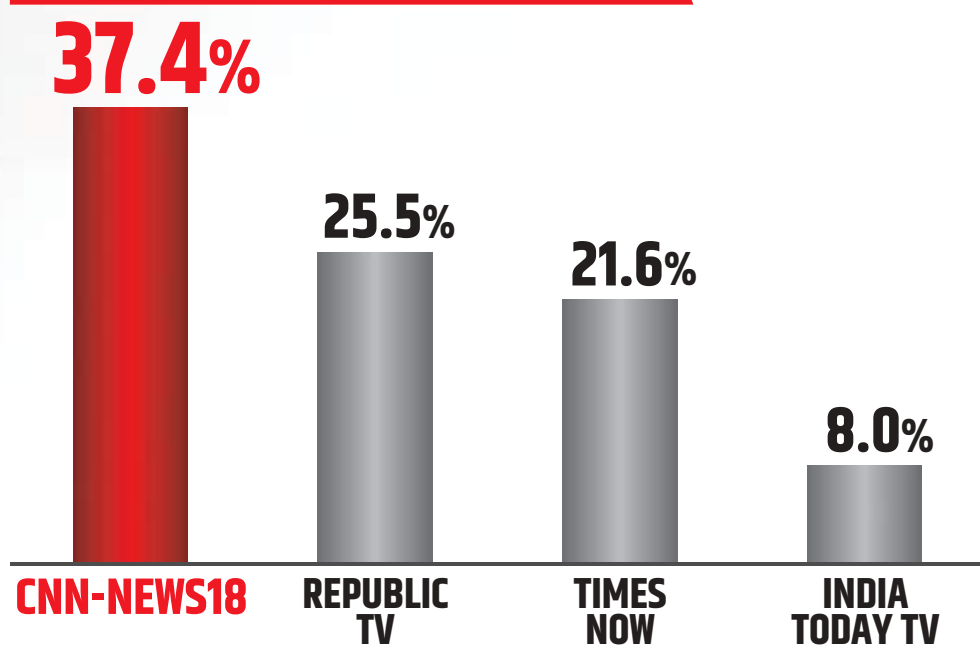


CNN-NEWS18 RACES AHEAD OF TIMES NOW & REPUBLIC

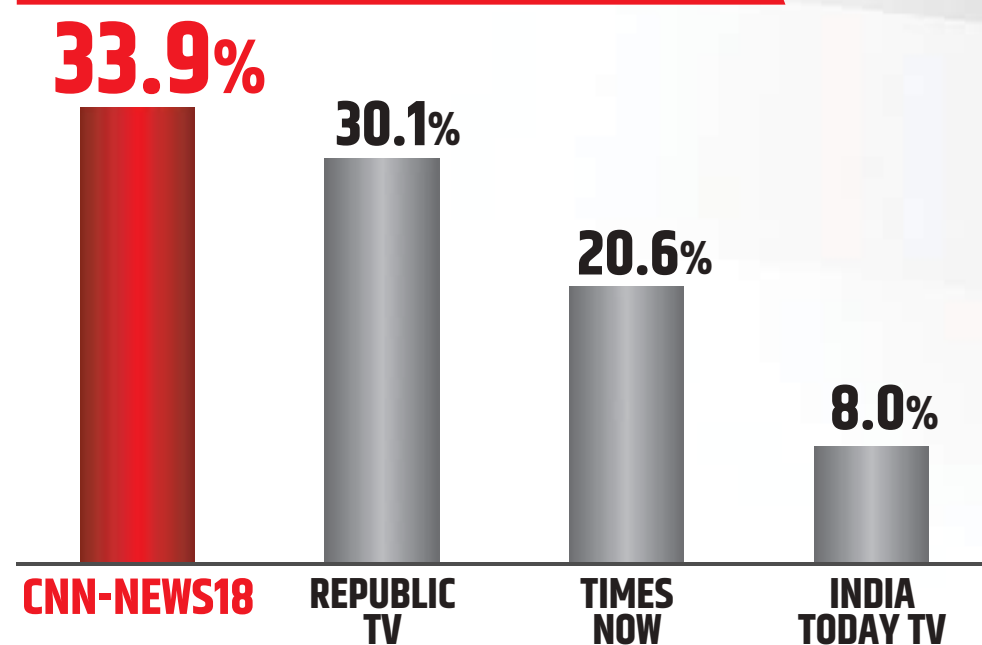
NO.1 OVERALL BY A WIDE MARGIN

FULL WEEK - MARKET SHARE %



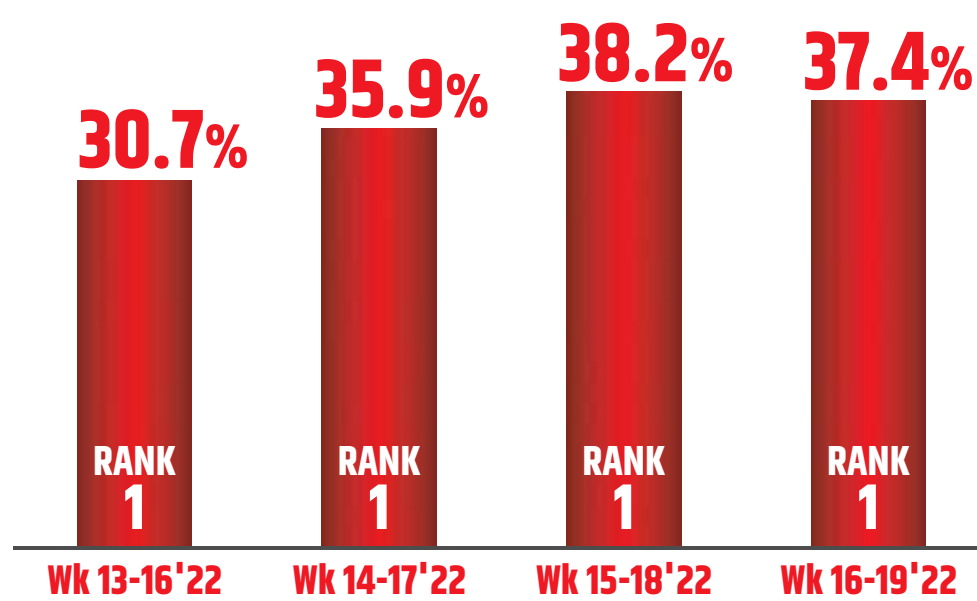
LEADS IN PRIME TIME TOO

1800-2400 HRS - MARKET SHARE%



AND GROWING WEEK ON WEEK*

RANK & MARKET SHARE



Source: BARC India | Mkt: India | TG: 2+ | Period: Wk 16-19'22 Rolling Avg. *Period: Rolling 4 Weeks as mentioned | Market Share basis AMA
Channels considered: CNN News18, Republic TV, Times Now, India Today Television, Wion, Mirror Now, Times Now World, News X

NOTICE BOARD

CORPORATE ASSOCIATE DIARY

APPOINTMENTS, MOVEMENTS, CELEBRATIONS, HONOURS



MEETING -IREDA

Pradip Kumar Das, CMD, IREDA met Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, Chief Secretary, Govt. of Odisha. They had a positive discussion about the numerous efforts made by IREDA in last two years and future opportunities in the state.



MoU -NBCC

NBCC signed MoU with PSCDL for various infrastructure development work worth more than Rs. 300 crore. Dr. T. Arun, (IAS) & CEO of PSCDL & P.S. Rao, CGM (Engg.), NBCC signed the MOU.



DEBUT- SAUDI TOURISM AUTHORITY

Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) making its debut at the 29th edition of SATTE 2022. STA, launched in June 2020, is responsible for marketing Saudi Arabia's tourism destinations worldwide and developing the Kingdom's offering through programs, packages and business support. On the opening day Mr. Ahasan Aldabbagh, Chief Market Officer – APAC, Saudi Tourism Authority said "Saudi has embarked on an ambitious programme to drive inbound visitation from India, inspiring local trade partners and the traveler to explore the undiscovered beauty and wonder of the country".



ACQUISITION- POWERGRID

POWERGRID has acquired the Project (SPV)-Khetri Narala Transmission Ltd. after emerging successful in the TBCB. It would help in evacuation of Renewable power from 8.1 GW Phase-II Solar energy zones in Rajasthan to Delhi.



INAUGURATION -DFCCIL

Darshana Jardosh, Union Minister of State for Railways & Textiles inaugurated ROB between IR Unjha & Bhandu Motidau stations, between IR Palanpur & Umardashi stations & ROB-1 of Twin ROB at Palanpur Yard in Gujarat.



CLIMATE CHALLENGE-SENEGAL

Senegal is on the front lines of the global climate challenge & will play a critical role in leading Africa's response, Patrick Verkooijen – CEO of the Global Center on Adaptation said in closing remarks in Dakar, after meeting President Macky Sall.



SWACHHTA PAKHWADA -NHPC

NHPC is observing 'Swachhta Pakhwada 2022' at its Corporate Office, Regional Offices, Projects & Power Stations. On this occasion AK Singh, CMD, NHPC, administered the 'Swachhta Pledge' to all NHPC employees.



MoU -TPDDL

A MoU was signed by Subir Verma, Chief HR, IR & HS, TPDDL & Sanjeev Singh, Director-Energy, CBIP in presence of Ganesh Srinivasan, CEO, TPDDL & AK Dinkar, Secretary, CBIP for conducting capacity building training.



FELICITATION- MUTHOOT

Dr. Sara George, Dir., St. George's School & Paul George Global School, was felicitated as the 'Education Icon of the Year 2021' by Education Today & honoured with 'Lifetime Achievement Award' at IIC Conclave Education D'eminence 2022.



DELEGATION- WAPCOS

A delegation of Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority & Zimbabwe Power Company led by Sydney Zikuzo Gata, Executive Chairman, ZESA & Kenneth Maswera, MD, ZPC met RK Agrawal, CMD, WAPCOS & NPCC WAPCOS Corporate office.



ANNOUNCEMENT -SRM

Founder Chancellor of SRMIST Dr. T. R. Paarivendhar proudly announce the job offer to Puranjay Mohan Amazon Germany for Software development role with a whopping CTC of One crore per annum (1 Lac + emoluments in Euros).



Desaru Coast -Malaysia

The newest & largest integrated destination, Desaru Coast Destination Resort (Desaru Coast) has announced its largest incentives package ringing in at total of Rs.12 million to entice Indian travellers, event planners & orgs. to its pristine, idyllic coastal resort. It promises an unforgettable MICE experience for Indian planners & org. India is a key & coveted source market in all categories for Desaru Coast. Returning to Sate for the 4th time, the destination is offering the incentives to cover key Indian market segments: For the leisure market, Desaru Coast is introducing its popular luxury stay packages at affordable prices starting at approx. Rs.6,600 p.p. Packages include hotel stays & selected Desaru Coast experiences as a special value-add. Guests can purchase Waterpark tickets, largest water parks in Asia, with every room purchased at the destination. The incentive offered to the leisure market is Rs. 5 million.

GAIL In line with the National Hydrogen Mission, GAIL Limited has awarded a contract to set up one of the largest PEM Electrolyser in India. The project would be installed at GAIL's Vijapur Complex, in Guna District of MP & would be based on renewable power. The Project has been designed to produce around 4.3 Metric Tons of Hydrogen per day (approx. 10 MW capacity) with a purity of about 99.999 Volume %. It is scheduled to be commissioned by Nov. 2023.

SAIL has supplied 4300 Tonnes of special steel for India's indigenous navy warships INS 'Udayagiri' and INS 'Surat'. The entire quantity of steel has been supplied from SAIL's Bokaro, Bhilai & Rourkela Steel Plants. This is in continuation to SAIL's sustained efforts to contribute substantially in India's 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat' mission and to strengthen the country's efforts towards import substitution.

POWERGRID Infrastructure Investment Trust ('PGInvIT') (NSE: PGInvIT, BSE: 543290), India's first Infrastructure Investment Trust by a Maharatna CPSE, 'POWERGRID' (NSE: POWERGRID; BSE: 532898), completed one year of listing, on May 14, 2022, with excellent performance. PGInvIT units have given a capital return of 37% to its unitholders on the Offer Price of Rs.100, during the period outperforming the benchmark indices on the bourses. Total returns to unitholders is about 45% including an aggregate distribution of Rs.7.50 per unit paid by PGInvIT since listing. PGInvIT came out with its Initial Public Offer in April 2021.

INDIANOIL reported Revenue from Operations of Rs.7,28,460 crs for FY 2021-22 as compared to Rs. 5,14,890 crs in previous FY. The Net Profit for current financial year is higher at Rs. 24,184 crs as compared to Rs.1,836 crs during previous fy. Reflecting on the stellar operational performance of the Corporation, Chairman, IndianOil, SM Vaidya said "This year, IndianOil has notched up the highest ever Revenue from Operations & as well as highest ever Net Profit. This stellar achievement reflects our resolve to set new benchmarks of excellence even in the face of stiff challenges. The Board of Directors in this meeting recommended issue of bonus equity shares.

IIT BHILAI Indian Institute of Technology Bhilai hosted the Pan IIT Yoga Sports Competition on May 14 in online mode, where representatives from 15 IITs participated in the elimination round. Prof. Rajat Moona, Director, IIT Bhilai, spoke on the occasion about the significance of International Yoga Day.

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

THE ADMINISTRATION OF UNION TERRITORY OF LADAKH
Information Technology Department
Tel/fax: 01962-255567, 255568
email: ladakhdivcom@gmail.com, ladakhgovagency@gmail.com

Invitation of Expression of Interest for providing Public Wifi hotspots in UT Ladakh

The Department of Information Technology UT Ladakh wishes to launch "Public Wifi" services in both Leh and Kargil districts at various locations. The Department invites Expression of Interest for providing bandwidth for WiFi hotspots in UT Ladakh "from internet service Providers/Telecom Services provides with experience in this field.

The Interested ISP (Internet Service Provider) and TSP (Telecom Service Provider) those who are willing are requested to submit their Expression of Interest by 27th May 2022, by 5.00 pm at ladakhgovagency@gmail.com.

Classifieds

I, Vimlesh D.O.B 01.07.1964, W/O Jitendra Sharma D.O.B 01.07.1959, No. 15704226F, Rank L/NK, Name Ajay Kumar Sharma, 21 Signal Group, Have changed mine name from Vimlesh to Vimlesh Sharma D.O.B 01.07.1962 and my husband name changed from Jitendra Sharma to Jitendra Kumar Sharma D.O.B 10.11.1959

0040614783-1

I Muthlekshmi Sudarsan W/O, Rajan Sudarsan R/o D-49, First Floor, South City-2, Gurugram, 122018, have changed my name to Muthlekshmi Sudarsan for all purposes.

0040614738-1

I Abha Kapoor D/O, Harish Bajaj R/o C-3/4, Second Floor, Subhadra Colony, Sarai Rohilla, Delhi-110035 have changed my name to Abha Bajaj for all purposes.

0040614735-1

PROPERTY FOR SALE

For Sale / Rent in Pune Premium Offices 2,000 - 10,00,000 Sq.ft./ Luxury Apartments & Bungalows/ Industrial Land & Factories. Call/ WhatsApp: 9823022097 www.earthwellrealty.com

0050197256-1

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to all concerned that, under the instructions of our client, Mr. Akhil Khanna S/o Mr. Raksh Khanna & Mrs. Upasana Khanna W/o Mr. Akhil Khanna, both R/o B-4/54, 1st Floor, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi, we are investigating the ownership and title of Entire Ground Floor of Freshhold Property Bearing No.135, Bk-A-1, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi, owned by Mr. Rajesh Sharma & Mr. Lokesh Sharma both S/o Late Mr. Yog Raj Sharma, R/o 6/46, Padam Singh Marg, Karol Bagh, New Delhi. Any person(s) claiming any rights, titles, interest or having any objection or in possession of any title documents including original Conveyance Deed dated 3rd Aug. 2004, by way of sale, inheritance, family arrangement/settlement, possession, succession, mortgage, lien, gift or otherwise however in respect of the said property shall intimate the objection to the undersigned with supporting documents and may kindly contact us at below address within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice, or else any such claims by anyone shall not be considered and shall be deemed to have been knowingly waived and/or abandoned. And our client shall proceed to conclude the negotiations, execution and registration of sale deed and no claim shall be entertained thereafter and shall not be binding on our client.
Arun Malik & Company (Advocates)
Ch. No.188, Laxmi Chatter, B-Block, Delhi High Court, New Delhi
Email: jyotims2013@gmail.com, Mob: 8178839104

HIGH COURT OF DELHI: NEW DELHI
(EXTRAORDINARY ORIGINAL CIVIL WRIT)
JURISDICTION
NOTICE UNDER ORDER V RULE 20, R/W SEC. 151 CODE OF CIVIL PROCEDURE
W.P.(C) 12710/2019
CM No. 51940/2019 & 51941/2019
UMESH GARG PETITIONER
VS.
THE CHAIRMAN, THE VAISH CO-OPERATIVE ADARSH BANK LTD. & ORS. RESPONDENTS
R2: Smt. Sunita Rani alias Smt. Sunita Anora alias Smt. Jaspreet Kaur
D/o Shri C.P. Anora, (GN/238),
W/o Mr. R. Paranjit Singh,
R/o Raja Farms, Near Anoop
Departmental Stores, Sultanpur, Mandi
Road, Mehrauli, New Delhi-
110030
R3: Shri. Om Prakash Verma, S/o Shri
Bhagat Singh, (GN/35/Asa),
51, Guru Angad Nagar, Laxmi Nagar,
Delhi-92
Whereas the petitioner above mentioned has presented the petition under Article 226 & 227 of the Constitution of India which was listed before this Court on 03.12.2019 and the Hon'ble Court ordered the issuance of notice on 03.12.2019.
And whereas on 26.12.2021 it has been proved to the satisfaction of this Court that above mentioned respondents cannot be served in the ordinary manner. Notice is hereby issued to you, by publication to cause an appearance to be entered on your behalf either in person or through an authorized advocate duly appointed by you for the purpose before the Court of Registrar on 28th July 2022 at 11:00 A.M.
Take further notice that in default of your appearance by yourself, your pleader or some other person authorized by law to act for you in the said Writ Petition on the aforementioned date, no further notice of the subsequent date of hearing of the said petition will be given to you in future and the said Writ Petition will be heard and determined ex-parte in your absence.
Given under my hand and the seal of the High Court of Delhi on this 12th day of May 2022.
Seal
Assistant Registrar (Writs)
for Registrar General

CORRIGENDUM

The Public Notice Published dated 20.05.2022 in the name of Newspaper Indian Express Should be read in the name of Mrs. Divya Bajaj instead of Mr. Divya Bajaj with immediate effect.

Corrigendum

Refer advertisement no 87/HL-NHDP/2022-23 Published on dated 22.04.2022 and 23.04.2022 by UPID NO 175177 date 21.04.2022. The revised date for submission of application for the post of Cluster Development Executive and Textile Designer- Cum- Marketing Executives are extended for 15 days from the date of publication of this corrigendum. The application may be sent through Email ID of Directorate of Handloom & Textile. E.mail ID- dhtup@rediffmail.com
Deputy Commissioner (Enforcement)
Directorate of Handloom and Textile
U.P. G.T. Road Kanpur
UPID-176415 Dt. 21.05.2022
www.up.gov.nic.in

EXPRESS EDUCATION
मैथिली
by : Surendra Raut
BPSC
5 Days Free Workshop
25 MAY 6:00 PM
206, 2nd Floor, Jaina House, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar
प्रबोधन IAS | 9015277823

KSG
For Institute for IAS Exam.
UPSC IAS
ADVANCE FOUNDATION COURSE
2 YEAR PROGRAM
ESPECIALLY DESIGNED COURSE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS
OFFLINE BATCHES
JAIPUR (Tonk Road) 20th MAY
INDORE (Bhawar Kuan) 23rd MAY
BENGALURU (Koramangala) 27th June
BENGALURU (Chandra Layout) 27th June
DELHI (Vijay Nagar) 4th July
DELHI (Rajender Nagar) 11th July
BHOPAL (M.P. Nagar) 20th July
JOIN OUR FREE PRE-PREPARATION PLAN
KSG ONLINE LEARNING (KOL)
Quality of Physical Classes with Convenience of Online
FOUNDATION COURSE
For Enquiry :- 882600 2521 / 882661 2521
DELHI NORTH DELHI CENTRAL JAIPUR BHOPAL BHOPAL
9717 340 833 9411 353 743 8790 806 461 7508 875 341 0968 002559
BENGALURU BENGALURU PRINCE BANGALORE BHOPAL BHOPAL
7419 146 843 7419 134 843 7843 932 734 9839 962 087 9400 347 399
www.ksgindia.com

Contact for Advt. Booking: M/s Friends Publicity Service
(M): 9212665841, 9212008155

"IMPORTANT"
Whilst care is taken prior to acceptance of advertising copy, it is not possible to verify its contents. The Indian Express (P) Limited cannot be held responsible for such contents, nor for any loss or damage incurred as a result of transactions with companies, associations or individuals advertising in its newspapers or Publications. We therefore recommend that readers make necessary inquiries before sending any monies or entering into any agreements with advertisers or otherwise acting on an advertisement in any manner whatsoever.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BARIPADA
"e" Procurement Notice for PMGSY Works
Identification No.- Online Tender- PMGSY N.C.B. No. 227 for 2021-22.
Letter No. 1702/ Date: 20.05.2022

- Name of the work :- Construction & Maintenance of PMGSY-III (Batch-III) for the Package No-OR-21-905 & OR-21-LB-47 2021- 22 for Road & Bridge works in the district of Mayurbhanj.
- Total No. of works :- 01 No. (One)
- Estimated Cost :- Rs. 510.08 lakhs (approximately).
- Eligible Class of Contractor :- As per annexure..
- Period of Completion :- As per annexure.
- Other details :-

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/O C.C.E.R.W. Circle, Baripada	Technical Bid	Financial Bid
		From	To				
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Baripada	PMGSY Online N.C.B. No. 227	27.05.2022 at 11.00 A.M.	16.06.2022 up to 5.00 P.M.	13.06.2022 up to 1.00 P.M.	17.06.2022 at 11.00 A.M.	7	30.06.2022 at 11.00 A.M.

• Further details can be seen from the website: www.pmgstyenders.gov.in
• Any Corrigendum/ Addendum will be displayed in the above e-tender website only.
Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer,
Rural Works Circle, Baripada
OIPR- 25181/11/0012/2223

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

HAY SAWARAN SINGH 31 MAY 1958 TO 23 MAY 1991 In the remembrance of Late Hav Sawaran Singh who left us for his heavenly abode on 23 May 1991. May Wahe Guru Ji give strength to CHHE SIKH fraternity and his family to bear this loss with courage and fortitude. He will continue to be a source of inspiration and strength for us. Let us pray for him in our hearts and remember a life lived so wonderfully in the service of the nation.
CO & All Ranks 6 SIKH

CHHATTISGARH TOURISM BOARD

2nd Floor, Udyog Bhavan, Ring Road-1, Telibandha Raipur (C.G.) 492 006
Tel.: 0771-4224611/22 Fax:- 4066425 E-Mail:- operations@visitec.in
No. 507/III/OPS/CTB/2022 Date: 20/05/2022

E-tender Notice

Chhattisgarh Tourism Board invites tender for "Selection of Agency for Refurbishment and Operations of Properties on Lease Owned by Department of Tourism at Multiple Locations in Chhattisgarh" and "Selection of Agency for Leasing of Properties Owned by Department of Tourism at Multiple Locations in Chhattisgarh".

Bid Publish Date	Pre-Bid Meeting	Bid Due Date
23.05.2022	06.06.2022 Time 14:00 Hrs.	23.06.2022 Time 15:00 Hrs.

Interested bidders can download tender documents from the official website <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> or www.chhattisgarhtourism.in. Any revision, clarification, corrigendum; addendum etc. will be updated only on the above website and shall not be published in the newspaper.

Sd/-
Managing Director
Chhattisgarh Tourism Board

CANTONMENT BOARD, AGRA

114, Fatehpur Sikri Road, Near Sadar Bazar, Agra Cantt
(Short Term Tender)

Invitation of E-Tenders (Dual Bid System)

Electronic Bids from eligible enlisted contractors of Cantonment Board Agra or eligible enlisted/registered contractors in any Central/State Govt. department or Semi Govt. departments of Central/State Govt. or Public Sector undertakings of Central Govt. and local bodies meeting eligibility criteria, are again invited by Cantonment Board Agra, for work of annual contract for repair/maintenance of Cantt. Fund buildings during the year 2022-23., on dual bid system i.e. Technical Bid (cover-1) and Financial Bid (cover-2). Manual bids/offers will not be accepted. Period for completion of contract is up to 31.03.2023. The interested contractors/firms may look up the website <http://defproc.gov.in/nicgep/app>. Terms/condition, eligibility criteria and connected details may also be seen in the office during working hours.

Critical dates are as under;

		23.05.2022	-
1	Date of Publication	23.05.2022	-
2	Online document download start date	24.05.2022	1300 hours.
3	Bid submission start date (cover-1 & 2)	25.05.2022	1600 hours.
4	Document download end date	13.06.2022	1600 hours.
5	Bid submission end date (Cover-1 & 2)	14.06.2022	1600 hours.
6	Bid opening date (cover-1) Technical Bid	15.06.2022	1600 hours.

C.A. No. T/10/Bldg/2022-23/CE/2022
Office of Cantonment Board
114, Fatehpur Sikri Road
Agra Cantt – 282001
Dated: 21/05/2022

Chief Executive Officer
Cantonment Board, Agra
(Vineet Kumar, I.D.E.S)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD, BUILDING, ASSAM: CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3

No. CE/TB-IV/34/2022/3

PRESS NOTICE

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Building), Assam, on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites bids from APWD registered Class-I (A) Contractors having experience in similar nature of work, for the following work. Details of bid may be seen at e-procurement website i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in. The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in

Sl. No.	Name of work	Approx Value Of Work	Time of Completion	Bid Security (2% for General, and 1% for Reserved category)	Tender Cost
1	Construction on Multi storied (B+G+5) Lakhipur Sub Divisional office cum Administrative Complex at Lakhipur in Cachar District	Rs. 22,94,63,402.00	30 (Thirty) Months	Rs. 45,89,300.00 (for General) or, Rs. 22,94,650.00 (for reserved category)	Rs. 20,000.00/-

N.B.:- Value of work may vary according to the detail NIT.

The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Document.

Sd/-

Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Bldg), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3
Janasanyog C/2928/22



BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNNY



'People told my father that boxing was a men's sport'
NIKHAT ZAREEN
WORLD CHAMPION BOXER

PAGE 14

SPORTS

UMRAN MALIK EARNS FIRST INDIA CALL-UP FOR SOUTH AFRICA T20 **PAGE 17**

PM IN TOKYO TODAY

Modi, Biden will discuss war in Ukraine and food security at Quad meeting

New Australia PM to be at Summit hosted by Japan's Kishida

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden will have a "constructive and straightforward" conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the "impact" of Russia's "brutal invasion of Ukraine", US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Sunday, ahead of their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the Quad Leaders' Summit in Tokyo on May 24.

Responding to questions on India's ban on wheat exports, Sullivan told reporters on Air Force One, the US President's aircraft, "Food security will be a topic of conversation at the Quad."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Navy info hub could play key role in Quad push to check China overfishing

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
CHENNAI, MAY 22

THE INDIAN Navy's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) may play a key role in a Quad initiative against illegal fishing.

Quoting a US official, the *Financial Times* reported that the initiative, to be announced by

the four leaders of the Quad at the group's Tokyo Summit, will bring together existing surveillance centres in Singapore, India, and the Pacific to create a tracking system for illegal unregulated and unreported fishing (IUUF) in the Indo-Pacific region.

Chinese trawler fleets are seen as responsible for most of the IUUF in the Indo-Pacific region, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

KCR hands out relief to kin of those who died in farm stir; says 'fight on'



The CMs of Punjab, Delhi and Telangana in Chandigarh on Sunday. *Jasbir Malhi*

KANCHAN VASDEV
CHANDIGARH, MAY 22

TELANGANA CHIEF Minister K Chandrababtu Naidu, one of three chief ministers who gathered in Chandigarh on Sunday to pay tributes to those who died during the protest against the three now-repealed farm laws, said farmers have the power to change governments, and urged them to continue their agitation until they get the "right price" for their produce.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann were also at the event at which Rao, on **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**



PM MEETS THOMAS CUP WINNERS

PM Narendra Modi with Indian badminton coach Pullela Gopichand and members of the contingent that won the Thomas Cup, during a felicitation event in New Delhi, Sunday. *PTI*

At RSS event, Yogi lists highlights: no Eid namaz on road, loudspeakers

Goa's Sawant wants temples rebuilt, Dharami calls for UCC

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE EID Namaz was not conducted on roads for the first time in UP, and "the volume of the mosque loudspeaker has gone down" following the state's recent crackdown, Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath said on Sunday while referring to his government retaining power in the elections this year.

He was speaking at an event organised to celebrate 75 years of RSS-affiliated magazines *Organiser* and *Panchjanya*.

