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## Soon, just scan QR code on power bills to pay dues in Telangana

Hyderabad: The Telangana Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (TGSPDCL), which on July 1 asked its customers to pay their monthly electricity bills through the power utility's official website and mobile app, citing RBI guidelines, is reportedly planning to print QR code on electricity bills to make payments. According to sources, bills with QR code would be available to consumers from next month. Users can pay their bills by scanning the QR code through their mobile phone. The Discoms officials claim that due to the new norms of the bill collections have not been affected for now. Officials claimed that till 10 am on Friday around 1.20 lakh consumers had paid their bills.

## Hyderabad anticipates scattered showers on Friday

Hyderabad: Following isolated showers at few places in the city on Thursday, Hyderabad is likely to receive scattered rains on Friday evening. Despite the rain forecast, mercury has climbed by around 2 degrees, with maximum day time temperatures hovering between 33 and 34 degrees Celsius, keeping the city's weather sultry.

On Thursday, intense downpours were observed in a few parts of the city. Areas such as Hayathnagar, Vanasthalipuram, Hasthinapuram, and LB Nagar saw heavy rainfall, while moderate showers were reported in Pahadisharif, Thukkuguda Balapur, and BN Reddy. Notably, Hayathnagar recorded 28 mm of rainfall.

## Court extends BRS leader K Kavitha's judicial custody till July 18



New Delhi, GNS News Agency, July 5

A court here on Friday extended till July 18 the judicial custody of BRS leader K Kavitha in a corruption case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. The CBI had arrested Kavitha, the daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, in April from Tihar Jail, where she was lodged after her arrest by the Enforcement Directorate. The ED had arrested the 46-year-old from her Banjara Hills residence in Hyderabad on March 15, and she was in judicial custody in the case.

## Bhatti Vikramarka attends Pharmaceutical conference, announces plans for Pharma clusters



GNS News Agency, July 5

Deputy Chief Minister of Telangana, Bhatti Vikramarka, highlighted the increasing pharma exports from Hyderabad to foreign countries during his address at the Indian Pharmaceutical Conference held at Hitex in the city. He announced plans to establish pharma clusters outside the Outer Ring Road (ORR) and introduce new policies in the power sector. Minister Sridhar Babu who also participated emphasised Hyderabad's growing status as the center of the pharma sector, noting the significant exports being made both nationally and internationally. He assured investors of the government's commitment to providing necessary facilities and support, especially in the era of artificial intelligence (AI) where Hyderabad is making advancements. Additionally, Minister Komatireddy Venkatredy praised the development of the ORR during the tenure of YSR and the influx of IT industries in Hyderabad. He called for the construction of the Regional Ring Road (RRR) and urged industrialists to contribute to the development of rural areas through corporate social responsibility (CSR).

## PM Modi thanks Rishi Sunak for deepening India-UK ties

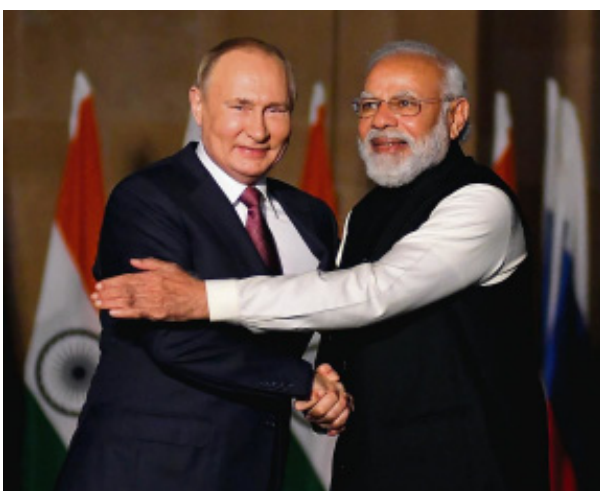
GNS News Agency, July 5

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday lauded Rishi Sunak's contribution to consolidate ties between the two nations during his tenure as the UK Prime Minister. "Thank you Rishi Sunak for your admirable leadership of the UK, and your active contribution to deepen the ties between India and the UK during your term in office. Best wishes to you and your family for the future," PM Modi posted on X. "Thank you @RishiSunak for your admirable leadership of the UK, and your active contribution to deepen the ties between India and the UK during your term in office. Best wishes to you and your family for the future. Earlier in the day, Conservative Party leader Sunak conceded defeat in the UK general election as the Labour Party secured a resounding victory under the leadership of Keir Starmer. PM Modi and the outgoing UK Prime Minister had recently met on the sidelines of the 50th G7 Summit in Italy's Apulia last month where they had reiterated their commitment to further strengthen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries. During their conversation, the two leaders also reflected on the strength of the India-UK relationship and agreed that this will continue to grow in the future. Sunak had also congratulated PM Modi on the BJP-led NDA's third straight election victory, insisting that the UK and India share the closest of friendships which would continue to thrive.

## India-Russia summit: Issues of regional, global interest to figure in talks between Modi, Putin

New Delhi, GNS News Agency, July 5

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Russia for an upcoming summit, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra on Friday said issues of regional and global interest will be on the agenda of the talks between PM Modi and President Vladimir Putin. In a media briefing here, he also said the annual India-Russia Summit is taking place after three years, and "we attach great importance to it". Prime Minister Modi will pay a two-day visit to Russia from July 8 to 9 to hold the 22nd India-Russia summit that will review the entire range of multi-fac-



eted ties between the two countries. After concluding his trip to Russia, Modi will travel to Austria, which will be the first visit by an Indian

prime minister to that country in 41 years, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday.

It will be Modi's first trip

to Russia in nearly five years. His last visit to the that country was in 2019 when he attended an economic conclave in the Far East city of Vladivostok. Issues of regional and global interest will be part of the agenda in the talks between the two leaders, Kwatra said.

The India-Russia summit will provide opportunities to discuss a whole range of bilateral ties, including in defence, investment, education and culture, and people-to-people ties, he said. Kwatra added that both sides are working on a series of outcome documents in connection with the 22nd India-Russia Summit.

## SC to consider pleas seeking review of verdict declining legal recognition to same-sex marriage

GNS News Agency, July 5

Members of Delhi Queer Pride and supporters of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, (LGBTQIA) community, participating in a parade start from Barakhamba Road to Jantar Mantar, in New Delhi. Members of Delhi Queer Pride and supporters of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, (LGBTQIA) community, participating in a parade start from Barakhamba Road to Jantar Mantar, in New Delhi on Sunday, November 26, 2023. | Photo Credit: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

The Supreme Court is scheduled to consider on July 10 a batch of pleas seeking review of its last year's judgement which refused to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage. According to the cause list of July 10 uploaded on the apex court website, a five-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice D. Y. Chandrachud would consider in chambers the pleas seeking review of the October 17 last year verdict. As per the practice, the review pleas are considered in chambers by judges. Besides the CJI, the other members of the Bench will be Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Hima Kohli, B. V. Nagarathna and P. S. Narasimha. In a setback to gay rights activists, the apex court had on October 17 last year refused to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage, saying there was "no unqualified right" to marriage with the exception of those that are recognised by law.

The apex court, however, had made a strong pitch for the rights of queer people so they don't face discrimination in accessing goods and services that are available to others, safe houses known as 'Garima Greh' in all districts to provide shelter to members of the community facing harassment and violence and dedicated hotline numbers which they could use in case of trouble. Holding that transgender people in heterosexual relationships have the freedom and entitlement to marry under the existing statutory provisions, the top court had said an entitlement to legal recognition of the right to union, akin to marriage or civil union, or conferring legal status to the relationship can be only done through "enacted law".

A five-judge constitution Bench headed by CJI Chandrachud had delivered four separate verdicts on a batch of 21 petitions seeking legal sanction for same-sex



marriages. All five judges were unanimous in refusing to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act and had observed it was within Parliament's ambit to change the law for validating such union. While the CJI had written a separate 247-page verdict, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul (since retired) had penned a 17-page judgement in which he broadly agreed with Justice Chandrachud's views. Justice S Ravindra Bhat (since retired), who authored an 89-page judgement for himself and Justice Hima Kohli, had disagreed with certain conclusions arrived at by the CJI including on applicability of adoption rules for queer couples. Justice P. S. Narasimha had said in his 13-page verdict that he was in complete agreement with the reasoning given and conclusions arrived at by Justice Bhat.

The judges were unanimous in holding that queerness is a natural phenomenon and not "urban or elite" occurrence. In his judgement, the CJI had recorded the assurance by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the Centre will constitute a committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for the purpose of defining and elucidating the scope of entitlements of queer couples who are in union. The LGBTQIA++ rights activists, who had won a major legal battle in 2018 in the Supreme Court which decriminalised consensual gay sex, had moved the apex court seeking validation of same-sex marriage and consequential reliefs such as rights to adoption, enrolment as parents in schools, opening of bank accounts and availing succession and insurance benefits. Some of the petitioners had urged the apex court to use its plenary power.

## Out on parole, Amritpal Singh, Engineer Rashid take oath as LS members

GNS News Agency, July 5

Jailed radical Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh and Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdul Rashid, who were granted parole to take oath as members of the Lok Sabha, were sworn in as MPs on July 5, amid heavy deployment of security personnel in and around the Parliament complex. While Rashid, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, is in Delhi's Tihar jail in a terror funding case registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Singh is lodged in a prison in Assam's Dibrugarh district for offences under the National Security Act. They were brought to the Parliament complex by security personnel this morning. The MPs-elect took oath in the chamber of the Lok Sabha speaker after completing formalities, a source said. Singh (31) and Rashid (56) won the recent Lok Sabha elections from Khadoor Sahib in Punjab and Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir, respectively, as Independents while being incarcerated. They could not take oath as members of the 18th Lok Sabha on June 24 and 25 along with the other winning candidates. For taking oath, Rashid was granted a two-hour custody parole, excluding the travel time from Tihar to Parliament, and Singh a four-day custody parole, beginning July 5, in view of the travel from Assam to Delhi and back.

Their parole orders stated that during their period of temporary release, they can neither speak to or address the media on any issue or make any statements. Their family members also cannot make a statement in any



form of media. While Singh, a Khalistani sympathiser who heads the 'Waris Punjab De' outfit, has been allowed to meet his family in Delhi, Rashid's family had permission only to attend his oath taking. The parole for Rashid, who has been in jail since 2019 after his arrest in 2017, was granted by a court in Delhi and that of Singh by the district magistrate of Amritsar from where he was arrested in April 2023 for barging into a police station in February and clashing with police personnel in a bid to free one of his aides from custody. Both Singh and Rashid are to be accompanied by security personnel at all times during their parole periods, the orders stated. The Delhi Police and Punjab Police were directed to coordinate with the secretary general of the Lok Sabha for procedures inside the Parliament complex.

## PM Modi congratulates Starmer after Labour Party's triumph in UK polls



GNS News Agency, July 5

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday congratulated Keir Starmer after the Labour Party secured a resounding win in the UK general election under his leadership. "Heartiest congratulations and best wishes to Keir Starmer on the remarkable victory in the UK general elections. I look forward to our positive and constructive collaboration to further strengthen the India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in all areas, fostering mutual growth and prosperity," PM Modi said in his message posted on X. The 61-year-old leader is set to become Britain's 58th Prime Minister as the Labour Party returns to power after 14 years following a historic triumph. "The change begins right here because this is your democracy, your community and your future. You have voted and now it is time for us to deliver," he said after the resounding victory. Last month, during his meeting with British PM Rishi Sunak on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Italy's Apulia, Prime Minister Modi reiterated his commitment to further strengthen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and the UK during the third term of the NDA government. "There is great scope to deepen ties in sectors like semiconductors, technology and trade," PM Modi said after meeting Sunak. The two leaders had extensively discussed the implementation of the Roadmap 2030 and expressed happiness on progress in all areas of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership including regular high-level political consultations, defence and security, trade and economic collaboration, critical and high technology sectors and people-to-people ties.

## Scrapping NEET-UG 2024 not rational, will jeopardise interest of honest candidates: Centre to Supreme Court

GNS News Agency, July 5

Scrapping the controversy-ridden NEET-UG 2024 examination would not be a rational step and "seriously jeopardise" lakhs of honest candidates who attempted the questions, the Centre told the Supreme Court on July 5. In its affidavit submitted in response to a batch of petitions filed by candidates, coaching institutes and parents of the NEET-UG aspirants, the Union Ministry of Education said the government has asked the CBI to conduct a comprehensive probe into the entire gamut of alleged irregularities. "It is also submitted that at the same time, in the absence of any proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in a pan-India examination, it would not be rational to scrap the entire examination and the results already declared," the Centre said. It added that in any examination, there are competing rights that are created whereby the interests of a large number of students who have taken the examination without adopting any unfair means must not also be jeopardised.

"Scrapping the exam in entirety would seriously jeopardise the lakhs of honest candidates who attempted the question paper in 2024," it said. The top court is scheduled to hear on July 8 a batch of pleas, including those alleging irregularities in the examination held on May 5 and seeking a direction that it be held afresh. Allegations of irregularities, including paper leaks, have led to protests in several cities and sparring between rival political parties.

## Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu presses enhanced financial aid for debt-ridden State to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

GNS News Agency, July 5

Ahead of the Union Budget presentation, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on July 5 met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, pressing for enhanced financial support to the debt-burdened State. Sources said Mr. Naidu, during the meeting in North Block, highlighted various ongoing projects in Andhra Pradesh that require urgent central assistance.

"The CM presented a detailed memorandum outlining the state's financial requirements and the rationale behind the demand for increased allocation," the sources added.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Time for India to frame blood safety policy

There has been a seasonal uptick in dengue cases with the onset of monsoon in the country. The mosquito-borne disease has its transmission peak during warmer and wetter months in many tropical and sub-tropical regions. And with global temperatures on a steady rise year after year, an alarming spread of disease has been observed in many parts of the world. Called "breakbone fever," the virus affects bone marrow, causing drop in production of platelets. Fatigue, joint pain and weakness are common. A platelet count of less than 1,50,000 platelets per microliter is lower than normal. When you have a low platelet count, you may have trouble stopping bleeding. In severe cases of dengue, platelets, or clot-forming cells, it leads to shock, internal bleeding, organ failure and even death. Any disease is a burden on the poor and if it affects their productivity, whole families suffer.

Hence, densely populated, slum areas should be government spotlight as rains acquire pace during the season. The uptick in dengue incidence is already, albeit slowly, pushing the demand for platelets in some parts of the country. Centre and States must wake up before any platelet shortage occurs anywhere. Blood not only has platelets, it has three other main components viz., plasma, red blood cells and white blood cells - with each of them having different functions. Each is vital to prevent mortality, especially in cases of accidents, surgeries. Should there be shortage of blood itself, or even its likelihood, it calls for an alarming urgency for action on the part of governments. Experts in their studies have been warning of significant shortage of blood availability in the country.

## From farmer's daughter to master juggler of bottles, how this mother of one took the world of bartending by storm

GNS News Agency, July 5

A reel that went viral on Instagram tells its own tale: Kavita, draped gracefully in a saree, cradles her baby in one arm while effortlessly juggling fiery bottles with the other. Garnering thousands of likes, she steers the bottles as though they are nothing to be afraid of. When questioned about the risks, Kavita says reassuringly, "I have been trained for eight years—I know exactly how to handle those bottles without endangering my child!" In the bustling world of bartending and mixology, where flair and skill merge into creativity, Kavita Medar, 27, a native of Bastur village in Karnataka, stands out as an embodiment of determination and achievement. Her journey to becoming a distinguished bartender and trainer at the Flair Mania Bartending Academy, Pune, bears testimony to her perseverance and passion for breaking barriers.

