



PRESIDENTIAL POLLS TODAY

Monsoon session begins today; Govt, Opposition brace for a stormy start

32 Bills likely to be introduced; all-party meet on Lanka tomorrow

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE GOVERNMENT Sunday accused the Opposition of trying to “belittle the image” of Parliament by insisting that “non-issues” such as the updated list of unparliamentary words be taken up for discussion, setting the stage for a stormy Monsoon Session that is set to begin on Monday.

At an all-party-meeting ahead of the session, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Opposition leaders demanded that the alleged misuse of investigation agencies, the Agnipath scheme for recruitment in the defence forces, price rise, alleged attacks on the federal structure and the “Chinese incursion”, be taken up for discussion.

With the session scheduled

to end on August 12 — during which 32 Bills are likely to be introduced — the Opposition said it anticipates that key Bills would “bulldozed” through. Congress MP and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said that with the session “leaving us effectively with only 14 days”, the government did not offer them clear answers on how it plans to discuss the proposed legislation in such a short time.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi later told reporters that while the government was ready to “discuss any issue” under the rules and procedure of the House, the Opposition “is raising non-issues as it does not have anything against the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which has wide acceptance among the people of India and abroad”.

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At the all-party meeting chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at Parliament House on Sunday. *Premnath Pandey*

Aviation upturn sees new trends: tourism routes popular; curbs in China benefit India

Goa, Srinagar among top destinations

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE STEADY recovery in India’s commercial aviation sector has lifted traffic to near pre-Covid levels — but with a clear realignment in capacities and routes.

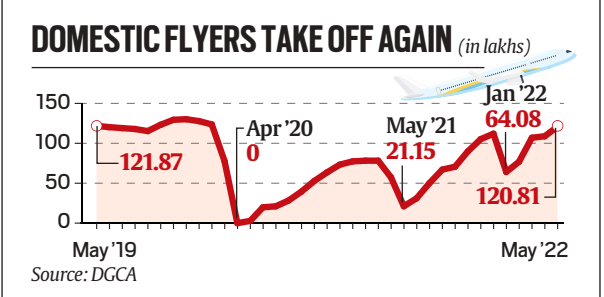
On the domestic front, the numbers show a push for tourism routes and direct connectivity to smaller airports. At the same time, international passenger traffic for Indian carriers has already surpassed pre-Covid levels with airlines that were dependent on China and the far-east now looking at other geographies, including India.

Within the country, destina-

tions such as Srinagar and Goa have seen significant capacity addition by airlines, which underlines the “revenge travel trend” after the Covid curbs. But the relatively slower rebound in business travel means trunk routes like Delhi-Mumbai, Delhi-Chennai, Mumbai-Bangaluru and Delhi-Hyderabad remain subdued (*chart, page 2*).

According to data sourced from aviation analytics and consultancy firm OAG, domestic airlines deployed 3.27 lakh seats on the Delhi-Srinagar route in June 2022, nearly twice the 1.68 lakh in June 2019. Similarly, the Delhi-Goa route saw 2.07 lakh seats in June 2022, much higher than

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NDA Presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu with BJP leaders in New Delhi on Sunday. *PTI*

Murmu thanks NDA MPs, says tribal community is ‘excited’

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

A DAY before the election for President, which she is expected to win as the ruling NDA’s candidate, former Jharkhand Governor Droupadi Murmu described her nomination as a historic moment that has made the

tribal community, especially its women, “*utsaahit*” (excited), *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Sources said that in a meeting with NDA MPs in the Parliament complex, Murmu also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP for nominating her, adding that around 10 crore tribals, from more than 700 communities, “are all delighted”.

The sources quoted Murmu as saying that she hails “from a small village” and has “struggled a lot” to “come up in life”. They also quoted her as telling the MPs that it was “an honour to get all your support”.

Before Murmu’s arrival, a mock voting drill for the poll on Monday was carried out, as BJP

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V-P polls: Opp picks Alva; TMC, AAP skip meeting

MANOJ CG & HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

SENIOR CONGRESS leader and former Union minister Margaret Alva was on Sunday pulled out of virtual retirement and nominated as the Opposition’s candidate for the vice-presidential election scheduled to be held



Congress leader Margaret Alva

next month.

Sources said the Opposition had initially considered former chief election commissioner

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RBI'S STATE OF THE ECONOMY REPORT

Commodity prices’ fall can help India escape global inflation trap

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has said that the Indian economy can escape the global inflation trap if the moderation in commodity prices witnessed in recent weeks endures, alongside an easing of supply-chain pressures.

“The biggest source of relief is from inflation coming off its recent peak, albeit at an elevated

EXPLAINED
Moderating inflation

WHILE US inflation shot up to a 41-year high of 9.1 per cent in June, India reported a retail inflation of 7.01 per cent, down from 7.04 per cent in May and 7.79 per cent in April.

level still,” the central bank has said in its latest ‘State of the economy’ report. Nonetheless, the signs of its generalisation and the potential unhinging of inflation expectations have elicited a pre-emptive and frontloaded monetary policy response, the RBI said.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had recently said that inflation was likely to “ease gradually in the second half of 2022-23, precluding the chances of a hard

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ED probe finds firm linked to ex-CP Pandey ‘snooped on 91 NSE staffers’

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has found that a firm linked to former Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Pandey snooped on as many as 91 office-bearers of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) on the directions of its then Managing Director Chitra Ramkrishna, sources said.

The agency Thursday booked Pandey and arrested Ramkrishna in a money-laundering case linked to the alleged

phone tapping.

“We are interrogating Ramkrishna as it was on her directions that the tapping was done by Pandey’s company. We want to know the motive behind tapping the phones of so many NSE office-bearers,” an ED official said.

Sources said the agency has found documentary and electronic evidence to show that phones of 91 NSE employees had been tapped by Pandey’s company, iSec Services Pvt Ltd. According to these sources, the agency has found transcripts and voice recordings — most of the

conversations are about information on stocks and the functioning of the NSE.

iSec Services was incorporated in March 2001. Pandey was not in service at that time. He quit the directorship in May 2006, with his mother Santosh and son Armaan becoming directors.

“However, it was Pandey who was running the company all along. Almost all correspondence between iSec and top officials of NSE are through Pandey’s email ID,” another ED official said.

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MORE FOR VILLAGES, WOMEN

2 billion jabs: India crosses global Covid milestone

PM flags people’s faith in science; hails doctors, nurses and scientists

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

INDIA REPORTED 2 billion cumulative Covid-19 vaccinations on Sunday, going past a global milestone in the ongoing battle against the pandemic. The country has now achieved a record 97 per cent first-dose coverage, while 90 per cent of its adult population has received both doses of the vaccine.

Around 4.90 lakh doses were given on Sunday, taking cumulative vaccinations to 2,00,03,73,288. The country is currently running a special 75-day vaccination drive in which the third, precaution dose is being administered for free at all government vaccination centres.

Two important features of India’s immunisation coverage — which constitute very significant steps to address vaccine inequity — are, first, 74% of vaccination centres have been set up in rural India and 71% of the vaccination coverage has been reported from rural areas and, second, 51.1% of recipients are women.

“India creates history again! Congrats to all Indians on crossing



At a medical college in Ahmedabad after India crossed 200 crore Covid-19 vaccine jabs. *Nirmal Harindran*

the special figure of 200 crore vaccine doses. Proud of those who contributed to making India’s vaccination drive unparalleled in scale and speed. This has strengthened the global fight against COVID-19,” Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a tweet.

“Throughout the rollout of the vaccine, the people of India have shown remarkable faith in science. Our doctors, nurses, front-line workers, scientists, innovators and entrepreneurs have played a key role in ensuring a safer planet. I appreciate their spirit and determination,” Modi said.

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VACCINE COVERAGE IN STATES

Top five	Two doses	Cumulative vaccinations
Gujarat	100%	11.25 crore
Karnataka	100%	11.37 crore
Telangana	100%	6.43 crore
Madhya Pradesh	97%	12.13 crore
Uttar Pradesh	96%	34.42 crore
Bottom five	Single dose	Cumulative vaccinations
Nagaland	51%	16.83 lakh
Meghalaya	64%	25.47 lakh
Manipur	74%	30.11 lakh
Jharkhand	81%	4.10 crore
Arunachal Pradesh	87%	17.67 lakh

% coverage as per population projections submitted to the SC

First 2 cars of prototype set to arrive, trial run for Metro Line 3 could begin soon

VALLABH OZARKAR
MUMBAI, JULY 17

IN AN indication that the trial run of Mumbai Metro line-3 (Colaba-Bandra-SEEPZ) — the first underground Metro of the city — will begin soon, the first two cars of a prototype train are all set to be dispatched from Alstom trains manufacturing plant based in Sri City, Andhra Pradesh. The move is in line with the new Maharashtra government’s decision to overturn the previous Uddhav Thackeray-led

MVA regime’s decision to relocate the Metro 3 car shed from Aarey Colony to Kanjurmarg. Sources have confirmed that the Urban Development department has initiated proceedings to remove the stay on construction of Metro-3 car shed in Aarey. The cars of the Metro prototype trains, which were ready for nearly a year, were not brought to the city due to unavailability of the Metro car shed. They are now set to reach Mumbai within the next 8-12 days.

According to the Mumbai

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PAGE 1 ANCHOR



EXPRESS IN SRI LANKA

SHUBHAJIT ROY
COLOMBO, JULY 17

■ An official who worked at former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa’s office says she’s been trying her luck in the fuel queue for the past three days, without success.

■ Another official at former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s office says he has “just enough” to get to the market. He used to get fuel from government sheds earlier but not after Rajapaksa fled.

■ A senior Sri Lankan diplomat has been working from home for the past week. “I walk to the stores nearby for daily needs,” the diplomat said.

■ A former diplomat, down with Covid, has saved up enough fuel to reach the hospital, if needed.

THE FUEL shortage in Sri Lanka has hit the elite as well as common people.

On the streets of Colombo, fewer private cars are plying, serpentine queues outside petrol stations are a common sight and most residents have been walking long distances, keeping the little fuel they have for an “emergency”. Facing the brunt of this shortage are the capital’s hospitals. At 7 pm on Friday, when *The Indian Express* reached National Hospital of Sri Lanka, one of the largest government hospitals, doctors and nurses said many of them can’t turn up for work due to the shortage.

They said the government has allowed priority access for medical professionals at fuel stations



A patient is brought in a grocery delivery van to the National Hospital of Sri Lanka in Colombo on Friday night. *Shubhajit Roy*

but it is too little for too many.

A senior doctor, who did not wish to be identified, said she has to change two buses to get to the hospital, and it is “extremely difficult”. “Many patients have been calling the free ambulance service to reach the hospital,” she said.

Outside, there were hardly any private vehicles, only ambulances arriving every 5-10 minutes and three-wheelers. One man drove up in a pick-up van, with his uncle lying on a mattress on the floor in the back. “I use the vehicle for bread and grocery deliveries, but today there was an emergency,” the driver said.

Dr Ananda Wijewickrama, a senior consultant at National Institute of Infectious Diseases in Colombo who was part of Lanka’s Covid task force, said, “The fuel crisis has had a significant impact, preventing doctors and nursing staff from coming to hospitals... The number of patients coming for regular check-ups, and elective surgeries and treatments, has also been impacted.”

In Colombo, the crisis has hit schools, too. Sanka, a 32-year-old housewife with two children, said, “The schools had been closed off and on for the past three months. Now they are saying that schools will open after

the President’s election...because of power cuts, online classes are also difficult.”

Due to the shortage, fuel prices have risen nearly four-fold from last year. Despite marginal cuts announced on Sunday, diesel is up from SL Rs 106 last year to 440 per litre while petrol prices have risen from SL Rs 130 to 450 per litre. In the black market, petrol is being sold at about SL Rs 2,000 per litre — an Indian rupee is about SL Rs 4.50.

This has also led to a sharp rise in prices of household goods. At Keells, an upmarket store in Colombo’s Union Place,

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THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, JULY 18, 2022

3 MAHARASHTRA

Water levels in 3,267 dams cross 50% storage capacity

While dams in Marathwada region have seen water storage reach 44% across its 964 dams, Konkan leads with storage levels reaching 76% across 176 dams

SHUBHANGI KHAPRE
MUMBAI, JULY 17

WITH THE state witnessing heavy rains over the last 10 days, the water storage levels in the 3,267 dams across Maharashtra have crossed 50 per cent of their storage capacity. The storage levels by mid-July, this year, is also 70 per cent higher than that seen in the same period last year.

As against the total water storage capacity of 40,779,220 million litres, the water storage crossed 21,009,610 million litres or 51.5 per cent this year. This is 70 per cent increase over the water storage of around 12 million litres seen in the same period last year. Last year, only 30 per cent of the storage capacity got filled by mid-July.

The incessant rains in last ten days of July is being attributed to sharp rise in water levels in dams across the state. The Jayakwadi dam in Paithan district of drought-prone Marathwada region is 57 per cent full. It has 1,247,270 million litres of water

as against its maximum capacity of 2,170,930 million litres. The water level in Jayakwadi dam which is the main source for irrigation, drinking and industrial use in eight districts of Marathwada region has 60 per cent more this monsoon. Currently water storage in the dam is 57.45 per cent as compared to 35 per cent previous year till mid-July.

By comparison, Gosikhurd, which is the biggest dam in Vidarbha region has shown a 11.5 per cent increase in its water level over the same period last year. At 2,72,490 million litres, its water level stands at 36.82 per cent. Last year by this time, the dam had around 2,44,000 million litres of water by this time and was 33 per cent full. The Gosikhurd dam has the maximum water storage capacity of 7,40,000 million litres.

The coastal Konkan region has lowest number of dams at 176, but the water storage in its dams are highest. While they were 40 per cent full by this time last year, they have reached 76.2

per cent of their storage capacity this year. The total water storage capacity in the dams of coastal Konkan region is 3,511,000 million litres. The region which has received highest rainfall, has resulted in quick water level rise in all its dams. At present the water storage levels are 2,674,860 million litres.

Marathwada region with eight districts — Aurangabad, Beed, Latur, Parbhani, Jalna, Osmanabad, Hingoli, Nanadgaon — has highest number of dams at 964. As against its optimum storage capacity of 7,259,000 million litres, water level now is 3,224,400 million litres or 44.4 per cent of the total capacity. The water storage in dam is, however, up by over 50 per cent over the same period last year, when it had around 29 per cent or 2,105,000 million litres of water storage.

The Amravati and Nagpur division which comes under Vidarbha region has always been confronting farm crisis. At least six out of its eleven districts are always reeling under agriculture distress leading to farmers sui-

cide. With moderate monsoon the dam water has increased. In Nagpur division with 384 dams the water storage is 51.20 per cent compared to 35 per cent last season. Similarly, Amravati division with 446 dams at 52.36 per cent is much relatively compared to 36 per cent previous year.

The Nashik region, which has seen floods with river Godavari crossing danger level as heavy rains lashed the district shows its 571 dams has water storage of 3,002,110 million litres. These dams are built to store up to 5,823,000 million litres. Last year water storage was just 20 per cent. Till now it has crossed 50.51 per cent which is more than double of what it had last year.

The scenario in Pune division in Western Maharashtra the water storage is dams is very satisfying. Its 726 dams have recorded 50.15 per cent water storage as compared to 29 per cent a year ago. In actual terms as against its water storage capacity of 15,199,000 million litres it already has 7,622,310 million litres water.

MAN STEALS CUSTOMER DATA TO ISSUE CREDIT CARD, WITHDRAWS Rs 81,000; ARRESTED

Mumbai: A 29-year-old man was arrested for using customer data to issue a credit card and withdrawing Rs 81,000 from a bank. The former credit card agent of a leading private bank took the personal details of a 24-year-old woman and got a credit card issued in her name. The woman told police that he had told the agent that she wanted the card cancelled. However, he allegedly used it to withdraw the money after lying to her that he had cancelled the card. She approached the police when the bank kept calling her and finally a recovery agent landed at her doorstep asking her to pay 'her dues'. The accused was booked under Sections 419, 420 of the IPC and 66 C and D of the IT Act. **ENS**

BUSINESSMAN HELD FOR THREATENING RECOVERY AGENT WITH FIREARM

Mumbai: The Worli police recently arrested a businessman for allegedly threatening a recovery agent with his licensed firearm when the agent went to his residence to recover pending dues on behalf of a bank. The incident took place on Friday. The complainant in the case works as a collection manager in the bank. He went to the accused's flat and inquired about why he was not repaying the loan. However, the accused pulled out a firearm and threatened the manager. The manager left and filed a complaint with Worli police station. Police later detained the accused and seized his licensed firearm and live rounds and booked him under relevant sections of the IPC and the Arms Act. **ENS**

Civic body rushes to fix potholes; claims to have filled 12,000 so far

SANJANA BHALERAO
MUMBAI, JULY 17

AS INTENSE heavy rainfall subsided in Mumbai, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) rushed to fill potholes on the roads, including the arterial linking road, for which it has been facing flak.

BMC used 'cold mix' technology to fill potholes on asphalt roads. However, the method cannot be used during heavy rainfall as it wears or washes off within hours. It is known as a 'cold mix' because it does not need heat for the application process, unlike hot asphalt.

Every year, the civic body

uses 11,000 metric tonnes of pothole mix on average during the monsoon. Data showed that this year, the civic body has filled over 12,200 potholes using 1,258 metric tonnes of cold mix, which is produced at the BMC's asphalt plant in Worli.

Officials from the Roads and Traffic department said after potholes are repaired using cold mix material, it requires at least 12 hours to stabilise (should be a dry spell) and traffic should be stopped.

As a temporary arrangement, the corporation uses paver blocks to fill potholes during heavy rainfall. BMC has been using cold mix material to fill potholes since 2018-19, with corpo-

rators questioning its success.

On Sunday, Additional Municipal Commissioner P Velrasu, in charge of the civic roads department, inspected various roads in the western suburbs — Andheri, Juhu, Malad, Kandivali, and Borivali along with a team of civic officers to inspect the pothole filling work.

Velrasu directed officials to check alternate mechanisms to fill potholes. He directed Deputy Municipal Commissioner Ulhas Mahale, in charge of infrastructure, to submit engineering solutions for potholes during monsoon. He also asked engineers to look into the feasibility of using pre-cast concrete plates and steel plates to fix potholes in the city.

BJP-Shinde govt will require Rs 10,000 crore to enforce incentive scheme for farmers: Officials

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE NEWLY-ELECTED BJP-Shinde alliance government will have to make provision for more than Rs 10,000 crore to implement the farm incentive scheme in Maharashtra. Under the scheme, farmers who have not defaulted on their crop loan payments will be eligible for a one-time special incentive of up to Rs 50,000.

Officials in the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative Department said, "We estimate that at least Rs 10,000 crore will be required to implement the scheme. The scheme will cover 20 lakh farmers."

Although the special incen-

tive scheme was announced by the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in 2020, it was not implemented due to financial constraints.

The Covid-19 pandemic coupled with lockdown compounded the financial crisis for the state and was cited as the main reason behind the MVA government's inability to execute the decision. The scheme remained on paper for two and half years.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who took charge of the government on June 30, have decided to accord higher priority to the farm incentive scheme.

Shinde said, "We are committed to accomplishing this

scheme. And if required it will be made flexible to accommodate more farmers taking into consideration the natural calamities, which led to crop loss and delayed repayment."

Both Shinde and Fadnis have urged officials to present a status report on the scheme status. It will be followed by a decision in the Cabinet. Accordingly, a budgetary provision will be made within a set time frame.

The BJP-Shinde government believe that the promise made to the farmers cannot be withdrawn. In 2019, the MVA government decided to provide a one-time crop loan waiver of up to Rs 2 lakh to farmers. The scheme was called Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Karj Mukti Yojna. Through this

ICSE results: Pune girl tops all-India list with 99.8% score as girls outshine boys

PALLAVI SMART
MUMBAI, JULY 17

WITH A score of 99.80 per cent, Hargun Kaur Matharu from St Mary's School in Pune has topped the All-India merit list in the Indian Certificate for Secondary Education (ICSE) exams for Class X, the results for which were declared on Sunday.

"I was hoping for it but I didn't think it would actually happen. In terms of preparation, I think the most important thing is to follow the topic being taught in the class. I didn't take any coaching. In fact, I never had a schedule, I would study as much as I wanted," said Matharu who is preparing for JEE and is interested in robotics.

A total of 26,083 students appeared for the exam, conducted by the Council for Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE), from 245 schools across the state. The state has recorded a 100 per cent pass percentage in the exam.

A number of students from Mumbai also featured in the all-India merit list, one of whom is Amolika Mukherjee from Jannabai Narsee School who, with 99.6 per cent score, stood second in the state as well as the country. Multiple students from Maharashtra, including nine from different schools in Mumbai, shared the All-India Rank (AIR) 2 with Amolika with 99.6 score.



(Clockwise from top) Amolika Mukherjee, Aadya Gaur and Bela Dighe who share identical score of 99.6 per cent and the All-India rank of 2. Express

school principal, Kalpana Patange, describes her as: "A versatile student, keen performer and a regular singer on the school's stage."

For Aadya Gaur from Poddar International School in Nerul, Navi Mumbai, her score of 99.6 per cent was something beyond her expectations. "We had two board exams wherein one was objective while the second was subjective. Most were not sure about what was happening until the last moment," said Aadya who is happy to see that "everything has worked out in the end".

According to Bela Dighe from G D Somani Memorial School who has an identical score, it has been a "peculiar" year. "Starting

from the confusion over which board exam will be conducted or not to having to appear for two different types of board exams in a year, it has been quite a change. But I am glad that offline exams were conducted," said Bela, daughter of a scientist from TIFR.

Kashyap Khandelwal from Vasudev C Vadhwa, Arya Vidya Mandir in Bandra, who too has scored 99.6 per cent, said, "The toughest part of this academic year was to stay afloat through all the uncertainty. There was more pressure because of two exams."

For Vedaang Kharya from Euroschool in Airoli, the most difficult part was the absence of any old question paper for reference for the objective exam held in the first semester of the Board year. "I have participated in multiple Olympiads and so the MCQ-pattern question paper was familiar to me," said the amateur magician who hopes to join one of the IITs to pursue engineering.

Varsha Shyam Sundar from Dhirubhai Ambani International School, who also scored 99.6 per cent, said, "I wasn't thinking of the score while I prepared for the exam." With mathematics and physics being her favourite subjects, she said she plans to pursue engineering for higher education. "I hope to apply my engineering knowledge to help the environment," she added.

(INPUTS FROM ENS, PUNE)

Revamped Gautam Buddha Udyan offers a serene, immaculate space to unwind

ALISHA AMBRE
MUMBAI, JULY 17

WATCHING OVER a view of the Bandra-Worli Sea Link is Bhagwan Gautam Buddha Udyan, opposite the Worli Sea Face. Situated on the side of a road leading to the sea link, the recently refurbished garden, which lives up to its name, is an easy find that offers a sweet spot for a picnic.

The space is essentially a large staircase, with a garden on each landing. Each of these gardens has been built for a specific purpose — yoga, meditation, pranayam and picnics. Despite all the steps, the place is wheelchair friendly, with a path on the left of the garden accommodat-

ing facility is also available with clean toilets. Although no artist has been credited for the artwork inside the garden, there are various paintings depicting different lifestyles and professions.

The area has been designed in such a way that even though the park is relatively small, the layout allows one to view the entire park from the entrance. Thus, right at the gate, you can see the steps leading up to what appears to be an artwork, except it is not a painting, but one of the most photographed and sought-after spaces inside the garden. The unique roofed structure is a favourite among visitors.

"I always like to sit underneath this roof," said Karthik, who comes here often for meditation, "it feels peace-

ful and beautiful, especially during the rain."

Praising the revamped garden, former state environment minister Aaditya Thackeray recently tweeted, "The revamped Bhagwan Gautam Buddha Garden elevates the aesthetic and visual appeal of the area while providing citizens with a recreational avenue that adds to their quality of life. We are continually working to improve the 'Mumbai' experience for both locals and visitors!"

MUMBAI GREENS

Many college students are often seen enjoying mini-picnics in the uppermost area of the park. "It's a nice place to relax and have some time before classes start," said Priyanka Sawant, who was visiting with her friends. "It's never crowded and always clean, so we always come here."

