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UP Chief Minister Vows To Continue Crackdown On Mafia, Criminals
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In Brief

Row Gets Murkier; Congress Demands Release Of Information

New Delhi: The Neet 2024 result row has got even more murkier with more and more details coming out. While earlier six students from a single centre in Haryana got 720 out of 720 marks, it has also come to light that an exam centre in Godhra was managed by paying crores to the NTA coordinator. It has also come to light that in Bihar, the paper was leaked using the Telegram app and some arrests have been made in connection with the incident. A police investigation into the Godhra NEET cheating scandal has uncovered transactions amounting to crores of rupees involving 12 students, their parents, and the accused individuals. The probe has revealed the extensive financial dealings orchestrated to facilitate cheating in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for undergraduate medical admissions. Among the implicated students, four deposited Rs 66 lakh into the bank account of Roy Overseas Company, owned by Parashuram Roy of Vadodra. Additionally, students issued cheques totalling Rs 2.82 crore to Tushar Bhatt and Parashuram Roy. The investigation also found that three students provided Bhatt and Roy with blank cheques, highlighting significant monetary transactions connected to the alleged NEET exam misconduct in Jalaram School, one of the exam centres in Godhra. The Congress party has levelled serious allegations against the Gujarat, Bihar and Central governments. Congress leader Pawan Khera said the National Testing Agency (NTA) has tried its best to cover up the matter in the court by saying that grace marks were given to 1563 children due to time loss. "The NTA quoted a Supreme Court judgement which clearly says that engineering and medical do not come under this category."

PM'S MEGA OUTREACH AT G7

Meets Zelensky, Meloni, Macron And Pope



Italy: PM Narendra Modi is in Italy for the G7 Summit, where he is holding a series of key bilateral meetings with world leaders. The summit is being held at the luxurious Borgo Egnazia resort in Italy's Apulia region. India has been invited to the G7 Summit as an Outreach country and this is PM Modi's first overseas visit since he took oath as Prime Minister for the third straight term. The Prime Minister has held bilateral meetings with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. He has met Italian Prime Minister

Giorgia Meloni and Pope Francis, and is also scheduled to hold talks with them later. After the meeting with Mr Zelenskyy, Prime Minister Modi said it was a productive one and that India is eager to further cement bilateral relations with Ukraine. On the war with Russia, the PM reiterated that India believes in a human-centric approach and that the way to peace is through dialogue and diplomacy. Giving details of the PM's meeting with Mr Macron, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal posted on X: "Taking Strategic Partnership to new levels! PM

@narendramodi met President @EmmanuelMacron of France on the sidelines of the 50th G7 Summit in Apulia, Italy." "The two leaders discussed ways to further strengthen the partnership including in areas of defence, nuclear, space, education, climate action, digital public infrastructure, critical technologies, connectivity and culture. They also exchanged views on key global and regional issues," he added. Day one of the summit was dominated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict as the leaders agreed on a US proposal to back a \$ 50-billion loan to Kyiv utilising frozen Russian assets, described

by US President Joe Biden as a "significant outcome" and a strong message to Russian President Vladimir Putin. In his departure statement, PM Modi had said he was "glad" that his first foreign visit in his third term as Prime Minister was to Italy for the G7 Summit. "I warmly recall my visit to Italy for the G20 Summit in 2021. Prime Minister Meloni's two visits to India last year were instrumental in infusing momentum and depth in our bilateral agenda. We remain committed to consolidate the India-Italy strategic partnership, and bolster cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and the Mediterranean regions," his statement said.

SECURITY FORCES PREPARE TO COUNTER EMERGING THREAT OF TERRORISM IN J&K

Terrorism In Jammu & Kashmir: Director General of Police RR Swain said on Thursday, "A new security challenge has surfaced in the Jammu region, but security forces are ready to give a befitting reply to foreign terrorists." On the sidelines of a function, the DGP mentioned, "There is a plan and motive behind pushing foreign terrorists into the Jammu region, which has emerged as a new challenge to security forces." "Terror handlers across the border have failed to recruit locals in Jammu and Kashmir. Now they are recruiting locals across the LoC and pushing them inside our territory to disrupt peace and kill people. Police and security agencies are ready to counter foreign terrorism in the Jammu region, and we will give them a befitting reply. When you have an enemy ready to kill people and create trouble, we also have to be ready to counter and bear some losses as well, he added." The DGP highlighted that the Jammu region has difficult terrain, dense for-



ests, streams, and tough mountains. "These foreigners are not in large numbers, but they are not operating under the law and can harm anybody. We will defeat them the way they were defeated after trying to set up a base in the Jammu region between 1995 and 2005." He also issued a warning to over ground workers who support terrorists by providing them logistics, stating, "We are identifying those who support terrorists and they will be punished. In the last few days, the Jammu region has witnessed four terror incidents: a pilgrim bus

MoHFW's 100 DAY ACTION PLAN

New Delhi: JP Nadda, the President of the Bharatiya Janata Party, met with senior ministry officials on Friday to go over the MoHFW's 100-day plan. Nadda gets in action one day after taking office as the Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare. JP Nadda's power-packed action plan talks about many issues the country is facing, the 100-day plan calls for:
 - A national campaign against non-communicable diseases (NCDs)
 - A special initiative to discourage tobacco use, particularly among youth and young adults
 - Deployment of the Arogya Maitri Disaster Management Cube-BHISHM (revolutionary mobile hospitals outfitted with state-of-the-art technology)
 - U-WIN portal for the purpose of facilitating children's vaccination registration
JP Nadda Makes Comeback As Union Minister
 Earlier, on Tuesday, Jagat Prakash Nadda assumed charge as Minister of Health



and Family Welfare in the national capital. Nadda was accompanied by Anupriya Patel and Jadhav Prataprao Ganpatrao, Ministers of State in the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry. Nadda served as the Union Health Minister in BJP government from 2014-19. The party contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and several assembly polls under his leadership. He is currently Rajya Sabha MP from Gujarat. After taking charge as Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Nadda took

to X and wrote, "Honoured to take charge as Minister of Health and Family Welfare under the esteemed guidance of Hon. PM Shri @narendramodi ji. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare plays a crucial role in the nation's progress and the well-being of its people. As the backbone of the country, the health sector not only promotes public health but also stands as a strong force in addressing and overcoming health challenges."

India To Send "High-Level" Delegation For Ukraine Summit: Zelensky

Italy: President Volodymyr Zelensky said India would send a "high-level" delegation to an international summit in Switzerland on Ukraine this weekend after meeting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Italy on Friday. The leaders, who met on the sidelines of the Group of Seven summit, discussed trade, expanding ties and preparations for the summit, which Ukraine hopes will be attended by around 100 countries and organisations. "Thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for sending a high-level delegation to the Summit," Zelensky said in a statement on the Telegram app after their meeting.



Darshan Case Victim Died Of Shock, Haemorrhage, Reveals Post-Mortem Report

Bengaluru: The man tortured and killed allegedly by popular Kannada actor Darshan Thoogud eepa died of shock and haemorrhage, according to the autopsy report. The autopsy found 15 wounds on the body of Renuka Swamy, who was allegedly beaten to death by the actor and his aides. They kidnapped Renuka Swamy from Karn ataka's Chitradurga over his comments on the social media posts of Pavithra Gowda, the girlfriend of Mr Thoogudeepa. Renuka Swamy's body bore wounds and marks on the head, abdomen, chest and other parts. The autopsy report indicated his head rammed a mini

truck parked in a shed in Bengaluru where he was brought from Chitradurga. The police have seized this vehicle. The police have also recovered wooden logs, a leather belt, and a rope used to torture Renuka Swamy. Mr Thoogudeepa had allegedly planted three men to take the blame for the murder, but during interrogation, they were exposed, the police have said, adding he offered the three ? 5 lakh each. "It's a heinous crime. He (Darshan Thoogudeepa) has to face the consequences... there will be no interference from the government. There is no room for that," Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said.

Earlier today, a driver identified as Ravi, who had taken Renuka Swamy from Chitradurga to Bengaluru, 200 km apart, surrendered before the police. Another accused, Raghu alias Raghavendra, had along with others arranged Ravi's taxi and boarded it in Chitradurga city. Ravi went into hiding after dropping them off in Bengaluru. Later, he reached out to the taxi association in Chitradurga, who told him to surrender to the police, sources said. Raghu ran a fan club of the Kannada actor in Chitradurga. The actor hired him to gather information about Renuka Swamy, the police had said. Renuka Swamy's wife al-



leged he was kidnapped from near their house. The actor and his aides dumped the body by a road. A food delivery rider saw the body and called the police. CCTV footage shows two cars - one of them linked to Mr Thoogudeepa - leaving the area after dumping the body.

Sheena Bora's Bones "Missing, Untraceable", CBI Tells Mumbai Court



Mumbai: In a bizarre development, the CBI has told a special Mumbai court that the bones and body purportedly of Mumbai executive Sheena Bora recovered by Raigad police after her murder 12 years ago, are reportedly "missing" and untraceable. The revela-

tion came up during the examination of a witness, Dr Zeba Khan, a forensic expert at the Sir J. J. Hospital here, who was the first person to confirm that the bones and other remains found were of a human being. With the help of a local policeman, the bones were recovered

by the Pen police in Raigad from the spot where Bora's body was allegedly burnt and dumped in the deep forests near Gagode-Khurd village.

Police said that Bora, an executive with Mumbai Metro, was allegedly eliminated by her mother, and her ex-husband in connivance with her driver on April 24, 2012, but the shocking killing came to light only around August 2015. At the court hearing on May 7, Public Prosecutor C.J. Nandode, appearing for the CBI, sought to show the bones that were recovered, for identification by Dr Khan, but despite a diligent search, they could not be located. At the next hearing, the CBI admitted that the two marked packets containing the evidence (bones) could not be traced, and the examination of the witness (Dr Khan) would

continue without showing it to her, though it was crucial for the case. According to the prosecution, Bora's mother and former media baroness Indrani Mukerjea, along with her ex-husband Sanjeev Khanna and her driver Shyamvar Rai, had strangled her in a car on the night of April 24, 2012. Later that night, they took her body, concealed in a suitcase, down to Gagode-Khurd, burnt the bag, and dumped the remnants in the forest before returning home early the next morning. A month later, the burnt bones and remains were found by the local police, but the sensational murder case came to light only in August 2015, after the arrests of Rai, Indrani and later Khanna. Indrani was released on bail in May 2022, while Rai was released earlier after he agreed to become a prosecution witness in the case.

5 Facts About Anna Lezhneva, Russian Model And Wife Of Actor Pawan Kalyan



Hyderabad: Actor-politician Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena Party (JSP), a part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), was one of the big winners in the recently concluded Lok Sabha and Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections. On Tuesday, the Telugu superstar was unanimously elected as the party floor leader in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly where the JSP has 21 legislators.

Celebrating this significant achievement, Mr Kalyan returned home to a warm welcome from his wife, Anna Lezhneva. In a heartwarming moment that soon went viral, Ms Lezhneva performed aarti and applied a sacred tika on his forehead.

Who is Anna Lezhneva?

1. Anna Lezhneva was born in Russia in 1980. She is a model-actress, who met Pawan Kalyan during the filming of Teen Maar in 2011. Their on-set romance blossomed into a relationship, and after two years of dating, they got married on September 30, 2013. Ms Lezhneva is Pawan Kalyan's third wife.

2. The couple has a son, Mark Shankar Pawanovich. Ms

Lezhneva also has a daughter, Polena Anjana Pawanova, from her first marriage.