Kavita's mother was a cook in a nearby hostel and her father was a farmer. Kavita's path to bartending was not a conventional one. Introduced to the industry by her spouse Raj Medar, Kavita initially had no idea about bartending or the opportunities it held. "The concept of bartending was completely alien to my family and the people around me. It was something that was 'out of the box,'" she recalls. Her husband's encouragement, even before they got married in 2019, to explore bartending as a career choice opened her eyes to a world where few women ventured, especially from rural backgrounds. Pursuing a commerce degree in Karnataka, Kavita used to come to Pune often, going back home just to appear for her college exams. "I did not know how to converse in English, Hindi or Marathi. Kannada was the only language I could think of," she notes, highlighting the substantial difficulties she faced in the initial stages. Out of around 25-30 boys in the bartending institute during her time, only one or two female students could be observed. "It was quite difficult. You had to practise one move about 100 times to get it right. I had moments where I gave up and started to think about what I was even doing this for," Kavita says. She remembers facing multiple injuries on various parts of her body. However, she gradually worked her way up to earn a diploma in bar and beverage management. "I never quit my dream. I had always wanted to do something different and out of the ordinary ever since I was a child," she asserts, elaborating on what kept her going despite all the challenges.

Kavita's commitment bore fruit when she set a world record for performing 110 flips of two bottles while juggling in just a minute, earning her a name in the World Book of Records, 2021. This feat not only emphasised her skill but also got her into the limelight, attracting immense media attention and admiration. The award ceremony was to be held in Switzerland in the same year, but her visa could not be issued due to the outbreak of Covid. During a visit to Goa in the same year, officials of the World Book of Records presented her with the award she rightfully deserved. "This was the time my parents back home actually found out what I was doing in Pune. They did not know this earlier!" she smiles, talking about how her parents saw her initial move to Pune as merely pursuing a basic hotel management degree. Beyond personal achievements, Kavita is an inspiration for women in a largely male-dominated industry. "Initially when I just started working, the audiences noticed that they were not really getting a good service, due to my struggles with confidence," she recalls. She proudly looks back at all the years of her hard work that has helped her overcome these challenges. "People look at you like you are a celebrity," she remarks, highlighting the rarity of female flair bartenders in India and the change she observed in herself as opposed to her initial days. A mother of a one-and-a-half-year-old child, Kavita balances her career with family responsibilities, demonstrating that professional success and personal fulfilment can coexist. She is now a permanent trainer at the Flair Mania Bartending Institute, conducts guest workshops and performs at events from time to time. "It's a pity that so many talented, skilful women stop working after they get married and have children," Medar notes, looking ahead to share her expertise globally and empower more women to explore unconventional career paths. "I don't want to just make a name or set records. I want my talents to reach each corner of the world and get the opportunity to teach all kinds of people," she smiles.

## Troubled by middlemen, farmer starts processing his produce, becomes entrepreneur



GNS News Agency, July 5

Troubled by middlemen and after years of not getting fair price for his produce, Sukhwinder Pal Singh (50), a farmer hailing from remote Kallu Sohal village of Gurdaspur district, stopped going to the mandis to sell his produce in 2021. He now stores raw materials at his place, processes it and sells it on his own throughout the year. Pal, who hails from a family of farmers, got into the job when he was just a teenager about three decades ago. "Over the years, I realised I was not very happy with the ongoing system of agricultural practice as it didn't give the desirable family income. Earlier, I used to visit the mandis (grain markets) a few times every year, but that meant having to deal with seasonal market fluctuations and middlemen. I realised the inefficiencies of selling raw grains at the market. It was not only economically challenging but also limited in terms of generating regular income. To become a direct seller and to get a regular income, I decided to turn into an entrepreneur and started processing my own produce," he says. "With the support of my family and driven by a vision to innovate, I started a small processing unit on my farm. The ICICI Foundation gave me a 'wooden Kohlu' (oil extraction machine) for free under their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme. I started processing mustard seed which I had grown in my fields," he says, adding that he cultivates mustard on 4 acres of his total 15 acres, producing approximately 24 quintals of mustard seed. He extracts around 6 quintals (approximately 25% of the total processed mustard seed) of oil from it. "I sell this oil under the brand name 'Sehaj Natural Products' at the rate of Rs 350 per liter because I do organic farming and the prices of the organic products are higher than the inorganic products," he says, adding that the wooden oil machine can only extract one quintal of oil in 10 hours, and only 25% of oil can be obtained from processing one quintal of mustard seed. He says that the slow processing speed is crucial as it keeps all nutritional ingredients intact in the final product.

He then expanded to processing sesame, Alsi (Flax

Seed), and coconut oils by procuring organic products from other organic producers. He has also set up a small flour mill producing multigrain flour and sells organic Basmati rice grown on his own fields. His dedication yielded a successful results for the quality of his products when his products got certification from Punjab Agro and are approved by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). "These certifications validate our efforts and assure our customers of the highest standards," Sukhwinder says, adding that the "decision to process and sell under my own brand was about taking control of my livelihood and offering consumers a superior product they can trust. By eliminating intermediaries, Sukhwinder not only ensures fair pricing for consumers but also maximizes profits for himself. "Direct selling protects us from the uncertainties of market prices and the commissions taken by middlemen," he adds, reflecting on how this approach has stabilised his income throughout the year. Sukhwinder adds that he wanted to create products that reflect purity and freshness as "because of the high use of pesticide and insecticide these days we are offering toxic foods to the consumers". "I also wanted a regular income as raw produce can be sold in the grain market twice or thrice a year and it was not giving me work for more than 5-6 months every year. Also it was economically not efficient, but my processing unit and selling my products to consumer directly keeps me employed throughout the year," he says, adding that self selling and self marketing protects me from middlemen who gets the major share of a farmer's income. "What I was earning earlier was much below the income I have generated now. It is almost double from the previous income of mine. The most important thing is that now I provide employment to over a dozen people who help me with packaging and distribution. I started marketing of my product on WhatsApp and other social media platform and to my surprise, people from nearby villages began showing interest. They appreciated the quality and the assurance that came with buying directly from us," he says. Word spread quickly and soon, Pal's processing experiments, which turned into a small-scale processing unit, started getting several regular customers. Looking ahead, he envisions to produce more organic products at his 15 acres as currently he is growing organic basmati, mustard, wheat, paddy, turmeric, and other oil seeds etc. "Sukhwinder Pal's journey from a farmer to an entrepreneur had not been a smooth ride but he was determined and today result is on front of everyone. He had proven that with determination and a bit of creativity, one could turn every seed sown into a story of success. It's about empowering the local economy, getting self employment and a regular earning rather crying like a distress farmer," says Faridkot Chief Agriculture officer Amrik Singh, who was earlier posted in Gurdaspur.

## Cops tell moms to keep kids from drugs



GNS News Agency, July 5

As part of the government's efforts to rid Punjab of drug menace, Ferozepur district police has come out with a novel concept to eliminate the addiction problem plaguing the state. The idea is - nip it in the bud. Keeping this in mind, the police here is organising seminars at drug hotspots exclusively for women and children, who, according to police, are the worst sufferers when a family member becomes a drug addict. By organising such workshops the district police is aiming to sensitise women and children at one go to the problems arising out of drug addiction. The main idea is to instil thoughts in them to "strangle the drug issue at birth". The other objective of the police is also to coax the women into anonymously revealing information about the drug suppliers, as they know from where the addicted family member gets his supply and the modus operandi. The police have got tremendous response from women who have been attending the seminars every day since June 26 - the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The idea of bringing children along with them to the seminars served them well. The seminar organisers engage the children in painting competitions on the theme of drugs, while their mothers attend the workshop. Another motivation for the women to attend is - the seminars are chiefly manned by woman police personnel. The children are drawn to the seminars they get prizes for winning the painting competitions. The police project is named "Nivekli Pehal" (

"Shuru se hi shuru kareng to achha rahega (it bodes well if we start from the nascent stage itself)," said sub-inspector Jyoti posted at the office of senior superintendent of police (SSP), Ferozepur. "While we interact with the women during the seminars, their children are engaged in painting competitions on the theme of drug abuse at the same venue. Whenever we talk about drug addicts or crimes related to drugs, the sufferings of the womenfolk remain unaddressed. They are the ones who bear the brunt of this menace when the husband, son or any other member of the family gets addicted to drugs. They face domestic violence. When children go astray, family life is in peril, and woman in the house loses hope in life. Children too suffer when the man in the house is into drugs. So, we planned to reach out to them (women and children) - to be their friends and listen to their side of the story," said Saumya Mishra, SSP, Ferozepur, while talking to Randhir Kumar, Superintendent of Police, Ferozepur, said, "When we compiled our records and analysed them, we found that very few women were involved in NDPS cases. So, this idea was floated. We are glad that women have shown a positive response to these seminars. They are not only attending the workshops but also sharing valuable information to police."

In a seminar attended by some 50-odd women in Zira town on June 26, the police got valuable inputs from them regarding suppliers of habit-forming drugs. "On June 27, the Zira police arrested two persons - Gurwinder Singh and Harpreet Singh (both from Moga) - who had come to Zira to sell habit-forming drugs. They were caught with about 2,500 tablets (Tramadol). They had been frequenting the area for long, as per the inputs," Randhir Kumar said. In another seminar organised at Bareke vil-

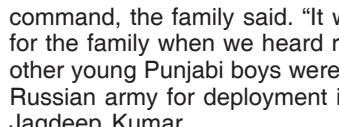
lage, close to the India-Pakistan border, on June 27, information about some 14 drug suppliers was received by police which is being verified, revealed information. Also, some valuable inputs were received from the workshops held at Basti Shekhan Wali and Basti Bhattian located in Ferozepur city. "As of now, we are zeroing in on the hotspots only and this exercise will continue for about a fortnight for the time being," said Saumya Mishra. For the record, there are around 40 hotspots in the border district which have a high number of NDPS-related cases. Nearly 180 woman officers are involved in this exercise. Every day two seminars each are being held in Ferozepur city, Ferozepur rural, Zira, and Guru-Har-Sahai constituencies," Jyoti said. "One of these days many husbands had also accompanied the women, but mostly the women are coming along with their children to attend the seminars," said Saumya Mishra.

At each seminar not less than 30 woman officers are present, besides a few male officers. "The women are given blank chits in which they are told to give inputs anonymously about drug suppliers and afterwards we act on the tip-off. The women are very forthcoming as their identity is also not revealed," added Saumya Mishra. "Be it drug addiction or overdose deaths in a family, women of the house suffer the most. So, if they develop a strong opinion against the drug issue, the problem can be addressed easily," said Kamaljeet Kaur, who runs a salon in Ferozepur city, while talking to The Indian Express. She had attended one of the seminars recently. "If children are made aware about the harmful effects of drugs right from the beginning, it can keep them from indulging in intoxicants," said Jyoti.

## Disabled Punjabi youth 'forced' into Russian army; family seeks government help

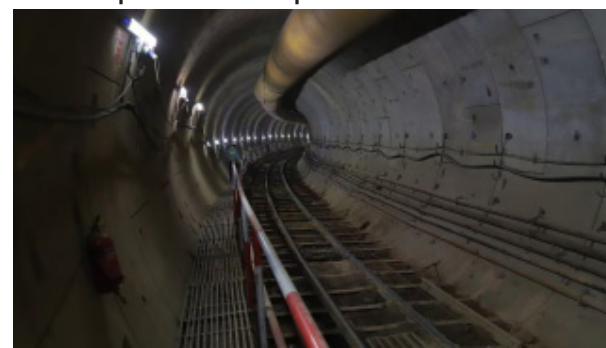
GNS News Agency, July 5

Apparently tricked by unscrupulous travel agents, one more Indian (from Goraya in Jalandhar district) has allegedly been forced into Russian army. According to the family of the alleged victim, Mandeep Kumar, he was tricked by travel agents who promised passage to Italy but diverted him to Moscow, where he was coerced into military service. Jagdeep Kumar - the brother of Mandeep Kumar - said, "My brother has a congenital limb (left leg) defect. Mandeep and his friends were misled into travelling to Italy via Armenia but they ended up in Russia instead. They were exploited and threatened by agents demanding more money." The last contact with Mandeep, in March, showed him in army uniform pleading for rescue and fearing for his life under Russian



command, the family said. "It was extremely distressing for the family when we heard reports that Mandeep and other young Punjabi boys were forcibly recruited into the Russian army for deployment in war-torn Ukraine," said Jagdeep Kumar. Desperate for help, the family approached Rajya Sabha member Balbir Singh Seechewal, who promptly raised the issue with the Ministry of External Affairs, urging swift action to secure the safe return of Mandeep Kumar and others ensnared in similar circumstances. Seechewal said, "This is very disturbing when innocent youths are lured by unscrupulous agents. We must caution our youth against falling prey to such traps."

## Half of civil work on all 3 priority corridors of Delhi Metro's fourth phase complete: officials



GNS News Agency, July 5

About 50 per cent of civil work on all the three priority corridors of phase 4 of Delhi Metro—Majlis Park—Maujpur, Aerocity—Tughlakabad (golden line) and Janakpuri West—RK Ashram Marg (magenta line) have been completed, officials said. "At present, over 50 per cent progress has already been achieved on all three corridors. On the Majlis Park—Maujpur section, about 80 per cent of civil work has already been completed. Tunneling work is in progress on various stretches on the Aerocity—Tughlakabad (golden line) and the Janakpuri West—RK Ashram Marg (magenta line) corridors," said Anuj Dayal, Principal Executive Director, Corporate Communications, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation.

Officials said the phase 4 section from Janakpuri West to Krishna Park Extension is now almost complete and is likely to be opened by August 2024. The Majlis Park—Maujpur corridor is also likely to be opened in the next year. Dayal added that the DMRC was progressing rapidly with its phase 4 expansion work with the target of opening all three priority corridors comprising 65 km of new lines by 2026.

"Though work on the fourth phase of expansion started in December 2019, immediately after the finalisation of tenders, but the progress of work was significantly affected from 2020 to 2022, for almost three years, due to the Covid pandemic and delays in tree-cutting permissions," said an official. Delhi Metro has been working continuously for the last two years to complete the entire work by 2026, officials said. The project is being monitored at various levels on a daily basis. Site visits are taken up at the highest level to expedite the work. Tree-cutting permissions are being pursued at appropriate levels. The rest of the sections of the priority corridors are expected to be opened in a phased manner by 2026. Certain permissions for tree-cutting and the acquisition of land pockets at isolated locations are pending, said officials. Two more corridors under phase 4, Inderlok—Indraprastha and Saket G Block—Lajpat Nagar, have received approval recently. "DMRC at present is processing for statutory clearances including land acquisition from the authorities. Forest clearances and tree-cutting permissions are also being taken up at the appropriate levels. Further processes regarding the planning and tendering for civil works are in progress," said an official.

## Airport mishap victim's kin were preparing for wedding in family when tragedy hit



Kumar was a cab driver, and his car was among the four that were damaged in the accident that followed a record-breaking downpour. "My daughter (aged 22 years) is set to get married next month. I have four children.

