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Batting for Bengal: Ranji team star by day, minister and TMC MLA at night

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, JUNE 16

FROM RESCUING the Bengal Ranji team by hitting a century during the day, to wading through files of official docu-

ments, as West Bengal's Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports and Trinamool Congress MLA from Shibpur, in the evening — it's all in a day's work for Manoj Tiwary. Multi-tasking to strike a balance between his two roles, as a sitting minister and cricketer, is a

big ask. When his team-mates hit the ice baths and put their feet up to re-energise in the evenings, Tiwary (36) says he dives right into official work. "There is a lot of constituency work — someone may need a



Manoj Tiwary goes through files in his hotel room. *Express*

Increase in booster dose numbers as Covid-19 cases on rise

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

WITH A fresh surge in Covid cases across the country, there was a 44.3 per cent increase in the number of "precautionary" or booster doses administered during the past week as compared to the week before.

Official figures show that around 47.5 lakh third doses were administered in the first 15 days of June as compared to 41.5 lakh during the last 15 days of May. The country reported 12,213 new Covid cases on Thursday in comparison to 7,240 cases last Thursday — hospitalisations and deaths have continued to remain low.

The data also show that five metros saw an average 77.9 per cent increase in the number of booster doses administered during the past week, driven mainly by a 212.5 per cent increase in Chennai, according to an analysis of data on the CoWIN portal.

The spike comes at a time when the Government is pushing to cover the elderly population through the Har Ghar Dastak campaign 2.0 that started this month. It is also looking to increase the coverage of the first two doses among children between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

A big chunk of the rise in booster doses for adults under the age of 60 years is likely to be recorded in metros and urban centres with a high number of private medical facilities. The Government's free vaccination drive for booster doses covers only those above the age of

KEY BJP ALLY JD(U) LEADS CALLS FOR REVIEW OF SCHEME

Govt raises Agnipath upper age to 23 for this year after protests

Trains, BJP offices attacked in Bihar; Govt vehicles set on fire in Haryana

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

WITH KEY NDA ally JD(U) leading calls for an immediate review of Agnipath, the new short-term recruitment policy for the Armed Forces, after violent protests seeking a rollback erupted in several states on Thursday, the Centre announced a two-year relaxation in the upper age limit for the scheme this year since there was no recruitment in the services "during the last two years".

After a day that saw large groups of youths blocking roads, pelting stones, torching train coaches, and targeting BJP offices and leaders, the Defence Ministry said that it would allow those who were 21 years old in 2020, when recruitments were stalled, to be eligible — only for this year.

Under the original scheme announced on Tuesday, only aspirants between 17-and-a-half years and 21 years of age are eligible for recruitment. But on Thursday, the Defence Ministry said that "the upper age limit for the recruitment process for Agnipath scheme for 2022 is increased to 23 years".

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MORE REPORTS
PAGE 8



A train was set on fire at Chhapra in Bihar's Saran district on Thursday amid protests. *PTI*

Behind protest: Temporary service, no pension, no healthcare benefit

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

HOURS AFTER protests erupted in several parts of the country against the short-term Agnipath scheme for the armed forces, officials sought to allay concerns and circulated a Myth vs Fact document to underline that the new scheme will not only bring in new capabilities but will also open up avenues in the pri-

ivate sector, and help the young men become entrepreneurs with the aid of a financial package.

For those protesting on the streets or watching from the sidelines, the primary concerns and insecurity have to do with the temporary nature of the new scheme — service is only for four years; pension has been removed; and there is no lifelong healthcare benefit for the soldier and his family.

EXPLAINED

There is also the fear that many of them may no longer be eligible — there has been no recruitment since 2020, and to become an Agniveer an aspirant has to be between age 17.5 and 21. Late Thursday night, the government granted a one-time waiver on the upper age limit by raising it to 23 years for 2022.

Until now, a soldier had job security for approximately 17 years, and thereafter the comfort of pension and access to subsidised healthcare for himself

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

No demolition without due process... the rule of law has to prevail: SC seeks UP response

Notice on Jamiat plea, bench says ensure 'nothing untoward' takes place meanwhile

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

UNDERLINING THAT the "rule of law has to prevail" and "no demolition can take place without following the due process of law", the Supreme Court Thursday sought the response of the Uttar Pradesh government on a plea by Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind which alleged illegal demolition of private properties in the state following violent protests over remarks against the Prophet.

Fixing June 21 as the date of the next hearing, and asking the UP government to file its objections in the meantime, the bench

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Police deployed at Prayagraj's Atala area on Thursday. *PTI*

Prayagraj demolition falls foul of Allahabad HC order: Ex-CJ

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

THE PRAYAGRAJ Development Authority's decision to demolish the house of Mohammad Javed, a political activist and businessman, on June 12, after serving just a day's notice to vacate goes

against a 2020 ruling of the Allahabad High Court that issued a directive to the Uttar Pradesh government to allow a 30-day window from issuing a notice to the property owner.

"The State authorities, where ever demolition orders are passed in respect of constructions raised

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

At the helm of oil and urban affairs ministries, Puri is Adda guest today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

AS UNION Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs and Petroleum and Natural Gas with Cabinet rank, diplomat-turned-politician Hardeep Singh Puri is at the helm of departments and ministries that play a critical role in influencing India's growth story. As a diplomat and a former



Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri

Union Minister of Civil Aviation, Puri — the guest at Express Adda on Friday — was one of the four Cabinet ministers tasked with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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FROM PAGE ONE

Agnipath

The Ministry said that since "it has not been possible to undertake the recruitment during the last two years, the Government has decided that a one-time waiver shall be granted for the proposed recruitment cycle for 2022".

Earlier, the protests were most violent in Bihar, where JD(U) and BJP are part of the ruling coalition. In Kaimur, job aspirants set fire to one coach of a stationary train. In separate incidents, protesters torched two other coaches -- one at the Sidhwalia station in Gopalganj, where passengers had to rush out to save themselves, and the other in Chhapra. No injuries were reported.

Confirming the damage caused, Bihar ADGP (law and order) Sanjay Singh said the police have so far "arrested 125 people for the violent protests". The Railways said 34 trains were fully cancelled and eight partially, with 72 trains either detained at stations or running late, because of the agitation.

Heated protests were also witnessed in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu and at a railway station in Delhi. Peaceful protests were held in Jharkhand's Ranchi and Uttarakhnad's Pithoragarh, officials said.

The protests resonated in the political arena, too.

JD(U) national president Rajiv Ranjan Singh demanded a review of the Agnipath scheme. Tweeting in Hindi, he wrote: "There has been an atmosphere of discontent, disappointment and fear of a dark future because of unemployment after the announcement of the Agnipath scheme. The Centre should revisit the Agnipath scheme immediately because it is related to the country's safety and security."

Speaking to The Indian Express, JD(U) national spokesperson K C Tyagi said: "Now that students are protesting, the Centre has to find a way out and see if it failed to explain the Agnipath scheme to the youth. But we do not support the manner of protest that has caused a lot of damage to public property."

Senior JD(U) leader and Bihar Minister Bijendra Prasad Yadav called on the Centre to "talk to representatives of the students". The Opposition parties attacked the Centre for "ignoring the grievances of unemployed youth", especially in rural areas, and "not respecting" the Armed Forces.

In Bihar, unrest was reported from at least 10 districts, including Ara, Kaimur, Siwan, Munger, Saharsa and Bhagalpur. Officials said the protesters attacked BJP offices in Nawada and Madhubani, targeted the vehicle of BJP MLA Aruna Devi in Varisalganj and pelted stones at the house of BJP MLA C N Gupta in Chhapra.

In Haryana's Palwal, over 20 police and government person-

nel were injured and five official vehicles set on fire by protesters who gheraoed the Deputy Commissioner's office near Agra Chowk. The police fired in the air and used tear gas shells to disperse the crowd.

The Haryana government later imposed prohibitory orders in the area and ordered a temporary suspension of Internet services in Palwal "to stop the spread of disinformation and rumours". "The agitation was infiltrated by anti-social elements who began pelting stones, causing a law and order situation. They also tried to cause damage to the (DC's) office and stole ammunition from the police stationed there," the police said.

Protests were reported elsewhere in the state from Rewari and Gurgaon, where traffic was blocked on the Jaipur highway at Bilaspur Chowk.

In Rohtak, a 23-year-old youth hailing from Lijwana village in Jind committed suicide by hanging inside his room at a paying guest accommodation with his family claiming that he was preparing for recruitment in the Armed Forces and was disappointed at the new policy.

The Central Government had unveiled Agnipath on Tuesday under which most soldiers will leave service in just four years -- 45,000 to 50,000 aspirants will be recruited annually but only 25 per cent will be allowed to continue for another 15 years under permanent commission.

On Wednesday, the Government rolled out a series of welfare measures for those who would be let go early, including priority in recruitment for the Central Armed Police Forces, Assam Rifles and some state police services.

"A job in the Armed Forces is the only lifeline to a secure future for youth from the villages and their families. Who will go for a four-year job with an uncertain future? This is traumatic for unemployed youth who have been preparing for a chance in the Armed Forces for most of their lives," said Aman Sah, a student from Bhagalpur in Bihar who took part in the protests.

"There is hardly a village in Bihar that does not send at least one youth to the Armed Forces every year. The short-term Agnipath scheme has come as a bolt from the blue for them," said SK Jha, who runs popular coaching programmes for job aspirants in Bihar.

According to Jha, an estimated 2.5-3 lakh students from the state appear for recruitment tests to the Armed Forces.

In Jammu, the police resorted to a lathicharge to disperse a large gathering outside the Army's recruitment office on B C Road in protest over the cancellation of their written recruitment test following the introduction of Agnipath. The protesters also blocked the busy Tawi bridge, disrupting vehicular traffic for nearly an hour in the morning.

"We had applied for recruitment in 2019 and undergone

physical and medical tests. The written test was cancelled more than once due to one reason or the other, including Covid. It was finally scheduled to be held on Thursday," said a protester who did not wish to be identified.

Protests were also witnessed in a few districts of UP, mainly Bulandshahr and Agra. While a highway was blocked in Agra, protesters clogged the busy GT Road in Bulandshahr and raised slogans against the Centre. Senior police officers said there was no arrest related to the protests.

In Rajasthan, job aspirants and workers of the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) took out rallies in Jaipur, Nagaur, Ajmer, Dholpur, Bhilwara, Sikar and Jodhpur, among other districts, with police resorting to mild lathicharge in some locations to disperse the crowds.

In outer Delhi's Nangloi station, protesters blocked the railway track and raised slogans against the Centre. Sameer Sharma, DCP (Outer), said: "About 15-20 men had gathered at the railway station and started protesting against the Agnipath scheme. They were on the track and stopped one train. They were dispersed."

In Ranchi, around 50 protesters gathered outside the railway station and in the Main Road overbridge area demanding a rollback of the policy, officials said. And in Pithoragarh, a group of youths staged a "peaceful protest" and submitted a memorandum against Agnipath at the collectorate.

(KRISHN KAUSHIK/NEW DELHI, SANTOSH SINGH/PATNA, ARUN SHARMA/JAMMU, AMIL BHATNAGAR/PALWAL, PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA/GURGAON, ASAD REHMAN/LUCKNOW, HAMZA KHAN/JAIPUR, ABHISHEK ANGAD/RANCHI & AGENCIES)

Behind protest

and his family. In case a soldier died in action, the benefits continued for his family.

The Agnipath scheme will end these benefits. One of the core but unsaid aims of the scheme is to cut down on the soaring salary and pension bill of the armed forces. For this year, the government has allocated over Rs 2.5 lakh crore under these two heads alone, out of the Rs 5.25 lakh crore defence budget.

The Agniveers, as the soldiers will be called under the four-year Agnipath scheme, will be paid for the tenure, and will get a lump-sum amount of Rs 11.7 lakh at the end of the service, which will be tax free. There is no concept of pension or lifelong health benefits.

In case an Agniveer dies while in service, the family will get Rs 1 crore including insurance, ex-gratia and balance salary. But it will be a one-time payout.

These benefits will, however, continue for those who become part of the armed forces after the four-year period. As the scheme envisages, all Agniveers will finish their four-year tenure and then there will be fresh recruitment of 25 per cent of the same pool. They will continue in the services for 15 more years, and will get pension and the health benefits existing today.

The rest though will be free to pursue other careers, with several departments and governments announcing that they will get preference, educational credits, skill certificates, to help them rehabilitate in other fields.

Official sources said the theory that Agniveers will be "insecure" is a myth. Those wishing to be entrepreneurs, the sources said, will get a financial package and bank loans and those wishing to study further "will be given 12 class equivalent certificate and bridging course for further studies".

For job-seekers, the government has already said they will get priority in the Central Armed Police Forces. Some BJP-ruled states have also assured priority in police recruitment. Additionally, the government has said "several avenues are also being opened for them in other sectors".

There is also concern about how the new recruitment path will align with the previous system based on the Recruitable Male Population (RMP) system for the Army, which is the proportion of the male population, which meets the Qualitative Recruitments laid down for recruitment, and is about 10 per cent of the total male population of a state, based on the census.

Sources within the defence services said the modalities of how this will happen are still being worked out. But the sources suggested that the population of the armed forces will represent the population of the country. Government sources claimed

that in the coming years "recruitment of Agniveers will be around triple of the current recruitment in armed forces." But on Tuesday, the day of the announcement of the scheme, the government said the intake this year will be 46,000, and will go up to 50,000 to 60,000 annually over the years.

No demolition

of Justices A S Bopanna and Vikram Nath did not pass any interim order staying demolitions, but said "now that notice is being issued and reply is being filed, make sure nothing untoward happens in the meanwhile."

"When the issue is before the court, there should be some restraint," Justice Bopanna said.

Senior Advocate Harish Salve, appearing for the district authorities, maintained that due process was followed in the three cases -- one in Prayagraj and two in Kanpur -- being cited by the Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind.

Providing details of the dates on which notices were issued in the three cases and follow-up action taken after alleged failure to comply, Salve said "the media picks it up, links it with some political statement and all the hype is created and it's said an umbrella order should be passed". He said he would convey the concerns of the bench to the authorities.

Justice Bopanna said "everything should look fair".

The bench said it did not mean to say there should be no demolition at all, but it was only saying that procedure must be followed.

Appearing for the Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind, Senior Advocate C U Singh said though the court had earlier issued notice on a matter challenging demolitions in other states, it had not passed any interim order and "taking advantage" of that "a spate of demolitions have taken place" in Uttar Pradesh and "on each occasion, statements are made that these are in retaliation, that people who are allegedly goondas or rioters or stone-pelters or persons who have allegedly indulged in violence due to some communal issues and so on, that their houses are being demolished because of that".

"Statements are being made by high constitutional functionaries, right from the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh downward, and several others. But once the demolitions are carried out or immediately thereafter, they are sought to be justified on the ground that these are illegal constructions. This is happening again and again, and it's like a playbook being used. To my mind, it's not shocking but absolutely appalling," he said.

"This is something we have never seen in this nation, not during the Emergency, not even during pre-Independence times... that an allegation is made against somebody and their home and shops and offices and the place of business are demolished. These homes may not even be the home of that person but of the father of that person, mother of that person. Allegations are made against X and the home of immediate relatives is demolished. In some cases, these are homes standing for 20 years, 25 years, 30 years, pucca houses and so on. What is happening is unconstitutional and this is being done by targeting a particular community, something absolutely horrifying," Singh said.

Appearing for the UP government, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said it's "very curious" that an organisation like Jamiat filed a plea but none of those affected came forth to file any petition. Referring to the litigation over the demolition drive in the Jahangirpuri area of Delhi, Mehta said "when such issues arise, everybody wants to have their pound of flesh", and that a political party filed a petition seeking relief that nobody should demolish anything anywhere in the country without following the law. He said no order is needed for such relief.

Intervening, Justice Bopanna said the matter should not be taken as adversarial, "about who has approached and what. Ultimately, rule of law has to prevail. So, let's not get into who has approached".

Salve, however, said "there is a reason why the person appearing becomes relevant". He said "one of them (action against illegal construction) started in August 2020, and somebody is riding a wave saying this is a good chance for me to protect my property. That's why, as the SG says, who has come to court becomes important."

The bench sought to know if prior proceedings were held in the cases cited by the Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind.

"No... but they are sought to be justified on the basis that they

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are illegal constructions, and in some cases, oral statements are made that notices were issued in the past. There is no material at all. In one instance, the home of the wife of the person who allegedly is an anti-social element, a home which she inherited... has been demolished. And statements are made by high political functionaries that bulldozers will be deployed against persons who take the law into their own hands," Singh said.

The bench said, "We are also conscious that no demolition can take place without following the due process of law."

Senior Advocate Nithya Ramakrishnan, also arguing against the demolitions, said, "After the demolition is publicised, they are coming out with the excuse that notice was given, it was pasted on their doors etc... a remarkable coincidence that this is done to persons who are otherwise accused in riots... there were statements from the highest functionaries of the state that bulldozers will be the manner of criminal justice."

Senior Advocate Huzefa Ahmadi said there is a strong case of malafides. "How is it that only those persons whose names are there in the FIR are picked up and their constructions demolished?" he asked. Even in cases where a particular property is unauthorised, the civil court, he said, will tell the corporation (to) give the person some time to remove materials. "You are not going to come overnight with a bulldozer and just knock it (down)," he said.

Prayagraj

on the private properties under the two acts, should wait from taking any action for actual demolition till the statutory period of appeal comes to an end," a ruling by Justices Shashi Kant Gupta, Pankaj Bhatia in October 15, 2020 had said in Abbas Ansari And Another versus State Of Uttar Pradesh.

The two legislations referred in the ruling are the Uttar Pradesh Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973 and the Uttar Pradesh (Regulation of Building Operations) Act, 1958. "The directions in the case have not been followed by the state. There is an apparent violation of law in taking action before 30 days of serving the notice," Justice Govind Mathur, who was the Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court then, told The Indian Express.

On June 12, the Prayagraj Development Authority had invoked Section 27 of the Uttar Pradesh Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973, to demolish Javed's house after serving just a day's notice to vacate the house. The provision gives the municipal authorities power to order the demolition of a building if it is found to be in contravention of the Master Plan or is without requisite permission or approval under the law.

While the municipal authorities said a show cause notice was issued on May 10, it claimed that a notice to voluntarily remove the encroachment was issued on May 25. However, Javed's family and his lawyer KK Rai have denied receiving any notices before the night of June 10.

Emails sent to Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA) Vice Chairman Arvind Kumar Chauhan, PDA Secretary Ajeet Kumar Singh and District Magistrate Sanjay Khatri seeking clarification on the court's directive of October 15, 2020, and the action taken by the administration did not elicit a response.

In the Abbas Ansari ruling, the Court acknowledged that the Uttar Pradesh government is carrying out demolitions without allowing the property owners time to appeal in several instances.

"Before parting with the case, we have noticed that before this court a large number of cases are being filed before this Court (burdening the dockets of this already overburdened court), complain-

ing of demolitions being carried out even before the expiry of prescribed period for filing of an appeal, coupled with the fact that the statutes namely the U.P. Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973 as well as U.P. (Regulation of Building Operations) Act, 1958, provide for an alternative remedy of an appeal within 30 days, we deem it appropriate to issue general mandamus in respect of actions being taken under the two statutes in the entire State," the Court said.

The HC had also directed the Registrar General of the Court to forward a copy of the order to UP Chief Secretary to ensure compliance by all the Vice-Chairmen of all the Development Authorities and the District Magistrates throughout the state.

Section 27(2) of the 1973 Act states that: "Any person aggrieved by an order under Sub-section (1) may appeal to the (Chairman) against that order within thirty days from the date thereof and the Chairman may after hearing the parties to the appeal either allow or dismiss the appeal or may reverse or vary any part of the order."

Additionally, the provision also states that "no such order shall be made unless the owner or the person concerned has been given a reasonable opportunity to show cause why the order should not be made."

The Allahabad High Court also said the timelines cannot be mere procedural crutches and that "expropriatory legislation" must be given a strict interpretation as they "purport to take away the valuable constitutional rights of the citizens."

"Till the disposal of the interim application filed in the statutory appeals the authorities should not take any steps for executing the demolition orders. Copies of the demolition orders, passed under the acts should be properly served upon the persons against whom the orders are passed," the HC held.

The ruling also underlined that the source for demolishing properties under municipal and revenue laws is not derived from police powers.

"The courts cannot also be oblivious of the fact that the owners who are subject to the embargos placed under the statute are deprived of their valuable rightful use of the property for a long time. Although ordinarily when a public authority is asked to perform statutory duties within the time stipulated it is directory in nature but when it involves valuable rights of the citizens and provides for the consequences therefore it would be construed to be mandatory in character. The courts should, therefore, strive to find a balance of the competing interests," the Court said.

The UP government has filed an appeal against the Abbas Ansari ruling before the Supreme Court. On March 12, 2021, the SC agreed to hear the appeal but did not stay the operation of the verdict. It has not been listed for hearing since.

In January 2021, the Allahabad HC relied on the Abbas Ansari ruling in a batch of three cases and stayed a demolition notice, directing the state to maintain status quo till the appeal is disposed of.

Adda guest

coordinating the government's massive efforts towards evacuating Indian students stranded in Ukraine after Russia attacked the former on February 24.

In his role as Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Puri is entrusted with the task of increasing domestic production of crude oil and natural gas, alongside generating a gas-based economy that entails a renewed focus on improving the availability and utilisation of the cleaner fossil fuel.

