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Jani Master Faces Suspension by TFCC Amid Rape Investigation

Hyderabad: Tollywood choreographer Shaik Jani Basha, popularly known as Jani Master, is facing a suspension by the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce (TFCC) following rape allegations. The police are currently investigating the claims against him. TFCC announced the formation of an internal committee to examine the allegations thoroughly. In light of the ongoing investigation, the committee has decided to suspend Jani Master from his position as president of the Telugu Film & TV Dance Directors Association. The suspension will remain in effect until the inquiry is completed and a final decision is made.

One Nation One Election cleared by Cabinet, bill in Parliament winter session likely

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

One Nation One Election: The bill for holding simultaneous polls is likely to be introduced in the upcoming winter session of Parliament, sources said. In a step towards simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday cleared the proposal for One Nation One Election. The bill for holding simultaneous polls is likely to be introduced in the upcoming winter session of Parliament, sources said. The development came after the report of the high-level committee, which was headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind, was placed before the Union Cabinet. Addressing a press conference, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the One Nation One Poll would be implemented in two phases, stressing that the proposal received support from a large number of parties. "Over 80 per cent of the respondents supported simultaneous polls. The opposition parties may face pressure from within to support it," Vaishnaw said.

Several opposition parties, including the Congress, AAP and Shiv Sena (UBT), have opposed simultaneous polls, alleging that it would benefit the ruling party at the Centre. The NDA's allies like JD(U) and Chirag Paswan's party have backed the idea.

"A common electoral roll will be made for all elections... an implementation group will be formed to take forward the recommendations of the Kovind panel," Vaishnaw further said. The Modi 2.0 government had constituted the panel to examine the feasibility of simultaneous elections, one of the key promises made by the BJP in its Lok Sabha poll manifesto. The panel submitted its report to the President in March this year.

In its voluminous 18,626-page report, the panel has suggested simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies as the first step. For this, the approval of states is not required for the constitutional amendment. The next step involves synchronising elections to municipalities and the panchayats with polls to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies. This will be done in such a way that local body elections are held within 100 days of general elections. This will, however, require rati-



fication by not less than one-half of the states. The panel has recommended as many as 18 constitutional amendments for One Nation One Election to become a reality.

In recent weeks, the BJP has intensified its pitch for a One Nation One Election, which also found a mention by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech. Saying that simultaneous polls were the "need of the hour", PM Modi contended that frequent polls were creating hurdles in the country's progress. Earlier this week, Union Home Minister Amit Shah doubled down on the issue, saying One Nation One Election would be implemented within the NDA's current tenure. Reacting to the Union Cabinet move, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "We don't stand with this. One Nation One Election cannot work in a democracy. Elections need to be held as and when required if we want our democracy to survive." Previously, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had also opposed the concept of simultaneous polls. The AAP also was swift to dismiss the proposal as another "jumla" of the BJP, saying there was no consultation with the opposition.

"They were not able to conduct the elections of Maharashtra, Jharkhand, J&K, Haryana together. We are asking them to hold Delhi polls with Maharashtra and Jharkhand, prove yourself first," AAP's Sandeep Pathak said. "If the government collapses in any state in the middle of its tenure, will the BJP run the state through its gundagardi," he further said.

KCR's achievements can never be erased: KT Rama Rao

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Hyderabad: Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Working President, KT Rama Rao, said on Wednesday that the achievements of former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao can never be erased. "Numbers never lie, and KCR's achievements can never be erased," he posted on X while reacting to a report by the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council on Telangana's impressive performance in terms of per capita income. The PM's Economic Advisory Council has testified to the tremendous growth of Telangana under BRS rule.

"Straight from the horse's mouth! The PM's Economic Advisory Council has testified to the tremendous growth of Telangana under the BRS' rule. Telangana, registering a per capita income 94 per cent higher than the national average in just 9.5 years, proves how KCR garu has made Telangana a trailblazer on all fronts," wrote KT Rama Rao. According to the Economic Advisory Council, Southern states have performed strongly in terms of per capita income since the 1990s. They had per capita incomes below the national average until the 1990s but grew much faster after liberalisation. Telangana now has a per capita income 94 per cent higher than the national average, it said.

Meanwhile, through another social media post, the BRS Working President highlighted flooding of Vattem pump house of the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation



Scheme (PRLIS). "While CM Revanth Reddy was busy discovering and rediscovering the origins of computers and while he is busy boarding flights to appease Delhi bosses, someone should remind him this 'Palamuru Bidda' that he is vastly ignoring his duties! The recent flooding at the Vattem pump house of the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme (PRLIS) on September 3 has raised serious concerns," wrote KT Rama Rao. "The incident submerged the Bahubhali motors, and despite the urgency, only one meter of water has been drained so far, leaving 18 more meters to be dewatered immediately. Mr Chief Minister, please answer as to why you are hell-bent upon destroying everything that is important to Telangana and its farmers?," he added.

Telangana emerges as top performer in economic growth under BRS rule

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Hyderabad: Notwithstanding the political mudslinging and whataboutery, the previous BRS regime is repeatedly proving to have played a key role in advancing Telangana's economic growth.

The State has not only excelled in relative per capita income, but was also become a leading contributor to the national GDP during the BRS rule, in stark contrast to its position in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. A study of key economic indicators by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, covering 54 years (1960-61 to 2023-24), revealed that Telangana outperformed other States in economic growth and recorded the highest relative per capita income level of 193.6 per cent of national average. This marks a sharp rise from 123.9 per cent in 2010-11 and 177.4 per cent in 2020-21. Over the years last 54 years, the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh recorded relative per capita income with 89.9 per cent of national average in 1960-61, 92.4 per cent in 1970-71, 75.4 per cent in 1980-81, 79.9 per cent in 1990-91 and 100.9 per cent in 2000-01. Since 2010-11, the relative per capita income was separately registered for Telangana with

123.9 per cent of national average in 2010-11, 177.4 per cent in 2020-21 and 193.6 per cent in 2023-24. In comparison, erstwhile Andhra Pradesh recorded lower per capita income relative to the national average: from 89.9 per cent in 1960-61 to 100.9 per cent in 2000-01. Currently, Andhra Pradesh has a relative per capita income of 131.6 per cent of national average. However, under the BRS rule, newly formed Telangana State emerged as a key player in India's economic growth. Among the top performers, Karnataka registered a per capita income of 180.7 per cent of national average, followed by Haryana with 176.8 per cent, Tamil Nadu with 171.1 per cent and Gujarat with 160.7 per cent of national average. Comparatively, Southern States have performed strongly in terms of relative per capita income since the 1990s. They had per capita incomes below the national average until the 1990s but grew much faster after liberalisation, the report said. In terms of share in the national GDP, the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh registered 7.7 per cent in 1960-61 which grew to 8.2 per cent in 2000-01. Telangana's contribution grew from 3.8 per cent in 2010-11 to 4.7 per cent in 2020-21 and to 4.9 per cent in 2023-24.

CM Revanth Reddy Announces Huge Funds at Zero-Interest Loans for Women Entrepreneurs

Hyderabad: Chief Minister Revanth Reddy unveiled a major new initiative at the launch of the MSME policy today. He announced that the government will provide large funds at zero interest rates to women's groups to help them start and grow their businesses. "We are committed to turning women into successful business owners," said CM Revanth Reddy.

He explained that the government plans to offer loans totaling several lakh crores without any interest to support women entrepreneurs.

Telangana unveils MSME 2024 policy

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday launched the Telangana MSME 2024 policy, for which the government has allocated Rs 600 crore over the next five years.

Unveiled at Shilpa Kala Vedika, the policy focuses on addressing six key areas: land acquisition, finance, raw materials, skilled labour, market access, and technology. The launch was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and Industries and IT Minister D Sridhar Babu. The MSME 2024 policy introduces 40 measures to support MSMEs through every phase of their growth. Notably, five out of 10 new industrial parks, planned between the Outer Ring Road and the proposed Regional Ring Road, will be exclusively for MSMEs. One park will be reserved for women-owned enterprises, and another for innovative start-ups. The policy also reserves five per cent of plots in new in-

MP is a \$808 Mn (Rs. 6,000 Cr.) World Bank assisted program to support MSMEs across India. Telangana submitted the required Strategic Investment Plan with 14 proposed projects to the Ministry of MSME of which 10 projects received approval and funding.



dustrial parks for women and 15 per cent for SC/ST entrepreneurs, who will receive a 50 per cent subsidy on land costs.

To address financial barriers, the policy introduces a capital investment subsidy scheme where SC/ST entrepreneurs are eligible for a 50 per cent subsidy for manufacturing units, while other MSMEs will receive a 25 per cent subsidy. Women entrepreneurs will get an additional 20 per cent subsidy. Pilot programmes will also be

introduced to allow MSMEs to access credit based on future sales. The policy emphasises technological advancement through the establishment of a Rs 100 crore Yantram Fund to support MSME adoption of new technologies. It mandates that 25 per cent of government procurement will be sourced from MSMEs to further stimulate growth. Labour market reforms under the policy include the establishment of the Telangana Skilling University and the Digital

Employment Exchange of Telangana (DEET), besides streamline labour compliance and provide flexible working hours. The MSME 2024 policy also supports Self-Help Groups (SHGs) transitioning into MSMEs and focuses on strengthening Telangana's role as a key exporter, with an emphasis on import substitution. Revanth Reddy said the new policy would be central to Telangana's goal of becoming a \$1 trillion economy.

Pramod Tiwari slams BJP, allies for 'chop off Rahul Gandhi's tongue' remark

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

New Delhi: Congress Rajya Sabha MP Pramod Tiwari on Wednesday slammed the BJP and its allies for "chop off Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi's tongue" remark and said they are creating an environment of hatred and violence in the country. "First a Cabinet Minister of State in the Government of India, then a Cabinet Minister in the Government of Uttar Pradesh. Then BJP leader Marwah threatened to kill him like his grandmother. Now, a Shiv Sena MLA has announced a reward of Rs 11,00,000 to cut off his tongue. BJP and its alliance partners are creating an environment of hatred and violence in the country and this is dangerous," he told IANS.

He asserted that if there is any lapse in the security of LoP Rahul Gandhi then the Indian government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah would be responsible for it. "Let me make it very clear, we lost former PM Rajiv Gandhi and his mother late PM Indira Gandhi to terrorism. We are not afraid of terrorism. We do not even bow down and salute terrorism like the BJP," he stated.

"We keep speaking out against terrorism, we are speaking and will continue to speak. Yes, some Jai Chands like Ravneet Singh Bittu who have gone to the BJP are now speaking the same things as much as they are being asked to," Tiwari added. He also hit out at PM Modi and HM Shah and said, "Amit Shah, you do not even answer during press conferences. PM Modi, you eat kheer after going to Odisha but you do not say anything about this bitterness." Tiwari asserted that the Congress has filed an FIR and fulfilled its duty by taking whatever legal action is expected. "We have provided all the details where we received the threats from various BJP leaders and its allies, calling for bodily harm and assassination of Rahul Gandhi and calling the LoP a 'terrorist' at New Delhi's Tughlak Road police station.



"Now, it is the responsibility of the Indian government to take cognisance of it. Tughlak Road comes under the Home Ministry of the Indian government. We have fulfilled our responsibility and now it's up to the Centre what they will do in this matter," Tiwari concluded. On Wednesday, adding fuel to the already raging controversy over calls to harm LoP Rahul Gandhi, BJP Rajya Sabha MP Anil Bonde has called for "burning" the tongue of the Congress leader.

Sparking a fresh row and leaving the Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders fuming, Bonde made the controversial remarks while reacting to ruling Shiv Sena's Buldhana MLA, Sanjay Gaikwad's comments against the LoP.

anjay Gaikwad announced a reward of Rs 11 lakh to anybody who could "snip off" Rahul Gandhi's tongue for his purported stand against reservation during his recent US tour. Bonde said that instead of chopping off Rahul Gandhi's tongue, it should be inflicted with burns ("chatka") as he had gone abroad and allegedly insulted the country.

Modi to meet Trump during US visit, says Republican

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Washington/New York: Former President Donald Trump has said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet him next week during his upcoming three-day visit to the US. While the Republican presidential candidate slammed India as an "abuser" on the issue of import tariffs, he described Modi as a "fantastic man". Speaking on Tuesday at his first public appearance following the recent apparent assassination attempt, Trump said Modi will meet him next week when he is in the US.

"So when India, which is a very big abuser. He (Modi) happens to be coming to meet me next week, and Modi, he's fantastic. I mean, fantastic man. A lot of these leaders are fantastic," Trump said, reiterating that India imposes heavy tariffs on imports. The former President revealed the information as he spoke about trade and tariffs while responding to a question at a town hall meeting in Flint, Michigan. He went on to say, "These people are the sharpest people. They're not a little bit

backwards... You know the expression, they're at the top of their game, and they use it against us. But India is very tough. Brazil is very tough.... China is the toughest of all, but we were taking care of China with the tariffs." "So we're going to do a reciprocal trade. If anybody charges us 10 cents, if they charge us \$2, if they charge us a hundred per cent, 250, we charge them the same thing. And what's going to happen? Everything's going to disappear, and we're going to end up having free trade again. And if it doesn't disappear, we're going to take in a lot of money," he said. Modi will begin his trip with the Quad Leaders' Summit being hosted by President Joe Biden in Wilmington, Delaware. The summit will be attended by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio of Japan. Modi will then travel to New York and address a mega community event in Long Island on September 22. He will address world leaders at the landmark Summit of the Future event at the UN headquarters the next day.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Phasing out paddy

PUNJAB's draft Agriculture Policy has laudably recommended a ban on all long-duration paddy varieties and paddy cultivation in 15 dark blocks, where the groundwater extraction rate is well above the recharge rate. Water-guzzling paddy has become a millstone around the state's neck in recent decades. Its cultivation was imposed on Punjab at a time when the country was facing food insecurity in the 1960s. The state's gritty farmers rose to the occasion, ushering in the Green Revolution, and the food-deficient nation became food-surplus. However, this led to far-reaching repercussions — agricultural as well as environmental.

Though rice is not a staple food in Punjab, cultivators have stuck to paddy farming because of an assured procurement system. What's alarming is the enormous damage caused to the water table. According to doomsday predictions, Punjab — the fabled 'land of the five rivers' — may turn into a desert in two decades. Moreover, the rampant burning of paddy stubble aggravates air pollution in many parts of the northern region in October-November every year. Successive governments in Punjab have tried measures such as encouraging short-duration paddy varieties and prohibiting transplantation before the notified date, but these have only been partially successful. Unfortunately, crop diversification has been promoted in a half-hearted manner. Motivating farmers to shun paddy has to go hand in hand with encouraging them to go for alternatives that consume far less water.

In November last year, the Supreme Court had asked the Centre to seriously consider the Punjab Government's suggestion to phase out paddy cultivation and incentivise farmers to switch over to crops such as millets by offering them the minimum support price (MSP).

'Shocking display of arrogance': Congress slams govt over video of restaurant chain owner 'apologising' to FM



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

coimbatoreThe incident stirred a hornet's nest after BJP Tamil Nadu posted a video of him interacting with Sitharaman post the event. A row has erupted over a video in which the owner of Annapoorna chain of restaurants is purportedly 'apologising' to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for voicing concerns about the Goods and Services Tax (GST). In the video shared by BJP's Tamil Nadu unit, Srinivasan, the owner of Annapoorna, is seen interacting with Sitharaman, standing up, folding hands in front of her. Reacting to the video, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said that when "fragile egos" of those in power are hurt, it seems humiliation is what they will deliver.

Two videos were being shared by several Congress leaders and in one of them at an event on September 11, Annapoorna chain of restaurants owner Srinivasan is seen purportedly highlighting concerns over varying GST rates. In the second video, Srinivasan was seen purportedly apologising in person to the Finance Minister. Gandhi said if this "arrogant government" would listen to the people they would understand that a simplified GST would solve the problems of lakhs of businesses. In a post on X, Gandhi said when the owner of a small business, like Annapoorna restaurant in Coimbatore, asks public servants for a simplified GST regime, his request is met with "arrogance and outright disrespect". "Yet, when a billionaire friend seeks to bend the rules, change the laws, or acquire national assets, Modi Ji rolls out the red carpet," he alleged.

