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## Eighty-year-old woman gang-raped in Medchal

Hyderabad: An 80-year-old woman was allegedly gang-raped by three men in Medchal on Thursday. The woman, who lives alone, was overpowered by the suspects and sexually assaulted at Bandamadaram village. "They overpowered and raped her and fled the spot," police said, adding that she regained consciousness and came out on the road. Passersby on seeing her alerted the police by dialing 100. Based on a complaint, the Medchal police booked a case of gang-rape and are investigating. Efforts are on to nab the suspects who are absconding. The victim was shifted to the hospital for medical examination.

## IIT-Hyderabad institutes ANR Award in field of performing arts

Sangareddy: The Indian Institute of Technology-Hyderabad (IIT-H) has decided to give ANR award in the field of acting and performing arts. The award is instituted by the family members of Akkineni International Foundation to honour the legacy of the legendary actor Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR). This award aims to recognise and support exceptional talent in the field of acting and performing arts, fostering creativity and innovation among aspiring artists. The award will be conferred on individuals who have made significant contributions to the performing arts, encouraging a new generation of performers to pursue excellence. Prof BS Murty, Director of IIT-H expressed his gratitude to the Akkineni international foundation on behalf of the IIT-H community for bestowing this honor upon the institute.

## Three BSF jawans killed, over a dozen injured as bus carrying troops falls into gorge in J-K's Budgam



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Srinagar: Three BSF jawans were killed and over a dozen were injured when a bus carrying the forces' personnel for election duty met with an accident in Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam district on Friday, officials said.

A hired bus carrying BSF jawans for election duty for the second phase of assembly polls fell into a gorge near Brel of Watarhaal in Budgam district of central Kashmir, the officials said. Over a dozen jawans were injured, some of them critically, in the accident, they said. The injured jawans have been rushed to a hospital, they added.

## CJI-lead five-judge Bench takes suo motu notice of a video showing Karnataka HC judge's sexist remarks in court

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and comprising four senior most judges on Friday (September 20, 2024) took suo motu cognisance of a video clip on social media showing a Karnataka High Court judge's "scandalous" remarks in open court to a woman lawyer during proceeding. The High Court judge, Justice Veda Vyasa Char Srishananda, was seen on video making a sexist and disparaging remark to the woman lawyer, creating a furore online.

The other four judges on the Bench were Justices



Sanjiv Khanna, B.R. Gavai, Surya Kant and Hrishikesh Roy. The Bench has sought the assistance of Attorney General R. Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, both of whom were present in the courtroom. The Bench directed the Registrar General, Karnataka High Court,

to consult with the Chief Justice of the High Court and submit a report on the incident in the next two days. The Bench listed the case for hearing on September 25. Senior advocate Indira Jaising had posted the video on 'X' with a comment "we call upon the Chief Justice of India to

take suo motu action against this judge and send him for gender sensitisation training". The same judge had, on a previous occasion, been in the eye of public storm for reportedly referring to a Muslim dominated sub-locality in West Bengal as "Pakistan". The video showed that the judge's comment was triggered by the initiative taken by the women lawyer to respond to a question directed at the male lawyer representing the opposite side in the case.

The judge said, in a jocular tone, that she seemed to know everything about him and may even reveal the colour of his undergarments if asked tomorrow.

## Supreme Court's Youtube channel hacked



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

New Delhi: In an unfortunate incident, The Supreme Court on Friday temporarily disabled its YouTube channel after it was hacked and broadcasted videos promoting a cryptocurrency developed by a US-based company.

Reportedly, the channel was renamed "Ripple" and a video titled "Brad Garlinghouse: Ripple Responds To The SEC's \$2 Billion Fine! XRP PRICE PREDICTION" was live on the compromised channel. Further, the hackers made other hearings live-streamed on the channel private. In its e-initiative measures, the SC began live streaming proceedings of the Constitution Bench on YouTube and used artificial intelligence and natural language processing technology for live transcription of such hearings of national importance. Recently, the judicial hearings in the NEET-UG matter and R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital suo moto case garnered huge public views.

The top court, in its judgment in the Swapnil Tripathi (2018) case, had favoured live streaming the proceedings in important cases. Thereafter, the full court decided to live-stream the proceedings of Constitution benches to provide citizens from every nook and corner of the country to witness the Supreme Court proceedings. In August last year, during the Constitution Bench hearing in "Re: Article 370 of the Constitution", Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud had said the top court was setting up its own cloud software for video conferencing to enable virtual hearings in all lower courts across the country. "In Phase-III of eCourts (Project), we have a huge budget, so we are in the process of setting up our own cloud software for video conferencing," he said. The Chief Justice had pointed out that during the pandemic, courts across India held as many as 43 million hearings through virtual mode.

## BRS constitutes three-member fact finding committee to investigate Gandhi Hospital deaths

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Hyderabad: A three-member fact finding committee has been formed by the BRS party to study the maternal and infant mortalities at Gandhi Hospital and also to analyze the present state of healthcare services available in government hospitals across Telangana State. The BRS working president, KT Rama Rao on Friday said in addition to Gandhi Hospital, the fact finding committee will also take a deep dive to access the quality of healthcare facilities available to the poor in other major government hospitals. Three physicians, including former Health Minister, Dr T Rajaiah, senior spine specialist and MLA Koratla, Dr Kalvakuntla Sanjay and Vikarabad BRS MLA, Dr Methuku Anand have been made members of the committee. The committee will produce an exhaustive report on the present state-of-affairs in government healthcare facilities and come up with recommendations, which will be submitted to the State government, the BRS working president said.

## BJP MLA Munirathna arrested in Bengaluru on rape, honey-trapping charges

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Bengaluru: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Munirathna was arrested on Friday in connection with the rape and honey-trapping charges in Bengaluru, said officials here. The Kaggalipura police, which had lodged an FIR, took the MLA into custody immediately after he came out of the Bengaluru Central Prison.

The court on Thursday had granted him bail in two cases registered at Vyalkaval police station over allegations of atrocity and issuing life threats. The team headed by Deputy SP Dinakar Shetty at the Central Prison had taken him into custody and arrested him, police sources confirmed.

The police will question the MLA in the rape and honey-trapping case and are likely to produce him before the court on Saturday.

Karnataka Police had lodged an FIR against the jailed MLA in connection with raping, honey-trapping, videographing an act of rape, and threatening a woman social activist.

## KTR demands Central probe into alleged corruption in AMRUT tenders

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao urged the union government to launch an immediate investigation into alleged corruption in the allocation of AMRUT scheme tenders in Telangana. He stated that tenders worth about Rs 1,500 crore were being awarded to companies linked to the Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's relatives, specifically his brother-in-law, without following due process. In a letter addressed to union Ministers for Urban Development Manohar Lal Khattar and Tokhan Sahu on Friday, Rama Rao cited repeated demands from opposition parties, including the BRS and the BJP, for transparency from the State government regarding these tenders. He said the State government so far failed to respond, raising suspicions of malpractice. He accused the Congress-led Telangana government of conducting secretive deals, deliberately keeping related information about the tenders hidden from the public domain.

"The Municipal department and other tendering websites have been manipulated to withhold this information from the public," he added. He demanded that the union government take necessary measures to release all tender-related documents and make them available to the public. Citing the urgency of the matter, the BRS working president asked the union Urban Development Ministry to review all tenders awarded over the past nine months under the AMURT scheme, which is funded by the Central government. He requested that any tenders violating the rules be immediately canceled, noting that



companies with no qualifications, other than being connected to the Chief Minister, were awarded lucrative contracts. Further, Rama Rao also drew attention to multiple tenders awarded to the Chief Minister's brother-in-law Srujan Reddy's company, along with Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Limited (MEIL) and KNR. He noted that these companies have been favoured, with inflated estimates exceeding 40 per cent of the projected costs. He revealed that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's brother, Tirupathi Reddy, allegedly holds shares in KNR company, adding to the conflict of interest. "If the Central government fails to act swiftly and appropriately, it risks being perceived as complicit in the Congress government's corrupt practices," he cautioned.

## Bombay High Court strikes down amended IT rules, terms them unconstitutional



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

The Bombay High Court on Friday held as unconstitutional and struck down the amended Information Technology (IT) rules which sought to identify fake and false content on social media against the government. The matter was assigned to Justice A S Chandurkar as 'tie-breaker judge', after a division bench in January delivered a split verdict on the petitions challenging the amended IT rules. Justice Chandurkar on Friday held that the rules violated constitutional provisions. "I have considered the matter extensively. The impugned rules are violative of Article 14 (right to equality), 19 (freedom of speech and expression) and 19(1)(g) (freedom and right to profession) of the Constitution of India," the judge said.

The expression "fake, false and misleading" in the rules was "vague and hence wrong" in the absence of any definition, he added. With this ruling, the High Court allowed the petitions filed by stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra and others challenging the new rules, including the provision to set up a Fact Checking Unit (FCU) to identify fake or false content about the government. The petitions against the IT Rules were referred to Justice Chandurkar after a division bench of Justices Gautam

Patel and Neela Gokhale delivered a split verdict in January. While Justice Patel struck down the Rules, Justice Gokhale upheld them.

## HM Shah promises to drive out illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in Jharkhand

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Sahibganj: Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while addressing a rally in Sahibganj, Jharkhand on Friday, promised to drive out Bangladeshi infiltrators if the BJP comes to power in the state. The rally marked the launch of the "Parivartan Yatra," aimed at delivering the message of ousting the current government and establishing a BJP-led administration that will focus on the state's development. HM Shah accused the Hemant Soren-led government of protecting Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltrators, and vowed that a BJP government would ensure their expulsion from Santhal Pargana. Describing the current state government as the most corrupt, HM Shah cited alleged scams involving MGNREGA (Rs 1,000 crore), land (Rs 600 crore), mining (Rs 1,000 crore), and liquor (Rs 40 crore). He further alleged that the government misappropriated land meant for the Army. He emphasised that the Parivartan Yatra's objective was not just to replace the JMM-Congress-RJD government, but to establish a government that would eradicate corruption and remove illegal immigrants from the state. The Union Home Minister said that the Hemant Soren government had broken several promises, such as providing five lakh jobs annually and giving Rs 2,500 monthly to widows, neither of which had been fulfilled. HM Shah expressed concern over the slogans demanding that Hindus and tribals leave Jharkhand, which he claimed were raised in Pakur district.

## Andhra CM seeks report from TTD over animal fat in Tirumala laddu



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday sought a report from the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on the alleged presence of animal fat in Tirumala laddu, purportedly during the regime of YSR Congress Party. Taking a serious note of the issue amid outrage among devotees, CM Naidu directed the TTD Executive Officer to submit a comprehensive report by the evening. CM Naidu held a meeting with ministers and top officials over the issue of quality of Tirumala laddu.

According to an official release, CM Naidu made it clear that stringent action would be taken against those who tarnished the sanctity of Tirumala temple and hurt the sentiments of devotees. He stated that the Andhra government was serious over use of adulterated ghee in making laddu prasadam. The government has taken note of the outrage this has caused among the devotees around the world. Ministers Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, Nimmala Ramanaidu, A. Satya Prasad, Kollu Ravindra and K. Parthasarathy, Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad and senior officials attended the review meeting.

## Heavy Rains Expected in Andhra Pradesh as Low Pressure Forms in Bay of Bengal

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Heavy rains are anticipated in Andhra Pradesh as the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) reports the formation of a low pressure area in the North Andaman Sea, which is expected to evolve into a significant weather system in the Central Bay of Bengal by the 23rd of this month. Meteorological officials suggest that this developing low pressure system will intensify and make landfall along the coasts of South Odisha and North Andhra, likely marking the last instance of low pressure for this monsoon season. In light of this weather development, light to moderate rainfall is forecasted in isolated areas across North Andhra today, with surface winds expected to reach speeds of 30-40 km/h. The Amaravati Meteorological Center has issued a yellow alert for coastal districts in anticipation of the adverse weather conditions continuing until the 23rd. As the monsoon trough shifts to the east-central Bay of Bengal, meteorologists have indicated that a surface circulation is likely to develop in and around the North Andaman Sea by the 21st. This circulation is projected to move northwest, leading to the formation of a low-pressure area in the Bay of Bengal in the coming days.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Save Indus treaty

THE landmark Indus Water Treaty (IWT), which has survived India-Pakistan wars and diplomatic tensions over the past 64 years, finds itself at a crossroads today. India has served a notice on its neighbour, seeking a review and modification of the treaty in view of 'fundamental and unforeseen changes in circumstances that require a reassessment of obligations'. Since January 2023, New Delhi has repeatedly written to Islamabad to initiate talks on revising the World Bank-brokered treaty, but all this has merely been water off a duck's back. Pakistan, which red-flagged its water crisis during a UN Security Council meeting in February this year, is banking on the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague to resolve the festering dispute over water-sharing.

River waters know no boundaries. Considering their mutual reliance on this precious natural resource, the two nations must realise that the IWT's survival is integral to ensuring regional water security. Intransigence and one-upmanship have made a bilateral settlement elusive. India has unreasonably indicated that there will be no more meetings of the Permanent Indus Commission, which includes officers from both nations, till the two governments discuss the renegotiation of the treaty. This 'Big Brother' approach may prove to be counter-productive as Pakistan has managed to internationalise the issue and is portraying India as the uncooperative party. The established dispute resolution mechanism — which has the provision for neutral experts as well as the arbitration court — should be honoured by both countries. Every effort must be made to keep the IWT alive and relevant. Amid its muscle-flexing over the Indus treaty, India must not lose sight of the Brahmaputra basin, which lacks a water management framework. This major river system has India, China and Bangladesh among the stakeholders.

## Water, water everywhere, not a drop to drink': Farmers in Punjab's Abohar worried as subsurface saline water level rises



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Around five villages in Punjab's Abohar are dealing with subsurface waterlogging, also known as "sem" in the local language. After the monsoons, saline water has surfaced in some areas of these villages, and it is present at a depth of 2-4 feet in large patches where either kinnow or cotton has been cultivated. The issue is serious in Patti Billa, Dalmirkhera, Sappanwali, Giddranwali, and Daulatpura in Abohar villages. Each of these villages has agricultural land ranging from 2,000 to 2,500 acres, where farmers cultivate cotton and kinnow. This time, they have also attempted to grow paddy. Sappanwali village is a nursery for government-approved kinnow saplings, while Daulatpura has most of its area dedicated to paddy cultivation. Water was seen at a depth of 8-10 feet about 8-10 years ago, and the level has gradually increased since then. Prem Kumar, a farmer of Patti Billa village, said, "For the past 3-4 years, we have been flagging the issue of the water level gradually rising. This time, the water has come up to the surface in many areas and is just below the surface in others. The saline water is not good for the soil, so we are worried about our ability to grow wheat in the coming season."