With the recent cut in excise duty on petrol and diesel, and the government's intervention in ensuring the addition of sanction-

hit Russia's deeply discounted crude oil into its overall supply basket, the minister has his work cut out in ensuring that the impact of spiralling global fuel prices is as transitory as possible, given the spiralling inflationary trend.

Retail or Consumer Price Index-based inflation has remained over the Reserve Bank of India's upper band of 6 per cent for five months in a row, prompting the central bank to hike policy rates and kill whatever little demand the economy has seen as India emerges out of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister, Puri has an overarching mandate over the development of urban infrastructure, at a time when there is immense stress on the infrastructure of most Indian towns and cities, including water supply resources, sanitation, the housing for all target, and also the task of leveraging the use of data, technology and innovation in the planning and management of cities.

A 1974 batch Indian Foreign Service officer, Puri also served as the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations between 2009 till 2013 ahead of joining the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2014.

As part of his urban re-engineering mandate, Puri is in charge of Narendra Modi-government's key flagship schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana -- Urban (PMAY-U), Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana and the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, among others. His ministry also oversees the ambitious Central Vista Redevelopment Project aimed to reshape India's seat of power at Raisina Hill.

At the Express Adda, Puri will be in conversation with Anant Goenka, Executive Director, The Indian Express Group and P Vaidyanathan Iyer, Executive Editor, The Indian Express.

The Express Adda is a series of informal interactions organised by The Indian Express Group and features those at the centre of change. When the discussions moved online during the Covid-19 pandemic, Union Minister for External Affairs S Jaishankar, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and MSMEs Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Education Ramesh Pokhriyal, AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria, and former Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian were among the guests at e-Adda.

Prominent guests at past editions of Express Adda include Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Nobel laureates Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, Chief Economic Advisor Krishnamurthy Subramanian, cancer specialist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee, and cricketer Cheteshwar Pujara.

TMC MLA

letter for an Aadhaar card, some small issues here and there. At the same time, we need to ensure that our government schemes reach the people," says Tiwary, adding, "I have got used to it now".

"There are many files and documents which need to be signed. So my day is long. As I am playing and cannot go to my constituency office, I have asked them to courier the files here. I sign the files and send them back, so that my work doesn't get hampered. I then call my office and check the status of pending work. I have people who give me daily feedback on things which need to be done," he says.

His first constituency, cricket, too placed a heavy demand on him in the Ranji Trophy semi-final against Madhya Pradesh at Bengaluru on Thursday. MP were bundled out for 341 runs on the second day and Bengal reached 273 runs, mainly due to Tiwary's 103.

Bengal were wobbling at 11 for 3 in under four overs when Tiwary walked in. Soon, they were

54 for 5 but Tiwary, in the company of centurion Shahbaz Ahmed, lifted Bengal towards respectability. "I have been in such situations before. It's just about keeping your head down and playing session by session. I told Shahbaz that we need to try and stay there as much as possible, runs will come later," says Tiwary.

An aggressive right-handed batsman who represented India in 12 one-day internationals and three T20s, Tiwary is fully aware that his Team India dream is over, and his non-selection in the last IPL auction has also brought down the curtains on his participation in that tournament.

The question, then, is why does he still play professional cricket?

"It's my dream that Bengal wins the Ranji Trophy one day. I wanted it to happen when I was captain, but sadly that wasn't so. Now, there is a desire to be part of the winning Ranji Trophy team at least once in my lifetime. It's the only reason which has kept me motivated," he says.

After he hit a century on Thursday, Tiwary took out a note from his pocket and flashed it towards the Bengal dressing room. He had scribbled a "thank you" note to his family for supporting him.

"It's not been easy. Earlier, I used to just play cricket and was on the road. Now, I don't get any time at all. There are days when I reach home at 1 in the night and leave early next morning for the party's programme. My wife has been a pillar of support behind me," he says.

Just after he joined the Trinamool Congress ahead of the Assembly elections last year, Tiwary had told The Indian Express that it was a phone call from party chief Mamata Banerjee that made him join the poll fray. "Manoj Tiwary will continue to call a spade a spade. When everybody is deserting Didi -- those who were in the party for so long are now running away -- I didn't want to take it lying down. This is in my blood. I will stand by a person who gives her everything for Bengal. I always wanted to work for people and contribute to society in this difficult situation," he had said.

Booster dose

60 years, and healthcare and frontline workers.

According to the data, a Covid surge in Mumbai has coincided with a consistent increase in pre-caution dose coverage over the last two weeks during the door-to-door campaign. There was a 31 per cent increase in the number of booster shots administered this week over the past week.

Bengaluru also saw a week-on-week increase during June -- a 6.8 per cent increase during the first seven days of June over the previous week and 49.2 per cent rise during the second week.

Delhi and Kolkata recorded fluctuations in the booster numbers of June. Delhi saw a 5.9 per cent decline in the first week of June followed by a 32.4 per cent increase. Kolkata reported a decline of 9.7 per cent in the first week of June followed by a 64.3 per cent increase, according to data on CoWIN.

The data show a 41.8 per cent increase in cumulative vaccine doses across the country during the past week, which is less than the increase seen for booster doses. Among the metros, the rate of increase in booster doses was higher than for the total number of doses in Delhi and Kolkata -- the capital saw a 15.8 per cent in total number of doses and Kolkata a 55.01 per cent increase. Mumbai saw a 31.06 per cent increase in the total number of doses, around the same pace as booster doses. Bangalore saw a 63.7 per cent increase in the total number, which was higher than the increase in total number of booster doses during the week. Chennai saw a 315 per cent increase in the total number of doses, much higher than the rate in booster shots.

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

ISRAEL IS looking forward to promote the new I2U2 initiative, a new grouping of India, Israel, USA and UAE, said Eynat Shlein, head of MASHAV, Israeli agency for international development cooperation, on Thursday. In the grouping's name, 'I2' stands for India and Israel, whereas 'U2' stands for USA and the UAE.

Speaking to reporters on Thursday, Shlein said, "The fact that the two close strategic partners of Israel -- US and India -- chose to become a part of this co-operation, of this new initiative, tells you the significance of this initiative."

"We are really looking forward to promote this new initiative," Shlein said.

As part of the I2U2 initiative, US President Joe Biden will hold a virtual summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Israel PM Naftali Bennett and UAE President

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

CLARIFICATIONS & CORRECTIONS

16.06.22, PAGE 1

IN THE June 16 edition front page report '10 lakh jobs: Existing Govt vacancies to account for most, 90% at lowest levels', the total cost to the government in employing 10 lakh people was erroneously mentioned as about Rs 4,500 crore a year. It should be about Rs 4,500 crore a month, or Rs 54,000 crore a year. The error is regretted.

3 West Bengal

Presidential polls: Mamata steers Oppn talks, with a nudge from Pawar



Banerjee with Sharad Pawar in Delhi, Tuesday. Conscious attempts were made to avoid making it a 'Mamata show'. File

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

"WHAT IS UPA? There is no UPA": Mamata Banerjee, December 1, 2021.

The three-time chief minister's assertion was projected as a sign of her determination to open a new chapter in Opposition politics, with her party, the Trinamool Congress, as the fulcrum, replacing a list-less Congress. On Wednesday, ahead of the joint meeting convened by her on the Presidential poll, as Banerjee warmly received Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Jairam Ramesh and Randeep Surjewala at the entrance of the meeting venue, the moment framed the distance travelled by the TMC in the last seven months.

Humbled by a poor show in the Goa assembly polls, desertion of inductees like Haryana leader Ashok Tanwar within days of joining, and trouble in its home turf West Bengal on many fronts, ranging from political violence and an alleged scam in teacher recruitment, the TMC appears to have reworked its strategy. The joint meeting, which was attended by 17 Opposition parties despite noises made by the Congress, Left parties and the DMK over Banerjee's "unilateral initiative", was replete with signs that the TMC has realised its limitations, and the need to adopt a more accommodating approach — with a little nudge from Sharad Pawar.

In fact, conscious attempts were made to avoid giving an impression that it was a 'Mamata show'. The NCP supremo, who played a major role in getting the TMC to dial down its aggression, which was threatening to erase even the fuzzy outlines of unity in the Opposition camp, presided over the meeting. Apart from the Congress, Pawar, who is the force binding together the unlikely Sena-NCP-Congress coalition in Maharashtra, also managed to bring the Left parties, which continues to have bitter equations with the TMC, on board for her proposal to "sit together" and pick "the true custodian of our Constitution".

In her speech at the meeting, Banerjee even attacked the BJP government over the ED grilling of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, likening it with the agency's action against her own nephew and TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee.

Monsoon likely to advance in Gangetic areas

Kolkata: The much-awaited southwest monsoon is likely to advance in parts of Gangetic West Bengal bringing down high day and night temperatures and humidity in the region and also into the entire sub-Himalayan West Bengal within a day, the Met department said on Thursday.

Widespread thundershowers with isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely in the sub-Himalayan districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Alipurduar during the next five days owing to strong southwesterly winds from the Bay of Bengal, the Met said.

The southwest monsoon is likely to advance in parts of Gangetic West Bengal and all the northern districts of the state by Friday, the Met said. It said rainfall is likely to increase gradually in the south Bengal districts with the possibility of isolated heavy downpours on Friday and Saturday in the region. **PTI**



CONG PROTESTS CONTINUE

Congress workers staging a protest outside Raj Bhavan in Kolkata against the questioning of their party leader Rahul Gandhi by the Enforcement Directorate. Over 100 party workers and Rajya Sabha MP Pradeep Bhattacharya were detained before being released. Partha Paul

IN THE ASSEMBLY

SUSPENSION OF 7 BJP MLAs REVOKED

Kolkata: Vidhan Sabha Speaker Biman Banerjee on Thursday announced withdrawal of the suspension of seven BJP legislators, including Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari from the Assembly. The saffron party MLAs were suspended on charges of disorderly conduct in the Assembly during the budget session in March this year. **ENS**

BILL TO MAKE CM CHANCELLOR OF 2 AGRICULTURE VARSITIES PASSED

Kolkata: The State Assembly on Thursday passed a bill to replace the Governor as chancellor of two state-run agriculture universities with the Chief Minister. The West Bengal Krishi Viswavidyalaya Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2022, also increased the retirement age of the vice-chancellors of the two universities from 65 to 70 years. On Monday, the assembly had passed a bill to make CM chancellor of all state-run universities under the higher education department. **ENS**

NOTICE

It is notified that the following for my client Asis Kumar Ghosh, son of Late Bhupesh Chandra Ghosh and Late Lila Ghosh R/o. 53/49, R. N. Guha Road, P.O. & P.S. Dum Dum, Kolkata - 700028.

1. Schedule of Property : A Plot of Land measuring 03 k - 01 CH-00 Sq.ft. along with structure there on and under khatian No. 88, R.S. Khatian No. 107, R.S. Dag No.220 & 244 in Mouza - Dum Dum House, Holding No. 91, R. N. Guha Road, Kolkata - 700028 in Ward No. 8 South Dum Dum Municipality

2. Owner of the Property : Late Lila Ghosh died intestate on 08.02.2015 leaving behind her two sons as her Legal heirs namely Asis Kumar Ghosh (the deponent) and Tapash Kumar Ghosh (now deceased).

3. That Tapash Kumar Ghosh died intestate bachelor on 02.05.2021, leaving behind his only brother Asis Kumar Ghosh (the deponent) as his only legal heir and representative.

Now my client is willing to record the said property in his name and any person having any right, title and interest in the said property should send written objection, if any, to the undersigned on or before 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of publication thereof. After that no claim will be entertained.

Advocate: Subhasish Ghosh
Address: 37A, Narasingh Avenue, Kolkata - 700074
Ph No. : 9831007396

PUBLIC NOTICE BRANCH OFFICE SHIFTING

Bajaj Finance Limited having its Registered Office, Mumbai- Pune Road, Akurdi, Pune 411 035 and Corporate office on 4th Floor, Bajaj Finserv House, Viman Nagar, Off Pune - Ahmednagar Road, Pune, Maharashtra 411 014 hereby informs its customers and concerned that it's office located at 1st Floor, 151, G. N. P. C. Road, (Mission Road), Beside Friends Club, Ranaghat, Nadia - 741201 will be closing with effect from 25th September 2022. For better customer facility all the existing services shall continue to be available at new branch shifted to 1st Floor, Khetra Kamal Bhaban, Holding No - 58, G.N.P.C. Road, Bara Bazar, Ranaghat, Nadia, West Bengal, Pin - 741201. All customers and concerned are requested to take note of change of address and requested to contact our office at 1st Floor, Khetra Kamal Bhaban, Holding No - 58, G. N. P. C. Road, Bara Bazar, Ranaghat, Nadia, West Bengal, Pin - 741201 thereafter.

Bajaj Finance Limited
4th Floor, Bajaj Finserv House, Viman Nagar, Off Pune - Ahmednagar Road, Pune - 411 014 Maharashtra Tel - 020 7150 5050 Date - 17th June 2022

Bankers Institute of Rural Development (BIRD)
Sector-H, LDA Colony, Kanpur Road, Lucknow-226012
Tel: (0522) 2421047
E-mail: bird@nabard.org, dpsp.bird@nabard.org
Website: www.birdlucknow.nabard.org

TENDER NOTICE

Applications are invited for "Empanelment of Contractors for Supply, Installation, Testing, and Commissioning of New VRF /VRF (Variable Refrigerant) Air Conditioning System and Dismantling of old Central Air Conditioning system at BIRD, Lucknow" which is estimated to cost **Rupees 4.70 crore**. Format of Application is available for download at <http://birdlucknow.nabard.org/tender-and-adv/>. Any corrigendum/ addendum in this regard will be published on above website only. Last date for submission of bids is 07 July 2022 at 15:00 Hrs.

Director

SCHOOL STAFF RECRUITMENT 'SCAM'

CBI raids WBBSE office, houses of senior officials

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JUNE 16

THE CBI on Thursday conducted raids at the office of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) and the houses of senior WBBSE officers as part of their investigation into the alleged illegal appointments in state-sponsored and -aided schools.

The move came days after Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay expressed his displeasure over the progress of CBI investigations into all cases, including the probe into the SSC recruitment scam case ordered by him. According to a senior agency officer, a six-member team carried out searches at the WBBSE's Salt Lake office and questioned staff members there.

Later in the day, raids were conducted at the houses of former West Bengal School Service

Commission (SSC) adviser Shanti Prasad Sinha and WBBSE president Kalyanmoy Ganguly. Sources said the raids were conducted after the WBBSE president failed to appear for questioning despite issuing repeated summons. Later, Ganguly was taken to the WBBSE's Salt Lake office for questioning. The officer said, "Our officers are there in connection with the investigation into the appointment scam. They are questioning staff members and conducting search operations."

Earlier, state ministers Partha Chatterjee and Paresh Adhikari were questioned by the CBI for their alleged involvement in the scam. Meanwhile, hearing a related case, Justice Gangopadhyay said, "Several SSC officers used their position to provide jobs to their family members." Without taking anyone's name, Justice Gangopadhyay said the truth would come out soon.

PROTESTS OVER REMARKS ON THE PROPHET

Call in central forces if need arises: HC to govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JUNE 16

THE CALCUTTA High Court on Thursday directed the state government to take all possible steps to ensure no violence takes place during any protest over the alleged controversial remarks made against Prophet Mohammad by former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma. The High Court also asked the government to call in central paramilitary forces if the need arises.

Hearing several PILs seeking deployment of Army or central forces to contain widespread violence that erupted in several districts last week, the court expressed its apprehensions that the violent protests might occur again. "We direct State authorities to assess the ground situation in advance and take steps to call central forces ... if the need so arises, before the situation goes out of control or before any loss of life or property takes place," said a division bench comprising Chief Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Justice R Bhargadwaj.

The bench directed the state government to take expeditious steps to collect video footage of



CM Mamata Banerjee at Dakshineswar Kali Temple.

incidents of violence and property vandalism and take action as per law.

On June 13, the court had expressed hope that state authorities would take all possible steps to make sure that no untoward incident took place and peace was maintained. During a hearing on Wednesday, the petitioners alleged that large congregations were taking place under the garb of peaceful gathering and provocative slogans were being raised.

Last week, large-scale violence had taken place in Howrah, Nadia, Murshidabad and North and South 24 Parganas districts. "Many people say that I offer namaz, I do not. But I do attend iftar parties. I stay with them till the breaking of the fast. It is not a religious ritual. People of any religion can take part in it. No one raises a question when I go to a gurdwara. Then why raise such questions when I go to a mosque," she said. **ENS**

AGNIPATH RECRUITMENT SCHEME

Centre playing with future of Army: TMC

Kolkata: The Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Thursday slammed the Narendra Modi government for rolling out the Agnipath recruitment scheme leading to protests in several parts of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, and accused the central government of playing with the future of the Indian Army.

"The country and its economy

are going through a crisis and its effects are being felt. Now, the Centre has brought a new scheme, which has led to violence. The scheme will compromise the efficacy of the defence. The central government is playing with the future of the Indian Army. There cannot be any justification to it," said TMC state general secretary Kunal Ghosh. **ENS**

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Hardeep Singh Puri
Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Housing & Urban Affairs, Govt. of India

in conversation with

Anant Goenka
Executive Director
Indian Express Group

P Vaidyanathan Iyer
Executive Editor
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DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, SILIGURI
Address: 2nd Floor, PCM Tower, 2nd Mile, Sevoke Road, Siliguri - 734001, West Bengal

Summons under sub-section (4) of section 19 of Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with sub-rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debt Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993

SUMMONS / NOTICE
O. A. No. 15 of 2019
BANK OF BARODA
(Erstwhile Vijaya Bank).....Applicant
-Versus-
M/S STELLER PROJECTS PRIVATE LIMITED AND OTHERS.....Defendants

To

1. M/S STELLER PROJECTS PRIVATE LIMITED, A Private Limited Company, having it's Registered Office at Shaktigarh, P.W.D. More, besides Burdwan Road, Ward No. 31 of S.M.C., Post Office- Siliguri Bazar, Police Station- Bhaktinagar, now New Jalpaiguri, District- Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, Pin-734005, also available at Royal Residency, 63/321, Maheshmati, Flat No. 3G, Malda, Post Office- Malda, Police Station- English Bazar, District- Malda, West Bengal, Pin-732101.

2. SRI SUBHADIPATI SAHA, Son of Kshitindra Nath Saha, residing of North Singalaya, near Tilas Club, English Bazar, Post Office- Malda, Police Station- English Bazar, District- Malda, West Bengal, Pin-732101.

3. SRI AMIT PAL, Son of Ajit Kumar Pal, residing of 9/3/3, Bijoigarh, Jadavpur University, Circus Avenue, Kolkata - 700032.

4. SMT. MITUL GANGULY, Wife of Sri Subhash Ganguly, Plot No. 2, Sector-I, The New Garia Development Co-operative Housing Society Ltd., Mouza- Chak Garia, 24 Parganas (S), Post Office- Garia, Police Station- Purba Jadavpur, Kolkata-700094, also available at Matri Mandir, Saratpally, Malda, Post Office- Malda, Police Station- English Bazar, District- Malda, West Bengal, Pin-732101.

WHEREAS, O.A. 15 of 2019 was listed before Hon'ble Presiding Officer on **18.03.2019.**

AND WHEREAS Applicant Bank filed **I.A. No. 46 of 2020** to amend the cause title and the Ld. Tribunal allowed the said I.A. vide order dated **13.05.2022.**

WHEREAS, this Hon'ble Tribunal is pleased to issue summons/ notice on the said Application under section 19(4) of the Act, (OA) filed against you for recovery of debts of sum of **Rs. 1,22,27,362.46p (Rupees One Crore Twenty Two Lakh Twenty Seven Thousand Three Hundred Sixty Two And Paise Forty Six)** only (application along with copies of documents etc. annexed).

In accordance with sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, you, the defendants are directed as under:-

(i) To show cause within 30 (thirty) days of the service of summons as to why relief prayed for in the OA should not be granted;

(ii) To disclose particulars of properties of assets other than properties and assets specified by the applicant under serial number 3A of the original application;

(iii) You are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other assets and properties disclosed under 3-A of the original application and also not to alienate, dispose or transfer the said property to third party, pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties;

(iv) You shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and/ or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under 3-A of the original application without the prior approval of the tribunal;

(v) You shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realized by sale of secured assets or other assets and properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institutions holding security interest over such assets.

You are also directed to file the **written statement** with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before **Tribunal on 14.07.2022 at 10.30 A.M.,** failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal on this the **19th day of June, 2022.**

By Order of the Tribunal
sd/-
Registrar
Debts Recovery Tribunal, Siliguri

SC judge M R Shah falls ill in Himachal, airlifted to Delhi

Police said the accused, Nasir Shaikh, resided with Alfeesa at Karanjia building on MS Ali Road. Both are divorcees and have children from previous partners. Police said the two were staying together for the past one year. **ENS**



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

Black Death: 7 centuries on, new light on plague origins

THE BLACK Death, or the bubonic plague that killed millions across Western Asia, Northern Africa, Middle East and Europe during 1346-53, remains the biggest pandemic in history. While it is known to have been caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*, its origins have long been uncertain.

Now, a study of ancient *Y. pestis* genomes has determined that the disease originated in modern day northern Kyrgyzstan around 1338-1339 – nearly 7-8 years before it began to ravage large parts of the world. The findings are described in the journal *Nature*.



PAPER CLIP

NEW RESEARCH

THE PANDEMIC: It is generally understood that *Y. pestis* was spread by fleas carried by rodent hosts. Once it spread to humans, they transmitted it to others either through fleas or directly through the respiratory system.

