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SC takes suo motu notice of sexist remarks by HC judge (21 September)

- A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, took notice of a controversial video showing a Karnataka High Court judge making inappropriate remarks to a woman lawyer.
- The judge in question, Justice Vedavyasachar Srishananda, made sexist comments during a court proceeding, which sparked outrage online.
- The other judges on the Bench included Justices Sanjiv Khanna, B.R. Gavai, Surya Kant, and Hrishikesh Roy.
- The Bench requested input from Attorney-General R. Venkataramani and Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, who were present in court.
- They instructed the Karnataka High Court's Registrar-General to consult with the Chief Justice of the High Court and report on the incident within two days.
- The case is scheduled for a hearing on September 25.
- Senior advocate Indira Jaising shared the video on social media, urging the Chief Justice of India to take action and provide gender sensitization training for the judge.
- This judge had previously faced criticism for calling a Muslim area in Bengaluru 'Pakistan.'
- The controversial comment arose when the woman lawyer tried to respond to a question directed at a male lawyer, leading the judge to jokingly suggest she might reveal intimate details about him.

Veteran Malayalam actor Kaviyoor Ponnamma no more (21 September)

- Veteran Malayalam actor Kaviyoor Ponnamma, 80, passed away after undergoing cancer treatment in a Kochi hospital.
- She started her acting career in drama before moving to films in the early 1960s, becoming known for her mother and grandmother roles.
- Ponnamma also acted in television serials and won the State award for best supporting actor four times.
- She lived with her younger brother in Karumallur, near Kochi.
- Condolences for her passing were expressed by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan.
- The Chief Minister highlighted her early career association with the Kerala People's Arts Club (KPAC) and her significant impact through mother roles.
- Satheesan noted that her six-decade career brought unique qualities to her characters.
- Her body will be available for public viewing at the Kalamassery Municipal Town Hall on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.
- The cremation will take place at her home in Aluva.

ISRO will take all precautions before manned Gaganyaan mission: Somanath (21 September)

- ISRO Chairman S. Somanath stated that the organization will take precautions and conduct extensive tests before launching the manned Gaganyaan mission.
- He mentioned the Boeing Starliner incident, emphasizing the need for caution.
- The first uncrewed Gaganyaan mission is planned for the end of this year, followed by three more missions before the manned flight.
- If these three missions are successful, the manned mission will be scheduled, but no tight timeline has been set.
- The first uncrewed mission is expected to launch in December, and the rocket is already at ISRO's spaceport in Sriharikota for final preparations.
- The Gaganyaan project aims to send three astronauts to an orbit of 400 km for a three-day mission, landing them safely in the Indian sea.
- Somanath also discussed future missions, including Chandrayaan-4, the Venus Orbiter Mission (VOM), and plans for a Bharatiya Anatriksh Station.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the importance of a long-term space mission for 2047 that inspires future generations and advances technology.
- ISRO's vision includes building a space station by 2035 and sending an Indian astronaut to the moon by 2040.
- The VOM is significant because Venus has a more challenging atmosphere than Mars.
- Somanath referred to Venus, Mars, and Earth as sister planets, stressing the need to understand them for the future.
- The VOM mission is expected to take place around March 2028.

SC asks govt. to explain delay in the appointment of judges (21 September)

Bench says the Collegium cannot be treated like a 'search committee' whose reiterations can be ignored or accepted at the govt.'s discretion; court seeks status of pending names in a week

- The Supreme Court asked the government to explain why it has delayed acting on names recommended by the Collegium for judicial appointments.
- A three-judge Bench, led by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, reminded the government that the Collegium is not just a search committee and its recommendations should not be ignored.
- The Attorney-General was instructed to provide a detailed chart within a week, showing the status of each pending recommendation and the reasons for delays.
- The Chief Justice emphasized that the goal is to ensure smooth governance, not to uncover issues from the past.
- According to the Second Judges case, the government is expected to clear Collegium recommendations as a matter of good practice.
- In December 2022, the court noted that ignoring or returning reiterated names breaches established norms for judicial appointments.
- The Attorney-General requested more time to gather information about pending High Court appointments, and the Chief Justice agreed, mentioning that some were expected to be cleared soon.
- Petitioners highlighted that many High Courts have been functioning with Acting Chief Justices for extended periods.
- Lawyer Prashant Bhushan stressed the need for immediate appointments of reiterated names, including senior advocate Saurabh Kirpal.
- Kirpal was first recommended in 2017 and has faced delays due to government objections over his advocacy for gay rights.
- Advocate John Sathyan also faced similar delays after being recommended for the Madras High Court.
- Bhushan proposed that if the government does not respond to Collegium recommendations within six weeks, those recommendations should be considered accepted.

Security adviser says many weapons may have come from outside Manipur (21 September)

- Kuldiep Singh, Manipur's security adviser, reported 2,681 weapons recovered since ethnic violence began on May 3, 2023.
- Of these, 1,200 weapons were looted from police armouries.
- Over 6,000 police weapons were stolen during the violence.
- Around 800 of the recovered weapons are sophisticated and likely came from outside the state or country.
- More weapons were looted in valley areas, where operations are easier for security forces.
- The hilly regions are harder to monitor due to difficult terrain.

