



EXPRESS NETWORK

**PENDENCY CRUCIAL
ISSUE, DOING MY
BEST TO FILL UP
VACANCIES: CJI**
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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

**A VIRUS
RAGES**By **SONIA GANDHI**
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GOVT & POLITICS

**HIMACHAL GOVT
ANNOUNCES POWER,
WATER SOPS** PAGE 4

ESHWARAPPA FINALLY RESIGNS

K S Eshwarappa with Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai in Bengaluru on Friday. Charged with abetment in the suspected suicide of a civil contractor, Eshwarappa submitted his resignation from the Cabinet. PTI

REPORT, PAGE 4

Time to resume India trade, doors will open: Pak's top industrialist

**NIRUPAMA
SUBRAMANIAN**
COLOMBO, APRIL 15

PAKISTAN'S TOP industrialist Mian Mohammed Mansha believes it is time his country and India resume trade, and improve relations for their betterment.

Mansha, who heads the Nishat conglomerate, Pakistan's No. 1 business group, told *The Indian Express* from Dubai where he is at the moment, that there are "many synergies" between the two countries that can come

into play once trade begins.

"I feel very passionately that we need to get our things sorted out with India. Now whatever the issues that are impeding, let them be there. But once they come to one another's country, through trade, tourism – religious tourism or normal tourism – I think the doors will start opening," 81-year-old Mansha said.

He said the Kashmir issue had to be resolved with "small steps" to "bring temperatures down". He also spoke on opening up Bollywood to Pakistani

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

New resolution at UNGA targets Russia; Jaishankar meets Guterres

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

A WEEK after Delhi sent its sharpest message to Moscow by abstaining on a resolution to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had a "wide ranging discussion" with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and exchanged views on the global impact of the Ukraine conflict as well as the situation in Afghanistan and Myanmar.

Jaishankar is in New York, after the Indo-US 2+2 ministerial and other cabinet-level meet-



S Jaishankar with UN Secy-Gen Antonio Guterres. PTI

ings in Washington DC, where he met the UN Secretary-General.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**2ND LOT OF S-400
FROM RUSSIA TO
INDIA ON TRACK** P4

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By **UNNY**

THE WORLD

**RUSSIA LOSES BLACK
SEA FLEET FLAGSHIP**
PAGE 12

Do not post any anti-Govt content on social media, tell kin too: TIFR to staff

PALLAVI SMART
MUMBAI, APRIL 15

THE TATA Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), the country's premier institution for advanced research in fundamental sciences, has instructed its staff not to post "anti-government content", photographs and videos of institute facilities on social media platforms since it "could lead to serious security consequences". It has asked the staff to tell their family members

too not to post such content.

In a letter dated April 13, TIFR Registrar Wing Commander George Antony (retired), referring to observations notified by the Department of Atomic Energy, mentioned that photographs and videos of DAE offices and facilities had been noticed on Facebook, WhatsApp and other social media platforms.

"It has been noticed that certain disgruntled employees have been sharing anti-government content over social media. The

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Tribal girl 'gangraped', male friend assaulted in Birbhum: Cops

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 15

A 15-YEAR-OLD tribal girl was allegedly gangraped and her male friend assaulted in Birbhum district on Thursday, the police said, adding that the minor, in her statement, said four to five people were involved in the incident. As per preliminary probe, the girl was visiting a fair with her friend on Thursday and was engaged in a conversation with him when about four to five people assaulted him before dragging her away to a secluded place, by a river, where she was allegedly gangraped.

She somehow managed to make her way home and was later admitted to a hospital, the police said, adding that an FIR has been filed in connection with the incident.

On learning about the alleged incident, Birbhum SP Nagendra Tripathi and other senior police officers visited the village. The SP also met the girl at the hospital. "As per the primary information, the girl has complained of being gang-raped. She is doing fine and is able to speak. A medical examination has been conducted on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

From cattle control to river linking, protests force rollbacks in Gujarat

**PARIMAL DABHI, AVINASH
NAIR & KAMAAL SAIYED**
AHMEDABAD, SURAT, APRIL 15

AT LEAST four major government decisions in poll-bound Gujarat, two of which were taken by the Centre, have been rolled back following protests. The reversal on the decisions was prompted by objections from communities like farmers, cattle herders, tribals and textile associations.

The most recent one was to put in abeyance The Gujarat

EXPLAINED
**Eye on
polls**WITH ASSEMBLY polls due later this year, the BJP is treading cautiously. The rollback of decisions is a clear signal to important voter segments like tribals, farmers, traders and *maldharis*. While it won a majority in 2017, the BJP saw a drop in its seats.

Cattle Control (Keeping and Moving) in Urban Areas Bill, 2022, a week after it had been passed by the Assembly. It is the first time the state BJP government had to make such a reversal.

The state Assembly had passed the Bill on March 31, after a six-hour debate. The Congress had put up a stiff opposition to the legislation that has seen vociferous protests by the maldhari community, traditionally cattle rearers.

Among those who opposed the Bill publicly was BJP state

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

In a first, Maharashtra app maps workers' migration for portability of ICDS scheme

GOVERNANCE
AN EXPRESS SERIES
MAHARASHTRA**RUPSA CHAKRABORTY**
MUMBAI, APRIL 15

IN A first of its kind project in the country, the Maharashtra government has developed a website-based migration tracking system (MTS) application to map the movement of vulnerable seasonal migrant workers



Anganwadi workers take weight and height of children of migrants in Amravati to port ICDS services. WCD, Maharashtra

through individual unique identity numbers. The state government's women and child devel-

opment (WCD) department launched it as a pilot project in November last year in six dis-

tricts with high tribal population including Gadchiroli, Chandrapur, Amravati, Jalna, Palghar and Nandurbar.

The MTS project is envisaged to maintain the continuity of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) like nutrition supply, immunisation and health check-up etc. to migrant beneficiaries including children aged up to 18 years, lactating mothers and pregnant women registered with the anganwadi centres. Their migration will be tracked for ensuring the portability of the ICDS for their families in their

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

ACCESS TO HEALTH FACILITIES

Healthcare fights poverty, helps in social justice: PM

'Building medical infra, record number of doctors soon'

GOPAL KATESHIYA
RAJKOT, APRIL 15

UNDERLINING THAT quality healthcare is linked to poverty alleviation efforts, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Friday that better health facilities are not limited only to the treatment of diseases, but also encourage social justice.

"When cheap and best treatment is available to the poor, his faith in the system is strengthened. If they get freedom from the worry of the cost of treatment, they work hard to get out of poverty with more determination," the Prime Minister said, addressing a public meeting in Bhuj town of Kutch after inaugurating the K K Patel Super Specialty



Using a video link, Prime Minister Modi inaugurates the KK Patel Super Specialty Hospital in Bhuj, Gujarat. PTI

Hospital via virtual mode.

In the past years, all schemes in the health sector, he said, have been implemented keeping this thought in mind. He said that through the Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Yojana, poor and middle-class families are getting free

medical treatment, cheaper medicines and are able to save "lakhs of crores of rupees" they would have otherwise spent on medical treatment.

"Initiatives like the Health and Wellness Centres, Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Now, Srinagar Corps posts video to show terror targets all faiths

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

AFTER THE Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Police, the Indian Army's Srinagar-based Chinar Corps on Friday posted a video on its social media handles titled "Kashmir fights back", which, a senior security establishment officer said, seeks to underline how "terrorism has affected all peace-loving citizens of Kashmir, irrespective of their faith".



From the video posted by the Chinar Corps

**J&K SARPANCH
KILLED** PAGE 3

Army sources said the video seeks to counter misinformation by Pakistan on social media. "People here follow many Pakistani handles. These have been fanning anti-India sentiments here. That is why we have used the same tune (background score) that Inter Services Public Relations (Pakistan military's PR wing) uses in its propaganda videos, to tell a different narrative and build confidence with the people," said an officer.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

When will you stop using facewash made with just chemicals?

Patanjali Facewash is made with natural elements, to give you natural glow and beauty

Neem Tulsi

Neem Tulsi Face Wash is a soap-free herbal formulation that cleans the skin & also moisturises it to maintain the natural balance. Neem and Tulsi help in removing germs, Honey and Aloe Vera are beneficial in giving a natural glow. Effective in pimples.

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Facial Foam

It deep cleans and detoxifies the skin. Its activated carbon removes all the dirt and toxins from the skin, cleanses the pores to remove blackheads. Goodness of Honey, Vitamin E, Vitamin A, Zinc Oxide and activated carbon help fighting against skin problems pimples to keep the skin naturally healthy.

Orange Aloe Vera

Orange Aloe Vera Facewash is made with the formulation of extracts of Orange and Aloe Vera. They give a natural glow to the skin and are beneficial for all skin types. Using it everyday helps in removing dead cells and toxins and cleans it naturally to make it soft and glowing.

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3 WEST BENGAL

CBI to conduct DNA test on Nadia 'gangrape' suspects

Collects samples from cremation spot; seizes mobile, clothes of second arrested youth

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 15

A TEAM of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Friday visited the place where the body of 14-year-old alleged gangrape victim was cremated in West Bengal's Nadia district on April 5 and collected samples from the spot.

The central agency, it is learnt, will conduct DNA tests on the arrested suspects, including key accused Braj Gopal Gayali (21), the son of a panchayat representative owing allegiance to the Trinamool Congress (TMC).

The investigators will match the suspects' DNA with the samples collected from the place of occurrence of the alleged gangrape, officials said. Fingerprint experts have also collected samples from the scene of crime.

The victim was cremated without post-mortem or death certificate a day after she was allegedly raped in a birthday party in a house belonging to Braj Gopal. She was dropped at her

house by a woman while bleeding profusely.

In its probe so far, the agency has found that it was Braj Gopal and two of his friends who committed the crime, sources said.

Of the three, Braj Gopal and one Prabhakar Poddar have been arrested by the police on April 11 and 12. Both were sent to 14-day police custody.

On Friday, the agency officials also visited Prabhakar's house and took his clothes and mobile phone in their possession.

The girl's parents have alleged that they were threatened and were forced to cremate her body. The FIR registered by the police also names the alleged victim's father, a relative and a neighbour for "destruction of evidence". Prabhakar was not named in the police FIR.

The case was registered under Sections 376(2)(G) (gangrape), 302 (murder), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) of the Indian Penal Code and relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

BJP fact-finding team meets victim's family, slams govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 15

A BJP fact-finding team on Friday met the family members of a minor girl who died after being allegedly gangraped in Nadia district on April 5 and slammed the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal for its "failure" to ensure safety of women in the state.

The team comprising BJP vice-president Rekha Verma, Mahila Morcha national president Vanathi Srinivasan, party leader Khushbu Sundar and West Bengal MLA Sreerupa Mitra Choudhury will submit a report to their national president JP Nadda on Saturday after interacting with the local residents.

Talking to mediapersons, Rekha Verma said, "Atrocities against women are taking place in the state every day. A minor girl was raped here and then her body was cremated forcibly. This proves that the state government has failed to ensure the safety and

security of women. The incident has shocked all of us."

Khushbu Sundar demanded imposition of Article 356 in the state. "A woman Chief Minister is making condemnable statements about the 14-year-old rape victim. She should apologise to the people for making such remarks and resign from her post. We demand the President's rule in the state," said Sundar.

TMC state general secretary Kunal Ghosh said, "Women are safe in the state under the leadership of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The BJP is quick to send teams to West Bengal but never bothers to send similar teams to Uttar Pradesh where rape cases were reported in Hathras and Unnao."

The 14-year-old girl had died after being allegedly gangraped by the son of a ruling TMC panchayat representative and others on April 4. Her family lodged a police complaint five days later, claiming her body was cremated forcibly.



NEW YEAR REVELRY

A celebratory procession on the occasion of Poila Boishakh (Bengali New Year) in Kolkata on Friday. *Partha Paul*

Barbs fly as Governor, CM greet people on Bengali New Year

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 15

WEST BENGAL Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday greeted the people of the state on the occasion of Poila Boishakh (the Bengali New Year).

Dhankhar in his message, however, took an indirect jibe at the Trinamool Congress government in the state. He said that the Bengali New Year may fructify Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's dream "where the mind is without fear and the head is held high".

"Greetings to all on auspicious occasion #PoilaBoishakh. May #SubhoNoboBorsho bring to you and your family happiness and prosperity! Let the dream #Gurudev of creating a land of Bhayashoonya Chitaa & Uchha Sheer fructify in West Bengal and all over (sic)," Dhankhar said in a tweet.

It was an apparent reference to the recent developments in the state which has witnessed a number of incidents of violence which are being probed by the CBI.

Poila Boishakh, also known as Bangla Noboborsho, is the first day of the Bengali calendar. It is widely celebrated in West Bengal, Assam and Tripura, as well as in neighbouring Bangladesh.

CM Banerjee said in a tweet, "Happy New Year, 1429. Many greetings and congratulations to all. Stay healthy, stay well, enjoy the coming days (sic)."

Taking a dig at Dhankhar over his tweet on the first day of the Bengali New Year, TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said, "He sees politics in everything. There was a dig in his message. We don't expect anything better from him anymore."

DEOCHA PACHAMI COAL BLOCK PROJECT

Protesters end dharna but say agitation not over yet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 13

VILLAGERS AND tribals demonstrating against the West Bengal government's ambitious Deocha Pachami mega coal block mining project at Birbhum district's Baromashia village on Friday lifted their dharna (sit-in) which has been going on since February 22.

The move comes two days after the agitators met with chief minister Mamata Banerjee at the state secretariat in Kolkata.

In a press statement, the Birbhum Jomi, Jibon, Jibika o Prakriti Banchao Mahasabha (Birbhum Mahasabha for Saving Land, Life, Livelihood, and Nature) said the CM has assured to look into their grievances. "Therefore, continuing with the demonstration is irrelevant. But lifting the sit-in does not mean we have moved away from the

agitation," it said.

Their makeshift office at Baromashia will stay and we will keep a watch on the situation, the mahasabha added.

"She (CM) spoke to our representatives for 40 minutes. We held a meeting with the villagers over the issue last night. We are satisfied after she personally assured us that no land will be taken without consent," said Mahasabha convenor Ganesh Kisku.

Jagannath Tudu, assistant secretary of the Mahasabha, said they are still opposed to the project even as they are lifting the dharna. "We have given a chance to the administration and we will keep a watch on future developments. The chief minister promised to consider lifting of false police cases slapped against the villagers and investigate atrocities committed on us and our families," he claimed.

The protesters allege that the

police on December 23 had beat up several villagers, including women, who had raised questions about a rally allegedly backed by the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in support of the project.

Thereafter, the TMC workers allegedly attacked protesters after a public meeting in Dewangunj on February 22 and the police slapped cases against the locals.

Houses of some of the protesters were also ransacked, it is alleged.

So far, the state government has identified 784 families in more than 90 villages for rehabilitation as part of the coal mining project. Banerjee announced a compensation package last November for those who will be displaced or affected and assured there would no forcible acquisition of land as had happened in Singur in 2006 under the Left Front government.

Threatened to withdraw 'molestation' complaint, girl attempts suicide; 2 held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 15

TWO PERSONS were arrested in Jalpaiguri district for allegedly threatening a teenaged girl who attempted suicide on Thursday, police said. The girl filed a police complaint earlier, in February, alleging that she was molested by the two, who are brothers.

According to her complaint,

the accused were threatening to kill her and her family since being released on bail.

According to the police, the girl's family said she tried to set herself on fire out of fear.

"The girl has been hospitalised and an investigation is underway," Jalpaiguri SP Debarshree Dutta said.

The two were produced in court and remanded in police custody for seven days.

Police said the girl was allegedly molested by the elder sibling in February.

The girl alleged that she was alone at home when the accused molested her.

She said as she raised an alarm, the accused escaped from the spot. The girl then lodged a complaint with the local police.

He was arrested on the basis of her complaint but was

later released on bail.

The police said the accused and a few of his friends had been threatening her with dire consequences over the past few days if she did not withdraw the complaint.

On Wednesday, two unidentified persons went to her house and threatened to kill her and her family members. The girl tried to end her life the day after, police said.

Pioneer in IVF research Dr Baidyanath Chakrabarty dies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, APRIL 15

DR BAIDYANATH Chakrabarty, one of India's pioneers in IVF research, died on Friday at the age of 94 after a prolonged illness, the hospital where he was admitted said. He was undergoing treatment at the Salt Lake hospital since mid-March after a massive cardiac arrest, it said.

He had also contracted pneumonia, it added. "He was diagnosed with several illnesses, most of which were age-related. He breathed his last in the morning," an official of the hospital said. Dr Chakrabarty founded the Institute of Reproductive Medicine (IRM) in 1986 for artificial insemination research. He handed it over to the ICMR in 2019.

TMC leader threatens Oppn with assault in video clip, triggers row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, APRIL 15

A CONTROVERSY erupted in West Bengal after a local TMC leader in Murshidabad district was seen in a purported video threatening the Opposition camp members with assault if they failed to provide proof of the claims they made while holding protests against rape cases.

Afroz Sarkar, the president of TMC's Bhagabangola block one committee, was also heard saying that "such tricks to dislodge the party from power won't be of any help".

"It is a case of rape, the claim has to be proved. If you (opposition) don't do that and cross barriers, we will beat you with sticks to silence you," Sarkar apparently said in the video, the au-

Minister Firhad Hakim says he isn't aware of what happened but his party does not endorse such statements

thenticity of which was not verified by PIT.

"I am not scared of anyone. Our leader Mamata Banerjee may not have a son of her own, but I am her son," he added.

The ruling party in the state recently came in the eye of the storm after a son of a local Nadia leader was arrested for his alleged involvement in a minor girl's rape case.

Opposition parties, in the wake of the recent incidents of violence have criticised the TMC government over the alleged deterioration of the law and order

situation in the state.

Senior TMC leader and state minister Firhad Hakim, said he was not aware of what exactly happened but the party would never endorse such statements. "The party does not support such statements. We want law-enforcing authorities to investigate every incident and take necessary action against the guilty," he said.

