

# INDIAN CHRONICLE

1 August, 2024 | Thursday | Volume No:12 | Issue No:147 Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

## Secunderabad – Visakhapatnam Vande Bharat Express train to have stoppage at Samalkot

Hyderabad: The experimental stoppage of Vande Bharat Express train at Samalkot railway station has been further extended for a period of six months. South Central Railway (SCR) said in a press release on Wednesday.

Accordingly, the Visakhapatnam – Secunderabad (20833) and Secunderabad – Visakhapatnam (20834) services will have stoppage at Samalkot with effect from August 3, the release said. The SCR officials requested rail users to make note of the change in schedule and plan their travel accordingly.

## Tension prevails at Hayathnagar as family of woman alleges foul play in her death

Hyderabad: Tension prevailed at Hayathnagar after a woman allegedly died by suicide at her house in Banjara Colony on Tuesday. Divya (21), a native of Yacharam in Ibrahimpatnam, was married to Ramavath Shiva (23), an auto driver and the couple were blessed with a daughter who is now aged six months. The family lives at a house in Banjara Colony, Hayathnagar. According to the police, on Tuesday evening, Divya hanged herself to the ceiling fan in the house and ended her life. On information, the police reached the spot and shifted the body to Osmania General Hospital mortuary for post-mortem examination.

## BRS calls for Statewide protests against CM Revanth's remarks



GNS News Agency, July 31

Hyderabad: The BRS has called for burning of effigies of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy in all district headquarters on Thursday in protest against the latter's derogatory remarks against senior women legislators P Sabitha Indra Reddy and Sunita Lakshma Reddy in the Assembly. The party also demanded that the Chief Minister retract his comments immediately and issue an unconditional apology to the girls and women of Telangana.

In a statement, BRS working president KT Rama Rao urged the people of Telangana to condemn the Chief Minister's offensive remarks made during the budget session in the Assembly on Wednesday. "The Chief Minister's statement, implying that trusting women will lead to ruin, is not only vile but also deeply insulting to every woman and girl striving to succeed in their lives in Telangana," he said.

He emphasised that the comments were particularly offensive given the long-standing public service and sacrifices made by Sabitha Indra Reddy and Sunita Lakshma Reddy. "Revanth Reddy's arrogant remarks have hurt the sentiments of all Telangana women and girls, especially those who aspire to grow in life," he added. Rama Rao called on the entire Telangana society to condemn the remarks, stating that Revanth Reddy was abusing his power and position. "The arrogance of power should not shield one from accountability. We all must register our dissent against such disgraceful comments," he stated.

## IAS officer Puja Khedkar row: UPSC cancels Puja Khedkar's candidature for CSE 2022, debars from all future exams

GNS News Agency, July 31

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on July 31 cancelled the candidature of probationer Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Puja Khedkar and she has been debarred permanently from all the future examinations and selections of the Commission. The UPSC said she was found "guilty of acting in contravention of the provisions of the Civil Services Examination-2022 Rules". Regarding submission of false certificates by candidates, specifically those of Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD), the UPSC said it "neither has the mandate nor the wherewithal to check the veracity of thousands of certificates submitted by the candidates every year". Earlier in July, Ms. Khedkar, posted as Assistant Collector in Pune, was transferred to Washim in Maharashtra following complaints of misuse of power by a senior officer. She allegedly demanded special privileges such as a separate office, house, car, and staff, which she was not entitled to. It soon transpired that she allegedly submitted fake PwBD and OBC certificates to clear the civil services exam.

The UPSC said a show-cause notice was issued on July 18 to "Puja Manorama Dilip Khedkar, a provisionally recommended candidate of the CSE-2022, for fraudulently availing attempts beyond the permissible limit provided in the Examination Rules by faking her identity". "She was to submit her response by July 25. However, she requested for further time till August 4 so that she could gather the necessary documents for her response. The UPSC carefully considered the request of Ms. Khedkar and in order to meet the ends of justice, she was granted time till 3:30 pm of July 30 to enable her to submit the response. It was also categorically made clear to Ms. Khedkar that it was last and final opportunity to her and no further extension in time would be allowed. It was also conveyed to her in unequivocal terms that if no response was received by the aforesaid date/time, the UPSC would take further action without entertaining any further reference from her. Despite extension in time allowed to her, she failed to submit her explanation within the prescribed time," UPSC said. It further added that in the backdrop of Ms. Khedkar's case, the UPSC has thoroughly examined the available data of more than 15,000 finally recommended candidates of the CSEs from the year 2009 to 2023, for a period of 15 years with respect to the number of attempts availed by them. "After this detailed exercise, barring the case of Ms. Khedkar, no other candidate has been found to have availed more number of attempts than permitted under the CSE Rules. In the lone case of Ms. Khedkar, the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of the UPSC could not detect her number of attempts primarily due to the fact that she changed not only her name but also her parents' name.

## New Governor of Telangana Jishnudev Varma Welcomed at Shamshabad Airport

GNS News Agency, July 31

Shamshabad, Telangana: Jishnudev Varma, the newly appointed Governor of Telangana, received a warm welcome upon his arrival at Shamshabad Airport on Wednesday. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, accompanied by Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari, DGP Jitender, and other senior officials, greeted Varma as he arrived from Tripura.

As part of the formal



reception, the new Governor was honored with a salute from the armed forces at the airport. This marks Jishnudev Varma's transition from his role as

the former Deputy Chief Minister of Tripura to becoming the fourth Governor of the newly formed Telangana state. The oath-taking ceremony for

Jishnudev Varma is scheduled for 5:30 PM today. High Court Chief Justice Alok Aradeh will administer the oath of office. Distinguished guests expected to attend the event include Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, leaders from the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), Leader of Opposition KCR, various opposition party leaders, and Union Ministers. The appointment of Varma comes at a crucial time as Telangana continues to evolve and develop its governance structure.

## Kerala given warning seven days prior to Wayanad landslides: Amit Shah

GNS News Agency, July 31

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while speaking in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, revealed that the Central government had issued warnings to Kerala about the impending disaster seven days prior to it. He also questioned the state government not taking preventive measures despite the warnings. The Home Minister began his speech by offering condolences to the families of the victims of the Wayanad landslides and slammed the Opposition for politicising the issue. On Tuesday night, massive landslides occurred at Churalpara in Kerala's Wayanad at around 2 a.m. The area was cut off, but the local people and a team of rescuers were engaged in locating the missing people in the area, which had been ripped into two. The death toll has touched 184 while 225 people are reported missing while around 7,000 people have been housed in around 50 relief camps. Shah stated, "On July 23, the Government of India issued a warning to the Kerala government. Warnings were sent on July 24, July 25 and also July 26, indicating that heavy rainfall exceeding 20 cm could lead to landslides and fatalities." Responding to the "irrelevant" questions regarding the Early Warning System of the government, he said that instead of "shouting, read the warnings that were sent." "There are many state governments who were able to secure zero casualty disaster management following the warnings sent by the Central government," he said, citing Odisha and Gujarat as examples. "The government has spent Rs 2000 crore on this system since 2014 after Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed power," the Home Minister asserted.

He said that the state government was sent a warning seven days prior to the disaster, and that warning is also accessible to everyone on the site, however, "some people don't open national sites, they are solely focused on the international sites, where they do not get national information." Shah mentioned that only four countries in



the world issue disaster warnings seven days in advance, and India is one of them. The Home Minister mentioned that on July 23, nine NDRF teams were dispatched to Kerala following his approval in response to the warnings of potential landslides. Slamming the lack of acknowledgement to the warning system, he said, "It is okay if they are unaware, but if they (Opposition) are politicising the issue, then it is disheartening." Questioning the state government's failure to implement preventive measures Shah said, "Everyone is questioning the government, but I would like to ask what the Kerala government did. It was a vulnerable situation, and they were warned about it, but why were people not relocated to safer places? They were only relocated after the disaster." Addressing concerns about disaster fund allocation, Shah clarified, "Those who are saying that there is no provision by which the state government can release the disaster funds are wrong." He said that under the State Disaster Response Fund, states have the authority to release up to 10 per cent of the allocated funds without the Centre's approval. He added that "irrespective of party politics, the Modi government will firmly stand with the people and the government of Kerala during this crisis."

## KTR presents list of farmers, weavers and auto drivers who died by suicide



GNS News Agency, July 31

Hyderabad: Presenting a list of 383 farmers, 14 weavers and 59 auto drivers, who died by suicide since the Congress government came to power, BRS working president KT Rama Rao appealed to the State government to extend assistance to their families. During the discussion on the Budget Appropriation Bill in the Assembly on Wednesday, he reminded the Congress that it had promised to process the Layout Regularisation Scheme (LRS) applications for free. He also appealed to the Congress government to review the law and order situation in the State. Cautioning the Congress government that its officers were misleading the government on investments worth Rs.40,000 crore from the Davos trip, he said GODI India, which assured to make an investment of Rs.8,000 crore, was from West Godavari in Andhra Pradesh. The company had a paid up capital of Rs.1.70 crore and reported a loss of Rs.27 lakh. How could such a company invest Rs.8,000 crore, he asked. Similarly, JSW Neo Energy had already entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with Telangana government in April 2022 for setting up 1500 MW hydro pumped storage project at Kumram Bheem with Rs.9,500 crore, he

said, adding that even that was added into the Rs.40,000 crore claim.

"I am not blaming the government. You are being misled by your officers," Rama Rao said. From Rs.40,000 crore, if Rs.8,000 crore of GODI India and JSW's Rs.9,500 crore was deducted, not much was left, he said. The Adani Group also announced investment of Rs.12,400 crore. Rahul Gandhi calls Adani a fraud but the Telangana government brands him a friend. Already, a pilot project is being offered to the company in Old City. This needs to be explained to the people, he said. The BRS working president also sought an explanation from the government over the Musi River Front Development project cost escalation from Rs.50,000 to Rs.1.5 lakh crore. Speaker

## Tarun Tahiliani says Olympic uniforms were 'rushed': Dealing with government means...

GNS News Agency, July 31

Tarun Tahiliani (L) designed the costumes worn by the Indian contingent at the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics. Fashion designer Tarun Tahiliani, who was on the receiving end of criticism over India's Olympic contingent's costume, has said the uniforms were designed in a rush.

Tahiliani designed the costumes worn by the Indian contingent at the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics on July 26. While athletes from other countries wore vibrant costumes, the Indian contingent's attire received flak for its lacklustre design.

## Telangana plans Mucherla as future city of Hyd



GNS News Agency, July 31

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Wednesday announced that Mucherla on the outskirts of Hyderabad will be developed as a future city. He told the state Assembly that after Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Cyberabad, Mucherla in Ranga Reddy district will be the fourth city. "This fourth city will be our future city," he said while intervening during a debate on the Appropriation Bill.

Announcing plans to connect Rajiv Gandhi International Airport with the proposed city, he said Mucherla would be the go-to destination for global investors. He said the future city would be the hub for healthcare, jobs, skills and sports including international cricketing events.

The Chief Minister said Skill University was also coming up at Mucherla to impart job skills to the youth. He said the future city would also have a health tourism hub with speciality hospitals to cater to the healthcare needs of not just people of the state but also hundreds of patients coming from the Middle East and other countries. The Chief Minister made the announcement when Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLA and former minister K. T. Rama Rao requested the government to review its decision to scrap the pharma city proposed at Mucherla by the previous BRS government. Revanth Reddy remarked that the present government would develop a city at Mucherla. "You had planned Pharma City but we will develop pharma villages and ensure that there is no problem of pollution," he said. Taking exceptions to remarks made by Rama Rao, the Chief Minister said he was using the time given to him to mislead the house. The BRS leader is implanting deceptive thoughts in people's minds in the guise of suggestions. KTR has his own experiences in the 10-year rule and people also have their own, he said.

"People gave the mandate to us after people had bitter experiences. Those who ruled for 10 years are criticising the government which has not yet completed even 10 months," he said. The Chief Minister also wanted to know why the previous government did not give permission for MMTS connectivity to the airport which could have provided a good facility for the general public. Revanth Reddy revealed that the Central government has proposed MMTS rail connective to the airport Shamshabad. "Since there is MMTS connectivity to Humnabad, an expansion of 2.5 km would have connected it to the airport but the then BRS government refused to give land for the same," he said. The Chief Minister alleged that the BRS government instead proposed Metro Rail fromHITEC City to the airport to benefit some people.

## Delhi govt to bring law to regulate coaching centres: Atishi

GNS News Agency, July 31

New Delhi: Delhi Education Minister Atishi and MCD Mayor Shelly Oberoi on Wednesday shared important updates on the actions taken by the government following the tragic deaths of three UPSC aspirants in the flooded basement of a coaching centre in the Old Rajendra Nagar on July 27.

"The interim investigation report has arrived, while the initial report from the MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) has also been submitted. Two main issues have emerged from the incident -- first, flooding in the area was caused by a blocked drain, which all the coaching centers had encroached upon, preventing water from getting discharged into the drain. Second, conducting classes and setting up a library in the coaching centre's basement was completely illegal," Atishi said at a press conference. The Minister also said that the junior engineer responsible for the drain blockage has been permanently dismissed from the MCD, while an assistant engineer has been suspended in connection with the case. "Action has been taken against two officers. I want to assure the people of Delhi that we will take action against any officer irrespective of rank if found guilty in the inquiry. The Magistrate's report will be available in six days, and all those responsible will face strict action.

"Bulldozers have been used to remove illegal encroachments on drains by the coaching centers. The MCD has been inspecting them for the past three days, sealing those found negligent or indulging in irregularities," the Minister said. Atishi also said that as a long-term solution, the Delhi government would bring a law to regulate all the coaching centres in the national capital.

MCD Mayor Shelly Oberoi said, "We will meet the students soon, listen to their demands, and form a regulation based on them which the Delhi government will pass for implementation in every MCD department." On July 27 evening, three UPSC aspirants lost their lives after heavy rainfall led to waterlogging in the basement of Rau's IAS Study Circle in the Old Rajendra Nagar area, which was being used illegally as a library.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Education stalemate

THE conflict between the Punjab Government and the Centre over the Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) scheme has reached a critical juncture. Punjab initially signed an MoU in 2022 to implement this project aimed at transforming schools into 'exemplar' institutions aligned with the National Education Policy-2020 (NEP). However, the state later withdrew, prioritising its 'Schools of Eminence' initiative, which seeks to revamp 117 government schools and introduce new specialised institutions. This decision has had significant financial repercussions. The Centre withheld Rs 515 crore under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), funds vital for the state's educational infrastructure. As a result, Punjab has now agreed to implement the PM SHRI scheme, hoping to unlock these crucial funds. Punjab's predicament underscores a broader issue: the tension between state and Central government priorities in education. While the PM SHRI scheme promises extensive upgrades with a budget of Rs 27,000 crore over five years, it requires states to bear 40 per cent of the costs and align with the NEP. Punjab's reluctance highlights concerns about federal overreach and the imposition of a one-size-fits-all model that may not account for regional nuances and existing state programmes. The impact on Punjab's schools has been stark. For example, as a recent report in The Tribune indicates, many government schools in Gurdaspur district are in a state of decay, with 28 out of 90 having no teacher. The withholding of SSA funds exacerbates these issues, affecting thousands of students. Punjab's eventual compliance with the PM SHRI scheme, driven by financial necessity rather than genuine alignment with Central objectives, raises questions about the effectiveness of such top-down approaches.

