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CBSE to go back to single board exam next year

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

THE CENTRAL Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has decided to restore the pre-pandemic single-exam format from the next academic year, which means the Class X and XII board exams are not likely to be split into two parts, according to sources in the Ministry of Education.

For the 2021-22 academic year, the CBSE had introduced a bifurcated format with two terms: the Term-I board exams were held in November-December last year, while the Term-II exams are scheduled to start on April 26. It is learnt that more weightage will be given to the Term-II exams.

The decision was taken after the board exams for the 2020-21 academic year had to be cancelled due to the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Students were evaluated on their scores in previous exams, practical exams and internal assessments.

According to a senior official, the board decided to restore the single-exam pattern after receiving representations from schools. "CBSE never announced that the two-term exam format

WORLD



UKRAINE SAYS SANK RUSSIAN FLAGSHIP, MOSCOW DENIES

SHANGHAI COVID CASES HIT RECORD HIGH [PAGE 12](#)

Co-operative banks in Kerala reel under bad loans, NPAs crossed 38% at end of last year

GEORGE MATHEW & SHAJU PHILIP
MUMBAI,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
APRIL 14

ALL COOPERATIVE banks in Kerala, a majority of which are controlled by the ruling Left Democratic Front, reported non-performing assets at the end of December 2021, with the total

(Rs 20,324 crore) amounting to as much as 38.3 per cent of the advances.

As per figures released by the State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC), as much as 88 per cent of advances of Kerala State Cooperative Agricultural and Rural Development Bank Ltd were NPAs, while the figure stood at 30 per cent for Kerala State Cooperative Bank (KSCB), also known as Kerala Bank, that

Every govt, every PM has helped take India to current heights: Modi

'Most PMs came from ordinary families, should inspire youth'

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi said Thursday that every government, every Prime Minister of independent India has contributed to nation building, taking the country to the heights where it is today. He said barring one or two exceptions — he did not elaborate but it appeared to be a reference to the period of the Emergency — the country has a "glorious tradition of strengthening democracy in a democratic way".

Inaugurating the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya at Teen Murti Estate in New Delhi, the Prime Minister said the museum is a living reflection of the shared heritage of each government. He recalled how most Prime Ministers came from ordinary families. "It gives confidence

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

A GUIDE TO THE PM SANGRAHALAYA

[PAGE 5](#)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress chief Sonia Gandhi at an event to mark B R Ambedkar's 131st birth anniversary in Parliament on Thursday. *Anil Sharma*

Contractor's death: Karnataka Minister finally decides to quit

JOHNSON TA
BENGALURU, APRIL 14

TWO DAYS after he was named as an accused in a case registered over the "unnatural death" of a civil contractor, Karnataka Minister and senior BJP leader KS Eshwarappa announced that he would resign from the State Cabinet on Friday.

"I have worked as Rural Development Minister in the Bommai government. I have decided today that I will resign as Minister tomorrow," Eshwarappa said during a short media briefing in Shivamogga on Thursday.

The Minister said he was quitting "to prevent embarrassment to the BJP" and would submit his resignation to Bommai in Bengaluru.

The contractor, Santhosh Patil (40), was found dead Tuesday in a lodge in Udipi region. He is suspected to have consumed poison, and the police are investigating it as a suspected case of suicide.



Karnataka Congress chief D K Shivakumar at a protest against KS Eshwarappa in Bengaluru, Thursday. *PTI*



Eshwarappa was named in FIR; will resign today

Prior to his death, Patil had accused Eshwarappa and his associates of not releasing payments for road work worth Rs 4 crore, which he had carried out at Hindalga village in Belagavi, and "demanding a commission

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Emergency to Ayodhya, 1971 war to N-deal: India via its PMs

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

"ON THE morning of 6 December 1992 activists suddenly entered the then disputed site of Lord Ram's birthplace in Ayodhya and destroyed the abandoned structure. That night (P V Narasimha) Rao imposed President's rule in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh," states a clip on a screen in the section "challenges" faced by Rao at the Prime Ministers' Museum that opened Thursday.

The word "kar sevaks" has been replaced by "activists" and the "challenge" is dismissed in two lines. The clip goes on: "The dispute was finally settled on 9 November 2019 by the unanimous judgement of the five-judge bench. All the litigants honoured the judgement. The judgement recognised the claim

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Musk makes hostile \$43-bn Twitter bid: 'Must become pvt company'



The Tesla CEO recently turned down a Twitter Board seat

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

TESLA CEO Elon Musk has launched a hostile attempt to buy Twitter for \$43 billion, saying it needs to be transformed into a private company to become a platform for free speech.

Musk, the company's largest individual shareholder, offered to acquire all of Twitter's remaining common stock at \$54.20 per share in a "non-binding proposal" he sent to Twitter's Board Chairman Bret Taylor on Tuesday.

In his letter to Taylor, the self-described free speech absolutist said he had invested in Twitter as he believed in its "potential to be the platform for free speech around the globe".

Musk said he realised since making his investment that Twitter in its current form would neither "thrive nor serve" as a tool for free speech — and so it "needs to be transformed as a private company".

The SpaceX founder's purchase offer was at a 54 per cent premium over the day before he began investing in Twitter "and a 38 per cent premium over the day before my investment was publicly announced".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

LONG PERIOD AVERAGE REVISED TO 87 CM Monsoon will be normal this year: IMD forecast

J&K, most of N-E, Haryana may get below normal rainfall

ANJALI MARAR & ESHAROY
PUNE, NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

PREDICTING A "normal" monsoon this year, the India Meteorological Department (IMD), in its first Long Range Forecast (LFR) on Thursday, has said that rainfall will be normal or above normal in most parts of the country, except the North-East, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir.

IMD officials said the onset of the southwest monsoon — which accounts for about 75 per cent of the country's annual rainfall — over Kerala remains June 1. Every year, IMD releases the long range forecast in two stages — in April and June.

"The southwest monsoon rainfall during June to

EXPLAINED
Rain-fed economy

WITH India's agriculture being primarily rain-fed, the southwest monsoon is vital for kharif crops. About 78 per cent of the country's gross cropped area is supported by monsoon rainfall. Besides agriculture, the key driver of the country's economy, India's reservoirs and sectors like transport, aviation and power are also monsoon-dependent.

WHAT DOWNGRADE IN AVG MONSOON RAINFALL MEANS [P 6](#)

September will be normal, and quantitatively, it will be 99 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA) which is 87 cm," said M Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences.

This is the fourth consecutive year that the IMD is predicting normal rainfall. The seasonal rainfall is considered normal when it is 96-104 per cent of the LPA. The LPA is defined as the average of the last 50 years. Till last year, the average of the period between 1961 and 2011 was taken as the LPA. This year, in a routine revision that happens every decade, the LPA baseline has been changed to 1971-2020.

As a result, the LPA has changed from 88 cm to 87 cm. That means that during 1971-2020, the country as a whole received 87 cm of rainfall every

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Fertiliser crunch looms: High global prices, no new import contracts

HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

WITH GLOBAL prices surging and hardly any imports contracted since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, India is facing a tight supply position in fertilisers, especially of phosphatic and potassic nutrients. This, even as retail food inflation has hit a 16-month-high of 7.68 per cent in March and kharif crop plantings are to commence from June.

The country's opening stocks as on April 1 are estimated at around 2.5 million tonnes (mt) of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), 0.5 mt of muriate of potash (MOP), and one mt of complex fertilisers containing varying proportions of nitrogen, phosphorus, potash and sulphur (NPKS). India annually consumes

9-10 mt each of DAP and NPKS complexes, besides 4.5-5 mt of MOP. Roughly 45 per cent of sales happen during April-September and 55 per cent in the balance October-March period.

"Farmers are now busy with marketing of their rabi (winter-spring) crop. They will require fertilisers before kharif sowing takes off with the arrival of the southwest monsoon rains. The Government has to ensure an adequate level of stocks towards end-May/early-June," said industry sources.

There is no availability issue — at least during the kharif season — in urea, where India produces 24-25 mt out of its yearly consumption of 34-35 mt. Also, while urea is sold at a controlled basic maximum retail price (MRP) of Rs 5,360 per tonne, companies

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUSINESS AS USUAL



EXPRESS NETWORK



SAND MINING: ED QUESTIONS FORMER PUNJAB CM CHANNI [PAGE 5](#)

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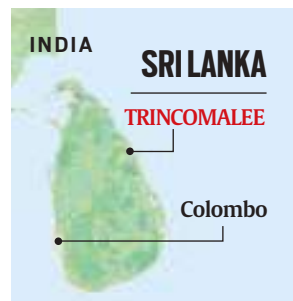


NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
TRINCOMALEE, APRIL 14

THIS IS the deal: 85 decrepit oil tanks in 850 acres of dense jungle, and a strategic natural harbour. The foliage is so thick that the place is now home to several species of animals and birds, and cutting down the trees needs government permission. One day, it could be key to Sri Lanka's energy security while giving India additional capacity for reserves.



A barge being filled with marine gasoline at Lanka Indian Oil Corporation jetty in China Bay harbour. *Nirupama Subramanian*



India's prized agreement with Sri Lanka for the joint development of the Trincomalee Oil Tank farm, signed earlier this year after a 35-year wait, may take years to turn around and at least a 100 million dollars. The twin economic and political crises in

Sri Lanka carry their own risks.

On April 12, Sri Lanka officially announced that it was temporarily suspending repayment of external debts worth \$51 billion. It is now seeking a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other multilateral organisations. It does not have the dollars to repay these debts.

Officials driving the Trinco oil storage project said they are keeping their fingers crossed and have "maximum optimism" that with the IMF negotiations set to begin, "things will start falling in place" for the Sri Lankan economy. With a ballpark cost of \$75-100 million for the entire

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



'I am tired of seeing beautiful Indian clothes relegated to weddings'

It features a different set of features compared to its predecessor

FULL REPORTS
www.indianexpress.com

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2022

3 WEST BENGAL

Crimes against women under woman CM shameful: TMC MP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 14

AMID FURORE over the alleged gangrape and murder of a minor girl in Nadia district, TMC MP Sougata Roy left his party red-faced on Thursday saying that any incident of crime against women in a state run by a woman chief minister is a "great shame".

Speaking at the inauguration of a new police station in Dakshineswar, the Dum Dum Lok Sabha MP said, "I don't know if it is because of the media, but everyone is worried about the atrocities against women (in the state). The government should have a zero tolerance policy on crimes against women. Strict action must be taken against the perpetrators of any such incident. It would be a matter of great shame even if a single incident of crime against women occurs in a state run by a woman chief minister. I hope our police administration will keep a check on such incidents."

Roy's remarks, made in the presence of Kamarhati TMC MLA Madan Mitra at the event organised by the Barrackpore Police Commissionerate, assume significance in the light of several incidents of crime against women across the state, including Deganga, Matia (North 24 Parganas), English Bazar (Malda), Bansdroni (Kolkata), Bolpur (Birbhum) and Nadia.

After the arrest of a TMC leader's son in connection with the Nadia incident, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had on Monday expressed doubts over the family's claim of gangrape saying one couldn't be sure if the minor was raped or was pregnant.

Speaking in the presence of the state's Director General of Police Manoj Malaviya at an event in Kolkata, the Chief Minister claimed that the girl was having an affair with the accused TMC leader's son and Opposition parties and the media were giving a "political twist" to the incident.

"What happened is unfortu-



Sougata Roy is Lok Sabha MP from Dum Dum

“Everyone is worried about the atrocities against women (in West Bengal). The government should have a zero tolerance policy on crimes against women — SOUGATA ROY

nate. I condemn the incident. But I have heard that the accused and the victim were having an affair. People in their neighbourhood knew about it and so did their families. Everyone knew. So why are we jumping to conclusions before a proper investigation is conducted into the incident?" the CM had said at the event.

"The incident is said to have taken place on April 5 and the FIR was registered on April 10. Why? From where will the police get evidence now?" Banerjee said as she looked towards the DGP, saying, "Am I right or wrong?"

Latching on to Roy's statement, Congress state president Adhir Chowdhury said, "Sougata *babu* is a good man. However, he did not make the remarks as forcefully and assertively as he needed to. This is because his party is in power."

BJP state spokesperson Shamik Bhattacharya said, "The 'woman chief minister', as Sougata da said, is also the police minister of the state."

CPM leader Sujan Chakraborty said, "What he said is true but he cannot say it in the presence of his party supremo. That is the unfortunate part."

TMC leader Jayaprakash Majumder said, "Is it fine to have violence against women if a state has a male chief minister? It doesn't matter if the CM is a male or female. Crime and violence against women should be eradicated from the society."



AAP supporters at a candlelight vigil in Kolkata on Thursday to protest against the Nadia gangrape and murder. Partha Paul

Nadia 'gangrape': CBI team meets victim's family members; collects samples

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 14

A TEAM of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday visited the family of alleged gangrape victim in West Bengal's Nadia district and inspected the spot where the purported crime took place on April 4.

The 14-year-old girl had died of "excessive bleeding" the next day. The team broke open the lock of the wooden gate to the property where the "crime" took place to gain entry. The main accused, Braj Gopal Gayali, alias Soheli (21) used to visit his family-owned property where he had invited the girl for his birthday party, it is learnt. A Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) team accompanying the CBI officials collected "samples and circumstantial evidences" from the spot. The state had seized a stained bed-sheet, the victim's clothes and her mobile phone before the CBI took over the case.

Braj Gopal's father Samarendra Gayali is a local Trinamool strongman and a panchayat member. Interestingly, Prabhakar Poddar, who is the only person to be arrested in the case as of now, has not been named in the FIR. Three members of the victim's family, including her father,

have been named in the police FIR for alleged "destruction of evidence" as the girl's body was cremated without a complaint or death certificate, cops had said.

The CBI will take the accused in their custody and interrogate them, it is learnt. Agency officials said samples and circumstantial evidences are crucial to the case since the victim was cremated without autopsy.

As soon as the CBI team reached the spot late evening, there was a blackout in the area due to power cut. There was "load shedding" in the area for about an hour. The officials used torch batteries for searching the premises. They also inspected the victim's home and adjoining area with torches and car lights. The CBI was given the case diary and all the related documents.

Earlier in the day, a BJP fact-finding team reached the spot and spoke to neighbours and "eyewitnesses". "The accused brought the victim back and surrounded their house, preventing her family from taking her to hospital. She remained in the house the whole night bleeding, surrounded by TMC goons. At 4am, she died. They entered the house, took her body and cremated it. I refuse to believe that the police had no information about this," said Bharati Ghosh, a member of the team.

CBI questions Jhalda police station in-charge in Congress leader's murder

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 14

THE CENTRAL Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday interrogated Sanjib Ghosh, the inspector in-charge of the Jhalda police station in connection with the murder of Congress councillor Tapan Kandu in Purulia district of West Bengal, officials said.

Ghosh, who has been on the radar of the investigators as Kandu's family suspecting his involvement in the incident, was questioned for nearly three hours by the sleuths at the central agency's camp office.

The agency officials said he was questioned about his initial response to the incident and what he did thereafter. Also, he was asked about his whereabouts on the day of the murder, they said.

Besides, they wanted to know who he has been in touch with and if he was close to any influential people of the area as has been posted in Jhalda for three years, it is learnt. Tapan's wife Purnima Kandu had accused IC Sanjib Ghosh of pressuring her husband to join the Trinamool Congress.

"He was threatened by Inspector in Charge of the police station to join TMC," she had told media. However, Purulia district Superintendent S Selva Murugan in a press conference, had given clean chit to the IC Sanjib Ghosh and had said that the Councillor's death was a fall out of family dispute. Kandu's friend Niranjana Baishnab, an eyewitness in the murder case, was found dead at his residence last week. He allegedly committed suicide. The CBI has also registered a case in this connection. Tapan was shot dead by unidentified assailants while he was out on a walk with friends on March 13.

RUCKUS IN CALCUTTA HIGH COURT

It was unprecedented and shocking: Governor

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 14

WEST BENGAL Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday said that a ruckus in the Calcutta High Court a day before was "unprecedented and shocking".

Referring to the protest outside the courtroom of Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay, who is hearing the School Service Commission (SSC) recruitment scam case, by a section of lawyers, Dhankhar said, "Whatever happened in the High Court was unprecedented and shocking. If access to justice is obstructed, where's the democracy then? It is unacceptable."

The governor, who was speaking on the sidelines of a function to mark the birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, said he was am concerned over the disturbing events that have taken place in the state in the last few days. Criminal activities are on the rise in the state, said Dhankhar, flanked by Vidhan Sabha speaker Biman Bandyopadhyay who appealed to him not to turn the function into a press conference.

"This is not a press conference and I will request the governor not to turn into one," said Bandyopadhyay.

Dhankhar, however, chose to respond to questions of the me-



Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar flags off four ambulances, equipped with modern equipment, at Raj Bhavan on Thursday. Express

diapers. "Another cause of concern at this stage is the quality of criminal investigation. We need to focus on independent, impartial, technologically superior investigation so that the people's faith in the institutions remains intact," he added.

It gets very difficult for him when people say Bengal is a den of corruption. Now we see more incidents of crime against women, he alleged.

"We can't have a state that is known only for violence and crimes against women, where bureaucracy is politicised and the preamble of the Constitution is disregarded," said Dhankhar. He also questioned as why

Trinamool Congress's Birbhum district president Anubrata Mondal was allowed to use a red beacon on his vehicle. "I have informed the DGP about it. Mondal was seen using a red light vehicle in Kolkata last week. I told the DGP if a person can travel from Birbhum with a red beacon it is not a good sign," he said.

Cabinet Minister Firhad Hakim said the people of Bengal have chosen Mamata Banerjee to run the state.

"So, as per the Constitution, the governor has not been given extra-constitutional power. We will keep him informed and can take his suggestions," said Hakim.

TMC leader's supporters protest at MLA's house

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 14

SUPPORTERS OF Trinamool Youth Congress leader Somnath Bandyopadhyay, alias Baban, who was suspended a day be-

fore following a clash between two groups in the Charakatala area over holding of Charak fair, staged a protest on Thursday in front of the house of Behala Purba MLA Ratna Chatterjee.

There were incidents of stone pelting and vandalism besides

allegations of firing on Wednesday. Police have arrested 15 people in connection with the incident. The Charak fair is held in the area before the Bengali new year. The TMC, however, claimed that a clash took between two groups from the area.

Birbhum violence: CBI makes another arrest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 14

THE CENTRAL Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday arrested another person in the violence incident at Birbhum district's Bogtui village in which eight people, including women and children, were charred to death following the murder of Bhadu Sheikh, a panchayat rep-

resentative owing allegiance to the state's Trinamool Congress.

The arrested suspect, identified as Riton Shiekh, is being questioned by agency officials.

Riton's named had cropped up in the course of investigation of the case, it is learnt. Sameer Sheikh, another suspect, was arrested recently in the case.

The CBI officials have interrogated Sameer repeatedly at

their temporary camp office in Rampurhat and arrested him after finding discrepancies in his statements.

Earlier, four people, including Bappa Sheikh and Sabu Sheikh, associates of the main accused Lalon Sheikh, were arrested from Mumbai.

Bhadu Sheikh's murder on March 21 evening had led to an attack on at least eight houses that were set on fire. A total of

nine people, including one who succumbed to burn injuries in hospital later, were killed in the attack.

Though the state government had initially set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the incident, the case was eventually transferred to the CBI on the order of the Calcutta High Court. The Opposition, especially the BJP, had also demanded a CBI probe.

Fortnight after being heckled, former Aliah varsity V-C back at JU

ENS
KOLKATA, APRIL 14

A FORTNIGHT after being abused and threatened by an expelled leader of the Trinamool Congress's students' wing and his followers, the former vice-chancellor of Aliah University, Mohammad Ali, returned to the familiar confines of the Chemistry department at Jadavpur University.

He said he was relieved to be back at the JU and will focus on academics and research in the coming days. "Happy and relieved to be back in the Chemistry department in JU," he said.

Ali said he did not want to extend his tenure as VC of Aliah after completion of his lien period for four years and had officially communicated the same to the state government a few days back. Ali came in the news on April 2 after a video clip went viral showing a youth, whom Ali identified as Giasuddin Mondal, a former president of the Aliah University unit of the



Will now focus on research work: Ali

Trinamool Congress Chhatra Parishad (TMCP), gesticulating and abusing him. After the incident, he went to Aliah University only once to collect his personal belongings. Asked if he had been contacted by anyone from the students and faculty of Aliah after leaving the office of V-C, Ali said, "Yes, one or two persons inquired about me. None else."

Abu Taher Kamruddin, president of the West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education, has been appointed interim V-C of Aliah University.

Seen at the laboratory of the Analytical Chemistry department at Jadavpur University, Ali said, "The last few days had been extremely traumatic and I wanted to come out of that trauma and focus on research work."

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After the war: Russia, the West, and India

Dr. C Raja Mohan
Visiting Research Professor,
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Shubhajit Roy
Associate Editor
The Indian Express

In conversation with

No matter how the war in Ukraine ends, Europe and the world will not be the same. Post Cold War relationships have been fundamentally -- perhaps permanently -- altered.

If Vladimir Putin remains in power, the United States will have to decide how to deal, in bilateral and multilateral fora, with the man it has called a war criminal.

In the United Nations, four members of the P5+1 will have to coordinate their strategy against the two remaining veto-wielding members of the Security Council, whom the war in Ukraine has brought very close in a shared hostility towards the West. Where does all of this leave India?

Its delicate tightrope walk between Russia and the West has already been frowned upon by important allies. It has crucial relationships on both sides, with far reaching economic and strategic implications.

What are the contours of the diplomatic challenge India faces in the coming years, and what choices can it be forced to make?

