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WORLD



BILAWAL PUSHES FOR PAKISTAN'S RE-ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIA
PAGE 10

ECONOMY

AVIATION TURBINE FUEL PRICE UP, HIKE IN AIRFARES LIKELY
PAGE 9

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

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

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

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

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

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

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

MORE REPORTS
PAGE 5



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

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

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

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

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

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

EXPLAINED

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

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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

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

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

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

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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

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

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

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

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

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

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



Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, JUNE 16

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

ments, as West Bengal's Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports and Trinamool Congress MLA from Shibpur, in the evening — it's all in a day's work for Manoj Tiwary.

Multi-tasking to strike a balance between his two roles, as a sitting minister and cricketer, is a

big ask. When his team-mates hit the ice baths and put their feet up to re-energise in the evenings, Tiwary (36) says he dives right into official work.

"There is a lot of constituency work — someone may need a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Manoj Tiwary goes through files in his hotel room. Express

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

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

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

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

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

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

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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16.06.22, PAGE 1

The error is regretted.

(KRISHN KAUSHIK/NEW DELHI, SANTOSH SINGH/PATNA, ARUN SHARMA/JAMMU, AMIL BHATNAGAR/PALWAL, PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA/GURGAON, ASAD

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

Appearing for the Jamiat-ulama-i-Hind, Senior Advocate CU Singh said though the court

tion demolished?" he asked. The ruling also underlined that the source for demolishing properties under municipal and revenue laws is not derived from police powers.

"The courts cannot also be oblivious of the fact that the owners who are subject to the embargos placed under the

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

“The courts cannot also be oblivious of the fact that the owners who are subject to the embargos placed under their statute are deprived of their valuable rightful use of the property.”

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

"There are many files and documents which need to be

increase in the total number of doses, around the same pace as booster doses. Bangalore saw a 63.7 per cent increase in the total number, which was higher than the increase in total number of booster doses during the week. Chennai saw a 315 per cent increase in the total number of doses, much higher than the rate in booster shots.



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3UTTAR PRADESH

KANPUR PROTESTS

Notice to kin of accused on ‘illegal building’

KDA notice seeks reply on why the hostel should not be demolished

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JUNE 16

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

The notice, addressed to Sayeeda Zafar, stated, “The party has construction on 200 square yards beyond two floors and is running a hostel there... You are expected to submit a written reply by June 30 at 12 noon at my office by being present there on why it (the hostel) should not be demolished. You can send a representative to submit the reply.”

The notice was put up outside the Poorvanchal Boys’ Hostel in the Kakadev area of Kanpur on Tuesday. “...As per a report by Regional Additional Engineer on June 14, you are building/have built/have started construction at 17/P/42, Hitkari Nagar, Kakadev without getting an approval under Section 14 of the Uttar Pradesh Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973,” the KDA notice said.

Hashmi, who is the chief of a local outfit – Maulana Mohammad Ali (MMA) Jauhar Fans Association – was arrested along with three others from Lucknow on June 4, a day after clashes erupted in Kanpur over



Hayat Zafar Hashmi was arrested on June 4

former BJP spokespersons’ remark against the Prophet.

Meanwhile, police were granted remand of all the four members of the outfit – Hashmi, co-accused Javed Mohammad Khan and Mohammad Rahil, and Mohammad Sufiyan – for two days.

“The four are in our remand from Wednesday. The remand will be over on Friday. We are questioning them,” said a senior police officer.

Kanpur Police had earlier said that they were looking into the role of Hashmi in the 2019 anti-CAA NRC protests.

As per MMA Jauhar Fans Association’s Facebook account, the outfit was founded in 2007 by Hashmi with the aim of “raising voice for social and civic problems like water supply, power crisis, roads and traffic issues”.

Kanpur Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Anand Prakash Tiwari said 57 people have been arrested in connection with the June 3 violence.

“Further investigation is underway,” he added.



AND PROTESTS CONTINUE...

Congress leader Akhilesh Pratap Singh and others protest against the questioning of their leader Rahul Gandhi by ED in an alleged case of money laundering, in Lucknow on Thursday. They were detained while they tried to march towards the Raj Bhavan. The Congress had given a call for “Raj Bhavan gherao” to protest the questioning of Gandhi. Vishal Srivastav

Jump in Covid infections, active cases near 2,000

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JUNE 16

THERE HAS been a steady increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in Uttar Pradesh in the last few days. The Thursday bulletin of the state Health Department reported 413 new cases in the last 24 hours, with Gautam Budh Nagar (Noida) reporting the most (100). The other four districts reporting a spike in infections include Lucknow (71), Ghaziabad (48), Varanasi (14) and Kanpur City (11).