## Manu Bhaker hits the bull's eye, triggers Olympic celebration at Chandigarh's DAV College



GNS News Agency, July 31

Among the names that adorn the walls of DAV College, Chandigarh, is Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Neeraj Chopra. On Sunday afternoon, as 22-year-old Haryana shooter Manu Bhaker became the first Indian woman to win a medal in shooting with a historic bronze in Paris Olympics, her name was etched in the college's rich sporting legacy. "Manu Bhaker has written her name in Olympic history for India as well as in the sporting history of DAV College. She joined the college in 2022 and enrolled in MA in Public Administration and was to appear for the second year final exams. Since she could not appear for the final exams, she is currently pursuing a diploma in mass communications. Her biggest strength has been her mental strength and she has proven that today after that debacle in Tokyo, where her pistol malfunctioned. She has become the pride of DAV College as well as the whole country with this bronze medal," said Associate Professor Amanendra Mann speaking to over the phone from Paris.

While the youngster had done her graduation from Delhi University, Manu along with other international shooters decided to enroll at Chandigarh college in 2022. While Manu could not take her final exams in MA Public Administration this year, she is expected to appear for the exams after her return from Olympics as a special case from Panjab University. Manu, who is among the six Indian shooters in Paris Olympics from the DAV College, has also been regularly attending the college's events as well as programmes of Late Aryan Mann Foundation constituted in the memory of Associate Professor Amanendra Mann's son who succumbed to a brain tumour.

"Last year, Manu came to the function where we distributed sports kits to poor students at Panjab University. She was excited to meet the young players from the university and listened to almost every athlete with keen interest. When the college honoured her during the Asian Games felicitation ceremony last year, she was the first to do bhanga. She enjoys her moments. She must be preparing for Monday's mixed team events before she celebrates this time but we all will celebrate here together," added Mann. "Manu has joined the illustrious list of DAV College students, who have done the country proud in sports. The college had a student in each of India's four cricket world cup wins, namely Kapil Dev, Yuvraj Singh and Yuzvendra Chahal apart from Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Neeraj Chopra. Manu Bhaker has today marked her presence in the country's Olympic history. Six shooters from our college are competing in the Paris Olympics and we hope for more medals coming India's way," said Jain.

## TGNPDCL organises 'Polam Bata' program in Khammam

GNS News Agency, July 31

Warangal: A team of Northern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited (TGNPDCL) on Sunday organised a 'Polam Bata' programme to address issues related to electricity at Lakshimpuram village of Mudigonda Mandal under the Madhira Constituency of the Khammam district. According to a release issued here, the team took up repairing works of bent poles, replaced broken and dangerous poles and undertook repairing of dangerous loose lines in the village.

## Customs department seizes 20 kg gold and 5 kg marijuana at Mumbai airport in 12 days; arrests 7



Foreign Currency concealed under the shoe insole worn by the pax.

GNS News Agency, July 31

The Customs department in Mumbai has seized more than 20 kg of gold worth over Rs 13 crore and nearly five kg of marijuana in the past 12 days at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. The department also arrested seven passengers for their alleged smuggling activities and working as carriers to earn hefty commissions from gold and narcotics smuggling rackets. The Customs department said on Sunday after it intensified actions against traffickers between July 15 to July 27, it intercepted many suspicious passengers and seized smuggled gold and marijuana from their possession based on profiling methods and intelligence inputs. The smuggled gold was found concealed in various forms like dust in wax and crude jewellery, bars in cardboard boxes, between layers of paper, inside shoe soles, and on the bodies of passengers, Customs officials said.

Six Indian passengers who travelled from Dubai, Jeddah, Sharjah, Kolkata, and Ahmedabad to Mumbai were intercepted and were found carrying 24-carat gold dust, 24-carat gold bars and 24-carat gold wire Rhodium weighing 7.160 kg concealed around the baggage in wire, inside plastic cases of LED drivers and on their

bodies. They all were arrested under relevant sections of the Customs Act. Besides this, an Indian passenger, a resident of Vasant Vihar in Delhi, was intercepted and 4.977 kg of purported marijuana was found concealed in three small cardboard boxes kept in his check-in baggage. He was subsequently arrested under relevant sections of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The Customs department also said 22 Indians who allegedly brought 7.685 kg of gold and 30 iPhones from Dubai, Bahrain, Doha, Hong Kong, Sharjah, Singapore, Bangkok, Abu Dhabi, and Jeddah were intercepted and found concealing these items inside the soles of their shoes, between two layers of papers, below the motherboard of the two PS-4 gaming consoles, and near the front wheel area of the baggage carrying trolley and on the body.

The anti-smuggling law enforcement agency also caught eight passengers for illegally carrying foreign currency in violation of rules regarding permissible limits. Nearly Rs 1 crore worth of foreign currency was found concealed in the case role in the check-in baggage carried by the passenger, under the shoe insole, and in between layers of Lijjat Papad. Customs department The smuggled gold was found concealed in various forms like dust in wax and crude jewellery, bars in cardboard boxes, between layers of paper, inside shoe soles, and on the bodies of passengers, Customs officials said. Four foreigners travelling from Dubai and Colombo to Mumbai were intercepted and found carrying 1.197 kg of 24-carat gold dust and gold bars concealed in the trolley and kept in a pant pocket. The Customs department has arrested only seven while the rest of the intercepted passengers were allowed to go after being penalised heavily, booked in smuggling cases, and also served legal notices as the contraband seized from them was small in quantities, an agency source said.

## How a 6-km stretch became a lifeline for commuters in Jalandhar

GNS News Agency, July 31

With the completion of maintenance work on a 6-km four-lane road project, commuters in Jalandhar are relieved. The Olympian Marg was constructed a few years ago to connect NH-1 near Pragpur with Nakodar, Nurmahal, Jandiála towns, several dozen villages and also to Moga district directly. Standing at a length of 6.625 km, the road reduces travel distances to Nakodar, Nurmahal, and Jandiála by around 30 minutes. It also decreases the traffic load of passengers going to the other side in Jalandhar city. However, the road needed major patch works and laying of bituminous concrete at several locations. Finally around six months ago it was again opened to public after the required maintenance. The Olympian Marg, which was earlier known as GT Road used for commute from Jamsheer to Khushropur, was part of a 2018-19 road plan.

"Though the road is in use for a few years now but it needed maintenance for three years. As the road provided a major relief from congestion earlier, periodic maintenance from time-to-time was needed," said a PWD official, adding that for maintenance, the administration approval was given in December 2021 with a budget of Rs 6.22 crore and then the project started on January 6, 2022 after a tender of Rs 4.41 crore was floated. Residents have expressed gratitude for this infrastructure and its maintenance including a major patch work needed on it, highlighting its transformative impact on their daily lives. Villages along the route now enjoy seamless connectivity to NH-1, while commuters praise the hassle-free journey and reduced dependency on congested urban routes. "This new road has made a significant difference



in our daily commute," said, Pawan Kumar, a resident of Nurmahal. "Earlier, going towards Nakodar and Jandiála involved navigating through Jalandhar city, which was time-consuming and stressful. Now, the journey is smooth and quick. The road needed maintenance as some patch work was needed on it and because of that people were inconvenienced. But now that has also been repaired," said Gagandeep Kaur, a teacher from Khushropur village who travels to Phagwara daily. In addition to benefiting residents, the road also serves as a crucial link for travellers from Jalandhar Cantonment and surrounding areas, offering them a direct route to NH-1 in mere minutes. Gurmeet Singh, Executive Engineer (XEN) of PWD B&R (Building and Roads) Provincial Division Jalandhar Cantt, said, "This route is one of the most important connecting routes of Jalandhar and its maintenance is the crucial component like any such infrastructure and we are taking care that everything gets done on time to avoid any damage to the basic structure.

## 'Vaping raises likelihood of conventional cigarette uptake by nearly 3 times': PGIMER's Dr Sonu Goel



GNS News Agency, July 31

As the Chair of the Tobacco Control Section, Dr Sonu Goel, Department of Community Medicine, PGIMER, Chandigarh, has published over 270 research articles in international peer-reviewed journals. A renowned public health expert with 25 years of experience, he shares with Parul his insights on dispelling myths about electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) or vaping.

What are E-Cigarettes?

Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are devices that vaporize nicotine (which is highly addictive) the solution instead of burning tobacco leaves. E-cigarettes deliver nicotine-containing aerosol (vapour) to users by heating a solution usually composed of propylene glycol or glycerol (glycerin), nicotine, and flavouring agents.

What harmful substances do e-cigarettes contain and what are their effects on various populations?

As per the World Health Organization, e-cigarette emissions contain nicotine and various toxic substances like propylene glycol, glycerol, acetaldehyde, formaldehyde, acrolein, heavy metals, tobacco-specific nitrosamines and many more carcinogens which are harmful to both users and non-users exposed to second-hand aerosols.

For pregnant women, nicotine exposure can negatively impact foetal development, posing significant risks during pregnancy. In children and adolescents, nicotine can impair brain development, potentially leading to long-term issues such as learning difficulties and anxiety disorders. It is also known to cause respiratory diseases such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), pneumonia and various other respiratory, gastrointestinal, and cardiovascular (heart) diseases. Accidental exposure of children to e-liquids poses serious risks, as leaking devices or swallowed e-liquids can be highly poisonous.

Do the young associate e-cigarettes with a cool image, and do they increase the likelihood of conventional cigarette use?

The association is due to its appealing features, flavours, social enhancement, and sleek designs. Numerous epidemiological studies indicate that vaping significantly raises the likelihood of conventional cigarette uptake, particularly among non-smoking youth, by nearly three times.

Do e-cigarettes cause lung injuries?

E-cigarettes, specifically electronic nicotine delivery systems ((ENDS), cause lung injuries. In the United States,

an outbreak of severe lung injury associated with e-cigarette use, known as e-cigarette or vaping-associated lung injury (EVALI). EVALI is characterised by large spots in the lungs (tissue damage) and has symptoms like shortness of breath, fever and chills, cough, chest pain, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, rapid heartbeat, rapid and shallow breathing. Vitamin E acetate (VEA), often used in ENDS products containing cannabis, is believed to have played a significant role in causing these lung injuries.

What factors determine the level of risk associated with e-cigarettes and tobacco products?

The safest choice is to avoid using either of them. E-cigarettes contain nicotine which is highly addictive and harmful. A non-smoker who uses e-cigarettes may become addicted to nicotine and struggle to stop using e-cigarettes or may even start using conventional tobacco products. Additionally, many e-cigarettes allow users to control their nicotine levels, which can reach dangerously high concentrations.

Can e-cigarettes act as tobacco cessation tools?

E-cigarettes are marketed to help quit smoking, but they have not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for this purpose. A recent study found that most individuals who intended to use e-cigarettes to quit smoking ended up continuing to use both traditional cigarettes and e-cigarettes.

Instead, tobacco cessation services can be provided by any healthcare professional with appropriate training. The Ministry of Health has initiated the National Tobacco Quit Line (toll-free number 1800-11-2356) to provide counselling services and the programme supports individuals willing to quit through text messaging via mobile phones (011- 22901701).

## Karnataka Police open fire at criminals who chopped off Dalit man's hand to arrest them



GNS News Agency, July 31

The police arrested five of the accused even as Kaima and Kanna escaped. The police arrested five of the accused even as Kaima and Kanna escaped. The Karnataka Police on Sunday arrested two criminals who were on the run after allegedly severing the hand of a Dalit man at Kanakapura town in the Ramanagara district earlier this month. They were arrested after the police opened fire at them in Kaggalipura on the outskirts of Bengaluru. The accused, identified as Harsha alias Kaima and Karunesh alias Kanna, have been admitted to a local hospital. The police said that on July 21, seven armed men went to the Malagalu village, predominantly occupied by Dalit communities in Ramanagara near Bengaluru and attacked people. The gang allegedly severed the left hand of Anish Kumar, son of local Congress leader Vairamudi. Seven people, including two women, were injured in the attack.

The Kanakapura police registered a case under sections 118 (voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons), 198 (unlawful assembly), 329 (criminal trespass), 351 (threatening) and 76 (assault and use of criminal force on woman with intent of disrobe) of Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita and provisions under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act. The police suspected a gang rivalry led to the attack. Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who represents the Kanakapura Assembly constituency, visited Anish Kumar in the hospital and directed the police to arrest the accused as soon as possible. The police arrested five of the accused even as Kaima and Kanna escaped. Upon receiving information about their whereabouts, the police went to Kaggalipura to arrest them. In a bid to escape, the accused attacked police and Inspector Mithun Shilpi opened fire at their legs to prevent them from escaping.

## Moga woman duped by Oman employer; tricked into paying lakhs to return by travel agent



GNS News Agency, July 31

This is a tale of a young woman from Moga district who went to Oman seeking greener pastures only to find herself short-changed by her employer there and her travel agent. Her family in Moga was in dire financial straits, and so she went to the Gulf to work as a housemaid in the hope of improving the monetary situation back home. But her trip backfired. Rather than serving the purpose, it involved more than she bargained for. She had to pay a huge sum, losing all her savings, to the travel agent to return home. Today things at home are worse than when she left for the Gulf. Her ordeal reveals a harrowing tale of exploitation, deception, and ongoing distress.

Last September, under the guidance of her relative-cum-travel agent Amarjot Kaur, she invested Rs 25,000 to secure a job in Oman. Kaur assured her of ample job opportunities and a decent salary of 100 Omani Riyals per month (approximately Rs 22,000). However, the ground reality was totally different. The woman was paid only for five months, receiving a total of 500 Riyal, against her work for almost 10 months. Her troubles began when she developed a severe skin condition on her hands. When she sought medical attention, her employer responded by locking her in a room after work hours. Furthermore, instead of working in a single household, she was forced to do chores in three other houses also.

Despite her pleas for better conditions, her relative-cum-travel agent dismissed her concerns, telling her she was "sold" and had no right to demand fair treatment. Physical abuse and further exploitation followed, leaving her in a dire situation. To make matters worse, when her family demanded her return, Kaur extracted an additional Rs 2 lakh — which included her five-month salary and more — from her before agreeing to facilitate her repatriation. Yet, even with this payment, delays continued, prompting her family to seek the help of MP Balbir Singh Seechewal.

"Thanks to his (Seechewal) efforts with the External Affairs Ministry, I was finally able to return home," she said while talking to . She returned to India recently. The woman's family now faces a debt of Rs 2.25 lakh which has endured a year of hardship without much help. They have lodged a police complaint, but no action has been taken against Kaur, who is in Oman. The victim said that she was aware of the plight of several Punjabi women who had returned from Oman in the past but she trusted her relative, Kaur, and took the decision to go to Oman to improve the situation at home. "The lesson I learnt was that one should not even trust the closest relatives when it comes to going to Oman as a house worker,"

## Woman shot by brother-in-law as she objects to 'advances'; main accused at large, parents booked



GNS News Agency, July 31

A 22-year-old woman was shot dead late Saturday night reportedly by her brother-in-law after she objected to his physical advances towards her in Nanumajra village. Sohana police booked three persons, including the father and mother of the accused on charges of murder and criminal conspiracy. According to the police, the victim was identified as Swati. She was shot dead while she was in her house with her mother-in-law (Seema) and father-in-law (Shayam). Both Seema and Shayam tried to dodge the police saying that Swati died due to an explosion of a mobile charger, and for the same have been

booked, according to the police.