Kumar said many farmers of the area went to meet Deputy Commissioner Amarpreet Kaur on Tuesday and gave her a memorandum regarding the issue. It has also raised concerns for the drainage, soil conservation, and agriculture departments, which are working to assess the affected area. Sandeep Jakhar, suspended Congress MLA from Abohar, said, "Waterlogging is an issue in Southwest Punjab, and many sem nallahs have been made in the Malwa districts to reduce the subsurface water level. However, after this monsoon, many villages are facing the peculiar problem of rising underground water levels, and this needs to be addressed urgently." The soft land in the fields indicates that subsurface water has risen

and is seen at 2-3 feet. It can damage the roots of the kinnow plant, and cotton can't be recovered now," said Darshan Singh, general secretary of Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) Rajawal of Fazilka district, who himself is from the Giddranwali village. When contacted, Jasbir Singh, executive engineer of the drainage department in Fazilka, said, "We are currently assessing the agricultural areas in the villages mentioned above. After the assessment, we will propose a solution. For now, we are using lift pumps to raise water from the fields and discharge it into nearby streams about 8 km away from the villages. In the future, we plan to implement a project involving the installation of perforated underground pipes to allow saline water to flow underground and be directed into pits and then to the streams. We are aware of the problem and are in the process of conducting the assessment." Jakhar, however, said, "As we all know, the underground water in southwest Punjab is saline and contains fluoride. Traces of uranium have also been found in many areas of Fazilka villages, making the water unsuitable for drinking and irrigation. It's a dire situation — water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink. I will meet with the drainage and soil conservation department officials on Wednesday to find a quick solution."

Farmers alleged that the increase in underground water levels in some areas is due to the lack of cleanliness in existing "sem nallahs". They have also pointed out that this season, heavy rainfall in Abohar, an area near the border of Rajasthan, is a contributing factor that cannot be denied. The area under cotton in the Fazilka district has decreased to 50 per cent this year. Additionally, many kinnow orchards have been uprooted due to an attack by the plant pathogen phytophthora on the kinnow plants. Some villages have attempted to sow paddy for the first time in certain patches. It remains to be seen whether the paddy crop has also contributed to the rise in underground water level, as observed by the authorities. The problem exists in many Muktsar villages as well, but farmers are currently occupied with the paddy crop in the area and, therefore, are not raising the issue at the moment, said Jakhar. He said the unscientific zig-zag construction of the sem nallahs in the area led to a significant rise in the level of underground water. "These nallahs were constructed during the tenure of the SAD-BJP government, starting from the Muktsar area. The then CM Parkash Singh Badal favoured many farmers in his area by altering the design of the nallahs to meet local requirements, causing trouble for those of us located at the tail ends," said Jakhar.

## Delhi High Court allows BharatPe co-founder Ashneer Grover, wife to travel abroad



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Ashneer Grover The couple were permitted to travel abroad earlier this year to the USA but on the condition that one of the spouses stays back in India while the other is travelling. The Delhi High Court on Tuesday allowed payment app BharatPe's co-founder and former managing director Ashneer Grover and his wife Madhuri Jain Grover to travel to the UK and Doha in Qatar from September 28 to October 7. The two have lookout circulars issued against them.

The Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) registered a First Information Report (FIR) against the Grovers and their family members in 2022 for the alleged misappropriation of funds causing losses worth Rs 81 crore to Resilient Innovations Private Limited, which runs the UPI platform BharatPe. The couple were permitted to travel abroad earlier this year to the USA but on the condition that one of the spouses stays back in India while the other is travelling. The Grovers are seeking permission to travel on the ground that they have paid engagements. The EOW opposed the Grovers' pleas before the court of Justice Sanjeev Narula. It was submitted that India does not have an extradition treaty with Qatar and a co-accused in the case, Madhuri's brother, has already been permitted to travel abroad during the same period. The EOW submitted that there's an apprehension that they may flee and that investigation is still "unfolding" even as "more than 100 people have been examined in the matter". However senior advocate Mohit Mathur, representing the Grovers, submitted that their children will be in India while they are travelling. Justice Narula permitted them to travel subject to depositing original share certificates and original title deeds of their properties, as was ordered earlier when the court permitted them to travel in May.

## Bengaluru police arrest history-sheeter who forces rival to run naked on road



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

The Bengaluru city police on Tuesday arrested a history-sheeter who allegedly assaulted a man, who was also involved in a few criminal cases, and forced him to strip his clothes. The accused Pawan Gowda alias Kadubu, a native of Tumakuru, also recorded the video of the incident that showed the injured victim Nagarjuna running on the road naked, the police said. The police said that they fired a gunshot at the leg of the accused as he tried to attack the officials at the time of arrest.

Investigators said that Gowda attacked and abused Nagarjuna reportedly due to gang rivalry. After the video clip, which was shot a month ago, went viral on Monday, the police traced Nagarjuna at a locality in Bengaluru city who gave the details of Gowda. S Girish, Deputy Commissioner of Police (West), said that the police asked Nagarjuna to lodge a complaint on Monday night and then formed a team to nab the accused. "Based on technical evidence, we tracked Pawan when he was near Ullal as he switched on his mobile phone around 3.30 am. The police chased him while he was speeding on a two-wheeler. When the police blocked his way, he attacked police constable Venkatesh with a knife. Then inspector Subramani opened fire in the air and shot a bullet at Pawan's leg," Girish said. The police later shifted Pawan and Venkatesh to a nearby hospital for treatment. In the video, the victim is seen bleeding and Pawan hurling abuses at Nagarjuna as he removes all his clothes. Later, it shows the victim being repeatedly and made to run. In the background of the visuals, voices of Pawan's associates could be heard asking Nagarjuna to wear clothes, but Pawan opposes it and instead asks him to run on the street naked, the police said.

## ED launches raids at Trinamool MLA's residence and five other locations in West Bengal

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Artisans of Kumartuli and their family members along with citizen of Kolkata during a protest from Kumartuli demand Justice for RG Kar victims in Kolkata on Sunday, September 08, 2024. (Express photo by Partha Paul) Artisans of Kumartuli and their family members along with citizen of Kolkata during a protest from Kumartuli demand Justice for RG Kar victims in Kolkata on Sunday, September 08, 2024.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) launched raids at six locations in Kolkata and neighboring districts on Tuesday morning. Among the places being searched is the residence of Sudipta Roy, a Trinamool Congress MLA from Sreerampur and former chairman of the patient welfare association at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital.

Roy was also raided by the CBI last Thursday. He has been accused of corruption by Akhtar Ali, who had previously made allegations against Sandip Ghosh, the former principal of RG Kar Medical College. The CBI has already arrested Ghosh on multiple allegations in the RG Kar rape and murder case, including disturbing the crime scene, tampering with evidence, violating official rules, criminal conspiracy and misleading investigators. In addition to Roy's residence in North Kolkata, the ED is also conducting raids on a drug dealer's house in Ballygunge Circular Road and a bungalow in Dandpur village of Hooghly, believed to belong to Roy.

## Arvind Kejriwal trying to mislead public, says former Congress MLA Haroon Yusuf



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

As Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Atishi is set to replace Arvind Kejriwal as Delhi chief minister, former Congress MLA Haroon Yusuf on Tuesday criticised Kejriwal for misleading the public amid corruption allegations. Kejriwal resigned as Delhi chief minister after the Supreme Court granted him bail in the Delhi excise policy case. "A person who has come out after being accused in a corruption case is trying to confuse the people. While the CBI case was not valid, in the ED case, it was clearly mentioned that the chief minister could not go to the office or sign any papers. Yet, the party ignored this and claimed he was given a clean chit. If that were true, the court would not have imposed so many restrictions," he said.

Yusuf further accused Kejriwal of repeating tactics used in the past. "He is trying to repeat the same drama from 2014. Back then, the Congress party had not supported him because he promised to work on health and

infrastructure all on his own. When he failed, he claimed his resignation was due to the Jan Lokpal Bill. It has been 11 years, but no Jan Lokpal has been implemented. Those asking for certificates of their honesty are now silent on this issue." In a scathing personal attack, Yusuf highlighted Kejriwal's lifestyle, saying, "He used to wear a broken sandal to appear poor, but now he travels in a car worth Rs 50 lakh with four security vehicles. On top of that, he has built a 'Sheh Mahal' for himself. This is a slap on the poor of Delhi, who still live on pavements and muddy roads." Yusuf also questioned the promises made regarding Delhi's infrastructure, pointing to recent issues during the monsoon. "The condition in Delhi is beyond deplorable. The moment it rains, the city turns into a river. As many as 32 people lost their lives due to flooding. He used to blame the MCD for not letting them work, but even after coming to power in the MCD, nothing has changed." Addressing Atishi, Yusuf said, "I welcome Atishi ji, but she owes many answers to the people of Delhi. She has been the water minister, yet clean water still doesn't flow in Delhi households. People, even the poorest, are forced to buy water cans. Electricity prices have skyrocketed, making Delhi the city with the most expensive electricity in the country." Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav said, "I extend my best wishes to the new chief minister and hope that the problems of the public will be resolved. However, the AAP government cannot run away from the promises it made. Atishi will be the chief minister for just three months because the AAP has been exposed to the public. The Congress will form government in 2025."

## TISS Mumbai withdraws ban on Left students' outfit, modifies Honour Code for students



The TISS banned PSF on August 19 for "misleading students" and "defaming institute". However, on August 24, it declared that the ban will be reviewed.

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai on Monday withdrew the ban imposed on Progressive Students Forum (PSF), a Left-leaning students' group active on campus. It has also modified the Honour Code for 2024-25 academic year, which included strict actions if students held political activities, participated in demonstrations which are "anti-establishment" and told them to keep away from "unpatriotic discussions".

The TISS banned PSF on August 19 for "misleading students" and "defaming institute". However, on August 24, it declared that the ban will be reviewed. An office order issued by the officiating registrar on Monday in-

forming about the status of the review, stated, "The same has been reviewed by the competent Authority of the institute and after detailed deliberations, it has been decided to withdraw the said order with immediate effect." It further stated, "The TISS Administration remains committed to fostering a respectful and inclusive environment for all the members of the institute and it urges all members to refrain from any actions or activities that may disrupt the academic atmosphere or tarnish the reputation of the institute." The order also stated that the restriction is meant to "preserve the values of mutual respect, unity and academic integrity on our campuses, ensuring that this continues to be a space of positive engagement and academic growth". It asked students to adhere to the Honour Code of the academic year 2024-25 declared on September 16, a modified version of the one declared initially in August at the beginning of the academic year. In a separate office order also signed by the officiating registrar, the institute administration declared that it has modified the Honour Code for students for the current academic year. The modified Honour Code removed the parts from the original document which prescribed strict action leading up to termination of a student in case of infringement of instructions such as not indulging in any political, anti-establishment, unpatriotic discussions, demonstrations, dharna or any form of activities that disturbs the academic environment of the institute. The undertaking that students have to sign, under the heading of disciplinary action, now states, "I acknowledge that TISS reserves the right to take disciplinary action against me for violation of its rules, policies, or for any other reasons as specified in the institute's regulations. I commit to refrain from any actions or activities that may disrupt the academic environment or damage the reputation of the institute."

## Manoj Kumar Verma named Kolkata Police Commissioner amid uproar over RG Kar rape-murder

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

After meeting a delegation of junior doctors, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said the Commissioner of Kolkata Police, Vineet Kumar Goyal, would be transferred at 4 pm on Tuesday. Accordingly, around 3.30 pm, the state government announced that Manoj Kumar Verma, known to be a "crisis manager", would be the new CP. Meanwhile, Goyal was made Additional Director General (ADG) and IGP of the Special Task Force (STF) of West Bengal. Deputy Commissioner (North) of Kolkata Police Abhishek Gupta was also removed from his post and transferred to the second battalion of EFR. Deputy Commissioner (East) of Siliguri Police Commissionerate Dipak Sarkar was given the charge of DC (North) of Kolkata Police. In the meeting between the CM and the junior doctors, it was also decided that Director of Medical Education Kaustav Nayak and Director of Health Services Debashish Halder would be "removed". Nayak has now been posted as Director of Institute of Health and Family Welfare, and Halder was posted as OSD of Public Health. Suparna Dutta, who was Director of the Institute of Health and Family Welfare until now, was also removed. In place of Halder, Joint DHS Swapan Soren was given the charge of DHS. The new DME is yet to be announced.

Junior doctors had also demanded the removal of DC (Central) Indira Mukherjee. According to sources, the state government has no immediate plan to remove Mukherjee. Manoj Verma was earlier DC (Traffic) of Kolkata police. He was the police superintendent of West Midnapore when the state government was carrying out a joint operation against Maoists at Jungle Mahal. He led the operation with the Counter Insurgency Force (CIF) which killed Maoist leader Kishenji (Koteswar Rao). When Gorkha Janamukti Morcha, a registered unrecognised political party, went on a 42-day strike in 2017, Verma was sent to Darjeeling, and he was also sent to Barrackpore amidst unrest.

## After Swati Maliwal attacks Atishi's family, AAP chief whip says she should resign as Rajya Sabha MP

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Aam Aadmi Party chief whip Dilip Pandey said on Tuesday that Swati Maliwal should quit and seek a ticket from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) after the party's Rajya Sabha MP said it was a "sad day for Delhi" following Arvind Kejriwal's announcement that Atishi would succeed him as the Delhi Chief Minister.

Reacting to Maliwal's comments on Atishi's parents, Pandey said, "Swati Maliwal ji is the kind of person who takes a Rajya Sabha ticket from the AAP but takes the script (to reach to a development) BJP. If she has even a little shame, she should resign from the post of Rajya Sabha MP and choose the path to Rajya Sabha on a BJP ticket". An hour after the AAP selected Atishi to succeed Kejriwal, Maliwal took to X, saying Atishi's parents wrote mercy petitions to the President in favour of Afzal Guru, convicted and hanged in the Parliament attack case. "Although Atishi Marlena is just a 'dummy CM', this issue is related to the security of the country. May God protect Delhi!" she wrote.

## New York-like skydeck in Bengaluru? Citizens tell Shivakumar to focus on roads first



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who recently returned to Bengaluru from a week-long personal trip to the United States, praised New York's The Edge, one of the largest outdoor observation decks in the world, and hoped to replicate a similar project in Bengaluru. Shivakumar, who holds the Bengaluru development portfolio, had already proposed a 250-metre skydeck in Bengaluru. It is likely to be built on a land parcel in Hemmigeppura (southwest of Bengaluru) along the Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprises (NICE) road. Aimed at boosting tourism in Bengaluru, the proposed skydeck is set to woo tourists with food courts and play arenas, among other amenities.

