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Face masks back again amid surge in upper respiratory tract infections

Hyderabad: The ongoing season of upper respiratory tract infections like influenza, viral fevers and pneumonia has forced doctors and staff to not only start wearing masks in hospitals but also advise the patients and their attendants do the same. While the present onset of viral fevers is not as dire as the time when Covid-19 was at its peak and masks were mandatory, these days, as a precautionary measure, a considerable number of individuals have started wearing masks to avoid air-borne transmission. On its part, the Directorate of Public Health (DPH), Telangana has urged people to guard themselves against air-borne infections like viral fevers, Conjunctivitis and influenza by strictly following cough etiquette.

Bengal, UP, Bihar, Maharashtra... more efforts to hide crime than provide justice: Rahul Gandhi on Badlapur 'sexual abuse'



GNS News Agency, August 21

Badlapur sexual assault case Rahul Gandhi in his post questioned why the first step to deliver justice was not taken until the public came out on the streets demanding justice. (Express Photo by Sankhadeep Banerjee) Days after two four-year-old school children were allegedly sexually assaulted in Thane district's Badlapur area, Rahul Gandhi Wednesday voiced his concern over how efforts were reportedly being made in such cases to hide the crime than provide justice. Drawing attention towards such cases of sexual abuse across the country, the senior Congress leader said: "After West Bengal, UP, Bihar, the shameful crimes against daughters in Maharashtra also force us to think where are we heading as a society? After the crime against two innocent people in Badlapur, the first step to give them justice was not taken until the public came out on the streets

demanding justice. Will we now have to protest to even register an FIR?" He added: "Why has it become so difficult for victims to even go to the police station? More efforts are made to hide crime than to provide justice, the biggest victims of which are women and people of weaker sections. Not filing an FIR not only discourages the victims but also encourages the criminals. All governments, citizens and political parties will have to seriously brainstorm on what steps should be taken to provide a safe environment to women in the society. Justice is the right of every citizen; he cannot be made dependent on the will of the police and administration." Two girls were sexually assaulted allegedly by a cleaning staff member on August 12 and 13 in the washroom of the school in Badlapur. There was reportedly a delay in responding to the crime by the police before they filed the FIR on August 16 and arrested the accused. The school had hired him on a contractual basis. After the alleged crime, parents have been demanding stricter safety measures and better supervision to prevent such incidents in the future, and residents have been demanding more stringent action against the accused. This also comes close to the alleged rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital. A doctor in Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad district was arrested for allegedly raping a 20-year-old Dalit nurse who worked at his hospital on August 17. Another sexual assault case was reported in Bihar where six people have been booked for gangrape and murder after the maimed body of a Dalit teenager was found in a village in Muzaffarpur district.

I do not own a farmhouse, clarifies KTR



GNS News Agency, August 21

Hyderabad: Dismissing accusations being made by the Congress party, BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Wednesday made it clear that he did not own a farmhouse that was built in violation of buffer zone norms or conditions laid down to prevent construction in full tank level (FTL) limits. Talking to media persons at Telangana Bhavan, he said he had taken a farmhouse that belonged to one of his friends on lease. If any sort of violations were found in its construction, he said he would come forward to support its demolition.

"My friend may curse me lifelong for having said so," he said, adding that he would not however back out from the move and that he had nothing to hide. "My affidavit on properties is a public document," Rama Rao said, adding that in case of any violations on his part, the government could act against him. "But let us start with Ministers who own properties that are built in violation of buffer zone norms," he said, seeking to know what action would be taken against similar properties owned by Congress leaders in power including Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and his brother. Offering to show a similar property owned by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and to share satellite pictures of the same with the media, Rama Rao said Congress leaders such as KVP Ramchandra Rao, Legislative Council chairman Gutha Sukhender Reddy, Patnam Mahender Reddy, Madhu Yashki Goud and others too owned such properties. Even Congress MLA and V6 channel owner G Vivek owned a guest house and farmhouse which were very much surrounded by the lake, he said, asking the V6 channel to shoot pictures of the property and ensure that it was demolished. Being an MLA, Vivek should also take initiative in this matter, he said, adding that chances were that it would not be demolished as Vivek would protect it.

Union minister Jitan Manjhi backs SC sub-quotas, creamy layer, warns of a stir

GNS News Agency, August 21

TAKING a stand contrary to fellow Dalit leader from Bihar and NDA ally Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) president Chirag Paswan on the issue of SC/ST sub-categorisation, Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) chief and Union minister Jitan Manjhi has backed the same saying that a lion's share of quota beneficiaries right now come from "affluent" sections among the Scheduled Castes. Manjhi has also threatened to hold a rally with 18 of the 22 SC sub-groups identified in the Bihar caste survey if the Centre does not implement the August 1 Supreme Court ruling authorising states to carry out sub-categorisation of SCs and Scheduled Tribes (STs) for the purpose of reservations.

"We demand a 10% quota for 18 sub-groups from the state and Central governments. If our demands are not conceded, we will call a big rally in Patna soon," the former Bihar CM said on Tuesday at an event attended by members of the Musahar, Bhuiyan, Dom, Turi, Rajwar and other "poor" SC communities. Manjhi claimed that as per a rough estimate, "affluent SCs comprise 95% of the beneficiaries that avail the quota". The BJP has maintained silence over the Supreme Court ruling dealing with sub-categorisation, only coming forward to oppose the Court's suggestion that the creamy layer be excluded from the quota. Apart from demanding that the sub-categorisation be implemented, Manjhi has demanded that the creamy layer be kept out of quota benefits. While Manjhi belongs to the Musahar community, which is among the most deprived among the Dalits, the LJP is seen as a representative of the Paswans, a relatively better-off group.

The 2022-23 Bihar caste survey said that 22 Dalit sub-groups make up 19.65% of the state's population, of which Dusadhs (Paswans) and allied castes comprise 5.3% and Mochis, Ravidas, Rohidas and Chamkars collectively 5.2%. The HAM(S) chief has been trying to consolidate a majority of the remaining SC sub-groups - roughly 9% of the SC population - including the Musahars, Pans, Sawasis and Panars (1.7%), Pasis (0.9%), Bhuiyans



(0.8%), Dhobis/ Rajaks (0.8%), Choupals (0.5%), Rajvars (0.27%), Doms (0.2%), Mehtars (0.19%), Bantar (0.14%), Nats (0.08%) and other sub-groups with even lesser populations. The survey also showed that 42.93% of the families among the SCs have a monthly income of less than Rs 6,000. They include more than half of the Musahar, Bhuiyan, Dom, Bhogta and Kanjar families. The numbers are 49.06% and 46.93% for Nat and Rajvar families respectively. In comparison, said the survey, 39.36% and 42.06% of families are "poor" among Dusadhs and the leather-working community respectively. In education, only 11.1% of SCs have passed Class 10 while only 0.28% of them are graduates. In the past too, Manjhi, the lone HAM(S) MP in the Lok Sabha, has been at loggerheads with the LJP, particularly its late patron Ram Vilas Paswan, over SC quota. Chirag, whose LJP (RV), is a bigger stakeholder in the NDA with five MPs, had expressed his concerns over the Supreme Court ruling to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and expressed his gratitude when the government distanced itself from the creamy layer exclusion suggestion. "The Prime Minister has assured that the reservation provisions made by Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar will remain the same. There will be no tampering with the reservations. After the Supreme Court's decision, my party also expressed its strong opposition to this decision. In such a situation, we express gratitude for this historic decision of the Prime Minister," he posted on X.

Hyderabad witnesses four deaths in a day due to motorcycles skidding on bad roads

Hyderabad: In the middle of the rainy season, road accidents attributed to skidding of two wheelers on the roads are being increasingly reported in the city.

In a recent incident, three persons were killed when their bike skidded at Bandlaguda Chandrayangutta. In another accident, at Shamshabad, a painter died after his motorcycle skidded. In all four people who were on two wheelers died in a single day and both the accidents were attributed to the two wheelers skidding on the roads.

PM Modi arrives in Warsaw on first leg of two-nation visit to Poland and Ukraine

GNS News Agency, August 21

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday (August 21, 2024) arrived in Poland on the first leg of his two-nation visit during which he will also travel to the Ukrainian capital Kyiv and share perspectives with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict. Prime Minister Modi's visit to Poland is the first trip by an Indian Prime Minister to the country in the past 45 years. During his stay in Poland, Mr. Modi will meet President Andrzej Sebastian Duda and hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Donald Tusk. "My visit to Poland comes as we mark 70 years of our diplomatic relations. Poland is a key economic partner in Central Europe," he said. "Our mutual commitment to democracy and pluralism further reinforces our relationship. I look forward to meeting my friend Prime Minister Donald Tusk and President Andrzej Duda to further advance our partnership," Mr. Modi said in his departure statement earlier in the day. "I will also engage with the members of the vibrant Indian community in Poland," Mr. Modi said. Mr. Modi's discussions with the Polish leadership during his visit will allow the two sides to exchange views at the top level on a variety of subjects and it will be a kind of real "useful exchange" of views, Indian Ambassador to Poland Nagma Mohamed Mallick told PTI Videos in Warsaw.

From Warsaw, Mr. Modi will travel to Kyiv on the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Ukraine since the country became independent in 1991. "From Poland, I will be visiting Ukraine at the invitation of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This is the first-ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Ukraine," he said. "I look forward to the opportunity to build upon earlier conversations with President Zelenskyy on strengthening bilateral cooperation and share perspectives on peaceful resolution of the ongoing Ukraine conflict," he said. "As a friend and partner, we hope for an early return of peace and stability in the region," he added. Mr. Modi said he was confident that his visit to Warsaw and Kyiv "will serve as a natural continuation of extensive contacts with the two countries and help create the foundation for stronger and more vibrant relations in the years ahead." The Prime Minister will travel to Kyiv from Poland in a 'Rail Force One' train that will take around 10 hours. The return trip will also be of the same duration. Mr. Modi's visit to Kyiv comes nearly six weeks after his high-profile trip to Moscow which triggered criticism from the US and some of its Western allies. India has not yet condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and has been calling for resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. Mr. Modi will be visiting Ukraine at the invitation of President Zelenskyy. This visit will be an opportunity to build on the earlier discussions with him and deepening the India-Ukraine friendship. We will also share perspectives on the peaceful resolution of the ongoing Ukraine...



Badlapur protest politically motivated to defame MahaYuti govt, claims CM Eknath Shinde



GNS News Agency, August 21

Mumbai: The protest that led to rail roko against the sexual abuse of two four-year-old girls in reputed Badlapur school is politically motivated, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde alleged on Wednesday, claiming that the involvement of locals was limited while a lot of people were brought in from outside. He targeted the opposition saying that Tuesday's protest was to defame the MahaYuti government.

"The seven to eight-hour protest in Badlapur was politically motivated. It unfortunately caused hardship to lakhs of railway passengers which should not have happened. People came from outside as they were brought in vehicles. Everything is visible in the CCTV footage. The state minister (Girish Mahajan) explained to the protesters and accepted all the demands. Still, they weren't backing down. They wanted to defame the government.

CM fails to keep sacred oath; Harish Rao to perform special puja seeking forgiveness



GNS News Agency, August 21

Hyderabad: Senior BRS legislator and former Minister T Harish Rao will perform a special puja at the Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple in Yadadri on Thursday and seek forgiveness for the people of the State since Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had failed to complete the implementation of the loan waiver on August 15 as he had taken a sacred oath to do so. He would also participate in the State-wide protests being organised by the BRS at Alair to hold the State government responsible for its failures to implement the crop loan waiver. In a statement, Harish Rao slammed Revanth Reddy for his failure to implement the farm loan waiver completely by August 15. Revanth Reddy had taken an oath in the name

of Sri Lakshmi Narsimha Swamy and then failed to keep it. "We will visit the Yadadri temple tomorrow, along with BRS leaders, to seek divine intervention for the well-being of the people of Telangana," he stated. He would also seek the Lord's forgiveness for the false oath taken by the Chief Minister.

Jay Shah likely to replace Greg Barclay as ICC Chairman, says The Age reports

GNS News Agency, August 21

New Delhi: Jay Shah is one of the most powerful people in cricket and his tenure as BCCI General Secretary Jay Shah has seen India further establish their grip as the most powerful board in the sport. It now seems that Shah is likely to be named as the Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Current chair Greg Barclay announced his intentions to step down from his post through a video conference amidst a 4.46 billion dollar dispute between the governing body and its major broadcast rights holder Star as reported by The Age.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Sickening Beyond Words

The region is also careening toward all-out war as the world awaits Iran's expected military response to Israel's most recent assassination campaign. Edward Ahmed Mitchell, national deputy director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), said Wednesday that "by approving another massive shipment of arms to the far-right Israeli government, the Biden administration is pouring gasoline on a fire that could engulf millions across the region"

The Biden administration on Tuesday approved roughly \$20 billion in additional US-made weapons for Israel's military as the death toll from its catastrophic assault on Gaza neared 40,000, with dozens killed over the past 24 hours in Israeli attacks across the besieged enclave. The pending sale includes dozens of F-15 fighter jets, tens of thousands of 120mm mortar shells, over 32,700 tank shells, and 30 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles. The Biden administration notified Congress of the sale on Tuesday, prompting calls for lawmakers to block the latest weapons transfer as US-backed Israeli atrocities in Gaza mount. Both chambers of Congress are currently on August recess. "The Senate should introduce a Joint Resolution of Disapproval to block the sale of F-15 fighter jets, related munitions, and other arms to Israel, a package which, if executed, would be in violation of US and international laws," Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN) said in a statement Tuesday. Josh Paul, a senior adviser to DAWN who resigned from the U.S. State Department last year over the Biden administration's arming of Israel, said that "the people of Gaza are pleading for food and medicine as Israel continues to rebuff the Biden administration's pleas to ramp down its deliberate bombardment of civilians and allow aid to reach the starving population."

From backing wrestlers to supporting farmers, how Congress plans to pin BJP in Haryana

GNS News Agency, August 21
On Saturday, Rohtak MP Depender Hooda led a massive roadshow from the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) to Haryana to welcome Olympian Vinesh Phogat. The move, along with a few others that the party has zeroed in on, is being seen as the Congress' attempt to aggressively corner the BJP ahead of the October 1 Assembly polls.

"The people of Haryana are eagerly waiting for October 1 as they are not able to tolerate this non-performing (BJP) government even for a day. October chaar, BJP Haryana se bahar (On October 4, BJP will be out)," former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda Phogat, along with fellow wrestlers like Sakshi Malik, Anshu Malik and Bajrang Punia, has caused massive heartburn to the BJP and has been the face of the protest against the alleged sexual harassment of former Wrestling Federation of India chief and ex-BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

Phogat also seems to have united warring factions in the Congress too with several leaders including the Hoodas, Rajya Sabha MP Randeep Singh Surjewala and Sira MP Kumari Selja publicly backing the wrestlers in their protest and also have demanded that Phogat be treated on par with an Olympic gold medalist. Hooda has gone as far as to say he would have ensured a Rajya Sabha berth for the wrestler if he had the numbers. On the other hand, the Nayab Singh Saini government had recently announced that Phogat would be treated on par with a silver medalist but the perks associated with it are likely to be put on hold as the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is in force.

The Congress' renewed aggression comes in the backdrop of its increased vote share in the recent Lok Sabha elections, where it garnered 43% of the votes, up from the 28% it got in 2019. It also opened its account in the state after 10 years, winning five of the 10 Lok Sabha seats on offer. Another issue that the Congress is likely to target the BJP is the farmers' demand for a legal guarantee on Minimum Support Price (MSP). Even as the state government recently announced procurement of all 24 crops on MSP, farmers did not seem to be impressed and termed the move a "political stunt". Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi met farmer leaders from Haryana and five other states on July 24 to hear out their issues even as Bhupinder Hooda has extended support to the protesting farmers.

The BJP, which faced backlash from the farmers in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls, too seems to be doing its bit to placate the "angry" community. Last week, the Saini government released the first instalment of the Rs 525-crore bonus for nearly 5.2 lakh farmers. The Rs 2,000 per acre aid was announced for the sowing of Kharif crops following a deficit in the southwest monsoon this year.

