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Telangana government will stand by Priyanka's family: Minister Vakiti Srihari



Hyderabad, August 10 : Telangana Minister Vakiti Srihari has demanded strict punishment for those responsible for the death of medical student Priyanka . Minister Vakiti Srihari, former MLA and AICC Secretary Sampath Kumar paid tributes near Priyanka's body in the Gandhi Hospi- tal morgue. They consoled

Priyanka's father and gave him courage. The minister spoke on the occasion. He expressed his grief that the incident involving Priyanka was extremely unfortunate. The minister said that CM Revanth Reddy responded immedi- ately and instructed him and the officials to visit Priyanka's family. He said

that strict decisions need to be taken to prevent such incidents from hap- pening in the future. He assured that the Telangana government will stand by Priyanka's family. Minister Vakiti Srihari urged the AP government to tighten the laws so that the ac- cused do not escape by exploiting loopholes..

Communists in India are total cowards: Sitharaman hits out at John Brittas

New Delhi: 10 august; Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday termed commu- nists in India as "total cowards" while lashing out at CPI (M) member John Brittas, accusing him of spreading confusion in the country over the charging of fees on UPI payments. In her reply to the discussion on The Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, in the Rajya Sabha, Sitharaman took exception to Brittas walking out of the house without listening to her reply after he made al- legations while moving a resolution to disapprove of the Income-Tax (Amend- ment) Ordinance, 2026, promulgated on June 5, 2026. Brittas alleged that the government has decided to charge fees on UPI pay- ments due to pressure from the US, just like it was ex- erted on Brazil, and was going against Prime Min- ister Narendra Modi's as- ssertion that "India's digital payment ecosystem had been developed as a free public good". The CPI (M) member, who was allowed to move his resolution by Deputy Chairman Harivansh after a brief com- motion, had walked out when his speech was cut



short by the Chair for ex- ceeding the time limit. "John Brittas can please stay here, if he wants to hear one line. Typical communist style, blast everybody with 'not facts', twist the facts and do something and also de- mand my right 'I have to speak'...and when actually the replies are to be given to them, point by point, they don't have the courage. Cowards!" Sitharaman said. "Communists in this country are total cowards; the member (John Brittas) has proven that. They can't face facts, but they will go on filibustering, making noise," she added. Refer- ring to the assertion by the opposition member of his right to speak, Sitharaman asked, "They don't have a right to listen? When the reply is given, I feel like say- ing it is my right to stand up and reply". Asserting that she listens to all the members and tries to reply to all the members in the dis- cussion, the finance minis-

ter said, "Honourable John Brittas should stay here to hear the reply because he has been creating confu- sion all over, not just here but in the country because that is the tactic the com- munist adopt. Total untruth". Earlier, while moving his resolution, Brittas said the finance minister has "facilitated promulga- tion of the ordinance and subsequently brought this bill thinking that foreign capital would come to this country". She is relyng more on the promises of the foreign countries, he noted. "There has been in- sistence on the part of US trade representatives that you need to charge UPI. The same pressure was ex- erted on Brazil. Now the policy of the government is being completely upended, and she has cleverly brought in the UPI compo- nent in this piece of legisla- tion," Brittas claimed. He re- collected a statement made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "G20 finance minis- ters and central bank gov- ernors in February 2023, that India's digital payment eco- system had been developed as a free public good". Thus, he said, "The current bill goes against the prin- ciple of India.

Telangana achieves 78.26 per cent digitisation of SIR forms

Hyderabad: August 10 : Telangana achieved 78.26 per cent digitisation of enu- meration forms after the schedule for the 'Special Intensive Revision' of the electoral rolls was extended multiple times. On Monday, the Election Commission of India (ECI)-mandated dead- line of the house-to-house enumeration phase of SIR came to a close. As the deadline came to a close on Monday evening, the Chief Electoral Officer, Telangana, C Sudarshan Reddy, released a final sta- tus report of 33 districts on

SIR. South Asians & Diaspora. A total of 3,38,26,448 enumeration forms were distributed to electors across all 33 dis- tricts in Telangana, accord- ing to the report. Of these, 2,64,73,616 enumeration forms were submitted by electors and digitised. The remaining 73,52,832 elec- tors were to be treated as either having not submitted their enumeration forms or as 'Absent, Shifted or Dead' (ASD) electors, the report said. Yadadri- Bhongiri district secured the top spot statewide in

digitisation, achieving 94.31 per cent, while Hyderabad district re- corded 58.89 per cent digitisation, the lowest in the state. The total number of electors in Hyderabad district was 47,36,669, and enumerations were sub- mitted by 27,89,214 electors, said the report. City & Local Guides. According to the revised SIR schedule, the publication of draft elec- toral rolls will be held on August 17, and the period for filing claims and ob- jections is from August 17 to September 16. Notices



served and the disposal of claims and objections will

be held from August 17 to October 15. The final pub- lication of the electoral rolls is October 19.