CPM leader Suján Chakrabarty said, "This is the kind of language usually spoken by members of Mamata Banerjee's party," Chakrabarty said.

BJP national vice-president Dilip Ghosh demanded that Sarkar be immediately arrested. "The TMC is afraid as incidents of attack on women and opposition members have increased in the state, with its activists found involved in most cases," he added.

Sarpanch shot dead in J&K village, 4th attack since March

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, APRIL 15

SUSPECTED MILITANTS shot dead a sarpanch in Pattan area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district on Friday, police said, the fourth such attack on grassroots representatives in the Valley this year.

Political parties have condemned the killing, which comes less than two weeks ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jammu, where he is expected to address members of the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Police said Manzoor Ahmad Bangroo, who was the sarpanch of Goshbhugh village, was not associated with any political party.

"In this terror crime, he received critical gunshot injuries and was immediately evacuated to nearby hospital for treatment. However, doctors declared him dead on arrival," a police state-

ment said, adding the area has been cordoned off and a search is on for the attackers.

While condemning the incident, the Peoples Democratic Party asked why killings of sarpanchs in the Valley have continued "despite multiple security assessments and bundling them in secure accommodations in Srinagar". "There seems to be no end in sight to the bloodbath in Kashmir. Yet nothing seems to move GOI enough to change its approach towards J&K," PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti tweeted.

On March 12, Shabir Ahmad Mir, the sarpanch of Kulgam's Audora village, was shot dead by suspected militants. Police said he had been staying at a hotel in Srinagar "for security reasons". On March 9, Sameer Ahmad Bhat, who was the sarpanch of Khonmoh village on the outskirts of Srinagar, was killed outside his house.



VISIT TO AYODHYA

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu at the Ram Janmabhoomi site during his visit to Ayodhya on Friday. He offered prayers at the temple site. The Vice President was also given a detailed presentation on the construction of the Ram temple. *PTI*

2 'minors' booked in UP for playing 'pro-Pak' song

Lucknow: Two youngsters, whose families claim that they are minors – have been booked for allegedly playing a "pro-Pakistan" song at a grocery store in Bareilly. Police said the boys, who are cousins, played the song on a cell-phone.

On Thursday, a police team informed the family members of both the boys about the matter, after registering an FIR.

"The families claim they are both minors. We collected their education certificates and will verify these on Monday from their

school," said a police officer. No arrests have been made yet. Police said the two cousins were at the shop on Wednesday when a local youth visited it and heard a "pro-Pakistan" song. "When the youth objected, the two started verbally abusing him," said the FIR. **ENS**

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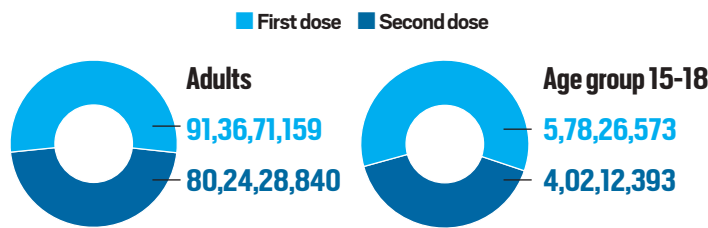
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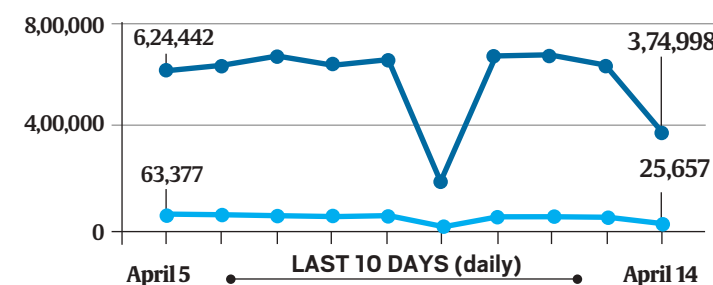
TOTAL DOSES 186,30,62,546



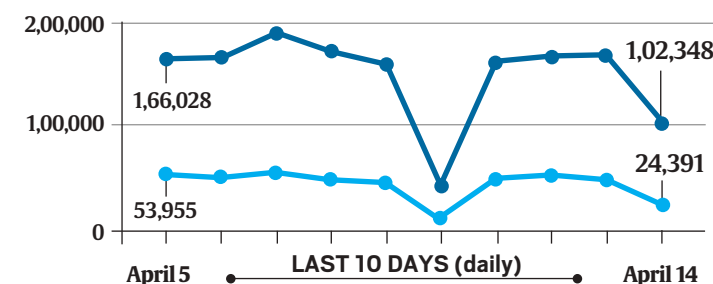
AGE GROUP 12-14: 1st dose: 2,38,56,478, 2nd dose: 42,352

Precautionary 60+: 2,49,38,410
Precautionary 15-59: 86,341
Doses On April 14: 7,86,242

ADULTS



AGE GROUP 15-18

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REGISTRATION MANDATORY

4th dose gives extra protection from severe Covid, study finds

STUDIES ON various vaccines globally have shown that an additional dose provides extended protection against Covid-19. Now, a study from Israel has found that four doses offer greater protection against severe disease than three, but the protection against infection itself was brief. India has started rolling out a 'precautionary' (third) dose for the general population.

ISRAEL DRIVE: Israel began giving the fourth dose to citizens over age 60 on January 2 this year. The vaccine in use there, from Pfizer BioNTech, uses the mRNA platform (in India, the two main vaccines, Covishield and Covaxin, use different platforms). The study, conducted between January 10 and March 10 when the Omicron variant was predominant, has been published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

The researchers used Israeli Health Ministry data on 12.5 lakh persons aged 60 or older. It estimated the rate of confirmed infection and severe Covid starting at 8 days after the fourth dose, compared with the rate among persons who had got only three doses, and among persons who had

received a fourth dose 3 to 7 days earlier. **FINDINGS:** Rates of confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection and severe Covid-19 found were lower after a fourth dose than after only three doses. Protection against confirmed infection appeared short-lived, but protection against severe illness did not wane during the study period.

The unadjusted number of cases of severe Covid-19 per 100,000 person-days was: 1.5 in those who got four doses, 3.9 in those who got three doses, and 4.2 in the internal control group (fourth dose 3 to 7 days earlier). When adjusted, the rate of severe Covid in the fourth week after the fourth dose was lower than that in the three-dose group by a factor of 3.5, and was lower than that in the internal control group by a factor of 2.3.

Protection against severe illness did not wane during 6 weeks after the fourth dose. The adjusted rate was lower than in the three-dose group by a factor of 2.0 and was lower than that in the internal control group by a factor of 1.8. But this protection waned in later weeks, the study said.

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE



PAPER CLIP

NEW RESEARCH

What's in the new museum to Prime Ministers: concept, content, technology

DIVYAA

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi inaugurated the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya at Teen Murti Estate in New Delhi on Thursday. The museum recalls the tenures of 14 Prime Ministers from Jawaharlal Nehru to Manmohan Singh, and the various challenges they navigated while leading the country. (The museum is a work in progress, and Modi's own tenure is not part of the narrative yet.)

"Desh ke har pradhanmantri ne samvidhaan sammat loktantra ke lakshyon ki poorti mein bharsak yogdaan diya hai (All Prime Ministers have contributed immensely towards achieving the goals of constitutional democracy)," Modi said at the inauguration.

Concept and controversy

The idea of a museum dedicated to India's Prime Ministers was mooted in 2016. The Congress opposed the idea, since Teen Murti Estate was Nehru's residence, which was later turned into a memorial to the first Prime Minister. Manmohan Singh wrote to Modi,

expressing concern over the "agenda" to "change the nature and character" of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) and the Teen Murti complex.

NMML officials say Teen Murti Estate, where Nehru lived for 16 years, is the natural home for the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya because of the continuity the site represents.

The Rs 270-crore project was approved in 2018, and NMML was appointed the nodal agency for the project in May 2019. Delays in civil works and content and curation issues, as well as disruptions caused by pandemic lockdowns resulted in the project missing the completion deadline of October 2020.

Erstwhile Nehru Museum

What used to be the Nehru Museum has been integrated with the new building. The Nehru Museum is now designated as Block I of the Prime Ministers' Museum, and has been technologically upgraded. A number of gifts Nehru received from all over the world, which had not been put on display so far, have been exhibited in the *toshakhana* on the first floor of the renovated Block I.

Two new galleries — Constitution Gallery



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the museum on Thursday. PTI

and India at Independence: British Legacy — have been added on the ground floor.

The new building

The top of the new museum — Block II of the complex — is built in the shape of the Ashok Chakra, from where visitors walk down to the various galleries. The ground floor has galleries dedicated to Gulzarilal



geostrategic imperative, both to project Russian power in the Mediterranean and to secure the economic gateway to key markets in southern Europe.

The Black Sea Fleet comprises Russian naval warships in the Black Sea, Sea of Azov, and the eastern Mediterranean, and is headquartered in Sevastopol, the major port on the Crimean peninsula. In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea.

In a paper titled 'The Naval Power Shift in



The Moskva sails in the Bosphorus, with the Istanbul skyline in the background, in June 2021. Reuters

the Black Sea' on the online platform *War on the Rocks*, Michael B Petersen of the Russia Maritime Studies Institute at the US Naval War College, said: "While the Black Sea Fleet assists with the defence of southern maritime approaches to Russia, it also allows Moscow to use the Black Sea as a jumping off point into the eastern and central Mediterranean... These activities enable its diplomacy and power projection into areas

where Russia previously had limited influence, and they retard what Russia believes are US and NATO efforts to destabilise its partners in places like Syria."

Black Sea in the war

Russia has focussed on dominating the Black Sea from the beginning of the invasion, to connect Russia and Crimea by a 'land bridge' by taking the Sea of Azov port of Mariupol (which appeared imminent on Friday).

Before the loss of the Moskva, Russia was also expected to focus its military efforts on Odessa, to the west of Crimea. If the Odessa region were to fall as well, Ukraine would lose access to its entire Black Sea coastline and would in effect be reduced to a landlocked country. That would be a devastating blow to the Ukrainian economy.

But the sinking of the Moskva is expected to put brakes — at least temporarily — on an anticipated amphibious assault on Odessa.

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SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

The economics of oil bonds

The Finance Minister has said the govt cannot bring down taxes — and thus oil prices — because it has to pay for oil bonds issued by the UPA. What are oil bonds, and to what extent do they tie the govt's hands?

UDIT MISRA

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

OVER THE last one year, as retail prices of petrol, diesel and other petroleum products have surged, the government has attracted criticism. On several occasions, including last week, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has sought to counter such criticism by claiming that the current government cannot bring down taxes (and, as a consequence, prices) because it has to pay for the oil bonds issued by the Congress-led UPA government.

How far do oil bonds tie the government down when it comes to taxation of petroleum products?

How much of fuel prices is tax?

There are two components to the domestic retail price — the price of crude oil itself, and the taxes levied on this basic price. Together they make up the retail price. The taxes vary from one product to another. For instance, as of now, taxes account for 50% of the total retail price for a litre of petrol, and 44% for a litre of diesel.

What has the Finance Minister said?

She has made two main points. One, she has blamed the ongoing conflict in Ukraine for higher crude oil prices. Two, on taxes, she has blamed the UPA era oil bonds. "... Taxpayers of today are paying for the subsidy which was dished out to consumers more than a decade ago in the name of oil bonds and they will continue to pay for the next five years as the redemption of bonds continues till 2026," she said in Rajya Sabha.

In December 2021, speaking in Parliament, she had quoted from then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's 2008 address to the nation: "I would like the nation to remember that issuing bonds and loading deficits on oil companies is not the permanent solution to this problem (of high fuel prices). We are only passing our burden to our children who will have to repay this debt."

What are oil bonds? Why were they issued?

When fuel prices were too high for domestic consumers, governments in the past often asked oil marketing companies (OMCs) to avoid charging consumers the full price.

But if oil companies don't get paid, they would become unprofitable. To address this, the government said it would pay the differ-

TABLE 1

OIL BONDS NDA INHERITED

DETAILS (INTEREST RATE, DATE OF MATURITY)	PRINCIPAL (₹ cr)
7.61% GOI spl. Bonds, 2015*	1,750.00
7.59% GOI spl. Bonds, 2015*	1,750.00
8.13% GOI spl. Bonds, 2021*	5,000.00
7.75% GOI spl. Bonds, 2021*	5,000.00
8.20% GOI spl. Bonds, 2023	22,000.00
8.01% GOI spl. Bonds, 2023	4,150.00
8.20% GOI spl. Bonds, 2024	5,000.00
8.20% GOI spl. Bonds, 2024	10,306.33
6.35% GOI spl. Bonds, 2024	22,000.00
7.95% GOI spl. Bonds, 2025	11,256.92
8.40% GOI spl. Bonds, 2025	9,296.92
8.40% GOI spl. Bonds, 2026	4,971.00
6.90% GOI spl. Bonds, 2026	21,942.00
8.00% GOI spl. Bonds, 2026	10,000.00
TOTAL	1,34,423.17

*These bonds have been paid in full

(total paid ₹13,500 crore)

Source (Table 1 & Chart 1): Union Budgets, Express Research

ence. But again, if the government paid that amount in cash, it would have been pointless, because then the government would have had to tax the same people to collect the money to pay the OMCs.

This is where oil bonds come in. An oil bond is an IOU, or a promissory note issued by the government to the OMCs, in lieu of cash that the government would have given them so that these companies don't charge the public the full price of fuel.

An oil bond says the government will pay the oil marketing company the sum of, say, Rs 1,000 crore in 10 years. And to compensate the OMC for not having this money straightaway, the government will pay it, say, 8% (or Rs 80 crore) each year until the bond matures.

Thus, by issuing such oil bonds, the government of the day is able to protect/ subsidise the consumers without either ruining the profitability of the OMC or running a huge budget deficit itself.

Oil bonds were issued by several governments in the past. But the ones in question now are the ones which the UPA government issued.

CHART 1

ANNUAL INTEREST PAYMENT ON OIL BONDS (₹ cr)

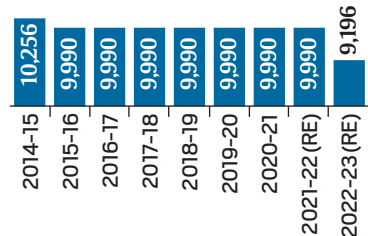
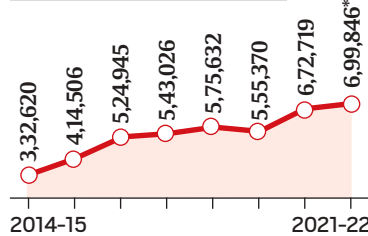


CHART 2

CONTRIBUTION OF OIL SECTOR TO EXCHEQUER (₹ cr)



*Provisional Source: PPAC, Express Research

As Table 1 shows, when the NDA government under PM Narendra Modi took charge in 2014, there were bonds worth Rs 1.34 lakh crore that had to be paid between 2015 and 2026.

How much of the UPA-era oil bonds has the NDA government paid back?

As discussed earlier, there are two components of oil bonds that need to be paid off: the annual interest payment, and the final payment at the end of the bond's tenure. By issuing such bonds, a government can defer the full payment by 5 or 10 or 20 years, and in the interim just pay the interest costs.

Table 1 shows that between 2015 and 2021, the NDA government has fully paid off four sets of oil bonds — a total of Rs 13,500 crore.

Each year, the BJP government had also had to pay the interest rate on all bonds that have not matured. Chart 1 shows the amount paid towards interest payment each year. Between 2014 and 2022, the BJP government has had to spend a total of Rs 93,686 crore towards interest as well as the principal.

speeches, video clips, newspaper interviews, and some original writings. These were collected from Doordarshan, Films Division, Sansad TV, the Ministry of Defence, Indian and foreign media houses and news agencies, and the *toshakhana* of the Ministry of External Affairs.

Families were requested for valuable information about the leaders; most of this content has been acquired on perpetual licence.

Virtual engagement

The 10,491-sq-m museum, built at a final cost of Rs 306 crore, has 43 galleries, and can accommodate 4,000 visitors at a time. There is a 'Time Machine' to transport visitors into the past, and an engagement zone, 'Anubhuti', offers a walk with the hologram of any Prime Minister, a picture with the PMs, or a letter 'signed' by them.

The museum makes extensive use of virtual reality, augmented reality, holograms, and audio-visual elements. A levitating emblem is the centrepiece of the reception zone, and 'Glimpses of the Future' on the ground floor allows visitors to be virtually part of future projects.



The Indian EXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

HOPE AND CAUTION

IMD predicts a normal monsoon. But India must take steps to meet narrowing supply of fertilisers

CROPS, LIKE HUMANS, need water and nutrients to survive and grow. There's room for optimism on the first, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicting a normal southwest monsoon: Rainfall is expected to be 99 per cent of the historical average for the country during June-September. The sanguine forecast is based on "La Niña" conditions prevailing and likely to continue through the four-month monsoon season. La Niña is the opposite of El Niño — an abnormal warming of the eastern Pacific waters usually causing heavy rains around South America, but also drought in the other western end whose effects percolate to India. Besides La Niña, which is generally favourable for the Indian monsoon, the IMD is counting on a "neutral" Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD). A "negative" IOD, wherein the eastern Indian Ocean waters off Indonesia and Australia turn unusually warm relative to the western part, is considered bad for the monsoon. The IMD believes that this time there will be La Niña and "neutral" IOD, at least till early in the season.

That hope — of a fourth consecutive normal monsoon — is somewhat negated when it comes to plant nutrients. India is today facing a tight supply position, especially in phosphatic and potassic fertilisers, ahead of the kharif sowings that will start with the monsoon. The country imports its entire muriate of potash (MOP) requirements. While it does manufacture phosphatic and complex fertilisers, their raw materials and intermediates — mainly rock phosphate, sulphur, phosphoric acid and ammonia — are largely imported. In the last one year, global prices of finished fertilisers and ingredients have doubled or trebled. The war in Ukraine — Russia was the world's largest and its next-door ally Belarus the sixth largest fertiliser exporter in 2020 — has only worsened things. Hardly any new imports have been contracted in the past two months, with companies unsure whether the government will allow them to pass on the higher prices or absorb the burden through increased subsidy rates.

