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MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2024, NEW DELHI, LATE CITY, 20 PAGES



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# THE WORLD

TOP OF THE  
WORLD



Pope Francis at Vanimo, on Sunday

PAPUA NEW GUINEA  
Pope delivers medical aid to remote town

*Vanimo:* Pope Francis flew deep into the jungle of the Southwestern Pacific island nation of Papua New Guinea on Sunday to visit Catholics living in one of the most remote areas of the world and deliver medical supplies and other aid. The 87-year-old pope brought hundreds of kilograms of items to help support the local population, said Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni. They included various medicines and clothing, as well as toys and musical instruments for school children, Bruni said. The pope is visiting the nation of 600 islands as part of his 12-day, four-country tour of Southeast Asia and Oceania, the longest of his 11-year-old papacy.

REUTERS

PAKISTAN  
Minister says Imran may face military trial

*Islamabad:* Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that the evidence against jailed former prime minister Imran Khan points towards a military trial in the cases concerning the violence on May 9 last year, a media report said on Sunday. Asif told a private news channel on Saturday that military trials had taken place before and will continue to do so in future as well, Geo News reported. "Evidence against founder Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party founder points towards military trial," Asif said.

PTI

VIETNAM  
Typhoon Yagi weakens after wreaking havoc

*Hanoi:* Typhoon Yagi, Asia's most powerful storm this year, was downgraded to a tropical depression on Sunday, after wreaking havoc in northern Vietnam, China's Hainan and the Philippines, claiming dozens of lives. Vietnam met agency issued the downgrade on Sunday but cautioned about the ongoing risk of flooding and landslides as the storm, the strongest to hit the country in decades, moves westwards. On Saturday, Yagi disrupted power supplies and telecommunications in Hanoi, causing extensive flooding.

REUTERS

MALE-DOMINATED VILLAGE COUNCILS SAY WOMEN LOSE VILLAGE MEMBERSHIP WHEN THEY MARRY

## 'Sisterhoods' challenge rural Chinese tradition denying women village membership, payouts

VIVIAN WANG  
SEPTEMBER 8

THE WOMEN came from different villages, converging outside the local rural affairs bureau shortly after 10 a.m. One had taken the morning off from her job selling rice rolls. Another was a tour operator.

The group, nine in all, double-checked their paperwork, then strode in. In a dimly lit office, they cornered three officials and demanded to know why they had been excluded from government payouts, worth tens of thousands of dollars, that were

supposed to go to each villager. "I had these rights at birth. Why did I suddenly lose them?" one woman asked. That was the question uniting these women in Guangdong province, in southern China. They were joining a growing number of rural women, all across the country, who are finding each other to confront a long-standing custom of denying them land rights — all because of whom they had married.

In much of rural China, if a woman marries someone from outside her village, she becomes a "married-out woman." To the village, she is no longer a member,

even if she continues to live there. That means the village assembly can deny her village-sponsored benefits such as health insurance, as well as money that is awarded to residents when the government takes over their land.

Now, women are fighting back, in a rare bright spot for women's rights and civil society. They are filing lawsuits and petitioning officials, energized by the conviction that they should be treated more fairly, and by the government's increasing recognition of their rights.

In doing so, they are challenging centuries of tradition that have



Though most court cases favour married women, village councils refuse to recognize rulings against them. AP

### TO PROTECT POPULAR ISLANDS FROM OVERTOURISM

### GREECE TO TAX CRUISE SHIP ARRIVALS

Greece plans to impose a 20-euro levy on cruise ship visitors to the islands of Santorini and Mykonos during the peak summer season, in a bid to avert overtourism, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said on Sunday. Some of Greece's popular destinations, which relies heavily on tourism, risk being ruined by mass tourism.

REUTERS



OVERNIGHT AIRSTRIKES KILL 3 IN RUSSIA, 2 IN UKRAINE

## Russian troops take Ukrainian town in advance on crucial eastern city

Pokrovsk city is an important rail, road hub for Ukrainian troops

REUTERS  
MOSCOW, SEPTEMBER 8

RUSSIA SAID on Sunday that its forces had taken full control of a town in eastern Ukraine as Moscow's forces advance on the strategically important city of Pokrovsk and seek to pierce the Ukrainian defensive front lines.

Russian forces, which control about a fifth of Ukraine since invading in February 2022, are advancing in eastern Ukraine in an attempt to take the whole of the Donbas, which is about half the size of the U.S. state of Ohio.

Russia's defence ministry said its forces had taken the town of Novohrodivka, which lies 12 km (7 miles) from Pokrovsk in Donetsk, an important rail and road hub for Ukrainian forces in the area. The town had a population of 14,000 before the war. Yuri Podolyaka, an influential Ukrainian-born, pro-Russian military blogger, published maps showing Russian forces attacking beyond Novohrodivka in two places less than 7 km from Pokrovsk.

Reuters was unable to immediately verify battlefield reports from either side due to restrictions on reporting in the war.

President Vladimir Putin said last week that a Ukrainian incursion was



Image provided by Ukrainian officials shows a firefighter at the site of a Russian airstrike in Sumy on Sunday. Reuters

sion into the Russian region of Kursk had failed to slow Russia's own advance in eastern Ukraine and had weakened Kyiv's defences along the front line in a boost to Moscow. Ukraine's top military commander said on Thursday that Kyiv's incursion into the Kursk region was working and that there had been no Russian advances on Pokrovsk for the previous six days.

He said that one of the objectives of the Kursk incursion was to divert Russian forces from other areas, primarily Pokrovsk and Kurakhove. Russia had diverted large numbers to Kursk, but was also strengthening the Pokrovsk front, he added.

Meanwhile, Ukraine and Russia accused each other of overnight air attacks on their border regions, with Ukrainian officials saying that two people died and four were injured in the Sumy region, and Russia saying three civilians were injured in Belgorod.

Two children were among those injured in Sumy, the military administration of the northeastern Ukrainian region said on Sunday on the Telegram messaging app. Several residential houses and cars were damaged, it said.

Across the border, in Russia's southwestern region of Belgorod, three civilians, including two children were injured in Ukraine's air attack, Vyacheslav Gladkov, the governor of the region, said on Telegram. He said

two residential buildings were destroyed and more than 15 buildings in total were damaged.

The Russian defence ministry said on Telegram that it destroyed two Ukraine-launched drones over Belgorod overnight.

Both Sumy and Belgorod regions have been subject to frequent attacks. Both sides deny targeting civilians, saying the attacks are aimed at destroying each other's infrastructure critical to war efforts.

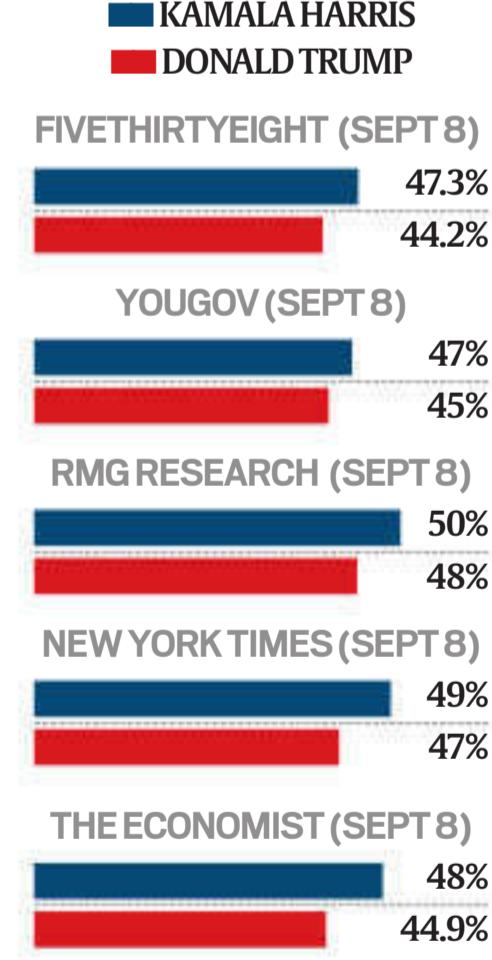
## Trump threatens to jail opponents in escalating rhetoric ahead of ABC debate

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MOSINEE (WISCONSIN), SEPT 8



### WHAT US THINKS

Kamala leads in 5/5 polls



unchecked power to prosecute his enemies and pardon insurrectionists who violently attacked our Capitol on January 6."

## West Bank border closed after gunman from Jordan kills 3 Israelis

REUTERS  
WEST BANK, SEPT 8

A GUNMAN from Jordan killed three Israeli civilians at the Allenby Bridge border crossing in the occupied West Bank before security forces shot him dead Sunday, Israeli officials said. It was the first attack of its kind along the border with Jordan since October 7.

The crossing, also known as the King Hussein Bridge, lies about midway between Amman and Jerusalem just north of Dead Sea.

The assailant was a 39-year-old truck driver who came from southern Jordan, according to family members. Jordan was investigating the shooting and a Jordanian official said the cross-

ing has been closed. "A terrorist approached the area of the Allenby Bridge from Jordan in a truck, exited the truck, and opened fire at the Israeli security forces," the Israeli military said.

Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty in 1994 and have close security ties. Dozens of trailers cross daily from Jordan, with goods that supply both the West Bank and Israeli markets.

## Erdogan vows to 'purge' military graduates who took secular oath

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
ISTANBUL, SEPTEMBER 8

THE TURKISH president has hit out at military graduates who took a pro-secular oath during their graduation ceremony, promising that those behind it would be "purged" from the military.

Speaking at a conference for Islamic schools in the northwestern city of Kocaeli on Saturday, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan described those involved as "opportunist."

He added that an investigation was underway and vowed that "the few impudent individuals responsible will be purged."

"Whoever they are, it is not possible for them to be part of our military," Erdogan said.

Erdogan was present at the

graduation ceremony at the Turkish Military Academy in Ankara on August 30.

Valedictorian Ebru Eroglulu led the 960-strong graduating class in reciting the official military oath about defending Turkey. But video footage from about an

hour later shows about 400 of the graduates gathered in a field, raising their swords and chanting "We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal" — a reference to the secular founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

Eroglulu then led the group in the Officer's Oath, in which they vowed to defend "a secular, democratic Turkey." That oath was discontinued from the academy in 2022. Some pro-government commentators suggested it might be a challenge to Erdogan's government.

Necessary steps will be taken to bring former prime minister Hasina back under the extradition treaty with India to try her on charges of mass killings during the student-led mass movement against her government, the newly-appointed chief prosecutor of the country's International Crimes Tribunal said on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the head of Bangladesh's interim government, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, on Sunday called for a fast-tracked third-country resettlement of Rohingya Muslims living in the south Asian country, as a new wave of refugees flee escalating violence in Myanmar's Rakhine.



Students rally to mark one month of Sheikh Hasina's ouster on Sept 5. Reuters file

Venezuela Opp leader Gonzalez flees to Spain for political asylum



Spain said Sunday that Edmundo Gonzalez's decision to leave Venezuela was his alone. Reuters file

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
CARACAS, SEPTEMBER 8

FORMER VENEZUELAN opposition presidential candidate Edmundo Gonzalez has fled into exile after being granted asylum in Spain, delivering a major blow to millions who placed their hopes in his campaign to end two decades of single-party rule.

The surprise departure of the man considered by Venezuela's opposition and several foreign governments to be the legitimate winner of July's presidential race was announced late Saturday night by Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez.

She said the government granted Gonzalez safe passage out of the country, just days after ordering his arrest, to help restore "the country's political peace and tranquility." Neither Gonzalez nor opposition leader Maria Corina Machado has commented.

Meanwhile, Spain's centre-left government said the decision to leave Venezuela was Gonzalez's alone and he departed on a plane sent by the country's air force. Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares told Spanish national broad-

caster RTVE that his government will grant Gonzalez political asylum as he has requested.

"I have been able to speak to (Gonzalez) and once he was aboard the airplane he expressed his gratitude toward the Spanish government and Spain," Albares said. "Of course I told him we were pleased that he is well and on his way to Spain."

Albares said that Gonzalez had spent an unspecified number of days at the Spanish Embassy in Caracas before his departure.

## Bangladesh to take steps to extradite Hasina, says official

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DHAKA, SEPTEMBER 8

BANGLADESH WILL take necessary steps to extradite deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina from India to try her on charges of mass killings during the student-led mass movement against her government, the newly-appointed chief prosecutor of the country's International Crimes Tribunal said on Sunday.

Necessary steps will be taken to bring former prime minister Hasina back under the extradition treaty with India to try her on charges of mass killings during the student-led protests in July and August, International Crimes Tribunal Chief Prosecutor Md Tajul Islam was quoted as saying by The Daily Star newspaper.

"We will file an application with the International Crimes Tribunal, when it resumes functions, to issue arrest warrants against all the absconding accused including Sheikh Hasina over the cases filed for mass

killing and crimes against humanity," he said at a press meet in Dhaka. He said a decision would be taken after consulting with the government about amending the existing International Crimes Tribunal Act.

Meanwhile, the head of Bangladesh's interim government, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, on Sunday called for a fast-tracked third-country resettlement of Rohingya Muslims living in the south Asian country, as a new wave of refugees flee escalating violence in Myanmar's Rakhine.

From the perspective of maintaining social stability, local governments or courts are definitely more inclined to protect the benefits of the majority," Lin Lixia, a legal advocate at Qianqian Law Firm in Beijing, said.

make it to court, not those that judges throw out or officials force into out-of-court mediation. And villages often refuse to recognize rulings against them.

In June, China passed a law reaffirming that village assemblies can continue to decide who counts as a member of their village collectives, and is therefore eligible for land rights.

On paper, the women's legal chances look good. Scholarly analyses have found that many court rulings in these cases favor married-out women.

But those are the cases that


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27<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2024**RG KAR RAPE-MURDER****TMC's Sircar to quit RS, flags Bengal's 'faulty handling', graft**

Govt action too little, late... can't accept corrupt officers, doctors getting top posts: Prasar Bharati ex-CEO to Mamata



A protest against the August 9 rape and murder of a junior doctor, in Kolkata on Sunday evening. Partha Paul

ATRI MITRA

KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 8



P5

**THE EXPRESS  
INTERVIEW**
**'NOBODY WAS  
LISTENING ... HAD  
ADVISED CM TO  
TAKE SOME STEPS'**  
JAWHAR SIRCAR  
TMC RAJYA SABHA MP

BATTLING PUBLIC protests and Opposition attacks over the RG Kar junior doctor's rape and murder last month, the Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal came under fire from within on Sunday, as the party's Rajya Sabha member and former Prasar Bharati CEO, Jawhar Sircar, announced his decision to resign, citing the 'faulty handling of the most spontaneous public movement'.

In his letter to Banerjee, which he posted on X, Sircar also flagged the issue of corruption and the "increasing strong-arm tactics of a section of leaders" in the Trinamool Congress. He said he had "decided to resign from Parliament and also from politics altogether".

Saying that "the present spontaneous outpouring of public anger" is against the "unchecked overbearing attitude of the favoured few and the corrupt", Sircar wrote: "In all my

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

In all these cases, it is the state's Town and Country Planning (TCP) department that approved change in land use over the past 18 months, converting "green zones" into "settlements" — allowing construction activity for both residential and commercial purposes, pushing up the land's value manifold.

Records show that one beneficiary is a firm that has TCP Minister Vishwajit Rane and his spouse as directors; Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira is himself a beneficiary. Significantly, Rane also holds the Forest


**PAVNEET SINGH CHADDA & DHEERAJ MISHRA**

PANAJI, NEW DELHI, SEPT 8

RAISING QUESTIONS of conflict of interest and political influence on policy, at least two state ministers, a clutch of politicians cutting across party lines and several real-estate companies in Goa are alleged beneficiaries of a controversial change in land use law, records investigated by The Indian Express show.

Everything has been strictly done as per the guidelines and under the ambit of law.

**VISHWAJIT RANE,  
TOWN & COUNTRY  
PLANNING MINISTER**


(The property) was incorrectly zoned as an orchard. It was a mistake, so we got it corrected.

**ALEIXO SEQUEIRA,  
ENVIRONMENT  
MINISTER**

Whatever the government does (in purview of law), it stands.

**AVERTANO  
FURTADO,  
CONGRESS LEADER,  
FORMER MLA**

1974, which allows conversion of plots without public consultation if the owner approaches the department with a request to "correct inadvertent errors" or "rectify inconsistent/incoherent zoning" in Goa's Regional Plan 2021.

The absence of public scrutiny and who decides what is "inadvertent error" form the nub of the controversy.

**Who got approval**

An investigation of records shows the following public figures and corporates among the beneficiaries:

■ **The Forest, Town and Country Planning Minister and spouse:** Karapur Estates Private Ltd, which lists TCP Minister Vishwajit Rane and his wife Deviya Rane as directors, got clearance to convert 11,580 sq m of land in Bicholim taluka's village Sarvona. Records show approval was received for "correction" of the zone to "settlement", which was earlier earmarked as "partly paddy field with CADA" in the 2021 regional plan.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

"I was the Home Minister of India and the PDP government was here in Jammu and Kashmir. I used to tell Mehtoba Mutti (the then Chief Minister) that the situation shall be normal and even a delegation of MPs led by me as Union Home Minister came here," said Singh, addressing a poll rally in Ramban district.

"There were senior leaders


**ARUN SHARMA**  
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 8

THE FOUR Opposition MPs, on whom separatist Hurriyat Conference leaders had shut their doors in September 2016, had visited them as part of Centre's outreach for peace talks, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Sunday.

"I was the Home Minister of India and the PDP government was here in Jammu and Kashmir. I used to tell Mehtoba Mutti (the then Chief Minister) that the situation shall be normal and even a delegation of MPs led by me as Union Home Minister came here," said Singh, addressing a poll rally in Ramban district.

"There were senior leaders

like Sharad Yadav (of the JDU) and from the Left parties (in the delegation)," he said. "I told them that we are from the BJP and the Hurriyat people do not like us and they get irritated on seeing us. You talk to them and tell them that we are ready to talk, but there shall be peace in Kashmir."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

**In Rudraprayag, 'non-Hindu' warning by local outfits triggers fear & unease**AVANEESH MISHRA  
RUDRAPRAYAG, SEPTEMBER 8

THE OMINOUS signboards are gone but the tension remains, seeping into conversations in village squares over 'chai' and inside homes.

For years, the villages of Rudraprayag, a key stop along the Kedarnath Yatra, saw communities working together peacefully, their livelihoods tied to the pilgrimage season in Uttarakhand. But a marked shift over the past few months has left



One of the now-removed boards at Shersi village in Rudraprayag, Uttarakhand

several of them on the edge, concerned by emerging fault lines — and uncertain about what lies ahead.

Reason: Boards set up, mainly by local pro-Hindutva outfits such as Bhairav Sena, which read: "Warning: Non-Hindus/Rohingya Muslims and hawkers are prohibited from roaming in the village and doing business. If caught anywhere in the village, punitive and legal action will be taken."

"This campaign has been going on for the past year," said

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2


**BUSINESS AS USUAL**  
By UNNY

ELECTION COMMISSION

They serve with no fear  
or favour, affection or  
ill will, past or future.Forces EC Appoints  
Amritsar

Ministry and Sequeira the Law portfolio, departments that are key to regulating the changes.

An investigation of TCP records shared with the Goa Assembly last month shows that approval was received to change — officially called "correct" — the land use of a total expanse of at

least 20 lakh sq m. This area is of green zones, including paddy fields, orchard land and no-development zones, and will now be "settlements".

Such changes were allowed after a March 2023 amendment [section 17 (2)] to the Goa Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

**1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS****How one woman's search for another led to murder charge against Tytler**NIRBHAY THAKUR  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

WHEN THE Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in 2007 filed a closure report against Congress leader Jagdish Tytler, 80, in connection with his alleged role in the deaths of three Sikh men at Delhi's Gurdwara Pul Bangash during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, multiple persons moved protest petitions. However, the trial court said it would only accept a



Lakhwinder's husband Badal Singh was killed in the riots

plea from one of the victims' family members. In 2007, the families of two of the three vic-

tims could not be traced.

For Nirpreet Kaur, 56, who lost her father in the same riots in another part of Delhi, the case against Tytler — who is accused of inciting a mob that set fire to the gurdwara, leading to the three deaths — being closed without going to trial was unacceptable. Nirpreet, who has been helping senior advocate H S Phoolka track down other victims like her since 2006, took it upon herself to look for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2


**I DEA  
EXCHANGE**

'We have a region where flashpoints could lead to catastrophic conflict'

PHILIP GREEN  
AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER

PAGE 13

**'Had seen fall in Tokyo... So I was not really scared of the (Paris) outcome'**PAGE 1  
ANCHOREXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

SHE BECAME India's first athlete to win two medals at the Olympics in Paris but Manu Bhaker very nearly gave up the sport three years ago after the heartbreak she endured in Tokyo. It was the restlessness within that put her back in the hunt.

The twin bronze medal winner made this revelation at the Express Adda on Saturday, where she was the guest along

with Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain. They were in conversation with Mihir Vasavda, Deputy Associate Editor, The Indian Express.

Manu, who won an individual bronze in 10m air pistol and followed it up with a mixed team podium finish along with Sababot Singh, said she faced many "hardships" after the Tokyo debacle, "doubted" her choices and even "thought of opting for a different career".

"Had hardships also after that. I was really doubting my choices. I was actually thinking of opting for a different career path. But destiny is something..." she said.

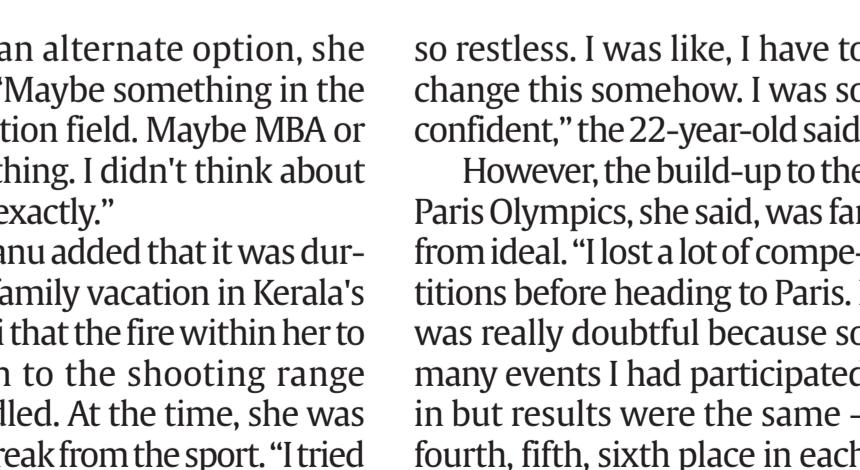
Asked what would have



Olympians Manu Bhaker and Lovlina Borgohain at the Express Adda in New Delhi on Saturday. Tashi Tobgyal



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well but I wasn't able to win any competition before I was heading to Paris. But still I was very positive about it."

"I was like, I'll try my best and let see what will happen because I had seen the fall in Tokyo and what happened after that. So I was not really scared of the outcome," she said.

Manu and Lovlina — whose Olympic fortunes have contrasted so far, Manu could not win a medal in Tokyo, where Lovlina won a bronze; Manu finished on podium this time while Lovlina couldn't — have been two of the faces of the rising power of Indian women at the Olympics.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



# Mahayuti struggles to remain in sync, fight over flagship scheme hints at divisions that run deep

SHUBHANGI KHAPRE  
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 8

ON JUNE 28, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar presented the state's annual Budget, the highlight of which was the Mukhyamantri Ladki Bahin Yojana (MLBY) that grants a monthly stipend of Rs 1,500 to women between 21 years and 65 years. With an estimated 2.5 crore beneficiaries, the state exchequer is set to incur a whopping Rs 46,000 crore expenditure on the scheme.

Less than 24 hours later, across Mumbai and the Thane district, posters on the scheme cropped up with an image of CM Eknath Shinde prominently at the centre.

In none of these posters was there a mention of the Deputy CMs, Devendra Fadnavis of the BJP or Pawar of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

Simmering for more than two months, differences emerged within the ruling Mahayuti alliance over the scheme again at a weekly Cabinet meeting on September 5 as a minister from the Shiv Sena objected to the NCP's decision to omit the CM's photo from advertisements and promotional material on the flagship project. After a war of words, it took Shinde's intervention to pacify both sides and it was decided that the allies should ensure uniformity and unity.

A senior NCP minister, requesting anonymity, said, "It is like *ulta chor kota wala daate* (the thief is accusing police)."

The minister claimed it was the Sena that first attempted to "hijack" the scheme. "They went all out to depict how the project was conceptualised, planned and executed by the CM. Initially, they had posters showing only the CM.

Now, when the NCP has used an Ajit Pawar photo, they are miffed," he said.

The discord between the allies over taking credit for the scheme is no secret. With the Assembly polls likely to be held later this year, all three Mahayuti parties are working overtime to consolidate their electoral bases through the women-centric scheme. The NCP is using Pawar's role as the finance minister to claim credit for the scheme, saying he made it possible. The NCP also omitted "Mukhyamantri" from the scheme's name in posters, referring to it just as Ladki Bahin Yojana.

The BJP, too, dropped "Mukhyamantri" from its programmes on the scheme. At several of its rallies, the flagship project was referred to as Ladki Bahin Yojana. The party has also begun using the moniker "Deva bhau" for Fadnavis to portray him as "the loving brother". Banners with Fadnavis's image and "Deva bhau" have been placed across the state.

When asked about these posters, Fadnavis explained, "People often address me with affection as Devendra bhau, Deva bhau. Personally, I like Deva bhau as it seems more affectionate." During an interview with a Marathi TV channel, Fadnavis spoke on the Cabinet show down over the scheme. "There was no fight. There was a discussion on how we should brand the flagship project. We felt there should be uniformity," he said.

Though the top leaders downplayed the differences between the parties over the scheme, all three parties in the ruling alliance are following independent strategies to take advantage of it. FULL REPORT: [www.indianexpress.com](#)

**Baramati should get new MLA: Ajit again hints at not contesting seat**



Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar

MANOJ MORE  
PUNE, SEPTEMBER 8

DEPUTY CHIEF Minister and NCP chief Ajit Pawar on Sunday said that Baramati should get a new MLA so that people can then compare his achievements over his 30-year-old career with the other representative. This is the second time Ajit Pawar has hinted he was not keen to contest from Baramati. However, the NCP (SP), led by his uncle, said that Ajit Pawar's statement was merely an exercise in creating confusion among people.

"I am 65. I am satisfied. Baramatikars should get a new MLA. Other than me, at least once. And then they should compare my career from 1991 to 2024 with the performance of my successor," Ajit Pawar said Sunday in his address to party workers in Baramati.

Describing it as a strategic move, NCP leader Jitendra Awhad said, "Of course Ajit Pawar will contest from Baramati. It is an art indeed to create confusion in people's minds."

Ajit Pawar's cousin and MP Supriya Sule said she had no clue why Ajit Pawar said what he did. "You should ask him why he wants a new MLA for Baramati."

## FROM PAGE ONE | FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

### TMC's Sircar to quit Rajya Sabha

years, I have not seen such angst and total no-confidence against the government, even when it says something correct or factual."

"I have suffered patiently for a month since the terrible incident at RG Kar Hospital, and was hoping for your direct intervention with the agitating junior doctors, in the old style of Mamata Banerjee. It has not happened and whatever punitive steps that the government is taking now are too little and quite late. I think normalcy may have been restored in this state much earlier, if the caucus of the corrupt doctors was smashed and those guilty of taking improper administrative actions punished immediately after the scandalous incident happened," he wrote.

Saying that "after 41 years in the IAS", he lived in a "small middle-class flat, next to a big slum" and drove "a very ordinary 9-year-old car", the former bureaucrat said he was "amazed to see that several elected panchayat and municipal leaders have acquired big properties and move around in expensive vehicles."

"It is also true that leaders in other parties and other states have amassed much more wealth. But West Bengal is unable to accept this extravagant corruption and domination. I know that the present Central regime thrives on the multi-billionaires that it has enriched, and not a day goes when I do not accuse it of dirty crony-capitalism. I just cannot accept some things, like corrupt officers (or doctors) getting prime and top postings," he wrote.

Sircar wrote that in 2022, a year after he joined TMC, he was "quite shocked" to see "open evidence of corruption that former education minister (Partha Chatterjee) had indulged in".

"I made a public statement that corruption must be tackled by the party and government, but I was heckled by senior leaders in the party. I did not resign then as I had hoped you would carry on your public campaign against 'cut money' and corruption that you had started a year earlier,"

he wrote.

Saying that there is no party that does not have a "corrupt section", Sircar said he was persuaded by well-wishers to continue as MP to "carry on the battle against a regime that is the greatest ever threat to Indian democracy and civil liberties".

"Though I carried on my task in Parliament with fervour, I became increasingly disillusioned as the state government seemed quite unconcerned about corruption and the increasing strong-arm tactics of a section of leaders," he wrote.

Saying that "after 41 years in the IAS", he lived in a "small middle-class flat, next to a big slum" and drove "a very ordinary 9-year-old car", the former bureaucrat said he was "amazed to see that several elected panchayat and municipal leaders have acquired big properties and move around in expensive vehicles."

"It is also true that leaders in other parties and other states have amassed much more wealth. But West Bengal is unable to accept this extravagant corruption and domination. I know that the present Central regime thrives on the multi-billionaires that it has enriched, and not a day goes when I do not accuse it of dirty crony-capitalism. I just cannot accept some things, like corrupt officers (or doctors) getting prime and top postings," he wrote.

While he expressed his gratitude to Banerjee "for the opportunity... to raise Bengal's issues in Parliament for 3 years", Sircar said he had "to say all this in writing as I have not had the opportunity to speak privately with you in several months".

