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**IDEA EXCHANGE**

In UP, Brahmins, Dalits face many issues. The way murders are happening... If someone complains, they face inquiry' **SATISH CHANDRA MISRA**
NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY, BSP, RAJYA SABHA MP
PAGE 10

Earlier, ration for poor went to those who said 'abba jaan': Yogi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 12

SLAMMING PREVIOUS state governments for what he said was their "casteist and dynast mentality" and "politics of appeasement", UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Sunday said that before 2017, those saying "abba jaan" used to "digest" ration meant for poor but now everyone benefited equally from development under his administration.

Speaking at events to lay the foundation stone and inaugurate development projects in Kushinagar, the Chief Minister said that construction of the Ram temple at Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya started only when the BJP came to power at the Centre and in the state — and asked if the SP, BSP or Congress would have built the temple.

Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Adityanath said he has changed the country's "political agenda", which was earlier limited to caste, faith, religion, place, language and family. "As a result, people from every class are getting the benefits of development. Today, there is development of everyone and appeasement of none. Earlier, when there was politics of appeasement, there wasn't development but riots, corruption, anarchy, terrorism, oppression and injustice," he said.

"Today, you are getting ration. Were you getting this ration before 2017? Because back then, those saying 'abba jaan' used to digest the ration. Back then, the **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

TOP VACANCY FILLED IN A DAY

First-time MLA Bhupendra Patel is BJP's surprise pick as Gujarat CM

Kadva Patidar leader will take oath today; thanks Modi, Amit Shah and Anandiben Patel

PARIMAL DABHI
GANDHINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 12

A DAY after the abrupt resignation of Vijay Rupani as Gujarat Chief Minister, with just 14 months to go for the state polls, the BJP Sunday sprang another surprise by picking first-time MLA Bhupendra Patel for the top job.

Party leaders told *The Indian Express* that 59-year-old Patel's name was proposed by Rupani at the BJP legislature party meeting and seconded by outgoing Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel. Bhupendra Patel, who represents Ahmedabad's Ghatlodia constituency, will take the oath of office Monday and is expected to announce the new Council of Ministers "in a day or two".

Following Sunday's decision, Patel staked claim to form the state government after meeting Governor Acharya Devavrata in the evening. An official release stated that the Governor has invited Patel to the Raj Bhavan for the swearing-in Monday after-



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

THE SHRINKING CM
BJP leadership replaces one more chief minister, trend of overweening high command takes hold **PAGE 8**

noon. A BJP release said Union Home Minister Amit Shah will attend the ceremony.

Patel belongs to the Kadva sub-group of the influential Patidar community, and is the first Chief Minister from this segment. Party leaders said he **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

Engineer, corporator, MLA in 2017 to CM: Swift rise for Patidar leader

RITU SHARMA

AHMEDABAD, SEPTEMBER 12

AMONG the earliest congratulatory messages for Bhupendra Patel, who was named Gujarat's new Chief Minister on Sunday, was from the Vishwa Umiya Foundation, a body of Kadva Patidars. Patel's elevation to the top job — he is the first from the Patidar sub-group to be Chief

Minister — is crucial to the BJP's plans to woo the community that has over the years drifted away from the party.

In fact, Patel, 59, is one of the trustees of Sardardham, the Patidar community organisation that hosted the programme where Prime Minister Narendra Modi was chief guest on Saturday, after which Vijay Rupani quit his job.

Patel, under whose leadership the 2022 assembly elections will

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



New Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel (second from right) is greeted by outgoing CM Vijay Rupani in Gandhinagar Sunday. *Nirmal Harindran*

India acknowledges: Taliban hold positions of power, authority

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

IN ITS first clear and official reference to the Taliban as a state actor, India acknowledged in a joint statement with Australia Sunday that the group holds "positions of power and authority across Afghanistan".

This reference is a step forward for the diplomatic establishment, but falls short of officially recognising the Taliban administration as the government of Afghanistan. Sources told *The Indian Express* that Sunday's formulation was arrived at after "much debate and deliberation" over the last week after the Taliban announced its Cabinet.

On Saturday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had described the Taliban as the "dispensation" in Kabul during his remarks after the 2+2 talks with Australia involving Foreign and Defence ministers.

Sunday's joint statement said: "(The) Ministers also expressed deep concern about the situation in Afghanistan. Ministers called for the Taliban to guarantee safe passage for foreign nationals and Afghans wanting to leave the country."



EXPERT EXPLAINS
M K NARAYANAN
From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight

THE THREAT THAT PERSISTS EXPLAINED
PAGE 7

It said: "They reiterated calls on those in positions of power and authority across Afghanistan to adhere to counterterrorism commitments and human **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

Al-Zawahiri appears in 9/11 video; no mention of takeover by Taliban

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIRUT, SEPTEMBER 12

AL QAEDA leader Ayman al-Zawahiri appeared in a new video marking the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, months after rumours spread that he was dead.

The SITE Intelligence Group that monitors jihadist websites said the video was released Saturday. In it, al-Zawahiri said "Jerusalem will never be Judaized" and praised al-Qaeda attacks, including one that targeted Russian troops in Syria in January.

SITE said al-Zawahiri noted the US military's withdrawal from **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

EXPLAINED **Not proof that he is still alive**

RUMOURS of Al-Zawahiri's death have circulated since late last year. The video does not necessarily suggest a recent recording — even though it appeared online on the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, it made no mention of the Taliban's return to power in Kabul. He mentioned the US withdrawal, but that was decided back in February 2020 itself.

Daylight killing of S-I by militant is caught on Srinagar CCTV camera

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 12

A POLICE officer died of injuries shortly after he was shot at point-blank range by suspected militants in Srinagar on Sunday afternoon.

Meer Arshad was a recent recruit in J&K Police and was serving his probation as a Sub-Inspector. His killing evoked strong criticism from the mainstream political parties in the Kashmir Valley.

Militants shot at and wounded Meer at Khanyar neighbourhood of old Srinagar city. CCTV camera footage of the incident showed a



The spot where J&K Police S-I Meer Arshad was shot at on Sunday. *Shuaib Masoodi*

suspected militant appearing from behind Mir and opening fire at him from point-blank range using a pistol. As Meer falls down, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**



Emma Raducanu of Britain defeated Leylah Fernandez of Canada to win the women's singles final on Saturday. *AP*

Teen immigrant's dream ride: from Pune title 2 yrs ago to US Open crown

SHAHID JUDGE

MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 12

THE SMILE on Emma Raducanu's face only got bigger as the chorus of *Sweet Caroline* blared across the Arthur Ashe Stadium in New York. She joined in singing Britain's enduring sporting anthem as Union Jack-clad fans on the upper tiers swayed to the soundtrack reserved for their revered champions across sport. It was the most British celebration you could imagine to mark Raducanu's 6-4, 6-3 win over Canadian Leylah Fernandez in the US Open final.

It also ended a 44-year title drought. No Englishwoman had won a tennis Major since Virginia Wade topped Wimbledon in 1977. It would take something spectacular, someone beyond anybody's wildest imagination, to break that streak. Raducanu, an 18-year-old with barely any experience on the WTA Tour, fit that billing. Her biggest title until now had come at a Futures event at the Deccan Gymkhana courts of Pune in 2019 — she spent three weeks in India, even playing an ITF tournament in Solapur. The Cinderella story, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

Haryana govt panel suggests redefining Aravallis, will shrink protected area

SUKHBIR SIWACH

CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 12

INSISTING THAT revenue records only identify 'Gair Mumkin Pahar (uncultivable hilly areas)' and make no mention of 'Aravalli', a high-level committee of the Haryana government has asked officials to identify the areas un-

der Aravalli on the basis of a 1992 notification of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), which only covers the areas of the old Gurgaon district (currently Gurgaon and Nuh).

Environmentalists say that by that definition, the provision of the National Conservation Zone (NCZ), which places restric-

tions on construction activity, will not be applicable to Aravalli areas in Faridabad.

A state-level committee led by Haryana Principal Secretary (Town and Country Planning) A K Singh had met on August 9 "for ground-truthing of NCZ in Haryana Sub-Region of National Capital Region". **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

Six weeks to end tussle, but Andhra and Odisha continue their tug of war over villages on border

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

AISHWARYA MOHANTY
KORAPUT, SEPTEMBER 12

ONA Wednesday afternoon, it's all quiet at the primary school in Phattuseneri village in Kotia gram panchayat in Koraput district. The school, with a map of Odisha on one of its walls, is shut — it is open only two days a week owing to the pandemic — but the students are away, at the nearby Telugu-medium Mandal Parishad primary school.

The Telugu-medium school, propped up by bamboo poles and an asbestos roof, came up

five months ago. All around the temporary structure are banners and posters announcing schemes of the Andhra Pradesh government. As a group of children recite numbers in Telugu, the teacher, A Ganesha, says, "There are seven students enrolled in Class 1 in this school. The same students are enrolled in the Odia-medium school as well."

Phattuseneri is one of 21 villages in Kotia gram panchayat that lie at the centre of a long-standing border conflict between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.

On August 31, the Supreme Court advised both the state governments to resolve the border dispute after Odisha filed a case of contempt in the apex court



At Phattuseneri, there are schemes announced by both the Odisha and Andhra governments. *Aishwarya Mohanty*

over Andhra's decision to conduct rural elections in six villages in the region. The bench of Justices AM

Khanwilkar and Sanjiv Khanna granted both states six weeks to hold political discussions to re-

solve the dispute.

But on the ground, little has changed, with the states only intensifying their interventions through social schemes. Two weeks ago, a team from Andhra Pradesh arrived here and conducted *bhumi puja* for an *anganwadi* centre, an *arogya* centre, a farmers' hall and a panchayat office, besides carrying out a plantation drive. That prompted a team from Odisha to rush to the spot a day later.

It's this tug of war that has dominated the lives of people and officials in these parts.

In Phattuseneri, while electricity is provided by the Andhra Pradesh, both the governments provide drinking water and **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

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5 UTTAR PRADESH

Man held for trying to ‘illegally convert neighbour’

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 12

A 40-YEAR-OLD man in Mahoba district has been arrested under the state's anti-conversion law for allegedly attempting to convert his neighbour to Christianity by promising him monetary help, the police said on Sunday. Investigators said Ashish John, who is from Ballia district, was arrested on Saturday based on a complaint from his neighbour Sachin Dwivedi. John had been living in Simaria village with his wife and children for the last nine years, and used to run a coaching institute. The accused was produced before a court that sent him to judicial custody on Saturday, said Additional SP RK Gautam.

Dwivedi alleged that around a month ago, John gave him a drink after he told him about his persistent headache. Recently, the accused reportedly asked the complainant again about his headache. When Dwivedi said the drink did not help, John allegedly told him to adopt Christianity to make the problem go away. The accused also allegedly told his neighbour that he would receive Rs 12,000 for starting a business, and gave him some books, said the police.

A few days later, John allegedly asked Dwivedi to accompany him to a church. The police acted after Dwivedi filed a complaint, and several Hindu outfits held a demonstration outside Panwadi police station.

John was booked under the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Law, 2020, said the police.

Security beefed up in Barsana for Radha Ashtami

Mathura: Security has been beefed up in Barsana town where maximum influx of pilgrims is expected on the occasion of Radha Ashtami, slated for September 14 officials said.

"The entire area in Barsana has been divided into three zones and seven sectors with senior gazetted officers as in-charge of each zone and sector," SP Chief Gaurav Grover said.

District Magistrate Navneet Singh Chahal has instructed officers to ensure fool-proof arrangements, he said. A comprehensive traffic plan would come into force from Monday morning, officials said. **PTI**

52-year-old teacher held in Rampur for ‘molesting’ girl

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 12

A 52-YEAR-OLD teacher was arrested by Rampur police for allegedly molesting a minor girl during a function at a coaching centre last week.

Police said the accused forcibly caught hold of the girl and smeared her face with a cake despite her objection.

The accused, who teaches at the same school where the minor studies, runs the coaching centre. He has been suspended by the school authorities, police said.

Police said other students were also present at the coaching centre when the alleged incident

Increase cane procurement prices, double PM-KISAN funds: Varun to CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

A WEEK after extending support to the agitating farmers with his tweet, BJP MP Varun Gandhi has written to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath seeking various relief measures for farmers in the state and sought substantial increase in sugarcane prices, bonus on wheat and paddy, doubling the amount of PM-KISAN scheme and subsidy on diesel.

In his letter, which he posted on his Twitter handle, Gandhi

suggested that the sugarcane selling price should be increased to Rs 400 per quintal, from the current Rs 315 per quintal in Uttar Pradesh.

Farmers, who have been in distress, should be given an additional bonus of Rs 200 per quintal above the minimum support price (MSP) of wheat and paddy, Gandhi said.

Sugarcane is mainly grown in western Uttar Pradesh, which is the epicentre of the farmers' protest in the state against the Centre's farm laws.

In the two-page letter to Adityanath, the Pilibhit MP listed



The BJP MP had asked govt to talk with farmers

out the problems and demands of the farmers and also suggested the solutions. Tagging the letter, the three-term MP tweeted: "I hope issues of the sons of the soil will be heard."

While the BJP government in the state has claimed that it has cleared more than 80 per cent of dues to about 4.5 million sugar

cane farmers, Gandhi pointed out that some dues were still unpaid. The state government has claimed that Rs 1,42,650 crore has been given to the farmers in the past four years.

On the day of the farmers' protest rally last week, Gandhi had tweeted: "Lakhs of farmers have gathered in protest today, in Muzaffarnagar. They are our own flesh and blood. We need to start re-engaging with them in a respectful manner: understand their pain, their point of view and work with them in reaching common ground."

The BJP MP also sought dou-

bling of the PM-KISAN scheme to Rs 12,000 per annum for farmers, with the state government contributing Rs 6,000 from its own funds. The scheme is an initiative of the Centre through which all farmers get up to Rs 6,000 per year as minimum income support.

In his letter, Gandhi shared the concerns of the farmers over the high charges of electricity and diesel price.

He urged the Chief Minister to provide a subsidy of Rs 20 per litre on diesel to farmers and reduce the power prices with immediate effect.



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra meets victims of the wall collapse accident at Toderpur village in Amethi on Sunday. PTI

Priyanka visits Amethi to meet victims of wall collapse accident

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAE BAREILY, LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 12

CONGRESS GENERAL secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday began a tour of her mother Sonia Gandhi's Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha constituency to energise party workers ahead of the Assembly elections in the state.

Priyanka, during her meeting with party workers, said that the Congress this time, plans to declare candidates well in time for the Assembly elections, a party leader said.

Beginning the two-day tour of her mother's parliamentary constituency, Priyanka Gandhi made the first pit stop at a Hanuman temple in Churua on the Lucknow-Rae Bareilly border, and offered prayers.

Elaborating on Priyanka Gandhi's meeting with party workers, Vinay Dwivedi, the spokesperson of the District

Congress Committee of Rae Bareilly, said, "The party's office bearers of the district unit and city unit of the party met Priyanka ji. Members of various frontal organisations, party candidates and zila panchayat members of the Congress also met her."

"She also went to Tiloi in the neighbouring district of Amethi, after some party workers from Amethi informed her about an accident. She will tour the rural area of Rae Bareilly before leaving for Lucknow," he said.

Later in the evening, Priyanka Gandhi visited Toderpur village in Amethi's Tiloi area where three children died in a wall collapse on September 6.

The Congress general secretary reached Toderpur village at around 8 pm and met family members of the deceased. Priyanka Gandhi consoled them and assured of all possible help. She also inquired about the well-being of two other children who were injured in the accident.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at an event in Sant Kabir Nagar district on Sunday. CMO

Govt: Rs 1,800 cr properties of criminals seized or razed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 12

THE BJP government in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday claimed that properties worth over Rs 1,800 crore belonging to criminals and gangsters have been seized or razed since 2017.

According to the data provided by the UP Police, more than 150 criminals were killed, and over 2,800 were injured in encounters since 2017.

In addition, more than 3,700 people have been arrested under the Gangster Act in the state and more than 550 have been prosecuted under the stringent National Security Act (NSA).

The manner in which the state government and the police department have curbed crime and mafia raj in the state remains an exemplary example for the others. Strict actions have been taken against notorious crimi-

nals, their associates, and the mafia on the orders of the state government. It is to be mentioned that the Yogi Adityanath government has not only fulfilled the promise to eliminate 'gundaraj' from the state but has also put all the mafias and criminals like Mukhtar Ansari and Atiq Ahmad behind the bars," read the statement.

Additional Director General (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar told *The Indian Express* that in the last four and half years, the UP Police has seized or razed properties worth over Rs 1800 crore belonging to criminals and gangsters.

The government also said that in order to strengthen the law and order situation in the state, "over 1.38 lakh policemen have been appointed with complete transparency", and women helpdesks and 213 new police stations have been set up in all the 1,535 police stations across the state.

"With an intention to ensure the safety, security, and dignity of the women, Mission Shakti campaign of the state government has made a record by taking immediate action on crimes related to women," the government said.

Meanwhile, speaking at an event in Sant Kabir Nagar district, Chief Minister Adityanath said: "We have converted state jails into reform homes where criminals are being given an opportunity to reform. The UP jails are no more places of fun for criminals... There was a time when power used to be a slave of mafias. Today, the government bulldozers run on their houses," Adityanath said.

The chief minister warned that his government will not let mafias have their say. "Our message to mafias is very clear. If mafias want to make the lives of the poor, farmers and traders hell, our government will not let this happen," he said.

BJP might misuse its power to fulfil its political agenda: Akhilesh Yadav

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday alleged that the BJP might misuse its power to fulfil its political agenda and that the party is keeping an eye over polling booths.

In a statement issued here, Yadav said SP workers must get down to work without wasting any time. "There should be no laxity on any booth, and party workers should not forget that they will not get a second chance. To



SP chief Akhilesh Yadav

save the piousness of festival of democracy, SP workers have to remain alert and make a concrete strategy, so that the BJP does not cheat the public," he said. **PTI**

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EXPRESS NETWORK

Mumbai civic body says 16 oxygen plants at 9 hospitals ready

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 12

THE BRIHANMUMBAI Municipal Corporation (BMC), which is trying to become self-sufficient in providing medical oxygen to patients, has said that the 16 oxygen generation plants at nine hospitals that will generate 41-42 metric tonnes of oxygen are ready and can be commissioned if the need arises.

As the construction of plants was mired in controversy over the delay, BMC said that the contractor will be penalised.

"There were some delays in the construction of these plants. But now, all 16 plants are ready. As per our plans to become self-sufficient, more oxygen generation plants are in the pipeline," said P Velarasu, additional commissioner of BMC who is in charge of the project department.

In addition to the 16 plants, BMC through Corporate Social Responsibility funding has built seven PSA (Pressure Swing Adsorption) plants at civic-run Kasturba, Bhabha, Cooper and Nehru Centre in Worli, that together generate 6.93 metric tonnes of oxygen.

To be better prepared for a possible third wave of Covid-19, BMC had planned to increase its oxygen production capacity, which was 3.3 metric tonnes a day. The city had just two plants—HBT Trauma Hospital at Jogeshwari (2.26 MT) and Kasturba Hospital (1.04 MT).

Goa orders 5-day quarantine for students coming from Kerala

Panaji: Goa government Sunday ordered mandatory institutional quarantine of five days for students and employees of firms in Goa arriving from Kerala. The orders issued by the district administration of both North and South Goa stated that an RTPCR negative report will have to be produced by those arriving from Kerala.

In the orders extending the Covid-19 restrictions in the state till September 20, the Collectors of both districts said that arrangements for the institutional quarantine of students will have to be made by educational institutions and that for employees will have to be made by their respective offices.

At the end of the five-day quarantine, these persons will have to take another RTPCR test, the orders state.