In the last two days, the state reported 318 and 286 new cases on Wednesday and Tuesday, respectively.

Consequently, the number of active cases in the state has risen to 1,849. By Thursday, there were 373 active cases in Gautam Budh Nagar, 411 in Lucknow, 193 in

Ghaziabad, 89 in Varanasi, and 59 in Kanpur City.

The positivity rate till Wednesday was 1.80 per cent and the recovery rate stood at 98.8 per cent, according to the health bulletin.

Following a jump in the Covid-19 cases in the state as well as in other parts of the country, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed officials to be extra vigilant in tracing new cases and to be on alert.

At a review meeting, the chief minister directed officials to ensure that people above 18 years of age avail the booster dose. He also directed officials to expedite the process of setting up new medical colleges in the districts. It may be mentioned that the government has decided to set up one medical college in each of the 75 districts of the state under the “Ek Janpad, Ek Medical College” scheme.

HEATWAVE ABATES: IMD

New Delhi: Heatwave conditions have abated in all parts of the country, with the southwest monsoon progressing towards central and east India and a fresh Western Disturbance affecting the northwest region, the Met Department said on Thursday. No significant heatwave conditions are likely till June 29, it said. PTI

Enemy properties scam in UP: CBI conducts searches, books 53 people

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

THE CBI has booked 53 people, including government employees, in four separate FIRs for allegedly leasing out prime enemy properties illegally across Uttar Pradesh.

The cases are based on a complaint from the Assistant Custodian of Enemy Property for India (Govt of India), Lucknow, “on allegations of causing huge loss to Govt Exchequer by leasing out prime value lands/properties on forged documents”.

Enemy properties are properties that have been left behind by people who have taken citizenship of Pakistan and China. Enemy properties are currently vested with the Custodian of Enemy Property of India (CEPI). The illegally leased out prop-

erties were spread across Lucknow, Barabanki, Sitapur, Noida Extension, Gautam Budh Nagar, Ghaziabad and Kasganj, among others, in UP.

The agency on Thursday conducted searches at 40 locations – including in Delhi, Kolkata, Ghaziabad, Kasganj, Bulandshahr, Gautam Budh Nagar, Lucknow, Barabanki – at the premises of the accused, which “led to recovery of incriminating documents”. The agency recovered Rs 82 lakh cash from one of the beneficiaries.

The CBI has booked Samandar Singh Rana, the then officiating Custodian of Enemy Property of India (CEPI) in Delhi; Utpal Chakraborty, assistant custodian, and Ramesh Chandra Tewari, a retired supervisor (both based in Lucknow). They have been booked under IPC Sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 420 (cheat-

ing) and 471 (forgery) and provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act related to bribery, officials said.

In addition, CBI has named multiple beneficiaries as accused in the FIRs.

According to CBI, “the said public servants, in conspiracy with private persons, caused huge financial loss to [the] Government Exchequer by leasing out large tracts of prime high-value land... It was further alleged that the said land were given at very nominal rentals, allowing illegal constructions by private builders and also forging lease agreements in the matter of enemy properties.”

Over 71 hectares of land were illegally leased out in this manner, the CBI has alleged. According to the FIR, the CEPI officials allegedly colluded with beneficiaries by “forging and manipulating lease agreements”.

शक्तिपत्र

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Director

यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India

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O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 9,99,904.50 + Intt. + Others Charges
Property : Residential House No. 5E/348, Situated at EWS, Hanspuram, Awas Vikas Yojna No. II, Naubasta, Distt. Kanpur Nagar. Owner of Property : Shri Shahid Ali S/o Shri Basheer Ali, Area : 24.37 Sq. Mtr., Bounded -North : 6 Mtr. Wide Road, South : Plot No. 5E/351, East : Plot No. 5E/347, West : Plot No. 5E/349. Date & Time of E-Auction : 20-07-2022 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 12.00 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 1.20 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TenderViewAllAuction.aspx>

