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NGT halts Kodangal lift irrigation project

Hyderabad, Aug. 26 (NSS): The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has delivered a significant setback to the Telangana government concerning the Narayanapet Kodangal lift irrigation project. On Tuesday, it issued a directive stating that no work is to proceed at the site until environmental clearance is obtained. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has taken the Narayanapet-Kodangal Lift Irrigation project very prestigiously and this initiative is designed to supply irrigation water to the Narayanapet and Kodangal constituencies within the former Mahabubnagar district.

The Kankurthi reservoir will play a crucial role in this lift irrigation project. Its construction is planned to occur in two phases, with the government aiming to enhance the scheme's implementation capacity through the development of the Kanukurthi Reservoir. The state government has planned to supply irrigation water to the drought-stricken regions of Narayanpet, Kodangal, and Maktal by drawing water from the Krishna River.

FAKE LIQUOR LABELS AND HEALS SEIZED

Hyderabad, Aug.26 (NSS): The Telangana task force team busted a fake liquor brand labels and duplicate Heals (Holographic excise adhesive labels) racket at Kushaiguda of Malkajgiri division, and seized a flexo printing machine, plates of top liquor brands (Royal Stag, AC Black, Old Admiral etc.), 31,900 liquor pouches, and thousands of fake holographic excise adhesive labels. Two accused - Gaddameedi Prakash and Nenavath Rajesh were arrested, while the kev accused Naveen Goud is already in custody in the Huzurnagar spurious liquor case. The arrested persons used to supply fake liquor packaging across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

The raids were conducted as per instructions of Excise commissioner Harikiran, director of enforcement Shawnawaz Khasim, Joint commissioner Qureshi and assistant commissioner P Pranavi.

Telangana Congress leaders, including CM Revanth, join Voter Adhikar Yatra



Hyderabad, Aug.26: Congress leaders from Telangana, including Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, on Tuesday participated in the ongoing Voter Adhikar Yatra (Voter Rights Yatra) in Bihar alongside Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha.

The gathering included notable figures such as TPCC president Mahesh Kumar Goud, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, Ministers Ponnam Prabhakar, Seethakka, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, and Vakati Srihari, as well as MP Anil Kumar Yadav and DCC President Rohin Reddy. During the event, the Telangana leaders also met Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi at Paras in Bihar to

convey their support for the Yatra. This Yatra is part of the INDIA bloc's statewide initiative aimed at promoting awareness regarding electoral rights and addressing issues of alleged vote suppression, featuring significant involvement from senior leaders of Congress and other opposition parties. The 'Voter Adhikar Yatra, spanning 1,300 kilometers, began on August 17 in Sasaram, Bihar. This journey will take place over 16 days, visiting more than 20 districts, and will culminate in a rally in Patna on September 1. The campaign, led by the Congress party, emphasises issues related to voter suppression and the importance of democratic accountability, presenting the Yatra as a "struggle to safeguard electoral rights." (

GOVERNOR AND CM EXTEND VINAYAKA CHAVITHI GREETINGS



Hyderabad, Aug.26 Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma conveyed festive greetings to the people on the occasion of Vinayaka Chavithi to be celebrated tomorrow (August 27). The Governor wished peace, progress, prosperity and happiness to the people of Telangana and the nation. He prayed to Lord Ganesha to remove all obstacles and guide the State on the path of unity and development. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy also extended heartfelt greetings, praying to Lord Vigneshwara to bless people with happiness, health and wealth. He urged the devotees to celebrate the festival with devotion and grandeur, and directed the police to ensure smooth traffic and safety during festivities.

PM flags off first 'Made in India' e-Vitara, to be exported to 100 countries

GNS News Agency, August 26

Ahmedabad: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on a two-day visit to his home state Gujarat, inaugurated and flagged off a 'Made in India' 'e-Vitara', the first global strategic Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) of Suzuki, on Tuesday. The inauguration by the Prime Minister took place in the presence of Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and the Ambassador of Japan, Keiichi Ono.

The rollout of 'Made-in-India' BEVs marks the country's big strides towards self-reliance and underscores the nation's ambitious plans to move towards green energy. Before flagging off the first unit of the e-Vitara, PM Modi also



termed it a 'special day' in India's quest for self-reliance and also informed that the production of hybrid battery electrodes will begin at a plant in Gujarat soon, giving a big boost to the country's battery eco-

These 'Made in India' BEVs will be exported to more than one hundred countries, including ad-

vanced markets such as Europe and Japan.PM Modi will also inaugurate the next phase of India's battery ecosystem with the start of local production of hybrid battery electrodes at TDS Lithium-Ion Battery plant in Gujarat. The plant, a joint venture of Toshiba, Denso and Suzuki, will boost domestic manufacturing and clean energy in-

Revanth Reddy faces heat in Bihar over old 'DNA' remark



GNS News Agency, August 26

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's maiden campaign for the Binar Assembly polls has trig gered sharp criticism, with people in the State questioning what they described as his "hatred" towards Biharis.

Reddy, who campaigned in Bihar on Tuesday along with Congress MPs Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, faced strong reactions to his past remarks against people from Bihar, including IAS officers serving in Telangana. His presence in Bihar drew flak from political leaders and citizens alike. Jan Suraj founder Prashant Kishor openly questioned Reddy's participation in the campaign. "Who is Revanth Reddy and what is his contribution to Bihar? He has abused Bihar people and said labour work is in the DNA of Biharis," Kishor said.

Reddy's controversial comments, made soon after assuming office in 2023, had sparked a political row, with parties including the JD(U) and BJP condemning them as divisive and arrogant. Criticising top officials who served during former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao's tenure, Reddy had then declared: "My DNA is Telangana and it is better than Bihar DNA."Recalling the statement, Kishor warned: "What is his status in Bihar? If Revanth Reddy visits any village, people will chase him with sticks." He also targeted Rahul Gandhi for inviting Reddy to campaign, saying, "This shows Rahul Gandhi's mindset. He invited a person who abused Bihar people."Reddy wound up his trip and returned to Hyderabad late in the evening. Apart from accompanying the Gandhis, he barely addressed the public

Congress government now uses PDS carry bags to push publicity for 'Six Guarantees'

GNS News Agency, August 26

Karimnagar: The State government has decided to distribute carry bags with the Congress Six Guarantees logo and photographs of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy along with PDS rice from September. The move comes after the government tried to draw political mileage from introducing fine variety rice through fair price shops and is now seeking to extend publicity of its flagship promises. The eco-friendly jute bags, with a capacity of 15 kg, will be filled with rice and handed over to card holders at PDS outlets. Though September quota rice has already reached ration shops, the bags are yet to be supplied. Each bag carries the Six Guarantees logo - Mahalakshmi, Gruhalakshmi, Yuva Vikasam, Indiramma houses, Cheyutha and Rythu Bharosa – besides photographs of the Chief Minister and the Civil Supplies Minister. A slogan, "Andariki Sanna Biyyam Praja Prabutvamlone Sadyam" (fine variety rice to all is possible only under Congress government), is printed on the bags along with the tagline, "Pragathi Patham Sakalajana Hitham Mana Praja Prabuthvam."

CONG GOVT ENSURING 365 DAYS WORK FOR WEAVERS: MINISTER TUMMALA

Hyderabad, Aug.26 (NSS):Minister for agriculture, handlooms and textiles Tummala Nageswara Rao today asserted that the Congress government is ensuring 365 days of work for weavers through various welfare schemes. About Rs.1,000 crore has been released for the sector since the Congress government came into power, he noted.

Addressing a gathering in Rajanna Sircilla, Tummala highlighted the "Handloom Abhayahastam Scheme", where the workers' savings are matched by the government's contributions, with Rs.290.09 crore deposited into 36,133 workers' accounts in 2024-25. Similarly, power loom workers benefited with Rs.34.07 crore deposits. Under "Netanna Bharosa", handloom weavers get Rs. 18,000 annually, and allied workers get Rs.6,000, with Rs.12 crore allocated this year. The "Netanna Bhadhrata Scheme" provides Rs. 5 lakh disbursed to 401 families so far, he explained.

The minister further said the "Indira Mahila Shakti Sarees Scheme" is providing continuous work, with two sarees given free of cost to about 65 lakh self help group (SHG) women annually. Establishment of "Konda Laxman Bapuji Indian Institute of Handloom Technology", a yarn



depot in Vemulawada, is labelled as a special Telangana Handloom brand. The institute would provide a 3-year diploma course in the field of handloom textiles to the children of the weavers in the state and currently about 120 students were studying in the institute, he claimed.

KTR criticises CM Revanth for prioritising Delhi dreams over urea shortage



BRS working president KT Rama Rao strongly criticised Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and his cabinet members for their focus on "Delhi dreams" while farmers in Telangana are facing an increasing shortage of urea. He raised concerns about the government's priorities, stating, "Farmers are struggling here, but where are the Chief Minister and ministers? The issues are in Telangana, yet the CM and his ministers are in Delhi and

In a statement here on Tuesday, KTR emphasised the difficulties that farmers are encountering, accusing the government of neglect and pointing out that while farmers are desperately seeking urea, the Chief Minister and his team are occupied with travel to states conducting elections. He also expressed disappointment with Congress and BJP MPs for their lack of action regarding the crisis, stating, "Congress MPs are unaware when it comes to urea, and BJP MPs do not even attempt to address the situation."The BRS leader accused national parties of putting electoral gains ahead of the well-being of the people. He stated, "National parties focus on winning votes, while it is the people of Telangana who suffer."

KT Rama Rao cautioned that the public is attentive to the government's lack of action and the apathy of national parties. The BRS working president urged for prompt measures to tackle the urea shortage and resolve the issues faced by farmers. "The government needs to take rapid steps to address the challenges confronted by farmers," he emphasised, highlighting that citizens are scrutinizing the State's leadership and expect account-

NCLAT judge alleges pressure from 'revered' higher judiciary member, recuses from insolvency case

GNS News Agency, August 26

New Delhi: In a rare incident, a judicial member of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has alleged being "approached by one of the most revered members of the higher judiciary", seeking an order in favour of a party, and has recused himself from hearing the matter. The Chennai-based bench of the appellate tribunal has even recorded the incidence in a two-paragraph order passed on August 13. Justice Sharad Kumar Sharma, the judicial member of the NCLAT, has recused himself from hearing the

"We are anguished to observe, that one of us, Member (Judicial), has been approached by one of the most revered members of the higher judiciary of this country for seeking an order in favour of a particular party. Hence, I recuse to hear the matter," the NCLAT bench said in the order. It requested that the matter be placed "before the Hon'ble chairperson for nomination of an appropriate bench" for hearing. The two-member bench comprised Justice Sharma and Technical Member Jatindranath Swain. The bench was hearing an appeal filed by AS Reddy, suspended director of Hyderabad-based KLSR Infratech, which is facing Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

Telangana Assembly Sessions likely from August 30 Commence

GNS News Agency, August 26

Hyderabad: At a time when the PC Ghose Commission has pointed fingers at BRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao and the government is looking to discuss the report in the Assembly, the big question in the political circles is whether KCR will come to the Assembly and defend himself. While many party leaders are tight-lipped on this issue, some leaders said in hushed tones that the BRS chief should effectively counter the ruling party in the Assembly with facts

However, some other party leaders said that Rao might not be keen on coming to the House for varying reasons, especially on health grounds. Moreover, senior leaders like K T Hama Hao and T Harish Hao could answer every ques: tion raised in the Kaleshwaram report dexterously, they added. The government is looking to discuss the Kaleshwaram report in the Assembly during a special session likely to be held during the third week of August. The BRS chief has skipped Assembly sessions since the elections except for important occasions like taking oath as a member and on the first day of the budget session. However, he did not participate in any discussion. Now with allegations levelled specifically against the Leader of the Opposition, there is pressure on the BRS chief to attend the Assembly and defend himself. A senior leader, who did not want to be named, said that KCR is the architect of irrigation projects in the state and it is better if he himself counters Revanth Reddy in the House instead of making others speak on his behalf.

BJP will prepare Hindu vote bank in Telangana, says MoS Bandi Sanjay



GNS News Agency, August 26

Hyderabad: Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said on Tuesday that the BJP will definitely prepare a Hindu vote bank in Telangana and unite Hindu society. He told media persons in Karimnagar that he won the election from Karimnagar Lok Sabha constituency with a Hindu vote bank." I say this openly and proudly that I won because of Hindu votes," he said. The minister reacted strongly to the remarks made by state Congress chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud over BJP misusing religion for the sake of votes. "Election or no election, BJP always works for Sanathan Dharma and Hindu Samaj," he professed.

During the ongoing Janahita padyatra in Karimnagar, the Telangana Congress president threw a challenge to Bandi Sanjay to win the election without bringing in religion. He had said that begging for votes in the name of god was the bankruptcy of BJP leaders. "You wear caps, offer namaz and attend iftar parties for Muslim votes.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Dharmasthala: Much ado about nothing, literally . . .

Acrimonious, combative politics too has its limits. But what has happened in Dharmasthala continues to be a he first sensational report about 'hundreds of bodies bured between 1995 and 2014' surfaced initially. While it was a trending topic all through these days as the case took its wn twists and turns, it finally ended as a badly botched up build-up for a political battle which seemed a trump card n the hands of the ruling party but now boomeranging on as a political controversy. It had all the elements of a cat and mouse game to begin with. A revered Hindu institu ion, the world over, Dharmasthala was accused of being centre of a horrible controversy, which was the handivork of a masked whistleblower who had started the blame name well. Aided by a legal protection which guaranteed is anonymity, his statements alleging that the bodies he had buried bore traces of strangulation and sexual assault it the bull's eye, virtually immediately. Out came the renta-cause activists and bleeding hearts pleading for justice or the hapless female devotees subjected to such inhu-

The Mr. Anonymous (subsequently identified as Chinnaiah) also declared that he had to live in hiding for 12 years in neighbouring Tamil Nadu after all this devastation took place, which was what he saw and reported. There was no way that this sensational outbreak of 'exclusive' news items would not spiral out of control in the lays that followed. After an initial round of wait-and-watch, but came the knives from both sides as the saffronites and secularists clashed with each other in a no-hold-barred ashion.

ECO-FRIENDLY GANESHA DRIVE

ganization", under the leadership of Dr CH Bhadra, has organized awareness seminars and distributed clay Ganeshas in various schools across Hyderabad city. Everyone should enjoy the festival while also protecting the environment. "Due to the Plaster of Paris idols, our lakes, rivers, ponds and oceans are becoming heavily polluted, endangering the biodiversity in these water bodies", he warned. Inaugurating the programme with Ganesha Pooja, performed by the chief guest Krishna Chamundeshwari Swamiji, Head of Chamundeshwari Peetham said that their Peetham has been conducting this wonderful initiative for over four decades with the slogan: "Let's worship clay Ganesha, let's worship Maha Ganesha" to promote environmental conservation among students and their parents. Renowned international environmentalist and Global Chairman of the Center for Environment Education and Research, Dr. Ramesh Naidu stated that the World Environmental Organization has achieved remarkable successes in its environmental protection mission. In 2017, a massive rally was organized near Khairatabad giant Ganesha idol with the slogan "Clay Ganeshas are sweet, Plaster of Paris idols - No, No". Following an appeal to the Khairatabad Utsav Committee, even the now world-famous Maha Ganesha idol was made with clay - a testament to the commendable efforts of the World Environmental Organization, he noted.

CM REVANTH REDDY SHOULD APOLOGISE TO KCR: BRS LEADERS DEMAND

Hyderabad, Aug.26: Several BRS leaders on Tuesday demanded that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy should tender an apology to BRS party chief K. Chandrashekar Rao for making derogatory remarks at Osmania University in the city. Yesterday, the CM said that there were 'human beasts' in the farmhouse. The BRS leaders condemned the language used by the CM against KCR. Leader of opposition in Legislative Council Sirikonda Madhusudanachari, former minister Jogu Ramanna and other senior leaders strongly condemned the CM's comments by terming them as "unbecoming of his office". Madhusudanachari alleged that Revanth was resorting to "derogatory language" as he had failed to fulfil his poll promises. The BRS leader described KCR as "another Gandhi" who had achieved Telangana state through non-violence, and accused the Congress for alleged "historical atrocities, Emergency excesses and the 1969 Telangana movement deaths". Former minister and BRS leader Jogu Ramanna said Revanth Reddy, while inaugurating various projects built during the previous BRS regime, was "damaging the state's reputation" by repeatedly targeting KCR. Other leaders, including G. Devi Prasad, Dudimetla Balaraju Yadav, Palle Ravikumar and Upendra Chari, said it was inappropriate for the CM to use such language at a premier institution like

M. Ghanashyam Krishna of UoH honoured as Academician of Asia Pacific Academy of Materials

Hyderabad, Aug.26 Professor M. Ghanashyam Krishna, Senior Professor in the Centre for Advanced Studies in Electronics Science and Technology, School of Physics, University of Hyderabad (UoH) has been elected as Academician of the Asia Pacific Academy of Materials (APAM) for his contributions to the areas of thin films, nanostructured materials and sensors. APAM is a scientific society oriented on problems of promotion of close cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region in the field of advanced materials with members from Australia, Russia, India, China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Prof. Ghanashyam Krishna is only the second faculty member of the University of Hyderabad after Prof. T.P. Radhakrishnan of the School of Chemistry to be elected as Academician of APAM.

Let's work together to save people's lives. District Collector Jitesh V. Patil at the District Level Road Safety Committee meeting."



Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradri Kothagudem Bureau, August 26, Indian Chronicle: District Collector Jitesh V. Patil has ordered the concerned officials to take strong measures to prevent road accidents in the district. The District Level Road Safety Committee review meeting was held at the IDOC office meeting hall on Tuesday under the chairmanship of District Collector Jitesh V. Patil. As part of this meeting, details were first sought from the concerned department officials about the measures being taken regarding road safety. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said, "Road accidents are increasing day by day in the wake of increasing use of motor vehicles in the district." He said that accidents are happening more and more due to the poor condition of vehicles, speeding, negligence of drivers, and failure to obey traffic signals. He said that the family members of those who are involved in accidents are becoming orphans. He said that the police, R&B, and medical department officials should work in coordination to reduce the number of deaths in road accidents. He said that cases should be registered against those who drive vehicles after consuming alcohol and steps should be taken to ensure

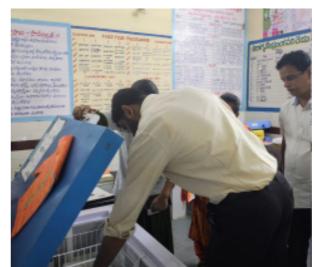


that they are punished in jail. He said that the places where accidents often occur should be identified and precautions should be taken to prevent them. He said that every twowheeler rider should wear a helmet. He ordered the police department to conduct a special drive on these. He ordered the transport department to install rubber speed controllers and hazard indicators to prevent accidents on the national highway. He suggested that steps should be taken to install CCTV cameras at road junctions, dhabas, and restaurants. The collector said that all departments should work together in coordination to save the lives of the people.In this meeting, Trainee Collector Saurabh Sharma, Additional Collector Local Body Vidya Chandana, ZP CEO Nagalakshmi, Tribal Welfare E E Bhadrachalam Chandrasekhar, R&B E E Kothagudem Venkateswarlu, DE Nageswara Rao, NP DC LS. E, Mahender, Panchayat Raj E E Srinivasa Rao, Municipal Commissioner Illandu Srikanth, Kothagudem Municipal Commissioner Sujatha, RTO Venkataramana, Kothagudem National Highway DE Shailaja, Medical Department Veerababu, Ramesh, and others participated.

People coming to the primary health center should be provided with better medical care—District Collector Jitesh V. Patil.



"Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradri Kothagudem Bureau, August 26, Indian Chronicle: District Collector Jitesh V. Patil has ordered the doctors to provide better medical care to people coming to the health center with various problems. On Tuesday, the Collector conducted a surprise inspection of the Urban Primary Health Center in Shekharam Banjara village of Palvancha mandal. As part of this inspection, the Collector monitored all the departments of the health center and closely examined the patient records, registers, drug stocks, vaccine safety, and lab facilities. During the inspection, the Collector spoke to the doctors and nursing staff and ordered them to treat the patients coming to the health center with courtesy and provide good medical care on time. He specifically advised the doctors and staff to be punctual and not neglect their duties with discipline. He clarified that special attention should be paid to pregnant women, young children, and the elderly, and that there should be no lapse in services. The Collector paid special attention to the cleanliness, distribution of medicines, and attendance records at the health center. He personally inspected the vaccine storage freezer and checked whether the cold chain was being maintained properly. He advised the medical staff to take precautions to prevent any lapses in vaccine safety. On this occasion, the Collector, who noticed the problem of roof slab leakage in the building, ordered the concerned officials to undertake immediate repairs. He wanted to provide all facilities so that the people do not face any difficulties. The Collector suggested that every primary health center in the district should become a reliable medical service center for the people and that the medical staff





should work with dedication. He urged the people to use government medical services with more confidence. Similarly, he clarified that strict steps would be taken to improve health services in the district, and the goal is to provide quality medical services to the people. He wanted to improve basic medical facilities in every village and provide better medical facilities to the people. Dr. Krishnakumari, PHO Srinivas, LT Shruti, Staff Nurse Ramulamma, Pharmacist Lalitha, Medical Assistant Sudhakar, Primary Health Center staff, and relevant officials participated in this inspection along with the Collector.

Public participation is needed in environmental protection: District Collector Jitesh V. Patil"""

"Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradri Kothagudem Bureau, August 26, Indian Chronicle:The Telangana Pollution Control Board (TSPCB), as part of its annual programs aimed at environmental protection, successfully organized the distribution program of clay Ganpati idols this year as well. The main objective of this program is to increase environmental awareness among the people and reduce the use of plaster of Paris idols, especially on the occasion of Vinayaka Chavithi, said District Collector Jitesh V. Patil.On the occasion of Vinayaka Chavithi on the 27th, two thousand clay Ganpati idols were distributed free of cost in the Kothagudem and Palvancha areas. This program was undertaken on the orders of



the Member Secretary of the Telangana Pollution Control Board and the District Collector. As part of this distribution program, the idols were given to the people in front of Singareni School at Kothagudem Post Office Center. The program was

officially inaugurated by District Collector Shri Jitesh V. Patil I.A.S. He unveiled wall posters and clay Ganpati idols and explained the importance of environmental protection to the people. Telangana Pollution Control Board Environmen-

Ravinder and other office staff participated in the program. Through this program, the message of celebrating festivals in an eco-friendly manner went out to the people. This is a crucial step in preventing plastic and chemical pollution.

MAJOR DRUG RACKET BUSTED AT MAHINDRA UNIVERSITY

Hyderabad, Aug.26: Sleuths of EAGLE team, Telangana have cracked down on a major inter-state drug peddling racket that was supplying narcotics to University students in Hyderabad. Based on a credible information, the team conducted a raid yesterday at Shivalayam colony, Suraram in Jeedimetla area. Four accused were arrested who included - Nevelle Tongbram, Ambati Ganesh, Boosa Shiva Kumar and Mohd. Ashar Jawed Khan and seized about 1.15 kg ganja, 47 grams of OG weed, and drug paraphernalia. The racket linked Delhi, Bidar and foreign suppliers, with at least 50 students under probe. Couriers like DTDC and Maruthi were misused to deliver narcotics. Students Bhaskar and Dinesh allegedly sourced MDMA from a Nigerian contact 'Nick'.

During the investigation of Malnadu Restaurant case, it was revealed that drug parcels were booked through one Rajesh Enterprises, a franchise of Maruti Couriers. Eagle Team obtained the list of parcels sent by Maruti Couriers to Hyderabad. On further investigations, it was seen that the receiver mobile numbers were that of one Indian Mobile number which was being used by a Nigerian from Nigeria. We reached a dead end due to the gross malpractice of Rajesh Enterprises (a franchise holder of Maruti Couriers). The same Nick had earlier provided Drugs worth Rs.1.3 Lakhs and 80,000 on two occasions to Surya of Malnadu case.