Arrivals of those other than students or employees from Kerala, the orders said, will be allowed with negative RTPCR test reports and they will have to remain in home quarantine for five days. **ENS**

KERALA BISHOP ALLEGATIONS OF NARCOTICS JIHAD

BJP urges Centre to bring law to deal with 'love jihad', 'narco-terrorism'

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

WITH A Kerala Catholic bishop's claim of "narcotics jihad" becoming a political flashpoint, the BJP on Sunday said the allegation echoed the voice of the Christian community in the state and sought the intervention of the Centre to bring in a law to deal with "narco-terrorism and love jihad".

Meanwhile, the Kerala unit of the BJP has written to Home Minister Amit Shah, seeking Central intervention "to prevent jihadi activities and protection to Palai bishop Joseph Kallarangatt and Christian community".

In a statement, BJP spokesperson Tom Vadakkan said, "The intervention by Bishop, His excellency Joseph Kallarangatt of Pala, Kerala during sacred worship is not just a wakeup call for his dioceses, it is the voice of the community who are victims of love jihad and the fallout of narco-terrorism. The cases of love jihad and drug abuse victims are ramping up."

Vadakkan alleged that the Kerala government has not taken cognizance of narco-terrorism and love jihad despite inputs from investigative agencies. He claimed that the bishop council has raised the issue following inputs from



Tom Vadakkan

devotees of different churches, alleging that young girls are being lured and fall prey to "love jihad" and "later end up in foreign jails". He said: "This has to be accounted as human trafficking."

"The rising drug abuse in different communities has affected peace within families and has created socio-economic disorder of disastrous levels," Vadakkan claimed. "My appeal to the Central government is to bring central legislation to book such elements, and bring in fast track courts to deal with narco-terrorism and love jihad."

Kerala BJP general secretary George Kurian, who is a former vice-chairman for the national commission for minorities, wrote to Shah Sunday, claiming that "jihadi elements" in Kerala get whole-hearted support from the CPI(M) and Congress. "Many of the jihadi elements are active

workers of CPI(M) and Congress. This has rendered the situation volatile. I request you to intervene in the issue and take steps to protect the bishop and the Christian community in Kerala," his letter said.

Kurian also claimed the reaction to the bishop's statement is a reflection of the "insecurity" among Christians and Hindus.

Bishop Kallarangatt had on Thursday triggered a controversy, saying Christian girls were largely falling prey to "love and narcotic jihad" in Kerala, and wherever arms cannot be used, extremists were using such methods to destroy the youth belonging to other religions.

The statement triggered a controversy in the state, with public demonstrations from both the Christian and Muslim communities. The ruling CPI(M) and the main opposition Congress have expressed their displeasure over the remark — Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan maintained that there was no need to give a religious colour to narcotics, while Leader of the Opposition V D Satheesan criticised the Sangh Parivar, accusing it of trying to spark communal tension over the bishop's comments.

Extending support to the bishop, Minister of State for External Affairs and senior BJP

leader V Muraleedharan had earlier said that he had raised the concerns of the community in Kerala and he cannot be silenced by attacking him.

In a statement, the Kerala Catholic Bishops Council (KCBC) has said that Kallarangatt's words were not aimed at any community and he was sharing the community's concerns. It should not be made controversial and should instead be debated with seriousness, the statement said.

The BJP has been trying to woo the Christian community in Kerala — which constitutes around 19 per cent of the state's population — in order to expand its electoral base in the southern state. Ahead of the Assembly polls in Kerala, the BJP had taken up the issue of alleged "love-jihad" in Christian-dominated areas after some church leaders had expressed their concern over it.

Addressing BJP general secretaries in June, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to sources, had advised party leaders to shed "rigidity" in forming alliances, and had advised that the BJP should try and win over the Christian community in Kerala. The Prime Minister also had meetings with Church leaders from the state earlier this year.

— WITH INPUTS FROM ENS, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

CPM ally Kerala Cong (M) extends support to bishop

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPTEMBER 12

DAYS AFTER the CPI(M) denounced a Catholic bishop's claim of "narcotics jihad", its LDF ally Kerala Congress (M) on Sunday extended support to the bishop, saying that he was exhorting people to be vigilant against social evils.

Palai bishop Joseph Kallarangatt's remark has polarised Kerala, with the CPI(M), Congress and various Muslim outfits protesting the statement.

However, in an embarrassment for the CPI(M), Kerala Congress (M) chairman Jose K Mani said, "There is some specific agenda behind making the statement a controversy. The bishop was telling the people that narcotics are a social evil. Don't distort his statement," Mani said.

Incidentally, Palai is the hometown of the Kerala Congress as well as Mani.

Cong 'group of 23' should be a closed chapter now: Moily

MANOJ CGG
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

IN A setback for the G23 grouping in the Congress, former law minister M Veerappa Moily, who was a signatory to the letter the leaders had written to party chief Sonia Gandhi last year, on Sunday said he "hates" the word G23 now and argued that some of the leaders are "misusing" the G23 by "keeping it alive" through meetings and remarks in the media.

Moily also favoured the induction of poll strategist Prashant Kishor into the Congress and said his entry is part of the reform measures that Gandhi is slowly unveiling.

Moily said the 23 senior leaders, including him, had written to Gandhi to reform the party and not to weaken the party. He said the exercise has fructified as Gandhi has begun initiating reforms in the party and the G23 should now be a "closed chapter" and not "institutionalised".

The Indian Express contacted many leaders of the G23 grouping but they refused to react. One leader said: "There has never been any institutional arrangement. G23 was a name given by the media... because there were 23 signatories.... You can only dissolve and dismantle some-



M Veerappa Moily

thing which existed."

Moily said there is no such institution like G23.

"That time it [the letter] was [written] to initiate certain reform measures by Sonia Gandhi... and she is now taking that step. She has also held discussions with Prashant Kishor. She has reorganised the party in many places. She has taken decisions. So she is marching forward. What do you want? It [the letter] was not intended to change the leadership at the centre. No. She is a dynamic leader and led the party for 18-19 years. She is well experienced and now the interest she is taking will definitely lead to reforms which we desire."

"Then why should we again and again pitch that idea. Let us stop it and allow her to take major decisions. Even for reforming the party, consulting Prashant Kishor..." he said.

In Punjab, Class 5 question paper tests students about welfare schemes

DIVYA GOYAL GOPAL
LUDHIANA, SEPTEMBER 12

THE PUNJAB government has started publicising its welfare schemes — in the question papers of school children.

Government primary school teachers have been sent question papers for Class 5 students, which carry a huge state government advertisement on hiking social security pension, below which are questions related to the advertisement.

A practice Punjabi question paper, which teachers have been directed to distribute to students to prepare them for the National Achievement Survey (NAS), was sent to them on WhatsApp groups of the education department Sunday.

In the paper, question no. 2 has an advertisement as a reference picture which says that the Punjab

government has doubled the social security pension for old age, widows and destitute women, orphan children and disabled.

This is followed by a multiple choice questions: "The above advertisement is regarding what?" and "When was the hiked social security pension distribution started?"

Teachers said they have been directed to take printouts of this question paper to give to students on Monday, when Classes 3 to 5 will sit for their September mid-term exams. "To prepare children for National Achievement Survey which is in November, these NAS practice papers of 40 marks each will be distributed for mid-terms," said a teacher.

Manmeet Grewal, assistant project coordinator, Padho Punjab, Ludhiana district, said NAS practice papers have been received from the state head office in Mohali.

NCW, NCSC visit Mumbai rape victim kin

Mumbai: Two separate delegations from the National Commission for Women (NCW) and National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) on Sunday visited the family of the 32-year-old woman who died after being assaulted and raped in the city.

The victim's two daughters will get around Rs 18.5 lakh as compensation, and recommendations have been made by the NCW for their relocation to a completely different environment and for their rehabilitation, which includes sponsoring their education. The NCSC, meanwhile, has asked the Maharashtra government to give them accommodation and a government job to the family.

NCW member Chandramukhi Devi and Ananya Singh, legal counsel, met the victim's mother and daughter. They also visited the crime spot. **ENS**



TEST TIME

Candidates for the NEET exit an examination centre in Chandigarh on Sunday. Officials said over 95 per cent registered candidates appeared for the medical entrance exam at over 3,800 centres across the country. *Kamleshwar Singh*

Vivekananda advocated secularism, religion for common good, says CJI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA advocated secularism, "analysed the dangers posed by meaningless and sectarian conflicts" and "believed that the true essence of religion was the common good", Chief Justice of India N V Ramana said Sunday.

Addressing an event to mark the 22nd Foundation Day Celebration of Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence, Hyderabad, the CJI said Swami Vivekananda's teachings have great relevance for all times to come. "Swami Vivekananda, in his address (to the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago, in 1893), propagated the idea of tolerance and universal acceptance. He analysed the dangers posed by the meaningless and sectar-



CJI N V Ramana

ian conflicts in society to the nations and civilisations," the CJI said.

Pointing out that "there is greater need today, in contemporary India, to pay heed to the words spoken by Swami Vivekananda as early as in 1893", CJI Ramana said the "he was prophetic. Long before the painful churning that took place in the subcontinent during the freedom struggle, resulting in

framing of an egalitarian Constitution of India, he advocated secularism as if he foresaw the events to unfold. He firmly believed that the true essence of religion was the common good, and tolerance. Religion should be above superstitions and rigidities".

Swami Vivekananda's participation in the World Parliament of Religions "gave a respectable recognition to India which, at that time, was merely identified as one of the colonies. His address drew the world's attention to the ancient Indian philosophy of Vedanta. He popularised Practical Vedanta as it preached love, compassion, and equal respect for all", said the CJI.

Saying the ideals of Vivekananda should be instilled in today's youth, the CJI said, "Young minds are usually the most reflective. Young hearts,

the most reactive. These emotions can be often moulded to achieve greatness, but the greater challenge in this path is the ability to differentiate between right and wrong choices."

History, he said, is witness to the power wielded by the youth. Recalling the role of youth leaders such as Birsu Munda, the trio of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru and Alluri Sitarama Raju in the freedom struggle, the CJI said that "the democratic rights that we take today for granted are a result of the struggles of thousands of young people who took to the streets fighting authoritarian figures either during the freedom struggle or the dark days of Emergency. Many lost their lives, sacrificed lucrative careers, all for the greater good of the nation and society. Trust the youth to check the deviations in a society's journey towards peace and progress".

Thane man held for 'raping' minor

Mumbai: A 30-year-old man was arrested on Saturday for allegedly attacking a 15-year-old girl with a hammer and then raping her on railway premises in Thane's Ulhasnagar (east).

The accused allegedly kidnapped her from the skywalk next to Ulhasnagar railway station last Friday, threatened her with a hammer and took her inside a room, where she was raped.

The incident took place when the girl was returning home. **ENS**



PERSONAL

I, Girish Chandra R/o Flat No. 1001, L Block Alaknanda Apartment Sector 4, Gomatnagar Extension have changed my minor son's name from Aradhyha Agnihotri to Ayushman Agnihotri

0040584171-1

I, Manorama Devi w/o Harigovind Singh (Ex HAV army no-13696260X), r/o vill & Post Bimoura, Sareni, Lalganj Raebareli declare that in my husband Army service record (P.P.O.) my Date of birth is 01/07/1975 wrongly mentioned whereas correct Date of Birth in Discharge book 29/06/1975 with affidavit dated- 06.09.2021 060083895-1

SALUTE THE SOLDIER



MARTYRDOM On 13th SEPTEMBER
SEPOY GOKAL SINGH, Vrc
(Hero of Nathula Operations - 1967)

We salute and pay homage to our beloved and gallant soldier Sepoy Gokal Singh, Vrc, who displayed exemplary valour and courage while defending the nation against Chinese aggression during the Nathula operations on 13 Sep 1967. We, the Akhaura Tigers are proud of his bravery and his act of heroism will always inspire the paltan to emulate the example set by him. May the soul of this brave martyr rest in peace.

Commanding Officer & All Ranks,
13 MECH INF (18 RAJPUT) AKHAURA TIGERS

SUGARFED PUNJAB

The Punjab State Federation of Cooperative Sugar Mills Ltd., Plot No. 53, Sector 54, Phase-2 (Opposite Bassi Cinema) SAS Nagar (Mohali), Ph.: 0172-2265653 email: sugarfedpunjab@gmail.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

Online e-tenders are invited from prospective bidders for Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) basis for Supply, Erection and Commissioning of following project:-

(1) New Ethanol Distillery Plant of 120 KLPD (alongwith slope fired cogeneration plant of 5.65 MW Power in existing campus, construction of foundations, factory building (complete civil work etc.) and operation & maintenance for two years on turn-key basis at Gurdaspur Cooperative Sugar Mill.

Terms and Conditions:

The proposed bidding schedule along with detailed terms & conditions including the complete bid document are available on e-tender portal <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in/nicgepiapp>. For participation in the above e-bidding process the bidders shall have to get themselves registered with website <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in/nicgepiapp> and get user ID, Password, Class-2 & Class-3 Digital Signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering process. For any clarification/difficulty regarding e-tendering process flow, enrollment please contact helpdesk at NIC on 0172-2970283, 0172-2970284, 89010-10014, 98888-80311, 62808-59484 (Gurdaspur CSM). The undersigned reserve all rights of rejections/ postponement of the tender without assigning any reason.

Sd/- Managing Director



RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav with LJP MP Chirag Paswan and his family during the event to mark the death anniversary of Ram Vilas Paswan, in Patna on Sunday

says: "The political history of in-

dependent India will always have a place for (Ram Vilas) Paswan ji. He rose from a very humble background and reached the top. But he always stayed rooted to the ground. Whenever I met him, he would share his experiences and express concern for the poor and the deprived."

The PM praised Paswan's contribution towards improving railway infrastructure and telephone connectivity and in giving momentum to reforms in mining and fertiliser sectors. "Paswan ji's life can teach many a lesson to youth and those who want to understand politics and serve the coun-

try by taking to politics," said the PM, recalling how Paswan was always accessible to party workers.

An overwhelmed Chirag Paswan said: "PM has put the gist of my father's life in his words and has shown great respect for him. The PM's letter has given us a lot of strength in this hour of sorrow."

Meanwhile, sources said Union minister Paras may also organise a separate function to commemorate the senior Paswan. Among those who attended Sunday's event were Bihar Governor Phagu Chouhan, Bihar Deputy CM Renu Devi, Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha.

TERROR'S NEW AGE

The threat that persists

EXPERT EXPLAINS

M K NARAYANAN

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight

HISTORY IS relevant and most important when it comes to ensuring a proper understanding of threats such as terrorism, which have a long-term impact. Hence, even though by September 2001 India had already been a victim of cross-border terrorism for years, 9/11 did denote a paradigmatic change in the practice of violence. More to the point, India's security establishment recognised early on that the attack had profound strategic implications.

Attacks on US, Mumbai

Already by the late 1980s, the broad sweep acquired by radical Islam had begun to be felt across the globe. The war against the Soviets in Afghanistan during this period gave it a new impetus, apart from producing new patterns of terrorism derived from a mixture of religious fervour and fundamentalist aims. The Afghan Jihad of the '80s attracted volunteers from across the Islamic world, and among the volunteers was Osama bin Laden, for whom Afghanistan was a formative experience. It brought him into contact with Islamists from Egypt and Syria, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. The thought process of the new breed of terrorists was influenced by the teachings of the Egyptian Syed Qutub and the Palestinian Abdullah Azzam, together with the practical theology of Jalaluddin Haqqani. Two decades on, the broad shape of Islamist terrorism remains much the same, though there are many more variants today in existence.

September 11, 2001 alerted security experts and agencies to 'new-age terrorism'. Though it took many more years for them to understand that these terrorists belong to an altogether different genre of terrorism, differing both in structure and morphology from those of the past, the lessons had hit home. 'New-age terrorists' had, for instance, far greater transnational reach. The attack that took place in the United States had its ultimate command and control in Afghanistan, while the attackers came from several Arab states.

In the case of the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai, the ultimate command and control was in Pakistan; the controllers relied heavily on technology to manage every phase of the operation; the terrorists were trained by official agencies in Pakistan; and an American national was used to carry out reconnaissance of targets to be attacked. From India's viewpoint, employing violence indiscriminately as well as the concept of external sponsorship and support to non-



The beginning and the end of the war. The ticker under ABC studios on Times Square (left) broadcasts news about the US attack on Afghanistan in 2001; a Taliban checkpoint (right) in front of what used to be the US Embassy in Kabul on September 4, 2021. *The New York Times*



state actors, revealed a new cognitive map of terrorism.

While September 11, 2001 helped to focus global attention on the reach and expanse of global jihad, November 26, 2008 was a direct wake-up call for India's security agencies. Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden emerged as the symbols of the new genus of terrorism following September 11, 2001, but what India realised with November 26, 2008, was that Pakistan had thrown down the gauntlet and would stop to nothing to achieve its ends. It had to, hence, gear up its efforts further to protect the Indian mainland.

Meanwhile, al-Qaeda continued to wax and wane, but of special interest to the Indian security establishment was al-Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent (AQIS). Of even greater interest to India's security planners was the impetus all this gave to al-Qaeda acolytes such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad, both of which operated from Pakistan and had been responsible for several large-scale terror attacks in India.

Continuing ISIS threat

Following the elimination of Osama bin Laden in 2011, and as the al-Qaeda core weakened, the world and India confronted a new threat, ISIS. The theology of the new organisation was not very different from that of al-Qaeda, but it leaned more towards the nihilism of Syed Qutub. It also offered a vision of a new and exclusive brand of puritanical Islam. The ISIS idea of a new Caliphate also ignited the imagination of Muslim youth across the globe, and it proved to be a powerful magnet to attract volunteers to the cause.

The ability to proselytise over the Internet became a key propaganda weapon in the armoury of the ISIS, with several thousands be-



PART 2

NEXT:
9/11 and Indian politics

THE EXPERT

M K NARAYANAN was India's National Security Advisor from 2005 to 2010, a period during which India saw the July 11, 2006 and November 26, 2008 terrorist attacks on Mumbai, as well as the spate of jihadist bombings in towns and cities across India from 2006-10. Earlier in his career, Narayanan served as Director, Intelligence Bureau, and Special Advisor on Internal Security to the Prime Minister. Few others have seen the evolution of the security threat to India and the country's national response to it as closely as Narayanan. He also served as Governor of West Bengal from 2010-14.

ing recruited in this manner. Although India remained in the crosshairs of ISIS, and at various times ISIS claimed that parts of India were incorporated within the Islamic State of Khorasan, the activities of ISIS in India remained rather limited. It would not, however, be wise to underestimate the influence of the Islamic State in the region as a whole. Clear evidence of this was seen in the Easter Sunday bombings in Sri Lanka in 2015, for which the Islamic State has claimed responsibility, even as it was facing setbacks in Syria and Iraq.

Notwithstanding the above, both the al-Qaeda and Islamic State, as well as terror outfits such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, continue to be active even though the numbers of violent incidents have come down as compared to the past. Afghanistan has been the main area of operation for the Islamic State following the setbacks in Syria and Iraq. The emergence of the Taliban as the *de facto* rulers of Afghanistan may see attempts on their part to check the activities of the ISIS, but to what extent is too early to surmise.

26/11: one of a kind

The 26/11 attack was one of a kind, and while prior to this Pakistan had been carrying out a series of terror strikes, some by the Lashkar, some by Jaish, and some by other terror groups almost all of which were sponsored by Pakistan, the magnitude of the Mumbai terror attack shook the security establishment.

