

# INDIAN CHRONICLE

26 July, 2024 | Friday | Volume No:12 | Issue No:142

Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

## Godavari crosses second warning level at Bhadrachalam

Kothagudem: Officials issued the second warning as water level in river Godavari reached the second warning level of 48 feet at 1.10 pm at Bhadrachalam in the district on Thursday. The water level crossed the second warning level for the first time this season on July 22. It started receding on Wednesday at 10 pm the water level was 45.10 feet with a discharge of 10, 18,806 cusecs. The flood flow started increasing in the midnight and on Thursday at 1 am water level was 45.40 feet. As the forecast indicates further rise the district administration was on alert.

## RTC to provide buses to IT companies on hire in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) which has been running special services to the ever busy IT corridor in the city, is now planning to provide buses to IT firms on monthly rental basis. Apart from metro express, the city ordinary and mini air-conditioning buses will be available for rent on different price range. Of late, traffic management has become a major concern particularly during the peak hours due to large number of cars hired by the IT firms apart from increasing personal cars plying the IT corridor. Flaggging off the issue, the Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC) had discussions with IT firms and TGSRTC officials and it was felt that traffic snarls could be checked to some extent by running buses to IT companies.

## KCR Criticizes Telangana Budget, says there is no specified policy

## Congress presents Rs.2.91 lakh cr budget for 2024-25

GNS News Agency, July 25

Hyderabad: The Congress government presented its maiden full-scale budget with an outlay of Rs 2,91,159 crore for the financial year of 2024-25. This is around Rs 15,000 crore more than the 'Vote on Account' budget of Rs 2.76 lakh crore presented by the government in February earlier this year and marginally higher than the Rs 2.9 lakh crore introduced by the previous BRS government for 2023-24. Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka introduced the State budget in the Legislative Assembly around noon on Thursday. As per the budget, the revenue expenditure is proposed at Rs 2,20,945 crore and the capital expenditure proposed is Rs 33,487 crore.

In his budget speech, Bhatti Vikramarka stated that the State debts shot up to Rs 6.71 lakh crore at the end of 2023-24 against Rs 75,577 crore in 2014-15 since the State formation. He said the State government is taking all measures to maintain fiscal prudence and put the

economy back on track by repaying the majority of the loans. In the budget allocations, the State government gave highest priority to the agriculture and allied sectors with an allocation of Rs 72,659 crore, followed by Rs 29,816 crore for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development, and Rs 22,301 crore for Irrigation. Around Rs 21,292 crore have been set aside for Education and another Rs 11,468 crore was set aside for Medical and Health. The budget had no overall allocations for the much-hyped Abhaya Hastham (six guarantees) except for Rs 2,418 crore for Gruha Jyothi Scheme and Rs 723 crore for the subsidised LPG cylinder scheme. The State government allocated Rs 1,525 crore for the Regional Ring Road for the current financial year, as against total expenditure of Rs 13,522 crore for the northern part and Rs 12,980 crore for the southern part. Another Rs 10,000 crore has been allocated for development of Hyderabad including GHMC, HYDRABAD, HMDA, HMWSSB and others. Around Rs 33,124 crore for SC Sub-plan Development Fund and Rs



17,056 crore for ST Sub-plan Development Fund, have been proposed in the budget. A total of Rs 16,410 crore has been set aside for power transmission and distribution companies. A nominal allocation of Rs 2,762 crore for Industries and Rs 774 crore for Information and Technology, were made in the State budget.

GNS News Agency, July 25

Following the introduction of the Telangana budget by Finance Minister and Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti in the Assembly today, BRS chief K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) expressed his discontent with the state's financial plan, labeling it as "far from reality."

After the assembly session was adjourned, KCR addressed the media, emphasizing his belief that the budget lacks substance and fails to present any new initiatives. He accused the government of merely reiterating the previous Vikramarka budget without offering any comprehensive understanding of the state's economy.

"There is nothing new in this budget," KCR stated, asserting that the government needs to provide a thorough explanation of all budget components. He criticized the absence of welfare schemes and claimed that the government's approach is detrimental to farmers, expressing anger over what he described as the Congress party acting as an "enemy government." KCR also pointed out significant gaps in the proposed IT policy and questioned the effectiveness of the agricultural strategy outlined in the budget. Highlighting the lack of proper policy frameworks, KCR noted that the budget speech resembled storytelling rather than a concrete fiscal strategy.

## State budget lacks policy direction, says Niranjan Reddy

## Eligibility for Rythu Barosa will be changed, announces Telangana Dy CM

## KTR offers support to Sircilla girl's IIT education



GNS News Agency, July 25

Hyderabad: Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, taking a dig at the BRS government while presenting the budget for the 2024-25 financial year on Thursday, said that Rs 80,440 crores were spent on the implementation of Rythu Bandhu for farmers. However, financial input assistance has been given to many ineligible persons, owners of fallow lands, and real estate businessmen. Thus, precious public funds were wasted by violating the rules framed by the then government for the scheme. Against this backdrop, the Rythu Bandhu Scheme (RBS) with Rythu Bharosa benefits the real farmers by increasing the assistance and providing Rs Rs.15,000 per year. He said that a cabinet sub-commit-

tee appointed to the scheme has toured various districts and consulted farmers, experts and intellectuals. The views expressed at these forums will be placed before the Assembly to hold a detailed discussion to elicit the opinions of the members and to finalise modalities to implement the scheme. A new scheme will be launched during the current financial year by providing financial assistance of Rs.12,000 per year to improve agricultural labourers' living and economic standards.

Highlighting the droughts and floods are a bane to the farmers. The natural calamities endanger the crops and cause economic destruction. Against this backdrop, it was decided to extend farm insurance to the farmers by joining the Pradhana Manthri Fasal Bhima Yojana (PMFBY), from the current year. Further, the state government will pay the crop insurance premium under the scheme. He said that the farmer suffers due to a lack of remunerative prices for the products. The government has decided to encourage the cultivation of "Sanna Rice" (superfine) rice. For this, the government has identified 33 superfine rice varieties, for which Rs 500 per quintal will be provided to the farmers who cultivate these varieties. Under the Rythu Nesham Scheme (RNS) to bring awareness among farmers on the latest technology and to share the experiences of progressive farmers with other farmers, the Rythu Nesham programme is organised in collaboration with the scientists of Professor Jaya Shankar Telangana Agriculture University PJST



GNS News Agency, July 25

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao has assured Deepthi, a poor student who got a seat in IIT Guwahati, to support her education. Deepthi is the daughter of Somireddy Padma and Chandram, a poor couple from Gudem village of Mustabad mandal in Rajanna Sircilla district. They had wished Rama Rao on his birthday on Wednesday and told him about their situation. He then responded and offered to meet the expenditure involved in her studies.

Deepthi also received a laptop from him as part of his 'Gift a Smile' initiative. He assured the family that he would bear the entire cost of studies for the next four years at the institution and help support her to realise her dreams. Deepthi got a seat in the Data Sciences and Artificial Intelligence course at IIT Guwahati. But the family was hesitating to send her to the premier educational institution as it was hard to make both ends meet, not to speak of supporting her pursuit for higher education. Deepthi and her parents thanked Rama Rao for his gesture. Wishing her great success in studies, Rama Rao hoped that she would have a bright career in future.

## Heavy rainfall in Maharashtra forces release of water from Khadakwasla Dam-Pune, waterlogging in Mumbai



GNS News Agency, July 25

As per information from the District Information Office, the Pune administration increased the speed and released the water into the Mutha River on Thursday at 6 a.m. at a rate of 40,000 cusecs. Earlier on Thursday, at 4 a.m., water was released at a speed of 27,203 cusecs. An alert has been issued to the residents living along the riverbanks to be careful. Additionally, due to heavy rains in Pune on Wednesday night, water entered the houses and buildings located in Ekta Nagri and Vitthal Nagar areas. The Pune Fire Department has brought boats to evacuate the people from the residences. Additionally, the District Information Office has also predicted gusty winds at the rate of 50 to 60 km per hour likely to occur in isolated places over Palghar, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg and moderate rain in Kolhapur and the Ghat areas of Pune in the next three hours. Orders have been given by District Magistrate Suhas Diwas to keep the schools in Pune closed as the Indian Meteorological Department has issued a red alert in Pune city, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Bhor, Velha, Maval, Mulshi, Haveli and the Khadakwasla areas. Advisories have also been issued to the public to stay indoors and venture out only if necessary. Additionally, the Indian Meteorological Department issued a red alert for Maharashtra on Thursday and has predicted extremely heavy rainfall. On Wednesday, an orange alert has also been issued in the state warning of heavy to very heavy rainfall (115.6 to 204.4 mm) from July 26 to July 27 in Maharashtra. An orange alert was also issued for Thane, Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri, and Sindhudurg districts in Maharashtra's Konkan region. On Thursday, the Brihan Mumbai Metropolitan

Council (BMC) said that on Thursday and Friday, there will be moderate to heavy rain in Mumbai city and suburbs. There is a possibility of very heavy rainfall at isolated places. Occasional gusty winds reaching 50-60 kmph is also very likely. The average rainfall recorded from 8 a.m. on July 24 till 8 a.m. July 25: 44mm in Mumbai city, 90mm in eastern suburbs and 88mm in western suburbs. On Thursday, High Tide of 4.64 metre is expected at 2:51 p.m. and a low tide of 1 metre is expected at 9 p.m.

Downpour disrupts public transport services in Mumbai. The Andheri Subway in Mumbai has been closed for vehicular movement following waterlogging from the persistent rainfall. The downpours have brought back woes for Mumbai and the suburbs, with waterlogging reported from several low-lying areas in the city. The heavy rainfall overnight has disrupted some public transport services causing inconvenience to countless commuters. The forecast indicates the possibility of very heavy rainfall in isolated places. Occasional gusty winds reaching 50-60 kmph are also very likely. As per the BMC, Vihar Lake, one of the 7 lakes supplying water to the entire Mumbai metropolitan area, started overflowing at around 3.50 a.m. today. The full storage capacity of Vihar Lake is 2,769.8 crore litres (27,698 million litres).

## Liquor policy case: Delhi CM Kejriwal's judicial custody extended till Aug 8

GNS News Agency, July 25 Delhi :CM Kejriwal's judicial custody extended till Aug 8 x Highlights A court here on Thursday extended, till August 8, judicial custody of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the alleged liquor policy scam. New Delhi: A court here on Thursday extended, till August 8, judicial custody of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the alleged liquor policy scam. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja of Rouse Avenue Court passed the order upon the expiry of the previously granted judicial custody.

## Rashtrapati Bhavan's Durbar Hall and Ashok Hall renamed as Gantantra Mandap and Ashok Mandap

GNS News Agency, July 25

New Delhi: In a significant development, two iconic halls of the Rashtrapati Bhavan have been renamed by President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday. Durbar Hall will now be known as 'Gantantra Mandap' while Ashok Hall has been renamed as 'Ashok Mandap'. The renaming of the halls has been done to drop their British semblance and 'bring them closer' to the Indian cultural values and ethos. "Rashtrapati Bhavan, the office and the residence of the President of India, is a symbol of the nation, and an invaluable heritage of the people. Continuous efforts are being made to make it more accessible to people. There has been a consistent endeavour to make the ambience of the Rashtrapati Bhavan reflective of the Indian cultural values and ethos," said a press communique from the President's House.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to the general public at large that, Annojula Santosh Kumar is intending to advance loan from bank, by mortgaging property Plot No.5, in Sy.No. 36/2, measuring 30'x50'=1500 Sq.Fts, situated at Village & G.P. Battisavargaon, Mdl& Dist. Adilabad within the limits of Adilabad Municipality, to the bank. That, the original link document No. 8112/2011 is been lost. If any one has any claim, right, title or interest of any kind in the said property, they may contact the undersigned within 7 days of the publication of this Notice, with all documents of claim and title. If no objection is received within 7 days, then the bank will proceed to complete the other formalities for the mortgage and if any claim and objection arise, it shall be deemed to have been waived.

**Bipin Kumar Patel**  
Advocate,  
Adarsh Building,  
N.H.No. 7, Adilabad  
Cell: 9440005500

Dt: 25-07-2024

GNS News Agency, July 25

In a response to the comments made by BRS leader and opposition chief K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) regarding the Telangana state government's budget, Congress ministers and MLAs held a press conference at the assembly, voicing strong dissent against KCR's remarks.

Minister Seethaka led the charge, questioning KCR's failure to comment on the recently unveiled central budget, highlighting the inconsistency of his critique on the state budget. "It is strange to discuss the state budget while remaining silent on the central budget," Seethaka remarked, referencing a resolution passed.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to the general public at large that, Tukaram Jadhav is intending to advance loan from State Bank of India, Brach Shivaji Chowk, Adilabad, by mortgaging property Plot No. 86, in Sy.No.27/B, measuring 30'x60'=1800 Sq.Fts, situated at Srinagar Colony, Dasnapur, Adilabad within the limits of Adilabad Municipality, to the bank. That, the original link document No.262/1992 is been lost. If any one has any claim, right, title or interest of any kind in the said property, they may contact the undersigned within 7 days of the publication of this Notice, with all documents of claim and title. If no objections is received within 7 days, then the bank will proceed to complete the other formalities for the mortgage and if any claim and objection arise, it shall be deemed to have been waived.

**Bipin Kumar Patel**  
Advocate,  
Adarsh Building,  
N.H.No. 7, Adilabad  
Cell: 9440005500

Dt: 22-07-2024

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## SAD at a crossroads

THE Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), one of India's oldest political parties, is struggling to put its house in order after a series of electoral debacles over the past seven years. Party chief Sukhbir Singh Badal is not only facing rebellion from senior leaders but has also been summoned by the Akal Takht — the highest temporal seat of the Sikhs — to submit a written reply regarding the alleged 'mistakes' committed during the 10-year SAD-BJP rule (2007-17) in Punjab. The clamour for a leadership change is growing, even as the party top brass is presenting a united front and accusing ex-ally BJP of attempts to break up the SAD.

Things have only worsened since the death of five-time CM Parkash Singh Badal in April last year. Badal was a towering leader under whom the SAD became a force to reckon with; his son Sukhbir has found it tough to step into those big shoes. Moreover, Sukhbir has been unable to shake off the 'one-family party' tag. The ghosts of 2015 — a series of sacrilege incidents, the Takht's flip-flop on pardon to Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim in a blasphemy case, and police action against protesters at Kotkapura and Behbal Kalan — continue to haunt the Badals. Grave lapses on the SAD's part have disillusioned and angered Panthic voters. No wonder the party has ceded considerable ground to Sikh radicals, exemplified by the victory of Amritpal Singh and Sarabjeet Singh Khalsa in the recent Lok Sabha elections. The farming community is no longer the SAD's dependable vote bank, even though the party pulled out of the NDA in 2020 in protest against the contentious farm laws (after having initially endorsed them). The exit of capable leaders like Manpreet Singh Badal and Adesh Partap Singh Kairon has left the party poorer. The SAD's resurgence is possible only if it goes all out to regain the lost ground and win over farmers.

## 'PGI OPDs see uptick in patients... advancements in cancer treatment have improved survival rates'

GNS News Agency, July 25

Yes. There has been an overall increase in cancer incidence across the world. Cancer was responsible for nearly 10 million deaths in 2020, and around one in six deaths globally. As per the WHO, the incidence, prevalence, and mortality in cancer have shown increasing trends. The top two leading cancers in males are lung and prostate and in women, breast and lung cancer. The OPDs in PGI are seeing an increase in patients from across the region, with many young people also being diagnosed with cancer. Yet, advancements in treatment of cancer have improved survival rates, outcomes, and in certain cancers, the treatments have contributed to the cure rates of more than five–10 years, and this has led to an increased survivorship in patients of cancer.

What are the challenges that you face in PGI, with patients coming from all walks of life?

