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Enrollment crisis hits Telangana government schools

Hyderabad: Government schools in Telangana appear to be grappling with an enrolment crisis. During the present academic year of 2024-25, a total of 1,864 government and local body schools across the State have failed in attracting students – not one of them. Given the dismal enrolment rate, these schools have ended up sending their 400 odd teachers to other schools. Ironically, these schools while failing to get even a single enrolment have around 2,800 sanctioned teacher posts. In fact, the number of zero enrolment rose from 1,791 in the academic year 2023-24 to present 1,864, reflect the sorry state of affairs in the government and local body schools in the State.

Dalits barred from entering temple in Telangana's Siddipet

Siddipet: In a disturbing case of alleged caste discrimination at the Shivaru Venkatapur village in Markook mandal, some upper caste villagers prevented persons from the dalit community from entering the newly built Durgamma Temple in the village.

The dalits approached the Markook police, seeking action against those who prevented them from entering the temple. According to dalits in the village, Shivaru Venkatapur is organising four-day festivities to mark the temple's inauguration. The villagers invited all their relatives to celebrate the festival grandly.

PM Modi calls states to expedite implementation of central projects



GNS News Agency, August 28

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the progress of several critical infrastructure initiatives, including drinking water supply, sanitation, national highways, gas pipeline construction, railway projects, and the Amrit-2.0 scheme. The discussion involved chief secretaries from various states, emphasizing the need for swift action on these essential projects. During the meeting, Prime Minister

Modi stressed the importance of completing schemes aimed at providing safe drinking water to citizens. He urged the chief secretaries to expedite the implementation of sanitation management projects as well. The Prime Minister called for timely completion of various railway and road projects, as well as the construction of new gas pipelines. Underlining the significance of the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation 2.0 (Amrit 2.0), Modi directed state officials to accelerate efforts in ensuring that every household in urban areas has access to safe drinking water. He also highlighted the need for advancing sewage treatment projects and developing green spaces around drinking water sources. Andhra Pradesh Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad, State Municipal Administration Department Special Chief Secretary Anil Kumar Singhal, TR&DB Principal Secretary Kantilal Dande, Finance Department Additional Secretary J. Niwas, Swachandhra Corporation MD Gandham Chandradu, and Municipal Administration Department Director Hari Narayana, among others participated in the scheme.

CM Revanth Reddy's Pharma Village plans face stiff opposition in his own constituency



GNS News Agency, August 28

Vikarabad: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's move to scrap the much awaited Pharma City and go for clusters of what he calls 'pharma villages' is facing stiff opposition, including from his own constituency of Kodangal, where the protest is so fierce that a woman farmer threatened on Wednesday to take her life if her land was taken away for the pharma village. Farmers from Kodangal have for the last few weeks been opposing the State government's move to acquire their lands and allocate them to pharmaceutical companies to set up a pharma village. The protest on Wednesday saw the farmers declaring that they would rather die than give up their lands. Tension prevailed during the protest in front of the Dudyala MRO office when a woman farmer from Polepally village, Turpu Rajamma, holding a bottle of pesticide, threatened to take her life if her land was taken away.

"I will die, but I will not give up my land," she declared while slowly moving to drink the pesticide. Alerted

by the situation, other farmers quickly intervened and snatched the pesticide bottle from her. The group then continued to protest, reiterating their stance that they would rather die than surrender their lands for the project. Farmers from Lekacherla, Pulicherla and Polepally raised slogans against the Congress and demanded the government to shelve the plans to set up a pharma village in the neighbourhood. They outrightly opposed the pharma village and declared that they would not part with their lands for the same. The majority of the lands in Kodangal were fertile lands and it was not wise on the government's part to use such lands for setting up a pharma village, the farmers said, pointing out that they had been depending on the land for their livelihood for generations and now the State government wanted it to be handed over to pharma companies. They also pointed out that water and air pollution would increase in villages and people would face severe health issues if the project came up. "We don't want the pharma village. Our lands should be ours. If agricultural land is given to pharma companies, it will affect our health and environment," former Polepally MPTC Purra Sreemannarayana said.

The State government is planning to acquire 1274.25 acres of government and patta lands from villages of Hakimpet, Polepalli, and Lakacharla in Dudyala mandal for the proposed pharma village. Worried over the State government's move to acquire their lands, a group of farmers from Daultabad mandal had recently met BRS working president KT Rama Rao at Telangana Bhavan and sought his support. The farmers said nearly 3,000 acres of agricultural land in the villages of Hakimpet, Polepalli, and Lakacharla in Dudyala mandal were at risk of being taken from them. They also said the Chief Minister's brother Tirupathi Reddy was pressurising them to give up their lands. They described the government's actions as a conspiracy to grab land worth lakhs of crores, ignoring the fact that these farm lands were their primary source of livelihood.

Kavitha receives rousing welcome on return to Hyd

GNS News Agency, August 28

Hyderabad: Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) leader and Member of Legislative Council K Kavitha received a rousing welcome at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport here on her return home after five months in custody. The Supreme Court had on Tuesday granted her bail in the cases initiated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) related to the Delhi excise policy case.

Kavitha's return was marked by emotional scenes as she reunited with her family and supporters. The BRS cadre, who had been eagerly awaiting her release, expressed their joy and relief. The party workers' jubilant mood was palpable, with many describing the moment as a victory for justice. Addressing the media, Kavitha reiterated her commitment to fighting against what she termed as "false allegations" and "political vendetta." She thanked her supporters for their unwavering faith and promised to continue her work for the people of Telangana.

Kavitha was greeted by thousands of jubilant party activists holding placards that read "Daughter of a Fighter," "Satyameva Jayathe" (Truth Prevails), and "Justice Has Won." The atmosphere was electric as supporters cheered and celebrated her return. The BRS leader was accompanied by her family members, including her brother and BRS working president, KT Rama Rao. A massive convoy of vehicles followed Kavitha from the airport to her residence. Along the route, huge cutouts and banners welcomed her, reflecting the overwhelming support she enjoyed from her followers. They chanted slogans lauding her resilience and leadership all the way.



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IMA suspends membership of RG Kar Hospital ex-principal Sandeep Ghosh

New Delhi, GNS News Agency, August 28

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Wednesday suspended the membership of former RG Kar Medical College and Hospital principal Dr Sandip Ghosh, amid a CBI probe into the alleged rape and murder of a junior doctor at the Kolkata-based institute earlier this month. The decision to suspend the IMA membership of Ghosh, who is the vice president of the association's Kolkata branch, was taken by its disciplinary committee.

In an order, the Indian Medical Association said the committee constituted by IMA national president Dr R V Asokan on Wednesday suo-motu considered the rape and murder case of the postgraduate resident doctor and the subsequent developments at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. The IMA general secretary along with Asokan had met the victim's parents at their home, it said. "They had put up their grievances against you (Ghosh) in dealing with the situation as well as lack of empathy and sensitivity in handling the issue in appropriate manner befitting the responsibility held by you in your dealings with them," the order said. "The IMA Bengal state branch as well as certain associations of doctors also have demanded action citing the nature of disrepute brought by you to the profession on the whole," it said. The



order said the disciplinary committee of the IMA has suspend you forthwith from the membership of Indian Medical Association".

President Murmu Condemns Kolkata Doctor's Rape-Murder, Calls For Societal Change



GNS News Agency, August 28

President Droupadi Murmu has issued a forceful statement condemning the recent rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata, declaring "Enough is enough" in an interview with PTI. This marks her first public remarks on the incident that has sparked widespread outrage and protests across West Bengal. Murmu emphasized the critical need for societal transformation to prevent such atrocities against women. She expressed support for the ongoing protests and called for expeditious justice, underscoring the importance of shifting societal attitudes towards women and ensuring their safety and dignity in all aspects of life. The President highlighted a concerning trend where, despite protests by students, doctors, and citizens in Kolkata, criminals continue to act with impunity elsewhere. She asserted that no civilized

society should tolerate such violence against women. Reflecting on the 12 years since the Nirbhaya case, Murmu criticized what she termed society's "collective amnesia" regarding numerous rape cases. She called this forgetfulness "obnoxious" and stressed the need for a more lasting awareness and response to crimes against women. Murmu pointed to a "deplorable mindset" that often views women as inferior beings - less powerful, capable, and intelligent. She urged society to engage in "honest, unbiased self-introspection" and confront difficult questions about its treatment of women.

The President's comments come in the wake of the August 9 incident where a 31-year-old trainee doctor was raped and murdered at RG Kar hospital, sparking public outrage and demands for swift action and severe punishment for the perpetrator.

SCR to run special trains in view of Dasara, Diwali festivals

GNS News Agency, August 28

Hyderabad: The South Central Railway (SCR) has announced running 48 special trains between various destinations in view of the forthcoming Dasara, Diwali and Chhat festivals. Accordingly, Kacheguda - Tirupati (07653) service will run between October 10 and November 11

Revenue Dept serves notices to MLRITM, Institute of Aeronautical Engineering

GNS News Agency, August 28

Hyderabad: Revenue officials on Wednesday served notices to the Marri Laxman Reddy Institute of Technology and Management (MLRITM) and Institute of Aeronautical Engineering (IARE) colleges in Dundigal owned by BRS MLA Marri Rajashekhar Reddy for allegedly constructing the college buildings within the buffer zone of the Chinna Damera Cheruvu. The revenue department has asked the college management to submit an explanation within 15 days.

In response to a writ petition filed by Anil C Dayakar, the High Court issued a directive to conduct a joint inspection on the lake Chinna Damera

Cheruvu. The appeal sought to stop further encroachment and safeguard the water bodies by highlighting illegal buildings throughout 13 tank bed regions in Hyderabad and in the erstwhile Ranga Reddy District. The court ordered a thorough report on the condition of the lake beds and the degree of encroachments, according to the Medchal-Malkajgiri District Collector. Along with establishing boundaries and protecting ecosystems, the court also ordered the authorities to demarcate the full tank level (FTL) of the lakes.

In the joint inspection, it has been found that the two institutes has encroached about 8.4 acres which includes buildings (1 acre), Permanent sheds (2

acres), Vehicle Parking (3 acres) and MLR college roads (2.24 acres). The notice, which is issued in accordance with provisions of the Telangana (TA) Irrigation Act, 1357 Fasl, and Section 23 of the Telangana Water, Land and Trees Act, 2002, requires the illegal buildings to be removed within seven days of receiving them. The authorities will take further legal measures if they fail to comply with the norms.

Meanwhile, Marri Laxman Reddy Institute of Technology and Management and Institute of Aeronautical Engineering (IARE) college management has reportedly approached the High Court against the notices issued to it by the revenue department.

ED Fines 908 Crore on DMK

MP Jagathrakshakan for Foreign Exchange Violations

GNS News Agency, August 28

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has imposed a red penalty of ₹908 crore on S. Jagathrakshakan, Arakonam DMK Member of Parliament, for violations under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). The penalty order was passed by the ED on Monday based on the Seizure Order dated September 11, 2020, under Section 37A of FEMA in which various movable and immovable properties held in the name of Jagathrakshakan and his family members, totally valued at ₹89.19 crore, were seized.

In a press release, the ED said the penalty was levied after the Madras High Court dismissed the writ appeals of Jagathrakshakan through order dated July 23

this year. Earlier the Madras High Court had on November 30 last year refused to intervene in the functioning of the ED which had followed the due process of issuing show cause notices against Jagathrakshakan and his family members on December 22, 2021.

The ED had charged Jagathrakshakan and his family members for violations of various FEMA provisions, particularly with respect to their investment to the tune of ₹42 crore into a shell company incorporated in Singapore during the year 2017 and acquisition/holding of Singapore foreign shares and its subsequent transfer amongst the family members in defiance of the provisions of FEMA. Also, ED had found violations with regard to the investment of around ₹9 crore made into a Sri Lankan entity.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Faith or folly?

THE horrifying incident in Gurdaspur, where a 35-year-old man lost his life at the hands of a pastor and his henchmen in the name of exorcism, is a reflection of the pervasive menace of 'faith healers' and 'miracle workers' in the region. The victim, subjected to brutal beatings, was allegedly being rid of 'evil spirits', an archaic belief that tragically led to his death. This incident is not merely an isolated case of misguided faith but a grim reflection of the dangerous power these pseudo-healers wield over the vulnerable.

Punjab has long been prone to such exploitative practices, where cultural and religious traditions often intermingle, creating a breeding ground for superstition. These self-proclaimed healers, masquerading as spiritual saviours, exploit the fears and insecurities of their followers, promising miraculous cures for everything — from physical ailments to mental illnesses. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of stringent legal frameworks to regulate or punish such practices. Often, these 'miracle workers' escape justice, shielded by the very communities they prey upon. The failure to hold them accountable not only emboldens them but also perpetuates the cycle of exploitation and abuse.

Punjab needs a comprehensive approach to combat this menace. Educational initiatives must be launched to promote scientific thinking and dissuade people from seeking help from unscrupulous elements. Communities should be empowered to distinguish between genuine spiritual guidance and harmful superstitions. Also, the state must implement stricter laws and ensure their rigorous enforcement to deter such practices. It is imperative that we, as a society, place our trust in rational, evidence-based medical and psychological care.

How Kashmiri Sikhs, like Kashmiri Pandits, endured everything — but chose to stay back in their homeland

GNS News Agency, August 28

Jammu and Kashmir, Sikhism in Kashmir, book on Kashmir, Sikhs in Kashmir valley, Kashmiri Pandits, Kashmiri Sikhs targeted killings, Bupinder Singh Bali, Bupinder Singh Bali, Indian express newsThe historical connect of Sikhs with valley has been a long one, and despite massacres that killed thousands from the community, many chose to stay back.

"To leave or not to leave?" — this question has haunted Bupinder Singh Bali, 34, a school teacher in the mystic valley of Kashmir, his homeland, several times in his life. But a phone call on October 7, 2021, reinforced the dilemma stronger than ever. In bone-chilling set of targeted killings, her colleague Supinder Kour, a school principal, and another teacher, Deepak Chand, a Kashmiri Pandit, were shot dead by terrorists. Kour's only fault: She was a Sikh, a Kashmiri Sikh.

While the ordeal that Kashmiri Pandits went through for decades at the hands of terrorists is still documented, what has remained largely hidden, and rather omitted from the narratives of Kashmir is the existence of its tiny Sikh community — the Kashmiri Sikhs who aren't migrants but belong to the valley ancestrally. Despite terrorism, massacres, brutalities, religious persecutions, many of them chose to stay in their homeland, while constantly battling with the question "to leave or not to leave?" "Those Who Stayed" is a new book by Bupinder Singh Bali, a Kashmiri-based school teacher, who was shaken to the core after his colleague Supinder Kour's killing by terrorists in October 2021 for just "being a Sikh". The book tries to remind countrymen that it weren't just the Kashmiri Pandits, but also minuscule Kashmiri Sikhs who have been persecuted in their home called Kashmir. Bali says that a renewed cycle of recent incidents of targeted killings where the non-Muslims and non-locals have been brutally shot dead by extremists in the valley in the past four-five years has once again triggered "silent migration" of Sikhs from Kashmir. Jammu and Kashmir, Sikhism in Kashmir, book on Kashmir, Sikhs in Kashmir valley, Kashmiri Pandits, Kashmiri Sikhs targeted killings, Bupinder Singh Bali, Bupinder Singh Bali, Indian express news

"The Sikh population in Kashmir is dwindling again. I was shaken when a Sikh school principal was shot dead in October 2021. That one phone call which brought this news to me left me with several questions. But somehow Kashmiri Sikhs have always been missing from the overall narrative of the valley which has a long history of turbulence and conflict. It was important to record and document their story as it was for Kashmiri Pandits who were forced to leave their homeland," says Bali. The historical connect of Sikhs with valley has been a long one, and despite massacres that killed thousands from the community, many chose to stay back.