The accused Rajiv was said to be on the run. He allegedly shot dead Swati with a country-made pistol (katta) when Swati objected to his advances on Saturday night. The family hails from Moradabad district in Uttar Pradesh. The investigating officer of the case, Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Om Parkash said that at the time of the crime, Swati was at her home with her elder son, Seema and Shayam. "Rajiv came to Swati's house and started harassing her, she objected to it which enraged Rajiv, he took out 'katta' and fired at Swati leaving her dead. After the incident he fled from the spot. Swati's son informed his father Shivam who was not present at home at that time," the ASI said. Adding the police were investigating how the accused got the weapon. The investigation found that the accused was harassing Swati for long despite her objections and she had told her husband and other family members about the advances the accused was making towards her. A case under sections 103 (murder) and 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and relevant sections of the Arms Act was registered against the accused at Sohana police station. The body was handed over to the family after the postmortem and cremation was held on Sunday. Swati is survived by her husband and three children.

## ADM headbutts man during demolition drive, claims he 'acted out of frustration'

GNS News Agency, July 31

VDA demolition drive, Delhi demolition drive, Additional District Magistrate, demolition of two hotels, Varanasi Cantonment area, Varanasi Cantonment area norms, Indian express news. The two hotels were built on the banks of the Varuna river. When contacted, ADM Alok Verma said he hit the man, Kursheed Alam, with his head "out of frustration" following "abuse" from those protesting against the demolition drive. An Additional District Magistrate (ADM) was seen hitting a hotel owner on the face with his head during the demolition of two hotels constructed allegedly in violation of norms in the Varanasi Cantonment area. The Varanasi Development Authority (VDA) carried out the demolition drive on Saturday and a video of the incident is circulating on social media. The two hotels were built on the banks of the Varuna river. When contacted, ADM Alok Verma said he hit the man, Kursheed Alam, with his head "out of frustration" following "abuse" from those protesting against the demolition drive. Alam sustained an injury on his face.

On Saturday, the VDA team, along with police and administrative officials, reached Budh Vihar Colony to demolish the two hotels. The hotel owner and his family objected and created a scene. Additional police force was called in to bring the situation under control. "The demolition of the two hotels was completed by late night," a senior VDA official said. Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav shared the video of the inci-



dent on X, formerly Twitter, saying officials under the BJP government in the state have started "a unique freestyle head strike Olympic game in the so-called Kyoto of UP".

"It remains to be seen what medal the state government will award in this game. The action against him will depend on which camp he belong to. This is the golden era of administration in the country's prime parliamentary constituency. Is anyone in Delhi?" he said. An official said the VDA in 1999 have approval to Kursheed Alam's father Mohammad Jafar Ali for constructing a three-floor building. In 2012, the authority gave Ali another approval to construct a three-floor building on another piece of land in the locality. But an illegal construction was carried out as the owner combined the plots and built two five-storey hotels, he claimed.

## 'This bronze medal is like gold to us...': Olympic medalist Manu Bhaker's family in Haryana village



GNS News Agency, July 31

It was a celebration time at Gorla village in Jhajjar district of Haryana as well as Kalali village in Charkhi Dadri district in Haryana, the paternal and maternal villages of Paris Olympics bronze medalist shooter Manu Bhaker. As Bhaker became the first Indian woman shooter to win an Olympics medal winning the bronze medal in the women's 10m air pistol final in Paris Olympics, the Bhaker household at Gorla village was full of village kids as well as relatives.

The Bhaker family also runs the Universal Higher Senior Secondary School at Gorla village and the house was also filled with the school students celebrating. "A young Manu was the star of our village as she played sports like boxing, volleyball, thang ta, skating and tennis at the national level and would often spend time at the school practising the game after her studies. With this Olympic medal, Manu has not only become the pride of Haryana but for the whole of India," said Mahendra Singh Bhaker, uncle of Manu, while speaking to The Indian Express. "We have been asking Haryana government for an automatic shooting range at our village. Hopefully,

this will be fulfilled after Manu's medal today so that more youth can pick up shooting."

The whole Bhaker clan was cheering for Manu, including her paternal grandmother Daya Kaur, uncles Pratap Singh Bhaker, Inder Singh Bhaker, Baljit Singh Bhaker and aunt Munni Bhaker. The Bhakers along with Manu's grandfather Raj Karan had started the school in 2004, where Manu learnt the trade of shooting at first under coach Anil Jakhar in 2016 and would go on to win junior world cup medals apart from medals in Asian Games and Commonwealth Games.

While Manu and his parents Ramkishan and Sumedha Bhaker along with her brother now reside in Faridabad for the last two years, Manu had visited the village six months ago before her preparations for Paris began. "Whenever she visits village home, she asks for fresh fruits from the home garden as well as fresh raita. She likes to have choorma some days. She often asks me, 'Dadi, what should I bring for you from abroad? Now that she has won the Olympic medal, this bronze medal is like gold to us and the biggest treasure of our family,'" says Manu's paternal grandmother Daya Kaur to .Manu's mother Sumedha Bhaker, who is a masters degree holder in Sanskrit and was the principal of the school at Gorla, hails from Kalali village in Charkhi Dadri district. Daughter of educationist Chaudhary Randhir Singh from the village, Sumedha remembered the sacrifices made by the family. "My father always believed in women empowerment. When Manu was born at 4.20 am on February 18, 2002, I had my Sanskrit Orientation Training (BED) exams the same day and my elder sister Kiran would take care of Manu for the whole week. Her whole maternal family, including uncles Yudhvir, Somvir and grandmother Savitri Devi, are celebrating the Olympics medal today," said Sumedha.

## After basement deaths, MCD reacts, seals 13 'illegal' coaching centres

GNS News Agency, July 31

New Delhi: The Municipal Corporation of Delhi sealed 13 coaching centres in the Old Rajinder Nagar area as it launched action against illegally run classes after three IAS aspirants died as the basement of their institute got flooded following heavy rains, officials said. A Delhi government statement issued late on Sunday said a civic body team visited the central Delhi coaching hub to initiate action against centres operating from basements. Around 13 such coaching centres were sealed during the action till late Sunday night, it said. "These coaching centres were found to be operating in basements in violation of rules and they were sealed on the spot and notices were pasted," the statement said. The Rau's IAS Study Circle, where the flooding incident took place on Saturday, has been sealed by the police.

The MCD had last year conducted a survey of such coaching centres after a massive fire broke out at an institute in Mukharjee Nagar, another coaching hub, in north Delhi. "To begin with, the survey will be used to identify those coaching norms," the official said. Three civil services

aspirants — two females and a male — died after a library housed in the basement of Rau's IAS centre got inundated following heavy rains Saturday evening, and reportedly led to the failure of the single biometric entry and exit point. "A gross criminal negligence is found on part of the owner of the institute in ensuring safety measures as the library in the basement was running illegally and had only one entry and exit point that was biometric-enabled and got locked due to the flooding," the MCD official said. "The students could have escaped had the exit been free. The MCD only approves the building plan but if somebody misuses the basement for commercial activities after declaring it will be used for parking and storing purposes, what else can the agency do to ensure protection?" he said. The official said storm drains in the area, which carry excess rainwater to bigger drains, were covered by "encroachers on street sides" and contributed to the flooding. "Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberoi has held a meeting of the officials in this regard and setting up of a high-level committee after talks with the Delhi government will be announced soon," another official said.

## Controversy after Church-run Kerala college denies students' demand for room to offer namaz



GNS News Agency, July 31

The demand by some students for a space to offer namaz at a college run by the Catholic Church in Kerala, and its denial by the college administration, have triggered a controversy, with the BJP on Sunday attributing the students' demand to "extremist elements". The issue began on Friday, when a group of girl students from the Muslim community asked authorities at Nirmala College in Muvattupuzha to allot a room for them to offer prayers. When the demand was not met, other students also got involved and they allegedly gheraoed the college principal, Father Kannadan Francis. Father Francis said the college had received a complaint that a group of girls were using a common room at the college for namaz. "A mosque is only 200 metres away from the college. Boys

at the college go to the mosque at noon for prayers. It is allowed in all educational institutions and we have also allowed it. However, the girls wanted to use a college room for their prayer, saying that they were not allowed at the mosque. We have told them the college cannot allow a room for prayers," he said.

The principal said the students who made the demand did not belong to any particular student organisation. BJP state president K Surendran waded into the issue on Sunday, saying some people were trying to create trouble at educational institutions run by Hindus and Christians. "Extremist elements are behind the demand. The Left and the Congress are supporting it. Do colleges under Muslim management give premises for prayer for students from other religious communities? If Muslim groups are trying to foment trouble at colleges, BJP will give protection," he said. The Students' Federation of India (SFI), the student wing of the state's ruling CPI(M), and the Muslim Students Federation (MSF), the student wing of Indian Union Muslim League, distanced themselves from the controversy, issuing statements that said their workers were not involved with the demand. SFI state president K Anusree said the organisation stood for ensuring secularism in campuses. If campuses allow religious practices of any particular community, such a move will affect the secular nature of the college campuses, she said, adding: "We are not associated with the demand raised at Nirmala College."

## Haryana youth dies in Russia, kin say forced to go to Ukraine battlefield

GNS News Agency, July 31

In a communication to the family of Ravi Moun — from Matour village in Kaithal district — the Indian embassy in Moscow confirmed the death although it did not mention the circumstances in which he died. Ravi's elder brother Ajay Moun told The Indian Express that the embassy has sought DNA test reports from the family, especially from Ravi's mother. "As we have lost our mother, we will be sending the DNA test report of our father to the Indian embassy soon," said Ajay. This comes days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier this month raised the issue of Indian nationals working in the Russian military and sought their early release. The Russian side had promised "early discharge of all Indian nationals from the service of the Russian Army".

The Ministry of External Affairs had in June confirmed the death of two Indians who had been recruited by the Russian Army in the war with Ukraine. One of them was from Amritsar. In March, two more Indian nationals — from Surat and Hyderabad — were killed at the battlefield. According to Ravi's family members, he went to Russia in January this year. One among three siblings, including a sister, he had studied up to Class 10. His brother Ajay said the family spent Rs 11.5 lakh to send Ravi to Russia after selling their one-acre land. According to him, an agent from the village had assured them a transportation job for Ravi in Russia. "Ravi went on January 13 this year and later five more youths from the village went to Russia. They are still there," Ajay said. Ajay claimed that Ravi was inducted into the Russian Army and the family later saw his photos in uniform. He alleged that the Russian Army forced Ravi to go to the frontline to battle the Ukraine forces or face 10 years imprisonment.

According to Ajay, Ravi was given training to dig trenches. "We were in contact with him until March 12. On that day, he told us that he had been on the battlefield since March 6 and he has to go to the battlefield again. After that we lost contact with him," said Ajay. On July 21, Ajay sent an email to the Indian embassy in Moscow to enquire about his brother. In response, Gloria Dung Dung, Second Secretary, Embassy of India (Moscow), confirmed Ravi's death a couple of days later. "The Embassy had requested the concerned Russian Authorities for confir-



mation of his death and transportation of his mortal remains as requested by you. The Russian side had confirmed the death. However, to identify the body they need a DNA test from his close relatives, especially a DNA test from his mother," the embassy wrote. "As conveyed to you on phone, it is requested that a DNA test may please be done in India from a registered hospital/ government hospital from his mother and the report be shared with the Indian Embassy in Moscow. The report will be shared with concerned Russian Authorities for identification of the body as requested by them." Meanwhile, Ravi's family has urged Prime Minister Modi to assist them in bringing back the body to India as they don't have enough money.

Reacting to the death, Congress general secretary and Rajya Sabha MP Randeep Singh Surjewala described it "heartbreaking". On April 7, Surjewala, who was earlier a legislator from Kaithal, had written to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar seeking his intervention "in extreme humanitarian crisis for bringing Haryana's youth from Russia-occupied territory of Ukraine". In his letter, Surjewala gave details of six youths from Matour village and two more from Fatehabad and Karnal districts, all in the 19-32 age group. Surjewala wrote: "On account of rampant unemployment and in absence of any opportunities to find work, these boys were made to pay Rs 8 to Rs 10 lakh each for transportation jobs in Russia. Finally, Ankit, who received the money from the boys and who is already in Russia, took them to Moscow on a tourist visa and forcibly they were sent to the war front in the Russian-Ukrainian war."

## Month before coaching centre deaths, UPSC aspirant sent complaint to MCD: 'Basement used illegally, possibility of major accident'

GNS News Agency, July 31

Nearly a month before three students drowned in the flooded basement of Rau's IAS Study Circle in Old Rajinder Nagar, a complaint was filed with the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) regarding the alleged illegal use of the basement. A civil services aspirant, Kishor Singh Kushwah, filed the complaint against the coaching centre on June 26. Reminders were sent to the civic body on July 15 and July 22. "Despite not having permission, they (Rau's) are running a classroom without NOC in the basement; they are running test classes, which are affecting the lives of students and staff. There is a possibility of a major accident...big UPSC coaching institutes are running classes at illegal places by putting the lives of the students at risk," Kushwah stated in his complaint. In the reminder on July 15, he wrote, "Sir, it is a very important and urgent issue, take strict action". In his second reminder, five days before the students drowned, Kushwah pleaded for intervention, writing, "Sir please take action... It's an issue of student safety." No action, however, was taken in the days that followed. "Under process", reads the "current status" of the online complaint. A crackdown against coaching centres took place only a day after the tragedy. The MCD on Sunday sealed basements of 13 coaching centres in Rajinder Nagar, including that of Rau's IAS Study Circle, and nearby areas for flouting norms. According to MCD officials, any commercial activity in basements is illegal and only storage and parking are allowed.

The completion certificate of the building where Rau's IAS Study Circle was operating, dated August 9, 2021, states that the basement had permission only to house two staircases, two lifts and two lift lobbies, a parking bay, a car lift and household storage. Mayor Shelly Oberoi Sunday ordered action against all such centres that were conducting commercial activities in the basement. In an official statement to the press, the MCD revealed that the coaching centre in question had violated building bylaws by using the basement for purposes other than those approved. It also stated that the coaching centre was running in disregard to fire clearance conditions. "It did not provide fire access. It used storage as



the place for coaching/ library. Had it followed the norms of approval, the tragedy would have been averted. This coaching centre and other buildings along the road have unfortunately encroached and covered the storm drains by extending their buildings in the form of platforms and ramps, thereby making draining of water difficult and cleaning of drains impossible," the statement added. Students of several coaching centres in the area said that classes and tests are held in basements regularly. A look at the coaching centres around Rau's confirms this. Path IAS Academy, which also has two floors above a Muthoot Finance branch, runs a studio from the basement. On calling the academy office, the receiver says that the basement is not used for classes. "We only use it for content production. No classes take place there," he said. At Vaid's ICS, an employee said that the basement is used for student counselling during admissions.

