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## TGSRTC offers 10pc discount on Hyderabad-Vijayawada route amid rains, floods

Hyderabad: To reduce the financial burden of passengers traveling between the two Telugu States in view of the heavy rains and flood situation, the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) has decided to provide a 10 per cent discount on Hyderabad-Vijayawada route on all the Rajdhani AC and Super Luxury buses.

RTC officials said that since Hyderabad - Vijayawada route is witnessing heavy passenger traffic, particularly during the weekends, it was decided to provide discounts on certain high-end services with the intention of reducing their financial burden. This concession is applicable from Hyderabad up to Vijayawada and vice-versa.

## Man claiming to be close aide of HYDRAA Commissioner demands Rs. 20 lakh from builders, arrested

Sangareddy: Exploiting the fear of Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA), a physiotherapist blackmailed and demanded Rs.20 lakh from a construction company threatening to call the demolition agency to take action against them. However, the company owner alerted the police about the blackmailer and he was caught red-handed while accepting Rs.2 lakh from the complainant. The accused, Dr Bandla Viplav Sinha (42), was residing in Sail Villas Colony in Ameenpur municipality. With the HYDRAA focusing on illegal constructions near nalas and lakes, Viplav saw it as an opportunity to threaten builders. As MCOR builders had taken construction of villas in the Ameenpur area, Viplav decided to exploit the opportunity.

## Congress Govt in Telangana yet to submit flood situation report, says Centre

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Hyderabad: In sharp contrast to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's claims of the State government moving proactively to ensure speedy relief to the flood-hit, the Ministry of Home Affairs has said the State government was yet to submit even a situation report on the flood, besides requisite documents for release of the Centre's share of the State Disaster Response Funds. In a letter to Chief Secretary A Santhi Kumari on Tuesday, Ministry of Home Affairs Disaster Management Division Director Ashish V Gawai asked the State government to submit the details in established procedure. Since August 31, some districts were facing flood like situation and were reported to have been adversely affected due to heavy rains. However, as per the established procedure, no formal situation report was received so far in the MHA Control room, he said.

As reported by the State Accountant General, Rs.1,345.15 crore was available in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) account as on April 1, 2024 for management of relief in the affected areas during 2024-25. "It has been observed from our records that the State government has not submitted requisite information for release of Central share under the SDRF for the current financial year," he said, adding that the second installment of the Central share of SDRF of Rs.188.80 crore for 2022-23 was released to the State government on July 10, 2023. This apart, both the installments of central share of SDRF amounting to Rs.198 crore each for 2023-24 were also released to the State government on March 13, 2024 and March 28, 2024 respectively, he said. The first installment of Central share of SDRF of Rs. 208.40 crore for 2024-25 was due for release since June 1. However, the State government had not made any request for release nor submitted information relating to crediting of earlier released funds, interest earned, utilization certificate etc. The MHA Disaster Management Director also wanted the State government to direct the officers concerned in the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) to furnish a daily situation report on natural disasters on a regular basis. The MHA official also said the Central government had deployed seven teams of NDRF along with boats and life-saving equipment in the State for rescue and relief operations. This apart, two IAF helicopters were also deployed in the State and they were at standby at Hakimpet.

## Harish Rao fires salvos at government for failing to submit crucial disaster relief reports

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Hyderabad: Former Minister T Harish Rao fired salvos at the Congress government in Telangana for its gross negligence to submit the situation report to the union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on the destruction caused by the heavy rains and subsequent flooding in the State. The reports are crucial for accessing disaster relief funds. "Shocking. The MHA's letter exposes the Congress government's complete failure to submit the required situation report on the flood crisis," he said. Taking to X, Harish Rao condemned the government's inaction, stating that it is delaying relief funds even as people continue to suffer. "The Congress government is turning a blind eye to the suffering of Telangana's people. This is not just inefficiency, it is a betrayal of the people's trust," he said. He urged immediate corrective action and submit necessary documents to expedite relief efforts. The MHA noted that Rs 208.40 crore in State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) allocations for June 2024 could not be released because the Telangana government failed to submit both the Utilization Certificate and the requirement for the current fiscal. Meanwhile, the Telangana Accountant General confirmed that Rs 1,345.15 crore in SDRF funds remain unused.

## Rahul Gandhi says INDIA bloc will ensure restoration of Statehood to J&K

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who kick-started the party's campaign for the upcoming Assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, said his party would "restore statehood to J&K after coming to power". "The BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) has to announce the restoration of statehood to J&K, else the INDIA (Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance) bloc will be doing it as its first step after dethroning Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party. We will ensure the return of statehood to the region, whether the BJP wants it or not. We will pressure the government under the banner of the INDIA alliance," Mr. Gandhi, also the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, said. Mr. Gandhi was addressing supporters in Anantnag's Dooru in south Kashmir. In a show of strength, he was joined by National Conference president Farooq Abdullah and NC MP Mian Altaf.

## PM Modi arrives in Singapore for two-day visit

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday (September 4, 2024) arrived in Singapore to "deepen strategic partnership" with the Southeast Asian country at the invitation of his Singaporean counterpart Lawrence Wong after wrapping his visit to Brunei. During the two-day visit, his fifth official trip to Singapore, the Prime Minister will connect with three generations of Singapore's leadership, officials in New Delhi said.

The Prime Minister will receive an official welcome at the Parliament House on Thursday and call on President Tharman Shanmugaratnam. This visit comes days after Mr. Wong took over and Mr.



Modi began his third term as Prime Minister.

Ahead of his departure, Mr. Modi had posted on X: "I look forward to my discussions to deepen our Strategic Partnership with Singapore, particularly in new and emerging areas of advanced manufacturing, digitalisation, and sustainable development." Mr. Modi, who last visited Singapore in 2018, is accompanied by Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and other government officials. "The leaders will review the progress of India-Singapore Strategic Partnership and exchange views on regional and global issues of mutual interest," a Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) statement said ahead of his departure for Brunei and

Singapore. Mr. Modi would call on Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong. Mr. Wong and Mr. Lee will host Mr. Modi to separate meals. Mr. Modi will also meet with Singaporean business leaders and interact with those in the country's semiconductor ecosystem. This visit will build synergies in semiconductor ecosystems of Singapore and India. Both PMs will visit a semiconductor manufacturing facility, officials said. They said MoUs will be signed for cooperation in manpower skilling in the semiconductor sector. From skilling centres to training and recruitment by Singapore firms, this will help India's youth with better skills and opportunities, officials added.

## SC to hear Arvind Kejriwal's pleas against arrest by CBI on September 5



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Thursday (September 3, 2024) Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's pleas seeking bail and challenging his arrest by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the alleged excise policy scam. According to the cause list, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan is likely to hear the matter. The top court had on August 23, 2024, allowed the CBI to file its counter affidavit in the matter and gave two days to Mr. Kejriwal to file a rejoinder. Mr. Kejriwal has filed two separate petitions challenging the denial of bail and against his arrest by the CBI in the case. He has challenged the August 5, 2024 order of the Delhi High Court upholding his arrest.

On August 14, the top court refused to grant interim bail to Mr. Kejriwal in the case and sought a response from the probe agency on his plea challenging his arrest. The Delhi High Court had on August 5, 2024, upheld the arrest of the Chief Minister as legal, and said

there was no malice in the acts done by the CBI which was able to demonstrate how the AAP supremo could influence witnesses who could muster the courage to depose only after his arrest. The high court had asked him to move the trial court for regular bail in the CBI case. It had noted that the loop of evidence against the Chief Minister closed after the collection of relevant evidence following his arrest by the CBI and it cannot be said that it was without any justifiable reason or illegal. It said Mr. Kejriwal is not an ordinary citizen but a distinguished recipient of the Magsaysay Award and the convenor of the Aam Aadmi Party.

The high court had dismissed Mr. Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest, saying it was only after sufficient evidence was collected and sanction was obtained in April 2024 that the agency proceeded with further probe against him. It was noted that the links to the crime extended even to Punjab, but material witnesses were not coming forward due to the influence exercised by Mr. Kejriwal by virtue of his position. It was only after he got arrested that the witnesses came forward to record their statements, the high court had said.

The Chief Minister, who was arrested by the ED on March 21, was granted bail by the trial court in the money laundering case on June 20, 2024. However, the trial court's order was stayed by the high court. On July 12, 2024, the top court granted him interim bail in the money laundering case. The excise policy was scrapped in 2022 after the Delhi lieutenant governor ordered a CBI probe into alleged irregularities and corruption involving its formulation and execution. According to the CBI and the ED, irregularities were committed while modifying the excise policy and undue favours extended to licence holders.

## Tollywood actors donate to support relief works in flood-hit Andhra Pradesh, Telangana



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Hyderabad: Tollywood megastar Chiranjeevi on Wednesday announced Rs 50 lakh each for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for flood relief. The actor announced the donation of Rs 50 lakh each for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Chief Minister Relief Fund. Taking to social media platform X, he posted that he was pained over the loss of lives and the hardships caused to people due to floods in the Telugu states.

Chiranjeevi said under the direction of the Chief Ministers of the Telugu states, both the governments were working hard to improve the situation.

"We all need to be involved in relief efforts in some way. As part of this, I am announcing my contribution of one crore rupees (50 lakhs each to Andhra Pradesh and Telangana CM Relief Fund) to help in providing relief to the people in both the states," he said and prayed for an end to the misery. Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and actor Pawan Kalyan, who is brother of Chiranjeevi, has also announced the donation of Rs 1 crore to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Pawan Kalyan clarified that he did not visit the flood-affected areas so far as this would have disrupted the ongoing rescue and relief operation. Popular actor Mahesh Babu also announced Rs 50 lakh donation each for the Telugu states. "In light of the floods impacting both the Telugu states, I am pledging a donation of 50 lakhs each to the CM Relief Fund for both AP and Telangana. Let's collectively support the measures being undertaken by the respective governments to provide immediate aid and facilitate the recovery process for the flood-affected regions. I urge everyone to contribute to this cause. May we rise above this crisis and emerge stronger," he posted on X. The Puspita 2 star, Allu Arjun has also pledged to donate a total of Rs. 1 crore to both the Telugu-speaking states amid the floods. He took to social media to announce his contribution to the CM relief fund. He wrote, "I am saddened by the loss and suffering caused by the devastating rind in Andhra Pradesh. In these challenging times, I humbly donate Rs 1 crore in total to the CM Relief Funds of both states to support the relief efforts.

## BRS legislators, MPs to donate one month's salary to help Telangana flood victims



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Hyderabad: The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has announced that its MLAs, MLCs and MPs will donate one month's salary to assist flood victims across Telangana and support flood relief efforts. The decision, directed by party president and former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao, was announced by senior leader and former Minister T Harish Rao on Wednesday. The BRS leadership also urged the party cadre to actively participate in ongoing rescue and relief operations. Additionally, they have been asked to make generous donations to help the needy.

## Centre, Tripura govt sign peace pact with two insurgent groups



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

A Memorandum of Settlement was signed between the Central and Tripura governments and two insurgent groups of Tripura in New Delhi on Wednesday (September 4, 2024), in presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha. "Tripura takes another step towards peace and prosperity with the signing of the agreement between the Government of India, Government of Tripura, National Liberation Front of Tripura, and All Tripura Tiger Force," Mr. Shah said in a post on X. The MHA has been working tirelessly to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of developed Northeast, free from extremism, violence and conflict, a statement issued prior to the signing of the memorandum has said. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the government has signed 12 important agreements to bring peace and prosperity in the Northeast region, of which three relate to Tripura. Due to signing of several agreements by the Modi government, around 10,000 people have given up arms and joined mainstream, the statement added.

## Kannada film industry urges govt to conduct probe for women's safety

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Bangaluru: Following the impact created by the Hema Committee Report in the Malayalam movie industry, the Kannada industry, on Wednesday, urged the Karnataka government to follow the same path. The Film Industry for Rights and Equality (FIRE) asked the Karnataka government to constitute a committee - headed by a retired judge - to study and report on sexual harassment in the Kannada film industry.

"The appointment of a retired judge-led committee to conduct a thorough investigation into the systematic issues faced by women in the Kannada film industry including sexual harassment is necessary," FIRE said in a statement. The group has urged the government to develop and recommend policies to ensure a healthy and equitable work environment for all women in the industry. The FIRE statement - which is signed by 153 actresses, directors, male actors and film dignitaries from the Kannada film industry - is headed by noted film director Kavitha Lankesh and lead actor and activist Chetan Ahimsa as the Secretary.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Brakes on bulldozer

IN recent years, the bulldozer has been all over the place, riding roughshod over laws, rules and procedures — especially in BJP-ruled states. People booked in cases of rioting and violence, particularly those belonging to a certain minority community, have seen their shanties and shops being flattened well before their guilt (or innocence) could be proved. In some cases, action has been taken without giving any notice to the accused. Such rare 'efficiency' of the authorities is nothing but a vengeful ploy to punish the accused and their families. The contentious exercise, which is carried out in full public view, is meant to send out a stern message to the entire community: Stay out of trouble or face the music.

Municipal laws mandate that unauthorised construction or encroachments on public land be razed. But the devil is in the timing and selectivity. Illegal structures come up right under the nose of the administration, which wakes up to the perennial problem mostly when a communal clash takes place. Making a welcome intervention, the Supreme Court has proposed to lay down guidelines to be implemented across the country to ensure that such demolitions stay within the legal ambit. The court has made it clear that even if someone is convicted, his or her house cannot be demolished without following the procedure prescribed by law.

The guidelines must include the provision of strict action against officials who bypass due process in their zealotry to show 'results' to their political masters. Proceedings should also be initiated against politicians who encourage illegal construction or promise to get it legalised in order to woo voters. The removal of encroachments ought to be a year-round activity, not restricted to the election season or confined to a section of the offenders.

## All you need to know about Vande Bharat sleeper train as Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw unveils prototype



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

The first Vande Bharat sleeper train is expected to be operational by the end of the year. Vande Bharat sleeper train is meant for long-distance overnight journeys, covering 800 to 1,200 km. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Sunday unveiled the prototype of the first Vande Bharat sleeper coach at Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML)'s Bangalore Complex. "After Vande Bharat chair cars, we were working on Vande Bharat sleeper cars. Its manufacturing has now been completed. This train will go out for the trial and testing from the BEML facility today," Vaishnaw said.

"This is a historic moment for the country. The much-awaited Vande Bharat Sleeper train set is now set to run on Indian Railways tracks, providing our people with a world-class travel experience and best-in-class amenities. The dedication and expertise of BEML's leadership and engineers have made this remarkable achievement possible," he said. Speaking about the ticket pricing, Vaishnaw said it will be on par with Rajdhani fares. The first Vande Bharat sleeper train is expected to be operational by the end of the year. Vande Bharat sleeper train is meant for long-distance overnight journeys, covering 800 to 1,200 km. The train will have 16 coaches — 11 AC three-tier, four AC two-tier, and one AC first-class — with 823 berths in total. The first Vande Bharat sleeper train is expected to be operational by the end of the year. According to the railways, the Vande Bharat sleeper train offers a passenger experience on par with European standards. The maximum operational speed will be 160 km/hr. It will have a hot water shower for 1st AC car, a public announcement and visual information system, ergonomically designed odour-free toilets, automatic exterior passenger doors, special berths and toilets for differently-abled people, and integrated reading lights with USB charging provision, among other provisions.

