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यूको बैंक

UCO BANK

(A Govt. of India Undertaking)

MASTER TARA SINGH NAGAR, Jalandhar-144001, Ph.: 0181-5064050, 5064061 E-Mail: zo.jlndhar@ucobank.co.in

ZONAL OFFICE: SCO-113-114-115,

SALE NOTICE OF E-AUCTION SALE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES)

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation & Reconstruction of the Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. (SARFAESI) read with proviso to Rule 8(4) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the symbolic/physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officers of UCO Bank (Secured Creditor) will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis on 27.06.2022 and invite bids from the intending purchasers for purchase of immovable properties mentioned hereunder.

Branch Name	Name of Borrower & Guarantor	a) Date of Demand Notice b) Amount due as per Notice c) Date of Possession Notice d) Type of Possession	a) Date & Time of Inspection of Property b) Last Date & Time of submission of EMD & Document c) Date & Time of E-Auction	Reserve Price Earenest Money Bid Increase Amt.
1 Dasuya Branch	Mr. Manjit Singh S/o Sh. Dev Singh & Mrs. Sukhwinder Kaur W/o Sh. Manjit Singh	a) 18.06.2021 b) Rs. 7,83,713 as on 31.05.2021 plus intt. and incidental expenses incurred by Bank w.e.f. 01.6.2021 c) 04.05.2022 d) Physical Possession	a) 17.06.2022 between 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM b) On or before 24.06.2022 before 4:30 P.M. c) 27.06.2022 between 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.	21,47,000/- 2,14,700/- 10,000/-
2 Nawanshahr Branch	M/s S.B. Sales, Chandigarh Road, Nawanshahr	a) 03.09.2021 b) Rs. 9,77,430.12 Inclusive of intt. upto 28.02.2022 with further intt. plus charges thereon, less recovery, if any c) 07.01.2022 d) Symbolic Possession	a) 17.06.2022 between 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM b) On or before 24.06.2022 before 4:30 P.M. c) 27.06.2022 between 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.	51,42,500/- 5,14,250/- 10,000/-

All that part and parcel of Residential Property measuring 10 Marlas comprised of Khalsa No. 42/1/2 Part 10/89 Khewat No. 1168 Khatori No. 1527 Hadbast No. 131 as per Jamabandi 2008-2009 situated at village Kainthan Tehsil Dasuya Distt. Hoshiarpur. Title Deed/Wasika No. 1678 Dated 26.09.2012 in the name of Mrs. Sukhwinder Kaur W/o Sh. Manjit Singh. **Bounded** : On the North by: Road, On the South by: Plot of Surinder Kaur, On the East by: Plot of Tarsem Singh, On the West by: P/o Gurnam Singh

All that part and parcel of Commercial Plot containing 20 Godowns area measuring 00 Kanal 11 Marlas as mentioned in sale deed No.3728 dated 02.11.1979 with Sub registrar Nawanshahr in the name of Ram Darshan, Surinder Kumar and Mr. Raj Kumar. Bounded as per sale deed: North: Godown of Dharampal, South: Road leading to Dana Mandi, East: Godown of Jivan Singh, West: Godown staircase Bal Sarup

Terms & Conditions: 1. The sale shall be subject to the Terms & Conditions prescribed in the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. 2. The properties are being sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS". 3. The particulars of Secured Assets specified in the Schedule herein above have been stated to the best of the information of the Authorised Officer, but the Authorised Officer shall not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation. 4. The auction sale will be "online through e-auction" portal <https://www.msfccommerce.com>. 5. The intending Bidders / Purchasers are requested to register on portal (<https://www.msfccommerce.com>) using their mobile number and email-id. Further, they are requested to upload requisite KYC documents. Once the KYC documents are verified by e-auction service provider (may take 2 working days), the intending Bidders/Purchasers has to transfer the EMD amount using online mode in his Global EMD Wallet by 24.06.2022 before the e-Auction Date and time in the portal. The registration, verification of KYC documents and transfer of EMD in wallet must be completed well in advance before auction. 6. Platform (<https://www.msfccommerce.com>) for e-Auction will be provided by e-Auction service provider MSFC Limited having its Registered office at 225-C, A.J.C. Bose Road, Kolkata-700020 (contact Phone & Toll free Numbers 079-41072412/ 411/ 413 or 1800-103-5342). The intending Bidders / Purchasers are required to participate in the e-Auction process at e-auction service provider's website <https://www.msfccommerce.com>. This Service Provider will also provide online demonstration / training on e-Auction on the portal. 7. The Sale Notice containing the General Terms and Conditions of sale is available / published in the following websites/web page portal: (1) <https://www.ibapi.in>, (2) <http://www.msfccommerce.com>. 8. The intending participants of e-auction may download free of cost, copies of the Sale Notice, Terms & Conditions of e-auction. Help Manual on operational part of e-Auction related to this e-Auction from e-bikri IBAPI portal (<https://www.ibapi.in>). 9. Bidder's Global Wallet should have sufficient balance (>=EMD amount) at the time of bidding. 10. During the e-auction bidders will be allowed to offer higher bid in inter-se bidding over and above the last bid quoted and the minimum increase in the bid amount must be as mention above to the last higher bid of the bidders. Ten(10) minutes time will be allowed to bidders to quote successive higher bid and if no higher bid is offered by any bidder after the expiry of ten minutes to the last highest bid, the e-auction shall be closed. 11. It is the responsibility of intending Bidder(s) to properly read the Sale Notice, Terms & conditions of e-auction, Help Manual on operational part of e-Auction and follow them strictly in case of any difficulty or need of assistance, before or during e-auction process, may contact authorized representative of our e-Auction Service Provider (<https://www.msfccommerce.com>). Details of which are available on the e-Auction portal. 12. After finalization of e-Auction by the Authorised Officer, only successful bidder will be informed by our above referred service provider through SMS/email. (On mobile no/ email address given by them/registered with the service provider). 13. The secured asset will not be sold below the reserve price. 14. The Authorised Officer reserves the right to accept any or reject all bids, if not found acceptable or to postpone/cancel/adjourn/discontinue or vary the terms of the auction at any time without assigning any reason whatsoever and his decision in this regard shall be final. 15. The sale certificate shall be issued in favor of successful bidder on deposit of full bid amount as per the provisions of the act. 16. It shall be the responsibility of the bidders to inspect and satisfy themselves about the asset and specification before submitting the bid. The bidder inspect the property in consultation with the dealing official as per the details provided. 17. All statutory dues/attendant charges/other dues including registration charges, stamp duty, taxes etc. shall have to be borne by the purchaser. 18. The Authorised Officer of the Bank shall not be responsible for any charge, lien, encumbrances or any other dues to the Government or anyone else in respect of properties (E-Auctioned) not known to the bank. The intending Bidder is advised to make their own independent inquiries regarding the encumbrances on the property including statutory liabilities, arrears of property tax, electricity dues etc. 19. The bidder should ensure proper internet connectivity, power back-up etc. The Bank shall not be liable for any disruption due to internet failure, power failure or technical reasons or reasons / contingencies affecting the e-auctions. 20. The successful bidder has to bear the FDS of 1% if the property value exceeds 50 lacs. 21. This notice is also to be treated as 15 days statutory sale notice to borrower and guarantor under Rule 9(1) Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. 22. In case of sale bidder the bid amount quoted in his/her bid form must be improved by at least one bid incremental value, i.e., the sale shall be cancelled/deferred. 23. Sale will not be confirmed if the borrower tenders to the bank contractual dues along with other expenses prior to the Authorised Officer issuing Sale Confirmation letter to the successful bidder, in such case the Bank shall refund without interest the entire amount remitted by the successful bidder. For any property related query may contact the Chief Manager (Recovery) Mr. Vikas Kumar, Mob. No. 80905-33770 E-mail: zo.jlndhar.rec@ucobank.co.in.

DATE: 16.05.2022 PLACE: DASUYA, NAWANSHAHR AUTHORISED OFFICER

ਦੀ ਮਾਫੀਵਾਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਇਮਰੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਖੇਤੀਬਾੜੀ ਵਿਕਾਸ ਬੈਂਕ ਲਿਮ., ਮਾਫੀਵਾਰਾ ਫੋਨ ਨੰ. 01628-250351

ਦੀ ਮਾਫੀਵਾਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਇਮਰੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਖੇਤੀਬਾੜੀ ਵਿਕਾਸ ਬੈਂਕ ਲਿਮ.: ਦੇ ਹੇਠਲੇ ਆਦਿ ਭਾਇਓਕੋਵਰਜ ਦੀ ਦੇਣ ਉਪ ਰਜਿਸਟਰਾਰ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾਵਾਂ, ਲੁਧਿਆਣਾ ਬਲੋਂ ਪੱਥਰ ਨੰਬਰ/ ਉਚਲ/ਪੇਸੀ ਰਕ-1/2117 ਮਿਤੀ-11/04/2022 ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਿਤ ਜੇਨਾਂ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਮਿਤੀ 09/06/2022 ਨੂੰ ਹੋਣੀ ਨਿਸ਼ਚਿਤ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਦੇਣ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਕੋਆਪੇਰੇਟਿਵ ਸੁਆਇਟੀਜ਼ ਰੂਲਜ਼ 1963 ਦੇ ਅਧੀਨ ਵਿਕਾਸ ਲੀ ਅਤੇ ਦੇਣ ਭਾਰੇ ਰਜਿਸਟਰਾਰ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾਵਾਂ, ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਚੰਡੀਗੜ੍ਹ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਸਮੇਂ ਸਮੇਂ 'ਤੇ ਜਾਰੀ ਹੋਵਾਂਗੀ ਅਤੇ ਬੈਂਕ ਦੇ ਬਾਈਲਾਜ਼ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ। ਇਸ ਵਿੱਚ 9 ਮੁਹੱਥਰ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਦੇਣ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਵੇਗੀ। ਝਣਾਏ ਗਏ ਹਲਕੇ, ਥਾਂ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਹੋਣਗੀਆਂ, ਮਿਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਦਾ ਵੇਰਵਾ ਨਿਮਨਲਿਖਤ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਹੈ।

ਲੀਂ	ਵੇਰਵਾ	ਮਿਤੀ	ਸਮਾਂ	ਸਥਾਨ
1	ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੇਣ ਨੋਟਿਸ ਜਾਰੀ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਮਾਫੀਵਾਰਾ ਮਿਤੀ	17.05.2022		
2	ਰਿਟਰਨਿੰਗ ਅਫਸਰ ਪਾਸ ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਕਾਰਜ ਦਾਖਲ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸਮਾਂ	06.06.2022	9.00 AM ਤੋਂ 11.00 AM	ਦਫਤਰ ਪੀ.ਏ. ਡੀ.ਬੀ. ਮਾਫੀਵਾਰਾ
3	ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਪੇਪਰ ਦਾਖਲ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਉਮੀਦਵਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਸ਼ਚਿਤ ਲਗਾਉਣਾ	06.06.2022	11.00 AM ਤੋਂ 11.30 AM	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
4	ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਕਾਰਜਾਰ ਤੇ ਇਤਰਾਜ਼ ਫਾਇਲ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸਮਾਂ	06.06.2022	11.30 AM ਤੋਂ 01.00 PM	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
5	ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਕਾਰਜਾਰ ਤੇ ਇਤਰਾਜ਼ ਦੀ ਲੁਟਵਾਰੀ	06.06.2022	01.00 PM ਤੋਂ 03.00 PM	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
6	ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਕਾਰਜਾਂ ਦੀ ਪਰਤਾਲ	06.06.2022	03.00 PM ਤੋਂ 04.00 PM	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
7	ਹੀਲ ਪਾਏ ਗਏ ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਕਾਰਜਾਰ ਦੀ ਸੂਚੀ ਲਾਉਣ ਦਾ ਸਮਾਂ	06.06.2022	04.00 PM ਤੋਂ 04.30 PM	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
8	ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਕਾਰਜਾਂ ਵਾਪਸ ਲੈਣ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਮਾਂ	06.06.2022	04.30 PM ਤੋਂ 05.00 PM	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
9	ਲਿਖਤ ਮੁਕਾਬਲਾ ਕਰਦੇ ਉਮੀਦਵਾਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਤੀਜੇ ਦਾ ਐਲਾਨ	06.06.2022	05.00 PM	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
10	ਚੋਣ ਨਿਸ਼ਚਿਤ ਅਲਾਟ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ	07.06.2022	09.00 AM ਤੋਂ 09.30 AM	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
11	ਚੋਣ ਨਤ ਭਾਰੇ ਉਮੀਦਵਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਸ਼ਚਿਤ ਲਗਾਉਣਾ	07.06.2022	09.30 AM	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
12	ਕੋਲਟ ਪੇਪਰ ਡਾਕੂਮੈਂਟ ਲਈ ਰਾਖਵਾਂ ਹਿੱਸਾ	08.06.2022		ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
13	ਵੋਟਾਂ ਪਾਉਣ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ	09.06.2022	09.00 AM ਤੋਂ 01.00 PM	ਪ੍ਰਾਇਮਰੀ ਸਭਾਵਾਂ ਲਈ ਇਹ ਦੇਣ ਲਈ ਹੈ। (ਇਹ ਦੇਣ ਲਈ ਆਵਾਜ਼)
14	ਵੋਟਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ	09.06.2022	ਵੋਟਾਂ ਪੈਣ ਤੋਂ ਤੁਰੰਤ ਬਾਅਦ	ਪ੍ਰਾਇਮਰੀ ਸਭਾਵਾਂ ਲਈ ਇਹ ਦੇਣ ਲਈ ਹੈ। (ਇਹ ਦੇਣ ਲਈ ਆਵਾਜ਼)
15	ਚੋਣ ਨਤੀਜੇ ਦਾ ਐਲਾਨ	09.06.2022	ਵੋਟਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਮੁਕੰਮਲ ਹੋਣ ਉਪਰੰਤ	ਰਿਟਰਨਿੰਗ ਅਫਸਰ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਐਲਾਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ।

ਜੇਨਾਂ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਪਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਸਭਾਵਾਂ ਵੇਰਵਾ

ਲੀਂ	ਜੇਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਨਾਂ	ਜਿਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਹੋਣਗੀਆਂ	ਵੋਟਾਂ ਪਾਉਣ ਦਾ ਸਮਾਂ	ਸਥਾਨ
1	ਮਾਫੀਵਾਰਾ	09.06.2022	09.00 AM ਤੋਂ 01.00 PM	ਦੀ ਮਾਫੀਵਾਰਾ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸੁਆਇਟੀ ਲਿਮ., ਮਾਫੀਵਾਰਾ
2	ਭੰਡੀਆ	09.06.2022	09.00 AM ਤੋਂ 01.00 PM	ਦੀ ਰਾਵਣਾ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਖੇਤੀਬਾੜੀ ਸਭਾ ਲਿਮ., ਰਾਵਣਾ
3	ਮਾਏਵਾਲ (ਅਨੁਸੂਚਿਤ ਜਾਰੀ ਲਈ ਰਾਖਵਾਂ)	09.06.2022	09.00 AM ਤੋਂ 01.00 PM	ਦੀ ਮਾਏਵਾਲ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸੁਆਇਟੀ ਲਿਮ., ਮਾਏਵਾਲ
4	ਜਸਵਾਲ	09.06.2022	09.00 AM ਤੋਂ 01.00 PM	ਦੀ ਜਸਵਾਲ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸੁਆਇਟੀ ਲਿਮ., ਜਸਵਾਲ
5	ਜੋਧਵਾਲ	09.06.2022	09.00 AM ਤੋਂ 01.00 PM	ਦੀ ਜੋਧਵਾਲ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਖੇਤੀਬਾੜੀ ਸਭਾ ਲਿਮ., ਜੋਧਵਾਲ
6	ਰਾਮਗੜ (ਐਕਤਾਂ ਲਈ ਰਾਖਵਾਂ)	09.06.2022	09.00 AM ਤੋਂ 01.00 PM	ਦੀ ਰਾਮਗੜ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਖੇਤੀਬਾੜੀ ਸਭਾ ਲਿਮ., ਰਾਮਗੜ
7	ਹੋਰਾਂ ਫੋਟ	09.06.2022	09.00 AM ਤੋਂ 01.00 PM	ਦੀ ਹੋਰਾਂ ਫੋਟ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਖੇਤੀਬਾੜੀ ਸਭਾ ਲਿਮ., ਹੋਰਾਂ ਫੋਟ
8	ਮਾਫੀਵਾਰਾ ਬਾਸ	09.06.2022	09.00 AM ਤੋਂ 01.00 PM	ਦੀ ਬਾਸ ਪਾਠਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਖੇਤੀਬਾੜੀ ਸਭਾ ਲਿਮ., ਬਾਸ ਪਾਠਕ
9	ਜੋਧਵਾਲ (ਐਕਤਾਂ ਲਈ ਰਾਖਵਾਂ)	09.06.2022	09.00 AM ਤੋਂ 01.00 PM	ਦੀ ਜੋਧਵਾਲ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਖੇਤੀਬਾੜੀ ਸਭਾ ਲਿਮ., ਜੋਧਵਾਲ

ਚੋਣ ਲਈ ਹੋਵਾਂਗੀ

1. ਚੋਣ ਰੁਪਤ ਬੋਲਟ ਪੇਪਰ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ।
2. ਬੈਂਕ ਦੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਹੋਵੇ ਬਾਇਲਾਜ਼ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਹਿਸ਼ੀਦਾਰੀ ਦੀ ਰਕਮ 500/- ਰੁਪਏ ਹੈ, 500/- ਰੁਪਏ ਤੋਂ ਘੱਟ ਹਿਸ਼ੀਦਾਰੀ ਵਾਲੇ ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੋਟ ਪਾਉਣ ਦਾ ਹੱਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ।
3. ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਭਿਕਾਰਵਾਰ ਮੈਂਬਰ ਬੈਂਕ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਚੋਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਲੈ ਸਕਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਉਹ ਵੋਟ ਪਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਪ੍ਰੰਤੂ ਭਿਕਾਰਵਾਰ ਮੈਂਬਰ ਮਿਤੀ 04.06.2022 ਸਮੇਂ 5 ਵਜੇ ਤੱਕ ਬੈਂਕ ਵਿੱਚ ਭਿਕਾਰਵਾਰ ਰਕਮ ਭਰ ਕੇ ਮਿੱਥੇ ਤੋਂ ਰਜਿਸਟਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਕਰਵਾ ਦੇਣ ਉਹ ਵੋਟ ਪਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।
4. ਹਰ ਇੱਕ ਜੇਨਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਇੱਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਮੈਂਬਰ ਚੁਣਿਆ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ ਅਤੇ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਿਤ ਜੇਨਾਂ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਹੀ ਹੋਣਗੀਆਂ।
5. ਜੇਨਾਂ ਨੰ: 6 ਤੋਂ 9 ਐਕਤਾਂ ਲਈ ਰਾਖਵਾਂ ਰਹਿੰਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਜੇਨਾਂ ਨੰ: 3 ਅਨੁਸੂਚਿਤ ਜਾਰੀ ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ ਲਈ ਰਾਖਵਾਂ ਰਹਿੰਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ।
6. ਜਿਲ੍ਹਾ ਕੋਟੀ ਮੈਂਬਰ ਸੰਬੰਧਤ ਜੇਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਵੋਟਰ ਸੂਚੀ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਪੀ.ਏ.ਡੀ.ਜੀ. ਮਾਫੀਵਾਰਾ ਵਿੱਚ 500/- ਰੁਪਏ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਜੇਨਾਂ ਲਈ ਕਰਵਾ ਕੇ ਲੈ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।
7. ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਚੋਣ ਕੋਟੀ-19 ਦੇ ਸੁਪਰਿਡ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਸਰਕਾਰ/ਚਾਰਡ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਸਮੇਂ ਸਮੇਂ 'ਤੇ ਜਾਰੀ ਹੋਵਾਂਗੀ ਜੋ ਕਿ ਚੋਣ ਸਮੇਂ ਲਾਗੂ ਹੋਣਗੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਹਿੱਸ ਨਿਸ਼ਚਿਤ ਪਾਲਣਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਵੇਗੀ।
--ਜਰੀ--
ਚੋਣ ਮੈਨੇਜਰ, ਸਹਾਇਕ ਰਜਿਸਟਰਾਰ, ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾਵਾਂ ਸਮਝਾਵਾ

यूनियन बैंक

Union Bank

of India

Branch Office : GTBH , Shastri Nagar, Model Town, Ludhiana

[RULE 8 (1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer for Union Bank of India, GTBH Branch, Ludhiana, under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Second) Act, 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice date as briefed under calling upon the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the notice and interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the Amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules on the date mentioned there against.

The Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the Union Bank of India, GTBH Branch, Ludhiana, for the amount and interest thereon.

The Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset(s).

Name of Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Description of the Properties	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Possession	Amount due
1. M/s Om Knitwears through its Proprietor Sh Jagdeep Sharma B-12/13/74/D/8, Street No.10, New Kundan Puri, Ludhiana, Punjab. 2. Sh. Jagdeep Sharma, B-12/13/74/D/8 Street No.10, New Kundan Puri, Ludhiana, Punjab (Borrower & Mortgagor). 3. Smt. Manita Sharma, B-12/13/74/D/8, Street No.10, New Kundan Puri, Ludhiana, Punjab (Guarantor).				

Date: 15.05.2022 Place: Ludhiana Sd/- Authorised Officer

U.P. JAL VIDYUT NIGAM LIMITED

(A Govt. of Uttar Pradesh Enterprise)

Shakti Bhawan Extn., 12th Floor, Ashok Marg, Lucknow-226001

e-Tender Notice No. 01/EE(Design)/2022-23

Online e-Tenders in two parts are invited from manufacturers or accredited representatives for Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 02 No. 132 KV SF6 Circuit Breaker at Obra Hydro-electric Project, Obra, Sonbhadra (U.P.) as detailed below.

1. Cost of Tender inclusive of GST @ 18% (Rs.): Rs. 3540/-

2. Earnest Money (Rs.): Rs. 21,000/-

3. Date of Opening (Part-I): 13.06.2022 (at 14.30 hrs.)

4. Last date for submission of e-bids online: 10.06.2022 (upto 14.00 hrs.)

Part-I of the e-bid shall contain uploaded techno-commercial bid along with documents in support of deposition of tender fee & earnest money (EMD). If EMD is submitted in form of BG then the original copy of same shall be submitted along with hard copy of techno-commercial bid documents. Part-II shall contain price bid. Tender can be downloaded from and uploaded on e-procurement website: www.etender.up.nic.in. Last date for submission of hard copy of techno-commercial bids shall be 13.06.2022 (upto 12.00 hrs.). Date of opening of price bid shall be intimated later. Undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the bids without assigning any reason thereof. Bidders should keep themselves updated in regard to publication of corrigendum (if any) by visiting e-procurement portal regularly. If the date of opening will be a holiday, the tender shall be opened on next working day at the same time.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (DESIGN)

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Union Bank

of India

REGIONAL OFFICE

41/1, Walla Complex, Atam Nagar, Dugri Road, Ludhiana-141003

MEGA E-AUCTION

SALE NOTICE ON

17.06.2022

SALE NOTICE FOR

SALE OF

IMMOVABLE

PROPERTIES

DATE & TIME OF AUCTION 17.06.2022 BETWEEN 1.00 PM TO 5.00 PM (WITH 10 MINUTES UNLIMITED AUTO EXTENSIONS)

LAST DATE AND TIME FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD ON OR BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF E-AUCTION

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/physical/ symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Union Bank of India / Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on the date as mentioned in the table herein below, for recovery of its dues due to the Bank/ Secured Creditor from the respective borrower (s) and guarantor (s). The reserve price and the earnest money deposit will be as mentioned in the table below against the respective properties. The Online E-Auction will be held through web portal/ website: www.msfccommerce.com on the date and time mentioned above with unlimited extension of 10 minutes.

SR No	Name of the Branch (Contact No. & Borrowers, Guarantor(s) & Mortgagor(s).	Outstanding amount (Secured Debt)	Detail Description of Immovable Properties	(i) Reserve Price (Rs.) (ii) EMD (Rs.) (iii) Bid Increase Amount (Rs.)
1.	Kharar Branch, Nih-21 Chandigarh Main Road Desumajra-140301	Rs. 31,79,785.84 + interest & other expenses as on 30.04.2022	Land and building --- residential admeasuring 81.25 sq yards, situated at H No B9 A, New Mata Guji Avenue, Village Bhago Majra, Tehsil Kharar, District SAS Nagar, Punjab 140301. CERSA Asset ID 200021121296.	(i) 21,00,000/- (ii) 2,10,000/- (iii) 25,000/-

1. HARSHDEEP KAUR W/O RANJIT SINGH VILL KAURI, KHANNA DISTT-LUDHIANA, PB-141401 Co-Applicant (1) SURJEET SINGH S/O NAAGAR SINGH VILL-DAUN MAJRA, KHARAR SAS NAGAR, PB-140301 (2) RANJEET SINGH S/O RAGUVEER SINGH VILL-KAURI, KHANNA DISTT-LUDHIANA, PB-141401

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: The sale shall be subject to the Terms & Conditions prescribed in the SARFAESI Act & Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 and to the following further conditions: 1. The properties are being sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS" 2. The particulars of Secured Assets specified in the Schedule here in above have been stated to the best of the information of the Authorised Officer, but the Authorised Officer shall not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation. 3. The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the Website <https://www.msfccommerce.com> on 17.06.2022 between 01:00 PM to 5:00 PM. For any information regarding above mentioned properties. Please contact to the concerned manager. 4. For detailed term and conditions of the sale, please refer www.ibapi.in, www.msfccommerce.com, <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in>. This may also be treated as 30 days notice u/s rule 8 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to the borrower(s)/guarantor(s) and mortgagor(s) of the above said loan about the holding of E-Auction sale on the above mentioned date.