BRS exposes massive scam in PM Ekta Mall tender, seeks cancellation and probe



Hyderabad: august 10; Terming the tender process for the proposed PM Ekta (Unity) Mall at Raidurg a massive multi-crore scam, the Bharat Rashtia Samithi demanded immediate can- cellation of the tender, stop- page of further Central funds and an independent probe into the entire trans- action. The party alleged that the Congress govern- ment in Telangana tilted ten- der conditions in favour of

a private developer that could result in dispropor- tionate benefits at the cost of public resources and urged the Centre to inter- vene before any irreversible decisions were taken. The proposed project has an estimated cost of Rs 2,059.81 crore, excluding the value of land, and has re- ceived around Rs 202 crore in Central assistance. It is proposed on about 6.3 acres of prime land at Raidurg, with nearly 27 lakh square feet of built-up area. In a strongly worded letter to union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday, the BRS working president K T Rama Rao raised serious concerns over the distribution of com- mercial space. While the

government's minimum share is around nine lakh square feet, the private de- veloper is entitled to a mini- mum of 18 lakh square feet, which is twice the government's minimum built-up area. He ques- tioned the rationale behind grant- ing such extensive commer- cial rights to a private de- veloper when the project involves valuable public land and substantial Central financial assistance. The selected consortium com- prises Vamsiram Builders & Developers Pvt. Ltd. as the lead member and Aparna Infrahousing Pvt. Ltd. as the partner. Rama Rao stated that the consortium offered an additional 18,000 square feet of Grade-A com- mercial office space over

the government's mini- mum entitlement, taking its total built-up area to about 9.18 lakh square feet. However, the private de- veloper retains a minimum entitlement of 18 lakh square feet, apart from the possibility of additional area through future plan- ning efficiencies or permis- sible FSI. The BRS working president also questioned the financial model under which the Rs 200 crore in- terest-free loan sanctioned under the Special As- sistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme is proposed to be routed through Telangana Trade Promotion Corpora- tion Limited to the selected developer on a back-to- back basis.

Deadline for 'Indiramma Houses Towers': Applications extended till August 15

Hyderabad: august 10; The Housing Depart- ment has extended the last date for filing applications for Indiramma Houses in CURE area till August 15. The last date was filing ap- plications was August 10. Housing Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said 7,340 houses in 16 con- stituencies are currently underway as a pilot project. The Minister men- tioned that the government decided to extend the dead-

line after considering re- quests from various sec- tions of society to avoid inconvenience caused by consecutive holidays, in- cluding the second Satur- day and the Bonalu festival. Applications have been accepted since July 21 through Mee-Seva centres, online portals, and the Mee-Seva WhatsApp ser- vice. The Minister stated that a total of 46,121 appli- cations had been received by August 10.



Government cannot be run with batons: Hunger-striking Mahto hospitalised in Ranchi



Ranchi: New Delhi: aug- ust 10; JJKM leader Devendra Nath Mahto, who has been on a hun- ger strike for nine days over alleged irregulari- ties in Jharkhand recruit- ment examinations, was admitted to a hospital here as his health condi- tion deteriorated after participating in a march by protesting students. Doctors de- scribed Mahto's condi- tion as critical, due to a "drastic" drop in his blood sugar level. "He is being treated in the emergency ward," Nancy Priya, Medical Officer at Ranchi Sadar Hospital, told PTI. Pankaj Kumar, an aide of Mahto who was with him in the hospital, claimed that he was injured dur- ing lathi-charge by the police near the

assembly. Despite his frail health, Mahto joined the agitators dur- ing the march to assem- bly earlier in the day, ar- riving at the protest site in an ambulance carry- ing a portrait of former chief minister Shibu Soren. He later stood on a stretcher to address the gathering. "A government cannot be run with batons, bul- lets and guns. A govern- ment is run by keeping the people satisfied," Mahto told reporters near the assembly. "I have been on a hunger strike for the past nine days. Despite this, po- lice pushed and shoved me, harassed me and forcibly put me in an am- bulance. But, I will con- tinue this fight," he asserted. Mahto alleged that police were attempt- ing to suppress the stu-