GNS News Agency, July 5

Until Thursday night, the Kumar family, residents of Rohini, were busy preparing for a wedding. By the next day, however, a pall of gloom had set over the household. The head of the family, 45-year-old Ramesh Kumar, died after the canopy of the Terminal 1 at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport fell on his car in the early hours. Kumar was a cab driver, and his car was among the four that were damaged in the accident that followed a record-breaking downpour. "My daughter (aged 22 years) is set to get married next month. I have four children. He (Kumar) was the only stable source of income for us. I don't know what will happen to us," says Usha Devi, 38, the wife of the deceased. Kumar's family received his body on Friday, around 1pm, after a post mortem at the Safdarjung Hospital. He was cremated at Naharpur Gaon Shamshan Ghat, Rohini Sector-7. Kumar's body was brought to Safdarjung Hospital around 2 pm on Friday after he was declared dead at Medanta facility at IGI airport. However, the family members said they got to know about his death only around 4pm. "They didn't even let us see his face for the entire day. They kept us at the police station. If he had actually fainted, they should have taken us to him, we would have tried to get him treated. Even by borrowing money from someone, we would have saved him," says Usha. Her son Ravinder had told The Indian Express on Friday that he was informed at 8.30am that his father had fainted. Santosh Yadav, one of the injured persons, said though he has been discharged, his injuries remain severe. "I have got two stitches in my head. I have to go to the hospital again on July 3 to get them checked and change my dressing," says Santosh. A cab driver with a private company, Yadav lives in Lado Sarai while his family is in his village in Bihar. "I am the sole breadwinner and I am not going to be able to return to work for a couple of months. There has been no one from the government who has talked about compensation with me. My company is private, so they are also not going to help with anything. What will I send home?" Santosh asks. In the wake of the incident at T1, the central government had announced Rs 3 lakh compensation for all the injured and Rs 20 lakh for the deceased. Meanwhile, officials at the IGI airport said that the repair work at T1 has been halted. "Can't say if it will start in one month or 15 days. It's India's busiest airport. This incident should not have happened. But now that it has, repair work should be expedited," an official said.

## Indian students protest new laws, Karan Aujla achieves new milestone; Punjabi youth dies in car crash three months after arriving



GNS News Agency, July 5

Aujla, the Indo-Canadian singer has achieved another milestone as the first Punjabi musician to be featured in Apple Music's global Up Next initiative. Naujawaan Support Network—a group advocating for youth, international students, and workers—held a demonstration at Kanef Park in Brampton to protest against the recent changes to Canada's study permit and post-graduation work permit policies, calling for fairer treatment. According to Toronto Today, international students took to the streets of Brampton in protest last Saturday, braving rainy and windy conditions to demand an end to the exploitation of immigrants and students.

The students are pushing the government to extend the work permits of foreign workers set to expire in 2024 and 2025, advocating for a more accessible pathway to permanent residency. Their motto, "good enough to work, good enough to stay," reflects their stance against what they perceive as the exploitation of international students as a source of cheap labor in Canada. Laura Walton, President of the Ontario Federation of Labour, joined the protest to show her support. She remarked, "Your fight is our fight... Quite frankly, what we see right now is racism. It's discrimination, and there's no room for racism and discrimination in our province and in our country," as quoted by Toronto A widely circulated poster on social media emphasized the protest's message, stating that international students are being unfairly blamed for the housing and jobs crisis, despite "zero evidence" supporting such claims. The group insists that government policies and corporate practices are the actual issues, not the students. "International students are not the cause of the crisis, but we are being made into scapegoats," the statement read.

By the end of 2023, Canada had accepted 1,040,985 international students, according to the Canadian Bu-

reau for International Education. However, Toronto Today notes a significant 52.6 percent decline in the number of international students arriving in Canada for the 2023 session compared to the 2021-22 session, when 2,196,468 international students came to the country. Indo-Canadian singer Karan Aujla Breaks New Ground in Music Industry

Karan Aujla is making significant strides in the music industry this year. In March, the Punjabi-Canadian artist became the first individual of Punjabi descent to win the Juno Fan Choice Award. Now, he has achieved another milestone as the first Punjabi musician to be featured in Apple Music's global Up Next initiative. This program focuses on emerging stars, providing Apple Music's editorial resources to support featured artists through original short films, interviews with Apple Music radio hosts, and more. Aujla's short film showcases him exploring his favorite spots in Vancouver, such as Eddy's barbershop, and discussing his musical aspirations. "I feel like my music helped a lot of people that don't know my language," Aujla states in the film. "There don't have to be barriers around it, like 'Oh, this is a Punjabi song. I can't listen to this.' I don't think that's right. I listen to Spanish music all the time. I don't know a word of Spanish."

Aujla expresses hope that Punjabi music will have a global breakthrough similar to "Despacito," as the Punjabi Wave gains popularity in markets outside India. The Up Next feature highlights Aujla's rising status as an icon. Starting as a lyricist in Vancouver, collaborating with Punjabi artists like Diljit Dosanjh, Aujla has made a name for himself as a performer. His collaborative album with producer Ikky, "Making Memories", reached No. 5 on the Billboard Canadian Albums chart last year. In addition to his achievements, Aujla is releasing an Apple Music edition of his latest EP "Four Me" and preparing for his first Canadian tour this summer, which will include performances in three arenas across the country. The four-song EP follows last year's "Four You", another collaboration with Ikky. Aujla joins the ranks of other Canadian artists who have been featured in Apple's Up Next program, including Orville Peck, Jessie Reyez, Daniel Caesar, and Tate McRae. A young man from Punjab, Sanjeev Kumar Sachdeva of Talwandi Bhai, tragically lost his life in a road accident in Surrey, Canada. Having arrived in Canada three months ago to pursue his studies, Sachdeva and one of his colleagues died at the scene of the accident on Friday. Two others were seriously injured in the incident.

## Govt developing AI chatbot to provide personalised help to Maha Kumbh visitors



GNS News Agency, July 5

The Uttar Pradesh government is planning to launch an Artificial Intelligence-based chatbot that pilgrims and visitors could access to get information at next year's Maha Kumbh. "This Gen-AI chatbot will serve as a one-stop solution for the devotees and tourists to get information on transportation, accommodation, smart parking, real-time weather updates, lost and found services, emergency assistance, and Kumbh Mela helpline services in multiple languages," a government official said. "It will offer personalised assistance for families, senior citizens, and others with special needs. The Gen-AI chatbot will be integrated with WhatsApp. It will ensure user data privacy and comply with relevant data security regulations," the official said.

The Maha Kumbh, held every 12 years in Prayagraj, will begin on January 13, 2025. Crores of devotees are expected to gather for a holy dip in the Sangam of the

Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers during the event. The process of building a website/mobile app and making it Gen-AI chatbot enabled has been started in view of Mahakumbh Mela-2025. These platforms are being made user-friendly and interactive. The Uttar Pradesh Development Systems Corporation Limited (UPDESCO), which has been entrusted with the task, has started working on a website/mobile app with AI-enabled chatbot, and aims to complete all technological updates and development within the next six months. The UPDESCO will select a service provider agency from its empaneled companies and assign the work to them, said an official. "Developing an AI-powered chatbot involves several key processes, with advanced learning playing a crucial role. This involves data collection, data analysis, and command coding. Based on software requirements specifications (SRS), software design specifications (SDS) will be developed," said the official.

"The chatbot solution will go through various stages, including bot training, user acceptance training (UAT), cybersecurity enhancement, development of the go-live phase system, and continuous operation and maintenance training. After completing all these processes, the chatbot will be launched," the official added. The Gen-AI chatbot will provide solutions to Mahakumbh visitors in Hindi, English, and various regional languages based on their needs. It will also assist visitors with travel planning, accommodation options, and safety protocols. It will also guide users on local transportation, timings for holy baths, cultural events, and emergency procedures.

## As new criminal laws come into effect tomorrow, what changes for experts at FSL, Rohini – the forensic lab in Delhi

GNS News Agency, July 5

A young man, his hands donning white surgical gloves, holds a slightly moistened cotton swab. He scans for residue from a bullet hole on the door of the white Creta car parked at Tilak Nagar police station. The "hand picking" — a delicate and painstaking work by a forensic examiner — isn't just science, it's an art, where perfection is an absolute necessity. Every inch of the crime scene can hold "trace evidence" — a lock of hair, a tiny piece of fibre — anything the perpetrator left behind. And this team of three examiners from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) Rohini is trying to make sure nothing flies under their radar.

It is 10 am and their first crime scene of the day. Last night, they were at another crime scene till 2.30 am to collect evidence in a rape case. FSL Rohini is the biggest among the four forensic labs in Delhi which deal with thousands of cases every month. The others are CFSL (Central Forensic Science Lab) and two state FSLs — one more in Rohini and one in Chanakypuri. Across India, there are 117 forensic labs — Tamil Nadu has the highest number with 11, Maharashtra has nine, Andhra Pradesh has eight, Gujarat and Rajasthan have seven each, and Uttar Pradesh has five, according to data from a Project 39A report titled Forensic Science India report: a study of forensic science labs (2013-2017). The Rohini lab's workload has increased exponentially over the years. In 2005, experts from FSL Rohini visited six crime scenes. In 2023, they visited 1,144. Since April this year, forensic experts from this facility have already visited 3,878 crime scenes.

Come Monday, once the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) replaces the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), forensic experts may have a lot more on their plate. For one, forensic evidence will be central to criminal investigation and jurisprudence. The BNSS makes forensic investigation mandatory for offences punishable with seven years of imprisonment or more. Earlier, there were no statutory requirements on crime scene management, and the practice for evidence collection varied across states. In fact, it was the prerogative of an investigating officer to decide whether to seek evidence collection by forensic experts. BNSS also expands the powers of magistrates to order forensic evidence collection — both widening the ambit of individuals from whom the evidence can be gathered from and the type of evidence that can be collected. Situated at Madhuban Chowk, FSL Rohini has a strength of 390, including 63 forensic experts covering around 45 to 60 crime spots daily. The lab deals with around 800 cases a month. According to data on the FSL Rohini website, it has received 2.05 lakh cases between its inception in 1995 and March 31, 2023. Among them, 1.79 lakh cases have been "disposed of" — a "disposal rate of almost 90%". Division Head of Crime Scene Management at FSL Rohini, Sanjeev Kumar Gupta, acknowledges that there will be a significant increase in their crime scene visits after the new laws are implemented. "There are 63 scientific experts deployed at 15 Delhi Police district mobile vans. These days, we're working to streamline the district-level mobile forensic crime scene teams to handle the changing scenario," he says. "I hope that after the new rules come into effect, we will be able to meet the requirements." The lab also happens to cater to a city where crime, and its reporting, is rampant. According to data released by the National Crime Records Bureau in December 2023, Delhi recorded over 11,400 violent crimes in 2022, including 5,641 cases of kidnapping, 1,808 cases of robbery, and 785 attempted murders. With 509 murder cases, Delhi



recorded the highest number of homicides among all metropolitan cities. It also topped in cases of crime against women among 19 metros in the country.

To be sure, the administration has taken some steps to strengthen the Rohini facility. In January, Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena approved the restructuring of the FSL, which led to the creation of 420 new posts at the facility. It has also conducted special workshops on the new laws. "I don't know what will happen after July 1 when the new laws are implemented," says the forensic expert from the lab. "...but our laboratory is prepared. Training programmes will be on till everyone is well-versed with the new laws," he added. "In view of the new criminal laws, as per the notification of the Home Ministry, all states have to develop and enhance the forensic investigation facilities in the coming five years," another forensic expert told the Indian Express stating that the government had started taking the necessary steps to tackle the situation after the implementation of the laws. This work they do is on full display as forensic experts help with the case in which two men allegedly fired gunshots outside a car showroom in West Delhi's Tilak Nagar, injuring BJP functionary Vikas Tyagi and six others inside the shop. Back at the Tilak Nagar police station, one of the forensic examiners inserts a trajectory rod in the bullet hole. His aim, he says, is to ascertain the path of the bullet that had hit the person sitting in the vehicle. The team carefully places the fragment inside an "illumination kit".

After collecting 30 exhibits — bullet residue, bloodstains collected using cotton swabs and placed in small containers to avoid contamination, the car's floor mats — they hand it over to a sub-inspector and head to the crime scene — the car showroom where the shooting took place. Across the 15 districts in Delhi, these experts visit approximately 60 such crime spots every day. With a masters' in forensic sciences, they sometimes spend up to six hours at a single scene. The evidence, once handed to the IO, is sent to the lab for examination — such as matching a bullet with a gun. "Cartridges are unique... a mark on the head of each bullet is different — just like fingerprints," a forensic expert says. The Biology Department examines the evidence to ascertain the identity of a person, victim or perpetrator. Other divisions at FSL Rohini include chemistry (explosives), DNA profiling, toxicology and cyber forensics, where experts analyse mobile phones, computers, etc. Explaining the rigours of their work, a forensic expert says at times, blood from five to six different people is gathered from a single crime scene. "The DNA profiling of each sample takes four to six hours and examining the samples could take one to two days," he says. "There are always pending samples because of the work and their numbers keep increasing."

## Downpour lays bare 'world-class' claims at East Kidwai Nagar redevelopment project

GNS News Agency, July 5

Built to house central government officials, the East Kidwai Nagar redevelopment project was hailed as an example of modern urban living and sustainable development when inaugurated in 2016. A day of heavy rainfall, though, raised a question mark on all the claims as floodwater inundated the three-level underground parking space, lifts stopped functioning, and buildings began showing cracks. The project was executed by the National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) and was lauded for its promise to deliver 4,608 modern dwelling units to government servants and officers. On Saturday evening though, government officers were seen draining water out of their cars, which had been submerged for the past 24 hours. "Did you know that the Defence Secretary's roof has collapsed?" an officer remarked, holding a bucket to drain greenish water from inside his vehicle.

"The cars have been soaking in water since last night... this is not the type of facility we expect at a government quarter that promises world-class amenities," said Kavita, a government officer's wife. "This is a significant planning failure. We have a public redressal system, but no announcement was made that water had started entering the parking space," she added. Her son noted, "The houses in many towers have started showing cracks..." An officer from the environment department said, "We talk about the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, but our



own houses are left dirty after heavy rainfall." "Due to the waterlogging, the lifts in most buildings have been shut down. In one tower where the lift was still functioning, someone suffered mild electrocution," said Eddison John, a resident. "These are 14-storey buildings, but we have been climbing up and down every time. An elderly person from the 12th floor had to be taken to the hospital due to a health emergency," he added. Another government employee said, "We cannot complain because government officers have conduct rules, but does this mean we have to put up with these issues in silence?" Kusum Sharma, an officer's wife and teacher, said, "We called for cranes to remove our cars but they told us the basement cannot be accessed through them. We then paid the maintenance staff Rs 1,500 to manually push our cars out of the waterlogged area."

## 100-year-old miniature paintings damaged as water enters museum in Siri Fort area



GNS News Agency, July 5

In the early hours of Saturday morning — a day after Delhi was battered by heavy downpour — artist Arpana Caur was wading through stagnant water, assessing the damage, and supervising the unscrewing of centuries-old miniature paintings and folk art paintings that are part of the museum housed in the basement of the Academy of Fine Arts and Literature at Siri Fort Institutional Area. The museum features works from her collection built over decades. "By 5.30 am on Friday, the water level in the museum galleries was about five-feet high. Over 30 miniatures and over 70 folk paintings have been damaged. Some of these miniatures are 150-200 years old and are registered with the Archeological Survey of India (ASI)... The folk paintings include rare Dhaka paintings and thangka, and works by acclaimed artists such as Jangarh Singh Shyam and Durga Bai," says Caur.

The artist notes that the influx of water came from the adjacent drain. "Anticipating that this would happen, my mother (author Ajeet Caur) had written a letter to the MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) on June 19. She had stated that the drains were full of rubbish and needed

immediate cleaning, but no action was taken," says Caur.

