

INDIAN CHRONICLE

24 July, 2024 | Wednesday | Volume No:12 | Issue No:140 Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

Six-year-old sexually assaulted at Shamshabad

Hyderabad: A six year-old girl was sexually assaulted by a man at Shamshabad on Monday night.

The victim stays along with her parents, who are daily wagers, at Siddhanti village in Shamshabad. The suspect Anjaneyulu, a native of Mahabubnagar district, stays in the same locality close to the victim's home. "When the suspect's wife went out on some work on Monday, Anjaneyulu took the child into the house and sexually assaulted," said an official of RGI Airport police station. The locals who noticed the girl crying, caught hold of Anjaneyulu, and handed him over to the police.

Ananthagiri Hills witness increased footfall, traffic jams reported

Hyderabad: Ananthagiri Hills in Vikarabad district is experiencing a surge in visitors due to the monsoon season. The influx of people is causing traffic jams, particularly on weekends, enroute to the viewpoint. Police report that round-the-clock patrolling is in place to manage the situation. Vikarabad Circle Inspector told Telangana Today, "Police outposts have been set up. We are patrolling 24/7. Traffic jams usually occur on weekends but clear in about 10 minutes." In addition to Ananthagiri Hills viewpoint, the Kotepalli Reservoir and Anantha Padmanabha Swamy Temple in the district are also attracting visitors. Authorities are advising the public to stay vigilant during their visits.

Telangana ignored in Union Budget: KTR expresses disappointment



GNS News Agency, July 23

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao expressed strong disappointment over the Union Budget, stating that despite high expectations, Telangana was once again neglected. "We hoped that Telugu daughter-in-law, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, would allocate significant funds to Telangana. But what we got is nothing," he stated in his response to the Union Budget for 2024-25. He highlighted that despite the Central budget exceeding Rs 48 lakh crore, only a few States received major benefits, with Telangana not being mentioned at all. The BRS working president recalled how former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao made numerous requests to the Union government to support the young State of Telangana and fulfill 35 promises made under Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act. However, there has been no response in the last 10 years.

He pointed out that there were no additional funds for the proposed Tribal University at Mulugu, the promised steel plant at Bayyaram or the railway coach factory at Kazipet. National status for irrigation projects like Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme was also denied, and requests for central institutes like IIM were ignored. Further, appeals for industrial corridors and new handloom and power loom clusters received no response.

Rama Rao criticised the lack of support even when the Congress leaders from Telangana visited Delhi. He urged the people of Telangana to reflect on the lack of representation of regional forces at the Centre and compare the allocations to States like Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, which gifted more parliamentary seats to the regional parties. "BJP and Congress MPs did not speak a word for Telangana. If BRS had MPs in Parliament, they would have strongly opposed the Central government's stance," he asserted. He warned that Telangana's people will teach the BJP a lesson for neglecting their State despite having eight MPs.

While expressing goodwill towards Andhra Pradesh, Rama Rao lamented that the Union government did not even mention Telangana when discussing the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act. "We are happy with the significant funds given to Andhra Pradesh, but it is truly disappointing to see only Andhra Pradesh and Bihar receiving majority funds while the other States are overlooked," he added.

Centre announces Rs 11,500 crore support plan for flood control, irrigation

GNS News Agency, July 23

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a comprehensive Rs 11,500 crore financial support plan aimed at enhancing flood control measures and irrigation projects across several states. The plan includes funding for projects like the Kosi-Mechi intra-state link and flood management in Assam.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday announced a comprehensive financial support plan of Rs 11,500 crore to enhance flood control measures and irrigation projects across several states. Presenting the Budget in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman highlighted that the government, through the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Program and other sources, will provide financial support for various projects. These projects include the Kosi-Mechi intra-state link and 20 other ongoing schemes, encompassing barrages, river pollution abatement, and irrigation projects. Additionally, survey and investigation of Kosi-related flood mitigation and irrigation will be undertaken.

"Bihar has frequently suffered from floods, many of them originating outside the country. Plans to build flood control structures in Nepal are yet to progress," Sitharaman said. Assam, which grapples with annual floods caused by the Brahmaputra and its tributaries originating outside India, will also receive assistance for flood management and related projects, she said.

"We will provide assistance to Assam for flood management and related projects," Sitharaman said. Highlighting the extensive losses suffered by Himachal Pradesh last year, Sitharaman said, "Our government will provide assistance for reconstruction and rehabilitation through multilateral development assistance."

Similar support was promised to Uttarakhand, which faced significant losses due to cloudbursts and massive landslides. Recently, Sikkim witnessed devastating floods that wreaked havoc across the state. The Finance Minister added that the government will extend its assistance to Sikkim as well.

Relief for salaried class under new tax regime; 50 percent hike in standard deduction to Rs 75,000

GNS News Agency, July 23

New Delhi: In sops for the middle class, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday hiked standard deduction by 50 per cent, to Rs 75,000 and tweaked tax slabs under the new income tax regime to provide more money in the hands of salaried class with a view to boost consumption. She said salaried employees in the new tax regime could save up to Rs 17,500 in income tax annually following the changes announced in the Budget. The standard deduction for salaried employees is proposed to be increased from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000



annually. Similarly, deduction on family pension for pensioners is proposed to be enhanced from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000. "This will provide relief to about four crore salaried individuals and pensioners," Sitharaman said in her Budget speech. In the last fiscal, more than two-thirds

individual taxpayers have availed the new personal income tax regime. Over 8.61 crore I-T returns were filed in 2023-24 fiscal. The new tax slabs under the new income tax regime will be effective from April 1, 2024. (Assessment Year 2025-26). Sitharaman said income of up to Rs 3 lakh will continue to be ex-

empted from income tax under the new regime.

As per the proposal, a 5 per cent tax will be levied on income between Rs 3-7 lakh, 10 per cent between Rs 7-10 lakh, 15 per cent for Rs 10-12 lakh. However, 20 per cent tax will continue to be levied on income between Rs 12-15 lakh and 30 per cent for income above Rs 15 lakh. Under the existing new I-T regime, a 5 per cent tax is levied on income between Rs 3-6 lakh, 10 per cent for income between Rs 6-9 lakh. Income between Rs 9-12 lakh and Rs 12-15 lakh is subject to 15 per cent and 20 per cent tax, respectively. A 30 per cent I-T would be applicable on income above Rs 15 lakh.

Rs. 15,000 cr announced for development of Andhra Pradesh's Capital



GNS News Agency, July 23

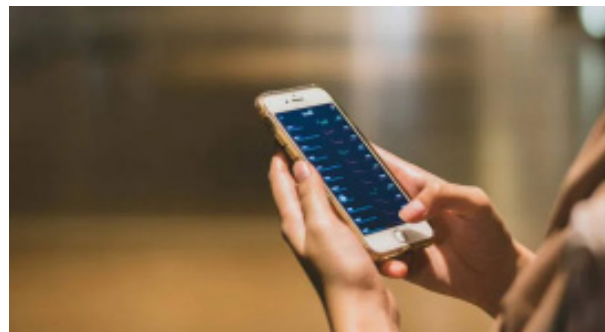
New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday announced Rs 15,000 crore for the development of Andhra Pradesh's capital city this fiscal, addressing long-standing commitments under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act. Presenting the Budget for 2024-25, Sitharaman outlined a comprehensive plan that addressed key issues faced by Andhra Pradesh post-bifurcation.

The minister promised to facilitate additional funds for development of the capital Amaravati in coming years. She also gave a commitment to finance and expedite the Polavaram Irrigation Project, allocation for infrastructure in industrial corridors, and grants for backward regions. "Our government has made concerted efforts to fulfil the commitments in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act," Sitharaman said, acknowledging the state's need for a capital. The Rs 15,000 crore will be facilitated through multilateral development agencies this fiscal, with additional amounts in future years, she added. Terming Polavaram "the lifeline for Andhra Pradesh and its farmers," Sitharaman linked its completion to national food security. She also announced funds for infrastructure in Koppurthy (Vishakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor) and Orvakal (Hyderabad-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor). Grants for backward regions of Rayalaseema, Prakasam, and North Coastal Andhra, as mandated by the Reorganization Act, were also part of the package. The announcements come amid demands from BJP ally Telugu Desam Party (TDP) for Central support to address post-bifurcation challenges and rebuild the state.

Centre cuts customs duty on mobile phones, components to 15 pc; industry upbeat

GNS News Agency, July 23

New Delhi: The government on Tuesday announced to reduce the basic customs duty (BCD) on mobile phones, printed circuit board assembly (PCBA) and mobile chargers to 15 per cent from the current 20 per cent. With a three-fold increase in domestic production and an almost 100-fold jump in exports of mobile phones over the last six years, the Indian mobile phone industry has matured. "In the interest of consumers, I now propose to reduce the BCD on mobile phones, mobile PCBA and mobile chargers to 15 per cent," said Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the Union Budget 2024-2025. India's electronics sector has experienced rapid growth, reaching \$155 billion in FY23. Production nearly doubled from \$48 billion in FY17 to \$101 billion in FY23, driven primarily by mobile phones, which now constitute 43 per cent of total electronics production. Pankaj Mohindroo, Chairman, India Cellular Electronics Association (ICEA), congratulated the government for the landmark budget. "We are impressed with its intent and direction focusing on enhancing manufacturing and export competitiveness. The Finance Minister has also acknowledged the tremendous growth of mobile phone manufacturing and exports," he said. The industry had recommended reducing BCD on mobile phones, its PCBA and charger/adaptor to 15 per cent, which has been accepted. "The



announcements will go a long way to enhance manufacturing, exports and our competitiveness. Our proposal for tariff slab rationalisation, as has also been acknowledged and FM has announced that it will be taken up in the next six months, will further embolden the industry and its competitiveness," Mohindroo explained. India has significantly reduced its reliance on smartphone imports, now manufacturing 99 per cent domestically. According to Siddhesh Mehta, research analyst, Samco Securities, this change will reduce costs and support the Indian manufacturers. "Dixon Technologies will benefit the most from this move, allowing the company to strengthen its market position and grow further," said Mehta.

Rahul Gandhi slams government, says Budget intended to 'appease allies, cronies'

New Delhi, GNS News Agency, July 23

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday dubbed the Union Budget a "kursi bachao budget" and claimed it makes "hollow promises" to BJP allies at the cost of other states. The former Congress chief also claimed that the budget was "copy and paste" job of the Congress manifesto for 2024 polls and previous budgets. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the budget for 2024-25, her seventh straight presentation, surpassing the record of former prime minister Morarji Desai. This is the first budget in Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's third term in office.

In a post on X, Gandhi said, "Kursi Bachao' Budget. Appease Allies: Hollow promises to them at the cost of other states. Appease Cronies: Benefits to AA with no relief for the common Indian. Copy and Paste: Congress manifesto and previous budgets." The Congress also slammed the Union Budget as being "more focused on posturing than action" and claimed that the "copy-paste government" has borrowed heavily from the party's manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls. The opposition party in its post claimed that the government had "tacitly" admitted that "mass unemployment is a national crisis", and said the budget has "political compulsions written all over it"

BRS takes jibe at BJP and Congress over no budget allocations to Telangana



GNS News Agency, July 23

Bharat Rashtra Samithi party headed by K Chandrashekhara Rao has responded to the Union Budget 2024 in its Twitter handle with an image taking dig at both Congress and BJP for not allocating funds to Telangana.

The BRS party wrote that although the BJP and Congress has 8 MPs each the allocation were zero. The tweet carries 8+8=0. It may be recalled that the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has introduced the budget wherein Andhra Pradesh and Bihar got good allocations as the ruling parties in the states are in alliance with BJP. The centre allocated Rs. 15000 crore to the development of Amaravati.

SC rules out cancellation, re-test of controversy-ridden NEET-UG 2024



GNS News Agency, July 23

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed the pleas seeking cancellation and re-test of the controversy-ridden NEET-UG 2024, holding that there was no data on record to indicate a systemic leak of question paper and other malpractices. A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra heard submissions from a battery of lawyers, including Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA), and senior advocates Narender Hooda, Sanjay Hegde and Mathews Nedumapra for around four days.

The bench dictated the operative part of the judgement keeping in mind the future of over two million students and said a detailed judgement will follow. "There is absence of material to conclude that result of NEET-UG 2024 exam is vitiated or there is systemic breach," the CJ said. The bench, however, said the fact that the question paper leak took place in Hazaribagh and Patna was not in dispute. The NTA and the Union education ministry have been at the centre of a massive political row and protests by students over alleged large-scale malpractices ranging from question paper leaks to impersonation in the test held on May 5. The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) is conducted by the NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions across the country. The NEET-UG 2024 was taken by 23.33 lakh students at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including in 14 overseas, on May 5.

Court grants bail to Delhi minister Atishi in defamation case

New Delhi, GNS News Agency, July 23

A court here on Tuesday granted bail to Delhi minister Atishi in a defamation case filed by a BJP leader over her claim that several AAP MLAs were approached by the saffron party with offers of cash to bring down the Arvind Kejriwal government. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Tanya Bamniyal granted bail to Atishi in the case filed by BJP leader Praveen Shankar Kapoor after she appeared before the court pursuant to summons. The judge granted the relief to the senior AAP leader on a bail bond of Rs 20,000 and one surety of the like amount. Atishi was reported to have claimed that 21 AAP MLAs were contacted by the BJP, which offered Rs 25 lakh to each of them, to switch over to the saffron camp. The judge will further take up the matter on August 8 for scrutiny of documents and arguments on framing of notice. The judge had on May 28 refused to summon Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the defamation case.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

India Inc lags in jobs

THE Economic Survey for 2023-24 highlights a concerning disparity within India's corporate sector. While companies have enjoyed unprecedented profits, hiring and salary growth have not kept pace. The government has rightly emphasised that job creation predominantly occurs in the private sector, urging companies to increase hiring and worker compensation. Between FY20 and FY23, the profit before taxes for over 33,000 companies nearly quadrupled. Yet, this financial boon has not translated into corresponding growth in employment or wages. This imbalance poses a risk to India's long-term economic stability and growth. For sustainable development, it is crucial that corporate profits benefit a broader spectrum of society.

The Economic Survey also underscores a collaborative approach between the Centre, state governments and the private sector, which is essential to meet the rising aspirations of Indians and achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. It reveals that the road ahead is challenging, with geopolitical shifts, climate change concerns and the advent of artificial intelligence adding layers of complexity to the job market. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, presenting the survey, noted the Indian economy's resilience and strong post-Covid recovery. However, she acknowledged that maintaining this trajectory required concerted efforts from all stakeholders. An intriguing recommendation in the survey is for India to seek more foreign direct investment (FDI) from China to boost local manufacturing and tap into export markets. Despite strained ties and ongoing border tensions, greater FDI from China could integrate India into global supply chains and enhance export capabilities. This strategy, as the survey suggests, might be more beneficial than relying solely on trade, given the growing trade deficit with China.

Two die of lightning strike in Jamnagar, trains halted, cancelled in Saurashtra

GNS News Agency, July 23

Gujarat rain, lightning strike, Jamnagar, trains halted, trains cancelled, Saurashtra, submerged railway track, Devbhumi Dwarka Officers of the district disaster management control room in Jamnagar said that two migrant labourers, who were husband and wife, were working on a field in Sumra village when they were struck by a lightning bolt on Thursday evening.

Two married agricultural labourers were killed by lightning in Jamnagar, while 250 train passengers were left stranded by a submerged railway track section in Devbhumi Dwarka, in the wake of very heavy rains in Gujarat's Saurashtra region on Thursday and Friday.

Officers of the district disaster management control room in Jamnagar said that two migrant labourers, who were husband and wife, were working on a field in Sumra village when they were struck by a lightning bolt on Thursday evening. The two were identified as Magan Bhuriya (47) and Rama Bhuriya (45). On Friday morning, 250 passengers were briefly stranded after the Delhi Sarai Rohilla-Porbandar Superfast Express had to be halted at Bhanvad town as a section of the track towards Porbandar was submerged. "Due to heavy rain, train movement has been affected on the Bhanvad-Porbandar section. We took more than 200 passengers of the train to Porbandar by buses," said Pradeep Sharma, a spokesperson of Western Railways.