Date: 12.05.2022 Place: Mohali Authorised Officer: Union Bank of India

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JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

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Chandigarh

**BIGGEST TEAM TITLE IN BADMINTON**

Team India scales the peak with first ever Thomas Cup

Sen, Satwik-Chirag duo & Srikanth stun Indonesia in final

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, MAY 15

THE VAGUE whiff of a dream turned to reality as the week wore on, and India inched closer to the impossible — Thomas Cup, the ultimate team title in badminton. A dozen players in Bangkok and their coaches, there and in India, believed throughout. It's a little secret that they've known for a month now: they were going to win the Thomas Cup. This was a date with destiny, meticulously envisioned and executed by India's most underrated and talented sportspersons — the men's badminton players. Kidambi Srikanth, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy. They have travelled

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Kidambi Srikanth (centre) celebrates with teammates after winning his decisive Thomas Cup match against Indonesia's Jonatan Christie on Sunday. *AP* FULL COVERAGE, [PAGE 16](#)

‘This is the real World Cup... proud of this team win’

PULLELA GOPICHAND
SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS

THE MOST heartening aspect of India's Thomas Cup team today was watching Chirag Shetty-Satwiksairaj Rankireddy beat Mohammad Ahsan-Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo. All the previous times that our boys faced

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Gautam Adani with Holcim CEO Jan Jenisch in Ahmedabad, Sunday. *PTI*

Biggest infra materials deal: Holcim's India biz is Adani's for \$10.5 billion

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 15

THE ADANI group has acquired Zurich-based Holcim's cement business in India for \$10.5 billion (about Rs 81,000 crore) in India's largest ever M&A transaction in the infrastructure and materials space.

Through its subsidiaries, Holcim holds 63.19% in Ambuja Cements Ltd and 54.53% in ACC Ltd (of which 50.05% is held through Ambuja Cements). This is the largest ever acquisition by Adani, which beat the JSW and Aditya Birla groups to the deal.

Holcim's exit from India follows several high-profile departures of multinational companies, including Ford, General Motors, Harley Davidson, MAN Truck,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

WORLD**U.S.: GUNMAN KILLS 10 IN LIVESTREAMED RACIST ATTACK****INDIA LOOKS TO BOLSTER CULTURAL TIES TO NEPAL** [PAGE 12](#)

Entertainer & enigma, life was so much more than cricket for this reluctant star

PAGE 1
ANCHORSANDIP G
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

TWO DAYS before the 2009 World Cup, Andrew Symonds, after months of abstinence from the bottle, snuck out of the hotel room and drank deep into the night. The next morning, Australia's then captain Ricky Ponting confronted him and conveyed the message that he was flying back home.

Symonds was far from being hurt. "Once I had got home from England, and everything had settled down, it was a relief," he

ANDREW SYMONDS
1975-2022

would later say. By that time, playing for his country had become a burden. "I felt like I was

in a cage. Always under the microscope. I wasn't having fun anymore. I wasn't enjoying it,"

he had admitted.

However, world cricket could never get enough of the entertaining all-rounder who was the spine of the Aussie team that intimidated every side they played in the late 90s and early 2000.

Late on Saturday night, Symonds, 46, died in a car crash outside of Townsville in his home state of Queensland. He played 26 Tests and featured in 198 ODIs, scoring six centuries, while also contributing 133 wickets. The ultimate all-purpose player, the IPL champion was on the wish list of all T20 teams.

For Symonds, an unabashed hitter of the cricket ball, playing the game was all about finding joy. But somewhere in his time,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

CONG BRAINSTORMING SESSION ENDS

Rahul admits people connect lost, Sonia announces all-India yatra

MANOJ CG
UDAIPUR, MAY 15

HAVING SUFFERED staggering election defeats since 2014 under his leadership and that of his mother Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi on Sunday admitted that the Congress's "connection" with the people is "broken", and needs to be repaired urgently.

To reestablish that connection, Sonia announced the party will undertake a Bharat yatra from October 2 this year. The party also announced a series of organisational reforms at the end of its three-day chintan

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNNY



shivir here to bring new and young faces into leadership roles.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

EXPLAINED **Action remains to be seen**

ADMISSION OF a "broken connection" and announcement of a Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir Yatra is acknowledgment of the need to go back to the people. But as always, the question of implementation remains.

CHINTAN SHIVIR:
MORE REPORTS [PAGE 8](#)**REGION**

1946 RESOLUTION OF SGPC ON 'SIKH STATE': WHAT SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN MISSED

[PAGE 7](#)

'The only way out is to fight for the cause of the people; a leader then emerges automatically'

BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA
CONGRESS LEADER

[PAGE 9](#)

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Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

FROM PAGE ONE

Tricity grapples with a new epidemic: Cyber crime

The data provided by the Chandigarh Police's Cyber Crime Cell shows the city is set to cross 2021's crime figures in first few months of this year itself

SAURABH PARASHAR
CHANDIGARH, MAY 15

NOT A day goes by when the UT police does not register a case of cyber crime. Police officers say if this carries on, cyber crimes will be on top of the crime chart in Chandigarh. In the first four months of this year itself, the city police has registered 70 per cent FIRs related to cyber crimes, compared to 2021.

A look at the statistics of the Chandigarh Police's Cyber Crime Investigation Cell (CCIC) shows a total of 5,922 complaints and 67 FIRs related to cyber crimes in 2021. A total of 2,130 complaints (which amounts to 35 per cent of the total complaints received) and 47 FIRs (70 per cent of the total FIRs lodged) have already been registered between January 1 and April 30 this year. At least 1,550 of the total 2,130 complaints received this year relate to fraudulent transactions, online transactions asking for PIN, debit/credit card details, etc. Besides these, they also received 519 complaints related to harassment, abusive calls, messages through WhatsApp, IMO, VOIP calls, etc.

"The maximum number of FIRs that we register these days relate to cyber crimes. It is one of the reasons among others behind the increasing number of cybercrime related cases. Simultaneously, there is an improvement in the detection ratio also. We are able to arrest the people involved in these cases from far reaching places. For speedy court trials of cybercrime related cases, securing the conviction of accused, meetings are going on with judicial officers at many levels. There is awareness about cyber crimes among people. But a lot to achieve yet. We need to do a lot of work at many levels if we want to make a cyber crime free city," SP (Cyber) Ketan Bansal, said.

Chandigarh is a member of Joint Cybercrime Coordination Team (JCCT) Group-5. Other states/UTs in the JCCT Group-5 include Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir. A high level meeting of the JCCT Group-5 which was attended by DGPs of many states along with the officers from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) took place last month in Chandigarh.

"The aim behind holding such high level meetings is to increase the efficiency and improve the coordination among the different investigation agencies. As we all know, financial frauds through online modes are the biggest threat in the present time before us. It involves many sectors including banks, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), social networking sites, etc., which require a lot of correspondence online and offline. In the meeting, we stress to follow such a mechanism through which the coordination among all the institutes becomes smooth and flexible," a senior police officer said. There are seven JCCTs, which include all the states and UTs.

"We launched a full-fledged campaign titled Cyber Swachhata Mission in Chandigarh involving hundreds of students of computer science and related subjects as cyber interns with the CCIC. Many surveys were conducted. Modus operandi were shortlisted, reasons behind why people increasingly falling in the traps of fraudsters, solutions for cyber crimes and techniques through which shortcomings of the investigation agencies can be sorted out were shortlisted," the Chandigarh police's CCIC in-charge, Inspector Hari Om, said.

Nobody is immune

In the two-month survey, many aspects were covered by cyber interns. The survey suggests that people of all age

KYC details

A common way to fraudsters obtain confidential details from people is by asking for their Know Your Customer (KYC) details, for them to be able to continue their bank accounts, credit cards, etc. As one shares their particulars, fraudsters begin online shopping. They also demand a One Time Password (OTP) which comes on the phone of the victim. RBI has cleared it multiple times that no bank is authorised to collect KYC details of customers over phone.

Dish TV recharge/ coupons/ phone bill payment

Text messages with a web link sent on the cell phones of people urging them to recharge their dish TV subscriptions, coupons, or to make payments of pending mobile bills. The link, once opened, will follow with instructions that require confidential details to be shared. It is not advisable to click these unknown weblinks.

Extortion after befriending people on social media

Many organised gangs involving women are active that target people. Many senior citizens have become victims of these gangs. A member usually befriends one, often urging them to perform obscene acts on the video calls using women's faces. These videos are recorded and later used to blackmail and extort money.

Common modi operandi



YEAR-WISE NUMBERS

Year	Complaints	FIRs
2021	5,922	67
2022 (upto April 30)	2,130	47

AnyDesk link

AnyDesk, a mobile application that allows another user to see and interact with another computer system over the Internet, has been used since the onset of the pandemic, due to many organisations working from home. The link is sent on the phone of the victim urging them to click to update KYC details, pay online mobile bills, etc. UT has reported a dozen cases, where people lost lakhs, by clicking on an AnyDesk link.

Paytm, GPay QR codes

Cheating people by making payments through Paytm or GPay QR codes mostly happen in online shopping, or while making payments to strangers. People are asked to initiate a payment of Rs 10, or less, and share the QR code along with it. This establishes a link with the fraudster, who is able to hack into the bank account linked with the code, and access the money. However, this is not the same as paying a merchant through a QR code at a

shop. People are advised not to share QR codes with strangers.

Insurance schemes, investments

Many retired people are being targeted with insurance schemes. To gain the trust of victims, fraudsters transfer interest rates over the invested money into the accounts of the victims in the initial months but stop making payments when the victims invest a larger sum in the scheme. In some cases, fraudsters charge a fee if the victim wants to obtain their full amount, which will never be given.

Bitcoin scams, instant loan providing apps

Investment in low price Bitcoins is popular among youngsters. There is no immediate remedy in the Bitcoin cheating cases. Shibonk, Dogecoin and Titcoin along with two other crypto currencies are the most famous among the investors. It is easy

for people to purchase these crypto currencies. A number of instant loan providing mobile applications at high interest rate are there. As one downloads the app, the contact list automatically goes to the handlers. In case when one fails to pay the money, false messages are sent to the contacts.

Theft of SIM cards, swapping of cards

SIM card of the victim is stolen and is placed in their handsets, accessing all control over online banking, etc. They change the online banking password after visiting the option 'forget password'. The OTP also lands in their handsets. ATM/debit card swapping, mostly happen when someone does not know how to operate the machine properly. Criminals swap these on the pretext of assisting the victims.

Stealing profiles, hacking emails

Suspects create fake profiles on Facebook using particulars of genuine people and sending messages/emails to their contacts about emergency financial help. They mention bank accounts in the messages/emails. In the recent past, many such cases were reported including profiles of serving and retired UT officers.

Job promises, air tickets, visas

Fraudsters invite applications for jobs on the fake portals which match reputed job providing portals by changing alphabets. They obtain bio-datas, send them confirmation letters of jobs in foreign countries, MNCs and charge a heavy fee.

groups ranging from 15 to 80-years were among the victims targeted successfully and unsuccessfully by fraudsters. Interestingly, in many cases, timely information to the cyber cell about hacking, sharing of confidential details, etc., resulted in the saving money.

Sources in UT cyber cell said, "There are a number of cases when we received information within moments after the crime. We immediately urged the concerned bank management to block the account number or freeze it, so the money could not be withdrawn/ transferred. In many incidents, we were successful. The victims themselves can approach the banks."

1930 is the centralised National Cyber Crime reporting helpline number. The number is linked with the control room of many states including Chandigarh, Punjab and Haryana.

When The Indian Express phoned the helpline number, the response was only received from the Chandigarh desk, which can be reached by dialling the extension 3. There was no response for 1 and 2, to reach the Punjab and Haryana police desks, respectively.

"The cyber criminals are out-smarts. They are ahead in technology also. Though the figures of cyber crimes have been increasing, most crimes remain un-reported due to social stigma and a reason why cyber criminals remain scot-free. Further, there is no lamination of any geographical boundaries. They operate across the world and they need not be physically present at spot. This complexity makes it harder for the LEA to completely curb this menace," Gurcharan Singh, cyber faculty head in Central Detective Training School (CDTS), Sector 26, had told The Indian Express, in an interview last month. Gurcharan Singh's observa-

tion was evident from the fact when Vikas alias Vicky (23) from Fatehabad in Haryana arrested by the Chandigarh cyber cell was found linked to at least 1,352 cyber crime cases reported across the country on May 9.

Eight cell phones and four International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) numbers seized from Vikas were uploaded on the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (ICCC) portal. The portal found the numbers linked with 1,352 cyber crime cases. The ICCC is a centralised portal where the police of every state/UT upload the numbers of seized mobile sets along with their IMEI numbers. Vicky was arrested in connection with the fraud of Rs 83,979 from a woman on the pretext of refunding her money related to her SBI credit card on April 18.

Panchkula, Mohali privy too

Neighboring cities including Panchkula and Mohali are also privy to cyber crimes. According to ACP (Panchkula) Raj Kumar Kaushik, at least 100 cases in which fraudsters duped people merely on the pretext of updating their Know Your Customer (KYC) details pertaining to their bank accounts have been reported only in Panchkula.

How to avoid getting cheated

■ Avoid sharing any particulars like bank account details with strangers directly or over the phone.

■ If you have been cheated, immediately call the toll-free helpline 1930.

■ If you do not receive a response from your bank after reporting a fraud, contact the Banking Ombudsman at RBI, Sector 17.

■ Get sensitised about online banking and transactions before using online banking services.

Two directors booked for Rs 3.66-cr fraud

Chandigarh: The UT Police booked the directors of two Ghaziabad-based companies for cheating a Mani Majra-based businessman of Rs 3.66 crore by stealing his shares and selling them further. The suspects, Ramesh Arora and Suman Arora, directors of Altruistic Trading and KSBL Securities Limited, Ghaziabad (UP), and other unidentified persons. Satya Dev Saimwal, director, Panchkula Finvest Private Limited, NAC, alleged that Ramesh and Suman represented themselves as SEBI share brokers and financial consultants to enhance the valuation by deploying high level professional strategies to the complainant. He reported that they transferred shares in their favour and secretly sold the security property and misappropriated the amount. **ENS**

3 arrested with 150 gm heroin

Mohali: Zirakpur police arrested three persons, Gurmukh Singh, Ranjit Singh and Yadvinder Singh, and recovered 150 grams heroin from them. All the accused belong to Ropar and were carrying the drugs in their car, when they were stopped at a naka by the police. Nakas have been set up across the district to check suspicious vehicles. Police also beefed up vigil after the attack at Punjab Police's intelligence wing in Sector 77, last week, and taking to Punjab to supply to their clients. **ENS**

Dummy weapons confuse cops

Mohali: The Matrou police was faced with a tricky situation after a car was stopped in Phase VII and two bags with dummy weapons were found. An officer said that the two were going to UP to provide the weapons to a film production company for the shooting of a Punjabi film. The weapons were released after necessary verification. **ENS**

MOHALI SANITATION WOES

Facing residents' ire, MC allots contracts to maintain parks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MOHALI, MAY 15

MOHALI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (MC) allotted the work of maintaining parks in the city to contractors, on Saturday. The work will start within the next two days. Residents in many areas have been criticising the civic body for not allotting the work, and that the parks have been in a poor condition for many months.

The MC has around 600 parks under its jurisdiction in the city. Out of these, around 100 are being maintained by the Resident Welfare Associations (RWA) in different areas. The parks are in shambles for the past four months due to delay in allotting the work to the contractors to maintain them. If the MC officials are to be believed, the delay happened due to the imposition of the model code of conduct in the state ahead of the Assembly elections held earlier this year. An officer said that due to the delay in the allotment of work, there were many com-



A park in bad shape in Phase I, Mohali. Express

plaints from residents about the poor condition of parks.

An officer added that in many parks, there was no cleanliness at all which had added to the woes of residents. Deputy mayor Kuljeet Singh Bedi told The Indian Express that the work orders worth around Rs 3 crore had been allotted to the contractor and the sanitation work will start within the next two days.

Bedi said there has been a backlog of work as contracts were not given out, adding that

action will now be taken in case of irregularities. The opposition had been targeting the ruling dispensation in the MC for the lack of sanitation in the city. The opposition had also alleged that such a situation had never arisen in the past, where the parks were in such a bad state. Opposition councillor Sukhdev Singh Patwari said that the present dispensation has made a mockery of sanitation in the city, adding that parks are in bad shape and the cleanliness of roads is also poor.

PRAYER MEET ON FIRST BARSIS OF MILKHA SINGH, NIRMAL MILKHA SINGH

Jeev remembers parents: 'Mawan thandian chhawan, Peo tatte gheo'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, MAY 15

A PRAYER meet and remembrance meeting was conducted by the Milkha family on the occasion of the first barsi of Flying Sikh Milkha Singh and former Indian volleyball captain Nirmal Milkha Singh in Chandigarh on Sunday. The Milkha couple, who breathed their last within one week of each other on June 13 and June 18 respectively last year due to Covid-19, were remembered by family -- son Jeev Milkha Singh, daughters Dr Mona Singh, Sonia Sanwalka and daughter-in-law Kudrat Milkha Singh apart from grandson Harjai Milkha Singh -- and

friends during a ceremony on Sunday afternoon.

The family had organised Sukhmani Sahib path at their Sector 8 residence on Saturday.

"It is very difficult and emotional to talk about my parents. We still feel the void and cannot believe that they are not there with us. But I would like to share an experience with you which I realise now. With age and experience, we were blessed that we were born in the house where we were given the right guidance and my parents taught us to always be humble. One day, I asked dad while my mother was present, 'Dad, why you are so firm and mom is so gentle?' He said, 'Mawan thandian chhawan, Peo tatte gheo (mothers are like



Jeev Milkha Singh along with his family members pays tribute to his parents on the first anniversary of their death, at a hotel in Chandigarh on Sunday. Jasbir Malhi

Parking row turns ugly, cross-FIRs filed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PANCHKULA, MAY 15

ROW OVER parking turned ugly when two parties, residents of same colony, fought over a wrongly parked car, on Saturday night. Cross FIRs were registered by the Panchkula police. The cases were registered against a 57-year-old Aashu Varun and two others, and Chetna Munshi and her husband Anubhav Mishra.

An altercation took place when two residents of Kendriya Vihar, Sector 14, allegedly had a brawl

Police stated that both parties suffered injuries in the brawl

over wrong parking. While giving details of the case, the police official stated, "Chetna Munshi and her husband parked their car which the other party (Aashu Varun) said was in the wrong parking. While she alleged that she was assaulted by Varun and two others, Varun man also alleged that he was man-handled by Munshi and her hus-

band over the issue. A serious altercation took place between both the parties following which a case had to be lodged and cross FIRs were registered."

The situation turned so ugly that Munshi suffered injuries under her eye and below the neck while Varun was also injured. A medical examination of both the parties was conducted late Saturday night at the civil hospital, Sector 6, Panchkula.

A police official said that a case under sections 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), 354 A (assault or use criminal force in-

tending to outrage the modesty of a woman) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) has been lodged against Varun and two others, while a case against Munshi and her husband has been lodged under sections 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code.

While Munshi alleged that there was delay in the registration of a case, police officials denied the allegations stating that facts were being cross checked to lodge an FIR in the matter.

Man booked for sexually harassing nursing student

Mohali: Kharar police booked a man after he allegedly sexually harassed a nursing student and assaulted her friend on Sunday. The accused was arrested and later got bail. The complainant told police that she was at her training shift at a hospital when the accused, Love Jeet Singh, came to the hospital and started bothering her. When her friend tried to speak to Lovejeet, he assaulted and abused her. **ENS**

Farmer booked for burning stubble

death of a toddler as well. The Dera Bassi police booked Jeet Singh under sections 427 (mischievous causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees), 188 (disobedience to orders duly promulgated by a public servant) and 304-A (death due to negligence) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). A case has been registered on the complaint of Ranveer Singh.

A major fire erupted on the outskirts of Sundran village on Saturday afternoon, which entered shanties located near the fields. The fire spread after Singh

set his fields on fire to burn the paddy stubble. This practice is banned in Punjab.

Due to the fire, a toddler identified as a Rupali was killed due to severe burn injuries and another child sustained serious injuries. The shanties belonged to the labourers who work in factories or as farm labourers in the area. "It was a sheer negligence on the part of the accused. Stubble burning is banned in the state we have registered a case and initiated the probe," a police officer said.

who had flown down from the USA last year to take care of her parents, was present in the ceremony along with her younger sister Sonia Sanwalka. The couple's third daughter Aleeza Grover could not attend the ceremony due to some other family commitments.

"One thing which both my parents taught us was the importance of stability and balance in their lives. We as kids would often spend time with them observing them portraying different roles as a player, administrator and father and mother to us. And they would always tell us to be balanced and stable in our approach to life. This remains the biggest gift to each one of us from our parents and will always

remain with us in our lifetime. Their loss remains the biggest loss to the whole Milkha family. It was unfortunate that we lost both of them to Covid-19 but they led a content life and guided us throughout," Dr Mona Singh told The Indian Express.

Among those who paid their tributes were BJP leader Sanjay Tandon, PGTI president Uttam Singh Mundy, golfer Harmeet Kahlon apart from some young golfers and athletes. "Milkha sir was special to the golfing community too and he would always encourage young golfers. Whenever PGTI hosted an event at Chandigarh, Milkha sir made sure that he was there to compete in the Pro-Am and to cheer the professional golfers," said Mundy.

6 REGION

After Sunil Jakhar's resignation, focus back on faultlines in Punjab Congress Committee

Former PCC chief Navjot Sidhu and his successor Raja Warring differ on the veteran leader's value to the party

NAVJEEVAN GOPAL
CHANDIGARH, MAY 15

WITH VETERAN Congress leader Sunil Jakhar quitting the party on Saturday, the existing faultlines in the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee (PPCC) were once again on display. Former state Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu came out in Jakhar's support soon after the former PCC president announced his decision in a Facebook Live stream while the party's current state chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring lashed out at him.

Calling Jakhar "an asset worth his weight in gold", Sidhu on Saturday tweeted, "The Congress should not lose #sunil-jakhar ... Is an asset worth his weight in gold ... Any difference can be resolved on the table."

Dalit leader of Congress and former legislator Raj Kumar Verka — who had initially publicly criticised Jakhar and demanded his expulsion, before re-

versing his stand and calling for unity — said the former PCC chief's resignation was a "sad day" for the party. "As a true soldier of the Congress and Rahul Gandhi, I will say only one thing that on one side the Chintan Shivir is underway in Udaipur, all senior leaders of the Congress need to do 'chinta' on the assets of the Congress getting finished."

But Warring, Sidhu's successor, said Jakhar was out of the party because of "wild and unsubstantiated allegations against the party that gave so much to him and his family".

Punjab Congress working president and former minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu said, "There is no doubt that all (Congressmen) consider him (Jakhar) a good person. But, today the Congress party needs discipline. If a party leader has any grudge against any other party leader, it should be conveyed on the party platform. Even if you want to quit the party, it should be done in a re-

spectful manner."

Criticising the veteran leader, a senior Congress leader said, "He (Jakhar) was never good to anybody. While serving as PCC chief, he did not go to the grassroots level and did not organise any mass contact program. Someone told him from Delhi that many Punjab leaders were in favour of him (as the CM face) and he made an issue out of that. I don't know what plans he has, but I am very much sure that not even a single person will support or accompany him wherever he goes."

Jakhar's rise and fall

Jakhar was 48 years old when he entered the poll fray in the 2002 Assembly elections. His father Balram Jakhar is the longest-serving Lok Sabha Speaker, served as the governor of Madhya Pradesh, and was close to the Gandhi family.

Sunil Jakhar was branded a reluctant politician but managed to make people sit up and take notice for he neither dressed like

a career politician nor spoke like one. He fought and won the election from his family's pocket borough of Abohar and went on to repeat the feat in 2007 and 2012.

Between 2012 and 2017, he was the Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly. He suffered a surprise defeat in the 2017 Assembly polls at the hands of a local councillor from the BJP but managed to bounce back by getting elected to the Lok Sabha that year from Gurdaspur in a by-poll necessitated by the death of actor-turned-politician Vinod Khanna. He lost from Gurdaspur in the 2019 parliamentary elections to the BJP's Sunny Deol.

Following the downturn in his electoral fortunes, Jakhar's position in the Congress became precarious. In the run-up to the Punjab elections, Jakhar that the Congress leadership did not choose him as its chief ministerial face as he is Hindu and following the poll debacle labelled former Chief Minister Charanjit

Singh Channi a liability. Last month, the party's disciplinary committee issued him a show-cause notice saying he was accused of making "derogatory statements against Congress leaders and also attributed motives to the leadership of thinking on communal lines while deciding the leadership of CLP Punjab".

