

INDIAN CHRONICLE

17 October, 2024 | Thursday | Volume No:12 | Issue No:212

Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

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Karimnagar Collector advises farmers to get MSP by selling paddy in PPC

Karimnagar: Collector Pamela Satpathy advised farmers to get minimum support price (MSP) by selling their produce in paddy purchasing centers established by the state government. The Collector along with Choppadandi MLA Medipally Satyam inaugurated PPC centers in Vedula of Ramadugu mandal, Garshakurthy of Gangadhara mandal on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, she instructed staff to arrange all facilities at centers for the convenience of farmers and not to give any troubles to them. The MLA advised farmers not to be betrayed by selling the crop to middlemen. Government has set up centers for the convenience of farmers. So, ryots could get remunerative prices for their produce by bringing quality crops to centers.

PM Modi to chair NDA CMs' conclave in Chandigarh tomorrow



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair a national conclave of all chief ministers and deputy chief ministers of the ruling National Democratic Alliance in Chandigarh on Thursday. The BJP on Wednesday said the conclave would deliberate on issues of national development and also discuss the 50th anniversary of the 1975 Emergency, imposed by former PM Indira Gandhi.

"Almost all 20 chief ministers of the NDA and their deputies will be engaging in a half-day conclave, the first of its kind after many years, being held in Chandigarh. PM Narendra Modi will be present all through the meeting and will guide the proceedings," the BJP said.

The party said BJP president JP Nadda, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu and Nagaland CM Nipah Kishor would also lead the discussions. The proceedings of the CM Conclave will start immediately after the swearing-in ceremony of newly elected Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini. There are in all 13 CMs and 16 deputy CMs belonging to the BJP whereas Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Sikkim, Nagaland and Meghalaya are ruled by the NDA partners of the BJP.

"Deliberations in this meeting will cover a structured agenda covering national development issues. It will also discuss subjects like observance of 'Sanvidhan Ka Amrut Mahotsav' and the Year of 50th anniversary of the attempt to murder democracy," the BJP said.

Bomb threat to flights: Mumbai police has arrested a minor, says Civil Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Mumbai Police has arrested a minor responsible for issuing bomb threats to three flights, Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu said on Wednesday (October 16, 2024). He also assured that "every possible effort is being made to safeguard airline operations." "Strongly condemn the recent bomb threats to Indian air carriers. We are closely monitoring the situation and ensuring that every necessary measures are taken against such actions. We are Committed in maintaining the highest security standards and passenger safety remains our top-most priority," he said in a post on X. "Mumbai Police has arrested a minor responsible for issuing bomb threats targeting 3 flights. All others responsible for the disruptions will be identified and duly prosecuted," he said in his statement. The arrest comes after the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), earlier in the day, sought a report from the Civil Aviation Ministry on the series of bomb threats to domestic and international flights of various airlines. A senior MHA official confirmed that the Ministry has instructed the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Bureau of Civil Aviation, National Investigation Agency (NIA) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) to submit a report on bomb threats that have been received recently. Meanwhile, the Delhi Police also registered an FIR in connection with bomb threats and launched a probe into the matter, according to official sources. The FIR was registered at the IGI airport police station. At least six more flights received bomb threats for the third consecutive day on Wednesday (October 16, 2024), taking the total tally of such calls to at least 15 though most were declared hoax. These included three IndiGo flights 6E 651 Mumbai to Delhi, 6E 1011 Mumbai to Singapore, and 6E 74, from Riyadh to Mumbai. Akasa Air's QP 1335 Delhi to Bengaluru, and two other SpiceJet flights too received similar threats. These were all declared hoax and the aircraft allowed for flight operations.

PM Modi launches BJP's Active Membership Campaign, becomes first member

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday became the first active member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as he launched the party's nationwide 'active membership campaign'. The event, held in the presence of BJP national president J.P. Nadda, and Vinod Tawde, the convener of the National Membership Campaign, marks the next phase of the party's 'Sangathan Parv Membership Campaign-2024'. PM Modi shared photos of the event on social media platform X, expressing pride in becoming the first active member of the BJP.

"Giving momentum to our effort to build a devel-



oped India! Proud to become the first active member of the BJP and launch the active membership campaign today in the presence of our national president JP Nadda ji. This movement will strengthen our party at the grassroots level and ensure effective contributions from our workers towards national progress," the Prime Minister stated. The Prime Minister also outlined the criteria for becoming an active member. "To qualify as an active member, a worker must register at least 50 new members within a booth or an assembly seat. This will make them eligible to contest elections for the Mandal Committee and higher roles within the party. These workers will

be given ample opportunities to serve the party in various capacities in the future," PM Modi mentioned in his post.

The BJP's National Membership Campaign was initially launched by PM Modi on September 2 at the party's central office expansion. The campaign, titled 'Sangathan Parv Membership Campaign-2024,' has already seen significant growth, with the BJP surpassing nine crore members as of October 15. In Uttar Pradesh alone, the BJP claimed to have crossed two crore members. With the conclusion of the first and second phases of the membership drive, the third phase began on Wednesday, focusing on expanding the party's active membership base.

EAM S. Jaishankar thanks Pakistan PM, FM for hospitality after SCO meeting



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Islamabad: As he wrapped up his flying visit to Pakistan for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Heads of Government (CHG) meeting in Islamabad, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar on Wednesday afternoon thanked Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar for the "hospitality and courtesies" during his nearly 24-hour stay in the neighbouring country. "Departing from Islamabad. Thank PM Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and the Government of Pakistan for the hospitality and courtesies," the minister posted on X as he boarded the IAF plane at Rawalpindi's Nur Khan airbase. The last time an Indian EAM visited Pakistan was in 2015 when late Sushma Swaraj attended the Heart of Asia Conference in Islamabad. EAM Jaishankar highlighted that India made a "positive and constructive con-

tribution" to the deliberations at a "productive" meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government in Islamabad on Wednesday. A total of eight outcome documents were signed with many key takeaways from the Indian perspective.

It included Developing a dialogue on the idea of One Earth, One Family, One Future; Outcomes of India's initiatives like SCO Startup Forum, SWG on Startups and Innovation and Traditional Medicine welcomed by SCO members; DPI and Digital inclusion becoming part of SCO cooperation framework; SCO taking inspiration from Mission LIFE to achieving UNSDGs; and, enhancing global food security and nutrition through promoting use of climate-resilient and nutritious grains such as millets. The signed documents also included Upholding fair and balanced connectivity projects in accordance with international law, the goals and principles of the UN Charter and SCO Charter; Reemphasizing rules-based, non-discriminatory, open, fair, inclusive and transparent multilateral trading system with WTO at its core; and, opposing protectionist actions, unilateral sanctions, and trade restrictions that undermine the multilateral trading system and impede global sustainable development. During his much-anticipated address, the EAM called "terrorism, extremism and separatism" as the, "three evils" while emphasising that if trust is lacking and good neighbourliness is missing somewhere, there are surely reasons to introspect and causes to address. "If activities across borders are characterised by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges in parallel," said Jaishankar without naming Pakistan.

Mutiny against Konda Surekha: Six Congress MLAs ask high command to take action

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Hyderabad: A major political crisis has hit the Congress in the erstwhile Warangal, with six Congress MLAs openly revolting against Minister Konda Surekha and approaching the party high command complaining that she was "interfering" in their constituencies.

It is learnt that the six MLAs on Tuesday urged the high command and the State leadership as well to take action against Surekha, citing "interference" and "misconduct" by the Minister. In their complaints, they accused Surekha of overstepping her boundaries and creating problems in various Assembly constituencies in the district. The MLAs alleged that the interference by Surekha and her followers was causing friction between local MLAs, party leaders and the cadre. Sources say the MLAs would be flying to Delhi on Thursday to lodge a complaint against Surekha with the party high command. They have even sought an appointment with AICC general secretary KC Venugopal. Telangana Congress party in-charge Deepa Das Munshi and TPCC chief Mahesh Kumar Goud have also expressed displeasure over the functioning of Surekha and asked her to avoid controversies.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has reportedly asked Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy to resolve the issue as the rift between party MLAs may affect the prospects of the party in the upcoming local body polls. The Congress MLAs from Warangal claim that Surekha's actions tarnished the party's public image and could negatively impact its prospects in the upcoming local body and MLC elections. The Congress had won 10 assembly seats of the 12 in the erstwhile Warangal district. Party sources say the Congress MLAs have



stopped inviting Surekha to programmes held in their constituency as she was creating rifts between party workers and encouraging groupism. They complained that the Minister was trying to increase her influence in their constituencies and trying to weaken them. The clashes between Surekha's supporters and the party's Parkala MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy over the display of their respective leaders' photos in flex posters on the day of Dasara at Dharmaram village in Geesugonda mandal of Warangal district, has exposed the differences between the two. Surekha occupying the chair of the Station House Officer of Geesugonda police station too did not go well with the State leadership after a video of the incident went viral. Surekha and Prakash Reddy have been at loggerheads for some time now. In May this year, a heated phone conversation between the two went viral on WhatsApp groups. Surekha is also having a running feud with Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Seethakka, it is learned.

Eight-year-old Jetoth Vihanram from Siddipet scales Mount Patalsu

Siddipet: When 20 of 42 members of an expedition team from Telangana could not conquer Mount Patalsu, an eight-year-old boy from Siddipet reached the summit with ease, leaving everyone surprised.

The boy, Jetoth Vihanram, a native of Hanuma Thanda in Dhoolmitta mandal, was staying in Karimnagar town. Since his father Jetoth Tirupathi Nayak was working as an Excise constable in Karimnagar, Vihan was also studying Class 4 in the town. Nayak's colleague Lenkala Mahipal Reddy, a well-known mountaineer, was imparting mountaineering training to some 42 youngsters, who were aspiring for different jobs in the Indian Army. After watching the youths training every day, Vihan also expressed his liking for mountaineering and decided to join the expedition team without much training.

Centre approves 3pc DA, DR hike for govt employees, pensioners

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

New Delhi: Union Cabinet led by PM Narendra Modi on Wednesday approved a 3 per cent increase in dearness allowance (DA) and dearness relief (DR) for Central government employees and pensioners. The latest hike raises the DA or DR from 50 per cent to 53 per cent. The increase will come into effect from 1 July. This decision is a major relief for Central government employees ahead of Diwali. The biannual revision of DA and DR, which impacts approximately one crore Central government employees and pensioners, aims to mitigate the effects of inflation.

DA is given to the Central government employees which is calculated based on the average of the Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW), which is published monthly by the Labour Bureau, making it a crucial component in determining government salaries and pensions. In March, the government raised the dearness allowance by 4 per cent, effective from January 2024, bringing the total dearness allowance to 50 per cent of basic pay from 46 per cent. According to the Seventh Pay Commission report, a slew of allowances including house rent allowance is eligible for automatic revision once the DA reaches 50 per cent of the basic pay. These allowances, including HRA, were accordingly raised earlier this year, the Confederation of Central Government Employees confirmed. However, the basic pay has not been raised as such a recommendation was not part of the final Seventh Pay Commission report. Apart from this, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Dev Sai on Wednesday announced that DA for state government employees will be increased by 4 per cent ahead of Diwali. Due to hike, DA will become 50 per cent of the basic salary. This increase will be effective from October 1.

PM Modi congratulates Omar Abdullah, says Centre will work closely with him for J&K's progress



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Srinagar: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday extended his best wishes to Omar Abdullah as his becoming the Chief Minister and assured that the Centre will work closely with him and his team for the progress of Jammu and Kashmir. PM Modi said on his official X-post handle, "Congratulations to Shri Omar Abdullah Ji on taking oath as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. Wishing him the very best in his efforts to serve the people. The Centre will work closely with him and his team for J&K's progress."

Congratulations to Shri Omar Abdullah Ji on taking oath as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. Wishing him the very best in his efforts to serve the people. Earlier in the day, Omar Abdullah was administered the oath of office and secrecy by J&K Lt Governor Manoj Sinha. Five MLAs, including Surinder Choudhary, Sakina Itoo, Javaid Ahmad Rana, Javaid Ahmad Dar and Satish Sharma were sworn in as ministers. Omar Abdullah later announced that he was deputing Surinder Choudhary as the deputy chief minister to give proper representation to the Jammu division as he had promised before forming the government. Abdullah has taken over as the 14th chief minister of J&K having served the previously full six-year term from 2009 to 2015 as the chief minister of the erstwhile J&K state. Congress party said that it would support the government from outside. Squashing rumours about differences between the NC and the Congress over berth sharing in the council of ministers, G.A. Mir, leader of the J&K Congress legislature party told reporters, "We are very much part of the government." He reiterated the party's "principal stand on the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir" saying that Congress will not take the oath of office until statehood is fully restored. He emphasised that this position is non-negotiable and reflects the party's commitment to the rights of the people of J&K. "We did not contest this election for power, but for restoration of the people's rights. The question of ministerial posts is irrelevant at this point. Our priority remains the restoration of statehood," Mir said. He called on the Prime Minister to honour the mandate given by the people, which Mir believes clearly indicates a desire for the return of statehood. "The people have spoken and the Prime Minister should respect their will," he added. Mir also clarified that despite not taking the oath immediately, Congress remains an integral part of the government.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Right to protest

THE right to protest is protected under Article 19 of the Constitution. Citizens have a right to assemble peacefully and protest against the action or inaction on the part of the State. What's becoming an issue of concern, particularly in Punjab, is the repeated recourse — almost a given — to blocking roads and railway tracks when something irks someone. The protesters base their argument on past experience, which is that memorandums and dharnas count for little and only the disruption of traffic and essential services has the desired effect of forcing the authorities to take cognisance. The counter-argument is equally persuasive. What purpose does it serve to inconvenience fellow citizens day in and day out? If the authorities are at fault, why make the people suffer? The normalisation of disruption is a telling commentary on a State that does not care — for protesters and public alike. It is essential to guard against a citizen versus citizen binary taking root. A situation, where both protesters and citizens harbour the notion of being victims, does not augur well for democracy. It dilutes the legitimate demand of protesters and makes citizens immune to legitimate causes. No one gains. The use of the term 'andolanjeevi', in the protests against the Modi government's three farm laws drew criticism, and rightly so. People in our region stood as one, in solidarity with the protesting farmers. If these selfsame citizens — known for backing a worthy cause — increasingly feel they are at the receiving end, those leading the protests need to introspect. The methods being adopted are not helping. Meanwhile, another 'andolanjeevi', the well-known Ladakhi activist Sonam Wangchuk is not being allowed to have his say in Delhi. Section 144, the Raj-era section in the revamped penal code, has been imposed all over the capital's New Delhi district, prohibiting the gathering of more than five people.

18 more travel agencies booked for illegally advertising job opportunities on social media



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

travel agencies Earlier, 20 first information reports (FIRs) against 25 such illegal travel agencies were registered in the month of August. Now the tally of booked illegal travel agencies has reached 43, the spokesperson stated. Continuing its crackdown against illegal travel agents, Punjab Police's NRI Affairs Wing and Cyber Crime Wing in coordination with the Protectorate of Emigrants, Chandigarh, have booked 18 more travel agencies in the state for illegally advertising employment opportunities on social media, an official spokesperson said here Sunday. Earlier, 20 first information reports (FIRs) against 25 such illegal travel agencies were registered in the month of August. Now the tally of booked illegal travel agencies has reached 43, the spokesperson stated.

The Protectorate of Emigrants had red-flagged the advertising on Instagram and Facebook for jobs in foreign countries by such travel agencies. Additional Director General of Police (NRI Affairs) Praveen K Sinha stated, "These unscrupulous travel agencies were advertising jobs abroad on Instagram and Facebook without possessing the requisite license and permissions. We checked the online platforms, verified their credentials covertly and registered FIRs against them." He added that a total of 18 new FIRs had been registered under the Emigration Act at various NRI police stations in the state, including at Amritsar, Mohali, Ludhiana and Patiala. Of the 18 new FIRs, six were registered in September and 12 in the current month so far. The ADGP stated, "Of the total 34 accused in the 26 FIRs registered in months of August and September, 25 have been arrested." Further investigations are on and notices are being sent to the remaining accused travel agents, he added. The ADGP exhorted citizens to be cautious and verify travel agents' credentials before entrusting them with documents and money. "Only engage agencies with a valid Recruiting Agent (RA) licence under the Emigration Act, 1983, and always ask for the licence of the agency issued under the said Act. "Verify and then trust, should be the working principle while engaging travel agents," he advised.