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20 APR 2022

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— JOURNALISM OF COURAGE —

Militant freed during IC 814 hijack declared ‘terrorist’ now

New Delhi: After designating relatives of LeT chief Hafiz Saeed and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar as terrorists under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), the Centre has now designated Kashmir resident Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar as a terrorist under the law. Zargar, 52, fom from Srinagar, was among three terrorists released by India in exchange for hostages in the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight 814 in 1999.

“Zargar is a threat to peace, not only to India, but across the world, with his contacts and proximity to radical terrorist groups like the Al-Qaeda and Jaish-e-Mohammed... The Central Government believes Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar alias Latram is involved in terrorism and said Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar is to be notified as a terrorist under the said Act,” said a gazette notification issued Wednesday by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

According to the notification, Zargar is founder and chief commander of Al-Umar-Mujahideen, a proscribed organisation under UAPA, and was affiliated with Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front earlier. **ENS**

India, France agrees to boost defence ties

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

THE 20TH edition of India-France Joint Staff talks focused on new initiatives in defence cooperation, the government said on Thursday.

The two-day talks concluded in Paris on Wednesday.

“The meeting was conducted in a friendly, warm and cordial atmosphere. The discussions focused on new initiatives under the ambit of existing bilateral defence cooperation mechanism and strengthening ongoing defence engagements,” the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

Winds of change in Bihar Congress: New chief soon

SANTOSH SINGH PATNA, APRIL 14

THE CONGRESS is all set to appoint a new Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee (BPCC) president to replace Madan Mohan Jha, according to sources in the party’s central leadership.

Jha’s meeting with former Congress president Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi on Thursday triggered talk of impending changes in the party in the eastern state. Jha had offered to step aside after his three-year term ended last September but the high command told him to continue.

“My term has ended. Moreover, I offered to resign more than six months ago. Even if I do not submit my resignation, the high command can replace me anytime. So, I do not know why there is this big talk about my resignation,” the Bihar



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INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)
2Bid Identification No. WATCO (W) - 01/2022-23 Dtd. 12.04.2022
WATCO No. 1439 Date: 12.04.2022

1.	Name of the work	-> 1. Construction of 2nd & 3rd floor and Addition and Alteration of Odisha Water Academy at Basuaghai, Bhubaneswar. 2. Construction of 2nd floor and Addition and Alteration of A & B type quarters at STP Basuaghai, Bhubaneswar
2.	Estimated cost	-> Rs. 920.00 Lakh and Rs. 707.00
3.	Period of completion	-> 6 (Six) Month
4.	Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal	-> From 11.00 AM of Dt. 04.05.2022 to 5.00 PM of 18.05.2022.
5.	Last date / time of receipt of bids in the portal	-> 5.00 PM of 18.05.2022
6.	Date & time of opening of technical bids	-> 12.30 PM of 19.05.2022
7.	Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	-> Chief Executive Officer, WATCO Telefax:- 0674-2571444. Email: ceowatcoodisha@gmail.com
8.	The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only.	

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Karnataka temple continues tradition of kicking off festival with Quran recitation

DARSHAN DEVAIAH BP BENGALURU, APRIL 14

THE HISTORIC Chennakeshava temple in Belur continued with its age-old tradition of kicking off the rathotsava (chariot festival) after reciting passages from the Quran, despite opposition from right-wing activists.

The state’s endowment department allowed the temple authorities to go ahead with the practice on Wednesday. The annual celebrations started on Wednesday under strict vigil of the district police. Hundreds of people from across the state thronged the Chennakeshava temple to witness the two-day festival.

“Reading excerpts from the Quran is a tradition but this year, there was a confusion as the temple authorities had initially issued a notice barring Muslim traders from setting up stalls. However, the endowment de-

Maulvi Syed Sajjad Basha chants verses from the Quran on day one of the rathotsava. *Express*

partment took the suggestion of various priests and decided to go ahead with the tradition,” an official from the Endowment department told *The Indian Express*.

According to the tradition, a maulvi reads out excerpts from the Quran to mark the beginning of the celebrations at the Chennakeshava temple.

Recently, as the spectre of

communal tension loomed large over Karnataka, right-wing activists had urged the district administration and temple authorities to bar Muslim traders from taking part in the festival. However, the state endowment department had directed the temple administration not to bar any non-Hindu traders and allowed them to set up stalls and

participate in the celebrations, according to senior officials of the department. “Accordingly, around 15 Muslim traders had set up their shops,” a senior official told *The Indian Express*.

Maulvi Syed Sajjad Basha chanted verses from the Quran on day one of the rathotsava on Wednesday before the chariot was pulled. Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Basha, a maulvi from Doddamedur village in Hassan district said, “The recital of verses from the Quran before starting the chariot festival has been a tradition for generations by my ancestors. This year too I recited verses from the Quran, in a symbol of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. Both Hindus and Muslims should live united with the blessings of God.”

Earlier, Belur Sri Chennakeshava Swamy Temple executive officer Vidyulatha had issued a notice to non-Hindu traders, asking them not to do

business near the temple. “As per the Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments (HCRE) Act, a notice had been issued to non-Hindu traders. Now, as per the directions by the endowment department, the non-Hindu traders were allowed to do business during the festival,” Vidyulatha told *The Indian Express*.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Rahil, a non-Hindu trader doing business near the Channakeshava temple for the last 40 years, said, “I am happy that the administration allowed us to do business. Our family has been doing business at the commercial complex for the last 40 years near the temple and our family is dependent on it.”

There were no untoward incidents during the temple event although earlier a few representatives of the pro-Hindutva groups had urged the district administration to ban non-Hindu traders from taking part in the festival.

Extend GST relief for a decade: Baghel to PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE RAIPUR, APRIL 14

CHHATTISGARH Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting that GST compensation be continued for at least another decade.

In his second letter to the PM on the same issue in two days, Baghel wrote that the state will face losses to the tune of Rs 5,000 crore in the next financial year if the Centre stops GST compensation. Referring to the meeting called by the Finance Minister on December 29 last year, and attended by chief ministers of several states, Baghel reminded Modi that several states had discussed problems they would face if the GST compensation stops. He also said that the demand then was to extend the compensation for the coming five years.

He requested a 10-year extension.

MR AND MRS KAPOOR
Actors Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor make their first public appearance after tying the knot, in Mumbai on Thursday. *ANI*

CJI at Partition Museum: Peace only through unity

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

RECALLING THE horrors inflicted by the divide and rule policies of the colonial forces that ruled India, Chief Justice of India N V Ramana on Thursday said the country “must remain ever vigilant against divisiveness”.

The CJI made the comments in the visitors book of the Partition Museum in Amritsar.

“This museum remind us of our tragic past and warns us against divisions of all kinds,” the CJI wrote.

“It portrays vividly the losses suffered by mankind on an unprecedented scale due to the divide and rule policy of colonial powers. This dark chapter in our history should serve as a lesson to mankind. We must remain ever vigilant against divisiveness. Only

through unity can we achieve peace and progress.”

On a day-long tour of Punjab, CJI Ramana also visited ‘Zero Point’ at the India-Pakistan border, the first sitting CJI to do so. He was accompanied by wife, Sivanala, and other family members.

Besides paying obeisance at the Golden Temple and the Durgiana Temple in Amritsar, the CJI also visited Jalianwala Bagh. He said the site “manifests the strength and resilience of the people of this country”.

“This serene garden is symbolic of the great sacrifice made in the face of tyranny. It serves as a reminder of the heavy price paid for freedom, which we must always cherish and protect,” he wrote in the visitors book.

The Chief Justice of India also paid floral tributes to Dr B R Ambedkar at Town Hall, Amritsar.

No hate speech at Delhi event: Cops to SC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

DELHI POLICE, which investigated complaints of hate speech at a meet organised by the Hindu Yuva Vahini here on December 19, 2021, has told the Supreme Court that “no hate was expressed” at the event as alleged.

In an affidavit filed in the court, the police said, “...no hate was expressed in the event at Delhi against group, community, ethnicity religion or faith”.

“(The) speech was about empowering one’s religion to prepare itself to face the evils which could endanger its existence, which is not even remotely connected to call for genocide of any particular religion,” the affidavit said.

The affidavit was filed in response to the notice issued by the court on a petition that sought probe into allegations of hate speech at the Dharam Sansad in Haridwar and the

subsequent Delhi event last year.

The police said they had received three complaints alleging that open calls were made for genocide of Muslims. The complaints also referred to a speech by Suresh Chavanke, editor of news channel Sudarshan News, and claimed it contained instances of what can be termed as hate speech. “All the... complaints were consolidated and an inquiry was initiated,” the police said. “After that deep inquiry was conducted, evaluation of video etc, then the answering respondent did not find any substance in the video as per allegation levelled by the complainants,” the affidavit said.

“In the video clip of the Delhi incident, there is no utterance against any particular community. Hence, after inquiry and after evaluation of the alleged video clip, it was concluded that the alleged speech did not disclose any hate words against a particular community as al-

leged or otherwise. Bare perusal of the complaints made, the statements, which are alleged to be offensive, would divulge that no specific words against a particular community or any community were uttered by the gathering or any other person in that event,” it said. “In view thereof, the complaints were closed vide inquiry report dated 13.03.2022.”

The affidavit said that “none of the words which were spoken during the events in any manner whatsoever overtly and explicitly described Indian Muslims as usurpers of land, livelihoods and of Hindu women, and nothing was said or done which could create an environment of paranoia amongst any religion, caste or creed”.

It also pointed to the law on free speech and said “it is trite law that the fundamental freedom of speech under Article 19 (1) (a) can be reasonably restricted only for the purposes

mentioned in Article 19(2), and the restriction must be justified on the anvil of necessity and not the quirks and of convenience and expediency”.

“We must practice tolerance to the views of others. Intolerance is as much dangerous to democracy as to the person himself,” the affidavit said. The police said the “the petitioner is trying to draw an incorrect and absurd inference by isolated passages disregarding the main theme and its message”.

The affidavit said the apex court “has time and again reiterated that commitment to freedom of expression demands that it cannot be suppressed unless the situation created by allowing the freedom are pressing and the community interest is endangered. The anticipated danger should not be remote... The expression of thought should be intrinsically dangerous to the public interest which is not the case in instant matter”.

Four militants killed in J&K encounter

Three soldiers die, five injured in accident on way to site of gunfight

BASHAARAT MASOOD SRINAGAR, APRIL 14

FOUR MILITANTS were killed in a gunfight in south Kashmir’s Shopian on Thursday while three soldiers were killed and five injured when their vehicle met with an accident on way to the encounter site.

Police sources said a joint team of J&K Police, Army and CRPF cordoned off Badigam village Thursday afternoon after receiving inputs about the presence of militants in the village. As the forces were zeroing in on the target, the hiding militants opened fire and tried to break the security cordon.

In the gunfight that followed, four militants were killed. The police said the killed militants were locals and associated with

Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT). A search operation was on in the area, the police said in a tweet, quoting IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar.

Meanwhile, three soldiers were killed and five injured when their vehicle met with an accident. According to the police, soldiers of 44 Rashtriya Rifles (RR) were traveling in a Tama Sumo from Chowgam camp in Shopian to the encounter site at Badigam when the vehicle skidded off the road at Kanipora village.

“The driver lost control over the vehicle due to some technical fault and it skidded off the road,” the police said in a tweet.

A defence spokesman said the vehicle met with an accident because of “wet road conditions”.

The police denied rumours of stone pelting by protesters on the Army personnel at Kanipora.

Gawate is NCB Mumbai’s full-time zonal director

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, APRIL 14

A DAY after two officials associated with the Mumbai Zonal Unit (MZU) of the NCB were suspended for dereliction of duty, the acting zonal director of the bureau was divested of his charge and a full-time zonal director appointed in his place. Amit Gawate, a 2008-batch IRS officer, who was formerly the zonal director of NCB’s Bengaluru unit, has been appointed as the new MZU director.

After controversial officer Sameer Wankhede’s tenure with the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) ended in December 2021, Brijendra Choudhary was given

additional charge of the unit.

On the reason for the transfers, an official said Vishwa Singh and Ashish Prasad, who were responsible for the custody of Sahil Shah alias Flacko, who surrendered before the NCB in January, did not provide proper details during his court hearing. “Even though Shah was wanted in more than one case, the same was not brought to the attention of the court following which he managed to secure bail within a day,” a source said.

Wankhede, who had been “loaned” to NCB from the DRI after the Sushant Singh Rajput case in 2020, was asked to report back to DRI from January this year. While initially he was asked to report in Delhi, he was later posted back to the directorate’s Mumbai unit.

Laws structured to discriminate against poor: Orissa High Court CJ

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 14

ORISSA HIGH Court Chief Justice S Muralidhar on Thursday said laws are structured to discriminate against the poor and that the system works unequally for the poor and the rich.

“There are many barriers to accessing justice that a marginalised person faces. The laws and processes are mystifying even for an educated literate person. The laws are themselves structured to discriminate against the poor,” he said, addressing a lecture organised by Community for the Eradication of Discrimination in Education and Employment on “Appearing in Court: Challenges in Representing the Marginalised”.

“The system works differently for the poor. The beggars’ courts, the Juvenile Justice Boards and the Mahila Magistrate courts are the first point of encounter for the poor with the legal system.”

Discussing the statistics, Chief Justice Muralidhar said 21% of the undertrial population of 3.72 lakh in India and 21% of the convict population of 1.13 lakh belong to the Scheduled Caste. Similarly, 37.1% of convicts and 34.3% of the undertrials belong to OBCs. The corresponding per-

centage for Muslims – 17.4% and 19.5%, respectively. Raising concern over the quality of legal aid, he said the marginalised who are the recipients of legal aid do not really have a choice.

“The lack of confidence in the legal aid lawyer is a reflection of the general approach to welfare services by the providers and the perception that this is an act of dignity rather than the right of the person who receives such service. I call it the ration shop syndrome. The poor believe that if you get any service for free or it is substantially subsidised, then you cannot demand quality,” he said, adding that a study found that lawyers belonging to Dalit and Adivasi communities working on human rights cases risk being labelled as Maoist/Naxalite lawyers.

Color calibration bars and registration marks.



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



The Chief Justice of India, NV Ramana, at Kanha Dhaba in Amritsar on Thursday. *Express*

POORI-FIED

ON A whirlwind tour of Punjab, Chief Justice of India N V Ramana was keen to visit the much-talked about dhabas of Amritsar. On recommendation from local officials, he went with his family to the popular Kanha Dhaba for breakfast on Thursday. The CJI was so impressed at the sight of pooris being served in a big tray that he took out his phone and clicked some pictures of the platter himself.

FUTURE TENSE

A DAY after Gujarat Congress working president Hardik Patel's outbursts against the party, AICC in-charge of Gujarat Raghu Sharma met Rahul Gandhi on Thursday. They are said to have discussed Hardik's unhappiness as also the issue of entry of Naresh Patel. The opinion in the party on Hardik's next move is mixed. Some leaders suggest he could be on his way to the AAP. Some others say his entry into AAP is difficult given that he and AAP Gujarat president Gopal Italia do not share a good equation. But if Hardik exits, it will be a setback to the Congress, both in terms of optics and narrative ahead of Assembly elections. The party has seen the exit of many high-profile young leaders recently. Incidentally, almost all of them are considered close to Rahul.

THE MEMORABILIA

THE NEWLY inaugurated Prime Ministers' Museum has several personal memorabilia donated by families of erstwhile Prime Ministers, such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee's wrist watch and Lal Bahadur Shastri's badminton racquet. The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), which was tasked with implementing the project, also wrote many letters to the Gandhi family to see if it could get some personal items belonging to Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi as well. According to the NMML administration, the letters went unanswered.

At 1st meet, inter-ministerial group discusses border infra, rail link to Bangladesh


New Delhi: The Inter-Ministerial Coordination Group (IMCG) for a comprehensive management of India's relations with neighbouring countries on Tuesday deliberated on a host of issues, including the construction of border infrastructure that would facilitate trade with neighbours like Nepal, opening rail connectivity with Bangladesh and humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and Myanmar.

"The meeting deliberated upon and took important decisions on various aspects of India's bilateral relationship with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the areas of trade and investment, connectivity, border infrastructure, immigration, development cooperation and border security," the Ministry of External Affairs said.


ENS

Peek into PMs' museum


KEY ATTRACTIONS




A display that allows visitors to fly over upcoming projects. *ANI*



A levitating national emblem. *Abhinav Saha*



A kinetic flag made of a thousand lights. *Abhinav Saha*



An immersive display on Pokhran nuclear test. *Abhinav Saha*

■ The Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya (Prime Ministers' Museum) was thrown open to the public on Thursday. The erstwhile Nehru Museum has been integrated with the new museum building. The Nehru Museum is now designated as Block I, and has a technologically advanced display on India's first PM.

■ Two new galleries have been added on the ground floor of Block I —

IN NUMBERS

7.5 hours of immersive content

Constitution Gallery and India at Independence: British Legacy.

■ In Block II, the lower ground floor has been dedicated to immersive experiences. The 'Time Machine' helps you relive

43 galleries

4,000 visitors at a time capacity


the past, while 'Anubhuti' is an engagement zone which offers a walk with the hologram of any PM, a photograph with PMs and a signed letter.

■ The ground floor has galleries dedicated to 8 PMs


— Gulzarilal Nanda, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, PV Narasimha Rao, IK Gujral, HD Deve Gowda, Manmohan Singh and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

■ The first floor has the other 5 PMs' galleries — Rajiv Gandhi, VP Singh, Chandra Shekhar, Morarji Desai and Charan Singh.

■ Glimpses of PM Narendra Modi's 1st term (2014-2019) will be added in coming months. *Compiled by Divya A*



The ticket is priced at ₹100 for Indian citizens and ₹750 for foreign nationals. There is a light and sound show that can be viewed for an additional charge of ₹50.



TIMINGS: 10 am to 6 pm (March to October); 10 am to 5 pm (November to February). Closed on Mondays and gazetted holidays.

KV admission under MP quota, other special provisions on hold

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

ADMISSION TO Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) under "special provisions", including the quota for Members of Parliament (MPs), has been put "on hold", weeks after the Centre told Parliament that a decision on scrapping or retaining the quota would be taken after consultations with MPs.

The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Education which runs these schools, communicated the decision to the principals of KVs across the country on April 12. "As per the directions of KVS headquarters, New Delhi, you are hereby informed that no admission should be done under special provisions till further orders," it said in a circular sent to the schools.

An official of the KVS said the decision was taken "as the list of special provisions has grown too long". "The MPs' quota has not been scrapped. Like all the other special provisions, it has been put on hold for the time being," the official said.

According to data furnished by the Ministry of Education in Lok Sabha, 1,75,261 admissions took place in KVs through 21 special provisions in 2021-22. This included 7,301 through the MPs' quota, under which each MP can recommend 10 cases for admission in Classes I to IX at the beginning of each academic year. Under the rules, the 10 names have to be confined to children whose parents belong to his/her constituency.

The MPs — 543 in Lok Sabha and 245 in Rajya Sabha — can

EXPLAINED

Quota's changing dynamics

THE MP quota has undergone several changes, including being discontinued on at least two occasions. Earlier, an MP could recommend two admissions in an academic year, which was increased to five in 2011, six in 2012, and 10 in 2016. Currently, with 543 MPs in Lok Sabha and 245 in Rajya Sabha, 7,880 admissions are possible against this quota every year.

collectively recommend up to 7,880 admissions per year. The quota was introduced in 1975 as a special dispensation scheme. It was withdrawn at least twice in the past, only to be restored. Such is the demand that in 2018-19, 8,164 admissions were made under the MPs' quota, overshooting the cap.

Incidentally, in 2021-22, there were no admissions under the education minister's discretionary quota, which is one of the special provisions. In 2019-20 and 2020-21, there were 9,411 and 12,295 admissions respectively in this category.

The other special provisions include children and dependent grandchildren of MPs and serving or retired KV employees; children of recipients of Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra, Vir Chakra, Ashok Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra; recipients of the National Bravery Award; 100 children of employees of the Ministry of Education; 15 children of Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) employees; children orphaned due to Covid-19; children of central government employees who died in harness; children who have shown special talent in fine arts.

Home Secy in Kashmir for Amarnath Yatra preparations


EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

UNION HOME Secretary Ajay Bhalla on Thursday embarked on a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir to take stock of preparations for the Amarnath Yatra, which will take place in June. Sources said Bhalla is accompanied by Intelligence Bureau chief Arvind Kumar and IB special director Tapan Deka, as well as additional secretary (Kashmir) Piyush Goyal.

Sources said Bhalla is holding meetings with top officers of the Jammu and Kashmir Police, as well as officers of the BSF and the CRPF. Sources said the main focus of the review meetings is to ensure that the Yatra is conducted smoothly, with no untoward incident taking place.

The Amarnath Yatra had been suspended for the past two years due to the Covid 19 pandemic. In 2019, the yatra was cut short due to the impending announcements of bifurcation of the state into two Union Territories and the removal of its special status.

ED questions Channi in sand mining case



Former Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JALANDHAR, APRIL 14

FORMER PUNJAB Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi was questioned by the the Enforcement Directorate for several hours in a money laundering investigation linked to illegal sand mining in the state, officials revealed on Thursday.

Channi appeared before the ED for the first time Wednesday, over two months after his nephew, Bhupinder Singh alias Honey, was arrested in the case ahead of the February 20 Punjab Assembly polls. Honey is still in jail in that case and had applied for bail on Tuesday.

In a tweet, Channi said, "I was summoned by the ED yesterday regarding the mining case. I attended and replied to the queries put by them to the best of my knowledge. A challan in this case has already been presented by ED in the Hon'ble court. The authorities have not asked me to come again".