26/11 provided direct evidence of the involvement of the Pakistani state in terror activities. The choice of targets in Mumbai had been made after careful reconnaissance carried out under the aegis of the ISI, and implemented by a group of 10 handpicked LeT terrorists who had been trained for several

weeks in Lahore and Karachi. The entire operation was masterminded by the ISI and the Pakistani establishment, with even telecommunications being controlled by an official of the establishment. Details of the plan formulated by the Pakistani deep state, which emerged from the computer of Zafar Shah, indicated that the LeT terrorists were to proceed by a mother ship from Karachi on the high seas, shift to a smaller sailing ship, and onto dinghies closer to land. After landing, the 10 terrorists were to split and proceed to their predetermined and previously reconnoitred targets. Seldom, if ever, in the annals of terrorism have there been instances of a government sponsoring an attack of this kind.

Lessons India learnt

The intelligence available was undoubtedly sketchy, and proper anticipation too, was missing. Both have since been addressed to a large extent.

The first responders reacted gallantly. Arrival of the elite National Security Guard (NSG) was, however, delayed due to lack of transport and other administrative pitfalls. Several steps have since been taken to overcome these lacunae. The Coast Guard mechanism to police India's long coastline has been strengthened and energised. Additions have been made to the number of NSG hubs. Better transport facilities for the NSG have been introduced. Intelligence coordination between the states and the central agencies has been strengthened.

While the good news is there has not been an attack anywhere on the scale of 9/11 in the US or 26/11 in India, the grim reality is that the ideology and the concept of nihilistic violence has not been eradicated. Confirmed figures about the number of Salafi jihadist fighters, worldwide and in our re-

gion, are not available but they run into several thousands including in our immediate neighbourhood. The Islamic State remains a potential threat. All this indicates that even though the terrorist threat may ebb and flow at times, terrorism remains an ever-present reality.

An uncertain coalition

However tempting it might be to think that the Global "War on Terror" and the international response to Islamist terrorism greatly helped shape India's strategic relationships around the world, this is hardly the case. India often plays a lone hand in making the world understand the seriousness of the terrorist threat, and has had even less success in having individual terrorists like Hafiz Saeed designated as terrorists of international concern.

While many of the current Taliban leaders, including the acting prime minister, Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, and some ministers like Sirajuddin Haqqani, have been included in the United Nations Security Council Terrorism List, India has had to wage a lone and uphill battle to include other names on the same terror list, despite providing enough evidence of their perfidy and terror links. The India-US nuclear deal of 2008 in fact, did far more to shape and strengthen India's new strategic relationship with the US. The deteriorating relations between the US and China, and India and China, have further contributed to the strengthening of India-US strategic relations.

What lies ahead

The return of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the generally unsettled conditions in that country, are matters of deep concern to India for a variety of reasons. Important among them is that the current Taliban interim government includes quite a few internationally listed terrorists. This could possibly make it easier for forces inimical to India, such as Pakistan, to use Afghanistan as a base to wage major terrorist operations directed at key targets in India. One obvious target is Kashmir, which has been in the crosshairs of Pakistani terror groups for over three decades. It is now possible to envisage Pakistan as exploiting the opportunity to enlarge its areas of operation and the ambit of its targets well beyond Kashmir, given its relationship with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. India's 'terror watch' will as a result, need to be greatly enhanced.

The prognosis about a reduction in terrorism in the near future is distinctly unfavourable. The United Nations has a poor record in dealing with terrorism in any form, and does not give high priority to this subject. Any number of sponsored resolutions are likely to make little difference, and despite the Prime Minister seeking a universal definition of terrorism, it would appear that the fight against terrorism will largely continue to be fought by individual countries who are victims of such attacks. India must not lower its guard under any circumstances.

Why Battle of Saragarhi continues to inspire India & world, 124 yrs on

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 12

SEPTEMBER 12 marks the 124th anniversary of the Battle of Saragarhi, which has inspired a armies, books and films both at home and abroad. A look at how it unfolded, and why it is considered one of the finest last stands in the military history of the world:

The battle

Saragarhi was the communication tower between Fort Lockhart and Fort Gulistan in North West Frontier Province, now in Pakistan. The forts were built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh but renamed by the British.

Although Saragarhi was usually manned by a platoon of 40 soldiers, on September 12, 1897 it was being held by only 21 soldiers from 36th Sikh (now 4 Sikh) and a non-combatant called Daad, a Pashtun who did odd jobs for the troops. They were pitted against over 8,000 Afridi and Orakzai tribals, but managed to hold the fort for seven hours. They fought till their last breath, killing 200 tribals and injuring 600.

In his book *The 36th Sikhs in the Tirah Campaign 1897-98 — Saragarhi and the Defence of the Samana Forts*, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh writes that these soldiers knew they were looking at certain death. "They could have surrendered, yet they didn't and displayed unparalleled bravery."

The attack & the isolation

Around 9 am that day, the sentry saw a large army of tribals marching towards the fort. He estimated their number between 8,000 and 15,000. The tribals wanted to isolate the two forts by cutting off the lines of communication between them.

Sepoy Gurmukh Singh, 23, sent a message to commanding officer Lt Col John Haughton: "Enemy approaching the main



Actor Randeep Hooda dressed as Hav. Ishar Singh poses with Singh's picture on the cover of Punjab CM Amarinder Singh's book in 2017. *Express Archive*

gate... need reinforcement." But the Pathans had cut off the supply route between Fort Lockhart and Saragarhi. Haughton radioed back, "Unable to break through, hold position". Sepoy Gurmukh Singh conveyed this message to platoon commander Havildar Ishar Singh. Fully aware of the consequences, he responded: "Understood."

Capt Jay Singh-Sohal, a British officer who made the film *Saragarhi: The True Story*, says: "The soldiers were not only outnumbered, they also had limited ammunition with around 400 rounds per man, one reason why Lt Col Haughton urged them to use their firepower carefully."

The men & the resistance

Havildar Ishar Singh, who led the troops, was in his early 40s when he was given independent command of the Saragarhi post. Amarinder Singh writes about him: "While he will always be remembered for his gallant conduct at Saragarhi, within the regiment they will also rue the loss of their best illicit liquor producer, and a man who 'borrowed' meat on

hoof for his men, when short of rations, from a neighbouring unit without asking them."

Naik Gurmukh Singh, the signaller, was the youngest and Naik Lal Singh, 47, the oldest of the 22 men at Saragarhi. In his book, Amarinder Singh writes: "Naik Lal Singh, though severely injured, was lying on his bed. Although unable to move, he was conscious and able to fire his weapon, and is reported to have kept up a steady fire, killing more pathans, as did Gurmukh Singh and Sep/Swpr Daad."

Gurmukh continued to report the battle as it unfolded. And then finding the soldiers falling one by one, sent one final message: "Permission to join the battle, Sir." The response was in the affirmative.

In his book, Capt Amarinder calls Daad the 22nd soldier. He was from Nowshera, now in Pakistan. He was denied any honour although he too fought bravely, killing five men before being stabbed to death.

Remembering the fallen

In a departure from the tradition of not giving gallantry medals posthumously, Queen Victoria awarded the 21 soldiers — leaving out the non-combatant — the Indian Order of Merit (comparable with the Victoria Cross) along with two *marabas* (50 acres) and Rs 500 each.

In 2017, the Punjab government decided to observe Saragarhi Day on September 12 as a holiday.

Even today the Khyber Scouts regiment of the Pakistani army mounts a guard and salutes the Saragarhi memorial close to Fort Lockhart.

The British, who regained control of the fort after a few days, used burnt bricks of Saragarhi to build an obelisk to the martyrs. They commissioned gurdwaras at Amritsar and Ferozepur in their honour. Now, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has named a hall after Saragarhi.

Actor Akshay Kumar's film *Kesari* was based loosely on the battle.

New tech based on CRISPR to control growth of mosquitoes

LEVERAGING advancements in CRISPR-based genetic engineering, researchers have created a system that restrains populations of mosquitoes that infect millions each year with debilitating diseases. The "precision-guided sterile insect technique" (pgSIT), alters genes linked to male fertility—creating sterile offspring—and female flight in *Aedes aegypti*, the mosquito species responsible for spreading diseases including dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika, the University of California, San Diego said in a press release.

Details of the pgSIT have been described in *Nature Communications*. The pgSIT uses CRISPR to sterilise male mosquitoes and render female mosquitoes (which spread disease) flightless. The system is self-limiting and is not predicted to persist or spread in the environment, two safety features that should enable acceptance for this technology, the release said.

The scientists say pgSIT eggs can be shipped to a location threatened by mosquito-borne disease or developed at an on-site facility that could produce the eggs for nearby deployment. Once the pgSIT eggs are released in the wild, sterile pgSIT males will emerge and eventually mate with females, driving down the wild population as needed.

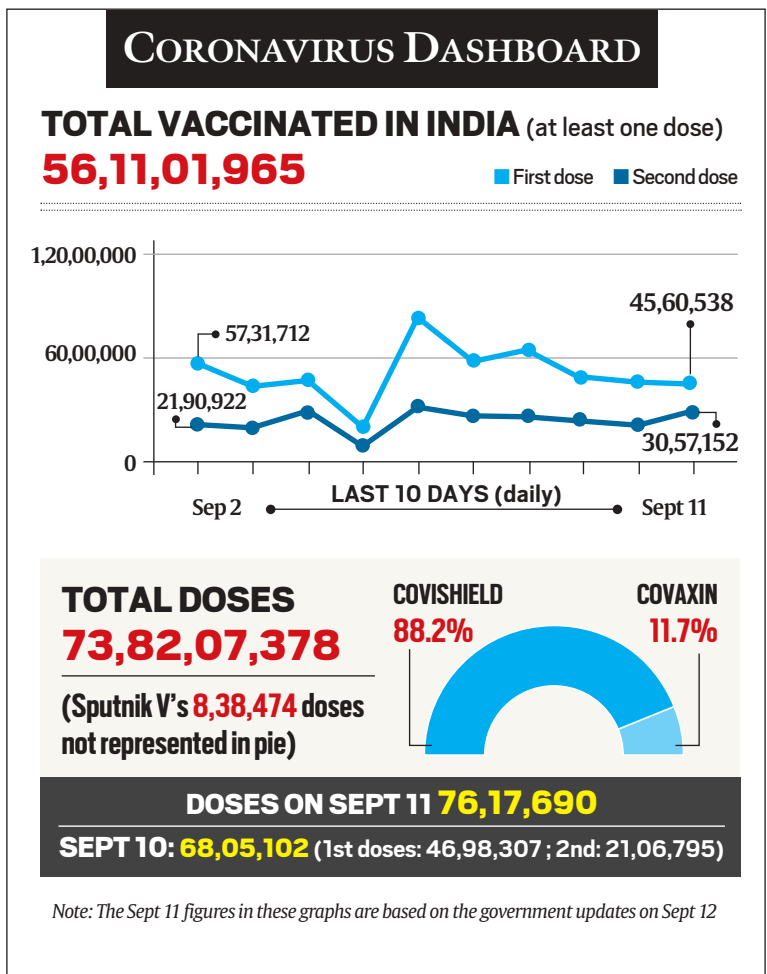
Source: UC San Diego

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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

SHRINKING THE CM

BJP central leadership replaces one more chief minister, trend of overweening high command takes hold

THE BJP HAS replaced yet another one of its chief ministers — the third in two months — before the end of his tenure, for reasons that are not officially stated but ostensibly have to do with balancing caste equations and containing anti-incumbency. The party has chosen Bhupendra Patel, a low-profile legislator with no previous experience in government, as the new Gujarat CM, seemingly in a bid to assuage the politically powerful Patel community ahead of assembly polls in 2022. Vijay Rupani’s poor record in Covid management — the Gujarat High Court had censured the government’s functioning — and his inability to win over powerful social groups, may have gone against him. But his exit, in circumstances that are strikingly similar to his elevation to chief ministerial office in 2016, speaks of a larger trend in the BJP.

Political parties are prone to replacing MLAs in elections to dent anti-incumbency, but a change at the top is usually made when there is a threat of revolt by legislators. However, the BJP has visibly downsized the office of the chief minister in states where it runs the government — even assembly elections are fought in the name of the prime minister. The presidential mode of campaign in the general election, which has coincided with the rise of Narendra Modi in national politics in 2014, has percolated down to assembly elections. Gujarat, where Modi has also been the chief minister, is the best example of this trend: Votes are sought for Modi in elections at all levels — Rupani and the new CM, Bhupendra Patel, were not prominent in state politics until their elevation to the state’s top office. After his ouster from office, Rupani compared the change of chief ministers to a relay race: “I was running. Now I will give the flag to someone else. (Now) he will run,” he said. In Uttarakhand and Karnataka, where the BJP also recently replaced CMs, it similarly preferred legislators with limited influence to party veterans: For instance, in Karnataka, it opted for Basavaraj Bommai, who had joined the BJP only in 2008. In Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, the party did not highlight any state leader during assembly elections and sought votes by projecting Modi’s leadership.

Ironically, this rise of a powerful party centre, reminiscent of the Congress high command under Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, is at variance with the federal approach the BJP had cultivated and nurtured under Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L K Advani. That had enabled the party to create a second line of leadership of charismatic politicians in the states. Many of them — Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Uma Bharti, Vasundhara Raje, Raman Singh, Yediyurappa, Kalyan Singh among others — led the party to success in their respective states, which can be said to have laid the ground for the BJP’s spectacular growth under Modi and Amit Shah. The denial of autonomy to state units and agency to state leaders, the preference for faceless runners in a relay race over influential politicians, and the dependence on the high command for electoral outreach, are significant changes in the form and character of the new BJP.

IIT-PLUS

Their success as B-schools is a sign of a more expansive education vision taking root at premier engineering institutions

SIX IITs ARE now among the top 20 management institutions in the country, some even outpacing reputed business schools such as IIM-Indore and IIM-Lucknow — proof that India’s premier engineering schools are not content to remain just that. The signs of a more expansive vision of education, that looks beyond tech to embrace the world of humanities and law, arts and architecture, have been evident at the IITs for a while now. IIT-Kharagpur, for example, opened a medical college in 2018; over a decade earlier, it had set up a school of law focussed on intellectual property. The highest ranked IIT on the National Institute Ranking Framework in the management category, IIT Delhi, started offering MBA programmes in the late 1990s. Over the years, several IITs have gone on to offer courses in humanities, social science and literature as well, arguably in response to a growing realisation that an exclusively technical education can become a stunted one. The transformation has been slow and steady, at a pace decided by the IITs and on their own terms. But it signals an important, welcome change — it is increasingly hard to conceive of education, even professional education, in silos. Indeed, the IITs have been chipping away at a working model of interdisciplinary education, much in the mould of what the National Education Policy envisages a future university ought to be.

This success offers a lesson: Given adequate financial resources and the autonomy to decide their own trajectory, higher education institutions can build on their unique strengths to live up to the ambitious blueprints of policymakers. For example, what is giving the IITs momentum in challenging the best business schools is a focus on research. Where the IITs falter is an old, deep-rooted deficiency — gender diversity. Despite the introduction of supernumerary quotas to increase the intake of women, the IITs remain a largely male preserve — here, they are losing out to the IIMs, which do much better on the count of inclusivity.

For decades now, the IITs have defined success for lakhs of students barely out of school, ready to hurl themselves into rigorous hyper-competitive training to procure a seat at the elite institutions. Some of the features of this regime have been called into question, from the social bias that makes an IIT classroom predominantly male and upper-caste to the rigid walls between science and arts education. Not all of those questions, especially on gender and caste inclusion, have found satisfactory answers. But a widening of the IIT canvas bodes well — for the larger education ecosystem.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



An aatmanirbharta challenge



ASHOK GULATI AND RITIKA JUNEJA

Move to promote oil palm is welcome, but incentive structure that favours rice, wheat must change

LAST WEEK, THE government announced the minimum support prices (MSP) of rabi crops for the marketing season 2022-23. The MSP for wheat is up by 2 per cent while that of rapeseed-mustard is up by 8.6 per cent, perhaps indicating that the government wants to focus more on edible oils/oilseeds than on wheat. This is the right approach given, on the one hand, the bulging stocks of wheat at home and the massive imports of edible oils on the other. But the profitability of MSP over the projected cost (A2+FL) is 100 per cent both in case of wheat as well as rapeseed-mustard. Given that the government has a massive procurement programme for wheat, but a very meagre one for rapeseed-mustard even when the prices rule below MSP, the relative incentive structure remains in favour of wheat. So, we doubt if farmers will switch from wheat to mustard in any meaningful manner to bridge the edible oil deficit.

In this context, it is important to note that Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently announced a Rs 11,000-crore National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm (NEOM-OP), as a part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. This is a bold step to augment domestic edible oil supplies, given that 60 per cent of the edible oil consumed in the country is imported — more than half of this is palm oil followed by soybean and sunflower. In FY 2020-21, edible oil imports touched \$ 11 billion or about Rs 80,000 crore (for 13.5 million tonnes). Despite these imports, edible oil inflation in July 2021 (on a year-on-year basis) was 32.5 per cent.

In this backdrop, the move to promote oil palm is a step in the right direction. It is the only crop that can give up to four tonnes of oil productivity per hectare under good farm practices. But it is a water-guzzling crop, loves humidity (requires 150 mm rainfall every month) and thrives best in areas with temperature between 20 and 33 degrees Celsius. The National Re-assessment Committee (2020) has identified 28 lakh hectares suitable for oil palm cultivation in the country — the actual area under oil palm cultivation, as of 2020, is only 3.5 lakh

Achieving self-sufficiency in edible oil production through the other oilseeds complex would require about adding about 45 million hectares under oilseed cultivation. This is not possible without drastically cutting down the area under cereal crops. The best alternative is, therefore, to ensure proper care of palm oil crop, provide good planting material, better irrigation management, fertilisers and other inputs to raise productivity to four tonnes of oil/hectare.

hectares. A large potential is thus waiting to be tapped. Much of this (34 per cent) is in the Northeastern states, including Assam, followed by Andhra Pradesh (19 per cent) and Telangana (16 per cent).

NEOM-OP aims to bring an additional 6.5 lakh hectares under oil palm by 2025-26, of which 3.25 lakh hectares will be in the Northeast and the remaining in other parts of the country, most prominently in the irrigated tracts of Telangana. Thus, by 2025-26, the government hopes to cover an area of a million hectares under oil palm. We feel the government could have been bolder and attempted to cover 2 million hectares by 2025-26, given the huge deficit in edible oil production in the country. Achieving self-sufficiency in edible oil production through the other oilseeds complex would require adding about 45 million hectares under oilseed cultivation. This is not possible without drastically cutting down the area under cereal crops. The best alternative is, therefore, to ensure proper care of palm oil crop, provide good planting material, better irrigation management, fertilisers and other inputs to raise productivity to four tonnes of oil/hectare.

The NEOM-OP intends to focus on productivity and area expansion by supporting the farmers in the following ways: An input assistance of Rs 20,000-29,000/ha for planting material, additional assistance of Rs 12,500/ha for four years to cover maintenance/opportunity costs of farmers, with no limits on acreage, a Rs 5-crore assistance to industries that plan to set up a five tonnes/hour processing unit, assistance of Rs 100 lakh to seed gardens in the Northeast for 15 hectares (up to Rs 80 lakh in rest of India); and support for vermiculture, irrigation and farm mechanisation. This comprehensive assistance package will, hopefully, attract farmers as well as incentivise the industry to work with agriculturists and augment edible oil production in a globally competitive manner, thereby reducing the import bill.