While there has been a tremendous improvement in detection and treatment of cancer, it is the fear of cancer that makes many ignore the warning signs, symptoms, and they do not opt for investigations, tests, for a fear of diagnosis and then treatment, and also side effects of treatment. The fact is that earlier the diagnosis, better the outcomes. Over the last many decades of my career here, the financial aspect plays a big role, as only 10 per cent with cancer can afford the best treatment, and for 60 per cent, it is tough, as out-of-pocket costs are high. Here at PGI, we have international level treatments, and radiation therapy that will cost around 2.5 lakh outside will be about Rs 7,000 here at PGI, which is a boon to patients. From equipment to technology, we offer the best, but have to work under many constraints, as the number of patients keeps increasing. As OPD numbers are very high, and we are overburdened, there is a lack of time and patience. This can result in disengagement with the patients, and the emotional and humane component can get overlooked. The faith between a doctor and patient in the OPD is crucial, and leads to better outcomes. Due to financial constraints, patient participation in the treatment is poor, for the decision is not of the patient, but the family, and many times, patients because of lack of money have to compromise on treatment. Due to fear of side effects (radiation-induced toxicity to surrounding healthy tissues), many times the patients have left treatment mid-way leading to poor outcomes. This leads to a complex process of making a decision on part of the patients, as I have mentioned in a recent paper, 'Hobson's choice', or a 'Horned dilemma,' where the benefits of radiotherapy have to be weighed against the risk of long-term complications and financial burden.

What are the reasons for the high incidence of cancer? We are diagnosing more cases, as compared to earlier, as we are living longer. Medical science has advanced tremendously, so there is better diagnosis. Also, there is more exposure to carcinogenic elements. Our lifestyle and diets have changed. We are eating more processed food. There is a hurried eating, high levels of stress, lack of exercise, and, of course, some of us have a family history. There is not one single factor, but many factors that play a part.

How has radiotherapy played a role in the management of various malignancies?

Radiotherapy has played a paramount role in the management of various malignancies and is utilised in approximately 70 to 80 per cent of all cancer cases, either as a primary treatment modality or in combination with surgery and/or chemotherapy. The effectiveness of radiotherapy is evident in its impact on cure rates and long-term survival. For example, in cancers such as breast cancer, early-stage treatment with radiotherapy has contributed to cure rates exceeding 90 per cent in some cases. Similarly, in prostate cancer, radiotherapy has significantly improved survival rates, with five-year survival exceeding 95 per cent in localised disease. The success of radiotherapy exceeds other malignancies as well like cervical cancer, anal canal, and head-and-neck cancers. If you could share some technological advancements in the field of radiotherapy?

The landscape of radiotherapy has undergone remarkable technological advancements, ushering in a new era of precision radiation oncology, reduced toxicity, and improved quality of life of patients post-treatment.

## 2020 Northeast Delhi riots: High court judge recuses from hearing Umar Khalid's bail plea in 'larger conspiracy' case



GNS News Agency, July 25

Delhi High Court Justice Amit Sharma on Monday recused himself from hearing former JNU student Umar Khalid's bail plea in the police's "larger conspiracy case" pertaining to the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots. The bail plea was listed before a division bench of Justices Prathiba Singh and Sharma after a change in the roster of judges dealing with the matter. "Subject to the orders of the Hon'ble Acting Chief Justice, list this matter before another bench, of which Justice Amit Sharma is not a member, on July 24 along with all the connected matters," the bench said. Notably, Justice Sharma previously recused himself from hearing the bail pleas of other persons accused in the matter. This is Khalid's second bail plea moved in the Delhi High Court — he first approached the court in early 2022 against a trial court order denying him bail in the case. On October 18, 2022, the Delhi High Court's division bench of Justice Siddharth Mridul and

Justice Rajnish Bhatnagar denied bail to Khalid. In a 52-page judgment, the bench examined the phraseology used by Khalid in his speeches, holding that a call to revolution may affect many beyond those who were visibly present.

The bench observed that Khalid's name was recurrently mentioned from the beginning of the conspiracy till the culmination of the ensuing riots. "Different protected witnesses have stated the role of the appellant and other accused persons and about the open discussion on violence, riots, finance and weapons". Agreeing with the trial court's finding the bench had said that the trial court had looked at numerous witness statements wherein Khalid's role in the "context of conspiracy and riots was apparent". Khalid then moved the Supreme Court challenging the HC's October 2022 order. Citing a "change in circumstances", Khalid withdrew his bail plea from the Supreme Court on February 14, 2024. His lawyer, Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal said, "We will try our luck in the trial court". A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal before whom the petition was listed allowed the request and dismissed it as withdrawn. On May 28, the trial court rejected Khalid's second bail in the case, pursuant to which he has moved the HC again. Apart from Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, Gulfisha Fatima, Abdul Khalid Saifi, Athar Khan, Meeran Haider and Shadab Ahmed have also been booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in the First Information Report (FIR) 59/2020 for allegedly being the "masterminds" of the February 2020 riots, which left 53 people dead and over 700 injured.

## Bengal Guv concerned over discovery of tunnel under house of fake gold dealer

GNS News Agency, July 25

West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose has expressed concern over the discovery of a tunnel underneath the house of an alleged fake gold dealer in South 24 Parganas district, asserting that it poses a "national security concern". The tunnel, unearthed by the police in Kultali area on July 15, connects to a nearby canal that flows into the Matla river. "The existence of the well-planned and structured tunnel reportedly leading to a nearby canal flowing into the Matla River in the Sunderbans beyond which lies the Indo-Bangladesh international border gives rise to serious national security concern," the Raj Bhavan said in a post on X on Sunday. The owner of the house and fake gold dealer, Saddam Sardar, was suspected to have used the tunnel to escape during a police raid. He was later arrested. The governor alleged that the local police were "reportedly aware" of the "thriving fake gold mafia", and "now the situation has come to such a pass that it puts the state in



a very bad light since it is compromising our national security." Bose also called for a report on the action taken by the state government to check organised crimes along the international borders. The governor urged the West Bengal government to make the role of police objective and proactive.

## Amid 'Boycott PhonePe' campaign, CEO Sameer Nigam apologises for his statement on Karnataka job reservation Bill

GNS News Agency, July 25

PhonePe founder and CEO Sameer Nigam apologised on Sunday for his comments over Karnataka's draft job reservation Bill, stating that he never intended to insult the state and its people. Nigam's statement came after some Kannada groups started a 'Boycott PhonePe' campaign. The Karnataka Rakshana Vedike and other pro-Kannada organisations and members launched the campaign on social media to boycott PhonePe after Nigam's post on X commenting on the Karnataka Cabinet approved The Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories and Other Establishments Bill, 2024. The Karnataka Government withheld the Bill, which mandates 75 per cent reservation in non-management jobs and 50 per cent in management jobs for "local candidates" in the private sector, after stakeholders opposed it.

On Sunday, Nigam said in a statement, "I would first and foremost like to clarify that it was NEVER my intention to insult Karnataka and its people. If my comments hurt anyone's sentiments in such a way, I am truly sorry and would like to offer you an unconditional apology." "PhonePe was born in Bengaluru and we are incredibly proud of our roots in this city, which is well known for its world-class technology talent and vibrant diversity. From Bengaluru, over the past decade we have expanded across the length and breadth of India and been able to deliver secure and efficient digital payments for over 55 Crore Indians," Nigam said in his statement.

As Nigam hailed Bengaluru's reputation as the Silicon Valley of India, its "incredible culture of innovation", he said, "As a company, we are deeply grateful for the supportive business environment that Karnataka's governments and its local Kannadiga populace have offered us. Without such an inclusive ecosystem and progressive policies, Bengaluru would not have become a global technology superpower".

"If my comments hurt anyone's sentiments in such a way, I am truly sorry and would like to offer you an unconditional apology. I have the highest regard for Kannada, and all other Indian languages. In fact, I truly believe that linguistic diversity and rich cultural heritage is a national asset that all Indians should be proud of; and all Indians should be respectful of and celebrate local and cultural norms," he added. The PhonePe CEO said startups in Bengaluru are competing against Google, Apple, Amazon, and Microsoft. "To do so, these companies must be able to employ the very best talent available in India purely based on their technology skills and proficiency in fields such as Coding, Design, Product Management, Data Sciences, Machine Learning, AI and beyond. As a nation, that is the only way we can build world-class companies that can compete in the global village that we live in today," he said. "I also want to help create lakhs of jobs for Bengaluru and Karnataka. And, I believe with more dialogue and discussion, we can find ways to create more sustainable employment avenues. Let's all work together to do this meaningfully and while creating long-term



impact." According to PhonePe, there are 4,36,68,141 users in Karnataka with transactions worth Rs 2,79,64,39,155 between January and March. Several social media users also criticised Nigam for his post on Karnataka's domicile quota in the jobs Bill. Mohammed Ilyas on X said, "I always preferred @PhonePe over any other UPI apps due to its Swadeshi origin. @\_sameernigam, Karnataka helped you to grow up. You came here to build your career, not to improve Bengaluru. This is the time to say goodbye to PhonePe. #UninstallPhonePe #BoycottPhonePe."

## Terrorists open fire at Army post in J&K's Rajouri, troops retaliate

GNS News Agency, July 25

Rajouri/Jammu: Army troops foiled a terrorist attack on a security post in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district early on Monday and launched a cordon and search operation to track them down, officials said. The terrorists fired at an Army post in the Gundha area of Rajouri district at 4 am, and troops guarding the post retaliated, resulting in fierce exchanges, an Army spokesperson said.

The troops foiled the attack, following which a cordon and search operation was launched by security forces in the area, the spokesperson added. Unconfirmed reports said a jawan and a civilian suffered injuries in the attack.

However, a fresh firing between terrorists and security forces has broken out in the area, while the cordon and search operation is underway, the officials said.

Sources said the terrorists first tried to attack the house of a village defence group (VDG) member and ex-serviceman on the outskirts of a hamlet but presence of police personnel forced them to flee the area and later target the Army post.

## Delay by Megha Engg consortium: MSRTC receives 20 of 1,700 e-buses in 8 months

GNS News Agency, July 25

The Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), which awarded one of the world's largest e-bus supply contracts for 5,150 electric buses in July 2023, has received just 20 buses from Olectra Green Tech Limited and Evey Trans Private Limited — subsidiaries of Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Limited (MEIL), with which it had entered an agreement for supply of electric buses. This represents less than two per cent of the total fleet expected to be received by the MSRTC over the past eight months. The company was supposed to supply 215 buses to the MSRTC every month over 24 months, and in eight months between November 2023 and June 2024, the MSRTC was to receive over 1,700 buses as per the agreement. The transport corporation, operating one of the largest inter-city bus systems in India, has now issued a notice to the consortium, imposing a penalty of Rs 2.2 crore as per contractual clauses.

Earlier, The Indian Express reported that the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST), an autonomous body under the city's civic corporation, received only 185 electric buses out of the 2,100 promised by MEIL subsidiary Evey Trans Private Ltd before August 2023. "We issued a notice to the contractor in June and imposed penalties as per contract clauses. The contractor cited production issues. They have supplied 20 buses and committed to delivering an additional 50 buses by the end of July," Madhav Kusekar, vice-chairman and managing director of MSRTC, told The Indian Express.

The contract was signed between MSRTC and a consortium comprising Olectra Green Tech Limited (Olectra) and Evey Trans Private Limited (EVEY) — subsidiaries of Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Limited (MEIL) — on November 1, 2023. MEIL, promoted by Pamireddy Pichi Reddy and PV Krishna Reddy, was the second largest purchaser of electoral bonds, acquiring bonds worth Rs. 966 crore, with Rs 584 crore directed to the BJP between April 2019 and October 2023.

In July 2023, the MSRTC awarded the contract to the consortium for supplying, operating and maintaining 5,150 electric buses. Evey Trans was tasked with procuring these buses from Olectra and was to oversee their delivery over 24 months, with the contract valued at approximately Rs 10,000 crore. The corporation serves approximately 53 lakh commuters daily across Maharashtra's remote areas and a few services in other states, maintaining a fleet of 15,945 buses. As per contract terms, delivery of these 5,150 electric buses was expected within 24 months from the prototype inspection, with 215 buses (approximately 4% of the total) to be delivered monthly starting three months after agreement signing. The prototype inspection reportedly took place in November 2023, but since then, only 20 buses were delivered in February this year.

These 20 electric buses were flagged-off by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in February this year and they are operating on the Borivali-Thane-Nashik Route route. According to the Letter of Intent (LoI) accessed by The Indian Express, the consortium was expected to deliver about 1,700 buses in the past eight months since November 2023, which has not materialised. The delay in bus supply poses a significant setback to MSRTC's financial recovery plan, as the corporation has faced financial strain in the recent years, relying on monthly state government aid to pay its 90,000 staff salaries. The companies have, however, attributed the delay to disruptions in the global supply chain, particularly affecting imports such as lithium-ion battery cells from China, which constitute about 50 per cent of the electric bus cost.

"Although chassis and bus bodies are manufactured locally, reliance on imported components presents challenges. Global supply chain disruptions, exacerbated by the pandemic, have hindered timely bus deliveries. Manufacturers have struggled to meet order demands," Olectra stated. The company acknowledged a Rs 2.2 crore fine imposed by the MSRTC for contract non-compliance. "We have initiated an automated production plant near Hyderabad in Seetharampur, expected to be fully operational in the coming weeks. This facility will enhance our annual production capacity to 10,000 buses," the company added.

## Planning to visit Sikkim? Then carrying this is must for tourists



GNS News Agency, July 25

Gangtok: All tourist vehicles entering Sikkim will now have to mandatorily carry a large garbage bag, according to an official order.

The decision has been taken to ensure community participation towards achieving the goal of environmental sustainability, said the order issued by the Tourism and Civil Aviation Department.

It will be the responsibility of the tour operators, travel agencies and vehicle drivers to inform the traveller about the use of garbage bags for waste disposal, it said. Random checks of tourist vehicles would be conducted to ensure compliance and any vehicle found violating the order, will be penalised, it added.

Awareness campaigns about cleanliness are being carried out to educate tourists about waste management and environmental sustainability, officials said. Sikkim, which is India's least populated State with over 6 lakh residents, gets more than 20 lakh visitors every year for its picturesque Himalayan destinations, they said.

## Kanwar Yatra order forces Muslim, Hindu dhaba owners to remove staff



GNS News Agency, July 25

Muzaffarnagar: For the past seven years, Brijesh Pal, a daily wager, would work at a roadside dhaba in Khatauli area of Muzaffarnagar during the two months of Shravan to help his Muslim owner manage the heavy footfall of customers, mainly the Kanwariyas. He would get Rs 400-600 and at least two meals every day for the job. This year, however, his employer, Mohammad Arsalan, asked him to look for other jobs as he cannot afford to hire extra staff, expecting that his earnings will take a hit due to the Uttar Pradesh government's orders to owners of hotels, restaurants, food carts and eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route to display the names of their owners at their outlets.

After the Muzaffarnagar Police issued the order, the Uttar Pradesh government on Friday extended the controversial order across the State. Uttarakhanda Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said similar instructions are already in place in his State as well. The order has snowballed into a controversy with opposition parties, civil society and even some ruling alliance leaders criticising it. "It was a good source of income as finding other jobs in

this season is very difficult because construction and farm work don't happen much in the monsoon season where I could get a job as a labourer," Pal said.

"I joined the 'dhaba' a week ago but now the owner has asked me to look for work elsewhere," he said. Small fruit vendors, and dhabas fear their earnings will be severely hit by the move. Arsalan, the owner of the dhaba, said he fears that Kanwariyas will not eat at his place due to his Muslim name. "My dhaba is named Baba ka Dhaba, like every third dhaba on this route. More than half of my staff are Hindus. We serve only vegetarian food here and even avoid using garlic and onion during Shravan (monsoon). Still, as the owner, I had to display my name. I have also decided to change the name of the dhaba. I fear that Kanwariyas after looking at a Muslim name will not come and eat at my place," he said. "With such limited business, I cannot afford to hire extra staff this year," Arsalan explained. Lakhs of Shiva devotees, called Kanwariyas, visit Haridwar during the Kanwar Yatra every year during 'Shravan' (monsoon) to collect water from the Ganga. The order has not just impacted the earnings of Muslim owners and their staff but also Muslim staff working in eateries owned by Hindu owners. Animesh Tyagi, who owns a roadside eatery just outside the main market in Khatauli said, "A Muslim man used to work on the tandoor at my restaurant. But due to this issue, I asked him to leave. Because people can make an issue over it. We don't want such trouble here." Tyagi said he has called another man, a Hindu this time, to work at the tandoor. A few other 'dhaba' owners also complained about the lack of specific directions in the government order on how the names are to be displayed at their outlets. "The administration has put out an order but has not made anything specific. There are no guidelines about the size and font in which the name of the owner is to be written," said Deepak Pandit, who runs a tea stall along the Kanwar Yatra route in the district.