Other BJP chief ministers also spoke at the event, with Goa's

Pramod Sawant calling for temples destroyed in the past to be rebuilt and Uttar Pradesh's Pushkar Singh Dhami reiterating that his state will form a "special committee" to implement Uniform Civil Code.

The chief ministers of Manipur (N Biren Singh), **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

BENGAL 'SSC SCAM'

Inquiry report shows how 5 officials booked by CBI 'committed fraud'

ATRI MITRA & RAVIK BHATTACHARYA
KOLKATA, MAY 22

THE JUSTICE (retired) Ranjit Bag Committee that looked into an alleged scam in recruitment for Group C and Group D posts in the

School Education Department has recommended action against four West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) officials, former and current, and a senior education department officer for alleged criminal conspiracy. Based on the Committee's report, the Central Bureau of

Investigation (CBI) on Saturday filed a fresh FIR against the five.

In its report to the Calcutta High Court (HC) on May 12, the Committee, which a Division Bench of Calcutta High Court Justices Harish Tandon and Rabindranath Samanta set up on **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

EXPRESS NETWORK



ASSAM: DAY AFTER POLICE STATION, TORCHED, HOMES OF 'CULPRITS' RAZED **P7**

BJP'S ARJUN SINGH RETURNS TO TMC **P9**

Remove harmonium from Golden Temple? Sikh music scholars strike differing notes

PAGE 1 ANCHOR**KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR**
AMRITSAR, MAY 22

AKAL TAKHT Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh has asked the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) to phase out the harmonium within three years from Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) so that the *kir-tan*, or singing of *Gurbani*, can be accompanied by traditional string instruments.

But not everyone is on the same note. One group of scholars in



Most of the hymn groups perform on the harmonium. *File*

Gurmat Sangeet, the Sikh tradition that has parallels with Indian classical music, support

the move and say the harmonium was "imposed" by the British. Then there are those who

ask: the world can't go back in time, why should music?

Every day, 15 *ragi jathas*, or groups of hymn singers, are deployed in turns to perform at Harmandir Sahib for 20 hours in one of the mainly 31 *raags* that are chosen depending on the time of day and season. According to SGPC officials, only five of these groups have the experience and skills to perform without the harmonium, using only string instruments such as rabab and saranda. Most of the over 20 departments of Gurmat Sangeet in SGPC-runs colleges have started training in string instruments only recently.

"The harmonium was an **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

Ride market volatility with Balanced Advantage Funds.

Give your portfolio a dynamic mix of equity and debt. Funds in the Balanced Advantage category aim to offer optimum market linked returns while helping you manage market volatility.

Diversify your investments with **Balanced Advantage Funds**

Contact your MFD/RIA.

BHAROSA APNO KA

An Investor Education Initiative by HDFC Mutual Fund

Visit <https://www.hdfcfund.com/information/key-know-how> to know more about the process to complete a one-time Know Your Customer (KYC) requirement to invest in Mutual Funds. Investors should only deal with registered Mutual Funds, details of which can be verified on the SEBI website (www.sebi.gov.in/intermediaries.html). For any queries, complaints & grievance redressal, investors may reach out to the AMCs and/or Investor Relations Officers. Additionally, investors may also lodge complaints on <https://scores.gov.in> if they are unsatisfied with the resolutions given by AMCs. SCORES portal facilitates investors to lodge complaint online with SEBI and subsequently view its status.

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

VASANT VIHAR TRIPLE SUICIDES

Women found dead at home
left note warning of gas inside

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

INVESTIGATION INTO the alleged triple suicide case in Vasant Vihar has revealed that the 54-year-old woman and her daughters had been planning to end their lives for days, said police, adding that they found four purported suicide notes and a note taped to the wall inside the house warning anyone who enters of “gas” inside.

On Saturday night, Manju Devi and her daughters Anshika (26) and Ankita (30) died after inhaling toxic fumes from an *angithi* inside their home. Police believe it was a “suicide pact” as the family had sealed their windows with foil and tape. The *angithis* and other items were recently ordered from an e-commerce website, said police.

The note on the wall gave instructions to open the windows and switch on the fan, said police. “Too much deadly gas.. CO inside. Pls ventilate the room by opening the window... Do not light match, candle or anything!



Police said the family had sealed their windows with foil and tape

Be careful while removing the curtain because room is full of hazardous gas. Do not inhale. Open the inside window from outside,” it read.

DCP (Southwest) Manoj C said: “Manju’s husband, who also owned the house, died of Covid in April 2021 and the family had been depressed since then. Manju was bedridden due to an illness. Prima facie, it appears that they died due to suffocation.” A forensic team was called in to collect evidence from the spot.

A senior police officer said

one of suicide notes, 7 to 10 pages long, was written in Hindi. On the contents of the note, he said: “It mentions the physical and mental health problems they were facing. They also wrote about the financial and emotional crisis after the father’s death. The note states they lost all support. In one of the notes, they thanked everyone... their locals and family members... and apologised to a few people. They said they want to give all their belongings to their domestic help, Kamla, if she wishes to take them, else to donate it to

the poor.”

RWA president M David said, “We tried to peek through the window of the house (on Saturday) but couldn’t see much. Later, someone tried to open the window. That’s when we smelt the gas...”

He said the daughters had pursued BCom but didn’t take up a job. “Six months ago, they asked their tenants to vacate the flat. The family (tenants) wanted to stay but the women asked them to leave... they were paying around 12,000-Rs 14,000 as rent,” he said.

We saw them after their father’s death
last year, they were broken: Relatives

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

A DAY after 54-year-old Manju Devi was found dead, along with her daughters Ankita (30) and Anshika (26), at her Vasant Vihar residence, relatives said the three were depressed since her husband, Umesh Srivastava (55), died of Covid last year.

Arriving from Kanpur to collect their bodies from Safdarjung Hospital, Anshul, Manju’s nephew, said: “We were shocked when police called my *papa* and informed him about the deaths. We could never imagine they would take this step... I spoke to Anshika last

month, she said everything was fine. My father would try to go see them, but they didn’t like meeting anyone. We last saw them after their father’s death. They were broken...”

SSrivastava, Umesh’s uncle, said, “After his death, I transferred some money to help them and offered more but the girls said no.”

Kamla, Manju’s former house help, said she was among the first persons to discover the bodies: “I worked for them for 8-9 years... they asked me to stop coming in 2020, saying they couldn’t afford to pay me. I kept in touch with them. I last spoke to Anshika *didli* on Friday. She wanted me to tell the grocery

store owner that she’ll come and pay him the money they owed him. They called me on Saturday, but I was sleeping. When I went to meet them in the evening, there was no response. I then went to work at other houses and passed by the grocery store later, when the owner told me Anshika hadn’t come. I got scared, I went to their house again and knocked several times... I alerted neighbours and we called police.”

“The pandemic ruined everything. The daughters lost their father, and their mother was already bedridden. They were good people... they paid for my operation when I had a baby,” she said.

Neighbours said the family had been living in the locality for around 30 years.

“Manju’s mother owned two houses on the ground floor and the family shifted in with her. After she died around 10 years ago, the women stopped interacting with others. Manjuji was bedridden... I last spoke to her in 2018... We knew about their financial condition and offered help, but they refused. Manju and her children were depressed after Umesh’s death. They had no job. They also asked their tenants to leave. We only saw Anshika leaving the house to buy groceries or feed dogs in the area,” said Pammi, their neighbour.

Madame Tussauds to
reopen next month

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE FAMED Madame Tussauds wax museum, which had shut shop at Connaught Place’s Regal Building in 2020, is set to reopen next month. The international attraction will now be housed on the 4th floor of DLF Mall of India, Noida, covering an area of 16,000 sq ft. “The project is under construction and is scheduled to open in the month of June for the

public,” said a spokesperson from Merlin Entertainments India, the venture’s holding company.

The company added “they have chosen the new location for Madame Tussauds as it is one of the best malls in the country and caters to the population from Delhi/NCR and UP”. The opening attractions will have close to 50 figures of celebrities and superstars from five different zones — History and Leaders, Sports, Music, Bollywood, Hollywood & Film & Television.

Unified MCD’s
Special Officer,
Commissioner
take charge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

IAS OFFICER Ashwani Kumar took charge as the Special Officer and Gyanesh Bharti as the Commissioner of the unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi on Sunday.

They took charge at the Civic Centre, which is now the headquarters of the unified corporation.

Bharti introduced the officers to Kumar and briefed him about the corporation’s working and the challenges. He also apprised Kumar of the various schemes of the MCD.

Senior officials in the civic body said that the first priority of the Special Officer would be to ensure that the corporation pays salaries and pensions of all its employees, which have been delayed for months. “Next on the agenda would be the disposal of garbage and shortening the height of landfill sites,” an official said.

Kumar is a 1992-batch AG-MUT cadre officer. He earlier served as the Chief Secretary of Puducherry and Principal Secretary, Public Works Department, in the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD).

75
Azadi Ka
Amrit Mahotsav
www.bankofbaroda.in

बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा
Bank of Baroda

NOTICE

26th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TO BE HELD THROUGH VIDEO
CONFERRING (VC) / OTHER AUDIO VISUAL MEANS (OAVM)

Shareholders of the Bank may note that in pursuance of Circular issued by Ministry of Corporate Affairs and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in this regard, the 26th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Bank will be held through VIDEO CONFERRING (VC) / OTHER AUDIO VISUAL MEANS (OAVM) on Monday, 27th June, 2022 at 11:00 a.m. IST, to transact the businesses that will be set forth in the Notice of the Meeting.

In compliance with the above Circulars, electronic copies of the Notice of AGM and Annual Report 2021-22 will be sent to all the shareholders whose email addresses are registered with the Bank/Depository Participant(s). Shareholders holding shares in dematerialized mode and whose email ids are not registered, are requested to register their email addresses and mobile numbers with their relevant depositories through their depository participants. Shareholders holding shares in physical mode are requested to demat their holdings / furnish their email addresses and mobile numbers with the Bank’s Registrar and Share Transfer Agent KFin Technologies Limited, at einward.ris@kfinetech.com. The notice of the 26th AGM and Annual Report 2021-22 will also be made available on the Bank’s website, at www.bankofbaroda.in, the Stock Exchange websites and on the RTA’s website, at <https://evoting.kfinetech.com>

Shareholders will have an opportunity to cast their vote remotely on the business as set forth in the Notice of the AGM through electronic voting system. The manner of voting remotely for shareholders holding shares in dematerialized mode, physical mode and for shareholders who have not registered their email addresses will be provided in the Notice to the shareholders. The details will also be made available on the website of the Bank. Shareholders are requested to visit www.bankofbaroda.in to obtain such details.

Shareholders may please note that in terms of aforementioned circulars, the Bank will not be sending physical copies of AGM Notice and Annual Report to the Shareholders.

Place: Mumbai
Date: 23.05.2022

For Bank of Baroda
Sanjiv Chadha
Managing Director & CEO

28/22-23



PHD Family Welfare Foundation



PHD CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY



PHD Rural Development Foundation

Interactive Session with



SHRI GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT

Honourable Minister of Ministry of Jal Shakti
Government of India

WATER STEWARDSHIP
Key to sustainability in India

Tuesday, 24th May 2022 ; 3.50 pm
PHD House, New Delhi (Physical Event)

LEADERSHIP PHDCCI



Mr. Pradeep Multani
President



Mr. Saket Dalmia
Sr. Vice President



Mr. Sanjeev Agrawal
Vice President



Mr. Sanjay Aggarwal
Immediate Former
President

RSVP:-

Dr Kadambari, CEO PHD Rural Development Foundation, M. 9811766322
Sangita Dutta Das , CEO, PHD Family Welfare Foundation, M. 9717315287
Piyush Sharma - Secretary I Water Committee, PHDCCI | E.mail: Piyush@phdcci.in, M. 9999943847

DIAMOND SPONSORS



PLATINUM SPONSORS



EVENT SPONSOR



HOUSE OF PURITY

CORONAVIRUS
IN THE CAPITAL

VACCINATIONS IN LAST 24 HOURS
35,710

PATIENTS IN HOSPITAL: 114

OXYGEN SUPPORT 42

VENTILATOR SUPPORT 3

DELHI TOTAL CASES		Total		Vacant	
		HOSPITAL BEDS		9,581	9,471
19,03,554		ICU BEDS		2,222	2,187
	Cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests	
May 21	479	569	1	23,214	
May 22	365	530	1	18,543	
Total	1,912*	18,75,381	26,201	3,83,63,619	
*Total active cases in Delhi					

NOIDA		
	May 21	May 22
Cases	38	34
Deaths	0	0

GURGAON		
Cases	172	120
Deaths	0	0

*Total active cases in Delhi

HARDLOOK

The bulldozer gathers pace

Routine anti-encroachment drives in Delhi have taken a political hue ever since one was held in Jahangirpuri, days after communal violence there. Since then, what used to be a bureaucratic process has pitted AAP and BJP firmly against each other

ABHINAV RAJPUT
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

TWO BULLDOZERS were engaged in demolishing a house spread on around two acres in South Delhi's Kalyanpuri last week. Watching from a distance, Shyam Pihal, who lives in a jhuggi cluster adjoining the road, made a phone call to his friend: "MCD wale aaye hain, sab log idhar aa jao, kahii ye jhuggi na todne ka sochein (People from the MCD are here, all of you come, they might just think of breaking the jhuggis)."

While the drive was carried out by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on court orders, the much publicised anti-encroachment drives carried out across the city by civic bodies have sparked fear in people's minds. The year-round activity has also turned into a flashpoint between the BJP, which has been ruling the MCD for three terms, and the opposition Aam Aadmi Party.

The first big drive

The erstwhile North Delhi Municipal Corporation carried out an anti-encroachment demolition drive in Jahangirpuri on April 20, days after the area witnessed communal violence following a Hanuman Jayanti procession. It was stopped mid-way by the Supreme Court.

While Opposition parties hit out at the BJP for bringing in "bulldozer politics" of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to Delhi, those in the party as well as a section of people hailed state union chief Adesh Gupta for "teaching the rioters a lesson".

Gupta had written to the North MCD Mayor demanding identification and demolition of "illegal encroachment" and construction by those arrested in the Jahangirpuri violence. He also ordered the three corporations to undertake more such drives to remove "illegal encroachments by Bangladeshis and Rohingyas".

While the AAP was not directly critical of the drive at that point, its MLA Atishi accused the BJP of helping settle Bangladeshis and Rohingyas in different parts so that *goonadagardi* (hooliganism) can be perpetrated. In the days since, a series of anti-encroachment exercises have been carried out across the capital, and the AAP has become more direct in its opposition to the drives.

Since Jahangirpuri

The MCD has carried out more than 25 drives, with an average of around one per day, in the past one month. These have been in areas such as Jahangirpuri, Dilshad

During the drive in Jahangirpuri last month. *Archive*

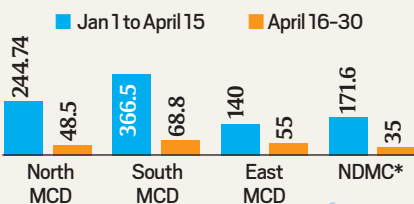
ANTI-ENCROACHMENT AND DEMOLITION DRIVES

ACTION TAKEN BY CIVIC BODIES

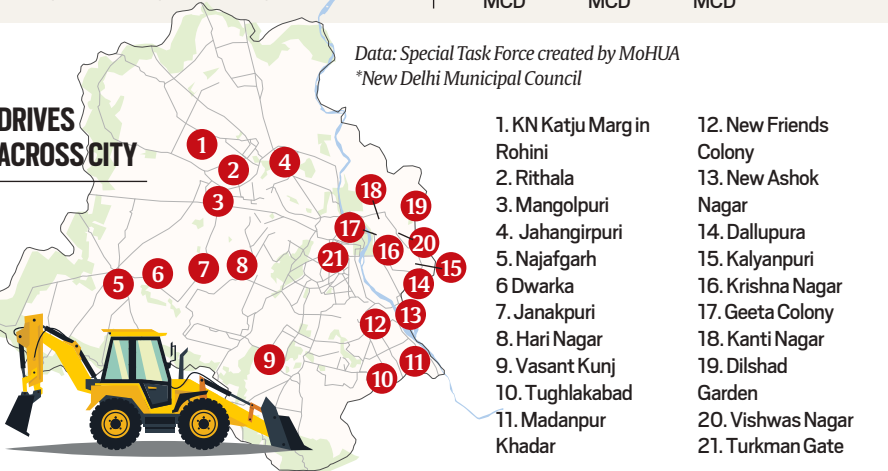
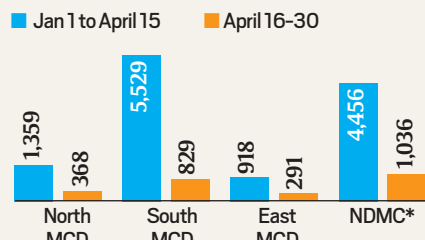
Agencies	Complaints*	Structures demolished	Sealed	Items seized
North MCD	57,346	1,628	395	1,063
South MCD	43,298	1,922	1,821	1,592
East MCD	17,245	494	367	607

(Till April 30, 2022)

LENGTH OF ROADS/STREETS/FOOTPATHS CLEARED (IN KM)



ITEMS LIFTED



Garden, Dallupura, Geeta Colony, Kanti Nagar, Mangolpuri, Najafgarh, Hari Nagar, Chaukhundi, Vasant Kunj, Raghubar Nagar, Janakpuri and Dwarka. "These drives are conducted based on feedback and the nature of complaints. Most of them are to clear the right of way; there is no pick

and choose," said a deputy commissioner in the North MCD.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, meanwhile, has asked his party MLAs to hit the ground against these drives and show their support for people.

On May 9, South MCD officials tried to carry out an anti-en-

croachment drive in Shaheen Bagh but were stopped by residents and representatives of the Congress and AAP, who protested in front of the bulldozer. Three days later at Madanpur Khadar, the civic body barricaded the street and started tearing down the walls of four under construc-

tion buildings that were allegedly being constructed illegally. Clashes broke out between locals and police and AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan was arrested. During DDA's drive in Kalyanpuri, AAP MLA Kuldeep Kumar was detained by police.

According to data from the Special Task Force constituted by the MoHUA in April 2018 to clear encroachments and unauthorised constructions in the capital, the corporations along with other government agencies have removed 4,132 encroachments till April 15. As many as 4,319 properties have been demolished while there is a pendency of 7,522 cases.

A deputy commissioner with the South MCD admitted that the drives have intensified in the past one month, but attributed it to several complaints that had piled up over the past two years due to the pandemic and inability of the civic body to act on the same.

Earlier, he said, councillors too used to resist such drives as it went against popular sentiments: "Now they themselves are taking the lead, making our work easier."

Some discontent

Not all within the BJP are enthusiastic about this. Two MPs that *The Indian Express* spoke to said the drive had started to backfire and the party should not associate itself with it as it is carried out by bureaucrats on a routine basis.

"This is not the Uttar Pradesh model. Yogi ji carries out these drives on criminals; here it is being done locally wise. While the Jahangirpuri drive was to send a message to rioters, what are we gaining by associating with the drives in Dwarka, Matiala, New Friends Colony?" said an MP.

Another senior BJP leader said, "In the past, we have confronted the MCD during the sealing drives... our MP even broke the seal of a shop. Now, it feels like we are getting carried away by the media hype... Now that the special officer (of the unified MCD) has taken charge, he should undertake a course correction and stop such drives. Or the party should make it clear that it does not back them."

Former Puducherry chief secretary Ashwani Kumar has been appointed as the Special Officer of the unified MCD, and took charge Sunday.

A senior BJP leader, who is also office bearer in the state team, said, "We should have disassociated ourselves after Jahangirpuri... or Shaheen Bagh."

The BJP has now started to slowly distance itself from the drives. Gupta said, "We back only those drives where the mafia has

encroached common land. The rest are routine exercises by the MCD and the BJP has nothing to do with it."

The AAP, meanwhile, blamed the BJP for targeting the common man. While Kejriwal said that the BJP and MCD had put the lives and livelihoods of 63 lakh people, who live in unauthorised areas, in danger, AAP leader Saurabh Bhardwaj said at a recent press conference, "The BJP is targeting the poor and middle class... It has planned encroachment drives in Saket P block, Qutub Institutional Area, Chirag Delhi — do Rohingyas live here? I stay in Chirag Delhi, where Jats and Brahmins live."

For and against

It has largely been traders, jhuggi clusters and roadside vendors who are bearing the brunt of such drives. Lakshmi, who lives in a jhuggi in Trilokpuri, said she has been living in the area for the past 10 years along with her family of six. Though the MCD has not reached the locality, the fear remains. "Yaha todenge to hum kah-jayenge (where will we go if they break our home?). My husband drives an e-rickshaw and my son lost his job during the pandemic; he worked in an office in Noida... We do not earn enough that we can pay rent."

About one-third of Delhi lives in substandard housing, which includes 695 slums and JJ clusters, 1,797 unauthorised colonies, and 362 villages. Among them, those living in slums and JJ clusters lack access to basic facilities like toilets and sewer connections.

Residents, meanwhile, said the corporation should focus on more pressing issues like sanitation. B S Vohra, who heads the East Delhi RWA Joint Front, said the corporation should widen roads rather than focusing on cosmetic actions: "Areas like Krishna Nagar see bad traffic snarls, causing pollution."

At Shaheen Bagh, Shahazad Ali, who owns a furniture shop, said the garbage in the area is rarely cleared and the corporation should focus on this. Another resident of the area, Itteshan Azmi, said these encroachments would be back in a few days: "The bigger question is how these encroachments came up in the first place."

Mayor Mukesh Suryan, however, said, "Ask people if they are relieved that encroachments have been cleared..."

A deputy commissioner in the South MCD added, "Encroachment is done by poor people, but the rich will not be spared — if their houses are on government land, they too will be demolished."

‘Patrol passage’ to come up alongside Asola Bhatti to check encroachers



According to forest officials, they have faced several incidents of encroachment and trespassing on forest land

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE DELHI government is planning to construct a 45-km-long peripheral road alongside the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary boundary, which will function as a 'patrol passage' to boost security.

According to forest officials, they have faced several incidents of encroachment and trespassing on forest land. "The sanctuary is very big and is surrounded by densely populated areas and villages such as Fatehpur Beri, Bhati Mines, Rajpur Khurd, Jaunapur, Chandan Hula, Asola Gaon among others. There are farmhouses and banquet halls in the vicinity as well. We have witnessed several incidents of encroachment and trespassing on forest land... anti-social elements also create problems at night. So, this corridor will help us in securing the area," said a senior official from the forest department.

The sanctuary is situated in the South Delhi Ridge section of the Aravalli range on the Delhi-Haryana border. It is spread over

an area of 6,784 acres and covers 32.71 sq km.

"We already have small passages for patrolling but we want to make the area more secure. The upcoming one will be a huge corridor and patrolling will be done throughout the day and night. It will be used only by forest department officials; no outside vehicles will be allowed," said the official.

Construction will be carried out by the Department of Irrigation and Flood Control (I&FC) and tenders have been floated for the project, said officials.

Officials said the passage will be a Water Bound Macadam Road, which is a type of flexible pavement in which the base and surface layer contains crushed stone or broken rock pieces. "It is suitable for a vehicle like an SUV or a jeep," said the official.

The estimated cost of the project is Rs 8.44 crore. The tendering process will be completed by June and construction will start post that. I&FC is planning to execute the construction in phases and the road will be constructed within 9-12 months, said officials.

No decision taken on excavations at Qutub Minar, says Culture Minister

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

AFTER REPORTS emerged on Sunday that the Ministry of Culture has ordered the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct excavations at the Qutub Minar in Delhi, officials in the ministry told *The Indian Express* that no such orders have been issued at present. Union Culture Minister G K Reddy also clarified: "No such decision has been taken."

Culture Secretary Govind Mohan visited the monument on Saturday, after which it was reported that the ASI has been ordered to conduct excavations to ascertain whether the UNESCO World Heritage Site was built by Qutubuddin Aibak in the 12th Century or by the Gupta Empire much earlier. The Ministry insisted it was a regular site visit by its officials and no such decision has been taken. ASI officials were not available for comment.

A few days ago, former ASI regional director Dharamveer Sharma was quoted as saying that the Qutub Minar was actually a "sun tower" built by Chandragupta Vikramaditya of the Gupta Empire in the 5th Century.

On Saturday, Mohan had spent over two hours there, along with a team of senior officials and historians, wherein var-

ious aspects pertaining to the upkeep of monuments were discussed. In light of a recent letter written by the National Monument Authority to the ASI on moving two Ganesha idols out of the complex, "owing to their disrespectful placement", the team also visited the adjoining Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, wherein the idols in question are currently placed.

A source privy to the proceedings added that the ASI has been asked to conduct the iconography of idols at Qutub Minar. It has also been recommended that visitors should be given detailed information on various Hindu and Jain idols located in the complex through appropriate signboards. Even though there has been no decision on conducting excavations, the matter did come up for consideration during the official visit, added the source.

Later, the ministry team also visited the 1,000-year-old Anang Tal lake in the vicinity, which is set to be declared a national monument by the ASI. In fact, Delhi Development Authority vice-chairman Mukesh Gupta also visited the water reservoir Saturday, announcing that the lake's cleaning up and beautification will begin as soon as next week. The DDA also plans to remove encroachments from the Anang Tal area, ministry officials said.

Culture Secretary Govind Mohan visited the monument on Saturday. *Archive*

Fuel prices slashed, auto unions demand relief for CNG too

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

A DAY after the Centre slashed excise duty on fuel prices, the rates of petrol and diesel in Delhi were reduced by Rs 8.69 per litre and Rs 7.05 per litre respectively. The new prices kicked in from 6 am on Sunday. While petrol and diesel dealers, vehicle owners and taxi associations welcomed the move, cab and autorickshaw unions were unhappy as there was no relief or subsidy on CNG.

Petrol prices in the city had crossed the Rs 100-mark (per litre) in the past few months. Till Saturday, petrol was being sold at Rs 105.45 per litre and diesel at Rs 96.71 per litre. After the reduction in prices, petrol now costs Rs 96.76, while diesel costs Rs 89.66 at Hindustan Petroleum pumps and Rs 89.62 per litre at Indian Oil and Bharat Petroleum.

"It is a huge relief for people in the transport business. The government has reduced fuel rates by almost Rs 9. Our request is to keep it this way," said Rajendra Kapoor, president, All India Motor and Goods Vehicle Association.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said slashing of excise duty will bring at least a 10% reduction on other daily goods and commodities. Praveen

Khandelwal, general secretary, CAIT, said, "The government should direct big manufacturers to reduce prices of their goods as they increase their costs in no time when fuel prices go up."

However, Rajendra Soni, president, Delhi Autorickshaw Union, said: "It is good that excise duty on petrol and diesel was reduced. But both the Centre and state government have forgotten auto-rickshaw and cab drivers who are facing difficulties due to the continuous rise in CNG prices. We held protests and the Delhi government said it will increase the fare price. But we want a 33% subsidy on CNG."

The CNG price in Delhi was Rs 75.61 per kg on Sunday and Rs 73.61 on Friday. It increased at least three times in May. On March 28, CNG price per kg was Rs 60.01. The drivers' unions, including those employed with cab aggregators, held several protests in April demanding subsidy on CNG prices. "We depend on daily earnings, but CNG rates have increased at least 15 times in the last year," said Soni.

Following the protests, the Delhi Transport Minister had constituted a 13-member committee on April 20 to revise autorickshaw and taxi fares in the capital. The panel was directed to submit a report in 30 days.

Go to Lakshadweep or face disciplinary action: MHA to six DANICS officers

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE UNION Home Ministry issued an order to six DANICS officers in Delhi to join work in Lakshadweep or face disciplinary action. The officers had been transferred to the Union Territory from Delhi last November, but had moved the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) against it.

On May 20, the CAT said it had found "no merit" in their applications to stay their transfers. It noted that while a reason for transferring officials was not

necessary, the Additional Solicitor General had informed the Tribunal that the transfer order was issued in exigencies of service/public interest. The MHA order followed the CAT order on the same date.

Issued to Sandeep Kumar Mishra, Sravan Bagaria, Shailendra Singh Parihar, Singare Ramchandra Mahadev, Nitin Kumar Jindal and Rakesh Kumar, the notice said, "The aforesaid officers are directed to immediately report to the UT of Lakshadweep and forward a copy of their joining report in Lakshadweep Administration, failing which disciplinary action

as per rules will be initiated without any further reference."

After they were issued the transfer order, the MHA sent a reminder in February this year.

In its order, the Tribunal said, "It is the settled proposition of law that a government servant cannot disobey the transfer order by not reporting at place of posting and then go to court to ventilate his grievances. It is his duty to first report for work where he is transferred and to make a representation subsequently as to what may be his personal problems, which has admittedly not been done in the instant case.

Woman falls off flyover after car hits divider, dies

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

A 45-YEAR-OLD woman died and her son was severely injured after their car rammed into a divider and crashed into a railing on Satyawati Flyover in Northwest Delhi's Ashok Vihar, police said. The woman fell off the flyover during the accident, officers added.