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Property : Residential Land & Building at Arazi No. 1868 Mi (Part) Village Daheli Sujapur, Kanpur Nagar. Owner of Property : Mohd. Rashid S/o Shahid Rahman, Area : 100 Sq. Yards, Bounded -North : 6 Mtr. Road, South : Arazi of Baburam, East : Part of Plot, West : Part of Arazi. Date & Time of E-Auction : 20-07-2022 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
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Borrower : M/s Bachcha Trading Co., Proprietor : Shri Dharmendra Kumar Pandey S/o Shri Ravi Shankar Pandey, Address : 943, Kalyani Devi Road, Civil Lines, Unnao. Guarantor : Smt. Priyanka Pandey W/o Shri Dharmendra Kumar Pandey & Smt. Chandra Devi W/o Late Ram Sevak Pandey, Both R/o : House No. 943, Kalyani Devi Road, Civil Lines, Unnao.
O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 56,60,865.78 + Intt. + Others Charges
Property (1) : Plot No. 1576 situated at Mohalla-Daroga Bagh, Unnao. Owner of Property : Shri Smt. Priyanka Pandey W/o Shri Dharmendra Kumar Pandey, Area : 250.92 Sq. Mtr., Bounded -North : House of Sushma Singh Gaur, South : Rasta 20 Ft., East : Grave Yard West : Plot of Others. Date & Time of E-Auction : 20-07-2022 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
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Property (2) : House No. 943, at Plot No. 2, (Municipal No. 309), Kalyani Devi Road, Civil Lines, Distt. Unnao. Owner of Property : Smt. Chandra Devi W/o Late Ram Sevak Pandey, Area : 261.85 Sq. Mtr., Bounded -North : Plot No. 3 of Shri Jagdish Prasad, South : Plot No. 1 Shri Alok Sharma, East : 6 Ft. Wide Gali, West : 5 Ft. Wide Road. Date & Time of E-Auction : 20-07-2022 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
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O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 8,20,209.23 + Intt. + Others Charges
Property : Land and Building situated at Siddha Nagar, Kasba & Tehsil Akbarpur, (Ramabai Nagar) Distt. Kanpur Dehat. Owner of Property : Smt. Baby Khatoun W/o : Mohd. Mahboob, Area : 133.47 Sq. Mtr., Bounded -North : House of Mahesh Prasad Nigam, South : House of Bhagauti Prasad Nigam, East : Road, West : House of Surendra Mukhiya. Date & Time of E-Auction : 20-07-2022 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 17.00 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 1.70 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TenderViewAllAuction.aspx>

Borrower : M/s Maa Bhagwati Construction Co., Proprietor : Smt. Rani Devi W/o Shri Sobran Singh, Address : House No. 40, Paliwal Nagar, Rura, Tehsil Akbarpur, Distt. Kanpur Dehat, Guarantor : Shri Abhishek Pratap S/o Shri Sobran Singh & Shri Sobran Singh S/o Shri Nathu Singh, Both R/o : Ward No. 11, Paliwal Nagar, Rura Tehsil Akbarpur, Distt. Kanpur Dehat and Shri Sunil Kumar S/o Shri Radhey Shyam, R/o : Mallahan Purwa, Tigain, Kanpur Dehat. O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 24,85,193.60 + Intt. + Others Charges
Property : Land and Building on Plot on Gata No. 1168 (Part) Kasba-Rura, Shiva Ji Nagar, (Paliwal Nagar) Tehsil Akbarpur, Distt. Kanpur Dehat. Owner of Property : Smt. Rani Devi W/o Shri Sobran Singh, Area : 74 Sq. Mtr., Bounded -North : House of Raj Bahadur, South : House of Smt. Kamla Devi, East : House of Smt. Ram Janki, West : Road. Date & Time of E-Auction : 20-07-2022 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 33.00 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 3.30 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TenderViewAllAuction.aspx>

Borrower : M/s Maa Bhagwati Enterprises, Proprietor : Smt. Ram Kishori W/o Shri Raj Kumar Sharma, Address : Ahmadpur, Syonda, Post Pama Katka, Tehsil Akbarpur, Distt. Kanpur Dehat, Guarantor : Shri Vinay Pratap S/o Shri Jagdish Singh, R/o : Kishwar Lal Road, Raniya, Tehsil Akbarpur, Distt. Kanpur Dehat, & Shri Ram Sagar S/o Shri Kallu, R/o : Ahmadpur, Syonda, Post Pama Katka, Tehsil Akbarpur, Distt. Kanpur Dehat. O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 9,65,461.47 + Intt. + Others Charges
Property : Residential Plot Situated at Gata No. 107 Ka and 151 Cha, NH-2 Road, Raniya, Tehsil Akbarpur, Distt. Kanpur Dehat. Owner of Property : Smt. Ram Kishori W/o Shri Raj Kumar Sharma, Area : 0.024 Hectare/240 Sq. Mtr., Bounded -North : Plot of Babu Lal Gupta, South : Plot of Vidya Bhaskar, East : Kalpi Road, West : Arazi of Ram Kishori Purchaser before Plot Ashari.
Date & Time of E-Auction : 20-07-2022 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm
Reserve Price : Rs. 58.00 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 5.80 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/english/TenderViewAllAuction.aspx>

For Registration and Login and Bidding Rules visit <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp>

Date : 17.06.2022 Place : Kanpur / Kanpur Dehat / Unnao Authorized Officer, Union Bank of India

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5 GOVT & POLITICS



RELICS, BONDING

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

POST UNDER CLOUD

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

CARE FOR THE ROYAL

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

Won't be silenced: Afreen whose house was bulldozed

New Delhi: Student activist Afreen Fatima, whose family house in Prayagraj was bulldozed following her father Javed Mohammed's arrest in connection with violence in the city, Thursday said she and her community would not be silenced despite "threats".