Jakhar also got in trouble with the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes, which directed the Jalandhar police to register an FIR against him for allegedly making objectionable comments about Dalits in a television interview. Though Jakhar did not name anyone, his remarks were construed to be aimed at Channi.

Jakhar did not reply to the party's show-cause notice, saying that instead of making a "public spectacle" out of it, senior Congress leaders should have spoken to him.

Though he did not hold any organisational posts, the party

last month stripped him of all positions for not budging from his position. "This is what ails the Congress," Jakhar said on Saturday. I do not know about AAP, but the Punjab Congress has been demolished by party leaders sitting in Delhi who know nothing about Punjab, Punjabiat, and Sikhism."

Wishing the party "goodbye and good luck", Jakhar questioned the functioning style of party president Sonia Gandhi and advised her to be wary of "sycophants". To revive the party, he asked the Gandhis to "lead by command" instead of being "misled" by those who "don't know about the ground realities of Punjab".

Lashing out at senior Congress leader and Sonia's advisor Ambika Soni, Jakhar said she was a "blot on Punjab, Sikhs and Sikhi" and "defamed and insulted Hindu community" by creating a narrative that "Punjab will be on fire if a Hindu becomes the chief minister".

Uphill battle of veterans & kin to get dues continues

MAN AMAN SINGH CHHINA
CHANDIGARH, MAY 15

THE OFFICIAL apathy towards veterans and their dependents is nothing new but every now and then there comes welcome news where some veteran or dependent wins the legal battle finally in face of stiff opposition from the civil bureaucracy of MoD or the Army bureaucracy. One such case is that of the wife of an Asian Games Gold Medallist and ex-Havildar of Sikh Regiment who was forced to defend her case in the Supreme Court to get a family pension of Rs 14,000 (plus DA) per month with arrears of ten years.

Beant Kaur, wife of late Havildar Hakam Singh was made to run from court to court for getting her dues with appeals being filed against her in the Supreme Court. Recently, the stoppage of pension of a retired Army Commander hit the headlines and caused great consternation in military circles, but there are thousands of such cases where JCOs, Jawans and their dependents are made to fight legal battles till Supreme Court to get what is their rightful due.

The pension imbroglio has shown that if even senior officers are not spared the ignominy of running around for their dues then what may be the case with junior officers and other ranks and their widows/next of kin settled in remote areas.

Hakam Singh's case has been a sad one where his family suffered due to many reasons, for which the athlete was himself partly to blame too initially. A Gold Medal winner at the Asian Games in Bangkok in 1978 in the 20 km race walk category. He was also a Dhyan Chand Trophy awardee. A soldier in the 6th Battalion of The Sikh Regiment, he faced a court martial and was dismissed from service without any pension in 1987 after serving for 14 and a half years in the Army.

The Ex-Servicemen Grievances Cell run by a group of veterans and led by Lt Col SS Sohi (ret'd) came to know about the plight of Hakam Singh and his family and took up a case in Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) for award of disability pension and won the case in Jan 2018. Unfortunately, the former athlete could now enjoy the benefits because an appeal was filed by the MoD against the orders of the AFT and he passed away in August 2018.

After the appeal in the apex court failed, the wife of Havildar Hakam Singh finally got her family pension released this month after an uphill struggle. The veterans of the Ex-Servicemen Grievances Cell celebrated the event by distributing sweets at their weekly meeting in Mohali last Friday. Incidentally, the cell, which was allowed to function from the open courtyard of the District Sainik Welfare Office in Mohali in the past, now functions under a tree in the small park op-



Gen A S Aujla

posite the office after being turned out some months back. The veterans of the cell have been doing yeoman's service to the veterans community and their dependants for getting their dues from the Records Offices and other organisations and function without any government help.

ARTRAC compiles ancient Indian strategic sayings

With a recent impetus from the highest quarters on indigenous strategic thought process and not depend upon western strategic ideas or Chinese ones, the Army has been quick to look at ways and means to implement that agenda. Accordingly, the Army Training Command (ARTRAC), Shimla,

has published a compendium of 75 Indian stratagems after researching ancient Indian historical scriptures. As per ARTRAC, "the stratagems edify on the wisdom and rich strategic culture of ancient India."

It would be pertinent to mention here that ARTRAC came up in 1991 in Mhow and was shifted to Shimla in 1993. Its role is supposed to be formulation and dissemination of concepts and doctrines of warfare in the field of strategy, operational art, tactics, logistics, training and human resource development.

New Corps Commander in Srinagar raises hopes

There is considerable excitement over the appointment of Lt Gen AS Aujla as the new GOC of 15 Corps in Srinagar. The General officer has commanded an infantry division in the valley and has also commanded a brigade in the same theatre of operations. He has served as a Brigadier in the Infantry Directorate of Army HQs when the present Northern Army Commander, Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi, was the DG Infantry. He has also served as a Major General General Staff (MGGS) in Northern Command Headquarters in Udhampur. There are high hopes being expressed by many in the Kashmir valley that he would bring about a welcome change in the circumstances prevailing therein.

CHINTELS PARADISO ROOF COLLAPSE

Groundwork done, Haryana to hand over case to CBI

VARINDER BHATIA
CHANDIGARH, MAY 15

IT WAS in February when the ceilings of multiple flats collapsed at a posh housing society — Chintels Paradiso — in Gurgaon's Sector 109, resulting in the death of two people. Now three months later, the Haryana government has decided to hand over the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation for a thorough investigation.

Sources told *The Indian Express* that all the legal modalities have been worked out by the state government and procedures completed to hand over the case to the independent investigating agency. A senior officer privy to the developments told *The Indian Express*, "All the requisite reports that were required from the district administration and police department have been received by the state government. The case shall be sent to CBI for a thorough and deep investigation. Certain officials of the Town and Country Planning Department, district administration and other departments are in the dock for allegedly colluding with the builders in giving sanctions to the project despite structural flaws and violations of the requisite norms and procedures."

"The state government also wants CBI to probe the manner in which the colony license was issued to the developers. The license was issued to the developers during the Bhupinder Singh Hooda-led-Congress government in Haryana," a source told us. On February 10, after two people died in the roof collapse of several flats in the building during a repairing work on the sixth floor of Tower-4 of the building's D-block, Haryana Police had regis-

tered an FIR against Ashok Saloman, developer of Chintels Paradiso, and various others on the complaint lodged by Rajesh Bhardwaj, one of the residents of the housing society. Rajesh's wife Ekta Bhardwaj was the first casualty in the incident. The roof collapse had begun on the sixth floor and stopped on the first floor of the tower.

Two weeks after the incident, the then Gurgaon DC, Nishant Kumar Yadav, reconstituted the committee probing the factors and circumstances that led to the collapse. The team was given the mandate of coordinating with the expert teams appointed by IIT, Delhi for the structural audit of the housing society and submitting a report in three months. The committee was also asked to supervise the re-settlement of families residing in Tower-D and evaluate the prevailing market rates and cost of interior works of the damaged flats.

The district administration had also ordered that in wake of the structural defects in about 100 flats of towers E, F, G and H of the housing society, the cost of possible shifting of the families residing in those towers would also be borne by the developer. Besides that, the committee was also asked to determine if the structure of the affected block (Tower-D) could be made habitable after making necessary improvements.

While the preliminary investigation reports of the district administration and committee probing the circumstances that led to the report hint at the possibility of substandard construction material and structural flaws, the developers refuted claiming that they had used the "highest quality of material and workmanship for the project".

Maruti Kharkhoda plant to produce its first electric car in 2025: Chautala

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, MAY 15

THE MARUTI Suzuki's plant at Sonapat's Kharkhoda will manufacture its first electric car in 2025, deputy CM Dushyant Chautala said on Sunday. At this plant, Suzuki will make motorcycles in 100 acres while Maruti will make electric vehicles in 800 acres. About 11,000 youth will get employment in Maruti industry and about 3,000 youth in Suzuki's motorcycle manufacturing industry, Chautala added.

"Progress cannot stop if the thinking and intentions are right. Haryana government has done this even in adverse circumstances. During the past one year, about Rs 28,000 crore has been invested at various places in the state, due to which new employment opportunities have been created. In Kharkhoda too, Maruti-Suzuki has taken steps towards setting up its plant on 900 acres, which will be of special benefit to the youth of the region", Dushyant said while addressing a public meeting at Kharkhoda's Anaj mandi, today.

"Maruti-Suzuki will start manufacturing the first vehicle in Kharkhoda in the year 2025. Due to the law made to give reservation to the youth of Haryana in the private sector, 75 percent employment will be given to the youth of the state. The mother plant of Maruti-Suzuki will be established here, with the help of which many small industrial units will also be established. In this way employment opportunities will increase further. In the coming five years, Kharkhoda will get a different identity on the international map. The development of Kharkhoda is being accelerated on the lines of Gurugram", Dushyant added.



Smoke clouds appear in the hills during a forest fire caused due to dry weather near Tutikandi in Shimla on Sunday. Pradeep Kumar

Blistering weather conditions prevail across Haryana, Punjab; Gurugram sizzles at 48.1°C

Chandigarh: There was no respite from the sweltering heatwave in Punjab and Haryana as mercury hovered well above normal levels on Sunday, officials said.

Gurugram in Haryana sizzled at 48.1 degrees Celsius, making it the hottest place in the two states even as maximum temperatures hovered well above 43 deg Celsius at most places, according to the meteorological department.

Muksar in Punjab also reeled under extremely hot weather, recording a day-temperature of 47.4 degrees Celsius. Among other places in Haryana, Hisar saw a high of 47.3 degrees Celsius.

Severe heat prevailed in Sirsa, which recorded a high of 47.2 deg C while Rohtak recorded a maximum of 46.7 deg C. Bhiwani experienced a high of 46 degrees Celsius. Ambala's highest tem-

perature during the day was 42.1 deg C while Karnal's maximum settled at 42.4 deg C.

Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states, braved yet another hot day, with the maximum settling at 43 deg C.

Meanwhile, intense heatwave prevailed in Bathinda, which recorded a high of 46.8 deg C while Amritsar sweltered under severe heat at 46.1 deg C. PTI

Bar & Bench must together find a cure to malady of adjournments



DR BALRAM K GUPTA

THE CASE Arjun Gopal vs Union of India was being argued before the Bench of Justice M R Shah in the Supreme Court on April 19, 2022. This matter pertained to ban of firecrackers. The Bench felt that one of the reasons for pendency of cases was the frequent adjournment requests made by lawyers. Justice Shah reportedly said: "If we don't

grant time we aren't liked, but we are least concerned whether we are liked, we don't want to work according to certificate of others, as per our conscience we should work."

He added that every day five-six adjournment letters are filed on the grounds of personal difficulty. "We cannot ask as to what is the personal difficulty." It is apparent that these observations of the Hon'ble Judge were prompted by his serious concern about frequent adjournments and heavy pendency.

This is indeed a matter of concern both for the Bar and the Bench. The Bar and the Bench are two wheels that must move in coordination and cooperation. Without this, the smooth operation of the justice delivery system is interrupted. Therefore, this matter demands thoughtful consideration.

ADJOURNMENTS IMPAIR JUSTICE

Lawyers normally do not make requests for adjournments in those courts in which they know the adjournment will not be granted. Consequently, the lawyers come prepared to argue the cases. They take the liberty of making requests for adjournments rather frequently in those courts where they feel they would be accommodated. A request for an adjournment halts the adjudication process. The Bench should consider it most sparingly.

What is genuinely bothering me is the observation of the Hon'ble Judge, "We are least concerned, whether we are liked or not." This kind of feeling should never be generated in the Bar and the Bench. If the judge feels he is not liked, will it not shake the objectivity of his mind? Should such a feeling be allowed to creep in? Will this

not disturb the balance between the Bar and the Bench? It is the right of the judge to say a firm 'No' to an adjournment. That is the end of the matter. Why should the judge feel that he is not liked? More so, when the judge is uniform in declining the request. Believe me, many lawyers themselves do not like seeking adjournment. Equally, they hate it when such requests are made by other lawyers. This is a disease that spreads. Sometimes opposing lawyers join hands to seek adjournments. This unhealthy practice must be curbed.

OPPORTUNITY FOR JUNIOR COUNSEL

There is another aspect to it. The senior counsel is busy in another court. Accordingly, a request is made to pass over or to adjourn the matter. The junior counsel making the request is asked to start with the case and

the senior would join after finishing the arguments in another court. Invariably, the junior lawyer is not prepared with the case and says he has no instructions to argue the matter. This

SPECIAL TO THE Express

is an unfortunate situation. The junior counsel seldom gets the opportunity to argue the matter. In this process, even when he gets an opportunity, he is not prepared to avail it. I feel each senior counsel owes a responsibility to nurture a team of young lawyers. Once the senior allots a case to a particular lawyer of his team, it becomes his responsibility. The senior needs to ensure that the instructing counsel must be so well-prepared that if required

to argue the matter, he is in a position to argue it.

First, if the counsel is thorough with the case, he would be able to assist the senior counsel effectively as it ought to be. Secondly, the office of the senior is a laboratory for the junior counsel and he must prepare the cases given to him thoroughly. Judges always encourage young lawyers. They give them the opportunity to argue. No one is a born lawyer. The life journeys of Nani Palkhivala, Kanhaiya Lal Misra, Ram Jethmalani and Fali S Nariman are demonstrative of this. The young lawyers need to change their mindset. There is no substitute for diligence.

THE VAGUE 'PERSONAL DIFFICULTY'

Judges are humans. In case of sudden illness or death or emergency, the lawyers are always accommodated. But many times, a

request is made for adjournment on the grounds of 'personal difficulty', a term both vague and wide. Therefore, adjournment on this ground should be avoided.

The basic malady is that once a lawyer gets a stay order in his favour, he does not wish to argue the matter, and continues to seek adjournments. The opposing counsel too does not oppose it. The judge also gives adjournments willingly, given that the daily roster is so heavy. This mutuality will have to be broken as it hampers the administration of justice. Members of the Bar must stop seeking adjournments. The judges in turn will grant adjournment only in exceptional situations.

Justice Vineet Saran while speaking at the farewell function on May 10, 2022, described the relationship between the Bar and the Bench, saying "Bar is the Lord Krishna. It guides

Arjun. Arjun is the Bench." This in short is the essence of the relationship. The Bar guides and assists the Bench. The quality of judgment depends upon the quality of assistance. The lawyers learn the court craft. The judges also need to develop court craft. The court craft of Justice Saran was, he would show he was angry during the hearings. In reality, he was not. The showing of anger was only to caution the lawyer. This recipe could also be applied to frequent adjournments. The judge ought to show his annoyance at requests for adjournments. The Bar must realise it's wastage of court time. Not to delay justice should be part of rule of law. Both the Bench and the Bar must work together for this common goal.

(The writer is Professor Emeritus, Senior Advocate and Director (Academics), Chandigarh Judicial Academy)

7 REGION

AFTER ANNOUNCEMENT OF MSP FOR MOONG

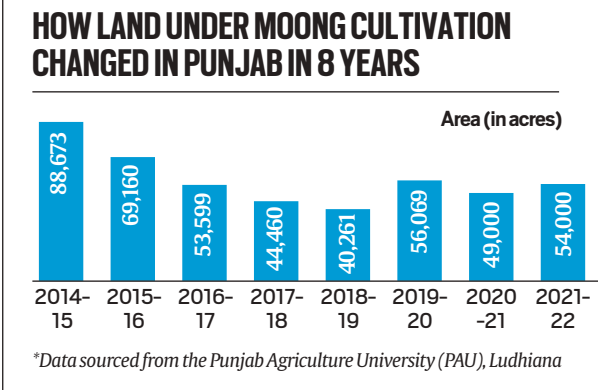
Summer moong cultivation touches 8-year high, a 42,000-acre jump from last fiscal

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA
JALANDHAR, MAY 15

SUMMER MOONG cultivation in Punjab has touched an eight-year high of 96,000 acres (38,900 hectares) this year, an increase of around 42,000 acres (16,196 hectares) from the previous season.

This is quite beneficial for Punjab does not grow enough pulses to meet its consumption and thus relies on other states to make up the deficit. The state grows only 15 per cent of its total consumption. Agricultural experts said that the area being used to grow moong would have increased manifold if Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had announced providing a Minimum Support Price (MSP) on moong before the sowing phase in April.

As per data from State Agriculture Department, Mansa district led the state in sowing moong over 25,000 acres (10,000 hectares) i.e. 25 percent of the total area sown under this crop in the state. Followed by Moga 12,750 acres (5100 hectares) and Ludhiana 10,750 acres (4,300 hectares). The area under moong in Bathinda and Sri Muktsar Sahib districts is 9,500 acres (3,800



hectares) and 8,750 acres (3,500 hectares).

The Chief Minister has already reiterated its government's firm commitment to purchase every grain of the moong crop with a pre-condition that they will have to sow paddy of either PR-126 variety or Basmati in the field used for moong after its harvest as both these crops take far less time for maturity and require much less water as compared to other varieties of paddy.

Bhagwant Mann also appealed to farmers to save only available natural-resource water by adopting patterns of alternative crops. To encourage the farmers to go for Direct Sowing of Rice

(DSR), the state government has already announced financial assistance of Rs 1,500 per acre to them. Summer moong is a high cash value crop and its cultivation timing fits well between wheat harvesting and rice sowing in the state. This short duration crop, which takes around 60 days to grow, not only plays a vital role in improving soil health and conserving natural resources but also boosts the income of the farmers of the state.

If farmers are able to sell moong for the fixed MSP of Rs 7,275 per quintal, a 5 quintal per acre harvest can earn them nearly Rs 27,000 per acre (2.4 hectares) at a time when the fields mostly



A moong field before harvest in the state. *File*

lie vacant (after the wheat harvest and before paddy sowing)

This value estimate is after taking into account expenses related to field preparation, sowing charges, seed cost, labour, insecticides and harvesting. This comes somewhere close to Rs 10,000 per acre. Not only does moong provide an additional income, but it also bears nodules on its roots that improve the nitrogen levels in the soil. Experts say that the fields where moong is sown require lesser amounts of urea fertilisers, about 25-30 kgs, per acre.

According to experts, summer moong should ideally be sown by the second week of April and completed by the third week to

fetch a higher yield and protect the crop from an early monsoon in June. Agriculture experts said that in some parts of the state, summer moong has become quite popular ever since the Punjab Preservation of Sub Soil Water Act, 2009, came into force three years ago. The Act prohibits the sowing of paddy before June 10 to conserve groundwater.

Dr Gurvinder Singh, Director of Punjab Agriculture Department, said that there is a need to bring large areas under summer moong as it enhances soil fertility as well as farmers' income. He said that this could be possible if farmers get full MSP on moong.

MOONG MSP: GREAT STEP TOWARDS CROP ROTATION

Chandigarh: International president of World Punjabi Organisation and chairman of BRICS Agri Council Vikramjit Sahney has appreciated the announcement of MSP on moong cultivation in Punjab by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

Sahney added that Punjab is expected to produce 4 lakh quintals of pulses. It is a great step towards crop rotation and addresses the problem of reducing water level.

Sahney hoped that the government will promote cultivation of oil seeds such as soya, sunflower, canola etc as prices of edible oil are increasing.

He also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for accepting procurement of shrivelled grains which will help Punjabi farmers and will contribute to the food security of the nation.



SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal during a recent meeting of SGPC at Teja Singh Samundri Hall in Amritsar. *Express*

1946 resolution of SGPC on 'Sikh state': What Simranjit Singh Mann missed

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR
AMRITSAR, MAY 15

ON MARCH 9, 1946, about 80 members of the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbhandak Committee (SGPC) general house convened at the Teja Singh Samundri Hall in Amritsar to pass a resolution calling on Sikhs to strive for a separate Sikh state.

"The present political state of affairs in the country holds out ominous portents for all nations, including the Sikhs," read the SGPC resolution. "In view of the revolutionary changes which are occurring in the country and realising the need to protect Sikh identity, the SGPC declares that the Sikhs are a nation. This general house of the SGPC considers it imperative to have a Sikh state to preserve the main Sikh shrines, Sikh social practices, Sikh self-respect and pride, Sikh sovereignty, and the future prosperity of the Sikh people. Therefore, this house appeals to the Sikh people to endeavour to achieve the goal of a Sikh state."

At a meeting in the same hall on May 11, Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) president Simranjit Singh Mann, a retired IPS officer whose party is the only one to still contest elections in Punjab on the demand for Khalistan (a separate Sikh state), joined the other two rival Akali Dal groups – the Shiromani

Akali Dal (SAD) and the Shiromani Akali Dal (Delhi) to demand the release of Sikh prisoners. Mann did not miss the opportunity to subtly remind the SGPC about the 1946 resolution for a Sikh state and urged the organisation to back the idea of Khalistan. He even asked the gathering to wink to show their support for a separate Sikh state.

But what Mann glossed over was that the context of the 1946 resolution and his party's Khalistan demand are not the same.

Opposing demand for Pakistan

Before Partition, Sikhs constituted about 13 per cent of the population of Punjab province where Muslims were a majority. The SAD was born in 1920 with the objective of looking after the political interests of Sikhs. The SAD worked primarily as a "Sikh extension" of the Congress before the demand for Pakistan became a part of the national discourse.

At a meeting between the SAD and the Khalsa Darbar – an organisation representing different Sikh parties established in 1932 in Lahore – on June 14, 1936, a 19-point manifesto was tabled for elections. The first point was on the fight for "Puran Sawraj" (complete independence) as there was apprehension that the colonial government could declare Punjab a Muslim-majority province.

Four years later, at a party conference in February 1940, the SAD opposed the idea of Pakistan and repeated its demand for "Sawraj". At the time, with relations between the SAD and the Congress breaking down over the Pakistan issue, Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Master Tara Singh, "You have nothing in common with the Congress. You believe in the rule of the sword, Congress doesn't."

Of the three resolutions passed at the SAD conference in

Attari on February 10-11, 1941, one was on the opposition to the idea of Pakistan and the second reiterated the demand of "Puran Sawraj". The all-parties Sikh conference on April 8, 1942, in Amritsar passed a resolution saying, "We will not allow Punjab to become Pakistan."

At an "Akhand Hindustan" conference in Delhi on October 8, 1944, Master Tara Singh said, "Sikhs are protectors of India. Punjab is ours. It is a Sikh state. Mahatma Gandhi cannot communicate Sikhs from India. Even if the majority of Hindus agree with Pakistan, there is no justification that it should be forced on Sikhs."

The Sikh leader participated in another "Akhand Hindustan" conference in Ludhiana the following month to oppose the formation of Pakistan.

Towards the 1946 resolution

With the possibility of Pakistan's formation growing stronger, many Sikh leaders started calling for a separate Sikh state to counter the demand for Pakistan. Though the word "Khalistan" was mostly used from the 1970s, its emergence can be traced back to pamphlets

distributed in 1942 by Dr Veer Singh who called for a Sikh homeland.

On May 19, 1940, more than 100 Sikh leaders gathered in Amritsar and formed 21-

member committees of the Khalsa Raj on the lines of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Sikh empire. On June 6, 1943, the Sikh National College in Lahore released a manifesto on "Azad Punjab" or independent Punjab. The same month, the SAD passed a resolution calling for "Azad Punjab". Master Tara Singh said the idea of "Azad Punjab" was no different than the 17-point charter presented to Mahatma Gandhi on March 20, 1931.

On July 28, 1944, Sikh MLA Mangal Singh said, "Demand of Azad Punjab will come to existence after formation of Pakistan. If there is no Pakistan then there is no demand. Then Azad Punjab will be part of India. Azad Punjab is different from Pakistan and not on its lines."

At a meeting of more than 500 Sikh leaders at the Teja Singh Samundri Hall in 1943, a resolution supporting the demand for a Sikh state was passed. The SGPC resolution three years later came when it became apparent that the formation of Pakistan was almost inevitable.

Khalistan and sedition law

Unlike the 1946 SGPC resolution, the Khalistan demand emerged in the 1970s in reaction to the alleged discrimination against Sikhs in independent India.

In the 1986 Balwant Singh vs State of Punjab case, the Supreme Court acquitted two Sikhs who had been charged with sedition, saying their slogans of "Khalistan Zindabad" and "Raj Karega Khalsa" did not incite violence. This judgment allows Mann's party to contest the elections on the Khalistan demand and not attract charges under the sedition law. But the party is now on the margins of Sikh politics and received only 3.85 lakh votes in the Assembly elections in February.

Punjab, Haryana to restart wheat procurement

ENS & PTI
CHANDIGARH, MAY 15

PUNJAB AND HARYANA governments have decided that the wheat procurements in the two states will continue and the markets will remain open till May 31. The decision was announced by CM Manohar Lal Khattar while speaking at "Haryana Pragati Rally" at Yamunanagar on Sunday.

Punjab's Minister for Food and Civil Supplies Lal Chand Kataruchak on Sunday ordered continuation of wheat procurement operations in 232 mandis in the state until May 31. According to an official statement, this announcement was made after carefully examining the "ramifications" of the recent decision of the Centre to ban wheat exports. Notably, India has banned wheat exports in a bid to check high prices amid concerns of wheat output being hit by scorching heatwave.

