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Is this route to 'Viksit Bharat': Kapil Sibal

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi, July 20: Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Saturday slammed as 'divisive agenda' the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments' order to all eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route to display their owners' names and demanded that it should be withdrawn. Days after the Muzaffarnagar Police asked all eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route to display their owners' names, the Uttar Pradesh government on Friday extended the controversial order across the state. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said similar instructions are already in place in his state as well. UP directs eateries including roadside carts to display names of owners! In a post on X, Sibal said, 'Kanwar Yatra Route. UP directs eateries including roadside carts to display names of owners! Is this the route to a 'Viksit Bharat'? 'Divisive agendas will only divide the country!'

Free healthcare, electricity among 5 'Kejriwal's guarantees' for poll-bound Haryana

Simmi Kaur Babbar Chandigarh, July 20: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal on Saturday launched five 'Kejriwal's guarantees' for poll-bound Haryana, promising free electricity, free medical treatment, free education to people, Rs 1,000 per month to every woman in the state and employment for youngsters. The Haryana Assembly polls are due later this year. Besides Sunita Kejriwal, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders Sanjay Singh and Sandeep Pathak were also present during the launch of 'Kejriwal ki five guarantees' in Panchkula. The Delhi Chief Minister, who is also the AAP national convener, is currently in judicial custody in an excise policy-related case. While seeking people's support for the AAP during the Haryana Assembly elections, Kejriwal's wife Sunita hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of putting the Delhi Chief Minister behind bars as he was 'jealous' of

his works. Calling her husband as 'Haryana ka laal' (son of Haryana), she asked people that not even a single seat should go to the BJP and said 'it is not about Kejriwal, it is about Haryana's honour'. Speaking about Kejriwal's 'guarantees', she said there will be free electricity for domestic category and there will be round-the-clock electricity in the state if her party is voted to power. 'Like in Delhi and Punjab, there will be 'mohalla clinics' in cities and villages. The condition of government hospitals will be improved and there will be free and good treatment for everyone,' she said. The condition of government schools will also be improved where good and free education will be provided, she added. 'Each woman will get Rs 1,000 per month,' she said. 'It will soon be implemented in Delhi and Punjab,' she added. She said the AAP will

give employment to each unemployed youth. The AAP has promised free medicine and medical tests, saying it will provide relief to people from inflation. It has also promised to end the 'education mafia'. During her address, Sunita said nobody could have ever imagined in dreams that Kejriwal would rule the country's Capital one day. 'It is not an ordinary

thing. It is not less than a miracle,' she said. 'He was born on August 16, 1968. You will be surprised to know that on that day, it was 'Krishna Janmashtami'. It is not a coincidence. I feel that God wants to get something done through him. Otherwise a boy born in a village who is from an ordinary family and he became the CM of Delhi,' she said. 'Arvind ji started with zero and he floated his own party and became the CM. Is it not surprising?' she asked. He shook the country's politics and he did such things which the old parties could never do, she said. 'Today in the entire country and world, people know him for his works,' she said as she spoke about his works. 'Kejriwal did a lot of things. I want to ask you, is there any party which I improved the condition of hospitals and schools and set up mohalla clinics and made electricity free,' she asked.



बदलोगे हरियाणा का हाल अब लायेंगे केजरीवाल

Supreme Court to hear on July 22 plea to seize money received by political parties under electoral bonds scheme

New Delhi, July 20: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on July 22 a plea seeking a direction to the Centre and others to confiscate the amount received by various political parties under the now-scrapped electoral bonds scheme of 2018. In a landmark verdict on February 15, the apex court had junked the Centre's electoral bonds scheme of anonymous political funding, calling it 'unconstitutional'. According to the cause list of July 22 uploaded on the apex court website, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra is slated to hear the plea filed by Khem Singh Bhati. The petition has said that on February 15, the top court had struck down the electoral bonds scheme, and pursuant to the court's direction, details of electoral bonds purchased



by various corporate houses and redeemed by the political parties were made available in the public domain by the Election Commission. 'It is submitted that the amount received by the political parties through electoral bonds was neither 'donation' nor 'voluntary contribution'; rather it was 'barter money' received from various corporate houses by way of 'quid pro quo' for the undue benefits granted at the cost of the public exchequer,' the plea claimed. The petition has been settled by senior advocate Vijay Hansaria and is filed in the top court through advocate Jayesh K Unnikrishnan. The plea alleged that the details of the purchase and encashment of electoral bonds clearly showed that money paid through electoral bonds by the companies to the political parties, 'was either to avoid criminal prosecution or to get monetary advantage by way of contract or other policy matters'. 'The political parties have misused their position, being the ruling party in the government and procured electoral bonds behind the iron curtain,' it claimed. 'The political parties used electoral bond as a tool and method to extract money, by conferring undue advantage to corporate houses by way of compromising their criminal prosecution or granting state largesse, at the cost of public exchequer and against public interest,' the plea alleged.

Dawood Ibrahim declared terrorist in individual capacity: Bombay High Court

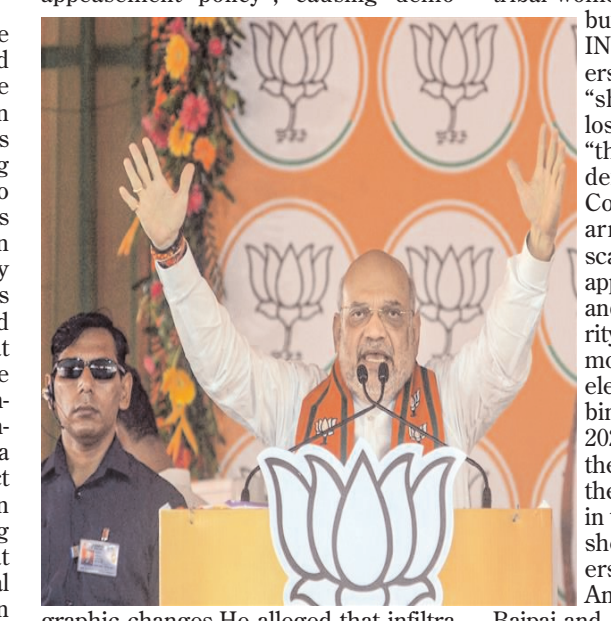
Mumbai, July 20: The Bombay High Court has said fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim has been declared a terrorist in his individual capacity under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and, hence, any association with him or his gang would not attract provisions of the stringent law. A division bench of Justices Bharati Dange and Manjusha Deshpande, in an order of July 11, details of which were made available on Friday, granted bail to two persons held by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad in August 2022. The ATS had claimed Faiz Bhiwandiwala, from whom it seized 600 grams of ganja, and Parvez Vaid, were members of Dawood Ibrahim's gang. The duo was booked under UAPA for being members of a terrorist organisation, committing terrorist acts and collecting funds for commission of an offence as well as under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act provisions. In its judgment, the HC said the Union government had issued a notification on September 4, 2019, notifying 'Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar as a Terrorist' under the UAPA. The bench said UAPA has segregated the activities of an individual, which would amount to a terrorist act on one hand, and the activities by the terrorist gang and terrorist organization on the other.

BJP will bring out 'white paper' on demography in Jharkhand to protect tribal lands, rights: Amit Shah

Navdeep Singh Sahni Ranchi, July 20: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday claimed that rampant infiltration has led to the shrinking of the tribal population in Jharkhand, and said that if the BJP forms the government in the state, it will bring out a 'white paper' on demography to protect their lands and rights. The BJP is confident of forming a government in Jharkhand as the lotus has already bloomed in 52 of 81 Assembly segments in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Shah said while addressing party workers at Prabhat Tara Ground here during the saffron party's extended executive committee meeting. 'After forming a government in Jharkhand, we will bring out a 'white paper' on demography to protect tribal people, their lands, reservation and rights,' Shah said. Without naming Hemant Soren, he alleged that Jharkhand's tribal CM was instrumental behind 'Love Jihad' and 'Land-Jihad' in the state due to his 'vote bank and

appeasement policy', causing demographical changes. He alleged that infiltrators were entering Jharkhand, marrying

tribal women, obtaining certificates and buying land. He also attacked INDIA bloc and Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, for 'showing arrogance' despite losing the Lok Sabha polls as 'they are unable to accept defeat'. 'INDIA bloc and Congress leaders are showing arrogance for indulging in scams worth Rs 12 lakh crore, appeasement, dynastic politics and playing with national security,' he alleged. 'The BJP got more seats in this Lok Sabha election than Congress's combined numbers in 2014, 2019, 2024 polls,' he said, adding that the JMM-led alliance was one of the most corrupt governments in the country and it was time to show it the exit door. BJP leaders including Union minister Annapurna Devi, Laxmikant Bajpai and Arjun Munda were also present on the occasion.



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'I am a bad actor, Kangana Ranaut won't agree to do film with me': Union Minister Chirag Paswan

Tejinder Kaur Babbar New Delhi, July 20: Union Minister Chirag Paswan, who joined politics after a failed Bollywood debut, has no plans to make a comeback in films and also jokes that he is such a "bad actor" that even his Lok Sabha colleague and first co-star, Kangana Ranaut, will not agree to share the screen space with him again. In an interaction with PTI editors at the agency's headquarters here, the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) chief, who made his debut with Ranaut in the 2011 movie 'Miley Naa Miley Hum', said the film was a "disaster". He also said that he has no plans to get married for at least another two years as he wants to dedicate all of his time to politics, especially as the Bihar Assembly elections are due next year. "And I think marriage is also a huge responsibility. You

can't just be occupied with your work and give an excuse to your better half that my work is my priority. If your work is your priority, then set your priority clear. I am very clear about my priority that I am married to my work. And if I don't have time

for my better half, I should not get into that," the MP added. As Ranaut, one of the leading actors of the Hindi film industry, joined politics and won the Lok Sabha

polls from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, Paswan's debut film came back to the limelight and many social media users said they would like to see them together on the silver screen again. He, however, was quick to rule out any possibility of a comeback. Asked if he would ever consider returning to cinema, Paswan quipped, "Again? After one disaster!" "No, not at all. And I think anybody who has seen the movie will agree with me," Paswan said. He smilingly added that his short stint in Bollywood has taught him what not to do in life. However, his stay in Mumbai also exposed him to the struggles of people from Bihar and firmed his resolve to do something for them through politics. Though he started as an actor, Paswan said, he realised it was not his calling. Politics is not something to be taken casually, he said. "I think politics comes with a huge responsibility and you cannot take this profession casu-



ally. Also as a Member of Parliament, I am accountable directly or indirectly to 25 lakh people in my constituency and as a cabinet minister, I have responsibility across the country. "I do not think I can take this lightly. And yes, no director, producer, including Kangana herself, will agree to do a movie with me," he said. Asked if he would do a movie with Ranaut, Paswan said, "She will not. She knows how good an actor I am." "I am a very bad actor. You need to be honest with yourself," he added. The Hajipur MP, who is among the few bachelors in the Lok Sabha, also said he has no plans to get married as of now. Asked if he is getting any marriage proposals, he said, "I do not know. I think my mother is processing most of it." "I don't know how to answer these questions... I have already started blushing," Paswan said with a bashful laughter. He added that his work is his priority for now, especially since the Bihar assembly polls are due next year.

UPSC files forgery case against probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar

Naresh Malhotra New Delhi, July 20: The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) said it has cracked down on probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar by initiating a series of actions, including registration of a police case, against her for fraudulently availing attempts in the civil services examination by faking her identity. The commission also issued a show cause notice for cancellation of her candidature of the civil services examination-2022 and debarment from future examinations and selections. Official sources said the commission had on Thursday filed a complaint with the Delhi Police's crime branch against Khedkar. Following the complaint, the police registered a case under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Information Technology Act and under the disabilities law to probe charges of forgery, cheating and misuse of disability quota in securing her candidature in the civil services, they

said. Khedkar, a 2023-batch probationary IAS officer, is accused of misusing power in Maharashtra recently. She was accused of bullying everyone around and of placing a red-blue beacon (indicating high-ranking official) atop a private Audi (a luxury sedan) car used by her that also had 'Maharashtra Government' written on it during her stint. After the Pune district collector flagged the matter, Khedkar was transferred to Washim District Collectorate in the Vidarbha region. She was declared qualified in the civil services examination 2022. Based on the results declared last year by the UPSC, Khedkar was allocated the IAS and her home state Maharashtra as a cadre. "The Union Public Service

Commission (UPSC) has conducted a detailed and thorough investigation in the misdemeanour of Ms Puja Manorama Dilip Khedkar, a provisionally recommended candidate of the Civil Services Examination-2022," an official statement issued on Friday said. From this investigation, it has been revealed that she fraudulently availed attempts beyond the permissible limit under the examination rules by faking her identity by way of changing her name, her father's and mother's names, her photograph/signature, her email ID, mobile number and address, the commission said. The UPSC has, therefore, initiated a series of actions against her, including criminal prosecution by filing a First Information Report (FIR) with the police authorities and has issued "a show cause notice for cancellation of her candidature of the Civil Services Examination-2022/debarment from future examinations/selections, in accordance with the Rules of the Civil Services Examination-2022", it said.



and privileges, by demanding perks and facilities she was not entitled for, during her training in Pune District Collectorate

Flood-like situation in Saurashtra region districts

Ahmedabad, July 20: Flood-like situation prevailed in several districts in Gujarat's Saurashtra region as heavy rains continued to batter the state on Saturday, cutting off villages and inundating low-lying areas, prompting rescue and relief operations and deployment of NDRF teams. Dwarka taluka in Devbhumi Dwarka district recorded 163 mm of rainfall in 12 hours ended at 6 pm on Saturday, followed by Junagadh city and taluka (133 mm of rainfall), and Patan-Veraval in Gir Somnath district, which received 117 mm rainfall, the State Emergency Operation Centre said. Officials said 10 teams of National Disaster Response Force were deployed in the affected districts and rescue and relief operations were underway to shift stranded people from water-logged low-lying areas to safer places. Copious rains caused 16 reservoirs to overflow.

Separately, an alert has been issued for 36 reservoirs and 25 dams, including Sardar Sarovar dam, which are filled up to 50 to 70 per cent of their total capacity. The India Meteorological Department said exceptionally heavy rainfall occurred over Dwarka district in Saurashtra, and extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places in Junagadh and Porbandar. A cyclonic circulation persisted over Saurashtra and Kutch extending up to 5.8 km above the mean sea level and tilting southwestwards, the Met department said forecasting heavy to very heavy rainfall coupled with extremely heavy rains in districts under the Saurashtra region and south Gujarat till Tuesday morning. Amid heavy rains, Union Labour Minister and Porbandar MP Mansukh Mandaviya arrived at his constituency to assess the situation and coordinate relief efforts.

Crop loan waiver comes as booster for Congress ahead of Hyderabad local body polls

HYDERABAD : The Rs 2 lakh crop loan waiver appears to be a political game-changer in favour of the Congress. The Congress leaders are in an upbeat mood as the crop loan waiver, which is expected to win the hearts of the farmers, would hold the party in the ensuing local body elections. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, the party leaders feel, has kept his word on the implementation of crop loan waiver scheme, which had enhanced his credibility further. While ministers, MLAs, MLCs, and constituency-level leaders are taking part in celebrations over loan waiver, the BRS leaders seem to be flustered by the prospect of the farmers turning to Revanth and the Congress. As the local body polls are likely between September and December this year, the Congress leaders at the village level hope that the waiver of crop loans might help them win the elections easily.

They believe that the waiver would lay a strong foundation for the party to develop further and emerge as an invincible force. This is because the farmers are a very large constituency that could make or mar a government.

Worry for BRS

Meanwhile, the BRS appears to have been alarmed at the turn of events as the party, till now, believed that Revanth would not be able to keep his word of waiving crop loans up to Rs 2 lakh at one go. As the tide is slowly turning in favour of the Congress, the BRS cadre are exerting pressure on the MLAs and other leaders to switch loyalty to the grand old party or they will be left alone. The significance of the Congress' success in fulfilling its promise of crop loan waiver is not lost on the BRS MLAs who seem to be taking a hard look at whether they should continue in the pink party or switch sides.

Kozhikode man feared trapped in landslide in Karnataka, search operations on

KOZHIKODE/ANKOLA: Arjun Mooladikuzhiyil, a truck driver from Kozhikode, is feared to be trapped under a huge mound of soil for the past four days following a landslide at Ankola in Karnataka. Even as efforts continue to trace him and others who went missing in the landslide that occurred on the national highway at Shirur on July 16, Arjun's family is hopeful of his safe return. Meanwhile, the Uttara Kannada district administration has sought the assistance of the Coast Guard in the search operations. There was not much success on Friday except for clearing the debris in some places. The harsh terrain, heavy rain and landslide possibility in adjoining areas are posing hurdles to the efforts. The search operation that was suspended on Friday night will resume on Saturday morning.

Uttara Kannada Deputy Commissioner Lakshmi Priya said seven bodies have been found so far. "Three more persons are still missing, and we hope we might find them soon," she said. "I have written to the Coast Guard to help with their helicopter to search for the bodies in the river and even amid the debris at the areas beyond our reach," she said. However, the bad weather has made assistance by helicopter impossible. Meanwhile, ministerial-level interventions and joint efforts by the Kerala-Karnataka authorities have raised hopes of Arjun's family. Arjun, 30, from Kannadikkal, had started his journey to Kozhikode from Jagalpet after loading timber in truck. According to

eyewitnesses, he had stopped at a hotel in Shirur to have tea when the mishap occurred. He and his truck have gone missing following the landslide. "We want to believe that a miracle will happen," said Krishnapriya, Arjun's wife.

'Truck's GPS signal last received from landslide spot'



For the past few days, we have been trying hard to know his whereabouts. When we contacted the BharatBenz company, the GPS signal from the lorry driven by Arjun was finally received from the place where the landslide occurred," she said. "Every time he goes for long trips, Arjun calls us without fail. I spoke to him on July 16, but couldn't get in touch with him from the next day. We have been trying to call many officials, but no major rescue effort was made till Friday," she said. Krishnapriya said Arjun's second mobile phone had been ringing when she dialled on Friday morning. Uttara Kannada deputy commissioner Lakshmi Priya said: "His (Arjun) family is in Shirur. They are seeing what is happening here." Arjun, who has

been working as a driver for a Mukkam-based trader, used to go on inter-state trips as part of his work. "Arjun is a hardworking man and the sole earner of his five-member family, consisting of his ailing parents, sister, wife and son. His disappearance can adversely affect his family now," said Baiju K, a neighbour. After failing to contact him over phone, the family members complained with the Chevayur police on Tuesday night. When they came to know about the landslide, some of the relatives went to Ankola on Wednesday. "When the relatives reached there, they realised that no rescue operation was taking place. Though several vehicles were stuck in the mud, the authorities were getting the soil removed with just two earth movers. Later, we filed a complaint with the Karnataka police.