## Poor infrastructure of Panchkula's Civil Hospital adding to patients' woes



GNS News Agency, July 25

A visit to the Sector 6 Civil Hospital in Panchkula on Sunday revealed deplorable conditions, highlighting the hospital's struggles with overcrowding and maintenance. As The Indian Express correspondents entered the hospital, an unpleasant odour filled the air. Scores of patients, including men, women, and children, were seen lying on the floor, awaiting treatment. Long queues snaked through the corridors, with many patients forced to wait for hours. Some blocks were air-conditioned, while others had to endure the intense heat of summer with only fans offering some relief. As some time passed, frustration boiled over, leading to heated arguments among those in line, who had been waiting for an extended period.

The situation worsened by the lack of seating, with the few available chairs mostly occupied, leaving many to stand or sit on the floor. The hospital's corridors were also found to be in a state of disarray, with fluid on the floor posing a slipping hazard to patients and staff. The hospital's infrastructure was also found to be in a state of disrepair, with the staircase and lift walls stained with patches of gutka and pan masala spits, adding to the overall sense of neglect and decay. Anuj, a frustrated patient who accompanied his mother for kidney stone treatment, shared his experience with the hospital. "I've been coming here frequently, and unfortunately, the staff's behaviour is sometimes rude and uncooperative," he said. "Even minor tests take an inordinate amount of time, and reports are delayed, sometimes taking a whole day to receive and then another day to get it reviewed by the doctors."

Anuj's concerns were compounded by the lack of adequate seating arrangements. He was forced to sit on

a side structure in the corridor, like many others, due to a scarcity of chairs. "It's unacceptable that a hospital of this scale doesn't have sufficient seating for its patients and their families," he added. Gurpreet Singh, a resident of Daria village in Chandigarh, has been frequently visiting the Civil Hospital in Sector 6, Panchkula, for the past three months, seeking treatment for his wife's gynaecological issues. Despite being in the prestigious PGIMER hospital in Chandigarh's proximity, Gurpreet prefers the Sector 6 hospital due to its relatively smaller patient load, which ensures more personalised attention and care. Additionally, the hospital's in-house medicine dispensary is a significant advantage, unlike PGIMER, which often leaves patients scrambling to procure prescribed medications. However, during a follow-up visit in the evening, the rush had subsided, and the queues had shortened. During the evening visit, few nurses and ward boys were seen moving around, attending to patients. Upon speaking with one of the nurses, it became clear that the hospital has various departments, each with its own set of challenges. The staff's insights provided a glimpse into the hospital's inner workings and the difficulties faced by the staff while managing with a lot of people in a day.

According to Dr Umesh Modi, Principal Medical Officer of Civil Hospital at Sector 6, Panchkula, there are a sufficient number of chairs and seating areas in the hospital. However, adding more seating would be a challenge as it would hinder the movement of stretchers and wheelchairs for other staff members. During peak hours, patients may have to queue and stand outside the OPD. Modi assured that there are enough doctors to handle the workload, but sometimes some of them need to be deployed in the field for tasks such as medical check-ups at stadiums or attending Haryana Medical Council enquiries. Regarding the unpleasant smell, the medical officer explained that the D block does not have centralised air conditioning. However, the hospital has employed three cleaners in the emergency ward to maintain cleanliness. He highlighted that the hospital has the largest emergency ward at the district level, with 50 beds operating daily. The hospital receives approximately 150-200 admissions per day, and despite having a sanctioned strength of 300 beds, the hospital manages to accommodate 370-380 admitted patients. He is optimistic that the new building under construction will help alleviate overcrowding, as the paediatric and gynaecology wards will be shifted there.

## Vaping trend in classrooms of Ludhiana rings alarm bells; schools increase vigilance after recovery of devices from children

The principal of a private school in Ludhiana was shocked when she heard the response of a parent after a vaping device was recovered from a class 9 student. "His father said 'why are you making an issue out of it? I have an entire collection of such devices in different flavours at my home. Everyone does it these days.' I was shocked," said the principal. Varinder Singh Brar, an official from the state education department said that he was worried after his daughter, a class 12 medical student in a private, told him that her friends were "forcing her to try vaping and relax" after studying for long hours. "When she told me that everyone was doing it in her batch, I was so worried that I immediately searched it for on the internet. After I read about it, I told her to stay away from it. If drugs were not enough, now we have a new addiction to protect our children from," he said.

Vaping devices are now entering classrooms and the easy availability of such machines, both offline and online are becoming an increasing cause of concern in parents and teachers. Varying in the form of a pen, a hard drive or even a geometry box, most parents and teachers are largely unable to make out the device that the students are using. Vape, or an e-cigarette, contains addictive nicotine mixed with several flavours. Unlike a cigarette, it doesn't need a fire igniter to produce the vapours. As harmful as smoking, vaping can damage lungs, cause permanent respiratory issues, damage brain cells, cause behavioral problems among adolescents and divert their focus from academics/career, experts said, adding that it can also be a gateway for students to get into alcohol and drug.

Ironically, Punjab was the first state in the country to ban e-cigarettes in 2013, but the medical practitioners, teachers and parents that The Indian Express spoke to, said that vaping in Ludhiana schools was rampant, more after Covid, and children as young as 13 (class 8 onwards) were carrying vaping devices. The device is easily available for Rs 800 to Rs 2000 and once a device is purchased, one has to refill it using flavoured pods. "We are getting cases of children of classes 8 to 12 vaping almost daily," said a senior de-addiction specialist from Ludhiana. A class 12 student of a private school in Ludhiana said, "In my class of 35 students, around 15 vape regularly. Some use very high concentration of nicotine and do it every few minutes. They either rush to the washroom or prefer to seat near windows. Once a classmate was vaping two benches behind me. I had to face social boycott in my class after I raised it with teachers."

Another student from Ludhiana added: "Students who go for coaching are offered free trial by their friends. Once three girls and two boys in class 9 were caught by the teacher after she smelled something weird. CCTVs were checked, and then they were suspended. Another class 10 student was expelled after a vape was found in his pocket. They think it's very cool and mostly do it out of peer pressure." Jaswinder Kaur Sidhu, principal of DAV Public School in Ludhiana's BRS Nagar, said that the problem increased after Covid lockdown. "As schools reopened, we noticed that students (class-9) onwards were rushing to washrooms every few minutes. We started surprise check of schoolbags. I didn't know much about it so I researched the topic and sent notes to parents to know its harmful impact. We get mixed response from parents when such devices are recovered. Some know about it, for others it comes as a shock," she said, adding that the misconception that vaping is harmless is adding to the problem. "A vape device looks like a pen or a remote control and parents fail to recognize it. Earlier we use to confiscate money if children would get cash in schools but now parents are depositing it in their e-wallets," added Sidhu. One such circular that Sidhu had issued to the parents reads: "School authorities are getting information that some students are bringing vape/e-cigarettes to school and are influencing their friends/peers to use it. Our teaching staff is regularly counselling the students about its harmful effects, searching the school bags of the students at random for confiscating the vape and informing their parents. Surprisingly, some parents admitted that it's with their consent that their ward is using it, but school cannot allow such a habit forming trend in its own premises."

"We have informed parents that a fine of Rs 2500 will be imposed if device is recovered along with three-day suspension. A repeat offence will invite rustication. Counsellors are always available if students need help," Sidhu said. Satwant Kaur Bhullar, principal of DAV Public



Children as young as thirteen are using e-cigarettes, say teachers; authorities fail to crackdown on suppliers selling banned product

School in Pakhowal, said, "A class 8 student who was caught with vape said that his friend gave it to him at a tuition. Another class 11 student was suspended. Easy access in markets needs to be checked by the government. We have increased vigilance outside washrooms, and told parents to check cupboards/bags etc secretly." Anuja Kaushal, principal of BCM Arya Model Senior Secondary School in Ludhiana, said that they have appointed support staff to keep vigil outside washrooms. "They just keep an eye on any suspicious activity but never make students uncomfortable."

Dr Navkiran Mahajan, head of psychiatry department at Dayanand Medical College & Hospital (DMCH) in Ludhiana, said that most teens admit to vaping when asked. "They think it is very normal and harmless but the concentration of nicotine in vape is way higher than a cigarette. Vaping can damage lungs as does smoking. Patients as young as 15 come for other issues such stress, anxiety but gradually open up to vaping. Vape patients also suffer from chest/respiratory issues, anxiety, irritability and their academic performance suffers. What is worse is to normalise such addiction," Dr Mahajan said.

Dr Pankaj Kumar, psychiatry professor at DMCH, said, "Vaping is a new category of addiction in Punjab which needs serious action. We are getting cases almost daily. Vape addicts are unable to concentrate, even fail to do normal conversations with confidence, get anxiety. One such patient tried to commit suicide after his parents refused him money to buy a vape. Supportive treatment, counselling and therapies are the only treatment." Dr Rupesh Chaudhary, de-addiction specialist at Arora Neuro Centre in Ludhiana, said, "Vape is too toxic and these days some suppliers are also mixing cannabis in vape. We have 15-20 cases in which parents got their children for counselling. Side-effects include aggression, insomnia, loss of appetite, tremor of hands, anger, irritability, lung issues etc. Most are doing it for leisure, during parties and due to peer pressure."

Failure to crackdown: Data in Lok Sabha shows "zero" recoveries in Punjab. Even as the Punjab had become the first state to ban e-cigarettes under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act in 2013, and the online sale was also banned in 2016, the curbs have remained on paper and successive Punjab governments have failed to crackdown on the underbelly vape market supplying devices to children at any price. The sale of e-cigarettes and like devices was prohibited nationwide under the Prohibition of e-cigarettes Act (PECA), 2019. In February this year, the issue was also raised by Congress MP from Assam, Pradyut Bordoloi in the Lok Sabha who asked for details on the action taken by the Centre/states. According to the data presented by the union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the House, there were "zero" violations and nil recovery of e-cigarettes in Punjab in 2023-24. Dr Jaskiran Kaur, nodal officer, National Tobacco Control programme, Punjab, said that Punjab was the first state to write to online sites such as Flipkart and Amazon to ban the sale of e-cigarettes and to issue ban orders. "Health department can only create awareness. Schools need to check students at their own level. To crackdown on suppliers is the work of police and enforcement agencies. We can only issue challans worth Rs 200 if someone is found smoking publicly including e-cigarettes," she said.

## Revamp in store for Civil Lines to Kashmere Gate Ring Road stretch

GNS News Agency, July 25

delhi Ring Road, delhi Ring Road stretch, beautification of sidewalks, North Delhi, Central Delhi startingdian express newsThe stretch, which is about 4.5-km long, connects North Delhi with Central Delhi starting from Chandgi Ram Akhara to Nigambodh Ghat, near Kashmere Gate)A key section of the Ring Road, stretching from Civil Lines-Metcalf Road to Kashmere Gate ISBT, is all set to undergo a revamp, officials said. Besides, beautification of sidewalks on both sides of the road would be carried out, they added. The stretch, which is about 4.5-km long, connects North Delhi with Central Delhi starting from Chandgi Ram Akhara to Nigambodh Ghat, near Kashmere Gate ISBT.

According to senior Public Works Department (PWD) officials, the stretch is due for repair and strengthening. "It is one of the key Ring Road stretches because not only it connects North Delhi with Central Delhi, it also connects VIP routes such as CM house, L-G house, Delhi University North Campus, ISBT, Hanuman Temple besides ITO, Pragati Maidan, Sarai Kale Khan, and Mathura Road," said an official.

"Currently, the road has many potholes and cracks. Besides, bituminous layers are peeling off and this adds to the already heavily packed stretch... We have conducted a thorough assessment of this stretch with the assistance of experts, following which it has been decided to repair it... Once the road is strengthened, it will be helpful in reducing traffic jams and giving a safe and smooth ride to commuters," said another official. Officials said the revamp of the stretch has got financial approval from the PWD minister in March, adding the project could not start due to the implementation of Model Code of



Conduct ahead of Lok Sabha polls.

"Now, tenders have been floated. The bidding process and work of award will take about one month... Once the work is awarded, the repair work will begin by September," said an official. As part of repair and strengthening work, the main carriageways of the stretch will be relaid with new bituminous layers. Besides, all the potholes, cracks and breaks along with Central verges and sideways will be repaired. Officials said the contractor which will be awarded the work will also maintain the stretch — bituminous work for five years and thermoplastic paints for two years. Besides, the defect liability period of the work will be for 12 months. The stretch is used by more than one lakh commuters using vehicles such as cars, bikes, trucks, tempos and buses. Besides, on Tuesdays, the stretch is heavily packed especially during the evening hours as large number of devotees visit the Hanuman Temple. Officials said this stretch is part of the redevelopment of 60 key roads being undertaken by the PWD in three phases on priority.

## Delhi government releases nearly Rs 100 crore for 12 colleges affiliated to DU

GNS News Agency, July 25

Delhi University, DU fund released, delhi govt, Education Minister Atishi, Union Budget, delhi budget expectations, DU affiliated colleges, Indian express news Last year in April, the government released Rs 100 crore in the first quarter for the 12 colleges. The Delhi government on Sunday released about Rs 100 crore for 12 colleges, which are financed by it and are affiliated with Delhi University (DU), as part of the funds for the second quarter approved by Education Minister Atishi. In the upcoming Budget, a provision of about Rs 400 crore has been made by the Delhi government for these colleges for the financial year 2024-25, as per an official notification. Last year in April, the government released Rs 100 crore in the first quarter for the 12 colleges.

The Indian Express had reported in January that the Delhi government had said it would only clear funding once these institutes were de-affiliated from DU and became part of one of Delhi's state universities. The statement came after DU Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh wrote to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, saying the colleges would remain with the varsity and the state should continue funding them. Citing reports from the Directorate of Audit, Atishi earlier told The Indian Express that the special audit conducted in 2020 on six of the 12 colleges "unequivocally highlighted numerous instances of grave irregularities and procedural lapses of the 'highest levels' in expenditure exceeding hundreds of crores." "Let alone the approval, there should be an inquiry against these colleges. The Delhi government has directed strong action against the administration of these colleges for creating illegal posts, including recovering salaries since 2015 of illegally appointed staff mem-



bers," Atishi said.

"These 12 colleges have consistently received an annual grant in aid exceeding Rs 300 crore from the Government of NCT of Delhi for several years. They must be held accountable for any misutilisation of funds," she added. As per the notification on Sunday, Atishi stated, "Along with schools, the Kejriwal government focused on higher education and opened three new universities and expanded the existing universities. The 12 Delhi University colleges — fully funded by the Delhi government — play an important role in higher education in Delhi." "Many issues of financial mismanagement have come to the fore in these colleges in the last few years, but the Kejriwal government has decided that the teachers and students of those colleges should not suffer due to the mistakes of the management and administration. Keeping in mind the welfare of teachers, their medical benefits, pension benefits which were stuck due to financial mismanagement, Delhi Government is releasing a fund of Rs 100 crore in the second quarter for these 12 colleges of Delhi University," she added.

## Mughal-era bridge that lends its name to a busy flyover, key drain



GNS News Agency, July 25

From a key flyover in South Delhi to a drain notorious for overflowing during monsoon, making its way into people's homes and shops this season, Barapullah lends its name to two iconic landmarks of the Capital. But the original Barapullah is not far from these two: A 17th-century stone bridge, it stands quietly under the Barapullah flyover as a sluggish Barapullah drain passes underneath.

Once a thoroughfare, it now houses a bustling and congested Sabzi Mandi (vegetable market) in Block D of Jangpura. Educationist and reformer Sir Syed Ahmed Khan describes the bridge as "very beautifully constructed and located four miles south of Shahjahanabad on the way to Faridabad near an inn" in his book *Asar-us-Sanadid* published in 1847. The bridge is said to have been built by Mirhan Agha, the chief eunuch of the court of Mughal Emperor Jahangir in 1611-12, according to Zafar Hasan's book *Monuments of Delhi*. The bridge is protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Commenting on its significance, author and filmmaker Sohail Hashmi tells *The Indian Express*, "This must have been an important passage in its time as it falls right in the area connecting Nizamuddin area to Mathura." On the history of the drain, he says, "There used to be around 10-12 streams flowing from the Aravallis, carrying fresh water to the Yamuna. These would join behind Nizamuddin and form the Barapullah drain. Sadly, in-

stead of fresh water, it carries untreated sewage into the river now."

