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THE AWARDED

President Ram Nath Kovind presents Padma Bhushan to badminton player PV Sindhu (above); PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah greet Padma Shri Tulsi Gowda, who has planted 30,000 saplings as part of environmental efforts in Karnataka. **PTI**

[REPORT, MORE PHOTOS P 9](#)

LAKHIMPUR KHERI DEATHS

SC tells UP: unsure of your probe, let ex-judge of another HC monitor

CJI-led bench says SIT mixing evidence from two cases to benefit one accused

ANANTHAKRISHNANG
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

MAKING CLEAR that it is “not confident” and does not want Uttar Pradesh to continue with the judicial commission it appointed to probe the October 3 incidents in Lakhimpur Kheri, the Supreme Court proposed Monday the appointment of a retired judge from “a different High Court” to monitor investigations till the chargesheets are filed. It asked Uttar Pradesh to get back by Friday.

The bench headed by Chief Justice of India N V Ramana expressed dissatisfaction over “intermixing” of evidence by UP investigators probing the cases involving the death of farmers allegedly overrun by a convoy of three vehicles, including one owned by Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra, and the other deaths including that of a driver and two BJP workers in the violence that followed on October 3.

“What appears to us is that this SIT (Special Investigation Team), somehow or the other, is unable to maintain an investigative distance between the cases,” he said. “If this kind of process

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At the site of the Lakhimpur Kheri incident. **File**

continues, it will be a case of weighing the oral evidence in one case against the other. To ensure that evidence... are recorded independently and there is no overlapping and there is no intermixing of the evidence, we are trying to appoint a retired judge from a different High Court to monitor the investigation on a day-to-day basis... We are not confident... We don't want the judicial commission appointed by your state to continue,” Justice Surya Kant, one of the three judges on the bench, said.

The bench, also comprising Justice Hima Kohli, suggested the names of Justice Ranjit Singh and Justice Rakesh Kumar Jain.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2](#)

13 in jail for farmer deaths; minister son's bail plea to be heard Nov 15

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 8

THE BAIL application of Ashish Mishra, son of Union Minister of State Ajay Mishra, will be heard by a court in Lakhimpur Kheri on November 15.

Ashish alias Monu is among the 13 accused arrested by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) investigating the incidents of October 3 in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri district, in which four farmers and a local journalist were run over and killed by a convoy of SUVs including one that is owned by Union minister Mishra.

Three occupants of the vehicles were subsequently beaten to death by the mob at the site. The SIT headed by Upendra Agarwal, an Uttar Pradesh Police officer of DIG rank, has arrested four people for their alleged involvement in these murders.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2](#)

After Islamabad, Beijing to skip New Delhi meeting on Kabul; Iran and Russia to join

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

AFTER PAKISTAN'S refusal last week, China has cited “scheduling issues” to convey that it will not participate in the Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan on November 10, sources told *The Indian Express*.

While the two neighbours have chosen to stay away, the other key countries in the region — Russia, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbeki-



At a camp for aid in Kabul. Leaders will talk “current situation, future outlook”. **AP**

stan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan — are expected to participate in the meeting to be held at the level of national security advisors, and chaired by NSA Ajit Doval.

Though it has refused to attend, China has conveyed that it is open to maintaining contact and discussions through bilateral diplomatic channels.

Sources said the meeting will look at evolving a “regional security architecture” to deal with the challenges arising out of the

Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, mainly terrorism within and across its border, radicalisation and extremism, cross-border movement, drug production and trafficking, and potential use of weapons and equipment left behind by the US and its allies.

The Delhi meeting will be attended by Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani (Iran), Nikolai P Patrushev (Russia), Karim Massimov (Kazakhstan), Marat Mukanovich Imankulov'

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2](#)

Deputy CM Randhawa's son-in-law among two appointed as addl AG

KANCHAN VASDEV
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

MONTHS AFTER Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, as then Cabinet minister in Capt Amarinder Singh-led dispensation, had opposed vociferously the appointment of sons of two MLAs on government posts, his son-in-law Tarun Vir Singh Lehal was Monday appointed as Additional Advocate General (AAG) in Punjab.

Randhawa is now a deputy chief minister in Charanjit Singh Channi-led Congress government and also holds the charge of department of home.

Lehal's appointment was notified by the department of home affairs and justice on Monday, days after the Home Secretary had put up the file to the legal department. The appointment also has CM's stamp.

Another advocate, Mukesh Chander Berry, too has been appointed as AAG. The government has also appointed Sumeet Mahajan as senior AAG, Aadil Singh Boparai as AAG, and Rehatbir



Tarun Vir Singh Lehal: 'practicing for 13 years in the HC'

EXPLAINED
E **Stirs nepotism debate**

THIS APPOINTMENT comes at a time when PPCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu is gunning for the AG. This is not the first time the Congress government has come under fire for nepotism. Randhawa himself had staunchly opposed jobs to sons of two ministers by former CM Capt Amarinder Singh.

Singh Maan as deputy AG. According to an official order, Lehal and Berry have been

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2](#)

Online retail bets big on quick-commerce: micro warehouses, under 30-min delivery

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

AMID SUPPLY chain disruptions triggered by the pandemic, the online grocery segment has forged a new sub-vertical — Quick Commerce, or q-commerce — where the promise of deliveries within 10-30 minutes of ordering is the unique selling proposition.

New players, including Mumbai-based Zepto, have

waded into a space where industry heavyweights — Grofers, Swiggy and Dunzo, alongside Tata Group-owned Big Basket that will be extended to the Tata Neu superapp — have either launched or are contemplating full-scale operations. The focus of most of these ventures is on setting up micro-warehouses located closer to the point of delivery and restricting the stocks at these ‘dark stores’ to a focused set of under 2,000 high-demand items, as against the traditional

formula of well-stocked large-format warehouses located on the outskirts of towns and cities.

The newest entrant in the space is Zepto, a startup founded by two 19-year-old entrepreneurs, which announced a \$60 million fundraise on November 1, which it plans to invest in expanding the number of ‘dark stores’ it has to offer 10-minute grocery delivery to its customers.

In addition to Zepto, older players with delivery infrastructure like Grofers and Swiggy have

also set up dark stores to decrease the turnaround times on delivery of goods. Dark stores are micro-warehouses that are located closer to the point of delivery, compared with larger warehouses that are typically located on the outskirts of a city and are fewer in number. Only 3-4 such large warehouses service an entire city, instead of hundreds of dark stores being set up in a large city like Delhi. Further, while the more conventional

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2](#)

SIT grills Dera head Ram Rahim first time in sacrilege case, poses 100 questions in 7 hrs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

THE FOUR-MEMBER Special investigation Team (SIT) of Punjab Police on Monday questioned Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh for more than seven hours in Rohtak's Sunaria jail in connection with theft of a “Bir” of Guru Granth Sahib on June 1, 2015 from a gurdwara in

Burj Jawahar Singh Wala village in Faridkot district. The Dera head has been questioned for the first time in the sacrilege case.

During “first time and sustained questioning”, Dera chief was posed with “more than 100 questions”, a member of the SIT team said.

After arresting seven Dera men, in July last year, the SIT had named Dera chief as accused in the theft and sacrilege case in

which an FIR was registered on June 2, 2015.

The SIT team led by its head, Inspector General Surinder Pal Singh Parmar, and comprising of

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2](#)

KOTKAPURA FIRING: SC TAKES UP PUNJAB SLP, ISSUES NOTICE
[PAGE 7](#)



Children rescued from the fire in the paediatric ward of Kamla Nehru Hospital on Monday night. **UNI**

4 infants dead in fire at Bhopal govt hospital

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHOPAL, NOVEMBER 8

AT LEAST four infants died late Monday in a fire that broke out in the children's ward of the Kamla Nehru Hospital, which is located within the premises of Bhopal's state-run Hamidia Hospital. Officials said the fire broke out in a general ward and an ICU ward. They said that 36 of the 40 infants in the ward were rescued while four, who were already in a critical condition, succumbed to the blaze.

“Prima facie, the cause of the fire seems to be a short-circuit.”

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2](#)

Undeterred by daughter's murder, he scripts hope for girls

PAGE 1
ANCHOR

SANTOSH SINGH
PATAURI (SAMASTIPUR), NOVEMBER 8

EARLY ON September 14, Umashanker Thakur's teenaged daughter got on her bicycle and started pedalling towards his coaching institute at Patauri town in Bihar's

Samastipur, about 14 km away from her home in Karnauti village of Vaishali.

The Class 10 student was among 300 others, mostly girls, who saw Thakur's Daughters Development Group as a gateway to a life of hope and success. But the 14-year-old, the only girl among Thakur's three children, never reached where she wanted to. She was waylaid and murdered by a group of six men led by a man who, police say, had got into an argument with her

days earlier.

Within the next 10 days, all the accused were arrested and jailed. And a week later, Thakur was back at the institute. “I see my daughter in all of these girls who cycle 10-15 km from their villages to the coaching centre,” says the 45-year-old.

Over the last 18 years, since Thakur left his job as a marine engineer in Mumbai and started this institute “to lift the education profile” of rural students from Samastipur and Vaishali,



Umashanker Thakur, a marine engineer, left a lucrative job to start a coaching centre in Samastipur. **Santosh Singh**

“DDG” has notched up an impressive honours board: 30 government jobs, four IIT seats, 10 NIT slots, three NEET successes, over 100 Army jobs, 70 police placements and about 40 Group-D jobs in the Railways.

“The list of successful students has more than 30 girls. We help all of them prepare for competitive examinations or just clear their school exams from Class 9-12,” says Thakur. “We also speak to the students about issues such as foeticide and

dowry system, and try to create awareness among them.”


The centre charges Rs 300 per month for six hours of coaching every day, and employs five other teachers.

“This institute has filled me with so much self-confidence,” says Kriti Kumari, a farmer's daughter who is pursuing a B.ED degree. “I have been coming here for a year. I am now confident that I can speak out anywhere,” says Neha Kumari, a Class 12

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2](#)

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PERSEPOLIS: A DEFIANT ANIMATION FILM BASED ON 1979 IRANIAN REVOLUTION

Persepolis was not only a box office success, but went on to win several high-level international acclaims, including the Cannes Jury Prize, nomination for an Oscar in the Best Animated Feature category, and a Golden Globe nomination.


TECH



'GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY' REVIEW

Story-focused game is redemption from the Avengers game

ENTERTAINMENT



REVIEW OF MEENAKSHI SUNDARESHWAR

It doesn't satirize or send up the arranged marriage thing

EXPRESS AUDIO

Five promises PM Modi made at COP26

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Discussing the significance of the five promises Prime Minister Narendra Modi made at the COP26 in Glasgow.

FROM PAGE ONE

Bhopal fire

Medical Health Education Minister Vishwas Sarang said. Minutes earlier, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had tweeted that three children “who were already seriously ill” could not be saved. Describing the deaths as “an unbearable pain”, Chouhan said a high-level inquiry would look into what went wrong.

According to Rais Khan, a resident of Rajgarh in the state whose 10-day-old grandson was admitted in the general ward, “there was a spark and heavy smoke”, which led to chaos.

“Before we could understand what had happened, the hospital staff pushed us out,” he said, adding that he was still not sure about the status of his infant grandson.

Officials said 13 fire tenders were rushed to the spot to tackle the fire, which is said to have started around 8:45 pm.

Congress MLA from Bhopal, Arif Masood, who was present at the spot, said: “This is the second incident reported in the same building. An inquiry has been ordered but the reason behind these incidents should be thoroughly investigated and those responsible should be punished.”

13 in jail

Ashish Mishra was arrested on October 10. He has said he was not present at the scene of the crime. All 13 accused are lodged in the district jail in Lakhimpur Kheri.

On October 3, three vehicles including a Mahindra Thar belonging to the minister, ploughed into a group of farmers returning from the venue of a protest, at the Tikonia crossing, killing the four farmers and the journalist.

The enraged mob lynched two BJP leaders and the driver of the Thar, and set ablaze the Thar and a second vehicle, a Toyota Fortuner owned by one Ankit Das, a nephew of the former Union minister Akhilesh Das. The driver of the third SUV, a Mahindra Scorpio, escaped with his vehicle.

Ashish has claimed that at the time of the incident, he was at a wrestling event in his ancestral village Banveerpur, around 2 km away. The farmers have, however, alleged that he was present in one of the vehicles.

Ashish was questioned for 12 hours before he was arrested, during which he allegedly replied to only 40 questions that were put to him, sources said.

“We have found the involvement of 16 persons in the killing of the four farmers and the journalist. Three of these people, including the driver of the Thar, were killed in the violence that followed. The SIT has arrested the remaining 13 persons, including Ashish Mishra and the drivers of the other two vehicles,” a officer involved in the investigation said.

The driver of the Thar has been identified as Hari Om Mishra. The Fortuner and the Scorpio were being driven by one Shekhar Bharti and one Shishu Pal respectively. The 13 arrested include Sumit Jaiswal, who is the complainant in the second case.

The SIT obtained police custody remand (PCR) of all the accused from the local Lakhimpur Kheri court in order to interrogate them. Ashish was interrogated twice, and he and the other accused were taken to the scene where the crime was recreated. Ashish was also taken to his village, where he has claimed to have been at the time of the incident.

“The SIT is collecting evidence to prepare a watertight

case against the accused,” the officer quoted above said.

In the second case, relating to the lynching of Thar driver Hari Om Mishra and BJP leaders Shubham Mishra and Shyam Sunder, the SIT made four arrests last month after releasing pictures of the incident and asking people to help identify the individuals in them.

The four arrested have been identified as Gurvinder Singh, Vichitra Singh, Ranjeet Singh, and Avtar Singh, all residents of Lakhimpur Kheri. Based on information provided by Gurvinder, the SIT has claimed to have recovered a stick that was allegedly used to attack the two BJP leaders and the driver.

The SIT went through videos and pictures of the violence and zeroed in on 11 suspects. Some of the videos and pictures were collected from social media; others were sent to police by residents of the area.

In a few videos, some people can be allegedly heard instigating the public after the SUVs ran over the protesters. The SIT is learnt to have sent around 165 videos for forensic analysis, including one to match Vichitra Singh's voice with one that is heard in a video.

“We have received reports of the analysis of a few videos from the Forensic Science Laboratory. We are studying them,” an officer said. The SIT has also recorded the statements of over 100 witnesses in the two cases, including 70 who have given their statements before a magistrate.

“Most of the witnesses in the cases are common,” an officer said. According to police, security has been provided to the families of the eight deceased persons. Security has also been provided to over a dozen people who are crucial witnesses, sources said.

Delhi meeting

(Kyrgyzstan), Nasrullo Rahmatjan Mahmudzoda (Tajikistan), Charymyrat Kakalyeyevich Amavov (Turkmenistan) and Victor Makhmudov (Uzbekistan).

The top security officials are expected to jointly call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday. Some of the visiting delegates will also travel to Amritsar and Agra for sight-seeing.

With security concerns pertaining to Afghanistan dominating Delhi's mind, the conference is being held on the Taliban-ruled country's “current situation and future outlook”. Apart from the multilateral element, there will be bilateral meetings as well, sources said.

The Ministry of External Affairs said the “high-level dialogue will review the security situation in the region arising from recent developments in Afghanistan”.

“It will deliberate upon measures to address the relevant security challenges and support the people of Afghanistan in promoting peace, security and stability,” it said. “India has traditionally enjoyed close and friendly ties with the people of Afghanistan and has called for a unified international response to address the security and humanitarian challenges facing Afghanistan. The forthcoming meeting is a step in that direction,” it said.

Last week, responding to a question on the meeting from reporters in Islamabad, Pakistan National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf had said that he would not attend, and added that “a spoiler can't be a peacemaker” in an apparent reference to India, the host.

Sources in Delhi said there is “consensus” among regional countries attending the confer-

ence that Pakistan is “source of the problem”. There is a credibility gap between Pakistan's actions and intentions on Afghanistan, sources said.

“Pakistan's decision is unfortunate, but not surprising. It reflects its mindset of viewing Afghanistan as its protectorate. Pakistan has not attended the previous meetings of this format. Its media comments against India are an unsuccessful attempt to deflect attention from its pernicious role in Afghanistan,” sources said.

According to sources, the country's top security establishment, the National Security Council Secretariat, is taking the lead in organising the conference. The meeting is a “security track”, which is different from the “diplomatic track”, and the “czars of the security establishments” in these countries will discuss “practical cooperation”, they said.

However, sources said, there was no request or plan to invite the Taliban since none of the participating countries have recognised or legitimised the regime so far. They did not rule out the possibility of inviting other countries, including the US, in future editions of the event.

According to sources, there has been an “overwhelming response to India's invitation”.

“Central Asian countries as well as Russia and Iran have confirmed participation. This would be the first time that all Central Asian countries, not just Afghanistan's immediate neighbours, would be participating in this format. The enthusiastic response is a manifestation of the importance attached to India's role in regional efforts to promote peace and security in Afghanistan,” they said.

Underlining the need to actively engage with the world to protect its security interests, sources said the event could be India's way to get a seat at the table to decide the future course of action on Afghanistan. “When you are not at the table, you are on the menu...this conference is India's attempt to set the table, be on the table and decide the agenda,” they said.

Until the fall of Kabul, India had not engaged with the Taliban through publicly announced official channels. For Delhi, the event is an “important play” since the Government has made it clear that it has red lines on the Taliban dispensation — it should not allow safe havens for terror on its soil, it should be inclusive, and it should protect the rights of minorities, women and children.


But so far, the signs from the Taliban have not been encouraging, according to the assessment shared by New Delhi with its interlocutors.

Sources said two meetings were held under this format in Iran in September 2018 and December 2019. The third meeting in India could not be held earlier due to the pandemic.

Q-commerce

e-groceries manage close to 1 lakh stock keeping units (SKUs), dark stores manage a focussed set of 1,500-2,000 SKUs. This is akin to a comparison between traditional supermarkets and modern convenience store formats.

Zepto currently offers its grocery delivery services in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi and Gurugram, and plans to expand to Kolkata, Pune and Hyderabad. The \$60 million fund infusion into Zepto by investors such as Nexus Venture Partners, Silicon Valley-based Y Combinator, Global Founders Capital, in addition to some angel investors is also reflective of the potentially addressable



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SC slams UP: unsure of your probe, giving it to ex-judge of another HC

retired judges of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, and said “let a former judge monitor everything till the chargesheets are prepared and filed”.

The bench's suggestion came after it said that evidence of some of the witnesses in the case relating to the death of the driver and the two BJP workers were overlapping with the case related to the death of four farmers. It raised doubts whether this was being done to benefit a “particular accused”.

“It appears that one particular accused is seeking to be given benefit by overlapping the two FIRs,” Justice Surya Kant said without taking names.

Appearing for the UP government, Senior Advocate Harish Salve said he will take instructions on the suggestion. “That will be done, my lord. I can take instructions. Government can appoint,” Salve told the bench.

Uttar Pradesh had appointed a retired judge of the Allahabad High Court, Justice Pradeep Kumar Srivastava, as a one-man judicial commission to probe the October 3 incidents.

On October 3, a convoy of three vehicles, including one owned by Union Minister of

State for Home Ajay Mishra, ploughed into a group of protesting farmers. In the violence that followed, two BJP workers and the driver of one of the vehicles were killed. A journalist was also among those killed. In the two cases, UP police arrested 17 persons, including the minister's son Ashish Mishra. Maintaining that the two investigations are separate, Salve said the mix-up may have happened because some of the witnesses who had come forward to give statements in the case of death of the driver and BJP workers were also making statements about the case involving the death of the farmers. He said when witnesses come forward saying they want their testimony to be recorded, police cannot say no.

He said the confusion may have occurred also because it was initially suspected that the journalist had died in the violence that followed the crash, but it later emerged that he too was allegedly crushed by the vehicles. Therefore, the investigation into his death, Salve said, “had moved to the FIR registered in connection with the death of the farmers”.

The bench said that's why it wanted an independent judge to monitor till the filing of the chargesheet.

Justice Surya Kant said the cause of death of the journalist was “entirely different...impression sought to be given was this journalist was beaten to death”.

“They were all crushed by the car,” Salve said, adding “the trouble is” there were thousands of people at the scene, and there are political overtones for whatever is happening. “We don't want to have any political overtones,” the CJ said, justifying the bench suggestion for a retired High Court judge to monitor the probe. “Find out from your government,” he told Salve.

At the outset, the CJ told the senior counsel that there is “nothing in the status report except saying some more witnesses examined” and that the “lab reports (have) not come yet”. Salve said it is “beyond our control... They have said they will give by November 15”.

The bench then questioned him on the seizure of phones of the accused and wondered why only the phone of key accused Ashish Mishra had been seized. “What about the mobile phones of other accused,” Justice Kohli asked.

“Some of the accused have said they don't have a cell phone. But their call data records have all been obtained,” Salve said.

Justice Kohli asked if he was trying to say that none of the other accused had phones on them. Salve said they had thrown away their phones and claimed that they didn't have any, but the police obtained the CDRs. He said CCTV visuals of the incident were awaiting certification.

Justice Surya Kant said the collection of evidence in the FIR related to the death of farmers has to be an “independent exercise”.

Senior Advocate Arun Bharadwaj, appearing for Ruby Devi, wife of slain BJP worker Shyam Sunder, expressed lack of confidence in the probe and urged that his case be handed over to CBI. Salve said the man “came out (of the vehicle). Farmers hit him. Police tried to protect him. Police were trying to save these people who were thrashed by the farmers”.

The bench told Bharadwaj “CBI is not the solution of everything” and he can submit his evidence before the judge proposed to be appointed to monitor the probe.

general. “I have been practicing for almost 13 years in the high court. Being a son-in-law of somebody, if that is negative, then I do not know what to say,” said Lehal.

The appointments come amidst an ongoing row over Advocate General APS Deol, whose appointment has been opposed tooth and nail by PCCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, who had even resigned from his post over the issue.

Aam Aadmi Party accused the government of betraying Punjab and following in the footsteps of former Amarinder Singh. Party co-in-charge for Punjab, Raghav Chadha, claimed that only the family members of Congress minister and MLAs were getting jobs in the state.

“Congress is fulfilling its principal poll promise of ‘Har Ghar Naukri but with minor modification. Recipients of these jobs are family members of Congress ministers & MLAs. Latest beneficiary is Deputy CM Randhawa's son-in-law. Channi is essentially carrying forward Captain's legacy,” said Chadha.

He said people of Punjab are well aware of the “betrayal being committed by the Congress”.

Randhawa had earlier opposed recruitment of MLA Fateh Jung Singh Bajwa's son as DSP on compassionate grounds and also of MLA Rakesh Pandey's son as Naib Tehsildar. He had not only opposed it during the Cabinet meeting but also in public by giving a statement to the media. He had said that the government should concentrate on giving jobs to the unemployed rather than giving jobs to the sons of legislators. The issue had then created a furore in Punjab. Fateh Bajwa's son had given up the job after a nudge by the party high command.

Interestingly, Sidhu's son was also appointed a law officer by Amarinder government but after being accused of nepotism. Sidhu's son had also given up the job.

Former Cabinet minister Gurpreet Singh Kangar's son-in-law was also absorbed in the Excise Department recently.

SIT grills

Batala SSP Mukhwinder Singh Bhullar, DSP Lakhvir Singh and Inspector Dalbir Singh questioned Dera chief for over 7 hours beginning 10:30 am and continuing till 6 pm.

Dera chief was awarded a 20-year in jail term in 2017 for raping two sadhvis (disciples). In January 2019, he and three others were awarded life term for the murder of journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati. He was also sentenced to life imprisonment along with four others on October 18 for the murder of Dera manager Ranjit Singh.

Punjab and Haryana High Court had last month directed that the SIT could question Dera head in jail after he approached court moving applications demanding quashing of a Faridkot court order where production warrants were issued against him in connection with 2015 case, and seeking anticipatory bail, in event of an arrest.

IG Parmar said, “We will submit the compliance report to Punjab and Haryana High Court by November 12 as has been directed.”

The theft of “Bir” and subsequent incidents of sacrilege and police firing on anti-sacrilege protesters where two protestors were killed in Behlhal Kalan police firing in 2015 had left members of Sikh community furious, and had pushed erstwhile SAD led government in Punjab to the wall.

The incidents continue to resonate strongly in the run up to upcoming Assembly elections in Punjab.

Chandigarh



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Chief Justice of India & Patron - in - Chief, NALSA

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Union Minister for Law & Justice, Govt. of India

Hon'ble Shri Justice Uday Umesh Lalit

Judge, Supreme Court of India & Executive Chairman, NALSA

 **IN THE AUGUST PRESENCE OF** 

Hon'ble Shri Justice Rajesh Bindal

Chief Justice, Allahabad High Court & Patron-in-Chief, UPSLSA

Hon'ble Shri Justice M.N. Bhandari

Judge, Allahabad High Court & Executive Chairman, UPSLSA



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RED CROSS
Salary late, our
Diwali ruined:
Contract staff

Panchkula: Non-permanent staff of Red Cross Society's Old Age Home here have alleged that the Haryana government failed to disburse their salaries, supposed to be given in advance as per a notification for Diwali, and are, yet to get the dues even after a week of the beginning of the month. They said that their Diwali was ruined due to a "delay in disbursement of salaries". Nine non-permanent staff work at the old age home. They had also written a letter to the CM on November 6. An employee said, "Diwali is a festival of joy. But, we were deprived of it." He said no salary was credited into his bank account until 2 pm today.

Savita Aggarwal, Secretary, district's Red Cross Society, said, "These are project-based contractual staff. As soon as we receive the grant, we disburse the salary. There was a slight delay due to busy schedule in DC's office." She added that the staff got their salary today itself. "I handed each one of them some cash and ration on my personal level so that they can celebrate Diwali with joy," she said. **ENS**

UGC payscales: Punjab, UT teachers
to intensify protests, hold dharnas

EXPRESSNEWSSERVICE
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

TEACHERS ACROSS five universities, 48 government colleges and 145 aided colleges of Punjab and Chandigarh Monday held three hour long dharnas in their institutions demanding implementation of UGC payscales and withdrawal of the decision of delinking of teachers' grades from UGC payscales. They have planned to further intensify their protests, until their demands are met.

A three-hour long campus dharna between 10am and 1pm was also held at the Panjab University campus today by PUTA in front of the VC Office, as per the call given by PFUCTO (Punjab Federation of University and College Teachers' Organisations), in support of their demands. Mritunjay Kumar, President PUTA, addressed the protesting teachers and rued the fact that required notification to implement the 7th UGC payscales has not been issued yet despite the assurance given by the Education Minister Pargat Singh and Krishan Kumar,



Members of PUTA protest at PU, Chandigarh on Monday. *Express*

Principal Secretary, Higher Education.

The minister had himself visited the dharna site on October 19, after which the Chain Hunger Strike, which began on September 5, was suspended by PFUCTO only when the minister agreed to their demand in principle.

"It is unfortunate that teachers are being forced to go into the protest mode again when the all

“There has been no announcement from the government. The teachers in the universities and colleges of Punjab and Chandigarh are the only section of employees still awaiting revision in their payscales”

— JAGWANT SINGH
GENERAL SECRETARY, PFUCTO

grievances," the demands had not been met.

"There has been no announcement from the government. The teachers in the universities and colleges of Punjab and Chandigarh are the only section of employees still awaiting revision in their payscales," added Singh.

HS Kingra, President, PFUCTO said that "the teachers plan to intensify their protest and have decided to hold candle marches across different cities on November 11. These will be followed by dharnas in front of residences of ministers of Punjab on November 16. On November 23 we plan to court arrest in front of the residence of the CM Charanjit Singh Channi at Morinda after a rally. There will be continuous disruption of activity on campuses for an indefinite period till their demands are met."



NESTING SEASON

Painted Storks make a nest in trees at the Chhatbir Zoo, Jaipal Singh

Needed at PU: Over 100 security guards, CCTVs

Shortage of guards since 2008, when new buildings were constructed

EXPRESSNEWSSERVICE
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

PANJAB UNIVERSITY has been struggling with the issue of shortage of security personnel, CCTV cameras for the last one decade. Insiders maintain that the university needs over 100 security guards and similar number of CCTV cameras.