The Congress has also taken a tough stand against the Agnipath scheme with Gandhi repeatedly promising to scrap it during the Lok Sabha campaign. "It is because of the Agnipath scheme that youth of the state are not joining the army. Earlier, around 5,500 youth were recruited but through Agnipath, the numbers have gone down to 900, of which only 200 would remain permanent after four years. Where would the remaining go? They will only add to the thousands of unemployed youth," Bhupinder Hooda, who comes from a family of freedom fighters and is an alumnus of the Sainik School, Kunjpura, said. Last month, the state government announced 10% horizontal reservation for Agniveers in recruitment for constables, mining guards, forest guards, jail wardens and special police officers (SPO) but the first eligible batch will come out only in 2026. Like the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls, unemployment is likely to dominate the campaign for the Assembly elections too. The state government's recent recruitment drives, including the "employment guarantee" through the Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam, are likely to be stalled due to the MCC. Since the change of guard in the state and its dismal Lok Sabha performance in the state, the BJP government has announced a slew of welfare schemes, some in contrast to the Manohar Lal Khattar regime. Since assuming charge just ahead of the Lok Sabha polls in March, the Saini government has given more financial powers to sarpanches, rectified processes to disburse social security benefits and given MSP to farmers among others

Poet pens memoirs of brother killed in 1962 war



GNS News Agency, August 21

There is a memory that poet and writer Madhavi Natekar has not written in any of her books, including the new one about her brother, the late Lt Vishnu Nilakantha Athalye who was killed in the battle of Walong in 1962 during the India-China war. "In our community in Maharashtra, there was no celebration of Raksha Bandhan when I was growing up. I was studying at Fergusson College in 1962 and saw my room partner and others sending rakhis to their brothers. I thought that I will send one as well to my brother. He got the rakhi and wrote a letter that he was very happy because everybody used to get rakhis and he was the only person who did not," says Natekar. The new book, Shura Mi Vandile, has been written by Akola-based Satish Ambhaikar in association with Madhavi Natekar. The book launch took place in Sangli and Pune, with copies distributed at the National Defence Academy, the alma mater of Athalye. 1962

war memoir As the book narrates, Athalye never returned from the battlefield.

As the book narrates, Athalye never returned from the battlefield. Instead, on December 17, 1962, the family received a telegram from the Indian Army that informed them that Athalye was missing. "As per the rule, after two months, there was a letter announcing his death. One day, all his belongings came to our house in Akola Jathar Peth," says Natekar. He was 21. Walong, located on the banks of the Lohit River in the Lohit Valley of Arunachal Pradesh, holds the distinction of being the easternmost town in India. During the Sino-Indian War, Walong became the site of one of the war's fiercest confrontations. It was the site where great acts of courage and valour were displayed by Indian soldiers against the Chinese army. Ambhaikar used to cycle through the road, named Martyr VN Athalye Road, where the family bungalow stood. "An alcohol shop had come up there and the people who came were littering the area. Ambhaikar was moved and tried to contact the civic body but with no response. At last, he decided to search for Athalye's relatives and this led to his contacting me and the book began to be born," says Natekar. The process of writing the book is unusual — Ambhaikar would ask questions and Natekar would write answers on paper and courier it to him. "We did not know him but he carried out this major project for our family," says Natekar. For the family, the last days of the brave soldier are captured in his final letters in which he wrote from Andhra Pradesh "that the scenery is very green, there are lots of waterfalls....".

Rohtak PGIMS doctor expelled for kidnapping and torturing medical student, arrested



Dr Maninder Kaushik On August 17, a first-year BDS student accompanied by her parents lodged a complaint of physical assault against Dr Maninder Kaushik. Amid protests against the rape and murder of a doctor at a Kolkata medical college, the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS) in Haryana's Rohtak has expelled a resident doctor who allegedly kidnapped and assaulted a medical student. He has also been arrested. "As approved by the competent authorities, Dr. Maninder Kaushik, PG student of MD Anatomy course batch 2023 is hereby expelled from Pt. BD Sharma PGIMS, Rohtak. His entry to the UHSR/PGIMS, Rohtak is debarred," read a circular issued by the PGIMS director on Sunday.

On August 17, a first-year BDS student accompanied by her parents lodged a complaint of physical assault against Dr Kaushik. "I am a 1st-year BDS student at PGI Rohtak. I am writing to share a disturbing and traumatic experience that took place on the 16th and 17th of August. Over the past seven months, a senior PG Anatomy student, Dr. Maninder Kaushik, has been stalking me. What began as a seemingly friendly interaction soon escalated into something much more sinister. He persistently pressured me to enter into a relationship, and when I refused, he became violent," the complainant wrote.

She added, "For the past two months, I have been living in fear as he constantly harassed and blackmailed me. He threatened to ensure I would fail Anatomy and even withheld my admit card, using it as leverage to force me into meeting him." On the night of the 16th of August, he called me outside the college library, promising he would stop troubling me and hand over my admit card. However, when I arrived, he forced me into his car, violently attacked me, and drove me to an unknown location. For nearly 12 hours, from 11 PM on the 16th until 1 PM on the 17th, he subjected me to extreme physical and emotional abuse. He kicked, punched, and tortured me with a knife, leaving marks all over my body, including my face. I was finally released back on campus, where I immediately called my parents and filed a complaint. "Despite this, no serious action has been taken against him. I'm left questioning how someone like him could be allowed into a medical college in the first place. I want justice for what I've endured, and I am determined to make sure no one else has to suffer in the same way." Inspector Roshan Lal, in charge of the PGIMS police post, confirmed that Dr Kaushik was arrested on the BDS student's complaint.

A doctor at the PGIMS told The Indian Express, "On the evening of August 17-18, a student had levelled allegations on Maninder Kaushik alleging physical assault. She also alleged that Kaushik kept her confined in his custody and made her roam around in the car for nearly 12 hours and then kept her in his wrongful confinement at an unknown location. He has been arrested in this case. But, it is only one side of the story because only the student's version has come to light. There is no version available from Kaushik's side so far." "Kaushik used to blackmail her and was threatening to fail her in her exams. He had also snatched away her admit card and was continuously harassing and torturing her. On August 16th and 17th, he even physically assaulted her. She had got bruises all over her body due to the assault," another doctor at the PGIMS told The Indian Express.

For Vivek Shanbhag, Kannada has been a language that absorbs

GNS News Agency, August 21

In a city like Bengaluru, one has to look around the older streets to find a place frequented by the great Kannada writers. However, Kannada literature is not solely a thing of nostalgia, and with writers like Vivek Shanbhag, these works are now gaining an audience worldwide. One of his novels, Ghachar Ghochar, translated into English, has received international acclaim. Growing up in and around Ankola, Shanbhag credits a strong reading habit and ready access to books with his tryst with writing which began when he was 16.

Recalling the first time he came to this city, he says, "I came to Bangalore in 1982 when my parents came here... I come from North Canara (Uttara Kannada), near Karwar. For people from the coast, 'the city' was not Bangalore. It was not a big city... People did not come here to seek jobs but went to Mumbai. Even in Kannada literature, it was always Bombay. Hardly any books made Bangalore a character, although one of the first novels in Kannada was set in Bangalore". Although not all of Shanbhag's works are set in the city, Ghachar Ghochar has Bengaluru as its backdrop. "I needed a background where there is rapid development and Bangalore was ideal... The way the economy is growing, I felt that all those things were represented in Bangalore ... where you place a story is very important. It can draw a lot of strength from the background. It must be there but not be very obvious," he says. The coffee shop that forms a large part of the novel's setting has some aspects of the Indian Coffee House and Koshy's. But Shanbhag says there is no single, physical space in fiction which can correspond exactly to reality. "What the city is - is multicultural and multi-lingual. It does not have its own unwritten rules like Bombay. So many languages are alive in the city which you might not see in Delhi, for example. Here, you can manage with English, Hindi, Tamil, and Malayalam if you are lucky, and Telugu works everywhere else. Even in Kannada literature, so many writers have had mother tongues in other languages. Masti lyengar spoke Tamil at home, (Girish) Karnad spoke Konkani... Kannada has been a language that absorbs," says Shanbhag who speaks Konkani.

Shanbhag, who has written several novels and short story collections apart from three plays, says the only language he can write in is Kannada. "Kannada is also the language of the street. It is very important for the writer



to write in the language of the street. Kannada is a language that has over 1000 years of an unbroken literary tradition. It is a language that has absorbed the ups and downs, various empires, and religions," he says. Ghachar Ghochar and Sakina's Kiss have been translated by Srinath Perur into English, bringing them to a wider audience beyond the Kannada-speaking world. "The experience of reading in a language is confined to that language. However, there is an effort made to bring this from one language to another, which is where all the skill and effort of translation is — not just the meaning, but the unsaid," says Shanbhag. "You need to have that imagination and imaginative about language to translate, and Srinath has that. He has translated one more work, Ooru Bhangha, which will be out next year," the author said of his novel which was originally published in Kannada in 2015.

The image of a writer doing nothing but writing would seem to be fiction. An engineer by training, Shanbhag worked at the aerospace and defence company Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Unilever, the consumer goods giant, all over the world for over two decades — moving to full-time writing in the past 10 years or so. "There are maybe two or three writers in Indian languages who can make a career out of writing alone. I do feel I have benefited by working in another profession and meeting people of different kinds with different worldviews. It also gave me the freedom to write when and what I want," he says. For young writers in Bengaluru and beyond, Vivek Shanbhag has one piece of advice. "Read a lot. Especially, if you are in Bangalore, as the experience of a city is of a different kind. In a city, people live mainly with their kind of people... Reading is a must to know the craft and to expand your own worldviews."

Discarded tyres turned into planters, Ludhiana's public spots undergo green makeover



GNS News Agency, August 21

The business and industrialist community of Ludhiana is often blamed for their contribution to giving a bad name to the city, which has got the tag of being among the "most polluted" in the country, but there is change in the air as some of the businessmen appear to be redeeming themselves by doing their bit for the environment and beautification of the city. In the past few months, the residents of Ludhiana have witnessed a welcome change when it comes to beautification and maintenance of public spots which were earlier lying barren and empty. They are now a fine instance of how industrialists and businessmen of Ludhiana can give back to their city, not by spending lakhs but simply using what was otherwise discarded. Ludhiana In the past few months, the residents of Ludhiana have witnessed a welcome change when it comes to beautification and maintenance of public spots which were earlier lying barren and empty. A small island near Aarti Chowk in the city has been beautified by using discarded tyres. The tyres have been converted into planters, and flowering plants in different hues have been placed at the spot. Cut-outs of Punjabi alphabets have been placed along to promote mother tongue. Similarly, at another site in BRS Nagar, tyre planters, painted in bright yellow and red, have brought to life the spot which had otherwise been lying lifeless for decades. This change in the city is an initiative taken by Bikramjit Singh Madhok (50), a businessman dealing in tyres, who developed a passion for converting discarded tyres into planters. In a tie-up with Ludhiana Municipal Corporation, he is beautifying such spots in the city by placing tyre planters.

Tyres are cut, re-shaped and painted in different colours before saplings are planted in them. Madhok says that it all started during a family trip to Switzerland more than a decade ago where he saw old discarded goods being used for beautification and that's when he started the experiment first at his own place. He first got some tyres converted into planters from a gardener, painted them in bright hues and placed them outside his own shop on Malhar Road. As saplings grew, turning the site into a soothing green view, he started getting appreciation from people who would cross the road.

Ludhiana green city Tyres are cut, re-shaped and painted in different colours before saplings are planted in them. "Soon we got more tyres converted into planters and started distributing them free of cost to the common man on our shop's anniversary," he says. Jasdev Singh Sekhon, Zonal Commissioner-D, Ludhiana MC, said Madhok was given responsibility of two sites — Aarti Chowk island and BRS Nagar. "They showed interest in maintaining both spots and paying for it out of their own pocket. Instead of discarding tyres or throwing them, they are doing a good job of planting saplings in them. Now both sites present a nice view for residents as well as those coming to our city from outside. Though it is just a beginning, we need more people to come forward and help us clean up the city which is infamous for pollution," said Sekhon. Madhok says that otherwise useless tyres are thrown in garbage, some even resort to burning them which leads to heavy air pollution. "We ensure to make some holes in tyres for proper drainage so that saplings don't die. It is our responsibility to water them every two days," he says, adding that his wife Rupinder Madhok has also undertaken a similar project at a park in Gurdev Nagar where tyre planters have been installed.

Face recognition system likely in govt schools to improve attendance

GNS News Agency, August 21

Face recognition system, attendance through Face recognition system, delhi govt schools, facial recognition technology, Indian express news The coming months will likely see pilot programmes and further discussions as Delhi's Education Department refines its approach. The Delhi government is likely to introduce facial recognition technology in schools in a bid to improve attendance of students. At a recent high-level meeting held on July 25, officials discussed plans to modernise school operations and improve transparency. The initiative comes as the city grapples with low student attendance at 65-70% — Director of Education RN Sharma who highlighted this in the meeting emphasised the need for "significant improvement", said sources. "Prioritising automation of student attendance using face recognition technology is crucial for improving accuracy and efficiency," a senior official said. The proposed measures include providing parents with monthly attendance updates and introducing regular tests (monthly and weekly) to keep students engaged. However, the tech-centric approach has drawn criticism from some educators. Ajay Kumar Choubey, Principal, Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya, Rouse Avenue, argues that the solution to attendance issues "cannot be administrative but should be pedagogical," especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. "These students come from backgrounds where many of their families or parents do not understand the importance of education. I do not think this problem can be solved by installing face recognition or by updating the parents on a monthly basis," he said. "There needs to be proper parental education too. We should think about creating a space in the school that would cater to the students and make them come to school happily," Choubey added. Meanwhile, the coming months will likely see pilot programmes and further discussions as Delhi's Education Department refines its approach. Referring to the face recognition technology, an official further underlined that "before rolling out the system to all schools, it needs to be tested in a few schools to evaluate its effectiveness and address any issues."

How Chandigarh turned its back on drug addicts and couples in distress



GNS News Agency, August 21

Neither the funds meant for welfare of drug addicts reached them nor the financial assistance for victims of inter-caste marriage reached them — this was found in the audit of the social welfare department of Chandigarh. The audit department while citing "blockade of funds due to non-implementation of NAPDDR Scheme of Rs 81.49 lakh" mentioned how the department kept sitting over the funds meant for the victims. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment had launched the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) on August 15, 2020, which is an umbrella scheme under which financial assistance is provided to 'State Governments/ Union Territory (UT) Administrations for Preventive Education, Awareness Generation, identification, counseling, treatment and rehabilitation of individuals, training and capacity building of the service providers through the collaboration of Central and state government and NGOs. "During test check of record of the Director, Social Welfare, Women and Child Development, UT, Chandigarh for the year 2021-23, it was noticed that the 12 components are admissible for providing the financial assistance to the beneficiaries by the Social Welfare Department under NAPDDR. However, the Director, Social Welfare had not provided any financial assistance for the treatment and rehabilitation, setting the quality standards, intervention in vulnerable areas, skill development, vocational training, accreditation for organizations, monitoring surveillance & evaluation and social audit, while the funds of Rs.81,49,992 (which is 81 lakh) was available as on 31.03.2022 as per the Bank statement.

Thus, the scheme is not being implemented properly while the funds for the scheme were available," the audit report specified. The department mentioned that "this has resulted in blockade of funds amounting to Rs 81.49 lakh, due to non-utilising the funds for various components of the scheme" and that it also forfeits the purpose for which NAPDDR Scheme was launched. The reasons for non-implementation of the NAPDDR scheme despite having availability of funds was called but no reply was furnished by the department.

PGI Chandigarh to curtail OPD services from today till further notice

GNS News Agency, August 21

The strike and protests by residents of PGIMER, GMCH-32, GMSH-16, Chandigarh, entered the 7th day Sunday, with the Faculty Association of PGI organising a candle march in the evening starting from New OPD to the protest area of the Bhargava lawns along with all associations, union of residents, students and employees. In the morning the residents conducted a walkathon at Sukhna Lake along with the faculty as part of their campaign to make the public aware of the reason for the strike, and urge people to raise their voices against the injustice and gruesome incident in Kolkata, where a young doctor was raped and killed on the campus of R G Kar Institute. The residents are demanding the immediate implementation of the Central Protection Act.

