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**PUNJAB REJIGS CABINET**

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

**KANCHAN VASDEV**  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

ALMOST A week after the successor to Capt Amarinder Singh took oath, the new Punjab Cabinet was sworn in by Governor Banwari Lal Purohit in the presence of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and Deputy Chief Ministers Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and O P Soni at Raj Bhawan around 4.30 pm on Sunday evening.

There are seven new faces in the Channi ministry: Raja Warring, the two-time MLA from Gidderbaha; Dr Raj Kumar

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Former hockey captain Pargat Singh being sworn in as minister at Punjab Raj Bhawan in Chandigarh on Sunday. PTI

### Hours before swearing-in, many add/drops, demotions, protests

**KANCHAN VASDEV**  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

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

The party was barely able to decide on all the names of ministers till a few hours before the oath taking ceremony. It had not submitted the list till afternoon. At the

last minute, PPCC working president and Fatehgarh Sahib MLA, Kuljit Nagra's name was dropped. Amloh MLA, Kaka Randeep Singh Nabha was included instead.

While the list was finalised by senior party leaders including Rahul Gandhi, K C Venugopal, Harish Chaudhary, Harish Rawat and Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi Wednesday, they had to tweak it further late Friday. After a protest by Nabha, Channi had two V-Cs with Rahul Gandhi. They

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## Elections coming, UP expands Cabinet: 7 new Ministers in BJP 'social balance'

**MAULSHREE SETH**  
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 26

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

The party's move comes in UP barely 10 days after it revamped the entire Cabinet in Gujarat, which goes to polls later next year.

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

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

### EXPLAINED Signal before state polls

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

Paltu Ram and Dinesh Khatri (SC), and Sanjeev Kumar Gond (ST). "Today's expansion gives representation to all sections, has been done with the feeling of social balance, and carries the message of harmony," Adityanath said, adding that it gives an opportunity to those at the lower

strata of society.

State BJP leaders told The Indian Express that apart from Prasada, the others are leaders who "worked their way up from the grassroots within the party". They include Chhatrapal Gangwar, who hails from Bareilly and represents the Kurmi community, Sangita Balwant Bind from Ghazipur, and Dharamveer Prajapati from Agra.

Paltu Ram is from Balrampur, Dinesh Khatri from Meerut in western UP, and Gond from eastern UP's Sonbhadra where his community is a key player in electoral politics.

While Adityanath stressed that the expansion gives representation to all sections from across the state, the opposition SP described the exercise as a "mere illusion" with an eye on the state polls to be held early next year.

"It is a drama being played to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## Work with no fear of contempt of court, says Tripura CM

**Opp attacks Biplab Kumar Deb****DEBRAJ DEB**  
AGARTALA, SEPTEMBER 26

TRIPURA CHIEF Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has appeared in a video asking officials and executives to work for the people without fear of committing contempt of court, because "we are a by-the-people government, not by-the-court government".

The Trinamool Congress attacked Deb as a "disgrace to the entire nation" and asked whether the Supreme Court would take cognizance of his statements.

The media adviser to the chief minister retorted that critics should listen to the full speech before spreading "fake" news.

The BJP said it was "wrong" to interpret the CM's comments as an endorsement of contempt of court. Deb himself did not respond to the video that went viral on social media on Sunday.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



### SPOT INSPECTION

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

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

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

THE LACK of development is the main reason for dissatisfaction in the districts where Maoists are active, and it is important to have uninterrupted development to wean the youth away from the

movement, Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday.

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

Six chief ministers were present; four states were represented only by their chief secretaries and directors general of police.

"The root cause of dissatisfac-

tion is that development has not reached there...since independence and...it is very essential to ensure accessibility to fast-paced development so that common and innocent people do not join them," the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) quoted Shah as having said during the meeting.

Without that, "neither we will be able to spread democracy

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

**WORLD**

### GERMANS VOTE TO DECIDE MERKEL SUCCESSOR

TALIBAN ASK AIRLINES TO RESUME INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS [PAGE 11](#)

**BUSINESS AS USUAL**

By UNNNY

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

CURTAINS BISECTING rooms "like in hospitals", cubicles with curtains fitted with jaalis, and separate shifts for women and men. More than a month after the Taliban took over Afghanistan, these are among

the elaborate plans drawn up by prominent public universities to implement the new regime's gender segregation policy.

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

26,000 and 10,000 students respectively -- face an anxious wait. There are nearly 12,000 women studying in Kabul University and 1,000 in Kandahar University, including 300 from other provinces accommodated in the dormitories.

Many private universities with fewer students have resumed classes.

"Public universities can only

reopen once they have the money. We also have to remember that public universities have many more students in one class than private universities. In private universities, there are only about 10 to 20 students in each class and hence separating men and women in such classes is much simpler. We have about 100 to 150 students in one class.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## Rajasthan shuts down internet, businesses as nearly 16 lakh appear for teacher examination

**PAGE 1 ANCHOR****HAMZA KHAN**  
JAIPUR, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

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

Barring Jaisalmer, where Vice



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

President M Venkaiah Naidu and his wife Usha Naidu arrived on Sunday, internet services remained suspended for different

durations across the state on the orders of the Divisional Commissioners.

In Jaipur division, Divisional

Commissioner Dinesh Kumar Yadav issued orders for suspension of internet services in Alwar, Dausa, Jaipur, Jhunjhunu and Sikar. In his order, Yadav said it has become necessary to suspend, "2G/3G/4G/ Data (mobile internet), internet services, bulk SMS/MMS WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and other Social Media Services through Internet Service Providers (except voice calls and broadband internet)."

In Jaipur Urban, orders were issued for suspension of the internet for 10 hours between 7 am and 5 pm; in Jaipur Rural, it was between 7.30 am and 5.30 pm. Internet services were suspended for 12 hours, between 6 am and 6 pm, in Alwar, Dausa,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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# FROM PAGE ONE

## Channi ministry

Verka, three-time legislator from Amritsar; three-time MLA Sangat Singh Gilzian; two-time MLA from Jalandhar Cantt, Pargat Singh; four-time MLA Randeep Nabha; Gurkirat Kotli, the grandson of former chief minister Beant Singh and also a two-time legislator; and Rana Gurjit Singh, a former minister who had resigned from the Amarinder Singh ministry in 2018 amidst allegations of corruption.

Eight former ministers have been retained: Brahm Mohindra, Manpreet Badal, Sukhinder Sarkaria, Triptaj Rajinder Singh Bajwa, Vijay Inder Singla, Aruna Chaudhary, Razia Sultana, and Bharat Bhushan Ashu.

The Doaba region, which had only one representative in the Amarinder cabinet, has got three ministers now. The most populous Malwa region has nine ministers, and Majha seven. The Amarinder cabinet had 11 ministers from Malwa, including the chief minister himself.

Sadhu Singh Dharamsot, Sunder Shyam Arora, Rana Gurmeet Sodhi, Balbir Singh Sidhu, and Gurpreet Kangar, who were part of the previous ministry, have been dropped.

Randeep Singh Nabha, 54, was included in the list of ministers at the eleventh hour. He had protested after the list was finalised, and had threatened to chalk out his future course of action himself. The Congress high command gave in to pressure and replaced PCC working president Kuljit Singh Nagra with Nabha.

Raj Kumar Verka: 58, the Valmiki face of the party, had been in the running for a ministerial berth ever since the Amarinder Singh government came to power.

Sangat Singh Gilzian, 67, who is also working president of the PPCC, had resigned from all posts after he was denied a berth by Amarinder. He had subsequently supported Navjot Singh Sidhu in his revolt against the former CM.

Hockey Olympian Pargat Singh is a close aide of Sidhu's, and had joined the Congress ahead of the 2017 Assembly election. He is also the PPCC general secretary, and has been vociferous in raising issues against Captain. He was ignored by Amarinder and not inducted in his Cabinet.

Raja Amrinder Singh Warring, 43, is the youngest minister in the cabinet, who has beaten back strong protests against his induction by Manpreet Badal. A well-known baiter of Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Badal and his wife Harsimrat, who defeated him from the Bathinda Lok Sabha seat in 2017, Warring was an IYC chief from 2015 to 2018, and is considered close to Rahul Gandhi.

Beant Singh's grandson Gurkirat Singh Kotli had faced trial in the infamous Katia molestation case. He had been angry with Amarinder for not including him in the 2017 ministry.

The Channi ministry has nine Jat Sikhs, four Hindus, three SCs, one OBC, and two women.

It will be after a gap of two years that the Cabinet will have no vacancy. With 18 berths in total, including the CM, the Cabinet had 17 ministers for two years after Navjot Singh had resigned. Channi's Cabinet now has 17 ministers.

Though there is no Mazhabi Sikh in the Cabinet despite Sidhu was pushing for Sukhwinder Singh Danny in place of Aruna Chaudhary, the Cabinet has AICC leader Rahul Gandhi's stamp on it. He commandeered the selection of ministers and till the last minute, when Kuljit Nagra was dropped from the final list, was in constant touch with Channi.

The party has tried to strike a balance of region, caste and community in the Cabinet. Congress has three women MLAs, of whom two are in the Cabinet.

While the party has conveyed

a strong message by dropping the closest aide of former CM Capt Amarinder Singh, Rana Gurmeet Singh Sodhi, it has accommodated eight ministers from his Cabinet. In the process, the party prevented a number of leaders from joining his camp and posing a threat to it. At the same time, it has dropped five ministers, all of whom have been in the midst of controversy lately.

By inducting leaders with a clean image like Pargat Singh, the party has also conveyed a message that integrity matters. However, the induction of Kapurthala MLA Rana Gurjit Singh — who was dropped from the Amarinder Cabinet over allegedly pocketing sand mining contracts in the names of his employees — has evoked protests within the party with seven leaders of Doaba writing to the top leaders. His name, however, was cleared by a probe panel.

Sources said the party has chosen Rana Gurjit to counter the SAD-BSP combine in Doaba. He is considered a strong leader of the region and was warming up to SAD with his three MLAs.

Brahm Mohindra is the one of the senior-most Congressmen of the state. He was local bodies minister in Amarinder's Cabinet. He was tipped to be the deputy CM but his name was dropped at the eleventh hour. Mohindra is a well-connected Congress leader. He had sided with Captain in the revolt against him.

Former finance minister Manpreet Singh Badal is nephew of former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal and had been with SAD earlier. An MLA from Bathinda, Manpreet had put in a word for Channi to AICC leader Priyanka Gandhi before he was named the CM of the state.

Triptaj Bajwa, former rural development and panchayats minister, spearheaded the revolt against Amarinder. He was all set to be dropped from the Cabinet citing that he was over 70 years. But it was felt that he should be rewarded for the revolt.

Aruna Chaudhary is also a former Cabinet minister. She is related to Channi. She was also set to be dropped but was retained as she is a representative of the SC community.

Sukhinder Singh Sarkaria, former housing and water resources minister, was also among those who had revolted against Captain.

Razia Sultana is the only Muslim face in the Cabinet. She was in Amarinder's Cabinet as well. An MLA from Malerkotla, she is the wife of former DGP Mohd Mustafa, who was ignored by Amarinder for the post of DGP. Mustafa, once considered close to Amarinder, is Navjot Singh's strategic advisor now.

Vijay Inder Singla, who was also a minister in Amarinder's Cabinet was considered close to former CM. Being a Hindu face of the party, he was not dropped.

Bharat Bhushan Ashu, former food minister in Amarinder's Cabinet, was also retained as he is considered a strong Hindu face. Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, a vociferous Badal baiter too found a berth in Cabinet this time despite Manpreet Badal opposing his induction. Sidhu is learnt to have supported him to the hilt.

**INPUTS FROM ABHISHEK ANGAD, AISHWARYA MOHANTY, IRAM SIDDIQUE**

Hours before swearing-in, many add/drops, demotions, protests

had deliberated on dropping Gurkirat Singh Kotli from the list, but later changed their minds as he was former chief minister Beant Singh's grandson. His grandfather was associated with

routing of the militancy from the state and was well-liked in Punjab.

Sources said they finally decided to drop Nagra, who however said he was never on the list. "It was a narrative created by the media. I am willing to sacrifice anything for the sake of the party and will continue to be soldier of the party. I had resigned from the Vidhan Sabha on farm laws. I am not even an MLA. How can I be a minister?" he asked. His resignation was never accepted by the Speaker.