An officer attached with Panjab University security wing said, "The shortage of security guards has arisen since 2008-09 when many new buildings were constructed and inaugurated to be used for different purposes, including administrative and academic works. But the number of security guards was not increased. There are several reasons behind it. One of the reasons is the non sanctioning of the budget for the newly constructed buildings. Despite this, guards were deputed in these buildings."

At present, Panjab University has a strength of around 215 security guards, including security officers and assistant security officers.

There are only two security officers and three assistant security officers. At least 10 posts of security officers and assistant security officers are lying vacant.

Seema Goyal, wife of Prof B B Goyal of University of Business School, PU, was found murdered at her house H-4, which is situated right behind the official residence of PU Vice-Chancellor, on Thursday.

The preliminary post-mortem had suggested that Seema was strangled, and had received a blunt injury on the back of her neck. The body was discovered by her husband

and professor, BB Goyal. The security is deployed around the vice Chancellor's house round the clock.

Sources said around 100 CCTV cameras have been installed during the first phase of security upgradation. Almost all the vulnerable, sensitive spots were covered but there is still plan to install cameras at other 100 locations too.

Panjab University spokesperson Renuk Salwan said, "Indeed, campus security is always a priority for Panjab University. In this particular case of murder, we will react after receiving a report from Chandigarh Police, which is probing various angles. The university is committed to providing a safe atmosphere for students, its staff members residing on the campus."

Vikram Singh, officiating chief security officer, PU, was not available for comment.

In December 2019, wife of a Panjab University professor was molested as well as assaulted by an unknown person at Botanical Garden, Panjab University, when the woman was on her routine morning walk. The woman fought with the suspect and managed to run away. Police lodged a case but are yet to arrest the suspect.

In October 2020, at least 48 heritage furniture items, including chairs and tables, were stolen from the building of the Department of Sociology at Panjab University.

Later, three people were arrested and maximum furniture items were recovered from them. Thieves had taken advantage of the low height of the boundary wall at Panjab University in order to steal the furniture.

MURDER ON CAMPUS
Prof questioned
over wife's death

EXPRESSNEWSSERVICE
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

THE UT police Monday questioned Prof BB Goyal, husband of Seema Goyal, 60, who was found dead at her house in H block of PU campus last Thursday, at Sector 11 police station. Prof Goyal was the only person present in the house other than the victim on the night. His daughter, Parul Goyal, had gone to the house of one of her friends.

SP (city) Ketan Bansal, SHO PS 11, Inspector Ranjodh Singh, along with other police personnel were present in the police station during the questioning.

A police officer said, "As the motionless body of Seema Goyal was first seen by her husband, he had rushed his wife to GMSH-16 along with his neighbors. We want to clear some points on the sequence of events on the fateful night."

The postmortem examination of the victim's body suggested strangulation with injuries on her back of the head. Seema Goyal was a native of Ludhiana and had married Prof Goyal in 1995.

The victim's maternal family members had claimed that the couple was in a strained relationship. A case of murder was registered at PS 11. Certain objects including two broken iron nets, cell phones, and a laptop were sent to CFSL-36 for the forensic examination. It has been four days since the murder but the police are yet to identify any suspect. Police have also failed to conclude the exact motive behind the murder.

Still no headway
in Balongi
murder case

Mohali: The Balongi police has failed to solve the murder case of a man who was stabbed to death on November 4. The preliminary investigation indicated that the murder could be the outcome of some personal rivalry.


Police did not rule out the robbery as the motive.

On the evening of November 4, victim Ranje was found murdered at a secluded place at Jhampur village. He had taken his wife and children for shopping on the day of Diwali on his nephew's bike but his nephew Raj Kumar had told the police that he received a call from an unknown person who informed him about his uncle's murder.

The Balongi Station House Office, Inspector Rajpal Singh, said that they were yet to solve the case. When asked about the findings of the investigation so far, the SHO said that they were yet to get any significant clue.

Sources in the police said that the investigation had so far indicated that the murder could be due to some enmity and soon the culprits shall be arrested.

"We have questioned some people and soon the case shall be cracked," an officer added. **ENS**



HARYANA ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION
Bays No. 33 - 36, Sector - 4, Panchkula-134109
Telephone No. 0172-2582531; Fax No. 0172-2572359
Website: - herc.gov.in, E-mail: - herc-chd@nic.in

Vacancy Circular

Haryana Electricity Regulatory Commission (HERC), a statutory body, invites application for filling up one post of Consultant (Technical) on contract basis for a period of one year at the fixed remuneration of Rs. 75,000/- P.M.

The applicants should possess the qualification and experience as detailed below: -

Required Qualifications	Additional Qualifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bachelor's degree in Electrical/Power Engineering or Mechanical Engineering.Nine years experience in a large power utility / organization with generation, transmission and distribution facilities.The applicants should have an adequate design/planning/operational experience in transmission and distribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Familiarity with electricity tariff issues and power sector reforms.Power procurement / systems operations - competitive procurement, power purchase agreements, least-cost planning, scheduling and dispatch

Age of the applicants must be less than 63 years as on the last date of application.

The applicants who fulfill the above said qualifications and experience may apply alongwith self attested documents for the said post in the Commission latest by 23rd November, 2021 upto 5.00 P.M.

If the work and conduct of the candidate is not found to be satisfactory, then his/her contract shall be terminated without assigning any reason by giving one month notice or on payment of one month remuneration in lieu of notice period.

Sd/-
Narender Kumar, HCS
Secretary,
HERC Panchkula.

5507/Hry

The Punjab Officer's Co-operative House Building Society Ltd.
Mohali
CORRIGENDUM
The closing date of tender is extended up to 18.11.2021. In reference to tender notice dated 20.10.2021. The mobilization advance upto 90% of bank Guarantee is payable. The maximum amount of mobilization advance is Rs. 50 lakhs which will be adjusted against running bills.

CORRIGENDUM
HDFC Vs Kuldeep Singh and Ors.
Please refer to Summon Notice Published in this Newspaper on 14.10.2021, in the above notice the OA Number 5432/2017 inadvertently mentioned 5432/2027 instead of 5432/2017, other detail will remain same. Next date of hearing 23.11.2021.
Recovery Officer, DRT-II, Chandigarh

ਪੰਜਾਬ ਰੈਜ਼ਨਰੀ ਬੈਂਕ
(ਪੰਜਾਬ ਰਾਸ਼ਟਰੀ ਬੈਂਕ ਦਾ ਹਿੱਸਾ)

pnbnb punjab national bank
(Govt. of India Undertaking)

ZONAL OFFICE, SECURITY DEPARTMENT,
SCO 31-42, BANK SQUARE, SECTOR 17-B, CHANDIGARH

NOTICE - ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT OF FIRE SAFETY EQUIPMENT

PNB, Z.O. Chandigarh invites application for Annual Maintenance Contract (Non-Comprehensive) of Fire Safety Equipments installed in PNB House Building, Sector 17-B, Chandigarh through E-Tender. Documents are available on Bank's Website <https://www.pnbindia.in/Tender.aspx> & <https://etender.pnb.net.in/login> which may be downloaded. Last Date of application submission is 23.11.2021 till 16:00 hrs.

Dated: 08.11.2021 Place: Chandigarh **ASST. GENERAL MANAGER**

ਕੋਆਪੇਰੇਟਿਵ ਬੈਂਕ
FULLY COMPUTERIZED BANK

Cooperative Bank
HEAD OFFICE : HOSHAARPUR

The Hoshiarpur Central Cooperative Bank Ltd.
ਕੁਟੋਬਨ ਨੀਟਿਸ਼

ਬੈਂਕ ਵਾਂਗੋ ਬਚਾਵਾਂ/ਮੁੱਖ ਦਫਤਰ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੀ ਸੇਵਾਵਾਂ/ਸੇਵਾਵਾਂ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ DdL/HP/ Lenoxy ਬੈਂਕਨੀ ਦੇ ਭੇਜਕਦਾਰ ਪੀ.ਐੱਸ. ਖਰੀਦਣੇ ਹਨ। ਬਚਾਵਾਨ ਪਾਣੀਨੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਕੁਟੋਬਨ ਹੇਠ ਜਿਨੀ 17.11.2021 ਤਕ 4:00 ਵਜੇ ਤਕ ਦੀ ਹੁਲਿਆਰਪੁਰ ਕੇਂਦਰੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਬੈਂਕ ਲਿਮ., ਮੁੱਖ ਦਫਤਰ ਹੇਠਲੇ ਹੇਠ ਹੁਲਿਆਰਪੁਰ ਵਿਖੇ ਭੇਜ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ। ਬੈਂਕ ਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ ਮਿਲੇਗਾ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਲਿਮੀਟੀਡ ਕੁਟੋਬਨ ਨੂੰ ਹੋਰ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਲਗੀ ਨੰਬਰ ਆਈਟਮ ਦਾ ਨਾਂ

1	Desktop Computer: Intel Core i5/10th Generation/8GB Ram/ 1TB Hard Disk/18.5" or 20" LED, Keyboard/Mouse/Win 10
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ਦੀ ਹੁਲਿਆਰਪੁਰ ਕੇਂਦਰੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਬੈਂਕ ਲਿਮ., ਮੁੱਖ ਦਫਤਰ ਹੇਠਲੇ ਹੇਠ ਹੁਲਿਆਰਪੁਰ

ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਮੈਨੇਜਰ

Coal India Limited
(A Maharatna Company)

"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd www.coalindia.in/ respective Subsidiary Company. CIL e-procurement portal <https://coalindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in>. In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <https://gem.gov.in/>."

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE						
SR. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1.	CAD DIVISION, BHIVANI	PLANNING, DESIGN, SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING, COMMISSIONING AND OPERATION & MAINTENANCE FOR 3 YEARS (INCLUDING THREE YEARS FREE MAINTENANCE OF ON-FARM MICRO IRRIGATION SYSTEM) AFTER ONE YEAR ASSURED PERFORMANCE DEMONSTRATION/DEFECTS LIABILITY PERIOD. WHICHEVER IS LATER, OF SOLAR POWERED INTEGRATED MICRO - IRRIGATION (PMI) SCHEMES IN THE COMMAND OF THE EXISTING CANAL, OUTLETS OF VARIOUS DISTRIBUTARIES/ MINORS IN BHIVANI DISTRICT OF HARYANA INCLUDING LOW PRESSURE PIPELINE INFRASTRUCTURE FROM THE OUTLET TO ON-FARM PLOTS, ON-EPIC MODE UNDER HYBRID ANNUITY BASED MODEL (HAM).	CLOSING DATE 18.11.2021	1755.60 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	82228-56403 xsrthhwaricad@gmail.com
2.	HYPNL	ENGAGEMENT OF HEALTH CHECK-UP SERVICE PROVIDER FOR PROVIDING CASHLESS HEALTH CHECK-UP FACILITY ON ANNUAL BASIS TO ALL THE REGULAR EMPLOYEES OF HYPNL-1341 NIT NO. 1224 DATED: 29.10.2021	03.11.2021 22.12.2021	EMD 2 LACS	www.hypnl.org.in	01722583789 pro@hypnl.org.in
3.	HYPNL	OIL TESTING EQUIPMENTS - PACKAGE-A QDP NO. 1338 NIT NO. 1221 DATED 26.10.2021	08.11.2021 08.12.2021	EMD 4.23 LACS	www.hypnl.org.in	01722583789 pro@hypnl.org.in
4.	HYPNL	1. PROVIDING TEMPORARY STORE SHED AT 220KV S/STN, MADANPUR PANCHKULA DURING FY 2021-22. 2. CONSTRUCTION OF ECO FRIENDLY PARK IN POWER COLONY AT 220KV S/STN, MADANPUR, PANCHKULA DURING FY 2021-22. NIT NO. 111/2021-22/XEN/TS/PNL DATED. 02.11.2021	02.11.2021 12.11.2021	3.80 LACS (657 EXTRA)	www.hypnl.org.in	01722583789 pro@hypnl.org.in
5.	DHBN	RECORDING OF MONTHLY METER READING WITH CMIS PROCESSING OF DATA FOR BILLING IN COMMON REQUIRED FORMAT AND COMPLETE ANALYSIS OF 1 3 RD METER DATA EVERY MONTH INCLUDING LOAD SURVEY LOGGING OF TAMPER EVENTS AND CONSUMPTION PATTERN OF VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF CONSUMERS WITH LT CT METERS SO THAT THE DATA ANALYSIS OF COMPLETE METERS ARE CARRIED OUT ONCE IN A QUARTER UNDER JURISDICTION OF DHBN	03.11.2021 03.12.2021	5.34 CRORE	www.dhbn.org.in	805988663 seerp@dhbn.org.in
6.	DHBN	BIF TRI AUG OF ACSR OF 11 KV FEEDERS AND RELOCATION OF METERS RELEASE OF ALL TYPE OF CONN & OTHER WORKS AS PER ESTIMATE ON NGAMS LABOUR SCHEDULED RATE WEF 14.05.18 UNDER OF CIRCLE DHBN FATEHABAD	10.11.2021 30.11.2021	AS PER ACTUAL SCOPE OF WORK	www.dhbn.org.in	01667223777 seerp@dhbn.org.in
7.	MUNICIPAL COUNCIL BHIVANI	DOOR TO DOOR COLLECTION OF GARBAGE, SWEEPING OF ROADS, LIFTING OF DUST ON ROAD IN RESIDENTIAL SECTOR 13, 23, 21, 26, MANDI TOWNSHIP, VINAS NAGAR, KIRTI NAGAR, NEW BASTI VIDYA NAGAR, REVENUE COLONY, OLD HOUSING BOARD, ADARSH NAGAR ETC. AS PER DMT	03.11.2021 17.11.2021	1 LAKH	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9610880504 me.mctbhwn@gmail.com
8.	KURUKSHETRA DEVELOPMENT BOARD, KURUKSHETRA	PRINTING WORK FOR INTERNATIONAL GITA MAHOTSAV-2021	CLOSING DATE 16.11.2021	EMD 1 LAKH	etenders.hry.nic.in	9416334507 kdtkkr@gmail.com
9.	HARYANA TOURISM CORPORATION LIMITED	RE-INVITE 1ST TIME, CONSTRUCTION OF BOUNDARY WALL ALONG CANAL SIDE AT TILVAR TOURIST COMPLEX, ROHTAK	09.11.2021 29.11.2021	99.60 LACS	haryanatourism.gov.in	9996107464 whtrcto@gmail.com
10.	HSAMB BHIVANI	ANNUAL REPAIR OF LINK ROAD FROM VILLAGE CHANG TO KHARAK IN BAWANI KHARA CONSTY. (10-420) DISTT. BHIVANI FOR THE YEAR 2020-21 & ONE OTHER WORK	CLOSING DATE 12.11.2021	8 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	oobhwni2021.hsamb@gmail.com
11.	MUNICIPAL CORPORATION ROHTAK	SHIFTING AND CONSTRUCTION OF SHOPS ON HISAR ROAD, OLD GOVT. SENIOR SEC. SCHOOL, HSP LAND, ROHTAK,	04.11.2021 23.11.2021	155.35 LACS	www.etenders.hry.nic.in	xermcrohtak@gmail.com
12.	UHBVN	A/MTC OF RB AT 33KV S/STN, KHARKHODA SONPAT	CLOSING DATE 17.11.2021	3.61 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9991480086 xendvubhvnrohtak@gmail.com
13.	UHBVN	A/MTC OF NRB AT 33KV S/STN, JATTAL PANPAT	CLOSING DATE 17.11.2021	3.80 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	9991480086 xendvubhvnrohtak@gmail.com
14.	UHBVN	A/MTC. OF NRB AT 33KV S/STN, KHEWRA (SONPAT)	CLOSING DATE 18.11.2021	1.14 LACS	www.uhbvn.org.in	9991480086 xendvubhvnrohtak@gmail.com
15.	UHBVN	A/MTC. OF NRB AT 33KV S/STN, FARMANA (SONPAT)	CLOSING DATE 18.11.2021	1.54 LACS	www.uhbvn.org.in	9991480086 xendvubhvnrohtak@gmail.com
16.	UHBVN	A/MTC. OF NRB AT 33KV S/STN, BEGGA (SONPAT)	CLOSING DATE 18.11.2021	1.10 LACS	www.uhbvn.org.in	9991480086 xendvubhvnrohtak@gmail.com
17.	UHBVN	CONST. OF PARKING SHED FOR 2 MOS. SE RESIDENCES AT GRH COLONY ROHTAK	CLOSING DATE 18.11.2021	1.35 LACS	www.uhbvn.org.in	9991480086 xendvubhvnrohtak@gmail.com
18.	UHBVN	PROVIDING RAIN WATER HARVESTING SYSTEM AT 33KV S/STN, SEC-6 ROHTAK	CLOSING DATE 18.11.2021	1.70 LACS	www.uhbvn.org.in	9991480086 xendvubhvnrohtak@gmail.com
19.	HARYANA DAIRY DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATIVE FEDERATION LIMITED, MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE, MAHENDERGARH	REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR RENOVATION OF TOILETS, INCLUDING TILE TERRACING AND MISCELLANEOUS REPAIR WORK AT HARYANA DAIRY DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATIVE FEDERATION LTD PANCHKULA	08.11.2021 16.11.2021	24.50 LACS	www.vtdindia.org.in	vtdindia@gmail.com
20.	HARYANA DAIRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD, KURUKSHETRA	CONST. OF COMPOST TO IN CHOUHAWAY BANER, HUDDA PARK IN MC MAHENDERGARH - 19 OTHER WORK	CLOSING DATE 15.11.2021	238.89 LACS	etenders.hry.nic.in	seey.mcmahendergarh@gmail.com
21.	HARYANA DAIRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD, KURUKSHETRA	HIRPAQ OF AGENCY FOR PROVIDING OF TAXIS (COMMERCIAL VEHICLE) ON DAILY RENT BASIS FROM DURING INTERNATIONAL GITA MAHOTSAV-2021	CLOSING DATE 11.11.2021	EMD 50000/-	etenders.hry.nic.in	9416334507 kdtkkr@gmail.com
5515/HRY FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in						

HARYANA STATE FEDERATION OF COOPERATIVE SUGAR MILLS LTD.,
BAY NO. 49-52, SECTOR-2, PANCHKULA
Phone No. 0172 - 2590821 & 2590824
E-mail. haryanasugarfed@gmail.com

RECRUITMENT IN COOPERATIVE SUGAR MILLS OF HARYANA
Haryana Sugarfed, an Apex Cooperative Institution, intends to engage MDs/CEOs/Unit Heads for its Sugar Mills at Moham, Panaji and Asandhi on contract basis.

Criteria

i) **Age:** The applicant should not be more than 57 years of age.

ii) **Qualifications:**
B.Sc. Agriculture from reputed University/ Institution OR Degree in Mechanical/Electrical Engineering and Diploma in Sugar Engineering from ISI or VSI - OR - AEGS/AVSI (Super Technology)

iii) **Experience:**
Total 10 years experience in Sugar Industry out of which atleast 5 years experience as Head of Cane Department in 2500 TCD Plant.

OR

Total 10 years experience in Sugar Industry out of which atleast 5 years experience as Chief Engineer / Head of Engineering Department in 2500 TCD Plant.

OR

Total 10 years experience in Sugar Industry out of which atleast 5 years experience as Chief Chemist/ Head of Production / Manufacturing Department in 2500 TCD Plant.

OR

Total 10 years experience in Sugar Industry out of which atleast 3 years experience as MD/CEO/Unit Head in minimum 2500 TCD Plant.

Preference will be given to the person having B.O.E. Certificate and experience in Co-generation Plant Ethanol Distillation.

iv) **Terms:** For a period of 3 years.

vi) **Person** should have good communication skills and Administrative capabilities.

Remuneration
Salary-Approx. 24.00 Lakh per annum. In addition, perquisites in the form of rent free furnished accommodation, car for official purpose alongwith Driver, Home Pylon and Medical Health Insurance Policy (Family floater) worth Rs.20.00 lacs shall be provided. Subsequent increment of year base salary will be decided at Govt. level.

Eligible and interested candidate may send their application and bio-data (with two colour passport size photographs affixed) alongwith attested true copies of the testimonials/documents towards their qualifications & experience by registered post/express post in a sealed envelope superscribed "APPLICATION FOR ENGAGEMENT OF MD/CEO/UNIT HEADS" to Managing Director, Haryana Sugarfed at the above address. The applications must reach the above address within 30 days from the publication of this Advertisement.

Managing Director

5 THE CITY

A CONFESSION AFTER 17 YEARS

Court holds Beant Singh murder convict guilty of Burail jailbreak

JAGPREET SINGH SANDHU

CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

ALMOST 17 years after he had escaped from the high-security Burail Model Jail in Chandigarh by digging a tunnel, Jagtar Singh Tara, a convict in the assassination of former Punjab chief minister Beant Singh, was held guilty by the Chandigarh district court on Monday.

Tara, who was arrested in 2015 after the escape in 2004, has been facing trial for the jailbreak at the Chandigarh district court. The matter came up for hearing on Monday for recording prosecution evidence before the Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM), Dr Aman Inder Singh. However, Tara gave a statement confessing his guilt through his counsel Simranjit Singh.

As per court orders, Tara was explained the consequences of making such a plea. However, he remained adamant. After being satisfied that the plea of guilt admission by the accused is voluntary, the court held him guilty and convicted him under sections 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 224 (resistance or



Jagtar Singh Tara in police custody at Chandigarh District Court on Monday. Express

obstruction by a person to his lawful apprehension) of the IPC.

The CJM court held, "The convict is coming in custody in this case since February 17, 2015 (sic). He has already undergone the sentence more than the prescribed period for these

offences. As such, the convict is ordered to be released from custody in this case. His custody period is treated as his full sentence for the offences and shall be considered to have run concurrently with any other sentence so undergoing."

Tara is currently lodged in

Burail Jail after he had been convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for assassination of former CM Beant Singh. Tara had earlier as well confessed his crime, and had submitted a letter to the court stating, "I have no regret for killing Beant Singh".

As per the present case, the assassins of Beant Singh — Paramjeet Singh Bheora, Jagtar Singh Hawara and Jagtar Singh Tara — and Devi Singh, a murder convict in another case, escaped from cell no. 7 of Munda Khana barracks at the "high-security" jail on the night of January 21-22, 2004, after digging a 94-foot-long and 2.4-foot-wide tunnel. Bheora and Hawara were held guilty by the Chandigarh district court in 2015, while another accused in the matter Devi Singh is still absconding.

'DECIDED TO FLEE FROM THE JAIL AS WAS HAVING NO FAITH IN SYSTEM'

Tara, who was convicted by the court on Monday, stated that he had to adopt this path due to atrocities inflicted on the Sikhism, several innocent persons were killed in fake encounters and the culprits were not brought to justice. He had decided to flee from the jail as he was having no faith in the system and he decided to go out of jail in order to serve the Sikh community. Riots of 1984 have also affected his mind. Police took no action against the culprits of 1984 riots.

PEC celebrates 100th anniversary today, President Kovind slated to visit college on November 16

MANISH RAJ MALIK

CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

PRESIDENT RAM Nath Kovind and other esteemed chief guests have been invited on Nov 16 as Punjab Engineering College (PEC) completes its 100 years tomorrow. PEC was originally started in Lahore (now in Pakistan) in 1947. Although arrangements have been made for the 16th and is approved by the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the date is still said to be tentative. Officially PEC completes its 100 years tomorrow on Nov 9 but due to the busy schedule of the President, they will celebrate the grand occasion on the 16th of this month.

Tomorrow, the deemed university will celebrate its foundation day with a special cake cutting ceremony with Dr Baldev Setia, Director of PEC, Dharam Pal, UT Advisor, Rajendra Gupta, Chairman of Board of Governors, and S.S. Gill, Technical Education Secretary, as guests of honour. Professors and the registrar of the college will be present as well. A 100 feet high and 10 feet in radius balloon will be hoisted to mark the 100 years of PEC tomorrow.

PEC will also be presenting 654 Btech degrees, 160 Mtech degrees and 27 PhD degrees tomorrow to the students of academic year 2020-2021. Dr Setia also shared his vision for PEC and announced, "An incentive committee for awarding research publications has been established. A regular post for the registrar has been advertised and 56 faculty positions are involved in the internal process." Regarding the infrastructure of the institute, the director added, "Hostels for students have been refurbished and PEC plans to build new guesthouses and residential facilities for faculty."

The director said, "We need to tighten our belts in areas of research. As per NIRF rankings, PEC was placed at 70 which is not good enough for us. Most IITs and NITs were placed better than us."

"From this session onwards, A+ will only be given to a student who is giving at least one research paper. For PhD students, the stipend will be increased if they submit at least one research paper. One regulation for PhD students is that if senate approves it, the student will be sent to abroad which will provide greater exposure and some incentives will also be given for writing research papers," the director added.

Rs 1.01-cr salary scam: UT police arrest another cop

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

A HEAD constable, Naresh Kumar, of UT police was arrested in connection with Rs 1.01 crore salary scam. He was remanded in six days police custody on Sunday. Naresh Kumar is the third policeman arrested in connection with the multi-crore scam detected back in February 2020. Earlier, two people including a former in-charge of the salary branch and one home guard volunteer were arrested in the case September 10. The two were Junior Assistant Balwinder Kumar, former in-charge of UT police salary branch, and volunteer Surjit Singh. Accused Balwinder Kumar had joined the UT police as a constable but later merged into the clerical staff.

The case is being investigated by a special investigation team (SIT) headed by SP (Crime) Manoj Kumar Meena. Sources said, "Suspect Naresh Kumar had earlier filed an an-

ticipatory bail in the local court. His role was under the scanner when an FIR was registered in connection with the scam. His role also came under the scanner following the interrogation of Balwinder Kumar and Surjit Singh." Naresh Kumar is being interrogated at the Crime Branch, Sector 11.

Sources said, "Accused Balwinder Kumar along with his associates took advantage of many loopholes in E-Sevaarth portal of National Informatic Centre. Maximum government departments make the salaries of their employees through this portal. The UT police crime branch has reportedly told the NIC officers about these loopholes, which were sorted out. The possibility of similar scam in other departments cannot be ruled out."

Notably, a special audit from the side of CAG established the total loss to the state exchequer as more than Rs 1.01 crore. The excess salary was transferred into the salary accounts of at least 161 police personnel. The

SIT has managed to recover almost Rs 90 lakh out of Rs 1.01 crore from the accounts of many beneficial cops. So far, 64 police personnel of constable rank, head constables and a few ASIs are under the scanner for their connivance with Balwinder Kumar.

The scam was detected when 40 salary accounts of police personnel were found to have credited huge money with fake entries of inflated conveyance allowances and ration/food allowances, TA/DA, allowances for other things in February, 2020. A fact finding probe had indicted six persons and Balwinder Kumar, who was then posted as the in-charge of the salary branch.

Others included HC Mukesh Kumar, Yogender, Ved Parkash, constable Rajbir, Jatinder and one woman constable Usha Devi. They were also attached with the salary branch. Subsequently, an FIR under charges of forgery, embezzlement and Prevention of Corruption Act (PC) Act, 1988, was lodged at PS 3.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION POLLS

Peeved by parties' attitude, societies to field 73-year-old social activist

HINA ROHTAKI

CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

UPSET OVER the attitude of political parties in resolving their issues, residents of the societies in Chandigarh on Monday decided to field M N Shukla in the next Municipal Corporation elections.

He will be contesting as an independent candidate from ward no. 35 that comprises sectors 48, 49, 50 and 63.

The decision on fielding Shukla was taken in a meeting of the presidents, secretaries and other functionaries.

The Chandigarh Municipal Corporation elections are scheduled to be held in December.

Shukla is a resident of Labour Bureau Housing Society in Sector 49-A.

"He will be fully backed by the Voice of Housing Societies (VOHS). He has inspired many generations in the field of social service before taking up the issues of flat-owners of housing societies of sectors 48-51 under the banner of VOICE OF HOUSING SOCIETIES (VOHS).