"Our small business owners have already endured the blows of demonetisation, an inaccessible banking system, tax extortion and a disastrous GST. The last thing they deserve is further humiliation," Gandhi said. But when the fragile egos of those in power are hurt, it seems humiliation is exactly what they will deliver, the former Congress chief said. He said MSMEs have been asking for relief for years. "If this arrogant government would listen to the people they would understand that a simplified GST with a single tax rate would solve the problems of lakhs of businesses," Gandhi said.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai on Friday apologised for sharing the entrepreneur's private conversation with Sitharaman. Annamalai wrote on X, "On behalf of @BJP4TamilNadu, I sincerely apologise for the actions of our functionaries who shared a private conversation between a respected business owner and our Hon. FM. I spoke with Thiru Srinivasan Aji, the esteemed owner of the Annapoorna chain of Restaurants, to express regret for this unintended breach of privacy." "Annapoorna Srinivasan Anna is a pillar of Tamil Nadu's business community, contributing significantly to the state's and nation's economic growth. I request everyone to lay the matter to rest with due respect," Annamalai wrote. DMK, the ruling party in Tamil Nadu and an INDIA bloc ally at national level, reposted Rahul Gandhi's post on X. Mallikarjun Kharge, LoP in Rajya Sabha also wrote on X, "Tax Terror for Poor & Middle Class, while 'Tax Cuts' for Modi ji's Crony Friends! The disgraceful humiliation of a small businessman, the owner of Sree Annapoorna restaurant in Coimbatore by the Finance Minister and the BJP, smacks of arrogance of power. She has been a repeated offender in such public interactions." "Tax Terror for Poor & Middle Class, while 'Tax Cuts' for Modi ji's Crony Friends! The disgraceful humiliation of a small businessman, the owner of Sree Annapoorna restaurant in Coimbatore by the Finance

Punjab CM, ministers, MLAs canvass for AAP in Haryana, face protesters' ire back home



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

At a time when Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, ministers and AAP MLAs are busy campaigning in Haryana which goes to polls on October 5, back home their government is facing the ire of several protesting employees' unions, including doctors and electricity department technical staff, over their various demands. CM Mann addressed a rally in Jakhhal on Sunday. With Thursday being the last day of filing nomination papers, six Punjab Cabinet ministers were sent to attend roadshows in different parts of Haryana. Health minister Dr Balbir Singh was in Bahadurgarh, Cabinet minister Aman Arora in Kaithal, Laljit Singh Bhullar in Maham Assembly constituency, Chetan Singh Jauramajra campaigned in Ratia, Brahm Shankar Jimpa in Beri, Balkar Singh in Faridabad, while Sangrur MP Gurmeet Singh Meht Hayer in the Pundri Assembly constituency. AAP MLAs Madan Lal Bagga, Ashok Parashar Pappi and Rajinder Pal Kaur China were also sent to Haryana on Thursday.

AAP senior spokesperson Neel Garg told The Indian Express, "Duties have been assigned to Cabinet ministers, MLAs and volunteers from Punjab to strengthen the campaign in poll-bound Haryana to help our party candidates win." "Over 2,500 government doctors under the Punjab Civil Medical Services Association (PCMSA) have been on strike since September 9. They suspended OPDs for three hours from September 9 to 11, and then the full-day OPD suspension on September 12, demanding assured career progression and promotions after 4, 9 and 14 years, among others. Full day OPD suspension was extended to September 13 by late evening.

Punjab Civil Medical Services Association (PCMSA) state president Dr Akhil Sarin said, "The assured career progression policy, temporarily suspended by the Congress government in 2021, has not been implemented by the AAP government to date." "Around 14,000 technical staff of the Electricity Department — linemen, senior linemen and junior engineers — are on a mass casual leave since September 10. On Thursday, they extended their leave till September 17 and got the backing of around 4,000 contractual employees from Thursday midnight onwards. The Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) has been managing grids and sub-stations by deploying clerical staff and engineers, and haked officers to outsource staff to repair faults in the absence of protesting employees, whose major demands include regularisation of contractual staff, Rs 1 crore compensation to the family of employees who die in the line of duty. Asked about the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), PSEB Employees Federation president Gurpreet Singh Gandiwind said, "We are being threatened with the imposition of ESMA several times but we don't bother about it. The government agreed to our genuine demands, but not implemented to date."

Indian Railways to roll out Kavach anti-collision technology from Churchgate to Virar in Mumbai

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

In a significant move to bolster passenger safety and improve operations of long-distance trains, the railway ministry is rolling out the Kavach technology across the Western Railway zone. The project has been planned for various Western Railway lines spanning 789 km, including a 56-km stretch from Churchgate to Virar in Mumbai. About Kavach Technology: Kavach is an advanced Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system, designed to prevent collisions and enhance operational safety. This technology features an electronic device linked with radio frequency identification systems positioned at stations, trains and tracks. If a loco pilot inadvertently skips a red signal, Kavach automatically activates and controls the train's braking systems. Additionally, the system detects any trains approaching the same tracks, taking necessary actions to avert collisions and alerting the loco pilot.

Current Status: Four contracts for the installation of Kavach on 789 km of tracks and 90 lokos were awarded in October 2022 and December 2023, with a 24-month completion period. So far, successful loco trials have been completed for 405 km of the total 789 km. The target for FY 2024-25 is to cover 735 km. Mumbai Suburban Section Update: For the Mumbai Central to Virar suburban

Punjab Pensioners' Association has announced a state-level protest rally against the state government on September 22 in Mohali in support of their various demands, especially for pending dearness allowance (DA) instalments since January 1, 2016. "Pending DA instalments apply to all serving employees as well. We appeal to the Punjab CM to accept genuine demands of protesting power corporation employees so that they return to work... ultimately consumers suffer," said Ajaypal Singh Atwal, general secretary of the PSEB Engineers Association.

On September 15, the Punjab Employees and Pensioners joint front will meet to decide whether to go to Haryana for protest rallies or continue in Punjab. Government teachers are also upset over delayed promotions, flaws in transfers, no regularisation of computer teachers, etc. On Teachers' Day, the Democratic Teachers Front (DTF) staged protests across the state, while police used mild force to disperse teachers in Sangrur. "Normally, transfers happen by March 31, but we are into September and the transfer process is still incomplete," DTF president Digvijay Pal Sharma said. From September 1 to 5, BKU (Ugrahan) held protest rallies in Chandigarh while the SKM did a mahapanchayat in Chandigarh on September 2.

The joint employees front held a massive protest rally, seeking the implementation of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), on September 3 in Chandigarh. The Punjab Revenue Officers Association had announced a mass casual leave from August 19, but the call was taken back after the revenue minister met them. The Deputy Commissioner Offices Employees Association, too, held gate rallies in August and even in the first week of September pressing the government for their pending demands. "The government has half of its term left but it appears from protests that this is an election year in Punjab. It is high time for AAP leaders to introspect. They failed to fulfil their promises," an electricity board employee told. "The government failed on all fronts. They made so many promises and couldn't fulfil a majority of them. The CM has no time to meet employees after giving them time to meet. On September 12, we were supposed to meet the CM over the implementation of OPS in Chandigarh, but our meeting was cancelled and we were told that the cabinet sub-committee would meet us. Hence, we boycotted that meeting. The CM should hear us. He had given time for meetings in the past too, but postponed them," said Jasvir Talwara, convenor, Punjab Employees and Pensioners Joint Front. "We will decide whether to go to Haryana or to protest in Punjab at our state-level meeting on September 15," he added. AAP senior spokesperson Garg, however, said, "We are a party which emerged out of an 'aandolan' and we always understand the problems of the masses. We are always open to dialogue. We are holding talks with doctors, electricity employees and other unions. The CM met farmer unions in Chandigarh on September 5 and assured them of implementing the agriculture policy. Following this, they called off their dharna. Rather in a democracy, we welcome people expressing their opinions... the same way the Centre should also listen to the farmers sitting at Shambhu and Khanauri borders. Most demands are being met in principle but the implementation takes time. Financial constraints are another issue which needs to be taken care of. Most of the demands are linked to the previous governments. Our government is still rectifying things step-by-step. Hence, I don't think the people are unhappy."

No coercive action yet against motorists without HSRP fixation, says Karnataka Transport Commissioner Yogesh



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

The Karnataka State Transport and Road Safety Department Friday said it will take a call on extending the deadline for HSRP (High-Security Registration Plates) affixation after the hearing of a related matter in the Karnataka High Court on September 18. According to earlier reports, transport officials were planning to impose a fine of Rs 500 on motorists without HSRP and Rs 1,000 for repeat offenders from September 16. The deadline for HSRP affixation is slated to end on September 15. Yogesh A M, Transport Commissioner, Karnataka, told the Indian Express that the department has neither decided to impose fines on erring motorists nor allow more time to get HSRP.

According to the transport department, only 26 per cent of the two crore vehicles in the state have affixed HSRP. The deadline for HSRP affixation was extended several times in the past in view of the lukewarm response. "The decision on extending the deadline once again or imposing fines against motorists will be taken only after the September 18 court hearing. Till then no coercive action will be taken against motorists," said Yogesh.

The Karnataka High Court is hearing writ petitions against the transport department's August 17, 2023, notification, which mandates that vehicles registered before April 1, 2019, affix the HSRPs through OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) and their authorised dealers. The petitioners have argued that all licensed number plate manufacturers having Type Approval Certificates (TACs) should also be allowed to affix the registration plates. The HSRP, a flagship project of the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), is an aluminium-made number plate that is fixed onto a vehicle by a minimum of two non-reusable snap-on locks and has various identifiable features. It has been made mandatory to fix them on vehicles registered before 2019, so that the old number plates are not tampered with and misused by car thieves.

After key accused Sanjay Roy refuses consent, court rejects CBI plea to conduct narco-analysis test



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

The additional chief judicial magistrate (ACJM) court in Sealdah on Thursday rejected CBI's plea for the narco-analysis test of Sanjay Roy, the main accused in the rape and murder of a junior doctor at Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital last month.

The ACJM court's decision came after Roy refused to give consent to the test to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is probing the rape and murder of the R G Kar Medical College and Hospital doctor. The Central agency appealed to the ACJM court, which is hearing the R G Kar rape and murder case, earlier in the day. Roy, a civic volunteer attached to the Kolkata police, is so far the only person to be arrested and accused in the case. He was arrested on August 10.

According to CBI sources, officials want to verify some facts in Roy's statement and pursue more questions in connection with the rape and murder case. They said Roy's narco analyses test is also key to determining whether it was a gang rape. Roy, a civic volunteer attached to the Kolkata police, is so far the only person to be arrested and named as an accused in the case. The sources said through the narco analysis test, also known as the truth serum test, CBI wants to determine whether Roy was truthful in his statements to the agency, and to know whether he is deliberately hiding facts or misleading investigators. On August 24, Sanjay Roy underwent a polygraph test inside Presidency Central Jail in the presence of two CBI officers. Later, CBI, which took over the probe following a Calcutta High Court order, interrogated Roy.

Thick haze envelopes Thane's Ambernath after 'gas leak', locals complain of breathing difficulties

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Thane: Residents in the vicinity of an industrial zone complained of eye irritation and breathing difficulties as a thick haze enveloped the area after a suspected gas leak from a factory in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Friday. The situation is under control and there were no injuries or hospitalisations, said Yasin Tadvii, Chief of the Disaster Management Cell of the Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC). Panic ensued after smog-like conditions prevailed in the Morivali MIDC area of Ambernath town, on the outskirts of Mumbai, around 11 pm on Thursday, the official said.



section (54 km), the contract for installing Kavach was awarded on December 27, 2023. The survey work is currently underway. The technology will only cater to long-distance trains and not the suburban train system. Official Statement: Vineet Abhishek, Chief Public Relations Officer, Western Railway, stated, "The Kavach system will significantly enhance safety and operational efficiency. While it is still in the trial stage, we anticipate its implementation soon. Kavach will play a crucial role in reducing SPAD incidents and preventing potential collisions, thereby increasing overall safety."

All-party meet over Sanjauli mosque dispute ends, policy for street vendors on the cards

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Shops closed in a market area in view of the 'bandh' called by traders to protest the police action during an agitation demanding the demolition of an illegal structure in a mosque on Wednesday, at Sanjauli locality in Shimla. Shops closed in a market area in view of the 'bandh' called by traders to protest the police action during an agitation demanding the demolition of an illegal structure in a mosque on Wednesday, at Sanjauli locality in Shimla. Amidst growing communal tension in Himachal Pradesh following protests against mosques in Shimla and Mandi over the construction of illegal structures, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu convened an all-party meeting at his office on Friday. "During the meeting, it was decided that a joint committee of leaders would be formed under the Vidhan Sabha Speaker to formulate a policy for street vendors in Himachal Pradesh," a joint statement issued after the meeting said. It was an altercation between a local and a barber, an 'outsider' settled in Shimla, in August that escalated into protests against the Sanjauli mosque. Soon, leaders cutting across party lines spoke about the need to defend the rights of locals and called for a strict vendor policy to control the influx of people from other states. On Friday, differences between the leaders emerged once the meeting ended. While CM Sukhu termed the protests against a four-storey mosque

in Sanjauli in Shimla as a "local dispute", BJP MLA Randhir Sharma demanded that the entire structure should be sealed if it was illegal. "The recent incident in Sanjauli is a local dispute, not a religious matter. The issue concerns an illegal structure. This incident was not a religious issue but a local dispute. The root cause of this dispute is unregistered vendors who often cause problems for locals. Himachal Pradesh is a peaceful state, and we welcome both domestic and international tourists," CM Sukhu said after the meeting. Sharma, who represented the BJP in the meeting, said, "We demand the sealing of the entire structure until the final verdict is delivered by the municipal commissioner's court in Shimla where the matter is listed for October 5. There is anger among the people regarding the mosque, which was constructed illegally. We agree with forming a joint committee for the registration of vendors from other states. The issue at hand concerns the illegal structure." Sharma also referred to Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Anirudh Singh accusing the BJP on Thursday of giving Rs 2 lakh for the construction of the mosque in Sanjauli when the saffron party was in power. On one hand, CM Sukhu has called for an all-party meeting, and on the other, ministers in his government are accusing the BJP of providing funds for the construction of the mosque.

'School students enrolled as BJP members': Ruling party, education dept order probe



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Sources said the school authorities had made it mandatory for all students to bring mobile phones to the school to enrol themselves as BJP members. Sources said the school authorities had made it mandatory for all students to bring mobile phones to the school to enrol themselves as BJP members. Following reports and allegations of school students being made Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) members in an ongoing primary membership campaign in Gujarat's Surendranagar district, the state's ruling party as well as the education department have launched an investigation into the matter. A notice has been issued to the school management by the education department.

According to some reports and purported screenshots of a WhatsApp group of the KU M R Gardi Vidyalaya, a higher secondary grant-in-aid school in Anindra village of Surendranagar's Wadhwan taluka, students from Class 9 and upwards have been enrolled as BJP members with their "membership cards" also generated and shared in the group. Surendranagar BJP district

president Hitendrasinh Chauhan called the exercise an action to defame the party. "Legal action will be taken against everyone behind this. I am investigating who is involved... As per primary investigation that we have conducted, it was revealed that no party member, taluka president, village sarpanch, or worker had gone to the school for the membership drive," Chauhan told The Indian Express. The minimum age for becoming a BJP member is 18 years and party functionaries claimed that the system does not accept entry below that age and thus no OTP is generated. Pointing out that there are over 700 villages and 1,000 schools in the district, Chauhan asked why students of only one school were asked to become members. "Why only one school and not 1,000 if that was the case? So it is clear that somebody is behind this conspiracy to defame the party," he added. The school authorities could not be contacted for comment on the matter. Surendranagar district education officer (DEO) A M Ojha said, "Through media report only we learnt that some school management or teaching faculty member had asked students to bring their mobile phones and a registration of a political party was conducted. Immediately, we took action and appointed a Class 2 official for an inquiry into the case. A notice has been issued to the school management." Sources said the school authorities had made it mandatory for all students to bring mobile phones to the school to enrol themselves as BJP members. Meanwhile, a similar case was reported in Surendranagar district in which authorities at a private school had allegedly asked parents to become BJP members. "There is nothing wrong in that as school authorities had only requested parents in a WhatsApp group to become members. No student was asked to do that and even for parents, it was not made mandatory," Chauhan told.