3. Beyond her modelling career, Ms Lezhneva is rumoured to own hotel chains in Singapore and is said to have assets, including properties in both Russia and Singapore, worth around Rs.1800 crore.

4. Ms Lezhneva's relationship with Mr Kalyan faced scrutiny and challenges, given the Telugu superstar's marital history. He previously married 19-year-old Nandini in 1997. That marriage ended in divorce in 2008. He then married actress Renu Desai in 2009, and they had two children, Akira Nandan

and Aadhya, before they parted ways in 2012.

5. Reports of Anna Lezhneva and Pawan Kalyan's separation also emerged when the model-actress wasn't in attendance at important family gatherings such as Telugu star Varun Tej's engagement and Ram Charan and Upasana's daughter's cradle ceremony. However, despite rumours of marital discord, Ms Lezhneva has been actively involved in her husband's public life. She was present and supportive during Pawan Kalyan's recent election victory, performing traditional rituals and greeting fans, quashing separation rumours.

"Amazing People": Bill Gates Recalls India Story In Nikhil Kamath's Podcast

Mumbai: Microsoft Co-founder and billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates has reflected on his relationship with India on the popular podcast series 'WTF is with Nikhil Kamath' with the Zerodha Co-founder and entrepreneur. Appearing on the new segment 'People By WTF' hosted by Nikhil Kamath, Bill Gates said he has had a great relationship with India. "We hired some very smart IT graduates, and brought them to Seattle," he recalled.

Reflecting on his journey with India, Bill Gates said, "I've had a fabulous relationship with India starting with the



Microsoft experience where we hired some very smart IT graduates, and brought them to Seattle. Later, they went back and created a development centre for us that's now in four loca-

tions, with 25,000 people. Of course, a lot of the amazing people I worked with in Microsoft were hired from India."

Praising present Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, Bill Gates said, "On the top of that list is Satya, who now is doing a great job as the CEO. In my digital first career, the connection with India was fun and made a huge difference in what the company was able to achieve. "It was during that time that I was kind of learning, 'Oh wow, India is such a study in contrast, first class in so many ways, but still a lot of

poverty and challenges'." However, he also flagged the country's legal system for the delay in delivering quick justice, looking at the backlog of cases in the Indian courts. Drawing parallels between the US and Indian legal systems, Bill Gates said, "Believe me, the legal things done in the US won't apply here. But, just imagine, if you could make everybody in the legal system four times more productive, that changes justice because right now the backlog is kind of nightmarish. And here, you know, comes a potential solution."

"No One Upset At All": Ajit Pawar After Wife Sunetra Files Nomination For Rajya Sabha

Mumbai (Maharashtra): Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and NCP leader Ajit Pawar said that no one in his party or the ruling Mahayuti alliance is upset by Rajya Sabha nomination of his wife Sunetra Pawar. "No one is upset. Chhagan Bhujbal and Praful Patel have already clarified that our parliamentary board has decided this. Devendra Fadnis was at a funeral (for the six people who were killed at an explosives



manufacturing factory); therefore, he couldn't come. No one is upset at all," Ajit Pawar told reporters. "The nomination has been filed already. Today we got to

know that the nomination has been accepted, and if no other contestants come before the last day, then this can be an unopposed election," he added. Sunetra Pawar filled her nomination for the Rajya Sabha bye-election at Vidhan Bhawan in Mumbai. The bye-election was necessitated after the resignation of NCP leader Praful Patel two years into his tenure, who was re-elected in February this year.

Gautam Adani, Tanzania Discuss Possibilities Of "Long-Term Partnership"

New Delhi: Billionaire industrialist Gautam Adani met Tanzanian President Suluhu Samia and discussed the possibilities of forging a long-term partnership with "one of Africa's most promising nations". "It was an honour to meet the charismatic President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Her Excellency @SuluhuSamia," Mr Adani wrote on X. "Fascinating to hear her deep insights about the future of Africa and discuss the possibilities for forging a long-term partnership with one of Africa's most promising and strategically important nations. "We are excited about the Adani Group le-

veraging its expertise across various infrastructure sectors, including ports, renew-



able energy, airports, transmission, distribution, and rail to help build world-class infrastructure in Tanzania," he added. Last month, Adani International Ports Holdings, a wholly-owned sub-

siary of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd. (APSEZ), signed a 30-year deal with the Tanzania Ports Authority. As part of the pact, the conglomerate will operate and manage Container Terminal 2 (CT2) of the Dar es Salaam Port - a gateway port connected to a massive network of roads and railways. Container Terminal 2, with four berths, has an annual cargo handling capacity of a million 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs), an APSEZ statement said, adding that the port handled 0.82 million TEUs of containers in 2023 - about 83% of Tanzania's total container volumes.

Amit Shah Reviews Security Situation In J&K After Terror Attacks

New Delhi: Home Minister Amit Shah chaired a high-level meeting to review the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir following recent terror attacks. The meeting comes a day after the Prime Minister also reviewed the situation in the Union Territory. The top security brass briefed the Home Minister about the counter-insurgency measures taken after back-to-back terror attacks in the Jammu region. A 360-degree review will be done. Mr Shah will chair the meeting in which National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval and Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj

Sinha will participate along with the Chiefs of the Army, Intelligence Bureau and Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW).

The Home Minister will also review the preparedness of the Union Territory's administration for the Amarnath Yatra. The Amarnath yatra is to begin from June 29 this year. The holy expedition includes a 52-day yatra to the 3,880-metre-high shrine, located in the south of the Himalayas. Devotees from all over the country will begin their pilgrimage from the Jammu base camp. A unified command meeting was held earlier this week in

Srinagar, after which a security audit of Jammu was done by the forces. "Some gaps were identified in the present grid. Officers from the Jammu and Kashmir administration will brief the Home Minister and the NSA about what steps have been taken to strengthen the existing security grid," a senior officer told. The Director General of Para forces along with other officers will also attend the high-level security review meeting, the officer added. Yesterday, the Prime Minister and the NSA reviewed the ground situation and then later spoke to Mr Shah. Terrorists struck at four places in the Reasi, Kathua



and Doda districts of Jammu and Kashmir over the past four days. On June 9, terrorists launched an attack on pilgrims in a bus in the Reasi district, leaving nine people dead. A suspected Pakistani

terrorist was killed by security forces in the Kathua district. The overnight encounter ended after a second terrorist was also gunned down on Wednesday. A CRPF soldier was killed in action.

After Viral Video With Amit Shah, Annamalai Calls On Tamilisai Soundararajan

Chennai: Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai visited party leader Tamilisai Soundararajan in Chennai today and said her political experience is providing impetus for the party's growth. Annamalai's visit comes a day after a video of Amit Shah's animated chat with Ms Soundararajan went viral on social media. After calling on Ms Soundararajan at her residence in Chennai, Annamalai, in a post on X, said he was extremely happy in visiting 'Akka Tamilisai,' a senior leader who functioned efficiently as the party's Tamil Nadu unit chief. Ms Soundararajan, when she led the party in

the state resolutely said that lotus will bloom in Tamil Nadu and worked hard to achieve it. Her "political experience and her advice is continuously providing an impetus for the party's growth," Annamalai said.

In a post on X, Ms Soundararajan said she was happy to meet Annamalai. Annamalai's visit also comes days after a war of words between supporters of Ms Soundararajan and the BJP's state unit chief in the social media following BJP's electoral drubbing in Tamil Nadu. Also, senior leader and Home Minister Amit Shah spoke to her during the swearing-in ceremony of

N Chandrababu Naidu as Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister. A video clip of their conversation became a political talking point.

Putting speculation to rest, Ms Soundararajan said on June 13: "Yesterday as I met our Honorable Home Minister Sri @AmitShah ji in AP for the first time after the 2024 elections he called me to ask about post poll follow-up and the challenges faced. "As I was elaborating, due to paucity of time with utmost concern, he advised me to carry out the political and constituency work intensively which was reassuring. This is to clarify all unwarranted

speculations," she said.

Ms Soundararajan contested from the South Chennai Lok Sabha seat. She lost the election to DMK's Tamizhachi Thangapandian. Her alleged comments on "criminal elements" in the BJP and that "the party would have won had there been an alliance with the AIADMK" were among the triggering factors. Annamalai's supporters opposed such remarks and hit out at her, using memes as well in social media, for jumping the gun.

Annamalai himself had pointed to the possibility of a win for the opposition in

Tamil Nadu (AIADMK, BJP) in a number of constituencies if the votes of Saffron party and that of the AIADMK were added up, which showed that the winner had scored less than the opposition's combined score. However, he did not appear to have favoured an alliance with the AIADMK. Subsequently, AIADMK leader SP Velumani too had spoken on the probability of victory in a number of seats had there been an alliance with the BJP. Later, AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami had again ruled out the scope for an alliance with the national party.



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EDITORIAL

AI offers hope for India's democracy

The BJP falling short of its predicted majority in Parliament was not the only surprise of the world's largest election. Despite widespread fears of an election cycle riddled with AI-generated dis/misinformation campaigns, the deepfake apocalypse did not come to India. The access to cheap and fast synthetic media changed political campaigning in India, but for the most part, campaigns, candidates, and party workers used AI for familiar political activities, including trolling the Opposition, and for targeted communication with their constituencies.

Indian voters received and circulated a variety of synthetic media — voice clones, AI-generated videos, personalised audio messages in different Indian languages, automated calls to voters in a candidate's voice, and AI-generated songs and memes. Most of that content was authorised by political parties who spent an estimated US \$50 million. Young AI companies, with their origins in serving the entertainment industry, were quick and proficient to respond to this growing demand.

Hyper-realistic AI-generated content in India was designed to appeal to emotions. Translated to regional languages, particularly to make parties accessible beyond the Hindi heartland, it leveraged relational bonds, especially with the resurrection of superstar politicians. Muthuvel Karunanidhi and Jayalalitha were among the first politicians to be resurrected with deepfake videos and voice clones posted by their political parties. A fellow party member circulated Arvind Kejriwal's message from behind bars through a convincing AI voice clone. Meanwhile, more than 50 million voters received calls from local representatives about the most concerning issues in their area — except the leader on the phone was an AI avatar. Political parties also used AI to bolster their ongoing meme wars, with cheap fakes, propaganda images, and AI parody videos.

Yet, the rural information ecosystem was not as sophisticated. The fact-checking unit Logically Facts reported that of their 224 fact-checks between February and June 2024, merely four per cent covered AI-generated content. Facebook, Instagram and local content aggregators like Moj and Public featured old-fashioned cartoons, easily recognisable and low-tech face-swaps or doctored content, supercuts of local video footage, or simply text on coloured backgrounds. The content largely mocked or expressed public frustration with the BJP's "400 paar" slogan. In Uttar Pradesh, a viral cartoon rebuked Modi's claim to God-like power with Lord Ram showing him the way out of the Ayodhya temple.

Two trends stand out now: The race to get content to the voter faster and with more targeted relevance in a permissive regulatory environment will place ethics in the hands of small enterprises. AI start-ups like Polymath Solutions (commonly known as The Indian Deepfaker) and Muonium AI have committed to an "Ethical A.I. coalition manifesto" pledging to protect data privacy and prevent the creation or distribution of harmful content. As the post-election market opens for new clients to leverage these AI tools, other start-ups may not have the same consideration for labelled or ethically produced content or self-regulation. India's experiment with AI can also open a new chapter for AI in participatory democracy. Consensual uses of AI in the context of renewed competition in the Lok Sabha can have a positive role in making democracy and governance more accessible, deliberative and representative.