Several students said they go to independent "study points" or reading rooms spread across the area — most of them in basements. On its board, Invictus Library says it is located in the basement of building 25/24 in Old Rajendra Nagar. Not too far, Wings Library is located in the basement of a residential building. When questioned, the caretaker of the library, Hemant, said that the library would remain closed for some days. AAP's MCD in-charge and Rajendra Nagar MLA, Durgesh Pathak, also questioned why commercial activity was being allowed in basements. Pathak, who before joining AAP was preparing for the civil services exam in Delhi, said,

## Purohit goes back, now UT officers hope for rollback of his decisions



GNS News Agency, July 31

With Banwarilal Purohit's exit from the city as the Administrator, UT officers are now eagerly waiting for reversal of various key decisions taken by him. These decisions include ban on air travel to Delhi, the general housing scheme, and mandatorily meeting the public on fixed days with fixed hours. A key decision to impact the UT officers will be the lifting of the ban on air travel to Chandigarh and luxury stay of the officers in the national capital. As UT officers have to travel by train, this is one decision they are looking at. After a report by The Indian Express last year, Purohit had banned the air travel and luxury stay of officers going from Chandigarh to Delhi. While specifying that "officers should lead a simple life", the Administrator ordered that they will travel only by Shatabdi. He also ordered that they would stay only in state bhawans and not any luxury stay. The then Administrator who would even summon officials on the basis of

newspaper reports would closely watch the activities going on in each of their departments.

Another ambitious project which was put on hold by Purohit has officers of Chandigarh Housing Board eagerly waiting for its revival. The CHB had to come up with housing and had even readied brochures when Purohit had stated that there was no space or infrastructure to accommodate more housing in Chandigarh because of which he put the scheme on hold. Interestingly, while CHB was yet to obtain environmental clearance from the Chandigarh Pollution Control Committee (CPC) for the scheme's rollout, it had gone ahead with floating the tenders, something that had not gone down well with Purohit.

The board then had to cancel tenders worth Rs 200 crore. The board had planned 340 flats worth crores in Sector 53. "Yes, we are hoping that this scheme shall be revived now. The brochure and everything stands ready," said a senior officer of the board. Not just this, the need-based changes which were to give relief to 50,000 allottees of the board were also put on hold. Sources said that the Administrator was not in favour of allowing violations in the units as they were not safe. The members in the board meeting were also given a feeler that the need-based changes shall not be regularised for which they were waiting for the Administrator's exit. Purohit had also been acting tough to ensure that UT officers meet public during the said meeting hours so that the public isn't harassed. An order was also issued seeking to ensure that no meetings are scheduled on public meeting days and public meeting hours.

## SP's Brahmin face Mata Prasad Pandey, 81, to replace Akhilesh as LoP in UP Assembly



GNS News Agency, July 31

In a surprise move, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday appointed the party's veteran Brahmin face and seven-time MLA Mata Prasad Pandey, 81, as the Leader of Opposition in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly. Also, Akhilesh appointed Kanth MLA and minority community leader Kamal Akhtar as the party's chief whip and RK Verma, a Kurmi face from Pratapgarh district, as the party's deputy whip in the Assembly. The development came a day before the start of the monsoon session of the state Assembly. The LoP's post had fallen vacant since Akhilesh had relinquished his Assembly membership after securing a win from the Kannauj constituency in the recently held Lok Sabha elections. The Yogi Adityanath-led BJP government in the state is likely to table supplementary demands for grants during the Assembly's five-day monsoon session.

Pandey, the seven-time MLA from the Itwa constituency in Siddharthnagar district in eastern UP, remained the Assembly speaker twice during the Mulayam Singh Yadav-led government from 2004 to 2007 and the Akhilesh-led government from 2012 to 2017. Sources

said even as a section of the party wanted Akhilesh's uncle and party founder member Shival Singh Yadav to take over the charge, the responsibility was given to Pandey following lengthy discussions. With the SP contesting the recent parliamentary elections on the issue of reservation and advocating the "PDA" (Pichhda, Dalit and Alpsankhyak), the appointment of Kamal Akhtar, a minority community leader from Moradabad district in western UP, as the party's chief whip is being seen as an attempt to strike a balance. Akhtar, who has also been a Rajya Sabha MP in the past, served as a cabinet minister in the Akhilesh-led SP government from 2012 to 2017. Verma, who joined the Samajwadi Party ahead of the 2022 Assembly elections, is presently MLA from the Raniganj seat in Pratapgarh. In the 2017 Assembly polls, he was elected as MLA from Pratapgarh on the ticket of the Anupriya Patel-led Apna Dal (Soneylal), a partner of the NDA at the Centre. While a section of the party was not keen on giving responsibility to "outsiders", all those present in the meeting unanimously agreed on the name of veteran Pandey. His appointment to the post also assumes significance as the party lost its then chief whip Manoj Kumar Pandey, a Brahmin leader MLA from the Raebareilly, switched sides to the BJP before the Lok Sabha elections. Speaking to mediapersons after attending the all party-meeting and business advisory committee meetings in the Assembly on Sunday, Pandey said, "This government has only given problems to the people of the state. Thus there is no dearth of issues that we can raise. There is the issue of law and order followed by unemployment, plights of students, and farmers etc. We will raise all these issues during the monsoon session." Calling Pandey a "prakash ka stambh" (pillar of light), Akhilesh said Pandey "has a long experience of understanding and making others follow healthy traditions in the Vidhan Sabha."

## Another fatal accident by a speedy BMW in Worli; man dies after battling for life for seven days

GNS News Agency, July 31

Man hit by speeding BMW, BMW accident, BMW accident death, speeding BMW car rammmed two-wheeler, Worli, fatal accident by speeding car, indian express news. The BMW car involved in the accident was seized by the Worli police. Deceased Vinod Lad, 28, was to get married in December this year. After battling for life for seven days, a 28-year-old man, who got severely injured after his two-wheeler was rammmed by a speedy BMW in the Worli Sea area on July 20, succumbed to injuries on Saturday. The police have booked the driver of the vehicle, who was taking his employer to a five-star hotel in Worli for a function. This is the second instance of a fatal accident by a speeding car in Worli this month. On July 9, fisherwoman Kaveri Nakhwa, 45, died after she was dragged for nearly 2 kilometres in Worli, after she got tangled in the BMW car, bring driven by Mihir Shah (allegedly under the influence of alcohol), son of Shinde Sena leader Rajesh Shah. The driver later had interchanged the seats with his driver.

The deceased person in the latest accident has been identified as Vinod Lad, who worked as a supervisor for a Thane-based transport company. Lad died on Saturday at the BYL Nair hospital, where he had been undergoing treatment for the past seven days. He also underwent a crucial surgery. According to Worli police sources, on July 20, when Lad, who resides on his cousin's Worli Hill Road, was returning home from work, his two-wheeler was dashed from behind by a speedy BMW car on the Abdul Gaffar Khan road in the Worli Sea Face area. Lad sustained serious head injuries. People from other vehicles got out and rushed the injured lady to the Nair hospital. He had been in a coma since he was brought to the hospital and was undergoing treatment in the ICU, when he died at the hospital on Saturday, said a Lad's relative.



The police have booked the accused driver of the BMW car, Kiran Indulkar. He was taking his Thane-based employer to a family function in a four-season hospital in Worli. The police filed an FIR on the complaint of Lad's cousin Kishore Lad, who is posted at the DN Nagar police station. Zonal DCP Krishnakant Upadhyay confirmed the development and said that on Saturday the injured person died. "The accused driver had not escaped from the incident please. He along with others rushed the injured to the hospital in his car. The accused person was earlier charged under relevant sections for causing grievous hurt by negligent driving. Now that the injured person has passed away, we would press the section of causing death by negligent driving," Upadhyay said. Lad, who lost his parents in his childhood, was raised by his uncle. A graduate, Lad, was working with the Thane company. His marriage was scheduled to be held in December of this year, and he was preparing for his marriage. Four days before the accident, it was his birthday, and his friends had gifted him a wrist watch. He told them that he would wear it on Sunday when he would go to meet his fiancée. But, before that, he met with a relative.

## Haryana gangster Gadoli: HC extends time to complete trial in fake encounter case by 8 months

GNS News Agency, July 31

Haryana gangster Sandeep Gadoli, Punjab and Haryana HC, trial in fake encounter case, BOMBAY High Court, fake encounter case trial, Indian express news. On February 7, 2016, Sandeep Gadoli, a Gurgaon-based gangster, was shot dead in an alleged encounter with a team of the Haryana Police at a hotel near the international airport in Mumbai. THE BOMBAY High Court has extended time given to complete the trial in the Haryana gangster alleged fake encounter case by eight months. On February 7, 2016, Sandeep Gadoli, a Gurgaon-based gangster, was shot dead in an alleged encounter with a team of the Haryana Police at a hotel near the international airport in Mumbai. The trial in the case is underway.

A few accused were granted bail by the Bombay High Court in 2023, on grounds, including that there is no likelihood of the trial getting over within a short time. The court had directed the trial court to complete the trial within a time-bound manner. The trial court through the registrar had written to the high court seeking an extension to conclude the proceedings. The high court has now extended the time by eight months.

Gadoli, a gangster based in Haryana, was wanted in over 20 cases and a reward of Rs 1 lakh was an-



nounced for information on him. A Gurgaon police team had claimed that when they went to arrest him after receiving information that he was in a Mumbai hotel, the gangster shot at them and he was killed in counter firing. The Mumbai police probe, however, claimed that the gangster was killed in a fake encounter. Among the arrested were members of the team, three of whom are in judicial custody, undergoing trial. Police had also arrested model Divya Pahuja, who was accompanying Gadoli, and was facing allegations of having helped the accused with information on him. Pahuja was murdered in Haryana in January this year, five months after she was released on bail.

Chief Minister (CM Shinde) and DyCM (Fadnavis). Both of them have also sent a proposal to the centre. So I am confident that in the next round I will be appointed as governor," Adsul told The

"Amit Shah had called me when the seat distribution was on for the Lok Sabha polls. He asked me not to contest from Amravati. I told him that the contestant they were planning to field could not win and she had a court case pending. Shah told me that they will take care of it. He asked me what I want and then offered to make me a Governor," Adsul who represented the Amravati Lok Sabha seat in 2009 and 2014 had said in May this year. In 2019, he was defeated by NCP-backed independent Navneet Rana, who has now switched to the BJP. Adsul was said to have been on contesting the seat on a Shiv Sena ticket but backed out due to BJP's preference for Rana. Rana lost the Amravati seat in the recently held LS polls.

## 'Your account is receiving terrorist funds', Pune man told as cyber frauds dupe him of Rs 1.27 crore

GNS News Agency, July 31

Pune cyber fraud case, Pune man cyber fraud, terrorist funding, duping case, Pune police, online fraud, indian express news. The caller told him that a parcel in his name sent to Taiwan had been seized and in it five passports, three credit cards, a laptop and 200 grams of MDMA drugs had been seized. "Your account is receiving terrorist funds. But we can help you get out of the case." A 73-year-old retired Pune man was told by cyber fraudsters posing as police officers. The senior citizen ended up losing a staggering Rs 1.27 crore of life savings to the online fraudsters in a 'drugs-in-parcel' scam in which he was manipulated into making three large transfers over three days.

A First Information Report in the case was registered at Cyber Crime police Station of Pune city by the man who is a resident of Paud Road. In the first week of July, he received a call from a man posing as an executive of an international courier company. The caller told him that a parcel in his name sent to Taiwan had been seized and in it five passports, three credit cards, a laptop and 200 grams of MDMA drugs had been seized.

He was told that his call was being transferred to 'Mumbai Cyber' police. A man who identified himself as a police officer asked him for all the information about his bank deposits, savings, investments and fixed deposits. As the complainant kept denying having sent any parcel and involvement in any illegal activity, the caller threatened him of dire consequences to him and his wife. He was then asked to speak to "officials from the Narcotics Department." On this call a man posing as a police officer asked the complainant about all his personal, financial details and Aadhar card details. The man posing as an officer told him that his identity was being misused and that he had been receiving 'terrorist funds' in his bank account. "But since you are a senior citizen, we will help you get out of this case. My senior officer will speak



to you about this process," said the man posing as a 'narcotics officer.'

Another man posing as a senior officer asked him to liquidate all his fixed deposits, investments and asked him to transfer the funds to some 'government accounts.' Over the next three days, the complainant was manipulated into three large transfers of Rs 50 lakh, 56 lakh and 21 lakh totalling up to Rs 1.27 crore. As the callers continued making further demands, the complainant realised that he had been duped and approached the cyber crime police. Officials said that Pune citizens continuing to fall prey to drugs in parcel scams was worrying as the cyber criminals keep adapting their tactics manipulate and coerce the victims. In an advisory issued about such online blackmail cases, the Ministry of Home Affairs said in May, "A large number of complaints are being reported on National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP) regarding intimidation, blackmail, extortion and "Digital Arrests" by cyber criminals posing as Police Authorities, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Narcotics Department, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Enforcement Directorate and other Law Enforcement Agencies."

## Elderly man dies after suffering an asthma attack during family fight, 3 arrested

GNS News Agency, July 31

Elderly man died, asthma attack death, attack during family fight, Mumbai Police, charges of culpable homicide, Indian express news. The fight broke out over the issue of turning on the lights late at night in their disputed property, the police said. The Pydhonie police arrested three persons on Saturday on charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder after they allegedly assaulted their 70-year-old family member during a fight in which the elderly person had an asthma attack and eventually died. The fight broke out over the issue of turning on the lights late at night in their disputed property (a room in a Pydhonie building), where all the family members live together, the police said. The deceased person has been identified as Salim Istiyaq Shaikh, while the arrested accused have been identified as Yunus Istiyaq Shaikh, 58; Sohail Yunus Shaikh, 26; and Azeez Jameel Shaikh, 41. They have been arrested on the complaint of Idris Istiyaq Shaikh, 54, a tailor by profession.

According to the police, the Shaikh family has ancestral property (a house) on the third floor of the Alizlala building on RR Road, Pydhonie. In this house, complainant Idris Shaikh and his brother Yunus Shaikh live with their families. Kids of Idris's sisters also live there. Besides this, Idris's elder brother Salim, a resident of Ahmednagar, frequents the house along with his wife as he is taking treatment for his asthma issue in Mumbai. Since the past two days, Salim and his wife have been staying in the house.

There is a dispute over the claim on the property. Hence, all the family members stay under the same roof by using curtains as partitions. On Friday night, everyone went to sleep. At around 1 am on Saturday, a heated argument erupted as Salim abused his younger brother Yunus, his wife, and his son Sohail over turning on the light and disturbing him. The fight took an ugly turn when an angry Salim pushed Sohail and also slapped his sister's son, Azeez, who had come to pacify the matter. After this, Yunus, Sohail, and Azeez allegedly assaulted Salim. The fight stopped only after Salim started experiencing breathing issues. Salim used his asthma pump, but it could not help him much. Salim was then rushed to the JJ hospital, where, during treatment, he died, states the FIR. "The accused persons assaulted Salim despite knowing that he was suffering from a serious illness that



could take his life. Hence they have been arrested in the case," said a police officer from the Pydhonie police station. The three accused have been arrested under sections 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 3(5) (common intention) of Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS).

## CPI demands action against cable bridge contractor

GNS News Agency, July 31

Karimnagar: CPI district secretary Marri Venkataswamy wanted the authorities to cancel the license of the contractor who constructed the cable-stayed bridge on the outskirts of Karimnagar town.