But even after four days, there was no major progress in rescue operation," said Krishnapriya. When the helpless situation of Arjun's family came to light, help started to pour in. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wrote to his Karnataka counterpart Siddaramaiah, requesting him to speed up the rescue operation to find Arjun. He demanded a system like ground penetrating radar be used to locate Arjun. Pinarayi also instructed the chief secretary to coordinate the rescue mission with Karnataka government. Transport Minister K B Ganesh Kumar contacted the Karnataka Transport Minister, who promised to probe the matter and take further action.

Viral infections, vector-borne diseases surge in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD : The city is reeling under the impact of seasonal infections of viral flu, dengue, chikungunya, and gastroenteritis. The outpatient departments in private and government have been seeing a significant increase in the number of patients daily. The instances of viral infections have gone up in the last two weeks with the advancement of monsoons. Doctors, however, said that there was no significant surge but there was a steady rise in dengue and chikungunya cases as of now. Dr K Shankar, Fever Hospital superintendent, said the hospital was seeing around 600 patients in the OP daily of whom five were affected by dengue. A patient with symptoms of high-grade fever, severe body and joint pains, and headache showed up in the OP of a private hospital, with doctors initially suspecting dengue. However, the patient tested negative for dengue, following which doctors advised a chikungunya test, which showed positive.

Doctors are facing a critical challenge of identifying viral, dengue, or chikungunya as the preliminary symptoms for these infections are same — high-grade fever, body and joint pains, and severe headache. Dr. Rahul Agrawal, HOD, Internal Medicine and Infectious diseases, at a leading private hospital told TNIE, "There is a little difficulty in detecting dengue from chikungunya in the initial days as the symptoms are nonspecific. We are now seeing patients who show dengue-like symptoms but turn negative in the tests but test positive for chikungunya. Even viral fever cases have similar symptoms and the initial three days, treatment is symptomatic in either case. Even as the instances increase, there are cases where patients are unaware that they have dengue, and only turn up for treatment when the symptoms worsen."

Gang peddling painkiller drugs busted in Coimbatore

COIMBATORE: Three days after the arrest of four drug suppliers, two youths were arrested here on Friday over peddling painkiller drug.

The arrested were identified as J Rizwan Suhail (24) from Sowkar Nagar at Karumbukadai and Ashik Sherif (24) from Poonga Nagar at Karumbukadai in Coimbatore city. They were arrested for illegal possession of 1,000 painkiller tablets for illegal sales. The Enforcement Bureau Crime Investigation Department Coimbatore city police had made the arrests and seizure of the tablets from the youths.

Earlier the police arrested the mastermind of the drug peddling racket C Mariya and her friends S Yashik Elaki (26) of Masjith Colony at Karumbukadai, M Poochi Krishnan (24) from Lawley Road and A Snetha (31), wife of Ahamed Sameer from Dhaliyur near Thondamthur in Coimbatore district on July 16 and remanded them in judicial custody. The police

seized 200 pills and 4 kilograms of ganja from them. The arrest was made with input from sources, said police. Mariya (30) is from Pooluvapatti in Coimbatore district. She pursued BE (Electrical and

Electronics) for a few months and married Shajahan while helping him in connection with a drug case. They have a child. However, Shajahan separated from her a few months ago. After the separation, Mariya started drug smuggling by purchasing online the scheduled drug Tapentadol - a painkiller - from a pharmaceutical company in Himachal Pradesh. Then she started to sell them to drug peddlers. She purchases a pill for Rs 30 and sells it for Rs 70 and it is sold by the peddlers for Rs 300, said K Saravanakumar, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Coimbatore City-South). Snetha who had completed her BA (Political Science) was also engaged in tablet drug peddling. After receiving the drugs in bulk from Mariya she sells them to drug addicts.



Madras HC bars schools from insisting on TCs, making remarks on fee

CHENNAI: The Madras High Court has ordered the Tamil Nadu government to take appropriate action to ensure that schools in the state do not insist on submission of the transfer certificates (TC) of children while admitting them in schools and that no remark of fee dues is mentioned in the TCs.

"The appellants are directed to issue a circular or instructions or orders to all school administrations across the state to not insist upon the submission of a TC by the child at the time of admission," a division bench of Justices S M Subramaniam and C Kumarappan ordered on Friday.

The bench also directed the state government to prohibit school managements from making "unnecessary entries" in the TC, including on non-payment or delayed payment of fees. "In the event of violation, actions are to be initiated under Section 17 of the Right to Education (RTE) Act and under the relevant laws applicable for protection of children, including the

Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act," it ordered.

The court also directed the state government to "revisit" the Tamil Nadu Education Rules and the Code of Regulations for Matriculation Schools and bring necessary amendments to bring them "in consonance" with the provisions of the RTE Act within three months. The orders were passed while allowing a writ appeal filed by the state government against an order of a single judge who ruled in favour of private school managements on making entries about fee arrears in the TC.

The court stated that the noble object of the RTE Act, aimed at achieving a Constitutional goal — of providing quality education to all — cannot be allowed to be diluted by offending the provisions of the very Act. It also slammed school managements which punish students by forcing them to stand outside classrooms if their parents could not pay the fees within the stipulated time.

Child's education can't be

jeopardised due to monetary reasons: Madras HC

School managements cannot stigmatise the child, it said, adding that the court can never allow a child's education to be jeopardised due to monetary reasons.

Pointing out that, for children, education is not only a means to prepare them to earn money in the future, the court noted they shall also be made aware of their rights and duties in society, and basic human values shall be inculcated.

Every section of society can be uplifted only through good quality education. Quality education should be made available to all, and that has always been the goal of our Constitution, the court added.

'Give jobs to 410 who cleared TET in 2017'

Chennai: The HC on Friday asked the TN government to recruit 410 candidates who cleared the Teacher Eligibility Test in 2017 as secondary grade or graduate teachers before going ahead with 2023 notification

Andhra Pradesh: Heavy rains claim one life in Nidadavolu, batter Godavari districts

RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM/KAKINADA: The incessant rains in Godavari districts have thrown life out of gear, resulting in crops, particularly paddy, being damaged, submerged roads and floodwater entering a few houses on Friday. One person was washed away in the Yerrakalva stream in Tirugudem village under Nidadavolu Assembly constituency. The deceased, identified as Gantasala Venkateswara Rao (55), was swept by strong currents when he ventured out for fishing. Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh, who visited the submerged villages along with East Godavari district Collector P Prasanthi, in Nidadavolu said paddy crop was submerged in Kamsalipalem, Singavaram, and Ravimetla villages. He said nearly 13,000 acres of paddy fields were submerged in the rainwater. Each farmer had invested '20,000 per acre to cultivate the crop. With inflows to the River Godavari rising, four lakh cusecs water was discharged into the sea from Polavaram spillway and Sir Arthur Cotton Barrage.

Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema District Collector Mahesh Kumar Ravirala said floodwater has been released at the rate of 3.5 lakh cusecs from Cotton Barrage. Flood surge is likely to reach seven lakh cusecs, he added. People of island villages at Burugulanka jetty in P Gannavaram mandal were extremely inconvenienced as the temporary path to cross the River Vashishta was washed away Thursday night.

Naidu takes stock of flood situation

Vijayawada: Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu directed the officials to take all possible steps to safeguard the lives and property of people. On Friday, he conducted a video conference with the Collectors and SPs of the districts most affected by rains. He instructed them to plan in advance to mitigate loss of life. Officials ensure safety of 2,319 people living on four Konaseema islands. The road made of sand and mud in the river bed faces the brunt of the rains every year with the release of water from the Dowleswaram barrage.

Microsoft outage: Four flights cancelled in Andhra Pradesh, many delayed

VIJAYAWADA: A global Microsoft outage on Friday caused significant disruptions across various industries, including software, hospitality, aviation, and retail. The outage led to the cancellation of a total of four flights, including three from Visakhapatnam and one from Vijayawada.

As a result of the technical issue, a total of 18 flight services, both arrivals and departures, at the Rajamahendravaram airport were delayed, but not cancelled.

"Three flights from Visakhapatnam — two to Hyderabad and one to Kolkata — were cancelled due to the Microsoft outage. The status of Saturday's flight schedules can only be ascertained once the issue is resolved," said Visakhapatnam International Airport Director Raja Reddy.

Further, Gannavaram Airport authorities informed that Indigo flight 6E7134 was cancelled due to technical issues. The flight,

scheduled to arrive Vijayawada from Bengaluru at 8:30 pm on Friday and return at 8:45 pm, faced an unexpected cancellation of both its to-and-fro services. In addition to the flight cancellation, technical difficulties also impacted the online services of Indigo and Air India Express. As a result, the airlines were unable to issue digital boarding passes, and so the staff had to manually fill the boarding passes.

Airport authorities said airline staff worked diligently to resolve the issues and ensure minimal disruption to passengers' travel plans. According to Madhurapudi Airport Officer Gneswar, six flights to Hyderabad, two to Bengaluru, and one to Chennai are operated from Rajamahendravaram.

Unexpected day off for Techies

The services of these flights were delayed by 30 to 45 minutes. While an atmosphere of chaos ensued at airports, it was a rather

calm day for software professionals in the Port City as the outage resulted in an unexpected day off. "It's been a nice day for the employees. They engaged in games and various activities. We also took this opportunity to conduct pending training.

It has been a light day overall, but we will need to focus on recovering the production loss over the next two to three days, which will be hectic," said RL Narayana, chairman of ITAAP (Information Technology Association of Andhra Pradesh) Investment Committee.

Elaborating on the issue, he said, "We became aware of the issue around 10:00-10:30 am on Friday. The impact has been very severe, resulting in almost an entire day of production loss. Network technicians are going system by system to reset and restore functionality. Around 5:00 pm, the issue was resolved.

Telangana Public Service Commission reschedules Group-II exams to December

HYDERABAD : The Telangana Public Service Commission (TGPSC) on Friday rescheduled the Group-II examinations to December. In a statement, the TGPSC said, "It is hereby informed that the Commission, having deliberated on the proximity of examination dates between various recruitments, has decided to reschedule the Group-II exams scheduled on August 7 and 8 to December 2024. The dates on which the Group-II exam would be conducted in December would be announced later."

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Kudumbashree on a mission to spread happiness in households

KOZHIKODE: Kudumbashree is looking to spread the joy around. It is set to open happiness centres in Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram aimed at boosting the happiness index of households. The initiative, part of the National Rural Livelihood Mission, will begin in August and roll out in two phases, starting with 168 community development societies (CDS). In Kozhikode, the project will be implemented in model CDS such as Nanmananda, Puthupadi, Mavoor, Olavanna, Chorode, Tiruvallur, Meppayur, Balussery, Chemancheri, Kavilumpara, Naripetta, Edacheri, and Cheruvannur. Local happiness committees will first

conduct surveys to assess the living conditions and physical and mental health of households, identifying and addressing issues in families with low happiness levels.

Committees at local, district, and state levels will be established, involving representatives from various departments, local bodies, and the Kudumbashree tri-level organisation system. Training for these committees will be completed by July 30, with ward-level training for ADS members starting August 1. "A survey will be conducted focusing on families in the model CDS where happiness centres will be established

and a detailed plan will be prepared to raise the happiness index of those families. Based on this project, a happiness index will be prepared according to the social situation of Kerala and the project activities will be started after conducting an evaluation under the leadership of experts in various fields," Kudumbashree executive director Jafar Malik said in a press note. The Happiness Project will focus on diverse areas, including economic sustainability, environment, hygiene, art, literature, mental health, nutrition, and democratic values.

Each local self-governing body will form a committee

chaired by the panchayat president or municipal chairperson, with the CDS chairperson as the convenor. Members will include representatives from welfare, health education, arts, sports, literature, culture, yoga, environment, and the bala sabhas.

In each CDS, ward-level associations, called 'Idams,' comprising ten to forty families, will be formed. A monitoring team with representatives from various departments, Kudumbashree, and community members will oversee and evaluate the project activities. Kudumbashree aims to set a benchmark by achieving significant improvements in the happiness index.

NEWS BOX

Algae to remove pollutants from leachate

GURGAON. Amid the solid waste exigency in the city, MCG is planning to tie up with Delhi Research Implementation and Innovation (DRIIV) for leachate management. Officials said DRIIV, which is an organisation under the Centre's Delhi Science and Technology cluster, is likely to set up a leachate treatment facility in the city. At the proposed facility, leachate will be treated via phytoremediation (use of algae to treat waste or wastewater). In phytoremediation, algae serve as the primary agents responsible for the remediation process. It is a cost-effective and environment-friendly method for eliminating a wide range of contaminants from water, officials said.

Gurgaon: Humidity soars to 91%, to stay high; rain likely

GURGAON: Weather in the city remained muggy on Friday with the humidity index hovering between 70% and 91%. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the region is likely to witness light to moderate rainfall till July 25.

The minimum temperature dipped to 29.8 degrees Celsius from the previous day's 33 degrees. The maximum temperature, recorded at 34.5 degrees Celsius, dropped a notch from 35.5 degrees on Friday.



"The region is likely to witness light to moderate rainfall until July 25 and humid weather is likely to continue," an IMD official said. The city's air quality index (AQI) was in the 'moderate' category on Friday, with the 24-hour reading at 103. It was 102 on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Delhi witnessed 4.3mm of rainfall in the past 24 hours. The maximum temperature was 35.6 degrees Celsius. The relative humidity index oscillated between 76% and 86%.

Guard charred to death, cops on trail of brother-in-law

GURGAON. A charred body of a 35-year-old security guard of an under-construction building in Sector 15 Part-1 was found in the lobby area of the building on Friday. The body has been sent for autopsy.

According to police, Gorelal alias Halla had a fight with his brother-in-law, who is suspected to be the prime accused, the night before. He is now on the run, police said. Gorelal, who was from MP's Chhattarpur, was working as a security guard and caretaker of the building on plot no. 256 in Sector 15 Part-1. His brother-in-law Rakesh was employed as a mason in the same building, along with a few others from their village. "On Thursday night, Rakesh arrived at the nearly completed building, where only finishing work was pending. Rakesh, Gorelal, and four to five unidentified persons had drinks. During this session, Rakesh and Gorelal had an argument that escalated into a fight. Rakesh allegedly poured a cleaning chemical (used for cleaning tiles) on Gorelal and set him on fire. After the incident, Rakesh fled the scene," said an official. On Friday morning, Rakesh allegedly called some known associates working in the same area and asked them to check the lobby of the building. They discovered Gorelal's burnt body and informed the police. Gorelal's family has been informed and the police are awaiting the autopsy report. ACP Shiv Archana Sharma said, "Preliminary investigations suggest that the argument between Gorelal and Rakesh was over a petty issue that turned violent. The police are questioning other workers present during the incident. A case has been registered under IPC section 302 (murder)."

Two snatchers on bike drag woman, 1 held after gunfight

Ghaziabad. Two men behind a series of snatching incidents in Vasundhara and nearby areas were chased down by cops on Thursday night and one of them was arrested after a gunfight. Cops said the accused would mostly target unaccompanied elderly women, follow them on a bike — a red Apache that eventually gave them away — and swoop down to snatch chains or purses among other things. ACP Indrapuram Swatantra Singh said on July 5, the two men — Shadab and Salman of Vijay Nagar — had dragged a 50-year-old woman, Savita Singh, for a few metres as they tried to snatch a gold chain she was wearing in the busy Vasundhara Sector 3 market. The woman was returning home after purchasing vegetables at the time. A complaint was later submitted by her son at Indrapuram police station under section 309 (4) (punishment for robbery) of BNS. "The snatching incident was captured by a CCTV camera installed in the market. We assessed the footage and spotted the accused on a red Apache. On Thursday, we got a tip-off that the two men might be headed towards Indrapuram again. Our teams flagged down the accused on spotting their Apache, but they took a sharp turn and tried to flee. We chased them and arrested Shadab a few metres ahead and seize the bike. But Salman managed to slip away," the ACP said. During interrogation, Shadab apparently told cops that they would carry a country-made gun during the robberies. He agreed to accompany cops to the spot near the Hindon canal where they had hidden the firearm. "Once at the spot, he turned the gun on the cops and fired a few shots. He was shot in the right leg during a retaliatory firing," the ACP said. On Friday, Shadab was sent to judicial custody by a local court. Cops are yet to nab Salman or trace the gold chain they had stolen earlier this month.

Another kidney transplant gang busted in Delhi, 15 arrested

NEW DELHI. Delhi Police busted another kidney racket in the city on Friday, arresting 15 individuals, among them alleged transplant coordinators, recipients and donors. The gang is believed to have had kidney transplants carried out in 11 hospitals in various states, with 34 cases of illegal transplants now listed. "A woman filed a complaint stating that her husband paid Rs 35 lakh to one Sandeep Arya and one Vijay Kumar Kashyap for a kidney transplant but wasn't provided one," a police officer said. To investigate the matter, Sanjay Bhatia, additional commissioner of police (Crime), formed a team led by ACP Raman Lamba with sub-inspectors Rakesh and Ankit. "The team conducted a raid in Noida, nabbed Kashyap and recovered numerous fabricated papers, stamp seals and files of patients and donors. The team also apprehended Arya and Devender from a five-star hotel in Goa," said Bhatia. The investigation revealed that some gang members worked in reputed hospitals as transplant coordinators, thus learning about the kidney transplant processes employed by those hospitals. After that, they identified patients undergoing



treatment for kidney disease in hospitals in Delhi, Faridabad, Mohali, Panchkula, Agra, Indore and Vadodara. The accused contacted potential donors, often from impoverished families, through social media and promised them Rs 5-6 lakh per kidney. Forged documents were created to portray the patients and donors as close relatives, a mandatory requirement under India's organ transplant laws. After preliminary medical examination, arrangements

were made for the donors to pass the scrutiny of the transplant authorisation committee in different hospitals. The investigation led to five more people being arrested: Puneet Kumar, Mohammad Hanif Shaikh, Cheeka Prashanth, Tej Prakash and Rohit Khanna. Five patients who were kidney recipients and two donors were also identified and legal action has been initiated against them too. The racket was run by Arya, an MBA graduate,

who had worked as a transplant coordinator in hospitals in Faridabad, Delhi, Gurgaon, Indore and Vadodara. He contacted patients and arranged kidney transplants in the hospitals he worked in. He charged Rs 35-40 lakh for each kidney transplant procedure, including the hospital expenses, arrangement of the donor, accommodation and the legal documentation required for surgery. He made Rs 7-8 lakh for himself from each transplant. Arya and his brother-in-law, Devender, were the ones who cheated the patient whose complaint brought the case to the notice of police. Kashyap was one of the gang members, while Kumar prepared the fake documents confirming a relationship between the patient and the donor. Hanif Shaikh, a tailor, donated his kidney for money and subsequently became involved in the transplant racket, as did Prashanth, who donated a kidney before he began working for the gang. With his help, Arya facilitated three kidney transplants. Prakash obtained a kidney transplant for his wife, while Khanna acquired contact numbers of kidney donors through social media platforms.

