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Man sexually assaults 12-year-old daughter, arrested

Hyderabad: A 12-year-old girl, resident of Medipally on the city outskirts was sexually abused by her father. The man, who works as a daily wagger, was sexually abusing the girl when her mother was away.

The girl managed to inform an acquaintance about the sexual abuse following which the issue came to the notice of police. The Medipally Police registered a case and took the man into custody. The police shifted the girl to hospital for medical examination. Investigation is going on.

Telangana police personnel did not allow us to appear for DSC exam, allege applicants

Hyderabad: Allying that police personnel did not allow some DSC applicants to appear for the exams by putting them under house arrest, student organizations and political leaders staged a demonstration at the Secretariat in protest against the police action.

The protesters burnt an effigy of the Chief Minister near the Secretariat and demanded the State government to immediately postpone the DSC that commenced on Thursday. The police personnel swung into action and detained the protesters.

Death toll in Chandigarh-Dibrugarh Express derailment rises to 4; 20 injured



GNS News Agency, July 18

Gonda/New Delhi: Four people were killed and 20 others injured when at least four coaches of the Chandigarh-Dibrugarh Express derailed here on Wednesday. Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak told PTI four people were killed in the accident in the state's Gonda district. Uttar Pradesh Relief Commissioner GS Naveen Kumar said 20 persons have been injured in the accident. A 40-member medical team and 15 ambulances are at the spot and more medical teams and ambulances are being rushed there, he said.

Senior railway and local administration officials are at the spot to oversee rescue operations. The accident occurred at around 2:35 pm, railway officials said. According to the relief commissioner's office, the helpline numbers- Gonda: 8957400965, Lucknow: 8957409292 have been started. The Indian Railways has started the relief operation and medical vans have reached the accident site. The Railway Board has issued the following helpline numbers - Commercial Control: 9957555984, Furkating (FKG): 9957555966, Mariani (MXN): 6001882410, Simalguri (SLGR): 8789543798, Nitsukia (NTSK): 9957555959, Dibrugarh (DBRG): 9957555960. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took cognizance of the incident and has directed local administration to provide assistance to the affected passengers. The chief minister has asked the officials to ensure proper medical treatment of the passengers injured in the incident.

Car washed away in stream in Eluru district, five occupants stuck in bushes



GNS News Agency, July 18

A car was washed away in a stream in Velerupadu mandal of Eluru district due to heavy rains causing the rivers to overflow. The incident occurred while the car was travelling from Ashwaraopet with five occupants, including two women. Locals reported that the occupants screamed for help as the car was swept away and promptly informed the police.

The occupants of the car were identified as Driver Rama Rao, Jyoti, Gaddam Kundana Kumar, Sai Jyoti, and Gaddam. After a short distance, the five managed to get out of the car and became stuck in the bushes along the stream. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and police have been mobilized to rescue the occupants from the hazardous situation. However, relief operations are facing challenges due to the overflowing river. Collector has set up a control room in response to the heavy rains in the district. Residents are urged to call the toll-free number 18002331077 to provide information in case of floods.

Tension Erupts in Punganur as TDP and YCP Cadres Clash at Former MP's House

GNS News Agency, July 18

A tense situation arose in Punganur of Chittoor district as supporters of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YCP) clashed at former MP Reddappa's house. The tension escalated when current MP Mithun Reddy visited Reddappa's house, leading to TDP cadres besieging the premises.

Amidst the chaos, both TDP and YCP activists resorted to pelting stones at each other, prompting the police to intervene and try to control the situation. In light of the escalating tensions, MP Mithun Reddy was placed under house arrest to prevent further unrest.

CM Sai in a post on X said, "Received the sad news

Upload full NEET-UG result, mask students' identity: Top court to testing panel

GNS News Agency, July 18

The Supreme Court asked the testing panel to mask the identity of the candidates and publish the NEET-UG results on their website. The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the National Testing Agency (NTA) to publish the full results of NEET-UG 2024 on their website city-wise and centre-wise by 12 pm on Saturday. The testing panel has been asked to mask the identity of the candidates. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwla and Manoj Misra was hearing a batch of petitions over al-



leged irregularities in NEET-UG exam. During the hearing, senior advocate Narendra Hooda, representing the petitioner, called for the results of all students to be declared to bring in some transparency. The Solicitor

General argued that the entire results are not published, and it is the personal property of the students. To this, CJI Chandrachud asked, "Why can't you have dummy roll numbers in a sequence centre-wise?"

After hearing argu-

ments from both sides the court asked the NTA to publish the marks obtained by students in the NEET-UG 24 exam, while ensuring that the identity of the students is not revealed. "What is happening is... the fact that there is a leak at Patna and Hazaribag is admitted... the question papers had been disseminated. We want to ensure whether this was confined to those centres or widespread. Students are at a handicap because they don't know results. We want the students' identity to be masked, but let us see centre-wise what was the mark pattern," CJI Chandrachud said.

'Tughlaq Darbar': BJP vs Siddaramaiah on Karnataka jobs quota bill U-turn



GNS News Agency, July 18

Leader of the Opposition R Ashok said the Cabinet had become like a 'Tughlaq Darbar' and sought clarification from the Chief Minister for putting the bill on hold. The BJP on Thursday likened the Congress government in Karnataka to Muhammad bin Tughlaq over its U-turn on the reservation bill for Kannadigas in private firms. Leader of the Opposition R Ashok said the Cabinet had become like a "Tughlaq Darbar" and sought a clarification from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for putting the bill on hold following an uproar by the industry and business tycoons. Speaking in the Karnataka Assembly, R Ashok said, "Initially, you posted that there was a Cabinet decision for 100% reservation for Kannadigas. Thereafter, the same post was deleted. Later, you deleted the post

stating there was no such decision in the Cabinet. This has become like Tughlaq Darbar."

Mohammad bin Tughluq, the eighteenth Sultan of Delhi, is known for his eccentric and disastrous policies. The BJP also warned the Congress government to be prepared for the wrath of the people if it failed to table the bill. The Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories and Other Establishments Bill, 2024, which was cleared in the Cabinet meeting on Monday, mandated employers to appoint 50 per cent local candidates in management roles and 75 per cent in non-management positions. Replying to Ashok, Siddaramaiah said the draft bill was still in the preparation stage and there was partial discussion on the subject.

"There is no Mohammed Bin Tughlaq administration here. This is Siddaramaiah's administration in the state. On Monday, there was a partial discussion on the subject, but we couldn't finish it. Much before that, it was published in the media," Siddaramaiah said. "We needed a comprehensive discussion on the subject, so there was some confusion. We will discuss this in the next cabinet meeting and sort out the issue," he said in the Assembly. The proposed bill invited severe criticism from industry leaders, who warned that it would stifle talent acquisition and investment in the state.

Naxal attack in Chhattisgarh: Two STF cops killed, 4 injured in Bijapur



GNS News Agency, July 18

Two personnel of the Special Task Force (STF) were killed and four others injured after Naxalites denoted an improvised explosive device (IED) in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said on Thursday, July 18, 2024. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai expressed grief over the incident and said the sacrifice of the jawans will not go in vain and the fight against Naxalism will continue till the menace is eradicated.

The incident took place on Wednesday night in Tarrem area when a joint team of security personnel was returning after an anti-Naxalite operation in forests on the tri-junction of Bijapur-Sukma-Dantewada districts, a police official here said. Personnel of the STF, District Reserve Guard - both state police units, Central Reserve Police Force and its elite Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) were involved in the operation, launched on Tuesday based on inputs about the presence of Naxalites belonging to their Darbha and west Bastar divisions and military company no.2, he said. "Two STF constables -- Bharat Sahu, resident of Raipur, and Satyer Singh Kange, of Narayanpur district -- were killed in the blast triggered by Naxalites while four other personnel sustained injuries," the official said. Reinforcement rushed. Reinforcement was rushed to the area after the incident and the injured personnel were shifted to Bijapur district hospital, he said. The injured jawans will be airlifted to state capital Raipur for further medication, he added.

CM Sai in a post on X said, "Received the sad news

about the martyrdom of 2 STF jawans and injury to 4 jawans in an IED blast carried out by Maoists in Tarrem area of Bijapur. I pray to God for the departed souls to rest in peace and for the speedy recovery of the injured jawans. "Naxalites have become frustrated by the operations being carried out by the state government to eliminate the menace and are resorting to cowardly acts. The martyrdom of the jawans will not go in vain. Our fight will continue till the end of Maoism," he said. As many as 139 Naxalites have been gunned down by security forces in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh so far this year, according to police.

BRS wins no-confidence motion in Adilabad municipal council

GNS News Agency, July 18

Adilabad: The BRS on Thursday won a no-confidence motion moved against Adilabad municipal vice chairperson Zahir Ranjani, who had quit the BRS and joined the Congress. While 25 councilors of the BRS and nine from BJP voted in favor of the motion, councilors belonging to the Congress and AIMIM did not participate in the voting held in a special meeting chaired by Revenue Divisional Officer Vinod Kumar. Adilabad municipal council has a total of 49 councilors, while the quorum for conducting the meeting was 34 councilors. Vinod announced that the no-confidence motion moved by the councilors of the BRS and BJP was successful and that Ranjani had lost his post. The councilors of the BRS decided to move the motion after Ranjani joined the Congress recently. Ranjani approached the Telangana High Court, but his plea was dismissed paving way for the meeting. Earlier, BRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao had issued a whip asking councilors to support the no-confidence motion. Accordingly, 25 councilors raised their hands in favor of the motion. Nine councilors of the BJP too backed the BRS though local BJP MLA Payal Shankar did not exercise his vote in the capacity of ex-officio member.

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy fulfills promise, releases loan waiver funds



GNS News Agency, July 18

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has released the loan waiver funds during a video conference at the Telangana Secretariat on Thursday. The loan waiver includes debts up to one lakh rupees, benefitting around eleven and a half lakh farmers in the state.

A total of Rs 7,000 crores has been transferred to the accounts of the farmers, bringing relief to many struggling individuals. The news of the loan waiver has been met with jubilation from beneficiaries at Rythu vedikas, who have eagerly awaited this financial assistance.

Furthermore, the government has outlined plans to settle arrears of Rs 1.5 lakh by the end of the month and up to 2 lakh by August 15th on behalf of the farmers. This gesture is seen as a significant step towards supporting the agricultural community in the state of Telangana.

Trainee IAS officer Puja Khedkar's mother remanded in police custody till July 20

GNS News Agency, July 18

A court in Maharashtra's Pune district on July 18 remanded Manorama Khedkar, mother of IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, in police custody till July 20 after she was arrested for allegedly threatening some persons with a gun over a land dispute. Ms. Manorama was apprehended from a lodge in Mahad in Raigad district in the morning. She was hiding there, police said. Ms. Manorama was then brought to the Paud police station in Pune district and placed under arrest. She was produced before a local court which remanded her in police custody till July 20, said an official.

Police had launched a search for Ms. Manorama and her husband Dilip Khedkar after a video surfaced showing her allegedly threatening some persons with a gun over a land dispute at Dhadwali village in Pune's Mulshi tehsil.

The Paud police in Pune rural have booked the Khedkar couple and five others under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections, including 323 (dishonest or fraudulent removal or concealment of property), and the Arms Act. "Manorama Khedkar was apprehended from Mahad in Raigad district and she was brought to Paud where, after the completion of formalities, she was placed under arrest," Superintendent of Police, Pune Rural, Pankaj Deshmukh, had said earlier. Manorama Khedkar, mother of IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, being brought by the police to a hospital for medical examination after her arrest.

PIL in Supreme Court seeks direction to Centre, states to control superstition and sorcery

GNS News Agency, July 18

New Delhi: A PIL has been filed before the Supreme Court seeking direction to the Centre and state governments to take appropriate steps to control superstition and sorcery. The plea said that the root cause behind the recent stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras, where at least 121 people died and several injured, was "superstition & sorcery".

It referred to Delhi's 2018 Burari incident, where all 11 members of a family committed suicide under the influence of "superstition & sorcery".

"Similarly, the brutal murder of two women as part of ritualistic human sacrifices in Kerala has left the country in shock. According to a preliminary probe, the victims were subjected to extreme torture and sexually harassed, their body parts cut into several pieces before they were buried in a pit. There are hundreds of similar cases across the country," it said.

The PIL also sought direction to develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform and to promote the fundamental duties among citizens in the spirit of Article 51A of the Constitution. It said a strict anti-superstition and sorcery law was urgently needed to do away with the unscientific acts prevalent in society that adversely impact the community and prevent any fake seers from exploiting innocent people.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Educational deadlock

THE Punjab education sector has been caught in the crosshairs of the ongoing political feud between the Bhagwant Mann-led AAP government in Punjab and the BJP-led regime at the Centre. The recent setbacks in both higher and school education systems underscore the urgent need for a resolution to safeguard the future of students and the welfare of teachers and other staff. A significant blow was dealt recently when the President of India returned the Punjab Universities Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023. This Bill, passed during a special Assembly session in June last year, sought to replace the Governor with the Chief Minister as the Chancellor of state-run universities. The President's refusal to clear the Bill has left the administrative structure of Punjab's higher education in limbo. Compounding this issue is the Centre withholding Punjab's share of over Rs 500 crore under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. This crucial funding, meant for upgrading the public school infrastructure, has been halted because of the state's withdrawal from the PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) scheme. Punjab says that it has done so as it already has its own comparable schemes, like 'Schools of Eminence', 'Schools of Brilliance' and 'Schools of Happiness', which would be linked with the National Education Policy. The impasse has stalled vital upgrade of school infrastructure, impacting the quality of education. The Centre must ensure a fair distribution of funds. The state and Central governments need to resolve these disputes on priority. It is imperative that educational institutions receive the necessary support and resources to operate effectively, fostering a stable and conducive learning environment. The ongoing political tussle threatens to undermine the state's long-term developmental goals, underscoring the need for a more collaborative and less adversarial approach to governance.

Senior lawyer Shishir Hiray appointed as special public prosecutor

GNS News Agency, July 18

Senior lawyer Shishir Hiray has been appointed as the special public prosecutor (SPP) in the three separate offences registered in connection with the Porsche car accident in Pune. Advocate Hiray appeared as an SPP in the Porsche car accident case before the special court in Pune on Friday. Hiray submitted an application seeking test identification parade of two accused persons Ashpak Makandar and Amar Gaikwad in this case.

Two IT engineers Aneesh Awadhya and his friend Ashwini Koshta, both 24 and from Madhya Pradesh, had died after a speeding Porsche car, allegedly driven by a 17-and-a-half-year-old boy in an inebriated state, hit their motorcycle at Pune's Kalyani Nagar junction around 2.30 am on May 19. That same day, a first information report (FIR) was lodged against the minor car driver, at Yerwada police station, under sections 304, 304 (a), 337, 338, 427, 279 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and sections 184, 119/177 of the Motor Vehicle Act (MVA). The police investigation revealed that when the boy was taken to Sassoon Hospital for a medical examination after the accident, his blood sample was allegedly replaced with his mother's.

The police arrested his father, mother, Dr Ajay Taware — the former head of the forensic department of the Sassoon Hospital, Dr Shrihari Harnol — who was the casualty medical officer at the time, and a Class IV employee Atul Ghatkamble, for allegedly changing the minor's blood sample for financial favours. Following these arrests, police had invoked sections 7, 7 A, 13 of the Prevention of Corruption Act in this case.