"The primary purpose of joining as an MP, without any direct involvement in party politics, was that it offered an excellent forum to carry on the struggle against the autocratic and communal politics of the BJP and its Prime Minister... My commitment to fight corruption, commu-

nism and authoritarianism in the Centre and the States is simply non-negotiable," he wrote.

Sircar said he would soon visit Delhi and offer his resignation to RS chairperson and would "disassociate... totally from politics".

In his post on X, Sircar said: "I am quitting as MP primarily because of WB government's faulty handling of the most spontaneous public movement following the terrible rape-murder case at RG Kar Hospital. Quitting politics – to be with the people in their struggle for justice. My commitment to values unchanged."

When contacted, TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said: "This is his personal decision. I cannot say why he has resigned. We agree with his letter... I can only say that we are soldiers of the Trinamool Congress and we are fighting against evil forces in this moment of crisis."

"I am quoted Gosh as saying that the party respects Sircar's decision, and he was hopeful that the leadership would address the issues that were raised, and take strong, clear, and positive actions. The Opposition, meanwhile, used Sircar's letter to target the TMC. "I have always taken the politically opposite position of Sircar, but his resignation from Rajya Sabha is a major loss. TMC should realise..."

"BJP's Rajya Sabha member Samik Bhattacharya said.

BJP's 'co-incharge' of West Bengal Amit Malviya said in a post on X: "Time for Mamata Banerjee to take cue and step down".

"Only extortionist and corrupt people become TMC leaders," said CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty.

"Sircar is praising the people's movement despite being a TMC MP. But the TMC cannot realise such things," said Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

A 1975-batch IAS officer, Sircar served as Prasar Bharati CEO from 2012 to 2016; he resigned before his term ended. He became RS MP in August 2021.

### • Rajnath on Hurriyat

"After asking me, Sharad Yadav and some Left leaders visited the Hurriyat Conference leaders, but they shut their doors on them, saying they will not talk with senior MPs of our country," the Defence Minister said.

While the Narendra Modi government has always showcased its tough stand against separatists, this is the first acknowledgement from the Centre that it tried to reach out to them in 2016 when Kashmir was witnessing large scale protests following the killing of militant commander Burhan Wani in an encounter.

During the all-party delegation's visit to the state in the first week of September 2016, which came in the wake of violence in the Valley that left 72 people dead, four Opposition MPs – JD(U)'s Sharad Yadav, CPI(M)'s Sitaram Yechury, CPI's D Raja and RJD's Jay Prakash Narayan Yadav – broke away from the 26-member group and visited the Srinagar residence of hardline Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who was under house arrest. Geelani, however, snubbed them and did not even open the doors.

When contacted, TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said: "This is his personal decision. I cannot say why he has resigned. We agree with his letter... I can only say that we are soldiers of the Trinamool Congress and we are fighting against evil forces in this moment of crisis."

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When contacted on Sunday, Raja told *The Indian Express* that he does not remember Singh telling them that they should meet the Hurriyat leaders as the latter may not meet the BJP leaders. "As part

of the all-party delegation... the understanding was that the members are free to meet anyone we want and hear them out. And we went," the CPI general secretary said.

In his address on Sunday, Singh also referred to registration of FIRs against Kashmiri youth involved in stone pelting following the killing of Burhan Wani.

"There were cases against young and innocent children and there were repeated demands from the people to withdraw the cases," Singh said, adding that he then spoke to Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti and allowed her to withdraw such cases.

"We did everything that could be done with an open heart to restore peace in the Valley, but they (separatists) did not respond the way they should have," he said.

Referring to NC leader Omar Abdullah's statement that Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru should not have been hanged, Singh asked whether he should have been publicly garlanded. "I want a reply from you (Omar) as to what should have been done to him," he said.

Singh also said that recently an affidavit was filed by Pakistan's additional solicitor general in the neighboring country stating that PoK is a foreign land. "I want to tell PoK residents that Pakistan considers you foreigners, but the people in India do not consider you so. We consider you our own and so come and join us," he said.

Talking about changes in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370, the Defence Minister urged the people to give BJP a chance to form the government in J&K. That will bring a big change in J&K in the next 10 years, he said.

The minister also criticised the NC and Congress for talking of restoring Article 370. No one has the courage to bring it back, he said.

WITH INPUTS FROM ENS, Srinagar & New Delhi

## They are troubled by death of dacoit: Adityanath targets SP over Sultanpur encounter

**Lucknow:** Breaking his silence over the Sultanpur encounter case that has led to a political storm, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath claimed on Sunday that the Samajwadi Party was troubled by the killing of a dacoit since its leadership provided patronage to the mafia in every district to run a parallel government when SP was in power.

Responding to SP president Akhilesh Yadav's allegation that the encounter was carried out based on the suspect's caste, the CM alleged that this was the "actual identity of the Samajwadi Party", cautioning people against

the alleged attempts to divide them on the basis of caste.

Addressing a meeting in Ambedkar Nagar district, the CM said, "When a dacoit under their patronage is killed in a police encounter, they start shouting as if someone has touched their sore point. The customer sitting in the jewellery shop could have been from any caste." Alleging that the mafia used to run a parallel government before the BJP came to power, the Chief Minister said, "Bigger the criminal, bigger the position he used to get in the Samajwadi Party. But things changed after that."

ENR

### • In Rudraprayag, 'non-Hindu' warning by local outfits triggers fear & unease

Praveen Kumar, whose wife Chandani Devi is the pradhan of Maikanda. "The board was installed by some people in my village a week ago, after which I received a call from police saying we cannot use communal remarks," he said.

"I spent my entire life here, but such things are happening for the first time," said Nadeem, a 28-year-old who runs a barbershop in Shersi village, a few kilometres away.

The *Indian Express* visited five villages in the area on Saturday, speaking to residents and tracing the source of this palpable unease. It found a volatile mix of "safety concerns" related to alleged thefts in temples and unfounded narratives surrounding local issues such as rain-related incidents and businesses being "taken over by outsiders".

"I had put up the board in Shersi two months ago to stop outsiders because of safety con-

cerns. In the recent past, there have been incidents of people stealing from temples. We suspect those coming from outside on the pretext of doing business," said Ashok Semwal, a local resident who identified himself as district president of Bhairav Sena, a pro-Hindutva organisation.

Apart from Maikanda and Shersi, similar boards had come up in villages such as Nyalsu, Triyuginarayan, Badasam, Jamu, Ariya, Ravigram, Sonprayag and Gaurikund. Guptkashi police station in-charge Rakender Kathait said they sent teams to these villages to remove the boards. "By Saturday, most of the boards had been removed. We informed the residents that if they find anyone suspicious, they can inform the police. Putting up such boards is wrong," Kathait said.

Semwal claimed that several other villages had followed his lead but added that he "regrets the choice of words" now. "Recently,

some people objected to the boards, and the use of certain words, which made us realise our mistake. We will remove 'Non-Hindu and Rohingya Muslim' to 'Outsider and Hawkers', and reinstall the boards... We will also put pressure on the administration to make sure shopkeepers and vendors put their names outside their shops," he said.

Semwal's father, Maheshanand, said the campaign began after a silver statue of our deity Nagraj was stolen" from Shersi last year. "All we want is to keep our villages and homes safe," he said.

A hotel owner in Guptkashi market said this fear was fuelled by a series of incidents over the past year – most recently, the allegations related to an obscene gesture made by a man to a minor girl in neighbouring Charnoli district, which triggered a mob attack last Sunday on shops owned by the Muslim commu-

nit to which the arrested accused belonged. The hotel owner, who did not wish to be identified, said "talk" that members of other communities who earn from Chardham Yatra did not step up to help during the recent rain-related disasters in the state's Kedar Valley is "adding to the rising tension".

"There is also fear that the state's demography is shifting, with local businesses being taken over by outsiders," he said.

The sign boards gained national attention last week after two delegations from the Muslim Seva Sangathan and AIMIM met Uttarakhand DGP Abhinav Kumar on September 5 to express concerns about what they said were "increasing anti-minority incidents" in the region. The DGP later told *The Indian Express* that Intelligence and local units have been directed to investigate and take necessary steps.

Back in Shersi village, meanwhile, Nadeem says he is "not sure

how to feel about all this". "I understand that there is no reason for me to be scared. I know this is not for me or my family, but for outsiders. Yet, I also see that an entire community gets a bad name because of things done by some," he said in a measured voice while trimming the hair of a local customer at the shop started by his father who migrated from Bijnor in UP over 30 years ago.

Phata outpost in-charge, Sub-Inspector Jagdish Rawat, who was removing the boards in Shersi on Saturday, said they came to know about them through photos on social media. "We have told people that they can put up boards prohibiting unverified outsiders but not use communal terms," he said.

For Naemeh Ahmad, who hails from Nazibabad in Bijnor and settled in Badus 12 years ago, the boards "don't cause concern" even though the 36-year-old belongs to the only Muslim family in the

village. "I was not at home when I got a call from my wife a week ago about a board that had come up, threatening non-Hindus against entering and working in the village. She was alone in the house with our two children and was scared. I asked if anyone had come to our house and said something. She

## BRIEFLY

'Drunk' men misbehave with doctor, nurse: Police

New Delhi: Two men allegedly misbehaved with a doctor and a nurse at Indira Gandhi Hospital in Dwarka over a lack of X-ray facilities on Sunday. The two accused men were inebriated at the time of the incident, police said.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8



Delhi Finance Minister Atishi. File

Introducing GST on payment gateways threatens their sustainability and growth," Atishi said.

She added saying, "The central government should focus on supporting small businesses rather than imposing additional taxes." The Minister further said that the AAP government will also challenge the imposition of an 18% GST on research grants received by educational institutions from private entities. The tax is unjustifiable given the reduction in central government funding for research between 2014 and 2024, the Minister argued. She pointed out that countries like the United States and the United Kingdom do not impose similar taxes on research grants.

The GST Council is chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and includes state finance ministers.

Same parking fee for pvt and govt buses among slew of changes in works at ISBTs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

SAME PARKING fees for private and government buses, fixed time slots for the use of bus bay, and use of FASTag for tracking the vehicles – a slew of changes are expected to be enforced by the Delhi Transport Department at the interstate bus terminals to increase efficiency and reduce traffic snarls, officials have said.

At the three operational interstate bus terminals (ISBTs) of the Capital – Kashmere Gate, Anand Vihar, and Sarai Kale Khan – private buses are charged a higher parking fee at present. Due to this, it has been observed a large number of private buses – trying to evade the fee – can be seen parked outside the terminals to pick up passengers, which eventually leads to snarls.

The decision to enforce these changes, as per officials, was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by LG Vinai Kumar Saxena, which was attended by Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot. According to the L-G Office, he also suggested reducing parking time to achieve a higher turnaround.

## SEAT-SHARING DISCUSSIONS FOR HARYANA POLLS

## Amid alliance talks with Cong, senior AAP MLA flags concerns

Calling it a 'selfish alliance', Somnath Bharti, who had contested the Lok Sabha polls, insisted that AAP should evaluate the effectiveness of the tie-up



Somnath Bharti attacked Congress on X. File

Bharti alleged a lack of cooperation from Congress leaders during the Lok Sabha election campaign, for which the two parties had come together in Delhi, Haryana, and Goa.

seats out of four, which was excessive. An alliance in the Assembly polls may end up eroding our voter base," said another MLA on condition of anonymity.

In his post, Bharti had

contested the Lok Sabha elections from the New Delhi constituency against BJP's Bansuri Swaraj who won by a sizeable margin.

Alleging a lack of cooperation from Congress leaders during the Lok Sabha election campaign, for which the two parties had come together in Delhi, Haryana, and Goa, Bharti urged the party to evaluate the "effectiveness" of the alliance in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

"Before the AAP-Congress alliance is inked in Haryana, @AamAdmiParty must evaluate the effectiveness of a similar alliance formed in Delhi during the Lok Sabha election. While my national convenor @ArvindKejriwal ji did roadshows for all three Congress can-

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# Reclaiming Delhi's lungs

Over the years, the Delhi Ridge has steadily vanished under rows of buildings. In the Southern Ridge, the largest section, efforts to free the land have met with little success owing to legal tangles, displacement of people and lack of manpower. *The Indian Express* hits the ground to understand the reason

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

INSIDE A police station, a motorcycle showroom, a parking lot, and the sprawling, well-kept lawns of a "spiritual and socio-religious organisation" lie pockets of Delhi's Southern Ridge. This is 'forest' land — at least as declared preliminarily by the Delhi government 30 years ago.

In a May 1994 notification under Section 4 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, it outlined the contours of the northern, central, south-central and southern Ridge and proclaimed that "all forest lands and wastelands which is government property" within these areas would be 'reserved forest'.

Over the years, vast swathes of the Ridge area — that act as the Capital's lungs — have been built upon. Less than a fourth of the "encroached land" has been freed so far, documents show.

Freeing up this land has led to conflict, key to some of which is a document submitted in 2019 by the then Divisional Commissioner and Principal Secretary, Revenue Department, to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in an application filed in 2013 by Delhi resident and activist Sonya Ghosh seeking protection of the Delhi Ridge from damaging construction.

The accompanying map, which marked encroachments, was prepared after a joint survey by the Revenue and Forest Departments in 19 villages in and around the Southern Ridge.

Of the 357.07 hectares of encroached forest land in the South forest division identified as per the 2019 document, the Forest Department has cleared just 79.88 hectares, or around 22%. Much of this action was taken in 2019-20.

The two villages in South Delhi with the largest area still encroached are Asola (38.17 hectares) and Bhatti (38.19 hectares). Sections of the two villages are notified as the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary.

Senior officials in the Forest Department pointed to a range of reasons for the slow pace of removal of encroachments: several court cases; land awaiting demarcation; orders from the Delhi High Court asking for status quo to be maintained till fresh demarcation is carried out; issues of manpower; absence of a dedicated fund to reclaim land; and the "lakhs of people" who might be displaced if large-scale demolitions, particularly of unauthorized colonies, are initiated.

A set of illustrative instances point to what still stands on the Southern Ridge and why:

## A police station

Maidangarhi police station in Asola is missing the characteristic red and blue board usually mounted on the front facade of most stations. Instead, 'P S Maidangarhi' is painted in bold red letters on the wall of an archway that leads to the station — single-storey structures surrounding a courtyard and a lawn. Down the road, about 100m away, is the forest — a green expanse walled off by the Forest Department.

In 2020, its SHO filed an application before the Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Saket — the ADM was appointed Forest Settlement Officer (FSO) under the Section 4 notification to examine and decide claims over land



(Top) Forest area around Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary near Sangam Vihar; (below) Maidangarhi police station, land reclaimed after a demolition drive earlier this year in Asola. Praveen Khanna

that was notified — for "de-notification" of forest land, stating that it was allotted to the Delhi Police by the Director (Panchayat) in February 2015. It said the applicant wants the land to be "de-notified from Ridge notification".

Going by the 2019 list of encroachments, the khasra number of the land marks it as a 'farmhouse encroachment'. The Deputy Conservator of Forest (DCF), South Forest Division, submitted in the ADM court in 2020 that the land mentioned by the applicant has been declared forest, and asked that the "present claim be dismissed with heavy costs".

DCP (South) Ankit Chauhan did not respond to questions about the police station and if it was a temporary arrangement. A source in the Revenue Department said the case before the FSO has not yet been decided.

This was not the only allotment of 'forest' land to other departments/agencies. In 2019, the Divisional Commissioner, who decides appeals in cases filed before the FSO, told the NGT that allotments made post the 1994 notification were done "without proper approval". The document submitted to the NGT had a list of such allotments — a total of 1,990 bighas and 15 biswa.

## IGNOU

When Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) submitted a request for permission to build a five-storey admin block on 0.27 hectares on its Maidangarhi campus — this was cleared by Delhi's Ridge Management Board last August and then went to the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) of the Supreme Court for further clearance — the matter raised the question of "documentary evidence" to confirm 'forest' land and its demarcation.

The Ridge Management Board, while granting permission, noted that approval was sought for construction in an area that falls within a 'reserve forest'.



## NATURE OF ENCROACHMENTS

Village	Total encroachment identified as on 05.04.2019	Unauthorised Colony	Farmhouse encroachment	Abadi	Total**
Aya Nagar	14.5	6.84	0	0	7.09
Chattarpur	21.3	21.25	0	0	21.25
Neb Sarai	22.29	22.31	0	0	22.31
Sahurpur	20.07	0	3.93	0.81	20.09
Devli	38.16	37.05			37.91
Asola	56.91	1.38	49.06		50.45
Bhatti	40.27	59.49	11.74	12.16	92.13
Maidangarhi	6.67		2.83	3.56	6.44
Saidulajab	9.2	8.34			8.34
Satbari	15.3	15.34			15.34
Jaunapur	24.2	6.78	8.82	0.03	17.48
Dera Mandi	33.6	2.73	8.14	15.12	25.98
Tughlakabad	33.9			34.14	34.29
Pul Pheladpur	20.7			20.76	20.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>357.07*</b>	<b>181.51</b>	<b>84.51</b>	<b>86.58</b>	<b>379.85*</b>

\*On difference in figures, a forest dept official said that some unauthorised colony areas were identified but erroneously not added in the 2019 affidavit submitted in the NGT

\*\*includes other encroachments

(figures from forest dept based on 2019 NGT affidavit)



## WHY THE RIDGE MATTERS

According to ecologist C R Babu, the Ridge is considered Delhi's lungs for absorbing carbon dioxide and giving out oxygen

With its native forest ecosystems, it serves as a physical barrier against sandstorms & expansion of Rajasthan desert into other areas, by keeping moisture on this side of the plains. It can regulate temperature. Porous soil of Ridge allows rainwater to sink in and recharge groundwater

CEC report submitted to the SC in May states: "Several orders have been passed... many committees and authorities constituted... but there is absolutely no progress as far as securing Delhi Ridge is concerned. In fact, multiplicity of judicial intervention seems to have diluted seriousness of the matter."

The Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Saket, then wrote to DCF (South) in July asking the Forest Department to provide the Section 4 notification under the Indian Forest Act that can point to its claim over the 68 bighas. As per revenue records, IGNOU has a perpetual lease deed for 202.02 bighas of land belonging to the gram sabha, dating back to the 1980s.

Sources in the Revenue Department said they were looking

for a Section 4 notification that specifies khasra numbers that have been declared 'forest' land. The DCF responded in July that the notification issued in 1994 only describes boundaries and does not have a "khasra-wise list of forest land". The DCF also pointed to the 2019 document filed in the NGT as mentioning the khasra number where IGNOU is located.

The DM wrote to the CEC later in July that "as per revenue record

and documentary evidence, it is not clear as to how Forest Department is claiming ownership of this land," and that it is doing so "as per affidavit" filed in the NGT. He also recommended IGNOU be granted nod for construction.

A senior official in the Forest Department maintained that the Divisional Commissioner's affidavit is the department's "Bible" when it comes to acting on encroachments. In the case of IGNOU, CEC has yet to submit its report for the apex court's consideration.

## Radha Soami Satsang Beas (RSSB)

As per Forest Department officials, RSSB is the single largest property owner in Asola and Bhatti with whom it is now engaged in a tussle. RSSB describes itself as a registered society, a "spiritual and socio-religious organisation", which has had a "major centre" at Asola-Bhatti for "over 40 years." The sprawling gated property spans 300 acres.

Going by the Divisional Commissioner's 2019 document, around 95 bighas of forest land is identified as encroached by RSSB in Bhatti. This, however, is not the only area identified as encroached on by the organisation. RSSB's appeals before the Divisional Commissioner altogether involve 340 bighas in Asola and Bhatti.

In 2020 and 2021, RSSB filed four applications in the FSO's court, all for exchange of land — it offered to swap its own land for forest land in Asola and Bhatti.

The Forest Department opposed these applications. It also pointed out that the FSO's court has no power to exchange land, and that the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, says no state or other authority can convert forest land for non-forest activity without the Centre's approval.

In 2023, RSSB withdrew these applications. Soon after, it filed another three applications before

the FSO, which are now pending. Going by records with the Forest Department, RSSB had filed the three applications seeking "deletion/exclusion/exchange of forest land". The department has opposed these applications on grounds that there is a delay of "more than 28 years" in claiming rights over the land.

RSSB filed three appeals, each pertaining to different pockets of land, before the Divisional Commissioner this year, which are pending. One says some of the contested land was not part of the notified reserved forest; another says the L-G had assigned or leased out some of this land to RSSB in 1988 for 99 years; and the third offers to surrender some of their land and asks to "delete and mark as forest" from the notification.

RSSB did not respond to questions emailed to an ID on its website. H C Yadav, Secretary, RSSB, in whose name the appeals before the Divisional Commissioner were filed earlier this year, also did not respond to calls and texts seeking comment.

## Farmhouses, other private properties

RSSB is not the only private property owner to seek exchange of its land with forest land. In some cases, the FSO issued orders allowing the exchange, which was then challenged by the Forest Department in appeals before the Divisional Commissioner.

Forest Department data from this February shows around 41 cases are pending with the FSO out of a total of 82 cases from the South Forest Division. As for appeals, a total of 32 cases, affecting around 100 hectares of forest land, were pending before the Divisional Commissioner.

According to officials in the Forest Department, it has also filed appeals in instances where the FSO has accepted the claim of a private property owner over land identified as forest.

Of the 14 villages that make up the Southern Ridge, Asola has the largest area under farmhouse encroachment. (see box)

Being issued notice to vacate the land, property owners approached the HC which allowed a stay till demarcation of land was verified.

A few instances point to the issues that have been raised and long-drawn legal processes:

■ In three cases where "notices of demolition and eviction" were issued to three property owners in Sainik Farms, they approached the HC in 2021. In November of that year, the court directed that petitioners' claims be verified by way of demarcation and the process be completed in four weeks. The matter was last heard in May when the demarcation process was complete but the report was not finalised. It is now listed in October.

■ The FSO, in some cases, allowed exchange of land. In a 2019 order, for instance, it let a farmhouse owner in Satbari, where 1 bigha 5 biswa of land was forest land, exchange privately owned land with forest land as the applicant had said they would lose passage to their property if a boundary was raised around forest land.

The Forest Department opposed these applications. It also pointed out that the FSO's court has no power to exchange land, and that the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, says no state or other authority can convert forest land for non-forest activity without the Centre's approval.

Forest officials maintain the actual exchange wasn't carried out as the department filed appeals before the Divisional Commissioner; these are yet to be decided.

## On the ground: Encroachments keep returning, demolition is not always easy

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

OVER THE years, clearing encroachments on land in the Ridge forest area has been no easy task for Forest Department officials. In some cases, there are stay orders from the court. Sometimes, encroachments are removed — only to crop up again.

Devinder, a resident of Asola who is in his early 50s, is sure that most farmhouses and establishments in Asola are younger than he is. "We began to see construction... farmhouses and others... in the 1980s," he said.

Concerned about Asola's forest area, particularly the wildlife sanctuary, he filed a petition in the HC in 2016, flagging "unau-

nished construction." The court asked the Delhi government to ensure there is no further encroachment in the area notified as sanctuary. In July 2017, the government told the court a demolition drive was fixed in Asola beginning later that month.

In 2019, Devinder's lawyer told the court that despite its orders, the encroached area has not been freed; in areas where partial demolition was carried out, encroachers have returned. In 2022, he told the court that though unauthorized construction was removed from two patches of land in Asola, the areas have been encroached upon again. In March this year, he told the court that there's been "perfunctory clearance of small shanties etc., but bigger farmhouses and other buildings have

not been removed/demolished."

In this matter, the Deputy Conservator of Forest, South Forest Division, filed a status report in April this year after an inspection. Of the 7 khasra numbers Devinder had flagged in Asola, four were marked as having "heavy encroachment on ground"; three were identified as "farmhouse encroachment".

Among those marked as "heavy encroachment" was a row of buildings, some multi-storey, with shops on the ground floor and homes above on Sant Shree Nagpal Marg, a busy main road, near Fatehpur Beri. One of these is a motorcycle showroom. "Some of these buildings came up in 2019-20; it was not as heavily built up in the years before," Devinder said. As for the farmhouses, he

said demolition was carried out in parts of those properties in 2017.

While the inspection report said demolition drives were fixed in two out of three of these areas in April this year, a forest department official said it was not carried out: "With farmhouses, there is also the issue of entry into the property. In the case of a farmhouse in Bhatti, we tried initiating demolition in

The Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Saket, then wrote to DCF (South) in July asking the Forest Department to provide the Section 4 notification under the Indian Forest Act that can point to its claim over the 68 bighas. As per revenue records, IGNOU has a perpetual lease deed for 202.02 bighas of land belonging to the gram sabha, dating back to the 1980s.

Sources in the Revenue Department said they were looking

for a Section 4 notification that specifies khasra numbers that have been declared 'forest' land. The DCF responded in July that the notification issued in 1994 only describes boundaries and does not have a "khasra-wise list of forest land". The DCF also pointed to the 2019 document filed in the NGT as mentioning the khasra number where IGNOU is located.

The DM wrote to the CEC later in July that "as per revenue record

2021, but the path to the patch of forest land is through their property, and they called the police to tell us we can't enter private land."

Some farmhouses have boards outside that specify they have a stay from a court. These stand within tall walls topped with concertina wire and sturdy gates, behind which buildings are difficult to spot. Some, like a piece of land in Bhatti, around 100 m away from the sanctuary wall, don't have construction within and comprise walls and a gate — structures that the department's staff is more confident about entering when they prepare a schedule for further demolitions.

Where court stays protect some properties, others have been razed either by the Forest Department or other agencies like the Delhi Development Authority; earlier this year, the DDA demolished the Akhoondji mosque and a madrasa in the



## Leopard mauls woman to death in Udaipur

**Jaipur:** A 40-year-old woman was mauled to death by a leopard in Udaipur district, police said on Sunday.

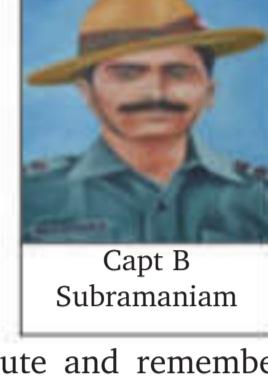
The deceased, identified as Mirabari, had gone to collect woods near a hilly area in Jhadol with two other women. The leopard dragged Mirabari into the forest and mauled her to death, they said. The incident

happened around 8.30 am on Sunday.

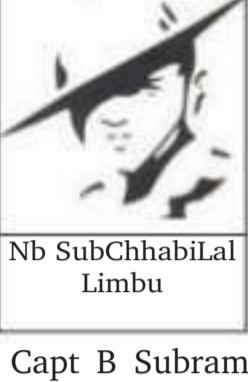
DSP Mahaveer Singh Shekhwat said they are combing the area to capture the leopard. The villagers later blocked the Udaipur-Ahmedabad Highway and staged a protest with the body, demanding compensation and killing of the wild animal.

## SALUTE THE SOLDIER

IC-13718H CAPT B SUBRAMANIAM  
JC-45151L NB SUB CHHABI LAL LIMBU  
09 SEP 1968



Capt B Subramaniam



Nb Sub Chhabbi Lal Limbu

We salute and remember IC-13718H Capt B Subramaniam and JC-45151L Nb Sub Chhabbi Lal Limbu of 1/11 Gorkha Rifles (BATALIK) who made the supreme sacrifice during 'OP ORCHID' in NagaHills on 09 Sep 1968 in a true act of valour. The brave soldiers will always be remembered for their enthusiasm and outstanding professionalism. To these bravehearts, we pledge that their immortal spirit shall always guide us and we shall strive to do their name proud.

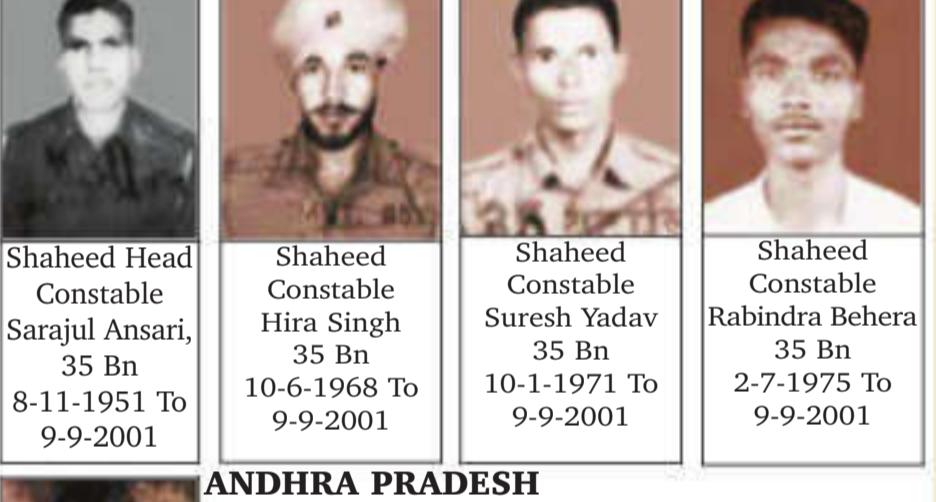
CO AND ALL RANKS, 1/11 GORKHA RIFLES  
(BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE)  
(BATALIK)



In proud memory of brave heartsof 6th Battalion TheDogra Regiment, who made the supreme sacrifice while serving the Nation at South of Hajipur Pass(INDOPAK WAR)on 09 Sep 1965. To the loved ones we have lost. They are forever in our hearts and minds. Their services and sacrifices to our country will always be remembered.

"BRAVES DIE, BUT ONLY ONCE"  
Remembered by Commanding Officer and All  
Ranks 6 DOGRA.

CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE



ANDHRA PRADESH

9 September 2001

On 8 September 2001, Left Wing Extremists hijacked a civil bus. In response, on 9 September 2001, CRPF troops from the 35th Battalion and civil police moved to the villages of Ranapachadavaram and Maradimilli, PS Aditimala, East Godavari district. While traveling, their vehicle was hit by a landmine followed by gunfire from higher ground. Despite the severe damage and injuries, the troops retaliated and forced the extremists to flee. Tragically, the IED explosion resulted in the martyrdom of five brave personnel: Shaheed HC Sarajul Ansari, Shaheed Ct. Hira Singh, Shaheed Ct. Rabindra Behera, Shaheed Ct. Bichitra Sahoo, and Shaheed Ct. Suresh Yadav, who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.



JAMMU & KASHMIR

9 September 2004

On 9 September 2004, troops from the 81st Battalion of CRPF were transporting personnel on leave in two vehicles under PS Doda, Doda district. While traveling, militants detonated an IED and opened fire. One vehicle was hit by the blast, falling into a 195-foot gorge, causing severe injuries to its occupants. Despite their injuries, the troops fought back fiercely, forcing the militants to abandon their plan to loot weapons and flee. Three brave troopers Shaheed Constable Rupesh Kumar Singh, Shaheed Constable Santanu Sarkar, and Shaheed Constable Pawan Kumar, sacrificed their lives in service to the nation.

## PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person Rohit Sharma S/o Anand R/o H.No. 13, Gali No. 1, Saroj Nagar Near Etah Chungi, P.S. Quarri, Distt. Aligarh, (UP) has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence case FIR No. 288/2018 u/s 420/406/506 IPC Act at P.S. Bawana, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Rohit Sharma cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Rohit Sharma has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proceeding u/s 82 Cr.P.C. has been initiated in the case. Proclamation is hereby made that the said Rohit Sharma accused of FIR No. 288/2018 u/s 420/506 IPC Act at P.S. Bawana, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on 08.10.2024.

By Order: Sh. Sarthak Panwar  
Metropolitan Magistrate-05 (North)  
Room No. 114, 1st Floor,  
Rohini Court, Delhi

## Rinda formed new terror network with US-based Passia: Intel agencies

Canada-based Landa and Pak based Rinda stopped working together: Officials

MAHENDER SINGH  
MANRAL

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

AFTER QUESTIONING a number of associates of Canada-based Khalistani terrorist Lakhbir Singh Sandhu alias Landa and Pakistan-based gangster-turned-terrorist Harvinder Singh Sandhu alias Rinda, Central Intelligence agencies have suggested that both the terrorists have stopped working together and that Rinda has started working with one Harpreet Singh alias Happy Passia, who is currently operating from the US. The new syndicate is now allegedly raising terror modules and carrying out terror actions in Punjab, officials said.

The information was recently discussed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) during a meeting with the police officials of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi.

3 killed day after dance at Ganesh Chathurthi procession leads to argument

JAYPRakash NAIDU

RAIPUR, SEPTEMBER 8

A HEATED argument that broke out on Friday after four men barged into a Ganesh Chathurthi procession and started dancing snowballed into a major fight on Saturday and led to the deaths of three people in Chhattisgarh's Durg district. The three deceased were identified as Karan Yadav, Vasu Yadav and Rajesh Yadav.

According to Durg police, the argument broke out at around 8 pm in Nandini village, where a Ganesh Chathurthi procession with DJ music was underway. Four men, including the three who later died, approached the procession and started dancing to the music, police said. The Old Shitala Ganesh Committee, which was carrying out the procession, objected to this and an argument broke out. However, with elders intervening, it did not lead to a fight, officials said.

On Saturday, at around 11.30 am, the two groups again fought with each other and again elders intervened. However, at around 8 pm Saturday, Vasu Yadav allegedly called Akash Patel and asked him to come to Shitala temple. After Patel reached the spot, one Dhanu Yadav allegedly attacked him with a knife. Soon, 8-10 friends of Patel joined the fight, and this led to the deaths of Karan, Vasu and Rajesh.

The alleged stone-pelting took place in the Mochipura area of the city on Saturday night when some people were carrying an idol for installation as part

An official said both the terrorists were not working together now as their motives are different – Landa is more inclined towards supporting pro-Khalistani activities in India and Rinda is more involved in drug peddling and arms distribution in the country.

"In 2023, Happy Passia formed an association with Rinda to raise terror modules in Punjab. He illegally entered the US in 2021 with the help of an illegal human trafficking network," the official said.

Sharing the action taken against the Rinda-Passia association, an official said around eight terror modules have been busted by the Punjab police from August 2023 to August 30. "Around 35 members of their group have been arrested and 546 individuals linked with the Rinda-Passia network have been verified," the official said.

Landa, a former resident of Tarn Taran in Punjab, is believed to be living in Edmonton in

Alberta in Canada and is wanted by security agencies in a case related to the Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) attack on the Punjab State Intelligence Headquarters in Mohali in 2022.

A cash reward of Rs 15 lakh

was announced by the NIA on him. "He has also been involved in various criminal cases related to raising of terror modules, extortion, killing, planting IEDs, smuggling of weapons and narcotics and using funds or proceeds thereof for terrorist acts in the Punjab and other parts of the country," an official said.

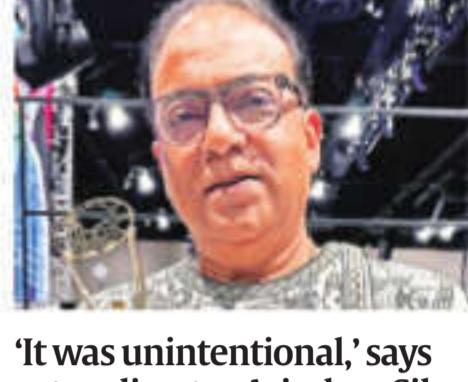
According to a gazette notification issued by the Centre, Rinda has been associated with terrorist organisation Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and is presently based in Lahore, Pakistan, under the patronage of cross border agencies and has been found involved in various terrorist activities, particularly in Punjab. Notably, Rinda is also said

to be connected to the Sidhu Moosewala murder case of 2022. The Delhi police had registered a case naming two Punjab gangs in the murder. The murder case was later taken over by the NIA, which is probing the alleged nexus between Punjab gangs and terror networks.

"Rinda fled to Canada in 2017. Before moving to Canada, he was involved in various cases including murder, attempt-to-murder, extortion, kidnapping, arms and drugs smuggling in Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Moga and Ferozepur of Punjab. Rinda was involved in a number of criminal cases between 2008 and 2019 in Punjab and other states of India. In 2019, he fled to Pakistan and joined BKI under the aegis of Wadhawa Singh Babbar, chief of the terrorist group backed by Pakistan spy agency, ISI. They started working together in 2022, and have been carrying out terror incidents in Punjab," an official said.

## ACTRESS'S COMPLAINT

# Bengal film body suspends filmmaker over 'harassment'



'It was unintentional,' says actor-director Arindam Sil

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 8

THE DIRECTORS' Association of Eastern India (DAEI) has suspended filmmaker Arindam Sil after an actress approached the West Bengal Commission for Women, accusing the 60-year-old of harassment and indecent behaviour.

In the suspension letter sent to the filmmaker on Saturday, the DAEI stated that there was "prima facie evidence against Sil" and the allegations "maligned the entire organisation".

Sil is the first big name in the Bengali film industry, also called Tollywood, against whom action has been taken after allegations of sexual harassment shook the Kerala film industry following the Hema Committee report.

"Due to certain allegations made against you, and prima facie evidence we have with us, which are of deep concern and is maligning to the entire organisation, the DAEI has decided to suspend you from membership for indefinite period or till the allegations against you are cleared," read the letter signed by DAEI president Subrata Sen and secretary Sudesha Roy to Sil.

Sil, also a well-known actor, said that what was being construed as misbehaviour was unintentional. He said the incident being referred to happened recently when he was explaining a scene to the actress during the shooting of a film. "No one objected to my actions or conduct at that time," he claimed.

"Amake bala hoyeche shot bojhatey give ami actor ke mishandle korechhi... DoP theke shuru kore floor sobai chilo [I have been told that I 'mishandled' an actress while explaining her the shot... From Director of Photography to

Hospital in Kolkata].

Over the past few years, several actresses have levelled harassment allegations against Sil, known for his detective films such as *Har Har Byomkesh* and *Mitin Mashi*.

(WITH PTI)

## Suspected case of mpox identified, no cause for alarm: Govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

A SUSPECTED case of mpox has been identified in India, according to a statement issued by the Union Health Ministry on Sunday.

While India has reported at least 30 cases and one death due to the infection since it was first detected in 2022, this is the current suspected case in the country. The concern regarding the current outbreak stems from the spread of clade Ib strain of mpox, which is predominantly being transmitted through sexual contact.

Police from Jaora town in Ratlam and Dhar district have been called in and heavy security has been deployed around the city, the SP said. The situation is under control, he added. "No idol was destroyed in the alleged stone-pelting. We will look into allegations that some people were injured in stone pelting and are looking into CCTV footage to ascertain the same," the SP said.

Police rushed to the spot for investigation. The crowd fol-

lowed the police to the scene, the official said. Someone threw a stone again and stone-pelting ensued in which a police vehicle's glass broke. Police were forced to use force to disperse the crowd.

Police from Jaora town in Ratlam and Dhar district have been called in and heavy security has been deployed around the city, the SP said. The situation is under control, he added. "No idol was destroyed in the alleged stone-pelting. We will look into allegations that some people were injured in stone pelting and are looking into CCTV footage to ascertain the same," the SP said.

The incident happened when the accused was out on a drive. Fearing he would be beaten up, he fled the spot and parked his car in his building. He took a bike and fled to Navi Mumbai. Eventually, we arrested him from Kharhargarh," Patil said.

Although Alagh did not appear to have been under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident, the police have sent his blood samples for tests.

The patient is admitted to the isolation ward in Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi, said sources.

"The development of this case is consistent with the earlier risk assessment conducted by the NCDC (National Centre for Disease Control) and there is no cause of any undue concern," the Health Ministry said.

Mpox was declared a 'Public Health Emergency of International Concern' – the highest level of alert by the World Health Organization – last month.

Mpox is a self-limiting disease but can lead to death, especially among children and those with weak immune systems.

The country is fully prepared to deal with such isolated travel-related cases and has robust measures in place to manage and mitigate any potential risk," the Health Ministry said.

Mpox is a self-limiting disease but can lead to death, especially among children and those with weak immune systems.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath formed a three-member committee headed by the Home Secretary to probe the collapse.

On Sunday, CM Adityanath visited the hospital where the injured are being treated.

## Chhattisgarh tribal village gets electricity supply for first time

JAYPRakash NAIDU  
RAIPUR, SEPTEMBER 8

MAHUAPANI, A far flung village in Chhattisgarh's Jagdalpur district, has got electricity connection for the first time since Independence.

The village, nestled in dense forest on a hilly terrain and approximately 85 km from the district headquarters, is home to over 100 families from the Pahadi Korwa tribe, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG).

The project has been implemented under Prime Minister Janman Yojana, a scheme launched on November 14 for the overall development of PVTG

habitats. Further, a total of 54 settlements of Pahadi Korwa community in north Chhattisgarh will be connected through roads under the scheme.

In 2018, about 45 families in Mahuapani had received solar power, but due to technical issues the villagers had been demanding uninterrupted power supply. Pahadi Korwa tribe is one of the oldest and an indigenous tribe of Chhattisgarh. Their lifestyle depends on the forests and mountains. The people of the village make a living through hunting, gathering medicinal herbs and practising traditional agriculture.

The electricity connection will enable the government to provide better facilities in education, healthcare, communication, and employment for the community.

The district administration hopes internet services in near future will help the tribe connect to the world. Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Principal Secretary, Tribal, SC, OBC and Minorities Development Departments, Sonmoni Borah said, "PM Janman Yojana is being implemented in 18 districts of Chhattisgarh for five PVTGs – Baiga, Pahadi Korwa, Birhor, Ahujamariya and Kamarा. In most of the 11 important activities/schemes identified, we are nearing saturation in approvals and the whole government approach is adopted in implementation in villages so that no citizen is left behind."

## PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person Rohit Sharma S/o Anand R/o H.No. 13, Gali No. 1, Saroj Nagar Near Etah Chungi, P.S. Quarri, Distt. Aligarh, (UP) has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence case FIR No. 288/2018 u/s 420/406/506 IPC Act at P.S. Bawana, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Rohit Sharma cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Rohit Sharma has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proceeding u/s 82 Cr.P.C. has been initiated in the case. Proclamation is hereby made that the said Rohit Sharma accused of FIR No. 288/2018 u/s 420/506 IPC Act at P.S. Bawana, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on 08.10.2024.

By Order: Sh. Sarth



This was the Jamaat-e-Islami's first show of strength since 1987, when it last contested elections

## Big turnout at Jamaat's rally for candidates

BASHAARAT MASOOD  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 8

IN JAMAAT-e-Islami's first show of strength since 1987, when it last contested elections under the banner of the Muslim United Front (MUF), Jamaat-backed independent candidates Sunday held their first rally to campaign for the Assembly polls in J&K.

The organisation Jamaat-e-Islami, which remains banned under the UAPA until 2029, has decided to field three of its former members Dr Talat Majeed, Sayar Ahmad Reshi and Nazir Ahmad as Independents in the first phase of the J&K Assembly elections. The Jamaat is also backing another independent candidate, Ajaz Ahmad Mir – PDP had denied him a ticket – in Zainapora in Shopian district.

"There is a vacuum, a vacuum created by the regional political parties, which needs to be filled," Reshi, who is in the fray from Kulgam, said at the rally in Bogam village of south Kashmir's Kulgam that saw a big turnout. Reshi is up against M Y Tarigami, a Communist leader and a consensus candidate of NC-Congress combine, and the PDP's Mohammad Amin Dar.

While the Jamaat-backed candidates have been holding low-key door-to-door campaigns for the last several weeks, Sunday's event was their first public rally since they announced they would contest the elections.

The Jamaat's decision has earned it the criticism of its arch-rival NC and also from within the organisation, especially its grass-root workers. "Fingers will be pointed at us, we will be criticised. But what we see (today) is the reality. Our strength is the sea of people," Reshi said.

With an eight-member panel of Jamaat engaging with the Centre to seek lifting the ban, Reshi reiterated that the party's doors are open for a pre-poll or post-poll alliance. "We will support any party that would work to restore the dignity of the people."

Jamaat's biggest criticism has been that the outfit spearheaded the militancy in J&K. At the outset of militancy, the Valley's largest indigenous militant outfit Hizbul Mujahideen called itself the armed wing of Jamaat. Jamaat's panel, however, says they were never officially into militancy.

"We will support the Constitution of India. But if there is suppression, we will call it suppression," Reshi said.

## SMALLER PLAYERS IN J&K

# As Omar alleges 'deal', a big jump in Independents, little-known parties

44% of nominees in Phases 1,2 are Independents, several parties registered outside state have fielded candidates

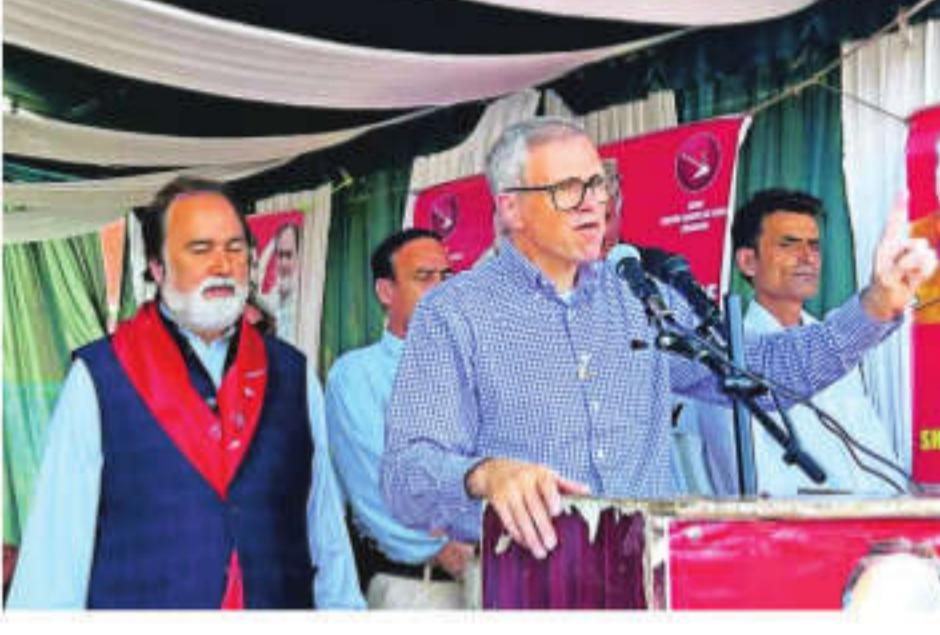
BASHAARAT MASOOD  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 8

NATIONAL CONFERENCE vice-president Omar Abdullah has been claiming that the BJP has "struck a deal" with some parties contesting the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls as well as with Independents, hoping to use their help to form the government in the Union territory.

From his family turf of Ganderbal, the former J&KC CM is facing seven Independents while the nomination of a candidate from a little-known outfit called the Anarakshit Samaj Party was rejected. Omar has questioned Union Home Minister Amit Shah's "silence" on the Apni Party and People's Conference, even while attacking other outfits, during his speech at the BJP's manifesto launch recently in Jammu, and expressed surprise at jailed separatist leader (Sarjan Ahmad Wagay a.k.a. Sarjan Barkati) filing nomination against him from Ganderbal as an Independent, so soon after another jailed separatist leader (Engineer Rashid) had defeated him in the Lok Sabha polls.

"They want to target only one person, the National Conference candidate from Ganderbal," Omar said at a rally on Saturday.

At 145, the number of Independents in the J&K Assembly elections for the first two phases for which nominations have closed is a whopping 44% of the total 330 nominees. This is a huge jump from 2014, the last time Assembly elections were held in J&K, when the total number of candidates in these constituencies was 278, and the number of Independents 87 (31%).



Omar Abdullah at a rally in Srinagar on Sunday. Shuaib Masoodi

Before that, in 2008, 190 Independents fought in the constituencies going to polls in the first two phases, but even that time, they added up to only 37% of the 518 nominees in the fray.

Apart from the big share of Independents, what is new this time is the presence of at least two dozen little-known political outfits, many of them registered outside the Union Territory.

The Anarakshit Samaj Party, registered in Farrukhabad in Uttar Pradesh, which defines its agenda as fighting against the caste system, has at least two candidates. One of its candidates, from the Channapura seat, is Mehraj Hilal Wani, who happens to be the son of the BJP candidate from the constituency, Hilal Ahmad Wani. The news that Congress-turned-BJP leader Hilal Ahmad was being picked for the seat led to the resignation of the BJP's Channapura president and his entire team of 40.

The Sampooran Bharat Kranti Party is registered in Vikaspuri in New Delhi; while the National Loktantrik Party's registered address is Kanpur in UP.

The "registered unrecognised" outfits with addresses in J&K include Garib or Poor Democratic Party; Aman Aur Shanti Tehreek-e-Jammu and Kashmir; All Jammu and Kashmir Liberal Democratic Party; National Democratic Party; Jammu and Kashmir All Alliance Democratic Party; and Jammu and Kashmir Nationalist People's Front.

Senior PDP leader Naeem Akhtar told *The Indian Express*, "This has been happening for some time. I think this is the fourth election this is happening, whosoever is sponsoring them. Suddenly, some political parties emerge, even national political parties like Ram Vilas Paswan's Party and JD(U). People just don't know who they are."

"It was earlier done perhaps to increase the voter percentage. But now this is an overused tool, and people see through it," Akhtar said, adding that it may even put people off, hurting the whole process.

Jailed separatist leader Engineer Rashid's brother set for his electoral debut

BASHAARAT MASOOD  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 8

THE AWAMI Ittehad Party (AIP) has announced Khurshid Ahmad Sheikh, the brother of its founder and jailed Baramulla MP Engineer Rashid as its candidate from Langate for the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections. Langate is a constituency that Engineer Rashid, a separatist, represented for two consecutive terms between 2008 and 2019.

Sheikh, a government teacher, resigned from his job in June, days after his brother defeated former J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and People's Conference leader Sajad Lone in the Lok Sabha elections. His resignation was accepted last week, enabling him to become the second member of the family after Rashid to enter politics. Rashid's sons, especially his elder son Abrar Rashid, had campaigned for him in the Lok Sabha polls but have yet to formally join politics.

Sheikh is likely to see stiff competition from Irfan Panditpuri of the People's Conference and Syed Ghulam Nabi of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The NC-Congress combine has fielded Ishfaq Ahmad from the seat. Dr Kaleemullah who is the son of Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ghulam Qadir Lone is in the fray as an Independent. Lone is a member of the eight-member leadership panel of the Jamaat.



Khurshid Ahmad Sheikh has been nominated from the Langate constituency



BJP supporters at a rally addressed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in Jammu's Ramban district on Sunday. PTI

## Several BJP bigwigs again left out as party puts out sixth J&K candidate list

ARUN SHARMA  
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 8

CLOSE ON the heels of dropping former Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Singh, yet another ex-Deputy CM, Kavinder Gupta, failed to find a place in the list of candidates as the BJP on Sunday released its sixth list for the coming Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections.

Apart from Nirmal Singh and Gupta, the BJP has also dropped many of its senior leaders including former ministers Sat Sharma, Sham Choudhary, Abdul Ghani Kohli, Bal Bhagat, and Ajay Nanda.

Gupta is the former MLA of the erstwhile Gandhi Nagar seat – bifurcated into the Bahu and RS Pura-Jammu South – in the 2022 delimitation exercise. The 65-year-old leader has served as the Mayor of Jammu for a record three consecutive terms from 2005 to 2010. He has also been a general secretary of the BJP's state unit. In 2014, Gupta was elected as an MLA for the first time from the Gandhi Nagar seat, where he defeated sitting Congress minister Raman Bhalla. Following the PDP-BJP's Assembly election win in 2014, Gupta was unanimously elected as the Speaker of the House.

The BJP has fielded former MLC Vikram Randhawa, son of senior leader and former Gandhi Nagar MLA Choudhary Piya Singh, from Bahu while Narinder Singh Raina is the party's pick from the RS Pura-Jammu South seat.

Randhawa found himself in the middle of controversies on three separate occasions between 2019 and 2021, leading to two FIRs against him. In May 2019, an FIR was registered

against Randhawa, the then BJP's Ladakh in-charge, for allegedly trying to bribe journalists in Leh. Two years later, he had to submit an unconditional public apology to party colleague and Union minister for levelling false allegations of corruption against him, a day before hearing of a defamation suit filed by Singh against him in a Delhi court.

In November 2021, the J&K BJP unit removed Randhawa from the post of secretary over his derogatory remarks against Kashmiri Muslims.

In a move seen as surprising to many local leaders in Jammu, the BJP has picked Bharat Bhushan and Rajeev Bhagat for the SC-reserved seat of Kathua and Bishnah, respectively. Bhushan, who is the brother-in-law of former Samba BJP MLA Devender Kumar Manyal, had resigned as the director of the Social Welfare Department only on Saturday to take the political plunge while Bhagat quit his job at a government-run hospital a few days ago. Manyal has been fielded from the Ramgarh Assembly seat.

Bhagat is the son of former BSP leader Ganga Dutt, who had unsuccessfully contested the 2008 Assembly elections from Cham. In Udhampur East Constituency, the party has fielded its former Ramnagar MLAs Pathania while Surinder Bhagat made the cut in the SC-reserved seat of Marh.

In the Valley, Mohammad Idrees Karnahi will be the party's candidate in Karna, while Ghulam Mohammad Mir, Abdul Rashid Khan, Naseen Ahmad Lone and Faqir Mohammad Khan will be the BJP candidates in Handwara, Sonawari, Bandipora and Gurez, respectively.

## IMAGE OF THE DAY



ONE OF THEIR OWN: Olympian Vinesh Phogat being welcomed at her in-laws' village, Bakhta Kheda, in Haryana's Jind district on Sunday. The village comes under the Julana Assembly seat, from where the Congress fielded Vinesh the day before. Jasbir Malhi

## I HEREBY DECLARE

MOHAMMAD KHALIL BANDI, NC candidate from Pulwama

### TOTAL ASSETS ₹2.11 CR

Movable assets ₹11.01 lakh  
Immovable assets ₹2 cr  
Liabilities ₹8.21 lakh  
Criminal cases None  
Education Class 10

WAHEEDUR REHMANPARA, PDP candidate from Pulwama

### TOTAL ASSETS ₹2.69 CR

Movable assets ₹11 lakh  
Immovable assets ₹2.58 cr  
Liabilities NA  
Criminal Three, including cases two under the UAPA  
Education Masters in International Relations



FOR MORE LOG ON TO  
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## HARYANA TALKS

CONG LEAVES A CRACK OPEN FOR AAP, BUT WINDOW CLOSING FAST

## NUMBER SPEAK

# Since BJP's 2019 LS sweep, fall in its win margins, rise in tighter contests

DEVANSH MITTAL  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

THE OCTOBER 5 Haryana Assembly elections in what is expected to be a tight bipolar contest between the state's ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress. Electoral data from the three elections held in the state over the last five years shows that the parties have drawn closer since the BJP's sweep in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, with more contests being decided by narrow margins and a decline in the average winning margins at the Assembly segment level.

### 2019 Lok Sabha polls

The BJP swept the Haryana elections, winning all 10 seats in the state, en route to getting 303 seats across the country. The

party improved on its 2014 performance, when it had won seven seats, followed by the O P Chautala-led Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) at two, and the Congress at one.

Converted to the Assembly segment level, the 2019 Lok Sabha poll results put the BJP on top in 79 seats (out of the state's total of 90). Not only that, the average victory margin of the BJP was an impressive 50,000 votes.

The Congress was ahead in only 10 Assembly segments, with the average margin between it and the second-placed parties at 32,000 votes. The Dushyant Chautala-led Janayak Janta Party (JJP), which made its electoral debut that year after splitting from the INLD in 2018, was on top only in the Narnaul Assembly segment, where it led by 56,007 votes.

### 2019 Assembly polls

Held just five months after the general elections, the 2019 Assembly polls in Haryana saw the BJP fall from the heights of its Lok Sabha performance to short

The average winning margin, across all parties, was 47,000 votes.

In other words, only a few Assembly segments saw tight contests, with the margin of victory less than 10% of the total votes in only 11 segments. The BJP won seven of these, the Congress three and the JJP one.

The Congress was the BJP's main rival. In 73 of the 90 Assembly segments, the Congress finished as the runner-up. The JJP was the runner-up in 46 of the segments in which it did not win, while the INLD one.

### 2019 Assembly polls

Held just five months after the general elections, the 2019 Assembly polls in Haryana saw the BJP fall from the heights of its Lok Sabha performance to short

## RECENT ELECTIONS IN HARYANA

Party	2019 Lok Sabha	2019 Assembly	2024 Lok Sabha
BJP	7	19	17
INC	3	19	13
Others	1	9	3

Source: Election Commission

of the majority mark, amid a Congress resurgence. The BJP won 40 seats, six less than the 46-seat majority mark in the 90-member House. The Congress bagged 31 seats, the JJP 10, and the INLD one. The JJP proved to be the kingmaker, striking an alliance with the BJP to form a coalition government.

In the 2014 Assembly elections, the BJP had won comfortably to form its first government

Independents and minor parties.

In a considerable decline from the Lok Sabha polls that year, the BJP's average victory margin fell to about 17,000 votes, while the Congress's was 13,000. The JJP recorded the highest average victory margin in the 10 seats it won at just under 25,000 votes.

In a major reversal from the general elections, the BJP finished as the runner-up in 37 seats, followed by the Congress in 30 and the JJP in 10. In 13 other seats, minor parties and Independents were the runners-up.

### 2024 Lok Sabha polls

Five years later, the BJP fell from its record high seat tally in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections to 240 seats in all. In Haryana, the 10 Lok Sabha seats were divided evenly between BJP and Congress. Ahead of the polls, the

BJP had snapped ties with the JJP, while the Congress and the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) struck an alliance as part of the Opposition INDIA bloc.

Of the 90 Assembly segments, 33 were won by a victory margin of less than 10%, as opposed to just 11 in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. The BJP won 17 of these, followed by the Congress at 13 and the AAP winning the remaining three.

This time, the BJP recorded an average winning margin of just over 25,000 votes in the 44 Assembly segments it won. Even in seats where it emerged victorious, the BJP's margins were almost halved from 2019, suggesting that it not only lost in "weaker" seats, but also slid across the state.

The Congress, on the other

hand, won 42 Assembly segments with



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



## PHOTO OP

A PHOTOGRAPHY exhibition in the capital on the tiger reserves in India saw high-profile attendance. Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav inaugurated the exhibition, which was attended by two former CJs – Justices S A Bobde and T S Thakur – and sitting SC judges Justices Hirshikesh Roy, Rajesh Bindal and Satish Chandra Sharma as well as NGT chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava. Former top cop Rakesh Asthana also attended the event. Yadav and the judges were seen exchanging notes on the diversity of India's wildlife and national parks.

## RETIRE ANOTHER DAY

THE CPWD officer in-charge of the Central Vista project, Special DG S P Chaudhary, was set to retire on August 31, but in an order issued the same day, President Droupadi Murmu gave him a one-year extension. He was among the officials instrumental in the completion of the new Parliament building last year. His re-employment, however, disrupted the plan of his colleagues at CPWD who had already sent out invitations for his farewell function, planned on August 30. The function had to be cancelled as news about the extension spread ahead of the official order.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

AT A time when the ruling CPI(M) in Kerala is under fire from the opposition Congress over its alleged "links" with the Sangh Parivar, there seems to be a new development in a different quarter. According to sources in the BJP, a senior Congress leader from the state has reached out to the BJP to discuss the possibility of him joining the party. Although many in the BJP have reservations against the Congress leader, who is an MP, the party may not decline his offer immediately considering the boost it will get in its fight against the Congress in the Assembly elections.