What can the government do apart from announcing higher subsidy — which it must, to ensure adequate availability of nutrients by May-end? It should immediately launch a campaign to promote single super phosphate and complex fertilisers like 20:20:0:13 and 10:26:26. These contain less phosphorus or potash than di-ammonium phosphate and MOP, but farmers can be shown ways to apply them in the right dosage (along with farmyard manure, compost and organic wastes) without sacrificing crop yields. Use of high-analysis fertilisers is a luxury for a country with hardly any natural gas, rock phosphate, potash or elemental sulphur reserves. The government should also actively engage with countries such as Canada, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Senegal, Togo, even Russia and Belarus, to contract more supplies, both for kharif and the next rabi season.

TRUST AND CREDIT

Rising NPAs in Kerala cooperative banking sector call for tighter regulation, less political interference

CO-OPERATIVE BANKS IN Kerala have reported high levels of non performing assets at the end of December 2021. Figures released by the State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) suggest that as much as 88 per cent of advances of the Kerala State Cooperative Agricultural and Rural Development Bank Ltd were NPAs, while the corresponding figure for the Kerala Bank or Kerala State Cooperative Bank (KSCB), which has 13 district cooperative banks under it, is 30 per cent. These numbers are disturbing. The agriculture sector in Kerala, reeling under consecutive years of devastating floods, reported negative growth in 2019-20 and '20-21. This and the pandemic may have contributed to the rising NPAs.

But two other factors are also key: One, political control and patronage; and two, absence of regulation. In fact, both are connected. Much of the activity of the Kerala State Cooperative Agricultural and Rural Development Bank Ltd, with primary agricultural credit societies as basic units, escapes the oversight of regulators such as the RBI and the income tax department. Light regulation and lax supervision has benefited various stakeholders, including customers, promoters and underwriters, in this case the state government. Unlike public and private sector banks, cooperative institutions have the leeway to extend credit to local consumers, often on the basis of trust or compassion or due to pressure from local social or political groups. In the best scenario, they provide a protective net against usury and a compassionate helping hand in times of distress. In the worst scenario, these institutions become instruments in the hands of politicians to dispense privilege or to park black money. Last year, a cooperative bank in Karuvannur, Thrissur, controlled by local CPM leaders, had gone under after a loan scam was unearthed. The nexus between the promoters (the elected representatives of the cooperative) and their political patrons (parties) is not unique to Kerala: A similar pattern of political patronage is wide-spread in states such as Maharashtra and has often been the cause of banks going bust.

A case can be made for the state government to step in with necessary regulation and address the governance issues linked with the cooperatives. The cooperative sector has been a key player in mobilising and circulating capital in the state. The agricultural credit societies and cooperative banks enjoy high levels of trust among the people. It is essential that they build on that trust. These institutions are a lifeline for middle and lower middle classes and their financial health is of utmost importance to the state economy.

WHODUNNIT?

A driver-less car is stopped by the police. A metaphor for Big Tech is born

IT COULD HAVE been an April Fool's joke or, perhaps, even a scene from a B-grade horror flick. In a dimly-lit street on a dark night, the police stop a car for driving without its headlights on. The car has no driver, no intention behind the wheel. Is it a ghost, a joke or part of an elaborate heist, ala *Ocean's 11*? In the age of Silicon Valley miracles, it could be all of the above — or none of them.

Earlier this month, the San Francisco police stopped a self-driving car, and a video of the incident recorded by a bystander went viral. The technology, of course, has been around for some years now — though not in widespread use by consumers. The offending vehicle (or is the AI that guides it, liable) is seen to be driving away from the cops. But even if it hadn't, can it be held responsible? After all, just as tigers cannot commit murder and kangaroos have never been convicted of burglary, it is unlikely that a car without a driver can be charged with a traffic violation. Guilt, innocence and liability require a moral, sentient agent as their subject.

Apart from being the subject of a viral video, the offending car is an apt metaphor for the crimes and lack of punishment for the Silicon Valley tech giants behind such innovations. The conscience and culpability of companies are exported to the all-powerful algorithm — somehow, though, the profits seem to accrue only to the billionaires, who have set their sights, and wealth, on privatising the heavens. Misinformation, effects on mental health, even political coups of sorts have been laid at the door of AI. Yet, for law enforcement — local, national and international — big tech is still just a driver-less car with no one to *challan*. A ghost, a joke and a marvel of technology.



SONIA GANDHI

DOES INDIA HAVE to be in a state of permanent polarisation? The ruling establishment clearly wants the citizens of India to believe that such an environment is in their best interest. Whether it is dress, food, faith, festival or language, Indians are sought to be pitted against Indians and the forces of discord are given every encouragement, overt and covert. History — both ancient and contemporary — is continuously sought to be interpreted to promote prejudice, animosity and vengeance. It is a travesty that instead of utilising our resources for creating a bright, new future for the country and engaging young minds in productive ventures, time and valuable assets are being used up in attempts to refashion the present in terms of an imagined past.

There is much talk by the prime minister of acknowledging India's multiple diversities. But the harsh reality is that under this ruling dispensation, the rich diversities that have defined and enriched our society for centuries are being manipulated to divide us and, worse, to harden faultlines and make them more firmly entrenched.

It is now well accepted that we must sustain high economic growth to create wealth that can be redistributed, raise living standards and, most of all, generate the revenues needed for social welfare programmes and provide adequate employment opportunities for our youth. But the worsening environment of social illiberalism and bigotry, the spread of hatred and divisiveness, shakes the very foundations of economic growth. It is no surprise that some bold corporate executives have been speaking out against what is being orchestrated in Karnataka, amongst the most entrepreneurially dynamic of our states. There has been a predictable backlash in social media against these courageous voices. But the concerns are widely shared — and very real. It is no secret that an increasing number of our business persons have been declaring themselves as non-resident Indians in the past few years.

The rising chorus of hatred, the unceasing instigation of aggression and even

A virus rages

It's the virus of hate and divisiveness. It deepens distrust, stifles debate, damages us as a nation and people

crimes against minorities are a far departure from the accommodating, syncretic traditions in our society. Shared celebrations of festivals, good neighbourly relationships between communities of different faiths, the pervasive intermingling of faith and belief in the arts, cinema and everyday life, of which there are examples by the thousands, are proud and durable characteristics of our society through the ages. To undermine this for narrow political gain is to undermine the composite and syncretic foundations of Indian society and nationhood.

There is something more insidious in this grand, divisive plan to keep India in a state of permanent frenzy. All dissent and opinion that is opposed to the ideology of those in power is sought to be ruthlessly stifled. Political opponents are targeted and the full might of the state machinery is unleashed against them. Activists are threatened and sought to be silenced. Social media, in particular, is utilised to propagate what can only be described as lies and venom. Fear, deception and intimidation have become the pillars of the so-called "maximum governance, minimum government" strategy. The Narendra Modi government has started the practice of celebrating November 26 as Constitution Day to mark the adoption of our Constitution by the Constituent Assembly in 1949. But it pays obeisance to the Constitution while systematically emasculating every institution. This is sheer hypocrisy.

How special we are seen to be globally will depend crucially on how inclusive we become at home — not through slogans but through actual actions. What prevents the prime minister from coming down unambiguously and publicly against hate speech, whichever quarter it may emanate from? Repeat offenders roam free, and there is no restraint on their use of incendiary and provocative language. Indeed, they seem to enjoy some sort of official patronage at different levels and that is why they get away with atrocious and prosecutable statements.

Vigorous debate, discussion and virtually any form of interaction where an alternative

point of view is welcomed has become a thing of the past and we are all the poorer for it. Even academia, once respected for encouraging fresh thought processes, is under the scanner for interacting with counterparts from other parts of the world. As vilification of faiths and condemnation of entire communities become the norm, it is becoming commonplace to see divisive politics affecting not just the workplace, but also entering neighbourhoods and indeed people's homes. Never before has this country seen hatred as the basis of the day to day choices that are made by our citizens.

This wonderful land of ours has been home to, and has celebrated, heterogeneity, multiplicity and creativity and has given birth to great minds and personalities whose works have been read and acknowledged the world over. The hitherto liberal environment, and the spirit of inclusivity, accommodation and tolerance, has played a critical role in making all this possible. A closed society that encourages straitjacketed thinking can hardly expect to be one where fresh ideas flow. A brow-beaten mind is hardly likely to be a fertile or innovative one.

An apocalypse of hatred, bigotry, intolerance and untruth is engulfing our country today. If we don't stop it now, it will damage our society beyond repair, if it hasn't already done so. We simply cannot and must not allow this to go on. We as a people cannot stand by and watch as peace and pluralism are sacrificed at the altar of bogus nationalism.

Let us contain this raging fire, this tsunami of hate that has been unleashed before all that has been so painstakingly built by past generations is razed to the ground. Over a century ago, the poet of Indian nationalism gave the world his immortal *Gitanjali* of which perhaps the 35th verse has become the most celebrated and quoted. Gurudev Tagore's prayer, with its seminal lines, "Where the mind is without fear...", is all the more relevant and has heightened resonance today.

The writer is president of the Congress party

THE WAR'S MANY VICTIMS

Russian invasion has created a food, energy supply crisis in developing world



ANTONIO GUTERRES

FOR THE people of Ukraine, the Russian invasion is a waking nightmare, and a humanitarian disaster on a terrifying scale. But the war is also fast becoming a matter of life and death for vulnerable people around the world. We have all seen the tragedy unfolding inside Ukraine: Cities flattened; people suffering and dying in their homes and in the streets; the fastest displacement crisis in Europe since the Second World War. But beyond Ukraine's borders, far beyond the media spotlight, the war has launched a silent assault on the developing world. This crisis could throw up to 1.7 billion people — over one-fifth of humanity — into poverty, destitution and hunger on a scale not seen in decades.

Ukraine and the Russian Federation provide 30 per cent of the world's wheat and barley, one-fifth of its maize, and over half of its sunflower oil. Together, their grain feeds the poorest and most vulnerable people, providing more than one-third of the wheat imported by 45 African and least-developed countries. At the same time, Russia is the world's top natural gas exporter, and second-largest oil exporter. But the war is preventing farmers from tending their crops while closing ports, ending grain exports, disrupting supply chains and sending prices skyrocketing.

Many developing countries are still struggling to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with historic debt burdens and soaring inflation. Since the start of 2022, wheat and maize prices have increased by 30 per cent. Brent oil prices have risen more than 60 per cent over the last year, while natural gas and fertiliser prices have more than

doubled.

The United Nations' own life-saving operations are under severe strain. The World Food Programme has warned that it faces the impossible choice of taking from the hungry to feed the starving. It urgently needs \$8 billion to support its operations in Yemen, Chad and Niger.

Some countries are already sliding from vulnerability to crisis and serious social unrest. And we know the roots of many conflicts lie in poverty, inequality, under-development and hopelessness. But while much of the world has stepped up in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, there is no sign of the same support for the 1.7 billion other potential victims of this war.

We have a clear moral duty to support them, everywhere.

The Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance that I launched last month aims to develop coordinated solutions to these interlinked crises, with governments, international financial institutions and other key partners. I thank the global leaders in all sectors who are supporting this initiative.

On food, we are urging all countries to keep markets open, resist hoarding and unjustified and unnecessary export restrictions, and make reserves available to countries at the highest risk of hunger and famine. This is not the time for protectionism. There is enough food for every country to get through this crisis if we act together. Humanitarian appeals must be fully funded, including for the World Food Programme. We simply cannot allow people to starve in the 21st century.

On energy, the use of strategic stockpiles and additional reserves could help to ease this energy crisis in the short term. But the only medium- and long-term solution is to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy, which is not impacted by market fluctuations. This will allow the progressive phase-out of coal and all other fossil fuels.

And on finance, the G20 and international financial institutions must go into emergency mode. They must find ways to increase liquidity and fiscal space, so that governments in developing countries can invest in the poorest and most vulnerable, and in the Sustainable Development Goals. This should be a first step towards deep reforms to our unfair global financial system, which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. Social protection, including cash transfers, will be essential to support desperate families through this crisis. But many developing countries with large external debts do not have the liquidity to provide these safety nets. We cannot stand by and watch, as they are forced to choose between investing in their people, and servicing their debt.

The only lasting solution to the war in Ukraine and its assault on the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world is peace. As the United Nations works to support the innocent victims of this war — both inside and outside Ukraine — we call on the global community to speak with one voice and support our plea for peace.

This war must end now.

The writer is the United Nations Secretary-General

APRIL 16, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

OPPOSITION UNITY

THE CALL FOR a credible alternative to the Congress-I through a programme of joint action received overwhelming support on the opening day of the convention of the Janata Party, the Congress S and a faction of the Lok Dal. The resolution incorporating the joint action programme rallied for the establishment of a unified leadership with a "common electoral strategy" to fight the coming elections. The resolution was moved by Madhu Dandavate (Janata) and seconded by Ambika Soni (Congress-S). Nearly 11,000 delegates are participating at the convention. Dandavate said that those who are opposed to Mrs Gandhi have not been able to unite.

She will finish them individually.

LOK DAL CRISIS

CHARAN SINGH'S RE-ENTRY into politics after a nine-day *sanyas* threatens to throw his truncated Lok Dal into a fresh crisis. The socialists led by Karpoori Thakur and George Fernandes were moving towards a show-down with Singh. Fernandes has threatened to resign. Both leaders, who are reportedly unhappy with Charan Singh's tilt towards the BJP, have tried for a patch-up between him and the rebel leaders Biju Patnaik and Devi Lal. Singh got the national executive's endorsement for the expulsion of Patnaik, Lal

and Kumbha Ram Arya.

WHEAT PRICE

THE PROCUREMENT PRICE for wheat has been set at Rs 142 a quintal, agriculture minister Rao Birendra Singh told the Lok Sabha. The decision means an increase of Rs 11 a quintal.

DACOITS STRIKE

DACOIT PHOOLAN DEVI struck again on April 15, when she and her gang raided two houses in Meerapur village of Jalaun district and took away a rifle and a 12-bore gun.



THE IDEAS PAGE

An Islamabad moment

Imran Khan’s departure could signal the beginning of an era of a more constitutionally appropriate judiciary and military in Pakistan — or it could not



MENAKA GURUSWAMY

ON APRIL 11, Imran Khan, Pakistan’s then prime minister, lost a no-confidence motion against his leadership and was forced to leave office. This was the culmination of a week-long, riveting political crisis, unfortunately, all too familiar in Pakistan. First, a sitting prime minister tried to dissolve parliament when faced with a resurgent opposition. Subsequently, the Supreme Court of Pakistan intervened to hold the dissolution unconstitutional and ordered parliament to proceed with the vote of no-confidence. Imran Khan’s Tehreek-e-Insaf lost the vote, with the opposition gathering 174 votes in a 342-member House. Imran Khan’s dismissal continues a long and inglorious tradition — no Pakistani prime minister has ever completed their constitutionally sanctioned five-year term. Khan is the first PM to be voted out of office by a no-confidence vote — a constitutionally-sanctioned method. Others have been executed, displaced by military coups, sent into exile, or imprisoned. What explains this instability of the Pakistani executive?

All elected governments in Pakistan must contend with the military and the judiciary to survive. Let’s start with the role of the military. Apart from being a professional army, the military is also the wealthiest commercial player in Pakistan. In her influential book, *Military Inc.*, Ayesha Siddiqi notes that the military is one of Pakistan’s largest landowners, controlling about 11.58 million acres of land. It is involved in a range of profitable activities — wheat storage, fertiliser production, oil and gas exploration and production, sugar, rice and ginning mills, fish farms, and bicycle manufacturing plants. These and many other commercial ventures have made the military financially independent from other branches of the state. Siddiqi argues that the Pakistani military has a commercial incentive and fiscal independence to wield political influence.

Pakistan’s military has had this power since the country’s inception. The Pakistan army’s first intervention into politics was as early as 1958, led by General Ayub Khan, who abolished the constitutional regime established by the 1956 Constitution and established what K J Newman terms a “preventive autocracy”. Subsequently, the military would stage three coups in October 1958, July 1977, and October 1999. These coups inevitably resulted in the unconstitutional and uncere-monious dismissal of elected prime ministers and the obvious breakdowns in constitutional functioning.

Yet, it is not only the military that has contributed to the unstable parliamentary form of government in Pakistan. The judiciary has also contributed to the fragility of elected prime ministers in the country. Soon after the founding of Pakistan, on October 24, 1954, the governor-general dissolved the Constituent Assembly (an elected body). The governor-general had earlier dismissed the East Bengali prime minister who enjoyed a majority in Parliament. The federal court (which would later become the supreme



C R Sasikumar

court) upheld the dissolution in Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan v Federation of Pakistan. Chief Justice Muhammad Munir found in favour of the governor-general, concluding that the latter needed to give his assent to provide legal authority to the actions of the Constituent Assembly.

In 1977, the supreme court faced another occasion to test constitutionalism in the context of a military regime in the case of Begum Nusrat Bhutto. Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was imprisoned by Ziaul Haq, the chief of staff of the army, who quickly declared martial law. Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Zulfikar’s wife, filed a petition before the supreme court challenging the prime minister’s detention on highly suspect charges of murder. The court not only found the military coup to be legal, but also did not prevent the execution of PM Bhutto by the military regime.

