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CROSSWORD 4545

**ACROSS**  
1 Dictatorial soldiers in khaki for example (11)  
9 Gapes at spectacles  
10 A pie is turned a fine shade of brown (5)  
11 Record a piece of music (4)  
12 I drag gun out for protection (8)  
14 Plant one hundred and fifty too many (6)  
16 Cold tart (6)  
18 Make a suit? (8)  
19 Temperature in the freezer ordinarily (4)  
22 A poisonous creeper (5)  
23 This is irritating for sightseers, naturally (7)  
24 Way that is perfectly clear (5,6)

**DOWN**  
2 Sense of anxiety possibly nags the third mate (5)  
3 Do nothing in mid Lent (7)  
4 An even chance the matador will try to avoid (4-2)  
5 Stop and relax with a shower (8)  
6 Fix a quiet spot (7)  
7 Most appealing feature of a newspaper perhaps (5,6)  
8 Supplementary benefit for workers lacking security (6,5)  
13 Cloth worker; one in a mess (8)  
15 Choose one mother - the best (7)  
17 A problem for the bridge-builder to emphasise (6)

**Solutions Crossword 4544:** Across: 1 Stifle, 4 Acrimony, 9 Ordain, 10 Estrange, 12 Digs, 13 Relay, 14 Arid, 17 Wonderstruck, 20 Numismatists, 23 Noon, 24 Cairo, 25 Loaf, 28 Insomnia, 29 Senior, 30 Gremlins, 31 Pounce. Down: 1 Slow down, 2 Indigent, 3 Laid, 5 Casual remark, 6 In re, 7 Owners, 8 Yields, 11 Perspiration, 15 Het up, 16 Scott, 18 Estonian, 19 Use force, 21 Ending, 22 Mousse, 26 Emil, 27 Veto.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

It takes a wise man to \_\_ a wise man. -- Xenophanes (9)

DOEER

EEHTCN

APTIO

ELUZGZ

Answer: It takes a wise man to recognize a wise man. -- Xenophanes

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis

CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson

MARVIN by Tom Armstrong

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

**ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**  
  
The Moon ups the stakes, and should give you the emotional energy and determination to get off to a good start. This is necessary if you are now to take decisions relating to a long-term partnership. All you need is the staying power to survive until a rival backs down.

**LIBRA (Sept 24 - Oct 23)**  
  
You have to pay more attention to partners' hopes and desires, if only because that's the best way to keep them quiet. There is a great deal to be said for making a few confessions of your own, but pick your time. If you catch partners at the wrong moment you might give completely the wrong impression.

**TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)**  
  
Look inward for the answers today, for the key to your hopes and the solution to your fears lies with you rather than with friends, lovers or employers. True, they may have a role to play, but they also depend on your imaginative lead. Do your bit.

**SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)**  
  
Harmonious connections link a region of your solar chart representing the daily work routine to that signifying professional ambitions. Your desire for status amongst your peers could be achieved, but only with extra effort on your part. Luck doesn't come into it.

**GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)**  
  
Go for teamwork today. You have a strong individualist streak, but you're not being asked to subordinate your interests to those of other people. You may have the chance, if you wish, to call on them to serve you. Of course, you can't make them agree, but if you don't try, you'll never know.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)**  
  
The broad planetary alignment is profoundly helpful. It doesn't take much imagination to see that, with confidence, you could leave planet earth, fly to the clouds and soar with the birds over the next two days - at least in your dreams. In other words, it's good to try to take an overview of all your daily activities and pressures.

**CANCER (June 22 - July 23)**  
  
Professional affairs must take first place today. Even if you're not at work, it's time to promote yourself in the community, accepting responsibility and attracting praise and applause. Don't be afraid to take an unusual approach as the element of surprise could work in your favour.

**CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)**  
  
Your attention will be drawn to domestic affairs, probably because of what partners say or do, rather than because of what you want. The answers could be financial, and it may be sufficient to throw extra money at discontented people. At least, you can hope that this will do the trick.

**LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)**  
  
The broad, far-reaching connection between Mercury and Venus is increasing your charm level. There will be moments over the next fortnight when you are grievously provoked, but you'll be foolish to respond in kind. You'll do much better to react to a snarl with a smile.

**AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)**  
  
You're not always known for your willingness to think things through, but today's decisions and choices should be given a little extra consideration. Above all, be practical, especially where children are concerned. And if a younger relation comes to you for advice, try to see the world through their eyes.

**VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept 23)**  
  
There is a case to be made for spending time on business matters. In point of fact you'll be in a rather charitable mood, and could be a soft touch for deserving causes. It's all a question of making sure they're genuine. Mind you, that might be easier said than done.

**PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)**  
  
You can be surprisingly resolute where money is involved, and it looks as if you will be determined to see that an investment is returned. You may, however, be required to put in just a little extra effort. But then, it might be an emotional favour that needs to be repaid.

NOTICE BOARD

CORPORATE ASSOCIATE DIARY

APPOINTMENTS, MOVEMENTS, CELEBRATIONS, HONOURS

**AWARD - NFL**  
NFL has recently bagged 7 awards in the 11th PRCI Excellence Awards held at Goa. In the individual category, BV Vittal (GM-HR) won Best HR Person of the year & Sanjeev Randeve (DGM - CC & HR) received 'Communicator of the year Award - Corporate Branding'.

**AWARD - BOM**  
Bank of Maharashtra received "Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar" for better implementation of Rajbhasha Hindi. AS Rajeev (MD & CEO - BoM) received the award from Nisith Pramanik, MoS Home Affairs, at Vigyan Bhawan, ND.

**MOU - TRIFED**  
TRIFED and Big Basket have entered into a MoU, recently. The MoU was exchanged between Seshu Kumar (CMO; BIG BASKET) and Pravir Krishna (MD; TRIFED) in the presence of Arjun Munda, M/o Tribal Affairs.

**POSHAN ABHIYAAN - CWC**  
CWC IS organizing the 4th Rashtriya Poshan Maah which comes under POSHAN ABHIYAAN. The campaign of Poshan Maah is to be celebrated under 4 different themes during 4 weeks in the month of September, 2021.

**MEET - DFCCIL**  
DFCCIL's 3rd Stakeholders Meet for Eastern DFC's 374 km Sonnagar (New Chiraila Pauthu) - New Andal section on PPP model, over 40 enthusiastic participants from Indian & MNC Companies, Financial Institutions, Banks, & Consultancy Firms etc., participated.

**MOU - TPDDL**  
TATA Power -DDL and Genus Power signed a MoU to provide education and training related to AMI Development in the presence of S Verma, Chief-HR, IR& EHS, TPDDL & A Tandon, Executive VP, Genus Power.

**AGM - BHEL**  
Dr Nalin Shinghal, CMD, BHEL, addressed shareholders through video conferencing, at 57th Annual General Meeting in the presence of the Board of Directors of the company in New Delhi.

**MUSICAL EVENING - PHDCCI**  
PHDCCI has recently organised Gata Rahe Mera Dil - a Musical Evening to commemorate 75th India's independence - & PHD Excellence Award at PHD House, ND. S Bhosle, Sunali Rathod, RK Rathod, Papon, Shibani Kashyap & Danish Khan were felicitated with PHD Excellence Award.

**MEGA CREDIT CAMP - PNB**  
PNB sanctions loan worth Rs 1791 crore at Mega Credit Camp organised across North-East India. Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam Chief Minister, lauded the Bank at the signing of MoU between PNB and Assam Bio Refinery.

**INITIATIVES - IOCL**  
Celebrating World Rhino Day, IndianOil has recently rolled out several initiatives towards protecting the One-Horned Rhino, categorized as 'vulnerable' as per Extinction Risk by WWF. SM Vaidya, Chairman, IndianOil, visited the Delhi Zoo and participated in various activities to generate awareness.

**AWARD - NHPC**  
NHPC's 510 MW Teesta-V Power Station, Sikkim conferred with 'Blue Planet Prize' by International Hydropower Association (IHA). AK Singh (CMD; NHPC), YK Chaubey (Dir Tech; NHPC) & other senior officers alongwith IHA-Blue Planet Prize Trophy.

**AWARD - IWIRC**  
The International Women's Insolvency & Restructuring Confederation (IWIRC) is pleased to announce the recipient, Mamta Binani, of the 4th edition of the IWIRC Woman of the Year in Restructuring (Asia) Award ("WOYR(A) Award"). The WOYR(A) Award is open to any female professional in the restructuring & insolvency industry based in Asia, including lawyers, judges, bankers, accountants, turnaround managers, restructuring advisers & academicians. Mamta Binani practises as both a lawyer & an insolvency professional in India.

**ONGC**, as part of celebrations of the 75th year of the nation's Independence, has organised visits of students from Kendriya Vidyalaya and engineering colleges to its oil-fields in different parts of India. These field trips have aroused the interest of the younger generation of India in the oil and gas business, which is a vital element of India's energy independence.

**TPDDL** has launched its popular 'Pay Bill and Win' scheme in a bid to promote digital mode of payments and ensure the safety of its consumers. TPDDL, through an array of initiatives, encourages its consumers to stay at home and opt for digital modes of bill payment.

**OIL** held its 62nd Annual General Body meeting at its Corporate Office in Noida. The AGM was held on a virtual platform, necessitated by the extraordinary demands of present time. SC Mishra, CMD started the AGM.

**NBCC** has recently organised an in-house free health check-up camp for employees NBCC Zonal office in West Bengal. During this camp, a team of Doctors examined about 43 employees including ex-employees / contractors.

**CRPF**: Manoj Sinha, lieutenant Governor of J&K, flagged-off the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav CRPF Cycle Rally from GC CRPF, Jammu. The rally will traverse across several states to reach Raj Ghat on 02nd October. The rally is an initiative of the Government of India to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture, and achievements.

**IGNOU**: Dharmendra Pradhan, M/o Education, laid the foundation stone of the IGNOU Regional Centres buildings of RCs Bangalore, Noida and Pune through virtual mode. The Minister addressed the students and staff on the occasion virtually.

**The Muthoot Group** donated an Ambulance (Mobile Medical Unit) to DAV Educational & Welfare Society for helping the poor and venerable people for their medical test, vaccinations etc. in Delhi NCR. The Ambulance (Mobile Medical Unit) was Flagged off by Alexander George Muthoot, Dy MD, at Corporate office of The Muthoot Group in Alaknanda, ND, in presence of officials of DAV Educational & Welfare Society.

EVENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, LAUNCHES, CSR INITIATIVES, APPOINTMENTS, MOVEMENTS, CELEBRATIONS

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, Namrata Deswal D/o Shisa Singh R/o DDA House Kothi No, 51, Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075 have changed my name from Namrta Deswal to Namrata Deswal for all future purposes.

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**UP, PUNJAB REJIG CABINETS**

# Election coming, UP expands Cabinet: 7 new ministers in BJP 'social balance'

**Jitin Prasada made Cabinet Minister; three OBC names among six MoS****MAULSHREE SETH**  
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 26

WITH BARELY months to go for Assembly elections to be notified in UP, the BJP Sunday expanded its state government by naming seven new Ministers in an exercise that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said reflects "social balance" and "gives representation to all sections".

The party's move comes in UP barely 10 days after it revamped the entire Cabinet in

Gujarat, which goes to polls later next year.

Topping the list in UP's expansion is former Union MoS Jitin Prasada, who had recently switched to the BJP from the Congress.

While Prasada, a Brahmin representative, took oath as a Cabinet Minister, the other six are Ministers of State, including a woman: Chhatrapal Gangwar, Sangita Balwant Bind and Dharamveer Prajapati (OBC), Paltu Ram and Dinesh Khatik

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6****EXPLAINED**  
**Signal before state polls**

WITH STATE polls around the corner, the emphasis in the UP Cabinet expansion is on political signalling to the non-Yadav OBC community and non-Jatav Dalit community. The BJP has also tried to woo Brahmins by inducting Jitin Prasada given how opposition parties are courting the community vote.

## Seven new faces in Channi ministry; Amarinder critics get berths, 8 ministers stay

**KANCHAN VASDEV**  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

A WEEK after Capt Amarinder Singh stepped down as chief minister of Punjab, and following an eleventh-hour change in the list of members of the new ministry, 15 MLAs were inducted into the Charanjit Singh Channi cabinet on Sunday.

There are seven new faces in

the ministry, while eight former ministers have been retained. Governor Banwarilal Purohit administered the oath of office and secrecy to the ministers at Raj Bhawan.

Chief Minister Channi and his two deputies, Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and OP Soni, had taken oath on September 20.

Those who took oath on Monday included Brahm

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

## Development push is key, Shah tells states in meeting on Naxals

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, RANCHI, BHUBANESWAR, BHOPAL, SEPTEMBER 26

THE LACK of development is the main reason for dissatisfaction in the districts where Maoists are active, and it is important to have uninterrupted development to wean the youth away from the movement, Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday.

Shah met with top officials from nine states affected by Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) to review the security situation and progress of development projects.

Six chief ministers were present;

**Amit Shah at the meeting in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI**

four states were represented only by their chief secretaries and directors general of police.

"The root cause of dissatisfaction is that development has not reached there...since independ-

ence and...it is very essential to ensure accessibility to fast-paced development so that common and innocent people do not join them," the Ministry of Home

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

## Nitish turns up heat on caste census, says Govt must reconsider

**SOURAV ROY BARMAN**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

MOUNTING PRESSURE on the BJP, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Sunday reiterated his call for a caste census, saying it will be "in the national interest", and urged the Centre to "reconsider" its position against such an exercise.

Nitish's latest call comes three days after the Centre effectively ruled out a caste census in 2021, and told the Supreme Court that such an exercise "would not be feasible", and that its stance on the issue is a "conscious policy decision".

Pointing out that unanimous resolutions backing a caste census have been passed in the Bihar Assembly and Legislative Council, Nitish told reporters in

**'It will be in the national interest'****THE EDITORIAL PAGE****COUNT THE CASTES**  
BY TEJASHWI PRASAD YADAV  
PAGE 10

Delhi: "All of us have already jointly placed our demand. The issue has come up now in connection with the socio-economic caste census matter in the court. It has no connection with our demand. We would like to request that the issue be considered and

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

## Don't fear contempt of court, who has gone to jail: Tripura CM

**DEBRAJ DEB**  
AGARTALA, SEPTEMBER 26

IN A speech to the Tripura Civil Service Officers' Association, state Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb asked officials and executives to work for the people without fear of committing contempt of court, because "we are a by-the-people government, not by-the-court government".

The Trinamool Congress attacked Deb as a "disgrace to the

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6****Opp TMC attacks Biplab Deb****BUSINESS AS USUAL**

By UNNNY

**INSIDE****CYCLONE GULAB CROSSES COAST, FISHERMAN DIES IN ANDHRA** PAGE 12**BHARAT BANDH TODAY, SEVERAL OPP PARTIES EXTEND SUPPORT** PAGE 9

## Rajasthan shuts down Internet as 16 lakh sit for teacher exam



At an exam centre in Jaipur, Sunday. Rohit Jain Paras

**HAMZA KHAN**  
JAIPUR, SEPTEMBER 26

A TEACHERS' entrance examination held on Sunday saw an unprecedented shutdown of internet services and businesses across Rajasthan on the orders of the administration.

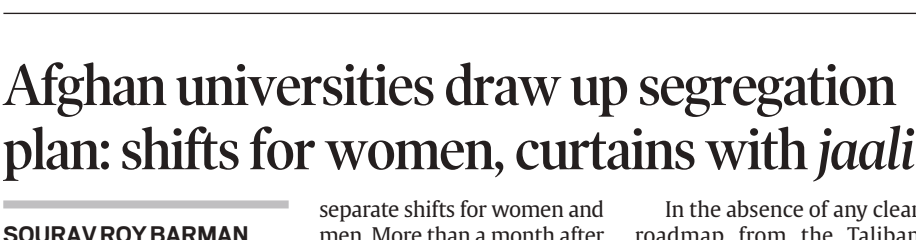
Nearly 16 lakh candidates appeared for the Rajasthan Eligibility Examination for Teachers (REET) — held to recruit Level 1 (class 1-5) and Level 2 (classes 6-8) teachers — in 4,019 centres across the state on Sunday. The last REET was conducted in 2018.

On Friday, Principal Secretary, Home, Abhay Kumar had written to the state, divisional and district officials to take a call on suspending internet services to enforce law and order, and to prevent fraud during the exam. "About 16 lakh students will participate in REET 2021 and will travel from one district to another. In such a situation, there is a possibility of deteriorating law and order situation due to fake news, rumours of accidents, paper leak, etc," he wrote. Thus, keeping in mind the Central government's 2017 notification on

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

## SPOT INSPECTION

On Sunday night, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the construction site of the new Parliament building in New Delhi. ANI



## Afghan universities draw up segregation plan: shifts for women, curtains with jaali

**SOURAV ROY BARMAN & RITIKA CHOPRA**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

CURTAINS BISECTING rooms "like in hospitals", cubicles with curtains fitted with *jaalis*, and

separate shifts for women and men. More than a month after the Taliban took over Afghanistan, these are among the elaborate plans drawn up by prominent public universities to implement the new regime's gender segregation policy.

In the absence of any clear roadmap from the Taliban regime on the future of women's higher education, public universities in the country such as Kabul University, established in 1932, or the three-decade-old

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

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On behalf of Air Force School Prahladpur, bids in sealed cover are invited for Renovation of Children's Washrooms at AF School Prahladpur. The firms dealing with Civil works may quote for technical bid as well as Commercial bid sealed separately in single envelope. The firms interested to bid the school for assessment and obtaining RFP before submitting bids. The last date for submission of bid (Technical bid as well as Commercial bid) is 11 Oct 201. The bids are to be dropped in the tender box kept at the main gate of Air Force Station Prahladpur, 27ED. Date of opening of Technical bid is 13 Oct 201 and Commercial bid is 20 Oct 201. The bids are to be addressed to Chairman, Air Force Prahladpur 27ED. For any queries contact the following:-  
Address:- 27 Equipment Depot Air Force Station, Delhi  
Air Force Palam, Delhi Cantt New Delhi 110010.

The ministry has nine

Sources said it was empha-

In the video, the CM says: "...[Officials] say, 'Sir, there will be problems with the system'. What problems will happen? (They say), 'Sir, we can't take the risk, there will be contempt of court'... Who has gone to jail in Tripura for contempt of court? I am here; if you go, I shall go before you..."

BJP spokesperson Nabendu Bhattacharya said: "This is a wrong interpretation of his state-

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**Advt-76**

**Chief General Manager/Projects**  
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**Executive Director,**  
**Area 1**



## 7 THE CITY

CORONAVIRUS  
IN THE CAPITALVACCINATIONS IN  
LAST 24 HOURS  
**2,09,860**

		Total		Vacant
TOTAL CASES		14,38,714		16,088
HOSPITAL BEDS		3,556		3,486
ICU BEDS				
	Cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
Sept 25	27	39	00	68,498
Sept 26	29	37	00	62,546
Total	371*	14,13,258	25,085	2,74,09,022

\*Total active cases

## GANGSTER GOGI'S MURDER

## Rohini firing: Out-of-turn promotions for 3 commandos who killed gunmen

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

DAYS AFTER two assailants killed gangster Jitender Maan alias Gogi inside a Rohini district courtroom before being gunned down, senior police officers from Delhi Armed Police recommended out-of-turn promotions for the three personnel who shot the attackers.

The three commandos — two constables and an assistant sub-inspector from the Armed Police — have been recommended for the promotions for controlling the situation, gunning down the attackers in time, and saving lives of other persons present inside the courtroom.

On Friday, the two attackers, Rahul Tyagi and Jagdeep Jagga, posed as lawyers and fired multiple bullets at Gogi inside the courtroom. Police personnel re-

Heightened security at the entrance of Rohini court, a day after the shootout. *Praveen Khanna*

taliated, killing the two assailants on the spot.

On Sunday afternoon, Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh

Asthana also visited the spot and stayed for almost an hour.

A senior police officer said, "The Commissioner contacted

us and told the policeman who controlled the situation at Rohini court will be rewarded suitably."

A Delhi Police spokesperson said, "We have come to know that the Special Commissioner of Police (Armed Police) will be sending a file to the Commissioner, requesting for a promotion for the three personnel."

## 'Plan was for 4 men to kill Gogi, surrender'

The Special Cell Saturday had arrested two men, Umang and Vinay Mota, and recovered a car used to drop the assailants to court. One of the arrested men is a close associate of Sunil alias Tillu Tajpuriya, Gogi's long-time rival. Investigation also revealed that the murder plot was allegedly hatched by Tillu from inside Mandoli jail.

The two men told police that the assailants met them six days

ago and stayed at their house in Haiderpur. The men also parted and dropped Tyagi and Jagga at the court on Friday and showed them the courtroom where Gogi was to appear, said police.

After questioning the arrested men, police found that the initial plan was for four men — Rahul, Jagdeep, Umang, and their associate — to enter the courtroom posing as lawyers, kill Gogi, and surrender before the judge.

"Their plan changed as Umang and the associate weren't wearing proper clothes. They sent Rahul and Jagdeep to the courtroom and stayed inside their car. CCTV footage, meanwhile, showed their associate, dressed in black, walking around the court. He will be arrested soon," said an officer.

Police are also questioning gangsters Tillu and Naveen Bali to get more details about their plan.

## At Gurjar mahapanchayat, anger against UP govt over lineage of 9th Century king

AMIL BHATNAGAR  
DADRI, SEPTEMBER 26

ANGER AGAINST the UP government simmered at a mahapanchayat in Dadri on Sunday, which was called by members of the Gurjar community to protest the removal of the word 'Gurjar' from the plaque on a statue of 9th Century king Mihir Bhoj.

The statue was unveiled by UP CM Yogi Adityanath at Mihir Bhoj Inter College on Wednesday. Locals claim the word 'Gurjar' was deliberately omitted from the plaque. Several speakers, from village leaders to Gurjar organisation members, addressed 2,000-odd people and said they wanted to send a "message" to the government through the gathering. They said the omission was an 'insult', and that the government has 10 days to restore the title.

"This has now become a matter of honour for the Gurjar community. We cannot be insulted anymore. We have to send a message to the ruling government in a dignified fashion. We are not dependent on any party or organisation for our self-respect..." said Avtar Singh Bhadana, a Gurjar leader and former BJP MP.

On Wednesday morning, before the CM arrived for the inauguration, locals claimed some "miscreants" blacked out the 'Gurjar' before the name Mihir Bhoj on the plaque. However, on another portion the statue, a list of donors has been engraved and the title above reads 'Gurjar Samrat Mihir Bhoj'.

A BJP leader put up a sticker that read Gurjar over the painted portion, which was also removed later, locals said.

Over 2,000 people were at Sunday's gathering. *Gajendra Yadav*

This triggered a controversy once the speech ended, with some locals saying the CM had "denied" Mihir Bhoj his actual legacy. "It is evident that the Chief Minister did not come as Yogi Adityanath but as Ajay Bisht. If you are a Yogi, you will not go into the religion or caste of someone and rather give due recognition. With this act, the community has been given a wrong signal. All of us have gathered to plan more protests and make them realise the unity of the Gurjar community," said Sonu Gurjar, convenor, Rashtriya Gurjar Veer Sena.

Shortly after the function, a call for Sunday's mahapanchayat was made in the college. Heavy police force was deployed and the gates to the college and the statue podium were locked. The gathering was then shifted to the Shiv Mandir a few metres ahead.

Police detained nearly 200 people for violating Section 144 and said no permission had been given for the gathering. "It was a peaceful gathering and heavy force had been deployed at several corners. A few protesters

were taken to Police Lines and later released. We will continue to monitor the situation," said Vishal Pandey, ADCP, Gautam Buddha Nagar. An FIR was also filed in Jewar police station against 150 named and 600 unnamed people for alleged violation of the government order and the Epidemic Act, said police.