## CM Majhi 'repackages' Naveen govt's KALIA, launches new scheme

**SUJIT BISOYI**  
BHUBANESWAR, SEPTEMBER 8

ODISHA CM Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday launched the CM-Kisan assistance, a repackaging of the previous BJD government's KALIA scheme.

Considering the scheme's popularity among rural population in Odisha – over 70% people depend on farming and receive assistance – the Majhi government decided to continue it under a new name and set aside ₹1,935 crore for 2024-25.

"Keeping in mind the number of beneficiaries and its popularity among farmers, it would have backfired had we scrapped the scheme and only implemented the PM-Kisan scheme. Hence, we decided to continue the previous government's scheme with a new name," said a senior government official.

of over 46 lakh farmers in the state. The government also announced a ₹800 bonus beyond the MSP to farmers for every quintal of paddy under the Samrudha Krushak Yojana.

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VICE PRESIDENT Jagdeep Dhankhar urged states that have not adopted the National Education Policy 2020 to "rethink" and "revisit", stating that the NEP "gives importance to all languages".

Speaking at the International Literacy Day celebrations at Vigyan Bhawan Sunday, he said, "After three decades, a revolutionary step was taken, and we had the NEP, and that laid great emphasis on mother tongue. From this platform I will appeal to States that have not adopted the NEP to rethink, revisit, because this NEP is a gamechanger."

This NEP allows our youth to fully exploit their talent and energy, and it gives importance to

## MEMORANDUM TO GOVERNOR

## Biren calls on Centre to protect Manipur's territorial integrity

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
IMPHAL, SEPTEMBER 8

MANIPUR CHIEF Minister N Biren Singh submitted a memorandum to Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Sunday, urging the Centre to revoke agreements signed with Kuki militant groups and to protect the territorial integrity of the state, sources said.

Accompanied by the Assembly Speaker, Cabinet ministers, and several MLAs, the Chief Minister met the Governor on Sunday morning.

According to sources, in the memorandum submitted to the Governor, the Chief Minister also called on the Centre to conduct the National Registry of Citizens (NRC) process with 1961 as the base year. It also urged the Centre to complete border fencing, and to ensure peace in the state, sources said.



Manipur Chief Minister Biren Singh hands over ex gratia to a family member of a victim of violence, in Imphal, Sunday. PTI

Raj Bhavan said in a statement that Biren Singh met the Governor along with his Cabinet colleagues and submitted a memorandum.

However, neither Raj Bhavan nor the Chief Minister shared the contents of the memorandum.

The statement said that besides more than 20 MLAs, Singh was accompanied by Assembly Speaker Thokchom Satyabrat Singh during Sunday's meeting, which lasted about an hour.

The meeting came amid fresh violence in the state, in

which at least five people were killed in Jiribam district on Saturday.

The Chief Minister had also met the Governor for 30 minutes on Saturday following a meeting with ruling party MLAs at the CM's bungalow.

Meanwhile, the Manipur Education Department has issued an order notifying that all educational institutes in the state will remain closed on September 9 and 10, citing state's law and order situation.

Manipur has been tense since violent clashes broke out on May 3 last year, and earlier this month, there was a flare-up when suspected Kuki militants carried out drone and rocket attacks in valley areas.

The Coordination Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOM) declared a "public emergency" on Friday, highlighting the urgency of addressing security concerns.

## RSS functionary: There should be no lynching, be it of cows or men

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PATNA, SEPTEMBER 8

SENIOR RSS functionary Indresh Kumar Sunday asserted there should be "no man lynching and no cow lynching", in order to ensure that people from different faiths live together in peace.

Talking to reporters, the national executive member also said the RSS stood by the views expressed by its chief, Mohan Bhagwat, in favour of a caste census.

"What honourable Mohan ji has said is a view held by cent per cent volunteers of RSS. Caste is a reality which we cannot wish away. But we must take care to keep at bay the venom of casteism (jaatiavat kadan)", said Indresh.

"Likewise, we are also of the view there are, and there will be, many religions. But we must be on guard against religious fanaticism and the violence that it leads to. People should follow their own path while having respect for all," he said.

Asked about frequent incidents of lynching by cow vigilantes, which opposition parties have blamed on the ascendance of BJP, he said, "In many parts of the country and the world people eat meat. But we must recognize that people are sensitive about cows. So, we should strive to create an environment in which there is no cow lynching and no man lynching. We should celebrate unity in diversity".

"Education is something that no thief can take away from you. No government can snatch it from you... It will grow and continue to grow as long as you keep sharing it," Dhankhar said.

MoS for Education Jayant Chaudhary said: "Today we understand the impact of literacy in uplifting society... in bettering health, in empowerment of women, and even connections with the GDP."

He appealed to States to fully adopt ULLAS (Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society) initiative and work towards ensuring 100% literacy by 2030.

## GLIMPSE OF HISTORY

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited the Saudi National Museum and King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives in Riyadh on Sunday. He is on a two-day visit to Saudi Arabia to attend the first India-Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers' meeting. PTI

## Dhankhar urges states to adopt NEP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8



Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar at Vigyan Bhawan, Sunday. Amit Mehra

all languages."

"Everyone should resolve to make at least one person literate in six months, and two people (literates) in a year," he said, adding that literacy liberates individual, helps them discover themselves, and cuts down dependence.

He said it is "time for us to be in mission mode with commitment and passion to ensure 100% literacy at the earliest but I am sure this is achievable sooner than we think."

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## Doval likely to visit Russia for BRICS NSA meet; Ukraine may figure in talks

Putin's remarks that BRICS leaders can play a role comes a month before Russia is scheduled to host the BRICS leaders' summit in Kazan from October 22-24. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva are expected to attend the summit.

NSA Doval has participated in some of the talks at the international level on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Modi has spoken to Putin and "exchanged perspectives on the Russia-Ukraine conflict" and "insights from the visit to Ukraine" last month.

Last week, Putin also made it clear that the Swiss-led peace summit, which was not attended by Russia, will not be considered for the talks. India had refused to sign the joint communiqué adopted at the Swiss summit in June, citing Moscow's absence at the table.

Reporting on his remarks at the plenary session of the 9th Eastern Economic Forum (EEF), US media outlet Politico quoted Putin saying, "If there is a desire of Ukraine to carry on with the negotiations, I can do that."

His remarks came within two weeks of PM Modi's visit to Kyiv where he held talks with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky.

In his talks with Zelensky, Modi had said both Ukraine and Russia should sit together without wasting time to end the ongoing war and that India was ready to play an "active role" in restoring peace in the region.

On Saturday, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, following her talks with the Ukrainian President, said India and China can play a role in finding a solution to the ongoing conflict.

## Gov: Asked Archbishop why Goa's Christian population going down

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPTEMBER 8

GOA GOVERNOR P Sreedharan Pillai on Sunday said at a church event in Kochi that he had asked the Archbishop of Goa to look into why the Christian population in the state had gone down while its Muslim population was up.

"I asked him (Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Goa and Daman) why the Christian population in Goa, which was 36%, is down to 25% now. At the same time, Muslim population, which was only 3%, has grown to 12%. I asked him to investigate it positively. They are now conducting a study into that," he said.

He later told media: "I did not mean any religion. At the time of liberation (of Goa), Christians were the prominent segment. Recently, I read an article that said the Christian population has come down to 25%."

"When the clergy came to meet me, I raised the matter with them. One religion is down and the size of another religion has grown to 12%," he said.

He said "brain drain" could be one of the reasons for the decline in Christian population in the state. "It is against this background that I talked about the increase of one religion and decrease of another," Pillai said.

## Bhagwat may fire another salvo but Sangh, BJP cannot do without each other

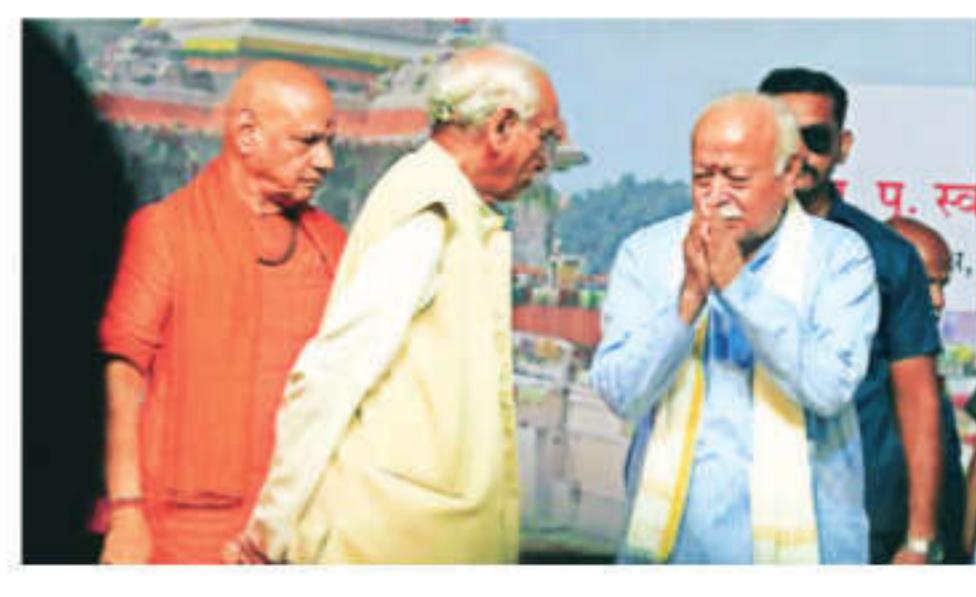
RSS will hardly wish for the return of the Opp to dismantle what the BJP has put in place and the ruling party needs Sangh on its side for the coming Assembly polls

**THE NEERJA CHOWDHURY COLUMN**

Weekly insight into what's changing in national politics – and why

MOHAN BHAGWAT has made yet another of his cryptic statements that is being seen in political circles as yet another criticism of Narendra Modi. This time the RSS sarsanghchalak has alluded, again without saying it in so many words, to the Prime Minister's claim, during the Lok Sabha poll campaign, that he was an "instrument for God to get things done".

Even as Modi has implemented the RSS's core agenda – Ram temple, Article 370 abrogation, triple talaq, moving towards a Uniform Civil Code – RSS leaders have had reservations about his style of functioning, what they call "vyaktiavād" (personal cult) and excessive power in the hands of one leader. During the parliamentary elections, RSS karyakartas did not campaign for the BJP as enthusiastically as in earlier polls. Some



At a meeting in Pune, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had said: 'Let people decide if there's a God in you'. Expressfile

attribute it to the complacency set in by the "400 paar" slogan. Nadda's remarks that the party no longer needed handholding by the Sangh – he said it in an interview to *The Indian Express* – was hardly music to Sangh ears. Yet, neither can the RSS nor can the Sangh do without the party. The RSS will hardly wish for the return of the Congress or the Opposition to dismantle what the BJP has put in place: among other things, people in key posi-

tions in government, bureaucracy and academia to carry forward its ideas and its "civilisational" project.

Admitting that it had differences with the BJP, the RSS said after the Palakkad meeting that these would be sorted out "within the family". The immediate issue before the BJP and the Sangh leadership is who will become the party president after Nadda and Bhagwat's statement is being seen as an attempt to pressure the BJP brass on this.

The RSS, however, surprised everyone in Palakkad when it came out in favour of a caste census. It called for the use of caste data only for "social welfare" and not for electoral politics, something that is not possible. For, economically and socially empowered Dalits, Adivasis and OBCs will naturally demand a greater share in the power structure. Besides, if the OBCs find they are 65% of the population – as was the case in Bihar during the caste survey last year – they will not remain satisfied with just 27%

reservation in government jobs and education institutions.

With its approval of a caste census, the RSS has come to the BJP's rescue. The party was sensing the heat from the Opposition's unrelenting demand for a caste census, which had traction in the Lok Sabha elections. The BJP has to take a call on a caste census. So far it has been ambivalent on it. But, given the rise of the OBCs and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, it is likely going to become increasingly difficult for the BJP, or for that matter other political parties, to resist it. The RSS approval may take the sting out of the Opposition's campaign on it and defang the issue in the coming State elections.

The BJP brass and the Sangh leadership have been worried about the shift of Dalits and OBCs – especially the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) – away from them in the recent elections, particularly in UP, and towards the INDIA alliance. From all accounts, in its centenary year, starting on Vijaydashmi Day this year, the RSS plans to especially reach out to the marginalised communities to again bring

them over to its side.

## Sangh's shift on caste question

India's diversity compelled the Communist parties to accept caste – and not just class – as a basis for analysis. In 2015, Bhagwat called for a review of the reservation policy. As a result, the BJP lost the Bihar election to the "akarshawallas (pro-reservation leaders)", Lalu Prasad and Nitish Kumar. But last year, the RSS chief said unambiguously that reservation should continue as long as there was discrimination in society, if needed even for "200 years".

Is this shift on caste a fundamental one or a tactical step back to address a difficult situation? There is an attempt by the RSS to give a different spin to both caste and religion and situate them within the Hindu fold. Last month, RSS-affiliated weekly *Panchayati* projected caste as a "unifying" force in Hindu society.

The RSS has also shown the BJP a way out of the impasse over the "sub-classification" in SC and ST quotas ordered by the Supreme Court. It is an issue on which parties such as the Congress and the BJP have been non-committal. The dominant castes among Dalits, who have gained from quotas, have come out against sub-classification that will benefit the more deprived amongst the SCs and STs. The smaller parties representing their interests, including the BSP, RPI, and Chirag Paswan's LJP (Ram Vilas), have opposed it.

The RSS has called for creating a consensus on it, which will take time and essentially put the issue on the back burner. A leader associated with the RSS had predicted in a private conversation not long after Modi took over as PM, "The real challenge for Modi in the future will come from the extreme Right." For the moment, Mandate 2024 requires Modi to depend on his NDA allies. And yet, given the need to win the impending state elections, the BJP can ill afford to have a sulking Sangh on its hands.

(Neerja Chowdhury, Contributing Editor, *The Indian Express*, has covered the last 11 Lok Sabha elections. She is the author of *How Prime Ministers Decide*)

## EXPRESS INVESTIGATION

# 2 Goa Ministers, local BJP, Cong leaders — look who benefits from tweak in state land use law that threatens 'green zones'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The company, engaged in agriculture, forestry, fishing and production of crops, also got approval for "correction" of 515 sq m from cultivable land to settlement for another plot in Karapur.

Both applications for correction were received on December 15, 2023. They were corrected and subsequently notified in the Official Gazette on February 15, 2024.

Asked about this, Vishwajit Rane told *The Indian Express*: "It was related to the access road to the property. The main property was converted 25 years ago. But I will have to verify it. The bottom line is that everything has been strictly done as per the guidelines and under the ambit of law."

Asked about concerns that the land use changes could lead to unbalanced development and would facilitate entry of real estate lobbies from outside the state, he said, "Whatever has been done is within the framework of the laws and as per the guidelines. As a minister, it is my job to see that all the rules and regulations are followed. There have been no violations. Before me (my tenure as TCP Minister), under section 16 B amendment, over 7,500 applications for land zone changes were received and over 1,000 were approved. Under the previous regional plan, over 1.5 crore sq m land was sought to be converted in one taluka. Some applications are sub-judice... people have invested in Goa. We cannot stop people from coming here. Goa is a progressive state. The whole idea is to put planning in perspective and we have on-boarded experts and consultants. For big projects, the green certification nod, as per the norms of Indian Green Building Council, will be required. Not a single inch of private forest has been touched."

Vishwajit Rane, son of veteran Congress leader and former chief minister Pratapsingh Rane, quit the Congress and joined the BJP in 2017. He is the BJP MLA from Valpoi and currently holds the portfolios of Forest, TCP, Public Health, Urban Development, and Women and Child Development. It was under his tenure as TCP Minister that the TCP Act was amended. His wife Deviya Rane is the BJP MLA from Poriem.

**Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira:** On August 29, 2023, an application by Sequeira seeking approval for rezoning of 3,817 sq m of a property to a settlement in Salcete's Nuvem – he is the Nuvem MLA – received approval. This property was marked in the Regional Plan 2021 as an orchard with no development slope. It was corrected and notified in the Official Gazette on January 11, 2024. Another application received by the TCP department on May 29, 2023, from real estate firm Tonis Estates and Resorts Pvt Ltd,

Goa's first regional plan, which lays down a decadal road map for land use and development and demarcates zones for agriculture, forests, hills, orchards, industry, settlements, was notified in 1986 and had a horizon period till 2001.

After 1988, section 17 of the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act empowered the government to direct the TCP department to undertake ad-hoc revisions of the regional plan. This meant that people could apply for a zone change and get the land converted from natural cover to settlement and start construction on their property.

From 1988 to 2005, over 2,241 zone changes took place and a majority of changes involved conversion of agricultural land and natural cover. Such piecemeal revisions led to concerns of "chaotic development", with the then Secretary, Town and Country Planning, Jayshree Raghuram, observing in an office note in March 2005 that "conscious effort needs to be made to curb this practice of allowing ad-hoc changes", which has led to "haphazard development"

and "mushrooming of concrete structures with scant regard to planning and land use norms".

"The crux of the problem in this department has been frequent change of land use in individual cases ranging from small plots to thousands of square metres of land, on the advice of the Town and Country Planning Board and with the approval of the government," the note said.

The then Chief Secretary Kiran Dhingra also noted that "relaxations under section 17 of the TCP Act are not well founded in law as they make changes in the regional plan without following provisions of the Act for amendment to the regional plan".

Following this, the practice of ad-hoc changes on requests from private individuals came to an end during the President's Rule in Goa in 2005, when the state government passed an order to stop entertaining any applications for change in land use.

In 2011, a revised regional plan 2011 was published, which came under criticism due to the proposed land use

changes which sought to bring vast areas under settlements. A mass public agitation led to scrapping of the regional plan 2011. Subsequently, the government appointed a task force headed by renowned architect Charles Correa to draft the regional plan 2021. This draft was later notified in segments and has been in force.

In 2018, the Goa assembly passed another amendment to the TCP Act – section 16 B – which allowed people to request the chief town planner for change of zone in the regional plan on a case-by-case basis.

In 2022, the government announced that all recommendations under section 16 B would be scrapped and earlier this year, the cabinet decided to repeal the provision.

In March 2023, the government amended the Goa Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act 1974. The amendment allows conversion of privately owned plots if the owner approaches the department with "inadvertent errors" that need to be "corrected" in Goa's Regional Plan 2021, without public consultation.

the plot and were surprised that it was incorrectly published as natural cover in the notified master plan. We filed an objection with the department in November 2021 and were pursuing this matter for 12 years. A sub-committee to examine such cases under section 17(2) was formed on May 25, 2023. As this was an appropriate body, we presented our matter to the committee. The matter was examined and found fit to be recommended for rectification and the rectification was published on June 15, 2023... We have not done any conversion. I am not an institution. This is our old property."

On whether his being on the expert committee that scrutinises applications was a potential conflict of interest, he said he had recused himself from the meeting due to protocol. "I was not in the meeting that day (when the application was brought for scrutiny). This application was put up much before this committee was formed," he said.

#### Chairman, Dempo Group:

On September 26, 2023, two applications were received from industrialist Shrinivas Dempo, chairman of the Dempo Group of Companies, and Vasudeva Dempo Family Private Trust respectively, for "correction" of 925 sq m of natural cover with no development slope to settlement in Socorro, and 4,935 sq m of orchard to settlement in Ella. The applications were corrected and notified on February 28, 2024. Shrinivas's wife Pallavi Dempo contested the recent South Goa Lok Sabha polls on a BJP ticket. Despite several messages, Shrinivas Dempo was not available for comment.

**Telugu film star, Telangana businessman:** Among the first applications filed and later approved under the amendment, for a change of zoning from orchard to settlement for 7,823 sq m of land for two survey numbers in Morjim, was by Telugu star and RRR actor Kondela Ram Charan. The applications were filed on March 27, 2023, shortly after the Act was amended. The same day, Preetham Reddy Nalla, a prominent businessman from Telangana, sought a "correction" of 57,562 sq m of orchard land to settlement in adjoining areas in Morjim in four survey numbers. All these applications were corrected and notified on April 20, 2023.

**Expert committee member Ralph de Sousa:** On June 15, 2023, an application from a real estate firm M/S De Souza Estate Holdings Private Ltd was approved for correction of 2,750 sq m of natural cover into "settlement" in Sangolda village in Bardez taluka. The firm's director is Ralph de Sousa, a member of the expert committee that scrutinises and verifies proposals for change in land use under Section 17(2). The application was filed on May 3, 2023. When contacted, De Sousa, former president of the Goa Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said: "The regional plan 2001 showed the plot as a settlement area with a small portion as an orchard... In the draft plan (2021), our plot was shown as a settlement and a small portion as an orchard. We decided to develop

14,203. When contacted, Arlekar did not comment on his application but applauded the amendment to the TCP Act. "This is a good step by the government. There are a lot of people in the region who want to repair their old houses or build new ones and convert them into settlements. This amendment will help them. I spoke about this in the Assembly."

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#### Sanatan Sanstha and its affiliate Hindu Janajagruti Samiti:

On October 27, 2023, Sanatan Sanstha's application concerning changing the zone of 9,691 sq m, which was previously earmarked partly settlement and partly orchard with no development slope, was approved to "institutional".

On September 7, 2023, Hindu Janajagruti Samiti's application for "correction" of 6,751 sq m settle-

ment land was approved to institutional.

When contacted, Ramesh Shinde, national spokesperson, Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, said: "An institution for instilling teachings and values of the Hindu faith is supposed to be set up there. This application was filed by our trust in 2019. Since the rule was changed by the government, we reapplied... Changing zone from settlement to institutional, like the case here, has no benefit since only an institution can use this land henceforth."

Said Chetan Rajhans, national spokesperson of Sanatan Sanstha: "There is a spiritual research centre here. In 2019, we put up an application to classify the land as 'institutional' from the viewpoint that people are able to access educational benefits or for research and training purposes in the future. However, in 2023, the law was changed so we were told to re-apply. In 2024, we applied and our application was assessed and changed to institutional."

The list also includes at least 65 people or firms associated with real estate, housing, construction, hospitality and hotels, including many from outside Goa. In fact, over 60 per cent of the land where permission was granted belongs to 20 individuals and companies.

Data shows that since the amendment in March 2023, the TCP department received 1,075 applications for "correction" of zoning out of which 260 have been approved. Of these, at least a third of the area "corrected" is in the coastal villages in Pernem taluka. Other major corrections took place in Bardez, Tiswadi and Salcete talukas.

#### Legal dispute

In June last year, The Goa Foundation, The Khazan Society of Goa (NGO) and Goa Bachao Abhiyan (NGO), filed a PIL in the High Court of Bombay at Goa for an order to quash and set aside Section 17(2) of the TCP Act, challenging the constitutional validity of the provision.

The petitioners submitted that the amendment vested "arbitrary, uncanalised and untrammeled powers" in the government to effect changes in the zoning of plots within the statutory Regional Plan 2021, on the basis of individual requests from private parties claiming to be victims of errors in the zoning.

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The petition listed the state of Goa (through chief secretary Goa, who is also the secretary in charge of Town and Country Planning), TCP department (chief town planner, planning), and several private parties for the first few applications that were approved under the amendment as respondents. The final hearing in the petition started last week. Puneet Kumar Goel, the Goa Chief Secretary, did not respond to calls and messages seeking a comment.

The proposal and the CTP proposal and submits a report with analysis, including a report from a registered professional. The CTP may consult agencies such as PWD, District Collector, agriculture or forest department, depending on the property. The TCP department also conducts a site inspection.

The proposal and the CTP scrutiny report are sent to a nine-member expert committee, headed by the CTP for scrutiny, verification and recommendation.

The expert committee gives its recommendations. The proposal is then submitted for a decision to the Secretary, TCP department and TCP minister. After the government's approval, a fee is levied for correction. Finally, the modification is notified in the Official Gazette and land zoning is changed to reflect the new zone.

**Why do people want to change land use from 'green zone' to 'settlement'?**

Once land is classified as a "settlement", both residential and commercial construction activity can be carried out, enabling the owner to build a house, residential complex, villas or hotels. Paddy fields, orchards, paddy fields, or chards. All this is being compromised for a fee."

Architect and urban planner Tahir Noronha says the rationale of the government's "discrepancies" in the 2021 plan obviate the need for public feedback.

"People are building illegal constructions and roads and applying for 'corrections' claiming that a road existed before the 2011

plan and the planners simply missed it. Hills, water bodies, paddy fields have been sacrificed."

**Why is the Who's Who list important?**

Because the process involves the TCP Department for approvals, scrutiny and final clearances, the fact that the TCP minister, a member of the expert committee, and other politicians, including the Environment Minister, are those who applied for correction, raises issues of conflict of interest and propriety.

As a result, when a plot is re-

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FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## LET IT PLAY

Delay in release of 'Emergency', the film, is disturbing. It points to a troubling ease with powers of censorship

**M**ANY EXCESSES AND horrors marked the 21-month-long interregnum when India's robust democracy was put on hold by the Indira Gandhi regime. They included forced sterilisations, bulldozing of homes, mass arrests of political opponents and pliant compliance, with some notable exceptions, by institutions that were meant to be guardrails against executive transgression and overreach. At its core, the Emergency, 1975-77, was a violation of the social contract enshrined in the Constitution, that makes the rights to life, liberty and free speech inalienable. It is, therefore, a troubling irony that a film certification board constituted by a government whose leaders lay claim to the proud legacy of the arduous struggle that led to the Emergency being revoked should be blocking the release of a movie about that dark period.

Ever since its trailer was released last month, *Emergency* – directed and co-produced by BJP MP Kangana Ranaut who also plays Indira Gandhi in the film – has been at the centre of controversy. As a report in this newspaper revealed, the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) had cleared the film for UA (with parental guidance) certification subject to three cuts and a fact-check on disparaging comments about India and Indians by Richard Nixon and Winston Churchill. The producers agreed to comply except in the case of one cut. Subsequently, Sikh bodies, especially the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), objected to *Emergency* on the grounds that it misrepresents the Sikh community and its leaders, and can cause religious disharmony. A PIL has also been moved in the Punjab & Haryana High Court seeking a ban on the film. The quality of the movie is not the question here – it has not yet been released. The sensitivity of its subject matter, too, cannot be cited as a reason. Politically sensitive subjects have practically turned into a film genre recently, with movies like *Uri: The Surgical Strike*, *The Kashmir Files* and *The Kerala Story*. In fact, some of the aforementioned titles received de facto state support, even though they also invited criticism from other quarters that found their depictions to be flawed and/or in flagrant service of a particular political ideology. It is difficult, then, not to surmise that the CBFC is acting as a tool of a politics that selectively invokes the Emergency as a cautionary tale – this year, the government announced that June 25 would be marked as 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' – but has few qualms about wielding some of the same powers of censorship that ran amok in that period. MP Ranaut has recently run foul of her party over her loose statements about the farmers' protests. The BJP is well within its rights to take disciplinary action against a member within and through party forums. But whether her film is good or bad, offensive to some or art to others – these are calls for the audience to take. The right to freedom of expression can, and must, include the right to make what many may think is offensive – art, by definition, is contested. Ranaut's work as an actor is formidable but surely she knows that too often her party – and other parties – conflate the artist, their art and their politics towards a disquieting silence.

The Information and Broadcasting Ministry and the CBFC would also do well to remember the tale of *Kissa Kursi Ka*. The film satirising Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi was banned and later the destruction of its negatives even became a criminal case. The movie became an example of a thin-skinned polity, the ban serving to do more damage than a release could have. That facet of the Emergency must not be repeated with *Emergency*.

## BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Swachh Bharat Mission shows what is possible by sustained intervention and schemes going beyond their initial targets

**T**HE BUILDING OF around 11 crore individual household latrines under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has averted 60,000-70,000 infant deaths annually, according to a recent study published in the prestigious science journal *Nature*. That shouldn't come as a surprise. Open defecation is a known source of water and food contamination, besides disease transmission through the fecal-oral route. Repeated infections, in turn, lead to dehydration and malabsorption of nutrients. NFHS data shows the percentage of Indian households with no toilet facility falling from 55 to 39 between 2005-06 and 2015-16. The decline was sharper and within a shorter period to 19 per cent in the 2019-21 survey, enabled by subsidised provision of toilets at scale under SBM launched in October 2014 by the Narendra Modi government. There may be questions over official claims of India becoming open defecation-free. But reduction in infant and child mortality consequent to improved sanitation access is consistent with international experience – and India, as the *Nature* study has established.

Moreover, it isn't just early child mortality rates that need to come down. Equally important are stunting (low height-for-age) and wasting (low weight-for-height). These are, again, a result of both inadequate nutrition and poor absorption from recurrent diarrhea, cholera and typhoid attacks caused by contaminated food and water. That's where a national sanitation programme like SBM could have a transformative role along with the Jal Jeevan Mission. The latter, which envisions providing safe drinking water through tap connections to all rural households by 2024, is also being taken up at-scale. The *Nature* study has demonstrated district-level toilet access of 30 per cent and above corresponding with substantial lowering of infant and under-five mortality rates. Similar critical thresholds are possible when SBM's effects are combined with that of universal piped drinking water availability.

The Modi government has made implementation of schemes at population scale one of its key signatures. Some – notably SBM and Jan Dhan – have been successes. Universal access to bank accounts has not only allowed subsidy and welfare payments to be directly transferred to beneficiaries, but also facilitated digital transactions through UPI and other mobile-based protocols. Toilets for all are, likewise, not just about ensuring dignity; they address a major pathway through which millions of Indians are repeatedly exposed to enteric pathogens. But there are, equally, schemes that have been not-so-successful (Soil Health Card) or whose effects aren't yet visible (Jal Jeevan). Ultimately, it's a matter of sustained intervention and schemes going beyond meeting their initial numerical targets.

## FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



## In defence of peaceful protest



SHAHEEN ALAM

In RG Kar case, Court cautions state on putting its might against protestors, urges reframing of citizen action

IN A DISTINCT departure from recent tradition, the Supreme Court (SC) of India chose to acknowledge "nation-wide protests" and address "issues that the protests have brought to the forefront". It initiated *suo motu* proceedings into the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, thus choosing to recognise the "agitations and protests as a moment of national catharsis" and worthy of institutional response. This is an opportunity to revisit the thorny relationship that the courts, and public opinion generally, have had with widespread public protests in the recent past.

In the present case, the popular protests centre on the sexual assault and murder of a trainee doctor inside hospital premises. The gruesome murder was followed allegedly by a series of lapses and procedural breaches by the hospital and the investigating authorities. It was felt that there was an attempt to deflect and evade responsibility, which resulted in a public outcry. It was the brutality of the murderer, and, equally, the perceived obduracy of the authorities that made people angry and brought them onto the streets.

In the first hearing, the court clarified that the incident in the hospital may have been the immediate cause of the *suo motu* proceedings, but it intended to consider wider issues relating to violence at the workplace. The court did not, however, contemplate "intersectionalities" – the point where several "margins" intersect. Life at this intersection, where several forms of discrimination and exclusion overlap, becomes most vulnerable. Imagine vulnerability to sexual assault and access to justice from the point of view of a woman who works in the unorganised sector and is typecast as an "illegal immigrant", who is homeless and has a physical or mental impairment. If there were to be an assault on such a woman, how would public opinion form? Would her alleged status as an "illegal immigrant" overshadow the fact of the sexual assault and lack of any state response? Would protests to demand justice for such a person be deemed anti-national? The court, in this instance, has not included within its ambit rape on the margins and how state and society react to those

instances of violence. But even in terms of the less nuanced view, which examines sexual violence in the mainstream, as a problem of all women, the court has limited itself to a particular context. It has framed issues only in relation to monitoring violence against health-care professionals on hospital premises.

Moreover, the directions seeking to make hospitals safer for health professionals are focused on greater policing and increased surveillance. Frisking and armed guards at hospitals (or universities) is a very particular reaction to the problem of violence. Alternative responses would require informed debates on public health spending, healthcare workers' rights and transparency of treatment protocols. The court has essentially taken a policy decision, preferring enhanced securitisation to other possibilities for systemic change.

However, the SC Order has provided openings on related issues. It validates the importance of media reports in a context where the protesting public cannot trust state narratives. The state's response in the past has often been to discourage reporting from contentious protest sites, even to arrest journalists for trying to incite violence.

But the most important endorsement by the court is towards the legitimacy of peaceful protests. It said repeatedly during the hearing: "Let not the power of the state be unleashed on peaceful protestors. People [are] speaking to the media to communicate their views. Let us deal with them with a great deal of sympathy. It's a time of national catharsis."

This may be our cue to attend to the present constitutional crisis, where illegal and selectively retaliatory action against demonstrators has become normalised. Courts have mostly been ambivalent about aggravated actions by governments against protestors, including demolishing homes and businesses.

As the court cautions the state from putting its might against protestors, it might be a good time to question the forms that such action takes: Sometimes, it simply dismisses a cause as fake or motivated, and chooses not to engage with it (as happened with the farmers' or wrestlers' protests); at other times, the state actively delegitimises protestors as 'biryani eaters', 'urban naxals' and 'andolanjeevi', and follows this up with lathi charges, arrests and prolonged criminal prosecutions.

"biryani eaters", "urban naxals" and "andolanjeevi", and follows this up with lathi charges, arrests and prolonged criminal prosecutions.

The court has also distinguished between "protestors" and the "mob" of hecklers that came to break the protest, and has chastised the police for retreating as goons vandalised property and intimidated protestors.

This chain of events is familiar, too, and akin to vigilante mobs intimidating and sometimes attacking protestors for being "traitors", and the police using these threats as justification to forcibly dismantle protests. Often, in the past, the police has left protestors to the mercy of such mobs, or used disproportionate force themselves, for example attacking students in libraries and hostels. But their kindest cut has been to blame and prosecute protestors for provoking a mob into violence.

The state may, in its defence, try to distinguish "good" protests and protestors from "bad" ones. It might claim that in the latter case, protests were disruptive and not peaceful. But the court's sympathetic treatment, in the present case, of the Indian Medical Association's withdrawal of medical services in protest, which may be perceived as disruptive, provides us space to rethink good/bad protests. It is often the state and statist media that frames them one way or the other, and public opinion is formed on that basis. It is also often the state that makes selective and unsubstantiated allegations about certain protests being in bad faith, violent or disruptive. The courts have been equivocal in their response to disproportionate state action upon protestors based on unproven allegations of violence. Public opinion has been equally uncritical. Perhaps this is an opportunity to have new jurisprudence on the law of protest – one that doesn't judge protests as good/bad on the basis of one's political preferences, or on the basis of the state's dismissal of them, or even on public opinion.

Many protestors remain in jail years after the event. This order sees citizen action differently. It may open up the space for criminal cases against protest leaders to be taken up all together, *suo motu*, and re-examined.

The writer is a Supreme Court advocate



KHINVA JANGID

ISRAEL IS SINKING in the quicksand of the Middle East – the war in Gaza seems to be going nowhere, the hostage deal looks unlikely, Iran-Hezbollah-Houthi are abrasive, there is growing international condemnation and isolation, and long-time allies are tired. Such external challenges have been part of Israeli politics, foreign policy and society for decades. There is now a far more dangerous threat from within: The army and government are at odds about the Gaza war. Yoav Gallant, the defence minister, is speaking against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for abandoning hostages, shifting the goalposts of the war, and not making a political decision about what will come after Hamas in Gaza. Gallant and other security agency heads no longer hide their lack of faith in the government.

There is another immediate cause for concern against the current government and its policies in the West Bank. The army is fighting another mini-war against the Israelis who live in various settlements in the West Bank for attacking and killing the Palestinians. The head of Shin-Bet (the internal intelligence of Israel) has called these attacks Jewish terrorism and asked for the immediate intervention of the Prime Minister against his coalition partners. This is an issue that Netanyahu doesn't want to address because he fears the government's collapse. His coalition partners, like Itamar Ben-Gvir, the current Minister of National Security, keep provoking people to defy the army and the police. He and some other ultra-religious and nationalist leaders speak without any qualms against the two-

## THE WAR WITHIN ISRAEL

Netanyahu's handling of Gaza crisis has led to unprecedented public unrest

Israel fancied itself as a Western, developed, democratic and modern state, and more or less that ambition was fulfilled. Now, the country resembles its regional neighbours with shaky and corrupt leadership, violent protests, erosion of law and order, religious extremism, and perpetual political instability.

state solution and unilaterally change the status quo in Jerusalem over religious places.

These developments are far more destabilising for Israel's national security and its war management in Gaza. In the middle of such domestic chaos came the news of the dead bodies of the hostages in Gaza who were executed by Hamas just before the arrival of the Israeli army. The six hostages survived their captivity for almost 11 months in the tunnels of Gaza and were to be freed if there was a hostage deal in June or July. The news of their deaths moved lakhs of Israelis, who came out in massive protests, around 3,00,000 people in Tel Aviv and 2,00,000 in other cities, against the government this weekend. Israel's largest labour union, Histadrut, called for a general national strike, which shut down almost all sectors of the economy and Israel's only international airport for a day. Histadrut represents close to 1,00,000 government workers (including the diplomats and ambassadors stationed abroad) in Israel. It acted against Netanyahu when he wanted to bring in judicial reforms that were much against the spirit of democracy and institutional checks and balances in March last year. Interestingly, the previous national shutdown occurred after Yoav Gallant, the defence minister, publicly opposed the Prime Minister for dividing the country and the army.

The national strike was only for a day, and the court ordered the union not to extend such a shutdown. However, the Hostage and Missing Families Forum can now get thousands of people on the streets as the public

anger against Netanyahu has been at an all-time high since October 7. He seems more anxious about the growing criticism of his war policy by the army and particularly Gallant. Can he carry on with his maximalist war policy in Gaza? If the military disobeys, can Netanyahu afford to sack the defence minister (the last time he tried, he had to backtrack because of popular support for Gallant)?

Israel is at war with itself in the middle of the ongoing war with Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran. Israelis have grown complacent about political fights between the religious and secular nationalists. They have been disenchanted with political leadership after Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres as they found no one with a vision for a better future or a solution to the conflict with Palestinians. The army remains the last bastion of unity and hope for the Israelis. Could the army take over in Israel for some time? That is not an unusual fate for countries in the Middle East. Israel fancied itself as a Western, developed, democratic and modern state, and more or less that ambition was fulfilled. Now, the country resembles its regional neighbours with shaky and corrupt leadership, violent protests, erosion of law and order, religious extremism, and perpetual political instability. Israel has strong allies when it comes to its war with others, but it is more exposed and vulnerable.

The writer is professor and director, Centre for Israel Studies, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P.Jindal Global University, Sonipat

## SEPTEMBER 9, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

## LD AGAINST ALLIANCE

SPMALAVIYA, Lok Dal general secretary, came out against the proposed alliance or united front as an alternative to the Congress (I) in the coming Lok Sabha elections even though the party president Charan Singh has been holding formal discussions on the proposal with the leaders of the non-communist parties including the Janata, Congress (S), DSP and the Janadari Party.

## ASSAM VOTER ROLLS

ASSAM CHIEF MINISTER Hiteswar Saikia and several of his cabinet colleagues arrived in the

Capital for fresh consultations with the central government on the Election Commission's proposal to treat the 1971 electoral rolls of the state as the basic document for revision of voters' lists. They met Home Minister P V Narasimha Rao and held detailed discussions on the commission's proposals.

## CONGRESS 'TAKEOVER'

FM KHAN, who was persuaded not to undertake a fast at the AICC (I) office, claimed that about 150 Congress (I) members of the Lok Sabha were frustrated over the increasing "takeover" of the party by opportunists and time-servers. Even during the last Parliament

session, many MPs had approached him to call a meeting to discuss the issue. But he had told them that things could be sorted out at the level of PM Indira Gandhi.

## NTR VS BHASKARA RAO

EVEN THOUGH A campaign had been launched against NTR, the Bhaskara Rao group was only willing to withdraw, afraid to strike. Rama Rao apparently had reports of it in the US. He sent back home a close aide, a state intelligence officer – who incidentally was also with Nandini Satpati in Orissa when her government fell – to get an authentic report about the revolt brewing in the party.



# THE IDEAS PAGE

## The hijacking of facts

In its depiction of intelligence and security issues, 'IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack' obfuscates context, misrepresents reality



RAMANATHAN KUMAR

THE HIJACKING OF Indian Airlines flight IC 814 from Kathmandu to Kandahar on Christmas Eve, 1999, which culminated, a week later, in the humiliating release of three jailed terrorists — of whom two were Pakistanis — in exchange for the passengers and crew on board, was a searing experience for India's intelligence, national security and diplomatic establishments.

From the early 1990s, Indian intelligence had been engaged in a protracted, covert war against Pakistan's ISI, which had been exploiting the weaknesses in Nepal's security architecture and the open Indo-Nepal border to mount offensive, plausibly deniable operations against India. This included the infiltration and exfiltration of terrorists trained in Pakistan, smuggling of high-grade explosives and weapons for attacks in India and the infusion into the Indian market of counterfeit Indian currency printed in Pakistan to augment the ISI's war-chest and destabilise the Indian economy. From the mid-1990s, however, unpublicised but effective security cooperation between Nepal and India foiled many of the ISI's designs. The plots disrupted are too numerous to recount. As the 20th century drew to a close, Indian intelligence appeared to be gaining the upper hand in the shadowy battle against their Pakistani adversaries in Nepal.

Then came the hijacking of IC 814 which took the Indian agencies by surprise. That Pakistan, the ISI and its proxies were involved was, of course, not difficult to fathom and it did not take long for the terrorist organisation involved — the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM) — and the principal actors — whose primary motivation was to secure the release of Maulana Masood Azhar, chief propagandist of the HuM incarcerated in a jail in Jammu, to be identified. But the gold standard of intelligence is forewarning that leads to preemption. No amount of *post facto* investigation, however brilliant, is a substitute for foreknowledge and prevention in the intelligence business.

Indian intelligence was unable to prevent the hijacking of IC 814 because, in the months preceding the event, it had temporarily lost access to certain valuable assets and the consequences of the vulnerability thus created, at a time when Pakistan was vigorously pursuing its policy of bleeding India by a thousand cuts, were not adequately anticipated. This is not an unusual phenomenon in the world of intelligence and the assets were revived soon after the event but the damage had been done. That the terrorists had acquired Indian driving licences and passports, which enabled them to accomplish their mission with relative ease, was another bitter pill to swallow. Equally galling was the failure of the national crisis management system that allowed the aircraft to take off from Amritsar where it had been forced to land due to shortage of fuel. The reality that India was friendless in Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban



CR Sasikumar

from 1996 to 2001 when the dominance of Pakistan and the ISI over its protégés was complete was also a far cry from the situation prevailing today.

This is the background and context that has been obfuscated, wittingly or unwittingly, in the Netflix series *IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack* which comes close to being a parody in its cavalier treatment of serious intelligence and security issues. The suggestion that the hijacking was masterminded by Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda or that the plot originated in Afghanistan, rather than Pakistan, verges on the absurd. HuM leader, Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil, a prominent asset of Pakistan's ISI, was doubtless a signatory to the famous fatwa issued by bin Laden's International Islamic Front in 1998 against the "Jews and Crusaders" but, unlike Masood Azhar's closest associates, the Al Qaeda leadership had no interest in securing the release of the HuM's portly propagandist who subsequently went on to form his own organisation after falling out with Khalil over control of the HuM's assets. Speculative reports in the Pakistani media about the presence of the Al Qaeda-Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)-HuM linked Pakistani terrorist, Amjad Farooqi among the hijackers cannot be taken as an established fact, absent any corroborating evidence. The depiction of the R&AW representative in Kathmandu and the assertion that Al Qaeda smuggled 17 kg of RDX into the aircraft in the Nepalese capital both beggar belief. And, finally, as the series itself acknowledges, the names of the Pakistani terrorist Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar of the Kashmiri

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terrorist organisation Al Umar Mujahideen, were specifically included in the list of terrorists whom the hijackers wanted to be released at the behest of the ISI which spared no effort to twist the knife once India's helplessness became obvious.

The shortcomings of films and series like *IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack* which claim to be "inspired by real events", but end up presenting a misleading and distorted version of reality, are related to a common malaise: Half-baked research. This, in turn, raises the related issue of the progressively tighter restrictions imposed on the retired personnel of our intelligence and security agencies who have been barred from writing on subjects pertaining to their specialised domains without prior vetting by the organisations in which they served. These blanket restrictions are counterproductive, for they discourage the knowledgeable from educating the public on matters in which the latter have a legitimate interest. Short of divulging sensitive operational details, especially sources and methods, the disclosure of which is likely to have an adverse impact on national security, retired personnel of our intelligence and security establishments should be encouraged to express their views, perspectives and unique insights in public without inhibition. A policy to the contrary risks impoverishing the public discourse on matters vital to our national security.

*The writer is a former special secretary in the Research & Analysis Wing. Views expressed are personal*

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It is incumbent on our leaders to better familiarise themselves with LGBTQIA+ policies so that they are not out of step with their younger and more progressive electorate and with the rest of the world."

— THE KATHMANDU POST

## Five sutras for digital infrastructure

As the digital world becomes increasingly complex, need for dependable solutions has never been greater. Citizen Stack fills the gap



AMITABH KANT AND MADHUMITHA PREMA RAMANATHAN

platform design ensures that it can cater to the diverse needs of a vast population while maintaining stringent security protocols to protect user data and privacy. By acting as an auditor, it guarantees that the DPIs it certifies are reliable, secure, and beneficial to the public.

In an era where digital solutions are proliferating and promises abound, the ability to identify a truly reliable and original platform is crucial. Citizen Stack offers this assurance. It is not just another DPI solution; it is the gold standard against which other solutions can be measured.

To delineate what constitutes a "good DPI", Citizen Stack has formulated five guiding principles, or *sutras*. These principles serve as the benchmarks for evaluating the integrity and efficacy of DPI solutions.

One, uphold the citizens' relationship with the market and the state. Ensure that the digital infrastructure is free from adverse influences that could distort this relationship.

Two, safeguard citizen empowerment and privacy. Implement a consent-based system for sharing data, prioritising individual empowerment and data privacy.

Three, prevent lock-in by competing monopolies. Ensure interoperability to prevent citizens from being trapped by monopolistic entities.

Four, techno-legal regulation. Combine public technology and law to govern ethical tech use, ensuring innovation, security, and societal rights in the digital age.

Five, public plus private innovation. Promote innovation through public and private sector collaboration, while avoiding domination by corporate interests. The future roadmap should be driven by public good, not corporate monopolies. Technology implementation should prevent exploitation by state or corporate actors.

These guiding principles are non-negotiable. A DPI must meet all these criteria to be classified as a "good DPI". While countries may choose to adopt DPIs that fall short on one or more of these principles, Citizen Stack remains committed to advocating for DPIs that uphold these high standards.

Citizen Stack represents a commitment to excellence in digital infrastructure, mirroring the trust and reliability found in the most respected and time-tested practices.

In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital public infrastructure, it stands out as a beacon of integrity and innovation, ensuring that digital solutions serve the public good while adhering to the highest standards of security and inclusivity.

As we advance into an increasingly digital future, the principles and practices exemplified by Citizen Stack will be crucial in building and maintaining the trust necessary for widespread adoption and success.

Whether through the harmonious balance achieved via India's ancient gift of yoga or the modern offering of digital public infrastructure — both selflessly given to the world — authenticity, quality and reliability serve as essential foundations that underpin our societies. India is dedicated to enhancing this model of fidelity for the benefit of the global community.

Kant is India's G20 Sherpa and former CEO, NITI Aayog and Ramanathan is a DPI advocate for Citizen Stack

## Government is not the nation

Constitution helps we, the people, to distinguish between the two



MANOJ KUMAR JHA

JUST TWO YEARS short of the country's 80th Independence Day is perhaps the right occasion to think through the contemporary understanding and more importantly, wilful misunderstanding of patriotism in our part of the world. It is also an occasion to unpack the aggressive clamour around *deshbhakti* but displaying little care about the substance within it.

The historian Eric Hobsbawm argued that nations without a past are contradictions in terms. What makes a nation is its past. The justification for a nation against others is derived primarily from the past. Hobsbawm can be relied upon to know this. After all, it is historians who produce the past. However, Hobsbawm probably could not foresee that once produced, the nationalism project moves beyond historian(s) and their craft's control. He probably could not also imagine in his long engagement with academia and people's movements that a time would come when politicians with counterfactual inclinations would emerge the world over and prop up their had-it-so version of history against established historical facts.

My aim here is not to get into the nitty-gritty of a historian's craft but to share some of my own insights into how patriotism is being imagined and performed in these fraught times. In India, the modern nationalism project took shape during the freedom struggle. It was moulded by the values that inspired the movement — truth, non-violence, liberty, inclusiveness, and progress.

Though one could go on and add a few dozen more values, ideas and impulses, it is important to recognise that these values were not impositions from above but that they prevailed through countryside meetings, street conversations, political rallies, and demonstrations for over five decades. These are also the values that shone through in the Constituent Assembly debates. Justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity formed the constellation that lit up the early hours of the morning sky over the young republic.

The Constitution gave the people an "idea of India" that was not singular but a toolbox of ideas of India. It never believed in majoritarian ideas of nationalism because the civilisational ethos of India always remained antithetical to such interpretation. Using this toolbox of ideas, we, the people of India, were able to forge a modern and progressive nation, bringing together extraordinarily diverse communities. Our love and affection for the nation so produced is patriotism.

With the Constitution in our hands, we, the people of India, know how to distinguish the nation from the government. The Constitution gave us a clear and unmistakable understanding that we are sovereign. Whenever a government elected by us sought loyalty and devotion, we, the people of India, were rightly alarmed. Even when it was posed as a test of our patriotism, we, the people of India, did not flinch once before renouncing such efforts. As and when efforts have been made to dilute or take away our rights, we, the people of

India, have not shied away from the path of democratic resistance. Many of us need no help to remember the tactics used during the Emergency. Similar tactics are being employed now by the current regime. Sometimes shouted through megaphones, sometimes as dog whistles. Sometimes from television studios and at other times through online whisper networks.

A spirit of nationalism, guided by particular ideals and values, won us our freedom. We created a nation. However, patriotism sustains us. Patriotism, felt as a deep love for our society and cultures, makes us a better people. Patriotism, manifested as a longing for our shared future, makes us behave better.

This regime has, unfortunately, turned nationalism into a 24/7 spectacle whipping up the baser instincts of people. The game masters work a frenzy not only among the willing and the reluctant players but also among the spectators. The objective of this game is simple — unquestioning loyalty and total submission. This is opposed to the patriotic values of the freedom struggle which defined our nation but stay true to the shape of electoral politics. For spectators, it also provides endless distraction from constitutional ideals and values.

There are no prizes for the winners either. While the players are immersed in the game world, a family member may have lost their job, a qualifying exam paper may have leaked, and the size of the thali may have shrunk. But the penalties are aplenty. Following one or the other draconian law,

the government will conflate questioning it with critiquing the nation and put such individuals behind bars.

In the 78th year of our independence, we must have a football field of a distance between "loving your government" and "loving your nation". Holding the government accountable to the people is the hallmark of true patriotism. By questioning and challenging wrong and arbitrary government actions, citizens ensure that their country remains true to the ideals and values that shaped this nation. The first step in this direction would be to not accept propaganda by the government at face value.

If the government is inefficient, corrupt, or harmful, it undermines national interests. A partisan and divisive government is not interested in the well-being of the nation; it is interested in trimming the nation down to a size to fit its narrow ideology. By working against the ideals and values that forged this great nation, it is undoing the nation itself. We must acknowledge as a collective that a true patriot cannot wish harm on some members of we, the people of India. True patriots care deeply about the well-being and progress of their nation, the whole nation.

Let us pay heed to our first prime minister who warned that majoritarianism in the cloak of nationalism is a dangerous ploy which has the potential to devour the foundational values of the nation itself.

*The writer is Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, Rashtriya Janata Dal*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### TIES THAT BENEFIT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Facing East' (IE, September 7). The boost to a high-level partnership with Singapore reflects India's rising economic heft and place in world affairs. Adding a new dimension to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's eastward trip was a visit to oil-rich Brunei, which give impetus for collaborative efforts in the crucial semiconductor sector, which is going to define how the world is going to move forward in several break-through technology areas. Additional agreements signed during PM Modi's visit, on digital technologies, education, and health, underscores the multifaceted nature of this partnership.

SS Paul, Noida

### FUTILE ACTIONS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Insurgency at its end' (IE, September 7). With 159 Maoist cadres having been killed in anti-Naxalite operations by security forces in 2024, this year has been a major setback to the left-wing extremist movement in India. The success in taking on Maoists is also a consequence of the weakening base of support for the insurgents as intelligence is a vital component of the operations. The insurgency and the counter-operations have taken a huge toll on the tribal population. Far from reaching any of its lofty

goals, the Indian Maoist movement has only brought misery for those whom the insurgents claim to fight for. The earlier they realise the futility of their ideology and work towards using spaces in the Indian democratic system to articulate concerns, the better it would be for the tribals who are caught in this crossfire between security forces and the Maoists.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

### INDO-CHINA DISPUTE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'At a strategic crossroads' (IE, September 7). China's hegemony and bullying tactics are frequently deployed to further its policy of expansionism and domination. Pakistan remains in tow to harm India's interests at LoC and the international fora. Though China professes that it will resolve the disputed issues by mutual cooperation and mutual respect, it does not move in that direction. More than twenty meetings have ended without any conclusion. India is in the process of strengthening the LAC and it may take three years to match the Chinese. So long as the trade balance, one to ten, is heavily tilted in China's favour, it won't care to attend to cool other flashpoints. The situation is complex, both hostile neighbours need to be reined in in the strategic, economic, political, social and diplomatic spheres. Subhash Vaid, New Delhi

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# E. EXPLAINED

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2024

## Mahmudabad & Musharraf's family land: 'enemy property' in India

AJOY SINHA KARPURAM

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

A PARCEL of land in western UP that belonged to the family of former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf is up for sale under The Enemy Property Act, 1968. In a notice erected at the plot, the Union Home Ministry has said that the "enemy property" of around 13 bighas of land in Kotla Bangar village in Baghpat district is open for e-auction until September 12 midnight.

**What is enemy property?**

The Defence of India Act, 1962 defines an enemy as "any person or country committing external aggression against India", any country that is "assisting the country committing such aggression", as well as any person who belongs to either country.

Under Section 29 of the Act, the Centre or states can "requisition" any immovable property for the purpose of "securing the defence of India, civil defence, public safety, maintenance of public order or efficient conduct of military

operations, or for maintaining supplies and services essential to the life of the community".

The requisitioning can be done only for the period required for any of these purposes, unless the government legally acquires the property in return for compensation (Sections 36 and 37).

At the time of the 1965 and 1971 wars, some people moved to Pakistan from India. Under the Defence of India Act, 1962, the Government of India took over the properties and companies of those who took Pakistani nationality, and vested them with the Custodian of Enemy Property for India. The same was done for property left behind by those who went to China after the 1962 Sino-Indian War.

The Tashkent Declaration of 1966, said India and Pakistan had "agreed to discuss the return of the property and assets taken over by either side in connection with the conflict". But the Pakistani government disposed of all such properties in that country in 1971.

**How did India deal with enemy property?**

The Enemy Property Act, enacted in 1968,

provided for the continuous vesting of enemy property in the Custodian of Enemy Property for India, a department under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

This property attains a unique status, as it cannot be transferred by the original owners who have been deemed an "enemy", "enemy subject" or "enemy firm" under the Defence of India Act. The Custodian has the power to transfer the property, enter into contracts over its use, and collect rent from any person occupying it.

In response to the sale of properties by Pakistan in 1971, India took control of all enemy property under the Enemy Property Act and the 1971 Rules. In 2017, Parliament passed The Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2016, which amended the 1968 Act and The Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971.

The new law expanded the definitions of "enemy subject" and "enemy firm" to include the legal heir and successor of the "enemy" even if they were citizens of India or any coun-

try that is not an enemy (legal heirs who were citizens of India were initially excluded from the definition); and the succeeding firm of an enemy firm, irrespective of the nationality of its members or partners.

The amended law provided that enemy property would continue to vest in the Custodian even if the enemy, enemy subject or enemy firm ceased to be an enemy due to death, extinction, winding up of business, or change of nationality; or if the legal heir was a citizen of India or a citizen of a country which was not an enemy.

The Custodian can, with the Centre's approval, dispose of enemy properties, and the government may issue directions to the Custodian for this purpose.

**Why were these amendments brought?**

The Statement of Objects and Reasons in the Bill said: "Of late, there have been various judgments by various courts that have adversely affected the powers of the Custodian and the Government of India as provided under the Enemy Property Act, 1968. In view of

such interpretation by various courts, the Custodian is finding it difficult to sustain his actions under the Enemy Property Act, 1968."

One major judgment that the amendment sought to negate was passed in the case of the estate of the erstwhile Raja of Mahmudabad in UP, who owned several large properties in Hazratganj (Lucknow), Sitapur, and Nainital.

**What was the Mahmudabad case?**

The Raja left India in 1957 and took Pakistani citizenship; his wife and son Mohammed Amir Mohammad Khan, however, stayed as Indian citizens. Under the 1968 Act, the Raja's estate was declared enemy property. After the Raja died, his son staked claim to these properties.

On October 21, 2005, after a long legal battle, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Mahmudabad heir. The court held that ownership of the property does not vest with the Custodian, who only takes it over for the purposes of possession, control, and management.

It held that the Raja's son, as an Indian citizen, was entitled to the entire property, which would then cease to be enemy property.

The verdict opened the floodgates for other pleas in which genuine or purported relatives of persons who had migrated to Pakistan produced deeds of gift claiming they were the rightful owners of enemy properties.

On July 2, 2010, the UPA government promulgated an Ordinance that restrained courts from ordering the government to divest enemy properties from the Custodian. The 2005 SC order was thus rendered ineffective, and the Custodian again took over the Raja's properties. A Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 22, 2010, but it could not be passed during the term of the 15th Lok Sabha, and lapsed.

On January 7, 2016, The Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Ordinance, 2016, was promulgated, which was then replaced by the Bill that became law in 2017. In February 2017, the Supreme Court refused to interfere with the Ordinance.

On February 22, 2024, a Bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan allowed the Lucknow Municipal Corporation to collect property tax on properties owned by the Raja of Mahmudabad, which were vested with the Custodian under the Enemy Property Act.

### EXPLAINED LAW

### EXPLAINED ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

## Use of AI in warfare

A global summit on the responsible use of AI in the military domain begins in Seoul today, with focus on shaping global norms. India has so far been in 'watch-and-wait' mode in this critical global debate

### EXPERT EXPLAINS

C RAJA MOHAN



PresVu is a pharmaceutical intervention for presbyopia, also corrected using glasses or LASIK surgery. [X.com/EntodPharma](http://X.com/EntodPharma)

who have inflammation of the iris. Regular use of PresVu may lead to itching and redness, eyebrow pain, and muscle spasms in the eyes.

**Is this a novel therapy?**

Although Entod's claims make it seem that PresVu is a new therapy, pilocarpine, the main compound used in the eye drop, has been available in India for decades now.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Dr Mahipal Sachdeva, chairman of Centre for Sight, a chain of eye hospitals and clinics in India, said, "While pilocarpine has been in use as the first line therapy for cataract, its property of temporarily improving the depth of focus is something that has been known for quite some time. The drug has been tried for presbyopia in other countries, and civil society members will participate."