dents' movement and claimed that efforts were made to prevent protest- ers from reaching Ranchi, with passenger vehicles allegedly stopped in several dis- tricts. The demonstra- tors said police erected multi-layered barricades topped with barbed wire and used water can- nons, tear gas and ba- tons to disperse the protest- ers. "Despite such action, we did not raise a single slogan against the gov- ernment," Mahto claimed. The agitation, which began on July 25, is aimed at seeking trans- parency in competitive examinations and ensur- ing opportunities for students in the state, Mahto said. "This fight is not for me, but for lakhs of students in the state," he said. Mahto said the protesters' next course of action would depend on the state government's response to their demands. "If the government does not meet the demands after today's protest, it will send out a message that the chief minister is also involved in the irregu-

larities, and may have to vacate his post," he stated. Earlier, Mahto had objected to the in- stallation of barbed-wire barricades along the route of the assembly march, saying the mea- sures were increasing anger among students. Maintaining that the agitation was not political, Mahto said, "If I die making a new and beautiful Jharkhand, this will not be wrong, as many people sacrificed their lives for the creation of Jharkhand." "I have not eaten for nine days, but I could not stop myself from coming here... the police adminstra- tion acted like cowards," he alleged. Several agitators and four policemen were injured during a clash near the Jharkhand as- sembly on Monday, as police used water can- nons, tear gas and lathi- charged job aspirants protesting against alleged irregularities in recruit- ment examinations, offi- cials said. The clash took place after the protesters breached multiple barri- cades near the Jharkhand Vidhan Sabha.

Improve government schools: CJP announces nationwide campaign from August 15

New Delhi: august 10; Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Monday an- nounced a nationwide cam- paign to improve govern- ment schools in villages, calling on parents to con- duct social audits of basic facilities and sarpanches to take up the task of improv- ing the institutions. The campaign will be launched on August 15, with the CJP calling upon citizens, par- ents and village leaders to work together to address what it termed "neglect of rural educational infrastruc- ture". In a video message, Dipke said he would launch the initiative from his vil- lage Hingoli in Maharashtra by approaching the vil- lage head with the request to improve the government schools there. "The coming 15th August is our 80th In- dependence Day. But, if anything has been ne-



glected or ignored the most in the last 80 years, it is the government schools in our villages," Dipke said. "We have made a new Parlia- ment, a new PM house. Why have we not been able to build new schools in our villages? Do we not con- sider the children of farm- ers and labourers the future of our country?" he asked. Dipke said that village children still have to walk long distances to attend school and often find basic facilities such as drinking water and toilets unavailable. "Even today, village children have to walk a long distance to go to school. After going there,

they don't find water or toi- let facilities," he said, high- lighting the difficulties faced by girls in particular. "I feel that on this 15th August, if we should pay attention to anything, if we should make a new start, we should start by improving our government schools," he said. As part of the cam- paign, the CJP has issued an appeal to sarpanches across the country to im- prove government schools in their respective villages. Dipke said he would per- sonally approach the vil- lage head in Hingoli, and urged other village heads to take up the initiative. The organisation has described it as a "Sarpanch Chal- lenge", under which the CJP would publicly recognise village heads who improve their schools by sharing before-and-after photographs on its social media platforms, giving

credit to the sarpanches concerned. "We will give you credit so that after seeing you, after seeing the schools that you have improved, many other village heads also start improving schools in their villages," Dipke said. The CJP state- ment also announced a citi- zen-led social audit of gov- ernment schools. Parents whose children study in government schools have been asked to visit the in- stitutions and check the availability of electricity, clean drinking water, func- tioning washrooms and mid- day meals. "You go to your children's schools and see if basic facilities are avail- able. See if there is electric- ity, water. Do your children get washroom facilities? Do they get mid-day meals?" Dipke said, urging the par- ents to record videos if the facilities are not available.