"We carried several posters, and placards and spoke to people walking here, making them aware that our protest and strike is for justice, and how we are so vulnerable at our workplaces and there is no law or act to protect us. While many were aware of the issue, some did not know the magnanimity of the situation, and it was purposeful to connect with a larger section of society," said a senior resident from PGI. The ARD PGI also released videos of residents doing their emergency duties and how patients are being taken care of in the ICUs and Emergency of the Institute, and in return, asking for support and a safe environment to work. The ARD at PGIMER Chandigarh will continue the indefinite strike. "We must remain strong and resolute in our stand," said Dr Hariharan A, president of PGI ARD. The Resident Doctor Association RG Kar Medical College, Kolkata, has expressed its appreciation and gratitude to the ARD, PGI for their solidarity in pursuit of justice, and for their support in safeguarding healthcare professionals. "As a prestigious institution of our nation, your support has been nothing short of invaluable during this difficult period. You have rightly emphasised that now is the time for our voices to be heard and for decisive action to be taken to ensure the protection of all of us. We ask that you continue to raise your voices alongside ours, ensuring that justice is served and that such atrocious acts never go unanswered. We stand together not just in mourning, but in defiance of a system that has too often failed to protect those who serve it.

We are resolute in our demand for justice, along

Delhi High Court overrules police on tattoo rejection; ensures the candidate's right to join Delhi police

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has stepped in to help a Delhi police constable candidate who has been turned away because of a "faded tattoo" on his right arm. The court has ordered the authorities to let him join the police force. The high court, which noted that the candidate has already undergone a surgery for the removal of the tattoo, asked him to appear before it and physically saw his right forearm. "We have physically seen the right forearm of the respondent (candidate) and from the naked eye, the tattoo is not even visible. The same has been shown to the counsel for the petitioners (authorities) and the officials who are present in court to assist the counsel.

"According to us, there is no clear visible tattoo on the forearm of the respondent. However, in place of the

The Director, Social Welfare, Women and Child Development, U.T, Chandigarh sanctioned Rs1,80,65,926 in favour of Indian Council for Child Welfare for the running of 50 creches for the year 2021-22. "During test check of record of Director, Social Welfare, Women and Child Development, UT, Chandigarh for the period 2021-23 related to the payments made to the Indian Council for Child Welfare, UT, Chandigarh for the period 2021-22, it was noticed that the Council incurred expenditure Rs 2,05,25,209 against the sanctioned grant of Rs 1,85,69,141 on creches," the audit team found. Further, the council was to utilise the grant funds of Rs 1.85 crore on 50 creches, but as per utilisation certificate submitted by the council two additional creches were added and their expenditure was met from the grant meant for 50 creches. It was found that the council had not got approval/regularised the excess expenditure from the Director Social Welfare to add on these two creches nor the Director, Social Welfare sought any clarification on the basis of utilisation certificates. This had not only led to inadmissible expenditure on additional two creches. But also an excess expenditure of Rs 24,59,283 was made by the council. On being pointed out in audit, no reply was furnished by the department. Non-payment of financial assistance under "Encouragement to Inter Caste Marriage Rs 5 lakh. As per notification in February, 2006 issued by the Secretary, social Welfare, Chandigarh Administration vide which Financial Assistance of an amount of Rs 25,000 (i.e. Rs.15000 in cash and Rs 10,000) will be given in the shape of fixed deposit in the joint account name of the married couple which shall not be redeemable before the expiry of 5 years. Later, the financial assistance amount was revised to Rs 2.50.000 issued by Director (SCD) Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment. During test check of record of Director, Social Welfare, U.T, Chandigarh for the period 2021-23, it was noticed that payment on account of financial assistance to eligible beneficiaries was not made during the period covered under audit to the victims. Scope of Social Welfare Dept Audit and Inspection Report on the accounts of the office of Director, Social Welfare, Women and Child Development Department, Town Hall Extension Building, Sector - 17, Chd. UT, Chandigarh for the period from 2021-22 to 2022-23 was carried out. The department is managing one Nari Niketan and many other institutions which are being run or managed through various government and non-government agencies. For the aged, scheme of Old Age Pension is being implemented and identity cards to senior citizen are also being issued by the department. An ex-gratia payment to the family of deceased government servants is also being released by the department along with the disbursement of pension under the scheme Old Age Pension, Pension to Disabled Persons, Pension to Widows and Destitute women and Financial Assistance to the Dependent Children of widow women is being made.



with the protection that every healthcare professional deserves," reads the letter. Meanwhile, given the continuation of the strike by the resident doctors in PGI, the OPD services will be run in a curtailed manner, from August 19 onwards till further notice. Registration of only follow-up (old) patients will be done from 8 to 9.30 am, and registration of new patients in the OPD will not be done till further notice. Emergency and trauma services, including critical care services, will function as usual. PGI PGI organising a candle march in the evening starting from New OPD to the protest area of the Bhargava lawns. (Express photo)

"Let's unite our voices for humanity" — this was the slogan given Sunday by the faculty, residents, interns and undergraduate students of GMCH-32. They organised a march and candlelight vigil from GMCH to the Terrace Garden to condemn the brutal incident in Kolkata. Due to the ongoing strike by resident doctors, the Outpatient Department (OPD) registration timing for patients will be curtailed from 8:00 am to 10:00 am, on Monday, August 19. Registration for patients will only be done during this specified time. However, emergency services will continue to function 24x7. The hospital in a statement has said that work is on to resolve the issue at the earliest and inconvenience caused to patients and their families due to this temporary arrangement is regretted. The Faculty Welfare Body of GMCH-32 has issued a letter stating that it is in total support of the residents against this brutal act and has declared a "Pen Down Strike" in support of residents on August 19 from 9 am to 11 am. Emergency services and care to patients will not be hampered.

tattoo there is visible very dim scar. Sometimes such types of scars are natural and therefore, the candidates cannot be rejected on that ground," Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Girish Kathpalia said in an order passed on July 24. The high court dismissed a plea by the Staff Selection Commission challenging an order of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) by which the candidate was granted relief. "It is also not the case of the petitioners that all the vacancies are already filled up since the basic training of the second batch has commenced from July 1, 2024. Accordingly, the petitioners are directed to allow the respondent to join the second batch for training within a week from the receipt of this order," it said. In September 2023, the candidate came across a notification for direct recruitment to the post of constable in Delhi Police and he applied for it.

Drought fears rise as 10 dams in north India face alarming water shortages



GNS News Agency, August 21

Dams across Northern India, including those in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Rajasthan, are having significantly lower water levels compared to the same period last year, even though the monsoon is at its peak. The 10 major reservoirs monitored by the Central Water Commission (CWC) in these states with a combined capacity of 19.663 billion cubic metres, currently hold only 51% of their total storage capacity. According to a report released by the CWC on Friday, the water levels in key reservoirs have not met expectations. For instance, the Pong Dam in Punjab is currently at 1,352.16 feet, a substantial drop from the 1,399 feet recorded at the same time last year. Last year's level was notably above the dam's designated upper limit of 1,390.20 feet. Similarly, the Bhakra Dam and Thien Dam are also reporting lower levels than those of the previous year.

The Bhakra Dam's water level stands at 1,629.50 feet this year, compared to 1,677.15 feet on August 16 last year, which was just below the dam's designated upper limit. In Northern India, there are 10 major reservoirs monitored by CWC, with a total live storage capacity of 19.663 billion cubic meters (BCM). As of August 16, 2024, these reservoirs collectively held 9.963 BCM, representing just 51% of their total capacity. In contrast, the storage level at this time last year was 88%, while the average storage over the past decade for this period was 71%. This year's storage is not only less than last year's

but also falls short of the normal storage levels for this time of year, with "normal storage" defined as the average over the past 10 years.

The CWC bulletin also reveals that while the overall storage position of dams across the country is better than last year, the situation in the northern region remains a cause for concern. Specifically, the filling levels of the 10 dams in this region show significant variation: one dam is between 71% and 81% full, four dams are between 51% and 68% full, and five dams are at 40% or below their full reservoir level (FRL). In Himachal Pradesh, which includes the Kol, Bhakra, and Pong dams, the storage levels have deviated by 27% from the normal. In Punjab, the Thien Dam has seen a 63% departure from normal storage levels. Dams in Rajasthan are showing a 20% deviation from normal levels. A comparison with last year's figures highlights a stark contrast. The Pong Dam was 100% full last year, the Bhakra Dam was 89% full, the Kol Dam was 48% full, and the Thien Dam was 84% full. Dams in Rajasthan were between 41% and 91% full last year. Experts have expressed concern over the current state of the dams, emphasising that with 40 days still remaining in the monsoon season, the reservoirs should be experiencing higher levels of filling. VK Gupta, an expert from the Power Department and spokesperson for the All India Power Engineers Federation, stressed the critical role of these dams in irrigation and power generation. "The monsoon season is crucial for filling these reservoirs to their designated levels. Insufficient water levels now could impact both power generation and irrigation in the coming months post-monsoon if the remaining monsoon period does not bring significant rainfall," Gupta warned. As a large area of the region continues to rely on these reservoirs for agricultural and energy needs, sufficient rainfall is also crucial for the paddy season in Punjab. Without adequate rains, there would be an increased reliance on groundwater to irrigate the water-intensive paddy crop, which is sown on 32 lakh hectares in Punjab alone. Meanwhile, in Punjab, the cumulative rainfall recorded from June 1 to August 17 is 204.6 mm, compared to the normal 310.5 mm, representing a 34% shortfall in the required rainfall for the state.

Atishi meets principals of 48 MCD schools after their leadership training at IIM-A



GNS News Agency, August 21

Atishi meets MCD school principals, leadership training at IIM-A, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, MCD Mayor Shelly Oberoi, MCD schools, Delhi government, education minister atishi, Indian express news Atishi with principals. Delhi Education Minister Atishi and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) Mayor Shelly Oberoi interacted with a group of 48 principals of MCD schools who returned to the Capital on Sunday after a five-day leadership training at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad. The Delhi government claimed the move to be aimed at providing "world-class exposure" to principals of MCD schools along the lines of the government schools in the city. Explaining the motive behind the initiative, the Education Minister's office quoted her, as saying, "Arvind Kejriwal believes that unless teachers get world-class exposure, they cannot provide world-class education to children. That is why we have sent the principals of MCD schools to IIM for training so that they get world-class training and then use it to improve their schools."

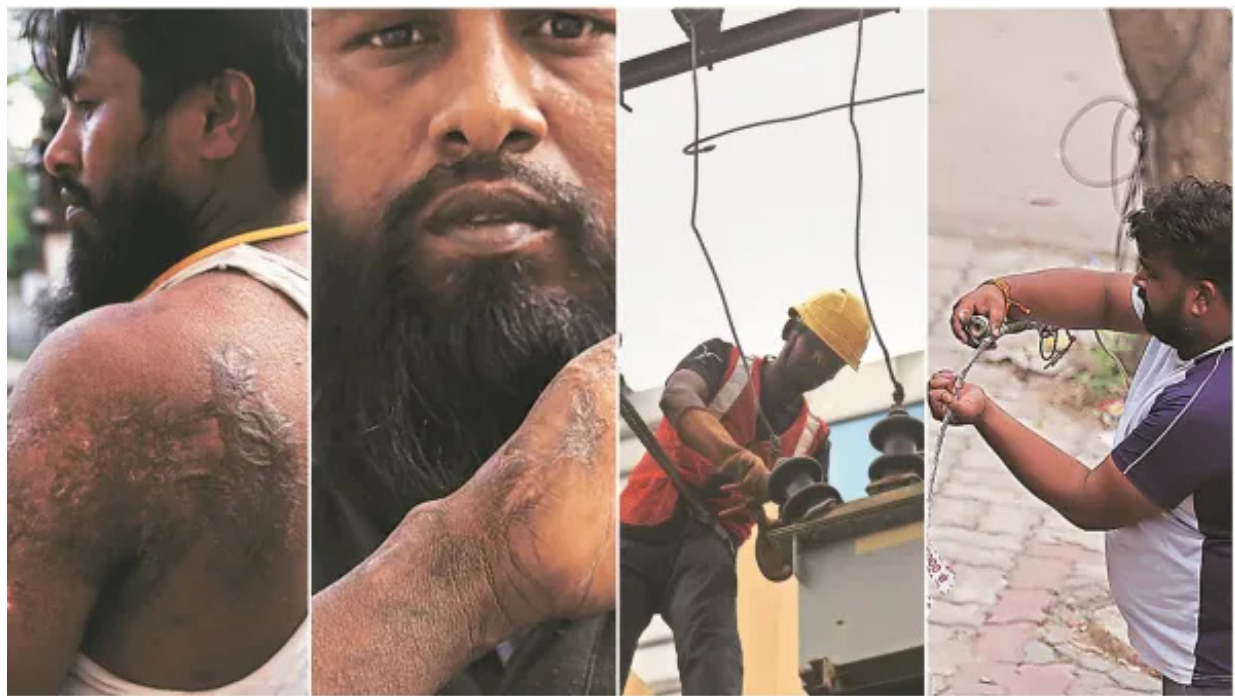
During the interaction, the principals shared their experiences of the training. Sushila Kumari, one of the principals, said the training helped in addressing the challenges that arise from the absenteeism of students. "It is a frequent problem we face that children are absent for four to six days, we learnt how to interact with parents in such situations," she said. Many principals vowed to apply the learnings from the training to improve their school environment. For instance, another principal, Ratna Arora, talked about being equipped with problem-solving skills to solve any problem including those of the school. Principal Parul Jain said, "At first, I felt that the professors here (IIM) prepare the top managers of the world, they would not know the ground reality of MCD schools. But during the training... I realised the vision was very huge which we were not able to touch, the students who are in the front have many chances but the vision is to bring forward the student who is being paid the least attention and is at the most backwards." The Minister emphasised the responsibilities of the MCD school principals. "There is no one else to guide the children who are coming to government schools and give them a chance to move forward except their teachers and principals... In such a situation, the responsibility of the principals of government schools increases further," she said. She added that every child studying in the school should feel respected and not be afraid of coming to school but should feel special. Oberoi said, "We have fulfilled our responsibility, now our principals should fulfil their responsibility. We hope that you give 100% and continue to perform much better in future. Our only dream is to bring a drastic change in MCD schools like Delhi Government schools such that they will be famous in the country and worldwide." The training program for MCD school principals covered a range of topics, including

developing a positive school climate conducive to learning and growth, effective teaching feedback techniques for instructional improvement, and the role of a school principal through understanding the multifaceted responsibilities of school leadership. Additionally, principals explored the intersection of artificial intelligence and education, examining future implications, and analyzed various leadership styles and their impact on school administration. The program also focused on personal development, with sessions on managing self-limiting beliefs to reach leadership potential, promoting mental well-being through mindfulness and emotional stability, and driving change through gamification techniques to engage students in learning. According to official sources in the Delhi government, a total of eight batches have been trained at premier institutions including six batches at IIM Ahmedabad and two batches at IIM Kozhikode. So far, the batches trained included 362 principals, 15 MCD officials, and eight State Council of Educational and Research Training (SCERT) officials.

Delhi High Court overrules police on tattoo rejection; ensures the candidate's right to join Delhi police

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has stepped in to help a Delhi police constable candidate who has been turned away because of a "faded tattoo" on his right arm. The court has ordered the authorities to let him join the police force. The high court, which noted that the candidate has already undergone a surgery for the removal of the tattoo, asked him to appear before it and physically saw his right forearm. "We have physically seen the right forearm of the respondent (candidate) and from the naked eye, the tattoo is not even visible. The same has been shown to the counsel for the petitioners (authorities) and the officials who are present in court to assist the counsel." According to us, there is no clear visible tattoo on the forearm of the respondent. However, in place of the tattoo there is visible very dim scar. Sometimes such types of scars are natural and therefore, the candidates cannot be rejected on that ground," Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Girish Kathpalia said in an order passed on July 24. The high court dismissed a plea by the Staff Selection Commission challenging an order of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) by which the candidate was granted relief. "It is also not the case of the petitioners that all the vacancies are already filled up since the basic training of the second batch has commenced from July 1, 2024. Accordingly, the petitioners are directed to allow the respondent to join the second batch for training within a week from the receipt of this order," it said.