Based on the payments made through banking channels, the Eagle team could identify some 50 students who might have been consuming drugs. Investigations revealed that the accused had set up a well-structured supply chain connecting interstate suppliers, local peddler and university students. Drugs were procured from Delhi and Bidar, smuggled into Hyderabad through courier and transport networks, and then pushed into Mahindra University through student distributors. The probe further established that at least 50 student consumers were regularly buying and using drugs from this network, and legal action will follow against all of them under the NDPS Act. Besides Ganja and Weed, the sleuths seized multiple high-end smartphones which were used for handling orders, UPI payments and courier tracking. The seizures confirm that the accused were running a commercial-scale narcotics business with organized supply and retail mechanisms. A case has been registered at Cyberabad Narcotic PS under various sections of the NDPS Act. In the last one year, the EAGLE team has successfully conducted rains in various institutions and colleges - Symbiosis College, Osmania General Hospital (OGH), Guru Nanak Engineering College, Culinary Academy of India, Kundanbagh, Chaitanya Bharathi Institute of Technology (CBIT), IIIT Basara, JNTU Jogipet, Medicity Medical College, ICFAI and Osmania University.

Bandi Sanjay's attitude still reflects a corporator's mindset : Chamala

Hyderabad, Aug.26Congress MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy has criticised Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay for his remarks about TPCC President Mahesh Kumar.He suggested that Bandi Sanjay has not yet moved beyond his experience as a corporator and still perceives himself as operating at that same level.

In a statement made on Tuesday, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy noted that while TPCC Mahesh Kumar Goud raised concerns regarding vote theft, Bandi Sanjay dismissed the issue and shifted focus to a different topic."Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi provided a detailed PowerPoint presentation addressing vote theft. In one household, there are 100 votes, while 78 votes are registered under a pub's name. This information was presented alongside evidence, highlighting irregularities that also occurred in Bengaluru," Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy remarked. He raised concerns about the Union government's reluctance to engage in a discussion on the issue within Parliament. The Congress MP stated that if there were truly no incidents of vote theft, a debate should be held. He noted that during a press conference, the Election Commissioner spoke solely about political matters and failed to address any of the questions posed

Good Darshan or not: Beware of Scam!!

Hyderabad, Aug.26: Unscrupulous elements are changing their tactics with each passing day off-late to cheat the gullible people, and loot their hard earned money. The latest one is in the name of the phone from Andhra Pradesh chief minister's office.

The calls are coming from numbers such as 8645319423, 8645361973, and others. The caller says in Telugu: "we are from Andhra Pradesh chief minister's office. If you had good Darshan, please press 1, if not press 2, or if you have any complaints about Prasadam, press 3. One person said he has received two calls today, and the number display that it is from Mangalagiri. Beware: these are calls from cyber crooks who plan to rob you of your money from bank accounts. As soon as you press the number as suggested by the scammers, all details about your bank accounts, etc., will go to their hands and they will loot your money. If you receive such calls or messages. don't press any number, but disconnect the phone and be safe. Also, inform 1930 the phone number and details

ACB ARRESTS ENGG CONSULTANT FOR TAKING BRIBE

Hyderabad, Aug.26 Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) officials on Tuesday caught red-handed Bandakindi Parushuramulu, Engineering consultant for MGNREGS, posted at the office of MPDO, Maddur Mandal in Siddipet district.

At 2.20 pm, the officer was apprehended while accepting a bribe of Rs.11,500 from a complainant for doing an official favour i.e. for verifying and completing check measurements of MGNREGS files and forwarding them to higher authorities for sanction of bills.

Efforts by Officials Needed to Provide Basic Amenities in Remote Tribal Villages Bhadradri Kothagudem District Collector Jitesh V. Patil orders""



"Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradri Kothagudem Bureau, August 26, Indian Chronicle, District: The District Collector Jitesh V. Patil has ordered officials to provide necessary basic amenities to the tribals living in the dense forest areas of the Agency area, as part of the PM Dharti Abajan Rashtriya Gaurav Utkarsh Abhiyan scheme. ""On Tuesday, he held a special meeting with ITDA Project Officer B. Rahul, Additional Collector Venugopal, and other officials at the Collectorate conference hall. During the meeting, they discussed the action plan to ensure the success of the PM Dharti Abajan Rashtriya Gaurav Utkarsh Abhiyan program. He then administered an oath to all the officials. "The Collector stated that special training has been provided to district-level officials at the NINSMIC center in Hyderabad to strictly implement this scheme in 134 villages across 19 mandals with a high concentration of remote villages in the Agency area. He instructed the district-level committee members to form block-wise committees at the mandal level, provide them with training, raise awareness among the villagers about the required basic amenities, and prepare plans accordingly. ""He urged them to conduct special camps through departments like Education, Medical

and Health, Rural Development, ICDS, Forest, Jal Jeevan Mission, Tribal Welfare, and RWS to provide the necessary basic amenities to the tribals in these villages, ensuring that all people benefit from these departments. ""He suggested that the mandal-level committee members go doorto-door to raise awareness about these schemes among the tribals and gather village elders and tribals to hold Gram Sabhas (village meetings). In these Gram Sabhas, they should be made aware of the basic amenities they need, especially education, healthcare, drinking water facilities, electricity, village roads, Podu land titles related to the forest department, welfare schemes through Tribal Welfare and Rural Development, and facilities for tribal farmers through the Jal Jeevan Mission. He emphasized that officials from every department must take special responsibility to participate in this program and take strict measures to ensure that tribals receive all kinds of facilities. "The event was attended by DRDO Vidyachandana, Assistant Project Officer General David Raj, DMHO Vijayalakshmi, DEO Nagalakshmi, AO Sunnam Rambabu, ICDS PD Swarnalatha Lenina, RWS DE Harilal, and other departmen-

Four Sentenced to Jail in Attempted Murder Case""

"""Bhukya ranjith naik,Bhadradri kothagudem Bureau, August 26, Indian Chronicle: Kothagudem Principal Assistant Sessions Judge K. Kiran Kumar on Tuesday sentenced four individuals to jail and a fine in an attempted murder case stemming from a land dispute. "On February 11, 2019, Talluri Bharathi of Sarapaka village in Burgampadu mandal filed a police complaint. According to her statement, her husband Jagadeeswar Rao and brother-in-law Sarveswara Rao were attacked while working on their land. The attackers, identified as Sunnam Muthaiya, Sunnam Tulasamma, Sunnam Gopalakrishna (alias Gopal) of Iravendi village, and Komaram Anjaiah of Chinthirya in Ashwapuram mandal, along with others, assaulted them with knives and axes in an attempt to murder them. Bharathi stated that a long-standing land dispute was the motive for the attack.""Witnesses to the attack, including villagers Bhukya Balaji, Bhukya Zakri, Badawat Balakrishna, and Darawat Suresh, were interrogated by the police. The injured victims were immediately taken to the Burgampadu Government Hospital. The then-Sub-Inspector, B. Balakrishna, registered a case, and after completing the investigation, he submitted a charge sheet to the court. The court considered the statements of 14 witnesses during the



trial. ""Following the investigation, Judge K. Kiran Kumar sentenced the accused—Sunnam Muthaiah, Sunnam Tulasamma, Sunnam Gopalakrishna (alias Gopal), and Komaram Anjaiah—to three years in prison and a fine of ?2,000 each. "Another accused in this case, Sunnam Ajay, is a minor, and his trial is ongoing in the Judicial First Class Magistrate Court. "The case against another accused, Sunnam Chenchaiah, was dropped after he died during the trial." The prosecution was led by Assistant Public Prosecutor K. Raja Rao. Court Nodal Officer D. Raghavaiah, Liaison Officer M. Srinivas, and Duty Officer PC J. Suresh assisted in the case.

50 Youths from Keshampet Join BJP, Urged to Promote Central Schemes"



"INDIAN CHRONICLE ""SHADNAGAR, August 26 ""In a significant boost to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Telangana, 50 young members from Keshampet Mandal, led by Pawan Kumar Reddy, left the Congress party and joined the BJP on Tuesday. The event took place at the Mahbubnagar MP office, where Palamuru Parliament Member DK Aruna and Rangareddy District BJP President Panthangi Raj Bhupal Goud welcomed the new members by presenting them with party scarves. "Addressing the gathering, MP DK Aruna emphasized the importance of ensuring that central government schemes reach every household. She urged party workers to work unitedly in the upcoming local body elections to secure victories from ward members to ZPTC positions, hoisting the BJP flag across the region. Aruna criticized the Congress party's failures and called on members to educate the public about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's welfare initiatives.""The group of new BJP members included Pawan Kumar Reddy, Krishna, Srisailam, Shiva, Raju, Mahesh, Mallesh, Ramakrishna, Ramu, Shankar, Vamshi, Praveen, Prasad, Rajasekhar, Siddu, Akhil, Mallayya, Ramesh, Pawan, Jangayya, and others. The event saw participation from BJP Mandal In-Charge Chendi Mahender Reddy, OBC Morcha District

Vice-President Pasula Narsimha Yadav, Kanchukota

Mahesh, Karedla Narender Reddy, Palle Anjayya, Shivaji, Tirupati, Satish, Dasharath, Mallesh, Bhaktavatsal, Ganesh, Vimal, Madhu, Kumar Gupta, Gopal Reddy, and other party leaders.

Migrant worker from Bihar assaulted in Bengaluru 'for wearing saffron towel'; 3 held

GNS News Agency, August 26

Three men were arrested in Bengaluru on Tuesday for allegedly assaulting a migrant worker from Bihar for wearing a saffron towel, the police said. The incident occurred at 9.30 pm on August 24, opposite the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation bus stand in Kalasipalya. The police identified the accused as Tabrez, 30, a mechanic from Nagawara, Imran Khan, 35, a radium-cutting worker from Banashankari, and Ajeez Khan, 47, a real estate worker from Tilak Nagar.

CITU Dharna Demanding Wage Hike for Scheduled Workers at Yellandu Labor Office""

" " " R a y a I a Kishore,Yellandu Constituency, August 26, Indian Chronicle: "A dharna was staged in front of the Yellandu labor office on Tuesday under the leadership of CITU, demanding wage hikes and basic facilities for scheduled category workers. "Shop assistants, petrol bunk staff, gas godown workers, mill workers, private school teaching and non-teaching staff, private hospital and lab workers, security guards, hotel and bakery staff, helpers, brick kiln workers, contract laborers, and construction workers participated in the protest.""The agitators demanded revision of wages, implementation of insurance. PF. ESI benefits, and immediate resolution of workers' issues. A represen-



tation was submitted to the labor officer.""Speaking at the gathering, CITU district leaders Abdul Nabi and Talluri Krishna criticized successive governments for neglecting workers, stating that while prices keep ris-

ing, wages are being reduced under new government orders.

They urged the government to revise wage structures and ensure fair support to the entire working class.""Leaders including

Boyina Shekar, Kama Nagaraju, Mahmood, Shiva Krishna, Raju, Bhaskar, Satish, Pawan, Satyanarayana Kori, Suresh, Naresh, Aditya, Sailu, Daniel, and Dilip participated in the protest.

BRAOU CELEBRATES 44TH FOUNDATION DAY

Hyderabad, Aug.26: Dr. BR Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU), Hyderabad, celebrated its "44th Foundation Day" at its campus here today. The event is marked with a lecture by Prof. Sanjeev Sonawane, Vice-Chancellor, YCMOU, Nashik, on "Transforming Open and Distance Learning through AI (Artificial Intelligence)."

Participating as a chief guest, Prof. Sonawane said that "AI is reshaping ODL" through personalized learning, adaptive systems, immersive AR/VR technologies, and generative AI tools. He stressed that the ethical concerns such as privacy, equity and digital inclusion should be taken care. Calling the AI as a "catalyst for democratizing education at scale", he urged for investments in training, connectivity and inclusive policy.BRAOU Vice-Chancellor Prof. Ghanta Chakrapani, presiding over the event, announced

the setting up of a "Digital Resource Center" and spoke about the initiatives like MoUs with Telangana Police and WE-Hub, micro-credential courses and collaborations for women empowerment. He cautioned that the private universities are sidelining 'open education'.On this occasion, an MoU with Anuvadini translation services was signed, micro-credential courses were launched, and a collection of research papers were released. BRAOU's "MBA (Hospital & Healthcare Management) was recently ranked among the top 10 in India by Academic Insights.Prof. Chakrapani donated 1,100 books to the University Library. Noted artists Ele Laxman and Dr. Gone Linga Raju were felicitated. Former VCs, senior professors, staff and association representatives participated. Floral tributes were paid to the portraits of Dr. BR Ambedkar and Prof G Ram Reddy.

Farmers should not worry about urea supply: Minister Jupally Krishna Rao

Hyderabad, Aug.26 State Minister Jupally Krishna Rao on Tuesday conducted a review at IDOC on the current urea stocks and supply available in Mahabubnagar district. MLC Damodar Reddy, MLAs Yennam Srinivas Reddy, Madhusudhan Reddy, Bandla Krishna Mohan Reddy, Parnika Reddy, Megha Reddy, Kasireddy Narayana Reddy, Dr. Rajesh Reddy, Dr. Vamsi Krishna, DCCB Chairman Vishnuvardhan Reddy, District Collectors, SPs, Agriculture Officers, and others participated in this review meet-

Speaking on the occasion , he said that the district Collectors should coordinate with the district officials in the matter of the urea and ensure that there are no problems in supply. He advised the officials to take steps to immediately sell the urea stocks held by private dealers to farmers. He instructed the officials to register cases against traders selling fake seeds and fertilizer shop dealers , who are selling the urea at high prices and take action to punish them. He wanted the officials to take strict action against those , who create artificial shortages and spread rumors. Rao said that the Collectors should hold press meets to reassure farmers, disclose stock details and remove the anxiety among the farmers.He said that the respective district collectors should take steps to ensure that the stock held by the private dealers was supplied properly.

He said that Until the end of the ongoing crop season, an officer should be appointed for each fertilizer shop, P. A. C. S. and Agro Seva Kendras and added that they should be given responsibilities. He said that such matters should be monitored closely. The Police officials have been instructed to coordinate with agricultural department officials and the officers appointed for each shop to ensure that there are no problems in the supply of the urea. He said that the officials should estimate the amount of the urea required by the farmers for the upcoming Rabi season, prepare proposals according to the actual figures and send an indent to the state government district-wise, and added that the state government would send an indent to the center based on those proposals.

Minister Jupally said that the allocation of the urea to the states was under the purview of the central government and alleged that the center, which should supply urea according to the needs of the states, was not cooperating with of urea to Telangana for the Kharif season, but so far it has supplied only 6.6 lakh metric tons of the urea and more than 3 lakh metric tons of urea still needs to be supplied, due to which there is a shortage of the urea in the state," he said. Rao was angry that the opposition parties were spreading false propaganda and throwing mud at the Congress government and added that they were spreading misinformation on social media against the state government .He said that the state government was taking all possible steps to increase the supply of the urea and urged farmers not to worry. He assured that necessary steps would be taken to meet the needs of the farmers.

NGT takes suo motu cognisance of buffer zone reduction around lakes in Karnataka

GNS News Agency, August 26

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has stepped in to scrutinise the Karnataka Government's recent move to reduce the buffer zones around lakes and tanks, taking suo motu cognisance of a media report dated July 28 highlighting the Cabinet's approval of revised norms for lake conservation. In notices issued on August 8, a bench of Justices Prakash Srivastava and A Senthil Vel sought responses from the environment department and made the Karnataka Lake Conservation and Development Authority, the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, the Bangalore Development Authority, and the Central Pollution Control Board parties to the case.

The matter, transferred to the Southern Zonal Bench, will be heard next on September 26. The tribunal's intervention comes against the backdrop of the passage of the Karnataka Tank Conservation and Development Authority (Amendment) Bill 2025, which seeks to amend the Karnataka Tank Conservation and Development Authority Act 2014. The Bill, which was passed in the Assembly and the Legislative Council recently, introduces area-wise buffer zones for tanks and lakes, effectively moving away from the earlier uniform restrictions. According to the new table of norms, the buffer zone will now vary with the size of the waterbody—ranging from 0 m for very small tanks (up to 0.05 acre) to 30 m for large lakes of more than 100 acres. Mid-sized tanks will have proportional buffer limits, such as 3 m for tanks between 0.05 and 1 acre, 6 m for those between 1 and 10 acres, 12 m for tanks of 10-25 acres, and 24 m for those between 25 and 100 acres. This area-based categorisation marks a significant departure from the broader protective zones recommended in earlier guidelines, which many conservationists had argued were essential for maintaining the ecological health of lakes and

sential for maintaining the ecological health of lakes and their catchments.

Alongside buffer reclassification, the Bill introduces provisions to permit certain public utility works within tank areas and their buffer zones. These include roads, bridges,

water supply lines, sewage treatment plants, underground

drainage systems, pump houses, electrical infrastructure, and allied works. Such permissions will be conditional on ensuring that the tank's original capacity is not reduced and that there is no obstruction to the natural inflow or outflow of

Further, the Bill allows industrial, recreational, and commercial activities within these zones, again with prior approval from the authority. However, it clarifies that these permissions are subject to compliance with existing siting guidelines and pollution control norms under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Rules 1976. Healthcare establishments and new infrastructure projects, however, are excluded from these relaxations.

The Government has justified the amendments by citing the recommendations of a technical committee headed by the chief secretary. The committee had argued for more practical, size-based norms, contending that a blanket buffer requirement was neither feasible in urban areas nor necessary for small waterbodies. The Bill's statement of objects and reasons notes that the aim is to facilitate development while still ensuring water conservation. Residents petition Governor Thaawarchand GehlotMeanwhile, a residents delegation under the banner of Bengaluru Town Hall met Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Monday and submitted a memorandum opposing the Bill. The group urged him to return the Bill for reconsideration, arguing that it weakens lake protection norms and violates constitutional and environmental safeguards. The memorandum highlighted that the Bill reduces lake buffer zones to a maximum of 30 mfar below what experts recommend. Hydrology and environment specialists, at a public consultation held by Bengaluru Town Hall on August 9, advocated 100-300 m buffer zones to safeguard ecosystem integrity, biodiversity, flood control, and water quality. They warned that the amendment would pave the way for reckless real estate development, endanger water security, and undermine the ecological balance of urban and rural lakes. The delegation alleged that the Bill was passed without adequate public or expert consultation, amounting to a violation of constitutional provisions related to environmental protection

Delhi HC asks home ministry to conduct probe after authorities fail to share CCTV footage of assault at detention centre



Granting bail to two foreign nationals accused of attempting to flee from a detention centre and assaulting officials on duty in the process, the Delhi High Court on Monday suggested that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) carry out an appropriate inquiry into the incident. The instruction came after Justice Girish Kathpalia noted that "It is quite surprising that footage of the CCTV cameras installed at the detention centre, namely Seva Sadan, Lampur, is being withheld from the investigator."The court made the observation after it called upon the prosecution "to address submissions in order to rule out a possibility that the entire incident was fabricated to somehow help the detenues" from being deported to their countries of origin. The accused in the case, nine foreign nationals - one of whom continues to remain on the run to date - had allegedly attempted to run away from the detention centre on February 23, 2024, after twisting the hand of an official and causing injuries to other officials in the scuffle that ensued. While two were caught inside the camp, six others were later apprehended from nearby areas. A First Information Report (FIR) was lodged in the case, and they were subsequently sent to judicial custody. Two of the accused, represented by advocates Meghan and Anup Das, while seeking bail before the Delhi High Court, claimed innocence and told the court that they are only being "used as a scapegoat", submitting that no such offence was committed and that they are facing "racial discrimination and the principles of equality have been

matter "is a cock and bull story and an attempt to convert other disputes into a criminal case by misusing the law."The Delhi Police, through the Narela police station Station House Officer, Inspector Rajendra Singh, had informed the court that while the incident was captured in CCTV cameras installed at the centre, it was unable to obtain the footage. According to the police, they initially issued a notice under Section 91 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) in March 2024 to the Superintendent, Department of Social Welfare of Delhi Government, who had responded that the department is only responsible for caretaking facilities and internal security is managed by the Delhi Police and external security by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), with the CCTV footage also being maintained by the latter. A notice under section 91 of the CrPC was then issued to the commanding officer, CRPF, SevaSadan, to which the force stated that cameras were not under their unit's jurisdiction and advised the police to approach the Foreigners' Regional Registration Office (FRRO). Another notice was issued to the Deputy Commissioner of Police, FRRO, to which the assistant commissioner (AFRRO) conveyed that CCTVs were installed by the social welfare department and the required footage should be obtained from them under section 65B of the Indian Evidence Act pertaining to electronic records. Justice Kathpalia recorded,

The Department of Social Welfare alleges that the CCTV is manned by CRPF; but CRPF alleges that CCTV is manned by FRRO; but the FRRO alleges that the CCTV is manned by the Department of Social Welfare... In view of the above mentioned peculiar circumstances of this case, learned APP (Assistant Public Prosecutor), after discussing with the SHO, Narela, submits that the Chief Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi or the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs would be the competent authorities to carry out the necessary inquiries/investigation."Therefore, copy of this order be sent to the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India to carry out appropriate inquiry and, if necessary, investigation in accordance with law," the judge added.

What is the Korean technology BMC is replicating in Mumbai at Rs 2,300 crore to prevent waterlogging?

GNS News Agency, August 26

To prevent waterlogging in low-lying areas of Mumbai's western suburbs, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has come up with an ambitious plan of setting up 25 floodgates at various inter-tidal zones in the Mithi River for Rs 2,300 crore. The project is inspired by the flood control systems used by South Korea, especially in areas prone to immense flooding and tsunamis. The tender for the project is set to be floated in the next two months and the BMC has set a three-year deadline for completing the work.

What is the Korean technology for operating floodates?

Like Mumbai, South Korea also experiences heavy rainfall and flash flooding during the rainy season. Its low-lying areas are susceptible to more flooding since the water comes rushing down from elevated regions to low-lying zones. Korea is also prone to tsunamis. Therefore, as a preventive measure, floodgates have been designed to prevent waterlogging in low-lying areas as well as intertidal zones. These floodgates operate vertically, unlike conventional floodgates that open horizontally. Additionally, these gates have dewatering pumps that channel out surplus water which also helps in controlling the water pressure. A unique aspect of these floodgates is that the vertical gates give precise control on the water flow that allows both complete blockage and regulated release of water.

 $\label{thm:continuous} Why does \, \text{Mumbai prefer this Korean technology?}$

The primary reason that this technology is preferred is because of the vertical alignment. Mithi River is narrow and will not allow the usage of horizontal floodgates. Therefore, these vertical gates will be useful since they will use lesser space and serve the purpose of water blockage. Another reason why these gates are preferred by the authorities is that they allow for precise control of the water flow



which will allow civic officials to streamline the surplus water into holding tanks. This could be recycled later for nonpotable usage as well.

How will these gates operate in Mumbai, and which areas will get respite?

Officials associated with the project said the gates will be installed in tidal zones starting from Mahim Creek and will stretch up to 8 km towards suburban Mumbai. During high tide in monsoon, these gates will be deployed and the inflow of water will be blocked. Meanwhile, a certain quantum of water will be pumped out, either into the sea or it could be transferred into holding tanks for reuse. The officials said the installation of the gates will allow respite in areas including Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC), Taximen's Colony in Bandra East, Dharavi, and Dadar. "The project was first proposed in 2022. However, the design aspects were changed and a new structure has been proposed. The tenders have been approved and will be floated in the next one month. Last time, several international firms from countries like Korea, Japan and Germany had shown interest in this project." the official said.

'What is definition of rave party?' Eknath Khadse alleges conspiracy by Pune police after son-in-law's arrest in drugs case

GNS News Agency, August 26

Nationalist Congress Party (SP) leader and former Maharashtra minister Eknath Khadse Tuesday accused the Pune police of defaming his family by leaking private photos through a conspiracy after arresting his son-in-law Pranjal Khewalkar in a drugs case. "Who has given the right to the police to make photos and videos viral from my son-in-law's cellphone? The police took photos and videos (of the arrest) and immediately made it viral. How did the medical report reach the media so quickly? There is scope for doubts," Khadse said at a press conference in Jalgaon.