Trial against Congress leader Jagdish Tytler to commence from October 3



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

After he pleaded not guilty in a 1984 anti-Sikh riots case, a Delhi court said on Friday that Congress leader Jagdish Tytler will face trial from October 3 for the murder of three men killed by a mob which torched the Pul Bangash Gurdwara in Delhi. On August 30, Judge Rakesh Syal of the Rouse Avenue court ordered the framing of charges against Tytler under Indian Penal Code sections murder (302); abetment (109); rioting (147); promoting enmity between groups (153A) and being a part of unlawful assembly (143).

Back home with fractured jaw, Punjab man recounts forced recruitment into Russian army: 'It was terrifying'

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

A Class 12 pass, the man said he was working in a factory in Punjab, earning ₹8,000-9,000 per month, when he was lured by an online agent who promised to take him to Europe. He paid half the agreed amount upfront, with the remaining balance to be paid upon his arrival in Europe, he said. Chandigarh A Class 12 pass, the man said he was working in a factory in Punjab, earning ₹8,000-9,000 per month, when he was lured by an online agent who promised to take him to Europe. He paid half the agreed amount upfront, with the remaining balance to be paid upon his arrival in Europe, he said. A 23-year-old man from Punjab's Doaba region, who was allegedly forced to join the Russian army earlier this year, returned to India with a facial fracture last week and is currently receiving treatment at PGI Chandigarh. The man, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, revealed how he and several other young men were deceived by travel agents under the guise of sending them to Europe, only to be coerced into joining the Russian military to fight the Ukraine war.

A Class 12 pass, the man said he was working in a factory in Punjab, earning ₹8,000-9,000 per month, when he was lured by an online agent who promised to take him to Europe. He paid half the agreed amount upfront, with the remaining balance to be paid upon his arrival in Europe, he said. However, after reaching Russia earlier this year, he and others like him were given a stark choice: either join the Russian army or face 10 years of imprisonment for overstaying their visas, he said. "After landing in Russia in February, we were immediately forced to join the army and signed several documents which were in Russian language," he explained. "There were many Indians, especially from Punjab and Haryana, in the same situation. We were sent to the battlefield with only basic training on how to use a pistol or rifle. It was terrifying. It was like working under bombs, as many young people are dying there, and many others, like me, have sustained some injury or the other," he added.

The man's face was severely injured when a heavy wrench hit him during combat, fracturing the bone near his jawline, he said. Now, unable to speak properly and surviving on a liquid or semi-liquid diet, he is undergoing

Charges have officially been framed and the examination of witnesses (prosecution evidence) will begin on the next date of hearing. Lakhwinder Kaur, the wife of deceased Badal Singh — one of the three men who had died — is the first witness who will be examined forty years after her husband was killed by the mob. After initially filing a closure report, giving a clean chit to Tytler, the CBI was directed to reopen the investigation against him in 2007. It was Kaur's protest petition against the closure report which led to the case moving forward.

On two other occasions, in 2009 and 2014, the CBI closed the case against Tytler but the court refused to accept the report. In April 2023, the agency said it had fresh evidence against Tytler — a corroboration of his voice sample with a particular speech he made 39 years ago which allegedly connected him to the incident.

In its chargesheet filed in May 2023, the CBI had accused Tytler of "inciting, instigating and provoking the mob" that had assembled near the Pul Bangash Gurdwara at Azad Market, Bara Hindu Rao on November 1, 1984. A day earlier, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards. Relying on the testimony of a witness, the CBI had further said that Tytler instigated the mob by shouting "Kill the Sikhs, they have killed our mother" — the "mother" being a reference to Indira Gandhi.



treatment with the help of a local leader who facilitated his access to government healthcare. "There is an extensive network of travel agents operating in India and Russia, who exploit vulnerable youth with promises of work in European countries like Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Germany. These agents allegedly manipulate young men by first securing them visitor or transit visas, allowing their visa period to lapse, and then threaten them with police action unless they join the Russian military," he said.

Despite his ordeal, the man said that he has been advised by officials involved in his repatriation to remain silent about the situation and not to interact with media, fearing it could strain India-Russia relations or jeopardise the chances of others still trapped in Russia. Expressing his frustration, he said, "If the Punjab government provided us with respectable jobs, we would not be forced to take such desperate measures to leave our families and country behind."

I hope that my story will serve as a warning to others being targeted by unscrupulous agents promising a better life abroad because daily youth from India are going to Europe via Russia and most of them are being trapped in Russia," he said. The man's uncle said that young men were going overseas to improve their financial condition but were facing such unfortunate conditions. "My nephew has not only lost his savings to pay the agent but his health too," he said, adding that governments have failed to control the travel agents despite numerous cautionary tales of human trafficking.

Ex-Colonel arrested by Ambala police after spat with Army officers in military hospital

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

A retired Colonel of the Indian Army was arrested late on Thursday by the Ambala Cantonment police following an altercation with Army officers. The retired colonel is the husband of a woman Colonel who is facing disciplinary proceedings and has levelled allegations of sexual harassment against three Brigadiers and a Lt Colonel. After her suspension from service over disciplinary proceedings, she is currently undergoing psychiatric treatment at a military hospital following attempts to harm herself twice.

In the developments that took place on Thursday, the retired colonel also submitted a complaint to the Station House Officer (SHO) of the Ambala Cantonment Police Station, alleging harassment of his wife by some Army officers. He alleged in the complaint that his wife had been physically manhandled in the officers' ward of the military hospital. As per the contents of the FIR accessed by The Indian Express, the retired Colonel has been booked under Sections 115, 121 (1), 132, 221, 353 (3), and 79 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). These sections pertain to obstructing a government servant from performing his duties and also voluntarily causing hurt and obscenity.

As per the complaint lodged by one Lt Col N K Sharma, the retired Colonel barged into the military premises and physically assaulted him on Thursday evening while he was discharging his official military duties in uniform. Lt Col Sharma alleged the accused hit him on his neck and arms and twisted his arm to gain unauthorised access.

Lt Col Sharma also alleged that the accused hit a woman personnel to gain unauthorised access to the premises. He alleged that the retired Colonel verbally abused him and all other officials on duty, and also recorded various Army personnel wearing uniforms and military installations, thereby compromising the safety and security of serving soldiers as well as military installations. When contacted, the SHO declined to give any information on the sections of the BNS under which he had been arrested, saying the matter was being investigated. Surinder Singh Bhorla, Superintendent of Police, Ambala, said he was not aware of the matter and would find out. However, he did not respond to subsequent messages. Sibash Kaviraj, Commissioner of Po-



lice, Ambala, however, confirmed the FIR and arrest of the retired Colonel. The accused has made several complaints in the past to the Ambala police alleging harassment of his wife by Army authorities. He has also been making posts on X stating that his wife was being targeted for ulterior motives.

Paddy farmers worried about bacterial blight in Karimnagar

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Karimnagar: Farmers are worried over incidence of bacterial blight on the paddy crops in the district. Sudden change in the climate and excessive use of Urea are cited as reasons for the paddy being infected by bacterial blight. Besides bacterial blight, the crop is also suffering from Zinc deficiency. A majority of the farmers in the erstwhile Karimnagar district are cultivating paddy during the last ten years since water sources have been developed with the completion of irrigation projects.

Though adequate water was not available in irrigation projects in the beginning of the present Vanakalam season, a majority of the farmers sowed paddy anticipating good water supply. As expected, all water bodies including major irrigation projects, tanks and ponds were filled with copious water following the recent incessant rains. Agricultural wells and borewells are also having adequate water following the recharge of groundwater table.

India's first non-suburban metro, Vande Metro train to connect Gujarat's Kutch district with Ahmedabad

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Bhuj, the headquarters of Kutch district on Indo-Pakistan border in Gujarat is set to get a semi-highspeed rail connectivity as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to flag off Vande Metro, the country's first non-suburban metro train service between Bhuj and Ahmedabad on Monday.

The Ahmedabad division of Western Railway conducted a successful trial run of Vande Metro between Ahmedabad and Bhuj early this week and Modi will flag off the inaugural run of the train on Monday during his two-day visit to Gujarat, officers of the Ahmedabad division of Western Railway said. The train will connect Kutch, among the largest districts of India in terms of geographical expanse, with Ahmedabad, the commercial capital of Gujarat. Kutch has seen rapid industrialisation since the 2001 earthquake. Kandla and Mundra, the country's largest public and private seaports respectively, are also located on the Kutch coast.

The train will depart from Bhuj station at 5:05 AM and reach Ahmedabad at 10:50 AM, covering a distance of around 360 kilometres in six hours and 45 minutes. On the return trip, the train will depart from Ahmedabad station at 5:30 PM and arrive in Bhuj at 11:20 PM the same day. The train will be able to run a speed of 110 kms per hour and will have stoppages at Anjar, Gandhidham, Bhachau and Samakhiali in Kutch district, Halvad in Morbi district, Dhrangadhra in Surendranagar district, Viramgam in Ahmedabad rural and Chandlodiya and Sabarmati railway stations in Ahmedabad city before terminating at Ahmedabad railway station in Kalupur. It will run six days a week. It will depart from Bhuj on all days of week but Saturdays and from Ahmedabad save Sundays. Thus, the train will give additional semi-highspeed rail connectivity to Morbi and Surendranagar districts also. Presently, a Vande Bharat train runs between Ahmedabad and Jamnagar via Rajkot, Morbi and Surendranagar.



Officials said that the Vande Metro train will be much like a Vande Bharat train with features of a suburban metro. "Vande Metro train's technical features are based on the concept of Vande Bharat trains. However, true to a metro train, it will have space for 2058 passengers to take the rides while standing in coaches and cushioned sofas for seating 1150 passengers," Pradeep Sharma, senior public relations officer (PRO) of Western Railway told The Indian Express, adding, "Coaches in the train will have automatic sliding doors and engines on both ends."

The train will have 10 coaches. "The major difference between a Vande Bharat and Vande Metro is that the latter is a fully unreserved train, meaning passengers can purchase tickets at the counter shortly before their departure time," Sharma further said. Officials said that the minimum charge for a Vande Metro train ticket will be Rs30, including GST. While the Ahmedabad division has yet to formally announce ticket rates, according to officials, the basic fare excluding GST for a one-way trip from Bhuj to Ahmedabad will be around Rs430. The railway will also issue weekly, fortnightly and monthly season tickets. The rates of such season tickets will be equivalent to seven, 15 and 20 single journeys respectively.

After Shimla, protests demanding demolition of mosque break out in Himachal's Mandi

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Mandi, Mandi news, Shimla, Shimla news, Shima mosque, mosque demolition row, Sanjauli mosque, Sanjauli news, indian express The development comes after Shimla district saw similar violent protests over an illegal construction at a mosque at Sanjauli. In yet another incident of a communal flare-up in Himachal Pradesh, hundreds of people gathered in Mandi town on Friday in protest against the illegal construction at a mosque on Jail Road and demanded that the structure be demolished. The police used water cannons to disperse the protesters and imposed prohibitory orders, barring the gathering of five or more people.

The development comes after Shimla district saw similar violent protests over an illegal construction at a mosque at Sanjauli. The agitation in Mandi was a fallout of a call of protest given by certain pro-Hindu organisations against a mosque situated on Jail Road. The land on which a portion of the mosque stands belongs to



the Public Works Department and a complaint had been filed against an illegal structure here. "More than 600 people gathered at Seri Manch in the middle of Mandi. First, they chanted Hanuman Chalisa and later, they started marching towards the mosque. The route to the mosque was barricaded but protesters tried to breach the barricades. To disperse them, we used a few tear gas shells. No injuries have been reported so far," a police officer said.

The protests broke out even as the court of Mandi Municipal Corporation Commissioner H H Rana

delivered an order on Friday stating that the status quo related to the original structure be maintained at the site and the illegal structure be demolished within 30 days. "The representatives of the mosque were told to demolish the illegal structure within 30 days. If they do not, the structure will be demolished by the administration. The matter pertaining to the mosque came to our notice when a local moved a complaint in 2023. It was disposed of today. The decision was conveyed to the protesters... The situation is under control," Rana said, talking to The Indian Express over the phone. "Yesterday, members of the mosque committee and Muslim community had demolished a certain disputed structure reportedly said to be on PWD land. But some Hindu organisations had already given a call of protest for today," a police officer said. Meanwhile, mosque committee member Iqbal Ali told the media that the community decided to demolish the illegal structure voluntarily. The wall was on PWD land so it was demolished, he added. More than 700 police personnel were deployed to maintain law and order in Mandi. Abhishek Trivedi,

Punjab power employees' strike enters day 4: over 90% of consumers' complaints yet to be attended



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

The ongoing protest by the technical staff of Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) has put the power consumers of the state, especially the farmers, in dire straits. Over 90 per cent complaints by the electricity consumers is left unaddressed, thanks to mass casual leave by nearly 14,000 technical staff of Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL). "Due to shortage of staff, all complaints can't be handled quickly and hence the queue to address the complaints is just getting longer and longer. We have limited hands," a senior PSPCL engineer told. The day 4 of the protest by the PSPCL staff below the sub-divisional officer rank on Friday intensified as an additional 4,500 employees working as complaint handling bike (CHB) gang on contract also supported the technical staff from Thursday midnight. As on 11.30 am, according to the portal of PSPCL, 10,153 complaints have been registered from 12 midnight of which only 1,258 were resolved. A total of 533 complaints have been pending for more than 24 hours and 10,420 complaints related to supply are yet to be addressed, said PSPCL officials.

As many villages remained in dark for more than 24 hours, consumers queued up to the sub-stations and entered into altercations with the PSPCL staff. Nanak Singh, a resident of Amla Singh Wala village of Barnala, said, there was a fault in the grid located at Thulliwali village due to which power supply of Thulliwali, Manewal, Kurar and few other villages were affected and it was restored on Thursday.

"The government should understand the sensitivity of the situation and do something about the demands of the employees as electricity is an essential commodity. Moreover paddyfields also need tubewell supply in their last leg. Problem is at many other grids as well," Singh

said. The sub-stations and grids of PSPCL are being managed by sub-divisional officers (SDOs), executive engineers (XENs) and other senior engineers along with some outsourced staff. The clerical and other back office staff have been deputed at grids so as not to leave the grids unmanned while engineers have been asked to outsource temporary staff to handle complaints for the time being, said a source.

Ajaypal Singh Atwal, state general secretary, Punjab State Electricity Board (PSEB) Engineers Association, said, the government should consider the genuine demands of the striking employees as the engineers sitting at grids are being gheraoed by the angry villagers at many locations. "Still we are trying to control the situation at our level best. Many employees haven't been able to return home for three days". On Thursday night, various unions of PSPCL held a meeting with Power Minister Harbhajan Singh, PSPCL management and power secretary. As per Gurpreet Singh Gandiwind, president of PSEB Employees Federation, though the government agreed to majority of the demands they did not issue any circular to implement them. "So, we decided to continue our mass casual leave. We are being threatened that the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) can be invoked, but we are least bothered. We are thankful to various farmer unions that extended support to us and understand our situation". The protesting employees unions are Punjab State Electricity Board (PSEB) Employees' Joint Forum, PSEB Employees' Federation (AITUC), Technical Services' Union, and the Association of Junior Engineers. The linemen, assistant linemen, junior engineers are also on strike. The protesting members have been demanding a compensation of Rs 1 crore for the families of electricity workers who die in fatal accidents while on duty, and granting them martyr status. Other demands include cashless treatment facilities for injured workers, not to register FIRs against junior engineers, linemen, senior linemen and others in case of accidents without investigation, regular recruitment to fill thousands of vacant posts, regularising services of in-house contract workers, and releasing the 32-month arrears of revised allowances, among others.

Meanwhile, farmers unions such as BKU Ugrahan and BKU Dakaunda have also extended support to the striking employees and asked the state government to implement their demands. In July, though the government had agreed to the demands it remained on paper, the protesters said.