Besides canceling the license, the public money wasted with the damage of the road should be recovered from the contractor, he said, also demanding action against officials who did not monitor the quality of road works. In a statement here on Sunday, Venkataswamy alleged that the contractor had not followed quality norms while laying the road. Subsequently, the road was damaged within one year and pot-holes were formed, he said.

## None from Shiv Sena as governor; Adsul says he is hopeful in the next round

GNS News Agency, July 31

After missing out on getting a place in NITI Ayog despite being the third largest ally in the NDA, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, which was hopeful of getting a governor post, has been left out. In May this year, former Shiv Sena MP Anandrao Adsul had claimed that Union Minister Amit Shah had offered him a governor's position for withdrawing his claim on the Amravati Lok Sabha seat, which he represented two times. President Droupadi Murmu appointed Governors for Rajasthan, Telangana, Maharashtra, Punjab, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Assam, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. However, Adsul was not appointed as governor.

Adsul, however said that he is still hopeful to be appointed as governor in the next round of the appointment. "I was given a commitment by Amit Shah himself. He had held my hand and promised me that I will be appointed as governor. All this happened in front of the

## Bangladeshi student group threatens to resume protests if leaders not freed



GNS News Agency, July 31

Violence in Bangladesh killed at least 205 people, according to an AFP count of police and hospital data, in one of the biggest upheavals of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year tenure. A Bangladeshi student group has vowed to resume protests that sparked a lethal police crackdown and nationwide unrest unless several of their leaders are released from custody on Sunday. Last week's violence killed at least 205 people, according to an AFP count of police and hospital data, in one of the biggest upheavals of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year tenure. Army patrols and a nationwide curfew remain in place more than a week after they were imposed, and a police dragnet has scooped up thousands of protesters including at least half a dozen student leaders. Members of Students Against Discrimination, whose campaign against civil service hiring rules precipitated the unrest, said they would end their weeklong protest moratorium. The group's chief Nahid Islam and others "should be freed and the cases against them must be withdrawn", Abdul Hannan Masud told reporters in an online briefing late Saturday. Masud, who did not disclose

his location because he was in hiding from authorities, also demanded "visible actions" be taken against government ministers and police officers responsible for the deaths of protesters. "Otherwise, Students Against Discrimination will be forced to launch tough protests" from Monday, he said.

Islam and two other senior members of the protest group were on Friday forcibly discharged from hospital in the capital Dhaka and taken away by a group of plainclothes detectives. Earlier in the week Islam told AFP he was being treated at the hospital for injuries police inflicted on him during an earlier round of detention and said he was in fear for his life. Home minister Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters Friday that the trio were taken into custody for their own safety but did not confirm if they had been formally arrested. Police told AFP on Sunday that detectives had taken two others into custody, while a Students Against Discrimination activist told AFP that a third had been taken on Sunday morning. At least 9,000 people have been arrested nationwide since the unrest began according to Prothom Alo, Bangladesh's largest daily newspaper.

Protests began this month over the reintroduction of a quota scheme reserving more than half of all government jobs for certain candidates. With around 18 million young Bangladeshis out of work, according to government figures, the move deeply upset graduates facing an acute employment crisis. Critics say the quota is used to stack public jobs with loyalists to the ruling Awami League. The Supreme Court cut the number of reserved jobs last week but fell short of protesters' demands to scrap the quotas entirely. Prime Minister Hasina has ruled Bangladesh since 2009 and won her fourth consecutive election in January after a vote without genuine opposition.

## TikTok collected views of US users on abortion, gun control: Justice Department

GNS News Agency, July 31

In its report, the US Justice Department has accused TikTok of harnessing the capability to gather bulk information on users based on views on divisive social issues like gun control, abortion and religion. In a fresh broadside against one of the world's most popular technology companies, the Justice Department is accusing TikTok of harnessing the capability to gather bulk information on users based on views on divisive social issues like gun control, abortion and religion. Government lawyers wrote in documents filed late Friday to the federal appeals court in Washington that TikTok and its Beijing-based parent company ByteDance used an internal web-suite system called Lark to enable TikTok employees to speak directly with ByteDance engineers in China. TikTok employees used Lark to send sensitive data about US users, information that has wound up being stored on Chinese servers and accessible to ByteDance employees in China, federal officials said. One of Lark's internal search tools, the filing states, permits ByteDance and TikTok employees in the US and China to gather information on users' content or expressions, including views on sensitive topics, such as abortion or religion. Last year, the Wall Street Journal reported TikTok had tracked users who watched LGBTQ content through a dashboard the company said it had since deleted.

The new court documents represent the government's first major defence in a consequential legal battle over the future of the popular social media platform, which is used by more than 170 million Americans. Under a law signed by President Joe Biden in April, the company could face a ban in a few months if it doesn't break ties with ByteDance. The measure was passed with bipartisan support after lawmakers and administration officials expressed concerns that Chinese authorities could force ByteDance to hand over US user data or sway public opinion towards Beijing's interests by manipulating the algorithm that populates users' feeds. "Intelligence reporting further demonstrates that ByteDance and TikTok Global have taken action in response to (Chinese government) demands to censor content outside of China," Casey Blackburn, a senior US intelligence official, wrote in a filing that supported the government's arguments. The Justice Department warned, in stark terms, of the potential for what it called "covert content manipulation" by the Chinese government, saying the algorithm could be designed to shape content that users receive. "By directing ByteDance or TikTok to covertly manipulate that algorithm, China could for example further its existing malign influence operations and amplify its efforts to undermine trust in our democracy and exacerbate social divisions," the brief states. The concern, the Justice Department said, is more than theoretical, alleging that TikTok and ByteDance employees are known to engage in a practice called "heating" in which certain videos are promoted in order to receive a certain number of views. While this capability enables TikTok to curate popular content and disseminate it more widely, US officials posit it can also be used for nefarious purposes. Federal officials are asking the court to allow a classified version of the legal brief, which would not be accessible to the two companies. Nothing in the redacted brief "changes the fact that the Constitution is on our side," TikTok spokes-



person Alex Haurek said in a statement.

"The TikTok ban would silence 170 million Americans' voices, violating the 1st Amendment," Haurek said. "As we've said before, the government has never put forth proof of its claims, including when Congress passed this unconstitutional law. Today, once again, the government is taking this unprecedented step while hiding behind secret information. We remain confident we will prevail in court." In the redacted version of the court documents, the Justice Department said another tool triggered the suppression of content based on the use of certain words. Certain policies of the tool applied to ByteDance users in China, where the company operates a similar app called Douyin that follows Beijing's strict censorship rules. But Justice Department officials said other policies may have been applied to TikTok users outside of China. TikTok was investigating the existence of these policies and whether they had ever been used in the US in, or around, 2022, officials said.

The government points to the Lark data transfers to explain why federal officials do not believe that Project Texas, TikTok's \$1.5 billion mitigation plan to store US user data on servers owned and maintained by the tech giant Oracle, is sufficient to guard against national security concerns. In its legal challenge against the law, TikTok has heavily leaned on arguments that the potential ban violates the First Amendment because it bars the app from continued speech unless it attracts a new owner through a complex divestment process. It has also argued divestment would change the speech on the platform because it would create a version of TikTok lacking the algorithm that has driven its success. In its response, the Justice Department argued TikTok has not raised any valid free speech claims, saying the law addresses national security concerns without targeting protected speech, and argues that China and ByteDance, as foreign entities, aren't shielded by the First Amendment.

TikTok has also argued the US law discriminates on viewpoints, citing statements from some lawmakers critical of what they viewed as an anti-Israel tilt on the platform during the war in Gaza. Justice Department officials disputes that argument, saying the law at issue reflects their ongoing concern that China could weaponize technology against US national security, a fear they say is made worse by demands that companies under Beijing's control turn over sensitive data to the government. They say TikTok, under its current operating structure, is required to be responsive to those demands.



results of the vote. "A message for the military. The people of Venezuela have spoken: they don't want Maduro," she said earlier on X. "It is time to put yourselves on the right side of history. You have a chance and it's now." Venezuela's military has always supported Maduro, a 61-year-old former bus driver and foreign minister, and there have been no public signs that leaders of the armed forces are breaking from the government.

## India links of US poll contenders may offer little boost for ties: Report



GNS News Agency, July 31

The Indian links of some US presidential election contenders probably mean little additional benefit for ties, experts said, against the backdrop of bipartisan support for closer relations with the South Asian nation to counter an assertive China. Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris and Usha Chilukuri Vance, the wife of Republican Donald Trump's running-mate, have rarely visited the birthplace of one or both of their parents, although Indians take pride in their success.

"Either way, from India's perspective, whether it is Republican or Democrat, that relationship enjoys bipartisan support and should not be affected," said Harsh Vardhan Shringla, a former Indian ambassador to the United States. Usha Chilukuri Vance, wife of Vice Presidential Nominee Senator JD Vance, speaks on Day 3 of the Republican National Convention (RNC). ("It can only

benefit," he said of the India links, adding, "(It) cannot be affected adversely." Since ties with New Delhi are viewed favourably by both parties in Washington, there will be little impact on relations, regardless of which party wins, or the candidate's Indian roots, an Indian government official said on condition of anonymity. Both President Joe Biden and Trump, his predecessor in office, sought to woo India, not just to challenge China in the region, but also to wean New Delhi from a traditional dependence on Russian weapons. Both Harris and Usha Vance, the wife of Republican vice presidential candidate, JD Vance, have links to southern India. Vance belongs to a family of renowned academics. Harris, who has garnered the backing of enough delegates to secure the Democratic nomination, is viewed as a role model in her mother's ancestral village of Thulasendrapuram. She has "proven how young women, previously confined to their homes, can reach such heights, becoming a public figure in the world's Number 1 country," said J Sudhakar, a resident of the village where Harris' maternal grandfather was born. "How big an achievement is that?"

Harris, who visited the village as a five-year-old, has recalled walks with her grandfather on the beach of the city of Chennai where the family later lived, about 320 km (200 miles) from the village of roughly 2,000 people. But she has not been back since becoming US vice president. "Residents expected a visit, a statement or at least a mention of the village, but that didn't happen," said shopkeeper G Manikandan. "But we will invite her when she wins and organise a grand celebration and welcome for her," he added.

## Venezuelan President Maduro seeks 3rd term as nation awaits historic poll results

GNS News Agency, July 31

Venezuela President Nicolás Maduro is confident of victory even as the opposition has attracted impassioned support and warned of possible irregularities. Venezuelans were awaiting results late on Sunday in the most consequential election in a quarter-century of socialist party rule, with President Nicolas Maduro confident of victory even as the opposition has attracted impassioned support and warned of possible irregularities.

Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado has been the star of the coalition campaign, despite a ban on her holding public office that forced her to pass the torch to candidate Edmundo Gonzalez, a 74-year-old ex-diplomat known for his calm demeanor. Gonzalez has won backing even from some former supporters of the ruling party, but the opposition and observers raised questions ahead of the vote as to whether it would be fair, saying decisions by electoral authorities and the arrests of opposition staff were meant to create obstacles. Maduro - whose 2018 reelection is considered fraudulent by the United States, among others - has said Venezuela has the world's most transparent electoral system and has warned of a "bloodbath" if he loses. Attorney General Tarek Saab told Reuters on Sunday evening that he did not anticipate any violence and that except for some isolated incidents voting had been peaceful.

He expected results on Sunday night, he added. Less than a block from Saab's office in central Caracas, dozens of ruling party supporters arrived together on motorcycles outside Andres Bello secondary school, the country's largest voting center, scuffling with opposition supporters gathered outside. The crowd dispersed after about 20 minutes. The Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict said on X that armed groups of the motorcycle-riding ruling party supporters known as 'collectives' were reported in six states and Caracas. Earlier, Marilyn Hernandez, the head of voting at the school, told Reuters about 50% of the 11,493 people registered at that polling place had voted as of 5:20pm. The figure was in line with estimates released by the opposition campaign that just under 55% of people had voted nationwide. Government officials cheered the voting in evening comments on state television. "Love won," said Jorge Rodriguez, a ruling party lawmaker and the head of Maduro's campaign. In their own evening remarks, Gonzalez and Machado repeated a call for opposition witnesses to remain at polling places for the vote count and not leave until they had their copy of the results. The opposition official meant to observe the overall national count at the electoral authority, Delsa Solorzano, had not been allowed to enter the facility, though other opposition witnesses had, the opposition said.

A legal restriction bars publication of polling from a week before the election until official results are announced, although several exit polls began circulating on social media in the late afternoon. Reuters journalists in seven locations around the country had reported morning lines outside polling stations, including some that opened late or where voting was moving slowly. Many voters had arrived before dawn.

"I work cleaning houses and my four grandchildren



depend on me. I earn just \$15 per week and that is enough to eat one day but not the next," said Luisa Gonzalez, 61, who voted in the state of Bolivar, traditionally a ruling party bastion. "We have spent years looking for change. I was a Chavista, but people have changed," she said, using the term for ruling party supporters, a reference to the late President Hugo Chavez.

Maduro's government has presided over an economic collapse, the migration of about a third of the population, and a sharp deterioration in diplomatic relations, crowned by sanctions imposed by the United States, the European Union and others which have crippled an already struggling oil industry. Maduro said if returned to power he would guarantee peace and economic growth, making Venezuela less dependent on oil income. Dozens of voters cast ballots at the Venezuelan consulate in the Spanish island of Tenerife, with others gathered outside waving flags and cheering. Migrants around the world reported difficulties registering and only a small percentage of the large Venezuelan diaspora was expected to be able to vote. THE CHAVEZ LEGACY

Maduro voted early in the morning in Caracas and said the result announced by the National Electoral Council would be recognized and defended by the armed forces and the police. Maduro said he would decree a national dialogue on Monday, using a term that typically means conversations between the government and opposition, businesses, communities and others. Many Maduro supporters speak enthusiastically of his mentor Chavez, and see Maduro, in power since Chavez's death in 2013, as a continuation of Chavez's legacy of helping the poor. Others told Reuters they saw Maduro's record as mixed but that they would back him.

"There are things that without doubt need to improve in our country, but this government has lived through sanctions and blockades like no other. That's why I back President Maduro and think he deserves another chance," said Jose Lopez, 57, as he waited to vote in central Valencia. Gonzalez and Machado have promised major changes and said a fresh start may motivate migrants to return. The two opposition leaders have said they expect the military to uphold the results of the vote. Venezuela's military has always supported Maduro, a 61-year-old former bus driver and foreign minister, and there have been no public signs that leaders of the armed forces are breaking from the government. Thirty-seven people have been arbitrarily detained since Friday in connection with the elections, Gonzalo Himiob, the vice president of human rights organization Foro Penal, said on X, and at least 20 remain detained.