EDITORIAL

Strong effort to curb adulteration

On the one hand, increasing air pollution is a serious public health problem, while on the other hand, uncontrolled adulterated food is becoming deadly. On Tuesday (4.8.26), inspections were conducted at various places in Hyderabad city and 25.3 tons of adulterated spices and 89.15 tons of raw materials were seized. Three accused were arrested. The fact that the Hyderabad Food Adulteration Surveillance (HEAST) team conducted 659 raids and seized 254 tons of adulterated food in the 140 days since its formation shows how rampant the adulteration epidemic is in Telangana, especially in Hyderabad city. It is a good effort that the Telangana government is also preparing to form a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to crack this racket. According to a report by the Union Health Ministry, out of every 100 samples tested in Telangana in the last three years, 15 were found to be adulterated. Up to 168 deaths have occurred due to adulteration. In Andhra Pradesh, 9 out of every 100 samples were found to be adulterated. Between February and March 2026, a total of 16 people lost their lives due to kidney failure due to adulterated milk in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, which caused a huge sensation. Southern states are at the forefront of cases of adulteration in food samples collected to detect adulteration across the country. Tamil Nadu is at the top with an average of 20 percent, followed by Telangana with 14 percent. Andhra Pradesh with 9 percent and Karnataka with 6.30 percent are next. In the last three years, more than 5.18 lakh food samples have been tested in the country and 88,192 people have been fined. Punishments have been imposed in 3614 cases. If you look at all this, you can see how adulteration is spreading like water under the carpet. Only by eating quality food can the brain and organs stay healthy. The Global Nutrition Report 2021 revealed that 12 million people died worldwide in 2018 due to unhealthy food made from adulterated ingredients. Milk, cheese, fruits, vegetables, and spices are adulterated, leading to serious health problems such as liver, kidney, heart diseases, and cancer for consumers. Adulteration is becoming institutionalized at the national level. Milk and water, which are the daily sources of people's livelihood, are filled with chemicals, damaging the quality of food. Antibiotics in poultry, and arsenic and lead in water have become dangerous. Spices and cooking utensils also contribute to adulteration. A study conducted by Stanford University on the prevalence of the chemical element lead chromate in the country has revealed some facts. When samples were collected from 17 cities and examined, it was found that up to 14 percent of all the samples contained high levels of lead chromate metal. Lead residues were found to be high in the cities of Patna, Guwahati and Chennai. If we look at the dairy industry, half of the cooperatives in this are unorganized workers. They process ingredients like ghee. It is known how much controversy the Tirupati laddu adulterated ghee affair has created in the country.



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Korean Kanakaraju, Non-Stop Entertainer: Varun Tej



Mega Prince Varun Tej believes Korean Kanakaraju marks one of the most demanding roles of his career, not because of action or emotion alone, but because of the complete transformation it required. Speaking ahead of the film's release, the actor revealed that

director Merlapaka Gandhi wanted audiences to see Kanakaraju rather than Varun Tej on screen. To achieve that, the team redesigned everything, including his hairstyle, appearance and overall body language. For the first time, Varun even coloured his hair to

suit the Korean-inspired look. The transformation wasn't limited to visuals. He spent considerable time learning the Rayalaseema dialect and understanding Korean pronunciation, while also working extensively with comedian Sathya to build believable chemistry. Their

comic timing, he says, came after extensive rehearsals and homework. Varun explained that the character carries two completely different dimensions, making it one of the most satisfying performances of his career. "I love learning new things, and that's one of the reasons I became an actor. Playing new characters and living different lives excites me. I always try my best to disappear into the character so that audiences see only the role, not me. Korean Kanakaraju is a non-stop entertainer. However, cutting a trailer for a comedy film is always challenging because comedy works best when viewed within the context of the scenes. Extracting jokes for a trailer doesn't always have the same impact. That's why we focused from the beginning on promoting it as a complete comedy entertainer." Happy with the early booking trends, Varun said audiences have already responded positively to the teaser, trailer and songs. That confidence has encouraged the team to promote the film aggressively, and he is convinced the entertainer will connect with viewers across all sections.

Kill Director Bags A Hollywood Biggie

Nikhil Nagesh Bhat is ready to make his first Hollywood movie. He became famous after directing the action film Kill, which was praised by audiences and critics alike. Because of its massive success, he has now received a big opportunity in Hollywood.

As per the latest update, his new movie has been titled Deadlocked. It is an action thriller starring popular Hollywood actor Jamie Foxx. The film will be released on Amazon Prime Video. Jamie Foxx will also serve as one of the producers of this biggie.

The story is about a former Marine who is tasked with confronting a group of armed criminals. The film promises to be full of action, suspense, and exciting moments. The news is also that the film will have crazy action, which has not been seen on Indian screens before.

Deadlocked is a proud moment for Nikhil Nagesh Bhat and Indian cinema. His success shows that talented Indian filmmakers are getting more opportunities in Hollywood. He was supposed to do a biggie with the makers of Kill, but no announcement has come officially. Fans are now eagerly waiting to see his unique action style on the international stage. The makers have not yet announced the film's release date.



Pawan Effect: Sujeeth Must Wrap Bloody Romeo Quickly?