"This time, the production of wheat has decreased. So PM Narendra Modi has banned the export of wheat. In order to ensure that every poor person of the country gets food grains, wheat will be procured again in Haryana for 15 days as per the

decision of the central government and it will start from May 16, which will continue till May 31. Farmers who want to sell their wheat can come to the mandis," Khattar said.

Earlier in the day, he also inaugurated and laid foundation stones for seven development works worth Rs 334 crores, inaugurated several other projects and announced various projects worth crores of rupees in both Jagadhari and Yamunanagar.

To promote plywood industry in Haryana, Khattar announced that the first Forest Research Institute will be set up in the state at Rs 50 crore.

Audio-track of Khelo India games launched

CM Khattar and sports minister Sandeep Singh launched the audio-track of Khelo India on Sunday. This year, Khelo India Youth Games-2021 will be organised in the state from June 4 to 13, 2022. "The Khelo India Promotional Song will work to instill enthusiasm among the young sportspersons coming from different states of the country. This year, once again the whole world will get to see the power of the players of Haryana through the platform of Khelo India Youth Games Year-2021.

Despite doubled MSP, target to sow cotton on 4L ha, experts unhappy

Say state has more potential, almost double area was used three decades ago

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA
JALANDHAR MAY 15

DESPITE FARMERS selling cotton at double the MSP set by the Centre and talks to bring more area under the crop as an alternative to paddy, the state only is targeting over 4-lakh hectares of land this year, 1.18 lakh (30 per cent) of which has already been sown on till Monday (May 9th). Experts believe that this target is far from Punjab's potential, claiming that almost double the area was used to grow cotton in the state three decades ago.

Experts said that the rate of cotton, which is sown between mid-April and May end, was quite high in the last season and farmers sold it for Rs 13,000 per quintal. However, they added that the attack of pink bollworm on the crop last year is making the farmers think twice before sowing it on more land.

Chief Agriculture Officer Mansa Dr Manjit Singh, while talking to *The Indian Express*, said that area under cotton in their district was 52,000 hectares last year and a target of 64,000 hectares has been set for this year. They have already sown cotton on 30,000 hectares. Mansa is one of the 8 major cotton sowing districts of the state.



Experts said that the rate of cotton was quite high in the last season and farmers sold it for Rs 13,000 per quintal. *Express*

"Farmers got a very high price for cotton crop in 2021-22 but because of the attack of the pink bollworm, they could not get the desired bumper crop and faced huge yield loss in some districts of the state. That factor is making several farmers hesitant about increasing the area under cotton. But still, there are farmers who are increasing the area under the crop this year," said Dr Manjit.

"Though this increase seems to be good if one looks at the figures of the previous years, a total

of 4-lakh hectares under cotton crop is not impressive in a state like Punjab where this crop needs to have around 8-lakh hectares under it. The state used to have 7.58 lakh hectares under cotton," said a senior scientist from Punjab Agriculture University (PAU), Ludhiana, adding that it is crucial to divert area under this alternative to paddy.

Experts also said that the pink bollworm attack could have been averted easily if farmers were made aware of it and precautions had been taken in time.

STATE-LEVEL FUNCTION ON BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SHAHEED SUKHDEV

Real tribute to martyrs if we can eradicate social evils, says Bains

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUDHIANA, MAY 15

PUNJAB JAILS and Tourism Minister Harjot Singh Bains Sunday said that the Aam Aadmi Party government is committed to preserving the legacy of freedom fighters and our martyrs, due to whose sacrifices we are living in a free society.

He said this while attending the state-level function organised on the birth anniversary of Shaheed Sukhdev at Guru Nanak Dev Bhawan in Ludhiana.

Bains said that Shaheed Sukhdev played a major role in India's struggle for Independence.

Born in Ludhiana in 1907, Sukhdev was hanged to death by the British along with Rajguru and Bhagat Singh in 1931 at Lahore. Since his childhood days, Shaheed Sukhdev had witnessed the brutal atrocities that the Imperial British Raj had inflicted on India, which



During a havan on the birth anniversary of Shaheed Sukhdev at his ancestral place at Naughara on Sunday. *Gurmeet Singh*

then led him to join the revolutionaries, vowing to set India free from the shackles of British dominion. He was a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), and organised revolutionary cells in Punjab and other areas of India.

Paying tribute to Shaheed Sukhdev, Bains said that the Bhagwant Mann-led Punjab government has chalked out pro-

grammes so that our young generation can seek inspiration from our great freedom fighters. These functions are being organised to promote national integration and instil patriotism among the people. The families of the martyrs are a treasure to the country and we must pay proper respect to them. Even the ancestral houses of all martyrs are like religious places and people should visit

them for paying obeisance. He said that the Punjab government would soon bring ancestral houses of all freedom fighters and prominent personalities on the tourist map.

Dr Manju Malhotra, who presented a brief note on Shaheed Sukhdev, said that he was the associate of Shaheed Bhagat Singh and Shaheed Rajguru. She said that it was on March 23, 1931, that the three brave revolutionaries, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, were hanged. She said that Shaheed Sukhdev was just 24 years old when he became a martyr for his country. However, he will always be remembered for his courage, patriotism and sacrifice of his life for India's independence.

Earlier, the Cabinet Minister paid tribute to the martyr by visiting his ancestral house in Mohalla Naughara. He also took part in the havan ceremony being organised by the managing committee.

Haryana Police warns people about fake power bill messages

Chandigarh: The Haryana Police issued an advisory requesting citizens not to share any information on fraud messages being sent to them regarding unpaid electricity bills along with a contact number.

Cautioning people to be aware, a Haryana Police spokesperson said, "a latest trend of cyber crime has come to the fore in which fraudsters have started duping people in the name of unpaid electricity bill. They send text messages pretending to be from trusted sources to get targets to click on links that install malware to steal personal and banking details. We are constantly trying to help the people by advising them to refrain from falling into the trap of such scammers".

Asking people to be cautious of such criminals, the spokesperson said, "People are advised never to share their personal information or phone number unless they know the person or organisation well." **ENS**

9

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

We should make a law that makes purchasing less than MSP punishable. If you don't give the farmer remunerative price, and allow private players to have their own way, he will go for distress sale

Manraj Grewal Sharma: How is Congress preparing for the 2024 elections? As a veteran leader, what do you think the Congress needs to do to give BJP a good fight?

As far as policies are concerned, the Congress is for the poor, farmers and labourers. But the present NDA government has made a shift in its policies, and the result you can see — the rich are getting richer and the poor are becoming poorer. As for me, I'll talk about farmers and farm workers. What is the need of the hour? The farmer gets minimum support price (MSP), not maximum retail price, but sometimes he doesn't get even that. Before these three farm laws were passed, there were three ordinances. At that time, I had said that the government should come forth with a fourth ordinance. In these ordinances, they were going for private mandis. I have no problem with private mandis but in private mandis, MSP was not mandatory. In APMCs, MSP is mandatory. So I said there should be a fourth ordinance so that if anybody, private or government, purchases less than MSP, it is punishable by law. So the farmer will get his due. Till now, farmers are not getting their due.

Manraj Grewal Sharma: Experts feel that market forces will help not only in diversification but also in giving the farmer better remuneration. For instance, this year, some farmers managed to sell their wheat for more than the MSP in Haryana as well.

Sometimes it happens. This time, due to the Russia-Ukraine war, even farmers in Punjab got Rs 5-10 more (than the MSP) for wheat, but that is not a remunerative price. The NDA government promised to double the income of farmers. It is 2022 and their income has actually fallen due to the rising cost of inputs such as diesel and fertilisers. During the 10 years of the UPA government, the average increase in MSP was 12-22 per cent. In the last seven years, MSP has increased by only 5.5-7.5 per cent. There is no problem in privatisation, but anybody purchasing less than MSP, whether private or APMC, should be punishable by law.

Harish Damodaran: Won't this drive away the private players?

Fifty per cent of the total employment is given by the agriculture sector. People from rural areas are migrating to cities because of unemployment. If you don't give them remunerative price, and allow private players to have their own way, the farmer will go for distress sale. You can't strangle farmers like that. You have to balance things so both farmers and private players earn.

Manraj Grewal Sharma: You mentioned that the shrinking land holdings are making farming unsustainable. Shouldn't we think out of the box instead of just focussing on MSP?

Unless MSP is there, farming won't be sustainable. There are other things also that need an increase in income, for example, dairy, fisheries and poultry. There are not only farmers but landless farm workers too who don't get finance from the banking sector. They should be given finance for piggery and poultry etc. The farm agitation took place because farmers thought the government was abolishing the MSP.

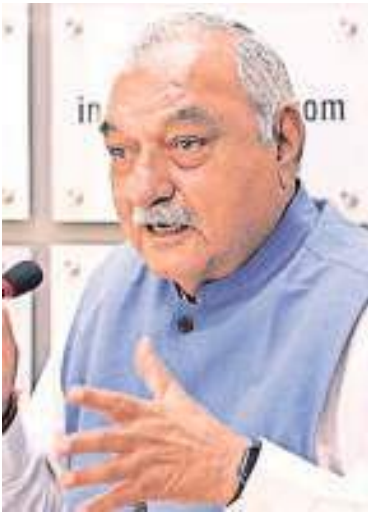
Manoj CG: You were one of the signatories of the letter that 23 partymen wrote to Sonia Gandhi in 2020. Recently, you said the party should introduce collective and inclusive decision-making at all levels. After that, Uday Bhan, considered close to you, was made Haryana Congress president. Are you still miffed with the party?

I was never miffed with the party. Every Congressman is close to me. But, we had some suggestions. And in future also, if I think it is in the interest of the party, I'll keep on suggesting. That was the basis of the letter. It was not against or in favour of anybody. Those were some suggestions on how to turn the party around, because Sonia Gandhi said that the base of the party was weakening.

Manoj CG: What was Kumari Selja not doing that Uday Bhan will be doing?

She did good work too. But this is a process. I was also PCC president. What I did or didn't do isn't the question, but I was changed.

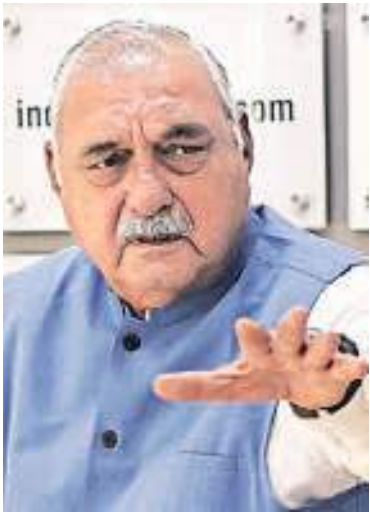
Manraj Grewal Sharma: Uday Bhan reportedly said Congress will do away with the quota system in ticket distribution.



WHY **BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA**

One of the tallest Congress leaders, and leader of Opposition in the Haryana Assembly, Bhupinder Singh Hooda was chief minister of Haryana from 2005 to 2014. With the recent revamp of the party unit in the state, and the appointment of his loyalist as the Haryana Congress chief, the former CM has cut through the party

factions to emerge the undisputed leader in the run-up to the assembly elections in 2024 when the state will face a new contestant in the Aam Aadmi Party. Hooda, who has considerable support among farmers, was also recently entrusted with preparing an agenda paper on farmers and agriculture for the Congress' Chintan Shivir



Everybody has said that there cannot be any alliance without Congress. Which party leads depends on the nature of the alliance — if it is a state or Central alliance. For 2024, we will decide accordingly

‘The only way out is to fight for the cause of the people; a leader then emerges automatically’

Bhupinder Singh Hooda talks about what the Congress needs to do to give a good fight to the BJP, preparing for the 2024 elections and giving farmers their due. This session was moderated by Manraj Grewal Sharma, Resident Editor (Chandigarh), *The Indian Express*



Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda in conversation with Manraj Grewal Sharma at the Idea Exchange. *Renuka Puri*

Tickets should be decided on winnability. In a democracy, the number of seats you can win depends on the candidate, as now, along with the party, the face also matters. So priority has to be given to the person's winnability regardless of his affiliation.

Liz Mathew: Everyone feels that this is one of the worst times the Congress is facing. What do you think the Congress should do immediately to make itself a formidable alternative to BJP, at least in some states?

Any party in a democracy should fight for the aspiration of the people; they should go with what the people aspire for, and what people expect from them. So, we should fight for their causes. Today, in Haryana, whether it is farmer, labourer, trader or government servant, nobody is satisfied with the present government. We have to take up their cause.

Liz Mathew: BJP has emerged as the ultimate ruling party without any major opposing forces. We are also seeing the emergence of AAP. What should Congress have done from 2004 to 2014 to prevent this oblivion?

Democracy comprises a ruling party and an Opposition. The Opposition comes to power only when it is able to give the promise or power to people. We failed in that. In 2009, LK Advani was a stalwart but he was not able to promise the people that he'll form the government. But in 2014, Narendra Modi gave this promise and he won. In politics, even one event can change the whole story. Let's see what happens.

Liz Mathew: We have seen AAP recently taking up the nationalism cause, in line with BJP. They took some steps to please the majority, while keeping a distance from certain issues hurting a minority community. We have read in history that Congress leaders, be it Indira Gandhi or Rajiv Gandhi, had taken certain steps that were seen as pleasing a particular community. What is your view on this kind of politics?

In a democracy, every party has the right to do that. So AAP is also doing it. The reason it succeeded in Punjab is obvious; it was the main Opposition party. If the Congress would have made some changes some two years ago, it would have been better. But leave that aside. AAP has no presence in Haryana. In Haryana, people look at only Congress as an alternative.

Manraj Grewal Sharma: Do you think the AAP sweep in Punjab will have an impact on Haryana?

Haryana has Delhi on three sides and despite being in power for so many years in Delhi, AAP couldn't make their presence felt in Haryana. Punjab is different. Every state has got different political situations.

Harikishan Sharma: You said Haryana is looking towards Congress for an alternative but trends show that your vote share has been steadily falling since 2005 when you were the CM even though Congress' slide nationally began in 2014. Your vote share in Haryana fell from 43 per cent in 2005 to 35 per cent in 2009 to 24-25 per cent in the 2019 assembly polls. How can you convince people to view your party as an alternative when your base is steadily eroding?

What was the result in 1996? The Congress had only six-seven seats out of 90. In Lok Sabha, we got only two seats — one was mine, the other was of Kumari Selja. But slowly, in 2000, we got 24 seats. These things happen and will continue to happen. The present government in Haryana has failed completely. It has proved to be a non-performing government, just an event-management government. People have realised this and that's why, they are looking towards Congress.

Shyam Lal Yadav: We have seen how BJP made parivarvaad (nepotism) a big issue in UP and succeeded. In Haryana, your third generation is in politics. You became the CM with 81 seats and now you're at 31 seats. To safeguard yourself from this BJP attack, don't you think Congress should give an opportunity to new people?

It's not the third but fourth generation; my grandfather contested in 1923, he was a towering leader. My father was a member of seven different Houses. Nobody in the world is a member of seven different Houses, except my father. I have been to the Lok Sabha four times and five times to Vidhan Sabha. Deepender has also been



in the Lok Sabha thrice, and is now in the Rajya Sabha. The question is how you behave with people — whether they accept you or not. There is no such thing that is you are a politician your son can't go into politics. Or if you are a journalist, your son can't become a journalist. If he's a good journalist, he will carve his own position.

Manoj CG: You're a grassroots leader. What is the political counter to this aggressive Hindutva run by the BJP and RSS?

Follow Mahatma Gandhi's policy and his thoughts. He was a staunch Hindu but had respect for every religion. The Congress has always followed Gandhi's policies.

Liz Mathew: During his trial on Babri Masjid, LK Advani said he had learnt to use religion in politics from Mahatma Gandhi.

This is what I'm saying. We will always follow Mahatma Gandhi. What is bad about it, when he was able to take everyone along with him. Be it Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian, everybody took part in the freedom struggle under his leadership. The idea should be how to use it to build our nation. If you make a road, can you make a road for a particular religion or a caste? It has to be for all.

Shyam Lal Yadav: Your government was in power for 10 years from 2004 to 2014. Since then, it seems Congress has done little for the party even though Rahul and Sonia Gandhi were free. You too must be wondering why Congress is shrinking.

This is why we have organised the Chintan Shivir. We are holding party elections. We will start from the block level. In Haryana, there were no ground-level block Congress committees or district Congress committees for the last seven years. For any organisation to be strong, the subordinate organisations are a must. So, this time we are having elections for

Follow Mahatma Gandhi's policy and his thoughts. He was a staunch Hindu but had respect for every religion. The Congress has always followed Gandhi's policies

block, district and state Congress committees. We will build a strong organisation.

Shubhajit Roy: Gandhi was in favour of prohibition (of alcohol). Haryana has one of the most liberal policies.

Gandhi's disciple Nitish Kumar is enforcing prohibition, right? What's the result? You have to realise what social changes are happening. Bansi Lal had tried prohibition, but what is its result today? There were several shortcomings in that. In Nitish Kumar's Bihar, so many people are locked up in jails.

Shubhajit Roy: There's a debate at the national level that UPA allies should take the lead and Congress should take the backseat. What is your take?

Everybody has issued statements that there cannot be any alliance without Congress. Which party leads depends on the nature of the alliance — if it is a state or Central alliance. For 2024, we will decide accordingly. In the state elections, the major party that should take the lead has to be accommodated by everyone.

Congress has to be in the mainstream in the national alliance. In 1977, when the Janata Party was formed, who was leading? Even Morarji Desai's name was not declared for the Prime Minister's post. So, that depends upon the political situation. If everybody in the alliance thinks about the interest of the country, they will decide accordingly.

Manoj CG: What has changed since 2014 in the relationship between Hindus and Muslims? What should be the political response to communal tension?

In Haryana, the government, to hide its failures, distracts the people. These are not real issues. We have been living together for so many years. Everybody knows that everybody has to live together. We have respect for every religion. We carry everyone along with us. We don't get involved in hate politics. The Congress is highlighting the real issues. People will realise slowly. It takes time in a democracy.

Manraj Grewal Sharma: Recently, both the Akali Dal and the Congress celebrated their centenaries. Both parties are on the decline. And one grouse against both is nepotism; there, they ask to change Badal, here, they talk of replacing Rahul.

If someone says in a democracy that their party will never decline, that is not true. I have seen when there were only two members of Parliament from BJP. I've seen more than two-thirds majority of Congress. It happens. And it is good for

democracy. Nobody should monopolise power. Nobody should think they are immune. People see everything, they are very intelligent. They decide at the right time.

Manoj CG: Congress president elections will happen in August-September and Lok Sabha elections in two years. Do you think Sonia Gandhi should continue till the LS elections are over?

The party is holding elections, and whoever is elected should be the president. The party holds democratic elections. If Sonia Gandhi is accepted by all, she'll be there.

Varinder Bhatia: In the current scenario when your party is sliding, do you think a change of face can revive it?

Nowadays, along with the party, the face also matters — whether it is the Congress or the BJP. Can you ask any BJP person, what will be your position minus Narendra Modi? In 2004, we assisted Sonia Gandhi (to become the Prime Minister), I was in Parliament, but she refused. In our party, we think about the people. The only way out is to fight for the cause of the people, for their problems. A leader then emerges automatically.

Sourav Roy Barman: Over the next few months, Arvind Kejriwal is going to travel to Haryana and hammer home the point that all parties are tried and tested, give us a chance. With Haryana sandwiched between two AAP-ruled states, can you afford to dismiss AAP? Also, why do you think the talks fell through with Prashant Kishor?

I can't say anything about him (Kishor), but as far as AAP is concerned, every party has got to come and convince the people. But in Haryana people see an alternative only in the Congress. And I am saying this because I know the ground realities.

Varinder Bhatia: You've been holding Vipaksh Aapke Samaksh programmes but we never saw the state Congress President participate. But the newly appointed president was there with you at the recent programme. Is it an attempt to present a unified face?

There's no question of factionalism. Our next programme is in Fatehabad and the Congress state president will be there too. These programmes are organised by the legislature party. Because the MLAs have to know (the problems), they have to be on the ground so that they can raise these issues in the Assembly. That was the idea of that programme.

The Indian **EXPRESS**

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

CAUGHT WITH CHAFF

Government ban on wheat exports hurts farmers and traders, dents India's image as a reliable global supplier

LAST JULY, THE Narendra Modi government imposed stockholding limits on pulses, going against the farm reform laws it had enacted only in September 2020 and before their formal repeal in November 2021. That move, and the latest decision banning wheat exports, constitutes not just knee-jerk reaction to inflationary pressures. Of more concern is their long-term impact on the farm trade and policy credibility. Building export markets, establishing warehousing infrastructure and creating supply chains takes both time and money. Investments in these — whose necessity for Indian farmers and consumers alike is not in doubt — are predicated on a stable policy framework. Which agri-business will have the confidence to put up large processing and storage facilities or search for new buyers for Indian produce if the government does abrupt policy about-turns — by telling them they cannot stock more than 200 tonnes of pulses or contract fresh exports?

The flip-flops in government actions is evident from the department of commerce, on May 12, issuing a statement about the Centre sending trade delegations to nine countries “for exploring possibilities of boosting wheat exports from India” and, a day later, prohibiting shipments “with immediate effect”. True, the country's wheat production has fallen due to the sudden spike in temperatures from mid-March, resulting in premature ripening and shrivelling of the grains. But this was known by early-April, when most ground reports pointed to farmers harvesting 15-20 per cent less yields compared to last year. How was the Minister of Commerce Piyush Goyal, then, talking about Indian farmers “feeding the world” and projecting exports of 10-15 million tonnes (mt) in 2022-23, breaking last year's record 7 mt, even in mid-April? This was indicative of either poor crop intelligence — inability to gauge yield losses from the heat wave — or refusal to admit that production has been significantly lower than the “record” 111.32 mt estimate made in mid-February.

The ban on exports has apparently been prompted by wheat procurement plunging to around 18 mt, from last year's all-time-high 43.3 mt, and the resultant depletion in public stocks seen as threatening “food security”. But if that was so, what stopped the government to pay a bonus above the minimum support price, incentivising farmers to sell to it rather than private traders and exporters? Nor was there any need to continue with supplying free wheat, apart from the regular quota of ration cardholders. If at all exports were to be discouraged in order to contain inflation, a better way would have been to impose a tariff or a minimum price below which shipments aren't permitted. A blanket ban is like breaking the knees of farmers and traders, from which they will find it difficult to recover — leave alone helping India's emergence as a reliable global supplier.

BLAME IT ON PUTIN

Russia's Ukraine invasion is driving NATO expansion. Moves by Sweden and Finland to abandon neutrality are evidence

PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S invasion of Ukraine is not only turning out to be a military blunder, but also a political disaster for Russia. It is producing strategic outcomes that Putin's war apparently aimed to prevent — the further expansion of Western military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The decision by Finland and Sweden — two countries that steadfastly remained neutral in the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the West during the second half of the 20th century — to join NATO marks an important moment in the strategic evolution of Europe since the Ukraine crisis began.

The smaller countries on Moscow's western periphery are afraid — very afraid — of Russian military power. For them, membership of NATO is about protection from the Russian threat. NATO membership is a defensive measure for these countries and not aimed as a challenge to Russia. Russia, with its massive army and thousands of nuclear weapons, is well positioned to deter and defend against attack on its territory. Its neighbours don't have that luxury. Putin's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine has reinforced the fears of the smaller countries and raised their incentives for seeking NATO membership. Equally important, Moscow might not have attacked Ukraine if it was already a member of NATO. Gaining membership of NATO has become a matter of greater urgency for Russia's western neighbours. NATO's principle of collective defence — that attack on any member will rally the rest — has now become even more valuable for Russia's eastern neighbours.

Finland and Sweden remained neutral after the Second World War despite the fact that two of their two immediate neighbours — Denmark and Norway — were founding members of NATO that was set up in 1949. They also chose to stay away from NATO, when three neighbours and former members of the Soviet Union — Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania — joined NATO in 2004. But Putin's muscular policies of recent years and Russia's aggression against Ukraine have tilted the scales. Moscow's ill-considered threats against joining NATO have only helped steel the resolve of Finland and Sweden to end their traditional neutrality. Finland and Sweden are important partners for India. Their neutrality during the Cold War had much in common with India's tradition of non-alignment. India had worked with Sweden closely on many global peace and security issues in the past. Delhi and Stockholm were active members of a coalition between neutral and non-aligned nations in the multilateral fora. They joined hands to promote nuclear arms control between Washington and Moscow. The strategic parallel seems to endure. Much in the manner that India has tilted to the US to secure itself against a growing Chinese military threat, the much smaller Finland and Sweden are embracing NATO to save themselves from their aggressive Russian neighbour.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



K SRINATH REDDY

THE INDIAN COUNT of Covid infected persons, as identified by tests, has risen since April. The actual numbers infected or reinfected would be much higher, as many who were asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic would not have gotten tested. However, it was reassuring that most of those who were infected by a member of Omicron's extended family experienced mild illness. This variant clan's inability to penetrate deeper into the lungs and blood vessels may be partly responsible for this feature. Prior immunity, acquired from earlier infection or recent vaccination, may also have been protective against adverse outcomes.

