

Bangladesh new interim leader Muhammad Yunus heads home, government to be sworn in today

ST Correspondent

Dhaka, August 7: The Nobel Peace laureate tapped to lead an interim government in Bangladesh called for calm and boarded a flight on Wednesday to return home, a day before his new government is expected to be sworn in to replace ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Muhammad Yunus, 84, was picked by President Mohammed Shahabuddin to lead the new interim government, a key demand of student demonstrators whose uprising drove Hasina to flee to India on Monday. "Let us make the best use of our new victory," he said in a statement before departing Paris, where he had been receiving medical treatment while out on bail from criminal cases brought under Hasina. "I fervently appeal to everybody to stay calm. Please refrain from all kinds of violence." Outside the airport, he told reporters: "I'm looking forward to going back home and see what's happening there and how we can organise ourselves to get out of the trouble that we're in." "I'll go and talk to them. I'm just fresh in this whole area," said Yunus, an economist who was awarded the



2006 Nobel Peace Prize for founding a bank that pioneered fighting poverty with small loans to ordinary people. President Shahabuddin said the rest of the interim government needed to be finalised soon to overcome the crisis and pave the way for elections. Nahid Islam, a key student leader, said he expected the members to be chosen by late Wednesday. Army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman said that he was hopeful the interim government would be sworn in by late Thursday and that the situation in the country was improving and was expected to become normal in the next three to four days. He also said that military leaders had held discussions with student leaders, political parties, and the president and that he was confident that Yunus would be able to take the country towards a democratic process. President Shahabuddin also announced the appointment of a new police chief, Mohammad Mainul Islam, to replace Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun as part of a shake-up of the security top brass that also included a new head of the technical intelligence monitoring agency and changes among senior army officials.

Declare Wayanad landslides as 'national disaster': Rahul Gandhi

Sanjay Kumar

New Delhi, August 7: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, speaking in Zero Hour in Lok Sabha on Wednesday, called for a package for tragedy-hit



Wayanad in Kerala and wanted that the Central government should declare the recent landslides as a 'national disaster'. Gandhi, who is Leader

of Opposition, said the package for Wayanad should go in making disaster resistance infrastructure. The area was hit by landslides after very heavy rain on July 30. A 2-km area of the hill has collapsed. It was just a river of stones. More than 200 persons are dead and vast numbers missing. The death toll would be in excess of 400 persons. Gandhi commended the work of the Centre and state government. He mentioned the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, IAF, central agencies and assistance from Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu. He also thanked the House for support.

Supreme Court expunges Punjab & Haryana HC comments criticising its stay order in contempt matter

Naresh Malhotra

New Delhi, August 7: Terming it as "absolutely unwarranted", "wholly unnecessary" and "a matter of great concern", the Supreme Court on Wednesday expunged the critical comments made by Justice Rajbir Sehrawat of the Punjab and Haryana High Court against it for staying contempt proceedings in a case pending before his Bench. "Compliance with the orders passed by the Supreme Court is not a matter of choice but a matter of bounden constitutional obligation. Parties may be aggrieved by an order. Judges are never aggrieved by an order passed by a higher constitutional forum," a five-judge Special Bench led by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said. "Whether individual judges are in agreement with merits of the order passed by a superior court is beside the point," it noted. "Justice Rajbir Sehrawat has made observations in regard to the Supreme Court of India, which are a matter of grave concern...Judicial discipline in the context of the hierarchical nature of the judicial system

is intended to preserve the dignity of all institutions whether at the level of District Courts, or High Courts or the Supreme Court," the CJI said, terming the judge's comments as "scandalous". "We are pained by the observations made by the single judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. The observations are made in regard to an order passed by the Supreme Court," said the Bench which had on Tuesday taken suo motu cognisance of Justice Sehrawat's comments made in his July 17 order. "Such observations tend to bring the entire judicial machinery into disrepute. This affects not only the dignity of this court but also of the high court," said the Bench which also included Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Justice BR Gavai, Justice Surya Kant and Justice Hrishikesh Roy. The top court said greater caution was expected from Justice Sehrawat in future in dealing with orders of the Supreme Court and the high court

Division Bench. The Special Bench said neither the Supreme Court nor high courts are



supreme and that in fact the Constitution of India is supreme. Attorney General R Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta described Justice Sehrawat's comments as "unwarranted". As Mehta pointed out that a video clip of Justice Sehrawat's

comments against the Supreme Court and the high court's Division Bench was under circulation, the CJI said judges needed to be more restrained in the age of live streaming of court proceedings. Mehta said the video showed Justice Sehrawat calling a Division Bench order to be "rubbish order" and declaring an order of the Supreme Court to be non-est. It was a case of judicial indiscipline and an aggravated form of contempt of court. In his July 17 order, Justice Sehrawat had commented that the Supreme Court had the tendency to presume it's more "Supreme" than it actually was and to presume a High Court to be less 'High' than it constitutionally was. He had sought to emphasise that high courts were not subordinate to the Supreme Court and there was no scope for the latter to issue sundry directions to the former regarding specific proceedings pending in a high court.

Vinesh Phogat disqualified from Paris Olympics for being overweight before final

Simmi Kaur Babbar

Paris, August 7: A day after the best day of her life, when she beat the great Yui Susaki and then reached the final of the women's 50kg freestyle, Vinesh Phogat suffered the greatest possible despair when she was disqualified for being around 100 grams overweight. Assured of at least a silver medal yesterday, Vinesh must return empty-handed from Paris - the third Olympics tragedy of her career. According to sources in the know, Vinesh had a sleepless night as she tried her best to lose weight by the usual methods - exercising, sweating and running - but did not succeed. According to the United World Wrestling rules, the final would be contested between Susan Hilderbrandt of the US and Cuba's Yusneylis Guzman Lopez, who was beaten by Vinesh in the semifinals yesterday. A statement from the Indian contingent said: "It is with regret that the Indian contingent shares news of the disqualification of Vinesh Phogat from the Women's Wrestling 50kg class. Despite the

best efforts by the team through the night, she weighed in a few grams over 50kg this morning. No further comments will be made by the contingent at this time." Vinesh



was to take on Sarah Hilderbrandt in the final today evening. The Indian star was within the 50kg limit on Tuesday but gained weight through the day and the evening due to her food intake as she tried to regain her strength and energy. Vinesh had met the

weight criterion yesterday but she had to do that today as well. After she desperately tried to lose weight today, and failed, Vinesh fainted due to exhaustion and was taken to a clinic at the venue. No amount of appealing by Indian officials is going to change the scenario on Vinesh Phogat's disqualification as world wrestling body United World Wrestling (UWW) chief Nenad Lalovic has said that "rules are rules and everyone has to respect them". In an interview with the Sportstar, Lalovic expressed sadness on the unfortunate turn of events that led to the disqualification of India's Vinesh Phogat from the Paris Olympics. Phogat was disqualified from the Olympics after being found overweight ahead of her women's 50kg final, leaving her medal-less within hours of coming close to an unparalleled gold. "We have to respect the rules. I'm so sad that what happened to her (Vinesh).

She was overweight very small one. But the rules are rules and everything is public. All the athletes are there and it's impossible to let someone to compete who does not make the weight," Nenad Lalovic said in the interview. "We want athletes to compete in their natural weight. This is when they make best performance", he said. The UWW head further said that it was impossible to give Vinesh the medal because she reached the final. "Impossible. Because the brackets are changing, everything is changing. And anyway, the rules are rules. Everybody who goes to this... continues, they know they have a second way. I don't see anything that can be done. The competition continues, and I really don't see that it is possible," Lalovic added. Responding to a question in Sportstar interview, he ruled out reviewing the rules after Paris Olympics and insisted it will only be adhered to more strictly. Meanwhile, Indian Olympic Association president PT Usha said that the Wrestling Federation of India has filed an appeal to UWW to reconsider the decision to disqualify Vinesh and IOA is following that up in the strongest possible manner.

Basement deaths: CBI takes over probe, books owner of Delhi coaching centre

New Delhi, August 7: The CBI has taken over the probe into the deaths of three civil services aspirants at a coaching centre in Old Rajinder Nagar here and registered an FIR against the owner of the institute, officials said on Wednesday. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) took over the case from the Delhi Police late Tuesday evening following a Delhi High Court order. The central agency has re-registered a case against Abhishek Gupta, owner of Rau's IAS Study Circle, in accordance with the laid down procedure, the officials said. Shreya Yadav (25) from Uttar Pradesh, Tanya Soni (25) from Telangana and Nevin Delvin (24) from Kerala drowned after water gushed into the basement of a building housing Rau's IAS Study Circle following heavy rains on July 27. The IAS aspirants were studying in the library set up in the basement when water flooded it resulting in their deaths. The CBI has booked Gupta for culpable homicide not amounting to murder, causing death by negligence, voluntarily causing hurt, negligent conduct, and common intention. The high court had castigated police and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) over the students' deaths, saying it was unable to fathom how they could not come out of the basement.

'Violent protests like Bangladesh possible in India': Salman Khurshid

Navdeep Singh Sahni

NEW DELHI, Aug. 7: Congress leader Salman Khurshid on Tuesday cautioned that a violent anti-government protest similar to those in Bangladesh could potentially occur in India, despite the appearance of normalcy on the surface. Speaking at a book launch event, the former Union minister said, "Everything may look normal in Kashmir. Everything may look normal here. We may be celebrating the victory, although some people believe that victory or success in 2024 was perhaps only marginal, and a lot more needs to be done." "The fact remains that beneath the surface, there is something," he said. "What's happening in Bangladesh could happen here... the spread in our country prevents things from blowing up in the manner they have in Bangladesh," he added.

Khurshid also mentioned that the CAA-NRC protests, spearheaded by women in Southeast Delhi's Shaheen Bagh and which continued for nearly 100 days, inspired similar demonstrations



across the country. He referred to it as a failed agitation since many participants are still in jail. He added that another agitation like Shaheen Bagh

could not take place in the country today. "Do you mind if I say that Shaheen Bagh failed? A lot of us believe that Shaheen Bagh succeeded. But I know what's happening to the people associated with Shaheen Bagh. How many of them are still in prison? How many of them can't get bail? How many of them are being labeled as enemies of this country?" he said. "If I ask myself whether there would be a repeat of Shaheen Bagh, I'm not sure there would be because people have really suffered," he added. Bangladesh is facing a fluid political situation, with Sheikh Hasina tendering her resignation on August 5 amid mounting protests. The protests, primarily led by students demanding an end to a quota system for government jobs, have evolved into broader anti-government demonstrations.

CM Bhagwant Mann visits Vinesh Phogat's home in Haryana

Tejinder Kaur Babbar

Chandigarh, August 7: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday asked why the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) did not raise any objection after wrestler Vinesh Phogat was disqualified from the Paris Olympics on being found overweight ahead of her women's 50 kg final bout. Mann met the family of Vinesh in Charkhi Dabri where he had gone to address a rally. Phogat had scripted history by becoming the first Indian woman wrestler to reach the gold medal bout in the event. She was disqualified on Wednesday after being found overweight ahead of her final bout, ending her hope of a medal. Speaking to media, Mann said he came to Vinesh's residence here. "We are sad," he said while referring to Vinesh's disqualification from the Paris Olympics. The Tribune interview: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini dares Congress to name OBC as CM candidate for upcoming assembly elec-

tions' Praising Vinesh, Mann said she won three games in a day and she defeated strong contestants, including a defending



champion. "Whose fault is this?" he asked on her disqualification. "I do not want to link it with politics. I am a sports lover and I do not want any politics in it... But tell me our Indian Olympic Association members, who have gone there, for what work they

have gone... Why did they not raise this issue and should have asked for one more chance?" he said. Expressing surprise over the developments, Mann said in one day, Vinesh was winning three matches and the next day she was disqualified. "What is happening? We want to become 'Vishwa Guru', but the Indian Olympic Association did not raise an objection even for once," he said. Mann asked whether Vinesh should weigh herself every night. "It is the job of her coach or physiotherapists to ensure what should be eaten before the match and what should be eaten before going to sleep," said Mann. "In an advertisement, they (BJP) say (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi ji stopped the Russia-Ukraine war. I want to ask why this injustice was not stopped against our daugh-

ter," he said. Mann said strong objection should have been raised against Vinesh's disqualification. "What has been done? Any application was given?" he said while referring to Vinesh's disqualification. To a question, he said Vinesh's coach must have been upset with her disqualification. Mann also raised the issue of a red card given to an Indian hockey player in the quarterfinal match. "Everybody was condemning this decision," said Mann. Indian hockey player Amit Rohidas was shown the red card and was also suspended for one match. Meanwhile, Vinesh's uncle and Dronacharya awardee wrestling coach Mahavir Singh Phogat said the whole country is sad after she was disqualified from the Olympics. "There is nothing left to say. The entire country was hoping for a gold medal. Now she has been disqualified," said Phogat.

Elections to 12 Rajya Sabha seats from 9 states on September 3

New Delhi, August 7: Elections to 12 vacant Rajya Sabha seats in nine states will be held on September 3, the Election Commission said on Wednesday. Ten Rajya Sabha seats fell vacant as the sitting members, including Union ministers Piyush Goyal, Sarbananda Sonowal and Jyotiraditya Scindia, were elected to the Lok Sabha. Bypolls are also being held for two seats in Telangana and Odisha. K Keshava Rao from Telangana resigned recently from the House after quitting the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) to join the Congress while Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Mamata Mohanta resigned from her Rajya Sabha seat and primary membership of the party. Besides Goyal, Sonowal and Scindia, the other Rajya Sabha members who won the parliamentary polls and moved to the Lok Sabha are Kamakhya Prasad Tasa (BJP), Misha Bharti (RJD), Vivek Thakur (BJP), Depender Singh Hooda (Congress), Udayanraje Bhosle (BJP), K C Venugopal (Congress) and Biplab Kumar Deb (BJP). The notification for the Rajya Sabha elections will be issued on August 14 and the last date for filing of poll papers is August 21, the commission said. The separate elections for each Rajya Sabha seat will be held on September 3 and the results will be announced the same day.

Kerala: Arrested Maoist leader Soman tortured by police, alleges human rights organisation JMP

KOZHIKODE: Janakeeya Manushyavakasa Prasthanam (JMP), a human rights organisation, has said that Maoist leader Soman, who was arrested by the Anti-Terror Squad of Kerala police last week, is on a hunger strike inside the high security prison in Thrissur. In a statement, the organisation said that Soman is protesting against the police torture and action of making him naked. JMP said Soman has prepared a complaint to the court, and the police said they have emailed it. But it is learnt that the



complainant has not reached the court. It was alleged that though Soman was admitted to the Thrissur Medical College, but he was not given proper treatment. JMP further said Advocate P A Shyna was not allowed to see Soman at Medical College, though she had obtained permission from the authorities. The organisation alleged that the state is trying to create another Stan Swamy in Kerala. Soman, the leader of the Kabani dalam (squad) of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) of the CPI (Maoist), was arrested from Shoranur last Sunday.

Sri Lanka court asks three TN boat drivers to pay 40L each or spend a year in jail

The court on Tuesday also ordered the release of 19 fishermen, and extended the custody of nine other fishers, sources said.

CHENNAI: A Sri Lankan court has sentenced three boat drivers of Rameswaram to undergo one-year imprisonment or pay a fine of 40 lakh Sri Lankan Rupee each for allegedly entering the Sri Lankan waters in violation of International Maritime Boundary Line on June 23. The court on Tuesday also ordered the release of 19 fishermen, and extended the custody of nine other fishers, sources said. The three boat drivers identified as Kaliswaran, Karuppaiah and Jegan have been taken to prison after the verdict, sources said. The 19 fishermen released by the court were handed over to Indian embassy officials for being sent back to India. About nine Rameswaram fishermen, who were arrested on July 23 for IMBL violation, were produced before the court and their custody was extended till August 20.