Illegal structures on MG Road razed in 2-day GMDA drive

GURGAON. GMDA carried out an enforcement drive on Thursday and Friday to clear encroachments from service lanes and greenbelts along MG Road. The authority has also undertaken a streetscaping project aimed at beautifying this busy area.

Additionally, they addressed the problem of unauthorised parking on footpaths and service lanes, which hinders both pedestrian and vehicular movement. Several complaints have been made by societies and business establishments seeking action against illegal parking and encroachments.

During the two-day drive, around 32 stalls and kiosks were demolished, specifically near metro stations and in front of malls and multiplexes. Also, 80 vehicles were towed, and 50 challans were issued for illegal parking on roads.



"The traffic police department also joined the drive equipped with machines to tow illegally parked vehicles and issue challans. Trying to evade action, some vendors attempted to flee to nearby sectors, but the team demolished their illegal structures as well," said an official. Also, metro parking authorities were advised to maintain stricter checks in their immediate surroundings to prevent

future encroachments. "We will make every effort to ensure ease in traffic flow, and such drives will be conducted regularly on key stretches of the city. GMDA is also implementing a project to bring pedestrian footpaths and cycle tracks on this stretch, which will improve public accessibility," said RS Bath, district town planner (DTP), GMDA.

The streetscaping project on this 2.5 km road is estimated to cost the GMDA around Rs 11.3 crore. The stretch will have wider sidewalks, improved lighting, dedicated cycling lanes, and accessible ramps for persons with disabilities. Besides, it will have a dedicated green zone with a children's play area, benches, bus stops, and vending zones.

More landfill sites, safai staff: MCG seeks Rs 115 crore

GURGAON: MCG has sought to get additional Rs 114.8 crore from the state disaster relief fund to clean up the city, where a longstanding problem of inadequate waste management has left roads and colonies littered with garbage.

MCG commissioner Narhari Singh Banger told TOI on Friday that the fund has been sought to "strengthen sanitation services" under SWEEP.

Haryana govt on June 12 declared solid waste exigency in Gurgaon and formed a panel to oversee the implementation of a Solid Waste Environment Exigency Programme, or SWEEP. The programme allows the corporation to seek funds beyond its own budgetary allocation. With these funds, we plan to make our city cleaner," the MCG chief said. Officials said that they have proposed to use up the largest chunk of the fund -



Rs 56 crore - on just hiring additional sanitation workers for a year. Around 4,000 sanitation workers are currently working in the city. Another Rs 20.7 crore will be spent on developing new sites to process fresh waste. Currently, Gurgaon generates 1,200 tonnes of waste daily, and all of it is dumped at the Bandhwar landfill. The corporation has been under pressure to clear lakhs of tonnes of legacy waste lying at Bandhwar after a 2022 order from the National Green Tribunal (NGT). This budget for new sites will include cost of operation and maintenance for a year, officials said.

Another big problem for the city is the lack of capacity and facilities to treat construction and demolition waste. For this, officials said, Rs 9.7 crore of the additional fund will be used to get vehicles and machinery, and Rs 80.9 lakh for tractor-trolleys and earthmovers. TOI had reported on June 15 that MCG's own budget for sanitation is underutilised almost every year. The corporation allocated Rs 325 crore for health and sanitation services for this fiscal year, but it had only utilised Rs 40 crore, or 12% of the budget, till mid-June. MCG just utilised one-third of its allocated budget of Rs 570 crore for sanitation purposes the year before (2023-24).

Metro Yellow Line to take service break

New Delhi. Train services on the Yellow Line will be briefly regulated on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday as Delhi Metro Rail Corporation undertakes planned civil work on a 490-metre section of the Janakpuri West-R K Ashram corridor of Phase-IV, where the alignment crosses over Haiderpur Badli Mor metro station on the Yellow Line (Samaypur Badli-Millennium City Centre Gurgaon). On Saturday, the last train will depart at 10.45 pm instead of 11 pm from Samaypur Badli to Millennium City Centre, and at 9.30 pm instead of 11 pm from Millennium City Centre to Samaypur Badli. However, on Sunday, the first train will start at 7 am, not at the usual time of 6 am, from Samaypur Badli to Millennium City Centre. "There will be no train services available between the small section of Samaypur Badli and Jahangirpuri after 11 pm on Saturday and before 7 am on Sunday. However, normal train services will continue to remain available on the remaining major section of the Yellow Line from Jahangirpuri to Millennium City Centre Gurgaon during this period," said Anuj Dayal, principal

executive director of corporate communications, DMRC. "To avoid any inconvenience to passengers during these late-night or early morning hours on the weekend,



announcements will also be made at the stations and inside the trains on the Yellow Line about the destination of trains and respective platforms for changeover during this period," Dayal added. We also published the following articles recently: Beijing shuts train lines as rain arrives in China's north. Discover the latest updates on severe weather conditions in China, as Beijing and other regions face heavy rains and flooding. Learn

about the temporary closures of train lines and emergency responses being implemented to address the situation.

Vicky Kaushal, Tripti Dimri, and Ammy Virk opt for Delhi metro during 'Bad News' promotions. Learn about the unique film 'Bad News' as actors Vicky Kaushal, Tripti Dimri, and Ammy Virk promote it by riding the Delhi Metro. Vicky clarifies pregnancy rumors surrounding Katrina Kaif. Find out more about the movie inspired by true events and releasing on July 19. Ravi Kishan hails Amitabh Bachchan as 'megastar of the millennium' for his role in 'Kalki 2898 AD'. Read about the heartwarming exchange between actors Amitabh Bachchan and Ravi Kishan at Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's wedding. Amitabh praised Ravi's work in 'Laapataa Ladies' while Ravi referred to Amitabh as the 'megastar of the millennium' for his role in 'Kalki 2898 AD'. Learn more about their touching interaction here.

Rush outside OPDs & delay in surgeries: Hospital services hit too

GURGAON. Several private hospitals in NCR cancelled elective procedures and resorted to using handwritten records for patients lining up at OPDs as access to specific Microsoft apps and services was blocked for hours on Friday. Most hospitals said OPD services, and patient admissions and discharge were primarily affected as staff had to start taking down information on paper. Doctors said they had to postpone surgeries and procedures as they did not have access to medical records. "Every second counts in the ER, and the outage put us in a dire situation. We could not access patient histories or test results, which are vital for making life-saving decisions. It was like being thrust into an era before digital medicine," said a doctor of a private hospital in the city. Family members accompanying patients said they were frustrated but realised that the staff couldn't do much else.

"We waited for hours just to get my father admitted. The delay in emergency services was terrifying. It felt like pandemonium everywhere," said Abhijit Sarkar, a resident of Sector 56 who was at Max Hospital in the city. His father was being admitted for swelling on his face and pain in the left eye. Naresh Sharma (65), who was scheduled to undergo a cataract surgery at Fortis Hospital on Friday, said the procedure was

postponed. "It was frustrating because I've been preparing for this for weeks," he said. A staffer at a billing counter in Max said it in the initial hours of OPD operations when she realised that the computer had stopped working. "I thought it as an internal glitch, so I waited for some time. Then I called up my seniors to ask what the problem was and they told me about the outage. We started preparing to use the manual process after that," the staffer said. Apart from hospitals, services were disrupted across companies, banks and airports world over as a cybersecurity update linked to Microsoft knocked out computer systems for a few hours on Friday. Pankaj Prasad, who was at Medanta Hospital for a routine check-up, said it was a long and exhausting day, but he was more afraid about patients who would have needed emergency care. Hospital officials said they did not get any accident, trauma or critical case in the hours that the outage lasted. Some NCR residents said the outage and its impact across the globe showed just how vulnerable the digital ecosystem was. "We understand that outages happen, but the lack of preparedness was shocking. Hospitals should think of keeping a backup plan,"



said Girish Mishra, who was with his son at a private hospital's OPD in Sector 90. Another resident Priyanka Gupta said, "The hospital staff was apologetic, but the situation was beyond their control. These were tough few hours for everyone." In Noida too, in-patient and OPD departments saw hours-long delays that began around 10am. A patient's attendant Rita Sree said the discharge procedure was delayed by two hours at the hospital. Public hospitals did not report any disruption to their services as most of them don't use the systems affected by the botched update.

Artemis Hospital in Gurgaon said in a statement its services were "up and running" as normal because it uses a "different solution for endpoint security". Others said in statements that their systems

were restored by the afternoon.

Max said its "software applications used for patient care and other services were impacted. We had to switch to manual services to service our patients as an alternative mechanism", but operations have resumed. "At Fortis, we experienced a brief interruption in our diagnostic services, which was managed efficiently. Our systems continue to run normally, and we have conducted thorough checks to verify this," said a statement from Fortis Healthcare. Several private hospitals in the capital also experienced partial disruption of services on Friday. However, govt hospitals, including AIIMS, Safdarjung and Ram Manohar Lohia, were not affected as their servers are maintained by the National Informatic Centre. "Another area of concern was the operation theatre, where the movement of patients in and out of the OT was hindered," revealed a doctor at Fortis. "This disruption was attributed to the system's malfunction; the hospital heavily depends on it for smooth functioning. Despite the obstacles, the staff managed to handle the situation eventually, albeit with some delays."

The situation was the same at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, where all patient records are stored electronically. A doctor said that the malfunctioning software particularly hit the discharge process.

NEWS BOX

Sheila Lee Jackson, strong democratic voice in US Congress, dies at 74

Washington. US Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, a strong progressive voice in the Democratic Party who was outspoken on African-American and women's rights, has died, her family posted, on X late on Friday. Jackson Lee of Texas announced last month she had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and was undergoing treatment. She was 74, according to US media. "A fierce champion of the people, she was affectionately and simply known as 'Congresswoman' by her constituents in recognition of her near-ubiquitous presence and service to their daily lives for more than 30 years," her family said in the statement. Jackson Lee, who represented parts of Houston, introduced legislation in the House of Representatives to make "Juneteenth" a federal holiday commemorating the end of the legal



enslavement of Black Americans. The holiday marks the day in 1865 when a Union general informed a group of enslaved people in Texas that they had been made free two years earlier by President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation during the Civil War.

We are going to win: Kamala Harris reassures worried Democratic donors

Washington. US Vice President Kamala Harris assured major Democratic donors on Friday that the party would win the presidential election as more lawmakers called for her running mate, President Joe Biden, to stand down.

"We are going to win this election," she said on a call arranged on short notice to calm donors, according to a person on the call. "We know which candidate in this election puts the American people first: Our president, Joe Biden." The call came after Biden vowed to continue in the 2024 race and the Democratic Party planned to accelerate his nomination. At least nine Democratic lawmakers called on Biden to drop out on Friday. Reuters reported that several of Biden's campaign fundraisers were put on hold, citing multiple Democratic sources involved in the events, as donors threatened to withhold funds from the campaign.

Donors were called to join the 30-minute briefing "to discuss urgent, emerging needs," according to a copy of



the invitation seen by Reuters. Harris attended the call "at the direct request of senior advisers to the president," one of the people said, an account confirmed by another person familiar with the matter.

Bangladesh soldiers out in force as PM cancels foreign trip

DHAKA. Soldiers were out in force Saturday in cities around Bangladesh after another day of lethal clashes between student protesters and police prompted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to cancel foreign visits.

This week's violence has killed at least 105 people so far, according to an AFP count of victims reported by hospitals, and poses a significant challenge to Hasina's autocratic government after 15 years in office. A government curfew went into effect at midnight and the premier's office asked the military to deploy troops after police again failed to subdue mayhem. "The government has decided to impose a curfew and deploy the military in aid of the civilian authorities," Hasina's press secretary Nayeemul Islam Khan told AFP. Streets of the capital Dhaka were almost deserted at daybreak, with troops on foot and in armoured personnel carriers patrolling the sprawling megacity of 20 million. Several rickshaw drivers downtown who ignored the curfew were told by police to return home. The curfew will remain in effect until 10:00 am (0400 GMT) Sunday, private broadcaster Channel 24 reported. Hasina had been due to leave the country on Sunday for a planned diplomatic tour but abandoned her plans after a week of escalating violence. "She has cancelled her Spain and Brazil tours due to the prevailing situation, her press secretary Nayeemul Islam Khan told AFP.

Near-daily marches this month have called for an end to a quota system that reserves more than half of civil service posts for specific groups, including children of veterans from the country's 1971 liberation war against Pakistan. Critics say the scheme benefits children of pro-government groups that back Hasina, 76, who has ruled the country since 2009 and won her fourth consecutive election in January after a vote without genuine opposition. Hasina's government is accused by rights groups of misusing state institutions to entrench its hold on power and stamp out dissent, including by the extrajudicial killing of opposition activists. Police fire was the cause of more than half of the deaths reported so far this week, based on descriptions given to AFP by hospital staff. "The rising death toll is a shocking indictment of the absolute intolerance shown by the Bangladeshi authorities to protest and dissent," Babu Ram Pant of Amnesty International said in a statement. Authorities imposed a nationwide internet shutdown on Thursday which remains in effect, severely hampering communication in and out of Bangladesh.

Israel threatens retaliation for Yemen rebel drone strike that killed 1

Tel Aviv. Israel threatened reprisals Friday after a drone claimed by Yemen's Huthi rebels penetrated its vaunted air defences and killed a civilian in a Tel Aviv apartment building near a US embassy annexe.

The attack drew condemnation from UN chief Antonio Guterres and an appeal for "maximum restraint" to avoid "further escalation in the region".

The pre-dawn strike came hours before Israel suffered another blow, a ruling by the UN's top court that its occupation of the Palestinian territories was "illegal" and needed to end as soon as possible. The advisory opinion of The Hague-based International Court of Justice is not binding, but it comes amid mounting international condemnation of Israel's handling of its war on Hamas in Gaza. The office of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas hailed the court's decision as "a victory for justice". Hamas said it puts "the international system before the imperative of immediate action to end the occupation". But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has overseen a major expansion of Jewish settlements in

the occupied West Bank, insisted: "The Jewish people are not occupiers in their own land." The Huthis are one of a number of Iran-backed armed groups around the Middle East that have claimed drone and missile attacks on Israel in retaliation for the Gaza war. The group, which controls swathes of Yemen, including much of its Red Sea coast, has previously claimed attacks on Israeli cities including Ashdod, Haifa and Eilat, but Friday's strike appears to be the first to breach Israel's sophisticated air defences. The Huthis fired at Tel Aviv a "new drone called 'Yafa', which is capable of bypassing the enemy's interception systems", their spokesman Yahya Saree said. An Israeli military official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said a "very big drone that can travel long distances" was used in the 3:12 am (0012 GMT) attack. He said the drone was detected but due to "human error" the alarm was not raised in time, and it slammed into an apartment building. Military spokesman Daniel Hagari said Israel believed the drone used was Iranian-made and upgraded so it



could reach Tel Aviv from Yemen -- at least 1,800 kilometres (1,100 miles) away. Medical services said one civilian was killed and four people suffered "relatively minor" injuries. Defence Minister Yoav Gallant vowed revenge. "The security system will settle the score with all who try to harm the state of Israel, or sends terrorism against it, in a decisive and surprising manner," he said in comments posted on social media platform X. "Everything blew out!"

In grainy security camera footage, the buzz of what appeared to be the drone was followed by an explosion that shook the building and set off car alarms.

The blast occurred about 100 metres (yards) from a US embassy annexe, said an AFP journalist who saw broken windows along the street lined with apartment blocks. "It woke me up because the vibration of the sound was like a 747 (jet) coming in," said Kenneth Davis, an Israeli who was staying in a hotel opposite the building which was hit. And then the explosion... everything blew out in the room," he told AFP. Since November, the Huthis have also carried out dozens of drone and missile attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden that they claim is Israeli-linked. The United States and Britain launched a campaign of air strikes in January to deter the attacks on shipping. The Gaza war was triggered by Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel which resulted in the deaths of 1,195 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures. The militants also seized 251 hostages, 116 of whom are still in Gaza, including 42 the Israeli military says are dead. Israel's retaliatory campaign has killed at least 38,848 people in Gaza.

Joe Biden vows re-election bid campaign despite increasing Democratic pressure

New Delhi. US President Joe Biden on Friday vowed to continue his campaign for re-election even as more fellow Democrats in Congress urged him to end his floundering campaign. His statement came after reports said that he was considering dropping out of the race. "Together, as a party and as a country, we can and will defeat him at the ballot box," Biden said. "The stakes are high, and the choice is clear. Together, we will win," Biden said. "I look forward to getting back on the campaign trail next week to continue exposing the threat of Donald Trump's Project 2025 agenda while making the case for my own record and the vision that I have for America," he said in a statement, referring to a policy plan developed by Trump's conservative allies. Media reports also said Biden's family members have begun contemplating what the latter's exit from his floundering campaign would look like. According to news agency Reuters, more than one in 10

congressional Democrats have now publicly called on Biden to drop out. However, Biden, who has insisted he can



beat Republican Donald Trump, remained defiant, saying he would resume campaigning soon.

Biden, 81, tested positive for Covid-19 while travelling in Las Vegas earlier this week and experienced "mild symptoms" including "general malaise" from the infection, the White House said. His disastrous June debate against Trump raised questions about his ability to win or to carry out his duties for another four years.

So far, 32 of the 264 Democrats in Congress have openly called for Biden to end his campaign, while other senior Democratic leaders have pushed him behind the scenes to do so, Reuters quoted sources and media reports. Democrats are increasingly worried about a Republican sweep in the November 5 election that could leave Trump and his allies not only in charge of the White House but also with majorities in both chambers of Congress.

Among the democrats expressing worries to allies about Biden's chances were former President Barack Obama and Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, who has privately told Biden the party could lose the ability to seize control of the House if he doesn't step aside. New Mexico Senator Martin Heinrich called on Biden to exit the race, making him the third Senate Democrat to do so. Amid the turmoil, a majority of Democrats think Vice President Kamala Harris would make a good president herself.