Railway officials said that the passengers were given refreshments at Bhanvad railway station and six private luxury buses were arranged to help them reach their destination. Officials from the Porbandar district disaster management control room said that Porbandar-Chhaya taluka faced 350 mm or 10 inches of rain for 24 hours, ending at 6 am on Friday. Porbandar's Ranavav and Kutiya talukas logged 239 mm or 9.4 inches and 144 mm or 5.7 inches of rainfall respectively. Bhanvad taluka of Devbhumi Dwarka registered 67 mm or 2.6 inches of rain but neighbouring Jamjodhpur taluka of Jamnagar district was lashed by 144 mm of rain. Kalyanpur taluka of Devbhumi Dwarka was hit by 261 mm or 10.2 inches while Kahmbhalia and Dwarka talukas recorded 51 and 40 mm — 2 and 1.6 inches — of rain respectively. Following the heavy rain, the trains of Porbandar-Bhanvad, Porbandar-Bhavnagar-Porbandar and Porbandar-Kanalus were cancelled for Friday, railway officials said. Meanwhile, the Rajkot-Porbandar Express, Porbandar-Rajkot Express, and Porbandar-Santragachi Kaviguru Express were short-terminated. Officials said that the Kaviguru express train had been short-terminated at Rajkot and will short-originate from Rajkot itself instead of Porbandar.

Action taken against Cong MLAs who cross-voted in Maharashtra council polls: Venugopal

GNS News Agency, July 23

K C Venugopal Maharashtra Congress Congress, which has 37 MLAs, had fixed a quota of 30 first preference votes for its candidate Pradnya Satav, and seven remaining votes were to go to Milind Narvekar, candidate of the ally Shiv Sena (UBT). (X/ kcvenugopalmp)

Congress leader K C Venugopal on Friday said the party has taken action against the MLAs who cross-voted in the biennial elections to 11 seats of the Maharashtra legislative council last week.

"Action has been taken against the MLAs who cross-voted and you will see the result in future. Discipline is very important," Venugopal told reporters after attending a meeting here to review the party's preparations for the upcoming Maharashtra legislative assembly elections and to decide its poll strategies. He, however, did not specify the number or names of the MLAs who defied the party's directive while voting. When asked whether the dissenting legislators will be denied in the assembly elections, the AICC general secretary (organisation) said, "You can have your own assumptions." In the biennial elections to the legislative council held on July 12, seven Congress MLAs cross-voted.

Madras HC orders issuing notice to Centre over DMK's plea against three new criminal laws



GNS News Agency, July 23

Madras High Court DMK plea against criminal laws According to the petitioner, the government introduced the three Bills and got them passed by the Parliament without any meaningful discussion.

The Madras High Court on Friday ordered issuing notice to the Centre over a plea by the DMK to declare as ultra vires and unconstitutional, the three new criminal laws brought in by the Union government. The three laws — Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam have come into effect from July 1. They have replaced the Indian

Penal Code, The Code of Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Evidence Act. A division bench comprising Justices S S Sundar and N Senthil Kumar before whom the petition filed by DMK Organising Secretary R S Bharathi came up for hearing, ordered issuing notice to the Centre and gave it four weeks time to respond. According to the petitioner, the government introduced the three Bills and got them passed by the Parliament without any meaningful discussion. In the absence of any substantive changes, mere shuffling of sections was unnecessary and will cause a lot of inconvenience and confusion regarding the interpretation of the provisions, he added.

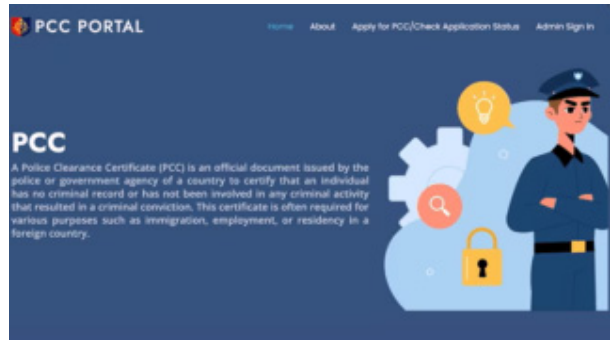
He said shuffling of sections will make it very difficult for the judges, advocates, the law enforcing authorities and the general public to correlate the new provisions with the old ones to search for precedents. It seems the exercise was being done only to "Sanskritise" the titles of the Acts without any devotion to revisit the laws, he contended. Bharathi further said the government cannot claim that it was an act of Parliament. The enactments were made by only one limb of the Parliament viz., the ruling party and its allies, keeping away the opposition parties, he claimed. He said the naming of the Acts in Hindi/Sanskrit was violative of Article 348 of the Constitution, which mandates, inter alia, that the authoritative texts of all Bills to be introduced in either house of Parliament shall be in English.

West Bengal Police launch online portal to get Police Clearance Certificates, say entire process expected to take 72 hours

GNS News Agency, July 23

In a bid to expedite the process of obtaining a Police Clearance Certificate (PCC), a crucial document for visa and job applications, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the West Bengal Police has launched a new portal. The portal allows citizens to apply for a PCC online, eliminating the need for lengthy paperwork and in-person visits to police stations. This digital initiative is expected to significantly reduce the processing time and provide greater convenience to the public. The portal was launched on Friday at the Bhawani Bhawan in presence of senior CID officials. Dr R Rajasekaran ADG and IG CID, Vishal Garg, IG CID, Supratim Sarkar, ADG and IG (South Bengal), Suresh Jain, IG Traffic, Akhilesh Chaturvedi, IG CID and Ajoy Kumar ADG and IG (Headquarters) were present during the launch. "We are hopeful that the process, which used to take so much time (around 30 days), will be now completed within 72 hours and in a hassle free manner," said Suresh Jain, IG (traffic).

The process involves completing an online application form, uploading a photograph and necessary supporting documents, and paying a Rs 300 fee through netbanking, debit, or credit card. Once the application and the fee are processed, the information is digitally forwarded to the relevant police station. Officers will then



conduct a physical verification at the applicant's address and carry out a comprehensive record check. Upon completion of the verification process, a digitally signed PCC will be emailed to the applicant. An SMS notification will also be sent confirming the issuance or rejection of the certificate. A Police Clearance Certificate (PCC) is an official document issued by the Police to certify that an individual has no criminal record or has not been involved in any criminal activity that resulted in a criminal conviction. This certificate is often required for various purposes such as immigration, employment, or residency in a foreign country. An applicant has to visit the <https://pcc.wb.gov.in>, which is hosted by the State Data Center, and follow the steps given below:

Gujarat HC grants bail to 5 Congress workers, furnishes bail bond of Rs 10,000



GNS News Agency, July 23

Gujarat HC grants bail to Congress workers Taking into consideration the allegations and the seriousness of the offences, the court of Justice MR Mengdey directed for the release of the five accused and furnished a bail bond of Rs 10,000 per head. The Gujarat High Court on Friday granted bail to five Congress workers who were accused of stone pelting and rioting recently, following clashes between the BJP and the Congress workers over purported "anti-Hindu remarks" by Congress MP Rahul Gandhi in his maiden speech at the Parliament. The five accused— Harsh Ishwarbhai Parmar (23), Vimalbhai Pansara (50), Manish Thakor (47), Sanjay Barot (57) and Mukeshbhai Datania (68)— were arrested based on a complaint filed by Paldi police station constable Karmaraj Bhagvatsinh who had suffered injuries in the clash.

An FIR had been filed under BNS for alleged rioting, stone pelting, and other offences against Congress leaders Shehzad Khan Pathan, Congress' LoP (Leader of Opposition) in Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, and Pragatiben Nandaniya, as well as against "around 200-250 Congress workers" and "a mob of 150-200 BJP persons".

Following the incident on July 2, FIRs were lodged against Congress workers based on two complaints, one by the police constable and another by Ahmedabad city's BJP Yuva Morcha wing chief. A third FIR was lodged against Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) members, based on the complaint filed by Himmatsinh Patel, former Bapunagar MLA and Ahmedabad city Congress Committee chief. Advocate Hriday Buch, representing the accused, submitted before the court that none of the five are said to have played a vital role in the commission of the offence and pointed out that none have been arrested in the other FIRs. Taking into consideration the allegations and the seriousness of the offences, the court of Justice MR Mengdey directed for the release of the five accused and furnished a bail bond of Rs 10,000 per head. Earlier on July 11, the Ahmedabad court refused bail to the five accused after going through the photographs and CCTV footage of the incident. The court stated that it was a "clear case of assault on a public servant" and a "clear case of attack on police machinery".

Bombay High Court seeks police reply in Bhavesh Bhide's bail plea

GNS News Agency, July 23

The Bombay High Court on Friday directed the Mumbai police to file an affidavit in reply to a plea by Bhavesh Bhide, the owner of Ego Media Pvt Ltd that constructed the hoarding which collapsed in Ghatkopar on May 13, killing 17 people. The petitioner, who is in judicial custody, sought to quash the First Information Report (FIR) registered for offence of culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

Bhide, who argued through advocate Rizwan Merchant, has also sought interim relief of release on bail pending disposal of his plea. A division bench of Justices Bharati H Dangre and Manjusha A Deshpande was hearing Bhide's plea which stated that his arrest was 'unlawful' and that the collapse was an 'act of God'. Bhide had also claimed his arrest was 'illegal' and without procedure as mandatory notice under Section 41A (notice of appearance issued by the investigating officer) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) was not issued to him.

The bench referred to the previous Supreme Court and HC judgments holding that in case the arrest is declared illegal, the remand order will be set aside and in case of illegal detention, immediate release is

ordered. Bhide claimed that the hoarding was erected after obtaining all required permissions and therefore it was legal. Bhide added that the FIR was driven by political pressure and construction and placement of the said hoarding had been authorised by Government Railway Police (GRP) along with the required 'No Objection Certificates' (NOCs) from the authorities. The petitioner had also claimed that he was not the director of Ego Media when the hoarding was being constructed and another person, Janhavi Marathe, was overseeing the activities. Bhide said he became the director of the company only last December. Bhide had claimed that the India Meteorological Department bulletin issued on May 12 had failed to predict the severe dust storms with gusty winds that hit the city the next day. Therefore, he claimed that the "unexpected and unprecedented wind speeds of up to 96 kmph caused the hoarding's collapse," and hence neither he nor the firm could be made accountable for the incident.

After public prosecutor Hiten Venegaonkar, representing the police department, sought time to file a detailed affidavit responding to the petitioner's claim of 'illegal' arrest, the bench granted time till July 24 and posted further hearing to July 26.

Trumpet and 'turha' poll symbols frozen in Maharashtra



GNS News Agency, July 23

Acting on the Nationalist Congress Party (SP)'s demands ahead of the Assembly elections in the state, the Maharashtra State Election Commission (SEC) has frozen the trumpet and 'turha' (a traditional trumpet) poll symbols from its list of free symbols.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) had granted the 'man blowing trumpet' symbol to the NCP (SP). However, in the recently held Lok Sabha elections, Independent candidates were given the trumpet and 'turha' poll symbols which reportedly led to confusion in the minds of voters. As a result, in several constituencies, NCP (SP) votes allegedly went to the Independent candidates.

In the Satara Lok Sabha constituency, for example, the Independent candidate won over 37,000 votes while the winning margin of the BJP candidate was around 32,000 votes. Similarly, in the Dindori Lok Sabha seat, the Independent candidate won over 1 lakh votes. Despite this, the NCP-SP candidate won by a margin of more than 1 lakh votes. A similar problem was reportedly seen in all seats contested by the NCP (SP). Based on its Lok Sabha experience, while preparing for the Assembly elections, the NCP (SP) had demanded that these two symbols be frozen.

How this agricultural engineer in Ratnagiri is turning heads through jackfruit business

GNS News Agency, July 23

Despite being born in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra known for the juicy and delicious Alphonso mangoes, Mithlesh Desai was more fascinated by the giant jackfruit. Discovering the immense nutritional value of the "seemingly under-rated fruit" and its other potentials, the 31-year-old agricultural engineer today grows 70 varieties of jackfruit in his 28-acre farm in Zapade village in the district. Besides, Desai's company even exports jackfruit leaves to Germany where it finds use in cancer research.

"Jackfruit, widely regarded as vegan meat, is high in nutritional value. Seeds of this fruit can equal almonds in terms of nutrition. In Konkani, it was the humble jackfruit which saved lives during the drought of 1972," said Desai, explaining jackfruit's potential in the global hunger problem. After his degree in agricultural engineering from the Mahatma Phule Agriculture University, Desai decided to do a scientific analysis on the nutritional secrets, value addition and cultivation of the fruit. For this, Desai set up a laboratory near his orchard sometime after 2014, when he took up cultivation seriously.

Desai did experiments to study the BRICs value (to determine its sweetness) and other parameters to understand the varieties that are best suited for each geographical region. The best way to consume the fruit is in its raw form, ripened or otherwise, said Desai, adding that the bark of the tree is used in animal feed as well as fertilisers. In his childhood, Desai was introduced to jackfruits by his father, a farmer who sold ripe jackfruits on roadsides at almost throwaway prices. "Unlike other farmers my father realised the potential of the fruit and in the year 2000 he travelled to Kerala, a major jackfruit growing state, to buy 36 varieties of the fruit and plant them in our farm in the Lanja taluka. Back then it was almost unheard of," he said. Like most farmers in the Konkani region of Maharashtra, mango and cashew were the main cash crops of the Desais.

"Climate change has played its part in increasing the cost of production of mangoes and return from the fruit was uncertain. Also cheap imports of cashew has resulted in cashew losing its sheen. It was then we decided to develop jackfruit and help it gain its rightful place," he said. Desai said the fruit is consumed as a vegetable in the Vidarbha region and North India, while the ripened fruit is favoured in western Maharashtra. "We should know which variety to market where," he said. Desai started a jackfruit nursery in 2018 and developed a variety named after his father Harishchandra. "Annual sales have zoomed from 1,000 saplings to over 25,000. More and more farmers are taking to this fruit as a serious crop," he said. Subsequently, Desai formed a Farmers Producer Company (FPC) with over 900 members. The nursery and the FPC are part of Desai's plan to help farmers tap in the ever-growing jackfruit market. "Be it in the vegan industry or chips, jackfruit has a largely untapped market," he said. The nursery would help Desai and the FPC to identify farmers who can supply the fruit in bulk. "Through FPC, we will buy the fruit as the raw material for the upcoming processing centre which would be set up in over 11,000 sqft in our area," he mentioned.

Prepare designs for integrated residential schools in one week: Telangana CS

GNS News Agency, July 23

Hyderabad: Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari said the integrated residential schools should have spacious class rooms, play areas, separate room for allowing parents to meet their children etc and directed the officials to prepare a uniform design for the school buildings within a week.

The Chief Secretary held a meeting with officials of different welfare departments and reviewed the measures to be taken for identification of lands and infrastructure for establishing integrated residential welfare schools in the State. During the meeting, she informed that a committee comprising the Advisor to the Government should be constituted to oversee the progress of the works.

HC frowns at mention of fee dues in school TC, says its a child's personal document



GNS News Agency, July 23

Transfer Certificate of a child was not a tool for schools to collect pending fees but a personal document issued in the name of the former, and no entries regarding fees arrears should be made in them, the Madras High Court held on Friday. The HC directed the Tamil Nadu government to issue circular/instructions/orders to all the schools across the State, to not to insist to produce TC by the child at the time of admission, and prohibit the school managements from making unnecessary entries in the document, including non-payment or delayed payment of fees. A division bench comprising Justices S M Subramaniam and C Kumarappan which gave the above directive said that in the event of violation, action was to be initiated under Section 17 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act) and under the relevant laws applicable for protection of children.