Condemning the court order, representatives of fishermen associations of Rameswaram, along with DMK MPs and TN Fisheries Minister Anitha Radhakrishnan, met External Affairs

Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday to urge the Union government to get the fishers and drivers released.

Jesuraja and Rayappan, fishermen representatives said, "During the 30-minute meeting, we raised the issue of

When we raised the issue of massive fine and imprisonment being awarded to fishermen, Jaishankar promised that action will be taken by the Indian government to get all the fishermen and boats released from Sri Lanka's custody.

We also raised the need for a delegation-level meeting with the Sri Lankan government and the island nation's fishermen to ensure safe fishing practices in the intra-country waters."

Meanwhile, the AIADMK, along with fishermen associations, staged a protest in Rameswaram condemning the continuous arrest of Indian fishermen. Former AIADMK minister R B Udhayakumar alleged that the state government had failed to address the longstanding issue.

19 fishermen released, custody of 9 extended

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arrest of fishermen. More than 80 fishermen have been arrested in the recent past and they are languishing in Sri Lankan jails.

Hundreds of boats have also been confiscated by the Sri Lankan navy.

'Let him sleep here as all his dear ones too are resting here': Chooralmala resident laments loss of family to landslides

PUTHUMALA (WAYANAD) : C Muraleedharan stood at the Puthumala mass burial ground with a heavy heart. A resident of Chooralmala School Road, he was in the area searching for his cousin, 27-year-old Haridas, who has been missing since the catastrophic landslides.

Though Muraleedharan and Haridas' elder brother Arun suspected that a body kept at the Meppadi Community Health Centre might have been his, it was buried along with other unidentified bodies and body parts because other members of their family were unable to arrive to identify the body for sure. "Let him sleep here as all his dear ones too are resting here," said Muraleedharan, standing next to the grave marked with the DNA identification number 176 where that particular body was buried. Muraleedharan's mother and Haridas' father too are among those missing. The family believes they were all buried together and are yet to decide whether to exhume the body and perform

the religious rites before cremation. "The two of us agreed on burying him here as we feel our other relatives too are buried here. It feels as if he is sleeping near us. Our house and property are devastated,



and we have no proper place to bury him now. Though Seva Bharati volunteers offered to perform the last rites according to our religious practice, we prefer not to exhume the body," Muraleedharan said, his voice choked with emotion. Blood

samples from Haridas' relatives were collected for DNA testing. Haridas had been working as a welder. When Muraleedharan and Arun arrived, preparations were under way to bury three more bodies and body parts in the 50 cents acquired by the district administration from the Harrison Malayalam Plantations at Puthumala tea estate for the mass burial. "Three other members of our family, including my mother, are still missing," said Muraleedharan. "Awaiting DNA test results to identify body of mother." "My wife and two children were not at home as I was out of town for work. Haridas' house and our house were destroyed. While the body of Haridas' mother was recovered, his two brothers escaped," said Muraleedharan, who too is a welder.

The houses were located beyond the road, but the Punnappuzha river changed course and flowed over them after the massive landslide, devastating them beyond recognition. "The DNA test results will

take 10 to 15 days to arrive. I hope my mother too will be found here," he said.

The relatives will soon arrive at a final decision on exhuming the body, especially as one of Haridas' brothers wants to give him a proper farewell. Muraleedharan offered a silent prayer at the grave marked with the DNA identification number 176, denoting the body they suspect to be of Haridas. Meanwhile, the family members suspect the grave with the identification number 56 could possibly be of Muraleedharan's mother. However, this can be finalised only if his DNA sample matches with the DNA collected from the remains.

SEARCH CONTINUES, NO BODIES FOUND ON DAY 8

An Air Force helicopter was pressed into service on Tuesday for aerial search as a 12-member special team embarked on a high-risk operation, combing the trail of the torrent to trace those missing in the July 30 landslides. Despite the efforts, no bodies were spotted in the operation in Sunrise Valley below Soochipara waterfalls.

Spike in amoebic infection cases perplexes health department in Kerala

KOZHIKODE: The health department is grappling with a surge in primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM) cases, a development that has perplexed experts. Though the Southwest monsoon is currently on in the state, the state is witnessing an unusual spike in this typically warm-weather infection. Amoebic meningoencephalitis is a rare but severe brain infection caused by amoeba, which usually thrives in extreme temperatures. However, the current climatic conditions in Kerala, characterised by persistent rainfall and resulting cooler temperatures, should have curtailed the proliferation of the amoeba. Hings took a turn for the worse after four youths from Nellimoodu in Thiruvananthapuram tested positive for amoebic meningoencephalitis. It's for the

first time in the state that the infection was confirmed in adults and one of them even died of the infection on July 23.

Specialist in infectious diseases Dr Rajesh Kumar said, "We did not expect an increase in amoebic meningoencephalitis cases during the rainy season. Typically, this amoeba proliferates in warmer climates. The current trend is both alarming and unusual." Efforts are under way to identify the sources of infection and implement containment measures. Public health advisories urging residents to avoid swimming in freshwater bodies and to maintain strict personal hygiene have been issued.

Experts said that Naegleria fowleri, also known as 'brain eating amoeba', the most reported variant of PAM, occurred

following exposure to warm, fresh water in lakes and rivers or any stagnant water body during summer. It can also live in hot springs or warm water discharged from industrial plants, poorly maintained swimming pools with minimal or no chlorination and soil. It can even grow in water heaters at temperatures of up to 115°F (46°C) and survive for short periods at higher temperatures.

Naegleria does not live in salt water. When people, usually children or young adults, swim in contaminated water, the amoebas can enter the central nervous system through the nose. When they reach the brain, they cause inflammation and tissue destruction, which usually progress rapidly to death.

Dr Reshma Rajan, a public health expert,

who emphasised the need for immediate action said, "The government is investigating all possible sources of contamination."

It is crucial for the public to follow safety guidelines and for healthcare providers to remain vigilant in diagnosing and treating potential cases. "The state government has allocated additional resources to the health department to manage the crisis. Medical facilities are being equipped to handle the influx of patients and awareness campaigns are being intensified to educate the public on risks and preventive measures.

The health department continues to monitor the situation closely, hoping to understand the underlying factors contributing to this unprecedented rise in amoebic meningitis cases during an atypical season.

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Judge orders trial court to frame charges, hold trial expeditiously; ministers told to appear in September

TN Ministers Ramachandran, Thennarasu to face trial in disproportionate assets cases: Madras HC

CHENNAI: In a significant order that is likely to have legal and political ramifications, the Madras High Court on Wednesday set aside the orders of a trial court, discharging incumbent Ministers KKSSR Ramachandran and Thangam Thennarasu of DMK from two separate disproportionate assets (DA) cases filed against them. The court sent the cases back to the trial court and ordered it to conduct trial expeditiously to take the cases to their logical conclusion. Justice N Anand Venkatesh, who had initiated the suo motu revision cases after finding issues in the manner in which the ministers were discharged by the trial court, delivered the verdict. Restoring the cases on the file of the trial court, which is the special court for cases under Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA), Principal District and Sessions Court of Srivilliputhur in Virudhunagar district, the judge ordered that the 'final closure report'



filed in the cases by the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) be treated as a 'supplementary report'. "As prima facie materials are available to frame charges, the special court shall proceed to frame charges, and thereafter, proceed in accordance with the law," he said in the order. Consequently, Justice Venkatesh,

dismissed the discharge petitions filed by the ministers and the other accused persons in the case. He directed Ramachandran and the other accused in his case to appear before the special court on September 9, 2024 and Thennarasu and the others accused in his case to appear on September 11, 2024 to furnish bonds with or without surety. The trial court was further directed to 'conduct the trial on day-to-day basis' and dispose the cases as expeditiously as possible. However, he added that the High Court has not commented on the merits of the case, and therefore, the cases can be decided by the special court 'without being influenced' by any of the comments. Justice Venkatesh took up the suo motu revision against the orders of the trial court passed in 2022 and 2023 to respectively discharge Thennarasu and Ramachandran from the DA cases. The trial court had given a clean chit to the ministers, following the DVAC's

submission of an "additional final report" following a "further investigation". The judge said that there was a 'pattern' in the manner the "further investigation" was held and the submission of the additional report, that too only after the politicians concerned came back to power (in 2021). He had said that such favours to political leaders alone by the DVAC cannot be let go without being questioned. Similar suo motu revision cases were initiated against another incumbent minister K Ponnudiy, former Chief Minister O Panneerselvam and former minister B Valarmathi. While delivering the judgement on Wednesday, Justice Anand Venkatesh quoted James Jeffrey Roache's poem "The net of law is spread so wide, No sinner from its sweep may hide. Its meshes are so fine and strong, They take in every child of wrong. O wondrous web of mystery! Big fish alone escape from thee!"

NEWS BOX

1 dead, 8 trapped after hotel partially collapses in Germany

Kroev, Germany. A hotel partially collapsed overnight near the banks of the river Moselle in Germany, killing one person and trapping eight others, some of whom suffered severe injuries in the incident, local police said on Wednesday.

The body of the victim was located but could not yet be recovered, said police, who established contact with some of those still trapped. "Due to the nature of the damage, this is an extremely demanding operation," the police statement said, and the building in the town of Kroev could only be entered by emergency responders with the utmost caution. Firefighters and paramedics gathered outside the building, whose upper floor caved in at around 11 pm on Tuesday. One emergency responder was seen carrying a barefoot woman out of the damaged building. Investigators believe 14 people were in the hotel when the incident occurred, five of whom escaped without injury. Police said 31 neighbours were also evacuated from their homes for their own safety. The Moselle region is known for its picturesque towns and vineyards on steep river banks.

Tropical storm Debby brings heavy rain, tornadoes to US states, streets flooded

Charleston. Tropical storm Debby drenched coastal cities in Georgia and South Carolina, stirred up tornadoes and submerged streets with waist-high floodwaters on Tuesday, just the beginning of a prolonged storm that could dump staggering rain totals of up to 25 inches (64 centimetres). Charleston and Savannah, Georgia, took the first blow, with up to a foot (30 centimetres) of rain falling along the coast between the two cities in just over 24 hours. Police blocked all roads into Charleston's downtown peninsula to everyone but essential workers and emergency personnel. Dozens of roads were closed in the historic city because of flooding similar to what it sees several times a year because of rising sea levels. As Debby swirls just offshore, the heavy rain is expected to move north into parts of South and North Carolina that have already seen two billion-dollar floods in eight years. In one Savannah neighbourhood, firefighters used boats to evacuate some residents and waded through floodwaters to deliver bottled water and other supplies to those who refused to leave. Michael Jones said water gushed into his home on Monday evening, overturning the refrigerator and causing furniture to float. Outside, the water seemed to be everywhere and was too deep to flee safely. So, Jones spent a sleepless night on his kitchen table before firefighters going door to door came in a boat on Tuesday morning. "It was hell all night," Jones said, adding, "It was a struggle, but God is good." In Charleston, Mayor William Cogswell said the road closures have kept businesses and homes from unnecessary damage and avoided the need for any high-water rescues. "We especially don't need any yahoos driving through the water and causing damage to properties," Cogswell said. South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster said Debby has not been as bad as feared so far, but he warned that the slow-moving storm was far from over. It will be a nervous few days for northern South Carolina and southern North Carolina, where forecasters warned of up to 15 inches (38 centimetres) of rain. Those totals are close to what the region saw in a historic flood from Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Two years later, many of those records were broken during Hurricane Florence. Both storms killed dozens.

Trump says he'll do 'major interview with Elon Musk' on August 12



World. Former US President Donald Trump has announced that he will be interviewed by tech mogul Elon Musk on Monday night. Making the announcement on his official Truth Social handle, Trump stated, "On Monday night, I'll be doing a major interview with Elon Musk — details to follow!" This came as Democratic nominee Kamala Harris selected Minnesota Governor Tim Walz as her running mate for the upcoming US presidential elections. However, Musk has yet to comment on the interview on his social media platform, X. It is worth noting that in January 2021, Trump was banned from Twitter during the final days of his term as US President. However, after Musk took over the social media platform, Trump's X account was reinstated.

The news of the interview comes after Michigan election officials along with North Carolina Board of Elections launched a probe into the Donald Trump-supporting political action committee (PAC), which the Tesla CEO said he had created. The probe centres on the allegations that the PAC has been scooping up and potentially misusing voter data. He activities of PAC, a political action committee backing Donald Trump's candidacy, are currently under scrutiny by both the North Carolina Attorney General's Office and the Michigan Secretary of State. As reported by CNBC, Elon Musk's PAC in the US has been called out for lifting personal information from people under the guise of voter registration. A recent report said that Tesla's political group has been collecting personal data from people in Michigan and other states through its website.

"While the America PAC is a federal political action committee, the Department is reviewing its activities to determine if there have been any violations of state law.

Bangladesh army defied Sheikh Hasina's order to impose curfew by force: Report

Bangladesh army chief Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman told Sheikh Hasina's office that troops would not impose a curfew by firing upon people who were demanding her removal from the post over the controversial job quota system, two officers told Reuters.

Dhaka The night before long-time leader Sheikh Hasina abruptly fled Bangladesh amid deadly protests, her army chief held a meeting with his generals and decided that troops would not open fire on civilians to enforce a curfew, two serving army officers with knowledge of the discussions told Reuters.

Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman then reached out to Hasina's office, conveying to the prime minister that his soldiers would be unable to implement the lockdown she had called for, according to an Indian official briefed on the matter. The message was clear, the official said: Hasina no longer had the army's support. Details of the online meeting between military top brass and the message to Hasina that she

had lost their backing had not previously been reported. They help to explain how Hasina's 15-year rule, during which she brooked little dissent, came to such a chaotic and sudden end on Monday, when she fled from Bangladesh to India. The nationwide curfew had been imposed after at least 91 people were killed and hundreds injured in nationwide clashes on Sunday (August 4), the deadliest day since student-led protests against Hasina began in July. Army spokesperson Lt Col Sami Ud Dowla Chowdhury confirmed the Sunday evening discussions, which he described as a regular meeting to take updates after any disturbance. He did not provide details when presented with additional questions about decision-making at that meeting. Hasina could not be reached and her son and advisor, Sajeeb Wazed, did not respond to repeated requests for comment. Reuters spoke to ten people familiar with the events of the past week, including four serving army officers and two other informed sources in Bangladesh, to piece together the final 48 hours of Hasina's



reign. Many of them spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter. Hasina, who has ruled Bangladesh for 20 of the last 30 years, was elected to a fourth term leading the country of 170 million in January, after arresting thousands of opposition leaders and workers. That election was boycotted by her main rivals. Her iron-fisted grasp on power has been challenged since summer by protests triggered by a court ruling to reserve government jobs - heavily coveted amid high youth unemployment - for certain segments of the population. The decision was overturned but the demonstrations had quickly morphed into a movement to oust Hasina. Zaman has

not publicly explained his decision to withdraw support from Hasina. But the scale of the protests and a death toll of at least 241 made supporting Hasina at all costs untenable, three former senior Bangladesh army officers told Reuters. "There was a lot of uneasiness within the troops," said retired Brig. Gen M Sakhawat Hossain. "That is what probably (put) pressure on the chief of army staff, because the troops are out and they are seeing what is happening." Zaman, who is related to Hasina by marriage, had showed signs of wavering in his support for the former Prime Minister on Saturday (August 3), when he sat on an ornate wooden chair and addressed hundreds of uniformed officers in a town hall meeting. The military later made some details of that discussion public. The general declared that lives had to be protected and called on his officers to show patience, said army spokesman Chowdhury. It was the first indication that Bangladesh's army would not forcefully suppress the violent demonstrations.

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami condemns attacks on Hindus: All have equal rights

World. Amid a series of attacks on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (BJI) has condemned the incidents, saying there is nothing called majority or minority and that every citizen has equal rights.

