# INDIAN CHRONICLE

7 August, 2024|Wednesday | Volume No:12| Issue No:152

Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

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#### TTD adopts DRDO's biodegradable bag technology for laddu distribution

Hyderabad: A new technology developed by defence research team will now provide eco-friendly and sustainable bags for Tirupati's laddu prasadam.Dr. K Veerabrahmam, Scientist, and his team at Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO), has developed PBAT, a biodegradable polymer derived from petroleum products or plant oils, which will now be used to distribute the laddu prasadam.The technology has already been transferred free of cost to over 40 industries and as part of a pilot project, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) have decided to adopt it and use biodegradable bags to distribute the laddus.

#### Jio, Airtel tariff hike sees BSNL getting 13,000 new subscribers in 13 days

Khammam: Cashing in the unrest caused among mobile users in the wake of tariff hikes by private telecom companies Reliance Jio and Airtel, the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) is trying to gain ground.

Officials and employees of the public sector telecom company have launched efforts to improve their customer base by attracting customers who are upset over tariff hikes by private companies. In Kothagudem, BSNL launched a mega mela to get new subscribers offering free 4G SIM cards and fiber net wifi 5G-modem besides organising awareness rallies.

#### Sheikh Hasina in shock, next move unclear; Rahul asks Jaishankar if foreign hands involved in fuelling the crisis



New Delhi, GNS News Agency, August 6

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday told an all-party meeting that India would help former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who arrived here on Monday evening, and would wait for her to decide the future course of action. Jaishankar said India was in touch with the Bangladesh Army and would ensure the safety of over 10,000 students there. Hasina is currently in a safe house in India. She has to decide if she wants to stay in India or proceed to some other country. After her father and Bangladesh liberation war hero Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated, Hasina stayed in India for many years.

Replying to questions from various leaders, including Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, the minister did

not rule out the role of foreign governments in the unrest in the country but emphasised that the situation was too fluid, and the government has been keeping a watch on the evolving situation, sources said. At the meeting, Gandhi asked if foreign governments might be involved in fuelling the crisis there. Jaishankar said that households and properties belonging to minorities were targeted by protestors in the neighbouring country. Noting that it has been not even 24 hours since Hasina arrived in India, he said she is in a state of shock and the government is giving her time to recover before it speaks to her over various issues, including her future plans, the sources said. The External Affairs Minister is scheduled to make a statement on the issue in the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha. Various leaders, including Gandhi, conveyed their full cooperation to the government on the issue.YSR Congress leader V Vijaysai Reddy said his party supports the government in the interest of the country. "Briefed an All-Party meeting in Parliament today about the ongoing developments in Bangladesh. Appreciate the unanimous support and understanding that was extended," Jaishankar posted on X after the meeting. Congress leader Karti Chidambaram said the government had briefed an meeting on the

all-party meeting on the situation in Bangladesh. "Congress party is fully with the government as far as national security and national interest are concerned," Chidambaram told PTI. However, he was not present at the meeting. Bangladesh plunged into uncertainty after extraordinary street protests over job quota forced Hasina to quit and flee. The all-party meeting was attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, DMK leader TR Baalu, NCP leader Supriya Sule among others.

## Arcesium announces expansion of Hyderabad facility



GNS News Agency, August 6

H y d e r a b a d: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, and his team, including Industries and IT minister D. Sridhar Babu, closed on a successful capacity expansion agreement with Arcesium, a leading provider of technology and service solutions for asset managers. The expansion

of Arcesium's Hyderabad office will involve increasing workforce and enhancing facilities to support the company's growing needs. This move is expected to create additional employment opportunities in the region and solidify Hyderabad's reputation as a premier destination for global tech companies. The Team Telangana had detailed discussions with a

high-level delegation led by Gaurav Suri, CEO, Arcesium, and senior team members, here late on Monday.

Arcesium, which was launched as an independent entity backed by DE Shaw group and Blackstone Alternative Asset Management (BAAM), delivers advanced data, operations, analytics platform used by financial institutions, including hedge

funds, banks, institutional assets managers and private equity firms. Speaking after the announcement, Arcesium, said, "the rich talent pool in Hyderabad and its strong infrastructure have made it an ideal location for our international operations. We are excited to deepen our commitment to the region by expanding our presence and leveraging local expertise to enhance our data solutions and services." Chief Minister Revanth Reddy expressed his support for the expansion, highlighting the state government's focus on fostering growth in the IT sector multi-fold. "We are thrilled that Arcesium is expanding its operations in Hyderabad. This expansion not only strengthens the company's global capabilities but further reinforces Hyderabad's position as a leading hub for technology and innovation in the BFSI space," the Chief Minister said.

#### 'Saving the best for the final', says Neeraj Chopra after topping qualification round

GNS News Agency, August 6

Paris: Defending Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra said, he has saved his best for the final after topping the men's javelin throw qualification with a throw of 89.34m in the Paris Olympics here at the Stade de France on Tuesday.Neeraj achieved the best throw of the qualification across both groups in his first attempt to start his title defence, in style.He won the gold medal in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics with a throw of 87.58m. He became the first Indian to win an individual Olympic gold medal in the track and field event.

"This is just the qualification round, the mindset and the situation in the final are different. I should focus on the preparations for the final after getting a good start," Neeraj told reporters after the end of the qualification round. The 26-year-old said all the throwers who have qualified with the automatic qualification mark of 84m will be tough competition in the final.

However, he emphasised that he had saved his best for the medal event. "I'm saving the best for the final and focussing on it. I'm ready for the final. I was not doing good here in the practice but when the qualification started, I had set the aim of qualifying in the first throw. My fitness is better now and I warmed up well before taking the first attempt," Neeraj said.Other than Neeraj, eight athletes qualified for the final with the automatic qualification mark including Grenada's Anderson Peters (88.63m), Julian Weber (87.76m) of Germany, Arshad Nadeem (86.59m) of Pakistan and Julius Yego of Kenya (85.97m), who completed the top five.



Talking about his mindset, Neeraj said he tries to give his best in the first throw. "I try to do well from the first throw itself but it doesn't happen every time. If I fail to get the best out of first throw then I try to do my best in every throw," he said. When asked about the adductor injury that he sustained earlier in the year, Neeraj said,

"I'm (feeling) better and taking all the precautions with a proper warm-up before the throw.India's Kishore Kumar Jena, who was in Group A, failed to reach the final after notching the best effort of 80.73m which came in his first attempt. The second throw was a foul before he threw 80.21m in the third attempt.Neeraj, the reigning world and Asian champion, will aim to become the first Indian athlete to clinch two individual gold medals in the Olym-

#### People who lost everything can't be called encroachers: Kerala CM slams Union Environment Minister

GNS News Agency, August 6

Thiruvananthapuram: Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday slammed Union Minister of Environment Bhupender Yadav for his remarks on Wayanad landslide victims, saying that those people who have lost everything cannot be called encroachers. "Anyone who knows the hardworking Wayanad people, living in the high-range areas, would never insult them. They are the worst affected people due to the landslide. How can the people who lost everything be called encroachers," the Chief Minister said.

On Monday, the Union Environment Minister alleged that the Wayanad area has been encroached illegally by the people, who have grabbed the land with the help of local politicians, putting Kerala's environment at great risk. The Chief Minister said that the needless reference to the disaster by the Union Environemnt Minister could have been avoided as people are suffering. "It is completely wrong to blame the state government and the local politicians for the encroachments and the mining activities which resulted in the worst ever disaster the Wayanad has witnessed," the Chief Minister said. The Chief Minister said that the Centre is using the Press Information Bureau (PIB) to malign the image of Kerala by publishing articles against the state government.

"PIB has been asked to get articles written by experts against Kerala. These reports have to be believed in the light of the statement from the Union Minister," the



Chief Minister said.Meanwhile, the rescue operations in landslide-affected four villages of Kerala's Wayanad entered the eighth day on Tuesday with the death toll reaching 402 and around 170 still missing. The over 1,200-strong rescue team comprising personnel from all the Defence forces, NDRF, SDRF, police, fire services and volunteers began searches early in the morning in the four worst-affected areas in Churalmala, Velarimala, Mundakayil and Punchirimadom. Special teams have been searching in the Chaliyar River from where several bodies and dismembered body parts were recovered in the past few days. DNA tests are being conducted on all such body parts. In over 100 relief camps, mostly set up in various educational institutions in and around the affected areas, over 10,300 people have been housed.

## Shinde speaks to MEA seeking safe return of Maharashtra students stuck in Bangladesh



GNS News Agency, August 6

Mumbai: In the wake of the civil unrest in Bangladesh, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday spoke to the Ministry of External Affairs for the safe and early return of students from the state stuck there. Shinde's intervention came amid questions being raised about the safety of foreign nationals in the neighbouring country, especially the students stranded in the troubled areas.

"We give the highest priority to the safety of our students. All necessary measures are being taken for their safe return to their homeland. The state government stands with the families of the affected students during these challenging times," Shinde said.Confirming the development, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said that Shinde has interacted with the Ministry of External Affairs and highlighted the need for immediate action given the seriousness of the situation in Bangladesh.The Chief Minis-

ter also urged the MEA to provide all possible assistance to the affected students, suggesting that the students be relocated to safer places to ensure their immediate safety and also speed up the process for their safe return to India. To reach out to the students from the state stranded in Bangladesh and provide immediate assistance to them, a list has been compiled and submitted to the External Affairs Ministry. The state government has also constituted a team to monitor the situation there and be in touch with the Central authorities and the affected families. Coordination is being done with the Indian Embassy in Bangladesh so that measures can be taken for the safety of the students.

Meanwhile, making a suo-moto statement in the Rajya Sabha on the ongoing situation in Bangladesh, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar on Tuesday expressed India's deep concern over the attacks on minorities, their businesses, and temples at "multiple locations" in the neighbouring country. Jaishankar's remarks came a day after Sheikh Hasina resigned as the Prime Minister and reached India following massive violence in Dhaka and several other parts of Bangladesh. "Properties of individuals associated with the regime were torched across the country. What was particularly worrying was that minorities, their businesses, and temples also came under attack at multiple locations. The full extent of this is still not clear," the EAM said while detailing the events since August 4 when things took a "very serious turn" in Bangladesh. "There are an estimated 19,000 Indian nationals there, of which about 9,000 are students.

## BJP is afraid of Nitish Kumar, says Prashant Kishor



Jan Suraj campaign chief Prashant Kishor claimed on Tuesday that the BJP is afraid of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

GNS News Agency, August 6

Patna: Jan Suraj campaign chief Prashant Kishor claimed on Tuesday that the BJP is afraid of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. The poll strategist claimed that Nitish Kumar's influence is so great that it has compelled the BJP to make organizational changes. Speaking to the media in Patna, Kishor said, "The fear of Nitish Kumar on the BJP government is such that he first got Bihar Deputy

Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary's turban removed. After that, he also forced the central leadership of the BJP to make organizational changes in Bihar as per his wish."

Kishor was referring to the change in the BJP's state leadership when Samrat Chaudhary was removed as the party state president in Bihar and Dilip Jaiswal was appointed in his place. Prashant Kishor criticized Nitish Kumar, stating that "Nitish Kumar asked for a ministry from the BJP, asked for the Chief Minister's chair for five years for himself. He got the changes he wanted in the organization of Bihar BJP.""Nitish Kumar wanted to get Samrat Chaudhary's turban removed, and he got it done. If you look at all these issues, you will realize that Nitish Kumar knows how to get things done in this manner, but he did not ask the Prime Minister to open the closed sugar mills in Bihar," he said. Kishor added, "Nitish Kumar should have said that we will support you only when factories are set up in every district of Bihar, but Nitish Kumar did not do so."Kishor also addressed questions regarding Bihar's special status, "Nitish Kumar has been with the BJP for 15 years.

The BJP has been in power at the Centre for the last 10 years. This is not the first opportunity for Nitish Kumar and the BJP to improve Bihar. Today, the situation has reached a point where it has become difficult for the BJP government to run at the Centre without the support of the Bihar MPs. Hence, people are now talking about special status, but I have told 10,000 youths that Nitish Kumar is only concerned about himself."

#### Indian Chronicle

English Daily

#### Politicising sports

THE denial of political clearance to Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann to attend the Paris Olympics aises significant concerns about the priorities and moivations of the Central Government. Mann intended to cheer for the Indian hockey team, which has 10 Punjabi layers. Despite his readiness to cover his expenses he Ministry of External Affairs thwarted his plans. Mann's liplomatic passport, which typically facilitates internaional travel, makes this refusal particularly troubling Not allowing him to travel to Paris hints at potential politicisation of sports, where support for athletes is sacificed at the altar of political rivalry. This isn't the first such denial; similar refusals for Opposition leaders have occurred, reflecting poorly on the democratic spirit and ollaborative ethos that should guide our governance The presence of a state leader, especially from Punjab which has contributed significantly to the Indian continent, is not merely symbolic. It underscores support and ecognition of athletes' hard work. Denying such an oportunity is a disservice to the athletes representing Inia on the biggest international stage.While security con erns for high-profile figures are legitimate, the context of this situation warrants a closer examination. Mann rolds Z-plus security cover. However, his diplomatic assport provides streamlined access and enables necessary security arrangements for international travel. The French authorities are well equipped to ensure his afety during the Olympics. A transparent review of the ecision-making process, with clear communication egarding the specific security threats and the measures aken to address them, would help ensure that security considerations are not perceived as a pretext for politial manoeuvring. As we strive for excellence in global arenas, our leaders, cutting across party lines, must be een as united in their support for our players.

#### UPSC coaching centre deaths Mercifully, you didn't challan the water: HC slams police probe, transfers case to CBI

GNS News Agency, August 6

Dissatisfied with the Delhi Police probe into the death of three UPSC aspirants who drowned after being trapped in the basement of a civil services coaching centre in Old Rajinder Nagar last week, a division bench of the Delhi High Court Friday ordered that the probe be transferred to the CBI. "Mercifully, you didn't challan the water, saying 'how dare you enter the basement'...," Acting Chief Justice Manmohan remarked while slamming the probes by the Delhi Police and the MCD into the July 27 incident which saw civil services aspirants Tanya Soni, Shreya Yadav and Nivin Dalwin drown after gushing water trapped them inside an underground library at the Rau's IAS Study Circle.

"Is this how civic planning works? There is a criminal negligence attached to it, this is not a swimming pool, it is a storm water drain. If water is falling short of reaching Yamuna, it will flood and enter homes. It has to reach the river. Even the Yamuna river is encroached," the bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said. The bench reasoned the transfer of the probe as necessary, considering "the seriousness of the incident, to ensure that the public has no doubt" on the probe and considering the possibility that the incident "may involve corruption by public servants". It also directed that the probe by CBI be supervised by a senior official nominated by the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). The official will have to ensure that the probe is completed in a time-bound manner.