The bench also directed the state government to revisit the Tamil Nadu Education Rules and Code of regulation for matriculation schools, and accordingly, make all necessary amendments in consonance with the provisions of the RTE Act within a period of three months. Allowing an appeal filed by the state government, the bench set aside an order of a single judge, which while allowing a petition from the All India Private Schools Legal Protection Society, found that mere indication of the arrears of fees payable by the student, does not have any negative connotation/ impact against the student and the parents.

The bench held that harassing children over non-payment or delayed payment of fees amounts to cruelty and constitutes an offence under Section 75 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The schools have every right to initiate appropriate action for recovery of the outstanding fees, if any, from the parents in accordance with law. But in the process, harassing or punishing the child over default in payment of fees was an offence and falls within the contours of Section 75 of the JJ Act, the bench added. The court ob-

served the schools should not involve the children in the fee collection process.

It was not necessary for the child to know the details regarding payment of tuition fees. Such information should be kept away from them to enable them to grow in a happy environment, free from stress. Children must be given an environment which was free from these burdens, allowing them to grow in a happy space. Schools should strive to provide a happy and supportive environment for children, the bench added. The bench said a TC was not a tool for the schools to collect arrear fees from the parents or to weigh their financial capacity. It was a personal document issued in the name of the child. Schools cannot put their own problems on the child by making unnecessary entries on the TC. Payment of tuition fees was the duty of the parents towards the schools. Any default in the same ought to be recovered from the parents by the school concerned in the manner known to law.

Instead, making entries of non-payment of fees on TC in the name of the child was sheer humiliation. What will the child do if the parents fail to pay the fees. It was not their fault and to stigmatise and harass the child was a form of mental harassment under Section 17 of the RTE Act, the bench added. It observed that once an entry as to the fees dues was made in the TC by a school, the child's entry into another institution becomes a question mark. Once arrears in fees payment was recorded in a TC, it becomes a stigma for the child. No schools would come forward to admit the child and all the more, the explicit mention of non-payment of fees on the TC will lead to socio-economic stigmatisation of the child. This strikes at the core of the RTE Act, the bench noted.

The court further observed that stigmatisation of a child over non-payment or delayed payment of tuition fee shows seeds of insecurity and results in low self-esteem. It lowers their confidence and emotionally impairs the child. Financial strains in the family often affect the children. This was rarely spoken about, but the child starts feeling insecure and burdened which in turn affects the psychological health of the child, the bench added. The bench said children come from different socio-economic backgrounds and when the academic year begins, some families have to go through immense strain to pay their child's tuition fee and in this process the child was made to undergo anxiety and stress. It was the duty of the school to understand the emotional challenges faced by the child during such times and instead of burdening them, it was a time to lend their care and assistance to the child. It was a traumatic experience for the child when it receives a TC with stigmatising remarks on non-payment or delayed payment of fees. Such action by the school authorities attracts section 17 of the RTE Act, the bench added.

A Punjab village synonymous with farmers' protests



GNS News Agency, July 23

Shambhu village bordering the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana is now synonymous with the farmers' protests. The village near National Highway 44 first hit the headlines in 2020 during the farmers' protest against three central farm laws when farmers from Punjab broke the barricades at the Shambhu border as they made their way to Delhi. The village is back in the limelight now with the Punjab and Haryana High Court recently directing Haryana to remove the barricades placed to prevent protesting farmers from marching to Delhi. In Punjab and Haryana, however, the Shambhu border has often been mentioned in speeches by politicians looking to target their opponents. When Parkash Singh Badal was the chief minister of Punjab from 2007-2017 and Manmohan Singh was the Prime Minister, Badal used to often meet the PM over various demands of the state. These visits drew flak as Badal's political opponents criticised him, saying "Badal meets the PM, gifts him a bouquet, submits his demands... the moment he crosses Shambhu border and enters Punjab, his language changes and he starts criticising the Centre." The Badals would repeat the same when their political opponents travelled to Delhi to meet National Democratic Alliance (NDA) ministers. Shambhu Sarai: A resting place for travellers

Shambhu is a village in Rajpura tehsil of Punjab's Patiala district. It has a large settlement, Shambhu Kalan, and a small settlement, Shambhu Khurd. The village enjoys historical importance because of the Shambhu Sarai (resthouse) built by Mughal emperor Sher Shah Suri in the 16th century. Sher Shah Suri built the Grand Trunk Road from Chittagong (now in Bangladesh) to Peshawar (in Pakistan). At every 50 km, rest houses were built, as per historians. Sources say that while many Sarais have been destroyed, the Shambhu Sarai still exists with a

small mosque on the lawn. Though not well-maintained, the old monument is visible if one travels by road on this highway. The resthouse was used by traders, soldiers and travellers.

In the early 70s, after the formation of Haryana as a separate state, a sales tax barrier was built on NH-44 where vehicles carrying goods from outside Punjab were checked to ensure tax compliance. In 1999, this was replaced by an information collection centre. A long queue of trucks was a common sight at the border during this time and often led to traffic jams. In 2000, a toll barrier for all vehicles was introduced in Punjab's jurisdiction with a toll tax of Rs 45 for a car for a two-side journey. Around six to seven years ago, this toll barrier was shifted from Mehmudpur village, the last village in Punjab, to near Nizampur village in Haryana's Ambala. The barrier, however, is still known as the Shambhu barrier as Shambhu is a big village close to Mehmudpur. The local police station is also named the Shambhu police station. "Perhaps, the barrier got the name after the police station," said Tejveer Singh, spokesperson of Bhartiya Kisan Union (Shaheed Bhagat Singh), Haryana. The sales tax checkpoint still exists near Punjab's border. During the protest against the three central farm laws in 2020, farmers had staged a dharna at the Shambhu railway station before marching towards Delhi. Two tents had come up on the highway near the Shambhu barrier; one by Waris Punjab De, then run by Punjabi actor Deep Sidhu, who died in a road accident later, and another by Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar). On November 26, 2020, the farmers marched from the Shambhu barrier towards Delhi breaking all the blockades in between. The temporary barricades were flung into the Ghaggar River flowing along the highway. The three farm laws were eventually rolled back.

The current protests This February, farmers under the banner of Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and Samyukt Kisan Morcha (non-political) had given a 'Dilli Chalo' call over several demands, including a minimum support price for crops. However, unlike 2020, the Haryana government placed six-layered barricading, brought in paramilitary forces, built a wall and used barbed wire fencing to stop the farmers. Tear gas shelling was carried out using drones and rubber bullets were also fired to stop the farmers from marching ahead. Several farmers, including Shubhkar Singh, died in the protests. While talks between farmer unions and Union ministers were inconclusive, the Punjab and Haryana High Court recently directed the Haryana government to remove the barricades. All eyes are now on Haryana as the directive comes at a time when the state is heading for Assembly elections.

After Defence denies permission, Karnataka govt likely to move sky deck project to southwest Bengaluru

GNS News Agency, July 23

The 250-metre sky deck proposed by Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar is now likely to be built on a land parcel in Hemmigeppura (southwest of Bengaluru) along the Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprises (NICE) Road. The sky deck project was initially planned to be built in the Central Business District (CBD) but did not take off after the Defence Ministry denied permission owing to the location's proximity to the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited airport. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah along with Bengaluru ministers, Congress MLAs, and senior officials chaired a meeting to discuss the sky deck project. An in-principle approval was accorded to the project, and it was decided that the sky deck would be built outside the CBD, said government sources. The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) had shortlisted three areas based on feasibility studies - Bangalore University campus in Jnanabharathi, Kommaghatta, and Hemmigeppura - for the project. The BBMP, however, dropped the Jnanabharathi campus as a possible site to preserve the tranquillity of the university environment and Kommaghatta due to its accessibility issues. Finally, a consensus was developed to use the 25-acre land in Hemmigeppura, currently under NICE's custody. Located in Banashankari sixth stage, the place offers a view of the Turahalli forest and is approximately five kilometre from the Thalaghattapura Metro station. However, the decision to move the project to the



southwest region has sparked concerns that the location for Bengaluru's second airport will unlikely be in the southern or southwestern part of the city, owing to the 250-metre sky deck coming in the way of airfield height restrictions.

Two days ago, Infrastructure Development Minister M B Patil in the Assembly had stated that the government has identified "seven to eight" potential sites for the second airport in southern, western, and northern parts, within 50-60 km distance from the city.

The sky deck was proposed by Shivakumar to woo tourists with food courts, and play arenas, among other amenities, and position the structure as a major tourist attraction.

Farmer, son killed in Punjab's Fazilka district after row over irrigating field

GNS News Agency, July 23

A farmer and his son were allegedly murdered by their neighbours in Punjab's Fazilka district on Thursday evening following an argument over irrigating a field. The police said that one person has been arrested and they are on the lookout for three other accused. The incident took place in Pakan village. The police identified the deceased as Avtar Singh, 58, and his son Harmeet Singh, 28, and the accused as Palwinder Singh, his brothers Balveer Singh and Raghbir Singh, and Balveer's son Anmol Singh.

"A First Information Report with murder charges and under the Arms Act has been lodged against the four men. Out of them, Anmol has been arrested," Pragya Jain, Senior Superintendent of Police, Fazilka, said. Jain added that a licenced weapon was used in the crime and raids were being held to catch the other accused. On Thursday, Avtar, a marginal farmer who owns around 2.5 acres of land, and his son Harmeet were watering nine acres of land that they had taken on contract from Hardeep Kaur from Chuhar village in Ludhiana two years ago.

Punjab Villagers gathered in the fields of Paka village where murder incident happened. (File photo) "Every Thursday, it is our turn to water the fields so my husband and son had gone there at around 4.30 pm. After some time, I went to give them tea and I found four people standing in the fields. They were fighting with my husband," Avtar's wife Sarabjit Kaur said in her statement to the police.

"Palwinder had a weapon in his hands while the others were holding spades. All of a sudden, Palwinder opened fire on my husband and son and the others attacked them with spades. They ran away afterwards," she added. Avtar and Harmeet were taken to a hospital but were declared dead.



The incident took place in Pakan village. The police identified the deceased as Avtar Singh, 58, and his son Harmeet Singh, 28, and the accused as Palwinder Singh, his brothers Balveer Singh and Raghbir Singh, and Balveer's son Anmol Singh.

Sources said that the fight began when Palwinder and his family members insisted that Avtar's time to irrigate the fields was over. They had also alleged that Avtar and Harmeet were taking water from a water channel not meant for their fields. The land they had taken on contract was earlier looked after by Palwinder Singh and his family, sources said. "Ever since the land was taken on contract by Avtar, Palwinder and his family members used to be at loggerheads with them. They always used to find reasons to fight... but we had no idea that they would go this far," a villager said. According to sources, Palwinder and his family members had tried to change the land records of Hardeep Kaur's land when they used to farm on it and this was what led to the contract being handed over to Avtar. While Avtar is survived by his wife and a mentally challenged son, Harmeet is survived by his wife and three-month-old son.

Second death due to Chandipura virus confirmed in Gujarat

GNS News Agency, July 23

Chandipura virus (CHPV): Typical symptoms include a rapid onset of fever, vomiting, altered mental state, convulsions, diarrhoea, neurological deficits, and signs of meningeal irritation. According to data from the SSG hospital in Vadodara, as of Friday afternoon, a total of 11 suspected cases of CHPV are currently under treatment at the hospital. The Vadodara District Health Department on Friday confirmed that the district has reported its first and Gujarat's second confirmed case of the Chandipura Viral Encephalitis (CHPV) in a six-year-old boy from Savli who had died on July 1 in hospital.

The six-year-old from Manipura village in Savli had been brought to SSG hospital in the early hours of July 1 with complaints of high grade fever, convulsions and unconsciousness. Within ten hours of his admission, he died in hospital. Since this day, four other deaths of suspected CHPV have been reported by SSG hospital. These deaths are of a six-year-old boy from Panchmahal district who died on July 14, a three-year-old boy from Dahod district who died on July 16 and two four-year-old girls from Panchmahal district who died on July 17. SSG Medical Superintendent Dr Ranjan Aiyer told The Indian Express, "We had sent the sample of the boy from Savli to the NIV on July 2 as part of our regular practice after clinically diagnosing the case as that of acute encephalitis. The characteristic of acute viral encephalitis and CHPV is that it rapidly progresses by affecting the neurological system, causing brain edema, which keeps increasing to a point where the child needs a ventilator."

He said that the hospital has sent samples of all the deceased patients to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) Pune as per usual practice. According to data from the SSG hospital in Vadodara, as of Friday afternoon, a total of 11 suspected cases of CHPV are currently under treatment at the hospital. Four fresh admissions of sus-



pected cases, with the patients currently in the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). This includes a 4-year-old from Gotri in Vadodara, a seven-year-old from Mahisagar district, an 11-month-old boy from Panchmahal district and a one-year-old from Morva Hadaf in Panchmahal district. A four-year-old girl from Panchmahal district, who was admitted on July 11 on suspicion of the virus, also continues to be in the PICU.

Vadodara Chief District Health Officer (CDHO) Minaxi Chauhan, on Friday, confirmed that the health teams have begun a drive in the Manipura village of Savli from where the deceased six-year-old boy had lived. Chauhan told The Indian Express, "I am visiting the village today.

The health teams had arrived in the village in the late evening on Thursday and we have randomly collected samples of children in the village and also begun a health survey in the neighbourhood of the boy. We only learnt about the case now as the NIV has reported the case as a positive CHPV case." SSG has also discharged two other suspected CHPV cases in Gujarat, whose samples tested negative at NIV Pune.

Bengaluru tattoo artist lands in soup over tattoo 'abusing' police

GNS News Agency, July 23

The Bengaluru police recently booked a tattoo artist over an allegedly abusive tattoo demeaning the police. A picture of the tattoo on the chest of a client was uploaded on social media by the artist himself. The tattoo artist, Ritesh Aghariya, 41, who runs a tattoo studio called Tattoo Sutra in central Bengaluru, was booked in a suo motu case by the Cubbon Park police under Section 352 of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) for causing intentional insult to police authorities. A police sub-inspector and social media in-charge from the Cubbon Park police station in central Bengaluru, Chethan S G, has alleged in his complaint that an Instagram post of a tattoo that is abusive



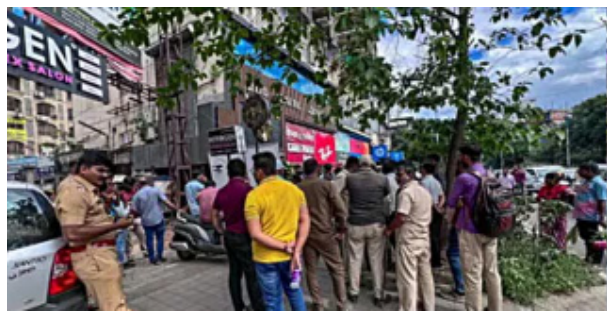
The Bengaluru police recently booked a tattoo artist over an allegedly abusive tattoo demeaning the police. A picture of the tattoo on the chest of a client was uploaded on social media by the artist himself.

sive towards the police came to his notice while checking social media. "The message indicates the use of abusive and bad language against the police and strict action must be taken for the post-

ing on social media," the police officer said in his complaint registered on . Based on the complaint, the police summoned the tattoo artist who was later released with a warning against repeating the of-

fence. Section 352 of the BNS prescribes an imprisonment of two to five years if a person is found guilty of causing intentional insult to breach the peace.

Bombay HC raps police and authorities over law and order situation, summons cop to explain action taken



GNS News Agency, July 23

The Bombay High Court on Friday pulled up the Maharashtra Government and the police and directed the senior inspector of the Shahuwadi Police station to remain present before it to inform it about the action taken by the police against those involved in the alleged violence on July 14 related to 'encroachments' from the Vishalgad Fort area. A division bench of Justices B P Colabawalla and Firdosh P Pooniwalla also said it would come down heavily on authorities if it finds any residential or commercial structure being demolished in the Vishalgad Fort area from Friday. The state government lawyer on instructions from the officials assured the court that as per the circular of the state government, no residential premises of any person in the Vishalgad Fort area shall be demolished, whether they are petitioners or otherwise, during the rainy season.

