



Nation Resolves To Ensure Benefits Of All Schemes Reach 100% Entitled People

“ I am working as a family member for the crores of citizens of the country. No beneficiary, who is entitled for the benefit, should be left out of the schemes for the welfare of the poor.”

Narendra Modi



- 6 lakh villages declared ODF
- Electricity connections to 2.6 crore households
- More than 9.5 crore households have tap water connections
- 9.17 crore gas connections to Women
- Bank accounts opened for the first time for 45 crore people
- Poor get insured at ₹ 1 per month under PM Suraksha Bima Yojana

- Cash transferred directly to bank accounts of 20 crore Women during Corona period
- Under PM KISAN, 11.78 crore farmers get ₹ 6,000 per year directly in their bank accounts
- 68% beneficiaries of MUDRA Yojana are Women
- MUDRA loan to more than 35 crore people

- Free ration to 80 crore people during Corona pandemic
- Under Ayushman Bharat Yojana, 3.28 crore people get free treatment upto ₹ 5 lakh
- 15 out of a total of 22 AIIMS established during last 8 years
- Under PM SVANidhi, collateral free loan to 31.9 lakh street vendors during pandemic
- Under PM Awas Yojana, more than 3 crore families get their own houses





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HORRIFIC MURDER, SAYS CM MANN

Days after his security trimmed, Cong leader Moosewala shot dead in Punjab

Gang rivalry, says DGP; Canada-based member of Bishnoi gang claims role

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR & NAVJEEVAN GOPAL
AMRITSAR, CHANDIGARH, MAY 29

DAYS AFTER the Punjab government reduced his security cover, along with that of many others, Congress leader and popular Punjabi singer Shubhdeep Singh Sidhu Moosewala was shot dead near Mansa on Sunday.

Police said Moosewala, 28,

was shot at while he was driving his SUV in village Jhawahar Ke in Mansa district with two others, and was declared brought dead at the Mansa Civil Hospital.

Punjab Director General of Police Viresh Kumar Bhawra said, "Moosewala left his house in Moosa village at 4.30 pm. Around 5.30 pm, he was driving his jeep, accompanied by two persons, when two vehicles that had been following him

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

At the Civil Hospital in Mansa where Moosewala, 28, was declared dead. **Express REPORTS, PAGE 12**

Mann back in the hot seat: singer killing after Mohali attack, Minister sacking

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, MAY 29

SOON AFTER the public sacking of Punjab health minister and Mansa MLA Vijay Singla for alleged corruption, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government

headed by Bhagwant Singh Mann finds itself in another political firestorm over the killing of popular singer Shubhdeep Singh Moosewala, days after it withdrew his security cover.

Coming a month after the violence in Patiala between workers of a Shiv Sena faction and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Rlys to police: Capacity panel plans to boost citizen-state interface

ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

AS PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi leads the NDA government into its ninth year, a silent reform of capacity building within the government is likely showing results in the Indian Railways.

An exercise initiated by the Capacity Building Commission which was set up in April 2021, and rolled out across various zones by the Railways has identified 12 friction points that can spoil the travel experience of customers; and four level of employees — the Traveling Ticket Examiner, the booking clerk for passengers, the booking clerk for freight consignments, and the stationmaster in smaller stations, who potentially make or mar the impression the customers carry back home.

At the top of the list of the dozen identified pressure points

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**THE EDITORIAL PAGE**

■ Eight years on

THE IDEAS PAGE

■ Women take the wheel

■ Anything but achhe din

■ A digital power

EXPLAINED

PAGES 10, 11, 14

AFGHANISTAN REPORT

Pak-based terror groups run training camps in Taliban areas: UN team

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

PAKISTAN-BASED terror groups Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) are present in Taliban-controlled parts of Afghanistan where they run training camps and have deep links with the ruling regime, including meetings at the top level, according to the latest report of the UN monitoring team on Afghanistan.

The report also states that the Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) has between 180 and 400

fighters, including "nationals from Bangladesh, India, Myanmar and Pakistan...located in Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Nimruz, Paktika and Zabul Provinces".

However, it adds that while Al Qaeda "enjoys greater freedom under the new Afghan regime", it is "unlikely to mount or direct attacks outside Afghanistan for the next year or two, owing to both a lack of capability and Taliban restraint".

The report cites a member state to state that "JeM maintains eight training camps in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**SPORT**

IPL: GUJARAT TITANS BEAT RAJASTHAN ROYALS IN FINAL P18



'China made a wrong bet... whichever way you look at it, Russia has lost this war'

SHYAM SARAN
FORMER FOREIGN SECRETARY

PAGE 13

Ministry withdraws advisory that said don't share copy of Aadhaar

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

THE MINISTRY of Electronics and Information Technology Sunday withdrew an advisory issued by the Aadhaar agency which cautioned people to not share a photocopy of the document with entities such as hotels and cinema halls owing to the possibility of "misuse". A ministry statement Sunday said the advisory was withdrawn because it could be "misinterpreted".

The advisory was issued Friday by the regional office of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

EXPLAINED CAG flagged privacy risk

THE COMPTROLLER and Auditor General of India had noted in April that UIDAI had not ensured that the applications or devices used by agencies or private firms for Aadhaar authentication were "capable of storing personal information... which put the privacy of residents at risk".

RAJYA SABHA POLLS: RCP SINGH SNUBBED BY JD(U) PAGE 8

4 Indians in Nepal plane crash: 'Had 10 days together a year...were excited'

YOGESH NAIK, PALLAVISMART & YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
MUMBAI, KATHMANDU, MAY 29

THESE WERE the 10 days they would spend together every year, the separated parents and their two children. And this year, the plan was Nepal.

On Sunday, the four Indians were among the 22 people on board the Twin Otter aircraft that took off from Pokhara at 9.55 am

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Ashok Kumar Tripathy, Ritika and Vaibhavi Bandekar in a May 27 photo taken by travel agent Sagar Acharya in Kathmandu

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Narendra Modi
Prime Minister



Shivraj Singh Chouhan
Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh

Better Cities Improved lives



Smt. Malti Mehra
Bankhedi

The blessing of tap water reaches homes

Gone are the days when women had to step out of the house in search of water. Today, they can enjoy tap water in the comfort of their homes. This has immensely benefited the women, and has empowered them. Now the children do not need to spend time hauling water from the handpumps. They can focus on studies and sports. The water from the tap is a blessing, and can be used to drink and cook as well.

A new identity to the women of today

Vandana Bathri, a resident of Multai tehsil of Betul district of Madhya Pradesh, lived in a kutchra house with her husband and two children for the last 20 years. All these years, Vandana and her family lived through the inconvenience of water-seepage during the rainy season. After receiving all the required information about the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) from the local administration, she took advantage of the scheme and built a pucca house. Now, Vandana and her family are enjoying happy days, in the comfort of their PMAY (U) home.



नगर पालिका परिषद बैतूल
वंदना पति दीपक बाथरी



Disease no more: Clean environment is the way to go

"Earlier, we used to get sick quite often because of the open drains near our houses. But now, these drains are clean and we are able to enjoy an odor-free and clean environment", says Zaheeda, a resident of Dharampuri. The sewerage connection has helped the residents of Dharampuri enjoy better health, and now they can even enjoy the open spaces near their houses and their children can play without a threat of falling sick.



Excellent cities in Swachh Survekshan-2021

• Indore • Bhopal • Ujjain • Dewas • Narmadapuram • Barwaha • Pachmarhi Cantt

27 cities bagged star ratings

• Five Star-1 • Three Star-9 • One Star-17 cities

Madhya Pradesh has received 11 awards out of total 20 award categories at the national level under the Smart City Mission

Madhya Pradesh ranks first in the entire country in the implementation of PM SVANidhi Yojana

Madhya Pradesh secured the second position in the country in the implementation of PM Awas Yojana (Urban)

Urban Development and Housing Department, Madhya Pradesh

8 GOVT & POLITICS

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



PREJUDICE AND PRIDE

JHARKHAND CHIEF Minister Hemant Soren, who was in the national capital on Sunday, could not hide his discomfiture over the ongoing investigations against him by central agencies. During an interaction with a group of mediapersons, he repeatedly stressed that he is being "harassed". Soren said he is making fewer visits to the national capital as "there are attempts to close the doors of Delhi towards me". He was quick to add that "sher ka bachcha sher hi rahega (a lion's cub will remain a lion)".

SURPRISE APPEARANCE

THE 35TH death anniversary of former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh saw leaders from a host of political parties sharing the dais during an event at Delhi's Vigyan Bhawan. Behind the speech that drew the loudest cheers from the audience, comprising mostly of RLD workers from western Uttar Pradesh, was an unlikely face, Pradyot Deb Barman, the leader of Tripura's indigenous political outfit TIPRA Motha. At the end of his speech, during which he made a call for an end to divisive politics and stressed on the need to celebrate India's cultural diversity, the audience broke into rapturous applause, with many walking up to the stage to tie him a 'pagdi', which, among the jats, is a traditional way of honouring guests. He was also mobbed for selfies as he made his way out of the venue.

MANN KI BAAT

PM: India now has 100 unicorns worth over Rs 25 lakh crore

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

HIGHLIGHTING THAT even in the current phase of the global pandemic, Indian start-ups have been creating wealth and value, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that India has reached a landmark figure of 100 unicorns with a valuation of more than \$300 billion.

Addressing the nation during the Mann Ki Baat the PM emphasised that India's start-up ecosystem is not limited to just big cities, but entrepreneurs are emerging from smaller cities and towns as well.

"On the 5th of this month, the number of unicorns in the country has reached the figure of 100 and you surely know that a unicorn is a start-up worth at least seven and a half thousand crore rupees. The total valuation of these Unicorns is more than 330 billion dollars, that is, more than 25 lakh crore rupees. Certainly, this is a matter of pride for every Indian," Modi said.

The PM said that a record 44 unicorns were established last year amidst the pandemic. "You will also be surprised to know that out of our total unicorns, 44 came up last year. Not only that, 14 more unicorns were formed anew in 3-4 months this year. This means that even in this phase of the global pandemic, our start-ups have been creating wealth and value," he said.

Modi highlighted that the



PM Narendra Modi spoke about India's start-up ecosystem

average annual growth rate of Indian unicorns is more than those of the USA, UK, and many other countries. "Analysts also say that in the coming years there will be a sharp spike in these numbers. The good thing is that our unicorns are diversifying. They are operating in many fields like e-commerce, fin-tech, ed-tech, bio-tech," Modi said.

"Another thing which I consider more important is that the world of start-ups is reflecting the spirit of New India. Today, India's start-up ecosystem is not limited to just big cities; entrepreneurs are emerging from smaller cities and towns as well. This shows that in India, the one who has an innovative idea, can create wealth," Modi said.

Modi further pointed out that in the world of start-ups, right mentoring is important. "...Another thing that is important in the world of start-ups is, right mentoring...right guidance. A good mentor can take a start-up to new heights...can guide the founders in every way toward the right decision. I am proud that there are many such mentors in India who have dedicated themselves to promote start-ups," the PM said.

MUMBAI POLICE REGISTERS FIR

BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma booked over remarks on Prophet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 29

THE MUMBAI police on Saturday registered an FIR against BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma for allegedly making remarks on the Prophet Mohammed during a news debate, officers said. The Pydhonie police registered an FIR on charges of hurting religious feelings, promoting enmity and causing public mischief on the basis of a complaint by Raza Academy.

Raza Academy is a bareilly organisation formed primarily with the purpose of printing and publishing books written by Ahmed Raza Khan, founder of the Bareilly sect in south Asia. The FIR was reg-



She made the remarks during a TV debate

istered on a statement by Irfan Shaikh, joint secretary of the Mumbai wing of Raza Academy.

Over the past few years, the organisation has been involved in various protests, including those against authors Salman Rushdie and Taslima Nasrin.

Shaikh, in his statement, said he received a link on WhatsApp pertaining to the debate on the Gyanvapi issue in which Sharma participated. He said he was hurt after coming across the alleged comments made by Sharma on

PARTIES NAME RAJYA SABHA NOMINEES

Azad, Sharma not in Congress list

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

THE CONGRESS high command had its way on the selection of the party's candidates for the biennial elections to Rajya Sabha as it fielded outsiders but staunch Gandhi family loyalists from four states, including party-ruled Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, where Assembly elections are due next year, and denied berths to G 23 leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad and Anand Sharma.

The party on Sunday night announced its 10 candidates from seven states, keeping the suspense on its nominee from Jharkhand where ally JMM is said to have agreed to back a Congress candidate after some persuasion by Sonia Gandhi.

There was speculation that the party may field Azad from Jharkhand as he is said to be acceptable to the JMM. But Azad told *The Indian Express* that he is not going to contest from Jharkhand. "I am not there. No regrets. May be the other people

CONGRESS RAJYA SABHA CANDIDATES

CHHATTISGARH



Rajeev Shukla



Ranjeet Ranjan

HARYANA



Ajay Maken

KARNATAKA



Jairam Ramesh

MADHYA PRADESH



Vivek Tankha

who have been selected are more competent," he said. The party has renominated

MAHARASHTRA



Imran Pratapgarihi

RAJASTHAN



Randeep Singh Surjewala



Mukul Wasnik



Pramod Tiwari

TAMIL NADU



P Chidambaram

only three MPs—P Chidambaram, Jairam Ramesh and Vivek Tankha. The party fielded seven outsiders

BJP candidates: Sitharaman, Goyal among first 18 names

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

THE BJP on Sunday announced the names of 18 candidates from nine states in its first two lists for the June 10 Rajya Sabha (RS) elections, including Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman from Karnataka and her Cabinet colleague Piyush Goyal from Maharashtra.

Six candidates are from Uttar Pradesh; three are from Maharashtra, two each from Karnataka and Bihar; and one candidate each from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Haryana, and Jharkhand. Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and senior leader Vinay Sahasrabudde did not feature in the lists. The name of BJP general secretary Dushyant Gautam, an RS MP from Haryana, was also missing.

The party expects to win 20 of 57 seats that will be up for grabs. **UTTAR PRADESH:** The party has fielded its former state president Laxmikant Bajpai; former Gorakhpur MLA Radha



Union ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, Piyush Goyal

Mohan Das Agrawal; Sangeeta Yadav (another leader from Gorakhpur); Other Backward Class (OBC) leader Baburam Nishad; Mahila Morcha national general secretary Darshana Singh; and state vice-president Surendra Singh Nagar whose tenure in the Upper House of Parliament will expire on July 4.

BIHAR: The party renominated incumbent Satish Chandra Dubey and sprung a surprise by fielding state unit secretary Shambhu Sharan Patel, a low-key Extremely Backward Class (EBC) leader from the Dhanuk community. **RAJASTHAN:** The candidature of former MLA Ghanshyam Tiwari is said to be a message to former CM Vasundhara Raje.

Before the 2013 Assembly elections, Tiwari along with Gulab Chand Kataria, Ramdas Agarwal and other senior leaders openly opposed Raje's candidature for chief ministership.

KARNATAKA: Nirmala Sitharaman was not expected to be fielded from Karnataka on account of social media campaigns calling for local candidates to be chosen to espouse causes concerning the state. So, to balance the choice of the Union finance minister, the BJP chose popular film comedian S Jaggesh.

MADHYA PRADESH: Kavita Patidar is the daughter of former BJP minister Bherulal Patidar and was the first woman to be appointed the general secretary of the party's state working committee.

The party has also nominated Goyal, Dr Anil Sukhdevrao Bonde, and Dhananjay Mahadik from Maharashtra; Dr Kalpana Saini from Uttarakhand; Krishan Lal Panwar from Haryana; and Aditya Sahu from Jharkhand. **(INPUTS FROM BENGALURU, PATNA, JAIPUR, LUCKNOW, BHOPAL)**

Soren: JMM, Cong on same page on RS polls

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

JHARKHAND CHIEF Minister Hemant Soren on Sunday indicated that the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), his party, and the Congress, its ally, had buried their differences over a Rajya Sabha seat up for grabs from the eastern state in an election scheduled for June 10.

Soren said he held an "extensive" discussion with Congress president Sonia Gandhi here the evening before on a number of political issues. The meeting lasted more than an hour.

"There is a consensus that the coalition will have one candidate for the Rajya Sabha seat," said Soren. He added the candidate's

name would be announced from Ranchi.

Elections to 57 Rajya Sabha seats, including two from Jharkhand, were necessitated by the retirement of 57 members from 15 states between June and August last year. The last date for filing nominations is May 31.

At its legislative party meeting last week, the JMM decided to field a candidate for the one Upper House seat that will go to the ruling coalition. The Congress state unit also staked a claim, pointing out that in 2020 the seat went to JMM leader and Hemant's father Shibu Soren. In the 81-member Jharkhand Assembly, the JMM has 30 MLAs, the Congress 18, and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) one. The BJP has 26 legislators and won one of the two Rajya Sabha seats in the

last election.

Soren's visit to the national capital and the meeting with the Sonia is seen as an attempt to avoid a clash between the coalition partners at a time when he needs his ally's support amid a series of ED investigations and raids related to alleged irregularities in the disbursement of MGNREGA funds and alleged money laundering in the allocation of a mining lease. The Election Commission (EC) has deferred to June 14 its hearing into office-of-profit accusations against Soren. The Jharkhand CM has to appear before the poll panel in person.

Talking to a group of journalists, Soren accused the BJP of using investigative agencies in a "witch hunt" against its political opponents and "discriminating

from four states.

From Rajasthan, the party has fielded Randeep Singh Surjewala, Mukul Wasnik and Uttar Pradesh leader Pramod Tiwari. Although a signatory to the G23 letter, Wasnik is now closer to the Gandhis than to the reformist group.

In Chhattisgarh too, it has fielded outsiders—AICC in-charge of Himachal Pradesh Rajeev Shukla and Bihar leader Ranjeet Ranjan. Interestingly, the party has fielded AICC general secretary Ajay Maken from Haryana. It was said that Bhupinder Singh Hooda, the CLP leader, had rooted for his fellow G 23 leader Anand Sharma.

It is said Priyanka Gandhi Vadra threw her weight behind Imran Pratapgarihi, Shukla and Tiwari—all three from UP, the state she is in-charge of.

Those whose names were talked about include AICC spokesperson Pawan Khara. He put out a cryptic tweet in Hindi saying "perhaps there was some deficiency in my penance".

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

JD(U) picks Mahato over RCP Singh

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, MAY 29

THE JANATA Dal (U) on Sunday made a surprise choice by deciding to send its Jharkhand president low-profile Khiru Mahato, a two-term MLA, to Rajya Sabha, ignoring senior party leader RCP Singh, who currently is the Union Minister of Steel.

With BJP also announcing its two Rajya Sabha candidates from Bihar, RCP Singh's stint in Parliament comes to an end this July and he may have to resign from the ministry. A former IAS officer, Singh was first nominated to Rajya Sabha after he took VRS in 2010. He was renominated to Rajya Sabha in 2016.

The possible reason why Singh fell out with CM Nitish Kumar was his "unilateral" decision to send his name for a cabinet berth last year being the national president of JD(U). Though Nitish never expressed his reservation against Singh's decision, JD(U) sources kept talking about the growing chasm between Nitish and Singh.

JD(U) GIVES BACKING

Chorus gets louder as Opp passes caste census resolution

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

THE CHORUS for a nation-wide caste census grew Sunday with a resolution calling it as an "imperative" to ensure targeted affirmative action for marginalised communities being passed with the backing of many Opposition parties and NDA ally JD(U).

The parties made common cause over the issue during an event hosted by the Jayant Chaudhary-led Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) at Delhi's Vigyan Bhawan to commemorate the 35th death anniversary of former Prime Minister and stalwart farmer leader Chaudhary Charan Singh.

"The last caste census in India was done in 1931 and all government policies are framed according to the numbers enumerated back then. Therefore, it is imperative for us to implement a caste census immediately to inform data-driven decision-making as is the case in almost all spheres of our life whether in medicine, sciences or business..." said the resolution passed after day-long discussions.

While the BJP-led Centre has ruled out a national caste census, with the Centre informing the Supreme Court in 2021 that such an exercise would not be feasible, in Bihar, which is run by the saffron party along with the JD(U), an all-party meeting will be held over the issue on June 1.

Apart from RLD and JD(U), the Vigyan Bhawan resolution received the support of Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Trinamool Congress, Aam Aadmi Party, CPI(M), Apna Dal (Kamerawadi) and the Tripura-based TIPRA Motha. Meghalaya Governor Satyapal Malik, who was also supposed to attend the event, stayed away citing health issues.

SP Rajya Sabha MP Ram Gopal Yadav and BSP Lok Sabha

Rath Yatra attackers now chanting 'Jagannath' in prison: Shah in Gujarat

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, MAY 29

IT WAS only under the Narendra Modi-led state government those who attacked the Lord Jagannath Rath Yatra were sent to jail where they are now chanting "Jagannath Jagannath", said Union Home Minister Amit Shah at Nadiad in Kheda on Sunday.

Attacking the erstwhile Congress governments in Gujarat for their alleged failure to maintain law and order, and prevent communal violence, Shah said, "For years, the Congress has done the work of promoting infighting within the society and spreading communal incidents, thereby demolishing the law and order in the state. What was its result? There were over 200 days of curfew in Gujarat in a year. If a man went to 'Relief Road' in the morning for work, there was no guarantee that he would return. For several days, banks, factories, and businesses used to be shut down, there was so much loss to the economy. If there was a Rath Yatra scheduled

EXPLAINED 'Social Justice panel'

AT THE event, the demand for a "Social Justice Commission" or an "Equal Opportunities Commission" also came up. The panel, they said, is required to analyse the data that a caste census may throw up so that representation for women, SC, ST, backward, minorities or rural-based weaker sections is not the exception, but the norm.