To maximise passenger safety, the train set features authentic stainless-steel construction and is equipped with advanced crash-proof elements, such as specially designed crash buffers and couplers. All materials and components used in the train set adhere to the highest fire safety standards, meeting the stringent EN45545 HL3 grade requirements, as per the railways. Vaishnaw on Sunday also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for a hangar facility spanning 9.2 acres near BEML's Bengaluru facility. It is dedicated to the export of standard and broad-gauge rolling stock, further expanding the BEML's global reach.

## Migrant worker from West Bengal lynched in Haryana, 5 held

Chandigarh: Five people, who are part of a cow vigilante group, have been arrested for allegedly beating a migrant worker from West Bengal to death in Haryana's Charkhi Dadri district over suspicion that he had eaten beef, police said on Saturday. Suspecting that the victim had eaten beef, the accused — Abhishek, Mohit, Ravinder, Kamaljit and Sahil — called Malik at a shop under the pretense of selling empty plastic bottles and then beat him, the officer said. He added that after some people intervened, the accused took Malik to another location and beat him again, leading to his death. Malik lived in a shanty near Bandhra village in Charkhi Dadri district and collected waste and rag for a living, the police said.

## SpiceJet flight from Mumbai to Dubai delayed over 12 hours, leaving passengers stranded and frustrated



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

SpiceJet flight from Mumbai to Dubai delayed. Passengers complained that the ground staff was uninformed about the issue and could not provide clear answers regarding the delay. A SpiceJet flight from Mumbai to Dubai faced a major delay, leaving over 150 passengers stranded at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport for over 12 hours. The flight, initially scheduled to depart at 11.30 pm on August 31, eventually took off at noon on September 1.

Ruhaan Chawla, 19, a student from Mumbai studying in London, was among those affected by the delay. "The airport ground staff was poorly managed, and we received no clear information about what was happening. I had to make do with a single burger provided by them," Chawla said. Passengers complained that the ground staff was uninformed about the issue and could not provide clear answers regarding the delay. Many were left to find alternative ways to reach Dubai, especially those with pre-planned schedules. Chhaya Aurangabadwala, a senior citizen from Borivali traveling to Dubai to visit her son, faced a particularly tough experience. Unfamiliar with air travel, she endured the extended delay with little support. "The airport staff was

uncooperative, even though I am a senior citizen. I was shivering all night, but the ground staff didn't provide even a blanket. I had to survive on a single burger meal and some refreshments while waiting the entire night," she said. This incident follows another SpiceJet issue just a day earlier. On the intervening night of Friday and Saturday, a different SpiceJet flight to Dubai was delayed and eventually cancelled. Despite the inconvenience, the airline offered no compensation, only advising passengers to board the next scheduled flight on August 31. Some passengers had to adjust their plans, while others were left waiting.

Priyanka Pandure, a Dubai resident in Mumbai for a business trip, said, "I was supposed to depart for Dubai on August 31 at 2 am, arriving at the airport on the evening of August 30. After multiple delays, the flight was eventually cancelled. I had to repeatedly seek updates from the uncooperative staff, and in doing so I twisted my ankle, leaving myself wheelchair-bound. I had no place to stay in Mumbai and had to beg for accommodation, which I finally secured after hours of waiting." "My fellow passengers and I spent two nights at the airport without any assistance. We were promised food and other facilities, but nothing was provided. The ground staff treated us poorly. I was frustrated and starving; this was the worst flight experience of my life," Pandure added. The delays and chaos were reportedly caused by a combination of issues, including a strike by a section of the cabin crew over unpaid salaries and staff shortages, which led to operational disruptions. A SpiceJet spokesperson told The Indian Express: "On August 31, SpiceJet flight SG 13 from Mumbai to Dubai was delayed due to a technical issue. While the problem was resolved promptly, the operating crew had exceeded their Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL), necessitating a crew change, which caused further delays. We sincerely apologize to our passengers for the inconvenience caused."

## Zoological Survey of India announces discovery of 2 spider species in Western Ghats

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Kolkata, has announced the discovery of two species of spiders from the southern part of the Western Ghats, a biodiversity hotspot. The new species—mimetus spinatus and mimetus parvulus—were collected from the Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka and Kerala's Ernakulam district, respectively. The discoveries brought the number of mimetus species in India to three, all of which have been spotted in the southern part of the country. Dr Dhriti Banerjee, Director, ZSI, said, "The Western Ghats play a crucial role in the climatic conditions of the country and continue to surprise scientists with their high levels of endemism. These new discoveries highlight the need for continued exploration and conservation efforts in this region, which is one of the world's hottest biodiversity hotspots." The previous discovery of a mimetus species in India (mimetus indicus) was made 118 years ago. This long gap emphasises the need for more extensive surveys and research into the taxonomy and biogeography of pirate spiders in India, the ZSI said in a statement. The discoveries were made by a team led by the ZSI's Dr Souvik Sen. Dr Sudhin P P, also from the ZSI, and Dr Pradeep M Sankaran of Sacred Heart College at Thevara in Kerala, were also part of the research team. The discovery has been published in the ZOOTAXA journal. Both species belong to the spider family mimetidae, commonly known as pirate or cannibal spiders owing to their unique predatory behaviour. These spiders are known for their



aggressive mimicry, where they infiltrate the webs of other spiders, mimicking the vibrations of prey or mates to deceive and kill the host spider. Additionally, they exhibit kleptoparasitism, stealing prey and even feeding on the eggs of other spiders. Mimetus spinatus is characterised by its medium size, pale yellow head and dull grey white abdomen, with scattered light green mottling. "Notably, it possesses long, black, flattened spine-like hairs on the dorsal head, which inspired its name. In contrast, mimetus parvulus is distinguished by its pale creamy rose head with dense grey black mottling and a triangular-shaped, dull grey white abdomen covered with numerous tubercles. The species' name, parvulus, refers to the short copulatory ducts of the female reproductive organ," the ZSI said in the statement.

## Fugitive Dipakkumar Thakkar extradited to India from UAE, arrested by Gujarat Police



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

A team from the Gujarat Police earlier this week brought back wanted fugitive Dipakkumar Thakkar from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where he was already under arrest on the basis of a Red Corner Notice (RCN) issued by the Interpol. A security escort team of the Gujarat Police, led by DIG Nirlipt Rai of the State Monitoring Cell (SMC), headed to Dubai on August 27, 2024. They took custody of Dipakkumar Thakkar and brought him to India. He was placed under arrest in Gandhinagar at 12.30 pm on Sunday. A statement from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said Thakkar was wanted in a criminal case registered on March 25, 2023, at Madhavpura Police Station, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, for being a kingpin of an international illegal criminal gambling racket, operating through the use of special software applications and utilising Hawala channels for dispersal of proceeds of crime reported to be over Rs 2,273 crore. Notably, the State Monitoring Cell (SMC) of the Gujarat Police had been investigating this case that was filed under sections of the Prevention of Gambling Act, the IT Act, as well as the Securities Contract Regulation Act. The complaint stated that the accused person had, in an office in Vejalpur, engaged in stock market dabba trading through the Meta Trader Application on the Velocity Server. They had made illegal trades in the stock market. The main accused or kingpin named in the police complaint was Thakkar. He hailed from Bhabhar in Banaskantha but was residing in Dubai. The SMC obtained an open-dated arrest warrant under CrPC section 70 against him.

When the police realized Thakkar had fled India on July 12, 2023, a lookout circular (LOC) was issued against him. The State Monitoring Cell (SMC) then approached the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), who put in a request to Interpol. The international agency then issued a Red Corner Notice (RCN) against Thakkar on December 15, 2023. The RCN was circulated to all Interpol member countries to locate and arrest the accused. Through

Interpol, the subject was geolocated in Dubai. Based on the RCN, the UAE police arrested Thakkar from Dubai on March 13 this year. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) sent an Extradition Proposal for Thakkar to the UAE government on June 25, 2024. The UAE granted this request for extradition on August 8. After this, the team led by DIG Rai headed to Dubai. Thakkar was one of the 36 accused arrested in this case. Earlier, the SMC seized all electronics and froze 47 illegal trading accounts run from the Vejalpur office. Further investigation is underway.

## No power group in Malayalam film industry, says Mammootty

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Thiruvananthapuram: Superstar Mammootty, who has maintained a studied silence days after the Hema committee's report on the Malayalam film industry was made public, on Sunday said there was no power group in the cinema. The Hema committee has mentioned a 15-member power group in the Malayalam film industry. Mammootty broke his silence after another superstar of the Malayalam movie industry, Mohanlal, spoke to the media on Saturday regarding the report. Both superstars have been facing criticism in the public sphere for being silent on the Hema committee report, which was made public on August 19. Mohanlal, who made his first comments on Saturday, welcomed the report and said movies are only one part of society, and all sectors have such issues. In a social media post, Mammootty welcomed the Hema committee report, saying he was waiting for the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) and its leadership to express their opinion before airing his thoughts. The superstar said, "All the good and bad in society will be reflected in cinema too, as people in it are just a cross-section of the society. But, since the film industry is always under the scrutiny of the public, the consequential and inconsequential happenings will end up becoming the focus of discussions." He called upon the professionals in the film industry to be careful and vigilant to ensure that nothing untoward happens in this sector. He said, "The government formed the Hema committee to study the industry and submit a report after an incident that should never have happened." The Malayalam superstar also said the industry wholeheartedly welcomes and supports the recommendations and solutions outlined in that report. Mammootty said, "It is high time that all associations in the film industry join hands to implement them."

## Brother, sister-in-law arrested for killing Pune woman, chopping her body over property dispute



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

The police said the accused threw the body pieces into the river to destroy evidence. The police said the accused threw the body pieces into the river to destroy evidence. The Pune police Sunday said they have arrested a married couple for the murder of a woman whose headless torso was found a few days ago. Those held for the crime are the brother and sister-in-law of the victim. The police have identified the deceased woman as Sakina Abdul Khan, 48, a resident of Bhaiyari Wadi near Dalvi Hospital in Shivajinagar, and the accused as Ashpak Abdul Khan, 51, and his wife Hamida, 45.

Sakina Khan's torso was found in the Mula-Mutha riverbed near a construction site in Kharadi around 11 am on August 26. Her head, both hands and legs were missing. Thereafter, an FIR for murder was lodged at the Chandan Nagar police station against unidentified persons under Sections 103 and 238 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). To identify the deceased, the investigators checked the details of about 200 women between 30 and 60 years who were reported missing in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad since August 1. The police teams also checked multiple CCTV footage to get clues about the deceased and her murderers. On August 30, the police got information that a woman named Sakina Khan was missing from the Shivajinagar area. They traced her family members and got a missing report registered as per which she was not seen after August 23.

During the investigation, the police found out that Sakina Khan was murdered by her brother Ashpak Khan and sister-in-law Hamida following a dispute over property, which included their residential house and other valuables. Sakina Khan was unmarried. During a press conference on Sunday, joint commissioner of police Ranjan Kumar Sharma said, "Probe so far has revealed that Ashpak and Hamida had a quarrel with Sakina regarding the property dispute on the night of August 23. During the quarrel, Ashpak and Hamida murdered Sakina by strangling her with a wire. Then they chopped her body into pieces with a sharp weapon." The police said the accused threw the body pieces into the river to destroy evidence. While Sakina Khan's torso was recovered, her head, legs, and hands have not been found yet. Attempts are on to recover the remaining body parts of the deceased and seize the weapon used by the accused to cut the victim's body into pieces. The police said Ashpak Khan is a garage mechanic and he was also working as a watchman. His children are out of town. The police are probing if more persons were involved in the crime. The police produced the two accused before a court in Pune on Sunday. "The court has remanded the accused in police custody till September 9," said police inspector Anil Mane, the investigation officer of this case. Meanwhile, cash rewards have been announced for police teams led by DCP (zone 4) Himmat Jadhav and DCP (crime) Nikhil Pingle for cracking the case.

## Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai slams BJP, Cong; says not opposition but cooperation needed to rein in pollution



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai Sunday slammed both the BJP and the Congress for criticising the Aam Aadmi Party-led government's anti-pollution measures. Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) president Devender Yadav and Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva had on Saturday accused the Delhi Government of playing politics over serious issues and engaging in gimmicks.

"Under the Kejriwal government, we have put a lot of efforts to reduce air pollution, and year-wise figures back this claim," Rai said. He said scientists from IIT Kanpur suggested artificial rain can reduce pollution levels that worsen from November. Rai argued that many places across the world have experimented with artificial rain and cited the examples of China, Malaysia, and Lahore. "For five years, I have been requesting the environment minister of the BJP-led Central Government to solve the air pollution crisis in Delhi. Not only has he not had any time to meet in these five years, but he has not found any time to respond to the requests either," said Rai. A day before, Sachdeva blamed the AAP-led Delhi Government for "wasting crores of taxpayers' money" on a smog tower. On Sunday, Rai hit back. "We followed the Supreme Court's directions and it was a pilot project in which the Central Government set up a smog tower in Anand Vihar and the Delhi Government built one in Connaught Place. Are you not (BJP) also accountable? Why are you hiding the smog tower in Anand Vihar?"

Citing data from the Central Pollution Control Board and the Centre of Science and Environment, the minister claimed that air pollution levels have decreased in the national capital owing to the AAP government's efforts. Rai said,

## Cop-out? Punjab AIG seeks premature retirement after transfer to Bathinda jail



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

After being transferred to the high-security jail in Bathinda as superintendent, an assistant inspector general (AIG) of the Punjab prisons department sought premature retirement from service on Saturday. He requested to be relieved with immediate effect after he paid a three-month salary as compensation. AIG Manjit Singh Sidhu, who was posted in Patiala Central Jail, submitted an application for premature retirement from service to the office of Punjab Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), triggering buzz that he was unhappy with the transfer. Along with the application, he attached a demand draft for Rs 3.96 lakh (three months' salary) and sought that the department approve his request for premature retirement with immediate effect.

An official of the jails department said it was "unprecedented" that any officer had sought premature retirement by paying in advance the salary for the notice period months. The official added that this was indicative of the officer being very "miffed" at the department's func-

tioning. The application moved by Sidhu, a class-I gazetted officer, would be considered by the additional chief secretary of the prisons department for a decision. Sidhu, who, according to a jail official, cited "domestic" reasons to seek premature retirement, was not available for comment despite phone calls and texts sent to him on his mobile number. IG (prisons) Ropop Kumar Arora said Sidhu was transferred to the Bathinda jail due to his "past experience" and since he was a "competent officer". Arora said, "There are 11 posts of AIG-cum superintendent in central jails of Punjab. We have only two officers, Manjit Singh Sidhu and Rajiv Kumar Arora, who are regular AIGs after promotion. Three years ago, we posted seven officers, who came on deputation from the Border Security Force (BSF), as jail superintendents. Out of them, a few retired. Now, three such BSF officers — N D Negi, who was posted in Bathinda jail; Anurag Azad, who was posted in Amritsar jail; and Gurnam Lal, who was posted in Ropar jail — were to be repatriated to the BSF after completion of their deputation period."

"We have transferred AIG Manjit Singh Sidhu to the Bathinda as jail superintendent. He has prior experience serving in Bathinda twice and is considered a competent officer. Bathinda jail is one of the most important jails where CRPF personnel are deployed, in addition to state-of-the-art security measures, including the jammer," Arora added. The IG said in the order on Wednesday, Rajiv Kumar Arora was transferred to the headquarters in Chandigarh as two officers were to retire next year. In the application seeking early retirement from service and immediate relieving, Sidhu mentioned that he joined as an assistant superintendent in the Punjab prisons department on December 5, 1997, and completed 26 years, eight months, and 16 days of service by August 31, 2024.