Additionally, the bench directed the MCD Commissioner to ensure that drains in the area are made functional and if there is a requirement of capacity enhancement, it should be done in a systematic manner at the earliest and that illegal and unauthorised construction in the area be removed forthwith. Meanwhile, ruing the "multiplicity" of jurisdiction of authorities as well as terming the MCD's financial health as "if not precarious, not healthy" with the city's infrastructure failing to keep pace with the population, and blaming government "subsidies" for the increase in its population, the bench directed that a committee be constituted to "relook" Delhi's "administrative, financial and physical infrastructure". The committee will be headed by Chief Secretary of GNCTD and also comprise the MCD Commissioner, the Delhi Development Authority Vice Chairman and the Delhi Police Commissioner; it has been directed to submit a report in the next 8 weeks. Observing that the financial health of the MCD is "precarious", the bench noted that the agency "has no funds" for "major infrastructure". In its order, dictated in the open court, it recorded, "This court is of the view that one needs to look at the bigger picture as there is a far more fundamental problem in the city of Delhi. Physical, financial and administrative infrastructure are all outdated and not in accordance with requirements of present day Delhi, with the population in excess of 3 crores, Delhi needs more modern physical and administrative infrastructure. Due to various subsidy schemes, the migration in Delhi has only increased and its population is also increasing."Recent tragedies, the bench said, showed that its past orders had "not been implemented in letter and spirit" and were being treated as "water over a duck's back". Meanwhile, with MCD Commissioner Ashwani Kumar and police investigating officer as well as the DCP concerned, M Harsha Vardhan, present in the court Friday, Kumar, who took charge less than two months ago, admitted that the storm water drains at the site of the incident were "dysfunctional". The bench was unimpressed after police stated it had so far not recorded the same in its probe. Responding to the court's queries, the police admitted it has not seized records, including with respect to the building plans, from the MCD yet and neither has it interrogated any MCD official so far.Addressing the police, ACJ Manmohan remarked orally, "This is the most elementary... You've not taken care of the file, we know how files change. Your officer should have gone on Day One and taken the file. This is neglect and this is chargeable. Because you are government officers, you are getting around it. This is not a brotherly club. In every monsoon, we will have these tragedies. Let's be ready for all these then. Water is not going to spare anyone, fury of nature you cannot fight. You have

to allow storm water and sewage to function."

## CBSE schools worried over approval for increase in intake capacity to accommodate RTE admissions



GNS News Agency, August 6

CBSE RTE Maharashtra schoolsThe state government passed an amendment to the rule of implementation of RTE in Maharashtra and declared that private schools having government or aided schools within 1km were not obligated to give RTE admissions. In the already delayed process of school admissions under the Right To Education Act (RTE), schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) have raised new concerns over increase in intake capacity to accommodate students allotted seats under the RTE.

According to these schools, they require the Board's approval for increase in intake capacity and the deadline to apply for it has already passed, making it difficult for them to accept admissions of students who are allotted seats under RTE. Few schools have also written to director of school education (primary) Sharad Gosavi, whose office conducts the RTE admissions.

A principal of one of the CBSE schools in the city, said, "As the process of RTE admissions began this year,

it was as per the new amendment which excluded private schools from the ambit of RTE admissions. Accordingly, schools concluded admissions, including on seats which are generally reserved for RTE admissions. Now, we have been instructed to increase intake to accommodate RTE admissions. But that requires approval from the board and the deadline to apply for it was July 15."

The state government passed an amendment to the rule of implementation of RTE in Maharashtra and declared that private schools having government or aided schools within 1km were not obligated to give RTE admissions. As admission began according to the new rule, parents moved court against it and the RTE admissions were stayed. In July, the high court ruled in favour of the parents and instructed the state government to resume RTE admissions in its original format wherein 25 per cent of total seats in private unaided schools are reserved for children coming from underprivileged sections of society. RTE admissions began afresh from July 23.

But most private schools have already concluded admissions and started the academic session. "Now students who are allotted seats are approaching us for admissions. We need to have seats to accommodate them," said principal of another CBSE school, adding that most of them are struggling to make arrangements. Meanwhile, the deadline for the first round of school admissions under the Right To Education (RTE) Act has been extended till August 5 because many students who have been allotted seats are yet to confirm admissions. A total of 2,42,516 students have applied for school admissions under the RTE this year. Out of the total, 93,009 candidates have been selected in the first round of RTE admissions while 40,020 have confirmed admissions.

## Katraj hill once a natural beauty, now concrete jungle that risks the lives of residents

GNS News Agency, August 6

Katraj PuneThe demand for land on the hill in the area near Koliwadi village increased after the government constructed a bypass for the Mumbai-Benagaluru highway which included a bridge in the valley and tunnel across the hill, Koli said. Once untouched by urbanisation, the Katraj hill that was spread into four villages was a favoured destination for trekkers, but it has now become a concrete jungle where houses have been built despite grave dangers of natural disasters. Thirty-six-year-old Srikant Lipare is a resident of Jambhulwadi village in the foothills of Katraj hill. He recalls that the hill was his favourite destination to relax and enjoy himself as it was quirt and gave a glimpse of part of the city from a height.

"The urbanisation picked up well before the area was included in the jurisdiction of Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC). Many people who didn't want to stay in crowded city areas and couldn't afford to buy houses in the city, opted to purchase plots on hill and hill slopes. These constructions came up before the area came under PMC, so the civic administration does not take action against them," he said. There was beauty in the hills with natural streams flowing from the hill to Jambhulwadi lake at the foothill, Lipane recalls while pointing to the now morphed scenery. "The hill is hardly visible as people have constructed houses," says Lipane. Sachin Koli of Koliwadi village said that there was a lot of farmland on the hill and villagers' livelihood was based on it but urbanisation in the city had its impact on land prices. The land in the 'village with a hill in the background' became very valuable. "The villagers sold the land to earn money and citizens bought plots which have now continued to



increase at a rapid pace," he says.

The demand for land on the hill in the area near Koliwadi village increased after the government constructed a bypass for the Mumbai-Benagaluru highway which included a bridge in the valley and tunnel across the hill, Koli said.In Ambegaon, ten years since the Malin disaster, the hillslopes still pose a danger. "The constructions have taken place before the area came into civic jurisdiction so we cannot take action against them. The PMC serves them notice regularly over safety concerns urging residents to shift from there, but no one cares for it as they have been living there for years. If any new construction is found then the PMC begins the demolition process," said city Engineer Prashant Waghmare. The demolition campaign of illegal structures is taken up on a regular basis, he said adding citizens are also warned not to construct new structures or buy property without doing enquiry about its legality.

## Bombay HC directs BMC to form animal welfare panel to resolve dog feeding dispute in Kandivali housing society



GNS News Agency, August 6

On April 24 last year, another bench of the high court, led by Justice Girish S Kulkarni, while hearing Puthran's plea claiming that the housing society was stopping residents from feeding stray dogsOn April 24 last year, another bench of the high court, led by Justice Girish S Kulkarni, while hearing Puthran's plea claiming that the housing society was stopping residents from feeding stray dogs. The Bombay High Court on Friday directed the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to expeditiously constitute an Animal Welfare Committee to decide a dispute between the housing society in Kandivali (West) and its resident, who is an animal lover, over the former's claim of 'serious problem' caused due to 'indiscriminate' feeding of stray dogs. The society claimed that the stray dogs had become aggressive due to indiscriminate feeding, resulting in instances of their biting or attacking senior citizens or small children who are helpless to defend themselves. The court said that while it cannot decide whether the dogs are aggressive or not, it is better that the dispute is resolved by the animal welfare panel. The court directed the civic body to constitute within a fortnight a committee stipulated under Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023, to hear and decide on the petitioner society's complaint and response by the resident and take a final decision on the same within 15 days thereafter. A division bench of Justices Mahesh S Sonak and Kamal R Khata was hearing a plea by RNA Royale Park Cooperative Housing Society Limited at Maharashtra Nagar in Kandivali west against one Paromita Puthran, who is a resident of the society, and sought directions to the BMC to take appropriate action.

On April 24 last year, another bench of the high court, led by Justice Girish S Kulkarni, while hearing Puthran's plea claiming that the housing society was stopping residents from feeding stray dogs, had observed that residents of housing societies are obliged to provide adequate water to animals, especially considering the on-

set of the summer season. It had disposed of Puthran's plea after society made a statement that it had not appointed bouncers to stop Puthran from feeding dogs but the same were security guards. Puthran had made a statement that she would not bring any new stray dogs into the society premises.On Friday, Puthran disputed the society's claims and submitted that a mechanism was put in place to deal with the issue by April 2023 HC order and she had no objection in case if the society sought an implementation of the said order. After the petitioner's lawyer claimed that while it was not against the feeding of stray dogs, it was aggrieved about the dogs getting aggressive. Puthran's lawyer claimed that the dogs do not get aggressive on their own and the members of the housing society were required to be sensitised about the same. The petitioner referred to Rule 20 of the 2023 regulations which stipulated responsibilities of Resident Welfare Association (RWA) or local bodies representing areas to make necessary arrangements for community animals residing in the premises for residents who feed those animals and provide care as a compassionate gesture.It also provided that when there is a conflict between RWA or the housing society and animal care givers/residents, a welfare committee is to be set up by the local authority, which in the present case was the BMC. Directing the civic body to appoint such a committee to resolve the dispute between the petitioner society, Puthran or any other resident related to feeding of animals, the bench noted, "As it is, it would be difficult for us to decide the dispute on questions of fact in extraordinary jurisdiction and it will not be possible for us to delve into rival claims, inter alia, breach of feeding point protocols, timings and aggression by some of the animals etc. These are matters best considered by the committee as provided under

#### Class two girl sexually assaulted at school in Uppal

GNS News Agency, August 6

Hyderabad: A class two girl was allegedly sexually assaulted by a class nine student at a private school in Uppal. The school management said that once the incident came to light, the boy was immediately expelled from the school and parents of the boy and the girl were informed. Though the details of when the incident happened in unclear, the victim informed her parents about it on Thursday, who staged a protest at the school. They demanded the management respond to the issue and take action against the suspect child.

#### 'Everything changed and came to a standstill'

GNS News Agency, August 6

The exhibition ends the way the pandemic did—with an image of the sun rising on a new beginning. The exhibition ends the way the pandemic did—with an image of the sun rising on a new beginning.

Chithkala Ramesh was never a very social person, but she did enjoy stepping out every now and then to go to a cafe and paint and be around people. She also would travel solo and find inspiration for more paintings. When the lockdown began, Chithkala did not know how to accept it. "Everything changed and came to a standstill," she says. A regular artist since childhood and an NID alumnus, Chithkala froze and became unable to paint. As she gradually made peace with the turbulent years of COVID, Chithkala created a series of works that document personal - and universal journeys of the emotions during the period.On August 2, an exhibition of these works, "Once Upon A Time, A Pandemic" opened at the Monalisa Kalagram in Koregaon Park. The exhibition rekindles memories of the pandemic, reminding audiences of the suffering that the world appears to have forgotten. The first work shows two empty plastic chairs, skeletal white, facing each other on a balcony. This is a fictionalised image of her balcony in Pune when the lockdown happened. "All I was left with were these two plastic chairs. Slowly I started noticing the trees around the balcony, the birds and the blue sky," she said.

The exhibition is arranged into four parts and, after the first images from Pune, it moves to the artist's travels to Goa and Uttarakhand. There are depictions of her time at home in Bengaluru after the first lockdown, when she started cycling around, when street dogs became her new friends and her time spent with her grandmotherall of which are represented in her art. It is in the third part of the exhibition that death and the looming threat of COVID-19 makes an appearance. The experience is captured in images of a small car that the artist had to drive as if it were an ambulance, an ECG report and, finally, a password to a phone. The exhibition ends the way the pandemic did—with an image of the sun rising on a new beginning."A lot of people think that art is my hobby. But, art is actually like my best friend who has got my back. No matter what happens, art helps me find a place of calm. More than anything, it is a silent friend," says Chithkala.

#### Woman-son drown in East Delhi drain: HC to hear plea

GNS News Agency, August 6

Delhi HC flooding deathThe petitioner also sought the court's directions to authorities to frame and adopt policies to cover all drains with immediate effect as well as to counter the flood-like situation Delhi finds itself in every year with heavy rain. (File)The Delhi High Court is expected to hear on August 5 a plea seeking action against officials for the deaths of a woman and her son, who fell into an open drain and drowned in East Delhi's Ghazipur amid heavy rain on July 31.

The public interest litigation, moved by a practicing advocate Jhunnu Lal Srivastava and represented by advocate Adnan Yousuf, sought fixing of accountability on erring officers as well as compensation for the family. It was mentioned before the court of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela Friday. Highlighting the incident where the woman and her three-year-old son fell into the 15-ft-deep open drain, the petitioner pointed out that this violates the Delhi Development Authority's own circular from 1986 where it was directed that all engineers have to strictly ensure that there should not be any gap on deep-covered drains and that no manhole should be left uncovered. Noting that the respondent authorities have failed to take corrective measures over the years, the petitioner called for "strict accountability" to be fixed on the DDA for failing to counter the flood-like situation in Delhi. The petitioner also sought the court's directions to authorities to frame and adopt policies to cover all drains with immediate effect as well as to counter the flood-like situation Delhi finds itself in every year with heavy rain.

The petitioner further sought the court's directions to the respondent authorities to conduct a comprehensive audit of all ongoing drain construction projects in Delhi and to ensure proper safety measures are in place, including barricades, warning signs, and adequate lighting. At 7.30 pm on Wednesday, Tanuja Bisht (23) and her son Priyansh were found dead, their bodies discovered in a drain just outside Khoda Colony, opposite a CNG pump, in Ghazipur. Her son had fallen in first and the mother jumped in to rescue him. Residents had alleged that the drain was never closed and it was waterlogged due to heavy rain.

# 9-yr-old found hanging at Surat home, police suspect foul play

GNS News Agency, August 6

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A nine-year-old boy was found hanging at his residence in Surat's Pandesara on Thursday. While the parents have said the boy died by suicide, the police suspect foul play. The Pandesara police identified the deceased as Yashkumar, son of Avdhesh Sav, a resident of Ashapuri society and a native of Bihar. Avdhesh, who works in a textile factory, stayed in a rented house with his wife Anju and three children. Assistant Sub-Inspector Sandeephhai Govindbhai said the police came to know of the incident from the New Civil Hospital, where the boy was taken after he was found hanging. "The family claimed that Yashkumar hanged himself with a rope tied to a ceiling hook," he said, adding that Yashkumar, a student of Class 4, was 4 feet and 5 inches in height. "The family claimed that the boy climbed on a chair and hanged himself. While the parents have claimed that they had dinner before Yashkumar died, the postmortem examination report says his stomach was empty. We are suspicious of the Avdhesh and his wife's statements," said Govindbhai. In his primary statement to the police, Avdhesh has said that he had dinner with his family at 7.30 pm and left for night duty at a textile factory at 8 pm.