The police had further arrested two "middlemen" Makandar and Gaikwad. Police said Makandar allegedly took Rs 4 lakh from the minor's father at a hotel in Kalyani Nagar and gave it to the Sassoon staffers for changing the blood samples. Police said they have recovered Rs 2.5 lakh from Dr Halnor, Rs 50,000 from Ghatkamble. The remaining Rs 1 lakh is yet to be recovered. On Friday, police filed an application before the court regarding addition of section 8 and 12 of the Prevention of Corruption Act as well as IPC sections 109 and 34 in this case. Meanwhile, the minor boy accused in this case was released from the observation home following a Bombay High Court order on June 25. Police have filed a "final report" against the minor before the Juvenile Justice Board on June 18. The minor has submitted an essay on road accidents and their solutions to the JJB, as a part of the compliance of conditions set by the JJB while granting him bail.

The other six accused including his parents have failed applications seeking bail before the court. Police are yet to file bail pleas of the minor's father and Makandar. Earlier, the minor's father had received bail in the other two offences related to the Porsche car crash. The second FIR in this connection was lodged on May 20 against the minor's father and six others including the owner, managers of two restaurants in Pune where liquor was allegedly served to the minor boy and his friends before the accident. They were booked under sections 77, 75 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and sections 3, 5, 199A of the Motor Vehicle Act. All accused in this FIR were granted bail by the court. Also, based on a complaint filed by the 42-year-old driver, the third FIR of kidnapping and wrongful confinement, under IPC sections 342, 365, 506, 34, against the minor's father and grandfather, who are prominent realtors in the Pune city. Police had arrested the grandfather and father of the minor for allegedly kidnapping and forcing the driver to take the blame of the Porsche car accident, both were later granted bail by the court. Advocate Shishir Hiray, who has been appointed as a special public prosecutor (SPP) in the Porsche car crash cases in Pune, is a resident of Malegaon in Nashik district of Maharashtra. He is also the SPP before the Koregaon Bhima Commission of Inquiry, which was formed by the state government for probing into the causes of violence of January 1, 2018 in Koregaon Bhima area. Hiray has also worked as a counsel for the Justice K U Chandival Commission appointed by the state government to look into the allegations of corruption against former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh (now an MLA from Sharad Pawar faction of National Congress Party). Chandival Commission had submitted its final report in April 2022 to the then Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

Sustainability via local sourcing, the new buzz word in hospitality



GNS News Agency, July 18

Malaka Spice Pune Local sourcing, composting, recycling of used ingredients are some of the ways in which the F&B industry is adopting. In 1997, when Malaka Spice began its journey in Pune, non-availability of exotic ingredients like Thai Basil, which is used in preparing Southeast Asian dishes was a major hurdle. Instead of relying on imports which had logistical problems, the entrepreneurs behind the brand came up with a different route to meet their needs.

Pradeep Nair, audit controller for the House of Malaka Spice and operations head of Cherish Farm said that the founders Praful and Cheeru Chandawarkar decided to ask their friends to grow these ingredients on their farm by sourcing seeds from Southeast Asian countries. This was perhaps the first step taken by this restaurant chain towards what is now known as local sourcing — an important part of the global buzz word of sustainability. Now, the restaurant sources all its Asian ingredients from the 4 acres they own near Pune. "Currently, on a daily basis, we need about 3-4 kgs of Basil and Lemongrass, about 500 grams of Galangal and about 100 grams of Kaffir Lime at both of our restaurants in Pune," he said. Other than helping them meet the needs for their menu, local sourcing also ticks the box of sustainability — which is getting increasingly popular

among restaurants and chefs across the world. Most Michelin Star restaurants now insist on sustainability with local sourcing and farm-to-fork being the flavour of the season. Across the world, Michelin star restaurants are now working with local communities and working out a way to make their operations sustainable. In Pune, some establishments are slowly catching on to the trend of composting their wet waste rather than giving it to the corporation. Local sourcing, composting, recycling of used ingredients are some of the ways in which the F&B industry is adopting.

While Malaka Spice decided to grow its own, others like Chef Atul Kochhar who was in Pune as part of Swiggy Dineout's Culinary Sessions, go all out to source ingredients available locally and to fashion their menus around them. Local sourcing for Kochhar was the result of his father's feedback when he visited the chef's renowned London restaurant. In search of the elusive essence which would reflect him, Kochhar went all out for local sourcing. Sustainability for the chef means working with locally available ingredients and ensuring zero waste. "Every bit of food is used — either on the plate or as filling for some other dish," he said. Nair, on his part, ensures that all wet waste generated in their restaurants goes into the composter in their Koregaon Park premises. "Not just this, at a restaurant level, we upcycle old sun boards or posters to make coasters. All candle wax collected from candles burning on tables are repurposed to make new candles," he said. Four properties of Neemrana Group of Hotels have adopted the farm-to-fork concept wherein properties are growing their own vegetables. Sonavi Kaicker, group CEO, said it reduces carbon footprint for the properties. "This commitment not only enhances the taste of dishes but also prioritises guest health, fostering memorable experiences," she said.

Ruling Mahayuti trumps in Legislative Council polls in Maharashtra, Oppn suffers cross-voting

GNS News Agency, July 18

In a last battle before the state Assembly polls, the ruling Mahayuti alliance in Maharashtra not only managed to keep its flock together thereby winning nine of the 11 Legislative Council seats it contested, but also dealt a setback to the Opposition MVA, which was riding high on the recent Lok Sabha victory in which it won 31 out of the 48 seats in the state. The results also, for now, have put to rest rumours about certain MLAs of Ajit Pawar-led NCP and Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena of being in touch with Opposition parties for crossing over, ahead of the Assembly elections slated in October-November.

Riding high on the success it gained in the Lok Sabha elections, the Opposition had hoped to attract ruling side MLAs to their side and had fielded three candidates. However, as per the preliminary estimate, seven MLAs from the Opposition MVA cross-voted in favour of the ruling side. On the other hand, all nine candidates of ruling alliance secured victory. Five candidates fielded by the BJP — party national secretary Pankaja Munde (26 votes), former minister Parinay Phuke (26 votes), former Pune Mayor Yogesh Tilekar (26 votes), Matang community (Scheduled Caste) leader Amit Gorkhe (23 votes) and former minister and Rayat Kranti Paksha chief Sadabhau Khot — won the election in counting of second preference votes. Besides, NCP led by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar had given tickets to Rajesh Vitekar (23 votes), a party leader from Parbhani district, and party general secretary Shivajirao Garje (24 votes) who secured victory. Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had nominated former Lok Sabha MPs Bhawna Gavli (26 votes) and Krupal Tumane (23 votes) and both won in the first round.

The Congress had renominated MLC Pradnya Satav who secured victory by winning 25 votes. Shiv Sena (UBT) had given the ticket to party chief Uddhav



Thackeray's close aide Milind Narvekar, who couldn't reach the necessary quota of 23 votes in the first round and won only in the second round. "Our strategy was to not disturb our ally and ensure that we gain extra votes from outside. It worked and we managed to win nine seats," said Ajit Pawar. He added that the NCP had 42 MLAs and his party has received support of 47. "I thank all these MLAs who supported us," said Pawar. Earlier, it was speculated that MLAs from Ajit Pawar's NCP will shift towards Sharad Pawar after the opposition victory in Lok Sabha. However results have shown that no such shift has taken place, instead at least 7 MLAs from Congress have cross-voted in favour of the ruling alliance. As per the numerical strength, three major parties in Opposition has a strength of 65 MLAs but it has won only 59 votes. Additionally, all smaller parties have voted in favour of the ruling alliance. In the MVA camp, the Congress had 37 MLAs. While one vote was reportedly turned invalid, six have gone in favour of the ruling alliance. Narvekar, whose party Sena (UBT) had 16 MLAs, received support of six Congress MLAs, instead of seven as decided in the strategy meet, earlier. The NCP (SP) has 12 MLAs and all these votes went to Jayant Patil of PWP. However, Patil could not win any other vote leading to his defeat.

CAG raises concern on state finances, asks Maharashtra govt to formulate realistic budget



GNS News Agency, July 18

The report also raised concern over the fact that the supplementary grants/appropriations as well as re-appropriation were obtained without adequate justification as large amounts remained unutilised. The report also raised concern over the fact that the supplementary grants/appropriations as well as re-appropriation were obtained without adequate justification as large amounts remained unutilised. Highlighting a continuous mismatch between receipts and expenditure indicating rising fiscal stress, the Maharashtra State Finances Audit Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year 2022-23 has recommended the state government to formulate a realistic budget. The report provides an overview of the finances, budgetary management and quality of accounts, financial reporting practices and other matters relevant to state finances. "The state government should formulate a realistic budget based on reliable assumptions considering the needs of the departments and their capacity to utilise the allocated resources," the report has recommended. The report also raised concern over the fact that the supplementary grants/appropriations as well as re-appropriation were obtained without adequate justification as large amounts remained unutilised. "The budgeting exercise carried out by the state government needs to be more realistic as 18.19 per cent of the total provision remained unutilised. The total expenditure incurred during the year was six per cent less than the original budget and the supplementary budget consti-

tuted 15 per cent of the original budget," remarked the report. "An appropriate control mechanism needs to be instituted by the government to enforce proper implementation and monitoring of budget to ensure that savings are curtailed, large savings within the grant/appropriation are controlled and anticipated savings are identified and surrendered within the specified time frame," the report said. The report has also advised the state on its investments. "The government may take steps to ensure better value for money in investments. Otherwise, funds borrowed at high cost will continue to be invested in projects with low financial returns," it said. It further stated that the state government needs to monitor and manage its debt levels to ensure long-term fiscal stability by adopting remedial measures to rationalise expenditure,

Karnataka BJP leaders stage protest against MUDA 'scam', detained

GNS News Agency, July 18

BJP on Friday staged a protest in Mysuru against alleged fraudulent allotment of sites to land losers by Mysuru Urban Development Authority, which involves plots given to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi. They demanded allocation of sites to the poor by withdrawing from those who were distributed "illegally", a CBI probe into the "scam", and Siddaramaiah's resignation as the allegations are against the chief minister and his family. The BJP workers attempted to lay siege to the MUDA office but were detained and whisked away by the police in a bus.

They included several BJP leaders, including Leader of Opposition R Ashoka, former Deputy Chief Minister C N Ashwath Narayan, Mysuru MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar. Earlier, in a bid to elude the police, Ashoka and Ashwath Narayan reportedly came to the palace city of Mysuru in a goods carrier. Opposition has the right to protest in a democracy, but even that is being scuttled. We have come here in a goods carrier that is used to carry vegetables, hiding from the police. Our in-

Hospital's first multi-organ donation: Transplants of 9-yr-old boy's organs save four lives



GNS News Agency, July 18

He lost his wife last year and three days ago, consented to donate the organs of his nine-year-old son who was declared brain dead at Sadhu Vaswani Mission's medical complex, Inlaks and Budhrani hospital. The boy's organs helped save four lives, Rhea Ahuja, medical superintendent at Inlaks and Budhrani hospital said.

Inlaks and Budhrani hospital performed its first multi-organ and tissue donation on July 9 after the boy's father consented to donating his organs. The nine-year-old, who was on regular treatment for a benign colloid cyst with hydrocephalus (obstructive) with coning, was admitted to the hospital after he had a severe headache and vomiting on July 3. We conducted a surgery, but the boy's condition was critical, Ahuja said and was declared brain dead towards midnight on July 8. Both the father and boy's uncle were counselled and a decision was taken to save four lives by donating his organs.

Aarti Gokhale, central coordinator, Zonal Transplant Coordination Committee (ZTCC), Western zone said one kidney was sent to Jupiter Lifeline hospital. The other kidney and pancreas was harvested and transplanted into one patient at Sahyadri Specialty Hospital, Pune Deccan and lungs were sent for transplant to Dr D Y Patil hospital and Research Centre. Gokhale said that the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation has declared July as organ donation awareness month. On July 8 the Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA) was enacted in order to regularise removing, storing and transplanting human organs for therapeutic purposes.

Families of four donors, who were declared brain dead, consented to donate their organs. Waitlisted patients across different hospitals received a new lease of life as eight kidneys were harvested and transplanted apart from two livers, one split liver, one heart and one lung.

Vadodara Municipal Corporation reports two cases of cholera



GNS News Agency, July 18

The civic body said that a 45-year-old woman from the Hathikhana had tested positive for cholera while on Thursday, another case was reported from Ganesh Nagar. With 27 patients being treated for suspected cholera, the VMC health department said it has sent five fresh samples for tests to government laboratories.

VMC Medical Officer for Health, Dr Devesh Patel, told The Indian Express that the civic body has temporarily cut off water supply in the two areas. "Following the confirmation of the two cases at Ganesh Nagar and Hathikhana, the water supply department has begun repairing the contamination in the water network. The supply has been temporarily disconnected and water is being supplied to these areas through a tanker..." Patel further said that though the results of the samples sent to the government laboratory were received on Thursday and Friday, respectively, the two patients had already received treatment for cholera by then at the hospital. "The cases are about a week old... As the test results take about five days, by then the patient would have also recovered... Suspected patients are treated for cholera while the report is awaited. In regard to these two cases, we have not come across any immediate contact or anyone in the neighbourhood who has contracted cholera," he added. The VMC on Friday also reported 48 positive cases of acute diarrheal disease, 454 suspected cases of typhoid and 311 suspected cases of viral Hepatitis A and E.

If state sits on matter, judiciary and executive would be at loggerheads: Madhya Pradesh HC warns govt



GNS News Agency, July 18

Madhya Pradesh High Court, Madhya Pradesh HC, MP govt, Madhya Pradesh government, Indian express news, current affairs. The court had previously recommended specific pay scales for high court employees across various cadres. Continuous inaction on following the court's orders would "create a situation where judiciary and executive would be at loggerheads", the Madhya Pradesh High Court has told the state government. The scathing remarks from a Division Bench of Acting Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Amar Nath came on July 4 on a contempt petition against the state government for non-compliance with the court's 2017 and 2019 orders on revising pay scales for high court employees. Petitioners in the case are HC employees seeking revision of their pay on a par with other HCs. The court has been hearing the case since 2016.

"If (the) state continues to sit over the matter for any further period of time, it would create a situation where (the) judiciary and executive would be at loggerheads,

which is not in the interest of administration of justice," the court said. The court had previously recommended specific pay scales for high court employees across various cadres.

In its observations, the court said: "It is quite unfortunate to note that the State is sitting tight over the matter since (the) last seven years after passing of order dated 28.04.2017 and since (the) last five years after passing of the order dated 05.09.2019. This contempt petition was adjourned on several occasions for one pretext or the other". Chief Secretary Veera Rana, who was present in court on July 4, was informed that the high court had recommended specific pay scales for its employees across various cadres. This recommendation has been pending with the state government for almost 10 years, awaiting approval and notification by the Governor, the chief secretary was told. "What is disturbing in this case is that the State Government is indulging in procrastination for reasons attributed to the State Government in a situation where the Chief Justice exercising powers under Article 229(2) of the Constitution recommended revised pay-scales for employees of the High Court after assessing requirement of number of posts and nature of duties attached to each post in the establishment of High Court," the court said, adding that if the Chief Justice of the High Court proposes a justified revision of pay scales, the obstacle of insufficient funds should not prevent the state from accepting it. When the chief secretary asked for more time citing the ongoing assembly session, the court gave the government three weeks to resolve the impasse. The case is now scheduled for on July 31 "for either reporting compliance by the State or showing cause as to why coercive steps be not taken against respondent/contemner".