Director Sujeeth, who is supposed to start OG 2, the most-aviated sequel to OG with Pawan Kalyan, has got plans changed. As part of the ongoing reshuffle, Sujeeth may first work with Nani before moving onto Pawan Kalyan's OG sequel. Pawan Kalyan's health reasons are the one of the reasons for this reshuffle. It is already known that Kalyan underwent his right-shoulder surgery in Mumbai very recently. As per fresh medical reports, Pawan may have to undergo another surgery in

the next two months and he needs rest post surgery. Given this, starting shooting for gangster drama OG 2 with action episodes involving Pawan Kalyan would be a very risky idea. So, makers of OG2 have reportedly put the project on backfoot. Meanwhile, Sujeeth will be teaming up with Nani for his proposed film. Tentatively titled as Bloody Romeo, Nani and Sujeeth may begin the shoot at the earliest. Nani will get free from Paradise from this month. Already, Sujeeth has started the pre-production

works of Romeo with Nani. If all goes well, Sujeeth and Nani to roll on Romeo. Inside buzz is that Sujeeth can't afford delay in Romeo shoot as he has to start OG 2 with Pawan Kalyan by mid 2027. PK will get busy from 2028 on wards. Pawan has political commitments ahead of 2029 general elections. Amidst this, Sujeeth is on a tight schedule to start Romeo with Nani and deliver it on time. Meanwhile, once Pawan recovers, he would start shooting for OG2 with Sujeeth.

KJQ: Dream Project Receives Massive Industry Support

Producer Sudhakar Cherukuri's latest production venture KJQ is all set to hit theatres tomorrow. The team has left no stone unturned in promoting the film, and the promotional content has generated encouraging buzz ahead of its release. The journey of KJQ has been an emotional one. Director KK passed away before completing what was considered his dream project, leading to an unexpected delay. Determined to fulfill his vision, the team came together, completed the remaining work, and ensured the film was ready for the big screen.

Adding further strength to the campaign, several prominent filmmakers from the Telugu film industry extended their support. Directors Sandeep Reddy Vanga, Srikanth Odela, Sampath Nandi and many others actively backed the film by participating in its promotional activities, giving KJQ valuable visibility ahead of release. Starring Deekshith Shetty, Shashi Odela and Yukti Thareja in the lead roles, KJQ now carries both emotional significance and positive pre-release momentum. The final verdict, however, rests with the audience, as strong word of mouth will be crucial in translating the goodwill into box-office success.