MP Danish Ali, who were also expected to participate, could not do so as they had to travel outside Delhi, RLD sources said.

At the programme, which saw the presence of a large number of RLD workers, the parties alleged that the BJP is wary of caste census as it will jeopardise its brand of politics "fuelled by creating communal divide". Incidentally, the BJP's Bihar unit has confirmed its participation in the upcoming all-party meeting, with it unwilling to cede political space to its coalition partner JD(U).

On Sunday, speaking at the event, JD(U)'s KCT Yagi urged the RLD to hold on to the demand for a nation-wide caste census, asserting that an overwhelming majority of the country's population will support the move.

Backing the demand for caste census, RJD MP Manoj Jha said: "You cannot change your country's destiny without data, numbers." AAP's Singh said the demand is being opposed by "the establishment in Delhi and the one in Nagpur as it will not suit them".

TMC MP Sukhendu Sekhar Roy said, "...They don't want to carry out caste census as they want to perpetuate the Manuvadi system."



Amit Shah in Panchmahal, Gujarat, Sunday. Bhupendra Rana

then communal violence had to happen." However, after the BJP came to power, not even a single person has dared to attack the Rath Yatra, Shah said. "Those who had dared are today sitting behind the lock-up chanting Jagannath Jagannath," he added.

It was the BJP government that brought peace in a border state like Gujarat without doing any "appeasement", Shah said. He virtually inaugurated 57 housing and office complexes built for police personnel across 25 districts.

BSP will not contest Rampur bypoll: Mayawati

LALMANI VERMA
LUCKNOW, MAY 29

THE BAHUJAN Samaj Party (BSP) will not contest the Rampur parliamentary constituency bypoll and will also not support any other party's candidate on the seat, party president Mayawati announced on Sunday.

"After a two-day review of BSP state unit's organisational affairs, the party has decided to contest the Azamgarh with full strength. But, BSP will not contest the bypoll on the Rampur seat because we need to make the party stronger in the seat. The party will certainly contest there in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections," Mayawati said in a statement issued by the party on Sunday.

discharge his parliamentary duties without any fear or favour from the government. However, during the present regime, the Opposition members are being targeted and intimidated and their parliamentary privileges are being breached," Chowdhury said in his letter to Birla.

Referring to the case of Karti, Chowdhury said, "The CBI is intimidating him and worse, they have seized confidential and sensitive parliamentary papers. Karti P Chidambaram is a member of Parliamentary Standing Committee for Information and Technology. The draft notes and other sensitive parliamentary papers pertaining to the above-mentioned parliamentary committee has been unlawfully



Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury accused the govt of trying to stifle the Opposition's voice

Chowdhury said Karti and his family are being selectively targeted in the name of 'so called' raid and investigation.

"This is to bring to your kind attention a serious matter of national importance. An MP is constitutionally conferred with certain privileges so that he can

CBI RAIDS ON CHIDAMBARAMS

Cong's Adhir writes to Speaker: Intervene, protect privileges of Opposition members

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

DAYS AFTER the CBI conducted searches at various premises linked to P Chidambaram and his son and Lok Sabha MP Karti, Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Sunday wrote to Speaker Om Birla, claiming that the CBI has taken away sensitive and confidential parliamentary papers from Karti.

He accused the government of trying to stifle the voice of the Opposition and urged the Speaker to "intervene and protect the rights and privileges of the Opposition members so that they can discharge their parliamentary duties fearlessly and effectively".



हिमाचल में हर दिन विकास का सेवा, समर्पण और विश्वास का



सूचना एवं जन सम्पर्क विभाग, हिमाचल प्रदेश सरकार

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THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, MAY 30, 2022

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE
YOU CAN GET ANYWHERE IN PAKISTAN IF YOU
KNOW PEOPLE, EVEN INTO JAIL.

— SALMAN RUSHDIE

The Indian **EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

EIGHT YEARS ON

Looking at the future, government has shown a capacity to think afresh — and is also trapped in stale resentments of history

THE NARENDRA MODI government completing eight years is a moment to pause and look back — and ahead. When it came to power in 2014, a large swathe of Indian voters saw in the slogan of “achche din”, and in the BJP’s energetic bid to wrest power at the Centre under the leadership of a man who had made himself a name, and controversy, as chief minister, a promise for a break from the status quo. In the first five years, from rethinking the language of welfare to recasting nationalism and reworking foreign policy, the Modi government made an impact that led to its re-election in 2019 with a decisive majority. Looking back, the eight years of Modi’s rule so far have been dominated by the last three. And in these, the government’s record has been two-toned — it has shown resolve, boldness, and a capacity for navigating complexity in some areas but it has been stiff and unmoving in others.

The signal that the second term would be more change-making than the first was sent by the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir in August 2019. Only months after that, came the enactment of a law that made religion a criterion for citizenship for those in the neighbourhood seeking refuge. The next year, the government inaugurated the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya. But if the Modi government took these large, contentious steps, it also faced steep challenges. While the over a year-long farmers’ agitation on Delhi’s doorstep could be traced back to the farm laws it enacted in September 2020, the public health emergency that began with the Covid outbreak earlier that year, and this year’s Ukraine war, are problems it has been forced to step up to. On balance, the Modi government has shown a mature head in crisis, coming back after a period of paralysis during Covid’s second devastating wave, to set in motion a strikingly successful vaccination programme. It resisted pressures to provide more direct support to a people lacking in safety nets, but ran a comprehensive free rations programme, ensuring efficient and mostly corruption-free delivery. Amid the continuing economic slump and joblessness, it has signalled a recommitment to its privatisation programme, with the sale of Air India and the LIC IPO. With China, after the face-off in Galwan, and 15 rounds of talks later, it shows firmness and resolve. With the US, it is strategically — and boldly — strengthening areas of convergence in the Indo-Pacific, even as, on Ukraine, it has negotiated a position keenly conscious of competing priorities. All this, under the leadership of a prime minister whose popularity is burnished more strongly than before.

And yet, the maturity and nuance that the Modi government shows in the areas outlined above seem to elude it when it comes to others — be it its heavy-footed handling of the agitation against the CAA-NRC, its attempt to forcibly join the dots between those protests and the communal violence later in northeast Delhi, its use of the IPC to tar dissent, its weaponisation of Central agencies to target political opponents. Its ringing silence amid the bid to reopen the faultline that now stretches from Ayodhya to Gyanvapi and its failures to restore the political process in Kashmir are part of the same problem. A government capable of thinking afresh seems trapped in stale resentments when it comes to the imperative that lies at the heart of democracy: Trust between communities and a respectful place for minorities. With the Opposition weaker than it was, and not many countervailing institutions, the Modi government will need to find it in itself to course correct. For, the challenges of inflation and recession, Ukraine war, China’s sabre-rattling, expectations of the young — these call for a governance that includes all, that does not let ghosts of history hijack spirits of the future, that heals old wounds without rubbing them in. Eight years on, that’s the hope.

SHORT CIRCUIT

Proposed scheme will help discoms clear part of their debt. But stress in power sector calls for structural overhaul

LAST WEEK, THE Union power ministry proposed a new scheme to help cash strapped power distribution companies (discoms) clear their mounting obligations. In 2020, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced a Rs 90,000-crore liquidity infusion scheme (this was subsequently raised to Rs 1.2 lakh crore) for discoms to settle their debt. Similar schemes in the past have failed to address the structural issues that plague the power sector, the distribution segment in particular. Rolling out another scheme is unlikely to help.

Discom dues are currently estimated to be around Rs 1 lakh crore. Six states — Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu — account for a significant share of the dues. Under the new proposed scheme, discoms will be allowed to pay off their obligations over 48 installments. The proposal also involves freezing the principal and the late payment surcharge on the date of the notification of the scheme. States such as Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra are expected to benefit the most from this restructuring. Considering that discom payments have on average been delayed by 4-6 months across 15 states as per CRISIL, these payments would offer some relief for the generating companies.

The financial position of discoms continues to be dragged down by a combination of inadequate and irregular tariff revisions, delayed subsidy payments by state governments, inadequate reduction in aggregate technical and commercial losses (a combination of technical losses, inefficiency in billing and power theft), and rising power costs. Successive attempts over the years to tackle these issues have failed to bring about a turnaround in the financial and operational position of discoms. With each passing year, the funds required to plug the gaps are only increasing. But, with the pandemic stretching government finances — both the Centre and the states have witnessed a steep rise in their debt levels — continuing financial support to discoms will become fiscally challenging. The reluctance to raise tariffs or bring down AT&C losses signals a lack of resolve at the state level.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



MRINAL PANDE

I BEGIN WITH a confession and an apology to the non-Hindi readers of *Ret Samadhi* by Geetanjali Shree, translated by Daisy Rockwell into English as *Tomb of Sand*. I have resisted reading the translated version, the winner of the International Booker Prize, because even though it must be very good, it may not replicate for me the resonance of the original. Writers in languages other than English face tough choices today. But the sheer brilliance of Geetanjali’s art leaps over a digital world that is forever pushing us to settle for a uniform, universally-understood voice: Loud, full of hyperbole and easy comparables. Her protagonist defies all efforts to generalise — language, gender, mother-daughter relationships and the partition of nations. Throughout, she speaks in one voice to her rambling, widowed mother Chandra Prabha, in another to her bureaucrat brother, yet another to his wife and, of course, the working classes who visit the home.

Then, suddenly, the novel playfully decides to defy linear time. It leaps back some eight decades to when the Subcontinent was partitioned. At this point, she casually informs readers that her mother was married to a man from another community, before she married the one who was their father and whose death plunged her deep into depression. In comes Rosie, a transwoman, who coaxes Ma out of her bed and reintroduces her to her daughter’s world. As she moves out of her son’s house to her daughter’s, Ma crosses a boundary and begins to speak. Together, through rambling conversation, the mother and daughter travel back and forth in time, occasionally even stepping onto the Silk Route, where tribes from all over Asia met and traded goods, and tales, and smoked their hookah in companionable silence.

What this brilliant piece of time travel is reminding us of is that if a writer wishes to find his or her own voice, she/he must refuse to stay put. A creative mind must remain nomadic, so that art remains polyphonic, unpredictable and porous, just like the human race. Life, the little tales and sub-tales in *Ret Samadhi* tell us, is not a linear, predictable progression of events. Time implicates both the oppressor and the oppressed, brutalises

This world, a mirage

Geetanjali Shree’s novel defies generalisations, reveals the many cultural republics in the Hindi heartland

‘Ret Samadhi’ brings to us honest, even if painful, glimpses of life in non-English speaking India. It is not one flat land but a series of cultural republics. The mother and daughter in the novel appear in this landscape. Together they turn into birds and flowers, move with Rosie and are reunited with Anwar, the lost lover, through music. All around them heavens and fades the Anglophile, upper-crust India, a land that still writes and administers unequal laws into what they consider a savage society.

ing men and the nations they build through violent acts. Life poses harsh questions here about the monuments that history will create and erase mercilessly.

But racial memories don’t die easily. *Ret Samadhi* leaps over the current dominance of a hard political Hindutva when the Mother’s memories transport her and her daughter to a dusty no man’s land. The ret samadhi or the burial mound blends with ancient lore about Indra (in Aitareya Brahmana): “Behold, I am The Truth. Study me closely for your own good. I have killed Tvashtra, the creator of the Vajra. I fed the band of Aroormaga monks to Salavrik (dogs or wolves). I have broken up countless treaties made on earth, in the sky and further up in the heavens. But not a hair on my head was disturbed. If after receiving this wisdom from me, you can fathom the whys and wherefores of my acts, even if you go and murder your kin, you shall cease to hesitate and not allow any emotions to cross your face ever again.”

We have yet to understand fully the peculiar past of a polyphone Hindi heartland of north India where multiple races came and fought and mingled. In the last seven decades, English as the language of rulers has slowly been losing much of its authority in the Delhi Durbār, which is today presided over by those who loudly proclaim they are all for Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan. But the Hindi they are opting for has ignited fratricidal, regional rages against India’s proposed rashtra bhasha (national language).

Geetanjali Shree’s has always been a strong and vibrant voice against homogenisation. In her earlier works, too, her language pulls readers in various directions and eras and their unsettled debts. In *Mai*, she writes of three generations of women spanning well over a century. In *Hamara Shahr*, she writes about small towns convulsed by communal fires that have raged underneath and erupted suddenly like lava gushing out. Ret Samadhi arrives like a resonant fugue, summing up its various kinds of histories, without denying the centrality of doubt and duality in life.

All writers in Indian languages harbour many languages within themselves by the

time they come of age. There is the simple mother tongue. Then comes college, with classes taught uniformly in English. Here, a writer is faced with a choice — do a straight swap with English, the language of the well-educated in India’s upwardly mobile, or say that not all of the well-educated must speak in a received voice. Geetanjali has chosen the latter. In India, it is an act of bravery to write in what is your natural voice without apologising for its rusticity, varied tonal registers or reducing it to an exotica or a political weapon or to win superficial, feminist brownie points.

Ret Samadhi brings to us honest, even if painful, glimpses of life in non-English speaking India. It is not one flat land but a series of cultural republics. The mother and daughter in the novel appear in this landscape. Together they turn into birds and flowers, move with Rosie and are reunited with Anwar, the lost lover, through music. All around them heavens and fades the Anglophile, upper-crust India, a land that still writes and administers unequal laws into what they consider a savage society.

The novel crosses frontiers of caste, race, gender, and languages as easily as migratory birds do. Their lives and conversations cut across time: When thumris and khayals were created by rulers who were losing power to marauding Marathas and the East India Company, but remained secular and discerning patrons of hybridised arts. Nothing in their world is erased. Nothing in it spells permanence. That is human life for you, according to *Ret Samadhi* where even memorial tombs are destined to turn to dust one day. It reminded me of my mother’s favourite couplet by Nazeer Akbarabadi, an 18th-century fakir who witnessed the fall of empires:

Flowers, dust, fire, wind, water and mud, we’ve seen them all/ And eventually, that’s all there is to this deceitful mirage you call your world.

(*Gul, shor, bagula, aag, hawa, aur keechad pani mitti hai/ Hum dekh chuke iss duniya ko, duniya dhokhe ki tatti hai*)

The writer is former chairperson, Prasar Bharati



POOJA PILLAI

HAVING TURNED 50 on May 25, Karan Johar decided it was time to conquer new worlds. “I will commence the shoot of my action film on April 23,” he announced in big, bold letters. An artist — which Johar is, no matter what his legions of detractors might say — must constantly innovate to stay relevant and his new guns-and-glory adventure will perhaps give Johar a creative boost. Such recharges are necessary, especially if an artist has dominated their chosen field, like Johar has undoubtedly dominated — even transformed — Bollywood romance, specifically by opening it up to queer narratives. Could a fairytale like *Badhaai Do*, for example, about the lavender marriage of two queer people (Rajkumar Rao and Bhumi Pednekar), have been imagined in pre-Johar Bollywood?

This is not to discount the role that other filmmakers, such as Onir, have played in telling much-needed stories about queer lives, nor is this an attempt to play down the space for such stories that opened up with the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 2018. It is also not possible to overlook the troubling portrayal of queer folks, especially gay men, in some of Johar’s productions: The jarring comic sub-plot involving the two male leads (Shah Rukh Khan and Saif Ali Khan) and a housemaid (Sulabha Arya) in *Kal Ho Na Ho* (which Johar wrote, but didn’t direct) is notorious. As is *Dostana* (produced by Johar) in which the two male leads (John

QUEERING THE LOVE STORY

Karan Johar uncoupled the camera from the male heterosexual gaze

Abraham and Abhishek Bachchan) pretend to be gay in an over-complicated attempt to woo the female protagonist (Priyanka Chopra). Such depictions, as some of his critics point out, did damage that was not helped by the fact that Johar himself, beyond a short in the 2013 anthology film *Bombay Talkies*, has not made a full-length feature with a queer love story at its heart.

Still, Johar must be credited with “introducing the idea of homosexuality by stealth into the Indian home”, as the writer Atish Taseer once put it — by, in other words, making what was once never mentioned the subject of dinner table conversations. He did this, firstly — and controversially — not so much with his movies, as with the relentless queer-baiting on his hugely popular TV show *Koffee with Karan*. The show’s sly jokes and innuendos, made with Johar’s complicity and frequently at his own expense, all but confirmed what everyone with any familiarity with Hindi cinema had long gossiped about. On this matter, it is worth noting that no amount of speculation about Johar’s sexual orientation (which he has hinted at frequently, including in his memoir, *An Unsuitable Boy*, without ever explicitly coming out of the closet), has done little to affect his box office success.

But the second way in which Johar, in a sense, “queered” the Bollywood love story is a lot more subtle. He uncoupled the camera from the male heterosexual gaze, thus mak-

ing room on the screen for stories that were decidedly non-mainstream before him. It is, for example, hard to think of another Hindi film director who allowed the lens to train so lovingly on the sensual male body as Johar did in the song ‘Suraj Hua Maddham’ from *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (K3G). In the way it zoomed in on Shah Rukh Khan’s dripping wet, see-through shirt, the camera’s gaze challenged Bollywood’s idea of romance, opening up space for, among other things, female desire. This, in fact, is Johar’s other great achievement, as far as Hindi film love is concerned: So many of his female characters, whether it is Pooja in *K3G*, Jazz in *Kal Ho Na Ho* or Saba in *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil*, were unabashed in pursuing what they desired, physical and otherwise. This quest to centre non-masculine heterosexual desire found its apogee in the 2018 anthology film *Lust Stories*, where Johar’s section told the story of a newly-wed woman (Kiara Advani) who seeks sexual fulfillment.

In his announcement, Johar noted that he’s been in the industry for 27 years. That is a long enough period in which to start feeling like one has stagnated. And while making an action film would be enough of a challenge to give Johar the creative shakeup he seems to feel he needs, a queer romance would be an even bigger one. Hopefully, one day, Johar will be up to it.

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MAY 30, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

LEFT FRONT ISSUES

THE FORMATION OF the second Left Front Ministry of West Bengal has run into rough weather with the CPM and RSP taking opposite views on the question of bifurcation of some of the portfolios. Jatin Chakrabarty, the RSP leader who was sworn in as one of the few ministers told newsmen that his party’s stand was that the bifurcation should be deferred by three months. If the CPM insisted on bifurcation right now, he would leave the ministry. But RSP ministers would continue to sit in the treasury benches. Earlier CPM leader and Left Front chairman Pramode Dasgupta said that his party would like to bi-

furcate the portfolios of health, PWD, House, Agriculture and Irrigation.

SHEIKH REFUTES ZIA

THE JAMMU AND Kashmir Chief Minister Sheikh Abdullah has said that Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar, Yasin, Ponial, Chitral and Skardu are inalienable parts of Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan President Zia-ul-Haq’s claim that these areas were never part of the state had no historical backing. The Kashmir leader said that India and Pakistan should come to the negotiating table to discuss all matters including Kashmir. The CM has said that the Kashmiris and the Government of India can-

not wash its hands of these areas just because Zia claimed they are Pakistani territory.

REDDY’S NOTE

PRESIDENT SANJIVA REDDY’S observations on the Haryana governor’s actions have created stir in the Congress (I) leadership. Informed sources say that Reddy had sent a strong note to the government on the Opposition leaders’ memorandum and also personally told the PM that the governor’s action is unconstitutional. Government circles are reading a lot into Reddy’s remarks and there are speculations of what else he might have told Opposition leaders.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Women take the wheel

As Modi government completes eight years in office, women have emerged as deciders of the nation's destiny, opinion-makers and social change agents



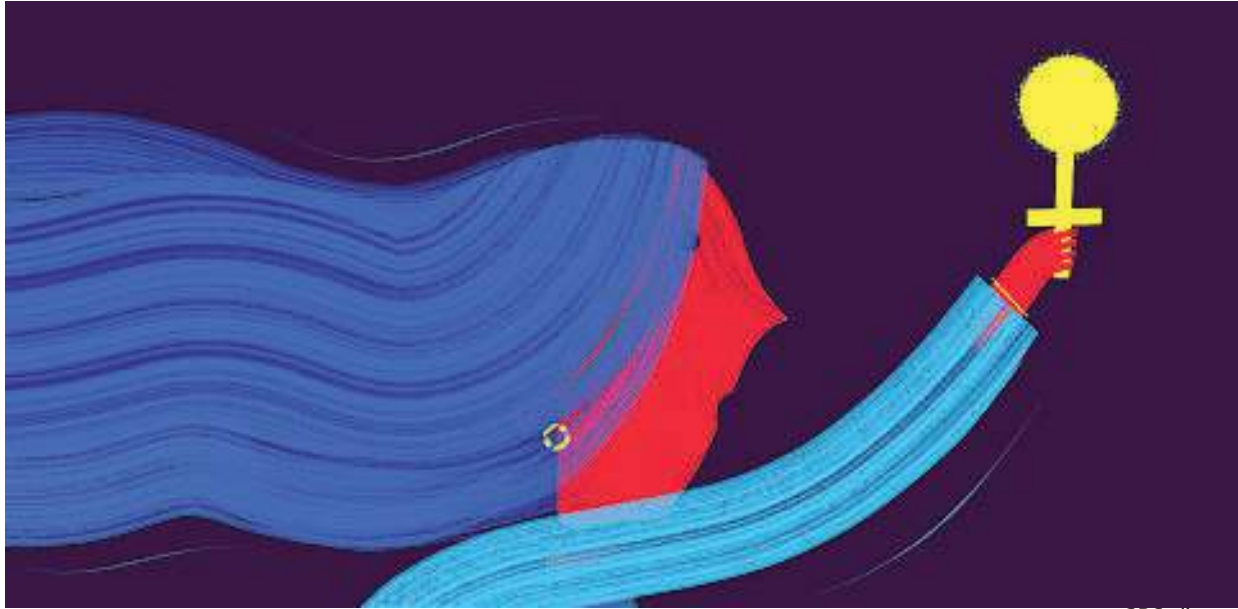
SMRITI IRANI

UNDER THE STEWARDSHIP of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government has heralded a renewed age of “nari shakti” in the run-up to Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. Programmatic interventions in this age attest to India's achievements in gender mainstreaming, not only in letter but in spirit. No longer are women subjects of unimaginative policies that target them in limited roles as mothers and wives. Women are now prolific leaders, useful hands in the labour force and the nerve centre of Indian society.