In contemporary times, Imran Khan’s predecessor Nawaz Sharif was dismissed from his position as prime minister by the supreme court, in the case popularly called the Panama Papers Scandal. The Panama Papers, you will recall, listed the names of many influential persons alleged to possess secret bank accounts with enormous amounts of money. Nawaz Sharif and his family members allegedly had such bank accounts. Hence, petitions were filed — including by Imran Khan and his party — that Nawaz Sharif was not “honest” or “ameen” as warranted by Article 62 (1) (f) of the 1973 constitution. This constitutional provision

OPENING ARGUMENT

In 1977, the supreme court faced another occasion to test constitutionalism in the context of a military regime in the case of Begum Nusrat Bhutto. Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was imprisoned by Ziaul Haq, the chief of staff of the army, who quickly declared martial law. Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Zulfikar’s wife, filed a petition before the supreme court challenging the prime minister’s detention on highly suspect charges of murder. The court not only found the military coup to be legal, but also did not prevent the execution of PM Bhutto by the military regime.

would disqualify any member of parliament who was found to be dishonest by a court of law.

During the hearings, the supreme court directed the setting up of a joint investigation team (JIT), with nominees from various executive institutions. Eventually, the court accepted the JIT conclusion that Nawaz Sharif “is not honest in terms of section 99 (f) of the Representation of People’s Act and Article 62 (1) (f) of the Constitution” and disqualified him from membership of parliament. Hence, Sharif also lost the position of prime minister.

Article 62 (1) (f) of the constitution itself is a remnant from the days of General Zia, who seized power through a military coup in 1978 and remained president till his death in a mysterious plane crash in 1988. He instituted many constitutional and statutory provisions apparently against corruption and Islam. Surprisingly, civilian political parties chose to retain this provision, not displaying foresight that it could eventually be used against them.

In Imran Khan’s case, the supreme court clearly played a constitutionally appropriate role, even if some critics allege that it may have been influenced by the wishes of the military. Whether this is the beginning of an era of more constitutionally appropriate judiciary and military in Pakistan remains to be seen.

The writer is a senior advocate at the Supreme Court of India

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“For far too long, non-democratic forces have acted as spoilers and crippled the progress of parliamentary democracy either by using political parties against each other or directly subverting the political system.” — **DAWN**

Same old test

CUET continues achievement-oriented approach of assessment tests that has put pressure on students without evaluating their reasoning skills



RAMA KANT AGNIHOTRI

THE COMMON University Entrance Test (CUET) is being lauded as providing a level-playing field for entrants to undergraduate courses. But the idea of a computer-based test, involving only multiple-choice questions (MCQs), is not all that new. The Central Universities Common Entrance Test attempted something similar in 2010. It is not clear how such tests sync with the NEP’s thrust on “critical thinking” through “inquiry-driven” and “discovery-oriented” pedagogy. There seems to be a clear disjunction between teaching and assessment.

Even when examinations do not involve MCQs, they are designed more for the ease of the evaluators and hardly provide any scope of critical engagement. Whatever be the format, examination systems in the country end up causing great stress to students and parents and perpetuating a lack of trust in the teachers who actually work with students.

The idea that assessment should be an integral part of the teaching-learning process is nothing new. Constructive assessment should actually constitute an input to the curricular objectives, syllabus design, and pedagogical practices. Given the kind of policing that needs to be done and the number of times examinations have to be cancelled for one reason or another, any healthy change in assessment should be welcome. We have created a world of assessment that is built on mistrust: In general, employers do not trust institutions of higher learning which, in turn, treat school boards with suspicion. Teachers and students are the final victims in this ecosystem of mistrust. Getting out of this rut requires assessment strategies that are centred on students without compromising on the need to provide them a solid grounding in the basics of subjects.

It is the community of teachers alone that can assess the abilities of their students reliably and contribute towards breaking the homogeneity, anxiety and boredom of existing testing mechanisms. One way out of the impasse is to switch to open book assignments and the projects mode that has a more relaxed time frame. In the process, students will be tested on their comprehension and writing skills, the ability to synthesise information, critical and rational thinking capacities, and their potential to arrive at imaginative conclusions. This calls for the professionalisation of teacher education including honing their digital skills and their immediate withdrawal from non-academic engagements such as the mid-day meal programmes, election duties, and census work. There is no substitute for face-to-face teaching-learning but online access to different kinds of materials and audio and video resources does add additional value to learning.

Scholars of education have traditionally made a distinction between achieve-

ment tests and proficiency tests. The former focus on what has been taught according to a prescribed syllabus while the latter focus on what has actually been acquired in the domain of knowledge through classroom transactions. The achievement test scores normally indicate the extent to which the learner has mastered the prescribed textbooks. Even after she has passed the Class XII examination with distinction, a student may not be equipped to critically examine the claims made by a scholar, propose alternative hypotheses and initiate a new line of rational enquiry.

The focus on achievement-oriented tests is one reason for the failure of the education system. There is indeed a rather unjustified, cold rationale behind this exercise: If students have been taught X, there must be evidence to show that they have learnt that in the time frame we decide. We know that acquisition of knowledge does not happen in such a linear and additive way — the human mind cuts across several trajectories in the process of acquiring a given concept. However, conceptual clarity and critical enquiry is not the focus of such achievement tests.

The annual examinations, including for Classes X and XII, are achievement-oriented. So are all competitive examinations including the JEE, NEET and IISER, except they require a student to answer MCQs at reckless speed. The CUET will be no different. Tuition centres call the shots in the board examinations and coaching institutes play a big role in a student’s success in the competitive examinations. The focus here is again on practice and speed. They have neither the capacity nor the time for conceptual clarity or proficiency enhancement.

The focus of proficiency exercises should be on tasks that draw out the learner’s imaginative and creative potential. She should be able to build fresh hypotheses in response to the issues being raised, examine the validity of alternative proposals through a process of rational enquiry and articulate a coherent response to the issue at hand. Policy and curricular documents do use these words but they never unpack them.

The foundations of any significant level of proficiency in any domain of knowledge can only be conceptual clarity. It can be built by students and teachers jointly engaging in a process of enquiry, constantly questioning what is written in textbooks. Indeed, the focus of teacher intervention must be to enable her students to question what she herself says. Students working under such a plan of action would undertake assignments and projects that would be exploratory in nature demanding higher levels of cognitive engagement. Students may build grade-appropriate portfolios of assignments and projects that would be evaluated by the community of teachers at school. The evaluation conducted in collaboration with students should be available in the public domain. Such an assessment should constitute the basis for admission to any institution of higher learning. Based on this, the community of teachers at each institute of higher learning could hold interviews to admit the required number of students.

The author retired from Delhi University and is currently Professor Emeritus, Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur



ABHINAV KUMAR

Misreading The Kashmir Files

Left-liberal critics are tone-deaf to changed political and cultural realities

FOR ALL those who thought that Partition and the subsequent adoption of a democratic Constitution had somehow settled the debate about the idea of India, as something defined by the values of “civic constitutionalism”, as described recently by a former vice president of India, the recent success of the film *The Kashmir Files* must come as a rude shock.

The film has generated passionate debate and a rather predictable response from the traditional conscience keepers of our public life on the left. They point to the historical inaccuracies in the film, decry its supposedly simplistic and voyeuristic portrayal of the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits that ignores the ongoing suffering of Kashmiri Muslims, and denounce it as another attempt by the Hindu Right to mangle the secular idea of India. They also suggest that the film is a diabolical assault on the syncretic values espoused by the notion of Kashmiriyat.

Alas, those of us who are directly involved in meeting the internal security challenges of India cannot afford the luxury of indulging in these flights of fancy about the very real challenges to the idea of India posed by the conflict in Kashmir — a conflict that’s grown out of more than seven decades of festering separatism based on unchecked ethnic and religious chauvinism. After three decades of bloody conflict, this separatism has now dropped all pretence of being anything other than a front for the ideology of Jihadi terrorism. It is an assault on not just the territorial

integrity of India, but also on the very idea of India as an inclusive, tolerant and liberal society. It is this assault on the idea of India that is depicted in the movie. But our left-liberals are so fixated on the threat to secularism from the Hindu Right, that they have a complete blind spot when it comes to acknowledging even the possibility that secularism in India faces a far graver challenge from Islamic fundamentalism, of which the conflict in Kashmir is the most egregious example.

Do we term the violence and displacement experienced by the Kashmiri Pandits as genocide? Compared to the very recent examples of the Jewish Holocaust and the massacre of Armenians by Turks, in the 20th Century, it is certainly a misnomer. However, it still represents a very brazen and brutal example of ethnic cleansing. Much has been made by those attacking the film about the failure of successive governments to ensure justice and rehabilitation for the displaced Kashmiri Pandits. But again there is a complete silence about the ideology of hate that allowed this persecution and displacement in the first place, an ideology that has peddled lies about Kashmiriyat to create a self-serving narrative of conspiracy and victimhood.

Let’s be honest, Kashmiriyat was always a bit of a fantasy. The recorded history of Kashmir since medieval times is full of examples of mass conversions based on political coercion and brute force. What happened to the Pandits in the 1990s was nothing abnormal or

anomalous. Our Kashmiri Muslim citizens and leftist intellectuals are in collective denial to pretend that what happened to the Pandits in Kashmir in the 1990s was a diabolical plot by the then Government of India to defame Kashmiriyat. Are we to believe that lakhs of Kashmiri Pandits faked their persecution and willingly left their livelihoods and homes to take part in an enormous charade to malign the Muslims of Kashmir? One would have to be exceptionally gullible, or paranoid, or plain twisted to peddle this narrative.

There is a tone that the film takes that is jarring even to every proud Hindu who is a patriotic Indian. It is the belief that not a single Kashmiri Muslim resisted the dominant narrative of hatred. I cannot believe that even in the middle of that collective madness, there weren’t a few Kashmiri Schindlers.

The violence against the Pandits in Kashmir was not just something carried out by a few fringe terrorists. It had the tacit support of large sections of the political class and the civil society of the Valley. It is this tacit support that prevents the return of the Pandits to Kashmir. Unless the now almost completely Muslim-dominated civil society in the Kashmir Valley questions its own twisted narrative, acknowledges its complicity in the plight of the Pandits, and weans off its addiction to victimhood and Jihadi separatism, peace isn’t coming anytime soon to Kashmir.

The popularity of *The Kashmir Files* must also be seen in the larger context of the broad

public support for the dismantling, in August 2019, of the special constitutional status of Kashmir that was based on Articles 35A and 370. The Constitution of India merely codifies our secular ideals. They actually draw sustenance from centuries of cultural syncretism that is at the heart of Hindu philosophy and culture. It was this syncretic core that was truly damaged by the persecution of Kashmiri Pandits and their displacement. Acknowledgement of this fact, as this film does with typical Bollywood hyperbole, is essential to any credible idea of India as well as to any viable roadmap to ending the conflict in Kashmir.

Our largely left-liberal elite has long argued that secularism in India faces an existential threat from the Hindu Right. For many decades post Independence, this position went largely unchallenged in both politics, and in our larger public discourse. It is being challenged in both domains now. This is what happens when outdated ideologies fail to adapt to ground realities. Vivek Agnihotri is certainly no Satyajit Ray or even Manmohan Desai. Nonetheless, denouncing the popularity of *The Kashmir Files* as another example of popular sentiment being misled and misfed by Hindutva forces is predictable. It is another chapter in being intellectually tone-deaf to the political and cultural realities of today’s India.

The writer is an IPS officer serving currently in Uttarakhand. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COOLING NEEDS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Sour lesson’ (IE, April 15). The insufficiency of the organised cold storage network and its allied supply chain infrastructure has been a bottleneck in realising the full potential of our leverages in the agricultural sector. The organised grocery chains, both in the online and offline retail space, have been able to channel investment into adding up cold storage space in the country. There’s a huge potential for giant players in the logistics industry to scale up their warehouse facilities, add necessary cold storage infrastructure, and cater to the organised grocers as their independent third-party supply-chain partners. With this, the organised players can free up their capital from logistics to retail, their core business interests. And an organised logistics industry gets the necessary incentive to develop cost-effective solutions for this sector.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Barasat

ONLY FOR ELITE

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘A fuller learning’ (IE, April 14). While the intention and object of the reform to allow pursuing two degrees simultaneously is noble, I fail to understand how students would manage multiple courses at a time. The impact on the quality of education itself is also questionable.

Another concern is regarding the asking for multiple degrees becoming the norm by the recruiters, and the poor and unprivileged would suffer who could not afford to pursue multiple degrees. Higher education in India is very swiftly turning into rich men’s privilege, and degrees are turning into commodities.

Saurav Kumar, Delhi

PROPHETIC WORDS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Babasaheb vs intolerance’ (IE, April 14). The writer is absolutely right: As predicted by Dr B R Ambedkar, the minorities in India are not treated equally before the law and are frequently discriminated against openly by the right-wing parties and their supporters. This situation worsened after the BJP came to power at the Centre with a thumping majority in 2014 and again in 2019, with a bigger mandate. In BJP-ruled states, Muslims are completely at the receiving end. A passive judiciary and the lack of unity among the opposition parties, which are at loggerheads more with each other than with the all-powerful BJP, are responsible for this to a great extent. What is really dispiriting is that even the Left, which should be at the forefront of fighting for the minorities’ rights and equal treatment, is itself in complete disarray.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

A Lot of Fury, Little Impact

KGF: CHAPTER 2
★★

Director: Prashanth Neel
Cast: Yash, Sanjay Dutt, Prakash Raj, Srinidhi Shetty, Raveena Tandon, Anant Nag, Archana Jois

SHUBHRA GUPTA

THE MOST striking aspect of *KGF: Chapter 1* (2018) was its setting. At every opportunity, the camera pulled all the way back so that we could get a bird's-eye view of the massive gold mines of Kolar burrowed deep in the earth, and there, toiling away ceaselessly, millions of faceless men and women. Slaves really, yoked to their back-breaking work without pause, trodden under the iron boots of their cruel masters.

Its scale reminded you of those old MGM movies set in biblical times. The humans who strode about in KGF had to yell and shout in order to be seen and heard. Therefore, the background music which had you reaching for earplugs. And therefore, larger-than-life characters, led from the front by Rocky (Yash), who announces his arrival as both messiah and avenger, rolled into one.

KGF: Chapter 2 is more of the same, only bigger. But alas, not better, despite the film corralling such Bollywood stars as Sanjay Dutt and Raveena Tandon, and branching out of the country, to dip its shovel in the Middle East, with its lighter patina of brown and beige, the darker shades reserved for the Kolar goldfields, which form the burnt-earth backdrop for the doings of our hero Rocky and his faithful denizens.

His unruly mane is still the same, but this time around Rocky appears in a series of sharp suits, standing out against the thousands of extras dressed in mud-brown humble clothes. What's also familiar is the swagger, and the dialogue delivery, which he gets to scatter amongst an array of characters — a very bad guy kitted out in tattoos and a complicated hairdo called Adheera (Sanjay Dutt),

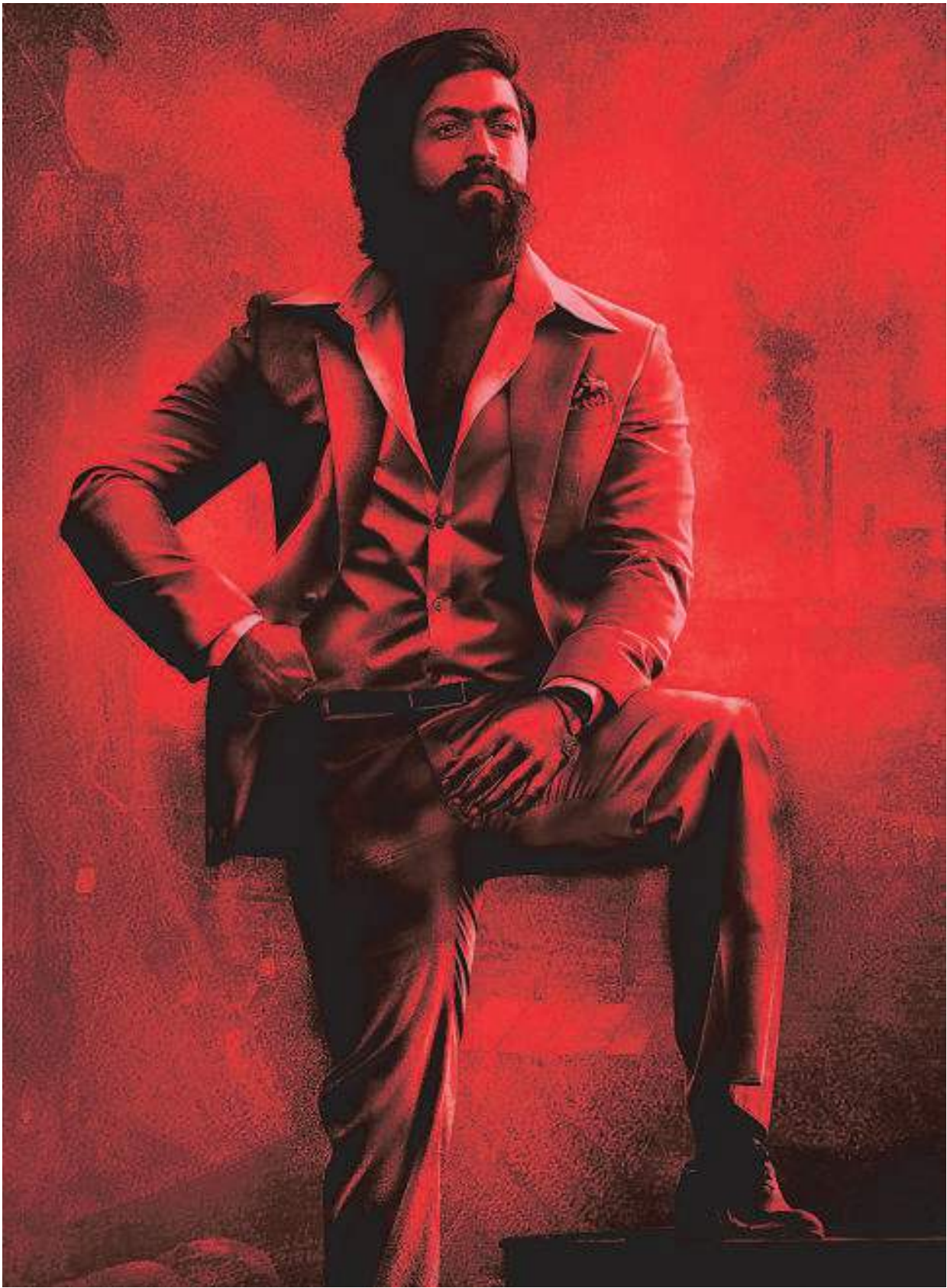
an Indian prime minister who looks and sounds like Indira Gandhi (Raveena Tandon), a bunch of rivals spread across the length and breadth of India, a CBI officer hot on his tracks, and gaggles of cops who regard him with dread and fear.