Party campaigning showed us new examples of using AI for more individualised communication across linguistically, ideologically, and ethnically diverse constituencies, with messages that were more accessible — especially among rural, low-income or low-literacy areas. India can take its recent fluency in AI-led party-people communications and transform it to more than one-way service clientelism. The Indian voters — across regions, religions, castes and class — have made it clear that they care less about polarising rhetoric or entertaining but empty promises. Instead, they want their representatives to respond to issues of local importance — agrarian distress, water scarcity, unemployment, hunger, and education. AI and the future of participative democracy could make constituent communication a dialogue so voters can share their demands and lived experiences directly with their representatives, at speed and scale. Globally, think tanks like Bussola Tech or POPVOX Foundation are exploring applications of AI in managing constituent relations within G20 parliaments and the US Congress respectively. The Indian government is already using AI platforms to provide government services to citizens in local languages, but stronger digital literacy in rural areas will be necessary for the universal adoption of new technologies.

Safe and ethical AI could be good for democracy and help our Parliament and elected officials to respond to grassroots needs and livelihoods.

Bengaluru-based band Swarathma's concert in Hyderabad to be powered entirely by solar energy

Hyderabad: Bangalore's folk-rock band Swarathma is making waves with their live concert scene in a whole new way. As they prepare to hit Hyderabad on their India tour, promoting the release of their fourth studio album titled Raushan, the indie band is set to pioneer India's first multi-city concert tour powered entirely by solar and clean energy.

The five-member band kicked off their tour in Mumbai and Bangalore, followed by Pune, and is scheduled to hit Hyderabad on June 15 at Odeum by Prism in Financial District. Known for their soul-stirring hits like 'Pyaasi,' 'Kaash,' and 'Naane Daari,' Swarathma has teamed up with Sustain Plus Energy Foundation, SELCO Foundation, and AmpereHour Energy, to design a revolutionary portable clean energy system, replacing the conventional diesel generators and proving that sustainability can rock just as hard. The tour aims to shift perceptions about renewable energy from small-scale applications to larger industrial uses. "As a band, we are excited to bring alive a concert experience that is friendlier to the earth," shared Jishnu Dasgupta, the bass guitarist of the band. "By proving that an



eight-city tour can run on renewable energy, we hope to encourage other applications requiring mobile power to consider using renewable energy," he explains.

Swarathma now travels with a setup featuring two battery banks, each offering four hours of backup power, and boasting a capacity of 430 kilowatt-hours per system. "A unique feature of their concerts is a display showing the remaining charge. It's quite exciting for the fans to watch the amount of charge left," he says. "Our battery-

based energy storage systems have the potential to replace diesel-based power generation, which has been used historically for powering events. This concert will act as a proof of concept that we hope to scale across the entire entertainment and events industry, helping them decarbonize their operations," says AmpereHour Energy CEO, Ayush Misra. Speaking about the track 'Raushan', Jishnu describes it as a fusion of Indian and Western influences, reflecting the album's overall theme. With eight songs, the al-

bum explores themes of enlightenment, freedom, and emotional growth. Swarathma plans to unveil one song each month, leading up to the full album release by year-end.

In addition to their musical endeavors, the band aims to send a strong message about sustainability, hoping to inspire fellow musicians to embrace eco-friendly practices. Following Hyderabad, Swarathma will take the stage in Indore, Gurgaon, and Jaipur. Interested individuals can register for tickets at Book My Show.

UGC's decision of allowing bi-annual admissions evokes mixed response from Telangana academics

Hyderabad: The University Grants Commission (UGC) decision of allowing bi-annual admissions in the higher educational institutions in the country has evoked a mixed response from academics in the State. Some academics stated that the country was adopting the western education model that admits students in two sessions, while others pointed out practical difficulties in the implementation of the policy decision.

The UGC has announced that higher educational institutions can admit students in January/February and July/August from the next academic year. Terming this decision as the western education model, a Telangana Council of Higher Education senior official said it might provide flexibility to students particularly for those passing in the supplementary exams to take admission in the HEIs.

However, he pointed out that

there was no uniformity in the education system followed with the State following 10 2 system while the CBSE and other boards have a different system. "There should be uniformity in the school and intermediate level for the bi-annual admission system to be implemented," the official said.

Osmania University former Vice-Chancellor Prof. D Ravinder termed the UGC's decision said the universities were not prepared for this admission process since the academic calendar that got derailed due to Covid-19 pandemic, has not got onto the track.

"From earlier annual system, the universities switched over to the semester system as part of choice-based credit system implementation. The examination and admission schedules that got affected due to the pandemic are yet to get on track. We have tried a lot to get things to normal but could



not achieve it. Moreover, majority students enroll in the July/August admission session, only a few students, particularly the ones clearing supplementary exams, go for the January/February session," Prof. Ravinder added.

Presently, academic session has 12 months and begins in July/August. UGC Chairman Prof. M Jagadesh Kumar said if Indian universities can offer admission twice a year it would benefit many students like those who missed admis-

sion to a university in the July/August session due to a delay in the announcement of board results, health issues, or personal reasons.

"Bi-annual university admissions will help students maintain motivation since they do not have to wait one full year to be admitted if they miss admission in the current cycle. Also, industries can also do their campus recruitment twice a year, improving employment opportunities for the graduates," he added.

iSprout to unveil Flyers Club for conducting business meetings at GMR Hyderabad airport

Hyderabad: iSprout unveiled its plan to launch the iSprout Flyers Club, a one-stop solution for conducting business initiatives that will cater to corporate travellers at the GMR Hyderabad International Airport. The firm is investing Rs.1 crore for the project, which will be launched in Hyderabad in the next two months, with subsequent plans to expand in other major airports in New Delhi, Bengaluru and Goa.

The vision behind this new-age initiative is to enable corporate travellers to conduct strategic and confidential meetings in secured meeting rooms, workstations, and business



centre services in the comfort of exclusive privileges like food and beverage options, a press release said.

Sundari Patibandla, CEO &

Co-Founder of iSprout, said, "Our goal is to eliminate the need for corporate professionals to travel into the cities for conducting client meetings or

interviews, improving efficiency, and time management."

Highlighting the cost-effective and enterprising aspects of the new initiative, Sreeni Tirdhala, CMO & Co-Founder at iSprout, said, "Our primary focus is to address the issue of time-management and lack of supportive services to corporate professionals in their business travels."

Membership benefits at the iSprout Flyers Club will include state-of-the-art business centres, meeting rooms, workstations, telephone booths, dry pantry areas that serve food and beverage options and gaming zones.

Bachpan Bachao Andolan: RPF rescues two children from trafficking

Hyderabad: In a significant operation, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) along with Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) rescued two minor boys from the clutches of a suspected child trafficker at the Lingampalli railway station. The RPF personnel and BBA team during their routine rounds on Platform No.1, found two children who appeared to be in distress and were accompanied by a suspicious person. Upon questioning, the children revealed they were brought from Uttar Pradesh to Hyderabad to work as construction workers at various construction sites in the city.

According to the RPF, the suspected human trafficker also from Uttar Pradesh admitted to residing in Hyderabad for the past two years and working as a building contractor, often bringing labourers from his village. The immediate intervention by RPF and Bachpan Bachao team led to the rescue of the children and the nabbing of the trafficker. The Government Railway Police (GRP) booked a case and took up investigation. The children were produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) of Ranga Reddy district and were shifted to the Government Home in Saidabad for further care and rehabilitation.

10,000 teacher posts to be filled through mega DSC



Khammam: Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka said that the State government was determined to promote the English medium in government schools. The government was taking steps to fully implement the Right to Education Act brought into force by the previous UPA government in Telangana state.

To keep up with the changing times, teachers working in government schools need to develop their skills by embracing technology, he said.

The Deputy Chief Minister along with Agriculture Minister Tummalala Nageswara Rao participated in the school re-opening ceremony at NS Canal Colony Government High School here on Wednesday and distributed uniforms to students. Nageswara Rao informed that 10,000 teacher posts would be filled through mega DSC.

By spending Rs 2000 crore facilities would be created in the government schools on par with the private corporate schools. District Collector VP Gautham said that providing textbooks and uniforms on the schools reopening day was a welcome development.

The uniforms of the students were made by women SHGs and women were given training for operating cutting, button and buttonhole machines.

Bells ring, wards back to classrooms

Hyderabad: With backs slung over their shoulders, students across the State returned to classrooms as the schools reopened on Wednesday, marking the conclusion of a nearly 50-day summer vacation and commencement of the new academic year 2024-25. While some students took their school vans, parents were spotted dropping their wards at the schools before prayer time. Some school staff warmly welcomed their students by giving them a flower. A sense of excitement filled the air as the students reunited with their friends after a long gap. The day was filled with chatter and laughter as the students caught up with each other. Some government schools provided a pair of uniforms, textbooks, and notebooks to students on the first day of school.



Treat Transgenders As Special Category For Employment, Education: High Court



Chennai: Holding that the transgenders should be treated only as a special category irrespective of their caste, the Madras High Court has directed the Tamil Nadu government to not bring them under either female or male category for education and employment. Justice V Bhavani Subbaroyan in an order passed on June 12, 2024 said in 'every employment and educational avenues,' the government shall prescribe separate norms for transgenders. The government shall direct all the state recruiting agencies to

specify transgender as a special category and prescribe separate norms for their cut-off mark. The age relaxation open to other special categories shall also be extended to transgenders, irrespective of their caste, in future employment and educational avenues. The transgender at no point of time in future shall be brought under male or female categories, the judge made it clear. Allowing a petition from R Anushri, a transgender who was denied the opportunity from being considered for combined civil service examina-

tion for the year 2017-18 which were for non-interview post group-II A services under various categories, the judge said since the petitioner has scored the eligible cut-off mark the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission shall permit the petitioner to upload documents for certificate verification. The judge said the petitioner has been placed in the scheduled caste woman category and denied permission by Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission (TNPSC) to upload her certificate for verification as she had scored less

than the cut-off prescribed for scheduled caste women.

TNPSC's approach is unsustainable and it had not categorised transgenders as a special category. Also, bringing the petitioner under woman category went against the order passed by the Supreme Court and Madras High court, the judge added. The top court has clearly said that the transgenders should be treated as unique and they should not be treated as one among the male or female. In fact, when Punjab had placed all the transgenders under male category, the top court had held such action as illegal and unsustainable. It was also to be noted that the transgenders were placed in the caste in which they were born and treated in the said category. This was of no use and detrimental to their development, the judge added. In her order, the judge said though the National Legal Service Authority case was decided by the Supreme Court as early as April 15, 2014, still, neither the state government, nor the central government has come forward to 'formulate a uniform mode of employment opportunities' to be provided for the transgenders.

South Of Pir Panjal, Terror's New Address In Jammu And Kashmir

New Delhi: Terror has got a new address - south of Pir Panjal in Jammu and Kashmir. Delhi is worried how the theatre of terror has shifted from the north of Pir Panjal to the south of Pir Panjal in the last two years. An urgent meeting of the Unified Command was called earlier this week to take stock of these terror attacks. They gave top priority to ensure the safety of pilgrims in the Amarnath yatra, which will start on June 29 and end on August 19. "Forces had thinned down over the years as the area had become relatively peaceful. The terrain also adds to the movement of terrorists and that's why incidents are going up," a senior official in North Block said. Earlier this week, a joint audit was

conducted by security and intelligence agencies in the Jammu region and gaps were noted. "These gaps have been filled, and area domination exercises are being done," an officer on the field told. The army has so far maintained that no infiltration happened last year. But the four recent encounters have negated their reports. Intelligence sources said Pakistan has been trying to exploit communal fault lines in the Jammu region, which is why terrorists have been carrying out targeted attacks. "Targeting of pilgrims was done knowing fully well that it may cause a flare-up in the region," a senior officer in North Block said. He said India has just conducted peaceful elections in



the region. "Pakistan obviously does not want this narrative to gain momentum and that's why they have been pushing terrorists to the Jammu region," the officer said, adding Pakistan wants to demolish the fact that there is total normalcy in the area. "As local (terror) recruitments have come down, Pakistan has been sending terrorists from

across the border," Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police RR Swain told reporters. "The four terror attacks indicate that this proxy war will continue to simmer at varying degrees of intensity and the involvement of new groups - whether it is Kashmir Tigers or the Resistance Front," another official who is on the field said.