According to police, they received a PCR call about the incident around 5 am. Officers reached the spot and found a "badly damaged" Scorpio car.



The incident took place on Satyawati Flyover in Northwest Delhi on Sunday

The woman was identified as Poonam Bhatia, a teacher at a

private school. Her son, Vats Bhatia (21), a college student, is undergoing treatment at a hospital. Police said they were on their home to Ashok Vihar Phase 1 from Wazirabad when the accident took place.

DCP (Northwest) Usha Rangnani said, "Local staff reported that the female occupant of the car fell from the flyover. The driver, her son, was also injured. Both were rushed to Deep Chand Bandhu Hospital where the woman succumbed to injuries."

Police said a case has been registered at Bharat Nagar po-

lice station against unknown persons under IPC sections 279 (rash driving), 337 (act endangering life) and 304A (causing death by negligence).

A probe is underway and CCTV cameras are being scanned to ascertain the sequence of events and whether another vehicle was involved in the accident, police said.

No allegations have been made by the victim's family, said police. The person driving allegedly lost control of the wheel when the car first hit the divider and crashed into the railing, they said.

7 GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



LOVE FOR JAPANESE

Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar is learning Japanese these days. At an event organised to celebrate 75 years of RSS-affiliated magazines *Organiser* and *Panchjanya*, Khattar said since considerable investment is coming to his state from Japan, he thought it prudent to learn Japanese as people feel respected when spoken to in their language. Khattar said he had completed a 30-day course in the language and can greet and have small conversations with representatives of Japanese companies in their language. The Haryana CM said he always had a desire to learn different languages and had learnt Tamil way back in 1979.

TOUGH TEST

CHIEF JUSTICE of India NV Ramana has been put in a spot over an examination that allows certain advocates a monopoly to appear before the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court Bar Association shot off a letter to exempt lawyers with 10 years of practice from appearing for an exam to be an Advocate on Record. Advocates on Record are the only set of lawyers who can appear and plead before the Supreme Court. No advocate can appear unless instructed by an AoR. Currently, lawyers with a minimum of 4-year experience and 1-year training with an AoR, who has at least 10 years of experience, are eligible to take the rather tough exam. The Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association has now resolved to write to the CJI to not consider the SCBA request.

REPORT CARD

Bahujan Samaj Party MP Malook Nagar has come up with a unique idea to present his three years' report card as a parliamentarian. Nagar, who represents Bijnor constituency, has prepared a detailed account of his participation in the legislative process inside the House and political activities outside. It includes a list of 455 issues raised by him inside the House; 1,290 letters written to Central and state governments highlighting issues of public importance; and 211 public meetings held between 2019 and 2022. He circulated the report card through WhatsApp messages to people in his constituency on weekends ahead of his online live interaction with the voters on Monday.

Haryana CM does not apply his mind to any work: BJP MP

State needs Brahmin CM: Arvind Sharma

SUKHBIR SIWACH
CHANDIGARH, MAY 22

BJP LOK Sabha member Arvind Sharma, who had defeated Deepender Singh Hooda in Rohtak in the 2019 parliamentary polls, said on Sunday that Haryana needs a Chief Minister from the Brahmin community. He also called Manohar Lal Khattar a Chief Minister who "doesn't do any work by applying his own mind".

While addressing a function held by Brahmin community members in Pahrwar village of Rohtak, four-time MP Arvind Sharma said: "Fifty-six years back when Haryana was formed in 1966, Pt Bhagwat Dayal Sharma was the first CM of the state. But for how many months did he remain? - six months. *Mhare saade char sak kab dyoge bhai* (When will the remaining 4.5 years of Chief Ministership be given)? I will speak to Modi ji and Amit Shah ji... There was a time when there were Brahmin CMs in ten states



Sharma with Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar. *File*

out of 20-22 states."

The event was called to restore a piece of the land for the Brahmin community.

The event was also broadcast from Jaihind's Facebook account. Congress MLA Kuldeep Vats, JJP MLA Ram Kumar Gautam and independent MLA Balraj Kundu also participated in the event.

Sharma announced plans to organise a community programme in August-September with a target of attendance of two lakh. While talking about the post of CM in 2024, he said: "Aabki bar bhai sauda chhodna nahi hai (we won't miss the opportunity this time)."

Gujarat to appeal against trial court orders to recover relief amount in 3 SC/ST Act cases

State govt goes against opinion of its own legal department, says no provision to take back relief

PARIMAL DABHI
GANDHINAGAR, MAY 22

THE GUJARAT government has decided to go against the opinion of its legal department and appeal against the judgments of a special trial court in Banaskantha ordering authorities to recover compensation that had been paid to some Dalits under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The special trial court had, in separate judgments, acquitted the accused in three cases of charges under the Act, and or-

dered the state authorities to recover the compensation paid to the Dalit complainants or victims. It had directed contempt of court proceedings if its orders were not complied with.

However, the state government has decided to appeal against the same in the Gujarat High Court, overruling an opinion by its legal department, in "public interest". A decision in this regard was taken recently by Social Justice & Empowerment Minister Pradip Parmar, and approved by the office of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel.

The legal department has ap-

pointed Advocate General to represent the state's case before the High Court, given the sensitivity of the matter.

Confirming the same, Parmar told *The Indian Express*: "I decided that we must appeal against the orders of the trial court since there is no provision in the (Atrocity) Act to recover the compensation already paid to a person. The CM was also positive in the matter."

Earlier, the ministry had written to the legal department to file an appeal before the High Court against the trial court orders of 2021, but the latter had

decided against the same. In August 2020, *The Indian Express* had reported the legal department's refusal to appeal against trial court orders of 2019 as well.

Since the Atrocity Act is a Central Act, the Social Justice & Empowerment Ministry also sought guidance from the Union government on the matter. However, sources said, it did not get any response.

Sources said Parmar then decided to go ahead with moving an appeal against the trial court orders. As rules mandate that the CM give his consent in such "rare" instances, this was taken.

The three cases at the heart of the matter were registered in Banaskantha district. One case relates to a monetary dispute, in which the complainant had charged the accused with making casteist slurs and beating him.

In the second case, a Dalit woman had accused an upper caste man of beating up her husband, who worked as a labourer in his field, and abusing him on caste lines.

The third case pertained to a fight between two upper caste juveniles and a Dalit Class 12 student.

Assam: Day after mob sets police station ablaze, houses of accused demolished

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, MAY 22

AUTHORITIES IN Assam's Nagaon district Sunday demolished the homes of five families that were allegedly involved in setting fire to a police station the previous day.

A mob of about 40 people from Salonabari village had set fire to a part of the Batadrava police station in Dhing circle Saturday afternoon over the death of Safikul Islam, a local fish-seller, after he was taken into custody.

A special investigation team (SIT) has been set up to probe the mob attack. The district administration, meanwhile, ordered a judicial probe into the death. Police suspended the officer in-charge of the Batadrava police station, 6 km away from the village.

On Sunday morning, bulldozers reached the village and demolished the "illegal" homes of "those

who were involved in setting fire to the police station", police officers said.

"There were about 40 people in the mob. We have identified and arrested eight... and 15 have been detained," Assam Special DGP (law and order) G P Singh told *The Indian Express*. A woman and a minor are among those picked up. Singh claimed that the demolished homes belonged to "illegal settlers". "They have settled on the land illegally or with forged documents," he said, adding that the demolition was wrapped up in the morning itself.

"Everything is under control now," he said. "We have ordered an independent probe into the alleged custodial death, and if any officer is found guilty, we will take strong action. But such an allegation does not mean you set fire to a police station."

He added that video footage was being analysed to identify the



A bulldozer demolishes a house in Nagaon Sunday. *ANI*

others involved. Asked if the home-owners were sent a notice about the demolition, Singh said notices fell under the jurisdiction of the district administration.

The Indian Express reached out to Nagaon DC Nisarg Hivare but his phone was switched off.

However, another district official, who did not wish to be iden-

tified, said they had not received any written communication or instruction from the office of the DC regarding the demolition, and that no notice was sent from the circle office to the village.

Speaking to the Press on Sunday evening, Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma said the incident was a reflection of the "dangerous" times the people of Assam were living in. "A police station was burnt down. Till our government is in power, we will not pardon such crimes," he said.

He said a lot of land in Batadrava was under "illegal occupation". "I have directed the district administration to identify such areas. We will take action — either through eviction or other laws — against any element trying to disturb the peace."

The circumstances preceding the death of Islam, who was picked up Friday night on a complaint of being "drunk", are con-

tested. According to a statement from the office of the Assam DGP, Islam was released and handed over to his wife on Saturday morning. "His wife even gave him some water/food. Later he complained of sickness and he was taken to two hospitals, one after another. Unfortunately he was declared dead," it said.

Family members of Islam alleged that police demanded Rs 10,000 and a duck as a bribe for his release. A villager said, Islam's wife and neice visited the police station with a duck on Friday night, but was asked to arrange money by the police. "When they returned the next morning, they found he was unwell and took him to the dispensary nearby. The case was referred to the civil hospital but he died on the way," said the resident.

Special DGP Singh said he had advised the Nagaon SP to probe if those accused had links with banned terror or jihadi outfits.

Shutting madrassas, bringing UCC is for benefit of Muslims: Himanta at RSS event

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

RAHUL GANDHI is indirectly encouraging secessionist elements by calling India a Union of states and anyone who shuts down madrassas and talks about the Uniform Civil Code is, in fact, a friend of Indian Muslims, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Sunday.

"If India is a Union of states, what about the 5,000 years of rich history? When Congress called itself Indian National Congress and held meetings across India, did it mean it as a Union of states? By calling it a Union of states, Rahul Gandhi is



Assam CM at the event to mark 75 years of *Organiser* and *Panchjanya*

speaking of breaking up the country. Indirectly he is encouraging secessionist sentiments. It is no different from what ULFA says, only the language used may be different," Sarma said at an event in Delhi commemorating

75 years of RSS-linked magazines *Panchjanya* and *Organiser*.

Speaking at an event in London Saturday, Gandhi had said India is a Union of states as described in the Constitution.

Sarma said betraying the Gandhi family is viewed as betraying the nation in Congress, while in the BJP, the nation is above the party.

The Assam CM, who initiated a move to shut down government-funded madrassas in the state, said the word madrassa should go extinct if Muslims are to progress in education. "If you want to teach religion, you do that at home. In schools, you learn science, mathematics..."

Targeting AIMIM chief

Asaduddin Owaisi, Sarma said that shutting of madrassas and implementing Uniform Civil Code would be for the benefit of Muslims. "We don't have to do this for Hindutva. Those who shut down madrassas and implement Uniform Civil Code, Indian Muslims should call them their friend, and Owaisi their enemy," he said.

Sarma was speaking on a day when authorities demolished houses of people allegedly involved in torching a police station. He said the episode happened in one of the 12 districts where Indians (*Bharat ke moolniwas*) are in a minority and migrants are a majority.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com



SHAH IN ARUNACHAL

Home Minister Amit Shah with Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu at a rally in Namsai district. Shah said the people of the state are filled with patriotism and greet each other with 'Jai Hind' instead of the usual 'Namaste'. *PTI*

Cong balancing act on Perarivalan: Silence on Stalin meeting, opposition to verdict

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

WHEN THE Congress officially opposed the release of A G Perarivalan — who has served over 30 years in jail in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case — earlier this week, it raised many eyebrows as the members of the Gandhi family had in the past made statements suggesting that they have forgiven the killers of Rajiv.

And when the DMK welcomed Perarivalan's release, with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin hugging him, many in the Congress were reminded of 1997. Back then, the party withdrew support to the United Front government led by I K Gujral over his refusal to drop DMK from his cabinet after the Jain Commission which investigated the conspiracy angle of the assassination, in its interim report, indicted the DMK.

The Congress's silence over Stalin's warm welcome to Perarivalan is telling. The DMK and Stalin are now closer to the Congress than ever before.

Its opposition to Perarivalan's



Stalin with Perarivalan after the release verdict

release despite the Gandhi family's contrary stand is deliberate positioning. Congress leaders say the party has to take "institutional" positions on such issues. They argue that the family can pardon Rajiv's killers — they respect that — but the party's position on combating terror and release of those convicted in terrorism related crimes is different. There is no contradiction or incongruity, they say. A party leader said: "We cannot pick and choose according to our likes and dislikes. It is a party position. There is no contradiction. The family has a personal view. The party has a view. They also understand that."

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com



At the site of the December 2019 encounter. *File*

ian at Chattanpally in Shadnagar on the outskirts of Hyderabad on November 27, 2019.

The Telangana government, which was under pressure from to bring the alleged rapists to instant justice in the rape and murder, did not condemn the alleged encounter killing.

While the Cyberabad Police was then hailed for the alleged encounter, senior minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav had said that the police action could not have happened without the sup-

port of the government.

Sources say if the government is forced to act against the policemen allegedly involved in the December 6, 2019, encounter, it may throw open the door for litigation in other encounters cases too.

For instance, the killing on April 7, 2015, of five persons allegedly associated with SIMI and other radical organisations near Pemburti.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

RS polls near, suspense in JD(U) over renomination of RCP Singh

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, MAY 22

IN THE run-up to next month's elections to five Rajya Sabha seats in Bihar, the JD(U), which is set to win one seat, faces a dilemma over renominating Union Minister Ramchandra Prasad Singh.

Singh, who was the national party chief before becoming the Steel Minister, is a divisive figure within the party. The JD(U) has left it up to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to take a call on his renomination.

A JD(U) source said: "Since there had been subtle posturing from RCP Singh himself and



Nitish Kumar and RCP Singh

some senior leaders reacting to it, Nitish Kumar is the only competent person to take the final decision on the matter."

The top leadership of the JD(U) had reportedly been upset with Singh for having become a Union Minister when he was national president of the party. Munger MP

Rajiv Ranjan Singh later took over as JD(U) national chief.

"Nitish Kumar is caught in a piquant situation. If he renominates RCP, it may displease not just Rajiv Ranjan Singh but a large part of the party cadre. RCP has little hold in party organisation as only three of his 32 candidates could win 2020 Assembly polls. And if RCP is not renominated, he will lose his ministerial berth in six months," said a JD(U) leader.

The elections to the five Rajya Sabha seats are scheduled for June 10.

In a House of 243, BJP has 77 MLAs followed by RJD's 76 and JD (U)'s 45 legislators. This means BJP and RJD will get two seats each and JD(U) one.

8 EXPRESS NETWORK

UGC to tweak draft regulations on learning outcomes

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE UNIVERSITY Grants Commission (UGC) has decided to tweak the draft regulations which, once approved, will define the learning outcomes associated with each level of qualification in higher education and enable transfer of credits between institutions and courses.

UGC chairperson Prof M Jagadeesh Kumar told *The Indian Express* on Sunday that the commission decided to revise the draft regulations, which were put out in public domain in January, to ensure parity with guidelines that govern technical education in the country.

Put simply, the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF), which is being revised, defines what a learner is expected to know upon completion of a course, ranging from certificate programmes to PhDs.

The draft NHEQF initially arranged the qualifications at a scale of five to 10. "However, the above is not in tune with the NSQF in which the levels are organised from 4.5 to 8..." Kumar said.

The UGC will hold a series of meetings with the heads of universities from May 25 to communicate the plan to revise the draft, Prof Kumar added.

10 lakh apply for CUET; BHU, DU, Allahabad univ big draws

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

OVER 10 LAKH candidates have registered to take the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for undergraduate courses, the application window for which closed on Sunday, with Delhi University, BHU and Allahabad University emerging as the top draws.

With each candidate allowed to take up to nine papers, 46 lakh applications have been made so far, with students from Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan accounting for a bulk of the registrations.

As many as 44 central universities, 12 state universities, 11 deemed universities and 19 private universities will take in undergraduate students through CUET in the 2022-23 academic sessions. The dates for the test have not yet been announced.

Among Central universities, DU leads the chart with over 6 lakh applications, followed by Banaras Hindu University (BHU) with 3.94 applications and Allahabad University with 2.31 lakh applications. Lucknow-based Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University trails

EXPLAINED A new platform

CUET, PROPOSED in the NEP 2020, provides a single platform for students to pick multiple courses and universities. The test scores will be used by many universities for UG admissions.

closely behind with 1.49 lakh applications.

Jamia Millia Islamia University, which had initially expressed reservations over adopting CUET, has also attracted 1.21 lakh applications. The institution is carrying out admissions to 10 of its undergraduate programmes through the common entrance. The government had initially told Jamia and Aligarh Muslim University that admissions to all UG courses need to be carried out through CUET, but later allowed the institutions to use it for selected programmes only.

Jawaharlal Nehru University, which is more popular for its postgraduate degree courses and advanced research, has received 57,000 applications. And

in line with the trend seen during the initial days after the application window was opened on April 6, at 3.3 lakh, the maximum number of registrations have come from Uttar Pradesh.

UP is followed by Delhi (1.5 lakh registrations), Bihar (83,672), Haryana (69,349), Madhya Pradesh (62,394), Rajasthan (48,016). Among the southern states, Kerala accounts for 40,476 applications, followed by Tamil Nadu with 16,590 applications.

Last month, the Tamil Nadu Assembly had adopted a resolution against CUET, prompting Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to write to the state government, saying there is "no case for infringing upon the rights of the states and Union Territories" through the test.

The numbers also reflect the popularity of DU among students in the Northeast, a region which lacks an adequate number of high quality higher education institutions, forcing students to migrate to other parts of the country.

For instance, there have been 17,613 registrations from Meghalaya, a state with a population of around 26 lakh, as op-

posed to only 5,739 from Karnataka.

"The geographical spread of the applications will be more even from next year. Actually much depends on the success of this year's edition of the entrance. Registrations will also increase as the exams will be held twice a year from next year," an official said.

The government had on May 19 exempted eight Central Universities in the Northeast and one in Uttarakhand from conducting the CUET, attributing the decision to "operational difficulties".

Among state universities, the Delhi government-run Ambedkar University has emerged as the most popular, drawing over 1.28 lakh applications, followed by UP's Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University with 97,376 applications. The Meerut-based IIMT received 1.37 applications, becoming the top draw among private universities.

Last year, around 9.39 lakh candidates had taken the JEE (Mains) for admission to undergraduate engineering programmes, while around 15.4 had taken the medical entrance NEET.

Assam NRC head Sarma is no stranger to controversy

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, MAY 22

ASSAM'S NATIONAL Register of Citizens (NRC) may be in a limbo but the issue continues to set off rows, which was again manifested recently when state NRC coordinator Hitesh Dev Sarma filed a police complaint against his predecessor Prateek Hajela. Sarma's complaint reflected his long-standing grouse against the NRC that was completed under Hajela's supervision in August 2019. Sarma has repeatedly claimed that this NRC is "anomalies-ridden".

In his complaint lodged with the police last Thursday, Sarma seemed to have gone a step further, alleging that Hajela had deliberately introduced errors in the NRC and thus "endangered national security". Opposing the August 2019 NRC, he has even filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court seeking its re-verification.

In another controversial move, Sarma had, in April, written to Assam's Foreigners Tribunals (FTs) — quasi-judicial bodies that decide on matters on nationality — instructing them not to rely on the "erroneous NRC" while adjudicating cases. An FT member wrote back, asking him not to "inter-



NRC chief Hitesh Dev Sarma

fer" in its work.

Sarma's tenure as the Assam NRC head has been marked by multiple controversies. He was appointed to the post by the BJP-led state government in November 2019 after the apex court ordered that Hajela be transferred out of Assam to Madhya Pradesh. Although the court did not explicitly state a reason for its order, it stated, "Can an order be without any basis?" After Sarma's appointment, his old social media posts, which were alleged to be communally-biased, surfaced.

Subsequently, state Congress MP Abdul Khaleque wrote to then Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, urging him to reconsider Sarma's appointment. Khaleque stated that Sarma was neither "unbiased nor trustworthy", citing his Facebook posts. The All-Assam Minorities Students' Union (AAMSU) also flayed his appointment to the crucial position.

EXPLAINED

General of India telling the state NRC coordinator to do so, leaving those rejected in a limbo. Without the rejection slips, they cannot approach the FTs to make their case of being Indians.

Earlier, Sarma had done another stint with the NRC office. From 2014 to 2017, he had served as an executive director of an NRC project led by Hajela, but had quit for "personal reasons" saying he was "not mentally as well as physically fit" to work in the project.

Assam teacher held for criticising govt gets bail

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, MAY 22

HOURS AFTER he was arrested, a 51-year-old college teacher was Saturday bailed out by a local court in Assam's Hailakandi district.

Jamir Ahmed Choudhury, an Associate Professor at the SS College, was booked for allegedly sending emails to officials "criticising government policies" and using "unparliamentary language" against the state's chief minister and education minister, police said.

"These emails were sent to the District Superintendent of Police as well as the Deputy Commissioner. We brought him in for questioning and booked him the following day. However, the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate granted him bail the same day," said a senior Hailakandi police of-

ficial, adding that the probe would continue. The police said that Choudhury headed the philosophy department in the college. "In his emails, he criticised the country's education system, saying it was 'misleading' the youth, and used unparliamentary language while referring to the chief minister," said the officer.

A suo motu case against the teacher was registered on Friday and he was booked under several sections of the IPC, including 153 A (promoting enmity between different groups and acts prejudicial to harmony), 294 (A) (uttering obscene words) as well as 83(2), Justice Juvenile Act (using children for illegal activities).

Amalendu Bhattacharjee, Principal, SS College said that Choudhury was called for questioning on Thursday.

The Indian Express reached out to Choudhury but his phone was switched off.



ASSAM FLOODS: IAF EVACUATION

IAF personnel evacuate people from the flood-affected areas in Assam on Sunday. Nearly 7.2 lakh people across 22 districts have been impacted by floods caused due to heavy pre-monsoon rain in the state, officials said. PTI

Varanasi district court to hear Gyanvapi case today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
VARANASI, MAY 22

THE VARANASI district court of judge Ajaya Krishna Vishvesha on Monday will hear the civil suit on the Gyanvapi mosque-Kashi Viswanath temple complex dispute after the Supreme Court on Friday ordered the transfer of the pending proceedings to the District Judge, Varanasi, for "trial and all interlocutory and ancillary proceedings".

Underlining the "complexity of the issues involved in the civil suit" earlier pending before the Civil Judge (Senior Division), Varanasi, the top court on Friday had said that the suit "should be tried before a senior and experienced judicial officer of the Uttar

Pradesh Higher Judicial Service".

Following the apex court's order, all documents and files related to the case, including the reports of advocate commissioners and case-related applications, were transferred from the office of the Civil Judge (Senior Division) to the office of the District Judge on Saturday. Both the offices are located in the same building.

"The hearing will begin in the court of the district judge on Monday... It is up to the district judge to decide at what point he starts the hearing. It would depend on the urgency and the importance of various issues," said a well-placed source.

Earlier, Civil Judge (Senior Division), Ravi Kumar Diwaker had listed the matter for hearing on May 23.

Technology for good of humanity, it shouldn't shape us: Ram Madhav

LIZ MATHEW
BANGALORE, MAY 22

WITH TECHNOLOGY growing beyond the "redlines", there has to be an intervention to contain it for the longer good of humanity and today India can play that role for the world, RSS leader and member of the governing council of the India Foundation, Ram Madhav, said on Sunday.

Madhav, at the concluding session of the three-day India Ideas Conclave, said the topic for the conference — Meta 2.0 — was chosen to change the discourse and ensure that a debate that's not religion or who would go to heaven or hell is changed in order to make sure that India does



RSS leader Ram Madhav

not miss another era of technology like it did in the past.

"Some people have to go through hell. Hitlers cannot be going to heaven irrespective of which religion he follows," he said, adding that everyone has to accept other's religion.

Madhav said technology has more intelligence than the humans but it doesn't have the heart, and the intervention of humans is necessary. He pointed out that the philosophers had always intervened when the hu-

man history took different turns to give the "religions and polity" a better form.

"We created technology but today we are having this concern that this technology could shape us...we know that it needs to be contained...we need to create an institution or a structure to make sure that the technology does not shape us...and cross the redlines," Madhav said, addressing the conclave organised by India Foundation, a think tank working closely with the BJP and RSS.

RSS joint general secretary CR Mukunda said technology that can be added to the sense of balance or dharma that India has followed since the ancient times can make the nation play a key role in the times to come.

state governments to implement a similar cut", Rajan said that "the union government didn't inform, let alone ask for any state's view" when they increased union taxes on fuel, citing a total increase of Rs 23 per litre for petrol and Rs 29 per litre for diesel since 2014. "Now, after rolling back ~50% of their increases, they are exhorting states to cut. Is this federalism?" Rajan tweeted.

On Sunday, a statement issued by Rajan's office said "It is heartening to note that the Union Government has finally heeded to the repeated requests of the Tamil Nadu government to reduce the taxes on petrol and diesel..."

Even before the Union Government had first reduced its taxes on petrol and diesel in November 2021, the DMK government had cut the VAT on Petrol, in August 2021, the statement added.

Gehlot's seven in agencies' crosshairs — from son and brother to close aides

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, MAY 22

FROM HIS family members to close aides to crisis managers, a number of those close to Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot are increasingly finding themselves in a spot either of their own making or allegedly due to their proximity with the Congress CM.

The latest cases in this regard involves minister Mahesh Joshi and party leader Mahendra Choudhary. Delhi Police is looking for Joshi's son Rohit in an alleged rape case, while latter's brother has been arrested in connection with a salt trader's murder.

As the Rajasthan Congress

gears up for the Assembly elections, slated for December 2023, these developments seem to have triggered apprehensions among some party leaders that they might be "caught in the net" of various agencies, especially the central agencies, who, they fear, may pursue the cases against them more aggressively in the run-up to the polls.

The BJP, however, hit out at the CM for "resorting to baseless allegations" that "democracy and constitutional bodies are in danger and ED, CBI are being misused". The Rajasthan BJP's chief spokesperson and MLA Ramlal Sharma said, "Ashok Gehlot has two laws. One is the Indian Penal Code, which he doesn't want to follow, and the other is Gehlot

Penal Code, where he reaches a conclusion without investigation and gives a clean chit...to all those close to him..."

A look at seven people, close to the CM who have been in the crosshairs of various agencies but have not been arrested so far:

DHARMENDRA RATHORE

During the 2020 crisis, the IT raids were conducted in the offices and properties of Dharmendra Rathore, one of Gehlot's close aides. In February this year, Rathore was appointed as the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation chairman.

MAHESH JOSHI

During the 2020 crisis, Joshi was

Gehlot's man Friday, which among other factors led to his elevation as a cabinet minister in 2021. Last year, Joshi too was summoned by Delhi Police in connection with Shekhawat's FIR, but he skipped it.

Recently, an FIR was lodged against his son Rohit in an alleged rape case. He is absconding. Meanwhile, he has also filed a petition in the HC to quash the FIR, claiming that their relationship was "consensual" and that she was "blackmailing" him.

RAJIV ARORA

Former Rajasthan Congress vice president, Rajiv Arora, founder

and owner of Amrapali Jewels, also faced IT raids during the 2020 crisis. A Congress veteran, he was among the founding members of the NSUI in Rajasthan. He is currently the Rajasthan Small Industries Corporation chairman.

VAIBHAV GEHLOT

CM's son Vaibhav Gehlot's name cropped up when during the July 2020 crisis the IT department searched nine offices of two firms — Mayank Sharma Enterprises (MSE) and Om Kothari Group. MSE belongs to the family of Ratan Kant Sharma, who had in March 2011 acquired 50 per cent

shares in Sunlight Car Rentals Private Ltd, a company floated by Vaibhav, and remained its shareholder till March 2016. In March 2022, Vaibhav was booked for an alleged fraud of Rs 6.80 crore. However, the complainant later dropped the case against him.

LOKESH SHARMA

Sharma faces an FIR filed by Union minister Gajendra Singh, in connection with which Delhi Police has issued summons to him about half a dozen times since last year. *The Indian Express* had reported in March 2021 that the government had accepted that phones were tapped during the July 2020 crisis. Defending the CM's OSD against the Opposition's allegation that he had prepared and circulated the

voice clips, parliamentary affairs minister Shanti Dhariwal, during a debate in the Assembly, had said, "If Lokesh Sharma gets something and forwards it on a WhatsApp group, what sin has he committed? Don't you do it too?...You say he made it viral, why shouldn't he make it viral?...". Days later, Shekhawat lodged an FIR against Sharma and others. Sharma has appeared twice for questioning. On May 14, he told police that he forwarded the clips to media persons "in the interest of the state".

MAHENDRA CHOUDHARY

Mahendra Choudhary was in the news recently after being named in the murder of a salt trader Jaipal Poonia in Nagaur. The FIR

was filed by Poonia's wife Sarita. Choudhary's brother Moti Singh is among five persons arrested so far. Claiming innocence, Choudhary has deplored Poonia's murder.

AGRASEN GEHLOT

During the July 2020 political crisis, the ED conducted countrywide raids, including the premises of the CM's brother Agrasen Gehlot in connection with an alleged fertiliser scam. The ED officials searched multiple properties of his firm, Anupam Krishi. However, sources close to Agrasen said the law was not violated by his company but by firms which bought fertiliser from it, and Agrasen had no knowledge of it.