Javed and Fatima are members of the Welfare Party of India —she is national secretary of the Fraternity Movement, the student wing of the party. Javed was arrested as one of the alleged co-conspirators of the June 10 violence over suspended BJP leader Nupur Sharma's comments on the Prophet.

"I stand in absolute solidarity with all Muslim families whose houses have been demolished," she said. "No matter how much you try to scare us... we will not keep quiet or be silenced, nor are we going to disappear from this country," she said. **ENS**

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

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

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

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

In a statement obliquely referring to China's assertiveness in the region, the statement said that they reaffirmed the "commitment to multilateralism founded on the principles of the

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

AGNIPATH RECRUITMENT SCHEME

Agnipariksha to path of fire, Opp demands rethink



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

Recruitment scheme: Who stands where

OPP PROTESTS

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

RAHUL GANDHI,
CONGRESS

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

SUBODH KUMAR MEHTA,
RJD NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON

BJP BACKS SCHEME

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

GURU PRAKASH PASWAN,
BJP NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON

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

YOGI ADITYANATH,
UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

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

ALLY DIFFERS

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

CAPT AMARINDER SINGH,
PUNJAB LOK CONGRESS CHIEF



Rahul's next appearance before ED on June 20

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

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

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

JAIRAM IS CONG'S NEW COMMUNICATION HEAD

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

acquired by Young Indian in 2010 for a "pittance", making it in turn the owner of all assets owned by the National Herald newspaper. Rahul's mother Sonia Gandhi is scheduled to appear before the ED later this month.

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

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

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

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

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

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

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

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

Congress leader 'grabs cop's collar', booked

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

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

Officers said a case against Chowdhury has been filed for obstructing a public servant from discharging his duty under IPC section 353. Chowdhury said the policemen touched her first, tried to move her from the spot and in retaliation, she defended herself. "I have no intention of hitting policemen. I was being manhandled," she said. **ENS**

LOK SABHA BYPOLL

In Azamgarh campaign, BSP's 'local vs outsiders' pitch takes hold

LALMANI VERMA
AZAMGARH, JUNE 16

THE LOK Sabha by-election in Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav's former constituency of Azamgarh on June 23 will see a triangular contest between the main Opposition party, the ruling BJP, and the BSP.

While the BJP is hoping for public goodwill for the Yogi Adityanath and Narendra Modi governments to help wrest the seat from the SP, the Opposition party is banking on its Muslim-Yadav vote bank. The Mayawati-led BSP, meanwhile, is making a pitch for its local candidate to be chosen over the "outsiders" fielded by the bigger parties.

The SP has fielded Akhilesh's cousin and former Badaun MP Dharmendra Yadav. The BJP has once again placed its trust on Bhojpuri actor-singer Dinesh Lal

Yadav "Nirahua" who lost to Akhilesh in 2019. The ruling party has its task cut out as it lost all five Assembly segments in Azamgarh — Gopalpur, Sagri, Mubarakpur, Azamgarh Sadar, and Mehnagar — in the state polls earlier this year.

The BSP, which won only one Assembly seat in the state elections this year, has fielded its former MLA Shah Alam, popularly known as Guddu Jamali, with the hopes of getting the Muslim community's support along with Dalit votes. Jamali, a businessman, recently rejoined the BSP after losing the state elections from Mubarakpur on an AIMIM ticket.

Making the local candidate versus "outsiders" argument that seems to have resonated with some voters, Jamali told *The Indian Express*, "I am a local and people have seen my devotion. I have been MLA from Mubarakpur for 10 years. They know and understand me. Others [the BJP and the

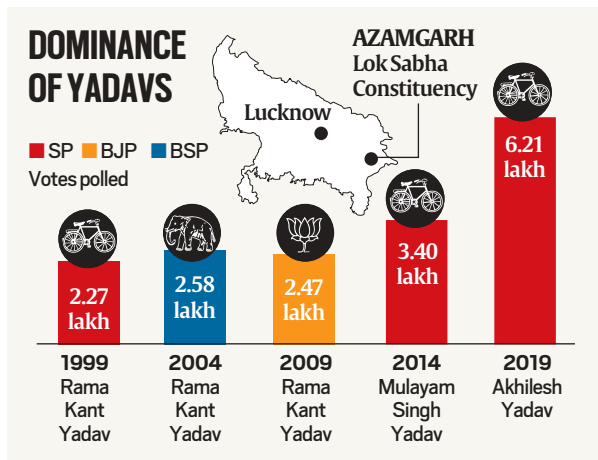
SP] have come from outside and will return after the polls. People did not find Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh in the constituency after the elections. Nirahua is from Ghazipur but lives in Mumbai. I am more accessible. I understand the problems here. Other candidates don't know this area."