Congress leader and former mayor Farhad Suri says the area once used to house a canal built by Sher Shah Suri who ruled Delhi in the mid 16th Century. "The bridge was later built to ease travel from Agra, the then Mughal capital, to Delhi which the emperor used to frequent to call on Humayun's tomb and Nizamuddin Dargah," he tells *The Indian Express*. "In its time, this was considered the most beautiful road in Delhi, lined by trees on both sides. Like a boulevard.... you can say." In her book *The Forgotten Cities of Delhi*, author and historian Rana Safvi writes, "The original bridge had 11 arches and the name came from its 12 (baarah) pillars... It was made of lime mortar and stone, and is now an unkempt market near the Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station. The bridge itself is in poor condition..." Hashmi says the bridge used to carry traffic on it well into the 1980s before a slipway was built parallel to it to ease congestion.

Now, around 400 years after it was built, the bridge is home to a market selling everything under the sun — from fresh meat to shoes to fruits and vegetables to garments. When asked about the historic bridge, most shopkeepers draw a blank. Flyover The sabzi mandi with a 400-year-old pillar seen in the background. (Express photo by Deepika Singh) Rameen Khan, founder of City Tales, which conducts heritage walks in Delhi, says Barapullah is "the perfect example of the apathy that we have towards functional heritage structures once they lose their purpose." He tells *The Indian Express*, "Once upon a time, this bridge was so important with a tributary of Yamuna flowing through it. Now, it is surrounded by neglect and apathy. The bridge gives its name to the extremely busy modern flyover. Lakhs use it and still don't know how it got its name while the defunct Barapulla dies a slow death." As hawkers shout "bhindi, taroi, lauki (okra, ridge gourd, bottle gourd)" and patrons nudge the butcher next door to cut them a premium piece, the bridge continues to serve as an object of utility and convenience, hosting a market catering to dwellers of nearby slums as well as upscale residents of Jangpura and Nizamuddin East.

## Granted relief by Supreme Court, Noida buyers bearing brunt of subvention scheme slam builders, banks

GNS News Agency, July 25

Noida homebuyers, Subvention Plan, subvention scheme, Noida builders, Supreme Court, bank notices, police action against buyers, flat booked under Subvention Plan, what is NEFOWA, Indian express news NEFOWA, a body of flat buyers, said buyers in projects such as Earth Infrastructure, Airwil, Unibera, Amrapali, Unitech, Jaypee, Rudra Builders etc. are "victims of the irregularities" in the Subvention scheme. When Dheeraj Sharma, 44, migrated from Firozabad in Uttar Pradesh to take up a private job in Noida two decades ago, he had one dream: a home of his own with dedicated rooms for his two children. In 2015, he booked a 2-BHK flat in Amrapali's Centurian Park in Greater Noida by availing the "Subvention Plan".

Nine years on, Sharma is yet to see a trace of the promised house for which he had paid Rs 7 lakh. On the other hand, the last few years have been a nightmare for him with the banks bombarding him with notices, asking him to pay the remaining amount. For homebuyers like Sharma, a recent order from the Supreme Court has brought some relief with the court directing the bank not to take any coercive action against the buyers who booked a flat under Subvention Plan and are yet to get possession of their flats. Under the subvention scheme, the banks or financial institutions would disburse the sanctioned amount directly to the builder who is supposed to pay the pre-EMIs or full EMIs until the possession of the flat is handed over to the home buyers. However, in many cases across the NCR, the builders left the projects midway, leading to alleged harassment of homebuyers by the banks as the loans were taken in their name. Narrating his ordeal, Sharma said, "I bought the flat for Rs 30 lakh. I did not have the money, but I wanted a flat for my children at any cost. The builder told me about a subvention plan and I thought that it could be a good opportunity as it will give me three years' time to arrange the money and the builder will pay the EMI (interest part only) till the delivery of the flat. They got a loan of Rs 17.80 lakh in my name. A total of Rs 21 lakh loan was sanctioned on my flat. But the builder paid the EMI only for six months and disappeared..." said Sharma, who works at a private university in Noida.

"I am paying Rs 15,000 rent every month. At the same time, the banks are sending me notices, demanding payment of dues. They have declared my account a non-performing asset (NPA). Once I needed to take a loan but could not borrow a penny because the bank spoiled my CIBIL score. Now the banks are saying that I have a liability of Rs 55 lakh and will have to pay Rs 66,000 per month as EMI to clear the dues. I don't even make that much money every month, how will I be able to repay this loan?" said Sharma. On the Supreme Court



order, he said, "Of course, the stay order is a relief for buyers like us. But our hope is that the court gives a clear decision in this, which has a clear roadmap to solve the problems of this subvention scheme." Like Sharma, 53-year-old Rakesh Bhatia, a Delhi resident and government employee, had booked a flat in Greater Noida west under a government scheme — Aadarsh Awaas Yojna — under Subvention Plan. Around a year after the booking, he got to know that the project never existed and was scrapped in absence of permission from the authority.

"I booked this flat in 2016 and a loan of Rs 36 lakh was sanctioned; around Rs 12 lakh was disbursed to the builder. Though it was a government scheme, it was being developed by Amrapali, which has now been taken over by NBCC after the builder went bankrupt. The project was to be developed in three phases, but the builder sold the flat for the fourth and fifth phase also. My flat was in the fourth phase and after around a year, we got to know that the builder was misleading us," said Bhatia.

He further said, "The builders had created this scheme to take advantage of the helplessness of the common man and with the connivance of the banks, crores of rupees were lost. Many a times, people do not have enough money to make the full payment in one go. So in this scheme, the buyers were in a position to save some money and pay the EMI and get the flat after three years. But this is where we were cheated..." NEFOWA, a body of flat buyers, said buyers in projects such as Earth Infrastructure, Airwil, Unibera, Amrapali, Unitech, Jaypee, Rudra Builders etc. are "victims of the irregularities" in the Subvention scheme. "This is one of the biggest scams happening in broad daylight in the name of buyers. The banks, in collusion with builders, have loaned crores of money without due process and after they (builders) ran away, buyers are facing the brunt," said Abhishek Kumar, President of NEFOWA. "RBI guidelines have been flouted at every step. This is a big relief, the stay from the SC but will the builders be prosecuted for cheating the buyers and banks as well? How can they go against the agreement and destroy the lives of thousands of buyers?" he added.

## 8 arrested for duping Delhi man of Rs 91 lakh with promise of higher returns in trading

GNS News Agency, July 25

A WhatsApp group, a promise of higher returns in stock and cryptocurrency trading, and an alleged fraud of Rs 91 lakh — Delhi Police has busted a gang and arrested eight men, including a contractual bank staff, in a case of cybercrime. Hemant Tiwari, DCP, Intelligence Fusion, and Strategic Operations (IFSO) unit, said that Sachin Bansal, the complainant, alleged he was cheated of Rs 91 lakh on the pretext of providing "handsome returns" in stocks and crypto trading. "The complainant was added to a WhatsApp group wherein perpetrators were giving stock recommendations, and upon persuasion of the accused, Bansal opened an account on a website — <http://www.yotemog.com> — and transferred Rs 91 lakh to 19 different accounts. After inquiry, a case of criminal conspiracy was lodged." During probe, the alleged accounts were frozen. One of the bank accounts had a balance of Rs 46 lakh in it, said officials. The accused have been identified as Ajay, Mohit, Shankar (contractual bank employee), Partyaksh Koshar, Manish Jawla, Shrayance Pandit, and Dinesh, who would open bank accounts on fictitious addresses and sell them to other cyber fraudsters,



as per officials. Meanwhile, the Delhi Police was investigating another case of cyber fraud where they had identified one such account and subsequently frozen it. The accused allegedly sent an e-mail to the bank manager, impersonating the investigative officer of the IFSO unit and asking him to immediately "de-freeze" the said account. "During the investigation, all suspected accounts involved in the crime were frozen by the bank on the directions of the police. After analysis of bank accounts, it was found that one of the accounts, which was registered in the name of Gaurav Singh, had Rs 46 lakh as available balance, and the same was immediately seized,"

## As student numbers dip, Kota's luxury hostel project turns into a 'ghost town'



GNS News Agency, July 25

Around 17 km from the hubbub of Kota, where lakhs of JEE and NEET aspirants spend years in hope of walking the corridors of India's top engineering and medical institutes, a Rs 1,500-crore luxury hostel project in the Rajasthan city has started resembling a ghost town. 'To-Let' and 'For Sale' posters dot the nearly 300 buildings today, which sprang up in Coral Park on Baran Road over the past five years in response to plans to move Kota's numerous coaching institutes to this government-allotted education zone.

Since January this year, investors of the ambitious Coral Park have been feeling the pinch due to a 30-40% dip in admissions in Kota, which is usually home to over 2 lakh JEE and NEET aspirants annually. ALLEN Career Institute in Kota, which had 1,25,000 students last year, says it has just 82,000 students this time, while Resonance Kota has 7,000 admissions this year, against last year's 8,800. Around 4,000 hostels or "residencies" and 40,000 paying guests (PGs) in Kota are dependent on these aspirants for their livelihood. In fact, almost every residential property here has been converted to a rental accommodation charging about Rs 7,000 per student per month, including food. Realtor Sunil Aggarwal, the president of Coral Park Society and owner of two hostels, including one in Coral Park, says his monthly income has dipped from around Rs 3 lakh to Rs 30,000 this year.

When coaching institutes like ALLEN and Physics Wallah first opened shop on Baran Road around 2019, he says there were no hostels in the area. After multiple meetings, investors decided to build 300 luxury hostel buildings in Coral Park. Spread over 68 bigha, most buildings are owned by a single owner and have 40-70 rental units (a room and an attached washroom) each. On the ground floor is a common dining room. The rent, locals say, varies depending on the facilities — AC, bigger room, balcony, television, a kitchenette — availed. Designed solely for coaching aspirants, Aggarwal says only 8,000 of 22,000 rooms are occupied at present. As per 2023 official estimates, Kota's coaching industry and its ancillary businesses were worth nearly Rs 12,000 crore. On an average, a student pays about Rs 1 lakh annually as coaching fee in Kota, besides boarding and lodging expenses.

Even shopkeepers at Coral Park have been affected. Sitting in front of their shops, Manoj Singh and Rajesh Saini say they open at 9 am each day, but usually make their first sale only by evening. They say they had decided to rent shops in this "up-and-coming area" in 2019. "Back then, shop rentals here were around Rs

30,000. Since January, most owners have cut the rent in half. Hostels charging Rs 15,000 per room earlier are now renting them for just Rs 3,000. We will vacate our shops soon if the situation remains the same," says Singh.

Blaming coaching centres, society president Aggarwal says, "Their owners are investing in centres in other states instead of helping us. We will go bankrupt if students stop coming to Kota." District Collector Ravindra Goswami says a decline in students has impacted the city's economy. "Nearly 70% of the city's economy is dependent on coaching. Teachers, maids, shopkeepers, labourers — almost everyone here is somehow dependent on the coaching industry. We are hopeful that things will improve," he told *The Indian Express*. Even small business owners are suffering. While a retail stationery shop owner says his business has been operating at barely "30%" since January, a wholesaler said his sales had dropped to "just 50%". The situation is equally bleak in the nearly 500 messes in Kota, where students can grab a meal for Rs 100. Lata Verma, a cook at a mess in Jawahar Nagar, says four of her colleagues were fired due to lower student turnout, while Kamala Devi, a house help, says most domestic helps, cooks and over 40,000 others in the unorganised sector are scared of being out of work by next year. In many hostels, owners have fired wardens and cooks due to low occupancies.

Naveen Mittal, president, Hostel Association of Kota, says the decline in student numbers was "evident" from February this year. "By February, we would get about 20 calls a day enquiring about hostel accommodations, but we got barely two calls per day this year. Hostel business is down by nearly 40%. Many hostel owners here lease their buildings, but lessees are struggling this year due to lack of occupancy," he says. While many reasons are being floated to explain this drop, institutes cited two main issues: delay in NEET results due to the ongoing court cases over the recent paper leaks and opening of multiple coaching centres in other states. The decline has also been attributed to the Central government prohibiting coaching institutes from admitting students younger than 16 years of age or those who have not cleared Class 10. Earlier, Class 6 students would move to Kota to prepare for NEET/JEE. R K Verma, founder and managing director of Resonance Kota, told *The Indian Express*, "NEET results have impacted admissions in Kota. Besides, many institutes have opened centres in big cities, where their intake is 10,000-20,000 students. Students suicides in Kota have given the city a bad name but I believe that every institute here maintains a safe environment for aspirants since our livelihoods depend on them." An employee of a coaching institute that has opened "centres in 65 cities in 15 years" says parents now prefer to send their children to local institutes and not Kota due to reports on student suicides. "We have also tied-up with schools, where our faculty teaches students on the school premises. This is helping keep the business afloat," says the employee. Yet, employees at two Kota-based institutes claimed their salaries had been cut around 30% on grounds of "fewer admissions" this year. An employee adds, "Every business sees a peak, followed by a decline. This may well be the decline of Kota. While the coaching business remains profitable, those who have hitched their wagon to these centres alone will be the worst affected."

## Over 2 years after Pune man goes missing, his family see reunion hopes — in an ad

GNS News Agency, July 25

Over 2 yrs after Pune man goes missing, his family see reunion hopes — in an ad. Dnyaneshwar Tambe and (right) the ad with his photo, according to his family. Dnyaneshwar Vishnu Tambe's family have not seen or heard of him since the 63-year-old left his home in Pune's Shirur taluka in December 2021. Two days ago, their hopes of meeting him again were rekindled after, according to them, he appeared in an advertisement on the Instagram account of the ruling Shiv Sena. The 'Mahayuti' government in Maharashtra, which, apart from Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena, comprises the BJP and the NCP (Ajit Pawar), last week launched the "Mukhyamantri Teerth Darshan Yojana", which provides a subsidy of up to Rs 30,000 to senior citizens for pilgrimage to prominent religious destinations in the state and outside. With Assembly elections due later this year, the state government and CM Shinde's party have been aggressively publicising the scheme.

It was one such advertisement that took Tambe's son, Bharat, by surprise on Thursday. He says a friend sent him a screenshot of a WhatsApp status someone on his contacts list had posted. "I saw the screenshot and couldn't believe it. It was my father in the ad of the Teerth Darshan Yojana," said Bharat, who runs an eatery in Shikrapur, about 25 kilometres from Varude village, where he lives. Saying his family had grown sceptical of Tambe's well-being after he remained untraceable for three years, Bharat urged CM Shinde "to oblige me by finding my father and reuniting him with us." "Now we know for sure that he is alive and is well. Our hopes of a reunion are high now," he said. The police have already begun searching for Tambe. Bharat lodged a missing complaint on Saturday night after the cops approached him, said Inspector Deeppratan Gaikwad of Shikrapur police station. "The family had never lodged a missing report about Dnyaneshwar Tambe in the past," Gaikwad said.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Prashant Dhole said, "When we interacted with the family members, they told us that Dnyaneshwar Tambe has left home multiple times in the past and he used to return home on his own. Last time he left home during the Covid-19 outbreak in December 2021. But the family members believed that he would return again. So they did not inform the police or lodged any missing report about him before." (Tambe's) family members said that after leaving home, he often visited places of pilgrimage. They suspect he now went to the wari procession where his photograph may have been clicked. We have formed teams to search for him now," Dhole added.