"An unforgettable experience visiting the SkyDeck in New York! Apart from the stunning views, what really inspired me was learning how it was all brought to life. Had the opportunity to chat with the brilliant minds behind the project, and a special shoutout to Mr. Babu Killar,

a fellow Kannadiga and structural engineer working in New York, for gifting me the SkyDeck book. I'm taking home a lot of inspiration and ideas and hoping to build something just as amazing in Bangalore," he wrote in a post on X on September 14. He said he caught a glimpse of New York City from the 7,500-square-foot skydeck located on the 100th floor of a building in Hudson Yards. Shivakumar also held discussions with architect Kenneth Drucker from global design firm HOK. Kenneth has been instrumental in building the World Trade Centre in New York, the Shanghai Tower in China, and Burj Khalifa in Dubai, among other architectural marvels. "If modern technology is combined with strong thoughts, the sky deck may bring a new definition to the Bengaluru skyline as well as improve the quality of urban development," Shivakumar said.

Meanwhile, many citizens slammed Shivakumar for the skydeck proposal and instead appealed to fix basic infrastructure like roads, footpaths and public transportation in Bengaluru. Pavitra Tandon, an X user, said, "Sir why are you so fixated with SkyDeck? What benefit will anyone be getting from it? Rather spend that money improving roads and footpaths across Bangalore... you must have seen public infrastructure in NYC and other cities in the USA, learn from it." Another X user, Aashrith V, said, "From up there, you should see how the infra of the city is built. Not just see how the sky deck is built! Please come, ride/drive as a common man, and you'd understand the pain we have to go through every single day." Another X user, Shankar, pointed out, "Let's focus on the basics first. Roads are in horrible condition. If we cannot lay out flat roads that would last long, how can we trust to build such fancy buildings?"

## SFI, AISA to contest Delhi University Students Union polls in alliance against ABVP

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Left student groups Students' Federation of India (SFI) and All India Students' Association (AISA) on Monday announced that they would contest the Delhi University Students Union (DUSU) polls slated for September 27 in alliance. In a joint statement, the student groups said, "AISA and SFI have decided to contest this year's DUSU elections together to give a firm response to the current model of DUSU politics. DUSU should not just represent the aspirations and issues of every student of DU but must go forward to become an example for what a progressive student's movement can accomplish." The CPI(M)-affiliated SFI and the CPI(ML) Liberation-backed AISA will challenge the ruling Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in the elections. The ABVP is the students' wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The SFI and the AISA said their detailed manifesto will be released in the coming days, but their core planks are instituting an elected internal complaints committee (ICC) and gender sensitisation cells in all colleges, scrapping specialised elective courses (SEC) and value-added courses (VAC), revising the internal assessment scheme, ending the mandatory attendance and debarment policy, and ending fee hikes.

"In the last 10 years, ABVP's dominance has been enabled by the national level consolidation of power in the hands of the BJP-RSS. ABVP's reign has been of an ineffective and anti-student DUSU, which acts as an agent of the administration and the Sangh. Every move to dismantle public education and destroy DU, from the introduction of NEP to relentless Fee Hikes, has been met with shameless support of ABVP," the joint statement said. "Under ABVP, we have seen a reign of an ineffective and anti-student DUSU. Every year the air is filled with names, the road blocked with cars and every inch of the campus plastered at great expense. A long list of promises are made but as always their politics of money



and muscle power defeats the agenda and interests of the students of DU. It is upon the progressive forces to give a tough reply to their politics of communalism and violence, making way for a politics of movement and democracy... Understanding this necessity the progressive forces of DU have decided to come together in this year's DUSU elections," it added. Speaking to The Indian Express, Ashutosh Singh, National Media convener ABVP said "Left-wing student organizations have minimal impact in Delhi University, so their alliance won't bring any change in this DUSU elections. In 2018, CYSS and AISA formed an alliance and received zero seats in DUSU elections. ABVP has consistently countered left-wing groups propaganda in DU. Their shrinking footprint has pushed them in a fight for Survival where they are coming together to fight so that they can cross NOTA." The deadline to file nominations in the DUSU polls is September 17. Voting is scheduled to take place on September 27. Morning college students can vote from 8.30 am to 1 pm, and evening college students can vote from 3 pm to 7 pm. The votes will be counted on September 28. In the 2023 DUSU election, ABVP candidates won the positions of president, joint secretary, and secretary, while an NSUI candidate was elected as vice president.

## CM Siddaramaiah launches 119 projects worth

## Rs 1,012.34 crore; Kalaburagi district gets major share



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

On Kalyana Karnataka Day, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inaugurated 119 projects worth Rs 1,012.34 crore during an event held at Kalaburagi on Tuesday. (Photo: Facebook) On Kalyana Karnataka Day, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inaugurated 119 projects worth Rs 1,012.34 crore during an event held at Kalaburagi on Tuesday. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday inaugurated 119 projects worth Rs 1,012.34 crore and laid the foundation stones of 83 projects worth Rs 806.85 crore on the occasion of Kalyana Karnataka Day at Kalaburagi. The Kalyana Karnataka Day or Hyderabad Liberation Day is celebrated in seven districts of the state to mark the merger of the Hyderabad state with the Indian Union in 1948.

Of the total of 1,819.2 crore projects, around 85 per cent of the projects – worth Rs 1,541.33 crore – are for Kalaburagi district, according to information shared by the Chief Minister's Office. Kalaburagi got a share of 37 projects worth Rs 895.97 crore, and foundation stones were laid for 49 projects which were estimated to cost to Rs 645.36 crore. Among other districts in Kalyana Karnataka region – erstwhile Hyderabad Karnataka – projects worth Rs 112.53 crore has been earmarked for Raichur district, Rs 87.92 crore for Ballari district, Rs 22.49 crore for Bidar, Rs 21.75 crore for Vijayanagar district, Rs 19.49 crore for Koppal and Rs 13.68 crore for Yadgir. Among the announcements made by Siddaramaiah, was a new flat-floor factory in Kalaburagi. This, he said, "will be a significant step for the state's electronics industry, providing ready-to-use factory spaces for entrepreneurs. This will create jobs and mark the beginning of electronics manufacturing in Kalyana Karnataka". In collaboration with the Central Government,

a mega textile park is being set up on 1,000 acres near Nadi Sinnoor-Honnakiranagi in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode; Rs 50 crore is allocated for infrastructure, which will directly create 1 lakh jobs and 2 lakh indirect jobs, he said. Another textile park will come up at Raichur under PPP mode. "Dedicated economic corridors provide the infrastructure needed for economic growth. Hence, we are taking steps to develop an economic corridor between Bidar and Bengaluru to boost the economic development of Kalyana Karnataka," he said. Apart from it, the first Center of Excellence focused on CNC (Computerized Numerical Control) machines will be established in Kalaburagi at a cost of Rs 16 crore. The state government will construct taluk administrative buildings called Mini Vidhana Soudha in 18 new taluks in Kalyana Karnataka at a cost of Rs 130 crore, Siddaramaiah added. To introduce the world to the teachings of Basavanna and other saints, a Vachana Museum or Mantapa will be established in Kalaburagi. "The land (is) already identified. Construction will begin soon," the CM said. On reservation for residents of Hyderabad Karnataka region in government jobs, he said that 1,09,416 jobs were identified for direct recruitment in various departments of the region, of which 79,985 have been filled. For the 38,705 promotional posts, 29,793 have been promoted. The remaining vacancies will be filled in phases, he added.

## Two sisters drown while trying to save their younger brother in Uttarakhand

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Dehradun: Two minor sisters were swept away in the strong current of the Ganga river while trying to save their younger brother from drowning in Haripur Kalan here on Monday.

Police said that the incident occurred at the Geeta Kutir Ghat at around 11:30 am where a woman was bathing along with five children of two families. According to officials, nine-year-old Suraj started drifting in the strong current following which his two sisters – Sakshi (15) and Vaishnavi (13) – jumped into the water to save him.

## Make first announcements in Kannada in flights landing or taking off from Bengaluru: Sahitya Parishat to BIAL



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Dr Mahesh Joshi, chairman of Kannada Sahitya Parishat, on Monday proposed to Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) managing director Hari Marar to make the first announcements on every flight landing or taking off from Bengaluru in Kannada. However, BIAL officials stated that the first announcements in Kannada require approval from the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA). As a result, Joshi said he would write a letter to MoCA requesting that Kannada announcements be introduced in flights outbound and inbound to

Kempegowda International Airport. Following the meeting with BIAL officials, Joshi said, "I have requested them to begin making announcements in Kannada from Kannada Rajyotsava Day (November 1). This is because implementing such a practice on flights will take some time. The first announcement on flights should be in Kannada, followed by other languages." He also mentioned that British Airways and Singapore Airlines have already implemented this system. He also met officials from BIAL to discuss initiatives to promote the Kannada language, art, and culture of Karnataka. This year, Kempegowda International Airport will collaborate with Kannada Sahitya Parishat to support the upcoming 87th Akhila Bharata Kannada Sahitya Sammelana in Mandya by providing reception desks and photo booths to welcome the delegates. "When visitors land in Bengaluru airport, they should feel like they are in Karnataka. Therefore, creating an atmosphere that reflects Kannada culture at the airport is essential. The authorities have responded positively to this proposal," said Joshi. In addition, the airport will use digital media to display information about the event and engage with passengers through on-ground activities to promote the Kannada language. The event is scheduled to be held from December 20 to 22.

## NIA summons Sikh activist who protested against father's death in Behbal Kalan police firing

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

The National Investigative Agency has summoned Sikh activist Sukhraj Singh, whose father was killed in the 2015 police firing in Punjab's Behbal Kalan village. Singh, who has announced a plan to contest the Gidderbaha Assembly bypoll, said he was unaware why he had been summoned. "Whereas it appears that you are acquainted with the circumstances of the case noted below, which is now under investigation by undersigned. You are hereby required to attend before the undersigned at National Investigation Agency, Hqrs Opposite CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, Phone No. 011-24368800, New Delhi on 19.09.2024 at 1100 hrs for the purpose of answering certain questions relating to a case," reads the NIA notice to Sukhraj Singh.

Sukhraj Singh led a 737-day-long protest from December 2021 to December 2023 to seek justice for his father Kishan Bhagwan Singh and Gurjit Singh, who were killed in police firing at Behbal Kalan in Punjab's Faridkot district during a protest related to the sacrilege of the Guru Granth Sahib in 2015. His protest played a role in the outcome of the 2022 Assembly elections. The NIA has registered the case (No-RC-05/2023/NIA/DLI) under sections 109, 147, 148, 149, 120B, 448, 452, and 325 of the Indian Penal Code, section 13 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act; section 3(1) of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act; and section 2 of the



Prevention of Insults to National Honours Act. The IPC sections are related to rioting, unlawful assembly, criminal conspiracy, house trespass, and assault without provocation, among other offences.

## Companies to jointly invest \$2.65 million in Bengaluru to build shared EV charging stations



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

The Climate Pledge, a coalition of several companies, announced on Monday a new collaborative project called JOULE (Joint Operation Unifying Last-mile Electrification). This initiative involves the signatories and industry partners working to establish a network of shared electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in Bengaluru. Amazon and Global Optimism co-founded the Climate Pledge in 2019. It is a commitment to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2040, 10 years ahead of the Paris Agreement. Pledge signatories and partners are committed to investing over \$2.65 million into the project by 2030. Amazon, Mahindra Logistics, Uber, HCLTech, and Magenta Mobility will collaborate to optimise the usage of the EV charging stations. They will combine the charging needs of their EV fleets to ensure that the infrastructure is well utilised. Industry partner Kazam, an India-based EV charging platform, will build a shared charging station network. The project will also receive support from renewable energy provider Greenko and strategic consulting partner Deloitte. The project aims to tackle some of the current challenges in India's charging infrastructure to support greater electric vehicle adoption and set a new standard for corporate climate collaboration. As part of this project, the first EV charging station located at Doddakallasandra is now fully operational, and the project aims to build five more charging stations in Bengaluru by the end of this year. There are also plans to expand further to meet the growing demand for local EV infrastructure.

Based on anticipated demand, the project is expected to support approximately 5,500 electric vehicles (EVs) in Bengaluru by 2030. However, at full capacity, it can accommodate around 9,500 EVs. To maximise utilisation, the infrastructure will also be open for other companies to charge their fleet vehicles during the day. All the electricity used by the charging stations (projected to reach 22,700 megawatt-hours of power) will be matched with 100 per cent renewable energy. This will amount to an estimated 6.2 megawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030. By the same year, the project is also expected to save over 11.2 million litres of fuel and abate an estimated 25,700 tonnes of carbon dioxide. In addition to reducing tailpipe emissions, the project will create an estimated 185 full-time jobs in Bengaluru between 2024 and 2030. "Establishing a shared network of EV charging stations in Bengaluru is a significant step towards achieving our national goal of increasing electric vehicle adoption. This initiative not only enhances the accessibility of EV infrastructure but also demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in driving India's transition to a more sustainable future," said Gunjan Krishna, Industries Commissioner, Government of

Karnataka.

According to a new whitepaper from Deloitte, for India to reach its target of having electric vehicle (EV) sales make up 30 per cent of all new vehicle sales by 2030, the country will need to have one charging station for every 20 vehicles. The current ratio, which is about one charging station for every 135 EVs, is much lower than this and is impeding the country's shift to EVs. The paper points out that major challenges such as the shortage of EV charging stations, uncertainty about usage rates, range anxiety, and businesses' reluctance to install charging stations due to high initial costs and a lack of awareness about the benefits, are all concerns for potential EV owners. The joint collaboration project addresses these challenges by setting up dedicated charging stations. These stations offer priority access, security services, essential amenities, and dedicated parking slots for corporate consumers. By bringing together companies on both the demand and supply sides and aggregating usage demand, the project also provides greater certainty regarding the infrastructure's utilisation rate and financial viability. "India's road transport sector still heavily relies on diesel and petrol, which significantly negatively impacts pollution and CO2 emissions. However, there is a silver lining in this; while India's EV penetration is low compared to other countries, it is expected to become one of the largest EV markets in the world by 2030. By bringing together companies from different sectors, this initiative is helping to create a more sustainable and efficient model for EV charging and accelerating EV adoption in India," said Shailesh Tyagi, partner, Climate Change and Sustainability Leader, Deloitte South Asia.

## Hema Committee repercussions: New organisation floated in Malayalam film industry

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Kochi: The repercussions of the Justice Hema Committee report, which brought out the ugly side of the Malayalam film world and the untold miseries of the women in it, continue to shake the industry with a group of film personalities on Monday announcing their decision to start a new organisation, as the existing Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) and the Film Employees Federation of Kerala (FEFKA) have come under a cloud. Named the Progressive Film Makers, the new organisation has Aashiq Abu, his actress wife Rima Kallingal, and popular directors Anjali Menon, Lijo Jose Perilassery, and Rajiv Ravi, among others, behind it. Following the Hema Committee report's revelations, several former actresses broke their silence and made allegations of sexual harassment against top figures, including those holding posts in the AMMA and the FEFKA, the apex body of 21 different organisations from light boys to directors, forcing their resignations while both groups also faced flak.