Tensions have been simmering in the region after local Karmi Sena members had earlier said Mihir Bhoj was a Rajput icon and was being "misappropriated" as a Gurjar leader. A 9th Century leader, he had led successful campaigns in Deccan, Malwa and Gujarat region. He also led battles against Arab invaders and rulers from Rajasthan.

Prior to Wednesday's event, some members of the Gurjar and Rajput communities entered a truce and decided not to raise the issue of Bhoj's lineage. There is also anger against area MLA from BJP and Gurjar leader Tejpal Nagar as some feel he has abandoned the community to toe the party line.

Nagar could not be contacted despite repeated attempts.

## BRIEFLY

## NHAH submits proposal to clear 14.08 hectares of 'forest' land

**New Delhi:** Delhi is likely to lose more of its green cover, this time for a high-way project. The National Highways Authority of India has submitted a proposal to clear 14.08 hectares of 'forest' land in East and Northeast Delhi to make way for a six-lane highway. The proposal is for the Delhi-Saharanpur highway from the Akshardham NH-9 junction to the Delhi/UP border. The stretch will be 14.75 km. The project falls under the Centre's Bharatmala Pariyojana road development scheme.

## Congress wants Rs 5 lakh fine from restaurants refusing entry in Indian attire

**New Delhi:** Delhi Congress vice-president and SDMC councillor Abhishek Dutt has demanded that a fine of Rs 5 lakh should be imposed against establishments if they deny entry to visitors wearing Indian traditional outfits. This was prompted by a recent incident wherein a woman was allegedly denied entry to a restaurant in South Delhi's Ansal Plaza as she was in a saree. Dutt, who is also the councillor from Andrews Ganj, has moved a proposal in the South MCD. The proposal is likely to be tabled in the SDMC House meeting on September 29. **ENS**

## Enrolment up in MCD schools, officials skeptical of celebrating

ABHINAV RAJPUT  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

ALL THREE municipal corporations have seen an increase in student enrolment this academic year as compared to the last — by over 10,000 students in South MCD, around 40,000 in East and around 20,000 in North.

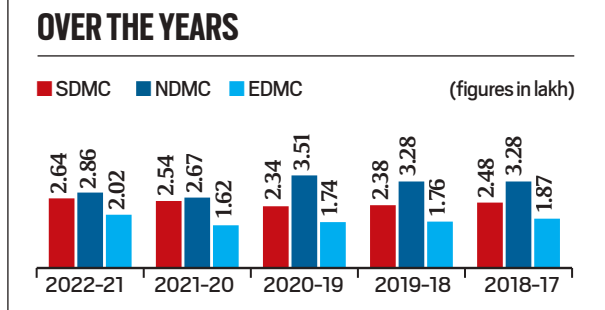
This, however, may not be a reason to cheer as senior civic body officials attributed it to reasons such as ghost students who exist on paper but enroll for perks such as direct benefit transfers; the pandemic forcing private school students to shift to MCD schools due to decreased parental income; and budget private schools remaining shut during Covid as opposed to civic body schools.

There are 568 schools under South MCD, 354 under East and 700 under North.

The East MCD has seen an uptick in enrolment, which has constantly been decreasing over the years — from over 2.33 lakh students in 2012-13 to 1.62 lakh students in 2020-21. In the 2021-22 academic year, the enrolment has increased to over 2 lakh, as per data given by the EDMC.

North MCD, which had 2.67 lakh students till last year, saw 2.86 lakh students enrolling this year.

The South body had seen a



rise last year too. There were 2.34 lakh students in 2019-20, 2.54 lakh in 2020-21, and 2.64 lakh in 2021-2022.

Director of the education department of North MCD Ranjeet Singh said students who were unable to afford private school fees are shifting to MCD schools. "Private ones are charging as usual... while in MCD schools, there is no fee. Besides, students get several benefits. Also, our infrastructure has improved."

Director Education of South MCD Pradeep Kumar said: "Enrolment has increased but the actual test would be once schools re-open and how many students can be retained."

A senior South MCD official said students may have enrolled themselves in private as well as MCD schools for DBT perks: "It is easier to bluff when classes are online... and tracking is not possible.

Once schools reopen, retention would be a tough task."

According to Director (education) East R Menka, there are cases where mohalla-level private schools were shut during the lockdown, but corporation schools continued teaching-learning in the form of online classes, giving physical sheets or assignments which could be collected from schools. "Direct benefit transfers for stationery, uniform are also incentives that drew students to our schools," she said.

In the pre-pandemic period, enrolment constantly decreased due to reasons such as some government schools admitting students from nursery onwards, poor student-teacher ratio at corporation schools affecting quality of education, and private schools admitting students under the Right to Education Act.

## Compensatory afforestation land not declared protected: RTI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

MOST OF the non-forest land used for compensatory afforestation in Delhi has neither been declared as protected forest yet, nor has its ownership been granted to the Forest Department, leaving large swathes of land used for compensatory afforestation unprotected.

A response to a request for information filed under the RTI Act by lawyer Pratyush Jain showed that a total of 136.55 hectares of

land is to be notified as 'protected' or 'reserved' forest under the Indian Forest Act. These are non-contiguous parcels of land.

The process of declaration of compensatory plantation areas in non-forest land as protected forest is "underway", according to the RTI response which answered a question on details of the non-forest land that has been declared protected.

On the mutation of compensatory afforestation land in favour of the Forest Department, the RTI response says that "considering Delhi as a

special case, the condition of mutation of land in favour of the state Forest Department has been waived off."

Kanchi Kohli, researcher at the Centre for Policy Research, said, "If the land is mutated to the Forest Department, it pre-determines the use — it should be put to forest use. If it is not forest land, it can be put to various uses. The DDA can, if it wants, say that the land can be put to a particular use. But the DDA has a mandate to 'develop.' On one level, it is a jurisdictional issue."

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 DME Invites applications for admission through **Management Quota Seats** for 2021-22 Session  
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14/21	Engineer (JAVA)	1
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16/21	Assistant Manager (Social) on contract	2
17/21	Assistant Manager (Environment) on contract	2

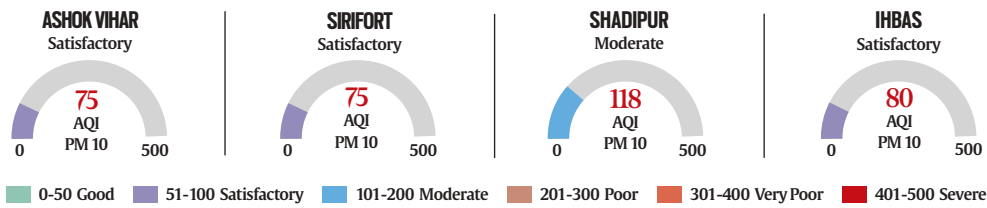
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**POSSESSION NOTICE (SECTION 13 (4)) (For Immovable Property)**  
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**Description of the Immoveable Property**  
 All that part and parcel of the property consisting in the name of Sri Vishnu Shankar S/o Late Dwarka Sah. Khata No. 555, Plot No.-1840, Khata No-596, Plot No.-1839, Mauza kritipura, Thana No.-141, Anchal kailwar, Bhojpur, Area-62.5 Dec. **Boundary** :- NorthRoad, South-Haidar Iqbal & Hamid Ahmad, East-Plot No-1838 Jitendra Singh, West-15 ft wide Rasta  
**Date :-24.09.2021**  
**Place :-Arrah**  
**Authorised Officer**  
**CANARA BANK**

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
**EX-SERVICEMEN CONTRIBUTORY HEALTH SCHEME**  
**ECHS CELL, STATION HEADQUARTERS MATHURA**  
 Phone : 0565-2470041  
**EMPANELMENT OF PRIVATE HOSPITALS DESIGNATED BY STATE GOVERNMENTS FOR COVID-19**  
 1. ECHS CELL, Mathura invites applications from Private Hospitals / Nursing Homes designated by State Government for COVID-19 treatment and co-morbidities for empanelment with the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) Polyclinics located at Mathura, Aligarh and Hathras under ECHS Cell, Station Headquarters Mathura.  
 2. The empanelment of such hospitals with ECHS will be for treatment of COVID-19 cases at rates as notified by Ministry of Defence. The hospitals which are notified by State Government for treatment of COVID-19 patients and are willing to get empanelled with ECHS on temporary basis initially for a period of six months subject to review of the COVID Situation by the Competent Authority would be eligible for temporary empanelment irrespective of their QCI/NABH status. The empanelment will only be for testing and treatment of COVID-19 and co-morbidities and will be for a maximum period of six months and will be renewed / extended based on COVID-19 situations.  
 3. For further information / other details please visit [www.echs.gov.in](http://www.echs.gov.in). Forward application with supporting documents to ECHS Cell, Station Headquarters Mathura, near Yodha Chowk, Mathura Cantt-281001 to reach latest by 05 October 2021.

Government of India  
 Public Enterprises Selection Board  
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**Director (Manufacturing Business)**  
 in  
**Balmer Lawrie & Co. Limited**  
 Last date of receipt of applications in  
**PESB is by 15.00 hours on**  
**15<sup>th</sup> November, 2021**  
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<http://www.pesb.gov.in>





**S K Y W A T C H**

**FORECAST: Sep 27**  
Generally cloudy sky. Light rain/thundershowers at isolated places

**MAX: 33** | **MIN: 25**  
1.0°C below normal | 1.1°C above normal

HARDLOOK

# Copyright vs wrong

A case between three academic publishers and the creator of pirate website Sci-Hub is currently being fought in the Delhi High Court. But unlike elsewhere in the world, where the latter has ignored such challenges, she is getting help in India from a group of people who believe research papers should be open access

SUKRITA BARUAH  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

A CASE currently being heard in the Delhi High Court has got the attention of academicians, scientists, and researchers across the world.

In December 2020, three major academic publishers — Elsevier, Wiley, and American Chemical Society — moved the court against Kazakh computer programmer Alexandra Elbakyan and website LibGen and its related additional domains. Elbakyan is the creator and owner of Sci-Hub, a pirate website which enables users to download research papers for free, bypassing paywalls and restrictions.

On its website, it claims to be “the first pirate website in the world to provide mass and public access to tens and millions of research papers”. The creators and owners of LibGen are unknown and the site provides free access to millions of journal articles and textbooks.

The publishing giants have appealed for a permanent injunction against them for copyright infringement by “unauthorised hosting, reproducing, distributing, making available to the public and/or communicating to the public, or facilitating the same, of the Original Works owned by the Plaintiffs”. They have requested the court to order the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and Ministry of Communications and its Department of Telecommunications to issue a notification to internet and telecom service providers registered under it to block access to the sites in question.

The hearing is listed for September 28.

This is not the first lawsuit against Elbakyan. In 2015, Elsevier had first filed a lawsuit against her in a US court, which found her liable for wilful copyright infringement and entered a permanent injunction against her and charged her \$15 million as statutory damages to Elsevier. With the servers based in Russia, outside US jurisdiction, Sci-Hub did not pay the damages.

In the years that followed, this has been followed by similar cases leading to blocking orders in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Spain and Sweden. Elbakyan had not defended herself in court in any of these cases. What is unique about the case in the Delhi High Court is that it is the first time she is disputing through legal representation.

“In most countries, I was not aware that Sci-Hub was being sued. For example, in Italy, France, Sweden, Russia and

Austria I had learned about the lawsuit only after the website was blocked. Perhaps they notified me by email that I do not check regularly, or did not notify at all. Or perhaps I had not noticed. In the Indian case, I received a notification about the lawsuit on December 21, if I remember well, and I shared the news on Twitter. Many people reacted, and lawyers from India contacted me to support. In 2015, there was a lawsuit in the United States. At that moment, the Sci-Hub Twitter account did not have many subscribers... There was a phone conference in the US court that included a judge, Elsevier lawyers and me. The judge advised me to find a lawyer. I later tried to reach out to lawyers through the Electronic Frontier Foundation. Some responded, but there was not a lot of interest. I found the whole process of participating in a legal case complicated, expensive, and potentially dangerous, since I would have to disclose my physical location... Today, Sci-Hub has a lot more support and I have more experience so for me it is also less complicated,” she told *The Indian Express* over email.

The legal representation for Sci-Hub in India began building momentum when a young lawyer in Delhi — a regular user of the site himself — decided to try reaching out to Elbakyan.

“I completed my LLM from Delhi University in 2019. The only place where we could access journals in the university’s system was through the computers in its central library, but the infrastructure was very limited. There were only two operational computers of which only one was functional all the time, and there were thousands of students. I didn’t have much money, so I was dependent on Sci-Hub to get access to law journals I needed for my work. It had been a valuable resource for me and that got threatened when I found that there was an attempt to block access to it through the court. I got to know about the case when Alexandra posted about it on Twitter. When I read the plaint, I thought this must be challenged directly through her,” said 28-year-old Nilesh Jain.

He said he messaged her on Twitter but did not get a response. He then found her email ID and reached out to her there, after which she agreed to let him represent her.

Originally from Rajasthan, Jain has worked on policy and research with different agencies and organisations. Last year, he had worked with Citizens Collective for Peace to set up medico-legal camps in riot-affected areas in Delhi. He said he approaches this case as a matter of “great public interest to the scientific and academic community”.

Requesting the court for time



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

## TRACKING USAGE IN INDIA

### BETWEEN AUGUST AND DECEMBER 2020

- sci-hub.tw domain received **3.529 million** visits from India
- sci-hub.se domain received **7,93,870** visits from India
- Indian users accounted for between **4.55%** and **6.64%** of traffic to sci-hub.tw and sci-hub.se domains

### BETWEEN SEPTEMBER AND NOVEMBER 2020

- gen.lib.rus.ec domain received **32.38 million** visits globally, of which **2.436 million** were from India

(Data from reports by Wiggin LLP)

to respond to the plaint after first representing Elbakyan on December 24, he managed to bring more experienced people on board, including intellectual property lawyer Rohan K George and senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayan.

This was followed by impleadment applications filed by science organisations such as Delhi Science Forum, Knowledge Commons and a set of various scientists seeking to be made party to the case.

“Researchers have a very tough time in India. Except for top universities, institutes don’t have access to international journals because of high subscription fees for various journals. You need some mechanism for researchers to be able to access published papers, and it has always been the forum’s position that knowledge is universal and should be shared publicly... Researchers who write articles published in journals don’t receive any royalty and surrender

their ability to share their knowledge to journals which charge huge amounts for access... Of course, there are some others who are legally sharing papers, but the repositories are nowhere as large as Sci-Hub,” said D Raghunandan, member of Delhi Science Forum.

He stated that there are two

questions at hand that he argues need to be addressed separately: of the ability of researchers in India to access the material on the sites and of the legality of the way the sites are procuring the papers.

The plaintiffs in the case, however, raise issues of data protection and phishing attacks.

Stating that they promote “lawful sharing” of scholarly articles, the plaintiffs told *The Indian Express* in a statement through their lawyers that sites like Sci-Hub compromise the security of institutions and individuals through their methods.

“Pirate sites like Sci-Hub threaten the integrity of the scientific record, and the safety of university and personal data. They compromise the security of libraries and higher education institutions to gain unauthorised access to scientific databases and other proprietary intellectual property, and illegally harvest journal articles and e-books. The risks posed by Sci-Hub are exacerbated by the way it operates: using stolen user credentials and phishing attacks to illegally extract copyrighted journal articles.”

They also stated that “unlike academic publishers and societies, they have no incentive to ensure the accuracy of scientific articles, no incentive to ensure

published papers meet ethical standards, and no incentive to retract or correct articles if issues arise”.

The lawyers for the defendant said did not want to respond on the merits of the case since the matter is sub judice.

Sci-Hub’s usage appears to have become normalised across universities and among researchers in India. In fact, the country forms the platform’s second largest user base and, according to Elbakyan, there are 7-8 lakh unique visitors to the site every month from India. This is behind only China, from where the site receives from 8-10 lakh unique visitors every month.

Wiggin LLP, a UK-based law firm, put together a report dated December 16, 2020, on the functionality of Sci-Hub for the plaintiffs. According to the report, between August and October 2020, the sci-hub.tw domain received 3.529 million visits from India. That domain was taken offline around September 20 after which a bulk of the traffic moved to the domain sci-hub.se which received 7,39,870 visits from India during the same duration.

It also found that as on December 7, 2020, sci-hub.se had a global Alexa rank of 3,137 and an India rank of 1,155.

The site claims to have more than 87.99 million research papers in its library. Researchers from the Department of Computer Sciences at Banaras Hindu University and CSIR-NISTAD, Dr Vivek Kumar Singh, Dr Sujit Bhattacharya and Satya Swarup Srichandan, have analysed the download requests originating in India received by Sci-Hub in 329 days in 2017. In that period, they found 13 million downloads from India for more than 5 million unique research papers. Their analysis of the disciplinary distribution of the downloaded papers showed that 21% were from Engineering, 19% from Health and Medical Sciences, 15% from Chemical Sciences, 11% from Computing Sciences, 8% from Biological Sciences, 5% from Physical Sciences and 5% from Technology.

In conversations with students and research scholars in different universities across the country, they stated that using the site to access papers has become a “norm”, a practice which is also leading them to not question limitations in the services provided by their universities.

Anurag Sharma, an M.Tech student at IIT-Delhi, said he ends up using Sci-Hub frequently despite his institute having access to most journals he requires.

“I think now for me it’s become more of a matter of convenience because of how quick the process is. I just need to find the DOI of the paper I need and

download it, without having to go through a log-in process and put in a paper title. But it was different when I was doing my M.Sc. in Physics from Jamia. Then, I used only on Sci-Hub because I was not aware of the procedure to access subscribed journals. I think there were computers in the university library to access them, but we were never told about it,” he said.

A Ph.D. research scholar at DRDO in Delhi said his institute has subscriptions to a limited number of journals: “I’m not even sure which ones are available through the institute’s system. Whenever there’s a paper I need to access, I first look for it on the institute system. If I don’t find it there, I just download it from Sci-Hub. I frequently use the Sci-Hub Telegram bot to which I can send the DOI or link to the paper on Telegram and it sends the paper to me.”

A Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Chemistry at IIT-Madras — one of the country’s top research institutes — said that while his institute has subscriptions to the publishers whose journals he uses the most, which are the three plaintiffs and the Royal Society of Chemistry, he has difficulty accessing papers more than 15 year old through them.

“I don’t know the reason for this and honestly, I haven’t bothered to try to find out because Sci-Hub has been there. I can place a request at my library for the papers I require and they can probably get it done, but that’s laborious and will take at least a few days, and I don’t have time for that because I’m rushing around the clock to get my work done,” he said. He added that usage of the site is “universal” at the institute, as well as other institutes in the city such as University of Madras and CSIR-CLRI.

Aniruddha Seal, an undergraduate student of Chemistry at NISER Bhubaneswar, said ever since college has gone online with the pandemic, the site has been his only access-point for research papers: “My institute has subscriptions to major publishers but remote access is available only to PhD students. All our papers have a research component, so we also need to refer to journals and papers. It’s such a norm to use Sci-Hub that no one has really raised concern over this, almost everyone in my class is using it.”

In fact, in the case of Jain’s alma mater Delhi University, *The Indian Express* had reported in 2019 that the university had not updated its subscription in over two years to over 40 online databases providing access to journals and other resources. Delhi University renewed its subscription to 34 of these only this year, restoring access to required research materials after several years to its researchers.

## Waterlogging at Ring Road: PWD looks for permanent solution

ASHNA BUTANI  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

AFTER MINTO Bridge, a permanent solution for waterlogging is being designed at Ring Road near the WHO building as the area has reported instances of heavy waterlogging, particularly this year.

Officials of the Public Works Department have discussed the creation of an alternate discharge route for stormwater. The tender will be floated by the end of the month and work on the project will begin soon. A PWD official said, “The main reason for waterlogging in the area is overflowing of the Delhi Jal Board line. The stormwater system cannot take the burden of excess water.”

Since the line is under the DJB, the two departments have discussed the matter and the DJB is working on upgrading its system. Further ahead on the line near Okhla, the PWD will undertake

construction of an underground sump. The official said a 5 lakh-litre collection tank will be made and excess water will flow into SDMC drain 12. As of now, stormwater from the area flows into an MCD pumping station.

The creation of this alternate route should reduce the pressure on the existing system.

Officials explained that the drainage system in the city, which was built over a 100 years ago, is not equipped to handle the needs of an ever-increasing population. Further, there has been an unprecedented amount of rainfall this monsoon.

For the first time in years, Minto Bridge saw much less waterlogging than it used to before. This is because a new pipeline for pressurised flow had been laid further ahead on Minto road.

Such projects cost approximately 70 lakh each and there are plans to implement similar initiatives across critical locations.

## 67 SUCH SPACES CREATED SO FAR

# In bustling Delhi, efforts on to create butterfly habitats

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

SHORT-LIVED, solitary and dwindling in concretised urban spaces, butterflies are far from the lime-light in bustling Delhi. However, efforts are under way to carve out spaces for the winged insects in the city. September is being marked as the Big Butterfly Month-India, as a nationwide attempt to celebrate butterflies and conserve their habitats.

At the nursery and butterfly park at the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, butterflies flit from leaf to leaf. “Butterflies have close relationships with plants. Once the female butterfly lays eggs on the leaves, it never sees the offspring. The plant is the surrogate mother,” said Sohail Madan of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), who led a ‘butterfly walk’ at the park Sunday morning as part of the Big Butterfly Month.

At the walk, a 30-minute long

count of butterflies reveals the presence of 16 species in the nursery. A longer count for around three-four hours, might reveal around 30-40 species, Madan said. The common ones include the Plain and Striped Tiger butterflies, Lemon Pansy butterfly, Common Mormon butterfly, and the Red Pierrot butterfly. The nursery also houses a more uncommon Red Flash butterfly — brownish wings when closed, open to reveal a flash of red. Such counts are taking place across the country as part of the Big Butterfly Month.

On some plants, the leaves have several holes in them chewed up by caterpillars. Butterflies lay eggs on tender leaves and caterpillars that emerge eat the leaves before they build a coffin-like chrysalis for themselves and metamorphose into fully-grown butterflies.

Different species of butterflies depend on different ‘larval host’ plants, marking the deep relationship that butterflies have



Sohail Madan of the Bombay Natural History Society led a ‘butterfly walk’ at Asola sanctuary on Sunday morning as part of the Big Butterfly Month. Mallica Joshi

with plants, rather than flowers as is popularly construed. The Plain Tiger butterfly for instance, the most commonly found in Delhi, has milkweed or ‘aak’ as the host plant.

“The role of butterflies as specialist pollinators in the ecosystem is only a secondary one,” Madan said. Their primary role is to constitute food for other creatures in all their life stages, he explained. If butterflies disappear, food for other predators is disrupted.

“They have a specific purpose in every stage of their life cycle. As caterpillars, they are food for birds, wasps and spiders. As adults, their purpose is to procreate. While they lay hundreds of eggs, the survival of only two is necessary to maintain a stable population,” he added.

BNHS had launched a project a few years ago to develop a ‘butterfly corridor’ in Delhi by creating habitats for them. “Around 67 such discreet habitats have been created so far. These habitats con-

nect forest patches in the city. The idea is to create a safe corridor for them to travel and increase their diversity, with no poison and no heavy pruning of trees and plants in these areas,” he said.

The more diversity of plants in an area, the more butterflies it is likely to attract. The BNHS is collaborating with citizens to create such gardens. It has been done in homes, schools, DDA parks, and in small gardens in collaboration with the local RWA.

“The BNHS provides some plants, while citizens might bring others. We also provide technical support and draw data from the habitats to study the population,” he said. For instance, which butterflies can cross a flyover? Host plants can be planted depending on such factors, he added.

Insects are closely associated with moisture and climate regimes of an area and researching them can provide information on the surrounding nature, Madan said.