"During 1947 Kabali raids, at least 20,000-30,000 Sikhs were killed. Later, at least 35 Sikhs were killed at Chittisinghpura, five in Mehjoor Nagar and three Sikh girls were also killed at Push Kri. The history of Sikhs in Kashmir goes back to more than 500 years. Sikhs living here were born and brought up in Kashmir. They are not outsiders who migrated from somewhere so Kashmir belongs to them too as much as it does to other diverse communities. They had to rebuild their lives after every massacre that would uproot them but they chose not to leave," says Bali, who was born in Kashmir but his family too was twice forced to move due to terrorism, only to return. "When my father's brother was gunned down in 1991, we had to leave our home. We returned but had to leave again in 2001," he says. "It is only after Sikhs fought Kabalis in 1947 that Indian Army was able to enter the territory. The sacrifice of Sikhs to protect their motherland can't be omitted from history," he says. Jammu and Kashmir, Sikhism in Kashmir, book on Kashmir, Sikhs in Kashmir valley, Kashmiri Pandits, Kashmiri Sikhs targeted killings, Bupinder Singh Bali, Bupinder Singh Bali, Indian express news Returning to Srinagar in 2010 after getting a job as a school teacher, Bali says that the analysis of the data in past some years indicates that Sikh population in the valley is dwindling again.

Sex ratio in Delhi dips post-Covid pandemic: Govt report



GNS News Agency, August 28

Sex ratio dips, Delhi Sex ratio, post-Covid sex ratio, Govt report, Covid pandemic, delhi sex ratio data, Delhi's sex ratio dips, Delhi gov's Planning Department, institutional births, domiciliary births, Indian express newsThe maternal mortality rate per thousand live births also decreased in 2023 in comparison to 2022 -- it was 0.49 in 2022; last year, it was 0.45. Since the outbreak of the Covid pandemic, Delhi's sex ratio has dropped from 933 in 2020 to 922 in 2023. According to the 'Annual Report on Registration Births and Deaths-2023' published by the Delhi government's Planning Department, an analysis of institutional and non-institutional births indicates that the sex ratio concerning institutional births decreased from 922 in 2022 to 915 in 2023. Meanwhile, in domiciliary births, the sex ratio increased from 1,037 in 2022 to 1,077 in 2023.

Data also shows the infant mortality rate dropped by 0.21%. In 2022, the infant mortality rate per thousand live births was 23.82, which came down to 23.61 in 2023. The maternal mortality rate per thousand live births also decreased in 2023 in comparison to 2022 — it was 0.49 in 2022; last year, it was 0.45. "Of late, it is observed that data/information of stillbirths is not reported regularly by hospitals/ institutions to the Registrar (B&D) concerned.

The Office of Chief Registrar (B&D) had issued a communication to sensitise medical superintendents of hospitals/institutions to report vital events, inclusive of stillbirths, within the stipulated period of 21 days to the Registrar (B&D) concerned," officials said. -Data shows that in 2023, the birth rate was 14.66 per thousand population as against 14.24 in 2022. The average number of births per day in Delhi was 863 in 2023 as against 823 in 2022. -The total number of births registered in 2023 was 3.15 lakh; in 2022, it was 3 lakh. Of the total births registered last year, 52.02 % were male and 47.96% female. -Data shows that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) accounted for 2.71 lakh (86.06%) of total births; 40,515 (12.86%) occurred in New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) areas; and 3,414 (1.08 %) in the Delhi Cantonment Board (DCB) areas. "It is observed that in Delhi, the proportion of institutional births during the six consecutive years was more than 90% in consequence of the positive impact of different government programmes to encourage institutional delivery for safe maternal and child health. Still, there is a strong need to take further measures to achieve the milestone of cent percent institutional delivery," the report stated. -The death rate per thousand population increased to 6.16 in 2023 from 6.07 in 2022. The data shows that Delhi saw 363 deaths per day last year, while it was 351 in 2022. -Data shows that a total of 1.32 lakh deaths were registered last year, while it was 1.28 lakh in 2022. Of these, 7,439 were infants. -Of the total deaths registered, 61.56% were male and 38% female. -The MCD accounted for 73.45% of total registered deaths while the share of NDMC was 25.16% and DCB was 1.39%. -The report also reveals that a maximum number of deaths (39.28%) occurred in the 65 years and above age group. -The major cause of institutional deaths in 2023 was due to septicemia (17.30%); shock (10.62%); liver disease (4.73%); pulmonary and heart disease (4.65%); hypertension (4.63%); tuberculosis (4.40%) and Covid virus identified and not identified (0.11%). The remaining deaths were due to other causes.

At Delhi govt shelter home, teen died of 'assault' in Jan, no FIR till date

GNS News Agency, August 28

Delhi govt shelter home, Asha Kiran shelter home, Delhi HC, Asha Kiran shelter home teen's death, Asha Kiran shelter home death toll, delhi shelter homes, delhi shelter home deaths, Indian express newsThe shelter home has been in the eye of a storm after it came to light that 14 deaths took place there in less than a month in July. (File Photo) In January this year, a 16-year-old living at Asha Kiran, a Delhi government-run shelter home for the mentally challenged, lost his life because of "blunt force injuries". Till date, however, no FIR has been registered in connection with the teen's death, The Indian Express has found.

The shelter home has been in the eye of a storm after it came to light that 14 deaths took place there in less than a month in July. Earlier this month, the Delhi High Court had sought a report on the matter. He learnt that on the morning of January 14, the 16-year-old complained that he was "unable to breathe". He was taken to Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival. The teen, who suffered from intellectual disability, had moved into the home on December 16, 2023, sources said. An autopsy was conducted at the hospital the next day. The post-mortem report states: "Death was due to hemorrhagic shock consequent to internal injuries to the abdomen. All injuries were ante-mortem, fresh before death, caused by blunt force and collectively were sufficient to cause death in the ordinary course of nature. The pattern of injuries to the abdomen is consistent with physical assault." The body was later handed over to the sub-divisional magistrate's office, which conducted the last rites.

According to Deputy Commissioner of Police, Rohini, Guriqbal Singh Sidhu, as per the law, if there is a suspicious or unexplained death at protective homes or

Kolkata rape-murder case: After new video, Opp says evidence erased; cops claim not of crime spot

GNS News Agency, August 28

Kolkata rape-murder case, Kolkata rape case new video, evidence tampering, crime spot, West Bengal doctors protest, Kolkata junior doctor murder rape case, R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, Indian express newsA patient waits in front of the trauma centre of the RG Kar College and Hospital, Kolkata, during a protest by junior doctors on Monday. Leaders of Opposition parties in West Bengal have alleged destruction of evidence in the rape and murder case of a junior doctor at Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital as a purported video surfaced of several people thronging the crime scene soon after the victim's body was found on the morning of August 9.

The video shows the then RG Kar principal Dr Sandip Ghosh, his lawyer Santanu Dey, Ghosh's personal assistant, police and hospital security staff at the seminar hall where the crime took place. Also seen in the video are Debashis Som, a demonstrator in forensic medicine posted in the health recruitment board, Prasun Chattopadhyay, a data entry officer at the National Medical College and Hospital.

BJP state general secretary Jagannath Chattopadhyay said, "The video clearly shows so many people roaming around at the place of occurrence of crime. Why did the police allow them inside the seminar hall where the rape and murder took place? It is clear that the evidence was destroyed." Echoing his views, party's state president Sukanta Majumdar said, "In the video, we can see the crime scene being converted into a fair. Everyone is roaming around in the presence of police. Has anyone seen such a crime scene?"

CPI(M) central committee member Sujana Chakraborty said, "The court was not satisfied with the police probe. We also said earlier that there was an attempt by the administration and the police to tamper with evidence. The video shows the then principal and his cronies, junior doctors, health department officials inside the seminar hall. What were they doing there? This clearly shows the evidence was compromised. Those in the video should be identified and interrogated. Only then the truth will come out."

Rejecting these claims, Kolkata Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Indira Mookherjee said, "People



custody/correctional facilities, the sub-divisional magistrate orders an inquiry and gives directions based on the findings of the inquiry report. An inquest report is then prepared by an SDM. They submit this report along with the autopsy report, and ask the police to file an FIR, the DCP said. "However, we have not received any such report as per my knowledge," said DCP Sidhu. When contacted, sub-divisional magistrate Manish Chandra Verma said their investigation is still underway. "Hearings of Asha Kiran staff with relevant records have been scheduled," he said.

He did not comment on why no FIR has been registered so far. "The police have to take a call on this," he said. When asked about the case, the Delhi government said in a statement, "We are deeply saddened by the tragic incident at Asha Kiran in January. This matter is being treated with the utmost seriousness and urgency by the authorities. Strongest possible action will be taken against those responsible as soon as the ongoing inquiry is concluded. The Delhi government is committed to ensuring that justice is served."



Leaders of Opposition parties in West Bengal have alleged destruction of evidence in the rape and murder case of a junior doctor at Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital as a purported video surfaced of several people thronging the crime scene soon after the victim's body was found on the morning of August 9.

are sharing a video on social media, alleging tampering of evidence as some individuals are standing inside the seminar hall. They are claiming that the place of occurrence of crime was not cordoned off. The portion of the seminar hall where the body was found was sealed immediately with curtains. No one except the victim's family was allowed 40 feet near the place where the body was found."

"The video is of the portion outside the area that was sealed. It is about 10 feet in length and width. Some people, including doctors of RG Kar, were present there. But no one was allowed inside the sealed area," she added. "I went to RG Kar that day to visit the OPD (outpatient department) of orthopaedics. I was standing outside the seminar hall. I am also a member of the institute's complaint committee," Sandip Ghosh's lawyer Santanu Dey told mediapersons. Besides Dr Ghosh, Debashis Som is also being questioned by the CBI in the case. TMC leader Jay Prakash Majumdar said, "People gather at a place whenever something happens. That is but an instinctive response."

Cherlapalli Railway Station all decked up for launch sans connectivity



GNS News Agency, August 28

Hyderabad: The Cherlapalli railway station, developed at a cost of Rs 430 crore, is being billed as an ultramodern passenger facility that is equipped with infrastructure rivalling best airports in the country. While the new station is expected to be launched next month, the authorities, rather strangely are yet to figure out a way to provide efficient connectivity for easy access to passengers. The State government initiated measures to widen roads on two sides to reach the Cherlapalli Station. However, due to a lack of coordination, the development and expansion works of the road have come to a standstill. As a result, question mark continues to remain over how passengers are going to reach the facility.

Passengers can also not reach the Cherlapalli Station via the recently completed second phase of the Multi-Modal Transport System (MMTS), as authorities are yet to launch services towards the new station via various routes. As part of the second phase of MMTS, works on railway tracks between Medchal-Bolarum via Falaknuma to Umdanagar and from Lingampalli to Tellapur, Sanathnagar to Cherlapalli and Ghatkesar via Moula Ali were completed. If MMTS services were launched, then it would benefit passengers from Lingampalli, Medchal, Malkajgiri, and Kacheguda to reach Cherlapalli. Apart from MMTS, even the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation services on the routes are inadequate and it is a cause of concern. There are two main routes for citizens to reach Cherlapalli station from various parts of the city that includes a 40-foot road from Mahalakshmi Nagar Colony and the road connecting IOCL to Cherlapalli. At present, both the roads are very narrow and have to be widened. For this, GHMC had earlier conducted surveys and found that at least 20 properties would have to be demolished for road widening. Due to resistance from the residents, the road expansion works have been pending since then. If the Cherlapalli station is opened to the public without the construction of approach roads, there is a possibility of major traffic gridlocks and passengers will face serious issues in reaching the station on time. Lack of coordination between various departments is pointed out to be a major reason for the construction of roads not progressing.

FSSAI withdraws order banning 'A1/A2' milk ads



GNS News Agency, August 28

New Delhi: Country's apex food safety regulator — Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) — on Monday withdrew its earlier order asking food businesses to stop marketing and selling milk and milk products as A1 and A2 types as these were "misleading claims". FSSAI, in an updated directive, said the advisory was withdrawn with immediate effect to carry out further consultations with relevant stakeholders.

"Clarification regarding selling or marketing of milk and milk products such as ghee, butter, curd etc in the name of A1 & A2 types... This is to inform that the advisory dated 21.08.2024 issued with respect to the subject cited, stands withdrawn for further consultation and engagement with the stakeholders," said the FSSAI order issued on Monday. In the earlier order curbing what it saw as deceptive promotion, the FSSAI said regulator explained that the A1 and A2 distinction in milk is related to differences in protein structure, specifically beta-casein. It emphasised that current milk standards, as specified in Food Safety and Standards Regulations 2011 did not recognise any differentiation based on A1 and A2 types. According to people familiar with the matter, the directive was withdrawn as a section of milk business operators feared that the decision to ban marketing under A1&A2 was rushed and it would hurt the market of indigenous milk producers.

Kolkata rape murder case: CBI conducts polygraph test on Ghosh, 5 others

GNS News Agency, August 28

Sandip Ghosh polygraph tests, CBI probe, R G Kar Medical Hospital, RGKMCH principal Sandip Ghosh, CBI conducts polygraph test, Kolkata rape and murder, Indian express newsThe Kolkata Police arrested a civic volunteer, Sanjay Roy, in connection with the case. However, the CBI has since

THE CBI on Monday conducted polygraph tests on former R G Kar Medical College and Hospital (RGKMCH) principal Sandip Ghosh and five others as part of their investigation into the rape and murder of a woman trainee doctor at the institution. Ghosh has been under the agency's scanner since the incident earlier this month and has faced multiple rounds of questioning.

Karnataka nod to land deal with Jindal Steel under Opp fire



GNS News Agency, August 28

Karnataka land deal, Jindal Steel, Karnataka controversial land deal, JSW Steel, Karnataka law minister H K Patil, Siddaramaiah govt, Indian express news. The state Cabinet cleared the sale of land, under two lease-cum-sale agreements signed in 2006 and 2007 respectively, at a meeting on August 22.

A controversial deal to sell two parcels of land measuring 3,667 acres to steel major JSW Steel (Jindal Group) in the Ballari region of Karnataka, which was earlier contested by both Congress and BJP leaders, has been given the final nod by the Siddaramaiah government citing a March 2024 High Court order. The state Cabinet cleared the sale of land, under two lease-cum-sale agreements signed in 2006 and 2007 respectively, at a meeting on August 22. "The Commerce and Industries Department has sought grant of clear land titles for 2,000.58 acres of land in Tornagal and Karekupa villages in Ballari's Sandur taluk and of 1,666.73 acres of land in Tornagal, Moosanayakanahalli and Yarabanaahalli

villages to Ms JSW Steel Ltd. The Cabinet has approved this decision," Karnataka law minister H K Patil said.

"We had protested against the grant of land and the matter was referred to a Cabinet sub-committee. The company went to court for an order to grant the land and in the context of the court order the Cabinet has decided to grant the land," the law minister said. Under the deal, JSW Steel will get the land at a price of Rs 1,50,635 per acre. In case the cost of acquisition of 944 acres of alternative land for Karnataka Power Corporation Limited is higher than the value for which the land is being sold to JSW Steel, then the cost difference will be met by JSW Steel Ltd, according to the conditions laid down in the original lease-cum-sale agreements. Some BJP leaders have raised questions over the sale of the land. Deputy leader of Opposition Arvind Bellad, who had gone against the BJP's government's Cabinet decisions in 2020 to sell the land to JSW Steel, has once again cited "internal agreements" in the deal. State Industries Minister MB Patil also cited the High Court directive of March 12, 2024 for the Cabinet decision to "implement the order issued on May 6, 2021 during the Yediyurappa-led BJP government... If there has been any internal agreement, it must be with his (Bellad) own party (BJP)," Patil said. The minister said JSW Steel, which has invested Rs 90,000 crore in Karnataka, has created 50,000 jobs. He said, "Failing to execute the lease-cum-sale deed... would send a wrong message to investors." Former BJP chief minister Basavaraj Bommai has accused the Congress of adopting double standards on the deal while being in power and in opposition. "We had previously reconsidered our stance on this due to opposition, but now the same Congress leaders who had strongly opposed it are in favour of the deal," Bommai said.