## Punjab Police lists achievements in war against drug smugglers: 29,152 FIRs, 39,840 arrests



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Punjab Police on Monday said it has arrested 39,840 drug smugglers, including 5,856 'big fish' and recovered 2,546 kg of heroin in the past two and a half years. Sharing details of police action against the drug menace, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sukhchain Singh Gill said, "The police have registered a total of 29,152 first information reports (FIRs) since March 16, 2022 under the NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) Act of which 3581 are related to commercial quantity."

In 2024 so far – from the start of January to end of August – the IG said that out of 8,789 drug smugglers/suppliers who were arrested, 1,311 were 'big smugglers'. This year, police registered 6,439 FIRs under the NDPS Act, including 825 related to commercial quantity. The recoveries during this period included 628 kg heroin, 796 kg opium, 324 quintals of poppy husk, and 2.83 crores tablets/capsules/injections/vials of pharma opioids besides Rs 10.32 crore drug money which was seized.

Since March 16, 2022 till the end of August this year, the IG said, "Apart from seizing big-haul of heroin, the police teams have also recovered 2,457 kg opium, 1,156 quintals of poppy husk, 954 kg narcotics powder, 51 kg lce drug (crystal methamphetamine) and 4.29 crore tablets/capsules/injections/vials of pharma opioids from across the state, along with recovery of Rs 30.83 crore of

drug money from the possession of drug smugglers." He added, "Punjab Police have also forfeited properties of 602 big smugglers worth Rs 324.28 crore in these two and a half years, while, as many as 192 cases to freeze properties worth 103.50 crore are pending with the competent authority for approval."

Referring to section 64-A which deals with power to tender immunity from prosecution, the IG said, "As many as 295 drug consumers, caught with little quantity of drugs, in 245 cases availed provision of section 64-A of the NDPS by pledging to undergo the rehabilitation treatment." He also said that as part of the ongoing special drive to arrest proclaimed offenders (POs)/absconders in NDPS Act cases, police arrested 2,378 POs/Absconders since March 16, 2022. He added that 502 persons who jumped the bail 56 who jumped the parole were also arrested. Talking about disposal of drugs, he said 2,940 kg heroin and 3,546 kg opium was disposed of during the two-and-a-half-year period. Giving details of actions against gangsters, the IG said, "The Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF) along with field units has succeeded in busting 508 modules after arresting 1,420 gangsters and neutralising 12 and recovered 1,337 weapons, 294 vehicles used in criminal activities, 56.7 kg heroin and Rs 4.05 crore drug money." Divulging details on action against terrorists, the IG said, "The Internal Security wing of Punjab Police busted 45 terror modules with the arrest of 272 terrorists after recovering 34 rifles, 303 revolvers/pistols, 8 detonators, 14 hand grenades and 290 drones."

During the two and half year period, the IG said there were 939 drone sightings and 290 drones were captured in joint operation with the Border Security Force (BSF). He said that in action against use of mobile phones inside jails, the Internal Security Wing of Punjab Police blacklisted as many as 1,663 IMEI numbers to stop the use by criminals. He added that 475 mobile numbers found to be linked with criminal activities were blocked. Apart from this, at least 6,500 social media accounts glorifying gangsters and promoting violence have been blocked, he added.

## Punjab police arrest former Navjot Sidhu associate over social media post

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

The district police on Monday arrested social activist Malwinder Singh Malli for allegedly hurting religious sentiments through a social media post. Malli, who has previously been critical of the state government on various issues, was arrested from Patiala after a case was registered under relevant sections of the Information Technology (IT) Act at IT City police station. Patiala MP Dr. Dharamvira Gandhi condemned the arrest, calling it unconstitutional. According to sources, the case was filed after Malli shared a post on his social media account. Following the registration of the case, police teams went to Malli's residence in Mohali, but he was in Patiala visiting his brother. The police arrested Malli in Patiala late in the evening, and he is set to be produced in court on Tuesday. Patiala MP Dr. Gandhi, in a statement, said, "I strongly condemn the unconstitutional arrest of eminent social activist and political analyst of Punjab, Malwinder Singh Malli, on flimsy grounds. This act is a violation of the fundamental right to freedom of expression enshrined in the Constitution." Gandhi further urged the Punjab government to refrain from taking "undemocratic and coercive steps" and instead focus on the deteriorating law and order situation in the state.

Malli sparked controversy in 2021 when he advocated for the revocation of Article 370 in Kashmir while serving as an advisor to the then Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee (PPCC) President, Navjot Singh Sidhu. Following his comments, Malli was removed from his advisory role.

Bharatiya Janata Party's National Kisan leader Sukhinderpal Singh Grewal also condemned Malli's arrest, calling it an "attack on the Constitution of India"



over a mere Facebook post. Grewal accused the Punjab government of unleashing a "reign of terror" in the state, claiming that many others—including YouTubers, opposition Congress leader Sukhpal Singh Khaira, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) General Secretary Parambans Singh Bunt Romana, Daily Ajit Chief Editor Barjinder Singh Hamdard, and social activist Bhana Sidhu—had been victimised for criticising the government. Grewal urged the High Court to take cognisance of the situation and restore the rule of law in Punjab, adding that he intends to raise the matter with the Central Government. Malli's political journey began as the state general secretary of the Punjab Students' Union in the 1980s. In 1993, he was arrested by Punjab Police under the National Security Act (NSA) and TADA (now repealed) for his 'inflammatory' writings but was released a month and a half later on the orders of the High Court. Malli retired in 2016 as a teacher at a government school in Ropar and served as a Public Relations Officer during the tenure of both Capt Amarinder Singh and former CM Parkash Singh Badal.

## HC flags 'dire necessity' of creating special NDPS courts in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Expecting a speedy trial of an accused will be an over-expectation from trial courts given the existence of a heavy docket of sub judice cases of various genres, said the Punjab and Haryana High Court, pointing to a dire necessity of making Special Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) courts in Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh. The division bench of Justice Sureshwar Thakur and Justice Sudeepti Sharma urged the Chief Justice to take up the matters with the state governments concerned so that special courts trying the NDPS offences be created in Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh. The HC made observations hearing a reference plea in an NDPS case, where one of the questions was whether a prolonged delay in the concluding trial could be a ground for bail when the accused was allegedly found in possession of commercial quantity, easing the bar of satisfying twin condition laid down under Section 37 of the NDPS Act. Referring to the judgments, including Union of India through Narcotic Control Bureau, Lucknow, versus Md Nawaz Khan, the HC said the Apex Court has explicitly held that as per Section 37, the bail should not be granted to an accused unless the accused was allegedly found in possession of commercial quantity unless he was able to satisfy twin conditions which was the reasonable ground for believing the accused was not guilty of such an offence and that the accused would not commit an offence or was not likely to commit an offence if granted bail. The HC said the Public Prosecutor has to be imperatively assigned an opportunity to oppose the application for regular bail.

The Bench said the expectations of a speedy trial being made by the accused, may be an over-expectation from the trial Court, especially given the existence of a heavy docket of sub judice cases of various genres.

The Bench said, "If the heavy docket of sub judice litigations of every genre becomes the deterrent for the learned trial Judges concerned, thus ensuring the makings of expeditious trials vis-a-vis the opposite charges drawn vis-a-vis the accused, especially the one relating to the accused concerned allegedly consciously and exclusively possessing the commercial quantity of the relevant narcotic drug(s) and psychotropic substance(s).



Only courts cannot be blamed for delay in trials, liability needs to be shared 'by prosecution as well as by accused'

Therefore, to the considered objective mind of this court, there is also the dire necessity of making Special NDPS Courts in the States of Punjab, Haryana and in the Union Territory, Chandigarh. "The HC said only the Courts cannot be blamed for delay in trials but the liability needs to be vicariously shared "by the prosecution as well as by the accused". In case, the prosecution witnesses are promptly served, the trial would proceed at an expeditious pace, held by the HC. "Insofar as the official prosecution witnesses are concerned, who may be on account of transfers become positioned at stations rather much distant from the Courts where before whom they are to record their depositions, thereby yet the trial Judges concerned, may choose to record their evidence through video conferencing but with the consent of the learned defence counsel," the HC stated. The Bench highlighted that the charges in the trial should also be expeditiously framed, and therefore, non-framing of charge should also be grounds for granting bail to the accused in the NDPS cases.

## Supreme Court grants bail to key accused Pulsar Suni in Kerala actress assault case, cites 7-year jail time, trial delay



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to Sunil N S alias Pulsar Suni, the main accused in the 2017 case related to the abduction and sexual assault of an actress in Kerala, noting that he had been in custody for over seven years and that the trial was not likely to conclude soon. "The appellant has undergone incarceration for more than seven and a half years. All other co-accused have been granted bail... Since 261 witnesses have been examined and the case involves nine accused, even recording of statements under section 313 of the CrPC will take a long time. Considering the long incarceration and the fact that the trial is not likely to conclude within a reasonable time, a case is made out for enlarging the appellant on bail," a bench of Justices A S Oka and Augustine George Masih said.

Opposing his plea for bail, the Kerala Government had in an affidavit accused actor Dileep, who is an ac-

cused in the case, of attempting to create unsubstantiated counter-stories through lengthy cross-examination of prosecution witnesses in order to undermine the evidence in the case. The state said, "A mere perusal of the lengthy cross-examination, now exceeding 1,800 pages solely by A8 (Dileep)... reveals that it is not related to the facts in issue or relevant facts. A8 attempt appears to be to create unsubstantiated counter-stories through repeated lengthy suggestions, aiming to undermine the prosecution evidence against him, both direct and circumstantial, presented before the trial court."

The prosecution case is that in furtherance of a criminal conspiracy hatched by Dileep, Sunil along with certain others abducted and sexually assaulted the actress in a moving car. Sunil has been in custody in the case since February 23, 2017. Sunil approached the apex court seeking bail after the trial court and the Kerala High Court refused him the relief. He said that due to the demise of his father in April 2023, his family's situation had become worse and that his family was not getting any support from anyone after the crime. Sunil also said his aged mother was living alone with his five-and-a-half-year-old niece and that his mother was suffering from acute vertigo and ear infection, for which she was advised bed rest and continuous treatment. He also pointed out that when it refused him bail six months ago, the Supreme Court granted him the liberty to approach the high court for bail if the trial was not over in a reasonable period of time. Accordingly, he had approached the high court but was refused bail, he added.

## Project Cheetah audit flags concerns: 'Unjustified' expenses, Centre-state coordination

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

A report by the Accountant General of Madhya Pradesh has flagged concerns over the management of Project Cheetah at Kuno National Park (KNP), highlighting a "lack of coordination" between central and state government departments as well as issues regarding expenditure. The concerns were raised in a sample audit of records – from August 2019 to November 2023 – that was made public Monday in response to an RTI query by wildlife activist Ajay Dubey. Senior officials at KNP said the audit was ongoing and not final. "These are not allegations, just questions that will be answered in the coming months. It is wrong to state that this is a final report. We will give all responses in the coming phases," an official said.

The audit flagged that there was no mention of cheetah reintroduction "in the work plan and management plan", and that "there are no documents detailing where the cheetah reintroduction work began and how it started". The audit noted that Kuno was to be developed as an alternate habitat for Asiatic lions, as per the Supreme Court's decision dated April 15, 2013, and the state government was "completely serious" about it. "Thus, it was not clear whether the cheetah reintroduction would be conducted within Kuno National Park. Consequently, no management plan specifically addressing cheetah reintroduction is available," the report said. The cheetah reintroduction is being conducted according to the Cheetah Action Plan 2021 prepared by the central government. The audit report said: "It is evident from the statements of the Forest Division that there was a lack of coordination between the departments of the Government of India and the Government of Madhya Pradesh." "It is also clear that the ground staff and the Forest Division were not involved in the site selection or the cheetah reintroduction study. The matter has been brought to the attention of the government," it said. The report also flagged an "unjustified" expenditure of over Rs 90 lakh under labour expenses. It was mentioned in the work plan of the Kuno Wildlife Division that "employment and alternative sources of income for the local residents near forests should be provided". The audit noted that "from September 2022 to June 2023, it was found that, in more than eight cases, brushwood removal and trench deepening work, amounting to INR 9,110,568, was carried out



using JCB machines instead of labourers, contrary to the directions." The audit said the "practice of paying for manual labour while using machinery is irregular and resulted in a loss of employment for the local people and an increase in costs".

The Forest Department said this was due to non-availability of labour and "payments were made based on manual labour rates". The audit further said there were irregularities in the construction of a 5.9-km wall. It said "67 fewer bags of cement were used than required, leading to a substandard construction", and that there was an excess payment of Rs 4.14 lakh. It also said that royalty was not deducted for materials such as sand, gravel, stone, and boulders used in the construction, which indicated a loss of revenue. The Forest Division said discrepancies in cement usage and payments were "due to technical reasons and corrective measures would be taken in future projects". According to the audit report, from the year 2021-22 to 2023-24 (up to January 2024), the expenditure on the Project Cheetah was Rs 44.14 crore, which "was not in accordance with the approved management plan". As per the approved management plan, Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary was identified as the second habitat of Asiatic lions (apart from Gir forest in Gujarat). However, as of November 2023, no efforts had been made to reintroduce Asiatic lions, the report said. The report also highlighted the transfer of Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Prakash Kumar not long after he received training from Namibia, saying that the "benefits of this training could not be utilised in the cheetah reintroduction, and the training proved ineffective".

## Flood-like situation grips Bengal as DVC releases 3 lakh cusecs from dams

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Kolkata: The flood-like situation in several districts of West Bengal is likely to worsen as the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) has released over 3 lakh cusecs of water from its Panchet and Maithon dams within a span of seven hours, officials said. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had on Monday night said that a flood-like situation was feared in at least seven districts of the State situated downstream after the release of water from dams in neighbouring Jharkhand.

Addressing a press conference, Banerjee alleged that DVC was releasing water without informing her government. DVC officials said that 3 lakh cusecs of water was released from 11.30 pm on Monday to 6.54 am on Tuesday. They said that initially 90,000 cusecs of water was released on Monday night but with upstream water flow remaining high, an additional 2.1 lakh cusecs

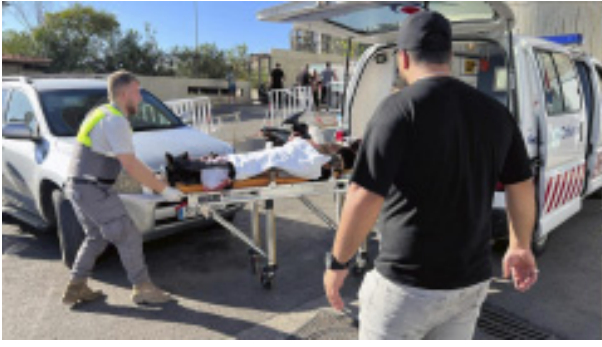


of water was released on Tuesday morning till 6.54 am. Banerjee had on Monday said that Birbhum, Bankura, Howrah, Hooghly, Purba Bardhaman, and parts of North and South 24 Parganas districts were already experiencing flooding due to heavy rain over the past two days, and the capacity of the rivers was already full. "I have called the Jharkhand CM three times, urging him to regulate the release of water," she had said. "Some people are trapped in

Hooghly after water level rose sharply, and the administration has been instructed to carry out rescue operations," she had said. After two days of incessant rain in several districts of West Bengal, the deep depression causing the downpour has moved towards Jharkhand bringing in heavy rainfall in the neighbouring State. Meanwhile, heavy rain caused by the deep depression has caused inundation of several low-lying areas in the districts of southern West Bengal, of-

officials said. In Paschim Medinipur district, Silabati River was flowing above the danger level, they said. TMC MP and actor Deepak Adhikari surveyed the flood-like situation in Ghatal and Keshpur areas in Paschim Medinipur district. Ghatal Sub-Divisional Officer Suman Biswas said that the administration has stocked relief materials and prepared a camp, if needed. Paddy and jute farmers in Chandrakona block 1 may suffer severe losses due to rising water levels, locals said.