12 years after Assam man was declared a foreigner, Supreme Court restores citizenship: 'A miscarriage of justice'



GNS News Agency, July 18

Twelve years after he was declared a foreigner by a Foreigner's Tribunal, the Supreme Court Thursday declared Assam resident Rahim Ali an Indian citizen, and came down heavily on the manner in which citizenship proceedings were first initiated against him 20 years ago. Calling it a "grave miscarriage of justice", the court said that Section 9 of the Foreigners Act does not empower authorities to "pick a person at random, knock at his/her/their door and tell him/her/they/them, 'We suspect you of being a foreigner', and then rest easy". In observations that could have a bearing on other cases where people have had, or are in the process of having, their citizenship scrutinised in Assam's Foreigners Tribunals, a Supreme Court Bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah questioned the basis on which Rahim Ali's citizenship had first come into question in 2004.

In July that year, a sub-inspector from the Nalbari police station in Assam visited Rahim Ali's home, informed him that his citizenship was under question, and asked him to show documents proving his Indian nationality. Rahim told him he did not have the documents at hand and sought seven days' time. When he was unable to produce the documents, the case made its way to a foreigner's tribunal in 2006. With Rahim failing to turn up in court, which he attributed to his health, the tribunal passed an ex-parte order declaring that he had illegally migrated to Assam from Bangladesh after March 25, 1971 — the cut-off date for citizenship in Assam. The tribunal held that he "had failed to discharge his burden" under Section 9 of the Foreigners Act and failed to prove that he is not a foreigner.

The section that the tribunal referred to states that if a question arises on whether or not a person is a foreigner, the burden of proof lies on that person. Scrutinising the proceedings that took place 20 years ago, the Supreme Court pointed to the section of the 1964 Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, which states that the tribunal "shall serve on the person... a copy of the main grounds on which he is alleged to be a foreigner and give him a reasonable opportunity of making a representation and producing evidence in support of his case". In Rahim Ali's case, the sub-inspector had told the tribunal that he had acted on directions by the then Superintendent of Police. It had been alleged by the police that he was from Bangladesh's Mymensingh district and had migrated after March 25, 1971. The court questioned what warranted this direction in the first place. "The pleadings and the record are silent as to what was the basis of the SP's direction. What materials or information had come to his knowledge or possession that warranted his direction?"

Days after PM meet with Putin, Doval discusses Quad issues with Sullivan

GNS News Agency, July 18

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval spoke to US NSA Jake Sullivan on Friday, days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Russia and met President Vladimir Putin. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, "They discussed a wide range of issues of bilateral, regional and international concern and forthcoming high-level engagements under the Quad framework to be held in July 2024 and later in the year."

It said that the NSAs "agreed to work closely to further advance India-US relations, which are built on shared values and common strategic and security interests". "They reiterated the need to work collectively to address global challenges to peace and security and further expand the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," the MEA statement said. Their conversation comes less than a month after Sullivan's visit to Delhi for the bilateral talks with Doval last month, when he also met PM Modi and External Affairs minister S Jaishankar. On July 10, in the wake of PM Modi's just-concluded visit to Russia, the US State Department, for the second day in a row, had expressed "concerns about India's relationship with Russia". Saying that it "continues" to express these concerns to India, the US also confirmed that it had held "conversations" with India in the "past 24 hours" too.

"We have been quite clear about our concerns about India's relationship with Russia. We have expressed those privately directly to the Indian government, and continue to do so. And that has not changed," US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller had said. He had said the US continues to "urge India to support efforts to realise an enduring and just peace in Ukraine, based on the principles of the UN charter, based on upholding Ukraine's territorial integrity and its sovereignty. And that will continue to be what we will engage with India about". A day earlier, Miller had said: "India is a strategic partner with whom we engage in a full and frank dialogue. And that includes our concerns about their relationship with Russia." Acknowledging that his two-day visit to Moscow was being watched by the "entire world", Modi had walked the hard diplomatic tightrope in his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin. So, a day after a suspected Russian missile struck a children's hospital in Kyiv, Modi had told Putin that the death of innocent children causes "pain and the heart simply explodes", "peace talks do not succeed amid bombs, guns and bullets", and "solution (to any conflict) cannot be found on the battlefield". At the same time, Modi underlined that both had a "frank" exchange on Ukraine and he had sensed a "new way" of thinking. The Prime Minister's visit to Russia had taken place at a time when Washington was hosting the NATO leaders' summit on the occasion of their 75th anniversary.

Modi's new and sharp formulation went beyond what he had told Putin at their last in-person bilateral meeting

Obviously, the State cannot proceed in such a manner. Neither can we as a court countenance such approach," states the judgement. "It is for the authorities concerned to have in their knowledge or possession some material basis or information to suspect that a person is a foreigner and not an Indian. In the present case... nothing has come on record to indicate even an iota of evidence against him, except for the bald allegation that he had illegally migrated to India post 25.03.1971," said the judgement, adding that even information on who made the allegation is not known or disclosed.

"It needs no reiteration that a person charged or accused would generally not be able to prove to the negative, if he/she is not aware of the evidence/material against him/her which leads to the person being labelled suspect. Ipso facto, just an allegation/accusation cannot lead to shifting of the burden to the accused, unless he/she is confronted with the allegation as also the material backing such allegation... In the absence of the basic/primary material, it cannot be left to the untrammelled or arbitrary discretion of the authorities to initiate proceedings, which have life-altering and very serious consequences for the person, basis hearsay or bald and vague allegation(s)," it states. The court's observations are significant given how widespread this manner of initiating citizenship proceedings has been in Assam, which has been roiled by tensions over the question of "illegal immigration" and citizenship for decades.

Calling it a "watershed judgement in citizenship jurisprudence", Aman Wadud, a lawyer who has handled a number of citizenship cases, stated that the "same modus operandi can be seen in case after case". "We have been talking about how randomly Indian citizens are accused of being foreigners. This is probably the first judicial decision on how random the process is, and it explains clearly that we need to go right to the core of the matter, the very initiation of the proceeding before the tribunal... In case after case, we have been saying that there is no investigation whatsoever... The judgement clearly explains that there should be some material to accuse a person of being an illegal migrant and not just randomly single them out," he said. Rahim Ali had faced a Foreigners Tribunal again in 2017, when in the course of hearing this case, the Supreme Court had directed the tribunal to determine his case "on merit". He had again been declared a foreigner by the tribunal, which had pointed to discrepancies in spellings and dates in some of the documents that he had produced. The Supreme Court judgement makes sharp observations on this as well, stating that these discrepancies were "minor" and that Rahim Ali had produced evidence that his parents had been residents of India far before 1966. "Variation in name spelling is not a foreign phenomenon in preparation of the Electoral Roll... Moreover, in our country, sometimes a title is prefixed or suffixed to a name such that the same person may be known also by one or two aliases. The Tribunal seems to have been totally oblivious to all this," states the judgement. This observation is significant as well because discrepancies in spelling and the use of different aliases in documents and the electoral roll are a widespread ground for people being declared foreigners by tribunals. "It is not uncommon throughout India that different spellings may be written in the regional/vernacular language and in English. Such/same person will have a differently spelt name in English and the local language," states the judgement.

Before Uttarakhand brought Uniform Civil Code, panel worked to find balance between gender equality and customs

GNS News Agency, July 18

Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code, Uttarakhand ucc, Uttarakhand, Uniform Civil Code, gender equality, Indian express news, current affairs. In addition, it also depended on public feedback and consultation with various stakeholders, including political parties such as the AIMIM, BJP, BSP, CPI(M), the CPI (ML), SP and the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal. The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) of Uttarakhand is aimed at focusing on gender equality while leaving prevailing customs and diverse ritualistic practices undisturbed, the panel set up by the Uttarakhand government to draft recommendations for the law had said in its report submitted to the government this year.

It was based on this report — all four volumes of which were released Friday — that the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) of Uttarakhand 2024, passed by the assembly in February, was drafted. In it, the panel said that it left alone customs and practices so long as they didn't come in direct conflict with constitutional practices. "The state government directed the rule and implementation committee to make the report in 4 volumes to share with the public. Today, we officially want to inform the public that the report in all 4 volumes and the Hindi and English volumes of the Act are being uploaded to our website," retired IAS officer Shatrughan Singh, who headed the committee, told the media.

Significantly, the Uniform Civil Code of Uttarakhand 2024 — which received presidential assent in March — seeks to "govern and regulate the laws related to marriage and divorce, successions, live-in relationships, and matters related thereto". The report released Friday claims that the committee relied on various materials — including existing statutes at both central and provincial levels, constitutional provisions and commentaries on personal laws, key decisions of the Supreme Court, and reports



from the Law Commission of India, including its consultation paper on the UCC — to draft its recommendations. In addition, it also depended on public feedback and consultation with various stakeholders, including political parties such as the AIMIM, the BJP, the BSP, the CPM, the CPI-ML, SP, and the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal. According to the report, the committee held 72 meetings to draft the code, which it said was a step towards realising "the lofty constitutional goals of creating an egalitarian society and inculcating a sense of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, as well as a sense of unity, integrity and nationhood among the citizens". "This is sought to be done by bringing the personal laws of the different communities under one umbrella and in line with contemporary realities without unnecessarily infringing on the varied religious rites, rituals and ceremonies; the customs and usages that are not against morality and public order are also sought to be protected," it says. On the exclusion of tribals from the UCC, the report says that "interactions with the tribal population revealed that an overwhelming majority was in favour of its inclusion".

India bears disproportionate brunt of blame for climate change: Justice Surya Kant

GNS News Agency, July 18

Even as there is room for improvement for India when it comes to sustainable practices, it bears the brunt of taking the blame for environmental damage and climate change, while many other nations fly under the radar, Supreme Court's judge Justice Surya Kant said

The SC judge was speaking during the launch of 'Climate Change: The Policy, Law and Practice', a book authored by lawyer Jatinder Cheema. While Justice Surya Kant was the chief guest, Justice K V Vishwanathan, Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice P S Narasimha were present as speakers. "When we analyse climate change, its effects and its counter measures through a domestic lens, we often see, and a perception is created on this, that India and other developing countries disproportionately bear the brunt of taking the blame for environmental damage and climate change. While I am not suggesting there is no room for improvement on our part when it comes to sustainable practices, wrongdoers often fly under the radar," said Justice Surya Kant.

Justice Surya Kant said there are countries, which are unable to handle their environmental issues and it is manifested in instances such as shipping of waste to developing and under developed countries. "... There are countries who are the highest generators of waste in the world, especially in terms of e-waste and marine debris. But what adds insult to the injury, is that these countries often export their plastic waste and very conveniently circumvent their need to address their ineffective waste disposal mechanisms," he said. All the SC judges present highlighted the recent landmark judgement by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud recognising the rights of citizens against adverse effects of climate change. The judgement delivered in April expanded the scope of Article 14 and Article 21 of the constitution to include "right against the adverse effects of climate change". The judgement was passed in a matter regarding recovery of critically endangered Great Indian Bustard birds.

Justice Vishwanathan and Justice Karol emphasised the need for a new jurisprudence on climate change which was separate from environment law. Reflecting on the debate as to what should be the new framework for climate legislation in the country, Justice Vishwanathan



While Justice Surya Kant was the chief guest, Justice K V Vishwanathan, Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice P S Narasimha were present as speakers.

said that India needs to take an all-round approach rather than only focussing on regulating emissions like certain developed countries. "One other thought I want to leave you with, is the need for establishing, which the author addresses in his book, and which the other experts have been writing on, a climate change commission for our country, which will be a permanent body. Like we have the NITI Aayog now, so that periodically all stakeholders address this issue and the frontiers are pushed," he said. Justice Karol stressed on the need for a special focus to tackle the impact of climate change on agriculture, which he said was one of the occupations affected adversely due to climate change. Meanwhile, Justice Narasimha underlined that any climate action cannot ignore the role of individual action, which is equally important in bringing about change.



According to the Ministry of External Affairs, "They discussed a wide range of issues of bilateral, regional and international concern and forthcoming high-level engagements under the Quad framework to be held in July 2024 and later in the year."

about two years ago. In Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in September 2022, Modi had told Putin that "this is not the era of war" — a line that was later used in the G20's Bali declaration that November, and by Western leaders and interlocutors to press Russia to end the war.

The Ukraine war has put India in a delicate diplomatic position with its Western allies. New Delhi has walked the tightrope, not explicitly condemning the Russian invasion but calling for an international probe into the Bucha massacre in the early weeks of the war, and expressing concern over threats of nuclear war issued by Russian leaders.

India abstained from voting against Russia in several resolutions at the United Nations Security Council. Washington has been quite understanding of the Indian position on Russia, due to its dependence on defence interests. Delhi has consistently maintained that it is on the side of "peace, respect for international law and support for the UN Charter", and "strongly advocates a return to dialogue and diplomacy". India has reiterated that respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states is an essential element of the international order, a euphemism for questioning Russia's conduct. However, Doval's conversation with Sullivan, just after Modi's visit signals that Delhi is trying to keep its channels of communication open with the West, after the Moscow trip.

Assaulted by Governor's son for not sending luxury car to pick him up: Odisha Raj Bhavan staffer



GNS News Agency, July 18

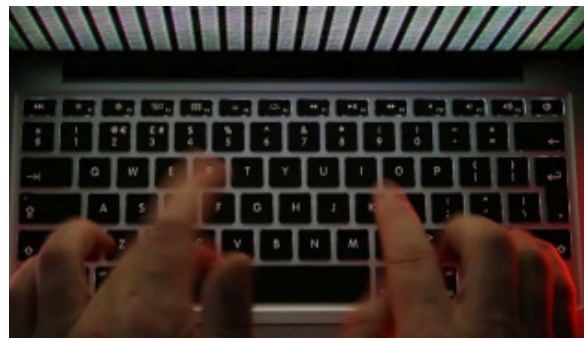
An official posted in Odisha's Raj Bhavan has accused Governor Raghubar Das's son of assault for not sending luxury cars to pick him up from the Puri railway station. The official, Baikuntha Pradhan (47), is posted as the Assistant Section Officer, Household Section, Governor's Secretariat, Raj Bhavan. He has alleged that Das's son Lalit Kumar and five others slapped, punched, and kicked him on the night of July 7 on the Raj Bhavan premises in Puri, where he was posted to supervise the preparation for President Droupadi Murmu's visit. On July 10, Pradhan submitted a written complaint to the Governor's principal secretary.

Raj Bhavan officials and principal secretary Saswat Mishra did not respond to calls and messages seeking a comment. Pradhan's complaint to the principal secretary states, "Being the in-charge of Raj Bhavan, Puri, I was there since July 5 to supervise the preparedness for the visit/stay of Droupadi Murmu, Hon'ble President of India, on July 7 and 8." Pradhan is otherwise posted at the Raj Bhavan in Bhubaneswar. He alleged that around 11.45 pm on July 7, when he was sitting in the office room, the

Governor's personal cook came and told him that Kumar wanted to see him right away. "The moment Kumar saw me, he started scolding me in unparliamentary language and used highly objectionable slang. When I objected to such humiliation, they started slapping me," he alleged in the complaint.