# 9 Govt & Politics



## BIRTHDAY WISHES

FORMER PRIME Minister Manmohan Singh celebrated a quiet 89th birthday on Sunday. There were restrictions on visitors and he spent the day with his family members. All top dignitaries, including President Ram Nath Kovind and Vice President Venkaiah Naidu, called him to wish. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who returned to India from his US visit, and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also wished him. The foundation for the Quad initiative was laid by Singh during his stint as the PM, and the India-US nuclear deal was the game-changer in the ties between the two countries. Jaishankar, incidentally, was key to the India-US nuclear deal initiative, as he had played an instrumental role as a diplomat. Congress president Sonia Gandhi and senior leader Rahul Gandhi and many top leaders of the party too spoke to Singh.

## RAISING A POINT

FOR THE past few weeks, former Union minister Uma Bharti has been making her presence felt in BJP circles with her comments on social media. On Sunday, when the news of Cabinet expansion in the Yogi Adityanath government came out, Bharti in a series of tweets reminded party leaders that the BJP came to power at the Centre and the states with support of backward communities. "But when governments are formed at the Centre and in the states, the backward, Dalits and tribals look for their place in power and at times they feel disappointed," she tweeted. So she advised the chief minister that he should see that the communities are represented in his government.

## SMOOTH BEGINNING

SENIOR IAS officer Devendra Kumar Singh, who was appointed secretary of the newly created Ministry of Cooperation, has had a good beginning. Within two days of taking charge, Singh oversaw the organisation of the first of its kind national cooperative conference on Saturday at the IGI Stadium, where Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah unveiled the roadmap of the new ministry. A 1989-batch Kerala cadre IAS officer, Singh made his first public appearance by delivering a short speech at the event. His predecessor Sanjay Agarwal was also present on the occasion.

# Panchjanya targets Amazon, compares it with East India Co

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

WEEKS AFTER it carried a cover story on Infosys, in which it accused the company of supporting "tukde-tukde gang", RSS-affiliate magazine Panchjanya in its latest issue has carried a cover story on Amazon, equating the retail giant with East India Company, and accusing it of corrupt practices.

It also accused Amazon for allegedly assaulting Hindu values through Prime Videos. Titled "East India Company 2.0", the cover story, written by Panchjanya Bureau, says, "Actually, Amazon too wants to have sole rights on the Indian market. For this it has started taking steps to encircle the political, economic and individual freedom of people here. It is accused of floating shell companies to capture the e-market platform, of bribing to have policies in its favor, and of Indian programmes opposed to Indian culture through Prime Videos."

It alleged that while Amazon invested in India with a promise to help small traders get a larger platform to sell products, it actually floated its own companies to do the same. "The company floated supplier entities such as Clouttail and Apiria in which it had significant stake and indirect control," it said, claiming that the two companies account for 35 per cent of all Amazon business.

Comparing its tactics with East India Company, which it said first attacked the Indian culture and then promoted conversion, the article said, "Today the same thing is being done by foreign companies. Amazon is now stuck in such a controversy. Following cognizance of certain anti-Hindu content in programs such as Tandav and Paatal Lok on its OTT platform Prime Videos by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and some state governments, the company has apologised. People had alleged that Prime Videos is regularly airing such shows in which Hindu deities are made fun of and family values are assaulted."

# Govt to weed out old files as PM directs clearance of all pending grievances, assurances by Oct 31

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

THE STEREOTYPE of a government office—full of archaic cabinets with dusty old files—may soon be a thing of the past.

The Government of India, on directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will in October dispose of all pending public grievances and complaints, along with all pending assurances given to Parliament, MPs and state governments as well as conclude all inter-ministerial consultations. As part of this exercise, the government will be weeding out old, unwanted files

along with all obsolete material. Starting September 13, all ministries, departments and subordinate offices, as per instructions from Cabinet Secretariat, have been preparing the material and identifying the scope of the work to be done.

While doing this, ministries are also to review the existing rules and old orders that increase paperwork in government working. "...The existing processes may be reviewed with a view to reducing compliance burden and unnecessary paperwork done away with, wherever feasible," says the letter to all ministries from Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, who wrote "to convey the



Praveen Khanna

## PM's US TRIP: 20 MEETINGS IN 65 HRS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who returned from the US trip on Sunday, was welcomed by BJP leaders at the airport in Delhi. During his three-day trip to the US, Modi's schedule was packed with a series of meetings with top political and business leaders. He met US President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, Japan PM Yoshihide Suga, Australian PM Scott Morrison and five CEOs, including Blackstone CEO Stephen Schwarzman. Besides attending the Quad leaders' summit in the White House, he also addressed the UN General Assembly for the fourth time as India's Prime Minister. *PTI*

## PUNJAB CABINET EXPANSION

# Before oath-taking, last-minute drama of additions, omissions

KANCHAN VASDEV  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

IT TOOK six days, three physical meetings and two V-Cs for the Congress party to decide on a final Cabinet list—and even that was tweaked at the last minute on Sunday.

The party was barely able to decide on all the names of ministers till a few hours before the oath-taking ceremony. It had not submitted the list till afternoon. At the last minute, PPCC working president and Fatehgarh Sahib MLA, Kuljit Nagra's name was dropped. Amlah MLA, Kaka Randeep Singh Nabha was included instead.

While the list was finalised by senior party leaders including Rahul Gandhi, K C Venugopal, Harish Chaudhary, Harish Rawat and Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi Wednesday, they had to tweak it further late Friday. After a protest by Nabha, Channi had two V-Cs with Rahul Gandhi. They had deliberated on dropping Gurkirat Singh Kotli from the list, but later changed their minds as he was former chief minister Beant Singh's grandson. His grandfather was associated with routing of the militancy from the state and was well-



Controversial MLA Rana Gurjit Singh takes oath at the Raj Bhawan in Chandigarh on Sunday. *Express*

liked in Punjab.

Sources said they finally decided to drop Nagra, who said he was never on the list. "I had resigned from the Vidhan Sabha on farm laws. I am not even an MLA. How can I be a minister?" he asked. His resignation was never accepted by the Speaker.

Congress general secretary in-charge Harish Rawat defended the party after the swearing-in: "There was no flip-flop. Our list was final. The media created an issue out of nowhere."

Defending the induction of Rana Gurjit Singh, whose name had come up in a 2017 mining

scandal, Rawat said, "Where is the controversy? He was exonerated by a departmental inquiry against him. Where is the taint?"

On two former ministers, Balbir Singh Sidhu and Gurpreet Kangar, protesting over being dropped, he said, "The party will accommodate everyone. We have roles for everyone. We will not let anyone be upset with us."

Brahm Mohindra, who was the second-most senior minister in Amarinder's Cabinet, has been demoted to no. 4 after Channi took oath with two other ministers.

# SAD vows to probe Cong 'misdeeds', AAP says Capt's '40 thieves' still there

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUDHIANA, CHANDIGARH  
SEPTEMBER 26

SHIROMANI AKALI Dal (SAD) president and Punjab's former deputy CM, Sukhbir Singh Badal, Sunday said that all ministers of the Congress who had indulged in corruption would be taken to task if the SAD is voted to power in the 2022 elections. Sukhbir said that the next SAD-led government would establish a special commission to probe the misdeeds of Congress ministers.

The Aam Aadmi Party, mean-

while, condemned the inclusion of ministers who had corruption charges against them in the new Punjab Cabinet, headed by Chief Minister, Charanjit Singh Channi.

Addressing a press conference, Sunday, Sukhbir said the Congress should not think that ousting a few corrupt ministers will wash away their sins or had made the other members of the Cabinet clean. "It is a fact that the entire Congress party is stained in corruption," he claimed.

Answering a query, Sukhbir said the SAD had welcomed the appointment of Charanjit

Channi as the CM. "However it is painful to watch the new Chief Minister being overshadowed by PPCC president Navjot Sidhu, as well as deputy CM Sukhjinder Randhawa. It is also unfortunate that Channi does not have any say in governance."

Senior AAP leader Harpal Singh Cheema that the Congress, by changing the mask of the Chief Minister (Amarinder Singh), has only changed the 'Ali Baba', while his 'forty thieves' were still there. Cheema also criticised Congress for including controversial MLA Rana Gurjeet Singh in the new Cabinet.

# Bharat Bandh by farmers today, Opp parties back it

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, LUDHIANA, NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

AHEAD OF the Bharat Bandh called on Monday by farmers' unions protesting against the three contentious farm laws, several Opposition parties on Sunday extended support to the 10-hour nationwide strike.

The Congress, SAD, SP, BSP, TMC, AAP, YSRCP and Left parties announced that they would support the bandh, with some of these parties asking their workers to join the strike.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of more than 40 farmer unions, which is spearheading the protests, said in a statement, "It was on September 27, 2020 that President Shri Ram Nath Kovind assented to and brought into force the three anti-farmer black laws last year. Tomorrow, there will be a total Bharat Bandh observed around the country from 6 am to 4 pm."

It said all emergency establishments and essential services will be exempted from the bandh.

The SKM said although all political parties have been asked to support Monday's strike, none of them, or their representatives, will be given space on the farmers' stage. They can set up their own stages in support of the farmers.

Calling for a peaceful bandh, SKM member Dr Darshan Pal

said, "We will ensure that no markets or shops are closed forcibly. There is no place for violence in our movement. Sunday also marked the completion of 10 months of farm agitation against farm laws at Delhi borders."

Farmers on Sunday also held a mahapanchayat in Panipat, which was addressed by senior farmer leaders, including Rakesh Tikait and Gurnam Singh Chaduni.

Extending support to the bandh, Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal tweeted, "All PCC presidents, chiefs of frontal organisations are requested to go out in front with our Annadatas in their peaceful Bharat Bandh across the country." In a tweet in Hindi, BSP chief Mayawati said, "The farmers of the country do not endorse the three farm laws brought in a hurry by the Centre, and are sad about it." She said her party supports their call for a peaceful bandh.

In Kolkata, TMC chief and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she supports the farmers. Addressing a public meeting for the Bhabanipur by-poll, she said, "Tomorrow, there is a call for Bharat Bandh. Our party does not support bandhs. But we support their issue. If needed, we will go to Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh to support their protest." In Kerala, both the ruling LDF and UDF supported the strike.

WITH PTI INPUTS



BKU leader Rakesh Tikait at a kisan mahapanchayat in Panipat, Haryana, on Sunday. *Manoj Dhaka*

# Farmers booked over black flags to Varun

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 26

AN FIR was filed against 36 farmers on Saturday for allegedly trying to show black flags to BJP MP Varun Gandhi while he was on his way to attend a public meeting in his constituency, Pilibhit, two days ago.

The accused were booked for flouting Covid protocol. Police said the accused farmers also tried to stop vehicles in Varun's



Varun Gandhi

cavalcade which resulted in a heated argument between them and the police.

Harish Vardhan Singh Rathore, SHO of Pooranpur police station, said the farmers were demanding rollback of the three agricultural laws.

# CJI Ramana bats for 50% reservation for women in judiciary

'With anger you've to shout, demand... Not a small issue. It's a matter of right'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

WOMEN LAWYERS should raise their voices "with anger" for 50 per cent reservation in the judiciary, which they are entitled to, Chief Justice of India NV Ramana said Sunday as he called for "urgent correction" of the gender imbalance.

"...With anger you have to shout, demand that you need 50 percent reservation. It's not a small issue. It's (an) issue of thousands of years of suppression. You are entitled. It's a matter of right. Nobody is going to give charity. It's unfortunate, some things we realise very late. With the help of all of you, after some time, we may realise and reach this goal in the apex court as well as other courts," the CJI said at a felicitation ceremony organised by the Lady Advocates of Supreme Court of India.

Invoking Karl Marx's "workers of the world" call, the CJI said: "Women of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains."

CJI Ramana said women constitute only about 30 per cent of the lower judiciary, 11.5 per cent of the High Courts, and 12 per cent of the Supreme Court. Of



CJI N V Ramana

India's 1.7 million advocates, only 15 per cent are women, they make up only 2 per cent of the elected representatives in the State Bar Councils, and there are no women members in the Bar Council of India, he said.

"This needs urgent correction," he added.

The CJI spoke about the difficulties women face while entering the legal profession, including gender stereotypes that force them to bear the responsibilities of the family, the preference of clients for male advocates and an uncomfortable environment within courts — including a lack of infrastructure and washrooms, and crowded courtrooms.

Elaborating on infrastructural issues, CJI Ramana said out of 6,000 trial courts, nearly 22% have no toilet for women. "The National Judicial Infrastructure Corporation I have proposed will ensure inclusive design of Court complexes. We need to create a more welcoming environment," he said. The CJI also favoured more gender diversity in legal education.

# UP hikes cane purchase price to Rs 350/quintal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 26

AHEAD OF the next year's Assembly elections, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday announced an increase in the state-administered price (SAP) of sugarcane by Rs 25 per quintal, taking the revised price to Rs 350 per quintal.

Addressing the Kisan Sammelan organised in Lucknow, the chief minister also announced to waive interest on pending electric bills of farmers.

Announcing that the hike would come into effect from the 2021-22 sugarcane crushing season, Adityanath said, "The purchase price of the early variety of sugarcane will be raised from Rs 325 per quintal to Rs 350 per quintal. The SAP for the general variety has been raised to Rs 340 per quintal from Rs 315 per quintal earlier."

The government has also decided to buy the rejected variety of sugarcane, of which barely one per cent is left, at an increased price of Rs 335 per quintal from Rs 310 per quintal.

According to a statement issued by the state government, the hike will boost the income of 45.44 lakh sugarcane farmers in the state and will result in an additional annual payment to the tune of Rs 4,000 crore.

During the 2007-2012 BSP government, the SAP for sugarcane was raised from Rs 125 per quintal for general and Rs 130 per quintal for early-maturing varieties to Rs 240-250 per quintal in the 2011-12 crushing season (October-September), marking an overall increase of Rs 115-120 per quintal.

# Goa polls: Senior Cong leader may join TMC ranks

The Pilibhit MP has not only tweeted support for the agitating farmers, but also wrote to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath a few days back seeking a substantial increase in sugarcane prices, bonus on wheat and paddy, doubling of grants under PM-KISAN scheme and subsidy on diesel, among other relief measures.

According to police, the cavalcade of the BJP MP was passing through Mohanpur crossing on Friday when BKU farmers tried to show him black flags.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
PANAJI, SEPTEMBER 26

AMID SPECULATION of a senior Congress leader being "in talks" with the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC), MLA and former Goa chief minister Luizinho Faleiro is expected to join the Mamata Banerjee-led party, it is learnt. The TMC has said that it is "very serious" about contesting legislative Assembly polls in Goa, scheduled for early 2022.

According to political sources in the state, TMC is aiming at contesting all 40 seats in the state. Senior TMC leaders Derek O'Brien and Prasun Banerjee arrived in the state last week and have been holding discussions with politicians and civil society members, the sources said.

Earlier, Goa Congress president Girish Chodankar had dismissed speculation over Faleiro joining Trinamool as "rumours".

Seventy-one year old Faleiro, who is the sitting MLA from south Goa's Navelim, served as chief minister of the state in 1998-99. A Congress veteran, Faleiro has also served as AICC general secretary in-charge of Northeast states.

His imminent exit from Congress may come at a time that the party has five MLAs in the 40-member house. In 2019, ten MLAs from the Congress defected to the BJP in 2019.

A team from the Prashant Kishore-led I-PAC has been assessing the political situation in Goa for the last three months.



New Delhi







The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA  
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

IN STEP WITH US

PM Modi's visit sets the stage for transcending differences between the two nations on bilateral, regional, global issues

ALTHOUGH THERE WERE no major announcements made during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States last week, the stage has been set for transforming India's partnership with America, advancing Delhi's Quadrilateral partnership with Canberra, Tokyo, and Washington, and boosting India's global impact. The three levels of Indian engagement with the US — bilateral, regional, and multilateral — are no longer in separate compartments, reinforce each other. Having transcended some of their traditional differences on bilateral, regional, and global issues during the last two decades, Delhi and Washington are now free to frame their bilateral relations in more ambitious terms — as a partnership for regional stability and global good. Bilateral defence cooperation, Indo-Pacific regional balance, vaccine development, and mitigating climate change now cut across bilateral, regional, and global domains.

This does not mean Modi and the US President Joe Biden are neglecting urgent bilateral agenda on conventional issues such as trade — in the end the sinews of any partnership. Although the politics of trade have become a lot more complex in both countries, the two leaders have agreed to resume their trade dialogue. Beyond trade, Modi and Biden addressed several other areas ripe for deeper cooperation — homeland security, energy, higher education, and technological cooperation. The bilateral discussion on terrorism inevitably brings in the enduring challenges of cross-border terrorism promoted by the Pakistan army. Modi and Biden have also to come to terms with the consequences of Pakistan's success in bringing the medieval Taliban back to power in Afghanistan. The interests of India and the US appear to be in convergence on both the issues, but Delhi should not underestimate the continuing leverage of the Pakistan army, backed by China, as a "regional spoiler" if nothing else.

Although Afghanistan remains a key area of continuing concern for both India and the US, both sides are now looking at the bigger challenges emerging in the Indo-Pacific, driven by the rise and assertion of China. That is where the first in-person summit of the Quadrilateral forum comes in. Delhi and Washington have found a new comfort level in the shared understanding that the Quad will not be a military coalition. That has allowed them to focus on a very expansive and consequential non-military agenda of providing public goods across the Indo-Pacific. This allows the Quad to offer a credible alternative to China on a range of issues — from health to telecommunications and infrastructure development. It also undercuts Beijing's propaganda branding the Quad as "Asian Nato" and enhances the forum's acceptability and sustainability in the region. The issues to be taken up in the Quad — pandemic management and climate change are not merely regional issues, but global and inevitably figured prominently in Modi's address to the United Nations General Assembly along with the question of terrorism. To be sure, there is much distance to be covered in building a global consensus on these issues. But India's own emergence as a major economic power makes it a critical player in shaping the outcomes on these issues. Delhi's closer partnership with Washington will in turn boost India's global strategic salience.

GRAIN DIPLOMACY

It can be symbolic of a new India — that Delhi, with its food abundance, will not let anyone starve in South Asia

THERE WAS A time when the US used food aid as a powerful diplomacy tool to contain hunger-induced discontent that, it feared, could trigger communist revolutions in underdeveloped countries. Successive post-World War II administrations made the Food for Peace programme, better known as PL-480, a cornerstone of US foreign assistance. India alone imported nearly 24 million tonnes (mt) of wheat under PL-480 during 1964-66. The US even supplied some 9.1 mt of subsidised wheat and corn to the Soviet Union in 1973, whose ideological significance wasn't lost on anybody. For the US, food shipments, on concessional or outright grant terms, served both as a bulwark against communism and a means to relieve its massive farm surpluses. John F Kennedy estimated that it cost 20 cents a year to store a bushel of wheat and 38 cents to ship the same grain to India. Exporting grain free, then, was cheaper than stocking beyond two years.

The same opportunity — what Kennedy called "turning our great agricultural abundance into a blessing, for ourselves and for all the world" — presents itself, albeit in a smaller manner, to India today. At 90.41 mt as on September 1, the country's public stocks of wheat and rice were the highest ever for this date, with the new paddy arrivals from October only going to add to these. Moreover, the stock pileup has taken place, despite a record 93 mt-plus grain offtake from the Central pool during 2020-21, much of it given out free/near-free post the pandemic. With government agencies procuring over 103 mt last year, the quantities flowing into the Food Corporation of India's warehouses are far in excess of that going out. The "carrying cost" — interest, storage and other expenses — of the excess buffer has been estimated at Rs 5,589 per tonne for 2021-22. Clearly, there is economic as well as diplomatic sense in donating or bartering this surplus grain abroad. And where better to do it than in our immediate neighbourhood?

Afghanistan is now facing an acute food crisis from a combination of prolonged drought, regime change and associated instability. Sri Lanka, too, is grappling with food shortages, worsened by dwindling foreign currency reserves. What stops India from offering, say, 2 mt of wheat to Afghanistan as humanitarian aid and one mt of rice to Sri Lanka against payment in local currency similar to that under PL-480? Wheat can only be eaten or, at worst, diverted as animal feed. There should be no moral compunction, hence, in supplying it even to a regime that India cannot recognise. Grain diplomacy — a simple message that nobody in South Asia shall starve while we are here — can be symbolic of the New India: One that cares and matters to the world.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



TEJASHWI PRASAD YADAV

I WRITE THIS IN the context of the affidavit submitted by the Union government on September 23 in the Supreme Court stating that the caste census in 2021 would not be "feasible". This excuse stonewalls the collective demand from across India for data that would have provided a context for a new paradigm for inclusive development based on contemporary realities. Further, the government's argument that their stance follows from the "conscious" decision taken since 1951 to not have such an enumeration is bad in both reasoning and intent. It is bad in reasoning because such granular data will allow the government an opportunity for targeted policy-making. Why would it let such an opportunity pass? It is bad in intent as well because the government need not go back to 1951 — just a few years ago several of its incumbent ministers explicitly promised a caste census. It is not "feasible" for the government because, like many other promises, the promise to conduct a caste census was also a jumla, just empty rhetoric.

The demand for a caste census or updated numerical status of castes has been strongly raised by several leaders and civil society activists committed to the philosophy and ideology of social justice for over three decades. My father, Lalu Prasad Yadav, together with colleagues from other political parties raised the need for such data inside as well as outside Parliament. The objective behind this demand was to bring out the unseen aspects of various caste groups and their share in resources. Such data would tell us not only the exact population of various caste groups but also help assess the so-called inclusive development since independence. In the light of these important concerns, and despite opposition by some mainstream political parties, in 2011 the then UPA government decided to conduct a caste census under pressure from subaltern voices.

For more than 70 years, we have heard from all governments about poverty allevia-

Real casteist politics is to protect the privilege of a few, and not address injustice of the many

The ruling elite as well as some members of the mainstream media have been suggesting that the demand for making the caste census public may lead to casteism in every sphere. Such fear-mongering needs to be dealt with objectively. Who are the people carrying out occupations that offer neither dignity nor adequate livelihood? Who are the workers who have absolutely no social security and are always one crisis away from destitution? Who are the people migrating from our villages for uncertain futures in cities? Why does the welfare state or at least the government — which is otherwise very inquisitive — not seem interested in knowing who these people are?

tion, ending unemployment, and equitable distribution of resources. While absolute poverty has increased manifold, the inequality between castes and classes is widening day by day. Several national and international pieces of research have revealed the bitter truth about the precarious life situation of Dalits, backward classes, and minority groups on the parameters of education, health, and employment, and their further marginalisation is a tragedy of our times. Numerous studies have shown that the dominant elite, comprising less than 10 per cent of the population, corners 90 per cent of the resources and a large section of these groups has been preventing the policies of the state from becoming pro-people. Each and every voice against these dominant groups have been suppressed by successive governments under one pretext or another.

If inclusive development is the constitutional priority of our country, then we must demand the socio-economic caste enumeration and make it publicly available so that our development policies and programmes can be accordingly shaped with an avowed commitment to empowering the people and communities on the margins. Development indeed is a very important constituent of empowerment, so the decision to prioritise it cannot be left to those who own 90 per cent of the resources. In contemporary discussions, it does not seem right or appropriate that the meaning of growth should be determined only by the fluctuations of the Sensex, which more often than not lacks the human face and touch.

The ruling elite as well as some members of the mainstream media have been suggesting that the demand for making the caste census public may lead to casteism in every sphere. Such fear-mongering needs to be dealt with objectively. We shall counter the misleading propaganda around this issue with facts and well-grounded arguments. Let us ask some valid questions with regards to the

contemporary development paradigm, which goes with the rhetoric of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas. Who are the people carrying out occupations that offer neither dignity nor adequate livelihood? Who are the workers who have absolutely no social security and are always one crisis away from destitution? Who are the people migrating from our villages for uncertain futures in cities? Why does the welfare state or at least the government — which is otherwise very inquisitive — not seem interested in knowing who these people are? Does their caste determine their economic status or their agency to speak for what is fair?

