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## Couple duping businessman of Rs. 3.2 cr promising seat for son in 'Stanford University' arrested in Hyd

Hyderabad: Claiming to have contacts in White House and offering to secure admission in Stanford University for his son, a couple from Madhapur cheated a businessman of Rs.3.25 crore.

According to Cyberabad Economic Offences Wing (EOW) officials, the couple identified as P.Raghuram and P.Sunitha, residents of Madhapur in the city, promised the complainant, Ch.Sanjeev Kumar of securing a seat for his son in an undergraduate course at Stanford, one of the leading university in the USA.

## Four kilos of gold stolen from man travelling on Hyderabad-Mumbai bus

Sangareddy: Unidentified persons stole four kilograms of gold ornaments from a bus while a man was taking the ornaments to Mumbai from Hyderabad on Friday night. The theft is suspected to have been committed when the bus was stopped at Kohinoor dhaba along the Mumbai-Hyderabad highway at Satvar village under Chiragpally police station limits. Ashish, an employee of a Mumbai-based jewellery company, lodged a complaint at Chiragpally police station, according to which he had got off the bus at the dhaba to have tea keeping the bag containing the jewellery inside the bus. When he returned, he could not find the bag.

## Revanth Reddy challenges BRS for probe on distribution of sheeps and bathukamma sarees



GNS News Agency, July 27

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has raised serious allegations against the ruling Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), claiming a massive corruption scandal involving the distribution of sheep and Bathukamma sarees. Reddy's remarks were aimed at past BRS government which he accused of mismanagement and financial malpractice. During his address, Reddy pointed out discrepancies in financial reporting, specifically calling out former Minister Harish Rao for failing to disclose sales figures while discussing debt levels. He highlighted the controversial sale of Outer Ring Road (ORR) projects during the previous government's tenure, stating that assets worth lakhs of crores were sold for a mere Rs. 7 crore.

Additionally, Reddy criticized the prolonged delays in the completion of several projects in the Palamuru district over the last decade. He alleged that under KCR's rule, significant plots of land in Rangareddy district were sold off, raising concerns about transparency and accountability. Reddy did not hold back in his questioning of the administration's integrity, asking, "Are you ready to investigate the distribution of Bathukamma sarees and sheep?" He referenced the distribution of Bathukamma sarees, claiming they were sourced from Surat and distributed in bulk.

## Revanth skipping NITI Aayog meeting wrong: Prahlad Joshi



GNS News Agency, July 27

Hyderabad: Union Minister for Renewable Energy Minister Prahlad Joshi criticised Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for skipping the NITI Aayog meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday. Addressing a press conference here, Joshi said if the Chief Minister had any concerns he should have attended the meeting and clarified it. "Boycotting the NITI Aayog meeting was not in the interest of the people of Telangana. Even the BRS government acted in a similar manner and people threw it out of power," he said. Responding to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee walking out of the NITI Aayog meeting as she was stopped from speaking, Joshi said, "What has happened in the NITI Aayog meeting, I have not seen it, I was travelling. I will verify that. I can only say that this so-called I.N.D.I.A bloc is not at all an alliance because Mamata did not give a single seat to Congress in Bengal during Lok Sabha polls." Refuting the allegation that the centre had not allocated enough funds for Telangana, the union Minister said the centre had allocated Rs. 5,336 crore for railway projects in Telangana and 40 railway stations in the State were being developed as Amrit Bharat stations. About Rs. 60,000 crore worth of road projects was going on in the State by the centre and even Regional Ring Road was being taken up by the Centre, he pointed out, adding that if the State government allocates land, more roads would be expanded.

## Five children among 8 killed after car falls into gorge in Anantnag

GNS News Agency, July 27

Eight members of a family, including five children, were killed when their vehicle skidded off the road and fell into a gorge in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district on July 27, officials said. A policeman, two women and five children aged between six and 16 are among the dead, they said. The victims were travelling from Kishtwar towards Marwah via the Sinthan Top when their vehicle skidded off the road and fell into a gorge at Daksum, officials said.

## NITI Aayog's Governing Council meeting begins under chairmanship of PM Modi

GNS News Agency, July 27

Making India a developed nation by 2047 is an ambition of every Indian, and States can play an active role in achieving this aim as they are directly connected with the people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on July 27. "Viksit Bharat @ 2047 is ambition of every Indian. States can play an active role to achieve this aim as they are directly connected with the people," NITI Aayog said in a post on X quoting Mr. Modi. Viksit Bharat @ 2047 is ambition of every Indian. States can play an active role to achieve this aim as they are directly connected with the people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on July 27. "Viksit Bharat @ 2047 is ambition of every Indian. States can play an active role to achieve this aim as they are directly connected with the people," NITI Aayog said in a post on X quoting Mr. Modi. Viksit Bharat @ 2047 is ambition of every Indian. States can play an active role to achieve this aim as they are directly connected with the people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on July 27. "Viksit Bharat @ 2047 is ambition of every Indian. States can play an active role to achieve this aim as they are directly connected with the people," NITI Aayog said in a post on X quoting Mr. Modi.

The meeting focuses on making India a developed nation by 2047. It aims to foster participative governance and collaboration between the Centre and State Governments,



enhancing the quality of life for both rural and urban populations by strengthening the delivery mechanisms of government interventions. The council, the apex body of NITI Aayog, includes all State Chief Ministers, Lieutenant Governors of Union Territories, and several Union Ministers. Prime Minister Modi is the chairman of NITI Aayog. The meeting also focusses on recommendations of the 3rd National Conference of Chief Secretaries held in December last year. Mamata Banerjee walks out

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee walked out of the NITI Aayog meeting in New

Delhi on July 27 as she said she was stopped from speaking "after just five minutes". "I have come out boycotting the meeting. [Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister] Chandrababu Naidu was given 20 minutes to speak. The chief ministers of Assam, Goa, Chhattisgarh spoke for 10-12 minutes. I was stopped from speaking after just five minutes. This is unfair. From the opposition side, I was the only one here. I attended the meeting because cooperative federalism should be strengthened.

She is the only Opposition leader who was attending the meeting. Following the Budget presentation,

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and the three Congress Chief Ministers, Karnataka's Siddaramaiah, Telangana's Revanth Reddy and Himachal Pradesh's Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu informed that will be skipping the Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog. During the conference, recommendations were made on five key themes — drinking water: access, quantity, and quality; electricity: quality, efficiency, and reliability; health: accessibility, affordability, and quality of care; schooling: access and quality and land and property: accessibility, digitization, registration, and mutation.

## Mamata Banerjee walks out of NITI Aayog meeting, claims was "stopped from speaking after five minutes"

GNS News Agency, July 27

Tempers ran high at the NITI Aayog meeting in New Delhi on July 27 as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the only Opposition leader to have attended the meeting, walked out claiming she was not allowed to speak. The Trinamool Congress chief was the only CM from Opposition ruled States to attend the meeting. Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren who was earlier scheduled to attend also did not come. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee interacts with the media after walking out of a NITI Aayog meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in New Delhi, on July 27, 2024.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee interacts with the media after walking out of a NITI Aayog meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in New Delhi, on July 27, 2024. "I have come out boycotting the meeting. [Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister] Chandrababu Naidu was given 20 minutes to speak. The chief ministers of Assam, Goa, Chhattisgarh spoke for 10-12 minutes. I was stopped from speaking after just five minutes. This is unfair. From the opposition side, I was the only one here. I attended the meeting because cooperative federalism should be strengthened," the TMC chief told the media after coming out. Terming the Union Budget presented on July 23 as "biased", Ms Banerjee said NITI Aayog cannot work since it has no financial powers and



said that the Planning Commission should be brought back. "Even the budget.... This is political, biased Budget. I said, why are you discriminating against other states? NITI Aayog has no financial powers, how will it work? Give it financial powers or bring the Planning Commission back," the Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo told reporters after she came out of the meeting. "They have stopped all welfare projects for Bengal and deprived the state of its rightful Awas Yojana and rural roads scheme. They have also stopped the food subsidy. We are deprived of funds worth ₹1.71 lakh crore. This budget has nothing but zero. Immediately after I said this, the mic was switched off," the West Bengal Chief Minister claimed.

## Responding to 'Godfather of corruption' remark, Sharad Pawar recalls Amit Shah's externment from Gujarat



GNS News Agency, July 27

Responding to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's "Godfather of corruption", Nationalist Congress Party (SP) leader and Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament (MP) Sharad Pawar recalled the former's days of externment from Gujarat while giving a talk at Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar on July 26. In his address to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) functionaries in Maharashtra to motivate them and set a tone for the upcoming Maharashtra Assembly election, on July 21, Mr. Shah called Mr. Pawar "Godfather of corruption" and someone who

institutionalised graft. He had also branded Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) as Aurangzeb Fan Club and other two partners, Congress and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray). Mr. Pawar in his speech said, "A few days back, Mr. Shah said a few things about me with regards to corrupt people in India and its leader. It's strange that a person who misused the law and was externed from Gujarat by the Supreme Court is India's Home Minister now." According to Mr. Pawar, "The way people are in whose hands are taking this incorrect path, we should ponder and think about it, else I am sure that they will take the country on a wrong path." The Union Home Minister was investigated in the alleged Sohrabuddin Sheikh fake encounter case of 2005, as he was accused of approving to stage the encounter. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had chargesheeted and arrested him in July 2010. In October 2010, Mr. Shah secured a bail from the Gujarat High Court, CBI challenged the decision in the Supreme Court, who barred him from Gujarat based on the argument that he could use his political influence to tamper with the evidence or threaten witnesses. Mr. Shah remained in externment for around two years from October 2010. Mr. Shah and other accused were cleared of the charge of ordering murdering Sheikh, his wife Kauser Bi and associate Tulsiram Prajapati.

## Explosion in chemical factory: Five injured in Pashamylaram

GNS News Agency, July 27

Sangareddy: Five employees were injured in a minor explosion at Virupaksha Organics Limited at Pashamylaram industrial area in Patancheru mandal on Saturday afternoon. Employees of the industry acted swiftly and prevented the fire from spreading to other areas



within a short time. The victims were Ananth Reddy, Srikanth, Krishna Reddy, Hari Prasad and Ganesh. They were rushed to a private hospital in Patancheru for treatment.

## Kaleshwaram pumps roar back into action; Operations begin from Nandi Medaram



GNS News Agency, July 27

Hyderabad: Overcoming the negative predictions over its fate and disproving the concerns voiced about its sustainability, the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project has once again flexed its hydraulic muscles and commenced drawl of water from Godavari. Operations were resumed on Saturday at the Nandi Medaram pump house to which water was released through the gravity canal from the Yellampalli reservoir.

Vexed over a long wait for irrigation support for its vast ayacut under multiple projects to be fed by the KLIP, BRS working president K T Rama Rao had on Friday served an ultimatum to the government to commence the operations of the lift irrigation scheme by August 2 or else let the farmers do it on their own. In a swift turnaround, Irrigation department officials rushed to the Yellampalli project and put two of its pumping units into operation by evening, lifting 6538 cusecs. Two more pumping units would also be made functional to raise the volume of drawl from the project. The inflows into Yellampalli reservoir are in the range of some 14000 cu-secs and the present storage level in the project is also over 17 tmc, just three tmc short of its gross storage capacity.

## Heavy Rains Expected in AP, Telangana for next three days



GNS News Agency, July 27

The Southwest Monsoon is currently active in the Telugu states, bringing forecasts of heavy rains over the next three days, according to officials from the Meteorological Center. A low-pressure system that formed in the Bay of Bengal has weakened over the Chhattisgarh region, leading to anticipated rain across coastal areas and Rayalaseema within the next 24 hours.

The Meteorological Department has issued warnings for strong winds along the northern coast, advising fishermen to refrain from going out to sea due to potentially dangerous conditions. In Telangana, the Hyderabad Meteorological Center has also issued a warning for heavy rains over the next two days. The low-pressure area is currently concentrated in North Chhattisgarh and is expected to remain over East Madhya Pradesh. Officials predict moderate to heavy rainfall in various districts across Telangana, with the possibility of thunderstorms and lightning. Wind gusts are expected to range between 40 to 50 km/h, bringing additional concerns. Residents of Hyderabad can expect light rain, while many areas in the state prepare for more significant rainfall. Authorities are urging citizens to stay vigilant and take necessary precautions during this period of inclement weather.



# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Toxic groundwater

LITTLE progress seems to have been made in checking the alarming levels of toxic heavy metals and pollutants in groundwater that Punjab has been suffering from for decades. A recent report reaffirms the presence of dangerous concentrations of nitrate, iron, arsenic, selenium, chromium, manganese, nickel, cadmium, lead and uranium in groundwater. This is primarily attributed to the overuse of fertilisers and pesticides ever since Punjab embarked on the Green Revolution journey. While it has been feeding the hungry, the state, pitifully, has been left with a degrading water quality and its people contracting various ailments.

High levels of magnesium can cause depression and nerve problems, while excessive sodium intake can lead to nausea, muscle twitching and even death. The presence of uranium, lead, nickel and manganese exacerbates the risks, including carcinogenic ones. The public protest against the Zira distillery for discharging untreated effluents into groundwater completed two years on Thursday, epitomising the struggle against the problem. While CM Bhagwant Mann had ordered the distillery's closure last year and sought a report — which has affirmed toxic contamination — the protesters are demanding that it be permanently shut. Meanwhile, the government has taken certain measures to tackle the problem. These include the implementation of the 'Soil Health Card' scheme to educate farmers on proper fertiliser use and organic farming. The Central and Punjab pollution control boards have initiated legal proceedings against polluting industries. But, clearly, much more needs to be done. The Ministry of Jal Shakti must prioritise water quality monitoring and remediation, while farmers need to adopt sustainable practices to reduce dependency on harmful chemicals.

## Unchecked installation of solar-operated tube wells threatens Punjab's water resources, crop diversification

GNS News Agency, July 27

Punjab has been witnessing a new trend of farmers installing solar-operated tube wells unchecked through private companies without following the proper route of securing permission from the government through an application. This practice threatens the state's groundwater reserves and agricultural diversification efforts. This issue is particularly rampant in Malwa districts such as Bathinda, Mansa, Barnala, Fazilka, and parts of Muktsar, where several of these tube wells have been installed within the last year. Driven by the desperation of farmers shifting from cotton to paddy cultivation, these tube wells operate outside of any state government policy.