He claimed he ran out of the room and hid behind the annexe, but was found by Kumar's personal security officers and dragged to a room, via a lift. "Security personnel and others present there witnessed this incident. They again slapped me, threw punches on my face, kicked every part of my body, and twisted my left ankle. Kumar kept on saying that if they murder me, nobody can save me..." he alleged. Pradhan said he verbally narrated the alleged incident to the Governor's principal secretary at 04.30 pm on July 8, and mailed the letter on July 10. Speaking to the media in Bhubaneswar on Friday, Pradhan's wife Sayo claimed they also went to the Sea Beach police station on July 11 to file a complaint, which was not accepted. "Hence, we have mailed the complaint to the police," she said. The complaint alleges that Kumar was upset with Pradhan for not sending two luxury vehicles to receive him at the Puri railway station. The complaint also alleges that during the assault, Kumar asked Pradhan to lick his shoes. The Puri Superintendent of Police Pinak Mishra did not respond to calls seeking a comment. My husband was deployed for the President's duty, not to serve the Governor's son," Sayo told reporters, adding that he was admitted to the Puri district headquarters hospital on Thursday. She claimed that Pradhan also met the Governor and senior officers on July 10 to discuss the issue, but was told to change his behaviour. She said that Pradhan served in the Indian Air Force for around 20 years before taking up the ASO job in 2019.

Both Home and IT ministries pitch for control of nodal cyber security watchdog Cert-In



GNS News Agency, July 18

cyber security, Cyber Security Policy, CERT-In, Computer Emergency Response Team-India, IT Ministry, Indian express news, current affairs. The IT Ministry, however, believes the CERT-In's job, which includes incident reporting and also alerting organisations about malware, is quite technical in nature, and that its remit goes far beyond law enforcement purposes. TWO KEY ministries, Information Technology and Home Affairs, are making a strong pitch for the ownership of Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), the country's nodal cybersecurity watchdog. At present, Cert-In comes under the administrative control of the IT Ministry.

According to sources, the two ministries have been engaged in discussions for at least a year now after MHA first elaborated on how bringing Cert-In under its ambit would help law enforcement. Cert-In's technical expertise, the MHA believes will streamline its investigative abilities in cyberspace, particularly because it has enforcement powers. The IT Ministry, however, believes the CERT-In's job, which includes incident reporting and also alerting organisations about malware, is quite technical in nature, and that its remit goes far beyond law enforcement purposes. The back and forth exemplifies the evolving complexity of the online world, especially when harms are involved, where multiple stakeholders have to work together and often with different approaches and mandates. "Cert-In's main job is to share inputs with the government on how the security infrastructure can be better, which is a very technical function. They have very limited powers in terms of actually carrying out investigations. For instance, unlike law enforcement agencies, Cert-In does not have any search and seizure powers, which limits its abilities to conduct full-blown investigations on its own," a senior government official told The Indian Express.

"The Home Ministry is approaching the debate with the perspective that since it has the overall investigative powers for various offences, if it also controls a technical agency like Cert-In directly, it might help streamline some of the law enforcement agencies' work," a second government official said. They also described the tussle as

"bureaucratic power games". Multiple queries sent to the IT and Home Affairs ministries did not elicit a response. A third official, who did not want to be named, said because of the way the Allocation of Business Rules (AoBR) have been framed, "cybersecurity has not been made the sole remit of any one ministry. There are agencies that work on various facets of cybersecurity, which come under the Prime Minister's Office, Home Ministry, and the IT Ministry. That ambiguity in the rules is also causing this turf war. Globally, some countries have their respective Certs under the Home office, or the IT ministry."

The Information Technology (Amendment) Act 2008, designated Cert-In to serve as the national agency to perform key functions in the area of cybersecurity including the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on cyber incidents; forecast and alerts of such events; prescribing emergency measures for handling them; and coordinating cyber incident response activities, among other things. The MHA also has a dedicated cybersecurity agency under it, called the Indian Cyber-crime Coordination Centre (I4C). However, it differs from Cert-In in that it focuses primarily on cyber crimes and improving coordination between various law enforcement agencies. Cert-In coming under the fold of Home Affairs could potentially give it the much needed technical expertise its agencies currently lack. Cert-In has been involved in the investigation loop of several high-profile cyber incidents that have impacted Indian institutions. For instance, it carried out a technical analysis of the cyberattack which had brought the operations of AIIMS Delhi to a grinding halt for several days in 2022. The agency has also evolved to enjoy a significant amount of regulatory powers since inception. In 2022, Cert-In issued a cybersecurity directive to all entities, which required VPN service providers along with data centres and cloud service providers, to store information such as names, email IDs, contact numbers, and IP addresses (among other things) of their customers for five years, among other things. Cert-In has also been criticised for not revealing details of investigations publicly, which civil society activities believe could help in transparency. The agency handled close to 1.4 million cybersecurity incidents in 2022, as per its latest annual report. The mitigation of vulnerable services accounted for the largest number of incidents handled by the agency, totalling 8,75,892. Soumyendra Barik is Special Correspondent with The Indian Express and reports on the intersection of technology, policy and society. With over five years of journalism experience, he has reported on issues of gig workers' rights, privacy, India's prevalent digital divide and a range of other policy interventions that impact big tech companies. He once also tailed a food delivery worker for over 12 hours to quantify the amount of money they make, and the pain they go through while doing so. In his free time, he likes to nerd about watches, Formula 1 and football.

SC to consider listing Bengal govt's plea on pending Bills

GNS News Agency, July 18

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to consider listing a plea of the West Bengal government alleging Governor CV Ananda Bose was withholding assent on as many as eight bills. A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submissions of lawyer Astha Sharma, appearing for the state government, that the plea filed in April is yet to be listed for hearing.

The state government, in its plea, said the denial of assent without assigning any reason to the bills passed by the assembly was contrary to the Article 200 of the Constitution. The Article provides for the process for a bill passed by the assembly of a state to be presented to the governor for assent. The governor may either assent or withhold assent or reserve the bill for consideration by the President. "When a Bill has been passed by the Legislative Assembly of a State or, in the case of a State having a Legislative Council, has been passed by both Houses of the Legislature of the State, it shall be presented to the Governor and the Governor shall declare either that he assents to the Bill or that he withholds assent therefrom or that he reserves the Bill for the consideration of the President," reads Article 200.



The Bills, which are awaiting consent of the governor, are the West Bengal University Laws (Amendment) Bill, the West Bengal University of Animal and Fishery Sciences (Amendment) Bill, the West Bengal Private University Laws (Amendment) Bill, the West Bengal Krishi Viswavidyalaya Laws, the West Bengal University of Health Sciences (Amendment) Bill, the Alish University (Amendment) Bill. These were passed by the state assembly in 2022. The West Bengal Town and Country (Planning and Development) (Amendment) Bill was passed in 2023. Some Bills, pending assent, pertain to the time when Jagdeep Dhankhar, the present vice president, was the governor of the state.

Centre dismisses Stalin's charges of neglecting Tamil Nadu, says hiked funding in many schemes



GNS News Agency, July 18

Stalin The sources said five projects worth Rs 4,000 crore have been approved by the Centre in Tamil Nadu, out of which two have been completed. The Centre has dismissed Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin's allegations that it was withholding funds for development projects in the southern state. Sources in the Union government said the central government has significantly increased the funding of projects on Railways, Highways, Airports and also in schemes in the social and rural sectors in Tamil Nadu in the last 10 years.

The sources said the budget allocated to Tamil Nadu for the development of railways between 2009 and 2014 used to average around Rs 879 crore per year, while the Central government has slotted Rs 6,331 crore for the state in the budget of 2024-25. As a result of this record budget, the work of construction of new railway lines, electrification, operation of new trains, development of stations and increase in passenger facilities are being done at a record pace in Tamil Nadu, the sources said. They said the total length of highways in Tamil Nadu

has increased to 6,806 km from the 4,985 km in 2014. "Projects having a length of 2,094 km at a cost of Rs 64,704 crore have been awarded in Tamil Nadu since 2014," the sources said, adding that projects having a length of 1,329 km at a cost of Rs 48,425 crore are under implementation. They said the Centre is investing a total Rs 2 lakh crore in development of national highways in Tamil Nadu. The sources said five projects worth Rs 4,000 crore have been approved by the Centre in Tamil Nadu, out of which two have been completed. They said the total investment in major ports in Tamil Nadu amount to Rs 10,168 crore. The sources said under the Fishery and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF), 64 projects worth Rs 1,574 crore have been approved for Tamil Nadu by the Centre, out of which 34 projects have been completed. Under the PM Awas Yojana, the Centre has released Rs 20,000 crore for the construction of more than 15 Lakh houses in Tamil Nadu in the last 10 years, the sources said. They said under the PM SVANidhi scheme, more than five lakh loans amounting to Rs 670 crore have been disbursed to street vendors in Tamil Nadu. The sources said more than 46 lakh farmers of Tamil Nadu have received Rs 11,000 crore under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, while more than one crore households have been provided tap water connections under Jal Jeevan Mission. They said the southern state has received Rs 700 crore each under PM Ujjwala and PM Matru Vandana Yojana initiatives of the Centre respectively. The sources said the Centre has spent Rs 13,392.89 crore under MNREGA in Tamil Nadu, which is 12.71 per cent of the total expenditure across the country in 2023-24. They said the Centre sanctioned 11 medical colleges in Tamil Nadu and released funds to the tune of Rs 2,145 crore and all 11 medical colleges are fully functional now.

Pune IAS officer could be sacked if found guilty

GNS News Agency, July 18

Probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar, who is at the centre of a controversy over alleged misuse of power and privileges, may be terminated from service if found guilty, official sources said.

They said all the documents presented by her to secure her candidature in the civil services examination and then for selection in the service will be re-examined by a single-member committee constituted by the Centre on Thursday.

The officer may be terminated from the service if found guilty. She may face criminal charges also in case she is found to have misrepresented a fact or done any sort of manipulation in documents relied upon for her



selection," a source said. Khedkar, a 2023 batch IAS officer, is currently posted in her home cadre Maharashtra.

Migrant worker's son translates Malayalam story to Hindi, Kerala school publishes book

GNS News Agency, July 18

Kerala Hindi story translation Aryan Thakur translated a short story by award-winning writer Priya A S titled Ullitheeyalum Onpathinte Pattikayam from his Malayalam text book. Aryan Thakur, born and raised in Kerala by his parents Sanoj Kumar Thakur and Dimple Devi—who moved to Kochi from Bihar's Rohtas district 12 years ago—is fluent in Malayalam. A Class 8 student at the St Albert's High School, Kochi, Thakur recently translated a Malayalam short story to Hindi. The 19-page book titled Pyaj Karhi Aur Nau Ki Pahaada was released on Thursday, July 11, at a dedicated event at Sree Rudra Vilasam UP School, Kochi, where Thakur studied till Class 7.

"I liked the process of translating; I would like to translate more works in the future," Thakur said, visibly thrilled. He translated a short story by award-winning writer Priya A S titled Ullitheeyalum Onpathinte Pattikayam from his Malayalam text book. Priya, who launched the booklet at the event, said, "This makes me more happy than receiving awards. I am reminded of how I translated William Wordsworth's The Solitary Reaper to Malayalam as a kid." The Budding Writers initiative

During the annual day function at Sree Rudra Vilasam UP School this year in February, social worker Rupa George spoke about the need for developing the skills of reading and writing in students. The school—with majority of students from economically backward backgrounds—took up her recommendation and introduced the "Budding Writers" initiative, where students were encouraged to translate literary works. Thakur, a studious boy, was chosen by teachers for the initiative. Under the guidance of Jyoti Bala, his Hindi teacher, Thakur started working on the translation, and he did that consistently for over a month and a half. Bala noted how he made time for this every evening. Priya won the (Kendra) Sahitya Akademi prize in 2023 for a children's novel based on 2018 Kerala



floods published by IE Malayalam. She won the Kerala Sahitya Academy Award for Children's Literature for the same novel in 2020.

A celebrated translator, Priya has translated Jaishree Mishra's Ancient Promises and Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things into Malayalam. She won the Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize in 2014 for translating Roy's Booker Prize-winning novel. Saying her short story was about a child's view on the world and that Thakur did justice to the translation, Priya also said, "A good translator is born when he can imbibe a story beyond the language, because literature is not just about the language, it is about life itself. It is good that students who have come from outside love reading Malayalam books and are enjoying it." Thakur's father works as a hairdresser on a ship, and his mother is a homemaker. They hardly understand Malayalam despite spending over a decade in Kerala. His sister Anushka, however, is fluent in the language. After the launch of her son's book, Devi thanked teachers for their effort and guidance. Anushka, a Class 6 student, said she read her brother's translation and enjoyed it. Uma S is currently working with indianexpress.com as an intern.

BMC's KEM Hospital makes history with first successful heart transplant

GNS News Agency, July 18

The King Edward Memorial (KEM) Hospital, under the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), carried out its first successful heart transplant surgery. The hospital had first tried to undertake a heart transplant in 1963 but the procedure was unsuccessful and no procedure was carried out ever since. The recipient is a 38-year-old male from Aurangabad, who was suffering from ischemic dilated cardiomyopathy. Considering the severity of his condition, a heart transplant was the only viable option. The donor was a 34-year-old female donor from Kalyan. She was seven months pregnant when she suffered from preeclampsia with intracerebral bleeding, leading to brain stem death on Sunday. She got married six-years ago. Talking to The Indian Express, her husband said, "She was rushed to a hospital in Kalyan when she developed high blood pressure. On Sunday, her condition did not improve even after being taken to KEM hospital and soon she was declared brain dead. She died along with the baby." Her husband decided to donate her heart to give a fresh lease of life to another patient. "It was a tough decision, but I realized that my wife was gone and there was no way to bring her back. If her heart could give someone else a new life, then why not?" he said.

The surgery was conducted by a team of five doctors headed by Dr Uday Jadhav, cardiovascular and thoracic surgery from KEM. The team also had senior consultant cardiologist Dr Praveen Kulkarni. The first attempt at a heart transplant at KEM Hospital was made in 1963-64 but was unsuccessful. For decades, no further transplant surgeries were performed. Recognizing this gap, Dr Sudhakar Shinde, Additional Municipal Commissioner, BMC, prioritized reviving the heart transplant program.

"It was a matter of bringing together the right resources and motivating our medical staff. With over 40 meetings and substantial investment in high-quality medical equipment, we have now successfully relaunched the programme," said Dr Shinde. The KEM Hospital received a provisional licence for the heart transplant programme on October 15 last year. Since then, they have procured more than 20 advanced medical devices and established a well-equipped transplant department. The cost of a heart transplant in a private hospital is typically around Rs 35 lakhs. However, the cost under the BMC is Rs 8 lakhs. This cost is further subsidized through schemes like the Mahatma Phule Jan Arogya Yojana, the Chief Minister's Assistance Fund, and the Prime Minister's Assistance Fund."

Elon Musk makes 'sizeable' donation to Donald Trump's campaign: Report



GNS News Agency, July 18

The development has grabbed attention as Elon Musk, a South African immigrant to the US, has donated to a candidate known for strict anti-immigration policies and views. Tesla CEO and X chairperson Elon Musk, a known critic of US President Joe Biden, has made a "sizeable" donation to a political group working to elect Republican Donald Trump to the White House, according to a Bloomberg report. While the exact amount donated is not known, sources said it was "sizeable".

