

Sanjay Kumar

New Delhi, July 5: The National Testing Agency (NTA) told the Supreme Court on Friday that cancellation of the controversial NEET-UG 2024 would be hugely counterproductive and significantly harmful to the larger public interest, especially to the career prospects of those who cleared it. In its affidavit filed in response to one of the petitions in the top court, NTA, which conducts NEET-UG, said the alleged incident/attempt of leak does not seem to have any bearing on the conduct of the entire examination held on May 5, as the number of candidates found to be involved by the investigating agencies is minuscule compared to number of candidates who appeared. "The cancellation of the entire examination

on the basis of the aforesaid factor, would be hugely counterproductive and significantly harmful to the larger public interest, especially to the career prospects of the qualified candidates," it said. The agency said NEET-UG was carried out fairly and with due confidentiality in entirety without any illegal practices and the claim of "mass malpractice" is "completely unfounded, misleading, and lacks any basis". Scrapping NEET-UG in entirety would "seriously jeopardise" lakhs of honest candidates and not be rational in the absence of any proof of large-scale breach of confidentiality. The Centre also told the apex court on Friday in a separate affidavit. NEET-UG was conducted on May 5 by NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses.

PM Modi asks athletes to share observations on conduct of Paris Olympics

New Delhi, July 5: Confident that India's bid to host the 2036 Olympics will be successful, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged athletes bound for this month's Paris Games to share their views on the arrangements in the French capital to help the country's ambitious push to bring the showpiece here. In an interaction with Paris-bound athletes, conducted both in person and online on Thursday, Modi said those travelling to the French capital would do the country a huge service by providing inputs from their experience. "We are hoping to host the Olympics in 2036, it will help in creating a sporting atmosphere. Work is in



progress to prepare infrastructure for it," he said in the interaction, which was attended by the national men's hockey team, the shooting contingent, boxers and track-and-field stars such as Neeraj Chopra. The interaction's complete video was shared by Prime Minister's Office on Friday. "I won't ask you to do anything in the middle of your events but when you are free, I would urge you to observe the arrangements. Your inputs will help our bid for 2036. We will have an understanding on how to make sure that we are better-prepared," he added. The upcoming Games will be held from July 26 to August 11 and India would be hoping to better its best ever tally of seven medals, including Chopra's historic javelin throw gold, achieved in the Tokyo Games. Over 100 Indian sportspersons have qualified for the Games, including an unprecedented 21 shooters, who would be aiming to end the medal drought of last two editions.

Court extends BRS leader K Kavitha's judicial custody till July 18

New Delhi, July 5: A court here on Friday extended till July 18 the judicial custody of BRS leader K Kavitha in a corruption case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja passed the order. The CBI had arrested Kavitha, the daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekhar Rao, in April from Tihar Jail, where she was lodged after her arrest by the Enforcement Directorate. The ED had arrested the 46-year-old from her Banjara Hills residence in Hyderabad on March 15, and she was in judicial custody in the case.

NEET-UG 2024: Centre opposes scrapping of May 5 exam

Naresh Malhotra

New Delhi, July 5: Amid demands for cancellation of NEET-UG 2024 examination over alleged paper leak, the Centre on Friday opposed before the Supreme Court petitions seeking scrapping of the May 5 examination, saying scrapping the entire examination would seriously jeopardise lakhs of honest candidates who didn't adopt any unfair means. "In the absence of any proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in a pan-India examination, it would not be rational to scrap the entire examination and the results already declared," the Union Ministry of Education said in an affidavit filed in the top court. "It is submitted that in any examination, there are competing rights that have been created whereby the interests of a large number of students who have taken the examination without adopting any alleged unfair means must not also be jeopardised,"

the affidavit read. "The Union of India remains committed to protecting the

the first seeking scrapping of NEET-UG 2024 examination for alleged paper



interests of lakhs of students who have attempted the question paper fairly and after years of hard work, without trying to obtain any illegal advantage," the Centre submitted. There are two sets of petitions before the Supreme court –

leak and irregularities and the second by 56 Gujarat-based successful medical aspirants seeking to restrain the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA) from going for a re-test. A three-judge Bench of Chief Justice

DY Chandrachud, Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice Manoj Misra will hear both sets of petitions on July 8. The top court has refused to stay the counselling of the successful candidates for admissions to MBBS, BDS and other courses. The Centre said, "While genuine concerns based on proven facts must be addressed, other prayers merely based on conjectures and surmises without any basis in fact must be rejected so as not to cause any unnecessary suffering and distress to honest examinees and their families." Asserting that "the government is committed to ensuring the sanctity of examinations and protecting the interest of students," the affidavit stated that Parliament has passed a law and the Centre has set up a high-level committee headed by former ISRO chairman K Radhakrishnan to suggest effective measures "for conducting transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations" by the NTA.

Assam flood situation deteriorates 16.50 lakh people affected in 29 districts

Guwahati, July 5: The flood situation in Assam further deteriorated with over 16.50 lakh population affected in 29 districts with the major rivers flowing above the danger level across the state on Thursday, an official bulletin said. An alert has been sounded in Kamrup (Metro) district with the Brahmaputra, Dibrugarh and Kollong rivers flowing above the red mark with vast tracts of land inundated. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is scheduled to visit flood-affected areas in Maligaon, Panu Port and Temple Ghat areas in Guwahati Metropolitan area on Thursday to take stock of the situation. Sarma chaired a meeting on the flood situation with all District Commissioners late on Wednesday night and directed them to be liberal in granting relief as per norms, complete all rehabilitation claims as per norms before August 15 and provide accurate information to the headquarters so that adequate

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Heavy rain in northwest, northeast India brings overall deficit down to just 3 per cent

New Delhi, July 5: Heavy rain in northwest and northeast India over the past few days has brought down the overall monsoon precipitation deficit in the country from 11 per cent on June 30 to just 3 per cent on Thursday, according to India Meteorological Department (IMD) data. The IMD reported that the rain deficit in northwest India has reduced from 33 per cent on June 30 to 14 per cent on Thursday, from 14 per cent to 8 per cent in central India, and from 13 per cent to 2 per cent in east and northeast India. South India has recorded surplus rains (13 per cent) in the monsoon season so far. The Met office stated that 24 per cent of the sub-divisional area of the country experienced excess to large excess rainfall, 45 per cent received normal rainfall, and 31 per cent experienced deficient rainfall. The country has gauged 190.6 mm of rainfall against a normal of 196.9 mm since the start of the four-month monsoon season on June 1. June had ended with a rainfall deficit of 11 per cent, with the country receiving only 147.2 mm of rainfall in the month against a normal of 165.3 mm, the seventh lowest since 2001.

Rahul Gandhi meets family members of stampede victims in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras

Simmi Kaur Babbar

Hathras/Aligarh (UP), July 5: Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday met the family members of the victims of the stampede that killed over 100 people in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras. Before meeting family members in Hathras, Gandhi made a stop at Aligarh and met the kin of victims from the district. Gandhi left from Delhi early morning on Friday by road for Hathras and was accompanied by state Congress chief Ajay Rai, state Congress in-charge Avinash Pande, party spokesperson Supriya Shrinivas and other office bearers. Don't want to make it political but administration made lapses: Rahul Gandhi on Hathras stampede. A total of 121 people, mostly women, died in a stampede at self-styled godman Baba Bhole's satsang in Hathras on Tuesday. In



Aligarh, the Congress leader was seen interacting with the family members of the victims of the Hathras stampede. Rai told PTI that Gandhi left Delhi around 5.10 am.

Park and Vibhav Nagar near Navipur Khurd in Hathras. Monu, a family member of the deceased, when asked about's Gandhi visit, said, "He also said that he will try his best to help us, and will talk to the government as his party is not in power." Khusboo, who had lost her mother, said that she would get help. Another woman who lost her sister-in-law in the stampede told reporters, "He (Rahul Gandhi) told us that the (Congress) party will help us, and assured us help. He also inquired from us how it (the incident) took place." She also said that there was laxity in treatment given to the victims, and added that they could have survived. Congress MP from Saharanpur Imran Masood were also present where Gandhi met the families of victims. The Uttar Pradesh government on Wednesday formed a three-member judicial commission headed by a retired high court judge to probe the Hathras tragedy, looking also into the possibility that a conspiracy was behind the stampede.

JEE aspirant from Bihar hangs self in Kota, 13th suspected suicide this year

Kota, July 5: A 16-year-old engineering aspirant allegedly died by suicide by hanging himself from a ceiling fan inside his PG room here, police said on Thursday. This is the thirteenth case of suspected suicide by a coaching student in Kota since January. The number of student suicides in Kota stood at 26 in 2023. Sandeep Kumar Kurmi, a native of Bihar's Nalanda district, was taking coaching for the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) in Kota for the last two years and lived in a paying guest (PG) room in Mahaveer Nagar-III, the police said. At around 7 am on Thursday, the teen's classmate went to his room. When he did not get any response, he peeped through the window and found Kurmi hanging from the ceiling fan, Mahaveer Nagar SHO Mahendra Maru said. Kurmi's classmate informed the PG caretaker who informed the police, he said. According to the SHO, the student died by suicide on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. No suicide note was recovered from the room, the police said. Kurmi's brother, Sanjeev, is taking coaching for the medical entrance exam NEET in Kota and lives in a separate PG room in Dadabari area, Head Constable Mahaveer Prasad said.

56 Gujarat-based successful medical aspirants move Supreme Court to restrain government

Navdeep Singh Sahni

New Delhi, July 4: Ahead of the July 8 hearing on petitions seeking scrapping of NEET-UG 2024 over alleged paper leak and irregularities, as many as 56 Gujarat-based successful medical aspirants have moved the Supreme Court seeking to restrain the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA) from going for a re-test. A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud is scheduled to hear on Monday petitions seeking scrapping of NEET-UG 2024 Examination held on May 5. So far, the top court has refused to stay the counselling of the successful candidates for admissions to MBBS, BDS and other courses. The petitioners from Gujarat contended that re-conducting NEET-UG would not only be unreasonable and harsh for the honest and hard-working students but also would lead to the infringement of the Right to Education and therefore violate of Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution. They sought a direction to the Centre and the NTA to identify

and punish the examinees who indulged in unfair means, identify the centres and take appropriate action where any "compromise to the established guidelines for NEET-UG 2024 examinations has been done. Around 24 lakh students appeared for NEET-UG 2024

Examination conducted on May 5 by the NTA across 4,750 centres in 511 cities and 14 centres abroad for admission to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in more than 700 government and private institutions.

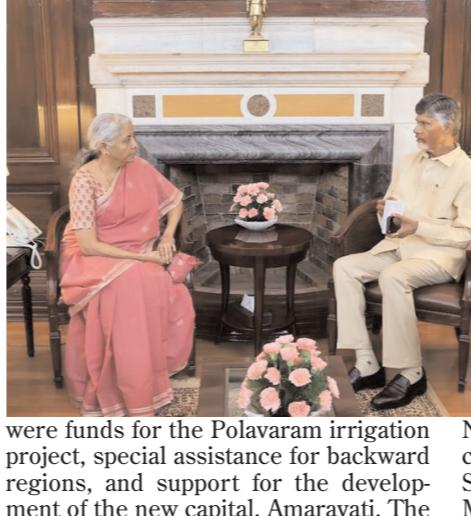


CM Chandrababu Naidu meets FM Sitharaman, seeks financial aid for debt-ridden Andhra Pradesh

Tejinder Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, July 5: Ahead of the Union Budget presentation, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, pressing for enhanced financial support to the debt-burdened state. Sources said Naidu, during the meeting in North Block, highlighted various ongoing projects in Andhra Pradesh that require urgent central assistance. "The CM presented a detailed memorandum outlining the state's financial requirements and the rationale behind the demand for increased allocation," the sources added. TDP ministers at the Centre were present during the meeting. According to the state government data, the public debt of Andhra Pradesh has increased from 31.02 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in 2019-20 to 33.32 per cent in 2023-24

fiscal, indicating deterioration in the fiscal health of the state in the last five years. Key among Naidu's demands



were funds for the Polavaram irrigation project, special assistance for backward regions, and support for the development of the new capital, Amaravati. The

chief minister also sought resolution of pending issues stemming from the bifurcation of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. The meeting assumes significance as it comes just weeks before the presentation of the Union Budget 2024-25. The sources indicated that Sitharaman gave a patient hearing to Naidu's concerns and gave an assurance that she will look into Andhra Pradesh's demands within the broader fiscal constraints. Naidu has been vocal about the state's financial distress and sought increased central support to tide over the fiscal challenges, when he met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Union Ministers on Thursday. The Naidu-led Telugu Desam Party is a crucial partner of the NDA with its 16 Lok Sabha MPs supporting the Narendra Modi-led government.

Jitan Ram Manjhi's reason behind Bihar bridge collapses

New Delhi, July 5: With bridges collapsing like ninepins in Bihar, Union Minister and former state Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi blamed the onset of the monsoon and subsequent heavy rain for the incidents. At least 12 bridges have collapsed across Bihar in the past 17 days, with the Nitish Kumar-led government coming under severe criticism from the opposition over infrastructure safety and maintenance. "It is monsoon time. There has been an abnormal amount of rain, which is the reason behind the collapse of bridges," Manjhi said. But, the Chief Minister of the state is very sensitive towards the investigation. He had a meeting yesterday and has given strict instructions that strict action should be taken against any kind of negligence," the Union Minister said. He bridge collapse incidents have been reported from Siwan, Saran, Madhubani, Araria, East Champaran and Kishanganj districts. In the wake of such incidents and after facing backlash from the RJD, Nitish Kumar directed the Road Construction Department (RCD) and Rural Works Department (RWD) to immediately conduct a survey of all old bridges in the state and identify those that require immediate repair.

Kallakurichi hooch case: Bunk sealed with 2K litres of methanol in TN's Cuddalore

CUDDALORE: The CB-CID team probing the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy case has sealed an unused petrol bunk at Veeraperumanallur in Cuddalore district after 2,000 litres of methanol was found stored in the underground sump of the fuel station. According to sources, the probe team initiated the action after M Madesh of Madukarai of Puducherry, a key figure suspected to have been involved in the supply of methanol to hooch sellers in the Kallakurichi case, spilled the beans about the concealment. Police sources alleged that Madesh purchased methanol from a chemical company in Chennai and supplied it to various people in Kallakurichi district. According to sources, the CB-CID team took custody of 11 of the accused for interrogation on Monday in the Kallakurichi case, and Madesh revealed the details about the methanol stash during the interrogation. Suspects may have planned to sell adulterated petrol. After inspecting the sump, CB-CID officials sealed the petrol bunk on Thursday in the presence of revenue officials, and took control of the site. Police sources said about 300 litres of petrol was also found in the same underground tank. "The suspects may have planned to sell as adulterated petrol, but nothing is confirmed yet," police sources said. At least 65 people died and 16 are still undergoing treatment at various hospitals in the hooch tragedy that affected nearly 229 people, including women, on June 19. The case was later transferred to the CB-CID, and so far 21 suspects have been arrested on the charge of illegal smuggling and sale of hooch. The accused are currently remanded in Cuddalore Central Prison.

KOCHI: Soon, Kochi Water Metro will expand its network to Mattanchery as the work on the terminal that hit many hindrances has gathered pace. According to the Kochi Water Metro officials, the new route will become operational by November 2024.

Cochin Shipyard Ltd is scheduled to deliver two more boats this month. We expect the completion of the water metro terminal work at Mattanchery by November. Once it is completed, the next route will become operational from High Court Junction to Mattanchery," said Sajan John, CEO of Kochi Water Metro.

At present, 14 ferries of Kochi Water Metro operate on five routes – High Court to Fort Kochi, High Court to Vypeen, High Court to South Chittoor, South Chittoor to Cheranalloor, and Vytilla to Kakkad. "As the patronage on the High Court to South Chittoor and South Chittoor to Cheranalloor route is less, trips on these routes are less. However, once more boats are received, the trips will be increased," said an official with Water Metro. On average, Kochi Water Metro has a daily ridership of 5,000.

"Owing to the summer vacation, the average daily ridership crossed 6,000 per day in April and May," the official added. The construction work of terminals at Paliyamthuruth, Kumbalam, Willgod Island, and Eroor is progressing. Meanwhile, Kochi Water

terminal at Mattanchery was re-tendered and awarded to Ernakulam-based firm Crescent Contractors last year. The work on the terminal began in December 2023. As per norms, the work on the terminal should be completed within 10 months. The construction was stalled at the initial

stage due to the withdrawal of a contractor. However, it gained steam after the Mattanchery water metro action council met the chief minister, and also got a favourable order from the High Court. The metro terminal will be constructed on 1.5 acres. The jetty platform, where boats can approach, will be built on a bridge that extends to the waterbody. The plan is to enable the smooth service of the

ships during low tides. For residents and traders of Mattanchery, the news comes with much joy, as water transportation for them is a much-needed facility. Fort Kochi and Mattanchery are two prominent tourist spots in the city. Mattanchery attracts hundreds of tourists daily because of its rich history and popular heritage sites. Despite being a prominent tourist spot, Mattanchery lacks water.



Political patronage unconditional, SFI goes on to hold campuses hostage

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: While being beaten up at SFI's "torture room" on the Kariavattom campus of the University of Kerala on Tuesday night, all KSU leader San Jose could think about was J S Siddharthan, the veterinary student who had reportedly endured brutal torture at the hands of SFI workers. The public trial and torture of the KSU leader is the latest in the series of violence involving SFI workers. In a similar instance in Koyilandy, SFI workers not only allegedly hit the principal of Gurudeva College of Advanced Studies on his face but also issued a public threat that, if the SFI decides, the teacher will not be able to enter the campus on two legs. These back-to-back instances of violence by SFI came barely a week after criticism came up in CPM meetings that Siddharthan's death and the party's inability to control its student arm cost it dearly in the Lok Sabha elections. Armed with the unconditional patronage extended by the ruling CPM, a section within the student outfit has been on a rampage on Kerala campuses. The SFI, which had promised "self-introspection" after the involvement of its activists in Siddharthan's death, is yet

to walk the talk, if recent incidents in campuses are anything to go by. Be it the manhandling of the principal or beating up of a KSU activist, SFI has emerged as the unquestioned perpetrator of campus violence, say academics as well as functionaries of other student outfits.

According to political observer and academic J Prabhash, lumpen elements have crept into the SFI leading to not only attacks on rival student outfits but also manhandling of teachers and heads of institutions. "SFI has been at the forefront of agitations, many of them violent, for major causes and issues. However, the unrest seen on campuses now is over very trivial issues, often related to opposition to the functioning of other student unions," he said. On the CPM's justification of the violence involving its student outfit, Prabhash said it reflects the lack of "self-criticism" or "self-correction" in the party. "A communist party like CPM has not yet fully understood the requirements of democracy. As long as the party does not imbibe a democratic culture, this mindset will percolate to its feeder outfits," he opined. Prabhash said the unchecked

violence by the SFI in campuses will also work against the interests of the Left democratic movement. "It is a paradox that Kerala follows a multi-party system, but in college campuses, only a single-party setup is allowed," he said.