The United States Food and Drug Administration approved a pilocarpine eye drop for presbyopia in 2021.

In India, the government decides on the ceiling price of pilocarpine in 4% and 2% concentrations. PresVu has pilocarpine in 1.25% concentration.

The company also said that PresVu uses "advanced dynamic buffer technology" – essentially, a base solution – to adapt to the pH level (a scale used to measure how acidic or basic a substance is) of tears. This ensures that the eye drop has "consistent efficacy and safety for extended use, keeping in mind that such drops will be used for years at a stretch".

PresVu is a prescription-only medicine and, according to doctors, its impact is unlikely to last beyond four to six hours. It should not be used by people

AS THE use of artificial intelligence (AI) by the world's militaries grows, the political effort to regulate the way the revolutionary technology is used in warfare is growing too. If the ongoing wars in Ukraine and Gaza are emerging as "AI labs" for warfare, there is also a diplomatic push to establish at least some general norms on how to limit the dangers of its military use.

India, which has been actively engaged with the issues of development and safe use of AI in the civilian domain, has stood apart from the emerging global debate on AI in military use. But as new global frameworks for 'AI arms control' begin to emerge, Delhi must shape the process rather than stay away from it.

**REAIM, beyond LAWS**

The summit on Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM), beginning in Seoul, South Korea, on Monday is part of the new global diplomacy to shape global norms on the military applications of AI. The summit is being co-hosted by Kenya, the Netherlands, Singapore, and the United Kingdom. Various governments, international organisations, tech companies, and civil society members will participate.

This is the second iteration of the summit; the first took place in February 2023 in The Hague. Until recently, the debate on military AI had been focused on autonomous weapons, the so-called 'killer robots'. The fear that the conduct of warfare would be taken up by computers and algorithms had generated calls for control. Keeping humans in the decision-making loop on the use of force has been a major objective of this discourse.

The issues relating to lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS) have been discussed within a group of governmental experts since 2019 at the United Nations in Geneva. Last December, the United Nations General Assembly took up for the first time the question of LAWS, and called on the Secretary General to gather the views of member states on addressing the ethical, legal, and operational challenges. The report is expected to be presented at the UNGA session later this month.

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"Unmanaged" waste is what ends up in the environment either as debris – polluting every conceivable place on Earth from the heights of Mount Everest to the bottom of the Marianas Trench in the Pacific Ocean – as a result of plastic burning in open, uncontrolled fires. The latter generates fine particulates and toxic gases like carbon monoxide which have been linked to heart disease, respiratory disorders, cancer, and neurological problems.

Of the unmanaged waste, roughly 43% or 22.2 mt is the form of unburned debris and the rest, some 29.9 mt, is burnt either in dumpsites or locally.

**Problem of 'unmanaged' waste**

The study, carried out by University of Leeds researchers Joshua W Cottam, Ed Cook, and Costas A Velis, estimated that around 251 mt of plastic waste is produced every year, enough to fill up roughly 200,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Roughly a

fifth of this waste – 52.1 mt – is "emitted" into the environment, unmanaged.

The authors define "managed" waste as what is collected by municipal bodies, and either recycled or sent to a landfill. Most plastic waste meets the latter fate.

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**North-South divide**

A trend that the study identified was that there is a notable Global North and Global

### AI in wars, from detection to strikes

## GAZA



Damaged building after an Israeli airstrike on Khan Younis in Gaza on Dec. 1, 2023. *The New York Times*

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) allegedly used AI-based programmes "Lavender" and "The Gospel" to detect and strike suspected operatives of the militant group Hamas. A report from Israel-based +972 Magazine and news website Local Call said that IDF officers often acted as "rubber stamps" in greenlighting strikes. The IDF denied such capabilities, saying the system was "simply a database... to cross-reference intelligence sources".

## From The Hague to Seoul

The REAIM process widened the debate beyond 'killer robots' to a broader range of issues by recognising that AI systems are finding ever greater application in warfare. While AI has long been used by leading militaries for inventory management and logistical planning, its use in intelligence, surveillance, and battlefield reconnaissance has significantly expanded of late.

Major militaries see the capacity of AI to transform the collection, synthesis, and analysis of vast amounts of data from the battlefield as useful in raising situational awareness, increasing the time available for decision-making on use of force, enhancing precision in targeting, limiting civilian casualties, and increasing the tempo of warfare. Many critics have warned that these presumed attractions might be illusory and dangerous.

The proliferation of the so-called AI decision-making support systems (AI-DSS) and

their implications are among the issues now being debated under the REAIM process. The Hague summit called for continuing dialogue, and the second summit hopes to codify a consensus measure. The summit's three-fold objective is to understand the implications of military AI on global peace and security, implement new norms on its use, and develop ideas on long-term global governance of AI in the military domain.

**Focus on responsible use**

Notably, the REAIM process has moved away from the idea that the AI revolution in military affairs can be reversed and abolished. Instead, it is calling for "responsible use". The REAIM process is one of the many initiatives on promoting responsible AI – national, bilateral, plurilateral, and multilateral.

On the last day of The Hague summit, the United States issued a unilateral draft political declaration on the responsible use of AI

and formalised it in November 2023. In 2020, Washington issued national guidelines for responsible military use of AI by its armed forces.

The US also encouraged its NATO allies to adopt similar norms. NATO's 2021 strategy identified six principles for the responsible military use of AI and unveiled a set of guidelines for its forces in July. The objective is to "accelerate" the use of AI systems for military gains in a "safe and responsible" manner.

Simply put, we are going to see more AI in warfare than less; that comports with the historic trend that all new technologies will eventually find military applications. AI is no exception. The US is also conducting a bilateral dialogue with China on the subject, especially on limiting its possible implications for nuclear deterrence.

**The world, India, and China**

The US introduced a resolution on the responsible use of AI at the UNGA earlier this year, co-sponsored by 123 countries and adopted by consensus. The REAIM process is aimed at a more granular discussion and building an international coalition in developing global norms. The US is also reaching out to countries in the Global South to win their support for the new AI initiative.

On its part, Delhi has been in a 'watch-and-wait' mode. It is examining issues of substance and their long-term significance as it observes but holds back from full involvement. India had not endorsed the "call to action" issued by The Hague summit and it remains to be seen if it supports a blueprint for global AI action, expected to be unveiled in Korea. Delhi, however, can't afford to remain a passive by-stander in this profoundly consequential global debate.

Beijing, in contrast, has been at the forefront of the strategic as well as regulatory discourse. Its military analysts talk about the role of AI in "intelligised warfare". In 2021, China issued a White Paper outlining its approach on regulating AI in military. It also supported the "call to action" at The Hague.

India's bitter experience with nuclear arms control, where political indecisiveness and ideological hesitations cost the nation dearly, is a reminder that it is easier to shape the global normative architecture in the design phase than change it after the new rules are established.

(The writer is a visiting research professor at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, and a contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express)

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## ON RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA

Nobody should want an unstable relationship with one of the principal countries of the globe, and I sense that India, too, is looking for a greater level of stability in its relations with China



**Shubhajit Roy:** You've spent a year in the country. Could you give us a sense of how the relationship between India and Australia has moved?

We are at a very high point in the bilateral relationship with India. The highest point we've ever been. My Prime Minister sent me here to keep up that momentum. There are three underlying drivers of this bilateral relationship.

The first is that now Australia and India share strategic alignment. We have always been friends but that friendship has gone up a very big notch in recent years. It's also largely focused on the way in which we seek to shape the future of the Indo-Pacific region. We both share anxieties about some of the directions in it, and share a very clear vision as to the way we want our region to run.

Second is the economy. With India being the fifth biggest economy in the world, which is growing between 7-8 per cent per annum, everyone is bound to take an interest in it, but we're a bit special because we have strategic alignment and we are a very complementary economy. We produce things that India needs and India produces things we need. Whether it's energy to drive the next phase of Indian growth, materials and minerals – especially critical minerals to help India drive its effort in the green energy supply chain – or whether it's job-ready training to those 20 million Indians, who turn 18 each year, India has quality labour. This is very important for exports to our country.

The third underlying driver is the human bridge. Nearly a million people of Indian origin live in Australia. It's the fastest growing community in Australia.

We have very good relations between our leaders and have set up plans, including a comprehensive strategic partnership, but these three underlying drivers will put us in a very good spot.

**Shubhajit Roy:** China has been seen as a threat and its presence has not been seen as benign in the region. Australia has faced those challenges, and India is facing the same challenges. Do you think there is still a convergence between India and Australia, with regard to China, after the Labour government came to power?

I think there's increasing convergence, actually. What has changed is that we have stabilised our relationship with China and have removed a large proportion of trade restrictions and re-established engagement, including at the highest levels. Nobody should want an unstable relationship with one of the principal countries of the globe, and I sense that India, too, is looking for a greater level of stability in its relations with China.

What has not changed is our focus on what concerns us in the region. We have a region that is highly contested, where flashpoints could give rise to catastrophic conflict. The main purpose of Australian foreign and security policy is to shape a region where conflict is not a feature and where the underlying effervescence of the Indo-Pacific in people, in the economy, is able to drive greater prosperity. India is a key partner with us.

There are many points of contact between Australia and China and we have a relationship which is now stable and in many ways good, but there are things that China is doing in our region that we do not appreciate. China is undergoing the largest military modernisation seen on the planet since World War II. That is happening without a public clarification of what its purpose is. We would like to have that transparency. China is involved in activities in the South China Sea that are illegal and dangerous. We do not welcome that.

**Shubhajit Roy:** Do you think China is deterred by this sort of coalition of like-minded countries, the Quad?

The Quad isn't directed against any particular country. It is focused on what it is for. It's for a region that is peaceable, stable, where countries large and small are able to exercise their sovereignty. We want a region where no one is dominated. The Quad is also delivering public goods, which is demonstrating to the countries of our region that we are making investments in this being the sort of secure and prosperous region we want. There are investments in maritime domain awareness, vaccine technology, infrastructure, undersea cables and health security.

I led the operationalisation of our Indo-Pacific strategy. One of the key aims of that was a deeper relationship with India but another key aim was transforming our relationship with the United States so that it had a very clear focus on our own region.

**Shubhajit Roy:** There has been concern in some quarters that the Quad has lost

## WHY PHILIP GREEN

Australian High Commissioner to India for just over a year, Philip Green has been exploring possibilities for further strengthening ties between the two countries. One of the senior most diplomats in the Australian Foreign Service, he has previously been High Commissioner to four

countries – South Africa, Kenya, Singapore and Germany. He was also International Advisor to Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2009-10. He has been instrumental in shaping and implementing the Indo-Pacific strategy of the Australian Government as well as the Quad in the early years.



## ON SIKH SEPARATISM IN INDIAN DIASPORA

It is normal in Australia to exercise the right of peaceful protest, but where those demonstrations turn violent, affect the dignity of a valued nation like India, we draw a line

# 'We have a region where flashpoints could lead to catastrophic conflict'

Australian High Commissioner to India Philip Green on the Indo-Pacific region, economic ties between India and Australia and strengthening defence and security partnership. This session was moderated by Shubhajit Roy, Diplomatic Editor, *The Indian Express*



Australian High Commissioner to India Philip Green (right) in conversation with Shubhajit Roy on August 8. Gajendra Yadav

**steam after the Quad Leaders' Summit couldn't take place earlier this year because Joe Biden wasn't available. Do you think the Leaders' Summit is something that injects energy? We still have six months left for it to happen.**

I would firmly rebut your imagination that the Quad has somehow lost steam. It has only intensified. My government has only intensified its focus in the Quad over the last year or so. I sense from none of the partners any reduction in their commitment to this forum. There are a lot of things going around in the world, not all of them in the Indo-Pacific. The leaders of these four countries are busy, so finding time for them all to be together is not simple. The Quad Summit for this year has many months to take place, and I note that the foreign ministers recommitted to a Quad Summit this year at their meeting in Japan.

**Shubhajit Roy: Do you think the current situation, where Russia appears to have a stronger hand on the battlefield, gives an impression that countries like China would be emboldened?**

The very firm position of my government is that we condemn Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. Invasion of one country by another is always unacceptable, but in this case we have a larger country invading a smaller country. We have a country that is a member of the permanent five of the UN Security Council, who under the UN Charter is given special responsibility for maintaining peace and security. We have a country which has not respected the boundaries of its neighbour. We are concerned about that instance, and we're also concerned about any case in which a larger country would seek to use its force against another. Our key ambition for our region is where no country is dominating and all countries are able to exercise their sovereignty in full.

The focus of our country is to support Ukraine so as to put it in a position to end the war on its own terms. I was deeply involved myself as ambassador in Germany. Australia has been very generous to Ukraine in the provision of military equipment and training to try to put Ukraine in the best possible position to end this war on its own terms.

**Shubhajit Roy: Do you think the recent assassination of Hamas leaders has derailed any chance of a peace deal, hostage deal or ceasefire deal in the Israel-Hamas conflict?**

I don't think it has. The principal concern right now is to avoid a wider conflict that would be devastating for the region

and have a potentially huge impact on all of us through our economies. The immediate activity that Australian diplomacy is engaged in is through our direct contact with the deep partnership we have with Israel, but also engagement with authorities in Tehran and Beirut to try to avoid a wider escalation.

We need to see a ceasefire and Australia has strongly supported the US ceasefire effort, which is now being backed by the UN Security Council. The impact of this conflict in Gaza has been devastating. We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation. A ceasefire is a first step towards building peace and security. But, of course, a ceasefire can't just be one way. Hamas's terrorist activities have to stop and that organisation has to be dismantled, so it can never again undertake the sort of heinous crime that it undertook late last year.

**Shubhajit Roy: In the India-Australia defence and security partnership, what are the broad contours of the defence relationship that are forward-looking?**

We are trying to normalise and make more frequent and ordinary the sort of engagement that we've been doing together. It's important to do new things but my defence adviser keeps telling me it's important to do them over and over again until they become normal in our systems. So there's a vast amount that is happening in terms of military exercises. The Indian contingent has just come back from our major exercise, Pitch Black. Malabar is just around the corner, on October 8 and 9, and AustraHind is later this year in Pune. It's also important that we do a lot more exchanges between our personnel, so it becomes routine and natural for Australian and Indian officers and troops to be operating in unison.

I am particularly focused on the question of maritime domain awareness in the North East Indian Ocean. This is a vital strategic waterway, the opening to the choke points of the straits which lead from the Indian Ocean into the South China Sea. Australia and India share a deep strategic interest in this field. The truth of it is that neither of us have the capacity to understand what is happening in this crucial waterway. More sharing of information is required, and not just between Australia and India, our Quad partners are also part of this.

**Sukpal Sharma: After the war, India's crude oil purchases from Russia have shot up and we've had different kinds of reactions from the global community. Where does Australia stand on this booming trade relationship between Russia and India?**

We know that India has a different approach to dealing with Russia than Australia's. That approach has a lot of historical antecedence, which we don't share. It has a lot of very current defence significance for India, which we understand. Our approach is different. We think that the sort of activity being undertaken by Russia in Ukraine should be condemned. This is an area of discussion between my government and the Government of India. I don't propose to have those discussions in a public forum. Our stance, clearly stated, is that we decry and condemn Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

**Aggam Walia: India and Australia are collaborating in strengthening the critical mineral supply chain. What role do you see India playing in these partnerships beyond just being a consumer of critical minerals?**

**ON A FULL-FLEDGED FTA BETWEEN INDIA AND AUSTRALIA**

There's a very strong case for further opening of our economies to generate that complementary supply chain... There will be another round of negotiations soon



This is a supply chain between Australia and India that has huge significance for the future... I'm working G2G (government to government). There is a partnership between the Australian and Indian governments through Critical Minerals Office and KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Limited), which is designed to identify critical mineral deposits in Australia that can be pre-qualified for possible investment or off-take by the Indian government and non-government organisations.

Separately, I'm engaged with major Indian industrialists looking for critical minerals off-take directly with Australian institutions. The supply chain is complex. It has five elements. You mine lithium, you transform it into lithium hydroxide, which is processed into cathode active material, that's then available for cells, and the fifth step is batteries. At the moment, Australia mines lithium and either exports it or transforms it into lithium hydroxide and exports that. On the Indian side, it is either importing batteries or cells. My ambition is that Australia and India together can manage this whole supply chain. The natural way for that to happen is the processing of lithium hydroxide in Australia, which can then be shipped to India for transformation into cathode active material and onto cells and batteries. That's not something that's going to take place in a month. That's a lot of industrial capability to bring together. That's what the Australian government wants to see occur with India.

**Shubhajit Roy: The issue of Sikh separation, Khalistan, has figured in some parts of the Indian diaspora. How does Australia tackle this issue?**

This is not a high-level problem for our multicultural society. We've been through waves of migration from every continent, and in many of those communities there are divergences within the community. We have systems to deal with it. For us, harmony between social groups is very important. Our multicultural authorities, police, security and intelligence authorities are very alert to problems that could occur within communities. But we need to draw a very clear distinction between what is normal and allowed in our community and the evils that we are trying to snuff out. It is normal, allowed and a right for anyone in Australia to exercise the right of peaceful protest. That is fundamental for us. But where those demonstrations turn violent, and in particular if they were to affect the premises and dignity of a valued nation like India, we draw a line.

Our authorities take huge care to make sure that Indian properties and diplomatic

premises are safe and Indian representatives are secure. We know that there have been lapses in other countries. We are very determined that will not happen in our country.

**Sukpal Sharma: Could you give us some sort of a timeline in terms of when we are going to see a full-fledged FTA. Currently, what are the sticking points of negotiations?**

Bilateral trade between Australia and India is going extremely strongly. Over the last five years, India's exports to the world have increased 37 per cent. India's exports to Australia have increased by more than 60 per cent. Your exports to my country are nearly double the acceleration of your exports to the rest of the world. A lot of that is because of the success of ECTA (Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement), the first phase of the free trade agreement. Exports of Indian apparel to Australia are up 20 per cent. Exports of iron and steel are up 25 per cent.

There's a very strong case for further opening of our economies to generate that complementary supply chain... There will be another round of negotiations soon.

I don't want to talk about sticking points because a lot of the deal will be interlocking, and so it's difficult to take one part out. It is important for Australia that we have a commercially meaningful deal, including a deal that has more access for Australian agricultural products in this country.

**Shubhajit Roy: What are the targets that you have set for yourself that you want to accomplish by the end of your tenure in India?**

I'd like to take a step forward in the way Australia and India are working in the defence and security sphere. That would mean new landing points on maritime domain awareness. I would like to see a second phase of the free trade agreement being settled. We need to find a pathway towards these important and complex supply chains in the green energy sphere. I would like to have a higher level of engagement between Australia and India in agriculture, including agri-tech cooperation.

We want to use cricket to get beyond cricket. The Border-Gavaskar series is happening this summer in Australia – November to January. I'm inviting a very large number of Indian industrialists and political figures to come to Australia for cricket and stay for business. We will find ways of ensuring that they have not just an enjoyable time, but also a professionally rewarding one.

**Pathardi Municipal Council, Pathardi**

Tal.- Pathardi, Dist.- Ahmednagar

**E-Tender Notice No. 1 For 2024-25**

Pathardi Municipal Council, Pathardi, Dist.- Ahmednagar invites B-1 Percentage Rate e-Tender for the work of Under Ground Drainage Scheme, Tal-Pathardi, Dist.- Ahmednagar valued at **Rs. 1,83,91,59,580/-** under Maharashtra Suvarna Jayanti, Nagarathan Mahaabhiyan (State Level). Please visit website <https://mahatenders.gov.in> for detailed information detailed schedule of Tender available from 09/09/2024.

sd/-  
Chief Officer  
Pathardi Municipal Council, Pathardi.**SOUTH EASTERN COALFIELDS LIMITED****"A MINI RATNA COMPANY"****NOTICE**

All the tenders issued by SECL for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of SECL <http://www.secl-cil.in>, CIL e-procurement portal <http://coalindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <http://eprocure.gov.in>. In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <http://gem.gov.in>. SECL's mining services tenders are also now available on GeM portal <http://gem.gov.in>.

**NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY**

**OPEN TENDER THROUGH E-TENDERING**  
CWM/Carriage & Wagon workshop North western railway Bikner acting for and on behalf of the president of India invites E-Tender No. 14-MECH-BKNW-FS-AUDIT-24 Closing Dated 30.09.2024 1. Name of work and its location : Fire & life safety audit and Fire Safety Training at Carriage & Wagon Workshop, NWR, Bikner. 2. Estimated Cost of work : Rs. 1,58,464.45 (Inclusive of GST) 3. Earnest money : 3200.00 4. Last Date and time for submission and opening of E-tender : 30.09.2024 up to 14:30 Hrs. E-Tender will be opened at 15:00 Hrs. on same day 5. Website particular where complete details of e-tender can be seen : [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) 1040-CR/24 Follow us on [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Instagram](#) [YouTube](#)

Follow us on [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Instagram](#) [YouTube](#)**RAJASTHAN SOLARPARK DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED**

(A Govt. of Rajasthan undertaking) (CIN NO. U46100RJ2011GCC0356G)  
Regd. Office : E-166, Kotharii Marg, C-Scheme, Jaipur-302001 Tel: 2225859, 2229341, 2222941, solarparkpugal@gmail.com, rrc2016@gmail.com  
RRECL/2024-25/PR/SP/TN-04  
**DETAILED e-NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
**NIT No. RSDCL/TN- (04) 2024-25**

Online tender is invited for the work of Design, Engineering, Supply, Construction of all Civil & miscellaneous works for infrastructure development of following solar parks including land levelling, roads & road lights, water intake, reservoir & distribution infrastructure, drainage system, green belts etc. at Dist-Bikaner (Rajasthan)

1. 1000 MW Pugal Solar Park Phase-I at Village- Surasar & Bhanawatwala, Tehsil- Pugal, District- Bikaner  
2. 1000 MW Pugal Solar Park Phase-II at Village- Surasar, Tehsil- Pugal, District- Bikaner  
3. 450 MW Pugal Solar Park Phase-III at Village- Sardarpura, Tehsil- Chittargarh, District- Bikaner

The complete bid document can be viewed and downloaded from e-procurement portal <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, SPPP portal <https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in/sppp/> and RRECL website (<https://energy.rajasthan.gov.in/fred/>). The Tender document may be downloaded from 09/09/2024, 03:00 PM. UBN - REC2425WL0B00017

Director (Technical)

Date : 08/09/2024

**FORM NO. INC-26**

[Pursuant to Rule 30 of Companies (Incorporation) Rules 2014] Advertisements to be published in the newspapers for Change of Registered Office of the Company from one state to another

Before the Central Government

(Regional Director, Northern Region, New Delhi)

In the matter of sub-section 4 of section 13 of the Companies Act 2013 and clause (a) of sub-rule (5) of Rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules 2014 AND

In the matter of M/s. ABC TALKIES PRIVATE LIMITED having its Registered Office at Flat No. E-64, 6th Floor, Spaze Towers, Group Housing Colony, Sector 72, Gurgaon – 122004, Haryana, India. ....Petitioner

Notice is hereby given to General Public that the Company proposes to make the application to the Central Government under section 13 of the Companies Act 2013, seeking confirmation of alteration of Memorandum of Association of the Company in term of special resolution passed at extra ordinary general meeting of the Company held on Saturday, 20th July, 2024 to enable the Company to change its Registered Office from "State of Haryana" to "State of Gujarat". Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the Registered Office of the Company may deliver either on MCA portal ([www.mca.gov.in](http://www.mca.gov.in)) by filing investor complaint form or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition to the Regional Director at the Address B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Parivartan Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi-110003, within 14 Days of date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant Company at its registered office at the address mentioned below:

ADDRESS OF REGISTERED OFFICE: ABC TALKIES PRIVATE LIMITED, E-64, Spaze Towers, Group Housing Colony, Sector 72, Gurgaon-122004, Haryana, India.

For: ABC TALKIES PRIVATE LIMITED

Sd/-

Shalibhadra K.Shah

Director (DIN: 08865111)

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**BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL**  
**AHMEDABAD BENCH**  
**CA (CAA) NO. 25 OF 2024**

In the matter of the Companies Act, 2013;

AND

In the matter of Section 230 to 232 of the Companies Act, 2013 and other applicable provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 and Rules framed thereunder;

AND

In the matter of Scheme of Amalgamation involving Merger by Absorption of Suzlon Global Services Limited (the 'Transferor Company') with Suzlon Energy Limited (the 'Transferee Company') and their respective Shareholders and Creditors (the 'Scheme')

**SUZLON ENERGY LIMITED,**

CIN: L40100GJ1995PLC025447

a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 having its Registered Office situated at "Suzlon", 5, Shrimali Society, Near Shri Krishna Complex, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad-380009 (the 'Company')

..... Applicant Transferee Company

**ADVERTISEMENT OF NOTICE CONVENING MEETINGS OF SECURED CREDITORS AND UNSECURED CREDITORS**

NOTICE is hereby given that by an order dated 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024 (the "NCLT Order"), the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal ("NCLT"), Ahmedabad Bench has directed separate meetings of the Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors of the Applicant Transferee Company, to be held for the purpose of their considering, and, if thought fit approving, with or without modification, the proposed Scheme of Amalgamation involving merger by absorption of Suzlon Global Services Limited (CIN: U27109GJ2004PLC044170) with Suzlon Energy Limited (CIN: L40100GJ1995PLC025447) and their respective shareholders and creditors under Section 230 to 232 of the Companies Act, 2013 (the "Scheme"). In pursuance of the said NCLT Order and as directed therein, further notice is hereby given that separate meetings of the Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors of the Applicant Transferee Company will be held through video conferencing/other audio-visual means ("VC/OAVM") on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at the respective times as mentioned hereunder when the said Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors are requested to attend.

Sr. No.	Class f Creditor Meeting	Day and Date	Time (IST)
1.	Secured Creditor	Thursday, 10 October 2024	02:00 PM
2.	Unsecured Creditor	Thursday, 10 October 2024	03:00 PM

The meetings are convened through VC/OAVM, as aforesaid, pursuant to the NCLT Order dated 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024 in accordance with the Companies Act, 2013 (the "Act") and framework for holding meetings through VC/OAVM, as prescribed by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs General Circular Nos. (i) 20/2020 dated 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 (AGM Circular), (ii) 14/2020, dated 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020 (EGM Circular-I) and (iii) 17/2020 dated 13<sup>th</sup> April 2020 (EGM Circular-II).

The Hon'ble NCLT has appointed Shri L. N. Gupta (Ex-member NCLT) to be the Chairperson of the said meetings of the Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors of the Transferee Company and (b) Adv. Vishawjeet Singh (Enrolment Number: PH/945/2023 (Bar Council of Punjab & Haryana) to be the Scrutiniser for the said meetings.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that in terms of the NCLT Order, the Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors of the Transferee Company shall have the facility and option of voting on the resolution for approval of the Scheme by casting their votes by electronic voting ("e-voting") during their meetings on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024 or by remote electronic voting ("remote e-voting") during the period commencing from 9:00 a.m. IST on Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024 and ending at 5:00 p.m. IST on Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

Only Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors whose names appear in the list of Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors of the Transferee Company as on the cut-off date, i.e., 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 shall be entitled to vote. The votes cast by the Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors shall be reckoned and scrutinised with reference to the list of Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors as on the cut-off date. The value of votes shall be in proportion to the amount due to them from the Transferee Company as on the cut-off date.

Kfin Technologies Limited ("Kfin"), the Transferee Company's Registrar and Transfer Agent will provide the facility for participating at the meetings through VC/OAVM; for e-voting during the meetings; and for voting through remote e-voting.

The Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors may opt to cast their votes only in one mode, i.e. by (a) remote e-voting or (b) by e-voting at their meetings.

In case they cast their votes by remote e-voting, they will nevertheless be entitled to attend the respective meetings and participate in the discussions but will not be entitled to vote again by e-voting at the meetings.

The resolution for approval of the Scheme shall, if passed by a majority in number representing three-fourths in value of the Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors casting their votes, as aforesaid, shall be deemed to have been duly passed on the date of the meetings.

It is clarified that since the meetings are being held through VC/OAVM, physical attendance of creditors. is dispensed with and facility for attending or voting by proxy is not available or applicable.

Body Corporates / Institutions (i.e. other than individuals, HUF, NRI etc.) are requested to send a certified true copy of the Board Resolution / Power of Attorney / Authority letter, etc. (PDF/ JPG Format) to Scrutinizer at [vishawjeet.rathore@gmail.com](mailto:vishawjeet.rathore@gmail.com) with a copy marked to [evoting@kfintech.com](mailto:evoting@kfintech.com) or [fa.ssc@suzlon.com](mailto:fa.ssc@suzlon.com) and also send a physical copy of the Board Resolution / Power of Attorney / Authority Letter, etc. at the Registered Office of the Company, addressed to the Company Secretary, "Suzlon", 5, Shrimali Society, Near Shri Krishna Complex, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad-380009, Gujarat, India in either case at least 48 (Forty Eight) hours before the time of holding the respective meetings.

Creditors who would like to express their views or ask questions during the Meeting may register themselves as speaker on or before 5.00 p.m. IST on Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2024 by visiting the URL <https://emeetings.kfintech.com/> and clicking on the tab 'Speaker Registration' or by sending their request, mentioning their name, demat account number / folio number, email id and mobile number to KFin and to the Company at [fa.ssc@suzlon.com](mailto:fa.ssc@suzlon.com). The Creditors who do not wish to speak during the Meeting but have queries may send their queries on or before 5.00 p.m. IST on Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2024, mentioning their name, PAN, email id and mobile number to KFin and to the Company at [fa.ssc@suzlon.com](mailto:fa.ssc@suzlon.com). These queries will be addressed by the Company suitably.