NIA raids Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh's relatives; his team reacts

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) raided the houses of Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh's relatives and supporters in Punjab on Friday morning. The raid started at 5 am at the Rayya house of the MP's uncle, Pargat Singh, who was not found at home. Following this, the NIA team took Pargat Singh's wife, Amarjit Kaur, to the Beas police station for questioning. Amritpal Singh's other uncle, Sukhchain Singh, also arrived at the police station soon after.

Apart from the house of Pargat Singh, a raid was also conducted at the house of Amritpal Singh's brother-in-law Amarjot Singh in Batala. Amarjot Singh is based in Canada. Properties belonging to Amritpal Singh's relatives in Mehta in Amritsar district and Sri Hargobindpur Sahib in Gurdaspur district were also raided. Following the raids, Amritpal Singh's team released a statement, which reads: "Since this morning, the NIA has been conducting raids at the homes of Bhai Amritpal Singh Ji's family and relatives. The family and relatives of Bhai Sahib are being harassed and troubled, especially the elderly women of the household. Bhai Sahib was elected by the people and won from Khadoor Sahib, yet his family con-



tinues to be disturbed repeatedly in this manner, which is entirely wrong. If there is any evidence, it should be presented openly. Today, many social evils such as drug addiction and gangsterism are widespread in Punjab, but instead of catching the masterminds behind these issues, the government is focusing on harassing Bhai Sahib's family and relatives. Bhai Sahib has always thought about his people and will continue to do so, raising his voice for them. The truth always prevails, as it has been proven in the past and will continue to be proven in the future."

Delhi Police arrest Assadullah Biswas accused of terror funding, fake currency distribution, rioting



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

The Delhi Police arrested Assadullah Biswas, a 61-year-old man accused of terror funding, fake currency distribution, and rioting, late on Wednesday night. Biswas, a resident of Kaliachak in Malda, West Bengal, was arrested following a raid on a hotel in the Nabi Karim area of Central Delhi, police said. Biswas, who is named as an accused in over 50 criminal cases ranging from abduction, murder, extortion, and arson to offences under the Arms Act, Explosives Act, and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), was wanted in connection with a riot and murder case in Malda on August 18.

According to sources, Biswas' gang clashed with a rival group on the morning of August 18, where one man was injured. Later that day, the injured man led an attack on the person who had hurt him. During the attack, the target of the attack was shot once in the arm and slashed with a knife. He died two days later, said police sources. Out of the 14 people involved in the clash, seven were arrested, but the other seven, including Biswas, escaped. A tip-off about Biswas' presence in a hotel in Nabi Karim led to the formation of a police team that launched a raid around 10 PM on Wednesday. Six mobile phones, allegedly used to mislead investigators, and Rs. 25,000 in cash were recovered from his possession. During the raid, the police also found a train ticket for Patna in his room. "He was about to leave for Patna in the next few days to stay with someone he knew there. We caught him in the nick of time," said DCP Central, Harsha Vardhan. "When he was being interrogated, Biswas said that he arrived in Delhi by train on September 7 and was here to meet his lawyers and also for medical reasons,"

said a police source, adding that the police still don't know what the exact reason behind Biswas' visit to Delhi was. "We are analysing the data from his six phones and are verifying the facts of the case through the local police in Malda," the source added. Vardhan said that Biswas had been involved in criminal activities since 1984, and has significant political connections. He was previously arrested in 2016 after he allegedly led a mob during the Kaliachak riots to burn down the Kaliachak Police Station in Malda. Biswas has also been under investigation by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for his involvement in counterfeit currency distribution and terror funding. In January 2020, the ED attached his assets worth 4.67 crores at Kaliachak. He has been booked under BNS Sections 103 (murder), 109 (attempt to murder), 115 (voluntarily causing harm), 118 (grievous hurt), 126 (wrongful restraint), 189 (unlawful assembly), 191 (rioting), 3 (common intent), and 61 (criminal conspiracy).

Man with criminal record opens fire inside hotel in Pimpri-Chinchwad, arrested

Agency, Sept 18

puneBharat Mane, the investigation officer, said further investigation is on to know the motive behind the firing. They are also probing from source of the firearm, which has been seized.

The Pimpri-Chinchwad on Friday arrested a man and booked another after one of them allegedly opened fire at a hotel in the Kalewadi area on Thursday night.

According to the Pimpri-Chinchwad police, they arrested Sachin Dattu Nadhe and booked his accomplice Vinod Jaywant Nadhe, both residents of Jyotiba Nagar in Kalewadi, after Tushar Bhojwani, the hotel manager, lodged the First Information Report (FIR) in this case at the Wakad Police Station early on Friday.

Police inspector suspended, 3 more held over violence in Karnataka town



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

A police inspector has been suspended for dereliction of duty while three more people have been taken into custody in connection with the violence during a Ganesh idol immersion procession here. The situation in this town in Mandya district, where clashes broke out between two groups following which mobs went on a rampage targeting several shops and vehicles leading to tension on Wednesday night, has returned to normal, police said.

Though the situation remains peaceful, additional police forces continued to be deployed in the town, where prohibitory orders prohibiting assembly of more than four people have been imposed till September 14 as a precautionary measure. With the fresh arrests, the total number of people held in the case now stands at 55. The 52 people who were initially arrested have been sent to judicial custody for 14 days, police officials said. A team of experts from the Forensic Science Laboratory also visited the spot on Thursday to collect evidence.

Police Inspector Ashok Kumar posted at Nagamangala town police station was suspended on Thursday evening for dereliction of duty in connection

with the clashes that broke out during the procession, Mandya Superintendent of Police, Mallikarjun Baldandi told PTI. "The situation is peaceful here and besides the 52 people already arrested, we have secured three more people in connection with the incident. We have additional police forces deployed and prohibitory orders will be in place till September 14," he said. Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel and JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy, who is Lok Sabha member from Mandya, visited the town on Friday. Taking to social media platform 'X' on Thursday, Kumaraswamy strongly condemned the violent incidents.

"It is the proof of 'failure of law and order' in the town that the miscreants of a community deliberately raised a ruckus by targeting the devotees who were walking peacefully in the procession of God Ganapati, throwing stones and slippers on the public-police, exploding petrol bombs and brandishing swords," he had alleged. Police said a case has been registered for unlawful assembly, attempt to murder, obstructing public servants, destruction of public property and other sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. A few people, including two policemen, sustained minor injuries in stone-pelting on Wednesday night. According to police, an argument broke out between two groups, when the Ganesh idol procession by devotees from Badarikoppalu village reached a place of worship on Wednesday, and some miscreants hurled stones, which escalated the situation. Following the clashes between the two groups, a few shops were vandalised and goods torched and vehicles set on fire on Wednesday night, they added. Police used mild force to disperse the crowd to control the situation. The group of youth that carried out the procession halted and staged a protest near the police station, demanding the immediate arrest of those responsible for the violence.

Canada-based gangster Gopi Lahoria behind firing at Ludhiana's Sindhi Bakers: police

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Nearly two weeks after two shooters opened fire at the popular Sindhi Bakers in the posh Rajguru Nagar area of Ludhiana, and were arrested by the Moga police hours later, the Ludhiana police said on Thursday the crime was committed on the directions of Canada-based gangster Gopi Lahoria. The Moga police arrested two criminals Jagmeet Singh alias Meeta of Bahona Chowk in Moga and Vikas Kumar alias Kasa of Pahara Singh Chowk following a brief encounter hours after the incident on August 28. The Ludhiana police brought Singh and Kumar from Moga on a production warrant for interrogation in the Sindhi Bakers shooting case. The police remand of both accused was extended on Thursday for three days. Earlier, they were in Ludhiana police remand for two days.

Gurdev Singh, Assistant Commissioner of Police (West) Ludhiana, said their interrogation until now has revealed that both accused had opened fire at Naveen Gangwani, the owner of the bakery, on the directions of Lahoria. "The motive behind targeting the particular bakery is still not clear. Usually, gangsters like Lahoria use such local history sheeters for threatening rich persons to extort money. They commit such crimes in exchange for small amounts of money. However, according to the victim, he had not received any extortion call. We will interrogate both accused further to know the exact mo-



tive behind targeting this bakery," said the ACP. The officer added Lahoria, a native of Moga and booked in multiple cases, is suspected to be hiding in Canada. Gangwani, who had suffered a bullet injury to his neck, said in his statement to the Ludhiana police that one of the accused came inside the bakery and asked about the price of a smoothie shake. "He then took out the weapon and attempted to fire at me twice but misfired as the weapon got stuck. An hour later, he came again and opened fire," he said. The Ludhiana police registered a First Information Report (FIR) under sections 109 (attempt to murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and sections 25/54/59 of the Arms Act at Sarabha Nagar Police Station.

Punjab police arrest main perpetrator in Chandigarh grenade blast case

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Punjab Police has arrested the main perpetrator of the Chandigarh grenade blast case, in a joint operation with Central Agency, Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said Friday. In a post on X, Yadav said, "The case is solved with the nabbing of Rohan Masih, resident of village Passia, PS Ramdass, Amritsar Rural and identification of the other accused as well. One 9MM Glock pistol alongwith ammunition recovered from his possession. Further investigation to unravel the entire conspiracy is being done jointly in coordination with the Chandigarh Police." The DGP said the accused was in custody of State Special Operation Cell (SSOC) Amritsar. He added that in the preliminary disclosure, Rohan admitted his role in the grenade blast that occurred in Chandigarh on September 11. On Thursday, Chandigarh Police announced a reward of Rs 2 lakh for any information leading to the arrest of two suspects involved in the low-intensity explosion at a house in Sector 10.

The blast took place on Wednesday evening and the owner of the house claimed that two people in an autorickshaw had hurled a "grenade". The auto-rickshaw driver, who was hired by the two suspects from Sector 43, has been apprehended, a police official said. The police also released a picture of the two suspects. As a retired Punjab police officer, Jaskirat Singh Chahal, who is believed to be the target of the alleged grenade attack, the Punjab Police enhanced his security detail by deploying two additional personnel. Chahal lived on rent in that house till over a year ago.

There was no casualty in the explosion but some windows and flower pots were damaged, according to the police. The house belongs to K K Malhotra, a retired principal of an institute based in Himachal Pradesh. The police received information about the blast around 5:30 pm on Wednesday. Visuals of the explosion and the autorickshaw were captured on a CCTV camera installed in the area. About the veracity of the claim that a grenade was lobbed at the house, the SSP had said that the police were investigating it. In October last year, the police had arrested two persons who a Punjab police officer said had come to eliminate Chahal at the behest of Passian and Rinda. Days later, their two more associates were arrested by the police for providing them logistical support.

In a purported social media post, the screenshot of which went viral Thursday, a user with an account name Happy Pashia (in Punjabi language) claimed responsibility for the "grenade attack". While there was no loss of life in the attack, the purported post read that "SP Gurkirat (sic) Chahal and his gunman were blown up and given due punishment in remembrance of Sikhs martyred in 1986 in Nakodar. The post with a footnote of 'Babbar

Khalsa International' had along with a title, Saka Nakodar 1986 de Sikh shaheed (Sikh martyrs of Saka Nakodar 1986), photographs of four Sikhs who were killed in indiscriminate police firing in Nakodar in February 1986 while participating in a peaceful protest against the sacrilege of Guru Granth Sahib. Chahal, who retired as Superintendent of Police from 3rd commando battalion of Punjab Police in 2015, was Nakodar Station House Officer (SHO) at that time in 1986. He has been a target of Sikh militants for his 'role' in 1986 Nakodar incident. Chahal told The Indian Express over the phone that "names of Rinda and Passian" as the masterminds had come up during police interrogation of the accused arrested last year for doing "recce" of the Sector 10 house he lived in. "When the accused were arrested last year, I had already shifted to another place," said Chahal who lived in the Sector 10 house for "six years" before shifting. Chahal said he learnt from the police at that time (last year) that another retired SP too was on the target of the arrested accused.

A senior Punjab police officer said it was not during the recce, but the accused were arrested when they had actually come to eliminate the retired police officer. The interrogation of the accused who were arrested in October last year revealed that they had done a "recce" in the last week of September. Hailing from a village in Kapurthala district, Chahal continues to live in Chandigarh after shifting from a rented house in Sector 10, while he also has a house in Jalandhar. "After getting relieved from the service, I have been living in Chandigarh only. Last year, I shifted to another house in Chandigarh," said Chahal. He said that his security has been enhanced after the Thursday incident. "I had three security personnel. Now I have been provided two more, taking the total number of security personnel to five," he added. In the recent past, the Punjab Police has busted a number of terror modules allegedly operated by Rinda and Passian, arresting operatives who were tasked to carry out target killings. In July, the Punjab Police arrested "a foot soldier" working for the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI)-backed terror module operated by Passia along with Rinda and Italy-based associate Resham Singh. The police claimed to have thwarted possible target killings with his arrest. In March, the police busted a terror module operated by Passian along with Rinda and Armenia-based associate Shamsher Singh, alias Shera, with the arrest of two persons. The police said the accused were tasked to carry out target killings in the state as the module was working to radicalise the youth by motivating them to carry anti-national activities in the state. In January, another key operative working for Passian and Rinda was nabbed. The accused, who faced a number of criminal cases, was wanted in UAPA case registered against him in Fazilka in September 2023, was arrested following a joint operation by the Punjab Police and Central agencies.

Pakistani-origin man convicted for killing Indian with stolen Range Rover in UK



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Vignesh Pattabhiraman, 36, was killed by Shazeb Khalid, 25, with a stolen Range Rover while he was cycling back from his workplace in Reading in southeast England in February this year. Vignesh Pattabhiraman, 36, was declared dead at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and a murder investigation was launched. (Source: <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/VigneshPattabhiraman>)

A 25-year-old man of Pakistani heritage has been convicted of murdering an Indian restaurant manager with a stolen car while the victim was cycling back home in southeast England on Valentine's Day this year. Vignesh Pattabhiraman, 36, was killed by Shazeb Khalid with a "stolen Range Rover" while he was cycling back from his workplace -- an Indian restaurant 'Vel' -- in Reading. The Indian man was declared dead at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and a murder investigation was launched. Khalid was arrested on February 19 and charged with murder the following day. Khalid was on Wednesday found guilty of murdering Pattabhiraman following a trial at Reading Crown Court that lasted 28 days. He went on to plead guilty to the lesser charge of manslaughter at an earlier hearing but was convicted of murder by the jury. Sohneem Hussain, 27, and Mya Reilly, 20, who were also arrested

and charged in the case, also appeared during the same trial. While Hussain was found guilty of assisting an offender, Reilly was found not guilty on the same charge. Khalid is set to be sentenced on October 10.

Thames Valley Police, which had conducted the murder investigation, told the court that a post-mortem examination ascertained that Pattabhiraman had died due to a head injury following the collision. "I am glad that the jury has found Khalid guilty of murder," said Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) Stuart Brangwin, the Senior Investigating Officer of the case at Thames Valley Police. "It was obviously clear to the jury that Khalid intended to cause Vignesh harm that evening. He used the stolen Range Rover he was driving as a weapon and left him to suffer knowing that he had hit him," he said. "The communication between Khalid and Hussain throughout the evening of Pattabhiraman's death showed that Hussain was very much aware of what happened and that he assisted in the aftermath. The death of Vignesh has left his family devastated, and I hope this verdict will help them in some way," added DCI Brangwin. Meanwhile, a Just Giving charity initiative set up online by Pattabhiraman's friends and family to help with repatriation costs and support for his grieving wife Ramya after the "senseless tragedy" has raised over GBP 52,500 (around Rs 57.82 lakh). "Vignesh was a committed restaurant manager at Vel, where he poured his heart and soul into his work, earning recognition for his exceptionally warm nature, customer service and work ethic. His dream of reaching a senior management position in the hotel industry was within reach, with an exciting opportunity awaiting him at Hyatt Regency Mayfair London," the online tribute read. "In addition to his professional endeavours, Pattabhiraman cherished time with his beloved wife, Ramya, and their shared aspirations for a bright future in the UK. Their dreams were shattered by this senseless tragedy, leaving behind a void that cannot be filled," it added.