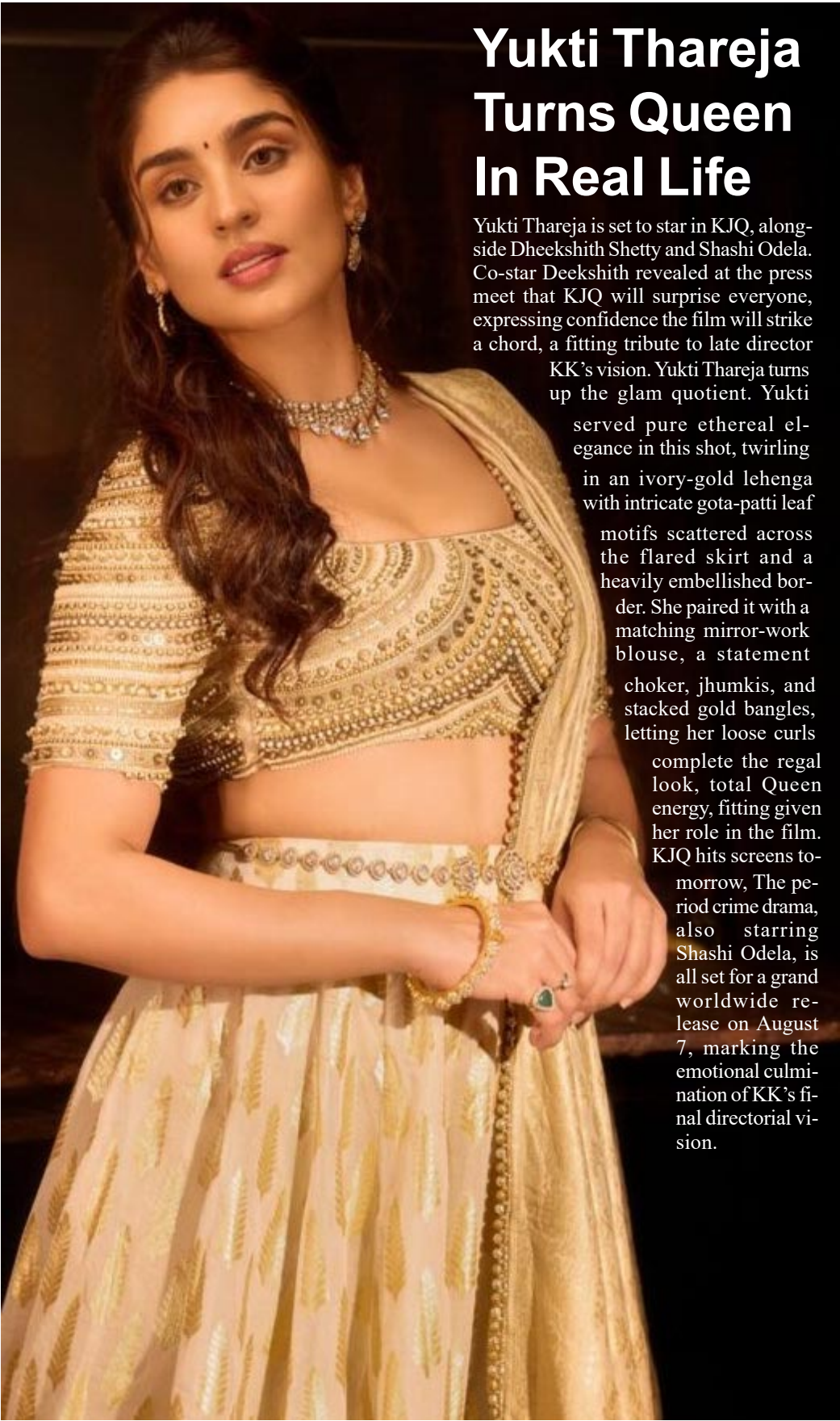
Yukti Thareja Turns Queen In Real Life

Yukti Thareja is set to star in KJQ, alongside Dheekshith Shetty and Shashi Odela. Co-star Deekshith revealed at the press meet that KJQ will surprise everyone, expressing confidence the film will strike a chord, a fitting tribute to late director

KK's vision. Yukti Thareja turns up the glam quotient. Yukti

served pure ethereal elegance in this shot, twirling in an ivory-gold lehenga with intricate gota-patti leaf motifs scattered across the flared skirt and a heavily embellished border. She paired it with a matching mirror-work blouse, a statement choker, jhumkis, and stacked gold bangles, letting her loose curls

complete the regal look, total Queen energy, fitting given her role in the film. KJQ hits screens tomorrow. The period crime drama, also starring Shashi Odela, is all set for a grand worldwide re-release on August 7, marking the emotional culmination of KK's final directorial vision.



Exclusive: Sreeleela Bags a Rajinikanth Movie!



Sreeleela is one of the popular actors in the tinsel town who is not scoring a hit despite making her presence in multiple movies. While her fans are disappointed of this fact, the interesting news is that she is likely to be seen in a film, starring Superstar Rajinikanth. Sreeleela was last seen in Prashakthi in Tamil and Ustaad Bhagat Singh in Telugu. The actress didn't score a hit with it even when there are high expectations in the projects.

The actress will now be rejoicing to be seen alongside Rajinikanth. As of now, the details of project are kept under wraps but ask the fingers point at Dharman. Ashwath is directing Rajinikanth in his next movie and it'll be produced by Kamal Haasan. This will be a prestigious movie and if Seeleela comes on board, it'll benefit her career in a big way. The actress is also seeing a struggling phase in Telugu as her last few movies including Ustaad didn't perform at the box office. Even in Hindi, Sreeleela is yet to mark her debut and if this new sensational project becomes a hit, it'll be vital for Sreeleela ahead of her launch in Bollywood. An official announcement on Sreeleela's next will be out soon.



Ajinkya Rahane signs with Amsterdam Flames for inaugural ETPL



Amsterdam: Former India captain Ajinkya Rahane has signed with the Amsterdam Flames as the franchise's marquee player for the inaugural edition of the European T20 Premier League (ETPL), set to begin on August 26. On July 30, Rahane announced his retirement from international cricket and all formats. Rahane represented India in 85 Tests, 90 ODIs and 20 T20Is for India, while his final international appearance came against the West Indies in a two-game Test series in July 2023. "Cricket has given me so much, and I've always believed that players have a responsibility to leave the game stronger than they found it. Europe is entering an exciting phase and has the po-

tential to become one of cricket's most promising frontiers. "What impressed me about Amsterdam Flames is the ambition to build something meaningful that creates a lasting impact both on and off the field. I'm excited to work alongside the management to build a successful franchise while helping inspire the next generation and strengthen cricket's future across Europe," Rahane said in a statement issued by the tournament on Friday. Rahane is currently in England as a commentator for the Hundred. Steve Waugh, the former Australia captain who's the co-founder and Chief Cricket Officer of Amsterdam Flames, welcomed Rahane into the set-up. "Ajinkya Rahane repre-