Woman and her boyfriend arrested for killing 2 children in Karnataka's Ramnagara

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

The police in Karnataka's Ramnagara district have arrested a woman and her boyfriend for allegedly murdering two of her children earlier this month. According to the police, the arrested have been identified as Sweety, 25, and her partner Gregory Francis, 30, residents of Ramnagara district, who allegedly killed the woman's children Kabila, 2, and Kabilan, 11 months. The police said Sweety met Francis at a park on Bengaluru's Tannery Road two months ago, and they began an affair. Sweety, who frequently visited Ramnagara with Francis, was married to Shivakumar, a Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) worker, and had two children with him, added the police. On September 27, Sweety rented a house in Ilooru with Francis. Kabila was allegedly murdered on October 1, and Kabilan on October 7, said the police. "Sweety beat the children on their backs leading to asphyxiation," said a police officer. While they cremated Kabila without raising suspicion by claiming the child had died of illness, concerns arose during Kabilan's cremation.

How voice samples helped police solve case of MNC employee's rape at Lonavala resort



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

More than a decade ago, the rape of a 29-year-old woman at a well-known resort in Lonavala shook the country just as the issue of women's safety has once again taken centre stage in Pune, particularly after the Bopdev Ghat gang rape incident. The woman, who had come to the resort for a conference held by her company, was raped inside a plush cottage at the resort by a 22-year-old security guard in the early hours of December 10, 2010. Since it was dark inside the cottage, the woman told the police she could not see the accused. However, the victim identified the accused by his voice samples which became crucial evidence in the case. The Pune Rural police arrested the accused nearly a month after the incident. A court in Pune sentenced the accused to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment in July 2018. Threatened by a pointed object

As per the police and court records, the woman worked as an account executive at the Delhi branch of a multinational company. She came for the company conference at the resort in Lonavala in the Pune district on December 9, 2010, and December 10, 2010, with her colleagues. She was provided accommodation at a cottage in the resort. The records show she went to the cottage on the night of December 9, locked its door, and went to sleep. She kept two lights on in the room, away from the bed, the records show. After a while, she woke up when she felt someone gagging her, found the lights switched off and a man forcing himself on her. When she tried to shout for help, the man held a pointed object to her neck and threatened in Hindi that he would kill her if she made a noise.

Taking him to be a thief, she asked him to take her valuables and leave, but he replied he wanted to have sexual intercourse with her. When she tried to reach for

her mobile phone, the man pressed a pillow on her face. She again requested him to leave, but he repeated he would leave after having sex. According to the records, she did not shout for help again as she was scared for her safety. The man allegedly raped her twice. After he left, she locked the door and switched on the lights at 3.50 am. She then called her woman friend in another room for help. As the victim's mental condition deteriorated, she went to her parents in Mumbai. She registered a First Information Report (FIR) at the Paud police station against an unknown person on December 12, 2010, under sections 450, 376, 323, and 506 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). A medical examination of the victim conducted by three medical officers, including one at the Sassoon Hospital, confirmed sexual assault on her and injury marks on her body. As the police initiated a probe into the rape case, they checked videos captured by CCTVs inside the resort, but failed to get any clues. The cottage where the incident took place was not under CCTV surveillance. Based on the description given by the victim, the police prepared a sketch of the suspect.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena leader Neelam Gorhe, who is now the Deputy Speaker of Maharashtra Legislative Council, raised the rape issue at an Assembly session in Nagpur. Gorhe asked the police to conduct a DNA test of all resort staff and other employees present on the day of the incident. Since the victim told the police that the rapist spoke to her in Hindi, they recorded the voice samples of some staff members, who were on duty at the resort when the crime took place, during their investigation. The victim told the police that one of these samples matched with the voice of the person who raped her. The police then arrested a security guard hailing from Uttar Pradesh, on January 14, 2011. The police also said the guard's face matched 80 per cent of the suspect's sketch. They also took his blood samples for DNA tests. Arguments in court During the trial, the prosecution lawyer pointed out that the accused was on duty at the resort, and that the resort staff knew about the lock system of the cottage where the victim was raped. The victim also identified the voice of the accused before the court. However, the accused denied his involvement in the crime. The defence lawyer stressed the DNA reports that did not match that of the accused. While considering that the victim had identified the accused, the court observed she did not have previous enmity with him, and said there was no reason she would falsely implicate him in the matter. The court also considered the medical reports confirming the sexual assault on the victim.

2,000 vehicles sold in Navratri: Data

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

As many as 1,861 vehicles were registered from October 3 to October 11, according to the details shared by the Chandigarh Registering and Licensing Authority (RLA). Several people purchase new vehicles in this period, which is considered auspicious as per Hindu religion. Data revealed that 964 petrol based two-wheelers and 436 petrol-based cars were registered. Also, 53 electric cars, 59 hybrid cars, and 93 electric two-wheelers, were also bought by people. RLA data showed 24 CNG cars and 153 new diesel cars were also purchased during this period. From 2014 till date that is 2024, Chandigarh has added approximately 4.69 lakh vehicles to its already crumbling infrastructure.



Even as there have been discussions and debates on the need to strengthen the public transport on the lines of countries abroad, the Union Territory's (UT's) residents prefer personal vehicles. Since Covid, more cars than two-wheelers prior to the Covid year of 2020, more two-wheelers than four-wheelers were registered in Chandigarh. After Covid, however, the mood in the 'City Beautiful' began to change. In 2014, 29,859 two-wheelers and 21,476 cars were registered in Chandigarh, while 28,936 two-wheelers and 21,365 cars were registered in 2015. In 2016 and 2017, 28,794 and 30,341 two-wheelers, and 21,073 and 21,765 new cars were added, respectively.

All these years, the number of electric vehicles registered in the city was zero, except in 2017, when 13 electric cars and one electric two-wheeler were bought. In 2018, 2019 and 2020, 29,698, 25,698 and 15,148 two-wheelers were registered in Chandigarh respectively. In these three years, 20,120, 18,975 and 15,402 cars were purchased. However, after 2020, four-wheeler registrations overtook two-wheeler registrations.

In 2021, as many as 20,437 cars were registered, while 16,527 two-wheelers were added. In 2022, there were 21,829 new two-wheelers and 25,415 new four-wheelers. In 2023, car registrations beat the two-wheeler registrations again as 26,515 cars and 20,278 two-wheelers were added. Experts have said authorities in Chandigarh, a city with the highest vehicle density in the country, must take steps to make its public transport system robust to ease the already congested city roads. The 'City Beautiful' desperately requires the need to make a robust smart public transport else its roads that are already burgeoning under the high vehicle density will be choked and cramped entirely, experts warned.

Bomb threat on Air India flight from Mumbai to New York, diverted to Delhi

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Air India flight AI 119 from Mumbai to New York was diverted mid-air to Delhi early Monday following a security concern arising out of bomb threat. "An Air India flight operating from Mumbai to New York was diverted to Delhi following a security concern arising out of bomb threat... All standard safety protocols are being diligently followed to ensure the safety of passengers and crew on board," DCP IGI, Usha Rangani said. The DCP added that the threat was received from a tweet on the social media platform X. Air India said that the flight — AI119 — received a "specific security alert", following which it was diverted to Delhi.

"Flight AI119 operating Mumbai to JFK (New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport) on October 14 received a specific security alert and on instructions of the government's security regulatory committee was diverted to Delhi. All passengers have disembarked and are at the Delhi airport terminal. Our colleagues on ground are making sure to minimise the inconvenience caused to our guests by this unexpected disruption," an Air India spokesperson said. In such instances, the aircraft is subject to a thorough security inspection before being allowed to take off again. The Boeing 777 aircraft — VT-AER — departed Mumbai at 2:27 am, nearly 50 minutes behind its scheduled departure of 1:40 am, and landed around one-and-a-half hours later, according to flight tracking service Flightradar24. Passengers were made to deplane the aircraft at around 4:10 am, but were asked to leave their bags on board. They are currently waiting in the holding area at the terminal, The Indian Express has learnt.

So far, it is not clear whether the threat was a hoax. If that turns out to be the case, once the aircraft's security inspection is complete, the plane will be allowed to fly to New York. Over the past few months, a number of Indian carriers' flights have received fake bomb threats. On September 6, a Vistara flight from Mumbai to Frankfurt was diverted to Erzurum airport in Turkey's eastern region after a note claiming that there was a bomb on board the aircraft was found in one of the plane's lavatories. The threat turned out to be a hoax but the incident became an



Air India flight AI 119 from Mumbai to New York was diverted mid-air to Delhi early Monday following a security concern arising out of bomb threat.

ordeal for the passengers who were stuck in Erzurum for nearly 24 hours. This was because by the time the necessary security checks were completed, the crew had exceeded its flight duty time limitations, which meant it could not have operated a flight without a mandatory rest period. Consequently, Vistara had to send an alternative aircraft with a fresh set of crew to fly the passengers stuck in Erzurum to Frankfurt.

What happens next?

All passengers have been sent to a hotel and further updates on the flight's operation are awaited from Air India. It is not clear yet if the airline would need to deploy another set of crew to operate the flight from Delhi to New York. If the operating crew is expected to exceed the FDTL, then Air India would have to arrange another set of crew to operate the flight. Aviation experts pointed out that it was likely that Air India will change the crew as the flight has been diverted and delayed, which has eaten into the scheduled flight time.

Two notorious criminals shot dead in separate incidents in UP



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Two notorious criminals, one a history-sheeter and the other carrying a reward of Rs 1.5 lakh, were shot dead in separate incidents in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras and Bulandshahr districts on Sunday, said the police.

Rajesh Jatav, 30, a notorious gang leader, was killed in an exchange of fire with the Bulandshahr police under the Aahar police station jurisdiction. (Express Archives/representational photo) Two notorious criminals, one a history-sheeter and the other carrying a reward of Rs 1.5 lakh, were shot dead in separate incidents in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras and Bulandshahr districts on Sunday, said the police.

Rajesh Jatav, 30, a notorious gang leader, was killed in an exchange of fire with the Bulandshahr police under the Aahar police station jurisdiction Sunday morning. Jung Bahadur, the in-charge of the Aahar police station, and Aarif, a constable, also sustained bullet injuries in the exchange of fire with Jatav, who was intercepted by the police when he was going alone on a bike.

Challenged by the police team, he allegedly opened fire, and the police also retaliated, shooting at him three times, while one bullet each hit the police inspector and the constable. Jatav was rushed to a hospital but he succumbed to his injuries while on the way, the police said. "Jatav was running an active gang of around a dozen criminals who were carrying loot, dacoity, and attempts to murder in the Bulandshahr and Aligarh districts for a long time. The Bulandshahr and Aligarh police had respectively announced a reward of 1 lakh and Rs 50,000 on his head. He was wanted in nearly 50 cases lodged at 15 police stations of Aligarh and Bulandshahr," said Shlok Kumar, Senior Superintendent of Police, Bulandshahr. In another incident, history-sheeter Harendra alias Hathi Singh, 31, was allegedly shot dead by unidentified assailants while he was out on an evening stroll on Sunday night in the Sadabad area of the Hathras district. "The deceased had a routine of going for an evening walk and the killers knew this. They shot him dead on a desolate road and fled. We are trying to find out the killers. He was a history-sheeter at the Sadabad police station," said Himanshu Singh, the in-charge of the Sadabad police station.

Violence erupts in Bengal's Howrah over photos during Durga Puja celebrations



The Howrah police said the situation was under control and also appealed for peace.

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Violence broke out in West Bengal's Howrah district on Sunday over a drawing competition and photo display during a Durga Puja celebration, prompting authorities to deploy the Rapid Action Force (RAF) and impose prohibitory orders. Swati Bhangalia, Superintendent of Police, Howrah, said a complaint was filed by a community regarding the objectionable photo, after which the police registered a case and arrested a few people. "In the Howrah district, unrest broke out during a Durga Puja celebration over a photo. The community objected to the photo and they came to the police station to submit a deputation. The deputation was received and a complaint was taken. Accordingly, a case was filed and arrests were also made. However, a section of them attacked the police, who retaliated and made more arrests," said Bhangalia. Bhangalia said the situation was under control and that strict action would be taken against anyone attempting to disrupt the peace. She also urged the public to maintain communal harmony. "We received information about vandalism in some puja pandals. We immediately sent force and the situation was brought under control. So far, 25 to 30 people have been arrested. We are patrolling in the area and have also imposed Section 144 in the area," said Swati Bhangalia, SP Howrah.

VIDEO | West Bengal: Visuals from the Shyampur area of Howrah district where unrest broke out during Durga puja celebration on Sunday. Unidentified individuals were reportedly involved in sparking the disturbances. Meanwhile, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and Leader of Opposition in Bengal Assembly Suwendu Adhikari urged the police and the administration to take action against "unruly vandals". "Today a group of miscreants while returning from the Shyampur Police Station where they went to submit a deputation, went berserk and started vandalising the Durga Puja Pandals. I would like to urge the DG @WBPolice to send adequate forces immediately at the spot to quell the vandalism and take action against the unruly vandals. Secretary @HomeBengal, you must monitor the whole situation till normalcy is restored. DM @HowrahDistrict & SP @RuralHowrah please take all steps necessary..." Adhikari posted on X. A group of criminal thugs, after submitting a deputation at Shyampur Police Station, unleashed chaos in the Shyampur area. These anti-social individuals engaged in blatant vandalism, targeting Durga Puja pandals in the locality. "West Bengal is burning, again. A group of criminal thugs, after submitting a deputation at Shyampur Police Station, unleashed chaos in the Shyampur area. These anti-social individuals engaged in blatant vandalism, targeting Durga Puja pandals in the locality... The situation has grown increasingly tense in areas under the Shyampur Police Station, which comes under the Howrah Rural Police District. This is a heinous act of violence and an assault on our traditions and the peaceful observance of Durga Puja," Malviya said in his post.

YouTuber 'attacked' in Batala, he blames AAP MLA's PA; legislator denies allegations



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Behal Batala AAP The YouTuber blamed local Batala AAP MLA Sherry Kalsi's personal assistant for the attack on him. However, Kalsi has denied the allegations. A Batala-based YouTuber, Ramesh Behal, was seriously injured on Sunday after he was allegedly attacked by five people "for raising the issue of disrespecting the national flag that occurred in Batala some time ago". Behal blamed local Batala AAP MLA Sherry Kalsi's personal assistant for the attack on him. However, Kalsi has denied the allegations.

A video of injured Behal on a hospital bed has gone viral on social media. The alleged attack happened in Batala (Gurdaspur district). The police have not registered a case yet, as Behal was not available for giving a statement due to injuries. He has multiple fractures on his legs.

In the video, Behal is heard saying: "I appeal to the judiciary for justice. I had raised the issue of disrespecting the national flag that occurred in Batala some time ago. I had received several death threats regarding this matter. On receiving threats, I had also provided a sworn statement to the SSP Batala. I had already been attacked three times before, which were life-threatening, but I survived. The SSP Batala, the SHO of Civil Lines Batala, and the SHO of City Batala all know that a deadly attack was unleashed on me, but no action has been taken. Today, five young men attacked me again, and I have identified two of them. I have often seen them with MLA Sherry Kalsi. This attack was orchestrated by the MLA's PA, Manik Mehta. I request justice and demand action against the culprits." On the allegations, Sherry Kalsi told the media, "I have nothing to do with the attack. He (Ramesh Behal) is a negative person. You can check his credibility from Batala." Meanwhile, SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal wrote on Facebook, "I condemn the attack on... Ramesh Behal from Batala. From his hospital bed, he has sent me a video in which he names the attackers and those supporting them, while appealing to the judiciary for justice. It is deeply saddening to hear about such incidents happening frequently. ... under this so-called 'change' government, no one is safe, and the administration appears helpless in the face of these goons. I appeal to the senior police officials to recognise their responsibility, watch this video, and arrest the culprits without delay, ensuring they receive the appropriate punishment." Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa, said, "I met Ramesh Behal to enquire about his health following the assault. This highlights the Bhagwant Mann government's failure to maintain law and order. We also met SSP Batala Suhail Mir, demanding immediate action and arrests. The CM's silence speaks volumes about the governance under the AAP rule."