The trouble with films busy working on their look is that they forget about plotting. The film swings haphazardly between the past, which shows us Rocky's devotion towards his mother (Archana Jois), and the present, in which he swings between being a saviour and the guy who cracks the whip and roars at the workers to never stop working. Good guy compelled to do bad things by dint of circumstance, or a bad guy with a golden heart? Not for us to make too fine a point on that faint distinction because as far as *KGF 2* goes, Rocky is no 'gangster', only the 'master who enters and conquers'.

The trouble with films busy working on their look is that they forget about plotting. The film swings haphazardly between the past and the present

To that end, we get set-pieces after set-pieces in which Yash swings heavy hammers and pulverises armies of goons, some who look as if they've wandered out of the sets of *Mad Max: Fury Road*, some from the old Westerns. Srinidhi Shetty is the heroine-there-only-to-buoy-the-hero. Dutt, in his *Agneepath* avatar minus the menace, should have made a worthy enemy but is made to do nothing but open his mouth and roar. In her tasteful saris, and that trademark white streak in her hair, Raveena Tandon leaves a little more impact: she is also responsible for an act that has ensured the erasure of the wild and valorous deeds of Rocky from our history books. The ladies are beside the point, though like the previous one, this film too is about men and machismo and muscle, all oiled and shiny and ripped; the audience dutifully chortles when a misogynistic remark or two comes out of the hero's mouth, as he turns to the real business at hand — to up the blood-soaked violence quotient at every turn.

As Prakash Raj's raconteur says, with a smirk, 'don't dramatise it so much, after all it's fiction, right?' With the exception of these moments and some bits of the action, *KGF 2* comes off largely dull. Too much sound, a lot of fury, little impact.



STREAMING WATCH LIST



ANATOMY OF A SCANDAL

NETFLIX
This six-part British drama series, based on the novel of the same name by Sarah Vaughan, features Sienna Miller as Sophie Whitehouse. Sophie's privileged life as the wife of powerful politician James Whitehouse unravels when scandalous secrets surface and he stands accused of a shocking crime. The cast also features Michelle Dockery, Rupert Friend, and Naomi Scott. The story mostly unfolds during James' trial. The series examines thorny issues such as power dynamics and entitlement.

CHOOSE OR DIE

NETFLIX
Tempted by a chance to win unclaimed prize money, two friends reboot a mysterious 1980s video game and step into a surreal world of next-level terror. Trapped by the game, the protagonist realises that there is no scope for reset or escape. She must win, or pay the ultimate price. This horror-thriller is directed by Toby Meakins and written by Simon Allen. The cast features Lola Evans (known for his role Otis in *Sex Education*), Asa Butterfield, and Eddie Marsan.

CHESS OF THE WIND



The 1976-Iranian film, restored by Martin Scorsese's World Cinema Project, is written and directed by Mohammad Reza Aslani. This film was released before the 1979 revolution in Iran and was banned soon after. After being rediscovered in 2020, the film was released in different countries and was well received. Set in an ornate, candlelit mansion in the Tehran of 1920s, it's an exploration of human greed and betrayal as the heirs to a family fortune vie for control of their matriarch's estate.

VEYIL (MALAYALAM)

PRIME VIDEO
This Shane Nigam-starrer has him portray a complex character with conviction. The film revolves around Siddhu, a troubled youngster who was raised by a widowed mother, and the strained relationship he shares with his family. In this coming-of-age story, some unexpected events ensure that Siddhu goes through a transformation.

OUTER RANGE



Created by Brian Watkins, *Outer Range* is a suspense drama about rancher Royal Abbott (Josh Brolin) fighting for his land and family. The series examines how we grapple with the unknown as Abbott discovers an unfathomable mystery at the edge of Wyoming's wilderness. The series is designed as a thrilling fable with hints of wry humour and supernatural mystery.

ALAKA SAHANI

Wrath of Another Vigilante Mother

MAI

Directors: Anshai Lal, Atul Mongia
Cast: Sakshi Tanwar, Vivek Mushran, Wamiqa Gabbi, Raima Sen, Prashant Narayanan, Ankur Ratan, Anant Vidhaat, Vaibhav Raj Gupta, Seema Pahwa
Streaming on: Netflix

NEW WEB series *Mai* pulls off a tough feat: it coaxes you to suspend tons of disbelief because you have been drawn into its world, and have become invested in its characters. Every time you go, how is that even possible (and this happens over and over again), you are yanked back into the narrative, which relishes its every gritty, grimy, ultra-violent beat.

It's set in a Lucknow very far away from its 'nazaakat-filled gallis', inhabited by people in very different spheres who normally wouldn't have known of each other's existence, till a fatal collision brings them together and changes all their trajectories. This is a conceit we've seen before, but *Mai* refreshes it by including an unusual ensemble, led by a homely, soft-spoken mother hell-bent upon avenging the killing of her daughter.

Vengeful mums are also not new. Sridevi and Raveena Tandon have gone down that path in 2017 in *Mom* and *Maatr*, respectively. Sakshi Tanwar's *Mai* is similar only because of the subject; where she branches off from the straightforward revenge track is to get embroiled in murky goings-on involving medical scams, dirty money and very dirty mobsters.

What's interesting is how Tanwar's Sheel never strays far from her *susheel bahu-biwi* persona, even as she burrows deeper into the dirt, getting closer to the secret behind her daughter's accident. Those are precisely the parts which are hard to swallow. Sure, a grieving mother can be full of anger at the tragic turn of events, but the ease with which she does a flip every time she is faced with a seemingly insurmountable obstacle is a major stretch.

Just how does a woman who divides her time between her family and the sleepy inmates of an old age home, suddenly become equipped to take on complicit cops, a dodgy businessman (Prashant Narayanan), a hard-eyed female gangster (Raima Sen), and brutal baddies, without turning a hair? This, and more of the same (have fence, will jump over it, sari and all, without breaking a stride; have a killer, turn tables like it's an everyday occurrence), is full eye-roll territory, and nothing in the six episodes of season one I've seen until now, gives us any hints in that direction.



Where does this ease come from?

But, and this is where I found myself admiring the dexterity with which the creator, Mongia, and the writers (Mongia, Tamal Sen, Amita Vyas) coax us along, even when there seems to be something missing from crucial characters. Take, for example, Sheel's husband (Vivek Mushran, great to see him back after such a long gap), a stoic man who appears resigned to his fate, running a chemist shop as his day job, doing *bijli*-repair odd jobs as his hobby. Who is this guy? Why is he the way he is? His attitude has a lot to do with the way Sheel responds to things, but it remains a mystery.

Still, the two of them are able to convince us that they are a unit, have raised a child (Wamiqa Gabbi, eloquently using sign language, very effective) with challenges, and have worked their way around their own challenges. The spiky interactions between the two of them, and their extended family — *bhaisa-hab, bhabhi*, and the children — are some of the most absorbing parts of the series.

The other parts, coasting on a bunch of contrivances and too-convenient connec-

tions, are full of 'chor-police' action (one long sequence where machine guns rattle and bodies fall, life ebbing away, is notable), non-stop *gaalis*, and twists and turns. Some of the flood of this invective reminds you of Mirzapur and other crime sagas set in UP: it's got old, guys, and tiresome. But again, a few of the faces stand out: as a couple of louts-on-to-a-good-thing, Anant Vidhaat and Vaibhav Raj Gupta (last seen in *Gullak*) have something nice going on. As a cop hot on the heels of the bad guys, Ankur Ratan leaves an impression. But Seema Pahwa needed to have been given more to do: for an actor who so effortlessly commands the screen, her part is really sketchy.

Sakshi Tanwar's journey from a timid housewife to a woman with steel (or did she always have it within her?) is at the heart of *Mai*. Right from her mega-popular Ekta Kapoor show *Kahaani Ghar Ghar Kii*, Tanwar had proved that she had more to offer than mere *saas-bahu* shenanigans. Despite the elements that stretch our credulity, here she manages to hold our attention. What will *Mai*'s next steps be? Tell, tell.

SG



Unapologetic Fan Service

BEAST
★★★

Director: Nelson Dilipkumar
Cast: Vijay, Pooja Hegde, Yogi Babu, Shine Tom Chacko, Aparna Das, Lilliput Faruqui

MANOJ KUMARR

THE BUILD-UP to the hero-introduction scene has seemingly been a non-negotiable part of masala movies starring superstars. It's a fan-service thing. But over the years, it has evolved into a ritual. No matter how maverick and rebellious the director, the movie will start firing on all cylinders minutes before the hero's entry, providing the right cues for fans to get ready to welcome their favourite star with deafening rounds of applause, whistles and screams.

Tamil superstar Vijay appears on screen without much announcement and fanfare, and smiles at the audience for a moment. That's all. It is a huge subversion of the expectations of hardcore fans.

The creative decision is in line with the stoic nature of Veera Raghavan, played by Vijay. He is so inexpressive that strangers won't be able to guess that he is suffering from traumatic stress just by looking at him. Director Nelson Dilipkumar has cut Veera Raghavan's character from the same cloth as Varun, the stoic hero of his last film, *Doctor*.

Raghavan is a RAW officer. However, the collateral damage caused by him during a high-profile mission takes a toll on his

mental health. He believes that he has been betrayed by his men. So he quits.

He unexpectedly ends up in a shopping mall, which gets hijacked. His former colleagues, who get a whiff of his presence in the mall, request his help. The government tells Veera that he's their best hope.

Unlike heroes in other films, Veera doesn't take it upon himself to fight the terrorists and rescue all the hostages single-handedly. After the terrorists take control of the mall, Veera safely escorts himself and a few friends and finds a safe place to hide. And then he tells his friends something like, 'Let's not worry about the lives of other people. It's the job of the government to save these people. Let us first save ourselves and get out'.

What?! He's the hero and the ultimate sign of a hero is sacrifice, isn't it? But Veera doesn't want to find himself in a position to decide who lives and who dies. But after hearing the screams of a young girl, Veera decides to take charge.

As composer Anirudh's track *Beast Mode* plays in the background, Veera walks in slow motion with an axe in hand, giving fans the opportunity to work themselves into a frenzy, which Nelson had denied them in the opening moments of the film.

The film, like most Nelson films, has actors Redin Kingsley, Sunil Reddy and Yogi Babu for comic relief, even though they don't really serve the narration. He also could have used this plot set-up to turn in a nail-biting thriller. Instead, he ends up giving us an unapologetic crowd-pleaser.

9 ECONOMY



GOLD

₹52,941



RUPEE

₹76.18



OIL

\$99.86



SILVER

₹69,179

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market as of April 13, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) as of April 12

SENSEX: 58,338.93 ▼ 237.44 (0.41%) NIFTY: 17,475.65 ▼ 54.65 (0.31%) NIKKEI: 27,093.19 ▼ 78.81 HANG SENG: 21,518.08 ▲ 143.71 FTSE: 7,616.38 ▲ 35.58 DAX: 14,163.85 ▲ 87.41

Domestic equity, currency, bullion and oil markets were closed on Friday on account of Good Friday; international market data till 1900 IST

SECTOR WATCH
ONLINE AGGREGATOR

With Swiggy as lead, Rapido raises \$180 mn; both eye logistics scale-up

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

BIKE-TAXI PLATFORM Rapido said Friday it has raised \$180 million in a funding round led by food and grocery delivery company Swiggy, along with investment from TVS Motor Company, Westbridge, Shell Ventures, and Nexus Ventures. Post this Series D investment round, Rapido is valued at about \$800 million.

Swiggy leading Rapido's latest fundraise assumes significance in the former's plans to expand into a logistics-led model. "Swiggy and Rapido share a vision to build a logistics platform that empowers riders through more opportunities and higher earnings. While we've already been working together, this investment facilitates closer alignment to leverage the synergies between the platforms and improve the value we provide to both consumers and delivery executives/captains across the country," Swiggy co-founder and CEO Sriharsha Majety said in a statement.

According to regulatory filings, Swiggy invested around \$124 million in the current round. In the past, Rapido has raised \$130 million from various investors. Rapido is currently present in around 100 cities across the country with over 1.5 million driver-partners. The company said that the funds from this investment round will be used to bolster its technology, strengthen its teams across capabilities, increase overall supply across

VALUED AT
\$800 MILLION

■ Post this Series D investment round — led by Swiggy, along with investment from TVS Motor Company, Westbridge, Shell Ventures, and Nexus Ventures — Rapido is valued at about \$800 million

■ According to regulatory filings, Swiggy invested around \$124 million in the current round

a larger audience base in metros, tier 1, 2, and 3 cities, and ensure a seamless last-mile connectivity. "This will fortify Rapido's presence to provide a convenient, safe, accessible, and affordable alternative mode of daily commuting," the company said.

Commenting on the fundraise, Rapido co-founder Aravind Sanka said: "We look forward to learning from Swiggy's experience to scale up throughout the country and enhance our captains' (driver-partners)/customers' experience, who are the backbone of our business." He added, "TVS Motor, who are very passionate about EVs and the future of mobility, will help us in further expansion. We hope to accelerate our pace of becoming a household name as we increase our geographies and services, on the backbone of our robust, global-standard technology."

STARTS RESTORING PAY IN PHASED MANNER TO PRE-COVID LEVELS

AI rejig: More Tata execs join, key pre-sale officials retained

PRANAVMUKUL
NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

IN AIR India's first major senior management reshuffle since it was handed over to the Tata Group by the government, the airline's Chairman N Chandrasekaran has appointed key Tata Group personnel to the airline, while retaining some pre-disinvestment officials.

Tata Sons senior vice president Nipun Aggarwal has been appointed chief commercial officer and Tata Steel's Suresh Dutt Tripathi has been appointed chief human resources officer.

Notably, the Tata Group is yet to appoint a chief executive officer of the airline.

Among the pre-disinvestment officials, operations head RS Sandhu and finance head Vinod Hejmadi have been reappointed as chief of operations and chief financial officer, respectively. Aggarwal replaces Air India veteran Meenakshi Malik, while Tripathi succeeds Air India's Amrita Sharan. Malik and Sharan were appointed as advisors to the CEO of Air India, according to a company communication signed by Chandrasekaran. A copy of the communication was reviewed by *The Indian Express*.

Further, Satya Ramaswamy



Air India plane, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport, Kolkata. File

has been appointed Air India's chief digital & technology officer and Rajesh Dogra as head of customer experience and ground handling. While Ramaswamy has worked at Tata Digital as head of strategic initiatives, Dogra comes in from Tata Consultancy Services, where he has played a key role in the company's execution of the Passport Seva Kendra project.

The communication noted that Malik and Sharan will serve as advisors to the Chairman till the new CEO joins. The Tata Group, in January, had announced former Turkish Airlines Chairman Ilker Ayci as Air India CEO pending a government approval but Ayci later denied the appointment. Other than Chandrasekaran

Alliance Air gets own passenger service system

New Delhi: Alliance Air said it will now sell tickets under the '9I' code and has shifted to its own cloud-based passenger service system (PSS) starting Friday. Alliance Air was not part of the Air India sale when the Centre sold it to Tata group last year. **PTI**

and the other executive directors, Hindustan Unilever CEO & MD Sanjiv Mehta and former General Insurance Corporation Chairperson Alice Vaidyan serve on Air India's board of directors as independent directors.

In the absence of a CEO, executive decisions at the airline were being taken by an Air India Managing Committee headed by Aggarwal with Hejmadi, Sandhu, Sharan and Malik as its members.

Further, Air India is restoring salaries of employees in a phased manner to pre-pandemic levels as the aviation sector is recovering with the decline of Covid cases.

The pilots flying allowance, special pay and wide body allowance were cut by 35 per cent,

40 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively, after the onset of the pandemic. From April 1 this year, flying allowance, special pay and wide body allowance of pilots are being restored by 20 per cent, 25 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, according to an organisational circular of the airline seen by *The Indian Express*.

Cabin crew members' flying allowance and wide body allowance was cut by 15 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, during the peak of the pandemic, the circular noted. Flying allowance and wide body allowance of cabin crew members are being restored by 10 and five per cent, respectively, April 1 onwards. The allowances given to officers and other staff members were cut by 50 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively, during the pandemic, and while officers' allowances are being restored by 25 per cent from April 1, other staff members' allowances are being restored to pre-pandemic level.

"As the hope of a post-pandemic world seems within reach and the aviation sector takes off once again with some visible changes in our performance, we are happy to inform you that your salary cuts have been reviewed and the restoration of salaries will happen in a phased manner," the circular noted.

Fund raising by listed cos via debt placement at 6-yr low

Fund raising by listed companies through private placement of corporate bonds was at a six-year low in 2021-22 at ₹5.88 lakh crore, showed Sebi data

DRIVING FACTORS:

- Good performance of equities
- Aggressive fund disbursement by banks at lower interest rate

Amount raised last fiscal was 24% lower from a record Rs 7.72 lakh

crore mobilised in FY21, data with Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) showed

DAMPENERS TO THE CAUSE IN FY23 COULD BE:

- High government borrowings that

₹5.88 lakh crore

raised last fiscal was the lowest level since 2015-16, when listed companies had raised ₹4.58 lakh crore

- may crowd out private placements
- Adverse interest rate cycles

Ongoing financial year is expected to be robust in terms of fund raising



activities through debt route on account of higher demand for credit from corporates in light of the improving economic outlook

Source: Sebi/PTI

In terms of issuance, 1,405 issues were witnessed in the just concluded fiscal year as compared to 1,995 issues in 2020-21

BRIEFLY
FRL meeting

New Delhi: Future Retail Ltd (FRL) said the meetings of its shareholders and creditors next week to consider and approve the sale of its retail assets to Reliance Retail are in compliance with the directions issued by the National Company Law Tribunal. Earlier this week, Amazon, which is contesting the ₹24,713 crore deal, had said the meetings were "illegal".