BJP vs BJP In Western UP After Poll Results, And Now A Press Note Twist

Lucknow: The blame game between BJP leaders Sanjeev Balyan and Sangeet Som in the aftermath of the party's poor poll show in western Uttar Pradesh has taken a new turn. A press note with Mr Som's letterhead has accused Mr Balyan of rampant corruption, but the former has now said he issued no such statement.

The two leaders have been targeting each other after the BJP suffered a big setback in politically-significant Uttar Pradesh in this election and lost several seats in the western part of the state. The BJP lost Saharanpur, Kairana, Sambhal, Moradabad, Muzaffarnagar and Nagina seats in western UP. Mr Balyan, a Jat leader who won Muzaffarnagar seat in the last two elections



and was a Union Minister in the second Narendra Modi government, lost to Samajwadi Party's Harendra Singh Malik this time. Responding to the media's questions on Mr Som's remarks in the run-up to the polls, Mr Balyan earlier said he hoped that BJP leadership would take action "against those who openly campaigned for Samajwadi Party". Hitting back, Rajput leader and former MLA Som said he is a dedicated worker of the

BJP. "I work for the lotus symbol, not for any person. The party gave me the responsibility to ensure victory in Sardhana seat. Despite difficult circumstances, BJP won the seat. He (Balyan) should introspect why he lost the election," he said at a press meet. Amid this exchange of barbs, a press note under Mr Som's letterhead has accused Sanjeev Balyan of large-scale corruption. The note alleges that the former Union minister has invested in

property abroad after making huge money as a central minister. This letter also mentions a plot in Australia and claims Mr Balyan bought the plot with the help of his acquaintance Sanjeev Sehrawat. Mr Sehrawat has sent a defamation notice to Sangeet Som. Mr Sehrawat has also put out a statement in which he has trashed the allegations and said he had no such deal with Mr Balyan. He has said the allegations have maligned his image. Mr Som has now said that no press note was distributed during his interaction with the media on Tuesday. He has alleged that someone got the note printed under his letterhead and distributed it at the press meet as part of a conspiracy.

Was Keen, But...: Chhagan Bhujbal On Sunetra Pawar's Rajya Sabha Nomination

Mumbai: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra Pawar on Thursday filed papers as an NCP candidate for the Rajya Sabha elections. Senior party leader and state minister Chhagan Bhujbal said that though he was keen on contesting the polls, he was not upset with Sunetra Pawar's nomination, a move which he described as a collective decision. In the just-concluded Lok Sabha elections, Sunetra Pawar lost from the Baramati constituency, where her sister-in-law Supriya Sule registered her fourth consecutive win. "The NCP has decided to field Sunetra Pawar for Rajya Sabha elections. Even I was keen on contesting the elections, but during a meeting on Wednesday evening, party leaders



finalised her name," said state minister and senior NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal here. The Rajya Sabha secretariat has notified ten vacancies in the Upper House, including two each in Assam, Bihar and Maharashtra, and one each in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tripura. Asked if key posts were going to one family, Bhujbal said Ajit Pawar did not decide Sunetra Pawar's nomination. "The decision to field Sunetra Pawar was taken by the party's core group. It was not decided by him (Ajit Pawar) alone. It was a collective decision," Bhujbal said. The vacancies in the Rajya Sabha arose after some of its members, including Piyush Goyal and

Udayanraje Bhonsle from Maharashtra, were elected to the Lok Sabha. Asked whether he was disappointed over not being fielded in the Rajya Sabha polls, Bhujbal said, "Can you see it on my face? I have learnt to respect collective decision-making and have been doing it for the past 57 years. Be it Shiv Sena or NCP, decisions are taken after discussions

with people and not as per one person's will." Earlier, Bhujbal was keen on contesting the Lok Sabha polls from the Nashik constituency, but NCP's alliance partner Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde fielded its candidate from there. The seat was won by Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT).

Actor Darshan Asked 3 Men To Take Blame For Murder, Paid Rs.15 Lakh: Cops



Mumbai: Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa, who has been arrested in a murder case, had allegedly asked three other men to take blame for the crime in exchange of cash, police said. The actor, who was

arrested on Tuesday, offered the men five lakh rupees each to implicate themselves in the case. The body of 33-year-old Renuka Swamy, was found in a drain at the Sumanahalli Bridge in Bengaluru. A food delivery

agent who noticed dogs gnawing at a body called the police. Renuka Swamy had allegedly sent obscene texts to Darshan's co-star and girlfriend Pavithra Gowda. The online harassment and use of objectionable language are now being probed as potential triggers for the ghastly murder. Darshan hired Raghavendra alias Raghu, the convener of his fan club in Chitradurga, to gather information about Renuka Swamy, they said. The victim's wife also alleged it was Raghu who picked him up from near their house. Before being murdered, Renuka Swamy was subjected to a brutal assault, bound with ropes, and savagely beaten with wooden sticks in a shed, cops said in their complaint. Thirteen people, including Darshan and Pavithra Gowda, have been arrested. Bengaluru Police Commis-

sioner B Dayananda has said that they will do a detailed probe in the case in accordance with law and bring the truth out, he said. "The guilty should be punished mercilessly as per law." The police have been given a free hand to take action against Darshan and other accused in accordance with the law, said the state's Home Minister G Parameshwara. The incident has sent shockwaves through the Kannada film industry with the state's top industry body demanding that Darshan's movies be not released. Darshan, popularly known as the 'Challenging Star', has acted in several commercial and critically-hit projects like Kariya (2003), Namma Preethiya Ramu (2003), Tarak (2017), Yajamana (2019) and Kurukshetra (2019).

RSS, BJP To Hold Meeting In Kerala, Lok Sabha Results Also On Agenda



New Delhi: With the BJP coming to power for a third consecutive time, albeit without enough numbers to achieve a majority on its own, the party and its ideological fountainhead, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, will hold a meeting in which the Lok Sabha results will also be reviewed.

The venue of the meeting will be Kerala's Palakkad, which is significant because the BJP has opened its account in the state for the first time and the party had put a lot of emphasis on the south in the run-up to the polls in an attempt to better its tally in the region.

The coordination meeting, held once a year between members of the Sangh Parivar, is scheduled for July 31-August 2. The BJP managed to win 240 Lok Sabha seats in the just-concluded Lok Sabha elections, down 63 from its 2019 tally and way off its off-repeated targets of 370 on its own and 400 for the NDA.

The NDA clinched 293 seats, paving the way for PM Narendra Modi to return for a historic third term.

Kerala has the highest number of RSS shakhas (local units) and the BJP has won a Lok Sabha seat in the state for the first time. Thrissur, where actor-politician Suresh Gopi emerged victorious with a margin of over 74,000 votes, is also important for the RSS because it is home to one of the greatest Hindu temple festivals, called the Thrissur Pooram. The coordination meeting is being seen as an attempt to send a message in a state where RSS workers have often been at the receiving end of violence. Sources said it will also help strengthen the BJP in the south, where it failed to increase its tally from 29 in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, ending up with the exact same figure this time.

Law Is Above You": Bengal Governor vs Mamata Banerjee Over Poll Violence



Kolkata: West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose questioned why the police had stopped alleged victims of post-poll violence from entering the Raj Bhavan despite his office issuing the necessary permission for it. "Unpardonable act that government prevented victims of violence from meeting the Governor," Mr Bose said at a press conference in Kolkata. "The (Bengal) Chief Minister cannot deface the constitution of India. It is a dance of death, a macabre of what is happening in West Bengal. However high you may think you are, the law is above you," he added, targeting West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

He has also written a letter to Ms Banerjee seeking clarification on the grounds upon which the police barred these individuals from meeting him. Mr Bose also visited Maheshwari Bhawan in Burrabazar and

met people affected by violence in the state after the Lok Sabha elections. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has levelled allegations of post-poll violence against the Trinamool Congress (TMC), which the state's ruling party has denied. The police on Thursday prevented BJP member and Leader of the Opposition in the assembly Suvendu Adhikari and the alleged victims of post-poll violence from entering the Raj Bhavan to meet Bose, citing Section 144 of the CrPC, which is in force outside the Governor House. In his letter to the Chief Minister, Governor Bose underscored the importance of adhering to constitutional protocols, particularly in matters concerning governance and legislation. He called upon the state government to provide explanations for its actions and urged against any attempts to undermine the authority of his office.

Bodies Of 45 Indians Who Died In Kuwait Fire Reach Kerala



New Delhi: The bodies of 45 Indian workers, who died in a massive fire in Kuwait two days ago, were brought back this morning. A special aircraft of the Indian Air Force landed in Kerala's Kochi and handed over 31 bodies of workers from three southern states. It then left for Delhi with the remaining 14 bodies. The victims include 23 from Kerala, seven from Tamil Nadu, three each from Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, two from Odisha, and one each from Bihar, Punjab, Karnataka, Maharashtra, West Bengal,

Jharkhand, and Haryana, said the Indian embassy in Kuwait. The bodies handed over in Kochi, including those of workers from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, were then sent to their homes in ambulances. The paperwork would have taken at least 10 days but the authorities were quick about it due to the instructions from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said Gonda MP Kirti Vardhan Singh, who had rushed to Kuwait soon after taking charge as a junior minister in the foreign ministry. "I would like

to thank the authorities as they did everything possible, they took all possible measures and fully cooperated in having all the papers completed, identification was done in such a short time because normally this could have taken a week or at least ten days.

On PM Modi's instructions, the authorities were very quick about it," said the minister who returned today onboard the special aircraft.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Union Minister Suresh Gopi, and former Union Minister V Muraliedharan were also present at the airport. A massive fire erupted in a six-storied building in Mangal city on Wednesday, killing at least 48 people. Out of the 176 Indian workers in the housing facility, 45 died and 33 are hospitalized, the embassy said. The rest are reportedly safe. Mr Singh reached Kuwait on Thursday and visited five hospi-

tals where the injured Indian workers are being treated. Most of them are likely to be discharged in a couple of days, he said. During his visit, the minister also met the First Deputy Prime Minister, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah, who assured him of full support and assistance in the early repatriation of the bodies.

The bodies were charred beyond recognition and DNA testing was done on them to confirm the victims' identities, said the minister yesterday.

The authorities have identified 48 bodies, among which 45 are of Indians and three are of Filipino nationality, a report quoted Mr Al-Sabah as saying. PM Modi, who has reviewed the tragic incident, has announced a compensation of Rs.2 lakh for those who died in the Kuwait fire. The local administration in Kuwait is also probing how more than 160 people were staying in the building.