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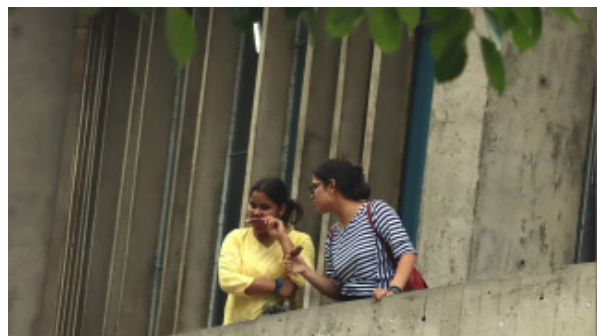
HC imposes Rs 1 lakh fine on Panjab University for failing law student

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

panjab university PU's counsel claimed the student should have been governed by the older rules as he took admission in 2016, before a 2022 amendment. The Punjab and Haryana High Court has quashed the result of a law student from Panjab University (PU), Chandigarh, who was wrongly declared 'fail' in a 6th semester paper in 2023. The court directed the university to issue the student's Detailed Marks Certificate (DMC) based on his actual marks and imposed a Rs 1 lakh cost on PU for its "wrongful action."

The court observed that the university's arbitrary actions had adversely affected the student's career and awarded compensation. It also directed the Vice Chancellor to investigate the matter, hold the responsible officials accountable, and recover the costs from them if necessary.

The petitioner, a B.A. LL.B. student at the University Institute of Legal Studies (UILS), had joined the five-year integrated course in 2016, which was scheduled to conclude in 2021. The student failed the 'Land Law and Rent Laws' subject during the May 2019 exam and reappeared for it in May 2023. Despite securing passing marks, the university scaled down his score and declared him 'fail'. The petitioner's counsel argued that the student was governed by the 2016 rules, which required a minimum of 45 percent marks in each paper, combining internal assessment and theory. Having scored 54 out of 80 marks



in the theory exam, the student met the passing criteria, but the university erroneously applied an outdated regulation to reduce his marks. PU's counsel claimed the student should have been governed by the older rules as he took admission in 2016, before a 2022 amendment. However, the High Court rejected this reasoning, terming the university's actions "perverse" and unsupported by law. Justice Jasgurpreet Singh Puri held that the university had acted arbitrarily and without any legal basis for scaling down the petitioner's marks. He further stated that such actions, which jeopardise a student's career, cannot be justified. The court ordered PU to issue the corrected DMC reflecting the petitioner's 54 marks and process his degree. The Vice Chancellor has been directed to take corrective measures within two months to prevent similar incidents from affecting students in the future.

Amid deepening probe in GST fraud case, 4 more arrested



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Amid a deepening probe in the GST fraud case, the Detection of Crime Branch (DCB) in Ahmedabad has arrested four more people, officials said on Sunday. The alleged racket involves over 220 shell companies that were fraudulently passing and availing bogus Input Tax Credit (ITC) and causing loss of crores of rupees to the government exchequer. A total of eight people have been arrested so far. Crime Branch DCP Ajit Rajjan on Sunday said that four more accused, who are owners of these benami companies, were placed under arrest and more arrests would follow. Those arrested have been identified as Faizal Munaf Shaikh (32), resident of Bhavnagar

and associated with Dhruvi Enterprise; Irfan alias Padu Sattar Jethwa (42), resident of Bhavnagar and owner of Dhruvi Enterprise; Jignesh Himmatlal Desai (50), resident of Bhavnagar and operator of the bank account of Dhruvi Enterprise; and Paresb Pradeep Dodiya (25), resident of Rajkot and owner of Prakash Industries. The four accused are set to be presented in a court on Monday, said investigating officer IN Ghasura. In the FIR filed at the DCB police station in Ahmedabad on October 7 in the matter, 13 firms and their proprietors were named as accused wherein the other shell companies had allegedly availed of fraudulent Input Tax Credit (ITC) that had been illegally passed on to them through bogus billing by Dhruvi Enterprise, the firm which is the main accused. The alleged racket was first unearthed by the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI). Four accused were earlier arrested in the case: The Hindu journalist Mahesh Langa, Aijaz alias Maldar s/o Iqbal Habib Maldar (30), Abdulkader alias Babu s/o Samad Jainmiya Kadri (33) and Jyotish Magan Gondaliya (42) were arrested on October 8 and the following day, on October 9, the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate had granted 10 days remand of all four accused to the Crime Branch. On October 11, the Gujarat High Court heard a petition from Mahesh Langa seeking to quash the remand order of the lower court. The next hearing is on October 14.

CM hails Surat industrialists for resolve to set up 80,000 rainwater harvesting units

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on Sunday hailed the resolve of industrialists, who have settled in Surat, to contribute to set up 80,000 rainwater harvesting units in Gujarat and congratulated them. The Chief Minister was addressing an event organised by Union Water Resources Ministry in Surat under the 'Jalsanchay, Jan Bhagidari' initiative. Gujarat has set a target of setting up more than 2 lakh such rainwater harvesting units in the state. At the function called 'Karmabhumi thi Janmabhumi' held at Indoor Stadium in Surat, apart from Gujarat CM, Rajasthan CM Bhajanlal Sharma, Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav and Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar Samrat Chaudhary brainstormed on intensifying water conservation programmes in their states, said an official release. Speaking on the occasion, CM Patel said, "Industrialists who have made Surat their karmabhumi have resolved to contribute to set up 80,000 rain water harvesting structures in Gujarat. And there is a target of setting up 2 lakh structures. I congratulate them." CM Patel hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his initiatives



like 'Nal Se Jal' and 'Catch the Rain', while saying that these are examples of the PM's vision to address challenges before its arrival. Quoting Paatil, the official release stated that Gujarat's model of 'Jal Sanchay, Jan Bhagidari' will set an example for the entire country. The event was also attended by various Gujarat ministers, and industrialists from Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh among others.

Cocaine seized from Gujarat firm, 5 detained; police claim linked to Dubai cartel



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Cocaine The Delhi Police Special Cell, along with the Bharuch police, recovered 518 kg of cocaine worth Rs 5,000 crore during a raid at a company in Ankleshwar in Gujarat, officers said on Sunday.

The Delhi Police Special Cell, along with the Bharuch police, have recovered 518 kg of cocaine worth Rs 5,000 crore during a raid conducted at a firm in Gujarat's Ankleshwar GIDC Sunday evening, officers said. Police claimed this is part of the consignment allegedly smuggled into the country by a Dubai-based cartel which was recently busted in Delhi. The Delhi Police issued a lookout notice (LoC) against the alleged mastermind, Virendra Baisoya, who is based in Dubai. Sources claimed the cocaine was recovered during a search at a company in Ankleshwar. Five people associated with the company have been detained, said sources. A top officer in the Gujarat Police confirmed the five have been taken to Delhi for further questioning. The arrest procedure is also underway, said the officer on condition of anonymity. Sources said the firm, which claims to manufacture other chemical products on its website, was incorporated in 2016. The Bharuch Police is gathering information on what chemicals the company was manufacturing, sources said. Special Cell officers said a total of 1,289 kg of cocaine and 40 kg of hydroponic Thailand marijuana, worth Rs 13,000 crore, have been recovered

in this case so far. "Five top officials are being interrogated right now on the role of the company," a police officer said on condition of anonymity.

Dubai to Gujarat to Delhi-NCR The officer said "the drugs came from Dubai and were sorted and mixed before being dispatched to Delhi-NCR". The drugs were then moved out of Gujarat as 'medical consignments' and then handed over, on paper, to an alleged fake pharma company set up in the name of 'Pharma Solutions Services', claimed sources.

"The fake company hired employees on the pretext of working for a pharma brand — many of them MBA graduates — and used them to arrange storage in NCR. The company's name was also used to hire vehicles from transporters in Delhi to move the consignment from one godown to another," the police officer quoted above said. Officers said on October 1, the Special Cell had raided a warehouse in Delhi's Mahipalpur, leased by a publisher's son, Tushar Goel, and seized a consignment and 562 kg of cocaine and 40 kg of hydroponic marijuana. An officer said, "On October 10, 208 kg of additional cocaine was recovered from a shop in West Delhi's Ramesh Nagar... during the investigation, it was found that the recovered drug belonged to a company named Pharma Solutions Services and it came from the company in Gujarat." As of now, seven arrests have been made in the capital, including the Delhi handler Goel, by the Special Cell team led by DCP Amit Kaushik. Six LOCs have been issued. "The Gujarat firm was allegedly involved with the Dubai cartel and Baisoya. Their communication channels are being looked into," a police officer said. Earlier, officers told The Indian Express that a paid encrypted app called Threema was used by Baisoya to communicate with his India handlers, including two UK residents Jitendar alias Jassi and Savinder Singh, who were allegedly responsible for distributing the Mahipalpur godown batch and the Ramesh Nagar batch respectively. Jassi is in police custody while Singh has fled to the UK, police said.

Afghanistan to Sudan: For refugees outside UNHCR office, endless wait for assistance

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Seven years ago, Mahmood Zamani (52) came from Afghanistan to Delhi so that his sons, one aged 25 and the other 21, could have a shot at a university education. But he soon realised options for a refugee like him were limited. So he took to waiting outside the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Vikaspuri. Every day, for the past three months, Zamani arrives on the dot at noon and sits outside till 6 pm. "I couldn't educate my children as I didn't have proper documents and money," he says. "I registered here (at UNHCR) and got an ID (refugee card). But I've been awaiting resettlement for years. If they can't give me a space to live here, send me somewhere else. My son earns Rs 15,000, working in a gym in Jangpura, from 5 am to 10 pm. Out of that, Rs 9,000 goes into rent," says Zamani, who lives in Jangpura's Bhogal with his wife, sons, and two teenage daughters.

Like him, there are several refugees from other war-torn countries like Afghanistan and Sudan. Many live in temporary tents outside the office. Sometimes, they protest seeking help to get to Europe, resettle in India, or for cash assistance — often leading to skirmishes with locals. In one such incident on September 30, Syrian refugee Rafat, his 11-month-old son, and a Sudanese national were allegedly attacked by locals with a corrosive substance.

Rafat, 28, a former call centre employee, his wife Marisa, a Thai national, and their son had been living outside the office for a month while he tried to get a job. He sustained burn injuries on his neck, back, and hands while his son had injuries near his eyes and on his chest. His son would possibly need plastic surgery for the burns, says Rafat. "All I want is to leave this country now... I have already lost a son, I was about to lose another," he says. His firstborn died in Bengaluru in 2018 in an accident. Police said a man, Rakesh Kumar, has been arrested in the case. "The liquid thrown seems to be phenyl. One of the locals opened a jerry can and threw it on their (family's) tent. The exact composition is being verified," DCP (West) Vichitra Veer had said. Also outside the office is Mohammad Naimi, 50, who fled Afghanistan with his wife and two young daughters in 2019. Settling in Lajpat Nagar, Naimi found work as a transporter at a dry fruit



shop. But the Covid pandemic dealt them a heavy blow. "In December 2020, my three-year-old daughter succumbed to Covid. In June 2020, my two-year-old daughter also lost her life to the virus."

The deaths of their daughters have shattered the family. His wife, overwhelmed by grief, is now dependent on antidepressants, he says. Paying for her medicines became tougher when he was fired from his job on September 20. "... I take a bus every day from Jangpura and come and sit here. But every day, I am told to come the next day. I don't even have an ID," he says. According to the UNHCR website, no refugee is guaranteed resettlement or cash assistance. It says it is for the organisation to decide which are the most vulnerable groups in need of such services. But this makes little difference for the protesting refugees outside. Usman, 25, says he came to Hyderabad from Sudan in 2019, with hopes of completing his education in the city. "My uncle was funding my education. But he died in 2020. I then moved to Tamil Nadu to work and support my family," he says. Usman, who has two younger sisters and his parents at home, came to the UNHCR office in Delhi hoping for relocation. He has been waiting for three months. "I've been living in a tent outside the UNHCR office. Last night, police took it away," he claims. Police, however, deny removing any tents. "They (refugees) stay in front of the office during the day and shift to other areas by night. They protest very loudly around the office, disturbing neighbours. Police came after some neighbours complained," a police officer said.

At JNU, no headway on bid to bring back internal entrance for PhD courses

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

A proposal to potentially bring back in-house PhD entrance exams at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) was not tabled at the varsity's Academic Council meeting last week with the administration maintaining that no feedback was received in writing from school deans more than two months after the consideration was announced. The faculty members, on the other hand, claimed the response sent by all schools was not taken up at the meeting. With the claims and counterclaims, uncertainty over the matter continued at the central varsity.

"The response sent by all schools to the matter discussed in the July 3 meeting of the VC with the Deans and Chairpersons of Special Centres regarding holding of in-house JNU PhD Entrance Examinations for 2024-26 was neither tabled by the administration nor allowed to be raised by any member," JNU Teacher's Association (JNUTA) stated Friday. The teacher's body also condemned "this autocratic style of running meetings by the chair of these bodies, namely the Vice-Chancellor". "No 'decisions' taken in such a non-meeting have any legitimacy," it added. "The item was not placed in the AC meeting as the request for JNUEE (JNU entrance exam) has not come in writing from any dean or special centre chairperson," an official on the condition of anonymity told The Indian Express.

The idea of going back to JNUEE was floated after the UGC National Eligibility Test — crucial for entry-level teaching jobs and PhD admissions at universities — was cancelled on June 19 following inputs from the Ministry of Home Affairs that "the integrity of the examination may have been compromised". In July, JNU said it would take eight weeks to arrive at a final decision on returning to the in-house exams.



JNUTA's statement Friday also criticised the Union Education Ministry's proposal in August to include its nominee in the Executive Council of all central universities, including JNU and DU, to "ensure uniformity in governance". The ministry "requested" universities to take "necessary steps to amend their statutes" to comply with the proposal. "Out of 48 Central Universities, 20 have already included a representative of the Ministries in their EC, while 28 ... do not currently have any such representation," the ministry had stated in a letter.

However, JNUTA said the request for amendment "completely undermines the Act from which the statutes derive their legitimacy". "This is nothing but a nefarious attempt to undermine the law of the land that vests the powers of awarding degrees only to Universities that are created through acts of legislatures — whose precise logic is that these institutions have to be autonomous bodies and not be departments of the government," JNUTA stated. DU has faced similar backlash after it placed the proposal on its agenda for the EC meeting on October 14.

Delhi cop moves court in drug seizure case: 'Unfair probe by state'



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

DelhiThe application was moved by Kumar, posted with the Anti-Extortion and Kidnapping Cell of the Delhi Police Crime Branch, last month before the court of Special NDPS judge Tarun Sehrawat at Saket court.

Almost a year after Sub-Inspector (SI) Naresh Kumar was served a notice by the Delhi Police to appear before the investigating officer in connection with his alleged role in the seizure of over 100 kg of drugs from two houses in Ashram earlier this year, the SI has moved court seeking transfer of the investigation to a different unit. In his plea, Kumar stated an "unfair investigation is being carried out by the state". Following the raids in January, police had arrested three persons and apprehended a juvenile. Police said they recovered 74 and 35 kg of ganja

in plastic bags from the two houses. The application was moved by Kumar, posted with the Anti-Extortion and Kidnapping Cell of the Delhi Police Crime Branch, last month before the court of Special NDPS judge Tarun Sehrawat at Saket court. The matter is to come up for hearing on October 16, when police are supposed to file a response to the plea. This, even as Kumar, who police said has been absconding since the registration of the case at Sunlight Colony police Station in Southeast Delhi in January, has moved two anticipatory bail pleas — in February and early July. In his latest plea, Kumar stated the CCTV footage pertaining to the case indicates that the sequence of events narrated by the prosecution "is false". "... in such circumstances, it is clear that the investigation being carried out is not independent and fair", said the plea. His counsel has stated there were "material contradictions" in what has been stated in the FIR and the contents of the chargesheet. The plea further said in view of the mentioned facts, the case be directed to be transferred to another department of the Delhi Police. During the hearing of his first bail plea, police had stated that it had obtained CCTV footage showing SI Kumar entering the Ashram house. Police had also told the court that call detail records and WhatsApp chats showed SI Kumar was in touch with the arrested accused. Kumar had joined the force in 1990. His anticipatory bail plea is listed before judge Sehrawat on November 22. He is being represented by advocates Ashok Anand and Dharmendra Rana.