In 2013, when a similar instance had occurred at her basement museum, Caur had moved the Delhi High Court. "The MCD and PWD were ordered to make sure the nullah is regularly cleaned. But the order seems to have been forgotten," states Caur. Recalling her ordeal on Friday, she notes, "We started calling the MCD and fire department early in the morning... Finally, we managed to receive help from the fire department around 3.30 pm. They worked till midnight, and managed to bring the water level down to two-and-a-half feet, and our carpenter was able to enter and unscrew some paintings. We are still in the midst of removing all of them, and several of these will require restoration."

## On extension since 2013, senior Gujarat official considered close to Modi retires

GNS News Agency, July 5

Kuniyil Kailashnathan, 72, popularly known as 'KK', regarded as Gujarat's most powerful bureaucrat, has retired after serving for 11 years as the Chief Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, a post created for him by then CM Narendra Modi in 2013 on his retirement from the CMO as Additional Chief Secretary. With Kailashnathan still considered close to PM Modi, there is talk in political circles that he may get a key post. According to a tweet by Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, Kailashnathan's last day at work will be Sunday (June 30). Wishing him a "fit and healthy retirement", Patel posted on X: "Since 2006, he served as the Principal Secretary in the CMO during the tenure [as CM] of Prime Minister Shri

Narendrabhai Modi... His administrative skills, keen sense of public issues and tactful working style were prominent features throughout his tenure. "An official said that a small farewell was held in the CMO in which "only a few officials participated". A senior official of the CMO said that Kailashnathan did not seek an extension this time. A 1979-batch IAS officer of Gujarat cadre, Kailashnathan had retired from service in 2013 when he was posted with the CMO, and a new post was created for him, redesignating him as Chief Principal Secretary for a tenure of two years. Subsequently he was given extensions to hold the post for 11 years. Among many sensitive responsibilities, Kailashnathan was also handling the Gandhi Ashram Memorial work, and the Pre-

dict Development Project, which is being jointly implemented by the state and central governments. In his last public appearance, Kailashnathan was seen at the prayer meeting for former secretary of Sabarmati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust (SAPMT) Amrut Modi at Sabarmati Ashram. The retirement of Kailashnathan has given way to speculation among bureaucratic and political circles on the way forward for him. A senior government functionary said: "It all depends on what 'KK' has decided for himself.

He could be appointed as Governor or Lieutenant Governor. The government will certainly not like to miss the experience of a person like 'KK'... all depends on what he wants to do."

## Heart patient completes cycle 'wari' to Pandharpur in flat 14 hours



GNS News Agency, July 5

Pune cycling event, Heart patient completes cycle race, cycle race from wari' to Pandharpur, who is Sunil Chacko, cyclists participation., Indo Athletics Society, Indian express news Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj palkhi, which left Alandi Saturday morning, will reach Pune city late in the afternoon. Both will meet in Wakdewadi area. "It was an experience to cherish for a lifetime. Although it required a lot of energy, hard-work and patience, I am glad I could complete the wari of 240 kms, in 12 to 16 hours," says Sunil Chacko, (60), a heart patient.

A resident of Aundh, Sunil Chacko was part of a group of 1,734 cyclists who earlier this month cycled their way to Pandharpur in Solapur district from the temple town of Dehu in Pune district. The Indo Athletics Society had organised the cycling event to Pandharpur in a bid to promote health and sports. The Sant Tukaram palkhi takes off from Dehu every year in June for its annual wari to Pandharpur, a distance of 240 kms. Dehu is located close to Pimpri-Chinchwad. Thousands of 'warkaris' accompany the Sant Tukaram palkhi from Dehu to Pandharpur every year. They walk all the way to Pandharpur.

This year, the palkhi left Dehu on Friday, stayed the

night there, and on Saturday, it reached Akurdi in Pimpri-Chinchwad. Tomorrow, it will leave Akurdi and will reach Pune city late in the afternoon. Similarly, the Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj palkhi, which left Alandi Saturday morning, will reach Pune city late in the afternoon. Both will meet in Wakdewadi area. Meanwhile, the cyclists had their own tales to tell. Chacko said the warkaris walk all the way to Pandharpur braving difficult conditions. "We too cycled all the way to Pandharpur which was a tough challenge. I am an avid cyclist and I have been practising and touring for years now. I am game for anything," he said.

Chacko said that although he was a heart patient, he had no trouble making it smoothly to Pandharpur. "We undertake cycle wari every year a few days before warkaris start their march on foot. Of the 1,700 plus cyclists, some of them made it in 12 hours, a few in 14 while the rest took 16 hours. We stopped for refreshments on the way. I had trouble making it to the destination but enjoyed every moment of my cycle ride," he said. Pointing out that it was the fourth year in a row that he was part of the cycling expedition, Chacko said, "Cycling to Pandharpur is a spiritual experience. There is a kind of magic when you land at a places like Pandharpur and take darshan of Vitthal-Rukmini." "We began our journey from Dehu and passed through the Pune-Mumbai highway. From Dehu we first went to Pimpri-Chinchwad, then to Pune city and then Bigwan, Indapur, Temburni and Pandharpur. There were several people on the way who waved out to us enthusiastically and sort of lauded our effort. We drew a lot of inspiration from them," he said. An active member of Indo athletic society, Sunil plans to visit Ayodhya this December. "The Indo Athletics Society started this event in 2016 with a handful of participants. The numbers have gone up reaching up to 1,700 plus. Our next destination will be Ayodhya," said Chacko.

## 'Heartbreaking': Over 2,000 books damaged, community library grapples with rain loss



GNS News Agency, July 5

Simpy woke up on Friday morning to the incessant ringing of her phone. The 22-year-old, who is the director of the Delhi-based Community Library Project, was startled to see multiple missed calls from her colleagues. Anxiety gripped her as she returned the calls only to learn that the cherished library in Sheikh Sarai - where she had been going since she was a child - was inundated after the early morning downpour. "I called my colleagues, and they told me that ankle-deep water had entered the premises of the library," Simpy recounts. "I rushed there only to find that the water levels were higher than I had imagined."

Simpy has been a part of The Community Library Project since she was 12. "Seeing the havoc caused by a single monsoon shower was heartbreaking," she says, adding that the library bore the brunt of the heaviest downpour in Delhi in 88 years. The Community Library Project, which has now grown to three branches in Sheikh Sarai, South Extension and Gurgaon, was established over 10 years ago with the mission of ensuring that everyone has access to books.

Amid frantic efforts by her and her colleagues to pump the water out using motors from the Sheikh Sarai branch on Friday, a high accumulation of silt choked the pumps and left them helpless. "We didn't know how to remove the water," Simpy recalls. "So we decided to move all the books from the bottom shelves to the second floor to keep them safe." In a heartening display of solidarity, community members rallied together, armed with buckets and mops, to start the arduous task of draining the water. "We started cleaning at 10:30 am, and it took us until 7:30 pm to finally clear the space," she adds. The Community Library Project takes pride in being an anti-

caste people's initiative, dedicated to building a publicly-owned, free library system accessible to all. "Access cannot be built without acknowledging the history of excluding people from reading," says Mausam, the 24-year-old deputy director, as she uses a fan to dry out the soaked books. "We believe that books are for everyone. Public library systems are the bedrock of breaking through the barriers of caste exploitation," she adds.

The community library in Sheikh Sarai is visited by people from Jagdamba Camp, Chirag Dilli, Khidki Gaon, Hauz Rani, and Panchsheel Vihar. It houses books in English, Hindi, Urdu, Bangla, Punjabi, and Odia. "People who visit us from Hauz Rani are from Afghanistan, so we also have books in Dari and Pashto. But now, two thousand of our books are damaged due to waterlogging," she says. "Most of our books come from donations," she adds. "People donate rucksacks full of books, but sometimes it's mostly scraps they no longer wish to keep. Each book that makes it to our shelf is selected after going through piles of donated books."

"It's quite devastating. Even though the water inside the library has been cleaned, the books are falling apart in our hands—the Mahabharata, the Champaks... books that are loved by our community. We were planning to host a pride event today for which we hand-painted a poster. It was a scene straight out of a movie: we entered the space, and there was a giant pride poster floating on the water. Bucket by bucket, we had to clean the space. It's gone from extreme heat to extreme water. From drought to drowning, we have never experienced anything like this before," Priyanka, a new library member, says. "Silt entered the library. We have to take climate change into account... We have to keep our members and our books safe. We do not have any other space right now," she adds. Wearing a shirt with B.R. Ambedkar's picture and the words "educate, organise, agitate" boldly written, Sumit, 27, a community organiser connected with the project, is seen cleaning the dirt using a coconut broom. "I wanted to read books but didn't have any money, so a friend told me about this library in 2016. When I saw the space, it had a huge big collection. I have been connected with the project ever since," he says. "If one would look at our faces today, they'll notice that we are tired. When we entered the library space yesterday, we were shocked, but we didn't give up. We instantly knew we had suffered great losses, but we have all experienced great losses before. That doesn't mean we will lose hope."

## New hoarding policy soon, fresh survey of billboards within 30 days: Samant

GNS News Agency, July 5

Mumbai New hoarding policy, Mumbai hoarding fresh survey, Mumbai billboard, Ghatkopar hoarding collapse, Uday Samant, BMC, MLC Sunil Shinde, Shiv Sena, Indian express news The issue of hoardings was raised by Shiv Sena (UBT) MLC Sunil Shinde through a Calling Attention Motion. Six weeks after the hoarding collapse in Ghatkopar claimed 17 lives and left 75 others injured, Maharashtra Industries Minister Uday Samant on Saturday announced in the Legislative Council that the state government will soon bring out a new hoarding policy and that a fresh survey of hoardings will be carried out within 30 days. Samant announced that the Railways would be given instructions to follow the rules of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) with regards to the size of hoardings on railway land as well. The issue of hoardings was raised by Shiv Sena (UBT) MLC Sunil Shinde through a Calling Attention Motion. Responding to it, Samant said that a fresh survey of digital hoardings will also be carried out and illegal hoardings will be removed. After the Ghatkopar hoarding collapse on May 13, the government had appointed a committee under former Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court Dilip Bhosale to conduct an inquiry into the tragedy.

"The Bhosale committee has been formed, which is working on the new policy. If the Opposition or any member of the House has any suggestions we will surely take it. We will take some of the members of the House in the committee. We already have the law for the hoardings but if there is any need to amend the law and make it more strict then we will do that as well," Samant said, adding that the government will issue instructions for a

fresh survey of hoardings in the MMR and to other civic bodies. "The survey will be conducted within 30 days and the report will be submitted. We will take strict action against the violators," he said. Sena (UBT) MLC Anil Parab also raised questions on illegal hoardings in the city as well as digital hoardings. "I have a list of the illegal hoardings. I will submit the list on Monday. Will the government take action against them," he asked. Responding, Samant said, "If there are any illegal hoardings, then we will also conduct a fresh survey of these illegal hoardings within 30 days. We will check the list once Parab submits it and if there are illegal hoardings then action would be taken. On digital hoardings too necessary action would be taken and it will be regulated." Samant also announced that the government will soon bring out a white paper on the status and outcome of the MoUs signed in Davos World Economic Forum (WEF) in the past three years. While responding to a question raised by Congress MLC Abhijeet Wanjari, Samant said that the white paper would be submitted before the Assembly polls. "This year we signed MoUs worth Rs 3.82 lakh crore around 80 per cent of the MoUs signed in Davos have been executed. We will soon bring out the white paper on the MoUs signed in WEF in the past three years," he said, adding that during the MVA government MoUs worth Rs 86,000 crore were signed but out of that only Rs 16,000 crore MoUs were related to MIDC, while MoUs worth Rs 50,000 crore were signed by the Energy department. Responding to allegations of Ambadas Danve, the Opposition leader in Legislative Council, that a Rs 50,000 crore project of Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) that was going to be set up in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar or Dabhol in Maharashtra will now be set up in Madhya Pradesh,

## MHADA proposes hike in prices of Patra Chawl lottery houses



GNS News Agency, July 5

The Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) has come up with a proposal to increase the prices of Patra Chawl lottery houses by up to Rs 10 lakh. The existing lottery flat cost is Rs 30 lakh. Sources in the MHADA said that this proposal has already been forwarded to the state government for further review and action. The issue stems from a 2015 housing lottery for 300 houses at Patra Chawl, which faced delay

due to the bankruptcy of the developer undertaking the redevelopment project. Despite the apartments being ready, certain essential infrastructure such as podium parking and other civil works remained unfinished.

The erstwhile Maha Vikas Aghadi government had appointed a contractor for the Patra Chawl redevelopment project. Wherein MHADA also initiated the lottery houses work. Now, it seeks to recover its expenditure by potentially increasing the prices for the lottery winners. The move has drawn criticism. Ajay Kumar, a lottery winner (name changed), expressed dissatisfaction, stating, "These lottery houses have not been handed over yet, and no progress has been made. We are currently renting, and if the houses are ready, they should be delivered instead of increasing the prices." In response to these concerns, an MHADA official clarified that during the housing lottery process, applicants are informed in advance that the costs associated with lottery houses may vary in future. MHADA's move to adjust prices is seen as an attempt to mitigate financial losses incurred during the project's execution phases.

## Pune police probe link between drug peddlers, FC Road pub owner, manager, party organiser

GNS News Agency, July 5

Pune city police are probing into the possible links between the alleged drug peddlers and the owner and manager of Liquid Leisure Lounge pub on Fergusson College (FC) Road. Police told the court on Saturday that a prima facie probe has revealed that the pub owner, manager, the party organiser and the accused drug suppliers were allegedly found to be in contact with each other. Police said an investigation is underway to trace and arrest the 'main drugs supplier' in this case. Police, on Friday, arrested three alleged drug peddlers Abhishek Amol Sonawane (23) of Diesel Colony, Omkar Ashok Sakat (28) of Mahatma Phule Peth and Idoko Stavley Sunday of Nigeria in connection with the supply of drugs to an illegal party held at Liquid Leisure Lounge in the wee hours of June 23.

Videos of alleged drug use at the pub and that of the establishment operating past the legal time limit were circulated widely on social media. Pune city police and the state excise department had swung into action and on June 24 arrested 14 people linked to the case. These included pub owner Santosh Kamthe, Utkarsh Deshmane, Yogendra Girase and Ravi Maheshwari to whom it was given to operate on contract, pub manager Manas Mallik, event manager Akshay Kamthe who organised the party, light and sound operator Dinesh Mankar and Rohan Gaikwad who allowed illegal entries from the back door after time limit. The ninth accused, Sachin Kamthe, brother of Santosh and co-owner of the place, is on the run, police said. An FIR was lodged against them at Shivajinagar police station under sections of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) and Maharashtra Liquor Prohibition Act.

The remaining six accused, who mainly included waiters, were arrested by the excise department on charges of alleged illegal operations including organising an illegal party at the pub, which was attended by dozens of people. Then, on June 25, police arrested Nitin Nathuram Thombre (34), an architect from Mumbai and



his friend Karan Rajendra Mishra (34) an IT professional from Pune, who were allegedly visible in a video taking drugs in the washroom of Liquid Leisure Lounge. During searches, policemen recovered drugs from Thombre's house. Police invoked the NDPS (Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) Act in the case on Wednesday. All 16 accused arrested by the police and excise department on June 24 and June 25 were produced before the additional chief judicial magistrate A U Supekar on Friday afternoon. The court extended their custody till July 1.