Although he has been in public space for his entire career, he managed to remain

ABOUT M N SHUKLA

HE IS the secretary of Uttarakhand Navchetna Parishad & other social, welfare and cultural organisations.

He is chairman of Pranav Entertainers, a renowned musical group. He is a trained yoga instructor of Bhartiya Yoga Sansthan. He has been holding free yoga classes in Sector 49 park every morning at 5.00 for years.

Besides arranging and distribution of ration and clothes to the needy, he is instrumental in arranging funds for kidney patients in need of dialysis.

apolitical keeping arm-length distance from all political parties," the VOHS said in a statement issued on Monday evening.

The VOHS, which came into being in the year 2019 to raise voice against the regressive

Flats Transfer Policy of 2018, is now a household name in sectors 48, 49, 50 and 51.

It was stated that VOHS evolved "because of non-cooperative attitude of the councilors of the area as also that of the local MP.

"The VOHS has seen that these politicians, especially the elected members, have not brought or provided any relief to the housing societies dwellers, be it in the matter of stamp duty, unearned Increase, non-issue of completion certificate or the steep hike in water tariff. They turned a blind eye completely to provide any succor or relief to the dwellers of these areas. It is because of this background that the VOHS has decided to have its own councillor from the area who would be truly representing the cause of the people," it was added.

Shukla has done MA, MEd and a diploma in painting. A social activist, he is 73 years old. "He espoused the cause of teachers in his stint as a teacher in various govt schools of Chandigarh -- remained president, UT Adhyapak Sangathan, served as secretary of Government Houses Welfare Association in Sectors 22&23," it was stated.

Anganwadi workers hold protest, block traffic

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

MOHALI, NOVEMBER 8

MEMBERS OF the Angadwadi Workers Union blocked traffic at the Kharar-Chandigarh highway on Monday, over their demands that have been long pending. Hundreds of people faced problems due to the protest.

The state president of the union, Harjeet Kaur Panjola, said that they had been protesting for for a long time but the government was not listening to them.

She added that they had decided to reach the residence of Punjab Chief Minister Charanjeet Singh Channi but the police had stopped them after which they decided to block the traffic near the Kharar bus stand.

Meanwhile, commuters continued to remain stranded in the traffic for around three hours as the protest continued on the highway.

Pump owners association not happy, says diesel consumption more in Punjab

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

MOHALI, NOVEMBER 8

THE PUNJAB government's decision to reduce the diesel and petrol prices by Rs 5 and Rs 10 respectively, did not go well with the Mohali District Petrol Pump Association as the association was demanding more reduction in diesel prices.

The president of the association Ishwinder Singh Mongia told The Indian Express that diesel consumption is more than petrol in Punjab and the state government must reduce the diesel prices. "The state is agricultural-based economy and the machinery is dependent on diesel but with Rs 10 reductions in petrol had left the petrol pump owners in confusion," he added.

Mongia added that diesel is still costly in the state as compared to the other northern states. He said, "The transporters, farmers and industrialists are the major consumers of diesel in the state, with the diesel rates cheaper in the neighbouring states, we fear that there shall be more smuggling of fuel from other states."

Mohali civil surgeon seeks public support to rein in dengue outbreak

Mohali: In view of the increasing cases of dengue fever, the District Health Department (DHD) had once again appealed to people to not let water stagnate anywhere in and around their homes, and to wear full body covering clothes.

Civil surgeon Dr Adarshpal Kaur said that everyone needs to take precautions to prevent the disease. She further said that in a case of dengue fever, one should not panic but visit a government health facility instead, where dengue test and treatment is absolutely free.

While soliciting cooperation and support of the people for the prevention of dengue, she said that only with the help of the people can the district be made dengue-free. She added that the inspection and awareness campaign by the teams of DHD has been going on continuously since the month of March across the

100 NEW CASES, 1 DEATH IN TRICITY

■ **Mohali:** 1 death, 58 new cases: Toll now 33, tally now 3,293, 104 samples had been sent for testing, 662 cases so far.

■ **Chandigarh:** 25 new cases. Total number of cases in November is 195.

■ **Panchkula:** 17 new cases. Total number of confirmed cases is 711.

district. A total of 13 teams are regularly checking coolers, fridge trays, pots, empty tires, boxes and other containers. She said that the survey and awareness campaign in all health blocks of the district

is going on in full swing. For any information, the health department's helpline number 104 can be contacted.

The civil surgeon said, 'It is important to understand that simple fevers that can be treated at home. Normally, platelet count goes down with most viral fevers and not all fevers should be mistaken for dengue. In case of dengue fever, good intake of fluids, healthy home food and complete bed rest is required.'

She said that dengue patients have high fever for five to six days and that platelet count may drop after the fever recedes. She added that goat milk, kiwi fruit or coconut water do not help in increasing platelets in any way and patients should consume plenty of fluids like water, juice, lemon water, coconut water etc. "Drink at least two litres of water daily," she said. **ENS**

Yet another inauguration in Mahila Bhawan, this time of auditorium

HINAROHTAKI

CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

SUCH IS the lure to grab credit ahead of polls, Mahila Bhawan in Sector 38 that had been lying defunct for the last six years saw yet another inauguration on Monday. An auditorium of the bhawan was inaugurated by UT Administrator Banwarilal Purohit on the request of area councillor and city BJP chief Arun Sood.

Mahila Bhawan's halls are being inaugurated in bits and pieces. The Bhawan was inaugurated in 2015, six years after its foundation stone was laid in 2009 by former Union minister Ambika Soni. Though no women-centric activities were held here all these years, an attempt was made to revive it.

Then in 2017, a women gym was inaugurated but even that couldn't survive the way it was thought about. Later, since all rooms were lying vacant, few of them were given to Chandigarh Lalit Kala Academy, Chandigarh Sahitya Academy and Chandigarh Sangeet Natak Academy.

New furniture at that time was also purchased and was gathering dust in the rooms of the bhawan. It was thought to have recreation rooms and rest rooms in the bhawan but to no avail. Now, as elections are scheduled, another

The bhawan had been lying defunct for the last six years, its halls are being inaugurated in bits and pieces

attempt was made to revive the bhawan with another inauguration.

The bhawan was touted to be one of its kind for empowerment of women in the city. The initial aim was to provide all facilities for women under one roof, to give women a platform to carry out their research or skill development activities. But it wasn't done. Built at a cost of around Rs 22 crore, it is spread over an area of 1.3 acre. It has an auditorium with a seating capacity of 275 people, an exhibition hall, a library, a kitchen, a pantry, a dining hall and a gymnasium. It was inaugurated by Purohit.

Addressing the gathering in the auditorium, the Administrator said that "women empowerment cannot be successful if women from each section of society are not empowered".

"After the onset of the 21st century, women belonging to the grassroots level have found many vocational works that were only

reserved for men. Today there are many female masons, bus drivers, petrol pump attendants, farmers etc. And all these women are doing their job extremely well. Undoubtedly women are making their presence felt on the earth as well as in the space. Sky is the limit for them now," he stated.

The Administrator said that he is happy to see the Municipal Corporation, Chandigarh, itself being headed by a woman. The civic body is doing its bit towards this cause of women empowerment and getting the much-needed auditorium in Rani Lakshmi Bai Mahila Bhawan inaugurated. He also congratulated the team MCC on creating this highly innovative, thoughtful and modern auditorium which is going to be the hub of socio-cultural activities in future.

Member of Parliament Kirron Kher addressed the gathering virtually. She said that women shouldered critical responsibilities even in India's struggle for freedom. The history of Indian freedom struggle would be incomplete without mentioning the contributions of women. The sacrifice made by the women of India will occupy the foremost place. They fought with true spirit and undaunted courage and faced various tortures, exploitations and hardships to earn us freedom.

MARKET WATCH

ANNOUNCEMENTS & HAPPENINGS

Dr Sonika Sethi's book 'Easter Lilies and other stories' was launched

DR Sonika Sethi's book 'Easter Lilies and other stories' was launched today at Press Club Chandigarh. A gold medalist in M.A. English, Sonika Sethi specializes in postcolonial literature and historical fiction. 'Easter Lilies and other stories' is a collection of ten stories by Sonika Sethi. Dotted with varied themes highlighted through varied human experiences set across diverse backdrops and different time periods, the stories deliver a common message—hope sustains humanity. The title itself is symbolic and refers to purity, hope, rebirth and resurrection. The backdrops range from



trayal of the characters. According to her, "No human being or character should be categorized under dichotomies of black or white; good or evil; hero or villain. I, through my writings, try to explore the grey areas of the human mind which lie somewhere between black and white."

'Easter Lilies and other stories' is the second collection by the author. Her previous collection 'Of Gulmohars

and Kaners and other stories' included twenty stories ranging from long, mid-length and very short stories also called 'micro-fiction'. The stories paint on a canvas, the geographical boundaries that extend from the Indian subcontinent to Europe to Greece

and to Turkey. These pan-global settings subtly convey the idea that while human emotions cannot be fathomed and scanned even by the most powerful equipment, it's only the creative writer who can get under the skin of the characters and lay bare what goes on in a single human heart.

Talking about her inspiration, Sonika reveals that most of her plots and characters are inspired by the people and incidents around her but sometimes they are a manifestation of her fictive juices. She loves to read historical fiction and literature from around the world. Her current literary interest includes Turkish-American author Elif Shafak, Australian Kate Morton, Nigerian Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Lithuanian-American Ruta Sepety.




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

Chandigarh

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

Martyr on 09th November
CAPT GURJINDER SINGH SURI, MVC (POSTHUMOUS)
(04 JUL 1974 - 09 NOV 1999)



Capt Gurjinder Singh Suri, Maha Vir Chakra laid down his life while fighting against enemy soldiers during "OPERATION BIRSA MUNDA" in J&K while on attachment with 12 BIHAR. In the truest tradition of the Indian Army, Capt Gurjinder Singh Suri displayed conspicuous bravery, excellent presence of mind and extraordinary junior leadership by killing three dreaded enemy soldiers personally. He will always be remembered and missed by all of us in the Army Ordnance Corps for his supreme sacrifice and gallant act.

The DG OS & Colonel Commandant and all rks of the AOC

7 REGION



Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and others during obituary references in Vidhan Sabha on Monday. *Express*

SPL SESSION OF PUNJAB VIDHAN SABHA

Opp demands longer duration: AAP seeks 15 days, Akalis 10

House pays tributes to Lakhimpur Kheri victims, adjourned to Nov 11

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

THE OPPOSITION parties in Punjab Monday demanded that the special session of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha be extended by some more days to “discuss burning issues” of the state with Aam Aadmi Party demanding that House be convened for at least 15 days while Shiromani Akali Dal pushed for a 10-day session.

The two-day special session, convened to oppose the Centre’s notification extending the jurisdiction of the Border Security Force along the international border and the Centre’s three farm laws, began Monday and was adjourned for November 11 after obituary references where House also paid tributes to the four farmers and a journalist who died in the Lakhimpur Kheri incident in Uttar Pradesh.

This is the first Assembly session after Charanjit Singh Channi assumed the office as Chief Minister.

The SAD legislature wing asked Vidhan Sabha Speaker Rana KP Singh to extend the duration of the session by 10 days to discuss burning issues as well as take stock of the promises made by the Congress.

In a memorandum to the Speaker, SAD legislature party leader Sharanjit Singh Dhillon said since this would be the last session of the current House, Punjabis expect the Congress to give an account of their work and tell why promises made to farmers, youth and under privileged sections have not been fulfilled. “Farmers were not granted a complete loan waiver of Rs 90,000 crore. Youth neither received employment nor unemployment allowance of Rs 2,500 per month even as social benefits, including old-age pension and Shagun schemes, were not increased as promised,” Dhillon said.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) demanded that the session be extended by 15 days and said that the proceedings should be telecast live. AAP MLAs Harpal Singh Cheema and Aman Arora accused the Congress government of running away from pub-

lic issues and said it has violated the Constitution by taking the “Tughlaqi decision” of adjourning the second day of the two-day session.

“The government in Punjab is running headless. The whole thrust of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and his Cabinet has been on how to cover up the shortcomings of over four-and-a-half-years of futile rule. That is why the government is running away from protesters sitting on the streets and questions of the Opposition,” the AAP leaders said in a statement.

Cheema reminded that former CM Capt Amarinder Singh had said that the cost of one day of the session comes to Rs 70 lakh. “The CM and the finance minister should tell who is responsible for this wasteful expenditure? As a responsible opposition, AAP will ask the Congress government all questions of people. It will be asked in which ‘deal’ Channi has handed over half of Punjab to Modi and Amit Shah through BSF. Questions will be asked in relation to agricultural loans, Dalits, traders and the PTI teachers sitting on dharmas and unemployed sitting on indefinite strike”.

Earlier, a two-minute silence was observed in the memory of the departed souls. The House was then adjourned till November 11 when the discussions on BSF’s jurisdiction will take place.

On the first day of 16th Special Session of 15th Vidhan Sabha, the House paid respects to former Minister Sewa Singh Sekhwan, former parliamentary secretary Ravinder Singh Sandhu, Naib Subedar Jaswinder Singh, Sepoy Manjit Singh, chairperson, IFFCO, Balwinder Singh Nakai, and freedom fighters Niranj Singh and Avinash Chander.

The House also paid tribute to Sepoy Gajjan Singh and freedom fighter Arjan Singh.

Sports and Youth Affairs Minister Pargat Singh proposed the names of four farmers and a journalist killed in the Lakhimpur Kheri incident for obituary references. Leader of Opposition Harpal Singh Cheema also proposed the names of all the farmers and farm labourers who died in the farmers’ agitation.

SHARPENS ATTACK ON CHANNI GOVT OVER AG, DGP, SACRILEGE CASES

Cong works out middle path as Sidhu says ‘choose between me, compromised officer’

KANCHAN VASDEV
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

HOURS AFTER Navjot Singh Sidhu stopped short of announcing his resignation as the Punjab Congress president, asking the state government to choose between him and “a compromised officer”, the AICC state affairs in-charge Harish Chaudhary Monday organised a meeting between the cricketer-turned politician and Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi to iron out the differences between the two leaders.

Chaudhary intervened to organise the meeting after Sidhu called a press conference and questioned the party government over the status of investigation into the 2015 sacrilege and police firing incident and sharpened his attack on Advocate General APS Deol and DGP IPS Sahota. Sidhu was apparently miffed at the Cabinet, which met Sunday, for not taking up the issue of AG’s resignation – one of the two conditions that he had put before the party high command on Friday for withdrawing his resignation as PCC chief. While taking back his resignation, Sidhu had said that if he would resume the charge the day a new AG is appointed in place of Deol and a panel of names for the appointment of a new DGP is cleared.

In the meeting organised by Chaudhary, State Sports Minister Pargat Singh, a close confidant of Sidhu, was also present.

A source privy to the developments in the meeting said, “A compromise pact has been worked out. A Cabinet meeting has been called on Tuesday in which the resignation of AG is



PCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu addresses a press conference in Chandigarh on Monday. *Kamleshwar Singh*

likely to be taken up.”

Later, talking to reporters Cabinet Minister Raj Kumar Verka said “whatever misunderstandings” there are between Channi and Sidhu “will soon be removed”.

Verka said Chaudhary had discussed issues with Channi and Sidhu separately and jointly. “There were some issues and they have been sorted to a large extent today and whatever remaining issues will be resolved soon,” he said.

To a question on replacing the AG and DGP, he said, “You will get answers on all these things very soon.”

A source in the Sidhu camp, meanwhile, said, “Channi and Chaudhary have been telling Sidhu that the AG will be removed. This has happened umpteenth time. But each time they go back on their promise. We are watching the developments closely. The AG resigned on Monday. It has not been accepted yet”.

“For now, they have decided that the resignation would be taken up in the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday and afterwards Sidhu will be taken to PPCC headquarters. This is the plan. But, in the past, several plans have been made and not acted upon. This is what got Sidhu upset,” the source added.

The government had earlier decided to table the agenda of AG’s resignation in Sunday’s Cabinet meeting, but dropped it at the last moment.

A miffed Sidhu had decided to go for an all out attack on Channi-led government before Pargat Singh intervened and advised him against going to media, a source said. Sidhu, however, did not relent and addressed a press conference earlier in the day media where he asked whether his own party’s government give justice to the victims of the 2015 Kotkapura police firing incident or stand with the guilty by becoming their “shield”.

MORE TROUBLE FOR CONG, PUNJAB GOVT

Even as the Congress is busy fighting the fire lit by Sidhu, a Gurdaspur-based leader Raman Behal resigned from the post of chairperson, Punjab Subordinate Services Selection Board on Monday. Behal, who is likely to join the AAP, said that leaders who have come from outside have “commercialised” the Congress.

Meanwhile, senior party leader Manish Tewari also hit out at the Punjab government

asking why it has it not yet challenged the Centre’s notification extending the BSF jurisdiction. “It has been close to a month now Central Govt by notification has extended @BSF_India operational remit in Punjab to 50 Kilometres. Why till now notification has not been challenged by @PunjabGovtIndia under Article 131 in Supreme Court of India is opposition to it mere tokenism?” **ENS**

KOTKAPURA POLICE FIRING CASE

SC takes up Punjab SLP challenging HC verdict, issues notice

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

THE SUPREME COURT Monday issued notice to all respondents over an SLP (Special Leave Petition) filed by Punjab challenging a High Court verdict quashing the findings of the SIT probe in the Kotkapura police firing case.

The division bench of Justice Indira Banerjee and Justice JK Maheshwari held that notice be issued to the respondents, returnable in four weeks.

Punjab in its plea, filed through Senior Advocate Salman Khurshid, Advocate Aadil Boparai, and Advocate on Record Jaspreet Gogia, has challenged certain findings and observations in the judgment dated April 9, 2021, passed by the High Court in the matter Gurdeep Singh versus state of Punjab.

The counsel appearing for Punjab contended that HC has erred in delving into a detailed appreciation of the evidence collected in the course of investigation and expressing its views on the substance of the allegations contained in the chargesheet. The SLP says that HC’s observations and findings in the judgment would not only prejudice the ability of the freshly constituted SIT to conduct a full investigation but would also inhibit any trial court while examining a report that may be submitted by the SIT and would ultimately, lead to miscarriage of justice.

It has been argued before the apex court that the HC has made sweeping observations attributing bias to the state government purely on the basis of conjecture.

As per reports, the HC in April this year had quashed the Punjab Police Special Investigation Team’s (SIT) investigation of the 2015 Kotkapura firing case and directed the state government to constitute a new SIT without IPS officer Kunwar Vijay Partap Singh. The directions were passed by the HC while hearing the plea of Gurdeep Singh, former SHO PS Kotkapura, and another official, who had approached the HC seeking directions to remove the IPS officer from the case investigation.

Advocate General of Punjab, APS Deol, had recently said that there were clear instructions for expediting the process of filing the SLP at the apex court.

Meanwhile, kin of victims: ‘Sacrilege, police firing a topic every poll; leaders haven’t even met us once’

RAAKHI JAGGA
LUDHIANA, NOVEMBER 8

THE ONGOING politics in Punjab over sacrilege incidents and subsequent police firing in 2015 has left a bad taste in the mouths of the families of the firing victims, who say all they have heard is statements in the run-up to elections, while not a single leader has come and met them.

The Behbal Kalan firing had taken place on October 14, 2015. Police had opened fire on protesters sitting on a dhama in Behbal Kalan village, in order to get it lifted. Krishan Bhagwan Singh of Behbal Kalan village and Gurjeet Singh of Sarawan Bodla, who were protesting against the sacrilege of Guru Granth Sahib there, were killed in the firing.

Gurjit’s father Sadhu Singh said: “I read news of Navjot Singh Sidhu visiting Burj Jawahar Singh Wala village. He visited that village twice, but he has never met the families who



Gurjit Singh's parents in village Sarawan. *Archive*

were victims of firing or lathicharge. If he is so concerned, he should meet us as well. The incident happened during the Akali government’s tenure and after that Congress left no effort returned to let justice get delayed. Sidhu appears to be concerned, but even he issues only

statements and nothing else. Wonder for how many elections they will drag this incident.”

He further said: “The then SAD-BJP government had started work on a community hall and sports stadium in the name of my son in November 2016. However, that work is still lying incomplete.

These works don’t need any court hearing. Apart from issuing statements, governments should do something else as well. A 3 km road leading to community hall was also to be named after my son. That road is still kucha, forget naming it. Everyday, after hearing statements on this issue, we just feel upset, wondering for how long politicians will keep using the victims for their votebank politics.”

Sukhraj Singh, son of Krishan Bhagwan Singh, said, “No doubt the government gave Rs 1 crore each to both families, Rs 10 lakh was given days after the incident by SAD-BJP government while Congress government had later enhanced this amount to a crore and the remaining Rs 90 lakh were given in August 2017 by the Congress government led by Captain Amarinder Singh. However, I go to every court hearing on my expenses. I have hired my own lawyer, but the government is delaying justice. Channi government is also follow-

ing the Captain’s footsteps. This is why SP Bikramjeet Singh (an accused police officer in the case) has been reinstated. Accused are applying for bail and politicians are issuing statements. Sidhu says exemplary punishment should be given. But he never meets the people at ground. Hence, he too is not much concerned. We are all being used as election statements.”

Both said they will be raising the issues of road, community hall and sports stadium with authorities again.

Six years have passed. The families feel that every politician uses them as a subject for vote-bank politics but justice hasn’t been delivered. The government job offered to each family was also as per educational qualification of the family members. Sukhraj said, “Vidhan Sabha elections of 2017, Lok Sabha polls of 2019 and now Vidhan Sabha polls of 2022, the same subject of sacrilege is being raised. This shows the intention of politicians.”

DRUG TRADE

Dy CM asks SSPs to crack whip, submit report

Chandigarh: Taking note of reports related to selling of drugs in villages Rauli and Vajidpur of Moga and Ferozepur districts, respectively, Punjab Deputy CM Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa Monday directed the SSPs of both the districts to “personally intervene in the matter and take strict action as per law besides attaching the property of drug dealers”.

He also asked them to “initiate disciplinary action against the police officers, who failed to take concrete action against drug smuggling” and submit a report within three days. Randhawa said: “CM Charanjit Singh Channi has given strict instructions to all the district police heads to adopt zero tolerance policy against drugs and no drug smuggler/supplier should be spared.”

Principal Secretary (Home) has also issued letters to the SSPs of Moga and Ferozepur pointing out that “social media reports suggest that drugs were being sold openly in the said two villages and no concrete action was taken by the police.” **ENS**

Today: Cabinet call likely on re-determining power price with two private thermal plants

KANCHAN VASDEV
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

THE PUNJAB government is preparing to bring a legislation in Vidhan Sabha session to re-determine state’s purchase price for two private power plants — Nabha Power Limited (NPL) and Talwandi Sabo Power Limited (TSPL).

With the legislation, the government plans to take remedial measures so that the power is sold by these power plants to the state at cheaper prices.

As the power plants have been charging high prices, the end consumer has been at the receiving end, paying for electricity through the nose. The Congress had in its pre-poll promises ahead of 2017 Assembly elections said that it would terminate the controversial Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs).

The legislation is likely to be



CM Charanjit Singh Channi: ‘Punjabian de ikk hor vadde massle da hall, kal’.

tabled in the Cabinet meeting scheduled on Tuesday.

If cleared, it will be tabled Vidhan Sabha on Thursday.

Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi tweeted on Monday to say that the government was going to provide a solution to a long pending issue of the people.

“Punjabian de ikk hor vadde massle da hall, kal,” he said.

Former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh was also tasked by the high command to cancel the PPAs. Now, Channi’s government is trying to find a so-

lution.

Channi’s government has already issued a termination of PPA notice to GVK thermal plant at Goindwal Sahib.

Sources said that Channi was working on finding a middle path so that the PPAs are not terminated but the state gets cheaper power supply from them.

“Afterall, those companies have invested thousands of crores in the state. The CM does not want them to go to the court and get a stay. This would not solve any purpose. Also, terminating PPAs sends a wrong message to the investors that the state does not honour the agreements. The mission is to get power cheaper and the government is trying to do that exactly,” a source said.

The government has already reduced the price of every unit of power by Rs 3 for consumers having a load of up to 7 KW.

Ensure supply of DAP in 7 days or will gherao your residence: Badal to Channi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUDHIANA, NOVEMBER 8

SHIROMANI AKALI Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Monday issued a week-long ultimatum to Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi to ensure smooth supply of DAP fertiliser failing which his party will intensify its agitation “to secure justice” for the farmers by gheraoing his residence.

Addressing a dhama in front of the deputy commissioner’s office in Bathinda, the SAD president expressed shock that “the Congress government had failed to secure adequate stock of DAP ahead of wheat sowing season due to which it was now being sold in black”.

“Farmers are even being forced to purchase zinc and phosphate fertilizers along with DAP,” he said, adding that all this was because “Congress leaders were busy fighting with each other”. He said this was the first time there has been such a shortage of DAP, and during Parkash Singh



Sukhbir Badal at dharna outside Bathinda deputy commissioner’s office on Monday. *Express*

Badal’s tenure as chief minister, the state used to make arrangements for acquiring needed fertilizer months in advance.

Sukhbir also condemned the Congress government for not giving compensation at the rate of Rs 50,000 per acre to cotton growers whose crop was completely destroyed by pink bollworm. He said the chief minister “had duped farmers by

rushing to get his picture clicked with them and then forgotten about releasing relief to them”.

“The relief was only announced under pressure from SAD but even that is anti-farmer as clauses have been put to deliberately deny farmers even the Rs 12,000 per acre compensation announced by the government for hundred per cent damage,” he added.

He said Channi, his relatives including his brother, son and son-in-law “were indulging in corruption by opening shops to dole out illegal favours”. He alleged that the CM “had virtually taken over the liquor and sand mining business by bifurcating the excise and taxation as well as industry and mining departments and retaining excise and mining portfolios with him. He holding meetings with mine owners and is extracting money from them,” he claimed.

Reacting to the appointment of Home Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa’s son-in-law Tarunvir Lehal as an Additional Advocate General, Sukhbir said

Channi “was following the footsteps of his predecessor Capt Amarinder Singh by doling out plum jobs to children of Congress ministers and legislators”. “The ghar ghar naukari scheme has become a Congress ghar naukari scheme alone,” he added.

Sukhbir also warned officials “not to victimise” Akali workers at the instance of state Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal.

Earlier in the day, senior leader Sikander Singh Maluka said the Congress government had only reduced power tariff by Rs 3 per unit till March 3, adding that in direct contrast, the SAD-BSP alliance had announced that it would offer 400 units per month to all consumers free of cost. Maluka also asked the chief minister “not to try to befool Punjabis” with false advertisements, saying the Congress government was claiming that petrol and diesel prices were the lowest in the state when the actual fact was that both petrol and diesel were cheaper in Chandigarh as well as Himachal Pradesh.



8 REGION

LUDHIANA

‘Alcoholic’ beats elderly mother to death, held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUDHIANA, NOVEMBER 8

A MAN allegedly thrashed his elderly mother to death in Poonia village of Ludhiana, Monday.

Police said the accused, identified as Jagjeevan Singh alias Jaggi (35), was a chronic alcoholic and used to fight with his mother over money on a daily basis. Whenever she would refuse, he would hit her, they added.

On Monday, he allegedly thrashed his mother Bhinder Kaur (65) after a spat as she tried to stop him from drinking.

Police said the accused was unemployed.

Inspector Kulwant Singh, SHO Samrala police station, said that not only the accused, but even his father was a chronic alcoholic and hadn't returned home for the past two days. "Both father-son used to fight with Bhinder Kaur on daily basis for money. On Monday morning at around 5 am, there was again an argument and neighbours heard the cries of the woman but since it was a routine thing, they ignored it. The accused beat his mother to death and fled. He has been arrested. We are unaware of his father's whereabouts," said the inspector.

He said that the wife of the accused had also left the house two years ago along with their daughters and started living separately.

An FIR for murder was registered against the accused at Samrala police station.