The Modi government has made women's empowerment a sine qua non for attaining holistic national development. This has been achieved by constructing a range of mindful policy interventions. The ration card's exclusionary logic of identification — with its issuance to the usually male head of the household — was replaced by unique identification for all, Aadhaar. The Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) was revamped to offer a greater range of services for women-centric ailments; its unwarranted, male-preferential cap of five beneficiaries per family was removed and supplanted by the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY). PM-JAY extends healthcare services to households without any adult male members, bearing no prejudice to the household size. In the larger scheme of things, an identity independent of husbands and fathers is a massive exercise in self-assurance, self-possession and “aatmanirbharta” for Indian women.

The government is catalysing a systematic overhaul of India's employment and labour architecture. The entrepreneurial acumen of women has taken flight under the auspices of the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, with such women comprising 68 per cent of the Mudra account-holders. Mudra loans awarded against aspirations for income-generating activities have expanded opportunities for women. Sizeable financial obstacles have been removed from the lives of women with loans against aspirations for greenfield enterprises in manufacturing, services and agriculture-allied sectors under Stand-Up India. Further, 10 per cent of the Startup India funds — to the tune of Rs 1,000 crore — in SIDBI-operated funds have been earmarked for women-led startups. The contribution of women in agriculture — a comparatively masculinised vocation — has been called to the fore with the annual observation of Mahila Kisan Diwas celebrations and a mandate of earmarking 30 per cent of funds in governmental, agricultural beneficiary-related interventions for female farmers.

Women have been put forward as foot soldiers of change. While Business Correspondent Sakhis are extending basic banking services to Self-Help Groups under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Mahila Swachhagrahis are bringing sanitation services closer home under the Swachh Bharat movement. Where lacunae have been uncovered, they have been bridged through capacity-building. The capacity-building programme for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayati Raj institutions is one such intervention that trains women representatives to deliberate constructively on issues pertaining to women and chil-



C R Sasikumar

dren and enables them to be change agents. Steps have also been taken to reconcile the male-female digital divide through a digital literacy drive under the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA).

Recognising that better-educated women make well-informed social, economic and familial decisions, the government has invested in this virtuous future. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) — a national campaign for the survival, protection and greater educational participation of the girl child shepherded by the PM — appears to be yielding social gains through monitorable targets. The sex ratio at birth (SRB) has improved by 29 points from 991 (2015-16) to 1,020 (2019-21) as per NFHS-5. Gross enrolment ratio (GER) of girls in schools at the secondary level has improved from 68.17 per cent (2012-13) to 79.46 per cent (2020-21) as per UDISE-data; in fact, between 2012-13 and 2019-20, the GER for girls at both secondary and higher secondary level has increased more than that of the boys.

The road from women's selflessness to selfhood has been supported by an all-around enabling socio-political and legal environment. Female literacy programmes, capacity building modules and livelihoods-oriented schemes have been but some strategies to remove barriers to the entry of women into Indian society, polity and economy. The government introduced the National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers in 2017 to address barriers created by care gaps. To further support working women, a liberal revision over the erstwhile 12 gas cylinders by a sum of Rs 200, qualms about the future affordability of refills stand assuaged. Coupled with the slashing of fuel prices, amid a global political climate of soaring energy inflation, this move promises greater ease of living for women.

The government has also, in unequivocal terms, expressed a resolve to equalise the otherwise inequitable distribution of assets and resources. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana promises concessional LPG connections to women beneficiaries in vulnerable households, thus according them greater dignity by way of ownership of an amenity. Simultaneously, the Ujjwala Yojana affords women a smoke-free environment and alleviates the drudgery of collecting fuelwood, lifting them from the poverty of time and health. With the recent announcement by the finance minister to subsidise up to 12 gas cylinders by a sum of Rs 200, qualms about the future affordability of refills stand assuaged. Coupled with the slashing of fuel prices, amid a global political climate of soaring energy inflation, this move promises greater ease of living for women.

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Similarly, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana too specifies a preference for women beneficiaries. In fact, approximately 75 per cent of homeowners under Awas Yojana are women. The Awas Yojana remedies the well-chronicled, historical, disproportionate gap in asset ownership that deprives women of social security and “fallback” options during crises.

According women's autonomy a central place in public discourse, the government has, in three masterstrokes, made Indian women the architects of their own destiny. To this effect, the undignified practice of instant triple talaq has been nullified through the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019; the permissible gestational age for abortion has been revised to 24 weeks — up from 20 weeks — for vulnerable women through the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021; and the legal marriage age for women has been proposed to be raised to 21 years, at par with men, under the provisions of the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021. Such a legal edifice ensures women's self-governance and procedural independence.

This genuine commitment to women's empowerment has augmented women's ability to make decisions. Between NFHS-4 (2014-15) and 5 (2019-21), nearly 89 per cent of married Indian women participated in major household decisions, a 5 per cent improvement over the previous survey. Markedly, more women than ever before owned houses (43.3 per cent) — alone or jointly — and had bank accounts (78.6 per cent) that they themselves used.

The Modi government has led by example in visibly respecting “nari shakti” in its eight years. There are eleven women in the current Council of Ministers, holding key portfolios and serving as a pleasant reminder of the repositioning of the nucleus of administrative initiatives. Amrit Kaal has signalled a tectonic shift from narratives of reinforced, gendered stereotypes and powerlessness to imagining new roles for Indian women that flex “nari shakti”. Women have donned new hats in the past eight years — as deciders of the nation's destiny in the capacity of strong-willed voters exercising their democratic rights, as opinion-makers, as foot soldiers of behavioural transformation and as social change agents. In Amrit Kaal, the future of nation-building is unquestionably “female”.

The writer is Union Minister for Women and Child Development

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation between China and the US are good news for China and the US and good news for the whole world.”
—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Anything but achhe din

Modi government has indulged in propaganda, distorted nationalism and misused investigative agencies to hide its failures



RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA

EIGHT YEARS IS a long time in which to measure a government's performance. The impact of policies and tent pole reforms start to become apparent, and the electorate can make an honest assessment of the leaders they elected. In countries like the US, Canada and Brazil, eight years marks two presidential terms and the term limit for an elected head of government/state. For Narendra Modi and his strawman cabinet, this is a significant milestone for three reasons.

First, no one is under any illusions about the Modi government now. In 2014, the then Gujarat chief minister Modi campaigned on promises of reform, growth, job creation, controlling inflation and equitable distribution of wealth, summarised in the slogan “achhe din”. In the last eight years, people have painfully suffered the exact opposite. Run-away inflation has singed the lives of common people. Wholesale inflation is at a 30-year high and food inflation has made the life of the middle class and poor unbearable. The unemployment rate is officially touching 8 per cent, and could be much higher. Instead of creating the promised 2 crore new jobs every year, over 12 crore jobs have been lost. This government has turned the demographic dividend into a demographic disaster. Boisterous sloganeering and advertisement-driven rhetoric are not a substitute for sound economic vision.

One must recognise that the falling rupee, flight of capital, plummeting GDP and a sharp drop in manufacturing activities are the result of a series of economic policy failures. This is called policy paralysis. It started with the body-blow of demonetisation, which failed in every single one of its stated objectives — curbing black money in circulation, combatting terrorism, reduction of forged currency and increasing taxation. The deeply flawed GST and 1,100 amendments since 2017 have made the taxation structure cumbersome for medium and small businesses. The bank frauds of Rs 5,35,000 crore over the last eight years and gross NPAs of 21 lakh crore have further eroded the credibility of the banking system. To top it, the surge in the Union's debt from Rs 55 lakh crore in 2014 to 135 lakh crore now reflects a debt trap.

The vulnerable sections have faced the brunt of this policy paralysis. Fourteen crore people have been pushed below the poverty line in eight years. The subsidised ration guaranteed under the Food Security Act enacted by the Congress is the only source of sustenance for millions. About 62 crore farmers and farm labourers have fallen prey to this malady with the Centre's clandestine attempts at diluting the UPA's 2013 Land Acquisition Act and failure to double farmers' income.

The last eight years have witnessed attacks on India's sovereignty and territorial integrity with the Modi government largely re-

maining a mute bystander. The devastating terror attacks at Uri, Pathankot and Pulwama and calling the dreaded ISI to Pathankot for an investigation are still fresh in every Indian's memory. China has brazenly occupied our territory in Depsang Plains, Gogra Hot Springs, Pangong Tso Lake and other places for the last two years. From a PM who rode to power on the promise of showing “lal ank” to China, the inaction is startling. Meanwhile, China has converted the entire LAC into a militarised zone.

Second, the Modi government has realised that it cannot stay in power if democratic institutions remain vigilant. So, it began the task of subordinating crucial institutions to its purposes. The timing and targets of actions by the CBI, ED and Income Tax Departments are so painfully obvious that states had to take the drastic step of withdrawing permissions to investigate. On the other hand, when someone defects to the BJP the charges mysteriously disappear.

Judges who acted in ways that incur the displeasure of the government are transferred swiftly to remote parts of the country. From a Supreme Court that had maintained a studied distance from the government, judges began to shower praises on the PM. One called him a model for the youth and another was nominated to the Rajya Sabha.

Third, it is now clear that the Modi government does not have the best interests of the public at heart. Modi prematurely declared the end of Covid-19, boasting about exporting vaccines, when the second wave hit. It was devastating. Hospitals and doctors were overwhelmed, people died senselessly waiting for oxygen and hospital beds.

So, whose interests does the Modi government serve?

The BJP has become staggeringly rich. It declared assets worth Rs 4,847 crore in 2019-20. And apparently, this wasn't enough. An RTI response revealed that the Modi government spent close to Rs 5,000 crore of public money in just four years (2014-2018) on publicity and promotion, more than double what the UPA spent in 10 years. There are the numerous attempts at curtailing the right to privacy and expanding state surveillance.

Consider the ultra-rich, the 142 richest Indians who saw their net worth soar by 30 lakh crore during the Covid years. All the while the average person saw petrol and diesel prices rise to over Rs 100 per litre. Cooking gas, oils and pulses all rose to exorbitant rates squeezing the already beleaguered middle class. After eight years, those that claim their support for this government is based on good governance are engaged in a remarkable act of self-deception. It is propped up on three pillars — incessant propaganda, a distorted brand of nationalism to keep the population divided and the rampant misuse of investigative agencies.

Their greatest fear is that history will remember their sins. Thus, no matter how many layers of propaganda, rewritten history and false news they deploy to distract us we must never cease to hold a mirror to them. To paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, eternal vigilance is the price we pay for our democracy. The truly patriotic can do nothing less.

The writer is general secretary, Indian National Congress



RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR

A digital power

In eight years, PM Modi has made India a technology hub

IN 2014, A country tired of six decades of the Congress's politics of a dynasty, motley coalitions and corrupt governments, voted Narendra Modi to office as Prime Minister of India. He promised change and a new direction in governance. The last eight years have seen him steadily progressing towards building this New India.

Before 2014, the India narrative was just about the country being a big market opportunity. This opportunity came with accepted caveats — governance dysfunction, corruption, nepotism, policy inconsistency, red tape and crony capitalism. This state of affairs was accepted as normal as far back as the 1980s when the then PM Rajiv Gandhi said that for every one rupee that leaves Delhi, only 15 paise reaches the citizens.

In pre-Modi India, a few politically connected families and groups cornered all the opportunities and capital. For instance, a Credit Suisse report, ‘House of Debt’, divulged that 98 per cent of the net worth of India's entire banking system was cornered by 10 influential families. Entrepreneurship and successful startups were rare exceptions. India was colloquially referred to as an elephant — big, slow-moving and unwieldy. Our revenues from tax collection remained low and our tax-GDP ratio was abysmal compared to other major developing economies.

In 2014, citizens of India voted for change and gave a resounding mandate to Modi, who had worked his way up from a poor family to

becoming the CM of Gujarat. In Gujarat, he had already demonstrated the contrast in his political and governance model with a focus on medium to long-term transformations rather than short-term populism with projects like the Sabarmati Riverfront development. He received another, stronger mandate in 2019 as well as in many state elections.

PM Modi spent the first 3-4 years in office addressing the deep damage to the economy and institutions of governance and rebuilding the lost trust of citizens in the government. He inherited a shattered economy. He steadily rebuilt the financial sector, investor confidence and trust in the government. He has transformed the work culture within the government, making public service a relentless crusade for change and prosperity.

There are several reforms and governance initiatives that have successfully steered India to its current strength. But his commitment to technology from very early on is a testament to PM Modi's vision and instincts about opportunities for India and Indians. The Digital India programme is one such example. Digital India was launched with three clear objectives: To transform citizens' lives, governance and democracy; expand the digital economy, create jobs and attract investments; and make India the leader in the realm of technology — a provider rather than a consumer of technology.

A report carding of Digital India's performance shows impressive progress. Every rupee

released from Delhi reaches the bank accounts of beneficiaries without any delay or corruption. Thus far, the government has transferred more than Rs 17 lakh crore through DBT while saving Rs 2.2 lakh crore. Today, India has the world's fastest-growing and most vibrant startup ecosystem with close to 70,000 registered startups and around 100 unicorns, with a unicorn coming up every week. The growth trajectory of these startups was determined by their hard work, passion, ability to innovate and availability of capital — not by political connections or family background. Thanks to the most significant reform in the form of the GST and tax compliance, India has registered its highest ever collections. Revenue increased from Rs 22 lakh crore in FY 21 to Rs 27 lakh crore in FY 22 — a whopping 22 per cent growth. This year alone, the Centre is investing over Rs 7.5 lakh crore in infrastructure building.

The Covid-19 pandemic was a litmus test for leaders across the globe. The global superpowers continue to grapple with third and fourth waves but India, under PM Modi, emerged as a resilient nation. It successfully delivered over 200-crore vaccination shots by pulling off the world's largest voluntary and technology-driven vaccination programme. India protected its small businesses and the poor — the latter continue to receive foodgrains under the world's largest distribution programme launched during the pandemic, the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). And even as economies falter and stumble, PM

Modi's policies have resulted in India being the fastest-growing major economy, attracting the highest ever FDI's (\$ 83.57 billion). India also set new records for goods (\$400 billion) and services (\$254 billion) exports.

Digital India played a significant role in India's response to the pandemic. It ensured that the government could reach people in remote parts of the country. Health, education and other essential services migrated swiftly to the online mode. It would not be an aberration to say that post-Covid, India emerged as a preeminent nation in the use of technology for governance.

Thanks to the relentless hard work and focus on the future of New India by PM Modi, India post-Covid has emerged as a trusted partner to the international community. The rapid digitalisation of the world along with a new focus on trust in the global supply chains for digital products and services presents tremendous opportunities for India and its youth. PM Modi has referred to the coming decade as New India's Techade. Young Indians and startups are presented with opportunities like never before as a result of the last eight years of dedicated work by the PM. It is now up to all of us to engage in a collective “sabka prayas” to realise New India's economic potential.

The writer is Minister of State for Electronics & IT, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A MURKY AFFAIR

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Hounding of Aryan’ (IE, May 28). It is shocking to hear that the NCB, which dropped all charges against Aryan Khan and five others in the Cordelia Cruise drug bust case, has recorded in an internal note that the investigating team headed by Sameer Wankhede may have been “motivated to somehow implicate Aryan Khan”. Wankhede went rogue, the NCB looked the other way, and it took 22 days in custody and eight months of investigations for Khan to get justice. Justice was elusive for Khan even with his background. One can only imagine how long the common man would have to wait. NCP minister Nawab Malik had earlier claimed that the raid on the cruise ship was a fraud perpetrated by Wankhede in association with the BJP. The NCP used the latest development to reiterate that Malik's claim was valid and had now been laid bare by the NCB. Will the NCB Director-General Satya Narain Pradhan apologise to the falsely accused

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee, Faridabad

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H N Bhagwat, Chiplun

THE IDEAS PAGE

Women take the wheel

As Modi government completes eight years in office, women have emerged as deciders of the nation's destiny, opinion-makers and social change agents



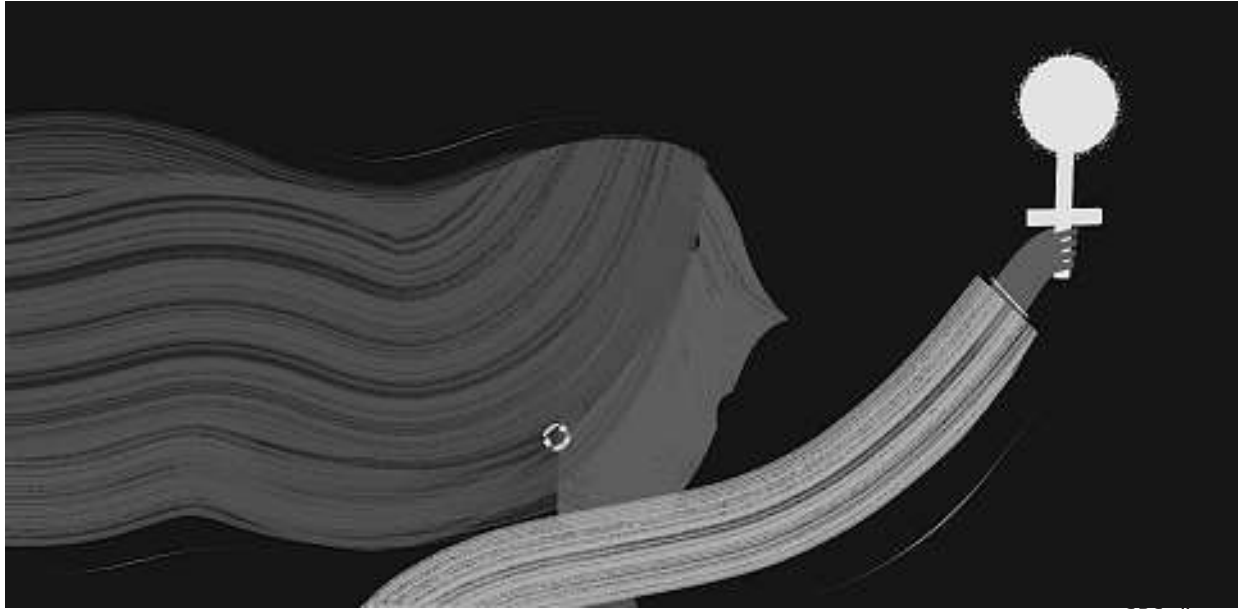
SMRITI IRANI

UNDER THE STEWARDSHIP of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government has heralded a renewed age of “nari shakti” in the run-up to Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. Programmatic interventions in this age attest to India's achievements in gender mainstreaming, not only in letter but in spirit. No longer are women subjects of unimaginative policies that target them in limited roles as mothers and wives. Women are now prolific leaders, useful hands in the labour force and the nerve centre of Indian society.

The Modi government has made women's empowerment a sine qua non for attaining holistic national development. This has been achieved by constructing a range of mindful policy interventions. The ration card's exclusionary logic of identification — with its issuance to the usually male head of the household — was replaced by unique identification for all, Aadhaar. The Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) was revamped to offer a greater range of services for women-centric ailments; its unwarranted, male-preferential cap of five beneficiaries per family was removed and supplanted by the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY). PM-JAY extends healthcare services to households without any adult male members, bearing no prejudice to the household size. In the larger scheme of things, an identity independent of husbands and fathers is a massive exercise in self-assurance, self-possession and “aatmanirbharta” for Indian women.

The government is catalysing a systematic overhaul of India's employment and labour architecture. The entrepreneurial acumen of women has taken flight under the auspices of the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, with such women comprising 68 per cent of the Mudra account-holders. Mudra loans awarded against aspirations for income-generating activities have expanded opportunities for women. Sizeable financial obstacles have been removed from the lives of women with loans against aspirations for greenfield enterprises in manufacturing, services and agriculture-allied sectors under Stand-Up India. Further, 10 per cent of the Startup India funds — to the tune of Rs 1,000 crore — in SIDBI-operated funds have been earmarked for women-led startups. The contribution of women in agriculture — a comparatively masculinised vocation — has been called to the fore with the annual observation of Mahila Kisan Diwas celebrations and a mandate of earmarking 30 per cent of funds in governmental, agricultural beneficiary-related interventions for female farmers.

Women have been put forward as foot soldiers of change. While Business Correspondent Sakhis are extending basic banking services to Self-Help Groups under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Mahila Swachhagrahis are bringing sanitation services closer home under the Swachh Bharat movement. Where lacunae have been uncovered, they have been bridged through capacity-building. The capacity-building programme for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayati Raj institutions is one such intervention that trains women representatives to deliberate constructively on issues pertaining to women and chil-



C R Sasikumar

dren and enables them to be change agents. Steps have also been taken to reconcile the male-female digital divide through a digital literacy drive under the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA).