## Exploding pagers injure hundreds in Lebanon: Health Minister



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Hundreds of people were injured across Lebanon when their pagers exploded Tuesday (September 17, 2024), Health Minister Firass Abiad said, with a source close to Hezbollah saying its members were targeted. The source close to Hezbollah said a large number of the Iran-backed movement's members had been injured in the near-simultaneous incidents, but that no deaths had been reported. It wasn't immediately clear if people were killed.

A senior military intelligence official and an official with a Lebanese group with knowledge of the situation, both of whom spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation, said that pagers carried by Hezbollah members were detonated. The second official said it was believed to be an Israeli attack. The Associated Press reached out to the Israeli military, which declined to comment. Photos and videos from Beirut's southern suburbs circulating on social media and in local media showed people lying on the pavement with wounds on their hands or near their pants pockets. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah previously warned the group's members not to carry cellphones, saying that they could be used by Israel to track their movements and to carry out targeted strikes. Lebanon's

Health Ministry called on all hospitals to be on alert to take in emergency patients and for people who own pagers to get away from them. It also asked health workers to avoid using wireless devices.

AP photographers at area hospitals said the emergency rooms were overloaded with patients, many of them with injuries to their limbs, some in serious condition. The state-run National News Agency said hospitals in southern Lebanon, the eastern Bekaa Valley and Beirut's southern suburbs — all areas where Hezbollah has a strong presence — had called on people to donate blood of all types. The news agency reported that in Beirut's southern suburbs and other areas "the handheld pagers system was detonated using advanced technology, and dozens of injuries were reported."

A Hezbollah official said that at least 150 people, including members of the group, were wounded in different parts of Lebanon when the pagers they were carrying exploded. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said the explosions were the result of "a security operation that targeted the devices." "The enemy (Israel) stands behind this security incident," the official said, without elaborating. He added that the new pagers that Hezbollah members were carrying had lithium batteries that apparently exploded. Lithium batteries, when overheated, can smoke, melt and even catch on fire. Rechargeable lithium batteries are used in consumer products ranging from cellphones and laptops to electric cars. Lithium battery fires can burn up to 590°C. The incident comes at a time of heightened tensions between Lebanon and Israel. The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and Israeli forces have been clashing near-daily for more than 11 months against the backdrop of war between Israel and Hezbollah ally Hamas in Gaza. The clashes have killed hundreds in Lebanon and dozens in Israel and displaced tens of thousands on both sides of the border.

## Hillary Clinton mocks Melania Trump as 'a little kid at b'day party', but defends her one move saying 'I was sorry...'



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Hillary Clinton in her new book 'Something Lost, Something Gained' opened up about her past meetings with Melania Trump and attending her wedding with Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. According to Clinton, she personally met with Melania for the first time after losing White House race against Donald Trump in 2016. Shedding light on their meeting, the former US State Secretary said Melania reminded her of a "little kid." "Speaking about her encounter with Trump's third wife at a memorial service for Rosalynn Carter, she wrote in her book: "Rosalynn's grandson Jason said it had been her wish that all the First Ladies would come together for her memorial in a show of unity in these divisive times." She explained that she was not informed about Melania's plan to attend the service. On seeing Melania standing alone, Clinton remarked her facial expressions, which were very smiley but uncertain, reminded her of "the little kid at the birthday party who doesn't know anyone and is waiting at the edge of the circle, hoping people are going to be nice." She mentioned that she went forward to meet Melania, along with Joe Biden and a group of former first ladies. While Michelle Obama gave Melania her classic big hug, Clinton stated, Jill Biden air-kissed her cheek. Trump's wife responded with a smile and few words when former president Bill Clinton sought to strike up a discussion and inquire about how she was doing, she wrote. Clinton too decided to shake hands with Melania, saying "Hello, Melania, it's nice to see you." The former

senator from New York stated that she understands how "awkward it must have been" for Melania, who was not aware about "what kind of reception she would get after all her husband's insults directed at us Bushes, Bidens, Obamas, and Clintons alike." Stressing that she found herself "conflicted" by Melania, the former First Lady remarked that she "never quite knew what to make of the third Mrs. Trump". What happened when Hillary Clinton attended Trump's wedding with Melania

Clinton mentioned in her memoir that she attended Trump and Melania's 2005 wedding at his Florida Mar-a-Lago property only "out of curiosity." "I was going to be in Florida anyway and thought it would be entertaining to see what a Donald Trump wedding was like. It was the first time I met Melania, and I just remember that she was young, very beautiful, and very tall," according to Clinton, who was speaking of the 54-year-old former model. However, Melania avoided talking much during her wedding day, Clinton wrote, particularly emphasising, "at least to me." Hillary Clinton defends Melania at one point in her memoir. In her memoir, Clinton defended the former president's wife Melania over backlash she faced for wearing a "gray suit" to the Atlanta burial instead of the customary black one. Melania's choice of outfit was dubbed "distasteful and gross" during that time. However, Clinton believed that Melania's attire to honor Rosalynn, who was a harsh critic of the Trumps, was quite appropriate. "I was sorry that Melania got slammed for something so petty."

## Control of Murdoch media empire at stake as hearing to proceed with mogul and children

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Rupert Murdoch and four of his children on Monday went before a Nevada probate commissioner behind closed doors to an evidentiary hearing that could decide who controls Mr. Murdoch's media empire after his death. The hearing scheduled to resume Tuesday (September 17, 2024) and continue into next week comes after Mr. Murdoch, 93, moved last year to change the terms of his irrevocable family trust. The New York Times reported, based on a sealed Washoe County court document, that it was part of a bid to ensure that his eldest son, Lachlan, remains in charge of his cadre of newspapers and television networks, including The Wall Street Journal and Fox News Channel. The court has kept the hearings closed to the public and most documents sealed, largely rejecting requests for access by news organisations including The Associated Press. The trust was originally set up to give equal control over Rupert Murdoch's businesses to his four oldest children upon his death, according to the Times. Mr. Murdoch stepped down as leader of both Fox News' parent company and his News Corp. media holdings last fall. He is arguing that to preserve his businesses' commercial value for all his heirs, the trust must be changed so Lachlan can ensure his newspapers and TV networks continue to have a conservative editorial outlook, the Times reported.

Lachlan succeeded his father as chairman of News Corp. in November. He's also executive officer at Fox Corp., home to conservative news network Fox News, the Fox broadcast and sports networks, and local TV stations. The media empire spans continents and helped to shape modern American politics. Rupert Murdoch's bid to change the trust has pitted him against his other three children named as beneficiaries: James, Elisabeth and Prudence, and they have united to stop their father from revising the trust, according to the Times. Irrevocable trusts are typically used to limit estate taxes, among other reasons, and can't be changed without permission from the



beneficiaries or via a court order. Nevada Probate Commissioner Edmund J. Gorman of the Second Judicial District Court in Reno ruled this summer that Rupert Murdoch could amend the trust if he can show that he is acting in good faith and for the sole benefit of his heirs, the Times reported.

The court's ruling notes that Mr. Murdoch sought to give Lachlan permanent and exclusive control over his companies because the mogul was worried that a lack of consensus among his children could affect the strategic direction at his companies, including potentially leading to a change in editorial policy and content, according to the Times report. The hearing is scheduled to continue into next week. More than 40 lawyers are listed on the court docket. The first of the carloads of attorneys began to arrive Monday an hour before the hearing, some divvying up boxes of legal documents to haul up the courthouse steps through a throng of reporters with cameras and a half-dozen sheriff's deputies a few blocks south of Reno's main casino district. James Murdoch and his wife, Karen, and sister, Elisabeth Murdoch, came next in separate vehicles in the same convoy of black SUVs. About 20 minutes later, Rupert Murdoch arrived with his wife, followed by Lachlan Murdoch and wife, Sarah.

## Can't be anti-immigrant and pro US-India ties at same time: State Dept official

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

WASHINGTON: It isn't possible to be against immigrants and for stronger ties between America and India, Richard R Verma, the deputy secretary of the State Department and the highest ranking Indian-American ever in America's diplomatic arm, has said. He also warned that nothing could be more "threatening" to bilateral ties than the "demonising of immigrants". Verma's comments come in the backdrop of Laura Loomer, a far-right social media influencer who has emerged as a key associate of Donald Trump, attacking Kamala Harris's Indian roots and the sharpening of Republican rhetoric against immigrants.

Speaking at the Hudson Institute, a Washington DC based think-tank, on the milestones and the pathways ahead for US-India ties, ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to US from Saturday, Verma spoke about the progress that has taken place in the last 25 years. He highlighted then President Bill Clinton's decision to "delink" the US-India relationship and US-Pakistan relationship; the passage of the civil nuclear deal; the designation of India as a "major defense partner", a unique status no other country holds; the evolving "hub and spoke" model of security in the Indo-Pacific and Quad; cooperation in the climate domain especially after the Paris climate agreement; and the increased flow of people from both sides as key achievements in this quarter of a century. Verma, who is also a former American ambassador to India, then highlighted the contribution of people of Indian and South Asian heritage to different walks of American life and said, "That is why it is so hard to fathom perspectives that are anti-immigrant and yet pro-US-India economic, security, and cultural ties. The two do not go together. And, in fact, nothing could be more threatening or damaging to US-India ties than the recent demonisation of immigrants we have seen careening through cyber space and our TV screens in recent days, which includes vile and racist attacks directed at Indian Americans." Verma added that he wanted to be clear that this kind of language and these kinds of attacks had no place in American society. "When we speak of shared values in the US-India relationship, our countries have a long history of pushing for social justice for our most vulnerable populations. We must continue to learn from each other and advance these values. Standing up for America as a diverse, multicultural, and inclusive society is something I will do at every opportunity."

Looking ahead, Verma identified emerging technologies and science (including in clean energy, vaccine development, AI and quantum, supply chains for critical minerals, digital economy), building the architecture of the Indo-Pacific and multilateral institutions, defence and economy, and people-to-people ties as four vectors where bilateral ties will and should deepen in the future. But Verma also flagged challenges that stem from the growing Russia-China collaboration and how Russian support can equip China with greater capabilities in the Indo-Pacific. Verma said the US recognised the history of the India-Russia relationship but it was upto India to decide if it still wanted to pursue closer ties with a declining power, with an ineffective military, out to subvert global rules and suggested that Russian equipment in the Indian security architecture were dated, aging and broken. He also spoke about the economic and civil society domain as areas that required deeper ties. "I am mindful of the need to deepen our economic cooperation, with



clear rules of the road, and more government-to-government efforts to ensure transparency and fairness. And I am mindful of the need to continue to support our collective civil societies to ensure every voice is heard and supported, with the freedom to speak out."

## US 'frustrated' with Israeli actions in Gaza, says strike 'preventable'

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

United Nations: The US ambassador to the United Nations on Monday accused Israel's military of striking schools, humanitarian workers and civilians in Gaza in a sign of growing American frustration with its close ally as the war approaches its first anniversary.

Israel has repeatedly said it targets Hamas militants, who often hide with civilians and use them as human shields, in retaliation for the October 7 attacks in southern Israel that killed about 1,200 people and launched the war in Gaza. US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield was unusually outspoken against the Israeli military at a UN Security Council meeting, saying many of the strikes in recent weeks that injured or killed UN personnel and humanitarian workers "were preventable".

Many council members cited last week's Israeli strike on a former school turned civilian shelter run by the UN agency helping Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, in which six UNRWA staffers were among at least 18 people killed, including women and children. Israel said it targeted a Hamas command-and-control center in the compound, and Israel's UN ambassador, Danny Danon, asserted Monday that Hamas militants were killed in the strike. He named four, claiming to the council that they worked for UNRWA during the day and Hamas at night. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for an independent investigation. Thomas-Greenfield told council members that the US will keep raising the need for Israel to facilitate humanitarian operations in the Palestinian territory and protect humanitarian workers and facilities like the UNRWA shelter. She also reiterated US "outrage" at the death of Turkish American activist Aysenur Eygi, who was shot and killed during a protest in the West Bank last week. Israeli Defense Forces said it likely killed Eygi by mistake, and the government has begun a criminal investigation. "The IDF is a professional military and knows well how to ensure that incidents such as these do not happen," the US envoy said.

## Georgian Parliament approves law curbing LGBT rights

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Georgian lawmakers on Tuesday (September 17, 2024) approved the third and final reading of a law on "family values and the protection of minors" that would impose sweeping curbs on LGBT rights.

The bill would provide a legal basis for authorities to outlaw Pride events and public displays of the LGBT rainbow flag, and to impose censorship of films and books. Leaders of the governing Georgian Dream party say it is needed to safeguard traditional moral standards in Georgia, whose deeply conservative Orthodox Church is highly influential. Activists say the measure is aimed at boosting conservative support for the government ahead of a parliamentary election on Oct. 26 in Georgia, a country that has ambitions to join the European Union but which Western governments fear is now tilting back towards Russia.

Tamara Jakeli, director of campaign group Tbilisi Pride, said the bill, which also restates an existing ban on same-sex marriage and bans gender reassignment surgery,



would likely force her organisation to close its doors. "This law is the most terrible thing to happen to the LGBT community in Georgia," Jakeli, 28, told Reuters. "We will most likely have to shut down. There is no way for us to continue functioning." Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili, a critic of Georgian Dream whose powers are mostly ceremonial, has indicated that she will block the bill. But Georgian Dream and its allies have enough seats in parliament to override her veto. LGBT rights are a fraught topic in Georgia, where polls show broad

disapproval of same-sex relationships, and the constitution bans same-sex marriage. Participants in Tbilisi's annual Pride marches have come under physical attack by anti-LGBT protesters in recent years. The issue has become more prominent ahead of October's election, where Georgian Dream is seeking a fourth term in office and is campaigning heavily against LGBT rights.