Linemen in Noida count job hazards that sometimes turn fatal



"I don't remember the date. But I know it was the month of June in 2019..." recalls Kamil Ansari, 38, as he gazes at the space in his right hand where his little finger once was. "Around 4.15 pm, a consumer in Noida's Sector 2 informed the electricity office that there was no power in their colony. I rushed to the spot and climbed up the electricity pole to check the wire. Within minutes, the current suddenly started to flow in the wire and my hand caught fire. My grip loosened and I fell down," says Ansari. Two days later, he woke up at Kailash Hospital with bandage all over his hand. "The doctors amputated one of my fingers," he says. A resident of Bihar's Araria district, Ansari has been working as a lineman at UP Power Corporation Limited's (UPPCL) Noida unit for the last 20 years.

The 2019 incident was not Ansari's only brush with death. "In 2021, I was at work on top of a pole when electricity was switched on. I felt the current pass my entire body and lost my balance. I fell down on another wire. By the time I was tossed to the ground, half of my body was in flames," he says. "Main bach gaya, par sab nahi bach pate (I survived but many don't)," he says, as he rolls up his sleeves to show the burnt skin of his left arm.

Even as Ansari continues working as a lineman, 23-year-old Amar Pal left his job after a narrow escape in Noida's Sector 24 earlier this year. "It was June 14. I was repairing a line; suddenly, the power was switched on. The current was so strong that my body flew in the air. I fell on a tree and got stuck in its branches. Had I had fallen on the ground, I would have died," he says. Pal left his job within a fortnight. "Maut dekhi thi same se (I had seen death staring me in the eye)." Festive offer Noida power supply management, Noida Linemen job hazards, UPPCL linemen, UPPCL Noida, electricity officers death, line man deaths, line man equipments, Noida power distribution body, Vidut Nagariya Vitran Mandal, line men electrocuted to death, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Indian express news (Clockwise from top) Linemen at work in Noida's Sector 63; Kamil Ansari shows the scars on his right hand and left arm. (Photos: Tashi Tobgyal)

Ansari and Pal are among the fortunate ones who lived to tell the tale. According to the records of Noida's power distribution body – Vidut Nagariya Vitran Mandal – 29 linemen were electrocuted to death while 10 others have been rendered disabled since January 2017 in Gautam Buddha Nagar. Their stories have one common thread: like Ansari and Pal, they were repairing a wire on the top of an electricity pole when power department officials mistakenly switched on the electricity from the feeder. This mistake has been repeated 39 times in the last six years and a half. In the last two months, two linemen were electrocuted to death in Greater Noida while two others suffered serious injuries. On June 15, Yunus Khan, 26, was electrocuted to death in Dadri. Sakhabat Khan, a 40-year-old lineman, was killed under similar circumstances at Shakarpur village, Greater Noida, on July 27. Both were employed at the Noida and Greater Noida branch, respectively, of the UPPCL office. "Each time we climb a pole, we walk into the lap of death. You are lucky if the power isn't switched on while you are working up there," says Ansari.

Chief Electricity Officer, Noida, Harish Bansal likens the job to a posting at the border. "They (linemen) are aware of the risk. If someone dies at the border, will anyone complain? It is the same when a lineman dies." He says that "the death (of a lineman) happens because of miscommunication between him and the service operator." "There is more than one lineman correcting the fault at different sub-stations, which are interconnected. When a lineman calls to confirm that the work is done, the service operator confuses him with someone else and turns on the feeder (the power supply)," Bansal says. Even though the linemen work for UPPCL, they are employed by a third party to whom the work has been outsourced. "UPPCL initiates a tender and interested agencies bid. After that, it is their responsibility to ensure the safety of the lineman," Bansal says. "Legally, the safety of these linemen is not our (UPPCL) responsibility."

The explanation by UPPCL, however, does little to convince the families that have lost their loved ones. It has been over a year since Vishal, 23, died of electrocution on May 16, 2023, but the mourning at his two-room brick house at Kaimrala Chakrasenpur village in Greater Noida's Dadri has not ended. He was employed by M/S Sarlok Services, a third-party contractor. His scooter is still parked outside in the tiny courtyard. "My son had been asked to repair a wire on top of a transformer... they suddenly switched on the power. His body burst like a firecracker," Vishal's father Sukh Pal, 50, says. Vishal's mother had died a month earlier. "My wife was lucky that she died before seeing her son get killed in such a brutal manner..." he says. Sukh Pal has another son, Vicky, who works as a manual labourer, and a daughter. "When my son died, they (the officials) told us that I will get a pension and a plot but they gave nothing," Sukh Pal says. The family had asked the UPPCL to give them a compensation of at least Rs 12 lakh, the authority handed them a cheque of Rs 8 lakh. "It bounced four times," Vicky says. "When we confronted the officials, they gave us Rs 6 lakh in cash. They said Rs 4 lakh is the life insurance amount while Rs 2 lakh was contributed by the staff at the Greater Noida's electricity office from their salary." Since then, there has been no word from UPPCL officials. Vishal's 19-year-old widow Chanchal still lives with her in-laws; they had got married only a month before his death. "The officers visited our home and promised that Chanchal would be given a job and pension," Vicky says. "But nothing of that sort happened". Chief Electricity Officer Bansal

says there is no provision for jobs. "But we have given pension to the families once the heir is declared," he says. "If the families have not received the pension, it is because they never produced the required documents". Bansal says the lineman's job is like that of a daily wage labourer, but once they have worked for 7-8 years, they are absorbed as permanent employees. "Then they become eligible for the insurance," Bansal says. "Those who have either seven years of experience or a diploma from an ITI (Industrial Training Institute) come under the skilled category. Those who have studied till Class 8 come under unskilled labourer category and can be employed as unskilled linemen," Bansal says. Most of the linemen working in Gautam Buddha Nagar belong to the unskilled category. "If you have an Aadhaar Card, a PAN card and you can climb up the pole, you can become a lineman," says Sundar Gautam, a service operator at Noida's Sector 18 electricity office.

When Gautam was asked about the training of the linemen, he says, "They learn on the job from other experienced linemen." Adarsh Verma, 24, is a lineman working at the Noida's Sector 21A Electricity Office. "I got the job through the junior engineer working here," he says. "Later, Globetech Creation Private Limited hired me. I earn Rs 9,000 per month." Verma, a Noida Sector 8 resident, says he completed his graduation (B Pharma) in 2017. "When I didn't find a job anywhere, I became a lineman. I had no choice," he says. As linemen, Verma says, they are on duty round the clock. "I have to respond to calls at any time of the day," he says. And what about safety? "I have a safety belt... a rope made of jute. I tie it to my back when I climb up a pole," says Verma.

He recalls an incident in May when he saw his friend Mukesh Sharma hanging on a tree after a fall from an electric pole he was repairing. "Fortunately, he was saved," he says. "It is a risky job. Every morning when I leave home, I am scared. It could be my last day alive." But why does he still continue? "I don't know any other work... The only thing that keeps me going is that if something happens to me, my family will get an insurance of Rs 5 lakh." Even though the life insurance amount of a lineman has been increased by the UP government to Rs 7.5 lakh, there is no compensation if they are critically injured on the job. In fact, there is no proper record of linemen injured at work. Data accessed by The Indian Express shows that in the past six years, 10 linemen suffered serious injuries while working on the electric pole; the names of Ansari, Pal and Sharma do not appear in the list. A majority of the linemen electrocuted in Noida are in the age group of 20 to 30 with a monthly salary of just Rs 9,000. Ashok Kumar was 30 when he was electrocuted to death while repairing a wire atop an electricity pole on June 24 last year. Like Vishal, he was also employed with M/S Sarlok Services. The story of his death, too, is the same: electricity was switched on without ascertaining whether he was still working on the wire or not. He has left behind his wife, 29-year-old Bhudehi, and six children. Bhudehi was almost eight months pregnant when Kumar was electrocuted just 100 metres away from his home in Munjkhedha village in Greater Noida's Dankaur. "He could not see Mohan," Bhudehi says as she points towards her 11-month-old son in her lap. A picture of Kumar hangs on the wall of the family's two-roomed house. Bhudehi says she deposited the insurance amount as a fixed deposit because "that's all my six children (three daughters and three sons) have now". The oldest child, a 10-year-old girl called Kanishka, studies in a government school. "They (officials) told me they would get me a job and the education of my kids will be free. But they came, consoled us, and left," she says.

Bhudehi remembers the day of Kumar's death as if it was yesterday. "I saw his phone lying on the ground. I spotted my brother-in-law hitting the pole with a wooden stick. I looked up and saw him (Kumar) hanging on the wire. I snatched the stick and kept hitting the pole. Then I fainted," she recalls. "When I woke up, he was gone". She says her husband had no protective gear on him. "He would climb up the pole with the help of a knotted jute rope," she says. "Equipment dena toh contractor ki zimmedari hai (It is the responsibility of the contractor to give them the equipment)," says Chief Electricity Officer Bansal.

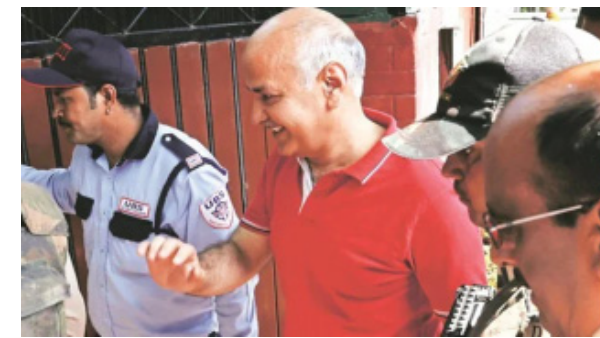
Most of the linemen are hired by a third party — contractors like M/S Sarlok Services, Rupal Engineering Corporation, M/S Becil, M/S Easy Source and M/S Solanki Services — in Gautam Buddha Nagar. "We give them rubber gloves and caps," says Sarlok Services' Manager, Lokpal Singh. "But if they do not use it, that is not our responsibility," he says. Bansal agrees. "Now, if there are five helmets in a house and a child in the family, who is without a helmet, meets with an accident, the family cannot be blamed. It is the same." Satinder Singh, a resident of Firozpur village in Khurja, Bulandshahr, lost his brother Harveer Singh, 28, on April 25, 2021, when he was electrocuted at work in Raghupura village. "A lawyer charged me Rs 50,000 to help me get the insurance cheque. When my brother died, the officials told us to throw the body away because of COVID (pandemic). For five days, my brother was struggling at the hospital. Everything was shut," he recalls. "They (officials) told me they will give me a pension," says Harveer Singh's mother. "But they gave nothing". The family says they spent Rs 90,000 on his treatment at a private hospital in Khurja. "That money was also not reimbursed to us," Singh says. Harveer's other brother Mesh Pal says he moved court when the police refused to register an FIR. "The case has been pending at the Allahabad High Court for the last three years," Mesh Pal says.

Sisodia at helm, outreach, report cards at centre of AAP strategy

GNS News Agency, August 21

Manish Sisodia foot march, Manish Sisodia, AAP assembly polls 2025 outreach, AAP report cards, AAP strategy, AAP delhi poll preparations, delhi development work, Indian express news Arvind Kejriwal has sent a message from jail that all the party officials should hold 'Auto Samvad' across Delhi Strategy meetings with party leaders and workers, taking stock of the development work in the Capital, and the launch of a footmarch for public outreach with an eye on the Delhi Assembly elections due next year — senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia has taken a deep plunge in the organisational affairs of the party since he was released on bail last week following 17 months of incarceration. "We have come to do the politics of work. After coming out of jail, I am continuously meeting people. I am visiting schools to meet children and taking out padyatras across Delhi," the ex-deputy CM said in a press release.

With his release, the AAP — aiming to secure another term in Delhi next year — has got a fresh impetus to prepare for the polls. According to Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak, who is also the AAP's National General Secretary (Organization), the party is preparing for many more campaigns in near future. In all 70 assembly constituencies, local MLAs are said to be presenting the report cards of their four-and-a-half years of work before the public. "So far, the worker conference has been successfully organised in 18 out of 70 assembly constituencies. Area MLAs and state vice-presidents participate in the workers' conference. Apart from this, the organisation



secretary and other officials are also a part of this conference," said Pathak, adding that top leadership of the party is set to participate in a conference in Chhatarpur on Monday. "We are going to every assembly constituency and connecting with people. We are giving them information about our work done in the last four-and-a-half years. We are directly communicating with the public. Booth mapping work is also going on at the assembly level," he said. Meanwhile, AAP Delhi state convener Gopal Rai said that a new campaign, 'Auto Samvad', will start Tuesday. CM Arvind Kejriwal has sent a message from jail, Rai added, that all the party officials should hold 'Auto Samvad' across Delhi, to "highlight the AAP government's work" at all the 511 auto stands across the city. "The CM has said till the time 'I am in jail, all our autowala brothers will together become my representatives'," he said.

Stray cattle behind hundreds of casualties in Chhattisgarh, Chief Secy takes note

As many as 404 people have died and 129 were seriously injured after the vehicles they were travelling in crashed into animals, mostly cattle, in Chhattisgarh over a period of five and a half years, according to police data. This includes nine people killed last month. After the Chhattisgarh High Court in July last year highlighted the issue of accidents taking place due to stray cattle on the roads, state government authorities and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) have moved out a total of 26,713 cattle from roads and highways in the period between August last year and July this year. Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain on June 27 held a meeting on the issue over video-conferencing with all district collectors in the state. At present, the cattle moved from roads are taken to shelters and a fine is collected from their owners, if any. During the June meeting, an idea was floated to create a sanctuary for the stray cattle, an official said. Road accident deaths as a whole have gone up in Chhattisgarh, according to police data. Such deaths in the state rose by 5.6% in 2023, and in the first half of this year, it rose by 8.72%. In May, the Chhattisgarh High Court had ordered government authorities to submit an affidavit on compliance with road safety directives in the wake of a fatal accident in Kawardha on May 21, where 19 people from a tribal community were killed. As reported by The Indian Express in August last year, deaths from road accidents have been steadily increasing in the state every year, except in 2020 when lockdowns due to the pandemic kept numbers lower.

In 2023, such deaths crossed the 6,000-mark, rising to 6,166 from 5,834 deaths in 2022. This year until July, 3,629 people have died in road accidents. The government is working towards its aim of bringing down accident deaths by 10% this year by giving focus to education, engineering, enforcement and emergency care — the four Es. Assistant Inspector General Sanjay Sharma, chairman of the interdepartmental lead agency for road safety in Chhattisgarh, said the government is working on the four Es. "As part of education, we are training teach-



ers in all government schools to teach the importance of road safety. Further, short films will be shown to students to create awareness on the issue. Five medium-sized vehicles will also move in public places and schools to create awareness."

On the second E — engineering — he said: "The PWD, for the first time, has received Rs 60 crore to take corrective measures on engineering issues at accident prone spots to improve road safety." On enforcement of traffic rules, he said more than one lakh cases have been filed and that fines amounting to Rs 8.53 crore have been collected. "We have sent a proposal to increase manpower," he said. On emergency care, he said: "Two new trauma centres have come up and six more trauma centres will be operational by the year end." At present, around 1,500 police personnel work in the traffic branch while the sanctioned strength is 1,400, with an additional force of 1,000 being roped in from other police branches. The requirement of manpower as per the norms of Bureau of Police Research and Development under the Ministry of Home Affairs, however, is 6,000. The state has also been seeing a major increase in vehicles on the road, with 5 lakh new vehicles getting registered on average each year.

Nicobar residents raise concerns about land acquisition for airport

GNS News Agency, August 21

The residents of Great Nicobar Island, who will be affected by land acquisition for the Greenfield International Airport project, have raised demands for a fair and comprehensive compensation package after a social impact assessment (SIA) report was submitted before the Union Territory administration last month. The proposed project — part of the Rs 72,000-crore Great Nicobar Infrastructure Project — comprises a transshipment port, Greenfield International Airport, power plant, township and allied developments. It will be built on 834.6 hectares of land, of which nearly 400 hectares is private land and the rest is government land.