To blunt his line of attack, Dharmendra Yadav recently spent around four hours at a workers' meeting in Mubarakpur and let regional leaders of the SP and the party's ally Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party address the crowd first. At the event, several Muslim leaders appealed to the crowd to vote for the SP to restore "Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb (Hindu-Muslim syncretism)" and set the foundation for dislodging the BJP from power in 2024.

"While the BJP and SP candidates are outsiders, Jamali is a local leader. He helped people with free oxygen cylinders and food



IN FRAY: Dharmendra Yadav, Guddu Jamali and Nirahua



during the Covid pandemic. He will get the votes of Muslims, along with Dalits and backwards, because of his reputation," Mumtaj Ahmed, who lives in Jamudi village.

In the adjoining hamlet of Asaul, Numan Ahmed said, "Muslims hold the key in this by-election. Both the SP and the BSP will get Muslim votes. The result will depend on who gets the maximum Muslim votes. Muslims are upset with Akhilesh because of his silence on Muslim-related issues recently... Jamali will get Dalit votes, but here there are fewer Dalits compared to Yadavs."

All three candidates have been drawing crowds to their public meetings, with Nirahua's events a big hit among the youth because of his popularity in the region. In 2019, when he finished second behind Akhilesh, the SP and the BSP had contested in alliance and a large chunk of the

Mayawati-led party's Dalit votes had transferred to the SP chief.

But the popular actor has to contend with some Muslim voters' anger with the BJP over recent incidents related to the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi and the police action against protesters demonstrating against now-suspended BJP leader Nupur Sharma's remarks on the Prophet.

"Have you seen the way young boys were beaten up? Is that justified?" asked Jiauddin, a resident of Magrawan village. Jiauddin, who claims to run a YouTube channel on local news, said if the SP was sure of receiving the support of Yadavs and Muslims it should have fielded a local leader.

At nearby Bisham village, where Jatav Dalits have a strong presence, voters appeared committed to electing the BSP candidate. They said that in the past governments led by the party had given them "social security".

In the Yadav-dominated Hariharpur village, where a government display board claims that the village had been electrified in 2020, farmer Harilal Yadav said he would vote for the SP. "Nirahua is also Yadav but his identity is that of a film actor," Harilal said. He claimed that a majority of the houses in his village got electricity connections during Akhilesh's tenure and the Yogi Adityanath government only built on the SP government schemes.

But Rakesh Yadav rejected his claim: "Yogi-ji has removed the loopholes in the system. Now, we are not dependent on middlemen to get work done."

The BJP has deployed two Yadav leaders — MoS Girish Chandra Yadav and MP Sangeeta Yadav — for campaigning. "BJP will win because of the work done by the our governments in UP and Centre," said Girish Yadav. **Full report: www.indianexpress.com**

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INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT
TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE
— MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

The IndianEXPRESS

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AGENCY & THANA

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

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

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

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

PRELUDE TO 5G

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

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

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

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

LIFE, NOT-LIFE

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

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

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

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

Congress in its labyrinth



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



DEEPIKA SARASWAT

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

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

IN THE SHADOW OF SANCTIONS

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

strategic actors determined to play a role in shaping a new multipolar order in their shared Eurasian neighbourhood and also at the global level.

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

Iran's Chabahar port, where India is de-

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

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

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

JUNE 17, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

NEW POSTINGS

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

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

MLA SHOT DEAD

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

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

ISRAELI INVASION

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



Lucknow

Justice more complete

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



ANUP SURENDRANATH

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

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

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

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



C R Sasikumar

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

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

The attempts to bring about procedural

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

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

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



RAKSHANDA JALIL

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

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

An ustad of our times

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

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

What the bulldozer demolishes

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



KAPIL SIBAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JOB CREATION

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

Vijai Pant, Hampur

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

Hemant Contractor, Pune

TOXIC CULTURE

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

Defence forces are notorious for how they treat their young recruits. As per the scheme, upto 25 per cent of the recruits shall be filtered out and regularised. This shall embolden the culture of sycophancy to remain in the good books of senior officers. For all practical purposes, it shall foster exploitation with the sword of Damocles hanging over the budding recruits’ heads. The *sine qua non* for any worker in any field to be motivated is to develop a sense of belongingness to the entity they are serving. The prospective scheme lacks this basic ingredient. Even big corporations that strive to scale down attrition rate have various incentives to keep the workforce engaged and motivated. What happens to all the recruits that wash out into a jobless market is a whole other question.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

