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5 students from Govt. Deaf School receive high-end hearing devices

Hyderabad: Five students from Government Deaf School, Malakpet received high-end hearing devices that are based on bone conduction technology.

Developed by Ahmedabad-based WeHear Innovations, the devices were distributed with the help of city-based Jain Education Institutions, free of cost to the students Rishik, R. Chandu, Mohammed Jafar, M. Teja, and B. Karthik. These five students were shortlisted for the hearing device after all the students of the School were screened. Unlike regular hearing aids that work through air conduction, these devices function through bone conduction.

Gachibowli flyover closed for construction from August 8-12, here are alternative routes

Hyderabad: The Cyberabad traffic police announced that the Gachibowli flyover will be closed between 11 pm and 6 am for five days beginning Thursday in view of construction works at SRDP Shilpa Layout Phase II flyover at Gachibowli junction. The works are being taken up from August 8 to 12 between 11 pm and 6 a.m.

The police advised the people to use the following alternate routes to reach their destination. Route 1: From Biodiversity Junction to IIIT Junction, bypass the flyover and travel beside it via Bichareddy sweets (Telecom Nagar) to Gachibowli Junction, then to IIIT Junction.

CM Revanth Reddy invites US firms to invest in 'future State' of Telangana

GNS News Agency, August 9

Hyderabad: With game-changing projects such as the AI city, Net Zero Future City, and the massive reimagining of Hyderabad, Telangana will deserve the sobriquet of 'The Future State,' said Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. He was addressing the CEOs of tech unicorns at an AI business roundtable hosted by the Indian Consulate General at Palo Alto in California. According to a statement from the Chief Minister's Office, he mentioned how every State in the US has a motto. "In America, every State has a motto. So far, I have been to New York, New Jersey, Washington DC, Texas, and now we are here in California. New York State motto - Out Of Many, One. Texas is known as Lone Star State. California has the motto: Eureka. In India, we don't have a motto for a State. But I will now like to give my State - Telangana - a motto. My State Telangana can be called - The Future State," the statement quoted him as saying.

"I invite you to Telangana. I invite you to the future. Together, let us make the future," he declared. Industry and IT Minister D Sridhar Babu presented the key highlights of the policies of Telangana and the inherent strengths that make it attractive for global and tech investors. Most of the leading CEO and founders of Artificial Intelligence unicorns expressed the desire to visit Hyderabad and explore options to invest and build capacities there in the near future. Earlier, at Dallas, IT Serve Alliance meet, CM Revanth Reddy and IT Minister Sridhar Babu pitched Hyderabad strongly for Indian diaspora investments.

IT Serve Alliance is the largest association of IT Services organisations based in the US. Both the CM and the Minister made a strong pitch to the members to actively consider investments in Hyderabad and Telangana.



and partner in any of the plethora of projects and engagements being created for the diaspora. "We have built Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Cyberabad over the years. Now, let us all join to making a world-class fourth city, the Future City. When you invest in Hyderabad now, you are clearly investing into the future," Revanth Reddy. Minister Sridhar Babu explained how the Future City, extension of Metro, and River Musi rejuvenation project were all parts of a larger strategy to reimagine Hyderabad in the coming decade. "It will be a hub for future tech like AI, and with Net Zero impact design, it will be an urban construct of truly global standards and processes." He also explained at length how the focus is on balance, which has prompted a huge push for service sector growth in Tier-II towns on one hand, and a platform being created for augmenting the economy through fill-up to manufacturing. "Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has declared a vision to transform Telangana into a US \$1 trillion within a decade. Let us all work to achieve it," Sridhar Babu added.

Dhankhar's 'enough is enough' warning, Naddas condemnation, 2 adjournments: Furore in Rajya Sabha -



New Delhi, GNS News Agency, August 9

A BJP member's alleged objectionable remarks about leader of opposition Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday plunged the House of Elders into chaos with the opposition walking out, the chairman issuing an "enough is enough, this virus will destroy democracy" warning and the government proposing a resolution by the house to condemn the "undignified and indecorous conduct of the opposition". It all started with Kharge rising in zero hour to flag unsavoury remarks made against him by BJP's Ghanshyam Tiwari and Congress demanding an apology -- something Dhankhar turned down saying Tiwari had actually praised Kharge in Sanskrit.

"Apologise for what," asked the chairman when Congress leaders sought an apology from Tiwari. At this point, SP's Jaya Bachchan got up and said she understands gestures and body language. "You may be sitting there but we are all colleagues," she said to Dhankhar who took strong exception to her remarks and castigated the opposition for "repeated attempts to destabilise the country and Parliament". At this point, the opposition walked out with Dhankhar slamming the move and later saying "enough is enough, they want to put democracy in peril." Dhankhar also opened the floor for other leaders to speak and said he needed counsel of the house to deal

with repeated obstructions and disruptions. Leader of the house J.P. Nadda later proposed a resolution condemning the opposition after leaders of the ruling NDA questioned the conduct of the Congress with former prime minister HD Deve Gowda accusing "two Congress members of provoking others when Mallikarjun Kharge appeared to have reconciled to the issue of Tiwari following Dhankhar's move to strike a truce between the two earlier today". Deve Gowda of the JD (S) slammed the opposition for "ignoring the appeals of the chair" and with folded hands urged Dhankhar to continue the house proceedings and let the opposition walk out if they must. "Nothing can prevent the Modi government from completing five years," Gowda said. NDA leaders -- Sanjay Jha of the JDU and Jayant Chaudhry of RLP condemned Jaya Bachchan for "making light of the institution of the presiding officer". Jha went to the extent of accusing Congress parliamentary party leader Sonia Gandhi of instigating the opposition to create ruckus. "Please don't be soft, use a baton," Jha urged Dhankhar, who earlier cited the imposition of Emergency by late Congress veteran Indira Gandhi to draw parallels to today's opposition and the Congress of emergency era times. The resolution Nadda proposed read: "This house unanimously condemns the events of the day." Dhankhar earlier in veiled references to Congress leader Salman Khurshid asked how an ex foreign minister could say things like "what has happened in a neighbouring country (Bangladesh) could happen in India." It has become a pattern. Some leaders on their side make objectionable comments. They suspend the leader and then take him back," added Dhankhar in reference to Sam Pitroda who had spoken of wealth redistribution on Lok Sabha poll eve stepping down as overseas Congress chief after uproar only to be brought back post polls. The Rajya Sabha chairman said attacks on the chair are a reflection that the opposition could not digest the BJP government for a third term. The events of the day led to adjournment of the Rajya Sabha at 1 pm until 2 pm and then again from 2 pm to 2.30 pm.

Centre sets up BIS department to ensure quality in Ayush sector

GNS News Agency, August 9

New Delhi: The Centre on Friday informed that the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has set up a new department to bring standardisation to the growing Ayush sector. The new department focuses on promoting safety, efficacy and quality of Ayush products and practices, encompassing traditional Indian systems of medicine such as ayurveda, yoga, naturopathy, unani, siddha, sowa-rigpa and homoeopathy, said the Ministry of Consumer Affairs. According to Pramod Kumar Tiwari, Director General, BIS, the Ayush department at BIS has formed seven sectional committees, each addressing a specific Ayush system. "These committees work collaboratively with various stakeholders, including experts, scientific and technical institutions, industry representatives, and regulatory bodies, to ensure comprehensive, evidence-based standards aligned with national and international guidelines," Tiwari noted. BIS has published 91 standards covering diverse subjects like single herbs, ayurveda and yoga terminology, Panchakarma equipment, yoga accessories, and test methods for pesticide residues in herbs. The bureau said that the publication of 80 indig-

enous Indian standards for herbs used in traditional medicine promotes their safe and effective use, benefiting both consumers and the industry. Additionally, the first-ever national standards for Panchakarma equipment ensure uniformity in prophylactic and therapeutic procedures, enhancing the quality of Ayush healthcare practices. BIS has also formulated an indigenous Indian standard for the "Cotton Yoga Mat," supporting domestic manufacturers and farmers.

The department also identified future standardisation areas, including terminology, single herbs, yoga attire, Siddha diagnostics, and homoeopathic preparations. As more people turn to traditional healthcare systems, the need for consistent quality, safety, and efficacy in Ayush products and services is imperative. "BIS has reflected its commitment in this area by establishing this dedicated department and developing critical standards, such as 'Cotton Yoga Mat'. These are critical milestones in promoting and developing traditional Indian medicine," said Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ayush, adding that BIS is committed to enhancing the acceptance and growth of Ayush systems nationally and internationally.

Inspired by Quit India, PM Modi wants country to get rid of dynasty politics

GNS News Agency, August 9

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said inspired by the Quit India movement, the country wants to get rid of all evils - corruption, dynasty politics and appeasement. While paying homage to participants of the Quit India movement, Prime Minister shared a video on social media platform X in which he spoke about the movement and how it gained steam. "Homage to all those who took part in the Quit India Movement under Babu's leadership. It was truly a watershed moment in our freedom struggle," his post read.

The Prime Minister said in Hindi, "Our new generation should know what happened on August 9, 1942. Mahatma Gandhi had given the mantra, and Quit India movement provided a fresh impetus to the country's fight for freedom." "This movement united the country to get rid of the British rule. It was the time, when all strata of society (poor, rich, urban and rural people) participated in the Bharat Chodo Andolan," he said. "Lakhs of youths left education, books. If we go into the pages of history, then we will know that the country's first freedom struggle started in 1857. From 1857 to 1942, this movement reached its crescendo, and in five years, in 1947, Britishers were forced to leave the country," he added. The Prime Minister said, "Inspired by the movement, the country wants to get rid of all the evils. Only one thing is reverberating in the country Corruption Quit India, Dynasty Quit



India, Appeasement quit India. "Quit India Movement or Bharat Chodo Andolan, launched in Bombay, was a turning point in the country's freedom struggle. In a speech, Mahatma Gandhi said, "Here is a mantra, a short one that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is: 'do or die'. We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery."

SC grants bail to Manish Sisodia, to walk out of jail after 17 months



GNS News Agency, August 9

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday granted bail to AAP leader Manish Sisodia in the corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged Delhi ex-

cise policy scam, noting that he has been in custody for 17 months. A Bench of justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan said Sisodia has been in custody for 17 months and trial has not yet commenced, depriving him of the right to speedy trial. The Bench said it would be a travesty of justice to relegate him to the trial court for seeking bail in these cases. The top court said it is high time that the trial courts and High Courts recognise that the principle of bail is a rule and jail is an exception.

It directed that Sisodia be released on bail on a personal bond of Rs 10 lakh with two sureties of the like amount. The former deputy Chief Minister of Delhi was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on February 26, 2023 for the purported irregularities in the formulation and implementation of the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy 2021-22. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested him in the money laundering case stemming from the CBI FIR on March 9, 2023. He resigned from the Delhi cabinet on February 28, 2023. Sisodia had sought bail contending that he has been in custody for 17 months and the trial against him has not yet started. The ED and the CBI had opposed his bail pleas.

BRS blames Telangana CM for collapse of Sunkishala project's retaining wall

GNS News Agency, August 9

Hyderabad: Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K. T. Rama Rao on Friday blamed Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy for collapse of retaining wall of the under-construction intake well and pump house complex at Sunkishala project at Nagarjuna Sagar. Rama Rao said that as the Chief Minister holds the portfolio of municipal administration, he should own the responsibility for this incident. He told media persons that Revanth Reddy's "incompetence" resulted in the collapse of the retaining wall.

The former minister for municipal administration wanted to know if there was no lapse on part of the government, why it kept the incident a secret for a week. The Sunkishala intake well project was stated by the earlier BRS government to be a significant component of the Krishna Drinking Water Supply Project (KDWSP) to supply water to Greater Hyderabad until 2050. KTR, as the BRS leader is popularly known, said the incident occurred on August 2 when the Assembly was in session. The government should have made a statement in the Assembly. "Had the government no knowledge of the incident or was it deliberately ignored? If the government was not aware of it, then it is shameful," he said.

He claimed officials as saying that the haphazard manner in which the work was undertaken led to the incident. Fortunately, the incident occurred when there was a change in the shift of workers. Otherwise, this could have resulted in major loss of lives, he said. The BRS leader demanded a judicial probe into the collapse of the retaining wall. He said Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka should announce this from the site where this incident happened. Stating that there was no engineering defect in Sunkishala project, he said the defect was in the government's approach. KTR said when this incident happened Chief Minister was in Hyderabad and he left for the United States without holding a review meeting on it. "If you are sincere, blacklist the contracting agency and take action against those responsible," he said. KTR mentioned that the previous BRS government launched the project to meet the drinking water needs of Hyderabad for the next 50 years. The project was designed to lift water from Nagarjuna Sagar at the dead storage level (462 feet).

He claimed that Sunkishala works were completed



expeditiously and only motor fitting works were remaining. "We had fixed the target of completing the project by 2024 summer but this government kept the works pending," he said.

Modi hails India's silver medalist, says "Neeraj Chopra is excellence personified"

GNS News Agency, August 9

New Delhi: Neeraj Chopra's silver medal in the Paris Games was hailed as a feat which will inspire the future generations in pursuit of excellence as President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the country in lauding the superstar javelin thrower's achievements. Tokyo Games champion Chopra on Thursday became the first Indian track-and-field athlete to win two successive Olympic medals with a silver in men's javelin throw in the ongoing edition in Paris. "Neeraj Chopra is excellence personified! Time and again he's shown his brilliance. India is elated that he comes back with yet another Olympic success. Congratulations to him on winning the Silver," PM Modi wrote on X. "He will continue to motivate countless upcoming athletes to pursue their dreams and make our nation proud." President Murmu said the country would look forward to more medals from Chopra.

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English Daily

Property tax relief

THE government's decision to restore the indexation benefit for long-term capital gains (LTCG) on property sales marks a pragmatic reversal in response to public backlash.

The Union Budget's proposal to eliminate the indexation benefit while reducing the LTCG tax rate to 2.5 per cent aimed to simplify the tax regime. However, it failed to account for the nuanced financial impacts on property owners, especially those with long-held assets. Indexation adjusts the purchase price of an asset to account for inflation, ensuring taxpayers are not disproportionately taxed on nominal gains. Without it, taxpayers could face substantial tax burdens, misrepresenting the real value of their gains.

The government's revised stance offers a choice: pay 20 per cent LTCG tax with the indexation benefit or 2.5 per cent without it, applicable to properties acquired before July 23, 2024. This flexibility not only addresses immediate financial concerns but also reflects a more thoughtful approach to tax policy, acknowledging the diverse economic realities faced by people. However, properties purchased after this cut-off date will only be eligible for the 12.5 per cent rate without indexation. There are fears that the new regime might increase secondary market sales as investors may not retain their properties for too long.

Ultimately, this rollback underscores the importance of nuanced policy-making that considers both economic principles and public sentiment. The restored indexation benefit is a welcome relief for many, reaffirming the government's ability to adapt and refine its fiscal policies in the face of legitimate public concerns.

In a first in Pimpri-Chinchwad, mother, 2 sons slapped with stringent MCOCA in murder case

GNS News Agency, August 9

In a first in Pimpri-Chinchwad, a 42-year-old woman and her two sons were recently slapped with the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA). The woman, Lata Rokde, who was sent to judicial custody by a local court on Tuesday had allegedly helped her two sons, both history-sheeters, flee to Uttar Pradesh after committing a murder in June last year.

The Rokdes became the third family in six years to face the stringent Act in the jurisdiction of the Pimpri-Chinchwad police and the first one which involves a mother and two of her sons, officials said.

"We arrested her on August 1. She was sent to police custody by a court. Her police custody ended today. The court has now remanded her to judicial custody," Assistant Commissioner of Police Devidas Ghevare told. Ghevare said in 2023, the Rokde brothers - Karan and Mungya - allegedly murdered a man, Sonya Tapkir, in Chikhli area after which their mother helped them flee to Mathura in Uttar Pradesh in an Innova that was registered in her name. "The second-hand Innova was bought by the woman after the crime," he said, adding that the men later abandoned the car in Mathura and fled.

ACP Ghevare said the woman then went to Mathura and took the vehicle to her 'rakhi' brother's house in Akola, Maharashtra. The police had arrested the two brothers, who collectively have 20 criminal cases against them, in July 2023 from Mathura. "The woman, though had no criminal case against her, had been long supporting her sons in their unlawful activities. All the three are part of a gang. Therefore the application of MCOCA was appropriate," he said. Lata had eluded the police for more than a year and had also sought anticipatory bail from Bombay High Court which rejected it, he said. According to Pimpri-Chinchwad police, Lata Rokde is the eighth woman to be slapped with MCOCA by the Pimpri-Chinchwad Police Commissionerate since its launch in 2018. In all, 941 accused have been slapped with MCOCA, of which 933 are males and eight are females. "Earlier, last year, three brothers were slapped with MCOCA in a murder case in Chinchwad. In 2018, a man, his son and son's wife were slapped with MCOCA for deceiving people by promising them gold after digging mud," the police said.