Farmers using these pumps are saying that they are being compelled to switch to paddy, which requires extensive irrigation. This comes at a time when they are experiencing significant losses in the cotton crop year after year due to devastating attacks by pests like pink bollworm and white flies. Officials in the agricultural department said the proliferation of privately installed tube wells requires comprehensive policies to regulate their installation and operation. Without effective management, Punjab risks further depletion of its precious groundwater resources, jeopardising the sustainability of agriculture in the region. In Punjab, 117 out of 153 agricultural blocks have been categorised as over-exploited or critical. The over-exploited blocks are further divided into two categories. There are 63 'orange' blocks, where groundwater development exceeds 200 per cent, requiring immediate conservation measures, and 53 'yellow' blocks, where development ranges from 100 to 199 per cent, necessitating urgent management attention. The remaining 37 blocks, including critical, semi-critical, and safe ones, are designated as 'green', requiring sustainable water management practices to maintain groundwater conditions. Farmers crave guaranteed water supply, private players jump in under the current state policies, Punjab manages over 14 lakh power-run tube wells, 1.5 lakh diesel-run tube wells, and 17,422 government-subsidised solar pumps through the Punjab Energy Development Agency (PEDA), placing considerable strain on groundwater levels. Also, the Punjab government announced that it would give 90,000 solar pumps but only through proper surveys where the water level is not down and for the purpose of drip and sprinkler irrigation. The recent surge in privately installed solar-operated tube wells aggravates this strain. While government regulations restrict new connections for power-run tube wells, which receive free power via rural feeders from the Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL), PEDA's solar pumps are installed under regulated procedures. In contrast, there are no such checks for privately installed solar-powered tube wells, leading to their widespread adoption without proper oversight. Each installation comes at a significant cost, averaging around Rs 1.20 lakh (3 horsepower [HP]) to 2.5 lakh per (7.5 HP) unit, excluding the cost of around Rs 25,000 for the bore, which goes down to 60-70 feet. This puts financial strain on farmers who are already grappling with rising input costs and fluctuating market prices. Despite these challenges, the allure of guaranteed water supply for crops like paddy remains strong, further driving the demand for solar tube wells. Jagjir Singh of Ulak village in Tehsil Sardoolgarh district Mansa said he has just 2.5 acres of land and no water arrangement to irrigate it. So he installed a 3 HP solar pump from a private company on instalment, as several companies are moving into their area, resulting in several such pumps in his village and surrounding villages. He said no permission was needed because they were spending from their own pocket, and the government was not helping them. Private companies have seized this opportunity, offering lucrative instalment plans to farmers increasingly turning to solar-powered tube wells to circumvent government restrictions. It is estimated that over 1,000 such connections have been established in the Sangat block of Bathinda district alone, with dozens more in villages like Jhumba. Jagjir Singh, a senior leader of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) Ugrahan from Jhumba village in the Santat block of the Bathinda district, highlighted that the annual damage caused by pests such as pink bollworm and whitefly to cotton crops is forcing farmers to shift to paddy cultivation.

## Karnataka government relents to Opposition demand, refers Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill to House committee



GNS News Agency, July 27

The Karnataka government on Thursday conceded to Opposition demands to refer the Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill to a House committee before seeking passage in the Legislative Assembly. The Bill was cleared by the Cabinet on Monday and was tabled in the Assembly a day later. Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D K Shivakumar, who rose to seek a discussion on the Bill, said that the reforms proposed in the legislation were required for the better administration of Bengaluru.

Leader of Opposition R Ashok sought that the gov-

ernment form a House committee of MLAs and MLCs to deliberate on the Bill before placing it in the Assembly. "The Bill should be kept pending," he demanded, saying that it was drafted only by officials without wider consultations. BJP MLA S T Somashekar suggested that all MLAs and MLCs from Bengaluru be included in the committee. Shivakumar said that he agreed with the Opposition leaders. "Let this be discussed widely. This is not an issue that can be done in a hurry," he said.

As per the Bill, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) will be split into smaller corporations and be governed by the Greater Bengaluru Authority. The Authority will be at the top of a three-tier administrative pyramid with city corporations in the middle and ward committees at the bottom. Among the criteria for city corporations specified in the Bill are that each city corporation under the Authority should have a population of 10 lakh or more with a population density exceeding 5,000 people per sq km, the revenue generated from the area by the local administration should not be less than Rs 300 crore per annum, and the percentage of employment in non-agricultural activities is above 50 per cent of the total employment. According to sources, the government was looking to split BBMP into five to seven corporations.

## 3 cyber police officers in Delhi booked for bribery, extortion

GNS News Agency, July 27

Three police officers attached to Hari Nagar cyber police station in New Delhi have been booked for bribery and extortion in a complaint filed by a student of Amity University who was falsely implicated in an OTP fraud case in 2023. The police at the Vigilance Station registered a case against Sub-Inspector Brijesh Redhu, Head Constable Satish Kumar and Head Constable Anil Yadav on July 10 under sections 384 (extortion) and 34 of IPC and section 7 (bribery) of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

"The police officers have not yet been suspended, as the investigation is ongoing," a police officer with Vigilance police station said. Apart from framing a false case against him, the university student, Suson Adhikary, also accused the officers of beating him, his brother and his friend and demanding Rs 40 lakh to "settle the case". According to the First Information Report (FIR), the 19-year-old student who was running an e-commerce company named Adhikary Media OPC Private Ltd was summoned to the Tilak Nagar Police station on March 10, based on a complaint by a customer who allegedly lost Rs 27,000 after she called up the Adhikary firm customer care to register a complaint. The complainant and Suson, along with his brother Sulav Adhikary and friend Aditya Raj were sent to the Hari Nagar station.

According to the FIR, SI Redhu abused Suson accusing him of OTP fraud and then asked his colleague Satish to beat him. "Satish then slapped and punched Suson multiple times. He then checked Suson's phone gallery which had photographs of his girlfriend and passed vulgar comments on her. He also thrashed Sulav till he bled. SI Brijesh then checked Suson's and Aditya's company accounts and asked them to pay Rs 25 lakh if they want to be released. He also threatened to arrest



Suson's mother, on whose name his company is registered," the complainant said, adding that Brijesh soon increased his demand to Rs 40 lakh. The policemen sent Suson, along with Sulav, to get the cash from his home, and the men returned with Rs 7.5 lakh and handed over the cash to the officers in a bag. The police kept the three in police custody.

The next morning (March 11), around 5 am, Brijesh told Suson, who was detained in the station, that his father had filed a missing complaint at Mandawali police station and sent him home to bring the remaining amount. Suson, using his savings, his mother's credit card and a friend's account, managed to pay Rs 19.5 lakh to the officers, after which all three of them were allowed to leave, the FIR alleged. On March 11, at around 11 pm Suson got a call from Brijesh threatening him not to reveal anything about the extortion at the police station. The police ordered an inquiry into the incident on April 20, 2023, based on Suson's complaint at DCP West Delhi, Vigilance on March 13. Suson and Sulav have applied for an anticipatory bail.

## 400 people shifted to safety; decision about school closure to be taken in the evening

GNS News Agency, July 27

As many as 400 people who were stranded in the low-lying areas of rain-battered Pune since Wednesday have been shifted to safety, District Collector Suhas Diwase said. At least four people have died and water logging has been reported in several areas including some residential societies in the Sinhgad Road area as well as Warje and other low-lying areas of the district, amid incessant rain since Wednesday night, forcing authorities to close schools on Thursday. The downpour also led to an increase in the discharge from the Khadakwasla, Mulshi, Pavana, and other dams in the area. While speaking to reporters, Diwase, who is also the District Disaster Management Authority chairman, said, "The rain in the pre-catchment areas was unusually high so the water discharge increased". The collector said the irrigation department has decided to release 35,000 cusecs of water from the Khadakwasla Dam at 4 pm. On allegations that people were not informed about the release of water from the dams, Diwase said the authorities were in full preparedness even as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a red alert for Pune and its surrounding areas. He added a decision about extend-



ing the holiday for schools for the next few days would be taken in the evening. Diwase said that of the four rain-related deaths, Shivaji Bhairat was killed in Adharwadi village after a huge rock slid and fell onto a hotel where he was sleeping. "Another man, Jitendra Jambhurpane from Gadchiroli, was injured in the incident," he added. Three men — Abhishek Ghanekar, Shiva Parihar and Akash Mane — died of electrocution when they went to retrieve their hand cart kept at the river bed, the Pune collector said. Meanwhile, seven state highways were closed to traffic due to rocks falling on them.

## Thomas Cook ex-employee in Mumbai siphons off nearly Rs 1 crore, booked

GNS News Agency, July 27

The police have asked Thomas Cook to submit a copy of the audit report, which would have details of all the fraudulent transactions so as to collect evidence against Rao. (Express Photo) The police have asked Thomas Cook to submit a copy of the audit report, which would have details of all the fraudulent transactions so as to collect evidence against Rao. Global tour and travel company Thomas Cook India has filed a complaint against its former assistant manager in Mumbai for siphoning off nearly Rs 1 crore, the police said.

The MIDC police in Mumbai on Wednesday registered a case against Nagesh Santosh Rao, who had worked for the company between 2016 and February 2023. Rao was posted as an implant (an employee deputed to a company's regular big business house clients) with an Andheri-based regular client of the complainant company. Implants are deputed to take care of the flights and other bookings for the employees of the client company.

According to the police, Thomas Cook India Limited noticed the fraud when it sought claim of the bill vouchers of their Andheri-based client. The client company informed them that out of the total claim, 250 flight tickets and 35 invoices amounting to Rs 94.07 lakh were neither booked

or utilised by their employees and hence refused to pay that amount, investigators said. During an internal audit by Thomas Cook in June 2023, the audit, credit control, and collection teams found that those 250 flight tickets were booked by Rao through a bogus profile created using the client company's employee's unique ID. He also allegedly created bogus invoices, according to the First Information Report. "To avoid getting caught, he would enter his own mobile number while booking the flight tickets. After an audit report exposed Rao's fraudulent practices, he was summoned to the company's head office in Lower Parel and slapped with a show cause notice," said an officer.

Rao admitted his wrongdoings before his seniors and told them that he had set up his own company along with his brother-in-law using the ill-gotten money, the police FIR stated. He also told them that his company's former employees were also helping him in the fraud, and he was getting a commission. He was subsequently sacked by the company. The police have asked Thomas Cook to submit a copy of the audit report, which would have details of all the fraudulent transactions so as to collect evidence against Rao. The police have booked Rao under sections 406 (criminal breach of trust), 408 (criminal breach of trust by an employee), 420 (cheating), and 465 (forgery) of the Indian Penal Code.

## Kharge recalls 'groundbreaking' 1991 budget, says there's pressing need for meaningful reforms



GNS News Agency, July 27

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday said his party takes immense pride in the groundbreaking achievement of the Liberalisation Budget of 1991, and asserted that there is a pressing need once again for meaningful and robust second-generation reforms. In a post on X, Kharge said July 1991 marked a watershed moment in India's history as the Liberalisation Budget, spearheaded by then Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, ushered in a new era of economic reforms. This visionary move revolutionised the country, empowering the middle class and uplifting millions from poverty and marginalisation, he said.

"The Congress party takes immense pride in this groundbreaking achievement, which catalysed India's growth trajectory and continues to inspire progress and prosperity," Kharge said. "Today, once again, there is a pressing need for meaningful, robust second generation reforms, which help both the middle class and the deprived," he said. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said that today, 33 years ago, then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh presented his first Budget that took India into a whole new world.

"Today, 33 years ago, was also the day when the New Industrial Policy was unveiled, which catalysed the economic transformation of India anchored in the philosophy of Continuity with Change. I have written of the events of July 24th 1991 and the background to them in 'To the Brink and Back: India's 1991 Story,'" Ramesh said in a post on X.

## Water recedes from parts of Surat city after rain stops; people start leaving shelter homes

GNS News Agency, July 27

With no rain on Wednesday night and Thursday morning in Surat, water has started receding from parts of the city in Gujarat and over 955 people have started returning from shelter homes. Owing to heavy rain received in the past two days, over 132 roads to different villages were closed. These roads included 12 in Umaprada, 27 in Mangrol, 21 in Mandvi, five in Mahuva, 29 in Bardoli, 16 in Palsana, four in Choryasi, 15 in Olpad, and three roads in Kamrej. Since Thursday morning, some of these roads have been reopened for the public.

Waterlogging and the overflow of creek water meant that several areas in the city such as Udhna, Limbayat, Sarthana and Sachin were flooded. As water entered residential societies, over 955 people, including women, children and elderly people, were rescued by teams from the municipal corporation and shifted to shelter homes set up at community health centres and schools Ganpat Vasava, MLA for Mangrol in Surat district, along with others left for Luvara village in Mangrol taluka after learning that several families had been stranded there. On their way, the BJP leader and over 20 others including police who were travelling with him got stranded in floodwater in Limbada village. A team of the National Disaster Response Force that was nearby rescued the MLA and others after an alert was passed to the district administration. Vasava said, "We went to the flood-affected areas to distribute food packets and rescue them. But we were trapped in the waters and could not move further. The NDRF rescued us and took us to safer places."

As per the Surat district flood control room, the water level in the Ukai dam on Thursday morning was 316.66 ft (danger level 345 ft), while the inflow was 33,168 cusecs and the outflow 600 cusecs. Water storage in the dam is now 2,649.47 million cubic metres (39.37 per cent). Meanwhile, it continued to rain in Valsad district on Thursday. Rainfall measured in different talukas between 6 am and 10 am are Dharampur 18 mm, Valsad 9 mm, Kaprada 20 mm, Pardi 4 mm and Umargam 6 mm. The water level in the Damanganga dam is 72 m, with a gross storage of 227.78 million cubic metre, while the inflow is 51,708 cusecs and the outflow 49,032 cusecs. All 10 gates of the dam have been opened up to 1.3 m to discharge rainwater. Till 12 pm, except for Khergam taluka (16 mm), no rain was reported in Navsari district. In Dangs district, it rained only in Saputara and rainfall of 29 mm was recorded between Thursday morning and afternoon.

## AAP gets new address at Delhi's 1, Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla Lane

GNS News Agency, July 27

The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs allotted a Type-VII bungalow, the second-largest size available, in Central Delhi to the Aam Aadmi Party as its national party office on Wednesday, it is learnt.

This comes after the AAP was asked to vacate its Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg office by the Supreme Court earlier this year as the land was earmarked for the expansion of judicial infrastructure.

The house, 1, Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla Lane, was earlier occupied by the Nationalist Congress Party, which vacated the premises after losing its national party status in September last year. As per the Union ministry's policy, national parties are eligible for land in Delhi to construct their own office or office space.

Sources in the AAP confirmed they will move to the new allotted space in the coming days, though a final date for vacating the DDU Marg office, which is adjacent to the Rouse Avenue Court, has not been finalised yet.