BIG MONEY

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

SS Paul, Nadia



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

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

TOP OF THE WORLD



Actor 'strenuously' denies sex charges. AP

UK
Sexual assault: Kevin Spacey granted bail

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

USA
Expert with India link named for key Pentagon post

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

MYANMAR
Junta calls return of executions 'required action'

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

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

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

REUTERS & PTI
COLOMBO, JUNE 16

SRI LANKA'S fuel stocks will last for about five more days, its power and energy minister said on Thursday, as the island nation awaits official confirmation from the Indian government for a new \$500 million credit line for fuel. Chronic fuel shortages have worsened this week with kilometres-long lines at some gas stations countrywide, leading to sporadic protests as vehicle owners wait, sometimes overnight, for petrol and diesel. Sri Lanka is unable to make \$725 million in overdue payments to suppliers and also struggling to open letters of credit for future shipments, Power and Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera said.

"We are struggling to get fuel supplies due to our forex issues and the government is working to manage existing stocks of diesel and petrol until 21 June," he told reporters. "We are finding it difficult to meet demand and stocks could run out faster if we do not cut back on non-essential travel and stop hoarding fuel." "We are expecting a petrol shipment within the next three days and another two shipments in the next eight days," he added. The country has also decided

Auto driver dies in petrol queue

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

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



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

Battered by crisis, Lankans seek passport to better life

REUTERS
COLOMBO, JUNE 16

RMR LENORA stood in a snaking queue outside Sri Lanka's Immigration and Emigration Department headquarters for two days last week, hoping to get a passport and, with it, a chance to leave a country willing under an economic crisis. A garment worker, 33-year-old Lenora decided to apply for a job as a maid in Kuwait after her husband was laid off from a small restaurant where he worked as a cook. "My husband lost his job because there is no cooking gas

and food costs have skyrocketed. It is hard to find work and the salaries are low," said Lenora, who said she earns about 2,500 Sri Lanka rupees a day. So last week, she was in Colombo, to hand in her papers for her first passport. In the queue, Lenora was joined by labourers, shop owners, farmers, public servants and housewives, some of whom camped out overnight, all looking to escape. In the first five months of 2022, Sri Lanka has issued 288,645 passports compared with 91,331 in the same period last year, according to government data.



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

KYIV VISIT BY LEADERS OF FOUR EU NATIONS

Leaders pledge arms, EU path for Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KYIV, JUNE 16

FOUR EUROPEAN leaders expressed their support for Ukraine on Thursday while meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, vowing to back Kyiv's candidacy to eventually join the European Union and offering more weapons to fend off Russia's invasion. French President Emmanuel Macron promised Ukraine six more truck-mounted artillery guns, the latest in a new round of Western arms pledges as the war grinds on in the Donbas region in the east.

France, Germany, Italy and Romania "are doing everything so that Ukraine alone can decide its fate," Macron said at a news conference with Zelenskyy and the others. "My colleagues and I have come here to Kyiv today with a clear message: Ukraine belongs to the European family," said German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. With Scholz beside him, Macron defended earlier comments that riled Ukrainians about humiliating Russia. He solemnly noted how the end of World War II had sown the seeds of World War II. "Today, this war must be won, France clearly supports

Ukraine so it prevails," Macron said. "Germany, like France, will never be in situations where they negotiate on Ukraine's behalf with Russia. Moreover, we have never done that." Italian Premier Mario Draghi expressed concern about the millions of tons of grain backed up in Black Sea ports by the war, saying it could lead to a "world-wide catastrophe." "Russia is only looking for new ways to scare Europe and seize more and more of our land," Zelenskyy said. "The goal of Russia in this war is to break Ukraine and through this break the whole of Europe."

EXPLAINED
E A visit with symbolic weight
THE VISIT carries heavy symbolic weight since the leaders of France, Germany and Italy have faced criticism for continuing to engage with Putin and failing to provide Ukraine with the scale of weaponry that it has said is necessary to fend off the Russians.