"Who is in charge of the law and order situation in Vishalgad? We would like the senior inspector of the said police station to come before us. We would like to know, we are not blaming officers so far as to what action police took with reference to this case," the bench said. "We record your statement that you will not demolish till September (rainy season), and if the same is breached, we will not hesitate to send the officer behind bars. We make it clear that if we find any structure demolished from today, commercial or household, we will come down heavily on your officers' authorities," the bench told Government Pleader Priyabhushan P Kakade.

Bombay High Court sets aside Maharashtra govt's decision to exempt private schools from RTE quota admissions



GNS News Agency, July 23

In a setback to Maharashtra government, the Bombay High Court on Friday quashed and set aside its notification that exempted private schools within a one-kilometre radius of government or aided schools from following Right to Education (RTE) Act quota admissions. The bench held that the impugned provision was "ultra vires of RTE Act and Article 21 of Constitution" and declared the notification issued on February 9 to be 'void'. This would mean that self-financed and private schools will have to mandatorily set aside 25 per cent of seats for students from socio-economically backward sections, as was the case prior to the notification.

The court also quashed and set aside circulars or communications issued by the government on March 6 and April 3 to implement its February 9 notification. Prior to the notification, the HC noted that the admissions made by private unaided schools prior to May 6 stay order for students belonging to economically weaker and disadvantaged sections shall not be disturbed and "in any circumstance, 25 % of total strength of class 1 of private unaided schools shall be filled in as per RTE Act." It added that if required, the total seats would be increased by such schools by submitting necessary information and details to the concerned authority of the education department. The court on May 6 had stayed the implementation of the notification until further orders of the government.

The students admitted under 25 per cent RTE quota are given fee concessions, and the state government later reimburses the fees to private unaided schools. A division bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar passed a judgement in a plea filed by members of management of aided schools and

After watching a video shown by the petitioner related to the law and order situation at Vishalgad Fort, the bench asked, "Where is the law and order? These are not your (state police) officers, right? So who are these men? Are you not responsible for maintaining law and order in the State? We want to know if any FIR is lodged in this matter". The bench asked the senior inspector of the Shahuwadi Police Station to remain present before it on the next hearing to be held on July 29 and inform it about the action taken against those seen in the video. The bench was hearing a plea by residents of Shahuwadi Taluka in the Kolhapur district seeking direction from the court to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by a former high court judge to probe into the alleged violence by right-wing activists. The petitioners, through advocate Satish B Talekar sought an urgent hearing and claimed that "the right-wing activist led by Maratha Royal and former member of Rajya Sabha, Sambhaji Rajee Chatrapati gathered at the base of Vishalgad Fort knowing fully well that prohibitory orders were issued by the Tehsildar, Shahuwadi." They claimed the district administration had deployed police at the base of Fort to prevent 'right-wing' activists from going to Vishalgad so that Muslim residents and their properties would be protected. The petitioners claimed that despite prohibitory orders proclaimed by the tehsildar of Shahuwadi, the police allowed at least 100 protesters to climb the fort leading to "an atmosphere of chaos and lawlessness prevailed in the village for almost two hours". The residents sought to amend their earlier plea of last year against the Maharashtra Archaeology Department's notices that directed seven people to demolish their structures within the Vishalgad Fort area. In February last year, a bench led by Justice Gautam S Patel (now retired) stayed the notices and directed no coercive or demolition action against the said petitioners and the same was continued from time to time. As per the petitioners, the demolition was in progress despite the stay order. The amended plea also sought direction to restrain respondent authorities from demolishing any of the houses, shops or any other structures, including the Hazrat Peer Malik Rehan Dargah at Vishalgad, pending final disposal of the petition.

parents from socio-economically backward classes among others. Maintaining that the matter contained "overwhelming public interest," the HC had held that the impugned amendments contravened the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, also known as the RTE Act.

The court had also continued an interim order in which the state government had submitted that till the next date of hearing, no students will be allotted to the schools under RTE. Before Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Kerala had diluted private schools' obligations under the RTE Act. Appearing for the petitioners, senior advocate Gayatri Singh had argued that the February 9 notification was stayed as it was contrary to the RTE Act that provides quota at municipal schools, aided schools and private unaided schools.

A public interest litigation by NGO Vidhayak Bharati and one Santosh Shinde had also challenged the circulars or communications issued by the government on March 6 and April 3 to implement its February 9 notification. The petitioner had claimed that the impugned circulars required aided government schools to register as being available for 25 per cent reservation even though they were not eligible to give such admissions as they already provide free primary education. Additional Government Pleader (AGP) Jyoti Chavan for the state government, however, had submitted that the petitioners' apprehension was not appropriate. She had said that the March 6 circular, in light of May 6 interim order of the High Court shall be construed only to mean that 25 per cent reservation for the children from economically weaker and disadvantaged sections of society shall be confined to self-financed schools, police welfare (unaided) schools and self-financed schools run by municipal corporations. The same will not apply to any other category of school mentioned in March 6 circular, she had added. This year, over 2.5 lakh applications were received for admission to close to one lakh seats available under RTE in schools across Maharashtra. However, several parents had complained that they were in a fix due to the pending litigation as their children remain without school admission despite the new academic year having begun. On June 18, the HC had said it will conduct the final hearing in the matter in the first half of July as it wanted to decide it as soon as possible "as students cannot be kept in limbo" considering "the urgency" in the matter. The court concluded the hearing and reserved its verdict on July 11, which it passed on Friday.

After no bids, K-RIDE to knock on Railways doors for Vande Bharat metro coaches for Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project

GNS News Agency, July 23

As per K-RIDE's estimation, the cost of each coach is expected to be Rs 9.17 crore which amounts to Rs 2,806 crore (excluding GST) for 306 coaches. The Vande Metro trains with 12 coaches, unveiled on April 30, are designed to operate along routes spanning between 100 km and 250 km. As per K-RIDE's estimation, the cost of each coach is expected to be Rs 9.17 crore which amounts to Rs 2,806 crore (excluding GST) for 306 coaches. The Vande Metro trains with 12 coaches, unveiled on April 30, are designed to operate along routes spanning between 100 km and 250 km. The Karnataka Rail Infrastructure Development Company Limited (K-RIDE) has approached the Integral Coach Factory for supplying Vande Bharat metro coaches for the Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project (BSRP) after it did not receive any financial bids for rolling stock on Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. K-RIDE, a special purpose vehicle implementing BSRP, has received no financial bids from the three firms — Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited, Bharat Earth Movers Limited, and Spanish rail manufacturer CAF — that qualified for the bidding process. According to government sources, no financial bids were submitted for the project due to the potential bidders seeking additional assurances in the form of sovereign guarantees from the Karnataka Government and the Centre. As per K-RIDE's estimation, the cost of each coach is expected to be Rs 9.17 crore which amounts to Rs 2,806 crore (excluding

GST) for 306 coaches. The Vande Metro trains with 12 coaches, unveiled on April 30, are designed to operate along routes spanning between 100 km and 250 km. As per the BSRP sanction letter, the tender for rolling stock procurement was supposed to be invited in two stages — Request for Qualification and Request for Proposal on the PPP model. While the three firms qualified in the first stage, none of them was willing to propose financial bids for the project, prompting K-RIDE to execute an alternative plan. The July 11 deadline for submitting the financial bids has now been extended to August 12. K-RIDE is now planning to procure Vande Bharat metro coaches for BSRP through equity funding involving the Karnataka Government and the Ministry of Railways. Dr Manjula N, Managing Director, K-RIDE, has requested the Railway Board to accord 'in principle' approval to procure rolling stock on equity funding through ICF in Chennai. K-RIDE has also requested ICF for certain structural and technical changes in the design of the Vande Bharat metro rolling stock to suit the BSRP-approved detailed project report. For example, the Vande Bharat metro trains are required to be compatible with BSRP in terms of axle load of 17 tonne, carrying capacity per coach with 300 passengers, CBTC signalling system, and a 24-month delivery period. According to the requirement of K-RIDE, the coaches are to be supplied by ICF till 2030 with the actual production starting in 2025-26 with two prototype trains.

Women spurn work, flock centres to register for the change that Rs 1,500 can bring home



GNS News Agency, July 23

Clutching firmly onto a bundle of important "kaagaz", Kalpana Sahani, resident of Malad's Ambujwadi, finally reaches the desk to fill the form for the "Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana", after an arduous wait of six hours. It was only a few days ago that women in the locality learnt about the new government scheme that comes bearing the promise of a monthly monetary assistance and a whole lot of hope. "We have been told that if we fill all the documents, women will get Rs 1,500 every month," says Pramila Khajure, awaiting her turn.

Announced by Finance Minister Ajit Pawar during the state budget, under the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Scheme, Rs 1,500 is slated to be transferred into the bank accounts of eligible women in the age group of 21 to 65 every month. According to the GR, only women whose family income is below Rs 2.5 lakh and has no member paying income tax are eligible for the scheme. Across the state, the applications for eligible women commenced on July 1. According to the guidelines, the registration can be fulfilled online through 'Narishakti Doot' app or through Anganwadi workers and Setu Kendras, who have been roped in to assist women in the physical and online form filling procedure. While the process sounds simple in theory, registration centres have been riddled with problems — from long wait to slow internet, with the beneficiaries as well as the Anganwadi and NGO workers facing the brunt. The final date of submission has now been locked at August 31.

Problems aside, the scheme has been getting a huge response, with the Chief Minister's Office saying that more than 53 lakh have so far registered. The scheme is set to be launched on August 15 and as per government estimates, the total number of beneficiaries could go up to 1.25 crore. "If we match this number, the total population that will benefit could range between 4.5 to 5 crore," said the official. Scrambling for documents

Patently furnishing the documents after a long wait, Kalpana says, "Today, my neighbour is taking care of my kids and I put my tailoring work on hold to fill the documents. After waiting since 10 am, my turn finally came now at 3 pm." At Ambujwadi registration centre in Malad, where an NGO camp is assisting with the application process, women — most of them working as house helps in the nearby MHADA buildings — say that the Rs 1,500 under the scheme will aid in running their households. Completing the time-consuming registration work comes at the cost of their livelihood as most of the women have taken leave or half-day off from work. Panchshila Nikalje, a house help, says, "Most women have taken leave to complete the application process... The biggest hurdle for us right now is the documentation process. I have been coming here daily for three-four days as I have been facing issues with voter ID." Like Nikalje, many are facing difficulties in procuring the documents. As per the guidelines, the women are required to furnish either ration card or voter ID that are at least 15 years old or school leaving certificate or birth certificate. Besides this, they are required to furnish income certificate or bank passbook and their Aadhaar card.

"Women are concerned and do not want to miss out on the scheme. For us Rs 1,500 is a significant amount. Hence we have been missing work and running around to get the documents," added Nikalje. Kisan Choure, a local activist who works with pavement dwellers, said, "Homeless women are among the most marginalised who

should have access to this monetary scheme. But how can they furnish the documents on income or ration cards when they have no steady livelihood. Even if they apply for ration cards now, the scheme requires the document to be at least 15 years old." Connectivity woes across centres, slow internet has emerged as one of the biggest hurdles. Inside an anganwadi at Bhandup's Jokim compound, a group of women, who found out about the scheme through WhatsApp messages and phone calls from the Anganwadi workers, assist each other with the registration process.

While the Anganwadi workers guide them through filling the physical form, the process gets stuck when they arrive at the final stage of online submission on the Narishakti Doot app. Sneha Sawant, an anganwadi worker, told The Indian Express, "With slow internet, we are facing a lot of problems in the online process. Even if we manage to somehow fill in the details, the OTP number is generated very late. To make sure that we have the details at least, we are filling the offline forms as well. We have been asked by our supervisors to try the online submissions during the night, hoping for better connectivity. But even at night, I face similar issues." In a bid to highlight the issue of snail-paced online registrations, Anganwadi workers staged a protest at Azad Maidan on July 10, demanding a better process. Sangita Kamble, who runs an anganwadi at Trombay's Samta chawl in Mankhurd, said that for nearly 200 offline forms she filled over the past few days, only 10-15 online forms have been filled so far. Speaking to The Indian Express, Kamble said, "The app is extremely slow and with every passing day, the bundle of physical forms is increasing and so is the gap in filling the online forms. At this pace, we won't be able to fill the form even in a year's time. This is also interrupting our routine work at Anganwadis." "Even the Narishakti Doot app itself is posing several problems as every day there is a new update on the application," lamented another Anganwadi worker. Levying charges even as the scheme enables free registration, women are allegedly being levied with charges for the submission of the forms. Bhagwan Madhe, a Nashik-based activist alleged that some centres were charging a fee of Rs 250-Rs 300 from women seeking assistance with registration in tribal talukas. "At the gram panchayat level in small villages, the process for online registration for the Ladki Bahini scheme is yet to begin. Since women are worried about the deadline, many are heading to centres in cities where they are being wrongfully charged a fee. At one centre in the Trimbakeshwar, I saw them charging Rs 250 for the online registration," Madhe told. In a bid to assist the women, Madhe's Elgar Kashtkari Sanghatna has been organising camps across Nashik's tribal villages. Having filled 3,000 physical forms so far, their organisation is now forwarding them to anganwadis for online submissions. "But the online process is very slow. Besides, the government has been coming up with new list of requirements every other day, which is creating further confusion."

Even women in Mumbai are not spared with instances of charging Rs 100 for filling form emerging from Deonar. On Monday, the Mumbai police lodged a case after the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) filed a complaint for misleading citizens and extorting money under the scheme. The complaint was registered after senior officials in the M/East ward learnt that an unidentified person had been charging a fee of Rs 100 for completing the application process from eligible women in Deonar. The civic body has instructed citizens to inform the BMC if anyone charges them for the application process. To further aid women, the BMC has also made the provision of an online application facility at Civic Facility Centers (CFCs) of the respective wards. When asked about the difficulties faced by the women to get registered, the official said that Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has issued clear directions about making the process easier. "There is huge rush to get registered for this. So some may have faced some difficulties. But now since the online system is available, local officials have been given instructions. All the problems will be solved at the earliest," he said.

Punjab farmers to receive Rs 7,000 per acre for crop diversification



GNS News Agency, July 23

Khuddian discussed various agrarian concerns with the Union Minister, including the implementation of the Crop Residue Management (CRM) scheme, the release of funds under RKVY, incentives for managing paddy straw, and ensuring a consistent supply of fertilizers and subsidies under the wheat seed replacement scheme. Punjab farmers will receive Rs 7,000 per acre for planting crops other than paddy as part of the Crop Diversification Plan (CDP). Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan agreed to include Punjab's demand in the plan, announced Punjab Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian on Thursday.

Khuddian met Chouhan in Delhi and submitted a memorandum of demands, including the Rs 7,000 per acre incentive for farmers diversifying from paddy to other crops. "The union minister has agreed to include it in the CDP," said Khuddian. Expressing concern over pest attacks, particularly Pink Bollworm and whitefly on cotton crops, Khuddian sought Chouhan's intervention in expediting research and approval for the Next Generation BG-3 cotton seeds. Khuddian emphasized the need to replace the current BG-2 cotton seeds with more advanced, pest-resistant seeds. He thanked the union minister for approving the State Agricultural Statistics Authority (SASA), which will enhance planning, monitoring, evaluation, research, and development in the state's agriculture sector. Khuddian also discussed various agrarian concerns with the Union Minister, including the implementation of the Crop Residue Management (CRM) scheme, the release of funds under RKVY, incentives for managing paddy straw, and ensuring a consistent supply of fertilizers and subsidies under the wheat seed re-

placement scheme.

Highlighting a significant concern, Khuddian noted that the Central Government changed the funding pattern of the CRM scheme to 60:40 (Centre:State) in FY 2023-24 from the earlier 100 per cent centrally sponsored scheme. He urged the Union Agriculture Minister to reinstate 100 per cent central funding, considering Punjab's contribution to national food security. Khuddian also requested per-acre incentives as compensation for the additional costs of managing paddy straw. Additionally, Khuddian pointed out the recurring shortage of phosphatic fertilizers during the Rabi season and appealed to the Union Minister to ensure a continuous supply. He also mentioned the annual investment of approximately Rs 20 crore under the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) scheme for replacing 33 per cent of seeds each year, urging the continuation of assistance for wheat seeds for the greater interest of feeding the growing population. Special Chief Secretary of Agriculture KAP Sinha, Director of Agriculture Jaswant Singh, and other senior officials of the department and ministry were also present at the meeting.