Usha Chilukuri Vance's granduncle, an RSS worker, was jailed during Emergency

World Usha Chilukuri Vance, the wife of Donald Trump's running mate JD Vance, has gained significant attention for her Indian roots. One of her close relatives was a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) worker and was jailed during the Emergency in India. "Usha is the granddaughter of Ramasastry, my husband Subramanya Sastry's eldest brother. My husband spent two years in jail during the Emergency as he was an RSS worker," Shanthamma Chilukuri, Usha's great-aunt, told The Times of India. The Emergency in India was a 21-month period from 1975 to 1977. Then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had suspended rights and jailed opposition leaders and activists. Her great-aunt Shanthamma, at 96, is India's oldest active professor, travelling 60 km daily to teach physics at a university in Visakhapatnam.

Usha, 38, is the daughter of Indian immigrants who moved to the US in the late 1970s. She practices Hinduism and has an impressive academic background, having studied at Yale and Cambridge. She previously worked as a law clerk to US Chief Justice John Roberts and later as an attorney at Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP. JD Vance said that Usha, a practising Hindu, helped him find his Christian faith. Shanthamma Chilukuri told Reuters that many in the family were well-versed in ancient texts like Upanishads and Vedas. She has authored a book on verses from the Bhagavad Gita.

The Chilukuri family places a strong emphasis on education, with Usha's father and grandfather associated with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). "Most of our family is academically strong and education

has been a top priority," Chilukuri told Reuters. The family hails from Vadduru in Andhra Pradesh but moved to Chennai when Usha's grandfather, Ramasastry Chilukuri, joined the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in 1959. The IIT now runs a student award in the memory of Ramasastry, who used to teach physics, reported Reuters.

Usha's introduction of her husband at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee marked her debut on the US national political stage. If Trump wins the upcoming election which is going to be held in November, Usha could become the 'Second Lady' of the United States. The Emergency in India was a period when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency, leading to the arrest of many opposition leaders and RSS workers.



strengthening our ability to resist Russian terror. Russian attacks on our cities and villages continue every day." "We agreed with President Trump to discuss at a personal meeting what steps can make peace fair and truly lasting," Zelenskyy tweeted.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

The United States has provided tens of billions of dollars in military assistance for Kyiv since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 -- though a Trump victory in the November election would put Washington's continued support into question. Trump's running mate JD Vance leads the isolationist wing of congressional Republicans, who argue the United States should drop aid to Ukraine.

Vance was one of the fiercest opponents of the approval of \$61 billion in new military aid for Ukraine, which was stalled by Republican lawmakers for months earlier this year -- a time in which Russia made battlefield gains. Trump told the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee on Thursday that he would bring an end to raging international crises.

40 Haitian migrants die after voodoo ritual sets boat on fire

At least 40 migrants have died after a boat they were travelling in caught fire off the northern coast of Haiti. As per a UN agency, the explosion was sparked by a voodoo ritual gone wrong.



Port-au-Prince, Haiti. At least 40 migrants have died after a boat they were travelling in caught fire off the northern coast of Haiti, a UN agency said Friday, with police saying the explosion was sparked by a voodoo ritual gone wrong. The UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that the Haitian Coast Guard rescued 41 survivors, 11 of whom were hospitalized, including some for burns.

But "at least 40 migrants have died, and several others were injured," the IOM said. The fire began when a passenger lit a candle to start a voodoo ritual, police spokesperson Arold Jean said. Survivors

told local media that the voodoo ceremony was meant to bring luck and help the boat avoid being intercepted by the coast guard. "This devastating event highlights the risks faced by children, women and men migrating through irregular routes," said Gregoire Goodstein, IOM's chief of mission in the country. The boat, carrying more than 80 people, had left the port of Labadee on Wednesday en route to the Turks and Caicos Islands, a 150-mile (240-kilometer) journey, the IOM reported, citing Haiti's National Office for

Migration. "The search continues with the aim of finding other survivors," said Jean, adding that an investigation had been opened to "identify and dismantle the networks that organize these clandestine voyages." Migration from the poorest country in the Americas has been surging for months, as thousands of people flee a spike in violence from criminal gangs that now control wide swathes of territory. The gangs have attacked prisons, destroyed dozens of police stations, and invaded the main airport, with the government's hold over the country tenuous. "Haiti's

socioeconomic situation is in agony," Goodstein said. "The extreme violence over the past months has only brought Haitians to resort to desperate measures even more." Hundreds of police officers from Kenya have been deployed in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince, part of an international effort to bring stability to a country riven by political, social and economic chaos. Newly named Prime Minister Gary Conille, a former UN official, has welcomed the Kenyan contingent and vowed to launch a police operation against the gangs. Criminal groups control 80 percent of the capital city, with residents saying they have faced the threat of murder, rape and kidnapping for ransom. As the pace of emigration grows, Haitian Coast Guard units in the north have observed an increasing number of departures by boat, the IOM said. Countries including the United States, the Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and Jamaica say they have intercepted a growing number of boats originating from Haiti. More than 86,000 migrants have been forcibly returned to Haiti by neighboring countries this year, according to the IOM. The country currently has nearly 600,000 internally displaced people, according to UN figures, a 60 percent increase since March.

Kerala: Fund crunch delays fuel payments, excise's anti-narcotic operations hit hard

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The state excise department formed with a stated objective to grapple with drug menace is now dealing with another formidable obstacle — fund crunch. Due to insufficient funds, the fuel bills of the department vehicles for the past three months are yet to get clearance, impeding anti-narcotic activities. Excise sources said private petrol pumps are reluctant to supply fuel for the department vehicles owing to mounting dues. "We refill fuel in our department vehicles after giving the indent bill to private petrol pumps. There is an understanding between both parties that the bill will be settled within 45-60 days. Once that period is crossed, the pumps often show reluctance to supply fuel to us. Now, it's been about three months that the fuel bills were paid and most of the pumps have serious reservations against selling us fuel," sources said.

An excise officer told TNIE that a department vehicle on average fills fuel to the tune of Rs 20,000 per month. In case of investigations spanning several districts and states, the fuel cost rises further. The officer said the officials are forced to spend out of their own pockets in case of emergency and not all can afford to do that since the reimbursement arrives slowly. Sometimes, it takes up to eight months to get the amount reimbursed. That's a long wait and hence the officers generally are less inclined to spend for official purposes from their pockets," sources added. However, the cops investigating drug cases involving commercial quantities, have to bear the brunt as the chargesheet has to be filed within six months to prevent the accused getting bail by default.

Breakfast scheme helps improve human resource capital in Tamil Nadu

Though the scheme will cost the exchequer Rs 500 crore, its short term and long term benefits will be massive.

Abiding by the philosophy of Dravidian Model, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu MK Stalin has given a renewed push to the education sector in the state. Apart from enhancing the nutrition of school kids, one of the flagship programmes of his government — the morning breakfast scheme — aims to improve the human resource capital of the state in the long run. The scheme coverage was extended to more aided schools by the chief minister on Monday. Around 24 lakh students now benefit from the scheme, making Tamil Nadu the first region in the world to offer breakfast in schools on such a large scale. Though the scheme will cost the exchequer Rs 500 crore, its short term and long term benefits will be massive. Some may naively deride interventions like these as freebies, only progressive schemes such as these implemented by the Dravidian parties have made Tamil Nadu the numero uno state in India on human resources development. In fact, the much acclaimed mid-day meal scheme, now emulated across India, was introduced in Madras State (now Tamil Nadu) by the Justice Party (precursor of the DMK party) way back in 1921. Since then, Tamil Nadu has been a role model to the rest of India in evidence-based social interventions. The rationale for introducing the morning breakfast scheme can be realised from a baseline study conducted among children aged 5-12, which identified that 43% did not consume breakfast daily or took it occasionally. As much as 17% were found

to never eat breakfast before going to school. The study further identified that the problem of skipping breakfast was more profound

behaviour and academic performance in children and adolescents') suggested a positive association between breakfast

attendance increased by at least 20% in 90% of the schools owing to the scheme. This is why the breakfast scheme was a game-changer.

Recently, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced on 'X' platform that breakfast would be made mandatory across primary schools via his government's National School Food Programme. Furthermore, the Labour Party in the UK, had promised to offer free breakfast to primary school students across the country if voted to power. As Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Stalin once said, education is the real wealth that can't be stolen. The breakfast scheme, among others, goes a long way in providing a level-playing field for children from all backgrounds. When a government imparts the best education to all children, the overall human resources of the state improve. Better the human resource capital, better the society, and better the overall economic growth.

[Footnote is a weekly column that discusses issues relating to Tamil Nadu] (Salem Dharanidharan is executive coordinator of Dravidian Professionals Forum and an alumnus of the University of Oxford)

Dutch study

A study in the Netherlands among 605 kids found breakfast skipping (eating breakfast <5 days/week) was associated with lower average annual school grades. With regular breakfast intake (>5 times a week), their performance showed drastic improvements. A study conducted by the Tamil Nadu Planning Commission into the Chief Minister's breakfast scheme also identified similar trends. It found that



among children from the bottom 40 percentile of income, or rather whose parents, particularly mothers, are daily wage labourers.

A study conducted by the European Journal of Medical and Health Sciences identified a clear positive causation between eating breakfast to happiness and concentration. Students who ate breakfast every day had higher scores in happiness index. Similarly, another research from the University of Leeds, UK ('The effects of breakfast on

frequency and quality of school grades or standardised test scores.

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1st radio-collared saddleback Nilgiri Tahr preyed upon by tiger

Speaking to TNIE, Yuvarajkumar said the postmortem examination revealed that the male Tahr might have been ambushed by a tiger.

COIMBATORE: A fully-grown 'saddleback' Nilgiri Tahr, the first animal of its kind to be radio-collared by the state forest department with the support of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-India in March this year, was preyed upon by a carnivore at Mukurthi National Park in the Nilgiris on Wednesday. Nilgiri Tahr is the state animal of Tamil Nadu. The remains of the Tahr's carcass were found at the western catchment area of the Western Ghats in the Mukurthi Forest Range on Thursday morning during surveillance by a forest team that went to check on the animal after its movement got stopped at the spot on Wednesday evening. A team led by deputy director of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) for core area C Vidhya, range officer M Yuvarajkumar and forest veterinarian Dr Rajesh Kumar reached the spot on Friday and conducted a postmortem. Officials said the remains of



the carcass were left at the place after the postmortem. Speaking to TNIE, Yuvarajkumar said the postmortem examination revealed that the male Tahr might have been ambushed by a tiger. "In order to study the behavior and movement of the Nilgiri Tahr, which is a schedule-I animal, the department fitted the radio

collar around its neck. The animal's movement was continuously tracked by a forest and WWF team for better understanding of its behavior under the Tamil Nadu government's Nilgiri Tahr project." The predation of the Tahr by a tiger revealed the presence of a healthy eco system in the forest area, he said.

"From Wednesday morning, the Tahr's movement was quite low. Since we got suspicious, we started tracking its movement continuously. After the ambush, the carnivore takes a few hours to eat the prey. If it was a leopard, it would have hidden the carcass on a tree to eat it after sometime. The Tahr's last spot was zeroed in on Wednesday evening. Despite the harsh climatic conditions due to heavy rain, we reached the place and found the carcass," he said. One of the findings of the study was that Tahrs like to eat four varieties of grasses, sources said. Officials said the fixing of the radio-collar on the Tahr was completed without tranquilising the mature male which has high stress-tolerance level. The animal was captured by using salt licks and drop net. The entire operation lasted for 20 minutes. The collar's weight was 750 grams and it was less than 1% of the weight of the animal.

Karnataka Lokayukta police found Rs 49.85 crore DA from 12 officials

BENGALURU: The Karnataka Lokayukta police on Friday found Rs 49.85 crore disproportionate assets (DA) after raiding 60 premises belonging to 12 officials of different departments across the state. This is the second such massive raid in the last nine days. On July 11, the Lokayukta police unearthed Rs 45.14 crore DA by raiding 56 locations of 11 officers.

Athar Ali, Deputy Controller, Legal Metrology Department in Bengaluru, allegedly threw a bag containing ornaments to a neighbouring building after seeing officials raiding his house in Bengaluru. All the ornaments were recovered by the Lokayukta police later. Chethan Kumar, District Labour Officer in Mysuru, was found with Rs 58 lakh cash. Athar stands first among the 12 officials, allegedly possessing Rs 8.63 crore DA. He owns Rs 5.82 crore in immovable assets, including four sites, and three houses. His movable assets are worth Rs 2.81 crore, including Rs 25.18 lakh cash, and Rs 2.08 crore worth of ornaments. Additional Director CT Madhukumar, on official duty as Chief Operation Officer at the Invest Karnataka Forum, Industries and Commerce Department in Bengaluru, allegedly possessed Rs 7.41 crore DA. This includes Rs 2.47 crore immovable assets with three houses, 6 acres 20 guntas agriculture land and a farmhouse.

Tragic landslides on NH-66, NH-75 spur rethink on road safety

KARNATAKA. The July 16 landslide in Ankola taluk on the Karwar-Kumta stretch of National Highway (NH)-66 which claimed at least seven lives, besides a series of other landslides, including the one blocking the busy NH-75 connecting Bengaluru with Mangaluru, have led to many reconsidering weekend plans involving long drives on national, state or district highways. It is the disaster that has been seceded in their minds, discouraging them from presenting any opportunity to be victimized by possible similar catastrophes. The images of tonnes of rocks and soil blanketing NH-66 near Shirur in Ankola taluk are likely sending chills down their spines. The tragedy reportedly

buried a whole roadside eatery with an entire family, carried a gasoline tanker along with its occupants into the adjoining Gangavalli River, and buried two other lorries and another family travelling in a car, which has remained under tonnes of debris that cascaded down on them. Most of them — some still unidentified — still lie buried under the humongous pile, which makes heavy earth-movers brought to the spot look like little toys in comparison. The incident should not be looked at in isolation, rather a close look needs to be taken at why it occurred and what needs to be done to prevent such tragedies. A landslide rarely occurs without anthropogenic factors at play. Maladies originate

from man-made activities which, in the pursuit of rapid infrastructure development, blind the authorities to the possibilities of such disastrous consequences. Besides the casualties, the consequences include colossal loss in land and property. For instance, losses incurred due to the landslides in Kodagu a few years ago are estimated to be upwards of Rs 35,000 crore. Landslides are such that even if there are no casualties, they drastically affect human lives. Both NH-66 and NH-75 (the latter landslide occurred a day after the former one) are busy roads which cater to heavy traffic linked to business & commerce, tourism, medical emergencies and general transport needs.

Survey of a Kerala government workplace finds most staff happy

KOCHI: A first-of-its-kind survey of the employees of Kakkannad civil station, the headquarters of the Ernakulam district administration, has found that the majority of them are happy, with some of them even higher on the contentment scale. The pilot happiness survey conducted by the economics and statistics department found that 41.06% of employees are happy, while another 13.41% are very happy. Only 1.22% were found to be unhappy at the workplace. The survey found that the factories and boilers department is the happiest office, with a score of 4.5, while the department that conducted the survey ranked second, with a score of 4.14. The mining and geology department (2.33) and district social justice office (2.0) brought up the rear. Releasing the survey, Ernakulam collector N S K Umesh said 63% of respondents were women. "The survey was



conducted among 246 individuals working in 37 offices at the civil station over April and May," he said. Umesh emphasised the importance of both personal and work life. "If you are happy in your personal life, you will be happy in your work life as well. This

is an opportunity for everyone to introspect whether they are happy at work. If you are not happy, tell your boss. Even if you can't solve your problem, opening up can help to an extent," he said. He said work is only a part of life. "Personal relationships and hobbies should be maintained. Everyone should have a hobby, it will help us improve self-love," he stressed. The study also found that among the primary reasons for unhappiness at the workplace are workload (26.34%) and bad supervisors (19.34%). "Establishing yoga or physical fitness centres, opportunities to showcase artistic and cultural skills, good communication with co-workers and superiors, arts and crafts training and equitable arrangements at work can improve the happiness and well-being of the employees," the report said.

HC directs TN govt to appoint 410 teachers selected between 2013-17

CHENNAI: The Madras High Court has directed the state government to resume the 2017 teacher appointment process and recruit 410 candidates, who had cleared the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET), in government schools, before going ahead with the 2023 notification. A division bench led by the Acting Chief Justice recently passed the orders on petitions filed by the 410 candidates who took the TET and completed their certificate verification between 2013 and 2017 but were not given the appointment orders. "All the writ petitions are allowed with a direction to the state government to continue the

appointment process left midway in 2017, insofar as the petitioners are concerned and appoint them as secondary grade/graduate teachers as expeditiously as possible without causing further delay," the bench said in the order. It further directed the government that these 410 candidates shall be appointed depending upon their respective merit/ranking as per the weightage method, their TET scores and the rule of reservation. The TET-score based appointment was introduced following the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. The process for recruitment was started in 2013 and completed in 2017 but appointments

were not made. Meanwhile, the government issued notification for appointing teachers based on a competitive examination in 2023. Challenging this notification, they approached the High Court. Advocate N Kavitha Rameshwar, appearing for some of the petitioners, submitted that the action of the government to ignore the 410 candidates from the purview of selection and appointment is clearly arbitrary and the respondent authorities cannot be allowed to proceed with the appointment as per the 2023 notification. The court concurred with her saying the action of the state has been most arbitrary, unreasonable.



The sad tale of an IAS probationer

PUJA Khedkar got an all-India rank of 821 in the UPSC examination of 2022, yet she was selected for the IAS, the premier civil service in the country. No wonder the standards have fallen. Should there not be a cut-off point below which entry to the IAS, at least, not be allowed? Khedkar belongs to the Vanjari community, which predominates in Bheed district of Marathwada and is prominent in the adjoining Ahmednagar district of western Maharashtra. The community is essentially pastoral and is classified as OBC (Other Backward Classes). Gopinath Munde, former Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra, hailed from this community.

There is another community with a deceptively similar name, Banjara, located prominently in Kinwat taluka of Nanded district in Marathwada and in the adjoining taluka in Yavatmal district of Vidarbha. The Banjaras were nomads till very recently. Hence, they have been classified as tribals and are entitled to reservation under the Scheduled Tribes category, which is allotted 7.5 per cent of the government jobs as against the 15 per cent quota enjoyed by Scheduled Castes.