KSU, which has of late been challenging the SFI's monopoly in many campuses, is of the view that the pro-Left student outfit will never 'mend its ways' as long as it continues to enjoy the political patronage of the CPM. According to KSU state president Aloysius Xavier, SFI also realises that it will bite the dust if a student union election is held in college and universities in the "true democratic sense". "It is the urge to retain its hegemony in campuses that prompts the SFI to not even allow a candidate of the rival union to file a nomination in an election. The hostility towards rival student outfits begins with threats and ends with the assault on their activists in torture rooms set up in campuses where SFI enjoys a free hand," said Aloysius Xavier, state president, of KSU. Owing to the violence unleashed by the SFI, a large number of students are getting alienated from it, he said. "The

arrogance and oneupmanship of SFI leaders and the outfit's unquestioned acts of violence in campuses have prompted students to think of alternatives. This is seen clearly in the results of student union elections held in various colleges and universities," Aloysius said. MSF state president P K Navas said the writing on the wall for the SFI is clear. "After an eight-year gap, SFI tasted defeat in Calicut University. The KSU-MSF combine also won in Pariyaram medical college for the first time since its inception nearly three decades ago. Anticipating SFI-sponsored violence in Kannur University, the union election is being conducted on July 6 under heavy police deployment, on the court's directions," Navas said. ABVP, which has had a history of clashes with the SFI, believes the latter's ideology is being rejected by campuses across the state. This, the ABVP believes, is why the SFI uses violence as a tool to retain its toehold in campuses. "The SFI is keen on promoting gang culture in colleges and creating a space for the students to indulge in violence.

have taken moral responsibility and resigned as CM after the Congress' dismal performance in the recent Lok Sabha elections.

"Siddaramaiah should resign. Assembly polls should happen again in Karnataka, and the BJP will win and come back to power. The Congress government has no right to remain in power," he said. He said the Congress government wooed voters using the guarantees, and despite that, people rejected them. Agarwal attributed the BJP's victory in Karnataka in the LS polls to former CM BS Yediyurappa's leadership. "The entire nation is thankful to BJP workers in Karnataka for ensuring that the party won more seats in a Congress-ruled state," he added.

Yediyurappa challenges Siddaramaiah to call for polls

"If they (Congress) have the courage, let them resign and call for Assembly polls," senior BJP leader BS Yediyurappa challenged CM Siddaramaiah. He said the BJP will win at least 150 seats if the Assembly polls are held now. "People have rejected the guarantees. In districts represented by the CM and Deputy CM, the Congress lost badly in the Lok Sabha elections," he said. Yediyurappa also slammed the State Government for increasing prices of essential commodities for their "useless guarantees."

Chased out of Madurai GH, patient spends two days on street

MADURAI: Housekeeping staff of Government Rajaji Hospital (GRH) in Madurai allegedly chased a patient out of the facility after he reportedly spilled urine on the floor. The patient allegedly crawled out of the hospital and lay on the pavement in front of a local bus stop for two days. Subsequently, social activists admitted him back to the hospital on Thursday morning. According to sources, Kattumari (58), of Vilachari in Madurai, was working as a cook for a catering company for several years.

A month ago, while he was shifting his bike, he was hit by two people near Nagamalai Pudukottai. He sustained injuries to the chest, leg, and hip and was admitted to the hospital. Soon, his right leg had

gone numb, and he was unable to walk. He had no attendant as his son was out of station. At the hospital, the victim wanted



to carry out nature's call, but nobody was present to help him. Hence, he urinated in a box, and it slipped and fell to the ground. The housekeeping staff of the hospital verbally abused him. Kattumari alleged that the sweepers would

routinely use foul language at him and ask him to move out of the facility. As he was unable to walk, he allegedly crawled out of the facility and lay on the pavement of the Anna Bus Stop for two days. Street hawkers found the elderly man and informed social activists, who informed hospital authorities and admitted him back.

Speaking to TNIE, GRH Dean Dr C Dharmanaraj said, "The official records mention that the person was admitted after an assault last month, and he went absconding for the last two days. But social activists have admitted the person claiming that he was chased out by our sweepers. I have asked the Resident Medical Officer to submit a complete report on the incident.

Air pollution blamed for 5.6% of Hyderabad deaths, study finds

HYDERABAD : A new study mapping the association between Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5 exposure and daily mortality in 10 Indian cities between 2008 and 2019 says that 5.6% of the deaths in Hyderabad during this period can be attributed to air pollution. The study, published in the Lancet Planetary Health journal on Thursday, said that while air pollution took around 12,000 lives per year in Delhi, Shimla saw 59 deaths between 2008 and 2019. The study was conducted by researchers from Ashoka University, the Centre for Chronic Disease Control, Karolinska Institute, Harvard University and Boston University, among others. It says that 5,552 deaths that occurred in Hyderabad during this period can be attributed to PM 2.5 exposure. Per



year, 1,597 deaths can be attributed to PM 2.5 exposure, the study added.

Hyderabad CP: Destruction of SIB data on Maoists puts national security at risk

HYDERABAD : Has the image of the Telangana Special Intelligence Branch (SIB), which earned laurels across the country over the past several decades, touched its nadir? The SIB, which is a key partner of National Investigation Agency (NIA) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) of Ministry of Home Affairs, appears to have lost vital information pertaining to extremist activities. The counter affidavit filed by Hyderabad Commissioner of Police Kothakota Sreenivasa Reddy, in the affidavit filed in the High Court in the phone-tapping case, more or less indicated the same. The Hyderabad CP also said in the affidavit that the then SIB chief T Prabhakar Rao put the internal security of the nation at risk by destroying the hard disks of the SIB. "The gravamen of the

charge is that removal of hard disks and damaging them caused heavy loss of information gathered on Left Wing Extremism (LWE) over the decades resulting in threat to public safety and security of state and nation," the Hyderabad CP said.

Hard disks with decades of data on Naxals thrown into river: Hyd CP

In their counter-affidavit filed in the High Court with a plea to close the suo motu case in the phone-tapping case, the Hyderabad police informed the court that the SIB was constituted under the Intelligence department of the Telangana State Police. The SIB is a specialised intelligence agency established exclusively for the purpose of collection of intelligence on the activities of the banned

CPI (Maoist) party and other affiliated organisations in the state to protect society, they added. "The SIB has achieved laurels in the entire country for successfully curbing the Maoist activities not only in the state but also elsewhere in the country through timely exchange of crucial information among various law enforcement agencies ... thereby preventing many violent incidents and saving hundreds of lives. The SIB thrives on the crucial information gathered painstakingly by hundreds of brave police officers over decades. In the instant case, the accused person has destroyed permanently such huge data of SIB along with the data he had developed clandestinely, unauthorisedly and illegally for ulterior motive of helping."

NEWS BOX

9-year-old's murder: Teen faces sexual assault charge too

GURGAON. A boy held for the murder of his nine-year-old neighbour over an apparent theft bid at an affordable housing society in Sector 107 on July 1 had allegedly sexually assaulted the girl before strangling her with a scarf and setting the body on fire in her house. Charges under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act were added to the case - the first to be registered under the newly implemented BNS in the city - after the boy made new revelations before Juvenile Justice Board counsellors on the last day of his remand on Thursday. "While there was no confirmation of penetrative assault by the teen, he claimed to have touched the minor inappropriately," ACP Naveen Sharma, investigating officer in the case, said. The teenager had earlier said he went to his neighbour's flat in an adjacent building to steal jewellery as he was under pressure to repay a Rs 20,000 loan he had taken from a friend for gambling. He also claimed he did not go to the house with the intention to kill the girl but had panicked when things didn't work out the way he wanted.

"Today, he told counsellors that once he reached the girl's house, he asked her to get him a glass of water. He touched her inappropriately while taking the glass, but soon asked for another glass. While the girl was in the kitchen, the boy found the keys to the cupboard, being well-versed with the house, and took the jewellery. The boy said when the girl saw what he was doing and started to scream, he tried to shut her up. He strangled her with a scarf as she would not stop screaming," the ACP said. Police said the teenager used crushed camphor to burn the body, which he apparently learnt from a Hindi crime serial.

He had also identified some shops where he was planning to sell the stolen jewellery, the ACP said.

The boy, who was just a day short of his 16th birthday when he committed the crime, does not come under the purview of Juvenile Justice Act provisions that allow a minor offender to be treated as an adult in heinous crimes because the age bracket for it is 16-18.

"He stole bicycles and money to settle gambling debts earlier. He even tried to run away from home once when his father scolded him for performing poorly in school," a police officer said.

Hathras case: Why stampede horror can't shake their faith in 'Baba'

NOIDA. Himanshu (18) believes he would not be studying in a university were it not for 'Bhole Baba's' blessings. For Seema, a 33-year-old lawyer from Hathras, Surajpal Singh is 'not human', but a 'messenger of God'. When medicines and doctors failed, 'holy water' from one of Narayan Hari Saakar's satsangs healed Neha - so the homemaker from Surajpur believes. The July 2 stampede in one of Surajpal Singh aka 'Bhole Baba's' religious gatherings in Hathras killed 121 people, but that hasn't shaken the faith of his followers - many of whom travelled from faraway cities to attend the event. The cult of 'Bhole Baba' has been built carefully - through a projection of supernatural powers in him, like healing people's illnesses and reviving the dead, and a simultaneous appeal to inherent humanitarian values, preaching against caste divides and discrimination. His ominous words - "aaj pralay aaegi" (there will be an apocalypse today) - minutes before the stampede broke out are being seen as a testament to his soothsaying abilities rather than an indictment of lapses in crowd management. Undergoing treatment for injuries suffered during the melee, Kamlesh Singh of Bulandshahar is wonderstruck at his "intuitiveness". "Just before leaving the stage, he held the mic again and said 'ab mai ja raha hoon, aaj pralay aaegi' (I am leaving now, apocalypse will follow). Imagine his intuitiveness - he knew exactly what would happen. And, there was no chaos until he left the venue," said Kamlesh, a follower for 15 years. A dust storm had started after the satsang. It could well have been a reference to that. Himanshu was all of six when his parents took him to listen to one of Singh's sermons. And since then, he has believed in "just one god".

JAL hikes one-time settlement to ?500cr but lenders reject it

Noida. Lenders have rejected the one-time settlement offered by Jaiprakash Associates Ltd in the insolvency case filed against it. After the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) ordered the initiation of bankruptcy proceedings against the company last month on a petition filed by lenders led by ICICI Bank in 2018, its suspended board of directors challenged the order in NCLAT, the appellate tribunal.

During a hearing on June 10, NCLAT asked JAL to increase the amount it was to pay upfront in its original settlement offer. Subsequently, JAL revised its OTS by increasing the amount from Rs 200 crore to Rs 500 crore. The company offered to pay an additional Rs 150 crore within 12 weeks as a part of the revised OTS and assured lenders that proceeds from the sale of its cement business would go towards settling the debt.

On Wednesday, the counsel for ICICI Bank confirmed it has not accepted JAL's revised OTS and sought a week to file its reply. The appellate tribunal will hear the case on July 26, the first settlement offer proposed to creditors before the NCLT on May 29. JAL assured an upfront payment of Rs 200 crore with another Rs 16,000 crore to be paid within 18 weeks after the OTS was accepted. NCLT's Allahabad bench dismissed the settlement offer and ordered the initiation of the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) against JAL on June 3. Bhuvan Madan was appointed as the Interim Resolution Professional (IRP) following the suspension of JAL's board of directors.

Sunil Kumar Sharma, representing JAL's suspended board of directors, submitted an appeal against the order at NCLAT. At the June 10 hearing, JAL reiterated its willingness to make the full payment within 18 weeks, if the OTS was accepted by the creditors. The bank's counsel objected, noting the petition was filed in 2017 and admitted in Sept 2018, and JAL had enough time to settle the matter but had failed to do so. The lender's counsel said JAL should have made a substantial payment earlier if it was serious about the settlement. The company has around Rs 26,000 crore debt.

Noida clears revised layouts for all Unitech projects in city



Gurgaon. MCG has finally decided to take over Mayfield Gardens, a private colony, from Friday. The decision was made during a meeting chaired by deputy commissioner Nishant Kumar Yadav on Thursday. Yadav instructed civic body officials to complete the transfer process within a day, following the directives of CM Nayab Singh Saini during his grievance committee meeting on June 27. The CM had also directed MCG to attach the property of the developer if they failed to pay the required development charges. Mayfield Garden Colony, an upscale colony, was developed by a group of builders that stopped its maintenance around five years ago. Since then, residents have been pooling funds to meet their basic needs. They had approached former CM Manohar Lal, requesting the inclusion of the colony in MCG. In response, the CM issued directives to include all nine builder colonies, and in 2022, the govt issued a notification to take over these colonies.

To facilitate the transfer, the developer needs to deposit Rs 16.21 crore with the corporation, which the builder has agreed to do within two days. Once the amount is deposited, the corporation will take the colony under its jurisdiction. "MCG will complete the formalities for takeover of Mayfield Garden in a day or two," said Yadav. After the takeover, MCG will provide facilities such as road construction, installation of street lights, beautification of dilapidated parks, sewer lines, and water lines to residents who have been deprived of basic amenities for the past five years. The state govt had announced the transfer of nine developer colonies to MCG in 2019, and the department of town and country planning (DTC) ordered transfer of these colonies in May 2022. While eight colonies were successfully transferred to the civic body, the takeover of Mayfield Garden was delayed due to a dispute over the estimated civic deficiency charges. Mayfield Garden, spread over

327 acres in sectors 47, 50, 51, 52, and 57, was developed in the early 2000s. Due to poor upkeep and maintenance over the last two decades, many roads in the colony have developed potholes, drains are clogged and filled with silt, and parks and green belts are unkempt. The residents are hopeful that the MCG takeover will address these issues and improve civic amenities in the colony. We also published the following articles recently: [Six people injured as water tank collapses in residential colony in Mathura](#) and [Six people injured as water tank collapses in Mathura residential colony](#).

Incident at Krishna Vihar Colony by Uttar Pradesh Awas Vikas Parishad. Tank built three years ago, confirms DM Shailendra Kumar Singh. Injured persons receiving treatment at district hospital. Water enters houses as rain plays great leveller in colonies & slums. Learn about the aftermath of heavy rains in Delhi, causing flooding in both low-income and upscale areas. Residents face challenges due to inadequate drainage systems and lack of preparedness. Read more about how marginalized communities are disproportionately affected. [111351809](#)

Fix city's waste woes in a week: CM to MCG. Get the latest update on Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini's directive to MCG officials to improve Gurgaon's sanitation system within a week. Find out about the resolution of complaints at the recent grievance redress committee meeting and the takeover of maintenance services of Mayfield Garden.

Burglars target Fbd bizman's home, flee with 50L jewellery

Gurgaon. Burglars broke into the home of a businessman in Subhash Colony, Ballabgarh, and fled with valuables worth Rs 50 lakh. The incident occurred in the early hours of Thursday while Vikram Singh and his family were asleep in their G+1 house, said police officials. CCTV cameras installed at Vikram's residence captured footage of the burglary, which has been handed over to the police. According to the complaint filed with Adarsh Nagar police, the burglar entered the house around 1.30 am. They latched the doors of two rooms from the outside and broke into a third room containing an almirah with cash, gold, and silver. "The robbers took Rs 2 lakh in cash, 600 gms of gold, and seven kilograms of silver articles. A bike parked in the stilt area was also stolen," said the complainant. The family discovered

the burglary around 4am when they woke up to get milk. One family member managed to unlatch the doors by squeezing through a window opening meant for an air conditioner. "One of the offenders stood outside the house and helped his associate climb over his shoulders to reach the first floor. From there, the burglar entered the first floor through an open verandah and broke the lock of the unoccupied room," said Kumar. An FIR has been registered under relevant BNS sections. We also published the following articles recently: [First snatching case under new BNS](#) and [Discover the first snatching case under section 304 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita in Bhopal](#). A 52-year-old man was robbed of his mobile phone by three miscreants while on an evening walk. Stay

updated on the investigation progress by Shahpura police. [111483766](#) Water enters houses as rain plays great leveller in colonies & slums. Learn about the recent heavy rains in Delhi causing severe flooding in both low-income and upscale neighborhoods. Residents struggled with waterlogging, property damage, and livelihood disruptions. Calls for improved drainage systems and government accountability were widespread. Throwback: When Tabu opened up on staying single, said, "relationships are meant to liberate, not stifle." Discover why Tabu, the versatile actor, continues to shine in the industry at 52. From her acclaimed performances in movies like *Drishyam* to her perspective on relationships and staying single, Tabu's journey is an intriguing one. Learn more about her unique outlook on love and growth.

Delay in flat handover: Realtors cough up 150cr, Rera to recover 750cr dues

Gurgaon. The Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority (H-Rera) along with the district administration has recovered Rs 150-crore dues out of Rs 900 crore from developers as delayed possession charges and refunds to homebuyers. A Rera official said since H-Rera was set up around six years ago, more than 3,000 recovery certificates (RCs), amounting to around Rs 900 crore, are pending for execution. The amount was recovered by the revenue department, but now after chief secretary TVSN Prasad's order, which empowered the H-Rera adjudicating officer to execute pending recovery certificates, the regulator will carry out the remaining recoveries, the official said. Two years ago, the powers to execute the recovery certificates were transferred from the regulator's adjudicating officer to the deputy commissioner, who is also the head of the revenue department at the district level. Deputy commissioner Nishant Yadav said these recovery certificates (RCs) were sent to the district administration by the real estate regulator. "We had a dedicated team at the district level which used to monitor these cases. A monthly review was also done for each case, which resulted in recoveries," he said. "With the district administration's help, we have seen considerable improvement in recovering the dues of allottees. However, we have a long way to go," H-Rera chairman Arun Kumar said, adding the state government has bestowed the powers of collector on the adjudicating officers of both real estate regulatory authorities in the state. Regulators are now trying to build capacity by engaging trained manpower to improve performance in due course. Sukhbir Yadav, an advocate specialising in recoveries, said the district administration had taken a good effort to recover the decretal amount, and it provides a ray of hope to homebuyers. However, there are still hundreds of unexecuted recovery certificates that need to be recovered. Another official said despite receiving refund orders and recovery certificates from H-Rera, many homebuyers have not been able to reclaim their funds from developers. "This is largely due to the ineffective execution of recovery certificates by the revenue department. This bottleneck in executing recovery certificates poses a significant challenge of successful implementation of the Rera Act," he said. We also published the following articles recently: [ARCs seek to take the value-addition route to recovery](#) and [In FY24, Asset Reconstruction Companies \(ARCs\) seek to take the value-addition route to recovery](#). In FY24, Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) in Mumbai played a significant role in resolving bad loans through restructuring, surpassing recovery through asset sales. The value of loan assets restructured by ARCs rose by 43% year-over-year to Rs 7,948 crore, accounting for 25% of total resolutions.

Name Change
I, SATYENDER S/O RAM KUMAR residing H-6320 GURUDAYAL VIHAR BAKKARWALA DELHI-110041 have changed my name to SATYENDRA PERMANENTLY

Name Change
I, VIDYA WATI DEVI W/O RAM KUMAR residing H-6320 GURUDAYAL VIHAR BAKKARWALA DELHI-110041 have changed my name to VIDHATA DEVI PERMANENTLY

Name Change
I, PATEL VAISHALI BEN wife of NO-156249507, Ram L/NK, Name-DAMODAR VISHALI KUMAR KANUBHAI P/O-VPO-AGOTA, TEH-SINGWALA, DIST-DAHOD, GUJARAT-398130 have changed my name from PATEL VAISHALI BEN to DAMOR VAISHALI BEN for all future purposes vide affidavit dated 05/07/2024 before Executive Magistrate, Delhi.