Delhi police rescued 18 underage children from jute factory, 9 arrested

GNS News Agency, August 9

The Delhi Police in collaboration with the departments of Labour and Revenue rescued children, aged between 11 and 17, from a jute bag factory in North-East Delhi's Bhajanpura. An NGO, Sahyog Care for You, which specialises in rehabilitating abused children also helped in the rescue operations.

Officials reported that the rescue operations took place on Tuesday, after they received a tip-off on Monday about underage children working in a jute bag manufacturing and printing factory in Seelampur's Gamri village. "During the search operation, 18 children between the age group of 11-17 years were found employed in the factory and printing work," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (North-East), Joy Tirkey, adding that all the children working as labourers "were rescued and medically examined". He said that the children belonged to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Uttarakhand.

The police arrested nine people from the factory and booked them under sections 75 and 79 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, and sections 3 and 14 of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act.

The children will be produced before the Child Welfare Committee for further assistance and rehabilitation, the police said.

Karnataka not likely to take up Centre's offer of rice at Rs 28 per kg to implement Anna Bhagya welfare scheme



GNS News Agency, August 9

The Congress government in Karnataka is unlikely to accept a new offer from the Centre to supply rice at a cost of Rs 28 per kg for the implementation of the Anna Bhagya welfare scheme, according to Food and Civil Supplies Minister K H Muniyappa. Muniyappa indicated on Tuesday that the Centre's August 1 decision to allow states with welfare schemes to directly purchase rice from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS-domestic) for Rs 28 per kg carried uncertainty since supplies would be available only until buffer stocks lasted. "How long will they supply the rice? They will provide rice only as long as the buffer stocks last, and after that, they will stop supplying rice," Muniyappa said, referring to the new proposal. The Congress in Karnataka had made an election promise in 2023 to supply 5 kg of free rice to people living below the poverty line but could not implement the promise due to the non-availability of rice supplies from the Centre. The Congress's promise of 5 kg rice was in addition to the 5 kg of rice provided by the Centre under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY).

After coming to power, Congress was compelled to offer Rs 170 per month in cash transfers to each member of a below-poverty-line (BPL) family instead of providing 5 kilograms of free rice. This decision was made due to the shortage of rice supplies from the FCI as a result of restrictions on states from purchasing rice under the OMSS. However, many families still consider the free rice scheme to be more advantageous than cash transfers. "Union minister Pralhad Joshi has come up with a new scheme, he is saying the Centre is willing to provide rice for Rs 28 per kg. The chief minister and deputy chief minister had earlier promised to provide 10 kg of rice in Karnataka. We requested the Centre to provide rice supplies," the Karnataka minister said at a Congress rally Tuesday. "The then Union minister did not provide rice even though there were stocks. This was done for politics. With a loss of Rs 12 to Rs 14 for a kg of rice to the national exchequer, they have now come forward to provide rice to the states," Muniyappa said. "When we asked for rice they did not provide it. Now they are willing to

provide rice at a loss of several crores of rupees. However, they are paying the farmer Rs 40 per kg," he said. In June 2023, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution decided to exclude state governments from the ambit of the OMSS (domestic) "to maintain sufficient stocks for market intervention/control prices of wheat and rice through OMSS(D)". The Centre's order to prevent states from buying rice stocks from the FCI to control inflation came a day after an FCI official communicated in two separate letters on June 12 that the FCI was willing to supply 2.08 lakh metric tonnes and 13,819 metric tonnes of rice to Karnataka. The move by the Centre to prevent Karnataka access to the FCI stocks for its populist scheme of providing five kg of rice to every member of BPL families - in addition to 5 kg being supplied by the Centre - resulted in the Congress government in Karnataka crying foul.

"The central government is trying to scuttle a scheme that provides rice to the poor people. They should not have politicized this. Despite the availability of stock, they (FCI) are refusing to supply," Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said after the order of June 13, 2023. The Karnataka government outlined a requirement of 2.28 lakh metric tonnes of rice per annum for its own 5 kg free rice scheme. This is in addition to the 2.17 lakh metric tonnes of rice provided per year under the National Food Security Act, 2013, or the PMGKAY.

The Karnataka scheme had outlined a total of 1.19 crore BPL card-holding families for the scheme. In contrast, the central scheme authenticated 96.19 lakh regular BPL card holders plus 10.36 lakh state BPL card holders - making up a total of 1.06 crore Aadhaar-authenticated ration cards. The Karnataka government identified 4.42 crore individual beneficiaries for the scheme, nearly 39 lakh more than the central beneficiaries. The state scheme was expected to cost the Karnataka government Rs 890 crore per month or Rs 10,092 crore per year if the rice is sourced from FCI at the rate of Rs 34 per kg, as initially agreed by the FCI with an additional Rs 2.60 per kg for transportation costs. Many senior officials in the Karnataka government regarded the failure to secure rice supplies for the Anna Bhagya scheme as a benefit for the state since it facilitated direct fund transfers to beneficiaries and prevented corruption, such as the black marketing of rice procured for the scheme and inflation of transportation and storage costs. The Anna Bhagya scheme was among the five guarantees made by Congress ahead of the 2023 Karnataka polls. The Karnataka government also launched four other schemes. The Shakti scheme offers free bus travel for women, the Gruha Lakshmi scheme provides Rs 2,000 per month for women who are heads of families, the Gruha Jyothi scheme offers free power of up to 200 units, and the Yuva Nidhi scheme pays allowances of Rs 3,000 to graduates who have been unemployed for two years.

Speech-hearing impaired man held: Cops recover video of 'hammer attack' recorded by accused



GNS News Agency, August 9

A day after the Mumbai police arrested two men with hearing and speech impairments for allegedly killing their friend, the investigators Tuesday recovered a video recorded by one of the accused, Jay Chawda, which captures the moment Shivjeet Singh, the other accused, allegedly attacked Arshad Ali Sadiq Ali Shaikh with a hammer. Police suspect that Chawda might have recorded the video to prove his innocence. According to police, Singh initially attacked Shaikh with a hammer at Chawda's residence in Pydhonie and then used a sharp object to kill him. The duo packed Shaikh's remains in a suitcase and attempted to dispose of it, but Chawda was apprehended by the Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel at Dadar railway station. An investigator said, "Chawda claims that he left the house to buy liquor. When he returned, Singh and Shaikh were arguing over something that quickly escalated into violence, resulting in Shaikh's death." Chawda recorded the entire crime on video and even video-called someone during the incident. We are currently working to identify the person he contacted and

are scrutinising his mobile phone for more details," the investigator added.

Chawda further told the police that Singh allegedly threatened to kill him if he refused to help dispose of Shaikh's body. Out of fear, he assisted in packing the remains into a suitcase. "Chawda claims he was the one who attempted to dispose of the remains because Singh fled the scene," said the investigator. "We are trying to gather more information from the two accused and verify their statements with evidence." Chawda reportedly took a taxi to CST station and then boarded a train to Khopoli. However, he changed his mind midway and alighted at Dadar railway station. He then proceeded to platform number 11 to board the Tutari Express but was intercepted by an RPF constable who intervened to assist him. The police are still working on clues to determine the motive behind the murder. "We have identified three potential motives: one, Shaikh had borrowed Rs 2 lakh from the accused and failed to repay the amount. Another possibility is that Shaikh's wife was allegedly having an extramarital affair with Singh, which led to a heated argument. Lastly, we suspect Shaikh had obtained an intimate video of Chawda with a woman and was using it to blackmail him," an officer revealed.

Investigators admit that they have not yet concluded the motive, and the investigation is progressing slowly due to the communication challenges posed by the accused's disabilities. "There is a significant communication gap between us and the accused. We have enlisted the help of a teacher specialising in education for individuals with hearing and speech impairments. We are proceeding step by step, but it is taking time to piece together the entire sequence of events," the officer stated.

Karnataka High Court reinstates 'outsourced employee' of State Govt removed after maternity leave

GNS News Agency, August 9

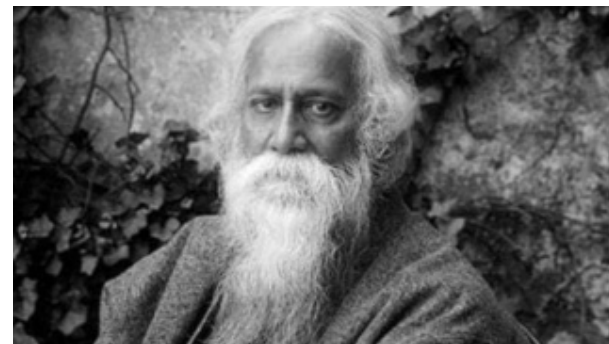
maternity leave, karnataka high court, indian express The bench directed that the employee be allowed to resume her post until regular appointments were made for it, and said she would also be eligible for back wages and the benefits under the Maternity Benefit Act. The Karnataka High Court has directed that an "outsourced employee" whose work was discontinued after she availed of maternity leave be reinstated to her post with the attendant benefits. The order was passed on July 26 by the Dharwad Bench of Justice M G S Kamal. The bench also strongly criticised the state's actions, stating, "The State and its instrumentalities, who are expected to act as 'model employers', are finding one after the other reason not only to brazenly flout the constitutional mandate, which they are obligated to uphold and implement in the process of public employment".

In this case, the petitioner was working as an accountant at the office of an assistant director of agriculture via an agreement with a manpower agency. After she returned from her maternity leave, availed from May 2023 to August 2023, she was informed that another person was working in her place. Her salary was also stopped. She then approached the court after allegedly no action beyond assurances was taken. The Karnataka Government argued there was no "privity of contract" involving them since the agreement was with the manpower agency, and grievance if any should be taken up with them. It also argued that while the employee's maternity



leave went on till the end of August, the State's contract with the agency expired in June. The bench observed that based on existing laws and previous cases, "...it is clear that when the doctrine of 'lifting of the veil' is applied to the facts of the instant case, the petitioner has indeed made out a case for outright rejection of the contentions of the respondent - State of there being no relationship of employer and employee." "It is necessary to note that the requirement of the services of the employee like petitioner is continuous with the compelling need to the respondent authorities. The services of the petitioner therefore cannot be termed either as temporary or ad hoc in nature. In fact, from the records it is clear that the respondent authorities were depending on the services of the petitioner and her absence had caused them extreme inconvenience," added the bench.

Shimla's Woodfield where Rabindranath Tagore created some of his finest works crying for attention



GNS News Agency, August 9

As the nation remembers Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore on his 83rd death anniversary today (Wednesday), Woodfield, a pre-Independence era cottage located on Boileauganj Road, which stands testimony to the Bard of Bengal's Shimla connections is crying for authorities' attention with regard to its upkeep. The world renowned poet, composer, playwright, and painter had spent at least eight months of his life in the queen of hills, Shimla. Woodfield, hardly 150 metres from the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS) where a Tagore Centre for the Study of Culture and Civilization exists, is where Tagore penned eight of his poems, which later became part of his celebrated literary work 'Sonar Tari', during his stay in Shimla between 1893 and 1894. Tagore corresponded in his unique style of puzzle paintings with his two contemporary artists - Abanindranath Tagore and Surendranath Tagore - from this place. These paintings are regarded among the finest artistic works of the social reformer. A huge plaque describing Tagore's literary work done between October 1893 and May 1894 at Woodfield, which was rented by his elder brother Satyendranath Tagore (famous as the first Indian to join the ICS) in October 1893, on Boileauganj Road adjoining a narrow path leading downwards to the cottage is perhaps the only object that currently reminds people about the importance of this place. The plaque, divided into two parts written in Hindi and English, was unveiled by former Himachal Pradesh chief secretary M S Mukherjee in April 1993. A visit to the single-story sprawling Woodfield standing amidst the deodars and pines suggests that the cottage, originally owned by a Britisher and later purchased by a local businessman Satpal Sood after Independence, currently houses many tenants. One of them, Nirmala Sharma, a retired government employee, says, "Whoever resides here is a tenant. I have been living here for more than five decades. We know that it is the house where Rabindranath Tagore stayed briefly. There have not been many changes to this house. The original structure is intact. Sometimes we repair the inner portion according to our requirements." When The Indian Express took a close look, it found it lying in a state of neglect. There were unkempt grass and bushes all around the front of the cottage. A 'takhatposh' (wooden bed) was seen in the veranda, a wooden door lying on the floor and a small paint box kept there too drew one's attention. At least two doors out of three inside the cottage facing the veranda were locked, while the third one was bolted from inside. Two pairs of wet shirts were seen hanging on a rope. "Woodfield is a place that should be preserved in view of the legacy of Rabindranath Tagore, where he stayed in the late 1890s and created some of his finest works. I tried to access it for my study on Tagore but did not get a response from the people staying there. My efforts are going on. Besides Woodfield in Shimla, there is another place, Snowdown House, at Bakrota Hills, Dalhousie, in Chamba district, where Tagore stayed in 1873. At that time, Tagore was only 12. I have decided to do research on that place also," Prof (Dr) Om Prakash Sharma, Tagore Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla, sHe said, "I learned that there were futile efforts to preserve this place when former chief secretary M S Mukherjee took the initiative to install a plaque near the cottage." Pankaj Lalit, Director of Language, Art, and Culture, who also looks after the Himachal Pradesh State Museum, said, "It is always difficult to undertake projects involving private places of historical importance without the consent of the legitimate owners of the property. Despite these challenges, a plaque was installed, keeping in mind the importance of this place. There are cases in the state where our department has undertaken certain private properties with historical importance, compensating the owners who are willing to sell." "We have come across many plans by the government to preserve Woodfield, where Tagore stayed, but nothing has materialised. The original structure of this place is intact. I am not sure whether any objects such as beds, chairs, tables and others that were present in the cottage when the Tagores stayed there are still in the cottage or not, but the structure of the cottage is intact," said Sanjay Lul, son-in-law of the owner Satpal Sood, who passed away years ago. Curator Hari Chauhan at the Himachal State Museum said, "Many years ago, a delegation from Calcutta came here and expressed their desire to visit Woodfield. Our staff members took them to the place. The delegation did not report their experience to us. We have not seen many tourists coming here who are aware of Tagore's brief stay in Shimla." The collection of poems 'Gitanjali' won Tagore the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. He was also the author and composer of the national anthems of India ('Jana Gana Mana') and Bangladesh.

Father kills man to avenge son's murder in Bengaluru; held along with 3 others

GNS News Agency, August 9

According to the police, Narasimhan, 48, Arun and Ajay, both 28, and Prakash, 30, all residents of Seshadripura, killed Ajith Kumar, who had been convicted of murdering Narasimhan's son, on August 1 and escaped. The police said they have also detained two women in connection with the murder case. Bengaluru According to the police, Narasimhan, 48, Arun and Ajay, both 28, and Prakash, 30, all residents of Seshadripura, killed Ajith Kumar, who had been convicted of murdering Narasimhan's son, on August 1 and escaped. The police said they have also detained two women in connection with the murder case. The Bengaluru police on Tuesday arrested four people for allegedly killing a 25-year-old man accused of murdering the son of one of those who were held.

BRS leader Rama Rao booked for flying drone without permission at Kaleshwaram project



GNS News Agency, August 9

A case has been registered against BRS working president K T Rama Rao for allegedly flying a drone "without permission" during his recent visit to Medigadda barrage in Jayashankar Bhupalapally district. A case has been registered against BRS working president K T Rama Rao for allegedly flying a drone "without permission" during his recent visit to Medigadda barrage in Jayashankar Bhupalapally district.

A case has been registered against BRS working

president K T Rama Rao for allegedly flying a drone "without permission" during his recent visit to Medigadda barrage in Jayashankar Bhupalapally district. A team of BRS leaders led by Rama Rao on July 26 visited the barrage, a part of the Kaleshwaram irrigation project to "expose the Congress government" and explain the facts to people. The ruling Congress and BRS have been engaged in a war of words over the damage to some piers of the Medigadda barrage, part of the project.

The National Dam Safety Authority had found in November last year that the Medigadda barrage had been severely compromised, rendering it useless unless fully rehabilitated. The damage to the Medigadda barrage during the previous BRS regime was a major issue in last year's Legislative Assembly polls. After inspecting the River Godavari flood intensity, former minister Rama Rao posted some drone visuals on social media platform X. Based on a complaint by Vali Shaik, a case was registered against Rama Rao and two former BRS legislators under sections 223 B r/w 3 (5) of BNS (disobedience) on July 29. Alleging harassment by the government, BRS sources said Chief Minister Revanth Reddy himself had earlier termed flying drones a trivial issue and hence the case will have no seriousness.

'We are scared... Don't know what will happen when we return home': at Petrapole land port on Bangladesh border

GNS News Agency, August 9

After getting her documents checked at the immigration counter of the Petrapole border check-post in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, 60-year-old Radharani hurriedly walked towards Bangladesh. "I am hearing that houses, shops and even temples are being ransacked. I don't know what will happen to me. But I have to return to my family as soon as possible," a worried Radharani said.