Nizamabad DEO alleges threat to his life, seeks police protection

GNS News Agency, July 23

Nizamabad: Nizamabad District Education (DEO) Durgaprasad has sought police protection, claiming that there was threat to his life from a few teachers.

In his complaint, the DEO claimed that there was threat to him from retired teacher Shantanu and school assistants Balayya and Omaji, working in ZPHS Rautla, Sirikonda mandal, and ZPHS Velmal, Nandipet mandal respectively.

He alleged that he was subjected to mental stress by the trio through their social media posts. The DEO said if anything happened to him or his family members the three persons would be responsible. He has appealed to the police to provide him protection.

UN chief Antonio Guterres concerned by ongoing violence, urges restraint on all sides



GNS News Agency, July 23

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is following the developments in Bangladesh very closely and is deeply concerned by the ongoing violence, his spokesperson has said, urging authorities in Dhaka to work with its young population and find solutions to the ongoing challenges. "Turning to the situation in Bangladesh, I can tell you that we are, of course, following the developments in the capital, Dhaka, and other places in Bangladesh very closely, and we continue to call for restraint from all sides," Stephane Dujarric, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, said at the daily press briefing Thursday. The UN chief urged the Bangladesh Government to ensure a conducive environment for dialogue and encouraged protesters to engage in dialogue to resolve the deadlock.

"Violence is never a solution," Mr. Dujarric said, adding that the Secretary-General encourages meaningful and constructive participation of youth in building a better world. Students take part in the ongoing anti-quota protest in Dhaka on July 18, 2024. Bangladeshi students

pressed on July 18 with nationwide protests against civil service hiring rules, rebuffing an olive branch from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who pledged justice for 18 killed in the demonstrations.

Students take part in the ongoing anti-quota protest in Dhaka on July 18, 2024. Bangladeshi students pressed on July 18 with nationwide protests against civil service hiring rules, rebuffing an olive branch from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who pledged justice for 18 killed in the demonstrations. Mr. Guterres called upon Bangladesh authorities to work with its young population, find solutions to the ongoing challenges and catalyse their energy towards the country's growth and development.

Mr. Dujarric, responding to a question on the situation, said that the Secretary-General is deeply concerned by the ongoing violence, and that includes the reported dozens of deaths, and the hundreds of injured, including journalists. Mr. Guterres urged the authorities in Bangladesh to investigate all acts of violence, hold perpetrators to account, and ensure a conducive environment for dialogue, he added. "It is important that we see restraint on all sides. The Secretary-General further encourages meaningful and constructive participation of youth to address the ongoing challenges in Bangladesh. Violence is not going to lead anywhere," Mr. Dujarric said. He underlined that the Secretary-General has been very clear, in Bangladesh and every other place in the world, of the need for the authorities to allow journalists to do their work in safety. University students in Dhaka and other cities have been holding rallies for days against the system of reserving some public sector jobs for the relatives of war heroes, who fought for the country's independence from Pakistan in 1971. At least 25 people have been killed and more than 2,500 others injured in the violence following protests, according to media reports.

'I had God on my side': Trump describes assassination attempt in personal detail as he accepts Republican nomination

News Agency, July 23

Donald Trump, somber and bandaged, accepted the GOP presidential nomination on Thursday at the Republican National Convention in a speech describing in detail the assassination attempt that could have ended his life just five days earlier. "I'm not supposed to be here tonight," Mr. Trump told the packed convention hall as thousands of people listened in silence. "There was blood pouring everywhere, yet, in a certain way I felt very safe because I had God on my side."

The 78-year-old former President, known best for his bombast and aggressive rhetoric, began his acceptance speech with a softer and deeply personal message that drew directly from his brush with death. Later, he returned to a tone closer to his typical campaign message, outlining his priorities on immigration and the economy but also referencing false theories of election fraud and the indictments against him. "The discord and division in our society must be healed. We must heal it quickly. As Americans, we are bound together by a single fate and a shared destiny. We rise together. Or we fall apart," Mr. Trump said, wearing a large white bandage on his right ear, as he has all week, to cover a wound he sustained in the Saturday shooting. "I am running to be president for all of America, not half of America, because there is no victory in winning for half of America." Later in the speech, he falsely suggested Democrats had cheated during the 2020 election he lost — despite a raft of federal and state investigations proving there was no systemic fraud — and suggested "we must not criminalize dissent or demonize political disagreement," even as he has long called for prosecutions of his opponents. Trump's address marked the climax and conclusion of a massive four-day Republican pep rally that drew thousands of conservative activists and elected officials to swing-state Wisconsin as voters weigh an election that currently features two deeply unpopular candidates. Sensing political opportunity in the wake of his near-death experience, the often bombastic Republican leader embraced a new tone he hopes will help generate even more momentum in an election that appears to be shifting in his favor.

With the stage to himself, Trump praised the many supporters who witnessed his assassination attempt and asked for a moment of silence for Corey Comperatore, the retired fire chief slain at the rally. Comperatore's firefighter's jacket and helmet were placed on stage as Trump spoke. Trump walked over to the uniform and kissed Comperatore's helmet during the moment of silence.

While Trump offered a gentler tone than usual on Thursday night, the crowded speaking program of the convention's final day was also designed to project strength in an implicit rebuke of Biden. It was decidedly more masculine than it has been for much of the week. Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump speaks during the Republican National



Convention on July 18, 2024, in Milwaukee. Ultimate Fighting Championship President Dana White called Trump "a real American bad ass." Kid Rock performed a song with the chorus, "Fight, fight!" And wrestling icon Hulk Hogan described the former president as "an American hero." Hogan drew a raucous response when, standing on the main stage, he ripped off his shirt to reveal a red Trump-Vance "Make America Great Again" shirt. "As an entertainer I try to stay out of politics," Hogan said as he briefly broke character. "I can no longer stay silent." Like many speakers during the convention, Carlson also suggested that recent events were divinely inspired and that he wondered "if something bigger is going on."

"I think it changed him," Carlson said of the shooting, praising Trump for not lashing out in anger afterward. "He did his best to bring the country together," Carlson added. "This is the most responsible, unifying behavior from a leader I've ever seen." Former first lady Melania Trump and Ivanka Trump, the president's elder daughter and former senior adviser, joined Trump in the convention hall ahead of his speech, making their first appearances there. But neither woman spoke. While Republicans were set to emerge from their convention more united than in recent memory, Democrats are bitterly divided about whether Biden should continue to lead the ticket. Biden, following his disastrous debate performance against Trump last month, has resisted increasing pressure to drop out, with Democrats' own party convention scheduled for next month in Chicago. Security was a major focus in Milwaukee in the wake of Trump's near-assassination. But after nearly four full days, there were no serious incidents inside the convention hall or the large security perimeter that surrounded it. The Secret Service, backed by hundreds of law enforcement officers from across the nation, had a large and visible presence. And during Trump's appearances each night, he was surrounded by a wall of protective agents wherever he went. Meanwhile, Trump and his campaign have not released information about his injury or the treatment he received. "The assassin's bullet came within a quarter of an inch of taking my life," Trump said. "Despite such a heinous attack, we unite this evening more determined than ever."

Biden expected to make major announcement about his re-election bid: media reports

GNS News Agency, July 23

US President Joe Biden is expected to make a major announcement on his re-election bid, with several senior Democratic leaders suggesting that he leave the race following his disastrous debate performance, a failed assassination attempt on his rival Donald Trump, his poor health, and falling poll numbers, according to media reports. "Several people close to President Biden said on Thursday that they believe he has begun to accept the idea that he may not be able to win in November and may have to drop out of the race, bowing to the growing demands of many anxious members of his party," The New York Times reported.

Mr. Biden, 81, is spending time at his Delaware residence in isolation after he was tested positive for COVID-19. Media reports said that top leaders of the Democratic party, including former president Barack Obama, former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, have asked him to leave the presidential race, in the absence of which the party risks losing the White House, the Senate and the House of Representatives.

"People close to top Democrats said Thursday that it now appeared it was a matter of when—not if—Biden

bows out of the presidential race. In the past day or so, former President Barack Obama has told friends who have called him that Biden's path to victory is narrow, according to people familiar with the calls." The NYT report said. The Washington Post reported Thursday night that Ms. Pelosi has stepped up her behind-the-scenes role in working to persuade the president to bow out of campaign. Obama has said that he has a very slight chance of winning the race.

According to The Hill, Vice President Kamala Harris has started looking for options for her running mate. The three being talked about right now are Senator Mark Kelly, Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear and North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper. Most of the media reports said that Mr. Biden's announcement on his re-election bid might come after the conclusion of the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee.

"One of the people close to him warned that the president had not yet made up his mind to leave the race after three weeks of insisting that almost nothing would drive him out. But another said that 'reality is setting in', and that it would not be a surprise if Mr Biden made an announcement soon endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris as his replacement," The NYT reported.

Barack Obama, Nancy Pelosi, Democrats make a fresh push for Joe Biden to reconsider 2024 race ahead of convention



GNS News Agency, July 23

Former President Barack Obama has privately expressed concerns to Democrats about President Joe Biden's candidacy, and Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi privately warned Mr. Biden that Democrats could lose the ability to seize control in the House if he didn't step away from the race. Ms. Pelosi also showed Mr. Biden polling that he likely can't defeat Republican Donald Trump, according to people familiar with the matter who insisted on anonymity to discuss it. Time racing, Democrats at the highest levels are making a critical push for Mr. Biden to reconsider his reelection bid, as unease grows at the White House and within the campaign at a fraught moment for the president and his party.

Mr. Biden has insisted he is not backing down, adamant that he is the candidate who beat Trump before and will do it again this year. Pressed about reports that Mr. Biden might be softening to the idea of leaving the race, his deputy campaign manager Quentin Fuiks said on July 18: "He is not wavering on anything." In recent days the President has become more committed to staying in the race, according to another person familiar with the matter and granted anonymity to discuss it. But influential Democrats from the highest levels of the party apparatus, including congressional leadership headed by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, are sending signals of concern. Some Democrats hope Mr. Biden will assess the trajectory of the race and his legacy during this few days' pause.

Using mountains of data showing Mr. Biden's standing could wipe out the ranks of Democrats in Congress, frank conversations in public and private, and now, the President's own time off the campaign trail after testing positive for COVID-19, many Democrats see an opportunity to encourage a reassessment. Time is of the essence. If Democrats are seriously preparing the extraordinary step of replacing Mr. Biden and shifting Vice-President Kamala Harris at the top of the ticket, this weekend will be critical to changing the President's mind, other people familiar with the private conversations said. One said it's now or never ahead of a planned virtual roll call to nominate the party's choice in early August, ahead of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Over the past week, Mr. Schumer and Mr. Jeffries, both of New York, have spoken privately to the President, candidly laying out the views of Democrats on Capitol Hill, including Democrats' concerns.

Separately, the chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Representative Suzan DelBene of Washington, spoke with the President last week armed with fresh data. The campaign chief specifically aired the concerns of frontline Democrats who are seeking election to the House. And on July 17, California Representative Adam Schiff, a close ally of Ms. Pelosi, became the highest-profile House Democrat to call for Mr. Biden to drop his reelection bid, saying that while the decision is Mr. Biden's alone to make, he believes it's time to "pass the torch." Mr. Biden, in a radio interview taped just before he tested positive for COVID-19, dismissed the idea it was too late for him to recover politically, telling Univision's Luis Sandoval that it's still early and that many people don't focus on the election until September. How will concerns over Biden's 'cognitive decline' impact the US Presidential race? | In Focus podcast

"All the talk about who's leading and where and how, is kind of, you know — everything so far between Trump and me has been basically even," he said in an

excerpt of the interview released on July 18 morning. Some national polls do show a close race, though others suggest Trump with a lead. And some State polls have contained warning signs too, including a recent New York Times/Siena poll that suggested a competitive race in Virginia.

While the tensions over Mr. Biden's ability to carry on a winning campaign subsided some, particularly after the Trump assassination attempt and as the Republican National Convention was under way in Milwaukee, Democrats know they have limited time to resolve the party turmoil after the President's faltering debate performance last month. To be sure, many Democrats want Mr. Biden to stay in the race. And the Democratic National Committee is pushing ahead with plans for a virtual vote to formally make Mr. Biden its nominee in the first week of August, ahead of the Democratic National Convention that begins August 19 in Chicago. Late on July 17, ABC News reported new details about Mr. Biden's private meeting over the weekend with Mr. Schumer at the President's beach home in Delaware. It said Mr. Schumer told the President it would be "better for the Democratic Party, and better for the country if he were to bow out." A Schumer spokesperson called the report "idle speculation." Leader Schumer conveyed the views of his caucus directly to President Biden on Saturday. "White House spokesman Andrew Bates said Mr. Biden told Mr. Schumer, as well as Mr. Jeffries, that 'he is the nominee of the party, he plans to win, and looks forward to working with both of them to pass his 100 days agenda to help working families.' But among Democrats nationwide, nearly two-thirds say Mr. Biden should step aside and let his party nominate a different candidate, according to a new AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll. That sharply undercuts Mr. Biden's post-debate claim that "average Democrats" are still with him even if some "big names" are turning on him.

Mr. Biden tested positive for COVID-19 while traveling on July 17 in Las Vegas and is experiencing "mild symptoms" including "general malaise" from the infection, the White House said. The President, who has spent the past several days campaigning, had already been scheduled to return to his Delaware beach home even before the diagnosis. Mr. Schiff's announcement brings to nearly 20 the number of Democratic members of Congress calling on Mr. Biden to withdraw from the presidential race in the wake of his dismal debate performance against Trump last month. Mr. Schiff said that by bowing out, Mr. Biden would "secure his legacy of leadership by allowing us to defeat Donald Trump in the upcoming election." Mr. Schiff is a prominent Democrat on his own, and his statement will also be watched because of his proximity to Ms. Pelosi.

It was Ms. Pelosi who revived questions about Mr. Biden post-debate, when she said recently that "it's up to the President" to decide what to do — even though Mr. Biden had already fully stated he had no intention of stepping aside. The former House Speaker publicly supports the President, but has fielded calls from Democrats since debate night questioning what's next. In response to Mr. Schiff's comments, the Mr. Biden campaign pointed to what it called "extensive support" for him and his reelection bid from members of Congress in key swing states, as well as from the Congressional Black and Hispanic caucuses. The campaign noted that Mr. Biden had been joined on his trip to Nevada this week by nearly a dozen Congressional Black Caucus members.

Still, Mr. Schiff's announcement came after Mr. Schumer and Mr. Jeffries encouraged the party to delay for a week plans to hold the virtual vote to renominate Mr. Biden, which could have taken place as soon as July 21, according to two people familiar with the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations. The Democratic National Committee's rulemaking arm is set to meet on July 19 to discuss how the virtual vote plans will work and to finalize them next week. "We will not be implementing a rushed virtual voting process, though we will begin our important consideration of how a virtual voting process would work," Bishop Leah D. Daughtry and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, co-chairs of the rules committee for the Democratic National Convention wrote in a letter on July 17.

Trump urges unity after assassination attempt while proposing sweeping populist agenda in RNC finale

GNS News Agency, July 23

Donald Trump, defiant and bandaged, accepted the GOP presidential nomination on July 18 at the Republican National Convention in a speech that described in detail the assassination attempt that could have ended his life just five days earlier before laying out a sweeping populist agenda, particularly on immigration. The 78-year-old former president, known best for his bombast and aggressive rhetoric, began his acceptance speech with a softer and deeply personal message that drew directly from his brush with death. Moment by moment, the crowd listening in silence, Trump described standing onstage in Butler, Pennsylvania, with his head turned to look at a chart on display when he felt something hit his ear. He raised his hand to his head and saw immediately that it was covered in blood. "If I had not moved my head at that very last instant, the assassin's bullet would have perfectly hit its mark," Trump said. "And I would not be here tonight. We would not be together." Trump's address, the longest convention speech in modern history at just under 93 minutes, marked the climax and conclusion of a massive four-day Republican pep rally that drew thousands of conservative activists and elected officials to swing-state Wisconsin as voters weigh an election that currently features two deeply unpopular candidates. Sensing political opportunity in the wake of his near-death experience, the often bombastic Republican leader embraced a new tone he hopes will help generate even more momentum in an election that appears to be shifting in his favor.