Name Change
I, KAMAL KISHORE GOYAL S/o Late Sh. Nagar Mal Goyal R/o Flat No.501, Tower-9, Beverly Park Apartments, Sector-22 Dwarka, South West Delhi, Delhi-110077 have changed my name to Kamal Goyal for all purposes.

Name Change
I, MOHAMMAD JISAN ANSARI S/O MOHAMMAD WASI ANSARI, R/E-15, BLOCK-E, SEWAK PARK, WEST DELHI, DELHI-110059, have changed my name from MOHAMMED JISAN to MOHAMMAD JISAN ANSARI for all future purposes and my father's correct name is MOHAMMAD WASI ANSARI

Name Change
I, KARAN S/O YASH PAL residing E-177 NEHRU VIHAR CMLINE DELHI-110054 have changed my name to KARAN MEHANDIRATTA PERMANENTLY

Name Change
I, NARENDER SINGH, S/o Sh. Ram Gopal Singh, R/o Ctr. D-7, Type-IV, Flats, Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024 declare that NARINDER SINGH and NARENDRA SINGH both are my incorrect names. My correct name is NARINDER SINGH for all future purpose. That NARINDER SINGH, NARENDRA SINGH and NARENDER SINGH one of the same person.

Name Correction
I, NARENDER SINGH, S/o Sh. Ram Gopal Singh, R/o Ctr. D-7, Type-IV, Flats, Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024 declare that NARINDER SINGH and NARENDRA SINGH both are my incorrect names. My correct name is NARINDER SINGH for all future purpose.

Name Correction
I, NARENDER SINGH, S/o Sh. Ram Gopal Singh, R/o Ctr. D-7, Type-IV, Flats, Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024 declare that NARINDER SINGH and NARENDRA SINGH both are my incorrect names. My correct name is NARINDER SINGH for all future purpose.

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INDIAN RAILWAYS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)

Nov Delhi, dated 05.07.2024

E-Open Indigenous Tender No.2024-TMS-2 closing on 29.07.2024 for procurement of Hydraulic Spares for IR Track Machines.

Electronic bids are invited for and on behalf of the President of India for procurement of Hydraulic Spares for IR Track Machines. The interested bidders are advised to visit the website <https://ireps.gov.in> for further details, download of the tender documents and submission of their e-bids.

Director, Railway Stores (F) (Railway Board)

2055/24 SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NOTICE
Public at large is hereby informed that Mr. Sandeep Mavi s/o Mr. Premraj is the owner of Plot No.2, area measuring 106 sq. yds., i.e. 88.62 sq. mts., Out of Khasra No.263, Situated at Shambhu end Village Chaprola Pargana, tehsil Dadri and Dist. Gautam Budh Nagar U.P vide Regd. Sale Deed dated 23/03/2024 executed by Mr. Ajay s/o Mr. Sanjeev in favour of Mr. Sandeep Mavi s/o Mr. Premraj (Doc No.16373, Book No.1, Vol No.26842, Page No.229-240, SR-Dadri) Initially, Mr. Baleshwar was the owner in respect of entire Property, who expired leaving behind his last Regd. Will dated 07/12/2007 in favour of Mr. Ajay and Mr. Vijay (Doc No.173) in respect of 1/6 share of 2-0-3, and Mrs. Rajesh Devi and others got other areas in Different Khasras, Later Notarized Affidavit dated 20/10/2023 executed by Mr. Vijay Kumar Tyagi stating that he has no objection that Plot area measuring 106 sq. yds. sold by his brother Mr. Ajay Kumar Tyagi Finally, Regd. Sale Deed dated 23/03/2024 is executed in favour of Mr. Sandeep Mavi s/o Mr. Premraj who intends to sell the said property to Intended Borrower who will be mortgaging the said property with Bandhan Bank Ltd. Whoever is having any objection to the said mortgage or anyone has claim or right or interest in the property shall contact the undersigned with the objection within 07 days failing which it shall be presumed that there stands no objections.

NOTICE

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PRAGYA BHUSHAN ADVOCATE

DATE: 5/7/2024

Enr. No. D/721/02

Office: L-27, GF, Kailash Colony, New Delhi-48

Mob.: 9968006418

NOTICE

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NEWS BOX

Biden says he needs more sleep, won't attend events after 8 pm: Report

world. In a candid admission of fatigue, US President Joe Biden told a gathering of Democratic governors that he needs to get more sleep and work fewer hours, including not scheduling events after 8 pm. According to the New York Times, the revelation came during a meeting aimed at reassuring over two dozen crucial supporters of his continued commitment to his role and readiness to engage in a vigorous campaign against Republican rival Donald Trump. The 81-year-old President's remarks about needing more rest indicated that he was aware of mounting concerns regarding his more frequent and noticeable slips in recent months. His faltering performance at last month's presidential debate was roundly panned by critics and triggered panic among Democrats. Despite these concerns, Biden said he was determined to stay in the presidential race during his meeting with governors, some physically present at the White House while others joined virtually.

Citing sources, the report stated that Biden attributed his recent performance issues to his extensive international travels leading up to the debate, which the White House as well as his allies have cited as the reason for his halting performance. Initially, his campaign blamed a cold, but the President acknowledged pushing himself too hard and disregarding advice on his schedule, and said he needed a lighter workload and more rest, particularly avoiding late-night events. During the meeting, Biden made a joke about his health, saying, "I'm fine — I don't know about my brain, though." His campaign chair, Jen O'Malley Dillon, later clarified that he was "clearly making a joke" despite some governors' private concerns about Biden continuing his campaign, none directly suggested that he should drop out of the race, as per the report. However, on another occasion, Biden has reportedly acknowledged to allies that he knows he may not be able to save his candidacy for a second term if he can't demonstrate his abilities to voters following the debate.

39 passengers fall ill after gas leak at Malaysia's Kuala Lumpur airport

Kuala Lumpur. Around 39 people at Malaysia's Kuala Lumpur international airport fell ill on Thursday after a gas leak at an aircraft engineering facility, but no passengers were affected and there were no flight disruptions, the fire department said. The Selangor state fire department said it received an emergency call regarding a chemical leak at the Southern Support Zone Sepang Aircraft Engineering facility at 11.23 am (local time) and dispatched its personnel along with a hazardous materials team. The engineering facility is separate to the passenger terminal and those affected by the gas worked for three companies operating there, the fire department said in a statement. Thirty nine people complained of dizziness and nausea, with 14 sent to the air disaster unit to receive treatment while one was hospitalised, the department said.

There was no wider risk to public safety, it added.

The chemical was later identified as methyl mercaptan, added to liquefied petroleum gas as an odorant, coming from an unused tank at the facility, the department said. The leak was being patched up, and the tank would be dismantled and disposed of, it said.

Pak to ban social media for 6 days to control 'hate material' during Ramadan

After successfully blocking X (formerly Twitter), for over four months, the Pakistan government is now set to ban all social media platforms - YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok - for six days from July 13 to 18, citing the need to control "hate material" during the Islamic month of Ramadan.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's cabinet committee on law and order has recommended banning of all social media platforms - YouTube, X, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, among others, during 6 to 11 Muharram (July 13-18) in Punjab, a province of over 120 million people, to "control hate material, misinformation to avoid sectarian violence", according to a Punjab government notification issued in Lahore late Thursday night. The Punjab government of Maryam Nawaz has requested her uncle Shehbaz Sharif's government at the Centre to notify the suspension of all social media platforms on the internet for six days (July



13-18). Pakistan Army Chief Gen Asim Munir has already declared social media a "vicious media" and underscored the need to fight what he called "digital terrorism".

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, who also holds the portfolio of foreign minister, recently called for placing a complete ban on social media. The Shehbaz government had shut down X last February following allegations of change of general election results by the Election Commission of Pakistan, apparently on the order of the military establishment to stop Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's jailed founder Imran Khan from coming to power. Both the military and the government were receiving backlash on social media since the ouster of former prime minister Imran Khan through a no-confidence motion in April 2022.

The government has arrested dozens of social media activists of Khan's party since then.

UK's Labour set to sweep into power with huge majority, exit poll shows



London Keir Starmer will be the next Prime Minister of UK with his Labour Party set to win a massive majority in a parliamentary election, an exit poll on Thursday indicated, forecasting Rishi Sunak's Conservatives would suffer historic losses. Centre-left Labour was on course to capture 410 of the 650 seats in parliament, an astonishing reversal of fortunes from five years ago when it suffered its worst performance since 1935. The result would give Labour a majority in 10 and would bring the curtain down on 14 years of increasingly tumultuous Conservative-led government. "To everyone who has campaigned for Labour in this election, to everyone who voted for us and put their trust in our changed Labour Party - thank you," Starmer said on X. Sunak's party were forecast to only win 131 seats, the worst electoral performance in its history, as voters punished them for a cost-of-living crisis, and years of instability and in-fighting which has seen five different prime ministers since the Brexit vote of 2016. The centrist Liberal Democrats were predicted to capture 61 seats while the right-wing populist Reform UK party,

headed by Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage who had pledged to destroy the Conservative party, was forecast to win 13. The prediction for Reform was far better than expected, and the party comfortably took second place behind Labour in the first two seats to declare their results, pushing the Conservatives into third place. Much of the damage to the Conservative Party tonight is being done by Reform, even if it is the Labour Party that proves to be the beneficiary. "John Curtice, Britain's most respected pollster told the BBC. However, the exit poll suggests overall British voters have shifted support to the centre-left, unlike in France where Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally party made historic gains in an election last Sunday. It was not just the Conservatives whose vote was predicted to have collapsed. The pro-independence Scottish National Party was forecast to win only 10 seats, its worst showing since 2010, after a period of turmoil which has seen two leaders quit in little over a year. In the last six UK elections, only one exit poll has got the outcome wrong. Official results will follow over the next few hours. "If this

exit poll is correct, then this is a historic defeat for the Conservative Party, one of the most resilient forces that have we have seen in British political history," Keiran Pedley, research director at Ipsos, which carried out the exit poll, told Reuters. "It looked like the Conservatives were going to be in power for 10 years and it has all fallen apart."

Sunak 'fall guy'

Sunak stunned Westminster and many in his own party by calling the election earlier than he needed to in May with the Conservatives trailing Labour by some 20 points in opinion polls. He had hoped that the gap would narrow as had traditionally been the case in British elections, but the deficit has failed to budge in a fairly

disastrous campaign. It started badly with him getting drenched by rain outside Downing Street as he announced the vote, before aides and Conservative candidates became caught up in a gambling scandal over suspicious bets placed on the date of the election. Sunak's early departure from D-Day commemorative events in France to do a TV interview angered veterans, and even those within his own party said it raised questions about his political acumen. If the exit poll proves right, it represents an incredible turnaround for Starmer and Labour, which critics and supporters said was facing an existential crisis just three years ago when it appeared to have lost its way after its 2019 drubbing. But a series of scandals - most notably revelations of parties in Downing Street during COVID lockdowns - undermined then prime minister Boris Johnson and its commanding poll leads evaporated. Liz Truss' disastrous six-week premiership, which followed Johnson being forced out at the end of 2022, cemented the decline, and Sunak was unable to make any dent in Labour's now commanding poll lead.

Who is Keir Starmer, the next British Prime Minister as Labour wins UK elections



World Keir Starmer will become Britain's next Prime Minister on Friday as his Labour Party won a massive majority in the UK's parliamentary election. Rishi Sunak conceded defeat in the national election on Friday.

Earlier today, centre-left Labour was on course to capture 410 of the 650 seats in parliament, an astonishing reversal of fortunes from five years ago when it suffered its worst performance since 1935. The result brought the curtain down on 14 years of increasingly tumultuous Conservative-led government.

WHO IS KEIR STARMER

UK Labour leader Keir Starmer is an ex-human rights lawyer and public prosecutor who will have to focus his relentless work ethic and methodical mind on fixing the country. As Sunak conceded his defeat, 61-year-old Starmer will be the oldest person to become British Prime Minister in almost half a century - and comes just nine years since he was first elected to parliament. In 2003, he began moving towards the establishment, shocking colleagues and friends, first with a job ensuring police in Northern Ireland complied with human rights legislation.

Five years later, he was appointed director of public prosecutions (DPP) for England and Wales when Labour's Gordon Brown was Prime Minister. Between 2008 and 2013, Starmer oversaw the prosecution of MPs for abusing their expenses, journalists for phone-hacking, and young rioters involved in unrest across England. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II, but rarely uses the prefix "Sir", and in 2015 was elected as a member of Parliament, representing a seat in left-leaning north London. Just weeks before he was elected, his mother died of a rare disease of the joints that had left her unable to walk for many years. In 2020, Keir Starmer was elected to lead Britain's Labour Party, right after the party suffered its

worst general election defeat in 85 years. Starmer and Labour have also, indisputably, capitalised on years of economic pain and political chaos under the Conservative Party, who look set to have their parliamentary majority eviscerated.

PERSONAL LIFE

Born on September 2, 1962, Keir Rodney Starmer was raised in a cramped, pebble-dashed semi-detached house on the outskirts of London by a seriously ill mother and an emotionally distant father. He had three siblings, one of whom had learning difficulties. His parents were animal lovers who rescued donkeys. A talented musician, Starmer had violin lessons at school with Norman Cook, the former Housemartins bassist who became DJ Fatboy Slim. After legal studies at the universities of Leeds and Oxford, Starmer turned his attention to leftist causes, defending trade unions, anti-McDonald's activists and death row inmates abroad. He is friends with human rights lawyer Amal Clooney from their time together at the same legal practice and once recounted a boozy lunch he had with her and her Hollywood actor husband George.

Rishi Sunak concedes to Keir Starmer in UK elections: I am sorry

world. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak conceded defeat to Labour Party leader Keir Starmer as the Conservatives headed towards a historic defeat in the elections. Starmer is on track to become the next UK Prime Minister as trends showed the Labour Party crossing the majority mark in the House of Commons. Rishi Sunak said the British people had delivered a "sobering verdict" and there was a lot to learn and reflect on. "The British people have delivered a sobering verdict tonight... and I take responsibility for the loss," Sunak, the UK's first prime minister of colour, said. "The Labour Party has won this general election, and I have called Keir Starmer to congratulate him on his victory," he further said.

While eight Conservative cabinet ministers lost their seats, Sunak held on to his constituency of Richmond and Northallerton in northern England, bagging 47.5% of the votes.



To the many good, hard-working Conservative candidates who lost tonight, despite their tireless efforts, their local records and delivery, and their dedication to their communities. I am sorry," Sunak said. Rishi Sunak took over as Prime Minister in 2022 after his predecessor, Liz Truss, stepped down after just 45 days in office. After having ruled for 14 years, the Conservative Party faced headwinds over a host of issues, especially its handling of the economy following a tumultuous exit from the European Union.

A cost of living crisis, with inflation reaching 11.1% in 2022, is believed to have cost the Tories.

The voters were also frustrated by the government's mismanagement of the Covid-19 pandemic and the healthcare system, opinion polls had revealed. Meanwhile, addressing reporters in central London, Keir Starmer said the task of the incoming Labour government would be "nothing less than renewing the ideas that hold our country together". "We have to return politics to public service... a burden has finally been removed from the shoulders of this great nation," Starmer said.

Putin: Trump 'sincerely' wants to end War in Ukraine

World President Vladimir Putin said Russia takes seriously statements by Donald Trump that he has proposals to end the war in Ukraine quickly.

"I'm not familiar with his possible proposals on how he intends to do this, and that is, of course, the key question," Putin told a news conference Thursday in Astana, Kazakhstan, where he attended a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. "But I have no doubt that he says this sincerely, and we will support it." He spoke a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told Bloomberg TV in an interview that Trump "should tell us today" what his plans for ending the war would be if he wins November's US presidential election. Zelensky warned that any proposal must avoid

violating Ukraine's sovereignty. Putin told reporters that he saw some of last week's election debate between Trump and Joe Biden but declined to comment on it. President Biden is facing growing pressure to drop his reelection bid following criticism of his poor performance in the debate. Trump hasn't explained how he believes he'll bring an end to the war that's now in its third year. Politico reported this week that he's considering a deal with Russia under which NATO would commit not to expand further east, including to Ukraine and Georgia, citing two national security experts aligned with the former president. Putin said last month that Ukraine had to pull out of four eastern regions partly occupied by Russian forces as a condition for peace talks. Under his terms, immediately rejected by Kyiv and its US and

European allies, Ukraine would also have to rule out ever joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Putin said in Astana that Russia won't declare a halt to fighting before Ukraine agrees to take "irreversible" steps demanded by Moscow, without specifying what those would be. A cease-fire without reaching such agreements is impossible," he said.

The Russian president also ruled out a resumption of talks with the US on strategic stability until after the election. Russia must first "understand the moods and preferences of the future administration," Putin said. Separately, European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said it would be "very difficult to continue arming Ukraine" without US support. "Will Europeans be able to continue supporting Ukraine militarily even if the US doesn't

Pakistan to host SCO Summit in October, India, other member states to be invited

A federal judge has temporarily blocked enforcement of a new Biden administration rule bolstering health care protections for LGBTQ people, handing a preliminary legal victory to more than a dozen Republican-led states that challenged it in court.

replied, "The chairmanship belongs to Pakistan, so in our capacity as the chair, we will be extending invitations to all Heads of Government of SCO member states". "This conference will take place in person, and we hope and expect that all members of SCO will be represented at the Heads of Governments Meeting being held in October", she said.

She added the October summit will be preceded by a Ministerial meeting and several rounds of Senior Officials meetings, focusing on the financial, economic, socio-cultural and humanitarian cooperation among the SCO member states. Baloch also said that Pakistan would not become a part of any bloc in international politics as it believed in having good ties with all countries. "I would first like to clarify that Pakistan has repeatedly said that we are not part of any bloc. We do not believe in bloc politics. We believe in good relations with all countries on the basis of mutual respect, mutual confidence and non-interference in each other's domestic affairs", she said.



opposes such unilateral reports that make observations on the internal affairs of sovereign states. "We believe that International Religious Freedom cannot be viewed from the lens of any single country's social and legal perspective", it said. It said unilateral reports assessing other countries' human rights situations are not free from political bias and present an incomplete and distorted picture and the methodology adopted in preparing these reports and the mandate and

expertise of its authors are not transparent. "We strongly believe that each State itself has the primary responsibility to promote and protect the religious rights and freedoms of its nationals", she said, adding that Pakistani citizens are entitled to the freedom of religion and belief under the law and as enshrined in Pakistan's constitution. She said that during the visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Tajikistan this week, the two sides signed the Pakistan-Tajikistan Strategic Partnership Agreement, which would be based on five pillars of bilateral cooperation, including political, trade and investment, energy and connectivity, security and defence, and people-to-people contacts. It will include structured high-level dialogue at the leadership and Foreign Ministers' level. She termed the UN group report on Imran Khan as unwarranted and said, "I would like to underline that a report on any particular case is unwarranted when it lacks objectivity and is based on an incomplete and inaccurate understanding of Pakistan's legal and judicial system".

Odisha government forms committee for MBBS textbooks in Odia

BHUBANESWAR: The Odisha government on Thursday constituted a committee to examine essentials required to provide medical education in Odia language in the state. The decision coincides with the direction of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to use Odia in all official works. The 22-member panel headed by vice-chancellor of Odisha University of Health Sciences (OUHS), Bhubaneswar Prof Manash Ranjan Sahoo has been mandated to examine the matter and identify essential course books for MBBS education required to be translated into Odia language. The committee has been directed to assess the volume of works to be taken up for the purpose, and work out the timelines and budget requirements for undertaking the task. It will also submit a detailed proposal to the Health and Family Welfare department within 15 days for taking further action on the matter.