Musk, who had previously said he would not spend money on either Trump or Biden, has donated to a group

called America PAC (political action committee). The PAC will disclose its list of donors on Monday (July 15). The development has grabbed attention as Elon Musk, a South African immigrant to the US, donated to a candidate known for strict anti-immigration policies and views. The billionaire has, however, not publicly endorsed any candidate so far. The donation from Musk comes at a time when Trump has overtaken Joe Biden in fundraising with backing from Wall Street and corporate donors, Bloomberg reported. Biden's own fundraising bid has tapered following a shaky presidential debate with Trump that has ignited his health concerns. Even Democrats have publicly asked Biden to drop his re-election bid.

Trump, who is expected to be officially nominated as the Republican Party's candidate for the November 5 US polls, had a meeting with Musk and other donors in March. Two months later, he denied media reports that suggested he might be roped in for an advisory role if Trump becomes president. "Musk knows Trump is a sucker who will sell America out, cutting his taxes while raising taxes on the middle class by \$2,500. Joe Biden has been standing up to people like Elon and fighting for the middle class his entire career -- and it's why he'll win in November," Reuters quoted Biden's campaign spokesperson James Singer as saying.

Amid calls to quit race, Biden tells supporters, 'I promise you, I'm ok'

GNS News Agency, July 18

Seeking to revive his struggling re-election campaign, President Joe Biden held a rare rally in Detroit on Friday (local time), telling a cheering crowd he wasn't going to leave the race and warning that Republican Donald Trump poses a serious threat. Biden, 81, is trying to shift the conversation from his mental sharpness and a growing number of Democratic defections to the impact of another Trump presidency, as he tries to reboot his campaign after a shaky debate performance on June 27.

"I am running and we're going to win," he said to a crowd that carried "Motown is Joetown" signs and chanted, "Don't you quit." "I'm the nominee," he said. "I'm not going anywhere." Pointing to the press area in the gym, Biden said, "They've been hammering me," to which the crowd boomed. "Guess what, Donald Trump has got a free pass," he added. "Hopefully with age comes a little wisdom," Biden said, in a defiant and sometimes gleeful performance. "Here's what I know - I know how to tell the truth, I know right from wrong and I know Americans want a president, not a dictator." Biden also laid out what he intended to do with his first 100 days of a second term, including codifying abortion rights, signing the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, ending medical debt, raising the minimum wage and banning assault weapons. These sweeping changes would be difficult or impossible without Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress. While union and religious leaders attended, Michigan's governor Gretchen Whitmer and its Democratic senators, Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters, did not. Earlier on Friday, Biden made a surprise stop at a restaurant in a Detroit suburb, where he told diners he planned to "finish the job," and said, "I promise you. I'm okay."

Biden got a boost on Friday when two prominent Democrats - Representative James Clyburn and California Governor Gavin Newsom - said he should stay in the race. On Friday afternoon, United Auto Workers president Shawn Fain, who had previously said he was worried about the president's chances, praised Biden for standing "with the working class," without using his name. But there were signs that his support was weakening elsewhere, as two more lawmakers called on him to drop out. "It is time to move forward. With a new leader," Representative Mike Levin, from California, said in a statement. Levin, like many others who have called on Biden to leave the race, faces a competitive re-election battle of his own this year.

Since the debate, at least 19 lawmakers have urged Biden to step aside, so the party can pick another candidate, as have some donors, Hollywood stars, activist groups and news outlets. Biden retains support from key figures in the party, however, less than five months from the November 5 election. "I'm riding with Biden no matter which direction he goes," Clyburn said on NBC's "Today" programme. Newsom likewise said he was sticking with Biden in an interview excerpt released by CBS.

Clyburn, 83, is a respected voice among Black Americans whose support is essential to Biden's 2024 campaign, while Newsom, 56, is one of several younger governors who are widely seen as the future of the party. While Biden courted Michigan voters, Trump challenged him on Friday to take a cognitive test, writing on Truth Social, "I will go with him, and take one also. For the first time,



we'll be a team, and do it for the good of the country." Trump will be in the national spotlight next week, when the Republican Party holds its convention in Milwaukee to award him the presidential nomination. **CRUCIAL CALLS**

Democrats are worried that Biden's low approval ratings and growing concerns that he is too old for the job could cause them to lose seats in the House of Representatives and Senate, leaving them with no grip on power in Washington should Trump win the White House. As he worked to stem further defections, Biden held separate phone calls with groups of Hispanic, Asian and Democratic lawmakers, according to aides. While the Hispanic group's top two leaders have endorsed Biden, some other members have not stated their positions. Democratic officeholders, donors and activists are trying to determine whether Biden is their best bet to defeat Trump and serve another four-year term in the White House. The New York Times reported that unnamed donors have told a pro-Biden Super PAC fundraising committee that roughly \$90 million in pledges will remain on hold as long as he is in the race. As Air Force One flew to the Motor City, campaign spokesperson Michael Tyler told reporters that donations "exploded" during Biden's Thursday night press conference to seven times the usual level. Hakeem Jeffries, the Democratic leader in the House, said he met with Biden on Thursday night to convey the range of thoughts his 213-member caucus held about Biden's candidacy. He did not say whether he personally thought Biden should stay in the race.

"I directly expressed the full breadth of insight, heartfelt perspectives and conclusions about the path forward," Jeffries wrote in a letter to colleagues. Thursday's closely-watched press conference provided fodder for Biden supporters and doubters alike. At one point, Biden referred to his vice president, Kamala Harris, as "Vice President Trump". Hours earlier, he introduced Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as "President Putin" at the Nato summit, drawing gasps from those in the room. He also delivered detailed assessments of global issues that served as a reminder of his decades of experience on the world stage. With most US voters firmly divided into ideological camps, opinion polls show the race remains close. An NPR/PBS poll released on Friday found Biden leading Trump 50 per cent to 48 per cent, a slight increase from his position before the June 27 debate. But some analysts have warned that Biden is losing ground in the handful of competitive states that will determine the outcome of the election. "If current trends continue, Mr Trump could rack up one of the most decisive presidential victories since 2008," Democratic strategist Doug Sosnik wrote in the New York Times.

Connecticut counsellor sent nudes, gave lap dance to 13-year-old student

GNS News Agency, July 18

A middle school guidance counsellor, a mother of three kids, from Connecticut sent nudes and gave lap dances to a 13-year-old student in her office. This sexual abuse by the counsellor was found out by her friend who borrowed her phone. It was full of explicit texts she had sent to the minor, police revealed.

A middle school guidance counsellor from Connecticut sent nudes and gave lap dances to a 13-year-old student in her office. The sexual abuse of a minor by the counsellor was found out by her friend who borrowed her phone. It was filled with explicit texts she had sent to the minor, Connecticut police revealed. The accused, Luisa Melchionne, a mother of three, was arrested on July 11. The arrest happened months later when her male friend asked for a phone as his phone was not working. He saw explicit texts to the teen boy, the police documents revealed. A judge decided on July 11 to keep Melchionne's bail at \$500,000. If she chooses to post bond, she will undergo GPS monitoring, intensive probation services and house arrest. She was asked to contact no other minor than her own three children. The 47-year-old has been charged with second-degree sexual assault and two counts of risk of injury to a minor, according to the Norwalk police. The investigation began in April as the friend reached out to the police and told them he had found these messages on her phone and said the mes-



sages "appeared sexual in nature" on the phone, according to the arrest warrant affidavit, reports the Norwalk Hour. The messages comprised explicit pictures of Melchionne and even financial transactions between the boy and her. When the police spoke to him, he said he received the nude pictures from the counsellor along with some payment for Uber rides, food and \$100 around last Christmas, reports NBC Connecticut. The student also informed that Melchionne gave "lapdances" and did other sexual activities with him behind closed doors.

Actor Alec Baldwin cries in court as judge dismisses 'Rust' shooting case



GNS News Agency, July 18

Hollywood actor Alec Baldwin broke into tears in a US court after a judge found that key evidence over a fatal shooting on the set of 'Rust' had been withheld from the defence and dismissed the case. US actor Alec Baldwin gets emotional at the conclusion of his trial on involuntary manslaughter at Santa Fe County District Court in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on July 18. Alec Baldwin's trial for involuntary manslaughter collapsed in spectacular fashion on Friday (local time) as a judge found key evidence over a fatal shooting on the set of "Rust" had been withheld from the defence, and dismissed the case. Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer, presiding over the trial in Santa Fe, New Mexico, said bullets potentially linked to the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins that could have been favourable to Baldwin's case had not been shared with his lawyers by police and prosecutors. The Hollywood A-lister immediately burst into tears, as the case -- which could have seen him sentenced to 18 months in prison if found guilty -- was abruptly tossed out in sensational scenes. "The state's willful withholding of this information was intentional and deliberate. If this conduct does not rise to the level of bad faith, it certainly comes so near to bad faith as to show signs of scorching prejudice," said Marlowe Sommer. "The court concludes that this conduct is highly prejudicial to the defendant."

Baldwin was holding a gun in the direction of Hutchins during a rehearsal in October 2021 when the weapon fired, killing Hutchins and wounding the film's director. The movie's armorer Hannah Gutierrez, who loaded the fatal weapon, is already serving 18 months in prison for involuntary manslaughter. Baldwin was facing the same charge. Prosecutors claim he ignored basic

gun safety laws and acted recklessly on set. Baldwin's celebrity lawyer Alex Spiro argued the actor had no responsibility for checking the weapon's deadly contents and did not know it contained live rounds. But the defence's case also rested heavily on discrediting the police investigation. And Spiro on Thursday introduced evidence that live bullets potentially linked to the shooting had been handed to police, but not disclosed to Baldwin's lawyers. **BURIED**

The bullets were handed to police by a "Good Samaritan" earlier this year, more than two years after the "Rust" tragedy. The "Good Samaritan" was a former police officer and a family friend of Gutierrez, the armorer. He told police the bullets matched the rounds that killed Hutchins. Spiro accused police of having "buried" evidence by not filing it under the "Rust" case, depriving the defence of a chance to see it. "It was a perfect plan," he told the court.

Crime scene technician Marissa Poppell, under questioning from Spiro, said she had catalogued the bullets, but had been told not to file them under the "Rust" case. Special prosecutor Kari Morrissey scrambled to respond, telling the court she had never seen or heard of the bullets before this week. But when it emerged that Morrissey had been present for discussions in which it was decided not to submit the bullets into the "Rust" case file, Morrissey voluntarily called herself as a witness in a last-ditch attempt to salvage the state's case. She claimed the allegedly "buried" bullets did not match the live rounds on the set of "Rust," and had been stored in a different state, Arizona, up to the day of the tragic shooting. Marlowe Sommer was not convinced and dismissed the case, prompting emotional scenes among Baldwin and his family. Baldwin is highly unlikely to see the inside of a criminal court again over the shooting, legal experts said, though he could still face civil suits. "As far as the criminal proceedings, it's over. They can't refile," said Los Angeles lawyer Tre Lovell. "It's been dismissed with prejudice. To try to do it again would be double jeopardy. You can't do that." University of Richmond law professor Carl Tobias agreed that "on the criminal side, I think it's done." The prosecutors could try to somehow mount an extraordinary appeal. But I don't think any appellate court is going to agree with the prosecutor," he said. The withheld evidence could benefit Gutierrez, the film's armorer who has already launched an appeal, and David Halls, the movie's first assistant director who took a plea deal and admitted negligence. Christopher Melcher, a Los Angeles-based attorney, told AFP he was "dumbfounded" by the case's sudden collapse.

Imran Khan's PTI to emerge as largest party in Parliament after court's ruling



A 13-member full bench headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa has ruled that Imran Khan's party was eligible for more than 20 seats reserved for women and minorities. After this verdict, Khan's party is likely to emerge as the single largest party in the country's Parliament.

GNS News Agency, July 18

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Friday ruled that Imran Khan's party was eligible for more than 20 seats reserved for women and minorities in Parliament, in a major legal victory for the jailed former prime minister, who demanded the resignation of the election commission chief. Candidates backed by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, who had contested and won the February 8 elections as independents after their party was stripped of its election symbol, had joined the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), a political alliance of Islamic political and Barelvi religious parties in Pakistan, to form a coalition of convenience. The SIC had filed a plea challenging the Peshawar High Court (PHC) decision upholding the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) move to deny its share in reserved seats in the assemblies. A 13-member full bench headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa heard the case. The ruling in the keenly awaited case is viewed as a major setback to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's ruling coalition though there is no immediate threat to the federal government. Chief Justice Isa had announced after the proceedings on Tuesday that the panel decided to reserve the verdict for mutual consultation, which it announced on Friday.

A majority of eight judges ruled in favour of SIC by overturning the orders of the top election body and the judgment of the Peshawar High Court. The judgment was announced by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah. "The order of the Election Commission of Pakistan, dated 1st of March 2024, is declared to be ultra vires to (beyond the powers of) the Constitution, without lawful authority and of no legal effect," according to the verdict.

"The notifications of various dates, whereby the persons respectively mentioned therein, being the persons identified in the commission's notification, dated 13th of May, 2024, have been declared to be returned candidates for reserved seats for women and minorities in the national and provincial assemblies, are declared to be ultra vires to the Constitution, without lawful authority and of no legal effect, and are quashed from 6th of May 2024 onwards," it read. The court went ahead to declare "the lack or denial of an election symbol does not in any manner affect the constitutional and legal rights of a political party to participate in an election (whether general or by) and to field candidates and the Commission is under a constitutional duty to act, and construe and apply all statutory provisions, accordingly". The verdict further declared that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was a political party and eligible for reserved seats. "The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was a political party, remains a political party", the order said while instructing the PTI to submit a list of its reserved seats candidates within 15 days.

Welcoming the apex court's ruling, Khan, in a post on X, wrote "Allah is Al Haq! (Allah is the truth)" "I have repeatedly raised concerns about the prejudice exhibited by the Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan against me and PTI. Today's Supreme Court decision—establishing the ECP's bias and malafide against PTI—reinforces our stance." "We demand criminal proceedings under Article 6 of the Constitution against all those responsible for disenfranchising millions of voters and supporters of Pakistan's largest political party. Sikandar Sultan Raja and the ECP members must resign immediately!"

Also, I would reiterate that Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa must distance himself from the cases involving me or PTI." Khan wrote on X. PTI chief Gohar Khan hailed the verdict as a "historic decision" in the country's history. "We finally got what we deserved," he said while speaking outside the apex court. He added, "Today is a day of happiness for the 250 million people of Pakistan."

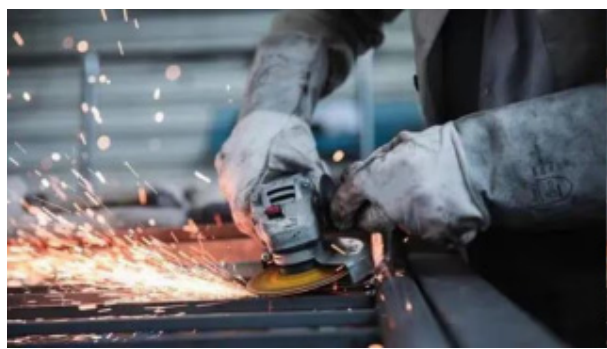
In an official reaction to the verdict, Political Advisor to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Rana Sanaullah rejected the verdict by saying the PTI got what it had never asked for. "The party had never asked to get the reserved seats and the court made it eligible for it," he said. Sanaullah also said that in his opinion a review petition should be filed against the verdict.