We were also told that an alarmingly high percentage of the people in rural India are landless. Today, there is a need to make public the figures of caste and land ownership so that we can deal with this dire situation by developing sensitive and inclusive intervention plans. Is it spreading casteism if we ask who is homeless in urban areas or what is the social background of the daily wage worker? Just querying the caste character of poverty, backwardness, and marginalisation cannot be and should not be dubbed an attempt at promoting casteism. In fact, going by the spirit of the Preamble of the Constitution, we must ensure that our public policy is in sync with the critical realities of our times.

Many friends claim that poverty has no caste. But all studies and research conducted around inequality show that poverty is entrenched among the subordinate castes. How does questioning the participation and lack of engagement of these groups in our development story become speaking for casteist politics? The bitter truth is that real casteist politics is the one that takes a "conscious" decision to cover up the privileges of a handful of people and does not find it "feasible" to redress the dire condition of crores of its citizens.

The writer is Leader of Opposition, Bihar Legislative Assembly

LEARNING WITHOUT BARRIERS

Developments in online education open up access for disabled children



FEZA T AZMI

GLOBALLY, ABOUT 15 per cent of the population lives with some form of disability. Of this, 80 per cent lives in developing countries. Persons with disabilities (PwDs) are among the most marginalised groups. They encounter a range of barriers and are more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes. Limited support infrastructure can have a significant debilitating impact on everyday life. WHO now considers disability a human rights issue. It emphasises that people are disabled by society and not by their bodies.

Over the last 65 years, the overall global literacy rate has increased by 4 per cent every five years — from 42 per cent in 1960 to 86 per cent in 2019. However, the global literacy rate for the disabled is as low as 3 per cent with just 1 per cent for females. Ninety per cent of disabled children in developing countries do not attend school, says UNESCO. The school drop-out rate is also high due to the lack of adequate infrastructure, inaccessible reading material and untrained teachers. An insignificant number make it to institutes of higher learning.

Lack of education has a trickle-down effect. Most disabled children are not equipped with foundational skills for employability. According to the UN, in developing countries, 80 to 90 per cent of PwDs are unemployed, whereas in industrialised countries, it is between 50 to 70 per cent. In most countries, the unemployment rate for PwDs is at least twice that of those who have no disability.

The pandemic has made us realise how technology is reshaping education.

Online education has the potential to make learning more accessible for persons with disabilities. It takes care of physical barriers created by transportation and mobility issues. Children have the advantage of accessing learning from the safety and comfort of their homes. It saves them from unnecessary inhibitions in attending physical schools.

Lockdowns made schools rapidly migrate to online education. This metamorphosis of education systems has far-reaching implications for disabled children. Online education has the potential to make learning more accessible for PwDs. It takes care of physical barriers created by transportation and mobility issues. Children have the advantage of accessing learning from the safety and comfort of their homes. It saves them from unnecessary inhibitions in attending physical schools. Disabled students in higher education too can have access to lectures, libraries and resources without the need to physically navigate remote campuses.

Online learning, both in the synchronous and asynchronous modes, offers added flexibility and the advantage of self-paced learning. With technological aids and assistive devices, it is possible to train disabled children in various skills. E-learning allows the review of materials and repeated viewing of video lectures. Various assistive technologies like screen readers, text magnifiers, speech recognition software, braille keyboards, sign language interpreters, videos with subtitles, audio recordings, etc, can be used.

Internet penetration is increasing fast. As of January 2021, there were 4.66 billion active internet users worldwide — almost 60 per cent of the global population. In 104 countries, more than 80 per cent of the youth population is online. Out of the 830 million young people who are online, 320 million (39 per cent) are in China and India, which are among the countries with the highest incidence of disability.

Prices of internet services have dropped by 50 per cent on average over the last three years and broadband and mobile services are available at much higher speeds. This augurs well for online education. Children are quick learners and adapt fast. With adequate support, adopting e-learning may not be a huge challenge.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals focus on "inclusive and quality education for all". With barely nine years left for the target, greater strides have to be made. Governments and educational bodies have an important role to play in making ICT accessible to disabled students. Those at the forefront of education administration can facilitate designing online courses and learning modules in easy-to-deliver formats. Initial challenges do exist, but students who did not attend schools due to physical limitations at least have an alternative now. This can be a good starting point to bring in students who have been denied access to schools.

Advances in the digital economy are creating unprecedented work opportunities for the disabled, a report by ILO says. With the rise of the gig economy, most work is being done from homes, creating new job opportunities for physically restricted PwDs. Online education could prove to be a turn of the wheel in the quest of PwDs to gain a meaningful life.

The writer is professor, Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Studies & Research, Aligarh Muslim University

SEPTEMBER 27, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

DHAKA PROTESTS

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT has brushed aside reports from Dhaka that 18 Bangladesh citizens had been killed within Bangladesh borders in an attack by Indian security personnel earlier this week. No Indian security person was involved in the reported incident, a spokesperson of the Union external affairs ministry said. The spokesperson said that there has been no request from the Bangladeshi government in response to the request from local Indian officials for a meeting to sort out the problem. He said about 5,000 people belonging to tribal communities had crossed into India from Bangladesh in the last few days. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh government had lodged a

strong protest with India alleging border violations by 500 miscreants in the Chittagong Hill Tract Areas.

CM DENIES CHARGES

DENYING THE CHARGES of corruption levelled against him, Bihar Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra launched a counteroffensive against Karpoori Thakur who he alleged was attempting "to give authenticity to his fabricated lies basing his information on an imaginary home ministry report". In his lengthy rejoinder, Mishra accused Thakur of earning more than Rs 2 crore from contracts given by the Bihar Electricity Board. Denying that he had a hand in the raising of the price of spirit

from 75 paise to Rs 1.80 per litre, the price had been settled by the excise department after negotiations with the manufacturers. He also said that Union Home Minister Giani Zail Singh had told him that no inquiry had been initiated into the charges against him.

STORM WARNING

MOVEMENT OF SHIPS to and from the Calcutta port and Haldia dock complex and normal work in these dock systems were disrupted by severe cyclonic storms. A danger signal was hoisted at the Calcutta ports and the Haldia dock complex warning ships, fishing boats and trawlers of a severe cyclonic storm.





# THE IDEAS PAGE

## Not the MSP route

Augmenting farmers' income will require investment in animal husbandry, fisheries and fruit and vegetable cultivation. Private sector needs to be incentivised to create value chains

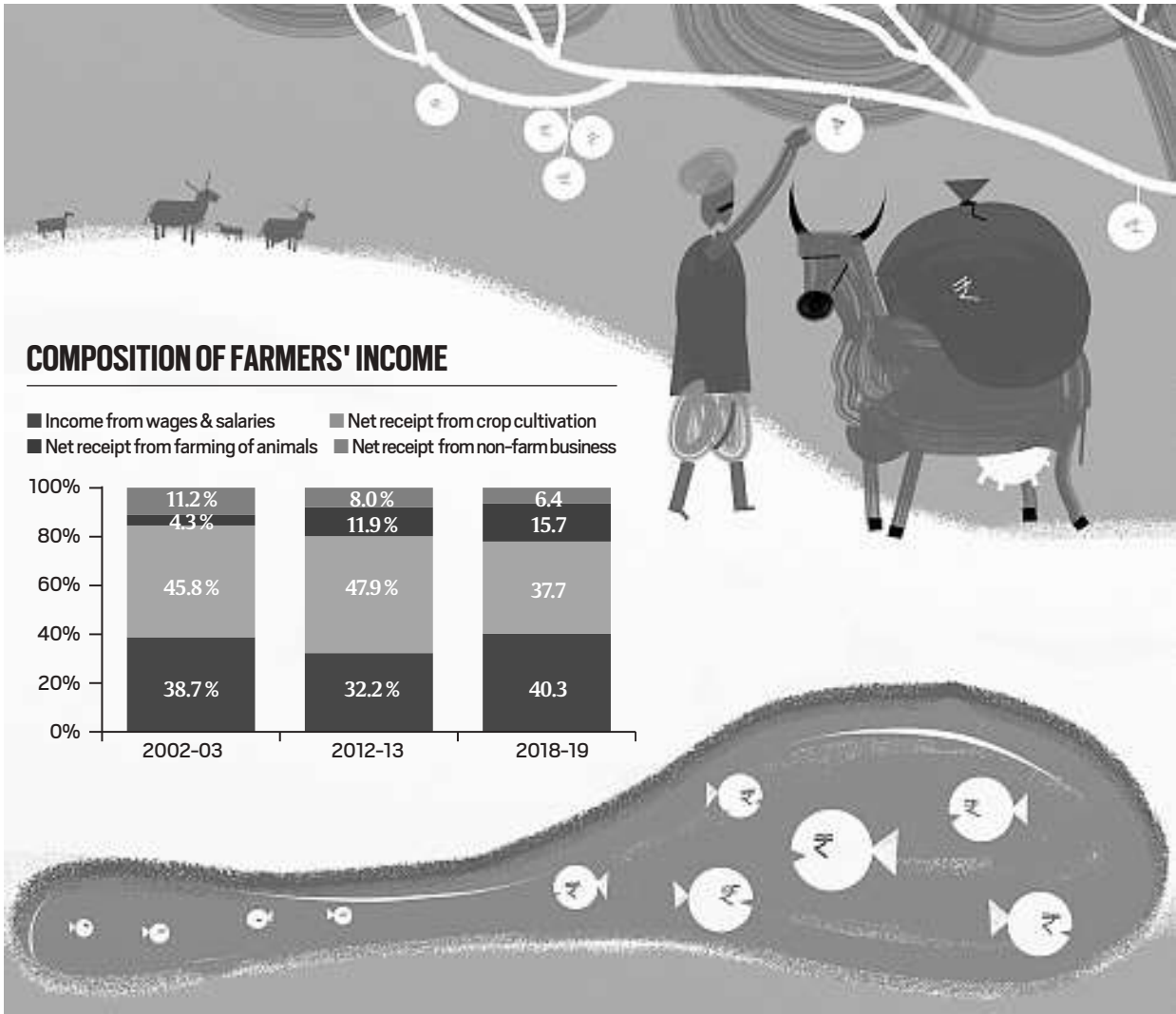


FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH  
BY ASHOK GULATI AND  
RANJANA ROY

AFTER TWO SUCCESSIVE droughts in 2014-15 and 2015-16, Prime Minister Narendra Modi set out an ambitious target to double farmers' incomes by 2022-23. Many analysts thought he was talking about nominal incomes. But the Ashok Dalwai Committee, which was set up to chalk out a strategy to achieve this, made it clear that the target of doubling farmers' incomes was in real terms and the goal was to be achieved over seven years with the base year of 2015-16. It clearly stated that a growth rate of 10.4 per cent per annum would be required to double farmers' real income by 2022-23. According to an estimate of farmers' income for 2015-16 by NABARD in 2016-17, the average monthly income of farmers for 2015-16 was Rs 8,931. However, unless a similar survey is conducted in 2022-23, we won't really know what happened to the target of doubling farmers' real income.

We do have the recently released data for 2018-19 based on the Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of agricultural households conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO). As per this survey, an average agricultural household earned a monthly income of Rs 10,218 in 2018-19 (July-June) in nominal terms. We have a similar SAS for 2012-13, when the nominal income was Rs 6,426. In nominal terms, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) turns out to be 8 per cent between 2012-13 to 2018-19. But we need to know the growth rate of real incomes. For that, the choice of deflator becomes critical. If one deflates nominal incomes by using CPI-AL (consumer price index for agricultural labour), which should be the logical choice, then the CAGR turns out to be just 3 per cent. If one uses WPI (wholesale price index of all commodities), the CAGR in real incomes turns out to be 6.1 per cent. This vast difference is just due to the choice of deflator. However, there is another SAS that the NSO conducted for 2002-03. Although the definition of agricultural household in that SAS was based on some area operated during the last year of the survey — replaced by minimum income earned from agriculture in the SAS of 2012-13 and 2018-19 — when one compares CAGR in farmers' real income (deflated by CPI-AL) over 2002-03 to 2018-19, it turns out to be 3.4 per cent (and 5.3 per cent if deflated by WPI). Obviously, in such point-to-point comparisons, the situation in the base year and terminal year influences the growth rates dramatically.

A better method would have been to look at average annual growth rates (AAGR), if yearly data was available. The AAGR for agri-GDP is available and at an all-India level, between 2002-03 to 2018-19, it turns out to be 3.3 per cent — this is very close to the real income growth (CAGR) of 3.4 per cent for the same period. However, at the state level, the variation is much more as state agri-GDP growth is volatile and depends on the monsoon — this is especially true for states that



have a much lower level of irrigation. For example, Punjab with almost 99 per cent irrigation cover, will have a much more stable income than say Maharashtra with just 19 per cent irrigation cover.

A disaggregated state-level analysis shows a huge gap between agriculture GDP and farmers' income growth in many states — Kerala, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh. But a closer look at individual states indicates that the Gujarat region had a 27 per cent deficient rainfall than its Long Period Average (LPA) and Saurashtra, Kutch and Diu were 38 per cent rainfall deficient in 2018-19. Jharkhand had 31 per cent deficient rainfall, while Kerala experienced a major flood in 2018-19. No wonder, the agricultural GDP growth of Gujarat was negative (-8.7 per cent) in 2018-19. This would surely depress the farmers' incomes in the state for 2018-19. But overall, for the period 2002-03 to 2018-19, Gujarat's agri-GDP growth is 6.5 per cent — one of the highest in India. The upshot of this analysis is that at the state level, it is important to consider both the indicators (growth in agri-GDP as well as farmers' incomes based on a survey of the specific year) to get a clearer picture of the state of affairs at the farmer level.

What is the policy message that one can derive from comparing these three rounds of SAS — 2002-03, 2012-13 and 2018-19? The figure gives the changing composition of farmers' real income.

What is clear from this comparison is the following: One, the share of income from rearing animals (this includes fish) has gone up dramatically from 4.3 per cent in 2002-03 to 15.7 per cent. Two, the share of income from

What these survey results indicate is that the scope for augmenting farmers' incomes is going to be more, and from rearing animals (including fisheries). It is worth noting that there is no minimum support price (MSP) for products of animal husbandry or fisheries and no procurement by the government. It is demand-driven, and much of its marketing takes place outside APMC mandis. This is the trend that will get reinforced in the years to come as incomes rise and diets diversify.

the cultivation of crops has decreased from 45.8 per cent to 37.7 per cent. Three, the share of wages and salaries has gone up from 38.7 per cent to 40.3 per cent. Four, the share of income coming from non-farm business has come down from 11.2 per cent to 6.4 per cent.

What these survey results indicate is that the scope for augmenting farmers' incomes is going to be more, and from rearing animals (including fisheries). It is worth noting that there is no minimum support price (MSP) for products of animal husbandry or fisheries and no procurement by the government. It is demand-driven, and much of its marketing takes place outside APMC mandis. This is the trend that will get reinforced in the years to come as incomes rise and diets diversify. Those who believe that farmers' income can be increased by continuously raising the MSP of grains and government procurement, irrespective of the fact that grain stocks with the government are already overflowing and more than double the buffer stocking norms, are living in the past — and advocating a very expensive food system. That will fail sooner or later. Wisdom lies in investing more in animal husbandry (including fisheries) and fruits and vegetables, which are more nutritious. The best way to invest is to incentivise the private sector to build efficient value chains based on a cluster approach. The Narendra Modi government has started working in this direction, but much more needs to be done.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture and Roy is a Research Fellow at ICRIER

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“While Mr [Imran] Khan may be sincere in urging the international community to lend a hand, the Taliban government is doing itself no favours by refusing to accommodate any demands of the international community, including Pakistan.”  
—DAWN, PAKISTAN

## Singing like a feminist

With her unusual weapons — laughter, songs, slogans and art — Kamla Bhasin built institutions and solidarities, made South Asian feminism a force



URVASHI BUTALIA

AT KAMLA BHASIN'S funeral on Saturday, people stood silently as her sister, Bina, performed the last rites. Shortly after, a young woman began a “conversation” with Kamla, addressing her as if she were still alive. Words turned into song and soon the entire gathering of feminist activists — working-class, elite, religious, non-religious, old, young and others whose lives Kamla had touched, broke into song.

As Kamla's favourite songs, many that have become anthems for the women's movement, rang out across the cremation ground, people tapped their feet, clapped their hands, swayed to the rhythm and then, gradually, fell silent. A group of women — her close friends, her beloved relatives — then lifted her and took her in for her last departure. Inside they raised slogans, those she had shouted in so many feminist gatherings, and once again they sang songs of farewell and love.

Ever since her aggressive cancer was diagnosed three months ago, Kamla knew she did not have long to live and joked often of the *bulawa* that was imminent. In hospital, on what was to be her last day, she fought energetically to live, and demanded that her hair be blow-dried, her toenails painted. Back home the next day, the life now gone out of her, her face still held her characteristic smile, mischief lurking at its edges.

It was some 40 years ago that Kamla Bhasin arrived on the feminist scene in Delhi. In one of our early encounters at an anti-dowry protest, she brought along her husband and daughter — at the time an infant — and they soon became a constant feature of our marches.

Later, in our street play, *Om Swaha*, she became the *sutradhar*, energetically sounding the *damru*, laughingly making up nonsense rhymes to invite bystanders and curious onlookers into the play, disarmingly making spontaneous comments on now a shirt, now a dupatta, making them feel special. I think it was perhaps that moment that turned her into the ace communicator she was to become later in life, talking with equal ease to a grassroots worker or an international official.

At the time, she had a day job with the Food and Agricultural Organisation, and her offices were located inside the UN building in Delhi, an unlikely locale for a woman who was much more at home spinning and rocking on her feet in the streets. But it was the South Asian regional remit of that job that Kamla would return to in her activist years, to build enduring solidarities and friendships across the South Asian region, and to make South Asian feminism a force.

She did this through her formidable and

unusual “arsenal” of feminist weapons: Laughter, joy, friendship, songs, slogans, art, dance, books and so much more. She organised — often with the dancer Chandrelekha — some of the early feminist poster-making workshops. In one of these was created the iconic poster that announced the arrival of her particular brand of feminist math: One-plus-one equals 11.

She set up institutions and campaigns: Jagori, of which she was an integral part, Sangat, through which she shared feminist concepts with less privileged women, One Billion Rising, a campaign that attempted to show that the numbers of women demanding their rights ran into billions.

Her enthusiasm and commitment to the women's movement — her home and her belonging — meant that even personal tragedies, the loss of her young daughter, the lifelong illness of her son, did not deter her and she bounced back from each one, the laughter intact on her face, the hurt hidden in her heart. One of her favourite coinages was: “One does not fall in love, one rises in love” — something that was the truth of her life. Many such were shared privately with her feminist comrades amid much laughter: “Mary conceived without sinning, oh Lord let me sin without conceiving”, “We don't want copper-T, we want proper T” and a song, “*Amma dekh, amma dekh, tera movement bigda jaye*”!

Kamla's life was also a testament to that most precious of things that feminism across the world has given us: The strength of female friendships. When a powerful critique was mounted against her on social media for statements she made on trans issues, it was her close group of friends that rallied round her and helped her understand the harm her words could do.

It was these same friends, spread across different cities and countries, who came together when her illness was diagnosed to help her sort out her affairs — the most important of which was the care of her son — and who created a roster of weekly support, putting their lives on hold to be with her full time as carers for that period. To be able to so generously give of the immense store of love that you have, and to be its recipient in equal measure, was something that came effortlessly to Kamla.

In our patriarchal world, the passing of a feminist life is rarely seen as a loss to society. In the last few months, we have seen several such departures: Gail Omvedt without whose writings and activism our understanding of caste would have been so much poorer; Sonal Shukla, who, like Kamla, made fun, reading, song, dance, and learning the central plank of her work; Rati Bartholomew, who gave her life to theatre. And Kamla herself.

They leave behind a world, more specifically the world of the women's movement, both enriched and impoverished. Enriched by the lives they fully and generously gave to it and impoverished by the loss of so much more that they had to give.

The writer is publisher, Zubaan



MICHAEL PINTO

IN OUR PRESENT polarised atmosphere, negative reactions from those on opposite sides of the political divide are only to be expected. Parties that supported certain policies when they were in power have now become their bitter opponents when in opposition. Of course, those now advocating them were equally vocal in their opposition when they were out of government. Whether it is the farm laws, monetisation or a host of other initiatives, we have seen the same drama play out each time.

Faced with a slowing economy that only became worse after the pandemic and a huge shortage of funds for investment, the government looked to monetise brownfield assets by unlocking their potential value. The proceeds are to be used for fresh investment in infrastructure. So, the right to collect toll on existing highways would be offered for 30 years or so to private investors in return for an upfront payment. Oil and gas pipelines would similarly be leased to private players as would seaports and airports. Assets proposed for monetisation include airports, terminals in seaports, railway lines, railway stations, stadiums, warehouses and a host of other government assets with unutilised potential.

One of the earliest salvos against this scheme was fired by a former Chief Economic Advisor. His main thrust was that leasing was not the best option because outright sale would bring in greater value and avoid the

## The choice to monetise

Critics of asset monetisation overstate pitfalls, hold it to unreasonable standards

ticklish questions of asset stripping and maintenance of the leased assets. There is no doubt that an outright sale would bring in higher returns but given the cries of “sellout” by opposition parties when even leasing is mooted, it is unlikely that sale would have been feasible. Potential buyers would be wary of the consequences of an unpopular sale. It may well have led to the kind of stalemate we have seen in the implementation of the agricultural reforms.

Critics also raise the valid point that leased assets would not be properly maintained. After all, no one washes a hired car. But the agreement to lease could contain clauses that mandate the return of assets in the same condition in which they were offered, normal wear and tear excepted. There could be differing views on what constitutes normal wear and tear but an independent authority whose decision on this would be final, could be part of the agreement to lease. Government undertakings like ONGC routinely lease their offshore vessels (OSVs) for operation and management to outsiders. Ports do the same for their vessels like tugs or pilot launches. In each case, there is a protocol for maintenance and return. In the case of the lease, the protocol would only have to cover the return and could address both maintenance and asset stripping.

Other objections relate to whether monetisation is intended to substitute the skill and efficiency of the private sector for the supposed

lethargy of government control. If leasing out a government asset brings improved efficiency in management that would be an additional bonus. But it is not the purpose of the exercise. So, we need not debate whether the private sector is innately more efficient (the jury is out on this one) or has fewer constraints (it definitely does) because these are neutral to the worth of this scheme.

Similarly, fears expressed that the move would bring greater concentration of power in the hands of the private sector are not relevant. Every time the government cedes some ground by opening sectors hitherto reserved exclusively for itself, it runs this risk. This has not prevented them from allowing private operators to operate freight trains or terminals in seaports. It has not even stood in the way of allowing private operators to run airports.

One criticism is that when the private sector bids for these projects, they would probably require institutional finance for at least part of their outlay and this would result in a “crowding out” of other investments. Surely this would apply to any investment, private or public? Public sector undertakings (PSUs) raise funds from banks and even the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) resorts to public funding. We do not ban PSUs or the NHAI from raising funds in the market. In fact, we actively encourage it since it reduces the burden on governmental outlays. So why quibble if it is done here?

Could this programme lead to the concentration of economic power in a few hands? Certain distressing trends have been seen recently in areas like telecom, airports and seaports but this trend pre-dated the current proposal. It does, however, sound a note of caution that policymakers should guard against. Necessary checks can easily be built into the offer documents that will ensure that the scheme does not create or reinforce monopolies of any sort.