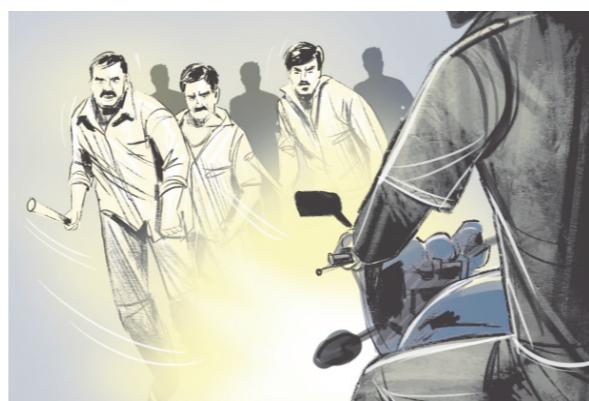
Other members of the committee comprise eight faculty members from AIIMS, Bhubaneswar, two each from SCB Medical College at Cuttack and PRM Medical College at Baripada, and one each from MKCG at Berhampur, Sundargarh, Puri, Koraput and Jajpur Medical Colleges. While registrar of OUHS is the member convenor, programme advisor of Odia Bhasha Pratisthan Premananda Mohapatra has also been made a member of the committee. If medical education is taught in Odia, Odisha will be the second state after Madhya Pradesh to teach MBBS courses in regional languages other than English. MP had released Hindi textbooks for first-year medical students in 2022.

Gang celebrations and attacks surge despite KAAPA enforcement in Kerala

KOCHI: Recently, an Instagram reel went viral showing a group of over 60 individuals celebrating the release of their gang leader, Anup, in a secluded paddy field in Kuttur near Thrissur. The event was organised to welcome Anup, who had spent around four years in prison as the main suspect in a murder case. To publicise the celebration, junior gang members recorded the event and shared a reel featuring songs from the popular Malayalam movie 'Aavesham.' The video also showed gang members carrying liquor cartons into the field. Earlier in Alappuzha, about 25 individuals with criminal backgrounds, including those framed under KAAPA, attended a wedding reception in Kattoor. In Ernakulam, the incidents of goonda attacks have been reported multiple times recently. After a brief lull, gangsters have reared their heads again, causing frequent and alarming chaos in the state. Even criminals who have been placed under preventive detention are disrupting public peace and posing a challenge to law enforcement agencies. Experts suggested that gangs are exploiting lapses in the enforcement of KAAPA, allowing them to operate with relative impunity. To combat the rise in gang violence, the state police launched the Action Against Goons (AAG) initiative.

On April 1, 2022, the home department

issued a notification directing all district collectors to use their powers under KAAPA against individuals involved in anti-social activities. Despite these efforts, it seems, the number of gang-related incidents has not decreased. Data from the home department reveals that over the past three years, district police chiefs have reported approximately 2,000 anti-social



elements for action under KAAPA. Of these, 1,028 habitual offenders were arrested and put under preventive detention, while 22 are still at large. However, recommendations to invoke KAAPA against 1,106 accused were rejected. In the same period, 96 gang attacks were reported, resulting in 12 deaths. In these cases, 463 gang members were booked, and 459 were arrested. "KAAPA is effective in dealing with gangsters, but it needs to be properly implemented," said former SP T K Raj

Mohan. According to the provisions of KAAPA, the district police chief must report those involved in anti-social activities to the IG or district collector. The IG can then issue an order to deport the person for six months, while the collector, acting as the district magistrate, can decide on deportation, bond execution, or arrest. "Due to political interference and other vested interests, reports sometimes remain pending, allowing the accused to approach the High Court and obtain bail," Raj Mohan explained. The Act defines 'anti-social activity' as actions that cause or are likely to cause insecurity, danger, or fear among the public, or threaten public safety, health, the environment, or public and private property. It also defines 'goonda' as a person who is involved in or promoting illegal activities harmful to public order.

A 'known goonda' is someone who has committed such acts within the past seven years, either found guilty by a court or identified through an investigation. A 'known rowdy' is similarly defined but with a specific focus on repeated offences. Justice K Narayana Kurup, former head of the State Police Complaints Authority, noted that the KAAPA is a replication of the Goonda Act, primarily aimed at preventing unlawful activities. "It is the responsibility of law enforcement agencies to identify these individuals and take appropriate action," he added.

HYDERABAD: With two crucial elevated corridors set to take shape soon, the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority has decided to utilise the services of Transaction Advisors (TA) for these projects to be taken up in PPP mode. The proposed corridors include an 11.12 km stretch from Paradise Junction (Gymkhana Ground) to Shamirpet Outer Ring Road junction, and a 5.320 km route from Paradise Junction to Dairy Farm Road, NH-44. The Paradise Junction to Shamirpet junction corridor is expected to benefit commuters travelling to towns in north Telangana from West Marredpally, Karkhana, Thirmulgherry, Bolarum, Alwal, Hakimpet and Thumkunta. The second corridor, from Paradise Junction to Dairy Farm Road (NH-44), will traverse Secunderabad, Tadbund Junction, Bowenpally Junction, and terminate near Dairy Farm Road.

HMDA has invited proposals from TAs empanelled with the Department of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, or the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI). The selected TAs will assist HMDA with contractual matters related to the concession agreement and other aspects of the projects. In addition to the elevated corridors, HMDA plans to develop multiple bus terminals and transport hubs throughout the city. To be implemented under PPP mode, the projects prove connectivity and facilitate smoother transportation for residents and visitors. The consultancy contract's objective is to structure the projects to be bankable and select developers for implementation under PPP mode. The consultant will ensure a transparent selection process for developers, design a financially viable contract, and develop an effective Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) or Hybrid Annuity Model framework.

Tiruchi railway division reduced cattle run over cases by 50 per cent

TIRUCHY: The Tiruchi railway division, which saw a four-fold increase in cattle run-over cases in 2023, has managed to reduce it by over 50% thanks to fencing and awareness campaigns, officials said. The division only reported 46 cattle run-over cases in 2022, but saw a significant rise in 2023. More than 60% of these incidents last year happened on the Tiruchi-Villupuram mainline (via Thanjavur-Kumbakonam-Mayiladuthurai), according to railway officials.

To address the situation, authorities implemented various measures in January this year. They formed a special team to identify vulnerable spots in this section. Within three weeks, cattle run-over cases have now reduced by over 50%, according to officials. "On an average, Tiruchi railway Division used to report 20-30 cases of cattle run-over cases each month. For example, in January 2024, there were roughly 25 cases. The issue is grave and has an impact on railway safety. As a result, our group installed more fencing in vulnerable areas and raised



awareness in villages. The number of cases have come down to 10 in February, 13 in March, and 11 in May as a result of these activities. We are routinely evaluating and exploring options to further reduce cases," stated MS Anbalagan, Divisional Railway Manager, Tiruchi.

According to sources, the surge in cattle run-over cases in railways is due to increased number of stray cattle being seized in cities and towns.

"Many villagers have now started to release their cattle to areas close to railway tracks, causing a rise in stray cattle run-over cases.

Since the railway has vast tracts of vacant land, it is impossible to fence them all. Therefore, we identified some of the vulnerable areas by fencing such spots," a source said.

After the Tiruchi-Villupuram line, the Tiruchi-Karaikal line reports the highest cattle run-over cases. "On most weeks, our team visits villages on the Tiruchi-Villupuram and Tiruchi-Karaikal line. We need their cooperation to bring cases down," said a senior official.

Minister shocked by poor facilities at TSIIC Warangal office, orders immediate modernization

HANAMKONDA: IT & Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu expressed his dismay over lack of basic facilities at the Warangal zonal office of the Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TSIIC). The minister, who made a surprise visit to the office on Thursday, was shocked to see that the staff did not even have proper chairs. He immediately ordered TSIIC Zonal Manager Swami Naik to modernise the office and provide basic facilities to the staff within a month. The minister also addressed commercial activities taking place in industrial areas like Rampur and Madikonda, originally allotted at subsidised rates for industries in Warangal district. An immediate survey was ordered to identify lands illegally converted for commercial use.

Sridhar Babu highlighted the enforcement of penalties, which are mandated under rules, ranging from 20% to 50% based on road width, for companies found to be violating land use regulations.

Earlier in the day, the minister said that the state government is committed to fostering the IT industry in Warangal and extending support to companies willing to establish their units in the historic city. Ordered TSIIC Zonal Manager Swami Naik to modernise the office and provide basic facilities to the staff within a month. Ordered TSIIC Zonal Manager Swami Naik to modernise the office and provide basic facilities to the staff within a month. Addressing the gathering after inaugurating RAKS IT Solution in Hanamkonda, Sridhar Babu appealed to NRIs to collaborate to ensure development of the state. He assured that the government would support them in setting up IT companies, emphasising their potential to generate employment for local educated unemployed youth. He also announced plans to develop Warangal on par with Hyderabad. Currently, IT firms like Cyient, Tech Mahindra and Quadrant Resources operate in the IT Incubation Centre of the Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TSIIC) at Madikonda.

Kerala HC rejects plea from Veterinary university VC in Sidharthan death case

KOCHI: The Kerala High Court has declined to interfere with the petition filed by the Vice-Chancellor of Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University. The petition challenged the interim order that granted permission to Mohammed Dhanish, M Rehan Binoy, Adithyan V, Althaf A, Soud Risal E K, and others to write the exams. The vice-chancellor argued that those students had been expelled from the college and they were removed from the rolls. Hence, they do not have any right to attend the examinations. There is



a shortage of attendance for them, and they failed to complete the necessary formalities, which form part of the curriculum, such as maintenance of records and attendance in the lab. Granting an opportunity to them, who are allegedly involved in a case of a serious nature, would send a wrong message to society. The court rejected the vice-chancellor's plea, noting that the interim order was meant to protect the rights of the students.

ED has no jurisdiction to probe,

says KIIFB
The Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) has submitted before the Kerala High Court that the enforcement directorate (ED) lacked jurisdiction to investigate the utilisation of funds collected through the floating of Masala bonds. It is the RBI that has to inquire whether the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) was violated and not the ED.

Distribution of funds: HC seeks govt's explanation

The Kerala High Court has asked the state government to provide details on how the budgeted amount for the midday meal scheme will be distributed to schools. The government pleader submitted that the government had allocated Rs 232 crore in the state budget for the scheme.

Hyderabad Metro to hire advisors for key elevated corridor projects

HYDERABAD: With two crucial elevated corridors set to take shape soon, the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority has decided to utilise the services of Transaction Advisors (TA) for these projects to be taken up in PPP mode. The proposed corridors include an 11.12 km stretch from Paradise Junction (Gymkhana Ground) to Shamirpet Outer Ring Road junction, and a 5.320 km route from Paradise Junction to Dairy Farm Road, NH-44. The Paradise Junction to Shamirpet junction corridor is expected to benefit commuters travelling to towns in north Telangana from West Marredpally, Karkhana, Thirmulgherry, Bolarum, Alwal, Hakimpet and Thumkunta. The second corridor, from Paradise Junction to Dairy Farm Road (NH-44), will traverse Secunderabad, Tadbund Junction, Bowenpally Junction, and terminate near Dairy Farm Road.

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Foul play: TN education dept issues order to cut number of PE teachers in government schools



up to a maximum of three teachers. In higher secondary schools, a PE director is appointed for every 400 students in Classes 11 and 12. The department has created 4,571 PET posts, 93 physical education director (grade II) posts, and 406 physical education director (grade I) posts in these 5,777 schools. It is also to be noted that 477 higher secondary schools with more than 250 students do not have a sanctioned post for a PET while 1,957 of them don't have the post of physical education director. This is due to various

reasons including variation in students' strength in schools over the years. As per the new order, PETs will be redeployed as per the new norm and additional posts will be created wherever needed.

Student-teacher ratio vital to ensure discipline'

One PET for high schools with 700 students or less, and two teachers for schools with more than 700 students will be appointed. For higher secondary schools, one PET and one director will be appointed for schools with 701-1,500 students, while two teachers and one director will be appointed for schools with more than 1,500 students. "Until 1998, one PET was appointed for every 200-250 students in government schools. Later, this ratio was increased to 250-400 students based on a government order issued to create posts in government-aided schools. While we have been urging the department to revert to the 1:200-250 teacher-student ratio and increase the number of posts, they have now made it 700.

Sambalpur police bust fake 'Special 26' agency, two arrested, mastermind at large

SAMBALPUR: Sambalpur police busted three fraudsters' attempt to recreate the Akshay Kumar blockbuster 'Special 26' in real life by enlisting youths in a fake agency which they called the 'Raid Action Wing' (RAW). Two of them, identified as Satyaranjan Sahu (43) of Remuna in Balasore and Shivnayan Seth (23) of VSS Colony within Hirakud police limits of Sambalpur, have been arrested. Mastermind of the racket, identified as Sukanta Kumar Ratha of Gajapati district, is at large and being pursued by the police. Sambalpur SP Mukesh Kumar Bhamoo said the accused posed as officers of the fake organisation 'Raid Action Wing' and targeted educated youth in search of jobs. They lured the victims of Central government job in the fake agency and asked them to complete tasks as probationers to secure permanent posting in the organisation after collecting certain fees from them. The accused issued ID cards and authorisation letters on a fake letterhead with Government of India and RAW logo along with 'International Organisation Against Crime and Corruption' printed on it. The youth were asked to raid excise shops and narcotics hideouts and seize items and hand them over to the accused. They had duped as many as six youths in the district, Bhamoo said. Police said the organisation was formed by Ratha and Sahu who posed as state director general and state in-charge of the organisation, with its headquarters.

Karnataka HC advocates for balanced use of English, Kannada in government affairs

BENGALURU: Observing that there should be a blend of local and global language in running the government machinery, the Karnataka High Court said which language should be used in governmental affairs is a matter of policy, convenience and practicality. While Kannada, which is a local language, has to be promoted and given importance, that itself cannot be a justification for the court to direct the state government and its departments to use Kannada language, the court said while dismissing a public interest litigation filed by a social worker seeking direction to the state government, including the Lokayukta, to use Kannada language at all levels and in all correspondences.

K V Aravind passed the order while dismissing the petition filed by Gurunath Vadde from Bidar. The petitioner's counsel submitted that in rural areas, only Kannada is understood by the locals. The court, however, said there is no denying, as was rightly submitted by the government advocate, that there has been extensive use of Kannada language in governmental affairs, correspondences and other communications. "Wherever it is necessary, the use of the English language in addition to Kannada cannot be disbanded," the court said adding, "Judicial pronouncements, law reports, statute books, important notifications and out-of-state or overseas correspondence are all in English language.

There should be a requisite blend of local and global language in the running of government affairs." The court also stated that Kannada language may be endeared, but at the same time, the utility of the English language should not be overlooked or discarded. "English is an official language for use in the High Court under the constitution. There can be no universal formula as to whether one language should only be used in governmental affairs. At local levels, however, it is hoped that the government and the officers as far as possible, may use, promote and give prominence to Kannada language to subserve the culture and the people of Karnataka. It cannot be, but, a universal phenomenon," the court observed.



Union Budget should focus on growth, equity and job creation

THE Union Budget is set to be presented later this month. It should be guided by two important considerations: India's aspiration to become a developed country by 2047, and the Lok Sabha election verdict, which seems to have been impacted by growing inequalities, rural distress and unemployment. Since 2014, the Union Budget has followed a vision guided by four pillars — fiscal prudence, building state-of-the-art infrastructure, achieving a higher growth trajectory and welfarism. The Finance Minister (FM) needs to recalibrate these pillars by according priority to high growth, equity and employment. Fiscal prudence and world-class infrastructure may be used as instruments to achieve these pillars, while welfarism may be taken care of with equity.

High growth would remain an epicentre of economic policies to achieve the meta-objective of making India a developed country (Viksit Bharat). The Indian economy's growth rate is hovering around 7 per cent per annum. According to an RBI study, 'India@100', the country's real GDP needs to grow at an annual rate of growth of 9.1 per cent during 2023-24 to 2047-48 for achieving the IMF benchmark of the GDP (\$49,069 billion) of an advanced economy. The rate of growth, as per the World Bank benchmark of a developed country (\$35,025 billion GDP), works out to be 7.6 per cent. This Budget should lay a foundation for achieving the average of these targets (8.35 per cent) by adopting a multi-pronged strategy — increasing capital expenditure, inducing private investment, creating world-class infrastructure, incentivising the adoption of latest technologies for improving efficiency in the economy and initiating outcome-oriented reforms across sectors for making the Indian economy globally competitive. The second priority of the Budget should be the promotion of equity across classes, sectors and regions. During the post-reforms era, India has witnessed growing inequalities. For India to become a developed nation, it is essential to make development inclusive. Over the past decade, the Union Budget has adopted the welfarist approach for improving the economic wellbeing of the poor, women, girls, farmers, youth and tribals by initiating financial inclusion and schemes focusing on areas like food, housing, health, education and skill development. Richer classes have reaped the benefits of opening up of the Indian economy. However, people just above the poverty line and the lower middle class have borne the brunt of market forces in the form of inflation and a lack of adequate quality jobs due to contractualisation, automation and the use of smart technologies like artificial intelligence. In the forthcoming Budget, it is recommended to have better policy packages both for the poor, people just above the poverty line and the lower middle class. These packages would help generate a huge demand and stimulate economic growth. Sectoral inequalities are also an outcome of India's growth story. The services sector and the industry have grown faster than agriculture. For achieving a rate of growth above 8 per cent in the coming 25 years, it is essential to develop all sectors simultaneously as they have forward and backward linkages. Allocating more budgetary resources for developing agriculture and allied activities would help mitigate rural unrest and act as a catalyst for growth in the form of an expanding market.

Roll out a roadmap to rebuild agriculture

The sector needs out-of-the-box thinking, however much may it upset the governing elite

FOR any discerning reader, this is a shocking revelation — in two decades, the price of bread in Switzerland has doubled, but the farmgate price of wheat has come down by half. This is an arrangement that has kept everyone happy, except the farmers. A former chairperson of the Punjab Farmers' and Farm Workers' Commission, Ajay Vir Jakhar, recently tweeted: "Twenty years ago, the price of bread in Switzerland was 2.5 Swiss francs (CHF) and the price of wheat was 110 CHF per kg. Today, the price of bread is 4 CHF and the price of wheat is 50 CHF per kg." Sometime back, I had shared an example from Canada, where wheat prices had tumbled over the past 150 years but bread prices had zoomed in the past four decades. This disturbing trend of declining farm output prices is not exclusive to Switzerland and Canada — it is more or less a global phenomenon. For over a century now, farm prices have been declining steeply, pushing farmers to either commit suicide, abandon agriculture or struggle to survive against all-pervasive distress. This is food inequality. People who produce food end up living perpetually in poverty. Often, it has been seen that the farm prices are low and do not even cover the cost of production. The tragedy is that those who bring food to our tables can't even afford to feed themselves. With successive governments pushing for increased productivity, the farmer's welfare was simply overlooked. Very cleverly, while farmers felt easily elated when called annadata, the other stakeholders in the agricultural supply chains rolled in profits. In the process, farmers have been rendered bankrupt.