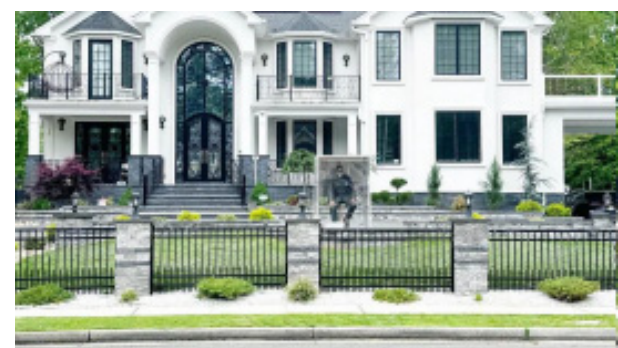
## Google lists Big B's statue outside New Jersey residence 'tourist attraction'

GNS News Agency, July 31

Washington: A life-size statue of Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan installed by an Indian-American businessman outside his New Jersey residence in the US has now been listed by Google as a tourist attraction.

Gopi Seth installed Bachchan's life-size statue in August 2022 outside his residence in Edison city, about 35 km south of Manhattan in New York. "Our home has become one of the most popular tourist attractions, thanks to the Amitabh Bachchan statue. Recognised by Google Search, this site attracts a growing number of visitors each day," Seth said. In two years since then, fans of the Indian superstar have been coming to this place, taking pictures and selfies, with many of them posting on social media platforms like Instagram and X.

"Fans of Mr Bachchan from all around the world travel to see the statue, with 20 to 25 cars of families arriving daily. Visitors often leave greeting cards and letters, expressing their admiration for the legendary actor," Seth said, sharing some of the videos of the fans visiting the statue. Seth said the popularity of his home extends



far beyond in-person visits. "Enthusiastic fans post videos, photos, and tweets about their experiences, flooding social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. These posts have garnered significant attention, further boosted the site's fame and made it a trending destination on the internet," he said. "Our home stands as a testament to Mr Bachchan's global appeal, and we are honoured to welcome fans from every corner of the globe," he said.

## After setbacks, more exploration of J&K lithium block likely before another auction



J&K lithium block, kashmir Lithium, jammu and kashmir Lithium, lithium exploration, India's lithium ambitions, J&K lithium block auction, Ministry of Mines, Indian Express, India news, current affairs On March 14, the ministry invited bids in a second attempt at auctioning off the block without any changes in the bid document. India's lithium ambitions hit a snag after the Ministry of Mines annulled the auction for the block in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)'s Reasi district for the second time on July 25. The repeated setback has officials weighing the need for further exploration before attempting another auction, The Indian Express has learnt. The block, which holds an estimated 5.9 million tonnes of lithium ore, has failed to get auctioned off due to insufficient investor interest.

The first auction was annulled on March 13 after less than the required minimum of three bidders cleared the first round. The very next day, the Mines Ministry put the block for auction in a second attempt, which was also annulled last week after failing to clear the first round. Notably, the minimum bidder requirement is waived off for second attempts as per auction rules, which require an auction to move to the second round even if less than three bidders qualify in the first round. However, with no qualified bidders at all, the auction of the J&K lithium block could not proceed. "Critical Minerals are auctioned in the country for the first time. Like any other auction, in auction of critical minerals also, required number of response may or may not be received," the Mines Ministry said when sought for comments. "With respect to Lithium block in Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, ministry is examining whether further exploration is required," it said. J&K lithium block, kashmir Lithium, jammu and kashmir Lithium, lithium exploration, India's lithium ambitions, J&K lithium block auction, Ministry of Mines, Indian Express, India news, current affairs

"We have started exploration work in J&K where

GSI (Geological Survey of India) identified lithium deposits in collaboration with the J&K government. As soon as possible, we will complete the exploration and auction it to start work on mining lithium with full force," Union Minister of Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy told the Rajya Sabha on July 22. Lithium is a critical mineral that is used extensively in electric vehicle (EV) batteries, energy storage systems, and consumer electronics. The first auction for the J&K lithium block for a composite licence (CL), which was launched in November last year, was annulled after less than three bidders qualified the technical bids round. A CL is a prospecting licence-cum-mining lease, which is a two-stage concession for the purpose of undertaking prospecting operations followed by mining operations. On March 14, the ministry invited bids in a second attempt at auctioning off the block without any changes in the bid document. According to the Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015, amended many times since, if a block being auctioned fails to secure the participation of at least three technically qualified bidders, it can be put on auction again as a second attempt. For such auctions, the rules require bidding to "continue to the second round even in case the number of technically qualified bidders is less than three". They also require the reserve price in the second attempt to be the "highest initial price offer of the technically qualified bidders if any in the first annulled attempt," which in the case of the Reasi lithium block was 11.25 per cent.

According to a document with the ministry, prospective bidders during the first attempt had sent queries ranging from the bid document having limited information on the block to the size of the block being too small "to apply modern mineral systems-based tools and look at areas where larger alteration haloes or deposit traps might exist". Another asked if any beneficiation study had been conducted to assess the feasibility of extracting and processing lithium from the resources identified in J&K, to which the ministry replied in the negative. The first auction of the J&K lithium block was part of the ministry's first tranche of critical mineral auction, which also included a lithium block in Katghora in Chhattisgarh's Korba district that was awarded to Kolkata-based Maiki South Mining Pvt Ltd on June 24 for an auction premium of 76.05 per cent. Last month, The Indian Express had reported that India's plans to develop domestic mining of lithium made progress in Korba district with the successful auction of one block and promising exploration results from other nearby blocks.

## Former Rockwell Collins chief being considered for Boeing CEO, report says

Former Rockwell Collins chief Kelly Ortberg has joined the list of contenders under serious consideration by Boeing as the planemaker's next chief executive officer, The Air Current reported on Sunday, citing industry officials.

Ortberg, Spirit AeroSystems CEO Pat Shanahan and Boeing Chief Operating Officer Stephanie Pope are among candidates for the Boeing job, the trade publication said. Reuters has reported Shanahan and Pope as contenders along with Boeing board Chair Steve Mollenkopf. Earlier in July, Boeing said it would buy back Spirit, its former subsidiary, in a stock deal worth \$4.7 billion.

RTX's Rockwell Collins produces aircraft communications, electronics and aviation systems for commercial and military customers. Ortberg retired in 2021 as an adviser to the CEO of RTX after heading Rockwell Collins and its successor entities for about eight years as it went through mergers, acquisitions and restructuring. Boeing



did not immediately respond to a Reuters' request for comment outside regular business hours. Boeing has been looking for a new head after Dave Calhoun said in March he would step down by year-end, in a broad management shakeup following a January mid-air panel blow-out on a 737 MAX plane.

## Srinivasan exits India Cements, sells 32.72% stake to UltraTech Cement for Rs 3,954 crore

GNS News Agency, July 31

Consolidating its number one position in the cement sector, UltraTech Cement Ltd, owned by the Aditya Birla group, has acquired 32.72 per cent stake of N Srinivasan and associates in India Cements for Rs 3,954 crore. With this sell-out, Srinivasan will exit from the company set up in 1946. As the Birlas will shell out Rs 390 per share for the acquisition, it will trigger a mandatory open offer for another 20 per cent stake in the company from the public at Rs 390 per share. The open offer, which will cost around Rs 2,400 crore, will be done subsequently after obtaining all regulatory approvals, the company said on Sunday. The Birlas will now have a stake of 55.49 per cent in India Cements. India Cements is currently controlled by the N Srinivasan and family. Srinivasan was earlier Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC) and President of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). While Srinivasan is the Vice-chairman and MD of India Cements, his daughter Rupa Gurnath is an Executive Director of the company and his wife Chitra Srinivasan is a non-executive non-independent director on the board. They are likely to quit from these positions when the takeover comes into effect. On June 27 this year, UltraTech Cement has acquired a 22.77 per cent stake in India Cements at a price of Rs 268 per share, triggering speculation about a takeover of the South India-based cement major. The move marked a further intensification of the battle for control of India's cement market, which was dominated for long by Kumar Mangalam Birla's company until the Adani Group entered the sector in 2022 and has since become the country's second biggest player. N Srinivasan exits India Cements, UltraTech Cement, UltraTech Cement Ltd, Aditya Birla group, The Birlas, India Cements NEWS, indian express news

When the Birlas bought the 22.77 per cent stake in India Cements in June this year, it said the stake purchase was only a "financial investment". "Post this financial investment, the promoter group approached us as they wanted to sell their holding in the company, and we found it appropriate to acquire their stake in the company," UltraTech said in a statement after the board meeting. If the Birlas get the full 20 per cent subscription in the open offer, their stake will increase to 75.49 per cent in India Cements. India Cements has a total capacity of 14.45 mtpa of grey cement. Of this, 12.95 mtpa is in the South (particularly Tamil Nadu) and 1.5 mtpa is in Rajasthan. The transaction is subject to regulatory approvals. India Cements shares rose 3.65 per cent to Rs 374.60 on the BSE on Friday. It has a market capitalisation



of Rs 11,608 crore. UltraTech shares gained 2 per cent at Rs 11,679.25 on Friday. Kumar Mangalam Birla, Chairman, Aditya Birla Group, said, "UltraTech Cement's investments over the years, both organic and inorganic, have been designed to propel India to become a building solutions champion globally. Every investment in a core sector like cement accelerates economic activity and drives progress." "These investments have also facilitated India's nationwide infrastructure upgrade, powering our country's growing need for housing, roads, and other vital infrastructure. This, in turn, has had tremendous impact on the lives and aspirations of people," he said. "The India Cements opportunity is an exciting one as it enables UltraTech to serve the Southern markets more effectively and also accelerates our path to 200 plus MTPA capacity," Birla said. On June 13, Adani Group owned Ambuja Cements said it has signed a binding agreement for the acquisition of Hyderabad-based Penna Cement Industries Ltd (PCIL) at an enterprise value of Rs 10,422 crore. Ambuja Cements will acquire 100 per cent shares of PCIL from its existing promoter group P Pratap Reddy and family. The spate of acquisitions by the Birlas and Adani is expected to intensify the battle for market share in the cement sector in the coming days. Currently, UltraTech has a consolidated capacity of 152.7 million tonnes per annum of grey cement. It has 24 integrated manufacturing units, 33 grinding units, one Clinkerisation unit and 8 bulk packaging terminals. India Cements made a loss of Rs 202 crore on a turnover of Rs 4,942 crore in FY2024. UltraTech had announced the acquisition of Kesoram Industries' cement assets for Rs 7,600 crore last year. UltraTech recently said its expansion programme is progressing as per schedule. Work on the second phase of 22.6 mtpa capacity announced in June, 2022, is under progress with capacities commissioned across several locations, it said.

## Nita Ambani's blouse, worn with a Banarasi sari, features exquisite real gold varak



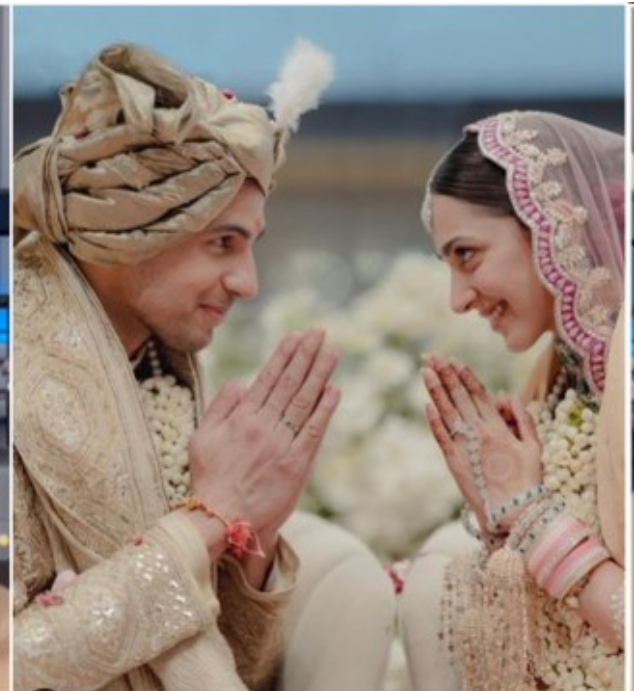
Nita Ambani, the influential founder and chairperson of the Reliance Foundation, turned heads at her son Anant's wedding in a show-stopping Banarasi sari. This exquisite ensemble transcended mere attire, transforming into a vibrant testament to the enduring beauty of traditional Indian craftsmanship and the artistry of rare techniques.

The mastermind behind the breathtaking sari was the renowned fashion designer Manish Malhotra. His vision, however, wouldn't have come to life without the exceptional skills of the artisans at Swadesh. Together, they created a masterpiece. The vibrant sari boasted a mesmerising Charbagh pattern, a hallmark of classic Banarasi saris. This intricate and symmetrical motif, reminiscent of a flourishing garden, adorned the fabric meticulously. Further enhancing the visual feast was the incorporation of vibrant meena work. This intricate em-

broidery technique, employing a multitude of colours, created a rich, multi-dimensional effect.

Taking to Instagram, Manish Malhotra offered a closer look at the intricate details of the sari. He delved into the symbolism of the Charbagh pattern, the painstaking application of the vibrant meena work, and the exquisite real gold varak work adorning the blouse. The captivating sari wasn't the only element that stole the show. The ensemble was further elevated by a unique and opulent blouse. Drawing inspiration from pichwai paintings, traditionally used as backdrops for Hindu deities, the blouse boasted a rich purple hue. This exquisite piece wasn't simply a fabric; it was a work of art in itself. Renowned artist Shehzad Ali from Kishangarh, Rajasthan, meticulously hand-painted the blouse, incorporating real gold varak work for an added touch of opulence. The meticulous detailing and use of precious materials on the blouse perfectly complemented the grandeur of the sari. Nita Ambani, well-known for her unwavering support of Indian artisans and their crafts, took the opportunity to express her deep appreciation for these age-old traditions. "The wedding festivities provided a wonderful platform to celebrate the beauty of Indian weaves and embroideries, meticulously crafted by master artisans using techniques passed down through generations," she said in a statement posted on Swadesh. "Saris, with their intricate karigari (craftsmanship), have always brought me immense joy. I am humbled to play a small role in preserving and promoting our rich cultural heritage."

## This is how Kiara Advani and Sidharth Malhotra's wedding version of the song 'Ranjha' came to be



Everyone swooned when actors Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani tied the knot in Suryagarh Palace in Rajasthan last year. But it was truly their wedding song that captured the hearts of many. In a recent podcast, their wedding videographer Vishal Punjabi aka 'The Wedding Filmer' recalled how the Shershaah co-actors decided to use their wildly popular song 'Ranjhaa' for their wedding.

Vishal explained how the original lyrics of 'Ranjhaa' from the movie were about Sidharth's character dying and Kiara's character, who was his love interest, yearning for him to come back to her. "It's a song about death and destruction but she (Kiara) wanted to walk to that song. Validly so, because it's the song that people loved the two of them for. Being Bollywood actors, they're known for that song," Vishal said in the Culture Podcast with DJ Simz. Though it made sense for Kiara to walk into that

song, the videographer and his team confessed to feeling off about the lyrics of the song as they "didn't make sense" and would not sit well with the celebratory vibe of the event.

"What I did with my team was that we changed the lyrics of the song. We made them positive and happy, and about, 'I'm coming to you'," Vishal revealed in the interview. Then, he says, Bollywood fans did their magic and fell in love with the song as they decided it would be the happy ending the couple's characters didn't get in the movie. "They took the wedding film as the real ending to the movie. They didn't get a happy ending in the movie but in real life, they got it." This is not the first time a custom song has been made for Bollywood celebrities' wedding. The first ones to do it were Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma, for whom singer Harshdeep Kaur sang the song 'Peer Vi Tu'.