## Labourer digs a fortune, uncovers diamond worth Rs 80 lakh from Panna mine



GNS News Agency, July 27

A labourer found a 19.22-carat diamond in a mine in Madhya Pradesh's Panna district on Wednesday which could fetch about Rs 80 lakh or more at the government auction, officials said. Raju Gaud said when he set out in the morning to dig mud and sift through it, a daily routine in monsoon months for the past ten years, he hadn't imagined he would strike a fortune. "I hope the amount earned (after the auction) will reduce my financial hardships and take care of my children's education," Gaud said. The

labourer said he was exulted after finding the precious stone in a leased mine at Krishna Kalyanpur and promptly deposited it with the government authorities. The gem-quality diamond will be put for sale in the next auction, said Anupam Singh, an official from the Panna diamond office. District Collector Suresh Kumar said the 19.22-carat diamond Gaud uncovered in a shallow mine could fetch Rs 80 lakh or more in the auction.

The gemstone would be put up for open bidding at the next diamond auction, the collector said. Gaud said he drove a tractor earlier and her family earned a livelihood from labour work. He has been taking small mines on lease during the rains for the past ten years in the hope of getting lucky someday. Gaud said he took the mine, where he found the diamond, on lease about two months ago. "I have deposited it at the Government Diamond Office. I'll spend the money on my children's education and buy farmland," he said. Officials said the raw diamond would be auctioned and the proceeds would be given to the labourer after deducting government royalty and taxes. The Panna district, located in MP's Bundelkhand region, is estimated to have diamond reserves of 12 lakh carats.

## 75% urban Indians see 'too much display of nationalism' at Olympics: Report

GNS News Agency, July 27

While Indians display polarised views over their interest in the soon-to-commence Paris Olympics, 75 per cent urban Indians felt that there was too much display of nationalism during the games, an Ipsos survey has found. In its report prepared after conducting survey across 33 countries, Ipsos has also mentioned that 74 per cent Indians believed the games should go ahead regardless of the world's economy and conflicts.

Moreover, 76 per cent Indians opined that global events like the Olympics should be held despite the climate impact of travel and construction. The same percentage also were of the view that government funding should support Indian athletes at the Olympics. The Ipsos Global Advisor Survey showed while 53 per cent are interested in the Olympics, 47 per cent are not. Further, three in four Indians held the view that the Paris Olympics is a good opportunity for the world to come together. While 76 per cent Indians said the Olympics will bring the country together, 75 per cent Indians said seeing their Olympics team made them proud of their country. 76 per cent also supported a strong case for Olympics, believing the games inspire tomorrow's generation to participate in sports.

Among all games, urban Indians (28 per cent) showed the highest interest in watching football, according to the survey. Other games Indians have evinced interest in included badminton (18 per cent), volleyball (14 per cent), tennis (14 per cent), cycling (13 per cent), boxing (11 per cent), and basketball (11 per cent), among others. Meanwhile, global citizens were keen to watch



athletics (26 per cent), gymnastics (24 per cent), aquatics (18 per cent), and volleyball (17 per cent). Amit Adarkar, CEO, Ipsos India said, "The stickiness is not as profound as it is for cricket. But the good news is that India is sending a large contingent of 171 athletes to Paris, with 72 athletes making their Olympics debut and there is a huge hope around them to potentially get a haul of medallions." "The global sporting event of Olympics unifies the world, reaffirming the spirit of nationalism, especially just watching one's contingent gives goosebumps. And let's not forget, one gets to watch the best of breed players vying for the much-coveted medals. Now that we are closer to the event, with the event kicking off this week, more number of sports enthusiasts are likely to watch the event, with all the amplified hype built up at the local level," added Adarkar. The interest in the Paris games was significantly high among most Asian countries, particularly in China (86 per cent), Thailand (77 per cent), Indonesia (75 per cent) and Philippines (71 per cent).

## 'After yesterday, coalition is appeasement and compensation': Abhishek Banerjee targets BJP over Budget

GNS News Agency, July 27

TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee Wednesday targeted the ruling NDA over the Union Budget 2024 and highlighted the failures of the government raising temperatures in the Parliament. Participating in the discussion on Budget 2024-25, he said the budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is "anti-people" and aimed at "appeasing and compensating" coalition partners of the ruling NDA. "Coalition means cooperation, collaboration, cohesion. But after yesterday, coalition is appeasement and compensation," said Banerjee, adding that in 2024 people rejected the Modi-led BJP government and the country has a shaky coalition now which is so uncertain and fragile that it can implode anytime. "BJP is ensnared in tentacles of appeasement politics trying to save its own chair," said Banerjee.

"Message is loud and clear — waqt badal gaya hain. During Budget, the number of cheerleaders has gone down, people of this country have denied them access to this temple of democracy," said Banerjee targeting the reduced number of BJP MLAs in the parliament. The TMC MP expanded the word 'BUDGET' where he said B stood for betrayal, U for unemployment, D for deprived, G for guarantees which were failed by the government, E for eccentric decisions and T for tragedies.

"Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas turned into Jo Humare Saath hum unke saath," Banerjee said alleging that funds were not being disbursed to West Bengal for the Central government schemes. "They have disrespected Bengal's culture and hatched continuous conspiracies to tarnish the state's image. Failing to fight politically, they declared an all out war — depriving poor in Bengal of roti, kapda and makaan. I challenge FM release white paper of how many rupees the Central govt has given to Bengal after its embarrassing defeat in the WB legislative elections in 2021, said Banerjee while detailing about funds withheld for various schemes in West Bengal including MNERGA and housing scheme and further elaborating that any 'official interactions with BJP members were met



with dismissive attitude and constant rejection," Banerjee said. He talked about how West Bengal was left out from flood control initiatives mentioned by Finance Minister in the Budget speech while North Bengal is heavily affected by inundation every year. He also detailed about how the state government in West Bengal cleared wages of MGNREGA workers from its own treasury. "If the NDA government spread even a quarter of time it dedicated to political witch hunting and spreading communal hatred on addressing the real issues, India would not be ranking 111 out of 125 countries in the global hunger index," said Banerjee, pointing out that while 20,000 crore rupees were spent on developing Central Vista, what was being done in cities, towns and villages of India.

He also spoke about the failures and 'eccentric nature' of the current government mentioning the 'poorly implemented lockdown', farm bills and demonetisation which led to deaths, loss of jobs and economic despair among others. Countering Banerjee, BJP's Bansuri Swaraj said the TMC leader used three objectionable and unparliamentary words and he should apologise. Speaker Om Birla said he will get the matter examined. He also urged members not to challenge the Chair in their speeches as Banerjee had asked the Speaker to intervene and ask BJP members to apologise to Mamata Banerjee.

## Six Bangladesh nationals arrested in Tripura



GNS News Agency, July 27

A total of six Bangladesh nationals, who crossed over to India without valid documents, were arrested from two places in Tripura, police said on Wednesday. Acting on a tip-off, a railway police team laid a trap at Agartala

railway station on Tuesday evening. "Around 7 pm, the team arrested four suspected Bangladesh nationals from the railway station. After preliminary interrogation, the four people revealed they were from Bangladesh and were planning to go to Kolkata in search of jobs. Since they could not show any valid documents to travel to India, all of them were arrested", the Officer-in-Charge (OC), GRP station Agartala, Tapas Dad, told reporters. They were forwarded to a local court for necessary legal procedures, he said, adding that an inquiry is underway.

In another incident, two more Bangladesh nationals were arrested from Srinagar in South Tripura district by BSF personnel on Tuesday.

"The two Bangladeshi citizens were arrested after they crossed over the Bangla border at Srinagar in South Tripura district on Tuesday night. The arrest came after the BSF intensified its vigil along the border," said a BSF official on Wednesday.

## Madhya Pradesh govt refuses RTI info on Project Cheetah



GNS News Agency, July 27

The Madhya Pradesh forest department has refused to provide information under the Right to Information Act on management of cheetahs brought from Africa and their cubs born in India. In response to a request filed by wildlife activist Ajay Dubey, the department cited Section 8(1)(a) of the RTI Act, which allows a public authority to withhold information if its disclosure would prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security, strategic, scientific, or economic interests of the State, relations with a foreign State, or lead to the incitement of an offence. Dubey had requested the state forest department to provide "management correspondence records of the Cheetah Project in Kuno and Mandsaur".

In his response, Saurav Kumar Kabra, Public Information Officer in the office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Madhya Pradesh, said: "The information (under point number 2) is related to the management branch, which has decided not to provide information under Section 8(1)(a) of the Right to Information Act, 2005." Dubey said this is the first time that information on Project Cheetah has been denied under RTI Act since the launch of the programme with the release of eight Namibian cheetahs into Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park on September 17, 2022. Dubey had previously received information under RTI on the health of the

first cheetah cub born on Indian terrain. Information obtained by Dubey revealed that the cub's right leg was fractured on November 28.

"I have been disclosing irregularities in the conservation of big cats since 2013, but this is the first time I received a reply stating that disclosure of information about cheetahs will affect national security or relations with foreign countries," Dubey told PTI. The first batch of eight cheetahs was introduced in India in September 2022, and the second batch of 12 cheetahs was flown in from South Africa last February.

The government now plans to introduce cheetahs into a fenced area in the Gandhi Sagar wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh, possibly by the end of the year, with a focus on breeding. A proposal to set up a cheetah conservation breeding centre in Gujarat's Banni grasslands was also cleared by the Central Zoo Authority in February. According to a document released by the Union Environment Ministry earlier this year, the long-term goal is to establish a metapopulation of cheetahs in the Kuno-Gandhisagar landscape (an area of around 9,000 sq km) of 60-70 individuals after restorative measures, prey availability, and scientific management are ensured. The much-vaunted cheetah conservation project initially drew criticism due to the animals' deaths. However, with the birth of 12 cubs this year, officials say the project is on the right track. Namibian cheetah Aasha gave birth to three cubs in January. Jwala, another female cheetah from Namibia, also gave birth to three cubs in the same month. She had delivered four cubs last year, but only one of them survived. With South African cheetah Gamini giving birth to six cubs in March, the total number of cheetahs, including cubs, in Kuno is now 26. Since last March, seven adult cheetahs, including Shaurya, have died due to various reasons. The seven adult cheetahs — three females and four males — who died include Sasha, Uday, Daksha, Tejas, Suraj, Dhatri, and Shaurya. The first six fatalities occurred in a six-month period between March and August 2023.

## CERT-In reported possible intrusion, data breach at BSNL on May 20: MoS Communications

GNS News Agency, July 27

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) had reported possible intrusion and data breach at state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) on May 20, 2024, Parliament was informed on Wednesday. An Inter Ministerial Committee (IMC) has been constituted to conduct an audit of the telecom networks and suggest remedial measures for prevention of data breaches in the telecom networks, Minister of State for Communications Pemasani Chandra Sekhar said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

To a question on data breach in BSNL, the Minister informed that Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) reported possible intrusion and data breach at BSNL on May 20, 2024. "The same was analysed and found that one File Transfer Protocol (FTP) server was having the data similar to the sample data shared by CERT-In. No breach into the Home Location Register (HLR) of the telecom network has been reported by the equipment manufacturer, hence no service outage in BSNL's network," he said. However, as a remedial



measure to prevent such probable breach, BSNL has taken steps, and access passwords to all similar FTP servers have been changed. "Further, an Inter Ministerial Committee (IMC) has been constituted to conduct an audit of the telecom networks and suggest remedial measures for prevention of data breaches in the Telecom networks," Sekhar added.

## Hours before its release, Kerala HC stays Hema Commission report that exposes problems faced by women in Malayalam film industry

GNS News Agency, July 27

Hours before its findings were to be made public, the Kerala High Court Wednesday stayed the release of a report on the problems faced by women in the Malayalam movie industry. The report had been prepared by the state government-appointed Justice K Hema Commission. The court's interim stay on the findings of the commission came on the back of a petition by filmmaker Saji Parayil, who challenged the state information commission's July 6 directive ordering that the findings be made public. The panel was set up in 2017 after a prominent woman actor was abducted and sexually assaulted in a moving car near Kochi. Actor Dileep was arrested in connection with the case and is currently being tried for it.

In his petition, Parayil argued that the disclosure of such a report could affect the privacy of those who had deposed before the commission. Set up by the LDF government, the commission saw scores of women from the industry depose before it on the condition that their names be kept confidential. The commission, which submitted its report in 2019, was believed to have recommended a tribunal to look into the allegations, although the contents of the report were never officially made public.

The issue of making the report public has been a subject of controversy in Kerala, with the state's cultural



affairs department unwilling to disclose information even under the Right to Information Act. On July 6, the state information commission, following petitions from RTI activists and media persons, ordered that the report be made public. To protect the identities of those who deposed before it, the commission ordered that such portions should be redacted. As a result, 70 pages of the 300-page report were removed from the version meant to be released. In his petition, the filmmaker said that disclosing the report would violate the confidentiality promised to those who deposed and that any move to make the report public will affect the film industry.

## 27 'stranded' labourers return to Ranchi from Cameroon

GNS News Agency, July 27

A total of 27 labourers from Jharkhand, who were reportedly stranded in Central Africa's Cameroon, returned to the state on Wednesday, officials said. The labourers had sought help from the state government, through a recent video message, claiming they were not receiving their salaries from the employer and also facing trouble in arranging for daily meals.

Subsequently, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren wrote a letter to the Ministry of External Affairs, urging the safe return of the migrant workers, according to an official release. "We received information about the problems of 27 people of Jharkhand stranded in Cameroon, Africa. Thereafter, the Jharkhand government took the initiative and got the outstanding amount of about Rs 30 lakh paid to them, and brought them back to the state," Soren said on X. He said financial assistance of Rs 25,000 was also provided to each labourer upon their return. Earlier in the day, the workers arrived at the



Parasnath Railway Station in Giridih. Of the 27 labourers, 18 belong to Bokaro district, five are from Hazaribag and four from Giridih, the release said. One of the labourers said an agency took them to the African nation on March 29. "We worked there under a contractor for four months but received no payment.



## BMC to revoke 10% water cut from July 29 as Mumbai lakes overflow amid incessant rain



GNS News Agency, July 27

Marking the highest single-day jump of the season, the total stock in the seven lakes catering to Mumbai's water demands saw a spike of nine per cent in the past 24 hours, as the lake levels touched 66.77 per cent on Thursday morning. Amid incessant rain in and around Mumbai Vihar lake and Modak Sagar lake started overflowing on Thursday. With the water stock replenishing and four lakes filling to capacity in the past week, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) announced that the 10 per cent water cut will be revoked from Monday, July 29. In a statement, the civic body added that it is also slated to withdraw the 10 per cent slash in the water supply in Thane city, Bhiwadi and gram panchayat divisions where the BMC supplies water, starting July 29.