"The discord and division in our society must be healed. We must heal it quickly. As Americans, we are bound together by a single fate and a shared destiny. We rise together. Or we fall apart," Trump said, wearing a large white bandage on his right ear, as he has all week, to cover a wound he sustained in the Saturday shooting. "I am running to be president for all of America, not half of America, because there is no victory in winning for half of America." While he spoke in a gentler tone than at his usual rallies, Trump also outlined an agenda led by what

he promises would be the largest deportation operation in U.S. history. He repeatedly accused people crossing the U.S.-Mexico border illegally of staging an "invasion." Additionally, he teased new tariffs on trade and an "America first" foreign policy. Trump also falsely suggested Democrats had cheated during the 2020 election he lost — despite a raft of federal and state investigations proving there was no systemic fraud — and suggested "we must not criminalize dissent or demonize political disagreement," even as he has long called for prosecutions of his opponents. He did not mention abortion rights, an issue that has bedeviled Republicans ever since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a federally guaranteed right to abortion two years ago. Trump nominated three of the six justices who overturned Roe v. Wade. Trump at his rallies often takes credit for Roe being overturned and argues states should have the right to institute their own abortion laws. Nor did he mention the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in which Trump supporters tried to stop the certification of his loss to Democrat Joe Biden. Trump has long referred to the people jailed for the riot as "hostages." "It was Donald Trump who destroyed our economy, ripped away rights, and failed middle class families," said Jen O'Malley Dillon, the Biden campaign chair, in a statement after the speech. "Now he pursues the presidency with an even more extreme vision for where he wants to take this country." With less than four months to go in the contest, major changes in the race are possible, if not likely. Trump's appearance came as Mr. Biden, the 81-year-old Democratic incumbent, clings to his party's presumptive nomination in the face of unrelenting pressure from key congressional allies, donors and even former President Barack Obama, who fear he may be unable to win reelection after his disastrous debate. Long pressed by allies to campaign more vigorously, Mr. Biden is instead in isolation at his beach home in Delaware after having been diagnosed with COVID-19. Hours before the balloons were scheduled to rain down on Trump and his family inside the convention hall, Biden deputy campaign manager Quentin Fuiks appeared nearby in Milwaukee

Slower deposit mobilisation may create structural issues: RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das at BFSI Summit



Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday raised concerns over slower deposit mobilisation compared to credit growth as it may create structural liquidity issues. Das asked banks to maintain reasonable balance between credit and deposit growth. "The deposit mobilization has been lagging credit growth for some time now. This may potentially expose the system to structural liquidity issues," Das said while speaking at the BFSI Summit 2024 organised by the Financial Express. While there could be a debate regarding deposit funding loans vis-a-vis loans funding depos-

its, the current regulatory concerns stems from the fact that there could be structural changes happening which banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and other lenders need to recognize and accordingly devise their strategies, he said.

The Governor said that household and consumers, who traditionally rely on banks for parking or investing their savings, are increasingly turning to the capital markets and other financial intermediaries. "While bank deposits continue to remain dominant as a percentage of financial assets owned by the households, their share has been declining, with households increasingly allocating their savings to mutual funds, insurance funds and pension funds," he said.

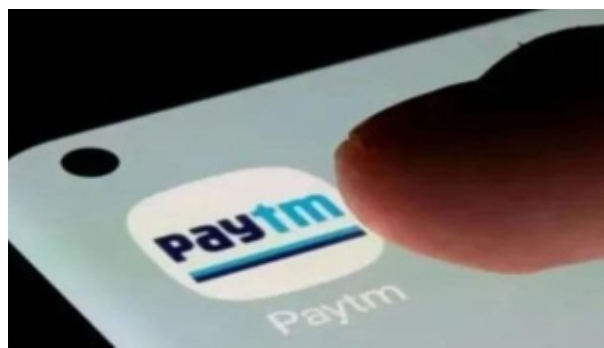
Banks, on their part, are filling the credit deposit gap by increasingly relying on banks for parking or investing their savings, are increasingly turning to the capital markets and other financial intermediaries. "While bank deposits continue to remain dominant as a percentage of financial assets owned by the households, their share has been declining, with households increasingly allocating their savings to mutual funds, insurance funds and pension funds," he said.

Paytm posts biggest loss since listing on banking unit wind down

India's Paytm reported a wider first-quarter loss on Friday, its biggest since it went public in November 2021, hurt by weakness in its payments business after the central bank's directive to wind down its banking unit. The digital payments firm's consolidated net loss widened to 8.39 billion rupees (\$100.3 million) for the quarter ended June 30, compared with a loss of 3.57 billion rupees a year earlier. Earlier in the year, the Reserve Bank of India wound down Paytm Payments Bank due to persistent compliance issues, triggering a meltdown in Paytm's stock.

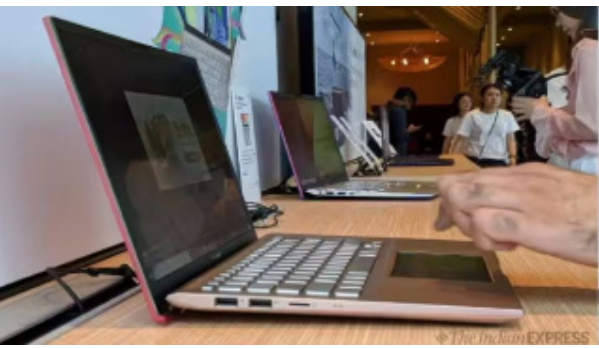
In May, the company said that the June quarter would see the full effect of the RBI's clampdown. Paytm reported EBITDA before cost of employee stock options at a negative 5.45 billion rupees for the quarter. It had earlier estimated the figure at five billion rupees-six billion rupees.

Its revenue from operations fell 36 per cent to 15.02 billion rupees during the quarter, also in line with its estimates of 15 billion rupees-16 billion rupees. Revenue from the payments business, which contributes roughly 69 per



cent to the total, slid 39 per cent. Paytm said it expects revenue and profitability to improve from the second quarter. RBI's restrictions also led to a number of lending partners halting loans given out via the company's platform, leading to a 1.4% sequential decline in loans. Revenue from its financial services unit, which comprises the loans business, also plunged 86 per cent.

NITI Aayog proposes simpler tariffs, fresh incentives to boost electronics sector



GNS News Agency, July 23

To grow India's electronics sector from \$100 billion to \$500 billion by 2030, NITI Aayog has recommended a slew of measures that include simplifying import tariffs for components and offering fiscal incentives for domestic manufacturing of components. In a report released on Thursday, the government's apex think tank also identified fiscal support to design-focused companies alongside easing the process for technology transfer as key to boosting domestic electronics manufacturers' role in global value chains (GVCs).

The report titled "Electronics: Powering India's Participation in Global Value Chains" said high tariffs on components are hindering India's ability to scale up electronics exports and compete globally. India is import-dependent on numerous components that are used in the manufacturing of mobile phones and other electronics, including microprocessors, GPUs, ancillary chips, and power management chips. "On average, India's tariffs on relevant electronics are around 7.5 per cent, which is higher than China (4 per cent), Malaysia (3.5 per cent), and Mexico (2.7 per cent). These high tariffs put Indian electronics exports at a 5-6 per cent cost disadvantage, making them less competitive in the global market. Therefore, there is a need for simplifying and streamlining the tariff structure so as to unlock India's export potential in the electronics sector," the report said.

At the release of the report, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam said, "Atmanirbharta does not mean we make everything—it means we make far more than what we actually import. I think that is what participation in GVCs is about. It also means easy custom procedures, easy movement of goods across borders so that movement happens barrier-free." Despite ongoing incentive schemes for most components, industry participation has been limited as present scheme structures fail to address the unique economic realities of component manufacturing, the report also noted. It recommended opex support for scaling manufacturing of components that are less complex and require low capex. For complex components, the report recommended capex support and hybrid support, which includes both opex and capex, to boost domestic manufacturing of components.

"We will definitely take this forward to the other arms within the government to make sure that we have a component scheme. Our Minister has already been articulating the view that a component scheme is required in the electronics sector," said S Krishnan, Secretary of MeitY, who was also present at the launch. Krishnan added that domestic value addition for mobile phone manufacturing needs to double from 18-20 per cent to 35-40 per cent. The report, which was prepared following extensive consultations with industry and policy stakeholders, also proposed fiscal support to design-focused Indian companies to scale up manufacturing of components and products that are designed in India. To strengthen supply chains for domestic manufacturers, the report suggests development of four large greenfield industrial clusters

and six brownfield clusters.

"Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMCs) in current shape are not attractive for SMEs and large players... There is also a need to undertake a thorough audit of existing EMCs to evaluate utilisation, implementation problems, and the state of facilities provided," the report said. The government first launched the EMC scheme in 2012, which was later revamped in 2020. The report also included suggestions around improving access to skilled labour, by expediting visa approvals for professional visiting for training purposes and setting up Electronics Skill Training Hubs, and easing processes around technology transfer. "To empower domestic electronics manufacturing, a convenient and economically viable technology transfer process is essential. Additionally, there is a need to develop a mechanism to fast-track approvals under Press Note 3 (2020) for specific proposals where foreign companies are critical for ecosystem development," it said.

In 2020, the government amended the foreign direct investment (FDI) policy through Press Note 3 whereby entities from countries bordering India or with beneficial owners from such countries can only invest in India via the government route. In a business-as-usual scenario, the report expects India's electronics sector to grow to \$275 billion in FY30 from \$101 billion in FY23. In an export-focused scenario, which includes implementing some of the suggestions made in the report, the sector can grow to \$500 billion, of which exports would account for \$240 billion from \$24 billion in FY23. This scenario could lead to employment generation for 50-60 lakh people, Subrahmanyam said. With the implementation of suggestions like reducing GST rates on electronics to boost domestic demand, the report proposed a third scenario in which the market can grow to \$625 billion by the end of this decade. NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery, Senior Advisor Ishtiyaque Ahmed, and other officials and industry stakeholders were also present at the report launch.

Dr. Reddy's signs agreement with Takeda Pharma, to market Vonoprazan tabs in India

Hyderabad: Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Limited has entered into a non-exclusive patent licensing agreement with Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Limited ("Takeda") to commercialise Vonoprazan tablets in India. Vonoprazan is a novel, orally active potassium competitive acid blocker (PCAB), used to treat reflux esophagitis and other acid peptic disorders.

Dr. Reddy's will market Vonoprazan tablets under its own trademark VONOTM to be available in two strengths of 10mg and 20mg.

Acid Peptic Disorders (APD), which include Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) and Peptic Ulcer Disease (PUD), are very common in India. A pan-Indian cross-sectional survey of clinicians showed APD prevalence to be in the range of 37 percent to 39 per cent. It is more common in the 18-59 age group, with heartburn and epigastric pain as common symptoms, a press release from the company said.

M.V. Ramana, CEO - Branded Markets (India & Emerging Markets), Dr. Reddy's, in the press release said, "For over three decades, patients and healthcare professionals have trusted our products in the gastrointestinal

We may (finally) have a solution to prevent bloating and gas after having rajma, chhole



Can you resist rajma and/or chhole? Probably not. Rajma, the kidney-shaped beans, is a powerhouse of iron, fibre, carbohydrate, and vitamins while chhole or chickpea is packed with several nutrients, vitamins and minerals and is rich in dietary fibre. "Rajma and chhole are highly beneficial as they help lower blood sugar levels, making them the best food choice for people with diabetes. They are jam-packed with soluble fibre, iron, and protein which can aid in weight loss, reduce cholesterol levels, maintain blood pressure, and enhance skin," said Dr Pratik Tibdewal, consultant gastroenterologist, Wockhardt Hospitals Mira Road. However, both of these are "packed with lectin, a protein that binds carbohydrates and can cause digestive issues like bloating and gas," shared Sushma PS, chief dietitian, Jindal Naturecure Institute.

So, what can help?

According to content creator Pragy Saxena Satsangi, adding curry leaves, cinnamon stick, asafoetida, salt, and ginger to soaked legumes can do the trick. But make sure to soak all of them together for at least half an hour before boiling. "These 5 ingredients absorb the acidic properties of chhole or rajma. This helps avoid bloating and gas," shared Satsangi. So, we turned to a

dietitian to understand the science behind it. "By utilising these specific ingredients during preparation, digestive issues can be resolved," said Sushma. She further said: Asafoetida (Hing): Asafoetida can aid in the reduction of gas and bloating by increasing the activity of digestive enzymes in the stomach and the small intestine. Ginger: Ginger has natural enzymes which help relieve indigestion, nausea, and bloating. When cooking, you can use grated ginger or fresh ginger paste. Curry leaves: Curry leaves also has digestive enzymes that help in digestion and prevent gas. Add fresh curry leaves during the tempering process as well for added flavour and digestive benefits. Salt: Sodium and chloride ions help digest and absorb nutrients. This helps smoothen the process of digestion. One can also use black salt. Emphasising the benefits, Dr Tibdewal affirmed that adding these 5 ingredients — curry leaves, cinnamon stick, asafoetida, ginger, and salt — with chole or rajma before cooking can help reduce the after-effects of eating these legumes. Tips for preparation and cooking: Soaking: Before cooking, soak the chhole and rajma for at least eight hours or overnight. This reduces the oligosaccharides (carbohydrate chains containing 3-10 sugar units) that cause gas. Rinsing: Rinse the soaked legumes thoroughly before cooking to remove any remaining oligosaccharides. Cooking time: Make sure the legumes are well cooked, as partially cooked beans might be more difficult to digest and produce gas. Individuals are also advised to avoid eating legumes like chole or rajma at night to avoid indigestion, gas, and bloating, said Dr Tibdewal. "Consult your doctor if the stomach-related issues increase after eating these legumes to avoid any further complications," said Dr Tibdewal. By following these steps and incorporating these ingredients, you can significantly reduce the chances of experiencing bloating and gas when enjoying rajma or chhole, shared Sushma.

Why the Chandipura virus is 'particularly severe' in children of this age group

Chandipura virus Primarily transmitted by sandflies, the Chandipura virus has caused fatalities in Gujarat due to its rapid progression and impact on the central nervous system, especially in children. Gujarat's suspected Chandipura Viral Encephalitis (CHPV) cases climbed to 20 on Thursday, with two tragically succumbing to the illness in Ahmedabad city. Worryingly, 35 individuals exhibiting CHPV symptoms are currently hospitalised across various district civil hospitals, The Indian Express previously reported.

It's important to note that most fatalities from this virus have been children. According to Dr Ather Pasha, Consultant of Internal Medicine at CARE Hospitals, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad, while the Chandipura virus can infect anyone, it's often more fatal in children due to their immature immune systems and the rapid progression of symptoms. The Chandipura virus, identified in India in 1965, belongs to the Rhabdoviridae family and causes encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. Primarily transmitted by sandflies, the virus has caused fatalities in Gujarat due to its rapid progression and impact on the central nervous system, especially in children, Dr Pasha noted.

While adults can contract the virus, they typically experience milder symptoms and lower fatality rates, he



said, further explaining the factors that make children more susceptible to severe Chandipura virus infection: Developing Immune Systems: Children's immune systems are still developing, making them less effective at fighting off the virus.

The rapid escalation of symptoms like high fever, seizures, and altered mental state necessitates early diagnosis and treatment, Dr Padha said. Unfortunately, delayed diagnosis, lack of specific antiviral treatments, and limited intensive care access in affected regions contribute to the high mortality rate.

Did you know Hardik Pandya proposed to ex-wife Natasa Stankovic on a yacht?