Man found dead in cardboard box in Pune killed over financial dispute: Police

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Two days after the body of a youth was found in a packed cardboard box near a canal in Hadapsar, Pune city police Sunday said that he was murdered following a financial dispute. Police identified the deceased as Imran Yamin Patil (24), resident of Undri chowk in Kondhwa. Police have also arrested one Mohammed Nijamuddin (30), also a resident of Undri chowk, over the murder. On October 11, local residents found a cardboard box near the canal at Hingne Mala in Hadapsar. When a rag picker opened the box, it carried the body of a man. Soon, the police were informed.

Senior officers including Additional Commissioner of Police Manoj Patil, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) R Raja and a team from Hadapsar police station rushed to the spot. During the probe, police confirmed the body was of Imran Yamin Patil, who worked as a water filter mechanic. An FIR in the matter was lodged based on a complaint by the deceased's cousin Asif at the Hadapsar police station. Police arrested Mohammed Nijamuddin for allegedly murdering Imran following a financial dispute. Police said Imran had allegedly taken a Rs 1 lakh loan from Mohammed but he did not return it.



This led to a quarrel between the duo. Police probe revealed that Mohammed got angry and he allegedly killed Imran by banging his head on a wall and strangling him on the intervening night of October 10 and October 11. Police claimed that to destroy the evidence, the accused packed Imran's body in a cardboard box, wrapped it with a plastic tape and dumped the box near the canal in Hingne Mala. Senior police inspector Santosh Pandhare is investigating the case. Police said accused Mohammed was also doing the work of fitting water filters.

Set up panel to probe campus 'suicide': IIM-Ahmedabad students' body



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Weeks after a final-year student died allegedly by suicide in his hostel room at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad, the institute's students' council has demanded setting up of a committee to probe into the circumstances surrounding the death. In an email to institute Director Bharat Bhasker, the IIM-A Students' Affairs Council has raised "grave concerns" over the death of Akshith Bhukya, 24, from Warangal in Telangana, on September 26. "The steps taken by the institute to date have failed to inspire confidence among the student body," the email said. The communication, signed by Atman Soni, general secretary of the 60th Students' Affairs Council, demanded the constitution of a high-powered committee to inquire into the circumstances surrounding Bhukya's death, along with "providing institutional support to students to ensure that the ongoing police investigation is conducted in a free, fair, and transparent manner". Bhukya's body was found in his hostel room on the new campus on the eve of The Red Bricks Summit (TRBS), the institute's annual management symposium. Bhukya was the head of the coordination committee for TRBS, which was eventually cancelled after his death. Stating that the students' body presented "pertinent facts to the faculty regarding the circumstances leading to this incident" on September 29, the mail levelled allegations against an administrative officer in handling matters related to TRBS. "The student community is deeply troubled by the circumstances surrounding this incident, as well as the institution's response to it," said the mail sent on Saturday to the IIMA Director, along with Board of Governors (BoG) Chairman Pankaj Patel, BoG members and faculty and research associates, among others. There was no reply to mails sent by The Indian Express to the IIM-A Director as well as the BoG Chairman seeking their response to the allegations until press time. Soni could not be reached for comment. "Preliminary evidence indicates that he (Bhukya) was under considerable pressure due to the uncooperative stance adopted by the IIMA administration in the conduct of TRBS. It is feared that this stress may have played a contributory role in his decision to take his own life," the students' body alleged in the mail.

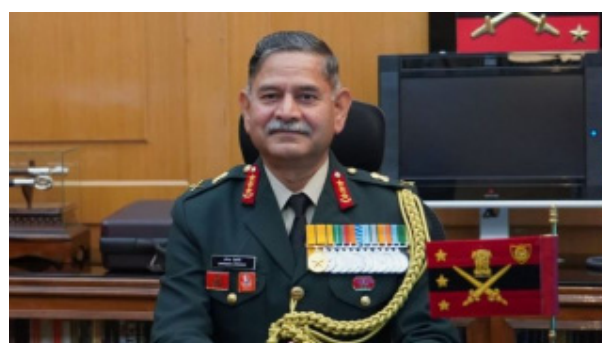
In their communication, the students also raised allegations over the manner in which the police investigation is being conducted. "Apparent lack of seriousness with which the IIMA administration is approaching this matter. This is evidenced by the following facts: On October 04, 2024, when the police came to record statements of students, the scope of their inquiry was limited to the IMS logo and Communication Team, based solely on the complaint filed by Akshith Bhukya's father, who may not

have been fully aware of the broader context," the mail said. Earlier, the police had told The Indian Express that a company from which the TRBS team had taken sponsorship had allegedly used the IIM-A logo in its promotional material at an advance event which rankled senior officials at the institute and this had become a point of friction. Bhukya's father, who had earlier lodged a complaint at the Vastrapur police station, requesting them to look into allegations that his son had been pressured by an administrative staffer at the institute over conduct of TRBS, also raised concerns over the progress of the probe. "There is no update from either the police or IIM-A on the investigation. We last heard from police around 10 days ago when we called them. They said they will start investigations after Navratri. We only want justice to my son's death," Hemanth Bhukya told The Indian Express on Sunday. Both Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Zone-1 Himanshu Kumar Verma and Vastrapur police station Inspector L L Chavda were unavailable for comments. The students also sought a clarification on "the issue of denying external participants' entry to TRBS when the IIMA administration "decided to accommodate the Chief Minister of Gujarat for a non-IIMA event — a Chintan Shibir involving senior bureaucrats — at the JSW School of Public Policy" on the campus. "This external event, which overlapped with the annual TRBS event, led to restrictions on TRBS audience participation. Furthermore, given the nature of the Chintan Shibir as a non-IIMA event, we seek clarification on the rationale behind prioritising it over a long-standing internal annual student event," the mail said. Two days after the student's death, a Chintan Shibir — a brainstorming session for officers and employees of the Chief Minister's Office — was organised on September 28 at the IIM-A. It was inaugurated by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel. "The denial of permission for external participants, due to the overlap with the Chintan Shibir, created immense pressure on Akshith, contributing to the stress he faced in the days leading up to his tragic death," the students said in their communication.

Telangana Social Welfare college students receive financial support for Asian Softball championship

Hyderabad: Three Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TGSWREIS) sportswomen heaved a sigh of relief after the Society responded in the eleventh hour to foot airfare of its students to take part in the 4th Asian Universities Women Softball Asia Cup Taichung 2024, Taiwan. The tournament is scheduled to be held from October 15. The move comes after a story — "Three TG sports women struggle for aid" — published in these columns on October 11 highlighted how sportswomen were struggling for a financial assistance of Rs.1.5 lakh each to cover their air travel expenses. Telangana Social Welfare college students face financial struggles ahead of Asian softball championships. Three Telangana Social Welfare Degree Colleges for Women students — Guguloth Mamatha, Lakavath Rani and Ajmera Indu — are among the 16-member team from India selected for the tournament.

Army chief Gen Dwivedi embarks on Japan visit to boost defence ties



GNS News Agency, Oct 16 Japan Army chief During his visit, the Army chief will hold meetings with Gen Yoshida Yoshihide, Chief of Staff, Joint Self Defence Force; Gen Morishita Yasunori, Chief of Staff, Japan Ground Self-Defence Force (JGSDF); Ishikawa Takeshi, Commissioner of Acquisition, Technology and Logistic Agency Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi is on a four-day visit to Japan with an aim to bolster defence cooperation between the two countries.

During his visit from October 14-17, the Army chief will also visit Hiroshima, wherein he will lay a wreath at the Hiroshima Peace Park and pay floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at his statue at the Peace Park. The visit marks a "significant step in bolstering defence cooperation between India and Japan," the defence ministry said in a statement here. On Monday, Gen Dwivedi will interact with Sibi George, India's Ambassador to Japan and

would thereafter engage in a discussion on India-Japan relations at the Embassy of India in Tokyo. He will engage in dialogue with the senior military leadership of Japan at the defence ministry in Ichigaya on Tuesday.

During his visit, the Army chief will hold meetings with Gen Yoshida Yoshihide, Chief of Staff, Joint Self Defence Force; Gen Morishita Yasunori, Chief of Staff, Japan Ground Self-Defence Force (JGSDF); Ishikawa Takeshi, Commissioner of Acquisition, Technology and Logistic Agency (ATLA), it said. The discussions will be aimed at fostering stronger military cooperation between India and Japan. Gen Dwivedi will also pay homage at the memorial at the MoD, Ichigaya and will be given a Guard of Honour by the JGSDF. The itinerary also includes an interaction with senior hierarchy of the JGSDF and a visit to the National Institute of Defence Studies. On Wednesday, the Indian Army chief accompanied by the Chief of Staff, Japan Ground Self Defence Force, will visit Fuji School, wherein he will engage in a conversation with Lt Gen Kodama Yasuyuki, Commanding Gen of Fuji School. Gen Dwivedi will be given a briefing at the School and he will also witness an equipment and facility display. On the last leg of his visit, the general will visit Hiroshima on October 17, wherein he will lay a wreath at Hiroshima Peace Park and pay floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at his statue at the Peace Park. The visit by Gen Dwivedi aims at strengthening cooperation between militaries of India and Japan, besides "exploring new avenues of collaboration" between the two nations, the statement said.

3 yrs before Tirupati laddu row, Sabarimala temple saw a storm over 'halal jaggery'

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

As a controversy rages over alleged adulteration of ghee in Tirupati temple laddus, a petition over the alleged use of "unholy and impure halal jaggery" in preparing the "naivedyam" (offering to the deity) at the Sabarimala temple is pending adjudication before the Kerala HC over the last three years. Petitioner S J R Kumar, an engineer-turned-social worker and general convener of Sabarimala Karma Samithi, moved the HC in November 2021 after media reports about alleged "illegal actions" by temple administration "in procuring halal-certified jaggery for preparation of prasadam including Aravana and Unniyappam at Sabarimala Temple in violation of rituals and customs prevailing in the Hindu community".

The jaggery was supplied by a Maharashtra-based firm for 2019-20. Aravana, a traditional sweet made from red rice, jaggery and ghee, and Unniyappam made from rice, jaggery and other ingredients and fried are the main offerings to the deity. The plea filed through advocate V Sajith Kumar said: "Firstly, use of spoiled materials would create health hazards to innocent devotees. Secondly, use of halal-certified jaggery which is prepared as per the religious practices of another religion in the temple and offering the same to the deity would amount to serious violation of religious customs and rituals followed at the temple from time immemorial..." and "are highly illegal and violative of religious rights guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution." On November 17, 2021, an HC bench of Justices Anil K Narendran and P G Ajithkumar asked the Sabarimala Special Commissioner to respond to the charges. The Special Commissioner submitted that according to reports of the designated officer, food safety special squad, samples of the accumulated jaggery stock were tested in April 2021 and found to be "satisfactory". "In September 2021, it was again tested and found to be infested with insects and unsafe and the sample had a foul odour." The report pointed out that the officer had said that the unsafe jaggery "is not used for preparation of Aravana and Appam". The report also said that the shrine administrator Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) has taken steps to auction the "unfit" jaggery by publishing tender notification and Southern Agro Tech Pvt Ltd had emerged as the successful bidder. On the alleged use of halal-certified jaggery, the report said "it is true that on the cover of the said jaggery there is a writing that it is halal", but added that the designated officer, food safety, had "submitted that declaration of halal certificate in the cover is not against the provisions of FSSA."

The Special Commissioner said that the Chief Vigilance Officer had said the manufacturer had stated that for "purpose of enabling export to some Middle East coun-



tries halal declaration is required." Regarding food safety, Assistant Commissioner of Food Safety, Pathanamthitta district, said there are two quality checking labs, and consignments are tested at both places before being released for preparing prasadam. The TDB counter affidavit said only "a few packets" had the label. Denying the allegation of impure products, the Maharashtra firm submitted before the court that "on certain packets of jaggery supplied by the company during the contract period label HALAL JUH/HRC/437/2018 is printed. It happened because the company is exporting jaggery to Arab countries and halal certification is necessary... The halal certification is nothing but an assurance of high level of hygiene, cleanliness". Calling the allegations made by the petitioner "malicious", the TDB contended that the petitioner's "intention was to stall the Aravana and Appam sale in Sabarimala and cause huge financial losses to the Board. There is a calculated attempt to attack the reputation of Sabarimala and to... destroy the communal harmony through various posts..." Kumar said this "indicates they are concerned only about the commercial interest and not serious about the sanctity and purity of Nivedya". Kumar said the temple administration "have not made available the lab test reports of the jaggery supplied by the Maharashtra firm and produced only lab reports of 'recent batch of Aravana produced using jaggery procured from' the new supplier. He also questioned the temple authorities for reselling the 'unsafe' jaggery through auction. TDB had said in its affidavit the "auction was made clearly mentioning that the stock is not suitable for preparation of Vazhipadu" and "the prohibition for sale is only for the articles for human consumption or use." Kumar said that Southern Agro in its affidavit said that a portion of auctioned jaggery was sold to two companies in TN, which is contradictory to TDB's stand that it was bought for being used as raw material. Hearing it on November 24, 2023, the HC asked the petitioner on his understanding of "halal". The matter came up for hearing a few more times.

NCPCR asks govt to ensure disclaimers on OTTs to keep minors off adult content

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

NCPCR asks govt to ensure disclaimers on OTTs to keep minors off adult content. In its recommendations, the NCPCR has said that the Ministry of Telecommunications may examine the feasibility of issuing SIM cards in the name of a child. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has written to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, asking it to ensure that over-the-top (OTT) platforms display disclaimers in "English, Hindi, and local/regional languages before showing any adult content".

These disclaimers, it said, must cite Section 11 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, and Section 75 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, "warning subscribers that they may be held liable" under these legal provisions "if their child views adult content". Section 11 of the POCSO Act refers to actions that constitute sexual harassment of a child, including showing "any object to a child in any form or media for pornographic purposes". The punishment in this case is imprisonment up to three years and a fine. Section 75 of the Juvenile Justice Act details punishment for cruelty to a child — assaulting, abusing, neglecting, exposing, abandoning the child is punishable by imprisonment up to three years or a fine of Rs 1 lakh or both.

The NCPCR's letter to the Ministry dated September 19 came after it convened a meeting in August with representatives of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), and various central ministries to "address the alarming increase among minor children committing crime after watching pornographic content". The letter was also sent to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Ministry of Telecommunications, with recommendations for necessary action. An official



The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has written to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, asking it to ensure that over-the-top (OTT) platforms display disclaimers in "English, Hindi, and local/regional languages before showing any adult content".

with the NCPCR said that the disclaimers were sought since OTT platforms allow different profiles to be created depending on who is watching, but these profiles are not password protected, allowing children access to all types of content.

The NCPCR has also recommended that the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology ensure that social media platforms "obtain verifiable consent" from parents in accordance with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023. The Act states that before processing any personal data of a child, the data fiduciary shall obtain verifiable consent of the parent or guardian. In its recommendations, the NCPCR has said that the Ministry of Telecommunications may examine the feasibility of issuing SIM cards in the name of a child.