"Darshan A Demigod In Kannada Industry, It's Black Day For Us": Co-Star Sanjjanana Galrani



The arrest of popular Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa in connection with a murder case has sent shockwaves across the film fraternity in Karnataka. Darshan, along with 12 others, was taken into custody after the body of Renuka Swamy, 33, was found in a drain in Bengaluru. Mr Swamy had allegedly made inappropriate comments about Darshan's girlfriend Pavithra Gowda on social media. Reacting to the arrest, Darshan's colleague and co-actor, Sanjjanana Galrani, said it was like "doomsday" for the industry. "This has been a black day for us yesterday, and it's been like a doomsday for the Kannada industry," she told, calling him a "demigod figure in the

Kannada industry." "People don't just watch his films, people are out here worshipping him, he is as big as that." Putting aside the severity of the charges, Ms Galrani asserted Darshan had a respectful and gentle nature. "He would not even call me by my name while shooting. He would refer to me as 'ji suniye' and 'amma,' that is how he represents a woman," she shared. Calling him a "soft-spoken gentleman," Ms Galrani stated that "the way he would talk to any woman, the way he would behave with every woman - there was a scene in the movie where he had to lift me, so he discussed it with me. He has a very beautiful aura around him - the way he

talks and respects women." Ms Galrani said she was "shocked" upon hearing the allegations against him. "It has completely shocked the guts out of every person in Karnataka," she said.

Asked about Darshan's "temperamental nature" and past controversies, Ms Galrani defended her former co-actor. "The person being spoken about in the news and the person that I know feel like two different personalities," she stated. "It's very early to jump the gun," she said, stressing the importance of due legal process.

"When something like this happens with a celebrity, if there is a 5% allegation, it becomes a 500% allegation," she remarked, adding, "We must respect the legal process and not jump to conclusions." Thirteen people, including Darshan and his girlfriend Pavithra Gowda, have been arrested in the murder of Renuka Swamy. The victim's mother has demanded that Darshan be banned from the film industry and his films' release be halted in Karnataka.

BJP Leader Clears Row Over Interaction With Amit Shah In Viral Video



Chennai: BJP leader Tamilisai Soundararajan said senior party leader Amit Shah asked her to "carry out political and constituency work intensively", a day after a video of her interaction with the Union home minister surfaced on the social media. In the video clip from TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu's swearing-in as Andhra Pradesh chief minister, Mr Shah can be seen talking to Soundararajan in an animated manner while gesturing with his finger. In a post on X on Thursday evening, Ms Soundararajan, who is the former Governor of Telangana, said she met Amit Shah for the first time following the declaration of Lok Sabha poll results and the duo was talking about "post-poll follow-up". "Yesterday as I met our Honorable Home Minister Sri @AmitShah ji in AP for the first time after the 2024 Elections he called me to ask about post poll followup and the challenges faced.

"As I was elaborating, due to paucity of time with utmost concern, he advised to carry out the political and constituency work intensively which was reassuring. This is to clarify all unwarranted speculations," she said.

Ms Soundararajan contested from the South Chennai Lok Sabha seat. She lost the election to DMK's Tamizhachi Thangapandian. Her comment assumes significance in the wake of rumours of an intra-party feud in the Tamil Nadu unit of the BJP.

Ms Soundararajan, on her return to Chennai on Wednesday, declined to comment, when she was asked by reporters on the claims of a discord within the party vis-a-vis her interaction with Shah. Her alleged comments on "criminal elements" in the BJP and that "the party would have won had there been an alliance with the AIADMK" were among the triggering factors.

Kerala Minister Says She Was Not Allowed To Visit Kuwait For Fire Relief Ops

Kochi: Kerala Health Minister Veena George said that it was "unfortunate" that the Central government did not permit her to travel to Kuwait to coordinate assistance for the people from the State affected in the tragic fire mishap in the Gulf country. "It is very unfortunate that we did not get the consent (to travel to Kuwait). More than half of the people who died were from Kerala. The majority of the people who are under treatment are also from Kerala," Ms George told reporters at the Cochin International Airport here today.

The Kerala State government had convened an emergency Cabinet meeting on Thursday and announced that Ms George along with State Mission Director (NHM) Jeevan Babu would urgently travel to Kuwait to



coordinate efforts related to the treatment of those from the State who sustained injuries as well as oversee the repatriation of the bodies of the victims. A massive fire erupted in a six-storied building in Mangal city in Kuwait on Wednesday, killing at least 48 people. Out of the 176 Indian workers in the housing facility, 45 died and 33 are hospitalized, the Indian embassy said. The victims include 23 from

Kerala, seven from Tamil Nadu, three from Uttar Pradesh, two from Odisha, and one each from Bihar, Punjab, Karnataka, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Haryana. "The Embassy did not give us the exact data on the number of seriously injured people. The data that we have collected from there is that a total of seven people have been admitted to the hospital and 4 of them are

from Kerala, but this is not officially declared. The purpose of my visit (to Kuwait) was that I wanted to be with the injured and bring their needs to the attention of the Central Government," Ms George said today.

A special Indian Air Force aircraft carrying the remains of 45 Indian victims that took off from Kuwait is expected to land. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed his deepest condolences and assured all possible assistance to those impacted by the tragedy. Minister of State for External Affairs of India, Kirti Vardhan Singh who reached Kuwait on Thursday visited hospitals where the injured were admitted and interacted with Indian nationals undergoing treatment following the tragic fire incident in Mangal.

UP Chief Minister Vows To Continue Crackdown On Mafia, Criminals

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asserted that action against mafias and criminals will be intensified in the state. "It is our responsibility to protect the interests of every poor, exploited, oppressed and deprived individual. Be it land mafia or any other mafia, action will be taken," the Chief Minister said here at a meeting with officials. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, in the first law and order review meeting after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, instructed officials to communicate, coordinate and earn the trust of the people. "Janta Darshan programmes should be initiated promptly at district, range, and zone levels," he emphasised, noting that in line with a zero-tolerance policy against corruption, stringent actions will target unethical transactions from the state secretariat down to the block level. The Chief Minister reviewed the law and order situation through video conferencing with police commissioners, divisional commissioners, district magistrates, and superintendents of police of all districts. He further told the



officers that VIP culture should not be promoted, and that action should be taken over the use of hooters and pressure horns in government and private vehicles. He even stressed maintaining peace and harmony during the upcoming festivities. The officers should ensure that there is full respect for faith, but there should not be any encouragement to new traditions, he said. Ganga Dussehra is on June 16, Bakrid on June 17, the Mangal festival of Jyeshtha month is on June 18, and the International Yoga Day will be observed on June 21. Moharram and Kanwar Yatra are in July. The government and administration should be in active mode 24x7, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said. During

the upcoming Bakrid festivities, the Chief Minister said that 'namaaz' should not be offered on the road, and action will be taken if banned animals are slaughtered.

"The spot for sacrifice on Bakrid should be marked in advance. There should be no sacrifice at other spots. The sacrifice should not be made at disputed or sensitive places. Officials should ensure that banned animals are not sacrificed. A systematic action plan for the disposal of waste after sacrifice should be launched in all districts," he added. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath instructed the officers to ensure that no incident which hurts the religious sentiments of people should take place in the state.

"Vendetta Politics": BJP Slams Congress Over Arrest Warrant Against BS Yediyurappa

Bengaluru: The Karnataka BJP accused the Congress government in the state of pursuing vendetta politics in the POC SO case involving former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa. Home Minister G. Parameshwara had even stated that there was no substance in the case. "Mr Ravi also said it is an open secret that since Rahul Gandhi was dragged to court in Bengaluru, the Congress wants the BJP to be dragged to court as well. "We will honour the court order in Yediyurappa's case. But this is a political conspiracy. The alleged incident took place on February 2, and the case was lodged in March. Yediyurappa had gone to the police station to record his statement. But the police told him that it was not necessary, and later recorded his statement at his residence," Mr Ravi said. Commenting on the matter, N. Ravikumar,

asking why the government was inactive for four months after the POC SO case was lodged against Yediyurappa. Home Minister G. Parameshwara had even stated that there was no substance in the case. "Mr Ravi also said it is an open secret that since Rahul Gandhi was dragged to court in Bengaluru, the Congress wants the BJP to be dragged to court as well. "We will honour the court order in Yediyurappa's case. But this is a political conspiracy. The alleged incident took place on February 2, and the case was lodged in March. Yediyurappa had gone to the police station to record his statement. But the police told him that it was not necessary, and later recorded his statement at his residence," Mr Ravi said. Commenting on the matter, N. Ravikumar,



BJP MLC and the party chief whip in the Legislative Council, said that there is no substance or truth in the case. "Home Minister Parameshwara had said that the complainant is mentally challenged and has lodged more than 60 cases against IAS/IPS officers, and politicians. The government itself had said that this case was not important. Despite Yediyurappa conveying to the police that he was ready to give a statement, the police asked him not to come to the police station and later collected his voice

sample in April," he said, adding that the entire matter is a conspiracy hatched by the Congress in retaliation to Rahul Gandhi being dragged to court in a defamation case. "The CM, Deputy CM, and Home Minister have acted on the advice of Congress' Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala and hatched this conspiracy," Mr Ravikumar alleged. "The Congress, which did not act in the last four months, has suddenly woken up. They have obtained a non-bailable arrest warrant and want to arrest Yediyurappa.

Cricketer-Turned-MP Yusuf Pathan Gets Notice For Encroachment In Gujarat

Vadodara: The BJP-ruled Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) in Gujarat has issued a notice to former India cricketer and recently elected Trinamool Congress (TMC) Lok Sabha MP from Baharampur Yusuf Pathan for allegedly encroaching on a plot of land the civic body said belongs to it. While the notice was served to Mr Pathan on June 6, VMC's standing committee chairman Shital Mistry informed the media on Thursday after the issue was highlighted by former BJP corporator Vijay Pawar. Talking to reporters earlier in the day, Mr Pawar had alleged that though the state government had rejected VMC's proposal to sell the plot to Mr Pathan in 2012, the newly elected MP had encroached on the plot



by constructing a compound wall. "I don't have any grudge against Yusuf Pathan. A plot in Tanadaja area under TP 22 is a residential plot owned by VMC. In 2012, Mr Pathan had demanded this plot from VMC because his house, which was under construction at that time, was adjacent to that plot. He had offered nearly 75,000 per square meter," Mr Pawar told reporters. The proposal was cleared by the VMC at that

time and it was passed in the general board meeting. However, the state government, which is the final authority in such matters, did not give its approval, he said. "Though the proposal was rejected, the VMC did not put up a fence around the plot. Then I came to know that Mr Pathan has encroached upon the plot by constructing a compound wall around it. Thus, I have asked the municipal corporation to conduct an inquiry," said Mr Pawar. Mr Mistry confirmed the sequence of events leading to the state government not approving the sale of the 978 square metre plot to Mr Pathan and said a notice had been served to him for alleged encroachment. "Recently, we received some representations about him constructing a compound wall.

Italy PM Giorgia Meloni's Namaste Greeting At G7 Goes Viral

New Delhi: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was seen greeting global leaders arriving at the G7 Summit with a classic Namaste gesture on Thursday. Videos of Prime Minister Meloni's greetings have gone viral on social media. Italy is hosting this year's G7 Summit which is being held in Borgo Egnazia (Fasano) in the city of Apulia in southern Italy from June 13-15. Several videos of the gesture have surfaced on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter). They show the Italian PM welcoming the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen with the traditional Indian way of greeting.

War Of Words Between BJP, Maharashtra Ally Over Article By RSS Leader



Mumbai: The BJP and its ally in Maharashtra, the Nationalist Congress Party, seem to have hit a rocky road after their rivals, the INDIA alliance, won more Lok Sabha seats in the state. The two parties on Thursday engaged in a war of words over an article in Organiser, a weekly known to be close to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The article had criticised the BJP for contesting the elections along with Ajit Pawar's NCP. The INDIA bloc won 30 seats in the recently held Lok Sabha elections. The BJP and its allies won 17, of which NCP scored only one. Maharashtra sends second-highest representatives to the Lok Sabha - 48 - only next to Uttar Pradesh's 80. According to reports, the BJP has launched an internal survey to assess if they should contest alone in the Assembly elections to be held later this year.