The ruling party, whose top candidate for the election is billionaire ex-prime minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, has deepened ties with neighbouring

Russia as relations with Western countries have soured. Earlier this year, it passed a law on "foreign agents" that the European and U.S. critics said is authoritarian and Russian-inspired. Its passage sparked some of the largest protests Georgia has seen since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Opinion polls show the party, which in 2014 passed a law banning anti-LGBT discrimination before later pivoting to more conservative positions, remains Georgia's most popular, though it has lost ground since 2020, when it won a narrow majority in parliament.

## Gold imports doubled to record high of \$10.06 billion in August



The precious metal accounts for over 5 per cent of the country's total imports. The jump in gold imports pushed the country's trade deficit (difference between imports and exports) to USD 29.65 billion in August. India is the world's second-biggest gold consumer after China. The imports mainly take care of the demand by the jewellery industry. India recorded a current account surplus of USD 5.7 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP in the March quarter. For FY24, the current account deficit narrowed to USD 23.2 billion or 0.7 per cent of GDP against USD 67 billion or 2 per cent of GDP in FY23. A current account deficit occurs when the value of goods and services imported and other payments exceeds the value of the export of goods and services and other receipts by a country in a particular period.

India is seeking review of certain provisions of the free trade agreement with the UAE, which came into force on May 1, 2022. The review assumes significance as experts have raised serious concerns over the spurt in imports of precious metals from the UAE under the trade agreement. Seeking an urgent review of the pact, think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) has stated that the India-UAE CEPA allows unlimited imports of gold, silver, platinum, and diamonds from the UAE into India with zero tariffs in the coming years. This will lead to significant annual revenue losses, move import business from banks to a few private traders, and replace top suppliers with Dubai-based firms, the GTRI report has said. It highlighted that currently, gold can be imported from Dubai at 5 per cent duty, but this will drop to zero in three years if the alloy contains 2 per cent platinum.

## India's goods export declines by 9% in August; trade deficit widens to \$30 billion

India goods exports decline. However, cumulative exports are rising, and a number of measures are being implemented, such as improving trade with African markets and not relying solely on advanced countries, which are experiencing a slowdown. Amid weak demand in Western countries, India's goods trade gap widened sharply to \$30 billion in August in the wake of a 9 per cent decline in exports and a 3 per cent increase in imports, which has pushed up the trade deficit to a nine month high, data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Wednesday showed.

While goods exports in August this year totalled \$34.71 billion compared to \$38.28 billion in August 2023, goods imports stood at \$64.36 billion compared to \$62.30 billion in August last year. This has pushed the goods trade deficit to \$30 billion, highest in nine months. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) Goods Trade Barometer earlier this month said that global trade could improve in the second half of the year. However, shifting monetary policies in advanced economies and weakening export orders continue to create uncertainty.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal stated that India's petroleum exports have been affected due to the decline in oil prices caused by the slowdown in China, even as this benefits imports. He also noted that global trade continues to face challenges, with the procurement of rough diamonds being affected by sanctions on Russia. However, cumulative exports are rising, and a number of measures are being implemented, such as improving trade with African markets and not relying solely on advanced countries, which are experiencing a slowdown. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is also collaborating with the Ministry of Shipping to resolve issues such as container shortages faced by exporters.

Recent trade data in value terms show weaker-than-expected performance in Europe, while other regions have experienced stronger growth, the WTO noted. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in May stated that



Europe's recovery, driven by domestic demand, is firmly on track, although inflation remains elevated in several European countries, necessitating a careful and measured approach to monetary policy easing. The current value of the WTO Goods Trade Barometer, an early indicator of the trajectory of merchandise trade volume, stands at 103—above both the quarterly trade volume index and the baseline value of 100.

"This suggests that merchandise trade has been picking up in the third quarter of 2024. However, the outlook remains uncertain due to shifting monetary policies in advanced economies and weakening export orders," the WTO stated. Following a flat period since the final quarter of 2022, world merchandise trade volume began to rise in the fourth quarter of 2023 and gained momentum in the first quarter of 2024, according to the global trade body. "Trade in the first quarter of 2024 was up by 1 per cent compared to the previous quarter, and 1.4 per cent year-on-year. Quarter-on-quarter growth over the last two quarters averaged 0.7 per cent, which is equivalent to 2.7 per cent on an annualised basis. This aligns with the WTO's most recent forecast from April 2024, which predicted a 2.6 per cent increase in world merchandise trade for the year," the global trade body had said in its latest report.

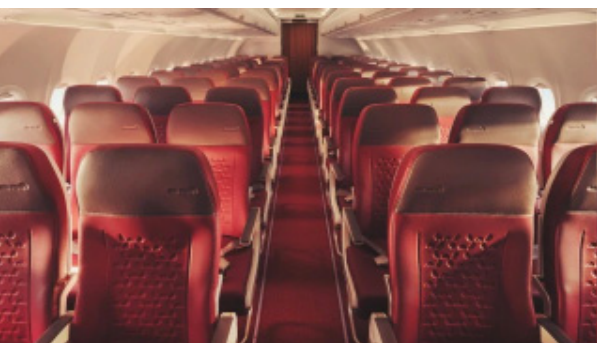
## Air India kicks off \$400-million refit programme to spruce up 67 legacy aircraft from government ownership days

Tata group's flagship airline Air India has kickstarted its over \$400-million refurbishment programme for 67 older legacy aircraft that the carrier has from government ownership days. Cabin refit and upgradation is part of Air India's product transformation plan. Over the years, Air India had developed a reputation of having run-down aircraft cabins and an ageing fleet as the then government-owned airline was under severe financial stress. The Tata group acquired Air India from the government in early 2022. The refit programme, which will involve a complete overhaul of the cabin with new seats, carpets, and upholstery, started Monday. The retrofit programme will first refresh Air India's 27 legacy narrow-body Airbus A320neo aircraft, followed by 40 wide-body Boeing aircraft.

According to Air India, three to four A320neo aircraft a month will enter the retrofit process, and the upgradation of the airline's entire narrow-body fleet is expected by the middle of next year. As for its legacy wide-body aircraft—Boeing 787s and 777s—the airline expects their retrofit to start early next year. "Market-leading seats and inflight entertainment systems have been selected, interior designs are complete and the airline is working closely with seat manufacturers to finalise regulatory certification and expedite production. Subject to supply chains, the retrofit of the first widebody aircraft will commence in early 2025," Air India said.

The legacy fleet refit will involve redesigning the cabin in a three-class configuration by adding a premium economy section in addition to Air India's regulation two-class configuration—economy and business. As part of this retrofit programme, the aircraft will also be painted in the new Air India livery that was introduced last year and entered into service with the airline's brand new Airbus A350 aircraft this year. "The first narrowbody aircraft to commence the refit program is VT-EXN, a single-aisle A320neo that went into the hangar on Monday. After prototyping and necessary regulatory approvals, VT-EXN is expected to re-enter commercial service in December 2024, joining the eight recently-delivered and operational Air India A320neo aircraft that already feature the upgraded cabin interiors and configuration," Air India said.

"The commencement of interior refit of the



Over the years, Air India had developed a reputation of having run-down aircraft cabins and an ageing fleet as the then government-owned airline was under severe financial stress.

narrowbody fleet is an important step in our journey of enhancing the flying experience of our customers. Over time, all the legacy widebody aircraft will also be refitted. This comprehensive upgradation of Air India's physical product is an important component of Air India transforming into a world-class airline," Air India's Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Campbell Wilson said. The refitted A320neo aircraft will feature eight business class seats, 24 extra-legroom seats in the premium economy class, and 132 economy class seats. The refit project will be coordinated by Air India's engineering team with leading global original equipment manufacturers like Collins, Astronics, and Thales, among others. The exercise will see the installation of over 15,000 next-generation seats across different cabin classes. "Subtle cabin lighting, spacious legroom and wider pitch, and modern features, like portable electronic device (PED) holders and USB ports with type A and C options to charge mobile phones, laptops and other gadgets, among others, will contribute significantly to offer guests an inflight experience catering to the needs of today's discerning flyers," Air India said.

## Amid a global transformer supply crunch, green energy developers face grid access delays



A global surge in demand for high-voltage transformers, driven by efforts to integrate renewable energy into power grids, is emerging as a significant setback for project developers in India. Long wait times for crucial equipment, along with legal hurdles and land availability issues, are delaying addition of transmission infrastructure and stalling grid access for renewable energy projects in key states like Rajasthan and Gujarat. In a June meeting with top energy officials, developers warned that evacuation systems for most upcoming projects may not be ready until 2029. With only three domestic manufacturers of high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transformers—all owned by multinational conglomerates—surging global demand is straining supply, underscoring the need to strengthen supply chains and rethink how developers place orders. Adopting programme-based ordering, a strategy gaining traction in Europe, could provide manufacturers with better visibility and help manage demand more effectively.

Government-owned Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL), the country's largest transmission infrastructure developer, is further constrained by a mandate to source transformers domestically from suppliers that ensure at least 60 percent local value addition. Transmission-related delays in bringing projects online could derail the government's target of adding over 50 gigawatts (GW) annually through 2030 to meet its 500 GW green energy goal. The Ministry of Power and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy did not respond to requests for comment. Across the world, including in India, booming demand for HVDC transmission equipment—used to efficiently evacuate green power over long distances—is causing supply constraints, which in turn could lead to project delays. Earlier, one HVDC project was executed every 4-5 years in India, whereas now the frequency has increased to one project each year. According to energy analytics firm Wood Mackenzie, transformer lead times have been on the rise in the last few years, from around 50 weeks in 2021 to 120 weeks on average in 2024. "... based on conversations with developers and suppliers, we predict that as much as 25% of global renewable projects could be at risk of project delays due to high transformer lead times," it noted in an April report.

"I think we all are aware of the challenges of grid connectivity and evacuation," CEO of Adani Green Energy Ltd Amit Singh said at the BNEF Summit in New Delhi earlier this month. Singh added that disruptions in the supply chain of inverters and transformers are testing developers' ability to execute projects on time and accelerate the deployment of renewable energy. "We are looking to domestically source these goods... It's very well known in the industry that we still don't have a very resilient supply chain. I think the wait time of inverters and transformers is very high, and there's a huge opportunity to make investments in that space and solve for it," Singh said. RK Tyagi, PGCIL's CMD, called the supply of gas insulated switchgears (GIS), transformers, and reactors a "big challenge" in an earnings call on August 2. PGCIL is further constrained by the government's Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order requiring government-owned companies to source equipment, like HVDC transformers, from local suppliers—namely Siemens Ltd, Hitachi Energy India Ltd, and GE T&D India Ltd—as opposed to importing from other countries.

N Venu, MD and CEO of Hitachi Energy India told The Indian Express that the company has created a "very robust supply chain" in order to meet both domestic and

export demand. According to him, challenges around sourcing HVDC equipment primarily stem from how developers plan the placement of orders. "I do not see that there is a constraint on the supply of equipment in India as of now. The challenge is better planning and sometimes our factories are coming empty slots and sometimes suddenly [demand] comes. We will not be able to do that. No company or no industry can cater to that. What we need is a balanced loading of the factories," Venu said. As a solution, Venu suggested moving to a programme-based ordering strategy as opposed to project-based ordering. "In other countries, especially in Europe, everyone is moving from project-based ordering to programme-based ordering. For example, take an HVDC or a large transformer, they will order 100 transformers for the next four or three years. With that, the manufacturer can cater to those kinds of demand and if they need to make any incremental expansions in the capacities, that can also be done," he said. While a complete shift towards programme-based ordering can take some time, transmission companies, including PGCIL, are now placing transformer orders well in advance—sometimes even before securing the bid, as in the case of Adani Energy Solutions Ltd, a major private player in the sector.

As demand for transmission infrastructure surges in developed countries, Indian HVDC manufacturers are also trying to capture some of the global market. In response to a question on whether Siemens' India capacities will supply equipment to developed economies currently facing shortages, CEO and MD Sunil Mathur responded affirmatively in an earnings call in May. While Mathur acknowledged that the domestic market is also growing, he said bidding decisions are made in consultation with the parent company. "But we also need to acknowledge (that) the HVDC market globally is booming. And therefore, we have got to look at it and along with the parent company, Siemens Energy AG, on whom we are dependent for technology, and for some products as well, we've got to work together with them to see where the priority lies in terms of the bidding process," Mathur said. At Hitachi Energy too, exports account for a large volume of total order book. "Exports contributed 27% to the total order book, not including the large HVDC export order we received from Marinus, because that's a large order. If we include that, the whole thing will be skewed, so we always keep out such large projects, while considering the export contribution to the total order," Venu said in an earnings call in July. Marinus Link is an HVDC project underway in Australia.

In a June meeting with top officials from the power ministry and the new and renewable energy ministry, solar and wind developers said that "projects in Rajasthan and Gujarat are facing challenges in timely availability of ISTS (inter state transmission system)," according to a document accessed by The Indian Express under the RTI Act. "Most of the upcoming projects, especially in Rajasthan, will not have evacuation systems available till 2029. Considering the imposition of ISTS charges and long waiting period, REIAs (renewable energy implementing agency) may find it difficult to sign PSAs (power supply agreements)," developers told the government. The 100 per cent waiver of ISTS charges will be phased out from June 2025 onwards. In addition to challenges in sourcing transmission equipment, grid infrastructure projects have also been delayed because of other issues, including the Supreme Court ban on high power transmission lines in the habitat of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB), found in Gujarat and Rajasthan. The ban was relaxed in March earlier this year. "Only 6 projects (total value: Rs. 6,500 crore) face delays due to the Supreme Court judgement on transmission lines in Great Indian Bustard (GIB) areas. With the issue resolved, these projects are on track for completion by year-end," a power ministry press release issued in July said. Transmission projects in India often encounter delays due to land acquisition challenges that arise during construction. Over the last year, significant HVDC project bidding was also delayed, partially because of the Lok Sabha elections held in April and May.

## When Ananya Panday met cousin Alanna's son for the first time: 'Where do I keep my hands?'

Ananya Panday's recent performance in Call Me Bae has been praised by fans, who believe she's playing a version of herself on the show. Now, a video of her meeting her nephew, River, for the first time has gone viral — and honestly, her reaction is so Bae! Ananya's cousin, Alanna Panday, welcomed her son, River, with her husband, Ivor McCray, a few months ago. During a recent visit to India, Ananya and her family met the baby for the first time. Alanna posted a video capturing the heartwarming moment as Ananya squeals with delight and holds her nephew.

Alanna had planned to surprise Ananya, so she was told a pooja was in the house. When she came in, she saw her nephew and exclaimed, "Where's the pooja? Wait, whose child is this?" Ananya asked her mom, Bhavna Panday, who had accompanied her, "That's not Alanna's child, right?" Ananya soon caught on: "Am I imagining? Are you kidding? Stop it! Oh my god. I knew it; there's a camera." The actor seemed completely taken with her nephew, saying, "He's so cute. Can I touch him? Oh my god, he's so fat. I love him." Her mom, Bhavna, cheekily replied, "You can't



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body shame a baby." It got even cuter when Ananya placed her nephew on her lap. She seemed to be a little (read: a lot) confused about how to hold such a small baby. "I'm scared. What do I do? Where do I

keep my hands?" When Alanna and Ivor guided her, and she finally had baby River deposited firmly on her lap, Ananya exclaimed, "Oh my god, he loves me!" When her family members asked her to rock him,

Ananya funnily started rocking herself, inviting teasing remarks from her family: "Rock him, not yourself, Ananya." Ananya has a special bond with her nephew. Like many aunts, she's already spoiling and showering him with love.