10-year-old opens up about rape in 'good touch, bad touch' session at school

GNS News Agency, August 28

A 10-YEAR-OLD girl was allegedly raped by a 67-year-old man who lives along the route to her school near Pune city. Pune Rural police have arrested the man after the girl opened up to her teachers in a group counselling session at her school about 'good touch-bad touch' and other concepts related to children's protection from sexual offences. A First Information Report in the case was registered at a police station under Pune Rural police. The incident took place in a village located around 15 km from Pune city. The 10-year-old is currently being provided counselling support, a police officer said.

"The incident took place around 11 am on August 23 when the girl was on her way to school. Probe has revealed that a few days before the incident, the man had offered her a chocolate. On the day of the incident, when the girl was walking to the school, the man allegedly took her into his house and raped her. Next day, during the counselling session at her school about 'good touch-bad touch' and other concepts, the girl opened up about the incident. The school authorities immediately contacted the parents. The parents and the school authorities together came to the police station to report the incident.



We registered an FIR and a probe was launched," said the in-charge inspector of the police station. The inspector further said, "We arrested the man on Sunday night. He was produced before a court on Monday and has been remanded in police custody for four days. He is unemployed and lives alone. Further investigation is on." Police have invoked provision related to rape under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita among others and relevant provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

After long delay, Karnataka Congress government cites HC order to clear 'controversial' 3,667 acre land sale to steel major

GNS News Agency, August 28

A 'controversial' deal to sell two parcels of land measuring 3,667 acres to steel major JSW Steel in the Ballari region of Karnataka which was contested in the past by both Congress and BJP leaders has been given a final clearance by the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government in Karnataka by citing a March 2024 high court order. The decision to confirm the sale of land under two lease-cum-sale agreements signed in 2006 and 2007, respectively, was confirmed by the state cabinet at a meeting on August 22.

"The Commerce and Industries Department has sought a grant of clear land titles for 2,000.58 acres of land in Tornagal and Karekupa villages in Ballari's Sandur taluk and 1,666.73 acres of land in Tornagal, Moosanayakanahalli and Yarabanaahalli villages to JSW Steel Ltd. The cabinet has approved this decision," Law Minister H K Patil said. "We had protested against the grant of land and the matter was referred to a cabinet sub-committee. The company went to court for an order to grant the land and in the context of the court order the cabinet has decided to grant the land," the law minister added. Under the deal, JSW Steel will get 2,000.58 acres of land in Tornagal and Karekupa villages of Sandur taluk of Bellary district at a price of Rs 1,22,200 per acre and 1,666.73 acres of land in Tornagal, Moosanayakanahalli, and Yarabanaahalli villages at a price of Rs 1,50,635 per acre. In case the cost of acquisition of 944 acres of alternative land for the Karnataka Power Corporation Limited - on account of the sale of land to JSW Steel - is higher than the value for which land is being sold to JSW Steel then the cost difference will be met by JSW Steel Ltd, according to the conditions laid down in the original lease-cum-sale agreements.

Some BJP leaders have raised questions over the sale of the land. Deputy Opposition leader Arvind Bellad who had gone against the BJP government's decision in 2020 to sell the land to JSW Steel has once again cited "internal agreements" in the deal. Industries Minister M B Patil has stated that "the cabinet has decided to implement the order issued on May 6, 2021, during the Yediyurappa-led BJP government, following a High Court directive of March 12, 2024." "If there has been any internal agreement, it must be with his own party (BJP)," M B Patil said in a response to the BJP deputy opposition leader.

The industries minister said JSW Steel invested Rs 90,000 crore in the state and created 50,000 jobs. He said that "failing to execute the lease-cum-sale deed, even after compliance with the government's terms, would send the wrong message to investors." The Karnataka HC in its order of March 12, 2024, issued a mandamus to the state government "to take the Government order dated 6-05-2021, which is a product of a decision of the cabinet on 26-04-2021, to its logical conclusion and execute sale deeds in favour of the petitioner/Company." The order came after JSW Steel went to court over delays in the deal. Former BJP chief minister Basavaraj Bommai has

accused the Congress of adopting double standards on the deal. "We had previously reconsidered our stance on this due to opposition, but now the same Congress leaders who had strongly opposed it are in favour of it. They behave one way when in opposition and another when in power," Bommai said.

Previously, the JSW Steel Ltd deal was questioned by the Congress and a section of the BJP on the grounds that land valued at Rs 40 lakh per acre was being sold for Rs 1.22 lakh to Rs 1.50 lakh amid questions over the firm being named in a 2011 Lokayukta report on illegal mining. The current Congress law minister H K Patil - who headed a cabinet sub-committee set up in 2013 to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the 2011 Lokayukta report - objected to a Congress-JDS government cabinet decision to sell the land to JSW Steel in 2019 on the grounds that legal proceedings were still pending and no legal opinion was obtained. In letters to the then chief minister H D Kumaraswamy and industries minister K J George, the current law minister had called the cabinet decision a contradiction to the Congress stand on illegal mining when the BJP was in power from 2008-2013. The "coalition government has decided to sell land at a throwaway price to a company accused in the Lok Ayukta report on illegal mining. Instead of focussing on recovering huge dues from the firm the state cabinet has decided to sell" land to JSW Steel Ltd (Jindal Company), Patil said in a June 4, 2019, letter to the industries minister. History of the deal The controversy over the sale of land to JSW Steel dates back to two separate lease-cum-sale agreements signed by the Karnataka Government in 2006 and 2007 for the grant of a total of 3,667 acres of land to JSW Steel Ltd in the Ballari district to expand its steel production. In the first order dated June 12, 2006, the then JDS-BJP state government - with H D Kumaraswamy as chief minister and B S Yeddyurappa as deputy CM - granted 2,000.58 acres and in a second order dated February 3, 2007, the state granted 1,666.73 acres of land. The land was granted to JSW Steel at a cost of Rs 1,22,195 per acre which was the cost of the land when it was originally acquired by the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board in 2005 for a power project of the state government.

One of the two lease agreements was due to be converted into an absolute sale agreement in 2012 but a decision was put off on account of a 2011 Karnataka Lokayukta report on illegal mining naming JSW Steel and other firms in a mining scam. The second lease was due for conversion into a sale deed in 2017 - if JSW Steel Ltd fulfilled all its obligations. After the Congress came to power in 2013, it set up a cabinet sub-committee headed by H K Patil to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the 2011 Lokayukta report. The Congress government considered the conversion of the 2006 lease agreement into a sale agreement at a cabinet meeting held on January 30, 2015. A decision was postponed after cabinet members argued that no decision should be taken without a legal opinion on the matter.

Despite finance dept objections, Maharashtra leases land to bank linked to BJP leader



GNS News Agency, August 28

After the state disregarded a negative opinion by its own finance department in leasing land to a bank linked to BJP leader Pravin Darekar, the Maharashtra government on Sunday approved the handover of a 2,566.57 square-metre MHADA plot in the prime Sion area (South Central Mumbai) to the bank on a 30-year lease for constructing a training centre in the cooperative sector. The bank that received the property is the Mumbai District Central Co-operative Bank, of which Darekar is the chairman.

In its note to the state, the finance department referred to a Bombay High Court order that advocated for a fair and transparent policy in distributing government property and opposed the transfer of land to predetermined members without advertisements. The department also pointed out that the proposal did not address any potential loss to the state exchequer. To compensate the government agency, it was decided that a 2,034.55 square metre construction worth Rs 24.23 crore will be transferred to MHADA by the bank once the structure is made,

based on the current ready reckoner rate of the plot. Ready reckoner rate refers to the minimum valuation set by the state government for properties in a particular area.

In the March 20, 2014 HC order referred to by the finance department, the court outlined five key principles - property vested in the state can only be disposed of based on a fair and transparent policy; methods adopted must provide fair opportunities for all eligible or interested persons to participate in the process; a policy of allotting state-owned properties based on individual applications without public advertisements or invitations cannot be considered rational; allotment of government properties cannot be a private venture, and the state must act without discrimination while distributing property.

The finance department noted that the application from Housing did not mention any loss to the state exchequer, nor did it express an opinion about the proposal. "If approved, similar applications will come from other corporations and organisations," it said. Referring to the court order, the finance department opined that "in view of the above-mentioned points, approving the proposal will not be appropriate". According to a senior official in the finance department, compensating MHADA based on the ready reckoner price could result in a loss to the state exchequer. "Had this plot been put to auction, the government could have earned much more than the ready reckoner price," the officer added. In the last week of July, the bank was also allocated a three-acre plot in Mumbai's Goregaon. The plot was previously owned by the Maharashtra Animal & Fishery Sciences University, Nagpur, where the sub-campus of Mumbai Veterinary College is located. A government resolution for this transfer was issued without any cabinet sanction. Upon realising the mistake, the GR was immediately withdrawn.

Pune's Sailee slays the Ironman challenge with a speedy 12.26 hour finish

GNS News Agency, August 28

When 41-year-old Sailee Wagh Gangakhedkar, a chartered accountant with a top MNC consulting firm completed the Frankfurt Ironman event on August 18, she was thrilled to be among the fastest recreational Ironman female triathletes in the country. An Ironman Triathlon is one of a series of long distance triathlon races organised by the World Triathlon Corporation. The Frankfurt Ironman event consisted of a 3.8 km swim, 180.2 km bicycle ride and a 42.2 km run - completed in that order in a time limit of 15 hours. There are cut-off times for each leg. This year's event attracted more than 3000 athletes worldwide but only a few from India. Gangakhedkar, who hails from Pune, completed the event in 12.26 hours. "This was an unbelievable race and I am thrilled to be among the fastest recreational Ironman female athletes in the country," she said. The congratulatory messages from prominent coaches and others have still not stopped and Gangakhedkar now wonders how she reached this milestone. This is her second Ironman event and Gangakhedkar had her training well planned. A consistent breathing pattern helped her achieve a personal best of 1.11 hours in the swimming round. Cycling along an adventurous rolling route with two loops and elevation, hilly terrain, and cobbled streets of Frankfurt city was a tough challenge. "The worst was steep downhill with sharp turns and muddy slippery cobbled streets," she recalls and adds that she is grateful she had a 'no fall' ride that she completed in 6.18 hours.

For the run that took her 4.38 hours, Gangakhedkar recalled that she had started pretty strong and wanted to continue at a pace of six minutes per km. "However the right IT band niggle aggravated slightly and had to do a bit of run and walk after 22/23 km," she added. "I am pleased with the timing as I had clocked 13.23 for the last Ironman event at Barcelona last year," she says.

For her friend Satyajit Joshi, a company secretary and fitness enthusiast who completed the Deccan



Cliffhanger - the ultra-cycling race in November last year, this was his first Ironman event and he completed in 12.45 hours. Joshi dedicated his achievement to the running and triathlon community and also emphasised the importance of training under a coach and regular medical check-ups before taking up gruelling races. Both Gangakhedkar and Joshi now want to qualify for the prestigious Boston marathon. Gangakhedkar recalls that she was working in the banking and finance domain for the last 19 years and post maternity started running in 2014/15 to lose weight and get back to regular fitness. "My son was small, so I had limited time for these activities but gradually I completed my first full marathon in 2020," she says. A state level swimmer, Gangakhedkar soon started training for triathlons during morning hours. "I workout for one and a half hours in the mornings on weekdays and for 2-3 hours on weekends," she said. Initially she started training with a few coaches but now has her own workout plan. "Fitness is a passion. This is my 'me' time and gives me positive energy and approach to life. I perform better at home and work and it has had a transformative effect," she adds. There is a huge fitness community in Pune and being with groups also has benefits like being self disciplined and organised.

BARTI students welcome Maharashtra govt's decision to give 100% scholarship



GNS News Agency, August 28

Maharashtra Cabinet meeting, Eknath Shinde, Maharashtra PhD scholars, Babasaheb Ambedkar Training and Research Institute, Maharashtra Cabinet approved scholarships, BARTI scholars, Indian express. On August 14, students participated in a protest in which they shaved their heads in front of BARTI's office. Two students had also started a fast-unto-death on August 5. The Maharashtra Cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday, announced 100 per cent scholarship for 763 PhD scholars of the Babasaheb Ambedkar Training and Research Institute (BARTI)

in Pune, a decision that was welcomed by the institute's students, who had been protesting for the demand for the last two years. The Cabinet approved Rs 37 crore for the scholarships.

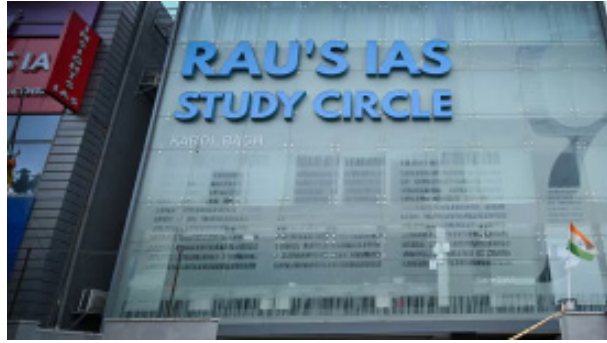
A Cabinet meeting on June 28 had decided that students who qualified for research grants before October 30, 2023 in various institute's of the Social Justice Department would be given only 50 per cent of the grant, drawing protests from BARTI scholars. BARTI's 2022 batch had long been protesting over its demand for granting fellowships to all eligible applicants, as opposed to the 200 cap set by the state government in October 2023, saying it cannot be applied

retrospectively. On August 14, students participated in a protest in which they shaved their heads in front of BARTI's office. Two students had also started a fast-unto-death on August 5. A few days before that, around 200 students had gathered at BARTI's office and boycotted the document verification process to avail fellowships. They had burnt copies of the GR, which stated that they will only receive 50 per cent of the grant. Some students had written to the chief minister, warning of self-immolation.

On July 21, students of SARTH (Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj Research, Training and Human Development Institute), BARTI and MAHAJYOTI (Ma-

hatma Jyotiba Phule Research and Training Institute) gathered in Mumbai after a long march to meet political leaders to resolve the issue. On January 10 this year, after protesting for 110 days opposing the 200 cap, some applicants announced a boycott of the Common Entrance Test (CET) for fellowships granted by BARTI, SARTH, TRTI (Tribal Research and Training Institute) and MAHAJYOTI. Over 3,400 students were expected to sit for it in four cities. "Research is very important for the overall development of the country. And it is equally important that the government spends money through fellowships with a special focus on research students. A fellowship is essential for providing the necessary services to students if research of the highest quality is to be produced. The government had reduced the student intake as well. We fought continuously for two years and now we have got our rightful hundred per cent fellowship. We will certainly make good use of this fellowship and contribute to the development of society and the country through our research," Mangesh Dutonde, a PhD research student at BARTI, said.

One month on, Rajendra Nagar deaths ripple through fraternity



GNS News Agency, August 28

New Delhi: On July 27, three IAS aspirants enrolled with a coaching centre in Old Rajendra Nagar in central Delhi, drowned after the library of the institute which was illegally operating out of the building's basement flooded following heavy rain. A lawmaker's speech in the House cannot be challenged before any court or he has a right to reply if his or her name is mentioned by another lawmaker. Lok Sabha MP and former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi on Wednesday moved a notice to bring a privilege motion against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Lok Sabha for sharing the speech of BJP MP Anurag Thakur on his social media platform X even as some parts of it were expunged.

A lawmaker—be it MP or MLA—enjoys certain privileges such as no misinformation can be spread about him or her in the legislative House. A lawmaker's speech in the House cannot be challenged before any court or he has a right to reply if his or her name is mentioned by another lawmaker. When the legislative session is going on, lawmakers should be informed first about any change in government policy or law before others. That's the reason why the government doesn't publicise decisions of Union Cabinet when a Parliament session is on. If a mem-

ber or a minister makes an unsubstantiated comment or if any person maligns the reputation of an MP or prohibits the lawmaker from his work, a Parliamentarian or an MLA can file a complaint to the Speaker (or the Chairman in case of Rajya Sabha) that his privileges have been breached. Did any Prime Minister or former PM face any privileges notice before?