Copy of the Notice convening meetings containing the said Scheme, Explanatory Statement pursuant to Section 230(3) read with Section 232(2) of the Act along with all Particulars to such statement can be accessed/ downloaded from the websites of the Transferee Company at [www.suzlon.com](http://www.suzlon.com); Kfin at <https://evoting.kfintech.com>; BSE Limited ("BSE") at [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com) and National Stock Exchange of India Limited ("NSE") at [www.nseindia.com](http://www.nseindia.com). If desired, Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors may also obtain a copy of the said Notice and accompanying documents free of charge physically from the registered office of the Transferee Company or by sending a written request from their email to the Company Secretary at [fa.ssc@suzlon.com](mailto:fa.ssc@suzlon.com).

The Transferee Company has initiated and shall on or before 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024 complete the dispatch of the Notice along with the Particulars, as aforesaid, and details of e-voting Event Number (EVEN), User ID and Password required for joining and attending the meetings through VC/OAVM and casting votes by e-voting during the meetings or by remote e-voting to all the Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors whose names were appearing in the lists of Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors of the Transferee Company as on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024. Such notice along with the accompanying documents and details have been sent by email to the Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors who have registered their Email IDs with the Transferee Company and physically by post to the Secured Creditors and Unsecured Creditors who have not registered their Email IDs with the Transferee Company.

Any other Secured Creditor or Unsecured Creditor as on the cut-off date who is unable to access the aforesaid details required for joining the meeting and casting their votes by e-voting/remote e-voting, i.e. EVEN, User ID and Password, for any reason may obtain such details by (a) accessing the link: <https://evoting.kfintech.com> or (b) sending an email request at the Email ID [evoting@kfintech.com](mailto:evoting@kfintech.com) along with scanned copy of the request letter. duly signed, providing their email address and mobile number.

In case any Secured Creditor or Unsecured Creditor has any query or grievance with regard to remote e-voting / e-voting, they may contact KFin at [evoting@kfintech.com](mailto:evoting@kfintech.com) or KFin's toll free No.: 1-800-309-4001.

The results of the meetings shall be declared by the Chairperson of the meetings or a person authorized by him within a period of 3 (three) days of the conclusion of the meeting as directed by NCLT and the same shall be displayed on the notice board of the Transferee Company at its registered office and posted on the aforesaid websites of the Transferee Company and Kfin. The results shall also be immediately forwarded to the Stock Exchanges where the securities of the Transferee Company are listed i.e., BSE and NSE.

The abovementioned Scheme, if approved at the aforesaid meetings, will be subject to sanction of the Ahmedabad Bench of the Hon'ble NCLT.

Place: Pune

Date : 7<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Vinod R. Tanti (DIN:00002266),  
Chairman & Managing Director  
of Suzlon Energy Limited

**FORM NO. INC-26**

[Pursuant to Rule 30 of Companies (Incorporation) Rules 2014]

Advertisement to be published in the newspapers for Change of Registered Office of the Company from one state to another

Company from one state to another

Before the Central Government

(Regional Director, Northern Region, New Delhi)

In the matter of sub-section 4 of section 13 of the Companies Act 2013 and clause (a) of sub-rule (5)

of Rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules 2014 AND

In the matter of M/s. ABC TALKIES PRIVATE LIMITED having its Registered Office at Flat No. E-64, 6th Floor, Spaze Towers, Group Housing Colony, Sector 72, Gurgaon – 122004, Haryana, India. ....Petitioner

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Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the Registered Office of the Company may deliver either on MCA portal ([www.mca.gov.in](http://www.mca.gov.in)) by filing investor complaint form or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition to the Regional Director at the Address B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Parivartan Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi-110

MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS &amp; IT COMMITS OVER ₹130 CR

# Govt clears 12 Indian start-ups for incentives under chip design plan

SOUMYA RENDRA BARIK

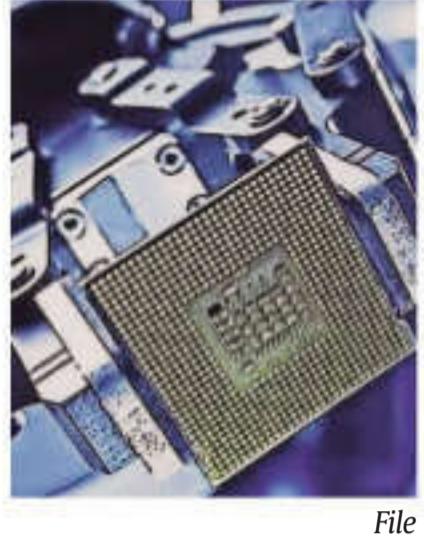
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

THE MINISTRY of Electronics and IT (MeitY) has approved chip design related proposals from at least 12 Indian start-ups and has committed more than Rs 130 crore to their projects, which span from developing integrated circuits for telecommunication applications, to artificial intelligence (AI) hardware accelerators, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

In total, the approved projects will cost Rs 342 crore, and the Centre has committed close to Rs 133 crore towards them. So far, the government has released a little more than Rs 7 crore. The government has received 59 applications under the design linked incentive (DLI) scheme, of which it has cleared 12 for financial assistance. 21 applications are under review.

The twelve companies, and the innovations they are working on are: DV2JS Innovation (image sensor system on chip for automotive applications); Microelectronics (microcontroller integrated circuit for industrial applications); Fermionic Design (beamformer IC for IoT and sensing applica-

## CENTRE RECEIVED 59 APPLICATIONS



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tions); WiSig Networks (NarrowBand IoT SoC); and MosChip Technologies (smart energy metre IC).

The DLI scheme is part of the overall \$10 billion incentive scheme for the semiconductor ecosystem, which was rolled out by the government in December 2021. The design scheme aims to offer financial incentives and infrastructure support across various stages of development and deployment of semiconductor design for integrated circuits, chipsets, and system-on-chip over a period of five years.

India is a major force in chip designing, with all major semiconductor companies having their design offices in the country. However, these engineers have traditionally designed systems for foreign companies, which has resulted in zero to little intellectual property creation by Indian entities. The chip DLI scheme is an attempt at plugging that gap, as it incentivises a crucial part of the chip supply chain – the IP.

The run rate of the scheme, however, seems to be slower than the Centre's initial projections. The government wants to fund at least 100 start-ups over five years under the DLI scheme, which would be an average of 20 entities per year. But, since announcing the scheme in December 2021, it has only approved 12 start-ups so far.

The IT Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Earlier this week, India approved its fifth semiconductor unit in the form of an assembly and testing plant being set up by Kaynes Semicon in Gujarat.

India has ambitions to become a major chip hub on the lines of the United States, Taiwan and South Korea, and has been

courting foreign companies to set up operations in the country. Previously, the country has approved a fabrication plant worth \$11 billion being set up by Tata Electronics in partnership with Taiwan's Powerchip, and three different chip assembly plants being set up by the Tatas, US-based Micron Technology, and Murugappa Group's CG Power in partnership with Japan's Renesas.

Currently, there are more proposals to set up semiconductor units with the government.

This includes a fabrication plant proposed by Israel's Tower Semiconductor and the Adani Group, and a Rs 4,000 crore assembly plant by Zoho.

After having committed nearly all of the \$10 billion in subsidies under its ambitious semiconductor manufacturing incentive policy, the government has prepared a blueprint for the second phase of the scheme – it could increase the outlay of the programme to \$15 billion, offer capital support for raw materials and gases used in chip manufacturing, and reduce subsidies for assembly and testing plants, *The Indian Express* had earlier reported.

## TWO FPIs MENTIONED IN HINDENBURG REPORT SEEK RELIEF

# Deadline for beneficial ownership of FPI holdings ends on September 9

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 8



EVEN AS the deadline to disclose the beneficial owners of holdings in foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) ends on September 9, some of these foreign investors have sought legal recourse to keep away from adhering to the regulations.

Two Mauritius-based foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) – LTS Investment Funds and Lotus Global Investment – have moved the Securities Appellate Tribunal, seeking urgent relief from complying with Sebi's new foreign investor norms. These two FPIs were mentioned in the January 2023 report on the Adani Group by US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research.

According to these FPIs, Sebi's directions to comply with certain conditions that did not apply to other FPIs have discriminated their investors. They have sought time until March 2025 to meet these norms.

In August last year, markets regulator Sebi had asked FPIs, holding more than 50 per cent of their equity AUM (assets under management) in a single investee company/corporate group or with an

overall holding in Indian equity markets of over Rs 25,000 crore, to disclose granular details of all entities holding any ownership, economic interest, or exercising control in the FPI. The norms were announced to prevent the possible round tripping by certain promoters using the FPI route.

LTS Investment Fund's asset is nearly \$1.5 billion, as per the Hindenburg Research's January 2023 report.

Sebi said certain FPIs have been observed to hold concentrated portion of their equity portfolio in a single investee company/corporate group.

Such concentrated investments raise the concern and possibility that promoters of such investee companies/corporate groups, or other in-

vestors acting in concert, could be using the FPI route for circumventing regulatory requirements such as that of disclosures under Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers Regulations, 2011 (SAST Regulations) or maintaining Minimum Public Shareholding (MPS) in the listed company.

The sell-off in the market in August can be attributed to the final deadline for FPIs to disclose their beneficial owners to the Sebi.

FPIs pulled out Rs 20,339 crore from the market in August this year. "Failure to meet this requirement would result in FPIs being disqualified from investing in India, necessitating the liquidation of their holdings. This regulatory pressure has led

many FPIs to sell off their investments, causing a broad decline in the stock market," said Ameya Ranadive CMT CFTe, StoXBox.

The regulator said granular details of all entities holding any ownership, economic interest, or exercising control in the FPI will have to be provided by FPIs. While economic interest means returns from the investments made by the FPI, ownership interest means ownership of shares or capital of the entity or entitlement to derive profits from the activity of the entity.

FPIs holding more than 50 per cent of their Indian equity AUM in a single Indian corporate group or holding over Rs 25,000 crore of equity AUM in the Indian markets are required to disclose details, it said.

In a consultation issued in May last year, Sebi had said that based on the data as of March 31, 2023, FPI assets under management of around Rs 2.6 lakh crore may potentially be identified as high-risk FPIs who would have to make additional disclosures.

Sources said FPIs which may be required to provide enhanced disclosures are expected to be significantly less than estimated in the consultation paper and the Sebi board note.

## Boeing reaches early deal with union on pay in hope to avert strike

REUTERS

BENGALURU, SEPTEMBER 8

BOEING SAID on Sunday it had reached a tentative agreement with a union representing more than 32,000 workers in the US Pacific Northwest, in a deal that could help avert a possible crippling strike as early as September 13.

The proposed four-year agreement, which includes a general wage increase of 25 per cent, 12 weeks of paid parental leave, and improved job security, would need to be approved on Thursday by Boeing factory workers near Seattle and Portland represented by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM).

An accepted deal would secure labor peace for Boeing at a time when the planemaker is burning cash and trying to raise production of its strongest-selling 737 MAX to a target rate of 38 aircraft a month by the year's end.

## 25% PAY HIKE

■ Boeing has reached a tentative pact with a union representing more than 32,000 workers in the US Pacific Northwest

■ The proposed pact includes a wage increase of 25%, 12 weeks of paid parental leave, and improved job security

Boeing is wrestling with a quality crisis and faces scrutiny from regulators and customers, after a January incident when a door plug on a near-new MAX blew off an Alaska Air jetliner while in mid-air.

Although the union had asked for a 40 per cent raise in their first full negotiation with Boeing in 16 years, it made other gains, like obtaining a seat at the table regarding the safety and quality of the production system.

## Adani floats China arm for project management services

New Delhi: Adani Group has formed a subsidiary in China to carry out business of providing supply chain solutions and project management services, according to a regulatory filing.

Adani Enterprises, the group's flagship firm, in the filing said a Singapore-based step-down subsidiary incorporated a wholly-owned subsidiary, Adani Energy Resources (Shanghai) Co. (AERCL), domiciled in Shanghai, China on September 2, 2024.

"AERCL is incorporated to carry out business of providing supply chain solutions and project management services," it said without providing details. The subsidiary was incorporated by Adani Global Pte (AGPTE), Singapore – a step-down subsidiary of Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL).

AEL houses the conglomerate's mining, roads, airports, data center and water infrastructure businesses.

RAVINDUTTA MISHRA

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

THE INDIAN medtech sector offers considerable opportunities for Swiss and Indian cooperation, as the Indian market is growing rapidly and Swiss companies can contribute to this growth story with their expertise and knowledge in precision industries, said Ruth Metzler-Arnold, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of Switzerland Global Enterprise (SGE), in an interview with *The Indian Express*.

This assumes significance as India is not only aiming to build domestic capacity but also diversify imports away from China in the strategically important medtech sector. India's dependence on imports in the medtech sector was as high as 75 per cent of the net imports of medical devices in FY23, which crossed \$4 billion, according to official figures. "India's medtech market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.4 per cent, reaching \$50 billion by 2030. The market is

## MARKET WATCH

### MCAP OF 8 OF TOP-10 VALUED COS DROPS

The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most valued firms got eroded by Rs 2,01,699.77 crore last week, with Reliance Industries and Tata Consultancy Services emerging as the biggest laggards, in line with weak trends in equities.

PTI

# Deceleration in car sales, inventories piling up: What is driving the slowdown?

ANIL SASI

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

FROM EXTENDED waiting periods for bestselling car models just six months back to record discounts across much of their fleet now, the country's carmakers are bracing for a progressively worsening slowdown in sales for the first time since the post-pandemic reopening of.

Car manufacturers, who have largely bucked the consumption downturn reported by other consumer goods manufacturers across the country, are now in for a reality check.

#### THE REASONS

There are at least five reasons why car sales have markedly decelerated. The first reason is purely cyclical: given that car sales have been clocking near double digit growth for the better part of the last 36 months, it was only inevitable that a tempering of demand was round the corner. Some of the demand-supply gap in the car industry immediately in the months after the pandemic reopening was on account of a crunching chips shortage that followed the Covid disruption, forcing manufacturers to cut back on production at that time, leading to high pent-up demand. This chip shortage has now eased off completely and car deliveries are fully back on track, even as the pent-up demand has eased, resulting in a progressive oversupply situation.

There were indications as early as in the post-festival season last year, when a tempering of footfalls and enquiries was brushed aside as a temporary phenomenon by both carmakers and dealers.

Automakers in India generally report wholesale dispatches to dealers and not actual retail customer sales. Even as the demand turned sluggish, the dispatches from the auto companies to dealerships continued at more or less at the blistering pace of the months leading up to the slowdown, leading to an eventual pile-up at dealerships. As dealers grapple with the problem, it is only a matter of time that this inventory piles up shifts further upstream to the stockyards of car companies.

#### LAUNCH RUSH

The second reason is that there have been a slew of launches over the last 12 months by carmakers, both of new models and feature-rich upgrades of existing models. That has led to subdued demand for the older models, or the earlier versions of upgraded models.

Given that feature-laden newer models are now in the market, lower consumer demand for older models has also contributed to the inventory pile-up at dealerships. Also, as against the impression that the auto sector has been largely immune to the consumption demand problem, the entry-level auto segment is where the affordability challenge has manifested



Car manufacturers, who have largely bucked the consumption downturn, are now in for a reality check. There are at least five reasons why sales have dropped

itself clearly and entry-level hatchbacks have struggled to see demand traction. This, according to an executive with a leading carmaker, is because the upward conversion of consumers from two-wheelers to entry-level cars is simply not happening at the rate that it used to, clearly reflective of the consumption problem that is showing up at the lower end of the auto segment. As a result, most carmakers, with the exception of Maruti Suzuki, the country's largest carmaker, have either cut back on entry level hatchback offerings or simply exited this product category altogether.

#### LOW-TRACTION SEGMENTS

Then there is a problem with certain vehicle segments or models that are seeing markedly lower traction. This includes Battery Electric Vehicles or BEVs. According to a senior executive with Tata Motors, the country's largest electric vehicle maker, the problem is that while the first adopters of electric vehicles continue to be bullish, the conversion of new customers who want to shift from ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles to BEVs is perceptible tapering off. And that is a trend visible across markets, with India too showing early signs of EV fatigue.

Also, some car models, such as the Maruti Suzuki Jimny, have failed to clock sale figures that were being expected, forcing the manufacturer to offer sharp discounts to clear stock. On the other hand, some newer segments such as hybrids are seeing improved traction, which is reflective of a trend being seen globally. Even in this segment, though, while Toyota is doing well with sales of its Hyryder and Innova Hycross hybrid models, Honda has largely struggled to sell its City e:HEV hybrid offering.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

A fourth reason, and increasingly important one, is climate change. An executive in the sales team of Maruti Suzuki indicated earlier this year that the soaring temperatures witnessed across most parts of the country during

the extended summer, and the national elections that ended in June, kept buyers from visiting showrooms. After that, the heavy rains in part of the country's south and east have further impacted demand, with states such as Kerala and Telangana among those where demand is reported to have hit due to heavy rains and flooding. An executive with Hyundai Motor, the country's second largest carmaker, said that repeated instances of unusually heavy rains in Kerala, a big diesel car market, has badly dented the sale of diesel models for most carmakers.

#### BUYERS WAIT & WATCH

The fifth reason is that when carmakers and dealerships offer high discounts and price cuts to clear stock for an extended period of time, consumers tend to postpone their buying decisions and choose to wait in anticipation of prices falling further, or deeper discounts being offered in the future. That too tends to have a spiralling impact on consumer demand.

As a result of some of these factors, dealerships are now reporting surging inventory levels that are hitting a new high with every passing month. In June, according to data collected by the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations, inventory levels at car dealerships, which touched an all-time high of 67 days in June, have since surged to 72 days in July and then to 75 days in August. Last month, inventories worth an estimated Rs 77,000 crore or higher were sitting idle at auto dealerships, with a number of these dealers reporting problems in moving vehicles from their yards to customers' hands, according to FADA. For auto dealers, inventory pile-ups have a carrying cost, given that limited stock yards at the dealerships are filled up with cars that are often not selling. At the same time, they do not have space to accommodate the newer and faster moving models dispatched by carmakers since the older, unsold stock is sitting in the yards. It is only a matter of time that the stockyard inventory problem gets transferred to carmakers from the dealerships.

To clear stocks, carmakers are offering steep discounts on models that were facing long waiting times just a while ago. These include high-demand SUVs including the Mahindra XUV700 and the Scorpio N, the Tata Harrier and Safari, Maruti Suzuki's Grand Vitara and even best selling MPVs such as the Suzuki Ertiga are now readily available at most locations, depending on dealer inventory, and often with heavy discounts.

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are already more than 140 Indian companies with a legal entity in Switzerland," she said. Responding to concerns about investment in India, Ruth said that the key to doing business in India is finding the right partner, and Swiss companies must also be aware of the business culture. "The Swiss Embassy, in collaboration with Invest India and key Indian government agencies, has been organising the Invest India Roundtable for Swiss companies for the past five years. This roundtable provides Swiss companies with the opportunity to highlight their concerns about doing business in India," she added.

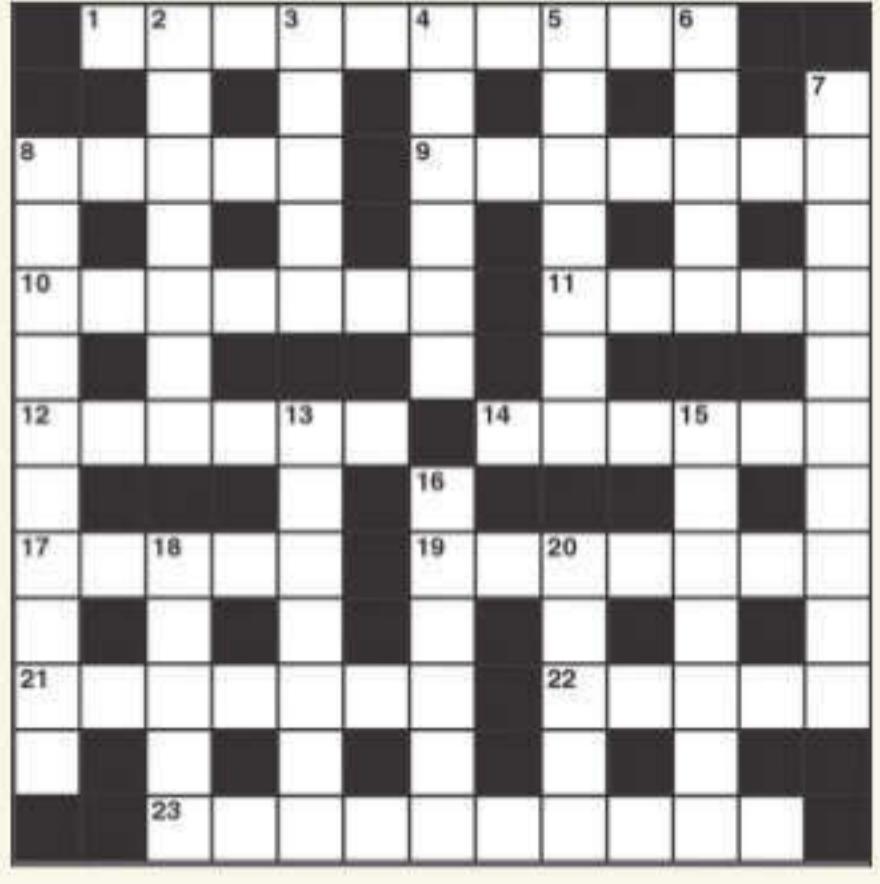
Last week, the Swiss government submitted a dispatch on the trade deal between India and the EFTA to the Parliament. This was the first step towards ratifying the deal that could open up the Indian market to Swiss exports. Ruth said that the India-EFTA trade deal would make high-quality Swiss products and services more affordable in India and Indian companies will also have preferential access to the Swiss innovation ecosystem.

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THE EXPRESS

## CROSSWORD 5464



**ACROSS**

- Assembly of what's considered proper (10)
- The depth of depression (5)
- Thoughtful pub holds raffle (7)
- Unmasked once questions are put (7)
- A laundry is partly under water (5)
- Lets out American imprisoned in brawl (6)
- Left cigar perhaps, it has a pungent taste (6)
- Completed a meal, while flying? (3,2)
- Years possibly follow as a metal-tester? (7)
- Punish in the right way? (7)
- Giants book of maps (5)
- Dramatic broadcasts (5,5)

**DOWN**

- His companion was a wife and a mother to him (7)
- Maybe virtuous but losing out to a bad influence (5)
- Water nymphs in a sad muddle (6)
- Country surrounding an American state (7)
- Old African lake included in many a safari (5)
- Likely place to find Christmas greetings (2,3,5)
- A sign that visitors aren't welcome (2,8)
- See what others have to say (3-4)
- Constant quality (7)
- A picture one will carry everywhere (6)
- The slipshod are likely to fall into it (5)
- Stop working in the stables? (5)

Solutions Crossword 5463 Across: 1 Amend, 4 Faucet, 9 Involve, 10 Prior, 11 Harem, 12 Cleanse, 13 Notabit of it, 18 Protein, 20 Infer, 22 Daubs, 23 Raising, 24 Riddle, 25 Knight Down: 1 Aight, 2 Elver, 3 Dilemma, 5 Apple, 6 Chianti, 7 Turkey, 8 Reactionary, 14 Orotund, 15 Opinion, 16 Spider, 17 Fright, 19 Easel, 21 Fling

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry &amp; T Lewis



## CALVIN &amp; HOBBS by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## JUMBLE 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.

Healing is a matter of \_\_\_\_ but it is sometimes also a matter of \_\_\_\_ - Hippocrates (4..11)

WEOOR



BONTTU



DOITT



ILMPPY



## SUDOKU 5708

## Difficulty Level 1s

## 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.

2	3	4		9	6			
7	1	3		6	5	4		
9	6	4	5	2	7			
	9		3					
8	5	1	7	2	4			
5	6	8		1	3	9		
9	2			4	8	1		

## Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy;

3s = Medium; 4s = Hard;

5s = Very Hard;

6s = Genius

## SOLUTION SUDOKU 5707

2	6	1	4	3	5	9	7	8
9	8	4	7	6	1	5	3	2
7	3	5	2	8	9	6	1	4
8	7	6	1	4	3	2	9	5
5	9	3	6	2	7	4	8	1
1	4	2	5	9	8	3	6	7
4	1	7	9	5	6	8	2	3
6	2	8	3	7	4	1	5	9
3	5	9	8	1	2	7	4	6

## DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

## ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

It's an emotional day and you're set for a busy week with many changes of mood. From today, the urgency to pursue various negotiations, especially those with a personal dimension, will become more obvious. Yet there is no immediate rush.

## TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

At last, you can begin to map out the future, the next stage of your relentless advance should now be complete. You are being buoyed up by a continuing sense that financial conditions can only improve. On the other hand, further information is required.

## GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

That optimistic planet Jupiter is at a crucial point in its twelve-year cycle around your horoscope, during which opportunities have come and gone. The sky is the limit as the culmination of this long-term phase approaches. I'd say it's time to broaden your horizons.

## CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Your passions are due to increase. Far from undermining you, partners' discreet actions will be calculated to further your interests. In any case, it will be a brave person who manages to take you on, and win, as long as Mars and Venus are so closely linked.

## LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Partners are playing a complicated game, that's for sure. You're still faced with contradictions, but may be utterly unable to clarify the issues, let alone resolve differences. Fall back on support from social contacts as a means of pursuing your goals.

## VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

You've got three substantial planetary movements over the next week. Venus is soon to join Mercury and Uranus to complete a brilliant and determined trio in critical sectors of your solar chart. There really is nothing that you cannot achieve, if you set your heart on it.

## LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Yours is not usually known as an adventurous sign, even though individual Librans have often been known to take a tough stance. Now is one of those times when all of you may take several major steps forward. If you have any truly loyal friends, stick close.

## SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Much has been written about your financial and business affairs over recent months. Everything that takes place now will convince you that good fortune is likely to become permanent rather than, as once you feared, be no more than a temporary blip.

## SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

How much you pretend otherwise, chance words can go deep. It must now be repeated that if you step aside and allow partners to take centre stage, you may share in their good fortune. Also, decisions involving your personal affairs must be taken in the full light of day.

## CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

The planets are indicating the possibility of a dramatic improvement in your health. Yet this will not take place without some initiative on your part, perhaps dietary, perhaps associated with complementary medicine or a new exercise regime.

## AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

An extraordinary line-up of pugnacious planets is exerting an influence over creative sectors of your chart, producing exactly the degree of support that you need at this time. Among the beneficiaries are people to whom you are romantically linked.

## PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

At last you can feel that property and domestic affairs are going your way. Certainly, you can afford to be optimistic about family relationships and everything which is emotionally fundamental to your existence. You'll also stop imagining resistant partners.

## Classifieds

## PERSONAL

I,Haji Mehboob,S/o Irsad,R/o-House no. 2151/T-6A,New patel nagar,new delhi-110008,have changed my name to name Mehboob Qureshi for all future purposes.

0040748536-3

I,Avi Saxena,S/o Hargyan Chand Saxena R/o Tower-1/61,MCC Signature Homes,Raj Nagar Extension,Ghazabadi,U.P.-201017,have changed my name from Avi Saxena to Avi Saxena for all future purposes.

0040748536-1

I,Amaan,S/o Mehboob Qureshi,R/o-House no. 2151/T-6A,new patel nagar,new delhi-110008,have changed my name to Amaan Qureshi for all future purposes.

0040748536-2

I,Shameem Begam R/o E.42/5,Gali,No.10,Subhash Mohalla, North Ghonda, Delhi-110033 Have changed my name from SHAMIM to SHAMEEM BEGAM for all purposes.

0040747796-1

I,Lt Col IPS KNIGGAR S/O Late,Lt Col SS KNIGGER R/O 116,Mahagun Maestro, F-21A, Sec-50, Noida, U.P.-201301,declare that my name and DOB,as mentioned in my father's record in Army Head Quarters, are incorrect. My correct name and DOB, as mentioned in my records in AHQ's and my Aadhar card, as JPS KNIGGAR and 15-01-1948, are correct.

0040748535-1

I,Kundan Kumar, S/o Shri Chandra Shekhar R/o E-178-179, Gali No. - 7, Pandav Nagar, Samas Pur, PO Patparganj, Delhi-110091,have changed my 14 years old minor Son's name from Kartikeya to Kartikeya Singh.Henceforth, he will be known by the name of Kartikeya Singh for all future purposes.

0040748398-1

I,Kharat Ramesh Ganapat, aged 37 Years, Service NO GS 190221A Rank EQPTMECH, Presently posted at HQ DGRB, Seema Sadak Bhawan, Ring Road, Naraina, (Delhi Cantt) New Delhi-110010, I have changed my name to Ramesh Ganpat Kharat for all future purposes.

0040748496-1

I,Lilawati Kumari Pandey W/O Hariom Pandey R/o D-298,Sector-2, Near Shiv Mandir, IE Sahibabad, Ghazabadi, Uttar Pradesh-201010 have changed my name to Lilawati Pandey.

0040748521-1

I,Deepali Arora Chhugani W/O, Keshav Chhugani R/o A202 Exotica Fresco Sector 137 Noida 201305 have changed my name to Deepali Arora.

0040748522-1

I,for general information that I, MINNIE MEENAKSHI KANDHARI w/o Late Major Krishan Kumar Kandhari R/o 153, Nilgiri Apartments, Alakananda, New Delhi- 110019 declare that my correct and full nameis MINNIE MEENAKSHI KANDHARI and not MANNIE KANDHARI. Myname may be amended accordingly for future.

0040748403-1

I,Amit Singh Chhopola S/O, Umed Rani R/o A59A, Ugf, Sainik Nagar, New Delhi - 110059 have changed my name to Amit Singh for all purposes.