"I have heard that miscreants have started to ransack, loot, and burn houses in my area. We are very scared. We do not know what will happen when we return. But I have to. My family, my sons, all are there," she added. A resident of Jhenaidah in Bangladesh, almost 90 km from Petrapole, Radharani had come to see her daughter in Barasat in North 24 Parganas before protests broke out in her home country. Radharani was not the only one in the group of people heading back to Bangladesh through Petrapole — the South Asia's largest land port that plays a key role in the trade between India and Bangladesh — gripped by uncertainty and fear. Parimal Chandra Ghosh (65), a resident of Barishal in Bangladesh, said: "I'm hearing that violence has started. I am scared. But where else will I go... Today is the last day of my visa to expire. I have to return home. Don't know whether I will get any transport there. Don't know how I will reach home." Ghosh is a businessman who has relatives in West Bengal.

"We are all tense about what will happen when we return home. I have heard from neighbours that violence is taking place," said Basudeb Bayen, who stays near the residence of Ghosh. "Everything is uncertain. I don't know what to say," echoed Noor Haq (32), who was heading to his home in Satkhira. So far, authorities at the Petrapole land port are allowing Bangladesh citizens to return back to their country, and also allowing both Indian and Bangladesh nationals entering India. Russel Mondol (21), a resident of Jhenaidah, studies engineering at a college in Meghalaya. Entering India through the border check-post, he said: "I saw with my own eyes miscreants looting



shops and setting fire to them. Houses of Awami League leaders are being ransacked and set on fire."

"Somehow, I managed to make it to Petrapole. Now, I will go to Howrah station to catch a train to Meghalaya. The violence and ransacking of statues of our nation's founding fathers are unacceptable," Russel said, referring to the statues of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman being vandalised in his country. Meanwhile, with further deterioration of the situation in Bangladesh, authorities have started calling back drivers of 724 goods-laden trucks. Till date, 105 Indian drivers are still in the Bangladesh side of the land port. At least 724 trucks loaded with goods are still stranded at Benapole, the Bangladesh side of the border. Trade has completely stopped at the land port since 3 pm on Monday as news poured in of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fleeing the country. The land port, which on a normal day sees an average 450 to 500 trucks going to Bangladesh and 150 to 200 trucks coming in, wore a deserted look on Tuesday. "Local drivers have started to return since yesterday (Monday) evening. But today we have been given orders to bring back 105 Indian drivers... We fear the situation in Bangladesh will further deteriorate," said Kartik Chakraborty, Secretary, Petrapole Clearing Agents Staff Welfare Association. "The movement of vehicles, good trucks continued to be suspended. We don't see trade opening up anytime soon," Chakraborty added.

Fall of Sheikh Hasina regime: BSF DG assesses 'operational readiness' on Bangladesh border, villagers told not to move at night



GNS News Agency, August 9. Border Security Force (BSF) Director General Daljit Singh Chawdhary on Tuesday reviewed security along the Indo-Bangladesh border in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district on the second day of his visit to the state in the wake of a political crisis in the neighbouring country. Accompanied by Additional Director General Ravi Gandhi and Inspector General Maninder PS Pawar, Chawdhary assessed the force's tactical and operational readiness at critical locations, it is learnt.

He visited the Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Petrapole and the sensitive Ranaghat border outpost. At Petrapole, Chawdhary inspected the passenger and cargo terminals, "gaining firsthand insights on the operational challenges faced by troops". He was briefed on the battalion's procedures by its commanding officer and the newly constructed ICP building. Later, the DG held a meeting with BSF officers at the Ranaghat border outpost to discuss the prevailing situation in Bangladesh and strategise counter-measures against infiltration and smuggling.

Festive offer Accompanied by Additional Director General Ravi Gandhi and Inspector General Maninder PS Pawar, Chawdhary assessed the force's tactical and operational readiness at critical locations, it is learnt. (Express Photo by Partha Paul) Accompanied by Additional Director General Ravi Gandhi and Inspector General Maninder PS Pawar, Chawdhary assessed the force's tactical and operational readiness at critical locations, it is learnt. Emphasising heightened vigilance, he directed the troops to implement effective measures to address these challenges. Addressing the BSF personnel at a Sainik Sammelan, Chawdhary underscored the impor-

tance of maintaining a high level of preparedness given the complex situation in Bangladesh. He urged the officers and jawans to remain alert and prepared to respond to any threats. The officers of the BSF's 8th Battalion and 107th Battalion of South Bengal Frontier held a coordination meeting with the officials of West Bengal government and people of border villages. A meeting was also held at the Bornberia border outpost. The 107th Battalion held border coordination meetings with villagers at the border outposts of Uttarpara and Mustafapur. The villagers were advised not to move freely in the border areas and on the International Border Road (IBBR) during night. It was also decided that all shops in the markets should be closed by 9 pm and announcements will be made from mosques that villagers should stay away from the border areas. The farmers were instructed to use the gates only for essential work and were assured of immediate assistance from the BSF. The key issues discussed in the meeting included the management of tall crops and problem of jute dumping by civilians near the border, civilian movement on border roads after curfew and land acquisition for fencing in unfenced areas.

GNS News Agency, August 9

Amid row over alleged sub-standard food and panjiri being supplied to beneficiaries by Aanganwadi centres in the state, the Punjab State Co-op Supply & Marketing Federation Ltd (Markfed) has decided to change the packaging of food material being supplied to the beneficiaries under the Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) programme, "forgoing one per cent of its profit". Denying the allegations of foreign materials being found in food packets as "concocted", Markfed said it would pack food-stuff in air-tight bags and supply these bags in cardboard cartons.

A government source said Markfed has decided to provide better packaging of food material, including sweet and salty dalia and millet khichdi, after complaints of foreign particles in these food products received. "We

Bypolls nearing, UP BJP tries to set house in order: Dy CMs, state chief brainstorm strategy with CM



GNS News Agency, August 9

AS THE stakes are high for the ruling BJP in the forthcoming bypolls on 10 Assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh, the party has apparently made yet another attempt to resolve alleged "internal issues" and showcase the "coordination" between the state government and organisation. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who held a meeting with ministers around a fortnight ago to discuss preparations for the polls during which senior organisational leaders as well as the two deputy Chief Ministers were not present, convened another meeting on Monday.

This time, both Deputy CMs — Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak — were in attendance, as well as the BJP's state president Bhupendra Chaudhary. The meeting comes days after the party and state government sought to clear the air over the Nazul Properties Bill, which was passed by the Legislative Assembly but put on hold in the Legislative Council and then sent to a select panel. The government claimed that the decision was "unanimously" taken after the CM spoke to the two Deputy CMs and Bhupendra Chaudhary, who is a member of the Legislative Council, too. After the Bill was cleared by the Assembly, where CM Adityanath is the leader of the house, it was put on hold by the Legislative Council, where too the BJP has majority and Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya is the leader of the house. This move had again led to talks of "differences" within the party and the government. However, sources said that in the meeting chaired by the CM on Monday to discuss the preparations for the bypolls, several other organisational leaders in the BJP as well as a number of state ministers were present.

"The notification for bypoll is yet to be announced but before that, the organisation needs to be strengthened till the booth level. Considering the recent Lok Sabha poll results, work needs to be done at the booth level. Thus, discussion took place regarding this in the

presence of the CM, both the Deputy CMs as well as leaders at the organisational level," said UP BJP chief Bhupendra Chaudhary, who also attended the meeting. Asked if any specific responsibilities were assigned to him or the deputy CMs, Chaudhary said, "All of us would monitor and camp in the regions (going to polls). Before the work begins on the ground, first the organisation structure, booth structure needs to be set right." Amid speculation that CM Adityanath would personally take over responsibility of Ayodhya and Ambedkarnagar, he began a two-day visit to Ayodhya on Tuesday. He visited the Ram Temple, offered prayers at Hanuman Gari temple and also held meetings with the party's organisational leaders.

The 10 seats that will vote in the bypolls are Milkpur in Ayodhya, Karhal in Mainpuri (vacated by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, who has become Member of Parliament), Khair in Aligarh, Katehri in Ambedkarnagar, Kundarki in Moradabad, Phulpur in Prayagrah, Ghaziabad in Ghaziabad, Majhwan in Mirzapur, Meerapur in Muzaffarnagar and Sisamau in Kanpur. Of these, the maximum — five — were won by the SP, including Milkpur in Ayodhya, where MLA Awadhesh Prasad has now become MP from Faizabad, while three were won by the BJP, one each were won by the Rashtriya Lok Dal and Nishad Party — both of which are NDA alliance partners at present. The BJP, which lost Milkpur in the 2022 Assembly polls, is focusing on winning it back in a bid to make up for the 2024 Lok Sabha loss in Faizabad. Meanwhile, the SP too has started contemplating the candidates on these seats, especially Faizabad, where sources say that Awadhesh Prasad's son Ajit Prasad is " frontrunner." Although the Congress and the SP are yet to finalise a seat-sharing arrangement for the coming bypolls, it is clear that the seats won by SP in 2024 will again go to the party, including Milkpur, and the Congress will support the SP candidate. Later in the day, in Ayodhya, Adityanath reviewed the preparations for the Milkpur Assembly bypoll with the party's election in-charges, laying emphasis on booth management. He directed the leaders to establish contact with every family regarding the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign of the party (from August 13-15) and urged them to expose the "double standards of the opposition" before the public. He pointed out that the workers should connect with the common people and take development issues to the people. State Ministers Surya Pratap Shahi, Satish Chandra Sharma, Girish Chandra Yadav and Mayankeshwar Sharan Singh were also present during the review meeting. Taking the organisation along, the BJP's district president Sanjeev Singh, district general secretary Raghavendra Pandey, presidents of the five divisions, in-charges, as well as district presidents of all fronts were part of this meet in Ayodhya.

HC pulls up Godhra civic body for allotting sub-judice graveyard land to build fire station

GNS News Agency, August 9

The matter pertains to City Survey Number 477 of Godhra, which is 'prima facie' a land being used as a graveyard (qabristan) from the early 1990s. The HC had, in its order dated March 20, 2023, directed a survey by the District Inspector of Land Records (DILR) to file a report along with the measurement map of the land. The matter pertains to City Survey Number 477 of Godhra, which is 'prima facie' a land being used as a graveyard (qabristan) from the early 1990s. The HC had, in its order dated March 20, 2023, directed a survey by the District Inspector of Land Records (DILR) to file a report along with the measurement map of the land.

Calling its actions an "overreach" and "disregard" for legal proceedings, the Gujarat High Court Tuesday admonished the Godhra Municipality in Panchmahal for issuing a work order to construct a fire station on a contentious graveyard regarding which a writ petition is sub-judice. It directed the civic body's Chief Officer to be present before the court on August 13 to show cause as to why the HC should not issue a suo motu contempt notice in the matter. The matter pertains to City Survey Number 477 of Godhra, which is 'prima facie' a land being used as a graveyard (qabristan) from the early 1990s. The HC had, in its order dated March 20, 2023, directed a survey by the District Inspector of Land Records (DILR) to file a report along with the measurement map of the land. In its report, the DILR had stated that several graves had been found on the land during the measurements undertaken, the court observed. However, on March 3, 2024, the Chief Officer of the Godhra Municipality issued a work order to construct a fire station on the contentious land.

Objecting to the decision, the court of Justice Nikhil S Kariel rebuked the Godhra Municipality for "showing disregard" and "considering itself higher than the court". The court also questioned the Godhra Municipality counsel on why the "officer of the state" had disregarded the sub-judice status of the case. "To this court, it would appear that the respondent (Chief Officer) has not given any due regard to the fact that a writ petition (WP) on the said land was in pending consideration of this court... As the Chief Officer of the municipality, more particularly as the officer of the state, (the officer) was required to stay his hands and not precipitate the issue any further... as



an officer of the state, (the CO) was under the obligation to ensure that due process of law is not derailed by the action of the said respondent by issuing work order... It prima facie appears that (CO) had no regard whatsoever for the WP pending before this court... (CO) was doing nothing but overreaching the due process of law," the court stated.

When counsel KP Champaneria, on behalf of the municipality, argued that the said land was allotted by the district collector as part of the construction of 32 fire stations at district-levels, the High Court issued instructions to government pleader Aakash Gupta to file a reply as to why the state government could not "allot any other land" in Godhra for the purpose of construction of the fire station. "Why this land and no other land? The municipality shall explain as to why pursuant to the measurement of the land by the DILR, the land should not be treated as a graveyard land... The state shall also take instructions on the above aspects, more particularly, if the land is to be treated as a graveyard land, then some other land should be allotted to the municipality for building a fire station," the court directed, barring any "further construction activity" on the contentious land until the next hearing. The court also termed the Chief Officer's action "undefendable". "When a petition is pending, why should your municipality pass a resolution? Authorities of the state have no business to say that there was no interim relief (granted to the petitioner by the court) and so, we are not bound (to respect the sub-judice status)... You (municipality) should have come to the court to say that we are in urgent need for the land and we are allotting the same for this purpose and informing the court so that we are not held in contempt," the court noted.

Markfed to change food packaging, to use cardboard cartons

checked the entire supply process and found packets of panjiri, dalia and khichdi damaged during transportation. Sometimes, these packets were punctured to ensure they were not damaged due to pressure while handling. We have now directed them to stop this. Air-tight packets of international standards will be used and transported in cartons. This will cause our input cost to go up, but we will forgo one per cent of our profit," said a government officer. The officer added these cartons would be handy for Aanganwadi centres which sometimes do not have proper storage space and food packets will remain protected in the cartons. "We know sometimes Aanganwadi centres supplying food material to beneficiaries do not have proper storage space. This becomes an issue, especially during monsoon, as some food packets get wet. Now, there would be no such issues," the officer said. A

row ensued after several videos of foreign objects like small stones in food packets distributed by Aanganwadi centres went viral. The Centre took cognisance of the matter after SAD MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal had raised it in Parliament. Union minister Annapurna Devi wrote to the state government over the issue. Punjab Women and Child Welfare Minister Dr Baljit Kaur denied such reports in her reply to the Centre. Under the ICDS programme, supplementary nutrition is provided to beneficiaries, funded by the state and the Centre in a ratio of 60:40. Sources said the programme is worth Rs 125 crore. The Women and Child Welfare Department is considering replacing panjiri with some other item, Dr Kaur told The Indian Express Monday. Sources said Markfed was told not to use millets in panjiri, so they are looking at some alternatives. "It is still in the nascent stage. We do not have millets available now.

In a first, Punjab farmers take home cheque worth Rs 1.75 cr as carbon credit compensation



GNS News Agency, August 9

Farmer Parminderjit Singh Cheema, of village Pur Hiran in Hoshiarpur, Tuesday received a cheque of Rs 20,985 from Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. It is the first installment out of the total four that the Punjab government will pay him as carbon credit compensation. Similarly farmer Navjinder Singh from Saleran village received a cheque of Rs 94,772. Ram Pal and Punit Kumar, from Chak Sadhu, received Rs 49,417 and Rs 47,386, respectively, while Dr Vikas Sood got Rs 6,702.

These payments are part of the pilot project that covers 3,686 farmers across Kandi region including Hoshiarpur, Ropar, Mohali, Pathankot, and Nawanshahr. The project will disburse a total of Rs 45 crore in carbon credit compensation in four installments to these registered farmers. On Tuesday, Mann disbursed Rs 1.75 cores into the accounts of 818 farmers of Hoshiarpur during an event to mark 73rd Van Mahotsav at Hoshiarpur. In a significant step towards environmental sustainability and farmer welfare, Punjab's Forest Department, in collaboration with The Energy and Source Institute (TERI) and an international company, has launched a pioneering carbon credit compensation programme. Under this initiative, farmers are receiving financial compensation for planting and maintaining trees on their agricultural land, contributing to CO2 reduction and benefiting from an additional income stream.

The programme requires farmers to plant trees and maintain them for at least five years to be eligible for carbon credit. After this period, the trees can be sold, providing farmers with income. If these trees are sold to paper making, furniture making and plywood making factories, then they are also helping in storing carbon in furniture and paper products, thereby preventing additional pollution, which could be caused through burning timber. In case of Parminderjit Singh Cheema, he grows tress on his 17 acres farm land instead of doing traditional wheat and paddy cultivation. He plants eucalyptuses and poplar trees in rotation. The trees get mature for harvesting in 5-6 years, when he cuts them down and plants the new batch. "This initiative not only helps reduce carbon emission, but also provides farmers with the opportunity to earn from their trees after five years, by selling them and by continuing to receive carbon credit payments. Also, we farmers are practicing intercropping

for the first three years in the fields where tree plants are grown, making extra income. This dual approach offers immediate agricultural benefits and long-term financial gains," said Cheema. Mann said Punjab is the country's first state to launch the carbon credit scheme to preserve the environment and check global warming. He also highlighted its potential to enhance environmental sustainability, control pollution, and provide economic benefits to farmers. He emphasized the need for wider awareness and participation in such programs to maximize their impact. "The initiative aims to create a sustainable model that benefits both the ecosystem and the farming community," said Dr Sanjeev Tiwari, Forest Conservator of the North Circle. He added that farmers who had grown tree plants in 2016-17, 2017-18 and so on are enrolled under this programme. Teams from the international company and TERI visit the farms to inspect the Verified Emission Reductions (VER) to calculate compensation based on the quality and duration of the trees.