The Pune police crime branch Sunday morning raided a studio apartment in the Kharadi area and arrested Pranjal Khewalkar, a doctor and the husband of Khadse's daughter Rohini Khadse, who is the NCP (SP) Maharashtra women's wing president. The police arrested six others also and claimed to have seized drugs. Alleging a conspiracy, Khadse said, "My son-in-law told me that police were keeping watch on him. They were following him in civil dress. The police had planned to defame me. A video of the police monitoring my son-in-law's movements has surfaced. I have some doubts about the police action." Khadse also asked how the police could enter the private spaces of citizens. "Who has given the police the right to intrude into the private space of citizens? There were only six or seven people at the party. If there is a large number of people, it is called a rave party. There was no dance show, nor a laser show. How can they call it a rave party when only seven people were present there? What is the definition of a rave party? The police should clarify this. All this is underway to muzzle my voice and defame my family. But come what may, truth will prevail," he said.

Khadse stated that when such action occurs, the police are not supposed to reveal the identity of the person under arrest. "In this case, the police brought the suspects before the media. This aim was to defame them and my



family," he said. Khadse said no drugs were found on Khewalkar, and despite this, they made him the accused number one. "No drugs were found on my son-in-law. In the video, it is seen that he is standing away from others. Yet he was made the accused number one. There is no offence registered against him in the past. He does not have a tendency towards criminal behaviour. On the contrary, he is a prominent name in the medical field. The police have claimed that they found drugs in the purse of one of the women arrested. Then she should be the accused number one, and Khewalkar should be the witness, as nothing was found on him."Khadse said," It is said that Dr Khewalka's alcohol test report has arrived. How come the report has arrived in no time? If the alcohol test report has arrived so quickly, then why is the drug test report delayed? Last year, the Porsche car accident case happened. We are all aware of the manipulation of blood samples at Sassoon Hospital. Will the drug consumption report of Dr Khewalkar be manipulated?" asked Khadse.Khadse said he plans to file a defamation suit against the Pune police. "I have consulted with lawyers in Pune who have informed me that this is a valid case for defamation. Let the investigation be completed first. I will proceed with the defamation suit against the Pune

Reliance Group, Hindustan Ltd: 'Westarctica ambassador' named shell companies after major Indian firms, UP Police find



GNS News Agency, August 26

Fake ambassador, Ghaziabad conman, Ghaziabad embassy, fake embassy, Harsh Vardhan Jain, UP Police, UP STFHarsh Vardhan Jain was arrested last week by Uttar Pradesh's Special Task Force that claimed to have uncovered a complex international financial network. Harsh Vardhan Jain, the man accused of running a fake embassy in Ghaziabad's Kavi Nagar area, allegedly named his shell companies after prominent Indian firms and public sector undertakings (PSUs).

Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group PLC, Reliance Big Pictures, Reliance Capital Limited, Reliance Big Entertainment Limited and Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Limited were some of the names used, sources in the Uttar Pradesh Police said. "This helped him present his work as legitimate in other countries," a source said. A majority of these companies were reportedly in England.

On Tuesday, the UP Police took custody of Jain, who claimed to be the ambassador of 'Westarctica', for five days in connection with the fraud and cheating case. According to police sources, the police had sought to question Jain about several bank accounts, 25 shell companies, and his frequent foreign tours, all of which are now under the scanner for alleged links to a larger hawala racket. Jain was arrested last week by Uttar Pradesh's Special Task Force that claimed to have uncovered a complex international financial network — stretching from marble mines in Rajasthan to banks in Dubai, Mauritius, and the UK. A source said that two people have come forward claiming to have given money to Jain on the pretext of getting jobs in Iraq. One was from Uttar Pradesh and another from Delhi, the source added.

The police are verifying their claims. A police officer privy to the investigation stated that, so far, evidence suggests Jain made money through his shell companies by offering fake business deals and promising jobs to people in foreign countries. The police team is currently trying to determine the number of people he may have cheated. The probe has allegedly revealed that Jain had 12 diplomatic passports and had visited around 40 countries over the past 10 years. These countries include the UK, UAE, Mauritius, Turkey, France, Italy, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Switzerland, Poland, Sri Lanka, and Belgium.

Maharashtra govt to launch ride-hailing app to compete with Ola, Uber

GNS News Agency, August 26

cabs lined up one after anotherThe service that would be operated under the state transport department would offer a competition for the private players in the sector, which is currently dominated by private cab aggregator platforms such as Ola, Uber, and Rapido, according to Sarnik.

The Maharashtra government will soon introduce an app-based autorickshaw, taxi, and e-bike service aimed at creating jobs for local youth, particularly those from the Marathi-speaking belt, Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik said on Monday. The service that would be operated under the state transport department would offer a competition for the private players in the sector, which is currently dominated by private cab aggregator platforms such as Ola, Uber, and Rapido, according to Sarnik. The proposal has received an in-principle nod from Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and deputy chief ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, but the clearance from the Cabinet is expected soon, Sarnaik said.

Sarnaik, who is also the chairman of Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), said the app-based aggregator platform for the state is almost complete, and the government is deliberating on names such as Jai Maharashtra, Maha-Ride, Maha-Yatri, or Maha-Go for the app. The app is being developed in collaboration with institutions such as the Maharashtra Institute for Transport Technology and Maharashtra Institution for Transformation



(MITRA), with private players in consultation. "This will not only offer comfortable travel for commuters but also generate employment for thousands of youngsters in Maharashtra," Sarnaik said, adding that all terms in the Centre's aggregator policy guidelines are being adhered to. "The government has the technical knowledge, infrastructure, and manpower. This model, if well implemented, will serve the interests of both service providers and users," he added. The government plans to check the monopoly and ensure transparency in fare levels and drivers' benefits, officials from the transport department said. Officials indicated that the platform will also be made compatible with the Central Government's Motor Vehicle Aggregator Guidelines, 2020, which stipulate safety, accountability, and fare regulation standards for digital transport aggregators.

People must protect their right to vote to safeguard Constitution: Rahul Gandhi

GNS News Agency, August 26

Launching a frontal attack on the NDA government at the Centre over the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Bihar, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday (August 26, 2025) said people must protect their right to vote to safeguard the Constitution. The SIR in Bihar has exposed the BJP and the ECI, and so people have started calling leaders of the saffron party 'vote chor', he claimed while addressing a public rally in Madhubani district as part of the Congress' 'Voter Adhikar Yatra'. "BJP leaders are indulging in Vote Chori through the Election Commission... People must come forward to protect their right to vote and also to protect the Indian Constitution," the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha said. People must remember that if they lose their voting rights, the Constitution cannot be protected, Mr. Gandhi asserted. The ECI deleted names of 65 lakh voters from the electoral rolls in Bihar, he said, and alleged that 65 lakh electors would now be added to help the BJP."(Union Home Minister) Amit Shah had said that the BJP government will continue for another 40-50 years. Now I realised that he said it because they are involved in 'vote chori' and it started from Gujarat itself," he said.Mr. Gandhi asserted that neither Prime Minister Narendra Modi nor Amit Shah uttered a single word on his charge of "vote theft" by the BJP. "When a thief is caught,



he remains silent, and this is what BJP leaders are doing," he claimed. The former Congress president charged the saffron party with changing the election dates. The PM, and not the ECI, decides on dates of elections, Mr. Gandhi claimed. The ECI was involved in 'vote chori' in Maharashtra and Haryana assembly polls in favour of the BJP, he alleged. "Now people have decided to teach them (BJP and its allies) a lesson after this SIR exercise in Bihar... Soon, PM Modi will stop coming out of his Race Course Road residence, as, whenever he delivers his speech in the future, people will call him 'Vote Chor'," Mr. Gandhi alleged.

5 killed, 14 injured in landslip on route to Vaishno Devi shrine

GNS News Agency, August 26

Relentless heavy rain led to a landslip on the route to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine atop the Trikuta hill on Tuesday (August 26, 2025) afternoon, killing at least five people and injuring 14, officials said. Several people were feared trapped. The pilgrimage to the famed shrine in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district was suspended when the mountainside literally gave way and stones, boulders and rocks came hurtling down around 3 p.m., catching people

Rescue operations are underway near the Inderprastha Bhojnalaya at Adhkwari, officials said. The landslip struck at a point about halfway along the winding 12-k.m. trek from Katra to the hilltop shrine. There are two routes up to the shrine — while the yatra had been suspended on the Himkoti trek route since morning, it was going on on the old route till 1.30 p.m. when authorities decided to suspend it till further orders in view of the torrential rain. "In an unfortunate incident of landslide at Adhkwari, 5 people have lost their lives and 14 others have been injured. Rescue operations underway, "the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board said in a post on X." I was coming down the hill after performing darshan when people started shouting. I saw stones falling down. I rushed to safety but was injured." Ms. Kiran told reporters from a hospital bed in



Rescue operations are underway near the Inderprastha Bhojnalaya at Adhkwari, officials said. The landslip struck at a point about halfway along the winding 12-k.m. trek from Katra to the hilltop shrine

Katra."We were a group of five out of which three are injured," added another girl, traumatised by her narrow escape. Three days of continuous rain has wreaked havoc across many parts of Jammu.

Ranga Reddy INDIAN CHRONICLE WEDNESDAY 27 AUGUST 2025

Just over 100 m from Mumbai Metro to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport's T2, thanks to new foot overbridge



GNS News Agency, August 26

Officials said the project was carried out without interfering with the other infrastructure constructions taking place in the area. Officials said the project was carried out without interfering with the other infrastructure constructions taking place in the area. A straight foot overbridge between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport's Terminal 2 and Mumbai Metro's Line 3 was thrown open on Saturday, offering straight connectivity. The bridge connects the CSMIA metro station on the underground Line 3 to the airport terminal.

The bridge, which is made up of steel, measures 88

m in length, 4.3 m in width and 3 m in height. According to the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), it has been built 23 m above the under-construction Line 7A, necessitating careful planning and tight security precautions. Officials said the project was carried out without interfering with the other infrastructure constructions taking place in the area.

An MMRDA official said, "The bridge provides direct, seamless connectivity between Metro Line 3 and the airport. The reduced walking distance will surely make the travel experience much better for the passengers."With this connectivity, the walking distance for air passengers travelling via Mumbai Metro has been reduced from 450 m to 118 m. The passengers will also no longer have to cross roadways carrying heavy luggage, minimising the reliance on other vehicles. The official added that the construction of the project posed various engineering problems as it needed to be constructed at a significant height above an active metro work area. "The engineers had to make meticulous planning so that there would be accuracy and safety at every step," the official added. Authorities said the foot overbridge will play a crucial role in improving last-mile connectivity for air travellers, especially as Mumbai Metro's Line 3 has begun operations. "The plan was to merge two large transport systems without impacting the current projects," the official further said.

A 'Special 26'-style heist in Gurgaon as gunmen posing as auditors loot finance office

GNS News Agency, August 26

Around 6 pm on Saturday, three men, one carrying a firearm, entered a Manappuram Finance office in Sector 5, off Sheetla Mata Road, claiming to be auditors. Within minutes, they brandished the weapon, assaulted two employees and fled with Rs 9 lakh in cash and gold, the police said

"They entered the company office on Sheetla Mata Road, posing as auditors and showing a fake auditor ID to the security guard. One of the individuals was armed. The suspects brandished the weapon, robbed the office, and assaulted two employees, including assistant manager Krishna, with the butt of the gun, causing minor injuries," a police spokesperson said Saturday night. The office, which offers loans against gold, confirmed that the stolen cash and gold were insured. Police teams from the Sector 5 station and other units remained at the scene late into the night, conducting investigations. Further details were not imme-

diately available.

The incident recalls previous high-profile robberies in India where criminals disguised themselves as government officials to gain access. In 2017, Delhi police arrested three suspected members of the Neeraj Bawania gang after they allegedly posed as CBI officers and attempted to rob a jeweller's home in Karol Bagh, an operation inspired by the Bollywood film Special 26. In that case, the suspects, one dressed in a khaki uniform, held the family at gunpoint before fleeing when a resident raised an alarm. In 2023, a dacoity gang in Hyderabad carried out a similar heist, posing as Income Tax officers and stealing gold worth Rs 60 lakh from a jewellery manufacturer in Secunderabad. That robbery, also modelled after Special 26, involved suspects showing fake ID cards, seizing workers' phones and locking them in a room before escaping with 17 gold coins. Police in Gurgaon said they are examining whether Saturday's heist bears similarities to those earlier cases.

ISI creating 'inter-changeable network' of gangsters, drug smugglers, terrorists: Punjab Police

GNS News Agency, August 26

In a series of crackdowns on the Lawrence Bishoi-led gang in Punjab and Rajasthan, Punjab Police have unearthed proof that an "inter-operational and inter-changeable" network of organised criminals, terrorists based abroad, and big drug smugglers is operating together under the tutelage of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). On the eve of Independence Day, August 14, Punjab Police's Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF) arrested two most-wanted operatives of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang from Patiala-Ambala Highway near village Shambhu and recovered an Austriamade 9mm Glock pistol along with six live cartridges from their possession.

According to Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav, those arrested were identified as Akshay Delu and Ankit Bishnoi alias Kakkar, both residents of village Khairpur in Abohar, Fazilka. The arrested accused were operating on the instructions of their foreign-based handlers identified as Anmol Bishnoi and Arzoo Bishnoi.Arzoo Bishnoi is the same US-based gangster who is wanted in the murder of a well known businessman in Abohar in Punjab on July 7. In this instance too, three members of Lawrence Bishnoi gang were arrested by Punjab Police from Rajasthan.DGP Yadav said that preliminary investigation revealed that they fled to Nepal after committing the murder and returned on directions of their foreign-based handlers to commit a sensational crime in Punjab.

Just days before this breakthrough, Punjab Police and Rajasthan Police conducted a joint operation and busted an ISI-sponsored terror network operated by Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and Lawrence Bishnoi gang through foreign-based handlers Mannu Agwan, Gopi Nawashahria and Zeeshan Akhtar on the directions of Pakistan-based Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) operative Harwinder Rinda. According to Rajasthan's Additional Director General of Police (Crime Branch) Dinesh MN, the suspects have been identified as Jitendra Chaudhary from Tonk, Sanjay from Hanumangarh, and Sonu alias Kali from Kapurthala, Punjab. Three minors from Uttar Pradesh, Niwai, and Punjab were also apprehended. They were apprehended last week in Jaipur and Tonk districts and subsequently transferred to the Special Operation Cell of Punjab Police in Amritsar. The accused were wanted in connection with a July 7 blast in Nawanshahr, Punjab.

ADG Dinesh said the gang had lobbed a grenade at a liquor shop in Nawanshahr and then fled to Rajasthan. Following this, the Punjab Police lodged a case under Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) sections 49 (abetment outside India for offence in India), 55 (abetment of offence punishable with death or imprisonment for life), 61 (2) (Criminal conspiracy) as well as sections of the Arms Act. Upon interrogation, it was found that they were associated with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang and that their handler goes by the name of one Zeeshan Akhtar, who lives in Canada and had claimed responsibility for the murder of NCP leader and former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique in Mumbai," he said, adding that Akhtar, Pakistani gangster Shahzad Bhatti, BKI terrorist Mannu Agwan and Gopi Nawanshahria were all allegedly connected with each other. "They carry out criminal activities in different parts of the country and contact local youth by luring them with money to commit crime. The accused in the present case were connected with Akhtar via Instagram and other online apps. Akhtar had also provided grenades to the accused for the Nawanshahr blast. He used to give instructions through online platforms and had told them to carry out blasts in Delhi and Gwalior on Independence Day," the ADG said.In June, the Mumbai Police had said that Akhtar had been detained in Canada. However, there has been little clarity



doubled its efforts to create unrest in Punjab after Operation Sindoor in May. They say that ISI has been trying hard to find new recruits in Punjab and goading their existing contacts to 'do something big'Speaking to The Indian Express, DGP Yadav said there is a continuous effort by ISI to create unrest in India using the existing terrorist nodes based in Pakistan. "One thing which we have noticed is that names of outfits have become meaningless. The labels of outfits are interchangeable and so are the people involved in criminal activities," said Yadav.Punjab Police investigations found that the attack on former BJP Minister Manoranjan Kalia in April was orchestrated by Germany based gangster Kulbir Sidhu but credit was claimed by BKI.In another instance credit for an attack was taken in the name of one Ranjodh Singh of Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF), but the police found that the man does not exist and the incident was put in effect by gangsters. "Organised criminals, terrorists and big drug smugglers are operating together under ISI's direction. The attack on a police post in Punjab was done by US-based gangster Gurjant Bholu's network on behalf of Pakistan-based terrorists. Gangsters, terror nodes and drug smugglers are being used in an interchangeable way as if they have an alliance," said Yadav. These same alliances are also indulging in extortion and terror activities in Punjab, say senior police officials. "Pak based terrorist Harvinder Rinda sent voice notes on threat to land pooling authorities in Jalandhar recently when land pooling policy had been announced," said a senior po-

Tanks, streams overflow, cut off transportation in Khammam

GNS News Agency, August 26

Khammam: Heavy rains over the past couple of days caused several tanks and streams, including the Munneru river, to overflow, cutting off transportation to many villages in the erstwhile Khammam district. The Munneru water level at Kalvodu was recorded at 14.50 feet at 5 pm on Saturday, reflecting a mild rise due to heavy rains in its upper catchment areas, including Mahabubabad. Minister Thummala Nageswara Rao instructed officials to remain alert, identify flood-affected areas in 12 municipal divisions of Khammam city, and shift residents to relief centres as water levels continued to rise. Additional DCP (L&O) Prasad Rao inspected the Munneru at Naidupet and the Paleru reservoir to assess the flood situation. The public was advised not to go fishing, avoid crossing submerged roads and streams, and contact the police at 100 or the control room at 87126 59111 for assistance. Police patrols were increased and personnel deployed at vulnerable streams. Wyra ACP Rahaman visited the rehabilitation centre at Wyra Government School, where residents from Rajiv Nagar Colony near the Wyra reservoir were lodged due to rising floodwaters

At the centre of Punjab farmer's VRS plan, a fast growing grass he calls green gold









GNS News Agency, August 26

An unplanned experiment, owing to push by a forest department officer, has — in a span of just about three years turned into a multi-state bamboo farming enterprise spanning Assam, Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan. At the centre of this enterprise is Rajveer Singh Brar (56), a progressive farmer from Rampura village in Punjab's Fazilka.In 2022, Brar received 200-300 bamboo saplings from the forest department for his farm in Chandigarh. They were left unplanted and died. "When the forest department officer visited again, he was disappointed, and we felt ashamed. He brought more saplings under the government's afforestation policy and got them planted on our farm. Those plants grew well," recalls Brar. Encouraged, Brar experimented by planting bamboo along the boundary of his kinnow orchards in the Abohar-Fazilka area. The orchards often suffered from hot winds that scorched the fresh leaves of kinnow plants. "We could have gone for eucalyptus or poplar, but those need replanting every 5-6 years and are vulnerable to wind damage. Locally procured bamboo didn't survive well either," say Brar, adding that his father then asked him to study bamboo farming seriously.

This led to visits to agricultural universities and extensive travel — from Maharashtra's Konkan belt, including the village Nee Paani ("No Water"), where bamboo cultivation thrives, to Kodal, which has extensive bamboo plantations, followed by Madhya Pradesh, and later the Northeastern states, including Nagaland and Assam, to understand the nuances of bamboo farming. His family acquired a piece of land in Assam's Silchar to set up a nursery. "Bamboo thrives in the Northeast. Growing our plants there helped ensure survival in Punjab and other northern states," Brar says.Brar experiment in bamboo farming began with a 6acre block in Abohar. Bamboo saplings were planted along an acre of kinnow orchard. He then helped several farmers to grow these in Suratgarh, Jaipur, Bikaner, and Dausa in Rajasthan, parts of Haryana and Punjab. "It can grow on both dry and waterlogged land, depending on the variety," he says. "There are different propagation methods — tissue culture, seeds, and rhizomes — for preparing sapling. Our nursery in Silchar uses seeds to produce saplings. Initially, there was no profit or loss, but now we've built a viable business model. We provide complete assistance from supplying saplings to guiding cultivation and post-harvest processes," Brar adds.

Economically, bamboo offers lucrative returns — about Rs 1.5 lakh per acre in the initial years and Rs 6–8 lakh per acre annually thereafter — while requiring minimal water, no fertilisers or pesticides, and virtually no maintenance. "Bamboo's appeal lies in its longevity and versatility: once planted, it needs a four-year wait for the first harvest but can then be harvested every year for up to a century. It can be cultivated in any season, has a calorific value of 3,800–4,500 (higher than coal), and one quintal can yield 20 litres of ethanol," Brar explains. "Environmentally, it's a powerhouse — absorbing 4–5 times more carbon di-

oxide and releasing 35% more oxygen than most plants, while drawing moisture from the atmosphere and storing it in the soil and one can get around 100 tonnes of bamboo per hecatres per year without replanting it for a century as against 25 to 30 tonnes per hectares for other trees that need re-tranpltantion every 5-10 years". The initial cost is Rs 40,000–50,000 per acre, after which maintenance is minimal. "No fertilisers, no pesticides—bamboo practically grows on its own after establishment. Its roots store water and draw moisture from the atmosphere, making it ideal for areas with water scarcity," he says. Bamboo grows in all soil types—light, loamy, barren, or waterlogged—and can be planted at spacings of 13×5 feet or 20×20 feet plant to plant and root to row, accommodating 400–600 plants per acre. Each plant can grow 25–30 feet in just 90 days.

Brar's joint family owns about 150 acres in Abohar, Fazilka, Ropar, Chandigarh, and Rajasthan, cultivating orchards, vegetables, cotton, paddy, wheat, sugarcane, and guar. They plan to expand bamboo cultivation to 20 acres.Brar cultivates 10-12 varieties, including Nutan, Green Vulguris, Yellow Vulgaris, Katanga, Sandro, Bambusa Polymorpha, and Assamica etc. The tender shoots of some varieties are used to make pickles, murabbas etc. Such shoots are sold at Rs. 500 per kg. Around 1,500 products can be made from bamboo — furniture, paper, fabric, cups, plates, toothbrushes, pickles, preserves, handicrafts, charcoal, and even newspaper paper. Some varieties are as strong as iron. Beyond farming, people are opening bamboo-themed restaurants in the middle of orchards, setting up yoga and meditation retreats, and creating photo-shoot and picnic spots—showcasing the agrotourism potential of bamboo. It is also ideal for use as a boundary wall for farms or homes. "Bamboo is now being used in house construction as a replacement for iron or steel, saving 15–20 times in costs after proper treatment. The central government is even using it for crash barriers on highways," Brar says. As India moves towards green energy, bamboo is attracting attention for bioenergy. "A 15 MW thermal power plant needs about 3,000 acres of bamboo for fuel. It's available year-round, stores easily, and earns carbon credits," he adds.

He also compares it with paddy stubble pellets promoted by the government. "Paddy pellets have lower calorific value and are hard to store. With global environmental mandates—such as the Glasgow Pledge—discouraging premature harvesting of trees, demand for mature bamboo is likely to grow. Now that bamboo is classified as grass, you don't need permission to cut it like trees," he adds.Brar's Rampura farm on NH-7 has become a hub for farmer interactions, attracting interest from 30-35 NRIs. "I call bamboo plantation the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS)—that's why my firm has been named VRS Agritech — because once planted, it can generate income for five generations,' he says, adding that those who cannot spare much time for farming but have land should opt for this eco-friendly and highly profitable farming. Bamboo is also ideal for intercropping — turmeric, ginger, wheat, vegetables, and even paddy can be grown under it during the first four years before harvest begins, and even after. With its strength, durability, climate benefits, and wide range of uses, Brar believes bamboo could help Punjab break its dependence on wheat and paddy — ushering in both ecological and economic sustainability. Bamboo varieties range in height from 8 to 30 metres, with diameters between 3 and 12 inches. It has a high tensile strength comparable to steel and an impermeable outer layer that protects it from water-induced rot—an issue that affects most other organic materials. It is also among the best alternatives to plastic, a major contributor to global pollution, which calls a Global Plastic Treaty.