Recognising that better-educated women make well-informed social, economic and familial decisions, the government has invested in this virtuous future. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) — a national campaign for the survival, protection and greater educational participation of the girl child shepherded by the PM — appears to be yielding social gains through monitorable targets. The sex ratio at birth (SRB) has improved by 29 points from 991 (2015-16) to 1,020 (2019-21) as per NFHS-5. Gross enrolment ratio (GER) of girls in schools at the secondary level has improved from 68.17 per cent (2012-13) to 79.46 per cent (2020-21) as per UDISE-data; in fact, between 2012-13 and 2019-20, the GER for girls at both secondary and higher secondary level has increased more than that of the boys.

The road from women's selflessness to self-hood has been supported by an all-around enabling socio-political and legal environment. Female literacy programmes, capacity building modules and livelihoods-oriented schemes have been but some strategies to remove barriers to the entry of women into Indian society, polity and economy. The government introduced the National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers in 2017 to address barriers created by care gaps. To further support working women, a liberal revision over the erstwhile 12 gas stipulation was offered by way of 26 weeks of paid maternity leave for expecting mothers.

The government has also, in unequivocal terms, expressed a resolve to equalise the otherwise inequitable distribution of assets and resources. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana promises concessional LPG connections to women beneficiaries in vulnerable households, thus according them greater dignity by way of ownership of an amenity. Simultaneously, the Ujjwala Yojana affords women a smoke-free environment and alleviates the drudgery of collecting fuelwood, lifting them from the poverty of time and health. With the recent announcement by the finance minister to subsidise up to 12 gas cylinders by a sum of Rs 200, qualms about the future affordability of refills stand assuaged. Coupled with the slashing of fuel prices, amid a global political climate of soaring energy inflation, this move promises greater ease of living for women.

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Similarly, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana too specifies a preference for women beneficiaries. In fact, approximately 75 per cent of homeowners under Awas Yojana are women. The Awas Yojana remedies the well-chronicled, historical, disproportionate gap in asset ownership that deprives women of social security and “fallback” options during crises.

According women's autonomy a central place in public discourse, the government has, in three masterstrokes, made Indian women the architects of their own destiny. To this effect, the undignified practice of instant triple talaq has been nullified through the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019; the permissible gestational age for abortion has been revised to 24 weeks — up from 20 weeks — for vulnerable women through the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021; and the legal marriage age for women has been proposed to be raised to 21 years, at par with men, under the provisions of the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021. Such a legal edifice ensures women's self-governance and procedural independence.

This genuine commitment to women's empowerment has augmented women's ability to make decisions. Between NFHS-4 (2014-15) and 5 (2019-21), nearly 89 per cent of married Indian women participated in major household decisions, a 5 per cent improvement over the previous survey. Markedly, more women than ever before owned houses (43.3 per cent) — alone or jointly — and had bank accounts (78.6 per cent) that they themselves used.

The Modi government has led by example in visibly respecting “nari shakti” in its eight years. There are eleven women in the current Council of Ministers, holding key portfolios and serving as a pleasant reminder of the repositioning of the nucleus of administrative initiatives. Amrit Kaal has signalled a tectonic shift from narratives of reinforced, gendered stereotypes and powerlessness to imagining new roles for Indian women that flex “nari shakti”. Women have donned new hats in the past eight years — as deciders of the nation's destiny in the capacity of strong-willed voters exercising their democratic rights, as opinion-makers, as foot soldiers of behavioural transformation and as social change agents. In Amrit Kaal, the future of nation-building is unquestionably “female”.

The writer is Union Minister for Women and Child Development

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation between China and the US are good news for China and the US and good news for the whole world.”
—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Anything but achhe din

Modi government has indulged in propaganda, distorted nationalism and misused investigative agencies to hide its failures



RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA

EIGHTYEARS is a long time in which to measure a government's performance. The impact of policies and tent pole reforms start to become apparent, and the electorate can make an honest assessment of the leaders they elected. In countries like the US, Canada and Brazil, eight years marks two presidential terms and the term limit for an elected head of government/state. For Narendra Modi and his strawman cabinet, this is a significant milestone for three reasons.

First, no one is under any illusions about the Modi government now. In 2014, the then Gujarat chief minister Modi campaigned on promises of reform, growth, job creation, controlling inflation and equitable distribution of wealth, summarised in the slogan “achhe din”. In the last eight years, people have painfully suffered the exact opposite. Run-away inflation has singed the lives of common people. Wholesale inflation is at a 30-year high and food inflation has made the life of the middle class and poor unbearable. The unemployment rate is officially touching 8 per cent, and could be much higher. Instead of creating the promised 2 crore new jobs every year, over 12 crore jobs have been lost. This government has turned the demographic dividend into a demographic disaster. Boisterous sloganeering and advertisement-driven rhetoric are not a substitute for sound economic vision.

One must recognise that the falling rupee, flight of capital, plummeting GDP and a sharp drop in manufacturing activities are the result of a series of economic policy failures. This is called policy paralysis. It started with the body-blow of demonetisation, which failed in every single one of its stated objectives — curbing black money in circulation, combatting terrorism, reduction of forged currency and increasing taxation. The deeply flawed GST and 1,100 amendments since 2017 have made the taxation structure cumbersome for medium and small businesses. The bank frauds of Rs 5,35,000 crore over the last eight years and gross NPAs of 21 lakh crore have further eroded the credibility of the banking system. To top it, the surge in the Union's debt from Rs 55 lakh crore in 2014 to 135 lakh crore now reflects a debt trap.

The vulnerable sections have faced the brunt of this policy paralysis. Fourteen crore people have been pushed below the poverty line in eight years. The subsidised ration guaranteed under the Food Security Act enacted by the Congress is the only source of sustenance for millions. About 62 crore farmers and farm labourers have fallen prey to this malady with the Centre's clandestine attempts at diluting the UPA's 2013 Land Acquisition Act and failure to double farmers' income.

The last eight years have witnessed attacks on India's sovereignty and territorial integrity with the Modi government largely re-

maining a mute bystander. The devastating terror attacks at Uri, Pathankot and Pulwama and calling the dreaded ISI to Pathankot for an investigation are still fresh in every Indian's memory. China has brazenly occupied our territory in Depsang Plains, Gogra Hot Springs, Pangong Tso Lake and other places for the last two years. From a PM who rode to power on the promise of showing “lal ank” to China, the inaction is startling. Meanwhile, China has converted the entire LAC into a militarised zone.

Second, the Modi government has realised that it cannot stay in power if democratic institutions remain vigilant. So, it began the task of subordinating crucial institutions to its purposes. The timing and targets of actions by the CBI, ED and Income Tax Departments are so painfully obvious that states had to take the drastic step of withdrawing permissions to investigate. On the other hand, when someone defects to the BJP the charges mysteriously disappear.

Judges who acted in ways that incur the displeasure of the government are transferred swiftly to remote parts of the country. From a Supreme Court that had maintained a studied distance from the government, judges began to shower praises on the PM. One called him a model for the youth and another was nominated to the Rajya Sabha.

Third, it is now clear that the Modi government does not have the best interests of the public at heart. Modi prematurely declared the end of Covid-19, boasting about exporting vaccines, when the second wave hit. It was devastating. Hospitals and doctors were overwhelmed, people died senselessly waiting for oxygen and hospital beds.

So, whose interests does the Modi government serve?

The BJP has become staggeringly rich. It declared assets worth Rs 4,847 crore in 2019-20. And apparently, this wasn't enough. An RTI response revealed that the Modi government spent close to Rs 5,000 crore of public money in just four years (2014-2018) on publicity and promotion, more than double what the UPA spent in 10 years. There are the numerous attempts at curtailing the right to privacy and expanding state surveillance.

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H N Bhagwat, Chiplun

BRIEFLY

KERALA
Man dies of
West Nile fever

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala on Sunday reported the death of a person due to West Nile fever in what was the first fatality attributed to the vector-borne disease in recent times. The victim, Puthanpurackal Joby (47), was a native of Panancheri in Thrissur district. The state health department has sounded an alert in the wake of the death. West Nile fever, spread by the Culex species of mosquitoes, had earlier claimed a life in Kerala in 2019. Officials said Joby developed fever and other symptoms on May 17 and was treated at various hospitals. Two days ago, he was admitted to the government medical college in Thrissur, where doctors diagnosed him with West Nile fever. **ENS**

KARNATAKA
Thief of high-end
cycles arrested

Bengaluru: Bengaluru police on Saturday arrested an alleged thief of high-end bicycles in the city, and recovered 54 bicycles, worth Rs 6 lakh, from him, officers said. Police in Sidduguntepalya identified the accused as Balraj (48), a resident of Mylasandra. They had recently received a complaint regarding a bicycle theft following which officers checked the CCTV footage in the area and, upon investigation, found that Balraj was a habitual offender, the police said. Balraj had been out on bail after being arrested in a house theft case. **ENS**

GOA
2 Archbishops
named cardinals

Panaji: Archbishop of Goa and Daman Filipe Neri Ferrão, 69, was among the 21 Bishops chosen by Pope Francis to be made a Cardinal. The Pope made the announcement in the Vatican City on Sunday. Archbishop Ferrao and Archbishop of Hyderabad Anthony Poola are the two Indian Bishops named by the Pope among the 21 who will receive the 'red hat' in August. The Vatican News website states that Pope Francis will hold a Consistory on August 27 for the creation of new cardinals. **ENS**

MOOSEWALA MURDER

With gangster Goldy Brar owning up to killing, Bishnoi gang under police radar

JIGNASA SINHA & PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

WITH CANADA-BASED gangster Goldy Brar claiming responsibility for the murder of singer-politician Sidhu Moosewala, sources in Delhi Police Special Cell say they will look into the role of those associated with Lawrence Bishnoi, of whose gang Brar is a part. Many such associates, police said, are already behind bars in and around Delhi.

Senior officers also said they had been investigating Brar for allegedly planning several murders and attempts to murder from Canada.

Bishnoi and his gang, the officer said, have criminal records in Delhi, Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana, with Bishnoi, lodged in a Rajasthan jail, still managing to run his gang from inside.

In February last year, Brar, with Bishnoi's help, allegedly planned the murder of Youth Congress Leader Gurlal Singh Balwan in Punjab.

Manish Chandra, DCP (Special Cell), had at the time told the media that his team arrested three men who fired more than 10-12 bullets at Balwan and killed him. "The accused have confessed to their crime and said

Varanasi court backed divisive politics: Jamiat on Gyanvapi

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, MAY 29

THE GOVERNING body of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind on Sunday said that "raking up" controversies regarding old places of worship like Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi and Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura "will result in disturbing peace, order and integrity of the country".

After the conclusion of its two-day meeting in Deoband in Saharanpur, the outfit of Islamic scholars and clerics expressed its "deep concern and disgust" over the issue and said the Varanasi Civil Court "supported divisive politics", while "ignoring" the special provision of places of worship Act 1991 in the Gyanvapi issue. The Jamiat also resolved to focus on improving the education of Muslim youth and told them to work for the betterment of their future by improving their educational and economic conditions.

"It (the Varanasi civil court) has explicitly disregarded the worship Act, which stipulates that places of worship will remain intact as it existed on August 15, 1947. The Varanasi Civil Court has completely ignored the decision of the Supreme Court regarding the Babri mosque which had specifically mentioned the protection of other places of worship," the

KEY DECISIONS AT DEOBAND MEET

■ To tame the growing tide of hatred and animosity against Muslims in the country in the name of clothing, food, faith, festivals, etc.

■ Will demand an ordinance for protection of Muslim Personal Law as per the provisions in the Constitution of India.

■ Taking up with the Central and state governments the poor educational and economic condition of Muslims.

■ Will urge the ruling dispensations against

reviving the differences of history, "which will not be conducive for the peace in the country".

■ Protecting Waqf properties and their proper utilisation.

■ Strengthening of SADBHAVNA Manch. Representatives of every religions and castes shall be invited to participate in the 'sadbhavna sansad'.

■ Dispelling misunderstanding regarding Islamic teachings and prevention of apostate activities.

resolution stated.

"The Ayodhya issue has already severely damaged social harmony and peaceful communal fabric of the country. Now, these conflicts will provide fresh impetus for further confrontation and the negative politics of majority domination. Keeping old controversies alive and trying to rectify the alleged so-called historical mistakes will be a disservice to the country... The Supreme Court in its ruling about Babri Masjid has described the Worship Act as

the basic spirit of the Constitution of India. This decision of the apex court explicitly conveys the message that the government, political parties and religious groups should keep away from reviving the controversial issues of the past. Only then it will redeem our pledges to the constitution, otherwise, it will be called great disloyalty to the constitution," the resolution stated.

Earlier speaking to *The Indian Express*, the national secretary of the outfit, Maulana

Niyaz Ahmed Farooqui, said the issues of Gyanvapi and Mathura mosques were not Hindu or Muslim cases.

"The matter of Gyanvapi masjid and Shahi Idgah masjid is pending in the courts and there is no space for sentimental arguments on them. This is not a Hindu or Muslim case. We told the meeting not to indulge in these cases and let the courts decide the matter," Farooqui said.

"National parties or organisations should refrain from getting involved. Because of temple and mosque, we are forgetting the main issues," he added.

In its resolution, the Jamiat expressed its concern over "the growing tide of hatred and animosity against Muslims in the country".

"In the name of the clothing, food, faith, festival or language and economy etc., Indians are being pitted against their own countrymen. Instead of engaging youths in constructive work, they are being used as a tool to wreak havoc. And the most unfortunate part... is that the government of the day is patronising these destructive activities."

"...The anti-Islamic propaganda in our country is tarnishing our country's image. As a result, anti-India forces are advancing their nefarious agenda on the international platform," it added.

Monsoon arrives
over Kerala three
days in advance

ANJALI MARAR
PUNE, MAY 29

THE SOUTHWEST monsoon arrived over Kerala on Sunday, three days ahead of its normal onset date of June 1, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The monsoon onset was also realised over southern Tamil Nadu and some areas of Lakshadweep on Sunday.

This is only the fourth occasion since 2010 when the southwest monsoon onset over Kerala was realised before June 1. According to the IMD data, the monsoon had arrived earlier than usual in 2010 (May 31), 2017 (May 30) and 2018 (May 29). The earliest onset over Kerala since 2005 was recorded on May 26 in 2006.

According to the latest IMD forecast, conditions are favourable for monsoon advancement into the rest of Kerala, Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep, parts of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in the next two to three days.

Over 2 years after Cabinet nod, govt notifies posts under IRMS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

OVER TWO years after the Cabinet greenlit the restructuring of Indian Railways, the government formalized the creation of the Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS) by throwing open top level posts to eligible senior officials, terming it a move to "remove departmentalism".

A gazette notification in this regard was published on Friday.

"The secretary-level posts, that of the Chairman Railway Board,

MANGALORE UNIVERSITY

Amid Karnataka hijab row, students worry about future

KIRAN PARASHAR
BENGALURU, MAY 29

FATHIMA SHAZMA, a first-year student of journalism at University College in Mangaluru, is worried about her future in the institution. "What if my family won't send me to college?" she wondered after Mangalore University last week decided that the Karnataka High Court order upholding the hijab ban in pre-university colleges will apply to degree colleges as well and that religious attire will therefore not be allowed inside classrooms.

"I am the daughter of a seller at the fish market, and I am a first-generation college student from my family. But now the college authorities are afraid of a piece of cloth that I wear," she said.

While the hijab issue in coastal Karnataka's Udupi district was making national headlines earlier this year, University College, a constituent college of Mangalore University, was not affected and students were allowed to wear headscarves even when they attended exams, students said. But last week, the issue cropped up in the college when ABVP-backed students staged protests against the wearing of hijab.

University College has about 1,600 students, and according to college authorities, it has recently seen an increase in enrolment of Muslim girl students. Now, however, some of those students say they may drop out of college or seek transfer to another institution.

"Not many colleges in Mangaluru offer a journalism

STUDENT ASSAULTED
FOR SKULLCAP: 6 COPS,
PRINCIPAL BOOKED

Bengaluru: Karnataka police have registered an FIR against seven people, including the principal of a college and six police officials, on charges of thrashing a 19-year-old student for wearing a skull cap in college. The case was registered after a local court directed the police to investigate it.

The student, identified as Naveed Hasan Saab Tharathari, studies in first grade government college in Teradal under Bagalkot district of Karnataka. According to police sources, the incident took place on February 18. Naveed was allegedly insulted, assaulted and prevented from entering the institution for wearing a skull cap. **ENS**

course, and the fees in this college is very less. Also, the college had allowed us to wear the headscarf, but all of a sudden, they have denied us entry," Fathima said.

Gowsiya, who is in her final semester of BSc, is just six months away from graduating, and the decision on hijab came as a rude shock to her. "I chose this college to study because hijab was allowed. Hijab doesn't mean that we wore a black headscarf — we wore the shawl, which is part of the uniform, on the head. All of a sudden, the college denied entry to students wearing headscarves.

UP: NSA invoked against former Balrampur MLA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, MAY 29, 2022

BALRAMPUR POLICE Sunday invoked the National Security Act against former Samajwadi Party MP Rizwan Zaheer who is currently in jail in connection with the alleged murder of another party member.

Zaheer, who has 14 cases lodged against him, is currently in Balrampur district jail. In January, he was arrested with his daughter Zeba Rizwan and son-in-law Rameez for allegedly planning the murder of SP leader Feroz Ahmed alias Pappu.

"The National Security Act has been invoked against Rizwan Zaheer," said Additional Superintendent of Police, Balrampur, Namrita Srivastava. The order was served to Zaheer inside the jail.

Earlier in May, Balrampur po-

lice had attached Zaheer's properties and bank accounts under the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act. The estimated value of the attached properties was around Rs 79 crore and they are located in Lucknow and Balrampur.

Zaheer had won from Balrampur Lok Sabha constituency twice as an SP candidate — in 1998 and 1999. He was also elected as an MLA from Tulsipur assembly seat thrice — as an Independent in 1989, as an SP nominee in 1993, and as a Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) candidate in 1996. In 2019, he joined the BSP but returned to SP in 2021.

As per reports, Zaheer and Ahmed had a fallout as the latter was preparing to contest the 2022 Assembly elections from the Tulsipur seat. Zaheer, on the other hand, had been vying for a ticket for his daughter Zeba from the same constituency as well.

Though it is clear that the Karnataka High Court order was for pre-university students, the authorities are misleading students stating they are following the High Court's orders." She said the parents of many Muslim students stopped sending them to college out of fear. "When we spoke to the college principal and other staff, they expressed their helplessness, and it clearly shows that they were caught in the politics of it. Also, some of them tried to misguide, stating that they were following the Karnataka High Court's orders, which nowhere refers to the Higher Education Department," she said.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Mangalore University Vice-Chancellor P Subrahmanya Yadapadithaya said that a meeting held by the university syndicate had come to the conclusion that hijab should not be allowed.

"We do not have clarity over the HC orders. It is really a painful decision as an academic, but we have taken a decision to be on the safer side... The enrolment of Muslim girl students have increased in Mangalore University, and it is really a good development, but these decisions are taken in a cloud of confusion... Only the Higher Education Department can clear the confusion," he said.

A senior official in the state Department of Higher Education said many bureaucrats were fed up with the state of affairs. "Dress should not have been a major issue in the education system, and this is really a sad development..."

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Assam govt to
issue minority
certificates to
six religious
communities

TORA AGARWALA,
GUWAHATI, MAY 29

THE ASSAM Cabinet on Sunday announced that the government would issue minority certificates to six religious minorities — Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis — in the state.

"This is the first time such certificates would be handed out," said Assam Health & Family Welfare minister, Keshab Mahanta, addressing the press after the Cabinet meeting in Guwahati on Sunday. He added that the modalities of the decision were still being figured out.

"We have a number of schemes for minorities, we have a separate department for minorities... But who are the minorities? There is no identification. We need to identify them so that such schemes reach them," Mahanta said, adding that the request for certificates came from the Assam Minorities Development Board.

Habib Mohammad Chowdhury, Chairman of the Minorities Development Board said that the move would "benefit" the minorities. "...often, without a certificate, we face issues when it comes to government schemes, and even scholarships or exams," he said.

As per Census 2011, Hindus comprise 61.47 per cent of Assam's total population, while Muslims constitute 34.22 per cent. Christians account for 3.74 per cent, while the percentage of Buddhists, Sikhs and Jain is less than one per cent.

"We want an independent probe into the death of Akhil Sahu, and the probe should be monitored by a judicial officer." He also demanded that the FIR against students and the order to vacate hostels should be withdrawn.

Suresh Kumar Sahu, father of the deceased student, filed a complaint on May 22 alleging that his son was not given the required medical attention at the university hospital.

Samastipur SP Hriday Kant said, "We would like to first thoroughly probe the case... There are four FIRs in the matter... As the university is closed, we are not able to talk to students."



Explosives recovered from a Pakistani drone shot down by police in Kathua. *Express*

disposal experts were called. They separated the payload attachment from the flying machine and found seven sticky/magnetic-type bombs, besides an equal number of grenades, the Kathua district police chief said.

The shooting down of drone and seizure of sticky bombs and UBGL grenades by police assumes significance as the upcoming Amarnath yatra, which will be the first after the Central government's August 5, 2019, decision of stripping Jammu and Kashmir of its special status, is only a month away.

As per yatra dates announced by Shri Amarnath Shrine Board, the 43-day pilgrimage this year will start on June 30 and conclude on Raksha Bandhan on August 11.

The threat of sticky bombs, especially during the upcoming Amarnath yatra, is being seen seriously by the police and security forces in view of the May 13 Katra bus fire incident, which is suspected to have been caused by a sticky bomb. Four persons had died and more than 20 injured in that incident. Security forces are currently engaged in preparing drills to guard against any such incident during the Amarnath yatra.