Revanth Reddy's lost opportunity on sub-categorisation



On October 11, the Telangana government appointed the Justice Shameem Akhter Commission to study the details of sub-classification of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Telangana and make recommendations to it. Earlier, in August this year, the Supreme Court had said that States could take a call on sub-categorisation, which involves classifying marginalised communities within SCs for more equitable distribution of benefits, addressing graded inequalities, and ensuring comprehensive representation.

Apart from having merely 60 days to complete its task, the one-man Commission faces a big challenge in the absence of Census data and data on castes. This was the same handicap that the B.N. Lokur Committee had also faced in 1965. As a result, it stopped short of recommending sub-categorisation. The committee concluded that the de-scheduling of advanced communities, such as the Malas, needed urgent consideration. The Telangana government's decision could not have come at a worse time for the disadvantaged communities among the SCs as it is currently on a hiring spree for government posts. The Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS), which initiated the demand for sub-categorisation, has urged the government to appoint 11,000-odd teachers in the State only after sub-categorisation of SCs. A planned protest march in Hyderabad by MRPS leader Manda Krishna Madiga, demanding immediate implementation of sub-categorisation, was scuttled by the police. Mr. Madiga has spent four decades championing the cause by using Gandhian tactics such as fasts, silent protests,

and marches.

It is a fact that discrimination against some of the communities classified as SCs continues to this day. In September, for instance, the Telangana High Court had to order police protection for a Madiga family in Medak district, about 40 kilometres from Hyderabad. The entire family had been ostracised by the Gram Sabha as two brothers who are a part of it did not want to be drum-beaters — the traditional occupation of the community — at a funeral in the village of Gowthojiguda in Medak. They are post-graduates and work in Hyderabad. The seriousness and persistence of discrimination can be seen from the frequent reports on the lack of access of certain communities to temples in Telangana.

Efforts to sub-classify SCs have been made in the past in the region. In erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh, the government led by Chandrababu Naidu had issued an ordinance in 1999 for SC sub-classification. In 2000, the Andhra Pradesh legislature passed the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservations) Act. It was implemented from 2000 to 2004. The SCs were divided into A (Reli), B (Madiga), C (Mala) and D (Others). Subsequently the Supreme Court struck this Act down, citing overreach by the State government. The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservations) Act was clear about its goals: "The State shall endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities, and opportunities, not only amongst the individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations as enjoined under Article 38 (2) of Part IV Directive Principle of State Policy of the Constitution of India." This law had provided 7% reservation for the group of castes that included the Madigas, who constitute 59.52% of the SCs in Telangana (Census 2011). It provided 6% reservation to the other SC communities, including the Malas (28.11% of the SC population). The same measure of segmentation used in the 2000 Act could have been used for implementing reservations after the SC verdict, in Telangana. After all, the Census has not been conducted yet. Also, the Congress, which has been championing social justice, could have been seen to be walking the talk. Instead, it has chosen to constitute a one-man committee, which looks like a delaying tactic for sub-categorisation. Past committees, such as the B.N. Lokur Committee, the Justice Ramachandra Raju Commission, and the Justice Usha Mehra Commission, made recommendations which were implemented in a half-hearted manner. The Revanth Reddy government has failed to seize the opportunity presented by the Court's verdict. The Justice Shameem Akhter Commission appears to be just another hurdle for the marginalised communities among the SCs.

China holds large naval, air force exercises



GNS News Agency, Oct 16 China held large-scale military exercises surrounding Taiwan and its outlying islands on Monday (October 14, 2024) in what it called a warning against Taiwan independence. China's Defense Ministry said the drills were a response to Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te's refusal to concede to Beijing's demands that Taiwan acknowledge itself as a part of the

People's Republic of China under the rule of the Communist Party.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry called the drills a provocation and said its forces were prepared to respond. The PLA's Eastern Theater Command spokesperson, Navy Senior Captain Li Xi, said the navy, army air force and missile corps were all mobilised for the drills. "This is a major warning to those who back Taiwan's independence and a signifier of our determination to safeguard our national sovereignty," Mr. Li said in a statement on the service's public media channel. Taiwan was a Japanese colony before being unified with China at the end of World War II. It split away in 1949 when Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists fled to the island as Mao Zedong's Communists swept to power on the mainland. Mr. Lai took office in May 2024, continuing the eight-year rule of the Democratic Progressive Party that rejects China's demand that it recognize Taiwan is a part of China. China routinely states that Taiwan independence is a "dead end" and that annexation by Beijing is a historical inevitability.

Kamala Harris slams Trump for spreading misinformation about hurricane response

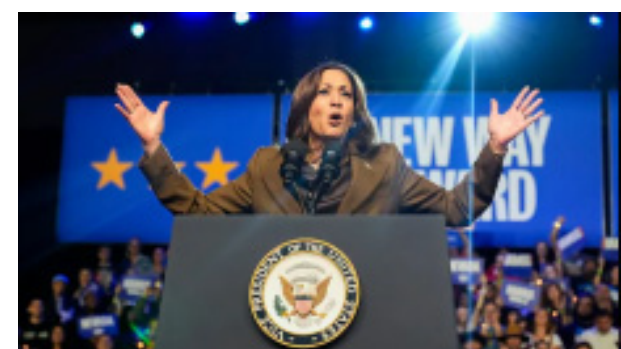
GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Kamala Harris did not mention Trump by name but stated that he is a key figure spreading false claims about the Biden administration's response to Hurricanes Milton and Helene, which affected Florida and other southeastern states. Kamala Harris used an appearance Sunday before a largely Black church audience in battleground North Carolina to call out Donald Trump for spreading misinformation about the government's hurricane response. President Joe Biden visited Florida for the second time this month to survey storm damage. Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee, did not speak Trump's name, but he is most prominent among those promoting false claims about the Biden administration's response to Hurricanes Milton and Helene. Florida was in the path of both storms, with Helene also hitting North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, while Milton headed for the open Atlantic. The vice president spoke at the Koinonia Christian Center about the "heroes" all around who are helping residents without regard to political affiliation.

"Yet, church, there are some who are not acting in the spirit of community, and I am speaking of these who have been literally not telling the truth, lying about people who are working hard to help the folks in need, spreading disinformation when the truth and facts are required," Harris said. "The problem with this, beyond the obvious, is it's making it harder, then, to get people life-saving information if they're led to believe they cannot trust," she said. "And that's the pain of it all, which is the idea that those who are in need have somehow been convinced that the forces are working against them in a way that they would not seek aid." Harris said they are trying "to gain some advantage for themselves, to play politics with other people's heart break, and it is unconscionable," she said. "Now is not a time to incite fear. It is not right to make people feel alone." "That is not what leaders, as we know, do in crisis," she said.

Trump made a series of false claims after Helene struck in late September, including saying that Washington was intentionally withholding aid from Republicans in need across the Southeast. The former president falsely claimed the Federal Emergency Management Agency had run out of money to help them because it was spent on programs to help immigrants who are in the United States illegally. He pressed that argument on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures," saying the White House response was "absolutely terrible" and repeating the claim about FEMA's dollars. "It came out from there and everybody knew it," Trump said in an interview that was taped Thursday and broadcast Sunday.

Before Harris spoke in church, Biden was surveying hurricane damage on a helicopter flight between Tampa and St. Pete Beach on the Gulf Coast. From the air, he saw the torn-up roof of Tropicana Field, home of the Tampa Bay Rays baseball team. On the ground, the president saw waterlogged household furnishings piled up outside flooded homes. Some houses had collapsed. The president said he was thankful that Milton was not as bad as officials had anticipated, but that it still was a "cataclysmic" event for many people, including those who lost irreplaceable personal items. He also praised the first responders, some of whom had come from Canada. "It's in moments like this we come together to take care of each other, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans," Biden said after he was briefed by federal, state and local officials, and met some residents and responders. "We are one United States, one United States." Harris opened her second day in North Carolina by speaking at the Christian center in Greenville, part of her campaign's "Souls to the Polls" effort to help turn out Black churchgoers before the November 5 election. The vice president later spoke to roughly 7,000 supporters at a Sunday afternoon rally at East Carolina University's arena, sug-



gesting that Trump's team has stopped him from releasing medical records or debating her again because they might be "afraid that people will see that he is too weak and unstable."

The North Carolina appearances mark the start of a week that will find Harris working to shore up support among Black voters, a key constituency for the Democratic Party. She is counting on Black turnout in competitive states such as North Carolina to help her defeat Trump, who has focused on energizing men of all races and has tried to make inroads with Black men in particular. On Tuesday, she will appear in Detroit for a live conversation with Charlamagne the God, a prominent Black media personality.

Black registered voters have overwhelmingly favorable views of Harris and negative views of Trump despite his attempts to appeal to nonwhite voters, according to a recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. But the poll also shows that many Black voters aren't sure whether Harris would improve the country overall or better their own lives. In Florida, which Biden had visited the Big Bend region on October 3 after Helene struck, the president announced \$612 million for six Department of Energy projects in hurricane-affected areas to bolster the region's electric grid. The money includes \$47 million for Gainesville Regional Utilities and \$47 million for Switched Source to partner with Florida Power and Light. With a little more than three weeks before the election, the hurricanes have added another dimension to the closely contested presidential race. Trump has said the Biden administration's storm response was lacking, particularly in western North Carolina after Helene. Biden and Harris have hammered Trump for promoting falsehoods about the federal response. Biden said Trump was "not singularly" to blame for the spread of misinformation but that he has the "biggest mouth." "They blame me for everything. It's OK," Trump told Fox. Biden has pressed for Congress to act quickly to make sure the Small Business Administration and FEMA have the money they need to get through hurricane season, which ends Nov. 30 in the Atlantic. He said Friday that Milton alone had caused an estimated \$50 billion in damages. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, whose department oversees FEMA, said the hurricane season is far from over and there are other natural disasters for which the agency must be ready. "We don't know what's coming tomorrow, whether it's another hurricane, a tornado, a fire, an earthquake. We have to be ready. And it is not good government to be dependent on a day-to-day existence as opposed to appropriate planning," Mayorkas said on CBS' "Face the Nation." House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said there was plenty of time and that lawmakers would address the funding issue when Congress comes back into session after the November 5 election. "We'll provide the additional resources," Johnson told CBS. Milton made landfall in Florida as a Category 3 storm on Wednesday evening. At least 10 people were killed and hundreds of thousands of residents remain without power. Officials say the toll could have been worse if not for widespread evacuations.

Israeli tanks destroy gate at Lebanon U.N. peace mission

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

This picture taken on October 13, 2024 shows an Israeli battle tank entering Lebanon from northern Israel at the southern Lebanese border point of Naqoura. U.N. peacekeepers in Lebanon said Israeli tanks broke through a gate to enter a Blue Helmet position in Lebanon on October 13, 2024, after blocking their movement the previous day.

This picture taken on October 13, 2024 shows an Israeli battle tank entering Lebanon from northern Israel at the southern Lebanese border point of Naqoura. U.N. peacekeepers in Lebanon said Israeli tanks broke through a gate to enter a Blue Helmet position in Lebanon on October 13, 2024, after blocking their movement the previous day. | Photo Credit: AFP/Israel Defence Forces (IDF) tanks destroyed the main gate of a facility of the UN peacekeeping forces at Ramyah in south Lebanon on Sunday, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) said. The UN forces are coming under attack for the fourth consecutive day. Smoke that entered the camp following several rounds fired nearby left 15 peacekeepers with skin irritation and gastrointestinal reactions. Israeli soldiers also stopped a critical UNIFIL logistical movement on Saturday (October 12, 2024), it said. In a video message to U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made an "appeal" that the "time has come" to withdraw UNIFIL from "Hezbollah strongholds and from the combat zones."

"Mr. Secretary General, get the UNIFIL forces out of harm's way. It should be done right now, immediately," Mr. Netanyahu said in the video. "Your refusal to evacuate UNIFIL soldiers has turned them into hostages of Hezbollah. This endangers both them and the lives of our soldiers," he said. The IDF said the tank entered the premises as its troops faced a barrage of anti-tank missiles in Southern Lebanon and that a smoke screen was used to provide cover for the evacuation of injured soldiers. "Throughout the entirety of the incident, no danger was posed to UNIFIL forces by the IDF activity," IDF said, adding its soldiers maintained coordination with UNIFIL throughout.

"An initial review showed that an IDF tank that was trying to evacuate injured soldiers while still under fire backed several meters into a UNIFIL post," IDF said on X. "Once the enemy fire stopped, and following the evacuation of the injured soldiers, the tank left the post." There are more than 10,000 peacekeepers from 50 countries under UNIFIL, under the Security Council. India is the third largest contributor to the force with 903 soldiers. According to defence officials here, the Indian Battalion has no presence at Ramyah. Early Sunday (October 13, 2024) morning, peacekeepers at a U.N. position in Ramyah observed three platoons of IDF soldiers crossing the Blue Line into Lebanon, UNIFIL said, and around 4.30 a.m., while peacekeepers were in shelters, two IDF Merkava tanks destroyed the position's main gate and forcibly entered the position. "They requested multiple times that the base turn out its lights. The tanks left about 45 minutes later after UNIFIL protested through our liaison mechanism, saying that IDF presence was putting peacekeepers in danger," it said in a statement. Further, around 6.40 a.m., peacekeepers at the same position reported the firing of several rounds 100 metres north, which emitted smoke. "Despite putting on protective masks, fifteen peacekeepers suffered effects, including skin irritation and gastrointestinal reactions, after the smoke entered the camp," according to UNIFIL. The peacekeepers are receiving treatment.

In addition, on Saturday (October 12, 2024), IDF soldiers stopped a critical UNIFIL logistical movement near Meiss ej Jebel, denying it passage, the statement said, and the critical movement "could not be



Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, in a video message to U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres, said the "time has come" to withdraw UNIFIL from "Hezbollah strongholds and from the combat zones".

completed". "Breaching and entering a UN position is a further flagrant violation of international law and Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)," UNIFIL reiterated. "Any deliberate attack on peacekeepers is a grave violation of international humanitarian law and Resolution 1701. UNIFIL's mandate provides for its freedom of movement in its area of operations, and any restriction on this is a violation of Resolution 1701."

"We have requested an explanation from the IDF from these shocking violations," it added. Israel has recently announced a ban on Mr. Guterres from entering Israeli territory; 104 countries that included European and African countries as well as much of the Global South, "condemned" this, which was not endorsed by India.

On Saturday (October 12, 2024), a joint statement was issued, initially by 34 troop-contributing countries to UNIFIL, later endorsed by six more countries, including India, condemning the ongoing attacks on peacekeepers and calling all to respect UNIFIL's mission and ensure the safety of its personnel.

'Appeal' to withdraw UNIFIL forces "We are more determined than ever to ensure our future; we are more determined than ever to defeat our enemies," Mr. Netanyahu said in the video message while stating that IDF soldiers are fighting forcefully to return Israeli residents in the north safely to their homes. "We are not fighting the Lebanese people, we are fighting Iran's terrorist proxy Hezbollah, which has occupied Lebanon," he said. Mr. Netanyahu said the IDF has requested repeatedly that UNIFIL withdraw from Hezbollah strongholds but has met with "repeated refusal", which "has the effect of providing Hezbollah terrorists with human shields." "We regret the harm to UNIFIL soldiers and we are doing our utmost to prevent such harm. But the simplest and most obvious way to ensure this is simply to withdraw them from the danger zone," he added. It is pertinent to note that UNIFIL was established according to Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) of March 19, 1978 to: confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon; restore international peace and security; and assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area.

'Neither India nor Pakistan has asked for a bilateral meeting at SCO'

GNS News Agency, Oct 16 Neither India nor Pakistan has requested a bilateral meeting when External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar lands in Islamabad for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of Government meet on October 15-16, said Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. He said that the government plans to welcome Mr. Jaishankar with "full protocol", as is Pakistan's duty as a "good host", comments that follow Mr. Jaishankar's remark last week that he would attend the meeting as a "good member of the SCO". While Mr. Jaishankar and other leaders of the 10-member SCO, including Iranian Vice-President Mohammadreza Aref and Prime Ministers from Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, are expected to land on Tuesday in Islamabad, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and Chinese Premier Li Qiang will arrive a day early on Monday for bilateral meetings with the Pakistani leadership.