New Delhi



EXPRESS NETWORK

DAY BEFORE ROWING FINAL, 2 KOLKATA BOYS WENT FOR PRACTICE ROUND, DIDN'T RETURN

‘Squall, rain came suddenly, when they were mid-water’

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, MAY 22

THE TWO Kolkata boys had dreamt of lifting the Cup on Sunday.

Pushan Sadhukhan and Souryadeep Chatterjee, both 14, had made the cut in the semifinals on Saturday of the inter-school regatta final organised by the Bengal Rowing Club (BRC). The two had then opted for a round of practice in Rabindra Sarobar at 3 pm in “good weather”.

What happened next was what no one ever imagined would happen.

“From around 3.30 pm, the skies started to turn grey. But it wasn’t bad. The squall and rain came suddenly, when they were in mid-water,” Arijit Nandy, two years their senior at South Point

school and an eyewitness to the tragedy that unfolded, told *The Indian Express*.

“The wind speed was vicious, and there was a stiff current. There were other boats also and everybody started to come back. Unfortunately, their boat overturned. It had five people, including an experienced cox (the rower who steers the boat) who tried his best. He saved two rowers but couldn’t save Pushan and Souryadeep. Maybe, their hands were ripped clean off the boat,” said Nandy, who was competing in the senior boys section.

The two students were from the city’s Lake Club, where they had cut their teeth in rowing. According to Lake Club joint secretary Debu Datta, six-seven boats capsized and the rowers were brought back to the club. When they found two of them missing, a search operation



Image posted on Facebook by South Point High School in tribute to the two students

started. Around 7.40 pm, the Kolkata Police’s disaster management team managed to pull the two out of the lake and take them to SSKM Hospital. They were declared “brought dead”.

Pushan was in Class IX, Souryadeep in Class X. Both were south Kolkata residents — from Santoshpur and Raja Basanta Roy Road, respectively — and “good swimmers” but couldn’t

negotiate the 90kmph storm and the choppy lake.

“They were good students, too. Very enthusiastic about sports. We are trying to build our rowing team, and they were the most junior members, very active. We all are very upset,” South Point principal Rupa Sanyal Bhattacharjee told *The Indian Express*. The school issued a statement, condoling the death of its students. “We appeal to the authorities to consider reviewing the safety standards for rowers,” it said.

School trustee Krishna Damani told *The Indian Express* that usually, “follow speedboats” accompany the rowers and act during emergencies at most rowing venues. But Calcutta Rowing Club secretary Chandan Roy Chowdhury said intervention by activists had put an end to this practice at Rabindra Sarobar, which is shared by all

rowing clubs in the city.

“We call the rescue speedboats ‘follow boats’ and they mandatorily accompany the rowers everywhere in India. What has happened here is that a few self-styled environmentalists were constantly writing to the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority to stop the use of speedboats to prevent water pollution and safeguard fish. We received an order from the Authority on May 18 that speedboats could no longer be used,” Chowdhury said.

“Rowing started here in 1928 and for the first time, such a tragic incident has happened. We are devastated.”

According to those who knew the two students, rowing was a passion for Pushan and Souryadeep. But in the end, that extra practice session proved to be fatal.

ANOTHER BOREWELL TRAGEDY IN PUNJAB

Six-year-old boy falls down 95 feet, loses life after struggling for 9 hrs

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA
JALANDHAR, MAY 22

NINE HOURS at a depth of 95 feet — that is what it took to snuff out the life of a six-year-old boy who fell into a borewell around 9 am on Sunday.

The incident happened at Khosla Balanda village under Dasuya sub-division of Hoshiarpur district. The victim, Hritik, was playing in a field. Suddenly, a pack of stray dogs appeared on the scene. To save himself from the canines, he climbed a borewell shaft, which was around 2.5 feet over the earth. The shaft was covered with a jute bag and when the boy sat on it, he slipped into the borewell.

The district administration immediately swung into action after getting information. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Army were called in and they launched a rescue operation. A JCB machine was pressed into service to dig up a tunnel towards the borewell so that the boy could be pulled out. Volunteers from Sangrur district too came forward to help in the rescue operation.

After a struggle of nine hours, the boy, who had fallen upside



During the rescue operation at Khosla Balanda village under Dasuya sub-division of Hoshiarpur district on Sunday. Express

down, was pulled out but he could not survive. He was immediately rushed to hospital where he was put on life-saving support to revive him but doctors declared him dead. The doctors said that he died due to asphyxiation.

The parents of the boy, who are migrant labourers, were not around when the boy fell into the borewell. Later, his mother Vimla Devi was brought to the rescue operation site and was asked to talk to her son so that he could hear her voice and feel some relief. He had two brothers and two sisters.

Hoshiarpur Deputy Commissioner Sandeep Hans, who had been at the spot since morning, said: “It is unfortunate. We tried our best to pull him out but the boy was stuck at a depth of 95 feet. We called NDRF and Army teams for the rescue operation.” He added that high-flow oxygen was supplied into the well and through camera they saw the boy was lying in a semi-conscious condition.

The government announced a grant of Rs 2 lakh to the family of the boy.

A post-mortem examination was yet to take place.

In Rajasthan’s urban job scheme, planting trees to cleaning ponds

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, MAY 22

FROM TREE plantation, cleaning ponds and lakes, conserving heritage to collecting garbage from door to door and segregating it and catching stray animals, the Rajasthan government has come up with the job description under its much-touted Indira Gandhi Shehri Rozgar Guarantee Yojana.

Announcing the employment scheme for urban areas on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA for rural areas, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, in his budget speech this February, had said that Covid has impacted the

livelihood of the common man. “While MGNREGA assisted people in rural areas, there is no such scheme for street vendors, as well as those working at dhabas and restaurants in urban areas,” he had said, announcing the scheme as “the largest urban employment guarantee scheme in the country”.

Under this scheme, employment will be provided for up to 100 days in a year, and the state government will bear an additional expense of Rs 800 crore on this. Mainly, the labour-based works have been included and the same will be prioritised. Moreover, the ratio of cost of material to payment for labour

Arjun Singh returns to TMC, jolt to Bengal BJP

Says BJP losing ground in Bengal, party calls exit ‘huge loss’

SWEETY KUMARI
KOLKATA, MAY 22

DAYS AFTER criticising the Central government over its jute policy, BJP MP from Barrackpore, Arjun Singh, on Sunday returned to the Trinamool Congress (TMC). Singh’s return to the TMC nearly three years after he had left the party ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections is yet another blow to the BJP in West Bengal, plagued by the exit of several MLAs and leaders since its defeat in the last year’s Assembly elections in the state. The BJP also conceded that Singh leaving the party was a huge loss for them. “What can we say if someone wants to do politics for their personal benefit. But it’s a huge loss (to the party),” BJP national secretary Anupam Hazra said.

Addressing a press conference after joining the ruling TMC in the presence of its national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee at his Camac Street office in Kolkata, the Barrackpore MP said, “The way TMC is working on the development of Bengal is worth appreciating. I am from the jute mill area where people have been suffering due to the Centre’s unjust jute policies.”

The BJP is losing ground in the state because its politics is limited to air-conditioned rooms and social media, he claimed. “The BJP as an organisation is limited to Facebook. It is not possible to do politics only on Facebook. Ground politics is important in Bengal. I am back in the party as I was facing problems working for the development of the people of Bengal,” he added.

On holding the MP’s post as a BJP member, he said, “Two TMC MPs who joined the BJP should first resign from the post first. If they do, I too will resign. If the party asks me, I will resign in a minute.”

Abhishek Banerjee said on Twitter, “Extending a warm welcome to Arjun Singh who rejected the divisive forces...”

Singh has been targeting the Centre, claiming that it was neglecting the jute industry of West Bengal. He had even threatened to hit the streets if the issue of jute price capping was not resolved. The Jute Commissioner had revoked the decision to cap the prices of jute.



TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee welcomes Arjun Singh in Kolkata on Sunday. Twitter/@AITCOfficial

Sulking BJP ‘strongman’ now back in TMC camp

ATRI MITRA & SWEETY KUMARI
KOLKATA, MAY 22

ENDING DAYS of speculation, BJP vice-president and the party’s Barrackpore MP Arjun Singh joined the Trinamool Congress on Sunday — the latest in a long list of BJP leaders to return to the Mamata Banerjee-led party.

Singh is among the biggest leaders to return to the TMC.

Within a month of the TMC’s landslide victory in the Assembly election, Mamata’s lieutenant Mukul Roy resigned from the BJP and joined his old party in the presence of the TMC leadership. He was followed by Rajib Banerjee, Joyprakash Majumder, Babul Supriyo, among many others. However, according to a senior TMC leader, Singh’s homecoming can only be compared to Mukul Roy’s in scale.

“TMC suffered the most when Mukul Roy, Arjun Singh and Shuvendu Adhikari left the party. Mukul has already returned and Arjun joined today. So, it’s a big gain for the TMC and a huge, huge setback for the BJP,” the leader said.

Singh’s family originally hails from Siwan of Bihar, a connec-

tion that helped him build the TMC organisation in the industrial belt of North 24 Parganas, where most of the voters are Hindi-speaking migrants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

In 2001, he became TMC MLA from Bhatpara and three more wins from the seat followed.

In March 2019, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Singh resigned as TMC MLA and joined the party. His exit proved to be a setback for the TMC, which lost

its organisation in the Barrackpore industrial belt and the larger North 24 Parganas that year. Singh defeated TMC’s Dinesh Trivedi to be elected BJP MP from Barrackpore.

Seen as a ‘strongman’, Singh has a string of criminal cases against him, including on charges of corruption, attempt to murder, fraud and rioting. Though Singh was summoned by the state CID and police in many of these cases, he wasn’t arrested. All the cases are under investigation.

Over the last few months, Singh has been openly critical of the new BJP leadership in the state, with sources saying he felt sidelined under Sukanta Majumdar, the new state party chief.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

CANCELLED VISIT TO AYODHYA OVER ‘TRAP’, SAYS RAJ THACKERAY

Pune: Two days after calling off his proposed Ayodhya visit, MNS chief Raj Thackeray on Sunday alleged that he was forced to do so in view of a “trap” being laid for him and his workers ahead of the election season in Maharashtra.

Addressing a rally in Pune, Thackeray said: “Those who were rattled by my announcement to visit Ayodhya were planning to lay out a trap...”

“...it was said I would not be allowed to enter Ayodhya... I got information from Mumbai, Delhi, and even UP... People were telling me what is happening. Then I realised this was a trap... all this had a Maharashtra link,” he claimed.

AAP-Twenty20 to not back any front in Kerala bypolls

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 22

THE PEOPLE’s Welfare Alliance (PWA), a newly floated political front of Twenty20 and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), on Sunday announced that PWA would not back any political party or front in the upcoming by-election at Thrikkakara assembly constituency.

Last week, Twenty20, the CSR wing of the garment major KITEX Group, and AAP decided for a new political alliance.

Twenty20 chief co-ordinator and KITEX Group MD, Sabu M Jacob told media that the

PWA has decided not to give support for any party in the by-election.

“The outcome of this by-election is not going to make any impact in the state. But we urge our party workers to exercise their votes after evaluating the present political scenario. The decision is left to the people,” said Sabu, who was flanked by AAP state convener P C Cyniac.

Twenty20 had pocketed 13, 800 votes in the Thrikkakara assembly seat during the 2021 elections. The bypoll was necessitated due to the demise of sitting MLA and senior Congress leader P T Thomas. The election is on May 31 and the counting is on June 3.

A political message wrapped in hyperbole: Tripura minister compares Biplab to Tagore, Gandhi, Einstein, raises eyebrows

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, MAY 22

A WEEK after Biplab Kumar Deb stepped down as Chief Minister of Tripura, making way for Manik Saha, state Law Minister Ratan Lal Nath stirred the still simmering political pot by comparing the former CM with Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and Albert Einstein, among others.

Speaking at an event at Kamalpur, 93 km from the Agartala, on Friday, Nath, who is known to be a close associate of Deb since before the BJP came to power in Tripura in 2018, said, “Of

the 50 years of my political career, I’ve been MLA for 29 years, been in politics for 20 more. I’ve seen everyone from Sachindra Lal Singh (first CM of Tripura)... I have seen them all... Biplab Deb is what you can call the people’s leader. He is an exception. He has given the state a new direction, a new dream,” Nath said.

And then, there was more: “There is a reason why people are born where they are born... for example, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Vivekananda in our country or Einstein... not everyone is born everywhere. It’s good for Tripura that Biplab Kumar Deb was born here.”

While the clearly hyperbolic



Deb’s removal as CM hasn’t gone down well with a number of BJP members

remarks raised eyebrows considering the sudden removal of Deb as CM hasn’t gone down well with a number of BJP lead-

ers and workers, the party leadership has so far been guarded in its response to Nath’s comments.

Asked for his reaction, Chief Minister Saha said Saturday: “Of course, there is no scope to disregard Biplab Deb’s contributions. I think it would be proper to ask him (Nath) about it.”

Several Tripura BJP leaders, still to come to terms with the suddenness of Deb’s removal, said his contribution towards bringing the BJP to power in Tripura can’t be ignored.

“He was instrumental in ending 25 years of Left Front rule,” said a leader while refusing to comment on why Nath compared Deb to Tagore, Gandhi and Vivekananda.

Sources said Nath’s comments could be aimed at sending out a larger message to the central leadership of the party. While the BJP leadership has insisted that Deb was replaced as CM to allow him more time to work for the organisation and prepare for the 2023 polls, the reason for his removal is still contested, especially since Deb hasn’t yet been given any political charge.

Sources said Nath, 71, was probably trying to build a hyper-real narrative to boost Deb’s political prospects given that the former CM doesn’t have a clear role yet. They also said Nath’s flattery was probably aimed at exerting pressure on the new CM. Opposition parties have been

quick to react to Nath’s comments. Sudip Roy Barman, who after stints in the Trinamool Congress and BJP is now back in the Congress, termed Nath’s comments “insane”.

CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chaudhary said Deb’s tenure as CM was replete with violence, economic crises, and shortage of work and food in villages. “To compare him with Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda or Einstein is ridiculous...”

TMC leaders said Nath’s comments were mere “flattery”. Amid the criticism, Nath, however, has stood his ground and said he didn’t need to take lessons from people who don’t agree with the great leaders of India.

Tour of Duty: Army’s inclusive plan for new recruits likely to be ready by month end

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE ARMY is finalising the finer details of the Tour of Duty plan, which is planned to replace the existing structure of joining the force. Sources aware of the details told *The Indian Express* that the final structure of the programme could be ready as early as by May end.

Once the Army approves the plan, it will be up to the government to announce and implement it. Defence officials are hopeful that the government will give a go ahead soon as no new recruitment has taken place for two years.

There is a vacancy of more than 1 lakh Junior Commissioned Officers of Other Ranks in the Army at the moment, according to data shared by the Defence Ministry with Parliament on March 28. It also noted that while more than 90 recruitment rallies each were held in 2017, 2018 and 2019, only 47 were held in 2020-2021, and just four in 2021-2022, due to the pandemic.

Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt stated that “all recruitment rallies by Army Recruiting Offices (AROs)/Zonal Recruiting Offices (ZROs) stand suspended due to COVID-19 pandemic”. The suspension of recruitment in the armed forces has become a major concern among the youth. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was even confronted by angry youth at some of his rallies in the run-up

to the UP Assembly elections earlier this year.

While initially planned as a three-year Tour of Duty, the final structure could make it for four to five years, as one-year training and two-year service after that, it was felt, was too short a time period. At the moment jawans retire after 17 years of service.

Unlike the current structure, where soldiers are inducted into the regiments based on their caste and the region where they come from, an inheritance of the days of the British empire, the new structure will make it pan-India and independent of the caste.

There are regiments like Rajputana, Jat, Sikh, Jammu and Kashmir, Madras etc, which have officers from all across the country, but the soldiers largely come from their respective regions and for some regiments, they belong to just a particular caste. Some regiments have soldiers from more than one region, though.

The new Tour of Duty system will slowly remove such barriers, allowing any applicant from any part of the country to be able to join the Army.

The Tour of Duty is also expected to reduce the Army’s pension burden, as the country has a large population of retired servicemen. For the current fiscal, the government has allocated nearly Rs 1.2 lakh crore for pensions for the Defence Ministry and the armed forces, which is about a quarter of the total defence budget and larger than the capital acquisition allocation. **FULL REPORT ON**
www.indianexpress.com



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BALANCE AND CHECK

In Gyanvapi-Kashi Vishwanath case, the apex court needs to say more to underline the primacy of the Constitution

A DAY AFTER the Supreme Court allowed namaz to continue at the Gyanvapi mosque and ordered securing the site where the Shivling is claimed to have been found, it transferred the case from the senior civil judge to the district judge arguing that the issue needed a more “seasoned hand”. Then the court suggested that the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 doesn’t bar ascertaining its nature. This attempt by the court, ostensibly to “heal” and to balance competing claims in the Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque dispute, raises questions.

Transferring the case to a senior judge, the court acknowledged “the complexity of the issues involved” in the case. This is reminiscent of the court’s decision in the Ayodhya-Ramjanmabhoomi dispute where the civil suits were clubbed and transferred from lower courts directly to the Allahabad High Court. Short-circuiting due process is a slippery slope, especially in cases where “complexity” is as much about the law as it’s about politics. Leading the three-judge bench, Justice D Y Chandrachud remarked, in the form of a question to the parties, that the 1991 law may not bar “ascertaining” the nature of the place of worship even when it bars conversion of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947. Surely, the bench is aware that “ascertainment” in this case is not a mere intellectual inquiry, an academic expedition by diligent history students. The plea explicitly calls for access to worship — in Mathura, one even calls for demolition of the mosque — and, outside the courtroom, the lawsuits are framed by politics, faith, and a disdain of Constitutional norms. The court’s remark also contradicts its own unanimous verdict, that included Justice Chandrachud, which drew the curtains on the Ayodhya case. The SC held that the 1991 Act is “a legislative instrument designed to protect the secular features of the Indian polity, which is one of the basic features of the Constitution”. It also emphasised that the law preserves non-retrogression, “a foundational feature of the fundamental constitutional principles of which secularism is a core component”.

Just days ago, the Centre told the Supreme Court, in the sedition hearing, that the Prime Minister has repeatedly expressed his “unequivocal” views on “Constitutionally cherished freedoms”, that he has underlined one of India’s strengths as the “diverse thought streams that beautifully flourish”. The petitions in Kashi and Mathura challenge this very strength. Their final goal is the conversion of the religious character of these places in the name of “correcting historical mistakes.” The Supreme Court itself has said that independence from colonial rule furnishes a Constitutional basis for healing injustices of the past. The question is how will the Court put this idea into effect. It may need to do more, to say more, than the “balance” it has tried to strike so far.

WELCOME RELIEF

Fuel tax cuts will help ease price pressures, but inflation is likely to remain elevated

ON SATURDAY, THE Union government announced a reduction in the excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 8 per litre and Rs 6 per litre respectively. Alongside, the government also reduced the customs duty on raw materials and intermediaries for plastic products and iron and steel. Undoubtedly, these decisions are driven by the desire to cool the surge in inflation — recent data showed that retail inflation had risen to an eight-year high of 7.9 per cent in April, while wholesale inflation has been in double digits for 13 consecutive months. But, implicit in these decisions is also the acknowledgement that both fiscal and monetary policies are needed at this juncture to curb inflation. As per some analysts the cut in fuel taxes could help reduce inflation directly by around 20 basis points in June when its full impact will be visible. The second-round effects are likely to be equally strong.

This is the second time in the recent past that the Centre has cut fuel taxes. In November last year, the Centre had lowered the excise duty on petrol by Rs 5 and by Rs 10 on diesel. Back then, 21 states and some Union Territories had followed suit, cutting the VAT. If state governments follow suit this time also, the relief could be higher. Prior to this cut, taxes imposed by the Centre and states accounted for almost 43 per cent of the retail selling price of petrol. But with the latest cut, the government has brought the excise duty back to pre-pandemic levels. As per the finance minister, the reduction in excise duty will lower the government’s revenue by around Rs 1 lakh crore. However, it is possible that this loss in revenue is offset in part by higher collections through other sources. As per some analysts, the government’s tax revenues will exceed budget estimates by around Rs 1.3 lakh crore, even after this cut.

While this decision will have a moderating influence on price pressures in the economy, the worry is that inflation has become entrenched. As per projections by analysts, inflation is likely to remain above the RBI’s inflation targeting framework. To tackle this surge in inflation, analysts had, prior to this move, expected the monetary policy committee (MPC) to raise rates aggressively over the course of the next few meetings. The MPC, in its next meeting which is scheduled a few weeks from now, must not only release an updated forecast for inflation, but also shed some clarity on the extent of monetary tightening it envisages, and over what duration to bring inflation in line with its target.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



AMITABH MATTOO

AS ANTHONY ALBANESE is sworn in as Australia’s 31st Prime Minister, he will be conscious of the deep electoral angst against traditional politics and a groundswell in support for a contemporary avatar of Australia’s own “Aam Aadmi” politics: The Teal independents, a motley group brought together primarily by the lack of mainstream urgency to act against climate change.

But the alacrity with which the PM has acted to ensure that he and his Foreign Minister Penny Wong attend the Quad summit in Tokyo on Tuesday, should reassure those concerned about the future direction of Canberra’s foreign policy under a Labor government. At a moment of profound domestic churning, Australia’s foreign policy is unlikely to swing, especially under the charge of the wise and incisive Wong. This holds true, particularly of the near-consensus in Canberra about the importance of India and of improving bilateral relations.

After nearly a decade in opposition, Labor has come back to government. But that victory disguises the rise of a new force in Australian politics, the Teal independents and the fall in support for the Coalition (Liberals and Nationals) and for Labor, with a marginal increase in the standing of the Greens. The Teal independents, mostly women, are not connected organisationally except through the Teal colour (a blue-green that they used in the campaign) and financial support from an advocacy group — Climate 200.

The Teal independents have won at least nine seats; most of them, the safest blue-chip Liberal seats. Consider this: Kew, where my family has lived for the last decade, is part of the Kooyong constituency and a bastion of the Liberal Party ever since Robert Menzies, Australia’s longest-serving PM, occupied the seat in 1934. The incumbent, Josh Frydenberg, was the Treasurer in the Scott Morrison government and most saw him becoming PM one day. Frydenberg has been defeated by a rookie in politics, Monique Ryan — one of the Teals. Ryan, a well-regarded doctor, ran an electrifying campaign with hundreds of volunteers who campaigned door-to-door on just three planks — action on climate change; transparency and integrity

The new Labor government has signalled a commitment to the Quad, relations with India

in politics; and safety for women.

Climate 200 was set up as a “community crowd-funded initiative” by Simon Holmes à Court, a political activist and clean energy investor (and son of Australia’s first billionaire) that supported political candidates committed to a science-based response to the climate crisis; restoring integrity to politics, and advancing gender equity. The group backed 23 “Teal” candidates across the country, including the journalist Zoe Daniel in Goldstein and Allegra Sponder in Wentworth, who defeated the Indian-origin Dave Sharma (a former diplomat who had served as Australia’s Ambassador to Israel).

Climate 200 has a deep resonance with sections of conservative Liberal voters who are concerned about the end of a “lifestyle” because of climate change. As Australia’s best-known novelist Richard Flanagan wrote last year: “Australia today is ground zero for the climate catastrophe. Its glorious Great Barrier Reef is dying, its world-heritage rain forests are burning, its giant kelp forests have largely vanished, numerous towns have run out of water or are about to, and now the vast continent is burning on a scale never before seen.”

Not surprisingly Climate 200 managed to raise over \$10 million, amidst concerns about the degree of control it would have over the Teals and suggestions of a conflict of interest with Holmes à Court’s clean energy business.

When Albanese arrives in Tokyo to meet with other leaders of the Quad, much will be expected of him. The leaders will seek reassurance that Australia is still as committed to the Quad as the previous Liberal government. For the Australian PM, this will be a moment to demonstrate that he is different from his predecessor, but equally committed to the multi-lateral arrangement and to the bilateral relations that have been fostered over the last decade, including with India.

To be sure, Albanese is not Scott Morrison. Morrison was flamboyant, with a background in marketing. He had headed Tourism Australia and presided over perhaps the most controversial campaign video ever launched to promote Australia tourism: “So, where the bloody hell are you?”

In contrast, Albanese has a low-profile presence and a workman-like attitude and is given to a considered rather than a brilliant spontaneous response on most issues. Remember that Albanese was a child of deprivation rather than privilege. He was brought up by a single mother who suffered dreadfully because of rheumatoid arthritis while living in council housing in Sydney. Success did not come easily to him, but whether in the party or the government, he was seen as a coalition builder having the skills and patience to generate a consensus.

Although he has roots in the left-wing of the Labor Party (in his youth he identified with the struggles of the African National Congress against apartheid and the campaigns for nuclear disarmament — both have a resonance in India) he is a pragmatic leader who understands that Australia faces today a deeply volatile situation in the region and beyond.

One of the most animated moments in the electoral campaign was when Morrison suggested that Albanese was soft on China. Albanese responded by describing the PM’s words as an outrageous slur. This was after he had questioned the government on its failures over not doing enough to prevent the Solomon Islands from signing a controversial security deal with China.

Albanese is fortunate to have the brilliant and charismatic Wong as his Foreign Minister. Wong, who has been part of the Australia India Leadership Dialogue which I chaired in the past, genuinely believes in the importance of Australia’s partnership with India and has often referred to the fact that it was under the Labor Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, that the policies to reach out to India were first initiated (including overturning the ban on uranium exports to India).

One of the tired clichés about Australia is drawn from Donald Horne’s book *The Lucky Country*, which suggested that Australia was a lucky country run by second rate leaders. In contrast, by all evidence, the Albanese cabinet is one gifted with outstanding leaders, and hopefully luck will continue to be on its side.

The writer is professor at JNU & honorary professor at the University of Melbourne

AN EXCEPTIONAL JUSTICE

Perarivalan’s release highlights the gaps, callousness in India’s criminal justice system



ANUP SURENDRANATH AND ADRIJA GHOSH

THE SUPREME COURT’S May 18 order releasing A G Perarivalan, one of the convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, is the culmination of a long-drawn-out battle for freedom spanning over 31 years. Perarivalan’s agonising wait may have ended, but his struggle serves as a grim reminder of the several failures of our criminal justice system.

The fact that it took over 31 years for Perarivalan’s release despite strong concerns of wrongful prosecution and wrongful conviction ought to worry us. Perarivalan’s case forces us to reckon with the tyrannical legacy of terror laws and the broader crisis that plagues criminal justice administration. The case against Perarivalan, charged under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) and the Indian Penal Code (IPC), was that he had participated in the conspiracy to assassinate former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by supplying batteries for the belt bomb allegedly used for the assassination, with the knowledge that the batteries would be put to said use. The main evidence against him was a confession made to this effect to CBI officer, V Thiagarajan. Such confessions to the police, ordinarily inadmissible under the Indian Evidence Act, were admissible under the TADA.

In 2017, 18 years after the Supreme Court upheld Perarivalan’s conviction under IPC provisions, using the confession recorded under TADA (despite the TADA charges having been dropped), Thiagarajan submitted a sworn affidavit before the SC stating that he had omitted the exculpatory part of Perarivalan’s statement, denying knowledge of the use to which

the batteries would be put. This reveals the violent reality of our criminal justice system — that statements and evidence are manipulated to secure convictions. It also demonstrates the dangers of conferring extraordinary police powers under the garb of national security legislation. Again, in 2017, Justice KT Thomas, one of the three SC judges who had upheld Perarivalan’s conviction, acknowledged “serious flaws” in the CBI investigation.

For nearly half of his 31 years in prison, Perarivalan lived under the sentence of death. The SC confirmed the death sentence imposed by the TADA Court in ignorance of the Bachan Singh framework, which requires circumstances relating to both the crime and the criminal to be considered. Justice KT Thomas later expressed doubts as to whether such severe punishment would have been imposed, had it not been such a high-profile case. Nevertheless, in what must be seen as a triumph of the human spirit, Perarivalan’s educational attainments in prison are extraordinary. Life in prison, especially on death row, is one of despair; a reality that we can barely begin to imagine.

Perarivalan’s death sentence was finally commuted to life imprisonment by the SC in 2014, after almost 16 years on death row, on grounds of an extraordinary and unexplainable delay of 11 years, after which his mercy plea was rejected by the President. In 2015, Perarivalan filed a mercy petition before the Tamil Nadu governor under Article 161 of the Constitution, seeking pardon. For years, there was sustained back and forth between the state government in Tamil Nadu and the Centre

on which one of them had the authority to decide Perarivalan’s release. In 2018, the council of ministers of the Tamil Nadu government recommended to the governor that Perarivalan be released in the exercise of constitutional powers of clemency; advice that the governor was constitutionally obligated to follow. Despite this, the governor took no decision on the mercy petition and finally in 2021, forwarded the same to the President for his decision under Article 72. Holding that this was done without constitutional backing, the SC invoked its extraordinary powers under Article 142, releasing Perarivalan and deeming his sentence as having been served.