The PTI will now emerge as the largest party in the National Assembly as its seats will likely soar from 86 to 109, after it gains 23 reserved seats, Geo News reported. The opposition alliance in the National Assembly will also surge to a strength of 120, the report said. Currently, the combined opposition, including the PTI, has 97 members. Khan's party has 86 members in the lower house, 84 of whom are on board with the SIC and two independents — party leaders Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Omar Ayub Khan. With the majority seats of the PTI in the lower house of the legislature, the ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will continue to occupy the simple majority with the strength of 209 members. The PML-N has a total of 108 members. The dispute about the reserved seats was related to the rejection of a SIC plea by the ECP to award its share in the 70 reserved seats in the National Assembly and another 156 in the four provincial assemblies. Khan's PTI party could not contest the Feb 8 elections as the ECP rejected its intra-party elections and deprived it of the bat symbol for contesting the elections as a party.

Hence it was not eligible to claim the seats reserved for women and minorities that are awarded to the winning parties based on proportional representation. So its candidates, who had won independently but with the support of PTI, were asked by the PTI leadership to join a SIC to form a parliamentary party to claim reserved seats. The joining of PTI lawmakers made the SIC prominent, which otherwise was a dormant entity.

The ECP had rejected the SIC plea for reserved seats on the pretext that it had not contested the elections as a party and only got strength when the PTI-backed independently elected candidates joined its ranks after winning the elections. Its appeal against the ECP decision in the Peshawar High Court was also turned down in March, forcing the party to file a challenge in the Supreme Court. In a rare move, a 13-member full bench presided over the hearing and announced the verdict on the insistence of the SIC lawyers. Earlier, the Supreme Court on May 6 in a major relief to the PTI suspended the Peshawar High Court's decision about rejecting the SIC plea. Following the ruling, the ECP on May 14 suspended the victory notifications of 77 candidates, who belonged to other parties and were declared successful on the reserved seats. The final ruling by the top court in the case decided the fate of those 77 reserved seats. Though it may not change the current power structure, the changes in the overall number game in the assemblies may impact the law-making in the country.

Industrial production grows to 7-month high of 5.9% in May: Govt data



year. India's Index of Industrial Production grew by 5.7 per cent in May 2023, according to a statement by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation. As per the data, the mining output growth accelerated to 6.6 per cent in May against a 6.4 per cent expansion in the year-ago month.

The manufacturing sector's growth decelerated to 4.6 per cent in May compared to 6.3 per cent a year ago. The power generation increased by an impressive 13.7 per cent in May against a flat growth of 0.9 per cent the same month of the last year. As per use-base classification, the capital goods segment growth fell to 2.5 per cent in May 2024 from 8.1 per cent in the year-ago period. In May this year, consumer durables output expanded 12.3 per cent against 1.5 per cent growth in May 2023. Consumer non-durable goods production growth slowed by 2.3 per cent during the reporting month against a growth of 8.9 per cent in May 2023. According to the data, infrastructure/construction goods reported a growth of 6.9 per cent in May 2024, down from a 13 per cent expansion in the year-ago period. The data also showed that the output of primary goods logged a 7.3 per cent growth in May this year, up from 3.6 per cent a year earlier. The expansion in the intermediate goods segment was 2.5 per cent in the month under review, higher than the 3.4 per cent recorded a year ago.

India's industrial production grew to a seven-month high of 5.9 per cent in May 2024, mainly due to good showing by power and mining sectors, according to official data released on Friday. The factory output growth, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), was 5 per cent in April, 5.4 per cent in March, 5.6 per cent in February and 4.2 per cent in January 2024.

The IIP was 4.4 per cent in December and 2.5 per cent in November 2023. The previous high of IIP was recorded at 11.9 per cent in October 2023. During the April-May period this fiscal, the IIP growth was 5.4 per cent against 5.1 per cent in the preceding financial

Too premature to talk about interest rate cuts, says RBI Governor Das

"The last (May) CPI print was 4.7 per cent and the June inflation is expected to be out tomorrow (July 12). As per various surveys, it (June CPI inflation) is likely to be close to 5 per cent. So, when we are at 5 per cent and our target is 4 per cent, I would feel it is too premature to talk about interest rate cuts," Das said when asked about his guidance on repo rate cuts.

He said the overall economic environment, globally as well as in India, is very uncertain to talk about interest rate cuts. "I would not like to give any kind of forward guidance, which would lead the market players and the stakeholders to board the wrong train," he emphasised. The RBI Governor's statement comes days ahead of the monetary policy meeting, wherein it is expected that the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) may leave the repo rate – the key policy rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent. The MPC is scheduled to meet from August 6 to 8. In the June monetary policy meeting, the rate-setting panel kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent for the eighth consecutive time. In the policy, two external MPC members – Ashima Goyal and Jayanth R Varma – voted for reducing the repo rate by 25 basis points and changing the stance from withdrawal of accommodation to neutral. When asked if the perceived froth in the stock market is holding the RBI from cutting the repo rate, Das said the central bank monitors all aspects of the economy, including the stock markets, more from the point of view of financial stability and the kind of spill over it will cause to the economy. He said the RBI's rate action or monetary policy decision is governed by inflation and growth trajectory.

Das further said the RBI is very closely watching the banking sector and wherever it sees a potential problem, it takes action. He said the RBI increased the risk weights last year on banks' exposure to consumer credit, credit card receivables and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), to avoid any stress in the banking sector. To a specific query on if there was a fear that bank money could be fuelling the stock market rally, and so there was a case for higher risk weights or to keep interest rates on watch, he said, "So far as bank money giving some boost to the stock market is concerned, the exposure limit of banks to the stock market, individual borrowings from NBFCs, which were very high earlier for participating in initial public offering (IPOs) and follow-on public offering (FPOs)...even there we have put a limit of Rs 1 crore. It was all done some two years ago." He said banks do have their own system of monitoring the end use of funds



and only some amount of unsecured credit may go into the stock market. However, for unsecured credit, the RBI has mandated additional risk weights, which has already moderated the overall growth in the segment. When asked about the factors which could lead to the change in monetary policy stance of withdrawal of accommodation, Das said, given that inflation is above the 4 per cent target, it would be early to talk about the change of stance. "Unless you are close to 4 per cent, the question of changing the stance, I think, would be premature. When we move towards 4 per cent (inflation target) on a kind of a sustained and durable basis, only at that point we may get the confidence to have a relook (on policy stance)," the Governor said. On growth, Das said in the last three years, the GDP growth has averaged at about 8.3 per cent, and for the current year the economy is expected to expand by 7.2 per cent. Das said the momentum of growth witnessed in the last quarter (January-March) of FY2024 was very strong, and it continues to be strong in Q1 FY2025. "Given this, I think 7.2 per cent (GDP growth), which we have given (projected) at this point in time, looks very much achievable," Das said. The Governor said agriculture is expected to perform well in the current year due to the good monsoon season. Among industries, manufacturing as well as services sectors have been doing very well. Das said urban consumption has been strong for quite some time and is remaining stable. Rural consumption, which was lagging, has picked up. Given the fact that there is an expectation of a good monsoon, the rural purchasing power will also go up. "If you put all these things together, I think what we are looking at is that India is on a trajectory of higher growth. There is a structural momentum to our growth drivers and we are moving towards 8 per cent growth," he said. On potential growth rate, Das said it is the direction of growth which is important and not the exact growth number.

Synthetic textile makers seek relief from QCOs amid supply chain woes

Downstream synthetic textile manufacturers are urging the government to revoke Quality Control Orders (QCOs) on man-made fibres (MMF), which have undermined the competitiveness of the MMF supply chain by limiting access to affordable and specialised raw materials. With the textile sector already grappling with weak domestic demand, shrinking exports, and an underdeveloped raw material value chain, QCOs on polyester and viscose inputs have further exacerbated its woes, leading to significant idling of production capacity and balance sheets turning red, according to industry representatives.

"We do not get our raw material at internationally competitive prices. That is the biggest problem, which is impacting our exports. The first item in the value chain, the raw material that you use for synthetic textiles, is either polyester staple fibre (PSF) or viscose staple fibre (VSF). All these basic raw materials are at least 20 per cent more expensive in India than anywhere else in the world. That is killing our competitiveness," Rakesh Mehra, Chairman of the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) told The Indian Express. Industry players report that the market prices of PSF and VSF increased in FY24 following the implementation of QCOs on these inputs early on in the financial year. A QCO mandates foreign exporters to obtain Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) certification to sell products covered under it in India. It is aimed towards curbing the import of poor quality products into the country.

BIS, industry players allege, has been highly selective in granting certifications under the PSF and VSF QCOs to foreign exporters. For instance, while 65 per cent of PSF imports in 2022-23 came from China and Thailand. The BIS has not certified any Chinese unit alongside only three Thai units, two of which are owned by Indorama Ventures, which also manufactures PSF in India. Similarly, while 50 per cent of VSF imports in FY23 came from Indonesia and Singapore, no company in the two countries has received BIS certification. Moreover, the BIS has certified only three overseas VSF units in Austria and the United Kingdom, all owned by Lenzing AG. However,

Lenzing's Indonesia plant is yet to be certified.

Consequently, PSF imports dropped 43 per cent in FY24 to Rs 520 crore from Rs 917 crore in FY23, as per official trade data. Similarly, VSF imports plummeted 65 per cent to Rs 710 crore from Rs 2,033 crore in the same period. Curbing of VSF and PSF imports has forced downstream users – including spinners, weavers, and knitters, to rely more heavily on domestic fibre supplies. Various industry representatives told The Indian Express that these inputs are more expensive in the domestic market, which also lacks adequate supply of specialised fibres. In FY24, the MMF textile sector experienced a significant downturn, according to Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIIS) data compiled by CITI. Exports of MMF apparel fell by 22 per cent to \$2.89 billion from \$3.53 billion in FY23. Overall exports in the MMF sector dropped by 11 per cent to \$9.03 billion from \$10.02 billion.

"The QCOs are a lethal thing that they have done. There is nothing wrong with quality control to ensure that the end product which the consumer is using doesn't trouble the skin. If at all they have to apply QCOs, they should apply it on garments and fabrics. What is a QCO on raw materials going to do? It is not going to ensure that the end product is correct. It is a non-tariff barrier and a protection to them (domestic industry) so that they can charge higher prices," Mehra said. In a meeting of the National Committee on Textiles & Clothing (NCTC) in May, representatives from various industry bodies called for suspending PSF and VSF QCOs for a few years to allow domestic upstream manufacturers to become competitive. The temporary removal of these QCOs, they argued, will help revitalise the sector by allowing access to cheaper raw material and improving sourcing flexibility.

In March earlier this year, The Indian Express had analysed official documents obtained through the RTI Act to show how Aditya Birla Group-owned Grasim Industries Ltd lobbied the Ministry of Textiles to implement a QCO on VSF to curb imports. Grasim Industries is the sole producer of VSF in India.

Gel manicures and acrylic nails might look beautiful but they come with ugly health risks



From Kylie Jenner and Rihanna to Ariana Grande and Cardi B, celebrities are sporting long, acrylics – often heavily embellished with nail art – as an expression of their style. Nail fashion is now a booming industry with gel manicures and acrylic nails among the most popular current trends. While manicures might feel like self-care, they can ruin healthy natural nails – and might even cause unexpected health problems in a small proportion of people who get them. For example, the nail glue used to attach acrylics to the natural nail is typically a mixture of alcohol, cyanoacrylate and photo-bonded methacrylate, with other ingredients including formaldehyde, which is a known carcinogen. The chemicals in the nail adhesives can cause skin irritation and dermatitis. Nail glue burns are also widely reported. In some cases, nail glue spilled on clothing has caused injury by burning through the fabric and damaging the skin beneath, which can then become infected.

Prolonged wearing of gels and acrylics can also lead to pseudo-psoriatic nails, where extra-skin – known as hyperkeratosis – growing under the nail resembles the red and crusty appearance of psoriasis. Many manicure enthusiasts with pseudo-psoriatic nails test positive for allergy to methyl methacrylate. In some cases the allergy can be so severe that it causes the permanent loss of fingernails. Others suffer from peripheral neuropathy – tingling or numbness in fingers – sometimes permanently. An unlikely cause of skin cancer?

There are many factors that contribute to cancer risk, including age, skin type, previous exposure and family history; however, there are cases of skin cancer where UV nail lamp are reported to have played a role. Gel nails are cured using special dryers that emit ultra-violet light in the form of UVA, which hardens the gel converting it to stiff polymers. Since most people have their nails done every few weeks – and it takes approximately ten minutes to harden – that significantly increases UVA exposure. The back of the hands may be one of the most UV-resistant parts of the body but it's also unprotected by clothing – and one of the most common places people forget to apply sunscreen. If sunscreen is applied to hands then it's often washed off regularly without being reapplied. If you're a fan of gels, reduce your risk of UV

exposure by applying a high factor sunscreen 30 mins before the appointment and wear dark, fingerless gloves during the manicure. The removal process for both gel and acrylic manicures can wear down natural nails (Source: Freepik) Weak, brittle, dry nails Removal of gels and acrylics often peels or shaves away fragments of the nail plate. Even the most painstaking removal can damage the nail's keratin layers, which can weaken the nail, cause it to become brittle and the damage can make nails appear white (a condition known as pseudoleukonychia). Many of the chemicals used for removal, including acetone for gel nails, can also dry out the nail and surrounding skin – and be absorbed into the blood stream.

The removal process for both gel and acrylic manicures can wear down natural nails, which can be overfiled, causing stripes running across the ends of the nails, as well as changes and damage to the capillaries underneath. Removing the nails can also cause traumatic onycholysis, where the nail is pulled away from the bed underneath, giving a classic rollercoaster appearance at the join between the nail and the underlying bed. This can open up the barrier that protects the internal body from the outside world, particularly at the edges on either side of the nail, when they become infected this is known as paronychia. Leaving false nails on for too long can cause moisture to build up underneath the nail, creating an ideal environment for onychomycosis – the growth of fungus. Often, the changes to the appearance of the natural nail caused by a fungal infection are hidden by the acrylic, so infections can progress without being noticed. Even traditional nail varnish isn't without risk. It can alter pulse oximeter readings, which measure how much oxygen your blood is carrying. Thankfully, most of the time these are not altered to a clinically significant level but gels, acrylics and varnish are banned in clinical settings because the spaces under nails and chips on polish are a breeding ground for bacteria which can be passed between staff and patients. If you enjoy manicures then it might be a better idea to forgo the gels and acrylics and concentrate on caring for your natural nails, leaving them visible so you can notice any changes to their appearance that might indicate health issues, such as fungal infections – and even heart disease.

'Whatchamacallit', 'gizmo' and 'thingamajig': what we say when we can't find the right word – and why

Over 50,000 years ago, humans started speaking and we've not shut up since. Sometimes, though, we struggle to remember the name of an object, a place, or a person we want to talk about. The technical term for this phenomenon is "lethologica". While severe word-finding difficulties can be due to serious neurological issues, such as a stroke or dementia, drawing the occasional, temporary blank is very common. Unsurprisingly, stress doesn't help, and it gets worse as we age.