Dr Sood, who grows tress on 18 acres of land, emphasized that the carbon credit payments help cover the costs of plantation and maintenance, providing significant relief to farmers. However, he stressed the need for greater awareness of the scheme to encourage more farmers to adopt agro-forestry practices. This will help address environmental imbalances and control diseases related to pulmonary health, he said. Punjab, with its forest cover at just 6.6 percent—well below the minimum required 20 per cent—faces significant challenges. The extensive cultivation of water-intensive paddy crop has led to a drastic decline in the water table, while overuse of fertilizers, insecticides, and pesticides has polluted the soil and air. The state urgently needs crop diversification, making it an ideal candidate for agro-forestry. The National Forest Policy aims to increase the country's green cover to 33 percent.

Farmers involved in agro-forestry note that the rainy season is optimal for planting trees. Agro-forestry requires 80-90 per cent less pesticides, insecticides, and fertilizers compared to traditional crops, and its water consumption is less than 20 per cent of that required for paddy. After two to three years, the trees primarily rely on rain-water. Additionally, agro-forestry requires less labor compared to other crops and significantly improves soil quality. According to experts, trees such as poplar, safeda, dek, sababul, and kikar can be successfully integrated with main crops in Punjab's climate conditions.

Earlier, Mann gave a clarion call to people to take up tree plantation as mass movement for checking environmental pollution on one hand and enhancing the state's green cover on other. Highlighting severe environmental damage caused by deforestation, Mann said by reckless cutting of trees, human beings have created havoc with nature. "Owing to this only, we are witnessing a lot of natural fury across the country," said Mann, adding the only solution for this is to plant more and more trees. Mann also appealed to the farmers, who get free electricity to plant at least four saplings around their tubewells. He said this is currently a suggestion, but a law can also be enacted in this regard if needed.

Building plans under 'S+4' scheme won't be sanctioned as of now: Haryana to HC

GNS News Agency, August 9

punjab and haryana high courtAfter more than a year's ban, the Haryana government on July 2 this year had granted approval to construct stilt-plus-four floors (S+4) buildings in residential areas and also allowed owners to sell independent floors. The Haryana government on Tuesday assured the Punjab and Haryana High Court that new building plans under the 'stilt-plus-four' scheme won't be sanctioned till the next date of hearing in the matter. A division bench of Justice Arun Palli and Justice Vikram Aggarwal was told by counsel of Haryana government that a committee of experts has now formulated a scheme entailing several strict measures for the S+4 policy. During the resumed hearing, it was brought to the notice of the high court the filing of multiple pleas on the issue including a petition filed against the Haryana government and other respondents by Gurgaon Citizens' Council.

The counsel for the state, on a previous date hearing, had produced orders dated February 23, 2023, passed by the Director-General, Town and Country Planning, Haryana. At that time also, the government had decided to keep all fresh 'stilt-plus-four' building plan approvals of residential plots in abeyance, including the applications pending/received for approval. The state counsel had also produced an order dated March 16, 2023, vide which an expert committee was constituted to devise further course of action regarding suspension of fresh building plan approval cases for 'stilt-plus-four' floors in the residential plots. The bench adjourned the matter to September 9. Stilt-plus-four floors refer to a building that has a stilt floor, which is raised above the ground



level, and an additional four floors above it, making a total of five floors. After more than a year's ban, the Haryana government on July 2 this year had granted approval to construct stilt-plus-four floors (S+4) buildings in residential areas and also allowed owners to sell independent floors. The announcement was made by Town and Country Planning Minister Jai Parkash Dalal. Dalal had said, "It will help people who are not able to purchase houses due to high and exorbitant rates of property. Moreover, three were already allowed and one additional floor will help accommodate more people who aren't able to make purchases due to high property rates." The government in February last year had imposed a ban on S+4 constructions following massive protests by residents in Panchkula who had stated that the people living in old houses that have the weight-bearing capacity of only two floors are also taking advantage of the stilt-plus-four floors concept to add more floors for rental income. The protests gradually spread across the state.

Air India, IndiGo operate special flights to Dhaka; bring back over 400 people

GNS News Agency, August 9

The Air India chartered flight, which took off for the Bangladesh capital late Tuesday, was operated with an A321 neo aircraft. The flight brought back 205 people -- 199 adults and 6 infants -- from Dhaka. The Air India chartered flight, which took off for the Bangladesh capital late Tuesday, was operated with an A321 neo aircraft. The flight brought back 205 people -- 199 adults and 6 infants -- from Dhaka. Air India and IndiGo operated special flights to Dhaka, bringing more than 400 people amid a volatile situation in the Bangladesh capital.

A special Air India flight brought 205 people, including 6 infants, from Dhaka to New Delhi on Wednesday morning, an official said. IndiGo's special flight flew from Dhaka to Kolkata on Tuesday to bring back Indian nationals from Bangladesh, the airline said in a statement. The Air India chartered flight, which took off for the Bangladesh capital late Tuesday, was operated with an A321 neo aircraft. The flight brought back 205 people -- 199 adults and 6 infants -- from Dhaka. Air India operated the flight, which took off from the national capital without any passengers, at a very short notice despite infrastructure challenges at the airport there, said the official in the know of the developments.

"Following the temporary closure of Dhaka airport, IndiGo operated a special flight 6E 8503 from Dhaka to Kolkata on August 06, 2024. This flight was conducted to bring back Indian nationals from Bangladesh," the airline said in the statement. A source in the know said the IndiGo special flight carried more than 200 passengers from Dhaka to Kolkata.

The carrier also said normal flight operations between India and Dhaka are scheduled to resume on Wednesday and it has contacted all affected customers, providing updates and offering alternative travel arrangements. IndiGo operates one daily flight from Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai to Dhaka and two daily services from Kolkata. Air India will be commencing its scheduled operations -- two daily flights from the national capital -- to Dhaka on Wednesday. On Tuesday, Air India had cancelled its morning flight but operated the evening flight to Dhaka. Vistara will also be operating their services to the Bangladesh capital as per schedule. It operates daily flights from Mumbai and three weekly services from Delhi to Dhaka. Both Vistara and IndiGo had cancelled their Tuesday flights to the Bangladesh capital. The neighbouring country has plunged into uncertainty after street protests over job quota forced Sheikh Hasina to quit as prime minister and flee.

132 PMLA cases against current, ex-politicians in last 6 yrs: Govt



GNS News Agency, August 9

UNION MINISTER of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai told Lok Sabha on Tuesday that the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has registered 5,297 cases under Prevention of Money Laundering Act in the last 10 years. Of the total cases, 4,467 were registered between 2019 and 2024 after the PMLA's ambit was widened by the Centre through amendments. A total of 132 money laundering cases have been registered against sitting and former MPs, MLAs and political leaders in the last six years.

In a written response, Rai said 188 cases were registered under the PMLA in 2019, 708 in 2020, 1,166 in 2021, 1,074 in 2022, 934 in 2023 and 397 cases were registered so far this year. "195 cases were registered in 2014, 148 in 2015, 170 in 2016, 171 in 2017 and 146

cases in 2018," he said. The PMLA's ambit was widened through amendments in 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2019, giving the ED the teeth it now has. In 2009, criminal conspiracy under Section 120B of the Indian Penal Code was added to the PMLA's schedule among various other offences. This has, over the years, allowed the ED to enter any case where a conspiracy is alleged, even if the principal offence is not part of the PMLA schedule. In 2009, the ED also got international jurisdiction for tracking laundered money. Following amendments in 2015 and 2018, the ED was allowed to attach properties in India equivalent to properties acquired abroad through laundered money. Through certain "explanations" inserted into the PMLA in 2019, the government allowed the ED to attach properties earned directly or indirectly through alleged criminal activity that was even "relatable" to a scheduled offence.

Rai said 140 accused persons are currently in jail under PMLA provisions since 2016. On Tuesday, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary shared in the Rajya Sabha figures related to the ED filing enforcement case information reports (ECIRs) against existing and ex-MPs, MLAs, MLCs and political leaders or anyone affiliated with any political party between January 1, 2019 to July 31 this year. "The ED filed 15 ECIRs or money laundering cases in 2019 followed by 28 in 2020, 26 in 2021, 34 in 2022, 26 in 2023 and three in 2024 (till July 31). A court trial in these cases was completed in a total of three cases -- one in 2020 and two in 2023. Only one conviction in these cases was reported to have been made in 2020," he said. Chaudhary said a total of 7,083 ECIRs have been filed by the agency till July 31. "The rate of conviction obtained under PMLA is around 93%. Assets worth more than Rs 1.39 lakh crore were either seized, frozen or attached under the law. The total value of proceeds seized under PMLA is approximately Rs 3,725.76 crore, frozen under PMLA is approximately Rs 4,651.68 crore and attached under PMLA is approximately Rs 1,31,375 crore," he said.

Homecoming for 135 Meiteis who fled to relief camps to escape Manipur violence

GNS News Agency, August 9

Manipur violence, Manipur protests, Manipur news, N Biren Singh, manipur government, Manipur deaths, Manipur violence deaths, India news, Indian express, Indian express India news, Indian express IndiaA scooterist rides past a damaged water tanker that was set afire during a protest by tribal groups in Churachandpur in the northeastern state of Manipur, Days after Hmar and Meitei groups met for peace talks, 135 people living in a relief camp in Manipur's Jiribam since tensions flared in the district in June returned to their homes with security cover on Monday. Last week, Hmar and Meitei groups from Jiribam had met in Assam's Cachar as part of a peace initiative, and agreed to work towards normalcy and facilitate the movement of both communities within the district. As of the beginning of this month, there were a total of 768 Meitei people living in relief camps within Jiribam itself, and over 1,000 Hmar and Kuki people from Jiribam displaced and seeking shelter in the neighbouring Cachar district of Assam. On Tuesday afternoon, 135 people from the Meitei community, who had been living in a relief camp at Chingdong Leikai Primary School in Jiribam since June 7, were taken to their homes in Mongbung village, a district official said. The village is located around six kilometres from the town centre. "At around 3.30 pm, the inmates of the primary school left under the supervision of the District Collector and the Superintendent of Police. They had left their homes after disturbances in their area. Today, they went back with security forces, which include the Assam Rifles, the CRPF and the state police," said the official.

The people living in the primary school included 62 children and 46 women. The younger men of the village had continued to remain in the village. Mongbung is also located near where a CRPF man was killed last month in what the police had called an ambush attack. The incident took place in an area between Sejang Kuki village and Mongbung Meitei village. According to Jiribam SP M Pradip Singh, the district police asked for an additional



company of the CRPF to be deployed in the area after the incident. On Sunday, the company was deployed there. "Now, the Mongbung-Sejang area has one company of the CRPF as well as one platoon in Mongbung village, 10 policemen, two companies of Manipur police commandos and a dynamic deployment of Assam Rifles. We have to wait and see how this arrangement works. The villages will also take initiatives," he said. Representatives of different civil society organisations representing Hmar and Meitei interests -- as well as Thadou, Paitei and Mizo representatives -- had last week held their second meeting for peace talks in Cachar and resolved for "both sides to make full efforts to bring normalcy and prevent incidents of firing and arson"; to cooperate with security forces operating in the district; and for "controlled and coordinated movement" of both communities in the district. However, this had soon been met with backlash when the very next day, the home of a Meitei family was set ablaze. Also, the Hmar Inpui -- the apex body of the Hmar tribe -- had lashed out against its representatives in the Jiribam unit for participating in peace initiatives, and declared these "null and void". Separately, because of the unrest in Bangladesh, the district administrations of Jiribam and neighbouring Pherzawl in Manipur imposed night curfews with effect from Tuesday, citing the "likelihood of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh coming into the state".

Opp demands rollback of GST on life, health insurance

GNS News Agency, August 9

MEMBERS OF INDIA bloc parties staged a protest near the Makar Dwar (main entrance) of Parliament on Tuesday demanding a rollback of 18% GST on life and health insurance premiums. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla called the protest "not appropriate" and reminded the members of the "consensus" reached earlier of not holding any demonstration at the House entrance.

MPs from various parties, including Trinamool Congress, Congress, AAP, Samajwadi Party and NCP (Saradchandra Pawar) among others, participated in the protest on the steps leading to the Makar Dwar. They were carrying placards reading "tax terrorism" and other messages in different regional languages. Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi too joined the protest. Later, in a post in Hindi on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "Today on the Parliament premises, INDIA parties demanded immediate removal of 18% GST on health and life insurance premiums as this extortion is a severe blow to our people, especially the middle class." "The middle class is already struggling under the burden of the Modi government's tax collection policies. India's medical inflation rate is the highest in Asia in 2024 -- at 14%. On top of that, this 'Gabbar Singh Tax' on life and health insurance is inhuman and another condemnable example of the BJP's policy of plundering from 'opportunity in disaster'." Calling it an "insensitive thinking of the BJP government", Rahul Gandhi said, "The Modi government collected Rs 24,000 crore from millions of Indians who pay health insurance premiums every year by saving every penny to ensure that they do not have to bow down before anyone in case of a 'health crisis' in life... Looking for a 'tax opportunity' in every disaster is proof of the insensitive thinking of the BJP government. INDIA Alliance opposes this opportunistic thinking."

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said the INDIA bloc parties' demand is absolutely justified. "India is already the country whose citizens pay the highest out-



of-pocket expenses for health crises in the world. Senior citizens who have taken health insurance are now paying the highest GST rates in the world. How does the government intend to attain the goal of 'insurance for all by 2047', when it is instead ensuring the unaffordability of insurance to most," Tharoor asked on X. TMC MPs have been raising this issue in Parliament. TMC president and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee last week had written to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on the matter.

Earlier last week, Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari also asked Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to remove GST on life and medical insurance premiums, which currently attract an 18% GST rate. Reacting to the Opposition's protest on the steps leading to the Makar Dwar, Lok Sabha Speaker said: "After discussions with all parties, a consensus was reached that protests and demonstrations would not be held on any of the Dwaras of the Parliament House. Many members, especially women, had written to me that they were inconvenienced due to blocking of the way. A decision was taken that no protest or demonstration would be held on any ('entrance') of Parliament House. I request all of you to abide by the decisions that have been taken by you... I went there in the morning, this is not appropriate."

Kamala Harris picks Minnesota Governor Tim Walz as running mate



GNS News Agency, August 9

U.S. Vice-President Kamala Harris picked Minnesota Governor Tim Walz to be her running mate on Tuesday (August 6, 2024), according to three people who spoke to AP on condition of anonymity. In choosing Mr. Walz, she is turning to a Midwestern Governor, military veteran and union supporter who helped enact an ambitious Democratic agenda for his state, including sweeping protections for abortion rights and generous aid to families.

Ms. Harris hopes to shore up her campaign's standing across the upper Midwest, a critical region in presidential politics that often serves as a buffer for Democrats seeking the White House. The party remains haunted by Republican Donald Trump's wins in Michigan and Wisconsin in 2016. Trump lost those states in 2020 but has zeroed in on them as he aims to return to the presidency this year and is expanding his focus to Minnesota. Mr. Walz, 60, is joining Ms. Harris during one of the most turbulent periods in modern American politics, promising an unpredictable campaign ahead. Republicans have rallied around Trump after his attempted assassination in July. Just weeks later, President Joe Biden ended his reelection campaign, forcing Ms. Harris to unify Democrats and consider potential running mates during an exceedingly compressed time frame. The three people spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid preempting the official announcement later Tuesday.

Harris vs Trump: Who will determine the defining issues of the Presidential race? | In Focus podcast Ms. Harris, the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent to lead a major party ticket, initially considered nearly a dozen candidates before zeroing in on a handful of serious contenders, all of whom were white men. In landing on Mr. Walz, she sided with a low-key partner who has proven himself as a champion for Democratic causes. Mr. Walz has been a strong public advocate for Ms. Harris in her campaign against Trump and J.D. Vance, labelling the Republicans "just weird" in an interview last month. Democrats have seized on the message and amplified it since then. During a fundraiser for Ms. Harris on Monday in Minneapolis, Mr. Walz said: "It wasn't a slur to call these guys weird. It was an observation." Mr. Walz, who grew up in the small town of West Point, Nebraska, was a social studies teacher, football coach and union member at Mankato West High School in Minnesota before he got into politics. He won the first of six terms in Congress in 2006 from a mostly rural southern Minnesota district, and used the office to champion veterans issues. Mr. Walz served 24 years in the Army National Guard, rising to command sergeant major, one of the highest enlisted ranks in the military. He ran for Governor in 2018 on the theme of "One Minnesota" and won by more than 11 points. As Governor, Mr. Walz had to find ways to work in his first term with a legislature that was split between a Democratic-controlled House and a Republican-led Senate. Minnesota has a history of divided government, though, and the arrangement was surprisingly productive in his first year. But the COVID-19 pandemic hit Minnesota early in his second year, and bipartisan cooperation soon frayed.