The OBCs were included in the reservation pool after the Mandal Commission report, which was accepted during the Prime Ministership of VP Singh. The OBCs, being numerically larger, have been allotted 27 per cent of the vacancies in government jobs. The criterion of the 'creamy layer' was conceptualised to keep out those in the reserved categories who had gained from reservation. They had sent their children to the best schools and would have established a class within the category. Unless a concept like the 'creamy layer' was introduced in order to enable other neglected members of the category to compete and share the spoils, only the creamy layer would benefit. Presently, those whose parents earned less than Rs 8 lakh per year were excluded from the 'creamy layer'. Khedkar's father was an officer in the Pollution Control Board. Over the years, he seemed to have earned some Rs 40 crore and acquired assets like land and automobiles which he was forced to declare to the Election Commission because of his entering the electoral arena during the 2019 Assembly elections in Maharashtra. Yet, his daughter claimed to be a non-creamy layer candidate when appearing for the civil services examinations. She also claimed to be visually impaired. There is a provision of 2 per cent reservation for the physically impaired, a category in which the visually challenged also fall. This claim had to be ratified by a board of doctors of AIIMS, New Delhi. Though she was given dates for the test more than once, she failed to appear before the board.

I don't know if she tried to pass off as a tribal candidate instead of an OBC by confusing Vanjari with Banjara. The inquiry that has been ordered will pinpoint her falsehoods, if any. And if there are attempts to obfuscate, she should be peremptorily discharged. In fact, she would need to be prosecuted for cheating if any of her claims is proved false. The entitlements claimed by the probationer are simply outrageous. I have come across many entrants to the IAS and the IPS in recent decades who have joined the services with the express purpose of enriching themselves through irregular and illegal means. But I have not heard of a probationer flaunting a BMW or an Audi, as Khedkar is reported to have done, and deigning to use a red beacon on that car to assert her importance. These are traits that should have been noticed even earlier at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie. How did these traits escape the notice of the academy's staff and its director? It is incumbent on the director to advise the government to get rid of such misfits at the training stage itself. It needed the probationer to usurp the anteroom of a serving state service officer during his absence to show her true colours. At least now, the government should act swiftly to get rid of a probationer who is not in the service to serve the people but to be waited on. The academy has recalled her. That indicates appropriate action has been decided. The All-India Service Rules provide the authorities with enough scope to rid the administration of such misfits. I fail to understand why the government is so tolerant. The IAS and IPS officers will perforce interact with the local populace throughout their careers.

Strict enforcement of traffic rules can build respect for the law

Better adherence to traffic rules reduces accidents, lowering healthcare costs and economic losses.

AMERICAN author Robert Fulghum reminds us: "Every time you break a traffic law, you say something about yourself. It says that the rules are for other people." The Mumbai BMW hit-and-run incident — in which the accused is the son of a political leader — and the Pune Porsche case starkly highlight this issue. Punjab recently initiated a project to instal CCTV cameras for monitoring traffic and enforcing road discipline. While compliance may arise out of fear, it is expected to evolve over time into a societal norm embraced by the community. Obeying and enforcing traffic rules go beyond ensuring better traffic flow and reducing the number of accidents. Adhering to traffic rules cultivates responsibility and discipline, encouraging mindfulness of one's actions. This discipline extends beyond driving, fostering a more ethical society. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), enforcing traffic rules enhances road behaviour, promoting respect and self-discipline. Consistently enforcing traffic rules establishes them as social norms, encouraging a culture of law-abiding behaviour and reducing lawlessness. Effective enforcement, as highlighted by the European Commission report on 'Traffic Law Enforcement across the EU', forms a social environment in which following the rules is the standard. Obeying traffic rules promotes cooperation among road users, enhancing community and collective responsibility. This cooperation, as backed by the Journal of Safety Research, leads to higher levels of civic engagement and a more cohesive society. Adherence to traffic rules promotes a society of good Samaritans. This principle encourages individuals to help others in distress, nurturing empathy and responsibility towards safety and reflecting a broader societal value system of compassion and cooperation. A 2017 study by the American Psychological Association on pro-social behaviour found that people who consistently followed traffic rules were more likely to volunteer in their communities and help others.

This behaviour is directly correlated with overcoming the bystander effect in crime situations. Cultivating a habit of intervening, such as stopping to assist in case of an accident, encourages individuals to take proactive steps in helping or reporting the crimes they witness. This proactive mindset reduces

ambiguity and hesitation, aligning with the psychological principle of helpfulness.

A fair and consistent enforcement of traffic rules promotes justice and equality, ensuring that all individuals are held to the same standards. Research by the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy suggests that equitable traffic enforcement builds public trust and ensures equal protection under the law. Enforcing traffic rules educates both the young and the old about the importance of regulations in maintaining safety and order. A report by the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration underscores the role of traffic



education in schools to instil respect for rules from an early age. Data supports the notion that traffic rule enforcement is both effective and broadly accepted. According to the WHO, countries with stringent traffic law enforcement experience lower rates of road accidents and fatalities. Additionally, a report by the European Commission found that effective enforcement of traffic laws leads to better overall compliance with social norms and a more disciplined populace. Consistent enforcement of traffic rules leads to smoother traffic flow, reducing stress and anxiety while driving. According to research by the American Psychological Association, predictable and orderly traffic conditions positively impact one's mental wellbeing. Better adherence to traffic rules reduces accidents, lowering healthcare costs and economic losses. A study by the International Road Assessment Programme found that improved road safety through better enforcement could save

billions of dollars globally. Obeying traffic rules, like speed limits, enhances fuel efficiency and reduces emissions, promoting environmental sustainability. The Environmental Protection Agency states that regulated traffic flow significantly cuts vehicle emissions, aiding in combating air pollution and climate change.

Following and implementing traffic rules is perhaps the easiest and most effective way to instil discipline in a large number of people. Traffic rules are universally recognised and accepted because their benefits are immediate and visible: safer roads, fewer accidents and a more efficient traffic flow.

Unlike other forms of regulations, traffic laws do not typically face significant opposition because they are clearly linked to public safety and welfare.

Everyone understands the importance of traffic safety, and the consequences of non-compliance are often immediate and severe. This universal understanding makes it easier to enforce these rules without encountering the resistance that other types of regulations might face.

Moreover, the enforcement of traffic rules does not just lead to safer roads. It also creates a culture of discipline and respect for laws. This indirect benefit is significant. As individuals comply with traffic laws, they internalise the importance of following regulations in general.

This extends beyond one's driving behaviour to other aspects of life, leading to a more law-abiding and cooperative society.

Traffic rules also present a unique opportunity to enforce discipline on a massive scale. Unlike many other laws that target specific groups, traffic regulations apply to everyone, regardless of one's age, gender or socioeconomic status. This universality ensures that the principles of discipline and cooperation are instilled in all segments of society. Furthermore, the visibility of traffic law enforcement, such as through police presence and CCTV cameras, reinforces the notion that laws are meant to be followed, thus promoting a culture of compliance. Enforcing traffic rules is a universally accepted and effective means of promoting discipline, respect for laws and social cooperation. It stands out as an approach that encounters minimal resistance while delivering significant benefits, not only in terms of road safety but also in developing a

Karnataka quota Bill

Congress govt makes welcome retreat

SCATHING criticism from business and industry leaders has forced the Karnataka Government to put the contentious reservation Bill for Kannadigas in private firms on hold. The Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories and Other Establishments Bill, 2024, was cleared by the state cabinet on Monday; however, the ensuing uproar made CM Siddaramaiah claim that the final decision would be taken after comprehensive discussions. As per the Bill, 'any industry, factory or other establishments shall appoint 50 per cent of local candidates in management categories and 70 per cent in non-management categories'. The CM had even tweeted about 100 per cent reservation for Kannadigas in C and D grade posts in private institutions of the state, but he was quick to delete the post. It's baffling that Karnataka, India's tech hub and one of the best-performing states in terms of ease of doing business, has come up with this regressive Bill. NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Service



Companies) has cautioned the Congress government that the 'restrictions could force companies to relocate as local skilled talent becomes scarce'. The southern state has

failed to learn a lesson from the Haryana fiasco. The Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Bill, 2020, which mandated 75 per cent reservation in private sector jobs for residents of the state, was struck down by the Punjab and Haryana High Court in November 2023. Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand have also got their fingers burnt with similar legislation.

The 'vocal for local' slogan might have gained currency in recent years, but any compromise on merit, talent and skills for the sake of political gains is enough to put off investors. The TDP government in Andhra, looking to cash in on neighbouring Karnataka's potential own goal, has invited NASSCOM to expand or relocate its businesses to Vizag. Amid the fierce competition between states over investments, Karnataka would be well advised to give the Bill a quiet burial.

Onus on Punjab to reform land leasing ecosystem

An overwhelming number of informal tenants depend upon commission agents, landowners and money-lenders for undertaking farm operations.

THE agricultural land lease market in Punjab has witnessed phenomenal growth and expansion. It covers all agro-climatic zones, districts, principal crops and classes of landholders. It has been the outcome of cumulative pressure and interaction among endogenous and exogenous forces, such as high-end mechanisation, commercialisation, technological advancements, assured public procurement, support prices, extensive market network and overall modernisation of the state agricultural system. The land tenurial system in the state changed drastically with the advancement of agriculture as compared to the official programme of land reforms, which basically remained confined to ownership ceiling, abolition of intermediaries, grant of occupancy rights to 'tenants at will' and consolidation of fragmented holdings. The land reforms, as envisaged and implemented in the initial decades of agrarian reforms, gradually became redundant, and land relations adjusted to the market-driven system of production.

The private-cum-individualised ownership of cultivable land got a firm footing in the state. Farm households, as private producers, took production decisions anchored in the market principle of profit maximisation. This required scaling up the size of the holding, and hence, land leasing emerged as the only viable and handy option. The centuries-old practice of share cropping or in-kind tenancy vanished from the agrarian scene of the state. The institution of land tenancy off-loaded its feudalistic/semi-feudalistic/social embeddedness. The traditional practice of lease-in by marginal farmers/resource-poor peasants/pure tenants from big landlords for the purpose of survival or subsistence ended in due course. A new form of commercial/capitalistic/reverse tenancy has gained

ground. It is a market-driven venture spearheaded by enterprising farmers who 'lease in' land from other classes of landholders. These are essentially middle-sized farmers with a comprehensive set of farming, organisational, managerial and supervisory skills and deep connections in the input, credit and labour markets.

The supply of land for the purpose of leasing out is on the rise due to a number of factors — discontinuation of 'self-cultivation' by a good number of farm households, settling of families in the urban vicinity, emigration to other countries, less availability of able-bodied persons for handling agricultural operations, adoption of non-farming occupations, joining the services sector, etc. Land leasing involves getting access to land through a lease contract which bestows economic ownership, not proprietary ownership, on the lessee on the basis of mutually agreed terms and conditions. This results in the transfer and use of physical assets for an economic consideration. Thus, a lease is a transfer of an asset for a limited time in return for a periodic payment called rent. In the economic context, the terms rent and lease imply the same thing but for a difference in the duration — the former is for a shorter duration and the latter for a longer one. Lease agreements, if written and duly registered, are regulated by the lease contract, which spells out the obligations and rights of the parties concerned, and hence are enforceable.

In 2015, the NITI Aayog constituted an expert committee on land leasing under the chairmanship of T Haque. Subsequently, the committee submitted the draft of the Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act, 2016. The Act argued for the legalisation of land leasing to ensure security of land ownership rights for landowners and security of tenure for tenants, and

automatic resumption of land after the expiry of the lease tenure to remove the problem of adverse possession. The prioritisation of possession over ownership is held as the root cause of criminal activities related to properties, including those of NRIs. For the purpose of modernising the tenancy



laws in Punjab, the state Department of Revenue, Rehabilitation and Disaster Management constituted the five-member Revenue Commission under the chairmanship of Justice SS Saron, a retired judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, in February 2018. The commission drafted the Punjab Land Leasing and Tenancy Bill, 2019, for determining the owners/lessors and lessees' rights and obligations towards each other in a fair and justifiable manner, and without impacting the proprietary and ownership rights of the owners of the land while giving their lands on lease. In July 2019, the state cabinet decided to refer the Bill to a cabinet sub-committee headed by the Finance Minister and having the social security and revenue ministers as members. The commission

answered in detail the questions raised by the sub-committee and concluded that "in the circumstances, it would be in the fairness of all and a feather in the cap of Punjab to be a pioneer in the field of enactment of a land leasing and tenancy legislation; besides, this would entail financial incentives to the state".

The commission observed that the restrictions on lease holdings resulted in concealed tenancy, and informal tenants were more insecure.

The tenancy market in the state has been operating on an annual basis in the rental mode with oral contracts and cash deals, which obstruct capital formation in the farm sector. The informal tenant has no long-term interest and incentive to make any durable investment in rented land. And it is not possible to raise formal credit, get compensation for crop damage, receive official payment for selling the produce, avail government schemes and subsidies, and undertake risky ventures for producing high-value crops beyond the ambit of the MSP regime. An overwhelming number of informal tenants depend upon commission agents/money-lenders and landowners for undertaking agricultural operations. The situation demands the creation of an enabling framework to promote 'professional tenancy' through long-term written and registered leasing contracts, based on proper incentivisation, hassle-free functioning with a stipulated entry and exit framework. This has been the rationale and vision articulated by the Revenue Commission in its final draft Punjab Land Leasing and Tenancy (Safeguarding Rights and Enforcing Liabilities of Lessor and Lessee) Bill, 2021; this needs to be further taken up to formalise the long-term land lease market for the next-level transformation of the agriculture sector in the state.



Things to consider before quitting

Your job

A higher salary should not be your only consideration while moving jobs. you need to carefully evaluate the perks your current job offers before deciding to finally make the switch.

According to a recent study by LinkedIn, Indians are more proactive at job search and job switch on a regular basis. For Gen Z, a higher salary is the biggest draw. Getting a job and holding on to it is no longer a matter of pride; job hopping is no longer considered frivolous but as an opportunity to learn and climb the corporate ladder faster. Often, employees do not seem to think that an opportunity similar to the one they are seeking outside can exist in the company they are

currently employed with. To avoid this, firms should encourage employees to be more open about their professional aspirations. Even in the digital age, there needs to be more focus on increased face time, which would make everything else fall in place as the employees will be well-informed.

Here are a few perks you can miss out on when you plan to quit your current job for another opportunity:

TRAINING SESSIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Before you make a switch, you need to think if the new company offers you training that is more like spoon feeding you enough to go by a checklist or does it have a learning centric environment that allows you to grow as a professional and add life skills that can transferred in any type of setting.

COMPANY CULTURE

Take a moment to think whether you feel disconnected to the company's culture. If you feel engaged in the work that you do and the space you are in and think highly of your peer group, do you really want to move? Given how much time you spend with your peers, good relationships at the workplace can boost your morale. Once you are in a comfortable zone with your peers, you are

definitely more productive.

Changing to adapt to a culture and engage with a new workforce that you don't feel at ease with could lead to a difficult transition. Shift gears only if you are ready.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND OFFICE SPACE

This may seem trivial but note how it makes a difference to your day-to-day work and productivity. A healthy workspace layout and well ness initiatives offered on the job will keep you fit and productive for the long-term.

DOES YOUR COMPANY TRUST YOU?

Think about the level of empowerment you have at your level. Do you feel confident in your independence to get things done and do you feel trusted by your seniors and team mates? An organisation that enables you to step up and interact with the leaders is an indication of the trust it places in you: How valuable are you to the company and does it appreciate and recognise that? Think over it before you take a leap.

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Pay attention to the performance management system of the organisation. Most follow a model that is based on the principle of forced rankings.

This means your success will depend on how good or bad your peers on the project are. Firms that have performance review processes that are anchored in ongoing feedback and truly measure your impact and potential through a competency model are a better way of gauging your growth.

The competency model of your firm must allow for your growth through learning opportunities.

Facebook

can now stalk you everywhere on the

Internet



change would come into effect, when it mentioned that it would be implemented on January 30. Facebook says that it showed notifications to users, and sent them emails, informing them that the change was coming into effect.

It also ran a seven day comment period, allowing users to discuss the change. Facebook says that the data used will help personalise advertising and stop users being shown information that they don't want.

Advertising is key to Facebook's revenues, and drove the surging profits that the company reported last week.

Users can opt out of some parts of the new policy by customising privacy settings. The site has a special settings page for ads, where users can opt out of advertising that is shown on third party sites or is selected by comparing you with your friends. Adjustments can also be made on mobile devices.

To opt out of the site tracking your use across the internet, Facebook asks users to opt out through the European Digital Advertising Alliance, in the UK and Europe, or its equivalent in the US. Going through that service will allow users to opt out of the tool entirely, and once they have done so the preference will stay everywhere that Facebook is used.

A new Facebook privacy policy allows the site to track your activity even after you've left it — and all users have automatically signed up to it. The change enables it to gather data from activity across the internet, as well as the normal data it gathers on information you and your friends have added to the site. It also allows the site to pass on that information with its other branches, including Instagram. Facebook does not share data with WhatsApp or vice versa, the company said. The company said in November that the

Fortune favours the survivors - The first rule in business is to survive. The longer you are around, the higher are your chances of being acquired or good things happening to you. Valerie Wagoner and Amiya Pathak (ZipDial founders) stuck it out through thick and thin. If they had folded their cards at the first hiccup, they would not have made history. Set your horizons for at least seven years. In the case of ZipDial, it happened to them in Year 5. If you want to start something and flip it in two years, you better be extremely lucky!

Traction, not just technology -- Amiya (Pathak) built an amazingly scalable architecture that wowed Twitter. But unlike most technology companies I see, they had 60 million users, a strong sales team, growing revenues and ubiquitous presence. These must have been compelling factors when someone inside Twitter did a build-versus-buy decision.

Armchair matchmaking never works -- At AngelPrime, I hear entrepreneurs telling me why Facebook or Google or some other company would acquire them because of this-that-or-the-other. It never works that way. Based on my own experience in selling Snapfish and being the acquirer of startups, most large companies operate like independent fiefdoms ruled by fiercely protective leaders whose idea of what is best for them and what is best for the overall company are typically at odds. It is these leaders, not the M&A team, that makes buying decisions, especially in technology.