Wheat to Egypt

New Delhi: Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said Egypt, one of the largest importers of wheat from Ukraine and Russia, has cleared India as a wheat supplier. Egypt looking to import 1 million tonne of wheat from India and would need 2,40,000 tonne in April.

New Ertiga

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki India has launched a new version of its multi-purpose vehicle Ertiga, priced between ₹8.35-12.79 lakh (ex-showroom).

SITI Networks

New Delhi: HDFC has moved the NCLT against Essel group company and multi-system operator SITI Networks Ltd for an alleged default of ₹296 crore. "The company has received the notice of the said case on April 13, 2022," SITI Networks said in a filing.

IndiGo board

New Delhi: IndiGo named former Shell India chairman Vikram Singh Mehta and former Indian Air Force Chief B S Dhanoa as independent non-executive directors. Mehta will replace Anupam Khanna, and Dhanoa will replace former Sebi chief M Damodaran, it said. **PTI**

ComMin eases norms under EPCG scheme

To reduce compliance requirements, facilitate ease of doing business

New Delhi: The commerce ministry has relaxed various procedures under the Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) scheme in order to reduce compliance requirements and facilitate ease of doing business.

Under the scheme, imports of capital goods are allowed duty free, subject to an export obligation. The authorisation holder (or exporter) under the scheme has to export finished goods worth six times of the actual duty saved in value terms in six years. The objective of the Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) scheme is to facilitate import of capital goods for producing quality goods and services and enhance India's manufacturing competitiveness.

"With a view to enhance ease of doing business and reduce

compliance burden, certain provisions of chapter 5 related to the EPCG scheme of the Handbook of procedures (2015-20) are amended for EPCG authorisations issued under Foreign Trade Policy (2015-20)," the Directorate General of Foreign Trade said in a notice.

The changes include those related to annual reporting of EO (export obligation) — instead of by April 30 each year, exporters can file that by June 30 of each year with specified information, but any delay will be subject to a late fee of Rs 5,000. Requests for export obligation extension should be made within six months of expiry instead of 90 days prescribed earlier. However, applications made after six months and up to six years are subject to a late fee of Rs 10,000 per authorisation. **PTI**

DoT draft: Telecom infra to be mandatory inside housing projects

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

THE GOVERNMENT is considering mandating installation of telecom infrastructure inside housing projects and premises by introducing changes in the national building code and model building bye-laws, according to draft Right of Way guidelines issued by the Department of Telecom.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has come up with the draft Right of Way (RoW) guidelines for establishment of telecom infrastructure across the country to amend old norms and finetune the rules to suit the requirement of 5G network rollout. Telecom operators will need

FOR 5G ROLLOUT



■ The DoT has come up with the draft RoW norms to finetune rules to suit the requirement of 5G network rollout

to install 5G sites closer to the ground as the signals transmitted for the service will move at very high speed but cover shorter distances. **WITH PTI**

Musk abuses US SEC officials over 'forced settlement'

REUTERS
SAN FRANCISCO, APRIL 15

TESLA INC CEO Elon Musk on Thursday stepped up criticism of the US securities regulator, calling Securities and Exchange Commission officials "bastards" for bringing fraud charges against him over his 2018 tweets regarding taking the company private.

On the day he made major news by unveiling a \$43 billion cash takeover offer for social media company Twitter Inc, Musk aired his grievances toward the SEC during remarks at the TED Conference in Vancouver.

Musk, the world's richest person according to a Forbes tally, said funding to take his electrical car company private was actually secured at the time he posted his tweets, but the agency "pursued the active public investigation nonetheless."

"So I was forced to concede to the SEC unlawfully. Those bastards," Musk told the audience.



Tesla CEO Elon Musk at a recent plant opening party, Austin. AP file

Musk said he felt forced to settle with the SEC because banks threatened to cease providing capital if he did not do so, which would have made Tesla bankrupt immediately.

"So that's like having a gun to your child's head," Musk said.

"I was forced to admit that I lied to save Tesla's life and that's the only reason," Musk added.

Musk and Tesla each paid \$20

million civil fines — and Musk stepped down as Tesla's chairman — to resolve SEC claims that Musk defrauded investors on Aug. 7, 2018, by posting on Twitter that he had "funding secured" to take the company private. The SEC said at the time his funding tweets "lacked an adequate basis in fact."

A spokesperson for the SEC did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Thursday.

Apple, others see delays as China Covid curbs squeeze suppliers

JOSH HORWITZ & SARAH WU
SHANGHAI/TAIPEI, APRIL 15

SHIPMENTS OF some Apple products, as well as Dell and Lenovo laptops are likely to face delays if China's Covid-19 lockdowns persist, analysts said, as curbs force assemblers to shut down and closed-loop arrangements get harder to maintain.

China's race to stop the spread of Covid-19 has jammed highways and ports, stranded workers and left factories awaiting government approval to reopen — disruptions that are rippling through global supply chains.

Apple Inc supplier Pegatron Corp said this week it would suspend its plants in Shanghai and Kunshan, where according to sup-



A worker at the entrance to a tunnel leading to the Pudong area, after Covid restrictions in Shanghai. Reuters file

ply chain experts it produces the iPhone 13, the iPhone SE series, and other legacy models.

Quanta Computer Inc, which produces some three-quarters of Apple's Macbooks globally, also shut operations, which could impact delivers more severely, analysts said.

Stretched supply chains likely to weigh on coal stocks till Apr-end

'Domestic coal available; Railways not geared to meet demand spike'

KARUNJITSINGH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

THE ISSUE of low coal stocks at thermal power plants across a number of states is likely to continue till at least the end of April, said a senior government official.

Low coal inventories at thermal power plants have already led to load shedding in a number of states, including Punjab, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. A senior government official said the requirement for thermal power had hit 3.4 billion units (BU) per day against an estimate of 3.25-3.3 BU per day as a result of unexpectedly high demand for power, and lower supply from gas-based power plants due to a spike in prices. Coal-based thermal power meets about 76 per cent of the country's power demand. On April 14, total electricity shortage in the country was about 74.9 million units with 1,215 MW of capacity shortage at peak demand. "There is plenty of availability of domestic coal, both from Coal India and captive mines," the official said, adding the Railways were not geared to meet the current spike in demand for coal transportation.

Plants that rely on domestic coal have come under pressure as those utilising imported coal have reduced power supply to discoms amid high international prices.

"States such as Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, and Maharashtra that had PPAs with them (imported coal based plants) are now demanding more coal for their own thermal plants," the official said.

States have increasingly been looking to procure power from the energy exchanges at elevated rates to avoid load shedding. The average market clearing price of electricity on the Day Ahead Market at the India Energy Exchange

EXPLAINED
Load shedding

LOW COAL inventories at thermal power plants have already led to load shedding in a number of states, including Punjab, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

was Rs 9.74 per unit (kilowatt-hour) on Friday, up from an average price of Rs 3.4 per unit in January. The government is currently in talks with such thermal power plants and discoms to restart power generation to meet demand. "I do expect the situation to remain grim for the next 15 days or so," said the official on the ability of states to meet their power requirements, noting that lower demand for power in some areas in May could ease the pressure on coal supplies. The official said the move by the Centre to permit states to utilise linkage coal in plants closer to mines that can then transmit electricity, thereby reducing the need to transport coal, would be key to dealing with the issue of power supplies.

Despite increasing demand for power, the number of railway rakes being used to transport coal to powerhouses saw a decline in the first half of April. An average of 380.6 rakes of coal were transported to thermal power stations in the first two weeks of April as against an average of 408.9 rakes in March, according to data from the Indian Railways. Officials said the change could be a result of increasing shipments of coal to industry and more shipments to locations far from mines, which require higher turnaround time.

Twitter adopts 'poison pill' to fight takeover

REUTERS
NEW YORK, APRIL 15

TWITTER ADOPTED a 'poison pill' on Friday, a standard takeover defense that limits Elon Musk's ability to raise his stake in the social media platform, as a buyout firm emerged to challenge his \$43 billion bid for the company.

Thoma Bravo, a technology-focused private equity firm that had more than \$103 billion in assets under management as of the end of December, has informed Twitter that it is exploring the possibility of putting together a bid, sources said.

It is not clear how much Thoma Bravo would be prepared to offer and there is no certainty that such a rival bid will materialize, sources said. A Thoma Bravo

spokesperson declined to comment while Twitter representatives did not immediately respond to a request for comment. *The New York Post* reported on Thursday that Thoma Bravo was considering a bid for Twitter.

Twitter said it adopted a poison pill that would dilute anyone amassing a stake in the company of over 15 per cent by selling more shares to other shareholders. Known formally as a shareholder rights plan, the poison pill will be in place for 364 days. The move would not prevent Musk from taking his offer directly to Twitter shareholders by launching a tender offer. While the poison pill would prevent most Twitter shareholders from selling their shares, the tender offer would allow them to register their support or disapproval of Musk's offer.

Future Enterprises defaults

New Delhi: Future Enterprises Ltd (FEL) has defaulted on the payment of interest of Rs 1.22 crore due on non-convertible debentures, according to a regulatory filing. The due date for payment of Rs 1.22 crore interest was April 13, FEL said in the regulatory filing.

"The company is unable to service its obligations in respect of the interest on Non-Convertible Debentures was due on April 13, 2022," it said.

This is the second default by the Kishore Biyani-led Future group firm this week. On April 12, FEL had informed about the default on the payment of Rs 9.10 crore interest due on NCDs.

The latest default is on the interest of securities issued for a sum of Rs 25 crore. **PTI**

TOPOF THE
WORLD

Bilquis Bano Edhi

PAKISTAN

Philanthropist
Bilquis Bano
Edhi dies at 74

BILQUIS BANO Edhi, the wife of Pakistan's renowned humanitarian and philanthropist, the late Abdul Sattar Edhi, died at a private hospital in Karachi on Friday. She was 74. Bilquis worked shoulder to shoulder with her husband in establishing the Abdul Sattar Edhi Foundation, a welfare organisation that gained worldwide fame for its humanitarian work in many areas. After the death of her husband in July 2016, Bilquis carried on the work of the foundation with her son Faisal Edhi, who confirmed her death to the media. He said his mother was admitted to the hospital after her blood pressure suddenly dropped earlier this week. Pakistan President Arif Alvi and PM Shehbaz Sharif expressed their condolences. **PTI**

SOUTH AFRICA

Flood death
toll rises to
nearly 400

SOUTH AFRICAN authorities were releasing emergency funds on Friday to help tens of thousands of people left without shelter, water and power, after flash floods washed away homes and roads and killed almost 400 people on the country's east coast. The floods in Kwazulu-Natal Province have knocked out power lines, shut down water services and disrupted operations at one of Africa's busiest ports. The death toll rose to 395 on Friday from an earlier estimate of 341, state broadcaster SABC said. **REUTERS**

YEMEN

10 al-Qaeda
inmates escape
from prison

TEN JAILED al-Qaida militants have escaped from prison in Yemen's eastern province of Hadramawt, security officials said on Friday. The inmates staged a quarrel among themselves late Thursday at the prison in Seiyun, forcing guards to intervene. But when they did, the prisoners overpowered them, seizing their guns before running away, prison officials said. Preliminary investigations indicated that the inmates must have coordinated their move with some prison guards and other militants from outside, they added. **AP**

Russia warship sinks; Ukraine says over 900 civilian bodies found in Kyiv region

Moscow vows to step up missile attacks on Kyiv, says Ukraine conducted strikes on Russian territory

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KYIV, LVIV, APRIL 15

RUSSIA'S DEFENCE Ministry promised Friday to ramp up missile attacks on the Ukrainian capital in response to Ukraine's alleged aggression on Russian territory, an ominous warning that followed Moscow's stinging symbolic loss of its navy's flagship in the Black Sea.

In Kyiv, the police force said on Friday that more than 900 civilian bodies were discovered in the region surrounding the Ukrainian capital following the withdrawal of Russian forces — most of them fatally shot.

The number of dead is double that announced by Ukrainian authorities almost two weeks ago. Andriy Nebytov, the head of Kyiv's police force, said the bodies were abandoned in the streets or given temporary burials.

The largest number of victims were found in Bucha, where there were more than 350, he said.

Russia's threat of intensified attacks on Kyiv came after



The Moskva in port Sevastopol, Crimea, last week. AP

Moscow accused Ukraine of injuring seven people and damaging about 100 residential buildings with airstrikes on Bryansk, a region bordering Ukraine. Authorities in another border region of Russia also reported Ukrainian shelling Thursday.

"The number and scale of missile attacks on objects in Kyiv will be ramped up in response to the Kyiv nationalist regime committing any terrorist attacks or diversions on Russian territory," said Russian Defence Ministry

spokesman Igor Konashenkov. Ukrainian officials said their forces struck a key Russian warship with missiles. If true, the reported Wednesday attack on the guided-missile cruiser Moskva, named for the Russian capital, would represent an important victory for Ukraine and a symbolic defeat for Russia.

The flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet sank while being towed to port Thursday after suffering heavy damage under circumstances that remained in dispute.

EXPLAINED
Another setback
for Russia

THE SINKING of the Russian Navy's Black Sea Fleet flagship is seen as a major symbolic loss for Moscow in a war that has not gone according to the Kremlin's plans. The loss of the ship, however, is more than just symbolic, according to many analysts who say that it will make it more difficult for Russia to gain full control over Ukraine's Black Sea coast, including the port of Odesa.

Moscow acknowledged a fire on board but not any attack US and other Western officials could not confirm what caused the blaze.

The Moskva had the capacity to carry 16 long-range cruise missiles. If Ukrainian forces took out the vessel, it was likely the largest warship to be sunk in combat since the Falklands War in 1982.

China plays down
Russian scientist's
charge that Beijing
halted cooperation

Beijing: China on Friday downplayed the report that its scientists have withheld cooperation with their Russian counterparts after the Ukraine crisis, saying the bilateral collaboration in science and technology has been gaining momentum and has "immense potential".

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said the China-Russia Year of Scientific and Technological Innovation was successfully held from 2020 to 2021.

Zhao's remarks came in response to a claim made by Alexander Sergeev, president of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS). Sergeev said the Chinese partners of the RAS put cooperation with the academy "on hold", freezing the development of previously discussed projects, according to Tass news agency. **PTI**

PoK 'premier' Niazi
resigns following
revolt in Imran party

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 15

IN ANOTHER setback to Imran Khan, who was ousted as Pakistan's prime minister last week, the premier of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi, resigned following a revolt in the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.

Niazi, hand-picked by PTI chief Khan, resigned on Thursday after 25 lawmakers of his party moved a resolution of no-confidence to replace him with the party's regional president, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas.

Niazi's ouster comes days after Khan lost a no-confidence vote in the National Assembly.

Niazi came to power last year after PTI secured 32 seats in the 53-member House.

India had rejected the elections in PoK, saying the "cosmetic exercise" was nothing but an attempt by Pakistan to "camouflage its illegal occupation".

Reacting to the election, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi had said Pakistan had "no locus standi on these Indian territories" and that it must vacate all Indian areas under its illegal occupation.

"The so-called elections in Indian territory under the illegal occupation of Pakistan are nothing but an attempt by Pakistan to

SHEHBAZ: IMRAN
SOLD TOSHAKHANA
GIFTS WORTH
Rs 140 MN IN DUBAI

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif accused ousted premier Imran Khan of selling valuable Toshakhana gifts, including diamond jewellery, worth Rs 140 million in Dubai, inflicting a loss to the national exchequer. As per the country's law, any gift received from dignitaries of a foreign state must be put in the state depository or the Toshakhana. Shehbaz made the claim during a meeting with senior journalists Thursday. **PTI**

camouflage its illegal occupation and the material changes undertaken by it in these territories," he had said.

The PTI lawmakers had charged Niazi with "loss of the trust of the parliamentary party, failure to highlight Kashmir issue and implement party manifesto in addition to bad governance, nepotism and violation of merit", Dawn newspaper reported.

Speaking at a press conference in Islamabad on Thursday, Niazi called the allegations against him baseless. **PTI**

Teen held over attacks
on Sikhs in New York

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW YORK, APRIL 15

A 19-YEAR-OLD has been arrested and faces hate crime charges for his alleged involvement in attacks on three Sikh men in New York's Queens area, including the brutal assault of an elderly Sikh tourist early this month that was condemned as "deeply disturbing" by the Consulate General of India.

Vernon Douglas of Brownsville was arrested on Thursday in Brooklyn and charged with multiple counts of robbery, assault, aggravated harassment and hate crimes, the *Queens Chronicle* reported.

On April 3, Douglas al-

legedly approached 70-year-old Nirmal Singh near the corner of Lefferts Boulevard and 95th Avenue and punched him in the face in the unprovoked assault. The attacker fled the scene on foot and the incident was taken over by the NYPD Hate Crime Task Force.

Singh was a "tourist visiting from India", according to authorities, and he suffered a broken nose and bruises to his face.

The arrested accused was also involved in attacks on two Sikh men this week, the report said.

Douglas and another suspect, who was arrested on Tuesday, attacked two Sikh men, removing their turbans, robbing them of money and physically assaulting them.



Tents in a protest area, dubbed the Gota-Go village, in Colombo, Friday. Protesters are seeking the ouster of Sri Lanka's ruling Rajapaksa family. Reuters

Sri Lanka starts fuel rationing
as economic crisis roils nation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO, APRIL 15

SRI LANKA'S state-owned petroleum corporation announced fuel rationing for vehicles with effect from Friday, as an unprecedented economic crisis roils the country.

According to the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) statement, now motorcycles and other two-wheelers can purchase fuel upto worth Rs 1,000 per visit to a fuel station.