#### SC expands ambit of Radhakrishnan panel, extends report deadline



GNS News Agency, August 6

In its detailed ruling on the NEET-UG exam Friday, the Supreme Court expanded the ambit of the seven-member expert committee that was formed by the Union government to suggest measures for smooth and fair conduct of examinations by the National Testing Agency (NTA). The court said the expert panel, led by former ISRO chairman K Radhakrishnan, shall additionally look into issues of examination security and administration. The court asked the panel to suggest advanced data security protocols — including encryption and secure data transmission methods — to protect examination materials from unauthorised access and potential leaks.

It asked the panel to review and recommend updates to the policies of the NTA to ensure that the agency is equipped to handle evolving challenges in examina-

tion security. "It shall also consider the viability of NTA engaging in international cooperation with examination bodies and educational authorities from other countries to share best practices, security measures, and innovative solutions," said the apex court. In view of the expanded ambit, the Supreme Court extended the deadline for the committee to submit its report to the Union Ministry of Education — from August 22 set by the Centre to September 30. "The Ministry of Education shall take a decision on the recommendations made by the committee within a period of one month from receiving the report. It shall prepare and begin to implement a plan of action on this basis.

The Ministry of Education shall report compliance with these directions within two weeks of taking the decision on the implementation of the recommendations," said the court. In its ruling, the court also flagged the "commercialisation of education" and intense competition among aspirants that has led to a few towns becoming coaching hubs. "While these towns or cities may have a higher rate of success than some others, instances of malpractice at such centres should be treated on par with any other instance. All instances of the use of unfair means must be dealt with firmly," the Supreme Court said. The court was of the view that "formation of a committee is essential to thoroughly investigate and address the structural issues".

## Cong moves privilege motion against Shah over early warning claim on Wayanad

GNS News Agency, August 6

Shah had told Rajya Sabha Wednesday that the Centre warned the Kerala government on July 23 of the possibility of excessive rain and landslides, seven days before landslides in Wayanad district led to at least 210 deaths and the devastation of several villages. Shah had told Rajya Sabha Wednesday that the Centre warned the Kerala government on July 23 of the possibility of excessive rain and landslides, seven days before landslides in Wayanad district led to at least 210 deaths and the devastation of several villages.

Congress MP Jairam Ramesh Friday moved a notice in Rajya Sabha to initiate privilege proceedings against Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his "false statements" on the early warnings issued by the Union government to Kerala government on the Wayanad landslides.Ramesh wrote to Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, saying Shah's claims "were fact-checked by the media".

Shah had told Rajya Sabha Wednesday that the Centre warned the Kerala government on July 23 of the possibility of excessive rain and landslides, seven days before landslides in Wayanad district led to at least 210 deaths and the devastation of several villages. In his response to a Calling Attention on the Wayanad landslides in the Rajya Sabha on July 31, 2024, the Union Home Minister made several claims on early warning systems and how they were not utilised by the Kerala government



in spite of alerts issued by the Union Government well ahead of the tragedy," said Ramesh in his letter. "These claims have been extensively fact-checked in the media. One such detailed fact-check published in The Hindu dated August 2, 2024 is attached," he added.

Ramesh said: "It is clear that the Union Home Minister misled the Rajya Sabha by his emphatic statements on early warnings issued by the Union government which have been proven to be false". "It is well established that misleading the House by a Minister or a Member constitutes a breach of privilege and contempt of the House," he said. He said that under the circumstances, "privilege proceedings may be initiated against the Union Home Minister in this matter".

## 26 relatives lost, excavator operator in Qatar now waits for one to dig up his brothers in Wayanad

GNS News Agency, August 6

Shoukath worked as an excavator operator for 30 years in the Middle East, and on Friday at his native Mundakkai village in Kerala's Wayanad, he watched as an excavator dug through the mud in search of his two brothers and 24 other members of his family. The 51-year-old had rushed home from Qatar as soon as he heard about the devastating landslides that struck Mundakkai and surrounding areas early on Tuesday.

The death toll from the landslides, which covered whole villages in mud and debris, rose to 210 on Friday. Another 218 people are still missing. The government does not expect to rescue anyone else alive, with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan saying Thursday that only bodies were left to be retrieved from the worst-hit villages of Mundakkai, Chooralmala and Attamala. The dead included members of several families that were completely wiped out — either swept away into the raging river or buried under mud and debris.

Army personnel with sniffer dog during a search and rescue operation at a landslide-hit area in Wayanad. (PTI) Army personnel with sniffer dog during a search and rescue operation at a landslide-hit area in Wayanad. (PTI) "Everything is lost. My brothers, their families... everyone is gone. So far, only four bodies have been recovered. My wife and son escaped only because they rushed to the hill after the first landslide. My two-storey house, which I constructed using my hard-earned money, was reduced to rubble. I have no place to go," Shoukath said. After starting his journey as soon as he heard the news of the landslides, Shoukath reached Wayanad on Wednesday. It was only on Friday, however, that he was able to get to Mundakkai village, where his brothers and family members lived near each other in the same area.

The landslides had washed away the major bridge on the river Iruvazhinji, making it very difficult for rescuers to reach Mundakkai. After several hours, some rescuers managed to get across the river using ropes. The next day, the Army and National Disaster Response Force teams managed to install a rope bridge, giving rescuers slightly better access to the village that was at the epicentre of the landslides. A day after that, Army personnel completed the installation of a Baily bridge, for which parts were flown in from New Delhi. While this gave further momentum to the rescue operation, officials were discouraging locals from crossing it and going to Mundakkai.On Friday, Shoukath managed to get across the bridge and finally return to his native village. By then, the rescue operation had turned into an effort to recover as many bodies as possible.

Walking towards the area where his family's houses once stood, he saw earth movers scooping out mud and moving boulders in search of bodies. There he saw his family's neighbour, Mohanan, who lost five family members himself. When Shoukat asked him about the fate of others in the neighbourhood, Mohanan simply said: "They're all gone." Among those were Mohanan's mother, elder brother, sister-in-law and their two children. The search for bodies in the villages, divided into six sectors, were being conducted by 40-member teams – each comprising personnel from the NDRF, Navy, Army, Defence



Security Corps, state rescue personnel, and others, officials said. Officals said a drone-based body detection system will be deployed on Saturday for recovery of bodies. The Navy and Coast Guard also ramped up the search in Chaliyar river, where several bodies were already found. The Iruvazhinji, which flows through the affected areas, merges with Chaliyar river further downstream. Of the bodies recovered so far were 74 that could not be identified. On Friday, the state government decided to cremate them at different public crematoriums in nearby panchayats.

# Travel advisory issued to Indians in Israel amid escalating tensions in Middle East

GNS News Agency, August

india travel advisory israel, indian nationals israel travel advisory, israel travel warning india, indian embassy israel advisory, hamas israel tensions india advisory, middle east tensions india advisory, india citizens israel safety, travel advisory israel indian embassy, israel safety tips for indians, indian nationals in israelThe Indian embassy in Israel also urged Indian nationals who have not yet registered with the embassy to do so as soon as possible. The Indian Embassy in Israel on Friday issued a travel advisory for all Indian nationals in the country in light of the escalating tensions in the Middle

The Embassy advised all Indian citizens in Israel to remain vigilant and follow the safety protocols put in place by the local authorities. "In view of the prevailing situation in the region, all Indian nationals in Israel are advised to stay vigilant and adhere to the safety protocols as advised by the local authorities," the embassy posted on X.

Additionally, it has urged Indian nationals who have not yet registered with the Embassy to do so as soon as possible. Earlier in the day, Air India suspended its flights to Tel Aviv until August 8 in response to escalating tensions in the Middle East. The airline, which is part of the Tata Group, usually operates five weekly flights from Delhi to Tel Aviv.

#### CPI(M) demands impartial probe into Tripura violence, says proper arrangements missing at camp for displaced people



GNS News Agency, August 6

A delegation of CPI(M) state secretariat members visited different areas of Gandatwisa on Thursday and interacted with people who were affected in the violence.A delegation of CPI(M) state secretariat members visited different areas of Gandatwisa on Thursday and interacted with people who were affected in the violence. The CPI(M) on Friday demanded the BJP-led Tripura government to start an impartial probe into the recent violence at Gandatwisa in Dhalai district. Several houses and shops were damaged in a sudden spurt of violence revolving around the death of a tribal youth, Parameshwar Reang, on July 12, who was injured in a local clash five days prior. The opposition party also demanded the government to provide relief measures to the 165 affected families. A delegation of CPI(M) state secretariat members visited different areas of Gandatwisa on Thursday and interacted with people who were affected in the vio-

Later, the team went to the relief camp and interacted with the violence-affected families who took refuge in the camp. Speaking to the reporters at the CPI(M) head-quarters here, party secretary and leader of opposition Jitendra Chaudhury said they found that there was no proper arrangement of drinking water, sanitation, mosquito nets and medical facilities in the camp. "We demand

the state administration to make proper arrangements of food, drinking water, sanitation, mosquito nets, and medical camps till they (the affected) return to their respective homes. The government should also make proper planning for providing maximum compensation to them for the properties damaged in the violence and provide adequate security for them," said Chaudhury.He also demanded the state government to conduct an impartial probe into all the incidents that took place in the area.In reference to the death of Parameshwar Reang, Chaudhury said that the death was an "accident" and alleged that the violence after the death occurred due to misgovernance of the BJP-IPFT government over the last six years.

He also alleged that the "elements" behind lawlessness are used to grab power, especially by the saffron party. Earlier in July, a delegation of ministers and leaders of the BJP faced protests from people at Gandatwisa after they reached out to those affected in the violence. The aggrieved villagers also demanded for a full-fledged survey to ascertain losses sustained in the conflict, a detailed investigation to identify people who were intentionally involved in the conflict, deployment of sufficient security personnel in the area and commencement of camps by security forces to prevent any future flare up. The leaders, however, said that that was an outburst of distressed people, not a protest. "Our government is committed to ensure that these people receive their compensation at the earliest. Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha has instructed us to take initiatives so that these affected people can return to their homes at the earliest," BJP minister Tinku Roy had said during his visit last month. Meanwhile, a delegation of the Congress party led by former minister and Congress Working Committee (CWC) member Sudip Roy Barman and state Congress president Ashish Kumar Saha was halted on the pretext that their visit could disrupt the prevailing peace. The grand old party later demanded a judicial investigation

#### Medical education was open business before NEET, PG seats were sold for Rs 8-13 cr: Health Minister JP Nadda

GNS News Agency, August 6

Health Minister J P Nadda on Friday defended the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), which is under the scanner over paper leak cases, saying medical education had become an open business before the NEET was introduced and PG seats were sold for Rs 8 crore-13 crore each.

The minister intervened during a discussion on a private member's bill on the NEET moved by Rajya Sabha member M Mohmed Abdulla and said corruption was rife in medical education before the NEET was brought in during his first stint as health minister. "Medical education had become the den of a business. When I was health minister and was bringing NEET, one seat of post graduation was sold for Rs 8 crore each and if you had to opt for a discipline like radiology then it was Rs 12-13 crore," Nadda said. He said that before the NEET came in, students had to travel across the country for medical exams. The minister said that besides the money and time spent, the students also had to deal with huge corruption



in the medical education system. "The admission list used to be put up for 30-45 minutes and afterward it used to be said students did not come, therefore, we are using these seats at our discretion. It had become a business. There was a vested interest. The matter was pending before the Supreme Court for long time," Nadda said.

#### Govt must provide additional disaster management funds to states without discrimination: Kharge

GNS News Agency, August 6

Amid extreme weather events in various parts of the country, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge Friday demanded the Modi government immediately provide additional disaster management funds to states without any discrimination. He also called for improving disaster management and taking steps by adopting a scientific approach to make a solid policy for dealing with the effects of climate change such as floods, heavy rainfall, cloud-burst and drought-like situations. He made the remarks while condoling the loss of lives due to cloudburst and heavy rainfall in Uttarakhand.

"The news of the death of many people due to cloud-burst, extremely heavy rainfall and landslide in Uttarakhand is very saddening. According to the information, many people are missing," the Congress president said in a post in Hindi on X. "We are with the people of Uttarakhand in this difficult time. We have deep sympathies for the victims and we are confident that the rescue work being done by the Army will provide security and relief to the people," he said.

The government and administration are requested to fulfil their responsibility and help the victims with compensation, Kharge said. "The country is grappling with climate change. Floods, heavy rainfall, cloudburst and drought-like emergent situations have occurred in many states. For this, we will have to take steps by adopting a scientific approach, with the participation of all, by making a solid policy," he said. "We will also have to improve our disaster management. Positive initiative of the government is necessary for all this," Kharge added.



To deal with these natural calamities occurring year after year, the Modi government should immediately provide additional disaster management funds to the states without any discrimination, the Congress chief asserted. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi said the news of death of many people due to heavy rains and cloudburst in Uttarakhand is extremely saddening. "May God grant peace to the departed souls. My deepest condolences to the bereaved families. I pray to Lord Bholenath for the well-being of all, including the large number of devotees stranded on the way to Shri Kedarnath Dham," she said in a post in Hindi on X.Congress leaders and workers are requested to provide all possible help in relief and rescue operations, Priyanka Gandhi said. Fourteen people died and 10 more were injured in heavy overnight rains that triggered flooding and a house collapse as several rivers swelled in Uttarakhand, officials said here on Thursday.

#### NEET question papers carried in e-rickshaws, Supreme Court raises 'security concerns'

GNS News Agency, August 6

On July 23, a three-judge bench led by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud had in an interim order rejected demands for a retest and had said that it will give a reasoned judgement later. In the detailed verdict pronounced Friday, the bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said: "The information before us at this stage does not show that the question paper was disseminated widely using social media or the internet... The CBI investigation reveals the number of students who are the beneficiaries of the malpractice at Hazaribagh and Patna at this stage. This leads us to conclude that it is possible to separate the beneficiaries of malpractice or fraud from honest students. This being the case, the Court cannot direct a re-exam."The court also

said that using e-rickshaws and private courier companies for transporting National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate) papers "raises concerns about the security and reliability of paper-handling procedures"s had first reported in June that the investigators had found negligence on the part of at least one courier company that used an e-rickshaw to ferry the question papers in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh, the place where the leak allegedly occurred. The e-rickshaws were allegedly used to ferry question papers from the courier company's office on the outskirts of Hazaribagh to the strongroom of a local bank, from where it was then taken to exam centres."...E-rickshaws are relatively unsecured and lack proper monitoring, making them unsuitable for the secure transit of sensitive examination materials.