Assistant public prosecutor Priyanka Vengurlekar told the court that further custodial interrogation of the accused was required to carry out a confrontation with the alleged drug peddlers held in this offence. Defence lawyers refuted the allegations made by police. Senior lawyer Sudhir Shah, who represented Kamthe, argued that the place was rented out and so the owner has no links with the party or drugs in this case. So far, police investigation has revealed that the accused Sonawane had allegedly provided Mephedrone to Mishra during the party on June 23. Sakat and Idoko were arrested for allegedly supplying drugs to Sonawane. Police had seized 1 gram cocaine from Sonawane, 6.7 grams mephedrone from Sakat and 2.6 grams cocaine from Idoko. Police are probing whether the accused had provided drugs to more pubs and bars in the city.

## Extension of Amritsar's historical Bhandari Bridge brings relief to motorists

GNS News Agency, July 5

The Bhandari Bridge, a vital artery connecting the old and new sections of Amritsar city, has long been a critical junction for the city's traffic. Ever since the Punjab government opened two new parallel bridges adjoining the existing Bhandari Bridge in 2022, it has drastically cut down the travel time and reduced the frequency of traffic jams. The existing bridge is only 70 years old and it replaced a British-era bridge constructed across the railway line for the connectivity to the old walled city of Amritsar that has Darbar Sahib or the Golden Temple at its centre with the New City around the Civil Lines developed by the British on the other side. The colonial-era old bridge was demolished and new one was constructed in its place in 1954, and it was named after an engineer Padam Chand Bhandari who was the former executive engineer of Amritsar Municipal Corporation. Bridge extension project a boon The extension project promised a much-needed respite by providing an additional route for vehicles, thereby distributing the traffic more evenly and reducing the burden on the old bridge, which is still in use.

The bridge extension beginning at Hall Gate enables vehicles to cross over to the railway station side. Meanwhile, the extension from the Jalandhar road side connects traffic to Hall Gate as well as the railway station. However, there were unexplained barricades on the newly built parallel bridges. The traffic police removed these barriers only this year. Now commuters do not require to take a one-and-a-half-kilometre detour from the elevated road bridge to Hall Gate making the bridge more effective. "The Bhandari Bridge extension has reduced the traffic jams to a large extent. Now, there are traffic jams at Bhandari Bridge mostly when it is used for the protest," said Harminder Singh, a local resident who uses the bridge almost everyday.

The Bhandari Bridge is a popular protest venue as the heavy traffic on the bridge makes protesters grab eyeballs. "Bhandari Bridge was not being used to its full capacity. We urged police to remove barricades and now the traffic is smoother," said Kulwant Singh Anakhi of Amritsar Vikas Manch. A railway line divides Amritsar city into two parts - the Old City and the New City and the British constructed a bridge to connect both parts. In 1954, the old bridge was demolished and a new 500-metre bridge was reconstructed. In 2022, two parallel bridges were extended - one of 500 metres in length and the other of 600 metres.

How Amritsar's lifeline turns a bottleneck With the passage of time and surge in population and vehicle numbers, Amritsar turned this lifeline into a bottleneck, with traffic jams becoming an everyday struggle for commuters. The Improvement Trust initiated the Bhandari Bridge Extension Project on March 5, 2020. This ambitious project aimed to ease the traffic woes by construct-



## The Punjab government opened two new parallel bridges adjoining the existing 70-year-old Bhandari Bridge in 2022.

ing a new two bridges parallel to the old one and offering more entries and exits. The goal was to create a smoother flow of traffic and alleviate the congestion that had plagued the city for so long. History The colonial-era Bhandari bridge, however, is painted in dark shades of British dictatorship. Twenty five people were killed on this railway foot-bridge on April 10, 1919 as the British army opened fire at the crowd gathered there to protest the arrest of local leaders Dr Satpal and Saffudin Kitchlew, just three days before the notorious Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

As the news of 25 casualties on the old bridge on April 10, 1919 spread across the city, violence erupted in different parts of Amritsar and British officers, men and women were attacked at several places.

However, only Amritsar, but Lahore also witnessed reaction to firing on the Amritsar bridge on the same evening as a crowd marched from Lahore Gate to Anarkali bazaar raising slogans. Lahore police had opened fire at the gathering and the police later arrested nine people for alleged rioting.

Similar gathering was witnessed in Lahore on April 12, 1919 in which a crowd tore the pictures of the British King and Queen. Another gathering was organised at Babri Mosque Lahore and it was addressed by Hindu leaders. Different parts of Lahore saw small protests and crowds also turned violent at some places. Then came the fateful day of April 13, 1919- The Jallianwala Massacre.

## Gaza war protesters set off smoke bombs, clash with cops outside Biden fundraiser



GNS News Agency, July 5

Protests by anti-Gaza war proponents against US President Joe Biden's fundraiser in Manhattan, New York turned violent on Friday, resulting in multiple arrests and clashes with police. The event, held at the Hammerstein Ballroom, was disrupted by pro-Palestine protesters who

marched from Madison Square Garden, setting off smoke bombs and leading to the arrest of at least 32 demonstrators, according to a New York Post report.

The protesters confronted police in riot gear on the sidewalk near the venue. Videos shared on social media showed the chaos, with police taking several protesters into custody through the smoke while others tried to intervene. Officers were heard shouting "Clear the block" as they attempted to control the situation. A scrum of demonstrators briefly occupied the lobby of the James A Farley Building before returning to the street.

The protesters, organised by pro-Palestinian group Within Our Lifetime, raised 'Intifada' slogans and chanted, "Biden Biden, you're a liar. You set Palestine on fire." The group had stated on a flier that "genocidal politicians are not welcome in New York City." At the fundraiser, over 640 donors gathered to hear Biden reaffirm his commitment to seeking a second term after a widely panned debate performance against Republican rival Donald Trump. Ticket prices for the event ranged from \$250 to \$500,000, attracting notable figures like actors Billy Porter and Alan Cumming. The demonstration in Manhattan was the latest in a series of protests and disruptions in New York City since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in October. Back in May, pro-Palestinian protesters took over the Manhattan Bridge, blocking traffic on the upper-level westbound lanes. Pro-Palestinian groups have consistently demanded a ceasefire and an end to the killing of thousands of people in Gaza, often targeting high-profile events like the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

## Rishi Sunak condemns racist slur from Reform campaigner: It hurts, makes me angry



GNS News Agency, July 5

In the UK, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak condemned racist slurs directed at him by Reform UK campaigners. Sunak said he was "hurt" and "angry" by such comments.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Friday condemned the use of a racist slur against him by an anti-immigration Reform UK party campaigner and said such remarks hurt him and make him angry. The campaigner's remarks came as the general election campaign in the United Kingdom entered its final week. Some other campaigners made racist, homophobic and offensive comments in Clacton-on-Sea, eastern England, where Reform UK leader Nigel Farage is hoping to be elected as a Member of the Parliament next Thursday.

One canvasser was heard using the racist slur about Sunak. The supporter also described Islam as "the most disgusting cult" and called for Muslims to be kicked "out of mosques" and their places of worship turned into pubs. Responding to the remarks, Rishi Sunak said, "My two daughters have to see and hear Reform people who campaign for Nigel Farage calling me an effing Paki. It hurts and it makes me angry." "I think he has some questions to answer. And I don't repeat those words lightly. I do so deliberately because this is too important not to call out clearly for what it is," the British Prime Minister said. Meanwhile, Farage, who campaigned as a European parliamentarian for Britain to leave the European Union and now wants a freeze on immigration, called the campaigner's comments a "complete and total set-up". He suggested the canvasser, Andrew Parker, who was leafleting in Clacton last week, may have been paid to act in the video, possibly by opponents threatened by the party's popularity. This was not the lone incident of Reform UK candidates making derogatory comments. Earlier, a string of such candidates had been ditched or suspended over allegations of offensive comments. According to the anti-racism organisation Hope Not Hate, Reform UK has had to withdraw 166 candidates since the beginning of the year, many of whom have made racist or offensive remarks.

## Citing US Supreme Court ruling, Trump demands freeing of Capitol attack 'hostages'

Citing a US Supreme Court ruling in favour of a man who challenged an obstruction charge related to the US Capitol attack, former president Donald Trump called for the release of his supporters who were prosecuted for their actions during the riot. Donald Trump said on Friday (local time) that his supporters prosecuted for their actions in the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol should be freed, citing a Supreme Court ruling in favour of a man who challenged an obstruction charge related to the riot, a charge Trump also faces.

Speaking at a campaign rally in Virginia, the former president pointed to Friday's ruling, which raised the legal bar for prosecutors pursuing obstruction charges in the federal election subversion case against Trump and defendants involved in the attack. "Free the January 6 hostages now. They should free them now for what they have gone through" Trump said, as the crowd cheered. "They've been waiting for this decision for a long time," Trump added.

Trump is the Republican candidate challenging Democratic President Joe Biden in the November 5 US election. The Supreme Court ruled 6-3 to throw out a lower court's decision that had allowed a charge of corruptly obstructing an official proceeding - the congressional certification of Biden's 2020 victory over Trump that the rioters sought to prevent - against defendant Joseph Fischer, a former police officer. The justices directed the lower court to reconsider the matter. The ruling was a po-



tential boost for Trump, who was hit with two obstruction-related charges as part of a four-count criminal indictment in a case brought last year by Special Counsel Jack Smith. Trump has pleaded not guilty in the case. "That is a great thing for people that have been so horribly treated," Trump said of the ruling. Trump has often valorised his supporters convicted for their roles in the attack on the Capitol, calling them "patriots" and "warriors." Among other crimes, some of them were prosecuted for violence against police officers. The Supreme Court on Monday (July 1) is expected to issue its ruling on Trump's claim of presidential immunity from prosecution in the election subversion case brought by the special counsel. It is the final day of the court's current term.

## Khamenei protege, sole moderate to battle in Iran's presidential run-off

DUBAI, GNS News Agency, July 5 A moderate lawmaker will face Iran supreme leader's protege in a run-off presidential election on July 5 after the country's interior ministry said on Saturday that no candidate secured enough votes in the first round of voting. Friday's vote to replace Ebrahim Raisi after his death in a helicopter crash came down to a tight race between a low-profile lawmaker Massoud Pezeshkian, the sole moderate in a field of four candidates, and former Revolutionary Guards member Saeed Jalili.

The interior ministry said neither secured the 50% plus one vote of over 25 million ballots cast required to win outright, with Pezeshkian leading with over 10 million votes ahead of Jalili with over 9.4 million votes. Power in Iran ultimately lies with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, so the result will not herald any major policy shift on Iran's nuclear programme or its support for militia groups across the Middle East. But the president runs the government day-to-day and can influence the tone of Iran's policy. The clerical establishment hoped for a high turnout as it faces a legitimacy crisis fuelled by public discontent over economic hardship and curbs on political and social freedom. However, turnout in Friday's vote hit a historic low of about 40%, based on interior ministry count released on Saturday.

The election comes at a time of escalating regional tension due to the war between Israel and Iranian allies Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, as well as increased Western pressure on Iran over its fast-advancing nuclear programme. With Iran's supreme leader now 85, it is likely that the next president will be closely involved in the process of choosing a successor to Khamenei, who seeks a fiercely loyal president who can ensure a smooth eventual succession to his own posi-



tion, insiders and analysts say. Anti-Western views of Jalili, Iran's former uncompromising nuclear negotiator, offer a contrast to those of Pezeshkian. Analysts said Jalili's win would signal the possibility of an even more antagonistic turn in the Islamic Republic's foreign and domestic policy. But a victory for mild-mannered lawmaker Pezeshkian might help ease tensions with the West, improve chances of economic reform, social liberalisation and political pluralism. Pezeshkian, faithful to Iran's theocratic rule, is backed by the reformist faction that has largely been sidelined in Iran in recent years. "We will respect the hijab law, but there should never be any intrusive or inhumane behaviour toward women," Pezeshkian said after casting his vote. He was referring to the death of Mahsa Amini, a young Kurdish woman, in 2022 while in morality police custody for allegedly violating the mandatory Islamic dress code. The unrest sparked by Amini's death spiralled into the biggest show of opposition to Iran's clerical rulers in years.

## Trump outperforms Biden in US Presidential debate, finds poll

Atlanta: Former US president Donald Trump turned in a better performance than President Joe Biden during the first of Presidential debates, a shift from 2020 when debate watchers saw the 81-year-old Democrat as outperforming his Republican rival. During Thursday's feisty debate that lasted roughly 90 minutes, President Biden and 78-year-old Trump sparred over the economy, immigration, foreign policy, abortion and national security. Both the leaders called each other a liar and the worst President in the history of the US. Sixty-seven per cent to 33 per cent of the registered debate watchers said that Trump turned in a better performance, according to a CNN flash poll conducted by SSRS. CNN was the host of the first of the three Presidential debates held in Atlanta. Before the debate, the same voters said, 55 per cent to 45 per cent, that they expected Trump to perform better than Biden. The poll's results reflect opinions of the debate only among those voters who tuned in and are not representative of the views of the full voting public - in their demographics, political preferences or the level of attention

they pay to politics. Debate watchers in the poll were 5 points likelier to be Republican-aligned than Democratic-aligned, making for an audience that was slightly more Republican-leaning than all registered voters nationally. But the results are a shift from 2020 when Biden was seen by debate watchers as outperforming Trump in their presidential debates, CNN reported. A 57 per cent majority of debate watchers Thursday night said they have no real confidence in Biden's ability to lead the country, and 44 per cent that they have no real confidence in Trump's ability to do so. Those numbers are effectively unchanged from the poll taken before the debate, in which 55 per cent of those voters said they had no confidence in Biden and 47 per cent that they lacked confidence in Trump. Neither candidate scores highly on this metric, but while just 36 per cent of debate watchers now say they have a lot of confidence in Trump's ability to lead the country, only 14 per cent say the same of Biden, the report said.

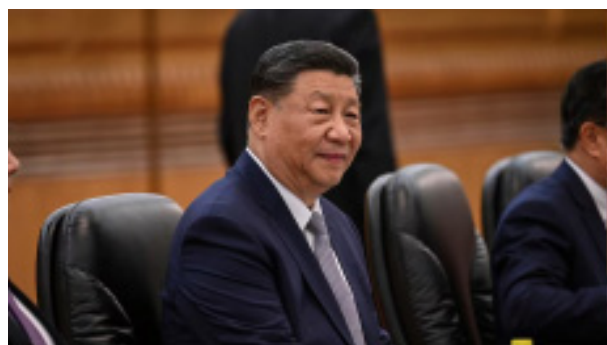
## Xi Jinping hails India's Panchsheel agreement as key to resolve global conflicts

GNS News Agency, July 5

This historic agreement, which gained prominence through the Non-Aligned Movement, was initially established in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India in 1954. Chinese President Xi Jinping highlighted the significance of India's Panchsheel Agreement, also known as the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, in resolving current global conflicts and sought to expand influence in the Global South amid its tussle with the West.

This historic agreement, which gained prominence through the Non-Aligned Movement, was initially established in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India in 1954. Xi Jinping invoked these principles at a conference marking their 70th anniversary, linking them to his Global Security Initiative, which aims to create a shared future for humanity. The Panchsheel Agreement was part of the legacy of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his Chinese counterpart Zhou Enlai in their failed attempt to find a solution to the vexed boundary conflict. "The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence answered the call of the times, and their initiation was an inevitable historic development. The Chinese leadership in the past specified the Five Principles in their entirety for the first time, namely, 'mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity', 'mutual non-aggression', 'mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs', 'equality and mutual benefit', and 'peaceful coexistence'," news agency PTI quoyed the Chinese premier as saying.