In June, Delhi-based Probe Research and Social Development Pvt. Ltd, the agency that carried out the SIA study, had held a public hearing on the draft SIA with the stakeholders. After this, the final SIA report, detailing private land acquisition, loss of plantations and project impacts was submitted to the Andaman and Nicobar administration late last month. An SIA study is legally mandated under the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act (LARR), 2013. Residents of Gandhi Nagar and Shastri Nagar in Campbell Bay taluk, the two villages where nearly 400 hectares of land will be acquired for the project, have raised concerns that displacement for the airport will cause hardship and loss of livelihoods. Project-affected residents criticised the SIA report for not fully capturing the potential impacts of the large project. They have demanded, among other things, that the local administration should revise circle rates for land, fix higher compensation for loss of fruiting trees and provide jobs for one family member of each affected family and shops near the proposed airport.

"The families that settled here in the 1970s had to face a lot of hardships as resources were not plentiful. The community also suffered loss of land during the great tsunami of 2004. This will be another episode of displacement and hardship for us. We want land in lieu of land and Rs 50,000 for each coconut tree that will be lost," said Prahlad Singh, 43, Pradhan of Laxmi Nagar Gram Panchayat, which comprises the affected villages of Shastri Nagar and Gandhi. The Greenfield Airport project will affect 263 families, as per the SIA report, and nearly all of the coconut, betel nut, guava, banana and mango plantations will be acquired for the project.

The project-affected families belong to the ex-servicemen community and were settled in GNI from differ-



ent parts of mainland India four to five decades ago. Coconut and betel nut farming forms the mainstay of their income source. Nearly 30,000 coconut trees, 60,000 betel nut trees, 450 mango trees and other fruit trees such as guava and banana will be lost to land acquisition, as per the SIA report. E S Rajesh, the pramukh and samiti member of Laxmi Nagar Gram Panchayat, told The Indian Express that the SIA report fails to mention what would be the adverse impacts of the project on the water resources of the region. "There would be an influx of outsiders because of not only the airport construction work, but also the tourism that it will attract. There are issues of water shortages even now. But the report has not analysed these issues," he said.

The Directorate of Social Welfare Department, Andaman & Nicobar administration, to whom the report was submitted, did not respond to queries seeking comment. The SIA report is also silent on the potential impacts of the airport project on the indigenous Great Nicobarese and Shompen tribespeople. Earlier, a group of over 100 former bureaucrats had written to the Centre criticising the draft SIA report. Social scientists and wildlife scientists, too, demanded that the airport development's impact on the tribal communities ought to be weighed. "The airport area covers 8.88 sq km of deemed forest, which is part of the Tribal Reserve area in Great Nicobar. This would certainly affect the Shompen and the Great Nicobarese. Yet the SIA has not taken the trouble to communicate with them," the ex-bureaucrats under the banner of Constitutional Conduct Group had said in a June 17 letter. After the SIA report's submission, a multi-disciplinary expert group is evaluating it, as per the procedure laid down in the LARR Act, 2013.

Blinken says 'decisive moment' for Gaza ceasefire talks



time for everyone to get to yes and to not look for any excuses to say no," Blinken added. The mediating countries - Qatar, the United States and Egypt - have so far failed to narrow enough differences to reach an agreement in months of on-off negotiations, and violence continued unabated in Gaza on Sunday.

Hours after Blinken's arrival Hamas said it holds Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responsible for "thwarting the mediators' efforts", delaying an agreement and exposing Israeli hostages in Gaza to the same aggression faced by Palestinians. There has been increased urgency to reach a ceasefire deal amid fears of escalation across the wider region. Iran has threatened to retaliate against Israel after the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on July 31.

The top U.S. diplomat also repeated U.S. caution against further escalation. "It's also time to make sure that no one takes any steps that could derail this process, and so we're working to make sure that there is no escalation, that there are no provocations," he added. The war erupted on Oct. 7 when Hamas militants rampaged into Israel, killing around 1,200 people and seizing around 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's subsequent military campaign has killed more than 40,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, according to Palestinian health authorities, and reduced much of Gaza to rubble. Humeira Pamuk is a senior foreign policy correspondent based in Washington DC. She covers the U.S. State Department, regularly traveling with U.S. Secretary of State. During her 20 years with Reuters, she has had postings in London, Dubai, Cairo and Turkey, covering everything from the Arab Spring and Syria's civil war to numerous Turkish elections and the Kurdish insurgency in the southeast. In 2017, she won the Knight-Bagehot fellowship program at Columbia University's School of Journalism. She holds a BA in International Relations and an MA on European Union studies.

TEL AVIV, GNS News Agency, August 21. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday called the latest diplomatic push by Washington to achieve a ceasefire deal in Gaza "probably the best, maybe the last opportunity" and urged all parties to get the agreement over the finish line. The marathon talks towards a ceasefire that has been going on for months are set to continue this week in Cairo, following a two-day meeting in Doha last week.

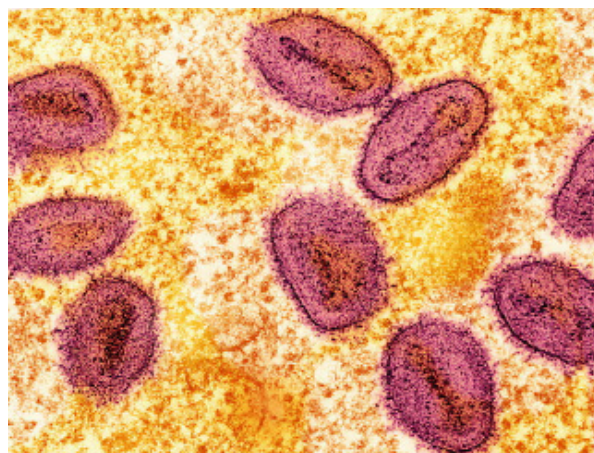
Blinken will intensify U.S. diplomatic pressure to ensure negotiations secure a breakthrough later this week after the U.S. put forward last week bridging proposals that the mediating countries believe would close gaps between the warring parties. "This is a decisive moment, probably the best, maybe the last opportunity to get the hostages home, to get a ceasefire and to put everyone on a better path to enduring peace and security," Blinken told reporters, ahead of his meeting with Israeli President Isaac Herzog. "I'm here as part of an intensive diplomatic effort on President Biden's instructions to try to get this agreement to the line and ultimately over the line...It is

Philippines detects first mpox case this year, yet to determine strain

MANILA, GNS News Agency, August 21: The Philippines has detected a new case of the mpox virus in the country, the first since December last year, its health department said on Monday, adding it was awaiting test results before being able to determine the strain. The patient was a 33-year-old Filipino male who had no travel history outside the Philippines, the Department of Health (DOH) said.

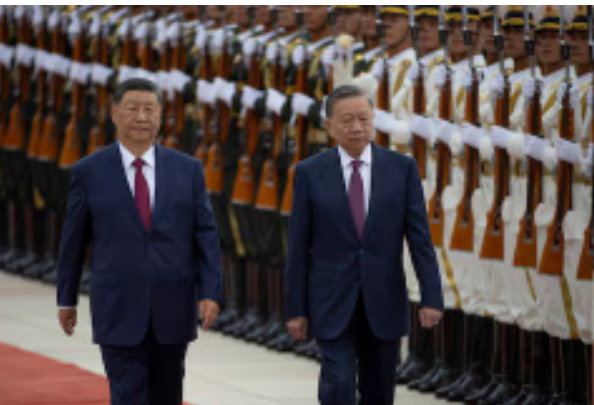
"We are awaiting sequencing results and will update once available," its spokesperson Albert Domingo said when asked about the strain. The World Health Organization on Wednesday declared mpox a global public health emergency, its highest form of alert, following an outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo that had spread to neighbouring countries. A new form of the virus has triggered global concern as it seems to spread easily through routine close contact.

A case of the new variant was confirmed on Thursday in Sweden and linked to a growing outbreak in Africa, the first sign of its spread outside the continent. Pakistan on Friday confirmed at least one case of the mpox virus in a patient who had returned from a Gulf country, but said they did not yet know the strain of the virus. The new case in the Philippines is the 10th laboratory-confirmed case the health department has detected. Its first case was in July 2022. "Symptoms started more than a week ago with fever, which was followed four days later



by findings of a distinct rash on the face, back, nape, trunk, groin, as well as palms and soles," the Philippine DOH said in a statement. The disease, caused by the monkeypox virus, leads to flu-like symptoms and pus-filled lesions. It is usually mild but can kill, with children, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems, such as those with HIV, all at higher risk of complications. Keep up with the latest medical breakthroughs and healthcare trends with the Reuters Health Rounds newsletter. Sign up here.

China's Xi meets Vietnam's new leaders, says Hanoi is 'neighbourhood diplomacy priority'



BEIJING, -GNS News Agency, August 21: China's President Xi Jinping praised Vietnam on Monday during talks with Vietnam's new leader To Lam in Beijing on his first state visit since he took office, Chinese official media Xinhua said. The meeting signals the close ties between the two communist-run neighbours, which have well-developed economic and trade relations despite the occasional boundary clashes in the energy-rich South China Sea. "China has always regarded Vietnam as a priority in its neighbourhood diplomacy, and supports Vietnam in adhering to the Party leadership, taking the socialist path suited to its national conditions, and deepening the cause of reforms and socialist modernisation," Xi said at the meeting.

"I believe that our road will expand wider as we walk further," Xinhua cited the Chinese leader as saying. He underscored establishing good working relations and personal friendship with Lam. China, displaying exuberance over Lam's choosing China for his first official trip, said last week it "fully reflects the great importance he attaches to the development of ties between both parties and countries". Lam arrived in China's southern province Guangzhou on Sunday for a three-day visit that would include meetings with Chinese Premier Li Qiang and other Chinese top officials. While in Guangzhou, he visited some Chinese locations where former President Ho Chi Minh conducted revolutionary activities. Last December, China and Vietnam signed more than a dozen agreements when Xi visited Vietnam. The agreements, specifics of which were not announced, covered strengthening railway cooperation and development, investments in various fields and establishing communication to handle unexpected incidents in the South China Sea. In a lengthy joint declaration, both countries said they would work on cross-border railway connectivity, naming three rail projects that included one connecting through mountain-

ous Lao Cai in the Vietnam's northwest to the port city Haiphong and a potential one linking two coastal cities to Haiphong. The statement mentioned continued support for both countries' railway companies to further cooperate to improve the efficiency of Vietnamese goods transiting through China. It also mentioned working on other projects under China's flagship infrastructure programme, the Belt and Road Initiative, and emphasised investment cooperation in agriculture, infrastructure, energy, digital economy, green development and other fields. China and Vietnam forged diplomatic ties in 1950 and established a comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation in 2008 that was jointly fortified five years later to extend to more shared international and regional issues of concern. The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here.

South Korea, US kick off annual drills over North's military, cyber threats

SEOUL, GNS News Agency, August 21 South Korea and the United States kicked off annual summertime military exercises on Monday, seeking to boost their joint readiness to fend off North Korea's weapons and cyber threats. The Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises, set to end on Aug. 29, come as North Korea races to advance its nuclear and missile programmes and tries to launch reconnaissance satellites. The drills will reflect "realistic threats" across all domains, including the North's missile threats but also GPS jamming, cyberattacks and other lessons learned from recent incidents, the two countries' militaries have said. South Korea will separately carry out the simultaneous government-led Ulchi civil defence drills, under the scenario of a nuclear attack by the North, officials said. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol urged thorough readiness posture against North Korea, calling it "the most reckless and irrational country in the world." "As seen in Ukraine and the conflicts in the Middle East, war can break out at any time," he told a cabinet meeting. "The nature of war has also changed from the past, being carried out in a hybrid form that mixes regular, irregular and cyber warfare, and even public opinion and psychological warfare using fake news." About 19,000 South Korean troops will take part, similar to last year, with 48 rounds of combined field training, including field manoeuvre, live fire and amphibious exercises to be held, Yoon said.

Indian medics refuse to end protests over doctor's rape and murder



GNS News Agency, August 21

Doctors shout slogans as they hold placards during a protest rally demanding justice following the rape and murder of a trainee medic at a hospital in Kolkata, in New Delhi, India. /Priyanshu Singh/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new ta- Thousands of Indian junior doctors on Monday refused to end protests over the rape and murder of a fellow medic, disrupting hospital services nearly a week after they launched a nationwide action demanding a safer workplace and swift criminal probe. Doctors across the country have held protests and declined to see non-emergency patients following the Aug. 9 killing of the 31-year-old medic, who police say was raped and murdered at a hospital in the eastern city of Kolkata where she was a trainee. A police volunteer has been arrested and charged with the crime. Women

activists say the incident has highlighted how women in India continue to suffer from sexual violence despite tougher laws brought in after the 2012 gang-rape and murder of a 23-year-old student on a moving bus in New Delhi.

The government has urged doctors to return to duty while it sets up a committee to suggest measures to improve protection for healthcare professionals. "Our indefinite cease-work and sit-in will continue till our demands are met," said Dr. Aniket Mahata, a spokesperson for protesting junior doctors at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, where the incident happened. In solidarity with the doctors, thousands of supporters of West Bengal state's two biggest soccer clubs marched on the streets of Kolkata on Sunday evening with chants of "We want justice". Groups representing junior doctors in neighbouring Odisha state, the capital New Delhi, and in the western state of Gujarat have also said their protests will continue. Gita Gopinath, deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, told India's Business Standard daily that workplace safety was important to raise the country's female labour force participation rate, which was 37% in FY2022-23. "One cannot raise that (female participation) without ensuring safety at the workplace and safety of women in getting to the workplace. That is absolutely critical," Gopinath said in the interview published on Monday. Reporting by Subrata Nag Choudhury in Kolkata, Sumit Khanna in Ahmedabad, Jatindra Dash in Bhubaneswar; Additional reporting by Sunil Kataria in Kolkata, Saurabh Sharma in Lucknow, Tora Agarwala in Guwahati; Writing by Shivam Patel; Editing by Stephen Coates

NYC mayor Eric Adams refers to India as Pakistan thrice at India Day Parade

GNS News Agency, August 21

The New York City Mayor, Eric Adams, referred to India as Pakistan, that too, thrice during his speech at the Indian Independence Day event. This was at the Queens 9th India Day Parade, where Adams addressed the Indian diaspora from a stage decorated with Indian flags and banners. New York City Mayor Eric Adams made a blunder during the 78th Indian Independence Day celebration in Queens, where he mistakenly referred to 'India' as 'Pakistan', not once but thrice. The day before, Adams had spoken at a flag-raising ceremony at the same venue for Pakistan's Independence Day. The incident occurred on Saturday at the Queens 9th India Day Parade. Adams addressed the crowd from a stage adorned with Indian flags, tricolour balloons, and banners reading "Mayor Adams Celebrates the Indian Community." Holding both the Indian tricolour and the American flag, Adams was surrounded by attendees waving Indian flags and dressed in tricolour-themed attire. "We raised the flag earlier this week at Bowling Green... And I think no greater symbol of what you offer to this community than the men and women who are part of the law enforcement community, who are here, the 'Pakistani' officers, who are continuing to grow in their numbers and ranks as they continue to show that public safety is the prerequisite to our prosperity," Adams stated, as reported



by the news agency PTI. He made this mistake a few times. He continued, "So I thank you for allowing me to come here. I've known this community for so long, from little Pakistan in Queens, little Pakistan in Brooklyn, you are a major foundation of our entire city. So let's continue to celebrate your independence." The mistake was hard to ignore as Adams had participated in a flag-raising ceremony at Bowling Green Park in Lower Manhattan on August 15 to mark India's Independence Day. But how did it happen? The goof up might have to do with how he addressed another crowd, a day before at the same place for Pakistan's Independence Day.