Yes. On November 22, 1978, a year after the Emergency was lifted, the Lok Sabha's privileges panel concluded that former PM Indira Gandhi was guilty of contempt of the House. The panel, led by Janata Party MP Samar Guha, had looked into the breach of privileges complaint filed by CPIM MP Jyotirmoy Bosu that Gandhi's government create hurdles for government officials to collect information on Maruti for a question he put in 1975. She was also expelled from the House in 1978. According to Channi, PM posted the link of the entire speech of Anurag Thakur, but some words of that speech had been expunged. Tweeting or publicising expunged words amounts to breach of privileges, according to Channi. In general, expunged words or remarks can't be publicised. There is a set of rules on moving privilege notices. Under Rule 222 of the House, "A member may, with the consent of the Speaker, raise a question involving a breach of privilege either of a member or of the House or of a Committee thereof." Rule 223 stipulates that "A member wishing to raise a question of privilege shall give notice in writing to the Secretary General by 10.00 AM on the day the question is proposed to be raised." What happens now after Channi's breach of privileges notice?

According to rule 222 says, the Speaker must give his consent before it can be processed. In this case, the Speaker will examine the feasibility of the notice and then decide. If the Speaker gives his consent to any such notice, it is usually sent to the privileges committee for examination. The panel calls both the accused and the complainant before submitting its report to the House.

Congress announces first list of nine candidates for J&K assembly polls

GNS News Agency, August 28

The Congress has announced its first nine candidates for the upcoming assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, fielding Ghulam Ahmad Mir and Vikar Rasool Wani, two former presidents of its J&K unit, from their Dooru and Banihal assembly constituencies, respectively.

The grand old party also named Surinder Singh Channi (Tral), Amanullah Mantoo (Devsar), Peerzada Mohd Syed (Anantnag), Sheikh Zafarullah (Inderwal), Nadeem Sharief (Bhadarwah), Sheikh Riyaz (Doda) and Dr Pradeep Kumar Bhagat (Doda West). The Congress will fight 37 seats in the 90-member assembly. It will contest the elections with its INDIA bloc ally, the National Conference (NC); the agreement will see the parties contest 32 and 51 seats, respectively, while on five seats, they will be engaged in a 'friendly but disciplined' competition. The remaining two seats have been given to Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Panthers Party. The seat-sharing talks were sealed in a meeting between NC president Farooq Abdullah and his son and party deputy Omar Abdullah—the two are ex-chief minis-



ters—with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and ex-chief Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha. The meeting was held on Wednesday in Srinagar, the summer capital of the former state; the region lost both its special status (via abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution of India) and statehood in 2019, and is now a Union territory. The assembly polls will be J&K's first since November-December 2014. Voting is on September 18, 25 and October 1, with counting of votes three days after the third and final phase.

Justice Rohini commission member backs caste census, sub-categorisation of SCs/STs

GNS News Agency, August 28

At least one member of the government's commission on sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBC), the Justice G Rohini Commission, has supported not just a caste census but also sub-categorisation of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, in line with the Supreme Court's ruling earlier this month. JK Bajaj's support for the caste census may be in his personal capacity but it assumes significance because of his proximity to the government, holding key posts like that of chairman of Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). Bajaj is also considered close to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as his book Making of a Hindu Patriot: Background of Gandhiji's Hind Swaraj was launched by the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat in 2021.

"Personally, I am for caste census," Bajaj said. "Since we are doing 50% of our admissions and appointments on the basis of caste, not having the data is like keeping ourselves in the dark." It is, however, unclear whether the Rohini Commission has also supported the census. Since it was submitted last year in August, the commission's report has been lying with the President of India's office and Bajaj refused to confirm its contents. While the Opposition is united in its demand for such a census, the Bhartiya Janata Party is in a quandary with its allies like the Lok Janshakti Party supporting it, but others being opposed to implementing it nation wide.

"It isn't a very easy thing to do. For OBC castes there is a central and state list but the government will also have to prepare a list of forward castes, as there are many in that list too who want to claim OBC status. For instance, you have the case of the Marathas in Maharashtra," said Bajaj. He also completely rejected the idea that Congress' Rahul Gandhi had put the government on the backfoot on the issue of caste representation. "Caste census is a larger demand than Rahul Gandhi. Socialist parties have also been asking for it, and many in BJP want it too. The Congress has only picked it up now." The top court's ruling earlier this month, that state governments have the authority to create sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) for the purpose of preferential reservations (as long as this based on data), has opened the door for states to identify and provide targeted benefits to the most disadvantaged sub-groups within the broader SC/ST categories. Following the judgement, the union cabinet ruled out the court's suggestion of instituting income based exclusions in the SC/ST quotas.

"Sub-categorisation in Dalits and Adivasis is even more needed than for OBCs," said Bajaj. "The data I have been looking at shows great differential from caste to caste within SC/STs," he said. The Rohini Commission member has written to the government to record the caste of every person who avails reservation in jobs and educational institutes. "The data on quota usage will show which caste has got how much. It will be more important



than data on population and, captured in entirety, will be crucial for our reservation system to be just and inclusive," he said. At present, government records show simply the number of admissions and appointments made through quotas, without giving a split by caste. The Rohini Commission studied data linked to 100,000 admissions under the OBC quota in central education institutes and 130,000 recruitments in the central government between 2015 and 2018. It found that a quarter of the share of benefits went to just 10 OBC castes, another quarter to 38 castes, a third quarter to 102 castes and under a fourth (22.3%) to 506 castes. A staggering 983 castes got no benefits while 994 jostled for just 2.68% of the benefits.

IndiGo evaluates honorific 'Mx' for internal candidates

GNS News Agency, August 28

New Delhi: IndiGo is evaluating introducing the gender-neutral option of honorific 'Mx' for internal candidates as part of larger efforts to boost inclusivity. Besides, the country's largest carrier, which has a domestic market share of 62 per cent, aims to increase by two-fold the number of individuals with disabilities employed by it.

An airline spokesperson said it is evaluating introducing the option of honorific 'Mx' for internal candidates. Sukhjit S Pasricha, Group Chief Human Resources Officer at IndiGo, told PTI that the airline has implemented various initiatives for the LGBTQ+ community, including employee referral programmes specifically designed to encourage hiring of LGBTQ+ individuals. "This has strengthened candidate mobilisation through internal resources and fostered a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ employees... we partner with agencies specialising in LGBTQ+ recruitment," he said.

According to him, there is a steady induction of LGBTQ+ individuals and they are working in various functions, including flying, at the airline.

Behind key rethink, BJP's more vocal allies



GNS News Agency, August 28

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge in a post on 'X' said, "The 'U' in UPS stands for Modi Govt's U turns! Post June 4, the power of the people has prevailed over the arrogance of power of the Prime Minister. — Rollback in the budget regarding Long Term Capital Gain / Indexation — Sending Waqf Bill to JPC — Rollback of Broadcast Bill — Rollback of Lateral Entry We will keep ensuring accountability and protect 140 Cr Indians from this despotic government!"

His reference was to the government announcing a Unified Pension Scheme as an alternative to the unpopular New Pension Scheme. The BJP was quick to react. Former union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the decisions were an illustration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ear to the ground. He said the Congress which had initially backed the New Pension Scheme introduced during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's premiership, should answer why the party has not implemented the old pension scheme in states where it is in power. "The Narendra Modi government takes decisions based on its own understanding..." Prasad said. To be sure, the NDA had already set up a committee to review the New Pension Scheme in 2023, but there have been some positions it has had to change and senior party leaders admit that these were not just in response to the opposition seizing issues with wider resonance and running with them, but in line with the party's oft repeated claims of ensuring 'gathbandan ki maryada' or dignity of an alliance. That is also a requisite now given the arithmetic in the Lok Sabha where the Bharatiya Janata Party is dependent on the support of allies for a majority.

Thus, the BJP's acceptance of the opposition's demand to send the Waqf Bill to a joint parliamentary committee is attributed to the nudge from its key allies, the Janata Dal United and the Telegu Desam Party that called for wider consultation on the issue. Pressure from allies such as the Lok Janshakti Party in Bihar is credited for the government's unambiguous stand against 'creamy

layer' within quotas for SC and STs and rolling back a scheme for lateral entry into the bureaucracy. On Sunday, the LJP upped the ante with its leader and union minister Chirag Paswan backing caste census, an issue that has been raised by the opposition INDIA bloc. Addressing the media, Paswan said a caste census would give the government information about the population of various castes so that it can ensure that the benefits of its schemes are universal. Senior BJP leaders who spoke on condition of anonymity said there is no denying that the allies are being heard, but that the government is equally aware of the backlash from the masses.

"The outcome of the 2024 polls was a lesson... we realised that the outreach towards SC and STs was undone by the opposition's fake narrative against us on the issue of reservation. While that itself was the biggest reason for the numbers shrinking, we got feedback on how policy decisions such as sticking to the new pension scheme alienated a significant group of people," said a senior party functionary. His reference is to the narrative pushed by the Opposition that the BJP was seeking 400+ seats in the Lok Sabha so as to change the Constitution and deprive underprivileged sections of the benefits of reservation. On the issue of ironing out differences with the allies, the functionary added, there is improved communication on key issues.

"Party president JP Nadda has begun meeting the allies frequently; it will be a monthly or bi-monthly exercise in the coming days. In the last such meeting we exchanged views on issues such as One nation, One election and other subjects that will require the allies to be on the same page," said the functionary. The BJP and the Prime Minister have been vocal about the need for simultaneous state and central elections, although the party's reduced numbers in the Lok Sabha will make the passage of the constitutional amendments required for this challenging. Given their role in determining the longevity of the government, are the allies flexing muscle? A senior leader from JDU said while they do not intend to create problems for the government, their party will ensure their concerns are onboarded. "For instance, on the Waqf issue we were clear that the government should speak to those who are affected... by doing so we protect our constituency, but without being at loggerheads with the government," the leader said. In the last decade, the BJP was accused of riding roughshod over the allies and slighting their concerns. A case in point being the fallout with its oldest ally, the Shiromani Akali Dal over the now repealed farm laws. The shrinking size of the NDA—it lost several allies including Shiva Sena, PDP and the AIADMK—itsself was seen as BJP subsuming the identity of the smaller parties and not taking their views on board for crucial policy making.

Telegram under Indian security scanner in multiple cases

GNS News Agency, August 28

Telegram, the popular messaging application, is facing mounting scrutiny in India as it emerges as a hub for a wide array of criminal activities. From the distribution of leaked exam papers and child pornography to stock price manipulation and extortion, the platform has become a preferred vector for illicit operations, drawing comparisons to the dark web, according to cyber experts, law enforcement officers and former government officials. The spotlight on Telegram intensified after its chief executive, Pavel Durov, was detained in France on Saturday over allegations of inadequate efforts to combat crime on the app, including the spread of child sexual abuse material. This incident has brought global attention to the unique challenges Telegram poses for law enforcement and digital content moderation. The Paris prosecutor said in a statement on Monday that probe into Durov concerns crimes related to illicit transactions, child pornography, fraud and the refusal to communicate information to authorities. The company, in reiterating a position it has held previously, said on Monday: "It is absurd to claim that a platform or its owner are responsible for abuse of that platform". Durov, then living in Russia, launched the platform in 2013 with his brother Nikolai. Telegram now claims to have 950 million users -- up from 550 million in 2022. Recent incidents underscore the platform's misuse across various sectors. On July 24, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) disclosed a stock-price rigging racket operating via Telegram. The owner of a Telegram group was indicted for receiving ₹20 lakh in commission from individuals connected to a listed steel sheet manufacturing firm. On May 3, two men from Bhopal were arrested for duping a local doctor of ₹38 lakh. They used Telegram to impersonate police officers and conduct a fake "interrogation".

On June 19, 2023, the UGC-NET exam, with approximately 900,000 applicants, was cancelled a day after it was held due to a question paper leak on Telegram. Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan addressed the issue, stating, "We tallied the questions with the original UGC-NET questions and they matched... All these activities took place on Telegram these days. It is a challenge to track the complex nature of Telegram without a high level investigation." And on May 3, 2023, many NEET-UG applicants reportedly received copies of the medical entrance exam questions a day before the exam, according to complaints in what turned into one of the biggest exam controversies in the country, prompting protests, triggering a federal investigation, and eventually requiring the Supreme Court's intervention.

A senior police officer from the Delhi Police cybercrime unit spoke of the extent of criminal activities flourishing on Telegram. "One of the most rampant scams on Telegram is investment fraud in which a user is added to a group and is suggested to invest their money in stocks on a fake application which mirrors a legitimate stock trading app," the officer explained. "This scam is where most people are losing their money on Telegram."

The officer further elaborated on other illicit activities: "Other illegitimate activities on Telegram include being able to buy fake sim cards and share your bank account details with cyber fraudsters operating from abroad. Those who provide account details get a commission from the fraudsters." The anonymity features of Telegram create significant hurdles for investigations, the officer pointed out: "One can hide their number and only show the username. This does not happen in WhatsApp. It's difficult for us to identify someone on Telegram because of this anonymity." Cooperation from Telegram in investigations has been lacklustre, according to law enforcement sources. The Delhi Police officer said, "Whenever we reach out to them, they respond with the last



login's IP address which is often of little help."

Two government officials, who asked not to be named, said Telegram cooperates with Indian agencies in only about 20% of cases, making data retrieval a challenging task. Rakesh Maheshwari, who headed the ministry of electronics and technology's cyber laws division until March 2023, shed light on Telegram's historical reluctance to comply with regulatory requirements. "Telegram was, on occasions, reluctant to cooperate though it did appoint an India-based grievance officer, chief compliance officer and nodal contact person, and opened an office in India [Gurugram], following the notification of IT Rules 2021. They would generally comply with Section 69A blocking orders but in few other cases, where the Ministry would forward the grievances as received, they were unwilling to comply even if the content appeared to be potentially illegal and harmful, or led to such URLs," he said. He identified two key areas where Telegram was particularly lacking in enforcement: obscenity and copyright. "To my knowledge, the platform was being misused by some accounts for promoting obscenity and to violate copyright. Lack of proactive content moderation had per se been lacking," he explained. Transparency has also been a significant issue. Despite the requirement under IT Rules 2021, Telegram does not officially publish a monthly transparency report. Attempts to obtain transparency reports for India from Telegram's @transparency bot were met with the response, "No transparency report is available for your region."

In October 2023, the Indian IT ministry had issued a notice to social media platforms, including Telegram, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube, to remove CSAM from their platforms in India, and called for implementation of proactive measures to take down CSAM. At the time, a spokesperson for Telegram, Remi Vaughn, in response to HT's questions had said that child abuse materials are "explicitly forbidden" by the platform's terms of service and that the platform's moderators actively "patrol public parts" of the platform to remove violative content. "Telegram's moderators actively patrol public parts of the platform and accept user reports in order to remove content that breaches our terms. In the case of child abuse content, we publish daily reports about our efforts here: t.me/stopca," the spokesperson had then said. According to the Telegram channel Vaughn had cited, 1,650 groups and channels related to child abuse were banned on August 25, bringing the total for August 2024 to 43,315. Despite the requirement under IT Rules 2021, Telegram does not officially publish a monthly transparency report, making the t.me/stopca channel one of the very few ways in which such information can be determined. Even within the government, according to conversations HT has had with at least three officials, there is a misconception that Telegram is E2EE by default and is thus unable to moderate content. But cryptographic experts have always questioned Telegram's claims of being end-to-end encrypted. "I would not pass its E2EE algorithm in a security audit. It is not a question of whether it is secure, it is whether I will put my name to it? There are too many non-standard elements to it.

Former Democrat Tulsi Gabbard endorses Donald Trump at National Guard Association conference, 'We as Americans must...'