Visitors praise the park for being well-maintained. No litter is found on the premises and cleaners are always seen brushing dead leaves away. A washroom



Visitors praise the park for being well-maintained. No litter is found on the premises and cleaners are always seen brushing dead leaves away. Express

‘There is a complete lack of support system for teachers’

A ZILLA Parishad (ZP) school teacher from Maharashtra's Solapur district, **RANJITSINH DISALE**, who is headed to the US on a Fulbright Scholarship after winning the Global Teacher Award, has found himself in the spotlight for a completely different reason. Last week, a report of an inquiry against him by the ZP administration found that he was absent from his job for 34 months despite drawing a salary for the period. Disale, who has already submitted his resignation earlier this month, speaks to PALLAVI SMART about the allegations and his future plans. Excerpts from an interview:

On the one hand you are gaining global spotlight and on the other, your equation is soured with the ZP administration where you started your journey as a teacher. What do you think led to this?

I will be holding a press meet to reveal several other aspects of

this entire episode, which have not been brought to the fore as yet. This should not happen with other teachers who are inspired to go beyond the traditional box for their students. I have been in the system for 13 years now and if there was anything wrong about me, it would have come out long ago and not just during the tenure of these particular officers. Whatever transpired reflects negatively on the way teachers are being treated in the education system of this country. It is important for the system to introspect and see what went wrong. I plan to present this entire experience in an elaborate manner in my book. My book was almost ready but developments in the past have led me to a different ending. I am writing an additional chapter now.

What are your comments on the inquiry committee report?

They have made their allegations on how I have wrongfully



MONDAY INTERVIEW

RANJITSINH DISALE
ZILLA PARISHAD (ZP) SCHOOL TEACHER

drawn a salary. But issuing salary is purely a process by the system. Whether it was, adhering to the rules is also the responsibility of the officer who is issuing salary. If there was some irregularity by that person, it is their mistake. I have already submitted a 2,000-page long explanation before the inquiry committee. It was never pointed out to me that I was ab-

sent at the time of deputation. Moreover, these are the primary findings of the inquiry that is still expected to undergo several stages, which also include legalities. Until the inquiry report is declared as final, commenting on it will be in hurry.

Your leave for the scholarship was approved. Then why did you resign? Did anything lead you to it?

I will not link it with the challenges that I have faced in the recent past. I have been working to bring about a change at the local school level. But after receiving the wide exposure through the global award, I realised that gaining additional skill sets would help me make a similar difference at a larger scale. I was looking for a window of opportunity. Now that I have plans to pursue higher education in the US, my stay will be extended. My students at the ZP school should not suffer any academic loss because

of it. If I resign, the government will appoint a full-time teacher. I am not moving out of teaching but just the government system.

Having experience of a bigger platform of global teachers, how do you compare the educational system in India with that of other countries?

Compared to other countries, we have a greater number of teachers who are more emotionally invested in their students and are thus, willing to go out-of-the-box. But there is a complete lack of support system. The teaching sector is not driven by incentives, which could motivate a teacher to perform. Lack of recognition of extra efforts does lead to a complacent approach in some teachers. In other countries, after initial education, a teacher gets their license to work. It has to be renewed at regular intervals by showing how the candidate has developed professionally by way of more

trainings and workshops among other things that may be suited for their requirements. In the government education system here, we have training which is 'fit-for-all' and focused more on the content, instead of the methodology of teaching. A teacher from Nandurbar may need a completely different set of skills than the one who is teaching in urban areas such as Mumbai and Pune.

Tell us about your Fulbright scholarship and future plans.

It is a distinguished award for international teachers. A total of 34 teachers from 17 countries have been selected for this fully funded scholarship. My topic of research is going to be 'Peace in Education' as part of which I plan to research on how to promote peace through education. After completing the scholarship, I plan to pursue higher education in Arizona State University in educational policies and research.

<p>VJTI MUMBAI वेदमार्त जीवार्त टेक्नोलॉजिकल इंस्टीट्यूट (Autonomous Institute of Govt. of Maharashtra) H. R. Mahajani Road, Matunga (East), Mumbai - 400 019 Phone: + 91 22 24198101/102 - Fax: + 91 22 24102874 - www.vjti.ac.in</p> <p>AICTE Doctoral Fellowship (ADF) for 2022-23 Online applications are invited from Post Graduate students in Engineering/Technology for admission to a full time Ph.D. program under AICTE Doctoral Fellowship scheme for academic year 2022-23.</p> <p>For scheme details, please visit VJTI Website http://suril.iiitketo</p> <p>Important Dates for Online Applications as follows Last Date for Online Registration is upto 05.08.2022. (till 5.00 pm) Registration Link : https://forms.gle/fP9fJpwTb1FJTtM39</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Director</p>

With Sena support, BJP now eyes Cong-NCP vote base in Prez polls

Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray had declared his party's support to Murmu last week

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE
MUMBAI, JULY 17

WHILE EXUDING confidence about a thumping win for NDA presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu, the state BJP is anxious to see how many votes it can poll from Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) parties. With Shiv Sena already pledging support to Murmu, what remains to be seen is if the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will be able to make a dent in Congress-NCP votes.

The state assembly with 287 members along with 48 members in the Lok Sabha constitute the electoral college for presi-

dential polls from Maharashtra. The Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) have made a common cause in supporting Yashwant Sinha's candidature for the post. The cracks within the MVA got evident the moment Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray declared his party's support to Murmu last week.

The BJP along with Shinde faction, meanwhile, are united and have elicited support of sizeable number of smaller parties and Independents.

Deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis said, "We are confident of a thumping victory for Murmu. She will be the first tribal woman

President. We are confident that individual elected members across parties will come forward in her support."

Of the total 287 members in the state assembly, the BJP believes the numbers in favour of Murmu will cross the 180-mark. During the floor test in state legislative assembly held on July 4, BJP-Shinde alliance polled 164 and MVA 99 votes respectively. With 15 members of Thackeray's Sena supporting Murmu, the ruling alliance's tally will go up to 179.

A senior BJP functionary said, "The Congress has 44 and NCP 53 members (two members, Anil Deshmukh and Nawab Malik, are in prison).

What remains to be seen is if the Congress-NCP along with its 11 allies can retain its numbers."

Of a total of 48 Lok Sabha MPs, BJP has 23 members and Shiv Sena 18. The Congress has one MP from the state as does the AIMIM; the NCP boasts of four Parliamentarians from the state which has a lone Independent in the lower house. The BJP and the Sena make up for 41 MP. Thus, the BJP expects to elicit the support of a majority of members in support of the NDA's presidential candidate.

The Shiv Sena's decision to take suo motu decision on supporting Murmu without con-

sulting the Congress and the NCP has invited flak from senior leaders. In the words of Congress leader Balasaheb Thorat: "Since we are allies, a collective decision was expected. At least, Sena should have discussed with us." However, according to Congress insiders, BJP's top leaders should have consulted with Opposition parties about Murmu's candidature. "There is a possibility that the Opposition would not have fielded any candidate in that case. But the BJP kept its candidate's name under wraps. Once Sinha's name was forwarded, we had to support (him)," said an insider.

Woman dies after bike skids on bridge banned for two-wheelers, husband booked

Mumbai: A 40-year-old man was booked for causing death by negligence after he met with a bike accident on the Elevator bridge near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. The accident led to the death of his wife, who was riding pillion. The bridge is banned for two and three-wheelers.

The incident took place on July 10 when Patil left his home with his wife Ankita (34) and headed to Navi Mumbai. Patil, who works in the Merchant Navy, took the Elevator bridge to avoid traffic from the airport to the western express highway.

His bike skidded on a metal strip resulting in his wife suffering head injuries.

She was rushed to a nearby hospital but succumbed to her injuries on July 14.

ENS



MUMBAI CONFIDENTIAL

MUCH-NEEDED PUSH

WITH MOST ministers in the previous MVA government going back to their hometowns, former energy minister Nitin Raut, too, has gone back to Nagpur. Last Monday, on his way back to his constituency, he saw a rickshaw carrying school children getting stuck on a bad road. Seeing the plight of the children, Raut got off his vehicle and gave the rickshaw a push following which the students thanked him.

NEW ADDRESS

NEWLY ELECTED Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who is presently staying in Nandanvan bungalow, is likely to shift to Varsha - the official bungalow of the CM only in the holy month of Shravan, which will begin later this week. The house will now get a fresh coat of paint before the new CM and his family shifts to the address.

DEDICATED TEAM

AT PRESENT, the disaster management control room functions with the help of staff deputed from Mantralaya. With people from different departments working in shifts resulting in "lack of accountability", the relief and rehabilitation department, which manages the disaster management control room, has decided to get a dedicated staff for it, much on the lines of BMC.

COMPILED BY ZEESHAN SHAIKH & YOGESH NAIK

Deported from Mexico for tearing passports after tiff with wife on foreign trip, man held

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE
MUMBAI, JULY 17

A 36-YEAR-OLD man from Punjab was deported to India from Mexico along with his wife and minor son after the immigration authorities at the Mexico airport found out that he had torn their three passports and stitched them without informing the passport authority back home.

After landing at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport on Saturday, he was arrested by the Sahar police. The man told the police that he had torn the passports out of anger after an altercation with his wife and was not aware that it was a crime.

The accused, a businessman who sells JCBs (earthmovers), told police that he loves travelling and had been to several countries but ever since he got married, he never got a chance to take his wife abroad. So, he took his wife and son to Dubai in

March this year. In Dubai, the man and his wife had a heated argument and in a fit of rage he tore their passports. After some time he realised his mistake and stitched the passports with the help of a local.

However, he did not realise that the cover page of his passport was stitched into his son's and that of his son's passport was stitched into his own.

The three managed to travel from Dubai to Thailand and from there to Japan on their passports. They then travelled from Japan to Mexico and had plans for further travel.

However, he was caught at the Mexico airport on July 12. After landing at the Mumbai airport on Saturday, the immigration authorities handed him over to the Sahar police and, based on their complaint, the man was booked for cheating. As the accused confessed to tearing all their passports, the police did not book his wife. He has been booked under Section 420 of the IPC for cheating.

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SUB: APPLICATIONS FOR PROJECT POSITIONS UNDER EXTRA MURAL PROJECTS

Applications are invited for different positions to be filled purely on temporary basis at NCCS under different extra mural projects. For the detailed specifications of the posts, the prescribed application format and other terms and conditions, please see our **Advt.No.-NCCS/PMC/P-05/Online/2022** under **Project Positions in Careers** tab on our website (www.nccs.res.in). For any updates please check our website. (Hindi, English & Marathi version of this advertisement is available on our website).

DIRECTOR, NCCS

डहाणू नगर परिषद

ता. डहाणू, जि. पालघर

जाहीर सूचना

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मुख्याधिकारी
डहाणू नगर परिषद

Government of India Bhabha Atomic Research Centre Nuclear Recycle Board Tarapur

Online item rate tender in two parts i.e. Part A – Documents related to eligibility criteria and Part B – Financial Bid are hereby invited through e-Tendering mode on behalf of the President of India by the Project Manager, INRPO, NRB, BARC, Tarapur for the following work from the contractors having adequate experience in similar works.

	NIT-1 BARC(T)/NRB/ INRPO/ TRP-36/ 2022/152 Dated: 07/07/2022	NIT-2 BARC(T)/NRB/ INRPO/ GSO-31/2022/153 dated: 07/07/2022	NIT-3 BARC/NRB/ TNRPO/ TWMP-38/ 2022/154 Dated: 07/07/2022
Tender Reference No.			
Name of work	Carrying out Non Destructive test (NDT) for strength assessment of existing civil structures for Phase 2 at BARC, Tarapur.	Retrofitting and structural repairing of security towers, emergency staircase and cooling tower at R&WM plants at NRB, BARC Tarapur.	Construction of LWTP Augmentation building at NRB, Tarapur.
Mode of tendering	Online e-tendering on website https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app .		
Estimated Cost	Rs. 11,00,000/- (Rupees Eleven lakh only)	Rs. 63,00,000/- (Rupees Sixty Three Lakh only)	Rs. 5,90,00,000/- (Rupees five crore Ninety lakh only)
Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 22,000/- (Rupees Twenty two Thousand only)	Rs. 1,26,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Twenty Six Thousand only)	Rs. 11,80,000/- (Rupees Eleven Lakh Eighty Thousand Only)
Cost of Tender Document	Nil		
Period of Completion	06 (Six) Calendar months	08 (Eight) Calendar months	24(Twenty four) Calendar months
Tender Sale Period a. Download of Tender Document	From 21.07.2022 (15:00 Hrs.) to 08.08.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)	From 21.07.2022 (15:00 Hrs.) to 08.08.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)	From 19.07.2022 (15:00 Hrs.) to 05.08.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)
Last date & Time of a.Last date and time of closing of online submission of tenders. b. Date and time of online opening of Part A	31.07.2022 (10:00 Hrs.) to 08.08.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)	31.07.2022 (10:00 Hrs.) to 08.08.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)	29.07.2022 (10:00 Hrs.) to 05.08.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)
	10.08.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)	10.08.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)	08.08.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)

The detailed tender notice can be seen on the website <http://www.barc.gov.in/tenders> For clarification contact: (02525) /294816/ 293434/ 293402

Government of India Bhabha Atomic Research Centre Nuclear Recycle Board Tarapur

Online item rate tender in two parts i.e. Part A – Documents related to eligibility criteria and Part B – Financial Bid are hereby invited through e-Tendering mode on behalf of the President of India by the Project Manager, INRPO, NRB, BARC Tarapur for the following work from the contractors having adequate experience in similar works.

	NIT-1 BARC(T)/NRB/ INRPO/ TRP-34/ 2022/159 dated:12/07/2022	NIT-2 BARC(T)/NRB/ INRPO/ TWMP-56/2022/160 dated:12/07/2022	NIT-3 BARC/NRB/ TNRPO/ TWMP-57/ 2022/161 Dated: 12/07/2022
Tender Reference No.			
Name of work	Renovation and upgradation of toilets in PREFRE-I at NRB, BARC Tarapur	Cleaning of underground and overhead water tanks, cooling towers and cosmetic maintenance work (for the year 2022-2024) at R & WM Plants of INRPO, NRB,BARC Tarapur	Construction of structural steel sheds at various locations of WM Plant, NRB, BARC Tarapur.
Mode of tendering	Online e-tendering on website https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app .		
Estimated Cost	Rs. 52,00,000/- (Rupees Fifty Two lakh only)	Rs. 1,64,00,000/- (Rupees One Crore Sixty Four Lakh only)	Rs. 28,00,000/- (Rupees Twenty Eight lakh only)
Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 1,04,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Four Thousand only)	Rs. 3,28,000/- (Rupees Three Lakh Twenty Eight Thousand only)	Rs. 56,000/- (Rupees Fifty Six Thousand Only)
Cost of Tender Document	Nil		
Period of Completion	09 (Nine) Calendar months	24 (Twenty Four) Calendar months	06 (Six) Calendar months
Tender Sale Period Download of Tender Document	From 19.07.2022 (15:00 Hrs.) to 31.07.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)		
Last date and time of closing of online submission of tenders.	20.07.2022 (10:00 Hrs.) to 31.07.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)		
Date and time of online opening of Part A	01.08.2022 (15:00 Hrs.)		

The detailed tender notice can be seen on the website <http://www.barc.gov.in/tenders> For clarification contact: (02525) /294816/ 293434/ 293443

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Tender Cost - Rs.2500 + 18% GST(Non Refundable)
Tender can be collected from Consultant's Office From 18/07/2022 to 22/07/2022 Between 10.00 am and 06.00 pm (Except on Sunday & holidays)
Sealed Tender Submission with Rs. 70,000/- Cheque in favour of society & to be submitted at society office on 23/07/ 2022 Between 11.00 am & 05.00 pm

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0070794828-1

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E-TENDER NOTICE

PEST CONTROL TREATMENT IN PORT TOWNSHIP

JNPA intends to call e-tender for "Pest control treatment in Port Township, Inside & Outside port Area" in Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority. The details may be seen on the e-tender website: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> or JNPA's website: www.jnport.gov.in in tenders in vendor info section.

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NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

July 18, 2022

TATA Power-DDL invites tenders as per following details:

Tender Enquiry No. Work Description	Estimated Cost/EMD (Rs.)	Availability of Bid Document	Last Date & Time of Bid Submission/ Date and time of Opening of bids
TPDDL/ENGG/ENQ/200001439/22-23 Annual Rate Contract for Supply of 11kV/ 33kV/ 66kV CTs, PTs and NCTs	49 lacs/ 50,000	18.07.2022	08.08.2022:1600 Hrs 08.08.2022:1700 Hrs
TPDDL/ENGG/ENQ/200001438/22-23 RC for Supply of FRP Fencing Kit	80 lacs/ 2,00,000	18.07.2022	08.08.2022:1600 Hrs 08.08.2022:1700 Hrs

CORRIDGUM / TENDER DATE EXTENSION

Tender Enquiry No. Work Description	Previously Published Date	Revised Due Date & Time of Bid Submission/ Date & time of opening of bids
TPDDL/ENGG/ENQ/200001430/22-23 Rate Contract for supply of 1-P Meter Box	04.07.2022	25.07.2022 at 1700 Hrs/ 25.07.2022 at 1730 Hrs

Complete tender and corrigendum document is available on our website www.tatapower-dcl.com → Vendor Zone → Tender / Corrigendum Documents
Contracts - 011-66112222

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NOTICE INVITING BID

Balance Integrated (including Road works (upto Stage-I), Water supply lines, Sewer lines & S. W. Drains) for 22.5% in Sector – 26 & 26A at Pushpak Node, Navi Mumbai under NMIA Project.

CIDCO of Maharashtra Limited through the process of E-tendering invites “ON LINE” item rate percentage Bids from experienced prospective bidders fulfilling the mandatory eligibility criteria, registered with CIDCO Ltd. or with Central Govt., or with State Govt. of Maharashtra and its undertakings in appropriate class & Category, who have completed work of similar nature like collectively or individual work experience in Road works plus S.W. Drain, Sewerage & Water Supply works for the work mentioned below:

- 1. Name of Work: Balance Integrated (including Road works (upto Stage-I), Water supply lines, Sewer lines & S. W. Drains) for 22.5% in Sector – 26 & 26A at Pushpak Node, Navi Mumbai under NMIA Project.**
- 2. C. A. No.: 01/CIDCO/EE(AP-II)/2022-23**
- 3. Cost put to the Bid: ₹17,81,12,507.97 (₹17,77,97,768.97 Biddable Part + ₹3,14,739.00 Non-Biddable Part)**
- 4. E.M.D.: ₹17,82,000/-**
- 5. Registration Class: Class – IB & above**
- 6. Completion Period: 365 (Three Hundred Sixty Five) Days (including Monsoon)**
- 7. Tender Processing Fee: ₹35,400/- (including 18% GST (Non-Refundable))**

Bid Document along with bidding programme will be available on the website mahatenders.gov.in from 19/07/2022 at 17.01 Hrs.

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CIN - U99999 MH 1970 SGC-014574
www.cidco.maharashtra.gov.in CIDCO/PR/160/2022-23

EVERYDAY POLITICS

HOW VICE-PRESIDENT IS ELECTED, HOW CONSTITUTION DEFINES HIS OR HER ROLE

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE OPPOSITION on Sunday named former Governor and former Union minister Margaret Alva as its candidate for Vice President. The ruling NDA has announced West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar as its candidate. The election, scheduled for August 6, is likely to be only symbolic, with the NDA's clear majority in Parliament expected to carry Dhankhar through.

Office of the Vice-President

Under Article 64 of the Constitution, the Vice-President "shall be ex officio Chairman of the Council of the States" (Rajya Sabha). Article 65 says that "in the event of the occurrence of any vacancy in the office of the President by reason of his death, resignation or removal, or otherwise, the Vice-President shall act as President until the date on which a new President... enters upon his office".

The Vice-President shall also discharge the functions of the President when the latter is unable to do so "owing to absence, illness or any other cause".

Article 66 lays down the process of the election: the Vice-President "shall be elected by the members of an electoral college consisting of the members of both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote and the voting at such election shall be by secret ballot".

For the 2022 Vice-Presidential Election, the electoral college consists of 233 elected members of Rajya Sabha, 12 nominated members of Rajya Sabha, and 543 elected members of Lok Sabha, adding up to 788 members. Each elector has to mark preferences according to the names of the candidates.

"The elector can mark as many preferences as the number of candidates. While the marking of the first preference is compulsory for the ballot paper to be valid, other preferences are optional," the Election Commission of India said in a release issued on June 29.

Eligibility

Under the Constitution, the Vice-President "shall not be a member of either

House of Parliament or of a House of the Legislature of any State". If a member of any of these Houses is elected, "he shall be deemed to have vacated his seat in that House on the date on which he enters upon his office as Vice-President".

Article 66(3) says "No person shall be eligible for election as Vice-President unless he — (a) is a citizen of India; (b) has completed the age of thirty-five years; and (c) is qualified for election as a member of the Council of States".

Under Article 66(4), "A person shall not be eligible for election as Vice-President if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State or under any local or other authority subject to the control of any of the said Governments."

Article 67 lays down that the "Vice-President shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office". However, the Vice-President "shall, notwithstanding the expiration of his term, continue to hold office until his successor enters upon his office".

The Vice-President may leave office before the end of his term by resigning to the President, or he "may be removed... by a resolution of the Council of States passed by a majority of all the then members of the Council and agreed to by the House of the People".

In case of dispute...

Article 71 of the Constitution deals with "Matters relating to, or connected with, the election of a President or Vice-President". It says that "all doubts and disputes arising out of or in connection with the election of a President or Vice-President shall be inquired into and decided by the Supreme Court whose decision shall be final".

Should the Supreme Court declare the election of the President or Vice-President void however, "acts done by him in the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of the office of President or Vice-President... on or before the date of the decision of the Supreme Court shall not be invalidated by reason of that declaration".

Also, "Parliament may by law regulate any matter relating to or connected with the election of a President or Vice-President".

What women should eat to control high rates of illness

WOMEN TEND to live longer than men, but typically have higher rates of illness. Now, research from University of Georgia (UGA) suggests these higher rates of illness can be improved by a better diet — one that is high in pigmented carotenoids such as yams, kale, spinach, watermelon, bell peppers, tomatoes, oranges and carrots. These bright-coloured fruits and vegetables are particularly important in preventing visual and cognitive loss, UGA said in a press release on the study, published in Nutritional Neuroscience. The study reviewed and analysed data from previous studies.

Women have, on average, more body fat than men. Body fat serves as a significant sink for many dietary vitamins and minerals, which creates a useful reservoir for women during pregnancy. This avail-

ability, however, means less is available for the retina and the brain, putting women at more risk for degenerative problems.

Dietary intake of pigmented carotenoids act as antioxidants. Two specific carotenoids, lutein and zeaxanthin, are found in specific tissues of the eye and brain and have been shown to directly improve central nervous system degeneration.

"Men and women eat about the same amount of these carotenoids, but the requirements for women are much higher... recommendations need to be changed so that women are aware that they have these vulnerabilities that they have to proactively address, so they don't have these problems later in life," the release quoted co-author Professor Billy R Hammond as saying.

Source: University of Georgia



PAPER CLIP

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SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Is there a crisis in rice?

While overall crop coverage has risen since last year, that of rice is down. Deficient rainfall in key areas is among the reasons. But adequate stocks and cultivation over a wider area suggest there should be no cause for worry.

HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE SOUTHWEST monsoon's revival this month has resulted in the total area sown under kharif crops not only recovering, but even surpassing last year's coverage for the same period from June to mid-July. However, paddy (rice) acreage, at 128.50 lakh hectares (lh) as of July 15, was 17.4% down from last year's 155.53 lh.

Should that be cause for worry?

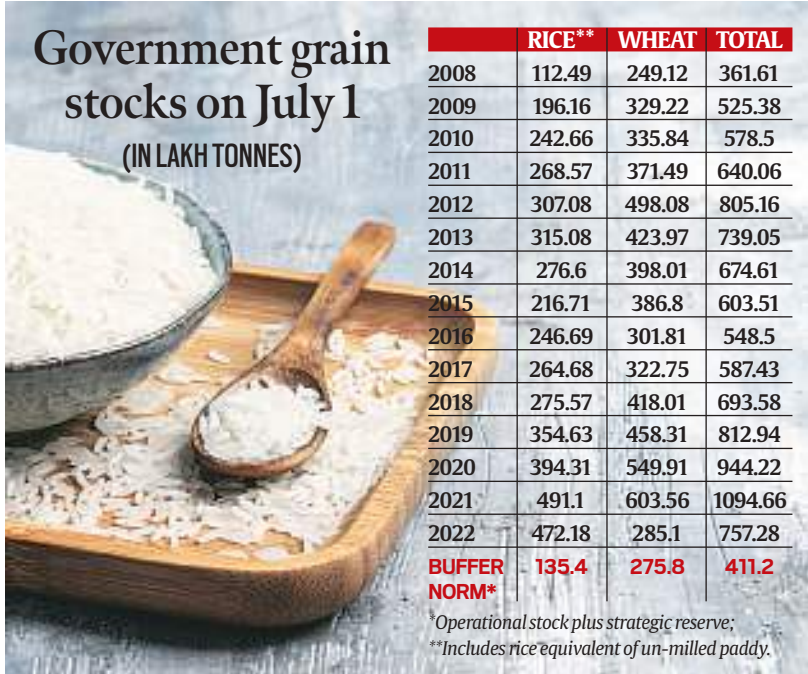
On the face of it, not much, as government godowns had over 47.2 million tonnes (mt) of rice on July 1. These were nearly three-and-a-half times the minimum level of stocks, to meet both "operational" (public distribution system) and "strategic reserve" (exigency) requirements for the quarter. Rice stocks are still close to their peaks scaled last year.