The manner in which Perarivalan and his mother Arputhammal ensured that their fight stayed alive for over three decades demonstrates the enormous effort required to correct an injustice in our system. Their efforts ensured that the case received national attention, that Perarivalan’s cause was backed by political parties in Tamil Nadu with strong support from the bar, civil society, and retired judges — all of these aspects are stories of exceptions rather than the norm. Perarivalan might have rightfully won his freedom back, but the same fate does not await others like him.

The passage of time has allowed us to look at the questions of injustice in this case in a far more meaningful way. It now is a question of whether we as a society have the courage to acknowledge what was inflicted in our name.

The writers are with Project 39A at National Law University, Delhi

MAY 23, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

BAHUGUNA SURE TO WIN
H N BAHUGUNA, chairman of the Democratic Socialist Party romped home in the elections to Garhwal Lok Sabha seat defeating his Congress (I)-rival Chandra Mohan Singh, minister of state for hill development, in one of the prestigious by-elections. According to provisional figures available at the state headquarters, Bahuguna led his Congress (I) rival by over 20,000 votes. Postal results are yet to be counted and the results are likely to be declared in a day. Bahuguna was elected from the Congress (I) in a victory with a big margin over his Janata Party rival in the Lok Sabha polls. However, the seven-month

honeymoon with the Congress (I) came to an abrupt end on the eve of the elections to the assembly elections to the Garhwal assembly constituency. Bahuguna’s men won from all the constituencies making him desert the Congress (I) and seek reelection.

REVERSES FOR CONG (I)
THE CONGRESS (I) has failed to secure a majority in Haryana and is facing a similar predicament in Himachal, the Left Front has romped home with a two-thirds majority in West Bengal. With the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress (I) bagging 28 and 29 seats respectively in the 65-member

Himachal Assembly, the poll in this hilly state, as also in Haryana, is in a stalemate. In Himachal much will depend on the six independents, four of whom are ex-Congress (I) members.

BRITISH FRIGATE SUNK
A BRITISH FRIGATE was sunk in Argentine air raids on the British task force landing troops on the Falkland Islands. Twenty crewmen were missing and feared dead and 40 were injured aboard the frigate MMS Ardent. The 3,300 tonne frigate was the second warship lost by Britain in the seven old crisis caused by Argentina’s occupation of the South Atlantic colony.

The carbon footprint cost

Rice and sugar are water guzzlers. Serious thought must be given to making our exports sustainable



BY RITIKA JUNEJA AND ASHOK GULATI

IN THE FISCAL year 2021-22 (FY22), agri-exports scaled an all-time high of \$50.3 billion, registering a growth of 20 per cent over the preceding year. This was made possible largely by rising global commodity prices, but also by the favourable and aggressive export policy of the Ministry of Commerce and its various export promotion agencies like APEDA, MPEDA, and commodity boards. However, from a strategic point of view, an important question that arises is how sustainable is this growth in agri-exports, given India's resource endowments and the country's domestic needs? Already, we have seen a sudden ban on wheat exports. To answer this question rationally, let us first look at the composition of agri-exports.

Among the several agri-commodities exported in FY22, rice ranks first with exports of \$9.6 billion in value (with 21.2 million metric tonnes (MMT) in quantity). It is followed by marine products worth \$7.7 billion (1.4 MMT), sugar worth \$4.6 billion (10.4 MMT), spices worth \$3.9 billion (1.4 MMT) and bovine (buffalo) meat worth \$3.3 billion (1.18 MMT) (see figure). Of these, two commodities, rice and sugar, are water guzzlers and serious thought should be given to their global competitiveness and environmental sustainability.

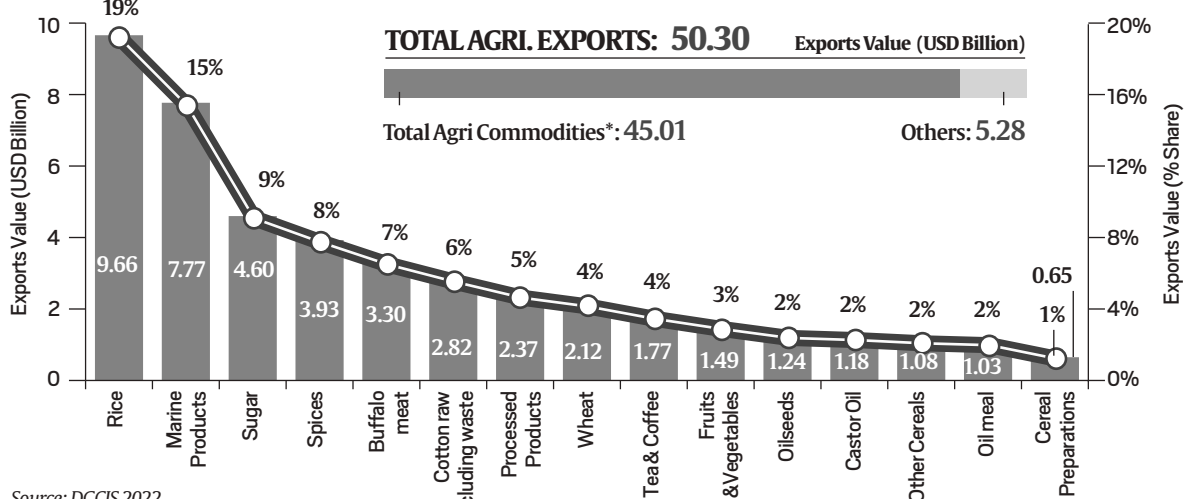
Let's take the case of rice first. India's exports of 21 MMT constituted 41 per cent of a global rice market of 51.3 MMT. Interestingly, when most of the other commodity prices were surging in global markets, the price of rice (Thailand supplies 25 per cent) collapsed by about 13 per cent from \$484/tonne in April 2021 to \$429/tonne in April 2022, largely due to India's massive exports. This means that India had to export a greater quantity of rice to get the same amount of dollars. Is this in the country's economic interest? In trade theory, it is a classic case for levying the optimal export tax of 5 to 10 per cent. India should optimally not go beyond 12 to 15 MMT of rice exports, else the marginal revenue from exports will keep falling. And that won't be in India's interest.

Another concern in the case of rice is that a substantial part of its global competitiveness comes from highly subsidised water, power and fertilisers that go into its production. It is well known that one kg of rice requires about 3,000 to 5,000 litres of water for irrigation, depending on the topography. Taking an average of about 4,000 litres of water per kg of rice, and assuming that half of this percolates into groundwater, exporting 21 MMT of rice would mean the virtual export of 42 billion cubic meters (m3) of water!

Sugar is another water guzzler, whose exports touched 10.4 MMT in FY22. It was backed partly by subsidies (including export subsidy) that crossed the 10 per cent limit mandated by the World Trade Organisation, bringing India into a dispute with other sugar exporting countries at the WTO. India lost the case. But rising global prices of sugar



EXPORTED AGRI COMMODITIES FY2022*



Source: DGCIIS 2022

TOTAL AGRI. EXPORTS: 50.30
Total Agri Commodities*: 45.01
Others: 5.28

Illustration: C R Sasikumar; Graphics: Ritesh Kumar

rice (DSR) that can save up to 25-30 per cent water and micro-irrigation that can save up to 50 per cent irrigation water, could be game-changing technologies in reducing the crop's carbon footprint. However, the real solution lies in incentivising the farmers to switch some of the area under rice and sugar cultivation to other, less water-guzzling crops. Haryana has come up with two schemes, Mera Pani, Meri Virasat and Kheti Khaali, Fir Bhi Khushali. Under the first scheme, Rs 7,000/acre incentive is given to farmers to switch from paddy to alternate crops, while under the second scheme farmers get Rs 7,000/acre even if they do not grow any crop during the kharif season.

A closer evaluation of non-basmati rice exports brings out another interesting fact. The unit value of these exports was just \$354/tonne, which is below the MSP of rice (\$390/tonne). How does that happen? One possibility is that a substantial part of the supplies through the PDS and PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) are leaking out and swelling rice exports. From a policy angle, it may be high time to introduce the option of direct cash transfers in lieu of almost free grains under the PDS and PMGKAY. This will help plug leakages as well as save costs. The savings can then be used for better diversification of our food systems, better use of scarce water and other practices that lower GHG emissions, and saving on burgeoning food and fertiliser subsidies. Can the Modi government make agri-exports more sustainable? Only time will tell.

Juneja is Consultant and Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor at ICRIR



RAJSHREE CHANDRA

SINCE 2010, INDIANS have spent nearly 3 million hours in prison on charges of sedition. An accused is most likely to spend up to 50 days in prison until a trial court grants bail and up to 200 days until a high court does so. The exhaustive database of *Article 14* (corroborated by the NCRB data) reveals that more than 13,000 Indians are trapped in a black hole since 2010.

It is time, therefore, that the sedition law (IPC, Section 124 A) is consigned to the bin. However, as we wait with bated expectation after the Supreme Court order (to keep the 152-year old sedition law in abeyance), and after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's willingness to reconsider the colonial law in the spirit of *Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*, a cautionary check is in order.

There are reasons to be sceptical. Not too long back, the BJP had attacked the Congress for its 2019 election promise to do away with dark laws like the AFSPA and sedition. Calling the Congress manifesto a "document of Pakistan's conspiracies", PM Modi accused the Congress of hatching a conspiracy to destabilise the country and "demoralise" its soldiers. One could, of course, argue that election speeches are not reliable indicators of intent. But the zeal of the ruling regime in criminalising dissent is a matter of record. The *Article 14* archive reveals that 2,862 citizens were charged with sedition during the anti-CAA protests; 133 farmers (and representatives)

It's about criminalising dissent

Doing away with sedition without touching UAPA will not bring much change

during the farm protests of 2021; 42 persons after the Pulwama attack, and 59 journalists for reportage on the farm bills, Covid-19, Hathras gang rape, citizenship and for being critical of the government were charged with sedition in the last seven years. There has been a 28 per cent increase in the number of sedition cases filed each year after 2014.

It is this track record that makes one suspicious of the government's intent. But perhaps there's a change of heart, a change of tack. Sceptic reasoning ought to make as much room for doubt as for a promise. In either case, my argument is that any move to remove sedition is imperative, but by itself, it's only a half-measure and a half-hearted measure. As long as the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) is untouched, dissent will continue to be criminalised. The government will claim moral victory but nothing really will change in substance. Here are two reasons why.

First, the sedition law under Section 124 A is a part of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) where along with penal provisions, there are safeguards and constitutional remedies. Bail is easier, there is provision for anticipatory bail, police have to file a charge sheet within 90 days, failing which the accused arrested is entitled to bail, and so on. These safeguards are not available to those charged under UAPA. As an anti-terror law, it has more stringent provisions and far fewer safeguards. For instance, UAPA permits detention without a charge

sheet for upto 180 days, creates a presumption of guilt, places the burden of proof on the accused and creates a strong presumption against bail.

In April, a single-judge bench of the Allahabad High Court granted bail to three Kashmiri students accused of shouting pro-Pakistan slogans in a T-20 cricket match. Justice Ajay Bhanot remarked eloquently: "The unity of India is not made of bamboo reeds which will bend to the passing winds of empty slogans...the foundations of our nation are more enduring." In contrast, especially after the SC's Watali judgment (2019), bail has become a virtual impossibility for the UAPA accused. The numerous bail rejections for the Bhima Koregaon and Delhi riots accused is a case in point.

Second, let's just look at the conviction rate of the sedition law. Arrests under sedition law may have risen but the conviction rate is as low as 2.25 per cent. Of the 399 cases that were registered between 2014-20, just nine were convicted. The ministry of home affairs data further reveals that of the cases registered, charge sheets were filed only in 169 cases. This tells us that the sedition law is not a very effective tool for incarceration.

The UAPA is a better bet. The conviction rate is higher. NCRB data reveals that between 2014-2020, 27.5 per cent of the cases saw convictions. But what is more damning is that very few cases even reach the stage where inno-

cence or guilt is proven. In the seven-year period, of the 6,900 cases, only 4.5 per cent of the cases sent for trial reached the stage of completion. And we are not yet talking of cases that languish in protracted pre-trial and trial period. 95.4 per cent cases were still pending trial at the end of each year between 2014-2020.

Many of those charged under sedition are also slapped with charges under the UAPA — Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, Tahir Hussain, Khalid Saifi, Siddique Kapkan to name a few. For all the attention the sedition law has received, it is the UAPA that does the heavy lifting.

It is expected that after the SC interim order, those imprisoned under the sedition law are likely to get immediate bail. However, retired Justice Manmohan Singh is, reportedly, of the view that this may not be the case for those charged with the draconian UAPA. He rightly says that the "UAPA contains many aspects of the sedition law with far-reaching consequences".

Civil liberties stand precariously poised in India today. The removal of the sedition law makes a dent, but it will be small and ineffective if the road-roller of civil liberties — the UAPA — remains untouched. We can celebrate the sedition law's much-awaited demise, but let's not miss the wood for the trees.

The writer teaches political science at Janki Devi Memorial College, DU

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"While its collapsing economy is as much a product of its corrupt politics as of global economic trends, Sri Lanka is also a worrying bellwether for the instability elsewhere that may be triggered by declining economic security in countries with high levels of poverty."
—THE OBSERVER

A civilisational question in Gyanvapi

Top-down secularism can't be saved by mocking Hindu beliefs, demonising Hindus and ridiculing their concerns and aspirations



ABHINAV PRAKASH SINGH

NANDI'S ETERNAL WAIT at Gyanvapi is symbolic of the sorrow, perseverance and hope of a civilisation. The hope is not only for the restoration of deities to their rightful places and the rebirth of temples but also for an end to the denialism and delusion that has plagued the Indian polity for too long. Kashi is an open and shut case like Mathura and many other places. There is no real controversy over the fact that these mosques were built after the destruction of the temples by medieval Islamic warlords. The only "controversy" is the manufactured political rhetoric, academic obfuscation and chicanery joined by Islamist religious supremacism. The Islamist claim over Hindu sites occupied by force and violence is untenable, unethical, and, like in the case of Ayodhya, illegal.

But Islamist supremacism and aggression are being provided intellectual cover by the usual suspects on the left and liberal spectrum. This has been a trend since the 1920s. The Kashi case is portrayed as a conflict between religious obstructionism and modernity, and appeals are being made to reject the past to build an enlightened secular future. This argument is both conceptually and theoretically flawed. First, it's about truth and justice and not modernity or obstructionism. Second, it assumes that there is some standard model of modernity or universal values like secularism, and the only task is to impose them forcefully. Third, it assumes that the past is dead, and a cut-off date of August 15, 1947, can decide between the old and new.

It is a liberal delusion that past, present and future are disjointed. But the past continues to shape the present and future. And no society can be detached from its past and unique trajectory. Ignoring the complex social formations and inter-community relations that evolved over centuries can only lead to disasters, as demonstrated repeatedly across the world. And Hindus and Muslims share a tumultuous past that has never been openly acknowledged. There has never been an honest Hindu-Muslim dialogue despite them not agreeing on the big questions of the day as a political community. No amount of academic jugglery and intervention can alter the ground realities.

The obsessive appeals to secularism have no legitimacy when it is always deployed in the service of the Islamic cause and is never used to challenge the Islamist agenda.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOR DIGNITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Unworkable' (IE, May 21). The recommendation of the PM's Economic Advisory Council to launch an urban equivalent of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act deserves serious attention. Urban unemployment is higher than rural, and though income levels are also higher, so is the cost of living. Though urban employment is not seasonal, it is sporadic, and the current trend of contract employment aggravates the problem. An employment guarantee could mitigate many hardships that the urban poor face and prevent reverse migration to rural areas, as so sadly seen during the pandemic. Above all, as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act shows, guaranteed employment enables the poor to live with a modicum of dignity. Some states such as Kerala, Odisha and Rajasthan have seen the merit in an urban guaranteed employment scheme and it is time the nation too considers adopting it. The benefits will far outweigh the costs.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

BIASED CENTRE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The business of federalism' (IE, May 21). The writer has lucidly explained how the Centre can motivate the states to compete and cooperate to create a win-win situation required for the country's development. This is because the competitive spirit in federalism goads states to try each other for far-reaching reforms. Similarly, these states can join hands for the synergy required for undertaking innovative projects. The problem surfaces when the party ruling at the Centre does not get well

Secularism is also an uncomfortable fit outside Western Europe and America, whose unique experiences gave birth to it. There is growing evidence of the crisis of secularism across the world. It is not the fault of those societies or people not being secular enough. It is due to unrealistic expectations from societies whose historical experiences, evolution and intellectual traditions are in dissonance with secularism. India has no word for secularism in any classical language because the concept or idea never existed. India managed its unparalleled diversity and pluralism using its own framework.

Secularism comes under great stress when dealing with the presence of two Abrahamic religions in a polity. And it becomes a harbinger of discord and conflict when other non-Abrahamic religions are also present because it privileges expansionist Abrahamic religions over others. The doctrine of the "basic structure" is itself a violation of the basic structure of the constitution because the Constitution envisioned no such arbitrary doctrine or gave effective veto power to an unelected judiciary.

The appeal to the Place of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 may still have some legitimacy if not for the violent anti-farm laws protests and open rioting to oppose CAA supported by those now appealing to the sanctity of the legislation passed by Parliament. The 1991 Act is draconian. It was passed without any consultation with or regard for the affected communities, bars judicial review, mandates an arbitrary retrospective cut-off date, and closes the constitutional and legal route to justice for an entire community.

Then there is the argument to protect the post-1947 social and political compact with its socialist-secular core. Such nostalgic arguments mistakenly assume that the old system is worth saving, that it had popular legitimacy and that it can be saved. It produced only misery and regular riots. It could neither produce economic growth, social upliftment or cultural rejuvenation. It was always a top-down imposition by an ultra-minority of urban elites and collapsed as democratic deepening accelerated after the '80s. It can't be saved, not least due to the utter incompetence of its champions, busy mocking Hindu beliefs, demonising Hindus and ridiculing their concerns and civilisational aspirations. They are trying to do to Shiva what they did to Rama and Ayodhya for decades. They clearly do not understand Shaivism or the undercurrents and faultlines at work.

The way forward is to accept the burden of the past and restore the Hindu sites — the only ethical thing to do. A grand bargain, something which should have been done in Ayodhya in the 1980s itself.

The writer is National Vice-President, BJYM

with opposition parties ruling in states. They face problems in getting their share even in the much-touted federal tax, the Good and Services Tax. Apparently, this situation prevents these states from undertaking reforms and other welfare schemes. Unfortunately, the dwarfed NITI Aayog, the forerunner of the all-powerful Planning Commission often hesitates to come to their rescue when faced with such discriminatory situations.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

LAW NEEDED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A regressive exception' (IE, May 20). The marital rape issue in India revolves around the basis of the institution of marriage. Post marriage, women are considered something similar to property possession as Hindu customs have termed it kanyadaan. Legislation regarding the crime is needed though such deliberations would take time. The judiciary may need to step in temporarily.

H Upadhyay, via email

NOT IN OUR STARS

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Our languages soul of Bharatiyata... some are trying to poison: PM' (IE, May 21). Prime Minister Narendra Modi while addressing the Bharatiya Janata Party national office-bearers spoke about the virtues and sacredness of every Indian language and connected it with Indianness. However, he overlooked the recent spate of speeches that were full of hate and bigotry targeted against Muslims. Nonetheless, he blamed the rival political parties for "trying to divert the nation's focus from major issues".

LR Murmu, Delhi

TOP OF THE WORLD



At a polling station in Bangkok, Sunday. AP

THAILAND

Bangkok votes for governor 1st time since coup

VOTERS IN the Thai capital headed to the polls Sunday to elect a new governor in a contest delayed by a military coup that still reflects a divided country with main candidates either supported by the conservative establishment or the liberal opposition. A record 31 candidates entered the race, but the battle being watched most closely is between two who registered as independents. The candidates campaigned on issues including congestion, pollution and persistent flooding. AP

IRAN

Revolutionary Guard colonel shot dead

A SENIOR member of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard was killed outside his home in Tehran on Sunday by unidentified gunmen on a motorbike, state TV reported. Although the Guard gave only scant detail about the attack that occurred in broad daylight in the heart of Iran's capital, the group blamed the killing on "global arrogance," typically code for the United States and Israel. The two assailants shot Col. Hassan Sayad Khodayari five times in his unarmoured Iranian-made Kia Pride, state media said. AP

FRANCE

New minister for the disabled accused of rape

DAMIEN ABAD, France's newly appointed minister for Solidarity and the Disabled, has denied he raped two women, following accusations published on Sunday by the Mediapart website in an article based on interviews with the women. The women quoted by Mediapart said Abad had forced them to have unwanted sexual relationships with him in late 2010 and early 2011, they said. "I contest with the greatest force these accusations of sexual violence," he said in a statement. "The sexual relations I have had throughout my life have always been by mutual consent." REUTERS

ZELENSKY SEEMS TOUGH SANCTIONS

Poland PM in Kyiv, addresses Parliament: Only Ukraine has right to decide its future

As strikes intensify in Donbas, lead negotiator rules out giving territorial concessions to Moscow

REUTERS
KYIV, MAY 22

UKRAINE RULED out a ceasefire or any territorial concessions to Moscow as Russia stepped up its attack in the country's east and south, pounding the Donbas and Mykolaiv regions with air strikes and artillery fire.

"The war must end with the complete restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty," Ukraine's presidential chief of staff Andriy Yermak said in a Twitter post on Sunday.

The comments came as Polish President Andrzej Duda told lawmakers in Kyiv on Sunday the international community had to demand Russia's complete withdrawal and that sacrificing any of it would be a "huge blow" to the entire West.

"Worrying voices have appeared, saying that Ukraine should give in to (President Vladimir) Putin's demands," Duda said, the first foreign leader to address Ukrainian parliament in person since Russia's Feb. 24 invasion. "Only Ukraine has the right to decide about its future," he said.

Speaking to the same parliamentary session, Ukrainian



Poland President Andrzej Duda in the Ukrainian Parliament on Sunday. Reuters

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy renewed a plea for stronger economic sanctions against Moscow. "Half-measures should not be used when aggression should be stopped," he said.

Shortly after both finished speaking, an air raid siren was heard in the capital.

Meanwhile, Russia pressed its offensive in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region Sunday. The heaviest fighting focused around

the twin cities of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk, interior ministry adviser Vadym Denysenko told Ukrainian television.

Russia's defence ministry said on Sunday its forces pummeled Ukrainian command centres, troops and ammunition depots in Donbas and the Mykolaiv region in the south with air strikes and artillery.

Ukraine's lead negotiator,

Zelenskiy adviser Mykhailo Podolyak, ruled out any territorial concessions and rejected calls for an immediate ceasefire, saying it meant Russian troops would stay in occupied territories, which Kyiv could not accept.

"The (Russian) forces must leave the country and after that the resumption of the peace process will be possible," Podolyak said in an interview with Reuters on Saturday.

Fate of 2,500 POWs from Mariupol plant stirs concern

Pokrovsk, Ukraine: With Russia claiming to have taken prisoner nearly 2,500 Ukrainian fighters from the besieged Mariupol steel plant, concerns grew about their fate. Russia has declared its full control of the Azovstal steel plant, which for weeks was the last holdout in Mariupol.

Denis Pushilin, the pro-Kremlin head of an area of eastern Ukraine controlled by separatists, said the captured fighters were sure to face a tribunal. Russian officials and state media have sought to characterize the fighters as neo-Nazis and criminals. "I believe that justice must be restored," Russian state news agency Tass quoted Pushilin as saying.

A prominent member of Russia's parliament, Leonid Slutsky, said Moscow was studying possibility of exchanging the fighters for Viktor Medvedchuk, a Ukrainian with close ties to Putin who faces criminal charges in Ukraine. He later walked back those remarks. AP



US President Joe Biden arrives in Tokyo on Sunday. Reuters

Biden visits Japan to launch economic plan to counter Beijing

REUTERS
TOKYO, MAY 22

PRESIDENT JOE Biden arrived in Japan on Sunday to launch a plan for greater US economic engagement with the Indo-Pacific.

On the second leg of his first Asia trip as president, Biden is to meet with leaders of Japan, India and Australia, the "Quad," another cornerstone of his strategy to push back against China.

Biden met with Japanese business leaders in Tokyo shortly after arriving, said a person familiar with the matter.

On Monday, he will meet Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, to discuss Japan's plans to expand its military reach in response to China's growing might.

Biden on Monday plans to roll out the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), a programme to bind regional countries more closely.

Beijing appeared to take a dim view of the planned IPEF.

Message for N Korea's Kim: 'Hello... Period'

Seoul: As US President Joe Biden was leaving Seoul for Japan, he had a simple message for North Korea's Kim Jong Un: "Hello... period."

Biden said he was "not concerned" about new North Korean nuclear tests, which would be the first in nearly five years. But his wry response when asked what message he had for Kim underscored the administration's low-key approach to the unresolved tensions with North Korea. REUTERS

"China welcomes initiatives conducive to strengthening regional cooperation but 'opposes attempts to create division and confrontation'," Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in a statement.

The Godfather, on the beach: An offer one could not refuse



EXPRESS IN CANNES

SHUBHRA GUPTA
MAY 22

A MAN sacked from his job at a slaughter-house makes his way home on a snow-laden night, hitching rides. As Mathias (Martin Gregore) enters his tiny town in rural Transylvania and gets off in front of his house, we see a fox run out of the bushes. Clearly, this is a place where people live in close proximity with nature: there are lumbering bears in the forest which abuts the town, and there are beasts who live in the houses.

"RMN", Cristian Mungiu's slow burn of a movie pulls back from the specific — a man who is at odds with his wife and his life — to the universal, townspeople riven by a visceral suspicion of the other. And that other could be ethnic Romanians (gypsy is not an endearing term in those parts), Bulgarians, Germans, and a group of Sri Lankan immigrants.

These people are dirty, yells a woman at a town meeting, face contorted in fury. And they put their hands in our bread She is referring to the Sri Lankans employed by the local bakery where they work long hours for very little money, but we can hear

echoes of this kind of anger against 'outsiders' everywhere.

In this microcosm set in a small European town is a larger story which speaks to snowballing provincialism, xenophobia, and ugly racism. RMN makes a powerful case for blurring boundaries between people.

'Brother and Sister'

The beautiful Marion Cotillard plays unforgiving sister to Melvil Poupaud's agonised brother in Cannes veteran Arnaud Desplechin's 'Brother and Sister'. The enmity between them is deep, but nowhere in the nearly two-hour long film do we find concrete reasons for it.

Cotillard and Poupaud deliver intense performances, as they circle around each other, but after a point, our inquisitiveness turns into indifference: what is with these two fifty-something siblings? Will they, or will they not reconcile?

'The Godfather'

The highlight of my day was the open-air beach screening of the restored version of 'The Godfather', which is celebrating its fiftieth year. Francis Ford Coppola's classic drew massive crowds at the Cinema de Plage. I've seen the film many times before, but the promise of this very Cannes experience pushed other things to the side: in Don Corleone's immortal words, it was an offer I couldn't, and didn't want to, refuse.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com



COUNTER VIEW

A resident fixes a banner on a balcony in Davos, Switzerland, to protest against the World Economic Forum. The WEF, an event that sees the world's business and political elite hobnob for days, is back two years after the Covid-19 pandemic struck. Reuters

Sri Lanka minister warns to stop fuel delivery after arson

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO, MAY 22

THE SRI LANKAN government has warned that it will suspend the delivery of fuel if transporters are threatened, after an angry mob torched a petrol pump owner's house in the country's North Central Province.

Spontaneous protests have been reported at the filling stations across the country where consumers have been waiting in long serpentine queues for fuel for hours on end.

Minister of Power and Energy Kanchana Wijesekera

said if the public continues to threaten the truckers delivering the fuel, then the government will have to suspend fuel deliveries for the safety of the transport workforce.

On Saturday, the residence of a fuel station owner and dealer in Anuradhapura, situated in Sri Lanka's North Central Province, was torched by an irate mob after the station ran out of fuel.

Citing obstructions and threat calls, the Ceylon Petroleum Private Tanker Owners' Association on Sunday requested police protection while transporting fuel, online portal the Daily Mirror reported.



A cargo ship carrying humanitarian aid from India arrives at a port in Colombo on Sunday. AP

Wijesekera, meanwhile, said a ship carrying petrol had begun unloading in Colombo port on Saturday night, and another ship carrying petrol is scheduled to arrive on May 25.

Sri Lankan police on Sunday began a nation-wide raid on those hoarding fuel for resale. Police spokesman Nihal Thaldudu has warned that anyone keeping unauthorised fuel and cooking gas would face arrest.

India on Saturday provided another 40,000 metric tonnes of diesel to Sri Lanka under the credit line facility to the island nation which is grappling with its worst economic crisis.