"They included the Five Principles in the China-India and China-Myanmar joint statement, which jointly called for making them basic norms for state-to-state relations," the 71-year-old leader said. Former Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, along with several political leaders and officials from various countries, attended the conference. Despite being initiated in India, the Five



Principles of Peaceful Coexistence soon took over the world stage. Over 20 Asian and African nations attended the Bandung Conference in 1955, Xi stated in his address. The non-aligned movement that was formed in the 1960s adopted the Five Principles as its guiding principles, he said.

Underscoring the significance of the agreement in ending present-day conflicts, Xi said, "The Five Principles have set a historic benchmark for international relations and international rule of law." Xi Jinping pointed out that the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence align with the UN Charter and evolving international relations, as well as the fundamental interests of all nations. He linked these principles to his Global Security Initiative (GSI), which aims for joint security and a shared future for humanity. Xi has been promoting various initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), to expand China's global influence. The BRI has involved significant investments in infrastructure projects but has faced allegations of debt diplomacy. China is also competing strategically with the US and EU for influence in the Global South and plans to establish a research centre, offer scholarships, and launch a youth leadership program to support cooperation in these regions.

## Eagles singer files lawsuit seeking return of 'Hotel California' lyric sheets

GNS News Agency, July 5

In his civil complaint filed in Manhattan, Eagles co-founder and singer Don Henley says his handwritten notes and song lyrics from the band's hit 'Hotel California' album were stolen. Eagles singer Don Henley filed a lawsuit seeking the return of his handwritten notes and song lyrics from the band's hit "Hotel California" album.

The civil complaint filed in Manhattan federal court comes after prosecutors in March abruptly dropped criminal charges midway through a trial against three collectibles experts accused of scheming to sell the documents. The Eagles co-founder has maintained the pages were stolen and had vowed to pursue a lawsuit when the criminal case was dropped against rare books dealer Glenn Horowitz, former Rock & Roll Hall of Fame curator Craig Inciardi and rock memorabilia seller Edward Kosinski. "Hotel California," released by the Eagles in 1977, is the third-biggest selling album of all time in the US. "These 100 pages of personal lyric sheets be-



long to Mr Henley and his family, and he has never authorized defendants or anyone else to peddle them for profit," Daniel Petrocelli, Henley's lawyer, said in an emailed statement Friday. According to the lawsuit, the handwritten pages remain in the custody of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office, which declined to comment Friday on the litigation. Lawyers for Kosinski and Inciardi dismissed the legal action as baseless, noting the criminal case was dropped after it was determined that Henley misled prosecutors by withholding critical information. "Don Henley is desperate to rewrite history," Shawn Crowley, Kosinski's lawyer, said in an emailed statement. "We look forward to litigating this

case and bringing a lawsuit against Henley to hold him accountable for his repeated lies and misuse of the justice system." Inciardi's lawyer, Stacey Richman, said in a separate statement that the lawsuit attempts to "bully" and "perpetuate a false narrative." A lawyer for Horowitz, who isn't named as a defendant as he doesn't claim ownership of the materials, didn't respond to an email seeking comment. During the trial, the men's lawyers argued that Henley gave the lyrics pages decades ago to a writer who worked on a never-published Eagles biography and later sold the handwritten sheets to Horowitz. He, in turn, sold them to Inciardi and Kosinski, who started putting some of the pages up

for auction in 2012. The criminal case was abruptly dropped after prosecutors agreed that defense lawyers had essentially been blindsided by 6,000 pages of communications involving Henley and his attorneys and associates. Prosecutors and the defense said they received the material only after Henley and his lawyers made a last-minute decision to waive their attorney-client privilege shielding legal discussions. Judge Curtis Farber, who presided over the nonjury trial that opened in late February, said witnesses and their lawyers used attorney-client privilege "to obfuscate and hide information that they believed would be damaging" and that prosecutors "were apparently manipulated."

## After a 11-year gap, Centre discloses key consumption expenditure survey data



spending on food has dropped to 46.4% for rural households from 52.9% in 2011-12, while their urban peers spent just 39.2% of their overall monthly outgoes on food compared with 42.6% incurred 11 years earlier. This reduction could translate into a lower weightage for food prices in the country's retail inflation calculations.

The MPCE numbers cited above do not take into account the imputed values of items received free of cost by individuals through various social welfare programmes such as the PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY) or State-run schemes, which were calculated separately, while including a few non-food items received through such schemes, including computers, mobile phones, bicycles, and clothing. The average MPCE, at 2011-12 prices, was a tad higher when these items were included while excluding free education and healthcare sops — at ₹2,054 for rural households, and ₹3,544 for urban homes.

The Statistics and Programme Implementation Ministry released a factsheet on the summary of the Survey findings, and said a detailed report on the survey will be brought out subsequently. The estimates of the MPCE are based on data collected from 2,61,746 households, of which 1,55,014 were in rural areas, spread over all States and Union Territories, the Ministry said. "The bottom 5% of India's rural population, ranked by MPCE, has an average MPCE of ₹1,373 while it is ₹2,001 for the same category of population in the urban areas. The top 5% of India's rural and urban population, ranked by MPCE, has an average MPCE of ₹10,501 and ₹20,824, respectively," according to the factsheet. Among the States, the MPCE is the highest in Sikkim for both rural (₹7,731) and urban areas (₹12,105). It is the lowest in Chhattisgarh, where it was ₹2,466 for rural households and ₹4,483 for urban household members.

For the first time in about 11 years, the government on February 24 released the broad findings of the All India Household Consumption Expenditure Survey carried out between August 2022 and July 2023. The data will play a key role in reviewing critical economic indicators, including the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), poverty levels, and the Consumer Price Inflation (CPI).

The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) is usually conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) every five years, but the findings of the last Survey, conducted in 2017-18 soon after the demonetisation of high-value currency notes and the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), were never released after the government cited "data quality" issues. As per the latest Survey, the average monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) in Indian households rose by 33.5% since 2011-12 in urban households to ₹3,510, with rural India's MPCE seeing a 40.42% increase over the same period to hit ₹2,008.

Importantly, the numbers show that the proportion of

## Berkshire 'built to last': Warren Buffett assures investors



GNS News Agency, Feb 27

Warren Buffett on February 24 moved to reassure investors that his conglomerate Berkshire Hathaway would serve them well over the long term, even as he mourned the recent passing of his longtime second-in-command Charlie Munger. In his widely-read annual letter to Berkshire shareholders, which accompanied a record \$37.4 billion full-year operating profit, Mr. Buffett said his more than \$900 billion conglomerate has become a fortress capable of withstanding even an unprecedented financial disaster. "Berkshire is built to last," he wrote.

Mr. Buffett also tempered expectations for Berkshire's stock price, saying the company's huge size left "no possibility of eye-popping performance."

"There remain only a handful of companies in this country capable of truly moving the needle at Berkshire, and they have been endlessly picked over by us and by others," Mr. Buffett wrote. "Some we can value; some we can't." But the 93-year-old billionaire also assured investors that Vice Chairman Greg Abel, his designated successor, was "in all respects ready to be CEO of Berkshire tomorrow."

Charlie Munger was the "architect" of Berkshire, says Buffett. Mr. Buffett also saved his most heartfelt words for Mr. Munger, who died in November at age 99. He called Mr. Munger the "architect" of Berkshire, with Mr. Buffett being only the "general contractor," and reminded investors how Mr. Munger pushed him to buy wonderful businesses at fair prices instead of fair businesses at wonderful prices. Berkshire's "extreme fiscal conservatism," including reluctance to make major acquisitions at inflated prices, is one reason Mr. Buffett has let the Omaha, Nebraska-based company's cash stake swell to a record \$167.6 billion. "In a way his relationship with me was part

older brother, part loving father," Mr. Buffett wrote, referring to Mr. Munger. "Even when he knew he was right, he gave me the reins, and when I blundered he never-never-reminded me of my mistake."

Cathy Seifert, a CFRA Research analyst who rates Berkshire "buy," said Mr. Buffett tried to show how Berkshire could withstand rocky shoals, even after Mr. Munger helped him transform a once-failing textile company into a colossus mirroring the broader economy. "Nothing is perfect," she said. "He tried to show there is a succession plan, and Berkshire would stick to its knitting." Mr. Buffett likened Berkshire's caution in making acquisitions, with the stock market now routinely setting record highs, to an insurance policy against the kind of hurried, unwise business decisions that would have irked Mr. Munger.

"I have a sense that Berkshire wants to make Charlie proud," said Thomas Russo, a portfolio manager and longtime shareholder at Gardner, Russo & Quinn in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Berkshire's results Mr. Buffett's letter was accompanied by the company's quarterly and annual results. Operating profit from its dozens of insurance, railroad, industrial, energy, and retail businesses rose 28% in the quarter to \$8.48 billion and 21% for the year to a record \$37.4 billion. Insurance businesses such as Geico benefited from improved underwriting quality and higher investment income as interest rates rose, offsetting wage pressures at the BNSF railroad and wildfire losses at Berkshire Hathaway Energy. "Results reflect the value of holding a diversified collection of operating businesses," said Jim Shanahan, an Edward Jones analyst with a "hold" rating on Berkshire. Investment gains in Berkshire's \$354 billion equity portfolio, including stocks such as Apple, American Express, Bank of America and Coca-Cola, helped the company generate a \$96.2 billion annual profit. The amount reflects accounting rules that require Berkshire to report gains in stocks it hasn't sold, however, making it "worse-than-useless" to investors according to Buffett. Berkshire's caution, and one of the reasons for its record cash stake, was reflected in its having sold about \$24 billion more stocks than it bought in 2023. Results also included some of Occidental Petroleum's earnings, which reflected Berkshire's approximately 28% stake in the oil company. Mr. Buffett said he expects Berkshire will keep that stake "indefinitely," along with its stakes in five Japanese trading houses: Itochu, Marubeni, Mitsubishi, Mitsui and Sumitomo. Berkshire's businesses also include industrial parts and chemical companies, a big real estate brokerage, and retail brands such as Dairy Queen, Fruit of the Loom and See's candies.

## After demand surge, multiple tripping incidents in northern region: NRLDC

After demand surge, multiple tripping incidents in northern region: NRLDC The multiple tripping event occurred right after power demand in the northern region peaked at an unprecedented 89.4 GW, driven by severe heatwave conditions prevailing across the region.

The electricity grid supplying power to northern states recorded a massive load drop of 16.5 GW after multiple power system elements tripped at around 2 pm on Monday, the Northern Regional Load Despatch Centre (NRLDC) said. The multiple tripping event occurred right after power demand in the northern region peaked at an unprecedented 89.4 GW, driven by severe heatwave conditions prevailing across the region. The grid incident unfolded as a key body of power engineers employed across state and central utilities sounded the alarm over an impending surge in agricultural load in Punjab by end-June, warning it "may lead to an unmanageable power situation".

As peak demand in the northern region touched 89.4 GW at around 1:53 pm on Monday, multiple grid elements tripped leading to a load loss of 16.5 GW, or 18 per cent of peak demand. Haryana experienced the highest load drop of 4.1 GW, followed by Punjab at 3.8 GW. Both Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan faced a load loss of around 2.8 GW each, while Delhi saw a drop of 2.2 GW. All transmission elements that tripped were restored by 4 pm, NRLDC said in a release. On the generation side, tripping of hydro and thermal generating units lead to a cumulative loss of 1.2 GW each. Additionally, 2.8 GW of solar capacity in Rajasthan was also affected. In its letter to Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann sent on Monday, the All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF) chairman



Shailendra Dubey, said, "While the situation of power availability and supply is becoming serious day by day, neither the government of India nor any state government has initiated steps to control the power demand. If the situation continues, there are fair chances of grid disturbance." "In the state of Punjab, the power consumption has gone up by 43 per cent between June 1 to 15, 2024, when compared to the same period during 2023... additional agricultural load expected to rise by the end of June due to paddy cultivation in the whole state of Punjab, may lead to an unmanageable power situation," Dubey cautioned. While a surge in domestic consumption load in the country's northern parts is behind the multiple tripping, a Union Ministry of Power spokesperson told The Indian Express. "All utilities have been advised to maintain a state of high alert and minimise forced outage of equipment". To meet demand, the Northern Region is also importing 25-30 per cent of its power requirement from the neighbouring regions, the spokesperson said.

## Patient privacy key in healthcare digital transformation: Report



New Delhi: Safeguarding patient privacy, which includes personal information, medical history, test and treatment, plays a key role in the digital transformation of the healthcare industry, according to a report on Tuesday. The pandemic and quarantine measures prompted a growth in telemedicine as well as a general increase in the usage of digital technologies across the board. However, if cybersecurity and data protection are not given top priority in the technological infrastructures of the healthcare industry and medical device manufacturers, the possibility of the exposure of private medical data severely jeopardises patient privacy, said the report by GlobalData, a data and analytics company. The report comes even as medical devices manufacturer Medtronic is currently involved in a legal battle over allegations that it exchanged a sizable amount of patient data on diabetes with tech giant Google.

The lawsuit accuses Medtronic of breaking patient confidentiality and raises significant difficulties with data privacy in the medical sector. "The foundation of digital health is the use of technical platforms that store and transfer data, including electronic medical records that consolidate patient health data and make it available to all healthcare professionals," said Elia Garcia, medical analyst at GlobalData, in a statement. Garcia said some medical devices like pacemakers, home monitoring systems, and blood glucose monitors, are enabled to com-

municate with one another via the Internet and send patient data. These offer significant advantages such as providing details on the patient's health status, individualised monitoring, and the adjustment and administration of medicines, she said. "Strengthening the legal and regulatory frameworks that control data protection is essential, and this can be done by defining and improving national or international standards that specify how companies should behave themselves," Garcia said. "To promote patient trust in digital health, it is essential that patients feel their data is secure. And because of this, medical organisations and businesses need to see cybersecurity and data protection as critical elements of daily operations," she added.

## When does pelvic girdle pain occur in pregnant women?



Dr Gupta.

Does it affect all pregnant women?

"PGP doesn't affect all pregnant women, but it's estimated that around 20 per cent of expectant mothers experience some degree of PGP during their pregnancy. Factors like a history of musculoskeletal problems, previous pregnancies, or increased body weight may increase the risk," said Dr Narang.

How to cope with it?

Follow these measures to deal with it:

"Prenatal care: Consult your healthcare provider to confirm the diagnosis and discuss pain management options. Physical therapy: A physical therapist can provide exercises and techniques to strengthen and stabilise the pelvis. Supportive devices: Maternity belts and pelvic support garments can provide relief by reducing pressure on the pelvis. Rest and posture: Avoid activities that worsen the pain, and practice good posture. Heat and cold: Applying a warm or cold compress to the painful area can alleviate discomfort. Pain medication: Under your doctor's guidance, some pain relief medications may be considered but do not take them on your own. Do consult your doctor first. Sleep comfort: Use pillows to support your body in a comfortable sleeping position. According to Dr Narang, prenatal gentle exercises like pelvic tilts and Kegel exercises can help strengthen pelvic muscles and provide stability. "Maternity belts or pelvic support bands can alleviate some discomfort by providing additional support to the pelvic area," said Dr Narang.

What to keep in mind?

Maintain good posture and avoid activities that exacerbate the pain, added Dr Narang. "Use proper body mechanics when lifting or getting out of bed," said Dr Narang. Having said that, experts urge that it is best to always consult your healthcare provider if you experience pelvic girdle pain, as they can provide personalised guidance and rule out any underlying issues.

## Can adding these two ingredients to our meals lower blood sugar spike by 15-20 per cent?



Besides improving the flavour of food, pepper and lemon work together to boost carbohydrate digestion, and nutrient absorption. But do they bring down blood sugar spike?