The man from Moosa:
Self-made, temperamental

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, MAY 29

"I AM not going anywhere. I will live here, I will die here." That was one line that Shubdeep Singh Sidhu, who liked being known as Sidhu Moosewala, would repeat at every rally, every roadside meeting while campaigning for the Punjab Assembly elections held in February. He did not get much time to live. Moosewala, 27, was the only child of his parents. He was shot dead near Mansa three days after his security was downgraded.

Moosewala was a self-made pop sensation. He could be petulant and temperamental. He had frequent run-ins with the law. Among several cases, he was booked under the Arms Act for firing an AK-47 rifle at a shooting range during the lockdown. He was also booked for promoting violence and gun culture with his song Sanju.

But his heart beat for his village Moosa. "That is why I chose



Sidhu Moosewala

to be known not by my name but by that of my village," he would tell people as he went from village to village to seek votes. He got the Congress ticket from Mansa, where he was pitted against the AAP's Vijay Singla.

Surprisingly, he ran a very different campaign shorn of any tall promises. Instead, he made a clean environment his poll plank.

His songs which he wrote and composed himself — he made it to the Top 5 in the UK charts last year — frequently got him into trouble both with the police and the clergy.

When defeated by Singla, he raged against the voters, calling them anti-national. But that was Moosewala. More recently, when Singla was sacked, he addressed a press conference. It turned out to be his last. He lived and died, just a few kilometres from his beloved village.



Students stage sit-in outside varsity on Sunday. *Express*

on May 22, a day after the death of Akhil Sahu, a student hailing from Rajasthan. University registrar P P Srivastava has alleged that during the protests, students en-

gaged in vandalism at the university campus and that they torched his car. Following the protests, seven named and 400 unnamed students were booked on charges of rioting and attempted murder.

In a written order on May 22, the registrar also ordered students to vacate their hostel rooms by 12 noon that day. The closure of the university has also caused students to worry about delay in the completion of their courses.

The RPCAU Students' Federation on Sunday staged a dharna outside the university campus. Harsh Dwivedi, the head of the students' federation, said,

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IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

What we are seeing today is China coming back into its own and therefore, should be deferred to... and is not comfortable when a country like India, seen as an upstart country, tries to contest that centrality

Shubhajt Roy: You write in the book (*How China Sees India and the World*) about how you went to China and made friends. What did you see that changed your perception?

It was only in 1974 that I crossed into China for my first posting. That was a China which, unlike today, was entirely closed to the rest of the world. And then I returned in 1983. It almost seemed as if this was a kind of Wild West China where people were taking this dictum of 'to get rich is glorious' very seriously. But even that pales in comparison to what I see when I go to China today; it's a modern-day marvel. There is no doubt that there has been a 40-year sprint which has completely transformed China.

Shubhajt Roy: China has built about itself an image, that it was the leader of the past and wants to reclaim that place. How have you busted that image in the book?

Every culture and civilisation has stories to tell about itself. Those stories are always positive stories. One of the things that China continues to put across is that India has never quite been independent because, for years, it has been ruled by alien empires. But they neglect to mention that for a lot of its recorded history China was also under alien rule... Today, China says that the Belt and Road Initiative is nothing but a re-establishment of the old Silk Road with China as the centre of that old economic and trade network. The fact is that China, in terms of those silk roads, was actually at the periphery. It was at one end of the Silk Road — it was not one road, it was a network of roads leading out of China or India or Persia.

So, what is China doing? It is coming back into its own, and therefore should be deferred to... and it is not comfortable when a country like India, for example, seen as an upstart country, tries to contest that centrality.

Shubhajt Roy: You talk about the contestation with Tibet that took place... Do the scars of 1962 shape India's thinking, when it comes to border negotiations with China?

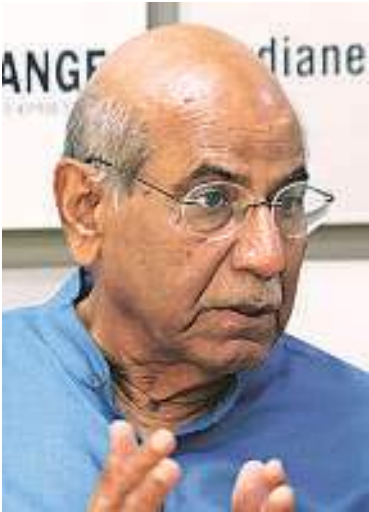
I do not say that it was a mistake on the part of India to receive the Dalai Lama. If we had not, I think it would have gone against everything that India stands for. But, there was perhaps a misunderstanding in India about how important the Tibet issue was for China. Anything that was being done on the Indian side was being looked at through the prism of nervousness by China. What were tactical manoeuvres in an earlier period became a kind of a strategic confrontation in the later period. We did not recognise that that change had taken place.

Shubhajt Roy: In 2005, China was part of the climate change negotiations. But then that tone changed from 2008.

Chinese policy, not just towards India, but its foreign policy is very much influenced by how China sees geopolitics around itself. In 2007-08, you had the global financial and economic crisis. Hank Paulson was the treasury secretary of the United States. And he had a strong relationship with Wang Qishan, who is today the Vice-President of China. He was a key negotiator with the West, particularly the United States. And he tells Paulson, after the economic and financial crisis, that we thought you were our teacher, but today, the teacher has failed. And now you have to learn from us. So, you see, the change that has taken place. China has emerged relatively unscathed from the crisis. In China, even a two per cent rate of growth over this large base means they are perhaps adding a new India every few years. So, that is why the Chinese after 2007-2008, would always say that our Indian friends should realise that China is today five times the size of India, and naturally, this will have an impact on India-China relations. Meaning, you should know your place.

Shubhajt Roy: In 2005, the nuclear deal was just being negotiated. Wen Jiabao comes here and China starts to upgrade its relations with India. What had happened?

China began to believe that India may go further ahead with its relationship with the United States, and that would be a negative development from China's point of view. So, China was trying to put across to India that it is not a threat and that there was enough space in Asia, and the world, for the simultaneous rise of India and China. That was the time when they also gave us a map, which, for the first time, showed Sikkim as a part of India. They



WHY SHYAM SARAN

A former foreign secretary and then Prime Minister's special envoy on nuclear deal and climate change, Shyam Saran understands China — its history, language, culture and politics better than most in Indian strategic circles. As someone who has conducted diplomacy at the highest levels



with China, the US and Russia, his analysis is taken seriously by those in top ranks in governments across the world. His latest book — *How China Sees India and the World* (Juggernaut) — is a masterclass on Chinese history and its strategic thinking, and how it impacts India and the world.



After 2007-08, they would say that our Indian friends should realise that China is five times its size, and naturally, this will have an impact on India-China relations. Meaning, you should know your place

‘China made a wrong bet... whichever way you look at it, Russia has lost this war’

Shyam Saran talks about how India should be mindful of China’s internal politics, the shift in the Euro-centric worldview and maintaining India’s strategic ties. This session was moderated by Shubhajt Roy, Deputy Chief of National Bureau, *The Indian Express*



Former foreign secretary Shyam Saran in conversation with Shubhajt Roy, Deputy Chief of National Bureau, *The Indian Express* Abhinav Saha

were willing to make some concessions to ensure that India retained a certain mobilised position and we were able to leverage that. In a sense, we got something from China, and something from the United States, as well; we were in a sweet spot.

Shubhajt Roy: Could you explain your thesis on the future of the India-China relationship?

Throughout history, the Chinese have had periods where there has been a strong central authority, a strong leader, who has delivered both economic prosperity and political stability. There is certain ingrained authoritarianism. That is not the case with India. Maybe it's because of invasion, migration or trade, but remarkably, India has been an open culture and civilisation. You would agree that we are a pluralistic society. And democracy is the best political dispensation to handle this reality. I would be very disappointed if India looked upon China as its model, what I call dictator envy. It is important for India to be more Indian, rather than to see this as the model for the future. For all its faults, there is a variety of opinion, dissent, which is still available in India, which really is our strength.

Shubhajt Roy: How is the India-US relationship different today than it was at your time?

The kind of depth and breadth that the India-US relationship has acquired in the last couple of decades, since I was foreign secretary, to me, has been a very surprising development. If you told me in 2005 that 20 years later, we would have such a strong military-to-military relationship, a strong counter-terrorism relationship, I would have probably said that that is an unrealistic prospect. But that has happened. I would have been one of the persons to oppose the signing of all the three foundational agreements between India and the United States. But, there is recognition that in terms of the challenges that we face, and will continue to face, this relationship is going to be very critical. And I agree with that.

Shubhajt Roy: In your book, you say that the Ukraine war and weakening of Russia has meant that China is more restrained. And that gives some sort of breathing space for India. Why do you say that?

The opposite could happen too. I may be wrong, but, to me, China made a wrong

bet in that declaration that they signed on February 4, in Beijing (with Russia). Because I believe that whichever way you look at it, Russia has lost this war. Even if there are battlefield successes tomorrow, if you leave Ukraine as complete rubble, is that victory for Russia? This is also accentuated by the domestic problems that China is facing, because of the way it has handled COVID-19. There is also a huge debt overhang. For these reasons, perhaps, China will need to trim its sails.

Shubhajt Roy: How do you see India-China diplomacy right now?

India has done well in terms of keeping the lines of communication open, and engagement with China open. It is the Chinese who are a little nervous about what India might do, with BRICS or RIC. I think we should keep them guessing. And keep the engagement going.

P Vaidyanathan Iyer: Does a change in leadership styles affect how China perceives India?

We think that the personal relationship with a Chinese leader will be important but for the Chinese, perhaps, that is not so important. That means (president) Xi Jinping will not be looking at his personal equation with an Indian leader whether it is (Narendra) Modi or Manmohan Singh. He will look at the balance of power. Where does India fit in, in how they see the global equations evolving? So, this is something that we need to

also understand that whether it is this Chinese leader or that, the language which they use usually does not change. It is not in the leadership changes that China looks at India, but the way it formulates its policy towards India, that will be a big change.

Ritu Sarin: Indian diplomacy has been in the news because of what Rahul Gandhi said. And then the EAM (External Affairs Minister) gave a pretty vitriolic sort of defence. As a veteran, which side are you on?

I don't think I should take sides at all. Every new government believes that it is making a departure from the past and doing better than the previous government. Despite these changes in behaviour, I actually am impressed by the remarkable continuity in terms of Indian foreign policy. If you take, for example, the relationship with the United States. Going back to Atal Bihari Vajpayee and seeing what we have today, there is hardly any change. In fact, I would say there has been a stronger attention paid to the relationship with the US than the time when I was foreign secretary. The other aspect is with respect to China itself, for what it did in eastern Ladakh. Again, the general approach of Indian foreign policy has been that even though you may have areas of confrontation with China, there are also areas where there is some degree of convergence of views. We should be firm in confronting them where our interests are being

If you told me in 2005 that 20 years later, we would have such a strong military-to-military relationship with the US, I would have probably said that is unrealistic... I would have opposed the signing of the three foundational agreements with the US



threatened but we should also not give up engaging with China.

And, I don't know on what basis Rahul Gandhi made that statement. In my conversations with foreign diplomats I have not come across that view expressed that your colleagues have become very arrogant or pushy. But that there is a more determined articulation of what our policies should be, that is there, at the level of the foreign minister himself and I'm not surprised, if officers in External Affairs take their cue from that or what the PM is saying, but overall, in the direction of our foreign policy, I do not see much of a change. Even with respect to Ukraine, I do not see a change.

Raj Kamal Jha: Since 2014, even in state elections, we hear a lot more about foreign policy. On the street, too, it is framed in terms of India's standing in the world. How do you read this?

During the earlier phase of my career, foreign policy was not something that was so publicly debated. Essentially, the lines set by (Jawaharlal) Nehru continued, in a sense, without much dissent. However, that began to change over a period of time. The big test actually came with the nuclear deal. That was perhaps the first time that you had a huge amount of debate in Parliament, and also a lot of public comment as well. As foreign secretary, I had to go out and explain things in the earlier period. What I see today is really a continuation of that trend. By the way, this is not a negative trend. I think Indian foreign policy would actually gain from the greater debate and public comment.

However, what is worrying, sometimes, is that there has to be some effort made to keep foreign policy issues, as far as possible, not mixed up with domestic issues or political issues. That creates a problem. For example, one of the success stories of India recently has been the improvement of its relationship with Bangladesh. But then all that gets vitiated when somebody starts talking about the people coming across the border or talking about how in Jahangirpuri, Bangladeshis were involved in the riot. To think that this will not resonate across in Bangladesh is simply unrealistic, it does have an impact.

With regard to neighbouring countries, it is not always possible to have that complete division between domestic issues and foreign policy issues. But that

effort needs to be made because that is what India's interests demand.

Shubhajt Roy: Did Galwan surprise you?

I do not understand why this happened. Under the previous government, I had carried out several border-infrastructure surveys. My reading is that earlier, because the infrastructure on the Chinese side and on the Indian side was not so developed, it was infrequently that Indian patrols and Chinese patrols came face to face. And the protocol was that you disengage, you don't get into a confrontation. What seems to have happened is that with the improvement of infrastructure on the Chinese side, and on ours, many of the areas which were not easily accessible, became accessible. So, the encounters between the two sides became much more frequent. Perhaps the kind of peace and tranquillity protocols and confidence-building measures that we had put in place earlier, needed to be updated. Perhaps that would be one of the reasons, I may be wrong. But that could be one reason. But I think behind all this is that sense: we are a much stronger power, we can dictate terms. That's the kind of mindset which I'm afraid is very much in evidence today.

Harikishan Sharma: What is your view on India's handling of the Ukraine crisis?

I do not disagree with the position taken by this government as far as the Ukraine crisis is concerned. The question is, what about our relationship with Russia? The strategic glue which held India and the Soviet Union together was really the common threat we perceived from China. What changed in 1990? The Soviet Union collapsed, the relationship between Russia and China, which was very adversarial, first but became somewhat neutral, ended up with the February 4 Joint Declaration.

Once the Ukraine crisis settles down, what does this mean in terms of Russia's relationship with China? That is the critical factor. And how we respond will very much be determined by that because going forward it will remain a major strategic challenge for India. If we are looking at what can help India transform itself and become a stronger power, having strong partnerships with these countries is actually in India's interest. How we leverage those partnerships depends upon us.



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ECONOMY

HOPE AND CHALLENGE

INDIA IS seen to be the world's fastest-growing big economy in FY23, with a realistic chance of holding on to that badge for a while as a botched zero-Covid policy threatens to derail the Chinese economy. But some of the structural issues that constrained the Indian growth story before the pandemic continue to weigh heavy amid a worsening inflationary spiral and an uncertain external environment.



Over the past 24 months, India has pivoted away from its otherwise insular trade stance, with pacts signed with UAE and Australia, and negotiations initiated with EU and UK. A reboot in efforts to leverage the digital infrastructure founded on the innovative UPI platform is underway, as well as further fostering of a start-up scene that has thrown up over 100 unicorns.



The big work in progress is the Centre's attempt at replacing 29 sets of labour laws by four broad labour codes, but implementation is behind schedule. The insolvency resolution process under IBC is seeing delays. The GST structure remains an issue; much of the buoyancy in collections is on account of compliance efforts. A manufacturing-led push relies primarily on production linked incentives, but beyond telecom hardware, the output is underwhelming. The 5G telecom push likely later this year could be key to the next wave of digitisation. Commercial mining in coal has been cleared, but output is constrained.



The absence of a data protection framework is a hurdle in leveraging the numerous digital projects underway. Private investment continues to underperform, and attempts at forced formalisation have hit MSMEs. Land and agri reforms remain pending. The consumption story, despite the post-Covid recovery, continues to totter. Cleavages in spending by the rich and poor could be worsened by prolonged high inflation. Air India and LIC have given disinvestment a boost, but the big-ticket privatisation of BPCL has fallen through.

ANIL SASI

EDUCATION

NATIONAL POLICY, NEW ENTRANCE

AFTER A sluggish first two years in the government's second term, much been happening on the education front in recent months.



After the announcement of the new National Education Policy in July 2020, its implementation got off to a sluggish start, mainly due to the pandemic. Now, there's a common entrance test for admission to central universities. Students can study a four-year multidisciplinary undergraduate programme with multiple exit options, or even two degree programmes simultaneously. The UGC now permits students to pursue up to 40% of a programme online. But some announcements have been more cosmetic: for example, the midday meal scheme has been repackaged and renamed PM POSHAN without any additional allocation.



A committee has been set up for drafting the National Curriculum Framework with guidelines for changes in the school curriculum. The NCF is expected to be ready by next year. For a single regulator for higher education, a Bill to set up the Higher Education Commission of India is almost ready.



Appointment of teachers remains tardy; the National Research Foundation announced in 2019 hasn't been set up yet; and public spending on education is nowhere near the 6% of GDP promised in 2014 and has in fact been decreasing. Apart from IIMs, none of the other centrally-run institutions have been granted total autonomy; and not even 20 of the 50 Institutions of Eminence prom-

ised by the BJP have been set up.

RITIKA CHOPRA

SOCIAL SECTOR

RISE OF THE LABHARTHI

LEVERAGING THE Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) platform to expand coverage of the flagship PM-Kisan scheme from 1 crore beneficiaries in February 2019 to over 10 crore in January 2022, new initiatives like PM-GKAY to provide free foodgrain to nearly 80

MODI's



YEARS

The Modi Govt completes 8 years today. Since returning to power in 2019, it has checked several key boxes on its agenda. India appears to have put the worst of the pandemic behind, but multiple challenges loom at home and abroad for the remainder of the Govt's second term

Illustration: Mithun Chakraborty

core people, and retreating with a bloody nose from the battle to reform the agriculture sector — these have been the social sector headlines of Modi 2.0 so far.



10 instalments of PM-Kisan have been released so far — Rs 1.80 lakh crore has been transferred directly into farmers' accounts. The 11th installment is due for release on May 31. PM-Ujjwala beneficiaries have gone from 8 crore in September 2019 to 9 crore in April 2022. Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, launched in response to the pandemic in February 2020 to provide 5 kg free foodgrains to 81.35 crore people every month, has been extended till

September 2022. The Centre has also been able to roll out the One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC) project to enable NFSA beneficiaries to avail of their entitlement anywhere in India.



The flagship Jal Jeevan Mission, launched in the government's second term, aims to provide tap water connections to all rural households by 2024. The Jal Shakti Ministry said on Saturday that 50% rural households had already been covered. If implemented fully and successfully, Jal Jeevan will be a scheme of gamechanging impact.



The withdrawal, in November 2021, and eventual repeal by Parliament of the three farm laws announced in June 2020 are both a setback and an unfinished agenda point for the government. Experts have argued that reform is critical to the advancement of Indian agriculture.

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

DIPLOMACY & STRATEGY

TIGHTROPE AND PARTNERSHIPS

NEW DELHI'S diplomatic outreach succeeded in blunting international criticism of the constitutional changes in Jammu and Kashmir early on, and significant strategic achievements have followed. But the neighbourhood remains in turmoil, and China presents a huge challenge.



With an experienced diplomat at the helm, Modi 2.0 began by explaining to the world its decision to abrogate Art 370 that revoked the special status for Jammu and Kashmir. The transition from the Trump administration to the one led by President Joe Biden was smooth, and the strengthening of the Quad was a significant achievement. The framing of an Indo-Pacific strategy by European partners including France, Germany, UK, and EU is a positive for India's interests, as China is seen as a violator of the global rules-based order. India's Covid diplomacy largely worked, albeit with some challenges of supply.



The amendment to the citizenship law set the cat among the pigeons, and New Delhi had to reach out to Dhaka to assuage concerns. The strategic establishment has been occupied with diplomacy with Beijing, as the two-year border stand-off poses the most serious threat of recent times. The war in Ukraine has made it difficult for New Delhi to continue deep engagement with defence partner Russia. The balancing act has been successful so far, but remains a delicate work in progress, as do engagements with China and the neighbourhood.



Taliban-ruled Afghanistan presents a huge strategic challenge. New governments are in power in Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, and the latter two nations are in economic and political crises. New Delhi has to navigate its ties with its neighbours and help maintain a peaceful and stable South Asia. Its leadership in the subcontinent will be tested in the near future.

SHUBHAJIT ROY

POLITICS

BJP GROWING, CONCERNS REMAIN

IN ITS second term, the BJP has made strides towards achieving its ideological agenda and consolidated its position as the major pole of national politics. But it remains challenged by regional parties, a struggling economy, and a communally charged atmosphere.



In the last years, the BJP has made itself and its ideology the major pole of Indian politics. With the key missions in its ideological agenda — the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya and abrogation of Article 370 — already achieved, the ban on triple talaq is being seen as progress halfway towards a Uniform Civil Code. The party is slowly and cautiously embarking on a new mission on Kashi and Mathura temples, but it is a legislative agenda.



Although the BJP has become a dominant political force at the national level, regional parties still call the shots in a number of southern and eastern states. The party is working on a blueprint to alter the "political and ideological character" of these states.



There has been very little progress in restoring the electoral process in Jammu and Kashmir, and the reopening of the Kashi and Mathura disputes has put paid to hopes of impending closure in these cases following the resolution of the Ram Janmabhoomi matter in favour of the Hindu side. The 'bulldozer politics' in several states has enhanced insecurities among the minorities and opened the government up to allegations of partisan behaviour. Satisfactorily addressing all of these dissonances remains a task before the government and party in line with the Prime Minister's promise of "sabka vishwas". Unemployment too remains a concern.

LIZ MATHEW

HEALTH

VACCINES FOR ALL, BUT WORK TO DO

Most of government's time and resources in the last two years have been consumed in responding to the pandemic, which has in turn exposed India's fragile healthcare infrastructure.