Ranga Reddy | WEDNESDAY 7 AUGUST 2024

#### Two Indians arrested in Massachusetts, took cross-country trip to sell drugs



GNS News Agency, August 6

Two Indian nationals, Simranjit Singh and Gusimrat Singh, were arrested in Massachusetts, US, with 400 kg of drugs worth over \$10 million. The two, based in California's Fresno, took a cross-country trip to distribute drugs.2 Indian national arrested in us for drug traffickingSimranjit Singh, 28, and Gusimrat Singh, 19, were arrested with over 32 kilograms of suspected methamphetamine and more than 400 kilograms of suspected cocaine, valued at over \$10 million. (Photo: United States Attorney's Office)

Two Indian nationals were arrested in Andover, Massachusetts, with over 32 kilograms of suspected methamphetamine and more than 400 kilograms of suspected cocaine, valued at over \$10 million. Simranjit Singh, 28, and Gusimrat Singh, 19, both from Fresno, California,

US, were charged with conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute controlled substances. The two are alleged to have undertaken a cross-country trip to distribute drugs.Both the Indian nationals -- Simranjit Singh and Gusimrat Singh -- were arrested on July 29. They made their initial appearances in federal court in Boston and are currently in federal custody.

The investigation began when authorities identified a California-based drug trafficking organisation (DTO) planning to transport methamphetamine and other drugs to Boston. Undercover agents communicated with a DTO member who agreed to sell 32 kg of methamphetamine.On the night of July 29, a white tractor-trailer, driven by Gusimrat and Simranjit, arrived at a pre-arranged location in Andover, Massachusetts, to deliver the drugs to the undercover agents. After they handed over the suspected methamphetamine, they were immediately arrested, according to the United States Attorney's office. During a search of the tractor-trailer's cab, investigators discovered over 400 kilograms of suspected cocaine, with an estimated street value exceeding \$10.5 million."The sheer amount of drugs seized in this one case is disturbing and dangerous. These defendants allegedly took a cross-country trip to distribute illicit narcotics into Massachusetts communities," said Acting United States Attorney Joshua S Levy. The charge of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute controlled substances carries a potential sentence of up to 20 years in prison, a supervised release period of at least three years up to life, and a fine of up to \$1,000,000

## Kamala Harris veep selection enters final stage, two leaders interviewed



GNS News Agency, August 6

Presumptive Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris is in the final stages of selecting her running mate, having met with top contenders Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro and Arizona Senator Mark Kelly. Harris's team, however, said no conclusions should be drawn yet.

US presumptive Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris's vetting team has met privately with two top contenders to be her running mate -- Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro and Senator Mark Kelly of Arizona, according to reports. With just four days until she's scheduled to campaign with her pick, Harris's search for a "governing partner" has entered the final stages. The only other candidate still in consideration is Minnesota's Governor Tim Walz, reported Yahoo News. Vice President Kamala Harris will hold her first rally with her new vice presidential nominee on August 6 in Philadelphia, according to sources.

The location suggests Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro has moved to the top of a short list of running mates, and that the Harris campaign had decided the state that Democrats won back from Republicans in 2020 is a must-win once again. Harris's aides emphasise that no conclusions should be drawn from these meetings or the location of her first public appearance with her VP choice next Tuesday in Philadelphia. Her campaign aides have said that she wants a "governing partner" who can hit the ground running on day one and has some executive experience, reported Politico. Kamala Harris's team is also prioritising geography and the ability to counter attacks from former President Donald Trump and his run-

ning mate, JD Vance. The team has insisted that the vice president has not yet finalised her running mate. The chances of Josh Shapiro, Governor of Pennsylvania, seem to have improved with the announcement that Harris' first appearance with her running mate would be at a rally in Philadelphia. He has been a strong supporter of Harris's campaign, actively lobbying for her across Pennsylvania. Mark Kelly, Senator of Arizona, representing another crucial swing state, is also a strong contender. However, according to Bloomberg, labour groups have expressed concerns about him, claiming he is not sufficiently supportive of the trade union movement. This could be problematic for Harris, who aims to attract Biden's union supporters.

Harris' vetting team's meetings with Shapiro and Kelly, noted that Harris plans to meet personally with the finalists. It also clarified that advancing in the process does not guarantee selection, Politico reported. Harris is taking her time with the decision, aware that the outcome of the 2024 presidential election may depend on choosing the right partner. Harris, the daughter of Indian and Jamaican immigrants, has already faced racist and sexist attacks. As Harris navigates this critical decision, she faces ongoing attacks from Trump, who has questioned her racial identity.Indian-American Republican leader Vivek Ramaswamy has also criticised Harris for using her Indian roots selectively. Harris has firmly countered these attacks, emphasising her mixed heritage and her commitment to racial progress. The selection of a running mate will be a pivotal moment in Harris's campaign, with the potential to significantly impact her chances of winning the presidency. If she wins the election, she will become the first woman President of the United States.

## 30 killed as rain batters Pakistan, breaks 44-year-old record in Lahore

GNS News Agency, August 6

Floods brought by torrential rains in Pakistan caused damage that killed at least 30 people this week, as the second-largest city of Lahore was drenched in the most rainfall it has received in 44 years.

Floods brought by torrential rains in Pakistan caused damage that killed at least 30 people this week, authorities said on Friday, as the second-largest city of Lahore was drenched in the most rainfall it has received in more than four decades. The arrival of the monsoon season has sparked floods and landslides across South Asia in the past week, with at least 195 killed and almost 200 missing in one disaster in neighbouring India.

Rain pummelled Pakistan's north, causing floods, building collapses and heightening the risk of electrocution."The 44-year-old rainfall record was broken in Lahore once again," said utilities officials in the northeastern province of Punjab, where authorities tallied six deaths and warned that flash floods were expected in the south this week.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 12 children were among the two dozen people who died in the last three days of rains and floods in the northwestern province, Anwar Shehzad, a spokesman for its disaster management agency, told Reuters. Global organisations, such as the United Nations, see Pakistan as one of the countries most vulnerable to extreme weather and climate change, with



The arrival of the monsoon season has sparked floods and landslides across South Asia in the past week, with at least 195 killed and almost 200 missing in one disaster in neighbouring India.

floods wreaking havoc in 2022, killing more than 1,700

## China's first university degree in marriage draws online flak



GNS News Agency, August 6

Amid falling marriage rates, China has introduced a new undergraduate degree programme called Marriage Services and Management that is drawing the scorn of social media users. Couples attend a mass wedding ceremony at the Shenyang Imperial Palace in Shenyang, in China's northeastern Liaoning province. China's Civil Affairs University announced a new undergraduate marriage program to develop marriage-related industries and culture, drawing scorn of social media users who questioned the need for such a course as marriage rates decline.

With the programme due to start in September, the Beijing-based institution aims to "cultivate professionals to develop marriage related industries and culture", state media reported this week.Policymakers are struggling to reverse the fall in new births, which are closely linked to

marriage rates, after China's population fell for a second consecutive year in 2023.

Marriage is seen as a prerequisite for having children due to widespread policies, including one that requires parents to present a marriage certificate to register the baby and receive benefits. Single women and LGBTQ couples are not entitled to the same rights. Called Marriage Services and Management, the new degree programme will focus on the development of the marriage industry, "aiming to highlight China's positive marriage and family culture to students and the public and advancing reform of China's marriage customs", the Global Times said. The university will enrol 70 undergraduates from 12 provinces this year to field sectors including "family counselling, high-end wedding planning and the development of matchmaking products. "Some users on China's social media platform Weibo ridiculed the announcement with one writing "It's time to start a state owned marriage agency."

Others questioned the need for such a degree. "This industry is not just a sunset, it's doomsday," one wrote, while another commented that "Learning this major is really unemployment after graduation."While the number of new marriages in China jumped 12.4 per cent in 2023 from a year earlier, reversing a downtrend that has lasted for almost a decade, demographers warn that this was more due to delayed nuptials following the Covid-19 pandemic.Many young people are opting to stay single or put off getting married due to poor job prospects and chronically low consumer confidence as growth in the world's second largest economy slows.

#### Trump's net worth dips by \$900 million after Kamala Harris enters White House race

GNS News Agency, August 6

Former US President Donald Trump's stake in his Truth Social platform has dropped by \$900 million since Vice President Kamala Harris entered the presidential race on July 21, the same day when President Joe Biden withdrew himself and endorsed her. The decline is primarily due to the decreasing value of the former president's stake in Trump Media and Technology Group (TMTG), the parent company of Truth Social, a Twitter-like platform, CNN reported. Trump holds over 114 million shares in TMTG, which has seen its value drop by 23 per cent since Harris's entry, from \$4 billion as of July 19 to about \$3.1 billion now. The decline in Trump's stake in TMTG coincided with opinion polls showing a close race between Trump and Harris in both national and key battleground states.

Investors on Wall Street have viewed the stock as a means to speculate on Trump's chances of returning to the Oval Office, with Truth Social potentially serving as a communication tool for his presidency if he secures a victory in the November 5 election. In June, Trump Media's shares spiked briefly after Biden's weak presidential debate performance. Last month, the stock rose again after Trump narrowly survived an assassination attempt at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

Some analysts caution that Trump Media is significantly overvalued given its minimal revenue generation and Truth Social's relatively minor presence in the social media arena. The decline in Trump's social media for-



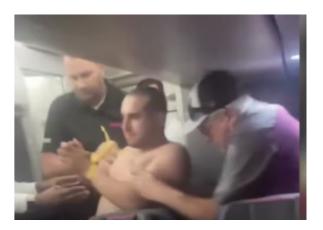
tune also comes amid challenges faced by Truth Social in establishing itself within the competitive social media landscape. According to data from Comscore, analysed by TheRighting, Truth Social's unique visitor count plummeted by 38 per cent year-over-year in June, marking the third consecutive month of declines, according to CNN.TMTG's shares have witnessed volatility since going public in late March. According to experts, Trump Media is a meme stock, which trades on hype and momentum instead of fundamentals. Despite this, Trump remains the dominant figure in TMTG, owning 114.75 million shares and serving as its chairman. He is the most popular user of Truth Social and his net worth is estimated at \$5.9 billion, according to Bloomberg.

## In mid-air meltdown, US man tries to open plane doors, have sex with crew

GNS News Agency, August 6

Prosecutors allege that 26-year-old Eric Nicholas Gapco exhibited "violent" and "dangerous" behaviour during the flight, including attempts to open the plane's doors and propositioning a flight attendant. A man on a US airline's flight was arrested for a violent and disruptive outburst that included attempting to open the plane's doors mid-flight and trying to have sex with a flight attendant, federal prosecutors said. According to the New York Post, 26-year-old Eric Nicholas Gapco of New Jersey was aboard American Airlines flight 2101 from Seattle to Dallas on July 18 when he began exhibiting erratic behaviour, according to a criminal complaint. Gapco allegedly removed his shirt, vaped, and propositioned a flight attendant, asking her to have sex with him. Video footage obtained by KSLTV5 shows the man yelling and acting aggressively as flight crew members attempted to

"I am sane! I am sane!" Gapco is heard screaming in a video. He also yells, "He's hurting me!" as a group huddles around the lavatory in which he had locked himself. To subdue Gapco, the flight crew and passengers took matters into their own hands, restraining his hands and feet with "flexible restraints". A video shows a shirtless Gapco being escorted down the aisle with his hands bound. The plane was diverted to Salt Lake City



International Airport, where Gapco was arrested upon landing. He allegedly continued his unruly behaviour at the airport, smashing the glass door of a holding cell.In addition to the initial charges of interference with a flight crew and attempted damage to an aircraft, he faces state charges of damaging a jail and assault on an officer.Prosecutors allege Gapco consumed approximately 10 marijuana edibles prior to the flight, and he also attempted to distribute unidentified pills to another passenger.

## US recognises Maduro's rival as Venezuela election winner

GNS News Agency, August 6

The United States on Thursday recognized Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's rival Edmundo Gonzalez as the winner of Venezuela's disputed presidential election. Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado and opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez wave as they address supporters after election results awarded Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro with a third term.

The United States on Thursday recognised Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's opponent and opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez as the winner of Venezuela's disputed presidential election, rejecting Maduro's claim of victory. "Given the overwhelming evidence, it is clear to the United States and, most importantly, to the Venezuelan people that Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia won the most votes in Venezuela's July 28 presidential election," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, opens new tab said in a statement on Thursday. The announcement from Washington did not go beyond congratulating him for a "successful campaign," the closest the US has come since Sunday's contested election to

recognising Gonzalez as the OPEC nation's new leader.

The dispute over the presidential election results has sparked protests in Venezuela. Venezuela's electoral council proclaimed Maduro, who has been in power since 2013, the winner of the July 28 election with 51% of the vote. But the country's opposition says its tally of about 90% of the votes shows that Gonzalez received more than double the support of the incumbent president, in line with independent polling conducted before the contest. The opposition has released detailed tallies on a public website, while the government has so far not shared any information beyond a national total of votes for each candidate.

The statement from Blinken on Thursday stopped short of threatening new sanctions on Venezuela but he hinted at possible "punitive action." Reuters reported on Tuesday that Washington was considering fresh sanctions following the disputed election. "We fully support the process of re-establishing democratic norms in Venezuela and stand ready to consider ways to bolster it jointly with our international partners," Blinken said.

#### Trump shares Kamala Harris's Indianheritage photo amid identity row



GNS News Agency, August 6

Former US President Donald Trump posted a photo of Vice President Kamala Harris and her family on Truth Social, following his controversial claim that Harris "turned Black" recently. Trump recently questioned Harris's racial identity, leading to backlash from the White House.