On Thursday morning, the lake levels soared to 66.77 per cent (9.66 lakh million litres), indicating the jump of nearly 9 per cent from Wednesday when the levels stood at 58 per cent. This is significantly higher than 2023 levels, when on the same day, the water stock re-

mained at 55 per cent. In 2022, the lake levels touched 89 per cent during the same period. Amid heavy showers replenishing the catchment areas, Vihar lake, which has a total holding capacity of 27,698 million litres, started overflowing in the wee hours on Thursday. Coming along its heels, Modak Sagar lake, situated in Shahapur, started overflowing at 10.40 am on Thursday. While Modak Sagar lake has a total capacity of 1.28 lakh million litres, the lake supplies 455 million litres of water to the city daily. A water cut was implemented in the city on June 5. Due to a shortage of rain in June, the lake levels remained at a low of 5 per cent throughout the month. However, starting from the first week of July, the lake levels have been slowly but consistently rising. Mumbai receives water from seven lakes: Tulsi, Vihar, Bhatsa, Modak Sagar, Tansa, Upper Vaitarna, and Middle Vaitarna, situated across Mumbai, Thane, and Nashik districts. The catchment areas of these lakes are filled during the monsoon, following which the water is supplied through a labyrinthine network of pipelines throughout the year. So far, four of the seven lakes have filled to capacity and started overflowing over the past week. On Wednesday, July 24, Tansa lake in Thane district started overflowing, leading the BMC to open three dam gates on Wednesday evening. The Tansa lake has a live storage capacity of 1.45 lakh million litres of water, and it supplies 455 million litres of water to the city per day. Meanwhile, Tulsi Lake, the smallest of the lakes, started overflowing on the morning of July 20. Data provided by the civic body indicates that all seven lakes received more than 100 mm of rain in the 24 hours leading up to 6 am on Thursday. During this period, Modak Sagar lake received the highest amount of rain at 217 mm, followed by Tulsi lake at 205 mm, Middle Vaitarna at 166 mm, Bhatsa at 139 mm, Upper Vaitarna at 123 mm, Vihar lake at 122 mm, and Tansa lake at 109 mm.

## New cybercrime helpline launched in collaboration with Maharashtra cyber cell

GNS News Agency, July 27

Saunik said the system for preventing and solving the cases of cyber crimes in Maharashtra was being strengthened, adding that a cybersecurity centre was being erected at Mahapay. Saunik said the system for preventing and solving the cases of cyber crimes in Maharashtra was being strengthened, adding that a cybersecurity centre was being erected at Mahapay. Sujata Saunik, Chief Secretary, Maharashtra, launched a helpline on Wednesday for raising awareness about cyber security. The 9019115115 helpline is run by a movement called What Now in collaboration with the Maharashtra Yuva Cyber Suraksha Upkram. "Digital tools and devices are used widely in society today but due to lack of information about the online transactions, many citizens are cheated. In view of this, the government is taking all possible efforts to create an environment that will be free from cyber crime. This will be done by strengthening the cyber security in the state. The What Now organisation is working for creating cyber awareness among people and the government will be extending all possible assistance to such initiatives," Saunik said.

Vivek Phansalkar, Commissioner of Police, Mumbai; B K Singh, Director-General, Maharashtra State Security Corporation; Brijesh Singh, principal secretary to the chief minister; Neeti Goyal, founder of What Now; and Nivedita Shreyansh, co-founder of What Now were among those present at the event held at the Yashwantrao Chavan Pratishthan Hall. Saunik said the system for preventing and solving the cases of cyber crimes in Maharashtra was being strengthened, adding that a cybersecurity centre was being erected at Mahapay.

Saunik said the police also have a cybercrime helpline, 1930. If cheated during an online transaction,



people should complain on the helpline and lodge a complaint at respective police stations, she added. She exuded confidence that the What Now movement, started with the assistance of the Maharashtra cyber cell, will be helpful for strengthening cybersecurity. What Now founders Neeti Goyal and co-founder Nivedita Shreyansh talked about the objectives of the initiative, "started by the youth and for the youth", which they said would prove helpful to cybercrime victims. A large number of students were also present at the event. Phansalkar appealed to the youth to be alert while using social media and asked them not to respond to unknown calls and friend requests from unknown people. He suggested they give information to the parents in the event of being cheated online. He also appealed to the youth to file police complaints. Phansalkar also urged the youth to raise awareness about cybersecurity and said that Mumbai Police will always support such endeavours. Brijesh Singh lauded What Now for its efforts to increase cybersecurity literacy in the state. He said that new laws had been enacted in the country to tackle cybercrimes and that the police were being trained in this regard, adding that the new laws will ensure justice for victims of cyber crimes.

## The white-topping work on roads from Rajajinagar 1st block to Dr Rajkumar Road is likely to go on for least five months



GNS News Agency, July 27

With the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) announcing white-topping work on roads from Rajajinagar 1st block to Dr Rajkumar Road for at least five months, all vehicular movement on this stretch has been prohibited from Thursday. With the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) announcing white-topping work on roads from Rajajinagar 1st block to Dr Rajkumar Road for at least five months, all vehicular movement on this stretch has been prohibited with the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) announcing white-topping work on roads from Rajajinagar 1st block to Dr Rajkumar Road for at least five months, all vehicular movement on this stretch has been prohibited from Thursday. The traffic police have also announced traffic diversions along this

stretch: -Vehicles coming from ISKCON entry point should move towards Star Circle (Modi bridge), take a left turn to reach Navarang Circle, and further take a left turn to move towards Dr Rajkumar Road 10th Cross. -Vehicles from Mahalakshmi Layout below the flyover should take a right turn at Star Circle (Modi bridge), proceed towards Navarang Circle, and further towards Dr Rajkumar Road 10th Cross. -Vehicles from Rajajinagar Metro Station should take a U-turn at 1st Block Junction, reach Star Circle (Modi bridge) and take a left turn to reach Navarang junction. -Vehicles from Rajajinagar Metro Station can also move straight towards GSF and reach 10th Cross.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar had recently said that the state government would spend Rs 1,800 crore to white-top 157 km of roads in Bengaluru. "The roads in Bengaluru are prone to potholes. Hence, we will white-top roads under the Sugama Sanchara Bengaluru and Brand Bengaluru initiatives," he had said, after inaugurating white topping of 19.67 km stretch of roads in Chamarajpet, Gandhinagar, Malleshwaram and Mahalakshimpura at the cost of Rs 200 crore. "We are white topping the roads to ensure that they are pothole-free and last about 25 years. We will commence white topping works in 3-4 wards every day. The works will be completed within the specified deadline. We have decided to white-top about 200 km of roads in Bengaluru to ease traffic jams. We will ensure the best quality work," he said.

## As actress Mamta Kulkarni gets respite from Bombay HC, a look at the drugs case in which she was named accused

GNS News Agency, July 27

What has the Bombay High Court said about the case against Mamta Kulkarni?

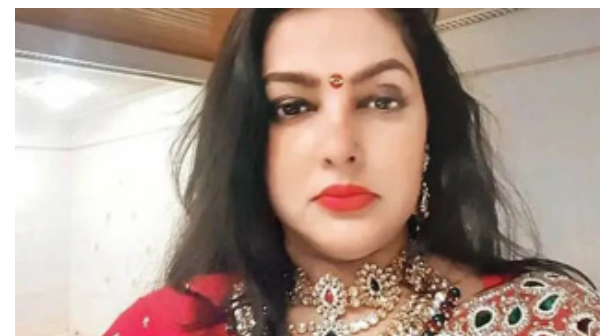
The Bombay High Court said on Monday that it would cancel the First Information Report (FIR) against the actor citing lack of evidence. While the court is yet to give a detailed order, it said that Kulkarni's plea to cancel the case will be allowed. Kulkarni had appealed before the court that she had been made a "scapegoat in the drug scam". Hearing her plea, a bench of Justices Bharati Dangre and Manjusha Deshpande noted that apart from allegations in the FIR, there was no evidence against her.

What was the narcotics case in which she was named as accused?

In April 2016, the Thane police raided Avon Lifesciences Ltd, a Solapur-based pharmaceutical company, and arrested at least 14 people. The police case was that the accused had planned to use ephedrine, a controlled substance that can be misused to make party drug meth, from Avon Lifesciences Limited. The ephedrine was to be diverted to Kenya where it was to be allegedly used to make meth that was to be sold in the US market. The police named five others as wanted accused in the chargesheet including alleged drug lord Vicky Goswami, Kulkarni's partner who was said to be the mastermind of the drug racket. As per police, Kulkarni was living with Goswami in Kenya.

What was Mamta Kulkarni's role in the case, according to the Thane police?

The Thane police under commissioner Param Bir Singh had alleged that Kulkarni, who stayed with Goswami in Kenya, was also involved in the racket. The police said that Kulkarni had attended a key meeting of Goswami and his aides at Hotel Bliss in Kenya on January 8, 2016, where the details of how the ephedrine from Solapur was to be used were discussed. During the first



press conference held by the Thane police on April 27, 2016, they mentioned that Kulkarni was present at a meeting held at the Bliss Hotel. In a press conference on June 18, 2016, the police said that a move was underway to make Kulkarni one of the directors of Avon Lifesciences by transferring shares in her name at a cheap rate.

What evidence did Thane police provide on Mamta Kulkarni's involvement?

The fourth and final chargesheet in the case filed against Goswami and Kulkarni did not add any evidence about the meeting or the share transfer. The police primarily relied only on the statement of a co-accused before a magistrate to prove her involvement in the case. Incidentally, after the statement of co-accused Jay Mukhi was registered before a magistrate in July 2016 that landed Kulkarni in trouble, he had made an application to retract the statement alleging it was given under duress.

What is the status of the other accused?

Soon after the case blew up, Goswami was arrested by America's Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in 2017 and is in the custody of the US authorities. The other arrested accused are in Thane jail, pending trial.

## MMRDA appoints key consultants & contractors for Ghatkopar Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar slum revamp, Metro 9 depot & Metro 5 projects



GNS News Agency, July 27

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) appointed Sandeep Shikre & Associates as the Architectural and Project Management Consultant for the proposed slum rehabilitation scheme at Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar in Ghatkopar. The redevelopment

project spans approximately 33.15 hectares and aims to rehabilitate 17,000 slum dwellers, with a total project cost of Rs 30 crore. The project will pave the way for the expansion of the Eastern Freeway from Cheddha Nagar in Ghatkopar upto Thane.

In addition to this, MMRDA has selected the joint venture of Rithwik and Soma for the development of depot land and construction of depot infrastructure at Dongri Village near Bhayander for Metro Line 9 (Dahisar - Mira Bhayander). Furthermore, the authority has appointed the NACPL- MANSI - UCC consortium for the comprehensive design, supply, fabrication, and erection of pre-engineered building structural steel works for Metro Line 5. This includes entry and exit structures, as well as the execution of internal and external architectural finishings, plumbing works, and interior fit-outs for six elevated stations on Metro Line 5 (Thane - Bhiwandi - Kalyan). These stations—Balkum, Kasheli, Kalher, Puma, Anjurphata, and Dhamankar Naka—form part of Phase I of this metro corridor, which stretches approximately 11.8 km.

## Karnataka High Court stays case involving missing pet cat

GNS News Agency, July 27

According to the owner's complaint, the cat, Daisy, had gone missing while jumping around the walls of the adjacent houses. The woman alleged the cat was being held by a neighbour in their house, and it was seen in CCTV footage. According to the owner's complaint, the cat, Daisy, had gone missing while jumping around the walls of the adjacent houses. The woman alleged the cat was being held by a neighbour in their house, and it was seen in CCTV footage.

The Karnataka High Court recently stayed a matter regarding a complaint filed by the owner of a cat who accused a neighbour of keeping it in his house in Anekal near Bengaluru. The proceedings in the case were stayed

by a bench consisting of Justice M Nagaprasanna, who heard the matter on July 22.

According to the owner's complaint, the cat, Daisy, had gone missing while jumping around the walls of the adjacent houses. The woman alleged the cat was being held by a neighbour in their house, and it was seen in CCTV footage. She filed the complaint against the neighbour under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections related to intentional insult, criminal intimidation, and insulting the modesty of a woman. The counsel for the accused neighbour argued it was normal for cats to go in and out of windows, and permitting further proceedings for frivolous complaints would tend to clog the justice system. A chargesheet had also been filed by the police in this case.

## 5-year-old boy drowns in swimming pool of Gurgaon housing society 'in presence of lifeguards'



The police have registered a case against the maintenance company and 3 lifeguards of BPTP Park Serene housing society that has 3 pools of different depths.

GNS News Agency, July 27

A five-year-old boy drowned in a swimming pool in a residential society in Gurgaon on Wednesday evening allegedly in the presence of life guards, the police said. The body of the boy identified as Mivansh Singla was found floating in a 4-ft deep pool, where children are not allowed, of BPTP Park Serene housing society that has three pools of different depths, they added. The police have registered a case against the maintenance company and three lifeguards. The boy's relatives and the residents association alleged that the lifeguards failed to notice the boy moving to the prohibited 4-feet-deep pool as they were playing on their phones at the time of the incident. Children are allowed only in the pool with a depth of 1.5 feet, the police said. According to Sitaram, his grandson Mivansh, an LKG student, was initially in the 1.5-ft pool and later moved to the deeper pool when his wife who had accompanied the child to the pool had returned to the flat sometime after 6.15 pm to fetch a towel for the boy.

"The child's safety was with the lifeguards, security guard and club manager. Children are not allowed in the

other two pools, and to ensure this doesn't happen, four lifeguards and a security guard are always present. They were present today as well," he stated in the First Information Report, naming the workers. Sitaram said the general manager and vice-president of the BPTP Pvt Ltd were responsible for the swimming pool on the society premises. "The death was caused because he swam in the four-feet deep pool due to the negligence of the BPTP Pvt Ltd, management company and the individuals mentioned," Sitaram stated. The boy was rushed to Signature Hospital where the doctors declared him dead, said an officer at Sector 10A police station that registered a case against the maintenance company and three lifeguards under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) section 106 (death by negligence).

Mevansh is survived by his father Binny Singla who works with Maruti in Gurgaon, mother Ashu Devi and a 10-year-old sister. Mevansh's grandfather told The Indian Express that he picked up the child from school around 1.45 pm. "He went down to the swimming pool around 4 pm and came back around 6 pm. He snatched the remote from me and was watching his favourite show. He and his grandmother went to the pool for a second time at 6.15 pm and I didn't know about it because I was downstairs with my friends. Later, someone informed me that a child had drowned in the pool. In a few minutes, the word got out that it was Binny's son," he said. "We sent him to a school in the same neighbourhood for safety purposes and the residential society was also supposed to be safe... His grandmother has not slept. She keeps saying she wants to see Mevansh," Sitaram added.

Hemant Kumar Pal, the vice-president of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA), said that they have had several run-ins with the builder and BPMS, the management agency that is responsible in dealing with the maintenance, over the past few years. "When the incident took place yesterday, the lifeguards were not even aware of it as they were engrossed on their phones," Pal said. "The RWA had given instructions that children shouldn't be allowed near two deep pools without either a life jacket or parents' supervision. We had shut the club house owing to issues like pendency in delivering services, problem in structure and ventilation," he said. The BPTP has declined to comment on the issue. The residential society is a 43-acre complex with three separate projects and 1,500 flats.