A critical element of the strategy is the pricing formula for fresh fruit bunches (FFB)

of oil palm. There will be no MSP, but the FFB price for farmers would be fixed at 14.3 per cent of average landed CPO price of the past five years, adjusted with the wholesale price index. This is the most critical part of the pricing policy and the formula needs to be carefully calibrated. However, the litmus test of pricing will be dovetailing it with the import tariff policy to protect the farmers in case landed prices fall below the cost of production. Recently, the effective duty on crude palm oil imports has been slashed against high global prices to 30.25 per cent (including agri-cess at 17.5 per cent and social welfare cess at 10 per cent). The effective duty on refined palm has been slashed to 41.25 per cent. Duties on other edible oils, soya and sunflower, are in the same range. However, effective duty for rapeseed and cottonseed oils ranges from 38.5 per cent for crude and 49.5 per cent for refined oils. It’s this high import duty, at a time when global edible oil prices have gone up by almost 70 per cent (y-o-y), that has caused high domestic inflation (32.5 per cent) in edible oils.

In its 2012 report, “Oil Palm: Pricing for Growth, Efficiency & Equity”, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices recommended that India should keep an import duty trigger at \$800/tonne — if the import price falls below \$800/tonne, the import tariff needs to go up in countercyclical manner. Thus, import duty needs to be in sync with rational domestic price policy. It is a necessary condition to give a fillip to aatmanirbharta in edible oils. But the sufficient condition would be revisiting the existing incentive structure that unduly favours rice, wheat and sugarcane through heavy subsidisation of power, fertilisers and open-ended procurement. The need is to devise a crop-neutral incentive structure where cropping patterns are aligned with demand patterns, and the crops are produced in a globally competitive manner.

Gulati is Infosys Chair professor and Juneja is Consultant at ICRIER



RAMU RAMANATHAN

WHEN I SPOTTED Sonal Shukla for the first time in the 1980s, I thought she was the best singer in the world. A feisty woman all pumped up and hollering at the top of her voice during a protest in Mumbai. Around her were a ragtag army of women marchers. Her finest moment was the Forum Against Rape movement — spontaneously formed by 49 women who connected over an open letter signed by Upendra Baxi and three others about the injustice in the Mathura rape case judgment by the Supreme Court.

Sonalben was our Odetta (the voice — and what a voice — of the civil rights movement in the USA). Music was in her genes. She was the daughter of Ninu Mazumdar, the musical maestro who composed hundreds of Gujarati songs and ditties. She once told me, “We have truly no roots in the family’s feudal past. No caste, no ‘native place’ to visit, no assets in Gujarat anywhere, no idols at home, no vrat and fasts, no rituals of any kind at home. Our father created musicals based on Sita, wrote stutis to Shiv and garbas of devis, but treated those sources as literature and not religion.”

Unlike her siblings, Shukla inherited very little of the musical notes from her father. But that never deterred her. Sonalben sang her protest songs. Future activists like me joined the chorus. We were shaped by her.

A committed feminist, Shukla’s focus in life — like Savitribai Phule — was “the empowerment of girls from deprived communities.” Her favourite child was Vacha. Born in 1987, Vacha is a tiny library in a municipal

THE SONGS OF SONALBEN

Through libraries and classrooms, Sonal Shukla opened new worlds for women

Her favourite child was Vacha. Born in 1987, Vacha is a tiny library in a municipal school in Santacruz which houses women’s magazines and writing by women. The Vacha idea was simple. Ordinary young girls in bastis could access words and indeed ideas — particularly work songs and work anecdotes — because they shape their lives better than high theory. Shukla and her team published books in which a girl asks: “Is Chyavanprash only for boys?” or “Why must boys not wash utensils?”

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Today, three decades later, Vacha has an outreach in more than 16 bastis in the city. Publishing books in which the *bal-kishoris* document their lives, the centres borrow heavily from Shukla’s work in her formative years. The emphasis is on basic stuff: “The right to food; right to pee; right to complain; the right to walk or cycle on the streets of Mumbai with heads held high; and, the right to laugh.”

When I had asked her what that meant, she said, “We had mothers who told us our daughters are happy at your centre, but please instruct them not to laugh so much when they step out. Some man will then stop them from going there.”

During the pandemic, her work carried on. She reported that the situation in the bastis was “frightening”, with job losses and mounting inflation. Vacha ran classes for six-year-olds in 2020 as schools shut down, and then for Class II students this year. Her forecast for this group of children was dire: “All over the country, millions of children between five and seven are likely to remain il-

literate or semi-literate.”

Besides dialectics and *daaru* with the best minds of our generation (from Angela Davis and Tariq Ali and Praful Bidwai to Flavia Agnes), Shukla’s weekly column in a Gujarati newspaper commanded respect from readers at a time when her Left politics had in some ways been eclipsed by right-wing gobbledygook. Be it her tributes to Dhiruben Patel and Ila Pathak or her analysis of women characters in Gujarati novelist Govardhanram Tripathi’s works, she sang the song of sanity. She analysed Vile Parle, the part of the city in which she stayed most of her life. In fact, she had insights on everything, from secret non-vegetarian joints to rare harmonium players. From Marx to Gandhi.

She corrected me when I mentioned her fondness for Gandhi in a public programme. “Gandhian education, though not always Gandhi, has been dear to me. Even today, I am trying to balance both in Vacha’s scheme of social education in the *bastis* of Bombay.”

By some standards, the planet has made progress when it comes to rights for women. And yet, four decades after the Mathura case, the question to ask is, if an Adivasi minor girl would be raped today, will we find the energy, force and commitment to raise our collective voices?

If only we had time for one more rousing song, Sonalben.

The writer is a playwright and editor of PrintWeek

SEPTEMBER 13, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

TAMIL NADU BANDH

THE STATE GOVERNMENT-sponsored bandh in Tamil Nadu against the atrocities on Tamils in Sri Lanka was almost total and peaceful, barring a few incidents of stone throwing and obstruction of trains in some parts of the state. Except for some central services like post offices, ports, railways and Indian Airlines flights and some essential services like hospitals, chemists, milk supply and the press, all activity was paralysed in the state. State government offices, banks, shops, hospitals were closed. The roads wore a deserted look, except for a few private cars and taxis. A skeleton suburban service was, however, maintained. Chief Minister M G Ramachandran in a statement

thanked the people and parties in the state for making the bandh a success.

ANTULAY’S SUCCESSOR

EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE by the Congress (I) high command to settle the Maharashtra issue before the Prime Minister leaves for her tour abroad. Sources close to the party say that there are no two opinions in the party that A R Antulay has to go. The delay in the final decision is only because of the selection of his successor.

JAGAT NARAIN MURDER

THE PUNJAB GOVERNMENT suspects Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to be the agent

provocateur behind the murder of Lala Jagat Narain. The chief secretary, Paramjit Singh, gave enough indication about Bhindranwale without naming him at a news conference. He, however, neither accepted nor denied direct questions about his role. He said evidence now confirmed that the murder was one of the few planned by “some elements who were planning the elimination of some persons with serious differences with the views they were expressing”.

CHINA DENIES

A CHINESE government spokesman denied all knowledge of a reported intrusion by Chinese troops into India’s remote north-western Ladakh territory.

9 THE IDEAS PAGE



CR Sasikumar

Stones of Sabarmati

Gandhi's Ashram is an abode of peace, a piece of history to be treasured. The nation must respect its heritage, allow it to speak



YOGINDER K ALAGH

STONES SPEAK TO you, unless you are the Taliban destroying the Bamiyan Buddhas with barbaric vengeance. The recent decision to build new structures in the IIM-A, because the corridors are dark and cold, took me back to the mid-Sixties when I was teaching and finishing my thesis at the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia. One day, Louis Kahn called all of us — Indian students and teachers — to the School of Architecture. In his dramatic style, he stood in front of a silk curtain behind which we could see a light. He dramatically parted the curtain and we saw the model of the IIM-A. He asked: "First impression?"

I was in the first row and he asked me: "Do you know Ahmedabad?" I said: "Yes sir". He said: "So?" I blurted out: "It is very un-Indian." He was infuriated. "What do you mean?" he asked. I knew I was in a soup. I said, "Mine is a poor country. These give a sense of power." He looked at me, stammered and said: "No. It's a monastery." I retired hurt.

In Ahmedabad, the Sabarmati was once a river. Bapu's ashram was on its banks. When I had a headache on account of all my worldly care — running institutions from a relatively young age — I would go to Hriday Kunj, sit for a few minutes, see his spectacles, writing desk and slippers, feel he was mock-

ing me for trivialising life ("Look at my problems young man," his twinkling eyes said). I went to the river bank, sat for a while, felt happy again, walked back, ate puri/shak at the cafeteria and went back.

Then there were the riots in March 2002. Chuni Kaka (the Gandhian, Chuni Vaidya) called up to say that he and Narayan Desai were going on a silent march, with a black gag on their mouth, from the Kochrab Ashram to the Sabarmati Ashram, carrying a poster, "Ahmedabad wants peace". "Would you like to join?" Of course, I will, I said. My son joined too. We were around 40 people to begin with. Ahmedabad was still burning. We didn't have police protection. But people kept on joining and half way, at the Gujarat Vidyapith set up by Bapu, there were hundreds marching. *Log saath aate gaye aur carvaan banta gaya*. At the ashram, a message of peace was read out, in spite of my protest, in my name — and not Vaidya's or Desai's. It was reported the world over.

Many years later, I was to lead the Indian delegation to the first Indo-Pak Planning Commission meeting. At Takshila, the stones speak to you, although the official guide gave it an "Islamic" twist, ignoring my diplomatic demurring, which he dismissed as anti-Islamic propaganda. Later at Nalanda, the stones whispered the same stories.

Meanwhile, Bimal Patel, whose teacher, the American planner of Spanish origin, Manuel Castells, had once invited me to a select meeting of experts to brief the first Prime Minister of Spain after the fall of the Franco regime, gave me a lowdown on his plans for redevelopment of the riverfront. I told him not to plan with a 10-year flood history, and sure enough, crores of rupees of work were

The redevelopment of Gandhiji's birthplace in Porbandar destroyed its simple elegance. A few decades back, a narrow road led to his three-storied brick-and-stone house. There was peace on each floor. You sat there, happy at the journey you had made. Now the *gali* is widened. The shops are gone. The house has been 'redeveloped'. It's sickening if you compare it with the earlier ambience.

washed away in the next monsoon flood. During this briefing, I also muttered something about my friend, the architect Charles Correa, and that he had not spoiled the Ashram while redoing it. I shudder at the redevelopment now.

At JNU, the stones speak to you in your morning walk. The Aravalli ranges there are short of water. The Rohillas ran away because of thirst. I wasn't going to run away. So, I got satellite imagery to help us to decide where to dig for water. While planning the Sardar Sarovar dam, we had to dig the foundations to withstand a thousand-year flood.

And now they want to turn the room where Nehru stood up on the midnight of August 14, 1947 and addressed the world — "When the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom" — into a museum. There are such rooms in other countries. Nations treasure their heritage. We are the descendants of Pataliputra. My ancestors include Raja Porus, Prithviraj Chauhan, the persecuted Bahadur Shah Zafar. The Dandi March is my heritage.

The redevelopment of Gandhiji's birthplace in Porbandar destroyed its simple elegance. A few decades ago, a narrow road led to his three-storied brick-and-stone house. There was peace on each floor. You sat there, happy at the journey you had made. Now the *gali* is widened. The shops are gone. The house has been "redeveloped". It's sickening if you compare it with the earlier ambience.

We must learn to treasure the stones, each one of which will remind us of their "memory".

The writer is an economist and a former Union minister

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The establishment of a Taliban government in Kabul has underscored that far from reasserting its global supremacy, the US looks more vulnerable today; and that the echoes of 9/11 are still reverberating across the region — but will not stay there." —THE GUARDIAN

It's still uphill

GDP is unlikely to reach pre-Covid level in ongoing quarter. But uptick in vaccinations could bridge the gap in second half of the year



ADITI NAYAR

THE DISTORTED BASE of last year's restrictive nationwide lockdown has expectedly obscured the challenges wrought by the second wave of Covid-19 in India in the first quarter of the current financial year. India's real GDP has expanded by a record-high 20.1 per cent (year-on-year) in the first quarter on the low base. However, a more appropriate assessment of the real recovery can be achieved by looking through a pre-Covid lens — that is, comparing the first quarter of 2021-22 with the first quarter of 2019-20.

The impact of the second wave was a considerable 9.2 per cent compression in the real GDP relative to the pre-Covid level. Incidentally, the corresponding change displayed by other large economies over the same period ranged from a moderate contraction of 3.9 per cent for Italy to a stellar growth of 11.5 per cent for China. The US reported a rise of 2 per cent, benefitting from the earlier coverage of vaccines over a larger proportion of its population.

Coming back to the drivers of aggregate demand in India, both private consumption and investment trailed their pre-Covid levels in the first quarter of the ongoing year by 12 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively. While farm demand remained resilient after a series of healthy harvests, the loss of employment and incomes in swathes of the non-farm rural and urban economy as well as higher medical and fuel expenses, contributed to the overall squeeze in private consumption. Investment plans were put on hold by the private sector amidst the second wave, even though government capital spending, especially that of the central government, put up a healthier performance even as government consumption spending exceeded the pre-Covid level by a healthy 7.4 per cent in the first quarter.

To examine this further, we analysed the performance of Centre and state finances in the first quarter, relative to that of the first quarter in 2019-20.

Let's first look at the fiscal metrics of the central government. The Centre's revenue expenditure rose by 7.8 per cent, led by non-subsidy spending. Moreover, its capital expenditure nearly doubled to Rs 1.1 trillion, from the muted Rs 0.6 trillion that had been recorded amidst the parliamentary elections and implementation of the model code of conduct.

Despite this, the Centre's fiscal deficit declined to a modest Rs 2.7 trillion from the pre-Covid level of Rs 4.3 trillion. This is due to an increase in its revenue receipts, benefitting from the upfroniting of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) surplus of

around Rs 1 trillion to the first quarter of this year, from the second quarter of 2019-20, following a realignment in its accounting year to April-March in line with that of the Government of India. But, the Centre's overall gross tax revenues have also grown, with rises seen across the board — corporation tax, personal income tax, and excise duty collections.

The considerable rise of 47 per cent in the direct tax collections is at odds with the decline in the GDP in Q1 FY2022 relative to Q1 FY2020. A likely conclusion is that the formal/tax-paying portion of the non-agri economy has gained at the cost of the rest.

For the 19 major states whose data has been published by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), we observe a substantial increase in their revenue spending — Rs 4.9 trillion in the first quarter of 2021-22, relative to the pre-Covid level of Rs 4.3 trillion. This possibly reflects higher social sector spending amid the second wave of the pandemic. These states have also seen their capital spending exceed their pre-pandemic levels.

However, in contrast to the compression observed in the Centre's finances, these 19 states have seen their fiscal deficit nearly double to Rs 1.1 trillion this year, up from Rs 0.6 trillion the year before. This is because the states' combined revenue receipts in the quarter were only marginally higher than the pre-Covid level. This can be traced to lower tax devolution from the Centre (relative to pre-Covid levels) and the subdued taxes of the states.

The decline in states' own taxes, which are predominantly indirect in nature, broadly resonates with the contraction in private consumption this year as compared to its pre-Covid level. In particular, despite attractive home loan rates and cuts in stamp duty rates by some of the states, collections this year were substantially lower than pre-Covid levels, revealing the continued impact of the pandemic on states' finances. On the other hand, the lower tax devolution in the first quarter, in our view, only represents a timing mismatch, with the budgeted target for the current fiscal modestly higher than the actual devolution in 2019-20.

Looking ahead, GDP will have to grow by 8 per cent (year-on-year) in the ongoing quarter to equalise to the pre-Covid level. Our current forecasts suggest that a continued lag in demand for contact-intensive services may narrowly prevent this from being achieved.

However, the pace of Covid-19 vaccinations has been ramped up since mid-August — this offers the best conceivable insurance to dampen the potency of another wave. If the seven-day moving average of 7.3 million doses/day as of September 5 can be sustained, 64 per cent of adults will have received their second shot before the year draws to a close. This could impart a positive momentum to the economy, pushing it above the pre-Covid level in the second half of the year.

The writer is chief economist, ICRA



SWAPNA KONA NAYUDU

IN THE AFTERMATH of the recent US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Fariba Nawa, an Afghan-American journalist, said in a tweet, "Congrats that you wrote a book and you have a few Afghan friends on the ground. And now you're a superstar because you embedded with the TB [the Taliban] or government forces. You were super brave. But you don't represent us. You don't have anything [to] lose. We do." Nawa was responding to writing on Afghanistan by non-Afghans, of scholarly or journalistic expertise from around the world. This damning indictment compels us to ask: What are the ethics of writing about Afghanistan from New Delhi? Of course, I use New Delhi as a signifier term rather than to indicate its precise location, to indicate writing sympathetic to an Indian point of view, reflective of the worlds of policymaking and the academe that often intersect, and have a shared readership.

Due to its longstanding imagery in Indian writing as a frontier state, Indian political writing on Afghanistan to a large extent has always been writing on war. This tendency was deepened by the world wars, which occasioned a closely entwined theorisation of war and empire by South Asian thinkers. The non-violent politics of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and his Khilafat Movement in the 1920s, embodied that consciousness. Afghanistan was a central concern in an exciting tradition of anti-colonial thought and anti-imperial agitation, eclipsed in public memory by populist movements led by Gandhi, but, in actuality,

enacted through writing across the British Raj. If the distance between Delhi and Kabul in the 1920s and '30s is the distance between Gandhi and Bacha Khan, then that history of the takedown of empire should be a fertile source for writing.

Where is that history now and what role does it play in interpreting a contemporary war? And how is it that so much Indian writing disjoins the current political landscape of Afghanistan from the wider context of empire, in its British, Soviet or American iterations? Projects aimed at decolonising political writing have escaped their confines in academia and have gained considerable hold in popular writing. Yet, this present moment is perplexing because it seems that new critical approaches to war are being neglected precisely when they could be tools to evaluate the failure of and sudden abdication by a great power in India's immediate neighbourhood. How is it possible that mid-20th-century subcontinental writers mounted extraordinarily unforgiving critiques of the imperial project, but despite long strides in the state of the theoretical field, Indian writers now are sliding back into ways of thinking about war that are resolutely imperialist?

There are two overlapping explanations for this reversal — first, the subcontinental anti-imperial tradition has now been lost to the trickle-down, ironically from the West, of Eurocentric ideas about war and empire. The radical vocabulary of modern Indian anti-imperialist thought is eschewed in favour of dominant western so-

cial and political thought, especially on writings concerning war. Eurocentrism is rampant, in what the critical theorist of empire, Tarak Barkawi, calls "the unreflective assumption of the centrality of Europe, and latterly the West in human affairs". This sort of Eurocentric analysis is materialised in an enchantment with the consequences of the US occupation of Afghanistan for the occupying power.

Second, foreign policy analysis has become a weak substitute for responses to the imperialist, fascist and ultimately capitalist aspects of world order. There is no critique to be made if we remain shackled to the language of strategy, which is ultimately a militaristic language. Indeed, the urge to respond pragmatically goes against the notion that India and Afghanistan share an imperial past and are impaled by it in our statehood, even if not in equal measure. Profound insights have emerged on humanitarian projects in Afghanistan, and on the moral fortitude India should have shown once the US withdrew, but we need more thinking on the relationship between what is happening in Afghanistan now and the neoliberalism India has embraced for itself.

To say that there is an intimate relation between 21st-century neoliberalism of the stripe now seen globally, but rather starkly in India, and America going to war, is possibly now blasé. When the Afghan National Army fell so quickly to the Taliban this past month, it reminded me of the words of an American soldier in Iraq, 2002: "America

is not at war; the Marine Corps is at war. America is at the mall." The frailty of Afghan institutions and their impending fate must provoke in us a deeper consideration of how a South Asian state has had a disastrous decolonisation forced upon it, with those in power now an unmitigated consequence of the very imperial project that has been displaced.