While the MEA did not confirm which of the leaders Mr. Jaishankar would hold bilateral talks with during the visit, all eyes will be on any meeting with the Chinese leader, ahead of the BRICS summit in Russia on October 22-24, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping will come face-to-face, with speculation that they would meet to try and resolve the military standoff at the Line of Actual Control. With neither side holding out much hope for an India-Pakistan meeting in Islamabad, experts have been playing down the

impact of Mr. Jaishankar's visit, the first by an Indian Foreign Minister in nearly a decade, on bilateral ties. In 2015, former External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had travelled to Pakistan for a Heart of Asia conference, but the visit had also seen a bilateral meeting and an announcement of the revival of the Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue, which ran aground a month later after the Pathankot terror attacks. "India's Foreign Minister has not asked for any meeting, and we haven't requested a bilateral meeting either. He will come as a guest for the SCO, and discussions will be held on multilateral issues," Mr. Dar told the media, briefing the press about arrangements for the SCO meeting, which he said was the first such major multilateral event in Pakistan in nearly three decades. In March this year, Mr. Dar had said that Pakistan would "seriously examine" whether to restart trade ties with India, which have been suspended since 2019, but the move did make any headway. When asked by journalists on Sunday, whether the issue could be raised during or on the side-lines of the SCO meeting, Mr. Dar said that while Pakistan is discussing initiatives like the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Pakistan-Afghanistan-India) energy pipeline and others with some SCO members separately, these were not part of the SCO's discussions. "In a broader context, we speak about connectivity and road and rail linkages with many members of the SCO bilaterally. But the mandate of the SCO will be multilateral, and the agenda is fixed," he said.

Adani Group warns Bangladesh's \$500 million debt from Godda power plant 'unsustainable': FT report



(USCTPP) at Godda in Jharkhand. USCTPP had begun supplying power to Bangladesh in April 2023, becoming the only power plant in India to export its entire output to the neighbouring country.

The deal was agreed upon during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka in 2015. Activists have repeatedly criticised the project, arguing that the high cost of importing power from Godda is not economically viable for Bangladesh. As The Indian Express reported earlier, the APJL's Godda plant exported at least 7,508 million units (MU) of power — or 63 per cent of the total exports 11,933.83 million units — to Bangladesh in April-March of 2023-24. On August 12, just a week after Hasina fled Bangladesh, the Ministry of Power amended its rules to allow plants exporting exclusively to neighbouring countries to sell within India. According to a report in the Financial Times, Bangladesh faced total power liabilities of \$3.7 billion as of the middle of last week. In the same report, Yunus's top energy adviser, Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, stated that the country owes as much as \$800 million to Adani. He said that the interim government has approached lenders, including the World Bank, for billions of dollars in loans to stabilise the country's finances. "Since joining [the government], we've been firefighting," Khan said. Yunus took charge of Bangladesh as Chief Adviser of the interim government in August, following weeks of student-led protests that started over reservations in government jobs and forced Hasina to resign and flee the country. Khan stated that Yunus's administration plans to reintroduce competitive bidding, empower regulators, and establish an expert committee to re-examine energy deals negotiated under the previous government.

The Adani Group has warned Bangladesh's new interim government that its \$500 million-worth backlog in dues from the contentious Godda power project has become "unsustainable", UK-based daily Financial Times reported. "We are in constant dialogue with the Bangladesh government and have appraised them of this unsustainable situation where we are meeting not just our supply commitment but also [commitments] to our lenders and suppliers in spite of rising receivables," Adani Power told the Financial Times. Despite the mounting dues, Adani Power said it would "continue to supply reliable and competitively priced power from our Godda facility to Bangladesh."

The new interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, is facing an immense challenge of reviving the economy of the country after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's ouster. In July last year, industrialist Gautam Adani called on Hasina following the full launch commencement of power supply to Bangladesh from the 1600 MW Ultra Super-Critical Thermal Power Plant

Lack of success in reducing road accidents a failure, says Nitin Gadkari

The government is trying its best to reduce road accidents but is not seeing much success, the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said Monday. Addressing a gathering at the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India's (ACMA's) annual meet, Gadkari requested the industry to use corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds to organise awareness programmes, especially in schools. "We are trying our level best but we are not getting that much success... I can accept that this is one of the failures," Gadkari said. He added that almost 5 lakh road accidents happen annually in India, with 30,000 accidents occurring in institutional areas like schools. Out of 1.68 lakh deaths, 66 per cent of the victims are aged between 18-36 years.

Gadkari appealed to the auto industry to use CSR funds towards educating people and students. "We need cooperation from the media, social organisations, NGOs, and the industry. You don't need to support the government financially but with your own initiatives through CSR, if you can organise programmes and contribute to this cause, it will be a great thing. Many people are doing it but you need to find out which are the effective programmes by which we change human behaviour," he said.



He also emphasised focussing on schools. "If you can concentrate on schools because they are the future generation and if we can change their mindset, it can be a great thing. We need to reduce accidents by 50 per cent but still we are not getting good success," Gadkari said.

"In Assam, in one district, 35-40 per cent accidents (of the) were reduced because the main culprit in the accidents is road engineering. I'm always firing to my engineers that you are responsible. But still, I feel that the problems with the society (is) neither fear nor respect for the law," he added.

Centre dissolves panel on statistical surveys after members raise concerns

India's last census was conducted in 2011 and it has already overshoot the stipulated timeline for the next round due in 2021. (File Photo) India's last census was conducted in 2011 and it has already overshoot the stipulated timeline for the next round due in 2021. A committee formed to oversee all statistical surveys by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has been dissolved by the government amid apparent concerns raised by some members over the delay in conducting the census. A letter by the Ministry to the panel members stated that the work done by the committee is similar to the work done by the recently formed Steering Committee for National Sample Surveys and thus, the committee was being dissolved.

On July 13, 2023, the government had constituted a 14-member Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS), after renaming and expanding the scope of coverage of the Standing Committee on Economic Statistics (SCES) formed in December 2019. Members of the Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS) said there were discussions in earlier meetings regarding delay in economic census and the decennial census which maps the population of the country and that could have been one of the contentious reasons for dissolution. India's last census was conducted in 2011 and it has already overshoot the stipulated timeline for the next round due in 2021.

Standing Committee on Statistics Chairman and former Chief Statistician of India Pronab Sen said that no reason was cited for dissolution of the committee. "It has been dissolved. No reason was cited by the Ministry. They just informed through an e-mail," he told. When asked whether the reasons for the delay in census led to the dissolution, Sen said, "There was no recent discussion. All the members had earlier expressed concerns that in absence of censuses, both economic census and census, household surveys are unreliable. This was discussed earlier in the meetings," Sen said.

Other members of the committee included Sonalde Desai, Professor, National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER); Biswanath Goldar, former Professor, Institute of Economic Growth; S K Sasi Kumar, former Senior Fellow, VV Giri National Labour Institute; S Chandrasekhar, Professor, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research; Tauqeer Ahmad, Head of Division, Division of Sample Surveys, ICAR-Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute; Sandip Mitra, Associate Professor, Indian Statistical Institute; Mausumi Bose, professor, Applied Statistics Unit, Indian Statistical Institute; and officials from the Reserve Bank of India and MoSPI.

The new committee is headed by National Statistical Commission (NSC) Chairman Rajeeva Laxman Karandikar and at least four members of the SCoS have been included in it. Queries sent by The Indian Express to MoSPI Secretary went unanswered. The SCoS was set up "to review the extant framework and to address the issues raised from time to time on the subject/ results/ methodology, etc. related to all surveys as brought before the SCoS by MoSPI; to advise on survey methodology including sampling frame, sampling design, survey instruments, etc. and to finalise tabulation plan of surveys; finalisation of survey results".



The committee was also mandated to provide guidance to conduct pilot surveys/ pre-testing, if necessary, before finalising schedules for data collection along with providing guidance for studying and exploring the availability of administrative statistics relating to surveys/statistics and provide guidance to study/identify data gaps/ additional data requirements, if any, for surveys/statistics and suggest appropriate strategies for improvement. The new committee had been formed last year at a time when India's statistical system was under criticism, especially from three members of the Economic Advisory Council to the PM (EAC-PM) including Chairman Bibek Debroy and members Shamika Ravi and Sanjeev Sanyal.

India poised to become global AI hub, says tech futurist Stephen Ibaraki

New Delhi: To become a global artificial intelligence (AI) hub, India needs to leverage its vast talent pool and establish AI-focused centres of excellence in collaboration with academic institutions and industry leaders, Stephen Ibaraki, a technology futurist and global thought leader, said on Saturday.

Ibaraki said the country, with its robust digital infrastructure, needs to continue investing in AI research and development, and creating a conducive environment for startups and innovation. "Additionally, the government should implement policies that encourage foreign investments in AI and facilitate public-private partnerships to scale AI initiatives across sectors such as healthcare, agriculture and finance," he said.

New technologies such as AI are emerging as the biggest strategic differentiator determining the economic prosperity of nations. India is the founding member of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), having joined the multi-stakeholder initiative in June 2020. The Cabinet recently approved an allocation of over Rs 10,300 crore towards the comprehensive 'India AI Mission' to democratise access to AI innovation pillars and ensure the global competitiveness of India's AI ecosystem.

It's Glowtime! Countdown begins for launch of AI-powered iPhone 16 series



Cupertino (California): The new era will dawn today with the unveiling of the hotly anticipated iPhone which will catapult the tech trendsetter into the age of AI.

Apple's ubiquitous iPhone is about to break new ground with a shift into artificial intelligence that will do everything from smartening up its frequently dim-witted assistant Siri to creating customised emojis on the fly. The new era will dawn on Monday (10:30 pm IST) with the unveiling of the hotly anticipated iPhone 16 in a Cupertino, California, auditorium named after Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, who pulled out the first iPhone in 2007 and waved it like a magic wand while predicting it would reshape society. Apple has sold billions of iPhones since then, helping to create about \$3 trillion in shareholder wealth. But in the past decade, there have been mostly minor upgrades from one model to the next — a factor that has caused people to hold off on buying a new iPhone and led to a recent slump in sales of Apple's mar-

quee product. The iPhone 16 is generating a bigger buzz because it is the first model to be tailored specifically for AI, a technology that is expected to trigger the biggest revolution in the industry since Jobs thrust Apple into the smartphone market 17 years ago.

The advances included in the iPhone 16 could set up Apple to be "the gatekeeper of the consumer AI revolution," Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives wrote in a research note. Apple's pivot began three months ago with a preview of its new approach during a developers conference, helping to build anticipation for Monday's showcase. Since that June conference, competitors such as Samsung and Google have made even more strides in AI. Google even took the unusual step of introducing its latest Pixel phones packed with their own AI magic last month instead of heaving to its traditional October timetable in an effort to upstage Apple's release of the iPhone 16. In an attempt to set itself apart from the early leaders in AI, the technology being baked into the iPhone 16 is being promoted as "Apple Intelligence." Even so, Apple Intelligence is similar to the generically named AI already available on Google's Pixel 9 and the Samsung Galaxy S24 released in January. Most of Apple's AI tasks will be performed on the iPhone itself instead of remote data centers — a distinction that requires a special processor within the forthcoming models and the high-end iPhone 15s that came out a year ago. That's why investors anticipate hot demand for the iPhone 16, spurring a surge in sales that has caused Apple's stock price to climb by 13% since Apple previewed its AI strategy in June. That spike has increased the company's market value by nearly \$400 billion.

From back to school necessity to relaxing hobby: How India began embracing stationery

As I walked into the enclosure hosting Delhi's 24th Stationery Fair on a rainy Sunday afternoon, I was transported to a world of colourful chaos. The place was packed with people exploring a world of arts and crafts under bright fluorescent lights. Artists eyed blank canvases, excited children thumbed through spiral-bound notebooks, and parents haggled over back-to-school supplies—all familiar sights at a stationery fair. A few stalls down the line, a watercolour artist enraptured her audience with a demonstration. "We want people to engage with our in-house artists, test our products in real time, and spread the word," said Himanshu from Staedtler's marketing department. For the German brand, participating in such fairs helps connect with the audience.

However, Himanshu observed a trend: while sales of colouring materials have risen steadily over the past three to four years, participation in stationery fairs is declining. "There are too many distractions—stalls selling food or home décor items take the focus away from stationery," he said. Some attendees echoed this sentiment. Ram, a UPSC aspirant, and his friend Nikita, an author, admitted they came primarily for the book fair, and the stationery stalls were a plus. "Not many know about the stationery fair specifically. Even though prices here are lower than in the market, the quality varies. If it were better advertised, more people might attend," they said.

They also pointed out how digital devices have reduced the use of traditional stationery. According to Ram, it's easier and cheaper to buy supplies from local shops or online platforms, which makes attending fairs less appealing.

Rajat Chopra, director of Evergreen, confirmed this shift. Many customers now prefer purchasing supplies from e-commerce platforms like Amazon and Flipkart. "The relevance of the book fair has gone down, but this year's turnout is better than last. We haven't reached pre-COVID levels, but participation is slowly recovering." Despite the drop in footfall at stationery fairs, artist supply sales have surged, and it is driven by a new trend. Lochan, the owner of HobbyCraft, explained that before COVID-19, stationery purchases were limited mostly to school supplies—pens, highlighters, and notebooks. But, the pandemic changed that. "During the lockdown, people were stuck at home and turned to creative outlets, leading to an increase in demand for hobby and artist supplies." This was evident at the fair. Nyssa, 14, a budding artist, was attending for the second year in a row. "Last year, the focus was more on writing. This year, I see a lot more artists," she said. Her favorite part of the event? Watching live demonstrations, gathering tips, and drawing inspiration for her art. When asked if she follows trends on social media to pick out art supplies, Nyssa replied, "Quality



matters more. At the end of the day, it's the finished piece that counts." Chopra concurred. "People are paying attention to details like paper thickness and ink absorption. They don't want ink bleeding through pages or marks on the back," he said.

It is also interesting to note that adult engagement with stationery is also rising, but in a different form. Colouring books for adults, for example, have become a popular tool for relaxation and stress relief. Stationery Adult coloring books uniquely combine structure and creativity, offering a meditative experience. (Source: Freepik)

How do hobbies improve the well-being of adults?

Kruti Shah, psychologist at Mpower, said that immersing oneself in creative activities induces a state of "flow," a psychological state of full immersion and focus that temporarily relieves stressors and anxieties. This flow state promotes mindfulness, reducing psychological distress. For example, adult colouring books combine structure and creativity, offering a meditative experience. According to Shah, colouring within predefined patterns calms the mind, reducing anxiety.

"As a psychologist, I've seen colouring provide a safe entry point into creative expression, especially for those intimidated by open-ended artistic activities. The structured designs comfort individuals, fostering creativity while promoting control," she said. According to her, incorporating creative activities like adult colouring into daily routines promotes mental health, providing relaxation, emotional resilience, and personal growth. As a mental health professional, she shared that these tools help foster a balanced mind. The evolution of India's relationship with stationery—from a back-to-school necessity to a cherished hobby—reflects broader societal changes. As digital devices become more dominant, the role of stationery may be shifting, but its value in promoting creativity and well-being remains undeniable.

Why exposure to pigeon poop is really bad for your health



longed exposure to pigeon droppings can cause this inflammatory lung condition.

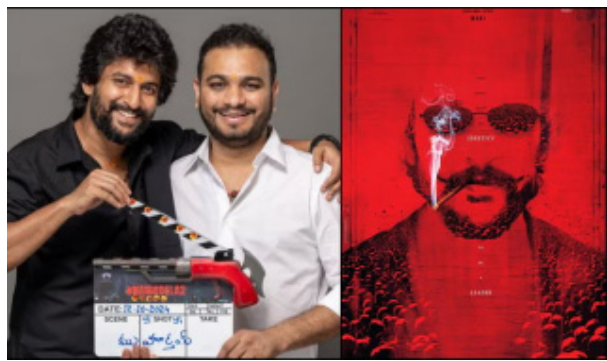
Allergic Reactions: Individuals with allergies may experience symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose, and itchy eyes. **Respiratory Infections:** Bacteria and fungi present in the droppings can cause respiratory infections.