Mr. Walz relied on emergency powers to lead the state's response. Republicans chafed under restrictions that included lockdowns, closing schools and shuttering businesses. They retaliated by firing or forcing out some of his agency heads. But Minnesotans who were stuck at home also got to know Mr. Walz better through his frequent afternoon briefings in the early days of the crisis, which were broadcast and streamed statewide. Mr. Walz

won reelection in 2022 by nearly 8 points over his GOP challenger, Dr. Scott Jensen, a physician and vaccine sceptic. Not only did Mr. Walz win, Democrats kept control of the House and flipped the Senate to win the "trifecta" of full control of both chambers and the Governor's office for the first time in eight years. A big reason was the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision, which held that the Constitution doesn't include a right to abortion. That hurt Minnesota Republicans, especially among suburban women. "Tim has been in the news because the country and the world is seeing the guy we love so much," U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar said on Monday. Ken Martin, Chairman of the Minnesota-Democratic-Farmer-Labour Party said young people he spoke to on the campaign trail were "Walz pilled".

Mr. Walz and other Democrats went into the 2023 legislative session with an ambitious agenda — and a whopping \$17.6 billion budget surplus to help fund it. Their proudest accomplishments included sweeping protections for abortion rights that included the elimination of nearly all restrictions Republicans had enacted in prior years, including a 24-hour waiting period and parental consent requirements. They also enacted new protections for trans rights, making the state a refuge for families coming from out of state for treatment for trans children. Their other major accomplishments included tax credits for families with children that were aimed at slashing childhood poverty, as well as universal free school breakfasts and lunches for all students, regardless of family income. They also enacted a paid family and medical leave program, legalised recreational marijuana for adults and made it easier to vote. Republicans complained that Mr. Walz and his fellow Democrats squandered a surplus that would have been better spent on permanent tax relief for everyone. And they've faulted the Governor and his administration for lax oversight of pandemic programs that cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

Federal prosecutors charged 70 people with defrauding federal food programmes that funded meals for kids during the pandemic out of \$250 million on Mr. Walz's watch. Known as the Feeding Our Future scandal, it's one of the country's largest pandemic aid fraud cases. The Office of the Legislative Auditor, a nonpartisan watchdog, delivered a scathing report in June that said Mr. Walz's Department of Education "failed to act on warning signs," did not effectively exercise its authority and was ill-prepared to respond. Republicans still criticise Mr. Walz for his response to the sometimes violent unrest that followed the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer in 2020, which included the torching of a police station. During a May fundraiser in St. Paul, Trump repeated his false claim that he was responsible for deploying the National Guard to quell the violence. "The entire city was burning down. ... If you didn't have me as president, you wouldn't have Minneapolis today," Trump said. It was actually Mr. Walz who gave the order, which he issued in response to requests from the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul. But within Minnesota, GOP legislators said both Mr. Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey were too slow to act. And there was finger-pointing between Mr. Frey and Mr. Walz on who was responsible for not activating the Guard faster.

Mr. Walz has served often as a Biden-Harris surrogate, and has made increasingly frequent appearances on national television. They've included an interview on Fox News that irritated Trump so much that he posted on Truth Social, "They make me fight battles I shouldn't have to fight." Mr. Walz is also co-chair of the rules committee for the Democratic National Convention. And he led a White House meeting of Democratic Governors with Mr. Biden following the President's disastrous performance in his debate with Trump. Putting Mr. Walz on the ticket could help Democrats hold the state's 10 electoral votes and bolster the party more broadly in the Midwest. No Republican has won a statewide race in Minnesota since Tim Pawlenty was re-elected Governor in 2006, but GOP candidates for attorney general and state auditor came close in 2022. Trump finished just 1.5 percentage points behind Democrat Hillary Clinton in the state in 2016. While Mr. Biden carried Minnesota by more than 7 points in 2020, Trump has taken to falsely claiming that he won the state last time and can do it again.

Pakistani man with ties to Iran charged in plot to carry out political assassinations on U.S. soil

GNS News Agency, August 9

This image provided by the Justice Department, contained in the complaint supporting the arrest warrant, shows Asif Merchant. The Pakistani man alleged to have ties to Iran has been charged in a plot to carry out political assassinations on U.S. soil, the Justice Department said Aug. 6. A Pakistani man alleged to have ties to Iran has been charged in a plot to carry out political assassinations on U.S. soil, including potentially of former President Donald Trump. The case disclosed by the Justice Department on Tuesday is the latest murder-for-hire plot originating from abroad to target American public figures, coming two years after officials disrupted a separate scheme that they said was aimed at former Trump administration national security adviser John Bolton. Asif Merchant traveled to New York in June for the purpose of meeting with men he thought he was recruiting to carry out the killings, even paying a \$5,000 advance to two would-be assassins who were actually undercover law enforcement officers, federal officials said. He was arrested last month as he prepared to leave the U.S. and after having told the men that he would provide further instructions, including the names of the intended targets, in August or September after he returned to Pakistan. Court documents do not identify any of the potential targets. But U.S. officials acknowledged last month that a threat on Donald Trump's life from Iran prompted additional security in the days before a Pennsylvania rally in which Trump was injured by a gunman's bullet. That July 13 shooting, carried out by a 20-year-old Pennsylvania man, was unrelated to the Iran threat and Merchant's arrest has no connection to the Trump assassination attempt, a law enforcement official said. But an FBI agent's affidavit suggests Merchant had current or former high-level officials like Trump in mind. He told an associate who was secretly cooperating with law enforcement that he wanted a "political person" to be killed, the complaint said, mapping out on a napkin the different scenarios in which the target could be assassinated and warning that there would be security "all around." U.S. officials have warned for years about Iran's desire to avenge the 2020 killing of Qassem Soleimani, who led the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force. That strike was ordered by Trump when he was

President. The U.S. government since then has paid for security for multiple Trump administration officials, and in 2022, the Justice Department charged an Iranian operative in a foiled plot to kill Bolton. FBI Director Christopher Wray said at a House hearing last month that the Iranian government had been "extremely aggressive and brazen" in recent years, and Attorney General Merrick Garland said Tuesday that "we expect that these threats will continue and that these cases will not be the last." The Justice Department will spare no resource to disrupt and hold accountable those who would carry out Iran's lethal plotting against Americans," he said. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters Tuesday during an afternoon press briefing that the U.S. had been "tracking Iranian threats against former politicians." "We consider this a national and homeland security matter of the highest priority. We have repeatedly met at the highest levels of our government to develop and implement a comprehensive response," she said. Federal officials identified Merchant, 46, as a Pakistani citizen who has said he has a wife and children in Iran and who traveled frequently to Iran, Syria and Iraq. A lawyer for Merchant declined to comment Tuesday when reached by The Associated Press. After Merchant's arrest, Justice Department prosecutors urged a judge to keep him locked up, writing in a detention memo that before flying from Pakistan to the U.S., "the defendant had spent two approximately two weeks in Iran. Given the seriousness of the murder for hire charges, the defendant has every incentive to flee to either Pakistan or Iran, significantly reducing the likelihood of his appearance in this case should he flee." He was ordered detained following a court appearance. Court documents trace the foiled plot to this past April, when Merchant flew to the U.S. to recruit participants in the murder-for-hire scheme. He contacted a person he thought would help him but who instead alerted law enforcement. That person became a confidential source for investigators, including by introducing Merchant to the purported hitmen, officials said. After meeting the two undercover officers posing as hitmen, the affidavit says, Merchant told them the work would be long-term. He instructed them that in addition to the killings, he would expect them to arrange protests at political rallies, steal documents and launder money for him.

Hamas names Yahya Sinwar, mastermind of the Oct. 7 attacks, as its new leader in show of defiance



GNS News Agency, August 9

Hamas on Tuesday (August 6, 2024) named Yahya Sinwar, its top official in Gaza who masterminded the Oct. 7 attacks in Israel, as its new leader in a dramatic sign of the power of the Palestinian militant group's hardline wing after his predecessor was killed in a presumed Israeli strike in Iran. The selection of Sinwar, a secretive figure close to Iran who worked for years to build up Hamas' military strength, was a defiant signal that the group is prepared to keep fighting after 10 months of destruction from Israel's campaign in Gaza. His selection is likely to provoke Israel, which has put him at the top of its kill list after the Oct. 7 attack, in which militants killed 1,200 people in southern Israel and took about 250 as hostages. Hamas said in a statement it named Sinwar as the new head of its political bureau to replace Ismail Haniyeh, who was killed in Tehran last week in a blast Iran and Hamas blamed on Israel. Israel has not confirmed or denied responsibility. Also last week, Israel said it had confirmed the death of the head of Hamas' military wing, Mohammed Deif, in a July airstrike in Gaza. Hamas has not confirmed his death.

In reaction to the appointment, Israeli military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari told Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya television, "There is only one place for Yahya Sinwar, and it is beside Mohammed Deif and the rest of the October 7th terrorists. That is the only place we're preparing and intending for him." The two assassinations left Sinwar as the most prominent figure in Hamas. His selection signals that the leadership on the ground in

Gaza — particularly the armed wing known as the Qassam Brigades — has taken over from the leadership in exile, which has traditionally maintained the position of the overall leadership to navigate relations with foreign allies and diplomacy.

Haniyeh, who had lived in self-imposed exile in Qatar since 2019, had played a direct role in negotiations over a cease-fire in Gaza through U.S., Qatari and Egyptian negotiators — though he and other Hamas officials always ran proposals and positions by Sinwar. Speaking to Al-Jazeera television after the announcement, Hamas spokesman Osama Hamdan said Sinwar would continue the cease-fire negotiations. "The problem in negotiations is not the change in Hamas," he said, blaming Israel and its ally the United States for the failure to seal a deal. But he said Hamas "remains steadfast in the battlefield and in politics ... The person leading today is the one who led the fighting for more than 305 days and is still steadfast in the field." As Hamas' leader inside Gaza since 2017, Sinwar rarely appeared in public but kept an iron grip on Hamas' rule over the territory. Close to Deif and Qassam Brigades, he worked to build up the group's military capabilities. He has been in deep hiding since the Oct. 7 attacks, which triggered Israel's campaign of bombardment and offensives aimed at destroying Hamas. The death toll among Palestinians is now nearing 40,000, most of the population of 2.3 million has been driven from their homes, and large swaths of Gaza's towns and cities have been destroyed. In May, prosecutors at the International Criminal Court sought an arrest warrant against Sinwar on charges of war crimes over the Oct. 7 attack, as well as against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel's defense minister for war crimes. Hugh Lovatt, an expert on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said Israel's killing of multiple senior Hamas figures over the past months cleared the way for Sinwar. "Two weeks ago, few would have expected Sinwar to be the group's next leader despite the strong influence he exerts from Gaza," he said. The killing of Haniyeh, a relative moderate, "not only opened the path for Sinwar to claim full control of Hamas, but also appears to have tipped the group into a more hardline direction," he said.

Nuclear disarmament must be tackled as a pressing issue, not an ideal: Hiroshima Governor

GNS News Agency, August 9

Hiroshima officials urged world leaders on Tuesday (August 6, 2024) to stop relying on nuclear weapons as deterrence and take immediate action toward abolishment — not as an ideal, but to remove the risk of atomic war amid conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East and rising tensions in East Asia. They commented as Hiroshima remembered its atomic bombing 79 years ago at the end of World War II. The memorial comes days after Japan and the U.S. reaffirmed Washington's commitment to "extended deterrence," which includes atomic weapons, to protect its Asian ally. That is a shift from Japan's past reluctance to openly discuss the sensitive issue as the world's only country to have suffered atomic attacks. Hiroshima Gov. Hidehiko Yuzaki said nuclear-armed nations and supporters of atomic deterrence "deliberately ignore ... the fact that once people invented a weapon, they used it without exception. 'As long as nuclear weapons exist, they will surely be used again someday,'" Mr. Yuzaki said in his address at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

"Nuclear weapons abolition is not an ideal to achieve far in the future. Instead, it is a pressing and real issue that we should desperately engage in at this moment since nuclear problems involve an imminent risk to human survival," he said. Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui said Russia's war on Ukraine and the worsening conflict between Israel and Palestinians are "deepening distrust and fear among nations" and reinforcing a view that use of force in settling conflict is unavoidable. The atomic bomb dropped by the United States on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, destroyed the city, killing 140,000 people. A second bomb dropped three days later on Nagasaki killed 70,000 more. Japan surrendered on August 15, ending World War II and Japan's nearly half-century aggression in Asia. About 50,000 people at the ceremony observed a minute of silence with the sound of a peace bell at 8.15 a.m., the time when a U.S. B-29 dropped the bomb on the city. Hundreds of white doves, considered symbols of peace, were released. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who



attended the ceremony, said global conflicts and divided views over approaches to nuclear disarmament make achieving that goal "all the more challenging," but pledged to do his utmost in pursuing "realistic and practical measures" to build momentum within the international community. His critics say it is a hollow promise because Japan relies on the U.S. nuclear umbrella for protection and has been rapidly expanding its military.

Japan, the United States and other regional allies have been stepping up security cooperation in response to a more assertive China and the growing nuclear and missile threats from North Korea. Japan has sought stronger U.S. protection by its nuclear capability. Many survivors of the bombings have lasting injuries and illnesses resulting from the explosions and radiation exposure and have faced discrimination in Japan. As of March, 1,06,823 survivors — 6,824 fewer than a year ago, and now with an average age of 85.58 — are certified as eligible for government medical support, according to the Health and Welfare Ministry. Many others, including those who say they were victims of the radioactive "black rain" that fell outside the initially designated areas of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are still without support. Hiroshima officials called on Fumio Kishida's government to do more to provide support and address their wishes. The aging survivors, known as "hibakusha," continue to push for a nuclear arms ban as they desperately campaign to have their effort kept alive by younger generations.

Hiroshima remembers atom bomb victims as 'global tragedies' unfold

GNS News Agency, August 9

The Mayor of Hiroshima said on Tuesday (August 6, 2024) that wars in Ukraine and Gaza were deepening fear and distrust worldwide while observing the 79th anniversary of the atomic bombing that devastated the Japanese city. Kazumi Matsui made a sombre speech at a memorial event to commemorate the victims of the U.S. nuclear attack on August 6, 1945 that left around 1,40,000 people dead. "Russia's protracted invasion of Ukraine and the worsening situation between Israel and Palestine are claiming the lives of countless innocent people and shattering normal life," he said. "These global tragedies are deepening distrust and fear among nations, reinforcing the public assumption that to solve international problems we have to rely on military force, which we should be



rejecting." Days after the 1945 Hiroshima attack, a second U.S. nuclear bomb hit Nagasaki in southwest Japan, killing around 74,000 people. The two strikes led to the end of the Second World War, and to this day Japan remains the only country to be hit by atomic weapons in wartime. During Tuesday's (August 6, 2024) ceremony, dignitaries including Prime Minister Fumio Kishida — all clad in black suits — bowed deeply and laid wreaths at the memorial cenotaph featuring the inscription "rest in peace". Today, Hiroshima is a thriving metropolis of 1.2 million people, but the ruins of a domed building stand in the city centre as a stark reminder of the attack's horrors. For the third year running, Russia and Belarus

were not invited to the ceremony because of the Ukraine crisis. It was the city's first peace memorial since Israel launched a military offensive on Gaza last year following an attack by Palestinian militant group Hamas on the country. The Israeli Ambassador attended the ceremony as usual, but according to local media, Hiroshima has never invited a Palestinian representative. "

Apparel exporters see global orders partly shifting to India amid crisis in Bangladesh



Bangladesh crisis, Bangladesh protest, Bangladesh youth deaths, Global textile orders, Bangladesh political turmoil, Bangladesh youth protest, Bangladesh Garment, Manufacturers, BGMEA, garment industry, Indian express news, Violence in Bangladesh has reportedly left at least 300 dead amid countrywide curfews and curbs on mobile internet. Global textile orders could partly shift to India as the political turmoil in Bangladesh has brought economic activity in that country's key sectors such as the garment industry to a standstill, Indian garment and apparel exporters said Tuesday. Given Bangladesh's prominent position in the global clothing industry, the Indian apparel industry might have to step in, at least temporarily, to fill the gap for global buyers. This comes after the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), fearing vandalism, reportedly asked all factory owners to keep their units shut until further notice. Violence in Bangladesh has reportedly left at least 300 dead amid countrywide curfews and curbs on mobile internet.