According to Bharat, his father had a habit of leaving home without informing his family but would always return "within a fortnight or sometimes a couple of months". The last time, however, when Tambe did not come back for several months, Bharat started looking for him, contacting friends and relatives, but in vain. After the advertisement, traced to the Shiv Sena's Instagram handle, Bharat contacted a local journalist and the news soon went viral, even drawing in the Opposition Congress, which criticised the state government. Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar, in an X post, said it was "a crime to use a photograph of a citizen in this manner illegally



on the advertisement, without seeking their permission". Slamming the Mahayuti government, he said its schemes as well as advertisements were "hollow". The state government denied it issued the advertisement featuring the missing man. "The state government has not posted this ad on any of its social media accounts. It has also not been issued via the government in any form," said a statement issued through the Director General of Information and Public Relations. The Shiv Sena has now deleted the post. Party spokesperson Naresh Mhaske said: "As far as I am aware, the advertisement was issued by the government. But if it was our social media team that designed the post, we would surely try to trace the source of the photo so that the elderly man can be traced." Meanwhile, the police are also trying to find out the source of Tambe's photograph in the advertisement.

## Beer in cans: Aluminium can unit to be set up in Telangana

GNS News Agency, July 25

Hyderabad: Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu said Ball Beverage Packaging Limited, a company involved in supplying aluminium cans to the beer, soft drink and perfume industry, had evinced interest in setting up a production unit in the State with an investment of Rs.700 crore with employment to be generated for about 500 people.

Ball Beverage Packaging Limited Head of Corporate Affairs Ganesan met the Minister at Secretariat here on Sunday. During the meeting, Ganesan explained the company's expansion plan to the Minister and in turn he suggested him to submit a complete investment plan. The Minister assured him that the State government would extend all support, including providing necessary land and other infrastructure for the company.

At present, the beers being sold in cans in the State were being bottled in Maharashtra. The use of tin cans here was less than two percent. On the contrary, the use of cans in the packaging of beer in Karnataka and Maharashtra was about 25 percent, he said. To facilitate bottling beer in aluminium cans in the State, a few changes had to be introduced in the Excise policy. The same would be discussed with Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Excise Minister Jupally Krishna Rao, he said.

## Imran Khan in death cell or caged in luxury with exer-cycle, private kitchen



GNS News Agency, July 25

Former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, held in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail, claimed he was "caged like a terrorist" in a death cell. The Pakistani government trashed his claims, listing all the provisions that he had in jail, including an exer-cycle, a walking gallery and a kitchen, which provided him with a "royal life". A recent interview of Imran Khan with a British newspaper sparked a debate on whether the former Prime Minister was "caged like a terrorist" or receiving "royal treatment" in a jail. While Imran Khan claimed he was in a death cell, the government said he was being confined in a "presidential suite". The 71-year-old has been imprisoned at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail since August 2023, after he was convicted in three of the several cases filed against him, including the Toshakhana case, the cipher case, and the Iddat case. Khan's term in the Toshakhana case continues, while he was acquitted by the Islamabad High Court in the cipher case in June, and Iddat case. However, while he is still confined in the Iddat case, the Pakistani political class has been embroiled in a heated debate over the prison conditions of the former prime minister. The debate started when Khan claimed that he was being treated like a "terrorist" in jail. In a recent interview with the British newspaper, The Sunday Times, Imran Khan painted a dire picture of his prison cell. He alleged that he was being denied basic rights and was being treated harshly, likening his conditions to those of a terrorist. Khan's claims sparked widespread outrage and concern among his supporters, who saw this as a clear example of political persecution. "I am confined in a 7 feet by 8 feet death cell, typically reserved for terrorists to ensure they have no contact with anyone," Khan told the British newspaper.

"It is solitary confinement with barely any space to move. I am under constant surveillance by the agencies, being recorded 24/7, and I am denied basic prison and human rights such as visitation," added Khan. Khan's interview with The Sunday Times was seen as a significant development, as it marked one of the few times he had spoken publicly about his prison conditions since his arrest. The interview was facilitated by his lawyers, who managed to bypass the strict security measures in place at Adiala Jail, where Khan is being held, reported the

Karachi-based newspaper Dawn.

**GOVERNMENT HITS BACK AT KHAN'S CLAIMS** The Pakistani government of the Muslim League (Nawaz) was quick to respond to Khan's claims, dismissing them as baseless and exaggerated. The government held that Christina Lamb, the interviewer, was mistaken, and held that Imran Khan was rather enjoying "royal treatment" in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail. In a statement, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar asserted that the former prime minister was being treated fairly and that his prison conditions were in line with those of other high-profile prisoners. The government emphasised that Khan was not being subjected to any undue hardship and that his claims were merely a ploy to garner sympathy and attention.

This convicted person lives in a 'presidential suite'. He has an exercise bike, a walking gallery, and a private kitchen at his disposal, along with a lavish menu of his choice, according to Tarar, reported newspaper Dawn. The federal minister also said that Imran Khan holds three meetings every week with his lawyers, friends, family and political leaders in the 'presidential suite', where he is confined. THE PHOTOS OF IMRAN KHAN'S PRISON CELL

To support its longstanding stand on Khan's living condition, the federal government in Islamabad submitted detailed reports and photographs of Khan's prison cell to the Supreme Court in June. The six photos that the government submitted showed that Khan's cell was well-furnished and equipped with basic amenities, contradicting his allegations of harsh treatment. The government's submission sought to show that Khan was not being mistreated and that his prison conditions were reasonable. The images showed what appeared to be Imran's prison cell, with the description highlighting amenities such as an LED television, room cooler, study desk, and chair, reported Dawn.

The second image displayed an "exclusive gallery" for the PTI supreme to walk in twice daily. In the third image, a cupboard stocked with cooking ingredients and utensils were seen. The fourth image revealed a collection of books available for the PTI founder's reading. They included David Gilmour's 'The British in India' and Nelson Mandela's autobiography, 'Long Walk to Freedom'. The fifth image showed exercise equipment and a "stretching belt" for Imran's physical fitness, while the sixth image featured a bookshelf filled with more than 30 books. Earlier, Khan had claimed he was in solitary confinement, without even a library. In May, photos of the jailed leader went viral on social media when he attended Supreme Court proceedings from the Adiala Jail through a video call, reported Pakistani newspaper The Express Tribune. Despite the government's claims and counter-claims, the debate rages on, leaving Pakistanis to wonder if Imran Khan is truly "caged like a terrorist" or living a lifestyle befitting a reality TV star in a prison drama.

## Trump doesn't hate you: Elon Musk vs Indian-American billionaire in X debate



GNS News Agency, July 25 Indian-American billionaire Vinod Khosla and Tesla CEO Elon Musk clashed over their differing views on Donald Trump's presidential candidacy after US President Joe Biden dropped out of the 2024 race and endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic nominee.

Khosla, an OpenAI investor and Democratic donor, called for an "open convention" to select a more moderate candidate, suggesting Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro as alternatives to Harris. He said America needed a president who neither swings to the far-right nor is too woke. "Time to have an open convention and get a more moderate candidate who can easily beat real Donald Trump. Gov Whitmer and @GovernorShapiro would be a great thing for America not held hostage between MAGA extremists and DEI extremism. Unique opportunity for a better moderate path. Every socially liberal, climate and fiscal voter should want it to balance our approach," Khosla tweeted. Musk, who recently endorsed Trump, responded by urging Khosla to support Trump and his running mate JD Vance. "Come on, Vinod. Trump/Vance LFG!!" he tweeted. Khosla strongly rejected Musk's suggestion, citing Trump's personal values and policies as reasons for his opposition. "Hard for me to support someone with no values, lies, cheats, rapes, demeans women, hates immigrants like me," he replied.

"He may cut my taxes or reduce some regulation but that is no reason to accept depravity in his personal values. Do you want President who will set back climate by a decade in his first year? Do you want his example for your kids as values?" Khosla said. Musk countered by saying that Trump does not hate Khosla and that his ad-



ministration would promote meritocracy and individual freedoms. "He doesn't hate you. In fact, I think he likes you. Meet him and find out for yourself. How many times have you read something in the media where you know the real story, but what they printed was diabolically false? Well, it's way worse in politics, which is a blood sport," the X boss said.

Acknowledging that Trump is not "without flaws", Musk asserted that America needs "an administration that is more likely to be meritocratic and promote individual freedoms over the heavy hand of government. Many years ago, that was the Democratic Party, but now the pendulum has swung to the Republican Party". Khosla responded by agreeing on the importance of meritocracy and individual freedoms but expressed concerns about Trump's stance on climate change and his potential impact on American leadership and moral authority.

"Agree on not trusting media. Agree on meritocratic and promote individual freedoms. But abandon climate and 'drill baby drill'? Be MAGA and abandon NATO and American leadership and moral authority? I was a socially liberal registered fiscal Republican till climate made me switch to Independent (sic)," he said. In another tweet, Khosla asked Musk if he would be "willing [to] forgive him for trying to subvert democracy on Jan 6 and push for insurrection just to win?" Musk did not reply to that post. A storied venture capitalist and co-founder of Sun Microsystems, Vinod Khosla hosted a fundraiser for Biden in May and previously endorsed Hillary Clinton in 2016. He has steered clear of endorsing Kamala Harris, instead calling for an "open convention" and a "ranked choice voting" to determine the "will of the people".

## Biden's historic move to drop out of White House race, here's what led to blow-up

GNS News Agency, July 25

Joe Biden ended his re-election campaign following a series of strategic missteps and a poor debate performance, raising concerns about his capability to run for another term. Here's what ultimately led to his decision. US President Joe Biden's decision to end his re-election campaign on Sunday followed a series of strategic missteps by his campaign team and White House aides. Biden's halting performance at the June 27 presidential debate against Republican candidate Donald Trump, pushed even some of his closest allies to question whether he could endure a full campaign. The last eight days of the US presidential campaign have proved a drama of epic proportions. Within days, Joe Biden became the first sitting President to stand down from a possible reelection since Lyndon B Johnson in 1968. In April this year, Joe Biden told radio show host Howard Stern that he'd debate Trump. News agency Reuters reported Biden was tired and dragged after he flew to Europe twice and to the West Coast over a 14-day period before taking just a few days to rest at his vacation home in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. On June 21, Biden and his aides headed to Camp David for focused preparation sessions.

On June 27, during the US presidential debate, Biden stumbled over his words and lost his train of thought. Officials told reporters Biden was sick with a cold at the time of the debate. Trump repeated a series of well-worn, glaring falsehoods during the 90-minute debate, including claims that he actually had won the 2020 election. Biden failed to refute them, leaving sentences and thoughts unfinished. A day after the presidential debate, Biden said he knew he was not a young man and



admitted his poor performance. On July 2, Biden said he nearly fell asleep on stage. Calls for Biden to step down began in the hours after the debate. Calls from Biden aides to worried Democrats facing re-election campaigns who saw their political futures flashing before their eyes wouldn't start until days later. On July 13, Trump was shot while giving a speech in Pennsylvania. The bullet grazed his ear, bloodied his face, and photos of the former president holding up his fist in defiance were shown widely. Days later, Biden was diagnosed with Covid-19 while campaigning in Nevada. Recovering at his Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, home, he would be left with time, alone and in isolation, to decide whether and how to end his campaign. On July 21, Joe Biden ended his re-election campaign after fellow Democrats lost faith in his mental acuity and ability to beat Trump. He announced his decision in a letter posted on social media, and in a subsequent post, he endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris to be their party's candidate.

## Record-breaking heat forecast for western US, wildfire threat looms large

GNS News Agency, July 25

As per some projections, temperatures may touch 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43 Celsius) in parts of states like California, Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, the National Weather Service said. Heatwave-like conditions to hit western US states like California, Arizona, Nevada, Oregon and Washington this week as per weather forecast.

The western part of the United States is sweating through another round of record-breaking heat as a wave is forecast to produce triple-digit temperatures in cities from Southern California to northern Idaho through the middle of the week. Some 30 million people are under heat advisories or excessive heat warnings in effect through Wednesday, with some projections topping 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43 Celsius), the National Weather Service said on Sunday. Those states include parts of California, Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. Central Oregon and parts of Washington are also under elevated threats of wildfires due to hot and dry weather conditions, the NWS said. Firefighters are battling multiple wildfires in Oregon, including the Lone Rock Fire that has scorched more than 116,000 acres (470 square kilometers) in the northern part of the state, according to the Oregon State Fire Marshal.

About 40 per cent has been contained. Thunderstorms moving through the state could make the response more difficult, officials said. The Malheur County Sheriff's Office on Saturday ordered some residents to evacuate

due to the Durkee Fire spreading in the eastern part of Oregon. In western Canada, wildfires in Alberta and British Columbia also forced evacuations over the weekend. Research shows fossil fuel-driven climate change is helping to produce dangerous heat waves across the world. Officials are warning of major health risks associated with extreme heat, including heat stroke. "At least for the next four days it looks pretty hot across a good part of the western US, and at least in the next two days there's definitely potential for some record high temperatures across parts of interior Pacific Northwest and down towards the desert southwest", NWS meteorologist Bob Oravec said. The northwest part of the US will experience the largest weather anomalies, including much of Washington state where temperatures are 20 degrees higher than usual this time of year, according to Oravec. Major cities like Seattle and Portland will be spared the extreme heat. Temperatures are forecast to climb above 100 F (38 C) and break records in cities like Yakima, Spokane and Mack in Washington. Boise, Idaho could tie a record of 107 F (42 C), Oravec said. Much of the West Coast will see temperatures that are about 10 degrees above normal. Las Vegas could tie a record of 113 F (45 C) on Sunday, while Death Valley National Park in California is expected to rise above 120 F (49 C). "For Monday, the records drop off, like the potential to break records, but it doesn't mean it's going to be any significantly cooler. They're still going to be well above average across the same general areas", Oravec said.

## 20,000 protesters rally against overtourism in Spain's Mallorca

GNS News Agency, July 25

Around 20,000 protesters took to the streets of Palma in Mallorca to demand changes to the current tourism model. Demonstrators argue that overtourism is damaging the island's resources and quality of life. Some 20,000 protesters hit the streets of Palma in Mallorca Sunday for a mass demonstration against overtourism, demanding changes to a touristic model they say is harming the Spanish Mediterranean island.

Under the slogan "Let's change course and set limits on tourism", the demonstrators formed a sea of brightly-coloured flags and banners as they surged through the city's most visited streets, in the latest in a wave of mass anti-tourism protests in Spain. "Your luxury, our misery," read one sign, while another placard said: "This isn't tourismophobia, it's numbers: 1,232,014 residents, 18 million tourists." The protests were called by some 80 organisations and social groups who want limits to be placed on excessive tourism in the Balearic Isles, whose main three islands are Mallorca, Menorca and Ibiza.

They say the current model of tourism has stretched public services to breaking point, harms natural resources and makes local access to housing increasingly difficult. Organisers claimed that 50,000 joined the protests, with police estimating 20,000 participants. Earlier, the central government's delegation in the islands had said 12,000. Last year, a record 17.8 million people visited the Balearic Islands, from mainland Spain and abroad, and the figures are expected to be even higher this year. The demonstration followed another mass protest across the archipelago's three main islands at the end of



May, in which many thousands of marchers hit the streets to demand steps to limit overtourism under the slogan: "Our islands are not for sale." "From a practical point of view, it is a legitimate economic activity. But as an economic activity, it should ultimately be regulated in the same way as hotels," said architect and urban planning expert Jose Maria Ezquiaga, who told TVE public television he believes tourist rental flats should require the approval of local residents' associations. "It should be local property owners who set the rules of the game and decide whether or not certain formats are acceptable," he said. And Manuel de la Calle, an expert in the field of tourism and business, said imposing a tourist tax could be part of the solution. "It is one of the possible solutions that could be put in place. It will not reduce the flow of tourism, but it will generate resources that can be driven into tourism management or other avenues to help the local population," he told TVE.

## Delta Airlines yet to recover from global IT outage, cancels 1,000 flights

GNS News Agency, July 25

The Atlanta-based airline, which cancelled just over a quarter of its schedule on Sunday and delayed another 1,700 flights, is facing ongoing operational problems caused by the outage's impact on its crew tracking system. Delta Air Lines struggled to restore normal operations on Sunday after last week's crippling global cyber outage, cancelling about 1,000 flights on top of the 3,500 it had already scrapped. The Atlanta-based airline, which cancelled just over a quarter of its schedule on Sunday and delayed another 1,700 flights or 46 per cent, is facing ongoing operational problems caused by the outage's impact on its crew tracking system. The issue has stranded thousands of Delta travellers across the country, with some resorting to car rentals to drive hundreds of miles and others facing days for new flights or cancelling trips altogether.