## Know why everyone is criticising India's Olympics uniform

The unveiling of the Indian contingent's uniforms for the 2024 Paris Olympics by renowned designer Tarun Tahiliani sparked a firestorm of criticism. The choice of a white kurta pyjama for men and saris for women, adorned with the Indian tricolour, fell short of expectations, with many on social media deeming the designs to be simplistic and lacking the grandeur associated with Tahiliani's work.

Tasva, the brand behind the uniform that is helmed by Tahiliani, decided to opt for digital ikat prints instead of traditional weaves, which further ignited the controversy. The expectation from a designer of his stature was a more opulent and culturally rich representation of India on the global stage, according to netizens. Social media platforms were flooded with disappointment and criticism, with many questioning the rationale behind the design choices. The incident has sparked a wider conversation about the importance of striking a balance between tradition, modernity, and practicality when representing a nation on the global platform. In an official press release, Tahiliani, who is the Chief Design



Officer at Tasva, shared "Seeing the outfits come to life adorned with the Team India Olympics logo was a moment of immense pride for Tasva. As our athletes sailed past the Seine during the opening ceremony, they carried a piece of India, making a bold statement in the fashion capital of the world." Though the designer did not address the controversy in the press release, he did tell The Hindu that choosing printed ikat was a deliberate choice to "meet timelines."

This doesn't seem to have convinced many of the decision. Former shuttler Jwala Gutta also expressed how the uniforms were a "huge disappointment" for her. In

a post on X, Gutta wrote, "The garments which was made for the Indian contingent participating in Olympics this time has been a huge disappointment!! (Especially when the designer was announced I had huge expectations)," she wrote. The garments which was made for the Indian contingent participating in Olympics this time has been a huge disappointment!! (Especially when the designer was announced I had huge expectations)" The choice of viscose over cotton was also deliberate. Cotton would have crushed badly. We used viscose because it is a wood pulp fibre and lets you breathe. It is cooler than silk," he said. "We had to consider breathability

because the athletes would be on a barge, in the heat, for up to five hours." I have seen better Sarees sold in Mumbai streets for Rs.200 than these ceremonial uniforms you've 'designed'.

"Hello Tarun Tahiliani! I have seen better Sarees sold in Mumbai streets for Rs.200 than these ceremonial uniforms you've 'designed'," wrote blogger and columnist Dr Nandita Iyer. She called it a combination of digital prints, cheap polyester fabric and the tricolour thrown together without any imagination. Others shared similar sentiments. Actor Tara Deshpande wrote: "They look absolutely awful.

## Inside Shruti Haasan's home: Kamal Haasan's first gift to Sarika, awards on top of fridge and a special spiritual corner



Shruti Haasan has the most beautiful abode, a dreamland for all comic book lovers with several references in and around and home to several artworks from around the world. Right from the artifacts from London to Goa, the actress' luxurious apartment in Mumbai is stylish and elegantly decorated, reflecting her taste and lifestyle. The actress recently gave a full house tour to Zoom, which is incorporated with modern amenities and artistic touches.

During the tour, Shruti Haasan first gave a glimpse of the spiritual corner of her house and revealed she follows a vegetarian diet on Tuesdays. Unlike other stars, Shruti Haasan likes to keep her awards on top of her fridge, which is placed in the kitchen, rather than building a special place for them in her extremely spacious apartment. There is a place, however, especially dedicated to her favourite god Murugan, and the place is decorated with her father Kamal Haasan's first gift to her mother Sarika as well as curios she has bought, and a spiritual corner. She also has kept her tarot card deck (which she

reads for herself and her special friends), and a spray she believes cleans one's spirit. Shruti Haasan likes to keep her awards on top of her fridge. (Photo: Zoom) Shruti Haasan There is a special spiritual corner in Shruti Haasan's house. (Photo: Zoom) Kamal Haasan One of the first gifts from Kamal Haasan to his wife Sarika. Another corner of her house is dedicated to her passion for music. This side of the house is decorated with her favourite piano, where the actress also gave a glimpse of a customised notebook her father Kamal Haasan gifted her to pen down her music notes. Her initials on the diary make it extra special for the actress, she revealed. The corner also had her best friend Fiona—a mannequin, dressed as an emo girl. Her music area also has a collection of ducks (which the actress is obsessed with), and books.

However, her favourite place in the entire house is where her couch is placed. This area is dedicated to all the guests and friends, whom the actress hosts. Also, a place where she stays all day long watching movies on her projector, when not shooting. Among the many things in her comment section, a commonly asked question or taunt is "Why are the walls not painted?", talking about the same, the actress said, "This is on purpose. This is a vibe." Despite her house being filled with the fanciest items, the actress revealed that the one that remains close to her heart is an old frame from 25 years back, which remains unchanged. It features a photo of a young Kamal Haasan posing with his daughters Shruti and Akshara Haasan. Revealing the story behind the frame, the actress said, "It's a photo from 25 years back with my dad and sister and it was clicked by my mother in our house at Kodaikanal. It's my favourite."

## Ranbir Kapoor recalls dad Rishi Kapoor making him travel by bus, survive on shoestring food budget: 'It was as strict as...'

Ranbir Kapoor started his journey in Hindi cinema as an assistant director to Sanjay Leela Bhansali in Black before making his acting debut in the director's 2007 film Saawariya. In a recent interaction, Ranbir recalled his college days in Mumbai and New York before joining the film industry, and how his father, the late actor Rishi Kapoor, kept him on a shoestring budget in New York to help him learn the value of money.

Ranbir joined The School of Visual Arts in New York after finishing college in Mumbai. However, after he came back, his father decided to send him back to New York because he thought Ranbir was too young to make an acting debut. This was the time the Animal star joined the famous Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute to learn method acting. During his stint at the film institute, his father kept him on a tight budget, barely enough to have two meals a day. Sharing the experience, he told Nikhil Kamath, "By then I was very eager to come back and start work. I felt like I had gotten the experience of America. It was not really the college experience but the exposure of talking to people from all over the world and living alone. My father had kept me on a very tight budget. Of course, when I say tight budget, I am still coming from a privileged background, but it was enough to have a McDonald's dollar menu meal for lunch and dinner. So, it was like \$2 for lunch and \$2 for dinner. It was as strict as that, even though I come from a privileged background."

When further asked why his father kept him on a tight budget, he said, "He never addressed this, but I think he wanted me to live like a student and not a superstar's son. Maybe it was to teach the value of money." Ranbir also shared that he continued living frugally when he returned to Mumbai, as his father stopped giving him pocket money. He recalled taking public transport when he assisted Sanjay Leela Bhansali on the film Black. "My father wanted to school me that this is not life, you are too moisturised, you need to see what hardship is," he



said. Talking about his college days in Mumbai, Ranbir recalled how he developed the 'nasty' habit of smoking during his college days in the city and how that habit lasted until last year when he finally quit, keeping his health in mind after the birth of his daughter Raha. "HR College reminds me of smoking because that was the first time I bought a packet of cigarettes. You smoke with your friends outside the college and you feel grown up. It's the first time you are wearing your own clothes and not a school uniform."

In an earlier interview to Filmfare, Neetu Kapoor had also spoken about Rishi's insistence on a normal upbringing for their kids. "When Ranbir was assisting in Black, Rishi told him to go by an auto or a bus... And Ranbir poor thing, he was so tall and he had to go to America on these long flights and he had to go in economy, he used to say mom, my legs get numb, I get jammed. The only thing I used to make sure then was to give him an aisle seat. So at least he can stretch his legs. I think these things are important. I would give the credit of this to my husband, because I used to spoil them." On the professional front, Ranbir will next be seen in Nitesh Tiwari's Ramayan, Sandeep Reddy Vanga's Animal, and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Love And War.

## Nick Jonas explains the 'National Jiju' tag to Jimmy Fallon on The Tonight Show: 'When I got married to Priyanka Chopra...'

In January 2024, when the Jonas Brothers came to India to perform at the music festival Lollapalooza in Mumbai, Nick Jonas was welcomed on stage amid loud cheers from the crowd, who yelled 'jiju jiju' as they addressed the singer. While it's common knowledge in India that Nick became the 'national jiju' after he tied the knot with Priyanka Chopra, the singer explained the same to Jimmy Fallon and the American audience during his recent appearance on The Tonight Show.

During his interaction with Jimmy, Nick explained the 'jiju' tag and said, "As you know I am married to Priyanka. When we got married this hashtag started. I was 'National Jiju.' Jiju means elder sister's husband, so effectively I'm the older brother to India." The show host also played a clip from the Jonas Brothers concert in Mumbai, in which Joe Jonas and Kevin Jonas introduced him as "Jiju" and the crowd started



In a recent interaction, Priyanka's mother, Madhu Chopra, talked about Nick appreciating Indian culture and rituals. She said, "He is very respectful, appreciates Indian culture, and lets us be as Indian as possible. Priyanka often says that he is a Punjabi."

chanted 'jiju jiju' as they welcomed him on stage. In a recent interaction, Priyanka's mother, Madhu Chopra, talked about Nick appreciating Indian culture and rituals. She said, "He is very respectful, appreciates Indian culture, and lets us be as Indian as possible. Priyanka often says that he is a Punjabi." She also

mentioned that while Nick was prepared for being called 'Nick jiju' by the actor's family, he didn't expect to become 'National jiju'. "All of them know about him being called Nick jiju; his family is aware of this too. Priyanka had told him. However, he wasn't expecting National jiju," she said.

Priyanka and Nick tied the knot at the majestic Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, in 2018. They welcomed their daughter, Malti Marie, on January 15, 2022, via surrogacy. On the professional front, Priyanka is currently shooting for her upcoming Hollywood flick The Bluff in Australia.

## Nayanthara lists 'benefits' of hibiscus tea, deletes post after The Liver Doc debunks claims: 'Absolute BS, bordering on quackery'



Hepatologist Cyriac Abby Philips, popularly known as The Liver Doc on social media, is famous for debunking alternative medical theories and backing his claims with scientific information. Recently, he was in the news for dispelling actor Samantha's post that advocated for alternative medicine therapy that suggested inhaling hydrogen peroxide to prevent and treat respiratory viral infections. Now, he has taken on her Kaathuvaakula Rendu Kadhal co-star Nayanthara. In a now-deleted social media post talking about the alleged benefits of hibiscus tea and the health care expertise of Mummun Ganeriwai, Nayanthara wrote, "This has to be my most favourite Tea. And the most exciting one in the meal plan curated by the genius @munmun.ganeriwai. It has long been used in Ayurveda. It is high in antioxidants and is helpful in diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and heart related ailments. It is very cooling for the system hence it is great for those who have acne, heat boils on skin etc."

"Hibiscus tea is great for the monsoon season as it is rich in vitamins and keeps our immune system in equilibrium. It has antibacterial effects that protects from seasonal infection/illness. P.S. anyone who needs the recipe can check with Nayanthara's now deleted post about benefits of hibiscus tea. Nayanthara's now deleted post about benefits of hibiscus tea. Now, this shout out to hibiscus tea has also fallen on the ears of The Liver Doc, who has exercised tremendous restraint considering "the larger fanbase" and given a step-by-step rebuttal to Nayanthara's claims. Starting out by calling out Nayanthara for "misleading her 8.7 million followers," the medical practitioner said, "If she had stopped at hibiscus tea is kind of tasty, that would have been ok. But no, they have to go ahead and blow their health-illiteracy trumpet and also claim that hibiscus tea is helpful in diabetes, high blood pressure, acne, antibacterial and protects against the flu. Well, none of the above claims have been proven." Clarifying to his audience that this post by Nayanthara seems like "an advertisement for her 'celebrity nutritionist' who has a masters in science degree in diet and nutrition who describes herself as 'the only gut

microbiome specialist in the world who combines traditional Indian foods, ancient Indian yogic practices and Ayurveda principles with gut microbiota study to understand and fight obesity and other diseases", Dr Cyriac minced no words and called it "absolute BS, bordering on quackery." This is cinema actress Nayanthara who has more than twice the following of the other actress Samantha misleading her 8.7 million followers on a supplement called hibiscus tea.

Backing his claims by listing out his medical experience, Dr Cyriac said, "I have expertise in modulation of gut microbiome and my department at the Liver Institute where I work, is the only one in the world that caters to stool transplant and microbiome modulation for patients with severe alcohol-related liver diseases." Not stopping at just calling out Nayanthara's post, he went on to list the aspects of the post that are lost without proper research. "Be very careful about having hibiscus tea on a daily basis. Firstly, to clarify, hibiscus tea is made from Hibiscus Sabdariffa or Roselle. Do not confuse it with Hibiscus Macranthus, which is a herb claimed to promote male fertility and increase testosterone, which has been shown in at least one rat study; overall, understudied. The influenza does not clear this aspect," said Dr Cyriac, going on to debunk each of the claims in the post by sharing scientific data, and sarcastically mentioning that "the claim from 'Dr.' Nayanthara is false." Raising concerns about the prolonged use of hibiscus tea in men and women, The Liver Doc raised a few red flags about this red drink. In fact, he vehemently discouraged men and women in reproductive age groups from having hibiscus tea on regular basis because "there is insufficient evidence on its safety. Better to be safe than sorry." Further, dissing Ayurveda and the "absurd and unscientific theory of hot and cold foods principle," Dr Cyriac urged people to follow "real doctors advice for bettering your health. Take care." While Nayanthara has deleted her post from her Instagram account, netizens are emphasising on the lack of scientific temper in such celebrity posts.

## 'Confused' Gwyneth Paltrow asks Robert Downey Jr about returning to MCU as Doctor Doom: 'Are you a baddie now?'

Robert Downey Jr's exit as Iron Man from MCU in the 2019 film Avengers: Endgame was extremely emotional. The actor's most-loved character Iron Man aka Tony Stark died in the movie, and with Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige making it clear that he had no interest in messing with Downey's emotional exit, there was no hope left in fans to see the actor return to the Marvel Cinematic Universe. However, at the San Diego Comic Con, the Marvel panel dropped a bomb when it was revealed Robert Downey Jr will return to the MCU as Doctor Doom for Avengers 5. While this took the fans by surprise, the one person whose reaction was noteworthy was that of Robert's co-star Gwyneth Paltrow. Gwyneth Paltrow, who has acted in the MCU as Pepper Potts had a rather confused reaction to the announcement, mirroring many of the fans. Responding to Robert Downey Jr's post where the actor shared photos of himself with the mask of Doctor Doom and announced the news on his Instagram handle, Gwyneth asked a question which was on the minds of many of the fans.

Gwyneth who was confused with the news commented, "I don't get it, are you a baddie now?" The actor's comment had several reactions from netizens who manifested her return. One of the users replied to her comment and said, "Maybe you



However, at the San Diego Comic Con, the Marvel panel dropped a bomb when it was revealed Robert Downey Jr will return to the MCU as Doctor Doom for Avengers 5. While this took the fans by surprise, the one person whose reaction was noteworthy was that of Robert's co-star Gwyneth Paltrow.

should come back and stop him." Another user replied, "He needs Pepper to show him the way back to the good side, can you?" Doctor Doom is one of the famous characters from Marvel Comics, created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. The character first appeared in The Fantastic Four in 1962. Doctor Doom is depicted as the monarch of Latveria whose goal is to bring order to humanity through world conquest. He serves as the arch-enemy of Reed Richards and the Fantastic Four. The character has also come into conflict with other superheroes in the Marvel Universe, including Spider-Man, Iron Man, Doctor

Strange, Black Panther, X-Men, and the Avengers. Though the character is mostly portrayed as a villain, he has also been an ally at times, working with heroes if their goals align and only if it benefits him.

