Opinion

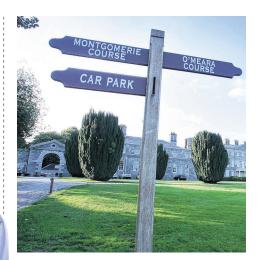
Thursday, August 28, 2025 €2.60 (£1.90 Northern Ireland)

FIRST-ROUND OFFERS 2025 EIGHT-PAGE SUPPLEMENT

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L Travis Kelce proposed, the crowd went wild. And now, the two great themes of Taylor Swift's lyrical universe-love and limelight-have come together in holy matrimony **Finn McRedmond**



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Growing FF expectation Gavin will seek Áras nomination

Prospect of former Dublin manager's candidacy warmly received in party

Hanafin 'encouraged' by response after she declared her interest in running

PATLEAHY Political Editor

There is a growing expectation in Fianna Fáil that former Dublin football manager Jim Gavin will seek a nomination to contest the presidential election for the party.

Sources at several levels of the party said yesterday that although there has been no confirmation from Mr Gavin or party headquarters that his name will be put forward, they expect he will enter the race.

The prospect of Mr Gavin's candidacy has been warmly received at all party levels. Although Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin has not declared his hand, several party sources believe Mr Gavin's pohave advanced to this stage—the coming weeks. without the Taoiseach's tacit

Furthermore, sources said Mr Gavin's meticulous nature have allowed his potential candidacy to proceed without careful planning and consider-

"This is not something that was thought up at the last minute," one senior source said.

One person who has been involved in internal discussions said it would be accurate to say Mr Gavin was giving the issue 'serious consideration".

Another person with a similar involvement used the same phrase, but stressed there had been no confirmation of Mr Gavin's intentions.

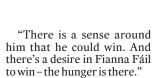
Mr Gavin has previously declined to comment and did not respond to messages yester-

'Hunger

However, the sense of expectation he will be a candidate has grown in the party in recent

days.
"I would be surprised if he is not in there," one person adjacent to internal discussions on the issue said.

"It certainly seems to be going down well," one TD said. "He ticks a lot of Fianna Fáil's boxes-the GAA, he's an Army officer who served with the UN, he has shown concerns about disadvantage.



Another TD, from Dublin, said: "Do I like the idea of canvassing for Jim Gavin? Yes."

One Minister spoke highly of Mr Gavin and noted "he'd have denied it by now if it wasn't happening". Another Minister sounded

similar note, saying: "It's been three days now and he hasn't denied it, so I presume he's interested.'

Selection process

Several members of the parliamentary party and other party sources said they would welcome Mr Gavin's candidacy, but said they expected there tential candidacy would not would be a selection process in

It is expected Mr Martin ly, perhaps this weekend, though no meeting of the parwas such that he would not liamentary party has been organised as yet.

Mr Martin has said he would set out his approach at the end of summer.

There is expected to be a handful of candidates contesting the selection process.

Former minister Mary Hanafin wrote to members of the parliamentary party yesterday, saying she had been very encouraged by the response and encouragement of the people I met" since declaring her interest in seeking the Fianna Fáil nomination.

There was also speculation about the intentions of MEP Billy Kelleher, though several TDs confessed to relying on media reports to know what was happening. "The circle is so tight," one senior TD said.

There was a blow for Independent candidate Catherine Connolly yesterday, however, when former Labour leader Alan Kelly said he would neither nominate nor vote for her, despite the party promising to support her bid to become president.

"She has shown disdain for us since 2006," he said.

Presidential election could define next era for Sinn Féin: page 2



Learning curve First day for junior infants

Arya (5) with parents Eeshita Ray Singh Mumon and Pragya Singh on the first day in the classroom for junior infants at Hansfield Educate Together National School in Ongar, northwest Dublin, vesterday.

Report: page 3 Photograph: Alan Betson

'Deeply unfair' college random selection criticised

JACK WHITE

The random selection process mand were allocated using ranhas again been criticised as "deeply unfair" after some students who achieved maximum points in their Leaving Cert lost some top-performing appliout on their first preferences for college courses yesterday.