GNS News Agency, August 28 Ex-Democrat Tulsi Gabbard has officially endorsed Donald Trump in his presidential bid against Kamala Harris. The former Representative from Hawaii made the announcement during a National Guard Association conference in Detroit, where Trump was speaking. The 43-year-old, who ran an unsuccessful 2020 White House bid, expressed her confidence in the former president, urging Americans to "stand together" to ensure Trump's reelection. Gabbard, who has become a regular figure in conservative media, exited the Democratic Party in 2022, accusing its leadership of "cowardly wokeness" and "anti-white racism" in a scathing X (then-Twitter) post. While addressing a gathering in

Michigan on Monday, she declared, "This [current] administration has us facing multiple wars on multiple fronts in regions around the world and closer to the brink of nuclear war than we ever have been before." "This is one of the main reasons why I'm committed to doing all that I can to send President Trump back to the White House, where he can once again serve us as our commander-in-chief," Gabbard went on, adding, "Because I am confident that his first task will be to do the work to walk us back from the brink of war." Her endorsement came on the third anniversary of the suicide bombing that killed 13 US service members following the withdrawal from Afghanistan. The former Democrat continued, "We as Americans must stand together to reject this anti-freedom culture of political retaliation and abuse of power. We can't allow our country to be destroyed by politicians who will put their own power ahead of the interests of the American people, our freedom, and our future." "I am proud to stand here before you today, whether you're a Democrat, a Republican or an Independent," she added. "If you love our country, as I do, if you cherish peace and freedom as we do, I invite you to join me in doing all that we can to save our country and elect President Donald J. Trump and send him back to the White House to do the tough work of saving our country and serving the people," Gabbard said, concluding her endorsement speech, per Fox News.

Queen Elizabeth's 'interesting' Putin remark at focus as Trump calls self her 'favourite president'

GNS News Agency, August 28

With renowned journalist Craig Brown's biography of the late Queen Elizabeth rising to the top of royal gossip this August, numerous headlines are also taking "A Voyage Around the Queen." The new book especially took centre stage because of Brown's sensational claims about former US President Donald Trump and how the queen made withering remarks about him having "some sort of arrangement" with his wife, Melania. The book, as you would have it, heavily relies on anecdotes, and with the queen herself no longer here, there's no way to actually cross-check anything. Rumour or not, just as Brown has his own version of Queen Elizabeth's response to the ex-president, Trump also got some opinions off his chest in a recent DailyMail.com interview.

As far as Craig Brown's account of the queen's meeting with Trump goes, she found him "very rude" and "particularly disliked" how he looked over her shoulder as if looking for someone more interesting. Last Wednesday, Trump addressed these claims and turned them on their head. "I heard I was her favourite president," he told DailyMail.com. Trump further rubbished all remarks about him and his relationship with his wife, calling it all "totally false." "Pushing on, he claimed to have no idea Brown was, as he asserted that everything he'd penned about him in his sensationalist book "was really just the opposite." "I had a great relationship with the queen. She liked me and I liked her," continued Trump. According to the ex-prez's understanding, Brown possibly launched the smear campaign against him to bolster his book's promotions. Again, he highlights that he "spoke to her often" during his visit; Trump shamed Craig Brown for pushing an agenda. "We spent hours together at a state dinner. She was a fantastic woman. I think it's a shame that a sleazebag can write an article that's totally false." "...you have this guy looking for some publicity for a book that probably is phony, and a lot of other ways too," he added.

There's more to the book than just its "rude" Trump agenda. The queen hosted Trump and his wife, Melania,



in the UK when he was the US president. Former Buckingham Palace staffer slams claims, says they "disrespect her memory" Further dismissing these bold assertions, former royal household member Jack Stooks said on GB News, "We know what the queen was like as a person. We know that in her reign, she never put a foot wrong. It's not something she would do. It's just ridiculous." "There are so many ways that these kinds of rumours can come about, but I just can't see why the queen would have done anything like that or even be inclined to do." The former gardener to the King also believed such accusations tarnished the queen's legacy: "I don't see why people think that it's OK in any way, shape, or form, to try and bring down the late queen's way of life." "Throughout her career, she was amazing. And to have somebody trying to ignite some kind of flames into it, it's not right to do that, especially to the monarchy right now. They're dealing with so much." Queen Elizabeth's alleged Putin remarks Brown also reported that British politician David Blunkett told him that his assistance dog barked vehemently at Russian President Vladimir Putin when he reportedly arrived late to a 2023 state event. The account supposedly also captures Blunkett apologising to Queen Elizabeth for the same reason. Her purported reply thereafter will indisputably make anyone clutch their pearls.

WWE legend Sid Vicious dies at 63 after tragic years-long battle with cancer

GNS News Agency, August 28

Sidney "Sid" Raymond Eudy, popularly known by his ring names Sid Justice, Sid Vicious, and Sycho Sid, has died at the age of 63 after a years-long battle with cancer. The WWE star's passing was confirmed by his family in a statement issued Monday. Eudy is survived by his wife of 30 years, Sabrina Paige, and their sons Gunnar and Frank. Gunnar Eudy announced his father's death via a Facebook post that read, "I am deeply saddened to share that my father, Sid Eudy, has passed away after battling cancer for several years." Calling him "a man of strength, kindness, and love," Gunnar added that Sid's "presence will be greatly missed."

"We appreciate your thoughts and prayers as we grieve this loss. Details for a memorial service will be shared soon. Thank you for your support," the statement concluded. Eudy was the world champion in WWF (now WWE) and WCW twice and was also a two-time USWA heavyweight champion. In honour of Eudy's wrestling career spanning decades, WWE said it was "saddened" by his tragic demise. "WWE is saddened to learn that Sid Eudy has passed away. WWE extends its condolences to Eudy's family, friends and fans," the production company said in a post shared on X, formerly Twitter.

Tributes pour in for Sid Eudy after his tragic death. Shortly after the news about Eudy's death was made



public, tributes from the wrestling community started pouring on social media. Booker T. Huffman, two-time WWE Hall of Famer, wrote on X, "Without Sid Vicious, I don't think my brother and I would have made it to WCW. His impact on this business was undeniable, and he paved the way for so many of us. My deepest condolences to his family during this difficult time. #RIPSid" American professional wrestler Marc Mero wrote, "So sad to hear that friend and wrestling superstar Sid Eudy (Sid Vicious & Sid Justice) has passed away at 63 from cancer. He was one of the first wrestlers I wrestled when I was trying out for WCW. What a great guy. My heart, thoughts and prayers go out to his family, friends and his millions of fans."

Israel and the U.S. must be prepared to prevent the Islamic Republic from gaining nuclear weapons. Gallant was meeting with top U.S. military officer General C.Q. Brown, who is on a trip to the region aimed at preventing Israel's war with the Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza from engulfing the region. In one of the biggest clashes in more than 10 months of border warfare, Iran's Lebanon-based proxy Hezbollah with around 100 jets in what it said was a pre-emptive strike aimed at thwarting a much larger attack. Brown, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also met with the Israeli military's Chief of General Staff Herzli Halevi. "We are very determined to continue degrading Hezbollah's capabilities, eliminating more commanders.

Special counsel seeks to revive classified documents case against Trump, urges federal appeals court



GNS News Agency, August 28

The appeal is the latest development in a prosecution that many legal experts have long considered a straightforward criminal case given the breadth of evidence. Special counsel Jack Smith urged a federal appeals court on Monday to reinstate the classified documents case against former President Donald Trump, saying a judge's decision that dismissed the prosecution was at odds with longstanding Justice Department practice and must be reversed. Smith's team said U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon made a grievous mistake by ruling that Smith was unlawfully appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland. That position, prosecutors wrote in a brief filed with the Atlanta-based appeals court, runs counter to rulings by judges across the country as well as "widespread and longstanding appointment practices in the Department of Justice and across the government." "If allowed to stand, they warned, it could "jeopardize the longstanding operation of the Justice Department and call into question hundreds of appointments throughout the Executive Branch."

"The Attorney General validly appointed the Special Counsel, who is also properly funded," prosecutors wrote. "In ruling otherwise, the district court deviated from binding Supreme Court precedent, misconstrued the statutes that authorized the Special Counsel's appointment, and took inadequate account of the longstanding history of Attorney General appointments of special counsels." At issue is a provision of the Constitution known as the Appointments Clause, which requires that certain public figures — including judges, ambassadors and "all other officers of the United States" — be appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. But the clause also includes an exception for what it says are "inferior officers" who can be appointed directly by the head of an agency. Smith, according to the Justice Department, fits that category and Garland was empowered to name him directly to the role of special counsel.

The appeal is the latest development in a prosecution

that many legal experts have long considered a straightforward criminal case given the breadth of evidence, including surveillance video and an audio recording, that Justice Department investigators accumulated during the course of the investigation. But over the last year, the case was snarled by delays as Cannon, a Trump-appointed judge, entertained assorted Trump team motions before ultimately dismissing the prosecution and bringing the proceedings to at least a temporary halt. It's unclear how long it will take for the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to decide the matter, but even if it overturns Cannon's dismissal and revives the prosecution, there's no chance of a trial before the November presidential election and Trump, if elected, could appoint an attorney general who would dismiss the case. A three-judge panel overturned Cannon in December 2022, ruling that she had overstepped her bounds during the documents investigation by appointing an independent arbiter to review the classified records seized by the FBI during a search months of his Mar-a-Lago estate. The case includes dozens of felony charges that Trump illegally retained classified documents from his presidency at his estate in Palm Beach, Florida and obstructed the government's efforts to get them back. Trump has pleaded not guilty.

Smith was appointed special counsel in November 2022 by Garland to investigate Trump's handling of the documents as well as his efforts to undo the 2020 presidential election ahead of the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol. Both investigations resulted in criminal charges, though the election subversion prosecution also faces an uncertain future following a U.S. Supreme Court decision last month that conferred broad immunity on Trump and narrowed the scope of the case. Defense lawyers in the classified documents case had argued that Smith's appointment violated the Constitution's Appointments Clause, a motion that prompted Cannon to hold a multi-day hearing in June. The judge sided with the defense, saying that no specific statute permitted Garland's appointment of Smith, who was unlawfully appointed because he had not been named to the position by the president or confirmed by the Senate. But prosecutors said Monday that no fewer than four statutes give the attorney general the power to appoint a special counsel like Smith — an authority they said has been recognized for decades by judges across the country. "From before the creation of the Department of Justice until the modern day, Attorneys General have repeatedly appointed special and independent counsels to handle federal investigations, including the prosecution of Jefferson Davis, alleged corruption in federal agencies (including the Department of Justice itself), Watergate, and beyond," Smith's team wrote.

Pennsylvania county broke law by refusing to tell voters if it rejected their ballot, judge says

GNS News Agency, August 28

HARRISBURG, Pa. — A Republican-controlled county in Pennsylvania violated state law when election workers refused to tell voters that their mail-in ballot had been rejected and wouldn't be counted in last April's primary election, a judge ruled. As a result, voters in Washington County were unable to exercise their legal right either to challenge the decision of the county elections board or to cast a provisional ballot in place of the rejected mail-in ballot, the judge said. The decision is one of several election-related lawsuits being fought in Pennsylvania's courts, a hotly contested presidential battleground where November's contest between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Kamala Harris could be razor close.

"It's a great day for voters in Washington County," David Gatling Sr., president of the NAACP branch in Washington, Pennsylvania, said in a statement Monday. The NAACP branch sued the county earlier this summer as did seven voters whose ballots had been rejected in the April 23 primary and the Center for Coalfield Justice, accusing Washington County of violating the constitutional due process rights of voters by deliberately concealing whether their ballot had been counted.

In his decision Friday, Judge Brandon Neuman ordered Washington County to notify any voter whose mail-in ballot is rejected because of an error — such as a missing signature or missing handwritten date — so that the voter has an opportunity to challenge the decision. Neuman, elected as a Democrat, also ordered the county to allow those voters to vote by provisional

ballot to help ensure they could cast a ballot that would be counted. In the primary, the county rejected 259 mail-in ballots that had been received before polls closed, or 2% of all mail-in ballots received on time, the judge wrote. Roughly three-fourths of mail-in ballots tend to be cast by Democrats in Pennsylvania, possibly the result of Trump baselessly claiming for years that mail-in voting is rife with fraud.

Nick Sherman, the chairman of Washington County's commissioners, said he and other county officials hadn't decided whether to appeal. However, Sherman said he believed the county's practices are compliant with state law. Sherman noted that Neuman is a Democrat, and called it a prime example of a judge "legislating from the bench." "I would question how you would read a law that is that black and white and then make a ruling like that," Sherman said in an interview. Sherman said state law does not allow the county to begin processing mail-in ballots — called precanvassing — until Election Day starting at 7 a.m. However, Witold Walczak, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, which helped represent the plaintiffs, said county election workers can see right away whether a just-arrived mail-in ballot has mistakes that disqualify it. Most counties check for such mistakes and notify voters immediately or enter the ballot's status into the state's voting database, Walczak said. That helps alert a voter that their ballot was rejected so they can try to make sure they cast a ballot that counts, Walczak said. None of that is precanvassing, Walczak said. "Precanvassing is about opening the envelopes," Walczak said. "That's not what this is. And if Sherman is right, then 80% of counties are doing it wrong."

French president rules out left-wing government amid bitter deadlock

GNS News Agency, August 28

French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday ruled out naming a left-wing government to end the country's political deadlock, saying it would be a threat to "institutional stability". While Macron said he would start new talks Tuesday to find a prime minister, left-wing parties reacted with fury to his announcement, calling for street protests and the impeachment of the president. Macron has held protracted talks on a new government since elections in July gave a left-wing alliance the most seats in parliament but not enough to govern.

The president rejected left-wing claims to govern after negotiations Monday with far-right figurehead Marine Le Pen and other political leaders. While some reports said Macron had wanted to name a prime minister on Tuesday, the president instead said he would embark on a new round of negotiations. "My responsibility is that the country is not blocked nor weakened," Macron said in a statement, calling on "all political leaders to rise to the occasion by demonstrating a spirit of responsibility". The July election left the 577-seat National Assembly divided between the left-wing New Popular Front alliance with over 190 seats, followed by Macron's centrist alliance at around 160 and Le Pen's National Rally at 140. The NFP, particularly the hard-left France Unbowed, has demanded the right to form a government but centrist and right-wing parties have vowed to vote it down in any confidence vote. A purely left-wing government "would be immediately censored by all the other groups represented in the National Assembly" and "the institutional stability of our country therefore requires us not to choose this option", Macron said. Macron said he would talk with party leaders and "personalities distinguished by experience

in the service of the state and the Republic". Without naming the LFI, the president called on socialists, ecologists and communists in the leftist alliance to "cooperate with other political forces". A source close to Macron later confirmed that he would not hold further talks with the LFI or the National Rally, nor with Eric Ciotti, leader of the right-wing Republicans, who had allied himself with Le Pen's far-right party for the snap vote. The LFI reacted with fury, with its national coordinator Manuel Bompard called Macron's comments an "unacceptable anti-democratic coup". LFI leader Jean-Luc Melenchon called for a "firm and strong response" by the public and politicians including a "motion of impeachment" against the president. Communist party leader Fabien Roussel called for a "grand popular mobilisation" and rejected new talks. Green party leader Marine Tondelier said "the people must get rid of Macron for the good of democracy. He is chaos and instability." Macron has left Gabriel Attal as caretaker government leader for a post-war record time since the July election as he seeks a figure with enough broad support to survive a confidence vote. The pressure is on however as the deadline to present a draft 2025 budget for the heavily indebted government is just over a month away. Leftist parties had pushed for Macron to name 37-year-old economist and civil servant Lucie Castets as prime minister. Melenchon even said there could be a left-wing government without ministers from his party, but this has still been opposed by Macron and centre-right parties. The president has repeatedly called LFI an "extreme" movement, branding the party as equally zealous as Le Pen's. Since Melenchon's offer, centre-right parties have focused attention on the NFP's big-spending manifesto at a time when France is battling a record budget deficit and a debt mountain.

RBI Governor ranked among top 3 global central bankers; Modi lauds Shaktikanta Das



"This is a recognition of his leadership at the RBI and his work towards ensuring economic growth and stability," Modi said. In the report released on August 19, Das secured the second spot among the three central bank governors rated 'A+'.