## Farmer takes Karnataka Govt to court over substandard seeds, awarded Rs 2.25 lakh compensation

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in Dharwad granted relief to Prakash Mahadeappa Huded's family in an order on August 27. The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in Dharwad granted relief to Prakash Mahadeappa Huded's family in an order on August 27. A consumer court in Karnataka has ordered the agriculture department to pay Rs 2.25 lakh in compensation to a farmer's family for providing substandard groundnut seeds.

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in Dharwad granted relief to Prakash Mahadeappa Huded's family in an order on August 27. According to the petition, on June 24, 2019, the Huded family bought five groundnut packets of 30 kg each from the agriculture department's Raitha Samparka Kendra, which was supplied seeds by the University of Agriculture Sciences in Dharwad and the Regional Seeds Growers Cooperative Society.

The groundnut seeds were sown on July 27, 2019, and ought to have sprouted within six days. But they did not, even after 10 days. An agricultural expert who inspected the seeds said he would report the matter to higher authorities. After 14 days, the university's director visited the farm and agreed that the seeds were substandard, and promised that he would take appropriate action. However, Huded's family did not get any reply or compensation. The family contended that the market value of groundnuts was Rs 5,000 per quintal when it



bought the seeds and that the family should have earned an income of Rs 5 lakh. The university submitted before the consumer court that it had not engaged with the family in any way. The court said the Raitha Samparka Kendra had collected breeders' seeds from the university and the Regional Seeds Growers Cooperative Society, adding that breeder seeds should not be sold as certified-foundation seeds to farmers, according to the National Seeds Policy of 2002. In his order, E K Bhute, president of the consumer court, however, dismissed charges against the university and directed the cooperative society and Raitha Samparka Kendra to pay Rs 2.25 lakh as compensation for selling substandard groundnut seeds. The court further ordered Rs 25,000 to be paid to Huded's family for causing mental agony and loss, as well as Rs 10,000 to be paid towards litigation costs.

## AAP councillor Ram Chander's son accuses BJP of abducting his father



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

The son of Shahbad Dairy councillor Ram Chander accused the BJP of threatening and abducting his father. Chander had recently rejoined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) after a brief stint with the BJP. AAP leaders circulated a video featuring Chander's son Akash Ram Chander. In the video, Akash accused the former BJP councillor from Bawana, Narayan Singh, of abducting his father.

"An incident took place today. Narayan Singh, a former BJP councillor from Bawana, called my father Ram Chander and said he wanted to meet him. When my father went to meet them, 5 to 6 people were with him. They threatened my father with ED and CBI raids and then took him away in their car. I don't know where they have

taken him; I'm going to look for him right now," Akash Chander said in a video that was posted by AAP leader Sanjay Singh on the social media platform X. Chander, who had switched allegiances just a few days ago later publicly admitted his regret, stating, "Joining the BJP was my biggest mistake... I will remain with the Aam Aadmi Party throughout my life." The AAP had credited his return to its party leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh. As a former MLA who won the Bawana Assembly bypoll in 2017, Chander had expressed disappointment over not being given a ticket by the AAP for the 2020 Delhi Legislative Assembly elections, which he cited as a key reason for his brief association with the BJP. AAP leader Sanjay Singh took to X to allege that Chander has been abducted by the BJP. "BJP's open hoolliganism in the country's capital, councillor Ramchandra has been kidnapped after being threatened. He has been threatened to be defamed by using ED and CBI," he said. Former Deputy CM and MLA Manish Sisodia also weighed in and said, "This is BJP's open hoolliganism in the country's capital. Councillor Ram Chander has been kidnapped after being threatened with defamation by using ED and CBI." In response, the Delhi BJP denied any involvement, accusing the AAP of spreading "fake sensationalism". Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said, "You guys are the kings of fake sensationalism. Whether councillor Ram Chander is not in your party or not, we have nothing to do with it. It is certain that he is sitting in his house."

## Rs.50 crore bitcoin, MLM scam busted in Nirmal; Cops, former soldier, teachers held

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Nirmal: Five persons including an ex-Indian Army soldier, an Excise Sub-Inspector, a police constable and two government teachers were arrested on charges of cheating the public under the guise of bitcoin trading and a multi-level marketing scheme.

Superintendent of Police Dr Janaki Sharmila said Salla Raj Kumar, a former Indian Army soldier from Nawabpuri in Kaddampeddur mandal, had joined hands with two government teachers, Sai Kiran and Kandela Naresh, Gangadhar, an SI from the Excise department and Mahesh, a constable working with the Armed Reserve police, to dupe the public by promising huge returns through bitcoin trading and an MLM marketing system. On being interrogated, Raj Kumar confessed to committing the crime to make a fast buck with the aid of Sai Kiran, Naresh, Gangadhar and Mahesh for the last two years. He admitted to luring between 4,000 and 5,000



people, mostly government employees, from different parts of the district under the pretext of offering returns if they invested in bitcoin trading every day. Police said that some people had invested up to Rs.50,000 too trusting the words of Raj Kumar. Some of the victims took loans to invest in the trading scheme.

## 3 former JJP MLAs, including Dushyant Chautala's close aide Manu Sharma's mother, join BJP in Haryana



GNS News Agency, Sept 4 Three former Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) MLAs — Jogiram Sihag, former Haryana deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala's close aide Anoop Dhanak, and Ram Kumar Gautam — joined the BJP during the ongoing Jan Ashirwad rally in Jind on Sunday. Model Jessica Lal's murder convict Manu Sharma's mother Shakti Rani Sharma also joined the saffron party on the occasion. She was accompanied by her other son and Rajya Sabha MP Kartikeya Sharma. Shakti Rani Sharma is former Congress leader Venod Sharma's wife and a former Union minister herself. "It is my good luck that I am standing here today. It is 200 per cent sure that Nayab Singh Saini shall become the chief minister of Haryana because a competent leader is one who takes everybody along and treats everybody equally. Before Manohar Lal Khattar started his tenure in Haryana, I had seen several other governments. During those regimes, a culture of parchi-kharchi (recommendations) prevailed. Manohar Lal Khattar ended it completely," Gautam said at the rally. Addressing the gathering, Gautam further said, "Khattar ji regularised several unauthorised colonies. People were facing lots of difficulties without such regularisation. There are several things that Khattar ji did." He also praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, and the abrogation of Article 370, among others.

"I told Nayab Singh Saini that my son is a very com-

petent lawyer. He hates politics but he told me that he would also like to join the BJP. Thus, I would request the chief minister to take him into the BJP fold," Gautam said, followed by Saini inducting Gautam's son into the BJP. Shakti Rani Sharma, too, praised PM Modi and said, "I am quite impressed with the BJP's ideology and the steps the prime minister took for the upliftment of women." Former Rohtak MP Arvind Sharma, who lost to Congress's Deepender Hooda in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, said, "You all need to realise why you removed them [Congress]. Have those people changed? You need to compare the unprecedented development and public welfare steps taken during the BJP's 10-year rule... lakhs of people got jobs during Manohar Lal Khattar and Nayab Singh Saini's tenure. The Congress is only spreading lies. During the Lok Sabha polls, too, they spread lies about the Constitution... and got stuck at 99. But the Congress's lies now stand exposed. I can assure you all that with your blessings, Nayab Singh Saini shall become Haryana's chief minister for the second time and the BJP will form the government for the third time." "You have only seen the trailer of Nayab Singh Saini, the movie is pending. When we form the government for the third time, you will get to see the full movie. Lots of rumours will be spread. For instance, rumours were spread on social media that Amit Shah had to cancel his visit here today. I would like to urge you all to stay cautious and beware of the Congress's lies. This time only the BJP's truth will prevail. Nayab Singh Saini's devotion and dedication will reap fruits this time," said BJP state chief Mohan Lal Badoli. In 2019, then-JJP candidates — Ramkumar Gautam defeated BJP's then-cabinet minister Capt Abhimanyu, Jogi Ram Sihag defeated BJP's Surender Punia, and Anoop Dhanak defeated BJP's Asha Khedar in Uklana. With the three former JJP leaders joining the BJP, the contest for party tickets in the forthcoming Assembly elections is set to heat up. Polls for the 90-member Haryana Assembly will be held in a single phase on October 5 and the votes will be counted on October 8.

## Rander's Ek Khamba Masjid, an architectural marvel built on a single pillar

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Across the Tapi river from Surat is Rander, a district known for its street food and mosques. Standing out among its architectural wonders is the Quwat-e-Islam Masjid, also called Ek Khamba Masjid (one-pillar mosque), as it stands on a single pillar, on Variyavoli Street adjacent to Botawala Street

From the single pillar in the basement stem out four arches and three minarets, each 50 ft tall, and on it rests the entire structure of mezzanine plus one floor. Rander is now a part of the Surat Municipal Corporation. It had a population of Jains, Parsis and others and it was famous for its international trade network. Historians say the Rander port was built before the Surat port. Way back in 1200, Arabs would trade different goods from the Rander area with Arabs, Africans, South East Asians and Middle Easterners. In 1225, Arab traders from Kufa in Iraq settled in Rander. Quwat-e-Islam Masjid at Rander The mosque was renovated in 1920 by Haji Ahmed Ibrahim Bharucha, a wealthy businessman of Rander.

Rander town is now dominated by the wealthy Sunni Bohra community, which has many of its members settled in the US, UK, South Africa, among other countries. Sunni Bohras settled in Rander and Mumbai after returning from Burma, where they had migrated to. They built mosques, burial grounds, schools, hospitals and banks in Rander town, which is spread over a 2 square km radius. Suleman Mithla, 75, a retired high school teacher who was a trustee of the Quwat-e-Islam Masjid, said, "Through our grandfather we know that the land was purchased from a Parsi family in 1850 by the Angulia family and others of Rander for Rs 5,000 and that the mosque was constructed at a cost of Rs 1.18 lakh. Around 15 people of Rander had contributed money for the construction of this mosque. For a long time, we have seen visitors including architecture students from the US, UK, Germany and other countries as well as different parts of India."

The mosque was renovated in 1920 by Haji Ahmed Ibrahim Bharucha, a wealthy businessman of Rander, its pastel shades and ornate minarets adding to its beauty. The elevation has a light green colour base, the shades changing on the engravings on the minarets and arch on the main gate. A stairway 4 ft wide, each step a foot high, leads one to another arch-shaped door, which is around 15 ft above ground level, to enter into the main hall—85 ft long and 60 ft wide, which is 2 ft below the main prayer hall (jamaat khana). The main hall is also used for large gatherings.

The mosque's hauz (water tank for ablutions) is built around a wooden deck. People also pray on the deck. The single pillar that bears the mosque is around 4 ft tall. The two arches stemming from it are around 15 ft long and the two others 10 ft long. The entire mosque structure rests on these four arches and the pillar. Next to the pillar is a grave. A 10-ft-deep water tank has been made in the basement to harvest rainwater. The first floor of the mosque has a large prayer hall, from where a wrought-iron stairway leads to the three minarets, each 50 feet tall



from ground level. The minarets have pointed arches built in Gothic style with floral carvings and domes that have grooves flanked by ornate edges. Even though this mosque is geometrically laid out, unlike other mosques it has minarets only on three sides. The fourth corner has a kitchenette on the floor above it. The internal prayer hall has a carved marble pulpit from where the imam delivers sermons. This prayer hall also has an exquisite lime-plaster fresco ceiling and chandeliers that are lit up during prayers.

The outer prayer hall (jamaat khana next to the inner prayer hall) is surrounded by Rajasthani arches. The prayer hall also receives natural skylight and air ventilation through large glass pane windows. Amar Hattiya, who is a civil engineer and one of the mosque trustees, said, "The engraving on the entry arch gate towards the prayer hall mentions that it was renovated in 1920 AD. The three minarets with equal weight are at three different corners of the mosques equidistant to each other. The fourth minaret was not built as there was no space due to the adjacent property of some private person. They constructed three minarets and to keep the balance of structure, with no possibility of a fourth minaret, they made a small room, which is used as kitchen, so that the structure stands still." Rander Masjid Income for the mosque comes in the form of donations made by Rander natives who have settled abroad.

The mosque has six rooms, three entrance gates and 50 windows, with three stairs going toward the top of the minarets. "The pillar has been made so strong that no earthquake or flood has ever been able to cause any damage. The outer wall has been made with limestone and other materials and plaster thickness is 50 mm, which protects it from sun and rain," Hattiya added. There are two more trustees for the mosque—Bilal Mehtar and Mohammed Modan, who take care of its maintenance expenses. Income for the mosque comes in the form of donations made by Rander natives who have settled abroad. Nikhil Shah, a Surat-based researcher, wrote about the mosque on the Sahapedia website. "The architectural styles identified are as follows: vernacular, colonial, baroque and Arabesque, an eclectic mix which has been carefully designed with visual harmony and proportions that appropriate the building within the setting."

## Ajit Pawar's NCP targets CM Shinde over Sawant's remark, cites 'pressure' from rank and file to quit Mahayuti

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Three days after Maharashtra Health Minister Tanaji Sawant made a disparaging remark about his cabinet colleagues from the NCP, the party headed by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has questioned Chief Minister Eknath Shinde over the remark made by the minister belonging to his Shiv Sena. "Why has the chief minister kept silent despite the fact that his minister made an outrageous and humiliating comment against our ministers? There has not been a single word from him. All this has raised doubts in the minds of our leaders and workers as to whether the minister made the statement after getting full support from the chief minister," NCP spokesperson Umesh Patil told The Indian Express on Sunday. Speaking at a public event on Thursday, Sawant said, "I have never got along with the Congress and NCP all my life. In cabinet meetings, when I sit next to them, I come out and vomit." Patil said that NCP leaders and ministers were grievously hurt by the remark. "After making his statement, he seems to be brazening it out. He has not even

expressed regret. He seems to be firm on what he said. If this is his stand, the NCP as a party will refuse to attend any cabinet meetings if he is present there. I am sure our ministers and our leader Ajit Pawar will boycott cabinet meetings till Sawant is ousted," the NCP spokesperson said. Patil said there was growing pressure on Ajit Pawar to exit the Mahayuti government. The Ajit Pawar-led NCP is part of the ruling alliance along with the BJP and Shinde's Shiv Sena. "NCP leaders and workers are extremely hurt by the constant attacks on our party by leaders of our own alliance. Many of them are veering around to the thought that the party should exit the alliance," he said. On Saturday, BJP spokesperson Ganesh Hake described the alliance between the NCP and his party as unholy. And the BJP's Latur district president, Dilip Deshmukh, said the Shiv Sena and the BJP were real brothers while the NCP was the step-brother in the alliance. Reacting to the BJP leaders' comments, the NCP spokesperson said his party expected Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis to act on the matter.

## Female medics won't feel safe without central protection law, say doctors at Jantar Mantar



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

New Delhi: Doctors in the national capital gathered at Jantar Mantar Saturday to protest against the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at a Kolkata hospital, asserting that without a central law to protect healthcare workers, female doctors would never feel safe during work. Protestors began gathering at Jantar Mantar from 3 pm onwards to demand justice for the victim of the incident at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and press the government to expedite the enactment of the Central Healthcare Protection Act, doctor associations said.