After the 1960s, Indians have written little about wars that were not India's to fight. From the 1920s to the 1960s, in a long moment of dense internationalism, writing about Asia, Africa, Latin America meant writing about wars and empire. War writing has since slid into the domain of military history, which is important in its place. But we also need to disentangle the neoliberal militarism that makes war possible but also that becomes validated through war. If we are to write about war as a field where contestation between unequal powers escapes the civility of politics, then in India we only have to look back to our own not-so-distant encounters with empire that remain with us and are unceasing in the social and political effects they produce. Reengaging India's colonial past in service of the present moment may help us write the history of this war as that of Afghanistan's war, waged on Afghan soil and on the bodies of Afghan men, women, children.

The writer works on India's international relations and political thought at Harvard University Asia Center

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ILLEGITIMATE GOVT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The government of the Taliban' (IE, September 10). A government that was installed through the force of violence is, ab initio, illegitimate and cannot acquire legitimacy through the band-aid solution of including women and even Hazaras. Therefore, governments across the globe ought not to keep barking up the wrong tree and instead, unitedly call for democratic elections in Afghanistan, to be supervised by external agencies of high integrity.

Surendra Sundararajan, Baroda

NOTHING NEW

THIS REFERS TO the article 'Deal with the new Kabul' (IE, September 10). We should avoid taking the Taliban at their words. Rather we need to judge them by their past heinous record. There seems to be nothing new in their world view. They can change their coat but not their theological beliefs. If our demonising the Taliban goes against our so-called national interests, our canonising them clashes squarely with our own concept of a plural and liberal society we are defending back home against many odds.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

CLIMATE PLAN

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The other shared crisis' (IE, September 10). India is home to 1.3 billion people, with the world's largest youth population and a huge section of aspirational middle-class that is driving the economy. India still has a sizable population under abject poverty. Its developmental needs are paramount, and cannot be compromised. The UN SDGs are already in sync

IDEAS ONLINE

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with India's developmental priorities. The country's National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change has been tasked to work on developing indigenous solutions to the issue of climate change, considering regional and local priorities and challenges. The global community is expected to acknowledge and support the "Indian solutions" to the problem of climate change.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Barasat

A COVER-UP

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Eight years on, probe finds those killed were unarmed, not Maoists' (IE, Sept 10). Justice VK Agarwal, who inquired into the "encounter" in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh concluded that none of the eight people killed, including four minors, were Maoists. The report says that the security personnel "may have opened fire in panic", and it was "a mistake". This is plausible. But planting evidence to cover up the botched operation is deliberate. And this can't happen without the involvement of higher-ups. Sadly, this facet of the event only compounds the tragedy.

L.R Murmu, Delhi



Lucknow



SATISH CHANDRA MISRA, NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY, BSP; RAJYA SABHA MP

In UP, Brahmins, Dalits face many issues. The way murders are happening... If someone complains, they face inquiry

Misra defends BSP's Brahmin outreach and says party stands for *sarv samaaj*; insists BSP has been active and raising issues in Parliament and courts; and says that while the party is ready to back the Cong on issues, it will do so on its terms. The session was moderated by Chief of Bureau & Political Editor Ravish Tiwari

RAVISH TIWARI: After a long period of inactivity, the BSP has sounded the poll bugle in Uttar Pradesh with a series of public meetings. What prompted it?

It's not entirely correct to say that we started doing this suddenly. For the past one-and-a-half years, public meetings have not been possible because of the pandemic. Despite that, we managed to have 62 meetings in different districts, with at least 200 persons each. While the Brahmins came to my office, similar meetings were held at Behenji's (party chief Mayawati) place. The moment the Covid-19 cases dropped in UP, we began (our meetings). It's not that we were silent, the party has been working right up to the booth level, and we are determined to throw out the BJP government in the state.

RAVISH TIWARI: But you can be accused of launching your campaign with caste-based events?

We called it 'Prabuddha Sammelan (intellectuals' meetings)'. No doubt, in all my meetings, 90 per cent of the attendees were Brahmins, but there were others too. There were advocates, doctors, engineers... So it wasn't a 'jaatavaad' event. In UP, Brahmins and Dalits are facing maximum issues. The way encounters and murders are happening... If someone complains, he faces inquiry. All these people who were suffering urged me to come out... They want 2007 to come back [the last time BSP came to power], they want the brotherhood of the Brahmin and Dalit communities to return. The social engineering... no one ever thought the communities could come together. We formed a majority government.

RAVISH TIWARI: What issues will you raise in the 2022 polls?

Law and order, development, atrocities on women, atrocities on caste lines... People are again talking about Mayawati's development work, how she handled law and order and did not even spare her own MP... Today one barely sees any development, we only see pages and pages of advertisements. (Mayawati) gave employment to people from all sections. Work on the first Delhi-Noida expressway was started in her time. An enquiry was placed on it after our term, and then the same government inaugurated it! The Congress, Samajwadi Party, everyone protested against the Jewar airport, and today they are all battling for it... Work on Lucknow Metro was started in our time. We ensured the all-round development of 29,500 Ambedkar villages. About 29,000 new primary schools were opened; seven international-level universities were set up... She opened 23 new districts, which came with new roads, hospitals, colleges... She improved the electricity situation in UP... In our five-year term, there was one rape case. Today, we hear of one rape every two hours... So that is the difference. (Mayawati) has put the agenda on the table, and has promised to take UP where it should be... Today we are seeing Rs 300 crore being spent by people to propagate themselves. It is a sin. Teachers are going without salary, people are not getting pensions, and then you are mocking everyone by putting signboards saying that we are giving 5 kg grain each to 15 crore people. But the cost of the bag with photographs of BJP leaders is more than the foodgrains. Is that justified?

LIZ MATHEW: The BJP has also been focussing on Dalit votes in UP, and the party's caste formula has worked so far. How will you consolidate your vote base in the face of such stiff competition from the ruling party? Also, what do you make of the Bhim Army's influence among Dalits in UP?

All these people and parties are propped up by the BJP, whether it is him (Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad) or (AIMIM chief Asaduddin) Owaisi. They are hardly going to do any damage to us. They will lose their own seat if they contest an election there. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are behind Behenji like a rock, which ensured that we got 2.62 crore votes in the Lok Sabha elections in 2014. We got no seats but we were the third largest party even then and now too. So people from these castes know who has worked for them. If they are being spoken about now, it is only and only because of her (Mayawati). It is not that she has built the Kanshiram Smarak in Noida, but she has done tremendous work for them... When BJP leaders visit



WHY
SATISH CHANDRA MISRA

With months to go for the crucial UP elections, the BSP has been holding a series of public meetings for Brahmins, hoping to revive the social engineering strategy that propelled Mayawati to power in 2007. Misra, a key strategist and aide for Mayawati, is crucial to the BSP's gameplan as the party hopes to make a comeback

(Dalit) homes, their food is taken from their own homes, they are just shown eating with them or washing their feet... But these people vote for Behenji. Why? It's because she doesn't indulge in these photo-ops. She has taken them out from their huts and given them *pucca* homes... Now, once again we are trying to revive the brotherhood between Brahmins and Dalits. We are a *sarv samaaj* party. We are reaching out to the neglected, whether Brahmin or Dalit.

BHUPENDRA PANDEY: Why have there been so many suspensions and expulsions in the BSP recently, including of senior leaders such as Lalji Verma and Ram Achal Rajbhar?

We don't follow the philosophy that just because someone is a senior leader, or an MP or MLA, they should not face action for anti-party activity. We fielded Ramji Gautam for the Rajya Sabha polls. In the last minute, some of our party's MLAs supported the SP candidate. What can be a bigger anti-party activity? Who has made them big leaders? The party.

And so the party is most important. If you look at the careers of people whose names you are taking, you will see that they have been made zero-to-hero by Mayawati. Over the years, many such people have come and gone in the BSP, and this time too, a lot of new

faces are coming.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: The months of April and May saw acute shortage of beds and oxygen and even political leaders like yourself couldn't hold the government accountable. Why should people trust you with their vote then?

Covid has put us all to shame. Let me tell you my own experience. I have helped at least 2,500 patients in getting treatment. For those one-and-a-half months, I literally did not sleep, trying to manage oxygen etc. We opened a campus for about 2,500-3,000 labourers who could not travel, and arranged for their food. But yes, we were not giving sound bites on TV about it; we were just doing our work. That's how our party is. The level of Covid

mismanagement in UP is unimaginable. They (the government) started taking action against those who pointed out the mismanagement. We visited the ghats, the cremation areas, and were shocked to see that nearly 100 bodies were being burnt in a line. We even helped in arranging wood for some... Bodies were being washed away in the Ganga... Where did all the money allotted for Covid go? They were blaming the media for showing the bodies. But what the media was showing was less. We were seeing the scenes at hospitals. Many patients died of hunger.

VANDITA MISHRA: We have had many agitations in the recent past — student protests, anti-CAA protests, the farmer agitation, Dalit protests. However, the BSP has not been visible in any of these. People who are in jail today, facing sedition charges, UAPA, they are activists who do not belong to any party. For a party that speaks for the most marginalised, isn't this a failure?

Our people have always been agitating, but in a different manner. We don't believe in *tod-phod*. During the Dalit agitations, we were present all over the country. Two of our people died in firing in Madhya Pradesh. In UP, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, over 100 of our people were put in jail... When it comes to cases of sedition, UAPA, we have been fighting for them in court, trying to ensure their release. We don't do *danga-fasaad* on streets. We don't stop trains, buses, destroy government property. We protested in Parliament for farmers. Our own members are farmers and they are protesting. When we form the government, we will look at all issues. Tomorrow if you write something, even you will not be spared. It's an undeclared Emergency.

MANOJ C G: There is much talk of Opposition unity at the national level. Sharad Pawar talks about it, Mamata Banerjee too. Sonia Gandhi held a meeting. But the BSP is not very enthusiastic about these efforts. Even in Parliament, sometimes you attend joint Opposition meetings, sometimes you don't. The BSP remains absent when some crucial Bills are put to vote.

We are always with the Opposition, I have myself attended meetings. Whether it was the Congress government earlier,

even when we were offering them outside support, or the BJP now, you can see that. But our party takes its own decision on matters, whether something is in national or public interest, on what to oppose and what not. So when the Congress asks us to stand with them in the Opposition, we might oppose the same things and still not stand with them. There are reasons for this, there is a background. We supported them when we had 40-41 MPs altogether, but what did they do? Earlier, when Ashok Gehlot became the Chief Minister in Rajasthan, they took away six of our MLAs even when we were giving them outside support. They did the same this time... The party also did this in Himachal and a few other places... On the one hand, you do all these things to break the BSP, hurt it, and on the other you say that the BSP should stand with you at all times. So we will back them on issues, but on our terms... We are also a national party, one among five national political parties. We have to decide based on our thinking on a matter... You spoke about Bengal... (in the Assembly election) they were all fighting each other. Who was together? So we have to fight you electorally, you poach our MPs and MLAs, same as the BJP... we are not double-faced. We are clear about our stand.

MANOJ C G: If the Opposition comes together and the Congress is not the one leading it, will the BSP join it?

We have not once but several times been part of such unity bids, whether Karnataka or Bengal... But if you think that we will come with you everytime you say so, we can't do that, either in Parliament or outside. We have an independent identity of our own... We have several times raised our voice against the BJP... To say that we have supported the BJP, say on Article 370 (abrogation)... We supported it after a proper decision, that this was in line with Dr Ambedkar's thinking. Even the BJP was surprised, it did not know we were going to support the move. The thinking was very reasonable — that while J&K has a small number of Muslims compared to the rest of the country, there are restrictions when it comes to marrying people from outside, owning prop-

erty there... Dr Ambedkar's thinking was simple, that how can there be two sets of rules in a country, he wanted the whole country to be one. He did not support Article 370 even then.

HARIKISHAN SHARMA: In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, you had aligned with the Samajwadi Party to take on the BJP. The BSP remains weak in Uttar Pradesh. In the coming polls, are you considering any alliance?

In this election, whatever party it may be, local or national, we are not going to align with anybody. We have learnt from our experience, we had a bitter experience... No doubt we have a coalition in Punjab, with the Shiromani Akali Dal, which is going very strong. There is no doubt that we will form the government there. But in UP, we are not going to have

We are not going to align with anybody in UP. We have learnt from experience; it was bitter... Our party is No. 1 in UP right now, the BJP is No. 1 only on paper

UP. Of the 1,500 Sanskrit colleges in the state, only 50% are left, because they never paid the funds... The *bhoomi puja* was done in Ayodhya with much fanfare, spending Rs 200-250 crore on August 5, 2020. A year later, there is nothing there. I asked the sadhus there about it, they said, 'Didn't you see, 5 bricks were kept and prayers were offered to them. These were later immersed in the Saryu'... Come Diwali, they will claim a record in lighting *diyas*. Why not spend the same money on the poor, give to teachers?

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY: But will you make concerns of Muslims a poll issue?

The concerns that they have are also our concerns. As I already said, whether it is Muslims, Dalits, any caste, we are working for everybody.

AVANEESH MISHRA: At the BSP's September 7 event (marking the end of the first phase of its Brahmin outreach), a lot of things that happened are usually seen on BJP platforms. The BJP sees it as an achievement of its politics.

You know that two days before our event, the BJP also organised a 'Prabuddha Sammelan (targeted at Brahmins)'. Before that, they were attacking us, saying one shouldn't hold events like this, it is wrong... Even the Samajwadi Party is holding such *sammelans* now... It's another matter that nobody is coming for those. So who is copying whom? They even kept the same name. And as for your claim that the September 7 event showed a changed BSP, rewind to June 9, 2005, when we had gone before the Brahmin *samaj*, the upper caste *samaj*, and brought the Dalits and them together. Mayawati was the chief guest at that event and it attracted close to 5 lakh people. Conch shells were blown even then, she was presented with a statue of Ganesha (like on September 7). Everyone knows what she said, holding that statue, 'Haathi nahin Ganes hai, Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh hai' (Haathi or elephant is the poll symbol of the BSP)... In our Prabuddha meetings across 75 districts, we have worked to remove their (BJP's) masks and, show their real faces.

BHUPENDRA PANDEY: Mayawati has said that the BSP will not give tickets to any bahubali or leaders convicted in cases (in the context of Mukhtar Ansari). She has always been serious about issues concerning women. Your Mau MP Atul Rai is in jail on rape charges, and recently, both the victim and a witness immolated themselves before the Supreme Court. There has been no reaction from the BSP, nor has the party taken any action against Rai.

...Maybe there are some details you do not know. There is a trial on in the court, where evidence emerged in police investigation that the two of them had tried to blackmail Rai using fraudulent means, including the false proof they had submitted. Police then filed an FIR against the two, and while the investigation was on and they were summoned before the court, they disappeared... The court then said that we have an accused (Rai) in jail, and evidence has now come that the charge against him might be fabricated, so they would have to appear... Then the two of them appeared before the Supreme Court and took that action. It's not like there was any pressure (from Rai), he continues to be in jail.

RAVISH TIWARI: Won't a triangular contest in UP, with the BSP not aligning with anyone, help the BJP? Secondly, who will be your main target: Narendra Modi or Yogi Adityanath?

This is an election for UP, not the country. On one side is Behenji and on the other side Yogi. We are fighting this election to defeat the BJP. As for what other parties are doing, we are not concerned about that. We know we will uproot this government, like we removed the SP government in 2007. They had the outside support of the BJP. Everyone knows this well... as to who helped the SP form the government in 2003... The Supreme Court later ruled in our favour on this matter. So our fight at this time is against the BJP... I don't see any advantage to the BJP from a triangular contest. The BJP would earlier win 40-45 seats, it would again be reduced to the same... Whatever the number, they will definitely not make any gains.

Illustration: Suvajit Dey

Our party always gives tickets to Muslims; they know it... Under BSP, UP did not see riots, nor did any community live in fear. People know whom to back

not see a single riot, nor did communities fight each other, or any community live under *dehshat* (fear). People lived together, there was *bhaichara* (brotherhood). So people know which party they should go with... Even in the Rajya Sabha, our leader is a Muslim, in the Vidhan Parishad, the leader is from the Scheduled Caste... As for you saying we have adopted the *trishul*, or started wearing *malas* (religious threads), we have always been doing it... it's in-built. We don't do *dhong* (pretence). Whether it is Goddess Parvati, Devi, Durga, or Lord Shiv or Ram... when I went to visit the Ram lalla (in Ayodhya), they asked what has Ram lalla got to do with the BSP? I have been there tens of times... They may talk Hindu, Hindu. We believe in taking everyone along... Left to them, they will finish Sanatan Dharma in

TOPOF THE WORLD



Anne Hidalgo

FRANCE Socialist Paris mayor enters race for French presidency

PARIS MAYOR Anne Hidalgo said Sunday she would run for president in 2022 on a Socialist ticket, though polls indicate she has little chance of mounting a serious challenge unless she can unite the fragmented left. Hidalgo, who became the first woman to run the French capital in 2014 and is among the few senior left-wing politicians to emerge from President Emmanuel Macron's 2017 redrawing of the political landscape unscathed, is polling at about 8% in April's first round. Macron and far-right leader Marine Le Pen are polling at between 20% and 24%. "Knowing the seriousness of our times and to give hope to our lives, I have decided to be candidate for the French presidency," she said. **REUTERS**

NORWAY

Norwegians begin voting in election centred on oil

NORWEGIANS WENT to the polls on Sunday for the first of two days of voting in a parliamentary election dominated by the widening gap between rich and poor, climate change and how the oil-producing nation should adapt to the energy transition. Opinion polls show the opposition Labour party on course to replace the Conservative-led coalition of Prime Minister Erna Solberg. The man projected to become PM after the Sept. 12-13 ballot, Labour leader Jonas Gahr Støre, has pledged to address inequality by offering tax relief for low- and middle-income families and hiking rates for the rich. **REUTERS**

PHILIPPINES

Strong typhoon cuts power, causes flooding

SEVERAL COMMUNITIES remain flooded and without power after a strong typhoon battered the Philippines' northernmost islands, the authorities said on Sunday, displacing thousands of people. Typhoon Chanthu, which at one point was categorised by the Philippine weather bureau as a category 5 storm, has weakened after powering into the northernmost region, including the Batanes island group, on Saturday, the weather bureau said. "It's one of the strongest typhoons I've felt," said Dennis Ballesteros Valdez, a resident of Sabtang. **REUTERS**



BANGLADESH SCHOOLS REOPEN

Teachers welcome students with roses at a school in Dhaka on Sunday. Bangladesh has reopened schools and other educational institutions after 543 days of closure as its virus situation eases and more people are vaccinated. Almost 97% of the country's teachers and staff have been vaccinated, the government said. Wearing masks, students arrived Sunday morning at schools that were decorated with balloons and ribbons. **Reuters**

UK ditches plan for vaccine passports

ASSOCIATED PRESS LONDON, SEPTEMBER 12

AUTHORITIES IN Britain have decided not to require vaccine passports for entry into nightclubs and other crowded events in England, Britain's health secretary said Sunday, reversing course amid opposition from some of the Conservative government's supporters in Parliament. Health Minister Sajid Javid said the government has shelved the idea of vaccine passports for now but could reconsider the decision if Covid-19 cases rise exponentially once again.

"We've looked at it properly and whilst we should keep it in reserve as a potential option, I'm pleased to say that we will not be going ahead with plans for vaccine passports," Javid told the BBC.

The U-turn came just days after both the government's vaccines minister and the culture secretary suggested that vaccine passports would still be necessary, despite growing opposition from lawmakers.

Other European nations are using similar documents showing peoples' vaccination status as a way to re-open society — although the rules vary widely. Each of Germany's 16 states has slightly different rules on what is required,

EXPLAINED Criticism from all quarters

THE UK government's plan to require a vaccine passport has come under severe criticism from many within the ruling Conservative party itself, as well as from the Opposition and from trade associations. People in the UK are generally not required carry around identification documents, and the requirement for a vaccine passport to enter pubs or other crowded venues has been seen by critics as a violation of rights, as well as a move that could further hurt performers and the nightlife industry which have already suffered great losses amid the pandemic.

but in general, people are required to show a negative test, vaccine or recovery certificate before being allowed to participate in indoor dining, drinking or dancing.