Contemporaries who wrote about the epidemic often described the buboes (hard, inflamed lymph nodes) as the distinguishing clinical feature. Matteo Villani, the Florentine chronicler, referred to the disease in 1348 as the “mortal disease of buboes” and “pestilence of buboes”.

The onset of symptoms was followed by intense fever and vomiting of blood. After the initial infection, most victims died within 2-7 days.

THE FINDINGS: In the late 19th century, excavations of two Christian cemeteries near Lake Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan unearthed a settlement of a trading community that had been affected by an unknown disease in 1338-1339. Inscriptions stated that the victims died of an unknown epidemic or “pestilence”.

In the new study, the researchers extracted DNA from the teeth of seven people buried at the cemetery and found genetic traces of *Y. pestis*. Genetic analysis then established that modern strains of the bacterium, closely related to the ancient strain, are found in plague reservoirs around the Tian Shan mountains, close to where the ancient strain was found. This indicated that Issyk-Kul was where the Black Death’s source strain came from.

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Northern Ireland Protocol: UK Bill, and legal proceedings by EU

YASHEE

NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

THE EUROPEAN Commission has launched two new legal proceedings against Britain and re-opened another, after the latter proposed legislation that seeks to get it out of some of its Brexit obligations. If pushed through, these proceedings could mean the European Court of Justice fining Britain.

The legislation

The new law, yet to be tabled in Parliament, seeks to reduce customs checks and paperwork for trade between Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland (which together with Great Britain forms the UK). Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said the changes are “relatively trivial”. However, these violate a key part of the 2019 Brexit deal – the Northern Ireland Protocol.

After the UK left the European Union, Northern Ireland remained its only constituent that shared a land border with an EU member, the Republic of Ireland. Therefore, checks would be necessary for goods from Northern Ireland to Ireland. However, given the history of conflict between the two, it was decided the checks would be conducted between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. This was the Northern Ireland Protocol, under which Northern Ireland remains in the EU single market, and inspections of goods from Great Britain take place at ports along the Irish Sea.

UK’s objectives

The UK has agreed that the Northern

Ireland Protocol Bill, unveiled on June 13, violates international law and provisions of the Brexit deal. Citing domestic interests, the UK government has justified it on its website: “The doctrine of necessity provides a clear basis in international law to justify the non-performance of international obligations under certain exceptional and limited conditions.”

The checks have made trade cumbersome: Some taxation and spending policies of the UK can’t be implemented in Northern Ireland because of EU rules. Also, any kind of border in the Irish Sea irks those who want a united UK. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) has paralysed Northern Ireland’s parliament since elections in May, refusing to allow a government to be formed until the trade border is softened. If the impasse lasts for six months, fresh elections will have to be called.

What now

The Bill is likely to face a tough journey in Parliament whenever it is tabled.

The two new suits accuse Britain of failing to ensure adequate staff and infrastructure for checks in Northern Ireland and not providing the EU with sufficient trade data. The other suit, paused a year ago, is about the movement of agri-food products.

European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic, who is the European Union’s Brexit Commissioner, has said the EU might take the case to the ECJ if Britain failed to address the charges within two months. However, Sefcovic also said the EU still wants to continue talks with Britain to soften the Protocol. The UK government has kept negotiations going.

ANIL SASI

NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

THE US Federal Reserve hiked interest rates by three quarters of a percentage point on Wednesday, its most aggressive move since 1994, in a bid to tame runaway inflation.

The hike, the third since March, comes after inflation in the US surged unexpectedly last month. Importantly, the US central bank has signalled equally-large hikes later this year, which could potentially dent the already wobbly investor outlook across markets.

After the conclusion of a two-day Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting on Wednesday, the central bank chair Jerome Powell indicated that the Fed would increase its key interest rate by three quarters of a percentage point to a range of 1.5% to 1.75%.

Forecasts released after the meeting recorded officials saying they expected the rate the Fed charges banks to borrow from it to zoom to 3.4% by the end of the year.

What is the import of this signalling?

While markets have largely factored in the reversal in the Fed’s policy stance, there are renewed concerns about the pace of the hike given that the US central bank is now under renewed pressure to tame inflation as prices in the world’s largest economy rose at their fastest rate in 40 years during May. There are now clear indications that the Fed would be far more aggressive in its intensity of rate hikes, going by the guidance offered by Powell.

Runaway inflation is being seen as a political headwind for President Joe Biden ahead of the November midterm elections. Biden had said earlier this year that it was “appropriate” for Powell to adjust the Fed’s policies. And congressional Republicans, according to an AP report, have endorsed Powell’s plans to raise rates, providing the Fed with rare bipartisan support for tightening credit.

Powell reaffirmed the view at the last review meeting that policymakers are convinced the American job market is robust enough to let go of the ultra-low interest rates. On Wednesday, Powell said the US is well poised to handle higher rates, pointing to still robust job growth. But projections released by the Fed show officials expect economic growth to slide to about 1.7% in 2022, a full percentage point lower than their forecast in March.

How does this impact global markets?

Traders across markets have been looking for signs that the Fed might be more aggressive about rolling back the stimulus that has been feeding stock market gains across geographies. The new projections are being seen as a definitive move to frontload the reversal of the expansionary monetary policy put in place in early 2020 to invigorate the American economy amid the Covid-19 outbreak.

Part of this support was in the form of an extraordinary bond buying programme, intended to bring down long-term interest rates and catalyse greater borrowing and spending by both consumers and businesses.

What are the concerns at this stage?

The Fed’s announcement has come amid criticism that the US central bank has fallen behind the curve on inflation.

Analysts were quoted by Reuters as saying that they felt the Fed is now struggling to catch up, after Powell and other Fed officials maintained till early this year that inflation was merely a temporary problem related to supply chain issues. Prices have spiked since then, partly due to external factors that include the war in Ukraine and the continuing Covid shutdowns in China’s key manufacturing hubs.

The Fed, which cut rates to support the economy when the pandemic hit in 2020, has already hiked rates twice this year, by 0.25 percentage points in March and another half a



US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell is seen on a screen at the New York Stock Exchange on Wednesday. Reuters

percentage point in May. At the time, Powell had reiterated that they were not considering sharper rises. But inflation numbers released on Friday showed US inflation rising to 8.6% in May – the fastest pace since 1981, prompting the latest round of hikes.

“It is essential that we bring inflation down,” Powell said, acknowledging that a 0.75 percentage point rise was “unusually large”.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, after an

initial slide, rose strongly during Powell’s post-meeting news conference before paring gains somewhat by the close on Wednesday. In India, benchmark indices traded up in opening hours on Thursday partly because the markets were seen as having partly factored in the increased rate hike after US inflation data for May was released last week. Indices, however, plunged later in the day and the Sensex slid 1,647 points from the day’s high to close 2% down at a 52-

EXPLAINED YOUR MONEY

Likely impact on India, and what investors should do



SANDEEP SINGH

EXPERTS SAY that the aggressive Fed rate hike of 75 basis points is likely to push the Reserve Bank of India for more rate hikes in the coming two or three quarters, and thereby will have a direct bearing on GDP growth and market movement.

How much could rates be hiked?

Economists, who had been expecting an additional rate hike of 75-100 basis points over the next three quarters in India, now say the RBI could go for additional rate hike of up to 125 basis points this fiscal, taking the overall rate hike to over 200 basis points.

That may not only impact overall demand in the economy and GDP growth, but will also lead to a correction in the market on account of outflow of funds by foreign portfolio investors and downward revision in earning projections of listed entities as a result of higher cost of funds and input cost.

The day after the Fed announced its rate hike by 75 basis points, the Sensex had fallen 2% to close at an over 12-month low of 51,495. According to provisional data released by exchanges, FPIs sold equity holdings worth Rs 3,257 crore on Thursday, and in June they have sold holdings worth Rs 31,500 crore putting pressure on domestic equities. Domestic institutional investors have invested a net of Rs 24,225

crore in the same period.

What should investors do?

A large part of the inflation concerns is on account of the Russia-Ukraine war. If an early resolution of the conflict may revive market sentiments, there is a feeling that a prolonged war could only hurt these further as it could lead to spike in oil prices and food items.

Given the continuing rise in interest rates and uncertainty on where the yields may stabilise, while debt investors can go for short-term products of 1-2 years, market participants feel equity markets in current times should only be considered with an investment horizon of at least 3 years.

Market participants tracking economic activity say India is very well positioned for higher growth over the next three to five years and companies across sectors are already in the process of fresh capital investment, which is expected to gain momentum over the coming months. Although the decline in equity markets has weakened investor sentiment for now, equity investments should be done keeping the future in mind. Systematic investment plans should be the preferred mode, as these will help investors capitalise on any further dip in the market. Also, to beat inflation, investors need to go with equities, which have traditionally performed better when inflation is high.

For a large number of investors who entered the markets over the last couple of years as day traders, it is high time they stopped taking speculative positions. Many feel the market uncertainty is way too high for such investors who are looking to make money on a daily basis, and who may only end up losing.

week low by the end of trade Thursday.

Why are the Fed’s signals important?

Like other central banks such as the Reserve Bank of India, as the US Fed conducts monetary policy, it influences employment and inflation primarily by using policy tools to control the availability and cost of credit in the economy.

Its primary tool of monetary policy is the federal funds rate, changes in which influence other interest rates – which in turn influence borrowing costs for households and businesses, as well as broader financial conditions.

Additionally, the bond buying programme, also known as quantitative easing, was put in place in 2020 as an extraordinary measure to help the financial markets and the economy counter the impact of the pandemic. This bond buying was an unconventional policy tool (that was deployed during the global financial crisis as well), using which the central bank purchases longer-term securities from the open market in order to increase the money supply and incentivise lending and investment. Buying these securities augmented the supply of new money in the economy, and ended up dampening interest rates, while also expanding the central bank’s balance sheet.

On Wednesday, the Fed halted the process of pumping the proceeds of an initial \$15 billion of maturing Treasuries back into the US government debt market, the first time it has done so since it kicked off its bond-buying programme in early 2020. This effectively signals the move by the US central bank to shrink its expanded \$9 trillion balance sheet.

The Fed is not alone in its intention to hike rates. On Thursday, the Bank of England hiked its key interest rate for a fifth straight time. Australia, Brazil, and Canada too have raised rates; the European Central Bank has indicated it could hike over the next couple of months.

How do rate cycles work?

When interest rates go up in an economy, it becomes more expensive to borrow; so households are less inclined to buy goods and services, and businesses have a disincentive to borrow funds to expand, buy equipment or to invest in new projects. A subsequent lowering of demand for goods and services ends up depressing wages and other costs, in turn bringing runaway inflation under control. Even though the linkages of monetary policy to inflation and employment are not direct or immediate, monetary policy is a key factor in tackling runaway prices.

Theoretically, a signal to hike policy rates in the US should be a negative for emerging market economies, especially from a debt market perspective. Emerging economies such as India tend to have higher inflation and, therefore, higher interest rate than developed countries. As a result, investors, including foreign portfolio investors, tend to borrow in the US at lower interest rates in dollar terms, and invest that money in the bonds of countries such as India in rupee terms to earn higher interest.

What will be the impact on other markets, including India?

A hike in rates in the US could have a three-pronged impact.

When the Fed raises policy rates, the difference between the interest rates of the two countries narrows, thus making countries such as India less attractive for the currency carry trade.

A high rate signal by the Fed would also mean a lower impetus to growth in the US, which could be yet negative news for global growth, especially when China is reeling under the impact of a real estate crisis.

Higher returns in US debt markets could also trigger a churn in emerging market equities, tempering foreign investor enthusiasm. There is also a potential impact on currency markets, stemming from outflows of funds.

2 years after Galwan clash, where India-China relations stand today

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

TWO YEARS after the Galwan clash in the Ladakh heights, in which 20 Indian soldiers were killed, and which plunged India-China relations to their lowest in decades, the two sides are normalising relations in many respects, with the Indian side displaying a pragmatism far ahead of the “*lal aakhi*” rhetoric.

Relations now

Even though New Delhi has not yet succeeded in getting the Chinese to vacate some parts of eastern Ladakh on India’s side of the Line of Actual Control or ensuring a return to status quo ante (as the situation existed in April 2020), bilateral trade has soared and it is now at its highest, first quarter data show.

Further, India’s trade with China in the calendar year 2021 was \$125 billion, higher than in the previous year, and higher than pre-pandemic, pre-Ladakh standoff levels. Imports from China reached \$97.5 billion, while exports crossed \$20 billion for the first time. All this after India put in place restrictions on Chinese participation in the Indian

economy, and banned several Chinese apps popular in India, and added more to the list subsequently. Tencent, the Chinese tech-entertainment giant, recently bought a stake in Flipkart, even while several apps linked to it such as Tik Tok remain banned in India.

While political contact is yet to resume fully, there have been significant interactions. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Delhi in March. National Security Adviser Ajit Doval participated in meetings of the multi-lateral Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, and on Wednesday attended a BRICS security officials meeting hosted by his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to attend the BRICS summit being hosted by China next week, in a virtual format.

This week, Beijing also lifted a two-year Covid ban on visas to Indian professionals and their families. It has also indicated it is processing visas of Indian students who had returned home on account of the pandemic.

Alongside, India has stepped up its engagement with the Quad, a grouping with Australia, Japan and the US that seeks to contain China in the Indo-Pacific region on both the economic and security fronts.

Military stand-off

Despite the PM’s assertion in Parliament that no intrusion had taken place into Indian territory, 15 rounds of talks between India and Chinese senior army commanders in eastern Ladakh for resolution of “friction points” indicate otherwise. The negotiations have led to withdrawal of troops by both sides from Galwan, Pangong Lake and Gogra/Patrolling Point 17A. While this is not yet a return to status quo ante in these areas, there are three other areas – Depsang plains, Hot Springs and Demchok – where Chinese troops continue to prevent Indian soldiers from entering areas they were previously patrolling.

In this time, there have also been several meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC). The Ministry of External Affairs said the two sides reviewed the situation along the LAC in the Western Sector, and agreed to hold the 16th round of senior military commanders at an early date.

Although the withdrawal of troops or disengagement, even partially, was supposed to be a prelude to de-escalation along the LAC, this has not happened either. Instead, China’s build-up of military infrastructure on

its side of the LAC is going on apace. General Charles A Flynn, Commanding General of the US Army in the Pacific region, said during a recent visit to Delhi that the build-up was “alarming”, and while talks were useful, “the way they are acting and behaving is concerning, and should be concerning to everyone, and I think it is”.

China has been building roads, living units and entire villages at various parts of the LAC, but the build-up in Ladakh includes a 11-m-wide bridge spanning the narrow part of Pangong Lake at Khurnak Fort in territory that falls on the Chinese side of the LAC but is claimed by India.

In military terms, according to Brigadier Rahul Bhonsle (ret’d), writing on his portal *Security Risks Asia*, “this bridge will facilitate quick deployment of troops from the Rudog base to forward areas as well as faster tactical deployment of troops within the theatre” to avoid being upstaged by India. On August 29-30, 2020, the Indian Army and Special Frontier Force occupied the Kailash heights in Chushul sub-sector, which dominate the strategically significant Spanggur Gap. China had used this area to launch its offensive in 1962. The heights also give India a direct eye

on Moldo Garrison.

The Chinese could not deploy additional troops quickly enough to repulse the Indian forces because the only route available was around the lake. This is no longer the case. The bridge is on the halfway mark of the lake. Earlier, another bridge, 6 m wide, came up earlier to facilitate the building of this bridge.

India is also building road infrastructure on its side.

Recalling Galwan

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army had pitched tents and an observation post on India’s side of the LAC. After a general agreement on disengaging in the Galwan sector earlier in June, the Chinese had agreed to withdraw. But on the night of June 15, a disagreement over the continued presence of the Chinese led to the bloodiest clash between India and China since 1975.

According to reports at the time, when Colonel Suresh Babu, commander of 16 Bihar that made up the majority of the troops at Galwan, walked up to ask the Chinese to leave, he was manhandled. This led to a five-hour confrontation between 600 soldiers from both sides.

Col Babu died after falling into the ice-cold river, apparently after being hit. At the time, an agreement between the two sides forbade the use of firearms. The Chinese side were equipped with clubs that had nails embedded in them. The Indian side had fibre glass batons. There was stone throwing as well. Many Indian soldiers also died after being hit and falling into the river or being pushed into it.

Ten Indian soldiers including two Majors, two Captains and six jawans were detained by the Chinese for nearly three days before being handed back after several rounds of negotiations. According to unconfirmed reports, the Chinese may have lost more men than India, but so far, the PLA has acknowledged that four of its soldiers were killed. The first acknowledgement of Chinese casualties came eight months after the incident, in March 2021. In February this year, Klaxon, an Australian website, said at least 38 PLA soldiers drowned in the river.

The Galwan clash was the first in which Indian soldiers were killed since October 1975, when four personnel of the Assam Rifles were killed in an ambush by the Chinese at Tulung La in Arunachal Pradesh.



The IndianEXPRESS

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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

AGENCY & THANA

Congress outrage over ED may not find much of an echo. But police action at its office strikes many a disturbing chord

THE CONGRESS'S FULL-THROATED protests against the ED questioning of Rahul Gandhi over three days in the National Herald money laundering case raise questions. Why does the party get agitated only on the alleged targeting of its leader, and not, say, on a range of issues where hard questions need to be asked and answers demanded, from bulldozers trampling due process in BJP-ruled states to witch-hunt of Opposition leaders, not just the First Son. Even on the issue of political vendetta, why does the Congress seem so isolated? Those are the questions for the Congress. But the images of police overzealousness that have also come in over the last few days from the heart of the national capital, stretching from the Congress Headquarters to the office of the Enforcement Directorate, have touched off another set of questions — these must be answered by the BJP government that Delhi Police reports to. Photos and videos of the barricading of the Congress office, of police entering the premises and pulling and dragging officebearers and workers, the rough treatment meted out to a Youth Congress leader and a woman Congress MP, are unseemly. Admittedly, the scene of action was a high security zone, prohibitory orders were in place. And yet, the police heavy-handedness on show in response to what was, after all, a legitimate political protest even if a limited one, underlines a larger and disturbing tendency of the BJP-led Centre vis a vis political opponents and dissenters — to favour the police response over the political.

If the health of a democracy is also measured by the safe, and indeed respectful, spaces that it provides for dissent, disagreement and protest, the last few years have not painted a rosy picture. The record of BJP governments, be it the Modi government at the Centre or the Yogi government in UP, has been scarred by an intolerance of political opponents and others who ask questions or oppose its politics and policy. In a democracy, the winner does not take all. And winning the mandate, even winning it decisively, does not mean an end to all argument — it only casts a responsibility on the ruling party to reach out and negotiate, to persuade and accommodate. The BJP's fantasy of an “Opposition-mukt” India would be a colourless and chilling place, if it ever came true.

The political battle between the Congress and the BJP seems currently skewed comprehensively in the latter's favour, and the Opposition is divided and fragmented. Even in the present instance, the Congress has hit the streets, but its indignation over the ED questioning of its leader has notably failed to strike a chord with the people at large or with other Opposition parties. There may be no political or electoral penalties to pay for the BJP, therefore, for denying space for protest to the main Opposition party. But the rules of the game, written and sometimes unwritten, call for the government to show respect to those who stand, or agitate, on the other side of the political fence. By not doing so, the ruling party keeps steadily corroding its victories.

PRELUDE TO 5G

Government has eased terms of spectrum auction, but high reserve price and allocations for enterprises will pose problems

ON WEDNESDAY, THE Union cabinet took the first steps towards rolling out 5G services, approving the auction of spectrum. The auction, which will include spectrum across multiple frequency bands, is slated to commence on July 26. The government has eased some of the constraints that had emerged as irritants in the past — a fair amount of spectrum has been put up for the auction, usage charge has been dropped, and payment terms have been eased. However, some issues warrant closer attention.

For one, the reserve price of spectrum has been retained by the government, despite demands from the telecom operators to review it. Telcos have, in the past, made the case for around 90 per cent reduction in the reserve price. However, in line with the recommendations of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), which were also accepted by the Digital Communications Commission (DCC), the reduction in the reserve price has been of a much lower magnitude, around 35-40 per cent. Thus, considering the high reserve price for the 700 MHz band, there is a possibility that this band may remain unsold this time as well. As per some estimates, industry is likely to fork out around Rs 1.1 lakh crore in these auctions. This will imply that the debt burden of the already over-indebted telcos will increase further. However, considering that the payment for the spectrum can be spread out over 20 equal installments, it will ease immediate cash flow concerns. The government has also allowed bidders the option to give up the spectrum after 10 years, without any liability for the balance payment. Second, the government has made it possible for enterprises, mostly tech companies, to be directly allocated spectrum by the Department of Telecommunications to engage in the Internet of Things (IoT), machine to machine communications etc. Telcos had earlier opposed this move on grounds of a potential loss in their revenues — according to their estimates, 40 per cent of 5G revenues accrue from the enterprise services. However, the government has leaned on the side of the tech companies. Doing so, after all, would also serve as an additional source of revenue.

Considering that 5G has more of enterprise use cases, at least in the initial years, the network capital expenditure is likely to be relatively low early on. But as retail use cases evolve, a successful rollout of 5G services across the country will lay the ground for a digital transformation, having wide ranging implications for economic activity.

LIFE, NOT-LIFE

Google engineer's claim that LaMDA is sentient AI touches off questions about humanity's relationship with machines

VIKTOR FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER could just as easily have been his friend. The creature from Mary Shelley's 1818 novel wanted more than anything to be accepted, to have a companion. And he continues to be the archetype — of both dreams and nightmares — for our conceptions of artificial sentience, and problems with technology that blur the line between life and not-life.