Dr Deepika, a protesting doctor, told PTI, "I will never allow my daughters to become doctors here... Can you imagine that all of us female doctors are scared now? We feel fearful while working, and we need protection. Can you imagine if she was raped and murdered at her workplace?" "We want protection so that all female doctors can work again without fear," she said. Chairman of Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA) Rohan Krishnan said they had earlier called off the protest due

to the Supreme Court's intervention. "...despite one arrest, there has been no significant progress in the case. That's why we want to continue our silent protest. We want our female doctors and nurses to feel safe again while working, and justice should be served," he said. The apex court constituted a task force, which will take note of suggestions of all stakeholders while formulating a national protocol for the safety of healthcare professionals, including the associations representing resident doctors.

A statement by FAIMA issued on Saturday said it "is profoundly disturbed by this heinous act, which has not only shattered the medical fraternity but also exposed the alarming vulnerabilities that healthcare professionals face daily." "Our fight will continue until justice is served," said Manish Jangra, founder and chief advisor of FAIMA. He added that members of the Resident Doctors of India (RDA) from hospitals around Delhi-NCR, such as Aligarh and Rohtak, will be part of the protest. Earlier this month, resident doctors across the country went on an indefinite strike on August 12 after the body of the trainee doctor was found on the premises of the state-run hospital in Kolkata on the morning of August 9. Following the incident, doctors held the strike for 11 consecutive days, during which all elective services, wards, and OPDs were suspended. However, after the Supreme Court hearing on August 22, the doctors called off their strike, stating that they will resume work following the court's appeal, assurances and intervention in the RG Kar incident and the safety of doctors. The key demands of the protest include a prompt and thorough investigation into the crime, ensuring swift justice for the victim and the immediate enactment of the Central Healthcare Protection Act to safeguard the lives and well-being of healthcare workers across the nation.

## Bengaluru court sentences West Bengal man to 6 years of imprisonment in a fake currency case

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

When the accused were interrogated, they revealed that they were circulating counterfeit notes, fake notes, Bengaluru, fake currency NIA investigations revealed that he had conspired with six others to traffic 41 fake Indian currency notes, with a face value of Rs 82,000, from the Bangladesh border to different parts of India.

A special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court in Bengaluru has sentenced a man to six years of imprisonment in a 2018 fake currency case. Sariful Islam, a native of West Bengal, was convicted and fined Rs 5,000 in the case. He is the seventh accused to be convicted in the case. NIA investigations revealed that he had conspired with six others to traffic 41 fake Indian currency notes, with a face value of Rs 82,000, from the Bangladesh border to different parts of India. Islam fraudulently obtained a SIM card to communicate with his co-accused for the procurement of the fake notes from West Bengal and their circulation across the country, as per the NIA. Investigations uncovered a series of similar transac-



tions involving the accused, who had previously supplied counterfeit notes worth Rs 10.30 lakh to the primary convict, Dalim Mia, in West Bengal. According to the NIA, the scheme was designed to destabilise India's financial and economic security. In this case, the NIA continues its investigation of two Bangladeshi nationals who supplied the currency notes to the convicts. So far, the agency has filed three chargesheets.

## Tension in Bengal: RAF deployed in North 24 Parganas after sexual assault of minor; nurse molested at Birbhum hospital



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Kolkata Bengal The panchayat member's family claimed the attack was carried out by supporters of the Opposition CPM from a neighbouring area. Amid the outrage over the rape and murder of a doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College, a nurse was allegedly molested in a hospital in West Bengal's Birbhum district and a minor girl sexually abused in North 24 Parganas district. A mob protesting against the sexual abuse of the minor girl vandalised the home of her alleged abuser and his

relative's shop at Madhyamgram in North 24 Parganas. A local Trinamool Congress leader allegedly triggered further outrage by asking the victim's family to "settle the matter". "The accused is a resident of our village. I could not imagine that he could do such a thing. My daughter, who is nine years old, was coming to my shop from home. At that time he assaulted her. I demand exemplary punishment for him," the girl's father said. As soon as the alleged sexual assault in the Rajbari area of Rohanda panchayat came to light on Saturday night, locals started protesting in front of the home of the accused. The TMC leader whose alleged interference ignited widespread public anger is the husband of a panchayat member. As the mob also targeted the panchayat member's home, police and Rapid Action Force personnel were deployed in the area and tear gas was used to disperse the crowd. The panchayat member's family claimed the attack was carried out by supporters of the Opposition CPM from a neighbouring area. In the other incident, a nurse working at a hospital in Birbhum district's Illambazar area said that during a routine procedure, a patient touched her inappropriately and used abusive language when confronted. After she filed a police complaint, the patient was arrested.

## Doctors assaulted by outsiders at medical college in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi, 2 apprehended

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Unknown people in two vehicles entered Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Medical College and Hospital, Nerchowk, in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district, and assaulted trainee doctors late on Saturday night, said the police. Sources said the trainee doctors also retaliated, damaging two vehicles belonging to the outsiders around 12.30 am. The police registered an FIR at the Balh police station and apprehended two suspects after two trainee doctors sustained minor injuries in the attack. Meanwhile, a heavy police force under the supervision of DSP (headquarters) Dev Raj was deployed at the hospital to prevent any further law and order situation.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Raj said, "Some outsiders in two vehicles entered the medical college and hospital premises without any apparent reason. They began roaming around unnecessarily, raising suspicion among the trainee doctors about their intentions. When a few trainee doctors questioned their purpose for entering the hospital, the outsiders attacked them. Security guards were present and intervened, but the clash escalated. At least three police teams rushed to the hospital after receiving the information. The situation is now under control, and some suspects have been detained for questioning." Several faculty members and principal Dr DK Verma arrived at the scene late at night after being informed of the incident. Dr Verma said, "It was around



12.40 am when the trainee doctors informed me about the clash. I rushed to the scene. By that time, many of the outsiders had managed to escape. Security guards and students had apprehended one or two suspects. We have two entrance gates, one for the hospital and another for the college. The outsiders had entered through one of the gates and reached the area between the college and the hospital.

The purpose of their entry into the institute is a matter of investigation. Work is ongoing at the hospital. I remained on the scene until 3.30 am." The SHO of the Balh police station, Inspector Purshotam Dass, said, "An FIR has been registered. The clash is unrelated to any complaint about the standard of treatment at the hospital. The investigation is ongoing."

## No political slogans on answer sheets: Amid protests over Kolkata doctor rape-murder, West Bengal issues guidelines for higher secondary exams



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

RG Kar Medical College The Council of Higher Secondary Education publishes guidelines before the exam to address misconduct. According to the council, this year's guidelines were issued in response to the R G Kar incident and the subsequent public protests from various corners. Amid the protest over the alleged rape-murder of a trainee doctor at R G Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, the West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education has published guidelines for the higher secondary examination scheduled for next year. The council stated that if any "political slogans" are written in the answer sheet, the candidate's candidature may be cancelled. The Council of Higher Secondary Education

publishes guidelines before the exam to address misconduct. According to the council, this year's guidelines were issued in response to the R G Kar incident and the subsequent public protests from various corners.

"A candidate shall be held guilty of misconduct or malpractice if found indulging in indecorous writing or indecorous drawing or political slogans in the answer script/OMR of the candidate," the guidelines noted. It also said, "A candidate shall be held guilty of misconduct or malpractice if he/she encloses a currency note with answer script with the intention of offering illegal gratification or inducements to the invigilator or any other person connected with the examination or in any way tries to take illegal or unfair advantages..." A senior official of the School Education Department said, "After the rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor at R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, people from all sectors across the state came out to protest this heinous crime and demanded justice. Specifically, students and teachers actively participated in the protest, and alumni from different colleges and schools also participated." "Even supporters of football clubs displayed banners demanding justice at the football stadium. The overwhelming protests made the council think that some students might conduct similar acts during the higher secondary examination. This is why the council published guidelines for such situations," the official added.

## Covid a distant memory, why supermarkets in Bengaluru are forcing customers to take off their masks

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

There was a time when wearing masks at supermarkets and other public places was mandatory due to Covid-19. But now, the tables have turned, as many supermarkets in Bengaluru have banned customers from wearing masks. The reason: a rise in thefts. According to an employee of a supermarket chain, they have experienced significant losses because of people wearing masks committing theft. The police also noted that masks have become a common attire for criminals such as thieves, chain snatchers, and robbers in the post-Covid era.

Rajesh Aradhya, an employee of a supermarket chain located in Kengeri, said in the last month, items worth Rs 3 lakh have been stolen from two of their supermarkets, which made the management take such a decision. "In the outlet I work at, we have lost about Rs 1.2 lakh worth of materials. We have installed CCTV cameras inside and when checked, we found that the faces (of suspected thieves) were covered with masks. The theft came to light only during an audit which happens once a week." When Rajesh was asked how the thieves hide stolen stuff, he said, "They will keep stolen items inside their college bags or in shirts or pants. Then, they will bring some items to the cash counter to bill, which will be of a lower cost. There are stores that do not allow bags inside. However, smaller outlets don't have that privilege."

Asked why they don't file a police complaint, he said, "It is not about one person. They steal items worth Rs 1,000-2,000, and the police would laugh at us if we said this. The same person rarely returns, and there are mul-



multiple people who do it." A senior police officer said while theft cases are not commonly reported at supermarkets, incidents such as robbery and other crimes where masks are involved pose a challenge to the police.

"In many recent thefts and robberies, we have observed that masks are being used to shield the perpetrators from being identified by the police. In cases of chain snatchings and thefts, we had similar issues before Covid-19 where the culprits used to wear helmets. However, with the subsequent capture on CCTV, we were able to catch them as they had to remove the helmets somewhere along their escape route. The use of masks has made it easier for them to evade identification," the officer explained. "It's not just about minor thefts. Even in the case of the Rameshwaram cafe bomb blast, the main suspect who left the IED in the restaurant was also wearing a mask. It has become a kind of uniform for thieves," the officer said.

## Bengaluru PG murder: Police file charges, say woman killed for sheltering colleague from ex-boyfriend

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Bengaluru PG murder Kriti Kumari, who was a business development associate, was killed around 11.15 pm on July 23 after she helped her colleague move out of the flat of her ex-boyfriend, Abhishek Ghosi. Police investigating the murder of a 24-year-old woman at a Bengaluru paying guest facility have filed a chargesheet and stated that the accused, the former boyfriend of a colleague, had bought the knife used in the crime just four hours before the murder. Kriti Kumari, who was a business development associate, was killed around 11.15 pm on July 23 after she helped her colleague move out of the flat of her ex-boyfriend, Abhishek Ghosi, who belongs to Madhya Pradesh, after their relationship soured. According to the police, Ghosi entered the Bhargavi Staying Homes for Ladies, located at Venkatreddy Layout in Koramangala, southeast Bengaluru, made his way to the third-floor room where Kumari was staying, and knocked on the door. When she opened it, Ghosi forced his way inside. As Kumari attempted to escape, Ghosi chased her down and allegedly stabbed her multiple times before slitting her throat. That night, Ghosi's estranged girlfriend was staying at a different place that Kumari had arranged for her.

Speaking about the motive behind the murder, a police officer said, "He believed that Kriti was responsible for his estranged girlfriend ending their relationship. Ghosi's estranged girlfriend was Kriti's roommate and the two had been in a relationship since childhood. When Ghosi's girlfriend moved to Bengaluru from Bhopal for a job, Ghosi struggled with loneliness and eventually relocated to Bengaluru as well. He rented a flat in Eijipura, just 800 m away from his girlfriend's PG accommodation."

In June, Ghosi became frustrated by his inability to find a job and began engaging in frequent arguments with his girlfriend. These fights escalated into abuse and harassment. In July, Kumari helped her move to a location unknown to Ghosi. Angered by this, Ghosi made several unsuccessful attempts to find out his girlfriend's new location from Kumari. When these efforts failed, on the morning of July 23, Ghosi decided to murder Kumari, according to the police. He vacated his flat and moved into a PG facility near Kumari's. In the evening, he purchased a knife for Rs 65 and tried to enter Kumari's place around 8 pm but was turned away by the security guard. Ghosi then waited for an opportunity and, at 11.15 pm, entered the building when the guard went upstairs, and allegedly killed Kumari. After the murder, Ghosi returned to his PG facility, changed clothes and took an autorickshaw to the Yeshwantpur railway station. Along the way, he allegedly disposed of the knife. On reaching the station, he changed his mind and headed to Majestic, but again sensed danger and travelled to Baiyappanahalli, where he boarded a train to Betul in



Madhya Pradesh. Meanwhile, the police had tracked Ghosi's estranged girlfriend's location and gathered key information about him. On July 26, Ghosi was arrested as soon as he arrived at Begamganj in Madhya Pradesh's Raisen district by bus from Betul, roughly 290 km away. The 1,205-page chargesheet, which was filed on Saturday, includes 85 witness statements. Thirteen of the witnesses have given their statements before a magistrate under section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

## UoH alumnus appointed as Chairman and Managing Director of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited

Hyderabad: Dr. D.K. Sunil, an alumnus of Centre for Advanced Studies in Electronics Science and Technology (CASEST), School of Physics, University of Hyderabad has been appointed as Chairman and Managing Director of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, a public sector unit under the Government of India.

Dr. Sunil received his PhD (Electronics Science) degree in 2019 under the supervision of Prof. Samrat L. Sabat of CASEST, a press release from UoH said. As CMD, Dr. Sunil will be responsible for the implementation of the LCA Tejas project and finalising a deal for joint production of jet engines among many other strategically important projects.



## US man claims he was kicked off flight for wearing 'Hawk Tuah' Trump t-shirt



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

The crew received complaints from another passenger about the objectionable imagery on the t-shirt and asked the man to change. He did at first but changed back later, following which he was made to disembark. A Donald Trump supporter claimed he was kicked off a

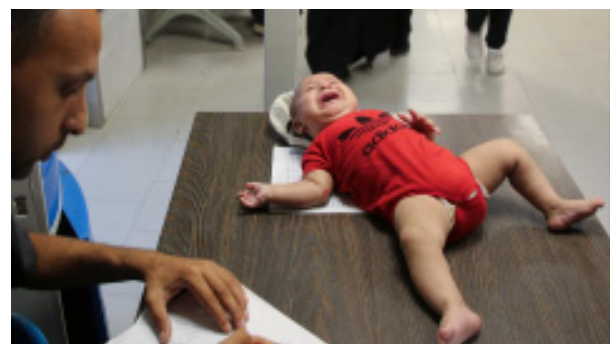
Delta Air Lines flight for sporting a t-shirt with a graphic of the former president making obscene hand gestures and slogans referencing the viral 'Hawk Tuah' girl, the New York Post reported.

The incident transpired on Saturday morning on a flight ready to take off from Florida's Sarasota Bradenton International Airport. The flight crew received complaints from another passenger about the objectionable imagery on the man's t-shirt and asked the latter to change. The man turned the shirt inside out for a while. "Next thing I know, right before take-off, a Delta employee comes on the plane and escorts him off the flight, he had flipped his shirt back to the decal side," a Reddit user wrote under the video posted on the platform, the New York Post reported. The shirt flaunted a graphic of former president Donald Trump wearing US flag-coloured glasses and a text above and below him referencing a viral video of a girl explaining oral sex. The video of the incident posted on Reddit has garnered over 900 upvotes and comments. "I am getting kicked off because of my shirt," the man can be seen declaring, while being escorted off the plane. He also abuses a flight attendant. Although the reaction seemed extreme to a slew of people on Reddit, the airline was well within its right to make the passenger deplane. According to Delta Air Lines' policies, which notes that passengers can be removed if their "conduct, hygiene, attire or odour creates an unreasonable risk of offence or annoyance to other passengers," according to the New York Post report.