That comfort doesn't extend, though, to wheat — where public stocks have plunged from all-time highs to 14-year lows within the space of a year (see table). Inflation-haunted policymakers would dread the wheat story getting repeated in rice. In wheat, it was a single bad crop — the one sined by the March-April 2022 heat wave — that did all the damage and brought down stocks to just above the minimum buffer.

In rice, the stakes are higher: It is India's largest agricultural crop (accounting for over 40% of the total foodgrain output), with the country also being the world's biggest exporter (a record 21.21 mt valued at \$9.66 billion got shipped out during the fiscal ended March 2022). Unlike with wheat, the options for import in rice — due to any production shortfall — are limited, when India's own share in the global trade of the cereal is 40% plus.

Why has acreage fallen?

Farmers first sow paddy seeds in nurseries, where they are raised into young plants. These seedlings are then uprooted and replanted 25-35 days later in the main field that is usually 10 times the size of the nursery seed bed. Nursery sowing generally happens before the monsoon rains. Farmers wait for their arrival to undertake transplantation, which requires the field to be "pud-



led" or tilled in standing water. For the first three weeks or so after transplanting, the water depth has to be maintained at 4-5 cm, in order to control weed growth in the early stage of the crop.

All this isn't possible without the monsoon, which has overall been good this time. The country has received 353.7 mm of rainfall during June 1 to July 17, 12.7% more than the "normal" historical average for this period.

Yet, a vast paddy-growing belt, from Uttar Pradesh to West Bengal, has had very little rains. Cumulative rainfall has been 55.5% below the long period average in West UP, and 70%, 45.8%, 48.9% and 45.1% respectively for East UP, Bihar, Jharkhand and Gangetic West Bengal.

Deficient rainfall has meant that farmers in UP had transplanted only 26.98 lh under paddy until July 15, as against 35.29 lh during the same time last season. Farmers in Bihar (from 8.77 lh to 6.06 lh), West Bengal (4.68 lh to 3.94 lh) and Jharkhand (2.93 lh to 1.02 lh) too have reported lower acreages. So have those in Odisha, Chhattisgarh and eastern Madhya Pradesh, although that gap should

reduce with the monsoon turning the corner in these parts.

How serious is the situation?

In UP — where the western and eastern subdivisions have so far recorded a mere 90 mm and 79.6 mm of rainfall, respectively — it certainly seems so.

Ajay Kumar Singh, a farmer from Emiliya village in Chandauli district of eastern UP bordering Bihar, said paddy nursery sowing in his area is normally done from June 1 to June 10 and transplanting from July 1 to July 10. This time, there was some rain towards June-end, but hardly any thereafter. "The seedlings should leave the nurseries in 25-35 days, beyond which they will age and not have enough time to grow in the main field. But when there's no water, how will farmers transplant?" he said.

Bal Mukund Lohia, from Magardaha village in Ghorawal tehsil of neighbouring Sonbhadra district, echoed the same: "Forget transplanting, most farmers with limited irrigation facilities have seen even their nurseries drying up".

According to Dr AK Singh, director of the

New Delhi-based Indian Agricultural Research Institute, farmers may well end up raising nurseries afresh. "But they will now have to plant shorter duration varieties of about 125 days (seed-to-grain maturity), instead of 155 days. That would translate into 1-2 tonnes less yield per hectare," he said.

Interestingly, in eastern UP, farmers with access to basic irrigation also practise the 'Sanda' double-transplanting method of paddy cultivation under conditions of delayed rainfall. In this case, the seedlings are uprooted after 25 days in the nursery and replanted in a puddled field that is only about twice the former's area. The plants after establishment begin tillering and are, thus, rejuvenated for the next 10-15 days. When the rains come, they are again uprooted and replanted in the main field 10 times the size of the original nursery.

Paddy yields from Sanda are said to be better than from the regular one-step transplanting. The reason for it is that the Sanda plants have already tillered and their establishment in the main field would be near 100% with little mortality. "Yields are 15-20% more, but that is offset by higher costs because of transplanting labour having to be paid twice. Sanda makes sense only in today's delayed monsoon situation," Lohia said.

So, is there a crisis ahead in rice?

Not for now. To start with, the India Meteorological Department has forecast that the current monsoon trough, which is active and south of its normal position, is "very likely to shift gradually northwards from tonight (Sunday)". That should, hopefully, provide much-needed relief to farmers in the Gangetic plains within the next few days.

Secondly, paddy cultivation takes place across a wider geography, unlike wheat that is grown only in a few states north of the Vindhyas. Also, rice is both a kharif (monsoon) and rabi (winter-spring) season crop. So, the losses in one area or season can potentially be recouped from the other. In wheat, everyone — from farmers and traders to policymakers — was caught off-guard by the sudden surge in temperatures after mid-March that cut grain yields by a fifth or more. Rice is less likely to throw up huge negative surprises. And with the present stocks, it should be manageable.

TOTAL RECALL

Rubaiya Sayeed's abduction, Yasin Malik's role

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, JULY 17

RUBAIYA SAYEED, daughter of former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Friday identified Yasin Malik, the jailed Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chief, and three others as her abductors in a 1989 kidnapping case. Malik is currently undergoing a life sentence at Delhi's Tihar jail after being convicted in a terror funding case in May.

The abduction & release

On December 8, 1989, Rubaiya, 23, was abducted from a mini-bus in Srinagar, when she was returning home from the Lal Ded Memorial Hospital where she was an intern. This was just six days after her father had been sworn in as Union Home Minister in the V P Singh government.

The bus was intercepted by four armed men, a few hundred metres from her father's home on the outskirts of Srinagar. She was taken away in a car. Hours later, the JKLF — then headed by Ishaq Majeed Wani — claimed responsibility for the abduction in a call to a local newspaper. Rubaiya had been abducted to demand the release of five JKLF militants from prison — Abdul Hameed Sheikh (Wani's deputy), Ghulam Nabi Bhat



(brother of JKLF founder Maqbool Bhat), Noor Mohammad Kalwal, Mohammad Altaf and Javed Ahmad Zargar.

Then Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah rushed back to J&K, cutting short a London visit. Senior officials from the Centre, including the then IB chief, were sent to Srinagar to start negotiations with the JKLF through a local journalist. On December 13, 1989, Union ministers Inder Kumar Gujral and Arif Mohammad Khan too were sent to the Valley.

A deal was struck and the five JKLF militants were freed. A few hours later, Rubaiya was released after spending five days in captivity.



Rubaiya Sayeed with her father, late Mufti Mohammad Sayeed (left) after her release in 1989; and Yasin Malik in Srinagar in 2016.
Express Archive

The politics

Reports at that time attributed the delay in Rubaiya's release to Farooq Abdullah's reluctance to release the jailed militants. A decade later, Abdullah confirmed he had been against the exchange, adding that the Centre had even threatened to sack him.

"A senior minister in V P Singh Cabinet specially flew to Srinagar with the threat. I didn't deter from my stand and refused to release any militant... Mufti Sayeed, however, ensured the militants were released, which hastened my resignation from the office of Chief Minister," Abdullah said on February 14, 2000. He had resigned 37 days after Rubaiya's release, and after Jagmohan was

appointed J&K Governor.

The aftermath

Following the release of the five JKLF men, a massive victory procession was taken out in old Srinagar city — the first time locals were seen expressing support for militancy.

The release of militants triggered a series of further kidnappings. Those abducted included Vice Chancellor of Kashmir University Professor Mashir-ul-Haq, his personal secretary Abdul Gani, and General Manager of Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT) H L Khara. All three were killed by their abductors as the government turned down their demands for release of militants. Indian Oil Executive Director K Doraiswamy, too, was abducted; he was set free after nearly two months in a swap involving nine militants.

The present case

A case on Rubaiya Sayeed's abduction was first registered at Srinagar's Sadar Police station on December 8, 1989 under Section 364 of the Ranbir Penal Code (RPC), Section 3 of TADA and Section 3/25 of the Arms Act. The CBI took over the probe in the early 1990s. In January last year, the court framed charges against 10, including Malik. These included the four identified by Rubaiya Sayeed on Friday: Malik, Zaman Mir, Mehraj-ud-Din Sheikh and Manzoor Ahmed Sofi.

Flavour & history of South India's filter coffee, now on Starbucks menu

POOJA PILLAI
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE TATA Starbucks menu will now feature South Indian filter coffee — one of the "regional favourites" that the chain is introducing, along with masala chai and small bites, as it seeks to expand its reach in India. The fan base of this style of coffee — served milky and hot, usually, in the stainless steel or brass combination of "tumbler" and "davara" — has grown in the last couple of decades. Now, its inclusion on the menu of a brand with a pan-India presence might give it a mainstream status.

What it means

Whether in Myslapore, Chennai or Matunga, Mumbai, the fragrance of freshly roasted beans, with their promise of a brac-

ing shot of the sweet, milky coffee, has long defined a certain, typically South Indian style of coffee.

The "filter" pot used to make it is of metal and with two cylindrical parts: coarsely-ground coffee powder is put in the top cylinder, which has fine holes in its base, and pressed down using a metal disc. Hot water is poured over this and the coffee is allowed to brew for about 10 minutes, the decoction slowly dripping and collecting in the bottom cylinder. This is mixed with milk — cow milk, strictly, if one wishes to make the famous Kumbakonam "degree" coffee — and sugar, and served in the tumbler and davara.

The coffee itself is ideally made using freshly roasted and ground coffee beans, with purists insisting that no chicory be added. Many commercially available blends, however, do contain some chicory.

Its history

While tea established pan-Indian dominance — in large part due to a marketing push in the 1930s by the British who were seeking a wider consumer base for the colonial tea industry, consumption of coffee has been far more limited. The coffee-drinking habit really took hold in Tamil society in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Coffee cultivation may have been established in the Mysore region by the 18th century, but most of it was being sent to Europe. As documented by historian AR Venkatachalapathy in *In Those Days There Was No Coffee*, by the turn of the 20th century, an enthusiasm for coffee gripped the emerging Tamil middle class.

Cultural anxiety accompanied the enthusiasm, with criticism that connected it to "every conceivable and inconceivable malady". It was deemed more addictive than al-



Foamy filter coffee in tumblers.
Wikimedia Commons

cohol, and Venkatachalapathy notes that women, in particular, were seen as having succumbed to its "dangers". Despite this, coffee became the preeminent beverage in Tamil society, prestigious enough that not offering it to guests indicated a lack of social grace.

Coffee, or *kaapi*, had become a "cultural marker" and symbol of modernity, particularly for the Brahmin middle-class, distinguished from tea that was viewed as the beverage of the "urban working class".

'Breaking Brahmin orthodoxy'

Venkatachalapathy's book records a tongue-in-cheek description from 1926 of "coffee hotels" (also known as "coffee clubs"): "A public tavern instituted by Brahmins. A messenger from God to break Brahmin orthodoxy." Although coffee hotels were frequented by all kinds of people, they were

mostly owned and run by Brahmins and almost always had segregated sections for Brahmins and non-Brahmins.

While the caste-based segregation is mostly gone, the influence of Brahmins on filter *kaapi* culture remains visible in the design of the utensils: the tumbler and *davara* were designed with outward-facing rims so that the drinker could pour the coffee into his mouth without letting it touch the utensils.

As coffee-drinking became common in other regions of South India, "Udupi" hotels elsewhere — particularly Mumbai and Delhi — introduced filter coffee to newer populations. Even now, however, the use of specialised equipment, as well as a certain degree of patience and skill, means only devoted fans will make the effort to prepare filter coffee at home — despite the wider availability of filter pots and even packaged decoctions.

AFTER FIVE YEARS IN JAIL

121 tribals, arrested for 2017 Maoist ambush in Chhattisgarh, acquitted

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

ASPECIAL court in Chhattisgarh has acquitted all 121 people who were arrested in connection with the 2017 Burkapal Maoist ambush in Sukma in which 25 CRPF personnel were killed. The accused had spent nearly five years behind bars.

The NIA special court, which pronounced the judgment on Friday, said the prosecution could not prove that the accused — all of them from the tribal community — were either on the spot of the incident, in possession of any arms or explosives or even members of the CPI (Maoist). “Thus it is clear that the prosecution has failed to prove its case against the accused beyond reasonable doubt,” the court of Justice Dipak Kumar Deshlahare said.

The ambush had occurred when a team of 70 soldiers of the CRPF’s 74th Battalion had gone to provide security cover for road building in Sukma’s Burkapal on April 24, 2017. The CRPF contingent had been surrounded and attacked by a group of 150 Maoists.

Following the incident, which was the biggest ambush on the CRPF since the 2010 Chintalnar massacre in which 76 CRPF soldiers were killed, the Chhattisgarh Police had arrested 121 tribal people from various villages in the region. All of them were arrested in 2017 and remained in jail till Friday. One accused turned out to be a minor, while another died in detention.

The Chhattisgarh Police registered a case in the matter under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and even invoked provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) at the time of the charge sheet. As many as 120 people were arrested in the initial phase with one more arrest being made later. Accused Dodi Mangalu of Patel Para in Sukma died in jail. According to the judgment,



A videograb of the accused who were released from prison after a special court acquitted them in the case

20 prosecution witnesses turned hostile during the trial, refusing to recognise the accused. They also did not support the prosecution’s claims of recovery of explosives from the accused. Fifteen of them said their statements were never recorded by police.

In May-June 2017, the Chhattisgarh Police first arrested some half a dozen people in connection with the case. Based on their statements, it claimed to have made recoveries of some arms and explosives from other accused — including a bow and an arrow, a metre of codex wire, a non-electric detonator, a crude bomb and so on.

“In the context of the incident, the prosecution witnesses have not made any statement with regard to the identity or presence of the accused at the spot of the incident. No recovery of any arms or explosives from the custody of the accused has been proven. Thus, on the basis of statements of prosecution witnesses recorded before this court no charge can be proven against the accused,” said the court.

According to the court, there was no believable fact in the statements of witnesses that could prove that the accused were members of the CPI (Maoist).

Naidu’s request for farewell gift: a productive RS session

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

RAJYA SABHA Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu, who will chair his last session of the House from Monday, has sought a meaningful and productive session from leaders of political parties as a farewell gift.

Naidu will demit office as Vice President on August 10. He made the remarks at a meeting of floor leaders of Rajya Sabha on Sunday. The meeting saw a record 41 leaders attending.

“I am making one last request for upholding the dignity and decorum of the House of Elders,” he said at the meeting. Naidu has presided over 13 sessions.

“It was an emotional evening for all political party leaders with Venkaiah Naidu-garu. They expressed their regret at his departure and praised his many contributions as Rajya Sabha Chairman. He will be a very tough act to follow,” said Congress chief whip Jairam Ramesh.

The meeting saw the Opposition seeking discussions on 16 issues. These are among them — federalism, Agnipath, inflation, declining labour force participation rate, EPFO interest rates, “declining credibility” of central institutions, external threats, hate speech, undemocratic actions against opposition leaders, increasing crime in Jammu & Kashmir and attacks



Venkaiah Naidu greets leaders of political parties at his residence on Sunday. Prem Nath Pandey

On Kashmiri pundits and reservations in promotion and in private sector.

The meeting saw some leaders also recalling the efforts made by Naidu to give more opportunities to members by streamlining the conduct of Question Hour, Zero Hour and Special Mentions and debates and his commitment to promote the use of mother tongue.

As the meeting turned into a farewell for Naidu, Leader of the House Piyush Goyal said it was a bit premature to do so as Naidu is to preside over one full session and a formal farewell would be held in the House with all the leaders and members sharing their experiences in detail in the House.

“All sections of the House would work together to present a befitting farewell to the Chairman in the form of a productive monsoon session”, Goyal said.



PARTY MEET

Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Anurag Thakur with BJP MP Anil Baluni during an NDA meeting in Parliament on Sunday. PTI

A QUICK GUIDE TO PRESIDENT POLLS

KEY DATES: Election is on July 18 and counting on July 21. President to take oath on July 25

VOTERS: There are 4,809 electors in the electoral college whose votes have a value of 10,86,431

THE RACE: NDA’s Droupadi Murmu is leading with support of 44 parties. Opp’s Yashwant Sinha has the support of 34 parties.

VALUE OF VOTE: The value of a vote of each MLA varies from state to state. In UP, the value is 208, followed by 176 in Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu. In Sikkim it is just 7 and in Nagaland 9

BJP, JD(U) seek Tejashwi apology for ‘murti’ jibe at Murmu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PATNA, MAY 17

A DAY ahead of the polling to decide the next President, the BJP and JD(U) on Sunday demanded an apology from Leader of Opposition in Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav for calling NDA presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu a “murti (statue)”.

On Saturday, Tejashwi said: “We do not want a murti (statue) as President of India. Has anyone heard the NDA candidate for President speak? Has she held any press conference? On the other hand, Opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha has held several press conferences.”

On Sunday, BJP national spokesperson Guru Prakash Paswan said, “Tejashwi Yadav has insulted not only Droupadi Murmu ji but millions of youngsters from tribal and Dalit communities by saying that she will be a murti in Rashtrapati Bhawan. This is nothing but a reflection of feudal politics in the name of social justice.”

The BJP also took a dig at the RJD, saying the state witnessed a “real statue government” when Rabri Devi was the Chief Minister between 1997 and 2005.

BJP national general secretary of OBC Morcha and party spokesperson Nikhil Anand told *The Indian Express*: “Everyone knows how Bihar had a real statue CM in the form of Rabri Devi when she was virtually dragged out of her kitchen to take over reins of the state.”

JD(U) MLC and spokesperson Neeraj Kumar said: “Tejashwi should know that President of India is an august post. As Murmu is all set to become President, statue reference to her by him is condemnable. He should immediately apologise. Murmu has served as a minister and Governor and it goes to show her struggle.”

Margaret Alva, a once-powerful face who retreated into shadows

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, JULY 17

AT THE start of the year, veteran Congress politician Margaret Alva, 80, wrote a letter to PM Narendra Modi, expressing her angst over a move by the BJP government in Karnataka to bring in a law on religious conversions.

“We Christians are a disciplined, non-violent, service-oriented community. If we were involved in mass conversions, why is our number under three per cent? 200 years of rule by Christian colonial powers and work by so-called ‘missionaries’ involved in forced conversions” should have shown in our numbers, which have been declining. Why this false propaganda and violence against us?” she wrote.

The letter to the PM and participation in protests against The Karnataka Protection of Right of Freedom of Religion Bill in the latter half of 2021 saw Alva, once a political force to be reckoned



Opp V-P nominee Margaret Alva

with in Karnataka, returning to the political stage in the state after a long hiatus. Now the Opposition’s ‘consensus’ candidate for the vice-president’s post, Alva finds herself in the spotlight once again.

Despite hailing from coastal Karnataka and representing the current Uttara Kannada (then known as Kanara) Lok Sabha constituency in Parliament in 1999, Margaret Alva has largely been identified as a national politician.

A lawyer, Alva entered Rajya Sabha at age 32 and was a member of the Upper House for four terms, and 24 years at a stretch, from 1974.

She has been a minister in several Congress governments at the Centre — under Indira Gandhi,

Rajiv Gandhi, and PV Narasimha Rao. She was minister for women and child development during Rajiv Gandhi’s tenure.

Around two decades ago, her connection with the Congress high command was formidable enough for speculation in the Karnataka unit of the party of Alva being a contender for the CM post.

Alva had a brief spell of frosty ties with the Congress leadership in Delhi after she stated, in 2008, that the Karnataka unit of the party was selling election tickets to the highest bidders rather than picking candidates on merit. She was removed from party roles for around six months before being made Uttarakhand Governor.

She later took on gubernatorial assignments in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Goa, taking her farther away from active politics. Her son Nivedith Alva has been an aspirant for representing the Uttara Kannada region in the state legislature for many years.

One of her sons Nireet Alva is a well-known television producer.

Behind Dhankhar choice: Tussle with Mamata, upper-caste tag

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

HIS PERSISTENT wrangles with the Trinamool Congress — seen as a strong pushback to the “confrontational politics” of the ruling party in West Bengal — combined with the RSS’s backing for him led to the BJP choosing Jagdeep Dhankhar as its candidate for the August 6 vice-presidential election.

Party sources said Dhankhar — a lawyer by training and the national convener of the BJP’s law and legal affairs department in 2016 — has in the past “extended solid support both politically and through legal advice and assistance” to the BJP, RSS and its affiliates.

The nomination of Dhankhar, who is from the socially and politically dominant Jat community of Rajasthan, could placate a sec-



NDA V-P nominee Jagdeep Dhankhar

tion in the Sangh Parivar that has been increasingly uncomfortable with the BJP leadership’s aggressive outreach to Dalits, OBCs and other backward communities.

“Several leaders from the Parivar have conveyed to the party leaders that it’s the time for the party to pitch for an *agada* (member of a forward caste),” said a party source.

Sources said the party was aware of an increasing disquiet among Brahmin leaders over the community being allegedly ignored in the power-sharing formula. “The nomination of Dhankhar for the vice-president

MP CIVIC POLLS

BJP set to rule 108 of 133 local bodies, but loses four mayor posts to Cong, AAP

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, JULY 17

MADHYA PRADESH’S ruling BJP is poised to rule over 100 of 133 local bodies, the poll results for which were announced Sunday. But the victory was dampened by the party losing its hold over four mayor posts after winning seven of the 11 Nagar Nigams and scraping through in the other two by a slim margin.

The results for the 133 local bodies — comprising 11 municipal corporations, 36 municipal councils and 86 town councils — were announced Sunday during the first phase of counting. The second phase of counting will be held on July 20.

Mayors for 11 municipal councils are being elected directly while the chairperson of the local body will be elected by councillors indirectly in municipal councils. Of the 11 municipal corporations, the BJP won the mayor’s seat in seven. Congress got three mayor’s posts and Aam Aadmi Party one.

With the counting underway until late Sunday evening, the BJP was comfortably headed towards establishing its rule in 10 of the 11 municipal corporations, 31 of the 36 municipal councils and 67 of the 86 town councils. With BJP having the majority of councillors in most local bodies, it is set appoint a chairperson in them.

Assaduddin Owaisi’s AIMIM also debuted with a four of its four councillors winning. Of these, two are in Jabalpur, one each in Burhanpur and Khandwa corporations. Similarly, 14 of AAP’s candidates emerged victorious while Rani Aggarwal bagged the mayoral seat in Singrauli municipal corporation.

Congress candidates were elected as mayors in Gwalior, Chhindwara and Jabalpur. But even with that, the party will only be establish its rule in

Chhindwara municipal corporation, with its elected councillors falling short of the majority mark in the corporation.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan held a press conference and reasoned that even though Congress won three Municipal Corporations and AAP won in Singrauli, the saffron party holds the majority of wards which is the true picture. “Despite AAP victory in Singrauli municipal corporation, out of the 45 wards, 23 went to the BJP. Congress got 12 and AAP won on five,” said Chouhan.

He continued, “In the local body polls, the BJP emerged victorious on 80 per cent of the seats unlike the earlier trend where vote share was always between 45-55 per cent.”

BJP state chief, VD Sharma said that out of the 37 municipal councils BJP has a clear mandate in 27. Similarly, in 64 of the 86 town councils, BJP has a majority. “Even in Jabalpur where Congress won the mayoral post, BJP won on 44 wards and will rule,” said Sharma.

By winning three of the 11 mayoral seats, the Congress has improved on its tally from the previous civic polls — zero.

Calling it a historic victory for Congress, state chief Kamal Nath said: “It is for the first time since 2009, there will be three congress mayors out of the 11 municipal corporations. The Congress has snatched three seats from BJP in two seats we lost with slim margin. I want to ask the BJP, what exactly are you celebrating?”

Nath said that even in Indore and Bhopal where they have lost, the number of councillors in wards have doubled. “The BJP and its B team of AIMIM tried their best and even then, the Congress gave a tough fight in Burhanpur and lost with a narrow margin of 300 votes. Even in a place like Ujjain it was a close fight with merely a difference of 700 votes between the BJP and Congress candidates.”