Former American President Donald Trump posted a photo showing Vice President Kamala Harris and her family on his Truth Social account. This comes after Trump recently said that Harris had "turned Black" and added he wasn't aware of her bi-racial identity a few years ago. Harris had condemned it as "the same old show of divisiveness and disrespect". At a Black journalists' event in Chicago, Trump questioned whether Harris is Indian or Black.Donald Trump's comments about the Democratic presumptive Presidential candidate received strong backlash, including from the White House, which described them as "repulsive and insulting". "Thank you Kamala for the nice picture you sent from many years ago! Your warmth, friendship, and love of your Indian Heritage are very much appreciated," Donald Trump captioned the said post on Truth Social.Kamala Harris's ethnic identity has become a focal point in the ongoing US presidential election campaign and in the support for the Vice-President.Indian-origin Republican Vivek Ramaswamy has also criticised her for using her Indian roots selec-

Speaking to a panel of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) convention in Chicago, Illinois, Trump said, "She was always of Indian heritage, and she was only promoting Indian heritage. I didn't know she

was black until a number of years ago, when she happened to turn black, and now she wants to be known as black. So I don't know, is she Indian or is she black?" Trump was quoted as saying by CNN."I respect either one, but she obviously doesn't, because she was Indian all the way, and then all of a sudden she made a turn, and she went - she became a Black person. I think somebody should look into that too," Trump added. Harris, a Democrat, started her presidential campaign last month after President Joe Biden withdrew his White House bid. She has always identified as both Black and Asian. Harris is the first person who is both Black and Asian-American to serve as Vice President. Since starting her presidential campaign on July 21, Harris has faced numerous sexist and racist attacks online, with some far-right accounts questioning her racial identity. Trump's response drew condemnation from Harris, who is of Indian and Jamaican heritage, calling it "the same old show of divisiveness and disrespect". "Let me just say, the American people deserve better. The American people deserve a leader who tells the truth, a leader who does not respond with hostility and anger when confronted with the facts. We deserve a leader who understands that our differences do not divide us. They are an essential source of our strength," Harris said in a statement released by the White House. Harris was born to two immigrant parents a Black father and an Indian mother. Her father, Donald Harris, was from Jamaica, and her mother, Shyamala Gopalan, who immigrated to the US from Chennai in 1958. She, however, defines herself simply as 'Ameri-

#### Joe Biden says killing of Hamas leader Haniyeh not helpful for ceasefire talks

GNS News Agency, August 6

Responding to questions about the assassination of the Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh, US President Joe Biden said that it will not help reach a ceasefire in Israel's war in Gaza.US President Joe Biden said on Thursday the killing of Palestinian Islamist group Hamas' leader Ismail Haniyeh was not helpful for reaching a ceasefire in Israel's war in Gaza.There has been an increased risk of an escalation into a broader Middle East war after the assassination of Haniyeh in Iran drew threats of retaliation against Israel

Hamas and Iran's Revolutionary Guards confirmed the death of Haniyeh, who had participated in internationally-brokered indirect talks on reaching a ceasefire in Gaza. Anxious residents in Israeli-besieged Gaza feared that Haniyeh's killing on Wednesday would prolong the war. Iran said the killing took place hours after he attended a swearing-in ceremony for its new president. "It doesn't help," Biden told reporters late on Thursday, when asked if Haniyeh's assassination ruined the chances for a ceasefire agreement. Biden also said he had a direct conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier on Thursday.

Netanyahu's government has issued no claim of responsibility but he has said Israel had delivered crushing blows to Iran's proxies of late, including Hamas and Lebanon-based Hezbollah, and would respond forcefully to



any attack.Israel's tensions with Iran and Hezbollah have fanned fears of a widened conflict in a region already on edge amid Israel's assault on Gaza which has killed tens of thousands and caused a humanitarian crisis. The latest bloodshed in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict was triggered on October 7 when Palestinian Islamist group Hamas attacked Israel, killing 1,200 and taking about 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. The Gaza health ministry says that since then Israel's military assault on the Hamas-governed enclave has killed nearly 40,000 Palestinians while also displacing nearly the entire population of 2.3 million, causing a hunger crisis and leading to genocide accusations that Israel denies.

## Indian-American doctor wins Democratic primary for US Congress in Arizona



GNS News Agency, August 6

Amish Shah, a 47-year-old Indian-American physician and former Arizona state representative, won the Democratic primary for Arizona's 1st Congressional District. Shah, who has been in the Arizona State House for five years, will face seven-term incumbent Republican David Schweikert in a November election. Amish Shah, a 47-year-old Indian-American physician and former Arizona state representative, won the Democratic primary for Arizona's 1st Congressional District. This district includes parts of northeastern Phoenix. Shah, who has served in the Arizona State House for five years, is now

gearing up for a competitive election in November against the seven-term incumbent Republican, David Schweikert.

Shah's parents immigrated to the US from India in the 1960s. His father is a Jain, and his mother a Hindu. Shah led by 1,629 votes and had a 23.9% to 21.4% advantage when his main opponent, Andrei Cherny, conceded, according to KTAR News. "While it's hard to come so close and fall short, win or lose, there are dreams worth chasing and things worth fighting for – and democracy, freedom, and America's future couldn't be higher on that list," Andrei Cherny wrote on X.Shah emerged victorious in a crowded Democratic field that included former local news anchor Marlene Galan-Woods, orthodontist Andrew Horne, former regional American Red Cross CEO Kurt Kroemer, and investment banker Conor O'Callaghan.

The district is known for its competitiveness, with Schweikert narrowly defeating Democrat Jevin Hodge by less than one percent in 2022, reported KTAR news.Born and raised in Chicago, Shah has been saving lives as an emergency department physician for 20 years. His parents, engineering students, immigrated to the US from India in the 1960s.In addition to his medical career, Shah founded the Arizona Vegetarian Food Festival to promote healthy eating and prevent diseases.Since 2019, he has represented Central Phoenix, Sunnyslope, and South Scottsdale in the Arizona House of Representatives.His victory in the primary sets the stage for a high-stakes race against Schweikert, whose political future is uncertain due to recent contro-

## Russia confirms at least 3 undercover agents freed in landmark prisoner swap

GNS News Agency, August 6

The Kremlin confirmed that at least two of the others freed -- a Russian couple released from Slovenia -- were also spiesThe Kremlin on Friday said that at least three Russians freed in a landmark prisoner exchange were undercover Russian agents, a rare public admission into the work of Moscow's top-secret security services.

Moscow said Vadim Krasikov -- who was serving life in prison in Germany for the 2019 brazen murder of a former Chechen separatist commander in broad daylight in a Berlin park -- was an elite operative with Russia's FSB security agency. Krasikov was one of the central figures in Thursday's historic multi-country exchange, with Putin having publicly lobbied for his release in a bid to get the deal over the line in the face of hesitation from Berlin.Biden hailed the 'wonderful' return of three US citizens in the exchangeThe Kremlin almost never reveals details about its sprawling intelligence agencies, but it confirmed Friday that at least two others freed in the deal were also long-term undercover agents stationed in the European Union.Russian President Vladimir Putin has portrayed them as returning heroes, personally thanking them for their service to the "Motherland" and promising to shower them with state awards. "Krasikov is an FSB employee," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Friday.

An investigation by Bellingcat had previously revealed his links to the agency, though Friday's admission was the first time Moscow has publicly confirmed he was a state operative. Peskov said Krasikov served in the agency's elite and secretive "Alpha" unit alongside people who went on to be Putin's personal bodyguards. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz admitted Thursday that releasing Krasikov -- who German judges said had carried out the assassination on orders from Moscow -- was "not easy." In return, Berlin secured the release of five German nationals -- including some with dual Russian citizenship. The Kremlin confirmed that at least two of the others freed -- a Russian couple released from Slovenia -- were also spiesRussia also released three US citizens -- journalists Evan Gershkovich and Alsu Kurmasheva, as well as ex-marine Paul Whelan -- and some of the country's most prominent domestic dissidents in a deal heralded by US President Joe Biden as an historic "feat of diplomacy."'Illegals'Peskov also confirmed that a Russian couple released from Slovenia were also spies. Artem Dultsev and Anna Dultseva, whose two children were sent to Russia in the deal, had been posing as an Argentine couple that ran an IT businesses and art gallery in Liubliana."The children of the illegals who arrived yesterday only found out they were Russian on the plane from Ankara. They do not speak Russian," Peskov said.

"Illegals" is a term used to refer to Russian undercover spies who live in foreign countries for years, even



decades, under fake identities, gathering intelligence to send back to Moscow.Putin had greeted the children with "buenas noches" -- Spanish for "good evening" -- after their arrival on Thursday."They didn't even know who Putin was. That's how illegals work, making such sacrifices for the sake of their work and their dedication to their service," Peskov said on Friday.At Moscow's Vnukovo airport on Thursday, Putin had told those released: "The Motherland never forgot about you."To secure their return, the Kremlin leader agreed to release not only the three US citizens, but some of his fiercest domestic critics who had been jailed for campaigning against him.

"I was sure I'm going to die in prison," said opposition politician Vladimir Kara-Murza, sentenced to 25 years on "treason" and other charges. He and two other freed Russian opposition politicians -- Ilya Yashin and Andrei Pivovarov -- announced a press conference in Bonn on Friday evening. 'Wonderful'In the United States, the three freed US citizens touched down in Texas on Friday for medical checks after earlier landing at Joint Base Andrews, just outside Washington. Their arrival on US soil late Thursday was met by cheers from family and friends as they disembarked a plane, before each embracing Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. "It feels wonderful, it was a long time coming," Biden told reportare

In total, 24 prisoners were freed -- eight by the West, 15 by Russia and one by Russia's ally Belarus.In emotional scenes at the air base, Wall Street Journal reporter Gershkovich was filmed embracing and lifting his mum into the air as they reunited after 16 months in captivity.Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty editor Kurmasheva, who also holds Russian citizenship, ran to hug her two children, while Paul Whelan, who spent more than five years in Russian prisons, expressed relief at finally being free."I'm glad I'm home. I'm never going back there again," Whelan laughed.The United States had denounced the charges against them -- Whelan and Gershkovich for "espionage" and Kurmasheva for spreading "false information" about Russia's military -- as baseless

## Who is Vadim Krasikov and why securing the assassin was important for Putin

GNS News Agency, August 6

Who is Vadim Krasikov, the man at the centre of the biggest US-Russia prisoner swap since the Cold War? And why was getting the hitman, who killed a Chechen rebel in Berlin, from a German jail to Russia so important for Russian President Vladimir Putin? Three bullets were fired from a Glock pistol just minutes away from the office of then Chancellor Angela Merkel and the German Parliament. It was a bright August day in 2019. A former Chechen militant had been assassinated in the heart of Europe. The assassin was on a bicycle behind his target Zelimkhan Khangoshvili. After shooting him, the assassin, a Russian, changed his clothes, threw away his wig, shaved his beard and dumped the bicycle in a river. That cold-blooded executioner was Vadim Krasikov. And it was Krasikov's release on which the entire US-Russia prisoner swap hinged upon. The release of 26 prisoners was the largest swap in post-Soviet history between Russia and the US.As the eight returnees reached Moscow airport, Russian President Vladimir Putin himself went there to welcome Krasikov and the others back home. But who is Krasikov who first triggered a diplomatic battle and then gave rise to a historic prisoner swap?

As Krasikov shot dead Georgian citizen Zelimkhan Khangoshvili and tried to destroy the evidence, some people spotted him.Khangoshvili had fought Russian troops in Chechnya and later claimed asylum in Germany.Krasikov, 58, was charged "with especially serious aggravating circumstances", the most serious conviction possible in Germany. He was convicted of killing Khangoshvili, reported Reuters. The judge called this murder "state terrorism", stating this order could have come from none other than the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. Evidence was given stating that the Russian state was involved. Krasikov had official Russian papers with a false identity and that Putin could order the killing of state enemies abroad. Khangoshvili had long cut his ties with the cause of Chechen independence, the judge said, reports Reuters."This was not an act of self-defence by Russia. This was and is nothing other than state terrorism," he said. "Four children lost their father, two siblings and their brother. "CHANGED CLOTHES, SHAVED BEARD AFTER MURDERKrasikov was born in Kazakhstan, previously a part of the Soviet Union, in 1965. His police mugshots show a mournful face. He was a part of Russia's FSB state security service. Here, he became a specialist assassin, according to open-source investigators. The FSB was the top successor agency of the KGB, Soviet Russia's dreaded security agency. When Krasikov was convicted two years after the assassination in December 2021, it led to the expulsion of two of the 101 diplomats from Russia's Berlin embassy.Krasikov entered Germany under the false identity of Vadim Sokolov. He was arrested minutes after killing Khangoshvili. People around the killing spot saw him change his clothes, thorw away his wig, shave his beard and dump his bicycle in Spree River and reported it to the police.In his trial, Krasikov pleaded innocent and stated he was Solokov, an engineer from St Petersburg, and that he was on a trip to Berlin. Putin, however, has accepted his identity. He said last year, he wanted the release of someone who had "eliminated a bandit in one of the European capitals", according to Reuters.

Krasikov was identified with the help of Ukraine's security services, who spotted a man with similar tattoosof a demon with a crown and a snake, during his second marriage to a Ukrainian woman from Kharkiv in 2010, reports Reuters.In his trial, he consistently ensured not to recognise the court, and he even removed his headphones often which relayed the interpretation when the



witnesses were being heard in the court. Chancellor Olaf Scholz's spokesperson, Steffen Hebestreit, said that people held "wrongfully" in Russia and a German held in Belarus can only be brought back by sending Russians "with an intelligence background", such as Krasikov, to Russia. "The freedom, physical well-being and -- in some cases -- ultimately the life of innocent people imprisoned in Russia and unjustly held political prisoners stood against the state's interest in the enforcement of the prison sentence of convicted criminals," Hebestreit said. "Our obligation to protect German citizens and solidarity with the U.S. were important motivations," he added.Russian President Putin had earlier referred to Krasikov as a "patriot".For Putin, a KGB veteran, freeing Russian operatives is important for the success of future undercover missions, says the Associated Press. It is a kind of assurance to agents that Moscow would negotiate their release if they are caught.

#### In July, Donald Trump received \$139 million in donations

Washington: Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump received \$138.7 million in donations in July, a hefty sum but much behind the \$200 million his Democratic rival Vice President Kamala Harris raked in in the week after announcing her candidacy. The 78-yearold former President also has \$327 million in cash on hand. "There has never been anything like the MAGA (Make America Great Again) Movement. We raised \$139 Million in July alone. We now have a whopping \$327 Million Cash On Hand," Trump said on Truth Social, his social media platform. "Spectacular support from Great American Patriots who are donating to our Campaign for President of the United States, and helping out in many other ways. Much work to be done, but I will always keep fighting for YOU. Our Country is failing, but we will turn it around, quickly, and MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!." he said on Thursday. The Trump Campaign, in a statement, said these numbers reflect continued momentum with donors at every level and provide the resources for the final 96 days until victory on November 5. July saw several major moments in Trump's re-election campaign, as the former president survived an assassination attempt; formally accepted the Republican presidential nomination and tapped JD Vance as his running mate. His July sum eclipsed his \$111.8 million June total but fell short of the \$141 million in contributions he received in May, the same month he was found guilty in the Manhattan hush-money case. The Harris campaign has not released full numbers for their fundraising totals in July. However, the campaign did reveal that they raised over \$200 million in the first week after her candidacy was announced-including \$81 million raised within the first 24 hours of her campaign.

#### NCLAT approves Byju's settlement with BCCI, sets aside insolvency plea against edtech firm



In a major relief to Byju's, the NCLAT on Friday set aside insolvency proceedings against the troubled edtech major over a sponsorship deal and approved a Rs 158 crore settlement with the Board of Control for Cricket in India. The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), however, passed the order with a caveat that any failure to make payments on the specific dates mentioned in the undertaking would automatically lead to a revival of the insolvency proceedings against Byju's. The appellate tribunal also dismissed the allegation of round-tripping levelled by Byju's US-based lenders, saying they failed to provide any evidence for the same. The tribunal further said the money was paid by

Riju Raveendran (brother of Byju Raveendran) through sales of his shares.

"In view of the undertaking given and affidavit, the settlement between the parties (is) approved and as a result appeal succeeds and impugned order (passed by the NCLT) is set aside," said a two-member Chennai bench in its order in the open court.