Passes are required in France when frequenting bars, cafes, restaurants, museums and other places where the public gathers and for long-distance travel on buses, trains and planes.

Japan passes 50% vaccination rate, may ease limits in November

ASSOCIATED PRESS TOKYO, SEPTEMBER 12

JAPAN'S GOVERNMENT says more than 50% of the population has been fully vaccinated.

Japan's vaccine rollouts began in mid-February, months behind many wealthy countries due to its lengthy clinical testing requirement and approval process. Inoculations for elderly patients, which started in April, were also slowed by supply shortages of imported vaccines, but the pace picked up in late May and has since achieved 1 million doses per day.

Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, who is in charge of Covid measures, told NHK public TV's weekly talk show Sunday that about 60% of the population is expected to be fully vaccinated by the end of September, on par with current levels in Europe.

The government is studying a roadmap for easing restrictions around November when a large majority of the population is expected to be fully vaccinated.

The progress of vaccinations has helped reduce serious cases and deaths among older people, but infections from virus variants spread explosively in August among younger generations still largely unvaccinated, severely straining health care systems.

Iran to let IAEA service nuclear monitoring cameras following talks

REUTERS DUBAI, SEPTEMBER 12

IRAN IS to allow the UN nuclear watchdog to service monitoring cameras at Iranian nuclear sites after talks on Sunday with IAEA head Rafael Grossi, according to the head of Iran's atomic energy body and a joint statement.

The talks with International Atomic Energy Agency chief Grossi were aimed at easing a standoff between Tehran and the West just as it threatens to escalate and scupper negotiations on reviving the Iran nuclear deal.

The IAEA said this week that there had been no progress on two key issues: explaining uranium traces found at old, undeclared sites and getting urgent ac-



IAEA chief Rafael Grossi meets Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation head Mohammad Eslami, in Tehran on Sunday. **Reuters**

cess to monitoring equipment so the agency can continue to keep track of parts of Iran's nuclear programme as per the 2015 deal.

"We agreed over the replacement of the memory cards of the agency's cameras,"

Mohammad Eslami, who heads the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran (AEOI), was quoted as saying by state media.

"IAEA's inspectors are permitted to service the identified equipment and replace their storage media which will be kept under the joint IAEA and AEOI seals in the Islamic Republic of Iran," the nuclear bodies said in a joint statement.

The IAEA told member states in reports this week that there had been no progress on two central issues: explaining uranium traces found at several old, undeclared sites and getting urgent access to some monitoring equipment so the agency can continue to keep track of parts of Iran's nuclear programme as provided for by the 2015 deal.

SPAIN

VILLAGERS FLEE AMID WILDFIRE

People fled their homes in six more Andalusian towns and villages on Sunday as Spain sent in a military unit to help tackle blazes raging close to a Costa del Sol resort. A wildfire fanned by strong winds has now driven out close to 2,000 people and killed one emergency worker since it erupted on Wednesday in the mountainous Sierra Bermeja above Estepona, a popular tourist spot.

Taliban say women can study in gender-segregated universities

KATHY GANNON KABUL, SEPTEMBER 12

WOMEN IN Afghanistan can continue to study in universities, including at post-graduate levels, but classrooms will be gender-segregated and Islamic dress is compulsory, the higher education minister in the new Taliban government said Sunday.

The minister, Abdul Baqi Haqqani, laid out the new policies at a news conference, several days after Afghanistan's new rulers formed an all-male government. On Saturday, the Taliban had raised their flag over the presidential palace, signaling the start of the work of the new government.

The world has been watching closely to see to what extent the Taliban might act differently from their first time in power, in the late 1990s. During that era, girls and women were denied an education, and were excluded from public life.

The Taliban have suggested they have changed, including in their attitudes toward women. However, women have been banned from sports and the Taliban have used violence in recent days against women protesters demanding equal rights.

Haqqani said the Taliban did not want to turn the clock back 20 years. "We will start building on what exists today," he said.

However, female university students will face restrictions, including a compulsory dress code. Haqqani said hijabs will be mandatory but did not specify if this meant compulsory face coverings. Gender segregation will also be enforced, he said. "We will not allow boys and girls to study together," he said. "We will not allow co-education."

Haqqani said the subjects being taught would also be reviewed. While he did not elaborate, he said he wanted graduates of Afghanistan's universities to be competitive with university graduates in the region and the rest of the world.

Taliban banned music and art during their previous time in power. This time, TV has remained and news channels still show women presenters, but the Taliban messaging has been erratic. **AP**



Afghans wait in front of a bank in Kabul on Sunday as they try to withdraw money. **AP**

Quandary at UN: Who speaks for Myanmar and Afghanistan?

RICK GLADSTONE SEPTEMBER 12

MYANMAR'S BRUTAL military coup and the Taliban's triumphal return to power in Afghanistan are among the crises confronting the United Nations as it convenes its annual General Assembly this coming week.

But Myanmar and Afghanistan present a further conundrum for the world's biggest diplomatic gathering: Who is the rightful representative of each country?

The Myanmar junta, which seized power in February and has been widely condemned for a deadly crackdown on opponents, has sought to replace the UN ambassador of the deposed government with a junta loyalist.

The Taliban, the violent, extremist Islamic movement that retook power last month after the American-backed Afghan government collapsed, is also expected to seek diplomatic representation, replacing an ambassador appointed just a few months earlier with one of its own.

The idea that a Myanmar putschist or a Taliban militant on



Ghulam M Isacszai was appointed UN envoy by the previous Afghan government. **Reuters**

a terrorism watch list could become a credentialed UN envoy may sound dumbfounding. But theoretically it is possible — if the government that person represents is deemed legitimate in the eyes of the United Nations.

Envoys from all kinds of political systems, from parliamentary democracies to monarchies to dictatorships, have long worked at the 193-member United Nations, the one place in the world where even governments that reject each other's ideologies enjoy some measure of equal standing. Still, there are standards to verify the legitimacy of both the envoy and the government he or she represents.

Verifying who represents each country at the United Nations falls to the Credentials

Committee, a nine-member group appointed at the beginning of each year's General Assembly. Its work is normally routine, checking each envoy's bona fides to ensure compliance with procedural rules.

The process gets more complicated when the legitimacy of the envoy's government is at issue, and disputes sometimes are referred to the General Assembly.

"It seems this year's Credentials Committee will be called upon to consider not just one, but two, questions of government legitimacy," Rebecca Barber, an Australian research fellow at the University of Queensland, wrote in the Blog of the European Journal of International Law. **NYT**

FBI releases declassified document related to September 11 attacks

MARK MAZZETTI & MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 12

THE FBI released a newly declassified document late Saturday describing connections that the agency examined between the hijackers and the Saudi government in the years since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, although it contained no conclusive evidence about whether the kingdom played a role in the attacks.

The 16-page report, which was issued hours after President Joe Biden arrived at the World Trade Center memorial in New York, is the first document to be released since the President last week moved to declassify materials that for years have remained secret.

Families of the Sept. 11 victims have long pushed for a deeper in-



The document was disclosed hours after Biden visited the Sept 11 memorial in New York on Saturday. **NYT**

vestigation into any possible role the Saudi government had in the attacks. Biden instructed the Justice Department and federal agencies in recent days to release declassified documents over the next six months after a group of hundreds of affected people — including survivors, emergency medical workers and victims' rel-

atives — told him to skip the memorial event at ground zero this year if he did not move to disclose some of those documents.

The document, which was heavily redacted, describes an interview conducted in November 2015 with a Saudi man, identified only as PII, who was applying for American citizenship. He detailed his work at the country's consulate in Los Angeles and shared anecdotes about his personal interactions with embassy leadership. The document also summarises his contact with people who investigators said had provided "significant logistical support" to two of the hijackers.

Some members of the commission that investigated the 2001 attacks believed that if the Saudi government had any role in the plot, it was likely to have involved consular officials.

But the document released on Saturday provided no new conclusive evidence about the Saudi government's role.

Speculation around the possible Saudi role increased over the years because of the government's refusal to declassify 28 pages of a 2002 congressional inquiry into the Sept. 11 attacks that specifically addressed possible connections between the kingdom and the terrorist plot.

The document was finally released in 2016, and it detailed numerous suspicious meetings between Saudi officials and the Sept. 11 hijackers, and checks from Saudi royals to operatives in contact with the hijackers. It was also an unflattering picture of the kingdom's efforts to thwart American operations against Al Qaeda in the years before the attacks. **NYT**

ARMIN LASCHET, MERKEL'S PARTY'S CANDIDATE FOR CHANCELLOR, SEEMS TO BE DRAGGING THE PARTY DOWN WITH HIM

Germany's election was his to lose, and he might just do that

MELISSA EDDY FRANKFURT AM DER ODER, SEPTEMBER 12

HIS PARTY is the biggest in Germany. It has won all but three elections since 1950, including the past four. Its departing chancellor is more popular than any politician in the country. And German voters crave stability and continuity.

Armin Laschet, the conservative Christian Democratic Union party's candidate for chancellor, should be riding high. The race to replace Angela Merkel was his to lose.

So far, he appears to be doing just that.

Weeks before Germans vote on Sept. 26 in their most important election in a generation — one that will produce a chancellor who is not Merkel for the first time in 16 years — Laschet is sinking, and he is pulling his party down with him.

The race is still close enough, and Germany's coalition politics so unpredictable, that it would be dangerous to dismiss the conservative candidate. But after recent polls showed Laschet's party dropping to record lows — of 20 per cent to 22 per cent support — his position is so dire that even some Christian Democrats have wondered aloud whether they picked the wrong candidate.

More broadly, Laschet's campaign has prompted queasiness among conservatives who fear they could be seeing a weakness in the party's appeal that has been disguised for years by Merkel's own popularity and is now exacerbated by her inability to groom a replacement.

In 2018, she announced her personally chosen successor, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, a moderate centrist. But even with Merkel's support, Kramp-Karrenbauer had trouble stepping out of the chancellor's shadow and building her own base. She quit in 2020 as leader of the conservatives, leaving the door open for Laschet.



Armin Laschet at a party meeting in Nuremberg. **Reuters**

Laschet had long boasted that if he could run Germany's most populous state, North Rhine-Westphalia, where he has

been governor since 2017, he could run the country. But then extraordinary flooding this summer called even that credential

into question, exposing flaws in his environmental policies and disaster management.

"The biggest problem for Laschet is that he has not been able to convince voters that he can do the job like Merkel," said Julia Reuschenbach, a political scientist at the University of Bonn.

She cited images of him laughing as the German president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, made a somber speech after devastating flash floods that killed 180 people, and posing before a mound of trash to make a statement of his own. "He comes across as uncertain, flippant and unprofessional," Reuschenbach said.

In recent weeks, Laschet has

seen his individual popularity drop below that of his Social Democratic rival, Olaf Scholz, while support for Laschet's party has been in a free fall since late July.

The situation is so dire that Merkel, who had said she wanted to stay out of the race, is now intervening and trying to rally voters for Laschet.

"Let's be honest: It is tight. It will be very tight in the coming weeks," Markus Söder, the head of the conservatives' Bavarian branch, the Christian Social Union, and a formal rival, said at a rally on Aug 20 that was meant to propel Laschet's campaign into a final, intense stretch. "It is no longer a question of how we could govern,

but possibly of whether."

Söder openly challenged Laschet this year for the chance to succeed the chancellor, and he still enjoys a higher popularity rating among Germans than Laschet's.

Germans elect parties, not a chancellor candidate. But over the course of Merkel's four terms in office, her party has enjoyed the so-called chancellor bonus, meaning the willingness of voters to effectively cast a ballot for consistency. Although Merkel remains Germany's most popular politician, her recent attempts to drum up support for Laschet have failed to turn his fortunes around, partly because they have appeared last-minute and halfhearted. **NYT**

12 ECONOMY

COS TRANSFORMING TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS INTO CONNECTIVITY TOOLS

Big Tech recasts ‘wearables’: Privacy concerns may draw regulatory glare

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

WHILE LAUNCHING Ray-Ban Stories — smart glasses for which Facebook partnered with the eye-wear brand — the social networking giant’s CEO Mark Zuckerberg alluded to the product being an “important step” towards a time when “phones are no longer a central part of our lives”. As companies both in the internet and consumer electronics space attempt to harness the wearables technology, the next port of call could seemingly be augmented reality and virtual reality.

In itself, Ray-Ban Stories is a pair of normal wayfarers equipped with a camera, microphone, a set of speakers, and storage and connectivity modules, the product is a part of Facebook’s larger plan of building glasses that augment the world visually and aurally. In September last year, the company had unveiled Project Aria, a research project to help Facebook build the “first generation of wearable augmented reality devices”. Facebook is also working on prototype of neural wristbands that would work along with the AR glasses to translate subtle neural signals into actions using electro-myography.

Even as these modernised renditions of traditional products hold the promise to change how internet is used, they come with a huge set of privacy concerns. Some of the initial reviews of Ray-Ban Stories have shown other people failing to realise that the glasses are recording, despite a feature being built in to specifically prevent this. As the use of these products proliferate, it becomes even more imperative to have a data privacy framework in place, which is currently absent in India.

This need was also made evident when just a day after its launch the new Facebook-Ray-Ban product invited attention from the data protection authority in Italy, which has sought clarifications to assess whether the smart-glasses are compliant with privacy laws. The Italian authority said it wanted to be informed on measures Facebook has put in place to protect people occasionally filmed, in particular children, as well as on systems adopted to make data collected anonymous and features of the voice assistant connected to the glasses, *Reuters* reported.

But Facebook is not the only company working in this direction. Augmented reality per se in limited spaces has only limited use-cases. For example, how Microsoft has introduced a “together

NEED FOR PRIVACY LAW

■ As the use of these products proliferate, it becomes even more imperative to have a data privacy framework in place, which is currently absent in India.

mode” as an addition to Teams, which displays all the participants in a call together in a virtual space instead of the grid of boxes that Teams and Zoom offer currently. However, when clubbed with wearables, a digital, three-dimensional layer of the world is created on these devices that would let the users interact with the various aspects of the world digitally as one does today with a smartphone.

Tech companies, for years now, have been working on integrating the connecting device as closely as possible with the human body. And the ideas for this have been coming from the fashion industry. The story of most popular wearable connectivity device — smartwatches — shows the appetite for adaptation to such devices. “India’s smartwatch market is in a boom phase as more and more people are trying out smartwatches be-

cause of the affordability factor. Smartwatches are now replacing traditional watches and complementing smartphone usage as well,” said Counterpoint Research Senior Research Analyst Anshika Jain. In 2016, when Google launched its VR headsets Daydream View, it specifically observed the need for wearable devices to be fashion oriented rather than being bulky electronic items and constructed its products using lightweight cloth and foam material. In 2017, Nokia Bell Labs announced a partnership with Belgian FashionTech designer Jasna Rokegem to design sentient garments that would “act as a smart fashionable augmented skin”.

In the eyewear technology space, too, a number of players have attempted and tried to gain some ground building upon their existing products. Google was the first big-tech company to bring out Google Glass — a futuristic looking pair of eyeglasses promised to give its users an immersive connected experience. Google Glass was available for retail purchase in 2014 but was shortly discontinued. Among the reasons for its failure was a \$1500-price tag (Facebook’s Ray-Ban Stories will be sold at \$299), and a range of privacy and hacking concerns from users.

Amazon has launched a pair of

smart-glasses under its Echo line of products called Echo Frames in 2019. The company launched a second-generation of the smart audio glasses equipped with its digital assistant Alexa earlier this year. Florida-based Magic Leap, a startup backed by Google, AT&T and NTT DoCoMo, released a headset in 2018 that cost \$2,300, but which basically failed to live up to the pre-release functionality claims, with the result that only a few thousand units being up being sold, according to tech-news website *The Information*.

In a 2019 report, PwC predicted that AR and VR have the potential to add \$1.5 trillion to the world economy by 2030, by catalysing productivity gains in areas including health care, engineering, product development, logistics, retail and entertainment while Goldman Sachs forecasts that the market for such technology to be worth \$95 billion by 2025.

Last year, India’s largest telecom firm Reliance Jio announced a new Mixed Reality solution, called Jio Glass. The company stated that the new Jio Glass was designed for teachers and students to enable 3D virtual rooms and conduct holographic classes via the Jio Mixed Reality service in real-time. Apart from this, they can also be used to perform virtual meetings.

Post SC nudge, govt appoints 31 members to NCLT, ITAT

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

THE GOVERNMENT has appointed 31 members to the Benches of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) after the Supreme Court urged the government to fill vacancies immediately.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the appointment of eight judicial and 10 technical members to the NCLT as well as six judicial members and seven accountant members to the ITAT, according to a communication by the Department of Personnel and Training on Saturday.

The Bench noted that it did not want a confrontation with the government on this issue. The appointments to the NCLT are for five years or until the member reaches the age of 65 while appointments to the ITAT are for 4 years or until the members reach the age of 67.

The Supreme Court had called out the government last week, saying the government had “emasculated” tribunals, such as the NCLT, by not appointing members. The court noted that a “critical situation has arisen” due to the vacancies at the NCLT and the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) with respect to the completion of corporate bankruptcy proceedings.

Seventy five per cent of the

The appointments to the NCLT are for 5 years or until the member reaches 65 while that to the ITAT are for 4 years or until the members reach the age of 67

4,541 corporate insolvency cases that were ongoing at the end of June had crossed the 270-day threshold. The bankruptcy law requires that corporate insolvency proceedings be completed within 330 days, including a 60 day allowance for litigation. Cases that do not yield a successful resolution are required to be sent for liquidation barring exceptional cases.

The Bench had said it expected appointments by September 13, the next date of hearing.

Benches of the NCLT deal with matters pertaining to company law as well as bankruptcy resolution while the ITAT deals with appeals related to income tax matters. The industry has flagged concerns about long pending vacancies at the NCLT as a key reason behind delays in bankruptcy resolution under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

The Standing Committee on Finance had also called out the government on the impact of vacancies at the NCLT, which is also operating without a full-time president, and the NCLAT, which

is operating without a full-time Chairperson.

“There is no respect for the judgments of this court, that is what we are feeling. There is testing the patience of the court...,” Chief Justice of India N V Ramana, heading a three-judge Bench with Justices L Nageswara Rao and D Y Chandrachud, told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta.

PTI adds

Andhra High Court judge Justice Telaprolu Rajani, Bombay High Court Retired (Rtd) Judge Justice Pradeep Narhari Deshmukh, Madras High Court Retd Judge Justice S Ramathilagam and District Court Judge Deep Chandra Joshi are among those appointed judicial members to the NCLT. The newly-appointed technical members include Principal Commissioner of Income Tax Ajai Das Mehrotra, Retd NHPC CMD Balraj Joshi, Retd Ministry of Panchayati Raj Secretary Rahul Prasad Bhatnagar, Retd Principal Director General of Income Tax Subrata Kumar Dash, Retd Department of Consumer Affairs Secretary Avinash K Srivastava and Retd SBI Chief General Manager Shree Prakash Singh.

Six judicial members have been named to ITAT. They are advocates Sonjoy Sarma, S Seethalakshmi and T R Senthil Kumar, Additional District & Sessions Judges Shatin Goyal and Anubhav Sharma, and Law Officer in SBI Manomohan Das, *PTI* reported.

SECTOR WATCH GLOBAL SHIPPING

How is container crunch sinking international trade?