Just before the pandemic, the government had unveiled its plan to create an elaborate network of health and wellness centres (HWCs) for delivery of primary healthcare. About 1.5 lakh HWCs are proposed to be set up. An initiative to provide a unique health ID to every citizen and create a registry of healthcare professionals and health facilities has also been launched. In providing Covid-19 vaccines to everyone, India has done better than most other countries.



Most of the health initiatives, including the creation of HWCs and digital mission are works in progress. So are programmes like the Jan Arogya Yojana for insurance to the poor. Barely 5% of India's population has health insurance right now, which makes the Jan Arogya Yojana a very important initiative.



The government still has a long way to go in providing universal and affordable access to healthcare facilities. The partnership of state governments is vital. Upgrading of infrastructure, reforms in medical education, expansion of nursing and para-medical education, and regulation of costs of healthcare are some of the big projects the government has to attend to.

AMITABH SINHA

SECURITY & DEFENCE

LWE IN DECLINE, REFORMS PENDING

ON THE security front, the performance of the government has been a mixed bag in the last eight years.



According to Ministry of Home Affairs, Left Wing Extremism-related violence has declined by 77% between 2009 and 2021, and resultant deaths by 85% between 2010 and 2021. The geographical influence of Maoists has been reduced to just 41 districts from 96 in 2010. Gains have also been made in the Northeast



The creation of the post of the Chief of Defence Staff was a key reform, but work appears to have stalled. After CDS General Bipin Rawat was killed in a helicopter crash in December, the position is still vacant. Also, theatisation in the armed forces isn't working at the desired pace.



Terror emanating from Pakistan remains a cause for concern. Despite the government's claims of normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir following abrogation of its special status on August 5, 2019, a rise in civilian killings has posed questions. Also, as many as 25 modules of Khalistan militancy were identified and neutralised by security forces in 2021, compared to 15 in 2020 and just seven in 2019.

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY

Palme d'Or: top award at Cannes, down the years

UDBHAVSETH
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

THE SWEDISH satire *Triangle of Sadness*, directed by Ruben Östlund, won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival on Saturday. It was the director's Palme d'Or, after his 2017 film *The Square*, a satire on the contemporary art world.

The Palme d'Or is considered one of the most prestigious awards in the film industry. It is awarded to the film adjudged the best among those contending at the Cannes Film Festival. Cannes is one of the "big five" international film festivals — the other four being the Venice Film Festival, the Berlin International Film Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival and the Sundance Film Festival.

The award's history

Palme d'Or translates to 'The Golden



Ruben Östlund with his award in Cannes on Saturday. Reuters

Palm'. But this honour at Cannes went through multiple iterations before taking its present form.

The first Cannes festival was held in 1939, then delayed until 1946 because of World War II. The top prize in 1946, then called the

Grand Prix du Festival International du Film, was awarded to one film from each of the participating countries — including India. Chetan Anand's *Neecha Nagar* is the only Indian film to win the award, itself never released in India. In 1955, by which time the award was being given to only one film, it was renamed Palme d'Or and given to Delbert Mann's *Marty*. In 1964, the award's name was changed back to the Grand Prix du Festival International du Film; in 1975, it became the Palme d'Or once again.

What it looks like

After the 1954 festival, jewellers were invited to design an award that would reflect Cannes's coat of arms and the palm trees lining the Promenade de la Croisette — the road with the convention centre that hosts Cannes every year. The original design was done by Parisian jeweller Lucienne Lazon.

The current design is by Caroline Scheufele and "made of 24-carat gold, is

hand-cast into a wax mold, then affixed to a cushion of a single piece of cut crystal and is now presented in a case of blue Morocco leather", according to the festival's website.

Milestones & trivia

Nine directors have ever won the Palme twice, a circle known as "double Palmes". Before Ruben Östlund (2017 and 2022) were Francis Ford Coppola (1974 and 1979), Shohei Imamura (1983 and 1997), Bille August (1988 and 1992), Emir Kusturica (1985 and 1995), Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne (1999 and 2005), Michael Haneke (2009 and 2012), and Ken Loach (2006 and 2016).

Jane Campion and Julia Ducournau are the only women to have won the Palme, for *The Piano* (1993) and *Titane* (2021) respectively. Mann's *Marty* (1955), Billy Wilder's *The Lost Weekend* (1946), and Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* (2019), are the only three films to have won both the Palme d'Or and the Oscar for Best Picture.



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What dried up Mars rivers?
Study finds some clues

MARS ONCE ran red with rivers. The tracks of past rivers, streams and lakes are still visible today. But about three billion years ago, they all dried up. A new study in *Science Advances* has examined the tracks of Martian rivers to see what they can reveal about the history of the planet's water and atmosphere.

The researchers analysed maps based on thousands of pictures taken from orbit by satellites. The simulations showed that

changing the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere didn't change the outcome. That is, the driving force of the change didn't seem to be carbon dioxide.

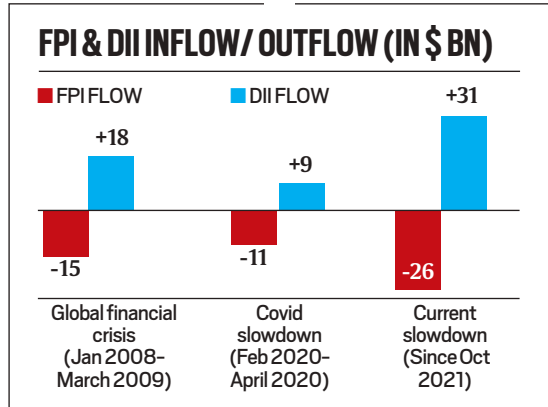
The new evidence fits nicely with a scenario where a layer of thin, icy clouds high in Mars's atmosphere acts like translucent greenhouse glass, trapping heat, the University of Chicago said in a press release.

Source: University of Chicago

15 ECONOMY

MARKETS WATCH INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS

DII's salvage record breaking \$26-bn FPI exit



GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, MAY 29

RECORD OUTFLOWS of Rs 201,500 crore (\$ 26 billion) by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) since October 2021 have made it the biggest sell-off in the history of the Indian capital market. A major crash was averted as domestic institutional investors (DIIs), led by mutual funds, pumped Rs 240,250 crore (\$31 billion) during this period.

Mutual funds invested Rs 155,000 crore since October in the market with investors putting over Rs 10,000 crore through systematic investment plans (SIPs) of MFs every month. The outflows due to sustained selling by FPIs in the last seven and a half months have even overtaken the previous record sell-off by FPIs when Rs 116,250 crore, or \$15 billion — at the current exchange rate — was pulled out during the global financial crisis between January 2008 and March 2009. According to data collated by *The Indian Express*, when the Covid pandemic hit the country in March 2020, FPIs pulled out over Rs 85,250 crore (\$ 11 billion) from India. However, markets pulled back and recovered later when the economy recovered from the impact of the Covid pandemic.

"Relatively high valuations in India, rising bond yields in the US, an appreciating dollar and concerns regarding possibility of a recession in the US triggered by aggressive tightening are factors behind FPI pullout," said VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist, Geojit Financial Services.

When the global economy took a hit, central banks slashed interest rates and announced liberal monetary policies. While this helped the economies to recover and led to higher consumption, surplus liquidity led to a big worry: inflation.

With inflation rising to new levels in major economies like the US and Eurozone, central

EXPLAINED In 7.5 months

THE OUTFLOWS due to sustained selling by FPIs in the last seven-and-a-half months have even overtaken the previous record sell-off by FPIs when Rs 116,250 crore, or \$15 billion — at the current exchange rate — was pulled out during the global financial crisis between January 2008 and March 2009.

banks have started tightening the monetary policies and hiking interest rates. In India, inflation surged to an eight-year high of 7.79 per cent in April, prompting the RBI to hike repo rate by 40 basis points to 4.4 per cent. Inflation has risen to multi-decade highs across several economies. If the US CPI inflation was at around 8.3 in April, that in the UK surged to 7 per cent in March, the highest in the data series. Overall, Euro area annual inflation reached a new peak of 7.5 per cent in April, said an RBI report.

This has resulted in a sharp sell-off across financial markets worldwide since April. The Sensex is down 10.5 per cent since April 4, when it closed at 60,611. If the concern then was the pace of unwinding by major central banks, particularly the US Fed, there was concern over the impact inflation and interest rate hikes may have on global growth.

"Recently, there were signs of selling exhaustion by FPIs and DII and retail buying is emerging as a strong counter to FPI selling at higher levels. If globally markets are stable FPI selling will be easily absorbed by DII plus retail buying," he said. With FPIs on a selling spree, their ownership in stocks has fallen by around two percentage points in the last two years to 19.5 per cent as of March 2022 based on data reported by NSE 500 companies. The rupee has also fallen in the last one year.

APPOINTMENTS ACROSS SPECIALISED DEPARTMENTS

Deepening Tata synergy: AI onboards senior Vistara execs

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

TATA GROUP-OWNED Air India has started hiring mid- and senior-level executives from its sister airline Vistara, indicating deepening synergies in the conglomerate's aviation portfolio as it plans to eventually merge the airlines under a single holding company. According to information sourced from professional networking platform LinkedIn, people in crucial departments such as IT infrastructure and network planning have started moving across the aisle from Vistara to Air India.

For example, Vistara's deputy general manager-network planning Kartikey Bhatt, who has been with the airline since January 2016, joined Air India as lead-network planning earlier this month. Similarly, Vistara's vice president-IT Prasan Verma was appointed Air India's head of commercial and operations IT earlier this month. Verma had been with Vistara since February 2016.

This month, Air India also recently appointed former head of cabin crew at Vistara Sandeep Verma as its head—inflight services. Prior to being named head—inflight services at Air India, Verma led a team comprising Taj Hospitality group executives to improve the airline's in-flight amenities following its takeover by the Tata group.

"There are more such parallel



An Air India aircraft at Chandigarh airport. File

appointments happening from Vistara to Air India across other specialised departments such as commercial, revenue management, partnerships, etc," a person aware of the developments said on condition of anonymity. Notably, the Tata group is mandated to retain Air India's employees for a period of one year, as per the disinvestment conditions, following which it can offer a voluntary retirement scheme.

These appointments also assume significance because they are happening in the backdrop of a new incoming Air India chief. The Tata Group named Campbell Wilson — CEO of Singapore Airlines' wholly-owned low-cost subsidiary Scoot — as Air India's chief executive and managing director. Singapore Airlines had un-

derscored that Wilson's appointment at Air India was being done with its "full blessings". He is expected to join next month.

Vistara is a 51:49 joint venture between Tata and Singapore Airlines.

Responding to a query sent by *The Indian Express*, Air India's executive director-corporate affairs Aruna Gopalakrishnan said: "Any recruitment/filling up of positions involves different factors like skill set required, succession planning, business requirements etc. We do not poach from sister companies. Inter-company transfer is an established policy in the Tata group because talent is considered a group resource. Group transfers take care of talent as well as company's interest".

"Our existing Human Resources possess the requisite

skill sets and experience required to make Air India a world class organization. Every AI employee is working with a common goal to make AI a world class organisation," she wrote, adding that the airline always looks for talent from within the company and the group "before looking outside".

An e-mail sent to Vistara asking if the appointments being done by Air India were in agreement with Vistara did not elicit any response.

A Vistara official said on condition of anonymity that Prasan Verma's appointment at Air India was done on the basis of "mutual understanding". Prior to Vistara, he worked at Tata Consultancy Services.

Tata group is looking to bring together all of its aviation assets under one roof, and it has held exploratory talks with Singapore Airlines for a potential merger between newly-acquired Air India and Vistara. Last month, in what marked the beginning of consolidation of the Tata group's aviation portfolio, Air India sought approval from the Competition Commission of India to acquire AirAsia India. The low-cost airline is currently majority owned by the Tata Sons.

Furthermore, the salt-to-software conglomerate has also chalked up plans to house its five aviation companies — Air India, Air India Express, Vistara, AirAsia India, and Air India SATS Airport Services — in a same corporate office in Gurugram.

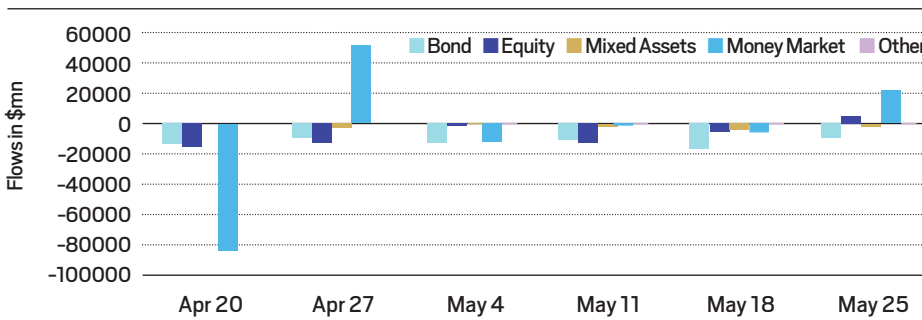
Global equity funds see first weekly inflows in seven weeks

Global equity funds saw money inflows in the week to May 25 as some investors took heart from a rebound in markets this week, after 7 weeks, as per a Reuters report



The New York Stock Exchange. Reuters file

FUND FLOWS: GLOBAL EQUITIES, BONDS AND MONEY MARKETS



Source: Refinitiv Lipper data

\$6.16 BN WORTH OF GLOBAL EQUITY FUNDS BOUGHT, MARKING THEIR FIRST WEEKLY NET BUYING SINCE APRIL 6, AS PER REFINITIV LIPPER

Over 3% gain in the MSCI all country world index, after slumping about 12.7% in the last seven weeks on worries that aggressive rate increases to tame inflation could send the global economy into a tailspin

Big inflows into global equity funds were also due to the creation of new shares in the equity exchange-traded funds (ETF). Jefferies said in a note

Equity ETFs saw inflows worth \$15.76 billion in the week, the highest in nine weeks

Industrials drew inflows of \$713 million but financials and tech continued to face outflows, amounting \$1.74 billion and \$1.44 billion, respectively

Source: Refinitiv Lipper/Reuters

'Tata Motors to take over Ford's Sanand plant'

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 29

THE GUJARAT government has approved a proposal submitted by Tata Motors to take over Ford India's vehicle-manufacturing plant in Sanand. The state Cabinet has issued a no-objection certificate for the proposal, according to sources.

The benefits extended to Ford India for the Sanand plant would be enjoyed by Tata Motors as well, the sources confirmed. A formal agreement regarding the takeover is yet to be signed between the two companies. Both Tata Motors and Ford India declined to comment on the matter when *FE* reached out to them.

Ford India had announced its exit from the country in September 2021. Despite investing significantly in the country, the company had accumulated more than \$2 billion of operating losses

Tata Motors and Ford India declined to comment

over the past 10 years.

Manufacturing operations were halted at Ford India's Sanand plant last month. The company has a plant in Chennai as well. While the Sanand plant has close to 2,500 employees, the Chennai plant has nearly 2,600 employees.

While the Tata Group has been in talks with Ford India as well as the state governments of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu for taking over both plants of the latter for quite some time now, the unions at the Chennai and Sanand plants have been demanding job protection in the event of any such move.

Ford India was also among the 20 companies selected for performance-linked incentives for electric vehicles (EVs) in February 2022. **FE**



Ford India manufacturing plant in Sanand, Gujarat. File

IN FY22

US crosses China to be India's biggest trading partner

New Delhi: The US surpassed China to become India's top trading partner in 2021-22, reflecting strengthening economic ties between the two countries.

According to the data of the Commerce Ministry, in 2021-22, the bilateral trade between the US and India stood at \$119.42 billion as against \$80.51 billion in 2020-21. Exports to the US increased to \$76.11 billion in 2021-22 from \$51.62 billion in previous fiscal year, while imports rose to \$43.31 billion as compared to about \$29 billion in 2020-21.

During 2021-22, India's two-way commerce with China aggregated at \$115.42 billion as compared to \$86.4 billion in 2020-21, the data showed.

Exports to China marginally increased to \$21.25 billion last fiscal year from \$21.18 billion in 2020-21, while imports jumped to \$94.16 billion from about \$65.21 billion in 2020-21. Trade gap rose to \$72.91 billion in 2021-22 from



JNPT port, near Mumbai. File

\$44 billion in previous fiscal year. Trade experts believe that the trend of increasing bilateral trade with the US will continue in the coming years also as New Delhi and Washington are engaged in further strengthening the economic ties.

In 2021-22, the UAE with \$72.9 billion, was the third largest trading partner of India. It was followed by Saudi Arabia (\$42.85 billion), Iraq (\$34.33 billion) and Singapore (\$30 billion). **PTI**

BRIEFLY

'Platform for schemes'

New Delhi: To improve the ease of living for the common man, the government is planning to launch 'Jan Samarth' - a common portal for delivery of various schemes run by different ministries and departments.

'Power crisis in July-August'

New Delhi: A lower pre-monsoon coal stock at thermal power plants in India is suggestive of another power crisis in July-August, independent research organisation CREA has said.

WardWizard, Li-ion plant

New Delhi: WardWizard Innovations and Mobility is lining up close to Rs 650 crore investment for the manufacturing of Li-ion advance cells infrastructure, said an executive. **PTI**

REGISTERED WORKERS ON E-SHRAM PORTAL

'94.11% informal workers income at ₹10K or less'

New Delhi: Over 94 per cent of 27.69 crore informal sector workers registered on the e-Shram portal have a monthly income of Rs 10,000 or below and over 74 per cent of the enrolled workforce belongs to scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST) and other backward classes (OBC), according to the latest data.

The proportion of informal workers getting a monthly income of Rs 10,000 or below was 92.37 per cent in the middle of November 2021 when total enrollments on e-Shram portal were a little over 8 crore.

Those belonging to SC, ST and OBC who enrolled on the portal were 72.58 per cent in the middle of November 2021.

The experts are of the view that as the enrollments progress on e-Shram portal towards the ultimate goal of enrolling all in-

E-SHRAM

■ e-Shram portal is aimed at building a comprehensive National Database of Unorganized Workers in the country.

formal sector workers estimated at 38 crore in the country, the data would show sharp disparities in the society.

e-Shram portal is aimed at building a comprehensive National Database of Unorganized Workers (NDUW) in the country.

The aim of the portal is to boost the last-mile delivery of the welfare schemes for over 38 crore unorganised workers in the country. It was launched on August 26, 2021. **PTI**

Cooling US inflation builds case for softer hikes

REUTERS
BERKELEY/WASHINGTON, MAY 29

EVIDENCE THAT US inflation is cooling will not budge Federal Reserve policymakers from half-point interest rate hikes planned for upcoming meetings in June and July, but may prompt a shift to smaller rate hikes come September if the trend continues.

AUS Commerce Department report on Friday showed the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index rose 6.3 per cent in April from a year earlier.

That is still more than three times the Fed's 2 per cent target.

While prices are still rising, the pace of the rise has slowed versus the previous month. April's PCE reading marked the first deceleration in the measure since November 2020.

The core PCE index, which strips out food and energy prices to give a clearer read of more persistent price pressures, rose 4.9 per cent — again, far too high for comfort, but marking a second straight month of moderation from what may have been a peak in February of 5.3 per cent.



US Federal Reserve, Washington. The Fed has lifted rates three-quarters of a percentage point so far this year. Reuters

The decline in core inflation is particularly good news for the central bank, along with fresh evidence that household spending continues to grow despite still fast-rising prices. Friday's report showed consumer spending rose 0.9 per cent last month.

"While inflation levels in the 4 per cent range are still too high for the Fed, we are seeing movement in the right direction," Nationwide Economist Dan Hadden wrote in a note. As long as inflation continues to stabilize

or moderate, "it will likely give the (Fed) more flexibility later this year."

The Fed has lifted interest rates three-quarters of a percentage point so far this year, and most policymakers expect to deliver a couple more half-a-percentage-point rate hikes, recent public comments and a record of their May meeting show.

That would bring overnight bank-to-bank borrowing costs to a range of 1.75 per cent-2 per cent by the end of July. Anticipation of

those rate hikes already appears to be taking a bite out of demand in the housing market, where prices have soared but sharp increases in mortgage rates helped push down home sales for a sixth straight month in April.

That softening suggests price increases will also moderate in months ahead and, says Comerica's Bill Adams, will start to show up in slower inflation readings late this year or in early 2023. Already at the Fed's May meeting, "a number" of policymakers thought "monthly data might suggest that overall price pressures may no longer be worsening."

The broad hope at the Fed is to get through this era of price shocks and uncertainty with, at worst, a slowdown in the pace of growth, rather than an out-and-out recession that causes a dramatic rise in unemployment.

"Amid rising pessimism about the state of the US consumer, today's report provides some reassurance that the main pillar of the economy is still standing strong in the face of historic inflation and rising borrowing costs," Oxford Economics' Lydia Boussour wrote on Friday.

US equity markets, which have fallen fast in recent weeks as investors took stock of how the Fed's monetary shift might slow the economy, rose on Friday following the inflation data and hope that the Fed's quest for a "soft landing" might still be in reach. Traders of futures contracts tied to the Fed's policy rate kept bets that the central bank will downshift to quarter-point rate hikes in September. For that to come to pass the rest of the world will need to cooperate.

