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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.

## 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 protesters 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 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 T R Baalu, NCP leader Supriya Sule among others.

## '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 final and focussing on it. "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 Olympics on Thursday.

## 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 Minister

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.

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

Khammam: Cashing in on 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.

## Arcesium announces expansion of Hyderabad facility



GNS News Agency, August 6

Hyderabad: 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, Gaurav Suri, CEO, 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.

## 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 Environment 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 Panchirimalam. 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.

## 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."

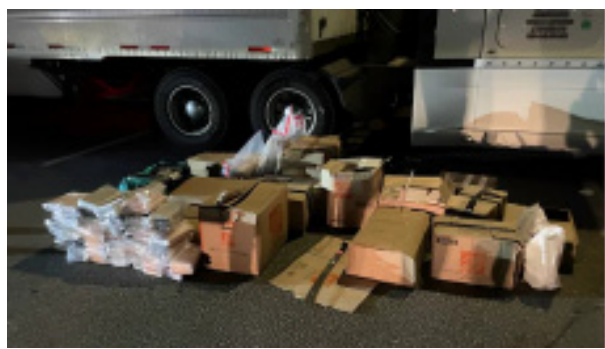
Kishor was referring to the change in the BJP's state leadership when Samrat Chaudhary was removed as the party state president in Bihar and Dilip Jaiswal was appointed in his place. Prashant Kishor criticized Nitish Kumar, stating that "Nitish Kumar asked for a ministry from the BJP, asked for the Chief 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."





## 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 trafficking Simranjit 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 emphasize 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 people and displacing millions.

## 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 downturn 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-



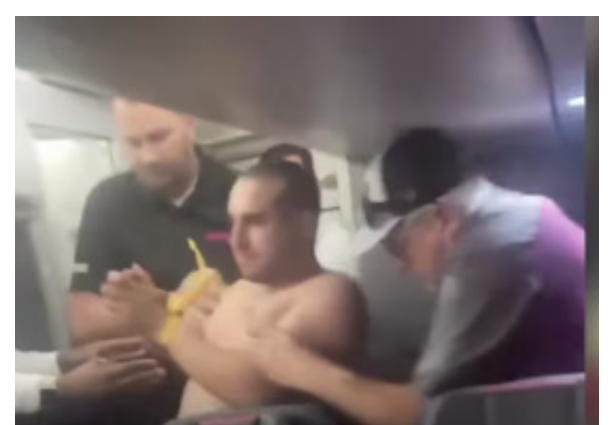
tune also comes amid challenges faced by Truth Social in establishing itself within the competitive social media landscape. According to data from Comscore, analysed by The Fighting, Truth Social's unique visitor count plummeted by 38 per cent year-over-year in June, marking the third consecutive month 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 calm him.

"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 Indian-heritage 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 selectively.

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 'American'.

# 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

# 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 controversies and scandals.

# 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 spies. The 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 the exchange. The 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 spies. Russia 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 Ljubljana. "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 reporters.

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 MURDER" Krasikov 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, throw 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.

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-year-old 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

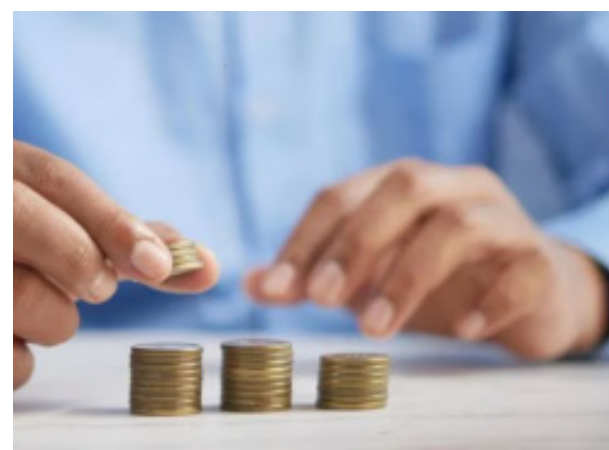


Riju Raveendran (brother of Byju Raveendran) through sales of his shares.

"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



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 of 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 expert said.

## 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



words in the French national motto: "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité." "It's the first time that there is a cauldron like this, 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 Paris. I adore it."

Teddy Riner and Marie-Jose Percec 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 Percec 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 the Olympic Torch.

For the first time in the history of the Games, the cauldron — a 7-meter (23-foot) 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

## 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. Ingredients: 1/2 spoon — Dry ginger powder 1 spoon — Black cumin/kalonji/Karunjeeragam powder Lemon juice 1 pinch of turmeric powder Method: 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 exercise for sustainable weight loss.

## 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 saangeet 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

moment amidst the 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 saangeet 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 revealed.

He added that Salman

Khan's grand entrance, alongside Anant Ambani, added a touch of 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 d o w n - t o - e a r t h demeanor. Ranveer Singh and Hardik Pandya were the life of the party. Ranveer Singh and Hardik Pandya were the life of the party.

Ranveer Singh, known for his energetic and flamboyant 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.

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



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 Aavesham, 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.

Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap has commented on the criticism that his Tamil thriller Maharaja has received, acknowledging that a section of the viewers was "triggered" 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

## 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 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 haie*, 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 cliché), can hardly cope, or willfully 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 his grip 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. "Amir 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 artists. "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 bhैया #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 IAF 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' performance 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 World 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*.

## 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 medalist — 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-Denis. 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."

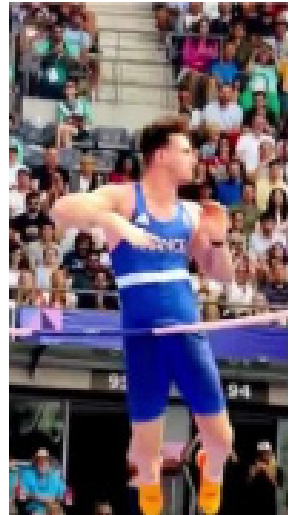
Paris 2024 Olympics: Julien Alfred sprinter Paris 2024 Olympics — Athletics — Women's 200m Round 1 — Stade de France, Saint-Denis, France — August 04, 2024. Julien Alfred of Saint Lucia crosses the line to win heat 1 with Gemima Joseph of France and Julia Henriksson of Sweden behind her. But the physical education teacher, Simeon Stephen, at the Leon Hess Comprehensive Secondary School — her senior was the West Indies swash-buckler 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 ago.

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

GNS News Agency, August 6

Anthony Ammirati, Pole vault, Paris Olympics, Paris 2024. Anthony Ammirati, of France, competes in the men's pole vault qualification at the 2024 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 21-year-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



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

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." Ammirati has taken the incident in a good spirit. He said: "I'm just glad I can make people smile and laugh. And who knows, maybe this will be the start of something amazing!" French sports

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 wobbly, wicketed 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 guile 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 needed.

With 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 180,000 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 medalists... first gold medalist 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 USA. Julien 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 champion.

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 USTFCCA All-America selection. After collecting her final NCAA championships, Julien Alfred was named the 2022-23 Big 12 female athlete of the year.

Julien Alfred walked away from the sport due to father's demise. Julien 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."