How to get Acquired

Bala Parthasarathy, managing partner at seed-stage fund AngelPrime, an early investor in ZipDial, writes about the 7 things they learned from Twitter's acquisition of the Bengaluru-based venture



Sow the seeds and be patient -- You should cultivate a business relationship with the potential acquirer that makes business sense for you and the company. Specifically, you should engage with one or more teams for which your technology or product would be interesting. Think business first, not acquisition first. And focus on why partnering with you helps them. In the process, get to understand the company's internal goals, the people and culture. ZipDial had a two-year business relationship with Twitter where they had worked together on various campaigns, including Bollywood and Indian elections. People, not companies -- People, not companies, do deals. Valley

companies are generally very insular and rarely do deals outside Bay Area, let alone India (Israel is an exception to the rule). They first need to build a relationship with you as a person before they see the value in your technology and business. The ZipDial team had solid relationships at multiple levels with different teams at Twitter, long before the deal was conceived. Luckily, there are plenty of people who can help you connect, if you're not the networking type. iSpirt M&A Connect is a very well designed programme which can formally help you forge relationships with many Valley companies.

Date many, marry one -- Though there might be one perfect company for you in the end, you should engage with multiple companies. And when I say engage, I mean build a business relationship. There are so many rational and irrational factors that go into an acquisition decision from the acquirer's end that you'll never know about and thinking that THE ONE will eventually scoop you up, is foolish. Plus, your chances of being acquired are much higher when multiple companies court you. ZipDial had plenty of other business relationships, each of which could have been THE ONE.

Don't sell, be bought -- This cliché is certainly obvious to anyone who has ever bargained in a bazaar. If you're desperately looking to be sold, your chances of being acquired are very, very low. And even if you do get acquired, the price will be pathetic. Indeed, the best way to be acquired is to go around building a solid business with traction, being patient and cultivating the relationships. And then, let the Gods of Luck play their role!

Flight operations 'smooth', backlog being cleared: Centre after IT outage

Sharing an update on airline operations, the Civil Aviation Ministry said all issues related to travel adjustments and refund processes were being taken care of.

New Delhi: The Ministry of Civil Aviation on Saturday said that flight operations were smooth and airline systems were back to normal across all airports a day after a global Microsoft outage led to flight cancellations and chaotic scenes at check-in counters. In a statement, the ministry said all issues related to travel adjustments and refund processes were being taken care of. "Since 3 am, airline systems across airports have started working normally. Flight operations are going smoothly now. There is a backlog because of disruptions yesterday, and it is getting cleared gradually. By noon today, we expect all issues to be resolved," the Aviation Ministry said. However, the IGI Airport in Delhi faced significant disruptions on Saturday morning as the Digi Yatra system, a biometric-based boarding system, remained non-operational. Long queues were observed at the departure terminals as passengers struggled to check in manually. Airport authorities have deployed additional staff to assist travellers and manage the



congestion. Between 6-7 am today, the system continued to experience glitches while issuing boarding passes. However, the scenario improved later in the day. In contrast to the chaos, most flights managed to stay on schedule, with the waiting period at Terminal 3 departures averaging around 3 to 5 minutes. The

situation marked a significant improvement from Friday when the global outage led to widespread delays. The global IT outage had far-reaching effects, disrupting airline operations worldwide. Airports and airlines rely heavily on Windows-based systems for a variety of functions, including check-ins, baggage handling, and security clearances. The outage highlighted the vulnerability of critical infrastructure to software issues. At IGI Airport, the impact was immediate and severe. The disruption of Digi Yatra forced a return to manual processes. This not only slowed down operations but also increased the strain on airport staff and resources. The impact of the outage of Microsoft 365 and Azure services saw hundreds of flights, including those by Indigo, Air India, SpiceJet and Akasa Air, getting delayed and several were cancelled as airline operators switched to manual processes. At the Delhi airport, more than 400 flights faced delays. Several passengers took to social media to post images of handwritten boarding passes.

500 Para Commandos To Hunt Pakistani Terrorists In Jammu After Attacks

New Delhi: In view of the infiltration of highly trained Pakistani terrorists in the Jammu region, the Indian Army is readjusting its deployments in the area as per intelligence inputs and security requirements. The Indian Army has deployed around 500 Para Special Forces commandos in the area to hunt down the 50-55 terrorists from Pakistan who have entered the region to revive terrorism there, defence sources told news agency ANI. The intelligence agencies have also bolstered their apparatus in the area and are working to take out the terrorist support infrastructure there



including overground workers who support terrorists, they said. The Army has already brought in troops to the area including one brigade strength of around 3,500-4000 personnel to counter Pakistan's proxy aggression here, they said. The Army brass on the ground has been working towards strategies to search and destroy the terrorists, who are equipped with the latest weaponry and communication equipment, they added. The Army already has an existing counter-terrorist infrastructure in the area with presence of two forces of the Rashtriya Rifles including the Romeo and Delta forces along with other regular infantry divisions in the area, they said.

Government Lists 6 New Bills For Upcoming Parliament Session. Details Here

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Haryana Congress MLA Surender Panwar in an "illegal" mining-linked money-laundering case, official sources said on Saturday. The 55-year-old legislator was taken into custody in the early hours in Gurugram. He will be produced before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Ambala where the central agency will seek a custodial remand, the sources said. The agency had



raided the premises of the MLA in January on the charges of "large-scale illegal mining" in the Yamunanagar area of the state. It had then arrested former Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) legislator from Yamunanagar, Dilbag Singh, and one of his associates. Kulwinder Singh, in the case. Assembly elections for Haryana's 90 seats are slated to be held later this year. The money-laundering case stems from several FIRs registered by the Haryana Police for probing alleged illegal mining of boulders, gravel and sand that took place in the past in Yamunanagar and nearby districts in spite of a ban imposed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The ED is also probing an alleged fraud in the "e-Ravana" scheme, an online portal that was introduced by the Haryana government in 2020 to simplify collection of royalties and taxes and prevent tax evasion in mining areas. It is estimated, as per the ED, that the alleged illegal mining generated slush funds of about ₹ 400-500 crore over the last few years.

Pistol That Puja Khedkar's Mother Waved At Farmers In Viral Video Seized

Mumbai/New Delhi: Days after the mother of controversial probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar was arrested, Pune Police has seized a pistol and three bullets from her house, which she used to allegedly threaten some Maharashtra farmers. Manorama Khedkar was arrested from Maharashtra's Raigad district on Thursday in connection with the viral video in which she is seen brandishing a firearm and threatening some villagers, reportedly over a land dispute. Police have also seized the SUV seen in the viral video which has sparked public outrage.

Ms Khedkar faces multiple charges, including attempt to murder. The footage shows her in a heated exchange with a farmer, demanding to see land documents allegedly in her

name. As tensions escalated, she waved the firearm threateningly before quickly concealing it upon noticing a



camera recording the encounter. The video that has put Manorama Khedkar in trouble emerged amid the row surrounding her 34-year-old daughter

Puja Khedkar. The 2023-batch trainee IAS officer made headlines a few weeks ago when Pune collector Suhas Diwase wrote to Maharashtra Chief Secretary Sujata Saunik, flagging several demands that she was not entitled to during her probation. This complaint set in motion a chain of events that led to shocking revelations. Questions were raised over how she cleared the tough selection process for UPSC. She was found to have availed of relaxation for physical disability and OBC candidacy, but allegations of her not being eligible for such relaxations surfaced. Her two-year training has now been put on hold, and her selection into the IAS is being probed by a panel formed by the Centre.

Three Indian Coast Guard Ships Battle Cargo Ship Fire In Arabian Sea

New Delhi: The Indian Coast Guard said on Saturday that its three ships were battling a major fire aboard a cargo vessel in the Arabian Sea after responding to a distress call a day earlier. The vessel MV Maersk Frankfurt reported explosions on its front deck on Friday, 12 kilometres south of Gujrat while sailing from India's Gujarat state to Colombo in Sri Lanka.

NO CASUALTIES "Ships Sujeet, Sachet and Samrat have been fighting the fire for over 12 hours, preventing its spread," the India Coast Guard said in a statement Saturday posted on social media platform X. It posted images and videos showing the firefighting effort. No casualties were reported from the merchant vessel. The Indian coast guard said a Donier aircraft was conducting aerial

assessments and that an additional plane was also in position for search and rescue. The coast guard said



another ship was also despatched from Mumbai and likely to join the effort by Sunday.

On Saturday morning, the ICG said on its X handle, "Ships Sujeet, Sachet and Samrat have been fighting the fire for over 12 hours, preventing its spread.

As of 0700 hrs, 20 Jul, the vessel is 6.5 NM south of Karwar." ICG's Dornier aircraft is conducting aerial assessment, with an additional aircraft from Kochi positioned for the search and rescue operation, it said. "ETV Water Lily departed #Mumbai on 19 Jul, arriving on scene by 21 Jul," it added. The merchant vessel, on its way from Munda to Colombo, was reportedly carrying "International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) cargo" and explosions have been occurring on its front part, the ICG had said on Friday.

On Wednesday the Indian navy rescued nine crew members and recovered one body from the Comorian-flagged MV Prestige Falcon oil tanker that had capsized off the coast of Oman earlier this week.

Air India relief flight lands in San Francisco with passengers stranded in Russia

New Delhi: Two days after making an emergency landing in Russia, the stranded passengers of Air India's United States-bound flight arrived at San Francisco in another aircraft from Krasnoyarsk International Airport (KJA). The relief flight, which took off from Russian Airport, arrived in San Francisco, with all the stranded passengers, Air India stated in a post on X. "We thank the DGCA, Government of India, Embassy of India in Russia, the Russian authorities, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Krasnoyarsk International Airport, and all partners involved, for their support in the situation," the airline tweeted.

An Air India relief flight departed from the Russian airport at 12:02 am on Saturday, the airline stated. After the flight took off, the Indian Embassy



in Moscow thanked Russia's Foreign Ministry and others for the assistance provided to the stranded passengers. Taking to X, the Indian Embassy stated, "Air India Rescue Flight AI 1179 with passengers of AI-183 took off from Krasnoyarsk for San Francisco."

The Embassy of India, Moscow, thanks the Foreign Ministry of Russia and its Representative Office in Krasnoyarsk, the Russian Federal Agency for Air Transport, the Krasnoyarsk Krai Government, airport authorities, and security officials for their assistance to the passengers and to the Embassy's team in the coordination work throughout the emergency situation," the Embassy added. Earlier on Friday, Air India obtained the regulatory clearance for the relief flight from Mumbai to fly US-bound flight passengers who were stranded at Krasnoyarsk International Airport (KJA). The airline stated that they were carrying essentials and sufficient food for all the stranded passengers. The San Francisco-bound Air India flight from Delhi was diverted to Russia on Thursday after the crew detected a potential issue in the cargo hold area.

Exponential' Surge in Dengue Cases in South India; More Patients Coming in With Severe Complications Like Low BP

New Delhi: India has started experiencing a significant surge in dengue cases, particularly in the southern states. From witnessing up to 10 patients every day to 200 patients now, the extent of the surge in cases varies from state to state and city to city. While Delhi-NCR is noticing a mild surge, Mumbai and Kolkata are witnessing a moderate spike and southern cities and states are reporting a big jump. The uptick in cases has been observed since the onset of the monsoon season, which typically exacerbates mosquito-borne diseases due to increased breeding sites for mosquitoes. According to several doctors News18 spoke to, the symptoms of dengue remain consistent with previous years, but they are observing an increase in cases with severe complications, specifically low blood pressure. Also, many patients - ranging between 20% to 50% of OPD cases - are requiring hospital admission. The top symptoms include high fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, joint and muscle pain, rashes and mild bleeding. Experts explain that these symptoms

typically emerge 4-10 days after a mosquito bite and can last between two to 10 days.

ZOOMING CASES IN SOUTH INDIA

Dr K Somnath Gupta from Yashoda Hospitals, Hyderabad, told News18 that he has been seeing 200 cases of dengue per week as of early July 2024. "The severity of cases varies, but a substantial number of patients require hospitalisation. In Karnataka, about 20-30% of reported cases need admission due to severe symptoms or complications." Gupta believes that, this year, the frequency and severity of the disease has increased due to higher transmission rates. "The current outbreak has seen an uptick in severe cases and complications, potentially due to the co-circulation of multiple dengue serotypes." As per the state government data, over 9,000 dengue cases and seven deaths have been reported in Karnataka from January to July this year. Until July 13, 66,298 people were tested for dengue, out of which, a total of 9,082 people tested positive for the fever. However, the

actual figures are estimated to be "at least three times the number", Dr L Sudarshan Reddy, senior consultant physician at Yashoda Hospitals, told News18. He said that "repeat infections tend to be more severe and often require hospitalization". Similarly, Dr Sheela Chakravarthy, Director of Internal Medicine, Fortis Hospital, Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru, said that she sees five to six dengue cases every day, with two to three patients requiring admissions, which means that almost half of the OPD patients require admission. "Presently, we have 18 admitted patients, including one critical case. Notably, the number of cases has increased over the past week," she said. Chakravarthy highlighted that patients must be examined for danger signs such as low blood pressure and advised people to keep that in check while they are being treated in a home setting. Dr Tharanath S, infectious diseases specialist at Sparsh Hospital, Yelahanka, Bengaluru, calls the jump in cases over the past month "exponential". "Between July 1 and July 19, our OPD has

seen nearly 100 cases with clinical symptoms similar to dengue, of which 30% required admission for further medical management due to severe symptoms." "While the symptoms of dengue are consistent with the previous years, we are noting an increase in cases with severe complications such as low blood pressure."

DENGUE STATUS IN DELHI-NCR, KOLKATA & MUMBAI

In July, doctors in Delhi-NCR started noticing a mild surge with up to five patients in their OPDs every day and some patients requiring admission as well. "Over the past week, our hospital has seen an average of 2-3 dengue patients per day. Since July 1, we have noticed a sharp increase in cases, with around 10-12 severely affected patients requiring hospital admission due to severe symptoms such as low platelet counts and severe dehydration," Dr Gaurav Jain, senior consultant, Internal Medicine, Narayana Super Speciality Hospital, Dharamshila, New Delhi.



All you need to know about fringe Benefits

The corporate drone operates at every level across sectors in the industry. Fringe benefits are a new buzz doing the rounds of corporate halls. It is generally combined or part of the total rewards system. Fringe benefits broadly include health, security and retirement benefits offered to all full-time employees. They are offered in addition to the defined compensation structure. Recent explosion of the digital platform industry led to an epiphany among the top executives and leadership teams at large, on talent management. To increase the level of attraction for young and exceptionally skilled talent, the focus on leading edge practices has become critical. Thus, an innovative bucket of fringe benefits is introduced in the market. Some of these are voluntary and taxable in nature, but aid the employee in different aspects of his/her life. Some of the popular ones are education assistance, adoption

assistance, Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), bonus allocated, meals offered by the organisation, flexible hours, transport facility provided, etc. Elango R, president HP Business Unit and chief human resources officer, Mphasis shares his views on the fringe benefit that people appreciate the most. He suggests, "It is anything that includes employees' family, that has high social and peer recognition. We should encourage giving a compensation that benefits their whole family. For instance, where an employee gets promoted or recognised for their work, without telling it to them, we can send a letter to their parents or spouse informing about the same. This gives them surprise and happiness. Second, at senior levels, people still like exclusive club memberships and offers which are difficult for them to get individually. This has a huge impact on them. The third is giving people enough opportunities to get together and socialise as peers either through conferences or

similar learning exercises. Many people cut it calling it an expense, but it is really a fringe benefit because others like to travel with their peers and their group and they look forward to these events. It is just another way to renew their relationships with their colleagues. The distinction in company size relates more prominently to the extent to which initiatives are implemented and the processes relating to how they are implemented. But acting as an outlier to this industry trend, these benefits are more popular among the start-ups who aspire to operate at a global level with employee-friendly policies and compensation structure. This aspect offered as an additional perk is often used as a bargaining chip with the prospective employees. The emphasis on the subject has increased to such an extent that some universities have actually started designing dedicated courses around the same. It can help manoeuvre the employee value proposition to the

external and internal population and benefit the organisational repute. While the benefits offered are enjoyed by the employees and employer bears the expense, it's a mutually-beneficial programme for both involved parties. Healthy and secure employees will have better productivity, attendance, and vigour to take on new challenges. This will help the organisation perform better. Generally, the scale of operations also determines the benefits offered as volume or headcount helps to spread the cost and gain discounts or workout better deals through collective bargaining for higher employee base. Also, these benefits are subject to Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT) which takes away time, energy and requires the expertise or knowledge to be there in the tax audit team. In the ultimate user experience, fringe benefits can be viewed as a distributed consensus system that allows management and employees at different levels to come on the same page and concur to achieve common organisational goals while contributing in their capacity. Industry experts advocate further growth and penetration of fringe benefits in the industry at large in the long range. While certain deficits are overlooked by the fact that an increase in the percentage of fringe benefits in the compensation structure will reduce the

Fringe benefits not only help the employees in terms of long-term growth, they are also equally important for the organisations for various reasons.

cash pay, an ideal scenario would be where benefits and cash components both increase at a similar pace, but that is too idealistic in a crunch economy like ours.



While you may have the best rapport with your boss, moving with him to the new workplace may bring unexpected consequences. Choose wisely.

The manager of your team has been the best mentor you ever had in your professional life. He has guided you through all the ups and downs that you faced in this organisation and has been a strong pillar of strength for you during your present stint. You have prospered well and feel totally in control of things at work. But now, he has decided to move on to explore better avenues and things have suddenly become not so clear for you. As you prepare yourself to deal with situations without having him around, you get an offer to join him at his new workplace. Now, the big question haunts you as to whether or not to join him in his new venture. Although, the most obvious and natural

progression in this situation would be to instantly grab the offer and move along, there might be certain pros and cons that need to be weighed before one takes the plunge. Working with the same boss would definitely mean the same old level of comfort and understanding. Sandeep Budhiraja, CEO of DOOR Training & Consulting India Pvt Ltd, puts it into perspective as he says, "Change brings uncertainty and the manager who has moved to a new role may be driven by his or her own need to establish himself quickly. Therefore, he would also be interested in bringing the trusted team members along. Also, it is well understood in HR circles that when people move together to a new organisation, they are taking the same risk as the organisation they are coming

from. Unless the company is desperate for that kind of talent, it is highly avoidable for them. Groups come with their own cultural and political issues. So, the new company that the employee has followed his manager to, will already start discounting the capabilities and trustworthiness of the employee, which does not bode well in the long run." Any change will always have uncertainties associated with it. Nonetheless, it cannot be ruled out that moving out with your boss may bring in some good results for you as the rapport you share with him will also help you settle down better in the new role. With him already working to create a credibility for himself, chances are high that you will benefit alongside. However, in such work relationships, the employee often loses his own ability to take the best decision for himself. Moving to a new role would definitely mean risking the growth opportunities that might have come your way in your present assignment. At the same time, it would also mean losing on the remaining support systems that one might have in the present organisation. Shalini Pillay, head-people, performance and culture, KPMG India, says, "If you understand and believe in the growth platform that your present organisation provides, it is not difficult to see the wider landscape of opportunities that present themselves in such a context too. What might seem like an easy path of going with the flow, might actually quite often be walking away from the imminent opportunity besides having to establish oneself in an entirely new organisational ecosystem. Similarly, the rapport that an individual builds with his manager and the trust he has in his ability to support

Should you follow your boss to his new Workplace?

individual growth is an outcome of a larger ecosystem. This ecosystem is a result of the culture and values that the organisation believes in. It may not be realistic to believe that similar culture-value systems exist in all organisations." The same is reckoned by Geetika Joshi, a senior HR professional. "Not only will such a move bring uncertainty along, it will affect most other relationships that you might have fostered over time, and

your relationship with your boss may even affect the relationships you make at your new workplace. Therefore, it is extremely essential to choose wisely and think deep before taking this plunge." While an opportunity to work with your existing boss may sound extremely good at the first time, it is extremely crucial to weigh the pros and cons and then take an informed decision about the same.