Despite its mild reputation, Omicron infected a very large number globally and claimed many lives. Most of those who became severely ill were either unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated. Even the definition of who is adequately vaccinated is shifting with one or more boosters being added to the earlier two doses and the interval between vaccine doses being reduced as new variants exhibit their enhanced prowess at infection and immune evasion. Mask mandates, withdrawn when Covid appeared to recede, were reintroduced as case counts started a fresh ascent.

In this ongoing match of wits with the virus, will we reach a state of equilibrium where the virus becomes endemic, with manageable seasonal outbreaks that do not steal lives and seal society? Though some commentators have declared that the virus has already become endemic, it is not yet fully predictable in its evolution, behaviour and impact as new variants keep arising. There is presently no global steady state that can be confidently called “endemic”. All we can say is that the virus is here to stay and appears to be moving in the direction of endemicity. However, the possibility of new recombinant viruses birthing from the womb of global vaccine inequity and a worrisome potential for recycled animal to human transmission creates uncertainty about whether and when a steady-state will be reached.

Even as we keep vigil, restrictions have to be withdrawn in stages. The lifting of mask mandates cannot be whimsically hasty, while the imposition of travel bans and school closures should not be knee-jerk responses. A cal-

India needs to shift from a heightened pandemic reaction to a steady-state response



While flood prevention and control require planning and action at multiple levels of government and society, much of the responsibility lies at the municipal level and involves the active engagement of the community. In endemic Covid too, urban local bodies, panchayats, community-based organisations and citizen volunteers must form a coalition that conducts situational analyses and responds with context-relevant prevention, control and relief measures. Health communication must be effective through community networks to prevent panic and protect against misinformation. Community based mental health services will help to allay anxiety and prevent illness.

ibrated response is needed, which provides the right balance of confidence and caution, both in policy measures and personal protection at each stage of an undulating pandemic. Situationally adaptive responses must be dynamically enacted against the constant backdrop of health system capacity buildup for prevention, surveillance and patient care.

Perhaps flood protection measures can provide a model of endemic preparedness. We get rains seasonally every year but don't experience floods annually. When there is a threat of recurrent floods, we raise the level of our embankments to prevent the surge of floodwaters into our cities. We build dams upstream to control downstream water levels in rivers. We create efficient drainage systems to prevent waterlogging in the streets.

We monitor weather patterns to anticipate the threat of floods during extreme weather events. If such events are forecast, vulnerable groups of people are evacuated to safety and people's mobility is restricted to essential services. If not, life proceeds without disruption even when rains arrive. We leave it to routine municipal services to deal with rainwater clearance and sanitation. Even then, we use umbrellas to protect ourselves from getting wet when we are exposed to rain.

Such adaptability is needed when we move from a heightened pandemic response to a steady-state endemic response, while being ready to shift gears when needed. We need to get early alerts of new virus variants, much like warnings of changing weather patterns. When there is a threat of a surge in serious cases, we restrict mobility, continue essential services and pay special attention to the safety of the elderly and those with comorbidities. A multi-sectoral response to a public health emergency, prioritising public safety, would be in order.

In an endemic state, routine health services will suffice for testing and treating cases while maintaining a watch on case counts, clusters and clinical profile of cases. People's mobility will not be restricted but masking in public and crowded indoor locations may be advised when seasonal outbreaks occur. Vulnerable groups of people will be specially protected with vaccine boosters. The general public will be ad-

vised of personal protection measures but life will be near normal during times of seasonal spikes which do not become dangerous waves.

Cities will get flooded even without storms if rainwater drainage and sanitation services are poor. Even a seasonal spike in endemic Covid can pose a serious threat if our health services are inadequately resourced and poorly managed. We need greater investments for strengthening our health services through better infrastructure, workforce, public health expertise, information systems and management. This requires constant attention, not just a crisis response.

While flood prevention and control require planning and action at multiple levels of government and society, much of the responsibility lies at the municipal level and involves the active engagement of the community. In endemic Covid too, urban local bodies, panchayats, community-based organisations and citizen volunteers must form a coalition that conducts situational analyses and responds with context-relevant prevention, control and relief measures. Health communication must be effective through community networks to prevent panic and protect against misinformation. Community based mental health services will help to allay anxiety, prevent illness.

Timely vaccine protection must be provided to all who need it without coercion but by building confidence. Still, there will be some who will be highly vulnerable to serious illness during a seasonal outbreak. Civic sensibility must be fostered so that all persons who have any symptoms suggestive of a respiratory illness voluntarily mask up during a seasonal outbreak to protect others. Infected persons must isolate, with the assurance of medical and social support during the period of illness.

If cases build-up, masking outside home must be mandated, so that asymptotically infected persons do not pose a threat. As we walk in the rain, we take care not to splash water on others. Likewise, in endemic Covid, it will be our civic duty not to infect others.

The writer, a cardiologist and epidemiologist, is president, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI). Views are personal

THE PARTY IS OVER

To stall price spiral, RBI is likely to respond with aggressive hikes



RADHIKA PANDEY

DATA RELEASED BY the National Statistical Office showed that retail inflation had surged to an eight-year high of 7.79 per cent in April, driven by higher food and fuel prices. The former rose to 8.38 per cent driven by double-digit inflation in edible oils and vegetables, while inflation in cereals surged in April because of higher wheat prices. Inflation has now remained above the RBI's upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent for four months in a row.

The second-order impact of higher fuel prices is also visible as inflation in transport and communication surged to nearly 11 per cent, from 8 per cent in the previous month. The April data again showed that rural inflation outpaced urban inflation as the rural consumption basket gives more weightage to food. This is not good news for rural demand, which is yet to show a sustained pick-up.

The latest data also indicates that inflation is becoming broad-based. With the lifting of Covid restrictions and a pick-up in demand, services sector inflation captured by the “miscellaneous” category has surged to 8.03 per cent. And with demand rebounding, the pass-through of higher input costs is also gaining momentum. Considering that demand for goods recovered faster than services, goods producers passed on input costs to consumers. But as services recover, there will be greater pass-through of prices to consumers in the coming months. Concerns about rising services inflation were also reflected in the April S&P Global Purchasing Managers' Index survey for India's services sector. The surveyed service providers highlighted a sharp surge in

their operating expenses from March to April prompting them to pass the impact of rising input costs to consumers.

While there may be a slight moderation, inflation is expected to remain above the RBI's threshold of 6 per cent in the coming months. While global food prices measured by the FAO's Food Price Index eased marginally in April, they are still 30 per cent above that in April 2021. The Ukraine conflict continues to impact markets for foodgrains and vegetable oils. Rising fertiliser prices are likely to push up farmers' production costs, leading to high food prices. While the government has extended price support through higher subsidies, if this will be enough to cool prices needs to be seen.

With sticky crude oil prices and continuing supply-side disruptions amplified by the Covid-induced lockdowns in China, the RBI has rightly reverted its focus on inflation targeting. This is needed as central banks around the world are pursuing tight monetary policies to counter inflation. The US Fed followed its 25 basis points hike by another 50 basis points rise in May. These will be followed by hikes of similar magnitude in the coming months. The Bank of England has raised the policy rate by 25 basis points, its highest in 13 years to tackle inflation. Other countries' central banks are also contemplating rate hikes.

In its April policy, the RBI announced the withdrawal of excess liquidity but did not raise the policy rate. The expectation of a sharp spike in inflation led it to announce an off-cycle 40 basis points hike in the policy repo rate. The

RBI is now likely to respond with aggressive rate hikes to prevent the price spiral from getting entrenched. By committing to bring down inflation through rate hikes, it bank can anchor inflationary expectations. Unanchored expectations will further fuel inflationary pressures. The continued strength of the dollar index and sharp rupee depreciation in the last few days could impose further pressure on prices through higher imported inflation. This reinforces the need for interest rate hikes.

In addition to calibrated rate hikes, the RBI needs to fast-track the withdrawal of the ultra-accommodative liquidity support provided during the pandemic. It needs to present a revised projection of inflation for the current year and its views on the possible trajectory of interest rates. Rising inflation will cut back discretionary spending and adversely impact consumption that had only just started picking up. There are concerns about a recession in advanced economies as rising prices have started manifesting in a decline in purchasing power and a fall in consumer sentiments. The demand destruction could trigger a moderation in prices. Base metals prices have eased from the peak seen in the last few months.

Monetary policy support needs to be accompanied by fiscal support measures. The policy response will have to be tailored to the evolving geopolitical situation and the paths of commodity and food prices while balancing the imperatives of fiscal consolidation.

The writer is senior fellow, NIPFP. Views are personal

MAY 16, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

FALKLANDS ATTACK

BRITISH JETS BOMBED Port Stanley airport and naval commandos carried a night raid into a West Falkland airstrip destroying a number of aircraft and blowing up an ammunition dump. The attacks were reported by the Defence Ministry on Saturday as British diplomats in the US met Margaret Thatcher to report the progress of talks at the UN. British Sea Harrier jets renewed bombing on the airfield outside Port Stanley, capital of the Falklands, in the first military action in the area in two days. In Buenos Aires, the Argentine military junta said its forces repelled the attack.

PM ON PAKISTAN

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi said that Pakistan had not been adhering to the Simla accord since its present military rulers came to power. Pakistan, she said, had been adopting “dubious standards”. On the one hand, that country was talking of friendship with India, on the other, it had been acquiring sophisticated weapons.

CHINESE DELEGATION

AN 11-MEMBER OFFICIAL-LEVEL Chinese team led by Fu Hao has arrived to hold the second round of talks on the border question

and other bilateral matters. Fu, a former Vice-Foreign Minister who has come here as a special envoy of the Chinese government, was received at Delhi airport by Eric Gonsalves, Secretary to the External Affairs Ministry.

EVMS IN KERALA

THE CHIEF ELECTION Commissioner is competent under the law to issue such orders as are necessary to rectify any inadequacy in the existent laws to ensure the holding of elections. This also covers the use of electronic voting machine. The machines will be used in the May 19 Assembly elections in the Parur constituency in Kerala.

The Ideas Page

Steering the ship

To ensure quick induction of submarines, India should seek a foreign collaborator to make necessary adjustments, conduct collaborative trials



ARUN PRAKASH

A DAY BEFORE Prime Minister Narendra Modi was due to visit Paris to meet President Macron, the French defence major, Naval Group, announced its inability to participate in India's Project 75-I, under which conventional (non-nuclear or diesel-electric) submarines are to be built domestically. Coming on the heels of similar withdrawals from this competition by Russian and German submarine builders, this is bad news for the crucial project. Some also see it as a coercive tactic by the group to persuade India to buy more of its Scorpene class subs, of which six have been built under licence by Mazagon Docks Ltd (MDL).

A major issue of contention in Project 75-I appears to be the installation of an air independent propulsion system (AIP) on these vessels. Since conventional submarines are propelled underwater by electric-power, battery endurance remains a major limitation. The submarine has to periodically expose itself to draw air for running generators that charge their battery-banks. It was to overcome this major vulnerability that several types of propulsion systems were evolved in Europe using "air independent," closed-cycle diesel or steam engines which would endow conventional submarines with much longer underwater endurance.

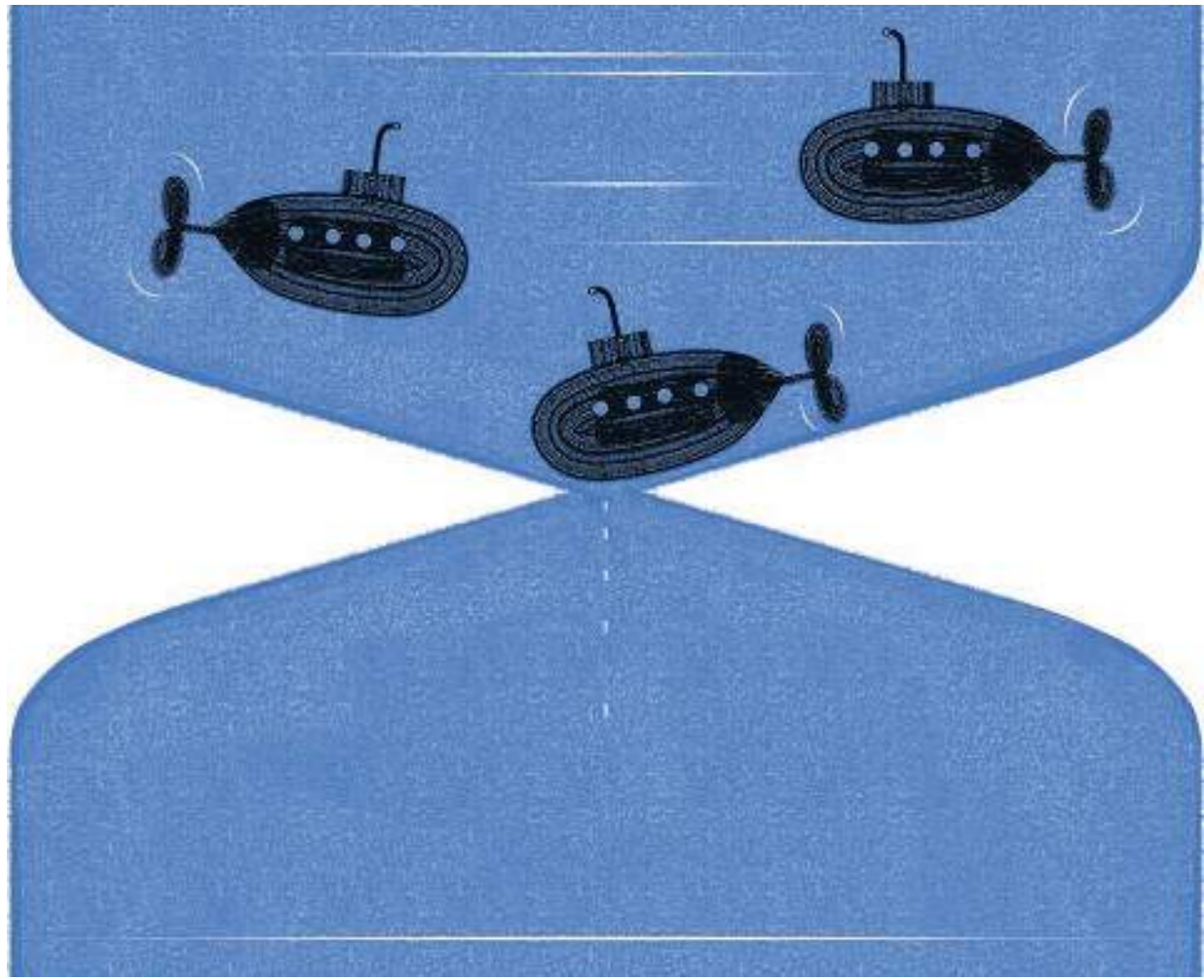
While protracted negotiations between the MoD and the French Naval Group were underway, none of the AIP systems had been fully proven. The contract for license-production of six Scorpenes was thus signed in 2005 without including this system. The Pakistan Navy (PN), obviously less risk-averse, acquired an untried French AIP system and installed it on three Agosta 90B submarines in 2008. What invests the P-75I programme with urgency is the fact that with the addition of eight Yuan Class Chinese submarines, the PN may field up to 11 AIP-equipped boats by 2028.

Project 75-I is also the first programme to be progressed under the MoD's new Strategic Partnership concept which ostensibly offers a "level-playing field" to the private sector. In this model, MDL and Larsen & Toubro will choose a foreign submarine-builder for collaboration and offer competing bids to build six modern conventional submarines.

Here a quick look at the genesis and growth of our young submarine arm is useful. While Pakistan had acquired its first submarine from the US in 1963, it was only two years later that the Naval HQ revived an old proposal for creating a submarine arm. Since the USA and UK were offering only surplus WWII vintage submarines, we turned to the Soviets and between 1967 and 1974 acquired eight Foxtrok class boats of contemporary design along with a submarine depot ship.

The Foxtrots, having trained a whole generation of Indian submariners, a timely step for upgradation of capabilities was initiated by contracting for the modern Type-209 hunter-killer submarines built by HDW of Germany. Between 1986 and 1994, four of the Type 209 boats entered service; two built in Germany and two in MDL.

Unfortunately, allegations of corruption



C R Sasikumar

in this deal scuttled plans for further indigenous construction. MDL closed its production line, representing a huge loss in terms of wasted skills/expertise and delays in capability accretion for the Indian Navy. However, concurrent negotiations with the USSR had resulted in the induction of 10 improved boats of the Kilo Class between 1986 and 2000.

By now, the Naval HQ had projected the need for a standing force of 24 subs in order to meet the growing threats to India's maritime interests. In 1999, the government accorded approval to a "30-Year Submarine Building Plan," which envisaged the simultaneous serial production of two types of submarines in separate shipyards. One of the two types was to be an advanced submarine of imported design, and it was hoped that the second line would, in due course, deliver a home-grown product, designed by our own naval architects with foreign assistance.

Delays in decision-making stalled the 30-year plan, and since 1999, the navy's submarine fleet has been seeing rapid obsolescence and steady depletion of force-levels. The 2005 contract for building six French Scorpene Class submarines under license from MDL served merely as a palliative measure, but even this programme saw huge delays over contractual issues. The sixth and last submarine was launched in April 2022, a full 17 years after signing of the contract.

With force-levels down to 17 ageing conventional submarines, the Indian Navy looked with hope at the Rs 43,000 crore Project 75-I. Commenced on time, this would have been the seamless follow-on to the Scorpene project; ensuring serial-production, and eventual indigenisation of this vital weapon-platform.

However, policy flip-flops and sluggish

This long-neglected project brooks no further delay, and is important enough to attract the time and attention of our highest decision-makers. A practical way forward is for one of the strategic partners and DRDO to jointly seek a foreign collaborator for P-75I who will install the indigenous AIP on the selected submarine and conduct collaborative trials. Once proven at sea, the indigenous AIP could be installed in all new subs and retro-fitted in the old ones. There will certainly be a price to pay, but the alternative is too bleak to contemplate.

decision-making have kept this project in limbo for over a decade. MDL, having launched the last of the Scorpenes, will start running down its state-of-the-art submarine-building facility, losing expertise and highly-skilled workers.

An added complication has arisen from the otherwise welcome development by DRDO of an indigenous AIP system. Based on electrolytic fuel cells, this system produces energy by combining hydrogen and oxygen with only water as the waste product. It has no moving parts and is safer and more efficient than others.

The drawback, however, is that the 8-10 metre-long AIP module has to be installed on a submarine and subjected to stringent underwater trials before the Indian Navy can accept it as "operationally proven" for induction into service. Since installation and trials of this module will be a complex and time-consuming process, three major issues are likely to arise: (a) Who will provide a submarine for trials? (b) who will undertake installation and conduct trials? (c) and most crucially, (d) who in our system will take such crucial decisions in a timely manner?

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There will certainly be a price to pay, but the alternative is too bleak to contemplate.

The writer is a retired Chief of Naval Staff

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Support for membership in Finland and Sweden shows the Russian president's assault on Ukraine has only strengthened the alliance (NATO) Support for NATO membership in Sweden and Finland shows Putin's assault on Ukraine has only strengthened the alliance."

— THE GUARDIAN

Gods aren't crazy, mobs are

Listening to self-appointed interpreters of divine moods will lead us back to the Dark Ages



G N DEVY

IN THE 5TH century BC, the Greek dramatist Euripides understood that there was much at the heart of Tragedy that was comic in essence and much in Comedy that was close to Tragedy. He demonstrated this in *Cyclops*, a satyr-play, "satyrs" being a kind of second-class gods with the ears and tails of horses. One of the characters Euripides created was Polyphemus, a *Cyclops*, known for his shrill songs, weird stories and fondness for younger men. However, in Greek mythology, Polyphemus was the son of Poseidon, the god of the seas. Three centuries before Euripides, the poet Homer had shown Poseidon getting violently angry when the epic hero Odysseus makes the one-eyed Polyphemus blind.

Poseidon's rage, which makes Odysseus' voyage home dangerous, raises some intriguing questions: One, do the gods ever get angry? And two, how do mortals know when the gods are angry? The answer, as provided in the Greek myths, was that Hermes, the interpreter, alone knows when the gods are angry. Hermes is the herald of the gods as well as a trickster — somewhat like the Narada figure in Indian myths. He is also considered the god of travellers, thieves, orators and merchants. The institution of interpreters of gods' moods was not an original Greek fancy. In the 33rd century BCE, the Egyptian dynasts known as pharaohs had founded their authority on the claim of their ability to interpret the gods' moods.

A similar echo of "theological hermeneutics" can be seen in India's history in the institution of the Vedic purohit, phonetically close to the Egyptian pharaoh (pronounced "phe-ro-aa"). Not much is known about how the Indus Valley people thought about the gods' wrath. Though their civilisation disintegrated around the 19th century BCE, the Harappans have not left behind archaeological signs about this. Perhaps, the Indus Valley civilisation had no interpreters, no orators and no figure that anticipated Hermes or the Vedic purohit. In sharp contrast to the Vedic purohit, Buddhism had no concept of an interpreter of the gods. Homer was a near-contemporary of Gautama Buddha. The Buddha located misery and grief in the minds of human beings, in their inadequate understanding of reality, and not in the whims of the gods.

Sadly, the purohits managed to oust Buddhism, and soon after, metaphysics rife with superstition came to be seen as "knowledge". The nobler parts of the Vedic and Upanishadic traditions describe anger as a self-destructive emotion. The Bhagavad Gita speaks of anger as a cause of delusion, memory loss and destruction. Yet, when the interpreters of God's mind assume the form of a coercive social institution, God himself becomes the loser. During the second millennium, the Bhakti

movement rebelled against the self-assumed role of the purohits as God's interpreters. During the 19th century, the resurgence of Hinduism rested on widening access to the divine for all sections of society. The greatest among our national leaders, Tagore, Aurobindo and Gandhi, accepted the idea of God but made humans the centre of spirituality. B R Ambedkar bravely rebelled against the social domination of the purohits and, in works like *Annihilation of Caste* and *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Ancient India*, tried to establish how repressive the idea of the superiority of purohits has been in India's social history. In Europe, Friedrich Nietzsche could speak of the death of God, and after Stalin's coercive policies started hurting people, Louis Fischer, Andre Gide, Arthur Koestler and Stephen Spender used the bold phrase "the God that failed" as the title of a book. In the light of this history of gods and their interpreters, it is absurd in the 21st century to invoke the gods to justify anger among humans.

The ethnography of the interpreters of God's anger should be of interest to those of us who believe in the ideas of justice and the rule of law as upheld by the Constitution. There is a small town called Madhi in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. Every year, thousands of people from nomadic communities get together there and express their devotion to the deity at the shrine. In recent years, the advocates of purohit raj have been gradually blocking the devotees' access to the shrine. When asked if this would make their God angry, many of those nomads replied, "No, our God is not angry, we are angry". They were honest and had not surrendered their ability to think.

Some four decades ago, I used to teach at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. There was a small temple inside the campus. When communal riots broke out in the 1990s, one of my colleagues remarked that if the faculty does not side with the majority community, the God on the campus would feel betrayed and angry. This reminded me of a poem by Aurobindo. Eight decades before my time, he had taught on the same campus. Explaining a sudden and unjustified burst of anger, he wrote, apologetically, "It was not me, but my belly's hungry god that was angry."

One knows that it is humans who get angry when there are no jobs and prices continue to go up, or bulldozers raze their houses. In an attempt to divert the people's attention from the hunger in their bellies, clever interpreters point to some trivial gesture or expression as an insult to the gods. Credulous mobs take the cue and attack the misconstrued expression in the work of painters, artists, singers, writers, cartoonists, protesters, critics, opponents, minorities, meek and mild people — all in the name of the gods. Hermes wins; the journey home for Odysseus gets longer; Buddha has to remain in exile. If we continue to be led by the interpreters of the gods' moods, we may as well find ourselves sliding back to the eras before science replaced myth. Historians describe those eras as the Dark Ages.

The writer is a cultural activist



N S GUNDUR

A rasa yatra

Rajshekhar Mansur saw himself as a 'saadhak', in music and literature

PANDIT RAJSHEKHAR MANSUR (1942-2022), son and disciple of legendary vocalist Pt. Mallikarjun Mansur, passed away in Bengaluru on May 1. He embodied in himself the spirit of the 20th-century Dharwad, which was home to Hindustani classical music and modern Kannada literary culture.

Born in a musical family, Rajshekhar grew up in North Karnataka, the region which boasts a great tradition of Hindustani classical music — Savai Gandharva, Mallikarjun Mansur, Kumar Gandharva, Gangubai Hangal, Bhimsen Joshi, Basavaraj Rajguru and others. Rajshekhar, the only son of the Mansur family, was brought up with seven sisters. Because of the hardships he himself had experienced as a professional musician, Mallikarjun Mansur did not want his son to pursue a career in music. But the musical milieu was so strong at home and in Dharwad that Rajshekhar was destined to be a maestro. It came as a surprise to senior Mansur when he heard of 16-year-old Rajshekhar singing Malkauns at an annual class day in college. His father started teaching him formally when he turned 19, and before that, a lot of informal training had gone into the making of a musician in Rajshekhar by way of his familiarity with ragas as tunes and listening to his father's *riyaz* at home. Thus, Mallikarjun Mansur became a father-Guru.