HP schools to reopen for classes 1 to 7

Shimla: The Himachal Pradesh government has decided to reopen schools, which were closed in view of the Covid pandemic, for classes 1 to 7, an official spokesperson said on Monday.

decision to reopen schools was taken in the state cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur here on Monday. The schools from class 8 and above have already reopened in the state.

It was decided to reopen schools for students of classes 3 to 7 from November 10 and for students of classes 1 and 2 from November 15, the spokesperson said. The cabinet also decided to resume transport buses with full capacity instead of the earlier 50 per cent norms, he added.

PTI

HARYANA 75% JOB QUOTA LAW

16,000 firms registered on govt portal, says Dushyant Chautala

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

HARYANA DEPUTY Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala said Monday that industries have been asked to get themselves registered on the government portal 'Haryana Udyam Memorandum' as part of the state government's initiative to implement the law aiming at 75 per cent reservation for local youth in private sector jobs that offer a monthly salary of less than Rs 30,000.

Dushyant claimed that so far, 16,000 companies have registered themselves.

The Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act, 2020, covers private companies, societies, trusts and partnership firms in the state, as per a notification issued by the state government Saturday. This notification shall come into force with effect from the January 15.

Describing this act as a landmark in the field of employment, the deputy CM said: "The state has opened new doors of employment for youth of the state by implementing the Act. All the private companies, trusts and societies have been directed to fill the details of their employees by registering on the 'Haryana Udyam Memorandum' portal by January 15."

He also informed that at

Will resign again if farmers ask me to: Abhay after taking oath as MLA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

SOON AFTER driving to the Haryana Vidhan Sabha on a tractor to take oath as an MLA, Indian National Lok Dal's Abhay Singh Chautala Monday termed his win in the Ellenabad bypolls as a victory of farmers and said he will not hesitate from resigning again if they ask him to.

"This victory is not mine. It is the victory of farmers. I will now go to Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders and ask farmers about their demands and expectations from me. Whatever demands Samyukt Kisan Morcha has, I will fulfill that. If they ask me to resign again, I will resign again," said Abhay Chautala.

The INLD general secretary on November 2 won the bypoll to Ellenabad Assembly seat, which had been necessitated by his resignation in support of the farmers agitating against the Centre's three agri laws.

Earlier, Chautala, who is the son of the INLD president and former chief minister Om Prakash Chautala, drove a tractor to the Vidhan Sabha building from his



Abhay Chautala drives a tractor to Haryana Vidhan Sabha, in Chandigarh on Monday. *Kamleshwar Singh*

Sector 9 residence. He was accompanied by some of his family members, INLD state unit president Nafe Singh Rathni and former Haryana DGP MS Malik. He was administered oath of office by Speaker Gian Chand Gupta.

Talking to the reporters after taking oath, the INLD leader alleged that the state government blatantly misused official machinery in the bypolls.

"We made 15 complaints to the Election Commission re-

garding the violation of the model code of conduct and also gave proof, including videos, in this regard but we did not get any response. We demand an inquiry by a sitting judge into blatant misuse of official machinery," the MLA said.

He said in a peaceful constituency, heavy deployment of police and paramilitary forces defied logic.

"They made it look like this bypoll was being held in

Kashmir Valley. BJP candidate and those campaigning in his favour used to be accompanied by 20 vehicles of police and paramilitary forces," said Abhay Chautala.

On a question on his victory margin narrowing this time as against the 2019 Assembly polls when he had won by nearly 12,000 votes, Abhay Chautala said last time only 57,000 votes were polled in his favour in comparison to nearly 65,000 this time.

"This is despite the fact that the BJP, JJP and the Haryana Lokhit Party were fighting the polls together against me and even the Congress had joined hands with them to see that I lose, but their hopes were dashed," said Chautala.

Abhay said JJP chief Ajay Singh Chautala and his family tried their best to see that he loses the bypolls.

"Ajay Singh, his both sons (Deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala, and Digvijay Chautala), bhabhi (sister-in-law Naina Chautala) used to campaign door-to-door until late in the night. More than (BJP-JJP candidate) Gobind Kanda, it was they who were fighting polls," he said.

Abhay Chautala said the Congress candidate had got 35,000 votes in the 2019 Assembly polls from the constituency but he lost security deposits this time. He said the poor show by the Congress resulted in some votes being transferred to the BJP candidate.

Meanwhile, when asked that Abhay has said he will resign again if farmers him to, Dushyant Chautala said, "He has made resignation thing a joke. Does an elected representative have no responsibility towards those who chose him. This is why I often say he is a non-serious politician."

Dushyant said Gobind Kanda secured nearly 60,000 votes and gave a tough fight to Abhay, which in itself was a victory for BJP-JJP workers.

Making a reference to Abhay, Dushyant said those who used to claim that they will win with a margin of over 30,000 votes have been shown the mirror by the people.

The INLD leader had defeated his nearest rival JJP-backed BJP candidate Gobind Kanda by a margin of 6,739 votes. Pawan Beniwal of the Congress came a distant third.

NAWANSHAHR

Low-intensity grenade blast at CIA office, cops escape unhurt

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA
JALANDHAR, NOVEMBER 8

A 'LOW intensity' explosion occurred at the Nawanshahr office of the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) around 11:55 pm on the intervening night of November 7-8, sending police in a tizzy which first suspected that "compressor of the water cooler" installed at the office got bust. Later in the morning, police realised after seeing the site that it was a grenade.

Police sources said that miscreants threw it from outside with "intended mischief" with any objective to kill or injure the cops on duty at the office. The explosion, however, did not cause "great damage".

Entire CIA office, however, was sealed in the morning of the incident and forensic experts, who reached the spot, collected the sample and remains of the grenade. It is said to be a China-made low intensity grenade.

Nawanshahr police registered an FIR against an unknown person on the statement of Sepoy Jagtar Singh, who was among five cops on duty at the CIA staff office and saw the blast site first.

SSP Kanwardeep Kaur confirmed the blast.

Jagtar Singh stated that he was on duty at the main gate post and at around 11:55 pm on Sunday when a blast took place near a water cooler installed in the premises of CIA Staff office. After hearing a blast all other cops on duty including ASIs Avtar Singh, Resham Lal, Balvinder Singh and Sepoy Gurcharan Singh came out. They saw smoke all around the water cooler which also fell on the ground but they did not realise that it was some kind of an explosion of a grenade. They thought that the blast took place



After the blast at CIA office. *Express*

because of the busting of the compressor of the water cooler.

"In the morning when they visited the site again they found shrapnels all around on the water cooler, on the roof of a room near water cooler and broken window pans," stated Jagtar Singh, adding that the grenade was thrown with an intention of killing the CIA staff.

"We can say anything conclusively only after examination by a team of forensic experts," said police sources.

The carelessness of the CIA staff on duty could be gauged from the fact that they did not care to investigate the type of explosion at the time it occurred. Also they did not alert the seniors about its happening so as to take precautionary measures.

After the incident, security in the entire district was beefed up.

Police are examining CCTV footage, a police official said.

Earlier too in 2018, four low intensity blasts took place in Jalandhar's Maqsudan police station where police had arrested some Kashmiri accused after a few months and the case was handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Effective fuel price cut less than announced by Punjab govt, claims petrol dealers' body

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

PETROLEUM DEALERS in Punjab have flayed the quantum of reduction in Value Added Tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel announced by the state's Congress government, claiming that it was less than what was announced. The Petrol Pump Dealers Association Punjab (PP-DAP) added that it will result in lesser sales with fuel prices remaining higher compared to Himachal Pradesh, UT Chandigarh and Jammu and Kashmir.

The PPDAP said that "the net reduction in fuel prices was not Rs 5 decrease in per litre of diesel and Rs ten in petrol what Punjab government announced yesterday".

According to PPDAP VAT advisory committee chairman and Mohali District Petroleum Dealers Association president Ashwinder Singh Mongia, the net decrease in price of diesel per litre in Mohali district worked out to be Rs 4.33 and of petrol Rs 9.05.

Mongia said, "While announcing the reduction in petrol and diesel prices, the government factored in basic and additional VAT, but the net reduction in fuel prices turned out to be lesser than announced as government also imposes cess, additional cess and infrastructure development fee on per litre of fuel."

PPDAP president Paramjit Singh Doaba, who owns a filling station in Kapurthala, said in his area the net reduction in diesel price was Rs 4.21 per litre and in petrol price, it was Rs 8.86 litre.

"*Raull pa diti ki das rapaiye atte panj rapaiye ghataya par asli jehra ghatya oh ath rapaiye chheyaasi paise atte chaar rapaiye ikki paise* (The government made a lot of noise as it announced reduction in prices of petrol and diesel by Rs 10

and Rs 5 per litre, but in effect prices stand reduced at Rs 8.86 and Rs 4.21, respectively)," said Doaba, asking "what kind of government and officers are there who could not even calculate the exact reduction".

Doaba also rued that the disparity in fuel prices puts Punjab at a disadvantage.

"We had demanded that prices of diesel and petrol, both should have been decreased by Rs 10 per litre each. This would have ensured a level playing field," he said, adding that the announced reduction would have "serious repercussions on the petroleum trade in Punjab, industry, transporters and the farming community". He said the decision would also lead to "reduction in VAT collections" due to "fall in sales of diesel in terms of litres of diesel sold".

He also issued a statement, pointing out that "Punjab shares its vast borders with Himachal, Haryana, J&K, Chandigarh and there is free flow of traffic between Punjab and neighbouring states through state and national highways, link roads, village roads making it vulnerable to unscrupulous activities like smuggling in small oil tankers, sourcing of diesel requirements by industry from neighbouring states, easy approach to farmers for sourcing their bulk diesel requirements from across the border".

Further, he said over phone that while farmers living along the border areas will be able to source the diesel from across the inter-state border, it would not be viable for farmers living in interior areas of Punjab. Similarly, he said that while big industries with huge requirement of fuel would get it from outside, it would not be viable for small and medium scale industries which comparatively had lesser requirements.

"We will have a meeting soon and decide association's next course of action on the issue," said Doaba.

STAND-OFF OVER NARNAUND PROTEST CONTINUES

Farmers begin 'pakka morcha' at Hansi mini secretariat

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 8

THE FOUR-DAY stand-off between farm unions and Haryana government over an FIR against three farmers, booked in connection with an agitation against BJP MP Ram Chander Jangra in Narnaund last week, intensified Monday with the peasants starting an indefinite dharna outside the mini-secretariat in Hansi.

The farmers who had laid siege to the Narnaund police station for past three days, moved to Hansi town to gherao the SP office, which is situated inside the mini secretariat, there on Monday after a fresh round of talks with the state government remained inconclusive.

Earlier in the day, farmers held a panchayat in Hansi which was addressed by Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait. After hours of protest, the administration invited the farmers for talks.

A farmer leader Vikas Sisar told reporters that a 16-member delegation of farmers held meeting with them, but the outcome was "not fruitful".

"Our demand is that a case



Farmers at the pakka morcha outside mini secretariat. *Manoj Dhaka*

be registered against Jangra and attempt to murder case registered against three farmers be withdrawn. We have decided that till our demands are met, we will continue our dharna, which has now shifted from Narnaund to the mini-secretariat in Hansi," Sisar said.

Farmers are demanding withdrawal of the FIR registered against the three farmers in connection with a protest against Jangra, a Rajya Sabha member, on November 5. Police had booked protesters for allegedly smashing windshield of Jangra's

car. However, protesters have alleged that Jangra's associates had attacked farmers resulting in serious injuries to one among them, Kuldeep Rana. They are also demanding an FIR against Jangra and his associates for assault on Rana, who is currently under treatment at a private hospital in Hisar.

Asked about the FIR, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar told reporters in Karnal that government will take steps "for maintenance of law and order".

Pointing out that farm union leaders had earlier promised to

hold their agitation in a peaceful manner, he said the Narnaund incident, in which BJP leader's car was damaged, belies their claim. "Action will be taken in the matter as per law," Khattar said.

Earlier, Tikait said Centre has time till November 26 to resume talks with the farmers protesting against the three agri laws.

"The central government has time till November 26. Hold talks, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha wants to have a dialogue. After November 26, we will start restructuring our tents (at dharna venues). The farmers won't return to their homes

SKM MEETING TODAY

The SKM, meanwhile, is scheduled to hold a meeting Tuesday to discuss the future course of the agitation. The farmers have been camping at the borders of Delhi since November 26 last year to demand repealing of three contentious farm laws. After a meeting with the leaders of Haryana's farmer outfits Sunday, another senior BKU leader Gurnam Singh Chaduni had stated that in the meeting of the SKM, they would suggest a march to the Parliament on November 26.

BMC chief awarded honorary degree by Thapar Institute

Cites exemplary management during Covid pandemic

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUDHIANA, NOVEMBER 8

IT WAS a proud homecoming for Iqbal Singh Chahal (55), a native of Punjab's Mansa, who was Monday awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) honorary doctorate by his alma mater, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology (TIET), during a special convocation at its Patiala campus.

A 1989-batch IAS officer, currently posted as the Municipal Commissioner of Greater Mumbai, Chahal was honoured for his "exemplary Covid management in Mumbai" as the chief of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

Chahal said that he was honoured to be the first alumnus of Thapar Institute to receive the honorary degree from his alma mater. "From 1994 to 2013, there were seven recipients of this honorary degree but none of them were alumni of Thapar Institute. They included personalities such as (former Prime Minister) Dr Manmohan Singh, (former Punjab chief minister) Capt Amarinder Singh, (Infosys



During the convocation, in Patiala. *Express*

co-founder) Nandan Nilekani, and (senior journalist) Shekhar Gupta among others. I am happy that I am the only alumni to be given this honor. In the past eight years, no one got it," said Chahal.

A native of Joga-ralla village of Mansa, Chahal said that he had graduated in electronics and communication engineering from Thapar Institute in 1987, before joining the IAS in 1989.

Thapar Institute, which is ranked 23rd in engineering category and 26th in university category in NIRF, in a statement said it was honouring Chahal "for his exceptional work as Municipal Commissioner of Greater Mumbai in leading fight against 2nd wave of the pandemic".

"Chahal restructured the entire Covid response mechanism in Mumbai, successfully managing the massive requirements of critical supplies in the mega city. His decisive approach saved Mumbai from the large-scale calamities due to Covid. In recognition of his commitment to social causes and exemplary contributions in the field, he is being awarded the degree of Doctor of Science (honorary)," it said.

A total of 2,319 degrees were awarded during the 35th convocation of Thapar Institute including 80 PhDs and 1672 BE/BTech. Forty students were given medals/awards in different categories.

EXPRESS NETWORK

SC concerned as CBI requests to investigate cases pending with states

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

EXPRESSING CONCERN over requests by the CBI, seeking specific sanction to probe cases, pending with eight states which have withdrawn general consent to the agency, the Supreme Court said on Monday that it is “not a desirable position”.

A bench headed by Justice S K Kaul referred to an affidavit filed by the CBI director, stating that about 150 such requests were pending with the governments of Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Mizoram since 2018.

The bench noted that these requests were made for matters relating to allegations of cheating, forgery, misappropriation, and also bank fraud cases.

The bench, which included Justice M M Sundresh, said “18% cases (were) of corrupt public servants... 78% of cases are said to be pending... not a desirable position”.

The bench also expressed concern over the stay granted by courts in CBI cases, thereby delaying the trial. “Both the aforesaid aspects need to be addressed,” the SC said, referring the matter to Chief Justice of India N V Ramana.

The CBI had filed the affidavit in response to the court’s query last month about the bottlenecks faced by it and steps taken to strengthen prosecution of cases.

The court had said there was a general perception that the agency’s success rate was rather low.

In its reply, the CBI said since these eight states had withdrawn general consent, it had to seek sanction separately for each case, and this was causing delay. The agency also submitted that the stay granted by courts was contributing to the delay, and said over 12,000 cases had been stayed so far.

The court was hearing an application filed by the CBI, along with an appeal against an order of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, seeking condonation of delay in filing it. During an earlier hearing, the bench had noted that the file was pending for comments of the deputy legal advisor in the office of the head of branch from May 9, 2018 to January 19, 2019.

UP polls coming, PM set to unveil projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 8

WITH ASSEMBLY election campaigning set to hit top gear, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to either launch or inaugurate state and Central projects worth over Rs 1-lakh crore in the next one-and-a-half months in Uttar Pradesh.

Among the projects that Modi will launch or unveil are the Purvanchal Expressway, the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor project, the Ganga Expressway, the Jewar International Airport, a film city project, a manufacturing unit in the Jhansi node of a proposed defence corridor, and an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Gorakhpur.

The PM would inaugurate the Rs 42,000 crore Purvanchal Expressway on November 16, said a government spokesperson. He had laid its foundation stone in July 2018, about a year after the Yogi Adityanath government came to power.

The crucial Kashi Vishwanath Corridor project in the prime minister’s constituency Varanasi is also all set for inauguration. As part of the project, a wider path will connect the Ganga embankment with the Vishwanath temple. The Rs 400-crore project, which was launched in 2019, has several amenities such as a museum, a meditation platform, and cafeterias. Old temples along the corridor have also

Padma awards conferred

Sportspersons, politicians and actors — a snapshot of the winners of the 2020 Padma awards



SUSHMA SWARAJ (POSTHUMOUS)
PUBLIC AFFAIRS
PADMA VIBHUSHAN (COLLECTED BY DAUGHTER BANSURI)



ARUN JAITLEY (POSTHUMOUS)
PUBLIC AFFAIRS
PADMA VIBHUSHAN (COLLECTED BY WIFE SANGEETA)



GEORGE FERNANDES (POSTHUMOUS)
PUBLIC AFFAIRS
PADMA VIBHUSHAN (COLLECTED BY WIFE LEILA KABIR)



MOHAMMAD SHAREEF, PADMA SHRI
SOCIAL WORK

A former cycle mechanic who performed last rites of thousands of unclaimed bodies



HAREKALA HAJABBA, PADMA SHRI
SOCIAL WORK

A fruit vendor in Mangaluru who saved money to build a school in his village



RANI RAMPAL, PADMA SHRI
SPORTS
Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets the father of India hockey captain Rani Rampal (centre)

KANGANA RANAUT
ART
PADMA SHRI

Photo source: President of India on Twitter

119 awardees from diverse backgrounds

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

PRESIDENT RAM Nath Kovind presented the Padma awards to 119 recipients — some of them posthumously — for the year 2020 at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday. Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah were among the attendees.

The list comprises 59 Padma Vibhushans, 10 Padma Bhushans and 102 Padma Shri awards. Of the total awardees, 29

were women and one was transgender, while 16 were posthumous awardees.

The Padma awards for the year 2021 will be distributed Tuesday.

After the ceremony, Modi tweeted, “Attended the first of the Padma Award ceremonies for the years 2020 and 2021. I felt extremely happy to see grassroots level achievers being recognised for their exemplary efforts to further public good. Congratulations to all those who have been conferred the #PeoplesPadma.

“From the environment to

enterprise, agriculture to the arts, science to social service, public administration to cinema... recipients of the #PeoplesPadma come from diverse backgrounds. I would urge you all to know about each of the awardees and get inspired,” he tweeted.

Among the personalities awarded the Padma Vibhushan were BJP stalwarts Arun Jaitley and Sushma Swaraj, former Union minister George Fernandes (all posthumously), and Hindustani classical singer Pandit Chhannulal Mishra.

Badminton player PV Sindhu won the Padma Bhushan award,

along with Dr Anil Prakash Joshi for social work, Dr S C Jamir for public affairs and Mumtaz Ali for spiritualism.

Among those awarded the Padma Shri was Air Marshal Dr Padma Bandopadhyay (retd.), the decorated former flight surgeon was the first woman to be promoted to the rank of Air Marshal in the IAF and the second woman in the forces to be promoted to a three-star rank. She continues to serve people as a civilian now.

Actor Kangana Ranaut and singer Adnan Sami also received the Padma Shri.

— WITHPTIINPUTS

Yogi promises safety to Kairana families, says exodus also issue

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Monday visited families who were allegedly forced out of Kairana in Shamli district between 2014 and 2016, promising them compensation and “security”.

The BJP had claimed “exodus” of Hindu families from the western UP town, under the Samajwadi Party government’s watch, and it was a big issue in the elections that followed.

On Monday, Adityanath again alleged that Hindus had been forced out, while claiming that many had returned due to his government’s measures. Speaking to reporters after meeting some of the families

now back in Kairana, including three who lost members to attacks by criminals, he said the government would compensate “the victim families so that they could again carry out their business and economic activities”. “I have sought a report from the district administration about the families which were harmed and their members killed,” he said, adding that action had been initiated against the guilty.

“I have personally come to assure the families that we will continue zero tolerance against criminals. There will be full safety and security. Without hesitation, they can live on the land of their ancestors,” Adityanath said.

The CM said Kairana’s standing as a major industrial town

and centre of classical music had suffered, along with towns like Kandhla, due to “the criminalisation of politics in the early 1990s and the politicisation of professional criminals. Hindu businessmen and other Hindus were forced to migrate from here on a large scale”.

Since 2017 though, Adityanath added, “Due to our government’s policy of zero tolerance towards crime and criminals, many families have returned.”

He also said that when he came to the town in 2017, people had demanded the strengthening of the police outpost and a PAC battalion. “The work of strengthening the outpost has already been done and today I came here for laying the foundation of a PAC battalion camp,” he added.

ISRO-Devas fallout: US firm moves court as ‘interested party’

JOHNSONT A
BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 8

US-BASED AEROSPACE firm Spaceflight Inc, which uses Indian Space Research Organisation rockets, among others, to provide global space launch services, has moved a federal court in Washington as an “interested party” after ISRO’s commercial arm Antrix Corporation lost a \$1.2 billion compensation plea over a failed satellite deal.

The move comes after the US court allowed Bengaluru start-up Devas Multimedia in August this year to identify Antrix assets in order to attach them for the recovery

of the \$1.2 billion compensation award, made by an international tribunal in September 2015 over a failed 2005 satellite deal. Spaceflight Inc had moved the US federal court for the western district of Washington as an interested party in October.

In 2019, Spaceflight Inc had signed up to be the first user of ISRO’s Small Satellite Launch Vehicle — still under development — through an agreement signed with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), a Government of India PSU.

Spaceflight has had nine launches with ISRO involving over 100 spacecraft on ISRO’s workhorse rocket, the PSLV.

India raises finance concern as COP 26 enters second week



EXPRESS AT COP26
AMITABH SINHA
GLASGOW, NOVEMBER 8

AFTER THE big-ticket announcements that gave it possibly the most productive start for any climate meeting, the Glasgow conference was staring back at familiar contentious issues on Monday as ministers re-assembled to resolve the key differences that are holding back progress.

Host country UK’s lead negotiator Archie Young said preparations were being made to facilitate “late night working” throughout the week. COP (Conference of Parties, the official name of the climate meetings) President Alok Sharma said negotiators needed to “shift gears” to ensure an agreement on contentious issues by Friday evening when the meeting is supposed to come to an end.

The first results of the ministerial consultations, in the form of draft texts on some of the issues, are expected to be out late by Monday evening.

The issue most talked about is the one related to finance. The failure of the developed countries to put together US\$ 100 billion in climate finance every year from 2020 onwards, in accordance with a promise made over a decade ago, has been the biggest disappointment. But that is not the only money that is not coming in.

Money is required for action in a lot of different areas, including adaptation, loss and damage, halting deforestation, capacity building in developing countries, and technology transfer. There isn’t adequate money flowing in any-

EXPLAINED Questions over commitment

LACK OF adequate climate finance is not a new concern at the COP. Finance flows have never kept pace with the requirement. The US\$ 100 billion amount is a small fraction of the trillions of dollars that are estimated to be required by developing countries to deal with climate change. Failure to arrange even that money raises questions over the commitment of the developed countries. Earlier, several developed countries had failed to meet their emission reduction targets assigned under the Kyoto Protocol. There are no penalties for not meeting climate targets.

where. While the requirements are estimated to be in trillions of dollars every year, developed countries, which are primarily responsible for delivering climate finance, have been unable to put together even a basic sum of US\$ 100 billion every year.

Lack of finance is not something new at this COP. It has persisted ever since the climate negotiations began. But the postponement of the 2020 deadline the start of the US\$ 100 billion commitment by at least three years has been a big setback to the process.

India, while making a statement on behalf of the BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) at one of the meetings on Monday, spoke for the entire developing world when it said that the non-seri-

ousness of the developed countries over finance was especially frustrating when several other nations had been enhancing the ambition of their climate actions.

“We would not like to see the enhanced mitigation ambitions (new targets announced by several countries, including India) reach the same fate as the pre-2020 climate finance ambition. It has been over a decade since the annual US\$ 100 billion pledge and the world is still waiting for its mobilization and delivery. Trust in multilateralism and credibility of the process is at stake,” said Richa Sharma, additional secretary in the Environment Ministry and India’s lead negotiator.

“Post 2020 mitigation ambition and net zero pledges require significantly enhanced climate finance. The exact magnitude of the new finance goal can be determined through a structured process with clear timelines and milestones so that we have a new finance goal well before 2025. This is a simple ask from many developing country parties. Yet what we are getting is more workshops and in-session seminars to discuss the new goal,” Sharma said.

“BASIC would like to warn that lack of a serious approach to climate finance will jeopardise the enhanced mitigation and adaptation ambition as well as net zero pledges of parties,” she said. On Sunday, the COP presidency had said the final outcome from Glasgow, called decision text, must contain a provision expressing “deep concern” over the failure of the developed countries to meet the US\$ 100 billion goal. It said another provision should acknowledge the urgent need to scale up finance flows to “levels needed to support developing countries”.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

LOAN DEFAULT CASE Assam ex-CM’s son gets bail

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, NOVEMBER 8

A DAY after he was arrested by the CBI in connection with a 25-year-old alleged loan default case, Ashok Saikia, son of former chief minister Hiteshwar Saikia, was granted bail by a special CBI court in Guwahati.

“His lawyers told me that bail has been granted,” Ashok’s elder brother and Leader Of Opposition in Assam Assembly, Debabrata Saikia, told *The Indian Express* on Monday morning.

“The court was satisfied with what I had to say, and I was granted bail,” Ashok told reporters after his release.

Ashok was arrested from his residence Sunday for allegedly defaulting on a loan worth Rs 9.37 lakh from the Assam State Cooperative and Agriculture Development (ASCARD) bank in 1996 for which bank employees filed a case in 1998. The case was transferred to the CBI in 2006.

In a statement Sunday, Ashok said he had proof to show the loan was repaid through a “compromised settlement scheme”. “I repaid the loan in 2011 and as proof,” he said.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

FRENCH PORTAL Mediapart has alleged that Dassault Aviation, manufacturer of the Rafale fighter aircraft, paid 7.5 million euros to “intermediary” Sushen Gupta’s Mauritius company Interstellar Technologies between 2007 and 2012.

Publishing “bogus” receipts allegedly raised by firms linked to Gupta, Mediapart claimed that the office of the Attorney General of Mauritius sent them to the CBI on October 11, 2018 — it also shared an image of the letter from the Mauritius AG’s office to the CBI.

The CBI, Ministry of Defence, Dassault Aviation did not comment Monday on the claims and charges made in the portal’s report.

“This was how Indian detectives discovered that Sushen Gupta had also acted as an intermediary for Dassault Aviation over the Rafale deal. His Mauritius company Interstellar Technologies received at least 7.5

million euros from the French aviation firm between 2007 and 2012, thanks to IT contracts that were clearly overbilled, and from which most of the money was discreetly sent to Mauritius using a system of alleged false invoices. Some of these invoices even got the name of the French company wrong, referring instead to ‘Dassault Aviation’,” Mediapart said in its report.

In April this year, Mediapart claimed that Gupta, chargesheeted by the Enforcement Directorate in the AgustaWestland VIP chopper deal case, had supplied classified documents to Dassault Aviation on the activities of the Indian negotiating team.

In the past, Dassault Aviation and Ministry of Defence have rejected allegations of any corruption in the Rafale contract. In December 2018, the Supreme Court dismissed a bunch of petitions demanding a court-monitored investigation into the deal. It said there was “no occasion to doubt the (decision-making) process” leading to the award of the contract. In November 2019, it rejected review petitions in the matter.