# To combat high rates of child drowning deaths in the Sundarbans, India gets its first pond-based swimming pool

GNS News Agency, July 27

Some 100 kilometres south of Kolkata, in Baikuntapur village, deep inside India's ecologically sensitive Sundarbans, 15-year-old Supriya Halder and her troupe of fellow students from neighbouring hamlets put together a jatra performance, a popular form of folk theatre in West Bengal. The young students are trying to raise awareness among villagers about drowning as a public health concern prevalent in this part of the country. A few metres from the makeshift stage is a pond, similar to the countless water bodies that dot the region. This one, however, is unique: it is India's first pond-based swimming pool. This initiative is the result of the combined efforts of India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the World Health Organisation, and the West Bengal government, supported by The George Institute for Global Health and the Child in Need Institute (CINI). According to UNESCO figures, almost 30 per cent of the land in the Sundarbans in West Bengal is covered by water bodies. The region also has the world's highest rate of child mortality due to drowning, says Dr Jagnoor Jagnoor, senior research fellow, Injury Program at The George Institute for Global Health. According to World Health Organization (WHO) data, drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury death worldwide, accounting for 7 per cent of all injury-related deaths, and low- and middle-income countries account for over 90 per cent of unintentional drowning. WHO recognises July 25 as 'World Drowning Prevention Day'.

In the villages of the Sundarbans, it would not be a stretch to say that every family knows at least one person who has drowned, says 20-year-old Shyamoli Moira. As a child, while playing by the family pond, she watched how her uncle and aunt almost drowned in the water body, a memory that she says will remain ingrained in her mind. Festive offer Young boys go for a swim in one of the two pond-based pools created in the Sundarbans, India, to help children learn survival swimming in safe spaces and less risk of drowning. Photo credit: Neha Banka Young boys go for a swim in one of the two pond-based pools created in the Sundarbans, India, to help children learn survival swimming in safe spaces and less risk of drowning. Photo credit: Neha Banka "My uncle and aunt were only a few years older than me. They fell into the water and both did not know how to swim. I was small and unable to call out for help. I didn't know how to swim. Then, my mother came out and asked me where the two were and I pointed to the water," says Moira. Her mother quickly called out to villagers for help, an intervention that likely saved the lives of both children because not too much time had passed.

While drowning is a pressing public health concern, in West Bengal, few adults know survival swimming, and even fewer children under the age of 10 have these life-

saving skills, which contributes to the high rates of child mortality caused by drowning, experts say. Studies show that three children drown every day all over West Bengal. "You will find ponds near every home here, located just a step from the house. Every home will have up to two ponds in this region," says Moira. While these water bodies are essential to the livelihoods of the villagers who live around them, they also pose a significant safety risk for infants and children. "We use the ponds for everything—from washing clothes to using it for bathing. These ponds are huge and are also used for fishing." At India's first pond-based swimming pool in Baikuntapur village, a community pond was modified with a platform and fencing to teach and encourage survival swimming to children between ages six to 10 years.

"You don't want to teach younger children because they are curious. They don't have enough skill sets and they try to explore in the water, so it becomes tricky. The WHO best-practice guideline recommends it for six to 10 year-olds and that is what we are trying to implement. We are not trying to make them athletes. All we want is for them to be able to survive for 30 seconds to two minutes if they find themselves in trouble in water," says Dr Jagnoor. The idea of pond-based swimming pools originated in neighbouring Bangladesh. Until about two decades ago, the country had high rates of drowning. Government and non-governmental interventions, along with socio-political factors such as improved housing and access to piped water, have significantly reduced these numbers.

Studies showed that initiating a public health project in West Bengal that was successful in Bangladesh had the likelihood of being an effective intervention to combat the issue of drowning among children. "Bangladesh is a small country and not that diverse in topography. They all speak one language in a high-density population. It is easier to work with similar interventions in West Bengal because the contexts in Bangladesh and West Bengal are similar. There are ponds and riverine areas. It is a low-lying area; a delta, and it has rural and remote populations," says Dr Jagnoor. With swimming lessons in the village pond-based pool about to start for small children this week, Halder hopes that more people are encouraged to enrol their children for survival swimming training. When Halder was six years old, her father took her to the family's pond, tied plastic bottles to function as flotation devices and taught her how to swim. "My father is not a trained swimmer. He was self-taught, but he taught me," Halder says. Sundarbans Supriya Halder stands by one of the two pond-based swimming pools in the Sundarbans. Photo credit: Supriya Halder

Not everyone in the village knows how to swim—even among adults, villagers interviewed for this report say. "I think there is a perception that rural populations

should know how to swim. Humans aren't expected to have an inherent ability to swim. Our lungs are not meant for that and we don't have self-buoyant bodies. It might not be something that you need to have rigorous training in, but there needs to be a risk assessment for the kind of water body it is, the risks of when you go into it and how you may or may not find yourself in trouble. All these are passed down from generation to generation or acquired through an outdoor source and that hasn't happened in these populations," Dr Jagnoor says about the Sundarbans. At the village pond-based pool, local residents with training in survival swimming teach children who want to learn. Halder says these lessons are important for all villagers, but particularly girls and women. The Sundarbans skirt the Bay of Bengal, the world's largest bay and one of the most cyclone-prone regions on the earth. In this region, storm surges have historically caused the most severe damage in tropical cyclone-related disasters. Floods caused by storm surges are a significant threat to the inhabitants of the Bay of Bengal, particularly the Sundarbans. A unique feature of this coast along the West Bengal-Bangladesh belt is that it is crisscrossed by several rivers and rivulets, and the elevation of the islands is 4 to 5 metres above sea level. When cyclones hit the Sundarbans, it is common for flood water to enter homes in strong currents, says Halder. "Because of the strong currents, many times people are not able to leave the house and go to cyclone shelters. If children know how to swim, they can reach safe spaces. Men somehow manage to swim to safety, but women and girls don't step into water bodies." These days, even remote villages in the Sundarbans are slowly getting access to piped water, making it less necessary for women to utilise ponds for everyday use in the frequency that it was required till even a decade ago. "When women go to the ponds, it is just for bathing. So they are unfamiliar with swimming and don't know how to save themselves," says Halder.

Researchers have specifically designed the pond-based swimming pools to ensure a safe space for children learning survival swimming, that would be appropriate for West Bengal. One section of the pond has been fenced with nets to separate the pool from the larger pond. "The idea is to have six kids under one adult's supervision. You want them to be barricaded so that they can be monitored. The original model implemented in Bangladesh does not have nets, but here in West Bengal, they do it because of snakes (in the water). They also have a platform because with ponds, you can't maintain the depth of the water, and this way, it is waist-height for the child to stand, and there is no risk of drowning," says Dr Jagnoor. Sundarbans Fencing around one section of a community pond in the Sundarbans that has been made into India's first pond-based swimming pool. Photo credit: Neha Banka "Most deaths will occur in areas where the number of water bodies is high and mostly in (rural) com-



munities). This model gives us the opportunity to build low-cost swimming training areas," says Dr Tej Prakash Sinha, MBBS, MS Assistant Professor, Emergency Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, who also serves as a technical expert at Ministry of Health, in preparing national policies on pre-hospital care, emergency care and trauma care. "Fencing of risky water bodies will also prevent accidental falls," says Dr Sinha. Clean pools are high-maintenance and expensive, even in high-income countries. The pond-based model becomes a more accessible solution for rural communities which require it the most, experts interviewed for this report say.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that the first pond-based swimming pool was implemented in West Bengal, says Dr Jagnoor. "As a researcher, you look at where the burden is and the Sundarbans has the highest child drowning mortality rates in the world. You can't turn a blind eye and you have to do something about it. The effectiveness in Bangladesh was very high, and they had an 80 per cent reduction in mortality cases between 2012-2015." "Every day, three innocent lives are lost due to drowning in the Sundarbans, a heartbreaking loss that is completely avoidable. CINI's implementation of strategies recommended by the World Health Organisation has shown promising outcomes," says Dr. Samir Chaudhari, founder secretary, Child in Need Institute. The Indian government has also been focusing on this subject. In December 2023, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare unveiled the 'Strategic Framework for Drowning Prevention', which, among other objectives, also outlined goals to formulate national and state drowning prevention action plans. While the pond-based swimming pool in West Bengal is the first of its kind in the country, there are plans underway to implement this model in other states as well, where the model is adapted depending on a wide range of topical socio-cultural and geographical factors. For young girls like Halder, the pond-based swimming pool is an asset to the community. "The swimming lessons are starting with school students, but we hope that word spreads and that women and girls can also learn how to swim here," she says.

## FBI Director raises doubts on whether Donald Trump's ear was grazed by bullet during assassination attempt

GNS News Agency, July 27

FBI Director Christopher Wray has expressed doubts over if Donald Trump was shot in the course of an attempted assassination at a Pennsylvania political rally.

During his testimony to the US House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, Wray disclosed that the FBI was still investigating whether it was some shrapnel or bullet that struck Trump's ear during the shooting. "With respect to former President Trump, there's some question about whether or not it's a bullet or shrapnel that hit his ear. I don't know right now whether that bullet, in addition to causing the grazing, could have landed somewhere else," he responded to legislators' question if the FBI knew where all eight bullets fired by 20-year-old shooter Thomas Crooks at the rally. "My understanding is that either it [a bullet] or some shrapnel is what grazed his ear," he added. FBI reveals shooter searched 'How far away was Oswald from Kennedy'

Initial accounts on the day of the shooting suggested that Trump might have been hurt by a shard of glass when a bullet struck the teleprompter. However, this notion was refuted when images showed that both glass screens remained intact after the attack. Wray further revealed that the gunman had searched for assassination of President John F. Kennedy prior to the attack. A week



prior to the shooting, Wray claimed that the gunman searched online, "How far away was Oswald from Kennedy?" On November 22, 1963, shooter Lee Harvey Oswald killed Kennedy from a sniper's position in Dallas. While the suspect had demonstrated a strong interest in well-known figures, Wray claimed no overt signs of an ideological motivation had been found. According to the investigators, they have compiled a thorough itinerary of Crooks' travels and internet activities, but they are still unsure of his exact motivation or why he targeted Trump. The FBI still believes that Crooks, who was shot and killed by a countersniper from the Secret Service, acted alone.

## Mom of Kamala Harris' step kids reacts to JD Vance's 'childless cat lady' dig at 'Momala'

GNS News Agency, July 27

Kerstin Emhoff, the ex-wife of Kamala Harris' husband, has defended the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee against JD Vance's "childless cat lady" remark.

Responding to a viral clip of Vance, Kerstin Emhoff, who shares two kids with Doug Emhoff, rejected criticism of Harris over her lack of biological children as "baseless". She asserted that Harris is an equal parent of their children. "For over 10 years since Cole and Ella were teenagers, Kamala has been a co-parent with Doug and I," she told CNN. Hailing Harris for being loving and nurturing, Kerstin said the US VP has fiercely protective of their kids. "I love our blended family and am grateful to have her in it." JD Vance takes brutal dig at Kamala Harris



after Vance's 2021 interview with Tucker Carlson, a former Fox News host, went viral on social media. In the interview, Vance stated that the US was led by those who don't have a "direct stake" in the country that is "a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives and the choices that they've made and so they

want to make the rest of the country miserable too." Trump's running mate went on to say, "Look at Kamala Harris, Pete Buttigieg, AOC—the entire future of the Democrats is controlled by people without children."

Kamala Harris reveals why her step kids call her 'Momala' Harris has been affectionately referred to as "Momala" by two kids of

Emhoff, with whom she got married in 2014. In a 2019 essay in Elle Magazine, she explained how the name "Momala" was introduced and called her stepchildren as her "endless source of love and pure joy." "A few years later when Doug and I got married, Cole, Ella, and I agreed that we didn't like the term "stepmom."

## Canada's govt and Central Bank at odds over immigration numbers

GNS News Agency, July 27

Toronto: While the Canadian Government has said it aims to reduce temporary immigration, the country's central bank has stated that those numbers are actually likely to increase. On March 21, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) had announced its intent to curb the intake of non-permanent residents or NPRs to reduce their share of the population from 6.2 per cent to 5 per cent over three years. However, in its Monetary Policy Report released on Wednesday, Bank of Canada (BoC) offered a distinctly different read of the situation, as it said, "Overall, this implied that the annual population growth rate would decline by about 2 percentage points in 2025 and 2026. NPRs represented 6.8 per cent of the population at the beginning of April — much higher than at the time of the March announcement — and the share is expected to continue rising over the near term. This suggests that it will take longer for planned policies to reduce NPR inflows to achieve the 5 per cent target." NPRs comprise international students, temporary workers and refugees with the first category contributing the bulk.

The Bank also revised upwards its forecast for population increase given that net inflows of NPRs has not been mitigated despite Ottawa's pronouncements. In April, it had projected that population growth of people aged 15 and older was assumed to slow from 3.3 per cent in the first half of 2024 to 1.0 per cent on average over 2025 and 2026. Now, those projections have changed. "Overall, population growth of people aged 15 and older is now assumed to be 3.3 per cent in 2024 and 1.7 per cent in 2025-26. Compared with the April Report, this is higher by 0.2 percentage points in 2024, 0.7 percentage points in 2025 and 0.6 percentage points in 2026," the BoC noted. "Considerable uncertainty continues to surround the future path of net NPR flows," it added. The first five



months of 2024 have seen an increase in the number of study permit approvals to 216,620 from 200,505 for the same period in 2023.

In January, IRCC announced that it will implement an intake cap on the number of applications accepted for study permits for international students which was expected to result in a reduction of 35 per cent in those numbers this year as compared to 2023. "For 2024, the cap is expected to result in approximately 360,000 approved study permits, a decrease of 35 per cent from 2023," IRCC noted in a release at the time. On March 21, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Minister Marc Miller announced the government's target to "decrease in our temporary residents population to 5 per cent over the next three years." The announcements from the government were driven by skyrocketing shelter costs, from housing prices to rentals, along with pressure on health and other infrastructure due to the explosive rise in temporary immigration. Of the 682,430 study permits issued by Canada in 2023, Indian students accounted for 278,335. So far, in 2024, Canada has issued 216,620 study permits with Indians availing of 91,510 of them.