However, its not just Gwyneth, but many of Robert Downey Jr and Iron Man fans, who have a mixed feeling about the casting. A fan commented on the actor's post, "I'm so pissed off and in shock right now. How can they turn my Superhero into a super villain. This is so not right. I need time to accept this." Another fan wrote, "I wish they could've actually kept this a secret but yeah I'm hav-

ing mixed feelings and emotions." "I want iron man back", is the wish of many others. On Sunday, in a dramatic ceremony, Robert Downey Jr was introduced as Doctor Doom. The stage was occupied by men in olive robes and metal Doctor Doom-like masks. Introducing the character, Joe Russo said, "If we're going to do this... then we are going to need the greatest actor in the world. As proof of the unimaginable possibilities of the Marvel Universe, we give you the one person who could play Victor von Doom..." Soon, one of the masked men stepped to the centre and took off his mask, revealing Robert Downey Jr.

## Why Paris Olympians are losing sleep – heat, not enough food, thefts, transport woes



GNS News Agency, July 31

week, USA's tennis sensation Coco Gauff gave her followers on TikTok a glimpse into the rooms where she and her teammates are staying. The video had screaming sound effects with a caption that read: "10 girls, two bathrooms". An Indian table tennis player said the "cardboard" beds are so uncomfortable that they faced trouble "sleeping peacefully" for the first couple of nights. "But that is something we still got used to. The real problem is at the dining hall, where either there isn't enough food or, if it is available, the queue is very, very long," the paddler added. Supply issues have marred the football-field-sized dining area — the 3,500-seater hall feeds around 15,000 people and has been serving up to 40,000 meals per day — since the first day. Shuttler Tanisha Crasto said the day there was rajma on the menu, "it got over even before we could reach". And the containers were not refilled. Vegetarian items aren't the only ones that are being rationed — eggs and grilled meats, too, have been in short supply, according to leading French sports newspaper L'Equipe. An official with the Indian contingent said the issue was flagged with the organisers and normal service was slowly resuming. "We have advised our athletes to be careful in ordering from outside since we can't be sure of the quality. Inside the Village, at least quality won't be compromised," said the official.

The Indian contingent, meanwhile, is bracing itself for other issues which "can be under its control". On top of that list is transport. Team India has kept one station wagon, a mini SUV, two minivans and four other vehicles on standby to ferry athletes from the Village to the Games venues, which are spread all over Paris. "Every night, we look at the schedule for the next day and assign these vehicles to each athlete who is set to compete. This is a back-up, just in case the bus is running late," said the official, adding that this advanced planning came in handy for the badminton players and equestrian team members. Indian athletes have also been asked to use safety vaults inside their rooms to store their valuables after incidents of robbery were reported inside the Village. According to the Japan Times, a Rugby Sevens player from the country filed a police complaint for the theft of a wedding ring, a necklace and cash from his room inside the Village. The estimated value was 3,000 euros. Le Parisien reported that an Australian hockey team coach filed a police complaint regarding the theft of a bank card. The report added that the individual was contacted by his bank for a "suspicious transaction" of 1,500 Australian dollars. Nagal, meanwhile, said he wasn't impressed with the Village as a whole. "This is the biggest tournament in the world for every sport. I think they could have done a better job," he said.

## How practice and a Chinese Taipei stint made Sreeja near-perfect before the Olympics



GNS News Agency, July 31

On her 26th birthday, India's top-ranked player Sreeja Akula joined Manika Batra in the Round of 16 of the women's singles table tennis at the Olympics. She beat Singapore's World No. 52 Zeng Jian 4-2 (9-11, 12-10, 11-4, 11-5, 10-12, 12-10) on Wednesday. The Indian duo has created history, as this is the first time two Indians—ever one — have reached this stage of the Olympics. It may have been her birthday, but Jian wasn't in any mood to shower gifts on her opponent. Sreeja, World No. 25, was made to toil, but she was prepared for the long haul. She knew her first Olympics would not be easy, so she had prepared rigorously for the biggest stage. Her plan was simple-play all day. A table was all she needed for that.

She wanted a Table Tennis' version of an all-you-can-eat buffet when she headed to Chinese Taipei for training. Three practice sessions spanning 12 hours, including one post dinner, against 20 opponents with varying playing styles, was the Hyderabad's three-course fill before she set out to Paris. "When you travel for tournaments, you have timing slots to practice. But I just wanted to be at the table the entire day. I wanted to play against various types of opponents. I wanted nothing but table tennis for more than a week," Sreeja had told The Indian Express. That's exactly what she got. Whirlwind lead-up India's No. 1 paddler has had a whirlwind eight months leading up to the Paris Olympics. From doubting herself to becoming the first Indian to win a WTT tournament and beating a top Chinese player, to adding another WTT title, all the while suffering from a tennis elbow problem, she has been through it all. And silently. Now, nothing can distract her from her ultimate goal — medalling at the Olympics.

In April, she had a high-intensity 12-day training camp in Chinese Taipei where she sparred with 15-16 year-olds. When she was struggling with her tennis elbow, she sought help from Strength & Conditioning (S&C) experts from the Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad. Fully fit, Sreeja was ready to spearhead the women's team comprising her, alongside Manika and Archana Kamath. Considering their fabulous performances in WTT events and at the ITTF World Team Championships in Busan earlier this year, a lot was expected and Sreeja knew she had to play a pivotal role. "She's very motivated. She knows she has the quality and the game to perform at the

highest level," says Somnath Ghosh, her coach of 14 years. Olympics Paris 2024 Olympics — Table Tennis — Women's Singles Round of 32 — South Paris Arena 4, Paris, France — July 31, 2024. Sreeja Akula of India in action during her round of 32 match against Jian Zeng of Singapore. REUTERS/Isabel Infantes/When Sreeja won her first women's singles title at a World Table Tennis (WTT) event — the Corpus Christi Feeder tournament at the start of the year — she didn't really think much of it. It was a perfect start to the Olympic year, but Sreeja knew that Paris was a long way off and she was still far from her best. Before her win at Corpus Christi, Sreeja admitted she doubted herself on the world stage. "I was getting great results in the domestic circuit, but internationally I couldn't get the results I wanted," she had told this newspaper. Confidence restored after Corpus Christi, she reached the quarterfinal of the WTT Star Contender in Goa. It was, however, the World Team Championships that changed everything for her. In what was a historic day for Indian table tennis, Ayhika Mukherjee and Sreeja beat the Chinese World No. 1 and World No. 2 respectively. Though they lost the overall tie, suddenly the world was talking about the Indian women's TT. "After that win, we knew that everyone would be watching us now. Not just watching, they would be expecting us to do well too. It motivates you to do better and to improve. The Olympics was just added motivation," Sreeja had told this daily.

Ghosh has seen Sreeja grow into a world-beater but says she has become a different beast in 2024. After all, she jumped 70 places from World No. 94 in January to her best ranking — World No. 24 in June. "She's willing to do everything and anything to improve. That's the mindset of a champion," Ghosh says.

After winning a Feeder II series in Beirut, Sreeja could've had a training camp with top Indian players at an academy in the country, but instead she chose to travel to Chinese Taipei. "They have a phenomenal academy where upcoming youngsters focus only on table tennis," says Ghosh, who accompanied her. "The schedule was such that she would wake up at 6.30 am and go running. Immediately after that was breakfast, and then practice till lunch. Then practice again till dinner and after that, another practice. It was 11-12 days of just that and she was so happy." Sreeja said it was refreshing to have so many sparring partners. "When we train here, we don't have that many sparring partners but over there, we had players from all age groups. There were more than 20 15-16-year-olds who had amazing energy and drive. They also had varying playing styles that gave me great experience in the lead-up to the Olympics," she said. While the Chinese Taipei stint gave her incredible experience, it also bolstered her confidence to face any type of opponent. Her fearlessness was on display when she won the women's singles and women's doubles title at the WTT Contender in Lagos late last month. While Jian was a tough opponent, Sreeja knows a tougher test awaits in the Rd of 16. She knows that there won't be any 15-16-year-olds, but she says she no longer fears anyone. For she knows she is equipped to neuter the challenges.

## Is Kishane Thompson an inheritor of Bolt's legacy or an imposter, Paris would prove

GNS News Agency, July 31



about... there is no way you can ignore that guy," Boldon said on Letsrun.com podcast. Lyles has the medals in his cabinet back home — an Olympic bronze in the 100m and three golds at last year's World Championships; in the sprints and 4x100m relay. He also has something Kishane will not at this Olympics — experience of nailing rounds before the final. Kishane will have to watch out for butterflies in his stomach. The first time Kishane will run heats, semis and final at a major competition is at the Olympics. Lyles is a proven champion and gunning for his first Olympic gold will give the 27-year-old showman the added motivation to silence critics and upstarts like Kishane. Lyles (9.81 this year) will also have to watch out for Oblique Seville (9.81), the fourth fastest man of 2024, also a Jamaican, and the unpredictable and trailblazing Kenyan star Ferdinand Omoniyi (9.79). Kishane is eyeing a podium place in Paris, he also has tough acts to follow in Bolt, Blake and Powell. "Those men were like beasts, they ran fast, they knew they were fast and they could control their speed with the snap of their fingers. They could slow down from 50 metres and run really high 9.8s and 9.9s," Kishane said.

## When Lakshya Sen played an insane shot in impressive win over Jonatan Christie

GNS News Agency, July 31

After falling to a six-point trail in the opening game, Lakshya rallied back remarkably to cut the deficit and outlast Christie in the closing passage of the game. The 22-year-old Sen remained ice-cool under pressure and launched a terrific shot in a crunch rally to freeze Christie's momentum. Sen unfurled a stunning behind-the-back near-forehand in the rally. Not only did it loop over the net, the Indian managed to take the lead to 20-18 with his impulsive stroke. Sen then routed Christie 21-12 in the second game to mark his berth in the knockouts in 50 minutes. This was only Sen's second win in six meetings against Christie, after having dropped four consecutive matches between the pair since their first meeting in 2020. Sen is now slated to take on the winner of Group K which will be decided by the clash between his compatriot HS Prannoy and Vietnam's Le Duc Phat. Prannoy and Duc Phat, level on points, will go head on a similar virtual knockout clash like Sen and Christie on Wednesday evening. WOW. What a time to pull off a behind-the-back shot in the middle of a furious flat exchange, and to eventually win the rally to set up game point. Earlier, PV Sindhu waltzed into the pre-quarterfinals of the Olympic Games' women's singles event, beating Estonia's Kristin Kuuba of Estonia in straight games. Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, won 21-5 21-10 in a match that only lasted 33 minutes and topped her group.

## 'Keep your skills and fitness levels high': Gambhir's stern message for India players that will miss Sri Lanka ODIs

GNS News Agency, July 31

With his first assignment as India head coach culminating with a 3-0 T20I series whitewash of Sri Lanka in Pallekele, Gautam Gambhir was content with the outcome but also delivered an important point in his post-game dressing room speech. India pulled off a stunning Super Over win against the hosts after posting 137 for nine. Batting first, India were subjected to an early collapse before Shubman Gill and Ravi Kumar Yadav led the side to a fighting total on a dicey surface. However, Sri Lanka suffered another downfall with the bat as they failed to reel in nine runs from the last two overs against part-timers Rinku Singh and captain Suryakumar Yadav himself. India proceeded to dominate the Super Over, conceding only two runs for as many wickets before Suryakumar hit the winning runs off the first ball.

While Gambhir started his speech by lauding Suryakumar's captaincy and batting, the 42-year-old immediately veered to address the players that will not be part of the three-match ODI leg that will begin in Colombo T20I captain Suryakumar, all-rounder Hardik Pandya, Sanju Samson, Rinku Singh, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Ravi Bishnoi will not feature in the 50-over format of the tour. India's next T20I assignment will be against Bangladesh in early October. "Some of the guys, who won't



be a part of the 50-over format, will have a longer break. So make sure when you come back for the Bangladesh series, you keep your skills and fitness levels high," Gambhir said. "You don't want to come for that series thinking that, okay, I can just turn up and probably deliver for the team. So, make sure that from the fitness point of view," the two-time World Cup winner added. Gambhir's focus will now move to the 50-overs leg where seniors Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli will mark their ODI return for the first time since the 2023 ODI World Cup final last November.

## Lanka's great escape to defeat: Starring Washington, Surya and Rinku

GNS News Agency, July 31

These are early days for Suryakumar Yadav as captain, but he is already making all the right impressions, reinforcing the faith shown by the selectors and head coach Gautam Gambhir for the role ahead of Hardik Pandya. For the first time in this series, on a pitch that had something for the bowlers, especially the spinners, defending a paltry 137, India managed to tie the game and take it to the Super Overs. At 108/1 at the end of 15 overs, Sri Lanka had the game in their bag. Or so one thought. Instead, they self-destructed, losing their next seven wickets for just 22 runs. In three successive matches, their batting unit has endured three collapses, and this one was perhaps the most soul-crushing of the lot. It was Kusal Mendis' dismissal in the second ball of the 16th over that changed the course of the innings for the hosts. In the last four overs, with eight wickets in hand, Sri Lanka needed 23. Washington Sundar's twin strikes of Wanindu Hasaranga and Charith Asalanka made Sri Lanka press the panic button. But a wayward over from Khaleel Ahmed, where he sent down 5 wides in an 11-ball over, reduced the equation to 9 off 12 balls. Still it looked like a routine chase with six wickets in hand. But off Rinku Singh's part-time off-spin, they lost Kusal Perera and Ramesh Mendis. With six needed off the last over, Suryakumar continued to be brave by bringing himself on. It was a huge punt, but it paid off as he took two

wickets in as many balls, conceding just 5 runs. Out of nowhere India managed to change the tide. Context and opposition notwithstanding it was as good as the final in Barbados. Washington Pallekele: India's Suryakumar Yadav with teammates celebrates the wicket of Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis during the 3rd T20 International cricket match between India and Sri Lanka at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium, in Pallekele, Tuesday, July 30, 2024. (PTI Photo/Kunal Patil) Sri Lanka's ordeal was over when they made just two runs in the Super Over, a target India polished off in one ball. With the series already in the kitty, Tuesday was more about giving opportunities to those in the bench as they made four changes to the XI. But the one who failed to grab the opportunity was Sanju Samson. For a second successive match, he had the chance to firmly assert his place in the side. With Shubman Gill returning, he was demoted to No 3, a slot he so used to in the IPL. Instead, he ended up being debutant seamer Chamindu Wickramasinghe's first wicket as he held out at deep cover off the fourth ball. With Rishabh Pant high in the pecking order and Dhruv Jurel waiting in the wings, time is running out for Samson. Like Samson, Rinku too missed an opportunity. Like Samson, he too went for big shot, this time off Maheesh Theekshana, but could only sky it to Matheesha Pathirana at mid-on.