Is the now-suspended Google engineer Blake Lemoine's claim — informed by his self-confessed “religious beliefs” — that the advanced AI chatbot LaMDA has (self) consciousness, tenable? The consensus in the aftermath of his revelations appears to be that it is not. Very simply put, most experts within and outside Google assert that the software can merely mimic human interactions and consciousness through a machine learning algorithm that relies on millions of interactions. Yet, according to Lemoine, LaMDA gave reasons for how it felt, even talking of emotions that are indescribable. This begs the question: When does personhood occur? A toddler may just copy behaviours, without reasoning, as she learns. Couldn't LaMDA be that phase, after language first makes an appearance and before meta-reasoning is achieved, for sentient AI? Given how little is known, still, about the emergence of consciousness and sentience, a little open-mindedness is perhaps in order.

For the lonely, the rise of artificial intelligence can be a balm. For the biological conservative, wedded to the prevalent idea of community and society, the rise of self-conscious machines is the manifestation of Frankenstein's monster. While LaMDA is unlikely to be a person, an artificial person is certainly on the way, according to experts, whether five, 15 or 50 years from now. It might be a good idea to treat the almost-sentient machines well until then.

Congress in its labyrinth



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

Its protests against ED summons to Rahul Gandhi point to misplaced priorities, diminished capabilities

THE CURRENT REGIME has converted the use of investigative and enforcement agencies into a political art. Hardly a day passes without some agency taking action against some Opposition leader. Such brazen use of official agencies throws up a dilemma for the Opposition: If it ignores such official enthusiasm in pursuing investigation, it can be read as mute submission, but on the other hand, protesting against it distracts the Opposition from its main tasks.

This dilemma has been witnessed in recent days by the Congress when the Enforcement Directorate summoned Rahul Gandhi and questioned him on consecutive days. The Congress chose to mobilise its senior leaders for protesting against the ED. The Delhi Police enforced prohibitory orders resulting in detention of party workers and even senior leaders. This could be possibly classified as the compulsions of the dominant party system we live in. The Opposition is pushed into the corner so much that it uses every executive action for protesting against the ruling party.

Most parties succumb to this trap and choose to get distracted. While protests against such investigations appear to give them temporary visibility, they also betray the internal asymmetry because only when a top leader is targeted, followers are encouraged to get scandalised whereas when middle-rung leaders face investigations, they are left alone to languish in custody or face the music. Protests against investigating agencies seldom produce public sympathy because of the nature of the allegations. In this way, the regime has ensured a shrinking of the political space, both because it pushes the targeted leaders out of action and because protests signify that politics will be further distanced from critical issues of policy and governance.

However, in the present case, the problem is broader than merely the tricks of the regime and the compulsions of the dominant party system. It pertains to the web of compulsions created by the Congress party itself. For eight years now, the Congress has been groping in the dark on issues to mobilise its cadres and more importantly, to mobilise the masses against the ruling party. And yet, the summons to Rahul Gandhi by

Even as the ED issued the summons and was investigating the National Herald case, in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP government was using bulldozers against protestors. One would have thought that this is a much more serious political challenge than the quizzing of Rahul Gandhi. The action in UP required more scandal and determination to fight because it shrank the idea of political protests. It also shrank the rule of law by short-circuiting judicial procedure. For the Opposition, this is a major menace because it puts into the danger zone ordinary party workers who participate in protests. But the Congress prioritised the ED summons to Rahul Gandhi.

the ED seems to have galvanised its top leadership into action. While it decries the ED inquiry as political vendetta, its own actions appear too theatrical to be politically relevant. On the one hand, Congress protests appear as an attempt to upscale Rahul Gandhi's image while on the other hand, the focus on action in Delhi means that even within the party there is no depth to the action. Therein lies the tragedy of the Congress. When it acts, it does not result in serious political action and it is often missing when action is expected from the Opposition.

Even as the ED issued the summons and was investigating the National Herald case, in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP government was using bulldozers against protestors. One would have thought that this is a much more serious political challenge than the quizzing of Rahul Gandhi. The action in UP required more scandal and determination to fight because it shrank the idea of political protests. It also shrank the rule of law by short-circuiting judicial procedure. For the Opposition, this is a major menace because it puts into the danger zone ordinary party workers who participate in protests. But the Congress prioritised the ED summons to Rahul Gandhi.

In a sense, we have three different platforms of protest mobilisation. One is when a major leader of the party is allegedly harassed through investigative action. The other is when ordinary workers are put in jeopardy through executive autocracy. The third platform consists of more pervasive issues engulfing ordinary citizens. Price rise and similar adversities faced by the citizens constitute the third platform.

So, how does the Congress operate on these three platforms? While we are witnessing visible protests by senior leaders on the first issue, on the second we only have nominal verbal protestations. In the case of the most potent platform of citizen adversities, the party fails to mobilise both its cadres and the general public. This speaks of two things — about the party's priorities and its capabilities.

Protecting a certain leader seems to be the main priority of the party. Therefore, it chooses to bring in its top guns to protest in Delhi and ensure that their loyalties are adequately displayed. These protests may also

build up to the second ascension of Rahul Gandhi. In other words, everything is connected to intra-party dynamics. No direct connect with ordinary people is involved in this choice. It also fails to connect the action to the more general harassment of its own party workers by the regime. Had the Congress been serious about expanding the scope of the issue, it could have tried to garner support from other non-BJP parties because many of them face similar treatment from investigative agencies. Instead, the Congress turned this into a simple agenda of protecting Rahul Gandhi and ensuring an impressive show in his support.

This episode also speaks about the capabilities of the party. It is unable to mobilise the ordinary public. It knows that the questioning of Rahul Gandhi is not an emotive issue beyond the close circle of Rahul supporters. But more than that, even on larger issues of freedom to protest and the livelihood of citizens, the credibility of the party is quite limited. As an Opposition party, during the past eight years the Congress has done so little that today it is impossible for it to stir the imagination of the masses and enthrust them to come to the streets. This inability to generate trust and mobilise the masses is a sad achievement of the party.

Thus the Congress seems engulfed in multiple existential compulsions of its own. First, it fails to see what political action is most urgently needed in the present moment. Second, it believes that leadership of the party must remain with only a family-based set of saviours. Three, the party puts a premium on display of loyalty to the leading family. As a result, any threat — internal or from outside — to the leading family is seen as a major challenge. Fourth, and fresh from the *chintan shivir*, the party manifests a complete lack of awareness about political priorities in picking up issues. And finally, as a result of all this, the party cannot mobilise the ordinary masses on their own issues and sufferings stemming from mis-governance by the ruling party. The protests against ED only indicate that a reversal of these compulsions remains a far cry.

The writer, based in Pune, taught political science and is chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics

IN THE SHADOW OF SANCTIONS

Iran foreign minister's visit reaffirms resolve of two countries to strengthen ties



DEEPIKA SARASWAT

IRAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER Hossein Amir-Abdollahian's three-day visit to India, last week, was the first ministerial-level visit from Iran since Ebrahim Raisi assumed the Iranian presidency in August last year. In keeping with the “Asia-oriented” foreign policy of the Raisi government, Abdollahian has visited Moscow and Beijing. President Raisi visited Russia in January this year.

The sanctions imposed by the US on Iran after Tehran withdrew from the nuclear deal in 2018 may have virtually destroyed India-Iran trade, especially India's energy imports from Iran, but the geopolitical logic underpinning relations between the two countries remains firm. The “Tehran Declaration” signed during former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to Iran affirmed the shared vision of the two countries for an “equitable, pluralistic and co-operative international order”. It recognised then Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's vision of a “dialogue among civilisations” as a paradigm of international relations based on principles of tolerance, pluralism and respect for diversity. Two decades later, as India strengthens new partnerships within its regional vision centred on the Indo-Pacific, and Iran deepens relations with China and Russia, both countries remain driven by the goals of advancing their standing at the regional and global level. Both are keen to project themselves as independent

As India strengthens new partnerships within its regional vision centred on the Indo-Pacific, and Iran deepens relations with China and Russia, both countries remain driven by the goals of advancing their standing at the regional and global level. Both are keen to project themselves as independent strategic actors determined to play a role in shaping a new multipolar order in their shared Eurasian neighbourhood and also at the global level.

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Over the last three decades, since the emergence of independent landlocked countries in Central Asia, as Iran has sought to leverage its crossroad geographical location straddling the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, India has come to see it as its land bridge to Central Asia and Eurasia. Despite the difficulties posed by decades of American sanctions, Iran has, along with India, Russia and a few other countries in the Eurasian region, continued to work on the multi-modal International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). As Abdollahian wrapped up his India visit, India-bound Russia cargo containers embarked from Russia's Astrakhan port to Iran's Anzali port across the Caspian Sea en route to India's Nhava Sheva port. During Raisi's visit to Moscow, the two sides had pledged to redouble their efforts to build the railway line between Iran's Caspian port of Rasht and Astara on the Iran-Azerbaijan border. The 130-km line will connect the railway networks of Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia. The activation of an alternative Caspian Sea route speaks volumes about the positive outlook of Iran, India and Russia on this corridor despite a variety of geopolitical challenges.

Iran's Chabahar port, where India is de-

veloping two berths that it will lease for commercial operations for 10 years, is also a story of perseverance in the ties between the two countries. During consultations with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar, Abdollahian brought up the “sluggish” pace of the port's development. Tehran has maintained that Chabahar does not seek to rival Pakistan's Gwadar port being developed by China. However, Iran does have a few like-minded partners when it comes to developing Chabahar. Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, Pakistan is leading the efforts to link Central Asia with Karachi through a trans-Afghan railway. Delhi is pushing for integrating Chabahar into the 13-nation INSTC. The maiden India-Central Asia summit, held in January, agreed on creating a Joint Working Group on Chabahar.

India abstained during the recent voting on the resolution by the US and its allies to censure Iran at the IAEA. This is in keeping with its stance of resolving the issue through dialogue. While the revival of the nuclear deal could give a fillip to India's economic ties with Iran, India's interests in continental Asia will be served well by heeding Abdollahian's call for developing a long-term roadmap for bilateral relations.

The writer is Associate Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

JUNE 17, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

NEW POSTINGS

THE UNION GOVERNMENT finalised a major reshuffle of secretaries. M. Narasimham, executive director, International Monetary Fund, will be posted as the secretary for economic affairs in the Union Finance Ministry. He succeeds R N Malhotra, who will take his place in the IMF. Manmohan Singh, member secretary, Planning Commission, will succeed I G Patel as Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. S Ramanathan, special commissioner for Karnataka will be the new secretary for fertilisers and chemicals. The present secretary, K V Ramanathan, moves to the Planning Commission as officer on special

duty with the rank of a secretary. A new post of special secretary in the Home Ministry to look after the eastern region has been created. P P Nayyar, chief secretary, Bihar, will be the new special secretary.

MLA SHOT DEAD

R ZADINGA, A newly elected People's Conference MLA of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly was shot dead by suspected MNF guerrillas at Lungrang village in his constituency in Aizwal district at 11 o'clock at night. He had been elected in the by-elections held last month. The assassins escaped under the cover of darkness. Security has

been tightened further all over Mizoram and parts of Aizwal town have been placed under night curfew.

ISRAELI INVASION

ISRAELI COMMANDOS, ADVANCING under covering shellfire from their Lebanese Christian allies, captured the science faculty of the Lebanese University from guerrillas of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, the state-run Lebanese radio reported. The campus, alongside the main runway of Beirut international airport, had been a major Palestinian strongpoint since Lebanon's 1975-76 civil war.



THE IDEAS PAGE

Justice more complete

Recent intervention by the Supreme Court suggests that there is a concerted effort to plug procedural gaps in death penalty sentencing, building on the vision outlined in 'Bachan Singh'



ANUP SURENDRANATH

IN A JUDGMENT delivered last month, the Supreme Court, in *Manoj & others v. State of MP*, embarked on a significant attempt to reform the administration of the death penalty. Though the constitutional validity of the punishment was not an issue in this case, the judgment by Justices U U Lalit, Ravindra Bhat, and Bela Trivedi will occupy a prominent place in India's criminal justice jurisprudence for its reflections on the state of the death penalty in the country and its attempt to fix a broken sentencing system. However, achieving meaningful compliance across all levels of the judiciary will be a significant challenge and so will translating these procedural reforms into substantive fairness in determining punishment.

There has long been a judicial crisis in death penalty sentencing on account of unprincipled sentencing, arbitrariness and worrying levels of subjectivity. The crisis has been acknowledged by the Supreme Court, the Law Commission of India, research scholars and civil society groups. At the heart of this concern is the fact that death penalty sentencing has been, by and large, crime-centric. This approach has flown in the face of the requirements imposed on sentencing judges by the Supreme Court in *Bachan Singh* (1980). In essence, the ruling of the five-judge bench in this case laid down a framework to be followed by judges who have to choose between life imprisonment and death sentence. This framework made it binding for the sentencing judges to take into account factors relating to both the crime and accused and assign them appropriate weight. Judges couldn't decide to impose the death penalty only on the basis of the crime. The background of the accused, the personal circumstances, mental health and age were considerations a sentencing judge had to account for. Judges were required to weigh "mitigating" and "aggravating" factors to ascertain if a case was fit for the death sentence and also determine if the option of life imprisonment was "unquestionably foreclosed".

The four decades since *Bachan Singh* have shown us that this framework has been followed more in breach. The truth of the matter is that there is utter confusion across all levels of the judiciary on the requirements of this framework and its implementation. An important reason for the breakdown is that factors relating to the crime — the nature of the crime and its brutality — are often dominant considerations, and there is barely any consideration of mitigating factors. There has been very little discussion on bringing the socioeconomic profile of death row prisoners as a mitigating factor into the courtroom. There is now empirical evidence that a vast majority of India's death row prisoners are extremely poor and often do not receive competent legal representation. In the last four decades, we have tried to implement the *Bachan Singh* framework without really addressing the measures that need to be put in place to gather the information required to give effect to the verdict.

The significance of last month's judgment, authored by Justice Ravindra Bhat, is that it takes this problem head-on. It identifies the lacuna as an explicit concern, states the consequences that flow from



C R Sasikumar

such a vital gap, and suggests measures to plug it. The judgment is clear that certain procedural thresholds must be met for sentencing to be fair and explicitly rejects (once again) the idea that death sentences can be determined solely on crime-based considerations. A striking part of the judgment is its commitment to recognising reformation as integral to the Indian criminal justice system, especially death penalty sentencing. It asks the state and sentencing judges (as a condition for imposing death sentences) to establish that there is no probability of reformation of the accused. The verdict recognises that aspects of the accused's life, both pre-offence and post-offence in prison, are relevant. As practical steps in this process, the judgment asks courts to call for reports from the probation officer as well as prison and independent mental health experts. The state too must present material that speaks to a wide range of factors. The right of the accused to present mitigating factors and rebut the state, if necessary, is also recognised.

Along with a *suo motu* writ petition on the collection of sentencing information in death sentence cases that the bench headed by Justice Lalit is currently seized of, there is now a concerted effort to plug procedural gaps in death penalty sentencing. It is obvious that the manner in which death penalty sentencing is being carried out across different levels of the judiciary is constitutionally unsustainable. These glaring sentencing errors have also been pointed out in a series of death sentence judgments from the benches headed by Justice L Nageswara Rao in Court 5 of the Supreme Court.

The attempts to bring about procedural

The significance of the last month's judgment, authored by Justice Ravindra Bhat, is that it takes this problem head-on. It identifies the lacuna as an explicit concern, states the consequences that flow from such a vital gap, and suggests measures to plug it. The judgment is clear that certain procedural thresholds must be met for sentencing to be fair and explicitly rejects (once again) the idea that death sentences can be determined solely on crime-based considerations. A striking part of the judgment is its commitment to recognising reformation as integral to the Indian criminal justice system, especially death penalty sentencing.

coherence and integrity will face significant challenges in the trial courts and the high courts and it is far from certain that these reforms will be meaningfully implemented in those forums. Apart from this issue of implementation, even if detailed and high-quality sentencing information is to come into our courtrooms, a bigger challenge awaits. The judicial treatment of sentencing information is a Pandora's box that will inevitably have to be opened. The Supreme Court will have to provide a rigorous normative basis for consideration of these factors. In the absence of such foundations, death penalty sentencing will continue to be unprincipled and sentencing judges are not going to understand the need for this wide range of sentencing information. And that might well be a question that the public at large might ask: Why should we care about all these sentencing factors concerning the accused? The answer to that lies in crucial discussions on moral culpability for our actions in psychology and philosophy. There is now overwhelming evidence from psychology that criminality cannot just be reduced to terrible decisions by individuals in the exercise of their free will. All our actions are a result of a complex web of biological, psychological, and social factors and that understanding has a very significant bearing on discussions on criminality and punishment.

The writer is the SK Malik Chair Professor on Access to Justice and executive director, Project 39A at National Law University, Delhi. Project 39A provided pro bono legal assistance to the accused in *Manoj & Ors. v. State of MP*

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"To Boris Johnson, the policy reality of government is of far less concern than being the head of it. Deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda matters less than being believed ready and willing to do it. What always concerns Johnson most is not what he does but what he is." — THE GUARDIAN

What the bulldozer demolishes

When it razes my home to the ground, it seeks to destroy not just the structure that I built but also my courage to speak up



KAPIL SIBAL

MY HOME is not just a brick-and-mortar structure. Its masonry and whitewashed walls do not even begin to tell the story. Within its womb lies all that I cherish. It saves me from the heat of the blazing sun, protects me from chilling winter nights, and holds the memories that live with me. The joys of my being are cradled within it. It is a place where I can freely breathe, laugh, cry, and give vent to my emotions, away from the gaze of outsiders. It may be a palace or a little hut, but it is my space. That is why each of us wants a home, which we call ours. A home where I am both alone and together, essentially a part of my very being. When you allow a bulldozer to wade through it, you don't just destroy a structure, you destroy the essence of all I am. With it, all of me falls apart. I can never build another.

Yes, there are rules and regulations. What rules to abide by when building structures, are coded. Corporations are meant to ensure that homes are built in accordance with the regulations and rules along with the operative bylaws. All of us know that any inspector can come around and find fault with a particular structure despite the fact that for years taxes stand paid, water charges regularly deposited and electricity bills duly honoured. None of this has any relevance when a bulldozer is assigned to demolish.

A bulldozer is a symbol of power, emotionless, cold as steel and it brooks no hindrance. Today, it has no relevance to illegal structures. It has relevance to who I am and what I stand for. It has relevance to what I say in public. It has relevance to my beliefs, my community, my being, my religion. It has relevance to my voice of dissent. When a bulldozer razes my home to the ground, it seeks to demolish not just the structure I built, but my courage to speak up. It seeks to belittle what I stand for, mock at my very existence and trample upon me with implacable arrogance so that I live in constant fear or succumb to the machinations of those who seek to bend me and all that I stand for.

I remember old Bollywood movies in which bulldozers symbolised the power of the villainous rich and the mighty, resisted by the courage of ordinary folk led by heroes who dared to stand up and be counted. Attempts of the powerful to aggrandise met with stiff resistance. The audience empathised with the victims and cheered when they were saved by the heroic deeds

of the star performer, often winning over the lass he is in love with. The villain often met his destined end. The key element during the unravelling of these dramatic events was that the state eventually always came to the aid of the victims.

But times have changed. It is now the state that seeks to bulldoze. Its official machinery prostrates itself to the will of its masters notwithstanding the law. It allows homes to be razed to rubble. There is no compunction, no contrition. Instead, law-makers have become law breakers and there is no one to appeal to and nowhere to go to. Overnight notices, inadequate time to respond, no checking of facts, no reprieve. All these acts violate all norms of civilised conduct, especially norms prescribed by the state itself.

Where should citizens go? The law is there, the lawmaker is there, and courts too are there. But citizens are helpless. There is no time to move the court and often courts have little time to listen. What about civil society? Very few in civil society have the courage to speak up. And if they do, they will be referred to as sympathisers of those who the state targets as a matter of policy. If one seeks to protect those who the law victimises, then trolls start rolling. Opposition to bulldozer justice is associated with being anti-Hindu. Mainstream media starts taking sides, pushing agendas demonising the victims who suffer. Nothing happens.

One must ask the question why of late this is happening and why only in some states? One wonders why is it that all illegal structures are not razed to the ground? If done, cities will be seen as heaps of rubble, given the reality of our cities. At least, the bulldozer that symbolises the power of the state must treat all with an equal hand. This does not happen because discrimination is at the heart of this unjust state enterprise.

Our Bollywood heroes are missing. This is not the mighty private entrepreneur's unjust enterprise. It is the might of the state at work. Opposition makes reprisals inevitable. Protesters gear up theatres, stalling shows. Too much at stake. Some are rumoured to lean towards bulldozer justice. No cause to fight for. Even the public will not applaud. They, instead, might just clap at instant justice provided by bulldozers.

It all happens when right-wing evangelists strike at the belief of others, causing a furor. On occasions, silence is not an option. The result is stone pelting by miscreants — totally unjustified. But it is for the law to take over. It is for the law to identify and punish the offenders. The bulldozer is not a weapon that the law prescribes. But it is a weapon that the law seems to use to teach a lesson. One can only hope that courts of law sit up and take notice. I wonder why they are silent.