As Rajshekhar mentions in a write up that is posted on his website, "There was no fa-

ther in this Guru when he began teaching a particular raga. There was neither a son when I was learning from him. It would be a purely guru-shishya relationship." The musical journey of the father and the son contributed immensely to the Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana, pioneered by the late Ustad Alladiya Khan (1855-1946) also known as Bade Khan Saheb, and his two illustrious sons — Ustad Manji Khan (1888-1937) and Ustad Burji Khan (1890-1950). The Mansurs, following the tradition of the Khans, kept the Gharana alive by refashioning its core values.

For 30 years, Rajshekhar accompanied his father in several concerts and committed himself to the Jaipur-Atrauli tradition of *aprachalith* (not familiar) and *durlabh* (rare) ragas. Later, he trained several disciples in India and abroad. His student, both in English literature and music, Mithun once said, "Sir was a true classicist in the pedagogy of music, and he was averse to superficially mixing certain ragas." In his interview with eminent cultural critic Manu Chakravathy, Rajshekhar said that the *jod* raga was not simply putting any two ragas together, and the notion of a *jod* raga had a deep philosophical conception and a profound sense of harmony. For him, music was vidya, something to be learnt by hard work and discipline under the direct tutelage of a Guru.

Like any other children born to celebrities, junior Mansur had to struggle with the

larger than life personality of his father. It enabled him to grow as a musician as much as it constrained him by putting him under pressure, both socially and professionally. In his memoir, *Nanna Rasayatre* (1983), Mallikarjun Mansur candidly mentions the conflict between the son and the father. As the memoir describes, Rajshekhar, who preferred to be all alone at home, was an introvert, moody and emotional. As a student, he was bright, and his father wanted him to be a doctor, but he chose to teach English literature. The late bilingual critic G S Amur, who was his teacher at Karnatak University, used to recall that Rajshekhar was a brilliant student. He did especially well in European Classics, the course Amur taught. Later, he studied Linguistics at the University of Wales.

As his literature student at Karnatak University, I saw Rajshekhar struggling to strike a balance between being a professor of English and a musician. When he joined the department, he was cautioned by his scholar-teacher and the then head of the department about riding the two horses, music and literature. But for Rajshekhar music was not a horse to ride but a unicorn to be understood and explored, and thus he always saw himself as *saadhak*, a seeker.

Though Rajshekhar could not carve a niche for himself as a litterateur in Dharwad, he composed some poems and short stories in Kannada. Moreover, he was a great teacher

of literature and influenced generations of students like me to pursue literary studies seriously. While he looked thoroughly Indian in his music concerts, in our class his British RP marvellled us. The way he taught us Aristotle's *Poetics* made us inquisitive scholars; he was so erudite that he presented different translations of Aristotle and a variety of commentaries. And the way he read literary texts, for example, G B Shaw's *Saint Joan* (1924) enthralled us; he brought music into the dialogues he read aloud. When he taught American Literature, especially Emily Dickinson and Eugene O'Neill, he moved us to tears. He was a charming teacher and we boys were jealous of him as girls admired his personality. He also had the possibility of being a great critic, and his article on Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), published in a research journal, is one of the best critical pieces I have ever read.

Rajshekhar could also have been a musicologist. Apart from demonstrating ragas as a pedagogue, he deeply reflected on the practice of music. He used to advocate that when we learn any art form, we should keep in mind three components — *manan*, *chintan* and *manthan*. A great takeaway from the teacher who taught us music and literature.

The writer is professor, Department of Studies and Research in English, Tumkur University

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE RIGHT CODE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'How to frame the Uniform Civil Code' (IE, May 14). India is a country with people practising many different religions. The framing of the UCC falls within the purview of Article 44, which is a directive principle. As the writer aptly said, before framing UCC, there is a need to make a preliminary review of all the existing acts. The loopholes in the existing acts should be removed first.

Aditi Pangarkar, Pune

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'How to frame the Uniform Civil Code' (IE, May 14). Modern democracy is established through a social contract between the state and citizens. The UCC would make civil rights equal for every citizen irrespective of religion, caste, gender, or region. The author has rightly pointed out the need to shun all regressive laws in the formation of UCC. According to the Constitution, UCC should be country-wide. State-level UCCs, as recently debated in the country, would create more discrepancies among citizens. The government law department needs to study various norms followed by different religious communities in India and outside and bring out the best suited for its citizens in matters of civil rights just like the Constitution was tailor-made for Indians.

H Upadhyay, via email

CHANGE THE LAW

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A question of consent' (IE, 14th May). The debate around marital rape has indeed led to questioning the "foundation" of marriages. There are often two issues around the subject of marital rape — first, it will challenge the institution of marriage. To this, the pillars of marriage should be mutual respect and not the submission of the wife's authority over her body to her husband. Second is the concern of proving "fake" marital rape cases. While the matter might be a little complex, we have a robust system to make and implement laws.

Saumya Shukla, Munger

SECURITY CONCERNS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Soft target' (IE, May 13). It is painful that the Kashmiri pandits continue to be an easy target for terrorists. That our security forces are failing to gain the upper hand in their fight against them shows that there are flaws and gaps in our strategy put in place for this purpose. It is not out of place to mention that targeted killings are not possible without local support. While we must hit our targets the hardest, we must also be accommodative and flexible to those caught in the crossfire. We must not be seen to be caught in a cleft stick.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur



Chandigarh

TOP OF THE WORLD



Macron with UAE's Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. AP

THE GULF

World leaders descend on UAE to pay respects to late ruler

AN ARRAY of presidents and prime ministers continued to descend on the UAE on Sunday to pay their respects to the federation's late ruler. They also came to praise his successor, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan — a vivid sign of Abu Dhabi's influence in Western and Arab capitals. The first Western leader to jet to the oil-rich emirate was French President Emmanuel Macron. He met Sunday with Sheikh Mohammed to pay tribute to Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the long-ailing ruler who died Friday at the age of 73. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was expected to arrive later, along with other leaders including Israel's president after the two countries opened formal relations in 2020. A US delegation led by Vice President Kamala Harris is due to visit the UAE on Monday. **AP**

USA

US to remove 5 from foreign terror blacklist

THE US is poised to remove five extremist groups, all believed to be defunct, from its list of foreign terrorist organisations, including several that once posed significant threats. Although the groups are inactive, the decision is politically sensitive for the Biden administration and the countries in which the organisations operated. The organisations include the Basque separatist group ETA, the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo, the radical Jewish group Kahane Kach and two Islamic groups that were active in Israel, the Palestinian territories and Egypt. **AP**

LEBANON

Mired in collapse, country to choose new parliament

THE PEOPLE of Lebanon voted for a new parliament Sunday against the backdrop of an economic meltdown that is transforming the country and low expectations that the election would significantly alter the political landscape. A new crop of candidates from the 2019 protest movement are running against the country's entrenched ruling class that is blamed for the collapse, hoping to unseat them. But they are divided and lack the money, experience and other advantages held by traditional political rulers with a decades-long grip on power. **AP**

IRAN

Filmmaker: Many movie industry workers arrested

AN AWARD-WINNING Iranian filmmaker said authorities raided the offices and homes of several filmmakers and other industry professionals and arrested some of them. Mohammad Rasoulof said in a statement signed by dozens of movie industry professionals on Instagram late Saturday that security forces made some arrests and confiscated film production equipment during some recent raids. **AP**

18-YR-OLD GUNMAN DROVE HOURS TO BLACK-MAJORITY AREA: POLICE

10 shot dead in live-streamed 'racially motivated' attack at US supermarket

Suspect surrenders to cops; 'manifesto' reportedly written by him says attack inspired by 2019 Christchurch shooting

REUTERS

BUFFALO (NEW YORK), MAY 15

AN 18-YEAR-OLD white gunman shot 10 people to death and wounded three on Saturday at a grocery store in a Black neighbourhood of upstate New York, before surrendering after what authorities called an act of "racially motivated violent extremism".

Authorities said the suspect, who was armed with an assault-style rifle and appeared to have acted alone, drove to Buffalo from his home several hours away to launch the afternoon attack that he broadcast in real time on social media platform Twitch, a live video service owned by Amazon.com.

Eleven of the 13 people struck by gunfire were Black, officials said. The two others were white. The racial breakdown of the dead was not made clear.

Court papers named the suspect as Payton Gendron of Conklin in New York state.

He was arraigned hours after the shooting in state court on first-degree murder charges, which carry a maximum penalty of life in prison without parole, said Erie County District Attorney John Flynn. New York has no capital punishment.

According to local media reports, the teenager was a student at State University of New York's Broome Community College near Binghamton.

When confronted by officers at the store, the suspect held a gun to his own neck, but they talked him into dropping the weapon and surrendering, Buffalo police commissioner Joseph Gramaglia told a news briefing.

Gramaglia said the gunman shot and killed three people in the parking lot of the Tops Friendly Markets outlet before exchanging fire with a retired police officer working as a security guard for the store, but the suspect was protected by his body armour.

Stephen Belongia, the FBI special agent in charge of the bureau's Buffalo field office, said the attack would be investigated both as a hate crime and as an act of "racially motivated violent extremism" under federal law.

Erie County Sheriff John Garcia said: "It was a straight-up racially motivated hate crime from somebody outside of our community."

US President Biden decried the shooting as "abhorrent to the very fabric of this nation" in a statement issued late Saturday. "Hate must have no safe harbour. We must do everything in our power to end hate-fuelled domestic terrorism."

New York Governor Kathy Hochul told a late-evening news conference she was dismayed that the killer managed to live-stream his attack on social media, which she blamed for hosting a "feeding frenzy" of violent extremist ideology.

Twitch said in a statement that it removed the livestream less than two minutes after it started.

In addition, a 180-page manifesto outlining 'The Great Replacement Theory' — the idea that white people are being replaced by minorities — also circulated online, reportedly authored by Gendron. It said he drew inspiration from the man who killed 51 people at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019. Police declined to comment on the document.



Near the site of the shooting in Buffalo, New York, on Saturday. AP

A grisly inspiration for racist attacks

A gunman who had professed racist views attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, on March 15, 2019, killing 51. This seems to have inspired several others to commit similar acts, including the Buffalo gunman. A look at some of them:

APRIL 2019: Prosecutors said a man who killed one person and injured three in an attack on a synagogue near San Diego during the Jewish holiday of Passover was inspired by the shootings in New Zealand.

AUGUST 2019: A gunman who killed 23 people in a crowded shopping centre in El Paso, Texas, posted a long note minutes before the



The suspect is detained after Saturday's shooting in Buffalo, New York. Reuters

attack. In it, he wrote, 'In general, I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto.'

AUGUST 2019: A 22-year-old Norwegian man who was sentenced to 21 years in prison for killing his stepsister and opening fire on a mosque said during his trial that he was inspired by the New Zealand massacre.

The New York Times

N Korea taking 'swift measures', reports more Covid deaths

REUTERS

SEOUL, MAY 15

NORTH KOREA said on Sunday a total of 42 people had died as the country began its fourth day under a nationwide lockdown aimed at stopping the impoverished country's first confirmed Covid-19 outbreak.

North Korea's admission on Thursday that it is battling an "explosive" Covid-19 outbreak has raised concerns that the virus could devastate a country with an under-resourced health system, limited testing capabilities and no vaccine programme.

State news agency KCNA said the country was taking "swift state emergency measures" to control the epidemic.

"All provinces, cities and counties of the country have been totally locked down and working units, production units and residential units closed from each other since the morning of May 12 and strict and intensive examination of all the people is being conducted," KCNA reported on Sunday.

Small wins buoy Ukraine; West says Russians losing momentum Finland, Sweden take a step closer to joining NATO

OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI & CIARAN MCQUILLAN KYIV, MAY 15

ALMOST THREE months after Russia shocked the world by invading Ukraine, its military faced a bogged-down war, the prospect of a bigger NATO and an opponent buoyed Sunday by its wins on and off the battlefield.

Finland decided to seek NATO membership as top diplomats from the Western alliance met in Berlin. The leaders of the militarily neutral country said the invasion had changed Europe's security landscape — though NATO's chief declared that "Russia's war in Ukraine is not going as Moscow had planned."

"Ukraine can win this war," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said, adding that the alliance must continue to give the country military support.

Several hours later, Sweden's governing party also endorsed joining NATO, a move that could lead to the country's application within days.

PM VISITS LUMBINI TODAY

With Buddhist centre, India looks to bolster cultural ties to Nepal

YUBRAJ GHIMIRE & DIVYA A

KATHMANDU, NEW DELHI, MAY 15

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will on Monday travel to Lumbini in Nepal to participate in a ceremony to lay the foundation stone for a Buddhist cultural centre to coincide with Buddha Purnima.

Sources said PM Modi's brief visit to Lumbini — he is expected to be here between 10.30 am and 3.30 pm — is focused on bringing soft power to the centrestage of India-Nepal relations while also marking India's formal presence at the holy site that's barely 10 km away from the border.

The construction of the 'India International Centre for Buddhist Culture & Heritage' — to be undertaken by the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), India, with financial support from the Ministry of Culture — comes decades after most foreign nations, including US, China, Canada, France, Germany and Thailand, among others, built their centres in Lumbini as an instrument of promoting Buddhist philosophy.

Officials in India's Ministry of Culture said that the PM, besides offering prayers at the Mayadevi temple in Lumbini, will also deliver an address at a Buddha Jayanti event organised by the Lumbini Development Trust.

A statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office on Sunday said the PM will be visiting Lumbini at the invitation of Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. "I am honoured to follow in the footsteps of millions of Indians to pay reverence at the sacred site of Lord Buddha's birth. I also look forward to meeting Prime Minister Deuba again after our productive discussions during his visit to India last month. We will con-

tinue to build on our shared understanding to expand cooperation in multiple areas, including in hydropower, development and connectivity."

The PM's visit to Lumbini comes amidst China's evident interest in Lumbini. Almost a decade ago, China had offered to build Lumbini as a world peace centre at a cost of three billion dollars, besides holding talks on bringing China's railway right up to Lumbini.

Modi's visit and his laying the foundation stone for the Buddhist Culture Centre — estimated to cost INR 1 billion and take three years to complete — will mark India's first attempt to develop strong linkages with Nepal's Buddhist heritage sites.

Modi's helicopter ride from Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh, where Buddha is said to have attained Nirvana, will terminate at a newly built helipad in Lumbini, from where he is expected to go to the Maya Devi temple, before laying the foundation stone for the Buddhist centre.

Though there has been no official word yet, indications are that "developmental issues" are likely to be discussed when the two prime ministers hold a meeting before Deuba hosts a lunch in Modi's honour.



The site for India's Buddhist cultural centre. Yubraj Ghimire

Sri Lanka PM extends support to protesters telling President to quit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, MAY 15

SRI LANKA'S new Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, has extended public support to the protesters who have been camping at a popular beachfront here for over a month calling for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's resignation with the country facing its worst-ever economic crisis.

Wickremesinghe said on Saturday that he appointed a committee to look after the interests of the 'Gota Go Home' village protesters who have been camping at Colombo's Galle Face Green since April 9.

It was President Gotabaya Rajapaksa who appointed Wickremesinghe as PM after asking his elder brother Mahinda Rajapaksa to quit.

Wickremesinghe said the young protesters in the village would be safeguarded and their views would be sought for the shaping of future policy.

In an interview with the BBC Sinhala Service, the Prime Minister said the 'Gota Go Gama' protest should be continued to



A protester hangs decorative lanterns to mark Buddha Poonmima or Vesak at an ongoing protest site outside the President's office in Colombo on Sunday. AP

bring a change in the political system in the country and let the country's youth take the responsibility to lead.

Wickremesinghe, the 73-year-old United National Party (UNP) leader, was appointed as Sri Lanka's 26th prime minister on Thursday as the country was without a government since Monday when Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned after violence erupted following an attack on the anti-government

protesters by his supporters.

Talks with World Bank, ADB

Meanwhile, on Sunday, Wickremesinghe held discussions with representatives of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank on the current economic crisis in the country, as India delivered the 12th shipment of diesel containing over 400,000 metric tonnes of fuel to the island nation.

THE KALUSH ORCHESTRA WON EUROVISION WITH THEIR ENTRY 'STEFANIA'

For Ukrainian fighters, Eurovision heralds coming victory over Russia

SERGIY KARAZY

MAY 15

GATHERED IN a basement used as safe quarters north of Kyiv a small group of Ukrainian soldiers joyfully watched their country win the Eurovision Song Contest, saying it heralded their coming victory in the war to evict Russian forces from Ukraine.

The Kalush Orchestra won the Eurovision with their entry *Stefania*, surfing a wave of popular support from all around Europe to claim an emotional victory that was welcomed by the country's president.

"We had a victory: today in



Reuters

Ukrainian service members celebrate (left) the victory of the Kalush Orchestra (right), a band from Ukraine, during the final of the 2022 Eurovision Song Contest. Reuters

Eurovision, but soon we will have a victory in Ukraine-

Russian war," said Tetyana, a military medic, standing in the

basement decorated with children's paintings of Ukraine flag

and "Glory to Ukraine" signs on them.



AP

The tired-looking but happy servicemen had sat around a screen, some tapping rhythmically on their knees when Kalush performed, and when the winner was announced they clapped and cheered with delight.

"We will also win," said Vitaliy, a soldier. "We have shown that we can not only fight, but we can also sing very nice."

The Russian invasion, now in its third month, has claimed thousands of civilian lives, sent millions of Ukrainians fleeing and reduced cities to rubble.

Moscow calls its actions a "special military operation" to disarm Ukraine and protect it from fascists. Ukraine and the

West say the fascist allegation is baseless and that the war is an unprovoked act of aggression.

The southern port city of Mariupol has suffered the heaviest fighting, and while it is now in Russian hands there hundreds of Ukrainian fighters still holding out at the Azovstal steel works despite weeks of heavy bombardment.

Stationed far to the north, closer to the border with Belarus, soldiers in the basement paid homage to the bravery of their comrades in the south.

"The next Eurovision we will host in liberated Mariupol," Vitaliy, the serviceman, said. **REUTERS**

13 ECONOMY

SECTOR WATCH
INSURANCEIrdai douses
'Burning Cost',
premiums may
fall for India IncGEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, MAY 15

WHAT IS THIS COST

■ **Burning Cost** is defined as a kind of break-even cost where the higher claims in the portfolio will automatically lead to higher premiums to be collected in the subsequent year

PAVING THE way for lower insurance premiums for India Inc, insurance regulator Irdai has said that 'Burning Cost' can't be quoted by general insurers as a 'mandated minimum rate' to charge premiums to customers.

The new notification by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) on the role of 'Burning Cost' — which is a reversal of its earlier stand — will now help insurers to lower the premiums for customers, insurance sources said. However, whether it will lead to under-cutting of prices leading to cut-throat competition and under-writing losses remains to be seen. The new situation will be detrimental for the reinsurers who had seen their fire premium going up in the last two years, industry analysts said.

Burning Cost is defined as a kind of break-even cost where the higher claims in the portfolio will automatically lead to higher premiums to be collected in the subsequent year. In a bid to bring in underwriting discipline and checking rampant under-pricing, leading to large underwriting losses in the Indian general insurance industry, Irdai had earlier asked the general insurers to stick to the 'Burning Cost' as prepared by the Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIBI), a data mining body for the Indian insurance industry set up by Irdai, to price any product. The regulator said it has been receiving several complaints from policyholders, both directly and through various platforms such as industry associations, that insurers are referring to the 'Burning Cost' as a 'mandated minimum rate'.

As a result, in FY2019-20, state-owned GIC Re and other reinsurers, foreign reinsurance

branches (FRBs), had increased its fire premium by almost 30 per cent on the basis of higher 'Burning Cost', which, in turn, was passed on to India Inc by the general insurers.

However, the latest Irdai move will allow general insurers to extend appropriate discounts once again. "The objective of the IIBI publishing details of Burning Costs occupancy-wise is only to give information to insurers with regard to industry-level experience for appropriate use while rating risks. By no means does this even remotely imply that this is a 'mandated minimum rate,' Irdai said.

The regulator said it expects insurers to consider all applicable risk factors for rating a risk and give appropriate discounts or charge loading as warranted. The rating approach shall be part of the technical note filed under the Use and File/File and Use procedure as the case may be, Irdai said. Insurance sources said burning cost itself was a fallacy as it ignores all kinds of exposures for the insurers and always the price needs to be greater than burning cost for long-term viability. If this can't be followed either driven by reinsurers or underwriting discipline of insurers, we will be returning to the anarchic days of pricing and be back soon to the difficult days of pre-2019," said a reinsurance official.

Full report on
www.indianexpress.com

EXPLORATORY TALKS WITH SINGAPORE AIRLINES

Vistara could merge with AI,
decision likely by end of 2023PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

TATA SONS has held exploratory talks with Singapore Airlines (SIA), its joint-venture partner in Vistara, for a potential merger of the airline with Air India, multiple sources told *The Indian Express*.

SIA is learnt to have asked for time until the end of next year to decide whether it wants to go ahead. Tata Sons is the holding company of the Tata Group, which took over Air India from the government earlier this year. Vistara is the only other full-service carrier in India.

"The Tatas and Singapore Airlines have discussed the merger possibility earlier this year. SIA had even agreed to join the Tata bid for Air India but because of the pandemic, it decided to back out given its poor financial condition," one of the persons aware of the development said on condition of anonymity.

SIA had waived the non-compete clause in Vistara's contract to allow the Tata Group to bid for the national carrier. Air India is now fully owned by the Tata Group, while Vistara is a 51:49 joint venture between the Tatas and SIA.

"SIA has asked for time till the end of 2023 to decide whether it wants to go ahead with the merger or not. What they're looking for is some stability in their financial condition, and that of Air India's operations post the disinvestment," the source said.

"Discussions on how much equity Singapore Airlines will hold in Air India will be held once it has fi-



An Air India aircraft at Chandigarh airport. File

nalised its intention to merge," the source added.

According to this person, the appointment of Air India's new chief executive is a step in the direction of the possible merger. The Tata Group on Thursday announced the onboarding of Campbell Wilson, a Singapore Airlines veteran and CEO of its low-cost unit Scoot.

Wilson's appointment as Air India's CEO & MD was made with the "full blessings" of Singapore Airlines. "The two groups sat together and took the call to appoint Wilson at Air India. The decision has been taken with a long-term perspective. Wilson has global aviation experience and comes with long-term commitment to lead Air India's turnaround," another source said. Singapore Airlines CEO Goh Choon Phong had said on Thursday: "Campbell is one of our most experienced senior executives who has made many important contributions in key management roles within the SIA Group. While we are sad to lose him, he goes to Air India with our full blessings."

On Friday, in his farewell note to Scoot employees, Wilson wrote:

"...There are other mountains to climb, and I am humbled to have been selected by Air India's board as the airline's new CEO. It is a fantastic opportunity to lead a historic airline, now owned by the Tata Group, to new heights, and I am grateful to embark on that exciting challenge with the full blessings of the SIA management team." The Tata Group won the bid to acquire Air India in October 2021, and the airline was transferred to its new owner in January. Vistara was launched in 2015.

Responding to a question from *The Indian Express* on the possible merger of Air India and Vistara, a Singapore Airlines spokesperson said: "We do not comment on any confidential discussions that we may or may not be having with our partners".

Tata Sons had not responded to an email seeking comments by the time of publication of this report on Sunday.

The Singapore Airlines Group reported a loss of SGD 4.3 billion (approximately Rs 23,851 crore) for the financial year ended March 2021 as passenger volumes fell 97.9% during the period. The group posted its first quarterly profit

since the onset of the pandemic during October-December 2021.

Air India posted a net loss of Rs 5,422.60 crore for the first half of 2021-22. The Tata Group has laid out a roadmap for the recovery of Air India, and to turn it around financially and operationally.

In Vistara, the JV partners have built a premium airline brand. During the January-March period, the two airlines together had a domestic passenger traffic market share of 18.7%.

The Tata Group also owns a majority stake in the low-cost airline AirAsia India, which could be merged with Air India's budget subsidiary Air India Express. Last month, Air India sought approval from the antitrust regulator Competition Commission of India to acquire AirAsia India.

A merger of Air India and Vistara would articulate Tata Sons chairman N Chandrasekaran's philosophy of "synergise", given that the two airlines complement each other in some ways.

They have identical fleets with Airbus A320 family aircraft in the narrow-bodied fleet meant for domestic and short-haul international routes, and Boeing 787 aircraft for medium to long-haul international routes. Air India also has Boeing 777 aircraft for its flights to the United States.

While Vistara has been established as a premium airline brand in the domestic segment, Air India's strength lies in the international markets, especially the US and Europe. Currently, Air India is the only Indian carrier that flies to the US; Air India and Vistara are the only ones that fly to Europe.

'84% of staff feel organisation
culture improved since Covid'

Around 84 per cent of employees globally say the organisation's culture has improved since the start of the pandemic, an EY Survey said



As employers shifted gears

providing more flexible work options, there is more that they will need to invest in — that includes higher pay and overall brand building of the organisation

Methodology

The survey canvassed the views of over 1,500 business leaders and more than 17,000 employees across 22 countries and 26 industry sectors. In India, the responses are captured by more than 100 business leaders and more than 500 employees

36% OF EMPLOYER RESPONDENTS SAY THEY WANT EMPLOYEES TO COME BACK TO THE OFFICE FIVE DAYS A WEEK

As many countries emerge from the pandemic, employees have gained significant influence over their employers and that their 'wish list' from potential employers is changing

Source: EY/PTI

SBI hikes MCLR again, second in 1 month

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 15

STATE BANK of India (SBI), India's largest bank, has hiked its marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) by 10 basis points across tenures with effect from May 15.