As per the undertaking, Riju Ravindran has made a payment of Rs 50 crore on July 31 against the outstanding dues owed by Byju's to BCCI. Another Rs 25 crore will be submitted on Friday, and the rest of Rs 83 crore on August 9 through RTGS. The NCLAT was hearing a petition filed by Byju's, challenging the initiation of insolvency proceedings against parent company Think & Learn.On July 16, the Bengaluru bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) directed the initiation of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Proceedings (CIRP) against Byju's, admitting the plea filed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). The BCCI had approached the NCLT under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) over a default of Rs 158.9 crore by Think & Learn — once India's most valuable startup worth USD 22 billion. The NCLT has suspended the board of Think & Learn as per the provisions of the IBC and appointed an interim resolution professional (IRP) to take care of the debt-ridden firm.

#### Indexation benefit withdrawal on grandfathered debt mutual fund investments has investors worried

Specifically in the case of debt mutual funds, the changes appear to be more complicated than for other affected asset classes. Specifically in the case of debt mutual funds, the changes appear to be more complicated than for other affected asset classes. The changes in the long-term capital gains (LTCG) tax regime announced in the Union Budget 2024-25, mainly the removal of the indexation benefit from tax computation, has triggered some heartburn among long-term investors of debt mutual funds. While the likely impact of the changes on asset classes like property and gold has been in focus, returns on earlier investments in debt mutual funds—which offer relatively low but more secure returns—could also get impacted significantly, investors and industry insiders say.

The new LTCG tax regime does away with the indexation benefit available for calculation of LTCG on unlisted assets, while reducing the LTCG tax rate to 12.5 per cent from 20 per cent. Specifically in the case of debt mutual funds, the changes appear to be more complicated than for other affected asset classes.

To be sure, the indexation benefit on new investments in debt mutual funds was scrapped in last year's Budget itself with effect from April 1, 2023, with taxation at the applicable income tax rate for the investor. But importantly, investments made until March 31, 2023 were grandfathered with the continuation of indexation benefit on such investments. What has left many a debt mutual fund investor disconcerted is that in this year's Budget, the indexation benefit on those grandfathered debt mutual fund investments has effectively been withdrawn. Investors and asset management companies want the government to reconsider the decision.

Indexation is the process of adjusting the original purchase price of an asset or investment in order to neutralise the impact of inflation on it. Inflation reduces the value of money over time, and therefore, when an asset is sold or an investment redeemed, indexation helps in arriving at a revised cost of acquisition with the impact of inflation over the holding period factored in. Without indexation, particularly in cases where the asset was held for an extended period, the gains may appear extremely high, but they may not paint a realistic picture as the inflation's impact on the value was not considered. In this case, if gains accrued on sale of assets or redemption of investments are taxed, absence of the indexation benefit would increase the tax outgo.

"Conservative investors who are long-term holders of debt mutual funds earlier had the benefit of Indexation, which after a holding period of five or six years made the tax burden almost nil on the low returns of 6-7 per cent that these debt funds offer. This class of conservative investors was protected in the last Budget by the Finance Minister when she promised that their existing holdings would be grandfathered. It seems that this promise may have been broken," said a debt mutual fund investor, who did not wish to be named.

"Suddenly without any warning or grace period the indexation benefit has been removed for all unlisted physi-



cal and financial assets and we are being clubbed with investors who buy and sell property and gold (which offer higher returns than debt mutual funds)... I sincerely hope this is an oversight and the Finance Ministry reconsiders this," the investor added. Given the likely hit to returns on older debt mutual investments due to the new LTCG tax changes, the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI)—the key mutual fund industry body in the country-has also urged the Finance Ministry to provide relief to debt mutual fund investors. AMFI sees the withdrawal of the indexation benefit on grandfathered investments in debt mutual funds and the other changes in the LTCG regime as a case of retrospective taxation. The mutual funds body wants the government to reconsider the removal of the indexation benefit from debt mutual funds or provide for the holding cost of debt mutual funds to be indexed till July 23 this year, the day on which the Budget for 2024-25 was presented.

"We believe that applying the new tax rates on a retrospective basis can be detrimental to investor confidence and deter new investors from entering capital markets as well as the existing ones to make further investments in the capital markets through mutual funds as these investors had invested in the funds based on the tax rates prevalent at the time of their investments. Further, FPIs also get impacted by such sudden changes in taxation, especially if implemented on retrospective basis," AMFI said in a request for changes in the Budget proposals. A tax expert, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that given the rate of inflation over the past few years and the returns on debt mutual funds, the actual returns for investors in real terms would be extremely low and could even be negative in a number of cases in the absence on the indexation benefit on older investments. "For investments like property and gold that have given high rates of return over the past few years, the new LTCG tax rules that have a lower tax rate of 12.5 per cent and no indexation may be better than the old regime of 20 per cent tax with indexation benefit. But for moderate and low-return investments like debt mutual funds, the tax outgo would go up notably in the new regime, eating into the investors' real returns," the tax ex-

## After import duty cut on gold, govt to decide future of Sovereign Gold Bonds scheme in September

Following the Budget announcement to cut the import duty on gold, the government plans to make a final decision regarding the future of the Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGB) scheme in September.

Sources indicate that the cost of financing the fiscal deficit through SGBs is quite high and does not align with the benefits accruing to investors from the scheme. This disparity may lead the government to decide on discontinuing the scheme at the upcoming meeting next month, which will also determine the official borrowing amount for the second half of the financial year. "Earlier, we used to have 10 tranches in a year, then we came down to four and then to two. That was a very conscious way of seeing that the cost of financing fiscal deficit and the benefits accruing from physical gold collection is disjunct. We will take a call in September when we hold the borrowing meeting to decide on whether we should issue a tranche this year or not keeping in mind that it should benefit both the investors and the government," an official said. Domestic gold prices have fallen by nearly 5 per cent since July 23, when Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman reduced the customs duty on gold from 15 per cent to 6 per cent—the lowest in over a decade. While this duty cut led to a decrease in gold prices, it also resulted in increased demand for the metal. "SGBs were brought in as an investment (instrument) with a specific objective of curtailing gold imports and holdings. But now that we have reduced the duty, we'll see how to go about it." the official said.

The official also mentioned that the SGB scheme is one of the more expensive instruments for funding the

fiscal deficit. A comprehensive decision must be made about whether to continue it, as it is not a social sector scheme but rather an investment option. Some analysts believe the customs duty reduction aims to curb gold smuggling, which has increased due to recent high gold prices. Although the duty cut might dampen demand for these bonds, they remain an attractive investment due to the fixed annual interest rate of 2.5 per cent, payable semi-annually. In the Budget presented on July 23, the government reduced the gross SGB issuances to Rs 18,500 crore from Rs 29,638 crore in the interim budget of February 1. Net borrowing through SGBs has been cut to Rs 15,000 crore from Rs 26,138 crore previously estimated.

"It is one of the most expensive instruments to fund the fiscal deficit," an official said, adding that a decision will be made in September during the meeting to determine the borrowing plan with the Reserve Bank of India. The government will decide whether there will be new issuances this year, ensuring they benefit both investors and the government. "Whether we would like to continue or not, a holistic decision has to be taken going forward. It is not a social security scheme but an investment option," the official added. The Government of India finances its fiscal deficit through various instruments, including dated securities, the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF), provident funds, and SGBs.SGBs issued under Series I of 2016-17, which were released on August 5, 2016, are up for redemption in the first week of August. These investors are expected to experience lower-than-expected returns due to the customs duty cut.

## Nothing could go wrong: The story behind the Paris Olympics cauldron balloon



Teddy Riner and Marie-Jose Perec watch as the cauldron rises in a balloon in Paris, France, during the opening ceremony of the 2024 Summer Olympics, Friday, July 26, 2024. (AP Photo)Teddy Riner and Marie-Jose Perec watch as the cauldron rises in a balloon in Paris, France, during the opening ceremony of the 2024 Summer Olympics, Friday, July 26, 2024. The night the Olympic and Paralympic cauldron first flew over Paris, its designer Mathieu Lehanneur held his breath: Nothing could go wrong.

The balloon, lit by the Olympic torch and set off into the sky, was a risk. After all, it was the first time it had ever been tested in its entirety, Lehanneur told The Associated Press on Wednesday. Some parts, like the balloon or the flame system, had been tested to ensure a smooth flight, but — with so much secrecy — never all together, making the balloon a bit of an Olympic-sized Hail Mary. So when the golden balloon lit up the Paris skies, the cherry on top of Friday's opening ceremony, it dazzled spectators. As the French designer watched in awe, the world watched with him. "The most important thing for me is that I discovered the finished cauldron at the same time as everyone else," said Lehanneur, who also designed

For the first time in the history of the Games, the cauldron — a 7-meter (23-feet) diameter ring of fire supported by a giant air balloon — flew through the air. His idea, inspired by the ancient Greek Olympic flame ceremony, was to represent freedom — one of the three

words in the French national motto: "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité." "It's the first time that there is a cauldron like this, the first time that there is a cauldron that flies and the first time that there is an Olympic flame that is not a real flame. There were many many firsts," said Lehanneur. "There were many challenges." The first hot air balloon flight in history was carried out by the Montgolfier brothers at Versailles in 1783. So for Lehanneur, it made perfect sense to design a hot air balloon when he won the design competition and was awarded what he thinks it's the most important project of his career so far.

But the prize-winning French designer didn't want to indulge in nostalgia: He envisioned an innovative, contemporary balloon. Also for this reason, and for the first time too, the flame isn't real, but one made of water and light, not needing fossil fuels to shine. What Lehanneur could have never imagined, though, is the incredible success the cauldron had during and after the opening ceremony.

So much so that now Parisians are collecting signatures to make the balloon, which sits on the ground during the day and rises each evening, a permanent monument in the City of Lights — just like the Eiffel Tower, which was supposed to only be a temporary construction for the 1889 World Expo in Paris. "It's like an experiment: You put some emotion, some pride, you find a good place, you dose all the elements and you wait, but an explosion of love like this one was impossible to foresee," Lehanneur told the AP.On Monday, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo even said she wanted to keep the cauldron after the Games. To the wonder of hundreds of people, the cauldron flies more than 60 meters (197 feet) above the Tuileries gardens from sunset until 2 a.m. The launch zone site is near the glass pyramid entrance to the Louvre museum. During daytime hours, 10,000 people each day can get free tickets to approach the cauldron. Every evening hundreds of Parisians sit in the gardens and wait for the show to begin, and their golden hour selfie be taken. Like Aline Le Quere, a French businesswoman from Paris, who thinks the flame is very original. "It's super modern and so really representative of the city of

## Social media is abuzz with this herbal drink for weight loss; know more about it here

Weight loss is one of the most popular search trends on social media. So it is not surprising to find various tips and hacks promising instant results. However, since weight loss requires consistent efforts and patience, it is important to always consult an expert before trying a viral remedy. As such, when we stumbled upon a reel promoting a concoction of dry ginger powder with turmeric, kalonji (black cumin), and lemon juice for weight loss, we had to get it verified.Ingredients1/2 spoon - Dry ginger powder1 spoon - Black cumin/Kalonji/Karunjeeragam powderLemon juice1 pinch of turmeric powderMethod\*In a pan, take a glass of water. Add dry ginger powder, black cumin, and turmeric powder.\*Let it simmer. Turn off the stove before it starts boiling.\*Strain and squeeze half a lemon. "Have it before going to bed," it read. The combination of black cumin seeds, dry ginger powder, lemon juice, and turmeric powder, when consumed together, may have potential health benefits. Among the many benefits they offer, one is weight loss, said experts. So, let's understand how each of these ingredients can help:Black cumin seeds: May help reduce inflammation, improve insulin sensitivity, and boost metabolism.

Dry ginger powder: Can aid in digestion, reduce bloating, and increase thermogenesis (heat production in the body) that potentially enhances metabolism.Lemon juice: Supports digestion, detoxification, and immune function, which can indirectly support weight loss.Turmeric powder: Turmeric has curcumin, which may help reduce inflammation, improve insulin sensitivity, and enhance fat burning.

While this combination may be beneficial, it's im-



portant to remember that this cannot miraculously result in weight loss, said Dr Shabana Parveen, clinical nutritionist, Artemis Hospital Gurugram. "This combination can aid in weight loss but is not the sole solution. Weight loss ultimately depends on a calorie deficit and a balanced diet. These ingredients should be used in conjunction with a healthy lifestyle, not relied upon as the sole means of weight loss," said Dr Parveen.It is also important to consume this combination in moderation and effectively so that it does not have any negative effects on overall health.To utilise this combination effectively, consider the following tips, shared Dr Parveen\*Consult a healthcare professional before using any new supplements, especially in case you have underlying health conditions.\*Incorporate these ingredients into your diet in moderation, as excessive consumption may have adverse effects.\*Combine with a balanced diet and regular

## Karan Johar hosted famous rapid-fire from his celebrity talk show at the Ambani wedding for Anant and Radhika

Get an exclusive look behind the scenes of Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's lavish wedding festivities. (file)Get an exclusive look behind the scenes of Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's lavish wedding festivities. The wedding festivities of Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant were a spectacle of opulence and grandeur. The sangeet ceremony, a prelude to the main event, was a star-studded affair that captured the nation's imagination.

Yash Gupta, a key member of the event's technical team, provided a glimpse into the magic that unfolded behind the scenes on the Real Talk podcast. His account paints a picture of meticulous planning and flawless execution, reflecting the Ambani family's penchant for perfection.Karan Johar, the celebrated filmmaker and talk show host, added his signature flair to the event by hosting a special edition of "Koffee with Karan," featuring the couple. The intimate setting and candid conversations between the newlyweds provided a heartwarming



grandeur. Yash said that everything was handled by Manish Malhotra, who was the creative director of the wedding. But added that Nita Ambani was also closely involved in the process. The sangeet was a dazzling extravaganza, featuring performances by both Indian and international celebrities. Justin Bieber's electrifying set, coupled with the energetic performances of Badshah and Karan Aujla, transformed the venue into a pulsating dance floor, Yash

Bollywood glamour to the evening.Ranbir Kapoor, a close friend of Akash Ambani, made a stylish appearance. Yash described the actor as "classy and tall," defying the stereotypical image often portrayed on screen. In stark contrast to his on-screen persona for Animal, Ranbir exuded a charming and down-to-earth demeanor.Ranveer Singh and Hardik Pandya were the life of the party Ranveer Singh and Hardik Pandya were the life of the party.

added a touch of

ant personality, lived up to expectations. Yash revealed that the actor danced incessantly throughout the evening, with a dedicated person carrying a speaker playing his favourite tracks. The actor's enthusiasm and infectious energy added to the vibrant atmosphere of the event, he said. Every element of the wedding, from decor to entertainment, was meticulously curated to create an unforgettable experience for the family and their guests, Yash said.

He added that Salman

# Anurag Kashyap opens up on criticism of Maharaja for its violent scenes: 'Some films will trigger something'



Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap has commented on the criticism that his Tamil thriller Maharaja has received, acknowledging that a section of the viewers was "trigged" by the Vijay Sethupathi starrer. In the film, which has been garnering acclaim and record views on Netflix, Kashyap plays the antagonist.