Allahabad University proposal for DLitt to Gulzar still ‘under consideration’



Gulzar

around a month ago. There are over 40 Central universities, and similar honorary DLitt-related proposals have also come from other universities. Giving the im-

pression that the proposal has been rejected would be incorrect. Following the ministry’s approval, it will be sent to the President,” the official said.

On August 18, the executive council of the Allahabad University — a Central varsity — had decided to award Gulzar, the nom de plume of Sampooran Singh Kalra, with the honorary doctorate during its convocation ceremony, two weeks after the varsity’s academic council had cleared his name.

Initially, the convocation was scheduled for September 23, but it was postponed and held on

Monday (November 8).

Prashant Kumar Ghosh, dean of the Faculty of Commerce and head of the Department of Economics, who had recommended Gulzar’s for the honorary degree, told *The Indian Express* that his proposal had been accepted unanimously by all members of the academic council.

Ghosh also said that Gulzar had given his consent for receiving the degree in August.

The university’s public relations officer Jaya Kapur has now said that he will be awarded the DLitt at a separate event as soon as the ministry grants permission.

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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

CROSSING RED LINES

UAPA against lawyers, journalists in Tripura is part of
playbook of state heavy-handedness. Judiciary must step in

THE TRIPURA POLICE's decision to charge lawyers, journalists and 100-odd social media users with the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for posts on communal violence is one more example of the flagrantly excessive use of a draconian law. This comes a few days after the Jammu and Kashmir police registered a case under UAPA against unknown students in two Srinagar medical colleges after they "cheered for Pakistan" in an India-Pakistan T20 match. The Tripura police, too, has pushed the interpretation of the harsh anti-terror law across vital distinctions and boundaries by wielding it against the authors of a fact-finding report, among others. Four lawyers from Delhi had gone to Tripura on a fact-finding mission after violence reportedly erupted against Muslims in the state last month, in a disturbing echo of the anti-Hindu violence that broke out, across the border, in Bangladesh during Durga Puja celebrations. The lawyers' report, released online, flagged targeted vandalism of mosques and shortcomings of the BJP government in dealing with anti-minority mobilisations and recommended a judicial probe. None of this falls outside the remit of actions that citizens and members of civil society can — and do — undertake in a democracy to pressure governments to act. It is hard to see how any of this constitutes an offence under Section 13 of UAPA, which applies to an act that "incites secession" or "disrupts the sovereignty of India" or "causes disaffection against India". Subsequently, owners of 102 social media accounts, including journalists who posted about the violence in Tripura and amplified the report, also faced charges under provisions of IPC "of promoting enmity" between communities, besides UAPA. The police have drawn a "one-to-one" correlation between the lawyers' visit and social media comments that "potentially" create communal hatred, but the law itself — and the Supreme Court — have set a higher bar. A citizen's right to freedom of speech and expression cannot be curtailed unless they resort to violence or incite violence.

Indeed, this appears to be a part of the playbook of heavy-handedness that has been perfected by governments. This involves the twisting of stringent laws such as the UAPA or the sedition law to quell dissent or intimidate anyone who contests or might contest the state's version. While harsh laws have existed and been misused even earlier, what stands out today is the apparent lack of qualms in the ruling establishment in wielding them as weapons against citizens. In UAPA cases, the legal process can itself become a prolonged punishment, given the lower judiciary's reluctance, barring a few exceptions, to grant bail to the accused. The Delhi High Court, however, struck a welcome dissenting note earlier this year while granting bail to anti-CAA activists — it criticised the state's tendency to confuse "protest" for "terrorist activity". Last month's Supreme Court judgment in the *Thwaha Fasal* case, too, clears the path for less oppressive interpretations of the UAPA.

In Tripura, and elsewhere, the onus is on the judiciary to step in to raise the questions and draw the red lines in order to uphold the fundamental freedoms of citizens against a transgressing executive power.

THE LAST T20

As Virat Kohli bows out of captaincy in the limited overs game,
time to take stock and reinvent

IN THE END, Virat Kohli's T20 captaincy and India's campaign in the World Cup concluded without any fireworks. Neither was bad, even if both are now shadowed by failure. Kohli has rightfully taken pride in the team's bouncebackability — a catchphrase of sorts for Indian cricket in the Kohli era — but the slip-ups will hurt when he looks back at his reign. The choice of out-of-form batsmen and absence of in-form bowlers was almost forced on him by the timing of the squad's selection for the T20 World Cup. It was clear from the outset that it was up to Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul to carry India and once both failed in the first two games, India found themselves pushed out.

Over the years, Kohli's captaincy improved, under the guidance of coach Ravi Shastri, but it's in the team balance and composition where he faltered. He might have made tons of runs in T20 but he is not really at home in this format in contrast with the match-winning destructiveness that he displays with such skill and ease in other formats. Perhaps that too played its part in his captaincy. He isn't the sort who likes to fade into the background, leads by example, and this format was the only one where he couldn't do it. On field, as long as MS Dhoni was there, Kohli chose the best option for the team as a boundary rider and let Dhoni handle the details. It did show, though, that just like his batting, he could curb his ego and do what was best for the team.

Throughout Kohli's captaincy, there have been recurring murmurs about the pull-and-tug with team-mates, especially the senior ones. In some ways, he was almost impatient in getting them to move on with his philosophy, but would eventually relent. It's a testament to how far the team has grown in recent years that the benchmark seems to be ICC tournaments. It was taken as a given that the team would reach the knockout stage in big-ticket events — a far cry from earlier days when the path to that stage seemed much rockier. Ironically, in his last tournament, India couldn't get there.

BUMBA DA'S ORDEAL

Bengali superstar Prosenjit complained to PM and CM about
food delivery. But why does his sense of entitlement irk us so?

S PARE A THOUGHT for the tribulations of Bumba *da*. Arguably the biggest star in Bengali cinema over the last couple of decades, he suffers like an urban, upper-middle-class everyman. Prosenjit ordered food over Swiggy. But — wait for it — he was not able to enjoy the sumptuous meal he was looking forward to. Then, the plot thickened, not unlike the gravy in a good shorshe jhaal: The app said his food had been delivered, when it had not! When he called the people at Swiggy, they refunded his money. For mere mortals, this is a common enough inconvenience and we move on. Not so, Bumba *da*.

Prosenjit took to the digital platform favoured by activists who want to make themselves heard without sweating it out to highlight his ordeal. He tweeted an open letter (the most self-righteous of formats), tagging the Prime Minister and West Bengal Chief Minister, to "highlight" the issue. "What if," the shocked superstar wrote, "someone is depending on the food app for their dinner? Will they stay hungry?" Burning questions, to be sure — but perhaps not meant for the table of heads of government.

However, before we judge him too harshly — as so many on social media did and are doing — a little context. Who really enjoys talking to customer care, either on the phone or through the bots that man so many text-based helplines? And in a country where who you know and how important you are allows you to skip lines, why does Bumba *da*'s sense of entitlement upset us so? Sour grapes, perhaps. After all, most people — particularly the higher one travels up the social ladder — phone a friend or a tout for everything from a passport to a driver's licence. Besides, the entire episode may be the result of taking political rhetoric too literally. Prosenjit sir, Pradhan Sewak isn't the chief customer care officer.



ARVIND P DATAR

THE WHOLLY UNJUSTIFIED arrest of the former chairman of the State Bank of India came close on the heels of the wholly unjustified arrest of Aryan Khan. Public memory is cruelly short and we have forgotten the fatal incarceration of 84-year-old Father Stan Swamy, the arrest — and denial of bail — to journalist Siddique Kappan, Rhea Chakraborty and many others who would not have been arrested in any democracy where the rule of law prevails.

Article 21 of our Constitution loftily states: "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law". The Supreme Court has repeatedly laid down directions that make the granting of bail the rule, and jail the exception. It is a scandal that these directions are repeatedly ignored by trial courts and jail has now become the rule and bail the exception even in petty bailable offences. If a case is even slightly sensational, it is almost certain that an accused will not be granted bail till his case reaches the High Court. And, if Aryan Khan had been an *aam aadmi*, it is also certain that he would have spent several months in jail before his case even reached the High Court.

Undoubtedly, there are conflicting issues in granting bail. On the one hand is the personal liberty of the accused or the suspect and on the other, it is the interest of the community as a whole. No one can argue that every suspect should be released on bail, but it is time to seriously consider whether the practice of creating too many non-bailable offences and the routine denial of bail subserves the public interest at all. To start with, laws imposing almost impossible conditions for the grant of bail have to be amended. Section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 requires the judge to be satisfied that there are reason-

A system quick to arrest and reluctant to grant bail
violates mandatory directions of Supreme Court

Section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 requires the judge to be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accused is not guilty of 'such offence' and that he will not commit 'any offence' while on bail. Similar conditions exist in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 as well. Barring the clearest of cases, how can a judge form the belief that a person is guilty or innocent at the initial stage?

able grounds for believing that the accused is not guilty of "such offence" and that he will not commit "any offence" while on bail. Similar conditions exist in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 as well. Barring the clearest of cases, how can a judge form the belief that a person is guilty or innocent at the initial stage? And how does the judge have the clairvoyance to predict the possibility of an accused committing an offence while on bail? Other areas that need urgent reform are the archaic requirement of furnishing security in every case and the considerable delay in releasing an accused even after a bail order has been passed.

The practice of making stringent criminal law provisions in tax and economic offences started in 1975. Every director or senior executive was presumed to be guilty and the burden was on them to prove their innocence. Each accused was presumed to have criminal intent and imprisonment was mandatory if the tax or duty was more than one lakh rupees. Thus, the fundamental principles of criminal law were turned on their head in the hope that draconian provisions would instil fear and tax compliance would increase. Just the reverse happened as the repeated *samadhan* and amnesty schemes have proved.

The unchecked tendency of arresting senior bank officials, company executives and civil servants must also stop immediately. Apart from being in complete violation of repeated and mandatory directions of the Supreme Court, it has a devastating and chilling effect on the decision-making process in banks and other institutions. In the 2G scam, more than a dozen senior executives languished in jail for more than 12 months, only to be acquitted later.

Indeed, there is no evidence that the practice of refusing bail has lowered the incidence of crime. On the contrary, it has resulted in almost 70 per cent of all prisoners being "undertrials". Several of them await trial for years. The sad reality is that every undertrial is treated as guilty until he proves his innocence by getting an acquittal.

The decriminalisation of several provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 through the Companies (Amendment) Act, 2020 was indeed a great initiative and similar amendments can be made in several Central and state enactments. The Supreme Court should take *suo motu* notice of the unacceptable arrest raj and issue urgent directives until the Centre and states make amendments or issue ordinances. Moreover, it is also vital to sensitise judges to the importance of bail, particularly when most of the poor and illiterate accused have little or no access to legal assistance. There is also an extremely urgent need for the Supreme Court and high courts to send clear signals to the lower courts that the granting of bail will be the norm and no subordinate judge will be penalised in their career prospects for granting bail.

In the case of the former SBI chairman or Aryan Khan and so many other accused, what was the need to arrest them? What fatal result would have ensued if they were asked not to leave the country and report daily for investigation? Even if a transaction appears tainted by extraneous consideration, it can always be investigated and the guilty punished. But making an arrest at the FIR stage destroys a person's reputation; a subsequent acquittal may heal the wound but the person will remain scarred for life.

The writer is a senior advocate



RAJEEV MALHOTRA

ROHINI NAYYAR, a well-known economist, former principal adviser at the erstwhile Planning Commission and one of India's foremost authorities on rural development passed away on October 24, stoically fighting illness and the consequences of the negligence of some doctors who attended to her in the last few years. She lived a full life as a professional, an ideal companion and anchor to her husband, Deepak Nayyar, a doting mother to her sons, Dhiraj and Gaurav, and as a compassionate person who cared for all, but particularly for those less fortunate. Her heart was in the right place, and she had a mind that was fearless, always engaging with issues that mattered, professionally as well as socially, never hesitating to take a stand when required.

She had a unique career trajectory. After completing her Master's degree in economics from the Delhi School of Economics, where she also met Deepak, Rohini joined the IAS in the Uttar Pradesh cadre in 1969, serving in Agra, Kanpur and Lucknow. She left the service within a few years to be with her husband at Oxford, where she did her BLitt in economics. In time, she wrote her DPhil thesis on rural poverty in India at the University of Sussex, a pioneering institution in development economics. She then chose to combine her academic specialisation with her interest in administration and policymaking by re-joining the Government of India as adviser in the Planning Commission in the late 1980s. For almost two decades, until 2005, she headed the rural development division at the Commission, rising in rank from joint secretary to secretary. Such a

WHAT SHE SOWED

Rohini Nayyar's legacy lives on in her important work on rural development

Rohini was not only a brilliant mentor to many of us in the Planning Commission, but also to academics and practitioners on the outside. To her subordinates, she was the ideal boss, accessible and empowering in every respect. She was frank, fair, and transparent in her dealings, never hesitating to speak her mind, values that are not so common among civil servants, especially in the present times.

long stint in one position is rare in the government system and it made Rohini's domain knowledge indispensable to a succession of governments who were all keen to make an impact in rural India.

Many policy ideas that were seeded at her time in the rural development division of the Planning Commission were implemented over the years. She was an early advocate for rationalising centrally-sponsored schemes at a time when such schemes were proliferating. In the 1990s, she believed in the need for a rural employment guarantee scheme, an idea which the UPA government wished to implement in 2004. As fate would have it, she was due to retire in 2004 shortly after the UPA took office but she was asked to stay on in the Planning Commission for a year after her retirement to help design the flagship NREGA.

Her analytical contributions were equally significant. In the 1980s, her estimation of rural poverty and analysis of inter-state differences, based on quantities of food and other necessities consumed, rather than household expenditures, was a pioneering original contribution. In the 1990s, her estimation of district income along with Vinod Vyasulu greatly enriched the literature on rural development.

Rohini was not only a brilliant mentor to many of us in the Planning Commission, but also to academics and practitioners on the outside. To her subordinates, she was the ideal boss, accessible and empowering in every respect. She was frank, fair, and transparent in her dealings, never hesitating to speak her mind — values that are not so com-

mon among civil servants, especially in the present times.

There is one instance, fresh in my mind, which reflects the person and the professional that Rohini was. In 1998-99, the Planning Commission was taken to task by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance for not having prepared a human development report for the country, when even Bangladesh had one. The Commission was directed to prepare one in a limited time. The initial thought was to outsource it. I thought of this as a great opportunity for the Planning Commission. However, being a relatively junior officer at that time, I needed an adviser-level person to back the project. I approached Rohini, although I was in a different division, to provide her leadership to the proposed project. It took a couple of minutes to brief her and she was ready to walk to the secretary's office to take responsibility on our behalf. We set up a team under her leadership to complete the task and presented the report to the prime minister and Parliament in the stipulated time frame.

Not once during the preparation of the report did she betray any sign of concern, as the buck stopped with her. She would often come to my office and share a cup of Darjeeling tea, a fondness that we both shared. It was her way of encouraging us to do a good job.

Her legacy will survive through all the lives she touched.

The writer is a former civil servant and professor at Jindal School of Government and Public Policy



NOVEMBER 9, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

DELHI PARIS LONDON

THE VISIT OF External Affairs Minister P V Narasimha Rao to London in response to Lord Carrington's long-standing invitation is likely to have a direct bearing on Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's four-day stay in Paris. India's politico-economic role in the Third World and non-aligned countries is recognised as vital both by France and Britain against the background of the situation in West Asia, South Asia and Southwest Asian countries, with particular reference to the developments in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Since Mitterrand was elected President, France and India have established close relationships. This is, perhaps, because the French President's views on

many matters are similar to those held by Mrs Gandhi. But there is hardly any issue of significance on which London and New Delhi agree despite the fact that the two countries have traditional friendship.

CENTRE ON KERALA

THE UNION MINISTER of State for Home, Yogendra Makwana, said that the Kerala government has decided to activate the police machinery for maintaining law and order in the state. Talking to reporters at the Raj Bhavan, he said he had given several instructions to the police with regard to law and order. He also assured police officers protection in the legitimate exercise of their duty.

Whenever necessary, the National Security Act would be used and instructions have been given to officers to constitute a review board for the purpose, he said.

TROUBLE IN ASSAM

WHILE THE ASSAM agitation leaders' response to the Centre's invitation for the 15th round of talks from November 19 is not known, the two sides are inevitably heading for a major confrontation. The agitators are firm on their decision to have a mass rally on November 18. The government is equally firm in not granting permission in an area which continues to be under prohibitory orders.

THE IDEAS PAGE

The Eurasia opportunity

Greater strategic activism, recalibration of Delhi's continental strategy, promises to open up possibilities in the region



RAJA-MANDALA

BY C. RAJA MOHAN

DELHI'S INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY has acquired political and institutional traction, thanks to intensive Indian diplomacy in recent years. It must now devote similar energy to the development of a "Eurasian" policy. If the Indo-Pacific is about Delhi's new maritime geopolitics, Eurasia involves the recalibration of India's continental strategy.

This week's consultations in Delhi on the crisis in Afghanistan among the region's top security policymakers, following the US withdrawal, is part of developing a Eurasian strategy. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has invited his counterparts from Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, Russia, and China to join this discussion on Wednesday. Pakistan's Moeed Yusuf has declined to join. It is not yet clear whether China will attend. Pakistan's reluctance to engage with India on Afghanistan reveals Delhi's persisting problem with Islamabad in shaping a new Eurasian strategy. But it also reinforces the urgency of an Indian strategy to deal with Eurasia.

After years of self-doubt, Delhi has clinched the internal debate on the Indo-Pacific and has made it integral to India's foreign and security policies. Given its novelty and strategic salience, the Quad or the Quadrilateral forum that brings India together with Australia, Japan and the US, looms large over the Indo-Pacific debate. But Delhi now has a mix of other important unilateral, bilateral, multilateral, and multilateral initiatives in the Indo-Pacific.

As in the Indo-Pacific, so in Eurasia, there is no shared international understanding of what constitutes the region. Among those who study the geography of the earth's landmass and oceans, there are agreed definitions of the Indo-Pacific and Eurasia. If the Indo-Pacific describes the long stretch of tropical waters from the east coast of Africa to the central Pacific, Eurasia is the name of a tectonic plate that lies under much of what we know as Europe and Asia. But the trouble begins when it comes to the political geography of Eurasia. In Russia's definition, Eurasia covers the former territories of the Soviet Union, which collapsed in 1991. In other words, it is about Russia's political claim to a sphere of influence in its "near abroad". Then there are various older usages like "inner Asia" and "Central Asia" that cover parts of the region. Given the deep connection between Muslim Central Asia and West Asia, some prefer the term "Greater Middle East" to describe parts of this region.

For Delhi, it makes sense to use the broadest possible definition of Eurasia in reimagining the region. The most important development in Eurasia today is the dramatic rise of China and its growing strategic assertiveness, expanding economic power and rising political influence. Beijing's muscular approach to the long and disputed border with Bhutan and India, its quest for a security presence in Tajikistan, the active search for a larger role in Afghanistan, and a greater say in the affairs of the broader sub-Himalayan region are only one part of the story. As the world's second-largest economy, China's commercial influence is felt across the world. Physical proximity multiplies China's economic impact on the inner Asian regions.



CR Sasikumar

The impressive expansion of China's Belt and Road initiative across central Asia and Russia, onto the shores of the Atlantic, and Europe's growing economic interdependence with China have added to Beijing's powerful leverages in Eurasia. These leverages, in turn, were reinforced by a deepening alliance with Russia that straddles the Eurasian heartland. Russia's intractable disputes with Europe and America have increased Moscow's reliance on Beijing.

Amidst mounting challenges from China in the Indo-Pacific maritime domain, Washington has begun to rethink its strategic commitments to Eurasia. The US withdrawal from Afghanistan is just the beginning of a long-overdue redefinition of US global strategic priorities. Even Europe, which has seen a massive deployment of US military resources since the Second World War, is not immune to the inevitable rearrangement of the US military's global disposition. Washington and Brussels are now in the middle of an important debate on how to rebalance the trans-Atlantic responsibilities for Europe's collective defence.

Whether defined as "burden-sharing" in Washington or "strategic autonomy" in Brussels, Europe must necessarily take on a larger regional Eurasian security role. More broadly, regional powers are going to re-shape Eurasia.

India has certainly dealt with Eurasia's constituent spaces separately over the decades. What Delhi now needs is an integrated approach to Eurasia. Like the Indo-Pacific, Eurasia is new to India's strategic discourse.

To be sure, there are references to India's ancient civilisational links with Eurasia. The collaboration between the Sangha and the Shreni in the Buddhist era produced lasting interaction between the two regions. India's inward orientation after the decline of Buddhism did not stop the flow of Central Asian forces into the subcontinent. The arrival of the British in India and the consolidation of the Raj as a territorial entity in the subcontinent saw the outward projection of India's influence into Central Asia. British rivalry with Russia during the Great Game in the 19th and early 20th centuries put Eurasian geopolitics at the top of undivided India's security agenda. The Partition of the subcontinent and India's physical disconnection from inner Asia, however, cut India off from Eurasian geopolitics. Overcoming the geographic limitation — represented by the Pakistan barrier — will be central to an ex-

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has invited his counterparts from Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, Russia, and China to join the discussion on Wednesday. Pakistan's Moeed Yusuf has declined to join. It is not yet clear whether China will attend. Pakistan's reluctance to engage with India on Afghanistan reveals Delhi's persisting problem with Islamabad in shaping a new Eurasian strategy. But it also reinforces the urgency of an Indian strategy to deal with Eurasia.

panded Indian role in Eurasian geopolitics.

While there are many elements to an Indian strategy towards Eurasia, three of them stand out. One is to put Europe back into India's continental calculus. Before independence, many Indian nationalists turned to Europe to secure the nation's liberation from British colonialism. After independence, Delhi's drift towards an alliance with Moscow saw India neglect Europe's strategic significance. As India now steps up its engagement with Europe, the time has come for it to begin a strategic conversation with Brussels on Eurasian security. This will be a natural complement to the fledgling engagement between India and Europe on the Indo-Pacific.

India's Eurasian policy must necessarily involve greater engagement with both the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. A dedicated military office in the Indian mission to Brussels, where both EU and NATO are headquartered, will be a crucial step towards a sustained security dialogue with Europe.

Second is to intensify the dialogue on Eurasian security with Russia. While Indo-Russian differences on the Indo-Pacific, the Quad, China, and the Taliban are real, Delhi and Moscow have good reasons to narrow their differences on Afghanistan and widen cooperation on continental Eurasian security.

Third is the substantive Indian collaboration with both Persia and Arabia. If Persia's location makes it critical for the future of Afghanistan and Central Asia, the religious influence of Arabia and the weight of the Gulf capital are quite consequential in the region. India's partnerships with Persia and Arabia are also critical in overcoming Turkey's alliance with Pakistan that is hostile to Delhi.

India will surely encounter many contradictions in each of the three areas — between and among America, Europe, Russia, China, Iran, and the Arab Gulf. As in the Indo-Pacific, so in Eurasia, Delhi should not let these contradictions hold India back.

The current flux in Eurasian geopolitics will lessen some of the current contradictions and generate some new antinomies in the days ahead. But the key for India lies in greater strategic activism that opens opportunities in all directions in Eurasia.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Femicide and abuse won't end until misogyny is recognised for what it is and eliminated."

— THE OBSERVER

Game on in Maharashtra

State is crucial for 2024 general elections. That's why BJP is taking aim at Sena-NCP-Congress government



GIRISH KUBER

POLITICS, AS everyone knows, has always been about cut-throat competition. Politics is subterfuge. Politics, at times, is about deceiving friends and embracing foes; it is about winning. Politics is also about keeping at least one window open for arch-rivals. Politics is everything that normal human beings cannot think of. However, politics, though brutal, was rarely played with a jilted-lover mindset.

The BJP received an unbearable jolt when the Shiv Sena, after the Maharashtra state assembly polls in November 2019, refused to sign on the dotted line and did the unthinkable by joining hands with the NCP and Congress. Since then, the three-party Maharashtra government has been perennially in a fire-fighting mode. It's understandable that an upset BJP would try to dislodge the Uddhav Thackeray-led ministry. What is, however, difficult to accept is the means for the purpose. One has to be super naive to believe that the actions unleashed by various central agencies have no politics to them.

Let's take a look at some facts.

First, the case of deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar. It was the alleged involvement of Ajit Pawar in the irrigation scam that helped the BJP win office in 2014. If it was the fiery campaign against Sharad Pawar by the BJP's late Gopinath Munde, helped by officials such as G R Khaimar, that propelled the BJP-Sena alliance to power for the first time in 1995, the corruption charges made by Devendra Fadnavis and others against Ajit Pawar helped the saffron siblings end the 10-year Congress-NCP rule in 2014. In office, the BJP-Sena government did precious little. The irrigation scam resurfaced in 2019 ahead of state elections when BJP leaders claimed that Ajit Pawar's rightful place was in jail. What is incredible is that the BJP tried to make the same Ajit Pawar deputy chief minister in that ill-fated, short-lived Fadnavis government.

It was the BJP's second consecutive failure in forming the government, the first being its inability to win over the Sena. It is not easy to digest two failures. Now that Ajit Pawar and his relatives are under the IT radar, the question is: Would this have happened had Ajit Pawar stayed with the BJP? Two state politicians — Harshvardhan Patil and Sanjay Patil, BJP MP from Sangli — recently said they have stopped worrying about central agencies since they joined the BJP.

Second, the case of former home minister Anil Deshmukh, who was arrested recently, on corruption allegations made by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh. Central agencies have investigated Deshmukh on the basis of a letter written by Singh to the chief minister. Singh himself has admitted that he

doesn't have any proof of Deshmukh's alleged wrongdoings. This is not to give a clean chit to Deshmukh who lacked the skills and maturity to run this crucial ministry. Not to forget, it was the BJP that made Deshmukh a minister for the first time in 1995.

Similarly, it was the BJP government that favoured Param Bir Singh for the powerful commissionerate of Thane. Singh had a special rapport with BJP bigwigs and was used to rein in the Sena. Ironically, it was Singh, who, in his capacity as the Director General (DG) of the Maharashtra Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), gave a clean chit to Ajit Pawar in the alleged scam involving 12 Vidarbha Irrigation Development Corporation (VIDC) projects. The short-lived Fadnavis government, where Ajit Pawar was deputy CM, too had absolved the latter of wrongdoings in the alleged irrigation scam. Since Ajit Pawar was cleared by a BJP government in the irrigation issue, he is now being probed for his role in buying loss-making sugar cooperatives.

These absurd political developments beg the question: Why is the BJP so desperate to dislodge the Sena-NCP-Congress government?

The answer lies in the 2024 general elections and the BJP's inability in making inroads in some big states. After Maharashtra, the BJP failed to cobble a winning alliance in Tamil Nadu and failed miserably in West Bengal. Along with Maharashtra, these states together send 129 MPs to the Lok Sabha. The increasingly hostile political atmosphere in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Gujarat and the uncertainty in Punjab make the upcoming assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh crucial for the BJP. Though it is too early to hazard a guess about UP results, it is clear that the party will find it extremely difficult to retain, leave alone improve, its tally of 312 of 403 seats in the assembly. Yogi Adityanath was not the BJP's face in the last assembly elections. This time he is. The polarising politics he has unleashed will test the BJP's resolve in a state that sends 80 MPs to the Lok Sabha.

After UP, it is Maharashtra with 48 seats that sends the largest contingent of MPs. If things go wrong for the BJP in UP in 2024, Maharashtra will become crucial. The NDA, which included the BJP and Sena, won 41 seats in 2019, of which 23 belonged to the BJP. Now the situation is evenly poised with the combined strength of Sena-NCP-Congress matching that of the BJP. If this three-party government survives till the next parliamentary elections, the BJP will have a tough battle ahead. Hence, the attempt to pull down the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government.