## What is Kamala Harris' take on Israel and Gaza? Americans wonder if she will chart a different path forward

GNS News Agency, July 27

After Joe Biden dropped out of the race and endorsed Kamala Harris, one question has been on the mind of all Americans: what is the US vice president's take on Israel and Gaza? Biden's strong support for Israel's war in Gaza led to a rift between moderates and progressives in his party. Will Harris create a different path forward? Notably, Harris was not present in her role as vice president during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address to Congress in the US, as she had to attend an event in Indianapolis. Harris and Netanyahu are expected to meet one-on-one later on Wednesday, July 24. According to the Wall Street Journal, Harris is expected to tell him "it is time for the war to end in a way where Israel is secure, all hostages are released, the suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza ends, and the Palestinian people can enjoy their right to dignity, freedom, and self-determination."

Will Kamala Harris chart a different path forward if she becomes president?

Harris not attending Netanyahu's speech and instead choosing to meet him privately is slightly different from Biden's approach. Biden was seen embracing Netanyahu on the tarmac in Tel Aviv in November, which symbolised his unwavering support for Israel. Biden and Netanyahu have remained close, with the president offering him financial and military support. In case Harris

plans to change the course even a little, US' relationship with Israel might be impacted. It could have electoral consequences too, of course. Harris has yet to open up about her Gaza policy. However, it is widely known that she has ties to the American Jewish community and Israeli interest groups.

Doug Emhoff, her husband, is Jewish. He has supported the Biden administration's initiative against antisemitism ever since Hamas terrorists attacked Israel on October 7 last year. Harris has a great working relationship with Israeli President Isaac Herzog, and has been involved in every phone call Biden and Netanyahu have had in the midst of the war. Harris has won the support of several major Jewish interest groups in her presidential bid, including Democratic Majority for Israel, J Street, and the Jewish Democratic Council of America. She is connected to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). In 2017, after being elected to the US Senate, Harris spoke at the organisation's annual conference. "I believe the bonds between the United States and Israel are unbreakable," she said at the time. On various occasions, throughout the ongoing war, Harris asserted that Israel has the "right to defend itself" against Hamas. She also said that the threat Hamas posed to Israel should be "eliminated." In March, Harris became the first person in the Biden administration to call for an immediate ceasefire.



## DGCA probing into AI Express cabin crew strike that caused flight cancellations: Civil Aviation Minister



On May 7, around 200 cabin crew members of Tata Group-owned Air India Express went on strike to protest against alleged mismanagement at the airline, resulting in the cancellation of hundreds of flights. On May 7, around 200 cabin crew members of Tata Group-owned Air India Express went on strike to protest against alleged mismanagement at the airline, resulting in the cancellation of hundreds of flights.

Aviation regulator DGCA is investigating the Air India Express cabin crew strike incident in May that had resulted in several flight cancellations and the airline will be penalized in case there were any non-compliance with regulations, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoan Naidu said in response to queries in the Lok Sabha related to flight cancellations, Naidu said the ministry was ensuring that there were no cancellations and delays as he emphasized that Civil Aviation Requirements (CARs) were in place to ensure that passengers received compensation. "We acknowledge that there has been an issue with Air India Express ... There were some internal issues with the crew as Air India Express was merging

with AirAsia India and a mass strike happened (on May 7)," the minister said during the Question Hour. There were a lot of cancellations due to the strike.

"Once this issue started, the ministry got involved, DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) facilitated a lot of discussions with airline, crew members and everything, and it was sorted out ... There was also a software glitch that happened. Because of the software glitch, the crew member data that was supposed to be with the airline, there was some problem and manually they were trying to enter (data) ... For everything to get back to normalcy, (it took) some time," the minister said. While noting that there are CARs in place, Naidu said if airlines do not follow regulations, the ministry gets involved and ensures that passengers get refund or readjustment in another flight. Citing an example, he said a penalty of Rs 10 lakh was imposed on Air India for not following certain guidelines.

"The Air India Express strike incident also ... The DGCA is going into the depth and investigating the issue. If there seems to be any non-compliance from the airlines, then definitely we are going to penalize them and ensure that passenger is the top priority," Naidu said. On May 7, around 200 cabin crew members of Tata Group-owned Air India Express went on strike to protest against alleged mismanagement at the airline, resulting in the cancellation of hundreds of flights. Consequently, the airline management terminated the services of 25 cabin crew members and warned the others to join work or face the same action. The strike was called off on May 9 after a conciliation meeting between representatives of a union representing the cabin crew members and the management convened by the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central). The termination letters were also later withdrawn.

## Delays expected in flights to and from Mumbai amid heavy rainfall, say major airlines; Air India offers full refund

"We are relentlessly working to ensure smooth operations and expect these delays to significantly reduce once the weather improves," IndiGo wrote in a statement. "We are relentlessly working to ensure smooth operations and expect these delays to significantly reduce once the weather improves," IndiGo wrote in a statement.

Major airlines, including Air India, SpiceJet and IndiGo, Thursday issued notices regarding potential delays in flights to and from Mumbai as torrential rains lashed the city. Owing to the disruption in flight operations, Air India announced full refunds or one-time complimentary rescheduling for bookings confirmed on July 25. "Due to bad weather (heavy rain) in Mumbai (BOM), all departures/arrivals and their consequential flights may get affected," SpiceJet wrote in a post on X. Meanwhile, Air India advised travellers to start early for the airport as disruptions in traffic due to waterlogging could cause delays in movement. "Please check flight status before heading to the airport," the air carrier wrote on X. "We are relentlessly working to ensure smooth operations and expect these delays to significantly reduce once the weather improves," IndiGo wrote in a statement.

Heavy rains battered Mumbai on Thursday, causing the Vehar Lake to overflow and the Andheri subway to shut, with multiple areas experiencing flooding. The Central Railway announced that local trains are operating at



reduced speeds due to low visibility caused by heavy rains and high winds. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde urged citizens in Mumbai, Thane, Raigad, and Pune to stay indoors, and assured that the district and municipal administrations are on alert, with rescue operations ongoing in flood-prone areas. Shinde stated that NDRF, SDRF, Army, Navy, Police, Fire Brigade, and Health systems are coordinating efforts. Instructions have been given to evacuate and provide necessities to affected people, he added. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert in Mumbai and nearby areas, predicting moderate to heavy rainfall. Live Updates | Click here for Union Budget 2024 announcements by FM Nirmala Sitharaman | New Income Tax changes announced - check here

## 'Not for high dividends ... If we suck profits out, PSUs will not be able to invest': DIPAM Secretary



After consistently missing divestment targets, the government is now doubling down on a shift in its disinvestment policy. According to TUHIN KANTA PANDEY, Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), the shift is reflective of the realisation that public asset management need not be overly dependent on strategic disinvestment, and requires a broader and more holistic approach that is decoupled from fiscal management. In an interaction with AGGAM WALIA and SUKALP SHARMA, Pandey talks about the change in strategy, the government's push to make public sector undertakings (PSUs) more competitive, efficient, and market oriented, and more. Edited Excerpts: There seems to be a clear move away from strategic disinvestment towards a broader public asset management strategy. Is it going to be the way forward in the medium to long term? And could you give us an insight into what went behind this shift? It is important to look at public asset management differently from fiscal management ... For 10-15 years, I would say there was a broad understanding between the pink press, economists and maybe even the government that you are bringing the fiscal deficit down, and for that you must disinvest ... you let the capital (in PSUs) go. But the markets do not look at it that way ... and most of these (PSUs) are market players ... investors expect the promoter to also manage these companies in a similar way as any commercial business enterprise. This means that boards have to be really bothered about shareholders' interests ... If minority shareholders start feeling that the companies care for their interest, they will care for the company's stocks also ... So I think there was a bit of disconnect when we had a focused disinvestment strategy. There was also a time horizon issue. If you are selling a certain number of shares, you are letting go of future dividends. It is like if you are disposing of your property, you are making one-time capital gains, but you are also foregoing future rental income ... So, you are not really counting the opportunity costs—future rentals, or in our case, future dividends ... We have also realised that there has to be an alignment of interests of the minority shareholders with those of the majority shareholders (government).

Talking of PSU dividends, there is a feeling in some quarters that perhaps PSUs are being forced to pay high dividends, because of which they are not able to invest in raising their capacities as much as they should. It (high dividends) is no longer the case. We are not asking them to maximise dividends. If we suck the profit out, the PSUs will not be able to put some of their earnings into their projects, which means that growth will not come ... then as an investor, your share price will not grow because gains come only from profitable growth. They (PSUs) can take exemptions also, and many times they have said that they will not be able to give it ... A consistent dividend policy is much better than a maximum dividend policy ... There is a certain amount of deliberation they must do. Investors also need some certainty. There are certain investors ... pension funds and others, who are interested in stable returns and high dividend yield companies. In between our dividend yield used to be very high because the share prices were very low. That is not the case anymore. So, is the era of the government pushing for large strategic disinvestment transactions over, or will privatisation go hand in hand with a more calibrated approach to stake dilution in PSUs and asset monetisation? In the overall approach we are presently following, we want to be a lot more calibrated. I don't think there is a lot of focus currently on big deals and big-ticket privatisations. We are now following a holistic public management strategy where disinvestment is based on opportunities and calibration, and I would also say a gradual process, not very sharp (offloading of shares) ... Because stocks is a sensitive game, where you have complex supply and demand dynamics ... We don't want to create overhangs ... It could affect share prices for many months. DIPAM is making efforts to help PSUs with image building and perception management. What is the specific problem that you see on that front? The market talks about something called public sector discounts. They look at whether the PSU managements are completely in alignment with the interests of the companies and shareholders or whether they have multiple objectives to serve, other than the commercial objectives. Even in private companies, there are multiple objectives ... but there is an element of constraint within the public sector managements due to certain rules just because they are government-owned ... Perception is always important in the market ... As we are trying to make the managements conscious about minority shareholders and markets, we are also trying to align their interests along these lines ... for instance, they should have communication skills for effectively handling and addressing analyst calls and talking to the market ... in that context, we had taken an initiative jointly with the Capacity Building Commission for senior PSU executives and we will continue (with such initiatives). Would it be correct to say that the government wants PSUs to be as conscious of the markets and as competitive as their private sector peers? Sure, that is the objective.

## Crafted by 40 artisans, Jennifer Lopez's Bridgerton-inspired dress took over 3,400 hours to make; features over half a million crystals



Jennifer Lopez turned 55 in style, throwing a lavish Bridgerton-themed party in the Hamptons and captivating everyone with a custom gown designed by our very own "local designer" Manish Malhotra. The dress itself was a showstopper, boasting intricate details and a unique blend of eras that perfectly complemented the party's theme. Taking to Instagram, Malhotra unveiled the meticulous process behind the elaborate design. The off-shoulder gown, featuring a voluminous skirt adorned with vintage brocade, was a true masterpiece of Indian craftsmanship.

Over 40 skilled artisans meticulously hand-stitched the dress, taking a staggering 3,490 hours to complete. A particularly striking detail was the floral motif meticulously crafted by hand from sequins and over half a million crystals, adding a touch of shimmering elegance. While the Bridgerton series is set in the Regency Era, Malhotra incorporated some modern elements into the gown to

create a truly unique look for JLo. A daring middle slit reaching her knees added a contemporary touch, ensuring the dress wasn't just historically inspired but also undeniably glamorous. To complete the look, JLo accessorised with elegant jewellery, including a dainty pendant and studs. Meshed gloves added a touch of drama, while a sophisticated bun with elaborate headgear kept her hair perfectly coiffed. Shiny chunky heels provided a final touch of glamour, perfectly complementing the overall ensemble.

Know all about the party! The Bridgerton-themed party, held days prior to the birthday itself, transported guests to the world of the Ton with its vibrant colour palette and rich decor. JLo shared a video online offering a glimpse into the celebratory atmosphere, filled with music, dancing, and merriment. However, reports suggest her estranged husband, Ben Affleck, was not present at the festivities, adding a touch of mystery to the occasion. Earlier, JLo took to Instagram to express her heartfelt gratitude to her fans for their unwavering support throughout her career. She emphasised their presence "in the good times and in the tough times," acknowledging their loyalty and love. According to media reports, JLo is currently prioritising self-care, focusing on rest, spending time with loved ones, and potentially prioritising personal well-being after her documentary, "This is Me... Now," didn't achieve the anticipated response. This period of self-care comes after a whirlwind year that included the release of the documentary and rumours surrounding her personal life.

## This is why you feel too lazy to move

We've all been there — those days when the couch seems more inviting than the gym, and the mere thought of lacing up our sneakers feels like an insurmountable task. In a world where hustle culture reigns supreme, succumbing to bouts of laziness can trigger waves of guilt and self-doubt. However, the truth is that feeling unmotivated to move our bodies is a more complex phenomenon. Dr Pranav Honnavara Srinivasan, MD, DM, senior consultant gastroenterologist at Fortis Hospital, elaborates, "It boils down to both physical and mental barriers. Physically, fatigue from poor sleep, a sedentary lifestyle, or even nutritional deficiencies can zap your energy. If your diet lacks essential nutrients like iron or vitamin D, you might feel perpetually tired and weak, making the idea of exercise less appealing." On the mental side, stress, anxiety, and depression can play huge roles, he says. When your mind is occupied with worries or you're feeling down, it's tough to find the motivation to get moving. Even if you view exercise as boring or time-consuming, these mental blocks can prevent you from starting. Impact of lifestyle factors As mentioned, your lifestyle choices greatly impact how energetic or lazy you feel. Dr Srinivasan elaborates on these factors: Diet: Eating lots of processed foods and sugary snacks might give you a quick energy boost, but they often lead to a crash later on. To keep your energy levels steady, focus on a balanced diet filled with fruits, veggies, lean proteins, and whole grains.

Sleep: If you're not getting enough shut-eye, your body can't recharge properly, leaving you feeling groggy and unmotivated. Aim for 7-8 hours of quality sleep each night to help keep your energy levels up. Stress: Chronic stress raises your cortisol levels, which can drain your energy and leave you feeling fatigued. Incorporating stress-reducing activities like yoga, meditation, or even just deep breathing can help you maintain better energy levels. Lazy, laziness, exercise, fitness To keep your energy levels steady, focus on a balanced diet (Source: Freepik) Underlying medical conditions and



deficiencies Sometimes, low energy levels can be linked to underlying health issues or nutritional deficiencies. "Hypothyroidism, anemia, and diabetes are just a few conditions that can lead to chronic fatigue. If you're constantly tired, it's worth checking in with your doctor to rule out these conditions," Dr Srinivasan recommends. Lacking key nutrients like iron, vitamin D, or B vitamins can make you feel tired and weak. A simple blood test can identify these deficiencies, and dietary changes or supplements can help. Practical strategies to overcome laziness and stay committed to fitness goals Dr Srinivasan shares some practical tips to help you beat laziness and stay on track with your fitness goals: Set SMART Goals: Create Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timed goals. Instead of saying 'I want to exercise more,' try 'I will walk for 20 minutes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.' This clarity helps boost your motivation. Enjoy What You Do: Choose activities that you actually enjoy. Whether it's dancing, hiking, or playing a sport, finding joy in movement makes it feel less like a chore. Build a Routine: Treat your workouts like important appointments. Schedule them into your calendar and maintain consistency. Over time, it will become a habit. Start Small: Don't overwhelm yourself with long and intense workouts. Start with short, manageable sessions and gradually increase the duration and intensity. This approach makes it easier to stay committed.