Chronic Respiratory Conditions: People with pre-existing respiratory conditions like asthma may experience exacerbated symptoms. **Pigeons Discover the shocking dangers of pigeon exposure as a young boy develops a life-threatening allergic reaction to pigeon feathers and droppings.** (Source: Pexels)

Protecting yourself from pigeon-related illnesses

To safeguard your health, Dr Reddy recommended that it's crucial to implement preventive measures: **Avoid Direct Contact:** Minimise contact with pigeons and their droppings. **Wear gloves and masks** when cleaning up after them. **Maintain Cleanliness:** Regularly clean areas frequented by pigeons, using disinfectants and water. **Avoid sweeping or vacuuming** as this can spread contaminants. **Improve Ventilation:** Ensure proper ventilation in areas prone to pigeon infestation to reduce the concentration of airborne particles. **Deterrence:** Employ bird netting, spikes, or other deterrents to discourage pigeons from roosting or nesting. **Regular Health Checks:** If you're frequently exposed to pigeons, schedule regular check-ups to monitor your respiratory health. **By understanding the risks and taking proactive steps, you can significantly reduce your chances of developing pigeon-related illnesses.** **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.

Nani's reunion with Dasara director Srikanth Odela goes on floors



Close on the heels of the blockbuster success of Saripodhaa Sanivaaram, Nani joined the sets of his next, Hit: The Third Case. Apart from this project, Nani also announced joining hands with filmmaker Srikanth Odela for the director's next. Now, on the occasion of Dussehra, the pooja for his film with the Dasara filmmaker took place

to make things official. Sharing pictures from the event, Nani wrote, "Ur next will be bonkers. We had a puja on this special day. More updates will follow #NaniOdela2".

Netizens also praised Nani for adding the director's name to the official hashtag for the film instead of following the usual trend of using the actor's name. Srikanth Odela made his debut with Nani's Dasara, which became a commercially and critically successful venture, and also starred Keerthy Suresh. The film, which was set in the backdrop of a coal mine, was an emotional drama overloaded with action. While there have been no official announcements about the cast and crew of Nani's film with Odela, there have been reports that composer Anirudh Ravichander has been roped in for the project. This would mark the third collaboration between Nani and Anirudh after Nani's Gangleader and Jersey. The first look of the project, which was launched earlier this year, came with the tagline, "You don't need an identity to be a leader." Backed by Sudhakar Chelukuri's Sri Lakshmi Venkateshwara Cinemas, this would be Nani's 33rd project.

Ranbir Kapoor reflects on wedding to Alia Bhatt while channeling a groom for Tarun Tahiliani's show: 'Alia planned everything; I just followed her lead'



Fans were reminded of Ranbir Kapoor's real-life wedding to Alia Bhatt in 2022 when the Animal star recently turned heads by dressing up as a groom for celebrity designer Tarun Tahiliani's Tasva Fall/Winter show, titled Baaraat. A video captures Ranbir making a grand baarat-style entrance in a vintage car, surrounded by models dressed as his groomsmen, dancing to the beat of dhol, perfectly capturing the essence of an Indian wedding.

Viral photos from the fashion show display Ranbir in an elegant silk ivory sherwani paired with a matching churidar and mojaris. He completed the authentic groom look with a turban and a dupatta, which was elegantly draped over his shoulder.

The actor was seen dancing and enjoying himself as he arrived in a vintage car with his model groomsmen. After the show, he interacted with the media and reflected

on his own wedding with Alia Bhatt. Speaking to ANI, Ranbir shared, "My wife planned everything, I just had to follow her lead. Our wedding took place at our home only. So, it was not that hectic. And it was just perfect marriage. To be bride groom again in this collection just feels good." Fans loved Ranbir's surprise appearance on the ramp at the Tarun Tahiliani show. One user commented, "Hey Alia Bhatt, your Dulhe Raja is here." Another wrote, "Alia is damn lucky." A third user remarked, "Ranbir looks amazing as the Indian groom."

Ranbir and Alia tied the knot in 2022 after years of dating. They welcomed their daughter Raha in the same year in November. On the professional front, Ranbir will next be seen in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's upcoming project, Love And War, which also stars Alia Bhatt and Vicky Kaushal in lead roles. He is also set to star in the highly anticipated Nitesh Tiwari's Ramayana.

Kartik Aaryan isn't bothered by clash between Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3 and Singham Again: 'Focused on Rooh Baba and Manjulika clash'



It will be a clash of titans this Diwali when Kartik Aaryan's Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3 and Ajay Devgn's Singham Again vie for audience love and attention. Both films are set to release on November 1, and fans are already speculating about who will come out on top in this box-office battle. However, while promoting Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3, Kartik dismissed any notion of a rivalry, emphasizing that Diwali is such a big holiday that both films can thrive since they belong to different genres.

Kartik stated, "Diwali itni badi holiday hai. I think do filmein aaram se chal sakti hain. Aur unka Singham Again ka action genre hai, humara horror comedy genre hai" (Diwali is such a big holiday. Singham Again's genre is action, and our film's genre is horror comedy). He added, "If I am a movie-goer, it's a festival for all of us. Two films are coming on the same occasion, which is very rare these days in the Hindi film industry. Films are not being released."

He further elaborated, "Abhi yahan par Diwali ke time par do aisi filmein aa rahi hain jiska I think audience dono filmon ka besabri se intezaar kar rahi hain. Mujhe unki bhi film pasand hai, main unki bhi film dekhne jaauंगा. I hope aap humaari bhi film dekhne jaayein. Aur dono filmein chalne ka bohot scope hai (On Diwali, two highly anticipated films are releasing. I like their film too, and I will watch it. Hopefully, the audience will also watch my film, and there is ample scope for both films to succeed)." Kartik stressed that it isn't a "versus" game. Instead, he is focused on the clash between Rooh Baba and Manjulika in Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3. He referred to Singham Again as a "huge franchise" and admitted that he is a fan of everyone associated with the film. Kartik

called himself "a big fan" of Rohit Shetty and the Singham franchise. Both Bhool Bhulaiyaa and Singham are significant franchises. Singham Again is part of Rohit Shetty's cop universe, with Sooryavanshi being the last film released as part of this universe, having earned just under Rs 300 crore. Singham Again is a direct sequel to Singham Returns (2014), which grossed Rs 216 crore at the box office. The first Bhool Bhulaiyaa film starred Akshay Kumar in the lead role, but he was replaced by Kartik Aaryan in Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2. The latter was a massive success at the box office, earning Rs 266.88 crore against a budget of Rs 70 crore.

Been a big fan of Alia Bhatt's ever since I've watched her movies

Mumbai: Actress Sharvari, who is all set to share screen space with Alia Bhatt in the upcoming spy film "Alpha", said that she has been a big fan of the star ever since she has watched her movies. "That was a dream come true. Because I've been such a big fan of Alia's ever since I've watched her movies. She's incredible," Sharvari said during the IFF Festival, one of the world's leading festivals for all things Creativity X Culture.

The 27-year-old actress never thought she would get an opportunity to work with Alia so early in her career. "I never thought that so early on in my career I'd get an opportunity to work with Alia and, headline a project like Alpha with her. So, for me, it is a dream come true," she said. The festival hosted the second day of its fourteenth season on October 13 at Mehboob Studio, Mumbai. On Day 2, Sharvari engaged in a conversation with Kopal Khanna, co-founder of Tape A Tale, during the session—"Qisse with Kopal". The actress, who is currently riding high on the success of "Munjya", "Vedaa", and "Maharaj", shared that working alongside Alia feels like an ongoing master class. "I get to learn from her every single day and it's like a master class. I'm always observing her, always trying to learn more from her. I think, the journey has just started for us and it's going to be incredible," said Sharvari. Amidst her growing success, Sharvari made her runway debut for designers Pankaj and Nidhi at the recently concluded Lakme Fashion Week and said that it was a "dream come true" for her.

Shraddha Kapoor: My fashion journey has been one of exploration and refinement



New Delhi: Shraddha Kapoor, who is one of Bollywood's most loved stars, said since her debut in 2010 with "Teen Patti", her fashion journey has been one of "exploration and refinement". "Since my debut, my fashion journey has been one of exploration and refinement. Initially, I experimented with various styles to discover what suited me best. Over time, I've developed a more defined sense of style, opting for outfits that reflect my personality and the roles I portray," Shraddha, who walked as the showstopper for label Kalki, told IANS.

The actress, who has outnumbered several personalities including Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Deepika Padukone and Kareena Kapoor Khan to name a few, with her Instagram following of over 93.6 million, learnt to balance between traditional and contemporary looks. "I've learned to embrace both traditional and contemporary looks, adapting my wardrobe to mirror my personal and professional growth," she said.

For Shraddha, who is the daughter of veteran actor Shakti Kapoor, fashion is a blend of "simplicity and sophistication". "I would describe my fashion sense as a fusion of simplicity and sophistication. I gravitate towards minimalist designs that make a statement through subtle details. Comfort is essential to me, but I also enjoy experimenting with different styles to keep my look fresh and versatile," she said. The actress agrees that working in films made has an impact on her choices on what she wears.

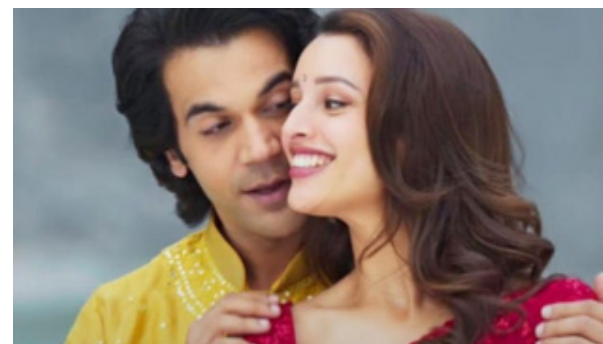
"Absolutely, my film roles have influenced my fashion choices. Each character I portray offers a new perspective on style, and I often incorporate elements from

my roles into my personal wardrobe." Being in the public eye has made Shraddha more conscious of her fashion statements, encouraging her to "select outfits that resonate with my audience and reflect my evolving image." Ever since her debut in 2010, Shraddha has worked in blockbusters such as "Baaghi", "Aashiqui 2", "Ek Villain", "Haider", "Chhichhore", "Street" franchise and "Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar" to name a few. The actress stressed that films have a significant impact on beauty and fashion trends. "Audiences often look to cinema for inspiration, and the styles showcased on screen can influence mainstream fashion. For instance, a particular outfit or hairstyle from a movie might become a popular trend," said the actress. She shared: "As actors, we have the opportunity to collaborate with designers and stylists to create looks that not only enhance our characters but also inspire viewers." The actress sauntered the catwalk for the label Kalki for their collection titled Mushk, which featured exquisite pieces designed for weddings and celebrations. The collection includes embroidered jackets, wide-legged pants, and new-age lehengas, all in a soft palette of antique golds, champagnes, and dusky pinks. Shraddha's outfit, a stunning blush pink lehenga with intricate Banarasi detailing, took over 350 hours of dedicated craftsmanship. Asked what makes the outfit from the label a perfect fit for you, Shraddha said: "KALKI designs resonate with my personal style, which embraces both elegance and contemporary flair. Their collections seamlessly blend traditional Indian aesthetics with modern sensibilities, allowing me to showcase my cultural roots while staying fashion-forward."

Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video box office collection day 3: Rajkummar Rao-Triptii Dimri's film overtakes Alia Bhatt's Jigra, earns more than Rs 18 crores

Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video box office collection day 3: Rajkummar Rao and Triptii Dimri's latest rom-com directed by Raaj Shaandilya received mixed reviews. The film was critically panned for its cheap jokes, however, the film has managed to perform decently at the box office compared to Alia Bhatt and Vedang Raina's Jigra. On its opening weekend, Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video has managed to earn Rs 18.65 crore.

While it has overtaken Jigra, compared to Saturday, the film saw a slight dip in its numbers on Sunday. On Saturday, the Rajkummar Rao film earned Rs 6.90 crores. As per industry tracker Sacnilk, on Sunday the film earned Rs 6.25 crore as per early estimates. Its Hindi occupancy was 21.08 percent. With just 18 shows, Chennai had the highest occupancy of 79.75 percent. With 1017 shows, Delhi NCR had an occupancy of 19.75 percent, while Mumbai occupancy was 24.50 with 583 shows. Rajkummar Rao's last film Street 2 was the highest grossing Hindi film ever, while Triptii Dimri's previous film Bad Newzz also tanked at the box office.

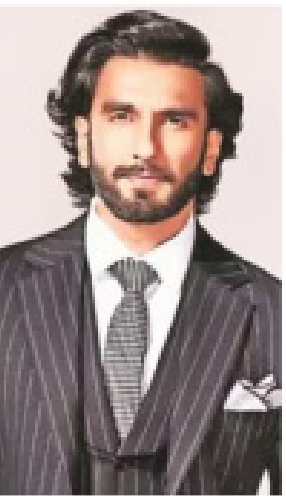
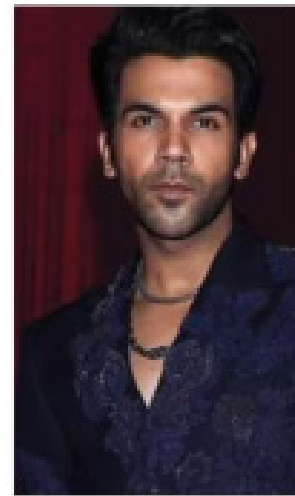


Also, what added to problems further for Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video was when the makers were called out for unauthorized use of Stree references in the film. Following the backlash, Raaj issued a public apology to Maddock films stating that a rectified version of the film will re-release in theaters on Tuesday, 15 October.

Rajkummar Rao admits he can't deny Ranbir Kapoor and Ranveer Singh's star power despite not believing in stardom: 'Ranveer killed it in....'

Rajkummar Rao, widely regarded as one of the finest actors of his generation, recently saw his film Street 2 break several box office records. However, in a recent interview, when asked about his colleagues - Ranbir Kapoor and Ranveer Singh - and their status as stars, the CityLights actor admitted that, while he doesn't personally believe in stardom as a metric, he can't deny their star power.

During an appearance on Unfiltered by Samdish, Rajkummar praised both Ranbir and Ranveer, calling them "damn good actors". When asked if some actors frequently receive media attention due to family connections or other reasons, Rajkummar responded, "They are definitely bigger stars, especially Ranbir. Ranveer is also a big star." He was then asked why he referred to them as stars if



he doesn't consider stardom as a metric. To this, Rajkummar replied, "I don't see stardom as a metric, but I also can't deny that it exists." He elaborated, "When your film Animal is doing Rs 500-600 crore and your next project is Ramayana with Nitesh Tiwari, which is expected to do even more, it makes sense. I also respect them as actors. They deserve

where they are. Ranveer especially killed it in Rocky Aur Rani." Rajkummar then explained his perspective on stardom: "Stardom could be about how significant a project is based on your presence. If you're the face of a Rs 200-crore film, that is one of the measure of stardom, I don't want to do that in my life right now."

Street 2, Rajkummar's most recent release, has

been a huge success at the box office, earning Rs 596.87 crore domestically and surpassing Animal, which grossed Rs 553.87 crore in India. Street 2 also starred Shraddha Kapoor, Aparshakti Khurana, Abhishek Banerjee, and Pankaj Tripathi in pivotal roles. Rajkummar Rao's latest film Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video is currently running in theatres. The film, however, has re-

Nations League has the potential to win the hearts of fans and footballers



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Nations League Impact on Football and Fans England's Jack Grealish, third from left, celebrates after scoring the opening goal with Angel Gomes, left, Declan Rice, second from left, Harry Kane and Cole Palmer, right, during the UEFA Nations League soccer match between Finland and England, at the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki, Finland.