The top position went to Denmark's Christian Kettel Thomsen, while Switzerland's Thomas Jordan was placed third. According to Global Finance, grades are assigned on an "A+" to "F" scale based on success in areas such as inflation control, economic growth goals, currency stability, and interest rate management. "The annual Central Banker Report Cards recognize those leaders whose strategies have outperformed their peers through originality, creativity, and tenacity," Global Finance's statement highlighted. Joseph Giarraputo, founder and editorial director of Global Finance, noted, "Central bankers have waged a battle against inflation over the past few years, using their primary tool: higher interest rates. Now, countries around the world are seeing the results of these efforts, as inflation has dropped significantly." Since 1994, Global Finance has published the Central Banker Report Cards annually, grading central bank governors from nearly 100 countries, territories, and districts, including the European Union, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, the Bank of Central African States, and the Central Bank of West African States.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das has been ranked among the top three central bankers globally for the second consecutive year by the US-based magazine Global Finance. Das received an 'A+' rating in the Global Finance Central Banker Report Cards 2024, the RBI announced on X on Tuesday. "We are pleased to announce that for the second consecutive year, RBI Governor @DasShaktikanta has been rated 'A+' in the Global Finance Central Banker Report Cards 2024," the central bank's post stated. Happy to announce that for the 2nd consecutive year, RBI Governor @DasShaktikanta has been rated 'A+', in the Global Finance Central Banker Report Cards 2024. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Das in a post on X.

Broad definitions in Telecom Act pit telcos and OTTs against each other yet again

A war over interpretation of what a telecommunication service is under the new Telecommunication Act has broken out between telecom operators and social media companies, with the former arguing that over-the-top (OTT) communications platforms like WhatsApp and Google Meet are indeed covered under the definition of a telecom service. This points to the vague manner in which telecom services have been defined under the Act, and despite the government's clarification to the media earlier that OTTs don't fall under the definition, experts believe media statements do not have the same sanctity as the legal word — and see this as the key reason behind this new divergence in the interpretation.

In response to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI's) ongoing consultations on service authorisations, all the three major telecom operators have made a case that OTT platforms fall under the definition of telecom services, and therefore, should require licensing from the government the same way telcos do. In the Act, telecom services have been defined as: "transmission, emission or reception of any messages, by wire, radio, optical or other electro-magnetic systems, whether or not such messages have been subjected to rearrangement, computation or other processes by any means in the course of their transmission, emission or reception". And 'messages' has been further defined as "any sign, signal, writing, text, image, sound, video, data stream, intelligence or information sent through telecommunication". Telecom services, new Telecommunication Act, telecom operators, social media companies, OTT platforms, WhatsApp, Google Meet, TRAI's consultations on service authorisations, Indian express news

When the Act was tabled in Parliament last year, various stakeholders had raised concerns that this particular definition was broad enough to potentially include OTT communications platforms. However, former telecom



minister Ashwini Vaishnaw had, at the time, clarified publicly to the media that OTTs are not under the ambit of the law. But telecom companies seemingly have a different interpretation, almost eight months after the Act was passed in Parliament. "As per our understanding, OTT communication services are covered under the new Telecom Act as an access service. To address the issues of non-level playing field and ensure adoption of principles of 'same service, same rule', these competing and substitutable services should be included under Access Services authorisation under the new framework," the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), which represents the three telecom companies Jio, Airtel and Vi, said in a statement. To be sure, this is the interpretation of the telecom companies, and TRAI or the telecom department may or may not entertain them. Tech companies are pushing back against this interpretation. The Broadband India Forum (BIF), a think tank which represents companies like Meta, Google, and Amazon, has opposed the telecom operators body's understanding and has said that such an authorisation requirement "will change the definition of the market altogether as certain entities would then possess an unprecedented market advantage, stifling competition, innovation and consumer choice".

Sebi proposes review of rights issue norms

SEBI, SEBI proposes review of rights issue norms, Securities and Exchange Board of India, changes in Rights issue, abolition of merchant banker, selective investors, fundraising, consultation paper, monitoring agency, Indian express news The regulator has suggested abolishing the requirement of appointing a merchant banker by an issuer for rights issues

The Securities and Exchange Board of India on Tuesday proposed to make major changes in the rights issue by reducing the processing timeline, rationalising the letter of offer, abolition of merchant banker and allotment to selective investors to make it a preferred route of fundraising. In its consultation paper, the regulator has proposed mandating the appointment of a 'monitoring agency' to supervise the use of proceeds from all types of rights issues of equity shares. It has suggested enabling allotment to selective investors in rights issues, laying down adequate checks and balances, and abolishing the requirement of appointing a merchant banker by an issuer for rights issues.

Currently, an issuer offering securities worth less than Rs 50 crore through a rights issue is not required to rope in a monitoring agency. Further, Sebi has recommended that in case the trading in the shares of the issuer is suspended at the time of making a rights issue, such an issuer should not be allowed to make a rights issue. However, the current rules do not prescribe eligibility conditions for making rights issues. The proposals are aimed at making rights issues a preferred mode of raising funds as Sebi noted that the amount raised through rights issues in FY24 was lesser than the amount mobilized through other available modes — QIPs and preferential allotments — during this period. Further, the number of rights issues was also substantially less than the preferential allotments.

In the consultation paper, the regulator has proposed to rationalize the content of a 'Letter of Offer' by requiring it to disclose only the relevant information regarding the rights issue, such as the object of the issue, price, record date, and entitlement ratio, among others. "In the case of a rights issue, for an investor to make an investment decision, only additional information is required viz object of the issue, price, entitlement ratio and promoter's participation," it said. "Thus, it can be inferred that investing in a company by way of rights issue is more or less akin to a secondary market purchase. Hence, in case of rights issue, there seems to be no requirement for aggregating the information, which is already available in the public domain except for few issue-related information," Sebi said. Sebi has proposed to reduce the current indicative timelines of a rights issue to T+20 working days from the date of the board meeting approving the rights issue till the date of closure of the rights issue. Currently, for non-

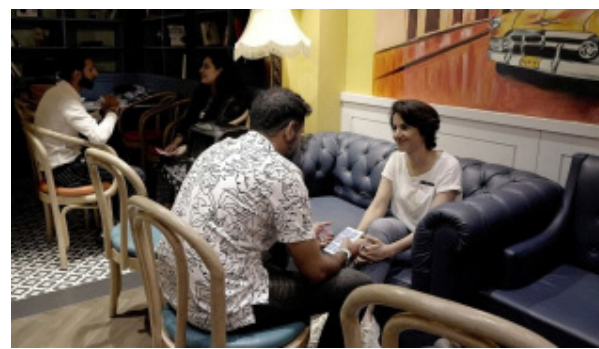


fast track rights issues, it takes on average 317 days to complete the process — from the date of board approval till the date of trading, whereas for fast-track right issues, it takes on an average 126 days. The regulator has suggested abolishing the requirement of appointing a merchant banker by an issuer for rights issues. Further, it has proposed to assign the activities, which are presently carried out by the merchant banker to the Registrar to Issue or stock exchanges. It has proposed that validation of applications and finalization of the basis of allotment, which is presently carried out by the Registrar to the issue, may also be carried out by stock exchanges and depositories, concurrently. The regulator has also suggested relaxing the restrictions with respect to renunciation by promoters and allowing the promoter or promoter group to renounce their rights entitlement in favour of any selective investor.

Amazon India cuts selling fees by up to 12% for festive season

Mumbai: Amazon India on Saturday announced an up to 12 per cent reduction in selling fees across multiple product categories on the marketplace ahead of the festive season. The reductions in fees, which is effective from September 9, will enable sellers to expand their product portfolio on the platform besides providing a boost to growth, Amazon India said. "With the changes, sellers on Amazon India will benefit from a drop in selling fees, ranging from 3-12 per cent, across various product categories," the company said. The new rate card will particularly benefit sellers offering products priced below Rs 500, it said. "At Amazon, we are invested in supporting businesses of all sizes, from small and medium businesses to emerging entrepreneurs to established brands.

Pakistani singles defy tradition, search for spouses in person



Dozens of young singles gathered this week to meet potential marriage partners in Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore, the first attempt by a UK-based matrimonial app to help people find spouses in person in the conservative Islamic country. Typically, marriages in Pakistan are arranged by parents who look for suitable matches for their children from within their communities or the extended family. Dating apps are generally stigmatised and gender segregation socially and at work remains common in the country of 240 million people. The Lahore event was organised by Muzz, formerly Muzzmatch, which says its app is based on Islamic etiquette. The app is restricted to Muslim users, and, in a nod to traditional values, gives the option of blurring pictures except for specific matches and allows for chaperones to oversee meetings. Other smaller events are also emerging in the country to challenge traditional matchmaking norms. Despite criticism online in the past for the app, the Muzz event was attended by about 100 people.

Aimen, a 31-year-old woman who did not want to be further identified, said she used the app on the recom-

mendation of her U.S.-based brother. "I used the app for two weeks, but then I saw an ad for this event and thought, why not meet people in person?" she told Reuters. She said that her mother would have accompanied her as a chaperone but couldn't attend because of ill-health. Muzz, launched in 2015 in the Britain, which also has a sizeable Muslim population, has over 1.5 million users in Pakistan, its second-largest market after Morocco. Moazz, a 27-year-old man, said he has been using Muzz for a year and that he was hopeful of finding a wife through the app.

"I do get matches, but they have different priorities," he said adding that girls on the app expect him to involve his parents from the beginning. "That is not (immediately) possible," he said, stressing the need of getting to know someone before taking the next big step. Annie's Matchmaking Party, another Lahore event last week, used an algorithm to match 20 young professionals after a selection process and invited them to the meet. Noor ul Ain Choudhary, the 30-year-old organizer, faced criticism online that her event promoted a "hookup culture". She countered that it aimed to provide a safe space for singles to meet and connect. "In Pakistan, we've had two options: biased arranged marriages or time-consuming dating apps with no guarantees. Safety during meetings is also a concern," she said. Abdullah Ahmed, 22, was bullish about in person events and said he was convinced he may have found his perfect match at the Muzz gathering. "The highlight was meeting an amazing girl," he said, beaming with excitement, adding that they instantly clicked and swapped social media handles. "We're both Marvel fans! We're already planning to catch the new Deadpool & Wolverine together," he said.

Kriti Sanon talks about not wanting people around if her mood is off: How to maintain healthy relationships while practicing self-care

Bollywood star Kriti Sanon recently appeared on Zerodha co-founder Nikhil Kamath's podcast 'WTF is with Nikhil Kamath', alongside cricketer KL Rahul and musician Badshah. In the episode, she revealed that a gentle touch from someone close can trigger tears when she's emotionally overwhelmed. She said, "If my mood is off, I usually don't want people around. I need to be left alone for some time. If I want to talk, and you're there, I may start crying in front of you... and if you scream at me, I will 100 per cent start crying."

This highlights a common but often misunderstood aspect of emotional self-care: recognising and honouring one's own feelings. In a fast-paced world where social interactions are constant, understanding when to seek solitude is crucial for maintaining emotional well-being. Neha Cadabam, senior psychologist and executive director at Cadabams Hospitals, tells indianexpress.com, "Emotional self-care is vital for maintaining mental well-being, but it can sometimes be challenging to balance this need with the demands of relationships." Recognising when to prioritise emotional self-care

Emotional self-care is the process of honouring your feelings and taking intentional actions to ensure your emotional health is safeguarded, said Cadabam. "If you find yourself becoming easily frustrated or overly sensitive, it may be a sign that your emotional reserves are depleted, and you need some self-care." Feeling mentally or emotionally drained, as if you can't handle even minor stresses, is a strong indicator. A sense of emotional numbness, where you find it difficult to connect with your feelings, can be a sign that it's time to take a step back and focus on self-care. Strategies for emotional self-care Carve out intentional moments throughout the day for relaxation and reflection. Practices such as deep breathing, meditation, or journaling can help restore emotional balance.

Cadabam adds, "Create a safe space where you can spend time alone without interruption, engaging in activities that bring you peace or joy, like reading, art, or simply resting." Activities such as yoga, walking in nature, or even cooking can provide an outlet for emotional ex-



pression and recharging, she says. Kriti Sanon Feeling mentally or emotionally drained, as if you can't handle even minor stresses, is a strong indicator of the need to practice emotional self-care. It's crucial to differentiate between practicing healthy emotional self-care and engaging in emotional avoidance. "Emotional self-care is about tending to your emotional needs and processing your feelings, whereas emotional avoidance is about escaping or suppressing those feelings," said Cadabam. Emotional self-care involves taking time to reflect on your feelings, process them, and understand their origins. You communicate your needs to others while respecting their emotions. Emotional avoidance often involves steering clear of conversations that could cause discomfort, even if it's necessary for emotional growth. Rather than processing emotions, you push them aside, hoping they'll go away on their own. Balancing solitude with healthy relationships Balancing the need for solitude with maintaining strong, supportive relationships requires careful thought and deliberate action, according to Cadabam. "Regular communication is key. Let your partner or loved ones know when you need alone time and why. Keeping them informed will help prevent feelings of neglect or confusion." Focus on quality connections rather than the frequency of interactions, she says. When you do engage with your loved ones, be fully present. While solitude is essential, so is human connection. Make an effort to schedule regular social interactions, whether it's a weekly coffee date with a friend or a dedicated evening spent with family.

Priyanka Chopra wears 30 lakh bracelet and vintage pearl necklace worth crores for brother's wedding

Priyanka Chopra made a surprise visit to India to attend her brother Siddharth Chopra's wedding celebrations. For one of the wedding functions, the Quantico actor turned heads in a stunning berry-hued chiffon sari by Bollywood's favourite Manish Malhotra. She complemented the ensemble with exquisite Bulgari jewels, showcasing her role as the brand's ambassador.

Chopra adorned herself with a Serpenti Viper Bracelet from Bulgari's Serpenti collection. The elegant bracelet, crafted in 18 kt white gold with full pavé diamonds, is valued at ₹30,79,000 according to the official website. She paired the bracelet with a vintage pearl choker necklace, adding a touch of timeless elegance to her look. Priyanka Chopra's vintage pearl choker necklace, a captivating piece adorned with pearls, rubies, and diamonds, added a touch of timeless elegance to her wedding en-



semble. While the exact price of the necklace remains undisclosed, reports suggest it comes with a hefty price tag of ₹8 crore.

We personally loved Priyanka's look, complete with her tiered pearl necklace, and some netizens agreed with us too. Priyanka's post on Instagram with her look got many comments from her fans. One of them was beauty influencer Aditya Madiraju from New Jersey,

who wrote, "Sonia from Altraaz meets Nandita from Gunday!", referring to Priyanka's characters in both movies. However, some netizens thought the jewellery didn't match with her look. The actress made a striking impression in her custom-designed berry-hued chiffon sari by renowned designer Manish Malhotra. The nine-yard masterpiece featured intricate floral patterns and shimmering sequin embellishments.

She paired the sari with a cropped blouse, showcasing a plunging neckline, spaghetti straps, and a backless design. To complete her look, Chopra opted for a vibrant berry lip, a messy top knot, pink eyeshadow, and contoured cheeks. The actor was styled by celebrity stylist Ami Patel for the occasion. She topped off the ensemble with a chic pair of sunglasses, with a hint of a cat-eye.

Following accusations and retaliations, survivors, alleged perpetrators in Malayalam film industry gear up for legal battles



Renowned Bengali actor Sreelekha Mitra, who recently accused filmmaker Ranjith Balakrishnan of misbehaviour, filed a complaint with the Kochi City Police against the director on Monday. After allegations of sexual harassment and retaliation from alleged perpetrators in Malayalam film industry, both survivors and named individuals are now gearing up for legal battles.

Following the release of the Justice Hema Committee report, the Malayalam film industry has been shaken by allegations of sexual harassment and retaliation from named individuals. Both survivors and alleged perpetrators are now gearing up for legal battles as many of them have filed complaints against each other. Renowned Bengali actor Sreelekha Mitra, who recently accused filmmaker Ranjith Balakrishnan of misbehaviour during the casting process of his 2009 Malayalam film *Paleri Manikyam: Oru Pathirakolapathakathinte Katha*, filed a complaint with the Kochi City Police against the director on Monday, news agency ANI reported. Although Ranjith

had denied the allegations initially, he was eventually compelled to resign as the head of the government-run Kerala Chalachitra Academy. In another development, the senior actor, who stepped down from his position as general secretary of the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) after being accused of rape, has also filed a complaint with the Kerala police, against the survivor. "The complaint has been submitted to the Director General of Police," an official with Kerala police was quoted as saying by ANI. A young writer, meanwhile, has accused director VK Prakash of misbehaviour and has filed a complaint with the special investigation team established by the Kerala government to probe allegations of sexual misconduct raised against prominent figures in the Malayalam film industry, Mathrubhumi reported. In the aftermath of the release of the Justice Hema Committee report, the government had formed a team of seven high-ranking police officers. The team is led by IG Sparjan Kumar, with ADGP H Venkatesh overseeing the probe. Four of the seven-member team are reportedly women IPS officers. The junior artiste who accused actor-producer Baburaj of sexually assaulting her in 2019 has also stated she is willing to talk to the police. Baburaj, meanwhile, denied the allegation and said he would "initiate legal action" against the junior artiste.