sents everything you want in a professional cricketer – skill, resilience, humility and leadership. "Throughout his career he has earned enormous respect across the cricket world, not only for his performances but for the way he has conducted himself on and off the field. I've seen first-hand the composure and leadership he brings under pressure, and those qualities help shape winning cultures. His experience, leadership and character will be invaluable as we build Amsterdam Flames into one of Europe's premier cricket clubs." In the IPL, Rahane played 212 games for six teams and amassed 5367 in the tournament, including captaining Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in 2025 and 2026 sea-

sons and being a tournament winner with the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in 2023. Abhishek Bachchan, Co-owner of the ETPL, highlighted the significance of Rahane's signing for the upcoming league. "Ajinkya Rahane joining Steve Waugh's Amsterdam Flames is a significant moment for both the franchise and the ETPL and another important milestone in our vision to accelerate the growth of cricket across Europe. "Players of Ajinkya's calibre not only raise the standard of the competition but also inspire and mentor the next generation of European cricketers. We are delighted to welcome him to the ETPL family." Echoing similar sentiments, Tim Thomas, Chief Executive Officer of Amsterdam Flames, termed Rahane's recruitment as a landmark event for the club. "Signing a player of Ajinkya Rahane's calibre is a defining moment for Amsterdam Flames. This is about much more than adding an outstanding cricketer, it is about establishing the standards, culture and ambition that will define our club for years to come. "Ajinkya's professionalism, experience and leadership perfectly align with our vision of building a franchise that competes at the highest level while making a lasting contribution to the growth of cricket across Europe," he said.

Sharad Kumar hails India's best-ever Commonwealth Games para campaign



New Delhi: Paris Paralympics silver-winning high-jumper Sharad Kumar on Friday said the country's para-athletes are delivering path-breaking results despite comparatively less funding as he lauded their best ever Commonwealth Games performance in Glasgow recently. India's para-sports contingent secured seven medals (three gold, two silver, and two bronze) for the country's most successful para campaign in the history of the Commonwealth Games. "The amount of money being put into para sports is comparatively less than other sports, and yet we are delivering tremendous results. When para-athletes perform, sports show that anybody can win," Kumar said on the sidelines of the Indo-French initiative 'Para Elan – Sab Ka Maidan' — a student outreach programme to promote French language in the national capital. "This is the first time that para sports have won gold medals at the Commonwealth Games. Because of that, our ranking went

from 23rd to fourth. You realise the last two gold medals were what helped us break into the top four," he said of India's final standing after winning 39 medals overall. Kumar said India's para-athletes have consistently punched above their weight despite comparatively lower investment in the sector. Para-sports has been a part of the country's flagship target Olympic Podium Scheme since its inception in 2014 but the number of athletes on TOPS roster has increased substantially in recent years. "The amount of money being put into para sports is comparatively less than other sports, and yet we are delivering tremendous results. When para-athletes perform, sports show that anybody can win," said the former world number one, who also has a bronze from the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. French Ambassador to India Thierry Mathou, who was also present at Friday's event, said para sport is a powerful tool for social change. The French Insti-

tute in India (IFI), under the Embassy of France, in collaboration with the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI), inaugurated the initiative at Thyagaraj Stadium, bringing together students from schools across Delhi for adaptive sports demonstrations and interactive sessions with para-athletes. The programme is part of the three-year initiative, inaugurated in April, which aims to reach more than 10,000 students across India through awareness campaigns and school engagement programmes centred on inclusion and para sports. Mathou said the initiative was built around promoting diversity through both language and sport. "Sport is an exceptional way to communicate, exchange views and interact, and the Paralympics are a way to learn from others. Teaching French, talking about diversity, promoting differences and doing sports is our ambition," he added.