Amid namaz row, Lulu Mall says it’s a place of business

Lucknow: Days after the Lulu Mall administration lodged a police complaint against unidentified people who offered namaz in the mall, the establishment issued a statement on Sunday saying it is “purely a place of business, which doesn’t discriminate against any caste, religion or any section of society”.

On July 14, an FIR was registered on a complaint from the Lulu Mall administration after a video of unidentified people offering namaz inside the mall went viral on social media.

The statement said: “Those who made a cheap attempt to offer namaz were complained about and an FIR was lodged.”

“We appeal to you to not target our esteemed establishment for selfish reasons and let us do business peacefully serving the consumers,” it said.

Two people were arrested Saturday after they entered the mall and recited the Hanuman Chalisa, police said. **ENS**

UP: Seen carrying photos of PM and Yogi in trash, sanitation worker sacked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JULY 17, 2022

THE CONTRACTUAL service of a 40-year-old Mathura sanitation worker was terminated for allegedly carrying a trash can that happened have photos of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

While showcause notices have been issued to the sanitary inspector and sanitary supervisor for not briefing the worker about photographs of dignitaries and public representatives, a probe has also been ordered.

In his representation to the municipal corporation, sanitation worker Bobby said he was

innocent as he is illiterate and failed to identify the photographs, said a senior official of the municipal department.

Mathura Municipal Commissioner Anunaya Jha said a fact-finding committee has been instituted. It has been asked to submit its report in 48 hours.

According to the official, Bobby was carrying trash that he took from a collection centre on Saturday. In the trash can, there were photographs of the PM and CM. On the way, he was intercepted by two people from Rajasthan, who made the video. The photographs were removed from the can and Bobby left the spot. In another video, a man is seen washing the photos of the PM and CM from the trash can.

ROUND 16 OF MILITARY TALKS WITH CHINA

India presses for full disengagement

Talks at Chushul Moldo point on Indian side of LAC last 12 hrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

INDIA ON Sunday strongly pressed for early disengagement of troops from all the remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh at the 16th round of high-level military talks with China, which took place after a gap of over four months.

In the discussions that lasted for around 12-and-a-half hours, the Indian delegation also insisted on the restoration of the status quo ante as of April 2020 – before the start of the military standoff, people familiar with the development said.

The talks began at 9.30 am at the Chushul Moldo meeting point on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the region, and ended at around 10 pm, they said.

There were some expectations of progress at the talks on completing the disengagement process at Patrolling Point-15 in the Hot Springs area.

The Indian delegation at the talks was led by Lt Gen. Anindya Sengupta, the commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps, while the Chinese team was headed by South Xinjiang Military District Chief Maj Gen. Yang Lin.

There was no official word on the outcome of the talks.

The 15th round of the military dialogue took place on March 11 but it failed to yield any significant outcome, with both sides, in a joint statement, reaffirming that resolution of the issues would help restore peace and tranquillity in the region and facilitate progress in bilateral relations.

The Indian side pressed for disengagement of troops as soon as possible in all the remaining friction points, the people cited above said.

It is learnt that the Indian delegation also sought resolution of pending issues in Depsang Bulge and Demchok.

India has been consistently maintaining that peace and tranquillity along the LAC were key for the overall development of bilateral ties.

The situation in eastern Ladakh figured prominently in talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Bali on July 7.

At the one-hour meeting on the sidelines of a conclave of foreign ministers of the G20 nations, Jaishankar conveyed to Wang the need for early resolution of all the outstanding issues in eastern Ladakh.

“Recalling the disengagement achieved in some friction areas, the External Affairs Minister reiterated the need to sustain the momentum to complete disengagement from all the remaining areas to restore peace and tranquillity in the border areas,” the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement after the meeting.

The MEA further said Jaishankar “reaffirmed the importance of fully abiding by bilateral agreements and protocols, and the understandings reached between the two ministers during their previous conversations”. The eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake area.

Both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process last year on the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area.

Each side currently has around 50,000 to 60,000 troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the sensitive sector.

ON VISIT TO FLOOD-HIT TOWN, CM FLOATS CONSPIRACY THEORY

Cloudbursts may be foreign plot to destabilise India: KCR

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, JULY 17

IF TELANGANA Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao is to be believed, cloudbursts may well be engineered by “foreign entities” to “destabilise” India. KCR presented his conspiracy theory to people in Bhadrachalam town in the state’s Bhadradri Kothagudem district, who have been forced into relief shelters by the overflowing Godavari.

“There is this new phenomenon called cloudburst. This is what happened in the Godavari region which caused the flood. There are reports that these cloudbursts are a conspiracy by foreign sources,” KCR said on Sunday.

“They (the alleged conspirators) first did a cloudburst in Leh-Ladakh, then in Uttarakhand, and now in the Godavari region. There are theories that these cloudbursts are being done to destabilise the country,” the Chief Minister said.

Heavy rain and inflows over a week up led to Godavari rising to levels not seen in Bhadrachalam in more than 35 years, some residents said. The state government moved several thousand people to camps as the river flooded its banks, before the water level began to fall on Saturday.

The Telangana BJP described the Chief Minister’s conspiracy



Telangana CM during a visit to a flood-affected area. Express

theory as the “joke of the century”. The Congress advised him to share his information with the central government and intelligence agencies.

State BJP president and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar accused KCR of making outlandish claims to divert attention from “failures”, including “submergence” of the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project.

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president and Malkajgiri MP A Revanth Reddy said that as Chief Minister, it was KCR’s responsibility to hand over the information about the “foreign hand” behind the cloudburst to the Centre, the Intelligence Bureau, and R&AW.

KCR visited the relief camps, and announced Rs 1,000 crore to build colonies on higher ground for the displaced people.

He promised Rs 10,000 per family as immediate relief during their stay in the camps, as well as free rice and essential commodities when they returned home.

The CM said it was “God’s miracle” that the Kadem dam on the Godavari tributary of the same name survived. “Its maximum capacity is about 2.90 lakh cusecs but during this flood, it (the flow) reached 5 lakh cusecs and it is a miracle it (the dam) is still standing. Thankfully, there is no loss of life in spite of the heavy floods,” he said.

KCR had to cancel his aerial survey of the flood-hit areas due to poor weather. He flew to Warangal by helicopter and thereafter travelled by road to assess the extent of the flooding and damage. WITH PTI INPUTS

Violence in Tamil Nadu town over student’s death; buses torched, DIG injured

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, JULY 17

PROHIBITORY ORDERS were imposed at several places in Tamil Nadu’s Kallakurichi district after protesters clashed with police and indulged in arson at a residential school on Sunday to protest against alleged inaction following the death of a 17-year-old student earlier this week.

Several people, including senior police officers, were injured in the violence at the residential school in Kaniyamoor, near Chinnasalem. Later in the day, the school principal and two school officials were arrested and the government transferred the suicide case to the CB-CID.

The protesters set on fire at least 15 buses, including three police buses. Following the violence, Kallakurichi Collector P N Sridhar issued prohibitory orders under Section 144 until July 31 in Kallakurichi taluk and several places in Chinnasalem. Chief Minister MK Stalin expressed regret over the violence and assured punishment for all those involved in the girl’s death. Appealing for peace, the CM said he has ordered the Home Secretary and the DGP to visit the site of the violence.

Sources said that on Sunday morning, around 2,000 people gathered at the school – where the Class 12 student was found dead on Wednesday – in response to a protest call on social media by youth groups in the area. The student is suspected to have jumped to her death from the third floor of the school building. The autopsy report confirmed injuries on the girl’s body. Police said that a suicide note purportedly written by the girl mentioned that she struggled in several of her school subjects. The letter allegedly blamed some of her teachers for putting her under pressure over her poor scores and also asked the



school to refund her annual school fee to her parents.

The girl’s family has refused to accept the body until those allegedly responsible for her death are arrested. Sources said that shortly after the girl’s death, when her family and local residents protested, they were promised strict action against the school. With no action even after three days, the protesters returned to the school in large numbers around 10 am Sunday.

Soon, the protest turned violent, with the mob pelting stones and ransacking the school building, classrooms and the principal’s cabin. They also set fire to school buses parked on the campus besides attacking at least three police vehicles.

“DIG M Pandian and the district Superintendent of Police were among those who were injured in the stone-pelting before a police team was able to manage the situation,” said an official. The situation was brought under control after additional police forces were called in from neighbouring districts. Minister CV Ganesan and (ruling DMK ally and VCK leader) Thol Thirumavalavan were among those who visited the victim’s family and promised to take up the case with the CMO.

After the violence broke out, DGP C Sylendra Babu appealed to the people to maintain calm and warned strictly against those resorting to violence.

Day after ‘animal parts’ found near Kannauj temple DM, SP removed; SHO suspended

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JULY 16

A DAY after “body parts of an animal” were found outside the entrance of a temple in the district’s Rasoolabad village, the Superintendent of Police and District Magistrate of Kannauj were removed from their posts on Sunday, officials said.

The Station House Officer of Talgram police station, under which the village came, was suspended. The police also arrested 13 persons on Sunday in connection with the arson and protests that broke out after the incident.

A senior police officer said, “SP of Kannauj Rajesh Srivastava and DM Rakesh Kumar have been removed from their posts. Shubhbrant Shukla would be the new DM of Kannauj, while Kunwar Anupam Singh would take over as the new SP.”

“The Station House Officer of Talgram police station has been suspended, and Jitendra Pratap Singh would be the new SHO,” said an officer.

Rasoolabad village remained tense on Saturday after some “animal body parts” were allegedly found outside the entrance of a temple under the limits of Talgram police station in Kannauj.

Police said a farmer lived inside the temple but he didn’t sleep there on Thursday night.

ICSE Class 10 results: More than 100 students tied in top 3 ranks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

MORE THAN 100 students were tied for the top three positions in the ICSE results released on Sunday, scoring 99.4% and above.

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations released results for its Class X board examinations Sunday evening. A total of 2,31,063 candidates from 2,535 schools across the country and abroad had appeared in these examinations, of whom 2,31,004 – or 99.97% of candidates – passed.

Along with a high pass percentage, the board results also show that many students scored in a very high range. Four students – three girls and a boy – were tied for the top position, all having an English plus best 4 subjects score of 99.8%. A total of 34 students were tied for the second spot with 99.6% and 72 tied for third place with 99.4%.

Of these toppers, the highest number are from Maharashtra, from where 37 students scored

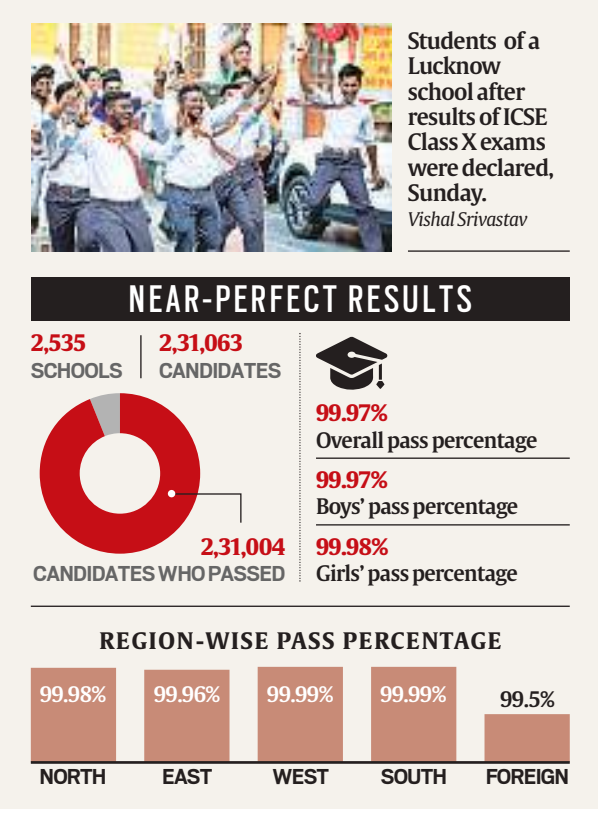
99.4% and above.

Hargun Kaur Matharu, of St. Mary’s School, Pune, was one of the four students who scored 99.8%. “It seemed to be a possibility. She is very academically inclined and her school had expectations but we didn’t want to pressure her. She has been very regular in her studies but maintained a balance,” said her father Dev Singh Matharu.

Mohammad Masood Iqbal of The Future Foundation School, Kolkata, was among those who scored 99.60%. “I am preparing for medical entrance exams and I want to be a doctor. I am sure Class 12 will be more challenging. I had a lot of issues with the online mode of classes, so I am happy that offline classes are back now,” he said.

Nihara Mariam Oommen, a student of Bethany High School, who also scored 99.6%, said she balanced her studies with music.

“I never expected this score... Credit definitely goes to my mother who tutored me for exams. She was a teacher during the Covid-19 lockdown,” she said.



NEET records 95% attendance, highest number of applicants ever

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE NATIONAL Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admissions to MBBS and BDS courses, which recorded the highest number of application ever this year, registered 95 per cent attendance on Sunday.

A total of 18.72 lakh candidates had registered for the exam, which is the country’s biggest common entrance held by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

According to an official statement issued by the NTA, the test was held across 3,570 centers in 497 cities in India and 14 cities abroad. NEET (UG) 2021, for which 16.14 lakh candidates had registered, was held in 202 cities including Dubai and Kuwait.

“The number of candidates within India were maximum in Jaipur (52,351) and minimum in West Sikkim (105). Similarly, the number of candidates outside India were maximum in Dubai (646) and minimum in Thailand (6),” the statement said.

The arrangements made by the NTA included one central control room, live CCTV surveillance and jammers.

Rajasthan: Students say wrote exam ‘twice’ due to question paper mix-up

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR, JULY 17

STUDENTS WHO appeared for NEET at an examination centre in Rajasthan’s Sriganganagar district on Sunday alleged they were forced to write the exam twice on account of a question paper mix-up.

Students said question papers meant for Hindi and English medium students were interchanged mistakenly. A National Testing Agency (NTA) official confirmed the mix-up to this news-paper, but said students were given extra time to complete the paper once the mistake was spotted. However, the exam centre superintendent, in a factual report submitted on Sunday evening, recommended a re-test to NTA.

The incident, earlier in the day, had resulted in students and parents protesting in front of the Army Public School, Sriganganagar, the exam centre.

“The examination started at



Students at an examination centre in Ludhiana. Gurmeet Singh

2 pm. Around 4:30 pm, people from the exam centre came to us and said we have been mistakenly given the bilingual question paper meant for Hindi medium students and those studying in Hindi medium have received the question paper meant for English medium students,” said Akshita Garg, a NEET aspirant.

Garg added that officials at the examination centre first gave the students another question paper, but subsequently said they will have to write the examination

once again. “We completed our exam by 6 pm. But then, they said our exam has been cancelled and we will have to write it again in another time slot,” she said.

Sriganganagar SDO Manoj Kumar Meena had reached the spot after the incident to maintain law and order.

In a factual report sent by centre superintendent Raja Sharma to the observers for the NEET exam, it was recommended that the examination should be conducted again for this centre.

J&K: CRPF ASI killed as militants fire at checkpoint

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JULY 17

AN ASSISTANT Sub Inspector (ASI) of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was killed when militants targeted a joint checkpoint of J&K Police and the CRPF in south Kashmir’s Pulwama on Sunday.

Sunday’s attack is the second shoot-and-run attack by the militants in the Valley this week. On Tuesday, an ASI of police was killed and two of his colleagues injured in a similar attack in Srinagar.

The police said that on Sunday afternoon militants fired indiscriminately at the checkpoint at Gangoo village of south Kashmir’s Pulwama.

“Today at about 1415hrs, terrorists fired upon a joint naka party at Gangoo crossing area of Pulwama in which one CRPF personnel attained martyrdom. Senior police officers along with reinforcement reached on the terror crime spot,” the police said.

“In this terror incident, one CRPF personnel namely ASI/GD Vinod Kumar was critically injured and was immediately shifted to nearby hospital for the treatment of his injuries. However, he succumbed to his injuries and attained martyrdom.”

The police said the militants appeared from the nearby dense apple orchards and fired at the joint team of police and paramilitary forces. Police sources said after targeting the joint forces, the militants managed to escape taking cover of dense foliage.

The police have registered a case under relevant sections of law and initiated investigation.

JHARKHAND

Journalist arrested for Maoist links

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, JULY 17

JHARKHAND POLICE on Sunday arrested a freelance journalist, Rupesh Kumar Singh, in connection with a 2021 case lodged in Saraikela district in which senior CPI (Maoist) leader Prashant Bose alias Kishanda is an accused. The police alleged that Singh used to arrange funds for the Maoists.

Jharkhand Police spokesperson Amol V Homkar confirmed that Singh was arrested from his home in Ramgarh district. “He was arrested for his links with CPI

(Maosit) leaders in the case that was registered against Maoist veteran Prashant Bose. There is no fresh FIR against him,” he said.

Incidentally, Singh’s name had appeared in the list of journalists who were targeted through the Pegasus spyware.

On November 12 last year, the police had arrested CPI (Maoist) central committee member Kishanda, who carried a reward of Rs 1 crore on his head, along with five others in the Kandra Police Station area of Saraikela. The FIR Station was registered under various IPC sections, including 420 (cheating), 467 (forgery) and under Unlawful

Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

The search cum arrest warrant against Singh issued by a Saraikela-Kharsawan district court mentioned FIR number 67/2021, which is the same one that was lodged at Kandra Police Station.

Singh’s wife Satakshi, however, said the family was not told about the specific allegations. “Around 5.25 am, police personnel arrived and searched our house. In the search warrant FIR 67/2021 was mentioned. However, the police did not tell us on what allegation my husband has been arrested. They took away his laptop and even my younger sister’s laptop,” she said.



The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BEYOND CAATSA

NDA government emphasises producing more weapons at home. That demands more urgent and purposeful policy action

LAST WEEK THE House of Representatives, the lower House of the US Congress, passed an amendment with a significant majority that called for an India-specific waiver from sanctions for the purchase of advanced Russian weapons. This sets the stage for Delhi and Washington to find a way around the problem of India's continuing dependence on Russian weapons. It is an issue that has acquired greater salience since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act in 2017 demanded sanctions on states that buy Russian weapons. The US imposed these sanctions in 2020 on Turkey, a NATO ally, for purchasing the S-400 missile system from Russia. With India, too, committed to the purchase of the S-400 from Moscow, it seemed inevitable that Washington would impose sanctions on Delhi and undermine a budding strategic partnership. US and India have been steadily building up the bilateral defence and security cooperation, are partners in the Indo-Pacific and members of the Quad along with Australia and Japan.

To be sure, the CAATSA authorised the US President to waive the sanctions provided there was an overriding national security interest. Both the Trump and Biden administrations had avoided imposing the sanctions but were hesitant to offer a waiver. Both were worried about the overwhelming anti-Russian sentiment in the US Congress. The House amendment now offers solid political support for the waiver. This, of course, is only the first step that needs to be matched by the US Senate and jointly approved by the two Houses at a later sitting. But the House amendment acknowledges the danger to the US interests from a mechanical application of CAATSA sanctions on India. It notes the special military challenges that India confronts from an assertive China in the Himalayas. While calling for a waiver, the House amendment calls for a deeper defence collaboration with India, and stronger high technology cooperation, and active encouragement to reduce Delhi's current dependence on Russian military supplies.

Although a rapid diversification away from Russian supplies can't be done overnight, it is a good moment for the Indian security establishment to review the changing context of Delhi's defence ties to Moscow. Indo-Russian defence ties emerged at a moment when Moscow was fighting Beijing in the 1960s. Russia and China are now close partners, while Beijing remains the main source of Delhi's security problems. Russia and China are also aligned against the West, which has become a major partner for India. After invading Ukraine, Russia is locked in a deep confrontation with the US and Europe. Although India can work on the margins to reduce the impact of Western sanctions on Russia, dealing with Moscow will only become trickier for Delhi in the days ahead. If and when the Ukraine war ends, Russia's focus will be on rearming itself rather than exports to other countries. Delhi, however, has no reason to jump from dependence on Russia to total reliance on the West. The NDA government has emphasised the importance of producing more weapons at home. It also wants domestic and foreign private capital to invest in India's arms production. Translating that laudable goal into reality demands more urgent and purposeful policy action in Delhi than we have seen so far.

A LIGHTER TOUCH

Data localisation norms may need easing, but startups should compete without relying on heavy handholding of state

THE STARTUP ECOSYSTEM in India, in overdrive for the past few years, is now undergoing a slow churn. After a period of frenzied fund-raising and deal-making, when unicorns (startups with a valuation of \$1 billion or more) were growing at a fast rate, fund-raising has begun to dry up. As per a report by PwC, after three consecutive quarters of more than \$10 billion, funding in Indian startups fell by 40 per cent to \$6.8 billion during April-June this year. This decline can be traced to a combination of factors — end of the era of cheap money with central banks across the world tightening policy to tackle inflation, fears of a global slowdown, and a decline in tech valuations as investors become more circumspect. During such testing times, when many startups have begun to lay off workers as they seek to conserve cash, Indian startups have also been voicing concerns over the "compliance intensive" nature of regulations in the current draft of the personal data protection Bill.

The concerns stem around regulations which mandate that users' personal data be kept within India. Many fear that these rules will restrict operations of startups. While the justification for data localisation is fairly uncomplicated — regulation will address concerns over data privacy and security, and will make it easier for government to access critical information — worldwide, in the designing of localisation rules, a careful balance needs to be struck between privacy and innovation. However, the Indian government seems to be sympathetic to the concerns of startups — as reported in this paper, the Ministry of Electronics and IT is examining the possibility of easing the data localisation requirements as laid out in the current draft of the data protection bill for startups. Considering that such concerns have also been voiced by others in the past, especially by global technology firms, carving out exemptions for startups, even as what constitutes a startup, the terms of its definition, remains difficult to ascertain, may not be a prudent approach.

Policies as critical as data protection should not be tweaked to accommodate the business plans of a few startups, corporate strategies should not be drawn up solely on the basis of the ability to influence policy. Should similar exemptions be also carved out for startups whose applications to become payment aggregators have been rejected by the RBI? The startup ecosystem is vibrant, in part, because it allows for easy entry and exit of firms — some startups will succeed handsomely, while many others will fail. That's the nature of business. Firms should compete without having to rely on government intervention.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



NEERJA CHOWDHURY

MONSOON SESSIONS OF Parliament are usually turbulent and the one starting Monday, July 18, is unlikely to be an exception. This session will also be dominated by the presidential and vice-presidential polls. It will start on a historic note, with MPs voting on opening day to choose the country's next rashtapati. Droupadi Murmu is certain to be elected president.

Her elevation to the high office may or may not improve the lot of Adivasis. But it will signal that a member of a tribal group, who is also a woman, can occupy the highest position in the country.

It is the nomination of the NDA's vice-presidential candidate which has, however, grabbed eyeballs. In a surprise move — though, by now, we should not be surprised by any move of the prime minister — the BJP announced that Jagdeep Dhankhar would be the NDA's candidate for VP. The BJP's choice may come to have a bearing on how the Rajya Sabha functions.

Dhankhar was an active MoS, parliamentary affairs, in the Chandra Shekhar government in 1990. He is from the Jat community, belongs to Rajasthan and came into prominence as governor of West Bengal for the confrontational bouts he had with Mamata Banerjee's government. His three attributes — being a Jat, belonging to Rajasthan and acting "tough" as a governor — point to the BJP's thinking, and the strategy it could adopt in the months to come.

That the BJP wants to get back into its fold the farming community of Jats who inhabit western UP, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan, is obvious. Unhappy with the farm bills, the Jats were the mainstay of the year-long agitation the farmers mounted outside Delhi last year, compelling the central government to take back the laws. Rajasthan, where elections are due in 2023, is clearly on the party's radar.

More importantly, Dhankhar, as the chairman of the Rajya Sabha, responsible for its proceedings, could be tougher on the Opposition. He is likely to win given the arithmetic of both the Houses which elect the VP. Going by his track record in West Bengal — he was not shy of run-ins with the state government — it could lead to greater contention

As Parliament reopens, votes are cast for new president, Opposition diminution, BJP aggression

with the Opposition in the Upper House.