"India has no intention or inclination to exploit this unfortunate situation in our friendly neighbouring country. The Indian garment industry is making serious efforts to grow RMG (ready-made garment) exports on its own, based on its merit. However, it is quite likely that in the short-term garment orders may shift to India and the Indian apparel industry may be asked to fill the gap caused by this severe disruption," said Mithleshwar Thakur, Secretary General of the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEP). Ready-made garments represent more than 85 per cent of Bangladesh's merchandise exports and over 70 per cent of its total exports. The expectations of a shift in orders to India comes as Dhaka has a bigger share in global trade of clothing at 7.9 per cent compared to New Delhi's 3.2 per cent, according to the World Trade Statistical Review 2023. Bangladesh's \$45-billion clothing in-

dustry that employs over four million workers was already affected due to the weakening electricity generation infrastructure that was hit by higher input costs following the start of the Russia-Ukraine war and adverse weather events, as per S&P Global. A senior executive with a listed textile company said that Indian industry might not be able to fulfil orders that might shift from Bangladesh as the supply chain is already stressed to fulfil domestic orders. "If this situation keeps Bangladesh occupied for more than 6 months then there could be a lot of shifts to India. But Vietnam may benefit from this more than Indian garment manufacturers since the supply chain is already stressed to fulfil domestic orders. Workforce and production capacity isn't elastic that can be increased overnight. Moreover, Ahmedabad textile processing industry which manufactures huge fabric quantities is already shut due to pollution checks," said the executive, who did not wish to be identified.

The Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) said that several major global brands that rely on Bangladesh for their sourcing needs will also be affected by these disruptions and that brands with significant portions of their supply chain rooted in Bangladesh may experience delays and a decrease in the availability of their products. "This, in turn, could lead to a ripple effect across the global retail market, affecting inventory levels and sales," CITI said. "The ongoing scenario in Bangladesh poses significant concerns for the Indian textile and apparel sector, particularly for companies operating factories in Bangladesh and exporting products from those units. Any supply disruption in Bangladesh will have immediate impacts on the supply chain, potentially affecting production schedules and delivery timelines," CITI said. S&P Global Ratings in its ratings report on July 30 had said that Bangladesh's economic growth continues to moderate following two years of fast expansion in 2021 and 2022. As high inflation, rising domestic interest rates, limited access to foreign exchange, and policies aimed at compressing imports continue to bite, domestic demand will likely remain modest in comparison to the long-term trend, the report said. Modest per capita income, which we estimate at about US\$2,600 in the fiscal year ended June 2024, remains one of Bangladesh's main rating constraints. But the country's strong underlying growth helps to mitigate this weakness. We calculate its 10-year weighted-average real per capita GDP growth rate at about 5.4 per cent. This is much stronger than the average for sovereigns at a similar level of income. We expect this long-term performance to remain largely intact, despite current policy headwinds," the report said.

Rupee ends at record closing low due to weakness in Asia FX

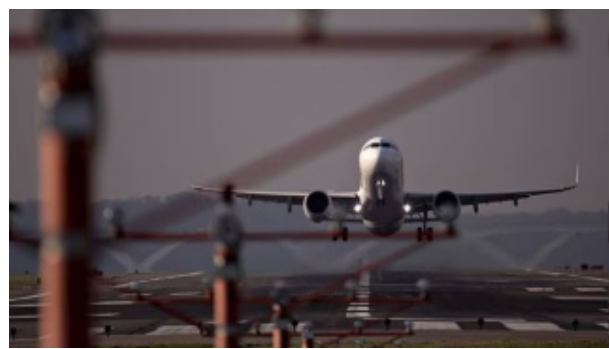
The Indian rupee fell on Tuesday and closed at its weakest level on record, pressured by a decline in its Asian peers and strong dollar demand in the non-deliverable forwards market, traders said. The rupee hit an all-time low of 83.96 per US dollar before closing at 83.9525, down 0.1% from its close of 83.8450 in the previous session.

Concerns about a US economic slowdown and the unwinding of carry trades that used the Chinese yuan to fund long bets on the rupee have pressured the local currency this week. But the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) interventions across the non-deliverable forwards (NDF), spot over-the-counter (OTC) and futures market have kept volatility in check, traders said. State-run banks intermittently sold dollars during Tuesday's session, likely on behalf of the RBI, which helped cap the rupee's weakness, a foreign exchange trader at a private bank said. The dollar index was up 0.2% at 103.1, while most Asian currencies weakened, led by the Malaysian ringgit's over 1% drop. Meanwhile, dollar-rupee forward premiums eased slightly but managed to hold on to much of their gains from a climb to a 14-month high on Monday.



A rise in corporate hedging demand, arbitrage between onshore and NDFs, and a broad decline in US yields have helped lift far forward premiums in recent sessions, traders said. Treasury yields pared their losses after economic data and remarks from Fed officials helped soothe concerns about a US slowdown. The 10-year US bond yield was last up 6 basis points at 3.84%. "Barring a US CPI surprise next week, the USD rate appeal appears compromised and we expect a softer dollar against pro-cyclical FX after the dust has settled," ING Bank said in a note.

GST notices to foreign airlines may dampen India's strong aviation potential: IATA



Global airlines' grouping IATA on Tuesday raised concerns over show cause notices issued to some foreign airlines operating to India with respect to Goods and Services Tax (GST), saying the issue can dampen and risk the country's strong aviation potential. Urging the government to resolve the matter, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said it is disappointed that the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) has proceeded to issue show cause notices to some foreign airlines operating to India despite a number of representations made by the industry on this matter. IATA represents more than 330 airlines, including Indian carriers, and its members account for more than 80 per cent of the global air traffic.

"DGGI's assertion that GST should apply to expenses incurred by the headquarters of foreign airlines (with a branch office in India) in the course of providing air transport services is flawed. It does not take into consideration the nature and conventions involved in the provision of international air transport," Xie Xingquan, IATA's Regional Vice President for North Asia and Asia Pacific (ad interim), said in a statement. He also said India is alone in its approach and that nowhere else around the world is this practised. "Indian carriers operating to destinations outside India do not face similar situations or demand," he added.

As many as 10 foreign airlines are under the scanner of DGGI and the carriers received notices since October 2023. IATA had also submitted a detailed representation to the Indian government on the matter. "The interna-

tional nature of air transport necessitates a clear and consistent policy framework globally. IATA continues to work closely with the government of India on this subject. IATA has also urged the government to urgently help resolve this matter, which can dampen and risk India's strong aviation potential," Xie Xingquan said. At a briefing in Dubai in June, IATA Country Director for India Amitabh Khosla had said that for now, 10 foreign airlines have been picked up for investigation and the move was "unprecedented". The statement from IATA also comes at a time when concerns have been expressed over GST demand received by IT major Infosys. On August 1, apex IT body Nasscom said the latest tax demand reflects a lack of understanding of the industry's operating model and sheds light on sector-wide issues wherein multiple companies are facing avoidable litigation and uncertainty.

It's official! X decides to move HQ out of San Francisco, Musk says 'no choice'

San Francisco: As the news about X moving its headquarters from the State of San Francisco in the US became viral, its owner Elon Musk on Tuesday said he had no choice as it has become "impossible" to operate in the city on the West Coast.

The Tesla and SpaceX CEO last month announced his decision to move the headquarters of its aerospace company as well as social media platform X from the US State of California. X, or Twitter as it was earlier known, has been in the city since it was founded in 2006.

"No choice. It is impossible to operate in San Francisco if you're processing payments," Musk posted on X. "That's why Stripe, Block (CashApp) and others had to move," the tech billionaire added. According to reports, X CEO Linda Yaccarino has sent an email to employees, alerting them that the company will move out of its office in San Francisco.

Tracing the roots of Banarasi saris: How Varanasi's pride became a wedding staple



Woven from the finest silks and adorned with intricate zari work, Banarasi saris are considered symbols of wealth and luxury. Indian weddings seem incomplete without the bride in a red Banarasi, replete with gold jewellery. For generations, our mothers and grandmothers have treasured their heirloom Banarasis for special occasions, reveling in their understated opulence and grandeur. "The Banarasi sari commonly features motifs of jasmine flowers, marigolds, paisleys, animals, and birds. These motifs are not just decorative but also carry meanings of fertility, beauty, and eternity, which are poignant for a new marital journey," said Roli Mehra, founder of Roliiana.

Our next dispatch in the ongoing series on Indian textiles explores the vibrant legacy of Banarasi saris, that carry deep cultural and spiritual significance tied to the ancient, holy city of Varanasi. We learn about the intricate weaving process, tips for identifying authentic Banarasis, their association with traditional weddings, and the future of the Banarasi industry. "Since the Vedic period, Varanasi has been a prominent center for the silk weaving industry," said Mehra. Banarasi textiles, that peaked during emperor Akbar's era, graced the wardrobes of Indian royalty and were staples in princesses' dowries.

Varanasi's pivotal position on the Silk Route facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and artistry, introducing Chinese silk and Persian designs to its looms. Weavers used specialised techniques like "Jamdani," known for its labour-intensive detailing, and "Kinkhab," famed for its lavish use of gold and silver threads, making these fabrics so luxurious they were called the "cloth of the gods." "Kin means gold and khwab means dreams, making it a golden dream and very precious," Mehra said. Sagrika Rai, founder and creative director of Warp 'n Weft, said, "The Vedic and Buddhist periods saw fine muslin fabrics, referred to as Kasav or Kasika. The Mughal and Persian invasions introduced sumptuous silken fabrics, and the Vijayanagara Empire celebrated opulent

gold-threaded brocades. The textile history of Banarasi shows a unified evolution and transition in yarns and patterns across eras." According to Rai, Banarasi silk stands the test of time and is perceived today as a slow luxury due to its painstakingly indigenous and age-old weaving techniques. A peek into the weaving process

"The process of weaving a Banarasi sari begins with the careful selection and dyeing of silk yarns," said Mehra. "The dyed yarns are set to dry and then loaded onto the handloom, where skilled weavers use various techniques like Kadiyal, Meenakari, Tanchoi, and Kadhwa to intricately weave the silk threads." Kadiyal involves weaving with multiple silk threads to create a vibrant border that contrasts with the body of the sari. Meenakari incorporates colourful resham (silk) threads into the weave, creating elaborate patterns depicting nature, mythology, or royal motifs. The craftsmanship is evident in the intricate weave, each perfect "Boota," and the soft folds of "Janglas" and "Kinkhabs." Other popular motifs in Banarasi weaves include latifa boota, kalgi boota, dollar boota, and anaar boota. "The motifs and patterns of Banarasi silk weaves have undergone a slow, deliberate transformation over centuries. Early designs may have been plain textures or stripes, then progressively featuring floral, animal, and bird patterns, which were popular between 350 AD and 500 AD. By the 13th century, 'Butidar' designs gained prominence," said professor John Varghese, School of Fashion, World University of Design. "The 16th-century Mughal influence introduced Islamic patterns like florals and 'Jali' or 'Jaal', while the 19th century saw a blend of Indian designs with Victorian-style geometrical patterns. Butidar brocades, Jangla featuring foliate patterns spread all over, Tanchoi with multi-coloured silk inter-lacings are all-time favourites," he added. How to identify authentic Banarasi saris

"An authentic Banarasi must be a pure handloom weave created on the traditional pit loom; it takes months to complete," said Rai. "The touch and feel of these saris, along with government authentication of Geographical Indication (GI) for Banarasi saris and brocades, are key indicators of authenticity." According to Mehra, an authentic Banarasi sari can be recognised by its elegant fluidity and delicate lightness of its zari work. The reverse side is nearly as refined as the front, with minimal thread tails and an almost invisible weave of zari. She also stressed on the beauty of human flaws. "Anything made by hand cannot have the exact same weaves printed across, there will always be some difference, some curves and threads that will not perfectly match," she said. Banarasi Radhika Merchant wore a Banarasi lehenga designed by Manish Malhotra for her wedding celebrations.

"The slow, meticulous art of handloom weaving is losing appeal among the younger generation, drawn to faster, more lucrative job opportunities," said Mehra. "This cultural shift, coupled with the slow pace of handloom production, pushes many weavers towards power looms, which offer quicker production and lower costs but lack the unique, intricate quality of hand-woven sarees." Shedding light on the economic challenges faced by weavers, who are often underpaid and undervalued in a market dominated by middlemen, who control both wages and work distribution, Rai said, "Traders promote power looms for faster production, reduced costs, and higher profits, sometimes even mixing art silk in the warp to cut costs." This raises an important question: Banarasi fabrics are booming, are they truly handloom? Are we safeguarding our heritage and supporting our artisanal community, a craft-skill that is a national pride for India?

Indian boxer Nikhat Zareen neither ate nor drank water for 2 days before match at Paris Olympics; know what happens to the body

Two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen's Olympic journey came to a premature end with a disheartening loss to China's Wu Yu in the pre-quarterfinals at the Paris Olympics. The defeat, a stark contrast to the high expectations placed on her, was a bitter pill to swallow for Nikhat herself, as well as those back home. "I will come back strong," Nikhat kept repeating, PTI reported.

The once-world champion looked visibly shaken by the loss as she asked her coach to pass her some water. "Sorry guys, I could not win a medal for the country. I have made a lot of sacrifices to reach here. I had prepared myself well mentally and physically for this Olympics," PTI reported her as saying when referring to the time spent away from her family and the hard training sessions she went through. The days leading up to the match were marked by immense pressure and physical strain. Nikhat revealed enduring a sleepless night and forgoing meals to make the weight qualifications. Despite these challenges, she entered the ring with unwavering determination. "I had not eaten in the last two days, I had to maintain weight. I did not even have water, and only after weigh-in I had some water but I had no time to recover, I was first in the ring," Nikhat said in the press conference. The athlete had moved down from her preferred 52kg weight division as it didn't feature in the Paris Olympics. The match against Wu Yu proved to be a formidable challenge. The Chinese boxer's superior speed and agility proved decisive, leaving Nikhat visibly frustrated. The defeat was a stark reality check for the Indian boxer, who had been touted as a strong medal contender.

"I ran continuously for one hour many times in the last two days. If I had won today, the effort would have been appreciated but it will now look like an excuse. I gave my best," Nikhat said while recounting her struggle. According to dietician Suhani Seth Agarwal,



HOD, Dietetics, Yatharth Super Speciality Hospital, Noida, extreme dehydration and fasting for weight-in purposes can be highly detrimental to an athlete's health and performance. This practice can lead to electrolyte imbalances, decreased muscle function, impaired cognitive abilities, and increased risk of injury, she said. "They might react slower, get tired quicker, and even struggle to think clearly. While it might help them make weight, it often leaves them weak when it really counts," Agarwal explained in an interaction with us. She noted that there are smarter ways to manage weight, like planning your diet weeks in advance and working closely with a nutritionist. "This helps to stay strong and sharp, giving them the best shot at winning. In the long run, these extreme methods can also mess with an athlete's metabolism and overall health," Agarwal added. Her determination to bounce back was evident in her post-match comments, where she vowed to return stronger. The road to recovery will undoubtedly be tough, but her fighting spirit suggests that she will emerge from this setback even more determined.

Tyaani by Karan Johar unveils exclusive curated collection for Varalaxmi occasion at Hyderabad store

Hyderabad: Tyaani by Karan Johar has announced the launch of an exclusive, limited-time collection curated especially for the Varalaxmi occasion. Available only at their Hyderabad store in Jubilee Hills, it features an array of jewellery styles designed to cater to diverse tastes and preferences, a press release said.

The collection includes Mango Malas, where traditional elegance meets modern sophistication. Each piece is meticulously crafted to symbolize prosperity and beauty, making them perfect for the auspicious Varalaxmi occasion.

The collection also showcases the rich heritage of

the Tyaani art form and these pieces highlight intricate craftsmanship and timeless designs that resonate with cultural significance.

For those who appreciate vintage charm, the collection also features Victorian-inspired pieces. Furthermore, the collection includes exclusive diamond designs that exude luxury and brilliance. Rishab from Tyaani said, "each piece in this collection has been thoughtfully designed to blend traditional elements with modern aesthetics, providing our customers with jewellery that is both timeless and contemporary." With the festive and bridal season approaching, this exclusive collection is available for a limited time only.

When Aamir Khan said Yash Chopra 'removed' him from Darr, casted Shah Rukh Khan later: 'My policy with two heroes is that...'



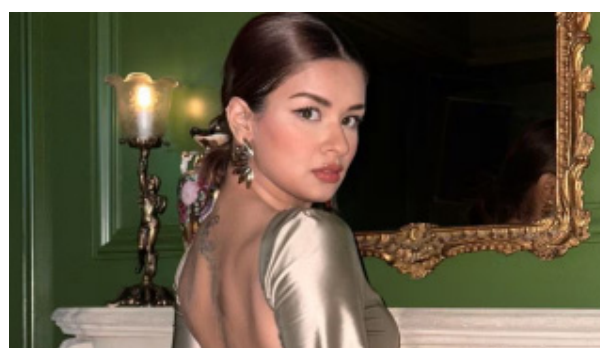
with him again. But, I have a principle, or you could say a policy, that if I'm working on a film with two heroes or more on one hero, I request the director for a joint narration. I prefer the director to narrate the story to both heroes together," he had said. Aamir recalled his comedy film *Andaz Apna Apna* co-starring Salman Khan and said both of them had received a joint narration for the film. "This approach ensures that both of us are satisfied with our roles and helps prevent any issues later on. This is how I like to work. But in this case, it was not possible. Yash ji did not feel that he should give a joint narration. On that basis, I was removed from the project."