## Siddharth reveals the first thing wife Aditi Rao Hydari does every morning leaves him in tears: 'It's against my wishes, without my consent'



Actors Aditi Rao Hydari and Siddharth recently sat down for a chat, where they finished each other's sentences and answered questions spontaneously, showcasing their deep understanding of one another. Actors Aditi Rao Hydari and Siddharth tied the knot on Monday. The film industry and fans' beloved power couple Aditi Rao Hydari and Siddharth recently tied the knot in a dreamy South Indian wedding ceremony at a 400-year-old temple in Wanaparthy district, Telangana. Both the bride and groom donned Sabyasachi creations, radiating an ethereal elegance even in their understated simplicity. Before the wedding, Aditi and Siddharth sat down for a "Tell The Truth" interview with Vogue India, where they finished each other's sentences and answered questions spontaneously, showcasing their deep understanding of one another.

ICYMI | Saif Ali Khan saves money on Pataudi Palace maintenance costs by having it whitewashed instead of painted, Sharmila handles 'hisab-kitaab' The video begins with Aditi asking, "If left unattended, Sid will..." to which Siddharth instantly replies, "with and die," causing her to burst into laughter. She also noted that he never

lied to her. When asked about the first thing Aditi Rao Hydari does in the morning, Siddharth humorously said it's waking him up "against my wishes and without my consent". Though Aditi countered that one should wake up when the sun rises, Siddharth added, "I wake up reluctantly and in tears that my day has begun. Now, the one person in the world who relishes this moment, almost like taking candy from a baby, is this person (Aditi)." Regarding what attire Siddharth looks best in, she noted that it's either his hipster clothes or a veshti (dhoti). On who is more likely to apologise first, Aditi enthusiastically screamed "me!" but Siddharth, with a disapproving look, said, "I do so many things wrong every five minutes. Ninety per cent of the words I speak to her are 'sorry,' and the remaining ten per cent are 'thank you.'" If asked who is the better driver among them, the couple's response is sure to leave you in stitches. While Aditi claims she's not a bad driver, Siddharth insists she's not a driver at all. When asked who is more romantic, the couple agreed without dispute that it was Siddharth. They also revealed that he was the first to say "I love you." Siddharth and Aditi previously worked together in director Ajay Bhupathi's Telugu romantic action film Maha Samudram (2021).

## Masaba Gupta says father Vivian Richards has a 'rage' inside him against racism: 'He grew up in the worst of times'

Fashion designer and actor Masaba Gupta recently opened up about facing racism in her daily life and shared some shocking experiences. Currently expecting her first child with husband Satyadeep Mishra, Masaba revealed during an interaction with journalist Faye D'Souza how she has been given inappropriate advice, like eat certain foods like rasgulla and drink milk, to ensure her baby would be born with fair skin. She also talked about her father, former cricketer Vivian Richards, and the deep-seated anger he still feels toward discrimination based on skin colour.

Reflecting on her personal experience of handling comments about her skin tone, Masaba said, "I still face comments about my skin colour. The comments are subtle now. It's not all settled and I don't think it ever will at least for the next decade."

Masaba Gupta recounted an incident where her masseuse advised her to eat a rasgulla every day to ensure her baby would have a lighter complexion. "My masseuse told me, 'You must eat a rasgulla every day because your kid has to turn out lighter than you.' Another masseuse even suggested I have a glass of milk every day for the same reason," she shared. "Saawli nahi honi chahiye (The baby shouldn't be dark). It was said with so much innocence. What can I do? Punch my masseuse? No. You can only raise a child who hopefully has the resilience to power through it," she said.

While Masaba acknowledged the innocence behind



such comments, she emphasized that similar beliefs persist even among educated and affluent individuals. "The number of times people think calling someone 'kaali' (dark) is a way of putting them down, I find that so absurd," she added. Masaba Gupta also reflected on how her father, Vivian Richards, continues to harbour strong emotions about racism. "Now I know why my father felt so strongly about it (racism) for so many years. Till today, if you ask him, he'll have tears in his eyes or he'll have this rage in him, where he will answer with a lot of pride. He grew up in the worst of times. He played professional cricket in a time where the colour of your skin came in the way of your ability to move ahead in the world. It's there, everywhere. It'll keep being spoken of until we fight for it, and it's only going to happen if everybody fights for it," she said.

## Miley Cyrus sued for allegedly copying Bruno Mars' 2013 hit 'When I Was Your Man' in Grammy-winning song 'Flowers'

American singer and songwriter Miley Cyrus, who won her first Grammy Award for her song "Flowers" this year, has been sued in Los Angeles federal court for allegedly copying a portion of Bruno Mars' 2013 hit "When I Was Your Man". Miley, along with the co-writers of "Flowers", Gregory Hein and Michael Pollack, has been named in the lawsuit. Interestingly, Bruno Mars is not listed as a plaintiff in the case. Instead, the lawsuit has been filed by Tempo Music Investments, a company that purchased part of the rights to "When I Was Your Man" from one of its co-writers, Philip Lawrence. The lawsuit also targets Sony Music Publishing, Apple, Target, Walmart, and other companies for distributing "Flowers".

According to a report by The Guardian, the lawsuit claims, "Any fan of Bruno Mars' "When I Was Your Man" knows that Miley Cyrus's "Flowers" did not achieve all of that success on its own. "Flowers" duplicates numerous melodic, harmonic, and lyrical elements of "When I Was Your Man", including the melodic pitch design and sequence of the verse, the connecting bass line, certain bars of the chorus, certain theatrical music elements, lyric elements, and specific chord progressions." It continued, "It is undeniable based on the combination and number of similarities between the two recordings that "Flowers" would not exist without "When I Was Your Man". With "Flowers", Cyrus, Hein and Pollack have created a derivative work of "When I Was Your Man" without authorisation." Back in 2023, many fans were quick to notice similarities between the lyrics of the two songs,



with some speculating that Miley's "Flowers" was directed at her former long-time boyfriend and ex-husband, Liam Hemsworth. Rumours circulated that Miley had "flipped" Bruno Mars' 2013 hit, which Liam had once dedicated to her during their relationship. It's also worth noting that "Flowers" was released on Liam's birthday. While Miley's song focuses on self-reliance and self-love, Bruno's song expresses a man's regret for not treating his partner better and his fear of losing her.

Miley Cyrus first rose to fame as a child star on Disney Channel's television series Hannah Montana (2006), in which she played a teenager living a double life as both a famous pop singer and an ordinary girl. In addition to starring in the series, she also provided vocals for its soundtrack, which were immensely successful on the Billboard charts.

## Inside Sayani Gupta's serene, minimalist Mumbai apartment filled with intriguing paintings, curated pieces.

Bollywood star Sayani Gupta's Mumbai apartment is filled with an intriguing mix of paintings, furniture and curated pieces, all while maintaining a minimalist aesthetic as well. The apartment's serene interiors mirror Sayani Gupta's calm persona and her collections, including books and artefacts, offer glimpses of her personality. (Sayani Gupta is one of those rare Bollywood actors who has consistently prioritised quality over quantity, leaving a lasting impact on audiences with each and every one of her performances. For Sayani, who hails from Kolkata and is an alumna of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, art is an inseparable part of her life, as reflected in her Mumbai apartment. Recently, the actor gave Brut India a tour of her place, filled with an intriguing mix of paintings, furniture and curated pieces, all while maintaining a minimalist aesthetic as well. With its white walls, the apartment's serene interiors mirror the actor's calm persona and her collections, including books and artefacts, offer glimpses of her personality.

The living room is tastefully decorated and has a rocking chair and a comfortable sofa adorned with printed cushions too. Sayani also has a luxurious vanity room where she gets ready. The room contains a yoga trapeze too, and in the video, she is seen demonstrating its use, even hanging upside down, showcasing her physical agility. A devoted plant mom, Sayani keeps her 'babies' in her bedroom, which receives ample sunlight all the time. She also has a four-poster wooden bed, her favourite stuffed toys, and a small bookshelf in it. When asked how



much time she spends on Instagram daily, she admitted that while she does check the platform regularly, there are days when she deletes the app to take a break. She also took part in the "OK Boomer" test, which assessed her knowledge of Gen Z slang and she aced all the questions. "Don't be a clout chaser cos you slay if you got rizz and then, everyone's gonna be like, 'she ate,'" Sayani advised her fans in the Gen Z style.

After making her screen debut with a key role in Second Marriage Dot Com (2012), Sayani earned widespread acclaim for her performance in director Shonali Bose's Margaritha with a Straw (2014). Her impressive body of work includes Parched (2015), Article 15 (2019), Posham Pa (2019), Axone (2019), Zwigato (2022) and Four More Shots Please! (2019). She was last seen in the comedy-drama streaming series Call Me Bae (2024).

## Sundar C to direct Nayanthara in Mookuthi Amman sequel

Nayanthara, in her stellar filmography cutting across linguistic boundaries, has never been part of a sequel. Vels Film International, the makers of her 'divine' blockbuster Mookuthi Amman, had earlier announced that Nayanthara would tick that box by reprising the role in the sequel titled Mookuthi Amman 2. With their latest announcement, the makers also enabled Nayanthara to tick yet another box in her career. Mookuthi Amman 2 marks her maiden collaboration with director Sundar C, who was announced as the director of this ambitious project. Announcing this update on their social media handles, the makers wrote, "Welcoming The King of Commercial Entertainers, Director Sundar C to the Divine Fantasy World of MA-2." Notably, the first part was helmed by actor-filmmaker RJ Balaji, who isn't part of the sequel. However, there are speculations that he is making a 'divine fantasy' film of his own with Trisha in the lead.

Through his Aranmanai films, Sundar C has already established his credentials in handling 'divine' subjects as his horror comedy franchise always had a heavy dose



of the 'Amman' presence. It would be interesting to see if he replicates the conviction of the Aranmanai films and gives us a full-blown 'Amman padam' or takes the satirical route of the original. The film is expected to go on floors after Sundar C completes the work on his next directorial, Gangsters, which reunites him with comedy legend Vadivelu.

## Rajiv Thakur recalls when Shah Rukh Khan slammed his photo on floor as part of a prank: 'I was in tears, he apologised'

Rajiv Thakur, who was recently seen in the Netflix series IC814: The Kandahar Hijack, has been a part of Kapil Sharma's shows for a long time now. As The Great Indian Kapil Show returns for a second season, Rajiv recalled one of his fondest memories from working with the comedy gang on the various iterations of the show and said that when he first shared the stage with Shah Rukh Khan, he was "completely numb." Rajiv recalled that Kapil and Shah Rukh had actually planned to pull a prank on Rajiv and caught him completely off guard.

Rajiv shared with Siddharth Kannan, "I have so much love for Shah Rukh so when he came on, I wasn't scared but there is a thing... he is my idol. I was wondering if I will even remember my lines when I see him for the first time. I was told there is a special part for you so you can perform with Shah Rukh. I didn't know that this would be later converted into a 20-minute section." Rajiv said that Kapil was aware of his love for Shah Rukh and together, they hatched a plan to pull a prank on him. "Shah Rukh sir scolded me on stage and I was on the verge of tears. When I got to know what is happening, I got emotional. He showered so much love on me after that," he recalled. "I had a photo that I had gotten clicked in his pose. He took it and threw it on the floor (during the prank). Later,



after the show, one of his people knocks my vanity and says 'Shah Rukh sir has sent this for you'.

He had a note written behind it saying, 'You are brilliant, I am so sorry'. Who does that? Even I didn't pick up my photo from the stage, but he did," he shared. In the same chat, Kiku Sharda also recalled facing Amitabh Bachchan for the first time and said that he was very nervous. "The very first time when you face Amitabh Bachchan... I was in a bad state. I have never experienced that kind of fright," he said.

## Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas share passionate kiss during London concert; baby Malti tries to 'steal' dad's mic.

On his 32nd birthday, Nick Jonas performed live in London, surrounded by his loved ones, including his wife, actor Priyanka Chopra, and their daughter Malti Marie Chopra-Jonas. Heartwarming videos of Nick Jonas, Priyanka Chopra and their daughter Malti Marie Chopra-Jonas sharing heartwarming moments have gone viral on social media.

American singer-songwriter Nick Jonas celebrated his 32nd birthday on Monday by doing what he enjoys most — performing on stage — surrounded by his loved ones, including his wife, actor Priyanka Chopra, their daughter Malti Marie Chopra-Jonas and his brothers Joe and Kevin. On Monday, the Jonas Brothers took to the stage at the O2 Arena in London, performing in front of a massive crowd of enthusiastic fans. Now, videos of Nick, Priyanka and Malti sharing heartwarming moments have gone viral on social media. In one clip, Nick can be seen walking towards the edge of the stage while performing, as Priyanka makes her way to him from the crowd. With music playing in the background, they hold hands and share a passionate kiss, just like a scene straight out of a romantic musical.

In another video, Nick is seen approaching baby Malti, who is in her mother's arms, and upon seeing her father, Malti lights up with excitement, smiles, and even reaches for Nick's mic. Moved by her sweetness, Nick plants a gentle kiss on her head before returning to his performance. Videos of Priyanka and Malti, who is wearing protective headphones to shield her ears from the



On his 32nd birthday, Nick Jonas performed live in London, surrounded by his loved ones, including his wife, actor Priyanka Chopra, and their daughter Malti Marie Chopra-Jonas.

loud music, vibing to the Jonas Brothers' music have also gone viral, with many admiring the adorable bond between mother and daughter. On the occasion of Nick's birthday, Priyanka also shared a few sweet family photos on her Instagram, captioning them, "Happiest birthday to the best husband and dad. You make all our dreams come true, every day. We love you!" While one of the photos humorously captures Malti photobombing her parents, the others offer BTS glimpses from the concert.

## Man City's Rodri says top football players close to going on strike because there are too many games



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Manchester City midfielder Rodri says top soccer players are close to going on strike because of the number of games they are having to play. The Spain international said players are concerned about the way the game is headed as more games are added to the calendar in competitions like the Champions League, which starts on Tuesday. Rodri was asked on Tuesday if players might start refusing to play because of the calendar. "I think we are close to that," he said in a news conference ahead of City's Champions League opener against Inter Milan on Wednesday. "It's easy to understand. You ask any player, he will say the same — it's not the opinion of (just) Rodri or whoever. I think it's a general opinion of the players." "If it keeps this way, it will be a moment when we have no other option, I really think. It's something that worries us because we are the guys who suffer." Rodri is expected to start his first game for City this season when Inter visits Etihad Stadium, having been given an extended break by the club after winning the European Championship

with Spain in July.

