but it didn't

make any difference to his batting. Actually, to be honest,

nothing has changed much. Because my batting has been

the same as before. I have to play with responsibility and

try and finish it on my own," he said."It's just that the way

you look at the game, I think every time you are more

involved now in the game since you have captained the

IPL franchise for a long period of time. So you tend to be

into the game for a longer period of time instead of just

staying in the boundary outside and just focusing on one

ball. As I said, batting wise it's not made much differ-

the goalkeeper and the person taking the penalty. It's not that I don't think that these things cannot be worked on but I am convinced – and my time as a player informs me

No. 10 too many: A surplus of players in similar roles has been a perennial problem for England. Except that this time the dilemma concerns not the centre of the field. A year or two ago, this would have been the perfect team, but the roles of players have transformed in the last few months. Harry Kane, a pure striker when he started, would increasingly drop back to play-make. Jude Bellingham, a defensive midfielder until he joined Real Madrid, would occupy spaces higher on the pitch. Phil Foden, a winger initially, is at his penetrative best when playing through the central channels. Effectively, England have three players, with different roles, tracing similar paths, often limiting their own spaces. Manager Gareth Southgate has the options to decentralise their forwardline, for instance dropping Foden and inserting nippy multitasker Eberechi Eze. But whether he has the courage is a different question.

A misfiring striker: Harry Kane had scored two goals in five games, not a horrible number when you consider that no one has scored more than three goals in the tournament so far. But he has looked off the boil and off the pace, ponderous and lethargic, as though he was tired and cramped too often. Perhaps he is not fully fit— he had carried a back injury into the tournament. Perhaps he is not getting enough service from England's stifled creators, but he has not looked at his sharpest this Euro. The No. 10 too many: A surplus of players in similar roles has been a perennial problem for England. Except that this time the dilemma concerns not the centre of the field.

shots have lacked power and fizz, he has been half a second slower to reach the ball, and hence not in the best position to shoot. He has taken only 15 attempts, of which only four have been on target. Kane has not been as involved in link-up play as he does these days, and his passing accuracy has been only 76.8 percent. England have alternatives in Ivan Toney and Ollie Watkins, but it's impossible that Southgate would bench England's highest goalscorer for as big a match as this. Left-side confusion:

Had Luke Shaw been optimally fit, he would have been the obvious choice. But he had not been, even though he was full of energy in the cameo against Switzerland. But whether he can cope with the pace of Dutch right-back Denzel Dumfries as well as manage the cunning Steven

Bergwijn is unsure. A

safety-first coach, Southgate would likely start with Kieran Trippier. The Newcastle United fullback, though, has struggled on an uncomfortable flank, especially on the offensive front. His communication with Foden has not been the smoothest; neither has his crosses troubled opponents. Southgate would probably start with Trippier and then introduce Shaw to inject aggression, especially if England are chasing the game. But if he retains the 3-4-3 formation he employed against Switzerland, Shaw would be a better choice, as he gives more width than Trippier. Southgate would mull a change upfront too, given Foden's struggles. He could be tempted to un-

> leash Eze, or even Cole Palmer, who has looked in pristine touch whenever he has come off the bench.

TAA or not: Southgate shunned the experiment of

Trent deploving Alexander-Arnold on the right side of midfield after the Denmark game. He didn't quite possess the press-resistance of a natumodern central ral. midfielder. But if he sticks to the same tactic of employing a three-man defence and two wing-backs, Alexander-Arnold would be a smarter choice than Bukayo Saka, who could be pushed upfront to the role that he has blossomed in for his club Arsenal. in the inside-right channel. That though would require the benching of someone, which in all likelihood could be Foden. Someone has to shift to the left too, which could be Bellingham. The Liverpool full-back can impart not only dynamism but also amplify the set-piece threat. The Dutch have looked vulnerable to set-pieces and Alexander-Arnold could make the dead-ball talk

who took his shot to the left, which was correctly predicted by Pickford's notes on the bottle. Next was Fabian Schar against whom Pickford faked a left dive and then went right, which was exactly opposite to what was written on the bottle. But Schar did what the goalie had initially anticipated and shot to the left.