The redacted version of the Justice Hema Committee report, released on August 19, made significant revelations, highlighting extreme discrimination and exploitation faced by women in the Malayalam film industry. This includes issues such as the casting couch, lack of basic facilities on sets, pay disparities, and ostracism for those who refuse to comply with demands from perpetrators.

Aamir Khan regrets not giving time to his kids Ira, Junaid and Azad: 'I didn't know anything about their feelings...'

Aamir Khan, who is known to be a perfectionist in his professional life, recently shared how he was unaware of his children's life and challenges. Aamir, who has been in films for over 30 years, said he regretted it so much that he decided to leave movies forever. The actor recalled how the pandemic made him think what he has lost to work over the years. In the latest episode of Rhea Chakraborty's podcast Chapter 2, Aamir, who is a father of three, revealed how he was never present for his kids Ira, Junaid, and Azad. He recalled, "Ira was struggling with depression at the time, she is much better now. But then she needed me. Junaid is starting his career. He has lived his life without me. And now, perhaps he is taking the last big step in his life, towards his career. If I am not with him at this time, then what's the point? Azad is 9 years now. In another 3 years, he will be a teenager. His childhood won't come back."

Aamir Khan, who claims to have extremely strong feelings for his kids and family, revealed where he went wrong. He said, "Not that I don't have strong feelings for my kids, I feel a lot for my family. But the fact that I already had my close ones around me, I had to win over the audience. I have laughed and cried with them (fans) through my films and stories. I have given hope to people. But when Ira and Junaid were five or six years old, I didn't know anything about their feelings then, what were their problems, what did they need then or what were their challenges. I had no idea about these things."

The actor cried as he recalled, "But, I knew everything about my team and directors. I felt very bad. So, that time was very difficult for me. Nobody told me this. I realised it myself. Ira and Junaid's childhood won't re-



turn. I could have spent a lot more time with my mother in the last 30 years, which I didn't. The time will never return."

When asked if his family didn't demand time from him, Aamir said, "My family sometimes did ask me to spare some time for them, but they never pressurised me because they felt that I was lost in my work and I shouldn't be disturbed. That realisation was a turning point in my life. At that time I decided what took me away from my family, I will leave that thing. I decided to not work in films at all. I didn't want to be associated with it. I was angry at myself and my work. After that time, I have been giving them time."

I had left films, but I rejoined." Aamir Khan, who announced a break from films after the release of *Laal Singh Chaddha* (2022), returned to films this year. The actor produced his ex-wife Kiran Rao's film *Laapataa Ladies* and will soon be seen in the movie *Sitaare Zameen Par*.

Ajayante Randam Moshanam trailer: Tovino Thomas promises an action spectacle with epic visuals

Ajayante Randam Moshanam trailer: This is Malayalam actor Tovino Thomas' first pan-India film after he gained a wider audience with *Minnal Murali* and the blockbuster drama 2018. *Ajayante Randam Moshanam* is scheduled for a worldwide release, including in 3D format, during this year's Onam season.

Ajayante Randam Moshanam trailer: What's a cinephile's dream? One film and three Tovino Thomas. That's exactly what *Ajayante Randam Moshanam* (ARM) will be showcasing as it stars the Malayalam actor in multiple roles in a film that unfolds over several timelines. The recently released trailer of this pan-India spectacle highlights that *Ajayante Randam Moshanam* will fully bank on Tovino's talents, exploring both his star persona and his acting skills extensively. The Malayalam period action-adventure is directed by Jithin Laal, a long-time associate of *Minnal Murali* director Basil Joseph. The official synopsis of *Ajayante Randam Moshanam* (which means *Ajayan's Second Robbery*), reads, "Set in northern Kerala, three generations of heroes, Maniyan, Kunjikelu, and Ajayan, try to protect the most important treasure of the land." The 163-second trailer begins with a voiceover saying, "One night, a starstone burst from the sky. Surpassing the speed of the wind, outshining the brightness of lightning, it came and fell on our Haripuram." The promo then cuts to a bygone era and introduces the Kalaripayattu combatant (Tovino). But we are soon introduced to another character, a "rascal looting from everywhere". As the locals gather to nab him, we see him (Tovino again), as fast as a leopard and as fierce as a tiger, emerging from the net traps laid for him, all so fiercely. The trailer soon reveals that the actor plays three roles — Maniyan, Ajayan, and Kunjikelu.

We are then shown Tovino in a timeline closer to the present and the romantic side of his various characters. "Three generations, one promise," the video unveils as its core, maintaining an element of surprise. It also introduces us to the characters played by actors Krithi Shetty, Aishwarya Rajesh, Surabhi Lakshmi, and Basil Joseph. This is the second visual asset of the film after the teaser, which gave a glimpse into the rustic but high-scale world of the film, which can be expanded into a franchise. The movie is written by Sujith Nambiar and produced by Dr Zachariah Thomas and Listin Stephen under Magic Frames and UGM Productions banners. The cast and crew of the film are currently on a city tour to promote their upcoming biggie, which will also be released theatrically in Hindi. This is Tovino's first pan-India



dia film after he gained a wider audience with *Minnal Murali* and the blockbuster drama 2018. *Ajayante Randam Moshanam* is scheduled for a worldwide release, including in 3D format, on September 12, 2024, coinciding with the Onam festival.

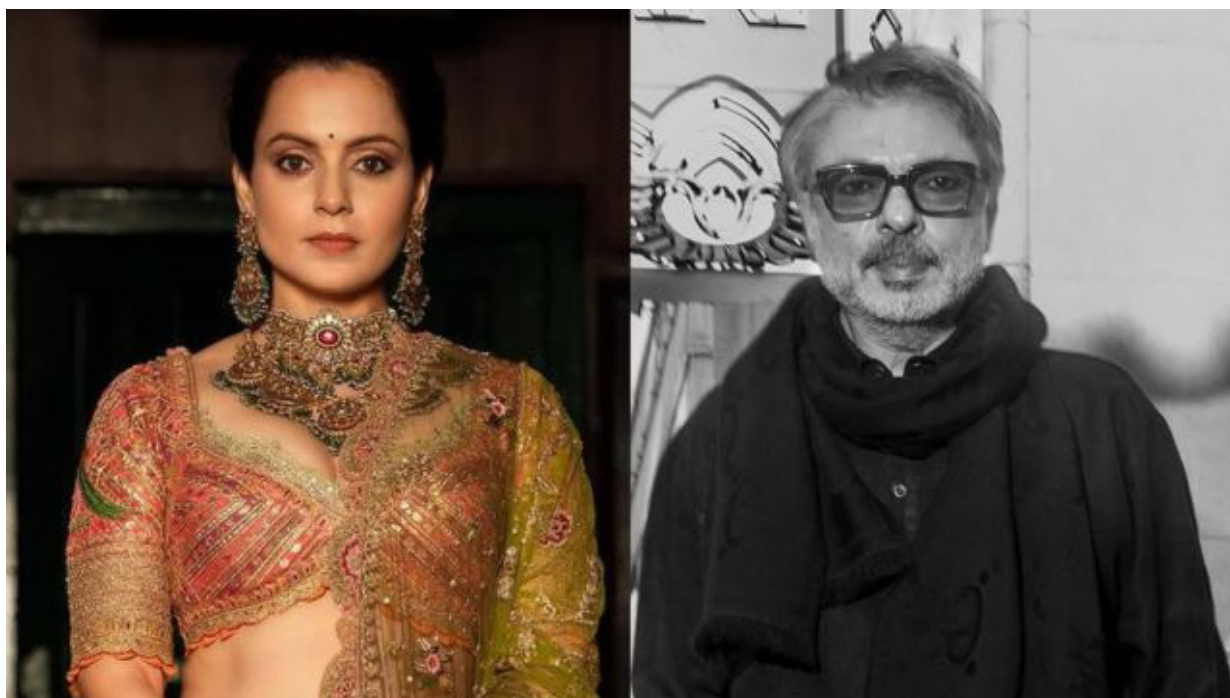
Sharvari is in an 'Alpha state of mind'

Mumbai: Ahead of her shoot in Kashmir, actress Sharvari is in an "Alpha" state of mind as she intensely preps for the schedule.

Sharvari took to Instagram on Monday and shared a slew of pictures featuring her in "action mode", where she is seen working out. She captioned it: "Alpha state of mind #MondayMotivation" Team "Alpha" is heading to Kashmir on Monday to shoot for the second schedule of the entertainer.

The actress had earlier shared her excitement to shoot in Kashmir, which is also called as "Heaven on Earth." Talking about her upcoming schedule, Sharvari had earlier said: "I can't wait to be on the sets of Alpha again and I can't wait to shoot in Kashmir! I'm thrilled that it's going to be a very exciting schedule. The Alpha team will be meeting after some time so we are all super ready to start the Kashmir sked!" And on the sets of Alpha, "I'm like a ball of energy soaking everything and trying to learn and better myself. To get an opportunity like this so early in one's career is truly a blessing. I'm just humbled to be in such a franchise that has the megastars of our film industry in it!" Sharvari is currently basking on the success of "Munija", which raked in Rs. 100 crore.

Kangana Ranaut says Sanjay Leela Bhansali approached her for a dance number in Ram Leela: 'How can you portray women like this?'



After claiming to have refused to work in *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, *Sultan*, and *Sanju*, Kangana Ranaut has now claimed she was offered a dance number in *Ranveer Singh* and *Deepika Padukone's Ram Leela*. Kangana said she turned down the offer as she couldn't portray a women like that.

In an interview with NBT, the Queen star said, "Even Sanjay Leela Bhansali called me for an item number in *Ram Leela*. Everyone said I was crazy for turning him down. I can't do it. Whether it's Bhansali or anyone else, I just can't. How can you portray women like this?" The particular clip from the interview has gone viral on Reddit. A fan commented on the post, "Sanjay Leela Bhansali said Aishwarya was offered the song before it went to

Priyanka. Priyanka was amazing in the song and its impossible to imagine Kangana Ranaut doing the same justice to the song." Previously, Kangana Ranaut claimed to have refused roles in Salman Khan's films *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* and *Sultan*. In a conversation with Siddharth Kannan, Kangana called Salman 'kind' and said, "Salman offered me a role in *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, I was like 'Yeh kya role diya hai? (what is this role?)' He then approached me for *Sultan*. I didn't take that up. He was like, 'What more do I offer to you now?'" In the same interview, Kangana even claimed to have refused a role in *Sanju*, despite Ranbir Kapoor's personal request. She even recalled how Akshay Kumar called her and asked, "Do you have a problem with me?", when she didn't do films with him.

Prithviraj comes down heavily on AMMA for inadequate handling of complaints: 'Stronger intervention and actions needed'

Regarding the existence of the "power group" mentioned in the Hema panel report, Prithviraj said that just because he hasn't encountered such a group or faced issues from anything like that doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Prithviraj Sukumaran revealed that he was among the first to speak with the Justice Hema Committee and provide a statement. (Image: Prithviraj/Facebook)

Even as senior actors and superstars Mohanlal and Mammootty remain tight-lipped about the Justice Hema Committee report — revealing several issues faced by women in the Malayalam film industry, including sexual harassment, lack of basic facilities like toilets, gender bias, discrimination and disparities in remuneration — younger thespians seem to be showing the way, taking stances. Actor Prithviraj Sukumaran recently addressed the report and the subsequent revelations by many survivors.

Prithviraj revealed that he was among the first to speak with the Justice Hema Committee and provide a statement. He also expressed his anticipation to see what actions will be taken against any identified perpetrators. Prithviraj further criticised the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) for its inadequate handling of the survivor's complaints. His comments were in response to a question about AMMA's inaction regarding a complaint by his *Avan Chandiyude Makan* co-star Sridevika against director Thulasidas. He asserted, "Stronger intervention and actions are needed from AMMA." When asked about the potential impact of these incidents on the film industry, Prithviraj stated that there should be an appropriate impact. "If there are allegations, there should be a watertight investigation into them. Those found guilty should



receive deserving punishment," he said. Prithviraj also noted that if any complaints are proven false, the complainant should also face consequences. He further affirmed his commitment to ensuring the safety and protection of everyone in the workspaces he is involved in. Regarding the existence of the "power group" mentioned in the Hema panel report, Prithviraj said that just because he hasn't encountered such a group or faced issues from anything like that doesn't mean it doesn't exist. "Just because I haven't faced any issues from a so-called influential group doesn't mean it doesn't exist. I haven't experienced it, but if anyone in Malayalam cinema has been affected by such a group, their grievances must be heard. If such a body exists, it should be dismantled," he added. The Justice Hema Committee report mentioned that about 10-15 persons who are at the forefront of the Malayalam film industry constitute a power group and control the industry.

Actors Sridevika, Geetha Vijayan accuse senior Malayalam director Thulasidas of harassment

Despite lodging a formal complaint with the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA), Sridevika said no action was taken against Thulasidas. Two actors, Sridevika and Geetha Vijayan, have raised allegations of harassment against senior Malayalam director Thulasidas. The tide has turned and the time has finally come for the downfall of those in the Malayalam film industry who wielded immense unchecked power, giving them a free pass to commit even crimes. The Justice Hema Committee report has exposed the deplorable conditions under which women work, and since its release, many survivors have come forward to share their traumatic experiences of being violated by men, many of whom are prominent figures in the industry. Now, two actors have raised allegations of harassment against senior Malayalam director Thulasidas. The first to speak out was south actor Sridevika, who claimed that Thulasidas harassed her while working on his film *Avan Chandiyude Makan* (2007), which starred Prithviraj Sukumaran. The incident took place during the movie's production in 2006.

Sridevika stated that during the filming of *Avan Chandiyude Makan*, she endured harassment with Thulasidas repeatedly knocking on her hotel room door late at night for several days in a row. After contacting the hotel reception, she confirmed that it was indeed the director who was knocking. Sridevika recalled informing a fellow actor about the harassment, which led her and her mother to move to a different room to avoid further encounters with Thulasidas. She also mentioned that after this incident, Thulasidas began acting vindictively towards her, behaving inappropriately on set and even reducing her shots and dialogues. Despite lodging a formal complaint with the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA), she said no action was taken against Thulasidas. Feeling let down by the association's lack of response, Sridevika went public with her story on Facebook in 2018, highlighting the letter she had sent to AMMA and criticising the association for its inaction.

Actor Geetha Vijayan also shared her traumatic ex-



periences with Thulasidas, stating that she faced similar harassment and stood up against it, which seemingly led to her exclusion from numerous films. Geetha alleged that Thulasidas harassed her persistently during the filming of his 1991 movie *Chanchattam*, repeatedly disturbing her in her hotel room by incessantly ringing the doorbell. The actor recalled that when she confronted him, he fled but later retaliated by acting vindictively, as Sridevika too described. Geetha said the director even refused to explain scenes to her and threatened to have her ousted from the industry.

"Isn't this a powerful movement? A fear has come to all those who have committed violence against women, and that fear is their punishment. That fear should always be there. I hope that such bad incidents will not happen again. Even if it happens, everyone should show courage to oppose it," Mathrubhumi quoted Geetha as saying, underscoring the significance of the ongoing movement. Thulasidas, however, has denied these allegations. He claimed that Geetha, along with other actors, had an enjoyable experience during the shooting of *Chanchattam* and he never went knocking on her door. The director also mentioned that actor Siddique, who has faced rape accusations, was often in his room late at night "discussing the script". Thulasidas dismissed Sridevika's accusations as well, suggesting she might be seeking revenge because he once scolded her during the shoot.