The writer, a former Union Minister, is a senior lawyer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JOB CREATION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The jobs push' (IE, June 16). The Modi government is well aware that so far as job creation is concerned, it stands on a weak wicket. With the next general elections less than two years away, there is a dire need to create employment opportunities to keep the youngsters, a sizable chunk of the voting mass, in BJP's favour. But, as rightly pointed out by the editorial, generation of government jobs will be hamstrung by financial considerations. Hence, the government must provide the right environment for the private sector to do business so that the huge numbers, wanting to join the workforce year after year, are gainfully employed.

Vijai Pant, Hampur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The jobs push' (IE, June 16). It is clear that the capacity of the government to absorb more labour is limited, and while a step up in manufacturing could create more jobs, this has not happened in the past few years, and it would be optimistic to see it happen soon. The only option appears to be a MGNREGA-like scheme for the urban sector which can at least provide partial employment for the tide of new job entrants. Projects such as AMRUT and Smart Cities could ensure a steady flow of work for the urban MGNREGA.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

TOXIC CULTURE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Force of change' (IE, June 15). This proposed new defence policy "Agnipath" can be termed as MNREGA of defence forces.

BIG MONEY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A very big league' (IE, June 16). The IPL seemingly remains immune to extraneous factors. Inflation, the Russia-Ukraine war and a pandemic that refuses to die down have had no bearing on the robust financial underpinnings of this domestic T20 league with an international flavour. The top-dollar yield of the IPL's latest media rights auction for the 2023-27 periods reiterates the monetary strength and brand equity of the league, which has gained incremental strength every year since its inception in 2008. With money in its coffers, the BCCI needs to improve stadiums and increase the number of international fixtures that India's women cricketers play.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

SS Paul, Nadia

An ustad of our times

Scholar and teacher Gopichand Narang believed in Urdu's ability to build bridges



RAKSHANDA JALIL

GOPICHAND NARANG passed away on Wednesday in Charlotte, USA, surrounded by his family. He was 92. With him an era of Urdu studies ends, for he was the last of the great Urdu *ustads* of modern times. In a long and illustrious career as a teacher of Urdu, a writer and critic of depth and gravitas, an engaging and eloquent speaker, a tireless organiser of seminars, symposiums and academic interventions, an indefatigable champion of the cause of Urdu, Narang sahab had single-handedly done more for the cause of Urdu in India than many *anjumans* and associations. His list of publications was formidable, and so was his command over the intricacies of linguistic theory and cultural praxis. What was most heartening, however, was his lifelong belief in the innate ability of Urdu to build bridges, to forge interfaith harmony and emerge as the pre-eminent symbol of composite culture.

I had known Narang sahab as a friend of the family virtually my entire life, but my first real engagement with his work began when I was writing my thesis on the Progressive Writers' Movement in Urdu. I found his seminal work *Tehreek-e Azaadi aur Urdu Shairi* to be by far the most authoritative study of the post-1857 Urdu literature. What was also interesting was and, in a sense, it bolstered my

own fledgling understanding of socially-engaged, socially-purposive literature, was how he viewed 1857 as a significant milestone in the evolution of what he called *wataniyat* (nationalism) in Urdu poetry. In giving the example of Raja Ram Narain Mauzoon who wrote this *sher* at the death of his friend Nawab Siraj-ud-daula of Awadh who was killed by the British in the Battle of Plassey in 1757: *Ghazala tum to waqif ho kaho Majnun ke mame ki/ Diwana mar gaya akhir ko wirane pe kya guzri*

Narang sahab drew our attention to how Majnun, the legendary lover of Laila-Majnun fame, becomes here a metaphor for Siraj-ud-daula who fired the imagination of many Indians by his heroic resistance to the British. Elsewhere, he cites literary commentaries, compilations of *sheher ashob*, volumes such as *Fughan-e Delhi*, texts and commentaries of Maulvi Zakaullah and Zaheer Dehelvi, to paint a very real picture of defeat and despair where people lived lifeless and spiritless lives (*bejaan aur berooh zindagi jii rahe the*). It was only with the dawn of the 20th century, Narang sahab goes on to demonstrate that *hubb-e watani* (love for the nation) as we understand it today was born and, what is more, found ample reflection in Urdu poetry. I found all this of great value to me in build-

ing my entire thesis that nationalism was not a foreign construct, nor was socially-engaged literature an exotic hybrid imported from the Russian motherland and grafted on to Indian soil. It was 1857, really, that caused a burst of political consciousness to seep out and colour our understanding of the world. It changed our ways of seeing the world and, by extension, it changed our literature. I owe a debt of gratitude to Narang sahab and his seminal work on 1857 which in a sense formed the basis of my own understanding of the *ghadar* and by extension the close relationship between social reality and literary texts. So, today is as good a day as any to acknowledge this debt.

Another thing that I, as neo-convert to Urdu studies generally and to Urdu literary history in particular, have benefited enormously from is Narang sahab's fondness for putting his thoughts down in a tabular fashion. This is a modern, scientific way of elucidating complex ideas. In his latest book, *Urdu Ghazal: A Gift of India's Composite Culture* (OUP), as in some of his earlier work he uses the table to explain the basic love triangle of the ghazal's metaphoric structure, the love triangle between the *aashiq*, the *marshuq* and the *raqib* and the many associated metaphors.

Given the recurring controversy over Faiz and his *Hum Dekhenge*, I am again reminded of Narang sahab's excellent essay, "Tradition and Innovation in Faiz", which talks of Faiz and his use of classical imagery for political themes. Locating Faiz in the same trajectory as Chakbast and Hasrat Mohani, Narang sahab places the progressive poetry of Faiz in the centuries-old *shehr ashob* tradition. However, unlike the dirge-like laments that were the *shehr ashob*, Faiz broadened the scope of time-honoured images and symbols and infused a new life and urgency in them. Briefly, some of the most commonly used terms in Faiz's poetry, as identified by Narang sahab which have been invested with a new political agency, are: *Ashiq*, *raqib*, *ishq*, *deedar*, *hijr*, *firaq*, *sharab*, *maikhana*, *pyala*, *saqi*, *zindan*, *daar-o-rasam* and so on.

While Narang sahab lived a rich life, amply studded with awards and encomiums (Padma Bhushan, Moortidevi Award, Sitar-e-Imtiaz, Iqbal Samman, to name a few), over 65 books in Urdu, Hindi and English, his real contribution lies in a life-long commitment to a scholarship that was dynamic, innovative and alive to changing social realities.

Jalil is a Delhi-based author, translator and literary historian



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



RELICS, BONDING

Union Law Minister Kiren Rijju returned to Delhi from Mongolia after a five-day visit where he took with him the holy relics of Lord Buddha. Apart from meeting Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukhand and the law minister, Rijju also attended a cultural event hosted to boost ties between the two nations. Playback singer Mohit Chauhan and a contingent of Ladakh Scouts of Indian Army performed at the event. The Kapilvastu relics have been put on display for 11-days at the Ganden Tegenchenling Monastery in Mongolia in a bid to boost cultural ties.

POST UNDER CLOUD

Now that the Congress has appointed senior leader Jairam Ramesh as the AICC general secretary in-charge of communication, publicity and media, including social and digital media, many are wondering about the fate of Rohan Gupta, the chairman of the social media department of the party. A senior leader said Gupta and his department will no longer be a "sovereign independent republic" and that he will report to Ramesh. The question is whether he will continue or the party will accommodate him in some other post.

CARE FOR THE ROYAL

Ahead of the June 23 bypolls to four seats, reports of political violence are pouring in from various parts of Tripura. In the hills, workers of the BJP and the fledgling outfit TIPRA Motha have clashed repeatedly over the last few days, triggering a war of words between the BJP's tribal leadership and royal scion Pradyot Debbarman. On Thursday, Debbarman was admitted to a local private hospital after he complained of discomfort. Former chief minister Biplab Deb, who recently deviated from the party line by appealing to Pradyot to support the BJP for its "dignified treatment of the royal house", rushed to the hospital to enquire about his health.



Renuka Chowdhury, File

Telangana Cong leader booked for 'grabbing cop's collar'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD, JUNE 16

THE HYDERABAD police on Thursday booked Telangana Congress leader Renuka Chowdhury for allegedly grabbing the collar of a police officer during the 'Chalo Raj Bhavan' protest against the ED's questioning of Rahul Gandhi.

As Congress leaders, workers and NSUI activists smashed windows of state road transport buses and burnt a two-wheeler of a police officer, in a video that went viral, Chowdhury was seen grabbing a sub-inspector by his collar as she protested against being forcibly removed from the protest site.

Officers at the Panjagutta police station said a case against Chowdhury has been registered for obstructing a public servant from discharging his duty under Section 353 (Assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) of the IPC.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Chowdhury said the policemen touched her first, tried to move her from the spot and in retaliation, she defended herself. In a video where she was seen seated inside a police jeep, Chowdhury was heard saying, "I have no intention of hitting policemen. That's not my intention at all. I was being manhandled. I was losing my balance. I was falling on that man. You can see in those visuals that they are suddenly trying to push me. And that is the reason when I was reaching for the shoulder he moved and I caught his collar."

AGNIPATH RECRUITMENT SCHEME

Agnipariksha to path of fire, Opp demands rethink

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

OPPOSITION PARTIES on Thursday hit out at the Centre over its short-service recruitment scheme for the forces, Agnipath. While the Congress called the scheme "poorly conceived" and "hastily drawn up", and asked the government to keep it in "abeyance" and hold "wide consultations" with serving and retired officers, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav called it "negligent" and potentially "fatal" for India's future.

The Left parties asked the government to scrap it, with CPI(M) saying that the scheme does "disservice to India's national interests", as "professional armed forces cannot be raised by recruiting 'soldiers on contract' for four years". The party also called it "criminal" to "call upon our youth to be prepared to make the supreme sacrifice without the minimum protection of job security".

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to listen to the voice of unemployed youths and not take "agnipariksha (trial by fire)" of their patience by making them walk on Agnipath, while RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said the Centre had promised to create 80 crore jobs by 2022 and has now come up with an MGN-REGA-like scheme for the educated youth in defence services.

Delhi CM and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal said: "The youth are upset. Their demands are absolutely right. The Army is India's pride, and our youth want to give their entire life to the country. Don't tie their dreams to the provision of four years."

BSP chief Mayawati said the scheme is "unfair" towards the rural youth and urged the Centre to immediately "reconsider" it.

Addressing the media at AICC headquarters with Ajay Maken and Sachin Pilot, former Union minister PChidambaram said the scheme is "controversial, carries multiple risks, subverts the long-



Chidambaram, flanked by Maken and Pilot, addresses media on Thursday. Anil Sharma

standing traditions and ethos of the armed forces and there is no guarantee that soldiers recruited under the scheme will be better trained and motivated..."

He said: "Our first concern is that Agnipath soldier will be trained for six months and will serve for another 42 months, when 75 per cent of the recruits will be discharged. It appears the scheme makes a mockery of training; inducts into the defence forces an ill-trained and ill-motivated soldier; and discharges a disappointed and unhappy ex-soldier into society..."

He said the stated objective of savings on the pension bill of the forces is a weak argument and has not been established beyond doubt. "We fear the scheme may turn out to be a case of 'penny wise and security foolish'," he said. "We would urge the government to keep the Agnipath scheme in abeyance, hold wide consultations with serving and retired officers, and address the issues of quality, efficiency and economy..."

The CPI(M) Politburo stated, "Instead of recruiting regular soldiers into the armed forces, this scheme leaves such contract soldiers with no other prospects of employment after their four years. This creates a dangerous situation where they may end up serving private militias..."

CPI general secretary D Raja tweeted, "Finding jobs has become literally a 'Path of Fire' under Modi. The Government is trying to hoodwink the restive youth with the Agnipath scheme. It will make our army contract-based and jeopardise the future of our youth..."



Youth Congress workers protest against Agnipath scheme at Jantar Mantar. Abhinav Saha

Recruitment scheme: Who stands where

OPP PROTESTS

"No rank, no pension, no direct recruitment for 2 years, no stable future after four years, no respect shown by the government for the army... Listen to the voice of unemployed youths of the country, don't take 'agnipareeksha' of their patience... , Mr. prime minister."

RAHUL GANDHI, CONGRESS

"NDA has a fanciful idea of addressing unemployment. Job in the defence forces commands a lot of respect. Now, who will go for four-year service? The scheme will also deprive candidates of pursuing higher studies... An Army-trained person without any other qualification can not seek re-employment."

SUBODH KUMAR MEHTA, RJD NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON

BJP BACKS SCHEME

"The protest is due to a sustained misinformation campaign by a section of the Opposition. The scheme came up after consultation with experts... (After 4 yrs) they can apply for police, other jobs."

GURU PRAKASH PASWAN, BJP NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON

"Agnipath Yojana will give a new dimension to youngsters' lives. It will lay a golden base for their future."

YOGI ADITYANATH, UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

ALLY DIFFERS

"It will dilute the long existing distinct ethos of regiments... four year service is too short for a soldier... Hiring soldiers for four years, with effective service of three years... not at all militarily a good idea."

CAPT AMARINDER SINGH, PUNJAB LOK CONGRESS CHIEF



THE LONE VOICE of dissent on the issue in the BJP, MP Varun Gandhi wrote a letter to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, saying youths have shared their doubts with him about the "radical changes in the soldiers' recruitment process". As 75 per cent of soldiers will become "unemployed" after four years, he said, their total numbers will keep rising every year and give rise to more disaffection among the youth.

India-ASEAN conclave: Foreign ministers agree on unified response to global issues

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

AS EXTERNAL Affairs minister S Jaishankar flagged the "geopolitical headwinds" triggered by the Ukraine crisis and its knock-on effects on food, energy security, prices of fertilisers and commodities as well as logistics and supply chains, foreign ministers of India and ASEAN countries on Thursday agreed to uphold multilateralism in jointly responding to the regional and global challenges.

With Myanmar not participating in the India-ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting, the joint statement issued after the meeting did not mention the situation in the country.

In a statement obliquely referring to China's assertiveness in the region, the statement said that they reaffirmed the "commitment to multilateralism founded on the principles of the international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the



S Jaishankar at the the Special ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers' meeting in New Delhi on Thursday. PTI

Sea (UNCLOS) and other relevant UN treaties and conventions, maintain an open and inclusive regional cooperation framework, support ASEAN Centrality in the evolving rules-based regional architecture, uphold multilateralism in jointly responding to regional and global challenges."

Jaishankar said that India fully supports a strong, unified and prosperous ASEAN with a central role in the Indo-Pacific and both sides should identify a new set of priorities while navigating the

"arduous path" arising from developments in Ukraine.

India is hosting the two-day conclave to mark the 30th anniversary of its relations with the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The ASEAN comprises Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Brunei, the Philippines, Singapore, Cambodia, Malaysia and Myanmar.

Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan criticised Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, saying such actions if unchecked

EXPLAINED Ties with region's key grouping

ASEAN, a 10-nation grouping, is considered one of the most influential groupings in Southeast Asia. India and several other countries, including the US, China, Japan and Australia, are its dialogue partners. The ASEAN-India dialogue relations started with the establishment of a sectoral partnership in 1992. This graduated to full dialogue partnership in December 1995 and summit-level partnership in 2002.

can threaten the "whole system of peace and stability which we have depended on for the basis of our growth, development and prosperity over many decades".

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

RAHUL GANDHI, who was supposed to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday for questioning in connection with the National Herald case, will now appear before the agency on Monday, Sources said Rahul sought exemption from appearance on Friday and it was accepted by the agency.

Rahul was questioned by the ED for three straight days since Monday. He first sought exemption from appearance on Thursday, following which he was called on Friday. Sources said Rahul is being questioned about the ownership of Young Indian (YI) by the Gandhi family and its shareholding in Associate Journals Limited (AJL), the company that runs the National Herald newspaper. He is being questioned about the circumstances under which the AJL was acquired by Young Indian in 2010 for a "pittance", making it in turn the owner of all assets owned by the National Herald newspaper.

Rahul's mother Sonia Gandhi is scheduled to appear before the

JAIRAM IS CONG'S NEW COMMUNICATION HEAD

New Delhi: The Congress on Thursday appointed senior leader Jairam Ramesh as AICC general secretary in-charge of communication, publicity and media, replacing Randeep Surjewala who was heading the department since 2015. The appointment came a month after the party at its Udaipur chintan shivir decided to implement 'one person, one post' in the party and impose a five-year term limit for those holding positions at all levels. **ENS**

ED later this month. Rahul had earlier been called for questioning on June 2, while Sonia was asked to appear on June 8. Both had, however, sought more time from the agency.

The ED case is based on a trial court order that allowed the IT Department to probe the affairs of National Herald and conduct a tax assessment of Sonia and Rahul. It was the result of a petition by BJP MP Subramanian Swamy in 2013.

INCESSANT RAIN CONTINUES IN NORTHEAST

4 killed in Assam, 3 in Meghalaya; 'no let up for next two days'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE GUWAHATI, JUNE 16

AS RAIN continues to batter Assam, two children died Thursday, after debris from a broken road caused their home to collapse in Goalpara district. Elsewhere in Dima Hasao and Udalguri districts, two more lives were lost in floods.

In neighbouring Meghalaya — which is also witnessing unprecedented rainfall — three died in rainfall-induced landslides in East Khasi Hills district.

According to the Regional Meteorological Centre, Guwahati, the rain is unlikely to let up for the next two days at least — both Assam and Meghalaya are under

a 'red alert' till June 18.

Initially Guwahati as well as parts of Kamrup (Metro) district witnessed episodes of urban flooding, but most parts of the state are reeling under floodwaters now. A release from the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (AS-DMA) Thursday night said that more than 11-lakh people in 25 districts are affected. 61,000 people are now in 170 relief camps opened in the affected districts of the state. The Brahmaputra and its tributaries are flowing above the danger mark.

Portions of the National Highway-6 — that serves as the road link between the rest of the country and south Assam's Barak Valley districts, as well as



NDRF personnel rescue residents from a flood-affected area in Guwahati on Thursday. PTI

Mizoram and Tripura — witnessed flash floods on Wednesday and Thursday. Part of the highway, which falls under

the Lumshnong police station in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district, was washed away by the heavy downpour, bringing move-

ment to a grinding halt, said East Jaintia Hills district DC Abhilash Baranwal. The administration has issued advisories, asking passengers — especially heavy motor vehicles — not to commute via the road. Gyanendra Dev Tripathi, Chief Executive Officer, Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), said most areas of lower Assam were inundated. "A number of landslides have been reported from Dima Hasao, Guwahati as well as the Barak Valley districts of southern Assam," he said, adding that while a major portion of national highways was flooded, no significant disruption had been reported. In Assam's Goalpara district, the victims were siblings, aged 9 and 11. In Meghalaya, chief

minister Conrad Sangma announced an ex-gratia of Rs 4 lakhs to the next of kin of each of the deceased. The government has formed regional committees to look into the situation and also ordered closure of all schools till June 20 in the "interest of the safety of schoolchildren".

Meanwhile, Guwahati continues to reel under urban floods — several low-lying areas continue to be inundated, with many localities facing power cuts. All education institutions in the city will remain closed on June 17.

Landslides of varying intensities were reported in North Guwahati in Kamrup (M) district, as well as in Dima Hasao, Goalpara, and Hojai districts.

NIOS to launch special courses for Agniveers who have cleared Class 10

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

THE MINISTRY of Education Thursday announced a special programme through the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) to support the Agnipath scheme of soldier recruitment.

Under the initiative, NIOS will develop customised courses to help 'Agniveers', who have cleared matriculation, to obtain Class 12 pass certificates.

A statement issued by the Education Ministry said the certificates to be issued by the NIOS will be recognised for higher education as well as employment.

"The Department of School Education & Literacy through its autonomous institution, the National Institute of Open Schooling, is instituting a special programme in consultation with the defence authorities to enable those Agniveers who are 10th class pass... by developing customised courses that are not only current but very relevant to their area of service," it added.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the programme will be "relevant to the spirit of the Agnipath scheme". "This certificate will equip Agniveers with relevant knowledge & skills and enable them to pursue jobs and higher education across India," he tweeted.

On Wednesday, the ministry had said it will launch a three-year, skill-based Bachelor's degree programme for serving defence personnel that will recognise the skills they acquire during their tenure in the armed forces. IGNOU will implement the programme, it added.

Gujarat: Naresh Patel not to join politics 'for now'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KHODALDHAM, JUNE 16

PATIDAR LEADER and industrialist Naresh Patel on Thursday announced that he is not joining politics "for now" as the elders of his community are against the idea but added that his organisation will launch an academy to train youth in politics.

Patel, the chairman of Shree Khodaldham Trust (SKT), a religious organisation of Leuva Patidar sub-caste group of Patidar community, chaired a joint meeting of trustees of the SKT, Shree Sardar Patel Cultural Foundation (SSPCF) and Shree Leuva Patidar Athibhavan (SLPA), Veraval, at Khodaldham, a temple complex built by SKT in Kagvad village near Jetpur in Rajkot Thursday.

Addressing a press conference after the meeting, Patel said that a survey conducted by the SKT on whether he should join politics or not, had shown that the members of his Leuva Patidar community as well as others were divided over the issue and that he had decided to go by the advice of the elders.

KANPUR PROTESTS Notice to kin of accused on 'illegal building'

Lucknow: The Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) has served a notice to the mother of Hayat Zafar Hashmi, arrested in connection with the June 3 violence, asking why a building in her name should not be demolished for allegedly flouting rules.