The fact is that our expectations from this scheme have been much too high. When it was first mooted, it had the limited aim of unlocking the intrinsic value of brownfield assets by leasing them out and using the proceeds to finance infrastructure projects. From that, we have raised the bar so high that the programme is now faulted for not improving the performance of PSUs, for risking crowding out of other investments and even for not meeting the government's entire infrastructure outlay. Out of a total of Rs 111 trillion for the government's ambitious infrastructure plan, monetisation is likely to net less than 5 per cent. Does that mean that we should abandon it? Can any one scheme finance such a humungous plan? Different schemes and sources will bring their own offerings to swell the total kitty. Let us not belittle their size.

The writer is a former secretary (shipping), Government of India

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A BLOT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Plug the leak’ (IE 25 September). It is distressing to see that a state, which has performed relatively better than others in welfare implementation, should find itself in the midst of a corruption scandal in its most prestigious scheme. The manner in which the beneficiary minister in the Bihar government has shrugged off the expose shows blatant disregard for propriety and is deplorable. The CM must get to the bottom of the scandal and take corrective action against all responsible if his image is not to be sullied. For a start, he must get the water scheme and all such schemes audited to find out if there are more skeletons in the closet.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

### PUBLIC VS PRIVATE

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The strategic public sector’ (IE, September 25). The problem of poor performance and losses of PSEs is largely due to political and bureaucratic interference in their functioning. Left to their managements, PSEs would earn reasonable returns, as NTPC has done. Another facet of the issue is that the privatisation will lead to monopolies for few capitalists, who will dominate market with high prices for their products and services.

Gangadhar Karalay, Nagpur

### RSS TOKENISM

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Why Mohan Bhagwat is right about the Raj’

(IE, September 25). I believe RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's words are mere tokenism. The larger project that he is a part of is to preserve and safeguard the social order and oligarchy of caste in Hindu society. How, otherwise, would he advocate for a Hindutva that repulses and excludes the larger interests of the Muslim community, which has been forced to fend for itself ever since the inauguration of this regime in 2014? Where was he when Muslims were being brutally maimed, lynched and assaulted on one or another pretext?

Ritwik Trivedi, Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Why Mohan Bhagwat is right about the Raj’ (IE, September 25). While certainly welcome, the article is likely to fall on deaf years. The Hindutva project is fundamentally opposed to fraternity.

Biswadeep Chatterjee, via email

### VP'S SIGNAL

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Modi and Harris discuss Pak support for terror’ (IE, September 25). In the joint press conference, the US and India's common concern with regard to Pakistan's role in spreading cross-border terrorism was expressed along standard lines, in a proforma manner. But US Vice-President Kamala Harris confabulating about necessary measures to strengthen democracy in their own countries is a surprising and unsolicited counsel to PM, who represents the most populous democracy.

I R Murmu, Delhi



## BRIEFLY



M Venkaiah Naidu

## RAJASTHAN

## Venkaiah visits temple near Indo-Pak border

**Jaisalmer:** Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday visited the temple of Tanot Mata and Longewala battle site in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer district. Naidu, who is on a five-day visit to the state, arrived in Jaisalmer on Sunday. He went to Tanot Mata temple and also paid homage to martyrs by laying a wreath at the Vijay Stambh. Tanot Mata temple is located 120 km from here, close to the Indo-Pak border. After the temple visit, the vice president went to Longewala Yudh Sthal and War Memorial. The memorial is situated on the site where the Longewala battle of the 1971 Indo-Pak war. **PTI**

## GOA

## Ward boy held for molesting minors: Police

**Panaji:** A hospital ward boy was arrested for allegedly molesting two minors in a hospital elevator in North Goa, police said Sunday. The accused was arrested based on a complaint that he had inappropriately touched the complainant's sisters, aged 17 and 13, in an elevator of the hospital in Mapusa, where their mother was being treated for an injury. According to the complaint, the accused molested the minors on two occasions on September 23 and September 25. He was booked under relevant IPC sections and the Goa Children's Act. **ENS**

## UTTAR PRADESH

## Two held for issuing fake road tax slips

**New Delhi:** Two persons were arrested by Agra cyber crime officials for issuing fake online road tax slips. The accused have been identified as Rahul Singh and Praveen Singh. Six persons had earlier been arrested after a complaint was filed by an Agra resident, and a multi-crore scam of fake tax slips was unearthed during investigation. "The accused made a fake website similar to that of the official Transport Department. The modus operandi involved issuing a fake tax slip which seemed authentic. During questioning it was found the accused operated across multiple states," Agra Police said. **ENS**

## MAHARASHTRA

## Man held for bid to kill wife as human sacrifice

**Jalna:** Police have arrested a female tantrik and a man at Jalnabad tehsil in Jalna district for allegedly trying to kill his wife for human sacrifice under the belief that it would get him hidden treasure, an official said Sunday. Police have also arrested one more person in connection with the incident that occurred in Mauje Dongaon village earlier this week, he said. The accused have been identified as Santosh Pimple, Jeevan Pimple, both residents of Dongaon, while the woman tantrik hails from Buldhana district of the state. **PTI**

# Envoy on hurdles in India-China ties: Shifting goalposts, blame game

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

IN WHAT is being seen as a candid assessment of the challenges in India-China ties, India's ambassador to Beijing Vikram Misri has listed "avoid shifting goalposts", "take a one-sided view of concerns and sensitivities", and "viewing bilateral relations through the prism of relations with other countries" as "obstacles which could block progress" in the relationship.

Misri, who spoke at the IDSA-Sichuan University Virtual Dialogue earlier this week, said, "I remain convinced that we can resolve our current difficulties without the outcome necessarily appearing to be a win or loss for either side."

This is the most frank analysis of the problem in the bilateral relationship by the Indian envoy, a year-and-a-half after the border stand-off in Ladakh began. The speech was made on September

23, but was made public by the Indian embassy in Beijing on Saturday.

Following the disengagement in the Galwan Valley in July last year, the two sides were able to disengage from the North and South Banks of the Pangong lake in February 2021, and most recently from Gogra in August 2021.

"The conversation between the two sides continues regarding the remaining locations and we hope that disengagement at the remaining friction areas will enable us to reach a point where we can pick up the threads of bilateral cooperation," Misri said.

On the challenges facing the relationship, he said, "The first is to avoid shifting goalposts. For long, the Indian and Chinese sides have adhered to a well-understood distinction between resolving the Boundary Question and managing border affairs."

Underlining the pacts signed since the 1988 understanding between the two countries, Misri said, "...Any attempt to con-



Needn't be win or loss for either side: Misri

fuse border affairs with the Boundary Question is a disservice to the work of those involved in finding solutions. This is why the Indian side has been consistently saying that the current issue is about restoring peace and tranquillity to the border areas, and is not about the resolution of the larger Boundary Question, on which our stance has not changed, despite what happened last year."

The second obstacle, the Indian ambassador said, is to "take a one-sided view of concerns and sensitivities, where one's own preoccupations trump any of those flagged by the other side".

"Affixing blame exclusively on the other side is not a helpful approach. And to press one's own

concerns and disregard the other side's concerns and sensitivities without any explanation or recourse goes beyond disrespect. It actually creates even more obstacles to finding solutions," he said.

Misri said these issues need not be limited to the "realm of high politics". Far less complex issues, which have a purely humanitarian context and are not connected to bilateral diplomatic positions—such as facilitating the movement of students, businesspersons, and stranded family members from India to China for over a year and a half now, await a more balanced and sensitive approach, he said.

India, he said, has also attempted to keep trade and commercial relationships insulated from current differences, for instance by continuing to issue visas to Chinese businesspersons to visit India.

"However, we are disappointed to see an unscientific approach with regard to several problems currently being faced by

Indian students, businessmen, marine crew and exporters, to name a few," the Indian envoy said.

The third obstacle, Misri said, is "viewing bilateral relations through the prism of relations with other countries". This was said in the context of the Quad leaders' summit, and Beijing's publicly-articulated concerns over it.

The ambassador underlined that India and China are two ancient civilisations and two modern Asian nations that have developed their independent foreign policies, and cherish their strategic autonomy.

He said that India formulates its national and foreign policies on the basis of national interest first and foremost. Many of these forums include China—the SCO, BRICS, and RIC are some examples—and these dialogues have continued even during the difficult phase that the bilateral relationship is passing through.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
**www.indianexpress.com**

## 2 militants involved in murder of BJP leader killed in J&K encounter

BASHAARAT MASOOD

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 26

A LASHKAR-E-TOIBA (LeT) commander was among the two militants killed in a gunfight in north Kashmir's Bandipore on Sunday. Police said the slain Lashkar militants were involved in the killing of BJP leader Waseem Bari and his family members last year.

On Saturday evening, a joint team of police, Army and the CRPF cordoned off Watrinia village of Bandipore after specific inputs about the presence of militants there. On Sunday morning as the joint team of forces tightened the cordon, they established contact with the militants trapped in the village.

"During the operation the holed-up terrorists were given repeated opportunities to surrender. However, they refused to surrender," the police said in an official release. "[They] instead fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party, which was re-

taliated leading to an encounter."

The police said that two militants were killed in the gunfight. The two were identified as Abid Rashid Dar alias Haqqani and Azad Ahmad Shah, both residents of Pakistan.

Haqqani, the police said, was a top Lashkar commander, who travelled to Pakistan on visa through Wagah border in 2018. The police said Haqqani infiltrated back into the valley in 2019 after receiving arms training in Pakistan.

They said the slain militants, together with a Pakistani militant, were involved in the killing of BJP leader Sheikh Waseem Bari and his family members. Bari, his brother and father—who were also associated with the BJP—were killed in July last year.

The police said that both Haqqani and Shah were involved in "planning and executing terror attacks" on security establishments and civilians. Haqqani was also involved in motivating the youth to join the militant ranks, they said.

## PM in Mann Ki Baat: No one should be left out of vaccine's circle of safety

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday greeted the people ahead of the upcoming festival season even as he cautioned them to maintain Covid protocols and to ensure that those who are yet to receive their vaccinations are also inoculated.

In his monthly Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast, recorded before he left for the US for an official visit, Modi said everyone should get the vaccine administered when his or her turn comes and should also ensure that no one is left out of this "circle of safety".

"With regards to vaccination, the country has made many such records which are being talked about the world over," he said. "Those around you who have not gotten vaccinated also have to be taken to the vaccine centre. Even after getting vaccinated, the necessary protocol has to be followed."

The Prime Minister also gave a call to mark this year's Gandhi Jayanti by achieving record sales at Khadi Gramodyog outlets across the country.

"Bapu connected cleanliness with independence; the same way he made khadi the identity of freedom. Today in the 75th year of freedom, when we are celebrating the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, we can say with satisfaction today that our young

generation today is giving khadi the place of pride that khadi had during freedom struggle..."

"On October 2, on revered Bapu's birth anniversary, let us aim for another new record... For the festive season, every khadi, handloom, cottage industry purchase of yours should strengthen the campaign for 'Vocal for Local', it should break all old records," said the Prime Minister.

Modi dedicated this month's Mann Ki Baat to World Rivers Day, which is marked on Sunday. The Prime Minister said in India, we revere rivers, but on the other hand, we pollute them. Pointing out that great progress was being made through the government's Namami Gange programme, Modi said the money collected through the e-auction of gifts which he has received (launched on September 17 and to continue till October 8), will be given to Namami Gange.

The Prime Minister also mentioned the feat of the team of eight specially-abled persons setting a world record by hoisting the Indian flag on the Kumar Post at Siachen Glacier, at an altitude of more than 15,000 feet.

He pointed to the 'One Teacher, One Call' campaign in Uttar Pradesh for specially-abled children. Spearheaded by the principal of a school in Dabhaura Gangapur, Deepmala Pandey, more than 350 teachers have been making house calls to ensure the admission of specially-abled children in the school.

### SERO SURVEY COVERED 6,000 PEOPLE IN 12 DISTRICTS

## Over 70% Odisha kids developed antibodies: survey

AISHWARYA MOHANTY

BHUBANESWAR, SEPT 26

A RECENTLY concluded serological survey covering 12 districts of Odisha to estimate and compare the age-specific prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies has found that 70 per cent children in the age group 6-10 years were found to have developed antibodies,

while the figure for the 11-18 years age group was 74 per cent.

The survey, conducted by the ICMR Regional Medical Research Centre (RCMR), also revealed a weighted community sero prevalence of 73.5 per cent.

"70 per cent sero prevalence was found in the age group 6-10 years while for 11-18 it was 74 per cent. Most children especially in the 6-10 age group have

not been exposed to the virus as they were expected to stay indoors. Their exposure must have been from immediate family and friends. Our findings are similar and are at par with the national sero survey," RCMR director Dr Sanghamitra Pati told *The Indian Express*.

Conducted between August 29 and September 15, the survey covered 6,000 people, including 1,200 healthcare workers, in 12 districts.

Of those surveyed, 25.6 per cent were fully immunised, 41.4 per cent were partially vaccinated and 33 per cent were not vaccinated at all. In the 19-44 years age group, the survey revealed a sero prevalence of 75.68 per cent—higher than the age groups 45-60 years (72.65 per cent) and 60+ years (66.04 per cent).

agreed that the school should run... From tomorrow, the school will re-open and the midday meal will be served," said the BSA.

"We will see whose fault it was. On whether the suspension has to be continued or not, those things will be looked at later. A few politicians have also got involved and are ensuring that the issue is resolved," Kamal Singh said.

Speaking to *The Indian Express* on Sunday, Mainpuri SP Ashok Kumar Rai said that action will be taken once he receives a complaint from the village pradhan regarding the threats.

"I did not meet the village pradhan's husband, but if he comes to meet tomorrow, I will take his complaint and if needed, action will be taken. If needed, he will be given security," said Rai.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
**www.indianexpress.com**

### MAINPURI SCHOOL 'CASTE DISCRIMINATION' ROW

## I'm being threatened: Dalit pradhan's husband who complained

ASAD REHMAN

MAINPURI, SEPTEMBER 26

THE HOUSE of Daudapur village pradhan Manju Devi in Mainpuri district of Uttar Pradesh was locked on Sunday. Her husband, Sahab Singh, is the pradhan pratinidhi (the village head's representative) and had complained about caste discrimination in the village primary school.

When contacted by *The Indian Express* on his mobile phone, Singh, a Dalit, said that he was being threatened by the Thakurs of his village after he complained that utensils of Scheduled Castes schoolchildren used for their mid-day meals were kept apart on the premises, and washed by the children themselves.

"They are openly saying that they won't let a Dalit continue to

remain the village pradhan. They used caste slurs on me as well. They are threatening to break my bones and even shoot me... They are doing this *hungama* (ruckus) in the village. I had come to meet the Superintendent of Police and District Magistrate, but they were not available. I will submit a complaint to everyone, including the Chief Minister (Yogi Adityanath)," Sahab Singh said as he disconnected the call.

His wife, Manju Devi, was elected village pradhan from the SC reserved seat in the recently concluded panchayat elections in the state.

After the issue of caste discrimination was raised, Mainpuri district administration suspended school headmistress Garima Rajput and relieved the two cooks who allegedly refused to touch the utensils of the



The primary school at Mainpuri's Daudapur village. Asad Rehman

Scheduled Caste students during the visit of officials.

The village has an almost equal number of Thakurs and Dalits (nearly 35%), while the rest belong to the OBC category.

On the other side of the village where Thakurs live, a group of men, mostly Thakurs, had gathered at the residence of 50-year-

old Gajendra Pratap Singh, who denied that he had threatened Sahab Singh. "What do I have to do with the issue?" he said and accused Sahab Singh of spreading "caste animosity in the village".

School headmistress Garim Rajput, who was suspended on Friday, could not be reached. Mainpuri Basic Shiksha

Adhikari (BSA) Kamal Singh on Saturday said the complaint of caste discrimination at the school was found to be true. "The utensils used by the Scheduled Caste children and other children were kept separately. During the visit of the Block Development Officer and other officials to the school, cooks Somvati and Laxmi Devi refused to touch the utensils of the Scheduled Caste students, and said they can't work at the school if they were forced to do so. They also used caste slurs," Singh had said, adding that action against the cooks had been taken by the School Management Committee.

Kamal Singh claimed that a "compromise" has been reached among the villagers. "Both sides have agreed to let the school function. The suspension and removal of the three persons will continue for now. Everyone in the village has

## ‘Conversion racket’ in UP: Three more arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 26

THE UTTAR Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) on Sunday arrested three people for their alleged involvement in a suspected illegal conversion racket. The three were identified as Mohammad Saleem and Mohammad Idrish Qureshi—both residents of Muzaffarnagar—and Kunal Ashok Chaudhary alias Atif from Nasik in Maharashtra. Chaudhary converted to Islam while pursuing a medical degree in Russia, said the police.

The police claimed that the three were arrested after being questioned, taking the number of people in custody in connection with the alleged racket to 14. According to investigators, they are close associates of 64-year-old cleric Kaleem Siddiqui who was arrested in Meerut on Tuesday night. Their names came up during Siddiqui's interrogation.

On June 21, the ATS arrested two clerics—Mohammad Umar Gautam and Mufti Qazi Jahageer Alam Qasmi—in Delhi, and claimed to have busted a "huge conversion racket" that was allegedly involved in the conversion of "thousands of people". The group allegedly targeted children with disabilities, women, the unemployed, and the poor by promising them a good education, marriage, jobs, and money.

## IAF officer held for sexually assaulting colleague: cops

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

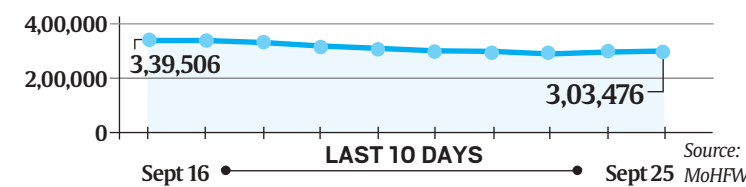
CHENNAI, SEPTEMBER 26

AN INDIAN Air Force (IAF) Flight Lieutenant was arrested by Coimbatore police and sent to judicial custody late on Saturday for allegedly sexually assaulting a lady officer. According to police, the lady officer filed the complaint against the accused with local police after she felt that the complaint she raised internally wasn't handled in a satisfying manner.

"The incident happened about two weeks ago. She filed a complaint with police as she was not satisfied with the action taken internally. Both were undergoing training at the Air Force Administrative College here," said the Coimbatore City Police Commissioner Deepak D Damor.

"He was sent to judicial custody. The victim was his junior, both were undergoing training. The investigation is in progress," said an officer probing the case. He said there were no jurisdiction issues in the arrest and that the IAF authorities may be seeking his custody soon to claim the trial of the case in a defence court.

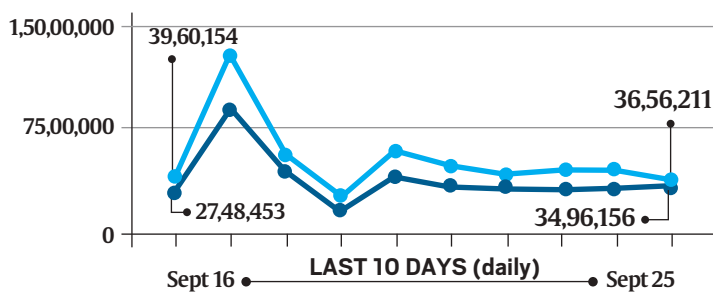




## CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

**TOTAL VACCINATED IN INDIA** (at least one dose)  
**63,08,31,085**

First dose Second dose



**TOTAL DOSES**  
**85,60,81,527**

(Sputnik V's 9,24,468 doses not represented in pie)

COVISHIELD

88.3%

COVAXIN

11.6%

**DOSES ON SEPT 25 71,52,367**

**SEPT 24: 74,11,134** (1st doses: 42,72,481; 2nd: 31,38,653)

Note: The Sept 25 figures in these graphs are based on the government updates on Sept 26  
Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on September 26

## TELLING NUMBERS

### US Presidents' ratings in their first year: Biden's numbers slip

A Pew Research Center report released last week has found that US President Joe Biden's approval ratings have fallen sharply in the last two months. This is the first time his ratings have gone down since he became President, Pew said.

The survey was conducted among 10,371 adults between September 13-19. It found less than 44% of US adults now approve of Biden's way of handling his presidency and 53% disapprove. In July, 55% had approved of his performance and 43% disapproved.

During the first year in office, among recent Presidents, George W Bush (2001) had the highest approval ratings at 78%. Donald Trump, who became President in 2017, had the lowest approval ratings at 38%. Significantly, among recent Presidents, Biden has lower ratings than most at similar points, the survey notes.

**BIDEN'S RATINGS SINCE MARCH 2021 (FOR SELECT MONTHS)**

Month (2021)	Approval ratings	Disapproval ratings
March	54	42
April	59	39
July	55	43
September	53	44

**OTHER PRESIDENTS' RATINGS DURING FIRST YEAR**

President	March	February
Reagan (1981)	60	47
G H W Bush (1989)	54-59	73
Clinton (1993)	54	51
GW Bush (2001)	54	78
Obama (2009)	59	49
Trump (2017)	44	38

Source: Pew Research Center



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## SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# Assam's conflict over land

A video of a protester being shot by police, then stomped on by a civilian, has thrown the spotlight on an eviction drive in Assam. But the state's conflict over land, with ethnic faultlines, goes back decades.

TORA AGARWALA

GUWAHATI, SEPTEMBER 26

LAST WEEK, an eviction drive in Sipajhar in Assam's Darrang district took a violent turn, leaving two dead and several injured, after clashes broke out between the police and protesters. A horrifying video showed a protester armed with a lathi being shot by a policeman, then jumped on and stomped on by a civilian. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has instituted a judicial probe into the deaths, and the civilian has been arrested.

In Assam, ethnic conflict over land goes back decades, and such eviction drives predate the current regime.

**What was the Sipajhar drive about?**

The eviction drive in Dholpur of Sipajhar, where primarily Bengali-speaking Muslims live, was aimed at removing "illegal encroachers" to free up government land for "landless indigenous communities". According to authorities, the drive on Monday and Thursday evicted 1,200-1,300 families who had "illegally" occupied roughly 10,000 bighas of government land. The drive is rooted in the CM's visit to the area in June, when he "promised" local communities that the encroached land would be recovered and that the Dholpur Shiva Mandir in the vicinity would get a *manikut*, a guest house and a boundary wall.

Later, the state Budget earmarked Rs 9.6 crore for an "agriculture project", called the Garukhuti project, on the cleared land. The project would promote afforestation and agriculture activities, involving indigenous youth. On the request of the Agriculture Department, the district administration declared the area "community agricultural land". In June, a smaller drive evicted some seven families who lived near the temple.

**Who were the people being evicted?**

Primarily Bengali-speaking Muslims, they are mostly peasants and daily wage earners. While the government alleged they have "illegally encroached" on the land, most families *The Indian Express* met said they moved there at least 40 years ago, from districts such as Barpeta and Goalpara, after losing their homes to river erosion. Many claimed they had bought the land from locals at the time. However, most transactions happened without documents, and hold little legal validity.

On Saturday, CM Sarma accused the settlers of using two things like a "mantra": floods and erosion. "The Assam government cannot cow down. We (the Assamese) are getting outnumbered every day," he said. He said the landless among those evicted will be given 2 acres.

Sipajhar, incidentally, is part of the Mangaldoi Lok Sabha seat, from where the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) had launched its anti-foreigner movement of 1979-85. A revision of rolls had shown a large number of new voters — the trigger for the agitation.