Another cloudburst in Himachal's Mandi, traffic disrupted on Chandigarh-Manali highway

GNS News Agency, August 26

A massive cloudburst was reported at the Takoli area in the Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh Sunday morning. It occurred over Shalanal Nala in the Takoli area of Mandi, resulting in water and debris flooding the Kiratpur–Manali four-lane highway at Takoli and disrupting traffic on the Chandigarh-Manali National Highway. The cloudburst took place in the early morning hours, causing destruction of infrastructure along with private and government properties. No casualties have been reported in the fresh cloudburst so far. Residents, tourists, and workers have been strictly advised to maintain a safe distance from the riverbanks during this period. The district administration of Mandi has decided to release additional water from the Pandoh Dam into the Beas River, depending on the inflow.

Apart from these, the boundary walls of some government offices and a residential colony of an infrastructure firm were also damaged. A senior officer said the alternative route via Kataula–Kamand between Mandi and Kullu was also affected, and the debris on this route will be cleared by afternoon. The officer said the route will be open for light vehicles. Mandi has emerged as the epicentre of the natural disaster in the shape of cloudbursts, landslides, and flash floods in the 2025 monsoon. Mandi witnessed the first disaster on the night of June 30 when a series of cloudbursts hit the areas of Bagsiad, Bagchanogi, Jhanjheli, Thunag,



Dharampur, Karsog, and Gohar that fall under the Seraj, Karsog, and Dharampur Assembly constituencies. The State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), based on testimonies from affected residents, site inspections, and scientific data, ruled that not less than 12 cloudbursts occurred that night. The water levels in five seasonal rivulets had risen unexpectedly, and the width of local nullahs expanded from a few feet to between 30 and 45 meters, affecting human settlements located at a significant distance from the streambeds. Meanwhile, a cloudburst struck a remote village in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district during the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday, leaving at least four people dead and six injured, as per reports.

Self-reliance, use of technology, health competition: Delhi Police chief outlines 3 focus areas on I-Day

GNS News Agency, August 26

Delhi Police Commissioner S B K Singh Friday, urged the force to strive for self-reliance, the use of technology and healthy competition. During the Independence Day celebrations at the Delhi Police headquarters, the police chief, while addressing the force, reiterated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision on these three points, which he had outlined at the Red Fort. During his address, Singh directed Delhi Police units to work on 'atmanirbharta' (self-reliance) and come up with a proposal within 15 days. The aim is to make the Delhi Police self-reliant on as many fronts to stop dependence on other units for things like commandos, bomb disposal squads and wireless sets, he said. "Although the Delhi Police have always been making the best use of technology and we are way ahead on this front, there is still a need to go further," he said.

"Whether it is a matter of surveillance systems, preventing cybercrime, anti-drone Technology, the ability to fight terrorists, the use of technology is required in every field," he said. Singh directed Delhi Police units dealing in technology-related matters to form committees and groups, conduct necessary studies, and come up with proposals within a month to enhance the use of technology in Delhi Police. Singh stressed that the force needs to build a sense of healthy competition and shun the feeling of jealousy. "We need to embrace this principle at an individual and as well as at the organisational level." He advised the units and districts of the Delhi Police to work on this principle to develop a sense of healthy competition among themselves. While expressing his concern, the police commissioner said that despite working so hard, even beyond working hours, the force has not been able to win the trust of the public as it should have.

He further suggested that every police personnel needs to come out of a feudalistic mindset and shift attitude from 'Shasak Bhav' to 'Sewa Bhav' to make the public feel more comfortable approaching the police in case of need. The force's head also took the opportunity to congratulate the 18 officers and personnel of Delhi Police who have been awarded police medals for 'distinguished service' and 'meritorious service' on the occasion of Independence Day, acknowledging their hard work and dedication.

on the case or Akhtar's whereabouts since then.

Punjab Police officers, meanwhile, say that ISI has

ervoir were loug

Sanitation drives in Delhi's slum clusters, commercial hubs, public toilets: How MCD's campaign removed 12,000 tonnes waste daily



GNS News Agency, August 26

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi's cleanliness campaign 'Freedom from Garbage' saw participation from a wide range of stakeholders, including school children, resident welfare associations, market traders, and youth. During this two-week initiative, which ran from August 1 to August 14, around 12,000 tonnes of municipal waste were collected daily, engaging more than 2.6 lakh residents. The corporation also conducted 917 drives in government and office premises, removing 10,692 kg of waste.

It conducted special sanitation activities across 1,138 public toilets to ensure hygiene and odour control, and 166

drives in slum clusters for targeted sanitation. Along with this, the drive also cleared 689.63 metric tonnes of waste along railway tracks, while commercial hubs saw 404 night-sweeping drives. The campaign also swept waste along the back lanes, parks and gardens with an average of 3,624 tonnes of construction and demolition waste collected daily.

Officials reported an increase of 1,000 tonnes in waste collection daily, bringing the total collection from 11,000 tonnes per day last month to 12,373 tonnes per days this month. In the lead-up to Independence Day, 138 plog runs were conducted, combining jogging with litter picking, engaging 16,691 youth and 1,26,881 students. To enhance the visual landscape of the capital, more than 35,000 posters and banners were removed from public spaces. Additionally, 160 wall beautification projects, including murals and thematic messages about cleanliness, were completed. Alongside garbage cleaning efforts, community awareness drives were held to discourage single-use plastics and promote compliance with the Solid Waste Management Rules of 2016. Additionally, 29,737 plantation drives were carried out from August 6 to 8. The corporation stated that a clean city needs behavioural change. "The lack of civic sense among many in public who continue to litter garbage and use single use plastic remains a major challenge for the corporation," read the official statement

Bhiwani teacher murder case: Kin demand 'fresh postmortem report'; failure of law & order, says Former CM

GNS News Agency, August 26

The murder of a 19-year-old playschool teacher in Bhiwani's Singhani village has caused public outrage in the area with protests entering its third day on Saturday and shopkeepers observing shutdown against alleged police inaction. While the protestors have lifted the blockade of the Delhi-Pilani road in Loharu, the deceased's family has refused to claim the body. Manisha, a resident of Dhani Laxman village in Loharu, had gone missing on August 11 and her body was found on August 13.On Saturday, Manisha's father Sanjay told the media: "The police personnel told me that if my daughter has gone missing, she must have eloped and she will come back in two days."Manisha's uncle Kuldeep also spoke to the media: "Protests will continue until all our demands, including the arrest of all the accused, are met." He also demanded a different board of doctors to conduct a fresh and thorough postmortem, alleging that: "There were multiple lapses in the postmortem examination."The family alleges that the post-mortem report doesn't "conclusively" indicate the murder.In response to the ongoing protest, the Haryana government, on Friday, transferred Bhiwani SP Manbii Singh and suspended Loharu police station in-charge Ashok, Assistant Sub-Inspector Shakuntala, Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV) team ASI Anoop, constable Pawan, and Special Police Officer (SPO) Dharmendra. The government posted Sumit Kumar as Bhiwani SP, who will supervise the investigation now. Reacting to the incident, former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda said on Saturday: "All the accused should be arrested at the earliest and justice must be ensured for the victim's family. We demand the strictest possible punishment for the culprits so that no criminal dares to even think of committing such an act in the future."In Bahadurgarh, Hooda told the media: "Law and order has completely collapsed across Haryana. Traders are receiving threats on a daily basis. Businessmen, employees, poli-



ticians, common people, and even the police no longer feel safe. It seems like there is no government in the state, and criminals have taken control of the entire system... This crime has exposed not just the brutality of the culprits, but also the failure of the law and order system... If the police had acted in time, her life could have been saved."

According to Manisha's family, on August 11, she left home to go to a nursing college in Singhani to enquire about her admission. As she failed to return by evening, her father informed the police via Dial-112 (Haryana police emergency response support system). According to Manisha's family, police accompanied them to the college to inquire, where they questioned three drunk men. The men denied seeing Manisha and said the college had closed at 1 pm.On August 13, a farmer found a young woman's body in a field near a canal in Singhani. Police, who reached the spot after being informed, identified the deceased as Manisha. Police said that, "Special Investigation teams have been constituted to identify and nab the accused. We are in constant touch with the victim's family members."

CBI arrests advocate, aide for seeking Rs 30-lakh bribe to secure favourable verdict in divorce case



GNS News Agency, August 26

According to the FIR, the case was registered under Section 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 and Section 7-A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018). According to the FIR, the case was registered under Section 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 and Section 7-A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018). The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Anti-Corruption Branch, Chandigarh, has arrested advocate Jatin Salwan and his aide on allegations of demanding Rs 30-lakh bribe to secure favourable judicial orders in a divorce case pending before a Bathinda court. As per a CBI official, Salwan was arrested and produced before the CBI court which sent him to judicial custody. Salwan's aide Satnam Singh was caught by the CBI, following the complaint from Sector 9, Chandigarh, while he was allegedly accepting amount of Rs 4 lakh. He was also produced in the court with Salwan, and sent to judicial custody by the Chandigarh CBI court. According to the FIR, the case was registered under Section 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 and Section 7-A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018). The FIR has been registered on a written complaint filed by Harsimranjit Singh, a resident of Firozepur. He alleged that Salwan demanded a bribe of Rs 30 lakh in exchange for ensuring a favourable order in the divorce case of his cousin, by misusing his personal influence on the judicial officer posted at Bathinda. The complaint was marked to Inspector Sonal Mishra, CBI, ACB Chandigarh, for verification. During verification, the allegations were substantiated.

In a recorded conversation, Salwan allegedly demanded Rs 30 lakh for securing the court's order in favour of the complainant's cousin. He reportedly insisted that the complainant pay the bribe in full but later agreed to accept Rs 5 lakh as the first instalment. Salwan informed the complainant that someone on behalf of the judicial officer would collect the token money. During the conversation, he is specifically quoted as saying: "rishwat de paise kade ghat nahi

honde (bribe amounts are never negotiated or reduced)". The CBI noted that the complaint and its verification prima facie disclosed the commission of offences under the BNS and Prevention of Corruption Act. In 2016, advocate Salwan was also arrested by the Chandigarh Police. At that time, the police had caught a businessman, Sukhbir Singh Shergill's driver, with 2.6 kg opium and Rs 15 lakh in counterfeit currency. During investigation, it was revealed that this was part of a conspiracy to falsely implicate Shergill, in which Salwan's name also surfaced. In this case, Salwan and others were booked under the NDPS Act, though he was later granted bail. The case against Salwan and the other accused is still pending before the High Court.

Gunmen on motorbike open fire at YouTuber Elvish Yadav's home in Gurgaon

GNS News Agency, August 26

Unknown assailants opened fire early Saturday morning at the residence of YouTuber Siddharth "Elvish" Yadav in Gurgaon, the police said. No one was injured in the incident. According to officers, the firing was directed at the first floor and stilt area of the Sector 56 house, while Yadav, who lives on the second floor, was away from Haryana on personal business.

"Initial findings suggest that the attack was carried out by three individuals riding a motorcycle," a police spokesperson said. "Further details are awaited as the police continue their probe into the motive and circumstances surrounding the incident." Hours after the incident, one Bhau Gang, via a post on Instagram, claimed responsibility for the attack saying that they did so as the YouTuber promoted betting platforms. Gunmen on motorbike open fire at YouTuber Elvish Yadav's home in Gurgaon pic.twitter.com/uvyj8UrdPK"Today the bullets that were fired at ELVISH YADAV's house were fired by us NEERAJ FARIDPUR and BHAU RITOLIYA, today we have introduced ourselves to him, he has ruined many homes by promoting betting and all these social media bugs are being WARNED, if anyone is found promoting betting, he can get a call or a bullet at any time, so all those who are into betting, be ready," the post in Hindi read. A police official said they are looking into the authenticity of the post. The attack marks the second such episode in recent weeks targeting celebrities popular among the city's youth. Last month, singer and rapper Rahul Fazilpuria came under fire near Sector 71's Southern Peripheral Road.

Six-month police op dismantles cybercrime syndicate in Delhi targeting SBI credit card holders



GNS News Agency, August 26

In a six-month-long operation, Delhi Police said it dismantled what it described as a major cybercrime syndicate that defrauded State Bank of India credit card holders across the country, siphoning off more than Rs 2.6 crore. The Police said Saturday that 18 people had been arrested, including the alleged masterminds, insiders at a Gurgaon call centre, SIM card suppliers, cryptocurrency handlers and field operatives. The network was operating out of Kakrola and Uttam Nagar in Dwarka, the police added.

The case began with a complaint tied to a call centre in Kakrola, police said. What followed was months of surveillance, analysis of digital trails, monitoring of cryptocurrency transactions and field operations before the scheme was exposed. The police said the syndicate was run much like a company, with divided roles and responsibilities. The scheme began with employees at a Gurgaonbased call centre, which had authorisation to handle SBI's Card Protection Plan services. Those employees, police said, leaked customer information — including names, registered mobile numbers and partial card details — with particular focus on clients enrolled in the protection program. The data was passed on to callers who posed as bank executives. According to police, those callers used scripted conversations to persuade victims that they were dealing with genuine customer service representatives. "The pretext for these calls commonly involved offering assistance, renewal,

or verification of CPP benefits, thereby creating a facade of legitimacy and instilling trust in the victim," said Vinit Kumar, deputy commissioner of police with the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations unit. During the calls, the accused deployed fabricated terms such as One Time Permission and Customer Value Verification Code to manipulate victims into handing over authentication details like one-time passwords and card verification values. "The process was executed in real time, allowing the syndicate to immediately utilize the stolen credentials to conduct unauthorized online transactions," Kumar added.

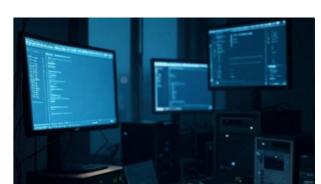
The stolen data was then used to purchase electronic gift cards from platforms including EaseMyTrip and Woohoo. Those gift cards were sold to travel agents and intermediaries, who used them to buy domestic airline tickets. The gang was paid in cash or cryptocurrency, often in the form of Tether, police said. The cycle was repeated across multiple states, with callers deliberately avoiding customers in Delhi to avoid drawing scrutiny. In the crackdown, the police seized 52 mobile phones, dozens of SIM cards and sensitive customer data. Police identified the alleged ringleaders as Ankit Rathi, Waseem and Vishal Bhardwaj. Two call centre employees, Vishesh Lahori and Durgesh Dhakad, were accused of leaking customer information. Others arrested included operational handlers Rahul Vishwakarma, Pawan Bisht, Kailash Purohit, Himanshu Chugh and Ravin Saini, as well as finance operatives Akhilesh Lakhotia and Harsh Chauhan. Another man, Shivam Sehrawat, was accused of supplying SIM cards to the group. "It is a matter of grave concern that sensitive data has been consistently leaked by employees of a major call centre," Kumar said. He added that employees hired as far back as 2019 had been systematically leaking company data for years. "This alarming breach not only exposes the company's inability to safeguard confidential information but also raises urgent questions about the adequacy of its security protocols and monitoring systems," he said. "Given that the call centre holds critical data of major banks in India, this breach represents a severe financial risk and positions the company as a significant source of data leakage leading to cyber financial frauds.

London School of Economics graduate among 3 arrested in Delhi cyber-extortion case

GNS News Agency, August 26

The three accused in Delhi had sent a QR code for cryptocurrency transfer as part of the extortion attemptThe three accused had sent a QR code for cryptocurrency transfer as part of the extortion attempt. (AI-generated image)Three men, including a 31-year-old graduate of the London School of Economics, were arrested in Delhi on Thursday for allegedly attempting to extort Rs 2 crore from a businessman by using the name of a notorious gangster, the police said. The case began on August 11, when the complainant reported receiving an international WhatsApp call from an unknown number. The caller, identifying himself with the gangster's name, threatened to kill the complainant's children if the money was not paid. A QR code for cryptocurrency transfer was also sent as part of the extortion attempt, the police said.

A case under Section 308(4) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was registered at the Desh Bandhu Gupta Road police station. The cybercrime unit, working with the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre of the Ministry of Home Affairs, traced the call and the QR code. Investigators said the cryptocurrency trail led to Thailand, where the accused had purchased an international SIM card in an effort to disguise their location. "Simultaneously the field level surveillance team kept a close watch on the suspects' addresses in India. Once the suspects landed back in India, they were immediately apprehended," said Nidhin Valsan, deputy commissioner of police for the Central district. "During interrogation, the accused persons revealed that all three of them



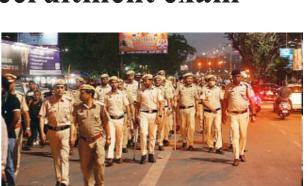
were heavily debt-ridden, and to pay off their debts in an easy way, they chose this extortion plot. One of the accused, Sumit, who works in the jewellery business, was well acquainted with the complainant and his family. To instil fear, they used the name of a well-known gangster."The men were identified as Sumit, 42, a commerce graduate from West Punjabi Bagh; Prince, 35, a school dropout from Roshanara Road; and Nitish, 31, a master's degree holder in software management from the London School of Economics who resides in Moti Nagar. Police said they recovered two mobile phones: one used to generate the cryptocurrency QR code and another to place the international WhatsApp call. The police added that the three conspired in India but travelled to Thailand to avoid detection before placing the extortion calls.

Admit cards, candidate lists found after police arrest man accused of leaking Bihar constable recruitment exam

GNS News Agency, August 26

The accused, Rajkishore Kumar (35), carried a reward of Rs 1 lakh, said DIG (EOU) Manavjeet Singh Dhillon, adding that multiple admit cards and detailed candidate lists for various recruitment examinations were allegedly recovered from his possession. The documents seized included names, roll numbers, districts, dates of birth, exam dates, category details, and booklet numbers of several aspirants in exams such as the Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET), the electricity department recruitment test, and the CSBC constable examination.

Sources say that Rajkishore is allegedly an associate of 2024 NEET-UG "mastermind" Sanjeev Mukhiya, who is also booked for orchestrating at least three competitive exam question paper leaks. According to the officer, more than Rs 1.5 crore was traced to his bank accounts, believed to be proceeds collected from candidates. The Central Selection Board of Constables had advertised 21,391 constable vacancies in the Bihar Police on June 9, 2023, for which more than 18 lakh candidates applied, and the written examination was scheduled across 37 districts on October 1, 7, and 15, 2023, in two sittings on each day. Following the October 1 session, allegations surfaced on social media platforms about large-scale malpractice, paper leaks, and "centre setting". Several Telegram channels, such as "Bihar Police Question Quiz," "Bihar Police Question Out 2023," and "Prime Education (Leak Questions)", circulated answer keys. "The first-shift answer key was leaked on Telegram by 7:59 am, and the second-shift answer key by 12:05 pm, before the exam had even begun in certain centres," according to the FIR lodged with the EOU. In light of confirmed irregularities, the exam scheduled for October 1 was cancelled by CSBC after investigation. Following multiple complaints to the EOU via email and helpline number, an official FIR was registered at the Economic Offences police station in Patna on October 31, 2023. Investigators had found that organised syndicates had been active since June 2023, promising candidates "guaranteed success" in exchange for payments ranging between Rs 80,000 and Rs 90,000. The groups circulated material using Telegram and WhatsApp, arranged electronic devices for cheating, and colluded with some exam cen-



tres, police said.Police said that multiple FIRs and arrests had earlier been made statewide in the same leak, and as the probe widened, it uncovered an organised racket targeting competitive exams.

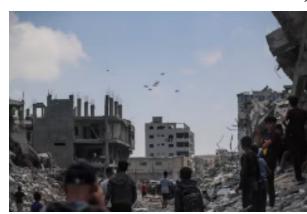
Andhra's Polavaram project works face setback again: Upper cofferdam suffers major slide

Hyderabad: The Polavaram Project under construction on the Godavari River has once again faced structural issues, with a major slide reported at its upper cofferdam. The incident, reported on Friday, affected an area about 10 feet wide and 7 to 8 feet deep, marking yet another setback for the project. Repeated structural issues are raising concerns about its construction quality in the backdrop of recurring floods in the Godavari River.

The slide occurred on the upper side of the cofferdam, a structure designed to divert water until the main reservoir is completed. Emergency repair works were swiftly undertaken and officials claimed that the damaged section had been stabilised.

They said the issue was confined to the upper cofferdam only, with no downstream impact, as the buttress dam remained intact. The Godavari water level at Polavaram currently stands at +28 metres. Ranga Reddy **WEDNESDAY 27 AUGUST 2025 INDIAN CHRONICLE**

Israeli military prepares to relocate residents to southern Gaza, spokesperson says



JERUSALEM/CAIRO, GNS News Agency, August Gaza residents will be provided with tents and other shelter equipment starting from Sunday ahead of relocating them from combat zones to the south of the enclave "to ensure their safety," the Israeli military said on Saturday. This comes days after Israel said it intended to launch a new offensive to seize control of northern Gaza City, the enclave's largest urban centre, in a plan that raised international alarm over the fate of the demolished strip, home to about 2.2 million people. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last Sunday said that before launching the offensive, the civilian population will be evacuated to what he described as "safe zones" from Gaza City, which he called Hamas' last stronghold. The shelter equipment will be transferred via the Kerem Shalom crossing in southern Gaza by the United Nations and other international relief organisations after being inspected by defence ministry personnel, the military said. A spokesperson for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs expressed concern over Israel's plans to relocate people to southern Gaza saying it would only increase suffering. But the U.N. body welcomed Israel's recognition that shelter is a desperate need and that tents and other shelter equipment will be allowed again into Gaza. "The UN and its partners will seize the opportunity this opens," the spokesperson said.

The U.N. warned on Thursday that thousands of families already enduring appalling humanitarian conditions could

be pushed over the edge if the Gaza City plan moves ahead. Palestinian and United Nations officials have said no place in the enclave is safe, including areas in southern Gaza where Israel has been ordering residents to move to. The military declined to comment when asked whether the shelter equipment was intended for Gaza City's population estimated at around one million people presently, and whether the site to which they will be relocated in southern Gaza would be the area of Rafah, which borders Egypt.Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Saturday that the plans for the new offensive were still being formulated. The Palestinian militant faction Islamic Jihad, an ally of Hamas, said that the military's announcement "as part of its brutal attack to occupy Gaza City, is a blatant and brazen mockery of international conventions." However, Israeli forces have already increased operations on the outskirts of Gaza City over the past week. Residents in the neighbourhoods of Zeitoun and Shejaia have reported heavy Israeli aerial and tank fire. Residents there have also reported explosions throughout the day, resulting from Israeli tank shelling against homes in the eastern parts of the neighbourhood. The Israeli military on Friday said that it had begun a new operation in Zeitoun to locate explosives, destroy tunnels and kill militants in the area.