ED officials said Thursday that they may summon Channi again, if needed.

After Channi's appearance before ED was confirmed, former Punjab Congress chief Navjot Sidhu tweeted: "My fight was for Punjab and not for sand ... Those who ran the land, sand and liquor mafia let down Punjab for selfish vested interests by looting the exchequer. It is either Punjab or the

Mafia in the present financial scenario! The fight continues."

Later in the evening Thursday, PPCC chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring met Channi to discuss future roadmap for the state unit.

Warring tweeted: "Met former Chief Minister of Punjab Shri @CHARANJITCHANNI ji today and discussed various issues related to the roadmap for future rebuilding of @INCPunjab."

According to ED sources, the agency questioned Channi about his links with Honey and others and about certain visits his nephew made to the CM's office.

He was also questioned about the allegations of certain transfer and posting of officials in the state as part of the illegal sand mining operations, the sources said.

The ED action in the case began on January 18 after it conducted raids against Honey and others and seized about Rs 7.9 crore cash from his premises and about Rs 2 crore cash from a person linked to him, identified as Sandeep Kumar.

Fadnavis slams Pawar over 'appeasement' policy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 14

SENIOR BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday attacked NCP chief Sharad Pawar, accusing him and his party of indulging in "appeasement" politics and polarising the society on communal basis.

Fadnavis posted a series of tweets on Tuesday, calling Pawar the first person to use the word "Hindu terror".

Citing Pawar's recent statements in which he criticised the film *The Kashmir Files*, Fadnavis said the criticism was in line with what he called the NCP's track record of appeasement. The film documents the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley.

Fadnavis said, "The NCP has grand plans on bringing a Muslim quota in Maharashtra even though our Constitution does not provide such a provision. Shameful how vote bank politics prevails over Constitutional values!"

"On March 12, 1993, when Mumbai was shaken with 12 bomb blasts, Sharad Pawarji invented a 13th blast in a Muslim area. Instead of law and order, appeasement was his first priority. Why such double standards when we expect communal harmony?" Fadnavis asked.

Aaheli, Authentic Bengali Cuisine Restaurant

THE CUISINE

Aaheli's cuisine celebrates the true essence of Bengali taste. Here we cater a blend of ecstatic delicacies from the districts of West & East Bengal. You also get to taste the culinary from the kitchens of the bygone Bengali Zamindars, which were popularised by the Tagore family.

THE SPECIALITY

To celebrate the true Bengali essence, **Aaheli** hosts many thematic food festivals on the special Bengali days like Poila Boishakh (Bengali New Year), Jamai Sasti, Durga Pujo, Poush Parbon & many more. Each and every dish served by Aaheli has a special signature of authentic Bengali taste, curated by our recognised Bengali chef. From a-la-carte menu to delectable thalis, Aaheli never falls short of exquisite Bengali delicacies.

THE EXPERIENCE


An unique conceptual restaurant that offers ethnic taste with an elegant touch of sophistication. The decor of the outlet reflects Bengali culture, folklore & etiquette. The decor comprises paintings of Bengal's village life.

At Axis Rajarhat, another extension of Aaheli is adorned with a pair of sculpted white pigeons. The interior aesthetic is further enhanced with a pair of ornamental parrots from the ceiling with rural Bengal art in ambience.

Guests at Aaheli are served food in bell metal, which typically reflects how one is used to be served at a Bengali household. Tables are laid using mats made of cane which are common in Bengal's art and craft, an oil lit lamp adds to the charm of the dinner. Napkins that are served to the guest is made of batik print, a print technique done by a wax resistant dye. At **Aaheli**, guests are encouraged to have food with their hands, in order to enjoy the taste of true Bengali cuisine.

THE PEERLESS INN KOLKATA 12, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Esplanade, Dharmatala, Taltala, Kolkata, West Bengal 700013, **Contact Details: 98317 80403 / 9903034456**

AXIS MALL RAJARHAT : 106, 4th Floor, Block CS, Axis Mall, 106, Major Arterial Road, New Town, Kolkata, **Contact Details: 62908 20229**



SARAT BOSE ROAD : 190 A, Sarat Bose Road, Kolkata- 700029, **Contact Details: 8585060351**

Kolkata



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

What downgrade in average monsoon rainfall means

ANJALI MARAR
PUNE, APRIL 14

IN ITS first-stage long range forecast for the 2022 southwest monsoon, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast normal rainfall during the season. It has, however, downgraded the Long Period Average (LPA) for all-India monsoon rainfall — from 88.06 cm to 87 cm, effective from June this year. A look at how rainfall is distributed across the country through the year, and what the downgrade means:

How much rainfall does India receive on average in a year?

Based on trends for 1961-2010, India's normal annual rainfall is about 1176.9mm. Of this, nearly 74.8%, or 880.6 mm (88.06 cm), occurs during the Southwest monsoon from June to September. This is the LPA rainfall for the monsoon, the figure that has been revised.

Before the revision, the distribution of the rest of the rainfall was 3.4% during winter (January-February); 11.2% in the pre-monsoon season (March-May), and 10.5% during the post-monsoon season (October-December).

When is the LPA revised?

It is an international convention to verify

the quantum of annual and seasonal monsoon rainfall once in a decade. The monsoon season's LPA rainfall acts as a baseline figure calculated over a 50-year period. The LPA is revised, if required, depending on any variations observed from the rainfall data obtained from the network of rain gauges.

In 2002, the IMD operated 1,963 rain gauges located across 523 districts. As of 2020, rainfall data was being collected from 4,132 rain gauges spread uniformly across 703 districts.

Between 2005 and 2010, India's LPA was taken at 89.04 cm. Between 2011 and 2015, the IMD revised it to 88.75 cm. It was 88.06 cm between 2018 and 2021. From the upcoming monsoon the revised LPA will be 87 cm.

Why has it been downgraded?

"The monsoon season rainfall shows an epochal behaviour, wherein the monsoon can shift between dry and wet epochs (30-to-50-year periods) in certain decades. The reduction in the rainfall is thus due to the natural multi-decadal rainfall variability," said Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, director general, IMD.

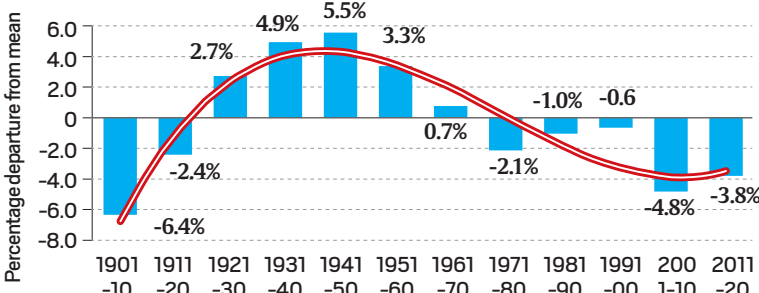
The decadal variability between 1901 and 2020 shows the southwest monsoon rainfall underwent a dry epoch between 1901 and 1921. This was followed by a wet epoch that prevailed till 1970. From 1971, the monsoon

SEASON-WISE RAINFALL VARIATIONS (mm)

SEASON	1971-2020	1961-2010
Winter (Jan-Feb)	39.8	40.8
Pre-monsoon (March-May)	130.6	131.7
Monsoon (June-Sept)	868.6	880.6
Post-monsoon (Oct-Dec)	121	123.8

Source: IMD

DECADAL MEAN OF SOUTHWEST MONSOON RAINFALL



has been passing through a dry epoch that persists till date.

"The dry epoch started in 1971 and has continued for five decades; thus the decadal mean rainfall values have remained negative. The decadal all-India southwest monsoon rainfall has been thus reducing by 1 cm. For 2011-2020, this value is minus 3.8, below normal," said Pulak Guhathakurta, head, Climate Research Division at IMD, Pune.

But the peak of this dry epoch has been surpassed with the monsoon set to revive, Mohapatra said. "The future trend suggests

that the decadal mean value will reach near normal during 2021-2030. It will then turn positive, meaning that the decade 2031-2040 will be the beginning of a wet epoch," he said.

The decadal mean value for the ongoing decade is predicted to be around minus 1.4 to 1.5.

Normally, the realised monsoon rainfall remains below normal for most years in a decade during a dry epoch. On the other hand, rainfall is normal or above normal during most of the years in a decade when it is a wet epoch.

So, has the all-India quantitative rainfall reduced?

There is indeed a decrease in normal monsoon rainfall between 1961-2010 (880.6 mm) and 1971-2020 (868.6 mm). The all-India annual rainfall, too, has decreased from 1176.9 mm (based on 1961-2010) to 1160.1mm (based on 1971-2020).

"But spatially or seasonally, the rainfall distribution has not undergone significant change, except some decrease during the southwest monsoon season," said Mohapatra. Rainfall variations are natural over a

country as large as India, and often non-uniform. Across the country, the number of dry spells and extreme rain events during short time-spans have been on the rise, Met officials said.

Rainfall over the Northeastern region has been on the decline since the 1950s, particularly in the past three decades. "Normal rainfall over Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura recorded during 1971-2020 was less than during 1961-2010," Mohapatra said.

Guhathakurta said: "On regional scales, the shifting of rainfall patterns and reduction in rainfall is due to climate change which is observed over Northeast India."

With the shifting of rainfall, the otherwise dry and arid west-central India regions covering Kutch-Saurashtra, Rajasthan and parts of west Madhya Pradesh are reporting a higher number of wet days than normal. These areas had more rainfall during 1971-2020 than during 1961-2010, the IMD chief said.

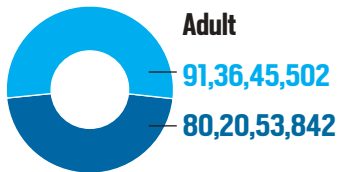
"There is a positive change in western India regions with research showing an increase in days with light to moderate intensity rainfall increasing over Rajasthan," he said.

However, on an all-India basis, rainfall reduction in some areas and increase in other areas do not contribute in a large difference in the total quantum.

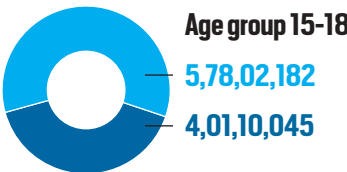
DASHBOARD, AS ON APRIL 13

TOTAL DOSES 186,22,76,304

First dose Second dose



Adult



Age group 15-18

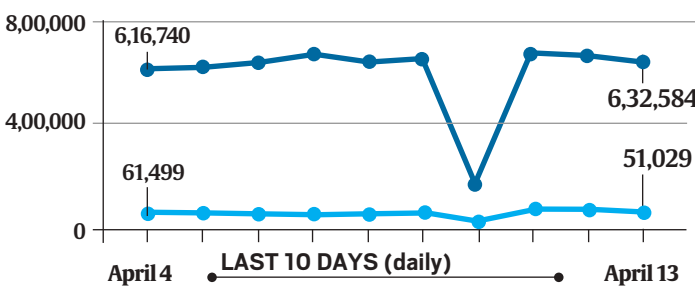
AGE GROUP 12-14

1st dose
2,36,92,551
2nd dose
30,964

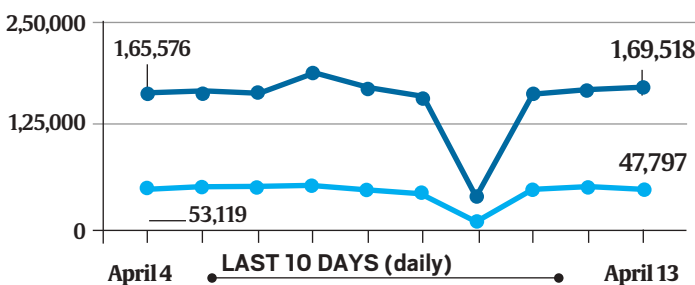
PRECAUTIONARY 60+

2,48,78,535
PRECAUTIONARY 15-59
62,683
Doses On April 13
15,69,805
Doses On April 12
16,37,883

ADULTS



AGE GROUP 15-18



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SHYAMLAL YADAV

NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

THE NEW AAP government in Punjab has decided to display pictures of Dr B R Ambedkar, along with freedom fighter Bhagat Singh, in government offices. Earlier this year, the AAP government of Delhi made a similar announcement. While Babasaheb has always been admired as a national icon and chief draftsman of the Constitution, the renewed rush among parties like the AAP and BJP to claim for themselves the legacy of the man whose 131st birth anniversary was celebrated on April 14 can be understood in the context of India's significant Dalit vote that now appears more than ever to be without a natural 'home'.

The Dalit vote

Assembly elections are due in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh later this year and in Haryana in 2024. After winning Delhi twice and Punjab with huge majorities, the AAP sees an opportunity in all three states.

In the 2011 Census, Dalits were 31.94% of the population of Punjab, the highest percentage in the country. They were 20.17% in Haryana, 25.19% in Himachal Pradesh, 6.74% in Gujarat, and 16.7% in Delhi. In India as a whole, Dalits, who have a special reverence and deep affection for Ambedkar, are 16.6%.

Data from recent Assembly elections show that Dalit voters in Himachal, Gujarat, and Haryana have mostly gone with the traditional players, BJP and Congress. The BSP's footprint has been tiny: in Himachal, it got 0.49% in 2017 and 1.17% in 2012; in Gujarat, 0.69% and 1.25% respectively; and in Haryana, 4.14% in 2019 and 4.37% in 2014. Despite Punjab's large Dalit population, the BSP got just 1.77% of the vote in 2022; in 2017, it had got 1.52%. In Delhi, it got 0.71% of the votes in 2020, and 1.30% in 2015.

However, in 2007, the year the BSP won a thumping majority in UP, the party did better in Punjab as well, getting 4.13% of the vote. In the elections in Delhi in 2008, the BSP polled as much as 14.05%. As AAP emerged as a powerful force, the BSP's vote share in Delhi shrank to 5.35% in 2013.



NCC cadets in Bikaner sprinkle flowers on Ambedkar's statue on his birth anniversary. PTI

Ambedkar in politics

Starting from the 1980s, Kanshi Ram, the BSP's founder, began to take away a large part of the Congress's traditional Dalit vote and damaged the party heavily, especially in UP. Kanshi Ram, who denounced Dalit leaders of other parties as "stooges", launched his book *The Chamcha* Age in September 1982.

The *chamchas*, he said, were "tools, agents and stooges of the high caste Hindus", adding: "The oppressed and exploited people of India who are about 85 per cent of India's total population are a leaderless lot. The high caste Hindus have succeeded in creating leadership amongst them."

The launch of the book coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Poona Pact between Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar.

In 1981 Kanshi Ram founded the social organisation 'DS-4', short for Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti. Three years later, on Ambedkar's birth anniversary, he dissolved it and founded the BSP. The aim, as he had articulated in his book, was to bring together 85% of the country's population — including the SCs, STs, OBCs, and minorities. A popular slogan that he gave later captured this political project: "*Jiski jitna sankhya bhaari, uski utni bhaagidari*" (The greater the numbers, the bigger the share)."

Kanshi Ram had predicted the end of the "Chamcha Yug" in 10 years. However, even as the Congress haemorrhaged Dalit support, other parties and politicians reacted to the challenge. In March 1990, the VP Singh government, in which social justice leaders such as Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav were ministers, conferred the Bharat Ratna on

Ambedkar posthumously.

But Kanshi Ram's plan to organise "85 per cent" of the population was successful to some extent only in UP. In 1993, he joined hands with the Samajwadi Party of Mulayam Singh Yadav to oust the BJP from power ("*Mile Mulayam Kanshi Ram, hawa mein ud gaye Jai Shri Ram*"). But their alliance collapsed in June 1995, and a very long period of hostility between the two parties followed. An attempt by Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati to build an alliance against the BJP ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections lasted for just a few months. In Bihar, Lalu Prasad emerged as a vote-catcher among not just the OBCs and Muslims, but also Dalits.

RSS and Ambedkar

The RSS has spoken of "Hindu unity" since its birth in 1925, but its leadership has traditionally been dominated by upper castes, in particular Brahmins. On Vijayadashami in 1956, Ambedkar embraced Buddhism along with nearly half a million followers in Deekshabhoomi in Nagpur, the headquarters of the RSS, but it wasn't until 1981, when hundreds of lower-caste Hindus converted to Islam in Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district, that the Sangh began its Dalit outreach.

The late RSS ideologue Dattopant Thengdi wrote four books on Ambedkar, praising his efforts for "*samajik samrasta*". Sah-sarkaryawah Dr Krishna Gopal, who was until last year in charge of coordination with the BJP, too has written a book on Ambedkar.

In 1989, the centenary year of the first

Sarsanghchalak K B Hedgewar, every *shakha* was asked to run at least one education centre in Dalit localities in its area. Behind this strategy were then Sarsanghchalak Balasaheb Deoras and Sarkaryawah H V Sheshadri; this was followed by the establishment of *sewa vibhags* to organise such activities.

In 1990, the RSS marked the centenary year of Ambedkar and death centenary year of social reformer Jyotiba Phule. The Akhil Bhartiya Pratinidhi Sabha, the highest decision-making body of the RSS, passed a resolution that read: "These two great leaders dealt deadly blows to the evil practices and conventions prevailing in Hindu society, and successfully persuaded Hindu society to do away with all the injustices it had perpetrated on its own members."

On October 22, 2015, in his annual Vijayadashami speech, Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat praised Ambedkar and ended with the slogan, "*Hindu Hindu ek rahen, bhed-bhav ko nahin sahen*" (Hindus must stay together, reject discrimination)."

Modi and Dalits

Until a few years ago, the Dalit vote bank remained largely out of reach of the BJP, which was still trapped in its image of an upper-caste party. Speaking in Kochi in February 2014, Narendra Modi promised his government would give Dalits, OBCs, and most-backwards their due. In 2015, the BJP celebrated Ambedkar's 125th birth centenary year down to the level of its small party units. The central government got re-printed the *Collected Works of Dr Ambedkar* once it was freed from copyright after December 6, 2016. Until around 2018, the Prime Minister repeatedly invoked Ambedkar in speeches.

In the Lok Sabha elections of 2019 and the UP Assembly elections of 2022, schemes such as Ujjwala, PM Awas, and free rations brought the BJP huge benefits. A large number of beneficiaries of these welfare schemes are Dalits. In the UP elections this year, a large percentage of Dalit voters are believed to have shifted their nearly three-decade-old loyalty for the BSP to the BJP. The BJP asked Union and state ministers, MPs, and MLAs to attend local events on Ambedkar Jayanti on Thursday in all districts of the state.

EXPLAINED YOUR MONEY

How inflation impacts households, and what to do with your savings



SANDEEP SINGH

INFLATION HAS emerged as a major concern over the last few months. CPI inflation for March, released Tuesday, was at a 17-month high of 6.95%. The Reserve Bank of India too has been keeping an eye on inflation: Its Monetary Policy statement, released last week, signalled a shift in focus from re-viving growth to mitigating risks posed by inflation. Although it has kept the policy rates unchanged for now, it indicated a possible hike in repo rates going forward.

"In the sequence of priorities, we have

now put inflation before growth. Time is appropriate to prioritise inflation ahead of growth," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said after unveiling the bi-monthly Policy Review.

Impact on households

The high inflation has been driven by rise in prices of fuel and food items such as cereals and vegetables. Rising fuel and food prices not only directly impact the household budget of families that are slowly coming out of the shadow of Covid, but also threatens to put them under further pressure on account of the expected rise in interest rates in the economy.

A rise in interest rates, as indicated by the RBI and in line with the global trend across central banks, will have a major impact on large section of the society that are paying EMIs on home loans.

While the interest rate hike in India is not expected to be very sharp compared to

what has been planned by the Federal Reserve in the US, it will have a bearing on existing loan customers.

If the rates were to go up by 100 basis points from 7.5% to 8.5% over the next year, the EMI on a principal outstanding of Rs 50 lakh for 15 years will go up from Rs 46,350 to Rs 49,236 — a jump of Rs 2,886 a month — if the tenure were kept constant. If the interest rates were to go up to 9% — a 150-basis-point increase — the EMI would rise to Rs 50,713, an increase of Rs 4,362 per month.

Impact on investors

A low-interest-rate environment also impacts conservative debt investors who are more comfortable investing in fixed deposits and other safe assets. When rates are low, most fixed deposits have been earning an interest rate between 4.5-6% for investors depending on tenure; however, as a result of the high inflation, the real interest earning has been negative. For those in the highest

tax bracket, it even makes less sense to invest in fixed deposits as the post-tax-return would stand between 3.1-4.1%, which is significantly lower than the inflation rate of 7%.

If the fixed deposit or a small savings instrument is earning 6% when inflation is 7%, then on a net basis the real interest income is negative (nominal interest rate minus inflation). Most of the small savings schemes, too, are now generating negative real rate of interest; only PPF (7.1%) and Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (7.6%) are generating an interest income that is higher than the inflation rate now.

Even the Central Board of Trustees of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) recently recommended a cut in interest rates from 8.5% to 8.10% for its over 6 crore active subscribers for 2021-22. The post-tax return of 8.1% is the lowest interest rate on EPF in at least four decades, but it is still higher than rates offered on small-saving schemes or on any other debt instru-

ment including bank fixed deposits.

What you should do

Any financial instrument must serve the purpose of growing your money — so, the first thing one must see before putting money in a pure debt instrument is whether that is happening.

With inflation expected to rise further in the wake of the ongoing war and other global and domestic factors, investors need to ensure their savings earn higher return than the inflation rate. As of now, any income less than 7% net after taxes actually makes you lose money.