In politics, such attempts are justified. But not so reasonable are the ways pursued to achieve the goal. "*Tum agar mujhko na chaho to koi baat nahi* (It's ok if you don't like me)" is acceptable in politics, but never has "*Tum kisi aur ko chahogi to mushkil hogi* (But you cannot like someone else)" been a precondition. Developments in Maharashtra, after West Bengal, indicate the changing contours of politics.

The writer is Editor, Loksatta

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DIVIDED INDIA

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The radicalisation in our midst' (IE, November 8). No growth in the nation's GDP can offset the irreversible damage that is caused by the schisms and wedges that are being driven into the ideas of secularism and fraternity. We can never reap the advantages of the potential demographic dividend if our young population keeps fighting the self-created internecine wars in the names of religion, caste, ethnicity, etc rather than fighting poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Radical and fringe elements, opposed to the very idea of syncretism, are present across religious lines and it is incumbent upon the secular and liberal forces within every religion to ensure that they pe-

ter out. In the words of Swami Vivekanand, "For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam — Vedanta Brain and Islam Body — is the only hope. I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta Brain and Islam Body".

Vinay Saroha, Delhi

POLITICAL CUT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Festive cheer' (IE, November 8). The Centre's decision to slash taxes on petrol and diesel is clearly political. The BJP-led NDA may have read the signals in by-polls held across many states to drop the price of this basic economic input,

which has been raising the hackles of the common man. Covid-19 may be on the wane but the intense politics of India will remain an eternal pandemic. The polarisation is made evident by the non-NDA states refusing to even consider bringing down VAT to let consumers enjoy a reprieve.

SS Paul, Nadia

REGULATE POLLS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Perils of the opinion poll' (IE, November 8). The opacity surrounding opinion polls should be addressed by the Election Commission immediately. More so, as much of the media unquestioningly accepts and publishes poll findings. Transparency of the process and accountability of the poll surveyors must be preconditions for poll surveys to be published.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Perils of the opinion poll' (IE 8 November). Indians largely vote along caste, region, and communal lines. In opinion polls, or otherwise, it is the grassroots equation between different social groups forged by various political parties that decides their fate. Opinion polls help political parties more than common voters to decide their pre-poll or post-poll alliances. An urban dweller, who isn't affiliated with any political front, relies on such televised polls to make their voting decision. Fabricated opinion polls are part of the larger rot that has been inflicted on the news media today.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Barasat



CONSTANTINO XAVIER AND RIYA SINHA

The connectivity effect

Gati Shakti plan must be leveraged to strengthen India's economic ties with world

THE GATI SHAKTI National Master Plan is another important step for India to upgrade national infrastructure and multimodal connectivity. According to the *Economic Survey* 2019-20, India will have to invest approximately \$1.5 trillion on infrastructure to become a \$5-trillion economy by 2024-25. However, while the Rs 100 lakh crore plan will have an important economic multiplier effect at home, it must also be leveraged to have an external impact by aligning it with India's regional and global connectivity efforts.

The Gati Shakti plan has three main components, all focused on domestic coordination. First, it seeks to increase information sharing with a new technology platform between various ministries at the Union and state levels. Second, it focuses on giving impetus to multimodal transportation to reduce logistics' costs and strengthen last-mile connectivity in India's hinterland or border regions. The third component includes an analytical decision-making tool to disseminate project-related information and prioritise key infrastructure projects. This aims to ensure transparency and time-bound commitments to investors.

One way to look at the Gati Shakti plan from a foreign policy angle is that it will automatically generate positive effects to deepen India's economic ties with Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, as well as with Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean region. This has been the experience in recent years with India's investment in roads, ports,

inland waterways or new customs procedures generating positive externalities for these neighbours, who are keen to access the growing Indian consumer market.

Nepal, for example, in 2020 reached record export levels due to a series of Indian connectivity initiatives, including electronic cargo tracking systems, new rail and road routes, modernisation of border control systems, and the region's first-ever bilateral petroleum pipeline. Any reduction in India's domestic logistics costs brings immediate benefits to the northern neighbour, given that 98 per cent of Nepal's total trade transits through India and about 65 per cent of Nepal's trade is with India.

By reducing the cost and time of doing trade through infrastructure modernisation at home, India will continue to have a positive impact on the price of commodities and developmental targets in neighbouring countries. In 2019, trade between Bhutan and Bangladesh was eased through a new multimodal road and waterway link via Assam. The new cargo ferry service with the Maldives, launched last year, has lowered the costs of trade for the island state. And under the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation Programme, India's investments in multimodal connectivity on the eastern coast is re-connecting India with the Bay of Bengal and Southeast Asia through integrated rail, port and shipping systems.

However, India can't just rely on the plan's automatic spillover effects. Connectivity plans

at home include important strategic decisions that will impact India's external economic relations, not only in South Asia, but also with Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean region. Whether it is the alignment of a cross-border railway, the location of a border check post, or the digital system chosen for customs and immigration processes, India's connectivity investments at home will have limited effects unless they are coordinated with those of its neighbours and other regional partners.

For instance, with its land neighbours, India's border check posts, known as Integrated Check Posts (ICPs), only have mirror infrastructure with Nepal. Other key ICPs, such as the one at Petrapole with Bangladesh, face regular congestion due to lack of complementary infrastructure across the border. Similarly, countries in South Asia use different digital systems that have hindered real-time information sharing. While India recently joined the Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) convention, which facilitates cross-border customs procedures, none of its neighbouring countries in the east has signed on to it.

There are three avenues for India to ensure that the Gati Shakti Plan has maximum effect. First, India will have to deepen bilateral consultations with its neighbours to gauge their connectivity strategies and priorities. This is not just a technocratic exercise of coordination and harmonisation. Given political and security sensitivities, India will require diplomatic skills to reassure its neighbours and adapt to

their pace and political economy context.

A second way is for India to work through regional institutions and platforms. SAARC's ambitious regional integration plans of the 2000s are now defunct, so Delhi has shifted its geo-economic orientation eastwards. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) has got new momentum, but there is also progress on the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative. Working through these multilateral platforms will help India develop a regional vision and standards for connectivity, reducing bilateral transaction costs.

Finally, India can also boost the Gati Shakti plan's external impact by cooperating more closely with global players who are keen to support its strategic imperative to give the Indo-Pacific an economic connectivity dimension. This includes the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, but also Japan, the US, Australia, EU and ASEAN. They come with expertise and expectations about connectivity standards, whether it is on e-commerce, environmental and social impact assessments of infrastructure or technology platforms. These external connectivity dialogues will give the Gati Shakti plan a truly regional and global dimension and help India achieve its developmental targets at home.

Xavier is a fellow and Sinha a research associate at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress, New Delhi



Chandigarh





“It doesn’t matter if you’re a Republican or a Democrat if your Florida house is flooded by rising seas, or your crops fail in the Dakotas, or your California house is burning.”

—BARACK OBAMA, on the need to work together to fight climate change

TOPOF THE WORLD



Bishop Eric de Moulins-Beaufort

FRANCE French bishops agree to compensate sex abuse victims

FRANCE’S CATHOLIC Church agreed on Monday to financially compensate sex abuse victims in what the president of the country’s Bishop Conference hailed as a “decisive step.” Conference President Eric de Moulins-Beaufort said in a speech that the Church has recognised its “institutional responsibility” and decided to go “on a path of recognition and reparation that paves the way for victims to get the possibility of a mediation and a compensation.” The Bishops Conference held its annual meeting a month after a report revealed large-scale child sex abuse in the French Catholic Church. **AP**

RUSSIA Google fined again over banned content

A MOSCOW court on Monday fined Google 2 million roubles (\$28,085) for not deleting content that Russia deems illegal, part of a wider dispute between Moscow and the US tech giant. Russia has threatened to fine Google a percentage of its annual Russian turnover for repeatedly failing to delete banned content on its search engine and YouTube, in Moscow’s strongest move yet to rein in foreign tech firms. Google confirmed Monday’s fine, but gave no other comment. **REUTERS**

CONGO Armed men seize villages near Uganda, Rwanda border

GUNMEN SEIZED at least two villages overnight in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo near the border with Uganda and Rwanda, a local official and an activist group said on Monday. Muhindo Luanzo, assistant to the administrator of Rutshuru territory, blamed fighters from the M23, a rebel group that seized large swathes of territory in 2012 and 2013. The two villages, Tshanzu and Runyoni, were the last redoubts of the M23 before they were chased by Congolese and UN forces into Uganda and Rwanda in 2013. **REUTERS**

18 MONTHS OF CURBS ON INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL END

US lifts travel ban for vaccinated foreigners

CEYLAN YEGINSU, NIRAJ CHOKSHI & CONCEPCION DE LEÓN
NOVEMBER 8

THE UNITED States reopened its borders for fully vaccinated travellers from dozens of countries on Monday, ending more than 18 months of restrictions on international travel that left families separated from loved ones and cost the global travel industry hundreds of billions of dollars in tourism revenue.

Under the new rules, fully vaccinated travellers will be allowed to enter the US if they can show proof of vaccination and a negative coronavirus test taken within three calendar days of travel.

The shift has come in time for the holiday season, when the beleaguered tourism industry is eagerly awaiting an influx in international visitors, especially in popular big-city destinations like New York, Los Angeles and Miami. The extended ban on travel from 33 countries — including European Union members, China, India and Iran — devastated the sector and resulted in losses of nearly \$300 billion in visitor spending and more than one million American jobs, according to the US Travel Association.

“Monday begins in earnest the return of international travel, when long-separated families and friends can safely reunite, travelers can explore this amazing country, and the US is able to reconnect with the global community,” said Roger Dow, the



Long lines at Heathrow Airport in London on Monday, following the lifting of restrictions on the entry of non-US citizens to the United States. *Reuters*

WHO IS ALLOWED IN

■ Fully vaccinated travellers will be allowed to enter the US if they can show proof of vaccination and a negative Covid test taken within three days of travel.

■ Unvaccinated Americans and children are exempt from the requirement, but must take a Covid test within a day of travel.

WHICH JABS ARE ACCEPTED

■ The three available in the United States — Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson — are accepted, as well as any of those cleared for emergency use by the World Health Organisation: AstraZeneca, Covaxin, Covishield, BIBP/Sinopharm and Sinovac.

PROOF OF VACCINATION

■ Paper and digital records of vaccination will be accepted. If you do not have your original record, such as a vaccination card, a copy will work. Proof of vaccination must include full name and at least one more identifier, such as date of birth and the name of the agency or provider issuing the vaccine.

Association’s president and chief executive officer. “It is a monumental day for travellers, for the communities and businesses that rely on international visitation, and for the US economy overall.”

Airlines saw a big spike in online searches and ticket bookings for international travel — particu-

larly from Europe and Latin America — after the administration announced its plans to ease the travel restrictions in Sept.

Many of the airplanes departing for the US over the coming weeks will be full of travellers reuniting with family and friends after more than a year apart. Felicity

Fowler, a retired homeopath from London, missed the birth of her grandson. He was born in New York in April; she hasn’t seen her daughter, his mother, since Feb 2020. “It’s been emotional torture to be so far away from my girl at a time when she has needed me the most,” she said. **NYT**

‘HISTORIC RESOLUTION’ EXPECTED TO BE PASSED DURING 4-DAY MEETING

China’s CPC kicks off major conclave to authorise unprecedented 3rd term for Xi

KJM VARMA
BEIJING, NOVEMBER 8

HUNDREDS OF senior officials of the Communist Party of China (CPC) began a four-day conclave here on Monday to deliberate and pass a rare “historical resolution” of the 100-year-old ruling party and pave the way for an unprecedented third term for President Xi Jinping.

The 19th Central Committee of the CPC started its sixth plenary session. About 400 full and alternate members of the CPC Central Committee are taking part in the plenum, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Xi, the General-Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, delivered a work report on behalf of the Political Bureau and made explanations on a draft resolution on the major achievements



China President Xi Jinping

and historical experience of the CPC’s 100 years of endeavours, the report said.

Xi, 68, holds China’s all three power centres — General-Secretary of the CPC, Chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC) which is the overall high command of the military, and the Presidency is set to complete his second five-year tenure next year. **PTI**

‘NSO spyware found on 6 Palestinian activists’ phones’

FRANK BAJAK & JOSEPH KRAUSS
JERUSALEM, NOVEMBER 8

SECURITY RESEARCHERS disclosed Monday that spyware from the notorious Israeli hacker-for-hire company NSO Group was detected on the cell-phones of six Palestinian human rights activists, half affiliated with groups that Israel’s defence minister controversially claimed were involved in terrorism.



NSO faces growing condemnation over the abuse of its spyware. *AP*

The revelation marks the first known instance of Palestinian activists being targeted by the military-grade Pegasus spyware. Its use against journalists, rights activists and political dissidents

Satellite images show China built mock-ups of US warships

Beijing: Satellite images show China has built mock-ups of a US Navy aircraft carrier and destroyer in its northwestern desert, possibly for practice for a future naval clash as tensions rise between the nations.

China has massively upgraded its military in recent years, and its capability and intentions are increasingly concerning to the United States as tensions rise over the South China Sea, Taiwan and military supremacy in the Indo-Pacific.

The images captured by Colorado-based satellite imagery company Maxar Technologies dated Sunday show the outlines of a US aircraft carrier and at least one destroyer sitting on a railway track. Maxar identified the location



A satellite picture shows a carrier target in Ruojiang. *Maxar Technologies via AP*

as Ruojiang, a Taklamakan Desert county in the Xinjiang region.

The independent US Naval Institute said the mock-ups of US ships were part of a new target range developed by the PLA.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said he had no information about the images. **AP**



British PM Boris Johnson

UK: Engulfed in corruption row, Boris says takes issue seriously

REUTERS
LONDON, NOVEMBER 8

BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris Johnson, fighting accusations his government is mired in corruption, said on Monday he took the issue very seriously and members of Parliament should be held to account for unethical behaviour.

Johnson has been engulfed for days in a row centred on his botched handling of the suspension of a ruling Conservative Party lawmaker, Owen Paterson, who was found to have breached rules on paid lobbying. It was the latest incident in a series of scandals to hit his Conservative government.

He suggested on Monday the process of investigating lawmakers needed to be changed.

“What we’ve got to make sure is that we take all this very, very seriously and that we get it right,” Johnson said, speaking about the issue of lawmakers holding additional jobs and of the process by which they can be investigated.

“What we do need to do is look also at the process. We are going to make every effort to get it right and we are going to hold MPs to account.”

WORKS 6.5 HOURS OUTSIDE CHINA’S SPACE STATION INSTALLING EQUIPMENT, DOING TESTS

Wang Yaping becomes 1st Chinese woman to spacewalk

KJM VARMA
BEIJING, NOVEMBER 8

CHINESE MILITARY pilot Wang Yaping scripted history on Monday when she became the country’s first woman astronaut to undertake a spacewalk as she moved out of China’s under-construction space station and took part in extravehicular activities along with a male colleague, the official media here reported.

Wang and Zhai Zhigang moved out of the space station core module called Tianhe and spent 6.5 hours outside in the early hours of Monday and successfully returned to the module, Xinhua news agency reported.



Wang Yaping outside the Chinese space station. *Xinhua via AP*

China had launched the Shenzhou-13 spaceship on October 16, sending three astronauts on a six-month mission to the under-construction space

station, which was expected to be ready by next year.

The 41-year-old native of Shandong province and mother of a five-year-old girl, Wang joined

the People’s Liberation Army Air Force in August 1997 and served as a deputy squadron commander before joining the second group of astronauts at the PLA Astronaut Division in May 2010.

In March 2012, she was part of the backup crew for the ninth manned Shenzhou mission series in June 2013 and took part in the 10th of Shenzhou series which lasted nearly 15 days. She is the second Chinese woman to have flown in space.

During the Shenzhou 10th flight, Wang gave China’s first space-based lecture inside the Tiangong 1 experimental module to more than 60 million Chinese students at about 80,000 schools across the country.

She was selected for the present manned space mission in December 2019.

Wang’s achievement has expanded the team of global female astronauts who have conducted spacewalks.

Before Wang, as of October 2019, a total of 15 women had participated in 42 spacewalks since 1984, when cosmonaut Svetlana Savitskaya became the first woman to walk in space, state-run *Global Times* reported.

While Wang and Zhai conducted the extravehicular activities, which included the spacewalk on Monday, the third member of the crew, Ye Guangfu played a supporting role from within the module. **PTI**

REUTERS
KUWAIT, NOVEMBER 8

KUWAIT’S GOVERNMENT on Monday submitted its resignation to the ruling emir, state news agency KUNA reported, a move that could help end a standoff with opposition lawmakers that has hindered fiscal reform.

It was the second time a government headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Sabah has resigned this year in a feud with the elected parliament. KUNA said the emir received Sheikh Sabah who handed him the written resignation of his cabinet.

It was not immediately clear if Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmed al-Sabah, who has final say in state

EXPLAINED Political deadlock hurt recovery

THE DEADLOCK between the government and the legislature had stalled legislative efforts to boost Kuwait’s state finances, which were badly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and last year’s low oil prices. The deadlock meant measures, such as a debt law, were not enacted.

matters, would accept the resignation of the government, which was formed in March after the

previous cabinet stepped down. Several opposition MPs have insisted on questioning the premier on various issues, including the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic and corruption.

Deadlocks between the cabinet and assembly have for decades led to government reshuffles and dissolutions of parliament, hampering investment and reform.

Lawmakers want to question Sheikh Sabah, who has been premier since late 2019, and have queried the constitutionality of a motion passed in March delaying any such questioning until the end of next year.

The government recently launched a dialogue with MPs to break the impasse.

TO START WITH BOTTOM 100 STOCKS BY MARKET CAPITALISATION

Bourses to kick off T+1 settlement cycle from Feb 25 in phased manner

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 8

STOCK EXCHANGES will kick off the T+1 settlement system on February 25, 2022, starting with the bottom 100 stocks by market capitalisation. Thereafter, from March 2022, on the last Friday (trade day) of every month, the next bottom 500 stocks from the list of stocks by market capitalisation will be available for introduction to T+1 settlement.

"Any new stock getting listed after October 2021, will be added to list based on the market capitalisation calculated on the basis

of average trading price of 30 days after commencement of trading," the stock exchanges said in a statement.

"The T+1 settlement cycle will be implemented in a phased manner and the first list of securities with T+1 settlement cycle will begin from trade date starting from February 25, 2022," exchanges said. In T+1, settlement of the trade takes place in one working day and the investor will get the money on the following day. The move to T+1 will not require large operational or technical changes by market participants nor will it cause fragmentation and risk to the core clearance and settlement ecosystem.

FPIs can invest in debt securities by InvITs, REITs: RBI
Mumbai/New Delhi: The RBI said foreign portfolio investors have been permitted to invest in debt securities issued by Infrastructure Investment Trusts and Real Estate Investment Trusts. Meanwhile, Sebi allowed FPIs to write off debt securities that they are unable to sell. **PTI**

tem. In case, based on market capitalisation, if the stock falls under

the category (in terms of market capitalisation) of stocks already under T+1 settlement then that stock also becomes eligible for T+1 settlement and will be introduced in T+1 settlement cycle on the last Friday (trade day) of next month, exchanges said. On September 7, Sebi allowed exchanges to start the T+1 system as an option in place of T+2. If it opts for the T+1 settlement cycle for a scrip, the stock exchange will have to mandatorily continue with it for a minimum 6 months. Thereafter, if it intends to switch back to T+2, it will do so by giving one month's advance notice to the market. Any subsequent switch (from T+1 to T+2 or vice versa) will

be subject to a minimum period. A stock exchange may choose to offer the T+1 settlement cycle on any of the scrips, after giving at least one month's advance notice to all stakeholders, including the public at large. "Securities such as preference shares, warrants, right entitlements, partly paid shares and securities issued under differential voting rights (DVR) will be transitioned to T+1 settlement along with the stock of parent company," exchanges said.

Foreign investors had earlier written to Sebi and the Finance Ministry about operational issues they would face while operating from different geographies.

INTERVIEW WITH CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER, VISTARA

‘With curbs relaxing, it’s an opportunity to grow, expand further



Vinod Kannan

Now that Covid is receding to some extent, is Vistara looking to get back to its growth plans?

Of course, we scaled back to an extent, compared to what we would have otherwise done because of Covid. On the other hand, if you look at it from the point of view of fleet size and routes and so on, ultimately, we have still grown, compared to where we were at the time of Covid. In the last 6 to 8 months, we have grown in size from 40 to 48 aircraft. The challenge has always been what is plausible in the face of various restrictions, especially on the international side because of factors such as bilateral arrangements, the second wave, various health measures being put in place. Looking at tomorrow, now that the limitations are being reviewed and restrictions are slowly being removed, it is an opportunity for us to grow and expand further and we will get there as soon as we have the opportunity to do so.

At a company level for Tata SIA Airlines Ltd (parent company of Vistara), is there a change in thought process now that Air India is to become a part of Tata Group?

At this time, we, as Vistara, have our own growth plans and our own business plans and strategies. And, at this time, we will continue to grow as per plan and the support of our shareholders. So, I don't think it is right to speculate or comment on that, but, at this time, we are continuing to take delivery of aircraft and continuing to grow.

For Vistara, how important is the race to command a significant market share?

Market share is capacity driven. The market share that you get is going to be related to a certain extent to how many seats you deploy... Pre-Covid, we were 5-6 per cent, and it has increased to 8.7 per cent now. Market share is important but I cannot expect to have over 50 per cent share like IndiGo, with only 50 aircraft. But on the routes that matter to us, where the profile of the traveller matches our product proposition, we will try to make sure we are competitive and as close to the customer as possible to ensure that, on these routes, our market share remains significant.

Two airlines are coming up. One is an ultra low-cost carrier (Akasa) and the second is probably a full-service carrier (Jet Airways 2.0). Which one seems more threatening for Vistara?

We will have to compete with both of them. There is no running away. If you look at the Indian aviation market, almost 80 per cent of the market share is dominated by low-cost carriers. This has an implication on pricing and how we can position ourselves... the most important thing is what value we bring to the table.

Full interview on www.indianexpress.com

SECTOR WATCH
AVIATION

Pak blocks GoFirst flight: How it flouts freedom of air

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

A 3-HOUR-AND-45-MINUTE flight from Srinagar to Sharjah, which was launched last month, flew a longer route, adding around 40 minutes to its flight time, for the first time on November 2. This was because it had to avoid flying over Pakistan after the country denied permission to use its airspace. With this refusal, experts have said Pakistan has violated the first freedom of air.

The GoFirst plane was flying from Srinagar to Sharjah

2009, prohibiting an Air India Express flight from Srinagar to Dubai from using its airspace.

What is freedom of air?

Following the Chicago Convention in 1944, the signatories to the convention decided to set rules that would act as fundamental building blocks to international commercial aviation. As part of these rules, initially, six 'freedoms of air' were decided. The first freedom of air grants the right to an

airline of one country to fly over a second country and land in a third country.

What are some of the other freedoms of air?

The second freedom grants the right to refuel or carry out maintenance in a foreign country without embarking or disembarking passengers or cargo. The third and the fourth freedoms grant the right to fly from the airline's home country to another and from a foreign country to the airline's own, respectively. *Full report on www.indianexpress.com*

What happened with the flight?

On October 23, Home Minister Amit Shah, while on a visit to Jammu and Kashmir, launched a direct flight between Srinagar and Sharjah, operated by GoFirst (formerly known as GoAir). On November 2, the flight was denied permission to enter Pakistan and flew south over Rajasthan and Gujarat before heading west over the Arabian Sea and flying through Omani airspace before entering the UAE.

Why did Pakistan deny the use of its airspace?

While there has been no official explanation given by Pakistani authorities, the country had made a similar move in

‘Housing finance companies to grow at 8-10% in FY22’

Housing finance companies (HFCs) are likely to witness a growth rate of 8-10% in fiscal 2022 helped by rise in economic and higher demand, an Icra Ratings report

FY2022 may see growth in disbursements and rising CE amid
■ Healthy demand in the industry
■ Rising level of economic activity
■ Increasing vaccination

COLLECTION EFFICIENCY (CE) started bouncing back by end of June and improved further in the second quarter of fiscal 2022
Source: Icra Ratings



HFCs registered nil sequential growth in on-book portfolio in the first quarter of this fiscal | **Jump in overdue** was sharpest in the recent past, as borrower level liquidity got stretched

EPFO board meeting: FY22 rate, investment options likely in focus

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

INVESTMENT IN alternative investment funds (AIFs), infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs) and other similar investment options, along with a likely discussion on the interest rate for 2021-22, are expected to be on the agenda of the next meeting of the Central Board of Trustees of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). The meeting is scheduled for November 20.

A board member said, "The Board will consider more secure investments such as government-linked InvITs, which will broaden the investment basket beyond exchange traded funds. Other options to tap into higher returns from the market would also be considered." The CBT may also discuss the interest rate for the ongoing financial year based on the returns of its investments from the debt and equity market. The EPFO has been providing

The Central Board of Trustees is scheduled to meet on November 20

an 8.5 per cent interest rate for the last two years. Despite being the lowest rate offered in the last eight years, the Finance Ministry has been nudging the retirement fund body for a lower rate.

In April, the Labour Ministry had notified changes in investment options to include units issued by Category I and Category II AIFs regulated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). The EPFO can invest up to 15 per cent of investment in equity as per the pattern of investment notified by the central government and the internal guidelines of the EPFO approved by the CBT. It had invested Rs 7,715 crore in equity till June 30 this year. The agenda of the meeting is yet to be circulated. The investment committee will meet before the Board meeting.

RIL exits US shale gas biz

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 8

RELiance INDUSTRIES Ltd (RIL) has completely exited from the upstream oil and shale gas business in the US.

Reliance Eagleford Upstream Holding, LP, a wholly owned step-down subsidiary of RIL, has signed an agreement with Ensign Operating III, LLC, a Delaware limited liability company to divest its interest in certain upstream assets in the Eagleford shale play of Texas. "With this transaction, Reliance has divested all its shale gas assets and has exited from the shale gas business in North America," it said.

Reliance said a purchase and sale agreement has been signed between the RIL arm and Ensign on November 5. "The sale is at a consideration higher than current carrying value of the assets," RIL said. It did not disclose the price at which this transaction took place.

‘Logistics ease’ rankings: Gujarat retains top spot

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

GUJARAT HAS retained the top spot on the Centre's annual logistics rankings for states, released on Monday, with Haryana and Punjab taking the second and third spots, respectively. Uttar Pradesh rose seven spots to sixth.

The Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) report is aimed at gauging the logistics performance of states and Union Territories (UT) and identifying areas where they can improve logistics performance. States are ranked based on quality and capacity of key infrastructure such as road, rail and warehousing as well as on operational ease of logistics including security of cargo, speed of terminal services and regulatory approvals. "It's a report that would urge all stakeholders to look at very seriously, to learn from it, to help build up India's competitiveness, and bring in a little more friendly competition among states," said Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal.

India's logistics costs account for 13-14 per cent of GDP, compared to 7-8 per cent in developed countries. Goyal said the government was aiming to bring down logistics cost by 5 per cent over next 5 years. West Bengal, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Assam were ranked 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st respectively. Northern Eastern States, and J&K and Ladakh have been considered a separate group for LEADS rankings.

BRIEFLY
Markets rally

Mumbai: The Sensex rose 0.8% to 60,545.61, and the Nifty by 0.85% above the 18,000 mark to 18,068.55. IndusInd Bank fell 10.71% to Rs 1,061.45 on the BSE. **ENS**

Adani, BNY Mellon

New Delhi: Bank of New York Mellon Corp won't provide financial services to Adani Group and its Carmichael coal mine in Australia.

Paytm IPO day 1

New Delhi: The Paytm's IPO was subscribed 18% on the first day on Monday.

RBI curb on bank

New Delhi: The RBI imposed restrictions on Babaji Date Mahila Sahakari Bank. **PTI**

Ward Wizard sales

New Delhi: Ward Wizard Innovations and Mobility Ltd sold 2,855 electric scooters and motorcycles in October.