The war began when Hamas attacked southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages, according to Israeli authorities, and 20 of the remaining 50 hostages in Gaza are still alive. Israel's subsequent military assault against Hamas has killed over 61,000 Palestinians, Gaza's health ministry says. It has also caused a hunger crisis, internally displaced most of Gaza's population and left much of the enclave in ruins. Protests calling for a hostage release and an end to the war were expected throughout Israel on Sunday, with many businesses, municipalities and universities saying they will support employees striking for the day. Negotiations to secure a U.S.backed 60-day ceasefire and hostage release ended in deadlock last month, and mediators Egypt and Qatar have been trying to revive them. Additional reporting by Emily Rose in Jerusalem, Nidal al-Mughrabi in Cairo and Michelle Nichols; Writing by Maayan Lubell, Ahmed Elimam, Enas Alashray and Nayera Abdallah; Editing by Sharon Singleton and Diane Craft

Over 300 protests held Saturday against Trump redistricting push

GNS News Agency, August 26

Pro-democracy activists and labor groups held hundreds of rallies and other events across the United States on Saturday protesting the Trump administration's push for Texas to redraw its congressional map in favor of Republicans.Former Congressman Beto O'Rourke was among those who spoke on Saturday in Texas, from which dozens of Democratic state lawmakers fled to deny Republicans the quorum needed to vote on a redistricting plan that President Donald Trump had demanded. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here. "They do this because they are afraid," O'Rourke told an audience on Saturday, speaking of those attempting redistricting. "They fear this power they see here today. "Drucilla Tigner, executive director of pro-democracy coalition Texas For All, told Reuters pro-democracy and labor groups held over 300 events attended by tens of thousands of people in 44 states and Washington, D.C.Many of the more than 50 Texas Democrats who fled the state have been staying in Illinois, also the site of protests on Saturday. The Texas lawmakers in Illinois are out of reach of civil arrest warrants that could be acted on within Texas. The Texas Democrats kept the map from coming to a vote during a special session Governor Greg Abbott called that ended Friday. Abbott immediately called a second special session. Abbott said that redistricting maps were introduced.



redistricting plans, legislation to increase flash flood safety in the wake of deadly July flooding, and other legislative work remains undone because Democrats are absent. California's Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom on Thursday unveiled a redistricting plan in his state that he says would give Democrats there five more Congressional seats, possibly offsetting any Republican gains in Texas. The Texas House Democrats said in a written statement on Thursday that they will only return to Texas if their state's special legislation is ended and once California's

Melania Trump writes 'peace letter' to Putin, urges end to war for children



GNS News Agency, August 26

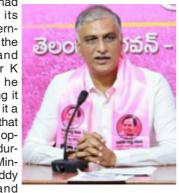
Washington: US First Lady Melania Trump has penned a heartfelt "peace letter" to Russian President Vladimir Putin, urging him to safeguard children and future generations by bringing an end to the war in Ukraine. According to media reports, the letter was personally delivered to Putin by US President Donald Trump ahead of his summit with the Russian leader at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska, on Friday.In her emotional appeal, Melania highlighted the devastating impact of the conflict on children, describing them as "caught in the crosshairs" of violence. Her letter opened with a moving line: "Dear President Putin, Every child shares the same quiet dreams in their heart, whether born randomly into a nation's rustic countryside or a magnificent city-centre. They dream of love, possibility, and safety from danger."The First Lady wrote that protecting future generations must be the shared responsibility of both parents and world leaders. "As parents, it is our duty to nurture the next generation's hope. As leaders, the responsibility to sustain our children extends beyond the comfort of a few," she noted. This marks Melania Trump's second known involvement in US foreign policy related to Russia and Ukraine. She had earlier played a role in convincing her husband to strengthen military aid to Kyiv and to take a firmer position in dealings with Moscow over the long-running conflict. Calling children "a purity, an innocence which stands above geography, government, and ideology," Melania appealed directly to the Russian President. "Mr. Putin, you can singlehandedly restore their

melodic laughter. In protecting the innocence of these children, you will do more than serve Russia alone, you serve humanity itself," she added. The letter ended with an urgent call for immediate action, urging Putin not to delay. "Such a bold idea transcends all human division, and you, Mr. Putin, are fit to implement this vision with a stroke of the pen today. It is time," she concluded. The letter was handed to Putin shortly before the Alaska summit between the two leaders. Meanwhile, Trump has described his meeting with the Russian President as "extremely productive," though he clarified that no formal agreement had been reached. Both leaders spoke positively about their discussions, even as no signed deal was announced. Additionally, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is expected to visit Washington on Monday to hold talks with Trump.

Harish Rao warns switching pumps on and off will damage KLIP motors

Siddipet: Former Minister T Harish Rao on Sunday warned that the practice of switching the Nandimedaram and Gayatri pumps on and off would cause severe damage to their motors. Speaking to reporters, Harish Rao said the pumps, with a capacity of 150 to 200 MW each, were being switched on at 7 am and turned off by 5 pm daily, a practice that could damage the bearings. He pointed out that even BHEL experts had cautioned the irrigation authorities and the government against such operations, but the

Congress government had failed to mend its ways. Accusing the government of trying to malign the image of the BRS and former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao, he asked: "Were they doing it due to negligence, or is it a conspiracy?"He alleged that the irrigation department operated the pumps only during the visit of Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy to Choppadandi, and



switched them off as soon as the Minister left in a helicopter. Harish Rao added that there was no shortage of power supply since all hydroelectric plants on the Krishna

river were in full operation.

Mistrust, fear: Complex story behind strained Syria-Lebanon relations



Beirut: A lot has happened in just a year on both sides of the Lebanon-Syria border. A lightning offensive by Islamist insurgents in Syria toppled longtime autocrat Bashar Assad and brought a new government in place in Damascus.In Lebanon, a bruising war with Israel dealt a serious blow to Hezbollah — the Iran-backed and Assadallied Shiite Lebanese militant group that had until recently been a powerful force in the Middle East — and a US-negotiated deal has brought a fragile ceasefire. Still, even after the fall of the 54-year Assad family rule, relations between Beirut and Damascus remain tense — as they have been for decades past, with Syria long failing to treat its smaller neighbour as a sovereign nation. Recent skirmishes along the border have killed and wounded several people, both fighters and civilians, including a four-year-old Lebanese girl.Beirut and Damascus have somewhat coordinated on border security, but attempts to reset political relations have been slow. Despite visits to Syria by two heads of Lebanon's government, no Syrian official has visited Lebanon.

Many Syrians have resented Hezbollah for wading into Syria's civil war in defence of Assad's government. Assad's fall sent them home, but many Lebanese now fear crossborder attacks by Syria's Islamic militants. There are new restrictions on Lebanese entering Syria, and Lebanon has maintained tough restrictions on Syrians entering Lebanon.

The Lebanese also fear that Damascus could try to bring Lebanon under a new Syrian tutelage. Syrians have long seen Lebanon as a staging ground for anti-Syria activities, including hosting opposition figures before Hafez Assad — Bashar Assad's father — ascended to power in a bloodless 1970 coup. In 1976, Assad senior sent his troops to Lebanon, allegedly to bring peace as Lebanon was hurtling into a civil war that lasted until 1990. Once that ended, Syrian forces — much like a colonial power — remained in Lebanon for another 15 years. A signature of the Assad family rule, Syria's dreaded security agents disappeared and tortured dissidents to keep the country under their control. They did the same in Lebanon. "Syrians feel that Lebanon is the main gateway for conspiracies against them," says Lebanese political analyst Ali Hamadeh.

It took until 2008 for the two countries to agree to open diplomatic missions, marking Syria's first official recognition of Lebanon as an independent state since it gained independence from France in 1943. The move came after the 2005 truck-bombing assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri that many blamed on Damascus. Two months later, Syria pulled its troops out of Lebanon under international pressure, ending 29 years of near-complete domination of its neighbour. When Syria's own civil war erupted in 2011, hundreds of thousands of Syrians fled across the border, making crisis-hit Lebanon the host of the highest per capita population of refugees in the world. Once in Lebanon, the refugees complained about discrimination, including curfews for Syrian citizens in some areas. Hezbollah, meanwhile, rushed thousands of its fighters into Syria in 2013 to shore up Assad, worried that its supply lines from Iran could dry up. And as much as the Lebanese are divided over their country's internal politics, Syria's war divided them further into those supporting Assad's government and those opposing it. A key obstacle to warming relations has been the fate of about 2,000 Syrians in Lebanese prisons, including some 800 held over attacks and shootings, many without trial. Damascus is asking Beirut to hand them over to continue their prison terms in Syria, but Lebanese judicial officials say Beirut won't release any attackers and that each must be studied and resolved separately. In July, family members of the detainees rallied along a border crossing, demanding their relatives be freed. The protest came amid reports that Syrian troops could deploy foreign fighters in Lebanon, which Damascus officials denied. Another obstacle is Lebanon's demand that Syrian refugees go back home now that Assad is gone. About 716,000 Syrian refugees are registered with the UN refugee agency, while hundreds of thousands more are unregistered in Lebanon, which has a population of about

Syria is also demanding the return of billions of dollars worth of deposits of Syrians trapped in Lebanese banks since Lebanon's historic financial meltdown in 2019. The worst post-Assad border skirmishes came in mid-March, when Syrian authorities said Hezbollah members crossed the border and kidnapped and killed three Syrian soldiers. The Lebanese government and army said the clash was between smugglers and that Hezbollah wasn't involved. Days later, Lebanese and Syrian defence ministers flew to Saudi Arabia and signed an agreement on border demarcation and boosting their coordination. In July rumours spread in Lebanon, claiming the northern city of Tripoli would be given to Syria in return for Syria giving up the Golan Heights to Israel. And though officials dismissed the rumours, they illustrate the level of distrust between the neighbors. Beirut was also angered by Syria's appointment this year of a Lebanese army officer — Abdullah Shehadeh, who defected in 2014 from Lebanon to join Syrian insurgents — as the head of security in Syria's central province of Homs that borders northeastern Lebanon. In Syria, few were aware of Shehadeh's real name — he was simply known by his nom de guerre, Abu Youssef the Lebanese. Syrian security officials confirmed the appointment.

Analysts say an important step would be for the two neighbours to work jointly to boost security against crossborder smuggling. A US-backed plan that was recently adopted by the Lebanese government calls for moving toward full demarcation of the border. Radwan Ziadeh, a senior fellow at the Arab Center in Washington, says the best way forward would be for Syria and Lebanon to address each problem between them individually — not as a package deal. That way, tensions would be reduced gradually, he said and downplayed recent comments by prominent Syrian anti-Assad figures who claimed Lebanon is part of Syria and should return to it. "These are individual voices that do not represent the Syrian state," Zaideh said.

European leaders undecided on us trip for Zelensky meeting



GNS News Agency, August 26

Berlin: The governments of German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, French President Emmanuel Macron, and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer plan to decide on Sunday whether their leaders will travel to the US for a meeting between US President Donald Trump and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky, media reported. According to Germany's Bild daily, the governments of Merz, Starmer, and Macron intend to coordinate their actions on Sunday and jointly decide who exactly will be travelling to the US on August 18 for Trump's meeting with Zelensky, Russian news agency Tass reported.

However, such a decision requires an official invitation from the US, according to Bild. The daily reported that while Trump offered Zelensky the option of inviting European politicians, no official invitations have yet been extended. Bild added that European leaders seek to avoid a meeting intended solely for publicity. A US daily reported earlier, citing the Elysee Palace, that the "coalition of the willing" will convene a meeting via video link on Sunday.

Starmer, Merz, and Macron, who had earlier announced that coalition members would soon hold a conversation without specifying the date, will meet online at 3:00 p.m. local time (1:00 p.m. GMT) on Sunday, Tass reported. The three leaders will discuss "next steps as part of the discussion on peace in Ukraine." Another US newspaper reported, citing sources, that following his meeting with Putin, Trump proposed negotiating a peace deal under which Ukraine would give up the rest of the Donbass region to Russia, including areas not yet under Russian control. In return, a ceasefire across the rest of Ukraine at current battlefronts and security guarantees for both Kyiv and Europe would be offered. On Friday, Putin and Trump met at the Elmendorf-Richardson military base in Alaska. Their talks lasted nearly three hours, including a one-on-one conversation in the American leader's limousine en route to the main negotiation venue, as well as a small-group discussion involving three participants on each side. The Russian delegation included Kremlin aide Yury Ushakov and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, while the American side was represented by Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Special Presidential Envoy Steve Witkoff. In a statement to the media following the talks, Russian President Vladimir Putin said they mostly focused on resolving the Ukraine conflict. Trump described his summit with Putin as "very productive." Later, he called Zelensky, EU leaders, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. After the summit and phone calls, Trump said that Ukraine and Russia should proceed directly to agreeing on a final peace deal, dropping his earlier demand for a ceasefire. Trump and Zelensky are due to meet at the White House on Monday. The US leader said that if talks with Zelensky are successful, another meeting with Putin will be scheduled.

Pak Army chief Asim Munir rejects leadership change rumours

Islamabad: Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir has ruled out any change in the leadership, describing rumours about the removal of President Asif Ali Zardari as completely false and against both the government and the establishment, a media report said on Saturday. In July, social media reports began to circulate that President Zardari may be asked to step down and that the army chief would take over the top

However, top government officials — Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Interior Minister Mohsin Nagvi — rejected such claims. Suhail Warraich, a columnist for the Jang media group, claimed in an article published Saturday that the army chief had spoken to him in person on the matter during a recent meeting in Brussels. Munir briefly stayed in Belgium on his return from last week's visit to the United

"The talk started with politics, especially on rumours that there is some effort to change the president of Pakistan as well as the prime minister. Field Marshal Munir clearly said, during both the Brussels gathering and in his

two-hour discussion with me, that the rumours about a

change were completely false," Warraich claimed in the column published in the Urdu daily Jang. "There are elements behind this (rumour) who oppose both the government and the authorities and wish to create political anarchy," the army chief was quoted as saying. The article claimed that Munir also outlined his ambitions in the Brussels gathering, saying that: "God has made me protector of the country. I do not desire any position other than that."

"On a question about politics, he [Munir] said that political reconciliation is possible only if there is a sincere apology," the report read. Although it was not clear who Munir was referring to, it can be inferred that he may have been referring to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and its incarcerated leader, Imran Khan. On foreign relations, Munir was said to have expressed confidence in maintaining equilibrium between the US and China. "We will not sacrifice one friend for the other," Munir was quoted as saying. The army chief also described President Donald Trump's efforts for peace as "genuine", and said Pakistan had taken the lead in nominating him for the Nobel Peace Prize, which was then followed by other nations.

How does plastic pollution affect health? | Explained



The story so far: Around 180 countries have failed to find consensus on an internationally binding legal agreement that sought to restrict plastic pollution. Talks in Geneva remained deadlocked on the issue late this week. While there is already a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)-backed resolution on the need for such a move, only a binding agreement will actually force countries to take concrete action. However, countries are divided on several questions: should they address plastic waste alone or include plastic production?; should developing countries be funded by developed countries for the purpose? The key point of contention is the role of plastics in health.

What are the challenges from plastic?

No material symbolises the global, industrialised, consumption-based economy like plastic. The chemical constituents of plastics are polymers, and they can be natural - like cellulose, lignin, and are the basis of nearly everything in nature — or made in labs. Polymers derived from fossil fuel and then shaped into objects are in general called 'plastic.' As a derivative of crude oil, it has the ability to be moulded into a nearly infinite variety of objects, from critical things, including aircraft and medical equipment, to cosmetic items such as tinsel, baubles and packaging. Add to that its low cost of production relative to materials such as glass and aluminium. The ubiquity of plastics and the fact that it is cheap has led to it being the prime source of litter and a symbol of the collapse of waste management systems. However, plastic's flexibility also implies its persistence. Plastics are mixtures of various types that include monomers, polymers, and chemical additives. There are more than 16,000 chemicals potentially used or present in plastic materials and products. There is little or no information about the potential impact on human health or the environment by over 10,000 of these chemicals. A report last year in the journal Nature concluded that more than 4,000 chemicals of concern can be present in each major plastic type, such as PVC, polyurethanes, PET, polyethylene and others. Given that most of these are synthetic and nonbiodegradable, public opinion has generally focussed on recycling or waste management. Over the years, however, there has been a body of scientific investigation into how these chemicals — that are indestructible — may make their way into living organisms in rivers, oceans, land and ultimately inside people

What is evidence that plastic harms health?
Ethylene, propylene, styrene and their derivatives are

commonly used to make plastic. Ethylene derivatives such as polypropene (PP), low-density polyethylene (LDPE), linear low-density polyethylene (LLDPE), high-density polyethylene (HDPE) and polyethylene terephthalate (PET) comprise the largest portion of downstream petrochemicals used to make plastic packaging. However, manufacturing them requires a range of other chemicals, several of which are monomers (the building blocks of polymers). These include bisphenols, phthalates, polychlorinated-biphenyls (PCB), polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), and per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). They are used to produce food containers, drink bottles, teething toys, polyester, intravenous bags, cosmetics, paints, electronic components, adhesives and sealants. For years, there have been a bulk of studies where medical researchers have investigated if exposure to these chemicals, via the products used, is having a discernible impact on health. Earlier this month, Boston College in the U.S. and Australia's Minderoo Foundation launched a dashboard that compiled such evidence. There are around 1,100 primary studies involving about 1.1 million individuals that have linked changes in thyroid function, hypertension, kidney and testicular cancer, and gestational diabetes to exposure to these chemicals. The vast proportion of these individuals studied are in the developed world. Nearly, all of these studies are "associative", in the sense that the measured disease outcome could be a result of exposure to the chemicals as well as a range of other factors, and it is not always possible to tease apart individual effects. The true "gold standard" of exposure is a "longitudinal study", where a fixed group of people are tracked over a long time to discern the effects of chemical exposure, but this is time consuming. There are studies underway, said Dr. Sarah Paul, neuroscientist and head of Plastics and Human Health, Minderoo, to evaluate if a group of people who were consciously less exposed to certain plastics would have improved health outcomes.

What about microplastics?

Microplastics are plastics smaller than five millimetres and can refer to the constituent elements of a variety of additives or plastic products. Given that technology available to detect them is relatively recent, they have over the years been found in blood, breast milk, placenta and bone marrow. While their exact impact on human health is unclear, they too are implicated in a wide range of disorders.

What is India doing about plastic?

There is a ban on the production and use of single-use plastics in nearly 20 States. These are the category of plastic goods that are the least re-usable and difficult to recycle. Given that they constitute a waste management problem, India has a range of administrative process meant to push companies towards ensuring that a proportion of plastic that is used are collected back. However, this has had limited effect. India doesn't yet recognise the impact of plastics and chemicals on health. In international negotiations on the global plastics treaty, India and other countries have expressed reservations on including discussions on health in the plastic treaty and said that these are matters to be taken up at the World Health Organization. Thus, plastics is primarily a waste management problem, as far as India is concerned.

Jeremy Corbyn | The British Left's second act

In late July 2025, Jeremy Corbyn announced the formation of a new left-wing political party alongside former Labour MP Zarah Sultana, marking a new chapter for one of Britain's unique political figures in the past decade. Operating under the provisional name 'Your Party', this venture represents Mr. Corbyn's boldest move since his expulsion, last year, from the Labour Party he once led. Mr. Corbyn is also part of the Independent Alliance, a parliamentary grouping of six independent MPs consisting of five Muslims including Ms. Sultana as the sole woman — who have positioned themselves as vocal critics of the current Labour government's policies on everything from welfare cuts to arms sales to Israel. The announcement has already generated strong grassroots enthusiasm, according to Mr. Corbyn, with over 6,50,000 people signing up for membership in the party's first weeks — a figure that suggests a significant appetite for an alternative to current Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour. This surge of support recalls the unexpected momentum that first propelled Mr. Corbyn to the Labour leadership nearly a decade ago.

In 2015, Mr. Corbyn's successful bid for the Labour leadership caught the political establishment completely off guard. As Andrew Murray, one of Mr. Corbyn's key advisers, reflected in a recent interview in Jacobin magazine, the victory was "totally unexpected" and driven by "exasperation within the Labour membership with the legacy of New Labour". While his rivals offered tepid continuations of the (Tony) Blair-(Gordon) Brown era, Mr. Corbyn represented something genuinely different: authentic opposition to neoliberalism, a commitment to mass movement politics rather than pure parliamentary politics, and an uncompromising anti-imperialist foreign policy stance. This combination was remarkable in the context of European social democracy. Unlike left-wing movements in Spain, Germany, or France that emerged from communist traditions or as entirely new formations, Mr. Corbyn accomplished something unique in European politics: he captured the leadership of a major, mainstream, social democratic party from a position of fundamental opposition to its decades-long trajectory toward centrism. In some ways, his rise was similar to that of Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party in the U.S. at a similar time. His programmatic positions included renationalisation of utilities, massive public investment, and wealth redistribution — policies that were always characterised as "Old Labour" and hadn't been seriously proposed by Labour leadership in decades, except by popular but sidelined leaders like Tony Benn. The 2017 general election validated this approach. Against all expectations, Mr. Corbyn led Labour to its biggest vote swing since 1945, securing 40% of the vote — a performance matched by only two other Labour campaigns since 1970, under Mr. Blair. However, Mr. Corbyn's functioning as Labour leader was constantly undermined by fierce resistance from within his own party. Mr. Murray estimates that at least 80% of Labour MPs opposed Mr. Corbyn "with different degrees of vehemence and for different reasons". This internal hostility created what Mr. Murray describes as feeling "like an encampment in the middle of enemy fire the whole time, coming from your own side". This was also exacerbated by a hostile media that lampooned or mischaracterised many of his positions ruthlessly. The opposition intensified around Mr. Corbyn's foreign policy positions, particularly his solidarity with Palestinian rights and criticism of Israeli policies,

honed over decades as a Labour back-bencher and peace

activist. This anti-imperialist stance proved especially threat-

ening to the Labour establishment, which as Mr. Murray



notes, was willing to tolerate domestic policy changes such as nationalising water companies but "if a government was going to compromise nuclear weapons or NATO or even support for Israel, those would be red lines". This foreign policy stance became a focal point of opposition, with allegations of anti-Semitism within the Labour Party being used to attack his leadership. While Mr. Murray acknowledges there were genuine issues that needed addressing, he and others have argued that the controversy was inflated into a smear campaign with the aim of discrediting Mr. Corbyn's critique of Israeli policies. The accusations created a "moral damage" that paralysed Mr. Corbyn's leadership and drained energy from his team, even if they weren't the primary factor in his eventual electoral defeat.

The issue that ultimately proved fatal to Mr. Corbyn's leadership was Brexit. Initially, he managed to straddle Britain's fundamental political divide by promising to "respect the referendum result" in 2016 while delivering a different Brexit than the Tories. This position helped maintain support amongst traditional Labour voters in working-class constituencies who had voted Leave, while not completely alienating Remain supporters. However, mounting pressure from a newly energised pro-EU movement and overwhelming Remain sentiment among Labour members forced him into an increasingly untenable position. By 2019, Labour had committed to a second referendum — a stance that proved electorally catastrophic. As Mr. Murray predicted, this position cost Labour dozens of seats in traditional workingclass strongholds and failed to deliver equivalent gains in Remain-supporting areas. The Brexit debate starkly exposed the deep division within Labour's electoral coalition, pitting its liberal and urban supporters against the party's traditional working class constituency in seats that voted to leave the EU. This split mirrors similar divisions affecting left-wing parties across the developed world, where globalisation has created divergent interests between different segments of the progressive coalition, particularly seen in the Democratic Party in the U.S. with the rise of Donald Trump's populism. Following Labour's 2019 defeat, Mr. Starmer systematically dismantled Mr. Corbyn's legacy within the party. Mr. Corbyn was suspended and eventually expelled, while many of his allies were marginalised or forced out. Mr. Starmer's centrist approach proved electorally successful in 2024, delivering Labour its largest parliamentary majority in decades. However, this victory hid a glaring statistic — Labour actually received fewer votes than Mr. Corbyn had achieved in his 2019 defeat, winning primarily due to the collapse of Conservative support and vote-splitting on the Right between the Tories and Reform UK. With a historically low vote share for a winning party, Mr. Starmer's government has struggled to maintain public

The man who serves the dead at Chennai Central



Amidst the hustle and bustle at Chennai's MGR Central Railway Station, a man in his 50s sits quietly, absorbed in his phone. On this humid afternoon, he is wearing a yellow T-shirt and khaki shorts, a sandalwood tilak smeared across his forehead, with kumkum at the centre. Behind this unassuming exterior lies a lifetime of confronting the unimaginable.N. Selvaraj, known to all at Central railway station as "Central Body Murugan", has been retrieving bodies from the railway tracks for 36 years. For more than three decades, this station has been his place of work, his refuge, and in many ways, his home. His job is as grim as it is underappreciated, demanding a fortitude most would recoil from. Yet Murugan speaks of it with quiet pride, regarding it as his solemn duty.