In fact, in a rising inflation scenario, if your investments can't earn above inflation, it is better to spend it today than save for tomorrow, because a year later, its value would be lower. So, as inflation continues to reduce your savings, there is no way debt instruments will help you beat inflation.

Financial advisors say conservative in-

vestors will have to bring equity into their portfolio in some form, be ready to carry some risk, and live with some volatility. "Investors need to improve their basket of asset allocation and will have to consider mutual fund offerings such as conservative debt hybrid, balanced advantage funds and equity savings schemes (that invest in equity, debt and arbitrage securities). Investors need to understand that higher returns can only come from equities and it also leads to better tax management," said Surya Bhatia, founder, AM Unicorn Professional Pvt Ltd.

While investors can also look at some company deposits offering relatively higher interest, they need to first seek professional advice and weigh their credit rating and risk.

Those who still want to stick with pure debt products should go for short-duration products because, as interest rates rise with rising inflation, they will be able to take advantage of these higher rates.

DELHI

Woman jumps to death off Metro station: Cops

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

A 25-YEAR-OLD woman jumped off a 40-foot high parapet wall at the Akshardham Metro station on Thursday morning and succumbed to injuries later in the day, said police. Personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) deployed at the station tried to save her by holding a blanket below but police said her injuries were severe.

According to police, the woman hailed from Punjab and worked at an e-commerce company in Gurgaon. Police said she was recently removed from her job and went back home and suspect she was upset over this. Her family told police that she left home last night and came

Police said the woman worked at an e-commerce company in Gurgaon. She was recently removed from her job and went back home and they suspect she was upset over this

to Delhi.

The incident took place around 7.30 am. CISF personnel deployed at platform no.2 of the Metro station noticed the woman climbing the parapet. They informed Metro staff and rushed to help the woman.

A video of the incident shows CISF staff trying to persuade the woman to move back after notic-

ing her standing at the edge of the wall. She waited for a while before jumping off but fell on the blanket that the CISF and Metro staff had arranged by then.

"CISF personnel quickly swung into action. While one team tried to persuade the woman to abandon her thoughts, the other team, with the help of locals, arranged for a blanket to catch her in case of a fall. Despite persuasion, she jumped off and the persons on the ground managed to catch her. Due to the severity of the fall, she sustained severe injuries... She was immediately taken to a nearby hospital," said a CISF spokesperson.

The woman was rushed to Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital for treatment where doctors said she suffered multiple injuries on her back and leg.

Went for a swim and never came back: Kin of 4 boys who drowned in Yamuna

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

A DAY after four teenagers drowned in the Yamuna while playing near Kalindi Kunj, their families said they usually went for a swim in the river in the morning and returned by noon.

On Wednesday, the boys — Mohd Ali (11), his cousin Sahil (13) and their friends Farman (13) and Rihaan (13) — allegedly drowned around 10-11 am but their families and authorities found out much later. The four didn't go to school and worked odd jobs to help their families.

DCP (Southeast) Esha Pandey said, "Rescue teams have recovered the bodies of Farman, Mohd Ali and Sahil from the river. Teams are still working to recover the fourth body."

Omar Shahid, Sahil and Mohd Ali's uncle, said, "...I went looking for them and found their clothes on the riverbank. I



The families said they found the teenagers' clothes on the river bank. Police said three bodies have been recovered and teams are working to recover the fourth

jumped into the river but couldn't find them. I got scared and called police."

Police said they received a call around 3.35 pm. The boys were last seen around 9-10 am and went missing soon after that. Several teams of the dis-

aster management authority, fire services and divers worked for more than nine hours but could only recover Farman's body. Rescue operations halted at night and began again on Thursday morning.

Fire officials said the water

was deep and they used hoses and boats to find the bodies. They suspect that the boys got trapped in mud and drowned.

Sadakat Ali, Mohd Ali's father, who works at a shop in the area, said, "I usually see my son in the afternoon before I go to work. On Wednesday, he wasn't home and I asked his sisters about his whereabouts but they didn't know. I was angry with him... I sent my daughters to look for him and they told me that his cousin and other friends are missing. We were all scared and started searching everywhere... It took almost a day to recover my son's body."

Imtiyaz, Rihaan's father, said the four boys were close friends. "I was at home with my wife when Sadakat called me... Farman was trying to get a job at a restaurant. He wanted to help us... I still can't believe they are gone," he said.

Senior police officers said they don't suspect foul play and that the teenagers drowned while swimming.

1 dead in fire at Delhi restaurant

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

A 24-YEAR-OLD man died and five others sustained severe injuries after a fire broke out at a restaurant in Southeast Delhi's Jamia Nagar Thursday afternoon. Police said it was caused by an AC compressor exploding, adding that they suspect the restaurant owner had called men to repair it when the incident took place.

Police said the victim has been identified as Nadeem, who was among two men called to repair the AC. He died during treatment.

Videos shot outside the restaurant purportedly showed the injured, some covered in blood, others unable to walk. A group of men were also seen pulling those injured out of the restaurant and sending them to the hospital in an e-rickshaw.

The Delhi Fire Services said they received a call from locals at 3.50 pm and a total of three fire tenders were rushed to the spot. "We were told 13 people were injured... They were sent to a hospital," said DFS chief Atul Garg.

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Poila Baisakh

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Renewal of faith

For farmers, it is about a rich harvest, for businesses, it is about opening accounts and for the family, it is about celebrating with feasts and new clothes. *Poila Boisakh* in Bengal is a community spectacle like no other



Poila Boishakh is the first day of the Bengali calendar and is celebrated in West Bengal and among Bengali communities in Assam, Tripura and Bangladesh. In Assam, it is celebrated as Bihu. Ritually, it celebrates the first rice harvest of the season and is an occasion to seek the blessings of Lord Ganesha and Goddess Laxmi to ensure that farmers are blessed and can continue growing abundant crops. For the business

arts to songs of Rabindranath Tagore.

Some historians attribute the Bengali calendar to the 7th century king Shashanka. The term *Bangabada* (Bangla year) is found in two Shiva temples. Various dynasties whose territories extended into Bengal, prior to the 13th century, used the Vikrami calendar. Buddhist texts and inscriptions created in the Pala Empire era mention "Vikrama" and the months such as Ashvin, a system found in Sanskrit texts

the harvest. He asked the royal astronomer Fathullah Shirazi to create a new calendar by combining the lunar Islamic calendar and solar Hindu calendar already in use, and this was known as *Fasholi shan* (harvest calendar). Some historians say this started the Bengali calendar.

Fish is the most preferred and integral part of any *Poila Baishak* meal. *Maacher Paturi* (steamed delicacy wrapped in banana leaves) with steamed rice is an all-time favourite item. The top sellers at restaurants and fine diners are *Tandoori*

"As the new year arrives, it brings new hope and opportunities... It is time to set new goals and try to achieve success by leaving problems from past behind.. With lots of love, wishing all the readers of The Indian Express a very warm & Happy Bengali New Year"

Kishore Belani, Director Mahal Lamp Shades

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SOUR LESSON

Spike in price of lemons underlines it: Key to reducing mismatch between supply and demand lies in boosting storage capacity

WITH A SINGLE lemon retailing at anywhere between Rs 10 and Rs 15, across the country, lemon prices are squeezing household budgets. Reportedly, the supply of lemons has fallen due to a decline in over-all production. Lemon orchards are very sensitive to excess moisture and the supplies took a hit after exceptionally heavy rains in September and October last year. Chances of a quick correction in prices are low because the next crop will come in only by October. From the policymaking perspective, however, it would be a mistake to view this spike in lemon prices in isolation. It would be equally erroneous to imagine that the solution lies in boosting production alone.

High food inflation as well as wild fluctuation in food prices are fairly chronic events in India. The commodities keep changing through the year but the phenomenon remains the same. The most recent example of this came earlier in the week when overall inflation rose by 7 per cent, driven primarily by a spike in the prices of food items. Food inflation rose by almost 8 per cent. Often, it is the prices of perishables such as fruits and vegetables that are the leading contributors to price rise. While high prices draw attention primarily because they hurt consumers, there is another side of the story — of excess supply and the resultant crash in prices, which, in turn, bring financial ruin to farmers. Breaking this cycle of supply gluts and shortages will benefit both consumers and producers. The key lies in boosting India's storage capacity as it can reduce the frequent mismatch between supply and demand.

It is now widely accepted — a January paper from the RBI reiterates it — that “wastage of food products due to inefficient post-harvest practices is one of the important factors behind high food inflation in India”. The wastage happens for a variety of reasons but the lack of proper storage facilities is particularly important. If one looks at the warehousing stock per capita (measured in square meters), India at 0.02 lags far behind other big economies such as China (0.8), the UK (1.09) and the US (4.4). Not only is India comparatively deficient, but the existing warehousing is inefficiently distributed as well. According to the RBI, nearly 70 per cent of the country's total capacity is limited to four states — Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Punjab and Gujarat — whereas states like Maharashtra and Karnataka, which have large export potential as well, do not have adequate facilities. Further, almost 70 per cent of all cold storage is for storing potatoes while only 30 per cent is used for multi-commodity storage, resulting in poor utilisation of existing capacity. Lastly, boosting cold storage capacity would be incomplete without a well-developed cold chain involving various stages from pre-cooling, pack-houses, refrigerated transport to refrigerated marketing display. This is where both the government and private sector need to invest to find a sustainable solution to repeated fluctuations and surges in the prices of everyday food items.

THE CENTRE FRAYS

Notwithstanding the results of the ongoing election, France under Emmanuel Macron has become more polarised

IN 2017, EMMANUEL Macron was a relative outsider who held out the hope that in France in particular, and in Europe as a whole, the centre would hold. After the first round of the presidential election earlier this week — the run-off poll between the president and leader of the far-right National Rally, Marine Le Pen, will take place on April 24 — it is clear that Macron's term in office has only polarised the French polity further. Macron received around 28 per cent of the vote, Le Pen 23 per cent and the Left candidate, Jean-Luc Melenchon was a close third, with 22 per cent. Both the far-right and the left have gained ground. And while Melenchon's call to his supporters to ensure that Le Pen does not gain the presidency may ensure that Macron becomes the first French presidential incumbent since Jacques Chirac in 2002 to win a second term, his pro-market, pro-EU centre-right plank has fewer takers than before.

Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine is only the latest challenge to surface during Macron's presidency. Domestically, the *gilets jaunes* or “yellow vests” protests against income inequality, price rise and tax breaks for the wealthy that rocked France began in 2018, and have flared sporadically ever since. The killing of school teacher Samuel Paty deepened another cleavage in French society and Macron announced a programme to “strengthen French values” and introduced laws that are seen to target Muslims. The rise of China and Britain's exit from the EU have made it all the more important for France to take a leadership role in Europe. Unfortunately, the far-right — especially Le Pen — have made pro-Putin statements and continue to be sceptical of the EU and NATO. Macron has tilted right whenever he has been under siege politically. Given that he has made combatting Putin's Russia a policy priority, and his opponent has called for a “reset” of NATO-Russia relations, the election results will have far-reaching geopolitical implications.

Most opinion polls predict a close race between Le Pen and Macron in this election. Data also points to apathy with the political system as a whole and Macron in particular among the young and rural working classes. In 2017, Macron promised a centrist “revolution”. Now, his hope is to chip away supporters from both the right and left, by becoming the default candidate for those fearful of a xenophobic Le Pen presidency. Given the fragile European unity, and the need for an outward-looking France in that context, the election results on April 24 will be closely watched in Brussels and beyond.

MERE STAR KI SHAADI

The Big Fat Bollywood Wedding offers distraction from lemon prices and other distressing things

FIRST, THERE IS the teaser. They make appearances in each other's family photos. Next, the trailer, the intimate roka, followed by the close-friends-and-family-only engagement, top-secret mehendi and hush-hush sangeet, with all the photos ending up, accidentally-on-purpose, on MissBollyGossip.com. And finally, release day. The lead couple, dressed in the finest Sabya or Manish by the costume department, stares dreamily into each other's eyes and/or laughs together as directed by the celebrity photographer hired to take exclusive images of the mega event. And an enraptured audience of a few million, which has been tweeting undying love for #RaAlia or #VicKak or whoever the couple of the moment is, sits back to enjoy the climax of yet another *paisa vasool* entertainer.

The Big Fat Bollywood Wedding is, in the immortal words of the Hindi film critic, a “family entertainer”. It has something for everyone: Drama, unforgettable clothes, and good, old-fashioned sentiment — all breathlessly live-tweeted. Admittedly, some of the appeal is in the thrill of seeing two beautiful and wealthy people come together in holy matrimony and — everyone secretly hopes — immediately generate fodder for the gossip mills with baby rumours, feuding in-laws and even conscious uncouplings. But the real reason anyone cares about these weddings is the same as why they watch a Bollywood film: Escape. With its glamorous cast — including guest and special appearances — extravagant outfits and gorgeous locations, a lavishly-produced Bollywood wedding guarantees a distraction from such distressing things as a pandemic, political mudslinging and the high price of lemons.

And the best part of all this? There will always be sequels. Because, as they say in the biz, picture *abhi baaki hai, mere dost*. Wedding *bhi*.



SY QURAISHI

WHAT IS TO be done when the Indian republic, committed to working within the framework of constitutional democracy and the rule of law, starts to accommodate elements that are stridently anti-constitutional and anti-secular? What once belonged to the fringes of Indian society now has increasingly become mainstream, their disruptive actions being registered in the public sphere more frequently and viciously. Hate speech is at the root of many forms of violence that are being perpetrated and has become one of the biggest challenges to the rule of law and to our democratic conscience.

One of the most visible consequences of hate speech is increased electoral mobilisation along communal lines which is also paying some electoral dividends.

Hate speech must be unambiguously condemned and the law must take its course, although not merely because it can lead to events of violence in the future. Hate speech, in itself, must be understood and treated as a violent act and urgently so, for it has become an indispensable resource for the ruling powers. No wonder, during the elections, it becomes louder.

Several instances of hate speech and religious polarisation have been reported in Yogi Adityanath's poll campaign in the recently concluded UP elections, for instance. In 2019, the Supreme Court reprimanded the Election Commission, calling it “toothless” for not taking action against candidates engaging in hate speech during the election campaigns in UP. The Commission responded by saying that it had limited powers to take action in this matter. So far, the Supreme Court does not appear to have acted decisively in response to allegations of hate speech in electoral campaigns, indicating that the EC must assume more responsibility and the EC has argued that in matters of hate speech, it is largely “powerless”. In any case, the EC's role is confined to the election period. So who is responsible for the non-election times?

Is the state powerless? Not at all. There are a whole bunch of laws meant to curb hate speech. The Indian Penal Code, as per Sections 153A, 295A and 298, criminalises the promo-

Hate speech must be condemned not merely because it can lead to violence but because it is, in itself, violent



While examining the scope of hate speech laws in India, the Law Commission in its 267th report published in March 2017, recommended introduction of new provisions within the penal code that specifically punish incitement to violence in addition to the existing ones. In my view, any recommendation for more laws is a red herring and provides an excuse for inaction. It's the lack of political will, blatant inefficiency and bias of the administration and shocking apathy of the judiciary that is killing the secular spirit of the Constitution.



SUANSHU KHURANA

MOHABBAT KARNE WALE *kam na honge, teri mehfil mein lekin hum na honge*. (There won't be a dearth of those who will cherish you, but in that gathering of your admirers, I won't be there.)

For over half a century, this Hafeez Hoshiarpuri ghazal was brought to life by Pakistani ghazal maestro Mehdi Hassan. He presented it with such nuance and tenderness that for years, the pangs of separation in this piece have transcended even the geopolitics of the Subcontinent. The ghazal became so popular that it was sung by other greats such as Farida Khanum, Iqbal Bano and Jagjit Singh. But it was Hassan who etched this ghazal — along with “Ranjish hi sahi” — in our common consciousness. For “Mohabbat karne wale”, he used *Tilang*, the raga that stems from the folk melodies of Rajasthan, where Hassan was born and learned music.

So, when Brooklyn-based Pakistani musician Arooj Aftab walked away with a Grammy earlier this month — a first for any Pakistani woman — in the Best Global Music Performance category for the “neo-Sufi” version of this ghazal which she calls “Mohabbat” in her 2021 album *Vulture Prince* (New Amsterdam Records), it became a moment to cherish for the Subcontinent.

The ghazal was first read in 1929 by Hoshiarpuri at Lahore's famed Government College.

But for “Mohabbat”, which has musical influences from diverse worlds of jazz, Hindustani music, Sufi and folk music, Aftab does not acknowledge — either in the album's

THE COURTESY OF CREDIT

Why Grammy winner Arooj Aftab needs to acknowledge those who came before

digital versions or in her acceptance speech — the poet or the composer, even though the basic tune is used in its entirety. The only difference is pace, orchestration and of course, Aftab's voice and style. The Recording Academy's award is for her performance of the ghazal but the onus to acknowledge its origins is on Aftab.

Culture Prince, Aftab's third album, came at the back of years of struggle in Pakistan amid a family that enjoyed musical baithaks at home but preferred their daughter to not make music. In it, she pairs the pain of famous ghazals with hushed orchestral arrangements created with the harp, flugelhorn, double bass, violins and synth. She sings Mirza Ghalib's “Diya hai” where the poignance of the poet's words finds release through her voice — the last song she and her brother shared before he passed away during the making of the album. The elegy and its pain aren't lost on the listener. There is also Sudarshan Faki's “Kuch toh duniya ki inaaayat”, which found itself with Begum Akhtar back in the day. Ghalib, Fakir and Begum Akhtar aren't credited either. She gives a new tune to Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's famed “Suroor”, but Anwar Farukhabadi, the poet, does not find himself anywhere in the seven-track album. The album, however, does advertise a perfume oil created by Dana El Masri, inspired by the music. As of now, the oil is sold out.

Barack Obama picked “Mohabbat” as one of his favourites for 2021 and the piece was called one of the best songs of 2021 by the New York Times. But I'd rather listen to Hassan's version. Mostly because of its quality

but also because of its sincerity. He would al-most always credit the poet. “Ye Hafiz Hoshiarpuri saab ki ghazal hai...”

Aftab hasn't put out any statement or explanation. But she shared a post by a friend on her Facebook page that read: “For those who are asking Arooj Aftab to give credits... either they are jealous or they do not understand that you can pick up any old poetry and compose it yourself, then there is no cover left.” This isn't a new composition. It's the same tune sung with different orchestration. Because she is trained in western forms of music, she's stripped the ghazal of classical ornamentations and created a new setting for it. Hoshiarpuri's words give context to her pain. This is why credit is necessary.

In 2018, at Lahore's Gurmani Centre for Languages and Literature, an 89-year-old Farida Khanum sat in a wheelchair and sang the same ghazal, diving into Hoshiarpuri's anguish and sarcasm. Musician and author Ali Sethi, who was in conversation with her, was visibly awed. So were those present. But before Khanum began, she said, “Ye Mehdi bhai (Hassan) ne gayaa hai. Aur badi gayaki ke saath gayaa hai. Maine isko light music ki tarah gayaa hai”. (Mehdi bhai has sung this. And has sung it with a lot of dexterity. I have sung it like light music). Even though Khanum's version is immaculate, she does not let the moment go without that mention.

While Khanum's reference is deferential, all we want from Aftab is some courtesy.

suanshu.khurana@expressindia.com

APRIL 15, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

HOSTAGE DRAMA

TWO-ARMED YOUTH HOLDING five persons hostage for nine hours in the South Avenue flat of Congress MP Dalbir Singh were overpowered by policemen in a swift 20-minute operation. The five hostages, including two former members of the Madhya Pradesh assembly, were freed. The youth have been identified as Ram Narayan Kumar and Kumaraswamy from Andhra Pradesh.

WEST ASIA STRIKE

AT LEAST 10 countries in West Asia and millions of Muslims elsewhere observed a day's

strike to protest against the killing of two Palestinians near the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem by an Iraqi soldier. The strike was called by King Khaled of Saudi Arabia. An exception was South Yemen, where the Marxist government of President Ali Nasser Mohammed ordered a double-shift work day to raise money for the Palestinians.

CHARAN RELENTS

THE LOK DAL chief Charan Singh will make a re-entry into politics on April 15, when he presides over the meeting of his party's national executive convened especially for the

May 19 “mini general elections”.

M S RETURNS MONEY

CELEBRATED CARNATIC MUSICIAN M S Subbulakshmi has decided to return the government a cheque of Rs 34,873 sent to her as remuneration for her inaugural concert at the Festival of India in London. In a letter to the chairman of the advisory committee of the festival, her husband T Sadasivam said, “it will be neither correct nor in keeping with our way of life to crave remuneration for a glorious service that Subbulakshmi was asked to render on behalf of our great nation”.