While farmers suffer and rural wages stagnate, the broken food system has kept consumers happy. Keeping food prices deliberately low and pushing them still lower with every passing year, and at the same time extracting excessive profits — seller's profit, as it is now called — has led agribusiness companies to laugh all the way to the bank. Although corporates blame rising wages and supply chain bottlenecks for the rising prices, studies have shown that in the US, for instance, in the second and third quarters of 2023, corporate profits fuelled 53 per cent of the inflation. Further, corporate profits jumped after the Covid pandemic,

reaching a record high by the last quarter of 2023. In the four decades prior to the pandemic, the contribution of corporate profits to inflation was only around 11 per cent. For over a century and a half, the economic design had denied rightful prices to farmers. Obviously, with policymakers turning a blind eye to the deepening crisis on the farm front, rural anger only gets highlighted in the election season. India's government claims to subsidise farmers, but actually hurts them



(The Economist, July 12, 2018) provides an interesting insight. While the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, the richest trading bloc, provide an equivalent of 18 per cent of the farm income to producers, India actually ends up taxing them. Accordingly, 6 per cent of the farm income is appropriated on an average in India. In another OECD study, it became clear that while Indian farmers lost 15 per cent on an average by way of low prices between 2000 and 2016, the real benefit accrued to consumers, who gained by 25 per cent in subsidised prices.

As the Finance Minister gets ready to present the full Budget for 2024-25, it is time to visualise what kind of economic policies are needed not only to assuage farmers' growing anger but also to lay out a roadmap for rebuilding agriculture. Remember what economist Jean Dreze had remarked: "Political discourse in India normally takes place within certain boundaries set by the privileged and powerful. If you overstep these boundaries, expect some trouble." Agriculture needs

out-of-the-box thinking, however much may it upset the governing elite.

All these years, the predominant route to raising farm incomes has been through more budgetary support for technological interventions. Even with the move towards digitalisation, artificial intelligence, robotics and precision farming, thereby bringing agriculture increasingly into the corporatisation lap, it has to be acknowledged that while the industry around agriculture has and will benefit immensely from such budgetary support, farmers continue to be pushed deeper into distress. Productivity gains haven't translated into living income for farmers. If farm incomes continue to be at the bottom of the pyramid even 60 years after the Green Revolution, the promise of technological transformation towards Agriculture Revolution 4.0 cannot be seen as a panacea for all the ills afflicting agriculture. As usual, policymakers are once again skirting the real cause of farm distress — falling farm incomes — and trying to cover it up with the flawed thinking that technological interventions will boost incomes. Amid 'global boiling', resilient agriculture will come from regenerative farming practices. More than artificial intelligence, what is needed is to first

utilise available natural intelligence. It is important to first invest in building the capacity and potential of human population engaged in agriculture. The dominant economic thinking will not be comfortable with this, but the time has come to look beyond the pre-designed parameters. Given that agriculture is the biggest employer in the country, employing 45.5 per cent of the workforce, making agriculture a profitable enterprise is the need of the times. The conventional thinking of helping the industry which, in turn, will help raise farm incomes — conforming to the trickle-down principle — is unlikely to work. To remove food inequality, there is a growing need for fresh thinking. First, provide a legal mechanism for guaranteeing farm prices as per the MS Swaminathan formula; secondly, the Finance Minister should ensure that 50 per cent of the Budget is allocated for roughly half of the population. To begin with, start enhancing the farm budget every year by 10 per cent of the total. At present, it is less than 3 per cent.

Hathras stampede

Draw lessons to improve crowd management



IT was a disaster waiting to happen, with around 2.5 lakh people crammed into a venue in which only 80,000 were permitted by the authorities. The death toll in the stampede that broke out during a 'satsang' in Hathras (Uttar Pradesh) has crossed 120; the victims were part of the crowd which had gathered to hear a preacher. According to the FIR, the organisers secured permission for the congregation on the basis of a false undertaking about the actual number of devotees who were expected to attend it; they are also accused of refusing to cooperate with the police in traffic control and concealing evidence after the incident. It is ironical and unfortunate that in a country where people throng one religious place or the other on a daily basis, crowd management often leaves a lot to be desired. A decade ago, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) had brought out a guide on managing crowds at events and venues of mass gathering. This document was aimed at spurring

state governments, local authorities and organisers to adopt an integrated and structured approach to crowd and disaster management. The NDMA had stated that

man-made tragedies such as stampedes could be prevented with 'proactive planning and flawless execution by dedicated groups with well-trained personnel'. However, all this was conspicuous by its absence at the Hathras event. Giving misleading estimates about the size of the audience or congregation is a common ploy to get the administration's nod. At times, palms are greased to get the job done. However, the organisers cannot be solely blamed when things go horribly wrong. The authorities should exercise due diligence in granting permission; spot inspections are a must to ascertain whether adequate safety arrangements have been made for even the worst-case scenario. The way forward is to take exemplary action against those whose rank negligence or greed puts lives on the line.

Time running out to combat climate change

Humankind seems to have sleepwalked into a planetary crisis. Some heads of government realise that the decisions we make today are going to determine our future



Environmental Future and Our Earth Matters have reflected the spirit of those early benchmarks by reminding the decision-makers of the rapidly 'depleting time' for a decisive course correction for planetary existence. The UNSG's warning is based on the findings of several scientific reports. According to the World Meteorological Organisation's (WMO) Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update (2024-28), "there is an 80 per cent likelihood that the annual average global temperature will temporarily exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for at least one of the next five years." The WMO's February 2023 report also stated that during the period from 2013 to 2022, the sea level rise was 4.5 mm/year, wherein human influence was construed as the main driver of such an alarming surge.

The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (April 2022) drew the grim scenario that the "net anthropogenic GHG emissions have increased since 2010 across all major sectors globally... as have cumulative net CO₂ emissions since 1850." The UN Environment Programme's Emissions Gap Report 2023 warned that the "global GHG emissions increased by 1.2 per cent from 2021 to 2022 to reach a new record of 57.4 gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent".

We live in the Anthropocene epoch (recognised in 2019), with an 'unmistakable imprint of human activities'. This has been affirmed in the formal proposal (October 2023) of the Anthropocene Working Group to the Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy. That, in turn, calls for a new human prism for the care,

maintenance and 'trusteeship of the planet' to seek answers for our environmental future. What lies in store for us in the next three quarters of the 21st century? How do we manage our profligate lifestyles, heavy resource extraction-based production processes and wasteful patterns of consumption so as not to endanger the very survival of life on this planet in general and the future of humankind in particular? This year is all set to become a landmark in succession to 2023 and 2022, which witnessed the Sustainable Development Goals Summit (last September in New York) and the Stockholm+50 Conference (in June 2022). The outcome of both these global conferences showed the gravity of the smouldering environmental crisis. This year, as mandated by a UN General Assembly resolution, the New York Summit of the Future will take place in September.

Humankind seems to have sleepwalked into a planetary crisis. Some heads of government have realised that "the decisions we make today are going to determine our future for decades to come" (as US President Joe Biden put it) as well as securing "a better future to the world and a better world to the future" (so said PM Narendra Modi). With time depleting rapidly, can we reverse this planetary crisis? The gathering storms provide indications of an environmental catastrophe. It is logical to pursue an idealistic quest for "exploring the future pathways" for innovative and iconoclastic solutions. After the Summit of the Future, it would be appropriate for the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to hold an emergency special session to set in motion a normative process to nudge the 193 member states to gear up for global environmental challenges as a planetary concern. It poses a challenge for the global scholarly community to pursue an idealistic ground work, including contours of the UNGA's normative process, to be affirmed by a concrete plan of action as a follow-up to the Summit of the Future.

Top 10 crazy Planters for your home

Toiling hard on a balcony garden, filled with the same old clay or plastic pots, can get boring at times. If you want to breathe a bit more life into your greens, just look around.

You will be surprised to find many household objects, unnecessarily occupying space, which can be turned into unique planters. As long as it can support soil and allow proper drainage, you can use almost anything. Container gardens can be the perfect solution for those living in small apartments. So, what are you waiting for? Unleash your crazy, creative side and make the best use of waste. Trust us, you'll love it!

TO THE TEA

Cup planters look just fine on dull window sills.



They are small and can hold a small amount of gravel. But once you see them, you are bound to change your opinion. Tea cups with graphics can add spectacle in the whole scheme of things. If you want to have small plants, this can actually be a very good idea. You can accentuate the beauty of the planter by adding decorative stones around the brim.

BOTTLE'S UP

Wine-bottle planters are really easy to make and look great once done. Start out by cutting off the bottom of the bottle. Since potting soil cannot be used as the planting medium here, use coco peat instead. A wire or small rope tied just below the bottle's threads is all we need to hang these planters. You can also grow various decorative indoor plants in these bottles.



TOYTALE

Succulents are ideal plants to grow in these toy trucks discarded by your kids. They are pretty low-maintenance too. Find something that has a large enough opening to hold the potting mixture and deep enough to allow the roots to grow.

SMUG IN JEANS

This planter is not just a great use of an old pair of jeans, but it's also a sure-shot way to grab eyeballs of every passer-by. So, if you are planning something extraordinary and eccentric this season, try and make at least one jeans container. You need to fill up the legs with pipes and thermocol.

SPREAD A WATER-RESISTANT PLASTIC BAG

Spread a water-resistant plastic bag inside before placing the potted plant. And you are ready to go... **OUT OF THE BOX**

Making a planter from a wooden crate or an old suitcase is quite simple. Because of its length, breadth and depth, it is best suited for growing herbs like coriander, lemon grass or mint. Fill it with soil. You can either sprinkle seeds, starting from the scratch, or directly plant saplings. If you are more into flowers, then Portulaca grandiflora (commonly called 9 o'clock flowers) can be one of the options. Decorate the case to your heart's content and it can double up as an installation in your balcony.



SPICE OF LIFE

You can hang these old jars on the wall, like spice racks - in the dining room or in the kitchen. These jar planters can be used to grow fresh spices and herbs for cooking at home. Clear your kitchen counter and keep your herbs, fresh in the air. Aromatic, we say!

HATS OFF

Give your tattered old hat a makeover as a unique hanging container for your plant. Pick one of the pots with seasonal flowers in it. Tie a wire around the pot and hang it on the balcony wall. Now, cut a hole in your once-favourite old hat and use it to cover the pot. Mindboggling, isn't it?

HEAD OVER HEELS These old shoes, which had once added to your style quotient, can also make for wonderful planters. Hung on the balcony fence, these coloured boots look great filled with flowering plants. Even high heels and sandals work perfectly well for decorative cacti. Let your imagination run as wild as possible.

BOOK STORE

It doesn't take much to add a little charm to your home or office. Turning an old book into a sassy succulent planter can do wonders. Just select an old book and glue the pages together.

Make sure not to stick the pages to the cover. Let it dry completely. Decide how wide a space you want to fit in your succulent. Leave at least 2 inches around the circumference of the roots to promote growth. Line the box you just cut with a plastic bag, making sure the bottom and sides are covered. Arrange your succulent on top of the plastic bag. Be sure to transfer enough soil from the original planter, along with the plant itself. Trim the excess plastic around the edges, leaving just enough of the liner to keep water from running into the pages of the book when you water it.

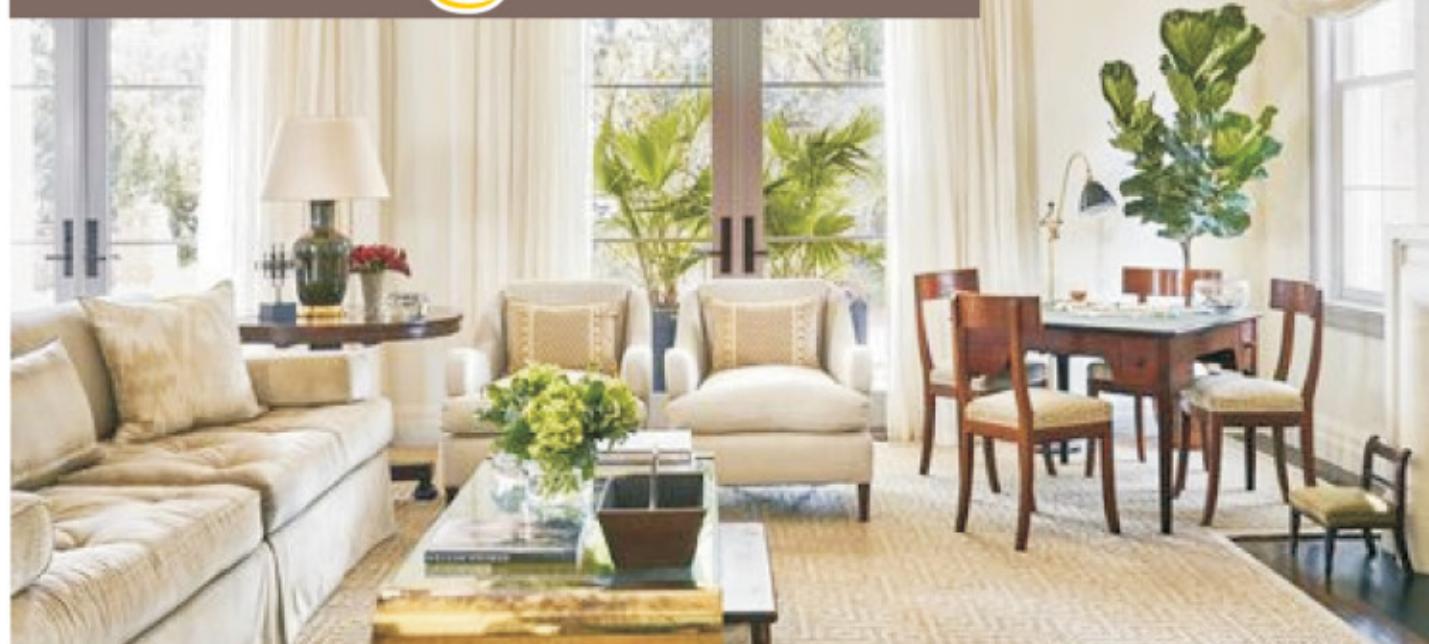
AT THE WHEEL

Next time you get your car tyre changed, don't throw the old one away. Paint it instead, and use it as a plant container. This type of arrangement is possible only if you have adequate space in your balcony or on the rooftop.

You can choose colours according to your preference. The advantage in this case is plenty of room, therefore suitable for bigger plants and bushes like rose, hibiscus et al.

Why the time is ripe for a tech-less

Living room



While we are aware that gadgets will continue to rule our lives in many ways, decor experts around the globe reveal that more families are opting to ditch technology in their living rooms in order to facilitate more quality time. With an overdose of screen time throughout the day, people are consciously making a choice to create a room without digital distractions. They want to bond over meaningful conversations, read a book or enjoy a glass of wine, in peace. Says Dr Rajan Bhonsle, relationship counsellor, "The living room is supposed to encourage interaction. Whether it's a television, ipad or laptop - all gadgets are addictive and it's difficult to limit their usage.

Hence, if the whole family decides to eliminate technology from their living space, they will end up bonding on a personal level. That's good news because the lack of eye-to-eye contact over time has made us apathetic and arrogant as human beings." Who says living rooms can't look chic minus the telly? In fact, this opens up huge opportunities for new designs and creative layouts in decor - you can now use up all the space that was once occupied by a gadget! Here are a few tips:

1. Let all seating face inwards

Arrange all the chairs and sofas in the room to

face each other. This seating arrangement encourages talking, sitting, reading and entertaining. You will now probably communicate face to face and reconnect instead of staring at a screen.

2. Rule of thumb

When you say you have a digital-free living



room, it has to be unplugged in the true sense. To help encourage this, ask your family members to leave their phones, tablets, music player in another room. They may grumble at first, but with time surely realise that it is very relaxing at the end of the day.

3. Stay away from too many colours

While the idea is to create a space that de-stresses you after a long day, be careful not to incorporate too many colours in a tech-less space. Stick to a neutral colour palette and use soft, soothing colours. Whites, creams, blues, browns, greys - all make for brilliant choices.

Decorate your home with these Indian handicrafts

Decorate your home with Indian handicrafts and boast the beautiful, interesting and intricate handicrafts which are made by rural artisans of the country. Add jute, brass and clay handicrafts to your home, says an expert. Cheenu Gupta, Co-founder of Divinehaat.com, an e-commerce portal of handicraft goods, has shared some ideas:

* **Brass handicrafts:** Brass provides a durable and sturdy decor option. There are so many brass handicrafts and show pieces like vases, table tops, wall art, lamps, ornament boxes, plates, bowls and figurines.

True brass tends to oxidize quickly when exposed to air and hence check that the brass product you are buying has been given a clear coating of lacquer. Any brass product will have to be regularly polished to keep the shine intact and remove any tarnishing.

* **Jute handicrafts:** Give a wow factor to your drawing room with one of the most affordable natural fibers Jute. There is a huge range of jute products which includes bags, rugs, lamps, tables, office stationery, curtains wall-hangings and many more.

Jute products are eco friendly and offer a natural, green way to decorate the house.

* **Clay handicrafts:** Clay pottery is supposed to be one of the most ancient forms of handicrafts in India.

You can choose from lovely terracotta planters or clay serving utensils to beautiful vases to decorate the house. Not only these products look beautiful but food cooked in the pottery is considered good for health.

There are multiple types of clay pottery - terracotta, red, black and grey pottery.

* **Wooden handicrafts:** Decorate your house with wooden furniture, toys, utensils, decorative pieces, jewellery and many more designer household goods like lamp shades, candle stands, vermillion boxes, jewellery boxes, bangle holders. Carved wood furniture is a treasured furniture item in a lot of homes.

* **Dhokra handicrafts:** Dhokra is one of the oldest forms of handicrafts. Dhokra candle



stands, pen stands, ash trays, horses, elephants, peacocks, owls, religious images, measuring bowls and other show pieces give an extra edge to the corner of your house.

Dhokra cast metal and ironware has a rugged vibrancy about it. It looks beautiful in any corner of your home.

* **Marble handicrafts:** To enhance the beauty of your house decorate it with marble decorative vase, marble elephants for the drawing room, pooja thali, idols of god for the spiritual room.

* **Art and metal ware handicrafts:** Wall art designing for living room is a new trend. One can choose from varieties of designs to go in sync with your living room.

Pune teen, who killed 2 with Porsche, submits 300-word essay on road safety

The minor driver of the Pune car crash that killed two techies submitted a 300-word essay on road safety, complying with his bail conditions.

New Delhi: The 17-year-old boy involved in the fatal Pune Porsche crash that killed two techies has submitted a 300-word essay on road safety to the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), complying with his bail conditions, an official said on Friday. He submitted the essay to the JJB on Wednesday, the official said news agency PTI. The teenager was previously released from an observation home after the Bombay High Court ruled his detention illegal. Initially, following the May 19 accident in Kalyani Nagar, the JJB ordered him into the care of his parents and assigned the essay as part of his bail. Police allege the teen was driving a Porsche under the influence of alcohol when he collided with a two-wheeler, resulting in the deaths of the two software engineers. Public outcry erupted over his seemingly lenient bail terms, prompting the police to request a revision from the JJB. The board then sent him to an observation home on May 22. However, the High Court ultimately



deemed his detention unlawful and emphasised the proper enforcement of juvenile justice laws, leading to his release.