**RAWAT DEFENDS FLIP-FLOP, RANA GURJIT**

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

Defending the induction of Rana Gurjit Singh, Rawat said, "Where is the controversy? He was exonerated by a departmental inquiry against him. Where is the taint?"

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

**DEMOTION FOR SOME MINISTERS**

Brahm Mohindra, who was the second-most senior minister in Amarinder's Cabinet, has been demoted to no. 4 after Channi took oath with two other ministers. Now Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, deputy CM, is the no. 2, with OP Soni being no. 3 in the pecking order. Manpreet Badal, who was earlier at no. 3 is now at no. 5 and so on. Triptaj Bajwa, who was no. 4 is now at no. 6. Aruna Chaudhary was on no. 6 and now on no. 7.

There has been a promotion for Sukhinder Sarkaria, who was earlier on no. 12 and this time on no. 7. Razia was on no. 7 but has been pushed to no. 8 now. Vijay Inder Singla was on no. 14, and is now no. 10. Bharat Bhushan Ashu was on no. 16, now no. 11.

**DAY OF PROTESTS**

Sunday was a day of protests as seven MLAs and leaders — Navtej Cheema, Sukhpal Khaira, Mohinder Singh Kaypee, BS Dhaliwal, Avtar Henry Junior, Pawan Adya — shot off a letter to the PPCC chief stating that a shell company of Rana Gurjit Singh had taken Rs 5 crore from a seamster Gurinder Singh and he had to resign from the Cabinet. They demanded he be replaced with an SC leader.

Two former ministers, Balbir Sidhu and Gurpreet Kangar, also questioned the high command as to why they were removed.

**Caste census**

closely, this is not just our demand. The demand has been raised in many states, not just in Bihar. It will be in the national interest."

Nitish said political parties in Bihar will now chart the future course of action on the matter over which he had led a 10-party delegation from the state, including JD(U)'s principal rival RJD, to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 23.

On September 23, submitting an affidavit in response to Maharashtra's request that the data of the 2011 socio-economic census be revealed, the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment had informed the apex court that the data was "unusable" as it contains many technical flaws.

Referring to that submission, the Bihar Chief Minister stressed that ruling out a caste census citing errors in the 2011 exercise would be "wrong". He said that such a census was needed to get "a clear idea about the situation".

"It will help in identifying

# Elections coming, UP expands Cabinet

give representation to those whose rights were snatched... By the time the ink on nameplates of these Ministers dry, the election notification would be out for the 2022 Assembly polls," SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said.

While the stress in Sunday's expansion is on the OBC community, Prasad's induction is in line with a push from all parties to woo the Brahmin vote. The inductions, however, did not cover the influential Jat community from western UP, which is protesting over the Centre's farm laws — the state government has announced a hike in sugarcane prices.

The exercise ignored former bureaucrat-turned-politician A K Sharma, who had served in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). While some party leaders say Sharma has mainly been given an organisational role, others point out that he had taken VRS to enter politics ahead of UP elections.

The inductions also indicate a sense of desperation within the BJP, with the state polls looming, as it comes during the "pitri-paksha" period considered to be inauspicious by Hindus when such changes, especially in politics, are usually avoided.

Prasada, who is the son of former Congress veteran, the late Jitendra Prasad, joined the BJP in June. Former Union MoS in the Congress-led UPA government and ex-Lok Sabha MP from Dhaurahra, the 47-year-old hails from Shahjahanpur and was once regarded as the "youth face" of the Congress.

Prasada, incidentally, had undertaken a Brahmin Chetna

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so that they can see the teacher, the class and the board through it," Wasiq said.

Like Takhar University, for classes with more than 15 women, Kandahar University has proposed to call students in shifts — morning for women and afternoon for men.

But implementing the proposals will put a strain on the finances of the cash-strapped institutes, some of which have not been able to pay salaries to teachers since Kabul fell to the Taliban. For now, Kandahar University has sought roughly \$6,200 from the government, Takhar University \$19,000, and Helmund \$12,000 to introduce the segregation measures, and for classroom furniture.

Undergraduate education in Afghanistan's public universities is free. Students are not charged any tuition fee, and those living in hostels and dormitories are provided free food and lodging.

Meanwhile, a recent development at Kabul University has deepened worries that the Taliban administration's approach leaves very little room for institutional autonomy. A source in the university said the Taliban sacked its chancellor after the institute sought some flexibility in implementing the gender policy, such as permitting women to sit in separate rows where putting up partitions appeared impractical.

"Kabul University runs around 560 programmes and has around 250 classes. We had told the government (before the new Chancellor's appointment) that splitting up classes and teaching women separately is not immediately feasible. It's not possible to carve out separate spaces (for women) for everything. How do we do that for libraries and laboratories? Also, there is an expectation that women should only be taught by women. Female teachers make up about 20% of the 900 faculty of Kabul University. How can 170 to 180 women teachers teach almost 12,000 female students? Splitting up classes means doubling teaching hours, so we need twice the number of faculty members," the source said, adding that the university, in its plan to the Ministry of Higher Education, had suggested "gradual implementation" of the gender policy.

The Kabul University source said the Taliban, in its response to the proposal, reiterated the need to strictly enforce gender segregation. It has also asked the university to consider shifting women students to their local provinces if it cannot hold separate classes for men and women under the present circumstances. "But Kabul University has its own curriculum. So moving students to other institutions is not feasible," the source added. The Indian Express could not reach the new chancellor, Mohammad Ashraf Ghairat, for comment.

The Kandahar and Helmand University Chancellors, however, said there is no ban on men teaching women.

In the case of relatively newer

chief minister said.

Deb asked officials to work with "niyat, neeti, and niyam" (good intentions, principles, and regulations). "Don't work only if CM, Secretary or the DM asks you to. You will become exceptional if you work on your own. If you are on the field, distributing relief and ration in a flood before the chief secretary arrives, people will remember you," he said.

**Shah tells states**

to the bottom nor will we be able to develop the underdeveloped areas," he said, according to the Odisha statement.

Chief Ministers Uddhav Thackeray of Maharashtra, Hemant Soren of Jharkhand, K Chandrashekar Rao of Telangana, Nitish Kumar of Bihar, Shivraj Singh Chouhan of Madhya Pradesh, and Naveen Patnaik of Odisha attended the meeting.

West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala were represented by top officials.

Several states asked for security-related expenditure and development funds for LWE districts to be increased.

Invoking "cooperative federalism", Soren said it "did not seem pragmatic" for the Centre to "demand money" from states for the deployment of central forces in LWE-affected areas.

"The central and state governments have to deal with this problem together on the principle of cooperative federalism... Till now a bill of Rs 10,000 crore has been raised by the Ministry of Home Affairs against the state of Jharkhand in this regard. It is my humble request that these bills be written off. Also, the Government of India should take a decision not to send such bills to state governments in the future," Soren said, according to a Jharkhand government release.

Patnaik said Odisha had kept up efforts to curb LWE activities despite the pandemic, and "from 70 per cent of the districts being affected during the peak (of the Naxal problem), now we have hardly parts of three districts affected by LWE".

He listed five development proposals for LWE-affected areas, including four-laning of NH 326 from Jeyapore to Motu via Malkangiri upto Bhadrachalam; railway networks between Malkangiri and Bhadrachalam (153 km), and Nabrangpur and Junagarh (118 km); mobile phone access to all villages of the state through an estimated 2,000 more mobile base stations; setting up banks in LWE-affected areas within a year or two; and conducting a study to determine how many children from LWE-affected areas across the country get into national-level exams like NEET, IIT, or JEE.

Sources said Thackeray demanded Rs 1,200 crore under the Security-Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme and for development projects in Maharashtra. The state told the meeting that it wanted to increase the numbers of police posts, develop new schools, and set up mobile phone towers in the Naxal-affected districts, the sources said.

Chouhan spoke about the efforts made by the state's security forces to combat the Maoists, and the various development initiatives of his government in LWE-affected areas.

Over 23,000 self-help groups of women and others, covering 2.64 lakh families had been set up in the Naxal affected Balaghat, Mandla, and Dindori districts, Chouhan is learnt to have said. According to the Madhya Pradesh government, some 10,000 youths have got jobs in these districts since April 2020.

Sources said it was emphasised during the meeting that states should conduct joint operations because Naxals keep moving across state borders.

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CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

THE FIRST phase of polling for Registered Graduate Constituency of Senate saw 14.66 per cent voting. The polling was held at 211 polling booths out of 272 booths spread across the states of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Chandigarh.

Vikram Nayyar, registrar and the returning officer, Senate elections, said the total number of voters registered at these polling booths was 2,87,997 and out of these, 42,228 voters came forward to cast their votes. The percentage of votes polled is 14.66%.

Voting at all the polling booths passed off smoothly. People, who came to cast their votes, included 83-year-old Chitranshi Singh. The highest voting took place in booths situated in Muktsar district with 25.60 per cent of the polling. The least polling took place in Delhi with merely 1.69 per cent. As many as 77 voters out of a total of 4,565 turned up to cast their votes. In Chandigarh, 8.65 per cent voting was reported and



During the polling at Panjab University in Chandigarh on Sunday. Express

4,414 voters out of 47,548 turned up to cast their votes.

The strongroom for the votes is situated at Panjab University under the close supervision of Chandigarh Police and PU security. As much as 17.25 per cent voting took place in Panchkula, 18.52 per cent in Una district, 11.54% voting took place in Solan district. As much as 9.90 per cent voting took place in Sirmour. As much as 20.41 per cent voting took place in Ropar while 12.02 per cent voting took place in Ambala.

Mohali's Ambedkar institute to provide 100 seats for MBBS

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE  
MOHALI, SEPTEMBER 26

ADMISSIONS TO the Ambedkar Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS) will start for 2021-2022 session and the institute will admit 100 students from this academic year.

The institute has already got a letter of permission from the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) after fulfilling the remaining formalities. The MARB had approved 100 seats for the institute and found that the institute still had a faculty deficiency of 8 per cent which the management will fulfil and inform the National Medical Commission (NMC) within a stipulated time period.

Anandpur Sahib MP and former Union minister Manish Tewari said that the NMC for Mohali- based medical college has approved the admission of students for MBBS seats.

He said that all-round development of Shri Anandpur Sahib Lok Sabha constituency was his sole objective. In a similar vein, the Ambedkar Institute of Medical Sciences has been set up in Mohali, where people will get world-class healthcare facilities.

He added that with this sanction, students would get admission in 100 seats of MBBS from this academic year.

The MARB had made the assessment of the facility regarding the infrastructure in the institute.

THIRD WAVE OF CORONAVIRUS

‘No evidence that children will be more infected’

PARUL  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

“THERE IS no scientific evidence that children will be more infected during the third wave,” said Dr Piyush Gupta, President of Central Indian Academy of Pediatrics (CIAP), during the on-going North Zone Pedicon 2021 held by the Association of Pediatricians of Chandigarh here on Sunday.

During the conference, faculty members of institutions of national and international repute presented talks and papers on various aspects of child health, discussing extensively about Covid-19 and its impact on the mental, physical and emotional health of children.

Children, during the first and second wave were 90 per cent asymptomatic and were infected by adults, who were Covid-19 positive. The death rate was low because of less severity of infection and those who had severe infection were already immunocompromised, had immunity and heart issues and were vulnerable. Covid-19 infection in children in some cases has resulted in the Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in children, but the proportion is small, said Dr Gupta.

Highlighting the issue of anxiety among children regarding Covid-19, he said, “A child asked a paediatrician recently if he was going to die because of Covid-19. The issue of concern right now is the rising anxiety among children regarding COVID-19, and the third wave, with many facing loneliness and confusion.”

On the looming threat of the third wave, he said: “Nobody can predict the third wave. All of us have failed when it comes to predictions about Covid-19 and how the virus will behave, mutate and affect the larger population. As a doctor, I can tell that paediatric facilities have been upgraded across the country on account of the fear of the third wave, which was the need of the hour, and we are prepared and equipped to handle tough situations.” The doctor, who is also a senior professor, said that the working of the virus is gradually learnt, like the Spanish Flu ended with the third wave but “we cannot say how the coronavirus will mutate. We may have herd immunity against one variant, but not against another.”