City has two more games to play in the first stage of the Champions League and up to seven matches more in the Club World Cup, which is scheduled to take place in the United States at the end of the domestic season. The introduction by FIFA of a 32-team Club World Cup, which will be played every four years, is regarded by global players' union FIFPRO as a tipping point for the expansion of international competitions. The union has filed a legal challenge against FIFA over its expanded competitions, which include the first 48-team men's World Cup in 2026, because it believes too much is being asked of players without consultation.

Rodri said players can be expected to "perform at the highest level" if they play 40 to 50 games. Not 60 to 70 matches, a number Rodri might have to play if City goes far in all of the competitions it enters. Julian Alvarez, who played for City the past two seasons before moving to Atletico Madrid, was picked in 83 match-day squads last season. Another City player, Phil Foden, played in 72. "In my humble opinion, I think it is too much," Rodri said. "We have to take care of ourselves. Someone has to take care of ourselves because we are the main characters of, let's say, this sport or this business. Not everything is money or marketing. It is also the quality of the show. In my opinion, when I rest, when I'm not tired, I perform better. If people want to see better football, we need to rest." Rodri said teammate Erling Haaland is demonstrating how a player can benefit from getting more of a break. Norway did not qualify for Euro 2024 so Haaland had the summer off, and has started this season by scoring nine goals in City's first four games. "It gives you a clue why we ask for this," Rodri said.

## Massive hike in women's T20 WC prize fund as ICC announces pay parity



GNS News Agency, Sept 20

In a landmark decision, the International Cricket Council on Tuesday announced equal prize money for men and women in World Cups, starting with next month's women's T20 showpiece, the purse for which has been hiked by a staggering 225 per cent to USD 7.95 million. The winners of the women's T20 World Cup will walk away with USD 2.34 million from this fund, a 134 per cent increase on the USD one million awarded to Australian women when they clinched the title in South Africa in 2023, said the ICC in a statement. Men's T20 World Cup champions India had received USD 2.45 million in cash prize earlier this year.

"The ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 will be the first ICC event where women will receive the same prize money as their male counterparts, marking a significant milestone in the sport's history," said the ICC. The deci-

sion ensures that the ICC reached its prize money equity target seven years ahead of its schedule of 2030. The runners-up at the showpiece event next month will get USD 1.17 million, an increase of 134 per cent in comparison to the USD 500,000 South Africa received for reaching the final on home soil at Newlands Cricket Ground. The two losing semi-finalists will earn USD 675,000 (up from USD 210,000 in 2023), with the overall prize pot totalling USD 7,958,080, a massive increase of 225 per cent from last year's total fund of USD 2.45 million. Each win during the group stages will see teams take home USD 31,154, while the six teams who fail to reach the semi-finals will share a pool of USD 1.35 million depending on their finishing positions. In comparison, the equivalent pool for the six teams in 2023 was USD 180,000, shared equally. Teams who finish third or fourth in their group will take USD 270,000 each while the teams who finish fifth in their group will both receive USD 135,000. "This move is in line with the ICC's strategy to prioritise the women's game and accelerate its growth by 2032. Teams will now receive equal prize money for the equivalent finishing position at comparable events as well as the same amount for winning a match at those events," the ICC added. The ninth edition of the tournament will take place across two venues in the UAE — Dubai and Sharjah — from October 3 to 20. All group matches will be completed before October 15. The semi-finals are scheduled for October 17 and 18, followed by the final on October 20.

## Pakistan Test coach Jason Gillespie backs Australia to beat India in Border-Gavaskar series

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

PAK AUSAustralia's Pat Cummins, right, hold up the ball after taking 5 wickets against Pakistan during the fourth day of their cricket test match in Melbourne, Friday, Dec. 29, 2023. (AP Photo/Asanka Brendon Ratnayake) Pakistan's red-ball head coach Jason Gillespie on Tuesday said that the Australian bowling quartet of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon are more than capable of beating India this time around in the upcoming five-match Test series. "I will be backing them to do the job," Gillespie told Fox Sports. "They are the best bowlers in the country. I think their records speak for themselves. This quartet is the best possible bowling attack that Australia can put out in the park," he added. Australia have not won the Border-Gavaskar Trophy since 2014-15 when they won 2-0 and have suffered consecutive series defeats on home soil. In 2020-21, India came from 1-0 down after being bowled out for 36 in Adelaide to take the series with famous wins at the MCG and Gabba. India vs Australia: Team India emerged victorious in the last Border-Gavaskar Trophy Down Under in 2021. India vs Australia: Team India emerged victorious in the last Border-Gavaskar Trophy Down Under in 2021. "They are red-hot, they are playing some good test cricket for a while now," said Gillespie. "Even though they have beaten Australia in recent times. I think Australia have a chance to beat India this time around." On Steve Smith

There is a lot of talk about where Steve Smith should continue to open for Australia or he should be back playing in the middle-order. Gillespie feels Smith should bat at No. 4 for Australia. AUS vs WI Australia's Steve Smith bats against the West Indies on the third day of their cricket test match in Adelaide, Australia, Friday, Jan. 19, 2024.



"Players like David Warner is pretty tough to replace. I didn't mind the idea of Steve Smith going up in the order. I have a feeling that he might have slot back in the middle order to bat at 4," he said.

On being Pakistan coach Gillespie didn't had an ideal start to his coaching stint with Pakistan as they suffered a shocked 0-2 defeat against Bangladesh in the recently-concluded Test series. "It was pretty disappointing, you want to win games at cricket. We prepared well but we were just beaten by a better team. We got a lot of work to do and there is no doubt about that," he said. Masood Pakistan's Naseem Shah, second right, celebrates with teammate after taking the wicket of Bangladesh's Zakir Hasan during the third day of first cricket test match between Pakistan and Bangladesh, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, Friday, Aug. 23, 2024. AP/PTI "There was a lot of disappointment around the country but there was also an acceptance and understanding that change is needed. We need to be patient. There is a real appetite of stability, hopefully, we can secure that."

## How K-pop and Hindi songs help Pragati Parida-Vishakha Toppo vibe on and off court

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

First they bickered on court about leaving a shuttle that landed in. Moments later after stepping out of the court with a win sealed, Pragati Parida and Vishakha Toppo were happily vibing to K-pop and Hindi music. At the Yonex Sunrise 31st Smt Krishna Khaitan Memorial All India Junior Ranking Prize Money Tournament, the Orissa U19 girls doubles pair scored an easy 21-8, 21-10 win over Bhakti and Ditya Jakhar in the first round.

Listening to some Korean and later Hindi and Punjabi songs to cool off the tension after the testy exchange, they proceeded to start making mental notes of their next match in the competition. "As a doubles pair, we fight a lot on things about making a wrong guess about an in shot or hitting the net (laughs). But this has come only after playing on the tour for more than three years and helps us to grow our game together. When we listen to the Korean songs or Hindi songs moments later, our coaches would tell us 'Are you girls the same ones, who argued earlier (laughs)'. Complementing each other apart from arguments too and understanding like sisters is important for us, be it life, or court," says 17-year-old Parida while speaking with The Indian Express. It was a search for settling into an academy fit for them which led to the two starting training together in 2020 at the Odisha-SAI Regional Academy in Bhubaneswar. While Kolkatan Parida, whose father is a video journalist, started playing badminton at a court near her home, Toppo's badminton dreams started in the steel town of Rourkela. Toppo's father works in the Rourkela Steel Plant and the youngest among three girls, two of whom are engineers, she would be initiated into sports. "Both my sisters wanted to be engineers but I wanted to pursue sports. I trained under Mohammad Haseem sir at Rourkela for two years before I decided to give trials for SAI Academy in Bhubaneswar," says Toppo.

For Parida, it was her coach at Kolkata, who advised her to seek professional training and the youngest would train at Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad for some months before spending two years in Mehsana to train under former junior world number 1 Tasneem Mir's father. "My coach in Kolkata, Vadhyanath sir advised my father to get me professional training as he found my strokes as a natural ability. While I trained at Hyderabad as well as Mehsana, I also realised that I am not good at singles," says Parida.

It was at Odisha-SAI Regional Academy in 2020



that coach Dileep Panchati would put the two in doubles and started training them. With Parida good at net play and Toppo good at back of the court, the coach would make them train for their specific strengths. "The first and foremost thing Dileep sir emphasized on was our on-court and off-court understanding.

He would make us practice through different simulations, also insisting I spend time on my back court game too and Vishakha on her net game too as it can come handy," says Parida. While the pair has been training at the National Centre of Excellence Guwahati since last one year, they have two final appearances in the junior ranking tournaments apart from a round of 16 appearance in the senior nationals. Parida also competed in the Asian Sub-junior Championships in Chengdu last year with Bhargav Ram Arigela, where they reached the quarters apart from winning the mixed doubles title in last year's U17 nationals in Hyderabad. "Russian coach Ivan Sozonov along with coaches Sayam Shukla and Saurabh Sharma make us understand that defense too is important in doubles.

They also have been focusing on getting the drive and smashes perfect and make us practice those shots 200-300 times per day," says Toppo. As for their favourite doubles pair, the duo is quick to say in unison about two different doubles players, "We both like to watch matches of Chiharu Shida playing with her doubles partner and Yuki Fukushima with her doubles partner. Both have less power but rely on their defence to compliment their respective doubles partner. And to talk of the chemistry of one single doubles pair, we like to watch Paris Olympics champions Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan of China," says the duo.

## India win Asian Champions Trophy hockey: How Jugraj Singh, with an assist from Harmanpreet Singh, became unlikely hero

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Not when he juggled between three roles as a young player — centre-half, full-back and drag-flicker. Not when he moved from Attari, where his house was a walking distance away from the Pakistan border, to Tarn Taran, where the boy who played on the pebble-laden surfaces was moulded into an India international and the country's 'fastest' drag-flicker. And certainly not when he watched, as a reserve player, the rest of his teammates step on the podium in Paris from the stands of the Yves du Manoir Stadium.

Standing near the edge of the circle with the ball glued to his stick isn't an unfamiliar situation for the defender and drag-flicker. But to be in that position inside the opposition's 'D' — with an unobstructed sight of a field goal but a lot of work still to be done — in the final of a continental championship isn't something he'd have ever thought of. Yet, here he was. As hosts China frustrated India for 51 minutes by blocking all their goal-scoring avenues and smothering the attackers, it was two defenders who combined to lead India to consecutive Asian Champions Trophy titles with a 1-0 win in Tuesday's final. Captain Harmanpreet Singh entered the circle from the baseline, cut back a pass towards Jugraj, who was unmarked six yards away from the goal. And with the coolness of a seasoned striker, the 27-year-old controlled the ball with his first touch and pushed it past the Chinese goalkeeper with his second to score what proved to be the winner. After scoring from penalty corners and penalty strokes during his entire international career, Jugraj scored his first field goal in his 63rd match for India. Jugraj looked a little dazed as he slapped his thighs in celebration, as if unable to believe himself that he'd scored a goal — a field goal, no less. And the timing of it could not have been better. Congratulations to the Indian Men's Hockey Team on clinching their record-breaking 5th Asian Champions Trophy title! ???Until that moment, China looked like they were succeeding in their game plan — keeping the scorelines close and taking the match into shootouts, where they would have a better chance of winning. The hosts did so with some incredibly shrewd tactics, as they had done throughout this competition.

In 2008, after China's women's team won the silver medal at the Beijing Olympics, a sizable number of schools were designated 'National Olympic Reserve Bases for Hockey Talents'. Inner Mongolia was one of the regions that benefited from the programme through which future stars were identified and shaped through systemised training. Sixteen years later, it wasn't a surprise that six players in the squad that lined up against India for the final were from Inner Mongolia. Shaped by club coaches — some of whom were international experts — even when



they were in school, the current crop of China's players are arguably the first to come through a proper channel.

China may still not possess the same set of skills that some of the best in the business do. But in the last week, they have shown if there's a plan and the players are fit enough to execute it, they can create all sorts of problems. Against the Olympic bronze medallists, the world number 23 side looked prepared to play the match with very limited possession. But they kept their defensive shape and chased down every pass. They doubled-teamed every time an Indian player had the ball, hurrying them and leading to turnovers, and were brave enough to push forward on the rare occasions they could. It's not like India ran out of ideas. Harmanpreet would switch flanks to change the angles of the low, hard long passes he'd drill into the 'D' from half-line. Vivek Sagar Prasad, Manpreet Singh and Nilakanta Sharma would combine to create chances for the forwards. Raj Kumar Pal would use his rubbery wrists to dodge the defenders and find their foot.

But none of it — neither the intricate patterns India would weave inside the attacking third nor the one-touch play; neither the counterattacks nor the penalty corners won — worked. India were thwarted either by China's goalkeeper Wang Weihao, who pulled off some stunning saves. Or a stubborn defence whose work rate was unquestionable. From the sidelines, coach Craig Fulton would signal his players to pass the ball quicker and raise the intensity. They did that, but as the minutes ticked by, and the scores remained goalless, the possibility of a shootout loomed large. And then the two defenders combined on the night India's attackers endured an off day. A Harmanpreet assist for a field goal by Jugraj is a rare occurrence. But these days, Indian hockey is full of pleasant surprises. Like two impressive podium finishes in two months. And, instead of crumbling under pressure, somehow finding a way to win even on days when they aren't really that good.

## Rohit Sharma says its 'not possible' to play your best players in all matches

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Indian skipper Rohit Sharma emphasized on the importance of workload management given the packed schedule. India will play five Tests at home against Bangladesh and New Zealand followed by a trip to Australia for five-match Test series. In the middle of red-ball games, a few white-ball T20s too are sprinkled for the next few months. "We will keep it in the back of the mind," said Rohit ahead of the first Test against Bangladesh to reporters in Chennai. "You want your best players to play all the matches but it is not possible." Post the red-ball series India will play a match T20 series against Bangladesh. "There are T20s lined up as well, so join for the manage well. We will monitor them and we have done it well in the past." "We managed to give [Jasprit] Bumrah and [Mohammed] Siraj one Test off during the England series," Rohit recalled. In a five-match series, Bumrah was rested for the fourth Test in Ranchi and Siraj for the second Test in Vizag. "We will talk to Physios and manage that. In the Duleep Trophy we had some exciting talents. Not worried about the pool," Rohit added.

Rohit last played a red-ball game in the final Test against England in Dharmshala earlier this year



whereas Kohli last appeared in the format for India in the New Year Test at Cape Town in South Africa "It is tough. Not easy when you haven't belayed for 8 months of Test cricket. But a lot of us have experienced before. It has happened previously before." the 37-year-old said. "That's why we had the camp here. Spent good hours on the field and get everything together. They manage themselves very well. Lot of us played Duleep Trophy as well. In terms of preparation, we are ready for what lies ahead of us. We used the camp in Chennai very well," he concluded.