Marsh, Short must finish BBL before joining SA20, says Cricket Australia

Melbourne: Cricket Australia (CA) has confirmed that Australia's men's T20I captain Mitchell Marsh and batting all-rounder Matthew Short will be granted No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to participate in the SA20 only after completing their respective Big Bash League (BBL) commitments. Marsh and Short were announced as marquee signings for the upcoming season of SA20 by joining Sunrisers Eastern Cape and Pretoria Capitals respectively. The SA20 is scheduled to get underway on January 17, 2027, just a day after Short's Adelaide Strikers host Marsh's Perth Scorchers in the final match of the BBL season 16 league stage. However, CA reiterated that clearance for foreign leagues remains subject to national board approval under International Cricket Council (ICC) regulations, regardless of a player's contract

status. "CA said the pair would only be granted a 'No Objection Certificate' once their BBL 16 commitments with their respective teams have concluded," said a report in cricket.com.au on Friday. Short, who opted to go freelance after his national contract was not renewed for the 2026/27 season, will still require the clearance alongside Marsh. A Perth Scorchers spokesperson also said in the report that Marsh would remain 'with Perth until the season ends, whatever stage of the tournament that is.' Should either Perth or Adelaide qualify for the BBL finals, scheduled to be played from January 19 to 26, their departure for South Africa will be delayed further. Both players enter the upcoming domestic summer in rich form. Marsh, who signed a three-year extension with the Scorchers till BBL season 17, enjoyed a stellar run in the pre-



vious Big Bash edition, scoring 360 runs to propel the side to a record sixth title. He followed it up with 563 runs for Lucknow Super Giants in IPL 2026 and has made a blistering start in The Hundred for the Sunrisers Leeds with 290 runs in five innings. Short,

meanwhile, has also been in great touch, hitting consecutive half-centuries for Welsh Fire in The Hundred following a dominant run in Major League Cricket, where he smashed unbeaten scores of 94 and 121 in the playoffs for San Francisco Unicorns.

Travis Head wins Allan Border Medal for second consecutive year

Hyderabad: Travis Head has been crowned the nation's leading male cricketer, winning the prestigious Allan Border Medal for a second consecutive year. At a function held in Brisbane to celebrate the 2025-26 season for Australia's men's teams, Head claimed top honours while Mitchell Starc was named Shane Warne Men's Test Player of the Year, Mitchell Marsh claimed Men's ODI Player of the Year and Tim David won Men's T20I Player of the Year. Head played 30 matches across all three formats during the 2025-26 international cricket season, scoring 1437 runs. The left-hander's season was highlighted by a brilliant 123 off 83 balls on day two of



the NRMA Insurance West Test, to help Australia claim an eight-wicket win and the first win of the Ashes series. Head's top score for the season was a 170 in the second innings of his home Test in Adelaide. That innings followed a century by Alex Carey, who finished one vote behind his South Australian teammate in the Allan Border Medal count. Carey also had a standout season, scoring 1079 runs in 24 matches across all formats. His glove work was pivotal in Australia's reclaiming of the Ashes when he finished the series with 28 dismissals. Fast bowler Starc finished third in

the Allan Border Medal and claimed the Shane Warne Men's Test Player of the Year. Starc, who was also the NRMA Insurance Ashes Player of the Series, took 57 wickets at 24 in 11 Tests with best figures of 7-58 in the first innings of the West Test against England. In the white ball formats, Marsh won ODI Player of the Year after scoring 304 runs in six matches with a top score of 100 against South Africa in Mackay. David was awarded T20I Player of the Year, scoring 395 runs in 14 matches which included the fastest-ever T20I century for Australia, an unbeaten 102 off 37 balls against the West Indies.

Neeraj Chopra becomes co-owner of UBS Athletics Kids Cup



New Delhi: Two-time Indian Olympic medallist javelin

thrower Neeraj Chopra on Friday became the co-owner of

the UBS Athletics Kids Cup having already served as the programme's Ambassador for the past two seasons. The UBS Athletics Kids Cup is one of a grassroots initiatives, designed to introduce children to sports through fun, inclusive and accessible competition. It has engaged more than 250,000 children across 2,500 plus schools in five cities. "Over the last two seasons, I have seen the impact that UBS Athletics Kids Cup has created for children across schools," said Chopra, who added a Commonwealth Games silver to his crowded cabinet last month, in a release. "Every

child deserves an opportunity to discover and showcase their talent, and becoming Co-owner felt like the natural next step because I truly believe in the vision we're building together. "Our ambition is to reach one million children and inspire many more youngsters to embrace sport. I look forward to sharing my own experiences with the kids, teachers and schools, because the more children play, the greater the chance of creating future champions." With Chopra joining the initiative as co-owner, the programme now enters its next phase of growth with an ambi-

tion to reach one million children across India. Beyond introducing young people to sports, the initiative aims to encourage confidence, discipline and lifelong participation in sport, helping build a stronger sporting culture from the grassroots up. Daniel Schenker, CEO of Dspowerparts and Co-Founder of the initiative, said: "The strongest validation any programme can receive is when someone who knows the field better than anyone else chooses to invest personally in its future. "Neeraj has seen the impact, met the children and understands the vision.