Similarly, three-wheelers can

purchase fuel worth Rs 1,500, cars, jeeps and vans upto Rs 5,000. Buses, lorries and commercial vehicles have been exempted from the rationing.

Long queues at fuel stations have resulted in public anger. Further, households are experiencing nearly 12-hour powercuts and there is a massive shortage of essentials, due to falling value of the Sri Lankan rupee.

The island nation is in the midst of one of the worst economic crises it has ever seen. It has just defaulted on its foreign

debts for the first time since its independence.

The Galle Face protests in Colombo entered their seventh day on Friday with more and more youth joining it every passing day. They urge the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa for his handling of the island's worst-ever economic crisis.

The protest campaign has been running on social media, urging the youth to gather at Galle Face. Besides, there have been continuing protests across the island against the government.

Growing defiance of Covid curbs in China leads to arrests

EDUARDO BAPTISTA
BEIJING, APRIL 15

SUN JIAN, a 37-year-old master's degree student in the Chinese city of Yantai, for months staged a solo campaign against his university's Covid-19 prevention measures, including blistering criticism on social media.

The last straw for authorities came on March 27, when Sun walked around his campus carrying a placard that read "lift the



Workers ride a tricycle, in Shanghai on Friday. Reuters

lockdown on Ludong".

Police detained him and on April 1 Ludong University expelled him, according to a letter from the university.

The Chinese public have been

largely supportive of the zero-Covid policy that kept the coronavirus at bay for the two years after it emerged in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019.

But the support seems to be

wearing thin as the highly contagious Omicron variant emerges in China, triggering curbs that have brought food shortages, family separations, lost wages and economic pain.

In some cases the push-back has gone viral on social media, with video clips of citizens scuffling with health workers and screaming anger over lockdowns from the windows of their apartments.

Arrests and detentions for Covid-related rule-breaking

surged in March, according to the results of a search on the Weibo social media platform.

The search found 59 confirmed police cases and 26 arrests for Covid rule-breaking in January, and fewer in February. But in March, more than 600 police cases and 150 confirmed arrests were reported on Weibo, the review by Reuters found.

It is likely that the figures represent only a fraction of actual cases as not every incident makes it to social media. **REUTERS**

FAR-RIGHT LEADER MARINE LE PEN WANTS TO OUTLAW RITUAL SLAUGHTER IF ELECTED PRESIDENT

In France's election, a meaty issue unites Jews, Muslims

JOHN LEICESTER
PARIS, APRIL 15

AS SHE cooks lunch and talks politics, Jewish voter Sarah Gutmann has a nasty feeling — of would-be French president Marine Le Pen invading the privacy of her home, reaching directly into her life and the plates of chicken and kosher sausages that she is frying for her husband and their eldest son.

That's because the far-right candidate wants to outlaw ritual slaughter if elected next Sunday. And that could directly impact how Gutmann feeds her family and exercises her religious free-

dom. She and her husband, Benjamin, say they would have to think about leaving France if a far-right government interfered with observant Jews' kosher diets. Their fear is that under Le Pen, targeting ritually slaughtered meats could be just the start of steps to make French Jews and Muslims feel unwelcome.

"Attacking the way we eat impinges on our privacy and that is very serious," Gutmann said as she busied herself in the kitchen of their Paris home.

"The intention is to target minority populations that bother her and send a message to voters who are against these minorities: 'Vote for me, because I



At a halal meat shop in Paris. AP

will attack them and perhaps, with time, make them leave."

Muslim shopper Hayat Ettabet said her family might be

forced to illegally slaughter at home to stay within their religious rules, bleeding out animals "in the bathroom, back to the way it was."

Le Pen says all animals should be stunned before slaughter, and frames the issue as one of animal welfare. That's unacceptable to observant Jews and Muslims who believe stunning causes unnecessary animal suffering and that their ritual slaughters for kosher and halal meats are more humane.

With the largest populations of Muslims and Jews in western Europe, the issue has major potential repercussions for France and could hit communities elsewhere that buy French meat exports. The issue is one of the many fault lines between Le Pen and incumbent President Emmanuel Macron and the starkly different

visions of France they are presenting for next Sunday's election runoff vote. It is expected to be far closer than in 2017, when the centrist Macron beat Le Pen by a landslide.

"We have never been so close to having an extreme-right regime," Gutmann said. "The alarm bell is ringing."

Le Pen's France would be more inwardly focused, with far fewer immigrants and fewer rights for those already here, less tolerance for non-Christian traditions, and less tightly bound to the European Union and the outside world.

Macron is largely promising the opposite as he seeks a second five-year term. **AP**

Minister asks non-resident
Nepalese nationals to open
dollar accounts in Nepal

SHIRISH B PRADHAN
KATHMANDU, APRIL 15

THE NEPAL government has urged Nepalese nationals living abroad to open dollar accounts in banks in the country and make investments amidst the economic crisis in the Himalayan nation.

Nepal's foreign reserves have been hit by a slump in tourism during the pandemic, a problem that has also hit Sri Lanka which is going through a crippling economic crisis since gaining independence from the UK in 1948.

Speaking at a virtual interaction organised by the Non-Resident Nepali Association

(NRNA), Nepal's Finance Minister Janardan Sharma on Thursday said that opening dollar accounts in Nepalese banks by Non-resident Nepalese (NRN) would help the country to get rid of the current foreign currency crunch.

"There will be no shortage of liquidity if 100,000 NRNs open bank accounts in Nepal at the rate of \$10,000," Sharma pointed out.

"We have enough foreign currency to buy goods and services for 6-7 months. As per the latest report published by the Nepal Rastra Bank, the central bank, the government has 9.58 billion dollars in reserve," Sharma said.

"As the price of petrol has increased, millions of dollars have to be spent on that," he added. **PTI**

With 3-1 win over Germany, India stay top of standings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 15

THE INDIAN men's hockey team defeated an inexperienced Germany 3-1 in the second match of the double-leg tie to consolidate its lead at the top of the FIH Pro League standings here on Friday. The Indians scored through Sukhjeet Singh (19th minute), Varun Kumar (41st) and Abhishek (54th), while Germany's lone goal was scored by Anton Boeckel (45th).

The Indians had defeated Germany 3-0 in the first match of the tie on Thursday. India are now sitting pretty at the top with 27 points from 12 games, while Germany are placed second with 17 points from 10 matches. Against a new-look Germany, whose half a dozen players of the 22-member squad made their debut in these two games, the Indians continued their domination. The Indians made some fine runs into the opposition circle in the first quarter but failed to convert any of the chances. Four minutes into the second quarter, Sukhjeet handed India the lead with a clever field goal. Sukhjeet found himself at the right position inside the circle to score only his second international goal after being beautifully set up by Manpreet Singh and Nilkanta Sharma. The goal ignited sparks into India's game as they started to move around the turf freely and their passing too looked impressive. The Germans put the opposition defence a bit under pressure on the final few minutes of the second quarter and managed a shot but Krishan Bahadur Pathak was alert under the Indian post.

India enjoyed the lions share of possession in the first half with three shots on goal against none. Three minutes after the change of ends, India finally secured their first penalty corner but Germany goalkeeper Jean Danneberg made a great reflex save to deny Harmanpreet Singh. In the 41st minute, Shilanand Lakra earned another penalty corner for India and this time Varun Kumar perfectly placed the ball low into the bottom left corner to double the home team's lead. Germany, however, pulled one back four minutes later through Anton Boeckel, who pushed into an empty goal after India custodian PRSreejesh committed early. Abhishek made it 3-1 in the 54th minute with a vicious shot from the left side of the circle after receiving a long pass from Harmanpreet.

The Germans gave their heart and soul in the final few minutes of the game and in the process secured a penalty corner but Pathak palmed away the ball to deny the visitors any inroads. The two wins marks the end of India's home campaign in the FIH Pro League.

Frankfurt deliver knockout punch on insipid Barcelona

Spanish club loses 4-3 on aggregate in the Europa League quarter-final

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BARCELONA, APRIL 15

BARCELONA'S EUROPEAN campaign has gone from bad to worse in its first season post Lionel Messi.

First the Spanish powerhouse was eliminated from the lucrative Champions League, and now it has been knocked out of the second-tier Europa League by Eintracht Frankfurt. The German team stunned Barcelona 3-2 at the Camp Nou to advance to the semifinals on a 4-3 aggregate score. Barcelona was the title favorite, looking to win the one trophy not in its collection. It was playing for the first time in the Europa League and had never won its predecessor, the UEFA Cup, reaching the semifinals on four occasions but not getting to a final. Frankfurt won the UEFA Cup in 1980.

Frankfurt will next face West Ham after the Premier League club advanced to a European competition semifinals for first time since 1976 by eliminating Lyon 4-1 on aggregate. Earlier, Christopher Nkunku scored twice to help Leipzig reach its first semifinals in a European competition with a 2-0 victory at Atalanta.

Kemar Roofe scored in extra time for Rangers to prevail 3-1 over nine-man Braga for a 3-2 aggregate victory to face Leipzig next. Leicester became the first team to advance to the semifinals of the inaugural Europa Conference League after coming from a goal down to beat PSV Eindhoven 2-1 in the Netherlands. The Premier League team will next play Roma. With José Mourinho in charge, Roma is one of the favorites to win UEFA's new third-tier competition. The Italian club got its revenge with a 4-0 victory over Norway's Bodø/Glimt to make the semifinals 5-2 on aggregate.

Barcelona had possession, but Frankfurt scored. They had entered tied 1-1 after the first leg. In a dream start for the visitors, Filip Kostic put them ahead 1-0 from the penalty spot four minutes into the game, sending goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen the wrong way. Rafael Borre doubled the advantage still in the first half with a drive into the roof of the net from 25 meters (yards), giving Ter Stegen no chance. Kostic scored again in the 67th minute. Barcelona threatened late when Sergio Busquets scored in the 91st minute. The visitors were reduced to 10 after Evan N'Dicka received the second yellow ahead of substitute Memphis Depay's penalty 11 minutes into stoppage time. American defender Sergiño Dest entered for Barcelona in the 61st, his first appearance



Barcelona's Ronald Araujo and teammates look dejected after the match. AP

since straining his left thigh at Galatasaray on March 17. In Lyon, West Ham survived early pressure and Craig Dawson netted the opening goal from Pablo Fornals' corner kick in the 38th. Declan Rice doubled the lead with a deflected shot six minutes later. Jarrod Bowen stretched the lead to 3-0 three minutes into the second half with a low shot from the edge of the area.

At the Ibrox Stadium in Glasgow, James Tavernier erased a 1-0 deficit from the first leg in Braga with an angled shot in the second minute. The Rangers defender scored his second from a penalty just before half-time. David Carmo's header for Braga in the 83rd minute forced extra time, and Roofe's effort in the 101st propelled Rangers. Nkunku scored after 18 minutes on a feed from Konrad Laimer and doubled the lead on a penalty late in the second half to seal Leipzig's 3-1 aggregate win. Atalanta goalkeeper Juan Musso had fouled Nkunku in the area to set up the Frenchman's 30th goal of the season in all competitions.

Leicester advance to semis

Meanwhile, Leicester became the first team to advance to the semifinals of the inaugural Europa Conference League after coming from a goal down to beat PSV Eindhoven 2-1 in the Netherlands. Leicester's 2-1 aggregate victory after a 0-0 draw in the first leg sets up a semifinal match

against Roma. Ricardo Pereira scored the winner two minutes from time to earn the first European semifinals for Leicester after goalkeeper Yvon Mvogo saved substitute Patson Daka's attempt. Eindhoven opened the scoring when former Germany international Mario Götze set up Eran Zahavi to net his eighth European goal this season and fourth in the last four Europa Conference League games.

James Maddison canceled that out for Leicester in the 77th minute. At Stadio Olimpico in Rome, striker Tammy Abraham opened the scoring for Roma in the fifth minute before Nicolò Zaniolo stole the show. He increased the lead to 3-0 with two goals — the first one between the legs of goalkeeper Nikita Haikin — in the span of six minutes later in the first half and completed his hat trick early in the second. Marseille won the second leg at PAOK Thessaloniki 1-0 to advance 3-1 on aggregate and meet Feyenoord in the semifinals after the Dutch club knocked out Slavia Prague 6-4 on aggregate. Cypriël Dessers scored twice to lead Feyenoord to a 3-1 victory over Slavia.

FRANKFURT 3	2 BARCELONA
Kostic 4' (P) 67'	Busquets 90+1'
Maury 36	Depay 90+11' (P)
AGGREGATE 4-3	

Tale of missed chances for Mumbai City FC in ACL



Mumbai FC missed three chances in the 1-0 loss to Al Jazira

SHASHANK NAIR
APRIL 15

A PENALTY that should have been awarded, a shot careening off the crossbar, and a goal-mouth melee at the death that should have resulted in a goal — Mumbai City FC had their chances to win on Thursday night. But against an Al Jazira side looking for their first win of the competition, luck, poor finishing and poorer refereeing meant that the Islanders suffered their second defeat in three games of the Asian Champions League.

Coming into the game, Mumbai were unbeaten. Having achieved their target of winning one match in the group stage — becoming the first Indian club to do so — they were looking to go one step further. In front of them were Al Jazira, a UAE Pro League club that is amongst the best in Asia, but had lost their opening two games, including to Air Force Club, the team Mumbai had narrowly edged out. The start of the game was similar to how Mumbai have approached this tournament. An endeavour to keep possession, especially by a defensive line that was constantly being hounded, were successful to a point. But eventually, Mumbai would run out of the quality required to bypass a high pressing line and give the ball up in sensitive areas — inviting Al Jazira to attack.

And attack they did. Once again, just like in the Air Force Club match, it was the inability of the opposition to finish in the final third that kept the Indian club in the game. That, and the occasional moment of brilliance from goalkeeper Mohamed Nawaz, who replaced Phurba Lachenpa from the previous match. After the match, Al Jazira coach Marcel Keizer said that tiredness also played its part. Nine of his players have now played 90 minutes of football three times in the span of nine days.

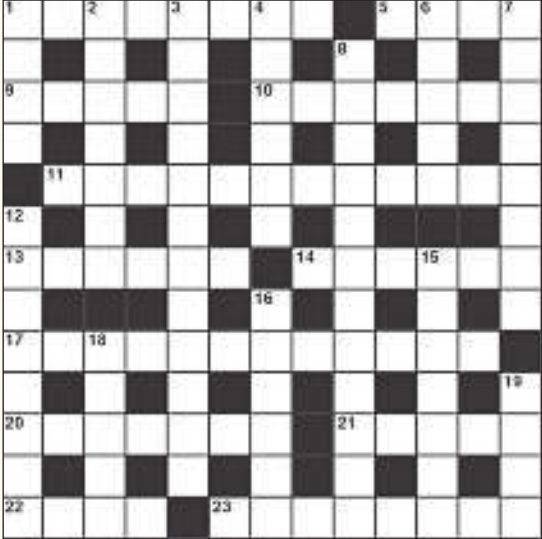
Mumbai managed to evade Al Jazira's shots at goal until the 40th minute. Substitute

Mehtab Singh, brought on after Amey Ranawade suffered an injury in the early minutes of the game, was unlucky to touch a deflected ball with his fingers in the penalty box. The referee blew his whistle and up stepped Ali Mabkhout to take the penalty. The UAE international, with 79 goals in 103 matches for his country, aimed for Nawaz's left-hand side and despite the goalkeeper getting his hand on the ball, it still went in for the only goal of the game.

Mumbai's 90 minutes against Al Jazira could have been salvaged three times. The first chance came minutes after Mabkhout had scored. Mumbai striker Diego Mauricio was given space to run with the ball by Al Jazira defenders. The striker, who has been instrumental in these three games in holding the ball in the final third and allowing Mumbai players to link up with the play, chose to go for goal. But just when he entered the box, he was brought down for what should have been a stonewall penalty. But the referee didn't see it that way and instead awarded Mauricio a yellow card for playacting. The second chance came late in the game after some sustained pressure from Mumbai. Previous match's hero Rahul Bheke, forced to play on the right-hand side due to Ranawade's injury, was bringing the ball along the touchline. He then lofted what seemed like a cross, but was actually a shot on target, towards the Al Jazira goal. The ball rebounded off the crossbar and went out of play — yet another moment that could have changed the complexion of the game.

But the best chance for Mumbai was their final corner of the match in the 90th minute. Substitute Raynier Fernandes was at the end of a corner from Lallianzuala Chhangte. Fernandes had all the time in the world at the far post, with no Al Jazira player tracking him. But the midfielder completely mistimed his shot and Mumbai fell to last spot in Group B after Al Shabab and Air Force played out a 1-1 draw.

CROSSWORD 4716



ACROSS

- 1 Widespread form of chore (8)
- 5 Kink in a nautical knot (4)
- 9 Spoke in the plural? (5)
- 10 Intuition, but not in teaching (7)
- 11 Pass our plan for interior decoration (6,6)
- 13 In turn it's consumed with decay (6)
- 14 Makes a run to clinch the match (6)
- 17 Burial fees? (5,7)
- 20 Possibly rides round to see newspapermen (7)
- 21 Suppose one includes a mathematical symbol (5)
- 22 Skid and get killed (4)
- 23 It may be read twice with an expression of dismay (4,4)

DOWN

- 1 Cupid upset and resentful (4)
- 2 Last to finish with majority (7)
- 3 Gave spot cash? (4,2,3,3)
- 4 An upright and amazingly true character (6)
- 6 Banish to a former French island (5)
- 7 Entertainer, possibly Sudanese (8)
- 8 Round trip? (8,4)
- 12 What you can make as you go along (8)
- 15 Exact point covered by the summary (7)
- 16 Virtuous, but possibly cheats (6)
- 18 Bad ideas produce barely audible comment (5)
- 19 Female right to German male title (4)

Solutions Crossword 4715: Across: 1 Frostbite, 8 Anita, 9 Emerald, 10 Mexico, 11 Lassie, 12 Tuesdays, 15 Alliance, 18 Vowing, 20 Hawser, 21 Stately, 22 Sprat, 23 Shortland. Down: 2 Rumba, 3 Stress, 4 Bulletin, 5 Easels, 6 Digital, 7 Carousing, 11 Lay a ghost, 13 Elevator, 14 Flowers, 16 Agents, 17 Switch, 19 Nylon.