Speaking in a press conference, BJI's current Amir Shafiqur Rahman accepted that there indeed have been attacks on religious minorities, including incidents of vandalism, looting and arson. "We have condemned these activities of the miscreants several times and still condemning it now. Under the circumstances, we have called upon the countrymen as well as the manpower of our organization to play the role of guardians in protecting the properties of the people of all religions. No one is majority or minority in our country," he said. Shafiqur Rahman further stated that everyone born in Bangladesh, regardless of their caste or



religion, is a citizen of the country and enjoys "equal rights". "So, the question of majority or minority is invalid," the BJI Amir said. He asked citizens to resist the miscreants and their misdeeds, and said the party is ready to "give full cooperation to the administration". The massive student protests against a quota system for government jobs in Bangladesh, which has led to the deaths of over 400 people, have now turned into a widespread saga of vandalism and looting, with the

minorities, especially the Hindus, facing ire. The attack escalated following the resignation as the Prime Minister and subsequent escape to India by Sheikh Hasina. Multiple online videos showed temples being set ablaze, and houses and businesses of Hindus being attacked. An ISKCON temple in Meherpur, located in Bangladesh's Khulna division, and a Kali temple were vandalised and torched. Meanwhile, two Hindu councillors were killed amid the protests.

The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council tweeted that as many as 54 attacks took place on temples, houses and establishments of the Hindu community. These include the Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, which promotes cultural exchange between India and Bangladesh.

Cocaine at White House: Secret Service destroyed evidence, quizzed no one

The United States Secret Service confirmed it disposed of cocaine discovered at the White House last year. The investigation closed after 11 days without interviewing suspects, despite a partial DNA match in a national database. Two of President Joe Biden's children have had issues with cocaine use.



Hunter and Ashley Biden, have had past issues with cocaine use, adding to the controversy. The cocaine, found on July 2, 2023, near the Situation Room in a locker for personal items, reportedly had a partial DNA match in a national database. The Secret Service closed its investigation just 11 days later without interviewing potential suspects, leading to speculation about the case's handling and possible involvement of Biden family members. The announcement comes amid reports suggesting that President Biden's then-Secret Service Director, Kimberly Cheatle, wanted to destroy

the cocaine but faced resistance from within the agency. According to RealClearPolitics, Cheatle was reportedly frustrated when her request to dispose of the drug was opposed by subordinates who cited protocols requiring evidence to be retained for seven years. "Cheatle was really pissed off" when her instructions were not followed, reported the New York Post. QUESTION RAISED OVER AGENCY'S PROCEDURES

Two sources indicated that Cheatle, or someone acting on her behalf, contacted Matt White, the agency's forensics division vault supervisor, to request the disposal of the evidence.

However, the decision to keep the evidence was upheld by Secret Service forensics division chief Glenn Dennis and Uniformed Division acting chief Richard Macauley. Cheatle resigned as the head of the Secret Service after former President Trump was shot at during a Pennsylvania rally last month.

World. The United States Secret Service has confirmed that it "disposed of" cocaine discovered at the White House last year, responding to reports of internal disagreements over its handling. Secret Service spokesman Anthony Guglielmi confirmed that the evidence was destroyed according to established retention policies. President Biden's adult children,

UK braces for fresh anti-immigration protests, thousands of riot police deployed

Far-right groups have planned demonstrations in more than 30 locations, with immigration lawyers and buildings hosting asylum seekers set to be the primary targets, according to posts on messaging app Telegram leaked to the British media.

London. Thousands of UK riot police on Wednesday stood ready to deal with more potential outbreaks of violence, which erupted more than a week ago after three children were murdered. Far-right groups have planned demonstrations in more than 30 locations, with immigration lawyers and buildings hosting asylum seekers set to be the primary targets, according to posts on messaging app Telegram leaked to the British media. The government has said 6,000 specialist police are being readied to deal with England's worst disorder in over a decade,

which has seen hundreds arrested and more than 100 charged. The violence broke out after three girls, aged nine, seven and six, were killed and five more children critically injured during a knife attack at a Taylor Swift dance class in Southport, north west England.

False rumours initially spread on social media saying the attacker was a Muslim asylum seeker. The suspect was later identified as 17-year-old Axel Rudakubana, born in Wales. UK media reported that his parents are from Rwanda. Despite the police statement, initial disturbances in Southport centred around a local mosque, and widespread violence has rocked England and Northern Ireland since. Prime Minister Keir Starmer late Tuesday warned anyone involved would face "the full force of the law", including those inciting violence online. Starmer, a former chief state prosecutor, said he expected "substantive sentencing before the end of this week" for the rioters, after chairing his second emergency meeting in as many days on Tuesday. "That should send a very powerful message to anybody involved, either directly or online," he added in televised comments. The unrest,



Britain's worst since the 2011 London riots, has led a number of countries to warn its citizens about the dangers of travelling in the United Kingdom. Rioting in several cities has seen demonstrators throw bricks and flares at police officers, burn cars and attack mosques and at least two hotels that have been used as accommodation for asylum seekers. Scores of alleged perpetrators were hauled before judges on Tuesday, with some entering guilty pleas. A 19-year-old man became the first person to receive a prison sentence related to the unrest when he received a two-month term Tuesday. PA Media reported. Another man was convicted after he admitted assaulting a police officer outside a hotel housing asylum

seekers in Rotherham, northern England, on Sunday. A 15-year-old boy pleaded guilty to committing violent disorder in Liverpool on Saturday after he was identified from a TikTok video, while a man in Leeds admitted posting threatening words on Facebook to stir up racial hatred. The government, only one month old, has vowed to take a tough line on the unrest. "99.9% of people across the country want their streets to be safe and to feel safe in their communities, and we will take all necessary action to bring the disorder to an end," Starmer said Tuesday. Justice minister Heidi Alexander told BBC Radio 4 that the government had freed up an extra 500 prison places. Police have blamed the disorder on people associated with the now-defunct English Defence League, a far-right Islamophobic organisation founded 15 years ago, whose supporters have been linked to football hooliganism. The rallies have been advertised on far-right social media channels under the banner "Enough is enough". Interior minister Yvette Cooper said "there will be a reckoning" for perpetrators, adding that social media put a "rocket booster" under the violence.

Indian-origin doctor in UK fakes assault to drop patient from surgery list

World A 58-year-old Indian-origin medical practitioner has been suspended for 12 months for fabricating an assault to frame a patient to remove him from his surgery list. Gurkirat Kalkat, who worked at Thames View Medical Centre in Dagenham, Essex, England, wanted to drop the patient due to a merger with another doctor's practice. He went to extreme lengths, including beating himself up and falsely claiming the patient had attacked him. The incident occurred when Kalkat called the patient in for an appointment, threw himself against the door, and hit himself in the chest while shouting, "Stop hitting me!" The patient, who had drug issues, sat in a chair and looked on in shock. Kalkat then pressed a panic button, and police officers arrived, taking the patient away in handcuffs. However, the investigation was dropped when Kalkat refused to proceed with a prosecution, reported the Daily Mail. Kalkat had previously lied to the patient about having terminal blood cancer to encourage him to register with another general practitioner (GP). He even paid £44,000 for the patient's rehabilitation treatment.

Kalkat was unable to explain why he was paying for the patient's treatment out of his own pocket, reported the Daily Mail.

PATIENT SECRETLY FILMED MEDICAL PRACTITIONER

During an earlier consultation, the patient secretly videoed Kalkat, a medical practitioner, as he falsely claimed he had six months to live and offered him a further £15,000 to leave the practice, reported the Daily Mail.

At the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service in Manchester, Kalkat from Loughton, Essex, was suspended from practising medicine for 12 months after being found guilty of serious professional misconduct. The tribunal chairman, Stephen Killen, stated, "Dr Kalkat had been taking increasingly inappropriate, desperate and dishonest actions with a view to Patient A registering elsewhere. It was clear that, if Dr Kalkat reported Patient A for being violent towards him, he would no longer be required to act as his GP."

DOCTOR CLAIMED PATIENT THREATENED TO HARM HIM

Kalkat denied any wrongdoing and claimed the patient had demanded £15,000 and threatened to harm him and his family. "It was clear that if Dr Kalkat reported Patient A for being violent towards him, he would no longer be required to act as his GP. Taking all the available evidence into account, it was more likely than not that Dr. Kalkat's report to police that Patient A had.

Thiruvananthapuram: Sutured glove piece sparks row; doctor says part of procedure

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: A post-surgical procedure at General Hospital in Thiruvananthapuram has sparked a controversy after a piece of surgical glove was found sutured to a patient's wound.

Shiju, a 38-year-old from Nedumangad, underwent surgery to remove a cyst from his back on August 3. His wife found the protruding piece of the glove while dressing the wound. Unaware of the procedure, they thought it was a mistake from the surgeon.

Later, Dr Suresh, who carried out the procedure, explained that the glove was



intentionally sutured to facilitate the drainage of pus and blood after the sebaceous cyst was removed. "This is a cost-effective technique that is commonly used. A portion of the glove is cut and attached to the dressing to ensure the flow of pus and blood. The patient was informed about this method, and it is documented in his medical records," he said. The family, however, contends that there was insufficient communication about the glove and that the nurse only advised them to seek treatment at the nearest hospital for dressing changes. Meanwhile, the Kerala Government Medical Officers' Association has called for action against those spreading misinformation about the procedure, arguing that such claims could demoralise medical professionals.

Minibuses to ply on interior routes of Tripunithura in Kochi soon

KOCHI: The demands for connectivity to interior areas and the narrow roads in the hinterlands have prompted the Motor Vehicle Department (MVD) to contemplate issuing permits to private buses, especially minibuses, in new routes in Tripunithura region. This comes in the wake of the huge response to a 'Janakeeya Sadas' held by the department as per the directives of Transport Minister K B Ganesh Kumar at Tripunithura on Tuesday. The same was attended by K Babu MLA, Municipal Chairpersons of Tripunithura and Maradu, the Udayamperoor Panchayat President, officials of KSRTC, Police, PWD, NHAI, private bus owners and residents' associations. "Basically, we're considering the issuance of permits in routes where there is no bus service and the ones where permits have been cancelled. The decision from the higher-ups is to allot permits to minibuses as well, given the narrow road stretches in the region. We've received 45 representations in all, having numerous proposals, from private bus owners and other stakeholders," said Tripunithura Joint RTO Abdul Rahman. "We'll codify all the proposals and consider the feasibility of the same before forwarding them to the Ernakulam



RTO. The latter will forward them to the transport department, which will again conduct a feasibility study on factors like beneficiaries, type of buses, viability, etc. Finally, an auction will be held for the finalised routes," the official added. There were many proposals for new routes such as Poothotta-Ameda; Tripunithura Railway Station- Town Bus Stand; Thoppumpady-Kannangad bridge-Kakkanad Civil Station; and Tripunithura-Nettoor (via NH 966 (B) parallel bridge), among others. "Permits should be allotted to minibuses in narrow routes where conventional buses cannot be operated. Similarly, several permits in routes such as Udayamperoor-Poothotta were cancelled. The same should be reissued, diverting such services to benefit people in the

interior areas. The bus services to destinations like Kumbalam and Cheppanam should be restored," said Tripunithura MLAK Babu.

The residents' associations batted for introducing 'share auto' services, linking the main bus stops in the town with interior destinations having no public transport connectivity. "Introducing share auto services to areas such as Mekkara, Pavamkulangara, Valiyathura, Manjelpadam, etc. will benefit a large section of residents," said V P Prasad, Chairman, TRURA (Tripunithura Rajanagari Union of Residents' Association), an apex council of nearly 140 residents' associations.

Meanwhile, many stakeholders expressed concerns over the scope of starting many new services, given that the main routes such as Vaikom-Ernakulam are nationalised ones. However, MVD officials pointed out that there are exemptions. "For instance, a private bus can operate on 5 percent of the total stretch of a nationalised route. It can then take a detour and connect the interior areas. Similarly, the rule that buses can pass through two immediate intermediate points can be bypassed by exploring alternative or parallel routes," said Naufal A, MVI.

Controversy erupts over Telangana's new local criteria for MBBS admissions



HYDERABAD/WARANGAL: The Medical and Health Department's recent order that students who studied from Class 9 to Intermediate will be considered local candidates for MBBS admissions has led to a controversy. Students who appeared for NEET have raised concerns that this rule could make students from Telangana, who studied in other states, non-local for admissions. However, Health Minister C Damodar Rajanarasimha assured them that the new order will not be a disadvantage to Telangana students. On July 19, the department issued GO 33, amending the eligibility criteria for MBBS and Dental admissions. The amended order said the eligibility for the student to get admission under Competent Authority Quota is: "A student must have studied in local educational institutions for at least four consecutive academic years ending with the year they first appeared for or as the case may have first appeared in the relevant qualifying examination". Telangana students argue that this could make those who studied Intermediate outside the state ineligible for admissions, while students from other states who studied in Telangana from Class 9 to Intermediate would be eligible.

KTR expresses concern

BRS working president KT Rama Rao expressed concerns about the potential injustice to Telangana students. "The eligibility criteria for nativity fixed by the government is raising several doubts. As Hyderabad has reputed educational institutions, students from other states would come to Hyderabad for studies. With the new guidelines, all of them would become locals and Telangana students, who studied in other states, would become non-locals," the BRS working president wrote on X. Meanwhile, Rajanarasimha countered these concerns, stating that the previous BRS government's GO 114 on July 5, 2017, had similar provisions and that the Congress government is continuing these rules. He clarified that the new GO 33 aligns with the existing policies and that students who studied four consecutive years in combined AP would be considered locals. Meanwhile, A Sandeep, a student from Mahabubabad district, said there was no issue with the amendment in the NEET admission of 2024-25 and there is no shortfall of MBBS seats. "I am happy to say it's good for the local students. However, if any student moved to another state for Intermediate, it would cause trouble for them," he said. Ch Swathi, a student from Kumurambheem Asifabad district, said: "I completed my school education here and moved to Hyderabad for Intermediate. Both districts are in Telangana, so GO 33 does not affect my NEET admission. I secured an All India Rank 2,40,000 in NEET 2024-25."

Political pressure may be leading to delays in deciding on MLA's disqualification: Telangana HC

HYDERABAD: The Telangana High Court has raised critical questions regarding the prolonged delay in making a decision on disqualification complaints against several MLAs who defected to the Congress. During a hearing on Tuesday, Advocate General A Sudarshan Reddy faced inquiries from the court on whether a specific deadline has been set up for the Speaker to address these complaints. When the AG responded that the court lacks the jurisdiction to issue directions to the Speaker, Justice B Vijaysen Reddy emphasised the need for timely decisions in such matters. He observed that district courts are frequently given deadlines to complete proceedings and constitutional tribunals should have similar authority to compel the Speaker, who serves as the chairman of the tribunal, to adhere to deadlines. Justice Reddy also expressed concern that political pressure might be contributing to the delays in taking a decision, which he deemed unacceptable from an individual who occupies a constitutional position. The court referenced the Supreme Court's decision in Kaisham Meghchandra Singh vs Speaker of Manipur case, where the Speaker was ordered to make a decision within a specified timeframe. However, senior advocate Jandhyala Ravi Shankar contested this point, asserting that the Supreme Court did not establish a fixed deadline for the

Speaker in disqualification petitions. On the other hand, senior lawyer Gandra Mohan Rao argued that the Speaker should indeed be required to make a decision within a stipulated period. The disqualification petitions were filed by BRS MLAs KP Vivekanand, Padi Kaushik Reddy and BJP's LP Maheshwar Reddy against MLAs Kadiyam Srihari, Tellam Venkata Rao and Danam Nagender. Justice Reddy reiterated the Supreme Court's instruction in a Manipur MLAs case, which mandated a decision within three months. He noted that more than three months had elapsed since these petitions were filed and suggested that the Speaker should be given clear instructions to expedite the decision-making process. Justice Reddy further highlighted that failing to act promptly undermines the constitutional responsibility of the Speaker and sets a negative precedent. He stated, "Everyone has respect for the Speaker. But it must be assumed that he is not taking the decision due to political pressures. It is not right to sit in a constitutional position and yield to political pressure. If this continues, even five years will pass without a decision." Following the arguments, the judge adjourned the hearing to Wednesday, granting senior advocates Mayur Reddy and Sriraghuram additional time to prepare their arguments.