"I ran away from home when I was 15," he recalls. "I have been here ever since." Drawn into the company of older men who performed this daunting task, Murugan gradually became part of a world where death was a constant companion. His earliest days were far from easy. "The body parts would be scattered, I would not even feel like going near it," he admits. Senior hands advised him to drink before attending to a body, a habit he took up to dull his senses. Back then, the pay was meagre. "In total, they paid ?8, and four of us would work together, so we shared the money," he says. The work was relentless, often with no rest between calls. Over the years, the payment structure changed, and the responsibility for paying him shifted from railway officials to the police. "Inspector James helped increase our pay from ?100 to ?500 for unknown bodies and ?250 for known ones," Murugan recalls. Even today, the amount is inconsistent, and his monthly earnings hover between ?5,000 and ?6,000. The job includes lifting mangled remains, sometimes reassembling and stitching the limbs, and in one instance, placing brain matter back into a skull.

In 2014, Murugan's role became particularly visible. A bomb blast in the Guwahati-Bangalore Kaziranga Express, stationed on platform 9, shook Chennai Central, killing one person and injuring several others. Murugan was among the first to respond, retrieving the body and helping the injured. For this, he was awarded ?1,800 from the railway department. This act of service brought him to the attention of political leaders. The now Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments P.K. Sekar Babu, and MP Dayanidhi Maran introduced him to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in 2019. He was then assured a permanent job and a steady salary.N. Selvaraj being felicitated by now Chief Minister M.K Stalin in 2019 for his service during the 2014 Chennai Central bomb blast.N. Selvaraj being felicitated by now Chief Minister M.K Stalin in 2019 for his service during the 2014 Chennai Central bomb blast. | Photo Credit: Special Ar-

Murugan says he waited for that promise to materialise. "Now, I have given up hope that it would ever come true," he says.A railway official who has known Murugan for years says: "Murugan has been working here for many years. Nobody knows him outside of this railway station, but he is a person who truly deserves everything. Nobody can do what he does for a living. He has grown up here."The official explains that while Murugan is not an official porter, he sometimes carries luggage. His main work, however, is retrieving bodies, for which there is no official record. "The police receive ?5,000 from the railway for shroud cloth and body bags, and from this, they give Murugan a portion. Labour cost is never included. The sad thing is there is no official record that he has served Chennai Central for 36 years doing the unthinkable."The certificate he received for his service during the 2014 bomb blast The certificate he received for his service during the 2014 bomb blast | Photo Credit: Special ArrangementThis absence of documentation means no benefits, no pension, and no security for his family should anything happen to him. "People who do normal work get job benefits. But for us, if we lose our life, there no one to take care of our family," Murugan says. Today, Murugan cannot work as before. A recent accident left him with a shoulder injury. When the police call him after a fatal accident or suicide, he now rings a few younger men he has trained over the years. If they cannot bring themselves to approach the body, Murugan steps in himself. The crowds at Chennai Central may not even notice him, but Murugan remains a constant presence there, carrying the weight of the dead so that the living may move

What are the challenges confronting the EC? | Explained

The story so far: At a press conference on August 7, Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi accused the Election Commission (EC) of massive electoral roll manipulations in Mahadevapura Assembly constituency in Karnataka. Mr. Gandhi's presser capped a series of allegations of deliberate voter roll discrepancies by the EC beginning with the Maharashtra Assembly polls. This, coupled with the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, which is under judicial scrutiny, has put the poll body in the eye of a storm.

What is the mandate of the EC?

The Election Commission of India is a permanent constitutional body. The Constitution has vested in the EC the superintendence, direction and control of the entire process for conduct of elections to Parliament and the legislature of every State, and to the offices of President and Vice-President of India. Originally, the commission only had a Chief Election Commissioner (CEC). It was expanded to include two Election Commissioners (ECS)

Why has there been a controversy about the appointment process?

Parliament passed a new law governing appointments to the EC, namely the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023. In accordance with the new law, the ECs are selected by a three-member selection committee, comprising the Prime Minister, a Union Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The Opposition had objected to this, saying the committee gave little room for dissent as the Prime Minister and the Union Minister are part of the government and could rule 2:1 in favour of their candidate.

Why is the EC's role in the spotlight?

Last year, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance had alleged that lakhs of new voters had been added to Maharashtra's electoral rolls in the time period between the Lok Sabha polls in May and the Assembly elections in October. The Congress had made the same allegations about Haryana, and later the Aam Aadmi Party alleged that voter rolls were tweaked in Delhi before Assembly polls. Even as the EC was grappling with these claims, CEC Gyanesh Kumar announced the SIR in Bihar which aims at cleaning up electoral rolls. The EC said the SIR exercise will be carried out across the country. At his press conference, Mr. Gandhi alleged large-scale discrepancies in the Mahadevapura Assembly segment under the Bangalore Central Lok Sabha constituency in Karnataka which he claimed helped the BJP win the seat. Mr. Gandhi said his party had carried out an investigation which spanned over six months before reaching this conclusion. He claimed that the voter list had manipulated entries, including duplicate voters, invalid addresses, and bulk registrations of votes at single locations. Following this, Mr. Gandhi reiterated his demand for machine readable voter rolls to be provided to all political parties for proper verification. The EC stated it has not been providing machine readable or "text-searchable" voter lists for concerns over cyber-security. The Supreme Court (SC) had upheld it in a petition filed by former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath in 2018.

When was a revision announced in Bihar?

On June 24, the EC ordered a SIR of electoral rolls in Bihar, barely five months before the Assembly elections. As per the SIR orders, every voter in Bihar who had not been listed in the 2003 voter rolls would have to submit documents proving their date and place of birth to determine whether they were Indian citizens. Those born after 1987 would also have to submit proof of their parents' date and place of birth. However, after the completion of the first phase of the SIR exercise, the EC released a draft electoral roll on August 1, which saw a drop in the number of voters in Bihar by 65 lakh. There were 7.89 crore voters registered in the 2025 electoral list before the SIR exercise; after the recount, it slid to 7.24 crore electors. The EC said that most of these 65 lakh "missing" voters have died; are registered in two locations; have migrated out of Bihar; or are untraceable. Civil society organisations, Opposition parties as well as NGOs approached the Supreme Court challenging the SIR



process.

What has the SC directed EC to do?

In an interim order on August 14, the Supreme Court directed the EC to publish an enumerated, booth-wise list of the 65 lakh electors not included in the draft roll. A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi instructed the EC to provide reasons for the deletion — death, migration, untraceability, duplicate registrations — against each name. The court also asked EC to accept Aadhaar as proof of identity for an elector to include his or her name in the rolls. "That it has taken the Supreme Court to nudge the EC towards following basic norms of natural justice and fairness in the Bihar SIR exercise reflects poorly on an organisation which takes pride in collecting and counting every last vote. While errors can creep into voter lists over time, the answer to that is not mass disenfranchisement as the EC is attempting," said Alok Kumar Prasanna, Advocate and Co-Founder of Vidhi Centre for Public Policy.

What about migrant voters?

Migrant voters still have to return to the place where they are on the rolls to vote. This is a huge cost and depresses turnout, notes Mr. Prasanna. "There is no simple solution to this currently. The solution will have to be cheap, secure and transparent to work. Solutions which work in richer societies and for richer migrants will not work for poor migrants from States like Bihar," he added.

What has been the political fallout?

After Mr. Gandhi's press conference, the Opposition upped the ante and tried to hold a march from Parliament to the Election Commission headquarters. They courted arrest when stopped. The ongoing monsoon session of Parliament has also been virtually paralysed over demands for a discussion on the Bihar SIR. The government has, however, not conceded to the Opposition's demand. The issue has brought Opposition parties together and protests are likely to continue when Parliament reconvenes on August

Catholic priest's presence at RSS event in Pala raises eyebrows

At a time when the Catholic Church in Kerala has been voicing concern over attacks on Christians in central and northern States of India, the participation of a priest from the Pala diocese of the Syro-Malabar Church at an event of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has raised a few eyebrows.

Father George Nellikunnu Cherivu Purayidom, director of Care Homes project under the Pala diocese and Deepika Friends Club, presided over Shankholi 2025, a student summit jointly organised by the Poonjar, Meenachil and Ramapuram units of the RSS on Friday (August 15).

Addressing the gathering, Father Purayidom said that it was the generation inspired by India's spiritual heritage and the freedom struggle that went on to shape modern India. Today's younger generation must strive to project the nation's glory on the world stage, making effective use of organisation and technology.

Atre, Pu La and now Kamra: A look at how satirists found themselves in political crosshairs in Maharashtra



The Shiv Sena's ongoing campaign against comedian Kunal Kamra for his political satire, where he allegedly referred to party chief and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde as "gaddar (traitor)", has brought to light the delicate and uncomfortable relationship between the state's politics and humour. However, Kamra is not the first humorist to clash with politicians in a state where interplay between politics and humour has long been an integral part of the conversation. Humorists in Maharashtra have frequently played a key role in both critiquing and reflecting on the political environment, often at the risk of facing backlash for their remarks.

One of the most prominent figures who drew political ire was Pralhad Keshav Atre (Acharya Atre), a journalist, politician, and humorist, whose sharp wit and satire led him into several run-ins with Maharashtra's politicians, including Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb Thackeray. Atre, through his writings in his newspaper "Maratha" and public speeches, often used humour to lampoon various political leaders. One of his most memorable satirical pieces targeted then President V V Giri, who had fourteen children. Maratha published a piece with a family photograph of Giri and his children, titled "Giri yanchi kamgiri". The humour arose from the dual meaning of the word "kaam", which could imply both "work" and "sexual desire", while "giri" referred to the President's surname and his performance (number of children)

Atre's wit was also evident during the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement in the late 1950s. When the popular slogan "Mumbaicha samyukta Maharashtra zhalach pahije (Mumbai must become part of united Maharashtra)" came under criticism from then Chief Minister Yashwantrao Chavan. In response, Atre said: "Remove the "Ch" from your surname and see what remains—"vhan", which means

footwear!" This became a staple example of Atre's satirical brilliance.

Atre's most significant verbal duels were with Bal Thackeray, whose rise to prominence in the state's politics in the 1960s was met with Atre's vocal criticism. Atre used satire to criticise the Shiv Sena's regionalist and nativist stance, which he believed to be divisive. He was particularly critical of the party's anti-migrant rhetoric and its aggressive political tactics. Through his columns and public speeches, Atre's humour challenged the party's approach to Marathi pride, highlighting the polarising effect of their politics. This conflict with Thackeray, a satirical cartoonist himself, led to Atre being depicted as a pig in the Shiv Sena's mouthpiece Marmik, with the Shiv Sena founder even referring to Atre as "Worli cha dukkar" (The pig of Worli). Atre's sharp criticism also provoked violent reactions from Sena activists, culminating in an assault on him. Despite their tumultuous relationship, after the Sena came to power, the Shiv Sena honoured Atre by erecting a full-size statue of him at Worli. Another notable satirist who faced the ire of Maharashtra's political class was Purushottam Laxman Deshpande (Pu La Deshpande). Deshpande, known for his iconic contributions to Marathi literature and humor, found himself at odds with the Shiv Sena when he openly criticised political violence. In 1995, while accepting the Maharashtra Bhushan Award, Deshpande took a jibe at the growing "goondaism" in the state's politics, condemning political parties that used hooliganism to gain power. Thackeray responded sharply, remarking that awarding him had been "their folly." Thackeray hit back with his own wordplay, commenting on how "old bridges are falling, but new ones must come up", a dig at Deshpande's name "Pu La" (which resembles the Marathi word for "bridge"). However, the duo later buried their differences. A clash also occurred in 2003 over the satirical show "Ghadle Bighadle (Done Undone)", which aired a skit that mocked NCP leader and then state Home Minister Chhagan Bhujbal. The skit, which parodied Bhujbal with a character named "ArmStrong" (a play on Bhujbal's name), angered the NCP, leading to Bhujbal's supporters vandalising the channel's office. Bhujbal eventually resigned from the Cabinet in wake of the controversy. The latest episode in Maharashtra's long history of political clashes derived from humorous comments involves Kamra and his outspoken remarks against Shinde. While many past conflicts between humorists and politicians have been resolved with reconciliations, the Kamra incident continues to simmer in Maharashtra.

After Nalanda, another Bihar university now set to rise from the ruins

A decade after Nalanda University came up in the foothills of Rajgir, work is on to revive another ancient centre of learning in Bihar — Vikramshila. While the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has, since December last year, been developing the site of the ancient Vikramshila university to attract more tourists, the Bihar government recently identified 202.14 acres at Antichak village in Bhagalpur district for the Central university.

Though the Centre had approved the project in 2015 and sanctioned `500 crore, with the state government unable to identify a suitable land for the project, there had been little progress until now. Speaking in Bhagalpur on February 24, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "At its peak, Vikramshila University was a centre of knowledge for the world. We have already fused ancient Nalanda university's glory with the new Nalanda University. After Nalanda, it is the turn of Vikramshila as we are opening a Central university."On a weekend morning, workers at the site of the ruins of the ancient Vikramshila Mahavihar weeded out vegetation and carefully brushed off the soil to expose the underlying features. As part of the conservation and preservation process, the entire site has been divided into grids. Rising above the ruins, glistening in the sun, is a cruciform brick stupa, the centrepiece of the Vikramshila site. All around the stupa are the cells — 208 of them, 52 on each side — where student-monks of one of the most splendid universities of its times practised Tantrayana, the last of the three great vehicles of Indian Buddhism after Hinayana and Mahayana. Tantrayana, which incorporated tantric practices and rituals, is what the scholars at Vikramshila excelled in. Founded by Pala king Dharmapala of the Pala dynasty in the late 8th to early 9 Century AD, Vikramshila Mahavihar existed and flourished at the time of Nalanda. "While Nalanda university flourished from the Gupta Period (320-550 AD) to the 12th Century, Vikramshila thrived during the Pala Period (8th to 12th century). While Nalanda got more international fame for teaching varied disciplines, Vikramshila was the only university that specialised in tantric and occult studies. In fact, during Dharmapala's reign, Vikramshila reigned supreme and is known to have controlled Nalanda's affairs as well." said ASI Superintending Archaeologist (.While Nalanda is the older of the two universities, at one point, the two centres of learning, who had a common patron in King Dharmapala, exchanged knowledge and even teachers, who were called Acharyas.At its peak, subjects such as theology, philosophy, grammar, metaphysics and logic were taught at Vikramshila. But the most important branch of learning were the tantras because Vikramshila flourished in the days of tantricism, when occult sciences and magic were subjects of study both in Buddhism as well as Hinduism. The university produced several eminent scholars, among them, Atisa Dipankara,



who played a key role in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. The institution prospered for about four centuries before fading out along with Nalanda around the 13th century — a decline that experts attribute to a combination of factors, from the rising of Hinduism and the decline of Buddhism to the invasion of Bakhtiyar Khalji.

The ruins — from the stupa to the remains of the cells and a vast library — bear witness to this rise and fall of Vikramshila. It was in the library, the ruins of which are at the south-west of the site, that teachers and students are known to have engaged in copying and translating manuscripts. According to ASI's Sujit Nayan, the rectangular structure, now partially exposed, had a cooling system, as part of which water from the adjoining reservoir would be channeled into the building. "The cooling system was perhaps meant for preserving delicate manuscripts," he said. Nayan said they are trying to preserve and conserve the site by maintaining the original form of the excavated structure. The initial excavation at Antichak was conducted by Patna University (1960-69), following which the ASI took over. A museum at the site displays several antiquities found during the excavation — from a carved limestone sculpture that depicts the eight major events of Buddha's life to sculptures of Buddhist and Hindu deities such as Avalokiteshvara, Loknath, Ganesh, Surya, Vishnu, etc.Less than 3 km away, at Antichak village, the idea of a new university is taking shape. The Bihar government has approved 87.99 crore for land acquisition at Antichak village.Bhagalpur District Magistrate Nawal Kishore Choudhary said" "The district administration has identified 202.14 acres, three km from the ancient Vikramshila site. Of that, 27 acres belong to the state government but are occupied by some families."Bihar Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary said: "Project Vikramshila has started. The land acquisition process will be completed soon. Construction and repair of NH-80 (connecting Vikramshila to Bhagalpur, 50 km away) is on. The time is not far when the new Nalanda and Vikramshila universities will collaborate — just the way they did in ancient times."

Karimnagar's Satavahana University gets engineering, law colleges

EMS News Agency, March 28Karimnagar: The State government has sanctioned an engineering college and a law college to Satavahana University. Government orders regarding this were issued on Monday.Both the colleges will be operated from the academic year 2025-26. While the university college of engineering will be established at Husnabad, the university college of law will be on the Satavahana university premises.The Engineering college will have four B.Tech programmes including Computer Science and Engineering, CSE (Artificial Intelligence) Information Technology, Electronics and Communications Engineering. The college will be started with an intake of 60 students in each programme.Rs 44.12 crore was sanctioned for the construction of the college and other expenditure.Meanwhile, the three years LLB course will be



started with two sections with an intake of 60 students each and LLM (intellectual property law) with one section with an intake of 20 students. Rs 22.96 crore was sanctioned for the development of the law college.

Why is the Parker Solar Probe trying to 'touch' the sun?



Among the various places humans have aspired to visit in the solar system, the sun remains the most foreboding. On December 24, 2024, NASA's Parker Solar Probe arrived within 6.1 million km from the star's surface. This is a short distance to be from the sun: no spacecraft has ever made such a close approach. Even the Parker Solar Probe took seven years to get here. The probe made another approach to the sun on March 22 and will do so again on June 19 this year. Sunlight is the main source of energy for earthlife. The sun's core produces this energy using nuclear fusion. The star also has strong, dynamic magnetic fields crisscrossing its surface, and sudden changes in the way they're arranged give rise to intense explosions called solar flares. Numerous electrons, protons, and heavy nuclei are spit out of the solar corona — the uppermost layer of the sun's atmosphere — at about 900 km/s.

These particles carry an enormous amount of energy and sometimes rush towards the earth at tremendous speed in an event called a coronal mass ejection. Their effects on the earth constitute a solar storm, including electric grid failures, loss of telecommunication channels, and damage to the ozone layer. They can also damage instruments onboard satellites. To understand the dynamics of the corona over time and their effects on the solar system at large, scientists need to observe the sun closely. This is also why the Indian Space Research Organisation launched and is currently operating the Aditya-L1 probe, stationed at about 150 million km from the star. Around six decades ago, a scientist named Eugene Parker predicted the existence of the solar wind: a stream of charged particles flowing out from the sun in all directions. NASA named the Parker Solar Probe in his honour. The probe was launched on board a Delta IV rocket from Cape Canaveral in Florida in August 2018. Once in space, the probe's maximum speed was an astounding 692,000 km/hr. To protect against the sun's intense heat, the probe has an 8-foot-wide, 4.5-inch thick carbon-carbon composite material shield that can withstand up to 1,370° C while weighing only 73 kg. This shield was built by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory. It consists of a carbon composite foam sandwiched between two carbon plates. Its sun-facing side is coated with white ceramic paint to reflect as much sunlight as possible instead of absorbing it. Just a few metres behind the shield, in its shadow, the ambient temperature drops to 29° C, allowing the probe's scientific instruments to operate without special provisions to maintain the temperature. The probe also has two sets of solar power arrays: one in the shield's shadow that supplies power to the instruments and the other on the sun-facing side, which uses a special fluid pump to cool itself while powering the probe during its close approaches. Touching the sun

Curiously, the first obstacle to the mission's success wasn't the sun's heat but its gravity. Since the probe flew through space at a very high speed, it had to decelerate significantly as it got close to the sun. If it didn't, the sun's gravity would have encouraged it to dive right into the star. This is why Parker's first mission profile had the probe fly towards Jupiter and swing around the gas giant to achieve an optimal speed to fly towards the sun. This idea fell out of favour because of the large travel distance. The probe's final mission profile was more direct; to use the combined gravitational forces of the earth and Venus to slowly spiral closer to the sun's surface, in the process spending more than 2,000 hours flying through the corona and 24 times along the solar equator. The probe has four scientific instruments: FIELDS, Integrated Science Investigation of the Sun (ISoIS), Wide-Field Imager (WISPR), and Solar Wind Electrons Alphas and Protons (SWEAP). FIELDS measures the electric and magnetic fields of the sun's atmosphere; ISoIS observes the energetic particles that cause solar storms while SWEAP records their properties; and WISPR takes pictures as it passes through the corona. A 'sun-touching' event occurred in April 2021 when Parker moved closer to the sun than its Alfvén surface — the height beyond which the solar wind can't affect the star's surface — as ascertained by the FIELDS and SWEAP instruments. A fifth instrument, called a Faraday cup, lies outside the shadow of the heat shield and measures the density of ions and electrons in the solar wind. It is made of a molybdenum alloy with a melting point of 2,349° CBlowin' in the (solar) windParker data has already revealed many new details about the sun. The solar system is ceaselessly coated in dust particles created when space rocks weather and scientists believed the dust ought to be everywhere. Yet Parker revealed dust-free pockets near the sun. The probe also detected magnetic switchbacks: parts of the solar wind where the magnetic field (created by the collective of charged particles) abruptly bent back on itself.

Is the new Income Tax law more accessible? | Explained

The story so far: The Income Tax Bill 2025, which seeks to replace the Income Tax Act of 1961, was passed by Parliament in the ongoing monsoon session. The Bill is significantly shorter, more concise, and has clearer legislation. However, it also incorporates some new elements that could be problematic.

Why was a new law needed?

The Income Tax Act, 1961 is outdated, and over the years has been amended numerous times, leading to income tax legislation in India being convoluted and difficult for an average citizen to understand. It also provided tax officials ample scope for harassment due to the discretion the law afforded them. In the new Bill, the number of chapters has been brought down to 23 from 47 in the Income Tax Act, 1961, and the number of Sections to 536 from 819.Moreover, in order to provide greater clarity, the new Bill has increased the number of tables to 57 from 18 and the number of formulae to 46 from six. Most importantly, the language has been greatly simplified. Jargon has been removed as much as possible, and examples have been provided where needed.

Why was a second version of the Bill needed?

The original version of the Income Tax Bill 2025 was introduced in Parliament in February this year. However, given the importance of the legislation and the ambitious nature of what it was trying to do, it was decided to refer it to a Select Committee. The committee was headed by Baijayant Panda and comprised Members of Parliament from across political parties. The Select Committee submitted its report in July this year. It was a mammoth report, and while it retained much of the language in the new Bill, it also recommended several changes. On August 8, 2025, the government withdrew the Bill to incorporate the suggestions made by the committee. The reason for the withdrawal was to avoid confusion through multiple versions of the Bill and to provide a clear and updated version with all the changes incorporated. That new version was introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 11, 2025 and was passed the same day without debate.

What has changed in the new Bill?

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was clear from the outset that the purpose of the new legislation was to simplify and rationalise the existing law, not to change the rates or slabs through it. Those changes are made periodically by the government, such as in Budget 2025, when the income tax slabs and rates were substantially changed. Most of the changes will not impact the average income tax payer, and are more technical in nature. For example, the provisions of Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) and Alterna



nate Minimum Tax (AMT) have been separated into two sub-sections. However, the new law has codified some tax-payer-friendly features. For example, taxpayers can now update their income tax returns up to four years from the end of the relevant assessment year. This means mistakes can be rectified without any penalty or tax incidence. Notably, the period for which assessments could be reopened has been reduced to five years.

Are all the changes positive?

No. The provisions relating to searches by income tax officials have been tweaked to include some concerning features. The original Income Tax Act 1961 required anybody found to be in control or possession of any documents in electronic form to provide the authorised officer "the necessary facility to inspect such books of account or other documents". It also authorised the tax official to "break open the lock of any door, box, locker, safe, almirah or other receptacle" in case their keys were not available. The new law takes these concepts a step further. It now says that anybody in possession or control of electronic documents or information must not only provide the tax officer "reasonable technical and other assistance", but also share passwords. As the law sets no limits on what electronic information the tax officer may need to assess, this means the assessee must also share passwords of social media and personal emails, if required. Further, the law also empowers the tax official to "override the access code to any computer system" if the password is not provided.