SBI branch, New Delhi. File

This is SBI's second hike in MCLR in the last one month.

SBI's overnight, one-month, three-month MCLR now stands at 6.85 per cent as against 6.75 per cent earlier. Similarly, the six-month MCLR stands at 7.15 per cent, one-year MCLR stands at 7.2 per cent, two-year MCLR stands at

7.4 per cent, and three-year MCLR stands at 7.5 per cent.

SBI's hike follows the Monetary Policy Committee decision to jack up repo rate by 40 basis points to 4.4 per cent. In April, SBI had increased its MCLR by 10 bps before the MPC hiked its benchmark rate by 40 basis points.

RBI to review asset quality of PSBs tomorrow

BANIKINKAR PATTANAYAK
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

DAYS AFTER the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) hiked the repo rate for the first time in almost four years, governor Shaktikanta Das will meet chiefs of public sector banks (PSBs) on May 17 to review credit flow and assess the outlook on asset quality, sources told FE.

Das may also take stock of state-run banks' strategy to deal with the rising interest rate sce-

Ashima Goyal
on rate hikes

New Delhi: The RBI is not "behind the curve" in hiking interest rate to tackle rising inflation, Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Ashima Goyal has said.

nario without upsetting growth dynamics, they added.

The Governor will also review

Frauds in PSBs dip
51% to ₹40,295 cr

New Delhi: Public sector banks reported over 51 per cent dip in the amount involved in frauds to Rs 40,295.25 crore during the fiscal ended March 2022, the RBI has said. **PTI**

PSBs' collection efficiencies, consumer grievance redress mechanism, digital banking units, lend-

ing to government entities, IT infrastructure and cyber security framework and any issue that the lenders may like to present, said sources.

"PSBs are preparing presentations on various aspects of their operations. The governor would probably like to have bankers' feedback as to how they are planning to cope with the new reality of elevated rates and tight liquidity conditions, and what could be the impact on banks' lending, asset quality and the broader operating environment," a source said. **FE**

'RIL to buy dozens of
brands in \$6.5-bn play'

Mumbai: Reliance will acquire dozens of small grocery and non-food brands as it targets building its own \$6.5 billion consumer goods business, sources said.

Reliance plans to build a portfolio of 50 to 60 grocery, household and personal care brands within six months and is hiring distributors to take them to mom-and-pop stores and bigger retail outlets across the nation.

The consumer goods push under a vertical named Reliance Retail Consumer Brands will come on top of the brick-and-mortar store network of more than 2,000



A superstore of RIL, Mumbai. Reuters

grocery outlets and ongoing expansion of "JioMart" e-commerce operations in India's nearly \$900 billion retail market, one of world's biggest. Reliance did not respond to request for comment. **REUTERS**

IMF lifts weighting of dollar,
Chinese yuan in SDR basketREUTERS
BEIJING, MAY 15

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund said on Saturday it has increased the weighting of the dollar and Chinese yuan in its review of the currencies that make up the valuation of its Special Drawing Rights (SDR), an international reserve asset.

The review is the first since the yuan, also known as the renminbi, joined the basket of currencies in 2016 in what was a milestone in

FIRST SINCE 2016

■ The review is the first since the yuan, also known as the renminbi, joined the basket of currencies in 2016

Beijing's efforts to internationalise its currency. The IMF raised the US currency's weighting to 43.38 per cent from 41.73 per cent and the yuan to 12.28 per cent from 10.92 per cent. The euro's weighting de-

clined to 29.31 per cent from 30.93 per cent, the yen's fell to 7.59 per cent from 8.33 per cent and the British pound fell to 7.44 per cent from 8.09 per cent.

The IMF said in a statement its executive board had determined the weighting based on trade and financial market developments from 2017 to 2021.

"Directors concurred that neither the COVID-19 pandemic nor advances in Fintech have had any major impact on the relative role of currencies in the SDR basket so far," the IMF said.

Govt: Constraints
in availability
of domestic coalENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

THE COUNTRY is facing constraints in the domestic coal availability and the rest of the dry fuel demand needs to be met with imports, according to the Coal Ministry.

The ministry has also emphasised that coal block holders — both captive and commercial — have a major role to play in mitigating the coal shortfall situation. Domestic coal production is about 800 million tonnes, according to the coal additional secretary, who is also the chairperson of an inter-ministerial panel on coal linkages for the power sector.

The inter-ministerial panel



A thermal plant, Punjab. File

met recently to consider the requests for coal linkages to central/state sector power plants and to review the status of existing coal linkages. "...rest of the coal demand has to be met through imports from other countries", according to the minutes of the meeting on fuel linkages. **WITHPTI**

RBI OFFICIALS TO PARLIAMENTARY PANEL

'Cryptos can lead to
dollarisation of economy'JATIN TAKKAR
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

CRYPTOCURRENCIES CAN lead to "dollarisation" of a part of the economy which would be against India's sovereign interest, top officials of the RBI have told a parliamentary panel, according to sources.

Briefing the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance chaired by former minister of state for finance Jayant Sinha, top officials of the RBI, including Governor

Shaktikanta Das, clearly expressed their apprehensions about cryptocurrencies and said these pose challenges to the stability of the financial system, sources told PTI.

"It will seriously undermine the RBI's capacity to determine monetary policy and regulate the monetary system of the country," a member of the panel quoted RBI officials as saying. Central bank officials said these currencies "can replace a part of monetary system it will also undermine the RBI's capacity to regulate the flow of money in the system". **PTI**

Imports are likely to be impacted significantly by the rupee's depreciation, with India's import requirements growing rapidly.

Imports, on the other hand, are likely to be impacted significantly by the rupee's depreciation, with India's import requirements growing rapidly — including increased demand for imported coal despite high international prices as thermal power plants are facing low coal inventories.

India's merchandise trade deficit hit an all-time high of \$192.4 billion in FY22 on the back of record high imports worth \$610.2 billion and exports worth \$417.8 billion. High growth in exports and imports has continued in this fiscal, with inbound shipments growing about 31 per cent year-on-year in April, boosted by high prices of commodities such as crude oil and coal.

The depreciation of the rupee is also set to make outward remittances, including those to students in the US, more expensive. Experts said the depreciation might impact the decision of students planning to study in the US going forward.

Experts noted that the rupee was unlikely to see further depreciation against the dollar for a sustained period in the first half of this fiscal. "As far as the rupee is concerned, we believe that with foreign exchange reserves still being large, it's unlikely to be a situation of disorderly depreciation. So, we now feel that for the rest of this half would be Rs 75-79 (against the dollar)," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at Ica, adding that she expected that the rupee might fall below its recent low but was unlikely to remain there for a long period.

India adds
8.8 mn jobs
in Apr: CMIE

Kolkata: As many as 8.8 million people joined the workforce in April, as per data provided by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

However, the jobs that became available were inadequate compared to the demand, it said.

India's labour force increased by 8.8 million to 437.2 million in April, one of the largest monthly increases since the beginning of the pandemic, CMIE managing director and CEO Mahesh Vyas said.

The country's labour market was at 428.4 million in March, he added. In 2021-22, the average monthly increase in the country's labour force was 0.2 million, as per the data. The report said that an 8.8 million increase in labour force participation was only possible if some working-age people who were out of jobs joined the working population in April. **PTI**



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EXPLAINED HEALTH

How to protect yourself from heat-related illness

EXPERT EXPLAINS



DR SURANJIT CHATTERJEE

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight

WITH TEMPERATURES crossing 40°C in several parts of the country, and states such as Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra experiencing a heat wave, doctors have been treating a number of patients with complaints of heat exhaustion and other heat-related illnesses.

What is heat-related illness and how can one protect oneself from it?

We mostly see cases of heat exhaustion,

in which people feel extremely lethargic after stepping out during the day. But the high temperatures may also lead to a heat stroke, where the body overheats to more than 104°F, resulting in damage to the organs and neurological dysfunctions. It can result in fainting, rashes etc.

The most important thing is to stay well hydrated, especially when out in the heat. Hydration can be in the form of water or something with electrolytes, such as shikanji. Also, thirst is not the only good indicator of whether you need to have more fluids. So, people must keep track of how much water they are consuming. The thing that one should keep an eye on is the urine output, which goes down when a person is dehydrated.

Other than that, people must not wear dark-coloured, tight fitting, synthetic clothes when it is as hot as this. Light-coloured, cotton clothes are the best. Covering the head also helps.

As much as possible, people should stay indoors during extremely hot hours.



Protection from the heat in Delhi on Sunday. Shivam Kumar Jha

How much water or fluids should one consume? Can people overdo it?

Yes, people can certainly overdo it. I have heard people talking about drinking water every 20 minutes. That's not how it works. The amount of water intake depends on a

person's health.

An apparently healthy, young person should drink between 2.5 to 3 litres of water a day. Perhaps, an additional 0.5 to 1 litre of water can be had if they are out in the sun. Anything more may overload the kidneys, which have to work harder to flush out the extra water. Excess water may also lead to electrolyte imbalance, which can cause its own set of problems.

Then, there are persons living with a kidney or a heart disease, and they should not overload themselves with water as it may result in accumulation of fluid in the legs, abdomen, and chest, which can in turn lead to breathing difficulties. People with such chronic conditions have to drink between 1 to 1.5 litres of water throughout the day. However, this would depend on the condition of their organs. Anyone who is on fluid restriction should definitely get in touch with their physician to check how much water they should have.

Having electrolyte-rich fluids is a better option when people are out in the sun. Around

two to three glasses of shikanji wouldn't be a problem for a healthy person. Again, those with any comorbidities should keep an eye on what they are having; for example, diabetics should avoid ORS solutions because they are high in sugar content.

Which section is most vulnerable in this season?

Children below the age of 5 and people above 65 are more vulnerable to the impact of heat. They must avoid stepping out during the hot hours, and if they have to, they must be extremely careful and stay well hydrated. However, young healthy people are not completely safe either. They mostly constitute the working population and are more likely to step out in the sun.

THE EXPERT

Dr SURANJIT CHATTERJEE is Senior Consultant, Internal Medicine, at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, Delhi. He has worked in the field of general medicine for over 25 years, treating both communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Also, anyone living with comorbidities such as cardiac diseases, diabetes, or thyroid is likely to feel the effect of sun exposure more.

Should people exercise in this season?

Exercising is not a problem; exercising when it is hot is. If people want to go out for a walk or a jog, they should either do it early in the morning between 5-6

am or in the evening after 7 pm. People should not do any physical activity between 10 am and 6 pm when it is this hot.

And, if people can exercise indoors – at home if they have enough space, or at the gym – then that is better than outdoor exercise.

Dr Chatterjee spoke to Anonna Dutt

SIMPLY PUT

The impact of price volatility

Normal food inflation does not hurt as much as sudden price increases, as has been the case with edible oils in the last few years. This is not good either for consumers or for producers.

HARISH DAMODARAN

NEW DELHI, MAY 15

BETWEEN MAY 13, 2014 and May 13, 2022, the average "modal" (most-quoted) retail price of palm oil in India rose over 2.3 times, from Rs 68.5 to Rs 160 per kg. So did the consumer prices of packed sunflower (2.1 times; from Rs 90 to Rs 190.75/kg) and soyabean (2.2 times; from Rs 77 to Rs 170/kg) oil.

Assessing the hikes

These are massive hikes, aren't they?

Well, not quite. It can be seen from *Table 1* that more than 90% of the price increases in palm, sunflower, soyabean and even mustard oil over the eight-year period – roughly coinciding with the Narendra Modi government assuming office – has happened just during the last three years. In vanaspathi (hydrogenated vegetable oil), the entire increase has taken place within the last three years, while well over two-thirds for groundnut oil.

Simply put, edible oil is a commodity that actually saw very little inflation during the first five years of the Modi government – in fact, going back further to 2011. Plentiful supplies of cheap imported oil – palm from Indonesia and Malaysia, soyabean from Argentina and Brazil, and sunflower from Ukraine and Russia – ensured access to a product that virtually defied food inflation.

It is only the period after mid- to late-2019 – the Modi government's second term – that has witnessed a doubling of consumer prices of imported vegetable oils. That includes vanaspathi, which is largely made from imported palm oil (the process involves hydrogenation or adding hydrogen to harden and raise the melting point of the oil, yielding a product mimicking desi ghee). Prices of indigenous oils, especially mustard and groundnut, have also gone up disproportionately only in the last three years.

When inflation is low, people think of other things. That was precisely the case with edible oils for an extended period from 2011 till mid-/late-2019. It's when prices suddenly shoot up that they take notice and the government, too, starts talking about the need for achieving "atmanirbharta" (self-reliance)". India consumes 22.5-23 million tonnes (mt) of vegetable oils annually, out of which 13.5-

TABLE 1

ALL-INDIA MODAL RETAIL PRICE OF EDIBLE OILS (Rs/kg)

	Palm	Vanaspathi	Mustard	Groundnut	Soyabean	Sunflower
2014	68.5	70	91.5	116.5	77	90
2015	60	75	87	121.25	81	100
2016	67	71.33	90	135	80	92
2017	67	75	100	130	80	92.5
2018	75	70	100	115	85	91
2019	76	70	100	140	85	100
2020	90	100	120	142.5	90	110
2021	140	140	160	180	155	145
2022	160	170	187.5	188.5	170	190.75

All prices as on May 13 in that year.

Source: Department of Consumer Affairs

TABLE 2

MRP OF AMUL POUCH MILK IN DELHI-NCR (Rs/litre)

	Full cream	Toned	Cow
May 9, 2014	48	38	-
June 3, 2016	50	40	42
March 11, 2017	52	42	44
May 21, 2019	54	44	46
Dec 15, 2019	56	46	48
July 1, 2021	58	48	50
March 1, 2022	60	50	52

Full cream: 6% fat, 9% SNF; Toned: 3% Fat, 8.5% SNF; Cow milk: 3.5% Fat, 8.5% SNF

Source: Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation.

14.5 mt is imported and the balance 8.5-9.0 mt produced from domestic sources.

A sudden spurt in prices (volatility) is different from normal inflation. Steep price increases within short periods hurts consumers more than when the same is spread over time. Take vanaspathi. Had retail prices risen by Rs 12.5/kg every year after 2014, consumers would have felt it less than the average annual increase of Rs 33.33 over the last three years and almost nil during the previous five years. Volatility – both prices crashing and excessively soaring – isn't good for producers either. These create distortions, leading to their sharply slashing or expanding acreages, further augmenting volatility.

Milk vs oil

The contrast between volatility and normal inflation is clearer when one looks at another essential item of consumption: branded liquid milk. The Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation has been raising the maximum retail price of its Amul milk by Rs 2 per litre every two years or so, with other brands mostly following the market leader. The cumulative price increase over the last eight years has been Rs 12 per litre (*Table 2*). It translates into a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 2.83% for full-cream milk with 6% fat and 9% SNF or solids-not-fat content. Paying Rs 1.5/litre more every year for milk wouldn't have pinched

the way the sudden Rs 40-60/kg rise in mustard, palm or soyabean oil price in a single year has.

It isn't milk alone. Inflation has been low for sugar and rice, too. According to data from the department of consumer affairs, between May 13, 2014 and May 13, 2022, the modal retail price of sugar has gone up from Rs 36 to Rs 42 per kg (CAGR of 1.95%) and from Rs 24 to Rs 31.5 per kg (3.46%) for rice. Even wheat and *atta* (whole flour) have recorded relatively low inflation during this period – from Rs 18.5 to Rs 22/kg and Rs 20 to Rs 28/kg, respectively, corresponding to CAGRs of 2.19% and 4.3%.

The wheat effect

The situation could, of course, change for wheat in the coming months. A poor crop (courtesy of the post mid-March heat wave), depleted public stocks (due to 15-year-low government procurement) and skyrocketing global prices (following the Russian invasion of Ukraine) can well do to wheat what the last three years have done for edible oils.

The impact of price volatility is already being felt, especially in products where both wheat and vegetable fats are key ingredients: bread, biscuit, cookies, cakes and noodles. Biscuit typically contains up to 58% maida (refined wheat flour), 12% fat and 15% sugar. Ordinary white bread will have 85-

90% maida and 4-5% fats, which act as a lubricant and impart necessary softness, texture and mouth-feel. Vegetable oil and wheat getting simultaneously expensive – sugar hasn't so far – would make it difficult for a whole host of food and bakery product industries.

To sum up, food inflation is a problem when concentrated within a relatively short period (such as in edible oils) and spread across commodities (wheat is the latest addition). Also, the probability of price volatility is more in commodities with high import dependence. Indian consumers benefited when global edible oil prices were low through much of the last decade. The tide turned first with drought in Ukraine in 2020 and Covid-19-induced shortages of migrant labourers in Malaysia's oil palm plantations. The Russia-Ukraine war, Indonesia's palm oil export ban and dry weather in South America's soyabean-growing belts have worsened matters.

In wheat, where prices at the Chicago Board of Trade futures exchange are ruling around 62% higher than a year ago, the likelihood of volatility would still be lower in India. The only reason is the country's *atmanirbharta* in the cereal, making it less vulnerable to international price fluctuations. The ban on exports – similar to what Indonesia did in palm oil – will provide further insulation.

Who is Devasahayam Pillai, first Indian layman to be declared a saint by Vatican?

DEVASAHAYAM PILLAI, who was born a Hindu in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu and converted to Christianity in the 18th century, became the first Indian layman to be declared a saint by the Vatican on Sunday.

Pope Francis canonised Blessed Devasahayam during the Canonisation Mass in St Peter's Basilica, which was attended by over 50,000 faithful from all over the world, as well as government delegations honouring him and nine other new saints, PTI reported.

Besides Devasahayam, the Pope proclaimed five other men – Titus Brandsma, Cesar de Bus, Luigi Maria Palazzolo, Giustino Maria Russolillo, and Charles de Foucauld – and four women – Maria Rivier, Maria Francesca of Jesus Rubatto, Maria of Jesus Santocanale, and Maria Domenica Mantovani – as saints.

Life and death

Devasahayam was born on April 23, 1712 in Nattalam village in Kanyakumari district, and went on to serve in the court of Marthanda Varma of Travancore. After meeting a Dutch naval commander at the court, Devasahayam was baptised in 1745, and assumed the name 'Lazarus', meaning 'God is my help'.

"His conversion did not go well with the heads of his native religion. False charges of treason and espionage were brought against him and he was divested of his post in the royal administration," the Vatican said in a note in February 2020. According to the Vatican, "while preaching, he particularly insisted on the equality of all people, despite caste differences", which "aroused the hatred of the higher classes, and he was arrested in 1749".

On January 14, 1752, Devasahayam was shot dead in the Aralvaimozhy forest. He is widely considered a martyr, and his mortal remains were interred inside what is now Saint Francis Xavier's Cathedral in Kottar, Nagercoil.

Sainthood road

In 2004, the diocese of Kottar along with Tamil Nadu Bishops' Council and Conference of Catholic Bishops of India recommended Devasahayam for beatifi-



The tapestry depicting Titus Brandsma (1881-1942; top), and Lazarus a.k.a. Devasahayam (1712-1752) at the Vatican on Sunday, during their canonisation mass, AP

cation. He was declared blessed by the Kottar diocese in 2012, 300 years after his birth.

During the midday 'Angelus' prayer in the Vatican that day, Pope Benedict XVI described Devasahayam as a "faithful layman", and urged Christians to "join in the joy of the Church in India and pray that the new Blessed may sustain the faith of the Christians of that large and noble country", the note from the Vatican said.

In 2014, Pope Francis recognised a miracle attributed to Devasahayam, clearing the path to his canonisation. He was approved for sainthood in February 2020 for "enduring increasing hardships" after he decided to embrace Christianity, according to the Vatican, which last November announced May 15, 2022 as the date for the ceremony.

While clearing Devasahayam for sainthood in 2020, the Vatican dropped 'Pillai' from his name, and referred to him as "Blessed Devasahayam".

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Vaccine against 3 encephalitis viruses found safe, effective

A VACCINE for eastern equine encephalitis virus (EEEV), western equine encephalitis virus (WEEV), and Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus (VEEV) was found to be safe, well-tolerated and induced a neutralising antibody response in adult volunteers, according to results from a phase 1 clinical trial, published in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*.

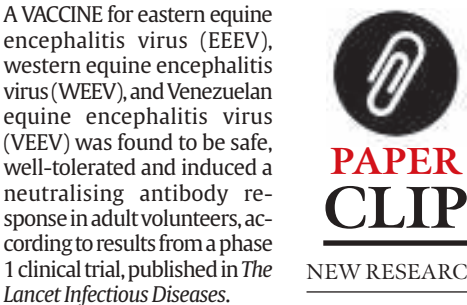
EEEV, WEEV and VEEV are spread to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes. Horses are also susceptible to infection, but horses cannot transmit the viruses directly to humans. Infections in humans are rare but can lead to flu-like symp-

toms and, in some cases, severe neurological damage or death.

Researchers designed a virus-like particle (VLP) vaccine candidate that uses proteins from the outer shells of the viruses, the US National Institutes of Health said in a media release. VLPs do not contain the genetic material that the viruses need to replicate in-

side cells, so VLPs cannot cause infection. In trials on 30 candidates, the vaccine was safe, well-tolerated and induced durable immune responses against all three viruses, the release said.

SOURCE: NIH, US



Royals' big stride forward

Rajasthan beat Lucknow by 24 runs to move to second, inch closer to play-offs

SYNOPSIS: Rajasthan Royals move to 16 points, second only to Lucknow Super Giants, after their strong attack comfortably defends what appeared to be a par total.

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
MUMBAI, MAY 15

IT WAS a strange sort of Powerplay from Lucknow Super Giants. Even if the ball was coming on to the bat, the Brabourne Stadium pitch wasn't an outright belter. Still, Quinton de Kock tried to force Trent Boult on the up through a cordon of backward point, point and cover, and found the middle fielder. Ayush Badoni was sent at No.3 for some quick runs but Boult trapped him plumb in front first ball with an inswinger.

After seeing two wickets falling in two deliveries, KL Rahul went into a shell for a couple of overs, even leaving regulation length balls outside off.

Was it because Yashasvi Jaiswal had taken 20 off the last over of RR's Powerplay, or was it because LSG were 23 for 2 after five overs? Suddenly, Rahul, on 4 off 16, switched to hyper-attack mode; he lofted Prasidh Krishna for a gorgeous six over extra cover, but then sliced a short ball into point's hands two balls later.

From 29 for 3, it was going to take some chasing against the likes of Yuzvendra Chahal and Ravichandran Ashwin. Chahal went for a few, unlike the unhittable Ashwin, but also had Deepak Hooda stumped for 59 off 39 in the 16th.

If the spin duo wasn't enough, left-arm seamer Obed McCoy, in just his third IPL game, was hard to get away with his slower-ball variations, from dipping full deliveries to sticky bouncers.

Padikkal presses on

Since he almost messed up RR's chase against Punjab Kings with a 32-ball 31 last week at Wankhede Stadium – where he was mis hitting even wide balls to fielders – Devdutt Padikkal has been a transformed batsman. On a difficult DY Patil Stadium surface where the ball was holding up, he began to play attacking strokes as soon as he came in against Delhi Capitals. It was not a pitch where he would get everything off the middle of the blade, but the intent was unmistakable. To that 48 off 30, he added 39 off 18 at the Cricket Club of India on Sunday.

These were much better batting conditions, of course, but Padikkal is usually someone who likes to get at least some feel of the wicket before opening up. Here he timed two lovely straight hits off Marcus Stoinis off



Trent Boult struck early to remove Quinton de Kock and Ayush Badoni. *sportszpics*

IPL TABLE						
TEAM	M	W	L	PT	NRR	
GT	13	10	3	20	0.391	
RR	13	8	5	16	0.304	
LSG	13	8	5	16	0.262	
RCB	13	7	6	14	-0.323	
DC	12	6	6	12	0.210	
KKR	13	6	7	12	0.160	
PK	12	6	6	12	0.023	
SRH	12	5	7	10	-0.270	
CSK	13	4	9	8	-0.206	
MI	12	3	9	6	-0.613	

Gujarat Titans secure top-2 finish

Mumbai: Wriddhiman Saha's solid 67 not out after a top-class bowling performance set up Gujarat Titans' seven-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings in the IPL securing a top-two finish in the team standings. Gujarat bowlers put up a clinical show to restrict CSK to a below-par 133/5 despite a fine half-century by Ruturaj Gaikwad. Saha, who struck eight boundaries and asix in his 57-ball knock, anchored the chase nicely to get Gujarat home. While CSK were already out of the play-off race, the win for Gujarat guarantees them a top-two finish on the points table in their debut season, providing them with two opportunities to reach the final. Saha first added 59 runs in just 7.1 overs with Shubman Gill (18; 3x4) to lay the foundation of the win. CSK tried to make a mini comeback by grabbing two quick wickets in the middle overs.

BRIEF SCORES: CSK 133 for 5 in 20 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 53, N Jagadeesan 39 not out; Mohammad Shami 2/19, Rashid Khan 1/31) lost to GT 137/3 in 19.1 overs (Wriddhiman Saha 67 not out; Matheesha Pathirana 2/24).