Delta has offered no timetable for when normal operations would resume and has already cancelled another 137 flights for Monday, according to FlightAware. A software update by global cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike triggered system problems for Microsoft customers including many airlines on Friday. While other US airlines have largely recovered, Delta has struggled to return to normal. United Airlines cancelled 9 per cent -- or 262 -- of its flights on Sunday, second most among carriers. Delta CEO Ed Bastian said the issue impacted its Microsoft



Windows systems, snarling a critical application. "In particular, one of our crew tracking-related tools was affected and unable to effectively process the unprecedented number of changes triggered by the system shutdown", Bastian told customers in an email. He told employees in a separate note on Sunday that Delta "will continue to tactically adjust our schedule as needed to ensure the safety of our operation". Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg spoke with Bastian on Sunday, according to an official, reminding Bastian of the carrier's responsibilities to customers and the department's enforcement role. CrowdStrike said on Sunday a significant number of the 8.5 million Microsoft devices impacted as a result of a global tech outage were back online.

## India's FY25 GDP growth seen at 6.5-7 per cent in real terms, says Economic Survey



GNS News Agency, July 25

India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is seen growing "conservatively" at 6.5-7 per cent in real terms in FY25, with prospects for continued strong growth on the back of improved balance sheets in the private sector, a likely pickup in rural demand amid predictions of a normal rainfall forecast and a likely increase in merchandise exports with improving growth prospects in advanced economies, the Economic Survey for 2023-24 tabled in Lok Sabha on Monday stated.

While India's current GDP level is seen close to the pre-pandemic trajectory in Q4 FY24, the Survey said any escalation of geopolitical conflicts in 2024 may lead to "supply dislocations, higher commodity prices, reviving inflationary pressures and stalling monetary policy easing with potential repercussions for capital flows", which could also influence Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) monetary policy stance. The GDP growth rate projected by the Survey is lower than 8.2 per cent growth recorded in the financial year 2023-24 and over 7 per cent growth seen in the last three financial years. Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran in the preface of the Survey has pointed out that though the Indian economy is on a strong wicket and stable footing, there has to be heavy lifting on the domestic front for recovery to be sustained. "The Indian economy is on a strong wicket and stable footing, demonstrating resilience in the face of geopolitical challenges. The Indian economy has consolidated its post-Covid recovery with policymakers - fiscal and monetary - ensuring economic and financial stability. Nonetheless, change is the only constant for a country with high growth aspirations. For the recovery to be sustained, there has to be heavy lifting on the domestic front because the environment has become extraordinarily difficult to reach agreements on key global issues such as trade, investment and climate," he said. Sustaining overseas investor interest will require effort amid higher interest rates in the developed countries which imply a higher cost of funding and a higher opportunity cost to invest abroad, he said.

"Emerging economies have to compete with active industrial policies in developed economies involving con-

siderable subsidies that encourage domestic investment...notwithstanding the impressive strides made in the last decade, uncertainties and interpretations related to transfer pricing, taxes, import duties and non-tax policies remain to be addressed. Lastly, geopolitical uncertainties, which are on the rise, will likely exert a bigger influence on capital flows, notwithstanding other reasons for preferring to invest in India," he said. On the crucial debate surrounding employment, the CEA said shocks and not structural forces have influenced employment. "India suffered two big economic shocks in quick succession. Bad debts in the banking system and high corporate indebtedness were one. It took the first term of the present government and more to bring it under control. The Covid pandemic was the second shock and quickly followed the first one. So, it is difficult to conclude that the Indian economy's ability to create employment is structurally impaired. Nonetheless, going forward, the task is cut out," he said. Overall employment in the unincorporated non-agricultural enterprises (excluding construction) fell to 10.96 crore from 11.1 crore in 2015-16, with a reduction of 54 lakh workers in manufacturing. But the expansion of the workforce in trade and services gained in jobs limited the overall reduction in the number of workers in unincorporated enterprises to around 16.45 lakhs between these two periods, he said. The Survey has urged the private sector to step up in its role for employment generation and capital expenditure.

"Employment generation is the real bottom line for the private sector. It is worth reiterating that job creation happens mainly in the private sector. Second, many (not all) of the issues that influence economic growth, job creation and productivity and the actions to be taken therein are in the domain of state governments. So, in other words, India needs a tripartite compact, more than ever before, to deliver on the higher and rising aspirations of Indians and complete the journey to Viksit Bharat by 2047," the CEA said. The CEA also said that the government's thrust on capex has been a critical driver of economic growth amidst an uncertain and challenging global environment. He noted that while it remains the government's responsibility to facilitate the development of infrastructure and address logistical challenges, it is "incumbent upon the private sector to take forward the momentum in capital formation on its own" and in partnership with the government. "Between FY19 and FY23, the share of private non-financial corporations in overall GFCF (Gross Fixed Capital Formation) increased only by 0.8 percentage points from 34.1 per cent to 34.9 per cent. This was mostly driven by their fast-increasing share in the additional stock of dwellings, other buildings and structures. Their share in addition to the capital stock in terms of machinery and equipment, started growing robustly only since FY22, a trend that needs to be sustained on the strength of their improving bottom-line and balance sheets in order to generate high-quality jobs," he said.

## Transformative expectations for skill development

The Budget 2024-25 is an important milestone for the new government as well as for the skill development sector. Over the last few years there have been concerted efforts from the government to make the vocational education and skill development ecosystem more effective across all the key segments like schools, ITIs, private training institutes implementing government schemes, colleges and universities.

Pre-vocational and vocational courses have been introduced at schools and the integration of vocational education in higher education is already a strategic initiative. These efforts across the education value chain are aligned with the National Education Policy 2020 guidelines. The skill development and entrepreneurship budget is likely to continue to focus on the last-mile efforts in building skills for employment and self-employment, especially among the youth. On skill development, the Budget is likely to see a continuation of the approach adopted over the last two budgets. Broadly, the focus has been on major centrally implemented schemes like Skill India and on the transfer of funds to states for centrally sponsored schemes under the development head.

A few areas are expected to be emphasised. Under the central schemes, the Skill India programme is likely to see an increase from about Rs 2,700 crore allotted for the current year. This may be to emphasise the importance being given to skill development initiatives to enhance employability and self-employment potential of the youth. For the transfers to states for implementing centrally sponsored schemes, SANKALP (Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood promotion) was allotted about Rs 380 crore in the vote on account. The amount is expected to be enhanced. Under the development head, under social services through labour employment and skill development, around Rs 2,800 crore was allocated. This is also likely to be revised upwards. Under the same head, Northeast areas were allocated about Rs 325 crore. This too is likely to be enhanced.

The Budget may bring additional focus and funding for new initiatives for ITI improvement, for the delivery of skills training digitally and for the promotion of apprenticeship schemes. There could also be new programmes for skill development in future deep-technology skills like artificial intelligence, electric vehicles, industry 4.0 and chip manufacturing to meet the requirements in the emerging sectors. India is passing through a phase where there continues to be a shortage of skilled manpower across sectors alongside demand for jobs from millions of youth. Globally, in the developed world too, there continues to be demand for skilled manpower in large numbers. There is also intense competition for global talent from other developing and emerging countries such as the Philippines, Mexico, Ireland, Poland, Nigeria and our South Asian neighbours. Targeted skill development has the potential to make our youth employment-ready both within the country and for the international market.

The Indian vocational education and skill development ecosystem is large and comprises schools, ITIs, polytechnics, colleges including engineering colleges, universities including skill universities, private training institutes including those implementing government schemes, government training institutes and entrepreneurship development institutes. Also, several ministries like the ones aligned to textiles, construction, rural development, micro, medium and small enterprises and agriculture undertake their own skill development programmes. Further, most states and Union Territories too have their own skill development missions, programmes and initiatives. For India to transform and



improve its vocational education and skill development ecosystem, collaboration and convergence is required across various institutions and the efforts across various segments need to be strategically aligned. The skill development initiatives must also be aligned with other national programmes like Make in India, Digital India, etc for synergies. Given India's scale, where almost a million people seek to join the workforce every month, skill development efforts have to be effective at scale and speed, and skill development for key sectors like IT, banking, financial services and insurance, retail, construction, textiles, manufacturing, agriculture have to be given priority. It is expected that Budget 2024-25 while building on the efforts in the last few years will address some of these key areas so that India's demographic dividend continues to contribute to the cause of nation building.

## Economic Survey 2024 says short-term outlook positive, long term requires clear vision



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled in Parliament the Economic Survey for the year 2023-24, a day ahead of the Narendra Modi-led government's Union Budget.

In his report, Chief Economic Advisory V Anantha Nageswaran said India's economy carried forward the momentum it built in FY23 into FY24 despite a gamut of external challenges. "India's real GDP grew by 8.2 per cent in FY24, exceeding the 8 per cent mark in three out of four quarters of FY24. The focus on maintaining macroeconomic stability ensured that external challenges had minimal impact on India's economy," the survey stated.

The survey stated that inflationary pressures stoked by global issues, supply chain disruptions, and vagaries of monsoons have been deftly managed by administrative and monetary policy responses.

## 7 warning signs of low calcium levels in women



Calcium, the mineral most associated with strong bones, is vital for many more bodily functions than you might realise. Women, especially those who've gone through menopause, are more susceptible to low calcium levels. But how do you know if you're one of them? Dr Komal Bhadu, Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Ruby Hall Clinic, Pune, explained women are more susceptible to lower calcium levels than men. This is primarily due to hormonal differences, especially the role of estrogen. "Estrogen plays a critical role in maintaining bone density by aiding calcium absorption and minimising calcium loss. During menopause, women experience a significant decline in estrogen levels, leading to an increased risk of osteoporosis and lower calcium levels. Additionally, dietary habits, pregnancy, and breastfeeding can also impact calcium levels in women more significantly than in men," Dr Bhadu explained in an interaction. What are the warning signs of low calcium levels in women? Low calcium levels, or hypocalcemia, can present with a variety of symptoms that may initially be subtle but can become severe if left untreated, said Dr Bhadu. Common warning signs include:

1. Muscle Cramps and Spasms: These often occur in the back and legs and can be accompanied by muscle aches.

2. Numbness and Tingling: Typically felt in the hands, feet, and around the mouth, this sensation is due to the nervous system's increased excitability.

3. Fatigue: Persistent tiredness and a general feel-

ing of weakness can be indicative of low calcium.

4. Dry Skin and Brittle Nails: Calcium is essential for maintaining healthy skin and nails, so deficiencies often manifest as dermatological issues.

5. Dental Problems: Hypocalcemia can lead to tooth decay and periodontal disease.

6. Mood Changes: Anxiety, depression, and irritability can result from inadequate calcium levels affecting neurotransmitter function.

7. Cardiac Symptoms: Severe deficiency can lead to irregular heartbeats (arrhythmias) and even heart failure in extreme cases.

How can they be fixed?

Addressing low calcium levels involves a combination of dietary, lifestyle, and sometimes medical interventions, according to Dr Bhadu:

1. Dietary Changes: Increasing the intake of calcium-rich foods is crucial. These include dairy products like milk, cheese, and yogurt, as well as leafy green vegetables, almonds, and fortified foods like cereals and orange juice.

2. Vitamin D Supplementation: Vitamin D enhances calcium absorption in the gut. Sun exposure and supplements can help maintain adequate levels.

3. Calcium Supplements: In cases where dietary intake is insufficient, calcium supplements may be recommended. It's important to follow a healthcare provider's advice regarding dosage.

4. Regular Exercise: Weight-bearing exercises, such as walking, jogging, and resistance training, can strengthen bones and improve overall calcium retention.

5. Medications: In certain cases, medications such as bisphosphonates may be prescribed to manage or prevent osteoporosis, particularly in postmenopausal women.

6. Regular Monitoring: Women at risk should have their calcium levels and bone density regularly monitored by a healthcare provider to catch and address deficiencies early.

## Jasmin Bhasin shares how the pain in her eyes 'gradually intensified' after wearing contact lenses; know what leads to corneal damage

In an interview with Bombay Times, she said, "I was in Delhi for an event on July 17, for which I was preparing. I don't know what exactly went wrong with my lens, but after wearing it, my eyes started hurting, and the pain gradually intensified." Despite the discomfort, she pushed through her work commitments before seeking medical help. "I wanted to see a doctor, but due to work commitments, I decided to participate in the event first and then visit the doctor. I wore sunglasses during the event and the team helped me with handling things, as I couldn't see properly after a while. We went to an eye specialist late at night, who diagnosed me with corneal damage and placed bandages on my eyes," she revealed. The news of her injury has since spread rapidly on social media, with fans expressing their concern and support for the actor. "Fortunately, I didn't have to postpone any of my commitments. I hope to recover in a few days and get back to work," she updated her fans and followers on social media. Dr Navya C, consultant ophthalmologist at Athreya Multi Speciality Hospital, says, "The sooner you seek medical attention, the better your chances of a full recovery. Don't hesitate to see an eye doctor if you experience any concerning symptoms."

Improper Cleaning and Hygiene: Dirty lenses are a breeding ground for bacteria and other nasty microbes. These can infect the cornea, leading to painful ulcers or even scarring. Skipping cleaning steps or reusing lens solution are big no-nos. Overwearing Lenses: Contact lenses, even the breathable kind, limit the amount of oxygen reaching your cornea. Wearing them for too long or sleeping in them deprives your eyes of this essential oxygen, making the cornea more vulnerable to damage and infection. Dry Eyes: When your eyes don't produce enough tears, lenses can stick to the cornea, causing irritation and potentially scratching the surface. This opens the door to infection. Poorly Fitting Lenses: An ill-fitting lens can rub against your cornea like sandpaper, leading to abrasions. This not only hurts but can also invite infection. Follow a Strict Cleaning Routine: Wash your



hands before handling lenses, clean and disinfect them as directed, and never reuse solutions. Replace your lens case regularly too. Stick to Wearing Schedules: Don't wear your lenses longer than recommended, and take them out before sleeping unless you have special extended-wear lenses. Address Dry Eyes: If your eyes feel dry, use lubricating drops designed for contact lens wearers. Don't ignore this issue; it's not just about comfort. If you suspect corneal damage (symptoms can include pain, redness, blurred vision, or sensitivity to light), act quickly, says Dr Navya. See an Eye Doctor Immediately: Even if the pain subsides, it's crucial to get checked out. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent long-term vision problems. How does corneal damage impact vision in the short and long term? The impact of corneal damage depends on its severity, says Dr Navya. In terms of short term effects, minor damage like a small scratch can cause blurry vision, pain, and sensitivity to light. These usually resolve with treatment. In the long-term, severe damage like deep ulcers or scarring can lead to significant vision loss, even blindness in some cases. Treatment options vary depending on the type and extent of the damage:

## All about iconic green and purple Made in India Wimbledon towels

The Wimbledon finale recently concluded with Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz winning the coveted title for the second time in a row by beating Novak Djokovic. As memorable as the finale, are the iconic and instantly recognisable green and purple Championship towels — the classic colours of Wimbledon's brand colours. These Wimbledon Championship towels, used by all tennis players on the court in every match, have been completely Made in India in Gujarat's Vapi for the past 15 years since 2009.

"Our collaboration with Wimbledon for so many years has been a mark of India's fine production quality on a global scale like this Championship. The Wimbledon towels are not just well-known, they are collector's items for tennis fans! It is indeed a matter of pride that these Indian-made products are ethically and ecologically produced. India's role in Wimbledon and India's growing global impact must be celebrated," said Vanshika Goenka, CEO, Christy UK, which is a subsidiary of Welspun Living Limited, the official towel manufacturers of the championship. The factory in Vapi, according to Goenka, "is an expert in creating yarn-dyed jacquard towels". The towels are therefore made by combining two different colour yarns to construct the fabric. They are built of two colours, but have striking both front and back. India is gaining attention in the global textile industry, and "definitely, the Indian government has played a great role in the same," shared Goenka. "Endeavours like these will empower skills, create jobs, and bring in a lot more global vendors to the domestic market," said Goenka. The design process for each year starts 18 months in advance of the tournament taking into account

design and colour trends for the season, apprised Lucy Ackroyd, head of design, Christy UK. "The fact that every player uses them on the court makes the product a much-wanted souvenir for tennis fans," said Ackroyd, adding that each towel goes through a seven-day-long manufacturing process.