In an article, a senior RSS

leader questioned the BJP's move to enter an alliance with the Ajit Pawar-led NCP, terming the move "ill-advised". "Why was this ill-advised step taken? BJP supporters were hurt because they had fought against this Congress ideology for years and were persecuted. In a single stroke, BJP reduced its brand value," RSS' Ratan Sharda wrote in the article. "Maharashtra is a prime example of unnecessary politicking and avoidable manipulations. Well-performing parliamentarians

were ignored to accommodate such late comers," it added. Rajya Sabha MP and senior NCP leader Praful Patel though said that the article shouldn't be seen as a sign that all is not well between the two allies. "An article in a weekly does not reflect the BJP's stance. It should not be interpreted in that manner," he said. However, NCP youth wing leader Sooraj Chavan lashed out saying that when the BJP performs well, credit is given to the hard work of the RSS but a defeat is blamed on Ajit Pawar.

Hitting back, BJP leader Pravin Darekar said, "The RSS is like a father figure to all of us. There is no need to make comments about the RSS. Sooraj Chavan should not have rushed to comment on the organisation. The BJP has not commented against the NCP. It would be better if such issues are discussed during NDA meetings."

The first signs of discord between the two parties emerged when the NCP denied a Minister of State post in the new government, led by Prime Minister Narendra

Modi. Ajit Pawar and Praful Patel both expressed a desire for a cabinet berth while rejecting the offer. The argument from the NCP's side is that Mr Patel, as a former cabinet minister, is too senior a figure to hold a junior minister's post. Ajit Pawar told reporters his party is "ready to wait" for that cabinet berth. Mr Patel was similarly resolute, telling reporters, "I was earlier cabinet minister (in the Congress-led UPA government and being made MoS (Minister of State) is a demotion." The Ajit Pawar-led NCP, part of the ruling alliance in Maharashtra along with the BJP and the Shiv Sena, managed to win just one seat (Raigad) of the four it contested in the Lok Sabha polls. It also lost the prestige battle in Baramati, where Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra Pawar was trounced by the sitting MP from the rival NCP faction and his cousin, Supriya Sule. The Indo-

Asian News Service, citing unnamed sources, reported that after the results, the BJP is considering whether to continue the alliance with Ajit Pawar or not. "These surveys have been launched to find out how the party will get the simple majority going solo. Besides, the surveys will also show how the BJP will perform in an alliance with the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena. It will also gauge the mood about whether to continue its alliance with the NCP," a BJP source told IANS. In the Lok Sabha polls, the BJP score this time, 240, was much lower than its 2019 tally of 303 and the 282 seats it won in 2014. The Congress, on the other hand, registered a strong growth, winning 99 seats compared to 52 it won in 2019 and 44 seats in 2014. The INDIA bloc crossed the 230 mark, posing stiff competition, and defying all predictions from exit polls.

Divya Spandana's Shoutout To Cops After Arrest Of Kannada Star Darshan



respect for the police officers discharging their duties. It's a thankless job. And they're doing their best. I truly hope they don't succumb to pressure from political parties and reinstate the faith of the people in law and justice," she wrote.

The actor ended the post with "# Justice for Renuka swamy #Darshan #Yedyurappa #Prajwal Revanna". The actor also shared posts on X about an arrest warrant being issued against Former Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yedyurappa in a sexual assault allegations. However, Darshan's co-actor, Sanjjanaa Galrani, has come out in support of the Kannada film star, calling his arrest "doomsday" for the industry. "This has been a black day for us yesterday, and it's been like a doomsday for the Kannada industry. He is demigod figure in the Kannada industry," she told NDTV. "It's very early to jump the gun. When something like this happens with a celebrity, if there is a 5% allegation, it becomes a 500% allegation.

In the same post, she also appreciated the efforts of Karnataka police officers. "A word of appreciation and

6 Dead, 1,500 Tourists Stranded Amid Landslides, Heavy Rainfall In Sikkim



Gangtok: At least six people were killed and 1,500-odd tourists stranded as massive landslides triggered by incessant rainfall caused devastation in northern Sikkim's Mangan district, officials said. A newly-constructed

bailey bridge at Sangkalang collapsed snapping the link between Mangan with Dzongu and Chungthang. Landslides blocked stretches of roads and several houses were inundated or damaged, while electricity poles were swept away,

they said. Towns such as Dzongu, Chungthang, Lachen, and Lachung in Mangan district known for popular tourist spots like Gurudongmar Lake and Yunthang Valley have now been cut off from the rest of the country. "Three persons each died in Pakshep and Ambhithang villages," Mangan District Magistrate Hem Kumar Chettri said. A number of houses were damaged in Geythang and Nampathang. A relief camp has been set up at Pakshep for the displaced people, Chettri said. The district magistrate also held a meeting with other officials to take stock of the situation following the incessant rainfall in and around Mangan District since Wednesday night and instructed them to carry out rescue and relief works.

Mobile network services were affected in North Sikkim even as a request

was made by the district administration to send an SDRF team with ration to Mangan, the officials said. The collapsed bailey bridge at Sangkalang was constructed after the massive social flood in the Teesta river in October last year. The authorities have asked the stranded tourists to stay where they are right now till alternative road connectivity could be set up for movement of vehicles, officials said. The Mangan district administration has started works with several agencies to expeditiously construct a bridge at Phidang to restore connectivity in the region. Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, who is in Arunachal Pradesh to attend the swearing-in ceremony of BJP leader Pema Khandu, asked the administration, police and officials of various departments to ensure a swift response to

the devastation.

"Efforts are underway to provide every possible support to the victims and affected families, including recovery assistance, temporary settlement, and the provision of basic needs," Tamang said in a statement. "The state government stands firmly with the victims of this unfortunate incident, pledging the utmost support to the bereaved families and all those affected and displaced by the landslides," he said. He will soon return to the state to personally supervise rescue and relief operations. Meanwhile, the Teesta river is in spate which might affect the residents of low-lying Singtam town. In Namchi district, the surging water in the Teesta river marooned the Melli stadium, officials said. Nearly 50 people were killed in the flash flood that hit the Himalayan state in October last year

Saas, Beta, And Bahu Sammelan' For Family Planning In UP



Lucknow: The second phase of Population Stabilisation Fortnight, focusing on Community mobilisation, is set to begin on June 27 and run until July 10. During this period, the Yogi government will organise various activities, such as 'Sarathi Vahan' and 'Saas-Beta-Bahu Sammelan', to raise public awareness about the importance of family planning. Following this, the third phase of the fortnight will be observed from July 11 to 24. "During this, consultations on various family planning methods (basket of choice) will be provided at all health units, and these methods will be made available to eligible and willing beneficiaries," as per an official release. The Health Department is continuously working to accelerate family welfare programs and achieve population stabilization. "World Population Day, celebrated annually on July 11, aims to increase societal awareness about population stabilization. In this context, Principal Secretary of Medical, Health, and Family Welfare Parth Sarathi Sen Sharma has is-

sued a letter with necessary guidelines to all District Magistrates and Chief Medical Officers in the state," the release stated. Dr Pinky Jovel, Mission Director of the National Health Mission, stated that Population Fortnight is celebrated annually with active participation from officials, health workers, and the community. "Numerous family welfare programs are also conducted during this time. These efforts have led to a decrease in the state's Total Fertility Rate (TFR), as evidenced by the National Family Health Survey. According to NFHS-5 (2019-20), the TFR is 2.4, down from 2.7 in NFHS-4 (2015-16)," as per the release.

The initial phase of Population Stabilization Fortnight began on June 1 and will run until June 20. During this period, preparations are underway to motivate targeted couples and effectively implement service delivery activities. "Efforts include capacity building for service providers, ensuring a supply of family planning methods, and fostering coordination between various depart-

ments," the release stated.

This year's slogan for Population Fortnight is 'Viksit Bharat ki Nayi Pehchan. Parivar Niyojan Har Dampati Ki Shaan' and the theme is 'Right time and gap of pregnancy for the health of mother and child'.

"Dr Suryansh Ojha, General Manager of the Family Welfare Program, emphasized that the program is focused on encouraging the community to adopt modern family planning methods, training health workers, and enhancing the Family Planning Logistic Management Information System (FPLMIS) portal," as per the release. This portal is crucial in inspecting and managing family planning materials and resources at all levels. Districts are encouraged to introduce innovative ideas during the fortnight. "To ensure the smooth operation of the family welfare program in districts, it has been decided that counselors from other programs will be trained and equipped to take on these responsibilities in areas without a dedicated family planning counselor," the release stated. Temporary family planning methods include the quarterly contraceptive injection Antara, the weekly contraceptive pill Chhaya, postpartum intrauterine contraceptive devices (PAIUCD), Copper T, Mala-N, emergency contraceptive pills (ECP), and condoms.

"Held On To Hope, Maybe He Got Out": Family Of Indians Killed In Kuwait Fire

Kochi: Grieving families kept a solemn vigil in the terminal of a Kerala airport Friday as the bodies of dozens of migrant workers killed in a Kuwait building fire returned home. Dawn blaze quickly engulfed a housing block home to some of the many foreign labourers servicing the oil-rich gulf state's economy. Fifty people died in the resulting inferno, 45 of them Indians, with dozens more hospitalised and anguished relatives back home frantically chasing news of whether their loved ones had perished. "We held on to hope till the last minute that maybe he got out, maybe he's in the hospital," Anu Aby, the neighbour of 31-year-old victim Cibin Abraham, told AFP. Aby said that Abraham had been due to return to his home in Kerala in August for his

child's first birthday. Abraham had been on the phone to his wife just an hour before the fire began, he added. Others sat in a waiting area at Kochi airport, wiping away tears as the Indian Air Force plane carrying the remains of their relatives touched down.

Most of oil-rich Kuwait's population of more than four million is made up of foreigners. Many of them are from South and Southeast Asia working in construction and service industries, and living in overcrowded housing blocks like the one that went up in flames. Nearly 200 people were living in the building and many of the dead and injured suffocated from smoke inhalation after being trapped by the flames, according to a fire department source. The bodies of many of the dead were



charred beyond recognition and needed to be formally identified through DNA testing before they were repatriated. One Kuwaiti and two foreign residents have been detained on suspicion of manslaughter through negligence of security pro-

cedures and fire regulations, authorities in the Gulf state said. Interior Minister Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef vowed to address "labour overcrowding and neglect", and threatened to close any buildings that flout safety rules. Three

Filipinos were also among the dead, with the country's migrant workers secretary Hans Leo J. Caddac saying authorities in Manila were in touch with their families. The blaze was one of the worst seen in Kuwait.

Family Performs Cremation Wearing PPE Kits After Bees Attack Funeral

Sindhudurg: Family members of a village in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district completed the last rites of an elder wearing PPE kits after a swarm of honey bees attacked them while they had started the cremation process, police said. The family members and a few other locals had gathered near the Tithavali village in Vaibhavwadi taluka to perform the last rites of a



70-year-old farmer, who passed away following a cardiac arrest, when the swarm of bees began attacking those gathered there. The bees apparently got agitated due to the smoke emanating from the burning

of dry wood nearby, a villager said. Some villagers were stung and as the bee attack continued, someone decided to approach a nearby primary health centre at Umbardi, from where they procured five Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits. Two hours after the last rites had begun, the son of the man and four other close family members completed the cremation wearing PPE kits, police said.