SEEKING HELP TO CURE DEPRESSION USING HALLUCINOGENS SUCH AS TOAD POISON

'I want to reset my brain': Female US veterans turn to psychedelic therapy

ERNESTO LONDOÑO
TIJUANA, MEXICO

PLUMES OF incense swirled through the dimly lit living room as seven women took turns explaining what drove them to sign up for a weekend of psychedelic therapy at a villa in northern Mexico with sweeping ocean views.

A former US Marine said she hoped to connect with the spirit of her mother, who killed herself 11 years ago. An Army veteran said she had been sexually assaulted by a relative as a child. A handful of veterans said they had been sexually assaulted by fellow service members.

The wife of a Navy bomb dis-

posal expert choked up as she lamented that years of unrelenting combat missions had turned her husband into an absent, dysfunctional father.

Kristine Bostwick, 38, a former Navy corpsman, said she hoped that putting her mind through ceremonies with mind-altering substances would help her make peace with the end of a turbulent marriage and perhaps ease the migraines that had become a daily torment.

"I want to reset my brain from the bottom up," she said during the introductory session of a recent three-day retreat, wiping away tears. "My kids deserve it. I deserve it."

A growing body of research into the therapeutic benefits of

psychedelic therapy has generated enthusiasm among some psychiatrists and venture capitalists.

Measures to decriminalise psychedelics, fund research into their healing potential and establish frameworks for their medicinal use have been passed with bipartisan support in city councils and state legislatures across the United States in recent years.

Much of the expanding appeal of such treatments has been driven by veterans of America's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Having turned to experimental therapies to treat post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries, addiction and depression, many former military members have become effusive advocates for a wider embrace



A ceremony initiating the psychedelic retreat. Meredith Kohut/ NYT

of psychedelics.

Psychedelic retreat participants often pay thousands of dollars for the experience. But

these female veterans and spouses of veterans who had traveled to Mexico for treatment at the Mission Within were at-

tending for free, courtesy of the Heroic Hearts Project and the Hope Project. The groups, founded by an Army ranger and the wife of a Navy SEAL, raise money to make psychedelic therapy affordable for people from military backgrounds.

The Mission Within, on the outskirts of Tijuana, is run by Dr. Martin Polanco, who since 2017 has focused almost exclusively on treating veterans.

Dr. Polanco said he had treated more than 600 American veterans in Mexico. "They understand what it takes to achieve peak performance."

In the beginning, he said, he treated male veterans almost exclusively. But recently, he started receiving many requests from fe-

male veterans and military wives and began running women-only retreats.

With the exception of clinical trials, psychedelic therapy is currently performed underground or under nebulous legality. As demand soars, a handful of countries in Latin America, including Costa Rica, Jamaica and Mexico, have become hubs for experimental protocols and clinical studies.

In Mexico, two of the substances that Dr. Polanco administers — ibogaine, a plant-based psychoactive commonly used to treat addiction, and 5-MeO-DMT, a powerful hallucinogen derived from the poison of the Sonoran desert toad — are neither unlawful nor approved for

medical use. The third, psilocybin mushrooms, may be taken legally in ceremonies that follow Indigenous traditions.

Dr. Charles Nemeroff, the chairman of the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Texas at Austin, which recently started a center for psychedelic research, said that the hype about the curative potential of psychedelics has outpaced hard evidence. The risks — which include episodes of psychosis — are considerable, he said.

The women at the Mexico retreat understood the risks. But several said they had lost faith in conventional treatments like antidepressants and had heard enough inspiring stories from friends to take a leap of faith. NYT



@ieExplained

#ExpressExplained

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

EXPLAINED HEALTH

Is unexpected hepatitis in children linked to Covid-19?

EXPERT EXPLAINS



DR ARVINDER SINGH SOIN

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight

SEVERAL COUNTRIES are reporting severe hepatitis in children who have contracted Covid-19. A study from Madhya Pradesh, which is yet to be peer-reviewed, has shown that 8% of children in the group being investigated reported a unique form of hepatitis and subsequent asymptomatic Covid-19 infection.

Can we say there is a link between Covid-19 and hepatitis in children?

In the West, there have been some cases of hepatitis, which are unexplained by previously known causes. And there have been publica-

tions that have been peer-reviewed, including one published in *The Lancet* last week, where they have talked about several children reporting unexplained hepatitis, where every parameter they test usually is found negative. The majority of them actually get well. But there has been a small number of cases where children have actually developed severe liver cases that need a transplant. That is obviously of concern.

The timing suggests it is related to Covid. Because the chronology is suggestive of Covid having a role as such a condition wasn't seen before the pandemic, the theory of a link is gaining ground. I am talking about the *Lancet* paper. In the non-peer-reviewed data from Madhya Pradesh, they found 37 cases of hepatitis out of 457 patients of Covid-19.

The *Lancet* study detected adenovirus in nearly 80% of the cases. Normally, this virus is fairly harmless. It causes gastritis, diarrhoea and vomiting but so far has not caused any severe illness. But now nearly 80% of children with hepatitis have this virus. It is still not known if it is causally related. Researchers even analysed the type of adenovirus and found a

particular strain called 41F in all samples. Now this strain is typically associated with mild gastro-intestinal illness in children. So, the theory going around is that somehow the immune system of children affected by Covid have developed abnormalities or been compromised to such an extent that the adenovirus, which is normally harmless, has manifested itself severely.

It is all a little blurry right now. But as an expert in liver disease for over 30 years and as someone who does liver transplants in children literally every other day, I think the recent cases of hepatitis are related to Covid-19 in some way. It is very likely, in my view, that there is hepatitis which has previously not been seen that has come about in children because of the pan-

THE EXPERT

DR ARVINDER SINGH SOIN is the Chief Hepatobiliary and Liver Transplant Surgeon and Chairman of the Institute of Liver Transplantation and Regenerative Medicine, Medanta. He has been part of the team that has issued national guidelines on liver transplantation during the pandemic.

demic. Whether the pandemic prevented the exposure to usual antigens or whether the virus itself in a silent or infected form created the imbalance in the immune system needs to be looked into. But there has been some disturbance in children's immune systems.

Could this have been triggered by an immune response caused by Covid-19?

Covid-19 activates the immune system. Whether you are symptomatic or not, you have some antigens. Over time, they will get absorbed and stimulate the immune cells, little by little, even long after the infection is gone.

It is like inciting the enemy during a ceasefire. So, even the slightest skirmish on the bor-

der will activate the enemy in a big way. With the immune system activated by the viruses and the antigen hanging around in the gut after recovery from Covid, even a minor infection caused by the adenovirus or a repeat infection of Covid can trigger a large immune response. And when a large immune response happens, the patient can get hepatitis.

Can we say children are at an increased risk of liver dysfunction after recovery?

It would be fair to say there is a risk of liver dysfunction after you recover from Covid. But the proportion of children or patients who get it is not large. It would be somewhere between the 10-20% mark. But then that translates to a significant number. In all seroprevalence studies done in India, 60-70% of children have been found to have Covid antibodies. So, if you are surmising that 70% of kids have developed infection and antibodies, they are susceptible to this kind of hepatitis. That's still a large number.

What are the preventive measures?

There are two things that you can do. First,

prevent kids from getting Covid-19. That is easier said than done. We know that even without vaccination in India, 70% of them had antibodies. Second, boost immunity with nutritious food, adequate sleep and intake of vitamin and mineral supplements whenever needed.

I would say that families that have had Covid-19 infection in their homes are very likely to have children who will be at risk of developing hepatitis. They should see a paediatrician and make sure that nutritious food and supplements, if necessary, are given.

When should parents visit a specialist?

As I said, if a kid is known to have had Covid-19 in the past, he/she should follow up with a paediatrician for at least three months after recovery. Even if the parent has had Covid-19, it is likely that the child has been exposed. This is true for children younger than eight years because it is very difficult to contain them.

Dr Sooin spoke to Kainain Sheriff M

LONGER VERSION ON www.indianexpress.com

THIS WORD MEANS

STORAGE GAIN IN WHEAT

Extra weight gained from absorption of moisture. How it is calculated, and why Punjab agencies want a waiver

HAVING ALREADY got a relaxation in Fair and Average Quality (FAQ) norms for wheat procurement this season, Punjab's state procurement agencies are now seeking a waiver of 'storage gain'. If allowed, the waiver would stand at around Rs 150 crore for the current season.

HOW IT WORKS: Wheat tends to gain some weight during storage. This is what is known as 'storage gain' and it mostly happens due to absorption of moisture by the endosperm of the wheat. State procurement agencies are required to give 1 kg wheat extra per quintal to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to compensate for storage gain.

While 20% of wheat procured by the FCI and the state procurement agencies, is moved immediately after procurement, it is usually on the remaining 80%, which is

moved out after July 1 every year, that storage gain has to be accounted for due to longer storage duration.

CALCULATIONS THIS YEAR: This year 96 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) wheat was procured in Punjab by all agencies. As 80% of this figure comes to 76.80 LMT, it means that storage gain would be around 7.68 lakh quintals on this. At MSP rate of Rs 2,015, it would cost state agencies Rs 154.74 crore if they are unable to supply 7.68 lakh quintals extra during movement of 76.80 LMT wheat. The state agencies argue that grain procured this year is both shrivelled and broken and therefore will not gain much weight.

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA

LONGER VERSION ON www.indianexpress.com

Battery-like device that captures carbon dioxide while charging

RESEARCHERS HAVE developed a low-cost device that can selectively capture carbon dioxide gas while it charges. Then, when it discharges, the carbon dioxide can be released in a controlled way and collected to be reused or disposed of responsibly, the University of Cambridge said in a press release. The device has been described in the journal *Nanoscale*.

The supercapacitor device, which is similar to a rechargeable battery, is the size of a coin, and is made in part from sustainable materials including coconut shells and seawater. The University of Cambridge said the supercapacitor could help power carbon capture and storage technologies at much lower cost. The most advanced carbon capture technologies currently require large



NEW RESEARCH

amounts of energy and are expensive.

The supercapacitor consists of two electrodes of positive and negative charge. The team tried alternating from a negative to a positive voltage to extend the charging time from previous experiments. This improved the supercapacitor's ability to capture carbon.

"We found that that by slowly alternating the current between the plates we can capture double the amount of carbon dioxide than before," the release quoted lead researcher Dr Alexander Forse as saying. "Our next questions will involve investigating the precise mechanisms of carbon dioxide capture and improving them. Then it will be a question of scaling up."

Source: University of Cambridge

HARISH DAMODARAN & PARTHASARATHI BISWAS
NEW DELHI, PUNE, MAY 22

THE WORLD and India are witnessing a resurgence of food inflation. Between September 2021 and April 2022, consumer food price inflation in India has risen from 0.68% to 8.38% year on year. And with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index hitting new highs, it has reignited memories of the last great commodity inflation (from the mid-2000s till around 2012-13, briefly interrupted by the 2008-09 financial crisis).

But there's a difference between the two food inflationary episodes, especially in India.

The former was a structural, demand-led inflation, driven by rising incomes. Real incomes going up resulted in declining per capita consumption of cereals and sugar (which basically deliver calories) alongside growing demand for foods incorporating proteins (milk, pulses, egg, fish and meat) and micronutrients (fruits & vegetables). This dietary diversification also had a bearing on inflation. Between 2004-05 and 2012-13, the cumulative rise in the wholesale price index was 93.1% for sugar, 99.9% for cereals and 48.1% for edible oils; and to 108.1% for milk, 110.1% for vegetables, 141.3% for pulses and 144.5% for eggs, meat & fish.

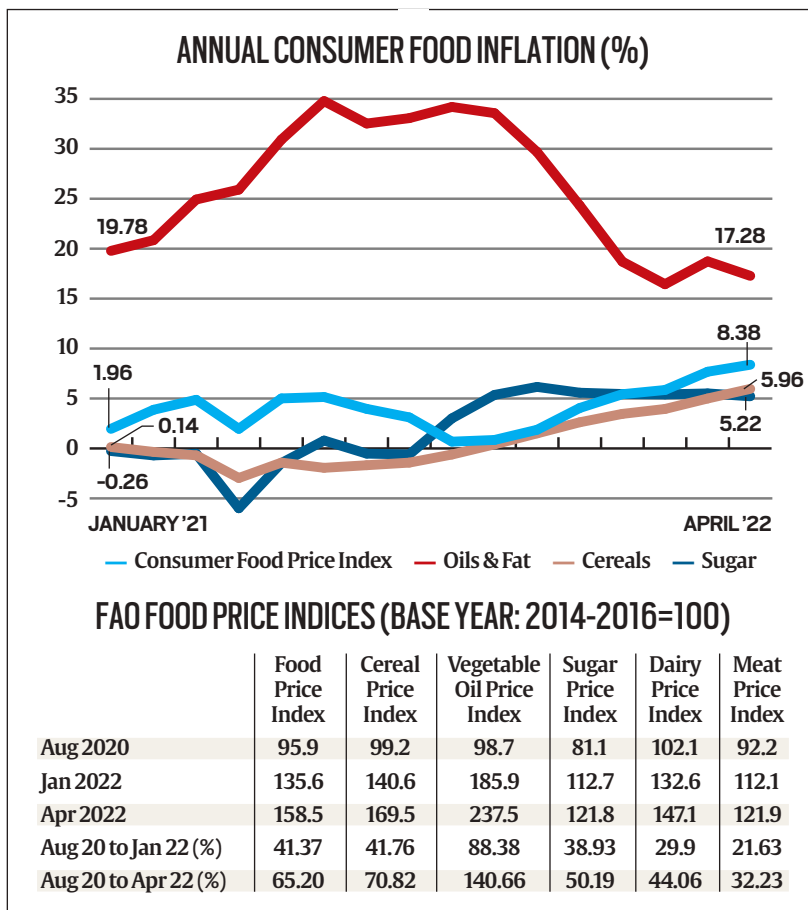
Now and then

The current food inflation, by contrast, is idiosyncratic and supply shock-driven. And it is more "calorie" than "protein" price inflation, a term coined by the former Reserve Bank of India deputy governor Subir Gokarn.

Since August 2020, when global demand started returning with the gradual lifting of lockdowns, the FAO's vegetable oil, cereal and sugar price indices have soared 141%, 71% and 50%, respectively. These exceed the 32% cumulative rise in the meat price index and 44% for dairy over the same period till April 2020.

Moreover, as the table shows, much of this inflation predated the war in Ukraine. Ukraine had drought in 2020-21, while Russia, in December 2020, announced export curbs on wheat, corn, barley, rye, sunflower and rapeseed for quelling domestic inflation. These — coupled with shortages of migrant workers in Malaysia's oil palm plantations — drove up global prices of edible oils and cereals.

The war only worsened things — by squeezing supplies from the two countries having a substantial share of the world's wheat, corn,



FAO FOOD PRICE INDICES (BASE YEAR: 2014-2016=100)

	Food Price Index	Cereal Price Index	Vegetable Oil Price Index	Sugar Price Index	Dairy Price Index	Meat Price Index
Aug 2020	95.9	99.2	98.7	81.1	102.1	92.2
Jan 2022	135.6	140.6	185.9	112.7	132.6	112.1
Apr 2022	158.5	169.5	237.5	121.8	147.1	121.9
Aug 20 to Jan 22 (%)	41.37	41.76	88.38	38.93	29.9	21.63
Aug 20 to Apr 22 (%)	65.20	70.82	140.66	50.19	44.06	32.23

barley and sunflower oil exports. Also, Indonesia's restrictions on palm oil shipments to contain local inflation, and surging petroleum crude prices made it all the more attractive to divert sugar, corn, palm and soyabean oil for bio-fuel production.

There has been no such major inflation in proteins. The FAO's dairy and meat prices indices have gone up, but that has had more to do with increased cost of feed ingredients.

Impact on India

The transmission of the higher global calorie inflation to prices in India has been limited largely to vegetable fats. From the chart, it can be seen that retail edible oil inflation ruled at 20-35% levels through 2021, well before the surge in the overall consumer food price index from January. Interestingly, inflation in the other two calorie food commodities — cereals

and sugar — has been relatively muted.

The main reason for no imported inflation, at least until recently, in cereals and sugar is because of the country being a surplus producer of both. India's exports of cereals and sugar were valued at a record \$12.9 billion and \$4.6 billion respectively in 2021-22. Also, despite some 32.3 million tonnes (mt) of cereals being shipped out, overflowing stocks in government godowns still enabled an unprecedented 105.6 mt of grain to be sold through the public distribution system.

There has been a pick-up in cereal inflation of late. But that, basically in wheat, has come on the back of crop yield loss caused by the sudden heat wave. In other words, not imported. The transmission mechanism here has worked the other way round: With lower domestic production and depleting stocks prompting the Centre to ban wheat exports from India, global

prices have firmed up — translating into higher inflation for importing countries.

What about proteins?

All-India modal or most-quoted retail prices of dals (split pulses) are lower now than a year ago. That includes *chana* (Rs 70 versus Rs 75/kg), *tur/arhar* (Rs 97.5 versus Rs 110), *urad* (Rs 97 versus Rs 105) and *moong* (Rs 98.5 versus Rs 105). The only exception is *masoor*, whose modal price of Rs 90/kg is higher than the Rs 85 at this time last year, according to Department of Consumer Affairs data.

The crash in international skim milk powder and butter fat prices has forced some correction in the domestic market as well. One can expect a similar easing of egg and meat prices. The heat subsiding should help reduce growing time and mortality of poultry birds.

On the whole, while there has been a recovery of demand from the reopening of hotels and other lockdown restrictions going, it is unlikely to trigger any "protein inflation". The demand-pull from rising incomes isn't strong enough this time round.

There is not much inflation in onion, potato and watermelons, cucumber, pumpkin, *okra*/ladies finger, gourds and other vegetables. Tomato prices are high, but not abnormally so.

Summing up

Food inflation resulting from war, drought, unseasonal rains and heat waves is different from structural demand-pull factors. The inflation now is not only more of the former, but also in foods mainly delivering calories rather than proteins, vitamins and minerals. That, to some extent, makes it worse than the previous inflation, which, in Gokarn's words, was "an inevitable consequence of rising affluence".

While high prices would also induce supply response from farmers, a lot hinges on the monsoon. Last year's monsoon was "normal" overall, but marked by an extended dry spell in July and then too much rain from late-August, followed by heavy unseasonal showers in December-January. One has to see how normal the "normal" forecast by the India Meteorological Department turns out to be.

Meanwhile, the good news is the Centre, on Saturday, cutting the excise duty on diesel by Rs 6/litre and many states also announcing reductions. That should have a further salutary effect on food inflation in the coming days.

LONGER VERSION ON www.indianexpress.com

Ram Mohan Roy's legacy and its renewed relevance, 250 years on

PAROMITA CHAKRABARTI
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

ONE OF the most influential social and religious reformers of the 19th century, Ram Mohan Roy, born on May 22, 1772, in what was then Bengal Presidency's Radhanagar in Hooghly district, would have turned 250 on Sunday. Amid changing social and religious circumstances in India, Roy's work in the spheres of women's emancipation, modernising education and seeking changes to religious orthodoxy finds new relevance.

Early life

Born into a prosperous Brahmin family, Ram Mohan Roy grew up when orthodox caste practices such as child marriage, polygamy and dowry were prevalent among the higher castes. He was himself married more than once in his childhood. The family's affluence also made the best in education ac-

cessible to him. Roy knew Bengali and Persian, but also Arabic, Sanskrit, and later, English. His exposure to the literature and culture of these languages bred in him a scepticism towards religious dogmas and social strictures. In particular, he chafed at practices such as Sati; his own sister-in-law had been a victim of Sati after his elder brother's death.

This was a time when the Mughals were waning and the East India Company was on the ascendancy in Bengal. Roy spent considerable time studying the Vedas and the Upanishads, but also religious texts of Islam and Christianity. He was intrigued by the Unitarian faction of Christianity and drawn by the precepts of monotheism. He wrote extensively on matters of theology, polity and human rights, and translated Sanskrit texts into Bengali, making them accessible.

"Ram Mohan did not quite make a distinction between the religious and the secular. He believed religion to be the site of all fundamental changes. What he fought was not re-

ligion but what he believed to be its perversion... (Rabindranath) Tagore called him a 'Bharatpathik' by which he meant to say that Ram Mohan combined in his person the underlying spirit of Indic civilisation, its spirit of pluralism, tolerance and a cosmic respect for all forms of life," said historian Amiya P Sen, Sivadasi Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, and author of *Rammohun Roy: A Critical Biography* (2012).

First among liberals

Even though British consolidation of power was still at a nascent stage at the time, Roy could sense that change was afoot. Confident about the strength of his heritage



Ram Mohan Roy's portrait by Rembrandt Peale. *Wikipedia*

and open to imbibing from other cultures, Roy was among India's first liberals. In the introduction to his biography, Sen writes, "He was simultaneously interested in religion, politics, law and jurisprudence, commerce and agrarian enterprise, Constitutions and civic rights, the unjust treatment of women and the appalling condition of the Indian poor... And he studied matters not in the abstract or in academic

solitude but with the practical objective of securing human happiness and freedom. That made him a modern man."

In 1814, he started the Atmiya Sabha (Society of Friends), to nurture philosophical discussions on the idea of monotheism in Vedanta and to campaign against idolatry,

casteism, child marriage and other social ills. The Atmiya Sabha would make way for the Brahmo Sabha in 1828, set up with Debendranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore's father.

Sati abolition, other reforms

During his 15 years in Calcutta, Roy became a prominent public intellectual. He campaigned for the modernisation of education, in particular the introduction of a Western curriculum, and started several educational institutions. In 1817, he collaborated with Scottish philanthropist David Hare to set up the Hindu College (now, Presidency University). The Anglo-Hindu School followed in 1822 and, in 1830, he assisted Alexander Duff in setting up the General Assembly's Institution (later Scottish Church College).

His relentless advocacy alongside contemporaries such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar finally led to the abolition of Sati under the governor-generalship of William Bentinck in 1829. Roy argued for the property

rights of women, and petitioned the British for freedom of the press (in 1829 and 1830).

His Brahmo Sabha, which later became the Brahmo Samaj, evolved as a reaction against the upper-caste stranglehold on social customs. During the Bengal Renaissance, it ushered in social changes and birthed the Brahmo religion, a reformed spiritual Hinduism that believes in monotheism and the uniformity of all men, irrespective of caste, class or creed.

Non-conformism brought its share of infamy. Roy, who was given the title of Raja by the Mughal emperor Akbar II, and who was among the first Indians to gain recognition in the UK and in America for his radical thoughts, was also often attacked by his own countrymen who felt threatened by his reformist agenda, and by British reformers and functionaries whose views differed from his.

LONGER VERSION ON www.indianexpress.com

14

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

WORLD BOXING CHAMPION
NIKHAT ZAREEN

‘People told my father that boxing was a men’s sport’

World champion boxer Nikhat Zareen talks about how people ridiculed her choice to become a boxer as a girl, her struggles in a conservative society and how she feels women boxers wearing hijab is a matter of choice. The session was moderated by Mihir Vasavda, Assistant Editor, *The Indian Express*



WHY
NIKHAT ZAREEN

Nikhath Zareen won the World Boxing Championships in Turkey on May 19, becoming only the fifth Indian woman to be crowned world champion (flyweight). But her story to the podium is also about breaking free from the shackles of patriarchy, tradition, mindset and, most importantly, from inhibitions. She is now setting her sights on the Olympic gold

Mihir Vasavda: You mentioned the support you received from your parents. You have three sisters, what is your relationship with them like and what did you all bond over?

I have two older sisters and a younger one, who is seven years junior to me. Both my elder sisters are physiotherapists and were not interested in sports. I had always been interested in sports and used to be a bit of a tomboy those days, hanging out with the boys. I had a boyish short hair too and preferred wearing T-shirt and jeans. Nobody thought I was a girl. Perhaps, I became strong because I have been, what you would call, “rough-and-tough” since childhood.

Before boxing, I was into athletics. Since there were no proper facilities and coaches, I would accompany my father to the Collector’s Ground where many competitive sports took place. I saw girls in every sport except boxing. I remember asking my father why there were no girls in the ring and if only boys could box? And he said, “no beta, girls can also box but people think they don’t have the guts to do so. That’s why they don’t send their girls to learn boxing.”

That challenged me to take up boxing as I couldn’t understand why people would think that girls weren’t strong enough to take up such a sport. So, I thought, let’s give it a try. *Bachpan sey mujhe khatron ki khiladi khelne ka bahut shauk tha* (I have always wanted to be a daredevil since my childhood). I didn’t quite anticipate what awaited me.

I was the lone girl practising in that stadium among boys. Initially, I used to get hit a lot but I did not give up. Maybe training in that atmosphere, surrounded by boys, helped me steel my resolve.



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

Sriram Veera: I was watching an interview of your mother talking about an early sparring session of yours. It was with a boy and he hit you in your face. Your mother said that she started crying and saying ‘beta tumse shaadi kaun karega?’

(Nikhath laughs) Let me tell you that story. That was my first sparring session and I was pitted against a boy who was very experienced. The coach shouted “box” and he started attacking me. I wasn’t ready for his attack and got hit on my nose, which started bleeding along with my eye which got bruised as well.

I went home with bloodstains on my T-shirt. When I entered my house, I directly rushed into the bathroom and didn’t come out until I had changed everything. I then stayed in my room, hiding my eye. But then my mother called me for dinner. We eat food together, while watching serials on TV, like every other household. This is the usual ritual but that day I chose to stay in my room. My mother got worried, barged in and seeing me bruised and black, she shivered. Then she started crying and said, “Beta maine tujhe boxing mein isliye nahi dala ki tera face kharab ho jaye (I didn’t allow you to pursue boxing so that your face would get scarred).” She then said that no one would marry me. I replied, “arre ammi, tension nako lo, naam hoga toh dulhon ki line lag jayegi! (Dear mother, don’t worry, once I make a name for myself, grooms will queue up at the doorstep).”

Now she’s used to it. Whenever I get hit, she casually tells me to apply some ice and says that it will be okay. Sometimes I feel she has become my coach. My parents watch all my bouts in every competition that I participate in and they now have a good idea of what boxing is. Whenever I have a match, my mother watches me closely and post-match calls me to review my performance, pulling me up on the mistakes I made during the fight. My parents have become my coaches and say things like, “Try to avoid clinching and play from a distance because your punches look clear then.” I find it funny that there was a time when they didn’t know anything about boxing and now they give me *gyaan* (laughs). But it feels nice that they’ve come a long way from their old mentality and have grown a lot with me.

Sriram Veera: Heard you say once that your plan B was to join the police.

In my childhood, I dreamt of becoming an IPS officer. When you are young, most children will say that they want to be a pilot, police, doctor or teacher. These were the professions we knew about and because of that, I wanted to be in the police. Also, the uniform looked cool and

when we were in school, IPS officers would visit us as chief guests during special events and programmes. I saw the respect they commanded. Whenever I looked at them, I told myself that one day I would wear a uniform like them and come as a chief guest to my school. That’s how I started dreaming about becoming an IPS officer.

Nitin Sharma: We talked about the gold medal you won as a junior boxer in 2011. You were 15 years old back then. Ten years later, you have got the senior title. What do these achievements mean to you and do you feel the senior title came a bit late?

Medal der aaya lekin durust aaya (better late than never). The medal I won in 2011 was memorable because it was my first-ever international competition where I got a standing ovation on the podium... our national anthem was being played in front of so many people. I was overwhelmed. That experience will always remain etched in my memory.

Still, I was a kid in a junior level championship. The elite level is very different. The competition is better and the pressure, higher. In the juniors, you don’t know your opponent – all you can think about is to enter the ring, beat the opponent and win the bout. But in the senior category, you know about your opponents’ styles, strengths and weakness. So, you end up having to plan your moves strategically. There is a lot more pressure on your mind at this level. And yet, I managed to win the gold medal for my country. I am really happy about that. Hopefully, I can continue to work hard like this and keep winning medals.

Nitin Sharma: In your weight category, you have had to compete with MC Mary Kom, whom you have idolised, over the past three-four years. We also saw your bid to get into trials against her for the Tokyo Olympic qualifiers. She did not want the trials and it turned into a spat. The bout eventually took place but how do you see her after that incident? Also how do you feel about the CWG trials knowing that Mary Kom is expected to take part?

She is an experienced boxer with many records in her past. So based on that

it was her right, perhaps. But when two boxers enter the ring, only the one who’s technically sounder wins. Because of that, when our trials took place, she won and was selected for the Tokyo Olympic qualifiers. I congratulated her on qualifying but unfortunately, she couldn’t win a medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

When I lost in the trials, I decided to move on from Tokyo and focus on the Paris Olympic Games. With regard to the Commonwealth Games trials, I heard she’s going for the trials in the 48-kg category, so I don’t think we’ll face each other.

Sandeep Dwivedi: What is so special about Hyderabad that so many world-beating women athletes come out of the city? Is it common aggression, that is so important in sport and that you share with athletes like Saina Nehwal and Sania Mirza, which propels you to such heights?