Issues with US mail system could disrupt ballot voting: Report

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

The officials also said that repeated outreach to the Postal Service to resolve the issues had failed and that the widespread nature of the problems made it clear these were "not one-off mistakes or a problem with specific facilities. State and local election officials from across the country on Wednesday warned that problems with the nation's mail delivery system threaten to disenfranchise voters in the upcoming presidential election, telling the head of the U.S. Postal Service that it hasn't fixed persistent deficiencies.

In an alarming letter, the officials said that over the past year, including the just-concluded primary season, mailed ballots that were postmarked on time were received by local election offices days after the deadline to be counted. They also noted that properly addressed election mail was being returned to them as undeliverable, a problem that could automatically send voters to inactive status through no fault of their own, potentially creating chaos when those voters show up to cast a ballot. The officials also said that repeated outreach to the Postal Service to resolve the issues had failed and that the widespread nature of the problems made it clear these were "not one-off mistakes or a problem with specific facilities. Instead, it demonstrates a pervasive lack of understanding and enforcement of USPS policies amongst its employees." The letter to U.S. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy came from two groups that represent top election administrators in all 50 states. They told DeJoy, "We have not seen improvement or concerted efforts to remediate our concerns."

"We implore you to take immediate and tangible corrective action to address the ongoing performance issues with USPS election mail service," they added. "Failure to do so will risk limiting voter participation and trust in the election process." The Postal Service on Wednesday reiterated DeJoy's assurances that it's well positioned to swiftly deliver election mail despite being in the midst of a network modernization that has caused some delivery hiccups. Mail is currently being delivered in 2.7 days on average, officials said, but the Postal Service is still urging voters not to procrastinate. "We are ready to deliver. We were successful in 2020, delivering a historic volume of mail-in ballots; also in 2022 and will do so again in November 2024," Adrienne Marshall, director of Election Mail and Government Services, said in a statement. The two groups, the National Association of Secretaries of State and the National Association of State Election Directors, said local election officials "in nearly every state" are receiving timely postmarked ballots after Election Day and outside the three to five business days USPS claims as the standard for first-class mail.

The letter comes less than two weeks after DeJoy said in an interview that the Postal Service was ready to handle a flood of mail ballots expected as part of this November's presidential election and as former President Donald Trump continues to sow doubts about U.S. elections by falsely claiming he won in 2020. That year, amid the global pandemic, election officials reported sending just over 69 million ballots in the mail, a substantial increase from four years earlier.

While it's likely that number will be smaller now, many voters have embraced mail voting and come to rely on it. And both Democrats and Republicans have launched efforts to push supporters to vote early, either in person or by mail to "bank" their votes before Election Day on November 5. The letter came out on the day the first mailed ballots of this year's general election were being sent to absentee voters in Alabama.

Postal Service officials told reporters last month that almost 98% of ballots were returned to election officials within three days in 2020, and in 2022, the figure was nearly 99%. DeJoy said he would like to inch closer to 100% this election cycle and that the Postal Service is better positioned to handle ballots than four years ago. But officials in rural states have been critical of the Postal Service for years as it has consolidated mail-processing centres to cut its costs and financial losses. In addition to being signed by the current and incoming presidents for both groups of election officials, the leaders of groups that represent local election officials in 25 states were listed. The election officials warned that any election mail returned to an election office as undeliverable could trigger a process outlined in federal law for maintaining accurate lists of registered voters. That means a voter could be moved to "inactive" status and be required to take additional action to verify their address to participate in



the election, the officials said in the letter.

Kansas Secretary of State Scott Schwab, the latest past president of the National Association of Secretaries of State, sent his own letter in recent days to DeJoy. He said nearly 1,000 ballots from his state's Aug. 6 primary election couldn't be counted because they arrived too late or without postmarks — and more continue to come in. "The Pony Express is more efficient at this point," Schwab posted on the social media platform X in late August.

Schwab and other Kansas election officials also have said some ballots arrive on time but without postmarks, which keeps them from being counted under Kansas law. What's more, Schwab told DeJoy, local postal clerks have told election officials that they can't add postmarks later even if it's clear that the Postal Service handled the ballot ahead of the mail-in deadline. Kansas will count ballots postmarked on or before Election Day if they arrive within three days. The Republican-controlled Legislature created that grace period in 2017 over concerns that mail delivery had slowed after the Postal Service shut down seven mail-processing centres in the state. That left much of the state's mail handled through larger centres in Denver, Amarillo, Texas, and Kansas City, Missouri. Schwab has promoted the use of local ballot drop boxes for voting in advance, breaking with other Republicans who have suggested without evidence that they can be sources of fraud. Schwab has long said the boxes are more secure than the U.S. mail. "Keep your ballot out of the hands of the federal government!" he advised voters in a post on X after the August primary. In their letter Wednesday, election officials said colleagues across the U.S. have reported that Postal Service staff, from managers to mail carriers, are uninformed about the service's policies for handling election-related mail, giving them inconsistent guidance and misdelivered ballots. "There is no amount of proactive communication election officials can do to account for USPS's inability to meet their own service delivery timelines," the officials wrote. "State and local election officials need a committed partner in USPS."

14 killed in attack in Afghanistan, Islamic State claims responsibility

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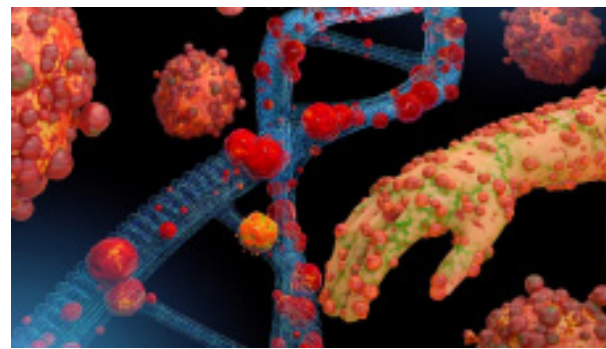
The Taliban administration condemned the attack, expressing sorrow for the victims and committing to finding and punishing those responsible. The Islamic State terrorist group claimed they carried out attack in Afghanistan's Daykundi province.

The Islamic State terrorist group claimed they carried out attack in Afghanistan's Daykundi province. (Image: Representative/Reuters) Fourteen people were killed and six others injured in an attack by unknown armed individuals in central Afghanistan, the Taliban administration said on Friday.

The Islamic State terrorist group claimed responsibility for Thursday's attack in Daykundi province but has not provided evidence. Most people in that area are Shia Muslims and it was considered one of the safest provinces.

"While we share our deep sorrow with the innocent victims of the incident, we are also making serious efforts to search for the corrupt perpetrators of this act and bring them to justice," Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement.

WHO approves world's first vaccine against mpox for use in some countries



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

The MVA-BN vaccine is currently not licensed for persons under 18 years and may be used "off-label" in infants, children and adolescents, and in pregnant and immunocompromised people in countries having mpox outbreaks. The WHO announces the MVA-BN vaccine as the first vaccine against mpox to be added to its prequalification list.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) on Friday announced the MVA-BN vaccine as the first vaccine against mpox to be added to its prequalification list, which is expected to improve access to the vaccine, particularly among communities urgently needing it. The prequalification process, based on information submitted by the manufacturer, Bavarian Nordic A/S, and review by the European Medicines Agency, is intended to facilitate the rapid procurement and distribution of the

vaccine. WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus emphasized the importance of the crucial step in curbing current mpox outbreaks, particularly in Africa. "This first prequalification of a vaccine against mpox is an important step in our fight against the disease, both in the context of the current outbreaks in Africa, and in future," he said. He called for an urgent scale-up of vaccine procurement, donations and distributions to ensure equitable access. "Alongside other public health tools, this vaccine will help prevent infections, stop transmission, and save lives," he stated.

The MVA-BN vaccine, administered as a two-dose injection given four weeks apart, is approved for people over 18 years old. After being stored in cold conditions, it can remain stable at temperatures between 2 to 8 degrees Celsius for up to eight weeks. Dr Yukiko Nakatani, WHO's Assistant Director-General for Access to Medicines and Health Products, stated, "The WHO prequalification of the MVA-BN vaccine will help accelerate ongoing procurement of the mpox vaccines by governments and international agencies such as Gavi and Unicef to help communities on the frontlines of the ongoing emergency in Africa and beyond." "The decision can also help national regulatory authorities to fast-track approvals, ultimately increasing access to quality-assured mpox vaccine products," he added. Available data shows that a single-dose MVA-BN vaccine given before exposure has an estimated 76 per cent effectiveness in protecting people against mpox, with the two-dose schedule achieving an estimated 82 per cent effectiveness, WHO said.

Donald Trump at Arizona rally promises no taxes on overtime payments if elected

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Former President Donald Trump has said in the past that he would support legislation that reduces or, simply, ends taxation of tips to aid service workers. His opponent has made similar pledges. Donald Trump is in a tight race, as numerous polls have shown so far, against the Democratic nominee and the current Vice President Kamala Harris. Republican US presidential candidate and former president Donald Trump proclaimed that he will end all taxes on overtime payments as part of a tax cut package if he is elected president in the upcoming November 5 election. "As part of our additional tax cuts, we will end all taxes on overtime," he said during a rally in Tucson, Arizona. "Your overtime hours will be tax-free." Trump is in a tight race, as numerous polls have shown so far, against the Democratic nominee and the current Vice President Kamala Harris. Trump has said in the past that he would support legislation that reduces or, simply, end taxation of tips to aid service workers. His opponent, Kamala Harris, also made a similar promise. A Harris campaign spokesperson responded to Trump's claims on Thursday, saying, "He is desperate and scrambling and saying whatever it takes to try to trick people into voting for him."

Harris, earlier this month, said in a rally with union workers, accused the former president of blocking overtime payments for millions of workers during his presidential tenure, which was from 2017 to 2021. The Trump administration did, in fact, issue in 2019 a rule which increased the eligibility of overtime pay to around 1.3 million additional US workers. The new rule replaced a proposal introduced by President Barack Obama, and was considered comparatively more generous.

Trump raised the salary threshold for exemption from overtime pay to \$35,568 a year, up from the previous and long-standing \$23,660 limit. The move was frowned upon by workers' rights groups, many of which admitted it covered far fewer workers than the scheme introduced under the previous president. The beneficiaries of overtime



pay at such income levels are overwhelmingly blue-collar workers like the waiters that serve you food, fast-food workers, nurses, store runners and other low-income workers. "The people who work overtime are amongst the hardest working citizens in our country and for too long no one in Washington has been looking out for them," Trump said on Thursday. Under Labour Department rules, eligible workers are to be paid at least one-and-a-half for hours worked above 40 hours in a single week. Data from the Bureau of Labour Statistics showed that, as of last month, factory workers in non-supervisory roles put in an average of 3.7 hours of overtime a week, according to Reuters. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, untaxed overtime would take away from government revenue. The former president's plan to permanently extend the tax cuts he passed as president, therefore, would increase the U.S. deficit by \$3.5 trillion by 2033. The US budget deficit in the first 11 months of the current fiscal year is \$1.9 trillion. How much revenue the government receives from taxed overtime pay, however, is unclear. This year, Alabama became the first state to exempt overtime pay for hourly workers from state taxes as a temporary measure. The move won support in the legislature to help employers fill up their job vacancies in a scarce labour market. The exemption, however, will only last for 18 months.

WHO approves first vaccine for Monkeypox amid global Mpox outbreak

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New Delhi: Amid the global outbreak of Mpox, the World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday announced prequalifying Bavarian Nordic's vaccine — a first against the deadly monkeypox virus (MPXV). Modified Vaccinia Ankara-Bavarian Nordic or MVA-BN is indicated for active immunisation against smallpox, Mpox, and related orthopoxvirus infections and disease in all adults 18 years of age and older. The vaccine can be administered as a 2-dose injection given 4 weeks apart. "Available data shows that a single-dose MVA-BN vaccine given before exposure has an estimated 76 per cent effectiveness in protecting people against Mpox, with the 2-dose schedule achieving an estimated 82 per cent effectiveness," the WHO said in a statement. "This first prequalification of a vaccine against Mpox is an important step in our fight against the disease, both in the context of the current outbreaks in Africa and in the future," said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Ghebreyesus stressed the need to "scale up in procurement, donations, and rollout to ensure equitable access to vaccines".

In addition, other public health tools are also urgently needed "to prevent infections, stop transmission, and save lives", he added. The WHO prequalification comes even as the UN health body last month declared a global health emergency over its outbreak in Africa. The prequalification may facilitate timely and increased ac-



cess, to contain transmission and help contain the outbreak. The WHO's assessment for prequalification is based on information submitted by Bavarian Nordic, and reviewed by the European Medicines Agency, the regulatory agency of record for this vaccine. The MVA-BN is currently not licensed for persons under 18 years of age, but the WHO recommended its use "off-label" in infants, children, adolescents, and pregnant and people with weaker immune system in cases where the benefits of vaccination outweigh the potential risks. Meanwhile, more than 120 countries have confirmed over 103,000 cases of Mpox since the onset of the global outbreak in 2022. In 2024 alone, there were 25,237 suspected and confirmed cases and 723 deaths from different outbreaks in 14 countries of the African Region.

2,500 Gaza conflict injuries require long-term rehabilitation: WHO

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Geneva: At least 22,500 people, or a quarter of those injured in the Gaza conflict as of July 23, are suffering from life-changing injuries that will require long-term rehabilitation, the World Health Organization (WHO) has reported. The report published on Thursday underscored the immense burden on Gaza's already crippled healthcare system, saying that severe limb injuries were the leading cause of rehabilitation needs. These limb injuries are estimated to affect between 13,455 and 17,550 individuals, Xinhua news agency reported. These injuries are compounded by some 4,000 amputations, and a sharp rise in cases of spinal cord injuries, trau-

matic brain injuries, and severe burns, many of which involve women and children.

Richard Peepker, WHO representative in the occupied Palestinian territory, warned that Gaza's health infrastructure is unable to meet the increasing demands. "The huge surge in rehabilitation needs occurs in parallel with the ongoing decimation of the health system," he said, emphasizing the critical shortage of acute rehabilitation services and specialized care for complex injuries. As the conflict continues, ensuring access to essential healthcare, including rehabilitation services, remains crucial to preventing further illness and fatalities, the Geneva-based health agency said.

Boeing machinists vote to strike after rejecting pay increases of 25% over 4 years



Machinists at Boeing voted Thursday to go on strike, another setback for the giant aircraft maker whose reputation and finances have been battered and now faces a shutdown in production of its best-selling airline planes. The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers said 94.6% of voting workers rejected the contract, which would have raised pay 25% over four years, and 96% approved the strike — easily surpassing a two-thirds requirement. The strike by 33,000 machinists was set to begin at one minute after midnight Friday morning.

"This is about respect, this is about the past, and this is about fighting for our future," IAM District 751 President Jon Holden said in announcing the vote. Boeing did not immediately comment on the vote. Very little has gone right for Boeing this year, from a panel blowing out and leaving a gaping hole in one of its passenger jets in January to NASA leaving two astronauts in space rather sending them home on a problem-plagued Boeing spacecraft. As long as the strike lasts, it will deprive Boeing of much-needed cash that it gets from delivering new planes to airlines. That will be another challenge for new CEO Kelly Ortberg, who six weeks ago was given the job of turning around a company that has lost more than \$25 billion in the last six years and fallen behind European rival Airbus. Ortberg made a last-ditch effort to salvage a deal that had unanimous backing from the union's negotiators. He told machinists Wednesday that "no one wins" in a walkout, and that a strike would put Boeing's recovery in jeopardy and raise more doubt about the company in the eyes of its airline customers.

"For Boeing, it is no secret that our business is in a difficult period, in part due to our own mistakes in the past," he said. "Working together, I know that we can get back on track, but a strike would put our shared recovery in jeopardy, further eroding trust with our customers and hurting our ability to determine our future together." Workers were in no mood to listen. Holden said Ortberg faced a difficult position because machinists are bitter about stagnant wages and concessions they have made since 2008 on pensions and health care to prevent the company from moving jobs elsewhere. "It's hard to make up for 16 years," he said.