KARUNJITSINGH
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

THE GOVERNMENT is in talks with exporters to help them deal with an international container shortage that has led to freight rates rising by over 300 per cent in the past year for key shipping routes.



JNPT in Mumbai. File

Why is there an international container shortage?

Experts said the reduction in the number of shipping vessels operating as a result of the pandemic have led to fewer empty containers being picked up, leaving many cases in inland depots and stuck at ports for long durations. Long waiting times at key ports, such as those in the US due to congestion, are also contributing to lengthening turnaround time for containers. A sustained global economic recovery has added to the impetus to trade. The lack of availability of containers and the faster-than-expected recovery in international trade has pushed up freight rates.

How is the container shortage impacting Indian exporters?

Indian exporters are facing major delays in their shipments and consequent liquidity issues as they have to wait

longer to receive payment for exported goods. Exporters noted that shipments that used to take 45 days are now taking 75-90 days, leading to 2-3 months of delay in payments that are causing liquidity crunch, particularly for small exporters.

How can the government help address this issue?

Exporters are calling on the government to regulate the export of empty containers. Experts said some countries were willing to pay a premium for empty containers and that this was further adding to the container shortage. They have asked the government to curb the export of empty containers at all Indian ports in line with a move by the Kolkata port to restrict the number of empty cases permitted to be exported to 100 per vessel for a three-month period.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

‘Manufacturing outlook in Q2 improves; cost of doing biz rises’

The outlook for increased manufacturing activities in the second quarter of this fiscal has been significantly improved, though cost of doing business is rising, according to a survey by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry

Hike in production costs, industry respondents attributed to, primarily high fixed costs, higher overhead costs for ensuring safety protocols, and a drastic reduction in volumes due to lockdown, as per Ficci’s latest quarterly survey (Q2) on manufacturing



logistic costs, increased cost of raw materials, power cost, and high-interest rates also factors for the hike

Lower capacity utilisation, high freight charges and other

68% MENTIONED THAT THEY ARE NOT LIKELY TO HIRE ADDITIONAL WORKFORCE IN THE NEXT THREE MONTHS

After experiencing subdued Q1, the outlook seems to have improved significantly in Q2

High percentage of respondents experiencing the rising cost of doing business and production

Around 58% of participants are expecting a rise in their outbound shipments during the second quarter



Source: Ficci/PTI

Methodology Responses have been drawn from over 300 manufacturing units from both large and SME segments with a combined annual turnover of over 2.7 lakh crore

‘GDP to expand 10% this fiscal; sustaining 7-8% growth key challenge’

New Delhi: The economy is expected to grow around 10 per cent during the current financial year on the likelihood of fewer Covid-linked supply disruptions and buoyancy in the global economy, said Poonam Gupta, director general of think-tank NCAER.

The real challenge, however, would be to sustain a growth rate of 7-8 per cent in years to come, she said.

“We could see annual growth in the ballpark range of about 10 per cent. The reasons for this perceived optimism are: fewer supply disruptions; increased pent-up demand in the traditional and contact-intensive services; and a buoyant global economy.

“Even so, if two pandemic years are taken together, there would be a very small net growth.

In other words, the economy at the end of 2021-22 would be only slightly larger than at the end of 2019-20,” Gupta said.

Gupta is the first woman director general of NCAER. Before joining the think-tank, she was the lead economist at the World Bank. She was also the Reserve Bank of India Chair Professor at NIPFP, and a Professor of Macroeconomics at ICRIER.

On the challenges being faced by the Indian economy, she said the first one is to recover from the impact of Covid and the second is to sustain post-Covid growth rates of at least 7-8 per cent.

India has done rather well during the Covid pandemic, primarily because of the rapid pace of vaccination, Gupta said. **PTI**

Air India transfer of assets to SPV to be TDS, TCS exempt

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

THE GOVERNMENT has exempted taxes on transfer of assets by Air India to SPV Air India Assets Holding Ltd, a move aimed at facilitating strategic disinvestment of the national carrier.

As a precursor to Air India sale, the government in 2019 had set up a special purpose vehicle, Air India Assets Holding Ltd (AIAHL), for transfer of debt and non-core assets of the Air India group.

In a set of notifications, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has said that no TDS shall be deducted under section 194Q in case of transfer of goods by Air India Ltd to AIAHL.

Also, no TDS shall be de-



Air India flight at Mumbai airport. File

ducted under section 194-IA of IT Act on payments made to Air India for transfer of immovable property to AIAHL.

The CBDT also said that Air India would not be considered as ‘seller’ for the purposes of deduction of TCS for with regard to transfer of goods by it to AIAHL.

It said that transfer of capital asset under plan approved by central government from Air

India Ltd to AIAHL would not be regarded as transfer for the purpose of income tax.

Last week, the CBDT had allowed new owners of erstwhile public sector companies to carry forward losses and set it off against future profits.

This is an effort towards making disinvestment deals of ailing state-owned firms more attractive for strategic investors.

The government is seeking to sell 100 per cent of its stake in the state-owned national airline, including Air India’s 100 per cent shareholding in AI Express Ltd and 50 per cent in Air India SATS Airport Services Pvt Ltd.

The strategic sale has reached the crucial phase with the September 15 being the last date for putting in financial bids by potential buyers. **WITHPTI**

Zomato to pull plug on grocery delivery service from Sept 17

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

ZOMATO HAS decided to stop its grocery delivery service from September 17 on account of gaps in order fulfillment leading to poor customer experience, marking its exit from the segment for the second time since last year.

The company also said that it believes that its investment in Grofers will generate better outcomes for its shareholders than in-house grocery efforts.

A Zomato spokesperson said, “We have decided to shut down our grocery pilot ... Grofers has found high quality product market fit in 10 minute grocery and we believe our investment in the firm will generate better outcomes.”

BRIEFLY

I-T refunds of ₹70,120 cr

New Delhi: The Income Tax Department on Sunday said it has issued refunds of over Rs 70,120 crore till September 6 this year.

‘Release of DA, DR arrears’

New Delhi: Bharatiya Pensioners Manch (BMS) has sought intervention of the Prime Minister for release of DA and DR arrears for central government staff and pensioners at the earliest. **PTI**

A nick to Apple’s profits could be windfall for app developers

JACK NICAS & KELLEN BROWNING
SAN FRANCISCO, SEPT 12

APPLE HAS taken to calling its iPhone App Store an “economic miracle,” and it has pointed to developers like Zach Shakked as proof. Shakked created an iPhone app that helps companies find trending hashtags on social media. Over the past 12 months, his sales have topped \$5 million.

But one of Shakked’s largest expenses is paying a cut to the world’s richest company. In his case, Apple took nearly \$1.5 million — its fee for letting him run his app on its devices.

Now, Shakked has hope that he could soon keep at least some of that money. On Friday, a federal judge ordered Apple to allow developers to steer their customers off their iPhone apps to pay for their goods or services, which Apple had banned. That is big news for developers like Shakked, because sales completed outside Apple’s payment systems are not subject to its commission of up to 30 per cent.

“It finally feels like the small guys got a win,” Shakked, 25, said. “There’s a sense of justice.”

The ruling in Apple’s yearlong legal fight with Epic Games, maker of the popular video game Fortnite, set off celebrations

POSSIBLE BARRIERS

THERE COULD be a number of barriers to the mandated App Store changes. Apple could ask another judge to temporarily block the order, which is set to take effect in 90 days.



Apple store, New York. Reuters

among app developers. From one-person startups to Fortune 500 companies, they have long complained about paying hefty cuts of their businesses to Apple.

The impact of the decision will be most felt by the smallest devel-

opers like Shakked.

“It’s a very big deal,” said Denys Zhadanov, a board member at Zaddle. The court fight has often been framed as a battle between industry heavyweights: Apple, which is worth \$2.5 trillion, versus

Epic, a far smaller company but still one of the few app makers capable of taking on the Silicon Valley titan. Friday’s verdict is not expected to be a big hit to Apple’s bottom line. In fact, the company declared victory, since Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, of US District Court for the Northern District of California, ruled that Epic had failed to prove that Apple had a monopoly in the mobile gaming market — which would have had a much more serious consequence.

There could be a number of barriers to the mandated App Store changes. Apple could ask another judge to temporarily block the order, which is set to take ef-

fect in 90 days. And both companies could appeal the ruling, a process that could take several years. Apple could also restrict how developers direct customers off their apps to complete transactions, including by making them list Apple’s payment system as an option and barring them from offering discounts for customers who don’t pay via Apple. Such discounts may be necessary to persuade customers to take the extra steps to open a web browser and enter their credit card information, versus simply tapping a button and paying via Apple.

Nevertheless, the tide may be starting to turn against Apple’s tight control over its App Store.

Regulators in Japan and South Korea have forced Apple to tweak how it manages the store, and regulators and lawmakers around the world are also considering measures to curb the company’s influence.

Match Group, maker of dating apps Tinder and Hinge, is on track to pay Apple and Google — which controls a similar app store for phones that run its Android software — more than \$500 million in commissions this year, the company’s single largest expense, said Gary Swidler, Match’s finance chief. The company was already considering ways to use Friday’s ruling to cut down that bill as much as possible, he said. **NYT**

Ricciardo wins Italian GP as Verstappen, Hamilton crash



Red Bull's Max Verstappen and Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton crash out. *Reuters*

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MONZA, SEPTEMBER 12

CHAMPIONSHIP LEADER Max Verstappen and defending champion Lewis Hamilton crashed out of the Italian Grand Prix, which was won by McLaren's Daniel Ricciardo on Sunday.

It was McLaren's first win in nearly nine years, since Jenson Button took the chequered flag in Brazil in 2012. It was also Ricciardo's first win since Monaco in 2018. He finished 1.747 seconds ahead of teammate Lando Norris and 4.921 ahead of Valtteri Bottas, who turned in a strong performance after starting from the back of the grid after a penalty for taking a new engine.

But the biggest talking point of the race came on lap 26. Hamilton had pitted from the lead and returned to the track just in front of Verstappen. The Red Bull driver tried to come up the inside on a turn as the seven-time champion defended his position.

As the two made contact, Verstappen's car catapulted on to the top of the Mercedes as both slid into the gravel. The protective halo ring at the front of F1 car cockpits may have saved Hamilton from serious injury. "That's what you get when you don't leave the space," said a furious Verstappen over team radio.

Both drivers were able to walk away from their cars though Hamilton took a long time getting out of his, only clambering out after Verstappen had long gone.

The stewards will investigate the incident after the race. Ricciardo won the race after a brilliant start allowed the Australian driver to pass Verstappen who started from pole position at turn one.

Behind them Hamilton, who started fourth, managed to pass Lando Norris. But he then attempted to try and get around the outside of Verstappen heading into the second chicane and was instead forced off across the grass, allowing Norris to regain his place. "He (Verstappen) pushed me wide!" Hamilton exclaimed over team radio.

Hamilton was then held up by Norris and

ON THE PODIUM

1. Ricciardo (McLaren) 1:21:54.365
2. Norris (McLaren) +1.747 seconds
3. Bottas (Mercedes) +4.921

DRIVERS' STANDINGS: 1. Max Verstappen (Red Bull Racing) 226.5 points, 2. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 221.5, 3. Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes) 126, 4. Lando Norris (McLaren) 114, 5. Sergio Perez (Red Bull Racing) 108

could only watch in frustration as Ricciardo and Verstappen stretched their advantage lap by lap. Ricciardo was first to pit, on lap 23, and came out seventh. Verstappen was struggling with his tires and stopped on the following lap.

But a botched pit stop that lasted 11.1 seconds saw him come out in 10th and, to make matters worse for the Dutch driver, Hamilton had in the meantime passed Norris to take the lead. But disaster struck for both drivers shortly afterward.

Daruvala finishes 5th

India's Jehan Daruvala missed out on podium, settling for a fifth place finish in the Feature Race of Formula 2 here on Sunday. Daruvala, who had sealed his second Formula 2 win with a dominating drive in the second sprint race on Saturday, was sluggish from second and clocked 56:41.936.

Oscar Piastri clinched a dominant first Feature Race win, beating Guanyu Zhou to extend his Championship lead. Piastri had been unable to convert pole in the previous round at Silverstone, losing out to Zhou when the lights went out but looked to have learned from the experience and completed the opening lap at the front.

Jumping from third to second off the line, Zhou kept the pressure on throughout the race but was unable to find a way past his title rival.

Biennial WC: Wenger's proposal that has split the football world

MIHIR VASAVDA
SEPTEMBER 12

ASIA AND Africa on one side. Europe and South America on the other.

Some of the game's legends on one side. A few current stars on the other.

At the centre of the incoming storm is FIFA. Feeling the threat of being swept aside is UEFA, the body that controls the game in Europe, the nerve centre of world football.

When coaching great Arsene Wenger proposed the idea of having a World Cup every two years, one wonders if he had imagined that it would split the football world in such a dramatic fashion. On the face of it, this seems like a straightforward debate. But scratch the surface and multiple layers emerge, the most crucial being the enduring power struggle between FIFA and UEFA.

Money matters

FIFA and Wenger, while proposing this idea, said the fans would be more interested in watching 'meaningful' matches, which might be true given that more than a billion people watched the 2018 World Cup final between France and Croatia. They've also claimed that the players would like more chances to play in a World Cup. Critics, however, have constantly pointed at a third element, which they allege is the main motive behind this move. "All about money," Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said recently. FIFA raised approximately \$6 billion in revenue from the 2018 World Cup. This money was generated by selling broadcast rights, tickets and sponsorship. FIFA hopes that instead of having just one World Cup in four years, conducting two during the same period would double its income.

Power struggle

This is where the clash of power between FIFA and UEFA takes place. FIFA, as the *Financial Times* noted, is 'challenging clubs and leagues' for a larger share of profits as the sport continues to grow. The world body's president, Gianni Infantino, is trying to do so by increasing the number of teams in the World Cup from 32 to 48 and also expanding the Club World Cup.

The UEFA, trying to protect its own financial interests, sees this as a threat to its own competitions for the simple reason that more international matches will directly eat into European club competitions – continental and domestic – thus impacting their revenue.

A World Cup every two years would also have a cascading effect on the continental



Arsene Wenger believes a World Cup every two years will give more players a chance to play in it. *Reuters*

championships like the Euros, which is currently held between two World Cups. According to Wenger's proposal, the Euros will have to change the year when it is held and thus, each season will conclude with a big-ticket event in June. As *Reuters* explained: "For example, in 2028 there would be a World Cup. In 2029, there would be a European Championship (and similar continental competitions around the world) then in 2030 there would be the next World Cup."

Domino effect

This would, in turn, have an impact on all other competitions.

FIFA has not yet made clear what happens in an Olympic year, or what happens if the World Cup is to be held in a country where the only option is to play the tournament in winter, as is the case with Qatar 2022. Not just football, a major football tournament every summer – and a World Cup every two years – would eat into the market for other summer sports, something which World Athletics president Sebastian Coe underlined last week. "I can see no good reason for it. There may be vested interests here but the summer sports are protective about the landscape as it's hard enough for them as it is to grab space in the traditional or digital media. A biennial World Cup will inevitably start clashing with the Olympic Games too," Coe was quoted as saying by *The Guardian*.

European boycott?

Amidst all this lack of clarity, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin has threatened a boycott. "We can decide not to play in it. As far as I know, the South Americans are on the same page. So good luck with a World Cup like that," Ceferin told *The Times*.

EXPLAINED

Football team manager hacked to death inside Bengaluru stadium

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, SEPTEMBER 12

A 27-YEAR-OLD history-sheeter, who also managed a football team, was hacked to death at the Bengaluru football stadium on Sunday evening.

The deceased has been identified as Aravind Kumar (in pic). According to the police, the incident took place at around 4 pm when

four or five assailants barged into the ground and chased Aravind before killing him inside a changing room for referees in the main stadium.

Players and spectators were shocked to see a man being chased by armed men on the ground. The incident took place minutes before the start of an A Division football game for women in the main stadium.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) M N Anucheth said Aravind was managing a local team and had come to play in a 6-a-side tournament at the BBMP ground opposite KSFA Bengaluru football stadium.

"At about 4 pm, four to five persons surrounded and assaulted him. He then fled from the spot and entered the main KSFA football stadium located opposite the BBMP ground. He went inside a referee's room and locked himself in. The accused persons then broke the door and hacked him to death using deadly weapons," police said.

A case of murder has been registered at the Ashok Nagar police station and two teams have been formed to identify and nab the accused.

Police said gang rivalry was the motive behind the murder and Aravind was a history-sheeter at the Bharathi Nagar police station in east Bengaluru.

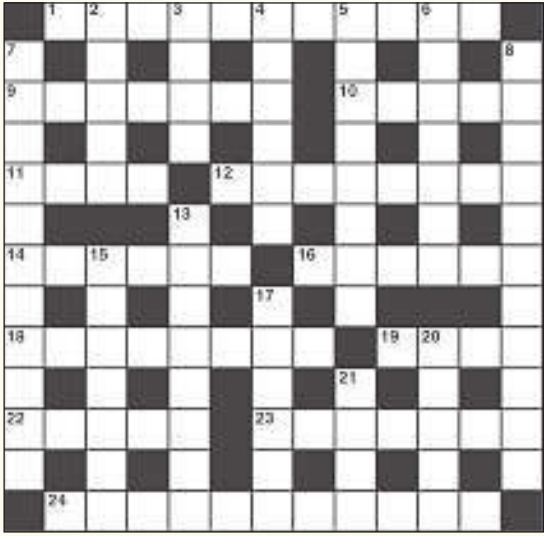
Army Red hold Gokulam

Kalyani: Defending champions Gokulam Kerala were held to a 2-2 draw by Army Red in their opening match of the Durand Cup football tournament here on Sunday.

Gokulam scored through Rahim Osumanu (9th minute) and Sharif Mohammad (70th) while P Jain (30th) and Bikash Thapa (43rd) found the target for Army Red.