Regarding the issue of vaccination of children, Dr Gupta agreed that vaccination is important to break the chain of infection, especially since everything is

opening up. “In a couple of months, we will have vaccination for the age group 12 to 18 years. Right now, there is a long process of framing of policies for this exercise,” said Dr Gupta.

TRICITY: 3 NEW COVID CASES, 1 VIRUS-RELATED DEATH

The Tricity reported 3 new cases and one Covid-related death on Sunday.

Mohali: One death, 3 cases

One more death was reported in Mohali district Sunday, taking the total number of fatalities to 1,064. As many as three positive cases were also reported, increasing the number of cases to 68,717 with 28 active cases.

Chandigarh: 1 new case

The UT reported one new Covid-19 case on Sunday, taking the tally of cases to 65,210. There are 41 active cases here now. In the last 24 hours, 2,340 samples have been tested for the virus.

Panchkula: 1 case, no death

One new Covid positive case was reported in Panchkula on Sunday. There was no Covid-related death. The active cases tally stood at 20. A total of 40,421 cases have so far been here.

GBP Group investors protest, demand arrest of owners

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE  
MOHALI, SEPTEMBER 26

HUNDREDS OF investors of GBP Group gathered at the project site of the private housing company in Zirakpur on Sunday and demanded the arrest of the promoters of the company who have allegedly duped hundreds of people to the tune of several crores.

The investors gathered at the site of the Athens Housing Project that was being developed by GBP Group. Recently, Zirakpur police booked four promoters of the group for the alleged fraud, however, the accused have not been arrested yet.

Gulshan Bansal, one of the investors, said that he had invested in the project in 2016 and was to get the possession of his property in 2019, but it never happened. He added that most of the investors who gathered at the site on Sunday had paid around 80 per cent of the total amount.

Arvind Rana, another investor said that most of the investors worked in private companies and had to pay EMIs as well as the rents, and many of them have been facing pay cuts due to the pandemic. “We had been trying to contact the company for the past 10 days but were not getting

any response, most of the investors who had come to the protest on Sunday had invested in Athens project, but now we are also contacting the other investors who had invested in other projects of the company,” Rana added.

The investors alleged that the banks are also in hands-in-glove with the owners of the company, as the banks kept charging the EMIs but failed to keep a watch on the private firm owners. The investors alleged that the banks kept giving money to the owners of the GBP Group.

The company allegedly fled after duping hundreds of people. It also closed its offices at Derabassi and Zirakpur.

Zirakpur police has booked the owners of the company on charges of criminal breach of trust and cheating.

SECURITY STAFF MAKE WAY FOR THIEVES

As the owners of GBP Group had allegedly fled after duping the investors, the company's offices in Zirakpur were abandoned by the security staff. Thieves stepped in and took away the furniture and construction material. The Zirakpur police found that some people were trying to flee with some items which they left in the fields.

Servant drugs woman employer, makes off with cash, jewellery

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

A DOMESTIC servant is suspected of drugging his woman employer and stealing cash along with gold ornaments in Sector 19 government quarters Sunday. Police said the incident happened Saturday but the theft came to light on Sunday.

The suspect is identified as Rinku. The house was allotted to the doctor husband of the victim woman. The victim's husband is posted in Civil Hospital, Mani Majra. He was out of station when the incident occurred. The woman reported to the police that her servant took away around Rs 5

lakh in cash and gold ornaments, which were kept in a locker.

Police sources said Rinku gave food laced with intoxicant substances to the woman, who lost consciousness. In the meantime, Rinku stole the cash and ornaments from the locker. Police said the woman had gained her consciousness late in the evening on Saturday. By then, Rinku was there. He told the woman that he is going to meet his friends but never returned. Police said that on Sunday, the woman checked the locker and found cash along with gold ornaments missing.

Police have started an investigation. A report was lodged at Sector 19 police station.

Le Corbusier: The curator of Chandigarh’s urban landscape

MAKING OF CHANDIGARH

SANGEETA BAGGA

CHANDIGARH is considered the most modern city of India, built to fill the void left by the loss of Lahore. It was a departure from the existing modes of thought with a great responsibility: to provide the best of amenities to all classes of people. Chandigarh was also the first complete realisation of Le Corbusier's urban precepts and the surrounding landscape.



A building in Chandigarh designed by Le Corbusier (above) and the logo (left) of the Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's forum. File

Who was Le Corbusier?

A Swiss-born French architect who adopted the pseudonym Le Corbusier, meaning crow, Charles Edouard Jeanneret Gris was the strongest protagonist of the Modern Movement whose quest for precision and artistic pursuit was inherited from a father, a watch dial engraver, and a musician mother.

His journey from the Alpine – Jura landscape to the plains of Punjab produced a 450,000-strong archive, which includes a vast repository of sketches, paintings, sketchbooks, drawings, maps, sculptures, artwork, poetry, and above all, the most majestic and provoking ensembles of architecture.

Corbusier is often criticised for treating his architecture as an object disconnected from the context. But that is not so.

Corbusier's greatest 'Landscape Project' in Chandigarh, its The Spiritual Directeur, was the Capitol Complex where he designed an 'optical apparatus' to capture and frame the views of the Shivaliks. The Capitol Complex exhibited his concerns for the site and the urban landscape.

On the verdant plain of Chandigarh, visually closed off by the Shivalik hills, Corbusier revisited the epiphany of the Acropolis in Athens, which he had documented in his sketchbooks during his travels, the Voyage d'Orient. It was the ideal placement of the city at the foothills of the emerald hills and the Capitol Complex was its noblest element. It was due to his respect for this context that his

original buildings, which were planned in a linear fashion, had to be rearranged to be perpendicular to the Shivalik range so as not to block the view.

The initial sketches were buildings in two groups, the High Court on the one side and the Assembly and Secretariat on the other, with a large central open space between them, thus offering the extended view of the mountains. A single structure, the Open Hand, was to rise atop a tall podium in this space. Working on this scheme, the composition became tighter and more geometric to include four majestic edifices and six monuments arrayed atop a 5-metre-high plaza where the 'pedestrian is the king' in eternal contact with nature. The creation of the symbolic axis depicted by the ceremonial path, the Jan Marg linking the city centre Sector 17, to the Capitol Complex, brought the citizens to the 'seat of

Administration'.

The new composition created a 1,400-metre-long Capitol and formed two equal squares, each divided into four equal sections, 350m on one side. Peripheral obelisks marking the boundaries of the Capitol Parc, as Le Corbusier called it, and a water channel forming its southern boundary, were seemingly inspired from the landscape architecture of the Mughal gardens of Pinjore, which Corbusier visited prior to his final sketches of the Capitol.

Corbusier's visits to the Mughal Gardens at Red Fort and the presidential Palace designed by Lutyens where he had his earliest meetings with Pandit Nehru were opportunities to appreciate architectural and natural compositions structured according to end points that identify notable elements of the landscape.

Thus began the story of Chandigarh, amidst the disci-



plines of local climate, a shoestring budget, and indigenous materials and methods of construction. With its theme of 'Sun, Space and Verdure', it was to be "a capital that would serve as a model in city planning for the nation, if not for the world". The Capitol Complex as its ceremonial and administrative head also represents the first-ever largescale use of the modern material -- Reinforced cement concrete. Cast and poured in situ with plastic qualities, it created the sculptural skylights and magnificent ramps for the Assembly Chambers, the parasols in the Secretariat, and porticos in the High Court. To add richness to the monochromatic concrete were the hand-painted ceremonial doors, the colourful tapestries or nomadic murals as Corb called them depicting Indian motifs and forms from nature.

Corbusier's Capitol Parc stands tall today as the largest property on the transborder serial nomination of Corbusier's works spanning seven countries across five continents on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

(The writer is the principal of Chandigarh College of Architecture)

**Sh. Jai Ram Thakur**  
Hon'ble Chief Minister,  
Himachal Pradesh

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**WORLD TOURISM DAY 2021**  
TOURISM FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH

**विश्व पर्यटन दिवस की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं**

*Heavenly Himachal*

**कृपया सुरक्षा उपायों का सम्पूर्ण ध्यान रखें और एक जिम्मेदार पर्यटक बनें :-**

2 गज की सामाजिक दूरी का पालन करें

हथों को बार-बार धोएं या सैनिटाइज़र से साफ करें

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## 6 REGION



Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi with his Cabinet after the oath-taking ceremony in Chandigarh, Sunday. PTI

## OPPN REACTS TO NEW PUNJAB CABINET

## AAP: Cong has just changed 'Ali Baba', retained his 40 thieves

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

THE AAM Aadmi Party on Sunday condemned the inclusion of ministers who had corruption charges against them in the new Punjab Cabinet, headed by Chief Minister, Charanjit Singh Channi, and termed it as an insult to democracy.

In a statement issued from the party headquarters here on Sunday, senior leader of the AAP and Leader of Opposition (LoP), Harpal Singh Cheema, said that the involvement of 'tainted' ministers in the new Cabinet made it clear that Charanjit Singh Channi was also part of the same gang and by only changing the face of the Chief Minister the Congress was trying to once again rob the people of the state. He said that the Gandhi family wanted to further plunder the natural resources of Punjab by including mafia lords in the Cabinet of Punjab.

Cheema said that before this, Captain Amarinder Singh, and his cronies, had looted a lot of Punjab in four-and-a-half years. Now, to avoid public opposition in the run-up to the elections, the Congress has changed them and was pretending to be clean. He said the people of Punjab had high expectations from Charanjit Singh Channi that maybe he would do



LoP Harpal Singh Cheema

Congress, by changing the mask of the Chief Minister, has only changed the 'Ali Baba', while his 'forty thieves' were still there. He said that Chief Minister Channi and the Congress state president, Navjot Singh Sidhu, should clarify their views on Rana Gurjeet now. On the letter being written by the Congress MLAs to the Gandhi family for non-inclusion of Rana Gurjeet Singh in the Cabinet, Cheema said it proves the allegation of the Aam Aadmi Party that Rana Gurjeet is the kingpin of the sand mafia in Punjab.

Expressing strong objection to the inclusion of former Chief Minister Beant Singh's grandson, Gurkirat Singh Kotli, in the Punjab Cabinet, Cheema said it was unfortunate that Kotli was included in the Cabinet on the occasion of International Daughter's Day. He said that Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi should make their stand clear.

something different, as he claimed to be a common man. But the difference between his words and deeds was clear, Cheema said.

The AAP leader further said that the Congress, by changing the mask of the Chief Minister, has only changed the 'Ali Baba', while his 'forty thieves' were still there. He said that Chief Minister Channi and the Congress state president, Navjot Singh Sidhu, should clarify their views on Rana Gurjeet now. On the letter being written by the Congress MLAs to the Gandhi family for non-inclusion of Rana Gurjeet Singh in the Cabinet, Cheema said it proves the allegation of the Aam Aadmi Party that Rana Gurjeet is the kingpin of the sand mafia in Punjab.

Expressing strong objection to the inclusion of former Chief Minister Beant Singh's grandson, Gurkirat Singh Kotli, in the Punjab Cabinet, Cheema said it was unfortunate that Kotli was included in the Cabinet on the occasion of International Daughter's Day. He said that Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi should make their stand clear.

## Spl commission to probe deeds of corrupt Cong ministers if SAD wins 2022 polls: Sukhbir

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUDHIANA, SEPTEMBER 26

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

Sukhbir on Sunday visited Ludhiana, where he paid a visit to some temples and held meetings with members of the Hindu community. He later also visited the Jain School at the Daresi ground as well as the Sangla Shivala Mandir and the Gyan Sthal Mandir in the central constituency. The SAD chief topped off his visit by making his way to various localities in the west constituency, besides attending an interaction with industrialists and doctors.

Addressing a press conference, Sunday, Sukhbir said the Congress should not think that ousting a few corrupt ministers will wash away their sins. "It is a fact that the entire Congress party is stained in corruption. Congress ministers have engineered scams worth thousands of crores. I assure Punjabis that all these scams will be probed thoroughly by a special Commission and that those guilty of looting Punjabis and the state will be brought to book".

He also announced that the next SAD-led government will review all decisions taken during the last three months of the Congress rule, adding that all decisions aimed at enriching Congressmen or their near and dear ones will be struck off.