The vote was also a rebuke to Holden and union negotiators, who recommended that workers approve the contract offer. Holden, who predicted that workers would vote to strike, said the union will survey members to decide what issues they want to stress when negotiations begin. Union members posted complaints about the deal all week on social media, often demanding bigger raises. On Thursday, several dozen blew whistles, banged drums and held up signs calling for a strike as they marched to a union hall near Boeing's 737 Max plant in Renton,

Washington. "As you can see, the solidarity is here," said Chase Sparkman, a quality-assurance worker. "I'm expecting my union brothers and sisters to stand shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm, and let our company know that, hey, we deserve more." The machinists make \$75,608 per year on average, not counting overtime, and that would rise to \$106,350 at the end of the four-year contract, according to Boeing. However, the deal fell short of the union's initial demand for pay raises of 40% over three years. The union also wanted to restore traditional pensions that were axed a decade ago but settled for an increase in Boeing contributions to employee's 401(k) retirement accounts. Boeing worker Adam Vogel called the 25% raise "a load of crap. We haven't had a raise in 16 years." Broderick Conway, another quality-assurance worker and 16-year Boeing employee, said the company can afford more. "A lot of the members are pretty upset about our first offer. We're hoping that the second offer is what we're looking for," he said. "If not... we're going to keep striking and stand up for ourselves." The head of Boeing's commercial-airplanes business, Stephanie Pope, tried this week to discourage the blue-collar workers from thinking that a strike would result in a better offer from the company.

"We bargained in absolute good faith with the IAM team that represents you and your interests," she said. "Let me be clear: We did not hold back with an eye on a second vote." Voting took place at union halls in Washington state, Portland, Oregon, and a smattering of other locations. Boeing believed it offered a significant benefit to the union by promising to build its next new plane in the Puget Sound area if workers ratified the contract. That plane — not expected until sometime in the 2030s — would replace the 737 Max. It was a key win for union leaders, who want to avoid a repeat of Boeing moving production of Dreamliners from the Seattle area to South Carolina.

The strike will stop production of the 737 Max, Boeing's best-selling airliner, along with the 777 or "triple-seven" jet and the 767 cargo plane at factories in Renton and Everett, Washington, near Seattle. It likely will not affect Boeing 787 Dreamliners, which are built by non-union workers in South Carolina. TD Cowen aerospace analyst Cai von Rumohr said before the vote that it is realistic based on the history of Boeing strikes — the last two were in 1995 and 2008 — to figure that a walkout would last into mid-November, when workers' \$150 weekly payments from the union's strike fund might seem low going into the holidays. A strike that long would cost Boeing up to \$3.5 billion in cash flow because the company gets about 60% of the sale price when it delivers a plane to the buyer, von Rumohr said. Holden told members Monday the union got everything it could in bargaining and recommended approval of the deal "because we can't guarantee we can achieve more in a strike." But many of the rank-and-file remembered the concessions on pensions, health care and pay. "They are upset. They have a lot of things they want. I think Boeing understands that and wants to satisfy a fair number of them," said von Rumohr, the aerospace analyst. "The question is, are they going to do enough?" Boeing has seen its reputation battered since two 737 Max airliners crashed in 2018 and 2019, killing 346 people. The safety of its products came under renewed scrutiny after a panel blew out of a Max during a flight in January. And now it faces a strike that could cause it to fall farther behind European rival Airbus in orders and deliveries of new jetliners. (AP)

SEBI Chairperson, husband call Congress allegations 'false, malicious and motivated'

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband Dhaval Buch on Friday issued a detailed statement denying a host of allegations recently levelled by the Congress Party against them. Buch called the allegations "false, incorrect, malicious and motivated".

Over the past few days, the Congress party has made a series of allegations against SEBI Chairperson and her husband Dhaval Buch, raising questions over their integrity. The Congress has alleged that Buch continued to draw salary from ICICI since 2017, when she joined SEBI as a whole-time member (WTM), and then took over at the helm of the market regulator. The opposition party claimed that she held 99 per cent shares in a company "actively providing advisory/consultancy services till date" and that her husband Dhaval Buch received Rs 4.78 crore as income from Mahindra & Mahindra while she "as a Whole Time Member of SEBI was adjudicating cases of the same group". "The above facts clearly show that all the allegations made are false, incorrect, malicious and motivated. The allegations themselves are based on our Income Tax Returns. In other words, all these matters are a part of our income tax returns in which all these matters have been fully disclosed and taxes have been duly paid," Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband Dhaval Buch said in a statement issued in their personal capacity. They claimed that their income tax returns clearly have been "obtained by adopting fraudulent means and illegally", which is a clear "breach of not only our right to privacy (which is a fundamental right) but also a violation of the Income Tax Act".

"The facts, transparently reflected in our income tax returns, have been twisted deliberately to create a false narrative," the couple said.

They further said that going by the pattern of creating a false narrative at periodic intervals, it appears that the allegations are being made in instalments, only to "keep the pot boiling". "If the objective had been to arrive at the truth rather than to malign individuals and institutions with distortions of facts, we wonder why all allegations would not be brought out, in public, at one go. We would then have given all the facts at one go," they said in the joint statement.

"If, however, this false narrative is motivated, to achieve some other objective, then the possibility of further allegations being made repeatedly in instalments in the future may not be ruled out," they said in the statement. On ICICI Bank-related matters in which the Congress raised a question regarding SEBI Chairperson's Employee Stock Options (ESOPs) from the lender, the couple said, "it is completely false that the options are to be exercised only in 3 months." "Only employees who resigned were required to exercise their vested options within 3 months. Those who retired (like Madhabi) were allowed to exercise their vested options for up to 10 years," they said. With respect to the baseless



allegation concerning payment of TDS by ICICI Bank, the couple said the fact is that ICICI Bank did not pay TDS from its own funds.

"Instead, when an employee or ex-employee exercises their options, ICICI Bank collects the required Perquisite Tax (for TDS) from the individual upfront and pays the same to the tax authorities. This was the process followed with Madhabi as well — ie Madhabi paid her own Perquisite Tax, upfront," they said. The Congress party alleged that Agora Advisory Pvt Ltd, owned by the Buchs, received Rs 2.95 crore from five companies in 2016-17, 2019-20 and 2023-24. Following the allegations, three listed companies, Pidilite Industries, Dr Reddy's Laboratories and Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) admitted that they had hired Dhaval Buch as a consultant or leadership coach during various periods and paid remunerations. "Despite the transparency and professional clarity given by these organizations, it is unfortunate that the need to justify decisions taken by such respected companies, based purely on Dhaval's expertise, has to be undertaken by them and by us," the couple said in a statement. On September 7, the Congress Media and Publicity Department chairperson Pawan Khara said, "Between 2018-2024, Madhabi Buch, as a whole time member and later as the chairperson of SEBI, had been receiving rental income amounting to Rs 2.16 crore from Carol Info Services Limited (a firm affiliated to Wockhardt Limited)." Wockhardt has called these claims "baseless" and "misleading".

"It is highlighted that the rental agreement for the property in question was concluded in accordance with standard market practices and this property jointly owned by Madhabi and Dhaval is leased and the rental from the same is declared and tax paid accordingly," the joint statement said.

They said that all necessary disclosures have been made to SEBI in writing right from Madhabi's appointment as a Whole-Time Member in 2017, including details about the property's market value and the rental income derived from it. The couple asserted that they were upright and honest professionals and have led their respective professional lives with transparency and dignity, earning an unblemished record.

Salmon sperm facials are all the rage online; let's find out if this trend is worth the hype



A new and unusual treatment has recently captured the attention of beauty enthusiasts and social media users alike — the salmon sperm facial. This unconventional beauty trend became popular after Hollywood star Jennifer Aniston admitted to trying it. "The primary active ingredient in salmon sperm facials is DNA derived from salmon sperm, also known as sodium DNA. It is not the sperm itself," says Dr Ajay Rana, dermatologist, aesthetic physician and founder of ILAMED.

How does this benefit the skin?

According to Dr Rana, the sodium DNA in a salmon sperm facial can benefit the skin in several ways: Hydration: Sodium DNA is thought to help the skin retain moisture, improving overall hydration and giving the skin a plumper, more youthful appearance. Regeneration: It may promote cell regeneration and repair, enhancing skin texture and elasticity.

Antioxidant Properties: Some studies suggest that salmon sperm DNA has antioxidant properties, which can protect the skin from environmental damage and reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. So, is there any validity to the anti-ageing claims associated with salmon sperm facials? While some anecdotal evidence

and preliminary research support the anti-ageing claims of salmon sperm facials, Dr Rana asserts that it's important to approach these claims with caution. "The scientific backing is not as robust or extensive as it is for more established anti-ageing treatments. However, some users report noticeable improvements in skin texture and hydration, which may contribute to a more youthful appearance. Until more comprehensive studies are conducted, it's challenging to fully endorse these claims," he admits. Salmon sperm facials versus traditional anti-ageing treatment: Traditional anti-ageing treatments like retinoids and hyaluronic acid have a significant amount of scientific research supporting their effectiveness," says Dr Rana. Retinoids: These are well-documented for their ability to promote cell turnover, reduce wrinkles, and improve skin texture. Hyaluronic Acid: Known for its powerful hydrating properties, hyaluronic acid helps to plump the skin and reduce the appearance of fine lines. Compared to these treatments, he explains, salmon sperm facials are relatively new and lack the same level of scientific validation. "While some users may experience benefits, traditional treatments are generally more reliable due to their established efficacy." Potential risks or side effects associated with using salmon sperm facials: As with any skincare treatment, there are potential risks and side effects to consider with salmon sperm facials: Allergic Reactions: Some individuals may experience allergic reactions or sensitivities to the ingredients, leading to redness, itching, or irritation. Lack of Regulation: The skincare industry is not as tightly regulated as pharmaceuticals, so the quality and purity of salmon sperm products can vary. This can increase the risk of contamination or adverse reactions. Limited Research: The long-term effects of using salmon sperm facials are not well-studied, so there may be unknown risks. Dr Rana recommends, "It's always advisable for individuals to perform a patch test before using a new product and to consult with a dermatologist, especially if they have sensitive skin or underlying skin conditions."

Rakul Preet Singh once rejected a guy who 'looked down upon the food I ordered': That's where I was like, 'out'

Food preferences can reveal a lot about personal values and lifestyle choices, and sometimes they play a significant role in romantic relationships. This was highlighted by actor Rakul Preet Singh who revealed that she once rejected a partner due to their preference for fried foods. In an interview with podcast host Ranveer Allahbadia, she said that she wasn't in the space to enter into a relationship before she met her now-husband, Jacky Bhagnani. As a result of this, she rejected a guy who ordered fried food on their date.

She said, "I didn't want a frivolous man, or someone who shows off. These are still big things. I didn't even want anybody who would order fried food. I have rejected a person because he ordered fried gyozas." She explained, "People have their own food choices, but it got worse when he looked down upon the food I ordered. He was like, 'What are you eating, what is healthy?' And that's where I was like, 'Out'. If we can't share a meal and a lifestyle, it's pointless. I have seen friends fighting over Indian and Chinese food." At first it might seem surface-level but such seemingly minor differences can potentially impact relationship dynamics. We speak to an expert to confirm this.

How can differing food preferences and lifestyle choices impact romantic relationships?

Dr Sneha Sharma, psychiatrist and co-founder, Anvaya Healthcare, tells indianexpress.com, "If partners' food and lifestyle preferences diverge significantly from the other's, it can lead to various challenges. For example, if one person values a health-conscious diet and the other prefers indulgent, less healthy options, this difference might manifest in daily routines, social activities, and long-term health goals." These differences, she adds, can create friction over meal planning, social outings, and even impact shared financial resources if eating out or buying specialty foods becomes a frequent issue. If not managed well, such differences might lead to misunderstandings and resentment, affecting overall relationship satisfaction.

Can conflicts over food and lifestyle choices be a



sign of deeper issues in a relationship?

Dr Sharma agrees that conflicts over food and lifestyle choices can indeed highlight deeper relational issues. "For example, if one partner's dietary choices are a source of tension, it might reflect underlying issues like lack of respect for each other's values, communication problems, or differing priorities." "Such conflicts can also be symptomatic of broader compatibility issues, like differing long-term goals or lifestyle aspirations. For instance, disagreements about how to approach health might indicate differing views on personal responsibility or long-term planning," she mentions.

How can couples navigate and reconcile significant differences in their daily preferences?

"Couples can manage and reconcile significant differences by fostering open communication and mutual respect," notes Dr Sharma. "Understanding each other's reasons behind their choices can help build empathy and compromise. For example, setting aside designated times for each partner's preferences or finding middle ground in dietary choices can be effective strategies." Establishing shared goals, she states, like finding a balance between health and indulgence, can also help align lifestyles. "Seeking professional counselling or relationship coaching might also assist in navigating these differences and improving overall compatibility."

From Egypt to Mohenjodaro and now modern India, ajrakh has a history worth remembering

Deep in the heart of India's Kutch region, a tradition of block printing a textile — ajrakh — famous for its intricate patterns and deep indigo hue has been passed down through generations for centuries.

"Ajrakh is more than just a fabric; it is a cultural symbol, deeply entangled with the lives of the Kutch region," according to Professor John Varghese from the School of Fashion at the World University of Design, Sonipat.

Whether ajrakh originated in the Egyptian or Indus Valley Civilisation is still being debated. But Gujarat-printed ajrakh was excavated from Al-Fostat, near old Cairo in Egypt, and was showcased at the 'India and the World' exhibit at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai, from November 11, 2017, to February 18, 2018. The priest-king of Mohenjodaro is also depicted wearing what is believed to be an early form of ajrakh, explained J Usha Rani, associate professor of fashion and textiles at Pearl Academy, Bengaluru. The etymology of the word ajrakh is contested, but the most widely accepted origin is from the Arabic word "azrak," meaning azure or blue, referencing the indigo dyes used in the fabric, a practice that can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilisation, with artifacts from Mohenjodaro dating as far back as 3000 BC, Varghese said. The re-emergence of this craft on the Indian mainland is linked to the migration of the Khatri community under the patronage of Kutch ruler Rao Bharmalji around 400 years ago, said Usha. "Many towns and villages with ajrakh printers and craftsmen provided the complete ecosystem for this craft to thrive. By the 16th century, the craft of printed textiles became a global fashion phenomenon. The British interest, with the East India Company beginning to import Ajrakh to the Western world, marked a significant chapter," she explained.

It is an ancient, labour-intensive hand-block printing process that involves multiple stages, said Avani Karan Chandan, co-founder of homegrown brand The

House of Ara. Here are the steps involved: Saaj: The unfinished fabric is washed to remove any starch or finish on the fabric. The cloth is soaked in a solution of camel dung, soda ash and castor oil, wrung and kept overnight. It is then semi-dried in the sun. This process of soaking and drying is repeated seven to eight times. Then, a solution of myrobalan, which acts as a mordant for the dyeing process, is used to wash the fabric with. Gach: At this stage, a mixture of alum, clay, and gum arabic is applied to the cloth, and sawdust or powdered cow dung is sprinkled over the printed area to avoid smudging. The cloth is then left to dry naturally over two to three days.

The entire process of making ajrakh textiles can take anywhere from one to three weeks, depending on the intricacy of the design and the number of colours used. The result is more than just a garment—it's a work of art, reflecting the skill of its creator and the spirit of centuries past. Sejal Kamdar, a Kutchi designer specialising in ajrakh, said, "It takes 20 to 60 hours to produce just one meter of ajrakh fabric." She also noted that traditional ajrakh featured two or three colours, whereas modern variations can include up to seven colours, including green, blue, black, and white. According to Chandan, real ajrakh can be identified by its rich, earthy tones and the unmistakable smell of natural dyes. The slight imperfections in the fabric due to the hand-blocking process, are key indicators of its authenticity. These minor inconsistencies in pattern or colour exhibit the handcrafted nature of the textile. Kamdar advised consumers to examine the reverse side of the fabric closely. In authentic ajrakh, the design on the back is as vibrant as the front. She recommended paying attention to the quality of the fabric and dyes as a primary way to distinguish genuine ajrakh from imitations. Usha Rani said that authentic ajrakh will have intricate geometric or floral motifs on red or blue backgrounds, accented with vegetable dyes in colours like green and yellow.