Though Aamir couldn't be a part of *Darr*, costume designer-turned-producer Shabina Khan had earlier revealed how it was him who had recommended the film to Shah Rukh at Salman's Eid party. "Aamir Khan, SRK, Gauri, and I were standing in Salman's compound when Aamir told Shah Rukh about a narration he heard the previous day. Though he refused the film, he strongly thought that Shah Rukh was perfect for the role and urged him to call Yash Chopra for the same. The film was *Darr*, and in that one casual conversation Aamir literally handed over Yash Chopra and Yash Raj banners to Shah Rukh," Shabina Khan had said in an interview with *Notch* magazine in 2013. After *Darr*, Shah Rukh went on to work with both Yash Chopra and his filmmaker son Aditya Chopra for their banner Yash Raj Films in movies like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenga*, *Dil To Pagal Hai*, *Mohabbatein*, *Veer Zara*, *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi* and *Jab Tak Hai Jaan*.

Superstar Aamir Khan was almost on board to star as the antagonist Rahul Mehra in Yash Chopra's 1993 thriller *Darr*, but turned the project down, making way for Shah Rukh Khan to step in and make the part iconic. *Darr* also starred Sunny Deol and Juhi Chawla and followed the story of her obsessive stalker (Khan), who wreaks havoc in the couple's lives. *Darr* was a milestone film for Shah Rukh Khan, who reached a wider audience with his menacing lover boy turn, earning praise for his act. But before he was on board, it was Aamir Khan, who was considered for the same part by Yash Chopra. In an interview with Sushma Dutt in Vancouver at the time, Aamir, who was touring Canada then, had revealed why he let go off the film despite liking the story.

"Yash Chopra is a very good director. I have worked with him on *Parampara* and was very keen on working

Indian jewellery brand calls out Avneet Kaur for 'breach of contract'



A local jewellery brand has slammed Avneet Kaur for not fulfilling her commitment of tagging them in her posts (Photo: Instagram/avneetkaur). A local jewellery brand has slammed Avneet Kaur for not fulfilling her commitment of tagging them in her posts (Photo: Instagram/avneetkaur).

Actor-influencer Avneet Kaur, whose recent Cannes appearance turned heads, is being slammed for not fulfilling her commitment related to a recent social media collaboration deal. A homegrown jewellery brand, Rang, has accused the actress of breach of contract. Rang took to social media, sharing damning screenshots of their interactions with Avneet, alleging that the *Tiku Weds Sheru* actress agreed to a collaboration during her European trip, receiving multiple jewellery pieces from the brand to wear during her vacation. Despite repeated promises, Avneet allegedly failed to credit the brand in any of her posts featuring the jewellery, disregarding a "verbal commitment." The post also spoke about how the actor

wore the brand's jewellery to accessorise her look alongside outfits from luxury brands like Dior and Vivienne Westwood. While she flaunted the jewellery, she only tagged these ornaments were sourced from the aforementioned high-end brand. "Hey, I will pay them. How much is it?" she told her stylist who reminded her to tag the brand. Screenshots of a conversation between the brand's PR team and Kaur reportedly show the actress offering to pay for the pieces instead of fulfilling the agreed-upon promotion. "It took me a few days to decide whether to share this incident on social media, but I realised I can't stay silent when it's important to take a stand," the brand owners wrote in the caption, adding they "care deeply about our customers, the stylists we work with, and the celebrities who wear our jewellery."

"This isn't about naming and shaming anyone, but about speaking the truth," read an excerpt from the brand's caption. The post, which quickly went viral, ignited a firestorm of criticism against the 22-year-old. Netizens expressed outrage, with many calling out the actress for her alleged "shady behaviour". Some questioned her maturity, suggesting she prioritise actions over appearances. "Avneet is extremely shady. Rose to fame for literally nothing. Hope that you get the credit you deserve," wrote a user while supporting the brand. While the incident has sparked a wider conversation about influencer responsibility and the exploitation of small businesses, Avneet is yet to address the serious allegations. The actor known for her dance reality show beginnings, recently made waves at Cannes with the first look of her upcoming film.

When Rishi Kapoor described father Raj Kapoor's affair with Nargis as 'a part of history': 'Not ashamed of this chapter in our lives'

The legendary filmmaker Raj Kapoor's romance with the actor Nargis is a part of Hindi cinema lore, a love story whose ripples were felt for years and impacted many lives. Raj Kapoor's son, Rishi Kapoor, wrote about this chapter in his autobiography, *Khullam Khulla*, and addressed it as 'a part of history' in an interview some years before his death in 2020. He said that both families developed a cordial relationship eventually, and that affairs are bound to happen. Appearing on *Aap Ki Adalat*, Rishi Kapoor was asked about his father's affair with Nargis, and he said, "We respect that a filmmaker, while working, develops friendships. Sometimes, these friendships transform into something else. We work in the creative field, we seek inspiration from each other, we rely on each other. We are human beings, after all. And a human being will love only another human being. Kabhi kabhi shaadishuda logon ka aisa haadsa ho jaata hai. It is part of life, I guess."

He continued, "We are not ashamed of this chapter in our lives. Both families are cordial with each other. But it happened. It's history, and we respect that. It's a part of history." In his book, Rishi Kapoor had written that his mother put her foot down when Raj Kapoor became involved with Vyjayanthimala, because she'd already dealt with his affair with Nargis. "I was very young when my father had an affair with Nargis Ji, and so was not affected by it. I don't remember feeling anything was amiss at home either. But I do remember moving into the Natraj Hotel on Marine Drive with my mom during the time Papa was involved with Vyjayanthimala," he had written.

Raj Kapoor himself addressed these rumours in a documentary about his life made by Prasar Bharti. He said that neither Nargis nor his wife, Krishna, "felt cheated" because both knew that they weren't playing 'second-

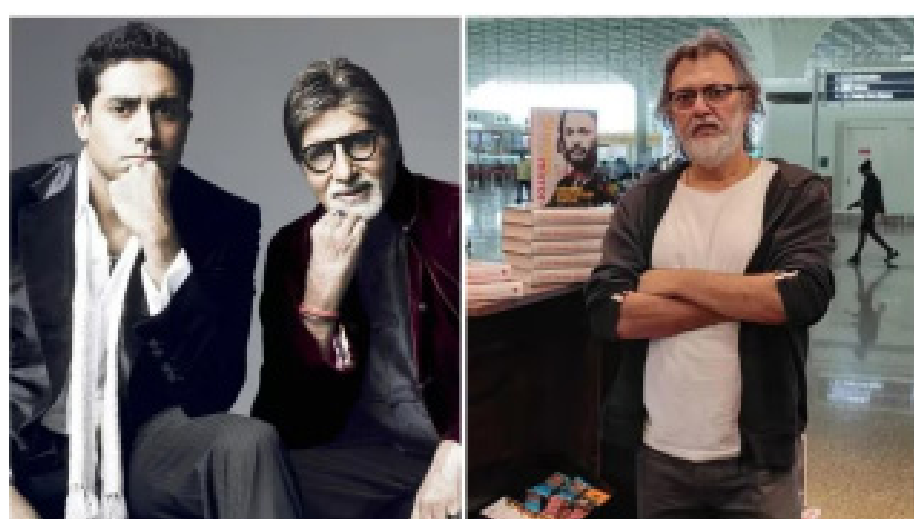


fiddle' to the other. "Right from the very beginning, from the word go, I drew a line. And it's a very, very straight fact that my wife is not my actress, and my actress is not my wife. By my wife, I mean the mother of my children. So, my home life, somewhere or the other, was there. Krishna was the mother of my children. While here was my actress. She would share, and have that satisfaction of having contributed to my creativity. That is her satisfaction," he said in the interview.

Nargis attended Rishi's wedding with Neetu Singh, and was greeted warmly by Krishna. He wrote in his autobiography, "Nargis-ji had not set foot in RK Studios after she completed *Jagte Raho* in 1956. However, that day, she came with Sunil Dutt to attend the ceremony. She was apparently very nervous about attending a Kapoor event after twenty-four years. My mother, sensing her hesitation, reportedly took her aside and said, 'My husband is a handsome man. He is also a romantic. I can understand the attraction. I know what you are thinking, but please don't beat yourself up over the past. You have come to my home on a happy occasion and we are here today as friends.'"

Abhishek Bachchan was to play a Pak terrorist 'with hate for India' in debut film, but Amitabh Bachchan thought script was 'bakwas'

Filmmaker Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra recalled the heartbreak of his debut film, *Samjhauta Express*, being shut down mere months before its scheduled start date, because the industry felt that its subject matter was too risky. He was set to collaborate on the film with Abhishek Bachchan, for whom it would serve as a long-awaited acting debut. In an interview, the filmmaker said that the industry felt that they were 'playing with fire', because the movie would've featured Abhishek in the role of a Pakistani terrorist. Appearing on Shiv Talwar's YouTube channel, he was asked about the epic journey of his would-be debut film, and he said, "Samjhauta Express, which I'd written with Kamlesh Pandey, was meant to be my debut film, and Abhishek Bachchan's debut film. We worked on it for a year, and Abhishek kept a diary in which, every day, he would write what the character thinks. It turned out well, but, as the market said, it was a very sensitive subject." The filmmaker explained why. He said that the movie would've featured Abhishek as a Pakistani terrorist whose heart



has been filled with hate for India because his innocent father was framed for being a terrorist himself. Abhishek's character infiltrates India in an effort to break his father free from jail, and inadvertently develops a bond with a police officer, who is forced to kill him in the climax. His body is repatriated on the *Samjhauta Express*. The filmmaker continued, "Until there are these dark holes of hatred between our two nations, we will keep filling them up with the bodies of our children. But they will never get filled. The only way we can build a bridge is through love. The industry felt that for Abhishek Bachchan to play

a Pakistani terrorist in his first film would be playing with fire, so the intelligent minds decided... The shoot was called off just three months before (it was supposed to start). He said that in a fit of grief, he took every bit of research material that he had collected for the movie, including the script and photos of the look test, and lit it all on fire. In an earlier interview with *Galatta Plus*, Abhishek had also recalled the story, and had included a bit about pitching the movie to his father, Amitabh Bachchan. "People were just not interested in working with me. I think I met all the directors I could've met, and they all very respectfully declined,

saying, 'We don't want the responsibility of launching you'... I was getting demoralised, and Rakeysh Mehra was only getting ad offers, so we wrote a script ourselves called *Samjhauta Express* in two months. I was playing a terrorist who comes in search of his father. Once the script was ready, we took it to dad to pitch it to him... We narrated the whole script, there was silence afterwards. My father looked at us, and said, 'Boys, bakwas script hai, get out', Abhishek recalled. He ultimately made his debut with *JP Dutta's Refugee*, and went on to work with Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra on the film *Delhi-6*.

When Pran feared people would abuse him at a wedding, was touched when they gave him 'respect'

Actor Pran, who was billed as one of the greatest villains ever in the history of Indian cinema, once feared that the audience would abuse him if he stepped out in public. Due to his image, which even his daughter wanted him to change, Pran said he thought he would get bashing from the crowd at a public event—but something unexpected happened. During the 'Inconversation with Ishan' podcast, veteran journalist Roshmila Bhattacharya spoke about some of the villains of Hindi films, who were "bad men on screen but proper gentlemen off screen."

The journalist recalled Pran's daughter, frustrated with his bad-man image, telling him to do a "good role" for a change. "My classmates keep telling me that my father is a villain, so please do a good role for a change," she had told him. Around the same time, he signed Manoj Kumar's *Upkar*, where he played Malang chacha, who became everyone's favourite after the film released and became a huge hit," the journalist said. Set in the backdrop of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, *Upkar* was the directorial debut of Manoj Kumar and starred Pran as the noble man Malang, who was the moral compass to Manoj Kumar. His non-villainous turn after years of being synonymous with the bad guy in movies completely won over the audience, as Pran later confessed of being respected perhaps for the first time in his career.

Roshmila Bhattacharya recalled, "There was an industry person's wedding, and naturally there was a lot of crowd. The venue was slightly ahead of where the car



would drop people, and on both sides, we had onlookers, wanting to meet the stars. Pran saab told me, 'Mujhe dar lagne laga, ki ye log mujhe gaali dena shuru kar dege (I feared that if I step out, I'd be abused by the crowd due to my...'. The minute he got down from the car, there was pin-drop silence. Suddenly someone said, 'Malang chacha is coming!' The crowd just moved, so that he could walk freely. He said, 'The respect I received that day... Whatever role you play, a hero, villain, or a character actor, you become that for the audience.' The veteran journalist reiterated the legend that Pran's impact on the audience was so strong that no babies were named after him, as parents feared their newborn would turn out like the on-screen villain. "But he was a pure gentleman," she added. Pran passed away in 2013, aged 93.

Vikrant Massey says his mom 'recommended' he, Sheetal Thakur should live-in before marriage: 'This worked for me'



Though actor Vikrant Massey tied the knot with colleague Sheetal Thakur only in 2022, they had been in a relationship for several years before that. The couple welcomed a baby boy earlier this year, soon after his major career breakthrough with director Vidhu Vinod Chopra's biographical drama *12th Fail*. Vikrant recently opened up about their bond and recalled the advice his mother gave him when he told her about his relationship with Sheetal. "We (Vikrant and Sheetal) have been together for almost a decade now. We dated for almost eight years (before tying the knot)," he said during a chat with YouTuber AminJaz on his *Untriggered* podcast.

When the host asked if it was ideal to date for a long time before settling down to ensure compatibility, Vikrant said that it depends on the individual. "This worked for me and suited me. Our temperaments suited each other and our life aspirations were similar. We lived together for almost the entirety of our relationship... for almost seven years," he added. Vikrant further recalled that it was his mother who urged them to try a live-in relationship before making things official so that they could see if living with each other was possible and learn about the other person better before commencing a family in the conventional sense. "It was my mother who suggested that we stay together. Thankfully, I have really progressive parents. My mother was born and raised in Bombay (Mumbai) in 1962. She's done her high school education

and was pretty progressive. She would listen to bands like ABBA and Boney M, wear stilettos and read Sidney Sheldon and Jawaharlal Nehru. So, that helped. She recommended that we stay together and it worked for us," he said, adding that being in a live-in relationship prior to marriage helped him put things into perspective. "You get to see different shades of each other; that's true companionship for me," he said. Recalling that he and Sheetal met through a common friend, Vikrant quipped, "It was love at third sight." "On the third day that we met, we realised that there were sparks flying and why not address it. There was an instant attraction. That's always the first thing, attraction. You don't fall head over heels immediately; no one does. When I say, 'it was love at third sight,' during the first two meetings, it was contemplation and assessment, 'Should I? Should I not?'" The actor further said that he too was once naive and confused infatuation for true love. "It happens. When I was in Class 7 and had an infatuation, I thought I had fallen in love. Now I know what it was. But that was also beautiful and gave me butterflies in my tummy. I would just look out for her during recess in school and that would make me really happy. If you get eye contact and a smile from the girl, your day is made. But that definitely was not love," he added. After the release of his film *Blackout* on JioCinema earlier this year, Vikrant is now gearing up for his second direct-to-OTT movie of 2024: director Jayprad Desai's *Phir Aayi Hasseen Dillruba*, a sequel to the 2021 film *Hasen Dillruba*.

Neeraj Chopra braces to defend javelin crown in what promises to be a cracker of a final



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Paris 2024 Olympics: Neeraj Chopra Javelin Throw final Neeraj Chopra, of India, competes during the men's javelin throw qualification at the 2024 Summer Olympics, Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2024, in Saint-Denis, France. In January this year, India's superstar athlete Neeraj Chopra had the chance to meet the legendary Roger Federer in Switzerland. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pick the brains of someone who has seen it all in his career, from the highest of highs to some crushing lows. After a quick chat about Indian food, Neeraj wanted to know something specific from the 20-time Grand Slam champion, who had one of the longest elite sporting careers in the world.

"Javelin and tennis are very different but the main thing I wanted to ask him was about his longevity at the top and his mentality. He said that maintaining a balance between competition, training and recovery was the most important thing, and I agree with that. I try to do that as well," Neeraj had said before his season began, recalling that chat with the Swiss great. Neeraj, 26 years old, will enter the Stade de France on Thursday night as the reigning Olympic and World Champion in men's javelin throw. He might already know a thing or two about longevity. He's still young, but has been at the centre of all Indian athletics hopes since the time he broke the junior world record back in 2016.

But striking a balance between competing and staying healthy is something he has had to learn in 2024. The temptation to test his preparation for the title defence in Paris might have been strong, but he and his team have been cautious in taking part in meets in the lead-up to the Olympics. While he has largely remained tight-lipped about his fitness concerns, Neeraj said after his qualification throw of 89.34m that he decided to focus on remaining fit for Paris instead of participating in meets to warm himself up. But if there were any concerns over his competitive level, he allayed some of those fears with the second-best throw of his career so far. One and done, into the final.