## Anant Ambani's stunning brooches will take your breath away; here's a quick look at his collection



We are sure that got you excited, so without wasting any time let's take a look at some of these pieces that did the heavy (quite literally) lifting when it came to his style.

During the recently concluded wedding celebrations of the Ambani family, it was not just the women who stole the show. The man of the moment, Anant Ambani did too. No, we are not talking about his emeralds and rubies encrusted silk sherwani, or his Nehru jacket embellished with Swarovski and nakshi handwork; today, we are here to talk about his outstanding (read: super expensive) brooch collection. We are sure that got you excited, so without wasting any time let's take a look at some of these pieces that did the heavy (quite literally) lifting when it came to his style.

The brooch was lion-shaped and featured a huge drop of diamond attached to its mouth and emerald-set eyes. In an exclusive interview with Forbes, Schwartz said: "The mane, though, is made of many different shades of yellow diamonds to give it texture and dimension. There was a 50+ carat colorless white diamond hanging from

the mouth and the eyes are made of emeralds, which are known to be a spiritual stone with healing powers and good luck. Also, the lion is standing on a platform made of Asscher cut white diamond which symbolizes grounding. Anant Ambani Anant Ambani's love for animals inspired this brooch by Heeramanek and Son.

For his wedding in Mumbai, Anant Ambani wore a brooch featuring an "impressive emerald and diamond design" with a classic Cartier Panther crouched on a "large boulder-shaped emerald weighing 720 carats" by Heeramanek & Son. "The Zambian emerald is an exquisite 720-carat cut specially for this brooch. The crouched panther, comprising of the highest quality diamonds, complements the colour, lustre and magnificent size of the emerald perfectly," shared the jeweller. They also mentioned that this brooch was made specially for Ambani because it signifies his love for animals.



## Amala Paul reacts to criticism over her 'inappropriate' dressing during Level Cross promotion in Kochi college: 'The problem lies with how the cameras projected...'



which didn't go down well with many online, who trolled and targeted the actress—some even abusing her.

Days later, the actress has finally reacted to the issue. At a recent press conference, the actress said, "The problem lies with how the cameras projected my dressing style. I wore what was comfortable for me. My dress was not inappropriate for the function. What was probably inappropriate was the way the camera projected my attire. I have no control over that."

Backing her statement further, the Adujeevitham star said, "The students were totally comfortable with what I wore. I wear all types of clothing, be it traditional or western. By wearing that dress, I wanted to instill confidence among students regarding their dressing choices." Amala Paul, who recently starred opposite Prithviraj Sukumaran in his dream project Adujeevitham: The Goat Life, gave birth to a baby boy last month. The actress has been actively involved in the promotions of Level Cross along with her co-stars Asif Ali and Sharafudheen. The film is set to hit the big screen on July 26.

Amala Paul, who recently faced trolling for allegedly wearing an "inappropriate" outfit to a college for the promotion of her upcoming film Level Cross, has finally broken her silence. At a recent press conference, the Malayalam actress told, "The problem lies with how the camera projected my dressing style." Recently, the actress visited St Albert's College in Kochi to promote her Malayalam film. For the event, the actress wore a little black dress (LBD),

## When Rekha ran to hug Jaya Bachchan as Amitabh Bachchan won Best Actor award, shocked fans



It is rare to see actors Rekha and Jaya Bachchan in the same frame. However, the impossible was achieved as Rekha ran to hug Jaya Bachchan as Amitabh Bachchan was announced the Best Actor winner for Piku at Star Screen Awards in 2015. As Big B's name was announced, both Jaya and Amitabh got up from their seat, while Amitabh headed towards dais to accept the award, Rekha — who was seated at a distance — ran towards Jaya and gave her a big hug. The duo then watched together as Amitabh accepted the honour.

Filmmaker Subhash Ghai announced Amitabh Bachchan's name along with Ranveer Singh for the Best Actor award. The two were seen hugging on the stage as they co-accepted the awards.

Rekha and Amitabh Bachchan, who have shared the screen together in several films including Muqaddar Ka Sikandar, Mr Natwarlal, and Ganga Ki Saugandh. The three of them appeared together in Yash Chopra's Silsila (1981), which also marked the last time Amitabh and Rekha, one of Bollywood's most celebrated pairs, shared

the screen. The romantic drama, which tanked upon release, had created many headlines due to speculations linking its narrative to the rumoured real-life affair between its stars.

In an interview with Simi Garewal in 2004, when Rekha was asked if she was ever in love with Amitabh Bachchan, the actress said, "Absolutely". She further explained, "Duh, that's a dumb question. I have yet to come across a single man, woman, child who can help but fall completely, passionately, insanely, desperately, hopelessly in love with him. So why should I be signed out? What do I deny? I am not in love with him? Of course I am. You take all the world in the love and then add some more — I feel that for that person. Bottomline."

However, in the same interview, she also clarified that they were never in a relationship. She said, "There was never a personal connection with him, that's the truth. Never ever. There was no truth to the controversies and speculation."

## Shivangi Joshi calls Hina Khan 'Mumma', shares actor's health update amid cancer treatment: 'She will get well super soon'



Hina Khan sent shockwaves across the country as she broke the news of suffering from breast cancer almost a month ago. The actor, however, has decided to manifest only positivity as she battles the disease. Many of her friends and colleagues from the industry rallied behind her, rooting and encouraging her to fight her way through this. Recently, Hina Khan's on-screen daughter Shivangi Joshi also shared an update on Hina's health during a conversation with Pinkvilla.

As Shivangi appeared on the show Behind The Success, she spoke about how her journey in the industry has been. Revisiting her ups and downs, the moments she had been left disheartened, Shivangi also spoke about her co-stars. During the interview, when Shivangi was shown a photo of Hina, she happily screamed 'Mumma' and shared an update on Hina's health. "I am still in touch with her, we were just talking yesterday. She is doing okay, she is very strong, she is a fighter and she

will bounce back soon. I am praying for her, I was supposed to meet her but that couldn't happen, I shall meet her soon. We are all praying for her and she will get well super soon."

Shivangi also shared that the photo was from Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai shoot. Shivangi played Hina's daughter in the show. Some time back, the show's director Rajan Shahni had mentioned how before Hina's exit from the serial, there was some friction between the two actresses. He shared that Hina had issues shooting for some scenes that highlighted Shivangi. However, the actresses have never spoken ill of each other. Hina who has been taking every day as it comes, she has been dropping hopeful posts on social media and regularly keeps updating fans about her health. Her last project was for Amazon Mini TV called Namacool, the actress has also shot for another project soon, but details about the same are unknown.

## Dimple Kapadia had 'reservations' about daughter Twinkle Khanna marrying Akshay Kumar: 'He is naughty to the hilt'



about his kind nature and added, "I see him interacting with a lot of people and he derives so much joy in just sitting and playing basketball or cards with you. He can just sit down and chat with you and make you feel so good. He is naughty to the hilt and he finds me to do these things on." In an earlier chat on Tweak India, Twinkle had said that her mother had asked her to live in with Akshay before getting married. "When my husband said he wants to marry me, my mother said, 'Nothing doing, you live together for two years. If you make it, then you get married,'" she said.

When Akshay Kumar and Twinkle Khanna decided to get married, her parents, Rajesh Khanna and Dimple Kapadia, weren't exactly on board with the idea of this union. In an earlier interview, Dimple shared how she wasn't thrilled with the idea at first but eventually realised that this was perhaps the best decision for Twinkle. She also shared how Akshay is a prankster at home and shared that he is an "amazing man."

Talking at an event organised by FICCI FLO Jaipur, Dimple shared, "Earlier on, I had my reservations about my daughter getting married to him. Thank God she did." Describing Akshay as "amazing," Dimple added, "He is what any aspiring actor would want to be as far as discipline is concerned. He is an amazing man." She spoke

## 'Dharmendra came on set, I didn't care to go see him,' says Mukesh Rishi: 'After the shoot, I fell on his feet'

Mukesh Rishi, who is one of the most popular villains of the Indian cinema, has worked with the likes of Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Sunny Deol, Aamir Khan, and Mithun Chakraborty among others over his career spanning over three decades. In a recent interview, Mukesh Rishi who has extensively worked with veteran actor Dharmendra, recalled an anecdote from one of his film shoots when the now 68-year-old actor met the star for the first time. Recalling his meeting, the actor said, "I knew he was on set, but I didn't care to meet him."

In a new interview with Radio Nasha Official, Mukesh Rishi recalled, "Dharmendra ji is among the people whose poster I had in my cupboard. So when I worked with him, it was surreal. He had a scene to shoot, Dharmendra ji came on set, I know he is there, but I didn't go to see him. I was mugging up my lines for my scene and then I said I was ready, I went on set, he was already there, but I didn't look at him. Then the shot happened."

"Soon after our shot was shot, I just fell on Dharmendra ji's feet. I waited all this while because if I had met him before the scene, I had so much respect for



him, that it would have just come out and I wouldn't be then able to perform before him. These are the things I have learnt myself, how to face big people. There is no course that teaches you all this. So this was my way to face big people and work with them. I have done quite few films with him," added the Sooryavansham actor. Mukesh Rishi and Dharmendra have worked in couple of films in the 90s. While their first project together was Anil Kapoor starrer 1992 film Humlaa, they went to make films like Jeeo Shaan Se (1997), Zul O Situm (1998), Nyaydaata (1999), and Loh Purush (1999).

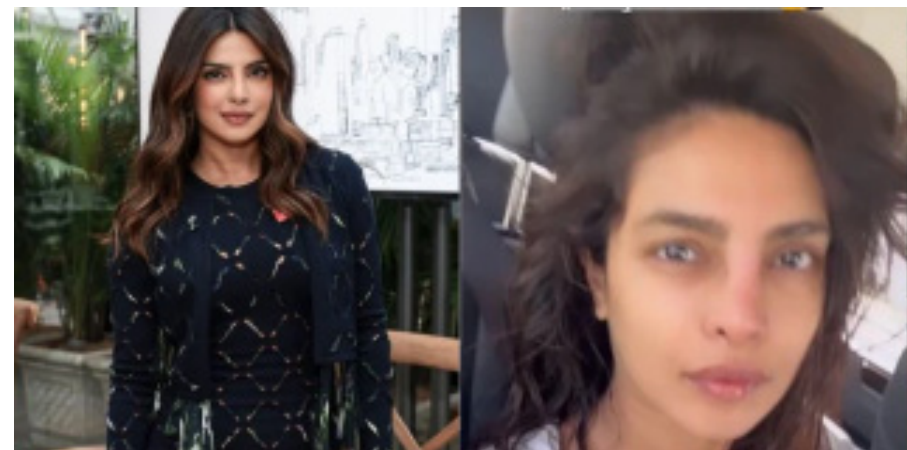
## Priyanka Chopra is seen on the verge of tears in a new Instagram video, leaves fan concerned: 'Just feeling today'

Priyanka Chopra is no stranger to a hectic lifestyle, but her recent whirlwind schedule seems to have caught up with her. Fresh off the heels of wrapping up the action-comedy Heads of State alongside Idris Elba and John Cena, the global star immediately jetted to Australia to immerse herself in the gritty world of The Bluff. The actress has been candid about the physically demanding role, often sharing glimpses of her bruised and battered state on social media.

Amidst her intense filming schedule, Priyanka made a quick detour to India to celebrate the lavish wedding of Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant with husband Nick Jonas. The couple even electrified the stage with a high-energy performance of "Desi Girl." However, the relentless pace of work, travel, and events appears to have taken its toll on the actor. On Thursday, Priyanka took to Instagram to share a video of herself, looking fatigued after work, leaving her fans concerned, who sent her messages of support.

Sharing a raw and vulnerable moment, Priyanka, in her video revealed her fatigued state after a long day of shooting. She is seen seated in a car with her hair damp, suggesting she may have just stepped out of the shower. The Barfi! actor looking tired as she rubbed her face while showing a soft smile. However, she looked as if she was in the verge of crying as eyes appeared watery. She wrote with the video, "Just feeling it today #staymotivated."

Fans expressing con-



cerns, wrote, "She works so much. Girl needs a break after this movie shoot. I hope she can take some time before Citadel starts." Another user commented, "You're strong keep it up." "Hang in there. One step at a time, one day at a time..." read a comment. Her husband, Nick, also offered a subtle show of support with a throwback Instagram post, which he captioned, "Damn." The Bluff, a period

action-adventure set in the 19th-century Caribbean, sees Priyanka portraying a former pirate protecting her family from the consequences of her past. The film, produced by the Russo Brothers' AGBO Studios and Amazon MGM Studios, is currently in production in Australia, where she is joined by her daughter, Malti Marie Chopra Jonas. The Don actor, who

recently turned 42, had a working birthday. Leaked photos from The Bluff set, which were widely shared online, showed Priyanka in a get-up of pirate, sporting a mohawk for the first time. Priyanka, wearing a black vest and is in full combat mode, can be seen in the character of Ercell—a pirate in the period action film. In the photos, Priyanka can be seen.

## Neelam, Jackie Shroff team up after three decades for romantic song 'Tu'

Mumbai: Bollywood's veteran stars Jackie Shroff and Neelam Kothari, a popular romantic pair of the 80s, have reunited for a song after three decades. Taking to their Instagram, T-Series recently made a joint post with Musicin Talwinder, Jackie Shroff and Neelam Kothari, announcing their upcoming song 'Tu'. Sharing a snippet from the song, T-Series wrote: "3 Legends in one song! #Tu releasing soon. This was accompanied by a bomb emoji. This latest development has left fans super-excited for the release



of the song, with many com- menting:



## Dhiraj Bommadevara, Antim Panghal, Sift Kaur Samra, Sreeja Akula – first-timers who could win big at 2024 Games



GNS News Agency, July 27

With the Olympics just around the corner, India has its fair share of medal contenders with names like Neeraj Chopra, Satwik-Chirag and Nikhat Zareen already established as big time forces. But there are athletes in the contingent who might turn out to be the next big thing in the annals of Indian sporting history. Here, we look at the emerging sportspersons who might steal the limelight from the more established names with impressive performances if not medals:

**Sift Kaur Samra (Shooting):** Samra, who will be debuting in this Olympics, will be one of India's medal hopes in shooting. A reigning Asian Games gold medallist and world record holder in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions, she will be looking to continue her hot streak in Paris. The gold medal at Hangzhou was also India's first-ever individual shooting Asiad gold medal in 3-position so she already has a penchant for making history though she will go up against razor-sharp Chinese rivals. At the Asian Games, she claimed the lead after the third series in the final, and never gave up thereafter, winning the gold by a margin of more than seven points over then reigning world champion, Zhang Qiongyue of China. Esha Singh (Shooting): Another strong contender for a shooting medal is Esha Singh, the 19-year-old pistol shooter from Hyderabad. Despite being so young, Singh has already won silver in individual category and gold in team category at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year. A national champion beating the likes of Manu Bhaker and Heena Sidhu when she was just 13, she was also a gold medallist in the 2022 Junior World Championships in 25m air pistol event. In January, she won India's 15th Paris Olympics quota with a gold medal in the women's 10m Air Pistol final in the Asian Olympic Qualifier in Jakarta. However she made the team for sports pistol – 25 metre pistol from the trials.