Meanwhile, on July 2, a Pune court granted bail to the father and grandfather of the juvenile, who were accused of kidnapping

and wrongfully confining their family driver and forcing him to take responsibility for the crash. The boy's father, Vishal Agarwal, a prominent builder, and his grandfather were arrested in May and have been under judicial custody since then. Since Agarwal was arrested in a separate cheating case, he remains behind bars, but the grandfather was released. According to police, the teen's father and grandfather allegedly kidnapped their family driver hours after the crash, wrongfully confined him at their bungalow, and tried to force him to admit that he, and not the juvenile, was behind the wheel when the accident took place. Following the accident, there were multiple attempts to cover up the incident to save the minor boy, including swapping his blood samples at the hospital where he was brought for a sobriety check. The accident and the subsequent interference by his influential family led to a massive uproar across the country, with people calling for justice for the victims.

Delhi metro, Rail Vikas Nigam unite for infrastructure projects in India, overseas

New Delhi: The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly serve as a Project Service Provider for design, construction, and consultancy services both in India and overseas. This strategic partnership was cemented on Thursday, with PK Garg, Director of Business



Development at DMRC, and Rajesh Prasad, Director of Operations at RVNL, signing the MoU in the presence of senior officials. DMRC stated that the collaboration aims to leverage the combined expertise and resources of both organisations to deliver complex infrastructure projects more efficiently and effectively.

The MoU covers a wide range of projects, including metro and railway systems, high-speed rail, highways, mega-bridges, tunnels, institutional buildings, workshops, depots, signal and telecommunication (S&T) works, and railway electrification. This MoU represents a proactive approach to meeting these needs by utilising the strengths and capabilities of both DMRC and RVNL, DMRC stated in the release.

How A Trip To Kashi 30 Years Ago Convinced Sudha Murty To Not Buy Sarees

New Delhi: Rajya Sabha MP and engineer-turned-philanthropist Sudha Murty has revealed in an interview that she has not bought a saree in 30 years. The reason: a trip to Kashi (Varanasi). Sudha Murty, wife of Infosys chairman Narayana Murthy, has often been in the news for her simplicity despite her immense wealth. In an interview with The Voice of Fashion, Sudha Murty has shared: "It is said that when you go to Kashi, you should give up something you like very much. I used to love shopping, so my promise to the Ganga was that I would give up shopping for this lifetime." Ms Murty, 73, said in the interview that her commitment to this promise is deeply rooted in her upbringing as her parents and grandparents lived frugal lives with minimal possessions.

When my mother passed away six years ago, it took us just half an hour to give away the things in her cupboard because she had just 8-10 sarees in it. When my grandma passed away 32 years ago, she had just four sarees. They travelled light on this earth, and since that has been part of my upbringing, I found it easier to adopt a simpler life with fewer possessions," she said. For over two decades, Ms Murty has been wearing sarees gifted to her by her sisters, close friends, and occasionally, the NGOs she works with. Among her most cherished possessions, she said, are two hand-embroidered sarees given to her by a group of women whose lives she helped transform through her work with the Infosys Foundation. While her sisters initially gifted her a couple of sarees each year, Ms Murty eventually found the growing collection cumbersome to handle. "I told them enough of this gifting. I have too much already," she said.

I've been wearing sarees for fifty years now and I always make sure that I air them out after wearing, iron them, and keep them away. I don't wear my sarees so low that they sweep the floor, so they don't get dirty and have longer lives," she added. The Infosys Foundation chairman, in her maiden speech in the Rajya Sabha earlier this week, pitched for a government-sponsored vaccination program to combat cervical cancer. Ms Murty also called for the recognition of 57 domestic tourist sites as World Heritage Sites.

Staring At Possible Defeat In State Polls, BJP-Led NDA Plans To Do A Madhya Pradesh In Maharashtra

New Delhi: The BJP-led Mahayuti or National Democratic Alliance in Maharashtra consist of Shiv Sena-Shinde and NCP-Ajit Pawar. The party is probably staring at a possible defeat in the upcoming state assembly elections if the trends of the Lok Sabha Elections hold for the assembly polls as well. In the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, the Mahayuti suffered a setback against the Maha Vikas Aghadi or INDIA bloc comprising of Congress, Sena-UBT and NCP-Shardad Pawar. In the 2019 polls, the NDA had bagged 41 Lok Sabha seats out of the total 48. However, in the recently concluded polls, the NDA got only 17 seats. In the recently concluded Maharashtra Legislative Council Elections for the four seats, the Mahayuti and Maha Vikas Aghadi

bagged two seats each, thus showing that the path ahead may not be easy for the NDA. The Maharashtra assembly has 288 seats and the majority mark is 145. If the current Lok Sabha trends are converted into the assembly segment results, the NDA is likely to win around 120 seats while the INDIA bloc may bag 160 seats. Thus, the BJP is very much aware of the possible poll results and is trying to do a Madhya Pradesh in Maharashtra. In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP recorded a landslide victory riding on the popularity of the Ladli Behan scheme under which women get a monthly financial aid of Rs 1,250 per month. Now, the Maharashtra government is planning a similar scheme named 'Ladki Bahin' scheme for women under which eligible women will be given

Rs 1,500 per month. Of a total of 9.29 crore voters in Maharashtra, there are 4.46 crore women electors and a total of 4.83 crore men. According to official data, of the 4.46 crore women voters, only 2.63 crore voted in the general elections. The BJP wants to tap this vote bank clubbed with the Ladki Behan Yojana along with the Central government's flagship schemes like PM Awas and Ujjwala Yojana.

Opposition's Reaction

NCP (SP) Lok Sabha member Supriya Sule said that while it's a good announcement, but this coming just ahead of the polls shows it's another election 'jumla' (gimmick). "As the Maharashtra elections are hardly 2 to 3 months away, a shower of 'jumlas' was expected from the state government," the Baramati.

Enforcement Directorate raids in four cities in Delhi Jal Board scam

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has carried out search operations at multiple locations in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, and Hyderabad in connection with a money laundering case linked to a scam involving the Delhi Jal Board (DJB). The central probe agency's investigation, based on an FIR filed by the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) of the Delhi government, alleges a scam worth Rs 1943 crore in the augmentation and upgradation of 10 Sewage Treatment Plants (STP) in the national capital. The Enforcement Directorate accuses a private company, Euroteck Environmental Pvt. Ltd., and others of colluding to secure tenders at inflated rates, causing significant losses to the exchequer.



The searches yielded cash amounting to Rs 41 lakh, incriminating documents, and digital evidence, officials said. According to the case details, four tenders, valued at Rs 1943 crore, were awarded to three joint venture entities in October 2022. The ED has found that the tenders were awarded at inflated rates, and the costs adopted by DJB officials, the joint ventures, and Euroteck in the alleged scam.

Enforcement Directorate has also claimed that bribe money from the DJB scam was channelled into AAP as election funds. The agency had summoned Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for questioning in the case, but he did not depose before it. The central agency is probing the role of DJB officials, the joint ventures, and Euroteck in the alleged scam.

Delhi to see wet weekend, 21 lakh affected in Assam floods as rivers overflow

The flood situation in Assam remains critical, affecting nearly 21 lakh people across 29 districts. Delhi and other north Indian states are also set to witness showers over the weekend.

New Delhi: Moderate rain is expected to lash the Delhi-NCR region and heavy rain in the northeastern states, even as the severe flood situation in Assam remains critical. The India Meteorological Department has predicted moderate to

heavy rainfall in most areas in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, and Rajasthan. Himachal Pradesh is likely to receive heavy showers. The situation remains grim in Assam, with nearly 21 lakh people affected in 29 districts. Major rivers, including the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, are flowing above danger levels, causing widespread inundation of agricultural land and submerging villages in Assam.

Other parts of Northeast India are also reeling under the impact of heavy rainfall, with landslides occurring in Manipur, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh. According to the IMD, heavy rainfall in northwest and northeast India over the past few days has reduced the overall monsoon precipitation deficit in the country from 11% on June 30 to just 3% on Thursday.

ASSAM SITUATION REMAINS GRIM

The death toll from floods and landslides

has risen to 62, according to the latest estimates by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA). A staggering 21,13,204 people have been affected across the state. The worst-hit

relief camps set up by the authorities. Additionally, relief materials have been distributed to over 7,24,322 people who haven't evacuated their homes.

An alert has been issued in Kamrup Metropolitan district, where the Brahmaputra, Dibrugarh, and Kollong rivers are overflowing, submerging vast areas of land. The Brahmaputra River and its tributaries remain a cause for concern as they continue to flow above danger levels at multiple points. Additionally, the Barak River and its tributaries pose a significant threat to nearby communities.

The situation in Arunachal Pradesh is expected to improve with rainfall subsiding. Over 60,000 people were affected across many districts, and landslides have snatched communication lines in seven districts. The IMD has predicted isolated heavy rain in the state on July 5. Heavy rain is expected to continue in Manipur and Meghalaya as well.



districts include Dhubri, with 6,48,806 affected people, followed by Darrang (1,90,261), Cachar (1,45,926), Barpeta (1,31,041), and Golaghat (1,08,594), according to the government agency. Relief efforts are underway to support the displaced population. Nearly 39,338 people have taken refuge in 698

Smart storage under Staircase

The space below the staircase can be utilised for storage or as a display area maximising space with smart ideas that are innovative and useful is what homemakers are looking for these days.

However, finding a solution that is utilitarian and attractive becomes an interesting challenge. Most furniture these days is modular, incorporating some storage facility to maximise utility. Beds and sofas come with storage. Wood chests, apart from being decorative, allow you to store trinkets. Study tables come with cubbyholes and shelves for added

storage. Another alternative to maximise storage that will not bring in new furniture is the creation of storage in an odd space in the home, such as the area below the staircase.

ALCOVE

Many home owners are efficiently utilising the space below the staircase and some of the space abutting the staircase to create an alcove. The area beneath the staircase is quite valuable when space is at a premium. There are many ideas on how to make the most of this otherwise lost space.

TV CABINET

We could all use some extra storage space and the space under the stairs could be ideal for a variety of storage needs. This space can be used for concealed storage or for housing a TV cabinet if

need be. Both are extremely practical and good options that are seen in most homes.

BUILT-IN SHELVES

If the staircase has a high intermediate landing, then the space below can be considered for shelving. Built-in storage with shelves and drawers that will take care of the

oddest cranny is the most basic way to utilise the space. For convenience, two cupboards can be built and the one with the highest point can be used to store unwieldy long coats or sports equipment such as golf clubs and cricket bats. All other knickknacks can be stored in the various drawers and shelves in the remaining space. This idea works well when the stairwell runs behind a door or if the staircase is in a small area.

NOOK TO RELAX IN

Having bookcases under the staircase are a good way to use space that would otherwise be wasted. Besides, you can also consider creating a niche activity space under the stairs. If your staircase faces the living room, you could have a music area or a bar. It can be a small home office, or even a small hobby or craft room.

If your staircase is located close to the utility area, it could serve as a convenient location for a small laundry room. If your staircase runs down into the front hallway, the area beneath could house a shoe rack. If it goes up to the

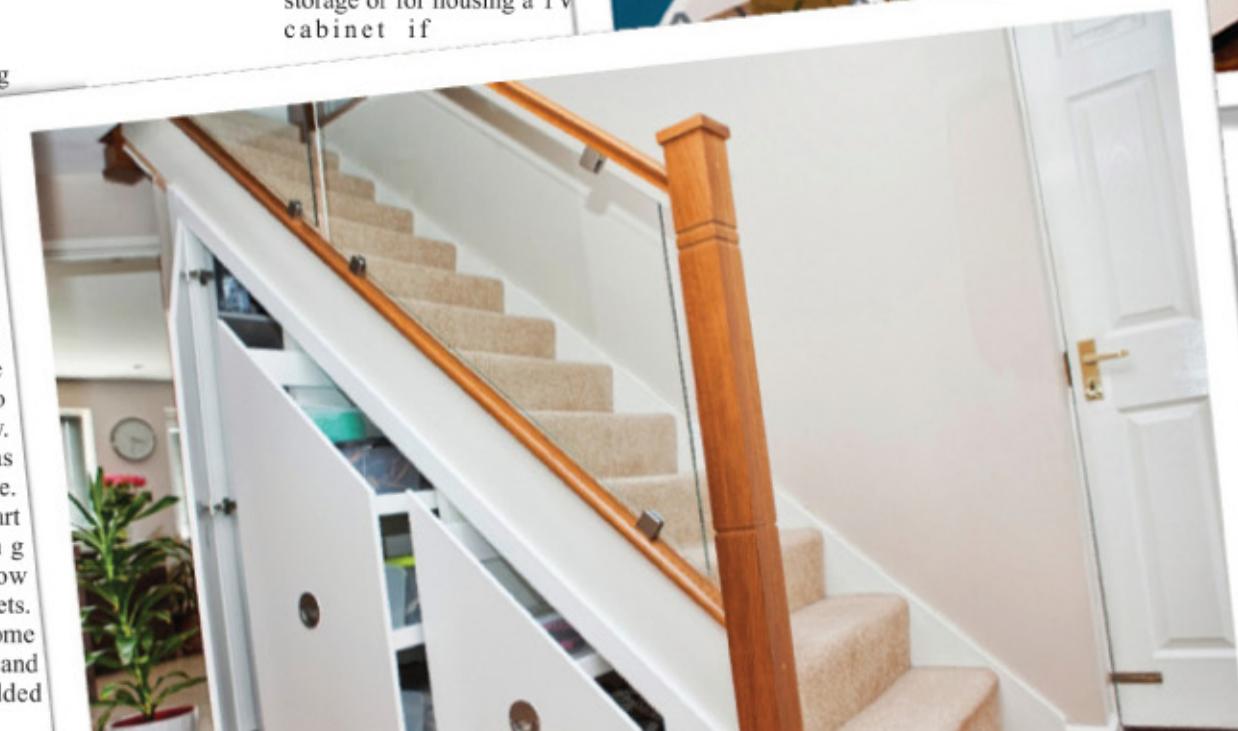
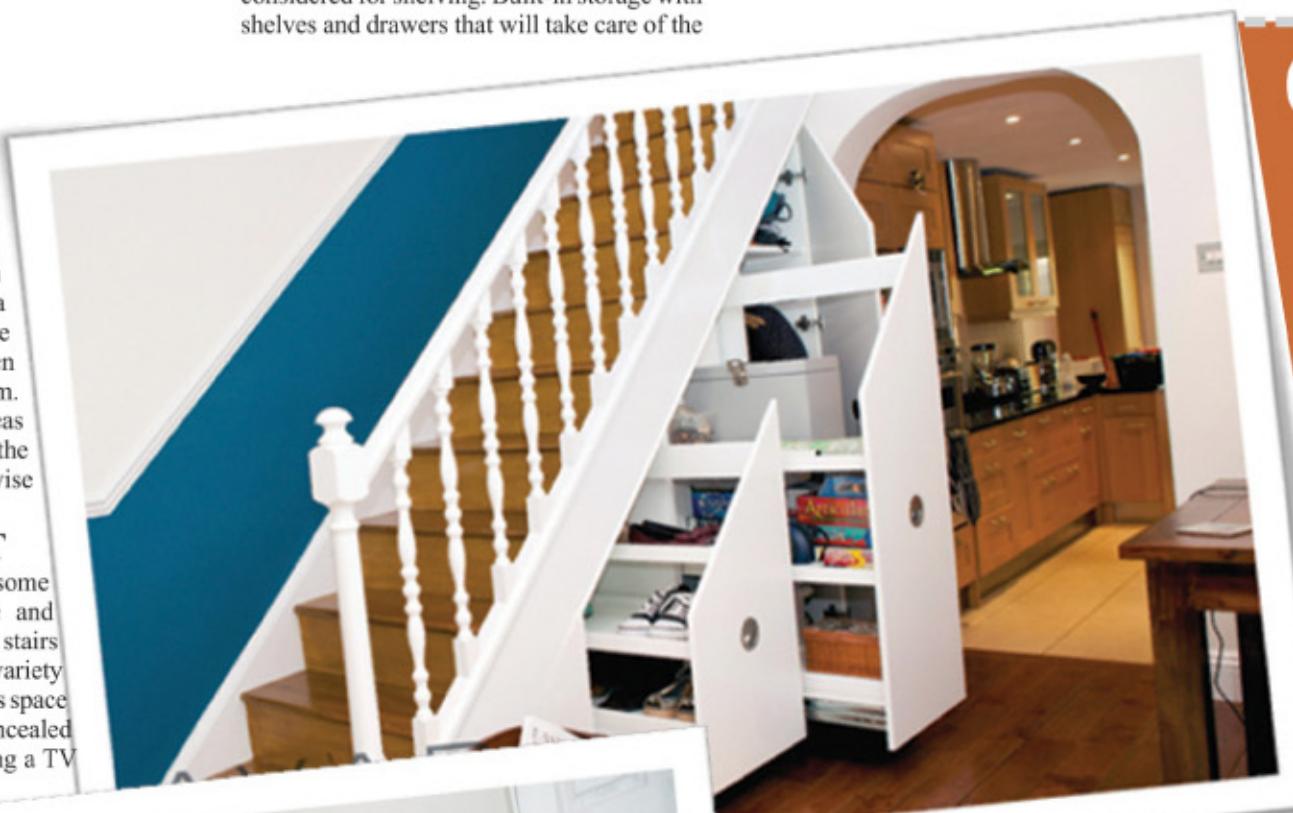
bedroom, you could have a mini cabinet or a wardrobe under the stairs.

STORAGE FOR TOYS

It could also serve as an efficient toy storage area for your children. For a toy storage area, find baskets, plastic tubs or bins of different sizes and then design shelving of different heights and widths to accommodate them. Ensure that these storage spaces are both attractive and easy to access. It can be simply shelved out and left open, or covered as a screen, or covered as a complete cupboard.

KITCHEN CABINETRY

If the staircase is in the dining room, consider having a superior quality wine storage cabinet below the stairs. Neat wood racks meant for wine bottles along with a temperature control mechanism will occupy little space as opposed to making a separate wine cellar. Smart shutters with glass can let you have a good view of your wine collection.



Choosing the best kitchen

connected to the dining area; some may build a beautiful temple, some may have just an idol; some may like it centrally air conditioned, whereas others may decide how to place it manually.

WOMEN DECIDE

Gone are the times where everything was accepted. The women, today, customise their bedrooms, their verandah, and the kitchen. The kitchen truly is the heart of the home and social gatherings.

THE TEMPLE OF FOOD

Kitchen designs are of various types. The one wall style, which is generally opted in for service or studio apartments, offers to save as much space as possible. The galley style, which is a walk-through kitchen, is designed with two walls opposite to each other utilising every inch of space. The L-shaped kitchen, which is designed basically for medium-sized kitchens, offers as much as workspace as possible. Likewise, the horseshoe or the U-shaped kitchen has three walls and the island (platform) in a similar shape, so that more than one person can work comfortably in the kitchen at the same time.

Few housewives who either have redone and renovated their kitchen, or have designed it the way they want it in a newly-bought house, have many common and related ideologies of designing a kitchen as a bright and a welllit space, have proper ventilation, lots of room for storage. Some of them had Indian conventional style of cooking.

Narendra Kaur Bagga, a housewife, says, "I have seen how trends change, but in my kitchen, I feel connected to the house, talking to my husband becomes easier while I cook and I can serve easily. Also, I can attend guests simultaneously, take a peek on what is going on the television; I do not have a door to my kitchen, it is open."