SPORT

KKR Star Sets T20 World Cup On Fire, Becomes 1st Man In History To...

A win over Oman has kept England within touching distance of a place in the Super 8 stage of the ongoing T20 World Cup. England desperately needed two points to keep themselves afloat having registered just one point from their first two games. They had lost to Australia while their game against Scotland was washed out due to rain. However, the defending champions bounced back with a dominant 8-wicket victory over Oman at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua. England ripped through Oman, bowling them out for 47 and chasing it down in 3.1 overs. England opener gave Phil Salt gave the chase a fiery start, smashing a six on the first two balls of the innings. By doing so, Salt became the first player to hit sixes on the first two balls of a team innings in international cricket.

"Working From Hotel After Matches": Saurabh Netravalkar's Sister Makes Big Revelation

United States cricket team fast bowler Saurabh Netravalkar has been enjoying a lot of popularity following brilliant bowling performances against India and Pakistan during the ongoing T20 World Cup 2024. The Indian-origin cricketer came into the limelight following a good show against Pakistan and when he took the wickets of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the match against India, he earned major plaudits from both fans and experts. Netravalkar is currently working with tech giant Oracle and his sister Nidhi Netravalkar recently revealed how he balances cricket and work. In an interview, Nidhi said that he is extremely passionate towards his job and he even works in the hotel after the matches.



dia, he brings his laptop. He's working. So after the match in the hotel, he's doing his work. He is pretty dedicated like that," she added.

Netravalkar has earned a lot of praise for managing work and cricket quite brilliantly and the fast bowler is currently on leave from Oracle for the T20 World Cup 2024. Nidhi also explained his dedication towards the game and added how growing up in Mumbai instilled "hustle cul-

ture" in him. "This is something which is like that Mumbai-ness in him, which is always there, this whole hustle culture in us." "You can't just take it out. You know, like all of us, like since the beginning, when he used to travel to Churchgate for his training on the train, he was to do his homework. He played cricket but also studied well and topped his class. He's always had two careers in my perspective," she concluded.

Rashid Khan Credits Franchise Cricket For Aghanistan's Strong Show In T20 World Cup 2024



Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan credited the domestic and franchise cricket experience of his players for the impressive performances that led his team to the Super Eight stage in the ongoing T20 World Cup. Afghanistan registered three consecutive wins in the group stage to become the second team from Group C to advance to the next round of the tournament after co-hosts West Indies. He also lauded his troops after sealing a seven-wicket win against Papua New Guinea, saying they have the skill set to adapt to different conditions.

Afghanistan won the toss and opted to bowl first and bundled out PNG for 95 in 19.5 overs. Pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi

grabbed three wickets while Naveen-ul-Haq clinched two scalps. In the chase, Gulbadin Naib smashed an unbeaten 49 to take his side over the line with 29 balls to spare. "They (the openers) have given us good starts in the last two games and today was a good opportunity for the others to spend some time in the middle. We had a domestic competition before coming here and everyone are in form," Rashid said in the post-match presentation. "That is the beauty of playing of franchise cricket as you know the conditions, some of them have played at St Lucia and know how the pitch will play which will help others. Everyone has the skill to adjust to any condition and hopefully, we will win that game

(against WI) as well," he added.

After progressing to the Super Eight stage, the star spinner said the outcome reflects the combined efforts of the players on the field. "Feeling great to qualifying for the next round. Great effort from the boys since game one. They know what they do and have executed beautifully, making things easy for me. "It is important to have someone like Gurbaz who goes out and takes on the bowling or Farooqi who picks up wickets in the powerplay. If the batter is attacking then as a bowler you have to attack too especially with pitches helping you," he said. Afghanistan will take on West Indies in their final group stage encounter in Tarouba on June 17.

Pakistan Journalist Accuses NZ Of 'Preferring Money Over Duty' Amid T20 WC Poor Show, Gets Brutal Reply

Former New Zealand and Mumbai Indians fast bowler Mitchell McClenaghan gave a strong reply to a Pakistani journalist on social media, who had accused the New Zealand team of "prioritising money over national duty" ahead of the 2024 T20 World Cup. New Zealand are star-

ing at a group stage elimination from the ongoing T20 World Cup after back-to-back losses against Afghanistan and hosts West Indies. After the accusation by the journalist, McClenaghan hit back, raising Pakistan's own poor form and recent losses. "This is what happens when

you prefer money over national duty. New Zealand Had a great chance to pre-prepare themselves for World Cup 2024 on Pakistan Tour but their Main Players Choose IPL and now they are out of the World Cup," wrote Pakistani journalist Imran Siddiqui on X.

UEFA Euro 2024: Groups, Format, Venues, Records: All You Need To Know

UEFA Euro 2024 kicks off on June 15, as hosts Germany face Scotland in the tournament opener. A major international tournament returns to Germany for the first time since the 2006 FIFA World Cup. Italy enter as defending champions, but they'll have an uphill task to even make it out of the groups, with Spain, Croatia and Albania alongside them in Group B. Germany talisman Toni Kroos has come out of retirement to have one last crack, while Cristiano Ronaldo and Luka Modric may also be playing their final Euros. The format stays the same; top two teams qualify from the six groups, with the four best third-placed teams also making the Round of 16.

The Final will take place in the Olympiastadion in Berlin on July 15.

What are the UEFA Euro 2024 Groups?

Group A: Germany, Hungary, Switzerland, Scotland

Group B: Italy, Spain, Croatia, Albania

Group C: England, Denmark, Serbia, Slovenia

Group D: France, Netherlands, Austria, Poland

Group E: Belgium, Ukraine, Romania, Slovakia

Group F: Portugal, Turkey, Czech Republic, Georgia

What is the format of UEFA Euro 2024?

Much like the 2016 and 2020 editions, UEFA Euro 2024 will have six groups (A to F) with four teams each. The top two from each group qualify to the Round of 16, while the four best third-placed teams also make it through to the knockout stage. The Round of 16 is followed by the usual quarter-final, semi-fi-



nal and final format, with one leg per tie.

Which stadiums will host the UEFA Euro 2024 matches?

Ten stadiums across Germany will host the UEFA Euro 2024 games. The Olympiastadion in Berlin will host the Final on July 15, while Munich's Allianz Arena and Dortmund's Westfalenstadion (also known as Signal Iduna Park) will host the semis on July 10 and 11. Nine of the ten stadiums had also hosted games during the 2006 FIFA World Cup, with the only exception being Dusseldorf's Merkur Spiel-Arena. Remarkably, every stadium has a capacity in excess of 45,000.

Here is the full list of stadiums for UEFA Euro 2024:

1. Olympiastadion, Berlin

2. Allianz Arena, Munich

3. Westfalenstadion, Dortmund

4. MHPArena, Stuttgart

5. Arena AufSchalke, Gelsenkirchen

6. Waldstadion, Frankfurt

7. Volksparkstadion, Hamburg

8. Merkur Spiel-Arena, Dusseldorf

9. RheinEnergieStadion, Cologne

10. Red Bull Arena, Leipzig

Which team has won the most number of UEFA European Championships?

Germany and Spain have won the joint-most UEFA Euro titles, with three each. Germany won as West Germany in 1972 and 1980, and then again in 1996. Spain won the second-ever Euros in 1964, before their

golden era saw them win back-to-back titles in 2008 and 2012. France and Italy have two titles each.

Portugal, Greece, Denmark, Netherlands, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union have one title each.

Which player has scored the most goals in UEFA Euros history?

Portugal legend Cristiano Ronaldo has 14 goals in UEFA Euros history, five more than any other player. France icon Michel Platini is second with nine goals, all of which he scored in the 1984 edition, en route to France's first Euros title. However, French star Antoine Griezmann will be looking to overtake Platini's tally, currently occupying third on 7 goals, alongside England's Alan Shearer.

'Other Pakistan Players Cover 2 Km In 10 Minutes, Azam Khan Takes...': Ex-Star's Fitness Dig Amid T20 WC

Former Pakistan captain

Mohammad Hafeez has re-ignited the debate surrounding Azam Khan's fitness, amid the wicketkeeper-batter's poor form in the ongoing T20 World Cup. Azam has been criticised for his fitness and form, with the youngster failing to justify his selection in the team for the tournament. During a recent interaction on PTV Sports, Hafeez shared an interesting anecdote regarding Azam's fitness regime. Hafeez revealed that during his time as Pakistan's Director of Cricket, Azam was assigned a six-week fitness program.

However, Hafeez didn't any change in the player, while his stamina also decreased.

"When Azam Khan joins a training programme, he's the same weight 6 weeks later that he started with. His fat levels are the same. The whole Pakistan team can cover two kilometers in 10 minutes, while Azam Khan will take 20 minutes to cover the distance," Hafeez

said on PTV Sports.

Hafeez also questioned Azam's professionalism and dedication while representing Pakistan, adding that he has been already been given too much time to work on his fitness.

"Being lean or oversize is never an issue for me, but you need to work according to the needs of the game. You need to bring your fitness to a required level. We gave him a fitness plan, but he [Azam] could not improve. You are in the team because of your talent, but you need to respond in case of fitness. You are the only one in the team on whom we have compromised on the grounds of fitness," he added.

Azam has been at the receiving end of strong criticism of former players. He was also dropped from the team for the game against India and Canada.

In 13 T20I matches, Azam Khan has an average 8.80 with a strike-rate of 133.33 and his highest score is 30 not out.



T20 World Cup: Team India's Practice Session in Florida Cancelled. Here's Why

After sealing their place in the Super 8 stage of the T20 World Cup, Team India take on Canada in their final game of Group A on Saturday in Florida. However, on the eve of the match, the Indian team's practice session at the Central Broward Regional Park was called off due to rain in Fort

Lauderdale, Florida. The city has been under cloud cover over the past few days due to rain and massive flooding. On Friday, USA are scheduled to play Ireland, hoping to qualify for the next round. If the match gets washed out on Friday, both teams will be awarded a point

each. In that case, USA will go through, which also means that Pakistan will be knocked out of the tournament. A draw would take USA to five points and even in Pakistan beat Ireland in their final game, they can only go upto four points. Only two teams can advance to the next round from

each group. Fort Lauderdale is set to host the final round of matches in Group A, including the game between India and Canada on Saturday. However, due to the extreme weather conditions over the past few days, it is highly likely that all the matches could get washed out.

Harom Hara review: Rich frames yet the narration lacks meat

In Kuppm, Subramanyam (Sudheer Babu) is employed as a laboratory assistant in a college, while his lover Devi (Malvika Sharma) works as a member of the teaching faculty. Thammi Reddy, Basava Reddy, and Sharath Reddy form a criminal group that instills dread in the area by unlawfully seizing property, committing acts of violence against men, and subjecting women to abuse.

Subramanyam's employment is terminated as a result of a minor conflict with a member of the gang he encountered at the college. Conversely, his father owes money to every individual in his hometown.

In order to amass wealth rapidly, Subramanyam and the suspended constable Palani Swamy (Sunil) use the chance to unlawfully produce guns and distribute them throughout India. Despite Subramanyam's flourishing business and growing power, the local gang saw his emergence as a danger. The remainder of the story revolves around the conflict between Subramanyam and the local mafia syndicate.

Analysis

The story of "Harom Hara" takes place in the 1980s in Kuppm, a border region between Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu. It follows the journey of Subramanyam, a young guy who transforms into a formidable figure while engaging in illicit arms trade.