After Pakistan's loss against Bangladesh, PCB chief mulls domestic strength: 'You can't dump someone unless you have a better one to replace'



GNS News Agency, August 28

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Mohsin Naqvi believes cricket in the country needs 'major surgery' after the team's disastrous 10-wicket loss against Bangladesh in the Rawalpindi Test on Sunday. Naqvi, who spoke on the occasion of making public the five mentors of Pakistan's One-Day tournament (Champions Cup), pressed on a dire need of backup players emerging from the domestic circuit.

"The problem is the selection committee has no pool to turn to from which to select players," he said. "I spoke of surgery because we need to fix our problems. But when we look at how to resolve them, we don't have any solid data or player pool which we can draw from. The whole system was a mess. The Champions Cup will produce great talent, and we'll have records for the games that happen. For surgery, you need all the tools to perform it." "We had a lot of players for which we didn't have records," Naqvi said. "This Cup will make domestic cricket strong, we'll have a pool of 150 players, and then the

surgery we need to be done, the selection committee will do. People said 'do it all today, slit the throats of four-five players, and get rid of them'. You can't dump someone unless you have a better one to replace them." These 150 players that have been selected, 80% of it has been done by AI (Artificial intelligence), and 20% using humans. Nobody can challenge that. We gave about 20% weightage to our selection committee. If we replace a player with a worse one, you'll be the first to complain. We'll have records and we'll all be able to see transparently who deserves a place in the team," he added. Masood Pakistan's Naseem Shah, second right, celebrates with teammate after taking the wicket of Bangladesh's Zakir Hasan during the third day of first cricket test match between Pakistan and Bangladesh, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, Friday.

Pakistan's cricket team has come under scanner on the back of their first-ever loss against Bangladesh in Test cricket. The Shan Masood-led team also coped flake for their poor reading of the conditions and fielding four seamers on a surface that didn't come to the aid of their quicks. "The weather had been around in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, it rained around 8-9 days before the first day of play," Masood said afterwards, conceding that Pakistan were wrong in their assessment of the pitch. "Firstly looking at the pitch, we expected it to do a bit more. With three pace bowlers, they were gonna be pushed to the limit. At the end of the day, we got it wrong."

Former PCB chief Ramiz Raja was among those who lashed out on Masood and Co after the loss. "Firstly, there was a mistake in team selection. You were without a spinner," Ramiz Raja said on his YouTube channel. "Secondly, the reputation based on which we rely on our fast bowlers is finished."

BCCI announces introduction of prize money for women's and junior cricket competitions

GNS News Agency, August 28

the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the introduction of prize money for the Player Of the Match and Player Of the Tournament award winners at the domestic level in all women's and junior cricket competitions. BCCI secretary Jay Shah announced the decision on his social media post on X (Formerly known as Twitter). "We are introducing prize money for the Player of the Match and Player of the Tournament in all Women's and Junior Cricket tournaments under our Domestic Cricket Programme," he wrote. Last year, the BCCI had increased the prize money for the domestic tournaments with the Ranji Trophy winners receiving a whopping cash reward of Rs 5 crore. The cash prize for Irani Cup too had been doubled with the winners getting Rs 50 lakh instead of Rs 25 lakh, and the team finishing runners-up got Rs 25 lakh. In Duleep Trophy, the champions now get Rs 1 crore and runners-up team receive Rs 50 lakh, while winners of Vijay Hazare Trophy get a cheque of Rs 1 crore and the team finishing second best Rs 50 lakh. "Additionally, prize money will be awarded for the Player of the Match in the Vijay Hazare and Syed Mushtaq Ali tournaments for Senior Men. This initiative aims to recognize and reward outstanding performances in the



domestic circuit," the tweet from Jay Shah on Monday further added. Test cricket incentive Earlier BCCI has also introduced Test cricket incentive scheme. Players who have featured in the playing XI of more than 50 percent of Tests in a season since 2022-23 will receive a financial incentive of Rs 30 lakh per game with the BCCI announcing a total Rs 40 crore corpus for the scheme. The payout will increase to Rs 45 lakh per game for every player who features in at least 75 percent of matches in a season. This incentive from BCCI will be in addition to the Rs 15 lakh paid per Test match.

Given a second chance to get into Test side, Suryakumar Yadav ready for the hard grind ahead of busy red-ball season

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Suryakumar Yadav's Instagram story couldn't have been more apt. Clad in whites with the Mumbai Cricket Association crest glittering under the evening sun, Surya called it, "Back to the roots." For the next four months when India are lined up to play 10 Tests, Surya's intentions are pretty clear. "I want to earn a place in that Test squad," he states. Since making his debut against Australia at Nagpur in 2023, the 33-year-old hasn't been part of the Test set-up. And ahead of the Sri Lanka series, even chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar had said they are looking at him as a T20 player as he wasn't even included in the ODI squad. But with new head coach Gautam Gambhir keeping the door open for Surya's return to the Test fold, the batsman's comeback trial will begin in Coimbatore on Tuesday, when Mumbai are scheduled to face TNCA XI in the Buchi Babu Invitational Tournament. "There are a lot of players who have worked hard to earn their place in the Test squad. Even I want to earn a place in that Test squad. After I made my debut for India in Tests, I got injured. A lot of players who got opportunities have done well. Those are the players who deserve the opportunity right now. Going forward, if I have to play, that is not in my control. What is in my control right now is to play this tournament (Buchi Babu), go on to play the Duleep Trophy and then we will see what happens," says Surya after a three-hour practice session on Monday.

Surya knows he is waiting in a queue. Apart from the returning Virat Kohli and KL Rahul, there are two of his Mumbai teammates – Shreyas Iyer and Sarfaraz Khan, here with him in Coimbatore – who are vying for a spot in the middle order. The next three weeks, when Surya is set to play a minimum of three Duleep Trophy matches, will reveal whether he moves up the pecking order or has to depend on the Ranji Trophy that follows soon after.

Festive offer Suryakumar Yadav Buchi Babu Surya knows he is waiting in a queue. Apart from the returning Virat Kohli and KL Rahul, there are two of his Mumbai teammates – Shreyas Iyer and Sarfaraz Khan, here with him in Coimbatore – who are vying for a spot in the middle order. (PTI/File) He has a lot of groundwork to do. It has been 13 months since Surya featured in a multi-day fixture. On Sunday as he linked up with the Mumbai squad here, he straightaway hit the nets. As he took guard and played out a few deliveries, it even prompted one of the net bowlers to wonder aloud, "Ena da pirichu edupar nu patha, porumaya adrar. Nan kooda bayanthute potean (I was expecting him to tear me apart... was scared to even



bowl, but he is being gentle). "Surya would subsequently bring out his trademark sweeps, but most of the time, he just focused on middling the deliveries and playing close to the body. "This format is a little challenging. You have to be one step ahead. You cannot bat like you do in a T20 match. But at the same time, intent is very important, including the body language you carry on to the ground. The thinking part of what needs to be done has to be done during the practice sessions. You cannot go to the game and think too much. What is in your control are the practice sessions and what you do until the start of the game. If you do well, stay humble. If you do not do well, go back to the basics and drawing board, start and come back again," Surya said. In his lone Test innings, Surya looked a bit expansive with his shots. But the conditions in Nagpur had prompted him to go for quick runs. Even in last year's Duleep Trophy, there was a bit of urgency in his batting, as he seemed to be in a bit of a rush. However, in the past, Surya has shown that he can bat in lower gears as well, and construct an innings. It is a side of his game that isn't spoken often. In 82 first-class matches, he averages 43.62 with a strike rate of 63.74 and has 14 centuries, a clear vindication of going through the grind. "When I grew up playing in the maidans of Mumbai and played local cricket, I started playing red ball. The love for red-ball cricket started from there. It has always been there. I have played a lot of first-class cricket, for close to 10 years. I made my Mumbai debut in 2010 (red ball) and played until at least 2020. This format has been close to my heart and I have always enjoyed playing it. That is why I am here ahead of the Duleep Trophy. I am fortunate to get this opportunity." It really seems so. It's now up to Surya to grab an opportunity that has come out of nowhere, just like he did on the boundary in the T20 World Cup in Barbados.

Barcelona should always aim for La Liga title, Hansi Flick says



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Barcelona La Liga 2024/25 season Following a trophyless last campaign which ended with the controversial firing of manager Xavi Hernandez, Barcelona signed former Bayern Munich and Germany coach Flick to help them regain the LaLiga title. (AP) Barcelona have started the LaLiga season well with two consecutive wins despite missing several key players, raising expectations around the prospects of new manager Hansi Flick. Top of LaLiga alongside Celta Vigo on six points, Barcelona travel to Madrid to face Rayo Vallecano on Tuesday, who are unbeaten after shocking Real Sociedad 2-1 and holding Getafe to a hard-fought goalless draw on Saturday. "The goal in Barcelona should always be to win the league," Flick told a press conference on Monday. "Sure, it's a long road, but we have started well, although everything can change quickly. Now we are happy about our start and we are confident. We are not looking ahead to May, our focus is to keep momentum in the next game. "We are very satisfied with what the team is doing on the pitch. The quality of the training sessions is good, the players are very focused, the intensity is good... and you can see that in the matches." Rayo will

rely on their raucous Vallecas Stadium to help stopping in-form Barcelona who beat convincingly beat tough opponents in Valencia and Athletic Bilbao to ease the pressure surrounding a club in turmoil on and off the pitch.

Following a trophyless last campaign which ended with the controversial firing of manager Xavi Hernandez, Barcelona signed former Bayern Munich and Germany coach Flick to help them regain the LaLiga title from Real Madrid. Flick took over a club with deepening financial issues, desperately trying to reduce their first-team wage bill so they can comply with LaLiga's financial controls so they are allowed to register new signings like Spain international Dani Olmo. La Liga 2024/25 season Robert Lewandowski Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski, right, celebrates with Jules Kounde after scoring his side's second goal during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between FC Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao at the Olympic stadium in Barcelona, Spain, Saturday, Aug. 24, 2024. (AP/PTI) They let German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan leave as a free agent after only one season since signing him from Manchester City and on Monday announced the departure of French defender Clement Lenglet — to Atletico Madrid — and Brazilian forward Vitor Roque — to Real Betis — both on season-long loans with no transfer fees just to clear their salaries. Flick is hoping that will enable them to register the versatile Olmo, who was central to Spain's Euro 2024 triumph, finishing as one of the tournament's top scorers with three goals and one of six Spain players in UEFA's team of the tournament. "I'm hopeful I can finally can count on him tomorrow," Flick said. "I also hoped for him in the last game, but things are the way they are. It would be fantastic, but we'll see what happens. It's something we can't control, neither the player nor the team, nor the coach... we know it's a difficult circumstance. I've spoken to him, it's a difficult situation. Of course he is not happy, but he knows the circumstances. He is fit and ready to play if the call comes..."

New-look Gachibowli Stadium all set to host Intercontinental Cup

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New Delhi: A new-look Gachibowli Athletic Stadium in the historic city of Hyderabad will welcome the players and spectators alike as the three-nation Intercontinental Cup kicks off on September 3. The multipurpose stadium, built in 2002, has witnessed many important international matches. It includes the Afro-Asian Games in 2003 and the high-voltage AFC Challenge Cup when the Blue Tigers defeated Myanmar in a historic semi-final that paved the way for an ultimate spot in the final rounds of the Asian Cup 2011 edition.

International football has returned to Gachibowli thanks to the initiative taken by the All India Football Federation president Kalyan Chaubey and Chief Minister of Telangana A Revanth Reddy. The CM, a huge sports lover, extended all necessary help for the successful conduct of the Intercontinental Cup. The government of Telangana has so far spent more than Rs. 15 crore to uplift the facilities of the Gachibowli Stadium on the eve of the Intercontinental Cup. The renovation work is in full swing as the new dressing rooms, officials' rooms, and 18 thousand new bucket seats will be ready to greet the players, officials, and spectators when hosts India, Syria and Mauritius arrive in Hyderabad for the tournament to



be played in the FIFA window. Syria are currently the best-ranked team in the FIFA table at 93, followed by India (124) and Mauritius (179). India, the champions of the 2023 edition in Bhubaneswar, are eager to defend the title and players will arrive on August 31 for the preparatory camp under the head coach Manolo Márquez. The Hyderabad meet will be the fourth edition of the Intercontinental Cup. India won the inaugural tournament in 2018 in Mumbai and regained the title in 2023. In between, North Korea bagged the title in 2019 in Ahmedabad.

Muralikant Petkar, the man who launched a billion Indian dreams in Paralympics

GNS News Agency, August 28

Mumbai: As the largest-ever Indian contingent left the country for Paris to participate in the upcoming 2024 Paralympic Games starting on August 28, all of the participants will be dreaming of winning the biggest prize in their respective sports discipline — a gold medal. The contingent is expected to break the record for India's best-ever medal haul in Paris 2024 with Paralympic Committee of India President Devendra Jhajharia, himself a two-time gold medallist in javelin throw at the Games, predicting the country to bag more than 25 medals. India is hoping to improve on the 19 medals won in the 2020 Games in Tokyo, which included five gold.

While members of the 84-strong contingent gunning for gold medals at the Games, many of them may not be aware of the person who launched these billion dreams — India's first gold medallist at the Paralympic Games. Muralikant Rajaram Petkar made history in the 1972 Paralympic Games in Heidelberg, Germany when he won a gold medal in the Men's 50m Freestyle 3 competition, twice improving on the World Record on his way to a golden triumph. In the final, he clocked 37.331 seconds and set a new World Record after breaking the previous record in his first race in Heidelberg. A soldier of the craftsman rank in the Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME) of the Indian army, Petkar suffered debilitating injuries when the army camp he was staying at in Srinagar came under aerial attack during the 1965 war with Pakistan. Petkar, who was 28 when he won the historic gold medal, took to the swimming pool in times when disabled people did not get much support from the government and society. He was advised to participate in sports to speed up his rehabilitation after suffering the injury.

He had to surmount many hurdles to participate in the Paralympic Games of 1972, and one of those who extended him monetary help was former India cricket captain Vijay Merchant, who was at that time heading an NGO for disabled people and arranged for Petkar's ticket to Germany. Petkar's story is one of the resilience and hardship of a boy from rural Maharashtra who set pulses racing with his masterful achievements in the swimming pool and gained tremendous adulation in the immediate aftermath of his Paralympic Games triumph.

However, his achievement as the first Indian to win an individual gold medal in either the Olympics or Paralympic Games was forgotten by people for decades and was not even part of the toughest of general knowledge quiz contests. He did not even get an Arjuna Award for his achievements. The fact that India did not win another gold at the Paralympic Games till 2004 when Jhajharia won in Athens too did not bring out his story into the limelight. But Muralikant Petkar emerged in our



conscience once again in 2012 when the Paralympic Games in London were televised in India and people were mesmerised watching HN Girisha winning a silver medal in the Men's High Jump F42. At that time even the PCI administration had no idea about Petkar's achievement. The legendary swimmer finally got due recognition from the government when he was awarded the Padma Shri in 2018. Born on November 1, 1944, at Peth Islampur in Sangli district of Maharashtra, Petkar's life was progressing on an upward trajectory as he was emerging as a boxer of repute in the Services and bagged a silver medal in the International Services Sports Meet at Tokyo, Japan in 1964. On returning to his home base in Secunderabad, he was given a short vacation and a trip to Jammu and Kashmir as a reward for bringing laurels to his Army Unit. The visit to Kashmir was arranged by his Unit Commandant and his stay was scheduled at the army camps in Srinagar.

It was during this vacation that Petkar's life took a drastic turn. Not a frontline soldier, Petkar was caught in a war between India and Pakistan and the camp in Srinagar where he was staying came under enemy attack. "I was out for tea in the afternoon when a siren was blown to indicate an aerial attack. I tried to rush back to my room but firing had already started," recalls Petkar, who received multiple bullet injuries and was also run over by an army vehicle in the chaos. Rendered paraplegic for life, the young army soldier did not wallow in grief for long and launched a second innings that took him to greater heights than he could probably have achieved as a boxer. Within three years of his injury, Petkar represented India in the 1968 Paralympic Games in table tennis and reached the second round in men's singles.