'Casting director' promises movie role, dupes girl in Bengaluru

BENGALURU: A 21-year-old girl has lodged a police complaint stating that she was duped of Rs 1.7 lakh by a man who promised to cast her in a Tamil movie. Nanditha K Shetty of Chunchaghatta Main Road, a student of a private college, filed a complaint with the Konanakunte police on August 1. Police said Nanditha saw a Tamil movie advertisement on Instagram and registered her name and mobile number. An unknown person messaged her on WhatsApp introducing himself as Suresh Kumar and claimed to be a casting director for the Tamil movie 'Hunter'. The accused took an audition online and promised her a role in the film. He told her that she needs to pay for charges such as a agreement, stamp duty, passport and flight expenses. In multiple transactions, the girl transferred Rs 1.70 lakh to the accused in July. When the accused asked for more money, Nanditha grew suspicious and cross-checked to realise that she was cheated, police said.



Finally, men, machinery to move into Ejjipura

BENGALURU: After much delay, the Rs 307.94-crore Ejjipura Flyover project is finally set to get going with the construction agency — BSCPL Infrastructure Ltd — making preparations to restart the abandoned works. According to the agency's Launching Engineer Vishwanath Tarangi, the 2.5-km flyover, which starts at Sony World Junction and ends at Kendriya Sadan, will ease traffic on the busy Koramangala area, facilitating smooth flow of vehicles from the South-East of the city. "We have got a power-packed hydraulic machine to lift materials over 1,200 tonnes. These machines were brought from Mumbai and metal bearings and threads for support were obtained from Kolkata. These machines are expensive and they are a must for installation work. By the end of the month, a few more machines will arrive. About 300 workers will be involved in the process. From August 12, we will begin the

works," said Vishwanath. BBMP (Project Division) Superintendent Engineer Hemalatha and Executive Engineer Yogesh went to Kolkata along with the executives of the infrastructure



firm to check the metal bearings. The official from the agency added that for each segment measuring 3x17 metres, 6.5 tonnes of steel has to be added along with concrete. After 11 segments, there are pillars and grouting will be done. "The work is very challenging as earlier another has abandoned the work. If we get continuous support from BBMP officials, we will be able to complete the task in a year or 18

months," said Tarangi.

As per engineers at the site, just to set up a new plant for making segments, transportation and purchase of machinery, Rs 30 crore is being spent.

Commenting on the development, Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy, who is the local MLA, said he has asked the corporation commissioner to extend support and also release bills accordingly and ensure that the project is completed at the earliest as it will benefit lakhs of motorists. A BBMP official said the project was started in 2017.

However, due to a delay in payments from BBMP, SIMPLEX, the agency that was executing the project, abandoned the project mid-way. "When the project was abandoned, it was about 40 per cent complete. Had the BBMP continued the contract and released the payment, by now there would have been vehicle movement on the flyover."

Poor condition in Warangal ITI keeps students away

WARANGAL: Students at the state-run Industrial Training Institute (ITI) in Warangal have been avoiding attending classes of late reportedly due to the poor conditions of their classrooms and workshops. In fact, the situation is such that even the faculty is also reluctant to take classes, fearing that the leaking roof may cave in due to rains. Students are calling for better infrastructure and construction of a new building. College convener and principal M Chander told TNIE: "As many as 14 classrooms and five workshops are in a dilapidated condition. We are worried that the equipment and machines could be damaged due to leakage from the ceiling during rains." According to the faculty, funds were sanctioned in 1957 for the college building to come up on a nine acre parcel of land. The institute was established in 1959. Despite proposals to authorities concerned for conducting repairs to the college building in 2018 and 2022, nothing was done. In 2018, the School Education department inspected the college.

Rs 80 lakh needed for repairs to ITI



building

The School Education department estimated that repairs to the ITI building would cost '80 lakh. However, no funds were allocated for repairs by the previous BRS government, sources said. With no alternative, the faculty continued to teach in the creaking

classrooms and workshops. The college has a total enrolment of 678 students. The college principal said: "Since the previous BRS government did not allocate funds for repairs to the college, we urge the Congress government to sanction funds for its development."

Bengaluru: Indira Canteens will now take digital orders

BENGALURU: Technological interventions in IT hub Bengaluru have enabled the revival of Indira Canteens, which will now take orders just as it's done in private restaurants and food courts — on digital screens which will be monitored at the head office. However, this idea has not gone down well with citizens and activists, with some even terming it another scam in the making. While Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) claims that of 169 Indira Canteens (IC), 160 are functioning, citizens and activists say the ground reality is different. They point out that many canteens, including those in Nagarbhavi, Bannerghatta Road, Queen's Road, Magadi oad and Jayanagar 7th Block,

are locked. A senior BBMP official told TNIE that tenders will soon be called to digitise the setup in ICs. "There are reports that ICs are not functioning. It could be because of contractor problems, canteen problems, staff issues, few or even missing meals. We need to know what customers think and what is the problem. So we are working on introducing digital screens in ICs, where customers will place orders and they will be noted on the screens. These screens will be linked to the head office and orders will be monitored live. Through this, we will get to know which ones are functioning, where the demand is high, what are the complaints and what citizens feel. Tenders for this will soon be called

and BBMP's IT wing is preparing the details," said an official from the BBMP health section. BBMP officials said digital screen trials were done in 15 Rajarajeshwari Nagar zone ICs and said there was positive feedback. The trials were done free of cost. But citizens and activists are not convinced. "The problem with ICs is food quality, the contractors and canteen locations. Instead of investing on quality and hygiene, BBMP is turning to technology. When BBMP knows contractors and agencies are a problem, they should give catering orders to local cooks and groups. This will also ensure local employment," said Tara Krishnaswamy, from Citizens for Bengaluru.



Lured into a life-killing rat race

ENOUGH has already been said and discussed about the tragic death of three IAS aspirants in New Delhi. It is like realising the implications of the all-pervading civil services myth, the agony of the perplexed/exploited generation, the crude business of India's black education system — the demonic coaching industry — and above all, the unholy alliance of the merchants of education and corrupt government functionaries. Imagine the callousness and corruption — a fancy and well-advertised IAS coaching centre running a library in the basement of the building, and feeling quite at ease with this illegal act. Think of the way these aspirants bargain with the gang of brokers/property dealers for finding an accommodation in tiny/dark cells that characterise the lanes and bylanes of Old Rajinder Nagar in Delhi — supposedly the 'sacred' sites for aspiring civil servants. Think of the monsoon malady and the pathetic drainage system in the area. And think of the intense flow of rainwater entering the basement library, and three youngsters dying a terrible death. Everything, it seems, is possible in this soon-to-be Viksit Bharat! Even though I understand the agony of these IAS aspirants, I feel like urging them to go deeper, question the myth that seems to have completely hypnotised them, rethink the meaning of 'success' and their life projects, and reflect on the price they pay — financial, mental and existential — for pursuing a goal that has often been imposed on them. To begin with, they need to understand the shallowness in the arguments they often make: "We want to become civil servants in order to serve the country." Well, IAS/IPS officers do not monopolise patriotism. One who collects the garbage from our houses and keeps the 'gated societies' clean is no less a patriot. Moreover, only a naïve person would say that our bureaucrats are saints and altogether free from the influence of the hugely problematic politics-business nexus.

The IAS myth has such an overwhelming impact on this generation because it promises officially 'legitimised' power and privilege. Anyone who has lived in a small town or village in India knows how the power/aura of the district collector, the superintendent of police, or even the block development officer tempts the aspiring class. For many, it is a path towards upward social mobility. Yes, accept it — it is not essentially the unconditional love for the country, but the 'will to power' and associated privileges that fascinate these youngsters — from engineers and doctors to PhD holders, or from history/anthropology graduates to even political activists. The result is the life-killing rat race. Imagine more than 10 lakh aspirants appearing in the UPSC prelims exam, and eventually 1,000 or a little more getting selected for IAS/IPS and allied services! Yet, the power of the myth is so strong that most of these aspirants try repeatedly, spend a huge amount of money (say, Rs 1.75 lakh only for general studies), end up wasting five or six years of their youthful lives, and eventually carry the stigma of 'failure'. Is it time for these youngsters to come to their senses, and debunk this myth? Think of the intensity of the damage it causes to them. For five/six years, what do they do? They shop around the overpriced coaching centres, and get attracted by the 'star strategists' (I do not regard them as teachers because meaningful teaching has a higher purpose) who instruct them how to prepare for general studies, history, psychology or Hindi literature, or 'motivate' them through their carefully crafted discourses. And from early morning to late night, they keep consuming the 'notes' or 'success manuals' through which the coaching centres colonise their lifeworld. Accept it, dear aspirants: In this highly mechanised and dehumanised process, there is no light, there is no joyful learning, and there is no serious engagement with even the 'skills' a future civil servant needs to cultivate. Possibly, after this tedious journey and endless drilling, most of these aspirants realise the utter meaninglessness of this process. If, for five years, you study history.

Hard questions before Sri Lanka's presidential poll

India has almost 15 million shops. What holds this essential segment back is the lack of broader market access and branding. It's time to think different.

India is a nation of shopkeepers. Today, we boast a total of 14.6 million shops in the country. Look around. Even as you and I step out of our homes, not more than three minutes goes by without passing either a paan shop, a small kirana or daily provisions store, or a large supermarket. Our lives are a clutter of the small shop. We are spoiled bad. For our every need, want, desire and aspiration, there is a store close by. At arm's-length reach. At desire's-length reach even.

Look at it from another perspective. How many of us have a shop within us? How many of our close relatives actually run a shop, big or small? The answer is loaded. We have a shopkeeper in our family either in the first, second or third rung of relationships. The shop and its upkeep is therefore within our DNA as Indians in more ways than one. If you don't own a shop, you possibly cater to a shop.

You sell stocks into a shop possibly through a sales and distribution business. And then there is yet another enterprise that intermediates between the manufacturer and the retailer at the street level. Informal numbers indicate the size of this business in sheer number terms to be as large as \$1.3 trillion in 2022 when last audited. Finally, all of us are related to shops in some way or the other. Which one of us has survived without going out to that small little shop to buy a bar of soap, sugar or cigarette?

The shop then is the true-blue representative of early-stage small entrepreneurship. It began with a shop and in many ways it ends with a shop. All entrepreneurs are leverage-businesses to ensure the satiation of man's want and need to buy and use. The most modern apps of today that cater to the needs of a new generation of consumers for both products and services are just this.

The shop began small, went medium-sized, went self-service, grew into a mega-mart, and then disappeared altogether to enter into those very homes that came to the shop in the days gone by through e-commerce. You don't have to go to the shop anymore. Instead, the shop comes to you. In the bargain, instead of you stepping out to buy that loaf of bread from your corner bakery, the bread came home, driven in on an outsourced e-bike, brought in by an outsourced delivery boy and paid for on an e-payment gateway. The shop in many cases is no more. Long live the shop. The shop is on the cloud. Long live the cloud. Interestingly, this very kirana

shop of yours is possibly selling more in the delivery-format than the in-shop format. Life has changed. Business has. This nation of shopkeepers of ours is therefore best poised to do business, more than any other. Yes, we are a nation of tech people today. But that's a total of 5.4 million people. We are a nation of doctors too, with 13.08 lakh allopathic ones registered with the National Medical Commission as on June 22. We are a nation of engineers, of teachers. But then, in sheer terms of numbers, exposure, relationships and the DNA of business intent, we are essentially a nation of shopkeepers. The agenda of the shopkeeper is therefore the biggest agenda we need to focus on. We



must plan for the future of the shopkeeper. What does the shopkeeper do next? Where is he stuck today? In the beginning he was small. Then big. And now bigger still in the virtual format. The shopkeeper reaches out to the rest of the world, which was hitherto inaccessible. Business today comes from all over. The humble Indian broomstick finds its way into Walmart across its stores in the US, just as Indian firewood finds its way into an ASDA in the UK. The most rustic offerings from India find value-added homes in the best of Western supermarkets. India is a supply waiting to feed the demand of the world. And the supply chain to facilitate this is that much more in a flux than ever before. Herein lies the story of the future, as it should unfold. Today's story of Indian exports into a global market is rather lopsided. If one examines Indian export earnings, we still earn from the core category of commodity, as opposed to the higher-end category of product and brand. Our top five exports are leather and its products, petroleum products, gems and

jewellery, auto, equipment parts and electronic goods, and pharmaceutical products.

When the product pipeline seems to dry up, we move into services (the best being IT services of value \$193 billion in 2022). The worst of the lot is the agriculture pipeline. We still do live out a life-script carved out for us by the British, as exporters of the basic commodity that markets of the West need and want. The business of India happens not only from and through the big conglomerates and business houses that dominate our imagination by the very fact that they are in the news all the time. The business of India resides in its small towns and villages. India today boasts of a population of 63.4 million medium, small and micro enterprises.

As the Union Budget 2024 just unveiled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman brings the MSME category into focus, we need to understand very simply that we are all shopkeepers. We are medium, small and micro shops. Some of our shops sell 'kirana', and some sell services such as healthcare and beauty. Some of our shops manufacture small tools that go as components in bigger manufacture. Some of us offer intermediary services in consulting, tax, audit and more. The net of it is that we are all about the shop and the shopkeeper in us. My study of the MSME sector in India, across eight regions (concluded in March 2024) indicates just two primary gaps that keep our 63.4 million MSMEs down. The first is the fact that we have no access to the expanded markets of today. Our distribution does not tap into the e-format in B2B and B2C marketing equally, where the world is really our oyster. Our go-to market strategy thinks small, medium and micro. Never massive. The second lag and gap is branding. We do not believe enough in it. As the world of consumption across 126 countries swears by the branded offering, we are still content being in the space that is a basic commodity. The MSME sector in India needs to sit up and smell the opportunity. The world is indeed my oyster today. I need to invest in both the e-format of reaching out to markets as well as prudent investments into the subject of building relevant, original and innovative brands for the world at large. I am a shopkeeper for sure. I need to think like an e-shopkeeper now. I need to think like the branded shopkeeper.

Hasina's ouster

Authoritarian govt gets its comeuppance

MASSIVE anti-government protests have forced Sheikh Hasina to step down as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and flee the country in the wake of widespread violence that claimed over 300 lives in just three weeks. A democrat who turned into a dictator, Hasina had it coming. She chose to ride roughshod over the people's aspirations and took them for granted. The dramatic turn of events has happened barely seven months after a controversial general election that was boycotted by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and other Opposition parties. Hasina had stormed to power for the fourth time in a row, but the allegations of rigging and strong-arm tactics tainted her victory. Desperate to drum up support for herself and her government, she visited India and China in recent months, even as trouble was brewing at home.



The Hasina regime grossly mishandled the agitation

launched by students in protest against 30 per cent reservation in government jobs for relatives of freedom

fighters who won independence for Bangladesh in 1971. The Supreme Court slashed the quota to 5 per cent, but the government's reluctance to release the arrested student leaders enraged the protesters, who upped the ante against Hasina. The public anger was exemplified by a mob vandalising a statue of her father, 'Bangabandhu' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who spearheaded the country's liberation movement. The developments are reminiscent of the 2022 protests in Sri Lanka that led to the ouster of the Rajapaksa brothers. The next government in Bangladesh will have to address the burning issues of high youth unemployment, economic stagnation and inflation. New Delhi, which enjoyed good ties with Hasina-ruled Dhaka, will have to recalibrate its strategy in view of the colossal churn in the neighbouring country. With the return of Pakistan-aligned BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami imminent, India needs to be wary of adverse headwinds in the subcontinent.