How to maximize your Space at home

When there is no room to spare, maximizing the potential of every inch becomes critical. Ajit Chellapan, of Gimi, India, shares some tips...



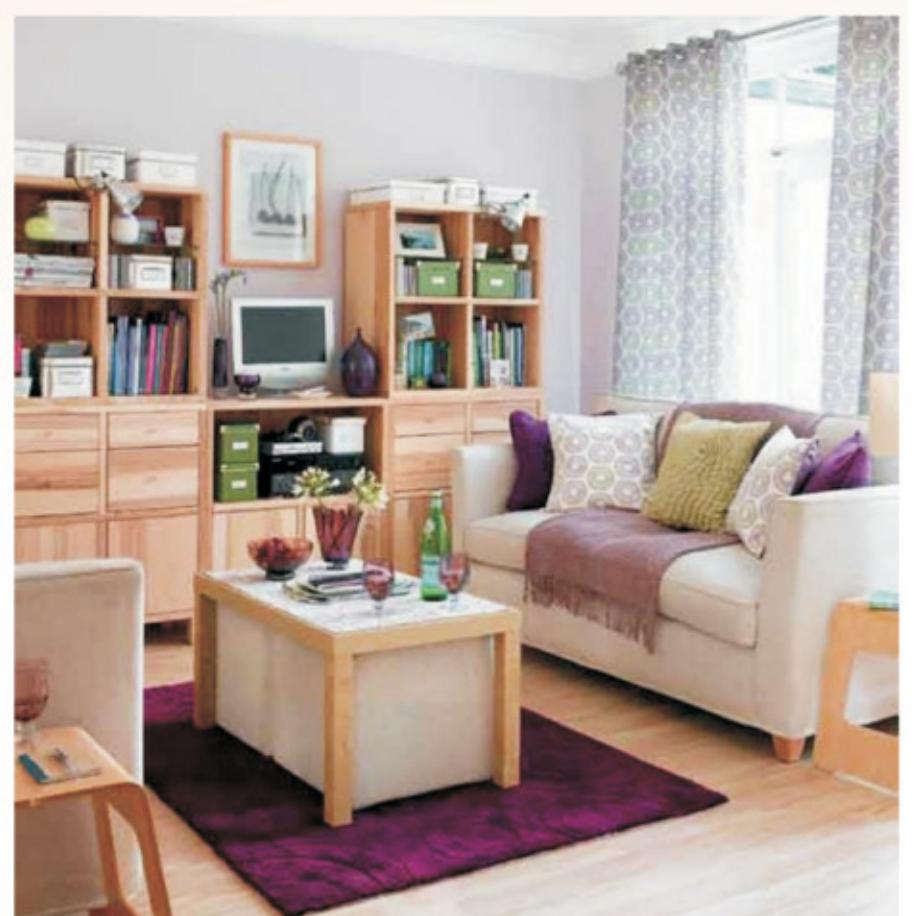
Small spaces can be quite cozy, but squeezing-in is often challenging. When you're pressed for space, the "pile" can be your worst enemy. When there is no room to spare, maximizing the potential of every inch becomes critical. This is typically seen in a family setting where it is challenging to find space in a small house or an apartment thus being a major cause of concern. Due to this constraint a lot of things are usually

dropped. The only solution to save space is being 'Creative'.

Most Essential: Since storage space is at a premium in smaller homes, being creative is an important part which will help in designing the minimum space at your home. You can opt for minimalism concept as well. Minimalistic design is softer, more personal and easier to live with. Generally in a minimalist design, only the most essential

elements are taken into consideration for people whose main focus is the functioning of their home. Apart from that, the clean look of modern interiors make homeowners love this type of concept which is clutter free and stress free. Untapped accommodation space under the staircase, wall mounted cabinets, can also help in storing most of the items which helps in saving space. Using of compact home utility products also provides a perfect solution for making your homes look clutter and stress free.

Role of Technology: Innovation and technology plays a major role. Most of the products available in the market today are driven by innovation and backed with technology. For example, with the advent of Nitrogen technology (originated in Italy) uses Nitrogen that is blown into the pipes/handles of the product at a very low temperature (-20 degrees) during the injection phase to empty the closed cavities from the inside making them exceptionally resistance to bending and twisting making the products long lasting. This type of technology is used in products such as balcony cloth dryer, ironing boards etc. This



What are 'dal-chawal' funds? Edelweiss CEO Radhika Gupta explains

New Delhi. Edelweiss MD and CEO Radhika Gupta shared tips for safely investing in mutual funds on social media where she advised followers to ensure 80% of their portfolios consist of 'dal-chawal' funds. Sharing an example, Gupta mentioned she recently saw the portfolio of an investor who had invested Rs 27,000 worth of monthly SIP across 31 funds, of which 15 were narrow sectoral ones, cautioning it as "a danger in these times." "A danger in these times is to fill your portfolio with narrow ideas that ideally are satellite allocation. Remember, 80% of the portfolio should be 'dal-chawal' funds!" said Gupta. When a follower asked what such funds would comprise, she added, "I mean stuff that is not narrow themes. Hybrid funds, diversified equity funds, active or passive, it doesn't matter. The point is broad-based, all-weather stuff."

What's a dal-chawal fund?

According to Gupta, broad-based mutual funds that are 'all-weather' and 'span a range of sectors' would be 'dal-chawal' funds. As an example, she pointed to balanced advantage and aggressive hybrid type funds, including flexi, multi, large and mid, and broad-based 250-500 index funds, calling these "forever funds."

"Active or passive doesn't matter — the point is not a narrow theme-based fund that works in one cycle and not in the next," she added.

Should you invest in dal-chawal funds?

As per Gupta, investing in broad-based funds ensures you're covered through various market cycles and do not take hits because of over-allocation in one or two narrow sectors that may be on a downward spiral.

In short, it refers to the old adage — don't put all of your eggs in one basket. A diversified, broad investment portfolio ensures that you don't sink if your investment does and that your investments would ideally balance each other out in times of gains and losses.

In another series of posts on X, Gupta shared a few facts about sector rotation "since sector funds are the flavour of the season." Sharing graphs to explain her points, she noted that narrow sector funds saw returns in line with the market and would "rarely" beat it.

On specific sector funds, Gupta noted that these have cycles. Broad funds aggressively move between down cycles and up cycles, but prediction of the down cycles is difficult and sometimes counterintuitive.

HDFC Bank falls 4% after weak Q1 business update. Should you buy the dip?

NEW DELHI. Shares of HDFC Bank fell sharply on Friday, declining 4% in early trade after a weak business update. This not only led to a substantial erosion in its market capitalisation but also raised doubts among analysts about the bank's future performance.

Historically, the June quarter has been seasonally soft for the private lender, but the latest reported numbers are slightly lower than the usual 1-3% sequential growth range, said brokerage firm Nomura. HDFC Bank Q1 business update

The bank reported 11% year-on-year growth or flat sequential growth in its gross assets under management (AUM) on a pro-forma basis. Net of loan sell-downs, gross loans declined 0.8% sequentially, while year-on-year growth stood at a modest 10.8%. Deposit growth was soft during the quarter, with 15.3% year-on-year increase on a pro-forma basis and flat sequential growth. The current and savings account (CASA) deposits declined 5% sequentially, causing the CASA ratio to drop 190 basis points to 36%.

Should you buy the dip?

Several brokerages said the latest quarterly business update from HDFC Bank was disappointing.

Analysts at Jefferies described the flat deposit growth as "slightly disappointing," contributing to the negative sentiment around the bank's stock. Meanwhile, Nomura India noted that HDFC Bank's loan and deposit growth (on a pro-forma basis) are tracking below their FY25F estimates of 12% year-on-year and 17% year-on-year, respectively. The brokerage believes that while the bank's balance sheet course correction is underway, it will be a gradual process. At current valuations of 2.3 times one-year forward book value per share (BVPS), Nomura does not see a case for significant outperformance compared to other private banks and maintains a "neutral" rating with a target price of Rs 1,660. Meanwhile, Morgan Stanley, which has an 'Overweight' recommendation and a price target of Rs 1,900 per share, stated that HDFC Bank's volume growth was expected to be soft due to seasonality in the June quarter.

Need mechanism to tackle fraud, market abuse

MUMBAI. Markets watchdog Sebi has asked stockbrokers to put in place an institutional mechanism by August 1, to help prevent and detect frauds or market abuse so that the system can instill confidence in the securities market. In a new circular amending the extant master circular, invoking the provisions of Chapter IVA of Sebi (stock brokers) (Amendment) Regulations, 2024, the Securities and Exchange Board (Sebi) on Thursday said the new mechanism should be in place by August 1 for qualified stock brokers.

The Sebi circular states that the new provisions will come into force in a risk-based, staggered manner to ensure smooth adoption by stockbrokers. Brokerages will get sufficient time, based on their size, to make necessary changes, it added. The new circular is an update of the circular issued on May 22, 2024, for stockbrokers, listing a range of issues like registration, supervision and oversight, dealings with their clients, default-related provisions and investor grievance redressal mechanisms. The latest circular asks stockbrokers to establish an institutional mechanism to prevent and detect fraud or market abuse, and invokes the provisions of Chapter IVA of the stock brokers amendment regulations, 2024. The other directions in the new mechanisms include putting in place a system for surveillance of trading activities and internal controls; listing out obligations of the brokerages and their employees.

Budget 2024: Standard deduction may be increased to Rs 1 lakh

The budget for 2018 reinstated a Rs 40,000 standard deduction for salaried individuals, which was increased to Rs 50,000 in the interim budget of 2019.

Budget 2024 is just around the corner, and there are many expectations and speculations regarding the benefits Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman may announce for taxpayers under Modi '3.0'. One such anticipated benefit in the upcoming budget is an increase in the standard deduction limit, which experts think is long due. The standard deduction of Rs 40,000 per year for salaried individuals was reintroduced in Budget 2018, replacing two earlier deductions — travel allowance (Rs 19,200) and medical deduction (Rs 15,000) per annum. In the interim budget of 2019, the standard deduction limit was

increased to Rs 50,000. However, there has been a continuous demand to increase this limit, as the combined total of the replaced deductions was Rs 34,200. The current limit of Rs 50,000 offers only marginal additional savings to taxpayers.

Read Full Budget 2024 Coverage

What is Standard Deduction?

The standard deduction is a flat deduction available to individuals earning a salary. Employees do not need to submit any proof or documents to the employer or IT Department to claim this deduction. A standard deduction of up to Rs 50,000 per year is allowed when computing income chargeable under the head "salaries." This deduction is available to all employees, whether in the private or government sector, regardless of the amount of salary. Until FY 2022-23, the standard deduction was available only under the old regime. However, starting from FY 2023-24, salaried taxpayers are also eligible for a standard deduction of



Rs 50,000 under the new tax regime.

The standard deduction is also available in the case of income from a pension, provided that the pension received is chargeable under the head "Income from Salaries" and not under "Income from Other Sources." In other words, the pension received by an individual after retirement is chargeable under the head "Income from Salaries," and the standard deduction is allowed in this case.

However, if the pension is received by the individual's dependents after their death,

it is considered family pension and is chargeable under the head "Income from Other Sources" in the hands of the recipients. In this case, the standard deduction is not allowed.

Will Standard Deduction be increased?

"The middle-class, especially the salaried, are anticipating quite a few tax reliefs in the upcoming interim budget 2024. The Finance Act, 2018, introduced a standard deduction from salary of Rs 40,000. This was increased to Rs 50,000 in 2019. It has been almost five years since the standard deduction was revised," said Rahul Charkha, Partner, Economic Laws Practice. He added that to bring parity with businessmen and professionals, it is expected that the salaried individuals be provided a standard deduction for their official expenses of an amount of at least Rs 1,00,000 in 2024. "The demand has become louder after the standard deduction was made a part of the new tax regime last year," said Charkha.

Zomato suspends hyperlocal delivery service 'Xtreme' due to low demand

NEW DELHI. Zomato has discontinued its 'Xtreme' hyperlocal delivery service, citing low demand, reported The Economic Times. Launched in October last year, the service operated in most cities where Zomato is active, utilising the existing delivery fleet to transport small packages for small and large merchants, similar to services like Porter. Zomato executive explained that 'Xtreme' was always intended as an experiment. "Many restaurants handle their own deliveries and wanted the same quality for their services. That was why we started 'Xtreme'. But it was always an experiment and could have gone either way," the executive said.



The 'Xtreme' app has been removed from the Google Play Store, and Zomato has yet to officially comment on the suspension. Zomato's entry into hyperlocal delivery came at a challenging time for competitors. Dunzo, backed by Reliance Retail, was facing difficulties, prompting Ola to launch its own service, Ola Parcel, in

Bengaluru using electric two-wheelers. In a related development, Zomato has relaunched its 'Legends' service, which delivers food from renowned restaurants in one city to customers in other cities. The revamped service now delivers directly from the restaurants and requires a minimum order of Rs 5,000. Customers can place orders from different restaurants in a single transaction. Recently available in cities like Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru, there are plans for further expansion. 'Legends' was first launched in 2022 but later shifted to delivering pre-stocked items from other cities for faster delivery. Shares of Zomato were trading 0.46% lower at Rs 206.35 at 12:24 pm.

Heatwaves hurt retail car sales in June despite big discounts

NEW DELHI Retail sales of cars in India fell for the second consecutive month in June as heatwaves across the country deterred customers from making purchases despite substantial discounts, a dealers' body reported on Friday.

Passenger vehicle sales dropped 6.8% year-on-year in June, a steeper decline compared to the 1% dip in May, according to data from the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA), which tracks monthly retail sales from dealers to buyers. Auto sales are considered a key indicator of private consumption in India. The auto industry contributes 7% to the country's GDP, as per government data. The intense heat in northern India has reduced footfall at dealerships, leading to fewer car purchases, especially impacting small cars and electric vehicles. Subdued retail demand also resulted in muted wholesales for some carmakers.

Tata Motors attributed the decline to the impact of the Indian elections and the weather. Mahindra & Mahindra also posted weaker-than-expected overall June wholesale growth.



Analysts noted that concerns about how government policies could affect people's income might discourage consumers from buying vehicles, thereby hurting automakers' sales to dealerships. Despite these challenges, the SUV portfolios of companies like Maruti Suzuki benefited from strong demand, extending the record-high sales seen in the financial year 2024. "Despite improved product availability and substantial discounts aimed at stimulating demand, market sentiment remains subdued due to extreme heat resulting in 15% fewer walk-ins. Dealer feedback highlights challenges such as low customer inquiries and postponed purchase decisions," said FADA President Manish Raj Singhania in a statement.

ITR filing 2024: What happens if you miss July 31 deadline

NEW DELHI. The last date for filing an income tax return (ITR) for the assessment year 2024-25 (FY24) is July 31. Missing this deadline can have serious consequences for taxpayers in India, affecting their financial planning and attracting legal repercussions.

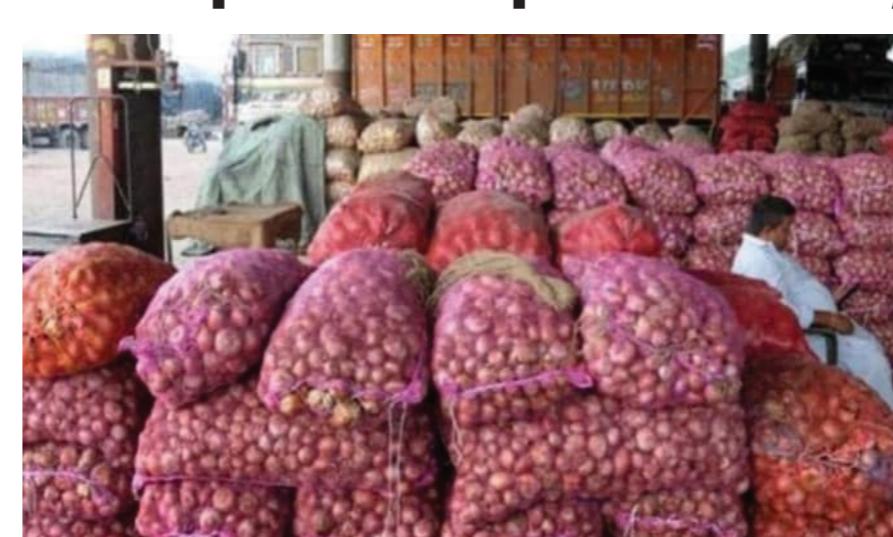
Filing your ITR on time is a crucial duty, but meeting the deadline can sometimes be challenging. It's important to understand the consequences of missing the ITR filing deadline to avoid issues such as financial penalties and scrutiny by tax authorities. "Missing deadlines can lead to consequences. If you fail to file your ITR by the designated date, you might be liable for a penalty under Section 234F of the Income Tax Act," said Vikas Dahiya, Director at ALL India ITR. However, the deadline for filing ITR varies for different types of taxpayers. Specific categories have extended deadlines. "Companies and those who are required to get a tax audit done. These require filing by October

31 of the AY. Transfer Pricing Cases: The deadline for these cases is November 30 of the AY," said Ritika Nayyar, Partner, Singhania & Co. Penalties for missing the ITR deadline: Filing an income tax return after the due date may result in financial penalties and interest charges as per Section 234A of the Income Tax Act, depending on the delay and tax liability. Additionally, Section 234F imposes a late fee, which varies from Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 based on the taxpayer's gross total income. Moreover, filing an ITR late restricts the ability to carry forward specific types of losses. Business and capital losses, except those related to house property, cannot be carried forward or offset against future income if the return is submitted after the due date. "The opportunity to claim certain deductions and exemptions may be forfeited if the return is filed after the original deadline. These deductions are crucial for reducing taxable income and optimising tax liabilities," added

Households face 'curry crisis' as onion, tomato and potato prices skyrocket

As of June 30, wholesale onion prices surged by 106% compared to the previous year, while potato prices rose by 96%.

NEW DELHI. Households across India are feeling the pressure as prices of essential kitchen staples like onions, potatoes, and tomatoes continue to soar. Official data revealed that the persistently high prices are largely attributed to reduced output last year, reported The Hindustan Times. This has been exacerbated by a hot and dry summer since April, which strained supplies of commonly consumed vegetables and heightened demand for these essentials. As of June 30, wholesale onion prices surged by 106% compared to the previous year, while potato prices rose by



96%. Despite a 40% annual decline in wholesale tomato prices, monthly figures spiked by a staggering 112.39%. Retail prices mirrored this trend, with tomatoes reaching an average of Rs 55 per kg by July 3, up from Rs 35 a month earlier, as reported by the Consumer

Affairs ministry's price monitoring division. Last year's irregular rainfall led to a 20% drop in onion output, compounded by a further 20% reduction in winter-sown onions in 2024. It may be noted that high temperatures and depleting reservoir levels since April also

impacted seasonal vegetables like okra, gourds, beans, cabbage, and turnips, causing severe rotting and driving prices higher. In its monthly bulletin, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) highlighted that while headline inflation softened in March-April, the exceptionally hot summer and low reservoir levels could stress summer crop production. The RBI also highlighted the need for careful monitoring of rabi arrivals of pulses and vegetables amid concerns that fluctuating high food prices, particularly in pulses and vegetables, could hinder achieving the 4 percent retail inflation target.

While consumer inflation in India moderated to 4.75%, food inflation remained elevated at 8.69%, as noted in the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) minutes released on June 26. The central bank also flagged that wholesale inflation in India surged to 2.61 percent, the highest in the past year, primarily driven by escalating food prices.