9 THE IDEAS PAGE

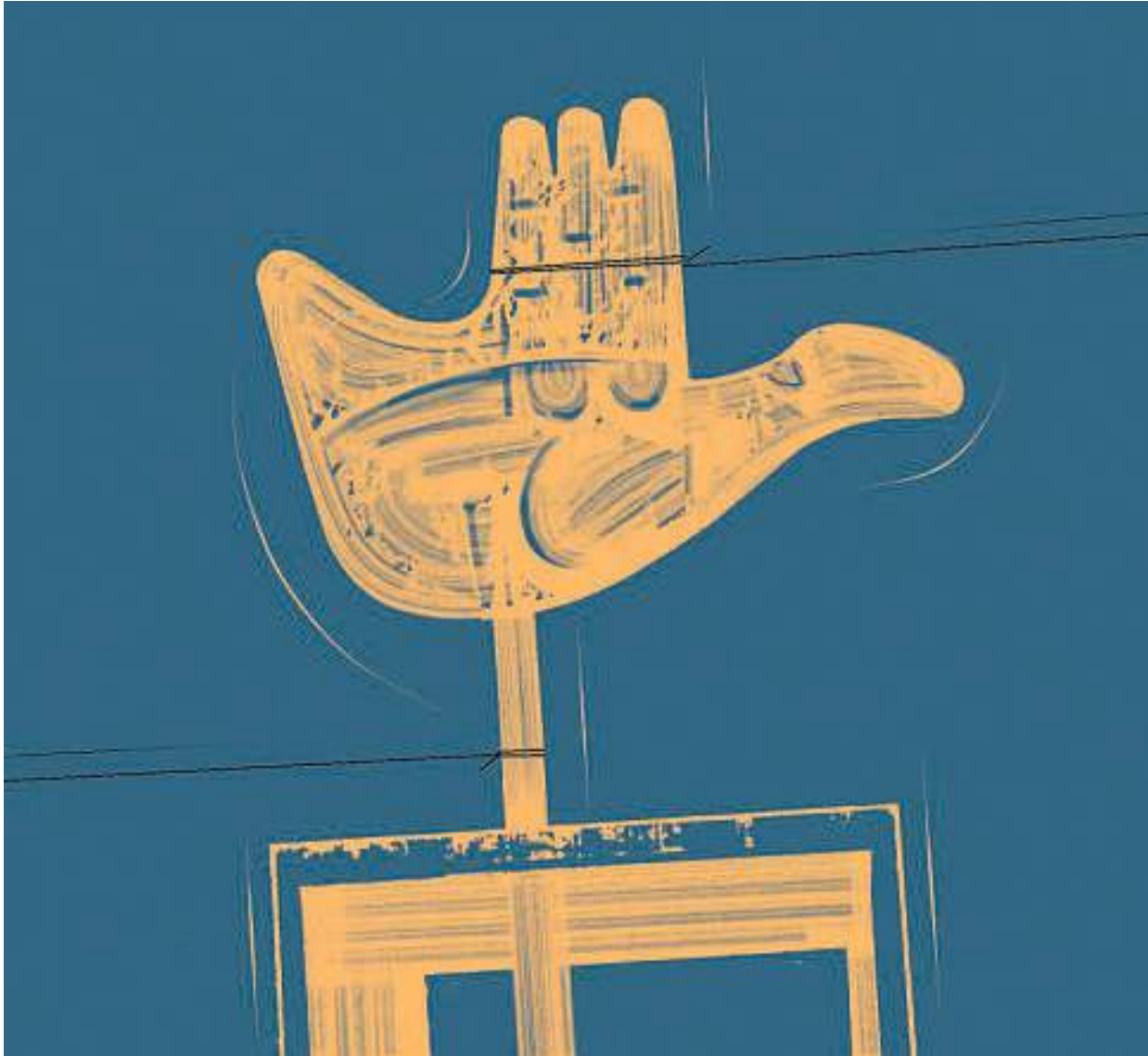
City beautiful, historical wrong

Intransigence of Indira Gandhi government prevented transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab. Centre must correct this anomaly, and also reconsider status of other Union Territories



MADHAV GODBOLE

I AM SURPRISED that it took so long for Punjab to reiterate its legitimate demand for Chandigarh. The usual political drama of the legislative assembly of Haryana holding a special session to oppose the demand was only to be expected. The question is whether the leadership of the BJP is prepared to do justice to Punjab, or deny it only because the AAP is now in power in Punjab and would get the credit. I have argued for some time that Indira Gandhi had done injustice to Punjab by denying its claim to Chandigarh. In my book, Indira Gandhi: An Era of Constitutional Dictatorship (2018), I referred to what Zail Singh had written in his book, *Memoirs of Giani Zail Singh – The Seventh President of India*: “On my return from tour of the three foreign countries, I was met by Swaran Singh (who was asked by the government to negotiate with the Akalis), who gave me the tidings that an understanding had been reached between the government and the Akalis. It was, inter alia, agreed upon by the two sides that the Anandpur Sahib Resolution would be referred to a parliamentary committee and the contentious city of Chandigarh would be transferred to Punjab... I was told by Swaran Singh that the central government had accepted these propositions and was about to make an announcement to this effect... The Akali Party had also accepted the arrangement. But the government changed its stance and sprang a surprise. An altogether different statement was made by home minister, P C Sethi, in Parliament... I came to know later that it was due to the intransigent attitude of Darbara Singh... who took the oft-repeated line, that if these solutions were accepted, things would go out of his control. He also thought that if Swaran Singh got the credit for solving the tangle, it would lower the prestige of the state government. Obviously, the Punjab state leaders were more interested in their prestige than in finding an acceptable solution to the long-standing problem.” I have given this long quotation to bring out the inner workings of the state and central governments. It also bears out the criticism of opposition leaders that Indira Gandhi was not able to assert herself in finding a lasting solution to the Punjab problem. Indira Gandhi in her last term as prime minister was quite a contrast of what she was prior to 1977. In spite of a resounding popular mandate, India was let down by Indira Gandhi in tackling the Punjab problem. More importantly, she paid for it with her own life. For years the Chandigarh question has become linked with the Fazilka-Abohar area. This is because of Indira Gandhi's insistence that Chandigarh can be given to Punjab only if Punjab agrees to give the Fazilka-Abohar area to Haryana, as compensation. A G Noorani in his essay “A White Paper on a Black Record”, included by Patwant Singh and others in Punjab – The Fatal Miscalculation, brought out several aspects that have rarely come into public discussion. When the linguistic states were created in 1956, only two states were



C R Sasikumar

excluded from it, namely, East Punjab and Bombay. Later, after prolonged agitation, Bombay city was given to Maharashtra and the separate states of Maharashtra and Gujarat were formed. But Punjab's demand for Chandigarh continued to be overlooked. On 22 January 1984, some 150 eminent Punjabis highlighted that Chandigarh was built to compensate Punjab for the loss of its capital, Lahore. There was no reason for that decision to be altered. B R Ambedkar was fond of saying that boundary marking is the job of a surveyor; boundary making is the task of a statesman. This is amply brought out by the Chandigarh imbroglio. At no time the decision of the Centre to link it up with Fazilka and Abohar was justified. There was no justification for making Chandigarh a Union Territory (UT). A new capital could easily have been constructed for Haryana. The latest example is that of Andhra Pradesh where Chandrababu Naidu, with his astute leadership and commendable statesmanship, decided to build a green-field capital for the state at Amaravati. Even in this case, suggestions were made to declare Hyderabad a UT, and following the example of Chandigarh, make it the capital of both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Fortunately, wiser counsels prevailed. If Indira Gandhi had taken a reasonable position on the subject and Chandigarh given to Punjab, the Punjab agitation would have taken a different and a more conciliatory turn. For all that I know, even Operation

It is unfortunate that even after Indira Gandhi's assassination, this issue has remained unaddressed. A new beginning should be made by announcing the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and building a new capital for Haryana. As for the future of other Punjabi and Hindi speaking areas in dispute, a boundary commission may be appointed with a clear guideline that, as in all other cases so far, village should be adopted as the unit, subject to the other usual criteria such as contiguity, communications, cultural ties etc.

Blue Star could have been avoided. It is unfortunate that even after Indira Gandhi's assassination, this issue has remained unaddressed. A new beginning should be made by announcing the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and building a new capital for Haryana. As for the future of other Punjabi and Hindi speaking areas in dispute, a boundary commission may be appointed with a clear guideline that, as in all other cases so far, village should be adopted as the unit, subject to the other usual criteria such as contiguity, communications, cultural ties etc. I have urged in my latest book, *India – A Federal Union of States: Fault Lines, Challenges and Opportunities*, that the continuance of other UTs needs to be considered afresh. At present, there are eight UTs. The justification for the continuance of these UTs has never been examined so far. I am sure Delhi would have to be continued as a UT, whichever political party comes to power at the Centre. For strategic considerations, Andaman and Nicobar, and Ladakh would have to continue as UTs. Kashmir valley and Jammu region, which were converted into a UT in 2019, should be upgraded and given statehood soon after the delimitation question is addressed. The remaining UTs should be merged with the adjoining states. In view of its history as a French colony, Puducherry should be made a separate district of Tamil Nadu to maintain its identity.

The writer is a former Union Home Secretary



HARISH K PURI

AS WE CELEBRATED the 131st birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar, several interesting and conflicting perceptions of his role as one of the makers of modern India came to mind. He is one leader from the pre-independence times who has gained phenomenal after-life recognition, respect and popularity, not only as a messiah of the Dalits but also as one of the greatest Indians of the modern age. He was a nation-builder with a difference. Unlike Gandhi, Nehru, Subhas Bose and Bhagat Singh, he didn't fight against British imperialism. In fact, he supported British rule and until mid-1946 struggled to ensure that the British did not leave India so early. His primary fight was against the evil of untouchability and casteism in the Hindu community. He was a severe critic of Mahatma Gandhi and the politics of the Indian National Congress for fighting only the external evil of foreign rule while ignoring the cancerous disease within the Hindu community. In his very first meeting with Gandhi, Ambedkar told him that he had no faith in great leaders and mahatmas. “History tells that mahatmas, like fleeting phantoms, raise dust, but raise no level,” Gandhi, on his part, expressed “the highest regard” for Ambedkar, and added, “He has every right to be bitter. That he does not break our head is an act of self-restraint on his part”. The central question for Ambedkar was: Why was it that during their whole history, the Hindus did not feel ashamed about the

Babasaheb's warnings

He was prescient in noting the fragility of democracy

practice of untouchability? Why did the great men of that faith not rise in revolt against such abominable caste inequality? Following a deep study of Hindu religious texts, he came to the conclusion that because of the religious sanctity provided to casteism, it was not possible to remove it. His undelivered lecture, later published as *The Annihilation of Caste*, was a severe critique of Hinduism. In 1935, he declared that though he was born a Hindu, he would not die a Hindu and indeed a few months before his death he led his flock of more than 4,00,000 to convert to Buddhism. But he remained deeply concerned that India was internally divided, that Hindu society was undemocratic and that it emphasised inequality and exclusion. He was worried that “if Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will, no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country”. Indeed, it was his effort to make this country a better place that underlay his labour in drafting the Constitution of India. The role of chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution of India came to him as a pleasant surprise. He believed that law was a powerful instrument for social change and he brought to his task the vision of a new social order. Ambedkar worked to embed the objectives of liberty, equality and fraternity and the concept of dignity of the individual at the heart of the Constitution. He could not carry through some of his strongly-held ideas. He had to compromise on several

issues; even nursing a resentment about having to work as a hack, and do what he was asked to do in the larger interests of the nation. In the end, though, the Constitution's text, as it was finally passed, carried his stamp. In his final speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949, a day before it was adopted on November 26, 1949, he exuded a great sense of achievement. One of Ambedkar's most important contributions, however, was a set of sharp, categorical warnings. His first warning was, “In politics, we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality.. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest moment, or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up”. The second problem he highlighted was the complete absence of the principle of fraternity in our country: “How can people divided into several thousand castes be a nation?” Respect for the dignity of the individual is central to a good society. As a member of the Nehru Cabinet, Ambedkar felt that the prime minister was more focused on issues of economic development and not as much on social reconstruction. Rights are protected not by law, but by the social and moral conscience of the society. Another warning was against the peculiar Indian habit of devotion or hero-worship of leaders, that is bhakti. As he emphasised,

“Bhakti, in religion, may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship.” Given his deep sense of history and culture, Ambedkar was worried that there was a danger in India that democracy may give place to dictatorship. As he underlined, “It is quite possible for this new-born democracy to retain its form, but give place to dictatorship in fact. If there was a landslide of popular support, the danger of that possibility becoming an actuality is much greater”. It seemed almost prophetic. Critics are taking note of Indian democracy turning into electoral autocracy. The cumulative effect of corporate power, increasing inequality, communal hatred and the allowance given to mobs to humiliate others, poses a real danger. Babasaheb warned that we need to recognise the evils that lie across our path and “which induce people to prefer government for the people to government by the people”. He asked us to be on guard against these evils and said “that is the only way to serve the country”. This warning from Babasaheb is particularly relevant now. Garlanding his statues or his ritual worship and ignoring his warnings would be hypocrisy. The writer is retired professor of political science and head, B R Ambedkar Chair, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“In Washington's eyes, whether a country has ‘human rights’ and whether it is ‘democratic’ depends on whether it is obedient to the US and whether it cooperates with the ubiquitous hegemonic tentacles of the US in geopolitics.” — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Widening data divide

Government expands its powers as custodian of data, but limits access to citizens and stakeholders



MD ZAKARIA SIDDIQUI, LEKSHMI PRASAD AND SABIR AHAMED

DATA CAN IMPROVE people's life in myriad ways, yet political factors thwart its dissemination and public usage. For example, data on migrants, meticulously collected during the pandemic, could have been used for effective public policy on migrants. While this year's Economic Survey focuses on improving the quality and quantity of data for better and quicker assessment of the state of the economy, it pays little attention to access to the data by citizens, ignoring the criticality of data for a healthy and informed public discourse on issues of policy relevance. Amassing of data by the government in itself will not lead to improvements, but its use by different stakeholders will. The mere fact that people have access to data is likely to act as a threat to the government to improve performance in many areas. However, generation of data doesn't guarantee seamless access to people whose lives matter most in a democracy. Informed public discourse in any democracy is critical for accountable and transparent governance. The Right to Information is a useful instrument for citizens to access data, however it seems to be losing its teeth gradually. The Indian state has been proactively strengthening the data architecture in the name of tackling corruption and better targeting of beneficiaries. Since 2014, the scope of UIDAI has seen a huge expansion. What we now know as JAM (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile) has private details of citizens, breaching their fundamental right to privacy. When such integration of databases was questioned in court, the government resorted to artificial barriers and restrictions in accessing public services for those who are unwilling to share their details. In short, the government is sufficiently empowered to collect and use information about its citizens touching all the spheres of their life. For example, an enormous amount of data was harvested by the government during the pandemic and immunisation process, conveniently overlooking privacy concerns and the risk of misuse. Along with traditional instruments such as the Census, sample surveys and registers of various departments, the government is now armed with real time data. However, the citizen's right to accessing relevant data for quality public discussion seems to be gradually eroding. In this process, the government has refused to hold itself accountable. This is evident from repeated events of delayed release of various survey data. The effectiveness of state policies can be judged from the data produced by the statistical wings of the government, which have a reputation for being independent and credible. However, recent events have se-

verely dented this perception. The government is increasingly intervening in the everyday functioning of data production for political convenience. For example, data from the consumption survey 2017-18 has not yet been released. The leaked summary results of the survey suggest some disturbing facts that may not be politically comforting for the government. Similarly, the first Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS 2017-18) was released only after the 2019 general election. Further, instead of relying on the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI), a systematically designed survey for estimation of industrial sector GDP, the government has started to depend on self-reported, unverified data submitted to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs since 2011, muddling the actual status of Indian industry. Now that ASI is nearly redundant for official estimation purposes, the future of this database is uncertain. To date, ASI is the most reliable and in-depth data for research on productivity and regional patterns of the industrial sector. Another example of undermining the scientific database is the delay in the release of Water and Sanitation Survey data 2018. The prime minister declared India open defecation free in October 2019 while the data was released much later depriving people of an opportunity to assess the status of the Swachh Bharat mission in a scientific manner. The information gaps in the area of migration are well documented. While the JAM architecture and pandemic induced tracking tools allow for the mapping of individuals, researchers and the civil society do not have access to that information, which is useful to ascertain the level and prevalence of migration across regions within the country. The last NSS survey on migration is of 2007-08. The indifference of the state towards the bottom half of the population is easy to gauge when one sees no effort by the government to produce data on the incidence of poverty and deprivation since the pandemic. In addition, the government has suppressed information on pandemic induced deaths. The increasing gap in accountability of is stark in India. The autonomy of statistical agencies is compromised for immediate political gains at the cost of sustainability and quality of democratic governance. The Indian state is fast acquiring the characteristics of a surveillance state that collects data in an aggressive manner but hesitates in distributing it. This data divide between the state and its citizens is a potential threat to the smooth functioning of a democracy. While the government has significantly expanded its scope as the custodian of data, it is increasingly limiting the scope of access to it by responsible citizens and stakeholders. Without bridging this data gap, the scope of modern technology for tracking development cannot be realised. Siddiqui and Prasad are associated with Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala and Sabir Ahamed works with Pratichi (India) Trust

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NO IMPOSITION

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Speaking for ourselves' (IE, April 14). In a country as diverse as India with dozens of languages and dialects, making one language compulsory militates against our heterogeneity. Hindi is the first among equals but by no means the only important language in India. There is no particular merit to making Hindi compulsory in a plural society such as ours, and only downsides to doing so. Mandating Hindi will be seen as an imposition, especially as it is being pushed vigorously by a government whose diehard views on language and culture are well known. We have managed well enough without Hindi being made compulsory and can continue to do so. The status quo must prevail.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

MISSING QUALITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A fuller learning' (IE, April 14). The wisdom of allowing students to pursue two degrees simultaneously is questionable. The emphasis seems to be on quantity rather than enhancing the quality of our undergraduate and postgraduate degrees which should be job-oriented and in tune with the current needs of the country. Providing such options since students cannot be accommodated on physical campuses will dilute the quality of the degrees handed out and lead to an increase in the number of "educated but unemployed" youth. There are already a huge number of youth who have acquired degrees in the online mode due to the pandemic

and may lack ideal skills. SS Paul, Nadia

DANGEROUS SILENCE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A constant simmer' (IE, April 13). Let alone any firm action, there has been "pregnant silence" from the top regarding the episodic flare-ups of communal nature which are now happening with sickening regularity. Under such circumstances, it would not be wrong to ask: Is there a method to this madness? While the deepening fault lines in society are electorally exploited by political parties if the trend continues unchecked the road ahead is fraught with danger. The BJP's top brass must step in to let sanity prevail.

Vijai Pant, Hempur

INFLATION LOOMS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Price of things' (IE, April 14). Headline, as well as core inflation, are crossing the safe limits. Although rising oil prices are beyond the RBI's control, it must remember its primary function is inflation control. From the revival-oriented accommodative monetary policy after the pandemic, the RBI will have to take a "U" turn and increase the Repo Rate. The Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) and Statutory Reserve Ratio (SLR) also need to be increased to signal to banks and the economy at large that the days of cheap money are over. Tighten your belts. The government will have to shoulder the burden of growth. Shishir Sindekar, Nasik

Gujarat Cong leader, known for riches & rifts, goes to AAP

GOPAL KATESHIYA
RAJKOT, APRIL 14

A MERCURIAL politician who was in 2012 the richest MLA in the Gujarat Assembly, with declared assets of Rs 122 crore, Indranil Rajyaguru was known to have been considering his options for a while now. However, compounding the Congress's problems in the state, and adding to its string of embarrassments, Rajyaguru left it for the Aam Aadmi Party in the state just three weeks after the Congress hoped to have won the sulking leader over with the post of vice-president of the Gujarat PCC.

Having won on the Congress ticket from Rajkot (East) in 2012, Rajyaguru, 56, had left the party in the aftermath of his 2017 loss to then sitting Chief Minister Vijay Rupani from Rajkot (West). He joined AAP on Thursday along with Vashram Sagathiya, one of the four sitting Congress corporators in the Rajkot Municipal Corporation.

The son of Congress leader Sanjay Rajyaguru, Indranil had much clout within the party after 2012, despite being only a one-time MLA, as much on account of his political lineage as his wealth. A real-estate developer with interests in the hospitality business, and owner of several private educational institutes, Rajyaguru would patronise Congress events in Rajkot.



Gujarat Congress leaders Indranil Rajyaguru (centre) and Vashrambhai Sagthiya join AAP in New Delhi. *ANI*

The party avoided checking him despite his frequent run-ins with successive presidents of the Rajkot unit of the Congress. The rivalries were at their worst when Kunvarji Bavaliya held the post around six years ago. A former Congress MP from Rajkot Lok Sabha seat, Bavalia was considered among the Congress's tallest OBC leaders back then.

So confident was Rajyaguru of his political prowess that in the 2017 Assembly elections, it was he who chose to shift from Rajkot (East) to take on Rupani, despite the latter being the incumbent CM and Rajkot (West) being a BJP bastion for decades.

Rajyaguru hired a private agency for managing his election campaign and projected himself as the people's leader – with assets of Rs 141 crore by that time -- keeping the Congress itself

largely in the background. The BJP's counter-campaign was centred around personal attacks, including the permit he had, in the dry state, to consume alcohol on health grounds. Eventually, the BJP handed Rajyaguru a heavy defeat.

Six months later, in June 2018, in a culmination of his growing distancing with the Congress leadership, Rajyaguru quit the party. At the time, he said he disagreed with how the party was functioning, particularly how those involved in anti-party activities were being rewarded. He also repeatedly clarified that he didn't intend to join the BJP.

After his arch Congress foe Bavaliya himself defected to the BJP in July 2018 and fought a by-poll from Jasdan Assembly seat, Rajyaguru ran a campaign against him. In another embarrassment for Rajyaguru, Bavaliya managed to win the bypoll.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, he was not seen and heard much, but around two years ago, Rajyaguru started warming up to Congress again. In June 2020, his resort hosted senior Congress leaders, including then Congress Legislature Party leader Paresh Dhanani and former GPCC president Arjun Modhwadia etc, as the party tried to hold its flock together to ensure senior leader Shaktisinh Gohil's win in a Rajya Sabha contest.

That perhaps eased

Rajyaguru's re-entry into the Congress in September 2020. However, despite being among the 500 delegates invited for the party's three-day Chintan Shibir or brain-storming session held in Dwarka two months ago, that was addressed by Rahul Gandhi, the leader remained distant from the powers-that-be in the party.