Railways' race against time

The prime minister has promised Indians at home and abroad that he will not rest till the country becomes the third largest economy, after the US and China. The average Indian railway commuter must wonder what this means for her. Last week, I travelled overnight by train from Bengaluru to Ernakulam. Little seems to have changed. The air conditioning was as cold as a morgue. A complaint was raised. The attendant obliged. Soon it was as hot as an oven. The black blanket smelled of others' sleep; the little white pillows had on them sepia maps of strangers' nightmares. The washroom taps did not work, the door bolts were not aligned, and, in the vestibules passengers hopeful of a miraculous berth squatted by their dozens. The Indian train, despite the efficiently-run Vande Bharat and others such, continues to be an arbitrary, uncertain, olfactory experience for most of the 23 million daily passengers.

My journey was behind schedule. But it did not kill or hurt, a probable outcome of buying a railway ticket. Last month, at least 10 passengers were killed and more than 50 injured because of track misalignment due to 'maintenance work'. In the last five years, there have been many accidents. In June 2023, in the Coromandel Express collision in Odisha, at least 293 people were killed and over 1,100 were injured. The causes were couched in bureaucratese: 'signalling errors and lack of real-time communication'. The year before, the major accident that occurred was the Bikaner-Guwahati Express derailment at Jalpaiguri, West Bengal: 9 killed, 45 injured. Track fracture was blamed. In 2021, it was the Doda train collision in Jammu: 20 killed, 70 injured, owing to 'signalling failure'. None of this makes much sense because the technology we have is capable of detecting the problems and sending the information to the right people. Dead passengers receive a compensation of Rs 5 lakh. The 'seriously injured' get Rs 50,000. What's Rs 5 lakh to the spouse and children of the



deceased, who, in most cases, are the main earning members? If you lose an arm, leg, or eye, what would Rs 50,000 do for you? The meanness of the compensation is an indication of how little value India attaches to Indian life. As a nation with just too many humans, we naturally prefer to know more about feasts than funerals. We know everything about the Anant Ambani wedding, for example. The estimated budget of Rs 5,000 crore, to begin with. The VIP list of invitees. The warmth of million-dollar hugs between total strangers in golden gowns. But we do not know, or cannot recall, the name or face of a single railway passenger who bought his ticket

for his/her final ride. Surely a death that they are not responsible for must rate a higher monetary value than the Rs 2 crore watches that Bollywood stars got for attending a wedding?

Almost every other year, India witnesses a railway accident. But there has been no sustained discussion about the nature of the accidents, compensation or safety. The last white paper on the railways was in 2009. Neither the treasury benches nor the opposition has followed up on the seemingly permanent backwardness of the railways. How odd it is to talk about sending a rocket to land on the moon at a precise spot, and the country's inability to warn one

train that another is coming at it from the opposite direction on the same track, though the same satellite information systems are at work. These systems can sense oncoming trains and alert the pilots and control centres almost instantly.

Yet, rail travel is a bit like a war to the average Indian. If the same rate of accidents was applied to air travel, there would be hell to pay. Recently, when the Delhi airport roof began leaking, it made headlines in every newspaper. Almost every railway station, used by the poorer classes a million times more, is in much worse shape—and yet, it is seen as pretty much all right.

The present minister has done a lot, introducing new high-speed trains and modernising the railways. Among the safety measures he has introduced is the Kavach, a train collision avoidance system named with a mythological allusion. This too involves satellite communication in part, we are told. None of this is cutting-edge technology. All of it has been there for scores of years. It is that we are way behind. It is that despite our ambition—Bovarian in its delusions of grandeur—to become a superpower or the third largest economy, we do not attach importance to the individual or try hard to make his or her life a little easier. In government offices, ration shops and even splendidly garish public toilets, the guiding sentiment is that the individual consumer is a subject receiving a favour. The railways itself affords a prime example of this almost philosophical disposition. How else can one explain the Mumbai local trains, which feel like travelling concentration camps, transporting 7.5 million commuters daily when they should be carrying less than half that number? There are changes in Mumbai's daily commuting, of course. The metro, for example—but it is about 50 years late in making its entry.

Clearly, the problem with the railways is the same as most of its trains: it is racing against time, and constantly falling behind.



Top 5 day trips from Lucerne



What is supposed to be the prettiest place in Central Switzerland, Lucerne, or Luzern as it is locally known, is a historical town with astounding Alpine scenery, wooden bridges that tell tales of a tragic past, sculptures that seem to possess human emotions, chapels that stand with all the elegance in the world and lakes that flow like no force could ever stop them. Switzerland's very own City of Lights, this German-speaking beauty possesses great diversity and radiates a unique charm with its symmetrical frescoed residences and old-fashioned souvenir shops.

Apart from being a sightseeing hub with attractions like the Lion Monument, Chapel Bridge, Swiss Museum of Transport and Lake Luzern, this populous city is also the starting point of some of the best excursions in Switzerland. While the most popular names are Titlis, Pilatus and Rigi, a few others deserve a mention because of their easy accessibility and sublime spectacles. Visit Lucerne for an adventure of a lifetime and take these day trips to make your journey truly unforgettable.

Titlis

A part of the Uri Alps of Switzerland, Titlis is a winter wonderland like no other. Home to 'Titlis Rotair', the very first revolving cable car in the world and the highest suspension bridge known to mankind, this peak is an absolute tourist trap, but the good kind. Head over to the Ice Flyer Chairlift for excellent views of the glacier

and have truckloads of fun at the Glacier Park. Explore the intimidating depths of the Glacier Cave and take the Titlis Cliff Walk to feel the warm embrace of the mountains. If you are someone like me, the landscape might just remind you of gooey chocolate brownies topped with pristine, creamy vanilla ice-cream. However, despite not being edible, the views are deliciously breathtaking. Even at 3032 m, Titlis has wonderful souvenir shops and restaurants that serve Italian and Swiss staples along with Indian cuisine.

The cable car to Titlis departs from the picturesque town of Engelberg, which is a 45 min train ride from Lucerne. The Titlis Valley Station is around 10 min from the Engelberg Train Station. The gondola first goes to Trubsee followed by Stand from where you finally get into a spinning cable car that takes you to the summit. Tickets for this day trip are a lot cheaper if you have a Swiss Rail Pass. Check the weather in advance and wear warm clothes.

Pilatus

Guarding Lucerne like a massive canopy, Pilatus is a cluster of peaks that go by the name of Tomlishorn, Oberhaupt and Esel. If legends are to be believed, this 2132 m mountain was once home to dragons that possessed the powers of healing. Some even say that the Roman Governor Pontius Pilatus is buried in what was once Lake Pilatus. Accessed by what is supposed to be the steepest cog railway on this planet, Pilatus has a huge rope park, 2 hotels and as many as 7 restaurants. On the clearest of days, Lucerne's home mountain

offers wonderful views of a whopping 73 Alpine peaks. The hiking trails lining this Swiss drawcard are picturesque and the air has a therapeutic quality to it.

Take a boat from Lucerne to the Alpnachstad Railway Station from where you can embark on the historic cogwheel that gets you to the peak. The journey is replete with excellent views of meadows and rock walls and is around 40 min long. There is also a cable car facility from Kriens, a town located on the outskirts of Lucerne. Known as the 'Dragon Ride', this gondola takes less than 4 min to get to the summit and therefore imparts the feeling of flying over the mountain tops. Those with a Swiss Travel Pass can enjoy the beauty of Pilatus for free!

Rigi

With hundreds of kilometres of fascinating hiking trails and total absence of cars, Rigi is a massif that offers arresting views of the Alps of Switzerland and those of Germany and France. And if this stupendous beauty wasn't enough, there are vistas of 13 pristine lakes, including Lake Lucerne, for you to feast your eyes on. At 1798 m, hikers love this mountain because of the abundance of trekking opportunities while families adore it for its forests and meadows which make for perfect picnic spots. The summit transforms into a blinding ski paradise in the winter season and the tracks extend up to 35 km. Tobogganing after dark from Rigi Kulm to Rigi Staffel is an adventure in itself. Watching the sunrise and the sunset from the summit is a visual made out of dreams and the ever-changing colours of the landscape—a little bit

of red, a tinge of blue and a whole lot of green—can put a spell on you.

The cogwheel trains from Vitznau and Arth-Goldau will bring you to Weggis from where you can board a cable car that is bound for Rigi. This cable car morphs into a romantic floating restaurant every Saturday between the months of July and September. You should ideally take a boat from Lucerne to Vitznau and descend the mountain via Arth-Goldau. Swiss Pass owners will get a 50 percent discount on the journey.

Engelberg

A quiet resort in the heart of Switzerland, Engelberg is a paradise for ski lovers and an ideal destination for those looking for some peace and serenity. Located around 25 km from Lake Lucerne, this rustic retreat is perched at a height of 1000 m and is home to a striking 12th century Benedictine Monastery.

The hotels and homes of the locals are strongly reminiscent of the Belle Epoque period and travellers often feel like they have gone back in time. Towering above its story-book townscape, Mount Titlis and its glacier seems to be within arm's reach and the Hahnen mountain is almost tangible. While the winters are all about snowboarding and sledding at a dizzying altitude of 2000 m, the summer months in Engelberg entail hiking, golfing and biking around its verdant pastures. In fact, the town hosts an annual Ski Jumping World Cup that attracts adventure-sports enthusiasts from all over the globe.

A part of the Canton of Obwalden, Engelberg has a tiny population of 4000 and also includes the hamlets of Obermatt, Schwand and Grafenort.

The resort is merely 45 min from Lucerne by a direct train (Luzern-Engelberg Express) along the Zentralbahn. For those who do not own a Swiss Pass, tickets should cost around 20 Euros. Think of Engelberg as a side journey and stay for a day or two in order to make the most of its delights.

Stanserhorn

Perched at 1898 m, Mount Stanserhorn is all about breathing in fresh Alpine air and soaking in the views of green valleys, blue skies and emerald lakes that include the Bernese Alps, Mount Pilatus and Lake Lucerne. Accessed by virtue of an aerial Cabrio cableway that comes with an open-air deck, the journey to the summit is the drawcard of Stanserhorn.

In fact, open roof wooden coaches have been transporting travellers to the top ever since the 19th century. Don't be surprised if R Kelly's 'I believe I can fly' plays in your head on an endless loop as you make your ascent.

The circular walk of Stanserhorn looks eerily futuristic, while the gifts of nature stand elegantly in the background—a noteworthy juxtaposition. Apart from magnificent vistas, the peak has a revolving restaurant by the name of 'Rondorama' that serves excellent Swiss cuisine.

The journey from Lucerne to Stanserhorn merely takes 40 min. You would first have to take a train to the town of Stans followed by a 5 min walk to the Valley Station to hop aboard the funicular to Kälti which is the boarding point for the Cabrio ride. This cableway is operational during the summer months of April and November. Try buying the 'Good Morning Ticket' as it is a lot cheaper and check the weather forecast before planning your day trip.

Things to do in Pokhara for all kind of visitors



Pokhara is a wonderful and scenic city and a major city in Nepal after capital Kathmandu. This has made this city a tourist favourite and a hub for both group vacationers and backpackers. There are plenty of sightseeing options in Pokhara and you can spend a good amount of time exploring them. But this does not mean that the activity seeker side of you will be bored during your stay here. As a matter of fact, the thrill seeker in you will have a field day as there are lots of things to do in Kathmandu. Be it bungee jumping from a cliff, paragliding over the city, cycling along the shores of Phewa Lake, heritage trail in Old Town and shopping in Lakeside market - Pokhara will not let you go lazy!

Bungee jumping

Bungee jumping is one of the most popular adventure sports that one can try out in Pokhara. The bungee scene in Pokhara is not that new but it is gaining popularity and only good days are following. Introduced midyear in 2014, bungee jumping in Pokhara has been attracting travellers and adventure junkies alike. Only the second bungee spot in the country of Nepal, Pokhara will always be a memorable mark in your adventure diary. The usual plunge is of around 70 metres with a water body underneath. Trained professionals will guide you through the dos and don'ts of the jump and will harness you well for the maximum safety measures.

Paragliding

Paragliding has to be one of the most common and easily accessible adventure sport in Pokhara. Many also hold that Pokhara is in fact one of the best paragliding destinations of Asia! There are several paragliding schools here from where you can go for a memorable flight across the skyline of Pokhara. The vast open space and lack of high rises offer the ideal background for an unhindered glide as you fly over the lush green hills and blue water lakes with the stunning Annapurna Mountains in the backdrop.

Cycling

Cycling is both a leisure activity and a common yet important fitness aspect. Some cycle to cut through pensive moments, some to avoid the rush and some to push their physical limits.

Well, Pokhara caters to all the above mentioned kinds of cycling enthusiasts. Leisure seekers can go for a cycling day out in the Lakeside region along the shore of Phewa Lake's north eastern side. This will help explore the city from a close corner and minus the conveyance hassles. Adventure lovers or the ones who are regular cyclists will also like to take a cycling trip down the lush green valleys passing through tiny hamlets and temples.

Heritage trail

Pokhara is an ancient and significant urban establishment of Nepal which is trying hard to hold on to its old world remnants. This opens up the opportunity for an amazing heritage trail in the city. The Old Town of Pokhara is the ideal place to kick off your culture trip. Located north of the buzzing Mahendra Pul, the Old Town is a treat for the ones who love to get the pulse of a new place from its epicentre. Best explored on foot, Old Town Pokhara offers an unmatched view of the new parts of the city in the morning before the traffic and daily chores take over the landscape. While you take a trip to Old Town, you will come across a marketplace selling locally produced items; Bhimsen Temple, an old shrine dedicated to the Newari god of trade and commerce and Bindhya Basini Temple, dedicated to goddess Durga.

Shopping

Pokhara might not come across as a well known shopping destination; but to write off the city's potential as a souvenir hub will be totally unjustified. The Lakeside region of the city, located on the northeastern banks of Phewa Lake, is on constant uphill radar as a commercial centre.

One will find several hotels and restaurants here along with lines of shops and stalls selling takeaway style items. A stark contrast to the commercial Lakeside market is the Old Bazaar where time seems to be taking a slower route. There one will find people in bright ethnic attires belonging to different tribes of the nation.

The impression of the dominant Newari culture is pretty much evident in the temples and buildings of Old Bazaar.

In Mega Waqf Board Reform, 44 Amendments Proposed, Women Members Mandatory

New Delhi: Amid the hue and cry over 'curtailing' of powers of the Waqf Board, particularly by Muslim outfits, the BJP-led NDA government is all set to introduce more than 40 amendments to the Act, by bringing two Bills in the ongoing Monsoon Session of Parliament. The Bills are aimed at kick-starting reforms in the Waqf Board as it makes it compulsory for the body to have two women members on its panel. Registration of Waqf property through a central portal and protection of rights of the Bohra community are other salient features of the proposed amendments.

The Amendment Bill also proposes to strip the Board of its power to declare any property as a 'Waqf property'. For this, Section 40 of the existing Waqf Board Act will be repealed. As per the details of the Waqf Amendment Bill, the Waqf Act 1923 will be revoked and the structure of Waqf Act of 1995 will be altered, by introducing 44 amendments, for its better functioning and operation. The proposed amendments also aim to enhance 'inclusivity' in the Waqf Board by ensuring women's representation on the Central Waqf Council and state boards.