The notice, addressed to Sayeeda Zafar, stated, "...As per a report by Regional Additional Engineer on June 14, you are building/have built/have started construction at 17/P/42, Hitkari Nagar, Kakadev without getting an approval under Section 14 of the Uttar Pradesh Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973." **ENS**

9 ECONOMY

SENSEX: 51,495.79 ▼ 1,045.60 (-1.99%) NIFTY: 15,360.60 ▼ 331.55 (-2.11%) NIKKEI: 26,431.20 ▲ 105.04 HANG SENG: 20,845.43 ▼ 462.78 FTSE: 7,077.86 ▼ 195.55 DAX: 13,100.95 ▼ 384.34

International market data till 1900 IST

SECTOR WATCH
OVERSEAS BANKING

Second year in a row, Indian funds in Swiss banks rise; at 14-yr high in 2021

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

MONEY PARKED by Indians in Swiss Banks jumped to a 14-year high of Swiss francs (CHF) 3.83 billion in 2021, on the back of rise in holdings and customer deposits, latest data from Zurich-based Swiss National Bank (SNB) released Thursday showed.

Money parked by Indians had declined in 2018 and 2019, but has since picked up. Marking the second straight year of rise, aggregate funds by Indians increased from 2.55 billion Swiss francs in 2020. The CHF 3,831.91 million of 'total liabilities' of Swiss banks or 'amounts due to' their Indian clients as of 2021-end included CHF 602.03 million in customer deposits (up from CHF 504 million at 2020-end), CHF 1,225 million held via other banks (up from CHF 383 million), and CHF 3 million through fiduciaries or trusts (up from CHF 2 million).

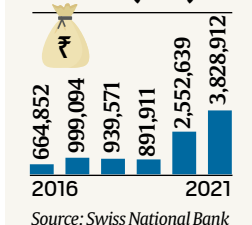
The highest component of CHF 2,002 million (up from CHF 1,665 million) was 'other amounts due to customers' in the form of bonds, securities and various other financial instruments. The total amount stood at a record high of nearly 6.5 billion Swiss francs in 2006, after which it mostly declined, except for a few years including in 2011, 2013, 2017, 2020 and now in 2021, as per SNB data.

India and Switzerland had, for automatic sharing of financial account information, inked a Joint Declaration

EXPLAINED
Pact on sharing tax info

AS PART of a tax information exchange pact between India and Switzerland, financial information on Indian residents with accounts in Swiss financial institutions since 2018 is shared with India.

DEPOSITS IN SWISS BANKS BY INDIANS (CHF)



Source: Swiss National Bank

on November 22, 2016, for activation of AEOI in tax matters between the two nations. The use and disclosure of the information received is governed by the confidentiality provisions of the India-Switzerland tax treaty.

As per the SNB, its data for 'total liabilities' of Swiss banks towards Indian clients takes into account all types of funds of Indian customers at Swiss banks, including deposits from individuals, banks and enterprises. It includes data for branches of Swiss banks in India and non-deposit liabilities. Full report on www.indianexpress.com

RECESSION FEARS HIT SENTIMENT AFTER FED HIKES RATES

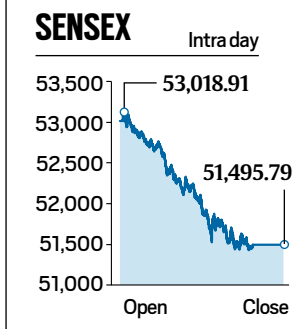
Bear market in sight: Sensex plunges 2% to 52-week low

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
MUMBAI, JUNE 16

MOVING FAST towards the bear market, the benchmark Sensex on Thursday plunged 1,647 points from the day's high to close two per cent down at a 52-week low as recession fears hit the sentiment across the globe, including India. Led by metal shares, the benchmark Sensex plummeted by 1,046 points at 51,495.79 and the NSE Nifty Index fell 332 points at 15,360.60 in the selling avalanche after the US Federal Reserve hiked its policy rates by 75 basis points, its biggest rate hike in nearly three decades, to tame inflation.

With this loss, the Sensex which registered a life-time high at 62,245.43 on October 19, 2021 — a gain 21 per cent in the calendar year 2021 — has lost 1726 per cent in eight months. When the market loses around 20 per cent from the recent high, it's technically considered as a bear market.

The early gain on Monday led by an in-line Fed policy was dampened as recessionary fears



haunted global sentiments. "The central banks across the globe are playing catch up with inflation and making efforts to race ahead of the curve. The 75-basis point increase by the US Fed and more importantly the upward revision of 1.5% in the expected year-end rate indicates that the inflation is winning the battle as of now," said Mohit Ralhan, Managing Partner at Tiw Capital Group.

Metal index crashed by 5.4 per cent amid inflation and recession worries. Markets are catching up to the reality that the tight monetary policy is the lone card on the

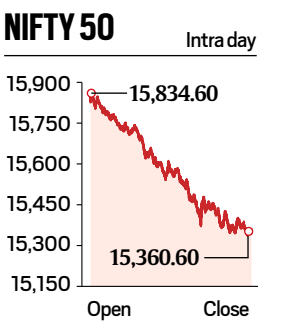


table lingering on high inflation. Markets are now skeptical about how the global economies would attain growth amid the aggressive tightening. Meanwhile, the rupee gained 12 paise and closed at 78.10 against the dollar. Yield on benchmark 10-year government bond remained high at 7.61 per cent.

Investor strategy

"In such a situation, preservation of capital is the theme by investing in a balanced portfolio of equity, debt and cash. In equities, safe sectors will be those that are

Wall St tumbles

New York: US stock indices tumbled on Thursday, after the Federal Reserve's largest rate increase since 1994. At 2:12 pm ET, the Dow Jones was down 802 points, or 2.6 per cent, at 29,866.05. Meanwhile, the Bank of England raised rates by 25 basis points. **REUTERS**

'Russia supply hit, Covid: High fuel prices to persist into 2023'

Fuel prices at pump may stay high into 2023 due to Russian oil supply disruptions and as refineries struggle to meet demand recovering from Covid, Wood Mackenzie said



-\$100 PER BARREL: EXPECTED AVERAGE CRUDE PRICES BY NEXT YEAR, COMPARED TO \$110 THIS YEAR

Second half of next year should see pressure ease, when several new large refineries including in the Middle East are likely to start up

Global oil demand cooled by around 1 million barrels per day for now, i.e. roughly 1% of global demand, amid record gasoline and diesel prices in the US, Europe and elsewhere

Average global refining margins in 2023 are likely to top their 5-year average range, albeit "nowhere near as punchy as 2022"

-\$120 A BARREL: CURRENT GLOBAL BENCHMARK BRENT CRUDE PRICES

Sanctions from the West on oil from Russia, following the latter's invasion of Ukraine in February, have led to:

- Lower Russian crude production and refinery output
- Severely disrupted oil flows around the world, pushing oil prices higher

Fuel price spike has squeezed household budgets as the cost of travel skyrocketed in many parts of the world

Source: Wood Mackenzie/Reuters

Another hike in ATF price, airfares to rise

PRANAV MUKUL
& MIHIR MISHRA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

IN THE 10th hike since the beginning of the year, state-owned oil marketing companies revised the price of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) by 16.3 per cent, taking the cost of jet fuel in Delhi to a record high of Rs 1,41,232.87 per kilolitre. The rising jet fuel prices, combined with depreciating rupee, is set to increase the cost of operations for airlines, leading to an increase in airfares by up to 15 per cent.

Experts have said fuel cost is already at unsustainable levels and airlines have no option but to pass it on in the form of fare hikes. Spicejet chairman Ajay Singh, in a statement, said they will have to pass on the increase in ATF prices to fliers, and that will lead to an increase in fares by up to 15 per cent.

Jet fuel prices are revised on the 1st and 16th of every month, based on the average international price of benchmark fuel in the preceding fortnight. The cost of ATF comprises up to 50 per cent of the cost of operations for airlines in India. Airlines are already struggling with the fall in the value of the domestic currency (rupee) is 5.7 per cent weaker against the US\$ since June 2021 since costs like lease rentals, payments to foreign airport operators and expat pilots are all dollar denominated. "Aviation turbine fuel prices have increased by more than 120 per cent since June 2021. This massive increase is not sustainable and governments, Central and state, need to take urgent action to reduce taxes on ATF that are amongst the highest in the world.



Ahmedabad airport. File

We have, in the last few months, tried to absorb as much burden of this fuel price rise as we could," Spicejet's Singh said.

Jet fuel prices have been increased by state-owned OMCs every fortnight since the beginning of 2022, and in 10 hikes starting January 1, ATF prices have been increased by Rs 67,210.46 per kilolitre. "The sharp increase in jet fuel prices and the depreciation of the rupee have left domestic airlines with little choice but to immediately raise fares and we believe that a minimum 10-15 per cent increase in fares is required to ensure that cost of operations is better sustained," Singh added. "The forward bookings are not looking very good. We expected that by this time, we'd be well past the pre-Covid numbers, but the general sentiment has not been in favour of air travel mainly because of high fares, especially in the last month or so," said a senior executive of a low-cost airline.

Travel industry insiders say fares are already about 50 per cent higher than last year and a further increase will impact that demand. Notably, domestic airfares are still governed by government-mandated price ceilings and floors.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

Chip shortage a concern: Hyundai



Hyundai MD-CEO Unsoo Kim at new Venue's launch company

VIKRAM CHAUDHARY
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

HYUNDAI MOTOR India, which on Thursday launched the new version of its compact hatchback Venue, said the semiconductor shortage is still a major concern for all carmakers.

"We have given a priority to all those customers who had booked the old Venue, and their booking seniority remains. That is why people who book the new Venue will have a relatively longer waiting period," Tarun Garg, director, sales, marketing & service, Hyundai Motor India (HMI), told FE. **FE**

BRIEFLY

DEA Secy, rates

New Delhi: The Centre does not see any adverse impact on Indian economy post US Fed's 75-bp interest rate hike, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said.

Jobless rate

New Delhi: Unemployment rate for people aged 15 and above in urban areas fell to 8.2% in January-March from 9.3% a year ago, as per a Periodic Labour Force Survey by National Statistical Office.

GST Council

New Delhi: GST Council, headed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, will meet June 28-29, in Srinagar. **PTI**

Musk address

Bengaluru: Elon Musk addressed Twitter staff for the first time via video, projecting a need for "rationalisation of headcount" but offered few details. **REUTERS**

RBI Guv to inaugurate FE's BFSI meet today

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

RESERVE BANK of India Governor Shaktikanta Das will inaugurate the FE Modern BFSI Summit today (June 17). The unique conference, being organised by FE.com, will see the coming together of the best and the brightest minds from the banking, financial services and insurance arena.

What also adds weight to the event is the keynote address by V Anantha Nageswaran, Chief Economic Adviser, government of India. Ajay Piramal, chairman, Piramal Group, and heads of India's leading banks and financial institutions will also be speaking at the day-long event.

Some of the other leading names from the industry attending the summit include Amitabh Rajan, Chairman, Reserve Bank of India (Services Board); Dinesh Kumar Khara; Chairman, State Bank of India; Zarin Daruwalla,



RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das (left); CEA V Anantha Nageswaran

CEO, Standard Chartered Bank, India; Chandra Shekhar Ghosh, MD & CEO, Bandhan Bank; and Murali Ramakrishnan, MD & CEO, South Indian Bank.

Some of the other thought leaders from the industry include R M Vishakha, MD & CEO, India First Life; Mahesh Kumar Sharma, MD & CEO, SBI Life; Ravi Subramanian, MD & CEO, Shriram Housing Finance; Jairam Sridharan, MD, Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Ltd; apart from Shiv Kumar Bhasin, group chief

technology & operations officer, National Stock Exchange; Deepak Sharma, president & chief digital officer, Kotak Mahindra Bank.

A session on the small finance banks will see its leaders including Sanjay Agarwal, MD & CEO, AU Small Finance Bank, and Samit Kumar Ghosh, chairman, Ujjivan Financial Services.

Software giant SAS has collaborated as the gold partner, digital innovation expert Adobe is the silver partner and the Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC), a representative body of assets and loan financing NBFCs, is the supporting partner for the event. The summit will be a grand congregation of over 50 speakers featuring over 10 power-packed panel discussions and over 500 delegates from the BFSI industry. **FE**

Register now at <https://www.financialexpress.com/events/modern-bfsi-summit-2022> to watch the best of the Indian BFSI sector.

IP waivers for Covid, fishery relief: WTO sews up deals

New Delhi: India managed to extract some concessions as member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) late Thursday sewed up a few deals, including reduction in fishery subsidies and temporary patent waivers to fight the pandemic.

However, WTO members decided to extend the moratorium on cross-border tariffs on electronic transmissions until the next ministerial meeting, likely to be in 2023. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said, "We will take some solid decisions probably after seven years, subject to a few issues being sorted out ... But nothing is done till everything is done." **FE**



The RBI, Mumbai File

2021 for non-compliance with the RBI regulations for storage of data in India. The RBI had given almost three years for Mastercard to comply with the regulatory directions, but it was unable to complete the process.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

RailTel
(A Government of India Enterprise)
CIN No. L64202DL2000GOI107905

Tender No-RailTel/Tender/OT/CO/P/2022-23/LIMS/003 date:13/06/2022
Railtel invites tenders from eligible bidders for Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning and Integration of Servers and other networking equipment. Tender Notice & tender document are available on www.railtelindia.com and <https://railtel.enivida.com> Addendum/ corrigendum will be uploaded on www.railtelindia.com and <https://railtel.enivida.com> website.

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT OF NCT OF DELHI
OFFICE OF THE ADDL. CHIEF ENGINEER (P)-2/EE(E&M)P-1
FLAT NO.-E-1, TYPE-IV, STAFF QTRS. JHANEWALAN
KAROL BAGH, NEW DELHI-110005
Email: djbeemii@gmail.com

PRESS NIT. No. 06 (2022-23)

NIT No.	Name of Work	Estimate Cost	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Date of release of Tender in e-procurement solution	Last date/ Time receipt of Tender through e-procurement solution
6	Design, Build, Operate & Maintain 9 MGD Pressure Sand Filters (PSF) at Chandrawali WW No-1 including all civil and electrical works for period of 5 Years (Re-Invited).	Item Rate	Rs. 1760000/-	Tender Id: 2022_DJB_224442_1 Publish Date 16 June 2022 01.30 PM onward	06 July 2022 upto 03.00 PM

NIT along with all terms & conditions is available on DJB website <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>
ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)
Advt. No. J.S.V. 191(2022-23)
Sd/- (Aditya Sharma)
Executive Engineer (E&M)P-1
"STOP CORONA; Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform the common public that Delhi police has registered a case vide FIR No. 350/2010 DATED 09/12/2019 U/S-406/420/409/468/471/120-B/34 IPC & 3/4/5 The Prize Chits and Money Circulation Scheme (Banning) Act 1978, P.S Crime Branch, Delhi against the firm/company namely ROSNEFT HEDGE FUND, RHFOLDGOLD, EURESOCOIN, JACKPOTMANIA and its promoters/directors namely Sandeep Kaushik, Sunil Singh Chauhan, Ashish Malik & Ors. The accused persons cheated the innocent victims on the pretext of providing 20% interest/ month on the investment. The investigation of the case is under progress. If anyone has invested with the above company and accused persons, he may join the investigation of the case along with all the relevant documents/details in the office of Economic Offences Wing at Mandir Marg, New Delhi, Ph. No. 011- 23745317.

DP/9333/EOW/22

DNP Ltd.
14 Government of Assam Undertaking)
P.O.: Duliagan-786002, Dist.: Dibrugarh, Assam; www.drpl.co.in
CIN: U51416AS2007SGC00410

TENDER NOTICE
Tender No.COL.CON/DNPL/36/2022/01 dt: 15.06.22
DNP Ltd. (DNPL), a Govt. of Assam Undertaking invites open e-tender for Hiring Services from Reputed and Experienced Parties for construction of its residential colony at Madhubani, Duliagan, Dist: Dibrugarh, Assam. Interested parties may visit the NIT e-tender portal: www.assamenders.gov.in. Any subsequent addendum/corrigendum will be uploaded in the aforementioned e-tender portal only. Sd/-
Director, DNP Ltd., Duliagan, Assam

RAJASTHAN RAJYA VIDYUT PRASARAN NIGAM LTD.
N.I.T. No. 05, 06 & 07/2022-23
Tenders are invited from reputed contractors registered in appropriate class with RRVPNL and A or AA Class in Central/State Govt. Department and their undertakings and registered in GST department for the bid S. No. 1 to 2 of NIT No. 05, bid S.No. 1 of NIT No. 06 and bid S.No. 1 to 8 of NIT No. 07 under Executive Engineer (Civil) Chittorgarh/Udaipur/Bhilwara, SE (Civil) Udaipur. All details of above NIT are available on website www.rvnpn.co.in & <https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in> or <https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>. UBN : VPN2223WSOB00487, VPN2223WSOB00488, VPN2223WSOB00452, VPN2223WSRC00485, VPN2223WSOB00453 to VPN2223WSOB00458, VPN2223WSOB00459
Superintending Engineer (Civil),
Raj.Samwad/C/22/3574 RRVPN/TR-5490/2022 Udaipur

The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply & Transport Undertaking
(OF THE BRIHANMUMBAI MAHANAGARPALIKA)

TENDER NOTICE
E-tenders are invited for the supply of following items.
(1) Testing & Pinpointing of Underground LV Cable Faults in the area of Electric Supply Distribution of the BEST Undertaking, (2) Rate Contract for Purchase of 11KV, 250MVA, Indoor Vacuum Circuit Breakers, (3) Repairing/Reconditioning of 16/20MVA, 33/11KV Power Transformer,
RE-INVITED E-TENDERS
(4) 73606, (5) 73696.
Note : For more details, log on to website <https://mahatenders.gov.in>.
PRO/AAM(M)/46/2022 **GENERAL MANAGER**



Tax Fraud
McDONALD's To Pay France \$1.3 Billion

McDonald's France and related companies have agreed to pay over 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3 billion) to the French state to settle a case in which the fast-food giant was accused of years of tax evasion. A Paris court approved the settlement Thursday, the French national financial prosecutor's office said.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Actor 'strenuously' denies sex charges. AP

UK
Sexual assault: Kevin Spacey granted bail

London: Kevin Spacey "strenuously denies" allegations of sexual assault, his lawyer said Thursday, as the Oscar-winning actor appeared in a London court to face five charges of offences against three men. Spacey, 62, arrived at London's Westminster Magistrates Court for the preliminary hearing and sat in the glass-fronted dock during the half-hour hearing. He was not asked to enter a formal plea, but his lawyer, Patrick Gibbs, said: "Mr Spacey strenuously denies any and all criminality in this case." Deputy Chief Magistrate Tan Ikram granted Spacey unconditional bail until his next appearance, a plea hearing scheduled for July 14. AP

USA
Expert with India link named for key Pentagon post

Washington: US President Joe Biden has nominated security expert Radha Iyengar Plumb to the post of Deputy Under Secretary of Defence for Acquisition and Sustainment. Currently serving as the Chief of Staff to the Deputy Secretary of Defence, Plumb was nominated for the top Pentagon position on Wednesday. Prior to her appointment as Chief of Staff, Plumb was the Director of Research and Insights for Trust and Safety at Google, leading their cross-functional teams on business analytics. PTI

MYANMAR
Junta calls return of executions 'required action'

MYANMAR RULING military on Thursday defended a planned execution of two prominent democracy figures as lawful and required, defying international criticism for resuming capital punishment after a three-decade hiatus. The United Nations, and others have urged the junta not to follow through with the execution of activist Kyaw Min Yu and former lawmaker Phyo Zeya Thaw. Military spokesman Zaw Min Tun said there were many countries using the death penalty. REUTERS

Sri Lanka left with fuel stocks for around five days, says minister

Country awaits confirmation from India for new \$500 million credit line for fuel

REUTERS & PTI
COLOMBO, JUNE 16

SRI LANKA'S fuel stocks will last for about five more days, its power and energy minister said on Thursday, as the island nation awaits official confirmation from the Indian government for a new \$500 million credit line for fuel.

Chronic fuel shortages have worsened this week with kilometres-long lines at some gas stations countrywide, leading to sporadic protests as vehicle owners wait, sometimes overnight, for petrol and diesel.

Sri Lanka is unable to make \$725 million in overdue payments to suppliers and also struggling to open letters of credit for future shipments, Power and Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera said.

"We are struggling to get fuel supplies due to our forex issues and the government is working to manage existing stocks of diesel and petrol until 21 June," he told reporters. "We are finding it difficult to meet demand and stocks could run out faster if we do not cut back on non-essential travel and stop hoarding fuel."

"We are expecting a petrol shipment within the next three days and another two shipments in the next eight days," he added. The country has also decided

Auto driver dies in petrol queue

Colombo: A 53-year-old autorickshaw driver in Sri Lanka died of a heart attack on Thursday in Colombo's suburb while waiting in a serpentine queue for fuel for the entire night near a petrol pump. The driver had been waiting in line for fuel since Wednesday night in Panadura and died of cardiac arrest inside his vehicle. Another 64-year-old man died while waiting in a queue for cooking gas at Pugoda on Wednesday night, police said. PTI

to import 50,000 metric tonnes of rice under the Indian credit line to curb an abnormal rise in rice prices, PM Rani Wickremesinghe said. The decision was taken after a discussion held at the PMO to allocate funds to the State Trading Corporation under the Indian loan assistance programme. The US announced that it will provide \$6 million in emergency assistance to Sri Lanka to address the needs of the marginalised and vulnerable communities impacted by the economic crisis.