- Unused and used rockets have been recovered, but the manufacturing locations remain unknown.
- Ethnic violence involves clashes between the Kuki-Zo tribes in the hills and the Meitei people in the valleys.
- Security forces are on high alert due to intelligence about 900 Kuki militants possibly entering the area.
- Districts such as Churachandpur and Ukhrul are particularly monitored.
- After a rocket attack on September 6, 26 weapons were recovered in a major operation.
- A drone bombing incident on September 1 has been handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for further investigation.
- A total of 533 arrests have been made, with around 60,000 security personnel deployed to maintain peace.

Dargahs different from other Waqf properties, says Sufi body (21 September)

- The All India Sujjadanashin Council (AISSC) claims to represent 600 dargahs in India.
- They presented to the Parliament's Joint Committee on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, asking for a separate and independent dargah board.
- The council believes current Waqf Boards do not meet the specific needs of dargahs.
- Dargahs are led by hereditary Sajjada Nashins, meaning one family has managed them for centuries.
- The council argues dargahs promote communal harmony and should be recognized as a separate class for their welfare.
- Their presentation led to many questions from Opposition members.
- Most dargahs, except Ajmer Sharif, fall under Waqf Board governance; Ajmer is governed by a different act.
- AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi noted that "Sufism" is not a sect but a broader approach to Islam.
- DMK MP A. Raja asked if the dargahs mentioned were Waqf properties.
- Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee requested details on the council's social welfare work over the last decade.
- Opposition members generally rejected the council's proposal and urged the panel not to consider it.

85 candidates in J&K polls have criminal cases: ADR (21 September)

- Out of 457 candidates in the first two phases of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly election, 85 have criminal cases against them.
- The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) analyzed affidavits from candidates.
- In Phase-2, 49 out of 238 candidates (21%) declared criminal cases.
- Eight of the 26 constituencies (31%) are labeled as 'red alert constituencies,' indicating three or more candidates with criminal cases.
- Among major parties, 15% of candidates from the Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party have criminal cases.
- 24% of candidates from the BJP have declared criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits.

Samples of ghee used by TTD contained 'foreign fat', says lab analysis (21 September)

- Samples of ghee used in offerings at the Tirumala temple contained fish oil, beef tallow, and lard, referred to as 'foreign fat.'
- This was reported by the National Dairy Development Board's (NDDB) Centre for Analysis and Learning in Livestock and Food.
- The analysis showed that all five 'S-values' used to check milk fat integrity fell outside acceptable limits, indicating contamination with foreign fats.
- Other fats present included soybean, olive, sunflower, and various seed oils.
- The samples would only be considered pure milk fat if all five S-values were within the limits set by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO).
- The lab report noted that false positives could occur due to factors like underfeeding cows or overfeeding them with vegetable oil-rich feeds.
- YSRCP MP Y.V. Subba Reddy challenged Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to prove the allegations about the ghee, warning of a defamation suit if he failed.

Private dairy firm in T.N. says its ghee has FSSAI certification (21 September)

- A private dairy in Dindigul claimed that its ghee supplied for making Tirupati laddus is not impure or substandard.
- The dairy, A.R. Dairy, stated it has supplied ghee to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) in June and July without complaints.
- The Quality Control team mentioned they stopped supply but had previously sent four truckloads of ghee during those months.
- They follow a Standard Operating Procedure, which includes sending samples to a government-recognized lab for testing before loading consignments.
- The dairy has been in business for 25 years and supplies to many institutions, with their products tested at various government-approved labs.
- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) officials also periodically collect samples for testing.
- The dairy claimed it follows legal guidelines and contributes 0.1% of the ghee supplied to TTD.
- Engineers from the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board visited the dairy to collect samples of the discharged water.
- They will also submit the ghee samples to a government-approved laboratory for testing.

Indigenous heavy water reactor attains criticality (21 September)

- Unit 7 of the Rajasthan Atomic Power Project (RAPP) in Rawatbhata achieved criticality on Thursday night, indicating the start of a controlled fission chain reaction.
- The event was recorded at 10:42 p.m. and was approved by the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board.
- RAPP-7 is the third reactor to reach criticality in a series of 16 indigenous pressurized heavy water reactors (PHWRs) being developed.
- The first two reactors to go critical before RAPP-7 were Units 3 and 4 at the Kakrapar Atomic Power Station in Gujarat, in 2020 and 2023, respectively.
- Achieving criticality signifies the end of the construction phase and the beginning of the operational phase for the project.
- RAPP-7 is expected to start generating electricity this year.

Blockchain, smart materials, among innovative projects mooted in PM solar scheme (21 September)

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has announced a ₹500-crore fund for “Innovative Projects” as part of the ₹75,000-crore PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana.
- Companies and individuals can submit proposals for innovative ideas related to rooftop solar installations.
- Examples of innovative projects include blockchain-based peer-to-peer rooftop solar, digital solutions, smart building materials, and systems for managing rooftop solar with battery storage.
- Each project can last a maximum of 18 months and can receive up to 60% of the total project cost, capped at ₹30 crore.
- The National Institute for Solar Energy (NISE) will implement the scheme.
- The PM Surya Ghar scheme aims to increase solar rooftop capacity and allow residential households to generate their own electricity.
- Launched on February 29, 2024, the scheme has a budget of ₹75,021 crore and will run until FY 2026-27.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that 1.3 crore families have registered for the scheme, with 3.75 lakh homes having installed rooftop solar since March.
- The scheme offers subsidized rooftop solar installation, with a maximum subsidy of ₹78,000 per household.
- Unlike previous schemes, applicants can choose their vendors online and access subsidized loans from banks for installation.