0040748375-1

## E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

## SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 8 (6) / 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Union Bank of India (secured creditor), will be sold on "As is where Is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on the date mentioned below, for recovery of dues as mentioned hereunder to Union Bank of India from the below mentioned Borrower(s) & Guarantor(s). The Reserve Price and the Earnest Money Deposit are also mentioned hereunder:

Name & Address of Branch	Name & Address of Borrower/ Mortgagor/ Guarantor	Amount Due	Property Details	Reserve Price/ EMD/Bid Multiplier
Union Bank of India, Samastipur Main Branch at LEAD DIST.OFFICE, GOAL ROAD, SAMASTIPUR, BIHAR - 848101 BM Sri ABHIJEET GAURAV Mob.8840261679	1. Borrower: Suresh Sah, S/o-Fudan Sah, 2. Co-Borrower / Mortgagor: Urmila Devi W/o- Suresh Sah, both (1 & 2) at Vill+Post-Bishanpur, Dariapur, Hakimabad, Anchal-Samastipur, Bihar-848101	Rs. 9,84,483.00 as on 31-07-2024 plus Interest and other Expenses	Land & building in the name of Urmila Devi W/o- Suresh Sah situated at Bishanpur Hakimabad, Samastipur, Bihar bearing land detail as under:-Thana No. -207, Khata No. -1092(N), Khesra No.-451 (O), 611(N), Area 1 katha 8 Dhar. Boundary - N- Rakesh Prasad, S-Ganaur Sah, E-Ganaur Sah, W-Sadak	Rs. 6,88,500.00- Rs. 68,850.00- Rs. 15,000.00-

Date and Time of e-auction 26.09.2024 at 12:00 PM to 05:00 PM (with 10 minutes unlimited auto extension) For detailed term and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Union Bank of India's website i.e. <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/auction-property/view-auction-property.aspx>

## BRIEFLY

## El Idrissi smashes Para marathon WR

Paris: Morocco's Fatima Ezzahra El Idrissi has smashed the world record in the women's marathon for runners with visual impairments on the last day of the Paralympic Games. El Idrissi finished in 2 hours, 48 minutes and 36 seconds on Sunday, beating the previous record from Japan's Misato Michishita in Hofu City in December 2020 by nearly 6 minutes.



"I wasn't running for a time, only for a medal," the 29-year-old Moroccan said. "I wasn't aiming to get the world record, just to get the gold, and now I have both." Companio Meryem En-Nourhi was just over 9 minutes behind, followed by Michishita, almost 15 minutes behind the winner. AP

## No Games Village in 2026 Asian Games

New Delhi: In a first, the 2026 Asian Games to be staged in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, will not have a Games Village and the athletes will be accommodated in hotels and cruise ships instead. In his address during the 44th General Assembly of Olympic Council of Asia here on Sunday, former Japan Olympic Committee president Tsunekazu Takeda, informed that continental showpiece to be co-hosted by the Aichi Prefecture and the city of Nagoya will have no Olympic village. "We will not have the Games Village as the Games will be held in two prefectures. Instead we are trying our best to accommodate athletes and dignitaries in hotels and cruise ships," Takeda said while briefing about the Games preparations. PTI

## AIFF will payout \$400,000 to Stimac

New Delhi: Igor Stimac and the All India Football Federation (AIFF) have reached an agreement with the former men's national team head coach set to receive USD 400,000 (approximately Rs 3.36 crore) after tax as compensation for being terminated from the job. The AIFF sacked Stimac in June, terminating his contract exactly a year before it was to expire in the wake of the side's ouster from the second round of FIFA World Cup Qualifiers despite getting a relatively easy draw. The sacking was followed by a bitter war of words between Stimac and the AIFF with the Croat threatening to sue the federation if it didn't settle his dues within 10 days. However, the two parties have now reached an agreement. PTI

## Poulsen scores a stunner vs Serbia

Copenhagen: Denmark striker Yussuf Poulsen created the opening goal and then added a brilliant second with an acrobatic bicycle kick as his side beat Serbia 2-0 in their Nations League A Group 4 clash on Sunday. With group rivals Switzerland and Spain set to meet later on Sunday, the Danes top the group with a perfect six points from their opening two games. After an industrious display in their debut on Thursday when Denmark beat Switzerland, attacking midfielder Albert Gronbaek gave his side the lead against Serbia with his first senior international goal in the 36th minute, playing a one-two with Poulsen before drilling the ball into the net. The 30-year-old Poulsen wrapped up the three points in the second half. REUTER

## HIGH-OCTANE ACTION

## Beyond tragic backstories, competitiveness and rivalries take centre stage

SHIVANI NAIK  
SEPTEMBER 8

NITESH KUMAR was quick to insist he had moved on from a train accident that led to him needing a prosthetic knee down. When he became a Paralympic champion this last week, it was the crisp quality of his strokes – defense and variations – that helped him win the marathon event of para-badminton, the SL3 half court duels where rallies routinely go over 100+ shots.

His court movements were visibly difficult and his opponent Daniel Bethell held a distinct advantage whenever he made Nitesh lunge. But the strokes were sublime.

And the thrilling final stayed engrossing not for waves of surging sympathy watching the two battle – Nitesh limping around, and Bethell overcoming his cerebral palsy shortcomings. For at some point, the contest simply went beyond the inspiration-template that para-Games keep mining from watchers. And it became a simple, raw sporting contest of a yo-yoing badminton rally, where the two gladiators were tested on who

## Break-up of breakthrough show

India record best-ever haul, China emerge runaway leaders & France punch above their weight

VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 8

THE PARIS Paralympics came to a close on Sunday with a record-breaking performance by India that saw them win 29 medals (7 gold, 9 silver, 13 bronze).

## HERE ARE A FEW KEY TAKEAWAYS:

## India's women step up

At Rio 2016 it was just one medal, as Deepa Malik won silver to become the first Indian female Paralympic medallist. At Tokyo 2020, Avani Lekhara and Bhavina Patel won three medals among them. At Paris 2024, that number multiplied more than thrice as Indian women brought home a total of 11 medals among them (including one in mixed team events). That, perhaps, is the story of India's campaign as they finished 18th on the medal tally.

The tally of 29 medals and 7 gold are both all-time highs for India at the Paralympics, beating the mark set in Tokyo (19 medals and 5 gold), where India finished 24th.

Avani Lekhara, Sheetal Devi, Thulasimathi Murugesan, Manisha Ramadass, Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan, Rubina Francis, and Mona Agarwal delivered in shooting, archery and badminton. But one of the biggest takeaways from the Games for India were the three women who set the lavender track on fire at Stade de France. Track events historically haven't been India's strong suit, especially the sprints. Before Paris, India had never won a medal in a sprint event at the Paralympics.

This time around though, three women delivered in style. Preethi Pal was India's solitary double-medalist at the Games, winning bronze in 100m and 200m T35 events. Deepthi Jeevanji and Simran came into Paris as World Champions, and bagged bronze in 400m T20 and 200m T12 respectively as India set a new track record too. Kapil Parmar deserves a special mention as he added a new sport in India's list of Paralympic medals, by winning bronze in blind judo.

Elsewhere, para athletics was once again the big source of medals for India and this time around, there were new champions crowned that helped India overtake the gold medal haul from Tokyo. That, and a first-ever gold medal in archery, thanks to Harvinder Singh, ensured India have a new benchmark for LA 2028.

## China's monopoly

While the battle for the top spot between USA and China came down to the wire during the Olympics last month, the Paralympics was dominated once more by China. For the sixth Paralympics in a row, Chinese athletes have dominated the Games, a streak that began at Athens 2004. Their tally in Paris was 94 gold, 76 silver, and 50 bronze for a total of 220 medals. China made their Paralympics debut only in 1984 and took their time to get going. At the turn of the century in Sydney, China were placed



Simran came into Paris as World Champion, and bagged bronze in 400m T20 and 200m T12 respectively. Reuters

**EXPLAINED**

## Why are the Chinese head and shoulders above the rest

The Americans may have narrowly pipped China in the Olympics medal tally (40 gold apiece but the US had more medals overall) but in the Paralympics the Asian sporting giants are a clear winner by a distance. China has 220 medals including 94 golds while USA is a distant third with 105 medals (36 golds). Great Britain is in second place with 124 medals. What sets apart China from the rest of the world is its heavy funding structure for both Para and able bodied sports. In 2023 alone China is estimated to have spent \$3.2 billion on sports. In the US the government doesn't fund sports and athletes rely on private sponsors. Another reason for China's dominance is their early talent scouting and training. In the US, a majority of para athletes are from the armed forces. But in China athletes usually come from rural backgrounds. They are spotted young and absorbed into state sponsored training programs at the nascent stage itself.

6th on the table with a total of 73 medals. Rio 2016, however, remains China's most dominant campaign where they won 107 gold in an overall tally of 239 medals.

China's unreal domination of the medals tally is largely down to their haul in Para Swimming and Para Athletics. From those two sports combined, they won 103 medals with 59 coming from the Stade de France in track and field while the pool contributed 54.

There was no change in the top three as China were followed by Great Britain and

USA. The Netherlands too kept their place in the top 5. While Russia competed under the RPC banner in 2021 and finished fourth, the Neutral Paralympic Athletes (group of approved Russians and Belarusians) technically finished 5th in Paris. But the official medal tally doesn't give NPA a rank.

## French ride home support

Underneath the Eiffel Tower's glow, there was pin-drop silence. It was the men's blind football match between France and

Argentina. In blind football, sport the spectators are mandated to remain quiet when a play is on, as the sport depends on athletes listening to cues from the ball and coaches. But once the winning penalty was scored, the home crowd went bonkers. If there was a roof, it would have lifted as France won gold in this event for the first time ever. At La Chapelle during badminton too, the atmosphere was stunning as Lucas Mazur and Charles Noakes delivered gold, with the former beating India's Suhas Yathiraj in a final where the crowd made a massive difference.

The wave of support during the Paris Olympics across all venues was unmissable, but before every Paralympic Games, there is always a sense of uncertainty of whether that will be repeated. While London 2012 is widely considered to be the best-ever Paralympic Games, Rio 2016 was off to a rocky start. Controversies in the buildup led to sparse crowds early days but it got better as the Games went on. Tokyo remains an outlier. But Frenchpeople turned up in massive numbers for the Paralympics too. According to The Guardian, almost 2.5m tickets were sold and more than 90% were to French people.

So France soared into the top 10 (8th) with 19 gold and a total of 75 medals, up from 11 gold and 55 medals in Tokyo that saw them finish 14th.

Navdeep first to console Iranian opponent after disqualification

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
SEPTEMBER 8

THE INDIAN contingent won its seventh gold medal at the Paris Paralympics late on Saturday night as Navdeep Singh won the gold medal in the men's javelin throw (F41). India now have 29 medals from the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games in what is their best-ever Paralympics performance.

But the gold medal did not come without drama. With a throw of 47.32 metres in his third attempt, Navdeep had secured a silver medal behind Iran's Sadegh Beit Sayah. But shortly after the event had ended, it transpired that Sadegh Beit Sayah was disqualified for what the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) called "unsporting or improper conduct".

While there has been no statement from the IPC on the incident or an explanation given for why the Iranian was disqualified, the broadcast of the event showed that the Iranian had pulled out a black flag from his bag after sealing his gold medal. The international broadcast had immediately cut the feed and switched to a different camera right away.

## Devastating news

India's Navdeep was sitting with Sadegh Beit Sayah when they learnt that the Iranian was being stripped of his gold and the Indian would be upgraded.

"I was sitting with the Iranian when he was informed that he had been disqualified. He was stunned and started to cry. I tried to console him by embracing him. But it was difficult to understand from him what had happened. He speaks only his own language, speaks no English. I guess this was just India's day!" recollects Navdeep Singh later.

Explaining what had happened behind the scenes, Navdeep Singh said: "We were all sitting together in a room after our event was over. That's when the official came into the room and showed the Iranian a red card. I had no idea what's happening. Then it was declared that he had been disqualified. He must done something that was against the rules. I also didn't understand what he had done. Initially I thought that he was wearing a t-shirt that was not his country's official jersey."

Paralympic legend Devendra Jhajharia, who currently serves as the Paralympic Committee of India President, said: "Before any big event, you country's flag is sent to the organisers. You can't have any other flag. So he has acted with indiscipline. That's why he was disqualified. It's a rule. You have to follow that. IPC has just enforced its rules."

## Sri Lanka on course for victory

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON, SEPTEMBER 8

Sri Lanka was on course for a series-closing victory over England after reaching 94-1 in its chase for 219 to win the third test at The Oval on Sunday. After skittling England for 156, Sri Lanka kept the momentum late on Day 3 as Pathum Nissanka played beautifully for 53 not out and was enjoying a 55-run partnership with Kusal Mendis (30 not out). The tourists need 125 more runs to win, though they already lost the series after defeats in Manchester and Lord's.

England is seeking a second straight series sweep this summer, having beaten the West Indies 3-0 in July. It was a dominant day in south London for Sri Lanka, which started the day on 211-5, was dismissed for 263 to

be only 62 runs behind after the first innings and bowled out a sloppy England batting unit in 34 overs.

**Brief scores:** England 325 & 156 (Jamie Smith 67; Lahiri Kumara 4/21, Vishwa Fernando 3/40) vs Sri Lanka 263 (Dhananjaya de Silva 69, Pathum Nissanka 64, Kamil Mendis 64; Olly Stone 3/35, Josh Hull 3/53) & 94/1 (Nissanka 53 batting). Sri Lanka need 125 to win

## Moeen retires

England allrounder Moeen Ali has announced his retirement from international cricket, continuing the changing of the guard in the English game that has also seen fast-bowling greats Stuart Broad and Jimmy Anderson quit the sport over the past year.

The 37-year-old Ali, who was overlooked for the upcoming white-ball series

against Australia, said in an interview with British newspaper the Daily Mail that it was "time for the next generation." "It felt the time was right. I've done my part," said Ali, who played 68 tests, 138 one-day internationals and 92 Twenty20 internationals for England – winning the World Cup in both of the shorter forms.

Ali, who was a role model for British Muslims, said he still feels like he can compete at the highest level, but was "trying to be realistic" about his international future.

"I could hold on and try to play for England again, but I know in reality I won't," Ali told the Mail.

Matthew Mott was fired as head coach of England's limited-overs teams last month after disappointing title defenses in the ODI and T20 World Cups and the appetite for change continued with the removal from the squad of Ali and Jonny Bairstow – two senior players sharing over 400 caps.

## Ill-equipped venue awaits New Zealand and Afghanistan

Greater Noida: Afghanistan opener Ibrahim Zadran twisted his ankle while taking a catch during a fielding drill on the eve of the one-off Test match against New Zealand at the rain-soaked Manuka Oval pitch.

Afghanistan captain Hashmatullah Shahidi said they would take a call on Zadran's availability before the toss but was not impressed with the facility, which used to be home to Afghanistan cricket (ACB). "Ibrahim Zadran has sustained an injury in his ankle. He is being monitored now and we will take a call tomorrow," he said.

The incessant rain has hampered Afghanistan's one-week training camp as they only managed to eke out one three-day game instead of the planned two. On the other hand, the New Zealand cricket team's two practice sessions were completely washed out due to rain and on Sunday, they didn't even step out

for routine fielding drills due to the soggy outfield. New Zealand captain Tim Southee has put the ball in match officials' court on whether the venue is fit to host Test cricket or not. He said: "The ground conditions come under the match referee and the officials. They decide whether it is fit enough. So as players, if they say 'it's fit' then we go and play."

Both soggy and wet conditions will greet Afghanistan and New Zealand at a stadium where drainage is very poor and with the weather forecast not looking good, it is highly unlikely that there will be a possibility of play on Day 1 of the Test match. According to the Accuweather weather forecast, there is a chance of 44 per cent of rain by 10 am. The Indian Express had reported last week about the poor drainage, soggy outfields, and flooded practice pitch, which the ground-staff were trying to dry out with table fans.

PRATYUSH RAJ



Renuka Marlena of Indonesia in Para badminton action

or Indian stadium, just to watch the two go another round as Suhas problem-solves his way to seek revenge in this engaging rivalry.

Just like that, from Tokyo to Paris, para-badminton has passed the hoop where spectators watch it out of mere consideration for their tragic backstories, and has glided into sport's original territory of competitive duels, with storied rivalries, given the skills on display. The disabilities don't come in the way of a viewing experience.

It really wouldn't be a surprise if the BWF conducted para-tournaments alongside the regular year-round circuit. For if Paris was any indication, para-badminton makes for a compelling watch, and can easily get mainstreamed given the high quality of playing abilities.

## Fast and exciting

SH6, where athletes suffering from dwarfism turned out, was easily the noisiest and most enthralling events at the Paris Paralympics, and Indians already boast of legends like Krishna Nagar and now Nithya Sre in this classification. They have wicked jump smashes, their commitment to defense gives

goosebumps, and the Chinese SH6 ladies are operating at an incredible pace. The men's final with Charles Noakes vs Krysten Coombs, brought the roof down, and recorded high YouTube numbers.

Perhaps the rally of the Paris Games was played between Miles Krajewski and Victor Tavares. You can watch the American, Krajewski dive about the four corners, retrieving unreal shuttles, and bouncing back to return the next shot on loop, a hundred times. Tavares prevailed in that one, but nobody who watched the two three-and-a-little footers in action, would forget the insane quality of defense in the rallies, oozing agility and athleticism.

Wheelchair basketball boasts about some radical dunking stunts in para-sport. But SH6 has acquired a cult following of its own from Paris. Like a proper sport, people will pay to watch them SH6 pros do battle.

Para-badminton always had a swag, but it seriously needn't remain a sideshow on Super Series Sundays, and can merrily join the 5 act plays of men's and women's singles and the three doubles of able-bodied athletes, if the numbers burgeon to 32-player draws.

Randhir first Indian to become OCA president

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

SEPTEMBER 8



RANDHIR SINGH, a five-time Olympian and sports administrator, became the first Indian to become president of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) on Saturday at the 44th OCA general assembly in New Delhi.

The 77-year-old had been the OCA acting president since 2021, and was filling in for Kuwait's Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, who was handed a 15-year ban from sports administration in May this year over ethics breaches.

Singh's elevation as president from acting president was a matter of mere attendance as he ran unopposed for the 2024-2028 term. He required a 50% plus one majority from the 45 member associations gathered at the Bharat Mandapam on Sunday. Randhir received 44 of the 45 available votes with one abstention. All other five vice-presidents and executive committee members elected were also voted in unopposed.

The new OCA chief said Asia as a continent has a strong foothold in world sports. "All NOCs are standing with us united. Last year there were a lot of differences but we are united now. Since 1991, we have been one family. It is a big moment for India to host the General Assembly," he said.

There are challenges that will become necessary to deal with at the Asian level for the new OCA body, chief of which will be the burgeoning size of the Asian Games and the pressure host nations have felt hosting the continental event. More than 15,000 athletes took part in the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023 – for context, the 2024 Paris Olympics had 10,500 athletes.

"We have spoken to the Asian Football Confederation. We are trying to reduce the number of teams for the Asian Games. So, we will have a qualification before and then the qualified teams will go to the Asian Games. Because, otherwise, it becomes unmanageable," OCA deputy director general Vinod Kumar Tiwari told PTI earlier in the week.

#### Yoga as demonstration sport

Among the many decisions made at the OCA general assembly, chief was the ascension of Yoga to a demonstration sport at the 2026 Nagoya-Aichi Asian Games.

# Queen of hard courts

Sabalenka channels her easy power to lift US Open title, beating Pegula

NAMIT KUMAR  
SEPTEMBER 8

IN SUNDAY'S US Open final, Aryna Sabalenka won 22 of the 28 points she faced on Jessica Pegula's second serve.

This seemingly obscure statistic took on greater meaning because it proved to be the only point of difference in what was a thrillingly even contest despite its straight sets scoreline.

Second seed Sabalenka defeated Pegula, the World No. 6 from the United States, 7-5, 7-5 to lift her third Grand Slam title in a high-quality match full of momentum shifts in front of a boisterous New York crowd that did not let their home favourite fall till the final ball.

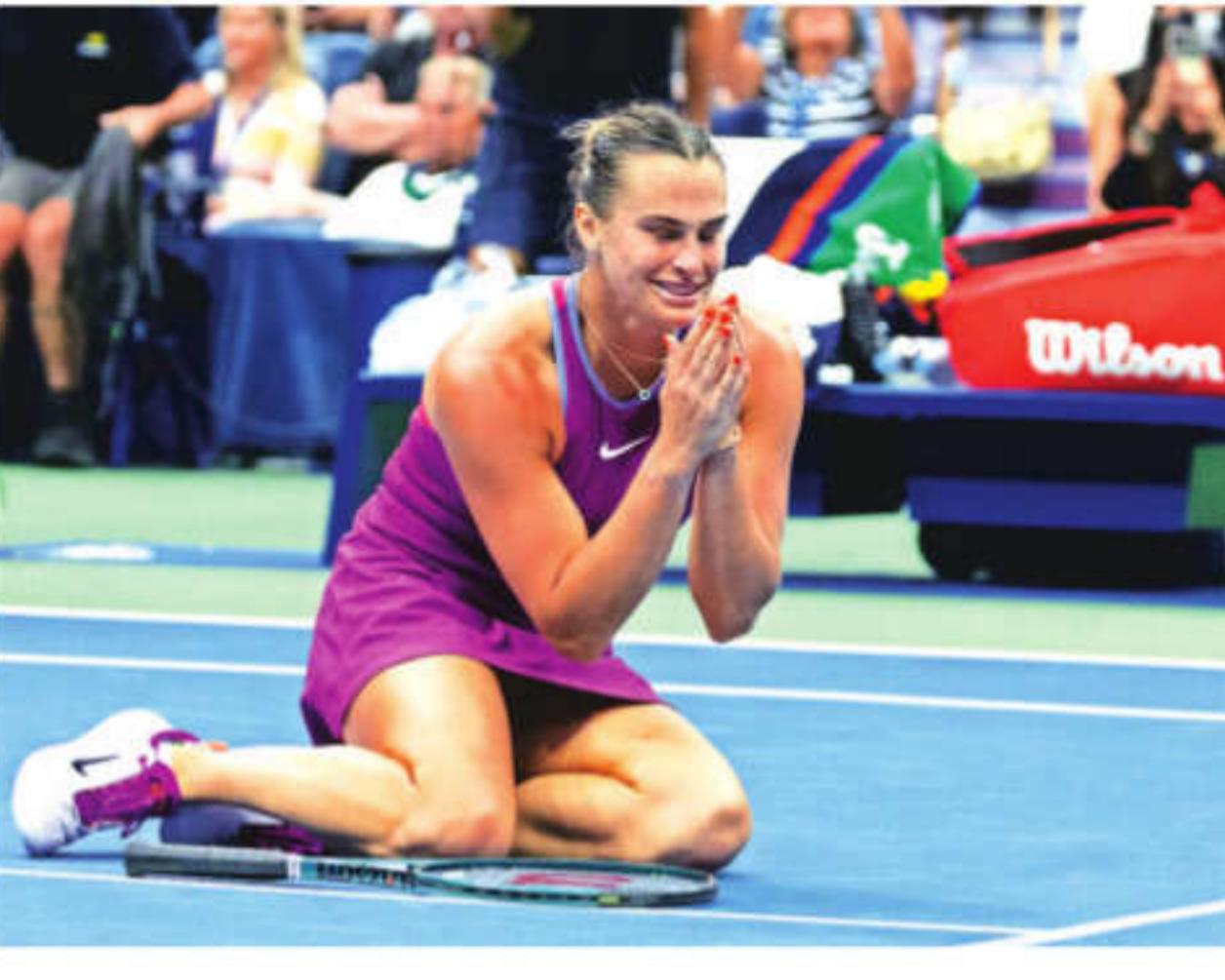
A year that opened with her in imperious form by winning the Australian Open, was marked by personal tragedy after the loss by suicide of her former boyfriend, and in which her form has been tetchy, Sabalenka ends the Grand Slam season by becoming the most successful tennis player from Belarus, overtaking Victoria Azarenka in Majors. She is also only the fifth women's singles player to win both hard court Majors in the same year.

Sabalenka came into the match as the on-paper favourite but the grit of Pegula made her a more resilient presence than the scoreline suggests. Sabalenka's commitment to overpowering her opponent and the smarts she used to be more aggressive while returning second serves took her to another gear, though, and got her over the line.

"After I lost my father, it's always been my goal to put our family name in the history of tennis," an emotional Sabalenka was later quoted as saying by The Guardian. "Every time I see my name on that trophy, I'm so proud of myself. I'm proud of my family that they never gave up on my dream and that they were doing everything they could to keep me going."

For years, despite having promising tennis talent as a teenager thanks to her impeccable timing and easy power, volatility had defined Sabalenka's career. Signs of being tentative showed up on the big stage, at the Majors especially, and her rising error counts and inexplicable double fault totals prompted her to lose matches.

But in the past two years, after incremental improvements and mental training, maturity has prevailed. The serenity that the Belarusian has developed under pressure has aided her power to make for a destructive com-



Aryna Sabalenka's average forehand topspin speed at US Open was 129 kmph, greater than that of even Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner or Novak Djokovic. USA Today

bination, even when under the pump, as she had been throughout Sunday's final.

It was Pegula who took the early lead in the first set, but the World No 2 roared back to win three games in a row by mixing her power game with variety to disrupt the rhythm, slicing and dropshotting her way out of trouble by finishing points off at the net.

Sabalenka enjoys what the tennis cognoscenti call 'easy power' – the overbearing shotmaking ability that, in repetition, allows her to break through any opponent's defences. Though there is nothing easy about the way she strikes the ball when it's in her zone. To put things into context, the Belarusian's average forehand topspin speed at the US Open was 129 kmph, greater than that of even Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner or Novak Djokovic.

That kind of power can be the catalyst for her in the big moments of tight matches, and it prevailed at the end of both sets on Sunday.

Serving for the opener at 5-3, Pegula put together a phenomenal return game to pile the pressure back on Sabalenka. At 5-5, the composition was lost, she was down double break point and was smashing her racquet. Just then, a big ace and huge backhand down the line followed. The crucial hold was found and a tight

final game from Pegula, and five set points later, she escaped with the lead.

The momentum had shifted, the second set seemed to be a foregone conclusion as Sabalenka was 3-0, 40-30 up on Pegula's serve just as the star-filled crowd -- from Noah Lyles to Lewis Hamilton -- willed her on for a remarkable comeback. Relying on timing and defence, Pegula broke through Sabalenka to win five games in a row and put herself in a position to serve for the set, when, for Sabalenka, volatility was replaced by serenity once again.

Last year, Sabalenka had been in the ascendancy in the US Open final against another home favourite, Coco Gauff. She had been striking the ball clean and breaking Gauff's defences with winners before unnecessary errors allowed Gauff a route back into the match, which she rode all the way to a comeback victory.

Sabalenka was not keen to let history repeat itself. Despite Pegula's relentlessness, the enormity of the weight of her shots meant this match too was on her racquet, and down 3-5 in the second, she locked in and played her best tennis, overwhelming her opponent, ending the match with 40 winners, and taking a first title at Flushing Meadows.

# Pant, Rahul return as India pick strong squad

VENKATA KRISHNA B  
CHENNAI, SEPTEMBER 8

**SQUAD FOR 1ST TEST**  
Rohit Sharma (c), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul, Sarfaraz Khan, Rishabh Pant (wk), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep, Jasprit Bumrah, Yash Dayal.

only one ODI during the tour of Sri Lanka.

Having undergone a severe right-knee surgery that required ligament reconstruction, there are still doubts as to whether Pant would be able to keep in all the 10 Tests, especially when there is a short turnaround during the home season. Between each of their five home Tests, India have only a three-day gap including the travel day. While a three-match T20I series is sandwiched between the Tests against Bangladesh and New Zealand, there are concerns if Pant will be able to manage such a grueling schedule especially while standing up to the spinners.

The Indian Express understands that like Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj - whose workload will also be managed during the home season - Pant will also be kept under close watch. With Jurel showing immense promise and assurance in front and behind the stumps, India are not fretting too much about and would take a call on a match-by-match basis. If the need arises, India can play Pant as a specialist batsman and hand the wicketkeeping duties to Jurel.

#### Packed middle order

Having taken the field against England with a batting line-up that was thin on experience, the return of Kohli and Rahul meant there was no space for any of the young crop, Sarfaraz Khan, who made an impressive start to his Test career against England retained his spot and is the lone reserve batsman in the squad. Rohit, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill will make India's top three. With Ashwin and Jadeja being sure starters, India continue to retain the batting depth that has been carrying them in Tests, especially at home.

The Indian Express understands that with three spinners expected to make the XI, India will rotate between Bumrah and Siraj to keep them fresh for the tour of Australia. With Akash continuing to impress in the Duleep Trophy, he is expected to play a huge role with the selectors looking at him as a third seamer.

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Vol XCII-258 Regd.No. DL-21046/03-05 R.N.I. No.506/1957 Printed and Published by R.C.Malhotra on behalf of The Indian Express (P) Limited and Printed at The Indian Express (P) Limited Press, A-8, Sector-7, Noida -201301 and Hindustan Media Ventures Ltd., Maua-Daryapur, Police Station-Shahpur, Danapur District-Patna, Bihar-801503 and Published at The Indian Express (P) Limited, Mezzanine Floor, Express Building, 9 & 10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110002. Editorial office: The Indian Express (P) Limited, Mezzanine Floor, Express Building, 9 & 10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: 0120-6651500. Advertising office: The Indian Express (P) Ltd., Express Building, B1/B, Rammath Goenka Marg, Sector 10, Noida-201301. Chairman of the Board: Vivek Goenka, Chief Editor: Raj Kamal Jha, Editor: Unni Rajen Shanker, Editor (Delhi): Rakesh Sinha \*\*\* Responsible for selection of News under the PRB Act. Copyright: The Indian Express (P) Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Indian Express®