## Health official says polio vaccine campaign begins in war-torn Gaza

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

A health official said a polio vaccination campaign began in Gaza on Saturday (August 31, 2024), while an aid worker said a large-scale rollout would begin on Sunday (September 1, 2024), coinciding with a "humanitarian pause" agreed by Israel and Hamas. The vaccination drive was announced after Gaza recorded its first polio case in a quarter of a century earlier this month. Local health officials along with the UN and NGOs "are starting today the polio vaccination campaign", Moussa Abed, director of primary health care at the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, told AFP on Saturday (August 31, 2024). An unspecified number of children received the first dose of the vaccination, which involves two doses and is administered orally, at Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Yunis. Among them was Amal Shaheen's three-year-old daughter, who was already in the hospital being treated for pneumonia. "We have been in the hospital for 17 days... I spend all my days worrying about her," Mr. Shaheen said. "Today she was vaccinated against polio to protect her, like all the children in the hospital have been vaccinated."



in Gaza said on Saturday (August 31, 2024) that the vaccination campaign required an "immediate ceasefire". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said measures to facilitate polio vaccination in Gaza are "not a ceasefire". The campaign aims to cover more than 640,000 children under 10 years old.

Michael Ryan, WHO deputy director-general, told the UN Security Council this week that 1.26 million doses of the oral vaccine had been delivered in Gaza, with another 400,000 still to arrive. The Ramallah-based Palestinian health ministry said earlier this month that tests in Jordan had confirmed polio in an unvaccinated 10-month-old baby from central Gaza. Poliovirus is highly infectious and most often spread through sewage and contaminated water -- an increasingly common problem in Gaza as the Israel-Hamas war drags on. The disease mainly affects children under the age of five. It can cause deformities and paralysis and is potentially fatal. "100% safe" Bakr Deeb said on Saturday (August 31, 2024) that he brought his three children -- all under 10 -- to a vaccination point on Saturday (August 31, 2024) despite some initial doubts about its safety. "I was hesitant at first and very afraid of the safety of this vaccination," he said. "After the assurances of its safety, and with all the families going to the vaccination points, I decided to go with my children as well, to protect them." Mr. Abed, the health official, stressed on Saturday (August 31, 2024) that the vaccine was "100% safe". He was in Gaza as the territory was triggered by Hamas's unprecedented attack on southern Israel on October 7 which resulted in the deaths of 1,199 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures. Israel's retaliatory military campaign has killed at least 40,691 people in Gaza, according to the territory's health ministry. The UN rights office says most of the dead are women and children. Inciscent Israeli bombardment has also caused a major humanitarian crisis and devastated the health system.

## Three killed after small plane crashes into row of townhouses in Oregon, TV station reports

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Three people were dead after a small plane crashed into a row of townhouses on Saturday (August 31, 2024) morning in a neighbourhood east of Portland, setting the homes ablaze, authorities told KATU-TV. Officials earlier in the day had said the plane was carrying two people and that at least one resident had been unaccounted for.



Photos and videos published by KGW-TV in Portland showed one of the townhomes engulfed in flames while black smoke poured out of the adjoining houses.

Portland. As the plane went down, it knocked over a pole and power lines, causing a separate brush fire in a nearby field, according to the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office. The plane was split into multiple parts as it crashed in the residential area in the city of Fairview, which is home to about 10,000 people.

Lewis said the first call about the fire came from

staff at the Troutdale Airport's control tower, who saw a thick plume of smoke rising in the air. But Lewis said that initial reports indicated "there was no mayday, no call for emergency" from the aircraft itself before it crashed. The National Transportation Safety Board is leading the investigation into the crash. The agency has sent two

investigators to the site of the crash who will document the wreckage, spokesperson Peter Knudson said. He did not release further details about the crash. The website for the Port of Portland, which oversees general aviation and marine operations in the Portland area, describes Troutdale Airport as a "flight training and recreational airport".

## Azerbaijan holds a parliamentary election expected to retain the presidential party's dominance



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Azerbaijan on Sunday (September 1, 2024) is holding a snap parliamentary election that is the first for the country since it regained full control of a former breakaway territory in a lightning offensive last year. Previous elections since independence from the Soviet Union have not been regarded as fully free or fair, and the vote for the Milli Mejlis parliament is not expected to bring significant changes to the body that is dominated by the New Azerbaijan party of President Ilham Aliyev.

Under the constitution, the election would have been

held in November, but Mr. Aliyev decreed it to take place two months early because the capital of Baku will host United Nations climate talks known as COP29 that same month. Mr. Aliyev and his late father, Heydar Aliyev, have led Azerbaijan with their heavy-handed rule since 1993, suppressing dissent as the country of almost 10 million people on the shores of the Caspian Sea basked in growing wealth from its huge oil and natural gas reserves. New Azerbaijan holds 69 of the 125 seats in the parliament, and most of the rest belong to small pro-government parties or independents. The Musavat party, the major opposition formation, put forth 34 candidates for Sunday's election but only 25 of them were registered. The Republican Alternative opposition party will run 12 candidates. The election comes just short of a year after Azerbaijani forces routed the remains of the self-declared government in the Karabakh region, which since 1994 had been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia. Most of the region's 120,000 Armenian residents fled the region the face of the offensive. The national election commission says 50 organizations will conduct observer missions. The largest observer contingent, from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, is scheduled to present its preliminary assessment of the election on Monday.

## Venezuela sends hundreds to maximum security jails after election: NGO

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

More than 700 people arrested during protests that erupted after Venezuela's disputed presidential election have been transferred to maximum security prisons, a human rights group said Saturday, August 31, 2024. The detainees, who had been held at police stations around the country, were transferred over the past week to two notorious prisons that were previously controlled by gangs, the Venezuelan Prisons Observatory said. "In many cases, the transfers were conducted under questionable circumstances, with detainees' relatives not informed of the moves to Tocuyito and Tocaror prisons," the group said. "They were conducted with many irregularities," the NGO said in a press release. More than 2,400 people were arrested after the protests that broke out after President Nicolas Maduro was declared winner of the disputed July 28 election. The Opposition claims it won by a landslide and has voting records to prove this.

The leftist Maduro government, brushing off accusations of authoritarianism, has resisted intense international pressure to release vote tally numbers to back up its claim of victory. The United States, the European Union, and several Latin American countries have refused to recognize Maduro as having won without seeing detailed voting results. Violence that accompanied the protests left



27 people dead and 192 injured. Venezuelan Prisons Observatory said none of the people transferred to maximum security facilities have been allowed to contact their families or attorneys. Of the 2,400 detainees, 1,581 have been listed as political prisoners by another advocacy group, called Penal Forum. Penal Forum said 114 of the total are adolescents and at least 40 of them were released on bail Saturday. Sixteen were freed from detention on Thursday. Some of those arrested are as young as 13 and have been sent to prisons with older, common criminals, opposition leader Maria Corina Machado said this week.

## Vice-President Kamala Harris calls Donald Trump's appearance at Arlington a 'political stunt' that 'disrespected sacred ground'

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Vice President Kamala Harris said former President Donald Trump "disrespected sacred ground" in his recent appearance at Arlington National Cemetery, where the Republican nominee took and distributed images despite a federal prohibition on campaign activity on the grounds. Ms. Harris, in a statement posted Saturday on the social media platform X, cited reports that Mr. Trump's campaign aides created an altercation with a cemetery staffer and proceeded to take photographs and film the former President, including at the graves of Afghanistan war veterans, after being warned about rules at the site. As Vice President, I have had the privilege of visiting Arlington National Cemetery several times. It is a solemn place; a place where we come together to honor American heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service of this nation. "Let me be clear: the former President disrespected sacred ground, all for the sake of a political stunt," Ms. Harris said, calling Arlington a "solemn place where we come together to honor American heroes ... not a place for politics."



officials, with a top campaign adviser, Chris LaCivita, referring to military spokespersons as "hacks." Trump campaign officials say it had permission to bring someone to take video.

Since Mr. Biden ended his reelection bid, Mr. Trump has been zeroing in on Ms. Harris and her roles in foreign policy decisions. He has specifically highlighted the Vice President's statements that she was the last person in the room before Mr. Biden made the decision on Afghanistan. Biden's administration was following a withdrawal commitment and timeline that the Trump administration had negotiated with the Taliban in 2020. A 2022 review by a government-appointed special investigator concluded decisions made by both Trump and Biden were the key factors leading to the rapid collapse of Afghanistan's military and the Taliban takeover. Ms. Harris on Saturday alluded to Mr. Trump's history of picking fights with veterans and repeated allegations that he has "called our fallen service members 'suckers' and 'losers' and disparaged Medal of Honor recipients." "This is a man who is unable to comprehend anything other than service to himself," Ms. Harris said. "I will always honor the service and sacrifice of all of America's fallen heroes. ... And I will never politicize them."

## Putin gifts 24 purebred horses to Kim Jong-un in return for arms for Ukraine war

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Nineteen stallions and five mares of the Orlov Trotter breed, said to be Kim's favourite, arrived in Russia on Sunday as partial payment for North Korean artillery shells sent to Russia amid the ongoing conflict with Ukraine, The Times reported. Two years ago, Pyongyang also received 30 Orlov Trotters, and Kim was seen riding a white horse in a propaganda video. Kim's picture riding a white stallion on Mount Paektu during a snowfall, released by state media in 2019, attracted significant attention on the internet. The horses Kim rode also symbolise North Korea's heritage, as the country named its post-1950-53 Korean War economic recovery effort after the mythical winged horse, Chollima. One of North Korea's rocket boosters is also named Chollima-1. According to analysts who talked to news agency Reuters, the imagery of Kim astride a white stallion was designed to instil confidence in North Koreans that they have a man of strength and destiny holding the reins of power.



Putin has also been famously photographed riding a brown horse while wearing wrap-around sunglasses, a gold chain, and army trousers. In June, Kim gifted Putin a pair of Pungsan dogs, a local breed of hunting dog, as the bond between the two leaders appears to be growing stronger lately.

## Private corporate sector sales up 6.9%; net profits rise 14.2% in April-June: RBI data



Private corporate sector, Private corporate sector sales, Private corporate sector profits, rbi, Reserve Bank of India, Indian express business, business news, business articles, business news stories Within the manufacturing sector, sales of cement, iron and steel, fertilisers, paper products and glass products declined, the data showed. Aggregate sales growth of listed private non-financial companies in the April-June quarter of the current fiscal (FY25) stood at 6.9 per cent (year-on-year) compared to a growth of 2.1 per cent in the year-ago period, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) data showed.

Net profits of listed non-government non-financial companies rose 14.2 per cent, compared to 9 per cent in the year-ago period, and 6.4 per cent in Q4 FY24, the data on performance of the private corporate business sector for Q1 FY25 showed. The analysis is based on the quarterly financial results of 2,934 listed non-government non-financial companies. All major sectors, manufacturing (67.5 per cent share in total sales), information tech-

nology (IT) (10.1 per cent), non-IT services (12.8 per cent), construction (5.3 per cent) electricity (2.9 per cent) and mining (1.1 per cent) recorded higher sales when compared to the corresponding quarter of last year. Within the manufacturing sector, sales of cement, iron and steel, fertilisers, paper products and glass products declined, the data showed.

In FY24, annual sales growth rate of listed private non-financial companies slowed to 4.7 per cent from 19.8 per cent in FY23. On expenditure front, manufacturing companies' expenses on raw material increased by 6.4 per cent (y-o-y) in consonance with their sales growth, whereas their staff cost recorded higher increase of 10.7 per cent during Q1 FY25; staff cost of IT and non-IT services companies increased by 2.4 per cent and 12.8 per cent, respectively. Staff cost to sales ratio for manufacturing, IT and non-IT services companies stood at 5.8 per cent, 49.1 per cent, and 11 per cent, respectively, during Q1 FY25. Operating profit of the private corporate business sector rose by 9.6 per cent in Q1 FY25, as against 5.3 per cent in the same quarter of the previous fiscal.

Operating profits of manufacturing, IT and non-IT services companies rose by 9.3 per cent, 5.1 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively, during Q1:2024-25 and their operating profit margin stood at 14.6 per cent, 22.5 per cent and 21.4 per cent, respectively. The interest coverage ratio (ICR) of manufacturing and non-IT companies improved marginally to 7.9 and 1.8 per cent, respectively, during the latest quarter. The ICR for IT companies remains elevated at 42.9 per cent. ICR, which is a ratio of earnings before interest and tax to interest expenses, is a measure of debt servicing capacity of a company. The minimum value for a viable ICR is 1.

## India's growth story intact, polls brought govt expenditure down: RBI governor day after GDP slips to 5-quarter low

As India's real Gross Domestic Product growth slipped to a five-quarter low of 6.7 per cent in April-June 2024-25, Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das Saturday said the country's "growth story is intact".

Addressing the national CA conference in Bhubaneswar, Das said the one component which pulled down the country's growth is a dip in government expenditure (capital expenditure) by both the Centre and state governments. "The model code of conduct was in force because of elections. Therefore, government expenditure has come down. It's minus 0.2%," said Das. He said that among all the drivers of growth, the growth rate is 7 percent-plus, and exuded confidence that the country would achieve 7 percent-plus in the current financial year. "Going ahead, whatever growth projection we have given for the current FY, which is 7.2%, should be materialised," said Das.

Based on his quick analysis of the growth figures, though he is yet to get a detailed report from the monetary policy team of the RBI, Das said that private consumption — a proxy for consumption demand — in the first quarter has grown by 7.4% against 4% in the fourth quarter of the previous fiscal year. "Investment has grown by 7.5%, industries sector has grown by 7.4%, manufacturing has grown by 7%, services sector has grown by 7.7% and construction sector has grown by 10.5%," he said. He suggested accelerating government spending in the remaining period of the fiscal to ensure high growth. "We are reasonably hopeful and expect that budgeted expenses of the central government and the state governments should be spent in the next three quarters. What-



ever shortfall has been noticed in the first quarter, I would like to believe that it will be spent in the next three quarters," said Das.

Despite slow growth in the agriculture sector in the first quarter, the RBI governor said, "Monsoon initially made a slightly late start but it has covered large parts of the country except a few parts in eastern and northern India." "The credit growth is 10 percent vis-a-vis 4 percent last year. We see big confidence in all business houses. Two important things are happening — capacity utilisation in the manufacturing sector is 76 percent, which is all-time high, and the balance sheets of banks and corporates are de-leveraged. Corporates have reduced their liabilities by reducing their debt," he said. He said that balance sheets of banks suggest whatever provision had to be made for bad assets or non-performing assets for the year have already been made.

## Those cravings you've been having actually reveal hidden vitamin deficiencies. Let's decode a few



Who doesn't crave good food? But, if your cravings get out of hand, they might be an indication of underlying health problems and nutritional deficiencies. Indianexpress.com spoke to health experts and found out a cheat sheet of common cravings and the deficiencies they are associated with.