**What do indigenous locals say?**

Portions of the land in Dholpur — as well as the larger Garukhuti area — have been a site



Evicted villagers inspect the remains of their homes in Dholpur.  
Sadiq Naqvi

of conflict for decades, with indigenous residents claiming their land has been usurped by migrants. Conflicts from time to time have often led to spurts of eviction. Organisations such as Prabajan Virodh Manch (PVM) and Sangrami Satirtha Sammelan, which speak for indigenous communities, have been demanding that encroached land be freed up. In 2015, some Assamese residents led by Kobad Ali, president of Dakhsin Mangaldai GOWALA Santha (an organisation of milk producers), filed a case under the Assam Land Grabbing (Prohibition) Act, 2010, seeking a Mangaldoi court's intervention in evicting encroachers from Village Grazing Reserve and Professional Grazing Reserve in a number of villages in Sipajhar. In 2013, an RTI response said around 77,000 bighas of government land in the area remained encroached for years. The BJP promised to clear it after it came to power.

Upamanyu Hazarika, convenor of PVM, said in a press statement on September 20 that there had been five earlier eviction drives in the area, but it was the "local indigenous" who were made to suffer as their lands were acquired for the agriculture project, and the encroachers remained "undisturbed".

**Did anyone among those targeted for eviction seek legal recourse?**

According to activists, 200 families from Dholpur 3 moved the High Court against the eviction late last month. In response, the government had filed an affidavit saying the settlers were on government land. The evictions on Thursday came before the petitioners could file a reply. "Propriety demands that they should wait for the final outcome of the case," said Santanu Borthakur, an advocate representing the families.

**How did the eviction turn violent?**

Last Monday, about 800 families were evicted from Dholpur 1 and 3 villages. While it happened without resistance, locals and activists were unhappy because it was done without a "proper rehabilitation plan".

On Thursday, organisations such as the All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU), along with the public, carried out a demonstration, demanding rehabilitation. Thereafter,

the authorities held a discussion with them and a settlement was agreed upon.

Those evicted allege that the eviction was carried out despite the agreement, in which the authorities reportedly said they would put the eviction on hold till facilities as demanded were arranged. "This is when the situation became tense, and then spiralled into violence," said AAMSU member Ainuddin Ahmed of Mangaldai, near Sipajhar. The authorities, on the other hand, alleged that even after the agreement, the locals "suddenly" began to attack the police with sticks, stones and spears. Darrang SP Susanta Biswa Sarma said police "did what they had to do" in "self-defence".

On Saturday, Chief Minister Sarma claimed the involvement of the Popular Front of India (PFI), the Muslim outfit.

**What is the extent of encroachment of land in Assam?**

Land has long been at the centre of ethnic contestations in Assam, with the common belief that the "indigenous" Assamese were losing its land to "migrants from Bangladesh". Often, it is alleged that government lands, lands around *xattras* (monasteries) and forest lands around national parks and sanctuaries have been encroached upon.

The Brahma Committee, formed by the previous Sarbananda Sonowal government to make recommendations on land rights, said in its interim report in 2017 that 63 lakh bighas of government land was under "illegal occupation". The same year, then MoS for Revenue Pallab Lochan Das (now Tezpur MP) told the Assembly that 6,652 sq km government land was encroached upon; in 2019, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said 22% of forest land was under encroachment.

However, officials will agree such figures are ambiguous. Das, the MP, told *The Indian Express*: "The figure keeps varying. After we evict, new areas are encroached upon. Some areas are not reported. So, it is never a static number," he said.

**Is it limited to migrant communities?**

No, not all of it. Some government land is often occupied by people considered indigenous to the state, especially in districts such as

Tinsukia, Dibrugarh etc. The Brahma Committee's report suggested that many natives do not own land documents.

"Many people — including indigenous people — have settled in these lands. Since no one has legal titles in principle they can all be evicted. But the vulnerability to eviction is largely determined by political circumstances," said political scientist Dr Sanjib Baruah, Professor, Bard College, New York. He referred to the Assam Accord of 1985: "The first AGP government learned this lesson the hard way. One of the promises of the Assam Accord was evictions from protected public lands. Clearly when the Assam Movement leaders negotiated this they only had so-called 'foreigners' in mind. They ignored the fact that some of Assam's most indigenous people like Bodos that were shifting cultivators had also found their way into these lands."

**What about eviction drives?**

Evictions are common in Assam but critics allege they have increased after BJP came to power. Drives were carried out by the Sonowal government including in Darrang, Sonitpur, Amchang (near Guwahati) and Kaziranga, where violence left two dead in 2016.

One of the BJP's promises in the May 2021 Assembly elections was to free government land from "encroachers", and allot them to "indigenous landless people". Since then, drives have evicted 70 families in Hojai's Lanka and 25 families in Sonitpur's Jamugurihat.

According to Baruah, the eviction in Sipajhar was "planned to an unprecedented degree". "Even the Finance Minister in her Budget speech referred to 'one experiment of our government was to remove encroachers from more than 17,420 bighas of land in Garukhuti under Sipajhar Block in Darrang district'," he said. "One can only infer that who would be evicted during this eviction drive had featured in the planning of the project."

Abdul Kalam Azad, a human rights researcher, said the difference between eviction drives aimed at indigenous communities and minority communities is that in eviction in places like Sipajhar, one will see "dehumanisation" of those who are being evicted. "It had political and communal intentions," he said.

## EXPLAINED THE PANDEMIC

# Why vaccine efficacy is declining, and the implications of a third dose

**EXPERT EXPLAINS**

TUSHAR GORE

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight



RECENT DATA suggest that the effectiveness of Covid-19 vaccines has been declining. This article explores the possible reasons, and the implications of a third dose.

The table alongside shows some summary findings from Israel, the UK, and the US for vaccine effectiveness (VE) in preventing Covid infections. The data indicate that while protection against infection (as shown by effectiveness against symptomatic Covid) has declined (especially in Israel and USA), protection against hospitalisation remains high. The Israel study also showed individuals vaccinated in early 2021 are more susceptible to infection compared to those vaccinated later.

**Is this a cause for alarm?**

No, because protection against hospitalisation is still high. Ideally, a public vaccination programme should protect the population from infection, transmission, and hospitalisation (and subsequent mortality). Initial vaccine data showed high efficacy versus infection and hospitalisation. (The correlation between infection and transmission is not automatic and has to be proven. Some post-clinical trial data showed this for the current vac-

cines.) Even if protection against infection decreases, vaccines highly protective against hospitalisation are still beneficial because hospitalisations place the maximum burden on healthcare capacity. As long as the disease can be managed at home (and there are no lingering effects such as long Covid) then it is any worse than flu-like discomfort?

The data do show protection versus hospitalisation remains high.

**What could be the explanation for the differences in effectiveness?**

The statement "The immune system is incredibly complex" is a woefully minimal description of the intricate set of interconnected reactions collectively called the immune system that protects us from disease-causing agents. The explanation below is a basic outline, and as with any simplification some inaccuracies creep in, but these do not distort the overall message.

The virus, as it 'infects' the body, is primarily found in two locations. One is the circulation system that it uses to travel around the body. The second is the cells that the virus invades and uses to multiply. The immune system has two main 'arms' to confront the virus in these two locations. One is the antibody arm. Antibodies 'lock in' on certain surface proteins of the circulating virus, thereby preventing it from invading our cells. Further, they 'tag' the virus for destruction. Thus, antibodies can be thought as a first line of defence, but they become ineffective once the virus enters the cells. At this point, the second arm becomes relevant.

This arm is aptly named the Killer T cell arm. These cells target our own bodies' cells

that harbour the virus and within which it replicates. The T cells kill such cells, thereby eliminating the virus within them.

Vaccination establishes the two arms of the immune response, which can mature differently with time and in response to variants. Circulating antibody levels decline with time. Even though there is "memory" to produce antibodies on demand, jumpstarting this memory at a subsequent en-

## THE EXPERT

**DR TUSHAR GORE'S** focus area is pharmaceuticals. He studied at IIT-Bombay and the University of Minnesota, and has worked at McKinsey and Novo Nordisk. He is the former MD/CEO of Resonance Laboratories, a niche pharmaceuticals manufacturer.

counter can take time. A weak and delayed antibody response would result in infection but if the T-cell response is intact, the individual would be protected from severe disease.

Additionally, vaccine effectiveness can reduce because the immune system primed by one variant has to counter a new variant. Even here, the differences in response of the two arms to a variant are crucial.

The antibody arm reacts to the viral surface proteins (primarily the shape, or the 3D configuration), and thus changes in this surface protein can reduce the effectiveness of the antibody response. T cells, however, react to smaller fragments of the surface and other viral proteins. Since T cells respond to a broader set of targets — more proteins (surface and non-surface) and more sites on the proteins (multiple fragments) as compared to antibodies that respond to a specific site controlled by the local "shape" at the site, the T-cell response can be more resistant to variants.

So, the table can be explained by a decline in antibody effectiveness caused by time and variants that reduces VE versus symptomatic disease. Continuing effectiveness of the T-cell response explains the ongoing protection against hospitalisation. An important note is that at present, this explanation is conjecture based on the general principles of immune system function. Recent studies tracking a few individuals have reported that the T-cell response to vaccines is durable and effective versus the variants. More data will be required to confirm and perfect this basic explanation.

The simplified picture also indicates that circulating antibodies are not the entirety of the available protective resources. Antibody tests are easier to implement at large scale as compared to T-cell measurements and are therefore widely available. Individuals, however, should not base lifestyle decisions on such tests. The best practice is to get vaccinated and follow the local guidance on appropriate behaviour.

**Will a third dose help?**

Given that a two-dose regimen is still

highly protective against hospitalisation, the principal benefit of a third dose would be in improving effectiveness versus infection. Current limited data shows improvement in antibody levels and increase in effectiveness after a third dose. Consequently, some countries are considering a targeted roll-out of the third dose — in high-risk populations.

Nevertheless, there are other questions to consider. Since the vaccine is still based on the original 'Wuhan strain', the longer-term effectiveness is one concern. If immunity wanes after two doses, how long will the third dose remain effective? Will it protect against potential new variants? Another vital topic is the balance between reducing infection in an already vaccinated population via a third dose weighed against denying a first or second dose — one that protects from hospitalisation — to the partially or completely unvaccinated. An imperfect analogy is the choice between giving a lifejacket to an individual already wearing one versus to a person without one. The analogy also highlights the conflicting interests of the individual versus the collective.

In India, the majority of the population is not fully vaccinated and is therefore susceptible to hospitalisation. Furthermore, there is no data in the Indian population assessing possible reduction in two-dose effectiveness and benefits of a third. With such lingering questions and continued supply constraints, the priority should remain full vaccination of the eligible population (including approval of a vaccine for children) to control hospitalisation. The basic precautions to control the spread such as masking, distancing, basic hygiene, and ensuring appropriate ventilation in crowded indoor spaces should continue.



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IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

RAJIV RANJAN SINGH, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, JD(U)

Caste census will help formulate policy for poor. No one has anything to lose... Nitish raised demand earlier too...

JD(U) leader Rajiv Ranjan Singh asserts the 2020 poll results were not anti-Nitish, denies charges of political patronage in state water scheme contracts, and talks about why Prashant Kishor was let go. The session was moderated by Chief of Bureau and Political Editor RAVISH TIWARI

RAVISH TIWARI: Can you elaborate on the churn that is underway within the JD(U)? Upendra Kushwaha was inducted into the party and appointed chairman of the JD(U)'s National Parliamentary Board. Also, the JD(U) joined the NDA government, which it was unsure about earlier. Is there confusion within the party?

No, there is no confusion. These are just efforts to expand the party. (Kushwaha's) Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) merged with the JD(U). (Kushwaha) should not be considered new to the party, he was part of the creation of the Samta Party in 1994 by George Fernandes and Nitish Kumar.

As far as the decision to join the government goes, there has been no confusion about it... As president of the party, Nitish Kumar had taken a decision in 2019, and then a decision was taken in 2021. So it is the party's decision.

RAVISH TIWARI: The Bihar BJP has the same number of MPs as your party. There are two Cabinet ministers and two Ministers of State from the Bihar BJP in the Union government, while you settled for just one Cabinet minister. There would have been some compulsions from within the party to join the government?

There were no compulsions. The BJP has a majority, and there is a fixed number of Cabinet ministers that the government can have. It is their prerogative to decide how many people they choose to make ministers from each state.

RAVISH TIWARI: How do you read the results of the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections?

The Vidhan Sabha results of 2020 were messed up because of many reasons. In many places we may have faulted in candidate selection. There may have been some sabotage within. We believe that there was a conspiracy against Nitish Kumar from all quarters and the results were a reflection of that. But even in that adverse situation we managed to get seats and that shows that people support us.

RAVISH TIWARI: So did the BJP conspire against the JD(U)?

There were many sections... But let bygones be bygones. We are focusing on the future... Chirag Paswan put up candidates against ours. They also put up candidates against the BJP. There were some people who were possible BJP candidates, they became (Paswan's) Lok Janshakti Party candidates. All this added up.

RAVISH TIWARI: So it wasn't a vote against Nitish Kumar's governance?

No. In the 2019 general elections, (the NDA) got 39 of the state's 40 seats. If the 2020 vote was against Nitish Kumar's governance, then the 2019 results should have also reflected that. Nitish Kumar has people's support now, he had it in the 2020 Assembly polls, and it has increased.

RAVISH TIWARI: But 2019 was a vote for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The 2020 vote was for Nitish Kumar...

So the NDA got the votes. Who is leading the NDA (in Bihar)? During the 2020 polls, it was clear that Nitish Kumar would continue as Chief Minister. So if people did not want Nitish Kumar, the NDA would not have got a majority... There were some circumstances (that led to the 2020 results) and our party was unaware of them.

RAVISH TIWARI: Why has the JD(U)

backed the demand for a caste census, putting the BJP in a spot?

The demand for a caste census is not new. Nitish Kumar had raised the issue when V P Singh was the prime minister. But Singh said that work on the (main) Census had already begun and so it could not be done. Now that a Census is about to be conducted, we raised the issue. The last caste census was conducted in 1931 during British rule... If we consider the claims made by communities, then the total population of the country should be 390 crore instead of the stated 130 crore! That is why it is important to know the exact number of people from each community based on a caste census. It will also help in formulating policy to help the country's downtrodden sections. So no one has anything to lose from it.

LIZ MATHEW: Compared to your peers in the JD(U), you have always been considered much closer to the BJP. But since you have taken charge as party president, the JD(U) has been talking on the ruling party over caste census, flood relief, Jal Jeevan Mission. Is this a sign of any future political realignment?

No, that is not correct. I have always had good relations with everyone. We took on Lalu Prasad over the fodder scam, but that did not ruin my personal relationship with him. There was no bitterness. My commitment is to the JD(U)... I have good relationships with everyone in the BJP. But it is about the policies and views of my party. I move ahead with that in mind... There is no question of any future realignment, we are a strong partner of the NDA. But that does not mean we will not have our own views on policy matters. We had opposed the triple talaq Bill in the Lok Sabha, Article 370... But we have been with the NDA, and now we are a part of the government too. It is hypothetical to assume any future realignment.

LIZ MATHEW: The JD(U) has always been opposed to Chirag Paswan. But now he is cosying up to the Opposition, which may hurt the NDA. Are you ready to forgive him?

It is not for us to forgive him. They have no MLA in the Bihar NDA, so where is the question of including him in the Bihar NDA? In the Lok Sabha also, he is alone in his party, five of his people have left. We believe they left because of his stubbornness during the Bihar elections. They say he behaved that way because of certain advisors. His father Ram Vilas Paswan was a grassroots leader. Chirag Paswan did not face any struggle. He was airdropped, and then he became an MP. He had no understanding of the ground realities.

HARIKISHAN SHARMA: Has the JD(U) given up on its demand for special status for Bihar? Also, in Uttar Pradesh elections next year, will the JD(U) contest polls in eastern UP, and will it do so under the NDA umbrella?

The Finance Commission report said that instead of special status, the backward states should be given a package. We are discussing the package. There is no issue of special status, no state is getting it now. We are focusing on the backwardness of our state now... Since 2005, our growth rate has been in double digits. If you see pre-2005 Bihar, there was no electricity, no law, poor education, the business of abductions was flourishing, and there were no roads. Today, we have roads, electricity... Now we are saying that if we could manage all this with our own re-



WHY RAJIV RANJAN SINGH

A Bhumihar leader in a party that largely derives its base from among extremely backward classes, four-time MP Rajiv Ranjan Singh was recently made JD(U) national president. With Shiv Sena and Akali Dal exits, the JD(U)'s voice is now the weightiest among BJP allies. And as Bihar CM, JD(U) anchor Nitish Kumar tries to leverage that to project an 'autonomous' image, it is upon his confidant Singh to make it stick

sources, then imagine the growth that can happen in the state with a (financial) package.

As far as elections go, we have decided that if there is consensus on seats in UP and Manipur under the NDA, we will fight polls from the two states... But if there is no consensus, then we will identify seats and contest polls on our own in these two states.

VANDITA MISHRA: Some time ago, the JD(U) had talked about a coordination committee in the NDA. You talked about the issues your party has, its convictions, but is there any hearing given to them — Article 370, CAA or farm laws?

Which coalition has a coordination committee... except maybe in Atal Bihari Vajpayee's time? There can be informal discussions too... there is not much of a difference... About the farm laws, we think that the legislation that has been enacted is for the benefit of farmers... they have the freedom to sell their produce anywhere. Bihar too had APMCs (Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees), and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar abolished the same in 2006. Both the production of our farmers and the money they get it for it

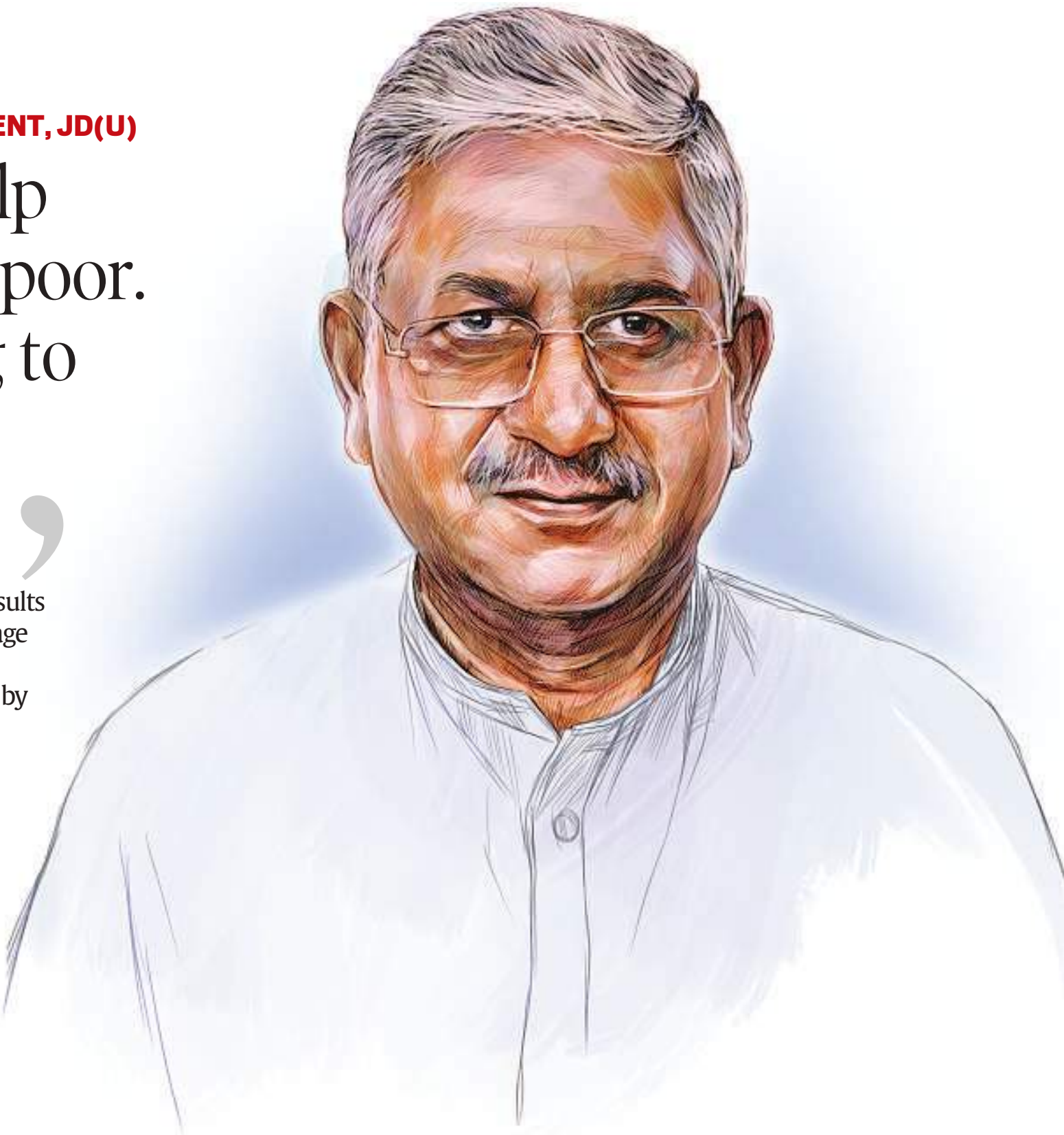


Illustration: Suvajit Dey

has gone up...

As for the rest of the issues, we had concerns, we have registered the same.

RITIKA CHOPRA: In several states in which your ally BJP has a government, people have been arrested, faced sedition charges, for differing with it, including activists, journalists etc. One doesn't hear of such arrests from Bihar.

Bihar doesn't have any such issue, people have full freedom to say what they want against the government... How can I talk about other states and the situation there?... This is an issue of democratic rights... We emerged from the 1974 agitation, we hit the streets for the freedom of the country, against the Emergency, took physical blows, went to jail even. So we are firmly of the belief that the press is the fourth pillar of a democracy.

RAVISH TIWARI: But you just said you would have no issues fighting under Yogi Adityanath's leadership in Uttar Pradesh, which proudly proclaims its strong-arm tactics.

It's up to the janata of UP to decide who it wants as its leader, not you or me.

RINKU GHOSH: Your party leader K C Tyagi recently called Nitish Kumar prime minister material.

Tyagi's statement should be seen in the right light. He said Nitishji is PM 'material', as in he has the abilities needed to run the country. There is a world of difference between being able to be PM and laying claim to be PM or being a PM contender... There are many examples to show why Tyagiji or other JD(U) leaders talk of him being PM-worthy. In 2015, the Nitish Kumar government launched the Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal scheme, under which we have spent Rs 27,000 crore to get drinking water to wards; the Centre adopted this as Jal Jeevan Mission in 2019. It was Nitishji's vision that the Centre adopted. Then, providing electricity to every household... it was a promise by Nitishji during the Bihar elections of 2015. By October 2018, power connection had reached every home, and now even rural areas have 20-22 hours of electricity a day. Similarly, the Centre adopted this in 2017... So when we say Nitishji is PM material, we are talking about his vision.

SANTOSH SINGH: The Indian Express has carried a series of investigative reports on the political patronage in contract allotments for Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal.

Our party has a big structure, we have nothing to do with the business of party leaders and workers. In any case, there is a system of e-tendering which cannot be managed. It cannot be known which person is taking part in the tendering process from where. But we have a business cell in the party. There is nothing wrong in

party workers doing business.

SANTOSH SINGH: Among those who got the contracts were BJP leader and Deputy CM Tarkishore Prasad's kin and aides.

He (Prasad) has explained his position.

LIZ MATHEW: You worked with the BJP under Vajpayee too. What's the difference compared to the Modi-led BJP? And does the current BJP take its allies along in significant decisions?

Yes, there are consultations, with leaders of the party, and there are agreements as well as disagreements, for example on Article 370 or triple talaq. But they got in touch with us on both. We express our opinion based on our stand.

There is a crucial difference from the time of Vajpayeeji. The BJP did not have a majority on its own then. Now, it has. So it takes the decisions and then consults its allies.

RAVISH TIWARI: When do these consultations take place, half-an-hour earlier or a week earlier?

In several matters, the talks take place one day, two days earlier.