Saudi's MBS allegedly forged father's signature on Yemen war decree: Report



GNS News Agency, August 21

The allegation comes as Prince Mohammed now serves as the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia, often meeting leaders in place of his father, the 88-year-old King Salman. A former Saudi official alleged in a report that Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman forged the signature of his father on the royal decree that launched the kingdom's yearslong, stalemated war against Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Saudi Arabia did not immediately respond to a request for comment over the allegations made without supporting evidence by Saad al-Jabri in an interview published Monday by the BBC, though the kingdom has described him as "a discredited former government official." Al-Jabri, a former Saudi intelligence official who lives in exile in Canada, has been a yearslong dispute with the kingdom as his two children have been imprisoned in case he describes as trying to lure him back to Saudi Arabia.

The allegation comes as Prince Mohammed now serves as the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia, often meeting leaders in place of his father, the 88-year-old King Salman. His assertive behavior, particularly at the start of his ascension to power around the beginning of the Yemen war in 2015, extended to a wider crackdown on any perceived dissent or power base that could challenge his rule. In al-Jabri's remarks to the BBC, he said a "credible, reliable" official linked to the Saudi Interior Ministry confirmed to him that Prince Mohammed signed the royal decree declaring war in place of his father. "We were surprised that there was a royal decree to allow the ground interventions," al-Jabri told the BBC. "He forged the signature of his dad for that royal decree. The king's mental capacity was deteriorating." A US-based lawyer for al-Jabri did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Yemen war against the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, launched with promises by the prince it would quickly be over, has ground on for nearly a decade. The war has killed more than 1,500,000 people and created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters, killing tens of thousands more. Prince Mohammed was the defence minister at the time. The Houthis also, since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, have launched attacks on shipping that have disrupted traffic through the Red Sea — and led to the most intense combat faced by the US Navy since World War II. Al-Jabri

once worked for former Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, a trusted confidant of the US in the battle against al-Qaida militants in the kingdom after the September 11, 2001, attacks. King Salman replaced the crown prince for his son in 2017 and Prince Mohammed bin Nayef is believed to have been held under house arrest after. Al-Jabri had sued Prince Mohammed bin Salman in US federal court, alleging the crown prince sought to have him killed after he fled abroad. Speaking to the BBC, al-Jabri again alleged Prince Mohammed considered assassinating former King Abdullah with a poison ring from Russia — something he claimed in a 2021 interview with CBS News. He also described his fears that the crown prince still wanted him killed as his children remain imprisoned in the kingdom. "He planned for my assassination," al-Jabri told the BBC. "He will not rest until he sees me dead. I have no doubt about that."

New Thailand PM thanks Modi for greetings, urges strengthening ties

New Delhi: Thailand's newly elected Prime Minister, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, expressed her gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday for his congratulatory message following her recent election victory. In a post on social media platform X, Paetongtarn Shinawatra wrote, "Thank you PM Narendra Modi for your warm congratulatory message."

"I look forward to working closely with you to further strengthen our bilateral relations, especially in the areas of trade and investment, culture, people-to-people contact, and tourism, in particular, to increase air travel between both countries," she further wrote. Expressing her hope for further strengthening the bilateral ties between India and Thailand, the newly-elected Prime Minister said, "I am confident that we can build upon our existing ties and explore untapped potentials to create even greater opportunities for our two countries, peoples, and beyond."

"Congratulations Paetongtarn Shinawatra on your election as the Prime Minister of Thailand. Best wishes for a very successful tenure. Look forward to working with you to further strengthen the bilateral ties between India and Thailand, that are based on the strong foundations of civilisational, cultural and people-to-people connect," he said in a post on X. Paetongtarn Shinawatra, 37, was elected as Thailand's Prime Minister on August 16, making her the second youngest woman to hold the position in Thai history. She follows in the footsteps of her father and aunt, becoming the third member of the Shinawatra family to serve as Prime Minister of Thailand.

Her aunt, Yingluck Shinawatra, was Thailand's first female Prime Minister and the country's youngest in over 60 years before being removed from office on May 7, 2014, by a Constitutional Court decision.

Sustainability standards to shape future of global trade; must take seriously: Welspun Living CEO & MD



India is primarily a cotton-growing country, focused on natural fibres. When you talk about polyester, China definitely has a competitive edge. But with the PLI schemes coming in and the government's impetus on manmade fibres, that's something we'll have to watch going forward. For Welspun, though, we're in a good spot, as we consume more than 85 to 90 per cent natural fibre.

Europe is looking at introducing sustainability standards for textile imports, like it has done for steel. Now, the steel industry has been scrambling to become compliant. Do you see similar challenges for the textile industry?

I'm very happy it will happen because it's something the textile industry urgently needs to tackle, especially with the landfill challenges we're facing. At Welspun, we've committed to a 2030 target, with clear milestones that we report on a quarterly basis. This includes being energy and water positive and minimising our environmental impact. One of the biggest challenges is post-consumer waste, particularly when exported products need to be reintegrated into our value chain. The infrastructure to handle this is still developing, but we're actively working on recycling and innovative solutions. I believe Europe's lead in ESG practices sets a crucial example. We must take these requirements seriously, as they'll shape the future of global trade. We've already seen the benefits of moving towards sustainability. For example, our Anjar facility operates entirely on recycled water. We're also transitioning to green energy by 2030, driven by past experiences where the rising costs of coal imports caused significant disruptions. Running plants on green energy not only gives savings of 30 to 40 per cent, but also ensures long-term stability and competitiveness in an uncertain energy market.

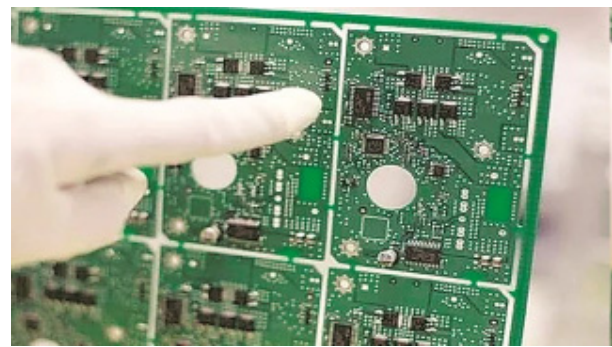
Welspun exports heavily to the US and some other locations as well. How do markets abroad compare with India?

The American consumer is highly capable, with the United States accounting for 30 per cent of global home textile consumption. The UK and Europe follow, but their market is fragmented. India is slowly emerging, though its base remains small. The American market is huge and highly engaged, with frequent buying occasions like college events, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Black Friday sales. America's consumer economy presents great opportunities due to its large base. Even if I grow at 4 or 5 per cent, though we are growing at a close double digit, we see that it's good enough because the base is so huge. The UK and Europe have been struggling, but the European economy is showing signs of improvement. Japan is increasingly looking towards India as an alternative to China for outsourcing. The Middle East is experiencing rapid growth, especially in the luxury segment. For example, our Christy brand is growing at over 35 per cent there.

How do you see the relationship between e-commerce and traditional retail evolving in India?

In the US, e-commerce is growing significantly. Before Covid, we thought it was cannibalising retailers and offline stores. But they're now learning to coexist. It's become quite beautiful – as a consumer, I can buy offline, online, or pick up from the store. Stores are becoming like warehouses. You have inventory there, can dispatch from the store, or buy from the store. It's called BOPIS – buy online, pick up in store. In India, while organised retail exists, mom-and-pop stores still rule. The kind of service they provide is unmatched. They're going to be a very important and integral part of India's entire ecosystem.

China dominates supply of electronic components for 'made in India' products



which iPhones contributed 65 per cent, or about \$10 billion – up from \$5 billion in the previous year.

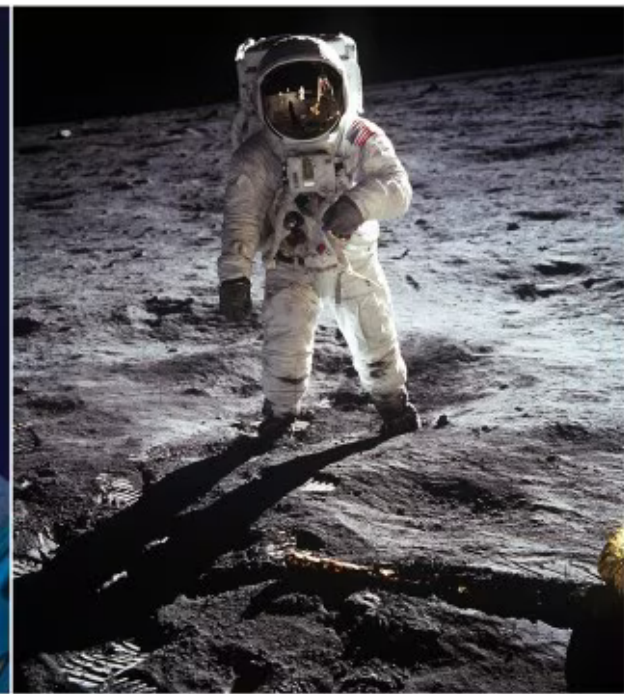
But, that growth has meant that India's reliance on imported electronic components – such as printed circuit boards, integrated circuits, advanced displays, camera modules etc. – has increased given that the country currently lacks any substantial manufacturing base for these crucial components. "China has built its manufacturing base over the last three-four decades. It is very difficult to rapidly decouple from them given that they are the biggest producers of the components that India would need for its domestic manufacturing processes," a senior government official said. Take Apple as an example. While the company's expansion in India has meant more of its suppliers are looking to set shop in the country, in 2023, as many as 157 Apple contractors manufactured in mainland China, up from 151 the previous year. The number of Indian suppliers, however, remained stagnant at 14.

To remedy the situation, the government is understood to be working on an incentive scheme for electronic components. "The details are currently being worked out, but the overall outlay could be between Rs 30,000 crore – Rs 40,000 crore," a second government official said requesting anonymity. Even as India's factory output for smartphones has risen, leading to a steady rise in exports, local value addition has not increased to a desirable amount. Currently, local value addition in mobile phone assembly is around 15 per cent, while a healthier number would be around 35-40 per cent. As tensions at the border in the last few years have proven to be the nadir of India-China relations, New Delhi as moved towards an economic blockade of sorts – its actions include banning China-based social media companies like TikTok, increasing scrutiny on investments from the mainland, excluding Chinese products from some telecom equipment on account of national security, and visa restrictions on Chinese technicians. But, India is seemingly warming up to the idea of letting more Chinese entities set up bases in the country in partnership with domestic firms, as part of joint ventures. The Economic Survey 2023-24 said that India should reduce the import of Chinese products while maintaining investments from Beijing.

Experts said imports from Hong Kong should be seen as Chinese imports since it is companies from the mainland who run some of their operations in the territory. The overall picture of India's reliance on Chinese supply of electronic components becomes clearer when compared to the imports from some other electronics hubs – such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and ASEAN countries which include the likes of Vietnam and Malaysia. In the last five years, barring 2022-23, the quantum of import of electronic components from China alone has outnumbered such imports from South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and all ASEAN countries, combined. Put together, imports from China and Hong Kong have been more than the other countries in each of the last five years. This is despite India having free trade agreements with ASEAN countries, Japan and South Korea.

India's emergence as an electronics assembly hub for smartphones has been notable. Today, almost all phones sold in India have been assembled locally in the country, with companies like Apple also exporting phones that were assembled in India. For instance, India exported smartphones worth around \$15 billion in 2023-24, of

All about Spaceflight Associated Neuro-ocular Syndrome, the eyesight issue Sunita Williams is likely facing in space



Space missions push human endurance and health to the limits, and vision is one of the most affected aspects of an astronaut's well-being. Recently, Sunita Williams underwent an eye test while being stranded in space, highlighting the importance of monitoring eye health in such extreme conditions. As astronauts spend extended periods in microgravity, their bodies undergo significant changes, and vision can be particularly vulnerable. Prolonged exposure to microgravity and its impact on the eyes Dr Navya C senior consultant, Ophthalmology at Athreya Hospital, tells indianexpress.com, "In the weightlessness of space, fluids in the body behave differently. Without the familiar pull of gravity, blood and other fluids shift upwards, leading to a phenomenon known as 'cephalad fluid shift.' This fluid redistribution affects various parts of the body, including the eyes and brain, contributing to the development of Spaceflight Associated Neuro-ocular Syndrome (SANS)."

Specific changes observed in the eye include: Optic Disc Edema: The optic nerve, responsible for transmitting visual information from the eye to the brain, can become swollen and inflamed. Globe Flattening: The shape of the eyeball itself can change, becoming slightly flattened posteriorly. Choroidal Folds: The choroid, a layer of tissue beneath the retina, can develop wrinkles or folds. Cotton Wool Spots: These are small white patches on the retina caused by tiny areas of decreased blood flow.

Hyperopic Shift: Many astronauts experience a shift in their vision towards farsightedness (hyperopia), making it difficult to focus on near objects. Telemedicine allows astronauts to consult with ophthalmologists on Earth. Telemedicine allows astronauts to consult with ophthalmologists on Earth. The exact mechanisms behind these changes are still being investigated, Dr Navya reveals, but several factors likely play a role: Increased Intracranial Pressure: The upward fluid shift increases pressure within the skull, which can compress the optic nerve and affect its function. Altered Fluid Dynamics: Changes in fluid distribution within the eye can impact the shape of the

globe and the structure of the retina and choroid. Vascular Changes: Microgravity can affect blood flow to the eyes, potentially leading to ischemia (reduced blood flow) and damage to the retina.

SANS and long-term vision: Protecting astronauts' sight The long-term effects of SANS are a growing concern as we consider future missions to Mars and beyond. "While most astronauts' vision improves after returning to Earth, some may experience lasting vision problems like blurred vision or difficulty focusing," says Dr Navya. SANS may increase the risk of developing certain eye conditions later in life, such as glaucoma or cataracts. To mitigate these effects, several strategies are being explored. "Creating artificial gravity through rotating spacecraft or centrifuges could help maintain normal fluid distribution in the body, potentially preventing or reducing the severity of SANS," she informs. Researchers are investigating various countermeasures, such as lower body negative pressure devices and exercise regimens, to mimic the effects of gravity and counteract fluid shifts. Astronauts undergo comprehensive eye exams before, during, and after spaceflight to monitor any changes and provide timely intervention, notes Dr Navya. Eye tests in space: A unique challenge According to Dr Navya, conducting eye exams in space presents unique challenges due to the microgravity environment and the limited availability of specialised equipment. "Astronauts use portable devices like retinal cameras and optical coherence tomography (OCT) scanners to capture images of their eyes and monitor for changes." Telemedicine allows astronauts to consult with ophthalmologists on Earth, who can analyse the images and provide guidance. Eye tests in space need to account for the fluid shifts and other physiological changes that occur in microgravity, concludes Dr Navya. According to a report by Financial Express, Williams and fellow astronaut Butch Wilmore were supposed to stay on the ISS (International Space Station) for roughly eight days before returning to the Earth. However, helium leaks and thruster problems during Starliner's journey have raised questions about the it's safety, leading to delays.

After ORS and paneer, fake garlic penetrates the market; here are some tips to detect

Fake items continue to penetrate the Indian market. After imitation ORS, paneer, and butter, a case of fake garlic has come to light in Maharashtra's Akola district. According to a report by Zee 24 Taas, Subhash Patil, a retired police officer's wife was cheated with garlic made of cement. It added that Patil's wife purchased 250 grams of garlic from a vendor, and upon being unable to peel it, she tried to cut the garlic only to find cement with a white coating on the outside. In a video, Patil said that fake garlic is being sold by a street vendor who is misleading consumers and potentially harming public health. It must be noted that garlic prices have surged from Rs 300 to Rs 350 per kg.

Taking a cue from the shocking incident, we reached out to an expert to know ways to stay safe when buying vegetables like garlic. Visually, real garlic has irregularly shaped cloves with a thin, papery skin that peels easily, while fake garlic may have uniform, overly smooth cloves, and thicker, harder-to-remove skin, said Dr Haricharan G, senior consultant physician, HoD internal medicine, Geneagles Hospitals, Lakdi Ka Pul, Hyderabad. The aroma of genuine garlic is strong and pungent, whereas fake garlic might lack this characteristic scent or have an artificial smell. "Additionally, real garlic feels dense and firm, and when placed in water, it sinks—unlike fake garlic, which may float due to its synthetic composition," said



Dr Haricharan. From a health perspective, fake garlic poses significant risks. "It often contains synthetic materials or harmful chemicals that can lead to digestive issues, allergic reactions, or long-term toxicity," shared Dr Haricharan. Consuming fake garlic also means missing out on the natural health benefits of real garlic, such as its immune-boosting properties and cardiovascular benefits. "Over time, exposure to chemicals in counterfeit garlic could potentially increase the risk of chronic health problems, including cancer," said Dr Haricharan. Therefore, it's crucial to be vigilant when purchasing garlic, ensuring it's sourced from reputable suppliers to protect both culinary quality and overall health.