President Reagan's shooter Hinckley fully released after 41 years

REUTERS
JUNE 16

JOHN HINCKLEY, who wounded then US President Ronald Reagan and three others in a 1981 assassination attempt, was released without conditions on Wednesday in compliance with a federal judge's order. He had received full-time conditional release in 2016 after 30 years in a psychiatric hospital in Washington and had lived with his mother in Virginia until her death last year. A jury had found him not guilty by reason of insanity in his 1982 trial, prompting Congress and some states to pass laws restricting the use of insanity as a defence. "After 41 years 2



John Hinckley Jr.

months and 15 days, FREEDOM AT LAST!!!" Hinckley, 67, wrote on his Twitter account on Wednesday afternoon. Last September, US District Judge Paul Friedman ruled that Hinckley was "mentally stable," had complied with the terms of his conditional release and that he should be granted unconditional release. Reagan's daughter Patti Davis opposed the release, saying Hinckley was a narcissist who she did not believe felt remorse.

UK
Indian-origin doctor freed in terror charge extradition case

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, JUNE 16

AN INDIAN-ORIGIN doctor from Assam fighting against being extradited to India on a terror charge for allegedly being chairman of United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) won his legal fight as he was discharged by a UK court on Thursday. Dr Mukul Hazarika, 75, a British national and general practitioner from Cleveland in northern England, was sought by the Indian authorities to be

prosecuted for "waging, or attempting to wage war, or abetting waging of war, against the Government of India and for conspiring to commit a terrorist act" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967. District Judge Michael Snow's judgment at Westminster Magistrates' Court said the accused must be discharged as the particulars in the case were not satisfied. "There is no admissible evidence that establishes that the defendant is Asom, the chairman of ULFA (I)," the judge concluded.

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

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

TIFFANY MAY
HONG KONG, JUNE 16

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

1997, that narrative — which rejects how the British saw their relationship to the city — will be explicitly taught to Hong Kong high school students through at least four new textbooks that will be rolled out in the fall. The textbook material is still under review by principals, teachers, scholars and employees of Hong Kong's Education Bureau, but it seems destined for classrooms. Local news websites published draft excerpts this week, and The New York Times viewed teachers' proof copies. The material is part of a wider campaign by China's top leader, Xi Jinping, to overhaul Hong Kong's schools, "protect young minds" and raise loyal, patriotic citizens.

Jeffrey Ngo, a Hong Kong pro-democracy activist and a doctoral candidate in history at Georgetown University, said the government's position "is a shorthand for saying, 'Hong Kong was always a part of China, thus Hong Kongers never could claim a right of self-determination.'" "It's about trying to ensure the next generation of young kids are going to be supportive or at least sympathetic to what the government is saying," Ngo added. "This is part of the remake of Hong Kong in the national security era." Under the terms of the 1997 handover negotiated with Britain, China had agreed that the social and economic systems of the territory would remain



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

unchanged for 50 years after resuming sovereignty, with the result that Hong Kong initially had a high degree of autonomy from the mainland. When moves by Beijing threatened that arrangement, protesters took to the streets in 2014 and again in 2019. Steve Tsang, the director of the SOAS China Institute in London, said since the Chinese leadership issued in 2013 a memo known as Document No. 9 that took aim at Western influences in the country, China has allowed only one version of history to be taught. Hong Kong would no longer be an exception to the rule. "In the Xi approach to history, facts are merely incidental," Professor Tsang said. "Only inter-

pretation matters. And only one interpretation is allowed." Scholars and historians said that China's portrayal of Hong Kong's status under British rule is not new. Although the Communist Party had referred to China before 1949 as a "half colony, half-feudal society," it has maintained since at least 1997 that Hong Kong was not a true colony, said Ho-fung Hung, a professor at Johns Hopkins University. He cited an article in the party's newspaper, People's Daily, published in March 1997, that argued: "The United Kingdom has exercised typical colonial rule in Hong Kong, but it does not mean that Hong Kong is a colony. Colonies in the usual

sense mainly refer to countries that have lost their sovereignty due to foreign rule and jurisdiction. Hong Kong is part of China's territory, so the concept of colony does not apply to Hong Kong." In the 19th century, Britain took over what is now modern-day Hong Kong via two wars and a series of treaties that the Chinese government called unequal and coerced. In 1946, the UN included Hong Kong on a list of "non-self-governing territories," and in a 1960 resolution said the people there should be granted "the right to self-determination." In 1972, after Beijing took over China's seat in the world body, it successfully pushed the U.N. to remove Hong Kong from the list. NYT

Tejaswin, Jeswin still hopeful of CWG spot despite AFI snub

ANDREW AMSAN
JUNE 16

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now TT player moves court

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

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

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

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

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

TUSHAR BHADURI
JUNE 16

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

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

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

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

What is the row all about?

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

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

What is the format?

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



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

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

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

How much money is on offer?

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

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

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

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

Who all have joined and why?