Xherdan Shaqiri was the third spot kick taker for the Swiss and he did what Pickford's notes had predicted and shot to the left of the keeper, something he narrowly failed to keep out. Zeki Amdouni was the last penalty taker for Switzerland who actually went against what was written on the bottle and slotted the ball right down the middle. In Pickford's instructions, it was written he would go to the left of the keeper.

Apart from the instructions on the bottle, Pickford also used an array of delaying tactics, keeping the Swiss penalty takers waiting before he went to goal. He even made weird facial expressions towards the takers, standing with his mouth open and eyes wide as a form of a distraction tactic. In the case of Akanji, it worked and England sealed their spot in the next round.Pickford dives to his left to save Akanji's penalty as instructed on the water bottle. (REUTERS) Pickford dives to his left to save Akanji's penalty as instructed on the water bottle. For France coach Didier Deschamps, penalties are a game of chance and it was impossible for a training session to replicate the real-life atmosphere of a shootout in a hightension match. "The shoot-out is a confrontation between

on this point - that it is impossible to recreate the psychological conditions of a shoot-out while you are in a training session," he had said in March. While the French have been practicing their spot kicks for Euros as per some video leaks by RMC Sport which raised the ire of the players, they finally have had a bit of luck from the shootouts, something that have been their undoing in big tournaments where they beat Italy in the 1998 World Cup. recent Champions League guarter final clash between Real Madrid and Manchester City, the reigning EPL champions' Bernardo Silva had spurned his chance from a penalty shootout when his tame shot down the middle was gobbled up by a grateful Andriy Lunin in the nets. The save, however, has a bit of psychology behind it. With Real already trailing in the match after Luka Modric missed his effort, the pressure was on Lunin to make the save. In most cases, the goalkeeper reacts to the pressure by diving towards his left or right but Lunin did the opposite by just holding his ground. Silva, who had anticipated a dive from the keeper, slotted down the middle but the goalie saved the penalty which would go a long way in Madrid eliminating City from the UCL. A 2009 paper analysing 311 penalty kicks from various men's professional leagues around the world had found shots at the centre of the goals were less likely to be saved than shots to the side. As the study suggested, on any other day Silva would have converted his penalty but it was the goalie's presence of mind on that particular night that he could not.

Still 'Not Out': Warner keeps door open, wants to play Champions Trophy 'if selected'

New Delhi: David Warner said chapter of his playing career is closed but has left the door open to appear in next year's Champions Trophy to play in one last international tournament. Warner concluded his Test cricket career in January, simultaneously declaring that his final appearance in the 50-over format was during last year's ODI World Cup.His international tenure came to an end last month following Australia's exit from the T20 World Cup. In a social media post, the Australian opener expressed gratitude towards fans, his national teammates, and staff.

Additionally, he indicated his willingness to play for national side at the Champions Trophy, which will be staged in Pakistan next February and March. "Chapter closed!! It's been an unbelievable experience to play at the highest level for such a long period. Australia was my team. The majority of my career was at the international level. It's been an honour to be able to do this. 100+ games in all formats is my highlight. I want to say thanks to everyone out there who has made this possible.""My wife and my girls, who sacrificed so much, thank you for all your support. No person will ever know what we've been through. For all the cricket fans out there, I truly hope I have entertained you and changed cricket, especially tests, in a way where we scored a bit faster than others.""We cannot do what we love without the fans, so thanks. I will continue to play franchise cricket for a while, and I am also open to playing for Aus in the Champions Trophy if selected. To the players and staff, thanks for putting up with me. No more whats app junk, your ears are now going to be free of my voice. This team has had unbelievable success the Last few years and long may this continue. Pat Cummins, Andrew old Mac and staff have got this," read Warner's post on Instagram. Australia's limited-overs teams will commence the era following Warner's retirement in September, beginning with a series of three T20Is each against Scotland and England, followed by a five-match ODI series against England.

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