Karan Singh Grover says daughter's open heart surgery was 'difficult for us'; Tips and insights for parents dealing with a child's recovery

Actor Karan Singh Grover recently opened up about his daughter's heart surgery, sharing the emotional struggles he and his wife, Bipasha Basu, faced during the difficult time. The couple welcomed Devi in 2022 but soon discovered that she had two holes in her heart. As a result, she underwent open heart surgery at just three months old. Grover told Dainik Bhaskar, "Something or the other keeps happening. I am very lucky that nothing very bad happened in my life. But there was a time when we faced a very big problem with our daughter. That time was very difficult for us. My daughter had a serious health problem, and what she suffered during that time is hard to describe in words." He continued, "My daughter is a true fighter. She has a long scar on her chest that goes to her stomach. Whatever we think and achieve in our lives is nothing compared to her. Whatever she and her mother (Bipasha Basu) have gone through, it cannot be compared. Nothing like this has happened in my life, I am

very lucky." Caring for a child post-surgery requires not only vigilance with physical healing but also attending to their mental and emotional well-being. Parents must juggle concerns about their child's long-term health, manage stress, and ensure that the child feels safe and supported throughout their recovery journey.

Dr Arun Kumar, senior consultant psychiatrist at Cadabams Mind Talk, says, "The immediate days following heart surgery are critical for your child's recovery. Administer prescribed medications diligently, ensuring correct dosages and timings. These medications could include pain relievers, antibiotics, and medications to support heart function. If you have any concerns or questions about the medication, don't hesitate to reach out to your child's doctor or pharmacist." He adds, "Keep the surgical incision clean and dry as per the medical team's instructions. Be on the lookout for any signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, warmth, or discharge."

Abhishek Banerjee issues clarification over his statement about dismissal from Agneepath: 'I have not accused Dharma Productions'



Actor Abhishek Banerjee, who was last seen in *Stree 2* and *Vedaa*, found himself in the eye of the storm recently. Controversy came knocking at his door after his statement from a recent interview went viral. During the promotion of his latest films, Abhishek appeared on a podcast where he spoke about his casting business with his friend Anmol Ahuja. He also shared how their agency Casting Bay was dismissed during the casting for *Agneepath* after he and Anmol failed to understand the director's vision. Unfortunately, his statement was misreported by several publications that said it was Karan Johar who fired their agency. Now, clearing the air, Abhishek issued a statement saying that he never intended to accuse Dharma Productions and never even mentioned Karan.

His statement read, "This week I have been blessed with two releases and one controversy. I've been reading and hearing a lot of reports about Dharma Productions supposedly firing my company, Casting Bay, during the casting process of *Agneepath* (2012). Unfortunately, this situation has been completely misrepresented as accusatory on our part. In a podcast/interview, I had stated the reason for our dismissal, acknowledging that we were unable to align with the vision of director Karan Malhotra for *Agneepath*. I also emphasized that Anmol and I were quite young at the time, around 20 to 23 years old, with little to no experience in casting for a major commercial film, which perhaps led to us misinterpreting Mr. Malhotra's requirements for the project." "I have not accused or suggested any wrongdoing on the part of Dharma Productions. In fact, I have deep respect for Dharma Productions and Karan Johar. I never mentioned Karan Johar in relation to our dismissal, yet some reports falsely claim that he was the one who fired us. The decision was actually made by Mr. Malhotra's team, and I accepted our mistakes. I shared this story to encourage young people that even if you fail or hit a roadblock, you can always bounce back, as we did. We went on to work on several projects with Dharma, starting with *Ok Jaanu*, *Student of the Year 2*, *Kalank*, and recent releases like *Kill* and *Gyarah Gyarah*. Additionally, Dharma even cast me as an actor in *Ajeeb Daastaans*. Dharma has always been very good to me and my company, Casting Bay. It is a relationship we value and nurture.

Vedang Raina says working with Alia Bhatt on *Jigra* has been 'confusing', addresses rumors of dating Khushi Kapoor



Actor Vedang Raina received praise for his performance in his debut film *The Archies*. Soon after that, the young actor was in the news for rumors of him dating co-star Khushi Kapoor. While the two have been spotted together on several occasions, this rumored relationship has been kept under wraps. Time and again, Vedang has also dodged questions about his alleged affair with Khushi. Now in an interview with *GQ*, the actor spoke at length about his dating life and his next film *Jigra* with Alia Bhatt.

Talking about his dating rumors with Khushi Kapoor, Vedang Raina said, "My dating life right now is taking a back seat because I'm focused on my career. I'm clear about my priorities and want to keep these two aspects of my life separate. I'm enjoying where I am, and there's a lot more I want to achieve. It's not that dating would necessarily hinder me, but it can become a major part of your life. So I'm choosing to stay mindful of that and concentrate on what's most important." Khushi and Vedang recently walked the ramp for designer Gaurav Gupta. The two were also spotted together at Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's wedding. A few inside pictures of



Vedang and Khushi sharing some cozy moments at the Ambani wedding also went viral.

During the interview, Vedang Raina also talked about his next film *Jigra* with Alia Bhatt. He said, "She's the polar opposite of me as an actor, and honestly, it's so confusing! Watching her, it's clear she's brilliant and makes a significant impact. I come in with extensive preparation, setting the mood with my playlist and sitting in a corner, immersing myself in the scene. Then, Alia arrives, and bam! She nails it in the first take, and I'm left amazed." Vedang added, "She gets into character instantly, everything is sharp and precise. It's a testament to her professionalism after spending years in the industry. I've learned so much from her—lessons that are hard to quantify but are absorbed subconsciously. It's incredible how much you can gain from observing someone you admire." A few months back, *Indianexpress.com* had learned that Vedang Raina would be seen playing a sibling to Alia Bhatt in *Jigra*. When he asked Vedang about the same, he said, "Everyone keeps asking me this, but I am not sure what it is about. It sounds very exciting to play a sibling to Alia Bhatt."

Shraddha Kapoor recalls proposing to Varun Dhawan and facing rejection: 'He ran away'

Shraddha Kapoor and Varun Dhawan, who have been childhood friends, reunited on screen in *Stree 2*, with Varun making a cameo appearance as his character from *Bhediya*. In a recent interaction, Shraddha shared a nostalgic and amusing memory from their childhood when she proposed to Varun at the age of eight and was rejected.

Speaking on a podcast with Shubankar Mishra for his YouTube channel, Shraddha said, "Bohot purani kahani hai. Logo ko pata hai ye. Varun ne mera proposal reject kiya tha. It is very funny. Hum humare dads ke shoot pe gaye the. Mujhe bachpan me Varun pe chhota sa crush tha. Hum mountain top pe gaye, waha pe khelte khelte gaye. Maine bola, 'Main ek baat bolungi Varun, main ulta bolungi to aap uska meaning samajh jaana.' Maine bola, 'You love I.' Usne bola, 'Mujhe ladkiyan pasand nahi hain.' Aur wo bhaag ke chala gaya fir (It's an old story that a lot of people already know about. Varun rejected my proposal. It's funny to think about. We had joined our dad during one of their shoots. As a kid, I had a small crush on Varun. While we were playing, we reached the top of a mountain. I said, 'Varun, I will say something in a reverse way and you'll have to figure it out.' So I said, 'You love I.' He replied, 'I don't like girls.' Then he ran away.)"

Shraddha Kapoor and Varun Dhawan have a loyal fan following due to their on-screen chemistry in films like *ABCD 2* and *Street Dancer 3D*. Fans were thrilled to see them share the screen, even if briefly, in *Stree 2*. The film is part of Maddock Films' horror-comedy universe, which also includes *Bhediya*. Fans have eagerly anticipated a crossover between *Stree* and *Bhediya*. *Stree 2*, starring Shraddha Kapoor, Rajkumar Rao, Pankaj Tripathi,



Shraddha Kapoor and Varun Dhawan, who have been childhood friends, reunited on screen in *Stree 2*, with Varun making a cameo appearance as his character from *Bhediya*. In a recent interaction, Shraddha shared a nostalgic and amusing memory from their childhood when she proposed to Varun at the age of eight and was rejected.

Abhishek Banerjee, and Aparshakti Khurana, is enjoying a dream run at the box office. According to the makers, the film has grossed Rs 283 crore worldwide within just four days of its release (including paid previews) and has become the third highest-grossing film of 2024.

Sunil Grover's question to Sri Sri Ravi Shankar leaves Kapil Sharma and audience in splits: 'Gurudev, how to avoid a fight between two friends...'



Kapil Sharma and Sunil Grover recently made a spiritual journey to Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's ashram in Bengaluru. During the visit, the actors also interacted with Gurudev as a huge crowd watched them. Now, a video of the trio discussing anger and conflict has surfaced online. While Kapil humorously points out that the discussion is pointed at him and Sunil, the latter's question to Gurudev leaves the audience in splits. In a joint video shared by Kapil and Sunil, the latter can be seen asking the spiritual leader a question about conflict. He says, "Gurudev,

I had a question to ask. When two friends, who love each other a lot, have a conflict, how do they make sure to patch up without having a gap of six years or avoid such situation?"

Sunil Grover's question made the entire audience laugh out loud as he was hinting at his previous feud with Kapil Sharma after which the two friends were not on talking terms for around six years, also cutting off all professional ties. Gurudev who was listening to Sunil's question with a warm smile, replied, "Conflict is a part of love! To love someone and fight with someone else, that doesn't happen. You need to be together for both love and fight." A few years ago, it was reported that a dispute occurred between Kapil Sharma and Sunil Grover on a flight from Australia in October 2017. Kapil was accused of physical assault under the influence of alcohol. After the incident, Sunil quit their popular comic show *The Kapil Sharma Show*. He played the popular characters Gutthi and Dr Mashoor Gulati on the show. Years later, the two reunited for Kapil Sharma's *The Great Indian Kapil Show* on Netflix. The show concluded its first season in June. Now, the makers are gearing up for the show's second season.

Imtiaz Ali considered casting Aishwarya Rai Bachchan for *Highway* before meeting Alia Bhatt: 'Wanted to cast a slightly elder woman'

Imtiaz Ali's 2014 movie *Highway* remains one of the most loved Hindi films, and it played a pivotal role in unlocking Alia Bhatt's potential as an actor after her debut in Karan Johar's *Student of the Year*. Although *Highway* was a breakthrough for Alia's career, she wasn't the first choice for the role. In a recent interaction, the filmmaker shared that he initially considered casting Aishwarya Rai Bachchan for the lead role of Veera.

Imtiaz originally wanted to cast an older actress for the film, but he changed his mind after meeting Alia at the screening of *Luv Shuv Tey Chicken Khurana*. In an interview with *Mid-Day*, Imtiaz said, "Her emotional quotient was very high, and I was drawn to talk to her." He added, "I always wanted to cast a slightly elder actress, like a woman of at least 30. I didn't want to cast a more mature woman who's had experiences of the type that she was going to talk about in the film. Aishwarya Rai without any makeup would be a great choice." In an earlier interaction with Mukesh Chhabra on his *Mashable India* show, Imtiaz Ali had revealed how the film's unit wasn't convinced with Alia Bhatt's potential to carry the film. He said "I asked if she (Alia) read the script. She was a bit overwhelmed and felt it was too much to do. She had an issue that she was there in every scene. Alia was a very unex-



pected actor for *Highway* and the unit was not convinced about how she would do this role. So, to convince them I made her tell the story in her way. By the end, everyone was like nobody else could do this role but Alia." *Highway* was Alia Bhatt's second film. It tells the story of a rich girl who is about to get married but is kidnapped by a truck driver. Instead of fearing him, she develops strong feelings for him and experiences a sense of freedom she had never felt before. The kidnapping also helps her confront the trauma of sexual abuse she endured as a child.

Anil Sharma says he told Sunny Deol that he deserves to charge Rs 50 crore per project: 'People measure stardom...'

Director Anil Sharma's *Gadar 2*, which starred the iconic Jodi of Sunny Deol and Ameesha Patel, became a blockbuster in 2023. Even though the film was heavily panned by critics, it worked quite well with the audience earning a lifetime collection of Rs 525.7 crore. Recently, as *Gadar 2* completed a year of its release, director Anil Sharma recalled how he had told Sunny Deol that the film would lead to him demanding Rs 50 crore per project after it was released. Anil also shared details about his next film called *Vanwaas: A Journey Of Life* with Nana Patekar and Utkarsh Sharma.

In an interview with *Bollywood Hungama*, Anil Sharma said that before *Gadar 2*, he would make one film every 2-3 years. However, after his last film, he began work on his next one. The director even shared that the shoot for his next film is already completed and the movie would star Nana Patekar along with Utkarsh Sharma. Talking about the film, Anil said, "The film's title is *Vanwaas: A Journey Of Life*. In *Ramayan*, the father sent his son to *vanwaas*. Nowadays, it's vice versa. *Har ghar mein vanwaas ho raha hai*, it is an emotional drama. Earlier, I made films like *Shradhanjali* (1981), *Bandhan Kuchhey Dhaagon Ka* (1983), and *Apne* (2007). This film is in that zone. It's the most relevant story of today's times, based on what's happening to old people in society. It has one of the finest performances of Nana Patekar. The scenes between Nana and Utkarsh are mind-blowing!"

When asked how instrumental he has been in Sunny Deol's comeback, Anil Sharma said, "When I told Sunny



Deol about *Gadar 2*, I told him, 'You should do this film. You deserve to charge Rs. 50 crore per project. This film would help you achieve that.' The demand for the film was such that its shows were happening at 3 am. I woke up at 7:30 am and I had no idea about it. My wife told me about it and showed videos of the madness happening in the cinemas. She had tears in her eyes. It was an emotional moment for us. Sunny sir deserved it as he has always been a superstar. But people measure stardom through box office success and I don't blame them either. Even in the industry, nobody imagined in their wildest dreams that *Gadar 2* would be such a historic hit, except me."

While Anil Sharma shared that he plans to release *Vanwaas* this year, he shared that a date would be locked in September. He also revealed that work on *Gadar 3* is underway, and *Apne 2* is also in the pipeline.

Kareena Kapoor says she is awestruck sitting next to Sachin Tendulkar, calls him 'living legend' at ISPL 2 event: 'We watched him on our TV screens...'

Star couple Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor made a stylish appearance at the launch of the Indian Street Premier League (ISPL) season 2 in Mumbai on Sunday. The event was also attended by legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar. Sitting beside the former cricketer, Kareena revealed she was awestruck.

The actress, who owns *The Tigers of Kolkata* along with her husband Saif, shared her excitement about sharing the stage with Sachin. Addressing the crowd at the event, Kareena said, "I am so stunned and excited that I am sitting next to a living legend, Mr Sachin Tendulkar, who we watched on our tv screens at home and gone like 'Oh my God', so I am completely awestruck right now being next to him and being part of the ISPL." Kareena Kapoor also shared her love for cricket and said, "I have always been great fan of watching and enjoying the sport for its team spirit. And, for the fact that it stands for the

heart of what India also stands for. I think when there's a cricket match, every Indian is glued to the screen." For the event, the actress wore a classy white shirt paired with grey trouser. She left her hair open to complete the look. Meanwhile, Saif Ali Khan sported an all-black outfit.

Kareena Khan's *The Tigers of Kolkata* lifted the inaugural Indian Street Premier League (ISPL)-T10 tennis ball tournament title after they outplayed Majhi Mumbai by 10 wickets in the summit clash in March. On the work front, the actress will be seen in the Meghana Gulzar film *Daayra*. She is also part of Rohit Shetty's cop-drama *Singham Again* also starring Ajay Devgn, Deepika Padukone, Arjun Kapoor, and Ranveer Singh. Apart from these films, the actress also has her long-pending project in the pipeline—Hansal Mehta's *The Buckingham Murders*. Meanwhile, Saif Ali Khan will be seen in his Telugu debut *Devara*, alongside NTR Jr and Janhvi Kapoor.