Dhankhar's nomination came within days of moves that have created a sense of disquiet amongst the Opposition and may have a bearing on MPs' free speech and freedom to assemble. The Rajya Sabha put out an advisory that MPs will no longer be allowed to hold dharmas within the precincts of Parliament; earlier such "requests" used to be made to MPs to desist from protesting in Parliament. The Lok Sabha issued a new booklet adding more words that are to be deemed unparliamentary to the existing list, and they are words of common usage like "corrupt", "ashamed", "tanashah" (dictator), which the Opposition leaders use against those in power. If the word "tanashah" had been declared unparliamentary 50 years ago, Indira Gandhi might not have lost the 1977 elections. If the word "corrupt" had been banned in 1987, Rajiv Gandhi might not have been ousted in 1989, nor the UPA swamped in scams like 2-G, Coalgate, and attacked day after day in Parliament.

Om Birla, the Lok Sabha Speaker, tried to reassure MPs that they will have the freedom to speak and the expunction of words would be done by the Speaker depending on the context. What was the need, then, to publish a booklet? That power vests in the Speaker anyway. These moves show a growing toughness adopted by the BJP towards the Opposition.

But it is mystifying why the BJP, which is increasing its footprint in the country, winning election after election, should want to be seen to be stifling the free speech of parliamentarians, or be worried about a dharna or two in Parliament. Particularly as the prime minister loses no opportunity to emphasise India's democratic credentials in world capitals. It is even more curious at a time when the Opposition is weakening.

As for the Opposition, the disarray in its ranks has been growing, evident even in the way it handled the presidential contest. Nobody expected Yashwant Sinha to win, only to present a dignified counter narrative. After all, in the past too, the Opposition fielded candidates who had no chance to win — Lakshmi Sahgal against APJ Abdul Kalam in 2002, or PA Sangma in 2012

against Pranab Mukherjee.

Having projected Sinha as the candidate of the Opposition, Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena and Hemant Soren's JMM have decided to support Murmu. Mamata Banerjee, who had proposed Sinha's name for rashtapati, found herself in a difficult situation, and had to ask Sinha not to come to West Bengal to campaign. Given this state of affairs, few will want to stand as candidates of the unified Opposition against the BJP, for any post.

Undoubtedly, the BJP caught the Opposition on the wrong foot by fielding Murmu. It hopes to augment the support of tribals in states in the Hindi heartland and west India where there's a concentration of these groups, and it may have to offset disaffection after being in power for 10 years. Its stakes are the highest in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Orissa and West Bengal in the run-up to 2024. It may also hope that Murmu, being a Santhal — the group has sizeable numbers in West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand — may help it breach the support base of its opponents in these states.

While the BJP knew what it was doing by projecting Murmu, the Opposition did not think through its political messaging with its candidate.

The Opposition will try to raise the issues agitating it to corner the government in the forthcoming session of Parliament — Agnipath, price rise, intrusions by China, the latest move to regulate digital media, among others — provided the din does not drown out debate.

Events of the last few days have shown that an already assertive BJP has decided to become even more aggressive in taking on the Opposition, which is anyway weakening — addressing an event in the Rajasthan assembly on Saturday, Chief Justice of India NV Ramana has also pointed to the "diminishing" space of the Opposition. That space may become smaller still, both within Parliament and outside it.

That is neither good for the ruling party, or for the Opposition, or the country.

The writer is a senior journalist

AN ORDERLY TRANSITION

The switchover from coal to renewables needs to be gradual and careful



RAKESH KACKER AND NIDHI SRIVASTAVA

SINCE THE ONSET of the pandemic and over the past few months, after the Ukraine-Russia war, commodity prices, especially that of energy, have surged worldwide. With inflation at unprecedented levels in many countries, concerns over energy security have gained centre stage.

Recently, there have been several policy initiatives in the coal sector in India. One which has gone largely unnoticed is the introduction of the national coal index (NCI). This index was created to provide a benchmark for revenue-sharing contracts being executed after the auctions for commercial mining of coal.

The NCI had to be introduced as the wholesale price index (WPI) for coal has no component of imported coal. For the last six months, the WPI for Coal has been stable at around 131. Over the same period, the NCI has jumped from about 165 to about 238 reflecting the sharp increase in international coal prices. The domestic coal industry has responded to this situation with an increase of over 30 per cent in coal production from April to June this year. This has helped reduce inflationary pressures in the economy.

This development shows the importance of increasing domestic coal production to reduce the exposure of the domestic economy to the price volatility of international markets. Anticipating these problems, a big effort toward permitting commercial mining

has been made to get the private sector to produce more coal. After taking preparatory action, about 50 contracts have been finalised in the last two years. Several other steps have been taken to increase domestic coal production.

However, much more needs to be done to make these measures more effective. First, and most importantly, the financial community has to be sensitised to the need of increasing domestic coal production to meet the growing energy demand. The Ministry of Power recognised the need to increase coal-based generation in the country in its draft National Electricity Policy released in May 2021, before the present crisis erupted. This policy has not yet been finalised. It should clearly articulate the importance of domestic coal-based generation. Apart from the government, the industry should also take up this issue with the financial community in adopting a more holistic approach toward environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria.

Second, is the need for a regulator to address the issues arising from a greater role of the private sector. The current arrangements were put in place at a time when the public sector dominated. There are several issues where new private commercial miners would need help. A single point of contact for the industry in the form of a dedicated regulator would give great comfort to private

players and would help to overcome problems that could arise in due course.

Third, increasing domestic production of coal and diversifying the production base are both needed. This must be complemented with efforts to improve the quality of the coal produced. And fourth, the undue financial burden on the coal sector due to various cross subsidies needs attention. The regime needs to be reformed. High prices of coal and coal-based generation will only encourage imported coal and expose the country to price risks from international energy prices.

Looking at coal from a singular focus on GHG emissions will give a myopic view of energy requirements for a growing economy like India. The path to achieving 500 GW of renewables needs to be gradual, ensuring an orderly transition as coal is unavoidable in the near future. Reducing coal imports and increasing domestic production of coal needs focused attention. The changes in the coal industry in the last few years are in the right direction. These were long overdue. Action on the issues discussed above will only help to deepen and strengthen these reforms which are needed to overcome the challenges that have resurfaced over the past few months.

Kacker is a former secretary, Government of India, and Srivastava is a PhD scholar at Energy Studies Programme, JNU

JULY 18, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

MISHRA ELECTED CM

SRIPAT MISHRA, THE 58-year-old Speaker of the Vidhan Sabha, will be sworn in as the 13th Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh after his unanimous election by the Congress (I) legislature party, according to reliable sources in Lucknow. According to a UNI report quoting sources in New Delhi, Mishra has been chosen by the Congress (I) high command to succeed V P Singh. Singh is believed to have made it known that he would abide by any decision taken by the party high command in this regard. Half of the ministers of the outgoing 48-members three-tier ministry of Singh are expected to be dropped. There is a

panic among the 16 cabinet ministers, 23 ministers of state and six deputy ministers. Most of them may lose their jobs.

MOSCOW IRE AT CPI

THE LEADERSHIP OF the Communist Party of India, which is already facing the anger of the rank and file over its latest stand on the Bharatiya Janata Party, is believed to have earned Moscow's ire also on the question, according to sources close to the CPI. During the party's general secretary Rajeswar Rao's visit to Moscow recently, senior leaders of the Soviet Communist Party, according to CPI sources, had clearly attacked the recent de-

cision of the CPI leadership to join hands with the BJP. Rajeswar Rao is reported to have met the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, Yuri Andropov and the alternate member of the politburo, Boris Ponomarev.

INDIANS RELEASED

ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN completed for receiving the 10 Indian nationals being released after eight years' detention in a Pakistani jail without a trial. The Indians will be handed over to India's consul general in Karachi. They will be flown out from Karachi to Delhi by Indian airlines on July 20.



9 THE IDEAS PAGE

A prosperity lesson for India

As it prepares to become most populous by 2023, it must remember: Improvement of human development index hinges on providing quality education to girl child



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

THE UNITED NATIONS' latest report, "Population Prospects" forecasts that India will surpass China's population by 2023, reaching 1.5 billion by 2030 and 1.66 billion by 2050. It was only three years ago that the UN Population Prospects (2019) projected that India will surpass China's population by 2027. But it seems that the rate of growth of India's population is faster than that of China, and the global agencies had to change their forecast significantly in three years.

Every country intends for its people to be prosperous and frames policies to attain this goal. China's story since 1978 is unique — the country has achieved the fastest decline in poverty and is today a superpower, perhaps, second only to the US. Its experiences hold some important lessons for India, especially because in 1978, when China embarked on its economic reforms, its per capita income at \$156.4 was way below that of India at \$205.7. Both countries were saddled with humongous poverty. Today, China is more than six times ahead of India in terms of per capita income — China's per capita income in 2021 was \$12,556, while that of India was \$1,933 in 2020. It is this economic prosperity that has enabled China to spend large amounts on building its military might.

How did China do all this? It is well known that China started its economic reforms in 1978 with a primary focus on agriculture. It broke away from the commune system and liberated agri-markets from myriad controls. As a result, during 1978-84, China's agri-GDP grew by 7.1 per cent per annum and farmers' real incomes grew by 14 per cent per annum with the liberalisation of agri-prices. As people gained prosperity and farmers' real incomes doubled, poverty fell by half in just six years. Enhanced incomes of rural people created a huge demand for industrial products, and also gave political legitimacy for pushing further the reform agenda. The aim of China's manufacturing through Town and Village Enterprises (TVEs) was basically to meet the surging demand from the hinterlands. The rest is history.

But one important policy during this period that is not talked about much was the one-child policy. China introduced the one-child per family policy in September 1980, which lasted till early 2016. It is this strict control on population growth, coupled with booming growth in overall GDP over these years, that led to a rapid increase in per capita incomes. Chinese population growth today is just 0.1 per cent per annum compared to India's 1.1 per cent per annum. India's overall growth story — though one of reasonable success — has not been as impressive as that of China, certainly not in agriculture. Over a 40-year period, 1978-2018, China's agriculture has grown at 4.5 per cent per annum while India's agri-GDP growth ever since reforms began in 1991 has hovered at around 3 per cent per annum. Market and price liberalisation in agriculture still remains a major issue, and at the drop of any hint of food price rise, the government clamps down exports, im-



C R Sasikumar

poses stock limits on traders, suspends futures markets, and pushes other measures that strangle markets. The net result of all this is reflected in the "implicit taxation" of farmers to favour the vocal lobby of consumers, especially the urban middle class.

Let's get back to the population story, and try to understand what India can do at this juncture. There is no way India can impose the one-child norm that China did in 1980. After Sanjay Gandhi's forceful attempts to control population through sterilisation methods in the early 1970s, and the people's discontent against it, no government is going to attempt it. The only way is through effective education, especially that of the girl child, open discussion and dialogue about family planning methods and conversations about the benefits of small family size in society. The record on that front is not very good.

As per the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21), of all the girls and women above the age of 6 years, only 16.6 per cent were educated for 12 years or more. If one talks of the quality of education, several ASER reports point to the poor quality of education. In our earlier research, based on unit-level data of NFHS, we found that women's education is the most critical determinant of the status of malnutrition amongst children below the age of five. The NFHS-5 data shows that more than 35 per cent of our children below the age of five are stunted, which means their earning capac-

Unless a focused and aggressive campaign is launched to educate the girl child and provide her with more than 12 years of good quality education, India's performance in terms of the prosperity of its masses, and the human development index may not improve significantly for many more years to come. From a policy perspective, if there is any subsidy that deserves priority, it should be for the education of the girl child.

ity will remain hampered throughout life. They will remain stuck in a low-level income trap. Moreover, 57 per cent of women in the reproductive age group of 15-49, are anaemic, as per NFHS-5 (2019-21), up from 53 per cent in NFHS-4 (2015-16). With this dismal status of women's health and education, the future of children in India is a serious issue to ponder over.

Biofortification of staples, supplying clean and safe drinking water to every household (nal se jal) and mid-day meals are all steps in the right direction to improve the well-being of people. But unless a focused and aggressive campaign is launched to educate the girl child and provide her with more than 12 years of good quality education, India's performance in terms of the prosperity of its masses, and the human development index may not improve significantly for many more years to come. From a policy perspective, if there is any subsidy that deserves priority, it should be for the education of the girl child. If the Modi government can take up this cause in sync with state governments, this will significantly boost the labour participation rate of women, which is currently at a meagre 25 per cent, and lead to "double engine" growth. This policy focus can surely bring a rich harvest, politically and economically, for many years to come.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIER

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Like unscrupulous populists and nationalists everywhere, the Rajapaksas exploited divisions stemming from economic insecurity, prejudice and plain ignorance, setting the Sinhalese Buddhist majority against the mostly Hindu Tamil and Muslim minorities."
— THE OBSERVER

The power of goodness

In the late Jagat Mehta's vision lies a lesson for the India of today



ABHIJIT V BANERJEE

I HAD NO reason to get to know Jagat Mehta. He was one of those who came of age during India's transition to Independence. Had he been with us he would be one hundred this month.

I knew of him of course. From the newspapers. He was the foreign secretary when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the External Affairs Minister in the Janata government of the late 1970s — a committed Nehruvian (he worked as Nehru's private secretary in his early years in the IAS) who made such a success of his partnership with Vajpayee that Indira Gandhi felt compelled to fire him when she returned to power. These were years of unusual cordiality between India and Pakistan, and key water-sharing agreements were negotiated. Jagatsaheb, as he was widely known, was justly proud of the achievements of those years. He gave a lot of credit to Vajpayee, who despite being ideologically close to the RSS, was capable of genuine warmth and empathy, which goes a long way in diplomacy. But I imagine Jagatsaheb, with his commitment to finding mutually acceptable solutions and above all, an effortless graciousness that extended to one and all, must have played a central role.

That graciousness touched me even before I met him. This was in the mid-1990s. I was trying to start my first randomised controlled trial (RCT). I had contacted Ajay Mehta, one of Jagatsaheb's four remarkable children through his brother, Uday, who taught political philosophy at MIT. Ajay headed Seva Mandir, a Udaipur-based NGO with a deep commitment to Gandhian ideals and community building. I was going to visit Udaipur to explore working with them. Ajay told me that Jagatsaheb had invited me to stay with them. I demurred, worried about imposing. He insisted. I didn't resist too much, and it was one of the best decisions I ever took.

I remember very clearly the morning I arrived in Udaipur for the first time and was taken to Jeevan Niwas, Jagatsaheb's beautiful house just outside the old city in Udaipur. He was waiting for me to have breakfast, and as soon as we sat down at the enormous table in the dining room — as I was to many, many, times more — he began to quiz me about what I was there to do. I noticed immediately there was an intellectual intensity to his queries, barely masked by the slightly old-fashioned politeness that was his second nature, that took it beyond the usual table talk. This was also Jagatsaheb — some of the leading minds of the time, people like Daniel Moynihan and John Kenneth Galbraith, were his close friends — but he offered his full attention to all comers, including young professors with strange ideas. When he asked me about the subject of

my study, I remember saying that I didn't really have one — if there was an intervention that Seva Mandir felt was important enough to test out, that was good for me. He probably found that odd but was too polite to say so.

Eventually, we started what would be a long sequence of RCTs across health and education, and for the next decade and more, I was in and out of Udaipur every few months and almost always, unless there was a large family gathering, I got to stay in Jeevan Niwas. Often, it was just the two of us. I would come back from a day in the field, shower and settle down in his enormous living room with its walls chock-a-block in Rajasthani miniatures with a glass of whiskey soda. And after some small-talk, Jagatsaheb would lean forward, furrow his brows and ask, "So how is Ind-ia doing?". Ind-ia, with an emphasis on the "d". Never Indiya.

This was the late 1990s and early 2000s, the economy was speeding up, poverty was falling, and I was mostly optimistic. Jagatsaheb didn't disagree, but his stance was always that we can and must do better. Because we are Ind-ia. Because we are the children of Gandhi and Nehru, who for him were the greatest idealists of the 20th century. Because we pledged ourselves to the ideals of equality of all, of universal adult suffrage, of tolerance and brotherhood, already in the 1920s, right from when our national movement became a peoples' movement. This was roughly the time when America only recognised the rights of white (men) and most of Europe was obsessed with race and religion, he would tell me.

It was not because he didn't see our flaws. Having spent his life working in government, he knew all about the rigidity and high-handedness of our bureaucracy, the venality of our politicians, the greed and cynicism among our leaders of industry. He would often quiz me in great detail about the implementation of various programmes and policies — about what might be going wrong, and how to fix it.

He was particularly harsh about the foreign policy establishment, especially during the years when he was active there. He thought we made a huge mistake by not supporting our Afghan friends during the Russian invasion in 1979, which, he believed, pushed them into the hands of Pakistan and contributed to the disastrous dynamic that led to 9/11 and beyond. He blamed himself, among others, for being too unwilling to read the warning signs to an uncomprehending Nehru, which ultimately led to our Chinese catastrophe. Protocol and blind love (for Nehru) make a bad combination, he once told me.

And yet he remained an idealist; unwavering in his belief that we must try to do the right things for the right reason, internally and externally, while accepting that it won't always happen. At a time when we seem to be wavering between trying to be powerful and wanting to be good, I dearly miss his voice telling us that we, Ind-ia, can only be powerful if we are good.

The writer, a Nobel laureate in economics, is professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology



AAKASH JOSHI

The Agniveer's journey

There is need for a deeper conversation about potential social fallout of Agnipath

"Back there I could fly a gunship, I could drive a tank, I was in charge of million-dollar equipment, back here I can't even hold a job parking cars."

— Sylvester Stallone, in 'Rambo: First Blood'

THANKS TO THE pervasive power of Hollywood, even those who have never been to America are likely to have some idea of the country's attitude towards armed forces personnel after they have completed their "tour(s) of duty". A strong sense of nationalism is tied up with their sacrifice and often promoted by the military-industrial complex. "Supporting the troops" and "thanking them for their service" is an integral part of the political identity of many Americans. Conversely, veterans suffer disproportionately from homelessness and mental health issues compared to the rest of the population — almost 20 per cent of them, according to the US National Institute for Drug Abuse. The prevalence of addiction, a disease of despair, is understandable. Violence is, by definition, traumatic and war — even when it is necessary — wounds entire generations.

Things get worse. As Kathleen Belew points out in *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, after every major conflict, many veterans who are unable to readjust well to civilian life have been involved in violent, organised crime and even terrorist activities. World War II veterans formed the Hells Angels (an "outlaw" motorcycle club) and there is an increasing

amount of scholarship on how veterans have fed the cadres of the White Power movement. Louis Beam, for example, was a decorated pilot in the Vietnam War. On his return, he joined the Ku Klux Klan and is now one of the leading ideologues for racist organisations. His conception of a "leaderless resistance" continues to be an inspiration for violent, anti-state, anti-minority groups and individuals. Unfortunately, Beam is a notable exception only in his notoriety.

The model for the Indian armed forces — a colonial legacy in some ways, to be sure — is different. Until now, short-term recruits formed a negligible part of the non-commissioned personnel. Soldiers are expected to die and kill for their country and are offered, in return, job security, pensions and health benefits. The military, by and large, has taken care of its own.

The economic and strategic imperative for reform in the armed forces is undeniable. The time for better technology, hardware and a more adaptable, efficient and versatile fighting force has long been here, and we are already late to the party. Continuing with the current structure of employment and benefits at the same scale is also an economically untenable proposition: More than half of India's defence budget is spent on pensions, while just around 5 per cent is earmarked for research and development.

The question, then, is not whether the armed forces need reform and restructuring. It is about the limited conversation

around the potential social upheaval the scheme could well lead to. As the protests around the Agnipath scheme die down, is India ready for the inevitable influx of thousands of young men, Agniveers, who are likely to have seen conflict and must now adjust to civilian life?

The protests — and the government's response — have been centred on the lack of job security (Agniveers will serve for four years, including 6 months of training) and benefits. A significant number will be employed in paramilitary forces, and their service and training will be recognised as a degree. Yet, many — if not most — Agniveers will have to make their own way. And the value of a "degree" for employers, more often than not, is only significant if it is a marker for skills that they can use.

The first lesson from America in this regard, then, is: The cold logic of the free market may pay lip service to patriotic sentiments, but it does not give salaries or jobs based on them.

Another issue, perhaps even more important, with creating thousands of armed forces gig workers is the social and psychological readjustment that Agniveers will need assistance with. And dealing with it in any meaningful manner requires facing the more uncomfortable weaves of India's social fabric.

The fact remains that ours is a society permeated by violence and hierarchy, as much as it is by compassion, decency and frater-

nity. Our political conversation continues to be dominated by wounds — real and imagined — of history. Caste animosity — including violence to protect its boundaries — is stoked at regular intervals. A camera on every phone means acts of brutality are recorded and shared, as boastful messages from diseased minds as well as for disturbing ideological ends. When men who have seen death at close quarters, and are trained in violence, are added to this already volatile mix, serious consideration and resources must be put in place to help them readjust. Mental health, community and vocational therapy — and less obvious initiatives — would be a good first step. India does not need — and cannot afford — its own version of the KKK and White Power.

The final lesson from America is a tangential one. Most of the sub-genres of its mainstream cinema have been replicated by Hollywood's Indian counterparts — the romantic comedy, the action movie and even the slick nationalist war film, a la Uri: The Surgical Strike. What we haven't had yet is the "war vet" genre — stories of soldiers who come back to a world that does not, cannot understand them. The first *Rambo*, for example, isn't just an action movie, it is a tragedy about irrelevance and loneliness. Let's hope a home-grown version of that tale never has any resonance.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DIPLOMATIC BRIDGES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bridge to the gulf' (IE, July 16). The I2U2 grouping and the summit of its leaders offer a sneak peek into the future. India has reaffirmed its plan to open itself up for international capital and technologies to address its issues, especially in the key markets of food and energy. The four leaders have also called for strengthening of peace, especially between Israel and the UAE. This is bound to result in more economic opportunities for all.

SS Paul, Chakdaha

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bridge to the gulf' (IE, July 16). After QUAD, the new formation of I2U2, which has taken UAE and Israel on board, has extended the outreach of India in the gulf region even further. Admittedly, this is a step in the right direction. However, India should ensure that the platform not seem hostile to any nation, especially Iran, keeping the historical animosity of the other three partners in mind. Moreover, Biden's recent visit to Israel and their open stance against Iran's purported plan to become a "nuclear power" will surely make Iran doubtful about the intentions of this nascent organisation. We should make our diplomatic intentions clear.

Devendra Awasthi, Lucknow

LAGGING BEHIND

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Maths without Pythagoras' (IE, July 15). Dropping mathematical concepts like linear equations and Pythagoras' theorem from the Class X CBSE curriculum is like removing the middle rungs of the ladder. Mathematical concepts are heavily interrelated. Since other boards are not cutting their syllabus, CBSE students will lose the opportunity of a level playing field. The CBSE board should have consulted concerned subject teachers regarding revisions, if needed. Moving forward, they must abide by the aims and objectives of NEP 2020.

Ravindra Zinjurke, Ahmednagar

DOUBLE STANDARD

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Need to ask some questions', (IE, July 16). Gaurav Bhatia exhorts the duty of the then ruling party to be answerable, but he forgets the same lacuna in the current regime. There is an iron curtain over the current government's work-from Pegasus to PM CARES. Additionally, there is no official data on child labour or employment. There must be a proper investigation of the allegations on the Vice President of India if circumstances demand so. However, the same metric must also be applied to matters concerning the current ruling government.

Abhishek Kumar Anshu, Patna

10

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

The effectiveness of CAR-T therapy in children has been 90 per cent. In other words, five to seven years of survival in 80 to 90 per cent of patients. And remember, these patients were initially refractory or relapsed

Kaunain Sheriff: Can you take us through the breakthrough therapy that you are introducing in India and the science behind it?

Let's begin with immunotherapy against cancer. It comes in many variations but there are three main ones. First are monoclonal antibodies (MABs) which have been in use for a long time. The second is T-cell therapy. This does not involve transfer of T-cells but uses your own native cells. In order to prevent your own T-cells from attacking themselves, you inactivate them so that you don't get autoimmunity. Some examples of autoimmunity would be Type 1 diabetes, lupus and arthritis. So, your body basically keeps a check on these T-cells and inhibits them. These drugs are called checkpoint inhibitors, some of which are available in India. Obviously, if you activate your T-cells against cancer, they can also be activated against your normal cells. So, checkpoint inhibitors are necessary. The third variant is the CAR T-cell therapy, where we extract T-cells from a cancer patient's body and we use a virus, which is a modified and inactivated version of the HIV virus but doesn't cause HIV, to deliver genes into them. These genes then weaponise the T-cells to attack cancerous cells. In other words, we remove the T-cells from the body through apheresis, they go into an extremely sterile laboratory, are activated with gene therapy and harvested in incubators until they expand to a very large number and are frozen. This process usually takes about 10 to 14 days before the cultured cells are transfused back into patients. Originally, when this was done in the US by several people, including Michel Sadelain at Memorial Sloan Kettering and very successfully by the UPenn group, led by Carl June and Bruce Levine, there was scepticism about whether these highly activated T-cells would attack the tumour which had spread considerably. The results were quite remarkable and almost miraculous. These patients were on the verge of death and mostly had liquid cancers or leukaemia as their tumours had stopped responding to multiple cycles of chemotherapy. We also tried to ensure that the activated T-cells, that would release cytokines or chemicals that T-cells use to communicate with each other and with the immune system, wouldn't generate a cytokine storm. We controlled it with medicines. Since then, we've already dosed several patients. A group in IIT is also dosing patients using the same formula. Theirs is a phase one trial, ours is a phase two trial. Theirs is a new product, ours is a clinically exposed product that has already been proven to be successful in humans. We have in-licensed it from Barcelona, it has already completed trials in Spain and has been proven to be both safe and extremely effective. We are giving the doses of T-cells in not one shot but in three or four shots, depending on how we do at the trial.