RAVISH TIWARI: You have listed the achievements of the JD(U) government. But many of these were in Nitish Kumar's previous term, and despite this, in 2020, he performed worse. What is his vision for this new term?

We have been working continuously... During the pandemic, around 24-25 lakh migrants working in other states came back. Nitish Kumar did a lot of work for them — set up centres, quarantined those who tested positive... But governance was never affected... whether selecting school headmasters, building roads, medical colleges, infrastructure for nurses... Work hasn't stopped.

RAVISH TIWARI: The BJP seems to be the dominant partner in the alliance. Has there ever been an instance when the JD(U) has stood firm on something and the BJP has agreed to it?

We objected to the NRC (National Register of Citizens). When they said there would be such a survey, we objected... Work on the NRC may have been paused because of the pandemic, but whenever it happens, our stand will remain the same.

HARIKISHAN SHARMA: In his Independence Day speech, the PM said the Centre's Jal Jeevan Mission

has taken water connections to 4.5 crore households, most of them in Bihar. Sanjay Jha, a minister in your government, said only 8.5 lakh connections in Bihar are under Jal Jeevan Mission and the rest are part of your Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal. What does this tell you about the current level of political discourse, where governments exaggerate their work to look good?

Sanjay Jha said the right thing, Nitish Kumar started the scheme in 2015... Anyone can make claims... we can only tell you the truth.

RAVISH TIWARI: How do you see the Centre's handling of the second Covid wave?

Nobody imagined the second wave to hit the way it did. And because nobody anticipated it, nobody was prepared for it. But when the crisis hit and there was a shortage of several things like oxygen, remdesivir etc, the Central government worked on a war-footing to ensure that these essentials reached people.

RAVISH TIWARI: Why was Prashant Kishor let go from the JD(U)?

He was saying different things, was associated with different parties. It's curious that the day before the House session, Pegasus comes out... Where is the evidence? The Congress has no agenda and finds itself taking up unnecessary issues. This is not politics... That's why the Congress is shrinking. Look at what's happening in Punjab.

SANDEEP SINGH: The JD(U) has been in and out of the NDA. With Opposition parties attempting to come together, has anyone got in touch with you?

We are not in touch with anyone. We are in the NDA... there's no confusion.

HARIKISHAN SHARMA: The Pegasus issue stalled the Monsoon Session of Parliament. What is your party's stand on it? Are you in favour of a parliamentary committee or a Supreme Court-monitored probe?

The matter is in the Supreme Court... But no fact has come out on Pegasus. It's curious that the day before the House session, Pegasus comes out... Where is the evidence? The Congress has no agenda and finds itself taking up unnecessary issues. This is not politics... That's why the Congress is shrinking. Look at what's happening in Punjab.

RAVISH TIWARI: What turn do you see Opposition politics taking by 2024?

Like I said, the Congress is shrinking. It will shrink even more.



TOPOF THE WORLD



Walter Scott

USA

Billionaire, philanthropist Walter Scott dies at 90

BILLIONAIRE WALTER Scott, the past top executive of Peter Kiewit Sons Inc. construction firm who helped oversee Warren Buffett's conglomerate and donated to various causes, particularly construction projects around Omaha, has died. He was 90. The Suzanne and Walter Scott Foundation that Scott founded said Scott died Saturday. The foundation did not mention a cause of death. Scott served as a board member of Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway conglomerate from 1988 until his death, and even invested alongside Berkshire in the company's utility and energy unit. Scott held about 8% of Berkshire Hathaway Energy's stock and 105 Class A Berkshire shares in the company's Berkshire holding nearly all the rest. AP

WEST ASIA

Israeli troops kill 4 Palestinians in shootout

AT LEAST four Palestinian gunmen were killed in shootouts with Israeli security forces during a sweeping West Bank arrest operation cracking down on the Islamic militant group Hamas on Sunday, the Israeli military said. It was the deadliest violence between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants in the occupied West Bank in recent weeks and came amid heightened tensions following this year's 11-day war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. AP

USA

Thousands traverse Panama on way to US

UP TO 4,000 migrants, most of them Haitians, have passed through the treacherous jungles of the Darien Gap in Panama on the Colombian border as they make their way north to the US, two Panamanian government sources said. An impromptu camp arose in recent weeks on the US-Mexican border that included Haitians, adding to President Joe Biden's migration policy headaches. At its peak on Sept 18 there were some 15,000 people there as Haitians flee economic, political and social chaos in their homeland. REUTERS

Canada lifts ban on direct flights from India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 26

CANADA WILL allow direct flights from India from Monday, lifting the ban on them after a gap of more than five months.

Announcing the decision, Transport Canada on Saturday in a tweet said: "Beginning at 00:01 EDT on September 27, direct flights from India can land in Canada with additional public health measures in place."

"Travellers must have proof of a negative Covid-19 molecular test from the approved Genestrings Laboratory at the Delhi airport taken within 18 hours of the scheduled departure of their direct flight to Canada," it added.

In April, Canada had banned all direct flights to and from India.

Swiss approve same-sex marriage by wide margin

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
GENEVA, SEPTEMBER 26

SWITZERLAND VOTED by a wide margin to allow same-sex couples to marry in a referendum on Sunday, bringing the Alpine nation into line with many others in western Europe.

Official results showed the measure passed with 64.1% of voters in favour and won a majority in all of Switzerland's 26 cantons, or states. Switzerland has authorised same-sex civil partnerships since 2007.

Supporters said passage would put same-sex partners on equal legal footing with heterosexual couples by allowing them to adopt children and facilitating citizenship for same-sex spouses.



At the scene of the Amtrak train derailment in north-central Montana on Saturday. AP

Three dead after Amtrak train derails in Montana

AMY BETH HANSON & TAREK HAMADA  
JOPLIN, SEPTEMBER 26

AT LEAST three people were killed Saturday afternoon when an Amtrak train that runs between Seattle and Chicago derailed in north-central Montana, toppling several cars onto their sides, authorities said.

The westbound Empire Builder train derailed about 4 p.m. near Joplin, a town of about 200. Amtrak spokesman Jason Abrams said in a statement. The accident scene is about 241 km northeast of Helena and about 48 km from the border with Canada.

Liberty County sheriff's dispatcher Starr Tyler told The Associated Press that three people died in the derailment. She did not have more details. Amtrak

VOTING ENDS IN TIGHT GERMAN ELECTION



Candidate for chancellor Armin Laschet and his wife Susanne cast their ballots in Aachen, Germany, on Sunday. AP



Social Democratic Party candidate for chancellor, Olaf Scholz, casts his vote in Berlin. AP

Conservatives, Social Dems tied in vote to decide Merkel's successor

THOMAS ESCRITT & PAUL CARREL  
BERLIN, SEPTEMBER 26

GERMANY'S CDU/CSU conservatives and their Social Democrat rivals were virtually tied in Sunday's national election, exit polls showed, leaving open which of them will lead the next government as Angela Merkel prepares to stand down after 16 years in power.

The CDU/CSU bloc won 25% of the vote, their weakest result in a post-war federal election and on a par with the centre-left Social Democrat (SPD), the in-fratrate poll for broadcaster ARD showed. A Forschungsgruppe Wahlen poll for broadcaster ZDF put the SPD and its chancellor candidate Olaf Scholz on 26% and the CDU/CSU on 24%.

"The SPD is back. We are where we belong," SPD Secretary General Lars Klingbeil said shortly after first exit polls. He said the polls showed the SPD and its



German Chancellor Angela Merkel appears at the CDU party headquarters in Berlin on Sunday after the first exit polls were released. Reuters

chancellor candidate Olaf Scholz had the mandate to govern.

CDU General Secretary Paul Ziemiak told ARD after the publication of their poll: "That hurts".

Attention will now shift to informal discussions — likely with the Greens, on 15%, and liberal Free Democrats (FDP), on 11% — followed by more formal coalition

negotiations, which could take months, leaving Merkel in charge in a caretaker role.

The election pitted Armin Laschet, of the CDU, against Scholz, the finance minister in Merkel's "grand coalition" who won all three televised debates between the leading candidates for Chancellor. REUTERS

EXPLAINED  
E Amid change, somethings remain same

THE 2021 elections change a lot for Germany, with Merkel stepping away as the country's leader after 16 years in charge, and her party facing its worst results since 1949. However, the broad political landscape remains largely unaltered. Merkel's CDU and its main rival SPD, both of which are effectively in a tie according to exit polls, as well as the Greens, who have made significant gains in these elections, are all moderate centrist parties who have previously been in governing alliances with each other. The Left, the most left-wing party in the German parliament, seems to be hovering at just 5% of the votes, and the far-right AfD did not make the gains it expected.

Behave normally, transport minister tells Britons as many queue up for fuel

WILLIAM JAMES  
BRIGHTON, SEPTEMBER 26

TRANSPORT MINISTER Grant Shapps on Sunday called on Britons to behave normally when buying petrol, saying there was no shortage of fuel and the government was stepping in to ease a shortage of drivers bringing it to petrol stations.

In recent days long lines of vehicles have formed at petrol stations as motorists waited, some for hours, to fill up with fuel after oil firms reported a lack of drivers was causing transport problems from refineries to forecourts.

Some operators have had to ration supplies and others to close gas stations.

"There's plenty of fuel, there's



Drivers queue to enter a fuel station in London. Reuters

no shortage of the fuel within the country," he told Sky News.

"So the most important thing is actually that people carry on as they normally would and fill up their cars when they normally would, then you won't have queues and you won't have shortages at the pump either."

Shapps said the shortage of drivers was down to Covid-19 dis-

rupting the qualification process for drivers, preventing new labour from entering the market.

Others pinned the blame on Brexit and poor working conditions forcing out foreign drivers.

The government on Sunday announced a plan to issue temporary visas for 5,000 foreign truck drivers. read more

But business leaders have warned the government's plan is short-term fix and will not solve an acute labour shortage that risks major disruption beyond fuel deliveries, including for retailers in the run-up to Christmas. Shapps called the panic over fuel a 'manufactured situation'.

"They're desperate to have more European drivers undercutting British salaries," he said. REUTERS

House panel clears \$3.5-tn Bill, crunch time for Biden agenda

ALAN FRAM  
WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 26

DEMOCRATS PUSHED a \$3.5 trillion, 10-year Bill strengthening social safety net and climate programs through the House Budget Committee, but one Democrat voted "no," illustrating the challenges party leaders face in winning the near unanimity they'll need to push the sprawling package through Congress.

The Democratic-dominated panel, meeting virtually Saturday, approved the measure on a near party-line vote, 20-17. Passage marked a necessary but minor checking of a procedural box for Democrats by edging it a step closer to debate by the full House. Under budget rules, the committee wasn't allowed to significantly amend the 2,465-page measure, the product of 13 other House committees. More important work has

been happening in an opaque procession of mostly unannounced phone calls, meetings and other bargaining sessions among party leaders and rank-and-file lawmakers. President Joe Biden, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY, have led a behind-the-scenes hunt for compromises to resolve internal divisions and, they hope, allow approval of the mammoth bill soon. Pelosi told fellow Democrats

Taliban ask airlines to resume international flights to Afghanistan

REUTERS  
SEPTEMBER 26

THE TALIBAN government in Afghanistan appealed on Sunday for international flights to be resumed, promising full cooperation with airlines and saying that problems at Kabul airport had been resolved.

The statement from the foreign affairs ministry comes as the new administration has stepped up efforts to open up the country and gain international acceptance following the collapse of the Western-backed government last month.

A limited number of aid and passenger flights have been operating from the airport. But normal commercial services have yet to resume since it was closed in the wake of the chaotic evacuation of tens of thousands of foreigners and vulnerable Afghans that followed the Taliban's seizure of the capital.

The airport, which was damaged during the evacuation, has since been reopened with the assistance of technical teams from Qatar and Turkey.

While some airlines including Pakistan International Airlines have been offering limited services and some people have been able to get places on flights, prices have been reported to be many times higher than normal.



At the international airport in Kabul. A limited number of aid and passenger flights have been operating from the airport. Reuters

Foreign ministry spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi said the suspension of international flights had left many Afghans stranded abroad and also prevented people from travelling for work or study.

"As the problems at Kabul International Airport have been resolved and the airport is fully operational for domestic and international flights, the IEA assures all airlines of its full cooperation," he said, using an abbreviation for Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Taliban's term for their new government.

Since taking power, the Taliban have grappled with a severe economic crisis and have faced pressure on issues ranging from girls' education to allegations of reprisals against former officials and others associated with the previous government.

Women candidates win majority of seats in Icelandic election

EGILL BJARNASON  
REYKJAVIK, SEPTEMBER 26

ICELAND HAS elected a female-majority parliament, a landmark for gender equality in the North Atlantic island nation, in a vote that saw centrist parties make the biggest gains.

After all votes were counted Sunday, female candidates held 33 seats in Iceland's 63-seat parliament, the Althing. The three parties in the outgoing coalition government led by Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir won a total of 37 seats in Saturday's vote, two more than in the last election, and appeared likely to continue in power.

The milestone for women comes despite a poor outcome for parties on the left, where female candidates are more often frontrunners.

Politics professor Silja Bara Omarsdottir said the gender quotas implemented by left-leaning parties for the past



Iceland's Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir

decade had managed to create a new norm across Iceland's political spectrum.

"It is no longer acceptable to ignore gender equality when selecting candidates," she said.

Opinion polls had suggested a victory for left-leaning parties in the unpredictable election, which saw 10 parties competing for seats. But the centre-right Independence Party took the largest share of votes, winning 16 seats, seven of them held by women. The centrist Progressive Party celebrated the biggest gain, winning 13 seats, five more than last time. AP

THE US MARINE CORPS ALMOST NEVER ALLOWS DEVIATIONS FROM ITS DRESSING STANDARDS

Marines reluctantly let a Sikh officer wear a turban; he says it's not enough

DAVE PHILIPPS  
SEPTEMBER 26

ALMOST EVERY morning for five years, 1st Lt. Sukhbir Toor has pulled on the uniform of the US Marine Corps. On Thursday, he also got to put on the turban of a faithful Sikh.

It was a first for the Marine Corps, which almost never allows deviations from its halloved image, and it was a long-awaited chance for the officer to combine two of the things he holds most dear.

"I finally don't have to pick which life I want to commit to, my faith or my country," Toor, 26,

said in an interview. "I can be who I am and honour both sides."

His case is the latest in a long-running conflict between two fundamental values in the US military: the tradition of discipline and uniformity, and the constitutional liberties the armed forces were created to defend.

While Sikh troops in Britain, Australia and Canada have long worn turbans in uniform, and scores of Sikhs do so now in other branches of the military, Toor's turban is the first in the 246-year history of the Marine Corps. For generations, the Marine Corps has fought any change to its strict appearance standards.

The Marine Corps has made

the allowance only to a point. Toor can wear a turban in daily dress at normal duty stations, but he cannot do so while deployed to a conflict zone, or when in dress uniform in a ceremonial unit, where the public could see it.

Toor has appealed the restrictive decision to the Marine Corps commandant, and he says that if he does not get a full accommodation, he will sue the Marines.

"We've come a long way, but there is still more to go," he said. "The Marine Corps needs to show it really means what it has been saying about strength in diversity — that it doesn't matter what you look like, it just matters that you can do your job."



First Lt. Sukhbir Toor at a Marine Corps training facility in Twentynine Palms, California, on Friday. NYT

For the Marine Corps leadership, an exception as small as one man's turban was seen as so potentially dangerous that Toor's request went all the way to top

Marine Corps authorities. Their initial reaction in June was largely a denial. In a stern response, one Marine Corps general warned that individual expression of that kind

could fray the fabric of discipline and commitment that binds the Marines. It could erode the nation's trust in the Marines. It could undermine combat effectiveness.

Toor appealed to the commandant of the Marine Corps, which retreated a bit in August, allowing him to wear a beard and turban in limited circumstances.

The Marine Corps' argument, time after time, has been that change could hobble its ability to fight. "In order to build squads that will move forward in a combat environment where people are dying, a strong team bond is required," Col. Kelly Frushour, a spokesperson for Marine Headquarters, said in written re-

sponses to questions from *The New York Times* about Toor's case. "Uniformity is one of the tools the Corps uses to forge that bond. What the Corps is protecting is its ability to win on the battlefield, so that the Constitution can remain the law of the land."

Toor grew up in Washington, DC, and Ohio, the son of Indian immigrants. He joined the Marines after college in 2017, knowing he would initially have to forgo the physical symbols of his faith, but he was willing to make the sacrifice.

Believing it was wrong to ask for anything before he had given of himself, he shaved daily and wore a Marine Corps utility cap for years without complaint. When

he was selected this spring for promotion to captain, he decided it was time. He wrote his formal request for a religious accommodation in April.

Two months later, he got a letter that granted the accommodation — but with so many caveats that it amounted to a denial. Toor would be allowed wear a beard and turban whenever he wanted, as long as it was not while he was deployed, serving in a combat unit that might deploy or doing ceremonial duties in dress uniform.

How often might those circumstances occur?

"Like, every day," Toor said with a laugh. "That is just what I do. I'm a combat arms officer." NYT



# 16 ECONOMY

## TWO GROUPS OF MINISTERS FORMED FOR GOODS AND SERVICES TAX REFORMS

# GST panels constituted: Focus on tax slab review, data analytics to shore up revenue

**AANCHAL MAGAZINE**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

A “REVIEW” of the current rate slab structure of Goods and Services Tax (GST) has been explicitly incorporated in the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the two ministerial panels formed for spelling out a blueprint for GST reforms.

The panels’ brief incorporates an overarching mandate: an evaluation of “special rates” within the tax structure, rationalisation measures that include “a merger of tax rate slabs for simplifying the rate structure”, alongside a review of instances of inverted duty structure and an identification of potential sources of evasion to shore up revenues.

The Finance Ministry has constituted a seven-member Group of Ministers (GoM) under Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj S Bommai for “rate rationalisation” and another eight-member GoM

under Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar for “GST system reforms”, orders issued on September 24 stated.

Incidentally, the mandate announced for the GoMs after the GST Council meeting on September 17 did not include a review of tax slabs. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had then said the ToR would relate to correction of inversion and rate rationalisation. *The Indian Express* had reported on Saturday that amid concerns of revenue buoyancy under GST, the GoMs will reassess the current tax slabs including a possible merger of some tax slabs.

The ToR for the GoM on rate rationalisation stated that it shall review inverted duty structure other than where the Council has already taken a decision to correct the inverted structure and recommend suitable rates to eliminate it so as to minimise instances of refunds due to inverted structure, and review the current tax slab

### ORDERS ISSUED ON SEPTEMBER 24

■ The Finance Ministry has constituted a seven-member GoM under Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj S Bommai and another eight-member GoM under Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, orders issued on September 24 stated

rates and recommend changes needed to garner required resources. It shall also “review the current rate slab structure of GST, including special rates, and recommend rationalisation measures, including merger of tax rate slabs, required for a simpler rate structure in GST”.

“The GoM may suggest chan-

ges that may be implemented immediately and the roadmap for implementation for the changes that should be implemented in the short and medium term,” the order said. The Group may submit an interim report for such immediate measures as it may deem fit and will have to submit its report in two months, it added.

Members of the GoM on rate rationalisation include Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad; Goa’s Minister for Transport and Panchayati Raj, Housing, Protocol and Legislative Affairs Mauvin Godinho; Kerala Finance Minister KN Balagopal; Rajasthan’s Minister for Local Self Government, Urban Development and Housing, Law and Legal Affairs Shanti Kumar Dhariwal; Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna and West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra.

The other GoM on GST system reforms will review IT tools and interface available with tax offi-

cers and suggest measures to make the system more efficient and effective, identify potential sources of evasion, identify possible use of data analysis towards better compliance and revenue augmentation and suggest use of such data analysis and identify mechanisms for better coordination between Central and State tax administration. This GoM will give its recommendation to the Council from time to time and will review the implementation of reform measures approved by the Council, the order said.

Members of this GoM include Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, Haryana Deputy CM Dushyant Chautala, Andhra Pradesh Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath, Assam Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, Chhattisgarh Commercial Taxes Minister TS Singh Deo, Odisha Finance and Excise Minister Niranjana Pujari and Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Palanivel Thiagarajan.

## PANDEMIC IMPACT

### ‘Biz leaders feel Covid pressed need to improve crisis management’

Over 90% of the Indian business leaders opined that the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to improve crisis management capabilities, says a survey by consultancy firm PwC India

**Investment in technology:** Over 80% of India’s business leaders have already invested in technology in the aftermath of the pandemic

**Evaluating pandemic lessons:** In India, business leaders were substantially more confident than global leaders about their ability to evaluate the lessons of the pandemic and put them into



action, with 92% of Indian organisations saying they were ‘confident’, against just 75% of global leaders

**ADVERSE IMPACT OF COVID:** About 59% of Indian business admitted having adversely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic

**Top priorities for business leaders:** Top priorities cited by business leaders include: accelerate transformations in organisational areas identified during the crisis (99%); adapt strategy to respond nimbly to major interruptions and implement changes (96%); and implement after-action review process to assess response to future incidents and crisis (89%)

**Survey details:** As part of PwC’s Global Crisis Survey 2021– India Insights, the consultancy said more than 2,800 business leaders around the world shared company data and personal insights into the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the future of enterprise resilience

Source: PwC India/PTI

# Beer companies penalised for ‘cartelisation’: What were the findings of CCI investigation

**KARUNJIT SINGH**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

THE COMPETITION Commission of India (CCI) has imposed penalties of Rs 873 crore on United Breweries Ltd (UBL), Carlsberg India Pvt Ltd (CIPL), All India Brewers Association (AIBA) and 11 individuals for cartelisation in the sale and supply of beer. Anheuser-Busch InBev India was also found to be part of the cartel fixing beer prices but did not face a fine as it was the first company to provide key evidence in the probe.

**Why have beer companies been penalised?**

The search and seizures conducted by the Director General of the CCI during an investigation found regular communications between the three companies to coordinate price hikes submitted to state authorities for approval.

The investigation found that key managerial personnel emailed competitors about the price hikes they were planning to propose to state authorities in var-

ious states and sought to coordinate price hikes.

Representatives of the beer companies held discussions among themselves about prospective quotes and the way forward with state excise departments and used to meet with the excise authority under the umbrella of the AIBA so that they would have a better chance of getting proposed price increases approved.

The AIBA was also fined for its role in arranging discussions between beer companies on various issues including pricing. The CCI cited multiple instances of the companies making identical price revisions for competing products. In the case of Maharashtra, the CCI found that price revisions by UBL and AB InBev since 2011 showed an “uncanny closeness” in timing, with CIPL also joining the two companies in making price revisions around the same time since April 2014.

The CCI found that the beer

companies also coordinated cuts in supply of beer in Odisha, Maharashtra and West Bengal to oppose moves by state governments to hike excise duties or reduce the price of beer. It also found that UBL and AB InBev had agreements on the price at which they would procure used bottles from bottle collectors for reuse at their breweries.

**What was the rationale of the beer companies?**

Key managerial personnel from the beer companies who were also penalised by the CCI cited the need to seek approvals from state authorities for any price revisions as a key reason for the need for coordination among competitors. In one case, an executive at UBL said that as price changes were only permitted on three specific dates in a year in Karnataka, competitors would exchange notes and price main products similarly to “ensure that we do not suffer huge losses as a result of this policy.”

EXPLAINED

## POLICY WATCH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

# SOP for IT Rules: Clarity on sections 69 (A), 79 of IT Act, liability of cos likely

**AASHISH ARYAN**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

THE MINISTRY of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is likely to soon come out with detailed guidelines or standard operating procedure (SOP) for proper implementation of IT Rules, which will provide clarity on the powers to authorities, especially under Section 69 (A) and Section 79 of the IT Act, senior government officials said.