India's Forex Reserves Hit Record USD 666.85 Billion, Driven By Surging Gold And Foreign Currency Assets

New Delhi. India's foreign exchange reserves have surged to a record high, reaching a new peak of USD 666.85 billion, according to data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The data highlights an increase of USD 9.69 billion in just one week, as of 12 July, surpassing the previous high of USD 657.2 billion. The reserves have been rising intermittently for some time now.

The RBI data reveals that India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the largest component of forex reserves, rose by USD 8.3 billion to USD 585.47 billion. Additionally, gold reserves increased by USD 1.2 billion, reaching USD 58.66 billion. According to a recent RBI report, India's foreign exchange reserves are now sufficient to cover over 11 months of projected imports. In the calendar year 2023, the RBI added approximately USD 58 billion to its foreign exchange reserves. In contrast, in 2022, India's forex reserves declined by a cumulative USD 71 billion. Forex reserves, or foreign exchange reserves (FX reserves), are assets held by a nation's central bank or monetary authority, typically in reserve currencies such as the US Dollar, and to a lesser extent, the Euro, Japanese Yen, and Pound Sterling.

The country's foreign exchange reserves last reached an all-time high in October 2021. Much of the subsequent decline can be attributed to the increased cost of imported goods in 2022. Additionally, the relative fall in forex reserves has been linked to the RBI's market interventions to manage the uneven depreciation of the rupee against a surging US dollar. The RBI frequently intervenes in the market through liquidity management, including the sale of dollars, to prevent steep depreciation of the rupee. The RBI closely monitors the foreign exchange markets and intervenes only to maintain orderly market conditions by containing excessive volatility in the exchange rate, without reference to any pre-determined target level or band.

Wipro profit up 5%; to hire 12K freshers in 2025

BENGALURU. Wipro beat Street estimates and posted a 4.6% rise in its consolidated net profit for the June quarter at Rs 3,003 crore as against Rs 2,870 crore in the year-ago period. However, it missed revenue expectations and its consolidated revenue fell 3.7% to Rs 21,964 crore as against Rs 22,831 crore in the same quarter last year due to softness in certain geographies. Srinii Pallia, CEO and MD, said in the first quarter, the company didn't see a major shift in demand environment. "Clients remained cautious and discretionary spending continued to be muted," he said. Large deal bookings in the first quarter stood at \$1.2 billion and IT services operating margin was at 16.5%, a rise of 0.4% YoY. Wipro has guided sequential revenue growth in the range of (-)1% to +1% in constant currency terms. The company had kept the revenue guidance to (-) 1.5% to + 0.5% for Q1FY25. When asked whether Wipro is planning for any acquisition in FY25, the CEO said, "M&A (mergers and acquisitions) is something that we will constantly look out and we will do the right M&A at the right time. That's part of the strategy and we have a



solid M&A team and as an organisation we have been acquisitive and we will continue to do that." Pallia said in Q1 the company maintained positive momentum in its Capco business, achieving a sequential growth of 3.4%. The company acquired Capco, a global management and tech consultancy to the banking and financial services industry, for \$ 1.45 billion in 2021. After a break of a year the company has started onboarding freshers from the campus. The company's Chief Human Resources Officer Saurabh Govil said the firm has onboarded about 3,000 freshers in the first quarter and will add 10,000 to 12,000 in the current fiscal.

Friday crash wipes out Rs 8L crore from domestic equity market

NEW DELHI. Snapping a four-day winning rally, India's equity market benchmarks – BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty50 – took a beating on Friday due to the global sell-off, triggered by operating system issues that caused devices to crash worldwide. Premium valuation concerns and investors deciding to book profit ahead of the union budget due on Tuesday next week also dampened sentiments.

At close, the Sensex was down 0.91% at 80,604 and the Nifty was down 1.09% at 24,530. The selling was so widespread that only 858 shares registered on the BSE gained while 3,071 shares declined and 81 were unchanged. The broader markets logged a decline for the second straight day as midcap and smallcap indices fell 2.3 and 2.2%, respectively. In total, investors lost almost Rs 8 lakh on Friday as the market capitalization of BSE-listed firms fell to Rs 446.38 lakh crore on Friday against Rs 454.32 lakh crore in Thursday's session. "The global IT outage has led to disruptions in various Indian industries. The overvalued market is also experiencing profit booking ahead of the budget next week. The recent performance has been bullish in anticipation of pro-industry and populist measures," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. Ajit Mishra – SVP, of Research, Religare Broking said that this decline signals caution ahead of the Union Budget, as participants chose to book profits.

A massive tech outage is causing worldwide disruptions. Here's what we know

The company says the problem occurred when it deployed a faulty update to computers running Microsoft Windows, noting that the issue behind the outage was not a security incident or cyberattack.

New Delhi. Much of the world faced online disarray Friday as a widespread technology outage affected companies and services across industries — grounding flights, knocking banks and hospital systems offline and media outlets off air. At the heart of the massive disruption is CrowdStrike, a cybersecurity firm that provides software to scores of companies worldwide. The company says the problem occurred when it deployed a faulty update to computers running Microsoft Windows, noting that the issue behind the outage

was not a security incident or cyberattack. CrowdStrike has said a fix is on the way. Still, chaos deepened hours after the problem was first detected.

Here's what you need to know.

How did Friday's 'blue screen' outage emerge? Friday's disruptions began when a faulty update was pushed out from CrowdStrike for one of its tools, "Falcon." In a statement about the ongoing situation, the company said the defect was found "in a single content update for Windows hosts" — noting that Mac and Linux systems were not impacted. But, because scores of companies rely on CrowdStrike for their security needs with Windows as their operating system, the consequences of this kind of technical problem have been far-reaching. As a result, affected computer after computer showed the "blue screen of death" error message.

Long lines formed at airports in the U.S., Europe and Asia as airlines lost access to check-in and booking services during



peak summer travel — disrupting thousands of flights. Banks in South Africa and New Zealand reported outages impacting payments. Some news stations, particularly in Australia, were unable to broadcast for hours. And hospitals had problems with their appointment systems, leading to delays and sometimes cancellations for critical care, while officials in some U.S. states warned of 911 problems in their areas.

Elsewhere, people experienced more minor inconveniences, including trouble ordering ahead at Starbucks, causing long

lines at some of the coffee chain's stores. Some billboards in New York City's famous Times Square also went dark. Experts stress that Friday's disruptions underscore the vulnerability of worldwide dependence on software that comes from only a handful of providers. "It is an 'all our eggs are in one basket' situation," Craig Shue, professor and computer science department head at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, said in emailed commentary. "This lets us make sure our 'basket' is high quality: the software provider tries to identify threats and respond to them quickly. But at the same time, if anything goes wrong and the basket fails, we have a lot of broken eggs."

What is CrowdStrike?

CrowdStrike is a U.S. cybersecurity company that provides software to companies around the world and across industries. It bills itself as being the globe's most advanced cloud-based security technology provider.

HCLTech links employee leaves to office attendance under new policy: Report

NEW DELHI. HCLTech is set to implement a new policy that ties employee leaves to their office attendance, reported moneycontrol.com quoting sources. The policy aims to enforce a three-day work-from-office rule as companies push to bring employees back to the workplace after the pandemic.

Under the new policy, HCLTech employees must work from the office at least three days a week and at least 12 days a month. If employees fail to meet this requirement, their leaves will be deducted for each day they are absent. This policy follows the company's shift to a hybrid work model five months ago, which required employees to return to the office three days a week.

An anonymous employee quoted in the moneycontrol.com report mentioned that the HR department has begun communicating this update via emails, and the policy is already in effect.



"Once our leaves are over, this could lead to loss of pay," the employee added.

As of now, HCLTech employees with less than three years of tenure are eligible for 18 annual leaves and one personal leave. Employees with more than three years' tenure receive around 20 annual leaves and two personal leaves.

"Our hybrid work policy provides flexibility where people in middle and senior-level management follow any three-days-a-week work-from-office arrangement which supports collaboration. All other employees

follow the working arrangements necessary to meet client commitments, planned by their respective managers," an HCLTech spokesperson told the publication. Back to office initially, IT services companies embraced a hybrid work model, allowing remote work options. However, as most of the industry's current workforce joined during the Covid pandemic and had never been to their offices, companies now believe that office attendance will help build social capital among new employees and improve collaboration on projects. Before HCLTech, TCS had already linked its quarterly variable pay component to office attendance.

In April, TCS required a minimum 60% office attendance for employees to be eligible for variable pay, with strict disciplinary actions for consistent violations. TCS's policy resulted in nearly 70% of their employees returning to the office.

Global IT meltdown: Antivirus update causes massive disruptions

/MUMBAI/BENGALURU. AIRLINES, banks, media outlets, and financial institutions across the world were on Friday thrown into turmoil by one of the biggest IT crashes in recent history, caused by an update to an antivirus programme. The mass IT outage came after some widely used Microsoft 365 applications and services shut down for hours as a result of the update. There were unprecedented chaos in major cities, including in India, with flights grounded, communication shut down, and shops closed. Millions encountered the Blue Screen of Death (BSOD) error, causing sudden system shutdowns or restarts. Microsoft, which said it was actively working to fix the outage, attributed the BSOD issue to a recent update by cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike, which admitted that its action affected Windows devices. In India, almost all the airlines and major airports were affected as they struggled

to provide online booking, web check-ins, and flight status updates. IndiGo cancelled around 200 flights across the country. SpiceJet, Air India, Akasa, and Vistara also faced disruptions due to a technical error in Microsoft Azure, the cloud computing platform that powers critical systems. Throughout the day, airlines were seen doing manual check-ins and issuing hand-written boarding passes. Operations at key airports such as Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru were badly hit, leaving thousands of passengers stranded. Aviation minister Ram Mohan Naidu said his ministry and Airports Authority of India (AAI) are actively managing the situation. Banking regulator RBI in a statement said that critical systems of most banks are not in cloud and that only a few banks are using the CrowdStrike tool, which created the chaos. "Our assessment shows that only 10 banks and NBFCs had minor disruptions, which have either been

resolved or are being resolved. Overall, the Indian financial sector in the Reserve Bank's domain remains insulated from the global outage," an RBI statement read. Auto major Maruti Suzuki India said it had briefly halted production and dispatch operations due to the outage. Although many IT employees found it difficult to log into Microsoft applications on Friday, no major setbacks were reported for the IT industry except production downtime. "Those who were using Microsoft Azure were not able to log in," an IT employee said. Meanwhile, in a statement around 7 in the evening, CrowdStrike said that the issue has been identified, isolated and a fix has been deployed. What exactly happened and how it created chaos Microsoft said the issue began at 1900 GMT on Thursday, after a defective update to CrowdStrike Falcon, an IT solution designed to protect Windows systems, ended up crashing the systems instead

Multilingual Support in 23 Languages

The new contact center will support 23 languages, making it accessible to more people. These languages include Hindi, English, Assamese, Maithili, Kashmiri, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Kannada, Konkani, Manipuri, Marathi, Bengali, Malayalam, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Santhali, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu. EPFO plans to upgrade its Helpline into an Integrated Grievance Management System with new software for registering complaints. This system will include tools to oversee and enhance subscriber satisfaction by resolving grievances quickly. By automating processes in its offices, EPFO aims to speed up service and improve quality, making it easier to handle common requests from start to finish.

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) which was launched in March 1952 stands as one of the earliest security schemes for workers in Independent India. This crucial initiative came into effect just 830 days after the adoption of the Constitution.

Budget 2024: Stock market may face bigger crash than Lok Sabha election result day if...

NEW DELHI. The stock market could face a sharper decline than the post-election reaction if Budget 2024 introduces any unfavorable changes with respect to the capital gains tax for equities, said Chris Wood, global head of equity strategy at Jefferies.

In his weekly note to investors, GREED & Fear, he warned that adjustments to both long-term and short-term capital gains tax in the upcoming budget, set for announcement on July 23, could trigger a more significant correction than the one following the Lok Sabha election outcome on June 4, when the BJP lost its majority but formed a government with coalition partners. "The view is that the re-elected government is unlikely to make such a move because of the reduced mandate. Still if that view turns out to be wrong, and the capital gains tax is increased materially, it will likely trigger a bigger correction than what occurred post the election," Wood said. In addition, Wood asserted that despite the rally in equities over the past few years, India is still in the early stages of developing an equity culture. His confidence in the Indian stock market's resilience is driven by the increasing participation of retail investors, which he expects to continue.

According to Wood, the domestic stock market remains one of the most promising globally, even after the BJP's loss of majority earlier this year.

Read Full Budget 2024 Coverage

Wood highlighted how the stock market was quick to bounce back after the massive crash on Lok Sabha election result day. "The stock market only corrected for one day and has since risen by 13.3% (since June 4). This underscores the power of the retail investor phenomenon, where retail investors bought as professionals sold, and so far, the retail investors have been right," Wood said. "The Indian market has fundamentally changed, becoming more domestically driven. In GREED & Fear's view, India remains in the early stages of the growth of what could be termed the cult of equity," Wood added. Citing these factors, Wood advised investors against selling in the event of a correction, except for short-term or tactical reasons.

Chris Wood's budget expectations

On the upcoming full budget, Wood said it will be closely watched for any signs of populism to meet the demands of the two



minority parties in the BJP coalition. Wood suggests that the budgetary allocation for such demands will likely be less than feared. Wood recently shared his views on capital gains tax and its potential impact ahead of the Union Budget 2024 in a recent market town hall hosted by CNBC-TV18. He highlighted that any significant increases in capital gains tax could negatively impact the market more than previous events like post-election fluctuations. Wood also pointed out that several markets, including Hong Kong, do not impose capital gains tax, suggesting that having no capital gains tax could be beneficial as

it would encourage more investments and market growth. He believes that if capital gains tax is maintained, it should favour long-term investments by having a substantial difference between the tax rates for long-term and short-term holdings. Investors want capital gains tax relief that may be noted that experts and industry bodies have long advocated for simplification and uniformity in the capital tax regime to enhance transparency and ease compliance.

One proposal under consideration is to increase the tax-free long-term capital gains (LTCG) ceiling from the current Rs 1 lakh to Rs 2 lakh. According to a note shared by EY, a simplified capital gains tax regime is expected. "An overhaul of the capital gains tax structure, including changes in tax rates and computation methods, is required. Similar to immovable property, the government should provide a tolerance limit of at least 10% of actual consideration for normative taxation purposes for the transfer of unlisted shares," EY said.

NEWS BOX

Neeraj Chopra's consistency has brought him success: AFI chief Adille Sumariwalla

New Delhi. Athletics Federation of India chief Adille Sumariwalla heaped praise on Neeraj Chopra for bringing laurels for India by showing unreal consistency in the javelin throw. Neeraj is all set to defend in crown when the Paris Olympics gets underway on July 26. Back in 2021, he won the gold medal and became India's first track and field athlete to do so in the quadrennial event.

Neeraj has not looked back since then and has only grown in stature, winning medals in tournaments around the world. Sumariwalla said that Chopra is not someone who would dwell on the past and would rather live in the present. "Neeraj is the person who lives in the present. Other people think about past, future but Neeraj lives in the present. That is why he is so successful. He knows 'I have to do this much'. Whenever you ask him to throw, he will always do 88-89 metres; that is his consistency. His consistency has got him all the victories." Sumariwalla said at a promotional event, as quoted by PTI.

Neeraj Chopra earns praise for grit and determination. Back in the 2022 Stockholm Diamond League, Chopra threw 89.94 metres, his best throw until now. Although he is yet to touch the elusive 90-metre mark, Sumariwalla said that it has hardly made a difference to Neeraj winning tournaments consistently. Last Olympics, three people had 90m-plus throws, Neeraj won in 88m (87.58). Before the World Championships (2023 Budapest), there were three people who threw 90-plus, Neeraj won in 89 (88.17m). Before the Asian Games in Hangzhou, there was one guy who was throwing over 90, Neeraj won gold. So, on that day what happens can be very different. There are people who have crossed 90m and Neeraj has never crossed 90m, but he won every time," Sumariwalla added.

Neeraj has had a decent year until now. He won the gold medal in the Federation Cup with a throw of 82.27 metres. Back in May, he finished second in the Doha Diamond League with a best attempt of 88.36 metres.

Mohammad Shami recalls missing 2019 WC semis: What more do you expect from me

New Delhi. Fast bowler Mohammed Shami recalled the times when he did not play in the semi-final of the ODI World Cup in 2019 despite being one of India's standout bowlers in the tournament. Shami picked up 14 wickets from four matches at an excellent economy rate of 5.48. Shami picked up a five-wicket haul against England and rattled Afghanistan with a hat-trick. But the Men in Blue left him out of the team in the semis against Kane Williamson's New Zealand at Old Trafford in Manchester. India lost the match by 18 runs after failing to chase down 240. "In 2019, I did not play the first 4-5 games. In the next game, I took a hat-trick, then picked up a five-wicket haul and then four wickets in the next game. A similar thing happened in 2023. I did not play in the first few games and then picked a fiver, then four wickets and then a five-wicket haul again," Shami told Shubhankar Mishra on the latter's YouTube show 'Unplugged'. "The one thing I keep wondering is every team needs players who can perform well. I took 13 wickets in three matches. What more do you expect from me? I neither have questions nor do I have answers."