Uniquely in India, we've been able to reduce the cost, which is a very difficult process because the input costs are already very high. You need an army of scientists, a specialised facility, several machines, manipulations and so on. In India, we have the innovative capacity to administer the dose to patients at a much earlier stage of the disease. If successful, it will be a great contribution to medicine internationally because we will be able to show that we can actually keep longer remissions and keep patients better for a longer period of time.

Kaunain Sheriff: This treatment has been there for almost a decade in the US, parts of the UK and now also in China. What does the global data tell us about its efficacy?

The global data looks very good. The tumours that respond are lymphoma, leukaemia and myeloma, all refractory tumours. I also have another company in the US called Vor Biopharma, which is one of the first companies to attempt this in myeloid leukaemia. This occurs mostly in children though some adults do get it, too. The effectiveness of CAR-T therapy in children has been 90 per cent. In other words, five to seven years of survival in 80 to 90 per cent of patients. Remember, these patients were initially refractory or relapsed. It was a very difficult population to treat, the only other treatment available to them being a bone-marrow transplant. But there the effectiveness is much lower, there's a much more toxic regimen and the side effects could go on for four decades. In contrast, this would be a 14-day process, followed by two or three days of infusion, and the cure rates could be 80 to 90 per cent, depending upon the kind and intensity of leukaemia. In myeloma, the cure rates are 80 to 90 per cent, too.

We have many strategies at Immuneel, which is the Bengaluru-based company, through which we are trying to determine if we can prolong the remissions, increase



WHY SIDDHARTHA MUKHERJEE

Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee is an eminent oncologist and Pulitzer award-winning author. He's rolling out a significant clinical trial on treatment of cancer, called the Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy, which has already been used in several countries. If his phase II clinical trials at Immuneel, the Bengaluru-based company

he's founded with Biocon chairperson Kiran Mazumdar Shaw and Dr Kush Parmar, are successful, then this therapy would be India's contribution to the rest of the world. He's also developed an independent pillar of treatment. Not chemotherapy, radiation, surgery or immunotherapy but using customised diet as drug.



Scientists here are of the highest calibre. Clinical, manufacturing and scientific teams are world-class. They work with my lab at Columbia University. There's no difference in the quality of conversation or innovation

'In anti-cancer therapy, there is (another) pillar: using diet as a drug'

Oncologist Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee on the crisis in the health economic system in India, attempting to cure blood cancer through sophisticated cell therapy, deploying strategies to prolong remissions and keeping costs down



Special Correspondent Kaunain Sheriff in conversation with Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee. Abhinav Saha

the percentage of remissions, and potentially even cure myeloma, using novel strategies. And again, this would be a contribution from Indian medicine to the rest of the world. Once we've completed clinical tests, we will start working on the product for a clinical trial, which will be a phase two trial.

Safety is paramount at Immuneel. We're following international standards, DGC and other appropriate guidelines of the Indian ecosystem. So far, there have been very mild adverse effects, nothing to stop the phase two trial.

Kaunain Sheriff: The first participant was a child. How was the experience? Can this be used as a first line of treatment for children?

It was a very big learning experience. A huge amount of training and quality control protocol was involved. We don't want to just throw the drug at someone, we want a full ecosystem, a partnership, and the achievement of that was the first child was appropriately treated.

Part of the protocol involves infusing chemotherapy into the spinal cord, part of the therapy for some high-risk patients involves giving radiation, which causes all sorts of downstream effects. When they grow older, they have cognitive, post-traumatic, psychiatric and psychological disorders. They are growth-limited at times because of the chemotherapy. Who would not like their child to receive one-day therapy, after 14 days of growing T-cells, without being first battered by two years of chemotherapy? But it's impossible to do that in the US if the cost is going to be \$400,000, plus all the associated care. Remember that \$400,000 is coming after two or three years of chemotherapy, which itself is another \$400,000- \$500,000. So, that child is being treated now with nearly a million dollars of chemo plus CAR-T therapy. This is why innovation and tech transfers are very important in this field to lower costs and deliver this therapy upfront.

Kaunain Sheriff: In the US, the cost is around Rs 3-4 crore and that's just the drug itself. Then you have hospitalisation and medicine. How will you bring this cost down in India?

We are attacking every potential pinch point. We are now ramping up the production of our own virus facilities, which will again be of international standards. We have decreased the labour costs enormously, partly because they are intrinsically cheaper. Hospitalisation costs are also intrinsically cheaper. All the associated drug costs are cheaper. We are using all the innovation that is available to decrease the costs dramatically. We cannot change the intrinsic costs of certain goods because the patient's safety comes first. We've already lowered the costs dramatically but are aiming

to lower them further, partly by producing some of these products or goods in India, partly by identifying 10 pinch points.

Kaunain Sheriff: Are you thinking of collaborating with the IIT Bombay team, which is working with Tata Memorial, to bring the cost down?

We've been in touch with the IIT team. But again, the entire ecosystem has to be appropriately deployed such that these are not competitive products but collaborative products. It's fair to say that this industry needs to be appropriately regulated. This is a very sophisticated therapy and the last thing we want is to contaminate the field with actors who don't have the sophistication and the knowledge to develop CAR-T therapies.

Kaunain Sheriff: How was it working with scientists here?

Scientists here are of the highest calibre. There are clinical, manufacturing and scientific teams and they are world-class. The research team works with my laboratory at Columbia University. There's no difference in the quality or the level of conversation and innovation.

Kaunain Sheriff: You're very close to bringing at least two potentially very significant drugs. One is related to untreatable leukaemia and the other addresses stem cells linked to arthritis, which is very common among women in India. When can these be rolled out?

The first one has started its clinical trials. It's a very complex twist on cellular therapy. My lab discovered it, we patented it and we've now sent it off to Vor Biopharma. We are waiting for an outcome signal. In osteoarthritis, we were the first, along with another group, to identify the stem cells or the progenitor cells that form cartilage. In animal models, these cells can be stimulated to grow using a drug. Potentially, they can also be transplanted. So we're using a variety of mechanisms to

grow these cells. This is a regenerative medicine study and if the cells are already dead, then you can't bring them alive. You have to intervene at a stage where you're seeing damage or injury but the cells haven't completely died. The challenge in regenerative medicine is to find the Goldilocks spot, don't go in too early or too late.

We have a third study, which is probably one of the most interesting studies in cancer, which is combining diets with drugs. This is not voodoo nutritional science but is based on extremely rigorous scientific experiments in which we've shown that particular diets, which lack certain substances, or have the addition of other substances, are synergistic with drugs. Targeted therapies make them much more effective. Our last study was published in *Nature* and trials will begin. That's what we call the independent pillar. Not chemotherapy, not radiation, not surgery, not immunotherapy — the four pillars of anti-cancer therapy — but a fifth pillar, where we treat diet as a drug.

Kaunain Sheriff: In India, we are looking at 30 million cases by 2025. Global data says that around 30 to 50 per cent of cancers are preventable. Do these figures worry you?

It worries me a lot. Cancers being treated by CAR-T don't seem to be preventable. Lymphoma has certain carcinogens that are preventable. But childhood leukaemia is a genetic accident. There's a pyramid-like basis for cancer therapy. At the bottom, where you get the most effect for the least cost, is prevention. Preventable carcinogens include tobacco, triggers include obesity while some cancers are caused by viruses. The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) causes cervical cancer and there's a very effective vaccine against it. We are in the process of discovering new carcinogens. Large studies are on to find the link between industrial and particulate pollution and cancer. The centre of the pyramid is early detection and screening.

Finally, there's the top of the pyramid and the most expensive: treatment.

Anonna Dutt: What would cancer therapy look like in 10-20 years and why did you choose to work in India?

Each cancer is treated differently. We haven't been able to be very successful with cellular therapy against solid tumours, such as ovarian cancer and colorectal cancer. For such cancers, we'll have to use some other inventive mechanisms or new drugs. You can't imagine how complicated Vor Biopharma is in terms of delivering its therapy for myeloid leukaemia. I have made a series of other inventions that are also going on trial. Those will be for solid tumours. So, it will be a mix. Some parts of it will be personalised for a patient. In the early days of cancer therapeutics, risk assessment was basically clinical. Now, the risk assessment is clinico-pharmacogenetics, which means that we use the patient's own genetic data. In other words, we study how they will metabolise or change responses to drugs, and track the genetic data from the cancer. Our risk assessment is far more sophisticated than it was 50 or 60 years ago. Then there are the five pillars I talked about. But the emphasis on prevention will continue.

I chose India because the clinical and the scientific ecosystem, particularly in tech hubs like Bengaluru, were sufficient and sophisticated enough to develop this.

Harish Damodaran: So much is happening in cell therapy in human biology. Why is there so much resistance to plant biology, be it in gene editing or modification?

In medicine, we're treating sick people. In the entire genetically-modified (GM) food industry, we're giving products to healthy people, so the regulatory concerns are totally different. In one case, the patient would die if you didn't give them the therapy. In the other, you are exposing someone who is physically healthy to unknown GM foods. That said, I'm perfectly sanguine with GM foods as long as they have passed safety paradigms and have been ecologically evaluated. Some of them have also led to monoculture of plants, which is a big problem because evolutionary and ecological diversity are important. If a plant species goes extinct, you can't revive it from the dead. Besides, all species, plants and animals, are mutating all the time which is also genetic modification. The other alternative is to chemically modify plants, which is more harmful.

Liz Mathew: During the African Genome Project, there was one finding that established race as a social construction and not a genetic reality. Any scope for such a study in India?

There's a very large Indian genomic study, which is being conducted to figure

out what the diversity of the Indian genome, broadly speaking, is. I can't tell you what the answer is going to be. There has been a lot of endogamy in India and that will have genetic consequences.

Rinku Ghosh: Can your new therapy arrest the aggressive Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML)? Also, how rigorous should we be about self-screening?

AML is really a tough disease to treat. In fact, we are still treating AML as we used to about 10 or 15 years ago, with standard chemotherapy followed by, in some patients, bone marrow transplantation, which is very toxic and difficult to administer. Vor Biopharma is one of my companies, which arises from the work done at Columbia University. It is a completely new way of treating AML and potentially a curative way, but it's on trial. I'm very hopeful.

Everybody should be aware of screening guidelines as they are available on highly regarded public websites and are constantly upgraded. The WHO, the National Cancer Institute and the European Cancer Institute have very clear guidelines. The epidemiology of India and many countries like India is shifting away from death as a result of infectious diseases towards death from chronic non-infectious diseases. For countries like India, it's like dividing mammals into cows and non-cows because there are now so many non-communicable diseases that are responsible for death, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and, of course, cancer. It's advisable to keep up with the new epidemiology. Appropriate screening, including colonoscopies, should be performed at the right age at the right time for the at-risk population. Upper endoscopy must be performed at the right age at the right time for at-risk people. Don't miss mammography.

Aakash Joshi: How does the cost of a life-saving drug for children, like the one that's being developed, pan out in a country like India?

In India, we will probably end up with a triple-hybrid model, with some cost displacement through the government, some cost assessment through private insurance and some through individuals. This is a health economics problem. I think the health economic system in India is in a crisis. It is a mishmash. Even within a single colony, you have a private hospital, a government hospital, you have a partially government hospital, someone's privately insured, someone's half-insured. It's a complete mishmash.

We need to create a system. My father was ill, and unfortunately passed away. He was in a hospital but the hospital didn't have a pharmacy. I had to go across the street to a private pharmacy to buy the medicines that had been prescribed for him. This is an absurd system.



THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



French President Emmanuel Macron

FRANCE

Anti-Semitism still rampant, says Macron

President Emmanuel Macron warned against anti-Semitism and historical revisionism on Sunday as he commemorated victims of the Holocaust on the 80th anniversary of the Vel d'Hiv roundup of Jewish families. On July 16-17, 1942, around 13,000 people were taken to the Winter Velodrome, the Vel d'Hiv, in Paris before being sent on to concentration camps across Europe. It was the largest mass detention of Jewish people by French police. "We have not finished with anti-Semitism, it is still there - stronger and more rampant," said Macron at the inauguration of a memorial in the central town of Pithiviers. **REUTERS**

SUDAN

Death toll from tribal clashes at 65: minister

THE DEATH toll from days of tribal clashes in a southern Sudanese province climbed to at least 65 people, a senior health official said on Sunday. The fighting between the Hausa and Birta ethnic groups in the Blue Nile province also injured around 150 others, said Gamal Nasser al-Sayed, the province's health minister, adding that most of the dead were young men who were either shot or stabbed. The fighting in the Blue Nile grew out of the killing of a farmer earlier last week and continued through Saturday, according to the local government. **AP**

SOUTH AFRICA

Police hunt for suspects after 9 killed in attacks

Police are on the hunt for suspects after nine people were fatally shot in separate shooting incidents in two provinces of South Africa on Saturday night, police said. The latest shootings come on the heels of an uptick in violent deaths in a country with one of the world's highest murder rates. The shootings took place in the Gauteng and also in Thembelihle. Police said it was not yet clear whether the suspects were involved in an earlier shooting in Alexandria. **REUTERS**

BANGLADESH: FEARFUL RESIDENTS LEAVE VILLAGE

Temple, homes vandalised over Facebook post

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DHAKA, JULY 17

A TEMPLE, shops and several houses of the Hindu community have been vandalised in southwestern Bangladesh by some unidentified persons over a Facebook post allegedly belittling Islam, in the latest spate of violence targeting the religious minority in the country, according to media reports on Sunday. Police fired warning shots to disperse a mob that vandalised several homes and torched one

of them in Sahapara village in Narail district on Friday evening, *bdnews24.com*, an online newspaper quoted Haran Chandra Paul, an inspector at the local police station, as saying. The attackers also threw bricks at a temple in the village during the attack around 7:30pm, he said. They also broke the furniture inside the temple.

Haran said a young man posted something offensive on Facebook, triggering anger among Muslims. Police took his father to the police station after a search for the young man failed to trace him. The situation was normal at night, said the police inspector. Narail Superintendent of Police Prabir Kumar Roy said the law enforcers were working to keep the situation under control. "We're investigating the incident. Those responsible for the violence will face action. The situation is normal for now," Roy said. Police were deployed in the area to prevent further violence, *The Daily Star* reported. "After one group looted all our valuables, another group came and found our door open. As there was nothing left to loot,

they set our home on fire," the paper quoted Deepali Rani Saha, a resident of Sahapara village, as saying.

A former Dighalia Union Parishad said most of the able-bodied people have left the village after the attack. "Almost all houses are locked. Only the elders of some families are home. They too are scared," she said. "Police are on guard in the village, but we cannot trust them," the newspaper quoted Shibnath Saha, president of the village's Radha-Govinda temple, as saying.

ATTACKS INTENSIFY IN DONBAS

Russian missiles hit key city in southern Ukraine

HANNA ARHIROVA
& CARA ANNA
VINNYTSIA (UKRAINE)

RUSSIAN MISSILES hit industrial facilities at a strategic city in southern Ukraine Sunday as a funeral was held for a 4-year-old girl killed in an earlier deadly strike elsewhere in the country. Liza, who had Down syndrome, was en route to see a speech therapist with her mother when a Russian missile struck the city of Vinnytsia in central Ukraine on Thursday. At least 24 people were killed, including Liza and two boys aged 7 and 8.

On Sunday, more Russian missiles struck industrial facilities in the strategic southern city of Mykolaiv, a key shipbuilding center in the estuary of the Southern Bug river. There was no immediate information about casualties.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Sunday that Russian missiles destroyed a depot for anti-ship Harpoon missiles delivered to Ukraine by NATO allies, a claim that couldn't be independently confirmed.

The British Defense Ministry said Sunday that Russia is moving manpower and equipment between Kherson, Mariupol and Zaporizhzhia. It said the Russians also are increasing their security measures around Melitopol.

It added: "Given the pressures on Russian manpower, the reinforcement of the south



A damaged building in Chuhuiv town in Kharkiv. Reuters

whilst the fight for the Donbas continues indicates the seriousness with which Russian commanders view the threat."

The bombings in south apart. Russia has so far focused its efforts on trying to take control of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas, where the most capable and well-equipped Ukrainian forces are located.

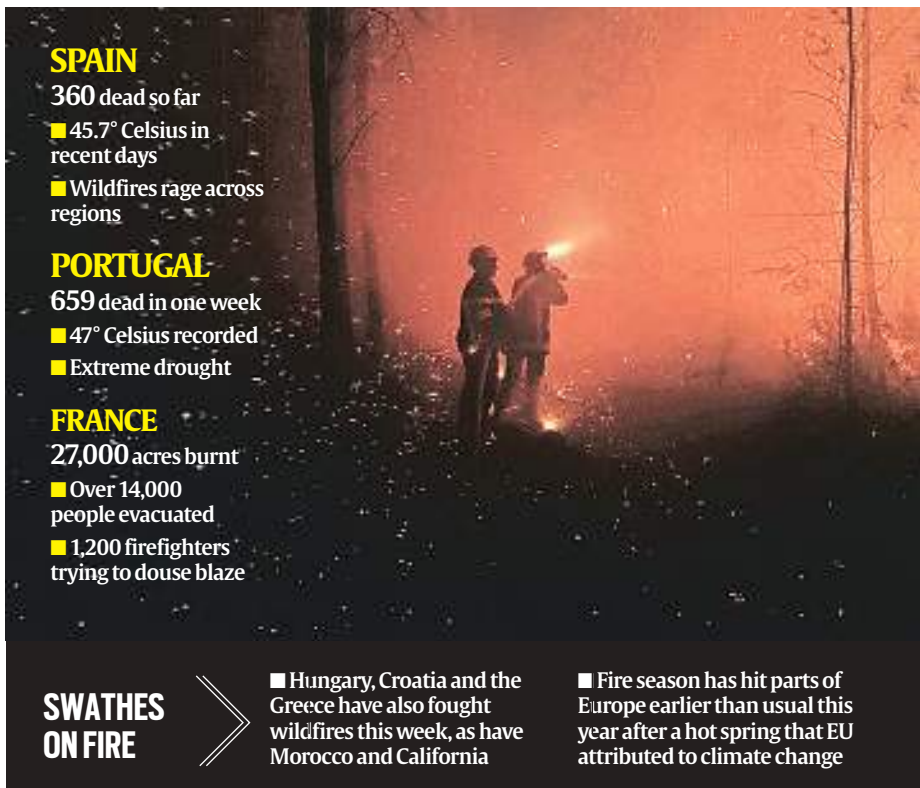
Ukraine says it still controls two small villages in Luhansk region, one of the two provinces that make up Donbas, and are successfully fending off Russian attempts to advance deeper into Donetsk.

The Ukrainian military's General Staff said that Ukrainian troops thwarted Russian attempts to advance toward a key stronghold in Donetsk. **AP**

EXPLAINED

A strategic war goal

THE RUSSIAN military has declared a goal to cut off Ukraine's entire Black Sea coast all the way to the Romanian border. If successful, such an effort would deal a crushing blow to the Ukrainian economy and trade and allow Moscow to secure a land bridge to Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria, which hosts a Russian military base.



AP

SPAIN

360 dead so far

■ 45.7° Celsius in recent days

■ Wildfires rage across regions

PORTUGAL

659 dead in one week

■ 47° Celsius recorded

■ Extreme drought

FRANCE

27,000 acres burnt

■ Over 14,000 people evacuated

■ 1,200 firefighters trying to douse blaze

SWATHES ON FIRE

■ Hungary, Croatia and the Greece have also fought wildfires this week, as have Morocco and California

■ Fire season has hit parts of Europe earlier than usual this year after a hot spring that EU attributed to climate change

Europe battles to control wildfires

AGENCIES

PARIS, JERTE (SPAIN), JULY 17

FIREFIGHTERS CONTINUED to battle wildfires raging out of control in France and Spain on Sunday as Europe sweltered under an unusually extreme heat wave that authorities in Madrid blamed for hundreds of deaths.

In Spain, firefighters supported by military brigades tried to stamp out over 30 fires consuming forests spread across the country. According to Carlos III Institute, which records temperature-related fatalities daily, 360 deaths were attributed to high temperatures from July 10 to 15.

Fires were raging in several other regions including Castille and Leon in central Spain and Galicia in the north on Sunday.

In Malagaprove in southwestern Spain, wildfires raged into the night, affecting local residents near Mijas, a town popular with northern European tourists.

In Portugal, a pilot of a firefighting plane died when his aircraft crashed on Friday.

Two huge blazes, which have consumed pine forests for six days in southwestern France, have forced the evacuation of some 14,000 people.

Italy is in the midst of an early summer heat wave, coupled with the worst drought in its north in 70 years.

Scorching temperatures have even reached northern Europe.

Britain's weather agency has issued its first-ever "red warning" of extreme heat for Monday and Tuesday, when temperatures in southern England may reach 40 C (104 F) for the first time.

24 dead in floods in China, Sudan

Beijing, Cairo: Flash floods in southwest and northwest China have left at least a dozen dead and put thousands of others in harm's way, state media reported Sunday. More than 4,000 people have been evacuated, the report said.

The rains come amid a heat wave in parts of the country including eastern Zhejiang province and Shanghai, with temperatures soaring as high as 42 degrees Celsius last week.

In Sudan's western Darfur region, 12 people, including children, were killed in floods, the UN and an aid group said Sunday. According to the UN, at least 9,336 people have been affected by heavy rains and flooding since June. **AP**

Tory voters feel Sunak will be a good PM

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, JULY 17

ALMOST HALF of the voters for the UK's governing Conservative Party believe Rishi Sunak will make a good Prime Minister, according to the results of a new opinion poll on Sunday.

The *Sunday Telegraph* reported that the JL Partners poll of more than 4,400 people found that 48 per cent of those who backed the Tories in the 2019 general election felt the British Indian former Chancellor would be a good Prime Minister.

This is also the first poll that puts Foreign Secretary Liz Truss in second place, with 39 per cent backing her for Prime Minister and 33 per cent in favour of



In the survey of over 4,400 people, who had backed the Conservative party in 2019, 48 per cent felt Sunak will be a good PM, while 39 per cent were in favour of Liz Truss. File

Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt. The survey comes as the race to elect Boris Johnson's successor as the next Conservative Party leader is narrowing down to these three main contenders.

James Johnson, co-founder of JL Partners and a ex-Downing Street pollster, told the newspaper: "Sunak invites strong opin-

ions. One-third of voters think he would be good in the top job, one third do not. But in an unpopular field where every other candidate is in net-negative territory, this score draw makes him the public's favourite. He is particularly popular with the all-important 2019 Conservative voter, as the only candidate to have half

approve of him," he said.

Among all voters, the most popular policy priority was to "turn the economy around", with addressing the National Health Service (NHS) backlog and restoring trust and integrity in public life coming second and third respectively.

Cutting taxes, which has emerged as a central focus of all the debates so far, was the fourth priority, selected by 38 per cent of voters overall and 40 per cent of Conservative voters.

"While the public chew over the economy, the NHS and public trust, Conservative MPs may have a much simpler question: who is the best candidate to hold their seat? On this evidence, the answer is Mr Sunak," added James Johnson.



With his body still in Spain, dos Santos's portrait was the official focus of mourning in Luanda last week. AP

DISPUTE HAS DIVIDED dos SANTOS'S FAMILY, COULD DECIDE FATE OF HIS PARTY

Dead but not buried, ex-President's body sparks cross-continental fight

GILBERTO NETO,
JOSÉ BAUTISTA
& LYNSEY CHUTEL
LUANDA, JULY 17

EVEN IN death, Angola's long-time ruler, José Eduardo dos Santos, is at the center of political infighting.