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

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

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

Poulter said: "I regard myself as a global

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

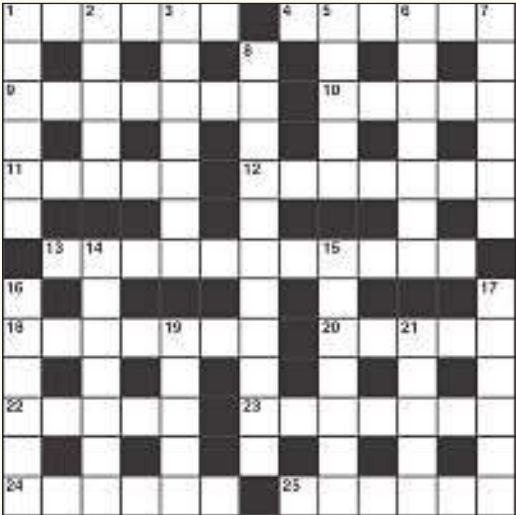
Why are so many LIV Golf players still in the US Open field?

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

Are there any parallels in other sports?

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

CROSSWORD 4770



ACROSS

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

DOWN

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

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

JUMBLED WORDS

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

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

NYIOR



IIORGN



EISLL

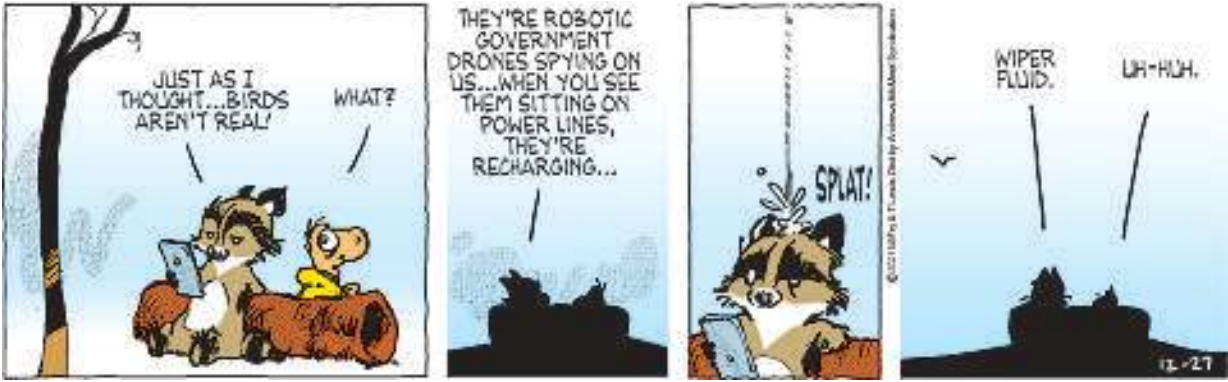


AGINKW



SOLUTION: WOULD, RIGHT, DIE, THAN, BE, AND, GENIUS.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



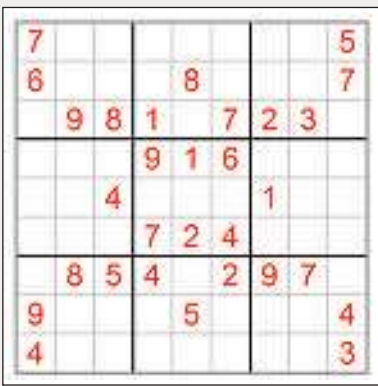
SUDOKU 4868

Difficulty Level 2s

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

Difficulty Level

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4867



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

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

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

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

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

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

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

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

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

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

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

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

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

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

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

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

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

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

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

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

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

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

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

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

12 SPORT

BRIEFLY

Prannoy storms into QF of Indonesia Open

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

Chanu wins gold at Khelo India League

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

Para Powerlifting: Basha wins 2 silvers

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

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

Dani Alves leaves Barca for 2nd time

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

Halle: Kyrgios, Medvedev win

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



SERIES WIDE OPEN

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

PTI

Yours faithfully, Sunil Chhetri

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

MIHIR VASAVDA
JUNE 16

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

'Boring lifestyle'

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

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

Multiple roles

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Flat tracks like Delhi can hamper confidence, says Harshal Patel

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JUNE 16

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

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

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

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

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

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



Hashal Patel says he prefers to play on slower pitches.

PTI

Extremely disappointed with our top order: Arun Lal

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
JUNE 16

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bengal aren't throwing in the towel yet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JUNE 16

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

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

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

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

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

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

Deshpande then swung into action and ripped apart the tail.

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

There was more agony in store for UP as Shaw (64, Y Jaiswal 35*, A Jaffer 32*) vs UP 180 all out (M Kaushik 38, S Mavi 48; T Deshpande 3/34, M Avasthi 3/39, T Koitan 3/35)