Kondal movie review: Antony Varghese Pepe's actioner is ruined by aimless writing



Kondal movie review: A man embarking on a vengeful rampage to eliminate those who wronged his mainstay is a familiar premise in world cinema. Yet, it remains popular and can still resonate with the masses if executed at least decently well, particularly due to its emotional depth tied to the 'bro-code'. However, debutant director Ajith Mampally's Kondal (Raincloud), starring Antony Varghese Pepe, Raj B Shetty and Shabeer Kallarakkal in the lead roles, despite having this tried-and-true premise, falls short due to poor and aimless writing.

The film introduces Antony with the sobriquet "Action Hero," and in this regard, Kondal delivers, capitalising on his ability to excel in raw stunt sequences. This is further amplified by the film's setting as a significant portion unfolds on a fishing boat at sea, heightening the tension.

Hailing from the coastal village of Anchuthengu in Thiruvananthapuram, Immanuel aka Manuel (Antony) has been living recklessly, spending much of his time drinking. Though he remains close to his family and supports them in every way, his self-destructive behaviour hints at something deeper. Meanwhile, the village, where most make a living selling fish, faces a crisis when Stephen and Sons, a local company, is exposed for selling rotten fish, turning the village into a target of bad publicity. As the fishermen struggle to sell their catch, they demand that the company take responsibility and publicly clarify that only their fish was spoiled, thereby clearing the reputation of the other fishermen. However, the company's owners (Spadikam Sunny and Usha) ignore the demands and attempt to bring in more fish, leading to a confrontation between the two parties. The conflict escalates into a violent, blood-shedding brawl once Manuel enters the scene. As the incident becomes a major discussion point, following the involvement of the police, Manuel is forced to leave the village for a few days. He takes up work on a fishing boat departing from Munambam Harbour in Enakulam, where his brother Daniel aka Danny (Raj B Shetty), once worked. During the journey, tensions rise between Manuel and the other crew members, including Jude (Shabeer Kallarakkal) and Michael (Rahul Rajagopal), due to the latter's certain actions. These confrontations lead him to shocking revelations about Danny's death, which was till then believed to be an accident. The rest of the film follows Manuel's pursuit of the truth and his quest for vengeance, while Jude and the others attempt to finish him off.

Although Kondal had the ingredients to be a decent revenge film, its major flaw lies in its shoddy script, penned by director Ajith along with Roylin Robert and Sathesh Thonakkal, which has nothing more than a few basic plot points. Given that a significant portion of the story unfolds in a confined space, with the protagonist and antagonists always in close proximity, the narrative should have offered more than mere bad luck to explain their inability to finish off each other. It also required solid moments to keep the tension high, which too is absent in Kondal.

In the beginning, Manuel is depicted taking a job on the boat to escape the turmoil he has stirred up in his village. Meanwhile, some crew members begin to act suspiciously towards him, despite being aware of his background. However, the film fails to clarify why these characters behave oddly or what the underlying issue is. Up until the interval, Kondal meanders aimlessly, struggling to establish a clear direction, leaving the characters to just exchange suspicious glances without much context. It is only just before the interval that the audience is introduced to Danny and the real reasons behind the crew's behaviour. Rather than skillfully withholding key details to build intrigue, Kondal keeps the audience completely in the dark for a good amount of time, failing to provide even basic information to understand what's going on.

Must Read | Kishkindha Kandam movie review: Asif

Ajith buys Porsche worth Rs 3.51 crore, Shalini says 'He has got the car, the style, and my heart'

Ajith Kumar recently added Porsche GT3 RS to his car collection. The news was announced by his wife Shalini. On Friday, the former actress took to her Instagram handle to share a photo of the luxury car. The photo also featured Ajith. Sharing the photo, Shalini wrote, "He has got the car, the style, and my heart." The picture was from the Porsche showroom. In the photo, Ajith Kumar sported a casual look, where he wore a white shirt paired with cargo pants. Later, his fan pages too shared several photos on social media from his recent visit to the showroom.

Ajith is a car and bike enthusiast. He is often seen going on various bike rides. According to India Today, the actor also bought Ferrari worth Rs 9 crore in August as a video of him riding a red Ferrari went viral on social media.

Apart from cars, the actor is also known for his love for his bikes. His collection includes, BMW S 1000 RR, BMW K 1300 S, Aprilia Caponord 1200, and Kawasaki Ninja ZX-14S. His car collection includes Ferrari 458 Italia, BM1 740 Li, and a Honda Accord V6, among others, according to cartoq.com. On the work front, Ajith recently wrapped up the shooting of his film Vidaa Muyarchi. The film, directed by Magizh Thirumeni, is yet to get a release

date. The actor is now busy with the shoot of Good Bad Ugly with director Adhik Ravichandran. The movie is scheduled for a Pongal 2025 release.

Ali, Aparna Balamurali-starrer is a brilliantly written, skillfully crafted mystery drama. Even after the characters' motives are revealed, Kondal fails to deliver impactful and engaging moments. Instead, it presents one murder attempt after the other, orchestrated either by Manuel or Jude, with no one actually dying, besides a fellow worker Alosy (Manikanda Rajan) who dies after an unrelated fall. At the same time, many characters introduced with considerable buildup in the first act, who cast menacing glances at Manuel as if his ending will be at their hands, do not reappear or even receive a passing mention later in the film, leaving their actual purpose in the movie unclear. While some characters, like the one played by Gauthami Nair, appear frequently at the start, their identity remain vague until much later. As a result, the audiences struggle to grasp the purpose of Manuel's journey, diminishing the sense of tension on the boat and not letting viewers resonate with the characters. The dialogues are equally unremarkable, sounding both pretentious and old-school, with the actors failing to bring any nuance or depth to elevate the scenes. What happens to the Alosy's family? Will his friends on the boat be able to arrange enough money for his sister's wedding as he wished? Will Manuel take revenge against his and Danny's friend Peter (Abhiram Radhakrishnan), who knew about the latter's murder, too? Kondal ends by 'forgetting' to answer quite a few important questions. Kondal, kondal review, kondal movie review, Antony Varghese, Raj B Shetty, kondal movie, kondal malayalam movie, kondal movie 2024, kondal movie cast, kondal malayalam movie review, kondal trailer, antony varghese pepe, antony varghese movies, antony varghese new movie, raj b shetty movies, raj b shetty malayalam movie, raj b shetty new movie, Shabeer Kallarakkal, malayalam movies, malayalam movies 2024 Despite the film's various shortcomings, Kondal is somewhat redeemed by Antony Varghese Pepe's commanding screen presence and his ability to ace action sequences.

Despite the film's various shortcomings, it is somewhat redeemed by Antony's commanding screen presence and his ability to ace action sequences. Although his difficulty with accents other than his own and his acting limitations are apparent — particularly with the camera mostly focused on him against a backdrop of the unchanging sea — his swagger helps to mitigate these flaws to an extent, preventing the film from descending into complete dullness. Raj B Shetty, as always, impresses in his limited scenes. However, the choice to use a dubbing artist whose voice does not match Raj's at all is perplexing. Considering that many Malayalis recognise Raj from his Kannada films and his role as the antagonist in the recent Mammootty-starrer Turbo, the makers of Kondal should have been more attentive to this decision since the incongruity between the actor's voice and the dubbing distracts viewers from what's happening on screen. While Shabeer Kallarakkal's portrayal of Jude is let down by the character's poor writing, Rahul Rajagopal's performance as Michael comes off as cartoonish, with the character's sole expression being a constant, toothy scowl of anger.

Cinema Anatomy | Ranjith: The Malayalam writer-director who peddled elitist, patriarchal and misogynistic ideas through his films, now accused of sexual harassment. While Deepak D Menon's cinematography is impressive, the same cannot be said for the VFX, which displays inconsistent quality throughout. Sam CS adds value to the film with a compelling background score and memorable tracks. While the action choreography by Vikram Mor, Kalai Kingson and Thavasi Raj is not exceptional, it effectively highlights Antony's skills, which works in favour of the movie. Kondal movie cast: Antony Varghese Pepe, Raj B Shetty, Shabeer Kallarakkal. Kondal movie director: Ajith Mampally. Kondal movie rating: 2 stars



The picture was from the Porsche showroom. In the photo, Ajith Kumar sported a casual look, where he wore a white shirt paired with cargo pants. Later, his fan pages too shared several photos on social media from his recent visit to the showroom.

The actor is now busy with the shoot of Good Bad Ugly with director Adhik Ravichandran. The movie is scheduled for a Pongal 2025 release.

Aditi Rao Hydari describes Tim Cook as a 'warm, kind man': 'There is so much sensitivity in everything'

Actors Aditi Rao Hydari and Siddharth recently attended the It's Glowtime event in Cupertino, California, where Apple launched some new products and announced their many new features. Post the event, Aditi and Siddharth shared a chat with the CEO of the company Tim Cook. Talking to The Indian Express, Aditi and Siddharth shared their experience of the event and spoke about democratisation in cinema because of easily accessible technology.

When asked about their chat with Tim, Aditi said, "He is so warm and so kind and it shows in anything that he does. There is so much sensitivity in everything. It's not just user friendly, it's thinking about what your consumer wants and actually caring for them and I find that incredible."

Siddharth spoke about the new announcements made at the event and said, "For me, as a filmmaker, the 4K 120 fps, kind of integrating multi track recording and voice memos, all of those things are taking production software and giving it to the user in a cellphone which is just unheard of." When asked about the democratisation of technology because of products like this, Siddharth said that when he started his career, filmmaking was restricted to a small section of people but that isn't the case today.

"When I started off in the business, the barriers to entry in the business were insurmountable. Today, there is no excuse for not making a film. Making a good film or



bad film is subjective, but there is no excuse for someone to not make a film because all the tools are available to the regular cellphone buying consumer," he said and added, "It's amazing when individuals are empowered to create." Aditi Rao Hydari also spoke about the same and said that she never learnt filmmaking officially but technology like this gives her a chance to learn. "It's empowering the individual artiste and I find that really incredible and it's also a learning. Because for me, I never learnt filmmaking but when you see this and you see it given to you to literally play with and to learn, it also makes you grow as an artiste in that you are then able to be a part of the process yourself to be more inclusive in the process of filmmaking," she said.

Kumud Mishra says he is lazy about his career, acting is the reason why he lives: 'Otherwise I can sleep for months'

Fans of Kumud Mishra might get bowled over by the subtleties he brings to his performances, but the acclaimed actor says the trick is more in his timing than his craft. "To be honest, I don't do anything different. But because I come on screen after regular intervals, people forget my past work!" he jokes. The actor is currently seen in Netflix's latest series IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack. On a long day of promotions, we were Indianexpress.com met Kumud Mishra, the actor was tired but surprisingly chatty, as he spoke about his career which started in mid 90s, earning him praise for his performances in projects like Tripling, Imtiaz Ali's Rockstar, Mulk, Dr Arora, Patiala House, among others.

When asked if he is lazy in his career, Mishra responded, "Yes. Except for acting, I am very lazy in everything. This (acting) is the only thing that excited me, otherwise I can sleep for months, eat for months! Sometimes I find breathing also very taxing, that why do you have to do so much work?! But because I am in this profession, life becomes exciting. Ye bahana hai jeene ka (this is the reason why I live). You shouldn't take this very seriously either. Enjoy it while it lasts."

The actor was joined by two of his IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack co-stars Vijay Varma and Dia Mirza. On the Anubhav Sinha directed show, Kumud Mishra is seen sharing screen space with acting heavyweights like Naseeruddin Shah, Pankaj Kapur, Arvind Swamy, Manoj Pahwa, Aditya Srivastava and Kanwaljit Singh, among others. While the passengers deal with the harrowing hijacking experience, the show deep dives into the various backdoor communication involved in resolving the crisis. These scenes, in particular, feature the mighty ensemble all together. "I was just observing them. They are such accomplished artistes; all you have to do is just absorb," Kumud Mishra said about being in the frame with other titans. "This happens rarely, when you are part of an en-

semble such as this. Like, before a scene, you'd know how they'd perform and yet when the camera starts rolling, they'd do something that would just surprise you. They do all of this effortlessly, which I think if I attempted, my efforts would have been visible. To learn like this is important for any actor."

While many actors often complain about being stereotyped in the industry, Mishra has a different take. The actor obviously believes getting typecast is not in his hands, but he will take up similar roles and make an effort that all are different in the way he portrays them. "See, I need to run my kitchen. If I am privileged to be given an option to choose from, I will do that. To make that character interesting is my job. If I am given the opportunity to play three cops, and I have no other options, it is my responsibility to ensure that all three are different from each other. I can't complain that the industry is typecasting me. If you give the same characters to three different actors, the result will be three brand new characters. "If you don't have the ability to play these parts distinctly, then why are you an actor? Yes, if you don't feel like taking up (on paper) similar parts because you feel saturated, that's a personal choice."

Hina Khan reveals Mahima Chaudhry has been a constant source of support since her first chemotherapy session: 'She went out of her way to make...'



Mahima Chaudhry, who is celebrating her 51st birthday today, has been a constant source of support for Hina Khan since her first chemotherapy session. The Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai actor made the revelation on her Instagram handle on the occasion of the Pardes actor's birthday. Taking to her Insta, Hina shared two photos from her first chemo session, which also featured Mahima. In the photo, Mahima can be seen hugging Hina and posing for the camera with a huge smile.

Sharing the photos, Hina revealed Mahima surprised her in the hospital when she went for her first chemotherapy session. She wrote, "This Picture is from the Day of My Very First Chemo. And this Angel of a Woman surprised me all of a sudden in the hospital. She has been there With me , guiding me , motivating me and illuminating my Path before me during this toughest phase of my life." Calling her a "hero", and "super human being", Hina recalled, "She went out of her way to make sure my journey was Easier than hers, she lifted my spirits and comforted me every step of the Way. Her Hardships became my Life Lessons. Her Love and Kindness became my benchmark and her Courage became my Greatest Goal. We became friends and shared our individual experiences but she never once made me feel that I was alone, she made it through and she made sure that I Realise and believe that I would too." Mahima Chaudhry was among the first actors to come out in support of Hina Khan after she revealed her breast cancer diagnosis. Taking to Hina's comments section in June, Mahima wrote, "Sending you all my love & strength, you are my brave one, Hina. You are a fighter, and I know you will be just fine! You have millions of people wishing the best for you, and I will be there holding your hand right through

this." Ever since Mahima Chaudhry's own cancer battle, the actor has been warning her friends to get timely breast examination done. She told The Week, "The point I want to make is that breast cancer is completely curable if detected at an early stage and delaying examination will only further delay one's chances at survival."

Diljit Dosanjh and Alia Bhatt to reunite in Jigra, fans say 'We are freaking out'

Diljit Dosanjh and Alia Bhatt are all set to collaborate after a gap of eight years since their film Uda Punjab. The actor-singer duo shared a sneak peek of themselves from the set of Jigra, also starring The Archies fame Vedang Raina. On Friday, Alia shared a photo on her official Instagram handle, where she could be seen sitting on a chair that read: "The said Kudi", while Diljit's chair read: "Sings about Kudi". Sharing the picture, Alia Bhatt captioned the photo: "Chairs say it all."

The post attracted several interesting reactions from fans. A user wrote, "While the world fights for tickets, she collabs with the man himself." Another excited fan claimed, "'ik kudi' duo is back y'all." Others commented, "This is going to be my new favorite track", "can not wait for this song to drop", and "So Alia X diljit the superhit musical collab is officially happening and we are FREAKING OUT."

Previously, Alia Bhatt and Diljit Dosanjh starred together in the 2016 film Uda Punjab. The movie, directed by Abhishek Chaubey, also featured Kareena Kapoor and Shahid Kapoor in the lead roles.

Jigra, directed by Vasan Bala, is all set to hit the big screen on October 11. The movie is jointly produced by Karan Johar and Alia Bhatt. Jigra will be Alia's first big screen release of the year. She last starred in Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani. On the other hand, Diljit is all set to kickstart his Europe tour this month. The Punjab actor-singer will also be visiting 10 Indian cities from October to December as part of his Dil-Luminati India tour.