Sukhbir said the SAD had welcomed the appointment of Charanjit Channi as the CM. "However it is painful to watch the new CM being overshadowed by PPCC president Navjot Sidhu, as well as deputy CM Sukhjinder Randhawa..."

FULL REPORT ON  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## ● RANDEEP SINGH NABHA (54)

## The quiet party loyalist who never shied away from speaking his mind

Nabha replaced Fatehgarh Sahib MLA Kuljit Singh Nagra, Rahul Gandhi's aide

DIVYAGOYAL GOPAL  
LUDHIANA, SEPTEMBER 26

COMING FROM a dyed-in-the-wool traditional Congress family, Randeep Singh Nabha, better known as 'Kaka Randeep' in political circles, has been four-time MLA—twice from his hometown of Nabha in Patiala district and twice from Amlah of Fatehgarh Sahib.

Nabha's name as a minister in Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi's new Cabinet was cleared at the last minute after Rahul Gandhi held a meeting with the CM around midnight on Saturday. Randeep replaced his party colleague and Fatehgarh Sahib MLA, Kuljit Singh Nagra, the two-time MLA, and Rahul Gandhi's close aide.



Punjab Cabinet Minister Randeep Singh Nabha at the swearing-in on Sunday. Express

However, sources close to Randeep Singh Nabha said that it was neither Rahul Gandhi nor PPCC president Navjot Singh Sidhu, who paved his way into the new Cabinet. It was rather Randeep Nabha's old proximity with former Madhya Pradesh CM, Kamal Nath, whom he considers

his 'Godfather', that swung the ministerial berth in his favour.

"After Nagra's name was announced as a probable for the Cabinet, Randeep protested because Nagra was already appointed as working president PPCC by Sidhu and was only a two-time MLA, whereas he had won four times. He also didn't see eye to eye with Nagra. Randeep lobbied with the help of Kamal Nath, who in turn told Sonia Gandhi that Randeep must be included, which led to the last-minute changes in the list," said a close aide of the leader.

Randeep, within the Congress ranks, is known for speaking his mind and standing up for himself, even if it means lodging protests against his own party. Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls 2019, he had demanded a ticket from Patiala,

which was instead given to Preet Kaur, wife of Captain Amarinder Singh. Randeep then refused to campaign for her in Patiala and said "CM Amarinder might be a good leader, but he was mostly inaccessible".

Party leaders identify Randeep as a man who barely is influenced by anyone, often walking his own path and not being part of any camp within the Congress. However, his political success as four-time MLA is attributed to the legacy left behind by his father Gurdarshan Singh, who was four-time Congress MLA (1962, 1967, 1977, and 1988) from the family's hometown constituency of Nabha. He had also lost from Nabha thrice, but contested seven times from this seat.

FULL REPORT ON  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## 'Gross injustice despite giving best performance as ministers'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

TWO SENIOR Congress leaders and former ministers in Captain Amarinder Singh's Cabinet on Sunday lashed out at the party high command for denying them ministerial berths, terming it as "gross injustice". The duo — Gurpreet Singh Kangar and Balbir Singh Sidhu — on Sunday said that they "have been subjected to gross injustice despite giving their best performances as ministers".

"As Power and Revenue Minister, I brought things back on track by working day and night. The power department was in a state of disarray and I streamlined it. Today Punjab is ranked among one of the top states in power management. Similarly, there were multiple leakages in the collection of revenue, which were plugged despite colossal resistance from nefarious forces," claimed Kangar.

On the other hand, listing his achievements as the state Health



Ex-ministers Balbir Singh Sidhu and Gurpreet Singh Kangar in Chandigarh Sunday. Jasbir Malhi

Minister, Sidhu, got emotional during the press conference and said that during the pandemic, he ensured that the healthcare system did not flounder and worked efficiently. "I worked tirelessly to ensure that the people of the state do not face any problems. In the past years, we streamlined health infra at the grassroots level. This is not the way to treat committed party

workers who have given the best of their life to serving the cause of the party," said Sidhu.

The two former ministers have written to the high command to express their displeasure at being left out of the Punjab cabinet which was sworn in on Sunday. They have asked the reasons due to which they were ignored by the high command. They, however, have made it clear

that they are with the new Chief Minister, Charanjit Singh Channi. "We supported former Chief Minister, Captain Amarinder Singh, as advised by the high command. Now, we will work along with the new CM as per the instructions of the party high command," they said.

"If the high command would have asked for our resignations, we would have resigned on our own. What has been done is quite embarrassing and humiliating," said Kangar, adding that his "loyalty towards former Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh had cost him dearly."

"Now, as a Congress soldier, I owe my allegiance to the present CM Charanjit Singh Channi. But if the loyalty to the party causes the kind of outcome that has happened in my case, then it is really sad. The high command should answer why I have been ignored despite so many achievements. I was responsible for the Revenue Minister for computerising land records," said Kangar.

## Despite having highest Dalit population, no cabinet berth from any Doaba Dalit MLA

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA  
JALANDHAR, SEPTEMBER 26

DOABA, WHICH is the smallest of the three regions of the state and accounts for 23 of the total 117 Vidhan Sabha seats, is politically crucial for any party aspiring to come to power in the state.

Doaba has also got the highest proportion of Dalit population not only in Punjab, but across the country. But in the past over four-and-a-half year rule of the Congress, no Dalit MLA has ever found representation in the Punjab Cabinet from Doaba, even though the Cabinet was rejigged thrice.

On Sunday, three Dalit ministers were sworn in under the new Cabinet, none of who belong to Doaba. While Punjab has a 31.9% Dalit population (according to the 2011 census), the Doaba region has a 38% Dalit population.

In Captain Amarinder Singh's Cabinet, which was formed in 2017, there were two ministers from the Doaba region — Rana Gurjeet Singh from Kapurthala, and Sunder Sham Arora from Hoshiarpur — neither of who was a Dalit. When Rana Gurjeet Singh was dropped in January 2018, after his name appeared in the infamous sand mining contract scam, people from Doaba hoped that the Captain will compensate and include another minister from the region, preferably a Dalit, when he expanded his Cabinet later in April 2018. However, that was not to be.

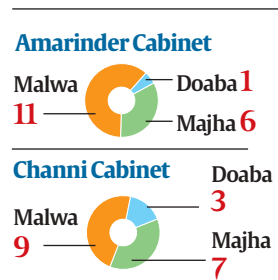
On Sunday, the new CM Channi, picked three ministers from Doaba — Pargat Singh and Rana Gurjeet Singh (both general category), and Sangat Singh Gilzian, who belongs from Backward Class.

In Doaba region, there are eight reserved constituencies out of a total of 23. On the eight reserve seats of the region, five are represented by Congress MLAs, all of who are first-time winners, which effectively cut out their chances of making it to the new Cabinet.

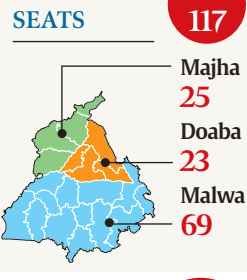
## CABINET SNIPPET: CHANNI RUSHES TO BATHINDA, FORGETS MANPREET BADAL

Chandigarh: Channi rushed to Bathinda to review loss of cotton farmers due to the pink bollworm attack ahead of the swearing-in ceremony. He was accompanied by his deputy Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, but did not take old associate Manpreet Badal along. Bathinda happens to be Manpreet Badal's constituency. While Channi and Randhawa flew by government chopper, Manpreet was in Chandigarh. The development is being watch curiously as Channi had visited Manpreet's residence Saturday evening. ENS

## REGIONAL REPRESENTATION



## ASSEMBLY SEATS



	Jat Sikhs	Hindus	SCs	BCs	Muslim	Women
	9	4	3	2	1	2

## REGION-WISE BREAK-UP IN LAST TWO POLLS

	MAJHA		MALWA		DOABA	
Party	2012	2017	2012	2017	2012	2017
INC	32	40	8	22	6	15
BJP	2	1	5	1	5	1
AAP	--	18	--	0	--	2
SAD	33	8	12	2	11	5
Others	2	2	0	0	1	0

## Rahul's signature, attempt to infuse fresh blood: takeaways from new Cabinet

MANRAJ GREWAL  
SHARMA

CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

SIX DAYS after Charanjit Singh Channi was enthroned the chief minister of Punjab along with two deputies, Sukhjinder S Randhawa and OP Soni, the Punjab Congress today (Sunday) introduced its new ministry with seven new faces.

The ministry, which has Rahul Gandhi's stamp all over it, is an attempt to infuse fresh blood in the team, balance caste and regional considerations, and take everyone along without providing ammunition to former CM Capt Amarinder Singh.

Here are the five key take-

aways from this rejig:

## RAHUL HOLDS THE SWAY

The new Cabinet has the stamp of Rahul Gandhi all over it. Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi was summoned to Delhi twice, and a final video conference was held late on Saturday night to finalise the list. Six of the seven new ministers were informed by Congress about their imminent elevation on Saturday morning, even before party chief Sonia Gandhi could formally approve the list.

Rahul also played a role in placating Randeep S Nabha, 54, a four-time MLA, by dropping Kuljit Singh Nagra. Considered close to Rahul, Nagra, working president of PCC, was earlier party in-charge

for Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim. When Nabha started complaining about being left out of the ministry despite his seniority, Rahul replaced Nagra with him, without any opposition.

Rahul also stood by the elevation of Raja Amrinder Warring, chief of Youth Congress from 2014 to 2018 despite opposition from within. Warring had contested against Manpreet Badal and defeated him.

## LOYALTY TO THE PARTY/FAMILY PAYS

he three rebel ministers, namely Tripat Rajinder Singh Bajwa, Sukbinder Sarkaria and Sukhjinder Randhawa, also called the Majha brigade were not only retained but Randhawa, the most

vocal of them all, was elevated to the rank of deputy chief minister. Sukhi is a second-generation Congressman and his father was one of the few legislators to stand by then prime minister Indira Gandhi after Operation Bluestar in 1984. Similarly, Beant Singh's grandson Gurkirat Kotli has also been rewarded. Brahm Mohindra, though close to Capt Amarinder, has been retained due to his longstanding ties with the Gandhi family, and his stature as a tall Hindu leader.

Jagroop Singh Sekhon, a political observer, says the party has walked the tightrope to isolate Amarinder. "While it has left out his hardcore supporters such as Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi, Balbir Sidhu and the tainted minister

Sadhu Singh Dharamsot, who did not join the rebels, it decided to retain his loyalist Brahm Mohindra because it doesn't want too many disgruntled leaders trying to join hands with the former CM."

## BABY STEPS TO A GENERATIONAL SHIFT

By elevating Pargat Singh, former captain of the Indian hockey team, Warring and Nabha and giving PPCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu a say in the Cabinet, the party also signals a generational shift. Sidhu has managed to get a berth for all his men except Nagra who is a working president.

There was talk about capping the age of the ministers at 70, but it was not carried through be-

cause it would have ended up excluding seasoned leaders like Tripat Bajwa and Brahm Mohindra. At 43, Raja Warring is the youngest in the ministry, while Tripat Bajwa is the oldest at 78. Both had joined hands against Amarinder. Earlier the party had just one minister, Vijay Inder Singla, below fifty, now it has three. Of the seven new faces, only two are senior citizens.

## REGIONAL BALANCE

The curious re-entry of Rana Gurjit Singh, the minister who had to quit the Captain Amarinder Cabinet after being caught in a sand mining storm, may have something to do with his stature in the Doaba region. Ashutosh Kumar, a political sci-

entist, says the party hopes that the well-heeled Jat Sikh industrialist along with Pargat Singh will be able to deal with any backlash from the Jat Sikhs in a region dominated by SCs. Rana is also known for his mastery over the electoral system. Much before the BJP started scripting booth-wise poll strategy, Rana was practising it.

With the present rejig, the party now has nine ministers from Malwa, which has 69 seats in the 117-member assembly, seven from the border belt of Majha (25 seats), and three from Doaba (23 seats). With this, the party has addressed the gripe of Majha politicians that despite winning 22 of the 25 seats in the region in 2017, the

## THE CASTE CARD

Well aware that SCs in the state are not a monolithic body, and the mere elevation of Channi as the chief minister may not be enough, the Cabinet has also inducted Raj Kumar Veka, a Valmiki, from Amritsar, and Sangat Singh Gilzian, a grassroots politician from the backward class Lubana community. Aruna Chaudhry, who's been retained from the previous Cabinet, also belongs to the SC community.