While Maharaja was praised for its screenplay and performances, it was also heavily criticised for the manner in which the film showed violence, especially towards women. In an interview with The Hindu, Kashyap addressed the criticism by drawing a parallel with that of Karan Johar-Guneet Monga backed Kill, which was billed as the goriest Hindi film of recent times. "My latest Tamil flick, like Kill, has drawn a lot of criticism for its violent

scenes, but that's okay because some films will trigger something. I believe violence should look so real and extreme that it actually stops you from doing it," the director shared

Anurag Kashyap then went on to praise Malayalam cinema, and noted how the makers there are the ones interested in telling "original" stories. This year alone, the Malayalam film industry has seen hits like Manjummel Boys, The Goat Life, Aavesham, Premalu and Bramayugam among others."I watch more Malayalam movies than Hindi these days because they excite me so much more. People here (in the Malayalam film industry) tell original stories that are unique to each individual. The filmmakers are catering to themselves rather than the market. A movie like Bhramayugam will never be made in black and white in any other industry. It shows that they're making the films they truly want to make "Even the commercial films are genuinely entertaining. In a movie like Avesham, they did not hesitate to cast three influencers in key roles," he points out. "In Bollywood, they would fill these roles with big stars, focusing on star power rather than telling a real story," he added

The filmmaker said the problem with the Hindi film industry is that it often relies on formulas and will break free from the pattern when an original work comes out, such as Laapataa Ladies, 12th Fail or Kill, which Kashyap said was an action movie which was "very unique" in itself

# Mothers' Instinct movie review: Jessica Chastain, Anne Hathaway pack enough switches to keep it interesting

It is significant where the apostrophe lies in this film's title. It is Mothers' Instinct, not mother's. If mothers are held to pretty high standards, perhaps no one does that job better than a fellow mother. For, there is no getting this job right. And certainly not in the American suburban 1960s, which Celine (Hathaway) and Alice (Chastain) inhabit. Perfectly dressed, coiffured, heeled at all times, lipstick and manicured nails in place, as they keep their neighbouring houses and adjacent lawns neat and clipped, and the hearth churning out perfectly baked canapes, they are there to stand by their husbands – and particularly their children.

Alice once expresses a desire to return to her job as a journalist, but they never return to the idea or her frustration over this life she leads again. Alice and Celine are also the bestest of friends, the kind with access to each other's homes, throwing each other surprise parties, husbands included, and wining and dining every other night, with their sons equally close.

Then, tragedy strikes, Celine loses her child to an accidental fall that Alice tries her best to prevent and, as such events do, their world is not the same again. The tension of Mothers' Instinct, an adaptation of a Belgian film that itself was based on the French novel Derriere la haine, rests in the shifts that this world takes post the incident. At first, Celine seems unstable – shutting out Alice, with the latter's son a constant reminder of the son she lost. A stare she gives Alice from behind a black veil is positively chilling. Then Celine comes right back into their lives, not able to keep away. So is Celine up to something, or is the anxious, high-strung Alice imagining



things? Their husbands, more open, accepting of each other (in a not-so-subtle cliche), can hardly cope, or wilfully turn a blind eye to what's happening.

For all the often-illogical protectiveness that motherhood invokes, and all the unknown ways that grief strikes – though it does suggest how no one wants to be around a mourning parent – Mothers' Instinct is almost too sun-bathed pastel and virginal vanilla to get the hands of its two women dirty. However, in their performances, Chastain and Hathaway pack enough switches to keep it interesting. Chastain, whose Alice wears her heart and fears on her sleeve, has the easier – and the meatier role. Hathaway, required to do perhaps too many tonal changes, isn't as convincing at times.In all this, you feel the most sorry for Alice's son Theo, with O'Connell bringing a quiet sincerity to the confusion the eight-year-old feels over the role of Celine in their lives, without being mushy.

# Ram Gopal Varma dissects economics of pan-India projects, explains why some big multi-starrers fail: 'These are proposal films mounted for star's ego'

Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma says the industry is witnessing many "proposal films" which are assembled by calculated pan-India casting to cater to a wider audience. These films, RGV said, often focus on pandering to the egos of the stars while the story becomes secondary. In an interview with Galatta Plus, the filmmaker explained why some multi-starrer pan-India films feature stars from different regions, as the producers think this would make more monetary sense. While there is "nothing wrong in theory," Varma said history is proof that such projects often nosedive.

RGV said, "These are called 'proposal films', because you are calculating- if this actor comes from there, that audience will watch the film. If the other is from some other region, that audience will come. There is nothing wrong in that theory, but if you look at Baahubali, the film-conceptually, with its visuals and novelty-technically has no stars. Prabhas is a Telugu star, but it was a blockbuster in Hindi and other languages. I am sure his films worked nowhere else at the time. "So you are spending on the film and creating a visual experience, where the audience feels they haven't seen anything like that before. But then you say, let me get this guy from Tamil, the other guy from somewhere else. Rajamouli never did that. By doing this, you are burdening the film and to justify each star, to cater to him on a personal level and satisfy his ego, you lose your grip on the film, which is a reason many multi starrer films fail."

Ram Gopal Varma said with Baahubali, which kicked off the now prevalent pan-India phenomenon, filmmaker SS Rajamouli proved that when things go right, one can hit Rs 1000-2000 crore mark at the box office. That made many makers ambitious, who thought they could mount films worth Rs 500 crore and push the boundary because it is still "one fourth of what Baahubali earned".

"That is a huge safety net, because the market works on the possibility that a right note can make you reach there. Anyone who is making a film believes they are making a better film than what came before. Leap of faith is what Rajamouli did, everybody else is basically just imagining they are as good as that. Then it is a trap."

The filmmaker explained how some stars like Aamir Khan juggle a big budget film with a smaller outing, keeping the cost of both in check according to the audience it will cater. "Aamir can do Ghajini and Taare Zameen Par



In an interview with Galatta Plus, the filmmaker explained why some multi-starrer pan-India films feature stars from different regions, as the producers think this would make more monetary sense. While there is "nothing wrong in theory," Varma said history is proof that such projects often nosedive.

in the same time period and his understanding is perfect. He told me that a Ghajini can be seen by 100 people and Taare Zameen Par maybe only 20 people. But you will look at the cost and time aspect of how much effort you have to put in. Within the 100 people, how many like it and in the 20 people, how many like it. That is the only thing he sees."

Ram Gopal Varma said the problem is when a smaller film is burdened with big budget, as makers think it can lead to bigger profits. Citing an example of Prabhas starrer Radhe Shyam, which was a box office disaster, the filmmaker said, "It is technically a small film—they might have spent a lot of money on it—because the idea and what the film represents is nowhere near Baahubali. When a film like that doesn't work, he will also think that maybe doing a small film might not work. "The problem is, if you are making a small film, like Aamir's Taare Zameen Par would've cost less than Rs 10 crore. But here, just because the recovery is there, they will spend more in a film where it is not required. That's where the problem is."

# Parineeti Chopra calls Raghav Chadha a 'star' after he raises the issue of piracy in Parliament, gets a shoutout from Jaya Bachchan: 'He knows much about film industry'



AAP MP Raghav Chadha was applauded by wife Parineeti Chopra and veteran actor Jaya Bachchan after he raised the issue of film piracy in the Parliament (Photos: Instagram/paineetichopra/Abhinav Saha)AAP MP Raghav Chadha was applauded by wife Parineeti Chopra and veteran actor Jaya Bachchan after he raised the issue of film piracy in the Parliament. Piracy has increasingly troubled Bollywood in recent years, with many actors and filmmakers voicing their concerns about its impact on the industry. Recently, Raghav Chadha, Member of Parliament from the Aam Aadmi Party, who is married to actor Parineeti Chopra, highlighted this issue in a Rajya Sabha speech, noting that piracy has "plagued" both cinema and OTT platforms, with a 62% surge in piracy during the COVID-19 lockdown. After Raghav's speech on film piracy, his wife Parineeti, who was recently seen in Netflix's Amar Singh Chamkila, shared a video of the speech and wrote, "You're a star for raising this important issue in Parliament, my love (king emoji).

In his address, Raghav Chadha stated, "Sir, piracy and unauthorised reproduction of copyright content has led to an annual loss of Rs 20,000 crore in the film industry and the OTT industry. And there has been a 62% increase in piracy incidents during the pandemic alone. Through you sir, I'd like to ask the honourable minister that the Cinematography Bill that was passed in this House last year, which largely deals with anti-camera recording

of films etc in theatres, is the Government of India today planning to amend the Cinematography Bill or come out with a separate mechanism to deal with piracy in OTT platforms that is also becoming widespread." He further underlined how the unauthorised reproduction of content impacts the hard work put in by artistes. "So I'd really urge through you to the Minister to come up with an institutional mechanism to deal with this piracy," he added.

As Raghav Chadha concluded his speech, Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar smiled and remarked, "He knows much about the film industry. Off late, he's gained experience." Veteran actor Jaya Bachchan, who was seated next to Raghav, gave him a shoutout, prompting Dhankhar to add, "Jaya ji has been diligent ever since she entered that silver screen. It's because of her that the question has been rationally worded." When Raghav sought permission to respond, Dhankhar advised, "Never clarify when you get endorsement from a legend." Jaya simply smiled at the acknowledgment.

The internet also applauded Raghav Chadha, with comments highlighting his advocacy on behalf of his wife Parineeti Chopra. "Ladki ka chakkar Babu bhaiya #parineetichopra," wrote a user. Another comment read, "Parineeti Bhabhi ka topic." Parineeti and Raghav tied the knot in the presence of top politicians, select members of the film industry, and families, in Udaipur, on September 24, 2023.

#### Ulajh off to a poor start at the box office; Gulshan Devaiah says, 'Word of mouth is the Mt Everest of publicity'

Janhvi Kapoor, Gulshan Devaiah, Roshan Mathew and Meiyang Chang starrer Ulajh opened to mixed reviews on August 2. The movie is also off to a very slow start at the box office. According to early reports, shared by trade website Sacnilk at 6 pm, the collection of the film in India stands at Rs 0.45 crore. Upon its release, Gulshan took to his X handle to stress on the importance of word of mouth publicity and said "if the audience deems it fit, they will give us the gift of their very precious and coveted WOM"

On Friday morning, Gulshan took to his official X handle and wrote, "Word Of Mouth" is the Mt Everest of publicity. It can't be created without the organic support of the audience. This is what every movie in the cinemas hopes & prays. #Ulajh is in cinemas today."

Expressing his love for cinema, Gulshan wrote, "I fell in love with movies since I was 6/7 years old. It's always a special feeling to have a theatrical release. It's been a little over 13 years in the business now & ya the ability to handle stress gets better & better with experience, so I'm not really stressed or anything. If the audience deems it fit, they will give us the gift of their very precious & coveted WOM."Ulajh, directed by Sudhanshu Saria, focuses on a young IFS officer, with a legacy of patriots in her family, entangled in a dangerous personal



conspiracy amidst a career-defining post far away from her home. The film, announced in 2020, was shot in India and London. Shubra Gupta in her review for the indianexpress.com wrote, "It's disappointing because here's a fine ensemble left to fumble through an amateurish plot-line. The trouble that Hindi films with heroines leading from the front is visible in the way Kapoor is planted front and centre, even when her character should have known better: stepping aside, and letting the experts do their job. When your lead is upped at the expense of the other characters, who feel underwritten, then you've underserved the film."

# Priyanka Chopra shares video of her stage performances from early 2000s: 'This is just a throwback to a girl in her 20s'

Priyanka Chopra may be away from Bollywood films, but her love for Indian cinema remains as strong as ever, just like her fans who eagerly await her return. She frequently expresses her affection for Hindi cinema and shares glimpses of her early acting days. Recently, Priyanka posted throwback photos from Mujhse Shaadi Karogi to celebrate the film's 20th anniversary. On Friday, she reminisced about her stage performances during her early Bollywood days, recalling the joy of dancing to songs from her films at award shows in the early 2000s. The video showcases her dancing to hit songs like "Khudaya Khair" (2009), "Mar Jawaan" (2008), "Desi Girl" (2008), and "Laal Dupatta" (2004).

Priyanka shared a video montage of her various dance performances at award events in India. Reflecting on her early career, she spoke about her unexpected passion for the stage and dancing. "When I first started working in the movies in Mumbai, I truly did not know how much of a love affair I would have with the stage and especially dancing on it. When I was in school, I was always doing extracurriculars on stage, but there was something that just hit different when I was performing on songs from my movies sung by the most incredible singers in India and being able to deliver entertainment to a live audience. It is intoxicating," the actor wrote on Instagram, sharing a video featuring her past stage

performances. "It's the closest I've felt to doing what my husband does every day," added the Bajirao Mastani actor, referencing her musician husband Nick Jonas' per-

formance at live concerts.

Priyanka Chopra shared that looking back at the old video made her nostalgic about the numerous rehearsals and the guidance she received from talented choreographers and dancers. "This is just a throwback to a girl in her 20s, shaping the woman that I am today. I'm proud of her. And grateful for her dedication and hustle. Take the time to be proud of your younger self. You are you today because of your tenacity yesterday," wrote the Quantico star.

Priyanka, who was crowned Miss Word at the age of 17, in 2000, in her post also gave a nod to her "younger self" for hustling hard to be where she is today. "I'm proud of her and grateful for her dedication and hustle. Take the time to be proud of your younger self. You are you today because of your tenacity yesterday," wrote Priyanka, who is mother to Malti Marie Chopra Jonas. Priyanka's singer husband, commenting on her post, said he is her "biggest fan forever and always".

Priyanka Chopra has been shooting for The Bluff in Australia. The film is her second collaboration with the Russo Brothers after the spy action series Citadel.

Ranga Reddy **WEDNESDAY 7 AUGUST 2024 INDIAN CHRONICLE** 

#### 100m champion Julien Alfred wanted to become like Usain Bolt, now she is as famous as St Lucia's Nobel prize winners



GNS News Agency, August 6

Saint Lucians flaunt their Nobel prize distinction. The country has the highest number of Nobel laureates per capita, the writer Derek Walcott and economist Sir Arthur Lewis. What it did not possess was an Olympic medallist - one among the 70 countries that had never medalled in the Games. That was until Saturday night though, before Julien Alfred ripped past the finish line in 10.72 seconds, like a straight-lined blur, an apparition dressed in sky blue jersey to claim gold. The sprinter she bolted ahead to win the gold was none other than World Champion Sha'Carri Richardson of the United States.