The SOP is also likely to outline the civil and criminal liabilities of the nodal contact person, resident grievances officer and chief compliance officer in case of non-compliance of any of the rules prescribed under the Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code Rules, better known as the Information Technology (IT) Rules, a senior MeitY official said.

“We have received representations from the industry and are aware of the fact that there has been some confusion, especially on the criminal liabilities part and which government agencies have the power to send takedown notices. The SOPs will lay down the guidelines very clearly and demarcate powers,” one of the officials said.

Section 69 (A) of the IT Act gives the Centre the power to “block for access by the public or cause to be blocked for access by the public any information generated, transmitted, received, stored or hosted in any computer resource”.

Meanwhile, under Section 79, any intermediary shall not be held legally or otherwise liable for any third party information, data, or communica-

tion link made available or hosted on its platform.

This protection, the Act says, shall be applicable if the said intermediary does not in any way, initiate the transmission of the message in question, select the receiver of the transmitted message and does not modify any information contained in the transmission.

Over the last month, executives from several social media intermediaries met senior officials from the MeitY and explained the need for urgent release of the SOP. The need was felt by the intermediaries once again in August, following controversy over Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s post across social media platforms, wherein he had posted a photo of the parents of a nine-year-old Dalit girl who was allegedly raped.

The photo stoked controversy and was subsequently taken down by Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Simultaneously, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) sent legal notices to the platforms as well as Gandhi. Though all three platforms removed Gandhi’s tweet and post, they claimed it was done based on their internal guidelines on posting and not on the notices sent by the NCPCR.

Twitter was the first to lock Gandhi out of his account, allowing him access only to delete the tweet. Though Gandhi had later submitted a consent letter of the parents of the girl on Twitter, the platform had still not allowed general public access to the tweet and said it would remain hidden as it is against rules under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

## BRIEFLY

### Diesel price hike

*New Delhi:* Diesel price was hiked by 25 paise per litre, rising to Rs 89.07 in Delhi.

### e-Shram portal

*New Delhi:* Over 1.71 crore unorganised sector workers are registered on e-Shram.

### IEC deactivation

*New Delhi:* The Commerce Ministry will deactivate all importer-exporter codes (IECs) that have not been updated after January 2005 from October 6. **PTI**

## MARKET WATCH

### M-CAP OF TOP-10 VALUED COS JUMPS

*New Delhi:* The top 10 valued firms added a total Rs 1,56,317.17 crore to their market capitalisation (m-cap) last week, helped by across-the-board rally which catapulted the benchmark index Sensex to the record 60,000 mark for the first time. **PTI**

## SITHARAMAN STRESSES NEED FOR FOUR OR FIVE BIG BANKS LIKE SBI

# FM: Not just more, but bigger banks needed; future to be driven by digitised processes

**ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 26

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said India would need four or five more big banks like State Bank of India (SBI) to scale up banking and meet the changing requirements of the economy and industry.

“The way in which the economy is shifting to a different plane altogether, the way in which industry is adapting, so many new challenges keep arising. To address these challenges, we need not just more, but bigger banks,” she said while addressing the Annual General Meeting of the Indian Banks’ Association (IBA).

The FM asked the industry to imagine how Indian banking has to be in the immediate and long-term future. “If we look at post-Covid scenario, India’s banking contour will have to be very unique to India, where there has been an extremely successful adoption of digitisation,” she said.

While banks in many countries could not reach out to their clients during the pandemic, the level of digitisation of Indian banks helped us to transfer money to small, medium and big account holders through DBT and digital mechanisms, she added.

Sitharaman underlined the importance of seamless and interconnected digital systems in creating a sustainable future for Indian banking industry. “Long-term future of Indian banking is going to be largely driven by digitised processes.”

The benefits of digitisation notwithstanding, the Finance Minister observed that there are wide disparities as well in access to financial services. “There are parts of our country where brick-and-mortar banks are necessary,” she said.

The FM asked the IBA to improve access of banking in every district through a rationalised approach and optimal utilisation of digital technologies. To achieve this, she advised the IBA to carry out digitised location-wise mapping of all bank branches for every district of the nation. “Almost two-thirds of nearly



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the Annual General Meeting of Indian Banks’ Association, in Mumbai, Sunday. **PTI**

7.5 lakh panchayats have optical fibre connection, IBA should consider this and conduct an exercise and decide where banks should have a physical presence and where we are able to serve customers even without physical branch,” she said. IBA should take the initiative and complement the government’s efforts for financial inclusion and enhancing access to financial services, especially in unserved and underserved areas, Sitharaman added.

The FM reminded bankers of the need to adapt in line with fast changes in technology. “What we think is latest today will be outdated in a year or so, we have to thus acquire resources to constantly update ourselves.”

“Such nimbleness and agility are especially important in India being able to achieve the ambitious export targets we have set for ourselves,” she said.

The government has given an export target of \$2 trillion by 2030, \$1 trillion in merchandise exports and \$1 trillion in service exports. “In an age of rapid change post the pandemic, there are going to be a lot of challenges in how we look at customers. These challenges cannot be addressed unless banks are going to be nimble, with sound understanding of various businesses and sectors,” the Finance Minister said.

Hence, the banking industry needs specialists to understand the unique business requirements of diverse sectors and the many businesses who are rapidly

relocating to India, she said.

Sitharaman also spoke of the high potential for banking outreach in the eastern region.

“The eastern region of this country has more than adequate CASA (current account savings account), but there are no takers for credit. You need to address this issue and see how you can lend in those regions, in states such as Bihar,” she said.

The Finance Minister said the UPI needs to be strengthened. “In the payment world today, Indian UPI has actually made a very big impression. A RuPay card which was not as glamorous as a foreign card is now accepted in so many different parts of the world, symbolic of India’s futuristic digital payment intentions.

“Fintech understands that UPI is its backbone, you have to give it its flesh and blood, you have to strengthen UPI,” she told bankers.

She stressed that the National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd is not a bad bank. “It is a formulation intended to clean up bank assets and dispose of NPAs in a speedy manner. Banks are now able to raise money from the market, hence the burden on government to recapitalise banks will be less, this is how we want banks to function — a lot more professional, with a changed mindset.”

Sitharaman said this is absolutely the right time to become professional, adding, “Bank valuations should be razor-sharp, enabling you to raise the right kinds of amount at the right cost.”

# Recovery to gather pace, but worries over jobs, capex remain

**ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

THE FAIRLY swift recovery following the second wave of the pandemic will likely gain momentum in the festive season ahead.

However, even as tax collections exceed expectations and high-frequency indicators show a pick-up, employment numbers remain worrisome. Headline unemployment has fallen in September to just 5.89 percent but urban joblessness is hovering around 8 percent; CMIE estimates the net cumulative increase in employment in the past 12 months at just 44,483. That’s just 0.044 million on a base of 400 million jobs.

Hopefully, the recovery process won’t lose steam and the supply-side issues will be sorted out.

While exports are surging, an analysis by HSBC shows high-skilled exports — mobile phones, machinery, pharmaceutical products, and IT services — have gained glo-

**Even as high-frequency indicators are rising, employment numbers remain worrisome**

bal market share, while low-skill and labour-intensive exports — textiles and agriculture — have been weak.

It is good news curbs on expenditure have been lifted and that several central government departments can now spend from their allocated budgets starting October; the curbs had limited spending by some departments to just a fifth of the FY22 outlay.

The other big concern is the capex cycle: An analysis by Nomura shows that while FY23 may see some impact of deferred investments, originally planned during FY22, the phasing profile of envisaged capex reveals persisting near-term risks to the private investment outlook. **FE**

# HDFC Bank to double rural presence, hire 2,500

**ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 26

HDFC BANK on Sunday said it is planning to double its reach to two lakh villages in the next 18–24 months and hire 2,500 people more in the next 6 months.

“The bank plans this expansion through a combination of branch network, business correspondents, business facilitators, CSC partners, virtual relationship management and digital outreach platforms,” the bank said. This will increase its rural outreach to about a third of the country’s villages.

HDFC Bank currently offers its products and services to MSMEs in over 550 districts. Its rural banking services extend to 1,00,000 villages. The private sector lender said it aims to double this to 2,00,000 villages and as part of this plan, it plans to hire 2,500 people more in the next 6 months.

On the rural expansion strategy, Rahul Shukla, group head—commercial and rural banking, HDFC Bank, said, “India’s rural and semi-urban markets are underserved in credit extension. They present sustainable long-term growth opportunities for the Indian banking system.”

# New York court pauses tax suit to allow Cairn to settle dispute

*New Delhi:* A New York court has paused Cairn Energy’s pursuit of US assets of Air India for the recovery of \$1.2 billion arbitral award, so as to allow the British firm to reach a settlement with the Indian government on the long drawn dispute.

The New York district court delayed the tax suit to November 18, according to court documents reviewed by *PTI*. This follows Cairn Energy and Air India jointly asking the court to stay further proceedings. **PTI**



New Delhi









# Glenn's Max Impact

Royal Challengers Bangalore hand Mumbai Indians a 54-run defeat as Maxwell comes good

**SYNOPSIS:** Maxwell's perfect night, Patel's hat-trick conjure a nightmare for MI

**SANDIP G**  
SEPTEMBER 26

GLENN MAXWELL scripted one of the most unforgettable nights for Royal Challengers Bangalore—he shellacked 56 runs off 37 balls, took two wickets for 23 runs and snatched a terrific catch to furnish Virat Kohli's side a memorable win over Mumbai Indians. He had two canny accomplices too—hat-trick hero Harshal Patel and comeback man Yuzvendra Chahal.

## Maxwell's perfect night

To the assortment of conventional strokes Glenn Maxwell has reversed—the sweep, pull, slog—you could add the ramp too, as though he is planning to publish a cricket lexicon of his own. As if pulling off the usual ramp is not complicated enough—though a T20 staple, few accomplish it with a high success percentage—he does it the opposite way to his own utter amusement and without any eye-shirking contortions of the body.

Twice he unfurled the stroke against Adam Milne. The first came as a shock when no one was expecting daredevilry. Pirouetting like a gymnast, he opened himself up, and dinked the ball past the third man. The next arrived in Milne's 17-run over — after reverse-sweeping (or was it reverse slog?) him — dabbing him fine of the short third-man fielder, with another nimbly flip.

The Victorian seemed to relish his battles with Milne, who he had creamed for a couple of boundaries, of more conventional hue, to kickstart his innings. To the spinners, he employed the more straightforward switch-hit over mid-wicket, as he illustrated to Krunal Pandya and Rahul Chahar. His knock injected momentum to RCB's innings, which was flailing as Kohli struggled for timing. It was an uncharacteristic knock by the captain—he stormed off to a start, ransacking 28 runs off the first 15 balls, but in the next 27 balls, he hoarded just 23 runs, soaking up more dot balls than usual (18). But fortunately for him, he had Maxwell in (reverse) swinging for the fences.

It was not the last time, Maxwell came back to torment his old team. He grabbed the opening-partnership breaking catch to eject a rampaging Quinton de Kock, before snaffling the wickets of Rohit Sharma and Krunal, all the while conceding just 23 runs. So much fuss is made whenever he underperforms, but on Sunday, he was worth every penny RCB had spent to acquire him.

## Patel's dream night

Harshal Patel is already the highest wicket-taker in this edition, unprecedentedly so. To this already rich haul, and burgeoning reputation, he added a hat-trick to stub the last flickering embers of Mumbai victory. When he strode in to bowl the 17th over, Mumbai had already lost half their crew, at 105. However, Hardik Pandya and Kieron Pollard were still in the middle and were capable of hunting down 61 off 24 balls.

But the unsung Patel knocked the wind out of their sails. He foxed Hardik with a full, slower ball. Pollard then wanted to break free and shuffled across the stumps to pulverise him over long-on. Instead, another slower ball, this time dipping into him, beat his bat and clipped his leg-stump. Patel, seeing Pollard shuffle, had smartly floated one on his legs, next nailed Rahul Chahar in front of the stumps to embellish a heart-warming story of a forgotten cricketer parachuting to fame.

**BRIEF SCORES:** RCB 165 for 6 (Maxwell 56, Kohli 51; Bumrah 3-36) beat MI 111 all out (Rohit 43; Patel 4-17, Chahal 3-11) by 54 runs



Harshal Patel took four wickets for 17 runs, including a hat-trick to dismiss Hardik Pandya, Kieron Pollard and Rahul Chahar. He is currently the leading wicket-taker this season with 23. [iplt20.com](#)

# Jadeja stars in cameo role as CSK beat KKR in last-ball thriller

**SYNOPSIS:** Glorious drivers set up Super Kings' win. Jadeja oozes all-round brilliance

**SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY**  
SEPTEMBER 26

TWO WICKETS inside three balls, and suddenly Chennai Super Kings' chase threatened to fall apart. Until the 17th over, they were in control, chasing 172 for victory. But Suresh Raina and MS Dhoni departed in quick succession and CSK required 26 runs from the last two overs.

Ravindra Jadeja found shots which released the pressure. Kolkata Knight Riders had lost Andre Russell to a hamstring pull and Prasidh Krishna bowled the penultimate over. Jadeja took him to the cleaners, hitting two sixes and two fours. Four runs required off the final over and Sunil Narine upped his game to almost force a super-over. The KKR spinner dismissed Sam Curran and Jadeja, but Deepak Chahar kept calm in the final ball of the match to take his team over the line. CSK won the thriller by two wickets.

## Glorious drivers

Amid the bludgeoning of T20 cricket, such glorious driving from CSK openers was so easy on the eye. Ruturaj Gaikwad and Faf du Plessis have a lot in common. At the same time, they complement each other. Gaikwad set the 'drive' rolling, stand-

POINTS TABLE					
	M	W	L	NRR	Pts
CSK	10	8	2	+1.069	16
DC	10	8	2	+0.711	16
RCB	10	6	4	-0.359	12
KKR	10	4	6	+0.322	8
PBKS	10	4	6	-0.271	8
RR	9	4	5	-0.319	8
MI	10	4	5	-0.551	8
SRH	9	1	8	-0.637	2

ing on his toes and driving off the back foot past cover-point to a Krishna delivery. Du Plessis got into the act through an on-drive against Krishna followed by a lofted one straight over the bowler's head.

Eoin Morgan brought on Varun Chakravathy, his trump card. But unlike the majority of modern-day batsmen, du Plessis and Gaikwad didn't play the length. They picked it from the hand and their stance and backlift allowed them to stay light on their feet. Du Plessis drove a full delivery from Varun with princely elegance. The spinner dragged his length back but the South African responded with another rasping drive off the back foot.

Gaikwad attacked Narine at the other end. He danced down the track and played a lofted drive over mid-off. When he came out of the crease again, it was a six. Through their decisive footwork, the CSK openers had managed to upset the spinners' length.

Narine dropped one short and Gaikwad effortlessly pulled it over the wide long-on boundary. Coming down to Andre Russell and lofting him over the sightscreen was contemptuous. Gaikwad got out next ball, a leading edge that went to Morgan at cover. But the way he has been playing, an India career beckons for the 24-year-old. A 74-run opening partnership in 8.2 overs allowed CSK to keep pace with the required run rate. And when the going got tough at the death, Jadeja's eight-ball 22 did the job.

## Jadeja's allround brilliance

There's a refreshing change in KKR's approach in this leg of the tournament. Morgan's team is now playing fearless cricket. The defeat notwithstanding, they were very good.

After Shubman Gill perished to a direct hit from Ambati Rayudu, Venkatesh Iyer and Rahul Tripathi took KKR to 50/1 after five overs. Then Shardul Thakur came and dismissed Iyer in his very first ball. A wicket-keeper was what CSK required at that stage. Jadeja from the other end tightened the noose.

The left-arm spinner went on to bowl a game-turning spell – 21 runs from four overs, including Tripathi's wicket. Thakur castled Russell in his second spell and returned with 2/20 from four overs. KKR still managed to post 171/6, but they didn't have Jadeja's allround quality in their ranks.

**BRIEF SCORES:** CSK 172 for 8 (du Plessis 43, Gaikwad 40; Narine 3-41) beat KKR 171 for 6 (Tripathi 45, Rana 37; Thakur 2-20) by two wickets

## EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER



Hot heads, calm minds and everything in between at the game

## Sir-Lord guarding Kings' galaxy



'Lord Shardul' and 'Sir Jadeja' bowled four overs in the middle in tandem and gave away just 20 runs. [iplt20.com](#)

AGAINST A team of knights, Chennai Super Kings needed a Lord and a Sir to pull things back. Anointed Lord Shardul and Sir Jadeja, they bowled four overs in the middle in tandem and gave away just 20 runs. Lady luck was smiling on Kolkata Knight Riders.

A leading edge from Venkatesh Iyer fell inches short of a diving Faf du Plessis. MS Dhoni took a sharp catch of Rahul Tripathi off Sam Curran, but it was a no-ball for height.

Only in T20 cricket, can a perfectly well-directed bouncer be called a no-ball, not for overstepping. Riding their luck and some lively hitting, KKR were 50/1 in five overs. Shardul Thakur came and induced an edge behind the stumps from Iyer in his very first ball. Why the batsman asked for a review was anybody's guess and Iyer walked

**Riding their luck and some lively hitting, KKR were 50/1 in five overs. Thakur came and induced an edge behind the stumps from Iyer in his very first ball. Jadeja bowled his overs through, out-guessing Tripathi in the process.**

back admonishing himself.

Ravindra Jadeja bowled his overs through, out-guessing Tripathi in the process.

By the time the latter realised that his attempted reverse sweep was a little too pre-meditated, he was clean bowled. Tripathi was livid with himself. Jadeja had spun CSK into ascendancy.

## Mighty Angry Rahul Chahar

With his braided locks, eye-piercing stare, and penchant for snarls and verbals, Rahul Chahar has all the requisites of a pantomime villain. He clearly was one on Sunday evening. He didn't take kindly to KS Bharat slog-sweeping him after he had beaten him with his first ball and then induced a leading edge. In his next over of an intense game, Virat Kohli flayed him for a four before Hardik Pandya dropped a difficult catch at point. Compounding his woes, Bharat smacked him over deep square-leg. Chahar was furious, with himself and the world. But the very next ball, he undid Bharat with a clever change of pace, and he vented out all his anger. Eyeballs jumping out of the socket, veins popping on his neck, he frenziedly kept punching the air and even punched at the gloves of wicket-keeper Quinton de Kock. He almost charged toward Bharat for a send-off, before he was whisked away by Rohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah. A stormy petrel so to say.

## Gill-Dhoni play Tom & Jerry

A cat-and-mouse game eventually weighed heavy on Subhman Gill. The Kolkata Knight Riders opener targeted the extra cover and mid-off region against Deepak Chahar, but MS Dhoni was one step ahead.

In the mid-day desert heat, Chahar barely had any swing to his assistance, a breeze notwithstanding. Dhoni took out second slip after the very first ball and put Moeen Ali at short extra cover. Gill accepted the challenge. He danced down the track and cleared Faf du Plessis at mid-off.

Then he drove uppishly past Moeen for another four. Chahar responded with an incut and trapped Gill in front. DRS overturned the on-field LBW decision and Gill looked relieved, but Dhoni's game was putting him under pressure.

Rotating the strike was a good option, but he erred in his judgement. A 36-year-old Ambati Rayudu knocking down the stumps with a direct hit from mid-wicket added to his misery. Gill returned to the dug-out disappointed.

# Arsenal's fast start secures derby delight

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
LONDON, SEPTEMBER 26

ARSENAL	3-1	TOTTENHAM
Smith-Rowe 21'		Son 79'
Aubameyang 27'		
Saka 34'		

ARSENAL STRUCK three times inside 35 minutes to beat Tottenham 3-1 on Sunday and move above their north London rivals in the Premier League table.

Just three weeks ago Spurs sat top and Arsenal bottom after their worst start to a league season for 67 years.

However, the Gunners have been rejuvenated by six summer signings and the return to fitness of a number of key players.

Emile Smith Rowe opened the floodgates by taking advantage of some awful Tottenham defending on 12 minutes.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang then rounded off a brilliant team move before Bukayo Saka rolled home the third 11 minutes before half-time. Son Heung-min pulled a goal back for the visitors 11 minutes from time, but it was too little, too late for Nuno Espirito Santo's men. Arsenal climb to 10th ahead of Spurs on goal difference with both sides on nine points from six games.

However, they are going in opposite directions with Tottenham losing their last three league games by a combined score of 9-1. The last time north London derby took place in front of a full crowd, Unai Emery and Mauricio Pochettino were still in charge of the sides. Both

clubs have had little reason to celebrate in the two years since.

But there are encouraging signs for Arsenal that the decision to invest heavily in youth during the transfer window is beginning to pay off. The Gunners spent more than any other Premier League club over the summer, investing £150 million in players aged between 21 and 23, despite failing to qualify for European football for the first time in 25 years. Four of the new faces started with all 11 of the starting line-up either signed in the two years since Mikel Arteta was appointed or handed a contract extension in that time.

Saka and Smith Rowe are two of those to have committed their long-term future to the club where they came through the ranks and where the stars of a first 45 minutes that sent the Emirates into raptures.

Smith Rowe was allowed a huge amount of space to amble into the box and slot home Saka's cross. The hosts rampaged through Spurs with ease for a brilliant second goal in a

move reminiscent of Arsenal's glory days under Arsene Wenger.

Tottenham claimed in vain for a foul on Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg as Granit Xhaka turned onto Aaron Ramsdale's pass out from the back. Aubameyang then flicked the ball through for Smith Rowe to charge in on the Spurs goal before having the presence to turn back and pick out his captain for a cool finish.

The Tottenham Hotspur stadium played host to Anthony Joshua losing his world heavyweight boxing titles to Oleksandr Usyk on Saturday. And Nuno's men were dealt a knock-out blow before the break.

Harry Kane found himself back in his own box trying to make a tackle, but the ball broke kindly for Saka to sweep the ball past Lloris.

Kane's frustrating day continued into the second-half as he prodded wide with just Ramsdale to beat before seeing strong appeals for a penalty waived away for a challenge by Ben White. The England captain is still to score in the Premier League this season after Tottenham refused to relent to Manchester City's interest. Spurs have scored four goals in total in their opening six games, but Son has three of them as his shot from Sergio Reguilon's cross had too much power for Ramsdale.

But the England international goalkeeper ensured there was not a grandstand finish with a stunning save to turn Lucas Moura's dipping effort onto the bar.



**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA**  
RC. NO.61024/TSIIC/E-AUCTION/PH-II/2021 DATE: 26.09.2021



## ADDENDUM

### POSTPONEMENT OF E-AUCTION OF GOVT. LAND PARCELS AT PUPPALAGUDA AND KHANAMET VILLAGES OF RANGAREDDY DISTRICT

Notification issued vide 61024/TSIIC/E-Auction/Ph-II/2021, dt. 30.08.2021, certain Govt. Land parcels of Khanamet Village of Serilingampally Mandal and Puppallaguda village of Gandipet Mandal of Rangareddy District were put for sale through e-Auction on 27.09.2021 and 28.09.2021 respectively.

That, certain frivolous claims are made by Third Parties on the Govt. Lands put for e-Auction by approaching various Courts.

In order to provide complete assurance to prospective buyers, Government will ensure speedy disposal of all pending cases before the process of auction is resumed.

Thereby, the notification issued vide reference No. 61024/TSIIC/E-Auction/Ph-II/2021, dt. 30.08.2021 for sale of the Government land parcels (9) Plots to an extent of Acs. 22.79 cts at Khanamet Village, Serilingampally Mandal and (26) plots to an extent of Acs. 94.56 cts of Puppallaguda Village, Gandipet Mandal, Ranga Reddy District through e-Auction stands **postponed**.

**For further clarification call on +91 95738 14737 | +91 88844 06412 or log on to TSIIC.TELANGANA.GOV.IN**

**Vice Chairman & Managing Director, TSIIC** On behalf of Government of Telangana

Issued By: Commissioner, I & PR Department, Government of Telangana