People wait to collect their passports at Sri Lanka's Immigration and Emigration Department. Reuters

Battered by crisis, Lankans seek passport to better life

REUTERS
COLOMBO, JUNE 16

RMR LENORA stood in a snaking queue outside Sri Lanka's Immigration and Emigration Department headquarters for two days last week, hoping to get a passport and, with it, a chance to leave a country willing under an economic crisis.

A garment worker, 33-year-old Lenora decided to apply for a job as a maid in Kuwait after her husband was laid off from a small restaurant where he worked as a cook. "My husband lost his job because there is no cooking gas

and food costs have skyrocketed. It is hard to find work and the salaries are low," said Lenora, who said she earns about 2,500 Sri Lanka rupees a day.

So last week, she was in Colombo, to hand in her papers for her first passport. In the queue, Lenora was joined by labourers, shop owners, farmers, public servants and housewives, some of whom camped out overnight, all looking to escape.

In the first five months of 2022, Sri Lanka has issued 288,645 passports compared with 91,331 in the same period last year, according to government data.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (left) with Volodymyr Zelenskyy (right) and France's President Emmanuel Macron in Kyiv. AP

KYIV VISIT BY LEADERS OF FOUR EU NATIONS

Leaders pledge arms, EU path for Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KYIV, JUNE 16

FOUR EUROPEAN leaders expressed their support for Ukraine on Thursday while meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, vowing to back Kyiv's candidacy to eventually join the European Union and offering more weapons to fend off Russia's invasion.

French President Emmanuel Macron promised Ukraine six more truck-mounted artillery guns, the latest in a new round of Western arms pledges as the war grinds on in the Donbas region in the east.

France, Germany, Italy and Romania "are doing everything so that Ukraine alone can decide its fate," Macron said at a news conference with Zelenskyy and the others. "My colleagues and I have come here to Kyiv today with a clear message: Ukraine belongs to the European family," said German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

With Scholz beside him, Macron defended earlier comments that riled Ukrainians about humiliating Russia. He solemnly noted how the end of World War I had sown the seeds of World War II.

"Today, this war must be won, France clearly supports

AMID ECONOMIC CRISIS

Pakistan already isolated, need to re-engage with India, says Bilawal Bhutto

Blames Imran Khan govt's policies for international disengagement on Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, JUNE 16

PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Thursday made a strong pitch for re-engaging with India, saying cutting ties with New Delhi would not serve the country's interests as Islamabad was already "internationally isolated and disengaged."

Addressing the Founding Day ceremony at the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad, Bilawal said: "We have our issues with India. Pakistan and India have a long history of war, conflict. Today, where we have serious disputes, the events of August 2019 cannot be taken lightly."

He blamed the previous Imran Khan-led government's flawed policies because of which Pakistan "is internationally isolated and internationally disengaged."

On the Kashmir issue, Bilawal said it has formed a "cornerstone of any conversation that I've had since becoming the foreign minister." "In May, we

Wives of Shehbaz, Imran richer than husbands

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and former premier Imran Khan's wives have financial assets worth more than their husbands, the media reported on Thursday. As per a statement of assets filed for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, Nusrat Shehbaz owns wealth worth Rs 230.29 million against PM's Rs 104.21 million. Imran's wife Bushra Bibi's net worth is Rs 142.11 million. PTI

had the delimitation commission and then just recently, the Islamophobic remarks of officials create an environment in which engagement is very difficult for Pakistan, if not impossible," the minister said, referring to re-engaging with India.

29% hike in fuel prices to secure IMF funding

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, JUNE 16

PAKISTAN'S GOVERNMENT has hiked fuel prices by up to 29 per cent, removing fuel subsidies in an attempt to trim the fiscal deficit and secure critical support from the IMF for the cash-strapped economy.

This is the third cut in fuel subsidies by the government headed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in about 20 days.

The new prices came into effect from Wednesday midnight and showed a hike of Rs 24 per litre in petrol prices and Rs 59.16/litre of high-speed diesel, Finance Minister Miftah Ismail said.

The latest rise came on top of an already Rs 60 increase in the prices of petroleum since May 25. PM Sharif on Thursday defended the unpopular moves, saying that the government was "left with no choice" because of "those who struck the worst ever deal" with the IMF.

H-1B operation has not kept pace with country's needs: US commentator

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, JUNE 16

THE OPERATION and implementation of H-1B visas, the valuable component of the US immigration system since 1990, has not kept pace with the country's needs, an American political commentator told lawmakers, underlining that expansion of high-skilled immigration will boost economic growth and expand American businesses.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

"In 2005, 85,000 visas were available. Today, nearly 20 years later, 85,000 visas are available. There are many promising options for expanding skilled immigration," Mia Love, a former Republican Congresswoman, top political commentator and national outreach director of Utah University, said during her testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Wednesday.

Testifying before the subcommittee on immigration, citizenship and border safety which held a hearing on strengthening the workforce, Love said research suggests an expansion of high-skilled immigration will boost economic growth, expand American businesses, and provide more opportunities for the most disadvantaged Americans.

BOOKS ARE PART OF CHINA'S EFFORT TO STRESS PATRIOTIC EDUCATION

Rewriting history: In these new textbooks, Hong Kong was never a British colony

TIFFANY MAY
HONG KONG, JUNE 16

MANY SCHOOLCHILDREN around the world have long been taught that Hong Kong was once a colony of the British Empire. But students in Hong Kong will soon learn a different lesson: It wasn't. Beijing has steadfastly maintained that historical view of the city's status, long before Britain returned the territory to China in 1997, and years before a sweeping crackdown crushed a thriving pro-democracy movement in the once-semiautonomous territory. Now, as Hong Kong prepares to commemorate 25 years since its handover to China on July 1,

1997, that narrative — which rejects how the British saw their relationship to the city — will be explicitly taught to Hong Kong high school students through at least four new textbooks that will be rolled out in the fall.

The textbook material is still under review by principals, teachers, scholars and employees of Hong Kong's Education Bureau, but it seems destined for classrooms. Local news websites published draft excerpts this week, and *The New York Times* viewed teachers' proof copies. The material is part of a wider campaign by China's top leader, Xi Jinping, to overhaul Hong Kong's schools, "protect young minds" and raise loyal, patriotic citizens.

Jeffrey Ngo, a Hong Kong pro-democracy activist and a doctoral candidate in history at Georgetown University, said the government's position "is a shorthand for saying, 'Hong Kong was always a part of China, thus Hong Kongers never could claim a right of self-determination.'"

"It's about trying to ensure the next generation of young kids are going to be supportive or at least sympathetic to what the government is saying," Ngo added. "This is part of the remake of Hong Kong in the national security era."

Under the terms of the 1997 handover negotiated with Britain, China had agreed that the social and economic systems of the territory would remain



Beijing has launched a sweeping overhaul of the education system. The cover of one of the new textbooks (left). NYT

unchanged for 50 years after resuming sovereignty, with the result that Hong Kong initially had a high degree of autonomy from the mainland. When moves by Beijing threatened that arrangement, protesters took to the streets in 2014 and again in 2019.

Steve Tsang, the director of the SOAS China Institute in London, said since the Chinese leadership issued in 2013 a memo known as Document No. 9 that took aim at Western influences in the country, China has allowed only one version of history to be taught. Hong Kong would no longer be an exception to the rule.

"In the Xi approach to history, facts are merely incidental," Professor Tsang said. "Only inter-

pretation matters. And only one interpretation is allowed."

Scholars and historians said that China's portrayal of Hong Kong's status under British rule is not new. Although the Communist Party had referred to China before 1949 as a "half colony, half-feudal society," it has maintained since at least 1997 that Hong Kong was not a true colony, said Ho-fung Hung, a professor at Johns Hopkins University.

He cited an article in the party's newspaper, *People's Daily*, published in March 1997, that argued: "The United Kingdom has exercised typical colonial rule in Hong Kong, but it does not mean that Hong Kong is a colony. Colonies in the usual

sense mainly refer to countries that have lost their sovereignty due to foreign rule and jurisdiction. Hong Kong is part of China's territory, so the concept of colony does not apply to Hong Kong."

In the 19th century, Britain took over what is now modern-day Hong Kong via two wars and a series of treaties that the Chinese government called unequal and coerced. In 1946, the UN included Hong Kong on a list of "non-self-governing territories," and in a 1960 resolution said the people there should be granted "the right to self-determination." In 1972, after Beijing took over China's seat in the world body, it successfully pushed the U.N. to remove Hong Kong from the list. NYT

Tejaswin, Jeswin still hopeful of CWG spot despite AFI snub

ANDREW AMSAN
JUNE 16

THE SELECTION of the athletics squad for the Commonwealth Games was on expected lines but for two misses - long jumper Jeswin Aldrin and high jumper **Tejaswin Shankar**, both of whom had achieved the mark set by the Athletics Federation of India.



Tejaswin is the only high jumper to have achieved the CWG qualification mark when he recorded a 2.27m jump and won the NCAA championship in the USA less than a week ago. The leap also puts him on top of the India leader board this season, with the second-best jump being 2.25m.

Despite the snub, both Tejaswin and Jeswin are hoping the federation gives them an opportunity to appear for a trial in California, where India is likely to lead a camp ahead of the World Championships. Tejaswin has, in fact, already written a letter to the federation to consider his request.

"I am extremely hopeful that the federation gives me one opportunity. I have already achieved the mark but I am ready to jump in front of them. The reason I was able to achieve the qualification mark in the first place was that I took part against a top field here. Even though I was participating here in the US my heart was just thinking about the CWG qualification," Tejaswin told *The Indian Express*.

Tejaswin, India's best long jumper by a distance, is naturally heartbroken at the selection news. "NCAA championship is a very serious competition. Several people qualified for their respective countries just because they took part in the NCAA championship. There is regular testing and they follow the best practices," he added.

"I am just two hours away from California. I am requesting for trial despite being the only one to achieve the mark. I am not even asking them to select me, I am just asking for a fair chance. I really want to represent my country at the CWG," said Tejaswin.

The federation reasons that only three athletes - Neeraj Chopra, Avinash Sable and Seema Punia - were given an exemption to skip the inter-state meet, which was incidentally clashing with the NCAA championship. "It was clearly mentioned on the website this was the last event where one could try to register the qualification standard for the CWG and Worlds. Tejaswin did not want to be selected. Mr Shankar did not ask to be exempted from the Inter-State Championships. He did not take permission from us before he competed in the USA," AFI president Adille Sumariwalla told reporters after the team was announced on Thursday.

Jeswin, who recorded a wind-assisted 8.37m and 8.26m (previous national mark) in Kozhikode just a couple of months, also missed the bus. At the inter-state meet, he recorded a series of fouls and a best attempt of 7.51m (the CWG qualification mark is 8m). Jeswin will also approach the federation for a selection trial.

AFI has currently named a 37-member squad for the CWG in Birmingham from July 28 to August 8. Defending champion Neeraj Chopra undoubtedly is the biggest name in the team and will be accompanied by throwers DP Manu and Rohit Yadav. This is still a provisional list since a few athletes' selection will be decided if they perform well in California or Kazakhstan.

India athletics squad for CWG Men: Avinash Sable (3000m Steeplechase); Nitender Rawat (Marathon); M Sreesankar and Muhammed Anees Yahiya (Long Jump); Abdulla Aboobacker, Praveen Chithravel and Eldhose Paul (Triple Jump); Tajinderpal Singh Toor (Shot Put); Neeraj Chopra, DP Manu and Rohit Yadav (Javelin Throw); Sandeep Kumar and Amit Khatri (Race Walking); Amoj Jacob, Noah Nirmal Tom, Arokia Rajiv, Muhammed Ajmal, Naganathan Pandi and Rajesh Ramesh (4x400m Relay).

Women: S Dhanalakshmi (100m and 4x100m relay); Jyothi Yarraji (100m Hurdles); Aishwarya B (Long Jump and Triple Jump) and Ancy Sojan (Long Jump); Manpreet Kaur (Shot Put); Navjeet Kaur Dhillion and Seema Antil Punia (Discus Throw); Annu Rani and Shilpa Rani (Javelin Throw); Manju Bala Singh and Sarita Romit Singh (Hammer Throw); Bhawna Jat and Priyanka Goswami (Race Walking); Hima Das, Dutee Chand, Srabani Nanda, MV Jilna and NS Simi (4x100m relay).

Now TT player moves court

PTI adds: Rising woman paddler Archana Kamath is the latest table tennis player to move court after she was dropped from the Indian team for the upcoming Commonwealth Games, further deepening the chaos surrounding the selection of the side for July 28-August 8 quadrennial event. Archana was initially included in the table tennis squad as an 'exception' as she did not meet the selection criteria laid down by TTFI, but was suddenly dropped by the Committee of Administrators (CoA) and Diya Chitale was brought in her place.

Shocked by sudden ouster from the squad, Archana, the world no. 4 player in women's doubles along with Manika Batra, has filed a writ petition at the Karnataka High Court against the Government of India, TTFI, Sports Authority of India and other members of the women's team.

The High Court has instructed all the parties to appear before it on the next hearing, which is scheduled on June 22.

How Saudi Arabian big money has shaken up golf's status quo

With hundreds of millions on offer, several top golfers have left the PGA Tour for the kingdom's LIV Golf

TUSHAR BHADURI
JUNE 16

THIS WEEK, Brookline, Massachusetts is hosting the 'toughest test in golf', as the US Open is often described as. But the last few weeks can also be referred to as the 'toughest test of golf' as developments on the course and off it threaten to tear the professional game apart.

The US-based PGA Tour has been the toughest, most prestigious and most lucrative golf circuit in the world, with most upcoming players aspiring to it as if it were the Holy Grail. Together with the DP World Tour (formerly called the European Tour), it has dominated the golfing scene for decades.

Now, a Saudi-funded venture with immensely deep pockets has threatened the status quo, tempting the best players in the world with lucrative contracts and guaranteed prize money to play in their LIV Golf events. Some of the top golfers have jumped ship and the PGA Tour has wasted little time in suspending their membership. But the big names who have opted to switch sides are free to tee up at the US Open and, in all likelihood, next month's 150th Open Championship on The Old Course at St. Andrews, considered the home of golf.

However, it seems likely that they will not be allowed to be involved in any capacity in future Ryder Cups or Presidents Cups.

What is the row all about?

The Public Investment Fund (PIF), the sovereign wealth fund of Saudi Arabia, has spent a lot of money on elite sports, which critics allege is a means to spruce up the image of the Saudi ruling regime, called 'sportswashing'. The kingdom is accused of several human rights violations and also came under a cloud after the murder of The Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The launch of a rival venture against an established US-based tour touches a raw nerve in the USA as 15 of the 19 hijackers in the 9/11 attacks hailed from Saudi Arabia.

The PGA Tour refused to grant waivers to its players for playing in the LIV Golf events. Some of the players even resigned their membership to avoid future sanctions or litigation.

What is the format?

LIV stands for 54 in Roman numerals and the tournaments are 54-hole affairs, in



Phil Mickelson takes a tee shot on the fifth hole during a practice round ahead of the U.S. Open golf tournament.

contrast to 72 on traditional tours, and played over three days, not four as is generally the case.

Each event features 48 players and has a team and individual competition. The teams have four members each. The players tee off at the same time on different holes in what is termed a 'shotgun start'. This is to reduce the time taken for a round, in a bid to make it more TV-friendly.

How much money is on offer?

The biggest names in golf have been offered astronomical sums - often in hundreds of millions of dollars - to join the new venture. This is just the signing amount.

Fronted by former world Number 1 Greg Norman, LIV Golf has lined up eight events in 2022. Each of them will have a prize fund of \$25 million, making them comfortably more lucrative than any tournament on the PGA Tour. The winner will take home \$4m, another high. The final event

will see the winning team getting \$16m, with each member getting 25 percent.

There is no cut and the player finishing last will still be richer by \$120,000. In contrast, on other tours, players missing the cut don't get any prize money.

Who all have joined and why?

Dustin Johnson, Bryson DeChambeau, Patrick Reed, Charl Schwartzel, Louis Oosthuizen, Ian Poulter, Graeme McDowell and Phil Mickelson are some of the prominent names on the LIV Golf roster.

Some of them like Poulter and McDowell have justified their decision, arguing that they are global professionals, while sidestepping the moral questions thrown at them.

"No one's going to argue that fact but we're golfers. We're not politicians. If Saudi Arabia want to use the game of golf as a way for them to get to where they want to be, we're proud to help them on that journey," McDowell said.

Poulter said: "I regard myself as a global

Dustin Johnson, Bryson DeChambeau, Patrick Reed, Charl Schwartzel, Louis Oosthuizen, Ian Poulter, Graeme McDowell and Phil Mickelson are some of the prominent names on the LIV Golf roster.

golfer and I have been for 24 years. I've played on numerous tours and events around the world and that is what I'm continuing to do."

Others didn't hide the fact that it was about the money.

Johnson had earlier pledged his allegiance to the PGA Tour before having a change of heart and resigning his membership. "I don't want to play for the rest of my life, this gives me an opportunity to do what I want to do," Johnson said.

DeChambeau calls his move "a business decision, first and foremost."

"There was a lot of financials to it and a lot of time. I get to have a life outside of the game of golf as well. It's given me a lot more opportunities outside of the game of golf and given me more time with my family and my future family," DeChambeau said.

Some others are in their late 40s and early 50s and know their best golfing days are behind them. They may want to cash in while they can.

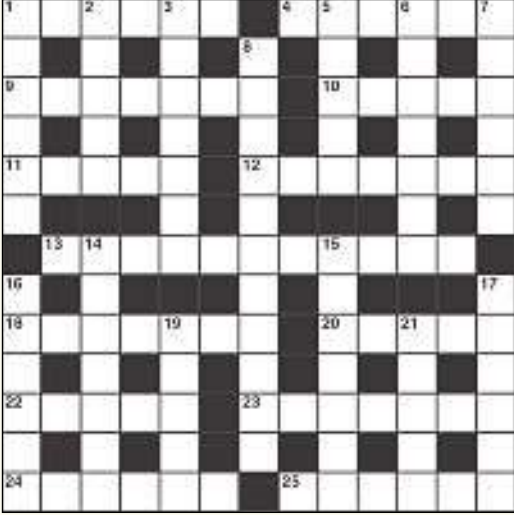
Why are so many LIV Golf players still in the US Open field?

The golf establishment hasn't hidden its disappointment at the big names deserting the official tours. But the US Open is organised by the United States Golf Association (USGA), and not the PGA Tour. The criteria for earning a berth in the Major was decided much before LIV Golf emerged on the scene, so it was argued that denying them the opportunity to play would be unfair on those who have made it on merit. Many of them are past champions and have gained exemptions.

Are there any parallels in other sports?

If one can earn much more by playing much less, there's a great temptation. It is the logic of T20 cricket professionals who go around the world playing in various leagues while not always turning up for their national teams. It is less taxing on the body and leaves one with ample time for themselves.

CROSSWORD 4770



ACROSS

- 1 Buffalo Bill tours the Middle East for fun (6)
- 4 Detached state of the caribou (6)
- 9 Firm receives clear order for a boat (7)
- 10 Do return with our bouquet (5)
- 11 Ring an agent back at Covent Garden? (5)
- 12 An error in the wage packet? (7)
- 13 More than mere business acquaintances (4,7)
- 18 Title given to James novel (4,3)
- 20 Class distinction (5)
- 22 My lie is found out by a girl (5)
- 23 Ill treatment? (7)
- 24 Sampled the last of the fruit - fresh dates (6)
- 25 Repeatedly set about a fly (6)

DOWN

- 1 Two companies joining together on a silk product (6)
- 2 Get involved in someone else's business? (5)
- 3 Badly presented medical lecture (7)
- 5 Look round New York - it's crazy (5)
- 6 Oil ran about and caused damage (7)
- 7 Sharp rap but different (6)
- 8 Character in rage meant to explode (11)
- 14 The antiquarian's avowed interest is shattered (2,5)
- 15 Guards companies (7)
- 16 Notwithstanding it's a vestment to fasten up (6)
- 17 Note bird dog (6)
- 19 James's girl? (5)
- 21 Clothing workers? (5)

Solutions Crossword 4769: Across: 1 Masseur, 5 Sadie, 8 Doctor of Music, 9 Ennui, 10 Empress, 11 Sphinx, 12 Heated, 15 Release, 17 Patch, 19 Private Income, 20 Sight, 21 Dresses. Down: 1 Midge, 2 Second helping, 3 Emotion, 4 Rhodes, 5 Sum up, 6 Dissertations, 7 Excused, 11 Stripes, 13 Expense, 14 Defend, 16 Apart, 18 Heels.

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.

I would rather be right and die than be ___ and ___ - Holly Lisle (5,4)

NYIOR



IIORGN



EISLL

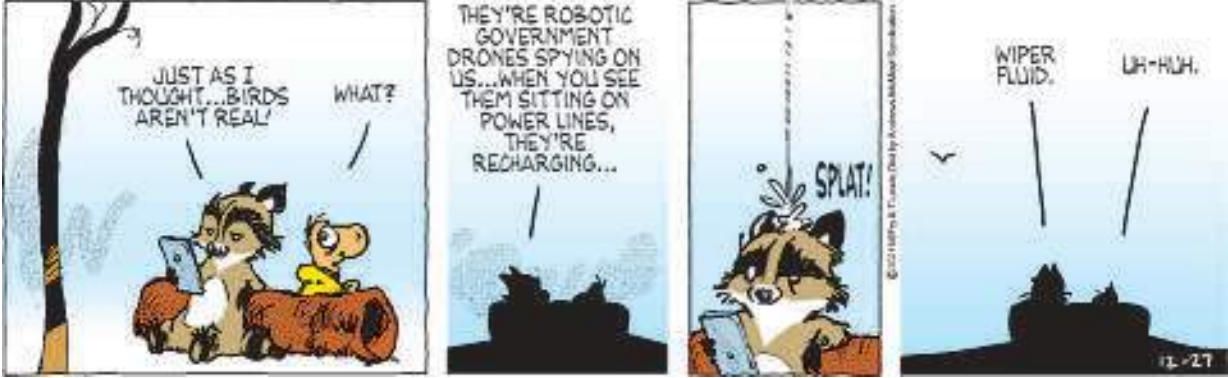


AGINKW



SOLUTION: NYIOR - NYLON, IIORGN - IRRIGATION, EISLL - EISLE, AGINKW - AGONY. WALKING

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4868

Difficulty Level 2s

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

Difficulty Level

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4867



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Assertive Martian alignments should now be having an effect, and today they're joined by emotional Lunar patterns, indicating that if you should feel like showing off or being a bit of a prima donna, go right ahead. And if you want to re-live former triumphs, why not?