Each year the design is screen-tested on the court to ensure that the towel stands out on camera during the tournament. "While in previous years, the towels have always been designed in a landscape format, the 2024 design layout was a portrait. This was a specific design direction from the team at Wimbledon. The decision to change to a portrait design format was to make the towel more appealing to use off-court as beach towels. The designs also included silhouettes of players in motion, created using a special shading technique (marl shadow). This was a way of honouring the long history and core values of the Wimbledon championship," said Ackroyd, who added that to celebrate the redesigned towels for the year, the brand launched a CGI-led campaign, draping these iconic towels over the world's iconic buildings. Just like in previous years, the "eco-friendly towels (OEKO-TEX certified) were made with high-tech HygroCotton, a patented spinning technology that is ideal for sports towels". "It increases absorbency and wicks away water quickly," said Ackroyd. Interestingly, Goenka revealed that every year, the number of players' towels returned at the end of the tournament reduces, as the players want to keep the towels as a souvenir of their tournament. Meanwhile, for the first time this year, Christy created an heirloom collection whereby excess towels from previous championships were upcycled into tote bags which were available for sale.

# Forced to sell dry fruit after his first film flopped, he went on to become the voice and 'rooh' of Raj Kapoor



When the legendary KL Saigal first heard "Dil Jalta Hai Toh Jalne Do," it left him confused. He tried to recall if he sang the number, and asked, "When did I record this one?" For Mukesh, who rose to instant fame with this Pehli Nazar song, there couldn't have been a bigger compliment than this. In an era when every aspiring male playback singer followed Saigal, Mukesh was no exception.

Mukesh, who started his singing career by emulating Saigal and was known for his nasal twang and sonorous singing, carved out his own identity and voice. He may have wanted to be the second KL Saigal, but he became Mukesh, one of the greatest singers of his time. His voice resonated deeply with listeners. Mukesh's ability to convey raw emotion and vulnerability made his songs timeless. He had a unique talent for expressing pain and melancholy, which struck a chord with people across generations. The emotional depth in his voice made his music relatable, connecting with the audience on a personal level. His songs often touched on universal themes of love, loss, and longing, making them enduring classics. A few months before his death in 1976, he told BBC Hindi, "If I get 10 light songs and one sad song, then I'll leave those 10 songs for that one sad song." Mukesh Chand Mathur, known simply as Mukesh, was a renowned Indian playback singer, celebrated as one of the Hindi film industry's most popular and acclaimed voices Mukesh Chand Mathur, known simply as Mukesh, was a renowned Indian playback singer, celebrated as one of the Hindi film industry's most popular and acclaimed voices.

Born Mukesh Chand Mathur on July 22, 1923, in Delhi, the seventeen-year-old Mukesh, who dreamed of becoming an actor in Hindi films, found his life taking an unexpected turn. Actor Motilal, who heard him sing at his sister's wedding, paved the way for a journey far from his family's expectations. His father, a businessman with a large family, envisioned a more conventional and 'respectable' path for Mukesh — a stable clerical job. The allure of the film industry was deemed unsuitable for a 'child from a good family'. Yet, the mention of KL Saigal, convinced Mukesh's father, Zorvar Chand Mathur. Dev Kohli- Mukesh- Express Archive Singer Mukesh, Music Director Jagdish, Lyricist Dev Kohli at Famous Studio in Tardeo, Mumbai.

It was the Bollywood of the '40s and the singer-actor combination was the norm. Capitalising on Mukesh's good looks, Motilal gave him a role in the 1941 film Nirdosh opposite Nalini Jaywant. Unfortunately, the film was a failure, and Mukesh's debut song, "Dil Hi Ho Bujha Hua Toh," met a similar fate. With the production house closing its doors, Mukesh found himself jobless. "After this, I became a share broker, a dry-fruit seller and did one thing after another as playback singing as a profession did not exist until 1942, when Debaki Bose began singing in Calcutta," said Mukesh in an interview to BBC Hindi. According to Mukesh's son Nitin Mukesh and playback singer, the legendary singer tried film distribution, too, but that didn't work either. "He soon realised that it was better to be a first-class singer than a second-class actor. So he focused on music," Nitin said in an interview.

Mukesh was meant to be a singer, one who would be remembered decades after he was gone. He may not have had the classical training or the voice like Mohammad Rafi, Talat Mahmood, Kishore or Manna Dey, but he could touch the listeners hearts with the way he could emote pain through his songs. A balm for broken hearts, "Dil Jalta Hai Toh Jalne De" became an instant sensation, dominating the airwaves for weeks and securing its status as a timeless classic. As Nitin recalls, "Those who entered the cinema halls emerged humming this unforgettable melody that continues to resonate today."

Under the guidance of composer Naushad, who encouraged him to embrace his own unique voice rather than imitate Saigal, Mukesh developed a distinctive style. This evolution led to the creation of timeless classics like "Gaaye Ja Geet Milan Ke" (Mela, 1948) and "Hum Aaj Kahin Dil Kho Baithe" (Andaz, 1949). Mukesh possessed a voice of immense warmth and subtlety — a voice that invited intimacy, a confidant for the heart. His nuanced expressions, free from excessive ornamentation, were both captivating and profound. While versatile and adaptable to various musical genres, Mukesh was particularly celebrated for his poignant renditions of melancholy. His voice became synonymous with the nation's collective sorrow and longing. Songs like Sahir Ludhianvi's hopeful "Woh Subah Kabhi Toh Aayegi" (Phir Subah Hogi, 1958), Heeraman's heart-wrenching "Sajanwa Bairi Ho Gaye Hamaar" (Teesri Kasam, 1966), the evocative plea of "Aa Laut Ke Aaja Mere Meet" (Rani Rupmati, 1959), the wistful beauty of "Ek Pyaar Ka Nagma Hai" (Shor, 1972), and "Dost Dost Na Raha" (Sangam, 1964) continue to provide comfort to bruised hearts even today.

But his voice wasn't just a teaser-jerker. It left a mark on those who worked with him as well as those who listened to his songs. He owned those songs and made them his own. Anandji Shah, one half of the legendary music duo Kalyanji-Anandji, in an interview with The Indian Express, reminisced about their extensive collaboration with Mukesh. "His voice could accentuate sad songs like no one else. Ours was a time of social and romantic dramas and the way he'd emote such tender emotions was brilliant. If I look at any of our songs by Mukesh saab

such as 'Koi Jo Hamara Hridaya Tod De', 'Chandan Sa Badan', or 'Mujhko Iss Raat Ki Tanhai Mein Awaaz Na Do', he's emoted so tenderly. In fact we won our first National Award in 1968 for Saraswathichandra and 'Chandan Sa Sadan' was the marquee piece," shared Anandji.

Where did this pain come from? Nitin believes his father's extraordinary ability to evoke pathos stemmed not from personal hardship but from an innate empathy. Nitin describes his father as a deeply "compassionate person" as his kindness was evident in countless small but meaningful gestures. Even at the height of his fame, he would take the time to inform the building's cleaning staff about his upcoming travels, ensuring they knew Nitin would be available if they needed anything. Once, the family's ironer invited him to his daughter's wedding, and Mukesh not only attended but also sang for the guests. Mukesh's unparalleled ability to evoke profound emotion is evident in his iconic rendition of "Zindagi Khwaab Hai" from Jaagte Raho (1956). Even the legendary Manna Dey acknowledged Mukesh's supremacy in this realm, despite his own technical brilliance. Manna Dey, an avid collector of Mukesh's discography, would often say, "Would I ever be able to sing like him? With the pain that Mukesh ji finds and channels in what he sings?." Despite his limitations as a singer, Mukesh consistently outshone other male singers, even when given fewer opportunities. A prime example is the background song "Chal Ri Sajni" from Bambai Ka Babu (1960), which eclipsed Rafi's chart-topping "Saathi Na Koi Manzil." Initially intended for Kishore Kumar, the song was eventually given to Mukesh after Kishore's refusal. Even SD Burman, known for his discerning ear, had doubts about Mukesh's suitability for the song but was ultimately captivated by his performance.

Mukesh's magic was evident in his collaboration with SD Burman on "O Jaane Waale Ho Sake Toh Laut Ke Aana" from Bandini (1963). Despite the haunting beauty of Burman's own rendition of "O Re Maajhi," Mukesh's version emerged as the more popular choice.

While Mukesh sang the most songs for Dilip Kumar and Manoj Kumar, it was Raj Kapoor who truly made him a star. The collaboration with Dilip Kumar was brief, as he later chose Talat Mahmood and then Mohammed Rafi for his playback singing. The collaboration between Raj Kapoor and Mukesh was a cinematic alchemy that defined an era. Their partnership ignited with Aag (1948), where Mukesh's rendition of "Zinda Hoon Is Tarah" for Kapoor marked the birth of a legendary duo. Kapoor when heard Mukesh, told him, "Ab tub sirf mere liye gaoge," Mukesh's voice was the perfect counterpart to Kapoor's on-screen persona: a tragicomic tramp navigating life's complexities. Kapoor famously declared, "Mukesh meri rooh hai!" (I am merely the body, while Mukesh was the soul of my characters.) Kapoor's portrayal of impoverished innocents found its most authentic expression through Mukesh's voice. In a post-Independence India grappling with the harsh realities of life, Mukesh's ability to convey both pain and hope resonated deeply. Their songs, from the timeless melodies of Barsaat (1949) to the poignant notes of "Mera Naam Joker" (1970), are etched in the collective memory of the nation. "It was uncanny. They also spent a lot of time together socially," Nitin told Hindustan Times. Kapoor once told a reporter, "I loved Mukesh not only because he was my 'soul,' but also because he was the shoulder I leaned on. Mukeshchand was the most affable person I knew, never speaking ill of anyone. He was patient, a great listener, and universally well-liked." Mukesh was the quintessential voice of the idealistic 1950s and 60s. His soulful melodies mirrored the era's optimism and empathy. As Hindi cinema evolved in the mid-70s, shifting its focus from social themes to action and revenge, the landscape for a singer like Mukesh dramatically changed. The demand for his signature style of heartfelt expression diminished as the industry embraced a new, grittier tone. Nevertheless, even during this transition, his songs continued to top the charts, a testament to his enduring popularity.

Tragically, Mukesh passed away at the young age of 53 while touring the USA with Lata Mangeshkar in 1976. His untimely death was a profound loss to the music world. While he may not have possessed unparalleled technical prowess, Mukesh's raw emotion and vulnerability resonated deeply with audiences. His sincerity was palpable, making him incredibly accessible. The secret to Mukesh's enduring popularity lies in his ability to infuse his songs with heartfelt emotion. "In the beginning, I thought the Mukesh craze would fade in five to ten years of his passing. But five decades after his death, people still want me not because of me but because they hear Mukesh in me. He was a rockstar," said Nitin, who owes his career to his late father, who stayed simple till his last breath and didn't let the ways of the world change him and therefore, the song, "Sab Kuch Seeka Humne..." best summarises his life.

## Jr NTR to begin second schedule of action spectacle 'War 2' on Aug 18

Mumbai: Superstar Jr NTR, who was last seen in the global cinematic hit 'RRR', is set to begin the second schedule of his upcoming action spectacle 'War 2'.

The film also features Bollywood superstar Hrithik Roshan. Jr NTR will return to Mumbai to start the film's second schedule on August 18. 'War 2', which is a part of the YRF spy-universe, is being directed by Ayan Mukerji.

A source close to the development said: "Jr NTR is completing his commitments for 'Devara' before starting his second schedule of 'War 2'. He will make a swash-buckling start with a huge action sequence planned around him. Ayan is going to present Jr NTR in a never-seen-before avatar in 'War 2', and this schedule will see the director film those portions."

The source further mentioned, "Jr NTR is a huge pan-India superstar, and Ayan knows he has to play to the gallery by presenting him as a larger-than-life figure in 'War 2'. He is leaving no stone unturned to do the same. Jr NTR will have a ferociously physical schedule starting August 18 in Mumbai. No one is talking about this schedule as they are under strict instructions not to divulge anything. 'War 2' is the sequel to the 2019 blockbuster 'War', which starred Hrithik Roshan as Major Kabir Dhaliwal, a RAW agent gone rogue, and action star Tiger Shroff in dual roles.

# Raaj Kumar turned a colourful shirt gifted by Govinda into a handkerchief, reveals Mehul Kumar: 'He used it to wipe off his hand and nose'



Mehul Kumar, the veteran filmmaker who shared quite a close bond with the late Raaj Kumar, recently shared an anecdote from the sets of his film Jung Baaz. A film that starred both Govinda and Raaj Kumar in the lead roles. It was their second collaboration together after the 1987 film Marte Dam Tak. Once during the filming of the 1989 action drama, Raaj Kumar turned a shirt gifted by Govinda into a handkerchief, leaving people speechless. While the story is quite famous in the industry, Mehul Kumar, in his recent interview confirmed the same and

shared its details.

In an interview with Bollywood Thikana, Mehul Kumar shared, "Once Govinda wore quite vibrant shirt to the set which Raaj Kumar liked. After he complimented the actor, Govinda didn't get the sarcasm... so the next day, Govinda gifted him the same shirt which Raaj Kumar turned it into a handkerchief the very next day on set and was using it to wipe off his hands and nose. Govinda couldn't really react to it. I am sure he must have felt weird about it."

He also revealed how Raaj Kumar once told the filmmaker about Govinda, "Mehul yeh humesha naachta hi rehta hai (Mehul, he is always dancing)." He further explained: "After hearing this from Raaj Kumar, I laughed and said, 'he is a dancer', so Raaj Kumar was like but 'why does he keep dancing even on the sets?' He never said this before Govinda though." Raaj Kumar, who is regarded as one of the finest actors of Indian cinema, was known for his unpredictable temper. The actor breathed his last on 3 July, 1996, at the age of 69. He is known for his classics Tirangaa, Pakeezah, and Mother India, among others.

## Jr NTR calls SS Rajamouli a 'madman' with no empathy, director admits 'I'm a slave to the story'

SS Rajamouli is one of the few filmmakers who have brought Telugu cinema to a global stage, with his film RRR even bagging two Oscars in 2023 for its song "Naatu Naatu". Now, fans will get to delve into the director's mindset and witness his filmmaking process through the Netflix documentary Modern Masters: SS Rajamouli. The makers unveiled the trailer of the documentary

The trailer provides behind-the-scenes action of his films RRR and Baahubali and offers an in-depth look into his filmmaking process. It also features his films' stars Ram Charan, Jr NTR, and Prabhas sharing their experiences of working with the director. Talking about Rajamouli's dedication to his craft, Jr NTR says, "You start feeling that he has no empathy at all. He is a madman. There is no point arguing with him. Just deliver what he wants and get out of there." Similarly, Ram Charan talks about how he has seen Rajamouli break mics on set. He adds, "Sometimes I am shocked. I see myself as a third person when I see his films." Rajamouli's wife, Rama Rajamouli, even called him a "demon of work." The trailer ends with Rajamouli explaining how he is a slave to his story.

The documentary Modern Masters: SS Rajamouli is



bankrolled by Applause Entertainment and Film Companion Studios. It is directed by Raghav Khanna and features an interview with the director himself as well as his close collaborators and film personalities such as James Cameron, Joe Russo, Karan Johar, Prabhas, Rana Daggubati, Jr NTR, and Ram Charan. The documentary will release on August 2. Meanwhile, Rajamouli was recently seen playing a cameo in Nag Ashwin's epic Kalki 2898 AD, which starred Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Deepika Padukone, and Prabhas in lead roles.

## Why Abhishek Bachchan liked a post about divorce; and it has to do with Aishwarya Rai's close friend



While the separate entries by Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and rest of the family at Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's wedding was already making headlines, sparking rumours of something is not well within the family, a like by Abhishek Bachchan amid the ongoing drama online simply escalated things out of proportion. Recently, Abhishek Bachchan liked a post about divorce, which netizens took it as a sign that the actor and his star wife are probably heading for a divorce. However, now, the real reason behind the actor's like on the article has come to the fore and the author of the piece Heena Khandelwal has also reacted to the issue. Recently a Reddit user shared the post online and pointed out that the likely reason why Abhishek liked the post is because wife Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's long time friend Zirat Marker has contributed to the article. Many commented on the Reddit post. A user wrote, "So this

divorce post which people took as a confirmation of divorce is him being a supportive partner and therefore may be a confirmation of not being divorced." Others called it a "crazy plot twist."