The impact of the Ukraine war on world commodity prices and the ongoing coronavirus lockdowns in China are two major risks fully beyond the Fed's control. Fed policymakers also say they are watching inflation expectations closely for signs that current high inflation is getting entrenched into American household and business psychology. Recent data suggests those risks too are at the least not getting worse. Fed staff, meanwhile, continue to see headline PCE inflation moderating to 4.3 per cent by the end of the year and to 2.5 per cent by the end of next year as a "historically large" tightening of financial conditions was felt.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Ahead of the polls, in Cali, Colombia. *Reuters*

COLOMBIA

Voting begins to elect country's new President

COLOMBIANS ARE voting on Sunday to choose a new president from among a former rebel promising generous social programs, a center-right candidate warning against a leftist economic mode, and an eccentric business magnate. Gustavo Petro, a leftist former mayor of Bogota and member of the M-19 guerrilla group and current senator, is consistently leading opinion polls with around 40% support. His main opponent is Federico 'Fico' Gutierrez, the center-right former mayor of Medellin, who has around 25% support. Polling third in the race is construction magnate Rodolfo Hernandez. **REUTERS**

FRANCE

Blame game over 'chaotic' football final

CHAOTIC SCENES at the French national stadium before and during Saturday night's Champions League final were branded a national embarrassment, while French ministers blamed Liverpool fans for the trouble. European soccer's governing body UEFA blamed fake tickets for causing the issue and said it would review the events together with the French authorities and the French Football Federation. France's Interior and Sports ministers ssaid: "Thousands of British 'supporters', without any ticket or with fake ones have forced their way in and, at times, used violence again stadium staff." **REUTERS**

SUDAN

Defence council seeks removal of emergency law

SUDAN'S SECURITY and Defense Council recommended on Sunday lifting an emergency law and releasing all detainees who were arrested under it, according to a statement issued by the transitional sovereign council. Military leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan headed a meeting that focused on security issues and ways to create the right atmosphere for dialogue. Al-Burhan had declared emergency after seizing control in a coup last year. **REUTERS**

Nepal crash: Bad weather stalls search ops

4 Indians among 22 on board; incident occurred about six minutes before landing; officials say prepared for the worst

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, MAY 29

AN AIRCRAFT with 22 people onboard, including four Indians from Thane, went missing in Nepal on Sunday morning with senior officials citing witness accounts of a "loud sound" and "fire" from near a remote, mountainous area in the western Mustang district to say that the plane crashed and that they "are prepared for the worst". A Nepal Army search team is expected to reach the site on Monday.

The Indians on board have been identified as Vaibhavi Bandekar, Ashok Kumar Tripathy, Dhanush Tripathy and Ritika Tripathy.

According to local police in Thane, Ashok and Vaibhavi were separated but had travelled with their two children to Nepal to visit the Muktidham temple, a Vaishnavite shrine about 18 km away from Jomsom airport where the aircraft was headed.

In Kathmandu, officials said

the aircraft crashed about six minutes before landing in Jomsom, adjoining Tibet. Operated by Tara Air, which is one of the two major domestic airlines in Nepal, the aircraft took off at 9.55 am from Pokhara for the 25-minute flight.

The Nepal government and Tara Air are yet to issue an official statement on the fate of those on the flight. "We are prepared for the worst and the family members of the Nepalis on board have been informed accordingly," a senior official told The Indian Express.

Apart from the four Indians, the flight was carrying two Germans, 13 Nepalis and three crew members, including the pilot Prabhakar Ghimire, who is said to be one of the most senior instructors in the country with "long experience in flying in mountainous and hilly zones".

Among the passengers was Basant Lama, a Tara Air pilot, who boarded the flight at the last minute after having piloted four flights in the morning.

Jomsom airport is located at



A search team waits for a flight in Kathmandu. *Reuters*

an altitude of 2,743 metres. Officials said bad weather and the remote terrain have hampered the search operation with two rescue helicopters unable to get close to the site near where local residents informed officials

that they heard "a loud sound".

"We are following the lead given by villagers, and the search and rescue team has no other alternative than to trek the route that will take a minimum four hours," Major General Narayan

Silwal, spokesperson of the Nepal Army, told *The Indian Express*.

"The plane has not yet been located. We are trying to reach the place where locals allegedly saw something burning. Only af-

ter our troops reach the location can we verify the findings officially and independently. Our rescue efforts from ground and air are relentless," he said.

Late on Sunday, the Army said it had "halted all efforts of search and rescue for today due to loss of daylight and adverse weather. The search will be resumed early in the morning tomorrow, both from air and ground".

Army sources said local residents near the crash area have claimed that the plane went down at the foothills of the Manapathi mountain.

According to officials, the last seven minutes of the air route to Jomsom consists of narrow passages that are difficult to negotiate in emergency situations.

Two air crashes — both involving Twin Otters — took place in the area in May 2012 and 2013, the first one causing the death of all passengers, including Bollywood child actor Taruni Sachdev.

(WITH YOGESH NAIK IN MUMBAI)

UVALDE SCHOOL SHOOTING

Biden visits Texas town as anger mounts over police failure to act

One killed in shooting at outdoor festival in Oklahama

AGENCIES

UVALDE, TAFT, MAY 29

PRESIDENT JOE Biden landed in the Texas town of Uvalde on Sunday to comfort families ripped apart by the worst US school shooting in a decade as the public demands answers about why local police failed to act swiftly.

There was mounting anger over the decision by local law enforcement agencies in Uvalde to allow the shooter to remain in a classroom for nearly an hour while officers waited in the hallway and children inside the room made panicked 911 calls for help.

The president and first lady Jill Biden wiped away tears as they visited memorials at the Robb Elementary School where the gunman killed 19 students and two teachers, laying white



Joe Biden embraces Mandy Gutierrez, the principal of the school where the shooting happened, in Uvalde. *Reuters*

roses at the school's sign.

At the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Uvalde, all the pews were filled as the Bidens attended mass. The Bidens will meet with victims' families, survivors and first responders.

The shooting has once again

put gun control at the top of the nation's agenda, months ahead of the November midterm elections.

Meanwhile, one person was killed and seven were injured in a shooting early Sunday at a outdoor festival at Tuft, Oklahoma, authorities said.

Erdogan: Syria operation could happen suddenly

Istanbul: Turkey's president told journalists that Ankara remains committed to rooting out a Syrian Kurdish militia from northern Syria.

"Like I always say, we'll come down on them suddenly one night. And we must," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on his plane following his Saturday visit to Azerbaijan, according to daily Hurriyet newspaper and other media.

Without giving a specific timeline, Erdogan said that Turkey would launch a cross-border operation against the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG, which it considers a terrorist group linked to an outlawed Kurdish group that has led an insurgency against Turkey since 1984. That conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK, has killed tens of thousands of people.

The YPG forms the backbone of US-led fight against the Islamic State group. **AP**

As Russia storms Donbas city, Ukraine seeks more weapons

Zelenskyy visits Kharkiv region, a first since invasion began

REUTERS

KYIV, MAY 29

UKRAINIAN FORCES on Sunday resisted a Russian assault on Sievierodonetsk, the largest city they still hold in the Luhansk region of the Donbas, but endured heavy artillery barrages, Ukrainian officials said.

The shelling was so intense it was not possible to assess casualties and damage, Luhansk governor Serhiy Gaidai said. "The situation has extremely escalated," Gaidai said.

The Ukrainian government meanwhile urged the West to provide it with more longer-range weapons in order to turn the tide in the war, now in its fourth month.

The battle for Sievierodonetsk, which lies on the eastern side of the Siverskyi Donets River, has become the focus of attention as Russia ekes out slow but solid gains in the Donbas, comprising of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

Having failed to take the capital Kyiv in the early phase of the war, Russia is seeking to consolidate its grip on the Donbas, large parts of which are already con-

EXPLAINED Face saver

MOSCOW'S FOCUS on Ukraine's east comes after Putin abandoned his campaign to capture Kyiv and Kharkiv. Experts say success in the east will give him the least he needs to end the operation and claim victory.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Ukrainian troops on the frontlines in northeastern Kharkiv region on Sunday.

Several explosions were heard in Kharkiv city hours after the visit, his first trip outside the Kyiv region since the Feb. 24 start of the Russian invasion, a Reuters journalist said.

A large plume of smoke could be seen rising northeast of the centre of the city, which has been the target of Russian shelling in recent days after several weeks of relative quiet. read more

"You risk your lives for us all and for our country," the president's office quoted him as telling soldiers as he handed out commendations and gifts.

Earlier, Zelenskyy voiced hopes Ukraine's allies would provide much-needed weapons and said he expected "good news" in the coming days.

Ukraine has started receiving Harpoon anti-ship missiles from Denmark and U.S. self-propelled howitzers, his defence minister said on Saturday.

Elsewhere, Ukraine's military command said its forces were counter-attacking in the southern Kherson region, most of which is occupied by Russia.



Ranil Wickremesinghe. *File*

Lanka PM for more powers to Parliament, cites India as example

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO, MAY 29

SRI LANKAN Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on Sunday made a special reference to India while advocating strengthening of the existing laws to give more powers to Parliament.

In his special televised statement on the current constitutional reforms, Wickremesinghe said there is a need to change the structure of Parliament and create a new system by combining the existing system of Parliament or the Westminster system and the system of State Councils.

"First of all, the existing laws need to be strengthened in order to give those powers to Parliament in the exercise of monetary powers. Following the example of countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand and India, we are proposing a stronger and more powerful law," he said while advocating the abolition of the Executive Presidency.

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, currently enjoying unfettered power, is facing growing demands for his resignation for his government's mishandling of the economy.

The functioning of the Parliament has been paralysed due to the weakening of the Parliamentary powers by the 20th Amendment, Wickremesinghe said, while battling for the 21st Amendment to the Constitution.

The 21st Amendment is expected to annul the 20A to the Constitution, which gives unfettered powers to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa after abolishing the 19th Amendment that will strengthen Parliament.

PAKISTAN

Imran reached out to Zardari ahead of no-trust vote: leaked audio

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, MAY 29

A LEAKED audio recording of an alleged telephonic conversation between former Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari and real estate tycoon Malik Riaz Hussain has surfaced, in which Riaz was heard as saying that ousted prime Minister Imran Khan wanted to reach out to Zardari for reconciliation talks ahead of the no-trust vote in Parliament last month.

The 32-second audio recording, believed to be the voices of Zardari and Riaz respectively, has gone viral on social media, and comes days after Khan was abruptly ended his anti-government sit-in amid speculation that there was a deal struck between the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Pakistan Army.

In the purported conversation, the date of which cannot be ascertained, Riaz could be heard telling Zardari that Khan was sending him messages, the Dawn newspaper reported. "Today, he (Imran Khan) has sent too many messages," the voice believed to be of Riaz told the former president, who in response says: "It is impossible now."

While the PTI immediately dismissed the audio as "fake," members of Zardari's party, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) said it "seemed genuine," the report said.

Khan, who was ousted from power last month through a no-trust vote, had apparently lost the support of the Army after he refused to endorse the appointment of the ISI spy agency chief last year.

PTI

MOVE TO MARK QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

Britain considers return of pounds, ounces in post-Brexit measure

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, MAY 29

BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris Johnson is reportedly set to announce a return to imperial measurements of pounds and ounces as a post-Brexit move away from the European metric system to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee next week.

As part of a series of announcements to celebrate the 96-year-old monarch's 70 years on the British throne, UK media

reports indicate that Johnson is preparing a nostalgic move away from another European Union (EU) influence on the country.

It is also being seen as an attempt to placate his strong Brexit voter base in the wake of the partygate scandal of COVID lockdown breaching parties at Downing Street, which have angered many voters.

"As the British people have been happy to use both imperial and metric measurements in their daily life it is good for the



The country is gearing up for celebrations to mark Queen Elizabeth's 70 years on the British throne. *Reuters*

government to reflect that now we are free to change our regulations accordingly." The Mirror newspaper quoted a Cabinet source as saying.

At present, shopkeepers are legally obliged to use metric measurements such as grams, kilograms, millilitres and litres when selling packaged or loose goods in England, Scotland and Wales.

As opposed to the metric system of weight, in which 1,000 grams are equivalent to one kilogram, under the imperial system

there are 14 pounds in a stone and 16 ounces in a pound.

While it is still legal to price goods in pounds and ounces, these have to be displayed alongside the price in grams and kilograms.

Since 2000, when the EU weights and measures directive came into force businesses have been legally required to use metric units for the sale by weight or measure of fresh produce.

Under the post-Brexit move, metric units are not expected to be scrapped entirely in Britain

but shopkeepers are expected to be free to choose which they use following a government study into the proposal.

It was during the 2019 General Election campaign that Boris Johnson pledged that he would bring back imperial units in shops.

He claimed that measuring in pounds and ounces was an "ancient liberty", as he heralded a "new era of generosity and tolerance" towards traditional measurements.

BRIEFLY

Doping: Anju blames foreign campers

New Delhi: Long jumper and Athletics Federation of India (AFI) senior vice-president Anju Bobby George on Sunday dropped a bombshell, alleging that few of the country's athletes are bringing back performance-enhancing drugs from overseas, which are being distributed among some of their colleagues. Speaking at the two-day Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the AFI, Anju said many of the banned drugs being consumed, have been brought by athletes caught for doping originated from abroad. "Many banned drugs being taken by the athletes caught for doping are not available in India, they come from abroad," Anju, also an acclaimed coach, has reportedly briefed the general body. "It is not only the coaches supplying banned drugs to young athletes but some athletes travelling abroad for training, procure the (performance enhancing) drugs and distribute them to others. We also have to stop this," said Anju.

PTI

Malaysia hold India to draw in Asia Cup

Jakarta: India almost clinched the title round berth before Rizieh Rahim turned out to be Malaysia's saviour with a hat-trick in an enthralling 3-3 draw in a 'Super 4' encounter of Asia Cup hockey tournament here on Sunday. Rahim (12th, 21st, 56th minutes) converted three penalty corners for Malaysia, while India made a valiant fightback after being two goals down, scoring through Vishnukant Singh (32nd), SV Sunil (53rd) and Nilam Sanjeev Xess (55th). India had earlier defeated Japan 2-1 in their first match on Saturday. Meanwhile in the other Super 4 league match, South Korea defeated Japan 3-1 to move to four points.

PTI

Perez wins race, Max extends lead

Monaco: Sergio Perez won a rain-delayed, crash-halted and nail-biting Monaco Grand Prix for Red Bull on Sunday. The Mexican's teammate Max Verstappen finished third to stretch his Formula One championship lead over Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who was fourth, to nine points after seven races. Ferrari's Carlos Sainz was second, for the second year in succession. Leclerc started on pole but Ferrari were out-smarted on strategy and he was leapfrogged by the Red Bull drivers in the pitstops.

REUTERS

Madrid wins Champions League crown with a performance of ruthless efficiency, meticulous organisation & doggedness

RORY SMITH
MAY 29

DEEP DOWN, Real Madrid does not believe in magic. Or, rather, it does not only believe in magic. It might have spent much of the last three months apparently touched by some golden light, its run to the Champions League final a dream of stirring comebacks and insurmountable odds and impossible triumphs. Those triumphs, against Paris St-Germain, Chelsea and Manchester City, might have seemed to prove that ultimate victory in this competition is Real Madrid's irrevocable destiny, that it is driven by some elemental, unstoppable force, one that defies rational explanation and brooks no resistance.

After the curtain had been lifted and the veil drawn, though, when reality's cold light poured in, there was no magic at all. There was, instead, just a plan: a painstakingly crafted and expertly executed plan that ended, as it always seemed like it would, with Real Madrid lifting yet another European Cup. That, in a sense, was the twist: There was no twist. Real Madrid beat Liverpool, 1-0, on Saturday in Paris with a performance of ruthless efficiency, of meticulous organisation, of clinical obduracy. To do so, it required not only a single goal, scored by Vinicius Junior, but really only a single attack, a single move, a single chance. It leaned, it is true, reasonably heavily on its goalkeeper, Thibaut Courtois, in those fleeting moments when Liverpool — another team in possession of a very particular sense of its own destiny — seemed to be gathering a head of steam.

But it is one of football's most cherished misapprehensions that having a good goalkeeper is just another form of luck. They are part of the team, too, after all; to beat Real Madrid, it is necessary to beat Courtois, and the reason the former is so difficult is because the latter, at times, appears to skirt the impossible. Real Madrid could risk absorbing pressure, conceding chances, safe in the knowledge that Courtois is a redoubtable last line of defence. Even he, though, found his role diminishing as the game wore on. Those last few minutes, as Real Madrid waited impatiently to claim its glory, did not build to some deafening climax. Instead, if anything, the game ambled gently to a close.

There were some substitutions. Liverpool committed some injudicious and unnecessary fouls. Real dawdled over some free kicks. The whistle blew. The trophy was presented. Everyone went home. It felt, in truth, like something of a non sequitur: Not only because Real Madrid has spent the spring finding ever more improbable ways to win games, but because that sort of drama is now an essential ingredient in this competition. Breathless fervour, something bordering on persistent mayhem, has become the hallmark of the modern



Real Madrid players celebrate winning the Champions League title for a record 14th time after beating Liverpool on Saturday.

AP

Champions League. It is what has helped turn it, for all the enduring concerns over its domination by a tiny cabal of clubs from a small group of countries, into such a consistently compelling spectacle. No victory is ever secure.

No game is ever over. Nothing is ever certain. That is what makes it so compelling. Saturday's final, by contrast — delayed by more than half an hour because of a complete organisational breakdown outside the Stade de France — seemed to belong to a prior incarnation of the tournament, when European football's showpiece occasions were far more tentative, when the slightest mistake tended to prove fatal, when games were decided by which team seized individual moments, rather than which could best harness some elusive, vaguely ethereal form of momentum.

And yet, below the surface, there was an undeniable thematic consistency to Real Madrid's victory, its record 14th title in the competition. The composite may have seemed distinct from all of the games that brought Carlo Ancelotti's team to Paris — and the coach himself to a record fifth Champions League final — but the strands were almost exactly the same. Jürgen Klopp, the Liverpool coach, spoke last week of Real Madrid's ability to "keep the door open." In all of their previous knockout games, it had faced moments when elimination seemed all but certain but still found a way to cling on.

—NYT

When 'keeper is man of the match then something is wrong: Klopp

Paris: Liverpool deserved more from their losing Champions League final against Real Madrid on Saturday after dominating the match but they will be back to challenge again for Europe's elite club trophy, coach Jürgen Klopp said. It was Real's fourth Champions League title in seven years as they improved their impressive record in the competition with their eighth victory in as many finals.

"We had more shots on target but the most decisive stat is on Madrid's side," Klopp told a news conference. "They scored a goal and we didn't. That's the easiest explanation in the world of football. Hard and harsh. When the goalkeeper (Thibaut Courtois) is man of the match, then something has gone wrong for the other team. We could have played better football and they could have, but they didn't. The stats are 50-50 but, apart from the goal, they did not have a shot on target."

Courtois made a string of superb saves that protected Real's lead from the 59th minute, with Liverpool having 23 goal attempts to Real's three. "We saw we did a

lot of good things but it was not enough," said Klopp, who has guided Liverpool to three Champions League finals and one victory in 2019. The Merseyside club, who a few weeks ago was aiming for a quadruple, end the season having won both domestic cups but missing out on the Premier League and Champions League. "Madrid had one shot on target and it was a goal," said the German coach.

"We played a good game but when you lose 1-0, it was not good enough. I told the boys in the changing room I feel the pride already. These boys played an outstanding season and the two competitions we couldn't win we didn't win for the smallest possible margin." Liverpool missed out on the Premier League after finishing a point behind champions Manchester City. "The boys will realise how special it was what they did (this season)," Klopp added. "I have the strong feeling we come again. The boys are really competitive, we have an outstanding group together, we will again have an outstanding group together and then we go again."

REUTERS

Djokovic cruises into last eight

REUTERS,
PARIS, MAY 29

NOVAK DJOKOVIC showed glimpses of his best to demolish Diego Schwartzman 6-1 6-3 6-3 on Sunday and book his place in the French Open quarter-finals. The world number one's pace was too much for Argentine Schwartzman, who barely threatened despite enjoying a 3-0 lead in the second set.

From then on, it was a one-way street for Serbian Djokovic, who won 12 of the remaining 15 games on a chilly Court Suzanne Lenglen. "I have a lot of respect for him. He's a good guy on and off the court and he's a clay-court specialist so it's not easy, especially in slow conditions today with a ball that was not bouncing high," said Djokovic of Schwartzman, a semi-finalist at Roland Garros in 2020.

"I found the good serves at the right moments." The match looked nothing like the 2017 Roland Garros thriller between the pair, when Djokovic had to fight from two sets down to advance to the fourth round. Djokovic, who has now reached the last eight here for the 13th year in a row, saved two break points at 1-1 before Schwartzman dropped serve to give his opponent the early lead in the opening set.

He raced through it, barely troubled by his opponent's drop shots. But the Argentine was not ready to give up and broke for 2-0 in the second set and held for 3-0 only for Djokovic to raise his level again to break back with a crosscourt forehand winner.

Always ready with a good serve when needed, the Serbian staved off break points in the next game to level for 3-3, took the 15th seed's serve again and wrapped up set two after another break.

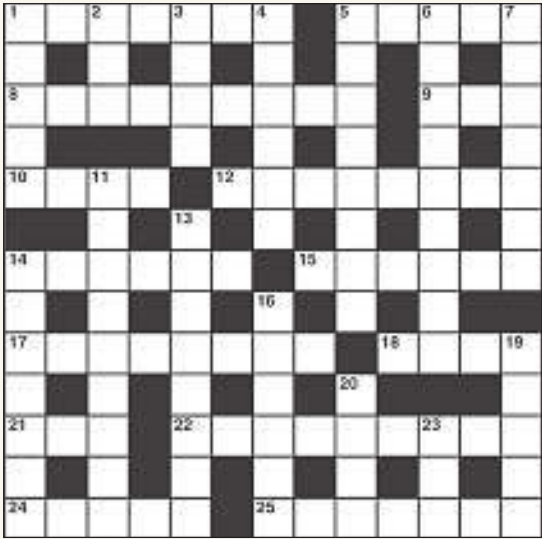
Schwartzman showed signs of frustration when Djokovic left him red-faced with a delightful drop shot to go 3-2 up in the third. Djokovic, back on the Grand Slam scene after being barred by local authorities from playing at the Australian Open over his refusal to get vaccinated against COVID-19, ended the Argentine's ordeal by winning his final service game to love.