Indian cricket star Hardik Pandya and Serbian model-dancer Nataša Stankovic announced their separation yesterday, after months of speculation. Sharing an Instagram post, the former couple wrote that they have "mutually decided to part ways" after four years of being together.

Indian cricket star Hardik Pandya and Serbian model-dancer Nataša Stankovic announced their separation yesterday, after months of speculation. Sharing an Instagram post, the former couple wrote that they have "mutually decided to part ways" after four years of being together. "We are blessed with Agastya, who will continue to be at the centre of both of our lives and we will co-parent to ensure that we give him everything that we can for his happiness," they added.

The duos whirlwind romance unfolded entirely in the public eye. Their love story, though brief, captured headlines with its unexpected twists and turns. Let's take a look at their relationship timeline: Hardik and Natasa's first meeting: They were a chance encounter in 2018, reportedly facilitated by a mutual friend at a nightclub. Little is known about the details of their initial spark, but Natasa later revealed in their wedding video that Hardik's unique charisma left a lasting impression. This spark quickly blossomed into a full-fledged love affair, culminating in a romantic and very public proposal on a yacht in 2020. Just months later, amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, the couple surprised fans with the announcement of their

pregnancy. Adorable photos showcasing Natasa's baby bump flooded social media, and in July 2020, they welcomed their son, Agastya, into the world. In what seemed like a solidification of their bond, Hardik and Natasa renewed their wedding vows in a lavish ceremony held in Udaipur, Rajasthan, in February 2023. The elaborate celebration, featuring both Christian and Hindu traditions, was a grand display of their commitment, further captivating their fans and the media. However, by May 2024, cracks began to appear in the seemingly perfect facade. Coinciding with Hardik's dip in performance during the Indian Premier League season, rumors of marital trouble began to swirl. Social media became a breeding ground for speculation, fueled by Natasa removing "Pandya" from her online profiles and the disappearance of their wedding pictures. Despite attempts to quiet speculation by re-uploading the photos, the couple recently announced their separation through a joint statement on social media. While the exact reasons behind their split remain private, they assured fans that they would co-parent their son Agastya, leaving fans to ponder the highs and lows of their brief but eventful time together.

Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal address their interfaith wedding: 'We may have 50,000 disagreements but it will be never over religion'



the same, Sonakshi said Zaheer and she are not very different from each other as their core values are the same. She said, "Our parents have taught us to be good human beings and believe in God, irrespective of whatever name you know him by."

Zaheer added to his wife's opinion and said that they could have 50,000 disagreements but it will never have anything to do with religion. Sonakshi further added that in seven years of their relationship, the fact that they are from different faiths never came up in a discussion. She said, "We both respect other religions. It's never been an issue for us or even a discussion." The Dabangg actress went on to add that their interfaith marriage made noise only outside and that she has learned to shut it out because it doesn't matter to her or Zaheer.

Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal, who never denied or confirmed their relationship in public tied the knot last month. Several photos and videos from the wedding was widely shared online. The couple had starred together in the 2022 film Double XL. There were rumours that Sonakshi's family was against the wedding. However, both her parents were part of the wedding festivities. Sonakshi's brothers gave her wedding as well as the reception a miss.

Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal had a beautiful wedding on June 23 in the presence of their close friends and family members after a relationship of over seven years. Their wedding caught a lot of attention and also sparked conversations around interfaith marriage. Now, the couple, who had an understated yet stylish wedding in Mumbai in the presence of their industry friends and family, have opened up about their views on them belonging to different religions.

In an interview with Times Entertainment, the couple called their interfaith wedding beautiful. Talking about

Fawad Khan says stardom is temporary, looks fade: 'I am often told you look alright, so what?'



after the Uri terror attack in 2016. The Indian Motion Picture Producers Association made the resolution that they won't work with Pakistani artists citing "security" and "patriotism" as their reasons to not allowing cross-border talent to perform in India. This led to artists like Fawad Khan, Mahira Khan and Atif Aslam not collaborate with their Indian counterparts. The ban, however, was called "a retrograde step in promoting cultural harmony, unity and peace" by the Bombay High Court.

Now, the actor is set to make a comeback in Indian films with a film starring Vaani Kapoor and also show with Sony Liv. With these projects yet to be announced, Fawad was asked about his feeling to return after 8 years, he said, "I am picking up exactly from where I left off." He further added, "I hope I am just as good as my craft, as I was when I was last here. I am seeking a lot from life. I had closed myself off for a while and I am stepping out into a different world than it was when I was not around. The challenges are different - I am not hunting for good scripts, I am looking for life experiences."

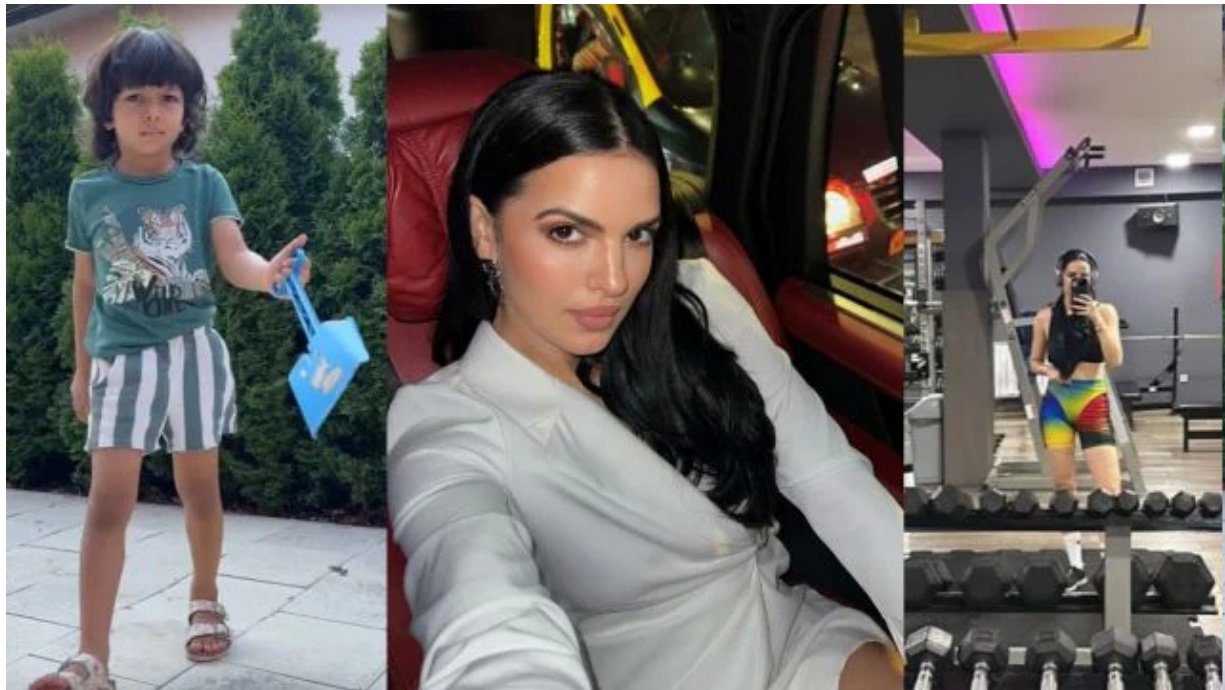
Fawad Khan, the man who won several hearts with his charming look and acting skills in films like Khoobsurat, Kapoor & Sons, and Ae Dil Hai Mushkil, is now a part of ZEE5 series Barzakh. With reports of the actor making a comeback in Indian films after a gap of 8 years, the popular Pakistani television star recently opened up about what he thinks of his looks as well as stardom. "I sometimes feel I wasn't made for stardom", said Fawad in a new interview.

Speaking about his latest supernatural series, Fawad in an interview with Mid-day also talked about his stardom. He said, "Mujhe ghabrahat hoti hai (I feel uneasy). I sometimes feel I wasn't made for this. And I worry that if I take my stardom seriously, or notice the frills of fame, I will be addicted to it. I consciously stay away from it because aaj hai toh kal nahi (this is temporary). I don't want to reach a pinnacle and then fall from there because the pain will be unbearable. I'd prefer it to be a light thud. Mujhe craft se ishq karne do (I love my craft). If I take my stardom so seriously, I will stop taking my job seriously. Best to remain unaware of it."

Often having charmed his fans with his dashing looks, Fawad believes looks fade. In the same interview, he said, "I have tremendous Godsent luck. I am often told 'haan thik dikhta hai, itna kya hai (you look alright, what's the big deal)?' People assume it's modesty. It's not. I am very realistic. Looks fade and I am grateful to all my fans, female fans. I am thankful that they have supported me so much and got me to where I am today. But I am just as scared of the men in their lives... so best to fear female adulation a tad."

India put a ban on Pakistani artists working in India

Hours after announcing separation from Hardik Pandya, Natasa Stankovic hits the gym, plays with son in Serbia.



A day after announcing her divorce with cricketer Hardik Pandya, model-turned-actor Natasa Stankovic shared a series of pictures of her time in her hometown Serbia, where she travelled to on July 17 along with her son Agastya

this difficult and sensitive time", the note further read.

A day before announcing their separation, Natasa was spotted at the Mumbai airport along with her son Agastya, which had raised concerns among fans who were already anticipating separation between the model and Hardik Pandya. The rumours of their separation sparked after the model missed many of the IPL matches as well as World Cup match. There were also no Instagram posts featuring the couple. Amid all this, Natasa shared several cryptic notes hinting at separation. Before announcing his divorce, Hardik, who was widely praised for his performance in the T20 World Cup, skipped the Sri Lanka tour fueling the separation rumours further.

The couple who started to date in 2019, tied the knot during the pandemic in 2020. They welcomed their son in the same year. In 2023, the couple had a grand destination wedding in Udaipur, where they renewed their wedding vows in both Hindu and white marriage.

A day after announcing her divorce with cricketer Hardik Pandya, model-turned-actor Natasa Stankovic shared a series of pictures of her time in her hometown Serbia, where she travelled to on July 17 along with her son Agastya. A day after reaching Serbia, Natasa and Hardik both took to their respective Instagram handles to confirm the speculations around their separation rumours. On Friday, Natasa shared a video of her son from his playtime as well as a glimpse of her workout session. Natasa shared a mirror selfie from a gym.

at around 9:15 pm, the duo shared a note that read, "After 4 years of being together, Natasa and I have decided to mutually part ways. We tried our best together and gave it our all, and we believe this is in the best interest for the both of us." Calling the decision of separation "tough", the couple shared that they will continue to co-parent their son Agastya. "We sincerely request your support and understanding to give us the privacy during

Fawad Khan says stardom is temporary, looks fade: 'I am often told you look alright, so what?'



I take my stardom so seriously, I will stop taking my job seriously. Best to remain unaware of it." Often having charmed his fans with his dashing looks, Fawad believes looks fade. In the same interview, he said, "I have tremendous Godsent luck. I am often told 'haan thik dikhta hai, itna kya hai (you look alright, what's the big deal)?' People assume it's modesty. It's not. I am very realistic. Looks fade and I am grateful to all my fans, female fans. I am thankful that they have supported me so much and got me to where I am today. But I am just as scared of the men in their lives... so best to fear female adulation a tad."

Fawad Khan, the man who won several hearts with his charming look and acting skills in films like Khoobsurat, Kapoor & Sons, and Ae Dil Hai Mushkil, is now a part of ZEE5 series Barzakh. With reports of the actor making a comeback in Indian films after a gap of 8 years, the popular Pakistani television star recently opened up about what he thinks of his looks as well as stardom. "I sometimes feel I wasn't made for stardom", said Fawad in a new interview.

Speaking about his latest supernatural series, Fawad in an interview with Mid-day also talked about his stardom. He said, "Mujhe ghabrahat hoti hai (I feel uneasy). I sometimes feel I wasn't made for this. And I worry that if I take my stardom seriously, or notice the frills of fame, I will be addicted to it. I consciously stay away from it because aaj hai toh kal nahi (this is temporary). I don't want to reach a pinnacle and then fall from there because the pain will be unbearable. I'd prefer it to be a light thud. Mujhe craft se ishq karne do (I love my craft). If

India put a ban on Pakistani artists working in India after the Uri terror attack in 2016. The Indian Motion Picture Producers Association made the resolution that they won't work with Pakistani artists citing "security" and "patriotism" as their reasons to not allowing cross-border talent to perform in India. This led to artists like Fawad Khan, Mahira Khan and Atif Aslam not collaborate with their Indian counterparts. The ban, however, was called "a retrograde step in promoting cultural harmony, unity and peace" by the Bombay High Court. Now, the actor is set to make a comeback in Indian films with a film starring Vaani Kapoor and also show with Sony Liv. With these projects yet to be announced, Fawad was asked about his feeling to return after 8 years, he said, "I am picking up exactly from where I left off." He further added, "I hope I am just as good as my craft, as I was when I was last here. I am seeking a lot from life. I had closed myself off for a while and I am stepping out into a different world than it was when I was not around. The challenges are different - I am not hunting for good scripts, I am looking for life experiences."

Vicky Kaushal, Triptii Dimri and Ammy Virk-starrer is inspired by a true story and a real but rare phenomenon



Vicky Kaushal, Triptii Dimri and Ammy Virk-starrer Bad Newz has finally hit the big screen. While the movie has opened to mixed reviews with special mention of Vicky Kaushal's performance, do you know it is inspired by a true story? In 2022, a rare medical condition was all over the news after a 19-year-old Brazilian woman gave birth to twins who had two different biological fathers.

According to Daily Mail, the anonymous 19-year-old girl from Minerios in Goias, Brazil, explained that she took a paternity test because she wanted to confirm who the father was using the sample of the person she had thought was the father. However, after the test she found that only one of her kids showed positive for the DNA test while the other one did not. According to report, after the test she remembered having involved in an intercourse with another man on the same day, whose DNA then matched with the second twin. This bizarre biological phenomenon is called heteropaternal superfecundation - which is quite common in dogs, cats, and cows, according to The Guardian.

In simple words, the phenomenon takes place when a woman releases two eggs at the same time or a few days apart in the same reproductive cycle and is sexually

involved with multiple partners. Bad Newz, directed by Anand Tiwari, is more or less based on the same phenomenon and inspired by the 2022 case. It is a spiritual sequel to the 2019 film Good Newz starring Akshay Kumar, Kareena Kapoor, Kiara Advani and Dilijit Dosanjh in the lead roles. The 2022 case was not the only time when this condition came in light. So far, around 25 such cases have been reported around the world. In 1982, twins who were born with two different skin colours were discovered to be conceived as a result of heteropaternal superfecundation. A similar case was also reported in 1995, 2001, 2008, 2015, 2016, and 2019. In 2019, it was reported that a Chinese woman from Xiamen City gave birth to twins from separate fathers. According to Times Now, the twins' father was suspicious that one of the babies didn't look like him and the mother was forced to admit that she cheated on her husband in a one-night stand. The final DNA results of the babies confused the father and the mother was left with no choice but to tell the truth, reported Strait Herald. Bad Newz is currently running in the theatres. The film is eyeing to be Vicky Kaushal's biggest opener with a collection between Rs 9 to 10 crore, according to Pinkvilla.

Kareena Kapoor credits Karisma Kapoor for 'resurrecting' Kapoor family name in the 90s: 'My mum Babita, aunt Neetu Kapoor gave up work'

Kareena Kapoor is the granddaughter of Raj Kapoor, who was one of the pioneers of Indian cinema, but Kareena and her sister Karisma, who was a superstar in the 1990s, had to face their own struggles before they made it big in the movies. In a recent interview, Kareena spoke about how Karisma 'resurrected' the family name and had to struggle from the age of 15. Kareena said that while her father, actor-director Randhir Kapoor, was supportive, he made it very clear that he wouldn't be calling people to ask for favours for her daughter.