(Laughs) *Sab Hyderabad ki biryani aur haleem hi hai* (It’s all in Hyderabad’s biryani and haleem). I guess every athlete gets nervous. The quality of a champion is how she deals with that pressure and nervousness. Even I was nervous about the world championship. I was nervous about how I would play against my opponent, whether I would be able to make her play according to my style and dominate her or whether she would trap me in her boxing style. Such thoughts always come to mind. I won all my bouts with unanimous decisions and I am happy about it.

Sandeep Dwivedi: You have been good friends with the likes of Tokyo Olympics champion Neeraj Chopra apart from CWG and Asian Games champion Vinesh Phogat and athletes like Tejaswin Shankar. Tell us how did this sharing of ideas start?

We met when all of us were going through a bad phase. We were suffering from injuries and were feeling low. Vinesh had a knee injury, I had a shoulder injury, Neeraj had issues with hamstring and even Tejaswin was struggling with some wound. We were rehabilitating at the JSW Sport Centre in Bengaluru. We would eat meals and roam together always. So, it all started from there. Then we shared each other’s stories and understood how much struggle each one of us had to face. That’s how

our friendship started. After the recovery, everybody got busy and now, Neeraj Chopra is an Olympic champion while Vinesh is a Commonwealth and Asian Games champion. They have made the country proud and seeing them achieve their personal highs inspired me to work hard. When they can do it on the world stage, it inspires me to push myself harder and achieve big on the world stage too. We can all meet together at the next Games.

Mihir Vasavda: You have mentioned a lot of ups, downs and struggles in your career. Was there any moment in your life, in your career to be precise, that shaped you as a boxer or inspired you to pack a punch?

Yes, before my shoulder injury, I was not mature enough. After the injury, I learnt a lot. I got to know who my real friends were and who weren’t. Because most of them did not even message me or ask me how I was doing. But still I stayed positive and worked hard on my rehabilitation. I made my comeback in 2018 and took some time to recover before I won the gold at the Strandja Memorial in 2019. I have never looked back and have always thought of progressing ahead.

Mihir Vasavda: You have been a path-breaker your entire career. You come from an orthodox family and have seen all kinds of struggle. In the last two-three weeks, we have seen referees and some boxers wearing hijab during the world championships. All over the world, there is a debate about whether athletes should be allowed to wear the hijab or not. In the normal course of life, too, there is a debate about this. What’s your take?

According to me, it’s their choice. If they feel comfortable, they should wear it. If they don’t feel comfortable, they should wear whatever is normal for them. It’s absolutely their choice. So, there is no need for my comment. I like boxing in shorts and a vest and nobody is forcing me to wear a hijab or stopping me from wearing shorts and a vest. It’s everybody’s choice and we should respect that.

Mihir Vasavda: It’s known that you are a big Salman Khan fan and like watching Hindi movies. If a biopic is to be made on your life, which actor would you like to portray you?

I haven’t given it a thought yet. When a movie is made on me, I don’t know which actress will be on top of the charts at that time. Right now, I want Alia Bhatt to portray me. *Kyunki usko bhi dimple aata hai and mere ko bhi dimple aata hai* (Because she has got dimples like me). I guess she can portray me.

15 ECONOMY

POLICY WATCH EXTERNAL DEBT

India has space to attract \$90 bn debt flows: RBI

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, MAY 22

INDIA HAS the space to attract debt flows of another \$90 billion (around Rs 693,000 crore), given the threshold level of the country's external debt, says a Reserve Bank of India study.

"The empirical results suggest that as against India's current external debt to GDP ratio of 20 per cent, the estimated threshold level is higher in the range between 23 per cent and 24 per cent of GDP, indicating space for attracting more debt flows of the order of \$90 billion," says the RBI study on 'Growth maximising external debt of India'. Given the risk of amplifying external vulnerabilities because of higher exposure to external debt, the estimated space may be used carefully balancing the objective of growth and macro-stability, it said.

India's debt market is being progressively opened up to the foreign capital in a careful and calibrated manner.

According to estimates, India's external debt stood at \$614.9 billion as at end-December 2022. Commercial borrowings (CBs) at \$226.4 billion, NRI deposits at \$141.9 billion and short-term trade credit at \$110.5 billion, together account for about 78 per cent of the total external debt. The external debt to GDP ratio as at end-December 2021 was 20.0 per cent.

The total external debt, which fell below the pre-crisis levels in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic lockdown, crossed the pre-pandemic levels as at end-December 2020 and consolidated further helped by NRI deposits crossing pre-pandemic levels as at end-September 2021 and short-term trade credit crossing the pre-pandemic levels as at end-December 2021, the RBI said.

In contrast, India's external debt remained relatively immune to the global finan-

NRI deposits down \$2.87 bn

Mumbai: Outstanding non-resident Indian (NRI) deposits in India fell by \$2.875 billion to \$139,020 billion in the financial year ended March 2022 as against \$141.895 billion a year ago, according to the latest RBI data.

India attracted only \$3.23 billion NRI deposits in FY22 as against \$7.36 billion a year ago. Non-resident external rupee account (NR(E)RA) witnessed a growth of \$3.33 billion in FY22 as against \$8.84 billion last year. FCNR (B) deposits declined by \$3.55 billion in FY22. **ENS**

cial crisis (GFC) reflecting the resilience of commercial borrowings, the most growth-sensitive and the largest component of India's external debt. "The resilience of commercial borrowings in the wake of the GFC stemmed largely from the relatively muted impact of GFC on growth in sharp contrast to that during GLD," the study said.

At present, a rule-based dynamic limit for outstanding stock of ECBs at 6.5 per cent of GDP is in place. As India aims at higher, sustainable and inclusive growth, the need for attracting larger external debt flows within the estimated threshold may be assessed along with other external vulnerability parameters so that the growth objective is pursued while preserving overall macro-stability, the RBI study said.

External debt, by supplementing domestic savings, can help countries grow faster. But a large stock of external debt can potentially create vulnerabilities and dent growth prospects. Since the onset of the pandemic, many countries have expanded public spending to support the recovery, which has led to a build-up of their external debt, the IMF says.

FOCUS ON DISCLOSURES, COMPLIANCES FOR NEW-AGE COS

Front-running: Sebi likely to soon initiate stringent action

SANDEEP SINGH
MUMBAI, MAY 22

CONCERNED OVER the recent case of front-running in the mutual fund industry and possibility of similar practices happening, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) is likely to take stringent action, which may include action against top officials of the fund house. A source close to the development said Sebi is closely monitoring the situation and its actions may follow soon.

On May 19, Axis Mutual Fund terminated its chief dealer Viresh Joshi, who was under investigation for irregularities, including front-running the AMC's transactions. A couple of days later, it sacked its second fund manager Deepak Agrawal on similar charges. The fund house had suspended the two fund managers on May 6, after irregularities running into several crores at the fund house came under the scanner of the market regulator.

Front-running involves purchasing a stock based on advance non-public information regarding an expected large transaction that will affect the share price of a company. When MFs purchase in huge quantities, it leads to rise in share price, resulting into illegitimate gains for the front runners.

Sebi has investigated and penalised several brokers, fund houses and fund managers in the past for front-running. In June 2021, it passed an order against three dealers of Reliance Securities for front-running the



The Securities and Exchange Board of India building, Mumbai. File

trades of an alternative investment fund. In the HDFC MF front-running case, Sebi passed several orders, over the last few years, including disgorgement of illegal gains and penalty on several entities including the former equity dealer of HDFC MF for numerous instances of front running in 2006 and 2007.

Stating that investor protection is one of the key roles of the regulator, the source added that Sebi is looking at various aspects of primary and secondary market in order to safeguard retail investors, who have been entering the markets in large numbers over the last two years. The number of investor accounts with CDSL and NSDL has jumped from 4.06 crore in March 2020 to 9.2 crore at the end of April 2022.

While on the primary market

front, the regulator is keen on enhancing disclosure and compliance requirement for listing of new-age technology companies, for the secondary market participants, it is keen on enhancing awareness around responsible investing as lot of new customers are going for speculative trading.

"What we worry about is the increasing amount of trading in the segment. As margins have increased for futures, they are shifting to options and largely in index options. It is pure trading... People need to be educated and made aware of the risks of these trades and so there is a thinking that it might be the right time for the broking community to come out with campaigns like responsible trading," said the source.

As concerns have been growing around valuations being commanded by new-age loss-making technology companies when they come out with their public issues, the regulator may be of the view that while it may leave the price determination with the markets, it may introduce disclosures that may take away liberty of the company management and merchant bankers from commanding unreasonable valuations.

The source said that the companies will have to disclose the change in financially quantifiable metrics that have resulted in increase in valuation and if there is no change in such metrics, then they will have to disclose upfront that there has been no change in the financial metrics but the valuation has gone up by 'x' times. So, they will have to disclose reasons for the increase in valuation

since the last funding round.

The source added that there was a thinking in the past that if the regulator had brought stringent regulations at the time of permitting loss-making new age technology companies to raise funds through public issues, it would have attracted lot of criticism. But now, with some not-so-happy experiences across several listings, additional regulations and compliances can be brought in and there is call for it, too.

"Sometimes you need to buy the time. And after what has happened with a couple of issues the regulator thinks that they can bring in the reform as people sometimes need to understand the need for reform and now everyone is aware of the issue and they feel that changes are needed," the source said.

The regulator is also looking at adding more disclosures for such companies.

Among some other key changes, the regulator is also learnt to be closely monitoring the appointment of chief financial officers (CFO) by several of these companies and may bring in a new compliance requirement with respect to CFO appointment for companies coming with public offering.

"It has been noticed that in several cases the CFOs are appointed few days before the issue and he/she signs up on all the financial details. Sebi is considering to make it mandatory for companies to appoint the CFO at least 2-3 quarter before the IPO and deliberations are going on this particular issue as of now," the source said.

Salil Parekh reappointed as CEO, MD of Infosys for 5 yrs

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE BOARD of Infosys has approved the reappointment of Salil Parekh as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director of the company for five more years, till March 31, 2027, according to a regulatory filing.

This is based on the recommendations of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC) and subject to the approval of shareholders. **WITHPTI**

TOTAL ORIGINAL COST of implementation of the 1,579 projects was ₹21,95,196.72 cr and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹26,78,365.62 cr, which reflects overall cost overruns of ₹4,83,168.90 cr (22.01 % of the original cost)

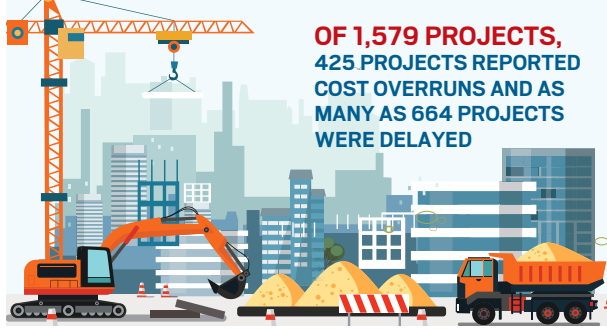
EXPENDITURE INCURRED on these projects till March 2022 stood at ₹13,88,760.73 cr, which is 51.85 % of the anticipated cost of the projects

NUMBER OF DELAYED PROJECTS decreased to 561, if delay is calculated on basis of latest schedule of completion

Source: MoSPI/PTI

Cost overruns of ₹4.83 lakh cr impact 425 infra projects

As many as 425 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than Rs 4.83 lakh crore, as per a Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation report



BRIEFLY Infra projects

New Delhi: All logistics and connectivity infrastructure projects, entailing investment of over Rs 500 crore, would now route through the network planning group.

SIAM on CNG

New Delhi: SIAM on Sunday sought reduction in CNG prices while welcoming the government's decision to lower the petrol and diesel prices.

'GST Council'

New Delhi: The GST Council is likely to consider modification in summary return and monthly tax payment form GSTR-3B in its meeting next month, an official said.

'Specialty steel'

New Delhi: The government's PLI scheme for specialty steel has received just 10 applications, even as the last date to submit interest was extended twice.

'Paytm bank'

New Delhi: Paytm expects that the issue of RBI ban on its subsidiary Paytm Payments Bank to onboard customers would be resolved in 3-5 months, after the clearance by the regulator to the processes being put in place, Paytm group CFO Madhur Deora told PTI on Sunday. **PTI**

CoinSwitch calls for regulatory 'peace, certainty'

REUTERS
DAVOS, MAY 22

INDIA MUST establish rules on cryptocurrencies to resolve regulatory uncertainty, protect investors and boost its crypto sector, CoinSwitch CEO Ashish Singhal said on Sunday.

"Users don't know what will happen with their holdings - is government going to ban, not ban, how is it going to be regulated?" Singhal, a former Amazon engineer who co-founded CoinSwitch, told Reuters at the World Economic

"Users don't know what will happen with their holdings - is government going to ban, not ban, how is it going to be regulated?"

ASHISH SINGHAL
CEO, COINSWITCH

Forum in Davos.

"Regulations will bring peace ... more certainty," he added.

While moves on taxation and certain advertising regulation had brought some relief, a lot more needed to be done, Singhal said, adding that India should develop a set of laws.

Amazon: FRL independent dirs facilitated fraudulent stratagem

New Delhi: Amazon has accused independent directors of Future Retail of facilitating "fraudulent stratagem" of transfer of 835 stores to Reliance, saying the narrative of that transfer was on account of failure to pay outstanding rent was a "sham" as the retailer had a month prior to such move.

The retailer wrote on May 19 to FRL independent directors, stated the firm had in meeting with core lender banks on January 1 "categorically admitted the unpaid rental dues was Rs 250 crore only. FRL further stated that it voluntarily retained the amount." **PTI**

'To boost production outside China, Apple may turn to India'

REUTERS
BENGALURU, MAY 22

APPLE INC has told some of its contract manufacturers that it wants to increase production outside China, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

India and Vietnam, which are already sites of Apple production, are among the countries short-listed as alternatives, it added.

Apple last month forecast bigger supply problems. The re-



An Apple store in Shanghai, China. Reuters file

port said Apple is citing China's strict anti-Covid policy and other reasons for its decision. Apple de-

clined to comment to WSJ and couldn't be reached by Reuters on Saturday.

'Govt considering spending \$26 billion more to fight inflation'

REUTERS
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE GOVERNMENT is considering spending an additional Rs 2 trillion (\$26 billion) in the 2022-23 fiscal year to cushion consumers from rising prices and fight multi-year high inflation, two government officials told Reuters.

The new measures will be double the Rs 1 trillion hit government revenues could take from tax cuts on petrol and diesel the finance minister announced on Saturday, both the officials said.

Retail inflation rose to an eight-year high in April.

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 22

DESPITE THE inflation in inputs, India Inc seems to have managed to protect its margins reasonably well by passing on the costs to consumers. Not all companies have been able to take price hikes to offset the entire increase in costs, but aggregate numbers for Q4FY22 show they have covered some ground.

For a universe of 927 companies (excluding banks and financials), operating profit margins contracted by only 50 basis points year-on-year to 16.37 per

cent, in the three months to March. Consequently, the operating profit went up by a good 20 per cent y-o-y and the net profits by a handsome 34 per cent.

Management commentary suggests companies plan to either raise prices further or offer smaller volumes for the same price to protect margins

MARKET WATCH

M-CAP OF 3 OF TOP-FIVE VALUED FIRMS JUMPS

New Delhi: Three of the top five valued firms together added Rs 1,78,650.71 crore to their market valuation last week, led by Reliance Industries. Last week, benchmark BSE Sensex climbed 1,532.77 points or 2.9 per cent. **PTI**

Excise cut on fuel: FM says burden to be borne by Centre

CENTRAL EXCISE DUTY/CESS

Effective	Shared with states (Basic Excise Duty)	Not shared with states (RIDC, SAED and AIDC)	Total excise duty
PETROL			
Mar 2020	₹2.98	₹20	₹22.98
June 2020	₹2.98	₹30	₹32.98
Feb 2021	₹1.4	₹31.5	₹32.9
Nov 2021	₹1.4	₹26.5	₹27.9
May 2022	₹1.4	₹18.5	₹19.9
DIESEL			
Mar 2020	₹4.83	₹14	₹18.83
June 2020	₹4.83	₹27	₹31.83
Feb 2021	₹1.8	₹30	₹31.8
Nov 2021	₹1.8	₹20	₹21.8
May 2022	₹1.8	₹14	₹15.8

Note: Figures in ₹/L. RIDC is Road & Infrastructure Development Cess, SAED is Special Additional Excise Duty and AIDC stands for Agriculture & Infrastructure Development Cess; Sources: Lok Sabha, CBIC

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
& KARUNJIT SINGH

NEW DELHI, MAY 22

PROVIDING DETAILS of the cut in excise duty on fuels, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said the excise duty cut of Rs 8/litre on petrol and Rs 6/litre on diesel has entirely been made in Road & Infrastructure Cess (RIC), which is not shared with states and, hence, the burden lies with Centre. The duty cut, effective Sunday, has a revenue implication of Rs 1 lakh crore annually for the Centre, which, coupled with the earlier duty cut of November 2021, will result in a total revenue loss of Rs 2.2 lakh crore a year, she said.

"Basic ED which is shareable with states has not been touched. Therefore, the entire burden of these two duty cuts (made in Nov. 21 and yesterday) is borne by the Centre. The duty reduction made yesterday has an implication of Rs 1,00,000 cr a year for Centre. The duty reduction made in November '21 has an implication of Rs 1,20,000 cr a year for Centre. Total revenue implication to Centre, on these two duty cuts is thus Rs 2,20,000 cr a year," she tweeted.

Opposition leaders had said that this round of excise duty cut would reduce the share of states in central taxes.

The excise duty reduction on petrol and diesel effective Sunday has entirely been made in RIC and this was the case even in November 2021 when tax on petrol was cut by Rs 5 and that on diesel by Rs 10, she said.

"Basic Excise Duty (BED), Special Additional Excise duty (SAED), Road & Infrastructure Cess (RIC) and Agriculture & Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC) together constitute Excise Duty on petrol and diesel. Basic ED is shareable with states. SAED, RIC & AIDC are non-shareable," she said.

Total Central tax on petrol before this duty cut was Rs 27.9 per litre, while basic excise duty was only Rs 1.4 a litre. Of Rs 21.80 a litre, total Central tax on diesel, basic excise duty was Rs 1.80. Special additional excise duty of Rs 11 a litre on petrol and Rs 8 per litre on diesel was levied. A Rs 2.50 a litre agriculture infrastructure and development cess (AIDC) was levied on petrol and Rs 4 per litre on diesel. Petrol had Rs 13 a litre additional excise duty in form of RIC and Rs 8 of such tax was levied on per litre of diesel, which has been cut now.

As per the tax sharing formula, 41 per cent of taxes collected by the Centre is shared

EXPLAINED How it breaks up

BEFORE THIS round of duty cut, total central tax on petrol was Rs 27.90 per litre and Rs 21.80 a litre on diesel. Basic excise duty, which is shared with states, was only Rs 1.40 a litre on petrol and Rs 1.80 a litre on diesel. Special additional excise duty and agriculture infrastructure and development cess, accounted for Rs 13.5 a litre on petrol and Rs 12 per litre on diesel, not forming a part of the shareable pool with states but have been reduced now by the Centre.

with states, while cess collections accrue to the Centre. Cess constitutes the majority of the tax on petrol and diesel.

Before this round of excise duty cut, Central and state taxes accounted for about 43 per cent and 37 per cent of the retail price of petrol and diesel, respectively, in Delhi. States apply an ad valorem VAT or sales tax on the base price, freight charges, excise duty and dealer commission on petrol and diesel. Therefore, state collections also increase/decrease as the Centre hikes/reduces excise duties.

Former Finance Minister and Congress leader P Chidambaram had on Saturday evening stated that the cut in excise duty was "equal to rob Peter more & pay Peter less!" "FM's exhortation to States is meaningless. When she cuts Central Excise by one rupee, 41 per cent of that rupee belongs to the States," he had stated. On Sunday, he tweeted stating that contrary to what he said on Saturday "the entire burden of the reduction falls on the Centre. To that extent, I stand corrected. The states are getting very little by way of share of duties on Petrol and Diesel. Their revenue is from VAT on Petrol and Diesel."

"The Union Government's levies on petrol have gone up substantially in the past 7 years. Though the revenue to the Union Government has increased manifold, there has not been a matching increase in the revenues to states. This is because the Union Government has increased the cess and surcharge on petrol and diesel while reducing the basic excise duty that is shareable with the states," Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Palanivel Thiaga Rajan said.

ther raise prices further or offer smaller volumes for the same price to protect margins. By a rough reckoning, prices have been raised by 5-15 per cent for consumer staples, 10-12 per cent for durables, around 10 per cent for automobiles, 5-15 per cent for residential properties and around 5-8 per cent at fast food eateries. By passing on the cost increases, companies have managed to grow their top lines despite, in many cases, selling smaller volumes. For the sample of 927 firms, net sales in Q4FY22 rose 24.2 per cent y-o-y.

Hindustan Unilever, for instance, has upped prices by about

10 per cent, enabling it to report a revenue growth of 11 per cent y-o-y in Q4FY22 despite volumes staying flat. Despite a 9 per cent y-o-y drop in volumes, Eicher Motors posted a revenue growth of 9 per cent y-o-y, thanks to a 21 per cent y-o-y increase in the average selling prices (ASPs).

While profitability may have been under some pressure, the good news is that businesses that were hit by the pandemic are bouncing back with the economy opening up. AB Fashion and Retail, for instance, reported better-than expected Q4FY22 revenue growth of 25 per cent y-o-y as the distributor channel recovered. **FE**

Thiem out of sync, out of French Open

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS, MAY 22

IT ALL used to come so easily for Dominic Thiem on a tennis court _ his powerful forehand, his elegant backhand, his hit-which-shot-when calculations, all fine-tuned to the point of a title at the U.S. Open and three other Grand Slam final appearances, including two at Roland Garros.

Nowadays, even though the pain from last year's torn tendon in his right wrist is no longer there, the strokes and, most disconcertingly, the wherewithal, are not what they once were, to the extent that his first-round exit at the French Open on Sunday was his 10th consecutive loss. The situation has become dire enough that Thiem, a 28-year-old Austrian once ranked No. 3 but now No. 194, acknowledged after being beaten 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 by Hugo Dellien that perhaps it's time for him to head to the lower-level Challenger Tour to get a win and gain some confidence.

After lamenting his forehand, his backhand and a too-low first-serve percentage, Thiem got to the bigger issue: "Sometimes, I do really stupid decisions during the rally, drop shots or down-the-line (groundstrokes) at the wrong moment. (In) match match situations, I'm not playing well. ... Then, for example, there was one game today where I did four or five forehand return mistakes in a row, where I'm thinking, 'What the heck is happening?'" His quick departure was not the only noteworthy development on a cloudy, occasionally drizzly Day 1 at the year's second major tennis tournament, which welcomed back pre-pandemic sights and sounds of full attendance and no masks in the stands.

Given Thiem's troubles _ sure, he was the runner-up to Rafael Nadal in Paris in 2018 and 2019, and to Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open in 2020, but his last victory came in May 2021 _ there were other results that probably were more surprising.

Chiefly in that category would be No. 6 seed Ons Jabeur's 3-6, 7-6 (4), 7-5 loss to 56th-ranked Magda Linette of Poland.

Jabeur, a Tunisian who is the first Arab woman to win a WTA title and first to reach a Grand Slam quarterfinal, acknowledged: "I was expecting myself to go far in this tournament." As were others. That's because Jabeur began the day with a tour-leading 17 wins on clay this season, including taking the title at the Madrid Open and reaching the final of the Italian Open.

Another top-10 women's seed _ and the 2016 champion at the place _ was sent home when Garbine Muguruza was defeated 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 by 46th-ranked Kaia Kanepi of Estonia. Muguruza beat Serena Williams in the final at Roland Garros six years ago and Venus Williams in the final at Wimbledon in 2017, but she now has lost her opening match in Paris two straight years.

Patel hopes FIFA doesn't ban India after SC intervention

MIHIR VASAVDA
MAY 22

FEARING A FIFA ban, which could grind most activities to a halt, former All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Praful Patel said he will talk to FIFA president Gianni Infantino and secretary-general Fatma Samoura to request them not to take such strong action. Patel also said he'll speak with the Supreme Court-appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA) and ask them to expedite the election process, underlining that 'dragging this issue can be very disastrous' for Indian football.

On Wednesday, due to a logjam in finalising AIFF's constitution to hold elections, the Supreme Court formed a three-member CoA to look after the day-to-day affairs of the federation, thus bringing an unceremonious end to Patel's stint as president. The Supreme Court also empowered the CoA _ comprising Justice Anil Dave, ex-Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi and former India captain Bhaskar Ganguly _ 'to take decisions on holding of tournaments, selection of players and all other matters necessary for the proper governance of the federation.'

Patel said the AIFF lawyers had pointed out to the court that this could amount to third-party interference and thus violate FIFA's statutes, leading to India's suspension. "All possible scenarios were pointed out and after that, it was up to the honourable court to decide," Patel, whose term officially ended in December 2020, said. "There was a phone call from FIFA on Friday asking for the order of the Supreme Court as they wanted to study that."

As per FIFA statutes, its Congress can suspend a member association at the request of the Council. However, the all-powerful FIFA Council can also temporarily suspend an association with immediate effect without a vote in the Congress.

The impact of FIFA's suspension could be 'drastic', Patel said. To start with, it could lead to India being thrown out of the Asian Cup qualifiers, which are scheduled to begin in Kolkata on June 8. The country could also lose the hosting rights of the Under-17 Women's World Cup, set to take place in October this year, Indian clubs will be barred from competing in continental tournaments and additionally, they will also be unable to sign foreign players other than those already on their rosters.

As per the court order, the CoA has been given time until July 15 to finalise the draft of the constitution before the next hearing takes place on July 21. The CoA has hinted that elections will be held within two or three months from the day the court approves the new constitution.



Former AIFF head Praful Patel says he will talk to the world body, and wants CoA to expedite election process

'Don't underestimate FIFA's power'

Patel said he will use his position as a Council member to request his colleagues to give the country time till July-end to complete the election process. "I don't want to pre-judge. FIFA is like a government, it's systems-driven. You have seen how FIFA reacts very strongly. They have suspended major football countries," Patel said, adding that he got an impression that 'AFC and FIFA legal teams have offered their services to quickly find a solution.' "I will do my best to tell them that if the court allows early elections, do not punish Indian football, but that can only be in the form of a request. I will do my best to talk to them in writing and in person."

The Rajya Sabha member added: "Dragging this issue can be very disastrous. If it's expeditiously dealt with, it'll be the best for Indian football. In the BCCI, we saw years and years of the CoA running the sport. For the ICC, if India doesn't play, there's no cricket in the world. In football, if India doesn't play, no one will miss it. I can't tell the courts what to do, but my suggestion is, please do not underestimate FIFA's strength to take radical decisions."

Patel looked back at his decade-plus long stint as the head of Indian football, which has been riddled with controversies, without any regrets and 'with a sense of satisfaction that one has laid the foundation for many more years to come.'

During his tenure, the AIFF was accused of succumbing to pressure from its commercial rights holders, IMG-Reliance (now Reliance Sports), on many football-related issues. And while the federation's dependence on corporate sponsors' money increased, its

government grant got slashed due to poor performance of the national team.

Patel insisted that the government support for football has always been 'very minimal' and lashed out at their policies. "They say 'you win a medal and we'll give you more money'. This is not the right approach. How can you say that? It's a very ridiculous argument," Patel said.

'Challenge to balance interests'

The career politician accepted it was a 'challenge' to balance the interests of corporates who pour in money, but said he 'never let anybody dictate the way AIFF does its duty.' "Nobody is doing charity. They give us money and get rights for lots of things," Patel said.

He cited the example of the impending merger of the Indian Super League and I-League, which has been one of the prickliest issues of his tenure.

"There was so much resistance from our partners (to merge the two leagues). But we could not let Indian football be driven by a closed league that would destroy it in the future. I can say with a sense of pride that I did push for it. I said, 'nothing doing, unless this issue is resolved, there is no future for Indian football'."

From next season onwards, the winners of the I-League will get promoted to the ISL, and from the 2024-25 season, a promotion-relegation system will be introduced in the top division. "The next people (in charge of AIFF) also will face that challenge. Integrating ISL with I-League will be a major challenge," he said, guaranteeing that there will be no going back on the merger promises already made.

'My position in politics would've helped AIFF than hurt them'

Patel said juggling issues like these showed that heading a federation required people with all kinds of skill-sets, going against the argument that former players should be elected to the top posts. Last month, the Madras High Court observed that only sportspersons, and not politicians, should be office-bearers of sports federations.

Patel said a democratic process should be followed to elect office-bearers, and everyone should be allowed to be a part of it. "Administration of football has nothing to do with just understanding the game. I understand the game as well but running the federation is not playing the game. The leader of the federation has to be administering the game, and balance various interests," he said. "I don't think it is right to say politicians cannot perform a job. My position in politics would have helped the AIFF on more occasions than hurt them."

ASIA CUP

Sardar's coaching debut talking point as India face Pak

MIHIR VASAVDA
MAY 22

BIRENDRA LAKRA and SV Sunil smiled sheepishly when asked how they felt playing in a team coached by former teammate and captain Sardar Singh. "It's not weird under him. He's a strict disciplinarian," Sunil said. Lakra chipped in: "He has been a role model. He's always been known for his fitness and discipline."