The Malabarians started on a positive note, courtesy a spectacular long-range goal from Ghanaian Rahim Osumanu but failed to capitalize in the later stages. Gokulam Kerala goalkeeper Rakshit Daggar got injured after a collision with Army Red's Mukesh Kumar and he was replaced by PA Ajmal. **PTI**

CROSSWORD 4533



ACROSS

- 1 Lose one's grip and decide to take no further action (4,3,4)
- 9 Hurried so curry is spoilt (7)
- 10 A fabulous writer takes a retrospective pose (5)
- 11 It flows out of line (4)
- 12 An event for wine people (4,4)
- 14 Decline with little hesitation (6)
- 16 Impressionist Renoir reproduction? (6)
- 18 Close of play (8)
- 19 I study Russian art (4)
- 22 Not the best man to take care of horses (5)
- 23 Hear Thai wraps chopped lamb dish (7)
- 24 No more stars for stargazers (11)

DOWN

- 2 Country river - a Russian river (5)
- 3 Ring up Winnie (4)
- 4 Call attention to 24-hour period of prosperity (6)
- 5 Crazy people eat them with cheese (8)
- 6 Keep us up to the mark (7)
- 7 Admit the account needs information (11)
- 8 It pays an actor to keep them up (11)
- 13 He likes to make things better for an anagrammatist (8)
- 15 Disport around the photographer's equipment (7)
- 17 Some insult angers the ruler (6)
- 20 Seat of learning? (5)
- 21 I'm a leader of Muslims (4)

Solutions Crossword 4532: Across: 1 Bumper, 4 Crossbow, 9 Rarest, 10 Wayfarer, 12 Nuts, 13 Relay, 14 Race, 17 Short circuit, 20 Posted abroad, 23 Ache, 24 Faint, 25 Sky, 28 Appendix, 29 Humane, 30 Indigent, 31 Zealot. Down: 1 Baroness, 2 Marathon, 3 Easy, 5 Road accident, 6 Soft, 7 Barsac, 8 Warren, 11 Registration, 15 Stood, 16 Limbo, 18 Cocktail, 19 Adherent, 21 Salami, 22 Shaped, 26 Snug, 27 Ruse.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

The first man gets the __, the second man gets the __. - Andrew Carnegie (6,5)

CLEER



RETELL



LPOSS



COPPHY



SOLUTION: CREEK, SLOPS, TELER, CHOPPY
Answer: The first man gets the **shell**, the second man gets the **oyster**.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4593

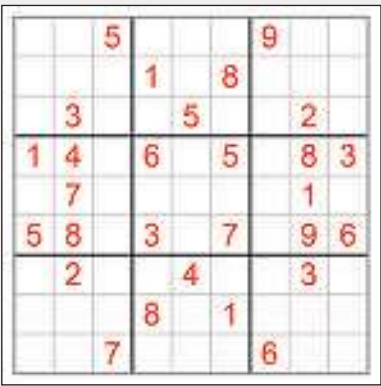
Difficulty Level 5s

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 4592



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Don't be slow in coming forward, for you deserve to be number one. And neither is there any need to pursue a conventional course. If you follow a hunch then you might find that you reach your destination by a very different and much quicker route.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

You can afford to be quite laid back today, but if you're right in the middle of a professional wrangle or any dispute with authority, check up on the legal angle, and ask whatever questions are necessary to get to the right answer. Don't worry about what other people think, that's their business.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

You might believe that money is the most important thing in the world, but you'd be wrong. It's the law that matters most, and you need to be absolutely and perfectly sure of your rights as soon as possible. And then there's a little question of justice and that's your real goal.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

When the circumstances demand, you can always call on your legendary compassion, and it's extremely likely that others will look for your sympathy today. However, in spite of first appearances, the best remedy may be no more more taxing than a nice chat with a close friend.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

There is a narrow line to be drawn between keeping your emotional defences up, which is desirable, and cutting other people out, which is not. It's all a matter of being kind to yourself, but maintaining a proper balance all round, acknowledging partners' very real concerns.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept. 23)

It looks as if this might be a very busy week, which is one good reason to take things slowly and conserve your energy today. But, then, it could be the case that, while your plans change frequently, you don't actually achieve a great deal. A child or younger relation requires reassurance.

LIBRA (Sept 24 - Oct 23)

If you sense that you're about to hit an emotional turning-point, you're right, which is why this particular time is so vital for making sure that your emotional foundations are firm. You must convince other people that you know what you're doing, and that you can succeed.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

Some people say that life is what happens when we are busy making plans. And right now it's difficult to say what's around the next corner. Your best policy is to be ready for last minute changes and welcome any opportunity to try out something totally new and different.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

You may look back on previous financial blunders and wonder how you were ever so naive. However, according to one of those strange laws of fate, the moment you dwell on the past, someone will take advantage of you again. Focus on everything that's good and things must get better.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

The Moon is making its presence felt again, so take advantage of every single opportunity to exert emotional control, especially at home. Always be flexible, for the moment you lapse into old habits, your actions will rebound on you. And that would never do.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Everything that happened over the last two weeks, and even over the last six months, can be seen as a rehearsal for the coming upheavals and opportunities. Make sure you have all plots and schemes thoroughly worked out in your own mind before going public.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You are still living an inner life that few people can glimpse and fewer still can understand, but the cumulative result of everything that takes place this week should be to give you a sort of inward glow. You should believe in yourself, even when other people can't grasp what you're doing.

BRIEFLY

Inter makes 1st misstep in title defence with draw

Rome: Inter Milan made the first mis-step of its Serie A title defense with a 2-2 draw at Sampdoria on Sunday. The result left the Nerazzurri two points behind Napoli, which extended its perfect start with a 2-1 win over Juventus on Saturday. With nine goals in its opening three matches, Inter has not had trouble scoring after Romelu Lukaku's departure to Chelsea. Barella, a key member of the Italy squad that won the European Championship, has provided assists in all three of Inter's matches this season. But the team missed reliable center back Alessandro Bastoni, who was out with a left thigh injury that he picked up on international duty with Italy. It remains unclear if Bastoni will return in time for Inter's Champions League opener against Real Madrid on Wednesday at the San Siro. **AP**

Asghar Afghan slams Paine in letter over T20 WC comments

Kabul: Former Afghanistan captain Asghar Afghan has slammed Australia Test skipper Tim Paine for his comments that the war-torn country looks impossible to play in the upcoming T20 World Cup, asking him not to "deliver aggressive statements without knowing the circumstances". In an open letter to Paine, Afghan said that his country's team has the right to play not only in the upcoming T20 World Cup but in all ICC organized tournaments/events in accordance with the rules and regulations. Soon after forming the interim government, the Taliban banned women from playing cricket or any others sports, casting doubts over Afghanistan men's Test status. As per ICC rules, all Test playing nations must have a women's team as well. **PTI**

Winner disqualified for wearing wrong shoes for marathon

Vienna: Ethiopia's Derara Hurisa was disqualified for wearing the wrong shoes after winning the Vienna Marathon on Sunday. The 24-year-old Hurisa crossed the line first by three seconds but was later told he had been disqualified because the soles of his shoes were 1 centimeter (0.4 inches) thicker than the maximum 4 centimeters allowed. Organizers said Hurisa had registered another shoe that met race rules, but switched to the shoes he had used in training to run the actual marathon. "I can't say at the moment why he didn't run in the shoes that were specified in the form," race coordinator Johannes Langer said. Leonard Langat of Kenya, who had originally finished second, in 2 hours, 9 minutes, 25 seconds, was declared the winner. **AP**

I JUST WANT TO SAY THAT I HOPE I CAN BE AS STRONG AND AS RESILIENT AS NEW YORK HAS BEEN THE LAST 20 YEARS
LEYLAH FERNANDEZ, after losing the US Open final to Emma Raducanu on September 11

Cinderella story

Main draw qualifier Emma Raducanu wins the US Open final 6-4, 6-3 beating fellow teen Leylah Fernandez

CHRISTOPHER CLAREY
NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 12

WE ADAPT quickly. It's part of the human spirit, whether we are teenage tennis stars or the people who line up and take a seat to watch them in the world's biggest tennis stadium.

Two weeks ago, the vast majority of us had never heard of Leylah Fernandez or Emma Raducanu. Fernandez had never been past the third round in a major tournament and had struggled to find her best form in recent weeks. Raducanu joined the tour in earnest only this summer and had to make it through the off-Broadway qualifying tournament to secure a spot in the U.S. Open.

But by Saturday, when Fernandez, 19, and Raducanu, 18, took to the court for one of the most unlikely Grand Slam finals, we already had a connection. They had boldly worked through the women's draw during this special U.S. Open, which was full of communion between the players and the public after all the distancing of the last year and a half.

By Saturday, those who had been following their unexpected progress already knew about their strengths, their multicultural backgrounds and even their quirks: Fernandez's jig behind the baseline before walking forward to serve, Raducanu's habit of blowing on her fingers between points as if to cool off a very hot hand.

But what was most striking Saturday was how quickly both unseeded players adjusted to this grand occasion, calmly giving thoughtful prematch television interviews, walking past Billie Jean King's quote on the tunnel wall, which says that "pressure is a privilege," and then walking past King herself as they emerged into the late-afternoon sunshine for the biggest opportunity of their short careers. It was all new, but you would not have known it once the ball was in play, as both attacked their groundstrokes and did their best to seize the occasion even after having nearly two full days to think about the occasion once they had won their semifinals.

After the introductions, Fernandez ripped a backhand crosscourt winner on the opening point. Raducanu later pounded a backhand winner of her own to hold serve and win the opening game. Raducanu and Fernandez both held firm, extending rallies with their quickness and defensive skills on the move, smartly sending lob high into the atmosphere when cornered. But just as impressively, they finished points with authority when they had created the space to go for winners.

Their styles contrast in some ways. The left-handed Fernandez uses more spin and enjoys deploying the drop shot. Her technique is more artisanal than textbook, with her hands often far apart on the grip on a two-handed backhand as she improvises on the fly.

The right-handed Raducanu favors more direct power and has fabulous fundamentals that allow her to control the ball even while swinging ferociously. She has a knack for making the tricky shot look smooth and an ability to run around her backhand in a flash and rip an inside-out forehand that Roger Federer could relate to.

But Fernandez and Raducanu are very contemporary tennis talents in their ability to sus-

2 Raducanu's first Grand Slam title has come in her second appearance in the main draw. No other woman in the Open era has played fewer majors before winning one.

tain pace and consistency from low body positions, their knees often touching the court as they counterpunch. Some of their extended rallies were spectacular Saturday as they exchanged backhand bolts with nary a grunt, their sneakers squeaking on the hard court.

Only Raducanu would get that great satisfaction, and although the score of 6-4, 6-3 will look fairly lopsided in the history books, anyone who watched will know that the match was much more tenuous than that.

"These two young women are a gift to tennis, an absolute gift," Andy Roddick, the 2003 U.S. Open men's champion, wrote in a post on Twitter. Roddick was right to shine a light on both players on Saturday. Fernandez is not yet a Grand Slam champion, but she is a world-class fighter who walks between points with the steely determination of someone on her way to break up a bar brawl.

She and her family have sacrificed plenty for her tennis career, and after losing a back-and-forth first set, Fernandez had every reason to still believe in her chances. She upset three players ranked in the top five - Naomi Osaka, Elina Svitolina and Aryna Sabalenka - as well as Angelique Kerber, a former No. 1 in resurgent form. Fernandez had beaten them all in three sets, so when Raducanu took a 5-2 lead in the second set but was unable to convert her first two match points on Fernandez's serve, Fernandez grinned as if she knew something that nobody else yet suspected.

Why should she not have believed in another comeback? But when she got a break point in the next game, she had to wait to play it as Raducanu, who had scraped her left knee while sliding for a shot, took an injury timeout to clean up trickling blood and have the wound bandaged.

The stoppage was well within the rules, but in this thinker's sport of ebbs and flows, it may have made the difference. Raducanu said she was concerned about losing her rhythm, as well. But it was Fernandez who expressed displeasure about the long pause to officials and then pushed a forehand long. Raducanu then saved a second break point with a leaping tap of an overhead.

She was back to deuce with Arthur Ashe Stadium abuzz and presumably most of Britain wide awake, as the match was broadcast in prime time in Raducanu's home country.

This time, she did not flinch, surprising Fernandez with a fine serve down the T that gave her command of the rally and brought her a third match point.

She mulled her options, tossed the ball high and smacked an ace to become the first qualifier in the long history of tennis to win a Grand Slam singles title.

In 10 matches, she never lost a set. "I never thought I would see it, so I'm in shock," said King, who watched from the stands as Raducanu dropped her racket and fell to the court, her hands covering her face. **NYT**



Before the final, Raducanu's return points win percentage was 52 per cent, which was second among all players at the US Open. **AP**

Method to Raducanu's glorious madness

SHAHID JUDGE
SEPTEMBER 12

THE FIRST all-teenage Grand Slam final since 1999 showcased carefree, risk-taking strokes mixed with graceful technique, impressive composure, and with Emma Raducanu and Leylah Fernandez involved, a whole lot of smiles.

Eventually, it was 18-year-old Raducanu who prevailed 6-4, 6-3 over the 19-year-old Canadian in what had been an improbable, but not undeserved, US Open run for both players. The Brit became the first woman from her country to win a Grand Slam title since Virginia Wade took the 1977 Wimbledon crown. She became the first-ever qualifier to reach a Major final, let alone winning it. And the World No. 150 became the lowest-ever ranked US Open champion - the unranked Kim Clijsters won in 2009. Raducanu is projected to climb to the World No. 23 rank on Monday. She went from being a qualifier to a champion without dropping a set. But the longest match she played in the tournament, the final lasting an hour and 51 minutes, wasn't just about mindless ball-striking. Here's how the final was won.

Targeting backhand, then forehand, then both

In the opening exchanges, it was clear that Raducanu had come with a plan to target the left-handed Fernandez's backhand. Even if it

meant taking risks over the higher part of the net, Raducanu would whack the ball to Fernandez's right whenever possible. The play worked for a while as Fernandez could not unleash her angled forehand strokes as often as she would have liked.

By the sixth game though, the Canadian had started to anticipate Raducanu's shots. So, the Brit changed tactics and began hitting to the Fernandez forehand. As the match progressed, she'd vary the direction of her shots and keep the Canadian guessing.

The Righty Serve

Left-handers tend to have an advantage against right-handers not used to facing southpaws - that's arguably what helped Fernandez beat defending champion Naomi Osaka in the third round. The 'lefty' serve - an angled delivery from the ad-court deep into the backhand side of a right-hander - draws the opponent out of position.

However, Raducanu proved that the right-hander serving with a heavy angle into a lefty's backhand could also be advantageous.

Raducanu's searly strategy in the match was to aim at Fernandez's backhand. It was something that continued to bother Fernandez. The Brit would often serve wide from the deuce-court, and then down the T from the ad-court.

But she would still throw in a few serves the other way around. Crucially, two points away from the title, with Raducanu serving for the match at 5-3, deuce, she served down the T, and on match point, hit her second ace wide.

Big returns of serve

Before the final, Raducanu's return points win percentage was 52 per cent, second among all players at the US Open. She continued to return with relish against Fernandez as well.

She won 38 of 78 receiving points (49 per cent) in the match (22 of 46 in the first set and 16 of 32 in the second).

The most important returns she made, though, came in the sixth game of the second set. She started the game off with a powerful backhand down the line return winner, and hit another big return to set up the point that was killed off with a forehand winner to go 0-30 up. At 30-40, there was an element of luck involved. Fernandez got hold of a strong first serve that drew a weak and short return. As the Canadian stepped up to slot home, Raducanu guessed right and hit a forehand winner to go 4-2 up - the break that decided the match.

Better numbers

Raducanu finished the match with 22 winners and 25 unforced errors. Fernandez scored 18 winners but had 26 unforced errors. Crucially for Fernandez, her first serve percentage was low - she hit only 45 of her 78 first serves in (58 per cent), and could win just 25 of them (56 per cent). Comparatively, Raducanu made 48 of 70 first serves in (69 per cent), and won 32 points on the first serve (67 per cent).

The Canadian faced 18 break points, saving 14 of them. Raducanu faced nine break points but was broken only twice.

Boxing's absurd summer gets a Trump injection

KEVIN DRAPER
SEPTEMBER 12

IN A single zany sentence, this is how the once-promising summer of boxing ended: Triller, a social video app that is a much less popular version of TikTok, put on a pay-per-view fight between a 58-year-old Evander Holyfield (who hasn't fought in a decade) and a 44-year-old mixed martial artist, Vitor Belfort - and paid former President Donald Trump and Donald Trump Jr. to serve as live commentators, all on the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks.

The result of the (legally) professional fight is mostly beside the point - Belfort won by a technical knockout in the first round, after the referee stopped the bout because of how clear it was that Holyfield never should have been allowed into the ring - but it served to underscore what could have been.

Earlier this year, Triller won the right to promote Teófilo López's lightweight title defense against George Kamboos Jr. The app paid more than \$6 million for the privilege, after the fight went to an open bid because López and his promoter, Top Rank, could not agree on a deal.

Triller had burst onto the boxing scene last winter, with an exhibition fight between Mike Tyson and Roy Jones Jr. Internet celebrity Jake Paul knocked out a former NBA player, Nate Robinson, on the undercard, and rappers Snoop Dogg, Wiz Khalifa and French Montana all performed



Former MMA star Vitor Belfort, left, knocks down Evander Holyfield during the first round of a boxing match. **AP**

between fights.

An optimist could see an evolution in how boxing was being presented: a brash entrant aiming to attract a new type - and a new generation - of fans to a sport that has been the subject of a thousand obituaries.

The López-Kamboos fight, then, was Triller's chance to show that it was serious. That its foray into boxing was not just an expensive, attention-grabbing marketing strategy for its app - though it was definitely that - and that its flashy presentation would work for real fights, too, and that it had figured out something that traditional promoters like Top Rank and Golden Boy Promotions had not.

As if to punctuate its seriousness, on June 1, Triller announced that it had hired Boxing Hall of Fame announcer Jim

Triller did not reveal how much it had paid Donald Trump, though Ryan Kavanaugh said he was negotiating with Barack Obama to commentate on a future event.

Lampley to call the fight. Cast aspersions on Triller all you want, but Lampley calling a López title bout is a strong way to present a legitimate draw.

Alas, that announcement would be the high point.

The fight, scheduled for June 19, was pushed back to August after López tested positive for the coronavirus. It was moved again, to September, onto the same card featuring Oscar De La Hoya - who has not fought since George W. Bush was president - fighting Belfort.

But that date did not work out - in theory, López will now fight in October - and then, last week, De La Hoya was hospitalized with the coronavirus, in what he said was a breakthrough infection.

No 45's appearance

On a week's notice, Holyfield stepped in to fight Belfort instead. The bout, originally to take place in Los Angeles, was moved across the country to Florida after the California State Athletic Commission refused to sanction it - even as an exhibition. (In Florida, it counted as a pro fight.)

But we are not done yet. On Tuesday,

Triller announced that Trump and Trump Jr. would commentate the fight. The next day, Lampley, objecting to the presence of the Trumps even though they were to be on a separate commentating stream, pulled out.

That is how Triller's big summer showcase, to be voiced by Lampley, became three hours of Trump recalling different boxers he'd known and been friends with, before two depressing top bouts, both over in the first round, each of which featured one washed-up fighter beating another.

"They say there is a lot of people watching," the former president said with a smile between fights. "I can't imagine why." The night was one of Trump's highest-profile, and lengthiest, public appearances since leaving office, and a fairly rare event in light of his suspension from a number of social media sites.

Triller did not reveal how much it had paid Trump, though Ryan Kavanaugh, whose company owns a majority stake in the app, said he was negotiating with Barack Obama to commentate on a future boxing match.

That was a clear bid for publicity, and perhaps a bipartisan hedge in advance of Saturday's fights, which featured such sights as former UFC fighter Tito Ortiz - a vocal Trump supporter who resigned from the city council of Huntington Beach, California, after drawing ire for his anti-mask and anti-vaccination stances - walking to the ring waving a "thin blue line" flag.

Ortiz was knocked out a minute into the first round by another former UFC fighter, Anderson Silva. **NYT**

Harvey Elliott's injury sours Liverpool win over Leeds

REUTERS
SEPTEMBER 12

MOHAMED SALAH's 100th Premier League goal helped Liverpool cruise to a 3-0 victory at 10-man Leeds United on Sunday in a match that was marred by teenager Harvey Elliott suffering a dislocated ankle.

After a lightning-fast start to the game, Salah became the 30th player to join the Premier League's 100-goal club in the 20th minute, tapping home from close range from a Trent Alexander-Arnold cross.

The visitors missed a host of chances to make it 2-0 in the first half, before Fabinho made one count early in the second period to put Juergen Klopp's side on course for three points in West Yorkshire.

There was a worrying sight later in the half as Elliott needed lengthy treatment on the pitch following a tackle from Leeds' Pascal Struijk, with the hosts' substitute shown a straight red card for the challenge by the referee.

Elliott was taken off on a stretcher, receiving applause from Leeds fans as he was taken down the touchline.

"It is his ankle. I heard it was dislocated and they couldn't put it back and he is now in hospital," Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp said.

Liverpool regained their composure to add a stoppage-time third through Sadio Mane to put the seal on a victory that



Mohamed Salah became the 30th player to join the Premier League's 100-goal club. **Reuters**

LEEDS UNITED	0-3	LIVERPOOL
	Mohamed Salah 20'	
	Fabinho 50'	
Lingard 90+2'		Sadio Mane 90+2'

moved them above Manchester City into third in the standings, while Leeds sit 17th without a win from four league matches this season.