Reacting to his exit to AAP on Thursday, at a time when the party is making inroads into the Congress space in the state, Mahesh Rajput, the former working president of the Congress Rajkot city unit and incumbent general secretary of the GPCC said: "Rajyaguru claims he wants to serve the people. But he actually deserted people after losing the 2017 Assembly elections. He always had compatibility issues with local party leaders and would try to force his decisions on the party."

Rajput also claimed Rajyaguru was seeking guarantees from the Congress that he and Vashram Sagathiya would get party tickets for the Assembly elections due later this year. "The party leadership refused to give such promises," he said.

On Rajyaguru's money power, Rajput said: "It is true, Rajyaguru has a lot of money. But a lot of other people also have it. A political party doesn't need a person only because he has money but also for his capacity to lead people within a party framework."

Hardik Patel says won't leave Cong as AAP leaves door open

KAMAAL SAIYED
SURAT, APRIL 14

A DAY after he lashed out at the Congress for ignoring him, party working president Hardik Patel clarified that he would "never resign from the party" even as Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) state president Gopal Italia said his party would welcome Hardik to its fold.

Addressing a public meeting on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti in Surat on Thursday, Hardik said, "Our constitution gives the right of freedom of speech. I have made honest statements... I will never give resignation from the party. We have to work together to build a better Gujarat in the coming days."

The popular Patidar leader further told the gathering, which included several Congress leaders, that he had always spoken the truth and "never lied and for which I have been defamed. In our country, we have to bring unity among all castes and creeds and move ahead".

Unite, stand with Akhilesh: Mulayam tells SP workers

LALMANI VERMA
LUCKNOW, APRIL 14

AMID REPORTS of a fresh tussle between Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav and his uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav and criticism from party leader Azam Khan's camp that the SP, under Akhilesh's leadership, was "ignoring issues faced by Muslims," party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav on Thursday urged the party workers to "stand with Akhilesh and strengthen the party in his leadership."

Giving a clear message that he backs the leadership of his son Akhilesh in the party, Mulayam, said all samajwadis should also "unite to give strength to Akhilesh." Mulayam made the appeal to SP workers in his Lok Sabha constituency, Mainpuri, where he along with Akhilesh held a party meeting on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti.

Mulayam and Akhilsh both addressed the party workers. It was their first joint programme in Mainpuri after the recent Assembly elections. Akhilesh,



SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav and its chief Akhilesh Yadav in Mainpuri, Thursday. *Twitter/@yadavakhilesh*

who contested Assembly polls for the first time, was elected MLA from Karhal seat in Mainpuri. Mulayam had campaigned for Akhilesh in Karhal.

SP's Mainpuri district president Devendra Yadav said, "It was a routine party meeting in which Neta ji (Mulayam) and adyaksh ji (Akhilesh) interacted with the party workers and gave them valuable guidance."

In the recent Assembly polls, the BJP and SP won two seats each in Mainpuri district. Mulayam's remarks hold

significance for SP workers against the backdrop of recent developments in which his younger brother Shivpal Singh Yadav – who runs a separate party but won the Assembly election on SP symbol – dropped hints of growing distance with the SP and increasing inclination towards the BJP.

A few days ago, Shivpal tweeted a photograph of "Ram darbar" and a chaupai from Ramcharitmanas and earlier he started following Prime Minister Narendra Modi, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and BJP's former deputy chief minister Dinesh Sharma on Twitter.

Earlier, Shivpal met Adityanath in Lucknow after taking oath of legislative Assembly. Before that, Shivpal criticised the SP for "not inviting" him to a Legislature Party meeting in which Akhilesh was elected the party leader last month. Akhilesh later invited Shivpal in a separate meeting of his alliance partners – Om Prakash Rajbhar and Pallavi Patel – for a meeting at the SP office on March 29, but Shivpal did not attend.

Politics of freebies won't work: Khattar jibe at AAP

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
GURGAON, APRIL 14

IN AN apparent jibe at the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday said that politics of freebies will not work in a state like Punjab, which is reeling under huge debt.

"There are some leaders who have made ulti [wrong]



Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar

policies.... There is a leader who has made a sit-down policy – who says you sit at home, there is no need to work and I will give you this free, that free," Khattar said. "Ye free

baant ke chala nahi payenge [they won't be able to govern by offering freebies]. This is a disease being spread... Delhi was a different matter, their situation is already worsening in Punjab; Punjab is under heavy debt."

Without naming any leader, Khattar said: "This person first announces freebies, and the next day goes to the Prime Minister with a bowl to ask for

funds to run Punjab. This double-game will not work. This deceit – you first promise freebies and then go to PM – if you have the courage, give things for free; if not, why brag?"

Khattar was speaking in Gurgaon, where BJP president J P Nadda inaugurated the party's new office, spread over 1 lakh square feet area and located near Signature Tower on Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

INDIA WILL talk about non-violence but will also carry the stick, as the world only understands power, according to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat.

Addressing a gathering of saints in Haridwar, Bhagwat said Swami Vivekananda and Maharshi Aurobindo's dream India will be realised in only 10 or 15 years.

"You spoke about 20-25 years, but if we increase our speed, I say 10-15 years. In that period, we will see...the India that Swami Vivekananda and Maharshi Aurobindo had imagined," Bhagwat said at the event on



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat

Wednesday.

Arguing that the society can achieve its goals if it walks together with determination, Bhagwat said, "Everything will not be achieved at once. I do not have the power at all...it is with people. They have the control. When they are ready, everyone's

behaviour changes. We are preparing them; you also do it. We will walk together as an example, without fear. We will talk about non-violence, but we will walk with a stick. And that stick will be a heavy one.

"We have no ill-will, no enmity with anyone. The world only understands power. We should have strength, and it should be visible."

Bhagwat said Hindu Rashtra is nothing but Sanatan Dharma. "The objectives of religion are the objectives of India. Swami Vivekananda had said religion is India's life.... India's progress is not possible without the progress of religion. Sanatan Dharma is only Hindu Rashtra. The progress of India is assured,"

he said.

The RSS chief said that India has begun its journey of progress and it cannot stop now.

"Those who want to stop it will be either removed or finished, but India will not stop," Bhagwat said. "Now a vehicle is on the move which has an accelerator but no brakes. No one should come in between. If you want to, come and sit with us or stay at the station.... Our goal is set. It is because we have assimilated our diversity. We have kept our diversity and traditions safe. But we must understand that we are not different (from each other) because of diversity. If we march together, forgetting our differences, we will reach our goal (in 20-25 years)."

indianexpress.com



I arrive at a conclusion not an assumption.

Inform your opinion with detailed analysis.

ECONOMY

SENSEX: 58,338.93 ▼ 237.44 (0.41%) **NIFTY:** 17,475.65 ▼ 54.65 (0.31%) **NIKKEI:** 27,172.00 ▲ 328.51 **HANG SENG:** 21,518.08 ▲ 143.71 **FTSE:** 7,586.81 ▲ 6.01 **DAX:** 14,160.52 ▲ 84.08

Domestic equity, currency, bullion and oil markets were closed on Thursday on account of Mahavir Jayanti and Ambedkar Jayanti; international market data till 1900 IST

SECTOR WATCH BANKING

IDBI Bank waves ‘pvt sector’ tag to seek 10 times rise in CEO pay

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, APRIL 14

THE PAY package of IDBI Bank MD and CEO Rakesh Sharma is likely to surge by over 10 times with the bank putting a resolution for postal voting by shareholders. The bank's board has proposed a hike of nearly 10 times in Sharma's salary, from Rs 2.62 lakh per month to Rs 20 lakh per month — Rs 2.4 crore annually — with effect from March 19, 2022. Besides, the other perquisites include semi-furnished accommodation, club membership, car for official purposes, entertainment expenses, leave and leave fare concession, PF, gratuity, annuity policy and other retirement benefits, according to the resolution moved by the bank for postal voting.

There are also stock options and variable pay as may be decided by the Nomination and Remuneration Committee of the IDBI Bank board and subject to the RBI approval. As a result, Sharma's total package is expected to go up further.

When compared to this, the salary of Dinesh Khara, who became Chairman of SBI, India's largest bank, on October 7, 2020, was Rs 38.12 lakh (Rs 3.17 lakh per month) in 2020-21, according to SBI Annual Report. Punjab National Bank's former MD and CEO Mallikarjuna Rao received a total salary of Rs 31.22 lakh (Rs 2.6 lakh per month) in FY21, says the PNB Annual Report. According to the bank's Annual Report for 2020-21, Sharma's salary was Rs 2,62,548 per month. This included Rs 22,440 salary and applicable DA (presently 17 per cent) of Rs 38,148.

IDBI Bank is controlled by the government directly and indirectly. Public sector LIC holds 49.24 per cent stake in the bank. The total promoter holding, including LIC and the government stake, was 94.71 per cent, as of December 2021. However, according to the bank, it has been categorised as a 'Private Sector Bank' for regulatory purposes by the Reserve Bank of India, with effect from January 21, 2019, consequent upon Life Insurance Corporation acquiring 51 per cent of the total paid-up equity

PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?

■ Explaining the rationale for the salary hike, the bank said, "the November 2019 circular of RBI on compensation of Whole Time Directors in private sector banks is applicable to WTDs in IDBI Bank also."

■ The Annual Report of IDBI Bank for 2020-21, says, "Pay and allowances for employees is presently based on structured pay scale in alignment with the structure prevailing in public sector banks."

share capital of the bank.

Explaining the rationale for the salary hike, the bank said: "The November 2019 circular of RBI on compensation of Whole Time Directors (WTD) in private sector banks is applicable to WTDs in IDBI Bank also." "The current salary drawn by the MD & CEO of IDBI Bank is based on the approval given by RBI for FY20-21, in terms of RBI guidelines on compensation of Whole Time Directors in private sector banks. The reappointment of MD & CEO has also been approved by RBI for a period of three years," the bank said in a statement to *The Indian Express*.

However, the Annual Report of IDBI Bank for 2020-21 says, "Pay and allowances for employees is presently based on structured pay scale in alignment with the structure prevailing in public sector banks." Sharma actually retired from Canara Bank in July 2018. He was appointed as IDBI bank MD and CEO in October 2018. He has now been given a three-year extension.

The e-voting on the resolution which started on April 6 will end on May 5, 2022.

The bank's plan to hike the CEO salary follows the government's proposal to privatise the bank by selling part of its stake. LIC, which is also the promoter of the bank, is also likely to sell part of its stake in the bank in the privatisation process.

BOEING 737 MAX SIMULATOR HAD MALFUNCTIONING STICK SHAKER

‘SpiceJet knew about faulty gear, still continued training’

Malfunction found on Mar 30, says DGCA official

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

SPICEJET DECIDED to continue training its pilots at a Boeing 737 MAX simulator facility near Delhi despite knowing that equipment at the said training centre was faulty, official sources told *The Indian Express*.

Aviation safety regulator DGCA, which barred 90 pilots of the airline from flying the 737 MAX model till they undergo retraining on a compliant simulator, has served a show-cause notice to SpiceJet and Canadian flight training service provider CAE, which manages the simulator facility.

According to a senior official at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), during a routine inspection on March 30 it was found that the Boeing 737 MAX simulator had a malfunctioning 'stick shaker' on the co-pilot seat. A stick shaker is a mechanical device that warns the pilots of an imminent aerodynamic stall by shaking

the aircraft's control yoke violently. The said piece of equipment had been out of service since March 17.

Notably, specific pilot training for the Boeing 737 MAX is mandatory for airlines operating the plane model to make pilots understand the new flight control system in the aircraft called MCAS, or manoeuvring characteristics augmentation system. This system was at the heart of the two crashes of this aircraft type that together killed 346 people, leading to a global grounding of the plane.

Upon discovery of the faulty equipment at the CAE-managed training facility in Noida, the DGCA inspectors reached out to Boeing seeking the American airframe maker's view on whether training could be conducted with a malfunctioning stick shaker on co-pilot seat. "Boeing replied that such training should not be conducted. Reply was then sought from SpiceJet regarding this issue, to which they replied that they have taken in house measure to continue such training. However, the OEM (Boeing) was not consulted by the operator (SpiceJet)", the DGCA official said. "The simulator training was stopped by DGCA ... and the credit of training for 90 pi-

SPICEJET: NO OPS COMPROMISED

THE AIRLINE shall submit its reply within the specified period...: SpiceJet spokesperson

lots was nullified. Further, SpiceJet was informed not to utilise these pilots for B737 MAX flight operations," the official added.

Additionally, the DGCA also served show-cause notices to SpiceJet and CAE for conducting the training that was in violation of the rules laid down by the regulator — specifically mentioning that a flight simulation training device with missing, malfunctioning or inoperative component "that is required to be present and correctly operate for the satisfactory completion of that maneuver, procedure, or task" should not be used or be allowed for use.

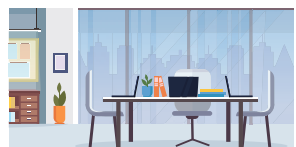
In response to a query from *The Indian Express* seeking comment on why the airline decided to continue training at a faulty simulator facility, a SpiceJet spokesperson said: "We have received a communication from the regulator on the

matter and the airline shall submit its reply within the specified period. We would like to reiterate that safety and security of our operations and passengers are of utmost importance which is manifested in our outstanding track record. None of our operations are compromised and are in line with international safety standards".

CAE responded via mail saying: "As the simulator is owned by Boeing, please speak to Boeing. We are working closely with all parties involved including Boeing and the DGCA to ensure the maintenance and operation of this specific device complies with all regulatory requirements. We are committed to ensuring our customers receive high quality simulation experiences in accordance with all regulations". In a similarly worded response to a query sent by this newspaper, Boeing in India said: "We are working closely with all parties involved including our supplier and the DGCA to ensure the maintenance and operation of this specific device complies with all regulatory requirements. We are committed to ensuring our customers receive high quality simulation experiences in accordance with all regulations."

‘Tech, BFSI firms account for 51% of office leasing in Jan-Mar’

Technology companies and BFSI firms drove office space demand, with 51% share in total leasing in the segment in January-March, a CBRE report said



Bengaluru, Chennai & Delhi-NCR dominated absorption during the quarter, accounting for almost two-thirds of the transaction activity, as per the 'CBRE India Office Figures Q1 2022' report

SHARE OF VARIOUS SECTORS IN OFFICE LEASING DURING FIRST QUARTER OF 2022:

■ Technology corporates: **34%**
■ BFSI (Banking, Financial Services and Insurance) firms: **17%**
■ Flexible space operators: **13%**
■ Engineering & manufacturing: **12%**
■ Research, consulting & analytics firms: **11%**

Source: CBRE South Asia Pvt Ltd/PTI

Office leasing activity in India in Q1 2022 grew 97% year-on-year to 11.4 million square feet

NEW FEATURES: REACTING TO MESSAGES, CALLING UP TO 32 MEMBERS

To help users organise groups, WhatsApp to launch Communities

NANDAGOPAL RAJAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

WHATSAPP IS expected to roll out Communities, an innovation to manage groups better and have more meaningful conversations, later this year. Communities would be like a "directory of groups", a WhatsApp spokesperson said, adding that the feature will let anyone "run a community of their own with diverse groups yet having some common linkages".

The person said this was "based on feedback that people get lost because of the multiple groups".

Anyone will be able to create a community and invite multiple groups to join in, but the groups will become part of the community only if their respective admins accept the invite. However, only those in a particular group will be able to see the messages in that group and will have no visibility on either the messages or the phone numbers of users in other groups within their community. The community

though has a broadcast option to message everyone across groups, but visible only to those who have allowed these messages. There are some other features being pushed as part of this new rollout. For instance, users will be able to react to messages like they do on Facebook and Instagram. Also, they will be able to get on an audio call with all members in a group provided that number is below 32. Plus, the limit for file sizes is now up to 2GB.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

‘Neu’ super app likely to offer non-Tata brands in future

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 14

SETTING THE stage for a tough competition with players like Amazon, Flipkart and Reliance Retail in the e-commerce space, the Tata group's ambitious super app, Tata Neu, is expected to go beyond Tata models and offerings "at some point" based on the customer demand.

Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran said the super app's evolution will be customer-driven, not contracts. "We will go beyond Tata offerings and the evolution of the Tata Neu app will be customer-driven, it will be determined by the consumers," he said while addressing the media in Mumbai. The app has already registered 2.2 million enrolments within a week of the launch. "This is the first version of the app. We are working on a number of categories and innovation and tech innovation which includes AI driven personal assistant for the consumer. We're overwhelmed by the response in terms of downloads and transactions," he said.

Chandrasekaran said the app

CONSORTIUM ALSO INCLUDES MUBADALA

BlackRock-led group to buy stake in Tata Power arm for ₹4K cr

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 14

TATA POWER Company and a BlackRock Real Assets-led consortium, including Mubadala Investment Company, have entered into a binding agreement to invest in Tata Power's renewable energy subsidiary Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd.

BlackRock Real Assets, together with Mubadala, will invest Rs 4,000 crore by way of equity or compulsorily convertible instruments for a 10.53 per cent stake in Tata Power Renewables, translating to a base equity valuation of Rs 34,000 crore. The final shareholding will range from 9.76 per cent to 11.43 per cent on final conversion.

This newly created platform will consist of five distinct businesses delivering long-term, customer-oriented solutions. It will house all renewable energy businesses of Tata Power. The broad-based portfolio of assets ensures diversified yet stable revenue sources including 25-year fixed-price PPAs for grid connected utility scale projects, Tata Power said.

Tata Power Renewables' vertically integrated operations cur-

10.53% STAKE BUY



Reuters file

■ BlackRock Real Assets, together with Mubadala, will invest Rs 4,000 crore by way of equity or compulsorily convertible instruments for a 10.53% stake in Tata Power Renewables

rently have approximately 4.9 GW of renewable energy assets.

Over the next five years, Tata Power Renewables aims to achieve a portfolio of over 20 GW of renewables assets and a market-leading position in the rooftop and electric vehicle charging space across India, the company said.



Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran in Mumbai. Pradip Das

has brought together all Tata brands like Big Basket, Air Asia, Croma and 1mg under the Tata Neu platform. "We have a roadmap about the app architecture. It will be a continuous process. Tata Neu pass (app's loyalty programme) will also go beyond the Tata group at some point," he said. "It's a value proposition to simplify the life of Indian customers. We will certainly drive a lot of strong financial outcomes, including profits and revenues," Chandrasekaran said. "You will see us launch new product categories over the next 1-2 years," said Pratik Pal, CEO Tata Digital.

On the hiccups faced by the app after its launch last week, an

official said, "We had unprecedented demands, glitches were there only for the first 3 hours on the first day of launch. We will be constantly updating the app and it's an ongoing journey. We are extremely passionate about this, and you will see significant improvements going ahead."

Tata Neu's NeuPass will offer various loyalty programmes across Tata group's consumer brands under a single platform. It entitles members to a minimum of 5 per cent additional NeuCoins every time they shop on the app, in addition to other benefits. NeuCoins are rewarding a customer earns when transacting on the Tata Neu app or at any brand stores or hotels.

Textiles PLI: Nod to 61 cos' proposals worth ₹19K cr

New Delhi: The Centre on Thursday approved proposals by 61 companies, including Kimberly Clark India Pvt Ltd, Arvind Ltd and HP Cotton Textile Mills Ltd, to receive financial incentives under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for textiles.

The 61 companies are set to invest Rs 19,077 crore for the production of MMF (man-made fibre) apparel, fabrics and technical textiles. The proposals are estimated to lead to the generation of over 2.4 lakh jobs, the Textiles Ministry said. "In the approved 61 applications, the proposed total investment expected from the applicants is Rs 19,077 crore and a projected turnover is Rs 1,84,917 crore with a proposed employment of 2,40,134 people," said Textiles Secretary UP Singh. **ENS**

IMF: Ukraine war 'sending shockwaves'

Washington: The war in Ukraine is prompting the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to cut global growth estimates for 2022 and 2023 as higher food and energy prices pressure fragile economies, IMF MD Kristalina Georgieva said.

She said the Ukraine invasion was "sending shockwaves throughout the globe" and dealing a massive setback to nations struggling to recover from Covid. **REUTERS**

RailTel
(A Government of India Undertaking)
CIN No. U40202DL2004CA0107496

RailTel/Northern Region invites E-tenders from eligible bidders for following works:
1. Trenching, laying for shifting/rectification of OFC in 5 sections of NER.
Estimated cost: ₹ 61,68,432
Tender Opening Date: 06-05-2022 15:30 Hrs at www.ireps.gov.in
2. Zonal Rate Contract for OFC laying and LAN wiring related works as per SOR under Territory of THLL/LNCR/RailTel
Estimated cost: ₹ 3,47,08,559.57
Tender Opening Date: 09-05-2022 15:30 Hrs at www.ireps.gov.in
Tender Notice & tender documents are available on www.railtelindia.com. Addendum/corrigendum will be uploaded in RailTel website only.

BRIEFLY

\$5-tn target

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry said the focus on capex will boost manufacturing and tax revenue collections, and keep India on track to be a \$5 trillion economy. **PTI**

Hyundai IONIQ

New York/Seoul: Hyundai's all-electric crossover IONIQ 5 won big at the 2022 World Car Awards at the New York International Auto Show, as it won overall World Car of the Year, World Electric Vehicle of the Year and World Car Design of the Year. **ENS**

M&M price hike

New Delhi: Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) raised prices of its entire range by 2.5%. It will hike ex-showroom prices by ₹10,000-63,000. **PTI**

Honda hybrid EV

New Delhi: Honda Cars will enter the mainstream strong hybrid EV segment in India by launching City e:HEV sedan next month. **PTI**

US jobless claim

Washington: Jobless claims rose by 18,000 to 185,000 last week, the US Labor Department said, but still stayed near a half-century low. **AP**

Bank of India moves NCLT against FRL

Mumbai: Future Retail (FRL) on Thursday said Bank of India (BoI) has moved an insolvency petition against it in the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

As per banking sources, FRL slipped into the non-performing asset (NPA) bucket in January and the 40 per cent provisions taken against that account will show in banks' Q4FY22 financial results.