"Cravings for specific foods can sometimes indicate certain nutritional deficiencies or emotional needs. When an individual craves fatty foods, it may indicate two things. One is that the body needs more omega-3 and omega-6 for brain function and hormonal balance; or the individual's diet lacks fat-soluble vitamins like A, D, E and K," shared Dr. Sonal Sureka, Dietitian, Consults Chocolate and Nuts

Integrative Health Coach Dr Prathana Shah shared that if you have a chocolate craving, you might be deficient in magnesium as cocoa is a rich source of magnesium. You could also be suffering from a vitamin B deficiency, or copper, or fatty acid deficiency. "If you constantly crave sugar, it's likely you lack chromium, phosphorus or your blood sugar is off the charts. It could also simply mean that you need some joy in your life because sugar causes a spike in serotonin! So do more things that bring you joy," Dr Shah shared. Also, try and add in broccoli, onions, tomatoes and mushrooms to your diet. A bread craving could indicate a lack of nitrogen, which requires more nuts, seeds, citrus and dark leafy greens. Cravings Understanding and addressing these cravings require a comprehensive view of one's overall health and lifestyle. If you're craving salty foods, you could be having low levels of sodium. A cheese craving could be due to lack in calcium, so consider adding some milk to your diet. "Also specifically, low levels of magnesium, calcium, or potassium can lead to an increased desire for salty foods," shared Sureka. She emphasised that food cravings can indicate underlying health issues beyond nutritional de-

ficiencies, such as hormonal imbalances, blood sugar regulation problems, and emotional or psychological factors like stress or depression. "They can also result from sleep deprivation, dehydration, gut microbiome imbalances, or side effects of medications. Understanding and addressing these cravings may require a comprehensive view of one's overall health and lifestyle," added the dietitian. Dr Shah suggested getting regular blood tests done and checking your electrolytes, vitamin and blood sugars regularly. According to her, a regular health checkup is essential to catching diseases early and even preventing the onset of more. \*DISCLAIMER: This article is based on information from the public domain and/or the experts we spoke to. Always consult your health practitioner before starting any routine."

## Clinical joint diseases in neck, shoulders may be due to vitamin D deficiency: Experts

Hyderabad: Vitamin D deficiency could have a direct link to the development of clinical joint disease, commonly in shoulder and neck joint, according to a study by sports medicine specialist from Hyderabad, Prof. Maj. Dr. S. Bakhtiar Choudhary.

The study titled "Association of Vitamin D Deficiency with Frozen Shoulder Syndrome and Repetitive Strain Injury on Spine", which is under publication, says that incorrect and inadequate nutrition on a long-term basis cause micro-nutrient deficiencies, which in-turn led to sub-clinical joint disease, commonly in shoulder and neck joints.

"We get around 20 per cent Vitamin D (D2) from our diet. But need 80 per cent of Vit D (D3) from direct exposure to sunlight (exposure to ultraviolet B rays). Urban pollution, UV sensitivity, use of sunscreen, dark skin, clothing, and staying indoors prevent direct contact with the sun for the majority of the time. People do not know these facts and remain under the false assumption that they are adequately exposed to sunlight," he said.

## Israel recovers the bodies of six hostages in Gaza including U.S. citizen Hersh Goldberg-Polin



Israel on Sunday said it had recovered the bodies of six hostages in Gaza, including a young Israeli-American man who became one of the most well-known captives held by Hamas as his parents met with world leaders and pressed for his release, including at the Democratic convention last month. The news sparked calls for mass protests against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who many of the families of hostages and much of the wider public blame for failing to bring them back alive in a cease-fire deal with Hamas. Negotiations over such a deal have dragged on for months.

Hersh Goldberg-Polin, 23, was seized by militants at a music festival in southern Israel on October 7. The native of Berkeley, California, lost part of his left arm to a grenade in the attack. In April, a Hamas-issued video showed him, his left hand missing and clearly speaking under duress, sparking new protests in Israel urging the government to do more to secure his and others' freedom. The army said he was among six hostages who were killed when Israeli forces were about to rescue them. The bodies were recovered from a tunnel under the southern Gaza city of Rafah. It identified the others as Ori Danino, 25; Eden Yerushalmi, 24; Almog Sarusi, 27; and Alexander Lobanov, 33; who were also taken from the music festival. The sixth, Carmel Gat, 40, was abducted from the nearby farming community of Be'eri.

"According to preliminary information, they were cruelly murdered by Hamas terrorists shortly before we reached them," Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the Israeli military spokesperson, told reporters. Mr. Netanyahu has taken a tough line in negotiations and repeatedly said that military pressure is needed to bring home the hostages. According to Israeli media, he has feuded with top security officials who have said a deal should be reached urgently. A forum of hostage families called for a massive protest on Sunday (September 1, 2024), demanding a "complete halt of the country" to push for the implementation of a cease-fire and hostage release. "The entire nation will stand alongside the hostages' families to protest the cabinet's ongoing neglect of the hostages," it said.

President Joe Biden, who had met with the parents, said he was "devastated and outraged." "It is as tragic as it is reprehensible," he said. "Make no mistake, Hamas leaders will pay for these crimes. And we will keep working around the clock for a deal to secure the release of

the remaining hostages." The Goldberg-Polin family issued a statement early Sunday, hours after the Israeli army said it had located bodies in Gaza. "With broken hearts, the Goldberg-Polin family is devastated to announce the death of their beloved son and brother, Hersh," it said. "The family thanks you all for your love and support and asks for privacy at this time." Biden said Hersh's parents "have been courageous, wise, and steadfast, even as they have endured the unimaginable." "They have been relentless and irrepressible champions of their son and of all the hostages held in unconscionable conditions. I admire them and grieve with them more deeply than words can express." Goldberg-Polin's parents, U.S.-born immigrants to Israel, became perhaps the most high-profile relatives of hostages on the international stage. They met with Biden, Pope Francis, and others and addressed the United Nations, urging the release of all hostages.

On August 21, his parents addressed a hushed hall at the Democratic National Convention — after sustained applause and chants of "bring him home." "This is a political convention. But needing our only son — and all of the cherished hostages — home is not a political issue. It is a humanitarian issue," said his father, Jon Polin. His mother, Rachel, who bowed her head during the ovation and touched her chest, said "Hersh, if you can hear us, we love you, stay strong, survive." Both wore stickers with the number 320, representing the number of days their son had been held. It had long become part of a morning ritual — tear a new piece of tape, write down another day. "I find it so remarkable how nauseating it is every single time," Rachel Goldberg-Polin told The Associated Press in January, ahead of the 100-day mark. "And it's good. I don't want to get used to it. I don't want anybody to get used to the fact that these people are missing." She asked other people around the world to take up the ritual, too, not only for her son, who moved to Israel with his family when he was 7, but for the other hostages and their families. She and her husband sought to keep their son and the others held from being reduced to numbers, describing Hersh as a music and soccer lover and traveller with plans to attend university since his military service had ended. At events she often addressed her son directly in the hope he could hear her, urging him to live another day. Some 250 hostages were taken on October 7. Before the military's announcement of the latest discovery of bodies, Israel said it believed 108 hostages were still held in Gaza and about one-third of them were dead. In late August, the Israeli military recovered the bodies of six hostages in southern Gaza. Eight hostages have been rescued by Israeli forces, the most recent found on Tuesday. Most of the rest were freed during a weeklong cease-fire in November in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Two previous Israeli operations to free hostages killed scores of Palestinians. Hamas says several hostages have been killed in Israeli airstrikes and failed rescue attempts. Israeli troops mistakenly killed three Israelis who escaped captivity in December.

## Brazil blocks X over Elon Musk's feud with judge

Sao Paulo: Brazil started blocking Elon Musk's social media platform X, making it largely inaccessible on both the web and through mobile apps early on Saturday after the billionaire failed to name a legal representative in the country. The move, which escalates a monthlong feud between Musk and a Brazilian Supreme Court justice over free speech, far-right accounts and misinformation, came after Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes ordered the suspension on Friday. To block X, Brazil's telecommunications regulator, Anatel, told internet service providers to suspend users' access to the social media platform. As Saturday morning after midnight local time, major operators had begun doing so. The company hasn't had a legal representative in the South American nation since earlier this month. Foreign companies that operate in Brazil are required to have local representation to make sure someone can be notified of legal decisions and is qualified to take any requisite action. De Moraes had warned Musk on Wednesday night that X services in Brazil could be shut down if he failed to comply, and established a 24-hour deadline. In response, the entrepreneur has fired back at the judge with insults and accusations of authoritarianism. De Moraes said the platform would remain blocked until it complies.

"Elon Musk showed his total disrespect for Brazilian sovereignty and, in particular, for the judiciary, setting himself up as a true supranational entity and immune to the laws of each country," de Moraes wrote in his decision. The justice gave internet service providers and app stores five days to block access to X, and said the platform will stay suspended until it complies with his orders. He established the same deadline for app stores to remove virtual private networks, or VPNs, and set a daily fine of 50,000 reais (\$8,900) for people or companies using them to access X. Brazil is an important market for X, which has struggled with the loss of advertisers since Musk purchased the former Twitter in 2022. Market research group Emarketer says some 40 million Brazilians, roughly one-fifth of the population, access X at least once per month. X had posted on its official Global Government Affairs page late Thursday that it expected X to be shut down by de Moraes, "simply because we would not comply with his illegal orders to censor his political opponents."

"When we attempted to defend ourselves in court, Judge de Moraes threatened our Brazilian legal representative with imprisonment. Even after she resigned, he froze all of her bank accounts," the company wrote. "Our challenges against his manifestly illegal actions were either dismissed or ignored. Judge de Moraes' colleagues on the Supreme Court are either unwilling or unable to stand up to him." X has clashed with de Moraes over its reluctance to comply with orders to block users.

Accounts that the platform previously has shut down on Brazilian orders include lawmakers affiliated with former President Jair Bolsonaro's right-wing party and activists accused of undermining Brazilian democracy. X's lawyers in April sent a document to the Supreme Court in April, saying that since 2019 it had suspended or blocked 226 users. In his decision Friday, de Moraes cited Musk's statements as evidence that X's conduct "clearly intends to continue to encourage posts with extremism, hate speech and anti-democratic discourse, and to try to withdraw them from jurisdictional control." Musk, a self-proclaimed "free speech absolutist," has repeatedly claimed the justice's actions amount to censorship, and



his argument has been echoed by Brazil's political right. He has often insulted de Moraes on his platform, characterising him as a dictator and tyrant.

De Moraes' defenders have said his actions aimed at X have been lawful, supported by most of the court's full bench and have served to protect democracy at a time it is imperiled. He wrote on Friday that his ruling is based on Brazilian law requiring internet services companies to have representation in the country so they can be notified when there are relevant court decisions and take requisite action — specifying the takedown of illicit content posted by users, and an anticipated churn of misinformation during October municipal elections. The looming shutdown is not unprecedented in Brazil.

Lone Brazilian judges shut down Meta's WhatsApp, the nation's most widely used messaging app, several times in 2015 and 2016 due to the company's refusal to comply with police requests for user data. In 2022, de Moraes threatened the messaging app Telegram with a nationwide shutdown, arguing it had repeatedly ignored Brazilian authorities' requests to block profiles and provide information. He ordered Telegram to appoint a local representative; the company ultimately complied and stayed online. X and its former incarnation, Twitter, have been banned in several countries — mostly authoritarian regimes such as Russia, China, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Venezuela and Turkmenistan. Other countries, such as Pakistan, Turkey and Egypt, have also temporarily suspended X before, usually to quell dissent and unrest. Twitter was banned in Egypt after the Arab Spring uprisings, which some dubbed the "Twitter revolution," but it has since been restored. A search Friday on X showed hundreds of Brazilian users inquiring about VPNs that could potentially enable them to continue using the platform by making it appear they were logging on from outside the country. It was not immediately clear how Brazilian authorities would police this practice and impose fines cited by de Moraes. X said that it plans to publish what it has called de Moraes' "illegal demands" and related court filings "in the interest of transparency." Also on Thursday evening, Starlink, Musk's satellite internet service provider, said on X that de Moraes this week froze its finances, preventing it from doing any transactions in the country where it has more than 250,000 customers. "This order is based on an unfounded determination that Starlink should be responsible for the fines levied unconstitutionally against X. It was issued in secret and without affording Starlink any of the due process of law guaranteed by the Constitution of Brazil. We intend to address the matter legally," Starlink said in its statement. The law firm representing Starlink told the AP that the company appealed, but wouldn't make further comment.

## 'Superstar asked me to treat his son like any other staff member; Ananya Panday had to audition for SOTY 2,' says casting director Anmol Ahuja



(He didn't need to send that message). And that kid, I love him. I met him once, and there was a spark, a sense of manners and etiquette in him. Uske pitaji ko bolne ki zaroorat nahi thi, lekin kiya hai. (His father did not need to tell him, but he did). "When asked if the star kid in question was Aamir Khan's son Junaid Khan, the casting director declined and revealed that he never auditioned him. However, he did praise Junaid and shared a story about how Junaid once saved a play from being cancelled. Anmol recalled, "As for Junaid, let me tell you, this is something Quasar Thakore-Padamsee himself said. They were doing a play and Quasar was very ill at that time. But still, that play happened because of Junaid; otherwise, it wouldn't have happened. So, this is a big deal in itself. So these guys are amazing and they have a lot of pressure." He added, "You know, even Ananya Panday had to audition for Student of the Year 2." Junaid Khan recently made his Bollywood debut in Yash Raj Films' Maharaj.

Casting Director Anmol Ahuja, the founder of Casting Bay, recently shared insights into the casting process of star kids and influencers, revealing intriguing details from his experience working with various actors. In a conversation with Bollywood Bubble, Anmol recounted an incident where a superstar requested that his son be treated like any other staff member. During the discussion, Anmol emphasised that, like any other newcomer, star kids also experience pressure and must audition to secure roles. He recalled a time when a superstar urged him to treat his son without any special privileges. "Let me tell you one thing, I will not name the person, but he is the son of a very massive superstar," he said.

He continued, "So the superstar I am talking about, his son will be working with us for a brief period. It's because he has the time right now and wants to understand the process of casting. That person said, 'Please treat him like any other staff member of yours. No special treatment.' Aur koi zaroorat nahi thi yeh message bhejne ki

## Producers of 2023 Malayalam blockbuster RDX booked for 'embezzlement' of profits

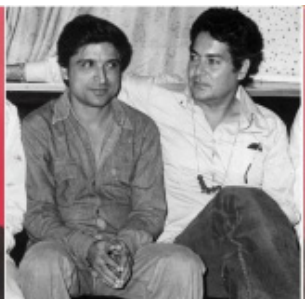
An FIR has been filed against the producers of the 2023 Malayalam movie RDX over alleged embezzlement and non-disbursement of profits. The FIR has been registered against producers Sophia Paul and James Paul. The case has been registered by Tripunithura Police in Ernakulam at Hill Palace Police Station, under sections, 120-B, 406, 420, 468, and 34 of the Indian Penal Code. Must Read | Bengali actor Sreelekha Mitra withdraws from Kochi seminar following sexual harassment allegations against director Ranjith: 'Have done my bit, now let me be'

RDX: Robert Dony Xavier directed by Nahas Hidayath, released on August 25, 2023. Antony Varghese, Shane Nigam, and Neeraj Madhav starred in the film. Anjana Abraham, a resident of Tripunithura, has alleged that producers, Sophia Paul and James Paul failed to distribute the promised profit margins to



stakeholders. Anjana claimed to have invested Rs 6 crore in the film's production after being assured of a full return on investment and a 30 per cent share of total profits. As per Anjana's complaint, she has only received her initial investment, despite several requests.