The sprinter from Cicero, five kilometres from the business town of Castries, the capital of the country likened to Helen of Troy for the numerous wars the British and French waged to conquer it, began her day watching Usain Bolt's London run, a routine since she began to run. When she was young, she would scribble in her diary: "I want to be like Bolt." After the race — a near perfect exhibition of controlled acceleration and impossible composure from the moment the pistol fired — she attempted a Bolt-like slingshot act and flunked it, perhaps realising that she was too emotional to pull off a rehearsed piece of celebration, when her tears of joy and torrent of sweat blended with Parisian showers on the purple tracks of the Stade de France in Saint Denise. She ran to a corner, took the bib off and pointed to her name to the audience of the packed arena. She soon wrapped herself in her country's flag and drowned in the pounding rain. Gasping for breath, not out of exhaustion but out of disbelief, she groped for words to capture the moment. Memories rolled back to her childhood: "Growing up I used to be on the field struggling with no shoes, running barefoot, running in my school uniform, running all over the place." All she knew when she was a child was to run. Her mother, Joanna, would narrate her journey to MBC Television: "My late husband and I used to leave her and the other kids at home, and the neighbours used to tell us that they would see Julien running really fast past their houses. But there was nothing like an academy or something like that in the neighbourhood. Moreover, we didn't have the money either. We wanted her to study so that she can live a dignified life.'

Paris 2024 Olympics: Julian Alfred sprinter Paris 2024 Olympics - Athletics - Women's 200m Round 1 -Stade de France, Saint-Denis, France – August 04, 2024 Julien Alfred of Saint Lucia crosses the line to win heat 1 with Gemima Joseph of France and Julia Henriksson of Sweden behind her. But the physical education teacher, Simeon Stephen, at the Leon Hess Comprehensive Secondary School — her senior was the West Indies swashbuckler Johnson Charles, who has a stand named after him in the Darren Sammy Stadium — saw a burning spark in her. "He saw the potential in me and made me run with the boys. He would teach me the technique and the importance of mental strength, to keep fighting and never give up," she would say of Stephen, who died two years

The family couldn't afford high-quality running shoes. But she was made to do with those from her seniors, or when there was none, she would run barefoot. But Stephen would give her the first pair of proper shoes, before she joined an athletics club run by a former athlete Cuthbert Modeste. "Aunt Karen too was another big influence. She always encouraged me and used to tell my parents to support me," Alfred would tell St Lucia Times. Her aunt too didn't live to see her niece's moment of glory, but the most shocking death of her life was her father's, when she was only 12. "I decided to quit running, because I felt it was not viable. I had to help my mother out, besides we didn't have much infrastructure here," she would tell the world athletics website.

Usain Bolt 2012 Olympics But Stephen insisted on her applying for a scholarship at the St Catherine High School in Kingston, Jamaica, where former athlete Marlon Jones coached. She did and flew to the island of her idol Bolt in 2015. The Island country of only 180,000 people, starved of sportsmen and sporting glory but for cricketer Darren Sammy, who has an entire stadium and an avenue beside it named after himThe other main sports venue it possessed was the skeleton of a stadium. With Chinese investment, construction had begun to repurpose the George Odlum National Stadium, a football arena into a multipurpose facility, but the work has been stalled for nearly decades. But under Saudi Arabia's initiative work has resumed. "We barely have the facilities. The stadium is not fixed. I hope this gold medal will help St Lucia build a new stadium, to help the sport grow," Alfred would say.

But Stephen insisted on her applying for a scholarship at the St Catherine High School in Kingston, Jamaica, where former athlete Marlon Jones coached. She did and flew to the island of her idol Bolt in 2015. Two years later, she would make another big leap and joined the Leon Hess Comprehensive Secondary School in Texas to train under the legendary Edrick Floréal. He not only polished her technique, especially her head position at the starting position, but also worked on her fit-

A piece of advice became her guiding light too: "Being the fastest woman doesn't play as much of a role as being the strongest woman." He made her work so hard at the gym that she could run three rounds of the 60m race a day with the same energy. I got better because I dedicated myself to running more with longer workouts, which I hated before." Soon, she would set the NCAA circuit on fire, setting the 60m indoor world record, besides a clutch of marks at the collegiate level in the USA. The World Championship in Budapest was a disappointment — she finished fifth in the 100m and fourth in the 200m. "Iron sharpens iron," she would say. A year later, the irony lady from Castries wore her country its first Olympic medal, of golden hue no less. The girl who wanted to be Bolt has transformed into a Bolt-like figure of inspiration in her island too. And would occupy a space as hallowed in their history as the two Nobel Laureates.

#### French pole vaulter misses out on medal after his crotch hits the bar

GNS News Agency, August 6

Anthony Ammirati, Pole vault, paris olympics, 2024Anthony Ammirati, of France, competes in the men's pole vault qualification at the Paris Olympics.French pole vaulter Anthony Ammirati has become an unlikely internet sensation after a video of his painful crotch mishap during a pole vault attempt went viral. He missed out on earning a medal at his home Olympics when his crotch got caught on the crossbar.

During his third attempt Saturday, the 21year-old was trying to clear a height of 5.70 meters, and he had a bizarre failed attempt when his crotch caught the bar and he fell to the ground. After watching the replay even the broadcasters seemed uncertain on how to describe the incident.After four attempts, Ammirati finished with a combined score of





'The conditions were good. It's the first time I've started a competition without any stress. As I was a total outsider, I only had one goal: to play with the crowd. I was almost there."

5.60 and in 12th position, not enough to advance to the final. The pole vault was Ammirati's only event at these Games. Ammirati won the U20 World Championships in Colombia two years ago. "It's a big disappointment. I'm a bit gutted," he said, via the French Athletic Federation.

"The conditions were good. It's the first time I've amazing!"French sports

started a competition without any stress. As I was a total outsider, I only had one goal: to play with the crowd. was

almost there."Ammirati has taken the incident in a good sport. He said: "I'm just glad I can make people smile and laugh."And who knows, maybe this will be the start something academy Envol posted a

tribute to the young competitor on Instagram after the event"We are proud of you @anthony\_ammirati despite the last two weeks of being physically disturbed you managed to show up, even though we are frustrated like you for that 5m70 bar. We wish you an unforgettable Olympic experience."

#### For Satwik-Chirag, Olympic loss is a good excuse to improve; but after rest, recharge & regrouping

GNS News Agency, August 6

There is inspiration everywhere in sport to bounce back from rock bottom. Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty were expected to play the Olympic finals this Sunday, but returned with not even a shot at the podium. The disappointment is all too raw, and the kindest thing afforded to them will be to not think about the future for some time. To allow the hurt to subside, soak up the stray verbal stabs from assorted sudden-experts, and then to eventually let the pain of missing out stew, and check if it's worth letting it bubble into inspiration. Their Tokyo failure set them up for three years of incredible improvement. It might not have been good enough to win an Olympic medal, but there was remarkable consistency in chasing excellence. Satwik-Chirag achieved what very few other Olympic legends can claim to have - they kept badminton fans hooked to the sport for the period in between two Games. Getting millions to watch the sport even without the big occasion on the circuit, has been the highlight of the Tokyo-to-Paris turnaround.

In the next cycle, they can eschew the mad treadmill of the Tour and focus on the big medal, not repeating the mistake of choosing the circuit over legacy Olympic medals.Mathias Boe Paris: India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty with coach Mathias Boe after their men's doubles quarterfinal badminton match against Malaysia's Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik at the 2024 Summer Olympics, in Paris, France, Thursday, Aug. 1, 2024. Indian duo lost the match. Their Paris failure is bound to leave a sense of incompleteness, and possibly a stab at another Games, even if LA is way too far to even think ahead. Satwik will be 28, Chirag 31. But in a sport and event where India never had any history, Satwik-Chirag made a good run in pursuit of a medal, though their quarters loss will be lambasted as a failure for the Top 3 pair. They only need look back at what criticism PV Sindhu copped after two World Championship silvers. It's how every second-place non-championship pushed her to improve her game, that holds much to learn from. Silvers, and moreover no-medals, carry with them the need to repair, restock, replenish and reconsider aspects of the game that let you down. Some weaknesses got glaring at Paris: their receiving of wobbley, wicked serves, learning the escape-route from flat games they get dragged into, and deciphering the low altitude fast game that's troubled them the last eight months. Being vulnerable at the Olympics on the first four strokes, wasn't exactly a secret. Not for opponents at any rate, as Malaysians exploited a very old weakness. When starved off their attack, 3 teams out of 4 can bring Indian defense under pressure.

A proper postmortem will tell you Indians should've seen this coming in the three Tour finals they lost. Against the Chinese especially, as well as the Danes at last year's World Championships. Fitness concerns might've pulled them back from an all-out attack, but ultimately it was Aaron Chia's guiles and Malaysian deep tactical sense, that poked at their medal chances. The scope of improvement is immense, and it will keep drawing boards busy in coming years till they nail a World title. Knowing their skill-set was incomplete can be a humbling realisation. But once more, they needn't look further than Sindhu to put their



heads down and chip away at the inadequacies.Paris Olympics Badminton Doubles draw satwik chirag India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty play against Indonesia's Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Rian Ardianto during their men's doubles badminton group stage match at the 2024 Summer Olympics, Tuesday, July 30, 2024, in Paris, France.

Perhaps the biggest inspiration can be riffed from defending champs, Taiwanese Wang Chi-Lin and Lee Yang, both 28 now, and making their second Olympics final. They were nowhere on the circuit, barely chasing rankings or tournament victories post Tokyo. They nursed injuries, stayed under the radar till qualification period fetched up, and ran up a good campaign just when

Wirh Mathias Boe stepping away, Satwik and Chirag will need to recalibrate their goals, refresh their ambition, find newer avenues and chew fresher brains of experts to mount a fresh challenge going ahead. Not winning keeps the hunger alive - there's still a World title to be won, and the Chinese and Malaysians to be beaten consistently, should they choose to stick around. But all that can wait, and wait till the injuries are mended. There are bigger coaches out there internationally, with wider expanses of knowledge, as India tries to make a combined ascent at the medal next cycle in all three categories men's doubles, women's doubles and mixed doubles. Being the sole hopes in doubles, can dump pressure on them and hyper-focussing on just one player or pairing, can prove counterproductive. If India have to do well at doubles, it will need a multi-pronged focus on several pairs and sparring to get better. It will need full-time coaches dedicated to the whole squad.

Above everything else, Satwik-Chirag will need to believe they can still win the World Championships despite this setback. For they are easily India's finest badminton talents whose matches are worth investing time in to watch on television or streams. Medals or no medal.On Happy Friendship Day, Satwik-Chirag can just be glad that their bond survived two heart breaking Olympic failures. They know they aren't a bad pairing at all. They know they have each other's backs. Paris didn't give them medals, but it could be the beginning of a beautiful new old friendship, this one between the only two people in this story who have to live down a loss at the Olympics. Their biggest inspiration is how they themselves have bounced back before.

#### Kobe Bryant's locker sells for \$2.9 million, while Lakers unveil his statue

GNS News Agency, August 6

The locker used by Kobe Bryant for most of his storied NBA career sold for an impressive \$2.9 million at a Sotheby's auction on Friday. The locker, which Bryant used while playing for the Los Angeles Lakers at the Staples Center, nearly doubled its estimated value of \$1.5 million. According to Sotheby's, a maintenance worker saved the locker from being discarded during the Staples Center's 2018 renovations. The locker was later acquired by an American collector. Brahm Wachter, Sotheby's head of modern collectibles, remarked, "Today's price highlights not only Kobe's enduring legacy but also the exceptional nature of this unique item."The auction, held in New York, also featured memorabilia from other sports legends like Michael Jordan and Reggie Jackson, as well as contemporary stars such as Rafael Nadal and Stephen Curry.Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Lakers unveiled their second statue of Kobe Bryant, this time featuring his daughter Gianna. The bronze statue, displayed outside Crypto.com Arena, merges two iconic images of father and daughter taken courtside at Lakers games.

The statue's unveiling was purposely timed on August 2, aligning with Kobe's jersey numbers 8 and 24, and Gianna's number 2. This date mirrors the previous unveiling of Bryant's first statue, which commemorates



his 81-point game in 2006. Vanessa Bryant, speaking at the unveiling, reflected on her family's commitment to women's sports and equality. She emphasized Gianna's potential and the barriers she faced due to gender. "In honor of Kobe and Gigi, I ask you this: give young girls your time. Give them your support. Tell them they can do anything any man can do and tell them they can exceed that," Vanessa Bryant urged. The Lakers plan to unveil a third statue during the 2024-25 season, making Kobe the first Laker to receive multiple statues.

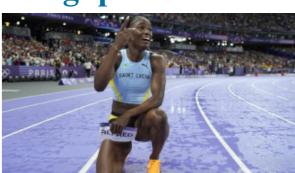
#### Julien Alfred wins women's 100m to claim Saint Lucia's 1st medal ever at Olympics: Who is history-making sprinter?

GNS News Agency, August 6

Julien Alfred stunned pre-race favourite Sha'Carri Richardson in the women's 100m race at the Paris Olympics to become the fastest woman in the world and give Saint Lucia its first Olympic medal in the history of the Games. In a race held after a heavy downpour at the Stade de France, Julien Alfred finished in 10.72 seconds for gold while Richardson claimed silver with 10.87 secs.

St Lucia, an eastern Caribbean island, is a nation of around 1,80,000 people. And Julien Alfred is the island's first Olympic medal winner in history. Of any colour!"Growing up, I've always said I wanted to be one of Saint Lucia's first Olympic medallists... first gold medallist at the Olympic Games," said Julien Alfred, who is from Castries, Saint Lucia's capital and largest city. Julien Alfred was spotted by school librarian and shaped in USAJulien Alfred was initially spotted by the school librarian. Once her talent was ascertained, she moved to Jamaica as a teenager to train, then attended the University of Texas, where she became a multiple-time NCAA

Julien Alfred was shaped by the American collegiate system, the NCAA, where she ran for the Texas Longhorns from 2018 to 2023. In that span, she was an 11-



time USTFCCCA All-America selection. After collecting her final NCAA championships, Julien Alfredwas named the 2022-23 Big 12 female athlete of the year.

Julien Alfred walked away from the sport due to father's demiseJulien Alfred walked away from the sport after losing her father when she was around 12. It was her then coach who convinced her to return to the sport."He (her father) believed I could be an Olympian. That I can be here," Julien Alfred said after her gold medal. "To come out with the win, happy I was able to do it. I want to attribute it to (my father). ... He'd be so boastful of his daughter being an Olympian.'

Printed and Published by V. Srinivas Reddy, on behalf of M/s Sai Krishna Publications, Owned by M/s Sai Krishna Publications, Printed at Sree Seshasai Enterprises, Plot No.98/1, Co-operative Industrial Estate, IDA, Gandhinagar, Quthbullapur Mandal, Medchal-Malkajgiri Dist, Telangana. Published at Plot No. 3, Flat No.13, Surya Saroj Apartments, Huda Complex, Saroor Nagar, Ranga Reddy Dist. T.S. 500 035.
Editor: V Srinivas Reddy RNI No. TELENG/2013/49469, Cell No. 9440231967.