"Please be informed that Bank of India has served an advance intimation of filing an application under Section 7 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, against the company for default on non-payment of monies due in terms of the Framework Agreement entered into between the Company and Bank of India. We have received a copy of the petition and are in the process of taking legal advice," FRL said in a notification to the exchanges. **FE**

REUTERS

FRANKFURT/LONDON, APRIL 14

THE EUROPEAN Central Bank (ECB) stuck to plans on Thursday to finally end its stimulus programme in the third quarter but gave no further clues on its schedule, stressing uncertainties

What does NPCI nod to WhatsApp mean for India's UPI ecosystem?

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

META'S INSTANT messaging app WhatsApp has received clearance from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to add 60 million users to its UPI-based payments service WhatsApp Pay. This will take the total permissible number of users on the platform to 100 million. In a statement, Manesh Mahatme, director-payments, WhatsApp India, said the platform has planned significant investments in 'payments on WhatsApp' across India including — "India-first" features.

What does this mean for WhatsApp?

As a result of this clearance from NPCI, WhatsApp will be able

WILL BE ABLE TO TAKE ON RIVALS

WHATSAPP WILL be able to add 60 million users to its UPI service and take on heavyweight rivals such as Walmart-backed PhonePe and Google Pay, which command a majority of the transactions



Reuters file

to add 60 million users to its UPI service and take on heavyweight rivals such as Walmart-backed PhonePe and Google Pay, which command a majority of the transactions that happen on UPI. However, the NPCI has ensured that WhatsApp's ability to skew the level-playing field is limited given

that the messaging app has over 500 million users and granting it permission to offer UPI service to all the users at once could impact competition. The company, on its part, though, is learnt to have asked NPCI's permission to expand its payments to all of its users without a cap.

EXPLAINED



CHRISTINE LAGARDE
President, European Central Bank AP file

linked to the war in Ukraine.

The statement pushed euro zone bond yields and the euro lower as markets trimmed expectations for the extent of rate hikes later this year. "We will maintain optionality, gradualism and flexibility in the conduct of our monetary policy," ECB president Christine Lagarde told reporters.

Elsewhere, Wall Street stocks fell, while bond yields in the US and the dollar rose as investors feared aggressive US policy tightening may hurt the economy.

The benchmark 10-year US Treasury yield jumped on a flurry of economic data and as the ECB signalled less aggressive tightening plans than expected.

On Wall Street, the Dow rose 0.09 per cent to 34,595.09, while the S&P 500 lost fell 0.57 per cent, to 4,421.09 and the Nasdaq by 1.29 per cent to 13,467.39.

Brent futures rose \$1.91, or 1.76 per cent, at \$110.69 a barrel, while US WTI futures rose \$1.63, or 1.56 per cent, to \$105.89 a barrel at 1:43 pm ET.

TOPOF THE
WORLD

Kim Un with Ri Chun Hi at the house. AP

NORTH KOREA

Kim gives 'Pink Lady' a luxury home

Seoul: Ri Chun Hi, North Korea's famous state TV anchor, has announced major events for decades, including nuclear and missile tests and the death of a leader, with an instantly identifiable, passionate voice. The anchor, dubbed the "pink lady" abroad for her bright traditional Korean attire, became the topic of official North Korean media herself Thursday after leader Kim Jong Un gave her a luxurious residence and asked her to continue to serve as the voice of his ruling Workers' Party. Experts say Kim is providing special treatment to elite to boost their loyalty as he grapples with the pandemic, a troubled economy and a stalemate in nuclear diplomacy with the US. AP

UNITED STATES

New York subway shooting suspect to remain in jail

New York: A US federal judge ordered the man accused of this week's mass shooting in a New York City subway car to remain in custody on Thursday after prosecutors said, Frank James, 62, is accused of injuring 23 people and faces a federal charge of violently attacking a mass transit system. He was represented by two public defenders in his appearance at the US District Court in Brooklyn who requested he undergo a psychiatric evaluation. REUTERS

UNITED STATES

IS 'Beatles' cell member convicted

Washington: A member of a group of Islamic State militants who beheaded American hostages in Iraq and Syria, and were nicknamed "The Beatles" for their British accents, was found guilty of terrorism offences in a US court on Thursday. A jury found El Shafee Elsheikh, 33, guilty on all counts following a trial in Alexandria, Virginia, just outside Washington, on charges including lethal hostage-taking and conspiracy to commit murder. The charges against Elsheikh carry a potential death sentence, but US prosecutors have advised British officials that they will not seek the death penalty. REUTERS

WARSHIP SERIOUSLY DAMAGED, RUSSIA CLAIMS FIRE ON BOARD

Ukraine says hit Russian flagship

ADAM SCHRECK
KYIV, APRIL 14

THE RUSSIAN military sustained a major blow on Thursday when the flagship of the country's Black Sea fleet was badly damaged and its crew evacuated. Ukrainian officials said their forces hit the vessel with missiles, while Russia acknowledged a fire aboard the Moskva but no attack.

The warship named for the Russian capital was 60 to 65 nautical miles south of Odesa when the fire ignited, and the vessel was still battling flames hours later while heading east, according to a Pentagon official. The loss of the ship would be a major military setback and a devastating symbolic defeat for Moscow as its troops regroup for a renewed offensive in eastern Ukraine after retreating from much of the north, including Kyiv.

Despite an early report from one Ukrainian official saying the ship had sunk, the Moskva was still moving on its own power, at least for now, a senior US defence official said. The official said the Pentagon could not confirm what caused the fire.

Russia said the fire aboard the ship, which would typically have 500 sailors on board, forced the entire crew to evacuate. It later said the fire had been contained and that the ship would be towed to port with its guided missile launchers intact.

The ship can carry 16 long-range cruise missiles, and its removal from combat would greatly reduce Russia's firepower in the Black Sea. Regardless of the extent of the damage, any attack would represent a huge blow to

Russia accuses Ukraine of border airstrikes

RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES have accused Ukrainian forces of launching air strikes on the Russian region of Bryansk, which borders with Ukraine, the latest in a series of allegations of cross-border attacks by Kyiv on Russian territory. Russia's Investigative Committee alleged that two Ukrainian military helicopters entered Russia's air space on Thursday and, "moving at low altitude, acting deliberately, they carried out at least six air strikes on residential buildings in the village of Klimovo," about 11 kilometers away from the Russian border. AP

Russian prestige in a war already widely seen as a historic blunder.

Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC show the Moskva steaming out of the port of Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula on Sunday. But cloud cover on Thursday made it impossible to use satellite images to locate the ship or determine its condition. Maksym Marchenko, the governor of the Odesa region, across the Black Sea to the northwest of Sevastopol, said the Ukrainians struck the ship with two Neptune missiles and caused "serious damage."

Russia's Defence Ministry said ammunition on board detonated as a result of a fire, without saying what caused the blaze.



The Russian missile cruiser Moskva, the flagship of Russia's Black Sea Fleet anchored in Black Sea port of Sevastopol. File

Shanghai sees 27k new cases as Xi reiterates urgency of Covid curbs

REUTERS
SHANGHAI, APRIL 14

CHINA'S FINANCIAL hub Shanghai reported over 27,000 coronavirus cases on Thursday, a new high, a day after President Xi Jinping said the country must continue with its strict "dynamic Covid clearance" policy and pandemic control measures.

Wider curbs to stop the spread of Omicron variant have led to logistical and supply chain disruptions that are taking a growing economic toll, adding to expectations that China's central bank will soon announce more stimulus measures.

An April 7 study by Gavekal

Dragonomics found 87 of China's 100 largest cities by GDP have imposed some form of quarantine.

Shanghai residents, meanwhile, have taken to social media to vent frustration over the difficulties of getting enough food and China's policy that requires anyone testing positive, symptomatic or not, to be centrally quarantined, where many people have complained about poor conditions.

Raising hopes for a shift in policy, on Wednesday the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a guide on home quarantining on its social media. Shanghai authorities also gave no hint of any change in approach during a Thursday briefing.



A complex converted to a temporary shelter for people fleeing Russia's invasion in Dnipro on Thursday. Reuters

UK imposes asset freeze on two Abramovich associates

REUTERS
LONDON, APRIL 14

BRITAIN ON Thursday sanctioned two close associates of Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, saying the men had been subjected to the largest asset freeze ever imposed by the government.

Chelsea Football Club direc-

tor Eugene Tenenbaum and another Abramovich business associate, David Davidovich, were targeted. Davidovich will also face a travel ban, meaning he will be refused the right to enter or remain in Britain.

The government said it had imposed a freezing order on \$10 billion worth of assets linked to the two men, who were being sanctioned for their close association with Abramovich.

Europe drafts import ban on Russian oil

THE NEW YORK TIMES
BRUSSELS, APRIL 14

EUROPEAN UNION officials are drafting the most contested measure yet to punish Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, an embargo on Russian oil products.

The bloc has long resisted a ban on Russian oil because of its enormous costs for Germany

and its potential to disrupt politics around the region and increase energy prices.

But EU officials and diplomats say the union is now moving toward adopting a phased-in ban designed to give Germany and other countries time to arrange alternative suppliers. The union took a similar approach earlier this month when it banned Russian coal, providing for a four-

UK plan to fly asylum-seekers to Rwanda draws outrage

JILL LAWLESS
LONDON, APRIL 14

BRITAIN'S CONSERVATIVE government has struck a deal with Rwanda to send some asylum-seekers thousands of miles away to the East African country, a move that opposition politicians and refugee groups condemned as inhumane, unworkable and a waste of public money.

Home Secretary Priti Patel visited the Rwandan capital, Kigali, on Thursday to sign what the two countries called an "economic development partnership." The plan will see some people who arrive in Britain as stowaways on trucks or in small

MEANWHILE

JOHNNY DEPP OPENS CASE AGAINST EX-WIFE

Lawyers for Hollywood star Johnny Depp on Tuesday gave a jury an overview of his U.S. defamation case against his ex-wife Amber Heard, the latest chapter in a long-running legal fight between the two Hollywood stars. Depp alleges Heard defamed him when she penned a December 2018 opinion piece in the Washington Post about being a survivor of domestic abuse.



Pak Army debunks Imran conspiracy charge, says Russia visit 'embarrassing'

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 14

CONTRADICTING OUSTED prime minister Imran Khan, who had accused the US of hatching a conspiracy to topple his government, the Pakistan Army said on Thursday that the word "conspiracy" was not used in a statement issued after a meeting of the National Security Committee last month.

Major General Babar Iftikhar, Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistan Army, also described as "embarrassing" Khan's presence in Russia when it invaded Ukraine but acknowledged that the Army was aware of the visit.

Iftikhar was addressing a press conference three days after Opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif was sworn-in as Pakistan's Prime Minister following the ouster of Khan in a no-confidence vote.

Responding to a question on Khan's allegation of a US conspiracy, Iftikhar said: "As far as military response about NSC meeting is considered, that stance in that meeting was fully given, and then a statement was issued... which says what was concluded in that meeting. The words used are in front of you... as I said... the words used are clear. Is there any word such as conspiracy used in it? I think not."

He said the minutes of the NSC meeting can be declassified if the new government decides to do so.

Asked about Khan's Russia trip, he said: "There was institutional input that he should go. It was in no one's wildest dreams that they [Russia] would announce war when the Prime

Explained
E Imran lost Army support

THE POWERFUL Pakistan Army has wielded considerable power in security and foreign policy. Khan, who was ousted early this week, was said to have lost support of the Army after he delayed the appointment of the ISI spy agency chief last year. According to reports, Khan wanted to keep Lt Gen Faiz Hameed as the spy chief but the Army high command appointed him Corps Commander in Peshawar.

Minister was there, which was obviously very embarrassing."

Iftikhar also told reporters that the former PM had approached the Army chief to help find a solution to the political crisis. "It is unfortunate that our political leadership was not ready to talk. So the Army chief and DG ISI went to PMO and three scenarios were discussed," he said.

He recalled that one solution was that the no-confidence motion should be held as it was. The others were that the PM should resign, or the no-confidence motion should be retracted and the assemblies dissolved. "No option from the establishment was given," Iftikhar said.

The ISPR chief also said the Army has "nothing to do with politics" and will remain apolitical in the future, and asserted that its chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa was not seeking an extension and will neither accept one.

Lanka's Opp party JVP to hold march against govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO, APRIL 14

SRI LANKA'S Opposition party Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) will hold a massive public march for three days next week to support the ongoing protest against the Rajapaksa government, as it accused the government of "stubbornly" trying to stay in power by using various tactics without listening to people's demands.

JVP General Secretary Tilvin Silva at a press conference on Wednesday said the "largest public march in the country's history" will be held from April 17 to 19 to take "this struggle to victory", the *Colombo Page* news portal reported. The march will start from Beruwala in Kalutara District on April 17 at 9am and reach Colombo on April 19.

"We are ready to give a new impetus to the struggle and turn it into a people's power that will end victoriously," Silva said.

"Artists, lawyers and experts from all walks of life have joined the people's struggle and are urging this government to go home. The government is stubbornly trying to stay in power," he said.

MARCOS JR, WHO HAS SPENT POLITICAL CAREER TRYING TO REHABILITATE FAMILY NAME, IS FRONT-RUNNER IN UPCOMING POLLS

Philippines toppled one Marcos, now his son may become President

SUI-LEE WEE & CAMILLE ELEMIA
MANILA, APRIL 14

THEY BOPPED along to the beat of a martial law anthem updated into a pop tune. They cheered when an A-list celebrity proclaimed that the spirit of Ferdinand E Marcos, the former dictator, was alive. And when Marcos' son and namesake held up the peace sign made popular by his father a generation ago, the shrieking crowds mirrored it in return.

It is election season in the Philippines, and history is being rewritten, one campaign rally at

a time. Ferdinand Marcos Jr has spent decades defending his family's name against accusations of greed and corruption and downplaying the legacy of his father's brutal rule. During his presidential campaign, he has portrayed himself as a unifier, while false narratives online reimagine his father's regime as a "golden era" in the nation's history.

Now, as patriarch of the Marcos dynasty, Marcos is expected to be the first person to win the presidential election in the Philippines by a majority in more than three decades.

The race is being cast as a competition between those who remember the past and those

who are accused of trying to distort it, the last chapter in a brazen attempt to absolve the Marcoses of wrongdoing and quash any effort to hold the family accountable. Five years of President Rodrigo Duterte — a strong Marcos ally known for his bloody war on drugs and for jailing his critics — may have presaged a Marcos family comeback.

"It will determine not just our future but our past," said Maria Ressa, a journalist and Nobel Prize winner.

The Marcoses are accused of looting as much as \$10 billion from the government before fleeing to Hawaii in 1986, when the peaceful "People Power" protests



Ferdinand Marcos Jr addressing supporters during a presidential campaign in Santa Rosa in March. NYT

toppled the Marcos regime. The family returned to the country

shortly after the death of the elder Marcos in 1989.

Despite the exile, the Marcos name never truly left the political establishment.

Marcos, known by his boyhood nickname, "Bongbong," served as vice-governor, governor and congressman in Ilocos Norte, the family stronghold, for most of the period between the 1980s and 2010. That year, he entered the national political scene when he was elected senator. Imelda Marcos, his 92-year-old mother, ran for president twice and lost in the 1990s.

Rehabilitating the family name has been a recurring theme. Over the decades, the Marcoses have sought to target young voters with no memory

of martial law or the torture and killing of political prisoners. Fifty-six percent of the voting population in the Philippines is aged between 18 and 41, and most did not witness the atrocities of the Marcos regime — ideal circumstances for the spread of disinformation, opponents say.

In January, Twitter said it had removed more than 300 accounts promoting Marcos' presidential bid for violating rules on spam and manipulation. The influential Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines said in a statement that it was appalled by the "historical revisionism" in the election, and "the attempt to delete or destroy our collective

memory through the seeding of lies and false narratives."

Marcos' spokesman, Vic Rodriguez, said there was "no certainty" that the Twitter accounts belonged to his supporters.

Several groups have sought to disqualify Marcos' candidacy, pointing to a 1995 tax evasion conviction and the \$3.9 billion in estate taxes that his family still owes the government. Marcos, 64, has brushed off the attacks as "fake news," and refused to participate in nearly all presidential debates.

Instead, Marcos has used social media to reach a captive audience online, reviewing viral TikTok dances and agreeing to makeovers. NYT

Harmanpreet shines in India’s comfortable win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 14

VICE-CAPTAIN Harmanpreet Singh continued his goal-scoring spree with a brace as the Indian men’s hockey team defeated an inexperienced Germany 3-0 in the first match of the two-leg tie to extend its lead in the FIH Pro League standings here on Thursday.

Harmanpreet converted two penalty corners for India in the 18th and 27th minutes, while Abhishek scored from another set piece in the 45th minute. With a half a dozen of Germany’s 22-member squad making their senior debut here, the vast gap between the two sides was evidently visible.

By virtue of this win, India have consolidated their position at the top of the table with 24 points from 11 games, while the Germans are placed second with 17 points from nine matches. Both the teams will lock horns again in the second match of the tie at the Kalinga Stadium on Friday.

The Indians started on a bright note and secured a penalty corner early into the first quarter but Jugraj Singh’s effort from a penalty corner was kept out by the German defence and from the resultant rebound Nilkanata Sharma shot wide.

India enjoyed a lot of possession in the first quarter but the forwardline hasn’t been clinical enough to bury the chances. India continued in the same vein in the second quarter and took the lead in the 18th minute through none other than Harmanpreet from a penalty corner with a superbly executed dragkick.

India earned another penalty corner soon but this time Gierman goalkeeper Alexander Stadler denied Harmanpreet. But Harmanpreet doubled India’s lead three minutes from half time, wrong-footing Stadler from another set piece.

The Indians kept up the pressure after the change of ends and created plenty of scoring opportunities but the young German defence stood firm but were also guilty of conceding a lot of plenty corners. And from such opportunity, Abhishek deflected in Harmanpreet’s variation to hand India a comfortable 3-0 lead just at the end of the third quarter.

Minutes into the fourth and final quarter, Germany conceded another penalty corner but this time Stadler kept out Harmanpreet’s try. The Germans gave a good account of themselves in the final 15 minutes but they gave too many chances to the Indians in the form of penalty corners which cost them dearly.

Ther Germans conceded eight penalty corners but failed to secure a single one in the entire 60 minutes.

Man City counter Atletico’s football, dark arts to progress

Extra security was called to keep players separate after the game ended 0-0

RORY SMITH
MADRID, APRIL 14

MANY THINGS happened at the Wanda Metropolitano in the final 10 or 20 minutes, the ones that seemed to stretch on and on, long past the final whistle, until they almost constituted another self-contained bonus game, a separate third installment of a scheduled two-part drama. There was some hair-pulling. There was quite a lot of time-wasting. There was a full-scale brawl, dozens and dozens of players and team staff members all streaming down to a corner of the field to make their opinions known. There was a flurry of yellow cards, and a bright, angry red. There was Diego Simeone, conducting his orchestra, urging the stadium to bay and to howl and to snarl until the last breath.

What there was not, the only thing missing, was much actual soccer. There were flashes, of course, Atlético Madrid charging forward, desperately hunting the goal that would break Manchester City’s resistance and take the game into extra time, extend their stay in the Champions League for another 30 minutes or, just maybe, another few weeks. For the most part, though, those endless last few minutes were a study in the art of not playing soccer. That is, of course, very much part of Atlético Madrid’s identity. Simeone has spent a decade crafting a team in his own image, one that plays, just as he did, with a “knife between its teeth.”

Atlético should, by rights, be a heroic underdog among Europe’s elite, a countercultural alternative to the hegemony of pressing and possession. It does not, after all, have the resources of its overweening neighbor, Real Madrid, let alone the state-backed clout of Manchester City or Paris St.-Germain, and yet it refuses to wilt, to succumb to financial inevitability. It is a potent testament to Simeone’s work, then, and to the great effectiveness of his inculcation, that his team can so easily and so frequently play the role of the Champions League’s obvious villain: a side of cynics, provocateurs and cutthroats, designed and built to draw the beauty and the soul from the game, happy to subvert any norm available in pursuit of victory, and in defiance of convention, its opponents and the game’s sense of moral rectitude.

And yet, in all the fire and fury, it was not only Atlético that realized that a place in the semifinals hung not on talent and technique but on grit and grizzle, on a willingness to do whatever it takes.

There is no team more associated with beauty than Pep Guardiola’s Manchester City.



Players clash during Manchester City-Atletico Madrid quarterfinal.

Reuters

SEMIFINAL LINEUP

Man City	vs	Real Madrid
Liverpool	vs	Villarreal

He has come, over the years, to stand as an embodiment of soccer’s higher values, its ultimate arbiter of taste, its aesthete in chief. Guardiola means sophistication and style, and he has imbued all of that into the team he has built.

Those were not the virtues, though, that allowed his team to escape Madrid unscathed, its place in a Champions League semifinal with Real Madrid secured, its chase for a domestic and European treble intact. City did not beat Atlético by overcoming its dark arts. It beat Atlético by borrowing them.