Fernandez stays on track

After her surprise run to last year's US Open final, Leylah Fernandez made the Roland Garros quarter-finals for the first time. The 19-year-old left-hander, who won the girls' title three years ago at the clay-court Grand Slam, made a stunning run to the championship match at Flushing Meadows where she went down to Emma Raducanu.

"I think I'm improving more and more and understanding my game, that's the most important thing," she said on Sunday, after defeating American 27th-seed Amanda Anisimova 6-3 4-6 6-3.

CROSSWORD 4753



ACROSS

- 1 Foreign vessel is shrouded in silence (7)
- 5 I get into the bath perhaps as a matter of routine (5)
- 8 Hose down one's supporters (9)
- 9 Back wages? Just talk (3)
- 10 Drinks round after round (4)
- 12 They may be hung and drawn, meaning death (8)
- 14 Found gold star (6)
- 15 Notable French studies (6)
- 17 No methods are without publicity in these times (8)
- 18 Slow-moving mice may get snapped up by them (4)
- 21 Hide outside? (3)
- 22 Young clerk orders the lad to stop skating (6,3)
- 24 Files a letter as an afterthought (5)
- 25 They are made to scale (7)

DOWN

- 1 Silas shows fibre when in trouble (5)
- 2 The fuss that's made when you open a door (3)
- 3 They may be well held (4)
- 4 Part of the day in which there's no glory (6)
- 5 Delay to take action when the tea is brewed (8)
- 6 Does it give a view of the cove? (3,6)
- 7 Staff of office? (7)
- 11 Terms of admittance (9)
- 13 Selfish drivers do go rash when upset (4,4)
- 14 I have a discussion about a kind of tree (7)
- 16 An excellent view of the tower we hear (6)
- 19 Eyesores yet to be improved on board (5)
- 20 Having been in the cooler in the police department (4)
- 23 Spelling test buzzer (3)

Solutions Crossword 4752: Across: 1 Cupboard, 5 Over, 9 No end, 10 Myrtles, 11 Desert island, 13 Agents, 14 Lead-in, 17 No time to lose, 20 Helmet, 21 Noble, 22 Pile, 23 Chests. Down: 1 Cant, 2 Preside, 3 Old Testament, 4 Remots, 6 Villa, 7 Resident, 8 Crossed lines, 12 Pawnshop, 15 Disable, 16 Stitch, 18 Twill, 19 Sets.

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.

If the Sun and Moon should ever ____, they'd immediately _____. - William Blake (5, 2, 3)

DEROO



ENSDUJ



TOUTS



INTUBG

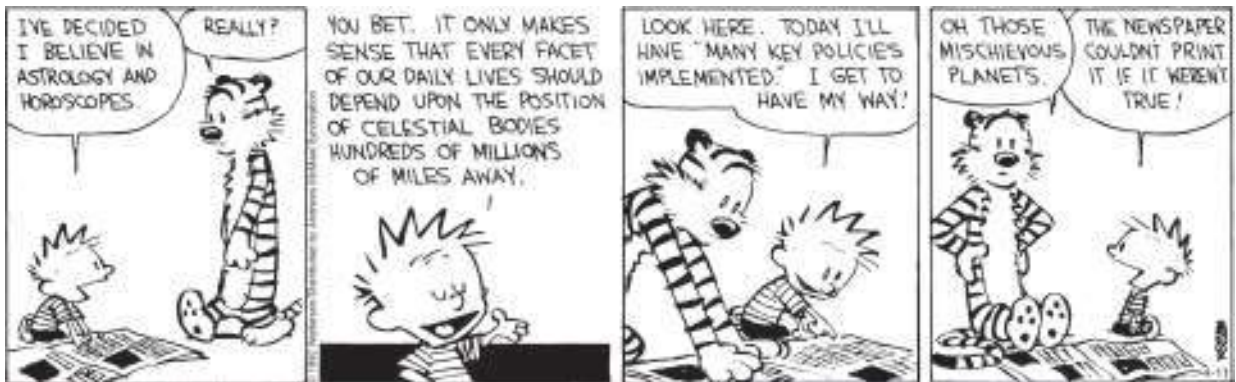


SOLUTION: ROODES, STOUT, UNDEES, TUBING. Answer: If the Sun and Moon should ever double, they'd immediately go out. - William Blake

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4850

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 4849



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

In general your planetary configurations are looking decidedly more relaxed. In addition, Mercury is now behaving itself, enabling you to take a long-delayed decision, and the Moon is encouraging you to question all existing assumptions. Allow yourself time to pause for a sigh of relief this week.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

People born under your sign are more obstinate than most, although in a way which is endearing, delightfully modest and totally disarming. The simple message for the whole of this week is: remember that you are number one. On the other hand, being top does bring its responsibilities.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

You have learnt how to put up with people you'd rather ignore, but just as you're feeling happy, the planets insist on further changes. You must gear yourself up for a period during which you will learn how to be alone, or at least not so dependent on others.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Hopefully you listen to the stars, but do you take their advice? It's a matter of tuning in to your intuitions, never an easy thing. The point is that if your high standards slipped last week, you will have to make amends by next week. Right now you're in a transitional period.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Although you have some serious problems of a business or joint financial nature to contend with, I maintain that in the long run the outcome will be favourable. In fact, today you have a chance to sort everything out once and for all, or at least until next month.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

It is said that you are hard-working, loyal and efficient. Well, today is the day to prove the astrologers right, for it seems that you will be entering the fray to clear up the chaos left behind by more careless people. You may have little time left over after the daily graft.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

You should now know how the next stage of major alterations in your life is to occur. I don't think you'll be able to put it into words, but I am convinced that, on an intuitive level, you understand exactly what is going on and what must be done.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

One thing that always impresses me is that you have the honesty and courage to admit when you are wrong, even if only to yourself. That's important, because today offers an ideal moment for family and domestic reconciliation. And about time too, some people might say.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

Accept what is offered and be thankful that the world is basically on your side. The current helpful planetary alignments indicate that, if you take more than your fair share, you won't have it for long, so be generous and do the right thing now.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

The right interpretation of planetary energies over the next few weeks indicates that you had better become a little less belligerent, a little more eager to please. However, you still have another three or four days during which you can put your foot down, and get away with it.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

This is not the moment to break the rules or habits of a lifetime. You can, however, consider whether you will do it all better next time round. You must realise that you now have a chance to end a very negative cycle of events, as long as you listen to people who have more experience.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Have you taken the planets' advice yet and settled a financial decision? If not, then please do so within the next few weeks. Time is now running out, events are moving on and it's very much a question of the sooner the better. A partner may have some unexpected advice, by the way, so listen carefully.

FOREST BACK IN EPL AFTER 23 YEARS

Nottingham Forest beat Huddersfield Town 1-0 in the Championship playoff final at Wembley Stadium on Sunday to return to the Premier League after a 23-year absence. The decisive goal came in the 43rd minute when Huddersfield defender Levi Colwill deflected a James Garner shot into his own net.

REUTERS

He's (Hardik Pandya) a high profile guy in India, but he's been incredibly humble. Wants to learn as a leader. Especially in IPL and in India, he wants to help youngsters. He's come in with real responsibility, very different to see him in other IPLs. He's batted beautifully.

GARY KIRSTEN, GUJARAT TITANS MENTOR

Beginner's pluck

Captain Pandya leads from the front to secure a title for Gujarat Titans in their very first season

SYNOPSIS: Skipper Hardik Pandya leads Gujarat Titans to the IPL 2022 trophy with an all-round performance in the final against Rajasthan Royals

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
AHMEDABAD, MAY 29

HAVING BEGUN the Indian Premier League 2022 under an injury cloud and as a raw captain, Hardik Pandya delivered the title for Gujarat Titans in their maiden season in their first match at their home ground, the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, with a spell of 4-0-17-3 and a pressure-easing 34 off 30 in the small chase of 131.

Pandya seals it with the ball

Against one of the top two bowling sides in the powerplay this IPL – the second being themselves – RR had come through the field restrictions for the loss of only Yashasvi Jaiswal. They were 60 at the start of the ninth over, the first one from Hardik Pandya. It wasn't a runaway score, but on a used surface they had played on two nights ago in the Qualifier 2, with the ball gripping and holding up, it wasn't a bad platform at all.

As Sanju Samson came on strike second ball of Hardik's over, the DJ tried to drum up the moment – captain would be bowling to captain for the first time in the match. The moment would last all of one ball; Samson went for a stand-and-swipe, but the length wasn't there at all; Hardik had dug it into the pitch, the ball kicked, and Samson's top edge couldn't even clear the inner ring.

As Mohammed Shami and Lockie Ferguson took some punishment when they went for the fuller deliveries, Hardik had sussed that the hard shortish length was the way to go on the surface. It is a length that he prefers anyway, and bowls pretty well, in white-ball cricket. He was finding some seam from that length, and was making life hard for Devdutt Padikkal. He had the left-hander pinned on the crease, and cut it past his outside edge several times.

Not that Jos Buttler was finding it easy to get Pandya away. He'd pulled and driven Mohammed Shami for successive fours, but when Pandya and Rashid Khan were operating in tandem, he'd been tied down. Buttler had managed just four runs off four deliveries from Pandya, and on 39 off 34, was getting a touch restless and also tiring; he'd faced nearly 20 overs across the previous two playoff matches in two corners of the country in Kolkata and Ahmedabad.

The first ball of his third over on the trot, Pandya pinged the hard length again and got it to just about hold the line. Buttler tried to dab it to third man in one-day fashion, and nicked behind. And RR had lost their best batsman, for the possibility of a single run.

Pandya was steaming in now. He had a

slip for Shimron Hetmyer in the 13th over, and let rip a bouncer that zoomed past as Hetmyer jerked his head inside the line.

There was no reason why Pandya would not bowl himself out now, after a return of 3-0-7-2. He also kept reacting instantly as captain; when Hetmyer backed away and hacked him past mid-off for a rare four, he immediately put in four men in the deep on the leg side, and flung another bouncer at Hetmyer. He even came up with a bluff, but Hetmyer was wise to it and steered the full delivery between short third man and backward point for four.

Pandya had given himself one over too many earlier in the season too, but on Sunday night at his team's home ground, nothing could go wrong. He had one delivery remaining in his spell, he bowled it on a good length, the ball held up – as if it were a parting gift for all that Pandya had done during the season for his side – and a stunned Hetmyer could only pop it back to the skipper. The wickets of the opposition's three biggest batsmen sealed, Pandya set off on a run that ended beyond the square-leg umpire, with whom he also found time to have a joke.

From 94 for 5 after 15 overs, Riyan Parag was RR's chief hope to get in some big hits. He even lasted right until the end of the innings, but scored just a run-a-ball 15.

Unhittable Rashid

Pandya's deputy Rashid Khan was unhittable with his mixture of wrong 'uns and quick legbreaks on a pitch that gave him some turn. Padikkal took eight deliveries to get off the mark; his first scoring shot, off Rashid, nearly carried to long-on.

With Pandya's economy-rate rivalling Rashid's at the other end, RR had to attack someone. Padikkal tried taking Rashid on with a sharp cut, but the Afghan rarely provides width; the ball skidded on around off, Padikkal's shot ballooned to short third man, and he departed for 2 off 10. So confident was Pandya in his vice-captain's abilities that he gave him two slips for the new man Hetmyer.

Easy chase after early nerves

RR had no choice but to go hard for wickets in the powerplay if they were to make a contest out of a target of just 131. They did dislodge Wriddhiman Saha and Matthew Wade by the fifth over, but GT could afford a powerplay return of 31 for 2. Also, Yuzvendra Chahal had dropped a sitter off Shubman Gill first ball, and the young opener would go on to anchor the chase to a secure, smooth finish. Captain Pandya provided the slight thrust the pursuit needed in the middle overs.

Hardik released the pressure in the ninth over – like he had applied it in the ninth of the RR innings – with a scythed throw to the deep extra cover boundary off Prasidh Krishna. Gill and David Miller completed the remaining formalities.

Brief scores: Rajasthan Royals 130 for 9 (Buttler 39, Hardik 3-17, Sai Kishore 2-20) lost by seven wickets to Gujarat Titans 133 for 3 (Gill 45*, Hardik 34, Boult 1-14)



Gujarat Titans batters David Miller and Shubman Gill celebrate after sealing the victory against Rajasthan Royals on Sunday.

Sportspics for IPL

Pace all-rounder Pandya's Kapil Dev moment

SRIRAM VEERA
MAY 29

NOT LONG after the caffeine-fuelled controversy on a Karan Johar show, Hardik Pandya told his childhood coach Jitender Singh in Vadodara: "Coach, you will not hear any negative thing about me after this".

"He has held that word, his father would have been so proud today," Jeetubhai, the coach, tells this newspaper on the afternoon of the big IPL final.

A few hours later at the sparkling Narendra Modi stadium, bustling with more than lakh mostly Gujarat Titan supporters, Hardik chose the most important game of the tournament to make an important point – he couldn't just bowl his quota of 4 overs, he still had the sting to deactivate an entire batting line-up. His victims for the day were Jos Butler, Sanju Samson and Shimron Hetmyer – the brawn, brain and the bluster of Rajasthan Royals. And would calmly shepherd the 131-run chase, after a few early wickets, with a responsible 34 to further drive the point home.

For a while in his career, Pandya seemed like he craved attention, without knowing what it was in him that he wanted everyone to look at. But in recent times, he has made it clear to himself and everyone that he wants the attention to be on his cricket.

This IPL, Hardik showed that at least in the game's shortest format, he could win games with both bat and ball and also be the Kapil-like inspirational leader.

Jeetubhai remembers the first time he tried to introduce captaincy to Hardik, just after the second IPL season. "I made him cap-



Hardik Pandya picked up 3 wickets in his four overs giving away just 17 runs.

tain the Reliance side. I told him it's time he starts developing that aspect." What happened? The coach laughs. "Hardik wasn't too keen then. 'Sir, I don't want all this now. I want to focus on my batting and bowling.'"

"With what he has gone through, and the way the other people have seen him, at times made fun of him, he knows exactly what to do with other players like him. He knows how backing them to be themselves can be a very powerful thing," the coach says. "I wasn't surprised he backed David Miller the way he has done."

The coach identifies three recent events that have matured Hardik rapidly. "The Karan Johar episode, marriage and fatherhood, and the death of his father last year. He didn't want to feel negative again after that television show, he realised all he wanted was a stable

happy family after marriage, and the death of his father, who he was very close to, must have matured him. That old bachpana (childishness) has changed."

The advertising folks behind the 'Dream Big' series for a fantasy game cottoned on to that inherent trait in Hardik that matches the public perception, and played it up. Where all other stars in that series, from Rohit Sharma to Jasprit Bumrah, Rishabh Pant to Ravichandran Ashwin, play down, choosing overt humility in tracking their rise through the help of an individual, Hardik's script runs bolder: he talks himself up, talks how even that other individual realised "top ka player hai".

Jeetubhai, who has known Hardik from when he was very young, smiles when that image is put across. "Let me put it this way. He is like a coconut, hard from outside, very soft inside. An emotional family man, who likes to be cool! I find that combination cute and cool!"

Good listener

It leads one to another side of Hardik. During his captaincy stint, Nehra has been seen counselling him about bowling changes from the sidelines during games.

Hardik has not only not minded it but has actively sought and taken such advice.

"He has no ego in that sense. He has always been a good listener, has always followed good advice. And he trusts Nehra a lot," Jeetubhai says. "As I said, he is a coconut in reality." Some journalists who were at the Wankhede Stadium a few years back during a Mumbai Indians training session, can attest to it. Something had happened, it couldn't be ascertained what went down, but suddenly

Hardik seemed to be distraught. The then MI head coach Ricky Ponting came across, patted his back, spent a lot of time consoling, then a few other senior players too came across.

After a while, Hardik got up, kept wiping his tears, and eventually shrugged whatever it was that was bothering him, slipped on sunglasses, threw a glance at the media bunch, and resumed his cool-cat walk. There he was, in public view, overcoming a soft personal moment with poise.

Turning the corner

When Jitender Singh reached Hardik's home at 7.30 in the morning when he was sent back from Australia post the Karan Johar controversy, he found his old ward sitting on a sofa with his sunglasses on as he hadn't slept the whole night. "Tension nahin lena hai (Don't take tension). You will get back to playing for India very soon. Jo ho gaya, voh ho gaya (what's done is done), no use worrying about it. Now, smile."

"I saw that he was upset about what happened. I know him well. He is a very emotional boy. Don't go by his dress and chains, and the style icon he seems to be. Bachcha hai (he is a child) and very pure at heart."

Once mocked, laughed at, dropped from the team, Hardik has bounced back in remarkable fashion.

"Throughout my life, a lot of people have counted me out and put a question mark. Same thing about the auction, or retention or even my captaincy. The best way to answer is not to answer," Hardik says in the GT video. "All the people who said something, I don't have to tell them to take it back. I think they themselves have taken it back."



Big final butterflies and batterings

Yashasvi Jaiswal is only 20; just two IPL seasons and a First-class game old. He shed nerves, understandably, featuring in arguably the biggest match of his career so far, and countenancing a masterly seam-bowler, Mohammed Shami. He was a picture of torment – Shami beat both his edges, beat him for pace as well as bounce. Jaiswal shrunk, he preened. His partner Jos Buttler sensed his partner's fragility, whispered a few words of counsel. Jaiswal had enough – seven balls; no runs. He went for broke. Clearing his front-leg, he heaved wildly at a pitched-up Shami ball. The sweet spot of the

willow eluded, but he got enough wood for the ball to reach the ropes. Buoyed, he bludgeoned the next ball over extra cover. Next over, he hooked Yash Dayal for a six, again he was not fully in control when playing the shot. Never mind, the last 10 balls had fetched him 22 runs. But he was still far from settled – he kept admonishing himself. And then came another short ball with his name etched on it. He unfurled the pull, but was a fraction too late and ended up fetching to the deep square-leg fielder. Jaiswal was thus spared of more agony. But he did get a hang of a high-pressure IPL final.

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER

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

Boult open, Yuzi jammed



"I did name him after a cricketer Yajuvindra Singh, who took seven catches in a Test match. I just changed the name a bit but that cricketer was the reason," the father of **Yuzvendra**

Chahal had once told this newspaper. Usually a pretty safe catcher but irony was blowing in the Ahmedabad wind on Sunday night. In the first over of the chase, Trent Boult had got one to curve into Shubman Gill who stabbed it off the inside edge and it popped up off his pad close on the leg side. Boult had placed Chahal pretty much for that kind of an eventuality, at short square-leg. Chahal lunged forward but clanged it. Boult had already started running towards him and Shimron Hetmyer too crouched pretty close. Boult ran his hands through his hair in anguish, Hetmyer plunged his face into his palms, and Chahal kept looking around him rather despondent.

Outwitting the deity

R Sai Kishore worships Ravi Ashwin like young batsmen used to adore Sachin Tendulkar in the 90s and the aughts. When Ashwin bowls, he forgets everything else. He would be busy taking notes of even the minutest detail, from the grip to release and field placements to the space between the fielders. He would watch his videos on a loop to understand the layers of the off-spinner's craft. Which batsman of which team on which ground did Ashwin dismiss and how (the set-up, the variation, time, date, everything), he would have the answer at his fingertips. His biggest regret was losing his cool against Ashwin's team during a TNPL game. Ashwin only intervened and stopped the fracas. He said he couldn't sleep that night and had no peace until he apologised. He might not sleep the night of May 29 either, because the left-arm spinner nabbed his deity with a straight-forward piece of bowling. Ashwin stepped out, Sai pulled his length back, Ashwin mis-cued straight to Lockie Ferguson. He let out an instinctive roar of joy. Then went mute. Another night without sleep.



All in a day's work

Prasidh Krishna bowled a peach to blast the stumps of Wriddhiman Saha – a late-swinging in-swinging that rolled back memories of Javagal Srinath, similarly tall and reedy at the start of his career. The next over, he bowled a horrendous wide when he decided to go from around the stumps to Matthew Wade. The Australian then thwacked him for a six. It was one of those days all-in-a-day's work night when he veered between the extremes. Either he was silly, or sublime. He then served one up full that begged Hardik Pandya to be pasted through covers. Two balls later, he hurried Gill into a cut that was not there, but the edge flew past Samson. Krishna, after three overs where he hardly emoted, threw his arms in frustration. It was a night which could have gone better for him; a night that could have gone worse too.

Sunday is the new Wade-noose-day



"It's been a frustrating tournament personally," **Matthew Wade** had said yesterday to *Cricchet.com.au*. "I've been hitting the ball well, especially since I came back into the team. It just hasn't quite clicked, I found the fielders a little bit, just found ways to get out but I've played enough to know that happens for periods of time throughout T20 especially, but you've just got to stay brave and keep swinging the bat like you know you can swing it." He swung a six but was sorted out by Trent Boult who got one to swing away from him from middle and leg line. Wade tried to flick it but sent a dolly straight to short midwicket. And he craned his neck all the way back, waiting for the replay on the big screen. Even though they don't have to chase much, pressure is slowly building up on Gujarat Titans.