Mahi bhai is not my friend... he is my guru: Khaleel Ahmed



GNS News Agency, August 21 Indian left-arm pacer Khaleel Ahmed has lauded sung high praise for the former skipper MS Dhoni. He would call the wicket-keeper his "Guru" and would recall his reaction when Dhoni asked him to bowl the first over during the Asia Cup. "This photo was taken in New Zealand. We were going to the practice ground from the main ground. Mahi bhai was given flowers by his friends. I was walking with him. He passed me the flowers Khaleel would recall about his experience on Akash Chopra's YouTube channel. Mahi bhai is not my friend, not my elder brother, he is my guru." he

added.

"Since my childhood, I wanted to become the bowler who took the first over from India since I had watched Zaheer Khan growing up. In the Asia Cup, Mahi bhai asked me to bowl the first over. I ran so hard, away from the huddle thinking that if I give it time he might change his mind. I think the most important player of a team gets to bowl the first," the 26-year-old said. Khaleel despite having the ability to swing the new ball and perform well has had his fair share of issues time and again which hampered his career. Former Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting who has worked with Khaleel during the Indian Premier League speaking to ICC would say: "Someone like Khaleel Ahmed I think could find himself on the Test tour (Border Gavaskar Trophy 2024/25). I know he's just been over in Zimbabwe recently and played that (T20) series over there, but a left-arter would be ideal for them to have in their touring squad. Khaleel is yet to make his red-ball debut but in 12 First Class matches he picked up 25 wickets at an average of 35 in white ball games, he played in 11 ODI's for India picking up 15 wickets at an average of 31 and an economy of 5.81. In 18 T20s he picked up 16 wickets at an average of 35.12 and an economy of 8.51.

Rinku Singh on Duleep Trophy snub: 'I wasn't selected because I didn't do well enough'

GNS News Agency, August 21

Rinku Singh attributed his exclusion from the Duleep Trophy to his underwhelming performance with the bat for Uttar Pradesh in the last Ranji Trophy season. Rinku was one of the noticeable names that missing from the four squads BCCI announced for the Duleep Trophy, starting from September 5. "I didn't perform that well (in the domestic season). I didn't play as many matches in the Ranji Trophy, I played 2-3 matches. I wasn't selected because I didn't do well enough," he told Sports Today.

In 2023-24 Ranji Trophy season, Rinku played three games for Uttar Pradesh, scored 128 runs at 42.66 with just one fifty. Overall, Rinku has a stellar first-class record, averaging 54.70 from 47 first-class matches. When asked whether he has been seen as a T20 specialist, Rinku said: "No worries, I am happy with whatever chances I am getting. When I will be selected for ODIs or Tests, it will be a huge deal for me. Whatever I am getting to play right now, I am playing." Team A: Shubman Gill (c), Mayank Agarwal, Riyan Parag, Dhruv Jurel, KL Rahul, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Tanush Kotian, Kuldeep Yadav, Akash Deep, Prasidh Krishna, Khaleel Ahmed, Avesh Khan, Vidwath Kaverappa, Kumar Kushagra, Shashwat Rawat

Team B: Abhimanyu Easwaran (c), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Sarfaraz Khan, Rishabh Pant, Musheer Khan, Nitish Kumar Reddy*, Washington Sundar, Ravindra Jadeja,



Mohammed Siraj, Yash Dayal, Mukesh Kumar, Rahul Chahar, R Sai Kishore, Mohit Awasthi, N Jagadeesan (wk) Team C: Ruturaj Gaikwad (c), B Sai Sudharsan, Rajat Patidar, Abishek Porel (WK), Suryakumar Yadav, B Indrajith, Hrithik Shokeen, Manav Suthar, Umran Malik, Vyshak Vijaykumar, Anshul Kamboj, Himanshu Chauhan, Mayank Markande, Aryan Juyal (wk), Sandeep Warrier Team D: Shreyas Iyer (c), Atharva Taide, Yash Dube, Devdutt Padikkal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Ricky Bhui, Saransh Jain, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, Aditya Thakare, Harshit Rana, Tushar Deshpande, Akash Sengupta, KS Bharat (wk), Saurabh Kumar

Pakistan vs Bangladesh, Test series: Squads, match schedule, live streaming info

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The Test series will be crucial for both sides to build their standings in the ongoing ICC World Test Championship 2023-25 cycle. Pakistan are currently placed sixth after featuring in five Tests this cycle. They have won two while losing three Tests to gain a points percentage (PCT) of 36.7. Meanwhile, Bangladesh are ranked eighth with a solitary win in four matches. Babar Azam's side last featured in a Test series in Australia last year where they went down 0-3 to the hosts. Bangladesh lost their last home Test series to Sri Lanka in March 2024.

While the two Tests were slated to be played in Rawalpindi and Karachi, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) moved the second Test from Karachi to Rawalpindi where the first match will be played. The decision was made following the ongoing renovations at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi, one of the venues for the ICC Champions Trophy in 2025. "We have been guided by the construction experts on the timelines for the readiness of the venue. They advised that while construction could continue during playing hours, the resulting noise pollution would disturb the cricketers. Additionally, the dust from the construction work could also affect the health and wellbeing of the players, officials, broadcasters, and media," the PCB said on Sunday.

Pakistan will feature a 14-member squad for the first



Test after the team released spinner Abrar Ahmed and batter Kamran Ghulam before all-rounder Aamir Jamal failed to recover from an injury. Pakistan squad for Bangladesh Test series: Shan Masood (c), Saud Shakeel (vc), Abdullah Shafique, Babar Azam, Khuram Shahzad, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Huraira, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Sarfaraz Ahmed (wk), Shaheen Afridi. Bangladesh squad for Pakistan Test series: Najmul Hossain Shanto (C), Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Zakir Hasan, Shadman Islam, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan, Litton Kumer Das, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, Nayeem Hasan, Nahid Rana, Shoriful Islam, Hasan Mahmud, Taskin Ahmed, Syed Khaled Ahmed.

I want to produce more Olympians, says Table Tennis coach Somnath

GNS News Agency, August 21

Hyderabad: "I am fully dedicated to table tennis and aim to produce more players like Sreeja from Telangana. However, it will be great if the State government extends support in this endeavour," says Somnath Ghosh, personal coach of Sreeja Akula. Somnath who was part of the Indian table tennis contingent at the recently concluded Paris Olympics, says we have the potential to produce champion players. However, to achieve this he says the State government's unstinted support is required. On the development of the sport in Telangana, the former national paddler says, "I have written to the Telangana government seeking land to develop a facility offering quality training to young talents. My role doesn't stop at Sreeja. I want to produce more Olympians from the State and this will happen only with support from the right quarters."

Reflecting on Sreeja's maiden Olympics, where she became only the second Indian paddler to reach the pre-quarterfinals in Olympic history, the coach is proud of her achievements. "This was the biggest stage. She should be proud of herself for the way she performed. Her confidence will only grow from here," Somnath said. "Sreeja had previously struggled against Christina Kallberg and Zeng Jian, but she put up a good show to beat them this time. This makes it special because the Olympics is the pinnacle of sports events," he added.

However, the 26-year-old's run was cut short by world



no. 1 Yingsha Sun in the round of 16. "It was disheartening to lose after playing so well in the first two sets. We were upset and cried after the game. I felt she was nervous and missed my presence in the field of play. But there's no point in dwelling on what went wrong. We've moved on and are now focused on the next challenge," the 40-year-old said. Looking ahead to the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028, Somnath is determined to see Sreeja doing well in the next Olympics. "The road to LA will be tough. By then, Sreeja should be in a position to beat the top Chinese players more often," he stated. Somnath is also focusing on the next generation of players. "The motivation for them is different now because they see an Olympian in the academy and believe that they can achieve the same."

Vikram Rathour on Rohit Sharma's captaincy: 'I have never seen a captain who is so invested in team meetings and strategies'



GNS News Agency, August 21 Rohit Sharma Mohali: India's head coach Rahul Dravid, batting coach Vikram Rathour and captain Rohit Sharma during a practice session ahead of the first T20 cricket match against Afghanistan, in Mohali, Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024. Former Team India batting coach Vikram Rathour showered praise on captain Rohit Sharma and lauded his on-field tactics and his captaincy style.

"He might forget whether he has decided to bat or bowl at the toss, or his phone and iPad in the team bus but he never forgets his gameplan. He is very good at it and is a very shrewd tactician," former Team India batting coach Vikram Rathour said in a podcast "Find a Way with Taruwar Kohli." Rathour explains three qualities of Rohit that make him an exceptional captain. "His first quality is that as a batsman, he is a phenomenal player. I think he

is someone who understands his game really well. He always have a clear game plan," said Rathour. "Even as a leader, you will have to lead from the front. You have to perform to set the example. And since he has become the captain he has always led by example." Rathour also credits Rohit for his investment in the team and players. "He is a player's captain. He is invested with the players heavily," he said.

"Kisi captain ko maine team meetings ya strategy mey itna involve hote nahi dekha (I have never seen a captain, who is so invested in team meetings and strategies). India T20 WC India's captain Rohit Sharma gestures playfully as he walks to collect the winners' after India won the ICC Men's T20 World Cup final cricket match against South Africa at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, Saturday, June 29, 2024. (AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)" He spends a lot of time on the team's strategy. He is part of the bowlers' meeting, batters meeting. He wants to sit with the bowlers and batters to try and understand what they are thinking. He invests a lot of time with the players." Rathour gives recalls an incident of the T20 World Cup final, where Rohit surprised everyone by bringing Jasprit Bumrah early and how it helped them win the trophy. "He is tactically very good as a captain. In the T20 World Cup final, he finished Bumrah's over early. A lot of people must have questioned that decision but that decision put us in the situation, where 16 was needed in the last over. "His tactical decisions on the field are spot on. Sitting outside it surprises you as a coach as well. We from outside sometimes think what he is doing but then you realise what he has done after a while."

Fabian Hurzeler, Premier League's youngest ever manager at 31, loves setpieces and high-presses

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Five of Brighton's starters against Everton were older than their manager, Fabian Hurzeler. His managerial counterpart, Sean Dyche, 53, was already a grisly centre-back at Chesterfield when Hurzeler was born in Houston, to dentist parents. Hurzeler, 31, is the youngest permanent manager in the history of English Premier League, its prevailing avatar the same age as him. Fresh-faced, with a faint stubble and a placid smile, liberally tattooed arms that fiddle with his cap, he looks younger, like an obscure substitute or a nutritionist, who had accidentally wandered into the touchline. There, though, was hardly a wave of surprise when Brighton & Hove Albion employed him as the manager. His reputation preceded him. Last year, he steered St Pauli, a left-leaning club with the insignia of a skull in northern Hamburg that he joined as assistant coach in 2020 when it was in the second division and had just bottled a promotion opportunity, to the Bundesliga for the first-ever time. His journey to St Pauli was even more fascinating.

Hurzeler was only two years old when his parents—father is Swiss and mother German—quit practice in the States and settled in Freiburg, before moving to Munich. In the city of the country's most decorated football clubs, football captivated him and by 10, he was already at the Bayern Munich academy, nursing football ambitions. "A hardworking midfielder," by his own accounts, he spent the next 10 years warming the age-group benches of several clubs including Bayern, Hoffenheim and 1860 Munich, before "common sense prevailed and I stopped dreaming that I could be a professional."

At the age of 23, he took his first leap into managing, joining fifth-division club FC Pipinsried as player-coach. That's why Hurzeler insists that he has more experience in managing teams than several others that are older than him. "My age is a big topic, I know that. I say I am a young man, but I am not a young coach," he would say in his unveiling press conference.

His ideas on the pitch, as illustrated in the thrashing of Everton are well-defined. Brighton was dynamic and energetic, pressed high and aggressively, commanding possession, dictating tempo, and regaining possession as soon as it was lost, emitting the vibes of Jurgen Klopp in his Dortmund years. The midfield shape-shifts, often assuming the form of an elongated diamond, the attacking midfielders often interchanged their roles, and maddeningly kept the ball higher up the pitch. He used to stick a poster in the St Pauli dressing room: "Always on the front foot." Like his Brighton predecessor Roberto de Zerbi, he builds from the back, but the build-up play is not as elaborate as the Italian's either. Besides, he has a maniacal obsession with set-pieces, unlike de Zerbi. "I'm a big fan of set pieces because set pieces are a game-changer. They are a match-winner. This would be part of my identity," he said.

In the technical area, he is all fire and brimstone, preening and pirouetting, yelling instructions, encourag-



ing them, moving to and fro corresponding to his team's movements. Last year, he received seven yellow cards. It's easy to foresee him copping a few this year too. Not that it would bother him. "I didn't receive a yellow card yet in the Premier League! I will be authentic and I won't change, but also I will always be respectful," said Hurzeler, who considers Marcelo Bielsa and Pep Guardiola as his "coaching voice." In the dressing room, he has emphasised on "being the best team-mate." "This brings energy. This brings a relationship to each other. This makes you strong on the pitch. This is togetherness. So, a big save from the goalkeeper; cheer, support. You have to live it and that's what we need to be successful. So, positivity and being the best team-mate. Two very important values," he told his players in his first speech.

His vision, he says, is to create a family. Before officially joining the club, he learned the names of every non-football staff at the club in England's south coast and met them addressing their names. He brought them cookies and candies when introducing himself to them. Training sessions, though, are intense and draining. During the preseason to Japan, he made them practise under the oppressive 1 pm sun in front of a packed stand. "Really hard, but it's been really enjoyable as well. If you put the hard work in, you get your rewards from it— which is what you want as players," Brighton veteran Adam Webster would say. To mix fun, he has introduced hand tennis, two against one, in narrow spaces. In weeks, he has woven a strong bond with his players. So much so that some of them, like the first-choice goalkeeper Jason Steele, two years older than Hurzeler, told his wife after the first day's practice that he was overwhelmed. "I told her there is no way I am older than the boss, which is credit to him. To be able to capture the room and have that aura and charisma. The moment he took his first meeting it was, 'Wow, this guy is here and he is ready.' Everything about him screams boss and that is the biggest compliment I can give him." The commitment of the players, the trust in his methods and the respect he exudes were writ large in the hammering of Everton, though sterner tests await them. Seven of his next nine games are those against the teams that finished in the top eight last season. But the first impressions of the Premier League's youngest ever manager suggests that the latest punt of Brighton's owner Tony Bloom, a betting entrepreneur, is a calculated gamble.

Irish rider Louis O'Regan dies after crash in Manx GP qualifying session

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New Delhi: The 2024 Manx Grand Prix was struck by tragedy as Irish rider Louis O'Regan lost his life following a crash during the event's opening qualifying session. The incident occurred on Monday at Kate's Cottage, a notorious spot on the mountain section of the 37.73-mile (60km) course. The crash happened at approximately 16:50 BST, leading to the session being red-flagged and not restarted, reported BBC. O'Regan, 43, originally from Ireland but living in Didcot, England, was an experienced competitor at the Manx Grand Prix. His journey in this historic event began in 2013 when he made his debut in the Newcomers A Race, securing an impressive 12th place.

Over the years, O'Regan demonstrated his skill and passion for the sport, with his best performance recorded in 2019 when he lapped the course at an average speed of 114.7 mph during the Junior Race. In a statement, race organisers expressed their deep sorrow at the loss. "With great sadness, the organisers of the Manx Grand Prix can confirm that Louis O'Regan, 43, has died following injuries sustained in an accident at Kate's Cottage dur-



ing the opening qualifying session of the 2024 event," the statement read. It is with great sadness that we can confirm the loss of Louis O'Regan following an incident in today's qualifying session. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Louis's partner, his family, loved ones, and friends. pic.twitter.com/2BEtvQ52vG "Louis, an Irishman who lived in Didcot, England, was an experienced competitor at the Manx Grand Prix, having made his debut in the 2013 Newcomers A Race, finishing 12th.