Proposed key changes in the new legislation are renaming of the Waqf Act 1995 as Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act, 1995; changes to ensure adequate representation of all Muslim communities including Shia, Sunni, Bohra, Aghakhani and other backward classes; a separate Board of Auqaf has been proposed for Bohras and Aghakhani Central Waqf Council and the state Waqf Boards will have representation of Muslim women and non-Muslims. The proposed changes have also found support from various dargah chiefs. On Tuesday evening, a couple of them met Kiren Rijju, the Minister for Minority Affairs and announced support to the legislation.

The Amendment Bill also proposes to strip the Board of its power to declare any property as a 'Waqf property'.



Give Timeframe By Aug 27 For Survey On Reservations In Local Body Polls: High Court To Telangana Government

HYDERABAD: The Telangana High Court has directed the state government to inform it by August 27 of the time it needed for conducting a survey to come out with recommendations on reservations for BCs and other categories in local body elections. A bench of Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice J Sreenivas was hearing a bunch of petitions seeking implementation of reservations for BCs category wise in local body elections, including in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. The bench referred to the Supreme Court's earlier direction that states should first set up a dedicated commission to conduct a "contemporaneous empirical survey" to collect data of various categories of BCs by the panel before earmarking reservations. The petitioners challenged the powers given by the BC Finance Corporation to collect the empirical data of BC, saying that cannot be done by a corporation and needs a dedicated commission to do it.

In 2021, the Telangana government designated the existing BC Commission as "Dedicated Commission" and vested powers in it to conduct the empirical survey, BC Commission sources said. The petitioners contended that the election notification for local bodies should be issued only after the survey is done. The high court's directive came on a petition filed by BRS leader Sravan Dasoju, who among others sought a direction to the Telangana government, the state election commission and other respondents to forthwith undertake the exercise. The HC posted the matter for hearing on August 27.

Puja Khedkar Case: UPSC Says 'Fake' IAS To Get Candidature Cancellation Copy Within Two Days

NEW DELHI: The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) informed the Delhi High Court on Wednesday that it will communicate within two days its order cancelling former probationary Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Puja Khedkar's candidature to her. Noting the submissions of UPSC, Justice Jyoti Singh disposed of Khedkar's plea challenging the Commission's press release stating that her candidature has been dismissed.

"The petition is disposed of granting liberty to the petitioner to approach the appropriate forum in accordance with law. It is made clear that this court has neither entered into nor expressed any opinion on the merits of the case and the filing of the present petition will not come in the way of the appropriate forum in adjudicating the issue on merits," the court said. The court asked Khedkar to give her address to the UPSC, and said the order be supplied to her physically and electronically. It also said that for other reliefs like challenge to the cancellation order, Khedkar will have to go to the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT). During the hearing, senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for Khedkar, said the cancellation order was never communicated to her and she came to know about it only through the press release.

On being asked by the court as to why she has not approached CAT with her challenge, Khedkar's lawyer said since she was not served with the official order by UPSC, the plea was moved before the high court impugning the press release. Senior advocate Naresh Kaushik, representing UPSC, said the order will be communicated by the Commission to Khedkar within two days on her email id as well as her last known address.

On July 31, the UPSC cancelled Khedkar's candidature and debarred her from future exams. She was accused of 'misrepresenting information' in her application for the UPSC Civil Services Examination, 2022. Khedkar was also accused of cheating and wrongly availing of OBC and disability quota benefits. On August 1, a trial court here had denied her anticipatory bail, saying these are serious allegations that "require a thorough investigation".

Rahul Gandhi to Centre: Declare Wayanad landslides a national disaster

NEW DELHI: Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday called on the government to declare the recent calamity in Kerala's Wayanad a national disaster. Speaking during Zero Hour, Gandhi also demanded higher compensation for the people affected.

He also expressed his gratitude to those who helped during the disaster. "With more than 200 dead and a vast number



Emphasising the need to declare the Wayanad landslides a national disaster, he said, "I saw it with my own eyes. I visited many different places where the disaster took place. In some cases, an entire family is gone, with just one person remaining, sometimes an adult or a child."

missing, the eventual casualty count may exceed 400," Gandhi said. He commended the work of the state governments of Karnataka, Tamil

Nadu and Telangana for their assistance as well the central forces and the army that helped in the rescue operations. Gandhi also highlighted the unity shown by communities. "It is heartening to see all communities coming together to help people, regardless of different ideologies," he noted. He pointed out that the landslides had cut off vital roads, exacerbating the crisis. "It is a huge tragedy," Gandhi said, urging the government to provide a comprehensive rehabilitation package, build disaster-resistant infrastructure and enhance compensation for the affected.

India brings back non-essential staff from Dhaka mission, diplomats remain

NEW DELHI: A special Air India (AI1128) flight brought back 190 non-essential staffers and their family members from the Indian High Commission in Dhaka amid unrest in Bangladesh that led to the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government, sources said. However, all diplomats remain in Bangladesh and the missions are functional, sources said. Sources said around 20-30 senior staff are left at the High Commission in Dhaka. Apart from the High Commission in Dhaka, India has assistant high commissions or consulates in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet. On Tuesday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said around 10,000 Indians were presently residing in Bangladesh and the government was in "close and continuous" touch with the community through its diplomatic missions.

The situation in Bangladesh is still evolving... We are



in close and continuous touch with Indians in Bangladesh through our diplomatic community," Jaishankar said in Parliament. Addressing MPs in Parliament during an all-party meeting, Jaishankar said the situation in Bangladesh was not that alarming to require the evacuation of the 10,000 Indians in the violence-hit country. Of particular concern for India has been the attack on houses and temples of the Hindus in Bangladesh. With an interim government still to be formed, widespread vandalism and looting of homes have been reported. The interim government will be headed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. The neighbouring country plunged into chaos after a controversial quota system for government jobs saw massive street protests and violence, leaving over 400 dead and hundreds more injured. On Monday, Sheikh Hasina quit as prime minister and fled to India as protesters stormed her residence and vandalised it. After her departure, the Awami League's main office was set on fire and several leaders were targeted by the protesters. Around 20 bodies of Awami League leaders have reportedly been found across Bangladesh.

Arvind Kejriwal was present after Swati Maliwal was assaulted: Chargesheet

New Delhi. The Delhi Police has stated that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was also present with his close aide, Bibhav Kumar, immediately after the alleged assault on AAP MP Swati Maliwal took place at the Chief Minister's residence, according to the chargesheet accessed by India Today. The police is currently investigating whether this proximity of the Chief Minister to the accused, followed by the subsequent actions by the Aam Aadmi Party leaders, suggests a coordinated effort to cover up the assault.

statements, raising questions about the potential conspiracy. On May 14, a day after the assault, Sanjay Singh publicly condemned



In the chargesheet filed against Bibhav Kumar, Delhi Police indicated that there could be a larger conspiracy behind the assault. The police highlighted that following the incident, both AAP leaders Atishi and Sanjay Singh changed their

Bibhav Kumar's actions, promising strict action. However, three days later, Atishi dismissed Maliwal's allegations at a press conference. This sudden shift in stance within a span of 72 hours prompted the police to probe to see if there was any consultation or

conspiracy behind these contradictory stands. In her supplementary statement, Swati Maliwal expressed her belief in a larger conspiracy, citing the unified support for Bibhav Kumar by AAP leaders and workers. She urged the police to explore this angle, suggesting that the party's backing of Kumar indicated an orchestrated effort to undermine her. Eyewitness accounts and statements on the chargesheet paint a grim picture of the assault. Maliwal reportedly endured a merciless beating by Bibhav Kumar, who allegedly slapped her multiple times, dragged her across the room, and kicked her repeatedly. An auto driver stated that Maliwal was visibly distressed and crying, recounting her ordeal over the phone.

Supreme Court's Stern Reprimand For Judge Who Criticised Its Order

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday responded firmly to a challenge to its authority - stressing that compliance with its orders is "not a matter of choice" - and expunged critical remarks made by a single-judge bench of the Punjab and Haryana High Court last month regarding a land dispute case. The judge had reacted sharply to a May 3 order staying certain contempt proceedings. Chief Justice DY Chandrachud called the criticism "unnecessary" and said it lowered the dignity of both courts. "A party may be dissatisfied with a decision... but judges can never express dissatisfaction over the order passed by a higher constitutional forum," the Chief Justice declared. A five-judge bench of the Chief Justice and Justice Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai, Surya Kant, and Hrishikesh Roy was responding suo moto to the judge's comment, and called it a "matter of grave concern". The bench also warned the judge - Justice Rajbir Sehrawat - who made the remark, saying it expected



restraint while commenting on orders passed by the Supreme Court. "Justice Sehrawat made observations in regard to the Supreme Court of India, which are a matter of grave concern... judicial discipline in the context of the

Gratuitous observations in regard to previous orders passed by Supreme Court are absolutely unwarranted." he Supreme Court underlined that compliance with its orders is not "a matter of choice but a matter of constitutional obligation". "Parties may be aggrieved by an order... but judges are never aggrieved by an order passed by a higher constitutional forum," the Chief Justice-led bench. The top court, however, declined to initiate contempt proceedings of its own against the judge, particularly since a Division Bench had acted first and stayed Justice Sehrawat's order. The court did, though, express hope that judges of other courts would learn from this episode and be cautious while commenting on orders passed by the country's foremost legal forum. The matter broke after a video of the judge making his observations went viral. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta suggested the video "makes (for) a case of aggravated contempt" against the judge.

There are more than one billion tourists in the world, but some destinations don't get quite as many visitors as you would expect. The beaches may be beautiful and the coastline inviting, but you can understand why Tuvalu doesn't get much through-traffic. It's tiny for a start; one of the smallest nations in the world, and not much bigger than Vatican City. It's also about as far from the beaten track as possible—right out in the middle of the South Pacific. So the 1,200 international arrivals recorded there in 2011—according to the World Bank—had to make quite an effort. It had the least number of recorded visitors for all countries where data was available (and no, there were no figures for North Korea). Incidentally, if you are curious about Tuvalu, the official tourism website is surprisingly enticing. Low tourism to other nations is less easy to explain. Here we round up some of the places where visitor numbers are surprisingly low.

Ten countries that deserve more Tourists



Zimbabwe

With vast landscapes, natural wonders, and mesmerising wildlife, Zimbabwe should be a rival to South Africa. Once upon a time it was, but visitor numbers have declined in recent years—it now registers around 1.8m visitors (compared to South Africa's 9.2m), and many more head to the mighty Victoria Falls from the Zambian side nowadays. **Why are numbers low?** Robert Mugabe.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

At the intersection of two great empires—the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman—this region has huge historical appeal, perhaps most notably in its capital city, Sarajevo. With its rivers and mountains, it is also being touted as a future adventure capital of Eastern Europe. Yet, of all the countries belonging to the former Yugoslavia, only Croatia has been a true success with its tourist industry (10.4m in 2012), with only 439,000 going to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the same year.



Why are numbers low? The shadow of the Balkans conflict has been hard to shake—and it lacks the magnificent coastline of Croatia, for example. There are also currently no direct flights from Britain either.



India

The world's most populous democracy ought to be a huge hitter when it comes to tourism. Right in the centre of Asia, with strong historical links to Britain, it has some amazing attractions, from the Taj Mahal to tigers. But

with less than seven million foreign arrivals last year, it is hardly setting the world alight with its visitor numbers. To put that into context, that's less than a third of Thailand's 22.4m during the same year. **Why are numbers low?** The difficult visa process is one problem—one that tourist

authorities are apparently trying to address, with a drive to reduce bureaucracy. The recent spate of bad publicity about attitudes towards women—including some recent attacks on tourists—has also done little to boost the country's image.

A glorious archipelago with miles and miles of pristine beaches, the Philippines certainly look enticing. On an unscientific level, news that the Philippines featured in Telegraph's 20 places to visit in 2014 was greeted enthusiastically and retweeted widely on social networks. Yet the number of visitors was only just above four million in 2012. It's a shortfall that's recognised within the country's own borders, with tourism officials aiming for more than 10m visitors in 2016. **Why are numbers low?** Political instability bedevilled the country for many years, and natural disasters certainly have not helped, Typhoon Haiyan being a recent, tragic example. Despite those images of devastation, most of the country remains open for business, as explained here.

The Philippines



For culture and history, few countries can compare with Greece. Often referred to as the birthplace of democracy, with ancient ruins dotting the landscape, it also has glorious beaches, and some wonderful islands—often at good value. **Why are numbers low?** Greece's recent travails have been well documented, and there was inevitably an effect on the country due to that. Signs are that tourism is on the rise again—with around 17 million people thought to have visited in

Greece

2013. Not a disaster, but then, when you think Spain has almost 60m and Italy is at almost 50m.



For a country whose fjords and wooden clapboard houses are almost instantly recognisable, Norway is significantly behind its neighbour Sweden for international arrivals, which has more than double the number of visitors, at around 10m. In some respects, however, business is booming: more Britons went on a cruise to Norway in 2012 than to the Caribbean. **Why are numbers low?** Expense would be one reason; Norway is hardly a destination for the budget traveller. Sweden also has more neighbours, which would explain some of the discrepancy, with the country easily accessible across the bridge from Denmark.

Norway



Bhutan

This landlocked country in South Asia is a beautiful, mountainous nation. With a strongly Buddhist culture, wonderful treks, remote forests and Himalayan kingdoms, there is a wealth of visitor attractions—yet there were only around 44,000 to appreciate them in 2012. **Why are numbers low?** This is the country's own choice. Bhutan has long limited tourists: visitors have to pay a tariff of \$250 a day to enter, a fee that immediately excludes many of the backpackers that head to Thailand.

Brazil

It may be the most visited country in South America, but that continent as a whole remains relatively unexplored. For a country with such a reputation for its beaches, natural assets and football culture, Brazil is arguably still not punching its full weight. It's comfortably the biggest economy in the region, and its attractions vary from the beaches of Salvador, Rio's Carnival to the remote flora and fauna of the Amazon. **Why are numbers low?** 5.7 million visitors isn't that bad, you might argue, considering the country is hardly positioned at the world's crossroads. But then, Australia gets more than six million, and it is further away from both Europe and the USA. Bolivia and Peru are two other countries where the visitor numbers don't seem to match the attractions on offer.



New Zealand

With The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit offering a giant marketing boost over the last few years, the number of tourists to this beautiful country is on the increase. But at just over 2.5m international arrivals at the last full count, it is still a long way behind Australia, its neighbour across the Tasman—it has only slightly more than a third of the visitors. **Why are numbers low?** It's a very long way away from almost everywhere, with a much smaller population than Australia (and hence fewer European relatives to visit). Australia also has more flight connections, and a reputation for its beaches.

Japan

For a country that has given so much to the world culturally—from temples to the madness of Tokyo—Japan has a relative dearth of visitors (about 8.4m, only about a million more than for Taiwan). **Why are numbers low?** High prices are probably the main reason—although with the devalued yen, that is less of a problem than it used to be. The country's cultural complexity could be another—perhaps the writing and language are viewed as obstacles by novices. The 2020 Olympics could provide a boost, however.



Markets rebound in early trade; Sensex jumps 1,046 points; Nifty surges above 24,300-level

MUMBAI. Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty bounced back sharply in early trade on Wednesday after three days of massive decline in tandem with a rally in global peers. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,046.13 points to 79,639.20 in early trade. The NSE Nifty surged 313.9 points to 24,306.45. Among the 30 Sensex firms, Maruti, Infosys, UltraTech Cement, Adani Ports, JSW Steel and HCL Technologies were the biggest gainers. Asian Paints, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharti Airtel and Titan were the laggards. Asian markets were also trading in the positive territory, where Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong were quoting significantly higher. The US markets ended green on Tuesday. "After the twin jolts from US recession fears and the unwinding of the Yen carry trade, stock markets globally are slowly limping back to stability. Even though FIIs were big sellers in India in the cash market during the last three days, their selling is being matched by DII (Domestic Institutional Investors) buying. This countervailing investment by DIIs can impart resilience to the market," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,531.24 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. DIIs bought equities worth Rs 3,357.45 crore on Tuesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.14 per cent to USD 76.59 a barrel. Falling for the third straight day on Tuesday, the BSE benchmark settled at 78,593.07, down 166.33 points or 0.21 per cent. Similarly, the Nifty declined 63.05 points or 0.26 per cent to settle below the 24,000 level at 23,992.55.