It's come full circle for the trio that formed the core of the team when India clinched the Asia Cup at the previous edition in 2017. Then, after heading in different directions, they are reunited.

Sunil, playing his fourth Asia Cup, a testimony to his longevity, was on a sabbatical when he was summoned to join the training camp for the Commonwealth Games. Lakra was enjoying his retirement, juggling time between family and office work, when he, too, got the call-up. Sardar, who'd been earning his coaching credentials, had been waiting for this opportunity.

The Asia Cup, starting in Jakarta on Monday, might not be of huge significance for the defending champions. The teams that reach the semifinals of the tournament will make it to January's World Cup, but India, being hosts, do not have to worry about qualification. Yet, when they take the field against Pakistan in their opening match, there'll be some fascinating storylines to follow. Sardar's debut in the dugout _ he'll be working alongside junior team coach BJ Kariappa _ will be one of them.

The other important thread to follow during the tournament will be the return of Simranjeet Singh. The forward last played in India's bronze medal playoff at the Tokyo Olympics against Germany, where he scored two goals that had a decisive role in the outcome of the match.

Since then, he'd been nursing an injury and missed all Pro League matches as well as the Asian Champions Trophy.

New faces

Simranjeet's comeback, coupled with the return of Sunil and Lakra, will be crucial for India given that the rest of the team has little-to-no senior international experience. Ten players, who were all part of last year's junior World Cup, will make their senior team debut on Monday. This includes the likes of drag-flicker Yashdeep Siwach, defenders Abhisek Lakra and Manjeet, midfielder Vishnukant Singh and forward Uttam Singh. Midfielders Mareeswaren Sakthivel and Sheshe Gowda BM, and forwards Abharan Sudev, Pawan Rajbhar and S Karthi will also make their first India appearances on Monday. The youngsters will immediately be thrown at the deep end when they open



Sardar Singh will be working alongside junior team coach BJ Kariappa.

Simranjeet's comeback, coupled with the return of Sunil and Lakra, will be crucial for India given that the rest of the team has little-to-no senior international experience.

their campaign against Pakistan, who too have travelled with a young squad as part of their rebuilding process.

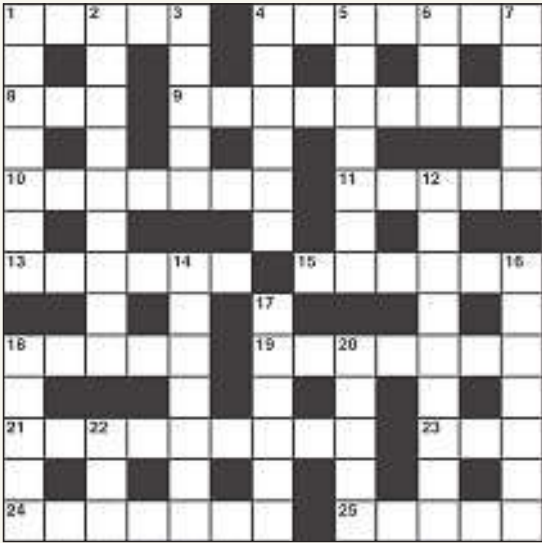
"We'll need to motivate them, guide them. If we get affected by the excitement and the pressure of playing Pakistan, the younger players too will come under pressure," Sunil said.

This young bunch, led by two veterans and coached by a former India captain, was selected for this tournament as preparation for July-August's Commonwealth Games. With an eye on the Asian Games, India had decided to send their second-string squad to Birmingham. To give the hastily-assembled group some match practice, Hockey India chose to send the group for the Asia Cup, where not a lot is at stake from an Indian point of view.

Now with the Asian Games postponed, it's unclear whether the main playing group coached by Graham Reid will take part at the CWG or the team currently in Jakarta.

The players aren't fretting over it. "I am at a stage of my career where I approach each tournament as if it's my last," Sunil said. "So, I hope to win this one, and not worry about what's in store in the future."

CROSSWORD 4747



- ACROSS**
1 Group tutorial (5)
4 Get mail perhaps but not without delay (4,3)
9 A low sound (3)
8 Goes ashore in South Africa to get the picture (9)
10 A sitter becoming a performer (7)
11 Not rounds used in an erratic salvo (5)
13 One can never be sure if one has them (6)
15 Dazed state possibly produced by Proust (6)
18 You may play it but don't let little Josephine (5)
19 Jams and preserves (7)
21 A plain fellow treated like a doormat (7,2)
23 One note produces anger (3)
24 Wrings out (7)
25 Do some spade work - for the figure (5)
- DOWN**
1 Order the ambitious officer hopes to get (7)
2 A call for military revolution (5,4)
3 These are sure to be brisk for beer on board (5)
4 Well-filled vessel (6)
5 Fail to include something so I must be corrected (4,3)
6 Start leading the field (3)
7 Think of Americans (5)
12 A northerner brought up fish that's frightful (9)
14 Soldier puts nothing in report sent back (7)
16 Relation to treat with consideration (7)
17 Pass around the quarterdeck (6)
18 Cook and sew (5)
20 Dance around when beaten (5)
22 Take food from the attendant (3)

Solutions Crossword 4746: Across: 1 Perfect fit, 8 Put on, 9 Allured, 10 Student, 11 Growl, 12 Totems, 14 Lyrics, 17 Venus, 19 Umbrage, 21 Lariats, 22 Waist, 23 Headstrut, Down: 2 Entrust, 3 Fence, 4 Chaste, 5 Fall guy, 6 Torso, 7 Adolescent, 8 Positively, 13 Mascara, 15 Italian, 16 Nurses, 18 North, 20 Bowler.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



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.

_____ are just a way of showing other people that we have respect for them - Bill Kelly (4,7)

KMAER	AETDNN
COOPS	AENTGM

SOLUTION: MAKERS, SCORER, TANNED, MANNER. Answer: Good manners are just a way of showing other people that we have respect for them - Bill Kelly

SUDOKU 4843

Difficulty Level 4s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4842



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

May I advise you to keep a close watch on all financial transactions? Today's epic planetary influences will have an amazing range of effects, but the impact on your financial, emotional and material security seems to be greatest. If competing for a prize, go for broke.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Tomorrow's challenging lunar pattern is already casting its shadow over your affairs in the nicest possible way. This will be an optimum weekend for creative expression, cultural events, romantic encounters and happy relationships with children.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

You may imagine that you know what is going on, but you are probably mistaken. Rarely have you been so likely to pick up the wrong end of the stick. Please take proper advice in all legal, foreign and travel matters. After all, if you're properly prepared, then you'll be one step ahead of the game.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Jupiter and Venus are as benevolent a pair of planets as you could wish to have watching over you. Generosity on your part will win friends and impress people, protecting you in the present and gaining you allies for the future: give now to receive later.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

With so much planetary activity taking place today, chiefly a stunning Sun-Moon angle, you'd do very well to take centre stage. Watch out for flying missiles, though, and duck if anything comes in your direction. Emotionally, by the way, family relationships take first place.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

I am sure that you have been put out, pushed around and generally had your interests ignored, but then that's all part of life's rich tapestry. This is no time to complain about the world being unfair. You'll just have to live with it like everyone else.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Recent unexpected developments at work have not undermined your confidence or commitment. Far from it. If your professional or worldly ambitions have been dented, I suspect that the real cause lies elsewhere. An intimate relationship could be proving costly, but a generous gesture will be worth it.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Today's lunar alignments are about the most intriguing that there have been for a long time. The news will be exciting, even if you are enjoying placid times. It's doubly significant for all new relationships, so go forward with hope in your heart.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

All the extraordinary planetary activity now taking place must be harnessed and used to channel your noble and selfless instincts. You have a clear choice whether to go all out for personal interest or to realise that material security is, in the grand scheme of things, purely temporary.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

It's a day of major planetary configurations, but whether you are directly involved in today's dramatic events, or merely a passive observer is a moot point. I take the view that the latter is more likely. That way you can put your feet up while partners pick up the pieces.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Today's lunar patterns are among the most striking to hit your sign for a good few months. If you're not knocked slightly off course there'll be something wrong, for it means that you're not directly in tune with your stars. After all, nobody promised it would be easy.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

A helpful aspect between the Sun and Jupiter is only one of a series of benevolent planetary alignments which is causing you to think again. There'll probably be a major mystery to solve. The answers will come next month, but you might not get the full picture for another three months.

17 SPORT

PLAYING TODAY

Hockey: Asia Cup
India vs Pakistan; 5pm
Live on Star Sports Network
French Open
Live on Sony Sports Network, 2.30pm

Man City eclipse rivals United to become EPL's dominant force

SHASHANK NAIR
MAY 22

JUST DAYS before Manchester City won their fourth league title in five years, Pep Guardiola compared his team's consistency in winning the Premier League to Alex Ferguson's golden era when he achieved the same level of dominance. Perhaps, it was a statement designed to rub salt into the wounds of their neighbours.

On Sunday, Guardiola and City won the title in a dramatic finale. City came back from 0-2 down to beat Aston Villa 3-2 with Liverpool breathing down their necks.

When a cash-strapped City was bought by Sheikh Mansour, their initial days of playing catch-up to an English football dynasty prompted a 'money can't buy everything' admonition. Yet City stuck to their guns, stressing that their project had nothing to do with United.

City's 2011-12 title confirmed that the threat was real. Ferguson came back next season to win the Premier League, but the writing was on the wall.

In 2012, City hired Ferran Soriano and Txiki Begiristain – the architects of Barcelona's famed success in the late 2000s and early 2010s. The owners of City Football Group then opened a £200m football campus – one that left behind Manchester United's famed youth facilities in the rear-view mirror by some margin.

Just as City continued to lay the red carpet for one of the greatest managers football has seen, United embarked on life after Ferguson and club CEO David Gill. City waited while Guardiola took over Bayern Munich. And in 2016, they finally had their target.

During this time, and in the years to come, City flouted financial rules, unlike any club before them with inflated sponsorship deals. When they were taken to task by UEFA for breaking Financial Fair Play rules, the Court of Arbitration for Sport provided the Citizens with get-out-of-jail cards. Money talked and titles started to flow.

Meanwhile, at the other end of town, a club geared towards proactively searching for the best deals in the market was now trying to break transfer records in a desperate attempt to close the gap. In three seasons at United, Jose Mourinho, Guardiola's eternal rival, had a net transfer spend of just under 315 million pounds. The money resulted in Paul Pogba, Romelu Lukaku and Zlatan Ibrahimovic signing for the Red Devils.

While rebuilds and managerial changes were taking place at United, City's golden period under Guardiola began in 2017. Their closest challenge has come from Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool, who managed to win their first-ever Premier League title, spending far less, but wisely. The Champions League is the only crown that evades the Citizens but signing a striker like Erling Braut Haaland could wipe away that blemish as well.

When a cash-strapped City was bought by Sheikh Mansour, their initial days of playing catch-up to an English football dynasty prompted a 'money can't buy everything' admonition

How City nearly blew up 14-point cushion & became champions on the final day

In mid-January, Manchester City were coasting to another EPL title. Guardiola's side had opened up a 14-point gap over Liverpool. However, Liverpool's incredible form since the start of 2022, coupled with a few slip-ups by City, helped them trim the lead to just one point by mid-March and take the title race right to the very last day of the season. City, ultimately held on to defend the title

JANUARY 15

1. MANCHESTER CITY	56 PTS
3. LIVERPOOL	42 PTS

JANUARY 16

1. MANCHESTER CITY	56 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	45 PTS

Kevin de Bruyne's superb curling shot helps City beat second-placed Chelsea 1-0. City, with the win, race 13 points ahead of Chelsea and 14 more than third-placed Liverpool. The following day, the Reds beat Brentford to move to the second spot but remain 11 points behind the leaders.

JANUARY 22

1. MANCHESTER CITY	57 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	45 PTS

JANUARY 23

1. MANCHESTER CITY	57 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	48 PTS

Manchester City drop points away from home to Southampton, who defend deep and hold the reigning champions to a 1-1 draw. The following day, Liverpool make most of City's slip-up by beating Crystal Palace and reducing the gap to nine points.



Manager Pep Guardiola masterminded Manchester City's title run. *Reuters*

FEBRUARY 19

1. MANCHESTER CITY	63 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	57 PTS

City lose to Tottenham 3-2 while on the same day, Liverpool thrash Norwich City 3-1 to cut the deficit to six points.

FEBRUARY 25

1. MANCHESTER CITY	63 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	60 PTS

Postponed due to Covid-19, Liverpool play their rescheduled match against Leeds United and thrash them 6-0 to get within three points of Man City.

MARCH 15

1. MANCHESTER CITY	70 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	66 PTS

MARCH 17

1. MANCHESTER CITY	70 PTS
2. LIVERPOOL	69 PTS

A resilient Crystal Palace hold Manchester City to a goalless draw at Selhurst Park even though Guardiola's team dominated the proceedings.

A couple of days later, Liverpool produce a stunning performance to beat Arsenal 2-0 away from home and cut City's gap at the top to just one point.

3-2... No. 1

Down 0-2 to Aston Villa and title slipping out of their grasp, Man City stage stunning fightback to win fourth EPL title in five years

CITY'S TITLE NO. 4 IN 5 YEARS

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1. Man City	38	29	6	3	73	93
2. Liverpool	38	28	8	2	68	92

- Manchester City 3 bt Aston Villa 2
- Liverpool 3 bt Wolves 1

REUTERS

MAY 22

MANCHESTER CITY won their fourth Premier League title in five years on Sunday but nearly let the trophy slip from their hands, coming back from two goals down to beat Aston Villa with three goals inside an electrifying five minutes late in the second half.

After an afternoon of high nerves, laced with fear of Liverpool pipping them to the title at the post, relieved and jubilant City fans poured on to the field at the final whistle.

Matty Cash put Villa in front in the 37th minute with a fine header from a Lucas Digne cross from the left flank, and the mood in the stadium instantly changed. The edgy mood among the home fans turned to desperation after Philippe Coutinho then doubled the lead for Villa with a goal of pure simplicity. Ollie Watkins headed on from a goal kick by keeper Robin Olsen long, and the former Liverpool midfielder Coutinho produced a brilliant first touch to cut inside and then drilled the ball into the bottom corner. Liverpool were level with Wolves at the time of Coutinho's goal, but City knew that a goal for Jurgen Klopp's side could now take the title away from them.

But then came the City comeback blitz that sealed the title regardless of events at Anfield. Two substitutes combined for the first, with Ilkay Gundogan heading in a Raheem Sterling cross at the back post in the 76th minute. Half-time substitute Oleksandr Zinchenko, on the left flank, then showed composure to pull back to Rodri, and the Spaniard delivered a pinpoint finish – side-footing into the bottom corner from 20 metres out. The title-winning goal came in the 81st minute when De Bruyne whipped in a low cross to Gundogan, who tapped in from close range, sending the crowd into rapturous delight.



Manchester City players celebrate after winning their fourth Premier League title in five years on Sunday. *Reuters*

SPURS TAKE FINAL CL SPOT

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
4. Spurs	38	22	5	11	29	71
5. Arsenal	38	22	3	13	13	69

- Norwich 0 lost to Tottenham 5
- Arsenal 5 bt Everton 1

Arsenal hammered Everton 5-1 on Sunday but it was not enough to snatch a Champions League place – and it was the visiting fans who were celebrating at the end after Liverpool missed out on the title.

Arsenal were on top from first to last and led 2-1 at the break through a Gabriel Martinelli strike and an Eddie Nketiah header. Second-half strikes for Cedric Soares, Gabriel Magalhaes and Martin Odegaard were a fair reflection of their

dominance. However, Tottenham Hotspur's 5-0 thrashing of Norwich City ensured they remained fourth, leaving Arsenal in fifth.

The Londoners, who last played in the Champions League in 2016-17 after 19 straight years of qualifying under Arsene Wenger, will have to settle for a place in the Europa League, which itself is something of a success after they began the season with three straight defeats.

Two goals from Dejan Kulusevski for Tottenham and Heung-Min Son, and a Harry Kane header guaranteed Antonio Conte's side a fourth-place finish and a spot in Europe's elite club competition for the first time in three seasons.

At full time the home fans gave Arsenal a good send-off after a troubled season but it was the Everton supporters, still giddy from their great escape on Thursday, who were making all the noise.

MAN U SEAL EUROPA BERTH

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
6. Man U	38	16	10	12	0	58
7. W. Ham	38	16	8	14	9	56

- Crystal Palace 1 bt Man Utd 0
- Brighton 3 bt West Ham 1

Manchester United secured a ticket to next season's Europa League after they ended their Premier League campaign in sixth place – despite losing 1-0 away at Crystal Palace.

Forward Wilfried Zaha scored against his former team in the first half as Palace celebrated their first-ever Premier League victory over United at home. Ralf Rangnick's tenure as interim manager came to an end with United collecting 58 points, their lowest tally in Premier League history.

COUNTY TO COUNTRY

IPL snub turns out to be blessing in disguise as Pujara returns

DEVENDRA PANDEY

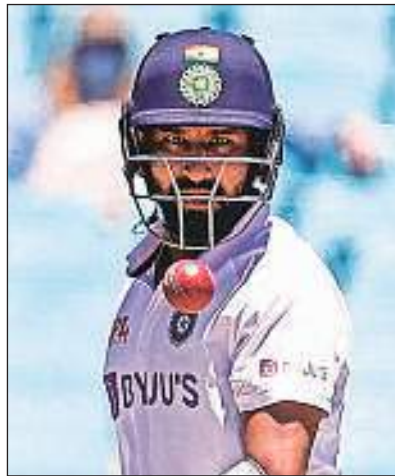
MAY 22

GOING UNSOLD in the Indian Premier League auction in February has turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Cheteshwar Pujara. While the IPL was on, Pujara travelled to England for a highly successful county stint with Sussex, which has helped him force his way back into the India Test squad for the deciding Birmingham Test in July.

"You can say that now in hindsight. Had I been picked by an IPL team, there were major chances that I wouldn't have got any games. I would have just gone (to nets) and practised. Getting match practice and practice in the nets is always different. So when the county thing happened, I just said yes. The major reason I said yes was that I wanted my old rhythm back," Pujara told The Indian Express from Paris, where he is on holiday.

With scores of 6, 201 not out, 109, 12, 203, 16, 170* and 3, Pujara slammed 720 runs for Sussex in five County Championship games at a staggering average of 120 across April and May. The stunning performance raised his hopes of making an India comeback in whites.

"I was positive, there was no doubt about it. The way my county stint went, I was hopeful that I will make a comeback to the Indian team. But when I went to play county cricket, the India comeback was never on my mind; I just wanted to find my rhythm and I knew one big innings would help me find my rhythm back."



Cheteshwar Pujara has scored 720 runs in five County matches for Sussex. *File*

Pujara is back, but the other veteran batsman who had also been dropped for the home Tests against Sri Lanka in March, Ajinkya Rahane, hasn't made it back. The fates of the two middle-order stalwarts had been seemingly intertwined for quite a while. Their struggles to post big runs had played out in parallel; they had fought against their fading fortunes with a brave, counter-attacking century partnership in the second innings of the Johannesburg Test against South Africa in January. Nevertheless, time had appeared to run out when the na-

Umrn, Arshdeep get maiden call-ups

New Delhi: Umrn Malik and Arshdeep Singh, young pacers with vastly contrasting styles, have been given maiden call-ups to the India squad for the five-match home T20I series against South Africa starting June 9.

With speeds often above 150kph, Sunrisers Hyderabad tearaway Umrn has been among the leading wicket-takers in the IPL, and the sight of him shattering stumps has captured the nation's imagination, although he's gone for runs too. Meanwhile, left-arm Arshdeep has conceded just 7.70 runs an over for Punjab Kings, which is highly creditable considering he is regularly used at the death.

Hardik Pandya and Dinesh Karthik

tional selectors opted to try out fresh talent for the Sri Lanka Tests.

In February, the IPL auction had taken place, where both Pujara and Rahane had put in their names. Pujara would go unsold, and it had seemed even Rahane would, before he was picked up at his base price of Rs 1 crore, the sole bid coming from Kolkata Knight Riders. And that is where, in hindsight, the duo's fortunes diverged.

By the time Pujara began his county stint against Derbyshire on April 14, Rahane's IPL season had ground to a halt after only 80

have made comebacks, riding on their IPL showing. Pandya has led debutants Gujarat Titans to the top of the table, batted responsibly and bowled nearly 25 overs. Karthik, who hasn't played for India since the 2019 World Cup, has finished multiple games for Royal Challengers Bangalore at a strike-rate of 191.33.

T20I SQUAD: KL Rahul (Captain), Rituraj Gaikwad, Ishan Kishan, Deepak Hooda, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (vice-captain) (wk), Dinesh Karthik (wk), Hardik Pandya, Venkatesh Iyer, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Harshal Patel, Avesh Khan, Arshdeep Singh, Umrn Malik

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

runs at just a run-a-ball strike rate from his first five matches. From their sixth game on April 15, KKR would drop Rahane. And by the time he got his next game, on May 9, Pujara had racked up 720 runs. A 95-Test veteran churning out doubles and daddy tons in the country where the team is set to play a series decider – the timing, weight and significance of Pujara's runs forced the selectors to bring him back.

For Pujara, the aim at Sussex was to get 150-plus scores. "If you look at my innings in the past, I was getting 80s, 90s, so I never felt

I was out of form even when the big runs were not coming. I was just hoping to get big runs. Big runs means not 100 but 150-plus scores. Because to get back to my usual concentration level, I needed those big scores. And I found that in England. I found my rhythm and as I got those runs, things began to fall in place."

Spending hours batting in the middle is what Pujara is known for, and he said that getting into that mode again also made him more aware of where his fitness levels were. "Once I bat for long, it not only improves concentration, but it also improves fitness. The county stint helped me to see where my fitness stands. One cannot play big innings if one does not have proper fitness. So everything went well," Pujara said.

Mayank dropped

With KL Rahul returning to the Test squad as vice-captain, and Shubman Gill retaining his spot as well, Mayank Agarwal has been left out. Agarwal opened along with skipper Rohit Sharma in the Sri Lanka Tests and had managed underwhelming scores of 33, 4 and 22. Before that, he had had a tough tour of South Africa, where he could average just 22.5 in six innings.

TEST SQUAD: Rohit Sharma (Captain), KL Rahul (vice-captain) Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Hanuma Vihari, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant (wk), KS Bharat (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Shardul Thakur, Mohd Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd Siraj, Umesh Yadav, Prasidh Krishna

Punjab Kings beat SRH to finish sixth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI, MAY 22

PUNJAB KINGS ended their campaign on a winning note, crushing an already demoralised Sunrisers Hyderabad by five wickets in an inconsequential final IPL league match here on Sunday. Batting first, Sunrisers Hyderabad managed only 157 for 8 on a good batting track.

But it was never going to be enough as Liam Livingstone made mincemeat of a hapless SRH attack, scoring 49 not out off 22 balls, and also hitting the coveted 1000th six of the tournament.

Shikhar Dhawan (39 off 32 balls) and Jitesh Sharma (19 off 7 balls) also contributed handsomely to the team's cause as the chase was completed in just 15.1 overs.

Punjab Kings, who haven't made the play-offs since their final appearance in 2014, finished sixth while the Sunrisers ended their high-spending IPL on eighth in the 10-team competition. For Livingstone, it was all about smashing big sixes once again as he hit five in all, while Dhawan helped himself to two fours and two sixes.

BRIEF SCORES: Sunrisers Hyderabad 157 for 8 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 43; Harpreet Brar 3/26, Nathan Ellis 3/40) lost to Punjab Kings 160 for 5 in 15.1 overs (Liam Livingstone 49 not out; Fazalhaq Farooqi 2/32) by 5 wickets



Thank You Shri Narendra Modi Hon'ble Prime Minister of India for major economic decisions



- Reduction in Central Excise Duty on petrol by Rs 8 per litre and diesel by Rs 6 per litre
- Duty structure changes which will reduce input cost of core sectors
- Subsidy of ₹200 per gas cylinder under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) which will provide relief to poor households

FICCI welcomes measures taken to benefit the common man as well as MSMEs.

www.ficci.in
[f ficciindia](https://www.facebook.com/ficciindia)
[t ficci_india](https://www.twitter.com/ficci_india)
[i ficci_india](https://www.instagram.com/ficci_india)
[in ficci](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ficci)
[e blog.ficci.com](https://www.blog.ficci.com)

NEXA

A NEW AGE OF BOLD TECH BEGINS.

CREATE. INSPIRE.



THE NEW AGE
BALENO
TECH GOES BOLD



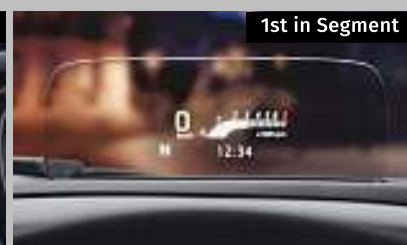
Scan the QR code
to know how
tech goes bold.



Also available
Via subscription.
Scan to know more.



360 View Camera



Head Up Display



22.86cm SmartPlay Pro+



6 Airbags



In-built Suzuki Connect

NEXA
Safety Shield

Standard Across All Variants

- DUAL FRONT AIRBAGS
- ABS WITH EBD
- PEDESTRIAN PROTECTION COMPLIANCE
- COMPLIANT WITH -
 - FULL FRONTAL IMPACT
 - FRONTAL OFFSET IMPACT
 - SIDE IMPACT

Feature and accessories shown may not be part of standard fitment. Black glass shade on the vehicle is due to lighting effect. Images used are for illustration purposes only.

Contact us at
1800-200-6392
1800-102-NEXA
www.nexaexperience.com
NOW YOU CAN ALSO BOOK ONLINE

WEST DELHI NEXA GT KARNAL ROAD RANA MOTORS PH: 7289999111 NEXA DWARKA SECTOR 14 COMPETENT AUTOMOBILES COMPANY PH: 9599947807	NORTH DELHI NEXA WAZIRPUR COMPETENT AUTOMOBILES PH: 9811478982 NEXA SAFDARJUNG ENCLAVE TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES PH: 7290075604	WEST DELHI NEXA ROHINI SECTOR 10 JAGMOHAN AUTOMOTIVES PVT. LTD. PH: 7290054935 NEXA RAJOURI GARDEN TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES PH: 9999525750	WEST DELHI NEXA NARELA DD MOTORS PH: 9081900800 NEXA PUNJABI BAGH DD MOTORS PH: 9081900800	WEST DELHI NEXA PITAMPURA KRISH MOTORS PH: 7838555047 NEXA MAYAPURI KRISH AUTOMOTORS PH: 7838555076	WEST DELHI NEXA PATPARGANJ MAGIC AUTO PH: 8929400503 NEXA MOTI NAGAR AAA VEHICLE LEASES PVT. LTD. PH: 8448993400	CENTRAL DELHI NEXA DILSHAD GARDEN COMPETENT AUTOMOBILES PH: 8377007962 NEXA GOKULPURI VIPUL MOTORS PVT. LTD. PH: 9870194313	SOUTH DELHI NEXA PREET VIHAR TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES PH: 7290091122 NEXA DARYAGANJ TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES PH: 8929200160	SOUTH DELHI NEXA AKSHARDHAM FAIRDEAL CARS PH: 9999525161 NEXA EAST OF KAILASH RANA MOTORS PH: 9999788886	SOUTH DELHI NEXA MATHURA ROAD PASCO AUTOMOBILES PH: 9999120572 NEXA NIT BVA AUTO PH: 7294121212
WEST DELHI NEXA OKHLA PHASE 1 PREM MOTORS PH: 011-42900000, 7063074531 NEXA BATA CHOWK VIPUL MOTORS PH: 9599814771	WEST DELHI NEXA PALWAL CENTRAL AUTONATION PH: 9311864040	WEST DELHI NEXA MG ROAD PASCO AUTOMOBILES PH: 9711290001	WEST DELHI NEXA RAJIV CHOWK GURUGRAM RANA MOTORS PH: 8929268142	WEST DELHI NEXA SECTOR 29 GURUGRAM TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES PH: 9999525740	WEST DELHI NEXA INFOCITY SEC 34 COMPETENT AUTOMOBILES PH: 7290025353	WEST DELHI NEXA UDYOG VIHAR VIPUL MOTORS PH: 7404666666	WEST DELHI NEXA IDC SEC 14 GURUGRAM PREM MOTORS PH: 0124-4440000, 7065074501	WEST DELHI NEXA SAHIBABAD TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES PH: 8929200160	WEST DELHI NEXA DARYAGANJ TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES PH: 8929200160

SMART FINANCE
AN ONLINE END-TO-END CAR FINANCE SOLUTION

- Multiple financiers
- Digital Document Upload
- Live Loan status
- Complete transparency (associated fees & charges)

*T&C apply. Offers may vary across variants. Maruti Suzuki reserves the right to withdraw offers at any point in time. Smart Finance available only in select cities.

New Delhi