The ministry now has four members from SC and BC communities against three in the previous government.



Chandigarh





# 7 REGION

●PARTAP BAJWA (64)

## Why one of Capt's most fierce critics found no place in new Cabinet

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR  
AMRITSAR, SEPTEMBER 25

IN THE new-look Punjab Cabinet that was unveiled on Saturday, a bunch of new faces and a few old loyalists managed to find spots. A prominent name missing from that list, however, was that of former Punjab Pardesh Congress Committee president and member of Rajya Sabha, Partap Singh Bajwa, who has been a staunch opponent of former Chief Minister, Captain Amarinder Singh, for the last nine years.

Speaking to The Indian Express on Sunday, Bajwa — who was known among the Congress ranks as the most vociferous critics of the Captain, if not his strongest opponent — said he was willing to watch for now as new alliances emerged within the Congress after the Cabinet formation and did not want to think much of the fact that he had missed out on a Cabinet berth.

Bajwa said that he had pushed for a few names of his own to be included in the new Cabinet. But all the names he backed were first-time MLAs.

"A total of six tickets were handed out on my recommendation in the 2017 Assembly polls. Five out of the six candidates I suggested won the elections. One of these MLAs, later, had joined a rival camp within the Congress after his election. Hence, I just had four loyalists — Joginder Pal from Boha, Balwinder Singh Laddi from Hargobindpur, Santokh Singh Bhalaipur from Baba Bakala, and my brother Fathe Singh Bajwa from Qadian. All these MLAs are first-timers."

There are faces in the new cabinet who remained loyal to Captain Amarinder Singh and opposed Navjot Singh Sidhu, and still managed to bag ministerial berths. It is only Bajwa and his men who seem to have missed out.

"It is not that I didn't push their names to be included in the new Punjab cabinet. But I was told that no first-time MLAs were being included in the new Cabinet and hence they cannot be considered," said Bajwa, on being asked why he had no representation.

He said that for now he will just wait and watch.

"The new government will have to meet the expectations of

the people. Captain Amarinder Singh couldn't meet their expectations. So he had to go. It is obvious that people will judge the new government on if it is able to deliver on the promises made to them," said Bajwa.



Partap Singh Bajwa

He added that the new government should immediately get to work by acting against leaders involved in the drugs trade. "Action should also be taken in the sacrilege cases. The new Cabinet will also be expected to lower the electricity charges in the state. There are many promises that they need to deliver on if they want to win the trust of the people of this state."

### BAJWA'S TWO 'BLUNDERS'

Bajwa had led the Charge against the Captain after the Congress had failed to form the government in the state in 2012 despite being piped as the hot favourites to do so. He later even went on to topple Captain Amarinder Singh and take over the reins of the state Congress unit in March 2013, becoming its president.

Bajwa also, in what was initially considered as a masterstroke, had pushed the name of Captain Amarinder Singh to contest against BJP's heavyweight candidate, Arun Jaitley, from Amritsar in the 2014 Parliament elections. In doing so, Bajwa had sensed that the Captain wouldn't like to get involved in such a high profile contest and it won't be an easy fight for him. This in turn, he hoped, would automatically push the Captain into retirement. Bajwa was right in his calculations to some extent. Captain Amarinder, indeed initially, drag his feet in getting into a poll contest against Arun Jaitley. It was only after a push from Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, that the Captain jumped into the fight and later emerged victorious by a handsome margin.

Bajwa, however, on the other hand, too contested the 2014 polls, and lost from his home constituency, Gurdaspur. In a matter of months, his masterstroke had turned into a blunder.

It was at this moment that Bajwa started losing ground to the Captain with the latter ultimately emerging as the CM's face in the 2017 polls.

Bajwa, however, continued to oppose the Captain even after the formation of the Congress government in the state in 2017 and was isolated. His rivals in Gurdaspur — Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa and Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa — became ministers in the Captain government.

War of words between Captain Amarinder Singh and Bajwa had become routine affairs till Bajwa finally reached some agreement with the Captain, even as Navjot Singh Sidhu started upping the ante against the government, earlier this year. Back in the good books of the Captain, he ended up launching a political campaign to contest the 2022 Assembly elections from Gurdaspur. He also managed to appoint some of his men at key posts in Gurdaspur.

However, before he could fully capitalise on his new-found truce with the government, the Captain resigned as the Chief Minister of the state, paving the way for Charanjit Singh Channi to become the new leader at the helm of the state.

After Channi's elevation, all of Bajwa's men were immediately removed from key positions they had secured just a month ago and his rival — Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa — managed to get his loyalists to fill up the vacant spots.

Despite opposing him for nine years, when the time came, Bajwa didn't gain much from the departure of the Captain government. His truce with the Captain at the last moment proved out to be his second blunder and potentially led to his undoing.

### OTHERS MAKING NEW ALLIANCES

While Bajwa seems left with very few options, MPs like Jabir Singh Dimpa and Gurjeet Singh Aujla from Majha have not taken much time to move on. Both Aujla and Dimpa had sided with the Captain till the last moment. However, as soon as a new chief minister took the oath of office, they were quick in reaching out to Channi. Going a step further, Dimpa even hosted Punjab Congress unit president, Navjot Singh Sidhu, for lunch Saturday.

●SUNDER SHAM ARORA (63)

## Only Doaba minister in Capt Cabinet dropped 'Scam' in auction of prime land overshadowed developmental works of Sunder Sham Arora, led to exit

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA  
HOSHIARPUR, SEPTEMBER 26

HOSHIARPUR HAS undergone a plethora of changes in the past four-and-half-years. From becoming the first district in the state where women e-rickshaw drivers can be seen plying on city roads, to the installation of 110 open-air gyms and providing dedicated tracks and smart bicycles to cycling lovers, a number of projects were successfully implemented in the district, under the watchful eyes of its MLA Sunder Sham Arora.

Arora has represented the Hoshiarpur Assembly segment since 2012 and became minister for the first time in 2017 when the Congress came to power. He held the Industries and Commerce portfolio in the state till last Saturday when the then Punjab CM, Captain Amarinder Singh, submitted his resignation and that of his council of ministers.

On Sunday, when a new Cabinet was sworn in under the leadership of the new Chief Minister, Charanjit Singh Channi, Arora's name didn't figure out on the list of new ministers. Sources said that Arora was not dropped from the Cabinet for being a Captain loyalist. He was rather left out as his name figured in an alleged multi-crore scandal in which a Rs 300 crore alleged loss was incurred to the exchequer during the auction of 31-acre prime land of JCT Electronics in Mohali. The Opposition cornered the government often demanding that Arora resign and the party



Sunder Sham Arora. File

had no choice but to drop him.

Talking about his achievements, regrets, and challenges, Arora said that in the past four-and-half years he has tried to make his constituency, which has a total of 1,88,041 registered voters, more developed than what it was under the tenure of the previous SAD-BJP regime. "I tried to bring some changes in the daily life of people of my constituency, and the Punjab Chief Minister was always very kind when it came to providing funds," Arora said.

### HIS FIVE ACHIEVEMENTS AS A MINISTER

■ Under the 'Ghar Ghar Rozgar' mission and to make women self-dependent, Arora handed over free e-rickshaws, at a total cost of Rs 50 lakh, to 38 women after providing them free training. "The initiative was undertaken under the Coca Cola CSR fund to provide e-rickshaws to differently-abled, divorced, widows, and the other needy women. They are now self-dependent and earn their livelihood respectfully by plying these e-rickshaws," said Arora.

■ With the help of school teachers, Hoshiarpur became a torch-

bearer in rainwater recharge projects, and 33 government schools installed rainwater harvesting systems on their premises. "We got smart classrooms made in 65 of the total 95 government schools of the constituency," he said.

■ Under Tandrust Punjab Mission, Arora installed 110 open gyms in city parks and in other places. "Everyone in my constituency can now exercise free of cost at their own timings in these gyms. Also, a dedicated 8.25-km long bicycle track was made where bicycle lovers can go pedal without being bothered by the traffic. If they register through our App, then they can also be provided cycles and headgears at a very nominal rate by us. We spent Rs 50 lakh on this project so that people remain healthy," he said.

■ An air-conditioned community hall was constructed in the city, at a cost of Rs 3 crore, where people can organise their social functions by paying very nominal charges — ranging from Rs 5,000 to Rs 25,000 only. And also all 60 villages of Hoshiarpur, a water tanker was provided during marriages or other social gatherings.

■ The entire city was covered under CCTV cameras, which can be controlled at three main police stations, at a cost of Rs 98 lakh. "This has helped us to bring down the crime rate in the city. Also, after Mukatsar Sahib, Hoshiarpur is the only district that has been providing heavy vehicle driving licences. We spent Rs 2 crores on renovating our cremation ground. Vehicles, with a seating capacity of 23, are provided to family members travelling to the crema-

tion ground and back home. Two plant saplings are provided to the families of every deceased with an aim to minimize the impact of deforestation. Besides, the entire city was provided 100% water supply and sewer system, and projects like a sports complex, an open-air theatre, food street, a mini sports hub for every five villages are under progress," he said.

### CHALLENGES

The major challenge was to provide jobs to the youths during Covid. We led the way and helped Punjab in the time of its distress with the help of district administration and local industries and various banks. We could provide jobs to hundreds of people right from the disabled to the poor. Setting up a Rs 325 crore medical college, which is already sanctioned for the district, is another major challenge that we will definitely achieve.

**Regrets:** There are no regrets as such. I have tried to do my best and the people of my constituency can vouch for it. A small and backward place like Hoshiarpur is now witnessing projects on the lines of any metro city, he claimed.

**Voter's views:** "Apart from some small issues, overall there has been a great amount of change in our city. All the parks have been maintained properly and open gyms are installed. The bicycle project is very interesting and anybody can enjoy it, even without owning a bicycle," said Baljit Singh, a city resident, adding that the new community hall was a big relief for the poor people

who can now organise the marriages of their wards in fully AC hall at reasonable prices.

Some residents said that the menace of illegal colonies and illegal mining could not be stopped even under the Congress regime.

"Minister Arora may count the upcoming 'Armed Forces Preparatory Institute (AFPI) for Male, as an achievement but it's actually the other way round. A 130-year-old 19th-century government-aided school, Sardar Bahadur Amin Chand (SBAC) Senior Secondary School Bajwara, had to be shut down to make way for this institute. The AFPI snatched away the right to education from many poor students," said another resident Manish Kumar.

### OPPOSITION VIEW

Former BJP minister Tikshan Sood, who contested against Arora in 2017, alleged that everyone knows that the minister has his share in various alleged unauthorised colonies at the periphery of the city. He claimed that under the Central government's schemes, water supply and sewer lines are being laid at the peripheries for helping such colonies and Arora was just taking credit for the same.

"Apart from this, Arora's name has appeared in an alleged multi-crore scandal in which there was a Rs 300 crore loss incurred to the exchequer during the auction of 31-acre prime land of JCT Electronics in Mohali. All the opposition parties had demanded a CBI probe in the case," said Sood.

●BHARAT BHUSHAN ASHU (50)

## The only minister in new Cabinet from Ludhiana city

DIVYA GOYAL GOPAL  
LUDHIANA, SEPTEMBER 26

BEGINNING HIS political career as a Congress counselor from Ludhiana in 1997, three-time counselor and two-time MLA, Bharat Bhushan Ashu (50), belongs to a business family that owns dairy farms.

Ashu grew close to Rahul Gandhi after getting in touch with senior Congress leader Kishori Lal and was eventually given a ticket from Ludhiana West — an urban constituency with Hindu voters — for the Punjab Assembly elections in 2012. Ashu won defeating BJP candidate Rajinder Bhandari, despite the SAD-BJP combine managing to sweep to power in the state.

Ashu's political clout in Ludhiana grew after senior

Congress leader and former Ludhiana MP, Manish Tewari, backed out from contesting the Lok Sabha polls 2014 from Ludhiana, and Ravneet Singh Bittu landed as the parachute candidate. Bittu won the polls and eventually, the Ashu-Bittu duo became the face of Ludhiana Congress, replacing Tewari and his aide Pawan Dewan.