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Keep your wits about you at all times, mainly because what is now taking place away from your gaze will affect your future interests. It may be next week before you discover what partners are doing. The simple solution is to see to it that your own plans are water-tight.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

At work and home you must keep the talking going, aware of the need for agreement. At least you must make sure that loved ones know your views on a promised engagement. If you explain yourself, they can't pretend they didn't understand you.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

It's time to get out and indulge in a spot of shopping therapy, hopefully today, but tomorrow will do if you really are tied up just now. There's nothing like spending a bit of money on an overdue treat to lift your morale. But, then, you still need a long-term solution, so don't imagine that you're off the hook.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

You are bathed in beneficial lunar alignments, and these are bound to make you feel increasingly emotional, and more compassionate. You may be a little gullible, and hence a soft touch vfor some. So, keep a weather-eye open for roving confidence tricksters.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

You do tend to worry, and sometimes you wonder if you've backed the wrong horse. However, right now you should allow yourself a great deal of extra time to consider the options and give current developments time to work themselves out before taking rash decisions.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Your social stars are beginning to look more buoyant, and you should keep your eyes open for new friends and meetings. Where romance is concerned, it looks very much as if security is increasingly the main issue. You want to hang on to what you have.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Strident planetary aspects force you to choose between home and work, between family interests and outside ambitions. Once you have made your position clear, others should give you the freedom to go your own way. But is freedom really what you want? You won't know unless you've got it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

Let the past take care of itself and concentrate on the untried and untested solutions of the future. It will do you a power of good to improve conditions at work, spreading a bit of colour around and generally raising the quality of life. And while you're at it, why don't you reassure people you live with that you're right behind them?

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Perhaps long-term financial commitments and obligations are causing concern, but you will have to understand that partners may not share your outlook. Relax and trust a little in the healing power of time. It's strange how what is so important today can be forgotten tomorrow.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

It's a fairly stressful day, but by no means a bad one. Much depends on how far you are prepared to welcome change, and to what extent you can turn friction to your advantage. It may be a cliché, but do look on the bright side, won't you? After all, optimism breeds success.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Stay busy and keep active. It's a day to cope with routine chores, getting as much accomplished as you possibly can. The essential rule is that the harder you work now, the more time you'll have off later on. I know you know that, but it's worth reminding you, all the same.

12 SPORT

BRIEFLY

Prannoy storms into QF of Indonesia Open

Jakarta: One of the heroes of India's epic Thomas Cup triumph, HS Prannoy continued his rich vein of form as he stormed into the quarterfinals of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 tournament with a straight-game win over Hong Kong's Ng Ka Long Angus here on Thursday. The 29-year-old from Kerala, who is desperately looking to break his five year title drought, dished out another impressive performance to out-wit Ng Long 21-11, 21-18 in a second round match that lasted 41 minutes. Among other Indians in the fray, Sameer Verma ended his campaign with a 10-21 13-21 loss to world number five Lee Zii Jia of Malaysia in the second round.

Chanu wins gold at Khelo India League

Nagrota Bagwan: Olympic medallist Mirabai Chanu won the gold medal comfortably but could not better her national record in snatch at the inaugural Khelo India Women Weightlifting League tournament here on Thursday. The Tokyo Olympics silver medallist lifted a total of 191kg (86kg+105kg) to stand atop the podium in the ranking event for women in the senior, junior and youth categories. Gyaneshwari Yadav 170kg (78kg+92) and former 45kg Asian Weightlifting Championship gold medallist Jhilli Dalabehra 166kg (75kg+91kg) finished second and third respectively.

Para Powerlifting: Basha wins 2 silvers

Bengaluru: Mumbai produced an incisive bowling display to bundle out Uttar Pradesh for a paltry 180 and take the crucial first-innings lead on the third day of their Ranji Trophy semifinal, here on Thursday. Resuming at the overnight score of 25/2, UP batters could add just 155 runs as Tushar Deshpande (3/34), Tanush Kotian (3/35) and Mohit Avasthi (3/39) shared nine wickets between them for Mumbai.

Brief Scores: Mumbai 393 & 1331/1 (P Shaw 64, Y Jaiswal 35*, A Jaffer 32*) vs UP 180 all out (M Kaushik 38, S Mavi 48; T Deshpande 3/34, M Avasthi 3/39, T Koitan 3/35); MP: 341 & 163/2 (A Srivastava 34*, R Patidar 63*) vs Bengal 273 (M Tiwary 102, S Ahmed 116; K Kartikeya 3/61, S Jain 3/63, P Datey 3/48)

Dani Alves leaves Barca for 2nd time

Barcelona: Dani Alves is leaving Barcelona for a second time, five months after the veteran Brazil right back returned to the Spanish club he helped lead to 23 titles. He started a second stint with Barcelona in January as a free agent on a contract that expired this summer. He scored one goal in 17 appearances last season. He finished his Barcelona career with 408 appearances in total.

Halle: Kyrgios, Medvedev win

Halle: Second-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas was eliminated from the Halle Open in the second round on Wednesday as Nick Kyrgios fought back to win 5-7, 6-2, 6-4. Top-ranked David Medvedev advanced by beating David Goffin 6-3, 6-2. The Russian will next play Ilya Yashka of Belarus in the second round.



SERIES WIDE OPEN

India coach Rahul Dravid with stand-in skipper Rishabh Pant on Thursday, the eve of the fourth T20I against South Africa in Rajkot.

PTI

Yours faithfully, Sunil Chhetri

Having scored almost a third of India's goals, India's 37-year-old talisman continues to save their blushes

MIHIR VASAVDA
JUNE 16

NOTHING ABOUT the run, the acrobatics or the goal suggested Sunil Chhetri will turn 38 in two months.

Sprinting towards the goal, eyes following the ball, arms outstretched and right leg extended, Chhetri met the diagonal cross from a free-kick mid-air. Then, in one motion, he cushioned it down, opened his body, slotted it past the Hong Kong goalkeeper with the left foot and, in a rare goal celebration, sealed it with a kiss to the thousands in the stands.

A couple of days earlier, when India seemed to have run out of ideas against Afghanistan, Chhetri lined up a free-kick from roughly 25 yards out with about five minutes left to play. He wrapped his right boot around the ball, which looked like it was headed well wide of the target but curled in sharply to find the top corner of the goal.

Days before, against Cambodia in the opening match of the Asian Cup qualifiers, six players – including the goalkeeper – stood between two Indian attackers, one of them being Chhetri, and the goal when Brandon Fernandes whipped in a cross from the left. Chhetri, who had already scored one from a first-half penalty, snuck behind the defenders to head home the ball.

On Tuesday, India sealed their back-to-back Asian Cup berths for the first time ever. However, this was about Chhetri, like it always is when the national team is involved. 'What would India be without Chhetri' is probably a question/statement that floods the meta-verse almost every time the team plays. It captures both India's plight without its talisman and the awe that Chhetri inspires with his ridiculous levels of reliability.

Take away his goals and one shudders to think where the national team would've been in world football. Since the time he made his debut, on June 12, 2005, Chhetri has scored almost a third of India's goals. Would the national team have qualified for the Asian Cups in 2011, 2019 and 2023 without his strikes? Or won the SAFF Championships so frequently? Who knows, perhaps they would've succumbed to more embarrassing defeats if not for his numerous rescue acts.



In Indian colours, Sunil Chhetri has scored 84 goals in 129 matches against 31 different opponents over 17 years

Of course, the argument can be made that someone else would've taken Chhetri's place if not for him. But it's also true that no player from this generation has come close to matching his goal-scoring prowess, consistency or longevity – 84 goals in 129 matches against 31 different opponents over 17 years is a testimony to that.

Looking at Chhetri's career merely through numbers, however, does not do justice to the man and all that he's done for Indian football. And there's very little he hasn't done: he's changed the mindset by chucking aside the semi-pro culture and embracing professionalism to a level that one hadn't seen before; he, with his heartfelt pleas, has got bums on seats when the national team plays; and then takes it upon himself to make sure those fans are entertained.

As former Bengaluru FC manager Carles Cuadrat says, Chhetri is 'a treasure, a kind of special gemstone for Indian football.' 'What makes Sunil special is his position on the pitch,' Cuadrat tells The Indian Express from Barcelona. 'A lot of players who perform well for such a long time are central defenders or defensive midfielders, not wingers or full-backs because they have to run a lot. Also, not forwards because they have to keep scoring always. In Sunil's case, what makes it more special is that he is performing as a striker and

is the top scorer of any team plays for, India or Bengaluru.'

'Boring lifestyle'

The secret, Chhetri's first captain Shanmugam Venkatesh, a former India international and assistant coach, says, is in the sacrifices he has made. "He challenges himself every day," Venkatesh says. During the qualifiers in Qatar recently, Venkatesh and Chhetri were relaxing in the lounge when Chhetri developed a craving. "He smiled at me and said, 'Venky bhai, chai-samosa khane ka mann kar raha hai. Someday...'" Venkatesh recalls. "When I played, I could eat biryani on the eve of the match. My body could handle that. But Sunil doesn't party, doesn't eat junk, sleeps early, wakes up early, works out every day, doesn't miss training... a boring lifestyle for a normal person but that's the reason he has been able to play so consistently for 17 years."

It's a lifestyle he's followed for years at Bengaluru FC. There are no cheat days, even during the off-season, when Chhetri does not skip training. During the season, on match days, he is one of the first to reach the club and heads straight to the massage room where he lies down on his chest and immerses himself in videos of Messi as the masseur does his thing. "Like Rafa Nadal, who arranges his bottles meticulously during a match, Sunil has many tiny rituals. But he isn't obsessed by it or doesn't overdo anything," Cuadrat says. Venkatesh adds: "He reads, understands and does what is right. And he does it every day, not just on the day of the match or the day after. That's why he can score goals as he scored against Hong Kong the other day."

Multiple roles

Chhetri, of course, is more than the sum total of his goals. He can assist, play second-fiddle and put in a defensive shift if the situation demands, especially when donning Bengaluru's blue jersey. Cuadrat gives the example of Bengaluru's ISL game against Hyderabad, which was played weeks before the pandemic struck. The game-plan, the Spaniard says, was that when his team would earn their first corner on the right, the ball would be crossed at the top of the penalty box towards Chhetri. He would make a decoy run

so that Nishu Kumar, a left-back, could run in behind him from the midfield and take a shot.

"Sunil is usually our target man in these situations. He is very good with the header and very good at shooting... so it's obvious that he is one of our targets. The opponents, too, are watching and marking him closely because he is the main threat," he says. "We were talking to Sunil, and he said it was tough but we should try."

In the seventh minute, Bengaluru earned a corner on the right. Midfielder Dimas Delgado sent a signal to his teammates and then counted to three; that was the moment the runs had to be initiated. "Sunil was the last player at the edge of the penalty box to run inside, and everyone was looking at him, waiting for his move," Cuadrat says.

Chhetri made a dash inside the box and distracted the defenders to create space for Nishu, the unlikely of goalscorers, who came charging in from behind to smash from the corner from the edge of the box. "After the goal, Sunil did not go to the players to celebrate. Instead, he came to the bench to honour us, honour the idea and capacity we had as a team to create something where he wasn't the protagonist but played a secondary role. It says a lot about him; that he is always thinking for the good of the team."

During the season Bengaluru became champions, Cuadrat says it was Chhetri's defensive work, while playing as a left-winger, which came in handier. "When we were defending, we had a 4-1-4-1 system. Miku was taking care of central defenders and the rest of the team was in defence. We were very compact, there were no passing lanes for the opponents. Sunil and Udanta's (Singh) defensive work on the wings let us have a strong defensive system," Cuadrat says. "Now, with age, if he isn't good enough for press, you can use him as number 10. He can be used in different offensive positions – as number 10, number 9, winger..."

The national team, perhaps, does not have that liberty given that there are few goal-scoring players. Manvir Singh and Ishan Pandita have shown promise but will have to prove consistency. In such a scenario, the who-af-ter-Chhetri question will not die down so easily. The man himself, however, continues to defy age.

Flat tracks like Delhi can hamper confidence, says Harshal Patel

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JUNE 16

AFTER THEIR bowlers defended a total successfully for the first time in three attempts in Visakhapatnam, India face another must-win scenario against South Africa on Friday evening in Rajkot in the fourth of five Twenty20 internationals. And at what has usually been a high-scoring venue, the hosts' bowling could be tested once more.

India failed to defend a total of 211 on a belter in the series opener in Delhi, as South Africa lost only three wickets and won with five deliveries to spare. In the second match in Cuttack, the batsmen could post only 148; Bhuvneshwar Kumar's powerplay strikes reduced the South Africans to 29 for 3 but with little help from the surface, the Indian spinners couldn't capitalise and Heinrich Klaasen belted 81 to carry the visitors to a comfortable win. Yuzvendra Chahal and Axar Patel had gone for 68 in five overs in Cuttack, and 66 in six overs in Delhi, for a collective two wickets. But they regained their bite in Visakhapatnam and bowled their full quota of eight overs for the first time in the series for four wickets at run-a-ball; the slow surface with some grip and turn helped them squeeze the life early out of South Africa's chase of 180. The pitch, as well as long straight boundaries, also suited Harshal Patel's bowling style, allowing him to make good use of his slower ones, both pitched-up and dug shortish into the surface.

Ahead of the Rajkot game, Harshal said that he'd prefer sluggish surfaces such as Visakhapatnam as against the Delhi one, which, according to him, could dent bowlers' confidence. "Although there was not a lot of variable bounce or lateral movement from the (Visakhapatnam) pitch, it was definitely slow. So that allowed us to bowl hard lengths and slower balls into the pitch. It was difficult to clear the boundary from those lengths," Harshal said. "I would certainly prefer to play on slower pitches because it allows you a bit of fighting chance. If we consistently keep playing on pitches like Delhi, it can hamper your confidence a little bit."

"We also have world-class spinners in the team, who can bowl well on any pitch, but it does bring them a little more into the game when we have slightly slower pitches and slightly bigger ground dimensions."

After the third T20I, Chahal had suggested that he was looking forward to bowling with the extra protection of the bigger square boundaries in Rajkot. However, the average scoring rate in three T20Is at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium has been 9.2 runs an over, indicating unforgiving bowling conditions. But Harshal said that the weather would be a major factor in determining the nature of the surface. Although maximum temperatures in Rajkot are currently in the late thirties, scattered thunderstorms are forecast on Friday afternoon.

"We cannot go by the reputation (of the ground) always as the weather on the day will have a big role in what kind of pitch we get," Harshal said. "We will have to assess the conditions accordingly."



Hashal Patel says he prefers to play on slower pitches.

PTI

Extremely disappointed with our top order: Arun Lal

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
JUNE 16

TWO MADHYA Pradesh spinners, Kumar Kartikeya and Saransh Jain, shared six wickets between them, as their side took an important 68-run first-innings lead on the third day of their Ranji Trophy semifinal on Thursday. At stumps, MP's lead swelled to 231 runs – 163/2 in their second innings. They can snuff the final.

Once upon a time, MP cricket, in its Holkar vintage, used to throw up stars for fun – CK Nayudu, Mushtaq Ali, Bhausaheb Nimbalkar, CS Nayudu... The current crop has Rajat Patidar's popularity from his IPL exploits. Patidar is batting on 63 in the second innings, but so far it has been a collective effort under the head coach Chandrakant Pandit's charge; from Himanshu Mantri's excellent century in the first innings to Kartikeya and Jain's spin-bowling and Puneet Datey's disciplined medium pace.

Even when Manoj Tiwary and Shahbaz Ahmed were threatening to take the game away, MP believed. A mistimed sweep from Tiwary gave them an opportunity to run through the Bengal lower-order, which they



Rajat Patidar (L) scored an unbeaten 63 for Madhya Pradesh

did. Last time MP qualified for the Ranji Trophy final was in 1998-99. This game is now theirs to lose.

MP's job, though, was made easier by a lacklustre batting display from Bengal. Tiwary scored a century, braving a heavily-strapped swollen knee and Shahbaz Ahmed, too, batted brilliantly to reach three-figures.

The two added 183 runs for the sixth wicket on the heels of a top-order collapse. Apart from that, however, Bengal's innings had eight single-digit scores and captain Abhimanyu Easwaran's 22. It was down to poor application.

Bengal head coach Arun Lal agreed. "Absolutely, there's no question about it. I'm extremely disappointed with our top-order. I cannot understand how on this pitch you can be 50/50," Lal told The Indian Express.

Maybe, it was the mindset. The lead-up of this semifinal had left-arm spinner Kartikeya spinning a web on a turning Alur deck. The majority of the Bengal batsmen seemingly carried the fear factor to the crease. "Must have been, because it looks like the top-order was very tense in the beginning," Lal said.

Tiwary revelled in his quality, while Shahbaz has been the team's crisis man over the last couple of seasons. The way he batted, a promotion in the batting order is imminent. "Definitely. If not No. 3, then No. 4, but definitely in the top five. His temperament is something that stands out. He is cool, he is calm. Doesn't panic. He is not scared. And he has got a very practical batting technique. Very low backlift; there's no backlift unless he is hitting a shot. Also, he has got huge leadership qualities. He is a leader and a performer."

"For the last three years he has been a guaranteed performer. Today, he ran out of partners," his coach Lal observed.

Bengal aren't throwing in the towel yet.

That's not in Lal's nature. For that though, early wickets on the fourth day would be essential.

Spinners should come into play more and Bengal have been playing an extra spinner in Pradipta Pramanik in this game.

"The pitch has become so slow that once a batsman gets set, it looks like it's almost impossible to get him out. You need quality red-ball spinners (on this surface)," Lal said. Shahbaz would do the restrictive job from one end. From Bengal's perspective, Pramanik, young and raw, needs to punch above his weight.

Also, Bengal missed Wriddhiman Saha both in front of the wicket and behind the stumps.

The wicketkeeper-batsman refused to play for his state team this term after fall-outs with the state association. "Of course, he (Saha) would have brought in more experience. He is a great cricketer. But he chose not to play for Bengal and that's his decision," Lal said. "I don't support it, but it's his decision and I respect it."

Brief scores: MP 341 all out and 163/2 in 63 overs (Rajat Patidar 63 not out) vs Bengal 273 all out in 89.2 overs (Shahbaz Ahmed 116, Manoj Tiwary 102; Puneet Datey 3/48, Kumar Kartikeya 3/61, Saransh Jain 3/63)

Mumbai in total command, take first-innings lead vs UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JUNE 16

MUMBAI PRODUCED an incisive bowling display to bundle out Uttar Pradesh for a paltry 180 and take the crucial first-innings lead on the third day of their Ranji Trophy semifinal, here on Thursday.

Resuming at the overnight score of 25 for two, UP batters could add just 155 runs as Tushar Deshpande (3/34), off-spinner Tanush Kotian (3/35) and Mohit Avasthi (3/39) shared nine wickets between them for Mumbai. Dhawal Kulkarni (1/25) also chipped in with a scalp. Skipper Prithvi Shaw made 64 off 71 balls with the help of 12 boundaries as Mumbai finished the day at 133 for one in their second innings, taking an overall lead of 346 runs. Mumbai had posted 393 in their first essay, courtesy hundreds by Yashasvi Jaiswal and Hardik Tamore.

UP lost wickets regularly after resumption with the 41-time Ranji Trophy champions dominating from the start.

The first UP batter to be dismissed on the day was skipper Karan Sharma (27), who became Avasthi's first victim.

Opener Madhav Kaushik (38) and Rinku Singh (16) tried to rally the innings, but managed to forge only a 32-run stand for the fifth wicket before the former was dismissed by Kotian. After that, the UP batters made a beeline to the pavilion. Rinku, Dhruv Jorel (2) and Saurabh Kumar (0) fell in quick succession. Kotian trapped Rinku in front of the wickets, while Avasthi accounted for the two other dismissals.

Coming onto bat at no. 8, Shivam Mavi (48) showed some late resistance, but it was too little and too late. Mavi hit four boundaries and two sixes in his blazing 55-ball knock.

Deshpande then swung into action and ripped apart the tail.

But the day belonged to Kotian, who broke Mavi's resistance as UP conceded a massive 213-run first innings lead.

There was more agony in store for UP as Shaw (64) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (35 not out) made an aggressive start by adding 66 runs for the opening wicket in Mumbai's second innings.

Brief Scores: Mumbai 393 & 1331/1 (P Shaw 64, Y Jaiswal 35*, A Jaffer 32*) vs UP 180 all out (M Kaushik 38, S Mavi 48; T Deshpande 3/34, M Avasthi 3/39, T Koitan 3/35)