But what can we do if we're coming up empty yet still want to keep the conversation going? Well, there are different ways of dealing with this problem. We can hesitate, using so-called fillers like "ehm" and "uh" to buy us some time, in the hope that the right word will make a delayed but triumphant appearance. We can describe what we mean, hoping to still get the message across. (Recently, it took me a moment to figure out that the "flat things that look like doughnuts" my daughter was talking about were DVDs.)

We may even be able to recall certain formal characteristics of the word, like the first letter or sound, or how many syllables it has and generously offer these clues to the puzzled listener: "You know – this guy we met last week, I think his name starts with a G." This is why we also call this the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon. Festive offer word Sometimes we struggle to remember the name of an object, a place, or a person we want to talk about.

We've almost got it, and our brain is doing its best to use all stored bits of information (for example, on the word's pronunciation and meaning) to come up with something useful to say, even if it isn't the correct word itself.

Sometimes, this results in us making up words on the spot (referred to within linguistics as "spontaneous" or "ad-hoc coinages"). You may not find them in the dictionary, but they usually still make sense in context. Even young children already come up with them in an attempt to put into useful practice what they've already learned about language – like the six-year-old referring to a women's shampoo bottle as a "lady thing" in a study on language play. My favourite example in this category, though, is a Tweet about a German customer in a Welsh pub who couldn't recall the word "cutlery" and politely asked for "food weapons".

Last but certainly not least, we may use ready-made placeholders like "thingamajig", "whatchamacallit" (for an



Over 50,000 years ago, humans started speaking and we've not shut up since. Sometimes, though, we struggle to remember the name of an object, a place, or a person we want to talk about.

object) or "what's-his-name" (for a person). Apparently, the struggle to find the right word is real and has been for some time, because the Oxford English Dictionary has its own category for these terms, labelled "thing or person whose name is forgotten or unknown". It includes 64 entries and some records go back as far as the early middle English period (1100–1300).

Not all of them are still used today. The last attested use for the strangely evocative "whiblin" was in 1652, for example, and "jiggumbob" is marked as obsolete. Others, like "gizmo" or "doodah" are still going strong, though, and you can even buy "Whatchamacallits" and "Whozeewhatszits" – they are chocolate bars made by Hershey's. There are threads on Reddit dedicated to collecting placeholder words in English and from around the world. They are worth exploring, with gems like "doomflitchie", the Dutch "huppeldepup" and the German "dingsdabumsda".

Fly Me To The Moon movie review: A criminal waste of Scarlett Johansson, Channing Tatum



form of Moe (Harrelson) hires a hot-shot marketing professional called Kelly (Johansson) to sell the Mission to the masses. This goes against all that the straight-as-an-arrow Mission Director Cole (Tatum) stands for, who sneers at the "lying", the "pretence", the brand tie-ins, and the fact that "people putting their lives on the line" would need marketing to be sold to Americans. "Boy, you don't know much about Americans, do you?" Kelly quips. Of course, Cole and Kelly's worlds clash. However, the film doesn't go either/or in this too, letting the two just gently bounce off each other, much like astronauts on the powdery Moon surface. So they orbit around each other, having declared their attraction very early on, getting down finally to a kiss when everyone is tired of their little games.

Meanwhile, the plot spins into an entirely new and dark (if the film thought hard about it) trajectory. On its own, focused just on this part, it isn't necessarily a bad story threat. However, the film wants us to accept it as just another blip in Kelly's long – and dubious, we are repeatedly told by Moe – career path and let it pass. The thing is that as Kelly herself says when taking the job, "Everybody loves the Moon." The film flashes signs of its wonder at Apollo 11's Mission too, letting drop that the NASA building at Kennedy Center is "the tallest single-storey building in the world", or that Cole and his men are doing "the most difficult thing done ever", or how the Moon's dark spots are called the Seas, and how the perfect landing spot was found. And yet, ultimately, the way the story goes, the wonder seems just a cynical tool, on the path to a very pedestrian love. It's even more criminal when you think the couple who lie at the heart of this love story – the otherwise luminous Johansson, who is lost to layers of caked make-up; and the otherwise magnetic Tatum, damped down to mundanity.

Much as we want space exploration to be all about the giant leaps for mankind, a lot of it is about the small steps of men. Fly Me To the Moon wants it to be about the small steps, hopes you will believe its giant leaps, and makes a hard landing somewhere in the middle.

There is a lot going on in this film about the Apollo 11 Mission, including rising American public – and hence political – apathy about spending so much to get to the Moon, coupled with anger against the government over the Vietnam War; a romance that never feels right except for the fact that 'why waste two good-looking actors'; a CIA-type scheming that suggests 'why not have one with Harrelson around'; and abundant jibes at Richard Nixon (in comparison with John F Kennedy) for Republicans to scream blue murder in this election season.

Yet, in the beginning, the film based on an original story looks like it will almost pull it off. With the Congress increasingly reluctant to keep the funds going to send a man to the Moon – a promise originally made by the aforesaid Kennedy – the US government in the shadowy

'I've lost all my money on fast women and slow horses': Randeep Hooda is shunning 'socialist' outlook towards wealth now that he's a married man



Actor-filmmaker Randeep Hooda said that he is trying to change long-held notions about work, as he has more responsibilities now as a married man and a film producer. He said that he used to operate under the principle that his work should do the talking, and that he needn't indulge in self-promotion or participate in film projects that pander. But now, having helmed his first film as director and gotten married, he feels that he needs to shed his past 'socialist' approach to money. The actor tied the knot with Lin Laishram in 2023, a few months before the release of his debut film as director Swatantrya Veer Savarkar.

Appearing on Bharti Singh and Haarsh Limbachiya's podcast, the actor joked, "I've lost all my money on fast women and slow horses." Asked how he decides which projects to take on and which to turn down, he said, "The most important thing is whether I'll be able to tolerate the people who are working on it." He added with a laugh, "But I've now decided that I will." He explained, "Before marriage, I was living a carefree life. But now that I'm married, and also a director-producer, I've learned the importance of money."

He said that as an actor, he was always a little child-like. "But there's a sense of responsibility now, as a producer, as a married man. I'm not alone any more. She also has desires and needs. I'm trying to change my path now. Us jaats have always had a socialist outlook towards money, that it's 'wrong' to make money, but that's changing over time. And it's important, because I never paid much attention to it. But now that I am, I'm sure it'll come." Randeep said in an earlier interview that he sold personal property to fund his latest film, Swatantrya Veer Savarkar, but managed to recover costs not too long afterwards. "My father had saved up and bought two or three properties for me in Mumbai, I let go of them and put the money into the movie. I couldn't stop. This film didn't have anybody's support," he told Ranveer Allahbadia on his podcast. He said in an interview with Bollywood Bubble that the film eventually broke-even. "Thankfully, we have been able to make enough money. We've made it back and some more. We are in plus and have managed to break even. I now joke with my dad asking him to buy more properties so that I could sell them for my next film. Agli picture mein kaam ayega (We will mortgage it when I am making my next film)," he said.

Amitabh Bachchan approached Mrityudaata director for work amid ABCL bankruptcy, asked, 'You have a garma-garam script?'

Director Mehul Kumar, who worked with Amitabh Bachchan on the film Mrityudaata in 1997, recalled how the superstar himself approached him for work at a time when his career was going through a difficult phase. In the 1990s, Amitabh hadn't yet transitioned from lead roles to supporting roles, and had spent a lot of his time and resources on launching his ambitious ABCL venture. In the same year as Mrityudaata's release, the company attracted negative press for unpaid dues following the Miss World pageant that it organised.

It was during this time that Amitabh approached Mehul Kumar at a party and asked if he had any 'garmagaram' script. In an interview on the Friday Talkies YouTube channel, the filmmaker recalled, "It was at the Rangeela music launch, Amit ji was there as well. He met me and asked, 'Sir, aapke paas koi garma-garam hai?' I asked, 'For whom?' He replied, 'For me, who else?' He wasn't doing films at the time, and I told him that I had something for him. The next day I got a call from his office, following up on his request. We arranged a meeting, and I narrated the film to him. He liked it, and said that he was going to do it."

He continued, "We completed the film in six months. It was Amit ji's comeback film, and I'm proud to have directed it. I also directed Raaj Kumar's comeback film." Mrityudaata wasn't well received, and bombed at the box office. In a 1999 chat with Vir Sanghvi, Amitabh revealed



that his wife, Jaya, 'didn't sit through' the film. The story of Amitabh asking Yash Chopra for work remains well-known. After the bankruptcy of ABCL, and the subsequent humiliation that Amitabh faced, At the India Today Unforgettables stage in 2016, Amitabh had said, "I had a huge financial failure in the corporation that I began. It went bankrupt and it bankrupted me. You sit back and think 'What can I do?' and I said, 'You are an actor. Go back to acting so, that's what I did. I went to Yash ji and said I am without a job. I need it.' And that's how Mohabbatein happened. Amitabh remains the most admired male star of his generation, and recently delivered the biggest hit of his career in Kalki 2898 AD.

Vicky Kaushal says Katrina Kaif has a wardrobe and he only has a drawer, answers who is the most 'kaleshi' in his house



Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif got married three years ago and since then, both Katrina and Vicky have been sharing fun details about their life together. In a recent interview, Vicky, who is promoting his upcoming film Bad Newz, spoke about their wardrobe space in the house and joked that they never fight about it because Katrina has a wardrobe but he only has a drawer.

Vicky was in conversation with Galatta India and as the audience laughed at his statement, Vicky said, "When I get a wardrobe, we'll fight about it. But let me get it first."

This conversation about fights started after Vicky was asked about who is the most 'kaleshi' in his house. He shared, "In my house, everyone looks for their 'kaleshi' moment one by one. There is no one designated person. It's not like just Sunny or Katrina or mom or dad or me. No one is a permanent 'kaleshi', everyone has their days, and on that day, the rest of the family aligns and makes space for that person."

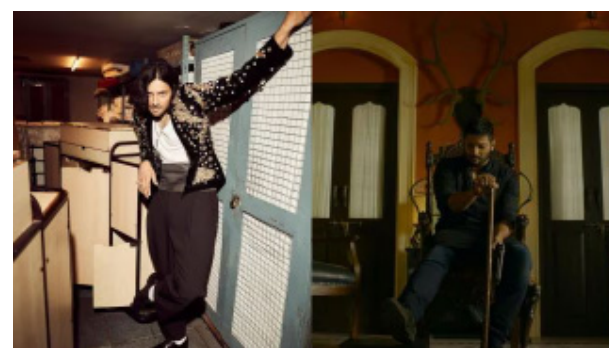
During the same chat, Vicky was asked about his relationship with Katrina and how the couple deals with their low phases. He shared, "It's been about just holding hands and just keep saying that whatever it is, we are on the same team together. The ups and downs we are both going through this together." Talking about their partnership, Vicky said that Katrina makes him a better person and shared, "I really feel very fortunate for all the beautiful things she adds on to me, to who I am. And I just feel that I just wake up a better person because of her. She is such a giver in that sense in the relationship that I feel very fortunate." Vicky and Katrina dated for a few years before tying the knot in 2021. They never opened up about their relationship when they were dating each other and surprised their fans with the wedding announcement.

'Mirzapur always leaves me with injuries': Ali Fazal

Mirzapur Season 3 released last Friday. It has been a journey of more than six years for Mirzapur's cast and while each one of them witnessed the show grow into something big, the love their characters received has also been very flattering. One of the most loved characters in the show is Guddu Bhaiyya played by Ali Fazal. Before the premiere of Season 3 of Mirzapur, Fazal talked to Indianexpress.com about his journey with the show. He also shared acting was never his plan, but one incident changed the course of his life.

Talking about Mirzapur getting immense success, Ali Fazal shared, "We didn't know this show would work and be a hit. After the release, for a week we thought we had fun shooting this, so it's okay. But after a week, the show started behaving like a monster of its own. Since then there has been no looking back. It became too big, we didn't expect it to." Ali Fazal, who maintains that his role was the hardest to play in Season 2 of Mirzapur, also revealed if there were any apprehensions about the bold content and language of Mirzapur. Sharing his view on the same, Ali said, "I didn't have an apprehension because this stuff has already worked in the West. I had the chance to work in the West, so I have seen all this. We have been watching these shows growing up. Only apprehension for me was that I never entered a gym per se. I am a sports person, so for me to transform into that gym body was irritating."

Being an actor was never Fazal's plan. He wanted to play some sport for India. Interestingly, when we asked them if there was a time in his life that transformed him into a very different person, the 3 Idiots actor shared, "It was when I broke my arm. I was in school, a basketball player. It was a big decision. I went back to the sport after breaking my arm and dislocating my shoulder. I was the team captain. I was in boarding school and we had seasonal sports, so I couldn't help myself. I again dislocated my shoulder and had to get operated, that is when I was told to make that switch to cultural stuff. That's how I began acting too. But a part of me wanted to keep that discipline. I carry that with me to date. My entire life changed. I was thinking of playing hockey or basketball for India,



but a science guy had to leave that and come to Xaviers and do economics. That moment of switching gave me sleepless nights. It felt like shedding your skin."

Once Ali Fazal shed the skin of a sportsman and donned the greasepaint, he never looked back. Today shooting for any project is sacrosanct for him. It's the time he is most vulnerable. When asked if he sees himself on screen once a project is released, Fazal said, "I used to feel extremely critical, and it would drive me insane when I watched. Then I stopped watching myself for a while. Now I am okay with it." During the conversation, Fazal also quipped how every season of Mirzapur has left him with an injury that has stayed on for a while. In the show, walking with a stick, left his forearm injured. Talking about the same, Fazal said, "I recently did dirt biking in an English film Kandahar and it aggravated this really bad forearm injury which has become a chronic issue in my life. Mirzapur always leaves me with injuries. Every season has given me some injury which has stayed on for a bit. (Laughs)" Don't miss: The complete Mirzapur family tree: As Kaleen bhaiya and Guddu Pandit battle rages, here's a quick recap Every cast member of Mirzapur has shared that one quality about the show is that it catches the attention of all age groups. While Fazal also feels the same, he shared how he made sure the show was not played at his home. "My grandmother would kill me," the actor added.

The Perfect Couple trailer: Ishaan Khatter makes Hollywood debut in Netflix show starring Nicole Kidman; Mira Rajput says 'You won brother'

Netflix on Thursday debuted the trailer for its upcoming murder mystery series The Perfect Couple, starring Nicole Kidman and Liev Schreiber alongside a diverse ensemble that also includes Indian actor Ishaan Khatter. Shahid Kapoor's half-brother makes a quick but memorable appearance in the new trailer, which teases the peril in paradise premise of the show, based on Elin Hilderbrand's bestselling novel.