Ashu, who never saw eye-to-eye with Manish Tewari, soon became Bittu's go-to man. Ashu always maintained his 'with the party' stand, even as the Captain Amarinder Singh and then PCC chief Partap Singh Bajwa's tussle played out.

Later, even when Captain Amarinder Singh and Navjot Singh Sidhu were at loggerheads, Ashu managed to stay clear of the tussle and maintained he was just a 'party soldier' without taking

any individual sides.

Ashu was later elevated and made deputy leader of Opposition in Vidhan Sabha during the SAD-BJP regime in 2015, overlooking several seniors, such as six-time Ludhiana north MLA, Rakesh Pandey, and others.

In the 2017 Assembly polls, Ashu again won from Ludhiana West with a margin of over 36,000 votes defeating AAP candidate Ahbaab Grewal. During the Punjab Cabinet expansion in 2018, he was made the Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs minister, an elevation that was pushed by Rahul Gandhi himself.

Ashu, however, has had his own share of controversies as well, with the major one being his alleged involvement in the Grand Manor Homes CLU scam and eventually the audio clips of his conversations with DSP

Balwinder Sekhon (who was probing the case) going viral. The officer moved court against the minister claiming that he was 'threatened' by the minister during the ongoing probe. Denying allegations, Ashu however claimed that the officer had sent him 'abusive texts'.

It was alleged that Ashu and another Ludhiana Congress leader, Kamaljit Karwal, allegedly helped a private company, building residential flats on Gill road of Ludhiana, and used their political influence in getting them to Change of Land Use (CLU) certificate using forged land ownership papers and their names figured in the probe report submitted by DSP Sekhon to then local bodies minister, Navjot Singh Sidhu, in 2019.

The case even led to the fallout between Ashu and Sidhu, who

had quipped, 'Mantri ho ya santri, sabko thokunga'. (Be it a minister or anyone, I won't spare any one), when the Opposition AAP and SAD questioned Sidhu in Vidhan Sabha over the action taken by him against Ashu on the report submitted by the DSP. While AAP had staged a walk-out from the House demanding the sacking of the minister on the basis of audio clips in which Ashu was purportedly 'threatening' DSP, then CM, Captain Amarinder Singh, defended Ashu in the House and said that he won't take any arbitrary action against the minister without any evidence. Ashu had said he was open to any inquiry and claimed that the DSP was abusing him for over three months. The DSP was later dismissed from service.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
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**DAY AFTER SAD CHIEF'S VISIT OVER PINK BOLLWORM ATTACK**

## Channi visits cotton fields in Bathinda, meets affected farmers

RAAKHI JAGGA  
LUDHIANA, SEPTEMBER 26

A DAY after SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal visited Bathinda villages to take stock of the pink bollworm attack on cotton crop, Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and his deputy Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa visited Bathinda villages to meet farmers.

Channi moved around with minimum security in the area. At Mandi Kalan village, he had a meal at the house of a farm labourer who had died during farm protests. He was seen frequently getting out of his vehicle to meet farmers on the way. He also stopped on the way to greet a newly married couple.

At Katar Singh Walia village, the CM interacted with farmers and visited their cotton fields. He expressed his concern over the pink bollworm attack on their crop. "We are not bothered about money to be spent to save crops, we are committed towards farmers. First of all, we will be using pesticides spray to control the spread of the disease and if nothing works out, we will compensate the farmers," he said.

Channi instructed agriculture officers to check the quality of pesticide spray as farmers have raised allegations that the spray used by them wasn't working on the pink bollworm. Sukhbir Badal had alleged that spurious quality pesticides and poor quality seeds were being



■ (Above) Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi in the cotton fields of Bathinda to take stock of crop damage by pink bollworm attack. ■ (Left) having a meal with deputy chief minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa at the house of farm labourer Sukhpal Singh-- who had died at the Delhi borders while protesting against farm laws -- in Mandi Kalan. Express

labourer who died during protests against farm laws at the morcha sites within Punjab or its borders.

The CM was scheduled to visit one more village, Cheema Kalan, but couldn't do so due to paucity of time. Hence, administration officials went to the village to hand over a job letter to yet another farm labourer's family.

"Channi is trying to project an image of aam aadmi by eating at labourer's houses, trying to be one among them. He will do a lot many things now to grab votes, it is a poll gimmick. Rahul Gandhi also does it, and so does Raja Warring," said Jagseer Singh Jhumba, a Bathinda-based farmer.

Channi met his brother Natha Singh and handed him a job letter, Rs 5 lakh compensation had already been given to him by the administration earlier. This is the first job letter given by the Punjab government to any farmer or farm

of spurious pesticides, the overall responsibility was that of the minister, who must resign immediately. You can't escape from responsibility by putting the entire blame on a particular officer. The minister had been convicted by the court in the past in a case of abusing his official position," Captain Amarinder Singh had said then.

**WHITEFLY ATTACK AFFECTED 60% OF COTTON CROPS IN PUNJAB**

Back in 2015, the whitefly attack affected around 60 per cent of cotton crops in the state. It was alleged that the attack could not be contained because farmers were sold spurious pesticides approved by the Punjab agricultural department.

The Punjab government initially announced a relief of Rs 10 crore for cotton growers, which was later increased to Rs 600 crore to compensate for the loss.

Now holding additional charge of Punjab DGP, then ADGP Iqbal Preet Singh Sahota probed the case. Agriculture department special secretary Daljit Singh also probed the allegations of purchase of sub-standard pesticides worth crores by Mangal Singh.

On September 2, 2015, a case of cheating was registered at Rama police station in Bathinda district against two pesticides dealers, Vijay Kumar and

Shubham Goyal, who operated a dealership in Rama.

A separate case was registered in Mohali too, the status of which is not known.

### MANGAL SINGH MADE A SCAPEGOAT TO SAVE TOTA SINGH, ALLEGED CONGRESS

Congress alleged that Mangal Singh Sandhu had been made a scapegoat in the case to save Tota Singh. In 2016, then PCC vice-president Sunil Jakhar had said that the Alkali government had filed a challan against the former director of agriculture in a separate corruption case registered on September 15, 2005 for accepting a bribe of Rs 8.5 lakh from a pesticide dealer.

"But what happened to the case registered on October 6, 2015, related to the purchase of Oberon pesticide worth Rs 33 crore? This case was registered after a departmental enquiry headed by special secretary (agriculture) Suresh Kumar had said that a scam had taken place in the purchase of the Oberon which led to damage of cotton crop in 8.5 lakh acres in Malwa region and hit about 3 lakh families," Jakhar had said.

Jakhar had alleged that this was being done to "deflect attention from the main issue of the multi-crore purchase of Oberon". "The former agriculture director was authorised to make purchases up to Rs 10 lakh only, while in this case purchases were made



BHARAT BANDH TODAY

Armed with new slogans, SKM says ‘no place for violence in movement’

Congr asks its workers, state unit chiefs and heads of frontal organizations to take part

RAAKHI JAGGA  
LUDHIANA SEPTEMBER 26

ABUNCH of new slogans has been issued to farmers to be chanted during Monday’s Bharat Bandh that has been called by the Sanyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) and has so far seen support from Aam Aadmi Party, Congress, and the SAD-BSP combine.

The SKM has so far categorically stated that though all political parties have been asked to support Monday’s strike, none of them, or their representatives, will be given any space on the farmers’ stage. They, however, can, set up their own stages in support of the farmers.

On Sunday the new bunch of slogans issued to the farmers included “*Modi karega mandi band, kisan karega Bharat bandh*”, and

“*Narendra Modi kisan virodhi*”. Dr Darshan Pal, a member of the SKM said, “We appeal to everyone to support our bandh. We will, however, ensure that no markets or shops are closed forcibly. There is no place for violence in our movement. Sunday also marked the completion of ten months of farm agitation against farm laws at Delhi borders.”

Kavita Kuruganti, another SKM member, added, “Farmers from across the world are supporting us. They even observed a protest in New York when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited there recently. Over 600 farmers have died during the protest morcha against farm laws so far.”

According to the SKM, the Bharat bandh will be from 6 am to 4 pm on Monday. “The SKM has appealed to all government and private offices, all educational and

other institutions, all shops, industries, and commercial establishments to remain shut on Monday. They have also stated that no public event or functions should be organised during the day while adding that public and private transport should also stop functioning during the period of the bandh,” said Dr Darshan Pal.

Administration officials said that road, as well as, rail traffic is likely to be affected on Monday with farmers having already declared that they will protest on highways as well as on railway tracks.

The All India Bank Employees Association has already supported the bandh, while the Shahi Imam of Punjab, Maulana Usman Ludhianvi, too, having thrown his weight behind the strike call. Ludhianvi has issued an appeal to one and all to support this bandh.

The SKM has however stated that all emergency establishments and essential services — including hospitals, medical stores, relief, and rescue work, and people attending to personal emergencies — will be exempted from Monday’s bandh.

Jagmohan Singh Patiala, general secretary of BKU-Dakaunda, said, “The Sanyukta Kisan Morcha appeals to every Indian to join this nation-wide movement and make the Bharat Bandh a success. In particular, we appeal to all organisations of workers, traders, transporters, businessmen, students, youth and women, and all social movements to extend solidarity with the farmers that day.”

The Congress on Sunday asked all its workers, state unit chiefs and heads of frontal organizations to take part in the ‘Bharat Bandh’ called by farmer unions on

September 27 to protest the Centre’s three agri laws.

The Sanyukta Kisan Morcha, the umbrella body of over 40 farm unions spearheading the farmers’ agitation, had earlier appealed to the people to join the bandh.

Congress general secretary (organization), K C Venugopal, said the Congress and its workers will extend our full support to the peaceful ‘Bharat Bandh’ called by farmer unions on Monday.

“We believe in the right of our farmers and we will stand by them in their fight against the black farm laws,” he said in a tweet.

“All PCC Presidents, Chiefs of Frontal Organizations are requested to go out in front with our Annadatas in their peaceful Bharat Bandh across the country,” Venugopal said. **WITHPTI**

Farmers ready to protest for 10 yrs, won't allow farm laws to be implemented: Tikait

ENS & PTI  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26



Farmer BKU leader Rakesh Tikait at a Kisan Mahapanchayat in the grain market of Panipat on Sunday. *Manoj Dhaka*

BHARATIYA KISAN Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Sunday said farmers protesting against the central farm laws for the last 10 months are ready to agitate for 10 years, but will not allow the black legislations to be implemented.

He was speaking at a mahapanchayat held by farmers in Panipat on Sunday before the bandh. Several senior farmer leaders, including Tikait and Gurnam Singh Chaduni, addressed the mahapanchayat.

Chaduni said: “We urge all sections of society to join the Bharat Bandh as the ongoing agitation is not only for a particular section of society but for all.” Expressing anguish over the issuance of summons to the protesting farmers in connection with different police cases, Chaduni said: “We will not let any farmer’s arrest. When the fate of our agitation is decided, only then will a call on FIRs be taken.”

Pagdi Sambhal Jatta Kisan Sanghrash Samiti president Mandeep Nathwan said: “We have identified as many as 12 main points in Fatehabad, Sirsa and Hisar to block the roads as part of the agitation apart from several other points where roads will be blocked by the people on their own. There is a warm response to the bandh call, especially after the rally of Muzaffarnagar and lathicharge on farmers in Karnal recently.”

Thousands of farmers, mainly

from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, have been sitting at Delhi’s borders for the past 10 months demanding that the farm laws, enacted in September last year, be scrapped.

It has been 10 months of this agitation. The government must listen with open ears that even if we have to agitate for 10 years we are ready, said Tikait, while addressing a well-attended Kisan Mahapanchayat in Panipat.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader said that the Centre will have to repeal these laws.

Indicating that farmers were ready to intensify their stir if their demands are not met, Tikait asked farmers “to keep their tractors ready”, saying “these may be required anytime (to move towards) in Delhi”.

The mahapanchayat came a day ahead of the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha’s ‘Bharat Bandh’ call for September 27 against the Centre’s three contentious farm laws, marking completion of 10 months of the ongoing agitation.

Tikait also said that if the present government does not rollback these laws then future governments will have to take it back.

Those who have to rule in this country, they will have to repeal these laws, he asserted, while adding that we will not allow these laws to be implemented, we will continue our agitation .