NEWS BOX

Wimbledon 2024, Day 5 Order Of Play: Alcaraz, Sinner and Gauff in action

New Delhi. Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner and Coco Gauff will be some of the big names in action on July 5, Friday as the Wimbledon 2024 moves on to its 5th day. Alcaraz, who is seeded No.3, will face a stern test in the form of Frances Tiafoe while Sinner will be facing Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic in the third round of the men's singles. Emma Raducanu, who has had a fine run so far, will be taking on the 9th seed Maria Sakkari in the third round of the women's singles.

The No.2 seed Coco Gauff will be looking to end the fairytale run of Sonay Kartal on Court 1 on Friday while Daniil Medvedev takes on Jan-Lennard Struff in Court No.2. Paula Badosa, Madison Keys and Ben Shelton are some of the other stars in action on Friday.

Wimbledon 2024: Iga Swiatek, Alexander Zverev and Rybakina advance to third round

London Fourth seed Alexander Zverev stepped up his bid for an elusive Grand Slam title by thumping American Marcos Giron 6-2 6-1 6-4 on Thursday to reach the Wimbledon third round, where he will face Briton Cameron Norrie. The 2020 U.S. Open runner-up who lost again in a major final at the French Open last month, underlined his credentials for grasscourt success by breezing through the first set on the back of two breaks and tightening his grip early in the next. After building a 5-1 lead with some outstanding tennis, the 27-year-old clawed his way from 0-40 down to break Giron again and wrapped up the second set when the unseeded American produced a double fault. Zverev, looking to become only the third German to win the Wimbledon title in the professional era and emulate Boris Becker and Michael Stich, faced a lot more resistance in the third but closed out the match when Giron sent a shot long.

Ready to battle even in the first rounds: Iga Swiatek

Meanwhile, Iga Swiatek produced a more assured display to reach the third round beating Petra Martic. Top seed Swiatek, fresh from her Roland Garros success, had no trouble as she powered past Croatian Martic 6-4 6-3 to remain on cours for her maiden Wimbledon triumph. "I'm happy to play in a solid way," said Swiatek, who has now reached at least the third round in 18 consecutive Grand Slam tournaments.

"It's not like I'm going in the first rounds of Grand Slams knowing that I should win or I should take it for granted. I'm ready to battle even in the first rounds."

"I'm happy that I'm consistent, for sure." 022 champion Elena Rybakina also endured a mid-match blip to get past Laura Siegemund 6-3 6-3.

Team India's iconic 'Vande Mataram' victory lap at Wankhede

NEW DELHI. The entire nation welcomed the Indian cricket team with fervour as they returned from Barbados following a historic T20 World Cup 2024 triumph. The festivities continued throughout the nation on Thursday, July 4 as the Men in Blue were hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a special breakfast meet followed by an open bus victory parade in Mumbai. The World Champions were also felicitated at the Wankhede Stadium in front of 33,000 people who joined in to celebrate their historic triumph. During the event, Rohit Sharma's men did a victory lap for the fans singing the patriotic song 'Vande Mataram' by AR Rahman. The moment has become an instant hit on social media as fans couldn't control their excitement seeing their favourite stars over the moon and flaunting the World Cup trophy along with the national tricolour. In the viral video Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya, Jasprit Bumrah and the rest of the team members can be seen passionately singing 'Vande Mataram' song bringing the crowd to their feet. The video guaranteed to give 'goosebumps' to Indians has got over two million views so far on the social media platform X. The video also captures a rather hilarious moment when a fan throws a shirt towards Hardik Pandya in excitement leaving Bumrah in splits.

Watch the video here:

Fans fill Marine Drive in Victory Parade

Notably, a huge number of fans were gathered to witness team India's victory parade in Mumbai. People from all over the city thronged to Marine Drive to get an up-close look of their favourite stars who finally won an ICC Trophy after 11 years. The entire team looked ecstatic while posing with the World Cup Trophy on the team bus one by one, making the crowd go wild. In a heartwarming moment, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma also held the trophy together raising it for the fans who stood through thick and thin with the Indian team when they failed to gift them a major title in the past 11 years.

R Ashwin expresses his emotions seeing team India's celebrations: 'Proud of Champions'

Star India off-spinner

Ravichandran Ashwin expressed his emotions seeing nationwide celebrations for the Indian team following their T20 World Cup 2024 victory.

New Delhi. Veteran India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin let his emotions out as team India got a hero's welcome upon their arrival back home following their T20 World Cup 2024 victory. The Men in Blue landed in Delhi on Thursday, July 4 after flying from Barbados in a special chartered flight. The World Champions got a rousing reception from fans both at the airport and the team hotel. Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted the entire team for a special breakfast meet following which they travelled to Mumbai for an open bus victory parade.

Seeing team India's rapturous reception by the fans, Ashwin stated that the moments



have filled his heart and he's extremely proud of the champions. "Watching all the videos and pictures from the celebrations yesterday in Mumbai just fills my heart. This nation has given and continues to give

so much to the sport. Once again so proud of the champions," wrote Ashwin on his X account. Notably, a huge number of fans were gathered to witness team India's victory parade in Mumbai. People from all

over the city thronged to Marine Drive to get an up-close look of their favourite stars which reminded people of Argentina's celebrations after their FIFA World Cup 2022 win.

Indian team rejoiced in celebrations

The entire Indian team looked ecstatic while posing with the World Cup Trophy on the team bus one by one, making the crowd go wild. In a heartwarming moment, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma also held the trophy together raising it for the fans who stood through thick and thin with the Indian team when they failed to gift them a major title in the past 11 years. Before the recent T20 World Cup win, India's last ICC Trophy victory came in 2013 when MS Dhoni led a young side to Champions Trophy triumph in England. Since then, the team qualified for the knockout stages of all the ICC events apart from the T20 World Cup 2022 but failed to clinch the title losing five finals in the process. However, the drought ended finally as India beat South Africa in the final of T20 World Cup 2024 in Barbados.

Martinez saves Messi's blushes as Argentina beat Ecuador on penalties to reach semis

New Delhi. Argentina secured a spot in the Copa America semi-finals after a thrilling 4-2 penalty shootout victory against Ecuador on Thursday, following a 1-1 draw in regulation time. Goalkeeper Emi Martinez was the hero of the shootout, making two crucial saves to ensure the defending champions progressed.

The match saw Lisandro Martinez give Argentina the lead in the 35th minute, heading in his first international goal from an Alexis Mac Allister flick-on. Argentina controlled possession early, but Ecuador created the first significant chance when Jeremy Sarmiento forced Martinez into a save from a tight angle. Ecuador increased the pressure in the second half and nearly equalized when a corner deflected onto Rodrigo De Paul's hand, resulting in a penalty. Enner Valencia, Ecuador's captain

and top scorer, hit the post with his attempt, and Argentina's Cristian Romero blocked the rebound. In stoppage time, Ecuador found their equaliser. John Yoehao delivered a perfect cross, and Kevin Rodriguez headed past Martinez in the 91st minute, leveling the score at 1-1 and sending the match to penalties, as there is no extra time in Copa America

knockout games apart from the final.

Messi misses penalty

Lionel Messi, despite injury concerns, started the game and set a record for most minutes played in the tournament's history. However, he clipped the crossbar with Argentina's first penalty in the shootout. Emi Martinez then made two crucial saves, denying Angel Mena and Alan Minda. Nicolas Otamendi sealed the victory with the decisive penalty, setting up a semi-final clash against either Venezuela or Canada. Martinez's jubilant reaction following his saves was a highlight, as he celebrated with the crowd, lifting Argentina into the next round. Argentina will now wait for the winner of the Canada vs Venezuela match for the semi-final clash on July 9.

Virat Kohli leaves for London after World Cup triumph celebrations in Mumbai

NEW DELHI. Star India batter Virat Kohli left for London late night in Mumbai after attending team India's T20 World Cup victory celebrations on Thursday, July 6. Notably, the Indian Cricket Team returned from Barbados via a chartered flight after being stranded in the country for three days due to Hurricane Beryl.

After long delay, the Men in Blue finally landed in Delhi and were given a rousing reception on their welcome. Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted them for a special breakfast meet as he got involved in a light-hearted conversations with all the team members. Following that, the entire team travelled to Mumbai for a special road show where they posed with the trophy for a swarm of fans gathered to see their favourite stars up close. Rohit Sharma's men were also felicitated by the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai where they brought the crowd to their feet with their dance moves



and by singing the patriotic song 'Vande Mataram' by AR Rahman. Despite enduring a tiring day being involved in the celebrations, Kohli reportedly took the flight to London to be with his family. His Bollywood actor wife Anushka Sharma is reportedly in UK along with their two children Vamika and Akaay. Anushka was spotted at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York for the iconic India vs Pakistan game of the T20 World Cup but was never seen again attending matches in the tournament. Kohli

finds form in the big final. Meanwhile, after struggling to score runs throughout the tournament, Kohli was adjudged Player of the Match in the final of the tournament for his match-winning knock of 76 (59). Heading into the final, the 35-year-old wasn't in the best of forms, opening the innings for the first time in the tournament's history scoring just 75 runs in the first seven matches. However, once the team

desperately needed his services in the all-important final after reeling at 3/4 in 4.3 overs, Kohli performed at his vintage best and took them to a good score of 176/7 in their 20 overs. In reply, South Africa looked cruising towards a win needing just 30 runs off the last five overs. With the game slipping away, Indian seamers turned the match on its head with their tight bowling and eventually won the match by seven runs to help the team clinch their second T20 World Cup Trophy.

New Delhi. India captain Rohit Sharma has called his team's 2024 T20 World Cup triumph more special than his 2007 victory as a player, as he was leading the team. Notably, the Men in Blue finally returned home on Thursday, July 4 after winning the World Cup by beating South Africa in the final.

Special arrangements were made both in Delhi and Mumbai for the team as fans gave a rousing reception to the World Champions upon their arrival. Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted the players for a breakfast meet. A special open-roof bus road show was also organized by the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) for the fans in Mumbai to see



their favourite stars up close. In a video released by the BCCI capturing the emotions of the fans and players during the roadshow, captain Rohit is seen reminiscing about his first T20 World Cup win as a player in 2007. However, he calls the 2024 victory a bit more special for him as he was leading the team. The Indian skipper also expressed delight to be able to bring a smile to the faces of the entire nation with their win. "2007 was a different feeling, we started off in the afternoon and this is in the evening. I cannot forget 2007 as it was my first World Cup. This is little more special because I was leading the team so it's a very proud moment for me. This is going to be mad. You can make out the excitement and it shows how much it means not just to us but also to the entire nation. It means a lot. So, I am very happy that we could achieve something like this for them as well," said Rohit in a video released by BCCI.

Mumbai comes out in large numbers to salute World Champions

The Indian team was also felicitated at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai where both Rohit and star batter Virat Kohli shared their emotions on the joyous occasion.

Lionel Messi's paneka penalty goes horribly wrong during Copa America 2024

- **Messi missed the first penalty for Argentina in the shootout**
- **Martinez was the hero as Argentina won the shootout 4-2**
- **Argentina face Venezuela or Canada in the semi-final**

NEW DELHI. Argentina captain Lionel Messi had a moment to forget during the quarterfinal against Ecuador as his attempt at a paneka penalty went horribly wrong on July 4, Thursday. The match between both teams was forced into a penalty shootout after the game had ended 1-1 at the NRG stadium in Texas. Messi, who has been struggling with injuries during the tournament, setup the opening goal in the



game when his corner was flicked on by Alexis Mac Allister and onto the path of Lisandro Martinez, who made no mistake. Ecuador turned on the heat on the World

before Kevin Rodriguez forced the game into penalties with his goal in stoppage time. Since there is no extra time in Copa America this year, Messi was given the job to take the first penalty of the night. The Argentine skipper stepped up and tried an audacious attempt to put the ball into the back of the net.

However, the shot went on to clip the top of the crossbar and went over as the Ecuador goalkeeper had already gone the wrong way. You can check the video below:

Emi Martinez saves the day for Messi and Argentina. In the end, Messi's miss didn't come back to haunt Argentina as Emi Martinez came in to save the day. Martinez, who was the shootout hero in the final of the Qatar World Cup, saved Ecuador's first penalty attempt from Mena. He would then save the second one from Alan Minda as Argentina took the lead in the shootout.

Both teams would convert their next two penalties and Argentina went on to win the shootout 4-2 to progress to the semifinals.

Vanessa Hudgens

And Cole Tucker

Welcome Their First Child

Vanessa Hudgens and her husband and baseball player Cole Tucker have not one but double reasons to celebrate. Cole Tucker turned 28 on July 3. What added to the joyous celebrations was the birth of his first child with his wife Hudgens. As the couple embraced parenthood for the first time, pictures faced on social media showcasing the new mom and dad leaving the hospital. While leaving the hospital, Vanessa Hudgens was clicked seated in a wheelchair, cradling her little one. Cole Tucker followed her closely behind with their bags and belongings in his hand. While the proud mother donned black sweatpants and a light blue button-down shirt, Tucker sported a casual look in a teal graphic hoodie, black shorts, and slides.

The actress made sure to wear her sunglasses as the cute family made their way to their car. While details like the baby's sex and birthdate are yet to be confirmed, one thing is for sure the couple is taking their bundle of joy home to make Tucker's birthday an occasion for double celebration.

Despite the busy day, Hudgens did not miss the opportunity to shower love on her husband on his birthday. Posting a sweet carousel, the High School Musical star wrote, "Happy birthday to my slice of heaven @cotuck, you make the world a brighter place just by being

you."

Vanessa Hudgens and Cole Tucker started dating in 2020. Three years later in 2023, they decided to take the plunge and got married in an intimate Bohemian ceremony in Tulum, Mexico. The actress initially kept her pregnancy news under wraps only to debut her baby bump on the Oscars 2024 red carpet in March. Previously, in an interview with E! News, she also expressed her hopes that her kids will appreciate her work one day. She said, "I'll show my kids all my work. That's why I chose things along the way in my career. I wanted to make sure that when I did have kids, there would be something for them to watch at every age."



Shweta Tiwari became a household name after she starred in Kasautii Zindagi Kay. The actress recently recalled filming a scene during the beginning of the show which turned out to be quite gross. She recalled staying in a lake Hungama, she said, "It was really gross. Cezanne Khan and I were shooting for a sequence in one of the early episodes, where my character falls into a river, and Cezanne's character jumps in to save me. The story required our characters to stay in the water the whole night and only come out in the morning when someone else comes to help us. We were shooting this in Film City Lake and stayed in the water all night. In the morning, we realised that kids had been sitting on the edge of the lake and pooping there. I was like, 'Oh shit, we were in this water the whole night!' I also saw a snake crawling there, and realised it was in the water with us at night. The show remains one of the most popular serials on Indian television. During the promotion of the show's sequel, Ektaa Kapoor recalled how she came about to cast Shweta. She said, "I had seen Shweta in a show on Doordarshan. She was not even the lead and was standing far behind in one of the scenes. But something just struck, and I asked my team to reach out to the girl. As for Cezanne, he was already doing a show for us, and I felt the two suited the part completely."

Shweta Tiwari last appeared in the Amazon Prime Show, titled Indian Police Force, a Rohit Shetty directorial. She shared the screen space with Sidharth Malhotra, Shilpa Shetty Kundra and Vivek Oberoi. Her upcoming project includes Singham Again, another Rohit Shetty directorial. It stars an ensemble cast of Ajay Devgn, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Akshay Kumar, Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone. The film is set to release on November 1. Shweta Tiwari is one of the leading names in the Indian television industry. After expanding her work to films, Shweta has also amassed impressive popularity on social media and remains her fans' favourite.



Shweta Tiwari

Recalls Kasautii Zindagi Kay Lake Shoot With Snakes, Kids' Poop: 'Stayed In Water All Night'

Armaan Malik's 1st Wife Payal SLAMS Devoleena Bhattacharjee: 'Jab Aapne Ek Muslim Se Shaadi Kari Thi...'

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Armaan Malik's first wife, Payal has lashed out at Devoleena Bhattacharjee for questioning YouTuber's participation in Bigg Boss OTT 3. In a recent interview, Payal reminded Devoleena that even she faced online trolling when she married a "Muslim guy". Payal urged the actress not to interfere in their married life. Sabse pehle aap yeh dekhie aap kitne criticise hue hai aapki shaadi ko leke. Jab apne ek Muslim guy se shaadi kari thi toh aapne bhi trolling ka saamna kiya tha. Main yhi kehna chahti hu, jab hum aapke life ke baare mein kuch nahi bol rahe toh aap bhi right nahi rakhte ho hamare relation ke baare mein bolne ke liye. (Firstly, see how much you were criticised after you got married. You also faced trolls when you married a Muslim man. I just want to say, when we did not say anything about your life, it is not right for you also to comment on our relationship)." Payal told Instant Bollywood. last month, the 'Saath Nibhana Saathiya' penned down a long post and slammed the makers of Bigg Boss OTT 3 for inviting Armaan with his wives. "Do you think this is entertainment? This is not entertainment, it's filth. Don't make the mistake of taking this lightly because it's not just a reel, it's real. I mean, I can't even understand how anyone can call this shamelessness entertainment. I feel disgusted just hearing about it. Gross. I mean, in just 6/7 days love happened, marriage happened, and then the same thing with the wife's best friend. This is beyond my imagination," a part of her post read. For the unversed, Armaan married Payal in 2011 and they welcomed a son named Chirayu Malik. Six years later, in 2018, Armaan married Payal's best friend, Kritika, without legally ending his first marriage. On December 4, 2022, Armaan took the internet by storm as he announced the pregnancies of both Kritika and Payal. Armaan is now a father to four children: Chirayu, Tuba, Ayan, and Zaid.

Karan Kundrra Kisses Tejasswi Prakash In New Photo From London Vacation; Check Here



Karan Kundrra and Tejasswi Prakash are one of the most adorable couples and there is no doubt about it. The two never fail to show PDA and often set couple goals with their adorable pictures. On Thursday, Karan took to his Instagram handle and shared a series of pictures from his recent London vacation with Tejasswi Prakash. In the first picture, Karan was seen adoring Tejasswi in the backdrop of the London Bridge. Another photo featured the couple posing in front of the Buckingham Palace. In one of the clicks, Karan was also seen holding Tejasswi close as he planted a kiss on her forehead. In the caption of his post, the actor wrote, "London Dump #1" and added, "All my pictures were clicked by my laadiiii btw ???" Check it out here:

Soon after the pictures were shared, fans rushed to the comments section to shower love on the couple. "So so beautiful pictures ?????? stay happy always ??," one of the fans wrote. "Nazr na lage," added another. It should also be noted that Karan's romantic photos with Tejasswi come days after the actor dismissed their breakup rumours. "This is imagination at its peak," he told the Times of India. Karan Kundrra and Tejasswi Prakash's love story was no secret. The two met inside the Bigg Boss 15 house and fell in love with each other. Previously, in an exclusive interview with News18 Showsha, Karan shared that he and Tejasswi were going very strong and were unfazed by the questions about their marriage. "To be honest, if I start taking pressure, then I won't be able to outperform. I am an artist and I am somebody who has to make some very critical decisions in my life," he told us and then added, "I have to worry about so many other things rather than the pressure. No offense but I cannot live my life if I take this pressure. (I am) Wise enough to know when what should happen."