The six-part series is directed by acclaimed Danish filmmaker Susanne Bier, best known for Bird Box, the original The Night Manager series, and The Undoing. The Perfect Couple is set in the idyllic seaside retreat of Nantucket, where a host of wealthy characters congregate ahead of a wedding. But when a dead body appears on the beach, everyone becomes a suspect. The teaser has hints of Kidman's own Big Little Lies, and the genre classic Broadchurch. Alongside Kidman and Schreiber, The Perfect Couple also stars The White Lotus alum Meghann Fahy, Jack Reynor, Dakota Fanning, Bad Sisters star Eve Hewson, and in a quick appearance that warrants his special title card, Ishaan Khatter. The actor is seen in the buff for a second, as he turns around in the shower and looks at someone who seems to have interrupted him. Ishaan made his film debut with Majid Majidi's Beyond the Cloud. He then made his Bollywood debut with the Dharma Productions film Dhadak, and has since starred in films such as Khaali Peeli and Pippa. He also appeared in a cameo in the star-studded Netflix film Don't Look Up, which featured Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence in the lead roles. Ishaan's sister-in-law, Mira Rajput, took to social media to hype his achievements. Sharing the trailer, she wrote, "Proud of you. You won brother." In an earlier interview with PTI, Ishaan spoke about his foray into Hollywood, and praised Kidman and the rest of the cast. "It's just a great opportunity. I taped my audition and they liked it which is why they called me I guess," he said. The show's official synopsis reads, "The Perfect Couple follows Amelia Sacks (Eve Hewson), a bride marrying into one of Nantucket's wealthiest families. The groom's mother Greer Garrison Winbury (Nicole Kidman), a famous novelist, spares no expense on the high-society wedding. But, when a dead body appears on the beach, everyone's Champagne dreams quickly vanish and are replaced by suspicion. As secrets bubble up to the surface, an investigation takes hold that feels



plucked from one of Greer's books." The show will be released on September 5.

Akshay Kumar opens up about creative differences with Sarfira director Sudha Kongara: 'She was telling me what I have to do...'

Actor Akshay Kumar opened up about the creative differences that he had with his Sarfira director Sudha Kongara, and said that it took them a week or so to sort things out. Sudha also directed Soorara Potru, the original Tamil film upon which Sarfira is based. In an interview, Akshay said that he found her way of working to be irregular from what he is accustomed to, but noted that she was gracious enough to accept his requests, like when he asked her to shoot an emotional scene with multiple cameras, and film longer takes. In an interview with Galatta Plus, Akshay was asked if he thinks directors are also responsible for shaping a performance. He said, "Very much. He's the captain of the ship. I could be doing another film also, but he's going to be with that film throughout."

Luka Modric signs one year contract extension with Real Madrid, named captain



GNS News Agency, July 18

Luka Modric has signed a one-year contract extension with Real Madrid which will keep him with the Los Blancos till 2025, the club said in a statement on Wednesday. "Real Madrid C. F. and Luka Modric have agreed to extend the contract of our captain, who will be linked to the club until 30 June 2025," Real said in a statement which also revealed that the Croatian will be the skipper of the team in the coming season.

Modric who won the Ballon d'Or in 2018, arrived at

Real Madrid in 2012 and recently won a sixth Champions League crown as well as a fourth LaLiga title with Real.

He has won a total of 26 titles with Real which includes 6 Champions Leagues, 5 Club World Cups, 4 European Super Cups, 4 Ligas, 2 Copas del Rey and 5 Spanish Super Cups. In 12 seasons with the club, Modric has made 534 appearances and scored 39 goals. His previous contract expired at the end of the 2023-24 season but the Croatian told fans he would return next season when they were celebrating their Champions League triumph which extended Real's record to 15 European Cups. The veteran player was widely expected to retire, especially after his long-time midfield partner Toni Kroos, 34, announced his retirement at the end of the season. Modric also had no plans to hang up his boots on the international stage despite Croatia's early exit from the recently concluded European Championship, where they were eliminated after the group stage. "I'd like to keep playing forever but there probably will come a time when I must hang up my boots. I'll keep playing on, but I don't know for how much longer," said Modric, who has 178 caps for Croatia.

Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill make gains in ICC T20I batting rankings after 4-1 win against Zimbabwe

GNS News Agency, July 18

Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill ICC Rankings Indian batsman Yashasvi Jaiswal, left and Shubman Gill touch bats during the T20 cricket match between Zimbabwe and India at the Harare Sports club, in Harare, Saturday, July 13, 2024. After his stellar performances against Zimbabwe, India's Yashasvi Jaiswal rose up 4 places to occupy the 6th place in the latest ICC T20I batters' rankings. His captain for the series Shubman Gill who was the leading run scorer in the Zimbabwe series moved up 36 places to be ranked 37th. Jaiswal scored 141 runs while Gill scored 170 in the 5-match T20I series against Zimbabwe which a new-look team India won 4-1. Rituraj Gaikwad, however, dropped a place and is now 8th in the standings. Meanwhile, power-hitter Suryakumar Yadav still retained the 2nd spot in the rankings behind Australia's Travis Head who leads the list.

No Indian features in the top 10 of the T20I bowlers rankings. Axar Patel, who was rested for the Zimbabwe series, dropped four places to 13th spot. However, fast bowler Mukesh Kumar and spinner Washington Sundar also made upward movements. Mukesh, who scalped eight wickets from three games, has gained 36 places to rise to 46th spot while Washington, who picked up eight



wickets in five matches, has risen 21 spots to 73rd rank. England's Adil Rashid is leading T20I bowlers' chart ahead of South Africa's Anrich Nortje and Wanindu Hasaranga of Sri Lanka.

In the T20I all-rounders' rankings, India's Hardik Pandya dropped four places to sixth while Axar slipped one rung to 13th. Washington (41st) and Shivam Dube (43rd) have risen by eight and 35 places to 41st and 43rd spots respectively. Sri Lanka's Hasaranga continues to top the all-rounders' list ahead of Australia's Marcus Stoinis and Zimbabwe skipper Sikandar Raza.

'Football in 2024 – uninhibited racism': France slam Enzo Fernandez, Argentina for racist chants after Copa America

GNS News Agency, July 18

Enzo Fernandez issued an apology for the racist chants by him and his Argentina teammates about French players. (Reuters) Enzo Fernandez issued an apology for the racist chants by him and his Argentina teammates about French players. Chelsea defender Wesley Fofana has slammed his club teammate Enzo Fernandez and the Copa America-winning Argentina team for their racist chants targeting France players.

In a video shared by Fernandez on his Instagram account following Argentina's 1-0 final win over Colombia on Sunday, the 23-year-old and his teammates are seen singing racist and discriminatory chants. Some of the derogatory verses in the song were: "They play for France, but their parents are from Angola. Their mother is from Cameroon, while their father is from Nigeria. But their passport says French." The song also had derogatory references about France and Real Madrid forward Kylian Mbappe's connection with transgender model Ines Rau.

The remarks have reportedly irked the French contingent within Chelsea. The team comprises several French Black players, including Christopher Nkunku, Malo Gusto, Axel Disasi and Benoit Badjiashile. Taking to X, Fofana captioned Fernandez's video: "Football in 2024 – uninhibited racism." Barcelona and France defender Jules Kounde labelled the video "lamentable" on social media.

The France Football Association (FFF) has also issued its statement with president Philippe Diallo challenging FIFA president Gianni Infantino and Argentina Football Association president, Claudio Fabian Tapia, to respond to the remarks in the footage. FFF also confirmed that it will file an official complaint over the video. "The president of the French Football Federation, Philippe



Diallo, condemns in the strongest terms the unacceptable racist and discriminatory remarks which were made against the players of the French team in the context of a song sung by players and supporters of the Argentina team after its victory in the Copa América and broadcast in a video on social media.

"Faced with the seriousness of these shocking remarks, contrary to the values of sport and human rights, the president of the FFF decided to directly challenge his Argentinian counterpart and Fifa, and to file a legal complaint for insulting remarks of a racist and discriminatory nature," the FFF statement read. Fernandez issues apology. Meanwhile, Fernandez issued an apology on his social media account on Wednesday. "I want to apologise sincerely for a video posted on my Instagram channel during the national team celebrations. The song includes highly offensive language and there is absolutely no excuse for these words. I stand against discrimination in all forms and apologise for getting caught up in the euphoria of our Copa America celebrations. That video, that moment, those words, do not reflect my beliefs or my character. I am truly sorry," wrote Fernandez.

Rafael Nadal defeats Leo Borg in Bastad ahead of Olympic preparation

GNS News Agency, July 18

Bastad: Rafael Nadal returned to singles action with a 6-3, 6-4 victory on clay over Leo Borg, the 21-year-old son of Swedish great Bjorn Borg, in the first round of the Nordea Open in Bastad. "For me it has been a huge honor to play against the son of one of the biggest legends in the history of our sport," Nadal said about his 21-year-old opponent.

"I think he played quite well, he has a future in front so I wish him all the very best." Nadal won the singles title in southern Sweden as a 19-year-old in 2005 and this week is his first time back since then as he prepares for the Olympic tournament on clay at Roland Garros in Paris.



Indian teenager Aarav Dengla wins oldest French chess tournament moved out of Paris for Olympics



GNS News Agency, July 18

Aarav Dengla (C) won the 2024 Grand Paris Masters Championship held out of the French capital due to the upcoming Olympic Games. Aarav Dengla (C) won the 2024 Grand Paris Masters Championship held out of the French capital due to the upcoming Olympic Games. Indian teenager Aarav Dengla won the 2024 Grand Paris Masters Championship, the oldest French chess tournament last Sunday. The tournament was conducted outside the capital city for the first time due to the upcoming Olympic Games.

Held at the Blanche de Castille High School in Villemomble outside Paris, the Masters chess event had 250 players in contention for the coveted title. The 15-year-old Dengla took the spotlight in the Masters tournament. Dengla achieved a perfect score of 7 points to secure a clear victory to mark his first Parisian championship title. He finished ahead of his compatriot Dalvi Aakash who received an International Master (IM)

norm. "I started learning (chess) when I was five. I played my first few day tournaments when I was six. Since then I've always been in love with the game," Dengla had told chess.com in 2022 after he received his first IM norm. "Initially, it started out as a hobby. My mom taught it to me and within three-four weeks, I was playing in local tournaments. After a while, I began playing in FIDE tournaments and that's when I wanted to get a bit further into chess and become a grandmaster," Dengla added. In 2016, Dengla had set a then record for becoming the youngest gold medal winner at the under-10 Mumbai School Sports Association (MSSA) chess tournament, shortly after his seventh birthday.

This win is special for Dengla, having previously earned his first and third IM norms at the tournament in 2022 and 2023. He was handed the IM title during the first FIDE Council in 2024. Russian Grandmaster (GM) Andrei Shchekachev shared the podium and won the title of 2024 Party Champion.

Dharmika Niroshana, former Sri Lanka U-19 World Cup captain, shot dead in Galle

GNS News Agency, July 18

Former Sri Lanka U-19 cricketer Dharmika Niroshan was shot dead outside his home by an unidentified assailant in Ambalangoda in Galle on Wednesday. He was 41. Sri Lankan Police have said that investigations are underway to apprehend the shooter. Local media reports suggest that Niroshana's wife and two children were along with him at their home when the incident occurred. Reports also suggested that the shooter used a 12-bore firearm to commit the crime.

According to Sri Lanka Police media spokesperson Nihal Thalduwa, "Investigations are underway to arrest the suspect involved in the shooting which seemed to be a result of a gang rivalry." Reports have also cited that Niroshana had returned to the country only three months ago, after having previously fled for his life following the murder of his close friend Dasun Manawadu in the Ambalangoda region. Police are also probing whether there is a link between Niroshana's murder and the death of former First-Class cricketer and cricket administrator H. Premasiri in 2016. Premasiri was also shot near his residence in Ambalangoda in the Galle district while he was active as the president of the Galle District Cricket Association. Niroshana was considered to be a promising talent in Sri Lanka's age-group system. He made his Under-19 debut for Sri Lanka in 2000 and went on to lead the side in a handful of games. However, he opted to retire at the age of 21.



Niroshana, a right-arm fast bowler and a handy right-hand batter, led Sri Lanka in the 2002 Under-19 World Cup held in New Zealand. Sri Lanka, however, won only game in the tournament even as they progressed to the second Super League stage. Niroshan's team comprised several future international stars, including Farveez Maharoof, Jeevan Mendis, Dharmika Prasada and Upul Tharanga. Niroshana picked up seven wickets in five innings in the tournament, averaging 19.28 with a best of 3/38. Niroshana made his First-Class debut in the 2001-02 season. He featured in 12 FC matches for teams such as Galle CC, Singha SC and Chilaw Marians, picking up 19 wickets across three years. His last professional game was for Galle Cricket Club in December 2004.

For Olympics opening ceremony, river replaces the track and entire Paris turns into a vast Stadium

GNS News Agency, July 18

For the first time in their history, the Olympics Games will not kick off in a stadium but instead on a river. A larger-than-life opening ceremony at Paris 2024 will see an armada of boats carry over 200 delegations of athletes along a stretch of the river Seine through the city, as thousands watch from either side of the waterway. An ambitious move, which in the words of Tony Estanguet – head of the organizing committee – will see the entire city turned into a vast Olympic stadium. The boats carrying athletes will depart from the Pont d'Austerlitz bridge, which gets its name from the Battle of Austerlitz during the Napoleonic Wars. The flotilla will cover a six-kilometer stretch over the Seine – crossing 18 bridges and several landmarks across the City of Lights in the sunset hours – before making its way to the Pont d'Île, which is a stone's throw away from the Eiffel Tower. Per several reports, including from French daily Le Monde, somewhere between 80-100 boats are expected to parade a contingent of athletes representing 206 different National Olympic Committees. The flotilla will cover a six-kilometer stretch over the Seine – crossing 18 bridges and several landmarks. (IOC) Venue of opening address and ceremony finale Champions Park – a temporary stadium with a crowd capacity of 13,000 – has been erected in front of the Trocadéro by the Eiffel Tower. The venue will host the culmination of the ceremony and the official Olympic protocol, including an opening declaration from French President Emmanuel Macron. While a lot of the details have been kept under wraps, over 3,000 artists are expected to participate in the opening and closing ceremonies. With the ceremony being held outside the stadium, the idea is to make use of the additional landscapes on offer. Dance choreography head Maud Le Pladec, for instance, hinted to reporters last month, "There won't be a single bridge in Paris without some dancers on it." To orchestrate the same, the Paris 2024 Organising Committee has appointed Thomas Jolly, a renowned theatre actor



and director. Over 3,000 artists are expected to participate in the opening and closing ceremonies. (IOC) Over 3,000 artists are expected to participate in the opening and closing ceremonies. (IOC) By holding a significant portion of the opening ceremony over the Seine, the organising committee has made it open for more people than any venue in the country could've seated. Other than Champions Park, a total of 3,26,000 tickets have been made accessible for viewing the parade of boats from quays by the river and bridges, where temporary stands have been built. Of this, 2,22,000 free tickets will be distributed to watch the ceremony from the upper banks while the rest are for the lower quays, ranging from €90 to €2,700. In addition, eight giant screens have been installed throughout the city to invite large public gatherings. The open setting of the ceremony adds to the security concerns of the organising committee with the athletes as well as several heads of state largely exposed. A resurgence of attacks by extremist Islamist groups across Europe contributes to the headache. From a logistical perspective, so does the river Seine. On June 24, a rehearsal of the ceremony was cancelled owing to strong currents in the river. There is a Plan B as well as a Plan C, President Macron had assured in April. One of the alternatives, he said, was to host the ceremony at Trocadéro Square facing the Eiffel Tower, nearby Pont d'Île, which is currently pinned as the arrival point after the river procession.