Muthoot CSR

New Delhi: The Muthoot Group took CSR initiatives on November 2, the 72nd birth anniversary of late chairman M G George Muthoot. **ENS**

Future moves SC

INDUBHAN
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

FUTURE RETAIL on Monday moved the Supreme Court against the Delhi High Court's order that refused to stay the Singapore arbitration tribunal's October 21 ruling which denied permission to allow the firm to go ahead with its Rs 24,713-crore merger deal with Reliance Retail (RRVL).

Challenging the HC's order that dismissed its plea for stay on the Singapore International Arbitration Centre's (SIAC) interim order, Future Retail Ltd in its appeal urged the SC to allow it to conduct a meeting of shareholders and creditors for approval to sell its retail assets to RRVL as per directions from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Mumbai, on September 28. **FE**

Future defers shareholder meet

New Delhi: After the NCLT's direction, Future group firms have deferred meetings of their respective shareholders and creditors, called on November 10 and 11, as per regulatory filings. **PTI**

‘Amazon deal: ED seeks documents’

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has told Future Group to submit documents on its 2019 deal with Amazon, as part of a probe in possible breach of foreign investment laws, as per sources and a notice seen. **REUTERS**

Maruti to finalise plans for new Haryana unit by 2021-end

R C BHARGAVA
Chairman, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (MSIL) will and finalise plans to set up of a Rs 18,000 crore new manufacturing facility in Haryana before the end of this calendar year with the state government, reducing the gross salary cap to Rs 30,000 per month in its 75 per cent job reservation policy for locals, Chairman RC Bhargava told **PTI**.

"Fundamentally, Maruti Suzuki can say that the (Haryana) government has responded positively. We are happy and we will go ahead and finalise the new land where we would move (the Gurugram plant) within this calendar year 2021, before the end of December," he said. **PTI**

Poll impact: Musk may sell \$21-bn Tesla stock

Bengaluru: Tesla Inc shares fell 3 per cent on Monday as investors prepared for its chief Elon Musk's proposed sale of about a tenth of his holdings in the electric-car maker following his Twitter poll.

Musk tweeted on Saturday he would offload 10 per cent of his stake if Twitter users approved the proposal. The poll asking follow-

ers if he should sell stock got over 3.5 million votes, and 57.9 per cent voted 'Yes'. Tesla's shares were last trading at \$1,185.95 intra-day, after falling to \$1,133 earlier.

Musk owned 170.5 million shares as of June 30, and a 10 per cent sale would be about \$21 billion based on Friday's closing, as per *Reuters* calculation. **REUTERS**

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Tender No : 07/SE/PHCK/2021-22. STATE PLAN-2021-2022 - Supplying and Commissioning of 2 Nos. of 1600 KVA Indoor Transformers, 1 No of 63 KVA Indoor transformer and 2 Nos. of Suitable HP pumps at 12m dia well cum pump house and allied works at Peroor. EMD : Rs. 2,00,000/- (Rupees Two lakhs only)
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(UBN No. MES2122SLRC00022)
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DIPR/C/11135/2021

कार्यालय अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियंता, सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग, संभागा, अजमेर
क्रमांक:- अमुअ/अन./तक./एक-2 (30ए) निविदा/डी-789 दिनांक:- 01.11.2021
NIB No.- PWD2122A1977
विषय:- निविदा सूचना संख्या 11 वर्ष 2021-22 के अंतर्गत स्वीकृत नगर निगम सड़क निर्माण कार्यो वावत। राजस्थान के राज्यपाल महोदय की ओर से वर्ष 2021-22 के तहत चार पैकेजों (नगर निगम सड़क कार्य) के लिए उपयुक्त श्रेणी में सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग राजस्थान में पंजीकृत संवेदकों एवं केन्द्रीय/राज्य सरकार व उनके अधिकृत संगठनों/केन्द्रीय लोक निर्माण विभाग/डाक एवम् दूर संचार विभाग/रेलवे इत्यादि में पंजीकृत संवेदकों, जो कि राजस्थान सरकार के एए श्रेणी के संवेदकों के समकक्ष हों, से निधारित प्रपत्र में कुल 04 पैकेजों विनकी लागत राशि रु. 1869.66 लाख है, के लिए ई-टेंडरिंग प्रक्रिया हेतु ऑन लाईन निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती है।
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Email:- mktgco.rsmml@rajasthan.gov.in, rsmmlphosphate@gmail.com
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Please refer the RFP no. SBI/GITC/Core Banking-Tech Operation/ 2021/2022/799 dated 20/10/2021. Corrigendum and Response to Prebid queries is available under "Procurement news" at Bank's Website, <https://www.sbi.co.in> and e-Procurement agency portal <https://etender.sbi/SBI/>
Place: Navi Mumbai
Date: 09.11.2021 **CB - Tech Operations Department**

GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN
OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT,
SAWAI MAN SINGH HOSPITAL, JAIPUR
[Sawai Man Singh Road Tonk Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan 302004]
(PHONE 0141-2518308, 0141 2565647, Email- ms.smhospital@gmail.com, Jaipur dated, the 1.11.21
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Bids for one year contract for procurement of Medical Oxygen Gas are invited from interested bidders up to 5.00 P.M. on 17.12.2021. Other particulars of bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajjasthan.nic.in>) of the state.
UBN No. MCJ2122GLRC00153
Sd/-
Medical Superintendent
S.M.S. Hospital, Jaipur
DIPR/C/11071/2021



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THIS WORD MEANS

LEONIDS METEOR SHOWER

An annual spectacle in the night sky in November. It turns into a meteor storm every 33 years or so.



A burst of Leonid meteors in 1999. NASA

THE ANNUAL Leonids Meteor Shower has begun. This year's shower is active between November 6 and 30, with peak activity expected on November 17. The peak time of a meteor shower comes when the Earth passes through the densest part of the debris. On November 17, bits of the cosmic debris will appear to viewers from Earth like a display of fireworks in the sky.

The debris that forms this meteor shower originates from a small comet called 55P/Tempel-Tuttle in the constellation Leo, which takes 33 years to orbit the sun. The Leonids are considered to be a major shower that features the fastest meteors, which typically travel at speeds of 71 km per second, although the rates are often as low as 15 meteors per hour, NASA notes.

The Leonids are also called fireballs and earthgazer meteors. Fireballs, because of their bright colours, and earthgazer, because they streak close to the horizon. The light — which is why a meteor is called a shooting star — is a result of the friction between the meteorite and the molecules present in the Earth's at-

mosphere because of which it burns.

Every 33 years, a Leonid shower turns into a meteor storm, which is when hundreds to thousands of meteors can be seen every hour. A meteor storm should have at least 1,000 meteors per hour. In 1966, a Leonid storm offered views of thousands of meteors that fell through the Earth's atmosphere per minute during a period of 15 minutes, NASA notes. The last such storm took place in 2002.

The showers are visible on any cloudless night when the Moon is not very bright. Ideally, the viewing location should have no light pollution; the farther away from cities the better. According to the website EarthSky, city, state and national parks are often great places to watch meteor showers.

NASA recommends that one should only look at the constellation Leo to view the Leonids, which are visible throughout the night sky. In fact, they are best viewed at about midnight. The eyes adapt to darkness in about 30 minutes and the meteors are usually visible up until daybreak.

An oral version of remdesivir

REMDESIVIR, which was once considered the most promising of the Covid-19 treatments that went through the Solidarity trials under the aegis of the World Health Organization (WHO), but which has since fallen out of favour, is delivered intravenously. Now, manufacturer Gilead Sciences has partnered with researchers in Georgia State University to test a modified version of remdesivir that can be taken orally. The research comes at a time when Merck and Ridgeback's oral drug for Covid-19, molnupiravir, has received clearance from the UK, and when Pfizer has reported promising trial results of its own Covid-19 drug, Paxlovid.

On November 20, the WHO issued a

conditional recommendation against the use of remdesivir in hospitalised patients, regardless of disease severity, as "there is currently no evidence that remdesivir improves survival and other outcomes in these patients".

Researchers have now reported that the modified version of remdesivir was "highly effective" in suppressing SARS-CoV-2 replication and transmission in animals when given orally. It could be "groundbreaking" in improving patient access to treatment early after infection, Georgia State University said in a press release. The results of the study, done on ferrets, have been published in the journal *Nature Communications*.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE



PAPER CLIP

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SIMPLY PUT

India's submarine strength

The CBI has chargesheeted naval officers and others for allegedly sharing details of India's submarine modernisation project. How many subs does India have, what is being upgraded, and what's the timeline?

KRISHN KAUSHIK

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 8

LAST WEEK, the CBI filed two chargesheets against serving and retired naval officers, and some others, for allegedly sharing details of the ongoing modernisation project of India's Kilo Class submarines. The Kilo Class comprises imported submarines that are being retrofitted.

Experts say India has lost a decade in modernising its submarine fleet, while China has marched ahead in its larger naval and more specific submarine capabilities.

How many submarines does India have?

Currently, India has 15 conventional diesel-electric submarines, classified as SSKs, and one nuclear ballistic submarine, classified as SSBN.

Of the SSKs, four are Shishumar Class, which were bought and then built in India in collaboration with the Germans starting 1980s; eight are Kilo Class or Sindhughosh Class bought from Russia (including erstwhile USSR) between 1984 and 2000; and three are Kalvari Class Scorpene submarines built at India's Mazagon Dock in partnership with France's Naval Group, earlier called DCNS.

The SSBN, *INS Arihant*, is a nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, built indigenously. A second SSBN, *INS Arighat*, an upgraded version of *Arihant*, is likely to be commissioned within the next few months.

Most of India's submarines are over 25 years old, and many are getting refitted.

What is the history of India's submarine acquisition?

India got its first submarine, *INS Kalvari* of the Foxtrot Class, from the USSR in December 1967. By 1969, it had four of those. During the 1971 war with Pakistan, the submarines were baptised into war. Between 1971-74, India bought four more Foxtrot Class submarines.

The eight Foxtrot submarines were a "good number at that point of time" and were "doing a great job, as contemporary as we could operate at that time", said Commodore (retired) Anil Jai Singh, who commanded four submarines, served in the Directorates of Naval Plans and Submarine Acquisition at Naval Headquarters, and was involved in drafting the Navy's 30-year submarine construction plan.

After 1974, India did not get new submarines for a decade. In 1981, it signed a contract to buy two Type 209 submarines from West Germany, while two others were to be assembled at Mazgaon Dock. These formed



INS Kalvari, built in India in partnership with France's Naval Group (earlier DCNS), Indian Navy

the Shishumar Class, the first of which was commissioned in 1986.

Parallely, Russia offered India its Kilo Class submarines. Singh, who was in the commissioning crew of the first Kilo Class submarine India got, *INS Sindhughosh* in 1986, said it was "probably the first time these boats were seen in the West". "We were the first to sail a Kilo so far from the Soviet Union."

Between 1986 and 1992, India got eight submarines from the USSR and the two from Germany. In 1992 and 1994, two German submarines built in India were also commissioned, adding up to 12 new submarines in eight years from 1986. "By 1995, we probably had amongst the most modern submarine arms in the world," said Singh.

India bought two more Kilo Class submarines from Russia in 1999 and 2000, taking the total submarine fleet to around 20.

Soon after, the older Foxtrots started getting decommissioned. Of the ten Kilo Class submarines, *INS Sindhurakshak* sank off Mumbai after explosions caused by fire. Last year India gifted INS Sindhuvir to Myanmar.

Why have there been delays in modernisation?

The 30-year plan (2000-30) for indigenous submarine construction, approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security in 1999, envisaged two production lines of six submarines each, built in India in partnership with a foreign Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM). The projects were called P-75 and P-75I.

The 30-year plan anticipated that India would get the 12 new submarines by 2012-15. Subsequently, India would make 12 of its own by 2030, taking the fleet size to 24, with the older submarines getting decommissioned.

Singh said the intention was that India would maintain a force level of 18 to 20 submarines at any given time. But the contract for P-75 was signed only by 2005, with France's

DCNS, now the Naval Group, "ideally the contract for P75I should have also happened then," Singh said.

What are the current projects underway?

Of the six being built, P-75 has delivered three Kalvari Class Scorpene submarines so far. P-75I is yet to take off; the first Request for Information was issued in 2008, then again in 2010, and the Request for Proposal was finally issued in July this year.

The project will be India's first under the Strategic Partnership Model, which came up in 2015. The government will give the contract to an Indian Strategic Partner, which will then partner with a foreign OEM.

The two selected SPs are MDL and Larsen and Toubro; the five selected OEMs are France's Naval Group, Germany's ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems, Russia's ROE, South Korea's Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering, and Spain's Navantia. However, bids are yet to be finalised. The earliest that the first submarine under the project can be commissioned will be around 2032, according to experts.

P-75, too, has been delayed. While the first boat should have been commissioned in 2012, it was commissioned in December 2017.

What is China's capability, and why is that a worry for India?

Singh said India needs more submarines for two reasons. "First, we need it for our own maritime security. Second, Chinese are going to be positioning a lot more ships and submarines in the Indian Ocean in the coming years."

He said China is giving Pakistan eight submarines and four destroyers, which can be used as proxy by China. "We need to handle that very soon, and move on P75I as fast as we can."

According to a 2020 report by the Pentagon, China currently operates four SSBNs and is fitting two additional hulls. It has six SSNs and,

and 50 diesel-powered attack submarines (SSs). According to the report, Chinese Navy will "likely maintain between 65 and 70 submarines through the 2020s, replacing older units with more capable units on a near one-to-one basis".

China has constructed 12 nuclear submarines in the last 15 years. It is expected to have up to eight SSBNs by 2030, the report said.

Why are nuclear submarines so coveted?

SSNs have infinite capacity to stay dived. As they are not propelled by batteries, they need not emerge for charging by a diesel engine. Propelled by a nuclear-powered engine, these submarines only need to come to the surface for replenishing supplies for the crew.

SSNs are also able to move faster underwater than conventional submarines. All this allows a navy to deploy them at farther distances, and quicker. They are like the fighter jets of the underwater world.

How many does India have?

India is among six nations that have SSNs, alongside the US, the UK, Russia, France and China. India got its first SSN in 1987 from the Soviet Navy, which it rechristened *INS Chakra*, which was decommissioned in 1991. In 2012, India got another Russian SSN on a ten-year lease, called *INS Chakra 2*, which has since been returned to Russia.

The government has also decided that of the 12 submarines to be built indigenously after the P75 and P75I projects, six would be SSNs instead of SSK. Singh called this decision a "very, very positive development", but cautioned about "a question mark" over how quickly the project moves. Even if all things move smoothly, Singh said the first SSN won't enter service until 2035 or 2040.

India is taking two SSNs on lease from Russia, but the first of them is expected to be delivered only by 2025.

But, during this time India has developed its own SSBNs, *INS Arihant* and *INS Arighat*. Unlike the other submarines, the SSBNs are strategic programmes and fall under the Strategic Forces Command, the tri-services command responsible for India's nuclear weapons. "That's not a war fighting machine. It should not be counted as a submarine war fighting capability, because it is a deterrent," said Singh.

India is building at least two larger SSBNs that will have bigger missiles, called S4 and S4* projects. The four SSBNs are expected to be commissioned before 2030, Singh said.

Why Maharashtra transport staff are on strike

VALLABH OZARKAR

MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 8

BOMBAY HIGH Court on Monday directed the Government of Maharashtra to set up a high-level committee to decide on the demand of state road transport corporation workers that they should be treated as government employees.

A large section of employees of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), one of the biggest transport corporations in India, have been on strike since October 27. Around 225 of the 250-odd MSRTC depots across the state were shut on Monday morning. There have been reports of commuters facing hardships from across Maharashtra because of the strike.

MSRTC and Covid

State-owned MSRTC has a fleet of 16,000 buses that it runs on inter-city and inter-state

routes. Before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, it ferried almost 68 lakh passengers every day and earned Rs 22-24 crore in daily revenues on average.

The many months of disruptions due to the pandemic, including a long period of full lockdown has, however, hit MSRTC badly. Daily ridership and revenues have plunged to about 24-28 lakh and Rs 12 crore on average respectively.

Maharashtra has suffered the country's biggest Covid death toll by far, and still has more than 18,000 active cases of the disease, behind only Kerala.

According to officials, MSRTC's cumulative losses stood at Rs 3,500 crore before the pandemic, and following massive losses, has crossed Rs 9,000 crore now. The corporation is finding it difficult to meet operational costs and pay salaries to its 96,000 employees on time.

Over the past year and a half, the state government has thrice provided financial assistance to MSRTC to help it pay staff.

Workers' strike

Following repeatedly delayed salaries and deaths by suicide of more than 30 employees over the past year and a half, several unions called for a hungerstrike on October 27 to press four demands: increases in salary, and dearness and house rent allowances, and the merger of MSRTC in the state government.

Transport Minister Anil Parab had announced an increase of DA to 17 per cent from the existing 12 on October 25, but the action committee of the unions went ahead with the October 27 agitation asking for DA of 28 per cent, at par with that of state government employees.

At a meeting with union leaders on October 28, Parab also accepted the other demands except the merger of MSRTC into the government.

Despite a commitment by their leaders on ending the strike however, a section of MSRTC employees continued the agitation to press for the merger, which they said was their main

demand. "This (merger) will ultimately resolve most of the issues and demands of employees. So, even after the major unions agreed to withdraw the agitation, employees, who are angry and frustrated, did not return to work," said a source among the workers.

Court orders

The industrial court had declared the strike illegal and passed restraining orders. MSRTC moved Bombay High Court after two unions announced a strike from the mid-night of November 3. The court directed employees to refrain from proceeding with their proposed strike until further orders, saying this would cause "hardships" to people seeking to travel during the Diwali holidays. However, the workers proceeded on strike on Sunday night.

A similar strike by MSRTC workers around Diwali in 2017 had been called off after Bombay High Court deemed their action illegal.

Over 2 decades, growing proportion of voters who decide choice late

SHREYAS SARDESAI

WITH CRUCIAL state elections scheduled in three months, pre-poll surveys have begun appearing in the media. If done well and at regular intervals, these surveys serve as useful tools for tracking shifting voter sentiment. However, pre-poll forecasts have often been quite different from the eventual result.

Quality issues apart, there's a major reason for this divergence, and that's late decision-making by voters.

Since 2000, there have been 130 Assembly elections. During 78 of them, Lokniti has conducted post-poll or exit poll surveys where it has asked voters when they made up their mind about who they would vote for. An analysis of the responses shows that most voters finalised their choice only during or after the campaign period, and not before. This tendency was always strong in Assembly elections, but has increased in the last decade.

In 46 of the 78 elections, at least half the voters took a final call during the campaigning weeks or at the last minute (*Table 1*).

In 8 of the 17 states where Lokniti has conducted post-polls more than twice since 2000, we find that the voters' tendency to decide during the campaign, or just after it, has been stronger in elections since 2010 compared to elections during 2000-09. These are Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

In 10 states, the last Assembly election there recorded the highest percentage of late deciders compared to previous elections. For instance, in the Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala elections this year, 65%, 68% and 39% of voters respectively decided their vote during campaigning or at the last minute, which was the highest of the last two decades for these states.

Jharkhand in 2019; Chhattisgarh, MP, Karnataka and Tripura in 2018, and Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh in 2017 also recorded higher-than-before figures.

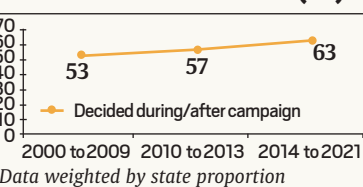
This apparent rising tendency of voters to decide late gets confirmed when we merge data from all 78 elections. In elections between 2000 and 2009, 53% voters decided their choice during campaigning or after it

TABLE 1 VOTERS WHO DECIDED CHOICE DURING/AFTER CAMPAIGN (%)						
State	2000-2009 Election			2010-2021 Election		
	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd
Assam	43	44	-	45	57	65
Bihar	58	58	47	79	73	77
Chh'garh	56	72	-	45	78	-
Delhi	68	51	-	41	39	PP
Gujarat	57	53	-	58	72	-
Haryana	54	36	NS	48	NS	-
Himachal	57	52	-	49	67	-
Jharkhand	50	NS	-	72	72	-
Karnataka	NS	68	-	PP	83	-
Kerala	17	25	-	24	PP	39
MP	58	71	-	53	72	-
M'rashtira	56	48	-	55	NS	-
Mizoram	72	43	-	NS	NS	-

Non-responses were excluded from analysis. NS=no survey done; PP=pre-poll done.

In 4 states where a post-poll was conducted only once, the responses were Odisha 2000 (68%), Meghalaya 2008 (37%), Manipur 2012 (38%) and Goa 2017 (65%).

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post-poll surveys

CHART 1
GROWTH OF LATE DECIDERS (%)

Data weighted by state proportion

TABLE 2
WINNING PARTIES' LEAD*

	Among earlier deciders	Among later deciders
Assam 2021	+9	-3
W Bengal 2021	+2	+16
Tamil Nadu 2021	+3	+5
Kerala 2021	+12	-4
Bihar 2020	+4	Equal
Jharkhand 2019	-2	+3
MP 2018	+1	-2
Tripura 2018	-14	+31
Gujarat 2017	-1	+11
Himachal 2017	+11	+6

Difference from nearest rival in percentage points

ended; in 2010-13, this increased to 57%; and in 2014-21 (the 'Modi years') it rose further to 63% (*Figure 1*). The rise in late deciders during the Modi era is due to a high proportion of campaign-stage deciders and not so much last-minute ones, whose proportion has remained quite stable at around one-third across the three periods.

The 2019 Lok Sabha election too had a large proportion (62%) making up their mind either at the campaigning stage or the last moment. This, in fact, constituted a reversal of the trend towards early decision-making seen in national elections held from 1999 to 2014.

It's important to stress that late deciders don't always end up upending poll predictions or behaving differently from early deciders. There have been instances when they haven't, but they often have. In West Bengal in 2021, most pre-polls had predicted a close contest. However, eventually the Trinamool Congress won easily and Lokniti's post-poll data shows that this was due to a massive 16-percentage-point vote advantage among campaign-period deciders (*Table 2*). In Bihar in 2020, the NDA was predicted to win quite comfortably. However, a late shift towards the Mahagathbandhan made the contest close.

All these data highlight the risks of predicting an election too early.



BRIEFLY

Djokovic wins record 37th Masters title

Paris: The day after ensuring he finishes No. 1 for a record seventh year, Novak Djokovic beat No. 2 Daniil Medvedev 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 in the Paris Masters final on Sunday for a record 37th Masters title. Djokovic moved one clear of fellow 20-time Grand Slam winner Rafael Nadal for Masters trophies, and nine ahead of Roger Federer, the other tennis great with 20 majors. It also gave Djokovic a record-extending sixth Paris Masters title and put him 6-4 up overall against the No. 2-ranked Medvedev, who is pushing hard to dethrone him in world tennis. The veteran Serb had lost to Medvedev in straight sets in the U.S. Open final two months ago and had not played a tournament since.

Medvedev looked strong early on but top-seeded Djokovic, who beat him in straight sets in this year's Australian Open final, withstood punishing rallies against an opponent nine years younger. Djokovic's double break against a tiring Medvedev, the defending champion, gave him a 5-2 lead and the chance to serve for an 86th career title. **AP**

Sarnobat, Bhaker qualify for finals

Poland: India's Rahi Sarnobat and Manu Bhaker qualified for the finals in the women's 25m pistol event on competition day five of the ongoing International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) President's Cup here on Monday. Both the Olympians shot identical scores of 583 in qualification, but Rahi took fourth place ahead of Manu's fifth on higher inner 10s.

The eight-shooter final is scheduled on Wednesday. It was triple delight for Bhaker as she also qualified for the gold medal match in the 25m rapid fire mixed team Pistol event, assuring her of at least a silver to add to the gold she won with Iran's Javad Foroughi in the 10m air pistol mixed team event. **PTI**

Newcastle appoint Howe as manager

Newcastle: Newcastle appointed Eddie Howe as manager on Monday, tasked with trying to keep the relegation-threatened team in the Premier League by the new Saudi ownership. Howe was in the directors' box at Brighton on Saturday to see Newcastle draw 1-1 to sit five points from safety. There are 27 games remaining but the squad can't be reinforced until the January transfer window. **AP**

How signing a club legend as coach is not a winning formula

MIHIR VASAVDA
NOVEMBER 8

ON May 23, 2015, when Xavi Hernandez played for the last time in a Barcelona shirt, he uttered words that now seem prophetic. "It's not a goodbye, just a 'see you later'," a teary-eyed Xavi had said. On Monday, the club legend returned to Barcelona as their new manager. "I'm about to cry," he said in his inauguration speech.

Xavi's appointment at the helm follows a frequent script in football – results go south, the manager gets sacked, the board feels the heat and to appease fans, a former player is handed over the reins. These, in a way, seem like perfect marriages but the team often comes across as the needy partner.

What have been the other instances?

Closer home, a similar narrative has gripped Indian cricket as well. Though not in crisis, a premature exit from the T20 World Cup has sparked some panic among India's fans. So, the timing of Rahul Dravid taking over as head coach could not have been more perfect.

How Dravid's stint with India goes remains to be seen but in club football, the trend doesn't seem to be working well: Andrea Pirlo lasted for just one season at Juventus, Frank Lampard was sacked unceremoniously by Chelsea, Mikel Arteta's Arsenal have been unimpressive for the most part, and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's struggles have only compounded at Manchester United.

What is the difference from 'other' managers?

There is, however, one big difference. At a time when three or four bad weeks can seal the fate of those at the wheel, players who are a part of the club's folklore and go on to become their managers more often than not get a longer rope, both from fans as well as the board. Arteta and Solskjaer, who have held on to their jobs despite tumultuous starts to the season, are cases in point. And it's not just them.

Real Madrid have been notoriously impatient with their managers and yet, since 2010, Zinedine Zidane is the only manager who hasn't been sacked by them. On the contrary, it was Zidane who left the club on both occasions, on his own terms. Across town, before Diego Simeone was appointed Atletico Madrid's manager in 2011, the club had 12 coaches in a decade.

Despite ups and downs, Simeone, a former Atletico player, has enjoyed the confidence of the club management, players and fans. Emotion has often been the overriding



Xavi Hernandez during his official presentation in Barcelona. **AP**

element in each of these stories. But with Solskjaer and Arteta, it also helped that the likes of Alex Ferguson and Pep Guardiola threw their weight behind the two player-turned-managers.

What is Xavi's track record?

For Xavi, the glowing recommendations have already started pouring in – even Lionel Messi sees him as the messiah. "As a player, Xavi saw the whole picture from the pitch. I'm sure from the sidelines, he'll see it even clearer," Messi was quoted as saying in the Spanish media last week.

Messi knows. At the peak of their prowess, even though the spotlight was always on the Argentine great, Xavi remained the most vocal advocate of Barcelona's playing philosophy. So much so that he even made a Qatari side Al Sadd – the only club he had coached before Monday – play tiki-taka football. A 22-second viral clip of a goal scored by Al Sadd in the Qatari league is perhaps a testimony of what Xavi the coach can get his players to do.

What is the task confronting Xavi?

That will be important. Under Ronald Koeman, Barcelona were stripped of their identity. In a way, there are similarities in both these managerial appointments. When Koeman was named Barcelona

manager in 2020, his biggest qualification was scoring the goal that won them the 1992 European Cup under Johan Cruyff.

Ironically, Koeman's Barca gave up on Cruyff's idea of football. For a team that considered possession to be paramount, whipping in hopeful crosses from the flanks became a staple.

Yet, the club tried to show loyalty and patience to one of its legends. Ultimately, when the fans turned on him – attacking

his vehicle after a defeat to Real Madrid in the Clasico, the Dutchman's fate was sealed.

When emotions will be separated from Xavi's return to Camp Nou, perhaps there will be a clearer picture of what he is like as a coach. In Qatar, Xavi's Al Sadd had a reputation of playing collectively as a team, dominating every aspect of the game, pressing high and playing fast, flowing football. He'll be expected to get Barcelona playing the same way. And for that, Xavi could get the luxury that Koeman did not have – time.