Ola Electric IPO subscribed 4.26 times on final day of bidding

NEW DELHI. The much-anticipated initial public offering (IPO) of Ola Electric was subscribed 4.26 times on the final day of bidding, receiving bids for 198.16 crore equity shares against 46.52 crore on offer. The low subscription level came despite the leading electric two-wheeler company's valuation eased to about \$4 billion ahead of the Rs 6,145 crore IPO. Categories-wise, the heavy lifting was done by qualified institutional buyers (QIBs) and retail investors as their portion was subscribed 5.31 times and 3.86 times the allotted quota, respectively. The non-institutional investors (high networth individuals) bid 2.39 times the portion set aside for them. The portion set aside for employees was subscribed 11.66 times against the reserved portion. Owing to low enthusiasm and rising volatility in the broader market, the grey market premium (GMP) of Ola Electric has fallen sharply in recent times, indicating a not-so-buoyant listing gain. Last checked, Ola Electric was commanding no premium in the unofficial market. Brokerage firms and analysts too have mixed views on the IPO as they expect Ola Electric to incur losses. They are also not satisfied with the \$4 billion valuation. The Bengaluru-based reported a net loss of Rs 1,584.40 crore with a revenue of Rs 5,243.27 crore for the financial year ended on March 31, 2024. Ola Electric is demanding an EV/sales multiple of 6.3 times, which is at a significant premium, said Choice Broking in a note. It added that key concern for the company is its reliance on government subsidies for generating sales and its loss-making operations.

ITR refund status: How to check online using PAN on e-filing portal and NSDL



New Delhi. Taxpayers now eagerly await their refund after having gone through the process of filing their income tax returns before the July 31 deadline despite facing several glitches on the tax portal. Taxpayers can check refund status for financial year 2023-24 (FY24) online. The deadline for filing ITR was July 31, and now it's important to stay updated on your refund status. You can easily do this using the income tax e-filing portal or the National Securities Depository (NSDL) website. Here's a guide to help you check your refund status. Before you start checking your refund status, make sure you have the following details: Your valid ID and password for logging into the income tax e-filing portal. Your PAN must be linked with your Aadhaar. The acknowledgement number from your filed ITR. How to check ITR refund status online using PAN card. Follow these steps to check your refund status using your PAN number: Visit the income tax e-filing portal and log in using your ID and password. Go to the 'e-File' tab. Click on 'Income Tax Returns' and then 'View Filed Returns'. Select the assessment year and check the status of your refund. How to check tax refund status on NSDL website You can also check your refund status on the NSDL website. Here's how: Go to the NSDL website and enter your PAN. Select the assessment year. Enter the 'captcha code' and click 'proceed' to view your refund status. How long does it take to process ITR refund? Typically, it takes about four to five weeks for the refund to be credited to your account after verifying your tax return online. If you have not received your refund within this period, look out for any emails from the income tax department regarding issues with your return. You can also check the status of your refund on the e-filing website to get updates.

Dubai International Airport, busiest for global travel, sees half-year record of 44.9 million passengers

A real-estate boom and its highest-ever tourism numbers have made the city-state in the United Arab Emirates no longer just a layover but a destination for even more travelers.

DUBAI. Dubai International Airport saw a record 44.9 million travelers pass through its cavernous terminals in the first half of this year, putting the world's busiest airport for international travel back on track to beat its all-time record as aviation booms after the coronavirus pandemic. The results released on Wednesday follow a record-breaking annual profit for the long-haul carrier Emirates that calls the airport known as DXB home — and comes as Dubai plans to move operations to a planned, nearly \$35 billion airfield in the next decade. Meanwhile, a real-estate

boom and its highest-ever tourism numbers have made the city-state in the United Arab Emirates no longer just a layover but a destination for even more travelers. "The record-breaking performance in the first half of this year highlights our strategic importance as a global aviation hub," Dubai Airports CEO Paul Griffiths said in a statement. "Dubai is at the forefront of global cities when it comes to attracting talent, businesses, and tourists from around the world — and we are proud to be the gateway to the city." The airport had 89.1 million passengers in 2018, its busiest-ever year before the pandemic. Sixty-six million passengers passed through in 2022 and 86.9 million passengers in 2023. "We have a very optimistic outlook for the remainder of the year, and we are on track to break records with 91.8 million annual guests forecasted for 2024," Griffiths added. DXB long has served as a barometer for the aviation industry worldwide and the wider economic health of Dubai. The emirate



and the airline rebounded quickly from the pandemic by pushing forward with tourism even as some countries more slowly came out of their pandemic crouch. The airport had 89.1 million passengers in 2018, its busiest-ever year before the pandemic. Dubai plans to move its busy international airport to USD 35 billion new facility within 10 years. That has seen whiplash at an airport briefly shut during the pandemic to one now straining from the traffic. In April, Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin

Rashid Al Maktoum announced plans to move DXB's operations to Al Maktoum International Airport at Dubai World Central, an airfield in the city's southern reaches whose development had been delayed by the repercussions of the sheikhdom's 2009 economic crisis.

Plans call for a curving, white terminal reminiscent of the traditional Bedouin tents of the Arabian Peninsula. The airport will include five parallel runways and 400 aircraft gates, officials say. The airport now has just two runways, like Dubai International Airport.

Al Maktoum International Airport, some 45 kilometers (28 miles) away from DXB, opened in 2010 with one terminal. It served as a parking lot for Emirates' double-decker Airbus A380s and other aircraft during the pandemic and slowly has come back to life with cargo and private flights in the time since. It also hosts the biennial Dubai Air Show and has a vast, empty desert in which to expand.

Akums Drugs and Pharmaceuticals IPO lists at 7% gain: Book profit or sell

NEW DELHI. A senior official has confirmed that the Indian government will not retract the tax demand of Rs 32,000 crore against IT giant Infosys, citing strong evidence in the case related to goods and services tax (GST). The official stated, "The government is firm in its decision. The law will take its own course. If there is a demand, then the company would have to settle it." Additionally, other companies with foreign branches may also face similar tax demands. Recently, Infosys received partial relief from the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) regarding allegations of tax evasion linked to free services provided by its foreign subsidiaries. However, this relief was granted on technical grounds, as the tax demand can't



exceed a five-year limit. The demand was issued by the DGGI on July 31, claiming tax evasion that exceeds Rs 32,000 crore. Following this, Infosys announced that the Karnataka state authorities had withdrawn a pre-show cause notice issued the same day and requested additional information from the company for the DGGI's review. In its defence, Infosys has stated that it has settled all its GST payments and

The official said that the government is firm in its decision. The law will take its own course. If there is a demand, then the company would have to settle it.

contends that the DGGI's claims do not pertain to its legitimate expenses. The company emphasised its compliance with all applicable central and state regulations in a filing on July 31. The pre-show cause notice came shortly after media reports surfaced regarding the Karnataka state GST authorities' notice on the same matter, as disclosed by Infosys in its July 31 filing.

Explained: Why Suzlon Energy shares jumps 5% in early trade

New Delhi. Suzlon Energy shares gained 5% in early trade on Wednesday after Morgan Stanley reaffirmed its 'overweight' rating on the company, setting a target price of Rs 73.40 per share. The target is approximately 11% higher than Suzlon's closing price on Tuesday. The boost in Suzlon's stock price comes on the heels of the company's announcement that it has signed definitive agreements to acquire a 76% stake in Renom Energy Services from the Sanjay Ghodawat Group (SGG). Renom is India's largest Multi-Brand Operations and Maintenance Service (MBOMS) provider, managing 1,782 MW in wind, 148 MW in solar, and 572 MW in BOP assets. Following this announcement, Suzlon's stock climbed to a high of Rs 69.45 on the BSE. Morgan Stanley highlighted that the deal's implied valuation of four times price-to-sales is more attractive compared to Suzlon's listed peer. Other financial analysts have set varying targets for Suzlon, with JM Financial

at Rs 71, Geojit Financial Services at Rs 73, Anand Rathi Shares & Stock Brokers at Rs 68, and Nuvama Institutional Equities at Rs



64. Suzlon's acquisition of Renom will occur in two tranches. The first tranche involves purchasing a 51% stake for Rs 400 crore, while the second tranche will see an additional 25% stake acquired within 18 months for Rs 260 crore. The completion of this transaction is contingent on fulfilling certain conditions. Suzlon Energy highlighted that the

strategic acquisition would unlock Renom's potential and position it as a leading Independent Service Provider (ISP) for multi-brand renewable energy assets. Girish Tanti, Vice Chairman of Suzlon Group, explained that this move aligns with India's goal of achieving 500 GW of renewable energy installations by 2030. He noted that Renom's strength in handling various renewable technologies and turbines would be crucial for Suzlon's growth strategy. JP Chalasani, CEO of Suzlon Group, added that this acquisition would enhance Suzlon's service business, which has been a key enabler of the energy transition. With Suzlon Services focusing on Suzlon-made turbines and Renom on non-Suzlon assets, the company aims to provide comprehensive O&M services across the Indian renewables sector.



and Ashima Goel are two of the three external members of the panel and are appointed by the government. State Bank Chairman Disneha Khara was vocal in saying he doesn't expect any changes in the policy on Thursday, saying growth remains strong and inflation, led by food articles are stubbornly high. "There is no reason for the RBI to slash the rate now as its inflation is far from over. Moreover, the economy is faring robustly well. Most central banks are decoupling from themselves and act mostly according to the domestic situations," Khara told reporters at the post-earnings presser last Saturday. However, he expects the RBI to do something more on the liquidity front as the system gets into the busy credit season now. Even fund managers and chief financial officers' polls by business channels also don't expect any changes in the policy rates. Retail inflation rose to 5.08% in June as against 4.8% in May, and remaining under the 5% mark since January due to higher food and beverage inflation. Core CPI rose to 3.13% from 3.07% in May. Both rural and urban inflation rates jumped in June, with rural inflation increasing to 5.66% and urban printing in at 4.39% in June.

LTCG tax rules: How you can pay less on stock profits below Rs 2.25 lakh

The long term capital gains (LTCG) tax was raised from 10% to 12.5%, and the Short Term Capital Gains (STCG) tax on certain assets were increased from 15% to 20%.

New Delhi. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced a new regime for the long term capital gains (LTCG) in Budget 2024. The long term capital gains (LTCG) tax was raised from 10% to 12.5%, and the Short Term Capital Gains (STCG) tax on certain assets were increased from 15% to 20%. "Short term gains on certain financial assets shall henceforth attract a tax rate of 20%, while that on all other financial assets and all non-financial assets shall continue to attract the applicable tax rate," Nirmala Sitharaman said during the Budget presentation. The Finance Minister shared the reason

behind it and said, "We wanted to simplify the approach to taxation, also for the capital gains. Second, if anything, the average taxation actual has come down. When we say it is 12.5%, because we have worked out for each of the different classes. But the point is that we have brought it down from below average to 12.5%, which is the lowest if you look at several years, encourages investment in the market," said Sitharaman.

In addition, Sitharaman also announced a hike in STT (securities transaction tax) on F&O (futures and options) securities by 0.02% and 0.1% in order to discourage retail investors from trading in the risky market segment. These changes to LTCG tax were not well received by the investor community. "The taxation on LTCG on sale of stocks has evolved in the past years. From being entirely tax free, to getting taxed at 10% with an exemption up to Rs 1 lakh of gains, to the current rate getting increased to 12.5% in the July 2024 budget, alongside a miniscule increase in exemption to Rs 1.25 Lacs.



While the intention of this amendment as mentioned in the memorandum, was to tap the gains derived primarily by HNI's, this is considered a blow on investment in stocks for classes across," said Ritika Nayyar, Partner, Singhania & Co. She further added that the maths for the taxes on these gains across varied income ranges does come out with some numbers which support those small investors, earning LTCG within that range, where they may be better off with this amendment. However, one will have to strictly not only time them well but keep a close watch that it doesn't go beyond that

income numbers. "This will be a play between, both, the rate of LTCG and the slight increase of exemption to Rs 1.25 lakh. For example, if we see the comparative table below, as the LTCG is increasing, after income of Rs 1.5 lakh, the tax as per new rates starts increasing, however it is still less than the tax coming under the old rate, which was lower," said Nayyar. This is due to the trade-off between the higher exemption and lower tax rate. However, it reaches a breakeven at Rs 2.25 lakh where the tax amount in both scenarios is the same. But after this income range, these small investors lose this leverage," she added. Note: For ease of the above calculation, surcharge and cess have not been considered. So, this amount of Rs 2.25 lakh could be considered as a focal point in case a small investor/ taxpayer intends to get the best of both the worlds. However, due caution on transactions within limits, will have to be exercised to ensure this.

NEWS BOX

Ukrainian wrestler and member of parliament has a goal for Paris: 'Show that Ukraine is still alive'

PARIS: Zhan Beleniuk's focus wavered at times as he trained in hopes of winning a second Olympic gold medal in Greco-Roman wrestling. The Ukrainian doesn't just represent his country in international competition. He's a member of parliament. And since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, well, it's been easy for his mind to drift.

"It's difficult because you are thinking about your safety, the safety of your relatives, your friends," Beleniuk said. "And you know, it's not comfortable training when some missiles are flying about your head. That's why it's difficult, it's dangerous. But it's our reality." Beleniuk, 33, said his team mostly trained in Ukraine before the Games, but it spent more time outside the country than usual, including places such as Croatia and Poland. He said other nations that normally would have trained some in Ukraine declined to for safety reasons.

Despite the extra challenges, Beleniuk, the first Black member of Ukraine's parliament, is now focused on competing. He feels he owes it to his country to come through.

"Our athletes should show that Ukraine is still alive," he said. "We still protect our land, we still do our job." Beleniuk, who won gold at



Tokyo in 2021 and silver at Rio de Janeiro in 2016, said he still will be ready to go when the 87-kilogram category starts Wednesday at Champ-de-Mars Arena. He opens against China's Qian Haitao in a class with five wrestlers who have won world championships. "It's huge competition there in my weight class. I know it, but it's not the first time for me," he said. "Because, this kind of weight class is good competition every time. I think my experience will give me an opportunity to show a good result."

Beleniuk is the son of a Ukrainian mother and a Rwandan father. His father died in the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda when Beleniuk was just 3 years old, but the son has maintained a connection with Africa. His primary government responsibility is youth and sport, but he said he also meets with other leaders — including from Africa — to drum up support and fight Russian propaganda. "Our country gave me everything that I have now, so my responsibility in this tough period for our country."

Gautam Gambhir has given us lot of inputs: Sundar on facing Sri Lanka spinners

New Delhi. Washington Sundar said that head coach Gautam Gambhir has been working with the Indian team about facing Sri Lanka's quality spinners. The Men in Blue are currently 0-1 down and will have a chance to draw the series in the third and final ODI on Wednesday (August 7) at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo. In the first two ODIs, India found themselves in a position of command but suffered batting collapses during run-chases. The Sri Lankan spinners, especially Jeffrey Vandersay, Charith Asalanka and Wanindu Hasaranga have troubled the Indian



batters. Vandersay picked up six wickets in the second ODI and helped Sri Lanka win by 32 runs. Sundar said that Gambhir has been helping the Indian batters with his precious inputs, having earlier been a quality player of spin-bowling.