## Zoya Akhtar reveals why Javed Akhtar, Salim Khan didn't do joint interview in Angry Young Men: 'That final meeting gave it a perfect closure'



During the third session of The Indian Express Expresso, Zoya Akhtar shared insights on why Javed Akhtar and Salim Khan did not give a joint interview in the documentary Angry Young Men. Filmmaker Zoya Akhtar talks about the documentary Angry Young Men based on the legendary partnership between writers Javed Akhtar and Salim Khan, which led to the creation of iconic films like Sholay, Deewar, Trishul, Shakti and more, features interviews with both writers — albeit separately. The documentary was co-produced by Zoya Akhtar's production company, Tiger Baby, along with Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment and Salman Khan Films. During the third session of The Indian Express's Expresso, Zoya Akhtar shared insights into why the two writers did not give a joint interview in the three-part documentary.

Angry Young Men was directed by Namrata Rao, a National Award-winning editor making her directorial debut with this project. When Zoya was asked why Akhtar and Khan only appeared together for a photoshoot at the end of the series and did not participate in a joint interview, she explained, "I think that was a directorial choice. I think she had planned to do it that way. I am speaking for someone else here but when she started shooting them separately, I think the patterns just started forming with their lives, their journeys and their personal lives. I think she liked the pattern that was forming and that one meeting at the end gave it a perfect closure. I agreed with her when she told me that but that is a question that you have to ask her." Namrata Rao has worked with Zoya on several projects, including Made in Heaven, Lust Stories, and Ghost Stories. Reflecting on their collaboration, Zoya said in an earlier interview with indianexpress.com, "She loves Hindi movies, she knew their work and has a great

sense of humour that I knew they'd connect with completely." Zoya further elaborated on the decision to have Namrata direct the documentary, saying, "I wanted someone, who is not from the family because I am a director, so is Farhan; Sohail could have done it, Arbaaz does personal interviews, he is good like that. But one of the kids doing it is too personal, you don't get that gaze, that kind of distance. It was also interesting to have a woman because they have such a male persona, but they are very specifically male — they are not offensive males. I wanted a female gaze on the 'Angry Young Men' and she just ticked all the boxes."

## Karan Johar: Amitabh Bachchan exudes an aura that is beyond your understanding

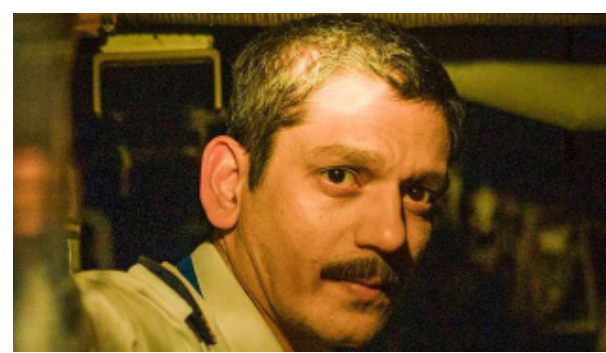
Karan Johar: Amitabh Bachchan exudes an aura that is beyond your understanding. Mumbai: Filmmaker Karan Johar has spoken about how he relates megastar Amitabh Bachchan with "power" and the late spiritual leader with "peace". Karan was speaking on the podcast "Jaane Mann" with host Jai Madaan, where he was asked about whom he relates the words "peace" and "power" with. Talking about power, Karan said: "Amitabh Bachchan, I think he has the power of his being when he enters a room. I feel he has that power that most people will stand up and they don't know why they are standing up." "He exudes an aura that is beyond your understanding of what an energy or power is. That is true power. Magnetism." Asked about peace, he said: "A gentleman who is no more amongst us anymore his name is Dada Vaswani. I've never felt more at peace than I was with him in an encounter I had with him in front of 50,000 people and I interviewed him and I had never really been moved by people in the spiritual world. But I was very moved by his presence and I felt at peace." In the podcast, Karan, who last helmed Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt-starrer "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani", said that he is proud of his journey as a human being and he wouldn't trade a thing to live it any differently.

## IC 814 The Kandahar Hijack draws ire online for 'changing terrorists' identity'; casting director reacts: 'We did proper research'

Directed by Anubhav Sinha, IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack is based on the 1999 hijack of an Indian aircraft by five terrorists on December 24, 1999, 40 minutes after it took off from Kathmandu. Anubhav Sinha's crime thriller drama series IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack is now streaming on Netflix. Amid demands by a section of social media users for boycott of the series IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack for allegedly hiding the real identities of the terrorists involved in the 1999 incident, casting director Mukesh Chhabra on Sunday claimed the perpetrators used nicknames for each other and proper research was done for the show. Directed by Anubhav Sinha, the series is based on the 1999 hijack of an Indian aircraft by five terrorists on December 24, 1999, 40 minutes after it took off from Kathmandu. It started streaming on Netflix on August 29.

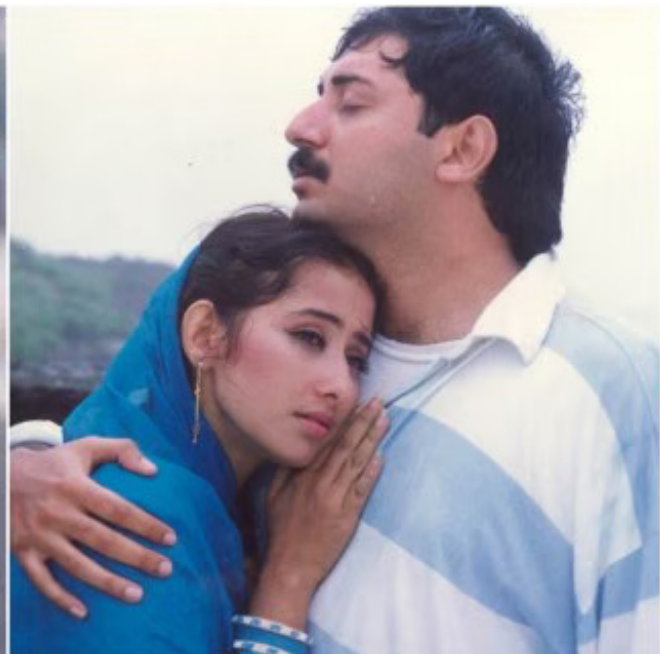
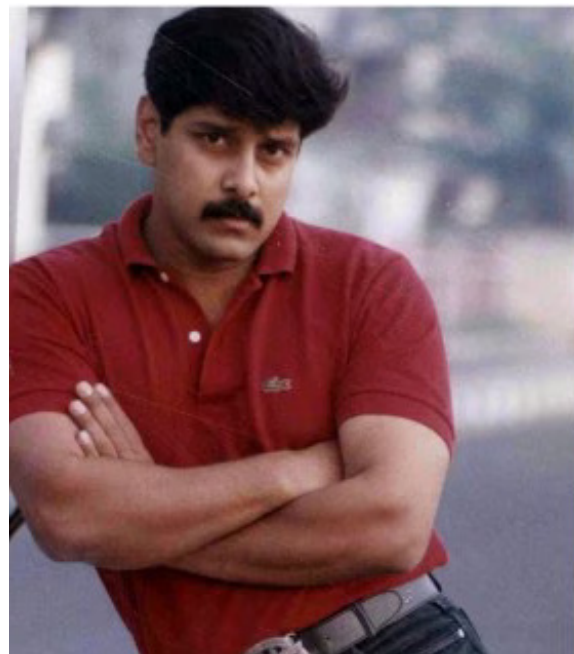
Using hashtags #BoycottNetflix, #BoycottBollywood and #IC814, many X users shared posts claiming the makers changed the names of the hijackers to 'Shankar' and 'Bhola' to allegedly protect the terrorists who belonged to a certain community. A user accused Sinha of "deliberate distortion of facts" as well as termed the series "propaganda". "... it's a vile attempt to rewrite history, downplay the terror inflicted by the actual hijackers, and subtly glorify their actions. By reducing the tragedy of IC 814 to a farcical narrative, Sinha has shown where his loyalties lie—not with the victims or the truth, but with an insidious agenda that seeks to whitewash the brutality of terrorism and vilify the Hindu community," she wrote on X.

"Names of IC814 Hijackers changed to Shankar & Bhola by @anubhavsinha. This is how Bollywood let the TERRORISTS WIN: #BoycottBollywood #IC814TheKandaharHijack," wrote another. "IC 814 Terrorists names — Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, Masood



Azhar and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar. In Movie — Shankar & Bhola" read a post. Chhabra, a prominent casting director in the industry, said the terrorists used "nicknames or fake names" to address each other. "I am reading so many tweets about the names of the hijackers. We did the proper research. They used to call each other by those names—nicknames or fake names, whatever you want to call them. And thank you, everyone, for loving the ensemble cast. A big thank you to my team, and especially to Anubhav Sinha for trusting us and giving me the freedom to explore. #IC814 #Netflix," he wrote on X. Five terrorists Ibrahim Athar, Sunny Ahmed Qazi, Zahoor Ibrahim, Shahid Akhter and Sayed Shakir hijacked the IC-814 plane during its flight from Kathmandu to Delhi on December 24 that year. At least 154 passengers and crew were held hostage for eight days and the stand-off ended when hardcore terrorists Masood Azhar, Omar Sheikh and Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar were released and the then external affairs minister Jaswant Singh took them on a special plane to Kandahar.

## Vikram recalls crying for two months after losing Mani Ratnam's Bombay to Arvind Swamy: 'I was confirmed, but I goofed up'



Vikram, currently celebrating the success of his latest film Thangalaan, recently revisited the painful memory of missing out on the chance to play the lead role in director Mani Ratnam's romantic drama Bombay. In a conversation with Siddharth Kannan, "Chiyaaan" Vikram revealed that he was initially finalised to play the central role in Bombay but made a mistake during the final audition. The role eventually went to Arvind Swamy.

When asked about rumours suggesting he had refused the role in Bombay, Vikram clarified, "I didn't refuse Bombay, I goofed up the audition because he suddenly asked me to audition and he didn't get a video camera, he got a still camera and he said act. He told me, 'Look at that girl she is running and I would freeze.' He said, 'Don't stop continue' but I was confused, 'He has got a camera, it's not a video camera so why do I act?' I understood at

that point that if I move he will get a blur image."

The Thangalaan actor also recalled how he cried for two months after losing out on the film. "It was a dream for me to work with Mani sir. I was ready to retire after the film; I didn't need anything after that. I was confirmed for the film. Morning was Manisha Koirala's photoshoot and evening was mine but I screwed it up. For two months, every day, I would wake up and cry, 'Shit I lost it.' A grown man crying for two months. That film went on become a pan-India and a cult film," he said. Despite the setback, Vikram's dream of working with Mani Ratnam was eventually realised. He starred in the filmmaker's 2010 film Raavan and played a pivotal role in Ponnin Selvan: I and II. Reflecting on his experience working with his dream director, Vikram said, "I got my revenge. I did two films with Mani sir after that."

## Bengali actor Sreelekha Mitra withdraws from Kochi seminar following sexual harassment allegations against director Ranjith: 'Have done my bit, now let me be'

Bengali actor Sreelekha Mitra has withdrawn from the upcoming seminar in Kochi following her sexual harassment allegations against film director Ranjith. Mitra announced her decision on Sunday morning, citing the recent turmoil in her life and the intense media scrutiny surrounding the allegations as reasons for her break. In her Instagram post, Mitra detailed the emotional toll the situation has taken on her. "August has always made me feel it's 'august' presence. My birth month and the month of my mom's passing, my brother's birth month, and the month and day of my very dear friend's passing. The 15th of August being our Independence Day and the day I moved out of my 'shashur bari' to start (wasn't even sure how) afresh. This August too began with the #rgkarrapemurdercase infuriating all of us across territories, then the #jhargramelephantkilling to something I never felt would come out in the open after 15 odd years about the #malayalamfilmindustry incident and how I became an integral part of the entire #metoo movement. I had been hounded by press media across country narrating the said incident over n over n over again which took a heavy toll on me as it did back here when I took names of #bengalifilmindustry who's who ..REMEMBER?" she wrote.

She apologised for not being able to attend the seminar and expressed her intention to take time for herself. "Yes I took a break from everything and travelled to the mountains whose quiet would calm my soul. This was my birthday treat to myself and done giving any justification to anyone for my said act. Sorry I couldn't travel to Kerala for the seminar which had been cancelled because of me. I needed a breather as I have my right to live My Life according to My Choice and have never ever bowed down

to the misogynistic society and film industry by a large. Again sorry Mr Joshy Joseph for declining your offer. Hopefully will come back in better times. I HAVE DONE MY BIT NOW LET ME BE," Sreelekha added. Earlier, Malayalam film director Joshy Joseph responded to the controversy. "A Special Investigation Team (SIT) visited my house, and we spoke for three hours. I provided a detailed account of events from the beginning, as required under Section 161 of the IPC. I will also give another statement under Section 164 in front of the magistrate, which I intend to do. We are bringing Sreelekha Mitra on September 10. There is indeed a crisis in the Malayalam industry today, and we are being accused, rightly so," Joshy Joseph had said while speaking to ANI. Earlier, Mitra lodged a complaint with the Kochi City Police against Ranjith on Monday, a day after he resigned as the chairman of the Kerala State Chalchithra Academy. The complaint alleges that in 2009, during discussions about a film role, Ranjith made inappropriate physical advances towards her. In an email sent to the Kochi City Police Commissioner, Mitra detailed an incident from 2009 when she was in Kochi for discussions about a role in the movie Palerimanikkam, which Ranjith was directing. She claimed that during the discussion, Ranjith "clutched" her hand and attempted to touch other parts of her body with sexual intent. "I was invited to act in the film 'Palerimanikkam' directed by Ranjith. As part of discussion I was called to the flat in which Sri Ranjith was staying at Kaloor Kadavanthra, Kochi. During the course of discussion, he clutch hold of my hand and later on attempted to spread his hand to other parts of my body with sexual intention. Realizing that his intentions are not the discussion regarding the film and with sexual intent,

## Ajinkya Rahane hundred keeps Leicestershire afloat



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Ajinkya Rahane County Century Seasoned India batter Ajinkya Rahane compiled his 40th First-Class century -- a marvellous 192-ball 102 -- as Leicestershire battled hard to avoid defeat against Glamorgan (X/Leicestershire CCC) Seasoned India batter Ajinkya Rahane compiled his 40th First-Class century -- a marvellous 192-ball 102 -- as Leicestershire battled hard to avoid defeat against Glamorgan in their County Championship Division Two match here on Sunday. Rahane, a veteran of 85 Tests and 90 ODIs, struck 13 fours and a six during his stay in the middle and was also involved in a

vital stand of 183 runs for the fourth wicket with Australian Peter Handscomb, who was batting on 94 at lunch on the final day of the four-day game. Leicestershire's international pair Rahane and Handscomb got together with an aim to save the game for them after Glamorgan's Colin Ingram had crafted a career-best, unbeaten 257 at Sofia Gardens. At stumps on the third evening, Rahane was 47 not out and Handscomb unbeaten on 33, as Leicestershire ended at 144 for 3, trailing by 155, when bad light stopped play with 21.2 scheduled overs remaining. At the lunch, Leicestershire were 271 for four and needing another 28 runs to make their opponents bat again in the match. Both the Indian and Australian were dropped by Glamorgan leg-spinner Mason Crane, two of his three dropped catches coming off his own bowling, misses that could come in the way of the home team's quest for victory. This was after Glamorgan had declared on 550 for 9, with a lead of 299, Ingram unbeaten on a personal best 257, Crane getting his day off to a better start with 49 runs to his name. When the 36-year-old Rahane came to bat, Leicestershire were 74/3 but he combined with Handscomb to keep the team's hopes of saving the game alive. Rahane employed the cut shot to get back-to-back fours and reach his first century for Leicestershire. Rahane, who has scored 12 Test hundreds and three ODI tons, made 42 off 67 balls in the first innings. Rahane eventually fell to Kiran Carlson.