Tikait said that if farmers have not returned to their homes for 10 months, they will continue to agitate for 10 years, but will not allow the laws to be implemented.

Haryana Police issues advisory, warns of traffic blockages on roads, highways

Chandigarh: The farmers’ outfits have finalised their plans to block all state and national highways in Haryana on Monday as part of the Bharat Bandh call given by the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha to demand repealing of three farm laws. The highways will be blocked from 6 am to 4 pm.

Although the farmer outfits had earlier hinted at focus-

ing on state and national highways, there are reports that the protesters will block link roads too.

Apart from the opposition parties, the farmers have received support from trader bodies too.

The traders of Jind have decided to keep the markets closed till Monday noon.

In view of the nationwide

call for Bharat Bandh given by various farmers’ organisations, the Haryana Police has issued an advisory stating that people may face traffic blockades on various roads and highways of the state on Monday.

A police spokesperson said: “As per reports, it is expected that agitating groups may sit on dharna on various

roads and highways and block them for some time. The national and state highways in the state may see some traffic disruptions for several hours. All the citizens are being informed about these arrangements in advance so that they are able to plan and modify their journey accordingly to avoid any inconvenience. All the districts have also been

asked to make necessary arrangements in this regard.”

The spokesperson also appealed to the farmers to raise their issues peacefully without disturbing law and order situation.

“Stern action as per the law would be taken against the elements trying to disturb public order under the guise of bandh call,” he added. **ENS**

Cyclonic storm Gulab crosses coast, Andhra fisherman dies

ENS & PTI  
VISAKHAPATNAM, BHUBANESWAR, SEPT 26

A FISHERMAN from Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh died and another went missing as the cyclonic storm Gulab crossed the Bay of Bengal coast Sunday.

Gulab’s landfall process started at around 6 pm on Sunday. The cyclone is likely to attain a maximum gusting speed of 95 kmph. The IMD said Gulab crossed the coast about 20 km north of Kalingapatnam, Andhra Pradesh as a cyclonic storm.

In Odisha, people from low-lying areas of Ganjam, Gajapati and Koraput districts were evacuated to safe locations. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced that schools in 11 districts that are likely to be affected by Gulab will remain closed Monday. He also emphasised on a zero-casualty target in the vulnerable parts.

42 Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force, 24 National Disaster Response Force and 103 fire services teams have been deployed in the areas likely to be affected.

Engineering departments have been asked to keep a close watch on river embankments in Ganjam and Gajapati.

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

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

This is the most frank analysis of the problem in the bilateral relationship by the Indian envoy, a year-and-a-half after the border stand-off in Ladakh began. The speech was made on September 23, but was made public by the Indian embassy in Beijing on Saturday.

Following the disengagement in the Galwan Valley in July last year, the two sides were able to disengage from the North and



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

South Banks of the Pangong lake in February 2021, and most recently from Gogra in August 2021.

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

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

Underlining the pacts signed since the 1988 understanding between the two countries, Misri said, “...Any attempt to confuse border affairs with the Boundary Question is a disservice to the work of those involved in finding solutions. This is why the Indian side has been consistently saying that the current issue is about

restoring peace and tranquillity to the border areas, and is not about the resolution of the larger Boundary Question, on which our stance has not changed, despite what happened last year.”

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

“Affixing blame exclusively on the other side is not a helpful approach. And to press one’s own concerns and disregard the other side’s concerns and sensitivities without any explanation or recourse goes beyond disrespect. It actually creates even more obstacles to finding solutions,” he said.

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

India, he said, has also attempted to keep trade and commercial relationships insulated

from current differences, for instance by continuing to issue visas to Chinese businesspersons to visit India.

“However, we are disappointed to see an unscientific approach with regard to several problems currently being faced by Indian students, businessmen, marine crew and exporters, to name a few,” the Indian envoy said. The third obstacle, Misri said, is “viewing bilateral relations through the prism of relations with other countries”. This was said in the context of the Quad leaders’ summit, and Beijing’s publicly-articulated concerns over it. The ambassador underlined that India and China are two ancient civilisations and two modern Asian nations that have developed their independent foreign policies, and cherish their strategic autonomy.

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

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All court work to be done virtually only today, orders HC after Bar Association plea

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

THE PUNJAB and Haryana High Court has ordered the holding of all court work through video conference on September 27 (Monday), as farmers across the country observe a daylong Bharat bandh against the three contentious farm laws.

The order has been passed by the Bench of Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court, following the request of the Bar Association.

The HC had received a request from the Bar Associations of High Court stating that on September 27, all court may be held through virtual/ video conference mode and no adverse order be passed in cases on account of non-appear-

ance of advocates due to the call for Bharat Bandh made by the farm associations in the ongoing agitation against the new farm and agricultural laws.

Accordingly, the HC, by modifying the earlier order for physical hearing of some courts, ordered that all courts, including those nominated for physical hearing for the said day, will be held only through virtual mode.

Ramana bats for 50% reservation for women in judiciary

Demand reservation, you are entitled to it, Chief Justice tells women lawyers

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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



“...With anger you have to shout, demand that you need 50 percent reservation. It’s not a small issue. It’s (an) issue of thousands of years of suppression. You are entitled. It’s a matter of right. Nobody is going to give charity. It’s unfortunate, some things we realise very late. With the help of all of you, after some time, we may realise and reach this goal in the apex court as well as other courts,” the CJ said at a felicitation ceremony organised by the Lady Advocates of Supreme Court of India. Invoking Karl Marx’s “workers of the world” call, the CJ said: “Women of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains.”

CJ Ramana said women constitute only about 30 per cent of the lower judiciary, 11.5 per cent of the High Courts, and 12 per cent of the Supreme Court. Of India’s 1.7 million advocates, only 15 per cent are women, they make up only 2 per cent of the elected representatives in the State Bar Councils, and there are no women members in the Bar Council of India, he said. “This needs urgent correction,” he added.

The CJ spoke about the difficulties women face while enter-

ing the legal profession, including gender stereotypes that force them to bear the responsibilities of the family, the preference of clients for male advocates and an uncomfortable environment within courts — including a lack of infrastructure and washrooms, and crowded courtrooms.

Elaborating on infrastructural issues, CJ Ramana said out of 6,000 trial courts, nearly 22% have no toilet for women. “The National Judicial Infrastructure Corporation I have proposed will ensure inclusive design of Court complexes. We need to create a more welcoming environment,” he said.

The Chief Justice also favoured increasing gender diversity in legal education. “I strongly support the demand for a certain percentage of reservation for women in all law schools in the country,” he said. “We hope more women will join the profession and achieve the goal of 50 percent shortly.”

On the Supreme Court resuming physical functioning, CJ Ramana said he was hopeful of this happening after the Dussehra vacation. The top court is closed for the festival from October 11-16.

Goa polls: Senior Cong leader may join TMC ranks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
PANAJI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

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

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

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

A team from the Prashant Kishore-led Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), a political advocacy group, has been assessing the political situation in Goa from three months. IPAC, that advised Banerjee in the West Bengal Assembly polls earlier this year, will continue to work with the TMC. Amid talk of Faleiro’s exit, Chodankar and Congress legislative party leader Digambar Kamat had met Rahul Gandhi in Delhi on Saturday.

SERO SURVEY OF 6,000 PEOPLE

Over 70 per cent Odisha kids developed antibodies: survey

AISHWARYA MOHANTY  
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT 26

A RECENTLY concluded serological survey covering 12 districts of Odisha to estimate and compare the age-specific prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies has found that 70 per cent children in the age group 6-10 years were found to have developed antibodies, while the figure for the 11 -18 years age group was 74 per cent.

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

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

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

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

Of those surveyed, 25.6 percent were fully immunised, 41.4 percent were partially vaccinated and 33 percent were not vaccinated at all.

In the 19-44 years age group, the survey revealed a sero prevalence of 75.68 per cent — higher than the age groups 45-60 years (72.65 per cent) and 60+ years (66.04 per cent).

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

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

Starting September 13, all ministries, departments and subordinate offices of the government, as per instructions from Cabinet Secretariat, have been preparing the material

and identifying the scope of the work to be done.

While doing this, ministries are also to review the existing rules and old orders that increase paperwork in government working.

“...The existing processes may be reviewed with a view to reducing compliance burden and unnecessary paperwork done away with, wherever feasible,” says the letter to all ministries from Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, who wrote “to convey the directions of the Prime Minister.”

“It may be recalled that during his Independence Day address this year, the Prime Minister has emphasized the need to review existing rules and procedures on a continuing basis,” the letter states.

This process is set to last till September 29, and the disposal exercise will start October 2, Gandhi Jayanti. The disposal ex-

ercise is part of the nationwide cleanliness campaign started by the NDA government.

Typically the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) website of the Ministry of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances receives complaints from citizens concerning any ministry. It is the nodal body to oversee this drive as well. It forwards the complaints to ministries concerned and there is a set protocol for redressal.

Along with disposing of all pending matters, the directive from the Cabinet Secretary also lists out that ministries should review record retention rules so that records are neither prematurely destroyed nor are they retained beyond a necessary time frame. Redundant scrap material and obsolete items are also to be identified for disposal.



RAJIV RANJAN SINGH, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, JD(U)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RAVISH TIWARI: Why has the JD(U)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



WHY RAJIV RANJAN SINGH

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

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

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

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

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

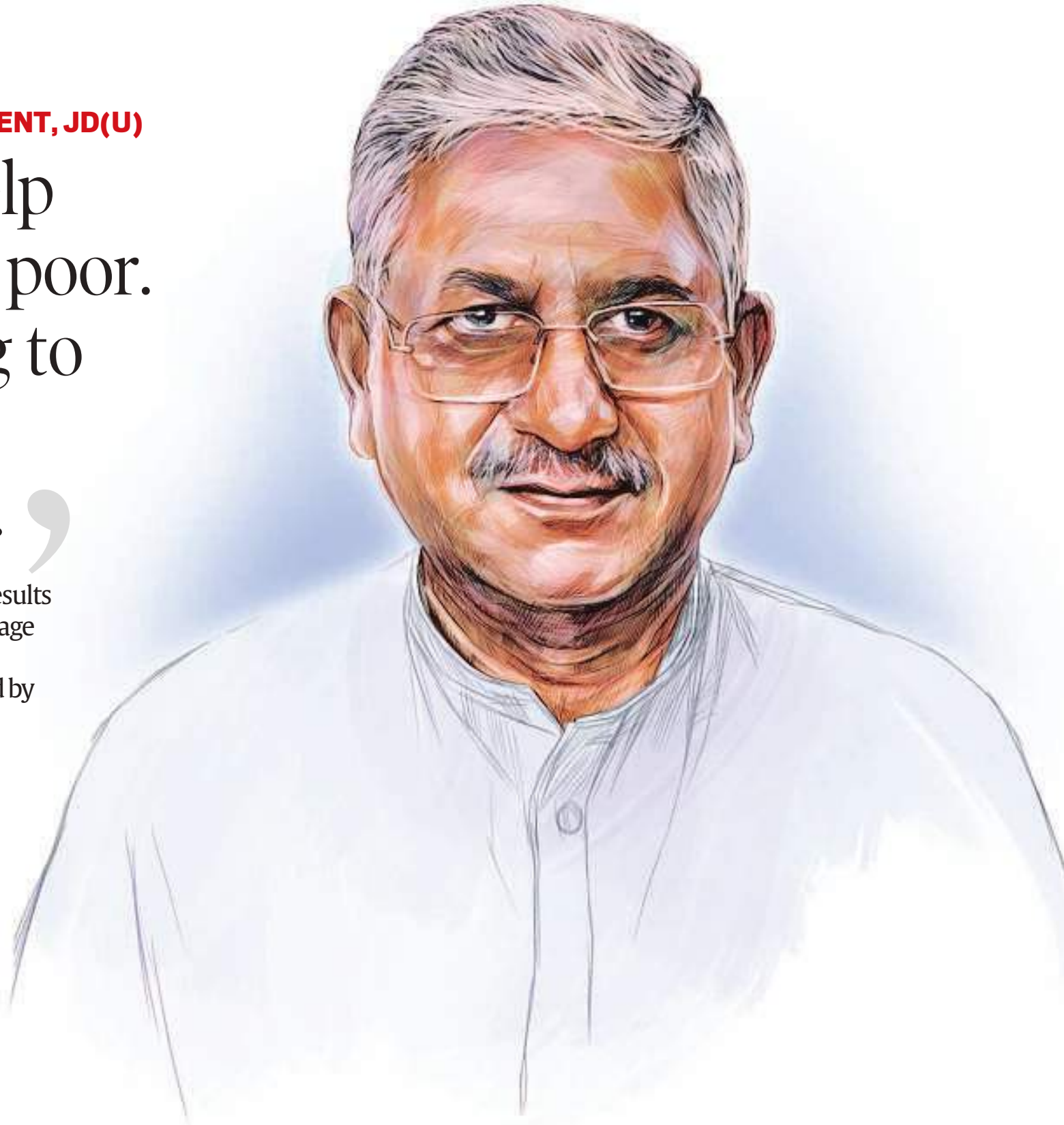


Illustration: Suvajit Dey

has gone up...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

party workers doing business.