What is the justification?

While a few members of the committee called for the dilution of these sections in their dissent notes, the Select Committee as a whole accepted the government's argument that a lot of relevant financial information is shared over messaging services or stored in personal emails, and so recommended that these sections be included.

NCC cadets to undertake fresh expedition soon, peaks shortlisted: DG

New Delhi: A newly constituted NCC expedition team consisting of 20 cadets, is set to embark on a mountaineering adventure post monsoon when they will attempt to scale a peak in northern India, the Corps' director general said. Two peaks have been shortlisted by the NCC — Mt Yunam (6,111 m) in Himachal Pradesh and Mt Shalang Dhura (5,678 m) in Uttarakhand. "One of the two peaks will be selected based on weather conditions. The team has equal number of male and females cadets, and the planned mission is in line with promoting a spirit of adventure among the youth," DG of NCC, Lieutenant General Gurbirpal Singh said

"We are now looking for the next expedition. We are still to decide on a peak, but it will be either Mt Yunam located in Lahaul in Himachal Pradesh or Mt Shalang Dhura, located in Uttarakhand," Singh said. An NCC team has earlier scaled Mt Yunam but, it will be the "first attempt" by cadets to summit Mt Shalang Dhura, he added. This will be

a post-monsoon expedition, so depending on rainfall and other weather conditions, it is likely to begin around either end-September or October, he added. The NCC DG said the Corps has already put together a team for this upcoming expedition. Around fifteen days ago, nearly 150 cadets had come to Delhi after being shortlisted by their respective directorates, and from that pool, the 20 cadets were finalised, he said. The NCC has 17 directorates spread across the country, with a total sanctioned strength of 20 lakh. It has two divisions — Junior Division and Senior Division. After they join, in the first year of Senior Division, the caders are made to train at various training academies as part of different courses, and mountaineering is also part of their training. After selection for a mountaineering expedition, they get trained for 7-10 days in Uttarkashi generally, but due to natural disaster there recently, "we are trying to do this at another place in Uttarakhand", the DG said.Lieutenant General Singh expressed pride that 2,000 NCC cadets along with 500

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Used cooking oil to fuel for planes: India's first sustainable aviation fuel plant to start production by year-end



SAF is a biofuel that is produced from sustainable feedstocks and has chemistry similar to conventional aviation turbine fuel (ATF) or jet fuel, which is derived from crude oil.SAF is a biofuel that is produced from sustainable feedstocks and has chemistry similar to conventional aviation turbine fuel (ATF) or jet fuel, which is derived from crude oil.

The country's largest refiner and fuel retailer Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) expects to start producing sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) on commercial scale at its Panipat refinery by December, following the recent international certification received by the unit for manufacturing the biofuel from used cooking oil, according to energy major's chairman Arvinder Singh Sahney. By the end of this calendar year, IOC will have the capacity to produce 35,000 tonnes per year of SAF from used cooking oil, which will be sourced from large hotel chains, restaurants, and sweets and snacks majors like Haldiram's, which normally discard cooking oil after single use

"The capacity (35,000 tonnes per year) will be sufficient to meet the country's 1 per cent SAF blending requirement (for international flights) by 2027...for feedstock (used cooking oil), we will be engaging aggregators to collect it from big hotel chains and restaurants. There is a large amount of such oil available in the country. The only challenge is collection. While it is easy to collect from large hotel chains, a solution needs to be found for collection from small users, including households," Sahney said. Earlier this week, IOC became the first company in India to receive the ISCC CORSIA certification for SAF production at its Panipat refinery in Haryana. ISCC CORSIA is a certification system for compliance with the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) criteria for SAF. It is a prerequisite for commercial SAF production. According to IOC, the certification also sets a benchmark for other domestic refiners and industry players to scale up SAF production.

SAF is a biofuel that is produced from sustainable feed-

stocks and has chemistry similar to conventional aviation turbine fuel (ATF) or jet fuel, which is derived from crude oil. This means that existing aircraft engines can easily use the SAF-ATF blend. For instance, Airbus claims that all its aircraft are capable of flying on a maximum 50 per cent blend of SAF and conventional fuel. Various Indian airlines have already operated successfully a few test and demonstration flights using jet fuel doped with SAF in various proportions. According to aviation industry and energy experts, SAF alone is likely to account for over 60 per cent of the global aviation industry's decarbonisation efforts. According to Sahney, given that Europe already has SAF blending mandates, European airlines could be the first potential buyers of IOC's SAF, which they can buy when they fly into India. The refiner is also exploring export opportunities, given that SAF demand is expected to shoot up globally over the coming years. The year 2027 will be an important one for adoption of SAF globally with the mandatory phase of CORSIA kicking in. CORSIA, which applies to international flights, would require airlines globally to offset any growth in carbon dioxide emissions beyond the 2020 levels. Using jet fuel blended with SAF is one of the ways through which carriers can keep their emissions under permissible levels.India, too, will have to comply with the mandatory phase starting 2027. In line with the CORSIA framework, India's National Biofuel Coordination Committee (NBCC) has set the initial indicative targets for blending of SAF with jet fuel 2027 onwards, starting with international flights. The indicative targets are: 1 per cent blending in 2027 and 2 per cent in 2028. The government is expected to announce SAF blending mandates for domestic flights in India as well, but only after blending for international flights begins 2027 on-

The government has been working on a roadmap for introduction of SAF in domestic flights and there were indications earlier that some sort of a blending mandate or recommendation could take effect over the next couple of years. However, given the high cost of production of the biofuel and opposition from airlines over apprehensions of fuel cost escalation, the government is now looking at introducing any such mandate only from 2027 or beyond. According to industry insiders, SAF currently costs around three times the price of regular jet fuel. While IOC has received the certification for the used cooking oil pathway for SAF production, the company is also working on setting up units based on the alcohol-to-jet pathway, which involves using ethanol as a feedstock to make SAF. A few other companies in India are also working to build units based on the various SAF manufacturing pathways. All such technologies and units need to be certified before they can start commercial

Group of Ministers meeting on GST reforms next week, tight timeline for Council's nod The Group of Ministers (GoM) on Rate Rationalisation

is set to meet in the coming week to discuss the proposal on next-generation GST reforms Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Friday. The GoM has ministers from six states: Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Bihar and Karnataka. While the proposal was shared with the ministers from the six states a day before the PM's Independence Day address, the Department of Revenue in the Union Ministry of Finance will make a presentation to the GoM when it meets, sources said

Sources in the Union Finance Ministry said they were confident the GoM and later the GST Council would find merit in the proposal. Internal calculations by the Department of Revenue in the Finance Ministry suggest that gross GST revenues under the proposed two-pillar rate structure of 5 per cent and 18 per cent will not be lower than what it is now. Giving a broad idea of the proposal, sources said most of the products and services would be placed in either of the two rates — 5 per cent or 18 per cent. Goods and services used by the common man, or as inputs by farmers, small entrepreneurs and MSMEs, will attract the lower 5 per cent duty. This will reduce the tax burden and is expected to drive consumption. Most other goods and services will attract the 18 per cent rate, they said.

Sources said that in categorising goods and services as sin and demerit goods and bracketing them under the special rate of 40 per cent, the Department of Revenue has kept in mind the country's "social ethos". At present, there are multiple rate slabs — 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent — and a compensation cess ranging from 1 per cent to 290 per cent that is levied on sin and luxury goods such as cars, refrigerators, air conditioners, pan masala, tobacco and cigarettes. With loans taken by the Centre to pay compensation cess to states getting recouped and fully repaid by November-December, the cess rates on goods are proposed to be subsumed at this special rate of 40 per cent, sources said. But on some goods like tobacco, the tax incidence is substantially higher than 40 per cent; the government is aware of this, and a separate mechanism may be arrived at in due course, the

Though there might be an initial impact on revenues, the gains from higher compliance and consumption are expected to offset the losses, they said. Against a tight timeline, the Centre is learnt to have factored in at least three meetings of the GoM before a final proposal is put before the GST Council, the apex decision-making authority on aspects of the indirect tax regime that was introduced in 2017. Indications are that a rollout is being targeted well ahead of Diwali, since the industry needs time to reconcile to the new rate structure and any disruption ahead of the festive season would need to be avoided."In the eight years of GST, there has so far been patchy tinkering of tax rates and slabs. That piecemeal addressing of problems with the tax regime has only complicated the structure further and has ended up with a system that is even more complicated and layered than what was originally envisaged. What we are doing now is a holistic revamp of the tax system with two main rates that will be the two pillars of the tax regime," said

"This structural reform to the tax regime would be accompanied by process reforms that include sorting out registration issues and problems with refunds, and changes in how automated notices are generated to make the interface smoother," said the source. As per the proposal, the government is looking to implement pre-filled returns to reduce manual intervention, eliminate mismatches and compliance burden due to multiple notices. Changes will also be made on the refunds front, with the proposal aiming to provide a major portion of refunds within a fixed number of days and enable automated processing of refunds for exporters and those with inverted duty structure."In Income Tax, the tax department keeps your TDS (tax deducted at source) amount for one year and pays you the refund after your return filing. But since they pay fast, the taxpayer feels



happy about it. In GST, there are refunds that are given three times or four times a year. But people still complain. Now, the crucial difference here is that in the case of GS the timing is crucial, since it (the refund) is working capital for the enterprise. So, there is a need to make the processes faster. All these will be part of the process reforms," the

The Centre is learnt to have factored in at least three meetings of the Group of Ministers (GoM) before a final proposal is put before the GST Council. Indications are that a rollout is being targeted well ahead of Diwali, since the industry needs time to reconcile to the new rate structure and any disruption ahead of the festive season would need to be avoided. The multiplicity of rates in the current GST regime, officials said, had triggered problems of implementation, confusion of interpretation, and disputes. "So, we wanted to make it simple. Ideally, one tax rate would have been the best solution, but it is not practical. Currently, we have five rates, alongside the exempt items and special rates for items such as iewellery or diamonds. Now we would have two rates (5 per cent and 18 per cent). The third rate (40 per cent) is exceptional. You need to justify why something should go there. Currently, 28 per cent is part of the structure. 40 per cent in the new regime is not. That is the difference," the source said. The PM's announcement has to be seen in the context of it being a proposal for states to consider, the source said. "A reform like this should have everybody on board for it to work best. The GoM on rate rationalisation has been working on this issue for the last four years... The Centre has now taken a leadership position on this, and put this proposal for consideration of the panel," a source said. The Centre, sources said, is convinced of the buoyancy from the rate rationalisation taking care of the worries stemming from revenue loss, unlike an earlier attempt in 2018 when rate cuts did not result in revenue gains. "There were problems then (2018), since it (the cut) led to inversions in duty rates in multiple sectors and that led to some amount of gaming of the system by players to avail of input tax credits. Evasion grew... This move to revamp the rate structure (now) is to avoid inversions and inversions-related problems," an official said. "Technically, the states should be convinced. Politically, one has to see how they respond," the official said.

Heart attack risk goes up by 41 per cent in women who are stalked: Harvard study reveals new risk



Can being stalked affect your health? Yes, it can increase your risk of heart attack or stroke, suggests a new study recently published in the journal 'Circulation.' Stalking is one of the commonest forms of inter-personal violence, with one in three women experiencing it in their lifetime, as per the study. These findings are based on around two decades of data from the cohort being followed under the Nurses Health Study II — a series of long-term research projects focusing on understanding risk factors for major chronic diseases

What did the study find?

The study found that women who reported being stalked — especially those who went on to obtain restraining orders — were more likely to get heart attacks and strokes later in life. Women who reported stalking were 41 per cent more likely to get cardiovascular diseases as compared to those who did not. And the risk increased to 70 per cent in women who obtained restraining orders. The researchers found the correlation the other way around as well. Women who had heart attacks or strokes as per their medical records were more likely to have experienced stalking in the past. The study found that nearly 12 per cent of the women had reported stalking, while 6 per cent had reported obtaining a restraining order. "Stalking is often seen as a form of violence that does not involve physical contact, which may make it seem less serious. Stalking can be chronic, and women often report making significant changes in response such as moving," said Rebecca B. Lawn, one of the authors of the study and a research associate in epidemiology at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. This increased risk, the researchers note, could be because of psychological distress, which may disrupt the nervous system, proper blood vessel function and other biological processes. Stress damages blood vessel walls.

Why is this important?

This is extremely important because stalking is fairly common. Around one in three women are stalked at some point in their lives, according to data from the US Centres for Disease Control and prevention. But, it is hardly ever looked at as a risk factor for cardiovascular diseases. The researchers say that this was to understand the impact of factors beyond the traditional risk factors for cardiovascular and other chronic diseases. "Although violence against women is common, and evidence has linked violence with consequences for women's later heart health, it is still not widely recognised or routinely considered by health care professionals as a potential cardiovascular risk factor among women," said Lawn.

What are the other risk factors for cardiovascular dis-

The traditional risk factors for heart attacks and strokes include hypertension and diabetes, habits such as smoking, a lack of physical activity and a family history. Emotional distress and depression are also known to increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases. When it comes to women specifically, high blood pressure or diabetes developed during pregnancy can increase the long-term risk of cardiovascular diseases. And, once women reach menopause, the risk of heart disease increases because they lose the protection offered by the hormones.

Is your blood sugar going up because of your sweet tooth? A new study has answers

It seems that your love for sweet taste doesn't really change, no matter how much or how little you eat. It seems that your love for sweet taste doesn't really change, no matter how much or how little you eat. Most of us have heard this advice: "If you stop eating sugar, you'll stop craving it." Many people believe that the more sweets you eat, the more you will want them. But new research shows that this might not be true. It seems that your love for sweet taste doesn't really change, no matter how much or how little you eat. Humans are born liking sweet tastes. This comes from our ancestors, who looked for sweet fruits and honey for energy. This liking for sweetness is built into our body and brain. Yes, our cravings can go up and down depending on mood, stress, or hunger, but our basic "sweet tooth" stays mostly the same. That means eating a lot of sweets for a short time won't make you like sugar more, and cutting it out for a while won't make you stop liking it. The new study followed people for several months. Some ate a lot of sweettasting foods, some ate less, and some ate only a little. In the end, their preference for sweet taste stayed the same in all groups. From my medical experience, this is believable. Taste preferences in adults—especially for basic tastes like sweet or salt — don't change easily unless something major happens, like illness or certain medicines.

If you enjoy sweets, you should still try to control how much sugar you eat for your health. Too much sugar can increase the risk of obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay. But don't expect your sweet tooth to disappear just because you stopped sugar for a month. Instead of trying to "kill" your



sweet tooth, focus on managing it: So choose fruits instead of cakes or candy. Have small portions of sweets instead of large ones. Check food labels for hidden sugars in drinks and packaged snacks. Over time, you may notice that very sweet foods start tasting "too much" for you, but this is a slow change. Some people say they no longer like sugar after cutting it out. This is often because their taste buds get used to less sweet food, so very sweet things feel too strong. But this doesn't mean they can't enjoy sweet tastes again—it just means their taste adjusted for a while. Your sweet tooth is mostly set from birth. Short-term changes in diet won't erase it. Cutting down sugar is still good for health but the goal should be to balance, not complete removal of sweetness from your life.

John Abraham shares fitness mantra and how he trains with a 74-year-old cancer survivor: 'There is no age to get fit. You just have to be goal-oriented'

Actor John Abraham, a strict disciplinarian when it comes to his diet and fitness, has said there is no age bar when it comes to exercise and anybody can start it anytime. In fact, he exercises mostly in the company of elderly women. Speaking during an "Idea Exchange" session at The Indian Express, the 'Tehran' actor even said that diet could change the trajectory of one's health. John is known to have stayed away from sugar for 25 years and has turned vegan over the years. He has also gone on record earlier on how he loves a simple farmer's meal, comprising all kinds of millets. "Anybody can do anything provided you are goal-

oriented," he said. Listen in. Can anybody start exercising anytime?

Absolutely. So I'll start by saying this, my training partner, the woman who trains with me in the gym, is a 74year-old woman who is battling stage two cancer. She comes back to exercise after gaps, obviously, after a chemotherapy session. She's hopefully going to go into remission. So the point I'm going to make is there is no age to get fit. There's really no age. It may sound very cliched but it's a mindset. A lot of women feel that their life post-menopause is over and tell themselves, 'I just can't do it anymore. Please throw such thoughts out of your head. You can get fit at any point of time in your lives. And most of the people I train with or I train or I give advice to are women. So very contrary to the image I have, where people think I hang out

only with dudes, I don't. What's the mantra of longevity?

I just speak about living a good life. If you want longevity, quality of life, you've got to eat the right things, think about the right things, and be very, very disciplined. And a



lot of people come up to me and say, 'Oh, you know, work is so intense and we have no time to work out.' I ask the men if they have a girlfriend or if they take out time to meet her. They say, 'ya, ya, we do.' I then tell them, 'Think of your body as your girlfriend. Think you're having an affair with your body. You find the time to take care of your body. The same applies to women too.

You are a vegan. Do plant proteins suffice in maintaining a balanced nutrition?

Yes, but not completely. I'm not an expert. I'm sure there are many dieticians out there who probably know much more than I do. But combine different plant-based protein sources through the day under guidance. I think what really matters is a combination of good sleep, good exercise and good food. It's a tripod stand. Without one leg, you will collapse. So just do everything in a healthy balance. And you'll find your way. It's as simple as that.

This dementia risk factor is modifiable: Lancet study in Karnataka flags household air pollution

Users of polluting cooking fuels like charcoal, kerosene, crop residue, wood or dung cake and those preparing food over an open fire pit may be at a higher risk of cognitive impairment (a decline in memory, thinking and reasoning ability) like dementia, according to a new analysis. Published in the Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia, the analysis was based on data from rural Karnataka. The participants were part of the ongoing prospective cohort study, Centre for Brain Research-Srinivaspura Aging, Neuro Senescence, and COGnition (CBR-SANSCOG). Researchers from the Centre for Brain Research, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, which funded the study, told The Indian Express that the aim was to investigate the relationship between household air pollution (HAP), cognitive functions (thinking, reasoning, memory-building, language, perception and decision-making) and brain structure. They found that the group that used polluting cooking fuels had poorer cognitive functions than those using clean cooking

Why is this study significant?

As dementia becomes a global burden and a significant challenge for India, the study helps in identifying house-

hold air pollution as a modifiable risk factor and prevent onset of such conditions. About 153 million individuals aged over 60 live in India. Altogether 19.1 per cent of the country's population will comprise older people by 2050. The burden of dementia is, therefore, expected to increase exponentially, significantly challenging the current healthcare capacity. With recent statistical data showing that 57% of rural households still use polluting cooking fuels, changing fuels could lower risk in the rural Indian population (which has been found to have a significantly higher prevalence of dementia than the urban Indian population).

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Jasprit Bumrah informs selectors he is available to play in the Asia Cup



GNS News Agency, August 26

India's star fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah has made himself available to play the forthcoming Asia Cup in Dubai, a Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) source said. understands that Bumrah had spoken to the selectors a few days ago and informed them about his readiness to play. The senior selection committee headed by former allrounder Ajit Agarkar is expected to meet on August 19 in Mumbai to pick a 15-member squad for forthcoming Asia Cup, which is scheduled to be played from September 9 to 28 in UAE in the T20 format.

"Bumrah has informed the selectors that he will be

available for Asia Cup selection. The selection committee will meet and discuss it when they meet next week," the source said. Bumrah was released from the Test squad for the fifth and final Test of the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy at the Oval keeping in mind his workload. Bumrah had played in the first Test at Headingley, skipped the second Test at Edgbaston, which India won, and played in the third and fourth Tests at Lord's and Old Trafford. During the Test series, he had two-five wicket hauls and bowled 119.4 overs. With Asia Cup to be played in T20I format, Bumrah won't have to bowl longer spells and the team management can even pick and choose his games. Bumrah will get a gap of nearly 40 days between the last Test he played in England and the start of the Asia Cup. Bumrah's last T20I appearance was in the 2024 T20 World Cup final against South Africa in Bridgetown that India won by seven runs. He took 2 for 18. The Indian team will be travelling early to UAE for the Asia Cup. Most of the players will be going to the Asia Cup without any match practice game. The BCCI had asked team management whether they were in favour of a short camp in Bengaluru. However, the team management felt that it would be better to fly early so that players can get used to the conditions. "Instead of having a camp here, the team will fly three-four days early so that they can get decent practice before the tournament starts," the source

Pakistan squad for Asia Cup 2025: Salman Agha to lead 17-member team; Babar Azam, Rizwan overlooked



GNS News Agency, August 26

Pakistan have announced their squads for the upcoming T20I tri-series and Asia Cup scheduled to take place in the UAE from 29 August to 28 September. Salman Agha will continue to lead the side as the team coached by Mike Hesson continued to snub senior pros Muhammad Rizwan and Babar Azam from the shortest format. Pakistan are placed in Group 'A' alongside India, Oman and UAE. They will begin their campaign on September 12 against Oman

followed by the highly-anticipated India clash on September 14 at the same venue. Having been drubbed in the ODI series decider by 202 runs in the West Indies last week, Pakistan will aim to regroup and brace for the continental rigours when they travel to the UAE for a tri-series T20 tournament between August 29 and September 7. The tri-series, featuring Afghanistan, Pakistan and UAE will be played at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. While Babar and Rizwan continued to be overlooked, the senior players who earned a spot are pace bowlers Shaheen Afridi and Haris Rauf, as well as dependable batters such as Fakhar Zaman and Khushdil Shah. Star wicket-keeper Mohammad Haris also kept his spot. The selectors have also reposed their faith in young names like Hasan Nawaz, Salman Mirza, and Sufyan

Pakistan's Asia Cup 2025 squadSalman Ali Agha (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Haris (wicket-keeper), Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Waseem Jnr, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Sufiyan Mugeem.

Why does Aakash Chopra think MS Dhoni will not take up Indian Head Coach job in future?

GNS News Agency, August 26

Former Indian cricketer Aakash Chopra predicted that MS Dhoni would not want to become the Head Coach of the Indian side. Chopra reasoned that it might have to do with the non-stop schedule of the Indian side throughout the year and Dhoni would not want to be away from his family. "That is a big one. I don't think he is interested. Coaching is a difficult job. Coaching keeps you as busy as you were when playing, and sometimes even more than that. You have a family, and you say that you have done the same thing your entire life, you have lived your life out of a suitcase, and you don't want to do that job now," Chopra said on his YouTube channel."That is why a lot of players don't get into coaching, and even if they do, it's a two-month IPL stint. However, if you become a full-time Indian head coach, it's a commitment of 10 months in a year. I don't know whether Dhoni would have that much time. I will be amazed if he has that much time," he added. Dhoni on CSK's

Dhoni, who was stand-in captain in the last IPL season where Chennai Super Kings finished at the bottom of the table for the first time, has admitted that the franchise has holes in the squad which they would try to plug in at the upcoming mini-auctions. With just 4 wins from 14 matches, in the absence of regular skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad, the fivetime champions had an underwhelming campaign with Dhoni taking over the captaincy mid-way through the season. Ahead of next season, with most teams already having a settled unit, Chennai do have a tough challenge ahead in terms of building a strong outfit. Dhoni, who turned 44 this July, still remains their frontline keeper with Urvil being the lone other gloveman in the set-up. While Dhoni's future as a player still remains in doubt, the former captain said they are more or less sorted on the batting front. "There were certain holes that we need to plug in. I think our batting order is quite sorted out now. Rutu (Gaikwad) will be coming back. A small auction is coming in December. You know some holes are there, and we will try to plug those in. But



again, you have to be at your best at the start of the tournament. You have to get the planning right. You have to use the resources in the best possible manner. Even the fans feel disappointed, but also the fact is the players always feel more disappointed than the fans. So we do talk about the processes. But at the same time here. We do want the result to come to our side. Last year wasn't there. But looking ahead we will try to sort out most of the things. And we will hopefully be at our best," Dhoni said at the launch of Maxvision Eye Super Speciality hospital in Chennai. Dhoni, who led the franchise to five IPL titles as captain, revealed that the franchise hasn't been up to the mark in the last two seasons. "The beauty of sport is how good you look on paper doesn't matter. Because what you actually do on the field is the stuff that really matters. And in a tournament like IPL, what you do consistently over a period of time matters. And then pull your socks up once you get into the knockout stage and come out with another beautiful maybe two or three performances. And that's how you win trophies. The last couple of years have not been good for us. We have not, you can say, up to the mark. Whatever the reasons may be. What is important is to see the learnings. It's not about what you have done in the past 15-16 years. Next year when you turn up again, you have to start from scratch,

Why playing World No 1 Shi Yuqi earlier in Round 1 rather than later, is better for Lakshya Sen

GNS News Agency, August 26

It's not unprecedented. Lee Chong Wei and even Viktor Axelsen have exited World Championships early as top seeds in last decade. But Shi Yuqi is on a hot streak of 3/3 Super 1000 titles this year, and 9/9 tournament finals since start of 2024. So, Indian badminton fans can be excused their morose mugs at the sight of the World No 1 drawn against Lakshya Sen in the Badminton World Championship draw. It's a depressed fan base, long-suffering since Paris Olympics, and prone to dunking own players at slightest hints of Top 10 opponents lining up early. Sen, however, has no such luxuries to sit and mope. And all things considered Round 1 might be the best time to go up against the toughest opponent in the draw. Shi Yuqi is not ideal to face in the first round, but when dreaming of a World Championship medal, isn't having to beat big names inevitable? It's how India won its last medal - Prannoy playing a masterfully strategic game, plotted by Pullela Gopichand and Gurusaidutt, to down Viktor 'The Axelsen' at home in Copenhagen in 2023.