It's not just what we eat, the way we prepare food also affects our health. While fried food is tasty, experts stress the need to have boiled and steamed food for optimum health benefits. But can adding a few specific ingredients also make a difference? We are here to find out exactly that — as we recently came across a social media post claiming so. According to a post by Medhya Herbs: Ayurveda for Women's Health, good food is about embracing delicious, gut-healing strategies. "Non-starchy vegetables like leafy greens, broccoli, and peppers are low in glycaemic index and rich in fibre. Fibre slows sugar absorption, promoting steadier blood sugar levels and improved insulin sensitivity, the post read.

"Studies suggest adding a squeeze of fresh lime juice to meals can help lower the glycaemic index of some dishes. This is because the acidity in lime juice can interfere with starch digestion, resulting in a slower rise in blood sugar, it added. "Black pepper powder may enhance insulin sensitivity. While research is ongoing, some studies suggest it activates pathways that improve your body's ability to utilise glucose (sugar), the post read. "According to the post, herbs like turmeric and fenugreek have been shown to support healthy blood sugar management and pancreatic function. So, will adding a dash of lemon and black pepper powder help? Maintaining an ideal blood glucose level for patients with diabetes has always been a difficult task. There are innumerable suggestions and comments that people or social media sites have to offer. This only makes it more and more difficult to comprehend what's helpful, commented Riya Desai, senior dietitian, Wockhardt

Hospitals, Mira Road, Mumbai.

Adding slices of lemon to a refreshing summer drink, or squeezing it into salads or vegetables helps in slowing down the digestion process for carbohydrates (due to the presence of citric acid), allowing glucose to be released into the bloodstream in a more gradual process.

"This inhibits random spikes in blood sugar levels. Lemon in food even adds vitamin C, which lowers inflammation and oxidative stress, while also indirectly boosting insulin sensitivity (which allows for better blood sugar control). Also beneficial to the body is the presence of polyphenols in lemon. With antioxidant properties, polyphenols allow improved response to insulin as well as glucose uptake," said Dr Thousia Hassan, consultant dietitian and nutritionist, Motherhood Hospitals, HRBR layout, Bangalore. In the case of pepper, its primary advantage is the presence of piperine, the active compound that allows for better nutrient absorption and metabolism functioning. "As a result of this, the body is better equipped to deal with nutrients that regulate blood sugar levels. Similar to the components of lemon, piperine improves sensitivity to insulin and glucose metabolism, which further regulates blood sugar levels," elaborated Hassan, adding that there is no one study to suggest a 15-20 per cent reduction in blood sugar levels. Besides improving the flavour of food, pepper and lemon work together to boost carbohydrate digestion, and nutrient absorption and provide other benefits that aid the body in controlling blood sugar, said Hassan. "They can be consumed in salads, or by sprinkling on food items like eggs, soup, vegetables, etc," added Hassan.

## Darshana Rajendran's thrilling Malayalam gem exposes the micro-aggressions of toxic men



phone the whole time, celebrating the Netflix gig with his colleagues, leaving Amritha to appreciate the stunning landscapes by herself. Later, he casually told her that she needn't continue blogging any more, undermining her profession and failing to acknowledge the joy that it probably brings her with one sweeping statement. This, the movie declares, is what Kesav was like even before life threw him into a high-pressure situation. As he realises in real time that he cannot control everybody like he has probably been controlling his wife, he begins to unravel; his true self — the one that Angelou warned about — rises to the surface amid the simmering tension.

Kesav initially operates under the delusion that he is in some way superior to the disenfranchised Lankans around him. He would've probably felt this way even if their government hadn't kneecapped them. He struts in and out of rooms, passing orders with the expectation that they will be fulfilled, having convinced himself that being a foreigner has earned him a level of... immunity. He threatens the local police captain, Sergeant Bandara, with a call to the Indian embassy if the stolen goods aren't returned, completely oblivious to the fact that Lankan society is collapsing around him. "I need my phone and laptop," he says, and Amritha has to remind him that her phone and laptop were stolen as well. Kesav has made it all about himself. In a rather telling scene, he storms into the kitchen at midnight, unable to sleep because of the racket that the bungalow staff — their driver Mr Andrew, the cook Iqbal, and the housekeeper Shree — have been making. Having resolved to scold them, he barges through the door, but stops in his tracks. They look at him quizzically, perhaps aware of why he's there. But before they can begin to apologise, Kesav meekly backs off. "Please continue," he says pompously, before spotting some local hooch on the kitchen counter, and asking for a peg. They warn him that it might be too strong for him, but Kesav insists that he wants to try. "I always drink my single malts neat," he brags as he takes a swig of the liquor, and nearly chokes to death. He puts on a brave face and slinks out of the kitchen with his tail between his legs. It's a magnificent self-own, committed by a man who doesn't really need anybody to put him in his place. He'll do that himself.

In addition to setting fire to his own relationship and attracting eye-rolls from everybody that has the misfortune of being in his company, Kesav commits graver sins in Paradise. He falsely identifies three local Tamil men as the thieves, despite Amritha's silent concern. When one of them dies in custody, he doubles down on his 'instinct', while Amritha stewes in second-hand guilt. She was, of course, complicit. And the movie doesn't entirely absolve her either. But literally surrounded by aggressive men on all sides, there's only so much that she could've done. In an alternate version of the Ramayana, Amritha tells their driver Mr Andrew in an early scene, Sita is the one who violently kills Ravana. She raises questions about female agency and deference, leaving Mr Andrew to sheepishly gaze at his shoelaces. But Paradise takes this thought a step further; not only does the movie reframe the narrative through Sita's perspective — Amritha is an obvious stand-in — but it blurs the lines between Rama and Ravana as well. Every man, Paradise says, has darkness and light within them. And as it cuts to black after a jaw-dropping climax, the movie leaves you with an even more radical idea — Sita was fully capable of saving herself from the clutches of the Rakshasa king of Lanka, but nobody asked if she needed rescuing from her own husband. Post Credits Scene is a column in which we dissect new releases every week, with particular focus on context, craft, and characters. Because there's always something to fixate about once the dust has settled.

"When someone shows you who they really are," said Maya Angelou, "believe them the first time." But as pessimistic as this fortune cookie philosophy might sound, it points to the inherent optimism of human beings. We're happy to offer second chances, often at the cost of our own principles. We're programmed to forgive bad behaviour, convinced that it is probably an aberration and not the norm. The deeply empathetic Amritha, played by Darshana Rajendran, has been married to Roshan Mathew's Kesav for five years when we first meet them in Sri Lankan director Prasanna Vithanage's Paradise. But you can tell from minute one that she isn't the sort of person who'd heed Angelou's advice. A thrilling investigation of an imploding marriage, Paradise frames their relationship against the backdrop of political turmoil. Amritha and Kesav visit Sri Lanka to celebrate their fifth anniversary with a tour of the Ramayana's most important sites, but are essentially held hostage in the country because of their own misdeeds. Vithanage deliberately declines to provide any insight into who these two were before the vacation, but drops enough hints to suggest that theirs has always been a marriage of inequality. Paradise is a gripping thriller on the surface — a movie whose metaphors are about as pointed as a Lasith Malinga yorker — but it is also a masterclass in examining (and exposing) male micro-aggressions.

Before providing, in a rather blunt fashion, an insight into Kesav and Amritha's personalities, Vithanage effectively explains everything we need to know about them in a quiet scene just ahead of the film's inciting incident. Ecstatic after having secured a lucrative Netflix deal — Kesav is some kind of filmmaker — he cuddles up against Amritha in bed. She responds willingly, but demurely. But you can see from their body language that he's accustomed to being the dominant one. Kesav lords over her, sneaking in a bite here and there; it's aggressive enough for you to raise an eyebrow. But Kesav's idea of self comes crashing down not too long afterwards.

When their belongings are stolen on the first night itself — they'd found a spectacular bungalow at the top of a misty hill — Kesav's first instinct is to blame Amritha. "Did you lock the windows?" he asks, as if it is inconceivable of him to have made the same mistake. On their way to the cops the next day, he declares Sri Lanka to be a 'sh\*thole', and demands to know from her why they chose it as their anniversary destination. "You said it'll be cheap at this time," Amritha replies, immediately exposing his false accusation. And he doesn't even deny it. "We're doing them a favour," he says with a snarl. Even before we met for the first time, the movie suggests, Kesav was already showing signs of arrogance, and Amritha was giving in. And this is when you begin, perhaps like Amritha herself, to re-litigate seemingly innocuous behavioural patterns. Of course it was ungentlemanly of Kesav to ignore her for the entire duration of their drive from the airport to the bungalow. Who does that? He was on the

## Gurmeet Choudhary on allegations that Debina Bonerjee is partial towards one of their daughters more than the other: 'She gets upset'

Actor Gurmeet Choudhary, who has worked in television, films, and in streaming shows, spoke about his experiences as a social media influencer. Gurmeet and his wife, Debina Bonerjee, also post vlogs on their YouTube channel, through which they reached out to a new fanbase. He said in an interview that viewers have reached out to him in person in cities as distant as London and Paris. But along with the praise, Gurmeet and Debina were also criticised for favouring one of their daughters over the other. He addressed these criticisms in an interview with Siddharth Kannan recently, and admitted that Debina feels terrible when people say this. Gurmeet and Debina have two daughters, Lianna and Divisha, both of whom were born in the same year. Asked about the section of their audience that feels they're partial to Divisha, Gurmeet said, "Debina certainly feels bad about it. How can people ever imagine that a mother would be partial to one of her kids?" He continued, "Only fools could even think this way. Debina feels bad about it, but I tell her that these people are jobless, they don't think before posting on social media, and what they say shouldn't affect our lives." Gurmeet said that he has 'trained' himself to ignore negative comments online.



"Why subject yourself to stuff like that at all?" he asked, adding that he's happy to read positive comments all the time. Gurmeet said that his life changed after he became a parent, and that he often feels like his motherly instincts have come to the fore after the birth of his daughters. He said that nothing makes him prouder than feeling supported and loved by his two girls, and they're slowly gaining a fanbase of their own among their audience on social media.

## Get ready for another laughter riot with Zakir Khan's new show

Mumbai: Comedian Zakir Khan is set to take over your screens with a new show Aapka Apna Zakir.

The makers of the show dropped the teaser on Saturday, Taking to Instagram, streaming platform Sony Entertainment treated fans with the video. They wrote, "Aap dekhenge. Hum dekhenge. Sab dekhenge. #AapkaApnaZakir, sirf #SonyEntertainmentTelevision par. Bohot hi jald. @zakirkhan\_208." Zakir's captivating wit and undeniable charisma, the show promises to offer an enthralling experience that combines laughter, shaayari and zindagi ke 'nuskhe' into one compelling package. This distinctive offering promises to stand out with Zakir's infectious humour and insightful anecdotes adding a special touch, providing a refreshing and delightful experience that will resonate with viewers of all ages. In 2012, Zakir Khan rose to popularity by winning the title of India's Best Stand Up at the Comedy Central. He has released four hour-length standup specials so far, including Haq Se Single, Kaksha Gyarvi, Tathastu



## Sharmila Tagore jokes that her 'nikaahnama' banned all cricket-related discussions in her marriage with Tiger Pataudi



Veteran actor Sharmila Tagore and her husband late Tiger Pataudi were the equivalent of Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli of their time. Both were extremely successful in their field but weren't excessively qualified in their partner's area of expertise. In a recent interview, Sharmila spoke about the same and joked that she was banned from all cricket-related discussions in her 'nikaahnama'. She said that she doesn't know much about cricket, but knows that it doesn't take a lot of money to make a good movie. She said that working with the legendary Satyajit Ray taught her that imagination and creativity is more important than a big budget when it comes to making great cinema.

In a conversation with lawyer and politician Kapil Sibal, she said that the industry is constantly changing, and that she is sure that even smaller films will find their audience if they're good enough. Sibal drew a parallel to the world of cricket, specifically the IPL, and Sharmila said with a laugh, "I don't think I'm qualified to talk about cricket. It was a part of my nikaahnama that you will not discuss cricket ever."

Citing the example of the IPL, Sibal made a point about opening up funding and discovering fresh talent,

which eventually empowered young cricketers to replace the old guard. He said that a similar transformation hasn't been observed in the world of cinema, which is still ruled by stars from a generation ago. Sharmila said, "The word creative itself is a very problematic word. Satyajit Ray taught me you don't need an extraordinary budget to make a great film. You need extraordinary imagination, extraordinary talent, and extraordinary comprehension of what cinema is all about. All We Imagine as Light is not an expensive film, but it won at Cannes, and I'm sure people will watch it in droves when it is released here."

Sharmila was married to the legendary cricket Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi, but has admitted in the past that while she enjoyed watching cricket, she wasn't invested in the lives of cricketers. "We met at a cricket party in Kolkata and then we exchanged telephone numbers," she recalled in an episode of Kaun Banega Crorepati, recalling the elaborate prank that Tiger Pataudi played on her to ask her out. It involved getting a call about supposedly illegal air conditioners. "I called that number and Tiger answered, and he was laughing. It was a joke, that kind of joke. That's how it happened. He said, 'Can we go out for coffee?' I said, 'Yeah, we'll go out for coffee.' That was that. We never stopped," she said.

## Nana Patekar opens up about losing terminally ill two-year-old son, feeling like a 'ghinauna' person for thinking only about himself

Veteran actor Nana Patekar opened up about his personal life in a recent interview, and looked back at a tragic event that made him gaze inwards about the kind of person that he is. Reflecting on his anger issues, he recalled losing an elder brother and a young son, and said that he might have inherited his temper from his abusive mother. He said that she would beat him regularly, and that she would never express sadness, even when her eldest son died as a teenager after falling from a building.

In an interview with The Lallantop, Nana Patekar also spoke about losing his own son, who was born with several disabilities and died at the age of two. Asked about dealing with the loss, he said in Hindi, "My elder son was born with a cleft palate, he also had difficulty seeing through one eye. The first thought that ran through my mind when I'd see him like this was, 'What will people think about me, that my son looks like this'. Imagine what a terrible man I am. My first worry was what people would say about me, not him."

Nana Patekar said that his son was named after the 'the angriest rishi' Durvasa. "He died at the age of two-and-a-half, but he taught me so much. He's the triggering point. It happens..." he trailed off, adding that he has never been one to wallow in sadness. "I've always had a chin-up attitude. I don't cry. I cry only in the movies, and I do that for money," he said, also opening up about his



wife. He said that they haven't been living together for years, and she was the one who cared for his elderly mother while he was away living his life. Once again, he trailed off without going into the details. He said that he would smoke constantly when his son died, which repelled people around him. "At that time, I used to smoke about 60 cigarettes a day. I even smoked while bathing. But it's a very bad thing. No one would sit in my car because of the foul smell. I never drank alcohol much but I smoked a lot," the actor said. Nana Patekar said that he often tries to examine his temper issues, but finds himself returning to the same behavioural patterns. He said that his mother was extremely violent with him, and that she died only recently, at the age of 99.

## Prabhas-starrer expected to join exclusive club that includes only five movies so far

Early reports of Kalki 2898 AD box office collections for day three indicate that the sci-fi epic led by Prabhas is playing on the front foot, putting up humongous collections of over Rs 100 globally if the trends hold. Till Saturday evening, Kalki 2898 AD has clocked Rs 47 cr all India-nett according to industry tracker Sacnilk — clearly signaling a hatrick of Rs 100 cr days at the worldwide box office.