**Dhiraj Bommadevara (Archery):** The 23-year-old Dhiraj from Andhra Pradesh is another name to look out for in this Olympics with a silver medal in men's recurve team at the Asian Games already in his kitty. He was also the first person to secure the country a quota for the Paris Olympics in individual recurve last November at the Archery Continental Qualifying Tournament, but primarily raises hopes of a men's team medal. He also won bronze medals in World Cup stages in 2023 and 2024. Known for his adaptability in adverse windy conditions, the armyman is known for his steady temperament in pressure situations.

**Preeti Sai Pawar (Boxing):** Among the more celebrated names in boxing like Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain, Preeti Sai Pawar is someone who might pass under the radar sometimes but the boxer who will be representing India in the bantamweight category is someone you need to keep an eye on. An Asian Games bronze medallist, she had secured her Paris ticket after entering the semifinals at Hangzhou. A diminutive boxer, she would look to carry on the legacy of Bhiwani, a boxing

hotbed. She comes from a family of wrestlers and kabaddi players.

**Dhinidhi Desinghu (Swimming):** Dhinidhi is the youngest member of the Indian contingent going to Paris at just 14 years old and she is expected to gain experience from the big event. She has won medals at the National Games and the senior National championships last year and is also the top ranked Indian female swimmer after good performances this year. She will feature in 200m freestyle. **Reetika Hooda (Wrestling):** Last April, Reetika became the first from India to book a quota in the heaviest Olympic weight class (76kg) for women which makes her one of the brightest prospects heading into Paris representing the wrestling contingent. Following the footsteps of Sakshi Malik, a Rio Olympics bronze medalist, who is also from Rohtak, Reetika had joined the centre at the Sir Chotu Ram Stadium, Malik's alma mater. Now, she'll hope to replicate the success that Malik had on the big stage. **Sreeja Akula (Table tennis):** A pretty familiar name to people who follow table tennis, Akula is one of the top prospects to bring in a maiden Olympic medal in TT from Paris. India's No.1 ranked paddler has had an eventful 8 months leading up to the Olympics, becoming the first Indian to win a WTT tournament when she won at the Corpus Christi Feeder tournament, to beating a top Chinese player, to adding another WTT title. She is also a Commonwealth Games gold medallist in mixed doubles alongside Sharath Kamal.

**Antim Panghal (Wrestling):** With a list of accolades already to her name, Panghal is the most recognizable athlete in this list and it'll be surprising to many that she will just be making her Olympics debut in 2024. A two-time Under-20 world champion wrestler and an Asian Games, Asian Championships and senior world wrestling championships medal winner, it feels as if Panghal has been at her craft for decades. Truth is, she is just 19 years of age and has her whole career in front of her with the sky being the limit for the prodigy from Haryana, who staked claim to the 53 kg spot held by renowned Vinesh Phogat. **Raj Kumar Pal (Hockey):** Young Indian midfielder Raj Kumar Pal will be hoping to make an impact for the Indian men's team after failing to get into the Tokyo Olympics squad the last time the Olympics rolled into town. The player has made over 50 appearances for India and has been an integral part in their bronze medal winning performances at the Asia Cup in Jakarta in 2022 and the Asian Champions trophy in Dhaka in 2021. Last time in Tokyo, India had won the bronze and this time, Raj Kumar and the team will be aiming for an upgrade. Craig Fulton opted for the midfielder for his 1v1 elimination skills, and a dash of creativity he brings over someone steadier like Nilakanta Sharma. **Tulika Maan (Judo):** Maan is India's lone judoka in this Olympics with the 25-year-old looking to win India's first ever medal in judo at the Olympics. Last time in Tokyo, Sushila Devi Likmabam was India's lone judoka and she could not get past the first round but Maan, a Commonwealth Games 2022 silver medallist, might have a better chance of going further.

## How has India fared in previous tournaments and what is maximum tally of medals at single event?

GNS News Agency, July 27

In the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, India registered seven medals which is the most number of medals for the country in a single tournament with javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra's gold being the highlight.

While India used to win a medal or two in the early editions of the Olympics, there has been an upward trajectory in the country's performance at the showcase event since the Beijing Olympics in 2008 where they won 3 medals. In Rio de Janeiro in 2016, India secured two medals, including a silver from PV Sindhu in badminton and a bronze medal from Sakshi Malik in wrestling. In the 2012 London Olympics, India picked up six medals including Sushil Kumar's silver in wrestling and Mary Kom's bronze in boxing. In Beijing, India got three medals including a gold from Abhinav Bindra



in shooting.

Sakshi Malik and PV Sindhu's success in 2016 also marked a turning point for the women's representation of Indian women in Olympic sports. The 2024 Olympics in Paris will begin on 26th July 2024 and finish on 11th August 2024. India has 117 athletes across 16 sports for the event. Of the athletes, 70 are men and 47 are

women. In addition to the players, the Sports Ministry cleared 140 members of support staff and officials of which 72 have been approved at the cost of the government. Gagan Narang who is a bronze medalist at the London Olympics and vice president of the Indian Olympic Association is the Indian contingent's Chef-de-mission for the 2024

Olympics. The obvious difference between Tokyo and Paris is the improved ratio between athletes and support staff, which Usha said was a conscious effort. "Instead of the usual 3:1 ratio between athletes and support staff, we have worked hard to change it to slightly better than 1:1 ratio," said Indian Olympic Association chief PT Usha in a statement earlier.

## Paris Olympics tennis draw: Djokovic-Nadal set for potential 2nd round meeting, Murray out of singles

GNS News Agency, July 27

Paris Olympics: Novak Djokovic leads 15-14 in the head-to-head against Rafael Nadal ahead of a potential clash in the second round in Paris. (Reuters) Paris Olympics: Novak Djokovic leads 15-14 in the head-to-head against Rafael Nadal ahead of a potential clash in the second round in Paris.

Top-seeded Novak Djokovic could meet his long-time rival Rafael Nadal in the second round of the Paris Olympic tennis tournament. Djokovic was drawn Thursday against Australian Matthew Ebden and Nadal faces Hungary's Marton Fucsovics, with the winners of those matches meeting in Round 2. The 38-year-old Nadal won a record 14 of his 22 major trophies at the French Open. He won gold in singles at Beijing in 2008, and in doubles with Marc López at Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

Meanwhile, two-time Olympic gold medallist Andy Murray said he will not compete in the singles competition at the Games and will prioritise the doubles in his final tournament before retirement. Murray skipped the singles in his final appearance at Wimbledon this month after having surgery to remove a spinal cyst, but had initially entered the singles and doubles, alongside Dan Evans, in Paris. "I'm happy to compete one more time for my country. Unfortunately I trained to get ready for singles and doubles but I'm getting older now and just ran out of time really," he said after the draw ceremony at Roland Garros. "But I'm happy to be in the doubles with Dan and we play well together and hope we can have a good



run." Murray won the singles gold at London 2012, beating Roger Federer in the final. He successfully defended his title in Rio four years later by defeating Juan Martin del Potro. Top-ranked Iga Swiatek of Poland faces Irina-Camella Begu of Romania in the opening round of the women's draw with second-seeded American Coco Gauff taking on Australian Ajla Tomljanovic. The Djokovic-Nadal rivalry meanwhile, Djokovic and Nadal are likely to meet for the 60th time across all major competitions, an intense rivalry currently led by the Serbian with 30 wins to Nadal's 29. Nadal and Djokovic have squared off once at the Games in 2008, where the Spaniard notched up a comfortable straight-sets win. The pair last met at the 2022 French Open quarterfinal in Paris, with Nadal securing a 6-2, 4-6, 6-2, 7-6(4) win. Nadal also holds the edge on clay-courts by an overwhelming 20-8 margin.

## F1: With Mercedes consistently improving, will Lewis Hamilton be questioning 2025 move to Ferrari?

GNS News Agency, July 27

The ongoing controversy-laden, compelling Formula One season was kickstarted by Lewis Hamilton's bombshell announcement to Ferrari in 2025. After missing a record-breaking eighth World Championship by a whisker in 2021, two meagre seasons and an uncompetitive ride prompted the Briton to jump ship from Mercedes – the brand he has represented his entire life – to the famous old red car. Reasonable as his move may have seemed back in February, as the season heads into its mid-season break after this weekend's Belgian Grand Prix in Spa, that picture seems to have blurred.

The dominance of Red Bull and Max Verstappen – a team with several internal fractures of their own – has been massively upended, with the championship suddenly featuring intense competition from McLaren, Mercedes, and Ferrari. This season alone has seen 7 different winners after 13 races, a stark contrast to last year's 3 winners when Carlos Sainz was the only non-Red Bull victor. McLaren's one-two finish at the Hungarian Grand Prix last weekend strengthened their status as the quickest car on the grid, but Mercedes' recent upgrades and performances have also buoyed spirits. Hamilton finished P3 in Budapest, making it his 200th podium – following up his 104th race win – and first since 2021 – in the previous race at Silverstone. The Silver Arrows have been on the podium for each of the last five races, and have won two of the last three.

Mercedes Team Principal Toto Wolff expressed his satisfaction at Mercedes' progress and said that they were "clearly back." A series of encouraging updates Monaco onwards, including a new front wing, brought the car "balance" and put it in a "better sweet spot", Wolff said according to the F1 website. Ferrari, meanwhile, have not had much to celebrate. Charles Leclerc, their number one driver and Hamilton's teammate for next year, won his home Grand Prix in Monaco to much fanfare in April, but the team has been sliding downward ever since. True to form, the Brit is yet to express any regret at his decision, even as Mercedes boast of solid race pace. "I think leaving when the chips are down would be the worst feeling for me. Leaving when the chips are up or on their way up... that's an amazing feeling. So I'm very proud of it and also excited for next year," Hamilton was quoted as saying by the Daily Mirror after winning in Silverstone. Yet, if Mercedes' ascent and Ferrari's disappointments continue, doubts, even perhaps a little regret, may begin to seep in about his future move.

Gamble worth taking Hamilton may have initially believed Mercedes had the people, resources, and development to get back to the front, but their prolonged struggles may have raised doubt. Meanwhile, Ferrari presented a compelling plan for 2026 (the next time technical regulations for F1 change), showcasing their development direction and future potential, swaying Hamilton.

He must have compared Mercedes' recent path with Ferrari's promises and achievements. While aware of the Scuderia's failure to win a constructors' championship



since 2008, Hamilton trusts their Team Principal Fred Vasseur, his former boss in junior racing and a close friend. Hamilton values strong leadership, and Vasseur's progress at Ferrari in just one year may have reinforced his confidence in the team. Additionally, the seven-time champion might be driven by the iconic status Ferrari holds. Many champions dream of driving for Ferrari, and it was also the dream of Hamilton's childhood hero, Ayrton Senna, before his tragic death in 1994.

Hamilton is not afraid of big leaps. In 2012, he left McLaren, the team that brought him into F1 and helped him win his first world title, to join Mercedes, which was then a midfield team. This move was seen as a massive risk, but it paid off with six drivers' championships and 82 Grand Prix victories over 11 seasons. However, Hamilton – so accustomed to being the No. 1 driver and having his team revolve around him – will be 40 years old by the time he first races for Ferrari, and will be up against a 27-year-old Leclerc, a driver often cited as arguably the fastest in the world over a single lap in a team which he has made his own. That may rob Hamilton of the special status he received at Mercedes. Only one other F1 driver has won the world title with more than two teams – Juan Manuel Fangio – by winning for Alfa Romeo, Maserati, Mercedes and Ferrari during the 1950s. With the title he achieved at McLaren and the six he has bagged at Mercedes, Hamilton sits alongside F1 icons such as Niki Lauda and Michael Schumacher – as a driver to have won with two outfits, but a championship at Ferrari gives him a shot at making it three and standing out further. Hamilton's switch to Ferrari may quite possibly be the biggest driver move in F1 history, and it will be extremely special to see a fresh dynamic of the most successful driver in F1 history racing for its most esteemed team, as F1 journalist Mark Hughes says, "the two highest-profile entities in F1 with all the commercial implications that carries." It will be exciting to see how he will fare against the Scuderia's protégé, Leclerc, since they are, under their soft demeanours, both hard competitors. In a sense, there's no losing for Hamilton. He has nothing left to prove on track, having broken nearly every record in the book. But if the competitor in him indeed remains alive, to see the team he is departing excel in terms of race pace, and to see the team he is joining in a slump, will surely be making him uneasy, to say the least.

## Angelique Kerber confirms retirement after Paris 2024

GNS News Agency, July 27

New Delhi: Three-time Grand Slam champion and Rio Olympics silver medallist Angelique Kerber of Germany has confirmed Paris 2024 will be her last professional tennis tournament. The 36-year-old German is scheduled to compete in both the women's singles and doubles competitions (with Laura Siegemund) at the Paris Games.

Kerber will be competing at her first Games since the birth of her daughter in 2023. "The finish line. Before the @Olympics begin, I can already say that I will never forget #Paris2024, because it will be my last professional tournament as a tennis player. And whereas this might actually be the right decision, it will never feel that way. Simply because I love the sport with all my heart and I'm thankful for the memories and opportunities it has given me," Kerber wrote in an Instagram post. "The Olympics, I've participated in so far, have been more than just competitions as they represent different chapters of my life as a tennis player: the climb, the peak... and now, the finish line."

"The Olympics in #London2012 came at a time, when I had my breakthrough season on the tour. I was climbing the rankings steadily and every win helped me overcome my doubts & strengthened my self-belief. It all



felt like new beginnings and I was carried by excitement to new heights. The year before, in 2011, I had almost turned my back on tennis and given up on my childhood dreams," she further wrote.

"When I arrived at the Olympics in #Rio2016, I had just won my first Grand Slam title in Australia at the beginning of the year. My silver medal run was embedded in a rush of emotions that led to my second Grand Slam title in New York and the top of the rankings. The descent in the following year was hurtful, but I learned my lesson and Wimbledon 2018 was my biggest reward," the post read.