"We are prepared to be on top" There have been a lot of inputs from [Gambhir]. He's a high-quality player of spin. We've always seen him putting up great performances on such wickets, especially against quality spin bowling. That's one of the reasons we came out here today to practice, to try and find a way to do those little things tactically. We are really prepared to be on top of the game in all aspects tomorrow," Sundar said in the pre-match press conference.

Sundar also admitted that India let the Sri Lankan batters off the hook in both the ODIs thus far. He said that if the bowlers become a little more confident, they can restrict their opposition to a low score in the final game.

"We'd love to get them out for 200 or less than that. We had them in that situation in both matches. With big tournaments coming up, we'll be in similar situations, and it's an opportunity for us to find a way to get the job done in crunch situations. We just need to put our hands up and win those critical situations in the game," Sundar added. Sundar has had an excellent series for India as he is their leading wicket-taker. In two games, Sundar has taken four wickets at an economy rate of four with a three-wicket haul to his name.

India lost Olympic gold: Nishant Dev unhappy with quarter-final result in Paris

Nishant Dev lost the quarter-final clash against Mexico's Marco Verde Alvarez in the 71kg category. He was unhappy with the decision taken by the umpires during the match as he suffered a loss in a split-decision.



Indian boxer Nishant Dev expressed his displeasure with the judgement of his quarter-final clash at the Paris Olympics 2024. A disappointed Nishant considered himself in contention for gold and suggested that India not only lost a bronze, but rather a bronze medal. The 23-year-old suffered a split-decision loss against Mexico's Marco Verde Alvarez in the 71kg category on August 3, Saturday. He was just one win away from assuring India another medal at the Paris Olympic Games. Nishant hoped that such things would not happen to any athlete. I am feeling very bad. India has lost not only a bronze but a gold medal, and I was seeing myself getting such a gold medal because I had defeated the person with whom I had a fight before and I had defeated him in this fight too but the point of view of

the judges was different and I was not at all happy with their decision," Nishant told ANI. Nishant's loss did not sit well with a certain section of users on social media as they claimed the umpiring was unfair and that India was "robbed-of" a medal. Nishant won the first round 4-1, and looked in complete control of the bout in the second round as well, where he landed a streak of massive jab hooks on the Mexican, yet the judges surprisingly sided with Alvarez in that round, putting him 3-2 ahead in the tie. The Indian boxer, who had defeated his

Mexican counterpart earlier, lost the last round as well.

Nishant was aiming for gold

Nishant seemed dejected as he felt 15 years of his blood, sweat and tears had come to a disappointing end. "And I just don't have anything to say because the years of hard work that I had put in morning, evening, day and night for this Olympics, my boxing training of the last fifteen years, have seen it coming to a disappointing end here today. But it doesn't matter, the sadness inside me says that in the coming Olympics, such a

thing should not happen to any athlete. Unless you are an athlete, no one can understand how much sorrow and pain you have inside you." "IOC should look at poor judging decisions" Nishant wanted the International Olympic Committee to intervene and look into the judging decisions. "I would like the Olympics and the IOC to look at these poor judging decisions and take some action against them. First of all, I don't understand that if there are five judges. They are giving the decision and the first thing is that the boxer can do whatever he wants, the decision is in the hands of the referees and earlier the scoring was good given this time the scoring is disappointing. It is not known which athlete is winning, still these people do it in favor of the other opponent. If there is a judging scoring system of five-zero and a blue corner is winning a one-sided fight and it is still in its favor. One is coming and four are those who are going in favor of the red corner." Nishant was India's last hope for a boxing medal in men's category, but he suffered an agonizing loss. "So I want ask, what is lacking in that judge that he is not able to see why he has been given each scoring, rather he was dominating the entire round, so I would like to know that.

SL vs IND: Rishabh Pant replaces KL Rahul, Riyan Parag to make ODI debut

India have made a couple of changes in their playing XI for the third ODI against Sri Lanka. Rishabh Pant and Riyan Parag have been brought into the team.



New Delhi. Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka won his third consecutive toss of the series and has opted to bat first in the third ODI against India on Wednesday, August 7 at R. Premadasa Stadium, Colombo. India made a couple of changes to their playing XI in a must-win encounter as they brought in Rishabh Pant and Riyan Parag in place of KL Rahul and Arshdeep Singh. It will be a return for Pant to ODI cricket after 20 months as he last played the 50-over format on November 30, 2022 against New Zealand. The southpaw has played 30 matches so far in his career and scored 865 runs at an average of 34.60 and a strike rate of 106.65. Pant will be replacing

Rahul in the playing XI who registered scores of 31 (43) and 0 (2) in the two matches of the series so far. On the other hand, Riyan Parag will also be seen making his debut in ODIs after making his international debut in the recent T20I series against Zimbabwe. The spin all-rounder has been brought keeping in mind the spin-friendly surface in Colombo where part-timers like Charith Asalanka have been successful with the ball. Parag will be replacing Arshdeep Singh

in the playing XI who has been quite expensive in the series so far. In the first two matches, the left-arm seamer registered figures of 2/47 (8 overs) and 0/58 (9 overs) in the two matches so far. Meanwhile, India will be eager to win the third ODI and avoid a rare series defeat against Sri Lanka. Notably, Sri Lanka last won an ODI series against India in 1997 and hence find themselves on the brink of history. India (Playing XI): Rohit Sharma(c), Shubman Gill,

Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant(w), Shreyas Iyer, Riyan Parag, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj Sri Lanka (Playing XI): Pathum Nissanka, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis(w), Sadeera Samarawickrama, Charith Asalanka(c), Janith Liyanage, Kamindu Mendis, Dunith Wellalage, Maheesh Theekshana, Jeffrey Vandersay, Asitha Fernando

USA's artistic swimming team replicate Michael Jackson's moonwalk in Paris

- USA's artistic swimming team replicate Michael Jackson's moonwalk
- Team USA wows fans with their tribute to the King of Pop Michael Jackson
- Fans were thrilled as Team USA perform moonwalk underwater



New Delhi. Michael Jackson's moonwalk has always been iconic, which charmed everyone, with dancers across the world trying to replicate the steps. However, one would not have imagined the iconic moonwalk could be done in the swimming pool as well. The USA Artistic Swimming team managed to do the unthinkable. They dazzled the fans by performing Michael Jackson's iconic moonwalk dance upside down while floating underwater. Soon, Olympic fans started raving about what they had just witnessed and the USA team went

viral with their dance moves underwater. The USA's artistic swimming team paid tribute to Michael Jackson with their technical routine. In fact, their outfits were also inspired by the King of Pop and danced to his 1987 hit "Smooth Criminal." They

stole the show when the team flipped underwater and did a few kicks before pulling off the iconic dance move with precision. The USA team managed to wow the fans with their creativity and synchronization. In fact, many social media users also demanded a gold medal for the

Vinesh Phogat's all-night workout to meet Olympic final weight limit ends in vain

- Vinesh Phogat worked out all night to compete in the gold medal event at Paris Olympics
- Vinesh Phogat did cycling, skipping and jogging overnight to shed extra kilos
- Vinesh lost 1.85kg overnight and was over-weight by 150 grams

50kg freestyle final at the Olympic Games. Vinesh was found over-weighted by 150 grams during the weigh-ins and that led to her disqualification. It was learnt that Vinesh was found 2kg over-weight on the eve of her gold medal clash against the USA's Sarah Hildebrandt. Vinesh Phogat was determined and undeterred as she worked out the whole night to shed weight. She did skipping,



jogging, cycling and everything in her potential to lose 1.85kgs. Eventually, she fell short by just 150 grams, which led to a heartbreaking disqualification from the final round. The Indian wrestler worked out all night to shed those extra kilos, showcasing her determination towards bringing India Olympic glory. However, all this was not enough for her to be able to compete in a gold medal match. Phogat contested in the 53kg

category in the last two Olympics, in 2016 and 2020, which is her usual category. She had to shed her weight from 53kgs to 50kgs to participate in the Paris Olympics 2024. Debutant Antim Panghal had qualified in the 53kg category and that led to Vinesh Phogat cutting down her weight to book Olympic berth. Vinesh entered the contest unseeded

in the category and registered three emphatic wins on August 6, Tuesday to seal an Olympic medal for India.

Why was Vinesh Phogat disqualified? Weigh-in rules explained

Vinesh disqualified from the Olympic final match. According to the rules, wrestlers must weigh in twice: once on the morning of the preliminary rounds and again on the morning of the final. On Tuesday morning, Vinesh was within the permissible 50kg limit. However, her weight likely increased throughout the day as she replenished herself after three bouts.

It is understood that she needed to lose about 2kg overnight. Vinesh was seen skipping in a sweat suit last evening after her semifinal bout and reportedly worked on losing weight all night.

Amrutha Prem

Bags Filmfare Award For Best Debut In Tagaru Palya



Amrutha Prem recently bagged a Filmfare Award for her performance in the Kannada film Tagaru Palya. It was written and directed by debutant Umesh K Krupa. It was produced by Dhananjaya. Apart from Amrutha Prem, the film also starred Nagabhushana, Tara, Sharath Lohithaswa and Rangayana Raghu. Hailing from a celebrity background, the actress Amrutha Prem debuted with this film against her initial decision to not become the part of entertainment industry. The actress is the daughter of film 96 fame director C Prem Kumar. The actress bagged the Best Debut Actress award at Filmfare held on August 3. The actress posted her snaps from the event. After her remarkable performance in the Tagaru Palya, the fans of the actress are waiting for her next film. The internet is buzzing with the anticipation of the actress's next film. Amrutha Prem revealed that the announcement of her next film will be done soon. The actress said she went through several scripts before finalising her next venture. She also admitted that the expectations have increased from her by fans after she won the award. She has also assured her fans of working better in the next films. The actress also posted her snaps from the Filmfare event. She posed with her award.

As per media reports, the muhurat of the second film by Kannada actress Amrutha Prem was held a few months ago at Shri Bande Mahakali Temple located in Bengaluru, Karnataka. Many prominent guests including Amrutha's father and actor, Prem, attended the muhurat ceremony. It became one of the most special moments for the Tagaru Palya actress as the muhurat ceremony coincided with the birthday of her father Prem. On this joyous occasion, Prem wished Amrutha for her upcoming project. The 22-year-old actress interacted with the media as well and patiently answered the questions related to the cast and crew of the film. The title of the film, however, remains undisclosed. Tagaru Palya was released in October, 2023. The actress has not been seen in any film since then. Fans are eagerly waiting for the announcement of the film.



Sushma Seth's Granddaughter Mihika Shah Passes Away, Mother Divya Seth Shares Heartbreaking Post



Actor Divya Seth Shah's daughter, Mihika Shah, passed away suddenly on Monday, August 5, in Mumbai. According to sources close to the family and reported by India Today, Mihika initially developed a fever, which was followed by a seizure. The family is devastated by the unexpected loss and has scheduled a prayer meeting for August 8. Taking to her Facebook account, Divya Seth Shah shared a note that read, "With profound sorrow, we inform you of the passing of our beloved Mihika Shah, who left for her heavenly abode on August 5th, 2024 (sic)." According to the note, the prayer meet will be held at Sindh Colony Club House in Mumbai on August 8.

Just last week, Divya shared a touching Instagram post featuring three generations of her family. The photo showed her daughter, radiant in a green dress, alongside her mother, who looked elegant in red. The image beautifully reflected the deep love and strong connection between them.

Mihika would often share photos with her parents and grandmother, Sushma Seth. In April, she had taken to Instagram to share beautiful photos from her childhood with her mom Divya on her birthday. "When I look at you, I see the purest love I'll ever know. Every wounded soul finds their way to you, in your care they heal and grow, Divya, gods gift, my blessing from above, who's love is stronger than the eye can see, in 8.1 billion people on earth mama, your the perfect mother for me. Happy Birthday my Dibi, I love you," she had captioned the post.

Divya Seth has worked in films like Jab We Met, Dil Dhadakne Do and Article 370. Veteran actress Sushma Seth has played pivotal parts in films such as Dhadkan, Kal Ho Naa Ho, Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham and TV series, Dekh Bhai Dekh.

Jr NTR, Janhvi Kapoor's Sensual Devara Song Brutally Trolled: 'Ew, He Looks So Much Older Than Her'



Jr NTR and Janhvi Kapoor released their new song from Devara, titled Chuttamalle, and it has not gone down well with social media users. In the music video, Tarak was seen romancing Janhvi, who is 14 years younger than him. Intended to be a sensual love song, several social media users pointed out that it was awkward to watch the RRR star and the Ulajh actress in this form. A few even added the age difference between the two is very evident.

"This pair looks so odd. Age gap is jarring (Let's see if it's justified in movie). Jr.NTR looks so awkward and out of place," a Reddit user wrote while sharing the music video on the platform. "Please don't do this to Jr NTR," added another. "After 'Natu natu' this feels like 'Dont-do Dont-do' so ewwwwwwwww," a third comment read.

"He is probably just vvv uncomfortable, because he knows the age gap is huge and that should ideally make anyone uncomfortable," a fourth social media user said. "When will Indian movies grow out of this hip thrusting, waist close ups, fake grinding etc.... It's so cringe. When will we make good, sensible movies," a user asked.

Chuttamalle is composed by Anirudh Ravichander. This is the film's second song. The film's first single, titled Fear Song, had already set the stage for high expectations. Producer Naga Vamsi had boldly claimed that it would surpass the popularity of Hukam, a hit track from the film Jailer, also composed by Anirudh.

Meanwhile, the action thriller film is getting ready to release on September 27. Written and directed by Koratala Siva, the film stars Jr NTR, Saif Ali Khan, Janhvi Kapoor, Shruti Marathe, Prakash Raj, Srikanth, Shine Tom Chacko and Narain. This marks Janhvi and Saif's first Telugu film. The film is produced by Sudhakar Mikkilineni and Kosaraju Harikrishna under the banners Yuvasudha Arts and NTR Arts. The film is divided into two parts.

Alia Bhatt

Flaunts Denim Look, Waves At Paparazzi As She Gets Papped



Alia Bhatt never fails to impress all with her simplicity and style. On Tuesday afternoon too, the Bollywood actress was snapped by the paparazzi in Mumbai when she impressed everyone with her charming looks. Alia sported a green tank top and layered it with a blue denim jacket with matching jeans. She tied her hair into a small bun and looked dapper in black goggles. Alia was seen waving at the paparazzi as she also smiled for the cameras. Soon after the video was shared, fans rushed to the comments section to shower love on their favourite actress. "She looks pretty," one of the fans wrote. Several others dropped red-heart emojis. Check it out here:

Meanwhile, Alia is currently shooting for her Spy Universe movie - Alpha. Last month, it was reported that the actress is shooting for an action sequence with Bobby Deol for the movie. As reported by IANS, Alia and the film's antagonist, Bobby Deol are currently in Mumbai where they are shooting on a heavily guarded set in Film City. "It is a ferocious action sequence. You can call it brutal. It is a no-holds-barred face-to-face action sequence between Alia Bhatt and Bobby Deol. There will be blood," a source cited by the news agency claimed.

Besides this, Alia will also be reuniting with her actor-husband Ranbir Kapoor for Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Love and War. The film also stars Vicky Kaushal in the lead. Earlier this year, in an exclusive interview with News18 Showsha, Alia talked about the film and her reunion with Ranbir when she said, "I, as an audience, am more excited to see him [Bhansali] and Ranbir collaborate, again, after so many years. I am like, 'wow, what's that going to be like?'" Talking about reuniting with Vicky Kaushal, Alia continued by saying, "Vicky and I coming together again; Ranbir and Vicky created magic with Sanju. So, it is a lot of combinations."

Alia Bhatt also has Jigra with Vedang Raina in her pipeline. She will also be seen in Jee Lee Zara with Katrina Kaif and Priyanka Chopra. However, there is no update on the film's shoot schedule as of now.