Some of them, at least. Just like its host, Guardiola’s team, for once, did not seem especially interested in playing soccer, either. It played, instead, for time. Every throw-in seemed to take an age, and every free kick and every goal kick, too. No injury was shaken off; even the most minor bump and bruise warranted an extended period of treatment. Balls that had run out of play were knocked just a little farther down the line, out of the reach of Atlético’s players.

No slight was too minor not to be met with indignation. That should not be read as a criticism of Manchester City; far from it. Often, it is so easy to be dazzled by the brilliance of Guardiola’s side that its character, its courage, is overlooked. His record in the

Premier League, in particular, in recent years has been built as much on defensive parsimony as attacking threat. City does not wilt and it does not doubt; it keeps going, remorselessly, absolute in its conviction that it will be proved right in the end.

As the Metropolitano — this sleek, modern stadium built by the success of Simeone — somehow morphed into the Vicente Calderón, Atlético’s crumbling, intimidating, nakedly hostile former home, what carried City through was not its magic but its mettle. That is as much part of Guardiola’s recipe as anything else.

And nor, for that matter, should it be read as a criticism of Atlético. “What matters more than anything in soccer is winning,” Simeone said after the game, not long after the players had confronted each other in the tunnel once more. “It does not matter how you do it.”

Even Guardiola conceded that Atlético had come close to winning, that it might have scored, might have won, if it had only possessed just a little more luck. “They had the actions to score,” he said. “We had to live this situation. We had to suffer. We were in big, big trouble.” On another night, in another world, he seemed to say, everything could have been very different.

That Simeone’s team had been able to run City so close was not despite its brinkmanship, but because of it. As Atlético did what it does, in those final few minutes, as the sense of outrage outside the steep concrete banks of the Metropolitano started to build, so too did the noise inside it. —NYT

Liverpool march on towards quadruple

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LIVERPOOL, APRIL 14

A PLACE in the Champions League semifinals secured. The dream of an unprecedented quadruple of trophies still intact. Key players rested amid a hectic schedule. Liverpool is in a good place entering the home straight of what could turn out to be the club’s greatest ever season.

Even conceding two late goals to draw 3-3 at home to Benfica couldn’t take the smile of Jurgen Klopp’s face. “The day we qualify for the semifinals of the Champions League and I’m not happy, please come here and knock me out,” the Liverpool manager said Wednesday after seeing his team advance from the quarterfinals 6-4 on aggregate.

With Liverpool inflicting significant damage by winning the first leg 3-1 in Lisbon last week, Klopp was confident enough to rest stars like Mohamed Salah, Sadio Mane, Virgil van Dijk and Trent Alexander-Arnold for a return match against Benfica that turned into a wild, end-to-end contest at Anfield.

Roberto Firmino’s second-half double put Liverpool 3-1 ahead on the night and 6-2 ahead on aggregate, only for Klopp’s team to ease off the pace. Benfica took advantage by getting behind Liverpool’s makeshift defense to score through substitute Roman Yaremchuk and rising star Darwin Nunez, but the gap was too much to make up.

“It was pretty comfortable,” Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson said, “but we’re disappointed with the goals we conceded.”

Ultimately, Liverpool has coasted into the last four of Europe’s top club competition and is there for the 12th time — tying the record for an English team with Manchester United — and the first since the last of its six title triumphs in 2019. Villarreal awaits Liverpool in the last four. Despite the Spanish team eliminating both Juventus and Bayern Munich and its coach, Unai Emery, being a master strategist of European competitions, it’s pretty much a dream scenario for Klopp and his team.

The quadruple of major trophies might really be on for Liverpool, already the winner of the English League Cup, currently in second place in Premier League — just a point behind Manchester City — and into the semifinals of the FA Cup.

That Klopp was able to rotate so heavily against Benfica — even Andrew Robertson and Fabinho had the night off — should enable Liverpool to field a full-strength team against Man City in the FA Cup semifinals at Wembley Stadium on Saturday.

City wasn’t taken as a luxurious position Wednesday, such all the way by Atletico Madrid in the Spanish capital where a 0-0



Liverpool’s Roberto Firmino celebrates scoring his side’s third goal. AP

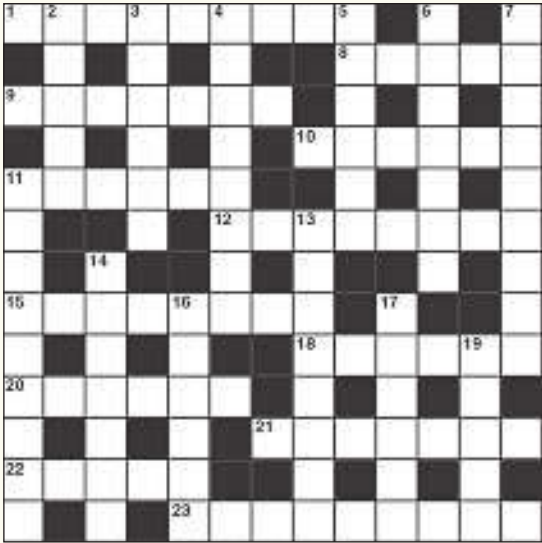
draw sealed a 1-0 aggregate victory. City, which will face Real Madrid in the semifinals, saw Kevin De Bruyne and Kyle Walker go off with injuries in an often brutal game against Atletico, on the same night Klopp kept his best players fresh and relied on his backups.

Ibrahima Konate was one of them and he followed up his goal in the first leg — his first both for Liverpool and in the Champions League — with another header to open the scoring off Kostas Tsimikas’ outswinging corner. Goncalo Ramos made it 1-1 in the 32nd minute — keeping Benfica in with the unlikelyst of chances — with a goal that had a hint of fortune about it. The ball ricocheted to the 20-year-old forward from a tackle by Liverpool midfielder James Milner and his finish from the edge of the area was emphatic past Alisson.

Firmino is no longer first choice for Liverpool following the arrivals of Diogo Jota and Luis Diaz but the Brazil striker staked his claim for a starting spot in the team’s big upcoming games with a double in the space of 10 minutes. His first goal came after mistakes from goalkeeper Odysseas Vlachodimos, who fumbled as he attempted to gather a through-ball, and center back Jan Vertonghen, who hurried his resulting clearance. Jota drove the ball back into the middle of the area and Firmino applied the finish in the 55th. The Brazilian volleyed in Tsimikas’ free kick to make it 3-1 but Liverpool let Benfica back into the match.

LIVERPOOL 3	3 BENFICA
I Konate 21'	G Ramos 32'
R Firmino 55' 65'	Yaremchuk 73'
	D Nunez 82'
AGGREGATE 6-4	

CROSSWORD 4715



ACROSS

- 1 Painful effect of exposure may be best for it (9)
- 8 The girl is a bit mean, it appears (5)
- 9 A gem of a green? (7)
- 10 About eleven, come round in a state (6)
- 11 Girl that is a famous film star (6)
- 12 Stayed with us erratically, coming once a week (8)
- 15 Marriage makes a nice change after all (8)
- 18 Five in debt - but promising (6)
- 20 Cable was twisted in her grasp (6)
- 21 Be a guest without let-up in August (7)
- 22 Mackerel bait? (5)
- 23 Sign language appears to be little help (9)

DOWN

- 2 Music coming from Burma (5)
- 3 Emphasis may be caused by overworking (6)
- 4 Ammunition in the news (8)
- 5 They play a supporting role in the studio (6)
- 6 Drug is removed with the fingers (7)
- 7 Many awakening us with their revels (9)
- 11 A dispiriting thing to do (3,1,5)
- 13 It lifts to reveal switch (8)
- 14 Runners, but not in the vegetable garden (7)
- 16 A note sent out by representatives (6)
- 17 Light whip for light control (6)
- 19 Fabric found in any London store (5)

Solutions Crossword 4714: Across: 1 Strayed, 4 Sense, 7 Edge, 8 Ferryman, 10 Malingerer, 12 Poncho, 13 Athens, 15 Sweepstake, 18 Approach, 19 Pier, 20 Sprig, 21 Spinner. Down: 1 Steam, 2 Regaling, 3 Deepen, 4 Screen test, 5 Name, 6 Ennoble, 9 In the wrong, 11 Relation, 12 Perhaps, 14 Fences, 16 Error, 17 Spar.

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.

The best way to get ____ is not to need it - Hugh Macleod (8)

PARTA



PACDIL



CTUOR



PAEMRV



SOLUTION: PARTA: COURT, PLACID, REWARD. The best way to get to need it - Hugh Macleod

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4805

Difficulty Level 2s

Instructions

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4804



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

You may have to accept that you are not on form and that you are still inclined to exaggerate other people's resistance to your plans. Now is the moment to start developing some of that gentle diplomacy which is the normal preserve of the Libran, your opposite sign.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Some kind of a break-up or conflict appears to be taking place, or will have done so by the time the next few days have passed. You are finally in an ideal position to knock some sense into a partner's head, but just how long it takes is an open question. Perhaps you'd better be patient.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Relations with children are beginning to assume a greater importance, perhaps because events are now moving so much faster than in the past, but also because there's an understanding that family feelings need to be respected. If you are undecided about your next move, you may allow yourself a little more time.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Where to turn? This is the great question which must be perplexing you now that six planets are urging you to take thirty-six different courses of action. You may allow fate to follow its course, waiting for events to settle down.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Now that Mars is changing its position, you should put more effort into being diplomatic and must listen carefully to what other people are saying. Whether you take their advice or comments into consideration is, of course, entirely another matter.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

The quicker you come to terms with your financial situation, the better you will be able to plan various social events and other engagements. Your ambitions are all very well, but you must have the cash to pay your way, otherwise you'll have to give up before you're even half done.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

For once in your life you may have to settle for second best, much as this goes against the grain. However, as soon as the current planetary situation has eased, you will once again be on course for the top. It's a question of three steps forward for every two back.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

What is important to you is peace of mind, yet to achieve such a happy state, you must deal with whatever personal frustrations have built up over the past few months. The problem is that it's so hard to get hold of relevant information at the moment.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

You may have become used to frequent chopping and changing in your plans. Many of you are currently involved in some sort of political or community activity, but will soon begin to question your motives. You need to be sure that a particular goal is the right one for you.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Just as long as you keep remembering that you are still on the right course, you will get the best out of your current situation. However, minor adjustments may be necessary in the short term, and whatever changes you make this week will result in major decisions some way down the line.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Take extra care when travelling and allow for delays or cancellations. The indications are definitely contradictory, with Mars urging you to push ahead while Mercury advises you to slow down. Just to complicate matters, Venus thinks that you should stay as you are.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You may soon receive interesting news from overseas, yet the results may be far from what you expected. Moneywise you are now entering another extravagant, high-spending phase. Keep something in reserve, though, for the last thing you want to do is leave yourself short.

Hardik leads from front Safety car criticised for being too slow

Gujarat Titans captain scores an unbeaten 87, takes a wicket and effects a run-out in 37-run win over Rajasthan Royals

SYNOPSIS: GT surged to their fourth win from five games as skipper Hardik Pandya's 87 set up a comprehensive crushing of RR.

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
MUMBAI, APRIL 15

HARDIK PANDYA and Abhinav Manohar dragged Gujarat Titans to 192 after another indifferent start, and Lockie Ferguson's slower yorker limited Jos Buttler's blitz to the Powerplay as Rajasthan Royals fell short by 37 runs.

GT top order fails again

Matthew Wade's woes with the bat have meant GT have the worst average for the opening partnership this IPL - just 14.80. But the left-hander got a whole first over against Jimmy Neesham, as against the prospect of facing the swing of the injured Trent Boult, who sat out the game. Having got hit-me deliveries, on the pads and wide outside off, Wade helped himself to three fours in the Neesham over; it appeared as if this was the night GT's opening stand would weigh in from both ends, for a change.

But GT would contrive to still go three down within an over after the Powerplay. Wade was run out by a direct hit from Rassie van der Dussen two balls after launching into Neesham. Vijay Shankar slashed and edged what would otherwise have been a Kuldeep Sen wide to the 'keeper. And Shubman Gill slammed Riyan Parag straight to long-on.

Hardik, Abhinav fire

Hardik Pandya is out of his comfort zone on all fronts this season. Maiden captaincy stint, new batting position, and bowling four overs in every game in his bid to make an India comeback. He's had to carry the innings with the top order unable to forge partnerships, and consequently, his strike rate was 122.60 heading into this game; moreover, he'd hit just two sixes from 115 deliveries.

He came out in a different mood on Thursday though. His second ball of pace from Kuldeep Sen, Hardik tennis-forehanded down the ground for four. The next one was slashed over point for four more and he lashed at the next for a thick edge to the fine third-man rope. Hardik was on 25 off 14 when Gill fell. For about five overs, mostly of spin, he didn't hit a single boundary. He'd still finish on 87 off 52, a strike rate of 167.31, with four sixes.

Abhinav Manohar, who added 86 with his captain in nine overs, said during the innings break that Hardik had told him to avoid high-risk shots until the 12th over, after which they would reassess.

And sure enough, Manohar charged Yuzvendra Chahal first ball of the 13th for a straight four and lofted the next for six over ex-



Hardik Pandya's 87 off 52 comprised eight fours and four sixes. Sportspics for IPL

Hardik, meanwhile, continued to flay them straight or over long-on, or scythe them square. He felt his back at least once after a boundary, with the effort he was putting in.

tra cover. This is his maiden IPL, and Manohar looks clearly out of his depth at times; he was clueless against Ashwin's carrom balls. He kept edging the Sunrisers pacers in GT's previous match and was dropped three times. But when he does get it off the middle, he holds his shape and belts it far. He slog-swept Chahal from outside off for six, but the leg-spinner had Abhinav top-edging a catch next when he tried the same stroke from the line of the stumps.

Hardik, meanwhile, continued to flay them straight or over long-on, or scythe them square. He felt his back at least once after a boundary, with the effort he was putting in. Also, fortunately for GT, David Miller came good after a struggle previously to get going, with 31 off 14.

In the previous match at DY Patil Stadium, CSK had hammered 156 runs off the last 10 overs. GT didn't come close to that carnage but themselves took 120 off the second half of their innings.

Buttler and the rest

If RR had any hope of chasing down 193, Jos Buttler had to fire. And he did, for a while. It was thrilling while it lasted, and needed a cracker of a delivery

from Lockie Ferguson to be cut short on 54 off 24.

Among the many aspects that make Buttler dangerous is the fact that his reaction can be so late, and so swift, that he simply stands and bashes the ball past cover after appearing to do absolutely nothing till the very last moment. Or he can smack that same delivery over mid-on.

The GT seamers tried denying him width, they tried making him hit to the slightly longer boundary. Hardik packed the square off-side region with short third man, fine backward point, point and cover. Buttler saw that and walloped the wide ones to the opposite side over cow corner instead. In between, he brought out his walking scoop over short fine leg.

Rashid Khan is usually saved for the latter half of the innings. Hardik brought him on as early as the fifth over. The leg-spinner rapped Buttler on the pad with a wrong 'un off the last ball of the over. Doing too much, said the umpire, and GT's review returned umpire's call. It seemed to be Buttler's night, even more so when he calmly scooped Ferguson's express pace for six.

The New Zealander's response was a 126 kph slower yorker that comparatively took forever to arrive at a stunned Buttler and crashed into the base of off-and-middle. Nine balls later, Hardik ran out Sanju Samson, and that was effectively the game for GT. **Brief Scores: Gujarat Titans: 192 for 4 in 20 overs (Hardik Pandya 87 not out, Abhinav Manohar 43, David Miller 31 not out; Riyan Parag 1/12) bt Rajasthan Royals: 155 for 9 in 20 overs (Jos Buttler 54; Lockie Ferguson 3/23, Yash Dayal 3/40).**

Tsitsipas moves into quarterfinals

REUTERS
MONTE CARLO, APRIL 14

Holder Stefanos Tsitsipas moved into the Monte Carlo Masters quarter-finals with a 7-5 7-6(1) victory over Laslo Djere on Thursday while fourth seed Casper Ruud was knocked out in straight sets by Grigor Dimitrov.

Tsitsipas broke only once in a match where break points were in short supply but the Greek third seed pounced when it mattered most at the end of both sets to seal victory.

The opening set went with serve but Djere was nearly broken when he was down 5-4 after he made three double faults. Djere held on but Tsitsipas switched gears and broke him in his next service game when the Serbian fired wide on set point.

The second set was nearly identical to the first with just one break point between the two. This time Djere forced a tiebreak, but Tsitsipas was unstoppable as he took the first five points before sealing the match with a forehand

winner. "I knew that I was going to have to be alert and 100%, he's someone that can compete very well on clay... I really had to work hard for this win," Tsitsipas said in an on-court interview.

"The beginning of the tiebreak was very important to get such a good, dynamic start... I was able to dictate those rallies and really get ahead of the game early on."

Diego Schwartzman stole the show on the day, however, after the Argentine fought back from a set down to beat Lorenzo Musetti 2-6 6-4 6-3, receiving a standing ovation from the crowd after the 2-1/2 hour contest.

Schwartzman was 3-1 down in the second set when he found a second wind and stormed back into the contest, winning 11 of the next 15 games to book a quarter-final clash with Tsitsipas.

Second seed Alexander Zverev fired eight aces and smashed 26 winners to beat Pablo Carreno Busta 6-2 7-5 on the back of a strong first serve.

"On claycourts, especially here where it's a little slower compared to other claycourts we play on, it's

very important to get that confidence going on your serve," Zverev said.

Zverev will take on Jannik Sinner, who rallied from a set and a break down to upset last year's finalist Andrey Rublev. The Italian converted seven of his 12 break points and saved six of 10 en route to a 5-7 6-1 6-3 comeback win.

Earlier, Norwegian Ruud became the tournament's latest high-profile casualty as he went down 6-3 7-5 to Bulgarian Dimitrov, who moved into the quarter-finals for a fourth time.

"It's always tough this week because you're switching surfaces," Dimitrov said. "So I try and not be too tough on myself in practice. I just try to do the simple things. It's going so well so far."

Unseeded Spaniard Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, who beat world number one Novak Djokovic earlier this week, reached the last eight with a 6-4 6-1 win over David Goffin.

He will meet 10th seed Taylor Fritz, who beat doubles partner Sebastian Korda 7-6(4) 7-5 in a battle of Americans.

REUTERS
LONDON, APRIL 14

FORMULA ONE'S governing body defended the Aston Martin safety car on Thursday, reminding drivers that its top speed was of secondary importance, after world champion Max Verstappen compared it to a turtle. Aston Martin and Mercedes both provide safety and medical cars for grands prix, with the championship divided between the two marques and Germany's Bernd Maylander the driver. "The FIA would like to reiterate that the primary function of the ... safety car is, of course, not outright speed but the safety of the drivers, marshals and officials," it said in a statement.

Red Bull's Verstappen had said after Sunday's Australian Grand Prix that the Aston Martin 4.0 litre twin-turbo V8 Vantage used in Melbourne lapped too slowly when twice deployed following crashes. "For sure the Mercedes safety car is faster because of the extra aero. The Aston Martin is really slow. It definitely needs more grip, because our tyres were stone cold," the Dutchman told reporters after retiring from the race.

The Mercedes-AMG GT Black Series used in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, and new for this year, produces some 730bhp compared to the Aston's 528bhp.

The Mercedes-AMG GT Black Series used in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, and new for this year, produces some 730bhp compared to the Aston's 528bhp.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, the championship leader and winner of two of the first three races, said he had also wanted to go faster. "I wanted to complain, but then I checked how much the safety car was sliding in the corner and I don't think there was anything more that he could give so I didn't want to put too much pressure," he told reporters.

"With the cars that we have now it's very difficult to keep the temperatures in the tyres behind the safety car."

Briton George Russell, who drives for Mercedes, said the German marque's safety car was about five seconds a lap

quicker than the Aston Martin.

The FIA said safety car procedures took into account multiple factors, including the need to bunch up the field and adjust the pace depending on recovery activities. "The speed of the safety car is therefore generally dictated by race control, and not limited by the capabilities of the safety cars," added the governing body. "The impact of the speed of the safety car on the performance of the cars following is a secondary consideration, as the impact is equal amongst all competitors who ... are responsible for driving in a safe manner at all times."

Ferrari reaping rewards

Years of hard work are paying off for Ferrari with a stellar start to the Formula One season, company chairman John Elkann said on Wednesday.

Charles Leclerc has won two of the first three races, finishing second in the other, and has a 34-point lead in the championship.

Ferrari, who last won a title in 2008 and failed to win a race in 2020 and 2021, also leads the constructors' standings by 39 points from champions Mercedes. "We said two years ago that we had to work

hard to get back to being competitive and the 2022 championship has got off to a truly thrilling start," Elkann said at Ferrari's annual shareholders' meeting.

Ferrari slumped to sixth overall in the 2020 season, their lowest ranking since 1980, but rose to third last year under principal Mattia Binotto and their new car looks both fast and reliable.

"Like all our tifosi (fans) around the world, I am delighted we are competing at the highest level," said Elkann.

Hamilton's love for Brazil

Formula One's seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton said on Wednesday he wanted to spend more time in Brazil and indicated his approval of a bid to make him an honorary citizen.

"I want to spend more time here in Brazil... It is such a beautiful culture. I've only been to Rio and Sao Paulo, but I want to come back for Christmas, New Year or something," Hamilton said.

"(Brazilian soccer international) Neymar invites me every year, and (pro surfer) Gabriel (Medina) invites me every year, but I never had the chance... I'm waiting for my Brazilian passport."



Sumit Mukherjee
Managing Director
Techno Chem Water Treatment Solution



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- Total quality assurance

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the Perfect Water Treatment Solutions organization status.

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