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.

All art is autobiographical. The ____ is the ____ autobiography - Federico Fellini (5,7)

CPAAEE



FOYLST



LYORR



ORTPSY



SOLUTION: PEACE, LOREY, SPORTY - Federico Fellini. All art is autobiographical. The peace is the Lorey's autobiography.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4806

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 4805



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Friends and partners are bound to be jumpy this weekend. You may have to settle for a number of broken arrangements and accept that you might have to alter your opinion of close friends or colleagues. There's a fair amount of emotional intensity today, although it diminishes as the hours pass.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

The world as a whole will be short on sound judgment this weekend, so please don't feel singled out if you are the victim of unfair criticism or attacks from friends or relatives. It might be that partners have good reason for their moods, even if they're nothing to do with you.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

It is difficult to think clearly at the moment, or get other people to indulge in anything approaching a rational discussion. You may be wise to steer clear of contentious issues, mainly because partners will almost certainly disagree with you.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Back your instincts and hunches to the hilt as far as your personal plans are concerned, but be very wary about putting anything into action until you are completely confident and absolutely sure of your ground. You'll probably have to wait until partners have made up their minds before you can press ahead.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

You don't take kindly to being told to wait your turn and hold your horses. However, it will be a brave Leo who takes on any new initiatives. Keep your head down and avoid trouble, wait until you sense that blind opposition has passed, and reason has returned.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

It's a fine moment for shopping, indeed for any extravagant outburst; you seem to have a shrewd eye for a bargain. However, you must regard all business and investment opportunities as potential disaster areas. Therefore, why don't you give yourself at least a few more days to think things over.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Everyone, no matter what their individual birth sign, is likely to be involved in events which may be surprising or shocking. Your trump card is your ability to put up with almost any amount of criticism. You may be just a little upset, but really it's all water off a duck's back.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Your financial stars are growing stronger, and that augurs well for your material security. But, you will need to be a super-enlightened person to avoid some of the emotional flak which is flying around this weekend. It's all down to the Sun-Moon alignment, so it won't last long.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

Going on a spending spree may be a way of avoiding some of the emotional 'u' turns which seem to be putting a spanner in the works of a generally pleasant weekend. Lay your own pressing questions about the future to one side and concentrate on here and now.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Having to put up with personal complaints is bad enough, but coping with professional problems is even worse. That's why you need to set up strong emotional defences. Please try to retain your sense of humour and laugh your way through stressful circumstances.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Several of your planets are now at loggerheads, all determined to frustrate each other's efforts, so you may feel pulled and pushed in different directions. There seems little you can do to resolve such pressures just yet, but you may be able to live with them quite happily.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You like a quiet life and there is no need for you to get involved in unpleasantness, so let other people battle it out. You would not be the compassionate person you are, if you did not come forward to help those who are having a hard time of it. By doing good to others, you'll do good to yourself.

BRIEFLY

Bahrain-based Investcorp in talks to buy AC Milan

London: Asset manager Investcorp has entered into exclusive talks to purchase Italian club AC Milan, a source close to the deal told Reuters on Friday. The source said the deal to buy the Serie A club from current owners Elliott Management Corporation was close to being completed. Investcorp, which is domiciled in Bahrain and has offices globally, is an asset manager with lines of business including private equity, real estate, absolute return investments, infrastructure, credit management, and strategic capital. It manages over \$42 billion in assets. American firm Elliott Management Corporation took over seven-times European champions Milan in 2018. Investcorp and Elliott would not comment when contacted by Reuters. **REUTERS**

Zverev beats Sinner in three to enter semis

Monte Carlo: Alexander Zverev survived a first-set blip to break Jannik Sinner's resilience and reach the semi-finals of the Monte Carlo Masters with an epic 5-7 6-3 7-6(5) victory. The German second seed struggled to stay focussed but eventually tamed his 20-year-old opponent in the deciding tiebreak. Zverev, who battled for more than three hours with the ninth seed, will next meet either defending champion Stefanos Tsitsipas or Argentine Diego Schwartzman. Earlier, Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina reached his first Masters semi-final by beating American Taylor Fritz 2-6 6-4 6-3 and will take on Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov. A terrible service game by Sinner gave Zverev a break for 3-1 but the German failed to hold on to the advantage and the Italian broke back before bagging the opening set. **REUTERS**

Pujara makes 6 off 15 on Sussex debut

Derby: Senior India batter Cheteshwar Pujara could only score six off 15 balls in his first innings of the 2022 County Championship here on Friday. Making his debut for Sussex, Pujara was dismissed in the 24th over on day two of the division two game against Derbyshire, who amassed 505 in their first innings. It was not the best of starts to a county stint for Pujara who needs a bagful of runs to make a comeback into the Indian Test team. Star Pakistan keeper batter Mohammad Rizwan is also in Sussex playing eleven. **PTI**

New Zealand, England to tour Pakistan

Karachi: Pakistan will host five men's and women's teams over the next 12 months as PCB announced the international calendar on Friday. The Pakistan men's team is scheduled to play seven Tests, 17 ODIs and a minimum of 25 T20Is in the next 12 months while the women's team participate in the ICC Women's Championship, ICC U19 and T20 World Cups and Birmingham Commonwealth Games. The PCB confirmed that West Indies, England and New Zealand men's sides will tour Pakistan twice each in the next 12 months while Sri Lanka and Ireland women will visit Pakistan in May/June and October/November. **PTI**

Sunrisers shine in night sky

Tripathi and Markram score impactful 50s as Hyderabad beat Kolkata by 7 wickets



Sunrisers Hyderabad's Rahul Tripathi smashed 71 off 37 against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Sportzpics for IPL

SYNOPSIS: Stroke-ful Tripathi cornerstones chase after fiery pace-pack stinging KKR

SANDIP G
APRIL 15

RAHUL TRIPATHI and Aiden Markram struck fifties to give Sunrisers a facile win over Kolkata Knight Riders, whose total of 175 prove inadequate. The win, though, was set up by a supreme exhibition of aggressive fast bowling by Umran Malik and T Natarajan.

Stroke-ful Rahul

Rahul Tripathi is something of an enigma in Indian cricket. He has an array of strokes that could melt the eyes; a technique that's sturdier than some of the silly shots he plays to get out suggest; he has the courage to take on some of the most feared bowlers in the game. But alas, his body of work does not match his potential.

That he is the highest run-getter among uncapped players captures the story of his career. He gets the runs, but not by truckloads that could barge his way to the national team. He is already 31, not an age where selectors could take a leap of faith in him. There, though, is the example of Suryakumar Yadav, but for that, he needs a Suryakumar Yadav kind of a season too.

But there always is a start, and this innings, wherein he surreptitiously blended aggression and timing, could be the start of the phase. From the moment he strode in, there was a sense of purpose and urgency about him. There were a host of familiar faces around him—he was a Kolkata Knight Rider last year, and he seemed to know the strength and flaws of every player inside out. Just the second legal ball he faced, he flicked Umesh Yadav, one of his best friends in the KKR team, regally through fine-leg.

The stroke conveyed the mood and touch he was in. But how many times have you seen him flatter to deceive? But this one did not. His next four was classier, Pat Cummins

IPL TABLE

TEAM	M	W	L	PT	NRR
GT	5	4	1	8	0.450
RR	5	3	2	6	0.389
PK	5	3	2	6	0.239
KKR	6	3	3	6	0.223
LSG	5	3	2	6	0.174
RCB	5	3	2	6	0.006
SRH	5	3	2	6	-0.196
DC	4	2	2	4	0.476
CSK	5	1	4	2	-0.745
MI	5	0	5	0	-1.072

had only pitched marginally fuller, but he pressed forth, a full-fledged front-foot press, and drove him through covers. Even the Australian gazed at him admiringly.

After demonstrating his elegance, he showed his mental flexibility, his ability to improvise his strokes. Andre Russell had just nailed captain Kane Williamson with a short-of-length ball that he under-edged. Tripathi ventured for the ball.

Though short, the ball seamed back in to congest him for room, but he swayed his body back to get under the ball and fetched it over square leg. Russell and KKR were suddenly short of ideas and inspiration.

Their captain Shreyas Iyer summoned Varun Chakravarthy. Tripathy shunned him of all his mystery, looting him for a three sixes and a four in four balls he faced across two overs.

In a modest chase of 176, that was all the momentum SRH had craved for. KKR blinked, they froze, options were running out. Sunil Narine was the last throw of the dice. Tripathy stole singles of the first few balls diligently.

But when he landed an off-break fuller outside the off-stump, he lunged forth and swatted him with the impatient disdain of a brute annoyed by a pesky fly. Soon after, he

completed his half-century, off only 21 balls. Run-rate under control, he decelerated and inched SRH closer to the finish line. Though he perished, Aiden Markram, with an unbeaten 68 steered them home with 13 balls to spare.

KKR would feel that the snubbed are biting them. Only a few games ago, Kuldeep Yadav, who was benched for almost the entire season, demolished them with an exhibition of high-class spin bowling. It was Tripathi's turn next, and they would be wondering whose turn it would be next.

Sting of the pace-pack

Only one of SRH's pace quartet is an overseas entity—the South African Marco Jansen. But their domestic assemblage sufficed. Bhuvneshwar Kumar, though not at his deceptive best showed the value of his experience, removing Pat Cummins at a crucial juncture of the match. His assortment of yorkers and slower ones are still hard to line up for the big strokes.

But the man who is making batsmen hop in fear is Umran Malik. He enhanced his reputation by ratcheting up hostility and aggro. He blasted the stumps of Shreyas Iyer with a blinding yorker, before he restricted the marauding Andre Russell to just two runs in an over that was all fire and fury. The Jamaican did all he could to connect with the ball, but ended swishing the thin air five times in an over. A rib-shattering bouncer had him spread-eagled on the turf, while trying to bob away from it.

The forgotten T Natarajan too showed stirrings of a renaissance after a set of unfortunate injuries. He dislodged Venkatesh Iyer and Sunil Narine with the new ball before he swallowed Nitish Rana, the top-scorer with 54 runs, at the death.

Though Russell brought on the afterburners, KKR's total fell inadequate.

BRIEF SCORES: KKR 175 for 8 in 20 overs (Nitish Rana 54, Andre Russell 49 not out; T Natarajan 3/37, Umran Malik 2/27) VS SRH 176/3 in 17.5 overs (Rahul Tripathi 71, Aiden Markram 68 not out; Andre Russell 2/20).

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER



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

The fast one tames the furious one

Andre Russell is not often in the middle for a long time, but definitely for a good time. And a good time for the Jamaican involves sending the white ball over the boundary with brute force. Not for him playing according to the situation. In fact, teams plan to send him when the situation is ripe for him. On Friday too, it didn't matter to Russell that Kolkata Knight Riders had lost half their side with seven overs to go when he strode to the crease. The second ball he faced, from impressive South African pacer Marco Jansen, was intended for some fearsome punishment but resulted in only a brace through midwicket. The next one, a length ball, landed way over the rope as Russell seemed to be warming-up to his task.

The West Indian is a murderer of medium pace stuff and Sunrisers Hyderabad skipper Kane Williamson gambled to bring on his express bowler Umran Malik, who had just just one over left. Malik is not known for



his economy, but serious pace, and the over produced a riveting contest. The bowler was lucky to get a dot ball with a full toss to begin with. The second ball was hit through the off-side for a brace. The batsman missed the slog off a length ball next and then, Russell was beaten by extra pace and bounce on the cut shot. The fifth ball was a bouncer that Russell avoided somehow by hitting the turf. The last one was a length ball outside off that the batsman missed again. Just two runs in the 16th over against one of the fiercest hitters of the cricket ball, there was no doubt about the winner of this contest.

Burning a review



Jagadeesha Suchith appealed as desperately as a man about to drown in a sea of sharks and as excitedly as someone who had seen the sea for the first time in his life. Wicketkeeper Nicholas Pooran was barely amused and did not appear even half-heartedly. The umpire let out a bemused smile, as if wondering why (and for what) the bowler was appealing. Skipper Kane Williamson almost laughed off the suggestion of a review. But Suchith persisted, and eventually coaxed Williamson to make the 'T' sign. The angle was difficult for an LBW—a left-arm spinner from over the stumps to a left-hander. The batsman, Nitish Rana, who had attempted a sweep, had missed the ball entirely. Invariably, the review seemed impetuous, to put it mildly, in the end. But Suchith still could not fathom, and had there been an option, he would have reviewed the review.

One pull too many for Williamson

Kane Williamson was in a mood to pull any ball that was pitched marginally short, or even short of length. Unlike many modern-day batsmen, and some of the past masters, who pull compulsively from the front foot, he does it the orthodox way. He shifts his weight onto the backfoot, presses back deep into the crease, arches his upper body like the curve of a bow and swivels as he completes the shot.

The absence of violent movements makes the pose a collector's item. He unfurled a gorgeous one against Umesh Yadav. Four balls later, he essayed a more powerful one against Andre Russell. The ball had bounced more than he had judged, but he rose with the bounce and flayed him through mid-wicket. The



next ball was identical and he recoiled for the pull. But the ball, an off-cutter that skid on, didn't bounce as much as he had expected, and he ended up dragging the ball onto the stumps. Never has Williamson, who usually wears restraint in both joy and agony, looked so livid. He bent down, cursed himself, and in an uncharacteristic burst of rage, almost blew the stumps away.

From tent to Trident: Salman's journey as a CSK net bowler

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, APRIL 15

"YEH DEKHO swimming pool. Ek dum Maldives jaisa hai (See the swimming pool. It's just like in the Maldives)."

Salman Khan, 22, provides a virtual tour of his posh hotel to his family, who live in a small tent at Mumbai's Cross Maidan, where his father works as a groundsman. On normal cricketing afternoons, the tent works as a dressing room for cricket teams.

Barring his father Idris, none of his family members knew where Maldives is and why it is famous.

But since being roped in by Chennai Super Kings (CSK) as a net bowler for the on-going Indian Premier League season, Salman has been living the high life, even if on a temporary basis.

He says his conversations back home are unusual these days. His father not only asks him about what happened at the nets, but also about the hotel he is stationed in. Whether he met Mahendra Singh Dhoni and what did he tell him.

The iconic hotel at Nariman Point has been a landmark for Mumbaikars and Salman hadn't seen it from inside, until CSK happened.

Over the years, his father has rolled pitches and seen many boys becoming stars overnight and now the family hopes that Salman can



Off-spinner Salman Khan in front of the tent where he stays at Mumbai's Cross Maidan; With MS Dhoni

change the fortunes of the family.

"One day, I got a call from a Chennai Super Kings official asking me whether I can join as a net bowler for this season. Later, I got to know my name was recommended by (Mumbai player) Tushar Deshpande. I was excited because I will get a chance to learn, otherwise I would be just playing club cricket," Salman said over phone.

CSK have been the pioneers in helping net bowlers make the transition to becoming IPL players. Two current players of the franchise - Mukesh Choudhary and Prashant Solanki - were net bowlers for them till last season, before being roped in at this year's mega auction.

Salman hopes the same can happen for him. His father always has one line to end his



conversations. "Abu phone karke bolta hai aacha kar, tera aacha hoga, toh hamara bhi hoga. Bowling mein khush kar dena (Whenever my father calls, he tells me to do well, so that something good will happen to them in the future. Make everyone happy through your bowling). I only say I will try my best," Salman, who has represented Mumbai in under-23 and junior cricket, says.

The rays of the floodlights and the loud cheering at the Wankhede Stadium reaches Salman's home. He has been sending pics of him with Dhoni and other players. Salman did bump into Dhoni and CSK captain Ravindra Jadeja, and asked them about his bowling. It took some time to gain Dhoni's confidence but, Salman says, at CSK everyone is equal.

"I spoke to Mahi bhai and Jadeja. I want to learn from them, these two months might change my life. I asked Mahi bhai about my bowling. He said, 'Salman, off-spinner ko T20 mein sab maarne hi dekhte hai, so thoda dinag se dalne ka, jyada sochne ka (in T20s, everyone tries to hit the off-spinner), so put some thought behind your bowling). He said he will speak to me after a few games. The franchise is treating us like everyone else. We are getting the same treatment like everyone else. The environment is superb."

Back at Cross Maidan, Idris is happy that his son has got a big push. In his four decades as a groundsman, he has seen Sachin becoming Tendulkar and Zaheer Khan becoming India's lethal pace bowler.

"I'm very happy for him. I'm a small man. I just want him to do well in life. In 40 years as a groundsman, I have seen people becoming stars, I just want my son to play good cricket aur apne paon pe khada ho jaye bus (and stand on his own feet)," Idris hopes.

From Tent to Trident Hotel, Salman will now hope life changes for him from here on.

DC physio Farhart tests positive

Mumbai: Delhi Capitals physio Patrick Farhart has tested positive for COVID-19, the first case of coronavirus in IPL 2022. In a statement, BCCI stated: "Delhi Capitals physio Patrick Farhart has been tested positive for Covid-19. He is being monitored by the DC Medical Team at the moment." The BCCI's medical team has advised all members of the Delhi Capitals to isolate themselves. A team has to undergo Covid-19 tests 48 hours before their game. Another round of testing was conducted on Friday evening. The team's practice session was also canceled. Delhi is scheduled to meet Bangalore on Saturday at the Wankhede Stadium. As per the protocol, a team needs to be able to field at least 12 players (seven in the playing XI must be Indian). "BCCI at its discretion will attempt to reschedule the match for later in the season. If this is not possible, the issue will be referred to the IPL technical committee," IPL rules state. It is learnt Farhart was in contact with most players. "The fresh testing has been done. Those whose second report (Friday test) comes negative will be allowed to travel for the next game," a BCCI official said. **ENS**