The former president died in Barcelona on July 8 at the age of 79, but when and where he will be buried has set off a cross-continental fight that has split the Angolan government and his widow against some of his adult children.

José Eduardo dos Santos's death came just weeks before a

crucial election. Angola's governing party and current president, João Lourenço, along with dos Santos's widow, want to bring his body home for a state funeral and burial in a Soviet-style mausoleum — the kind of spectacle that could rally support for a party struggling to stay in power.

But his daughter Welwitschia dos Santos is pushing for a private funeral and a discreet grave site in Spain, where his children can visit. She says she has the support of some of her siblings who, like her, face accusations of corruption in Angola and could be arrested if they return. They could also be

trying to parlay the return of their father's body to regain their place in Angola's political elite.

With both sides fighting it out in a Spanish court, it is now up to a judge in Barcelona to decide the feud.

The outcome could sway the August election in Angola, a country rich in oil and minerals on the west coast of southern Africa.

"People are just trying to use the body and all these related issues to advance their own personal agendas," said Augusto Santana, a political analyst in Angola. He added that the incumbent president wants to use the death "for electoral purposes,"

and the children to negotiate "the dropping of accusations related to corruption."

dos Santos, one of Africa's longest-serving leaders, was a towering figure in Angola for nearly four decades.

To his supporters, many of whom entered Angola's moneyed elite, he shepherded the country out of violent turmoil to make it one of the world's largest oil producers, its coastal capital dotted with skyscrapers.

But to his many detractors, he was a ruthless dictator who suppressed democracy and oversaw an economy choked by corruption, with most Angolans living

on less than \$2 a day.

dos Santos had been living in self-imposed exile in Barcelona for three years. According to Welwitschia dos Santos, popularly known as Tchizé, he had said he wanted to be buried there.

His handpicked successor, Lourenço, who came to power in 2017, had turned on him, blaming the dos Santos administration for Angola's economic malaise. Lourenço and dos Santos attempted a rapprochement last year. dos Santos returned to Angola and was set to appear at the party's conference. But then he learned that his son José Filomeno dos Santos would

be sentenced to five years in prison for embezzling the state's sovereign fund.

Angola held a seven-day mourning period for its former leader. In lieu of a casket, a large portrait of dos Santos was erected in a government plaza, with a red carpet leading up to it while uniformed soldiers stood guard.

But the fight over dos Santos's remains is of little concern to ordinary Angolans. "Do you know how much my husband and I earn?" asked Avenina de Vasco, 37, a street cleaner. "I don't care whether he is buried here or in Europe or America." **NYT**

12 ECONOMY

HUSSAIN HAQQANI, APARNA PANDE IN OPINION PIECE

US ‘must be alarmed’ by foreign cos exiting India: Hudson Institute dirs

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE IMPACT of multiple major global corporations pulling out from India on the country's foreign investment climate could be amplified by the broader geopolitical implications of these exits, given that several of these companies are based in the US. From automobile companies such as Ford, General Motors and Harley Davidson to Citibank, Holcim, Carrefour, and Metro AG, a string of global companies have either exited, scaled down or are working on pulling out of India.

Notably, while some of these companies have either cited poor competitive position or global business strategies, others have had long-running tiffs with law enforcement and tax authorities.

In an opinion piece published by *The Hill*, Washington-based Hudson Institute directors Hussain Haqqani and Aparna Pande have posited that the Joe

Biden administration “must be alarmed” by the decisions of several foreign corporations to either pull out of the Indian market or put their long-term plans on hold. This assumes significance, particularly, because for years the US has hoped to enable China's rise “as a way of checking China's growing power,” they wrote.

The authors also argued that Western democracies, which see India as a natural ally, believe that India would be able to deliver on its economic and military potential only if it attains higher growth rates — something that would only be possible “with larger inflows of foreign investment and further opening of India's markets”. In the year ending March 2022, India saw foreign direct investment inflows of \$58.77 billion, marginally down from \$59.64 billion a year ago.

Last year, the Indian government took steps to address some of the long-standing tax disputes with foreign companies in an effort to repair its damaged repu-

FDI FLOWS

■ In the year ending March 2022, India saw foreign direct investment inflows of \$58.77 billion, marginally down from \$59.64 billion a year ago.

tation as an investment destination. The government had announced rules, which when adhered to, will lead to the Centre withdrawing tax demands raised using the 2012 retrospective tax law and any tax collected in the enforcement of such demand being paid back. The retrospective tax law had an impact on corporations such as UK telecom giant Vodafone Plc, energy company Cairn Energy Plc, pharmaceuticals company Sanofi and brewer SABMiller, now owned by AB InBev.

However, a number of disputes still fester. As per a *Reuters*

report last week, French spirits group Pernod Ricard, in a letter to the Prime Minister's Office, has noted that three-decade old tax disputes with authorities on valuing liquor imports has inhibited fresh investment and its current business.

The sale of Swiss cement-maker Holcim's India assets to the Adani Group was also preceded by fines amounting to over Rs 2,300 crore by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Holcim's India companies — ACC and Ambuja Cements. The fines will be paid by the new owner.

Further, in May, Ford, which had already announced that it will stop selling its cars in India, retracted its plans to manufacture and export electric vehicles from India — a plan it had announced only a few months earlier.

In a 2021 report on India's investment climate, the US State Department noted that India remained a challenging place to do business. “New protectionist

measures, including increased tariffs, procurement rules that limit competitive choices, sanitary and phytosanitary measures not based on science, and Indian-specific standards not aligned with international standards, effectively closed off producers from global supply chains and restricted the expansion in bilateral trade,” the report said.

Authors of *The Hill* piece also said despite the challenges, India's large size and location continue to make it an attractive market for foreign businesses. “Access to the large Indian consumer market is a dream, as is the hope for a stake in the upgradation of India's civilian and military infrastructure... India's current rate of economic growth is woefully inadequate for India's domestic goals as well as the objective of becoming a serious rival to global economic juggernaut, China. The latter makes India's economic policies a strategic concern for US policymakers,” they wrote.

MARKET WATCH

SIX OF TOP-10 COS LOSE M-CAP

New Delhi: Six of the 10 most valued firms suffered a combined erosion of Rs 1,68,260.37 crore from their market valuation last week, mainly dragged down by IT major TCS amid an overall weak trend in the equity market. **PTI**

INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL MANAGER INDIA AT FINNAIR

‘Own operations a priority, there may be opportunity to have partner in India’

HELSINKI-BASED LEGACY airline Finnair is set to expand its services in India by adding a flight to Mumbai next month, as it also continues to look beyond Delhi and Mumbai for other destinations in the country, SAKARI ROMU, general manager India for Finnair, told PRANAV MUKUL in an interview. Romu also spoke about the airline's plans to look for a local partner in India, and on the potential re-emergence of low-cost long-haul travel. Edited excerpts:

You mentioned that your flights to China have reduced from 40 per week to just one. Where is this surplus capacity being deployed?

If you look at the time before Covid, we had around 370 daily departures, and this year, we are flying about 70 per cent of that on our own, 10 per cent we have been able to wet-lease to British Airways and Lufthansa Group. And by winter of 2023, we will be above 80 per cent but not 100 per cent.

Within India, are you looking at destinations other than Delhi and Mumbai?

We are looking but nothing concrete yet. But certainly, we are making the calculations, but that's normal business for an airline.

Are you looking at destinations from where you're getting traffic from into hubs like Delhi and Mumbai?

At the moment, we do not have a local airline partner in India. I think we have been successful, and I would like to see a good airline partner in India that would help in any way. But that's not something we can't live without. Demand just from Delhi and surrounding areas is taking up our capacity, and it's picking up. If you look at the other end, there was a strong trend before Covid, the travel to Scandinavian destinations, Helsinki and Baltic destinations from India was increasing strongly — by about 40 per cent every year. That's something, which will recur. About 15 per cent of our customers are



Sakari Romu

Finnish visiting India, and if we look only Finland as the destination, about 10 per cent of our customers are Indians visiting only Finland, and all the others are transfer, where the most important destination is the US.

... India will be also ready in the near future, where people are buying the cheapest possible business class fare. Maybe it is too new for India right now”

So in the medium term, what would be the priority for Finnair to go to other destinations in India — having an airline partner or flying directly?

In my opinion, we should look for help or have a good co-operation with a partner. But first come our own operations. At a certain point, there might be an opportunity to have a partner in India.

Because of the higher oil prices and the longer flying time for Finnair, how are you dealing with the fare part of business?

We are trying to effect our prices but finally it is the Indian customer who decides what is the correct price for Finnair and we really have to ensure our

prices are set according to the market.

Finnair has a business class fare with no baggage allowance. That is quite unusual...

That is something I have had lot of discussions about. Especially in China and also India, probably the market has not experienced that kind of product, where the customer is only looking for a comfortable in-flight experience. In Europe, and the US, it is very common — no luggage, no change fees, but you're travelling on business class. But the market in India is not ready for that. It is not something very new. We've had such products in Europe for years.

But how has the Indian customer responded to this fare offering?

We will do a study and make changes to this product, and we have faced the same cases in other markets and in some markets, we have taken out the product totally. But I think, India will be also ready in the near future, where people are buying the cheapest possible business class fare. Maybe it is too new for India right now.

The Airbus A321XLR is coming out soon and it is expected to change the dynamics of medium to long-haul low-cost travel. How does a full-service airline respond to this scenario?

I think especially now, if we think about making an airline profitable or making a certain route profitable, you can count on passengers but cargo also has a very big role. All those light version of flying impacts opportunities for cargo revenues. Cargo has always played a big role in our business, from India as well.

MARKETS WATCH

FOREIGN PORTFOLIO INVESTORS

FPIs in selling mode, pull out ₹7.4K cr from equities in July so far

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

FOREIGN INVESTORS continue to be cautious about the Indian equity market and have pulled out over Rs 7,400 crore this month so far amid sustained strengthening of the dollar and increasing concerns over a recession in the US.

This comes following a net withdrawal of Rs 50,203 crore from equities in June.

While foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have slowed down their pace of selling, this does not indicate a change in trend as there has not been any significant improvement in the underlying drivers, said Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India.

There has been an exodus of foreign funds from the Indian equity market over the last nine months.

“Given the uncertainty in the forex market and the sustained strengthening of the dollar, FPIs are unlikely to turn aggressive buyers in the Indian market and at higher levels they may again turn sellers,” said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

Going forward, FPI flows will remain volatile in the emerging markets on account of rising geopolitical risks, rising inflation and tightening of monetary policy by central banks, Shrikant Chouhan, Head-Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities, said.

According to data with depositories, FPIs pulled out a net



The BSE, Mumbai File

amount of Rs 7,432 crore from Indian equities during July 1-15. While there have been sporadic net inflows by FPIs last week, the broader trend continues to be cautious, Srivastava added.

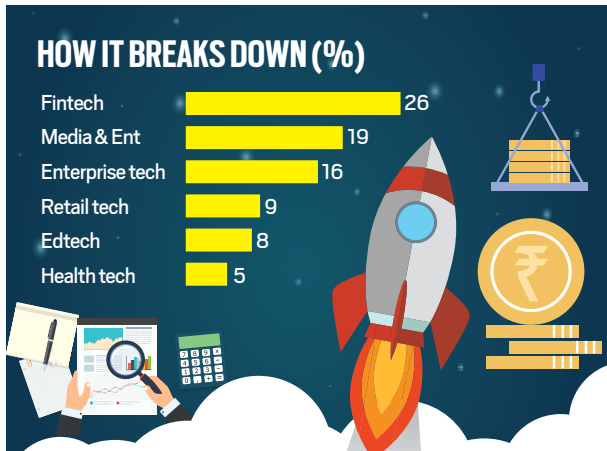
FPIs withdrew a net Rs 50,203 crore from equities in June. This was the highest net outflow since March 2020, when they had pulled out Rs 61,973 crore. With the latest pull out, net outflow by FPIs from equities this year so far has reached around Rs 2.25 lakh crore — a record high. Before this, they withdrew Rs 52,987 crore in the entire 2008, data showed.

According to Chouhan, Indian equities witnessed weakness as global inflation prints remained elevated, concerns of US recession increased, dollar index continued its sharp rally and Q1 results of large IT companies were weaker than expected.

Rupee has touched 80 per dollar mark briefly during the week, highlighting the trouble RBI faces on controlling the currency, said Vijay Singhania, chairman of TradeSmart. **WITHPTI**

‘Sequoia, Tiger Global lead startup funding in Apr-Jun’

Sequoia Capital and Tiger Global led funding in Indian startups during April-June, Nasscom said in a report



April-June quarter saw only four unicorns — neobanking firm Open, SaaS platform LeadSquared, edtech start-up PhysicsWallah and online beauty products marketplace Purple

January-March period had witnessed creation of 16 new unicorns, which dropped to only four in the reporting quarter due to decline in fund inflows into the Indian startup space

About 17% drop in investment into Indian tech startups, to \$6 billion, in April-June 2022 owing to macroeconomic slowdown

60% of the investments by Tiger Global and Sequoia were made in the growth stage of the startups

Of Tiger Global's investments, 40% were in the fintech sector and 20% in the enterprise technology domain. For Sequoia, enterprise technology accounted for about 25% of the funding

MAJOR INVESTORS

- Sequoia Capital
- Tiger Global
- Alpha wave
- Accel

Source: Nasscom/PTI

CURRENTLY HOLDS MD-CEO POST AT BSE

Chauhan to be NSE MD & CEO

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has approved the appointment of Ashishkumar Chauhan as the next Managing Director and CEO of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), the country's largest stock exchange.

Chauhan is currently the MD and CEO of the BSE and his tenure will end in November this year. He will join in place of Vikram Limaye whose five-year tenure ended on July 15.

Chauhan is one of the founders of the NSE where he worked from 1992 to 2000. At the NSE, he was involved in setting up India's first fully automated screen-based trading system and first commercial satellite communications network.

This is Chauhan's second



Ashishkumar Chauhan File

tenure in the BSE and under SEBI guidelines, a candidate cannot be appointed as MD & CEO for more than two tenures. BSE is also searching for a new CEO in place of Chauhan.

As per Sebi norm, the MD and CEO of a stock exchange has to apply and compete with other candidates for the top job after the completion of the five-year term. Limaye was appointed the NSE chief in July 2017 following the

exit of Chitra Ramkrishna amid the probe into co-location scam.

According to market observers, the priority of Chauhan will be to implement fair and ethical corporate and market governing practices at the NSE, which was hit by a series of scandals. He will also have to prepare the exchange for the much-delayed IPO.

Market regulator had earlier penalised Limaye's predecessors Ravi Narain and Chitra Ramkrishna for alleged lapses in corporate governance during the appointment of its group operating officer Anand Subramanian. In 2019, NSE was also penalised for giving preferential access to some stock brokers between 2012-2014 through their co-location facility.

Earlier in March, NSE, the largest derivatives exchange in the world, invited applications for the MD & CEO position.

BRIEFLY

Fuel demand

New Delhi: India's demand for petrol and diesel fell in the first half of July over the previous month as the onset of monsoon chipped away consumption in some sectors and restricted mobility, preliminary data showed.

Gulf remittance

Mumbai: The share of inward remittances from Gulf nations dipped sharply during 2020-21 on account of the economic stress created by the Covid pandemic, said an RBI article. On the other hand, advanced economies like the US, the UK and Singapore emerged as important sources for the country for remittances. **PTI**

FROM TODAY

Prepacked, labelled cereal, pulses, flour weighing up to 25 kg to attract 5% GST

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE CENTRAL Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) on Sunday said single packages of food items like cereals, pulses and flour weighing up to 25 kg will be considered as 'pre-packaged and labelled', and liable to five per cent GST from July 18.

It also clarified that if a retail shopkeeper supplies in loose quantity the item bought from a manufacturer or a distributor in a 25-kg pack, such sale to consumers will not attract GST.

The CBIC on Sunday night issued a set of frequently asked

The CBIC said GST will apply on a package that contains multiple retail packages

questions (FAQs) on GST applicability on 'pre-packaged and labelled' goods, just a day before the five per cent GST on such items becomes applicable.

In the context of food items (such as pulses, cereals like rice, wheat, flour etc), the supply of specified pre-packaged food articles would fall within the purview of the definition of 'pre-packaged commodity' un-

der the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, if such pre-packaged and labelled packages contained a quantity up to 25 kilogram (or 25 litres).

"It is clarified that a single package of these items (cereals, pulses, flour etc.) containing a quantity of more than 25 Kg/25 litre would not fall in the category of pre-packaged and labelled commodity for the purposes of GST and would therefore not attract GST," it said.

The CBIC said the supply of pre-packed atta meant for retail sale to ultimate consumer of 25 Kg shall be liable to GST. However, supply of such a 30-kg pack thereof shall be exempt

from levy of GST.

The board also said that GST would apply on a package that contains multiple retail packages, for example a package containing 10 retail packs of flour of 10 kg each, the CBIC said.

It said for the purpose of GST, "pre-packaged commodity" would mean a commodity which, without the purchaser being present, is placed in a package of whatever nature, whether sealed or not, so that the product contained therein has a pre-determined quantity.

Any such supply which requires declaration under the Legal Metrology act would attract GST, it said. **WITHPTI**

GEORGE MATHEW

MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE INSURANCE regulator has proposed the involvement of insurance companies at the state level and a big hike in the premium collection target in the next five years to deepen insurance penetration in the country.

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) Chairman Debashish Panda said insurance companies should become members of the State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) and boost the growth of the sector. "States and insurers will benefit from the inclusion of insurers in the SLBC. Quite a bit of AUM (assets under management) is going into the developments in the state," Panda said at a conclave of insurance CEOs in Hyderabad recently.

"I'm going to request the RBI and the ministry to include insurance in the SLBC Forum," he said, adding that each state will be assigned to one or two insurance companies for close coordination.

Irdai Chairman also proposed a steep hike in premium collection in the next five years. The regulator has proposed that the premium collection which was at Rs 2.20 lakh crore in the year FY2022 could be increased to Rs 2.98 lakh crore in FY2023. This is expected to rise to Rs 11.73 lakh crore in FY2027, a rise of 433 per cent, it said.

It has also proposed a company-wise target for premium collection in the next five years.

STEEP HIKE

■ The regulator has proposed that the premium collection, which was at Rs 2.2 lakh crore in FY22, could be increased to Rs 2.98 lakh crore in FY23. This is expected to rise to Rs 11.73 lakh crore in FY27

New India Assurance's premium collection target is Rs 99,430 crore for FY2027 as against Rs 32,569 crore in FY2022. The steepest hike is in the case of Go Digit General Insurance which is being given a target of Rs 150,610 crore in FY27 as against Rs 4,674 crore now, a growth of 3,122 per cent.

Panda said the insurance sector needs more players. "It can be small, medium or niche players. General insurance penetration in India is just one per cent as against the world average of 4.16 per cent," Panda said, adding that this needs to be changed.

"Of around 29.5 crore vehicles in the country, nearly 50 per cent are uninsured. Over 40 crore individuals are devoid of a health insurance policy," Panda said. Irdai has proposed a 45 per cent growth in the health insurance segment to Rs 106,689 crore in FY2023 and a 37.30 per cent rise in the motor segment to Rs 96,6789 crore.

Panda also proposed a long-term insurance policy for 15 years in the case of motor vehicles. "This is something which

EXPLAINED Raising coverage

WITH AN eye on deeper insurance penetration in the country, Irdai has pitched a company-wise target for premium collection in the next five years.

can be looked into by insurance companies," he said.

Irdai Chairman also hinted that the regulator is working on a proposal for a salary band for CEOs of insurance companies. "You can decide on the salary based on the band," he said.

Responding to Irdai Chairman's proposals, Star Health and Allied Insurance MD S Prakash said mis-selling in the health segment is creating a trust deficit. "We need to enhance penetration in the health insurance segment," he said.

On crop insurance, many insurance CEOs complained about the lack of adequate reinsurance support. Regarding long-term motor policy, Madhulika Bhaskar, Chairman-in-charge of New India Assurance, said the issue of solvency margin needs to be sorted out and the focus is now more on bottom-line. "How do you account for it in the investment guidelines?" she said.

Irdai has also set up two task forces to suggest steps to sort out the issues between insurers and reinsurers and other problems facing the industry.

COMMONWEALTH
GAMES, 2022

BIRMINGHAM
28 JULY-8 AUG

Commonwealth of emotions: Breaking stereotypes, a novice's dare,
a desire to end poverty, a mother's struggle and curious origins.

ONLY @ CWG

The Commonwealth of Irony

The Games were pioneered by a Canadian sports journalist due to perceived American arrogance, but now seem a relic from a bygone era

SRIRAM VEERA
JULY 17

THE GREAT irony about the Commonwealth Games is that Britain nearly didn't participate in the first-ever edition, called the British Empire Games, in 1930. Now, its existence itself is an irony in the post-colonial world of 2022, with a stale stench of a relic about it.

But the story of its origin is a fascinating tale of perceived American arrogance; one man's, a Canadian's, hurt that transformed it into a grand vision; persistence during the Great Depression; jugaad; grace; and pride.

It was all kickstarted by a sports journalist but before we get to that remarkable man, the Canadian scribe and athletics coach Melville Marks Robinson (popularly known as Bobby Robinson), let's play potential scenes from the trailer if a movie was ever made on the Games.

Perhaps, three scenes might play out. An overhead drone shot might whizz over a statue in Vancouver that captures the dramatic moment from the 1954 Games, famously known as The Miracle Mile, when the leader John Landy looked over his left shoulder at the same instant when Roger Bannister overtook him on his right, just a few yards out from the finish.

Both finished under 4 minutes, once thought improbable. A photographer, Charlie Warner, who instinctively positioned himself at that exact spot to capture one of sport's great pictures, would become a legend. A statue based on that photo still stands in Vancouver. Landy would mine into biblical myths to say, "When Lot's wife looked back, she was turned into a pillar of salt. When I looked back, I was turned into a pillar of bronze!" Incidentally, it was the first race that had two athletes finish the mile-run under four minutes.

The second scene could well be a gruesome sight. A grim close-up of bare-chested high-jumper Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Nigeria's first international sporting hero at the 1954 Olympics, facing a death squad.

After quitting sport, he co-led a military coup and according to the official version though disputed, killed the country's first

prime minister, then tried to end a civil war, but would die, shot dead at close range.

With his head slumped to his chest, with hundreds of hysterical watchers shouting 'shoot them, shoot them', Ifeajuna reportedly kept muttering that his death would not stop his fear that the federal troops would enter the city of Enugu, and they should still fight for a ceasefire. He was shot, and he was right, in a couple of hours, the federal troops had invaded, and his name, till date, remains controversial in Nigeria.

The third, at least for the Indian release of the movie, could be a visual of a man driving an ambulance during the Second World War in the UK. A close-up would reveal him to be wrestler Rashid Anwar, who won India's first medal in the event, a bronze at the 1934 Games, the first time India participated. A railways worker from Lucknow, and known as his 'swinging Boston Crab move', he shifted to the UK after the 1936 Olympics, wrestling professionally and died at Camden, London in 1983, a few months before India would win the cricket World Cup in that city.

But without Bobby Robinson and his annoyance at 'American arrogance', none of this would have happened.

The Empire Strikes Back

Bobby's annoyance began at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam. Robinson was covering the Games as a journalist for Hamilton Spectator from the city in Canada which would subsequently host the first British Empire Games. He had served in the First World War, was the manager of the national athletics team, and was known as an 'aggressive campaigner of agriculture' in Canada where he fought for the rights of individual vegetable and fruits sellers against the price-cuts enforced by wholesale buyers.

Robinson had his reasons to be frustrated with the Americans at the 1928 Olympics where Canada even lodged an official complaint. When Canada's great runner Percy Williams, who would decades later blow his own head with a shotgun, received his 100m medal, they didn't have the Canadian flag.

Then, the Americans were allowed to train on the track but the Canadians weren't. A disputed judges' decision in the women's



Perry, the 2022 CWG mascot, at the gates of the Buckingham Palace

Reuters

100m that went in the favour of an American when the Canadians thought there was no doubt that their lady had won it. And to top it all off, a direct insult by Avery Brundage, the then influential American in the Olympic movement, to a Canadian team official. All hell broke loose.

In his delightful book 'The Commonwealth Games: Extraordinary Stories Behind the Medals', Brian Oliver notes that the newspaper Toronto Star wrote of 'serious trouble brewing between the Canadian and US teams, between the Canadian representatives and the IOC'. At one point, Robinson vented his anger at Sigfrid Edstrom, the IOC official who would bridge the presidency between Henri de Baillet-Latour and Brundage. "We know the Canadians are getting the run-around here and we don't like it!"