Villain or Victim?: The world couldn't make up its mind about Symonds

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
MUMBAI, MAY 15

THE INITIAL reaction was a wrenchingly hollow sense of an emptiness that felt like it had been coming for a while – the gnawing feeling that some lives are almost destined to remain unfulfilled.

Former Australia allrounder Andrew Symonds, who died following a single vehicle car crash in Townsville, was both brutal and beautiful in a manner that was almost primal, and even if you were rooting for the opposition and willing him to get out every next ball, you just couldn't take your eyes off him. The bat always appeared too small in his massive gloves. It was as if the casual, rapid tapping of the bat in the crease was telling the bowler to just get on with it, as he did not have too much time for the frivolity of a long run-up.

For he just wanted to uncoil in deceptively quick fashion from that ungainly stance and bash the ball as hard as he could before he could wind down in the evening.

He was ahead of the curve in the limited-overs game, and way ahead of his time in T20, where even today, more than a decade after he played his last game, his international strike-rate of almost 170 remains eye-popping. It won't be unfair to say that for most Indian cricket fans in 2008, Symonds was one of the starring villains of the Monkeygate controversy, if not the most central figure at the heart of one of the game's biggest scandals. And yet, as it turned out, he became, more and more, the central victim of its fallout.

A few years later, Ricky Ponting would say that the incident and its aftermath had finished Symonds' career.

He lost trust in those who were supposed to stand by him, and no matter how strong you may appear to the world from the outside, being let down when you are at your most vulnerable can break the very best.

Villain or victim? That could well be the question that defined Symonds, and how the world perceived him.

It was hard to remain perched on the fence when it came to him. Out fishing when he was supposed to be at a team meeting. Drinking in public during a T20 World Cup, that too in England, when he had promised he wouldn't. Calling Brendon McCullum a lump of shit in a radio interview.

And then he would walk in at 84 for 5 in a Boxing Day Ashes Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and bash an immortal 156



After the Monkeygate scandal, Andrew Symonds felt let down and his career went into decline.

He was ahead of the curve in the limited-overs game, and way ahead of his time in T20, where even today, more than a decade after he played his last game, his international strike-rate of almost 170 remains eye-popping.

against the country of his birth. Or come in at 86 for 4 in a World Cup and crack 143 not out in 125 balls against Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis and Shoaib Akhtar.

It gives you a sense of what he was capable of if he could play almost 200 ODIs and still the consensus would remain that justice hadn't been fully done to the rare talent he possessed.

On the other hand, the bar brawls and the binge drinking would never quite go away. "I go out and drink hard all in one hit. Too fast, too much," he'd said once.

He was right. The rollercoaster he was on was going too fast, too much. All along, it had felt like something had to give. That it did at the age of just 46 adds the final full stop to a lifetime of sudden starts-and-stops. And it is probably fitting that he played his last match in India for an Indian team, Mumbai Indians, against an Australian team, New South Wales, in the 2011 Champions League. The villain and victim were both somehow conjoined to this land.

BRIEFLY

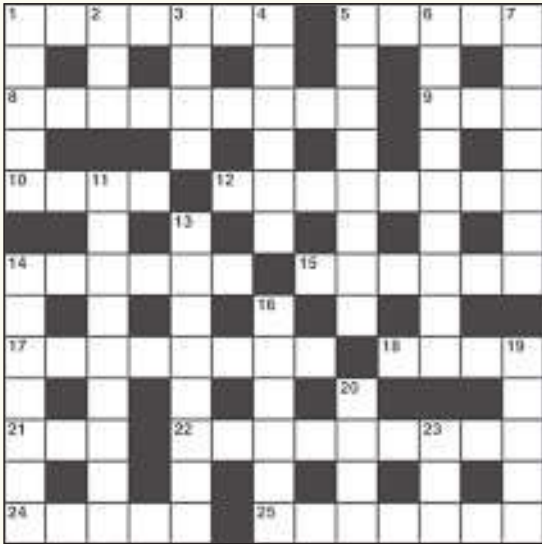
Zareen, Anamika, Parveen enter quarterfinals

New Delhi: Asian Championships bronze medallist Nikhat Zareen (52kg) continued her splendid run as she stormed into the quarterfinals alongside Anamika (50kg) and Parveen (63kg) in the World Boxing Championships in Istanbul on Sunday. Nikhat made light work of Mongolia's Lutsaikhan Altantsetseg to win by a 5-0 unanimous verdict. Parveen then displayed her attacking prowess to out-punch former Youth Olympic champion Jajaira Gonzalez of USA 5-0, while Anamika dispatched world championships bronze medallist Kristy Lee Harris of Australia with a similar margin. But, it was curtains for Shiksha (54kg), who went down by a 2-3 split decision to Youth Asian bronze medallist Yesugen Oyuntsetseg of Mongolia. Nikhat was the first Indian in action on Sunday and she completely dominated from start to finish in her round of 16 bout. The Telangana boxer used her quick hands to great effect and landed a flurry of straight punches on her rival's face in all the three rounds. The highlight of Nikhat's display was her immaculate footwork and speed, which the Mongolian found difficult to handle. **PTI**

Djokovic beats Tsitsipas for first title of the year

Rome: Novak Djokovic raised his first trophy of the year at the Italian Open on Sunday and showed that he's back in top form exactly a week before the French Open starts. After missing a large portion of the season because he wasn't vaccinated against the coronavirus, the top-ranked Djokovic beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-0, 7-6(5) for his sixth Rome title. "I've been building my form the last few weeks," Djokovic said. "It couldn't be better timing coming into Roland Garros." "Perfect scenario for me," Djokovic added later. Earlier on the red clay, Iga Swiatek defended the women's title by overwhelming Ons Jabeur 6-2, 6-2 to extend her winning streak to 28 matches. Djokovic didn't drop a set all week, having won his 1,000th career match over Casper Ruud in the semifinals. Djokovic, who was deported because of his un-vaccinated status ahead of the Australian Open, hadn't won a tournament since raising the Paris Masters trophy in November. **AP**

CROSSWORD 4741



ACROSS

- Punishment for lying in the sun? (7)
- A question of choice (5)
- New net cord starts tight (8)
- In traffic a repeatedly seen vehicle (3)
- Every one in teaching (4)
- Such a net may become loose (8)
- Many admit to being inexperienced (6)
- Sarah's crazy to worry (6)
- Mention a new name (8)
- Cause a storm in a teacup (4)
- Not conscious one is in error? (3)
- Gave effortless recital and staggered away (6,3)
- Entertained without a thought (5)
- Gleeman's new medley (7)

DOWN

- Give an oral test (5)
- This man invaded England (3)
- In extremities they can be accommodating (4)
- They're for putting on vegetables (6)
- He's paid to mind someone else's business (8)
- An insect's uninterrupted development (9)
- Gear to make use of horsepower (7)
- They will spend their time together (9)
- Rounded up but not rounded off (8)
- Many on past record seem to agree (7)
- Master switch for the current (6)
- Strip a firearm (5)
- Close up of a swimmer (4)
- Have something to confess (3)

Solutions Crossword 4740: Across: 1 Tropical, 5 Stop, 9 Unfit, 11 Cool customer, 13 Remain, 14 Bedlam, 17 Maiden speech, 20 Officer, 21 Trice, 22 Earl, 23 Hydrogen. Down: 1 Taut, 2 Off form, 3 Intelligence, 4 Accrue, 6 Totem, 7 Panorama, 8 For the better, 12 Primrose, 15 Licking, 16 Osprey, 18 Infer, 19 Seen.

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.

A somebody was once a nobody who _____ - John Burroughs (6,2,3,3)

NRAAE



EOTDNN



DIOTT



EEDDDW

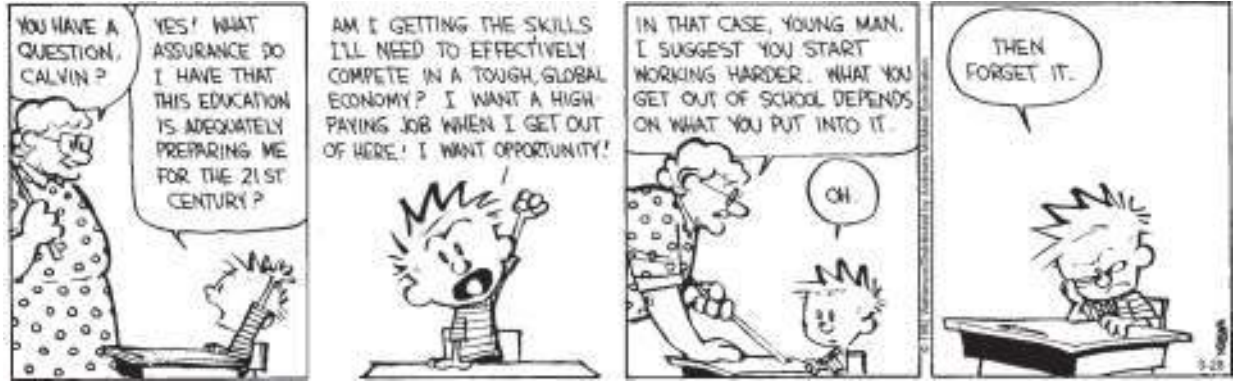


stgnhs - John Burroughs quip ededw, DITTO, TENDON, WEDEDED

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



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

SUDOKU 4836



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4835



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

No matter how relaxed the pace of life today, the end of the week could be rather hectic. There will also be a certain amount of emotional tension. You may therefore come to be grateful for your foresight and refusal to put off tasks that should be done as soon as possible.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

You may have a conservative reputation but, if allowed to express yourself, you have a wonderfully understated eccentric way of working. Now that Venus is aligned with a publicity-minded region of your chart, partners and associates will begin to notice your qualities.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

The Moon makes a number of very sharp moves today, which means that domestic affairs should now be sorted out and family relationships resolved, at least until the end of the week. Older relations could be the most helpful, you know who you can rely on.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Everything that has happened recently has conspired to change the rules of the game. Don't blame other people though, after all it's you who has moved the goal posts, possibly for the very good reason that it seemed the right thing to do at the time.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

The Moon eases its way through a private sector of your chart, inspiring dreams, strange imaginings and mysteries of the most colourful kind. You will relish any intrigues or uncertainty that cloud your vision today. After all, a mystery could be the cause of much more pleasure.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Nobody can really put you on the spot or undermine your confidence. You are so full of self-doubt that you are skilled at sabotaging your own interests. Make it your goal to boost your self-esteem and inspire respect. But don't feel that you need to rush into anything hasty.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Your personal affairs will be highlighted in a rather special and even spectacular way this week. Yet another full seven days may pass before you can genuinely get to grips with outstanding domestic differences and family hopes. That gives you every reason to wait until your mind is made up.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Pluto is a volatile planet, though often a force for good. This week you can be fully confident that this wonderful planet's healing and restorative powers will be used utterly in your favour, even if at first it looks as if the opposite is true. Things are not always what they seem.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

Because Jupiter, your planetary ruler, is still so powerful, you have all the protection you need. However, I would not say that this is a time for taking risks. On the contrary, great presence is required. You see, if you're to be a proper gambler you have to know the outcome before you start.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Even though you may be convinced that some kind of major career or professional change is unavoidable, you may hold things up for a while if you wish. However, it is certain that you can trust partners' generosity. Think now about what you might offer in return.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Even the most dedicated Aquarians shouldn't keep their noses pressed to the grindstone all week. After all, you need a rest and a chance to get on with your own intensely personal interests. A word of advice, treat all amazing financial offers with a huge pinch of salt.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Mercury is moving through your chart at a fair old pace, an indication that you only have a limited period of time, probably about two weeks, to arrange interviews, attend meetings and make proposals. What is most important today, though, is the Moon, which is reinforcing and stiffening your emotions.

INDIAN BADMINTON TAKES GIANT LEAP: FROM THE SEMI-FINAL SPOT IN 1979 TO TOP OF THE WORLD IN 2022

Feather floats in the sky



Indian players and coaching staff with their medals and trophy after winning the Thomas Cup in Bangkok on Sunday. AP

Dreamy day of drama for Indian badminton, great depth takes team to new high at Thomas Cup

SHIVANI NAIK
MAY 15

WHEN WAS India last able to boast about 'killer instinct' in its sportspersons while simultaneously triggering meltdowns and chokes in three massive powerhouses? India's Thomas Cup final triumph was all about comebacks - Lakshya Sen and Satwik-Chirag's in their matches, and Kidambi Srikanth's from three years in the oblivion. Also, HS Prannoy's from wondering whether all his big scalps without titles amounted to much.

Like the World Championships in December, young Lakshya Sen led the way.

India's not too familiar with the American collegiate idea of sophomore blues, but various versions of impending doom have been buzzing about Lakshya Sen, and his imminent struggles after being figured out on the international circuit. An unprecedented Thomas Cup final, where he had been battered in quarters and semis, was to test his mettle when he took to the court. Losing the opener 21-8 against Anthony Ginting, the damning prophecy began buffering. Then, Sen snapped.

Taking a 7-3 and 11-7 lead playing at a faster clip, Sen would parry Ginting's attempts at pinning him to the deep forehand corner by retrieving relentlessly. Sen's defense is an addictive watch, an assured pulse-metre spike as he scurries around the court chasing down the bird from all manners of balanced and imbalanced positions. It's vertiginous from an eye level because the quality big his strokes rises as the rally goes on. Ginting had him trapped in the corners in the opener, but lost confidence in his masterstroke the moment Sen sent back the shuttle.

He then played into Sen's hands. Rather into his body, frustrated at being retrieved at the far lines. Anyone who knows Sen knows that is an invitation in bold and underlined to trouble. Any shuttle close to his body with his torquing torso is Sen's strength and he happily started winning the longer rallies - including a 46-shot one, which annoyed Ginting even more.

The Indonesian is a speed fiend, and does-

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

FIRST RUBBER: LAKSHYA'S SENSATIONAL COMEBACK

Sen beats Ginting 8-21, 21-17, 21-16

Game 1: Sen struggles with the drift as the Indonesian dictates play to open up a four-point lead at the interval. After restart, Ginting wins 12 straight points. Game 2: A stunning 46-shot rally is the highlight of the game, with the Indian retrieving everything that Ginting throws at him to win the point. Sen grows in confidence and levels the tie with a brilliant cross-court winner. Game 3: A subdued Sen trails by four points behind at the interval. After the change of sides, Sen drags Ginting into longer rallies, tests his patience and begins to claw his way back to win the match rather comfortably in the end.

SECOND RUBBER: DOUBLES DELIGHT TO GO 2-0 UP

Satwik-Chirag beat Ahsan-Sukamuljo 18-21, 23-21, 21-19

Game 1: The Indonesians race to a 17-11 lead with consistent attacking play. Chirag-Satwik try to stage a fightback with some attacking play but service errors cost them dear.

Game 2: After taking a five-point lead, Chirag-Satwik make uncharacteristic errors and are unable to deal with their opponent's tempo. Ahsan-Sukamuljo get four match points but the Indian duo saves all four to force a decider. Game 3: Nothing separates the two pairs throughout the decider but Chirag-Satwik play fearlessly throughout to earn two match points. The Indonesian save the first. Then, Chirag produces a cross-court smash to convert the other and give India a 2-0 lead.

THIRD RUBBER: SEALING IT WITH A STRAIGHT-GAMES WIN

Srikanth beats Christie 21-15 23-22

Game 1: Srikanth wastes little time in getting into the groove. He constructs his points beautifully to stay ahead despite Christie constantly finding ways to fight back. But Srikanth controls the pace of the game and pockets the game. Game 2: The Indian begins sharply but makes three back-to-back errors, which gives his opponent some confidence. Tense exchanges followed the change of ends, with momentum swinging both ways right till the end. But Srikanth shows no nerves to win the match.

had dialled back his days of romping across the All England and World Championships courts. India took a 1-0 lead laced with hope.

Doubles magnifique

Satwik-Chirag were alert and moving well, but had still gone down 0-1 on set score to Indonesia's legendary Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo and Mohd Ahsan. They took a 12-8 lead in the second, but then allowed the Indonesians to pick 12 of 14 points to hike up to 14-19. At 17-20, the Indians were staring at 3 match points.

But through the course of the second set, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy had roused from his strictly steady zone to begin to put a lot of shoulder on his downward strokes. Chirag Shetty has been pulling this team like a yellow headband-rimmed steam engine all week. But the gentle giant Satwiksairaj had woken up. He would muscle up the smashes with such a rip, that Ahsan and Kevin were

beginning to get rattled. At 20-18, Ahsan dumped a nervous smash into the net.

The Indians had taken more than giant-killing reputation into this tie after disposing of Malaysia and Denmark. In winning all doubles against the top nations, Satwik Chirag had announced their whistling return to winning ways. The two can bully on the court, and the fact that they don't often make it even more menacing when they do. Kevin-Ahsan flubbed four match points. It was surreal, as the Indians went 20-all, 20-21, 21-all, 22-21 to finally have Satwik bisect the Indonesians with his steep smash to level 23-21.

The Indians have lost so many from 20-18, it was a delicious sight to watch them turn the tables on opponents. In the decider, leafs were traded, but 13-16 didn't look dire. Piling on the pressure with Satwik belting away his smashes, the Indians easily turned 17-19 to 20-19. Their audacity in not giving too much respect to Indonesia's big names, brought India 2-0 up.

Comeback 2. Check.

Srikanth's case has been a protracted period of three long years in the wilderness, hearing broken tape of how he had wasted his talent from random strangers on Twitter to coming into contention again. The World Championship silver medallist had waited for his body to patch up all the niggles so he could freely express his game. Yet the December event had ended in a lost final against Loh Kean Yew. In Bangkok, Srikanth's comeback was 6 out of 6 matches played and won. He had been parrying off second singles till quarters, but in Anders Antonsen and Jonatan Christie, he had two bonafide Top Tens. He made mincemeat of the rankings, of all history, of their gnashing resistance on the day, with mere great shot selection and an error-free game.

All he touched was marked gold, though Christie attempted comebacks and stayed calm. But Srikanth's class was far too much for the Asian Games gold medallist to find any rhythm when he was left scrambling to return the Indian's delectable bouquet of racquet work.

Reflexive backhand returns in response to tight spinning net dribbles, saw him sticking his hand out for the most defensive of winners at 8-7 in the second. The iconic net charging follow-up to a smash brought him match point, and the crosscourt smash set fire to the curtains of the dramatic day.

3-0 ain't dramatic as a whole. But every moment was for a pulsating nation back home, giddy with anticipation of a historic Sunday.

PM INVITES TEAM, AWARDS POUR IN

Calling India's Thomas Cup triumph as one of the country's finest sporting wins, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited the shuttlers to his residence on returning from Bangkok.

\$1 million: Prize money for winning the tournament.

Rs 1 cr: Amount the Indian players to get from BAI

Rs 1 cr: Cash award announced by Sports Minister Anurag Thakur.

Three shot stories

Lakshya Sen's relentless retrieving abilities, Srikanth's silken strokes and Chirag-Satwik flexing their muscles: the points that defined the matches



Lakshya Sen (R) in action against Indonesia's Anthony Ginting. AP

AT 14-13, LAKSHYA SMASH THAT HELPED HIM NOSE AHEAD

The shuttle clipped the tape and fell on Anthony Ginting's side to give Lakshya Sen a slight edge at 14-13 in the decider. Luck ought to favour the brave, goes the saying. Sen had earned his luck with a relentless defense that prolonged rallies and punctured Ginting's hopes in a way the defending champion wasn't prepared for. Sen had done the hard work of defending from four corners, and for a player like Ginting, this cancelling of

his attack with such bullheadedness was beginning to grate.

Sen started again the next point, maintaining a medium rhythm in his retrieves before he let rip the kill against the run of play. It was an accelerated down smash that hurried the pace mid-rally and gave him the 15-13 to nose ahead. The explosive attack on the back of a harp of defense was too much for the speed at top gear Ginting.

SRIKANTH'S DUBSTEP AT 22-21

Asked his favourite shot, aside of the winning point that is, Srikanth picked the penultimate one. "Because that brought me match point," he would say.

But 22-21 in the second had indeed been the signature Srikanth Dubstep. In a sparse rally, Srikanth amped up the pace for a near-kill which could've sufficed on its own. But the likes of Jojo Christie get under the smash invariably. It's in the follow up charge to the net that the opponent is far too spent to raise arms for yet another incoming bamboozler. It is Srikanth's confidence shot, it's regal in its execution, and stomping in its aftereffect.

On the day, it brought Srikanth the match point after being 19-20 down and a decider looming. A third set is always fraught with energy reserves



dipping and in a team event. Srikanth has never been a dawdler, and finishing in 2, asserting his class is his nature. Jonatan Christie doesn't get frazzled much. But the setup that fetched him the championship point left him deflated. A crosscourt smash that followed didn't need even the driving in of the knife. A poke drew blood, and India had a maiden Thomas Cup travelling on a flight back home.

DOWN 4 MATCH POINTS, CHIRAG-SATWIK UNLEASH POWER GAME

Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo, half of the legendary Minions, losing a Thomas Cup final rubber from four match points is unheard of.

That the Indians, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty chipped away at Indonesian confidence, at their self-image even, at what is at the core of their strength, and superbly executed with the building of pressure by the Indians, was the turning point of the final which ended in a disbelieving 3-0 result. The clutch of points were all about finding the right nuanced placement and not bullying speed as such.



At 17-18 Kevin Sanjaya had the most confident smash grazing the line pointing to accuracy and control. In the next few minutes, Indians incited anarchy. Satwik left shyness behind, and uncoiled his powergame.

Coach Boe basks in reflected glory after guiding Indian doubles pair

SHIVANI NAIK
MAY 15

MATHIAS BOE had been going through withdrawal symptoms. His chosen poison turned ailment: top-grade badminton. The former Thomas Cup winner and Olympic silver medallist, who retired two seasons ago, had not really come to grips with being away from the circuit. He immersed himself in his business, and his personal life. "But I missed winning like this at the top events. I'm happy India gave me the chance to experience this once again," said India's doubles coach (**inpic**), who helped the newly-minted Thomas Cup champions pull off a sensational 3-0 win against all-time leaders Indonesia in the final.

Boe has always shared a great equation with Chirag Shetty. And was guiding him along with video analysis online at the All England even when he wasn't formally the India coach. India's efforts to bring Malaysian Tan Kim Her as specialist doubles coach had fallen through, and India's top pairing was looking and feeling rudderless. Playing at the



topmost level, but without an experienced brain ticking behind on the coach's chair.

"The Malaysian appointment almost came through and then it didn't. And Chirag contacted me and asked if I was available for a short term. I've always had a good equation with Gopi, so we spoke. But these things need higher-ups involved. It was also a good offer for them to sign me. And now here I am in Bangkok, having won the Thomas Cup again," Boe said, happy and amazed.

He would guide the Indians through wins against Malaysia and his home nation Denmark - two highly-tactical battles against mercurial opponents that needed clarity of strategy. And his typically belief-inducing pep talks. At the Tokyo Olympics, the Indians beat the eventual champions, but went out in the group stage - leaving a whiff of unfinished business.

"Since the Olympics, it's really something I've missed doing. It's what I like. But my body grew old, and I couldn't play on the circuit any longer. I missed competing deeply. So, I was happy to be back and help in this capacity. It comes naturally to me to inspire others to win," Boe said.

Second coming

He would return to Mumbai and imme-



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (L) and Chirag Shetty celebrate after their win. AP

diately change a few things in the training regimen. "As players, they need sparring partners. But I also changed a bit of their style of play and how they communicate." The Indians had gotten into a rut, losing narrow

matches, and flubbing 20-18 advantages on match points. "As a recent player, I had an idea of what's running through their minds. They also needed someone to scream at them," he added.

It was an unreal team effort. And India will now realise how big this result is given only 6-7 countries have won Thomas Cup before. This will count as one of the biggest moments of Indian sport... I hope India really move away from the underdog tag and push forward and defend this crown like favourites."

MATHIAS BOE
DOUBLES COACH, INDIA

While the group games ended with India going down to the Chinese Taipei pair a day before the quarters, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag had the last laugh. Their belief in the process never dipped. "Quarters was tremendous pressure because losing would mean no medal," he says. India pipped Malaysia 3-2.

Denmark was a challenge not because Boe had to plot against his former teammates. But because Indians needed the confidence bolstered in their gameplan. "Finals was also that one sole shot at glory. And I didn't want us to miss it. I'm happy for myself and I'm happy I got the chance to feel this," he reiterated.

He would watch in awe as the team spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for 10 minutes. "It was an unreal team effort. And India will now realise how big this result is given only 6-7 countries have won the Thomas Cup before. This will count as one of the biggest moments of Indian sport," Boe said, adding his favourite moment will always be "the Srikanth projectile coming down." "Lakshya and my boys also fought, of course."

His day-after wish? "I hope India really move away from the underdog tag and push forward and defend this crown like favourites."

Vimal refers to 1983 moment

PTI adds: Coach Vimal Kumar on Sunday hoped the triumph would do the same to the country's shuttle sport what the 1983 World Cup win did to cricket. "We always had hopes but the way the players played, they just put up a performance out of the blue," Kumar said. "In 1983, when India won the cricket World Cup, the euphoria was something else but cricket was always a very popular sport and I hope with this performance, now badminton can also become so popular. It has always been about individual achievements but this was a team performance and I hope the popularity of the sports goes up from here on."