"I can only prove myself"

Shami was the top wicket-taker in the ODI World Cup 2023, where India finished as the runners-up after losing to Australia in the final at the Narendra Modi Stadium. Shami picked up 24 wickets from seven games with three five-wicket hauls to show for his efforts. "I can only prove myself when I get the opportunity. You gave me a chance, and I took 13 wickets in three matches. Then we lost to New Zealand. Played four matches overall and picked 14 wickets. In 2023, I picked 24 wickets in seven matches," Shami added. Shami hasn't played competitive cricket since the World Cup final last year. He has undergone surgeries and also missed playing for GT in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024. Shami has returned to bowling in the nets, but there is no official confirmation on his return.

Paris Olympics: Lakshya Sen aims to be 'really sharp' in tough pool at big stage

New Delhi. Lakshya Sen is wary of the tough challenge that lies ahead of him in the Paris Olympics 2024. Set to make his debut at the quadrennial event, the youngster knows that the pool he is in where the likes of World No.3 Jonatan Christie, World No.41 Kevin Cordon and World No.52 Julien Carraggi feature. While a player of Lakshya's calibre is expected to beat Cordon and Carraggi, his biggest test lies in the form of Christie, who has made him sweat in their previous meetings. Christie has a 4-1 lead over Lakshya on the head-to-head count. "Christie has been a tough opponent. All my matches against him have been close. I will be watching those matches, observing the areas I can do better from last time. Simultaneously, I'll be focussing on my strengths, on how I can control the game and play my best," Lakshya told Hindustan Times.

"Biggest tournament of my life"

Back in 2022, Lakshya won gold at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. But the Olympics is expected to be a different ballgame altogether. The 22-year-old said the Olympics will be the "biggest tournament of my life" until now. "I have played all of them before. I know what to expect. It is a tough pool. But I would be playing the Belgian and Guatemalan before facing Christie which will help me set up a good match against Christie.

UEFA launches disciplinary investigation on Morata and Rodri for Euro 2024 chants

Spain skipper Alvaro Morata and Rodri have the chances of getting handed a two-match ban after UEFA launched a disciplinary investigation on both for their chants about Gibraltar after their Euro 2024 celebrations. The Spanish duo sang chants on Gibraltar being a part of Spain and not the UK.

New Delhi. Spain's Alvaro Morata and Rodrigo Hernandez face the threat of being banned for two matches by UEFA after a disciplinary investigation was launched against the duo for their chants about Gibraltar during their Euro 2024 title celebrations this week. Spanish skipper Morata and Euro 2024 Player of the tournament midfielder Rodri might be slammed with a heavy punishment for singing chants about Gibraltar being a part of Spain and not the UK.

After clinching what was their fourth



European Championship by beating England in the Euro 2024 Final by 2-1 on July 14, the entire Spanish team travelled to Madrid on Monday to celebrate their title with their home fans. Both Morata and Rodri were spotted singing the chants about Gibraltar, which according to UEFA's statement, falls beyond the body's

disciplinary parameters. The Gibraltar FA had also released a statement condemning the actions of the Spanish duo and lodging a complaint to UEFA for the same.

"The Gibraltar FA has noted the extremely provocative and insulting nature of the celebrations around the Spanish Men's national team winning Euro 2024. The

Association is this morning taking advice on the filing of a complaint to European Football's governing body, UEFA, in relation to the unacceptable chanting and songs, relating to Gibraltar, sung by Spain's Men's National Team players after winning Euro 2024. Football has no place for behaviour of this nature," the statement from Gibraltar FA read. "A UEFA Ethics and Disciplinary Inspector is being appointed to evaluate a potential violation of the Uefa Disciplinary Regulations by the players Rodrigo Hernandez Cascante and Ivaro Morata in the context of conduct that occurred during the public presentation of the UEFA Euro 2024 trophy in Madrid on 15 July 2024. Further information regarding this matter will be made available in due course." UEFA's statement read. In case both Morata and Rodri are declared guilty after the investigation, the Spanish duo has the chances of being handed a minimum of two games ban by the UEFA governing body. Rodri will be travelling back to England to join the rest of his Manchester City squad for pre-season, Morata will be starting his new chapter at AC Milan after making a move away from his former La Liga side Atletico Madrid.

24 Service personnel among 117 Indian athletes taking part in Paris Olympics 2024

New Delhi. 24 armed-forces personnel are amongst the 117 Indian athletes who are all set to make the nation proud at the Paris Olympics, beginning July 26, 2024. Among these 24 athletes, 22 are men, including star Javelin thrower Subedar Neeraj Chopra, and two are women, which marks the maiden participation of female Service athletes at the Olympics.

Subedar Neeraj Chopra, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics Gold medalist, will again vie for top honours as his participation in the Paris Olympics comes on the back of exceptional performances which earned him a gold medal each at the 2023 Asian Games, 2023 World Athletics Championship, 2024



Diamond League, and 2024 Paavo Nurmi Games. 2022 Commonwealth Games bronze medalist Havildar Jaismine Lamboria and 2023 Asian Wrestling Championships bronze medalist CPO

Ritika Hooda are the two women service personnel who are taking part in the Games for the first time, and would aim to create history. They will feature in Boxing and Wrestling respectively.

Sub Amit Panghal (Boxing); CPO Tajinderpal Singh Toor (Shot-Put); Sub Avinash Mukund Sable (3000m Steeplechase); CPO Muhammed Anas Yahya, PO (GW) Muhammed Ajmal, Sub Santhosh Kumar Tamilarasan & JWO Mijo Chacko Kurian (4X400M Men's Relay); JWO Abdulla Aboobacker (Triple Jump); Sub Tarundeep Rai & Sub Dhiraj Bommadevara (Archery) and Nub Sub Sandeep Singh (Shooting) are also among the Service personnel who would aim to bring laurels to the country.

Mohammed Shami slams Inzamam-ul-Haq for 'cartoongiri' after dig at Arshdeep Singh

New Delhi. Mohammed Shami has slammed Inzamam-ul-Haq after the former Pakistan captain questioned Arshdeep Singh for getting reverse swing during the T20 World Cup 2024. After India's match against Australia in the Super 8, Inzamam claimed it's tough for a bowler to generate reverse swing as early in the 14th or 15th over in a match.

Although it was Rohit Sharma who won the Player of the Match award, Arshdeep also collected accolades for picking up three crucial wickets of David Warner, Tim David and Matthew Wade. On the back of his spell, India successfully defended 205 and won by 24 runs. Shami opened up while speaking on Shubhankar Mishra's YouTube channel. "I have said in an interview that I will cut the ball and show if there is a device or not. Abhi ek aur namuna khod ke dia hai inhone. They said, 'How can Arshdeep Singh get reverse swing?' I want to say only one thing

to Inzamam bhai. I respect him a lot. If you do the same thing, isn't it ball-tampering? Those who do well against them, will be



their target. India and Pakistan are arch-rivals," Shami said.

These statements are there to fool people' Shami asked former Pakistan cricketers to not try and fool people by making bizarre claims. The speedster also supported the legendary Wasim Akram, who said last year that balls do not have devices and there is no

— Mohammed Shami said that the claims made by former Pakistani cricketers, including Inzamam-ul-Haq, that Indian bowlers get reverse swing through pre-planning, are bizarre.

question of taking any undue advantage. "I don't expect that despite being ex-players you can say such thing. Even Wasim Akram said how umpires give you the ball and it is not possible to plant any device in it. This type of cartoongiri is not good. These statements are there to fool people," Shami added.

Arshdeep was India's standout bowler and finished as the second-highest wicket-taker of the tournament with 17 scalps to his name from eight matches at an economy rate of 7.61. He also picked up a four-wicket haul against the United States.

Did You Know Who is India's oldest and youngest athlete at Paris Olympics

At 44, Rohan Bopanna will be India's oldest athlete at the Paris Olympics. At 14, Dhividhi Desinghu will be the youngest athlete in Paris, competing in women's 200m freestyle event.

New Delhi. India will head into the Paris Olympics with a 117-strong contingent, fourth of the record tally from 2021. The hopes of breaching the best-ever mark of seven are ever-so high as the Indian contingent has headed to the city of romance with a lot of success over the last three years. India has a good mix of experience and youth in almost every discipline. At 44, tennis ace Rohan Bopanna is the oldest athlete in the Indian

contingent for the Paris Olympics. At 14, Dhividhi Desinghu is the youngest athlete in the Indian contingent.

ROHAN BOPANNA: INDIA'S OLDEST ATHLETE AT PARIS OLYMPICS

Bopanna will return to give winning an Olympic medal another shot at Paris. This will be the senior campaigner's third appearance in the Olympics. Bopanna and Mahesh Bhupathi paired together in 2012 and reached the second round of the men's doubles competition.

Paris Olympics: Full Coverage

In 2016, Bopanna and Leander Paes paired for the men's doubles event, but bowed out in the opening round. However, Bopanna and his mixed doubles partner Sania Mirza nearly brought home a medal. The mixed doubles pair lost the bronze medal match to Lucie Hradecka and Radek Stepánek of the Czech Republic in straight sets.

While Bopanna did not qualify for the Tokyo



Olympics, the 44-year-old, who has been ageing like fine wine, secured the quota for India via his ranking on the tour - World No. 4. The Karnataka tennis great will partner with World No. 62 N Sriram Balaji. Bopanna is heading into the Olympics on the back of a sensational run on the tour. He became the oldest World No. 1 earlier this year and also became the oldest man to win a Grand Slam crown when he and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden won the Australian Open crown. They also reached the men's doubles

Kavem Hodge 'happy, satisfied' after maiden Test hundred vs ENG: Dream comes true

New Delhi. Kavem Hodge was over the moon after he racked up his maiden Test century in trying times against England at Trent Bridge in Nottingham. Hodge found the right balance between attack and defence as he got to his three-figure score off 143 balls on Day 2 of the second Test. Batting at No.5, Hodge made sure that the hosts did not run away with the match after putting on 416 in the first innings. Just when it seemed that Hodge would play until the end of the day, Chris Woakes trapped him in front to cut short his stay in the middle. He scored 120 runs off 171 balls with 19 fours before getting out. The right-hander was satisfied after being able to stand out for his team in a crisis.

ENG vs WI Day 2 Highlights

"It's a dream come true, you play the game as a youngster, that's something that you want to do, especially at the highest level - in England against England. I'm really happy and satisfied about it, especially also the position of the team, it's always good to help the team's cause," Hodge said at the end of the day's play.



"Tend to go under the radar"

After West Indies lost the quick wickets of Mikyle Louis, Kraigg Brathwaite and Kirk McKenzie, Hodge joined hands with Alick Athanaze and put on a handy partnership of 175 runs for the fourth wicket. Hodge said that they complemented each other well.

"We always bat good together, play for the same franchise back home, we've had a lot of big partnerships. He's more aggressive than I am, I'm more of an accumulator, so I tend to go under the radar and go about my business quietly. Always good to spend time with him at the wicket," Hodge added.

Hodge's knock ensured that West Indies got the deficit down to 65 runs in their first innings after being at 351 for the loss of five wickets. Jason Holder and Joshua Da Silva played out the remaining 9.4 overs of the day after Hodge departed.



Disha Patani

Aces Double Back-Flip In Latest Fitness Video: 'One Step At A Time'

Disha Patani is at it again with another fitness video. Known for inspiring her fans with her intense workout routines, the actress has made headlines with her latest Instagram post. In the new video, Disha performs back-flips with impressive precision, showcasing her fitness prowess. Her dedication and flawless execution have captivated viewers, making it hard to look away. Disha Patani left us all stunned with her fascinating show of strength, stamina and flexibility in the latest video. In the video, not only did she ace the difficult backflip but took it a notch higher. Depicting the constant growth, she later performed the double backflip, landing gracefully. We are impressed, Disha! The expressions of happiness as she effortlessly pulled off the task were too cute to ignore. Disha captioned her video, "One step at a time."

That's not the first time Disha Patani has treated us to a glimpse of intense physical training. In a video shared a few months back, Disha first effortlessly climbed on top of some floor mats stacked together only to perform a very difficult backflip. After successfully completing her mission, Disha was visibly brimming with joy. Even other posts on Disha Patani's timeline are a peek into her workout routine. She loves spending her time in the gym. One of her rigorous workout routine videos depicted her lifting weights. She captioned it, "140 pounds (70 pounds each side)*4 reps 110 pounds (55 pounds each side)*10 reps #deadlift Strength training, and as you can see dying too#strongereveryday."

Work-wise, Disha Patani's last role was in Kalki 2898 AD co-starring Prabhas, Amitabh Bachchan, Deepika Padukone and Kamal Haasan among others. Released on June 27, the film has been going strong ever since, raking in nearly 1000 crores worldwide. That's not all. Fans have already begun waiting for its next installment as announced by the makers on various occasions. Next up for Disha Patani is Kanguva alongside Suriya, Bobby Deol and Prakash Raj. While Kanguva is set to be released on October 10 this year, the script for Kanguva Part 2 is currently in development and will go on floors in late 2025 or early 2026.



Trisha Krishnan

And Nayanthara Had A Fall Out? What We Know

Popular actresses Trisha Krishnan and Nayanthara were known to have a strong bond and friendship. Both actresses have been ruling the hearts of the fans for more than 20 years now. Both have a massive fanbase globally. However, some old reports suggest that the duo was not on talking terms. This was supposedly due to so professional reasons that the actresses decided to part ways. According to an old report from 2008, Trisha and Nayanthara had a clash with each other over the Tamil film Kuruvi. As per a report by the Times of India, both the actresses were initially considered for the role of Devi in the film. Eventually, Trisha was chosen for the role. Despite this news of professional dispute being shared widely, Trisha denied these rumours in an interview with India Herald. Several media reports suggested that both actresses did not speak with each other for several years.



Recently, Trisha decided to respond to the speculation about her and Nayanthara's relationship. In the interview, she mentioned that most of the speculations were made up and there was no such issue between them. She agreed that though they had some tussle it was

not regarding professional life. She said, "Nayad has more than 10 years of experience in the field of acting. Our problems were mostly made up by the media. We never fought. Yeah we had some minor falling out over shared acquaintances and personal issues." On the other hand, Nayanthara also commented on her relationship with Trisha. She mentioned that their long-term separation was caused by some misconceptions. While talking to the media, the actress appreciated Trisha for making the effort to solve the issues they had to date and mend the relationship between them. "There were some misunderstandings that affected our relationship. What more could I want for when she took the time to reach out to me? That's extremely appreciated," Nayanthara said.



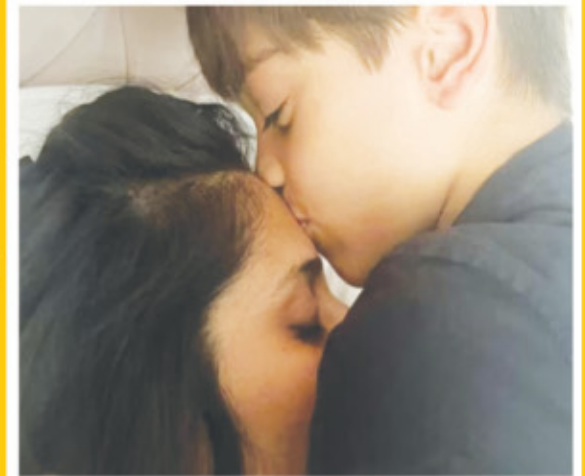
Arjun Kapoor Drops Cryptic Post Amid Breakup Rumours With Malaika Arora: 'Staying Positive Does Not...'



Speculation of Arjun Kapoor and Malaika Arora's breakup has ignited considerable conversation across social media platforms. Although the couple has not directly addressed these rumours, they have subtly referenced their relationship status online. Arjun Kapoor recently shared a poignant note on Instagram, focusing on navigating through pain while maintaining a positive outlook. Arjun Kapoor took to his Instagram story to share an uplifting message which read, "Staying positive does not mean that things will turn out okay. Rather, it is knowing you will be okay no matter how things turn out." This inspiring note came shortly after another cryptic post by the actor, which stated, "We have two choices in life. We can be prisoners of our past or explorers of future possibilities."

Meanwhile, Malaika Arora has sparked dating rumours amid reports that she and Arjun Kapoor have broken up. The Chaiyya Chaiyya girl is holidaying in Spain currently and has been flooding our timelines with photos from the trip. While she has been raising temperatures with her bikini-clad photos, she is also devouring good food during the trip. Just a couple of days back, Malaika seemingly shared a photo of a mystery man. In the photo, she was sharing a picture of a plate of clams, the beach view and a man whose face was blurred. The photo has sparked rumours that Malaika is dating again, couple since 2018. While they have largely kept their relationship private, they have shared glimpses of their time together through affectionate photos from vacations and heartfelt birthday wishes on social media. Malaika was previously married to Arbaaz Khan, with whom she has a son named Arhaan. The former couple finalized their divorce in May 2017, and Arbaaz recently remarried Sshura Khan.

Shalini Ajith Kumar's Heartwarming Picture With Son Aadvik Is Pure Mother-Son Goals



Actress Shalini Ajith Kumar has shared a heartwarming photo with her son Aadvik on Instagram. In the picture, Shalini is seen resting on her bed while Aadvik kisses her on the forehead. Shalini shared the photo with lots of heart emojis as she held her son close. This adorable mother-son moment has gone viral, with fans sending love and well-wishes for Shalini's good health. A person wrote, "Cutest picture of the day," while another noted, "Mother love."

Shalini Ajith Kumar recently underwent a minor surgery at a hospital in Chennai. Her husband and Tamil actor Ajith Kumar, who was working on his upcoming film Vivek Muryarchi in Azerbaijan, came back to the city to take care of her. On July 3, Shalini shared a photo from her hospital bed with Ajith Kumar. In the picture, Shalini is wearing a patient's gown while Ajith sits by her side. The couple held hands and smiled for the photo. Alongside the picture, Shalini wrote in the caption, "Love you forever."

According to a report by India Today, a source revealed that Shalini is now doing fine. "It's too personal, so let's not get into the details. But she underwent surgery and is doing fine now. There's a possibility that an official statement might be shared in a day or two," the source added.

Speaking of Ajith Kumar's upcoming film Vidaa Muryarchi, the shooting has been put on hold until the actor's returns. Directed by Magizh Thirumeni, the film is about a married couple whose trip takes a dark turn when the wife goes missing. The husband desperately searches for her while an unknown villain creates obstacles along the way. The film also features Priya Bhavani Shankar, Sanjay Dutt and Trisha Krishnan in pivotal roles. Shalini Ajith Kumar began her career as a child artist in 1983 in Malayalam film Ente Mamattikkuttiyammakku and acted in several films directed by Fazil. She is best known for her roles in Alaipayuthey (2000), Aniyathi Pravu (1997) and Amarkalam (1999).