It can be considered a Lite version of movies such as "KGF" (which revolves around the gold mining business) and "Pushpa" (which focuses on the illegal trade of red sanders). While the aforementioned films



showcased compelling drama and impactful emotional situations in addition to captivating action sequences, "Harom Hara" focuses solely on delivering action and lacks the same level of depth in its dramatic elements.

Gnanasagar Dwaraka, whose previous film was "Sehari", chose to follow a pre-established narrative structure. The film's plot and storytelling are highly predictable. The portrayal of the bond between the hero and his father appears contrived. However, the film manages to captivate our attention despite its predictable nature, because to its well-executed action sequences, visually stunning frames (excellent cinematography), the authentic Kuppm setting, and the use of its unique accent.

But the entire second of the film is disappointing due to poor storytelling and a lack of engaging scenes. The events transpire without any notable excitement or exhilaration. The justification provided for the conflict between the protagonist and the antagonists lacks any impact.

The film opens with the introduction of a police officer portrayed by Akshara Gowda, who narrates the events that have transpired thus far. Sunil plays the role of the protagonist's companion. After Sunil concludes his narration to Akshara, the intensity of the drama diminishes. When Akshara Gowda is tasked with apprehending Subramanyam, the film becomes triter. The scenes depicting people sleeping on the road in order

to prevent the police from arresting Subramanyam have not achieved the intended outcome.

The film's strengths, as previously mentioned, lay in its visually stunning photography, meticulous production design, and captivating action sequences. Sudheer Babu is effective in the leading role among the actors. He has got the diction and accent right. Sunil is okay. Malvika Sharma portrays a conventional female lead character.

Bottom line: "Harom Hara" showcases excellent imaging and features solid action sequences. However, it primarily falters in terms of its storytelling, particularly in the second half, which becomes monotonous.

Maharaja Review: A gripping thriller!

Maharaja (Vijay Sethupathi) works as a barber. Following the tragic demise of his wife in an accident, he has assumed sole responsibility for raising his daughter and has centred his entire life around her. His daughter goes to a different city to participate in a sports event, accompanied by other students under the supervision of the physical education teacher (Mamta Mohandas) for one week. Both the Maharaja and his daughter have a strong liking for an iron dustbin, which they have named Laxmi.

During this time, three burglars attack him as he returns home one night. He goes to the police station and requests that they find the stolen dustbin. Initially, the police officers dismiss him, but when Maharaja offers a bribe of Rs 5 lakhs in exchange for finding 'Laxmi', they suspect that he may be concealing something and believe they can obtain more money from Maharaja if they find the dustbin. So, they begin their investigation.

Why is Maharaja so concerned with locating a dustbin? What is his connection to the thieves? What's his true motivation behind all of this?

Analysis

"Maharaja," the 50th film in Vijay Sethupathi's successful career, is directed by upcoming Tamil filmmaker Nithilan Swaminathan. The plot begins with an accident in which Vijay

Sethupathi's character loses his wife, as the credits appear on screen. The story then jumps ahead 15 years, to the protagonist's middle age and his daughter's teenage.

The narrative subsequently centers on Vijay Sethupathi's unwavering approach to compel the police to locate a stolen dustbin from his residence. In addition, there are several characters present, including police officers, Vijay Sethupathi's daughter who seeks guidance from her teacher, a gang of burglars led by Anurag Kashyap, and a local politician. These characters are part of various threads that initially appear unrelated.

Despite the lack of a clear direction in the film, it successfully captivates our attention and keeps us engaged. It is only during the intermission that we come to realize that the protagonist is actually on a mission of revenge, and all the characters and incidents are intricately connected.

In the latter part, the reasons behind Maharaja's unwavering determination to locate Lakshmi become evident. And the final act when the actual shocking truth is revealed is totally gripping.

The film is a slow-burner. The director skillfully constructs a captivating screenplay with a non-linear narrative that effectively holds our attention until the end. "Maharaja" has famil-



iar features and revolves around the main theme of revenge, and some of its twists appear too convenient and contrived rather than naturally occurring. However, the film maintains a firm hold on its audience throughout. The film's primary strength lies in its ability to captivate and maintain our interest, while effectively sustaining the element of suspense. The performances are an additional advantage.

Vijay Sethupathi once again delivered a nuanced and powerful performance. He appears raw and strong at times, but vulnerable at others, always displaying the pain of a father. He completely carries the film. Anurag Kashyap, a Bollywood filmmaker, also does well as an actor. Despite his lip-syncing and initial unease in finding his

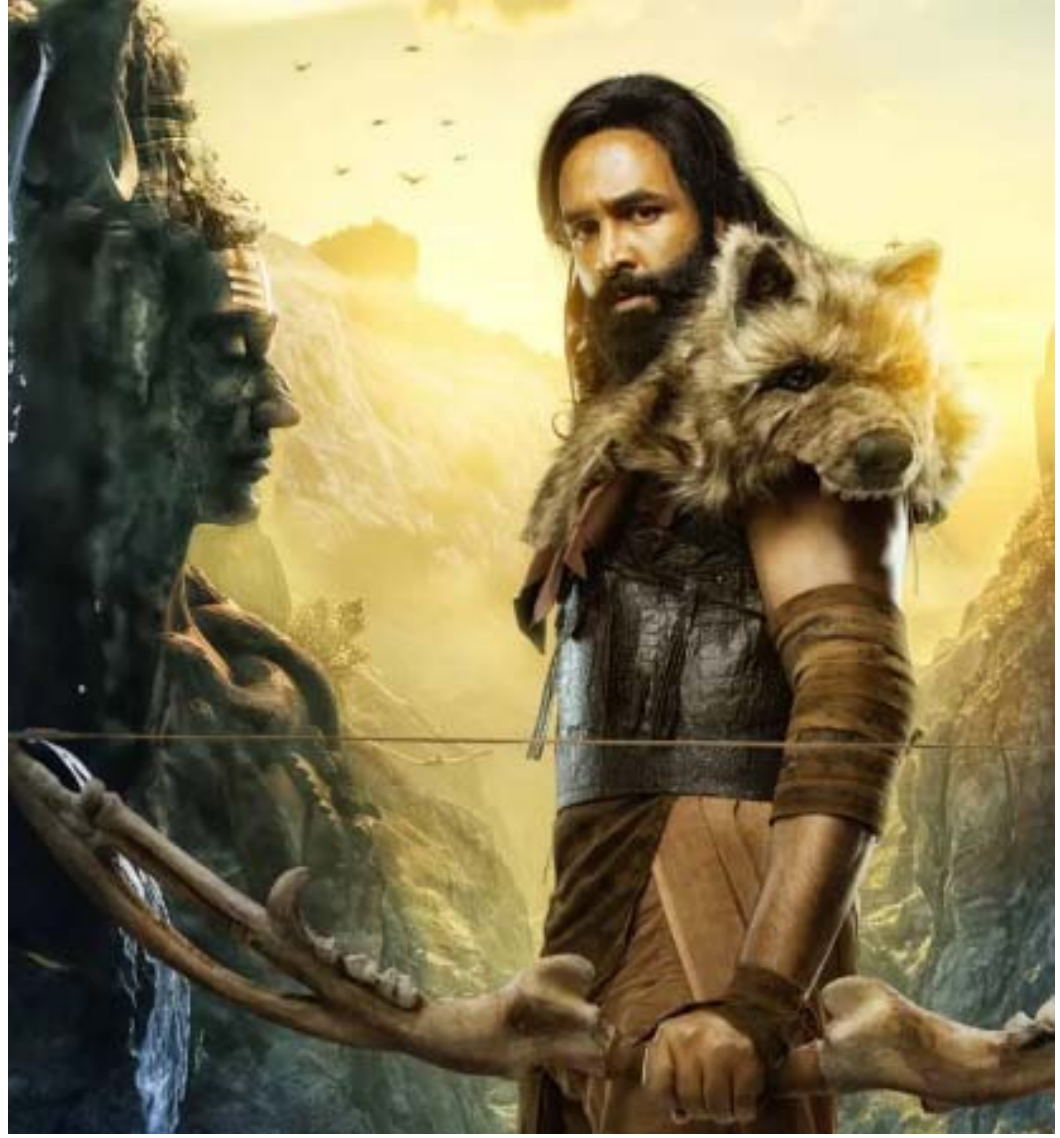
footing, he surprises us later in the film. He plays a shockingly negative role.

Natty's performance as a police inspector is equally impressive. Abhirami performs well as Kashyap's wife. Sachana Namidass, who plays Vijay Sethupathi's daughter, also has an impact in her limited screen time. Mamta Mohandas plays no significant role in the story.

Director Nithilan Saminathan's fantastic screenplay writing skills receive full marks.

Bottom line: "Maharaja" is a slow-burner with a gripping screenplay that keeps you engaged till the end. It is also a well-intended film about a societal subject. Despite the convenient writing, "Maharaja" is both captivating and emotional.

Kannappa teaser: Introduces an action-packed world



The teaser for Manchu Vishnu's ambitious film "Kannappa" is out. The teaser introduces the action-packed world of Kannappa, an atheist warrior turned Lord Shiva devotee. Manchu Vishnu plays Kannappa. The teaser shows him as a warrior capable of defeating numerous armies on his own. The rich visuals are the main attraction of this teaser. The film boasts some big names in guest roles, including Prabhas, Mohanlal, and Akshay Kumar. We get a brief glimpse of these top actors. "Kannappa" is all about an atheist hunter named Kannappa becoming a devotee of Lord Shiva. As an act of his devotion to Lord Shiva, he even plucks out his eyes. Touted to be a true story, the film mixes devotional elements with action elements. Mohan Babu Manchu, besides playing a minor role, produces the film, which is directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh.

First Look: Sreeleela plays Neera in Robinhood

Sreeleela's appearance in Nithiin's "Robinhood" sparked much speculation, with many reports claiming she was replaced by another actress. However, the producers have put an end to these rumors by revealing her first look and a video glimpse of her character in the film. The makers wished Sreeleela a happy birthday and introduced her character as the lady boss Neera Vasudev. "Jyothi, tsunami lo T silent undali," Sreeleela tells another character in the trailer, expressing her attitude. The hero is Nithiin, and the film is directed by Venky Kudumula. Rajendra Prasad and Vennela Kishore play important roles in the film. Mythri Movie Makers is producing the film on a lavish budget.



A South Korean artist accuses Kalki team of plagiarism

"Kalki 2898 AD," the much-awaited sci-fi drama is set for release. The film's trailer caused a stir on the internet. The trailer elicited a significant and positive reaction from film lovers throughout the world. Nag Ashwin's vision has earned appreciation. However, the director and the visual effects team received criticism from certain corners. Sung Choi, a South Korean artist, has raised plagiarism claims against the "Kalki 2898 AD" team. Through his social media handle, he released an image revealing how the creators of "Kalki 2898 AD" stole his artwork. He wrote, "I sometimes even question doing art in this lawless environment." Director Nag Ashwin has yet to respond to these charges.



Kunal Kapoor joins the team of Vishwambhara

Megastar Chiranjeevi's "Vishwambhara" is being produced on a huge scale. No surprise that the team is also enlisting big names from other film industries to play key roles in the film. Aside from Chiranjeevi, the film also stars Trisha Krishnan and Ashika Ranganath. Now Kunal Kapoor, a popular Bollywood actor, has joined the cast. Kunal Kapoor has appeared in Bollywood films such as "Rang De Basanti" and "Don 2." Director Vassishta is working tirelessly to make "Vishwambhara" a successful film. Vikram, Vamsi, and Pramod are producing this fantasy action adventure. MM Keeravani, who recently won an Oscar, is composing the music. Currently, a massive action episode is being filmed at a special set in Hyderabad.