Last week in the Nations League — which looms on the football calendar like a stranger you are forced to squeeze in the backseat of a crowded cab — Greece stunned England in a fierce dogfight at home. Italy and Belgium, two teams in flux, duelled in an ill-tempered draw; the Netherlands fumed at the red card brandished to their talisman Virgil van Dijk against Hungary; and Cristiano Ronaldo started in the 215th game for his country and scored his 133rd goal, showing signs that he would give another shot at the trophy that lends fullness to his career. Or he would never retire until the World Cup dream is achieved.

Unless you are a Nation League tragic, these games are just a bunch of results that you glance at and forget. Nothing sticks in the memory. Nothing makes you hit the app for the highlights package, nothing intrigues or fascinates. It's the curious plight of UEFA's youngest tournament, a toddler still, that for all its honourable ideals, which was to makeover the meaningless friendly fixtures that merely helped in bloating the ego of big teams and inflating the goal counts of gluttonous forwards, is perceived as a calendar spoiler. Or a burden for the players, a bay for injuries, and catalyst of a potential players' strike.

An overcrowded calendar is a genuine concern. A player cannot be playing once in four days, as had been Spain's Rodri and Argentina's Julian Alvarez. But to rebuke that the Nations League is bogus, or that it is the only evil, is pretentious. It has instilled a system and order to the randomness of friendlies, where an elite nation might play an archipelago in the Baltic sea or a splinter nation of the fallen Soviet Republic. The performance-based grouping system, with promotion and relegation like the leagues after every edition, means that the best teams often end up meeting the best teams, guaranteeing a level of quality and competitiveness. Nations League Portugal's Bernardo Silva (10) is congratulated after scoring his side's opening goal during the UEFA Nations League soccer match between Poland and Portugal at Narodowy stadium in Warsaw, Poland.

Lopsided contests have become fewer, and it rewards budding but aspirational countries. Powerhouses

are meeting more frequently than ever before. For the second time in little more than a month, the Netherlands and Germany would lock horns. Though within a capitalistic framework — an extra tournament means more broadcast and ad revenue — it has strains of socialism. It has addressed the European reality of the 21st century, the geopolitical changes within Europe since the fall of the Soviet Union and the Balkan blocs. There are smaller countries that trail behind in football infrastructure. The Nations League brings all the 55 football associations under one umbrella. A continent-unifying tournament was a necessity to bind the concept of Europe. Whatever the players might mutter — Romelu Lukaku refused to play this week for his country — they take the games seriously. Coaches don't unleash a pack of novices, or experiment with funky formations. Unlike the friendlies, the results are more reflective of the team's progress or lack thereof. Teams take it earnestly because there is substantial prize-money at stake too. The winners would be richer by 10.5 million Euros, while the runners-up would receive 9 million Euros. Besides, teams would get an initial participation fee, from 1.5 million Euros for League A teams to 500,000 Euros for League D teams. There are extra bonuses for winning the group, from 750,000 Euros in League A to 250,000 Euros in League D.

The sums might not be of Champions League scale, but it's still a significant amount, especially for players in lower tiers and leagues. In the lower rungs, there are thousands of footballers dependent on appearance fees and bonuses to supplement their modest salaries. Moreover, four slots for the 2026 World Cup are up for the grabs from this tournament. After 12 spots are determined through the qualifiers, the four best Nations League group winners based on their overall Nations League ranking will be grouped with the 12 runners up in qualifier groups in four groups. They will feature in two single-match play-off games, with the winners of each qualifying for the World Cup. What the tournament needs is a makeover. Its potential to be glamorised is hideously untapped. Perhaps the lengthy league-cum-knockout, an attempt to merge the best of both worlds, the club and country, has not resonated with the audience. Rather, it has somehow missed the charm of either. Or a change in perception that the Nations League is the next worst calamity that has happened to Europe after World War II. Or the judgment to be coloured by the players' calendar ranting. In a sense, it is a concern only for the top players of the top clubs. An International Centre for Sports Studies survey found that only 0.31% of players featured in more than 60 games a season, another 1.8% played 51-60 games; and another 6.8% played 41-50 games a season. Calendar congestion is thus affecting a minority, that is less than 10 percent footballers in Europe's top five leagues. Besides, teams could make five substitutions in a game. But games these days are more intense, with more pressing and running. And player burnout is a genuine concern that trophy-hunting managers and glory-dreaming players themselves have to address and manage. Putting the whole blame on the Nations League is being pretentious. The Nations League becomes a watchable league if the audience puts his prejudices away. Strike a conversation with the stranger, and he might end up being a good friend and the ride could be thrilling.

Why Steve Smith is set to move back to No.4 against India

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Australia's Steve Smith will return to the No.4 position against India in the upcoming Border Gavaskar Trophy as his short but memorable stint as an opener comes to an end. After David Warner had retired, Smith had volunteered himself to play as an opener, even scoring an unbeaten 91 against West Indies. However, he scored just 51 runs in 4 innings against New Zealand in the following series. "Steve had expressed a desire to move back down from that opening position, and Pat and Andrew have confirmed that he will be dropping back down the order for the summer," national selector George Bailey said. Bailey also confirmed that the decision to shift Smith down the order had nothing to do with Cameron Green's back surgery which means he will miss the series against India. "Pat (Cummins), Andrew (McDonald) and Steve Smith had been having ongoing conversations, separate to the untimely injury to Cameron (Green)," Bailey was quoted as saying by 'cricket.com.au'. Green who was diagnosed with a lower back injury during the ODI series in England, is expected to miss around 6 months of action which will rule him out of February's Test tour of Sri



Lanka and the Champions Trophy in Pakistan. It has also cast doubt on his availability for the next Indian Premier League season. Cricket Australia confirmed last week that Green was considering surgery to be performed by New Zealand specialists who have previously helped fast bowlers including Shane Bond and James Pattinson overcome back stress fractures. The alternative to surgery would have been to undergo rehabilitation and limit his bowling in the India series.

Why India need a favour from Pakistan to stay alive in semifinals race after loss to Australia

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

India Pakistan Women's T20 World Cup semifinal qualification scenarios On Sunday, India lost to defending champions Australia by nine runs in their last group match to find themselves in a difficult position to qualify for the semifinals of the women's T20 World Cup. After enduring a close loss to Australia, the Harmanpreet Kaur-led Indian outfit will have to rely on arch-rivals Pakistan's result against New Zealand to go further in the Women's T20 World Cup. While India are still mathematically alive in their quest for the semifinal, they need Pakistan to defeat an in-form New Zealand outfit but there's also a catch here. The Women in Blue need Pakistan to beat the Kiwis but not too heavily. With India's net run rate (NRR) still above the Black Caps, any sort of Pakistan win will eliminate White Ferns. For India's NRR to remain above Pakistan these are the possible scenarios: if Pakistan are chasing 121, they must take at least 10.5 overs to do so. If Pakistan score 150, they must not win by more than 52 runs. On Sunday, India lost to defending champions Australia by nine runs in their last group match to find themselves in a difficult position to qualify for the semifinals of the women's T20 World Cup. Chasing 152 for a win, India ended at 142 for 9 with captain Harmanpreet Kaur top-scoring with 54 not out off 47 balls. Deepti Sharma and Shafali Verma chipped in with 29 and 20 respectively.

Australia, who topped the group with all four wins, qualified for the semifinals while New Zealand (4 points)



While India are still mathematically alive in their quest for the semifinal, they need Pakistan to defeat an in-form New Zealand outfit but there's also a catch here. The Women in Blue need Pakistan to beat the Kiwis but not too heavily.

need a win against Pakistan on Monday to make it to the last-four stage. Opting to bat, Australia were restricted to 151 for 8 with opener Grace Harris top-scoring with 40 off 41 balls. Stand-in captain Tahlia McGrath and Ellyse Perry chipped in with 32 each. For India, Renuka Singh and Deepti Sharma took two wickets apiece while Pooja Vastrakar, Radha Yadav and Shreyanka Patil got one each.

How Australia showed off their incredible depth as India struggled to get out of the hole they dug for themselves



GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Once again, Harmanpreet Kaur stood in the way of Australia. She has been here before, of course. Sometimes successfully. Sometimes heartbreakingly short. After 18.5 overs, she was on 51 off 44 balls. Back-to-back half-centuries in two crunch matches with India's campaign on the line. India needed 15 runs off 7 balls after Pooja Vastrakar dragged her captain for a second run. Harmanpreet was on her haunches, bent double, gasping for breath. As long as she was there, India had hope. Even a struggling Harmanpreet Kaur, in all honesty, because she was unable to break free for the most part of her stay in the middle. In the end, the night ended in heartbreak for Harmanpreet and India. Chasing 152 to try and stay alive in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, India fell short by 9 runs. The finish to the match summed up India's campaign somewhat. With 12 needed off 2 balls, and Shreyanka Patil on strike, the match was perhaps already over. But Annabel Sutherland bowled a wide, and the Indian batters didn't complete a single for a bye to put Harmanpreet back on strike. It might not have mattered even if the equation was 10 off 2 but India didn't do enough to give themselves a chance.

Not doing enough to give themselves the best chance to win. Was the decision to not play any competitive match for 68 days before their opener in the T20 World Cup the right call? It left them rusty against New Zealand. And a massive defeat meant they kept playing catch up in a tough group. There was a lack of initiative against Pakistan. In truth, India's performance against Australia on the night was a pretty solid one. After Australia's 151/8, India showed good intent at the start of the run-chase, and even stayed ahead of where their opponents were during their innings earlier around the halfway mark. After 15.1 overs, the teams were level on scores and India even had a couple of extra wickets in hand. In the end it came down to the final flourish. Australia had the luxury to keep going hard because of the incredible depth and flexibility they possess in the bat-

ting line up. Phoebe Litchfield, one of the brightest talents in the game, batted at No 7.

Harmanpreet Kaur vs Australia, 2024 T20 World Cup India's captain Harmanpreet Kaur bats during the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024 match between India and Australia at Sharjah Stadium, United Arab Emirates, Sunday, Oct. 13, 2024. (AP/PTI) Ellyse Perry dropped down to No.5 and still played a blinder while stand-in captain Tahlia McGrath proved to be a thorn in the Indian flesh once more after promoting herself to No.4. With the likes of Annabel Sutherland in the backend, they have the firepower to just keep pushing the pedal hard and not drive around in third gear to rebuild in case wickets fall.

India on the other hand, showed the right signs early on with Shafali Verma and Jemimah Rodrigues. But with Smriti Mandhana struggling for any fluency, and the top three falling early, Harmanpreet and Deepti Sharma decided to consolidate. India's batting depth at this point is an illusion, and there are really only 5 or 6 reliable big scorers. It didn't help that Harmanpreet, despite trying to break free, couldn't find her timing right. In the post-match chat, the Indian captain was asked what the difference between the two sides was. Intentionally or otherwise, she started listing out a variety of things that just signified how good this Aussie side is.

"Well, I think their entire team contributes. They are not dependent on one or two players," Harmanpreet started. "They have so many all-rounders. They have batters who can take charge in the power play. And then later on they don't have anything fixed. They can always make a new plan according to the situation and pitch." As she said, India indeed kept themselves in the game, but Australia's sharpness on the field — even if it wasn't their best night — meant the boundaries didn't come frequently enough.

"I think the difference between them and us is also definitely their fielding. When Deepti and I were batting we weren't able to utilize a few loose balls where we could have got those boundaries. They didn't give us any easy runs and they were rushing the ball all the time. And their experience too. They have played so many World Cups together and have won also. They are a great side, they just know how to win these games. We can learn from them." McGrath came up with a one-line sum up the Aussie mindset: "Whoever is out there knows there is complete freedom and they can go hard." If the world thought the time was here to close the gap to Australia, at least for India, it wasn't to be. They are not mathematically out of the tournament yet, but it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say they got plenty of calculations wrong. India bank on a Pakistan win India are mathematically alive but depend on Pakistan to beat an in-form New Zealand... but not too heavily. With India's NRR still above NZ, any sort of Pakistan win will eliminate White Ferns. For India's NRR to remain above Pakistan these are the possible scenarios: if Pakistan are chasing 121, they must take at least 10.5 overs to do so. If Pakistan score 150, they must not win by more than 52 runs. Brief Scores: Australia: 151 for 8 in 20 overs (Grace Harris 40; Renuka Singh 2/24, Deepti Sharma 2/28) bt India: 142 for 9 in 20 overs (Harmanpreet Kaur 54 not out; Annabel Sutherland 2/22, Sophie Molineux 2/32).

Harmanpreet Singh leads the way as India's Paris medallists take centrestage over foreign stars

GNS News Agency, Oct 16

Eleven years ago, four of the six highest paid players at the inaugural edition of the Hockey India League (HIL) were foreigners. Three years later, German midfielder Moritz Furste was sold for an eye-watering sum of \$105,000 (Rs 65 lakh) with countrymen Florain Fuchs and Tobias Hauke also fetching \$96,000 (Rs 59 lakh) each. On Sunday, on day 1 of the player auction for the revamped HIL — making its return after a seven-year absence — the team-composition strategy for the franchises seem to have shifted. The highest sums were reserved for the marquee players of India's recent bronze-medal triumph at the Paris Olympics. India captain Harmanpreet Singh received the highest bid of Rs 78 lakh from the JSW-owned Soorma Hockey Club, while promising forward Abhishek was acquired by Srachi Rath Bengal Tigers for Rs 72 lakh and midfielder Hardik Singh went for Rs 70 lakh to the UP Rudras. Hockey Despite quite the bidding war, Sardar Singh, former India captain and mentor of Soorma Hockey Club, was happy to have picked up Harmanpreet. (Express File) Not as if the purse strings tightened totally for foreign players. German defender Gonzalo Peillart, among the best in the world, was snapped up by the Hyderabad Toofans for Rs 68 lakh. But the fact that eight of the 10 highest-paid players were Indians laid bare where the priorities for the franchises lay. This



pivot in strategy is unsurprising considering the timing of the return of the HIL itself. The league was launched in 2013 — as one of many offshoots of cricket's IPL in Indian sports — at a low point for Indian hockey, after the men's team had finished dead last at the London Olympics. Currently, though, Hockey India hopes to capitalise on the momentum of the success of the national team, having won medals at back-to-back Olympics, to relaunch the franchise league.

That franchises would, then, hope to snap up top home talent to be the face of their teams, could have been expected. It was not only the highest earners; each franchise has found room for the recognisable Indian Olympic medallists, sometimes at a bargain. India vice captain Manpreet Singh went to the Visakhapatnam-based Team Gonasika for Rs 42 lakh for a relative bargain. Sumit joined Hyderabad for the Rs 46 lakh, while Amit

Rohidas joined Tamil Nadu Dragons, and Jugraj Singh joined Bengal, for Rs 48 lakh. Delhi, meanwhile, got Raj Kumar Pal, Harmanpreet Singh and Samsher Singh. Recently retired PR Sreejesh, now technical director at Delhi SG Pipers, reflected on the difference between the auction 11 years ago and now. "It's not like it was then. These are the stars of Indian hockey. Olympic medallists can't be paid less," he said. "We have to pay them more, put them in the limelight and make stars out of them." Despite quite the bidding war, Sardar Singh, former India captain and mentor of Soorma Hockey Club, was happy to have picked up Harmanpreet. "We wanted both Harman and Hardik, but it was not possible because of the bidding. Now the focus will shift on targeting younger players," he said. "Earlier, these teams used to prefer foreign players but now everyone wants Indians, which they deserve because of their recent performances." Paul

van Ass, coach of UP Rudras, spoke highly of Hardik after acquiring the Indian vice-captain: "I rate him as one of the best players in the world, he can do anything. I think Harmanpreet went for a bit more — because of the drag flicker he is and his penalty corners — but I'm very happy." "I had the feeling that franchises were prioritising the Indian Olympians. I think what helped (in them getting top billing) is that they were put in the auction first, so all the teams had a clean slate and could go for the players they were targeting," he added. With marquee players now in place and the big sums spent, Monday will decide how the teams are finally composed; how each franchise will find the right balance between the big names they have in their ranks and the bit-part players they find in the auction. The HIL will also feature a women's edition later this year, the auction for which is set to take place on Tuesday.