NFL star Tyreek Hill's handcuffing detention revives fears of police excesses against Black Americans



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

After Miami Dolphins wide receiver Tyreek Hill scored an 80-yard touchdown against Jacksonville Jaguars earlier this week, the NFL star subtly put both his hands behind his back to ridicule his handcuffed detention a few hours earlier. The American football star had been pulled out of his car by a police officer and pushed to the ground after refusing to roll down the car window fully when stopped for a speeding violation.

The television cameras cut away quickly from the celebration, but Hill's mocking of being restrained just outside the stadium capped off an eventful day for the thirty-year-old Black athlete. "What if I wasn't Tyreek Hill, bro, worst-case scenario," he asked after the game on Sunday. Would his predicament have become worse if he wasn't a famous Black man and a well-known sports star with resources, was the deeper question an emotional Hill was bringing up. Or would he have been treated differently if he belonged to a different race? Here is the body cam footage from Tyreek Hill's detainment before the Miami Dolphins game. This level of aggression and demeaning behavior was not necessary. This is an excessive overuse of power. pic.twitter.com/yrlfkdRle Police body-cam videos give a clearer picture of how things unfolded and escalated and have divided opinion about who was in the wrong. Hill was pulled out of his car, pushed to the ground and handcuffed after he had handed his driving license through the partially open car window. In police body-cam videos, the officer can be heard threatening to 'break the freaking window' after Hill rolls it up. Hill does not comply when the officer asks him to 'keep his window down'. Hill's teammate Calais Campbell, also a Black man, who stopped by to try and defuse the situation was also put in handcuffs. Hill's family was also traumatized. When he went out to the grocery after the incident, Hill said his wife called him 10 times to check if he was ok. Hill is lucky things didn't go from bad to worse for him.

A research paper called 'Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race-ethnicity, and sex' published by PNAS, a peer reviewed journal of the National Academy of Sciences, found that 'Black men are about 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police over the life course than are white men. Black women are about 1.4 times more likely to be killed by police than are

white women.' Three years ago, the Los Angeles Times cited a study based on analysis of body camera footage which concluded that police officers spoke to black men in a less friendly tone when compared to white men during traffic stops.

Another study showed that sleeplessness increased among black people after incidents of mistrust between them and the police which led to deaths. "Sleep health among Black adults worsened after exposure to officer-involved killings of unarmed Black individuals," a study published in 2021 in the Jama Internal Medicine journal said. Hill admitted that he could have handled the situation better when he was asked to pull over but wondered how the police would behave if they didn't have body cams on. The cops also mockingly asked him if he needed an ear surgery; a reference to Hill not rolling down the car window. This was just after he told them the knee on which he had surgery in the off-season had been hurt when they handcuffed him. "I got to follow rules... you know like everyone else would do... Now does that give them the right to literally beat the dog out of me? Absolutely not. But at the end of the day I wish I could go back and do things differently," Hill said. Hill isn't going to take a knee in future games nor was he going to call for defunding the police nor was he going to protest. "Football is my therapy, this is how I get away from a lot of stuff. This is how I separate myself from past traumas in my life," Hill said during a press conference on Wednesday. When asked to talk about what he experienced at the hands of the police, Hill likened it to 'being in a movie'.

"I don't know bro like... choked, pinched, all of that man. I am just glad to be here so I can tell this story man. This is truly shocking to me. It is embarrassing because I got kids and when I FaceTime my kids they are like 'dad are you all right'? Hill wanted one of the officers involved in the incident Danny Torres, moved to administrative duty this week by the Miami-Dade police department, to be fired.

"Gone. Gone. Gone. He's gotta go, man," Hill said when asked about Torres. "In that instant right there, not only did he treat me bad, but he also treated my teammates with disrespect." Did the officers use excessive force and was their behavior too aggressive for a case of speeding? Or was it a pure case of racial profiling by the officers? Or did Hill aggravate the situation by not rolling down the car windows despite being asked to? Were the police on a power trip? The debate will rage on for a few weeks. Hill, however, wants to see change on both sides. "I don't think we should use this as a moment to separate people or divide people or make it a battle or anything like that." The body cam footage contains lessons that could help in course correction, he felt. "In football how we get better from things is we watch the tape and we get better from it and this instance we should do the same, a lot of people want to criticize. I think this could be a learning tool for everybody... civilians... officers around the world."

Shreyas Iyer's eventful Duleep Trophy day: Takes a First-Class wicket since 2018-19, came to bat with sunglasses and got dismissed for duck

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Shreyas Iyer eventful Duleep Trophy Day Shreyas Iyer had an eventful day on the field during the second day of India A vs India D's Duleep Trophy Round 2 match on Friday taking a wicket in his very first ball in India A's second innings while also getting dismissed for 0 earlier when it was his turn to wield the willow. (Screenshots: X) Shreyas Iyer had an eventful day on the field during the second day of India A vs India D's Duleep Trophy Round 2 match on Friday taking a wicket in his very first ball in India A's second innings while also getting dismissed for 0 earlier when it was his turn to wield the willow. Earlier in the day, Iyer drew a lot of curious gazes when he opted to come to bat with a sunglasses on. He would last just 7 balls before being dismissed for 0 off a Khaleel Ahmed delivery. The India D skipper would have the last laugh of Day 2 though when he dismissed India A's Mayank Agarwal for 56 when he caught a followthrough off the latter's bat to complete a low catch which signalled the end of the day's play. This was Iyer's 5th First-Class wicket and his first one since 2018-19.

In the match, Shams Mulani missed out on his maiden First-Class century as India D bundled out India A for 290



in their first-innings in the morning session. However, Shreyas Iyer's men succumbed to a fine bowling performance as they conceded a 107-run first lead, saved partially by Devdutt Padikkal's stroke-filled 92. In the other match of the Duleep Trophy, India C put on a mammoth 572 on the board with valuable contributions from the lower-order. Abhimanyu Easwaran and N Jagadeesan then laid a fine counter-attack for India B as they put on over 120 runs before stumps.

Border-Gavaskar Trophy: Maxwell excited about Kohli vs Smith showdown

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

New Delhi: Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell is thrilled about the prospect of watching modern-day greats Virat Kohli and Steve Smith battle for supremacy in the Border Gavaskar Trophy against India later this year. Kohli and Smith are among the 'Fab Four' batters of the modern generation, alongside England's Joe Root and New Zealand's Kane Williamson.

"I think the way that the two superstar batters, Steve Smith and Virat Kohli, probably head-to-head. Seeing how their dominance I suppose is asserted on the series and how much of an influence that has on who takes home the Border Gavaskar Trophy," Maxwell told Star Sports. "One of those two is going to make a lot of runs, if not both of them, and it's going to be pretty exciting to watch the two of the finest players of our generation go head-to-head," he added.

Both Kohli and Smith are former captains, and have indulged in fiery on field exchanges early in their careers but their relationship has evolved in recent times.

Smith recently said that Kohli was an Australian amongst the Indian players in terms of attitude. "I believe Virat Kohli is Australian in thoughts and action. The way he gets into a battle, the way he gets into the challenge and tries to get on top of the opposition. He's probably the most Australian of the Indian players, I'd say," Smith had said. India travel to Australia for the marquee five-Test series, starting in Perth on November 22. Since 2014-



"I think the way that the two superstar batters, Steve Smith and Virat Kohli, probably head-to-head. Seeing how their dominance I suppose is asserted on the series and how much of an influence that has on who takes home the Border Gavaskar Trophy," Maxwell told Star Sports.

15, Australia have failed to lay their hands on the Border Gavaskar Trophy, with India winning four consecutive series including the historic triumphs Down Under in 2018-19 and 2020-21.

Azam's confidence has taken a beating because of the way he has been treated: Moin Khan



GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Azam Khan Moin Khan Blaming Raja for his son's woes, Moin said that as soon as the former cricketer took over as PCB chairman, he dropped Azam from the 2021 T20 World Cup squad. Former Pakistan Test captain Moin Khan has said his son Azam's confidence had taken a beating because of the way he was treated over the years, and held former PCB chairman Ramiz Raja responsible for the damage done to his son's career.

Moin, a former wicketkeeper-batter like his son, said that after watching all the matches Pakistan played during the 2024 T20 World Cup in the Americas, he could confidently say that his son was best suited for the role. "I watched the entire World Cup and the matches leading up to it, and it seemed like Azam was the number one choice for wicket-keeping and batting. Then suddenly, after just one match, the entire strategy was changed," said Moin, who scored more than 6,000 international runs.

Azam faced considerable ire from fans regarding his fitness, with his golden duck against the United States team not going down well with the cricket-crazy Pakistani supporters. He was dropped in the subsequent match

against India. "Azam wasn't given a chance to keep wickets after one match and was dropped after getting out on the very first ball (against USA). Any player can get out on the first ball, but here the tradition of developing players that used to exist is no longer there. Whether it's the captain or the management, if they make such quick changes to players, how can we produce good players?" he asked.

Blaming Raja for his son's woes, Moin said that as soon as the former cricketer took over as PCB chairman, he dropped Azam from the 2021 T20 World Cup squad. "At that time, if the chief selector had made a wrong selection, he should have been removed, but they didn't have the courage, and as a result, they demoralised a young player. "I'm not saying that all the blame lies with the team management and the captain; Azam has his own shortcomings too. He needs to make himself physically and mentally stronger, and follow the fitness routines of other sportsmen." Moin said his son was working hard to improve his fitness. "For the past month or so, I've noticed he's been working hard to improve his fitness with his trainer Shehbaz Mohammad, even taking him along to the Caribbean League. I hope Azam has learned a lot from this experience," he added.

"Shaheen Afridi has the ability to lead the team and is highly liked by the players. He is an excellent choice for captaincy in T20s. In white-ball cricket, I don't see anyone else suitable for the role. Removing him from the captaincy was unjust," opined Moin. Moin also advocated for one captain for all formats. He also felt that conflicts among players are not unusual, and frequent changes, including changing the captain, affect team performance. "Players may not listen to their captain if there are constant changes. If the cricket board provides full support to the captain and assures them of a long-term responsibility, the team's performance will improve," he added.

Diamond League 2024 Finals: When and where to catch livestreaming of Neeraj Chopra and Avinash Sable events?

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

Brussels Diamond League Finals: Both javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra and steeplechaser Avinash Sable will be in action in the Diamond League final in Brussels which will be the first time when two Indians will be competing in a Diamond League final. Chopra, who won the Diamond League final in 2022 and finished runner-up in 2023, qualified for the final in 2024 after he finished second in the Doha and Lausanne events accumulating 14 points which helped him finish 4th. Grenada's Anderson Peters finished on top with 29 points and Germany's Julian Webber was second with 21 points. Jakub Vadlejch of Czechia, who is also the defending champion, finished third with 16 points. On the other hand, Sable finished 14th in the 3000m steeplechase standings with 3 points from 2 events but due to four athletes who finished higher than him were ruled out of the final, the Indian rose to 12th and qualified for the final. He had finished in the Paris leg of the Diamond League and followed that up with 14th place at the Silesia. Here's all you need to know about catching the steeplechase and javelin throw events live:

When will Neeraj Chopra's javelin throw and Avinash Sable's steeplechase events at the Diamond League final in Brussels take place? Neeraj Chopra's javelin throw event at the Diamond League final in Brussels will take place on Sunday, September 15. Avinash Sable's steeplechase event will take place on September 14 (Saturday).

Where is Neeraj Chopra's javelin throw and Avinash Sable's steeplechase events at the Diamond League final taking place? Neeraj Chopra's javelin throw and Avinash Sable's steeplechase events will be taking place at the Allianz Memorial Van Damme in Brussels, Belgium.

Travis Head's ODI, T20I strike-rates are through the roof; but is the S.R. head-rush dragging down his Test average?

GNS News Agency, Sept 18

A Test to ODI-T20I rekindling like Travis Head is the work of a marauding and instinctive outlier. None have aced a transition quite like the Aussie has this decade. Head's limited-overs international career was cast into the wilderness after two fledgling years between 2016 and mid-2018. He was not jettisoned altogether. Head made his Test debut against Pakistan in December 2018. Despite a duck in his maiden innings, Head was earmarked for a long rope in whites.

Five years later, the 30-year-old is Australia's fourth-most successful World Test Championship batter with 2510 runs and six centuries, championing predominantly in the middle-order. A white-ball return was inevitable but Head's mind-spinning numbers as an opener were barely prophesied. Head went 52 T20Is before his return, the longest gap between two appearances for an Australian batter. Over the last week, Head smoked more than 25 runs in a T20I over twice against contrasting attacks in Scotland and England. The hard-hitting blade has finally begun to reflect in the shortest format. On Wednesday night in Southampton, Head plundered England seamer Sam Curran for 30 runs in an over, the joint-highest by an individual for Australia. Head's last 20 innings in each format paint the story of his white-ball upsurge and a partial red-ball dip, probably stemming from the unfiltered aggression. His Test strike rate has moved into the 70s across the last 20 innings with the career SR going up to its highest at 64.71. However, Head's average has taken a hit in this period - from 46.57 in his first 61 innings to 28.25 since - bringing the overalls down to 41.75.

His current T20I average (33.18) and strike rate (159.22) are at an all-time high. His ODI average-strike rate (42.73 and 102.61) splits were at their peak following the 120-ball 137 in the World Cup final against India in Ahmedabad last November. In his first ODI after four years in 2022, Head cracked his second ton, a 72-ball 101 against Pakistan in Lahore. Head only played a soli-



What time does Neeraj Chopra's javelin throw and Avinash Sable's steeplechase events start at the Diamond League final in Brussels?

Neeraj Chopra's javelin throw event at the Diamond League final in Brussels will begin after midnight on September 14 (Saturday). It will happen at 1:52 AM IST (Sept 15, Sunday). Meanwhile, Avinash Sable's event will take place after midnight on September 13 (Friday) and happen

Which TV channels will broadcast Neeraj Chopra's javelin throw and Avinash Sable's steeplechase events at the Diamond League final in Brussels? Neeraj Chopra's javelin throw and Avinash Sable's steeplechase events at the Diamond League final in Brussels will be telecast on the Sports18 network in India.

How do I watch the live streaming of Neeraj Chopra's javelin throw and Avinash Sable's steeplechase events at the Diamond League final in Brussels?

Neeraj Chopra's javelin throw and Avinash Sable's steeplechase events at the Diamond League final in Brussels will be streamed live on the JioCinema app and website.

tary T20I that year before making a full-fledged return in 2023. Only a handful have matched up to Head's frenetic scoring rates since. From March 29, 2022, Head has racked up 1004 runs in 20 ODIs as an opener. 13 players have crossed the mark in the period, but only three have managed to acquire a 50-plus average and 100-plus strike rate - India's Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill being the other two. But none have matched up to Head's strike rate - a whopping 126.92 places him atop all the openers who have tallied at least 500 runs in the period.

Last week, the dashing southpaw came close to recording the fastest T20I hundred against Scotland in Edinburgh before he fell on 80 off a mere 25 deliveries. Head cantered to fifty in 17 balls, the joint-quickest by an Australian alongside Marcus Stoinis. His T20I recalibration began in August 2023 on the road to the 2024 T20 World Cup in the Americas. The South Australian phenom has plundered 717 runs in 20 innings with a 175.73 strike rate - the best among all batters with a minimum of 500 runs.

The devastation has extended to T20 leagues too in the period, with none amassing as many runs as him with a strike rate above 181 over the last year. It was not bewildering then to witness the Sunrisers Hyderabad batter decimate bowling line-ups in the IPL earlier this year, scoring 567 runs at a 191.55 strike rate - an unprecedented high for anybody who has passed the 550-run mark across 17 seasons. Head is not technical perfection but a modern flagbearer of maximising limitations at the highest level with immense self-belief. Tons culminating with ICC Test and ODI title triumphs have already been ticked. The T20I cabinet has yet to witness a century and a global title. Head missed the cut for the 2021 T20 World Cup when Australia lifted their maiden crown. Perhaps, the 2026 edition in India and Sri Lanka offers the perfect opportunity to complete cricket's greatest treble. By which time, the Aussie freak of nature would have advanced batting pyrotechnics to new uncharted territories.