Heena too took to her Instagram handle to share a note that read, "I am not familiar with his personal life, but it seems his single like on the post has been blown out of proportion. While he certainly doesn't need me to defend him, I feel a bit disheartened that my Instagram story highlighting his like has contributed to this situation." She added, "For your information, this post has garnered as many saves and shares as likes. Many people, including those who did not like or comment on the post, have reached out to me to express their appreciation for both the story and its subject matter. This response is quite telling."

The post in question is a piece on divorce. Heena shared an excerpt of her article on her Instagram handle with a picture that had a text that read: "When love stops being easy." The post dedicated to the topic of divorce mainly deals with grey divorce aka silver splitters—a term for those seeking marital dissolution after the age of 50. Talking about Aishwarya's friend Zirat, he is a prominent psychiatrist for kids and adults. Zirat and Aishwarya have been friends since their time in Jai Hind College in Mumbai. In 2016, Aishwarya even launched his book titled "Parenting in the Age of Anxiety". Abhishek earlier invited Marik and his family at the film premiere of his movie, Ghoomer.

## Sushmita Sen's ex Rohman Shawl reacts to actress' remark about being single: 'We are together for 6 years...'

Actress and former Miss Universe Sushmita Sen appeared on Rhea Chakraborty's podcast Chapter 2, a few days back. During the conversation, both the actresses were seen having a heart-to-heart discussion over several aspects of their journey. Both Rhea and Sushmita also opened up about their respective love lives.

During the podcast, Sushmita Sen revealed that she has been single since 3 years and has been enjoying the break. But this left many wondering about her equation with Rohman Shawl who was recently spotted accompanying her at an award show. Now, Rohman has spoken about the bond he shares with Sushmita. The model-turned-actor commented on their recent appearance



and said, "Voh toh 6 saal se saath mein hai. Isme naya kya hai? (We are together for six years. What's new to this?) We have always been friends and that will always continue. We share something special and that is visible also." When Sushmita ap-

peared on Rhea's podcast she had said, "As we sit here today, I have no man in my life. I have been single for a while now. Three years, to be precise. I am not even interested in anyone at the moment. It's lovely to take a break because I was in a relationship prior to that for almost five years and that was a long, long time." She had also added, "I have some incredibly wonderful people in my life who are my friends and they are all just waiting for a moment for me to call them and say, 'Look, I'm pulling the car out, get in the backseat. We're driving to Goa.'

## Manika Batra's secret to potential Olympic success: A fat motivational book, a surprise twiddle switch of racquet, and a mother's emotional support



GNS News Agency, July 25

Manika Batra can't readily remember the name of that motivational book she reads before every TT match. "Ek moti-si kitaab hai", she describes the 280 pager which works for her like a charm. A fat book. Effortlessly glamorous and effortlessly guarded about her life, India's most recognised table tennis star, isn't at pains to sound particularly profound before the Paris Olympics. Her practical mantra of two decades is: "I know my dreams. So I wake up everyday and work hard for them."

In a playing career of 15 years, she has found herself in myriad controversies of selection and copy-paste tweets and was even disallowed personal coaching at the last Olympics. Copping nastiness that comes the way of India's female athletes, while being serially misunderstood, the 2018 Commonwealth Games champion refuses to dwell on all the bile. She once refused to tank a match which would've helped one more Indian qualify, and has been labelled selfish, for not helping the team. But heading into Paris at 29, she has finally found a group of teammates and a coaching arrangement she's comfortable with. "I don't focus on criticism. I'm not active on social media. I don't scroll (timelines)," she says. Some call it being insular, but Manika is simply wary of opening up. At the table, things have been upbeat as she snicked a win over Chinese Wang Manyu, closely behind teammates Ayhika Mukherjee and Sreeja Akula who notched Top 3 scalps. "There's no specific reason why India is doing well. We are all working very hard and the fear of facing Chinese players has gone down a little. There's belief we can beat any opponent," she adds. A Delhi girl through and through, Manika followed her older sister and brother into the sport, inheriting her parents' tall frames – mother Sushma is 5'6 1/2? and her father 5'11". Sushma started off as a housewife, and then ran a fashion boutique for some years. "People asked me why's she wasting her time in sport 15 years ago when most pushed their kids into becoming doctors or CAs. But I always thought sport had potential," Sushma recalls. "I knew kar jaaegi woh kuchh table tennis mein. (She will go far in sport). In school I loved playing badminton in our sports period, but couldn't do anything with it. Now, I'm living my dream through my daughter," she adds. Manika's older siblings would drift into careers in finance and ease Sushma's workload, but the youngest hung around climbing unscaled heights.

There were hurdles with a family in flux and a burgeoning sporting career stressing their finances, though Sushma's in-laws offered complete support in a bustling Punjabi household. "There were hurdles, and I was often confused whether to continue her TT or not. But she was stubborn. There were rough days as we struggled for equipment and travel. The sport had no profile really a decade ago, so some days were very difficult. But now that things are going good, I actively want to forget about the bad times," the mother insists. As the youngest, Manika grew up pampered by everyone, but the mother knew things were turning serious with TT when the youngster grew a streak of discipline. "I told her strictly that work cannot be timepass, and you have to respect whatever you pick as profession. And she was taught to stay positive in any situation, which helps her when there's challenges beyond the table. We are Punjabis, we don't get daunted by life's ups and downs. She learnt to let go of the negative and have a 100 percent nature, no half hearted things," Sushma insists.

## A German horse, his Indian rider and their slow trot before the big Games: Brav, Old Sir Caramello

GNS News Agency, July 25

How do you ask a horse, an equestrian Olympian, to relax before a big competition day? It takes more than the proverbial whisper. Sir Caramello Old, who will be at the Paris Olympics, teaming up with 23-year-old Kolkata-based rider Anush Agarwalla in the Dressage event of the Games, is the country's only four-legged participant besides the 117 humans. The 16-year-old German-born horse's five-year association with Agarwalla has helped the two build a bond and perfect the "switch on, switch off" routine like most elite athletes.

Though responding mostly to stable staff in the German countryside, Agarwalla reckons Sir Caramello Old's ears tend to prick forward whenever he hears the voice of Sukhwinder Singh, the soulful singer with several hit songs to his name. "He really loves his freestyle music, such as AR Rahman's Jai Ho," says the rider. But he still loves hearing 'Brav' — German for 'well done' — from the Indian rider. Sir Caramello Old is a chestnut gelding, who loves his long walks into the fairytale-like woods, deep inside the north Rhine country-town of Borchen. This was part of the rest and recuperation regime charted out for the horse after late last year's hectic tournament schedule of four qualifiers in just over two months. "We slowly built our momentum to peak for the Olympics. But in the few off-season months, we needed to keep him fit. So there was no training, but we would go for walks, just taking him and setting off on the hiking trails near the stables. Change of scenery, and just seeing something else," Agarwalla recalls. He goes on to add that Sir Caramello Old is happiest when showered with attention and loves dinners out in the woods. But then, he had to be told that the break was over and it was time to train for the Olympics. "The training sessions get intense progressively. Also, when you wash the horse and he's cleaned and prettied up a certain way, he knows we're going for a show in the next 24 hours," says Agarwalla. The Paris Olympics starts this weekend with the opening ceremony on July 26. The Dressage event starts on July 30. The Indian rider isn't the first owner of the old pro horse. Since



the age of three, Sir Caramello Old has travelled to equestrian circuits in Germany, Denmark and the USA, and has been ridden by American Ashley Holzer, a former Olympic bronze medalist. In 2019, he was listed at a German barn sale. That was the time Agarwalla was nursing the heartbreak of failing to qualify for the Tokyo Games. The two would join forces and soon, a bond would form. "It was in 2021, I remember very clearly. He had been very quiet and subdued because of the atmosphere. But he began to loosen up after I patted and spoke to him, and knew he was comfortable thereafter," Agarwalla says. While rider cues on the paddock may vary, Agarwalla guesses that horses do respond to verbal communication. "I think there's a few words he knows. But it's more about the way you speak to them — the tone. Sir Caramello Old responds to a few words in German. Essentially, when a horse does something good, we say 'Brav'. And he's rewarded with a break," he explains. While Sir Caramello Old loves Jai Ho, the rider toggles between Indian music and English rap. Agarwalla took a liking for the 1983 movie chorus of 'Lehra do'. "I first heard it at the Asian Games and that song is a good memory," he says. n equestrian, a sport for fine margins where 0.01 point can decide medals,

## Abhinav Bindra awarded prestigious Olympic Order by IOC



GNS News Agency, July 25

Olympic gold medal winning shooter Abhinav Bindra was on Monday awarded with Olympic Order by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The award which was presented to Bindra for his outstanding services to the Olympic Movement, will be officially handed over to him during the 142nd IOC Session in Paris on August 10, a day before the closing of the Paris Olympics. "It is with great pleasure that I inform you that the IOC Executive Board has decided to award you with the Olympic Order for your outstanding services to the Olympic Movement," stated a letter addressed to Bindra which was dated July

20 Congratulations to Abhinav\_Bindra on being awarded the Olympic Order for outstanding contributions to the Olympic Movement! The Olympic Order is the highest award of the IOC, given for distinguished contributions to the Olympic Movement. It is awarded to recognize an individual who has illustrated the Olympic ideal through his/her action, has achieved remarkable merit in the sporting world, or has rendered outstanding services to the Olympic cause, either through his own personal achievement or his contribution to the development of sport. Nominations are proposed by the Olympic Orders Council and decided upon by the Executive Board. Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya also congratulated Bindra, tweeting, "Congratulations to @Abhinav\_Bindra on being awarded the Olympic Order for outstanding contributions to the Olympic Movement! "His achievement fills us with pride and is truly well-deserved. His name alone has inspired generations of shooters and Olympians." Bindra became India's first individual Olympic gold medalist when he won the men's 10m air rifle event at 2008 Beijing Games. He was a member of the Athlete Committee of the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) from 2010 to 2020, serving as its Chair from 2014. He has been a member of the IOC Athlete Commission since 2018.

## If Woolmer had remained head coach, Pakistan cricket would have reached great heights: Younis Khan

GNS News Agency, July 25

Former Pakistan captain Younis Khan said that had Bob Woolmer, the late national head coach, been alive, the country's cricket would have reached great heights. Woolmer who was 58 at that time, was found dead in his hotel room in Jamaica a few hours after Pakistan were knocked out of the 2007 World Cup after a loss to Ireland.

His death was later ruled due to natural causes after the Pakistan Cricket Board and the government sent their own security officials to the Caribbean to work with the Jamaican police. "I have no doubt that if Woolmer had remained head coach, Pakistan cricket would have been very different today, and he would have taken it to great heights," said Younis on a Pakistani TV channel. "I was very close to Bob (Woolmer) and it was our daily routine to sit down together after a match or nets to discuss cricket. Unfortunately the night he passed away, we didn't sit together as we had lost to Ireland. I was also out for a duck and was very upset with myself. So, I went to my room and locked myself in. Next day, I didn't see him at



breakfast and later we learnt about his death," Younis said. Khan also revealed that after the death of Woolmer, the players were moved to another island where they were questioned for three days by the local police. "It was like a torture for us there. While I fully understand the responsibilities a player has to show as an ambassador of his country, it should be the other way round... authorities must also look after us," he added.

## Scotland's Charlie Cassell becomes first bowler to snap up 7 wickets on ODI debut

GNS News Agency, July 25

Scotland bowler Charlie Cassell made his way into the record books after he became the first bowler in ODI history to claim 7 wickets in his debut. With his figures of 7/21 against Oman in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 match in Dundee, Cassell broke the record for the best figures on ODI debut which was previously held by South Africa's Kagiso Rabada. The Protea bowler had taken 6/16 in his ODI debut against Bangladesh in 2015. Another bowler who had taken 6 wickets on ODI debut was West Indies' Fidel Edwards who returned figures of 6/22 against Zimbabwe in 2003.

On Monday, the Scottish bowler trapped Zeeshan Maqsood lbw and cleaned up Ayaan Khan with just his first 2 deliveries. He would then snap up the wicket of Khalid Kail in the same over and then followed up with the scalp of Shoaib Khan in his second over. He would then go on to send back Mehran Khan, Pratik Athavale and Bilal Khan which led to Scotland bowling out Oman for just 91 runs, a target that they easily chased down



with 8 wickets to spare. "You've come back from a huge setback, with that massive injury you had, put you out for a year and a bit. Just to see your resilience coming back, getting back on the park, and just love watching what you do at Forth, and just the way how you hold yourself is incredible," Scotland captain Richie Berrington had said while presenting Cassell with his cap before the game.

## Surya over Hardik, managing Bumrah's workload, future of Kohli and Rohit: Gambhir and Agarkar explain

GNS News Agency, July 25

Four days after squads were picked for the short limited-overs tour to Sri Lanka, head coach Gautam Gambhir and chief of selectors Ajit Agarkar addressed the debates and talking points that had emerged from the team selection meeting. They chose Suryakumar Yadav over Hardik Pandya, Rohit Sharma's deputy in the T20 World Cup, because the all-rounder was prone to picking up injuries and on the basis of feedback from the dressing room on Suryakumar, revealed Agarkar, who stressed that "Hardik, remains an important player".

Among other highlights of the interaction, Gambhir emphasised he "shares a good relationship with Virat" and that "Virat and Rohit have a lot left." He touched upon the workload management of bowlers, especially of Bumrah, and that his prime responsibility is to make "a happy and secure dressing room. The biggest talking point was Suryakumar's elevation as captain, rather than the natural progression of Hardik assuming charges after Rohit's retirement from the shortest version. But Agarkar clarified that fitness was the biggest criterion. "The biggest thing is that the captain should be on the park, more often than not. That's a prerequisite really. We also feel that Surya has the necessary qualities to be a good captain. He has a good cricket brain, and is one of the best T20 batters in the world. He has been around the group for a year as well," he elaborated.

It was not a decision taken in haste, Agarkar stressed. "It's not an overnight thing where you just decide that someone should be captain or should not be captain. Obviously, a lot of thought goes in. You get a lot of feedback from the dressing room as well, what sort of qualities you are looking for," he added.

The Mumbai Indians batsman, though, was overlooked for the ODIs, where Agarkar said, "both Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul had a stellar run in the ODI World Cup." Besides, Pant has returned to contention and

squeezing Suryakumar, whose 50-over career has not taken off as brilliantly as his T20I one, would be difficult. "Two mature individuals" After the Suryakumar-Hardik debate was dusted, the topic drifted to Kohli, specifically the relation between Gambhir and Kohli, who had on-field run-ins as recently as the last IPL. But Gambhir blunted the scandalous undertones in his typical nonsensical way. "It (run-in) was good for the TRPs. My relationship (with Kohli) is not for public consumption. It's between two mature individuals," he said in an assertive tone. He would add: "I share a very good relationship off the field and will continue to do that. On the field, everyone has got the right to fight for their own jersey and come back to a winning dressing room. But at the moment, we're representing India, representing 140 crore Indians and I'm sure we're going to be on the same page and try to make India proud."

Extolling his virtues—"a thorough professional, a world-class athlete and a world class player"—he said he and Rohit could continue playing for a long time. "Both have a lot of cricket left in them. More importantly with the Champions Trophy and a big tour of Australia coming up they will be motivated. Then, hopefully, they can keep their fitness to make the 2027 World Cup as well," he said. That the ageing stalwarts have retired from T20Is would ease their burden, but Gambhir underlined the importance of managing workload, especially of bowlers, especially with Test-heavy calendar towards the backend of the year. "For a batsman if they can play consistently and if they are in good form, might as well play all the games," he said, and pointed out to Rohit and Kohli, who he said would be available for most games as they only have two formats to look after. But that's not the case of Bumrah, a cross-format bowler. "Workload management for someone like Bumrah is important. For Bumrah, because he is one rare kind of a bowler who anyone would want, so it's our responsibility to try and have him fresh for most of the important games.