In all, 51 per cent of third-level applicants received their first tral Applications Office (CAO), one of their top three college

However, places on 25 level-eight courses in high dedom selection. Two of these courses required the maximum 625 points for entry, meaning cants missed out while others

These two courses at Trinity College Dublin, which resorted choice following the initial to using the lottery system for round of offers from the Cen-six courses, were Dental Science and its degree in Manage-Systems Studies.

Despite expectations among tially a lucky dip. It doesn't truly

some in the sector that lower- reflect the ability, effort or poing grade inflation might reduce the use of random selection, there was no change in the number of courses using it.

Preston Ó Caoimh, president of the Irish Second-Level Students' Union, described the process as "deeply unfair", saying it had caused "ongoing concerns" for students in the lead-up to the State exams.

"Students can work tirelessly to achieve the points needed for their course, only to see their hopes dashed by what is essen- scribed random selection as a the lottery system was unfortu-

tential of the student just as many feel the Leaving Cert itself doesn't," he said.

Trinity said the downward adjustment in grade inflation this year was "offset by a significant increase in demand", with points rising by an average of 9.6. The number of CAO applicants overall jumped 7 per cent to 89,347, up from 83,543 in

Trinity vice-provost Orla "cruel arbiter", said while the nate. "It is worth considering

ing Certificate grades was welcome, "it is regrettable that the effects of this gradual unwinding will continue for a number of years to come. There is really no fair way of solving the prob-

lem when students present on equal marks". Prof Peter McHugh, interim president of the University of lection for four courses includ- at the moment." ing Medicine and General Nurssaid the continued use of

reduction in the uplift in Leav- whether there could be Hla-b and H2a-b [grades] and whether this would help create a distinction between candidates on

Minister for Further Education James Lawless said the random selection process was very fair". He added: "It's not desirable, it's not preferable, but as a lottery system it's proba-Galway, which used random se- bly the least-worst way to do it

> keep rising: Brian Mooney, page 3

Suspected case of trafficking involved forced organ removal

KITTY HOLLAND Social Affairs Correspondent

A suspected case of human trafficking for forced organ removal is highlighted in a report published today.

It is among 162 cases of human trafficking identified between 2022 and 2024, according to the monitoring report from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

The latest figure marks a 30 per cent increase on the preceding three years, when 124 victims were identified.

The number of child trafficking victims has increased by more than 50 per cent in six years despite a context of 'chronically low rates of identification of child victims", the report warned.

Of the most recent cohort of victims, 20 were children, compared with nine in the preced-

quent reasons for people being trafficked were for sexual exploitation at 62 per cent, labour exploitation at 28 per cent and forced criminal activities at 9 per cent.

"In the reporting period, there was one case of suspected trafficking for organ removal," said the report.

Sexual exploitation

"The data indicates that trafficking for sexual exploitation has remained the most often identified form of exploitation and that it is increasing steadily from year to year."

Anecdotal information also suggests trafficking for forced marriages and exploitative surrogacy, it added.

The majority of child and adult victims were women or girls, with 43 male and 119 female. There are also ongoing

ing three years. The most fre- concerns that not all child victims are being identified as minors, while those taken into Tusla's care are not always kept safe from traffickers.

Reports of migrant girls in care homes being targeted for sexual exploitation are cited. "Evidence shows that the accommodation of children in State care institutions is associated with risks of exploitation and human trafficking," said the report.

Separated and unaccompanied children whose age is in dispute-typically aged between 15 and 17-"are some of the groups most vulnerable to trafficking",

The commission draws on data provided "by State agencies and public bodies engaged in the trafficking response" for its regular reports to the Council of Europe group of experts on action against trafficking.

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two children and wound ed 17 other people when he opened fire on tioning after the death of | students attending Mass at a Minneapolis school.

Business + Innovation + **Technology**

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