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

He (Prasad) has explained his position.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





## IN STEP WITH US

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

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

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

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

## GRAIN DIPLOMACY

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

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

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

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

## FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



TEJASHWI PRASAD YADAV

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is Leader of Opposition, Bihar Legislative Assembly

## LEARNING WITHOUT BARRIERS

Developments in online education open up access for disabled children



FEZA T AZMI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## SEPTEMBER 27, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

### DHAKA PROTESTS

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

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

### CM DENIES CHARGES

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

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

### STORM WARNING

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



THE IDEAS PAGE

Not the MSP route

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

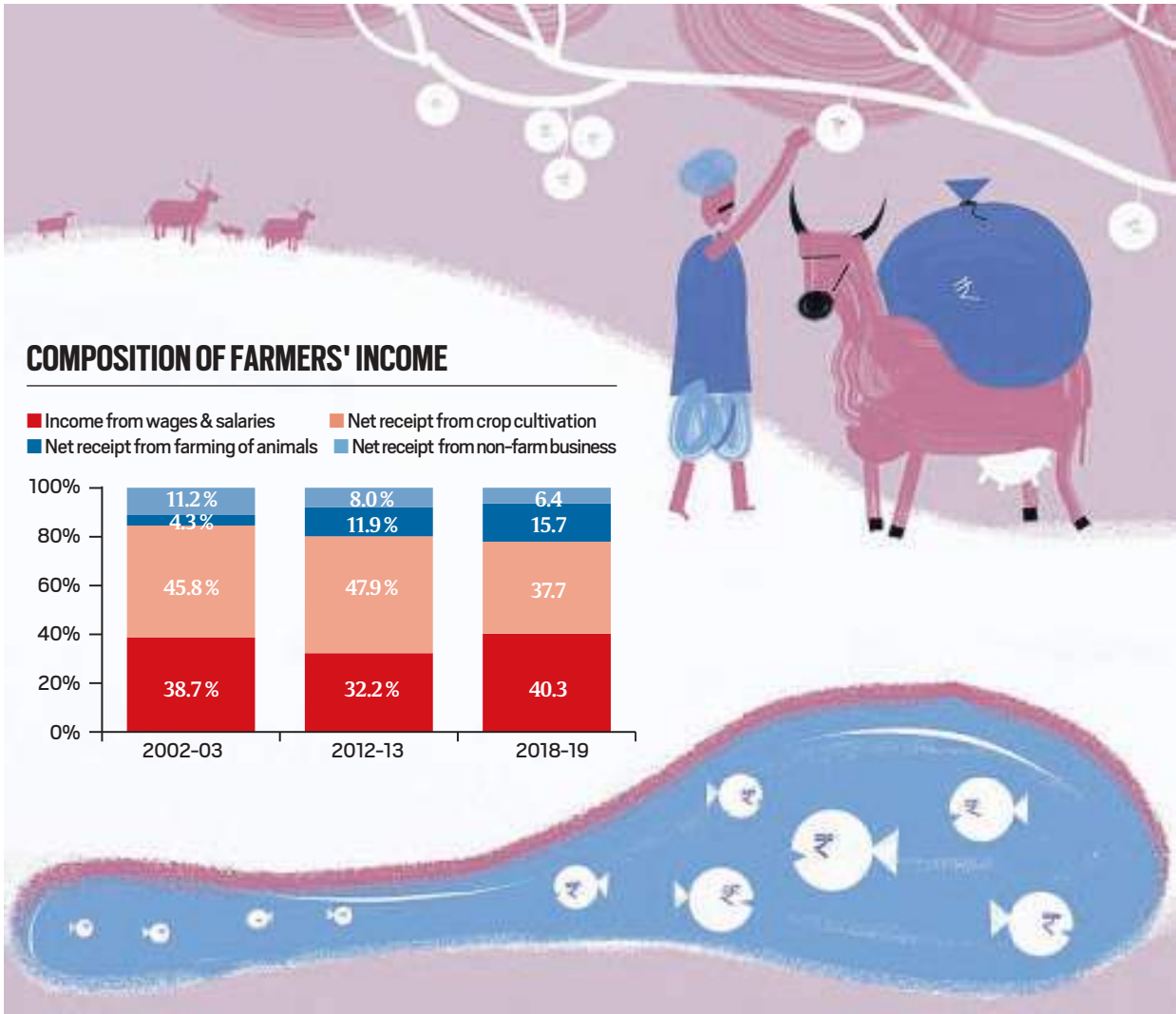


FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH  
BY ASHOK GULATI AND  
RANJANA ROY

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

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

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



COMPOSITION OF FARMERS' INCOME

	Income from wages & salaries	Net receipt from crop cultivation	Net receipt from farming of animals	Net receipt from non-farm business
2002-03	38.7 %	45.8 %	4.3 %	11.2 %
2012-13	32.2 %	47.9 %	11.9 %	8.0 %
2018-19	40.3 %	37.7 %	15.7 %	6.4 %

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

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

Singing like a feminist

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



URVASHI BUTALIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

She did this through her formidable and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is publisher, Zubaan



MICHAEL PINTO

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

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

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

The choice to monetise

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A BLOT

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

Hemant Contractor, Pune

PUBLIC VS PRIVATE

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

Gangadhar Karalay, Nagpur

RSS TOKENISM

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

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

Ritwik Trivedi, Delhi

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

Biswadeep Chatterjee, via email

VP'S SIGNAL

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

I R Murmu, Delhi









# 13 ECONOMY

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

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

**AANCHAL MAGAZINE**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ORDERS ISSUED ON SEPTEMBER 24

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

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

“The GoM may suggest chan-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

relocating to India, she said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## POLICY WATCH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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

**AASHISH ARYAN**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

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

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

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

tion link made available or hosted on its platform.

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

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

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

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

## PANDEMIC IMPACT

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Source:  
PwC India/PTI

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

**KARUNJIT SINGH**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

**Why have beer companies been penalised?**

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

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

ious states and sought to coordinate price hikes.

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

The AIBA was also fined for its role in arranging discussions between beer companies on various issues including pricing. The CCI cited multiple instances of the companies making identical price revisions for competing products.

In the case of Maharashtra, the CCI found that price revisions by UBL and AB InBev since 2011 showed an “uncanny closeness” in timing, with CIPL also joining the two companies in making price revisions around the same time since April 2014.

The CCI found that the beer

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

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

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

EXPLAINED

## BRIEFLY

### Diesel price hike

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

### e-Shram portal

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

### IEC deactivation

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

# ‘Funding oversight of Evergrande property projects in China stepped up’



Headquarters of Evergrande Group in Shenzhen, Guangdong province in China. *Reuters*

matter has set global investors wondering if they will have to swallow large losses when a 30-day grace period ends.

The special accounts have been set up since late August in at least eight provinces where Evergrande has the most unfinished projects, the Chinese outlet said, citing a source close to the developer’s management team.

These include Anhui, Guizhou, Henan, Jiangsu and cities in the southern Pearl River Delta, it added.

The custodian accounts aim

to ensure homebuyers’ payments are used to complete Evergrande’s housing projects, and not diverted elsewhere, such as to creditors, *Caixin* said.

In some southern cities, such as Zhuhai and Shenzhen, the offices of the housing regulator, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, were also involved in overseeing and reviewing fund use by Evergrande’s projects, it said.

Evergrande and the housing ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

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

**ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

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

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

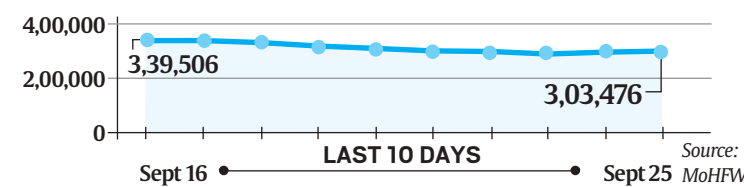
Chandigarh

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

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

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

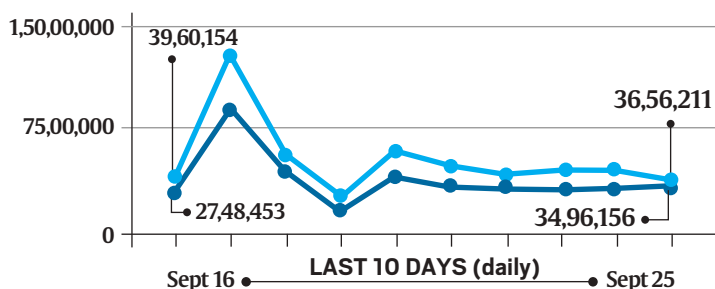




## CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

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

First dose Second dose



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

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

**COVISHIELD**  
**88.3%**

**COVAXIN**  
**11.6%**

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

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

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

## TELLING NUMBERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

**OTHER PRESIDENTS' RATINGS DURING FIRST YEAR**

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

Source: Pew Research Center



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## SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# Assam's conflict over land

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

TORA AGARWALA

GUWAHATI, SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

**What was the Sipajhar drive about?**

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

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

**Who were the people being evicted?**

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

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

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

**What do indigenous locals say?**

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



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

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

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

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

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

**How did the eviction turn violent?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Is it limited to migrant communities?**

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

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

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

**What about eviction drives?**

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

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

According to Baruah, the eviction in Sipajhar was "planned to an unprecedented degree". "Even the Finance Minister in her Budget speech referred to 'one experiment of our government was to remove encroachers from more than 77,420 bighas of land in Garukhuti under Sipajhar Block in Darrang district'," he said. "One can only infer that who would be evicted during this eviction drive had featured in the planning of the project."

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

## EXPLAINED THE PANDEMIC

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

## EXPERT EXPLAINS

TUSHAR GORE

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight



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

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

**Is this a cause for alarm?**

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

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

The data do show protection versus hospitalisation remains high.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## THE EXPERT

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Will a third dose help?**

Given that a two-dose regimen is still

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

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

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



21-year-old's 64 off 69 against Australia is the bedrock of team's highest-ever chase in ODIs; Australia win ODI series 2-1; one Test, three T20Is to follow

Chandigarh



# Glenn's Max Impact

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

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

**SANDIP G**  
SEPTEMBER 26

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

## Maxwell's perfect night

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

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

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

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

## Patel's dream night

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

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

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



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

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

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

**SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY**  
SEPTEMBER 26

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

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

## Glorious drivers

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Jadeja's allround brilliance

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

After Shubman Gill perished to a direct hit from Ambati Rayudu, Venkatesh Iyer and Rahul Tripathi took KKR to 50/1 after five overs. Then Shardul Thakur came and dismissed Iyer in his very first ball. A wicket-keeper Quinton de Kock. He almost managed to post 171/6, but they didn't have Jadeja's allround quality in their ranks.

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

## EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER



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

## Sir-Lord guarding Kings' galaxy



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

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

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

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

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

back admonishing himself.

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

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

## Mighty Angry Rahul Chahar

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

## Gill-Dhoni play Tom & Jerry

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

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

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

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

# Arsenal's fast start secures derby delight

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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



GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

RC. NO.61024/TSIIC/E-AUCTION/PH-II/2021    DATE: 26.09.2021

ADDENDUM

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

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

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

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

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

For further clarification call on +91 95738 14737 | +91 88844 06412 or log on to [TSIIC.TELANGANA.GOV.IN](http://TSIIC.TELANGANA.GOV.IN)

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

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