Ask Sindhu, Saina, Sai Praneeth, Srikanth or Satwik-Chirag, and they will reel off all the 'big names' they roiled against, ro earn their medals. For Sen - there's Shi Yuqi, and hopefully Christo Popov, Alex Lanier and Li Shifeng, though plenty hinges on how his back, shoulder hold up and what Sen's stamina reserves, are at. Go back a year, and there was similar mourning and muttering over Lakshya Sen's Olympic draw. He was placed in a group where he had to play an extra match, and which had Indonesian Jonatan Christie, at that point, looking good for a podium, if not gold. Jojo had beaten Sen the last couple of times, and would start as favourite. But it was some steely nerves and a pinpoint tactical game that helped the Indian get past the Indonesian, top the pool and get out of the group.

But even before the draw, Anders Antonsen had made a pertinent point: he said Sen was a dangerous floater that everyone wanted to avoid early, and Christie felt the KO punches, as did Chou Tien Chen later. Sen's meltdowns against Viktor Axelsen and Lee Zii Jia which denied him a medal, deserve a separate piece. Not so much the tactics (though those can be threadbared in hindsight), but his inability to summon a certain kind of heavyweight game, when smashing or killing at the net, at the business end in Paris, and letting himself down psychologically, cost Sen those matches. But early in a tournament, when he was not tired in the mind, and fresh and motivated, Sen could snatch momentum away from Christie, a clear favourite.

It's why playing Shi Yuqi - if he must, and he needs to - is a better proposition in Round 1 than in quarters, with a medal on the line. Let's call it the best of the worst-case scenarios. Sen is prone to over-training, putting inordinate pressure on his back and shoulder in needlessly rough training sessions, and exerting in the gym more than some think he ought to. He does this to be best prepared. But the back



can backfire. He goes into the Paris Worlds with a massive hit on his confidence after the Olympics and first round exits on Tour, but as any coach would tell him, there's literally nothing to do about past disappointments.

Yuqi is no slam-bang, impetuous hitter - but neither was Jojo. But the Chinese' vulnerability - the tiniest one might be his eagerness to win a World title, which he hasn't all these years, but can this time. With Viktor Axelsen having pulled out, everyone will have breathed a sigh of relief, but Yuqi will be under some pressure to make that count, so having the devilishly disruptive Sen across the net, might be equally unpleasant for him, as his visage and elegant game will be for Sen.

All of Kodai Naraoka, Loh Kean Yew, Li Shifeng and Alex Lanier are bunched in Sen's half, so it's going to be one painful ride if he gets past Yuqi to run into aggressive playing styles that he struggles against. But a badminton World Championship medal never came easy to anyone. The bitter-better, clutching-at-straws way of looking at things might be to glance at the draw, and thank the heavens for Kunlavut Vitidsarn for being in the other half.

There's a similar toughening-up brief to be delivered to Satwik-Chirag. Satwik woke up on his birthday on Wednesday and was gifted Liang Weikeng-Wang Chang in Round of 16, and Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik potentially if they get past the Thais, in quarters.

The Indians tend to start well these days, and should back themselves against the Chinese first up. The results aren't dizzying great, but the game is far more prepared for what Liang-Wang can throw at them. If the shoulders are alright, the Indians ought to think of Paris before the Olympic disappointment, when it was their favourite venue, where they won their last title. Aaron-Soh are fantastic players, but not unbeatable by the Indians. Luck can have its way with them, but even on a downturn, Satwik-Chirag make tournament semis, and can play the big game at will. Form book says India could end up with a second straight wretched August at Paris, and no medal for first time since 2010. But there's scores to settle with Paris, redemption arcs to traverse, and miles to go before Indian fans turn crabby

'Sometimes his legs are tied': Aakash Chopra on KL Rahul's India T20I comeback chances in Asia Cup 2025

GNS News Agency, August 26

The battle for spots in India's T20I set-up is heating up with the Asia Cup T20 in September and the next edition of the T20 World Cup only six months away. India are set to announce their squad for the forthcoming Asia Cup on August 19, and former India batter Aakash Chopra has weighed in on the long list of opening and wicket-keeping options. Speaking about the possibility of KL Rahul's return to the squad, Chopra felt that the general perception of his slow batting may go against the Karnataka batter. Chopra also stressed that Rahul cannot dream of a comeback in the opening position despite making amends through a prolific IPL 2025 season with the Delhi Capitals.

"If you see his IPL numbers, they are outstanding. In the recent past, no player has been a 600-run bank like him. However, a reputation has developed that he plays very slow at times," Chopra said on his YouTube channel. Chopra added that Rahul can often get into streaks and phases where his batting scoring rates may hit a roadblock. "If something is stopping him, it's his own mindset. Sometimes his legs are shackled, and when the mindset is right, he flies with wings. I feel he has the game. I remember a shot, it was the Indore ground, and he hit Jasprit Bumrah for a six over cover, and I was like wow. However, then you also get knocks when you feel that he should hit, but he thinks differently," he observed. With the likes of Sanju Samson, Abhishek Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill in the fray, Chopra said that Rahul could not be considered for the opener's slot. Ahead of his superb Test series in England, where he had scored over 500 runs



his T20 profile with 539 runs in the IPL, including a century and three fifties while predominantly batting in the middleorder role. "He cannot play as an opener because the opening story has ended, unfortunately, for the time being. Sanju Samson is there with Abhishek Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal is behind them, and I am putting Shubman Gill's name also at the fourth spot. Four people are standing in the line," Chopra added. With wicket-keeping slots also receiving cutthroat competition, Chopra suggested that Rahul's chances for an imminent T20I return remains bleak. "Ishan Kishan is saying that he is also there. Everyone wants to open. So there is no place for an opener. You will have to play in the middle order, and there, Jitesh Sharma is one, who has done very well, played an excellent IPL, and made his team win. Sanju Samson is opening at the moment. So a keeper is not required. Dhruv Jurel is also standing behind," Chopra

'I wasn't a natural': How Rahul Dravid became one of cricket's greatest slip fielders with help from Bob Simpson

GNS News Agency, August 26

Former India captain Rahul Dravid had evolved from a wicket-keeper batter at the age-group level in Karnataka to an all-time great Test No. 3 for India. Even in India colours, Dravid had stepped up as the makeshift glovesman behind the stumps, but his legacy as one of the finest slip fielders in the game also remains firmly in place. Dravid held the world record for most Test catches for nearly 13 years since his retirement until England's Joe Root surpassed him during the recent Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy. The legendary batter had once put down his snappy reflexes in the slips to a fruitful stint with legendary Australia cricketer and coach, Bob Simpson, who passed away aged 89 on Saturday. Dravid's evolution from wicket-keeper to the slips

"I wasn't a good enough bowler to be able to contribute with the ball. I tried my best. So I sort of figured out 'How do you contribute to the team? What do you do?'. I mean, sitting there as a batsman, what can I do really well, and one of the things was, if I catch well, it's a contribution. You feel you're involved, you're playing a part," Dravid had once said on the Lessons Learnt with the Greats podcast."I had to work on it, I don't think I was as much a natural, but I had to practise a lot of slip catching, and one of the really good pieces of technical advice that I received early on was to ensure that the weight was on the balls of my feet and ensuring that my balance was really good as a fielder, and ensuring I got into a really good position." Dravid recollected how a stint with Simpson between 1998-1999 helped him ace the slip fielder's technique and went on to break Mark Waugh's world record to become the first designated fielder to collect 200 Test catches. Simpson, who coached Australia to the 1987 World Cup title, joined the Indian national side on a consultant basis only two years after Dravid made his Test debut."I remember Bobby Simpson came and spent some time with the Indian team in 1998/99 and he took us through a lot of slip catching drills. And one of the things he stressed on a lot was having your feet bent a little bit so that you could get your weight into the balls of your feet. That was something I took to heart and practised a lot." "Even watching someone like Mark Waugh, the way he stood, in some ways I used to watch that. It was a really good Australian slip-catching unit: you had [Mark] Taylor, Waugh, they were really, really good, and you used to sort of watch them."An out-and-out trier, Dravid had said that his 210 catches in 164 Tests was a product of diligence, exhorting that slip fielding was an art that got better with practice. "Slip catching, a lot of it, is about practice - the more practice you can do, the variety of practice you can do - it's not mindlessly taking catches. I think catching [to] spinners was a very important thing for India, about a hundred of those catches are off two spinners - [Anil] Kumble and Harbhajan [Singh], I took about 60 of them playing in India – we do prepare turning tracks!"Regarded as one of the pioneers of modern-day Australian cricket, Simpson's transition from a great leader and astute slip fielder to coaching ensured



that he unearthed a horde of stars during his coaching tenure. As one of the great slip fielders of his time, he is credited with training drills that helped Mark Waugh become one of the great catchers and more importantly turn David Boon into one of the sharpest short-leg catchers of all time. Simpson played 62 Tests for Australia from 1957 to 1978, scoring 4,869 runs at an average of 46.81, including 10 centuries and 27 half-centuries. He captained Australia in 39 Tests and was their head coach for 10 years from 1986, helping them win the 1987 World Cup in India, the famous 1989 Ashes in England and an epic away series win in West

Suryakumar Yadav clears fitness test ahead of Asia Cup selection meeting

GNS News Agency, August 26

India's T20 International captain Suryakumar Yadav cleared a fitness test at the Centre of Excellence (COE) in Bengaluru ahead of the Asia Cup team selection, which is to be held on August 19. Yadav had undergone surgery for a lower-right abdomen hernia in Munich, Germany, in June. "He has cleared his fitness and will be available to captain the Indian team during the Asia Cup. He was at the COE till a few days ago, where he underwent a rehab programme and has now been declared fit. He will be attending the Indian team selection meeting," a Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) source confirmed. The Asia Cup is to be played in Dubai from September 9 to 28 and India is scheduled to play Pakistan on September 14. The senior selection committee will meet in Mumbai on Tuesday to pick the squad. In June, Yadav posted on Instagram about the successful surgery. "Life Update: Underwent surgery for a sports hernia in the lower-right abdomen. Grateful to share that after a smooth surgery,

Ranga Reddy INDIAN CHRONICLE WEDNESDAY 27 AUGUST 2025

Why the cast of 'Saare Jahan Se Accha' has the stage to thank for their roles on the screen



Set in the volatile 1970s, when a single move could tip the balance of power and trigger a global nuclear war, Saare Jahan Se Accha unfolds as India's R&AW and Pakistan's ISI clash in a deadly game of strategy. R&AW agent Vishnu Shankar (Pratik Gandhi) must outwit ISI agent Murtaza Mallik (Sunny Hinduja) in a race against time to prevent a major catastrophe. As Saare Jahan Se Accha, created by Gaurav Shukla and directed by Sumit Purohit, streams on Netflix, actors Pratik Gandhi, Sunny Hinduja and Anup Soni talk about being part of a stellar cast and how that enriches their experience. Pratik Gandhi: During our growing up years, the only spy we knew of was James Bond, who had swag and cool gadgets. But a real spy works differently. They can't afford to have any kind of attention on them. Nobody knows what a real spy looks like. The way the writer-director visualised this is what adds to the uniqueness of the series. Sunny Hinduja: I would give credit to Gaurav Shukla and the team for the way they have visualised the plot, along with the nitty

gritties of their personal lives. Pratik as R&AW agent may not want the spotlight on him but Sunny as an ISI agent has swag.Pratik Gandhi: That reflects the basic difference between how the agencies of different countries work.

From what we have read, the R&AW works with a lot of restraint. Ultimately, they are working for their country and can kill for it. But when do they take such an extreme step is a key question. Sunny: You don't find interviews of agents. But the functioning and recruitment of ISI is different from how the R&AW goes about it. So, whatever I could gather from the script and learnt from the research, I tried to use that in my performance. Pratik, you played Harshad Mehta in Scam 1992 and now the titular protagonist in the new series Gandhi. What's your approach while essaying these characters?

Pratik: When I am playing a real-life character, the ups and downs of their lives are usually known but what's going on in their mind when they are taking a major decision is not. That's open for interpretation and that's what I focus on. Vishnu's character in Saare Jahan Se Accha is fictional but we can assume that it is the blend of several real-life characters. Since he is fictional, I got a free hand to portray him

Anup, you made your screen debut with Shanti (1994-98) nearly 30 years ago. How was that experience?

Anup: Those days we just wanted to act, irrespective of the format. Shanti was unique as it was the first daily soap opera on Doordarshan. I tried for a role a couple of times but was not selected even though many of my friends were acting in it. I got a role in it in 1995 after its 100 episodes were over. Pratik: I feel alive on stage. You constantly calibrate yourself while performing in front of a live audience. Even though you play the same character several times, after 500 shows you may come up with something new — a nuance, a pause or a meaning. It teaches you that excellence is not a point, it's a constant journey. While performing in a play — I act in two running plays, Ballygunge 1990 and My Wife's 8th Vachan — one may believe that the eighth show was the best but later, the 40th show may appear to be the best. You constantly keep learning.

The Ba***ds of Bollywood first look: Aryan Khan goes all Shah Rukh Khan from Mohabbatein, says 'Picture toh saalon se baki hai, show ab shuru hoga'

The first glimpse of The Ba***ds of Bollywood kicks off with familiar music — the theme song of Aditya Chopra's 2000 hit romantic drama Mohabbatein, starring Shah Rukh Khan. But as the silhouetted figure steps into the spotlight while narrating a tragic love story, it turns out to not be Shah Rukh, but his son Aryan Khan, who will make his directorial debut with the Netflix India show. Aryan, dressed in all black, is spitting image of his father as he introduces the anticlimactic tone of his show — a series about Bollywood, which will be a mix of "bahut saara pyaar (lots of love)" and "thoda sa vaar (a little bit of a roast)". As he concludes his pitch, Aryan promises, yet again in trademark Shah Rukh Khan style: "Picture toh saalon se baki hai, par show ab shuru hoga."

The Ba***ds of Bollywood will be headlined by Lakshya and Sahher Bambba, and will boast of an ensemble cast including Mona Singh, Manoj Pahwa, Manish Chaudhari, Raghav Juyal, Anya Singh, and Gautami Kapoor. The preview of the show will be on August 20. The official synopsis of the series reads, "An ambitious outsider and his friends navigate the larger-than-life yet uncertain world of Bollywood. The series blends self-aware humour with a high-stakes narrative — and promises a host of unforgettable cameos, blockbuster thrills and an adventurous ride into the world of Indian cinema." Produced by Red Chillies Entertainment, the series is rumoured to feature cameos by Bobby Deol, Ranbir Kapoor, and several other big names. However, the release date remains tightly under wraps for now. It is co-created by Bilal Siddiqi and Manav Chauhan, who also share writing credits with Aryan Khan.

In an Ask SRK session on X on Saturday, Shah Rukh Khan confirmed that many "friends from the industry" have given cameos in the film, and that he'd also pop up for a special appearance in the show. "Lots of lovely friends from the industry have participated in Aryan's series. They've been very gracious and loving toward him. Main toh hun hi... Haq se (I'm obviously there too... rightfully so)," Shah Rukh tweeted. Everyone from Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos, filmmaker Karan Johar to actor Anil Kapoor has vouched for Aryan Khan's talent after watching The Ba***ds of Bollywood. While Ted called the show "really fun," Karan



proclaimed "prince" Aryan would surprise everyone. Anil even called him a "young Manmohan Desai." Even the cast of The Ba***ds of Bollywood have lauded Aryan's directorial voice and commitment, from Manoj Pahwa to Manish Chaudhari.

Prior to The Ba***ds of Bollywood, Aryan lent his voice to Simba, while his father Shah Rukh Khan voiced Mufasa, in the Hindi dubbed version of Disney's new live-action The Lion King franchise. Shah Rukh revealed that Aryan doesn't want to be an actor like him not only because filmmaking is his calling, but also because he would always face the threat of comparisons with his father. Aryan's sister Suhana Khan also made her debut a couple of years ago, playing Veronica in Zoya Akhtar's 2023 coming-of-age period musical The Archies, which also dropped on Netflix. She'll be next seen making her theatrical debut in Siddharth Anand's crime drama King, in which she'll share screen space with her father Shah Rukh. The filming of King is currently on hold, as Shah Rukh recovers from a shoulder injury he sustained while shooting an action sequence for the film.

Veteran Marathi actor Jyoti Chandekar passes away; daughter Tejaswini Pandit pays tribute

Jyoti's daughter, Tejaswini Pandit, confirmed the news of her mother's demise on social media. She shared a note in Marathi, which translates into English as, "Mother ?? Greetings, It is with great sorrow that we inform you that our beloved mother — full of life, cheerful, and making everyone laugh, as well as everyone's dearest senior actress, Mrs. Jyoti Chandekar Pandit, has sadly passed away today, on 16th August, at the age of 69, after a brief illness. Her last rites will be held tomorrow, 17th August, at 11 a.m. at Vaikunth Crematorium, Navi Peth, Pune. In grief: Tejaswini Pandit, Purnima Pandit, and the entire Chandekar-Pandit family ??."Known for her performances in Mee Sindhutai Sapkal, Guru, Ticha Umbartha, Dharmakanya, Dholki, Paoolwaat, Guru, and Tharal Tar Mag, Jyoti Chandekar leaves behind a rich legacy spanning five decades. She was admired for her contributions to cinema, theatre, and television. The Marathi entertainment industry and fans are mourning the demise of Jyoti Chandekar.

Star Pravah also paid tribute to Jyoti Chandekar. The channel's official Instagram page shared her photo, with a caption in Marathi: "Heartfelt tribute to everyone's beloved Purna grandmother – senior actress Jyoti Chandekar!"

Kriti works as a Copy Editor for the Entertainment section of Indian Express Online (Indianexpress.com).



She is great at web stories, galleries, and Express Archive's photo stories. She is good at spotting stories from social media posts. She makes the copies well-loaded with content, photos, tweets, and other related social media posts to make it interesting for the readers. An alumnus of Asian College of Journalism, Chennai (Specialization in New Media), Kriti has been a part of

Fans call Aryan Khan 'Xerox copy of Shah Rukh Khan' after The Ba**ds of Bollywood teaser drops: 'SRK relaunching himself'



The first look of Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan's much-awaited show The Ba**ds of Bollywood is finally here, and fans can't keep calm. While fans are excited for the series, which is written and directed by Aryan, they have also taken to social media to point out how eerily similar Aryan sounds to his father Shah Rukh.

In the video, instead of staying behind the scenes, Aryan makes an appearance in front of the camera and introduces his show with the line, "Picture toh saalon se baki hai, par show ab shuru hoga." Aryan's cameo in the teaser shows him delivering Shah Rukh's famous dialogue from Mohabbatein, but of course, the star kid added his own twist. After the teaser was released, fans took to social media to point out how Aryan looks like a "Xerox copy

of SRK," with his voice, mannerisms, looks, and even his acting and dialogue delivery resembling Shah Rukh's very closely.

A fan wrote on Reddit, "i genuinely thought it was Shahrukh doing the voiceover. CRAZYY HOW THEIR VOICES R SOOO SIMILAR." Another comment was along similar lines, "His voice also is similar to SRK, i thought SRK was doing dub for whole time." Another user joked, "SRK relaunching himself. That's it." One more comment read, "Dude how is he the Xerox Copy of SRK???? Never understood the hype until now but Aryan Khan is actually really hot??" Another fan pointed out, "The way he smiled is exactly how Shah Rukh smiles."

The Ba**ds of Bollywood features Lakshya, known for his lead role in Karan Johar's critically acclaimed film Kill, and Sahher Bambba in the lead roles. The show also boasts an ensemble cast including Mona Singh, Manoj Pahwa, Manish Chaudhari, Raghav Juyal, Anya Singh, and Gautami Kapoor. The preview of the show will be out on August 20. Earlier, Shah Rukh Khan had announced the title of Aryan Khan's web show through a video. The clip featured a lighthearted banter between Aryan and Shah Rukh, and that video too saw Aryan make a cameo. The official synopsis of The Ba**ds of Bollywood reads, "An ambitious outsider and his friends navigate the larger-than-life yet uncertain world of Bollywood. The series blends self-aware humour with a high-stakes narrative — and promises a host of unforgettable cameos, blockbuster thrills and an adventurous ride into the world of Indian cinema.'

Salman Khan's Sikandar tanked because I couldn't execute it well, says AR Murugadoss: 'I pulled off a Ghajini because it was a remake'

Salman Khan's Sikandar was expected to be his Jawan moment, but the outcome was far from it. The superstar collaborated with acclaimed South filmmaker AR Murugadoss, the man behind hits like Ghajini and Holiday. Having already created magic for Aamir Khan and Akshay Kumar, Murugadoss raised sky-high expectations when he announced a big-budget project with Salman. However, instead of delivering a blockbuster, Sikandar flopped at the box office, leaving fans disappointed.

Initially, Murugadoss attributed Sikandar's underwhelming performance at the box office to a language barrier. However, in a recent interview with Velaipechu Voice, the filmmaker admitted that the real issue lay in his own execution. "Actually, the base story is very emotional," he said, adding, "It's about a king who doesn't truly understand his wife. We are all like that — whether it's with our mother, friend, or wife, we often don't value relationships. Only when someone leaves us forever do we feel the weight of guilt. In the film, when the king loses his wife, her organs are donated to three different people. He then seeks them out, trying to fulfill the things he couldn't do for her. In the process, he befriends an entire village. The story was emotional, but I couldn't execute it well."AR Murugadoss also reflected on the difference between Ghajini and Sikandar: "I could pull off Ghaiini because it was a remake, not an origi-



nal script. I had already done it before, so I had complete command. With Sikandar, that wasn't the case. I'm not saying I won't return to Hindi cinema; I definitely will if I find my comfort zone. But when the audience can't connect with my thinking, it affects me deeply."Despite the hype, Sikandar managed to collect only Rs 184.6 crore worldwide in 22 days, against an estimated budget of Rs 200 crore, making it one of the most underwhelming outings in Salman Khan's career.

The Ba***ds of Bollywood first look: Aryan Khan goes all Shah Rukh Khan from Mohabbatein, says 'Picture toh saalon se baki hai, show ab shuru hoga'



The first glimpse of The Ba***ds of Bollywood, which marks the directorial debut of Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan, has been unveiled by Netflix India.

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