Sentiment has landed Xavi his dream job. And it is safe to say that sentiment will also provide him some cushion as he tries to steer Barcelona out of troubled waters.

EXPLAINED

Nazir Hoosein Memorial Drive takes Himalayan route

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GREATER NOIDA, NOVEMBER 8

CHIEF of Army Staff General Manoj Mukund Naravane flagged off the Nazir Hoosein Memorial Drive by Team Firefox in Greater Noida on Monday. The drive, a non-competitive rally, is set to take place through the 1981 Himalayan Rally route and will be staged over three days. The event is a tribute to the participants, officials and volunteers of the 11 Himalayan Rallies and will be conducted by Team Firefox, who have 20 Himalayan Rallies among them and are endorsed by IARC – the club founded by Nazir Hoosein, among others.

The rally started at Greater Noida from where the destination for Day 1 was Lansdowne. Two cars – the first, a retro-fitted Mahindra Thar driven by Colonel (Retired) SS Sekhon and the second, a similarly retro-fitted car commemorating the original Himalayan Rally, being driven by Surinder Thatti, Vice President for Sport, FIA, will go through Haldwani, Ramnagar and Kaladhungi, skirting the Jim Corbett National Park. The drive will be backed up by 15 support vehicles.

Day 2 will see the drive touch Tilwara or Chopta on the way to Mussoorie. A longer ride throughout will mean an early start from Lansdowne. Manjeev Bhalla, a former winner along with Flory Roothaert in the original Himalayan Rally, praised the care taken to put together an event that is a "fitting tribute to a man who revolutionised motorsport in this country".

"The organisers and participants must be commended equally, for their zeal and determination to create this event," he said. "The level of dedication and hours it must have taken to survey roads, create easy-to-navigate routes, and clear all permissions, es-



Chief of Army Staff General MM Naravane at the flag-off ceremony.

pecially in a time when travel is becoming a tough thing to do, is hugely admirable," said Bhalla.

The organisers have strict Covid-19 protocols for participants and support crews alike, in what is a first-of-its-kind 'traveling bio-bubble', according to a release. All participants were required to produce a negative RT-PCR test, regardless of their vaccination status, and only then allowed for registration. Additionally, participants will drive in groups, sequestered to ensure minimum contact with those outside of the event through the day's journey.

Day 3 will see a run to Kufri via Herbertpur, Paonta Sahib, Nahan, Kumarhatti, Solan and Shimla Bye pass and the following day will have the Jalori pass climb enroute to Manali. The route includes three high-altitude mountain passes over 10,000 feet and will end with a drive to Rohtang Pass and back through the Atal Tunnel.

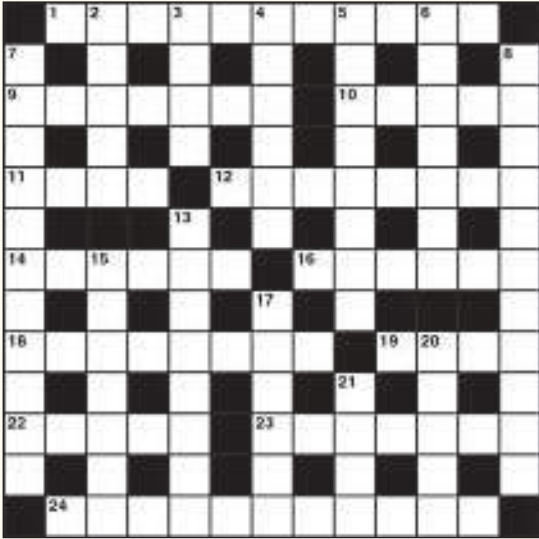
Verstappen wins Mexico GP, extends lead over Hamilton

MEXICO CITY: Max Verstappen won the Mexico City Grand Prix with a dominant race Sunday to stretch his season championship lead over Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton. Teammate Sergio Perez was the first Mexican driver in race history to not just lead the race, but also to earn a podium when he finished third.

And the result pulled Red Bull nearly even with Mercedes in a team championship worth millions of dollars at the end of season. While Verstappen and Perez basked in the chants of "Ole! Ole!" from the massive crowd during the podium ceremony and Perez's father wildly waved the Mexican flag, Hamilton could only watch and listen. He had to know he's running out of time and races to catch Verstappen in pursuit of a record eighth F1 season title.

Verstappen now leads Hamilton in the championship by 19 points with four races left, starting next week in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Verstappen won in 2019 and likely will be favored to again. The two have traded the lead several times this season, and even crashed into each other twice, in F1's tightest title chase in years. "Today with their superior speed, if they work to carry that into the next ones, we may be in trouble, or we will be in trouble," Hamilton said. Verstappen certainly isn't taking anything for granted. The 24-year-old Dutchman is chasing his first F1 championship and earned his ninth win of the season, his second in a row and third in Mexico City in four years. The two have traded the lead several times this season, and even crashed into each other twice, in F1's tightest title chase in years. **AP**

CROSSWORD 4581



ACROSS

- 1 Shriek at cat when upset and despondent (4,2,5)
- 9 Liberate one soul in torment (7)
- 10 A number holding no end of wood (5)
- 11 Hydrogen weapon and the damage it does (4)
- 12 Soft spot your boss has for you? (8)
- 14 It's important to exhort one not to lose heart (6)
- 16 It's used for pounding with a mortar (6)
- 18 Stop deer straying with ropes round their necks (8)
- 19 Identify the place (4)
- 22 Canned - as sardines are (5)
- 23 Jumble vital to a North European (7)
- 24 He clears the way for us (4,7)

DOWN

- 2 Badly riled, he's not keen to work (5)
- 3 Recognise a refusal when you hear it (4)
- 4 The point is seen in this essay (6)
- 5 Tips which are never mean (8)
- 6 The car could be in neutral (7)
- 7 Secret assignment for a lullaby singer? (4-4,3)
- 8 Arousing one's curiosity though resenting it perhaps (11)
- 13 Set upon one's fiancée (8)
- 15 Far-seeing man who fell foul of the Inquisition (7)
- 17 The man went down with a cry of pain (6)
- 20 Leo's hauteur? (5)
- 21 This is irritating for sightseers naturally (4)

Solutions Crossword 4580: Across: 1 Accede, 4 Offstage, 9 Canute, 10 Easterly, 12 Lour, 13 Links, 14 Here, 17 Discontinued, 20 Disobedience, 23 Slap, 24 Cause, 25 Heal, 28 Apple pie, 29 Portia, 30 Listless, 31 Starve. Down: 2 Accolade, 2 Conquest, 3 Duty, 5 Frankincense, 6 Site, 7 Air bed, 8 Elysee, 11 Dictionaries, 15 Topic, 16 Sepia, 18 Inventor, 19 Cellmate, 21 Israel, 22 Campus, 26 Well, 27 Boot.

JUMBLED WORDS

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

Fain would I climb, yet _ _ _ _ _ (Walter Raleigh (4, 4))

CESAE
[Shaded squares: 2, 3, 4, 5]

BNOAR
[Shaded squares: 2, 3, 4, 5]

AFIILL
[Shaded squares: 2, 3, 4, 5]

ALOYFF
[Shaded squares: 2, 3, 4, 5]

SOLUTION: CESAE: BARON, FILIAL, LAYOFF. Fain would I climb, yet fear't to fall - Walter Raleigh

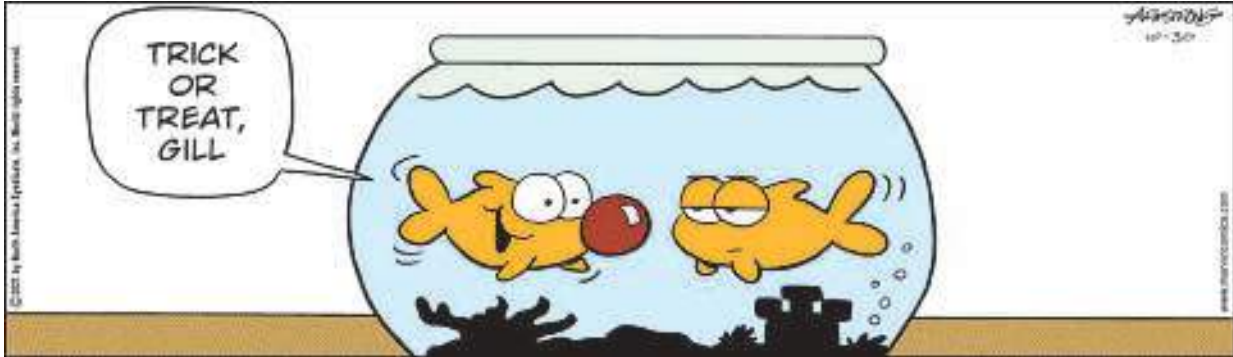
OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



Difficulty Level 5s

Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SUDOKU 4649



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Continue to play for time and don't let anyone else force the pace. This is a very special moment for you as far as your personal creativity is concerned and the last thing you want to do is let anyone else dictate your movements for you, especially if they've picked up the wrong end of the stick.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

You are now officially in a period of maximum domestic uncertainty. Let me tell you now that friction will only develop if you battle to keep things as they are. If you accept and even initiate change over the next two months, the consequences could be miraculous.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Get down to some serious work as soon as you can. By serious, I don't mean that it shouldn't be fun, but that anything you do now will be tied in to your destiny. I'd also advise a spot of day-dreaming if required. You might think that this is wasting time, but it's a great way to create space for new ideas.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Once you've dealt with financial matters, probably no more than routine shopping, you'll be free to let your mind wander. Overseas contacts seem to be important, which means that a family member far away is waiting to hear from you. Plus, an adventurous possibility is on the way.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

To be forewarned, as they say, is to be forearmed. It's therefore important to point out that even though you are entering a phase of unparalleled optimism, some of your hopes may be unrealistic. You must sort out what is possible from what is not.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
The following applies to your life over the next two months, so don't forget it: you are increasingly likely to feel exploited or undermined and will tend to blame other people, yet the cause, and hence the solution, lies with you. Once you've taken that on board then you'll be well on the way to finding a solution.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

The day seems to be divided into two halves, and you can swing to extremes either favouring self-indulgence or putting the emphasis on work. Certain people are convinced that you have a lazy streak, and now may be a good time to prove them right. Don't let them pressurise you.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Don't complain if you have been disappointed financially. There will be plenty of chances to make up for it later on, perhaps within a few days. Actually, self-indulgence should be a priority, perhaps because it's when you're enjoying yourself that you come up with the answers to rather serious questions.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

It's bound to be some time before you can fully recover from past disturbances, but, in almost exactly one week, you should be able to more than make up for one particular mistake. In fact, it's an astrological law that each time the same opportunity returns, we make better of it.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Others may make extravagant gestures, but you ought to be the one to call time on reckless financial adventures. Every single penny, cent, rupee or peseta you spend must be designed to earn two back in the future. You can't guarantee success, but you can do your best.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

While one very important planet, Saturn, urges you to dig your heels in, this could be a risky strategy. For the next twelve weeks, compromise and total flexibility must be an essential part of your strategy. Follow the Jupiterian path, the way of hope and optimism.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Slowly but surely, your confidence is starting to return. You should soon feel strong enough to make important arrangements and plot the next stage of a health and fitness programme. You also need to keep your mind in trim, so you might be seriously investigating a new interest.

SPORT

ICC T20 WORLD CUP

BRIEFLY

Roy ruled out with calf injury, Vince to replace

Dubai: Explosive England opener Jason Roy has been ruled out of the remainder of the T20 World Cup with a calf injury and James Vince has been drafted into the squad as his replacement. Roy sustained a calf injury in England's defeat to South Africa in their final Super 12 match in Sharjah. Roy looked to be in a lot of pain and could not walk back to the dressing room on his own. He was seen on crutches after the game. "I'm gutted to be ruled out of the World Cup. It is a bitter pill to swallow," said Roy in a statement. "I will be staying on to support the boys, and hopefully, we can go all the way and lift that trophy. It has been an unbelievable journey so far, and we have to continue expressing ourselves and concentrating on us." The rehab has already started, and even though I've torn my calf, I'm going to give myself the best chance of being ready for the T20 tour of the Caribbean at the start of next year. "England face New Zealand in the first semifinal in Abu Dhabi on Thursday. **AP**

New Yorkshire chief apologises to Rafiq

Leeds: Cricketer Azeem Rafiq was praised for his bravery in reporting racism and bullying at Yorkshire by the new chairman of the club on Monday. The county has been widely criticised for its handling of the scandal and has already lost sponsors, and the right to host England international matches at Headingley. "Azeem is a whistleblower and should be praised as such, he should never have been put through this," new Yorkshire chairman Kamlesh Patel said. "We're sorry for what you and your family have experienced and the way in which we've handled this. I thank Azeem for his bravery in speaking out. Let me be clear from the outset, racism or discrimination in any form is not banter." **AP**

All-round Venkatesh, pacey Avesh steal show

New Delhi: Avesh Khan terrorised with his pace and bounce while Bihar found Venkatesh Iyer's all-round talent too hot to handle as Madhya Pradesh cantered to a nine-wicket victory in a group D game of the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament on Monday. Avesh (3-0-6-3) and Venkatesh (4-2-2-2) first dismantled Bihar for 59 in 18 overs and the left-handed opener then smashed seven boundaries in his 20-ball-36 to race to the target in 5.4 overs. Meanwhile, Delhi and Mumbai lost close matches. Skipper Tanmay Agarwal led from the front with a 34-ball 54 as Haryana beat Delhi by three wickets in a last-ball finish in the Group E, while Ajinkya Rahane's third half-century in four matches was not enough as Mumbai lost to Chattisgarh by one run.

KEY RESULTS: Bihar 59 in 18 overs (Avesh 3/6, Iyer 2/2) lost to **MP** 60/1 in 5.4 overs (Iyer 36 not out) by nine wickets; **Delhi** 170/5 in 20 overs (Rawat 41; Millind 2/49) lost to **Hyderabad** 171/7 in 20 overs (T Agarwal 54; P Sangwan 3/27) by three wickets; **Chhattisgarh** 157/5 in 20 overs (Shashank 57, Herwadkar 53) beat Mumbai 156/5 in 20 overs (Rahane 69, Lad 46; Ruiakar 2/24, Kiran 2/32) by one run **PTI**

EXPRESS AT T20 WORLD CUP



SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
DUBAI, NOVEMBER 8

STUBBORNNESS OVER playing Hardik Pandya, wrong team selection, muddled thinking, tired minds and the Indian cricket's obsession for World Cups – a lot of factors contributed to India's failed T20 World Cup campaign. As Virat Kohli's team bade adieu to a tournament hosted by the BCCI, the entire Indian cricket set-up has a lot to answer for.

Pandya's case was the team management's inability to learn from their 2019 World Cup mistake, where they shunned Ambati Rayudu, stuck to Vijay Shankar at No. 4 and ended up playing a callow Rishabh Pant in that position in the semifinal. Pandya's selection for this World Cup reeked of similar hubris and projecting him like prime Kapil Dev was an error.

For a player who bowled very sporadically this year and didn't bowl at all in the IPL, even at the nets, picking him for the ICC event denied the team of a sixth bowler. As Pakistan openers Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan took the frontline Indian bowlers to the cleaners, an extra bowling option was badly missed.

"These things (uncertainty over Pandya's selection) from a talking or discussion point of view, feel very interesting that if he doesn't bowl, will he be left out? But we understand the value he brings to the team as a No. 6 batter and in world cricket, if you look around, there are specialists who do that job," Kohli had said on the eve of India's tournament opener, falling back on the allrounder's 22-ball 42 not out against Australia in Sydney last year.

It ignored Pandya's form: 65 runs in 10 T20s this calendar year and 127 runs from 12 matches in the IPL. The 28-year-old scored 69 runs in three innings at the T20 World Cup, a 13-ball 35 not out, after getting a reprieve on 14, being his highest. Against New Zealand, when he had the chance to put the pressure back on the opponents, he got out sloggling.

Eventually, under pressure and after rigorous fitness drills at the nets, the team management made sure that Pandya bowled a few overs in matches. He looked pedestrian. In fact, the selectors were far from convinced about his bowling fitness, reflected in Shardul Thakur's inclusion in the main squad at the expense of Axar Patel. The left-arm spinner, also a capable lower-order batsman, probably wouldn't have done worse.

Ditching wrist-spin completely was as inexplicable as it was unexpected. Over the last four years, the team management mother-henned that variety, only to ignore it at the showpiece event. Yuzvendra Chahal's exclusion was debatable, especially after his 18 wickets in the IPL, proving his effectiveness on UAE pitches in the process. But like chief selector Chetan Sharma, the skipper also maintained that Rahul Chahar was preferred over Chahal for being quicker through the air.

Then, not bringing in Chahar for the first four games was contradictory. It felt like the team management didn't have enough confidence in the leggie to play him in big games, even against New Zealand, traditionally the strugglers against leg-spin.

On Sunday, when asked if the team missed Chahal, India's bowling coach Bharat Arun said: "See, I think that is for the selectors to decide. We can only play with the team that has been given to us. And I wouldn't like to dwell too much on that." Picking Ravichandran Ashwin and not playing him in the first two

England were criticised heavily for not touring the country.

"It pleases me no end that we'll be engaged in a three-Test match series, connoisseurs delight," Raja said in a statement.

"Australia are one of the high-performing sides and them playing in our backyard for the first time after a gap of 24 years will be a special treat for the fans.

"Likewise, it will be a great opportunity for the Australia cricketers to not only play at our iconic venues but also feel and enjoy the respect, love and hospitality that this great country offers, something which most of their previous generation of cricketers missed out by playing offshore," he said.

Cricketer Australia chief executive Nick Hockley said they will continue to work with PCB to ensure foolproof security for their team.

"The safety and welfare of our players and staff remains our number one priority, and we will continue to work with the PCB and relevant agencies to ensure that appropriate and sufficient arrangements are put in place for the tour," he said.

CA's delegation will visit Pakistan to meet with PCB officials as well as provincial and federal authorities to discuss and finalise matters relating to "team operations, logistics, security and Covid-19 protocols".



A break between the IPL and the T20 World Cup would have been better for a team which has been on the road for six months. **AP**

Pandya's case was the team management's inability to learn from their 2019 World Cup mistake, where they shunned Ambati Rayudu, stuck to Vijay Shankar at No. 4 and ended up playing a callow Rishabh Pant in that position in the semifinal

games was a mistake as well. When the master off-spinner played against Afghanistan, he showed that at the international level, quality would always trump mystery.

Opening blues

Moving on to opening with Ishan Kishan. Back in March, after opening with Rohit Sharma in a home T20I against England and putting on 94 runs for the first-wicket to help India post 224/2, Kohli had spoken about opening the innings at the T20 World Cup as well. Before the tournament, the India captain changed his stance and decided on KL Rahul partnering Rohit. "Things were different before IPL, now it's difficult to look beyond KL Rahul (626 runs in the IPL) at the top of the order. Rohit is a no-brainer. I'll be batting at No. 3."

However, with Suryakumar Yadav ruled out against New Zealand due to back spasms, Ishan was sent ahead of Rohit to open with Rahul; a move that was ostensibly made to shield Rohit from left-arm pacer Trent Boult. Going into that game, Rohit carried a record of getting out to left-arm quicks 14 times in the shortest format and the golden duck against Shaheen Shah Afridi was a fresh scar. Later, India's batting coach Vikram Rathour called the move "tactical".

Rohit also admitted the mistake after the Afghanistan game. "Decision-making sometimes can be a problem, and that is exactly what happened in the first two games."

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
DUBAI, NOVEMBER 8

THE LOOP in Ravichandran Ashwin's delivery made the ball hang in the air a little more. Zane Green, not used to such level of wizardry, came forward as if in a trance. The ball dipped, spun like a perfect off-break to go past the bat and hit the stumps. Ashwin has done this time and again to batsmen far superior to Green. Ironically, India had ignored his quality for the first two matches of the T20 World Cup – against Pakistan and New Zealand.

From the stadium atmosphere to the players' body language, it was a fare-thee-well fixture for India. Playing both Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami probably wasn't in sync with the team's physical and mental fatigue complaints. At least Rahul Chahar got a game and showed why his selection ahead of Yuzvendra Chahal for the T20 World Cup was a mistake, his line and length going awry against an Associate nation. The game started in front of virtually empty stands and ended amid a turnout of about 5,000. For India, it was about going through the motions. After restricting Namibia to 132/8, a facile nine-wicket victory was achieved with 28 balls to spare.

In the process, Rohit Sharma scored his second fifty of the tournament and became the second Indian to go past 3,000 T20I runs after Virat Kohli. The outgoing captain and the cap-

On the road

This team has been on the road for the last six months and the bubble life is not easy. Like Arun said, a break between the IPL and the T20 World Cup would have been better.

"I think the players haven't gone home ever since they had a short break after the last IPL and they are in a bubble for the last six months. That takes a huge toll. Maybe, a short break between the IPL and the World Cup would have done a lot of good for these boys."

The BCCI didn't have another window to complete the IPL this year. Once the first phase had to be postponed due to Covid, the gap between the England series and the T20 World Cup was the only option. And the IPL is about Rs 4,000 crore worth of revenue, so the Indian board couldn't have shunned it. From broadcast commitments to other sponsors, legal issues would have been involved. But the players had the option to pull out of the second phase of the IPL, recharge their batteries and return fresh for the World Cup. England's Jos Buttler did that to a fantastic effect.

From the BCCI's perspective, appointing MS Dhoni as team mentor, citing his title-winning credentials, was outright undermining of the authority of the captain and head coach Ravi Shastri; a combination that has made India the world's best Test team over the past four-odd years, winning back-to-back series in Australia and leading 2-1 in England.

Indian cricket has an obsession for World Cups, although what this team achieved in Tests would supersede any ICC titles. Confirmation regarding this from a team insider came via a text message from even before the tournament: "damn right".

India will have a new T20I captain after this World Cup and a new coaching team. But should they follow England's lead and pick different teams for different formats? Arun concurred. "There's enough talent in our country so we can afford to field different teams for different formats."

tain-designate are India's batting royalty. But both would like to forget this T20 World Cup.

Those who cared to turn up for this game were witness to Ashwin's spin mastery. Knowing that he would have a complete upper hand against the Namibia batsmen, he teased them with loop and flight. Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton went for a cut to a delivery that wasn't short enough. The loop fooled the batsman. The extra bounce undid him, resulting in a catch to Rohit.

Gerhard Erasmus was taken care of by a faster one that skidded off the surface. Once again, an attempted cut wasn't the right shot to play as Rishabh Pant pounced the catch. In the end, Ashwin's figures read: 4-0-20-3. Hopefully, India under a new captaincy and coaching dispensation in white-ball cricket would use the master off-spinner a lot more.

Namibia put on 33 runs for the first wicket. But the game changed as soon as Ravindra Jadeja was brought into the attack. Before that, the excellent Jasprit Bumrah had removed Michael van Lingen with a rising delivery. The bowler didn't care to celebrate.

The pitch had a hint of turn and Jadeja was always going to impose himself on the opposition batsmen. He bowled flat, but Craig Williams charged down the track to be beaten by the turn. Pant had an easy stumping.

The facileness of this contest had a trickle-down effect. A legendary former cricketer took time off for a conversation, recounting events

Shastri leaves with stellar record, 'only missing piece'

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
DUBAI, NOVEMBER 8

RAVI SHASTRI has always been the crisis man in Indian cricket. When India faltered at the 2007 World Cup and Greg Chappell resigned after the tournament, he was given interim charge with an eye on resurrection. In 2014, when India were rolled over in the Tests in England, he was appointed team director, yet again for a course correction. Through his seven-year stint, with a mini break when Anil Kumble took over for a year, Shastri oversaw India's rise, especially in the longest format.

Under Shastri as head coach and Virat Kohli as captain, India progressed from being the seventh-ranked Test team in the world to win back-to-back Test series in Australia and take a 2-1 lead in England before the final Test was postponed. On the day of his farewell, the outgoing head coach turned emotional.

Shastri refused to draw any comparison between Tests and ICC events, saying all the tournaments/series that India play are important. But he cited bubble fatigue, with the players on the road for six months now.

"This is one of the great teams in the history of the game, absolutely no doubt in my mind. Unfortunately, we are out of this tournament, but that takes nothing away from a great side," he said at the post-match press conference.

Shastri didn't offer any excuse for India's poor performance at this T20 World Cup but said that bubble life could be mentally draining. "You are not switched on as you should be. This is not an excuse. Because in trying to win, you will lose a game. Here we didn't try to win,



because the x-factor - the players were mentally and physically drained - wasn't there."

Bubble life could have affected even Don Bradman was his observation. "I don't read too much into Virat's form. I don't care who the player is. If you put even Don Bradman in the bubble, his average will come down. Eventually, the bubble will burst."

Shastri agreed that a short break between the IPL and the T20 World Cup might have helped, but hoped it would win an ICC title – "the only missing piece" – in the near future, under new head coach Rahul Dravid. "They will get the rub of the green." He thanked former BCCI president N Srinivasan for giving him the opportunity to coach India and dropped a hint that his future might lie in TV commentary again, where he made his name before coming to coaching. "We won back-to-back (Test) series in Australia. We took the lead in England and it could be the longest lead in history (with the final Test deferred to next year). I might be commenting on that Test," Shastri said.

He also thanked outgoing bowling coach Bharat Arun for building a great attack and outgoing fielding coach R Sridhar for making the team's fielding standard world-class.

Australia set to tour Pakistan after 24 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE, NOVEMBER 8

AUSTRALIA HAVE agreed to tour Pakistan for the first time in 24 years for a full series next year, providing a much-needed shot in the arm for the country's cricket following the recent pullouts by England and New Zealand over security concerns.

Australia, who last toured Pakistan in 1998, will play three Tests in Karachi (March 3-7), Rawalpindi (March 12-16) and Lahore (March 21-25) as part of the World Test Championship.

Lahore will also be the venue for the four white-ball matches to be played from March 29 to April 5, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Monday.

In September, New Zealand, who were already in Pakistan, went back home without playing a game due to a security threat and soon after, England too announced they won't be touring the country ahead of the T20 World Cup, dealing a huge setback to the PCB's efforts in bringing high-quality international cricket to the country.

Australia coming to Pakistan is a big win for the recently-appointed PCB chief Ramiz Raja, who did not expect the Aussies to tour after England and New Zealand withdrew.



KL Rahul and Rohit Sharma put on 86 runs for the first wicket. **AP**

from the past and raising a question about why India needs a batting coach in the new set-up when Rahul Dravid is the head coach.

Out in the middle, Jadeja dismantled Stephan Baard with an arm-ball and finished with 3/16 to earn another Man-of-the-Match award. A couple of leaky overs towards the end made Namibia's score respectable. But it was Rohit's night, from the bigger responsibility that lies ahead to surviving three mishits on

the bounce and a dropped catch, as he scored 56 off 37 balls.

Some of his shots, though, were mesmerising; like when he stepped out to Bernard Scholtz, failed to get to the pitch of the ball, but leaned into his lofted drive to send it for a six. All the while, KL Rahul was watching from the other end. He switched gears after Rohit's dismissal, reaching his fifty off 35 balls and remaining unbeaten on 54 – three half-centuries on the spin to end the tournament.

Spectators would have liked to see Kohli walking out to bat on the last day of his T20I captaincy. Suryakumar Yadav was promoted instead. The gradual transition of India's white-ball squad is expected to begin from the home series against New Zealand, with an eye to the T20 World Cup in Australia next year. Yadav is likely to be an important part of the team going ahead. He made 25 not out off 19 balls.

"I know we haven't gone far in this World Cup, but we have had some good results in T20s and enjoyed playing together. It's a game of margins, T20 cricket," Kohli said at the post-match presentation, adding that it was the right time for him to look after his workload.

As for Namibia, not only did they give a good account of themselves here, they also secured automatic qualification for the next T20 World Cup, a year down the line.

BRIEF SCORES: Namibia 132 for 8 (Wiese 26, Jadeja 3-16, Ashwin 3-20) lost to India 136 for 1 (Rohit 56, Rahul 54*) by nine wickets