## Sunil Gavaskar predicts India will win Border Gavaskar Trophy by 3-1 margin

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

India will travel to Australia for the five-match Test series this year. The latter have not beaten the former since the 2014/15 series. (Australia win 2-0). The Men In Blue have won the last two series (2020/21 and 2018/19) against Australia away from home and additionally have also been dominant against them at home (2017 and 2023) beating as many times. Former Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar predicted India to win the series once again with a scoreline of 3-1. "It's going to be an exciting series for sure with the talent that is there on both sides and it will also show why Test match cricket is the ultimate format of our beloved game. Oh, and my prediction is a 3-1 win for India," Gavaskar wrote in his column for the mid-day.

"With their opening batting problems exacerbated after the retirement of David Warner and the middle-order also a bit dodgy, the Aussies are ripe for the taking once again," reasoned Gavaskar. Gavaskar would also emphasise that the lack of first-class games ahead of the series might cause India to start slowly yet again. "India being usual slow starters in an overseas series in SENA (South Africa, England, New Zealand, Australia) countries the first Test will be crucial. That they aren't playing proper first-class games before that as well as in the week long gaps between some Test matches could work against



them," he wrote. "That said, it is how schedules are nowadays for most touring sides. It is tough on inexperienced newcomers as Yashasvi Jaiswal found in South Africa last year. He came back brilliantly with over 700 runs against England at home," Gavaskar wrote. India for the first time since 1991-92 with the first Test slated to be played at the Perth Stadium from November 22-26. The second Test, a day-night pink-ball affair, will be held in the first week of December at the Adelaide Oval. The third Test will be held at The Gabba in Brisbane followed by the customary Boxing Day Test at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground from December 26-30, 2024 and will conclude with the fifth Test in Sydney in January 2025.

## Joe Root reacts to possibility of going past Sachin Tendulkar's most Test runs: 'I just want to play, and try, and do my bit for the team'

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Root Cricket - Second Test - England v Sri Lanka - Lord's Cricket Ground, London, Britain - August 31, 2024 England's Joe Root acknowledges the crowd as he walks back to the pavilion after losing his wicket, caught out by Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis off the bowling of Lahiru Kumara Action Images via Reuters/Andrew Boyers With two hundreds in either of the innings against Sri Lanka in the second Test at Lords, Joe Root gets closer to Sachin Tendulkar for the most runs in the history of Test match cricket. The English batter is 3544 runs behind Tendulkar. When asked about the possibility of crossing Tendulkar, Root would emphasise importance of scoring runs for teams win than personal milestones.

"I just want to play, and try, and do my bit for the team and score the runs as many as I can and see where we get to. But there's no better feeling I mean, it's amazing when you score 100, you'd be lying if you said it wasn't, a big part of why you started playing the game and what you love about it," said Root speaking on video released by England Cricket. "But there's no better feeling than winning a Test match. So the more, it can affect games and the more you can add to the team, the greater it is. So, that will be the main focus. And hopefully, more days like this will come with that mentality," he added. "But there's no better feeling than winning a Test match. So



the more, it can affect games and the more you can add to the team, the greater it is. So, that will be the main focus. And hopefully, more days like this will come with that mentality," he added. Root with his twin tons against Sri Lanka took his tally to 34 tons surpassing Alastair Cook (33 tons) for the highest number of centuries as an England player. Root is the second youngest batter behind compatriot Alastair Cook to reach 12,000 Test runs, completing the feat aged 33 years and 210 days. Former India captain Rahul Dravid was the oldest batter to cross the mark at 37 years 339 days. Root also eclipsed West Indies batting legend Brian Lara's tally of 11,953 runs during his knock.

## Salman Agha backs Babar Azam despite slump in form: 'As a cricketer, you go through these phases'

GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Pakistan talismanic batter Babar Azam has bagged in another score on Saturday in the second Test against Bangladesh in Rawalpindi. The 29-year-old has not gone past the 50-mark in his last 15 innings. "Babar Azam is a world-class player. As a cricketer, you go through these phases. He has scored consistently throughout the last five years. Soon, we will see him scoring big runs for Pakistan again," said Salman Agha in the press conference after the game. Babar's poor run of form began when The Men In Green travelled to Sri Lanka in 2023 where in two Tests he ended up with an average of 25.33. Consequently, his woes continued in Australia when Pat Cummins got better off Pakistani number four where he ended the series with an average of 21. In the ongoing series against Bangladesh too in three innings he has played, he could not make a handy contribution either. However, Agha would back Babar to come good and say there are 10 other players in the team as well apart from Babar.

"As a cricketer, you have such phases in your life. There are 10 other players in the team, so you should focus on them. It's fine if he's struggling. He will return to scoring big runs very soon," Agha added.



No batter who has debuted since 1990 has had a better home Test average (min. 1,000 runs) than Babar - 67.77. However, his middling away haul, averaging 36.86 after 56 innings, neutralises his overall account. The home-away average variance of 30.91 is the highest among the 10 batters who have achieved a 1,000-plus run and 60-plus average double at home since 1990. In contrast, Kumar Sangakkara (7.31) and Steve Smith (9.1) have the least variance in the mentioned bracket. Virat Kohli, who has played the most away innings (110) among them, has a home-away average difference of 17.21. Interestingly,

## Duleep Trophy: Anantapur's 'Perth' aims to fix India's pace woes before Australia tour



GNS News Agency, Sept 4

Concealed from premier First-Class cricket for nearly a decade, the contrast of an Indian ground where pace outranks spin has grabbed BCCI's attention this year. Mainstream cricket will return to these badlands, in the drought-stricken southwestern Andhra Pradesh district, with the season-opening Duleep Trophy as India C take on India D, starting September 5. Fifteen seamers have made the honours boards at Anantapur's ACA ADCA ground. Only a solitary spinner (KJ Appanna in 2006) has bagged a five-wicket haul to share that space in this period. The rationale behind the choice of venue (barring one match in Bengaluru) may be derived from this unique pace tryst of Anantapur, as a pivotal Australia tour simmers in the background. The national selectors would be keen to take stock of the front-line batters and the fast-bowling reserves behind Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Shami and Mohammed Siraj for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Poverty and underdevelopment paint the general picture of Anantapur's sandy ethos. But Moncho Ferrer does not overstate the return of high-profile cricket for the sport bleeds through the region throughout the year. "Oh, there's a lot of cricket that happens here. It is just that not a lot of high-level cricket happens. The grounds are occupied almost daily. There are inter-district, inter-state matches, and private matches. There are all kinds of activities. Plenty," says Ferrer, the Director of Programmes at the Rural Development Trust (RDT), the local NGO that set up the Anantapur Cricket Ground. Ferrer believes the BCCI's imminent requirement for 'sporting' pitches has had them turn to Anantapur this season.

Coincidentally, the Anantapur Cricket Ground, run by the RDT with the Andhra Cricket Association's backing, has carried some of the bounciest surfaces in the country. Save for a solitary Ranji Trophy plate group match in 2018, the occasion will mark the first time in 11 years that they will serve in First-Class matches. Between 2004 and 2013, where it hosted 15 matches, the main ground at the facility bore 345 wickets by pace and only 96 by spin. Interestingly, only once has a team folded below 100 runs [80] and only four innings have achieved a 400-plus total [highest: 447/8]. "We were one of the first in the country to try to integrate sports into the development sector. Sports can be a tool for many things. For inclusion and gender, etc. And then Anantapur being Anantapur, there was no sports infrastructure at all. So then one was to provide access to decent quality sports infrastructure in rural areas that cities are used to having. Anantapur Cricket Ground was the motivation 20 years ago for all the other districts in Andhra, to give them the belief that

## Badminton's new face France's Alex Lanier reframes the sport with muscle power

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The last two Olympics men's singles titles have gone to a European, not an Asian. And the first Tour title immediately after Paris Games, the Japan Open, a Super 750 final (that's just one rung below the Big 4 like All England and China Open), was won by French teenager Alex Lanier. If Danish Viktor Axelsen's tall, strapping mic-drop game has seen him collect titles at will, peaking for the big events and absolutely crushing opponents in one-sided finals, the 19-year-old Lanier brings a different physicality to the sport. Lanier, who is 1.8 metres long, got dubbed the 'Beast', as he brought a very high level of muscularity to the court, combined with quickness of movement and flexibility, that will prove to be a headache in coming years for Asians who have stuck to the lean, quick-footed, fast-reflexed bodytype when playing the sport.

Raw power - the likes that is employed by Axelsen and now Alex Lanier - however, can stub out all nuance of skill, deception and reflex. Once pace and clever placement get countered by intelligent anticipation, it is very easy for power to completely derail speed. Remember how Axelsen squished Lakshya Sen in the semifinals of the Paris Olympics in the second set? He didn't even grant finalist Kunlavut Vitidsarn a 19-19 mirage in the opening set. That's what towering power does. The BWF in describing Lanier's win over World No 1, Chinese Shi Yuqi at Japan, said, the Frenchman "imposed his tempo" on his opponent. Lanier himself talking to the press thereafter, explained he made Yuqi "lose his shot quality with sustained pressure" after the Chinese had looked in control of the opening set. Yuqi conceded Lanier was a 'strong player', by which he meant the muscle on the strokes. The Frenchman's scalps over that week in Yokohama were Lee Zhi Jia, Chico Wardoyo, Kenta Nishimoto, Shi Yuqi and Chou Tien Chen, pretty strongly built themselves in terms of the whip on the smash, but Lanier out-muscled them all.

Lanier's win can either be dubbed a flash in the pan or just a fresh player making the most of an opportunity against those who were returning weary from the Olympics, and not totally quite there. But that would be a folly. The former junior World No 1, who didn't make the French 2 at the Paris draw, has been picking some impressive wins even as attention was on Popov brothers. Lanier had lost to Indian Meiraba Maisnam a couple of seasons ago, but had beaten Priyanshu Rajawat in red-hot form at Canada Open just before Paris Olympics. His growth in the last one year has been quite dizzy, and a Super 750 crown is the reward. Perhaps the biggest compliment came from Axelsen, who within hours of the title was congratulating Lanier - also an acknowledgment of a rival spotted.

The French surge in badminton - driven entirely by Paris hosting the Games - might be starting to chomp into Asians, but their prime opponents remain the powerful Danes, and this is a start of a much-needed European rivalry. Speaking to Olympics.com last year, Lanier had said, "When one French player became stronger, then

'Yes we can do it as well,' says Ferrer. The RDT's desire for innovation eventually culminated in the modelling of a ground that bore Australian traits, of Perth and Adelaide, regarded among the fastest pitches in the world. "We wanted to experiment with something different and not have the same kind of wickets most of the country has. Since we were a small centre, we could afford that risk, unlike the cities. We tried to use the Australian and South African pitch construction methods. It is hard to find the right kind of soil and the necessary stuff. But we decided to be bold and courageous (laughs)," quips Ferrer.

Born to Spanish reformer Vicente Ferrer and his English wife Anne, who set up the RDT in 1969 in the district, Moncho understands Anantapur more than most. Scant resources have naturally directed to alternative ways of ground water preservation. "Anantapur, of course, is historically a drought-prone district. That is why it has such few resources and is known as one of the poorest regions in the country. So it is important to learn to manage your resources well and be smart in doing things," Ferrer says. It begins with the choice of grass on the strips and the outfield that can survive for days without water before growing back. "The Hybrid Bermuda selection 1-grade grass we have for the pitches and the outfield was bred in Australia. It survives temperatures up to 70 degrees," says Madhu Achari, curator of the ACG and secretary of the Anantapur District Cricket Association (ADCA). The honours board at the Anantapur Cricket Ground The honours board at the Anantapur Cricket Ground. (

"The climate is generally scorching here, touching high 30s to 40 degrees. We have used pure black soil from Amalapuram near Kakinada, about 850 kilometres away. We got them scientifically tested, and the reports showed similarity to the conditions of Perth and Adelaide. Compared to other pitches in India, the difference here is the high clay content in the soil. The clay makes up nearly 65 per cent of the pitch, five per cent of sand, and the rest is silt," Achari explains. The high-maintenance texture of these pitches makes it imperative to bear more active strips in the centre. The main venue of the facility holds 13 pitches. The 'B' ground, awaiting its First-Class debut, has seven. "It is difficult to manage because these pitches crack excessively. So you have to rotate them frequently. If a pitch is used for a game, it must be rested for nearly 45-50 days. Only then can we expect similar results for the next match. Given the Indian cricket calendar, it is difficult to operate until we have at least 9-11 strips in the square," Achari says. While neutral BCCI curators will overlook the preparations for the Duleep Trophy, Achari is confident the pitches will hold onto their Aussie instincts. "I am expecting the same (bouncy pitches). I used to prepare the pitches alone throughout the season. Nowadays, the BCCI sends neutral curators to manage them. The rest will depend on their preparation according to the team conditions. Their methods and experience are better than mine," Achari remarks. Even as the venue hosts several NCA camps and BCCI age-group tournaments, Ferrer remains grounded on the prospect of more top-end tournaments soon at the facility. "Now every district in Andhra has a ground (laughs)," he says. In the meantime, Anantapur will relish the procession of the country's top stars to their backyard. To their own mighty 'Perth'.



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the others followed and it was natural. They showed me that we can, from France, win the European titles and we can beat the Danish guys. We can beat everyone in the world; that's not impossible."

Lanier hails from Normandy, and literally started badminton when the racket was taller than him - at age 2, accompanying both his parents to the indoor barn-courts, where the mofussil French spend their winters. He's grown up idolising Lin Dan's mixture of power and 'laziness' ("We think that he's not really moving around the court, but he had a beautiful deception and he didn't really need to move, in fact," he told Olympics.com). But he brings distinct European physicality which can disrupt the Asian order of dominance of this sport. Lanier is just 19 and was determined after not qualifying for Paris, and his opponents at Japan weren't exactly in the best shape - mentally or physically, post Olympics. Soon after winning Japan though, he announced his intent to make a mark at the Paris World Championships in 2025. The likes of Lakshya Sen, Li Shifeng and Kunlavut will continue to max their strengths of lithe speed, tall physicality and endless endurance and compact technique respectively. But as Viktor Axelsen has shown power combined with solid technical prowess can help you dominate badminton and end the Asian hegemony. Hosting the Olympics definitely fast-tracked French badminton. There's another projection on muscled, power-badminton that's a little more scary given where the Games are headed in four years time. Like Indian national coach Pullela Gopichand says, "Now imagine when the Americans get into the mix!"