Not long after, a more serious fallout occurred between the two countries. With the economy crumbling during the Great Depression, America would announce tariffs on Canadian goods, triggering a trade war and strengthening Canada's ties with the Empire. A loyalist to the Union Flag, Robinson de-

cided enough was enough. Made aware of the Englishman J Astley Cooper's unexecuted plan to stage a 'Pan-Britannic Festival' of culture and sport in the 1890s, Robinson decided the time was ripe to put that into action.

Britain too needed it at that point. As sports historian Katharine Moore put it: 'Political domination in the world by Great Britain was a rapidly fading memory and it was no longer the premier sporting power either. The Empire needed the Games in 1930 to reconfirm and redefine its unity. They could be seen as one step towards re-establishing its sagging prestige ... as the various Empire countries matured and blossomed in their own right.'

Teething problems

With economies in a downward spiral everywhere, funding proved to be an issue. Robinson asked the leaders of host city Hamilton for \$25000 to run the Games and a whopping \$160,000 to construct a stadium. Things turned worse when the American stock market crashed.

Other countries began to drag their feet.

Robinson offered \$5000 to coax Australia to send a team, and similar funds were given to a few other countries like New Zealand who arrived in the steamer "Aorangi", picking up the Australians on the way. Scotland's travel expenses were paid by Scottish singer and comedian Henry Lauder.

Eight countries were roped in with travel subsidies but strangely, Britain was unmoved. They were worried on two fronts: finance and the potential of the Empire Games overshadowing the Olympics. Robinson shipped himself to England to persuade them and Britain was in, raising 8000 pounds through a public appeal.

In his newspaper The Hamilton Spectator, Robinson ran a plea to the patriotic hearts of the citizens. A public notice ran thus: "... Patronage of the Games should be considered in the light of a duty. To be pitied indeed is the man who is lackadaisical in his attitude towards this splendid venture. The fire of patriotism is not in him."

All the track events were sold out as people heeded the call, shelling out 35 cents for boxing matches to \$5 for a pass to all track events. Nearly 20,000 turned out for the opening ceremony. Over a lakh watched the rowing events. The Games was a box-office hit.

The 1930 Games was officially thrown open by Canada's Governor-General Viscount Willingdon, who said, "The greatness of the Empire is owing to the fact every citizen has inborn in him the love of games and sports."

Perhaps, so. Every citizen has also an in-born desire for freedom. A year later, Willingdon would be sent to India as the Viceroy, and would come to be known as the man who jailed Mahatma Gandhi and other Indian nationalists during the Salt Satyagraha. A pinch of salt that rocked the Empire.

Robinson introduced the concept of medal ceremonies on a tiered podium, an athletes village (over a dozen athletes were put up in a room, at a school), used volunteers to run the Games, and issued travel grants for athletes. None of these existed at the Olympics until then, and all of them would be copied in its later editions.

Perhaps, the best tribute to Robinson's desire came a few years back in 2017 when Donald Trump reportedly showed interest in the British proposal to join the Commonwealth as an "associate". The Games that started due to perceived American arrogance by a Canadian and which now feels like a relic of the past could well have an American standing on a Commonwealth podium. The irony is blowing in the wind.



EX COLONY BUT NOT A MEMBER

The US question

They were once a British colony but unlike most others, they aren't a part of the Commonwealth Games.

THE NON-participation of the US, unlike their neighbours Canada who are a Commonwealth Games powerhouse, has often attracted a few curious questions. One of the reasons, according to the Birmingham Mail, is war.

The Commonwealth is a group of 54 nations that were once part of the British Empire. The US became independent from the UK in 1776, after 13 American colonies broke away and declared themselves a republic, refusing to recognise the British monarch as their head of state.

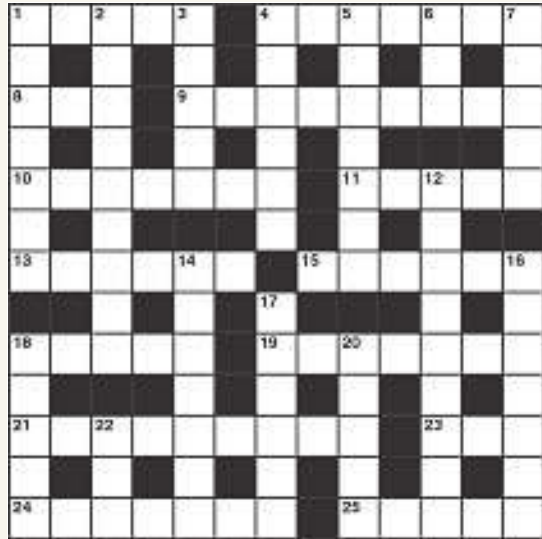
This – the need to recognise the king or queen as the head of state – was a prerequisite to remaining a part of the Commonwealth. However, after India became independent in 1947, it wanted to continue being a part of the Commonwealth while also becoming a republic. This prompted the London Declaration of 1949, which stated that 'republics and other countries could be part of the Commonwealth.'

Standing their ground

So, India continued to be a part of the Commonwealth – and thus, the CWG – even though it does not recognise the Queen as its head of state. In the case of the US, it was seen as a different case. "Since the USA practically battled against a foreign ruling monarch, their re-entry into the Commonwealth was unlikely," the Birmingham Mail reported.

In 2017, the Telegraph reported that the US could become an associate member of the Commonwealth but no step has been taken in that direction since.

CROSSWORD 4796



ACROSS
1 Worn cuffs (5)
4 A cleric angered about being questioned (7)
8 Confess one's love at two points (3)
9 Audible cheering is produced in a flash (9)
10 He is sorry for one who is late (7)
11 She's in a fine state (5)
13 Observe the water has now thawed? (6)
15 Be relevant to grizzly performing (4,2)
18 Vehicle to travel as freight (5)
19 Small article produced by an erratic knitter? (7)
21 Want to try? Only too willing (4,1,4)
23 Dad is right on the level (3)
24 Dead set about being relaxed (7)
25 Return to deposit gold sovereign (5)

DOWN
1 He will run away when the sun comes out (7)
2 Musical livewire (9)
3 Fresh loans required for a hairdressing business (5)
4 Consider changing gear on the road (6)
5 An improvement in relations (7)
6 Rumanian money that is left over (3)
7 Sort of lead mother will follow in principle (5)
12 Uneared income? (6,3)
14 To prevent overheating use this – not coal anyway (7)
16 It's expected to be unaffected (7)
17 Attacked the copper with acid (6)
18 Shouts out names (5)
20 In the meantime I'm after it (5)
22 Deceive a child (3)

Solutions Crossword 4795: Across: 1 Maintained, 8 Sheer, 9 Open-air, 10 Abeland, 11 Issue, 12 Easter, 14 Eraser, 17 Revue, 19 Orchard, 21 Wonders, 22 Ruler, 23 Settle down, Down: 2 Ageless, 3 Norma, 4 Avoids, 5 Needler, 6 Draws, 7 Free trader, 8 Scarecrows, 13 Element, 15 Shallow, 16 Morsel, 18 Vends, 20 Cured.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



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.

is organized ____
-Edgard Varese (5,...,5)

RRIOS



DEGLCU



DFNSU



ILLYDM



-Edgard Varese
Answer: Music is organized sound
SONLTON, ORNIS, FUNDS, CUNCE, MILDLY

SUDOKU 4899

Difficulty Level 4s
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 4898



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)
Today's Mercury-Uranus pattern is one of those magical planetary alignments that favours dreams and imagination, but lays out banana skins for those who allow confusion to creep in. Poetic aspirations come first and practical goals may have to wait.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)
Venus, your ruling planet, is teaming up with Saturn in a pattern which gives all sentimental, self-indulgent and creative Taureans a welcome shove in the right direction. But you may have to voluntarily renounce one commitment, if you are to make the space for a much better one.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
We'll start off with the good news: your stars are extremely prosperous. But here's the downside: romantic chaos and inspired confusion may be great fun but could result in costly mistakes. That's precisely why your main priority should be extra self-control.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
The typical Cancerian is a peace-loving creature, but you can still be easily provoked. Looking at the week as a whole, you may move from an idyllic illusion of perpetual harmony towards a realisation that a battle must be joined. And, when it comes, the struggle will be one of ideas rather than emotions.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)
Sometimes life is just not what it seems. Yet you have a huge amount going for you. This might be more obvious to other people than it is to you. That's why you have to trust in the future, and have faith that you are indeed on the right track.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
Everything that takes place this week will be encouraged by the fact that Mercury, your ruling planet, is now in an increasingly lively condition. Your smart ideas will help you pick your way through a rapidly approaching emotional minefield.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)
If the past few weeks have been free from disagreements then you're lucky. However, although, the nature of the game is changing, I don't think any of you will be unaware of the turbulent undercurrents building up this week. Keep your eye on the ball, Libra.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)
You'll soon have a new and brighter perspective on the immediate future. In fact, if you're a typical mainstream Scorpio, you may rub your hands with glee at what is just around the corner. If you've spoken out against certain practical arrangements and restrictive obligations, you may soon be vindicated.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)
You have little understanding of other people's intense feelings. You may even be rather bemused by this week's emotional events and general air of hysteria. Unless, that is, you have been here, done that and got the tee shirt. Experience counts for a lot.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)
Your emotional and romantic stars could not be better, so, if you're in difficulties, the key lies in your own complicated expectations and too high standards. Take other people at face value and assume that they are being straight with you, at least for now.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)
The winds of change will be blowing, gently at first but then with great force. By all means relax, but retain a guarded approach to all developments, not just those which are obviously dodgy. If other people do end up putting pressure on you, then it's probably because you need them to give you a shove in the right direction.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
You should be in your element this week, at least until Thursday or Friday. A series of major planetary patterns decrees that this is a week when Piscean qualities, imagination, intuition, romance and compassion, are dominant for everyone. And especially, of course, for you.

BRIEFLY

Babar ton leaves Test evenly poised

Galle: Pakistan captain Babar Azam pulled his side back from the brink with a century that helped the touring side dig themselves out of trouble on day two of the first test against Sri Lanka on Sunday. With Pakistan on 148-9, the writing appeared to be on the wall as they appeared set to concede a huge lead to the home side on a turning track. But a record partnership for the last wicket between Babar and Naseem Shah put Pakistan back in contention as they conceded just a four-run deficit in the first innings. **BRIEF SCORES:** **Sri Lanka** 1st innings 222 and second innings 36/1 (Oshada Fernando 17; Mohammad Nawaz 1/12) leading against **Pakistan** 1st innings 218 all out (Babar Azam 119; Prabath Jayasuriya 5/82, Ramesh Mendis 2/18) by 40 runs. **REUTERS**

India bow out of FIBA Asia Cup after 3rd loss

Jakarta: The Indian men's basketball team suffered a huge defeat against Lebanon, its third consecutive in the competition, to end its campaign in the FIBA Asia Cup on a disappointing note here on Sunday. India lost 63-104 in its final Group D match at the Istora Gelora Bung Karno Stadium. Winless India finished last in the four-team group. The top team from each group advanced to the quarterfinals, while the second and third placed sides will feature in the playoffs. India had earlier lost 47-100 against New Zealand before suffering a 59-101 defeat at the hands of Philippines. **PTI**

TT players rue lack of psychologist at CWG

New Delhi: The absence of sports psychologist Gayatri Vartak from India's 14-member table tennis contingent for the upcoming CWG has not gone down well with the players. Vartak, a former badminton player, was on the list of players and support staff for the Birmingham Games but has not made the final squad. Sharath Kamal, reigning national champion Sreeja Akula and Reeth Rishya said that Vartak's presence in the contingent would have made a big difference. **PTI**

Moudgil wins bronze at ISSF World Cup

Changwon: India's Anjum Moudgil won a bronze medal in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the ISSF Shooting World Cup here on Sunday. Anjum shot 402.9 in the final round to finish third. She had 100.7 in kneeling, 101.6 in prone and 200.6 in standing position. She had qualified for the finals after finishing sixth in the ranking round on Saturday. Germany's Anna Janssen won the gold while Italy's Barbara Gambaro took the silver medal. Anjum had won a silver in the 2018 Changwon World Cup. **PTI**

Pandya provides balance, breathing space for Virat

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
JULY 17

OFF THE last ball of his sixth over, Hardik Pandya bounced Jos Buttler and the England white-ball captain accepted the bait. Buttler swung the ball high in front of square from outside off, but Ravindra Jadeja's elite athleticism ensured that he not only sprinted to the ball from deep square leg, but also held onto it after impact with the turf.

Jadeja's spectacular take had given Pandya his fourth wicket in the third ODI in Manchester - the first time the all-rounder has taken a four-for in ODIs, after which he proceeded to rescue India from 72 for 4 with his 71 off 55. Last week, Pandya had taken only his second T20I four-for in Southampton, right after hitting 51 off 33.

Balancing the combination

Since his comeback to the national team in June, against South Africa, Pandya has instantly shown just how much India was missing him, especially in his fit-and-firing avatar. He provides just the right balance to this unit, the value of which goes well beyond the crucial breakthroughs he regularly provides or the runs he scores.

And no other all-rounder that India possess has been able to calibrate the team-combination scales in white-ball cricket with such finesse; about that, there remains absolutely no doubt.

Pandya's presence has allowed India a decent amount of cushion if one of the bowlers goes on to be expensive. It also did not let them feel the absence of their pre-



Hardik Pandya took four wickets and scored 71 runs to help India to victory in the third ODI against England. **AP**

mier pacer Jasprit Bumrah too much at Old Trafford. Even if it is something as basic, but critical, as putting in a reliable second-change spell after the opening bursts from Bumrah and Mohammed Shami, Pandya has stepped up to that role too.

Similarly, on the batting front, his name - and Jadeja's - on the team sheet means that much more buffer for the preceding specialists, and that much more breathing space if one or more of them is out of form, like Virat Kohli is at the moment. With genuine all-rounders around instead of a

Shardul Thakur or Bhuvaneshwar Kumar, the specialists can bat with more freedom and take more risks at the top, in keeping with how the white-ball game is evolving around the world.

And most importantly, a fit Pandya means India's T20 World Cup build-up is ticking along. India will keep hoping that this hard-fought fitness holds going into Australia. Pandya had bowled just four overs in five games in the 2021 T20 World Cup, effectively playing as a specialist batsman; that is not what they want him to be, as has been made clear.

White-ball craft

In that regard, it was heartening that Pandya sent down as many as seven overs in Manchester. The last time he bowled more was March 2021 and the last time he bowled his full quota in an ODI was in the 2019 World Cup semi-final. His workload's been steadily building up since he bowled a solitary over in his comeback match against South Africa in Delhi last month.

At Old Trafford, a majority of Pandya's deliveries were either short or just short of a good length. Only Mohammed Siraj had found some movement with the new ball; Mohammed Shami had gone for plenty with his full lengths, in search of early swing. Pandya saw that and altered his strategy. Not that Pandya cannot move the ball around - he has a Test five-for in England - but he uses his varied short balls smartly in white-ball cricket.

Pandya played on Liam Livingstone's ego in Manchester. His first spell of four overs had gone for a mere two runs, so he could afford to concede a few for another wicket. He had Livingstone swinging and missing, ducking and fending his bounc-

ers. In between, Livingstone also connected, depositing two over the boundary. But Pandya had the last laugh, revealing after the match that he was fine being hit for a few sixes if it increased the chances of getting his wicket.

Rescue act

Pandya's batting on Sunday was as switched-on as his bowling was. When England went short into his body, he did not hold back on the pull. When they pitched up, he was ready to take advantage of the vast vacant spaces at deep extra cover.

When Craig Overton zipped a lifter past his outside edge, Pandya gave the bowler a thumbs-up, and calmly played the next one late past backward point for a single. After Reece Topley appealed unsuccessfully for caught-behind down the leg side, Pandya replied with a rocket of a straight drive for four. He has this ability to consign the previous delivery to history in an instant, and then immediately hit back hard.

There was an incredible reflex back-foot punch off Livingstone that hurtled past extra cover and had such good timing it beat the sweeper's dive into the rope; it also left the bowler scratching his head in disbelief.

By the time he fell to Brydon Carse, Pandya had gone at a strike rate of nearly 130 and had outscored and outpaced Rishabh Pant. That rarely happens, and when it does, it requires something special.

BRIEF SCORES: **England** 259 all out in 45.5 overs (Jos Buttler 60, Jason Roy 41; Hardik Pandya 4/24, Yuzvendra Chahal 3/60) lost to **India** 261 for 5 in 42.1 overs (Rishabh Pant 125 not out, Hardik Pandya 71; Reece Topley 3/35) by five wickets.



Murali Sreeshankar during the long jump final at the World Athletics Championships. **Reuters**

But Sreeshankar and his father were adamant. They continued their training in Pallakad, Kerala after a month-long rehab at the JSW facilities in Bellary. AFI's removal of Murali as an official coach meant that he could no longer avail paid leave from Indian Railways, his employer, to train Sreeshankar.

"I always felt hurt when I was told that I don't know anything. I studied in a sports college, studied under several coaches, and was

Sindhu roars in Lion City

Singapore Open title 'just the start' as Indian shuttler fine-tunes her game for the Worlds with an impressive win over Zhi Yi Wang in the final

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, JULY 17

WHEN PV SINDHU grinned brightly post winning the Singapore Open defeating Chinese Zhi Yi Wang, and refrained from gushing, calling the Super 500 title "just the start", it signalled the most realistic perspective from an athlete aware of belonging to the higher echelons and firmly on the upswing in confidence.

The onset of July and August has historically proven a harbinger of the former World Champion's peaking at the biggest tournaments - whether the Olympics or Worlds. And for someone who's been in three World Championship finals and one at the Olympics, an easy Singapore Open Super 500 victory could only count as a good injection of confidence, a five-match-week paced perfectly, before the real battles fetch up - this time at the Tokyo Worlds.

VIP congratulatory tweets cannot discern between a Sunday spent downing a pugna-cious 22-year-old Chinese in a fisticuff final after a week of negotiating past pesky unseeded opponents and a Sunday battle-hardened, scar-riven and ice bath-soaked from taking out fellow Top Tanners. She might not have won a big title for three years now - not that Sindhu craved the smaller ones ever - but the swag of the World Champion from Basel, the muscle memory of rising to the pinnacle scything stacked fields, is firmly intact in the towering Indian.

A 21-9, 11-21, 21-15 victory with two lopsided games, and a decider that the World No. 7 cleverly controlled at the clutch, converted to settled nerves and a calmer court presence, that sets her up nicely for bigger battles that'll demand she keep her head during tricky phases of play. Not that Sindhu needs reminding, but the title restores belief she can lord over opponents, after some bruising losses in the past few months.

Metaphorically and literally, Sindhu read the winds, gauged the backline judg-



PV Sindhu managed to stay strong in the key moments to come up trumps 21-9 11-21 21-15. **AP**

ments, trained her peripheral vision to the flying bird's whimsy idiosyncrasies better than at any tournament in 2022, at Singapore where she picked her first Super 500 title. The decorated Indian has traversed global arenas all these years, and not once complained about the a/c- induced drift ever costing her a match. As such, Sindhu is India's best all-court, all-conditions player over the years, unfazed by shuttle speeds. Perhaps from an itchy lack of confidence, the last few tournaments since the Asian Championship had seen her wrestle and wrangle uncharacteristically

with line calls and Hawk-Eye judgments, impacting her poise on court, and costing her matches even.

At Singapore, Sindhu was spot on with her referrals through the week, and solidly aware of shuttle flight. Even more impressive was how her crosscourt game was neatly curated to neutralise the drift. She eschewed the straight, floating, baseline-kissing tosses and wildly transgressing smashes, and smartly deployed the short cross, angled drops from the forecourt to allow the shuttle to fall within bounds and not unnecessarily tempt fate, playing to the tramlines.

Smart gameplan

Zhi Yi Wang can beat the top names on her day (and their bad ones), but isn't quite pickled in the craft of deception. Ratchanok Intanon has drilled holes in her game for a while now, and Sindhu used canny deception on her strokes to get her to fall short in the forecourt as she was often found stranded at the back.

The drift dictated not just the lopsided individual game scores. It also nipped extravagances of hard hitting, as given half a whiff, the shuttle would gladly stray along the lines, such was the drift from left to

right and from the near side of the court. It was in grappling with that wild bird that Sindhu displayed her seasoned skill. The diagonal is always the longest leeway on a shuttle court, and playing across made sense to keep the shuttle on a plausible leash.

So, the power hitter Sindhu would fold away her unfettered attack and play the soft touches - angled drops from mid-court with a veiled racquet face, pinpoint net exchanges - not one shot more than required, pushing Wang back one step at a time.

Matters level at 1-1, and twice with the Chinese threatening to close down gaps at 11-12 and 14-16 in the decider, Sindhu would show precise shot selection and use more of the tempered drops and pushes to widen the gap once more. Prone to getting agitated if gaps narrowed earlier, Sindhu would stay cool as a cat, and then stamp her authority in closing out. That composure has been lacking against bigger players, but that seemed down to confidence, and nothing inherently in her game. Against Wang, the Indian looked well in control.

Titles like in Singapore have always been in Sindhu's reach, though she has prioritised the big stage, high-intensity, mounting-pressure tournaments like Worlds and Olympics over the circuit rigmarole. Three weeks back-to-back in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore helped her err and figure out corrections in her closing-out game, and the title is best seen as a smoothening of rough edges.

Granting it any more importance would be a disservice to Sindhu's calibre and potential of winning the big ones of the season. Even the Commonwealth Games ought to be seen, relative to the competition on offer, as a box to be ticked for the champion athlete, without going over the top once that happens. A five-time Worlds medallist knows her stomping ground is the World Championship. Singapore was a pitstop, albeit a validating one. "Just a start", as Sindhu offered.

Kerley wins men's world 100m final

Eugene (USA): Fred Kerley led an American clean sweep in the 100 metres final on Saturday, the first since 1991, to send the home fans wild and give the sport's dominant nation a night to remember as they hosted the World Championships for the first time.

Kerley timed his dip perfectly to clock 9.86 seconds as Marvin Bracy took silver and Trayvon Bromell bronze, both with 9.88 seconds, but Bracy edging it by two thousandths of a second. There was nothing between the medallists once they were into their running, and with Bromell out in lane eight and the other two side-by-side in three and four it was an impossible finish to call. **REUTERS**

Pant paces his way to first ton, leads India to win

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
JULY 17

UNTIL HIS 24th delivery, Rishabh Pant had not hit a single boundary. And the first one was an indication that he had had enough of reigning it in. He charged out to Craig Overton, had a heave, and outside-edged the ball past the wicketkeeper for four. Off his 27th delivery, he would provide England a much bigger opening.

He jumped down the track to Moeen Ali and swung with all his might, so much so that he was off the ground for an instant before completing the bat-swing and falling back on the pitch to try and make his ground. Fortunately for him, and unfortunately for England, Jos Buttler had failed to collect the ball. He was on 18 then.

It has been somewhat incongruous that Pant had already scored five Test hundreds, and had managed none across ODIs and T20Is. After the reprieve from Buttler, he would go on to correct that anomaly in Manchester on Sunday, hammering an unbeaten 125 off 113 deliveries that gave India the ODI series over England 2-1. In an indication of how well he paced his innings, Pant took 71 balls for his fifty, and just 35 to move to the hundred thereafter.

Pant first revived India from 72 for 4 in a 133-run partnership with Hardik Pandya. After the all-rounder fell with another 55 needed, Pant proceeded to absolutely flatten England. Having played the situation - as Pandya would say later - all along and turned it around for his team, Pant decided to have fun; he carved David Willey for five suc-

In an indication of how well he paced his innings, Pant took 71 balls for his fifty, and just 35 to move to the hundred thereafter.

cessive fours to bring India to the brink of victory, and then teased everyone present at Old Trafford by tapping a single off the last ball of the over. He reverted to typical Pant style, ending the game with a reverse-swept four off Joe Root.

He has cracked the big-innings puzzle in Test cricket long ago. But the fine line between attack and self-destruction that he straddles in the longer format has proved to be finer, and harder to sustain, in white-ball cricket. We see this a lot in T20, where he can go into a bit of a shell and then suddenly try to break the shackles, only to give it away.

Not that it couldn't have happened on Sunday, but he put that Buttler chance behind him and applied himself to the task at hand. Not as eye-catching as the late volley of boundaries, but perhaps more important, were the calm dabs square of the wicket and the hard running between the wickets with Pandya. Even when he was squeezed for width, he found a way to rotate the strike, like when he hit the ball hard into the ground and got it to bounce over point.

A maiden white-ball hundred in a chase to seal an away series; as Pant said after the game, "Hopefully I remember (this century) for the rest of my life."