According to producers Vyjayanthi Movies, the Nag Ashwin-directed film recorded a smashing global opening of Rs 191.5 crore on Thursday, of which Rs 95 crore came from domestic theatres. This included Hindi collections of over Rs 22 cr on day one. By the end of day two, Kalki 2898 AD had made a whopping Rs 298.5 crore globally.

On its third day, the film has recorded solid response, and should easily



make it past Rs 100 cr globally. The one thing that can dent its business, however, is the crucial T20 World Cup final between India and South Africa. Depending on the match's impact, a fair value of Kalki 2898 AD's collection will be established. So far, the three-day all-India nett total of the film stands at above Rs 200 cr. The film

reported a dip on Friday, but that was expected as it was a working day. The film has no holiday to aid its business, but is looking to cross the Rs 500 cr mark globally by Sunday. "If Kalki 2898 AD tops Rs 500 crores in the opening weekend, it will be the sixth Indian movie after Baabubali 2, RRR, KGF: Chapter 2, Pathaan, and Jawan, to achieve the feat (including

extended weekend)," the Sacnilk report said. The Telugu epic, co-starring Amitabh Bachchan, Deepika Padukone and Kamal Haasan, opened to good reviews. Kalki 2898 AD was the first event film to release for the Hindi audience since April's disastrous Bade Miyan Chote Miyan, starring Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff.

## England's Ivan Toney picks future star in Kobbie Mainoo: Everybody knows his qualities



GNS News Agency, July 5

England striker Ivan Toney believes that his young teammate Kobbie Mainoo has all the qualities to become a future star for both club and country. Toney heaped praise on Mainoo's performance in what is his debut Euro call-up, and has hailed the youngster as a big asset for their Switzerland clash.

England striker Ivan Toney heaped praise on teammate Kobbie Mainoo, hailing him as a future star for the Three Lions as well as in club football for Manchester United in the Premier League. As England gears up for their highly-anticipated UEFA Euro 2024 quarter-final against Switzerland on July 6, Mainoo sets up as one of the names to keep an eye on for the clash. The 19-year-

old midfielder received his maiden Euro call up, on top of some brilliant and match-decisive performances for Manchester United in the Premier League 2023-2024.

England have not been able to showcase their clinical prowess in Euro 2024, and have only managed to draw out narrow results in their favour. Even in their tensed Round of 16 clash against Slovakia on June 30, it was only a last-minute equaliser from Jude Bellingham and an extra-time strike from Harry Kane that booked a quarter-final spot for the Three Lions against a pretty solid Granit Xhaka-led Switzerland. However, the likes of Bellingham, Declan Rice and Kobbie Mainoo will have a big task on their hands, since Switzerland focus their attacking runs majorly from the midfield." Everybody knows his qualities. For club football, he played a massive part of the season. He carries himself so well on the pitch. He doesn't look one bit out of place and has a bright future ahead of him," Toney said in the pre-match press-conference. The Three Lions have received their share of backlash from their own fanbase upon their lacklustre approach in Euro 2024, and the majority of that has been directed towards manager Gareth Southgate. The gaffer has been severely criticised for his defensive approach despite having a fully stacked lineup at his disposal. It will be interesting to see whether England can rise above the criticism and extend their run in Euro 2024 with a crucial win against Switzerland

## Vistara's tribute to Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli: Call sign for Team India flight is 'UK1845'

T20 World Cup 2024: Vistara paid tribute to Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli by dedicating the team India flight's call sign, ie. 'UK1845' to their jersey number. Team India will land in Mumbai around 5:20 pm and will take part in the celebrations. The Vistara airline paid tribute to two of India's stalwarts, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma. The Indian team is en route to Mumbai from Delhi via the Vistara flight and the special part about it is the call sign that has been assigned to it. The call sign for India's flight from Delhi to Mumbai is 'UK1845', which signifies the jersey numbers of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma. The call sign had Kohli's jersey number 18 and Rohit's jersey number 45. The star India players announced their retirement from T20s for India after they lifted the coveted T20 World Cup trophy in Barbados on June 29, Saturday.

The flight took off at 2:55 pm from Delhi and is scheduled to land in Mumbai at 5:20 pm. The Vistara flight will make its landing at Terminal 2 of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Airport, Mumbai. The Indian team has been having a packed day ever since they landed in India, bringing the Cup back home. An Air India chartered plane brought back the stranded Indian team and journalists home from Barbados. After a 16-hour-long flight, the World



Champions touched Indian soil during the early morning of July 4. Interestingly, the call sign of the Air India flight was 'AIC24WC', which signified India's T20 World Cup triumph. The champion team received a rousing reception from the fans as they thronged at the Delhi airport to welcome the heroes. Rohit Sharma raised the T20 World Cup 2024 trophy as the fans went berserk getting a glimpse of the Indian team. The team headed to ITC Maurya hotel in Delhi and had a cake-cutting ceremony. They soon headed to PM Modi's residence at the Lok Kalyan Marg and shared a light-hearted interaction and clicked pictures.

## Prepared for Kylian Mbappe: Portugal's Nuno Mendes confident for France clash

GNS News Agency, July 5

Portugal full-back Nuno Mendes revealed that he is confident of facing France skipper and star-forward Kylian Mbappe when the two sides meet for their Euro 2024 quarter-final on June 6. Mendes also acknowledged the honour of sharing the dressing room with both Cristiano Ronaldo and Mbappe.

Portugal full-back Nuno Mendes revealed that him and his side are fully confident to go all out in their upcoming UEFA Euro 2024 quarter-final against Kylian Mbappe's France on July 6. Mendes explained that he is fully prepared to handle the attacking prowess of Mbappe in the fixture, if the French star-forward starts to focus his pacy attacks from his flank on the left. After Portugal clinched a nail-biting win via penalty shoot-out against Slovenia and France bagged a narrow 1-0 win over Belgium, football fans have now got one of the biggest fixtures in their hands.

Both France and Portugal are considered heavyweights, and two of the favourites for Euro 2024. However, both star-studded sides failed to showcase their usual brilliance in the tournament. To highlight their backlogs better, both Mbappe and Portugal talisman Cristiano Ronaldo have failed to score their opening goal in this tournament. Despite that, the defenders from both sides will know how much of a threat these two forwards carry, and the same will be expected in the highly anticipated quarter-final at the Volksparkstadion in Hamburg.

"I don't think he will be playing on my flank, but if it happens I'm prepared...I train every day for these moments and we are prepared to face them... They have



high-level players, but we also have great players. We need to do everything we can to cancel France's strengths and play our game," Mendes said in the pre-match press conference. Mendes is one of the fortunate ones to have the experience of sharing the dressing room with Kylian Mbappe at his club Paris Saint-Germain, and then Ronaldo in the national squad. Speaking at the pre-match, Mendes did not shy away from acknowledging the honour for the same, and explained how the two would be one of the main threats to each side in the match-up." They are high-level, excellent players who can make a difference at any moment. I shared a dressing room with both of them, and it was a pleasure to play with Mbappe and play with Cristiano. They are incredible, from one moment to the next they make a difference," Mendes added. With Spain facing Germany in the other fixture on July 5, the very first day of the quarter-final games in Euro 2024 will feature 4 of the heavyweights pinned against each other.

## Newcastle announce Dan Mitchell as Ashworth's replacement for Sporting Director

GNS News Agency, July 5

Newcastle United has announced Paul Mitchell as their new Sporting Director, who will take office at the Premier League club for the upcoming season. Mitchell will be replacing Dan Ashworth at Newcastle after the latter completed a move to Manchester United. Premier League heavyweights Newcastle United have announced Paul Mitchell as their new Sporting Director on July 4, and he will be replacing Dan Ashworth who only made a move to rivals Manchester United a few days back. Similar to Ashworth, Mitchell too boasts brilliant experience of holding the role of Director of Scouting at Tottenham Hotspurs and more prominently at Southampton. Mitchell's most recent stint came with Ligue 1 side AS Monaco, which also brought him under the radar of United before ultimately going with Ashworth. Newcastle have made a big leap in both on-field performance and off-field management setup since their ownership takeover by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, under Saudi Prime Minister Prince

Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. Dan Ashworth was a big part of Newcastle United's recent successes in the Premier League, which also saw them seal a UEFA Champions League qualification after 20 years in the 2022/2023 season. This only sets up huge expectations for Mitchell, specifically with the summer transfer window going on and the new season around the corner." His (Paul Mitchell's) extensive and diverse experience in football leadership, cultural change and recruitment mean he is the ideal person to lead our sporting directorate. We look forward to working with Paul and supporting him in our pursuit of long-term, sustainable success," Newcastle CEO Darren Eales said in a statement. "It's with immense pride that I accept the responsibility of being Newcastle United's new sporting director. I've seen the recent growth and ambition of the club. This, plus the amazing fan base, made the decision to join an easy one. I can't wait to get started and help continue the organisation's growth and long-term competitiveness in all areas of elite football performance."

## Germany's Toni Kroos confident ahead of quarter-final clash vs Spain: Won't be my last game



GNS News Agency, July 5

Retiring Germany midfielder Toni Kroos is not feeling nostalgic ahead of their Euro 2024 quarter-final against Spain that would be his last match as a player if they lose. Kroos, who won the Champions League with Real Madrid last month and will hang up his boots after the Euros, came out of international retirement this year to chase the one major trophy missing from a vast haul that also includes the 2014 World Cup. "It is the second most important title you can win and it would have a huge importance for me," the 34-year-old said on Wednesday. "If I did not see having the chance to do it with the team I would not have done it (come back).

"It would be a sensational end but I have also considered the possibility of it not happening. I am not nostalgic at all and did not bring any treats for you (journalists) either," he told a press conference as Germany prepares for their Euro 2024 quarter-final clash against Spain, retiring midfielder Toni Kroos remains focused on

the title, not nostalgia. Kroos, who recently secured the Champions League with Real Madrid, returned from international retirement this year to pursue the elusive Euro title, the only major trophy missing from his illustrious career. "It's the second most important title you can win, and it would mean a lot to me," said the 34-year-old Kroos on Wednesday. "If I didn't believe we had a chance, I wouldn't have come back." Facing the possibility of his final match if Germany loses on Friday, Kroos dismissed any sentimental feelings. "I don't expect tomorrow to be my last game, so I assume we will see each other again," he told reporters. Germany is aiming for their first major title in a decade, following disappointing performances, including early exits in the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. "There were big doubts about this tournament given our recent history," Kroos acknowledged. "But we've achieved a minimal goal by reaching the quarter-finals, and now we're focused on going further."

The team is determined to avoid another early exit, especially on home soil. "We're not just playing for a bonus; we want to win the tournament," Kroos emphasized. "We've reached a stage we aimed for, and we're confident we can progress." Germany faces a tough challenge against Spain, a team they haven't beaten in a tournament since the 1988 Euros. Spain's Joselu, a Real Madrid teammate of Kroos, expressed his desire to send Kroos into retirement with a loss. "Because we will win? Is that a good enough answer," Kroos responded when asked about Joselu's wish. "We have a lot to offer against it, and we have good chances. The Spaniards play good football, and so do we. It will be an interesting game, not boring. I will do everything to ensure his wish is not fulfilled."

## Grammy Award-winning Ed Sheeran performs to rejuvenate England team ahead of their quarter-final clash against Switzerland in Euros 2024



GNS News Agency, July 5

Grammy Award-winning singer cum songwriter Ed Sheeran gave a private performance to England team in their training base in Blankenhain (Germany) ahead of their quarterfinal clash against Switzerland on Saturday. Sheeran's unexpected arrival and performance were aimed at rejuvenating the players for the big game after a draining win against Slovakia on Sunday which went into extra time with England trailing in the game for the majority of it. This is not the first time Sheeran has performed for England to energize them ahead of games. Previously the singer performed ahead of the Euro 2020 final in St. George's Park which unfortunately England lost in the penalties against Italy.

Despite the team management trying everything to keep the spirits up of the team there is the question hanging around if Jude Bellingham would be allowed to participate in the knockout contest. Thanks to the goal from Bellingham deep into added time of the second half the

game against Slovakia stretched to extra time and Harry Kane scored immediately at the beginning of Extra time and gave England the lead which was enough for them to go through to the Quarterfinals. After scoring the 21-year-old kissed his right hand and moved it to his private parts. Though the referee on-field missed the gesture Bellingham might be sanctioned and face disciplinary action by the UEFA governing body. "A UEFA Ethics and Disciplinary Inspectorate will conduct a disciplinary investigation into a possible breach of the basic rules of decent conduct by England player Jude Bellingham, alleged to have occurred in the context of this match," the governing body said. However, Bellingham defended his action. "An inside joke gesture towards some close friends who were at the game. Nothing but respect for how that Slovakia team played tonight," Bellingham posted on X (formerly known as Twitter). However, irrespective of the reason behind his gestures UEFA's rules are clear. "Any obscene gesture or offensive or insulting action must be punished with a red card."

## Why Lakshya Sen brought back two-time Olympic men's doubles medallist Yoo Yong Sung to his coaching team

GNS News Agency, July 5

Sometime after the Indian Open in January, where he suffered his latest in a series of first-round exits, Lakshya Sen sat down for a chat with former All England champion and his mentor Prakash Padukone. Trying to get out of the slump in form dating back to the backend of 2023, Lakshya's chances of going to Paris for the Olympics were hanging by the proverbial thread. Padukone asked then, "Are you just looking for a place in the Olympics, or are you trying to have a realistic chance of winning a medal?" Lakshya responded: "I want to win a medal. So Prakash sir said, 'then first you have to show us that you can win a tournament. You don't have to go everywhere and try to reach the quarterfinals'. Even though I didn't win a tournament in Europe, I managed to pull off two really good weeks with confidence-boosting wins. And once my qualification was confirmed, I realised that it was time to increase my training intensity."

That is when he took the initiative to reach out to a familiar face. Lakshya will make his Olympics debut in Paris, and in the last stretch leading up to the Games, he has brought back Yoo Yong Sung, the Korean coach who worked with him in 2022. Yoo is a two-time men's doubles silver medallist at the Olympics, and it is this aspect that made Lakshya and his team take the call: to add the doubles intensity to his singles training routines. "Singles sequences are important. But for improving pace of play, especially towards the end of games, doubles training helps. The sheer monotony with which the singles routines are done can sometimes get boring.

When the doubles aspect is introduced, they enjoy training more, I feel. The pace increases, racket preparation, reflexes, everything is taken care of," coach Vimal Kumar told The Indian Express at the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy. As Vimal explained why Yoo returned, Lakshya was undergoing multi-feed training with Yoo. In badminton training, there is single shuttle training which is how regular rallying would happen in a match. Whereas in multi-feed training, a coach on the other side of the net has a stack of shuttles that they keep peppering at high speed, not allowing the athlete any breathing space to react. It is not a realistic match simulation but practising at that pace, makes match situations look slower in comparison. And Yoo's speed of multi-feeding is a sight to behold, as he bombards Lakshya with shuttles standing over a desk first mid-court and then from close range. "The intensity with which coach Yoo operates can help me with my flat game and the drives and also, I think with the defense when someone is attacking, and then how to counter it. And also a lot of quick, tight, skill work, like taps on the net. I think doing those double drills makes you even more alert and sharpens the singles game. And mainly, for the multi-feed drills, the intensity is really good, I wanted to add that to my game," Lakshya told The Indian Express at the end of his training session. Taking stock of where his game was after the European leg, Lakshya took the initiative to ask Yoo if he was available for a short stint with him, dropped him a message, and despite a brief delay in arrival, joined up with the team post Indonesia Open.