The clash for the podium, though, promises to be a thriller given how the main contenders of the medal fared

during qualification. "The final will be a cracker, the Tokyo final mark has already been surpassed in qualification," Neeraj said. It could be a different final too, if Neeraj finds himself playing catch-up early on unlike Tokyo where he laid down the early marker. India's Neeraj Chopra competes in the Men's javelin throw qualification round at the 2024 Summer Olympics, in Paris, India's Neeraj Chopra competes in the Men's javelin throw qualification round at the 2024 Summer Olympics, in Paris. (PTI)

But in the years since, Neeraj has had sufficient experience in fighting back. While he is a good starter naturally, Neeraj has also shown he can dig deep if needed, as he did at the 2022 Oregon Worlds to win silver, at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year to respond to Kishore Kumar Jena's challenge, and at the Doha Diamond League meet earlier this year.

Pressure is a privilege? Of course, there will be pressure. He has been asked that question pretty much in every single one of his media interactions since Tokyo. His response, however, has always been uniform. He prefers to look at the weight of expectations as a motivation. But even for someone who has stepped up repeatedly on big occasions, the atmosphere at a potentially packed Stade de France will be a new experience. Once again though, in a sea of global superstars, Neeraj will have to stand up as the solitary Indian title contender. It's a privilege he enjoys. Not a good day on track & field

That Neeraj will be in action on a day after a series of disappointments in track and field only adds to the heft of his consistent showings at international events since Tokyo. Officials' claims of India being a fast-rising athletics contender haven't quite played out so far as the likes of Jyothi Yarraji and Annu Rani went below their best on Wednesday. While there are no expectations from most of the athletics contingent to win medals at the Olympics yet, a basic benchmark for performance usually is how close they can get to their personal bests, or at the very least, Season Bests. Jyothi, on her debut, was expected to dip below her own 100m hurdles national record (12.78s) but instead ran one of her rare recent races where she went 13s+ (13.16s). But she will get another chance to race on the lavender track as athletics has introduced repechage for racers who don't meet the automatic qualification criteria in the opening round. For Annu, even matching her season best of 60.68m wouldn't have been enough for qualifying for the final, but 55.81m was well below her capabilities. (Her 2nd and 3rd throws were in the 53m range). In men's high jump qualification, Sarvesh Anil Kushare was 25th overall in the qualification round as he finished with a clearance of 2.15m, and three misses at 2.20m. (SB: 2.25m) Away from the Stade de France, Suraj Panwar and Priyanka Goswami did not finish the race in marathon race walk mixed relay, a debut Olympic event.

Opaque rules forced Vinesh Phogat to compete in a category she struggled to cut weight for

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Paris 2024 Olympics: Vinesh Phogat weight category Vinesh Phogat reacts after the round of 16 of the women's freestyle 50kg wrestling match against Japan's Yui Susaki, at Champ-de-Mars Arena, in Paris, France, Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2024. In a shocking reversal of fortunes, Vinesh Phogat is disqualified on Wednesday from the Paris Olympics after she was found overweight ahead of her women's 50kg final match. (AP Photo via PTI) Two halls at the National Institute of Sport in Patiala are abuzz, because Vinesh Phogat has done something audacious. The multiple-time Worlds medallist chooses to weigh in for both the 50 kg and 53 kg categories. She wins the 50 kg trials and finishes in the top four of the 53 kg trials. Phogat competed in two categories as she had no clarity on which category she could be part of due to the opaqueness of rules, and this way, her participation at the Olympics remained in her hands. Just under five months later, that punt by Phogat came extraordinarily close to delivering her a silver or gold medal at the 2024 Paris Olympics – a dream that came down to the last 100 grams. Phogat competed in the 48 kg category at her maiden Olympic appearance at the 2016 Rio Games. She won the Asian Games gold medal in the 50 kg weight class but just over a year later, won a bronze in the 53 kg category at the 2019 World Championships. The reason for the switch was the weight cut she was struggling with.

To avoid that struggle, Phogat chose to become a 53 kg wrestler after the Asian Games, and at one point after the Tokyo Games, was also wrestling in the 55 kg category. She won a bronze at the 2022 World Championships in 53 kg but after spearheading the protests against ex-WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, her return was curtailed by a knee ligament injury.

During that time, Antim Panghal won a bronze at the 2023 World Championships, thus getting India a Paris Olympics quota in the 53 kg category. Former Wrestling Federation of India rules gave the quota winner the go-ahead for the Olympics, and so Phogat was in a fix, because the ad-hoc committee was running wrestling in India at the time and they had promised her that there would be a trial for the 53 kg category. But that decision might have been taken away from their hands as the WFI was set to return to power after conducting their election



and selecting Sanjay Singh as its new president.

And thus when March 12 came, Phogat believed that a WFI return wouldn't necessarily guarantee her a shot at the Olympics in the 53 kg category. Which meant she either had to switch to the 50 kg category, or the 57 kg. She chose 50 – a weight class she had last been part of in 2018. "I had no clarity about the 53kg quota situation, whether there would be trials or not. Usually, the quota is won by the country but they hadn't held trials before. They (ad hoc committee) said that it wouldn't be the case this time. I had no option but to do this because I have to participate in the Olympics," the 29-year-old had said then, confirming that the decision to take part in the 50 kg category was to ensure that her Paris dreams remained in her own hands. Phogat's walk-around weight is usually around 55-56 kgs. Cutting down to 50 on consecutive days takes its toll. That's why United World Wrestling president Nenad Lalovic said that it wasn't a matter of one kilo, rather the large amount she had to cut in the first place to reach that figure of '100 grams' that caused the issue.

American wrestling legend Jordan Burroughs proposed some immediate rule changes on social media to avoid a repeat of the Phogat-like situation. "1.) 1kg second Day Weight Allowance, 2.) Weigh-ins pushed from 8:30am to 10:30am, 3.) Forfeit will occur in future finals if the opposing finalist misses weight, 4.) After a semifinal victory, both finalists' medals are secured even if weight is missed on Day 2. Gold can only be won by a wrestler who makes weight on the second day, 5.) Give Vinesh the Silver medal.

Wrestler Antim Panghal faces deportation trying to 'smuggle' sister into Games Village

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Indian wrestler Antim Panghal, who lost in the 53kg category, was summoned by the police inside the Athletes' Village in Paris. Antim was accused of 'smuggling' her sister inside the village, in a major violation of the rules. It is learnt that Antim and her sister are likely to be 'deported' back to India on Thursday. "The Indian Olympic Association has decided to fly wrestler Antim and her support staff back after a disciplinary breach was brought to IOA's notice by the French authorities," an IOA statement said. Moreover, Antim's support staff — coaches Bhagat Singh and Vikas — were embroiled in another police case. According to sources, they took a cab from

the Village to their hotel on Wednesday evening. Upon reaching the hotel, they refused to pay the cab driver and misbehaved with him before rushing inside the premises. The cab driver, sources added, also approached the police following the incident. Antim made her Olympic debut on Wednesday in the 53 kg category — the pet weight class of Vinesh Phogat. Considered one of India's medal prospects, she lost in a one-sided first round bout against Zeynep Yetgil. The 19-year-old left the Champ-de-Mars Arena in tears and was accompanied by her sister and coaches to the hotel where they were staying. She then asked her sister to pack her belongings and travel with her to the Village, where Antim passed the heavy security checkpoints with her accreditation card.

Sreejesh's family at Kerala's Kizhakkambalam gather to celebrate second Olympic bronze over unni appams



GNS News Agency, August 9

As seconds tick by, a wave of anxiety clutches P Raveendran. His big bright eyes wander to the wall-mounted grandfather clock, before he reconfirms the time on his mobile phone screen. The first half of the day had breezed along—he had gone to the airport to pick his eldest son Sreejith, coming home after five years. But the second half is meandering along to the promised hour, that is 5.30 pm, when his youngest son PR Sreejesh turns up for his country for the one last time. "I am always nervous before his games, but this time I am ever more, maybe because it is his last game, and might not experience it ever in my life," he says, staring past the window panes reeking of fresh paint and into the courtyard, where a hunched rambutan tree is swaying in the mild breeze. This afternoon, he says, is different from all other evenings. Longer and tender. "A chapter ends in our life," he says with a mix of pride, pain and relief. "Though reality has not sunk in yet. For the past 20 years we have seen him more on TV than at home. Now we could finally spend some time at home," he says, although he worries he would soon take up a coaching gig and leave home. "We often joke, he visits us like the Maveli (the mythical demon king) during Onam, but for parents the Onam or Vishu is when the children are at home," he says.

Sreejesh's wife Aneeshya chimes in: "I don't know how it is to see him as a retired sportsman. From the day I first met him, he has been a sportsman," she says, peels off giggles echoing the dining hall. They were classmates at the GV Raja Sports School in Thiruvananthapuram. "He was the class topper and in the ninth standard, she came and began competing with him," the father says. Love blossomed—Raveendran thought this was a passing infatuation of the teenager. "But he exceeded my expectations. I was happy when they decided to marry because their bond would be so strong to last 13 years," he says. Unlike Raveendran, Aneeshya has little time to meditate on the sluggish arms of the tick-tocking clock. She has to manage a herd of children—her own pair, three of Sreejesh's brother, and those of the extended family, who have come to watch the game together. "It's fun and a big mess too," she says, as one of them zips off on a skating board. Sreejesh's mother, Usha, is busy in the kitchen, mixing the dough for her son's favourite snack, unni appam (sweet rice fritters).

Neighbours—most of them their relatives—jostle in and out of the house, asking whether Sreejesh, fondly called Kannan, had called them, or if he was nervous and that typical irritating query: "What's his next plan? Is he going to revive the farms?"

Sreejesh calls his parents before every match. Often it turns out into a conference call, with the brother and his children too dropping by. He has not called yet, and Raveendran fidgets his thumb along the phone screen. Every time it buzzes, his heart pounds and eyes sparkle. No, no not him this time and he brusquely cuts the calls. His eyes light up. The name Kannan flashes on the screen and he rushes inside to call Sreejith for a private family video chat. As though a siren has blared, those in the house throng in front of the tiny screen of love. The last time Raveendran has seen his house this vibrant was

From a boy who liked playing harmonium to scoring two goals against Spain to help India win bronze medal in Paris Olympics

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Father Sarabjeet Singh still remembers when a young Harmanpreet Singh returned with a harmonium from the annual village fair held in the memory of Baba Gurditta ji, son of Sikhism's sixth guru Guru Hargobind Singh, instead of a usual hockey stick. The Indian captain, who had a flair for singing in his pre teens days, has been the highest scorer for the Indian team in Paris Olympics with 10 goals including a brace in the bronze-medal game against Spain that India won. "Nikke hunde bas gaun da shaq si Harmanpreet nu (While he was a child, he only had passion for singing)," the father recalls. "Whichever village fair we went to, he would urge me to get him a harmonium and once I got him, he would spend his time with the musical instrument. It was only at his school when a coach enrolled him in hockey that Harmanpreet's interest in the sport grew. With his drag-flicks, he has made the goal-keepers sing to his tune and to see him play his role in getting India back to back Olympics medals for India is a special feeling for all of us," Singh Senior tells. "At our village, most of the youngsters would play hockey at the village ground and there were days when I would play hockey with my friends after assisting my father on the farmland to relax," a young Harmanpreet Singh had told this newspaper in 2014. "Slowly, my interest in hockey grew and I would attend trials for various academies in Jalandhar in a hope to get a seat there." It was at the St Soldier's School at Jandiala Guru that Singh first started as a hockey trainee at the age of ten. Singh, who was trained initially as a full-back by coach Yadwinder Singh at Malwa Academy in Ludhiana, would join the Surjit Singh Academy in 2010 under coaches Avtar Singh and Gurdev Singh. While a young Harmanpreet would often hear tales about full back Surjit Singh, a member of the 1975 World Cup winning Indian hockey team who died in a road accident, his well built physique led the coaches to train the youngster for drag flicks.

"When Harmanpreet joined us, we were impressed by his physique. Most of the trainees, who come from villages, are built like that and Harmanpreet knew how to

during the childhood years of his sons. Sreejith can't resist guffawing. "We used to turn this house upside down, playing, fighting, playing music, fighting for the remote control. Loads of nostalgia. Can't wait to see him after five long years," says Sreejith, settled in Canada as a real estate agent. His youngest son has seen his uncle only through video calls. "For him every bearded man on the TV is his uncle. The other day he saw Virat Kohli and then suddenly began shouting Kannan chittapan (father's younger brother)," he says. They have never played hockey—but a lot of cricket with cousins. "Perhaps it has helped him (Sreejesh) in that he learned to be tough playing with boys older than him. Hockey, I must confess I didn't know it until he started playing it," he says. There was no hockey in Kerala; the presence is still scant. There is a lone astro turf in the entire state, built as recent as 2014 for the National Games. Their shirts don't peer from the ceiling of shops; sports shops, even in big cities, seldom stock hockey sticks and gears. His native Kizhakkambalam is a village in the guise of a town. The narrow road, aptly named Olympian Sreejesh Road, that winds past his house, transports you back in time to the rustic charms of countryside life. Paddy fields, waiting for the harvest, amble far into the horizon. Brooks and rivulets slither along like slumberous snakes.

The agriculture forebears of the Sreejesh household is evident. A traditional brass nelpara (large cylindrical bowl to keep rice) is proudly displayed in the visitor's hall. "We are proud sons of the soil. Behind Sreejesh's growth is the sweat and mud of the field. Kannan too used to help us during the harvest season," says Ravindra, who has stopped cultivating paddy after a heart attack four years ago. He points to his chest: "Full of stents.

Sreejesh Road The narrow road, aptly named Olympian Sreejesh Road, that winds past his house, transports you back in time to the rustic charms of countryside life. (Credit: Sandip G) To the ears of the hardened farmer, the game with a crooked stick hardly struck a chord. "Especially in that era (late 90s). I was skeptical, because I had never heard of anyone getting a job through sports quota playing hockey. At that time we had not even the faintest idea that he would be an international player. But I let it be, let life take its course," he says. It did, taking Sreejesh along 329 senior international games, numerous league games, a showcase stacked with medals, the most glittering the gold from Asian Games in 2022 and the bronze medal from the 2021 Olympics. A second Olympic bronze would squeeze for space.

He claims he was an unfussy parent, who seldom interfered in his son's sport. He remembers the only time he did with fondness. "He got into the junior selection camp in 2003-04. A friend of mine told me that if I talk to O Rajagopal (then a central minister) he could recommend him and get into the team. I conveyed this to him and he shot back at me and told me, "If I get into the team through recommendation, they will pick me once and then drop. Don't worry, a time will come when ministers will knock on our doors," he recalls. Though he didn't understand the game, and at times cynical, he always supported. He was reminded of one such incident when he took a stroll along the empty cattle shed. "Once I went to buy a hockey kit, The shopkeeper told me it costs Rs 10,000. All I had was Rs 3,000. I didn't hesitate, and sold a dairy cow," he says. The old stories warmed his heart, but the hands of the clocks were still walking heavily. "Sometimes you get anxious for no reason. I'm sure he will come back with the bronze," he said. So Sreejesh did, but a long and storied chapter in Indian hockey and Raveendran's household ended, leaving both the country and family immensely content. But the hands of the wall-mounted clock would never meander along as sluggishly as it had on Thursday for Raveendran.

make use of his physique as a fullback at a young age. We made him play as right as well as left fullback and he understood the strengths needed for both the positions at a young age," remembers coach Avtar Singh. Since the academy had two drag-flickers Varun Kumar and Gagandeep Singh, Singh's current team-mates, he was put on the drill by the coaches for a month initially.

"There was some of the Astro Turf patch remaining after new turf was laid out and we got the small astro-turf patch installed behind the main stadium in front of a goal-post and some nets surrounding the goal-post. Harmanpreet and other trainees would initially learn how to stop the ball and pull the ball. He had very strong wrists and it would help him to impart the speed to the ball. Initially he started with hitting 30-40 balls per session, which later increased to 50-60 balls per session," says coach Avtar Singh. He made his junior India debut in 2014, starred with nine goals in the Sultan of Johor Cup for the Indian U-21 team and 14 goals in the Junior Asia Cup in 2015, before making it to the Indian team for 2016 Rio Olympics where he was one of the drag-flickers for the team. The same year, Harmanpreet played his maiden junior world cup, scoring three goals. "Apart from staying low and rotating, Harmanpreet would also stay upright too and fall into the ball which helped him generate speed as well the different angles. He knows how to utilize his upper body. But his favourite was to hit the ball towards goal-keeper right or to hit the ball past the first rusher. It helped him develop low angles and that has always been his strength. That's what he showed in Paris too in some of his drag-flicks and his accuracy has helped him despite the urge to hit to his favourite positions. "Yes, it was a bit of bad luck in the semis against Germany where his variations could not be executed but he showed his accuracy with the low corner penalty corner equaliser towards the left of the Spanish goal-keeper for India today," says Avtar Singh. Former Indian goal-keeper Baljit Singh Dadhwal saw a young Harmanpreet in a domestic trial in 2016. "People in the IOCL teams used to call Harmanpreet as Pehlwaan (Wrestler). It was due to his strong physique and that has remained his strength till date.