In a conversation with The Week, Kareena said that the early years were difficult for Karisma "because it was like the first time anybody from the family... because my mum (Babita) had to stop working, Neetu (Kapoor) aunt stopped working but I think that was also a brink of... not rebellion... but just a brink of where I think our parents' mindset was also changing." It was famously known that women from the Kapoor family did not work in the movies as none of Raj Kapoor's daughters became a part of film, even though all three of his sons were actors. Their daughters-in-law also stopped working in the movies after getting married and their daughters were also never seen in the movies. Karisma was the first woman from the Kapoor clan to work in the film business.

Kareena said that when Karisma started her journey in the movies "a lot of our family members were more accepting." She added, "My mum was very supportive to my sister and she was like 'I want you to do what you want to do and strangely at that time, my father, who people actually think, would be like 'no, don't do this', he said, 'if you want to do this, you must try on your own and figure it



out. I am not going to help you in any which way."

Kareena said that her father Randhir Kapoor wasn't working much at that time and told Karisma to "figure it out yourself." She recalled her father saying that just because Karisma comes from the Kapoor clan, doesn't mean that she would certainly find success at the movies. "It's not that because you come from this legacy, there's a 100 percent that you are going to be a big star, or I am going to help you become an actor, or get you a film, or produce a film, nothing of that sort was ever on the line. He pushed us to do it on our own. There was no 'I will call so and so...'" she recalled. When asked about the conversations within the family when Karisma made her debut, Kareena said that Karisma "resurrected a home." "My grandfather had passed away, my father had made one film, Henna. Of course, Chintu uncle was this illustrious superstar actor but apart from that no one was working at that time."

Medals on mind as India eye best-ever performance at Paris Olympics



GNS News Agency, July 23

Mumbai: Indian sports underwent a renaissance in 1996 in Atlanta when Leander Paes won a bronze medal in men's singles tennis, ending a 44-year-old drought for the country's second individual medal at the Olympics.

As the clock ticks down for the upcoming Olympic Games in Paris, the question is whether India will undergo another transformation in the French capital.

That medal bagged by Leander Paes kind of triggered the growth points in Indian sport and since then the country has claimed at least one medal from the subsequent editions of the Olympic Games with at least one medal and 12 years after Atlanta. Abhinav Bindra added gold to glory by bagging India's first individual gold medal in shooting. It was from the same Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 that India, after a gap of more than half a century, returned with multiple medals as Vijender Singh clinched a bronze medal in middleweight boxing and wrestler Sushil Kumar came through the repechage rounds to bag bronze in men's 66kg freestyle.

India hit another peak four years later when an 83-member contingent returned with six medals — two silver and four bronze. And in the last edition of the games in Tokyo, which were held in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, India set another record by achieving their best-ever medal haul of seven including a historic maiden gold in Athletics by javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra and a bronze in men's hockey that ended a 41-year wait for

glory in the sport that India has dominated for decades, winning eight gold medals.

At the 33rd Olympic Games which will be officially declared open on July 26, Indian sports will face another trigger for transformation as it is for the first time that the country is hoping to win medals in double digits. India's progress in sports will be put to a true test in Paris. It will be the responsibility of the contingent of 117 sportspersons — 37 female and 70 male to return with a big haul. India will be looking forward to many of its sportspersons making historical achievements in Paris. Having won the first gold medal in athletics, Neeraj Chopra is eyeing another medal — hopefully gold. The 26-year-old from Haryana will be India's biggest hope in Paris and is looking forward to back-to-back gold medals. Chopra has continued to excel after winning gold in Tokyo, repeating his success at the World Championships and the Golden League Final. Though his struggles with injuries have thrown a spanner in the wheel and made him miss a few events, Chopra is still India's best bet for a medal in Paris. The relay teams have also done well in recent times, especially at the World Championships where it reached the men's 4x400 team reached the final. Woman shuttler PV Sindhu is also eyeing history, hoping to become the first Indian to win three individual medals in the Olympics, having won a silver medal in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro and a bronze in the Tokyo Olympic Games. If Sindhu wins a medal in Paris, she will become the first Indian sportsperson to win an individual medal in three consecutive editions of the mega-events. Besides Sindhu, the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will be India's biggest hope in Paris. The former World No.1 pair has made giant strides in the last couple of years and will be hoping to become the first male shuttlers to win Olympic medals. Also high on the medal radar will be boxer Nikhat Zareen, a two-time World Champion in the women's 45-50 weight category. Zareen has also bagged gold in the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in 2022 and bronze in the Asian Games in Hangzhou. Just like Sindhu and Neeraj Chopra, boxer Lovlina Borgohain and weightlifter Mirabai Chanu will be hoping to claim a medal in the second successive Olympic Games.

What would Satwik-Chirag need to do to beat Chinese, Malaysians and Koreans to win badminton gold at Olympics?

GNS News Agency, July 23

The draw could be called fair, and fairly reasonable this time. For Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty had run into World Nos 1 and 3 at the Tokyo Olympics, and even nicked a win off one of them but exited at the group stage nevertheless unluckily. This time, they are the No 3 seeds heading into their second Games. And both the draw and dangers call for them to take things one match at a time. The Indians won the French Open, sort of a Test event, at that same hall this spring, with the A/Cs turned on, making it similar to the Olympics. But the glare of the summer can be quite different even in indoor environs for the main showpiece. Still the Porte de La Chapelle Arena is expected to play faster than other sluggish big halls, which carves up the competition clearly.

The spectacular Chinese Weikeng Liang and Wang Chang, top seeds, remain favourites for the title. Wang, with his exceptional quick movements and anticipation at the net, will prove lethal in those faster courts, and the wild hitter Weikeng will relish the conditions, as much as the two hard-hitting Indians. The other pairing that might reveal in their fast, flat attack and make life difficult for everyone around are Anders Skaarup Rasmussen and Kim Astrup. They might seem to be caught up in the horror group D with the defending champions, the always-dangerous second Chinese and the thirsting-for-glory Japanese. But Astrup-Rasmussen can blast their way out of that group, and continue to threaten whoever comes in their path, given their playing style.

If the conditions — if the French Open was an indicator — stay steady, a particular needle might get threaded: facing the assorted wobbly serves of opponents, which turn devilish might not be a bother here in the absence of sideways drift that wreaks havoc.

Shetty's childhood coach Uday Pawar insists the myriad mystery serves that spun webs, and messed with the Indians' returns, might pose negligible trouble at the French venue. Also, that coach Mathias Boe got down to demystifying them himself, serving them at a fast clip as Shetty and Rankireddy came to grips with the possibility of facing them without being consumed by the fear, in training ahead of Paris. Interestingly, Boe, Pawar says, isn't a big fan of weaponising the spinning serves either. He might even dissuade one of his two players, who's pretty adept at the Wobblers, from trying them out at the Games. The thinking seems to be that chair umpires aren't going to take too kindly to borderline befuddling serves at the Olympics, and might call faults on all such attempts. So it's not worth the trouble.

The fact remains that one of the two Indians possesses the skill, and is confident he can pull it off, if needed at the right time — like match point for a medal. Boe's annoyance of the irritating serves though, remains. While the Top 3 head into Olympics in favoured conditions, the likes of Malaysian Aaron Chia, slimmed down and enjoying pressure to boot, pose the threat of running away with matches in those attack-heavy courts. He can literally get going on his day. The Korean reigning World Championships will be a bit of mystery — not particularly scary on faster courts, but that makes southpaw Seo Seung-jae all the more determined to find solutions at the net, as perhaps the most skilled player in the men's doubles draw. Satwik-Chirag's group opponents, the Indonesians, are not to be trifled with, and always start at 50-50 probability, even if they have lost all three times to Indians. "Indians have a good record against them statistically. But they need to get there and let the racquet do the actual talking," Pawar says, insisting that it will be important to top the group to avoid running into a tougher quarterfinal match-up. The Germans Lamsfuss and Marvin can be dangerous too, and should be approached with caution, in the group stages. Perhaps the biggest challenge at Paris — real and doubt-inducing swirl — for the Indians, will be Satwik's fitness status. By all accounts, he has been managing his power torquing back and should



der for at least 3 years now, even as murmurs and mutters paint it as a dire picture. The mischief-making lingo of this world keep stirring the pot of speculation. He's won Asiad, Thomas Cup and Indonesia all with careful niggles-management, but it's an open secret that the Indian duo are at their best when both are injury-free. Attack is their strength, and even if their defense is much improved now than at Tokyo, there's a simplicity to their venom — all-out offense at the first opportunity. Their maturity has been in being able to respond to a plan not working, by smoothly switching to a countering game and coping with the stress piled on by a defiant opponent. Pawar says as Chirag's oldest coach, he kept his advice deliberately pithy given the pressure that medal hopefuls from Indian get swamped under. "What's defined their success is the hunger to keep winning more and more. They've won the biggest matches. The main reason you got there is because you had the burning fire. Don't be complacent. Be happy that you get to contend for a medal at the Olympics. And don't ever be subdued," he ends.



GNS News Agency, July 23

After introducing a desi tadka to the way elite chess tournaments are organised with its first season, the Global Chess League will be back for another season in October this year. In the first edition, the GCL managed a coup of sorts by getting some of the biggest names in the sport to sign up: from world champions like Viswanathan Anand, Magnus Carlsen and Hou Yifan to stars like Ian Nepomniachtchi, Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa, Arjun Erigaisi, Vidit Gujrathi and Tan Zhongyi.

"Indians are enjoying lots of sports now. But we like imposing our own business model on it. We want something new. That's why last year we had the Global Chess League, which was this new Indian way of organising sport," Anand said at the Express Adda last week. Convincing players from different countries and cultures was easier said than done, particularly since the GCL would be a team-based league, which had no real precedence in a largely individualistic pursuit like chess.

Argentina 'land of asylum for former Nazis', says former Chelsea player as racism allegations mount up after Copa America win



GNS News Agency, July 23

Former Chelsea and Senegal forward Demba Ba is the latest to have criticised the Argentina national team, who have been under the scanner for a derogatory song sung in the team bus following their 2024 Copa America win. Taking to his X account, Ba wrote, "Argentina, land of asylum for former Nazis on the run. From 1945, Peron hosted war criminals. And it surprises you..." The turmoil surrounding the world champions has been in the aftermath of a live video posted by Enzo Fernandez on his Instagram.

In the video doing rounds on social media, Argentina players can be heard singing: "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." Ba isn't the only one who has been irked by the video. Fernandez's teammate at Chelsea, Wesley Fofana also took to his social media to let his

views known, quoting the video as "uninhibited racism." The France Football Association (FFF) also issued its statement with president Philippe Diallo challenging FIFA president Gianni Infantino and Argentina Football Association president, Claudio Fabian Tapia — confirming that it will file an official complaint over the video. Reacting on the outburst, Argentine midfielder Rodrigo De Paul gave insight into what his teammates think about the criticism, and how team captain Lionel Messi had cautioned them against instigating the opposition players or anyone else. "When the final ended, Messi came and the first thing he said was, 'nobody taunts anyone, let's celebrate and enjoy our victory,'" De Paul told OLG. "They always find something against the winner. Whether it's that we got help, or that we taunted others, or that it's not such a good team, or that South America is less developed than Europe, we didn't see any fuss about that when they say those things about us. All these things are said to discredit what we've achieved," he added.

Outraged over Olympic snub, India's Korean archery coach to leave after contract expires

GNS News Agency, July 23

India's Korean archery coach Baek Woong Ki is outraged after being denied accreditation for the Paris Games and said he will not continue once his contract expires on August 30.

According to reports, Woong Ki, who reached Paris with the Indian team after overseeing its preparation in Marseille, said he "was removed from the Olympic coaching role at a critical time" and will now be flying back to India with his return ticket already booked. "I am a Korean coach who signed a contract to prepare (the Indian archers) for the Paris Olympics. But at a critical time, I was removed from the Olympic coaching role and my flight schedule told me to return home," the renowned coach told PTI. He has been staying in a Paris hotel and was awaiting his Games accreditation. "I have a contract until August 30 and I signed it for the Olympics. I plan to arrive at Sonipat and calmly prepare for the formalities of entering Korea," he added. The disappointed Woong Ki clarified that he would not renew his contract. Woong Ki has guided archery heavyweights South Korea to two gold medals at the 2012 London Olympics. Appointed two years ago, he had been helping the Indian archers in their quest for a medal in Paris. He questioned the logic behind not being accommodated despite the Indian authorities investing in him. "I have been training them (Indian archers) for two years to win a medal at the Paris Olympics. However, foreign coaches were excluded due to the IOA's poor and hasty administration. I don't know why they invested money to appoint a Korean coach. More importantly, it's hitting a major notch just days before the Olympics," said Woong Ki. Woong Ki further said his presence would have surely boosted India's prospects.



"Korean archers are strong in competition. If Korea and India play in the final, there is a 90% chance they will lose, but if I enter the coach's box, the Korean archers will feel more tension and pressure because of me. Therefore, India's chances of winning increase," said Woong Ki, who is contracted by the Archery Association of India (AAI) and funded by the Sports Authority of India (SAI). During his stint in India, he has played a key role in shaping the team. "While preparing for the Olympics, I instilled in my archers the practice of avoiding and dealing with situations that may arise during competition. I have experience in the Olympics, having won four gold medals and one silver medal at the 2004 Athens Olympics and the 2012 London Olympics. No matter how well-trained the archers are, the psychological pressure at the Olympics is too great. Therefore, the coach must create conditions in the field where the archers can shoot stably. "And for the first time in 12 years, India has the opportunity to have three men's and three women's teams participating, which is a good opportunity to win a medal," he said.

How Global Chess League convinced players: Open houses, over-communication, Russian translator and presentation decks in Mandarin

This is why organisers had to go the extra mile ahead of the first season. "One player we signed for the GCL was someone who spoke exclusively in Russian. Thankfully, there was a person in FIDE who became our translator. For the Chinese players, we also got presentation decks made in Mandarin, which had detailed explanations for how we saw the league happening. It's not that players absolutely don't speak or understand English. But just to eliminate any communication gap and make the players completely comfortable, we did these sorts of things. This is how we got players from over 15 countries to sign up," says Sameer Pathak, the CEO of the Global Chess League told

Pathak says that there was one player the GCL organisers exchanged over 35 emails just to convince them of their vision for the league. "Besides the emails, we would also hold something we called an Open House Hour. We would send a link to a conference call to all players that would be active for an hour on specified dates. Any player who had any doubts about the league could just hop in on that call and ask us whatever they had on their mind. We would be on the other end of the calls to allay any concerns," said Pathak. "These calls would happen after we first approached players, so that anyone who had any doubts could get those cleared up. Then, after the players had signed contracts, we would hold calls so that anyone who wanted to get familiarised with our unique points system, could have clarity. We had four of these Open House calls when we were trying to sign players. Then two more to explain rules to the players." In chess, most players know who the organisers are since many tournaments have been held for decades now. So a quick email or a phone call can suffice to get a verbal

agreement in place before the organisers can draw up contracts. For the GCL to start, the organisers needed an assist from FIDE, the global governing body of the sport, who made introductions between the organisers and the players. After these emails, the elite players who showed an interest in participating were explained the concept of the league by the GCL organisers in individual orientation calls. "Our strategy was to over-communicate so that the players understand how this league will be different from anything they had played in," said Pathak. "In these calls we explained how the GCL would be different to anything else that they had played in, what our commercial model was and so on. This was so that they understood what a team owner's expectations from players would be, why they would be wearing those colourful jerseys rather than suits that they usually wear at chess tournaments." He revealed that they also convinced FIDE to forgo their strict rules about footwear — the global governing body has a strict code prohibiting players from wearing sneakers at events. But the organisers lobbied FIDE to drop the rule for GCL, realising the marketing potential of sneaker endorsements. "Sneakers are allowed in our league only because what if some sports shoe brand wants to sponsor a team? Little things like these were also something that we had to focus on," said Pathak. The other challenge after getting players to sign was devising a points system because FIDE winced at the idea of calling it a player auction, believing it to be demeaning. "We don't call it an auction because the word brings up negative connotations. We didn't want to get into the money-based thing. So to navigate these complexities, we devised a system where each team owner had a 1000 points and there were exactly 36 players in the draft pool for the 36 spots available.