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WORLD



RUSSIAN MISSILES POUND KYIV AS G7 LEADERS MEET

WHITE HOUSE TO FIGHT STATES OVER ABORTION PILL **P 13**

SALVE VS SIBAL, SINGHVI IN HIGH VOLTAGE BATTLE

Sena rebels challenge Dy Speaker's decisions in SC, to be heard today

One more minister flies to Guwahati, Shinde has 39 now

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MUMBAI, JUNE 26

THE MAHARASHTRA rebels camping in BJP-ruled Assam have moved their battle to the Supreme Court. The court will take up two petitions on Monday — one by rebel Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde; the other by 15 MLAs belonging to his camp.

The petitions challenge the decision by Deputy Speaker Narhari Zirwal to recognise Ajay

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Aaditya Thackeray arrives for a meeting at the Shiv Sena office in Mumbai, Sunday. *Amrit Chakravarty* **REPORTS, PAGE 6**

Keep Central forces ready, says Governor; 15 rebel MLAs get Y-plus security

YOGESH NAIK
MUMBAI, JUNE 26

FLAGGING REPORTS of rebel Shiv Sena MLAs' houses and offices being targeted in Maharashtra, Governor B S Koshiyari has asked the Centre to keep "adequate" central security forces "ready... to address the situation".

Meanwhile, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Sunday granted Y-plus security cover, comprising CRPF personnel, to at least 15 rebel Shiv Sena MLAs. While the MLAs are in a hotel in Assam, sources said security will be provided to their families in Maharashtra.

In his letter to Union Home **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**SAD (Amritsar) president Simranjit Singh Mann after winning the bypoll in Sangrur on Sunday. *Gurmeet Singh*

BJP wrests SP's strongholds in UP, AAP loses Sangrur in Punjab LS bypoll

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, JUNE 26

JUST MONTHS after it stormed to power in Punjab, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) suffered a setback on Sunday as it lost the Sangrur Lok Sabha seat, vacated by its Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, to Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) president Simranjit Singh Mann. The AAP now has no member in the Lok Sabha.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party (SP) lost its strongholds of Azamgarh and Rampur to the BJP in the Lok Sabha bypolls. The two seats fell vacant after party chief Akhilesh Yadav and senior party leader Azam Khan were elected to the Assembly in March.

In Azamgarh, where the Muslim-Yadav dominance had helped Mulayam Singh Yadav win the seat in 2014 and Akhilesh in 2019, BJP nominee Dinesh Lal Yadav "Nirahua", a

EXPLAINED

Setback for Opp

THE DEFEAT in Sangrur, just months after its spectacular win in the Punjab Assembly elections, comes as a wake-up call for the AAP. In UP, by wresting two SP strongholds, the BJP has strengthened its already-dominant position ahead of the urban local body elections due later this year.

Bhojpuri actor, defeated SP's Dharmendra Yadav, a former MP and cousin of Akhilesh, by a margin of about 8,600 votes. In 2019, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

MORE REPORTS **PAGE 4**

New SIT to probe Sreekumar, Teesta, Bhatt for conspiracy

VAIBHAV JHA
AHMEDABAD, JUNE 26

THE GUJARAT government on Sunday formed a six-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by the state's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) DIG Deepan Bhadrani to investigate retired DGP R B Sreekumar, activist Teesta Setalvad and former IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt for criminal conspiracy and forgery, and other charges, "as per directions of the Supreme Court", a top official told *The Indian Express*.

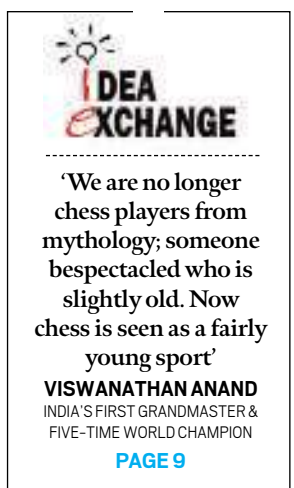
The move follows an FIR **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**Setalvad at an Ahmedabad court, Sunday. *Nirmal Harindran*

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

IN SC's NAME **PAGE 6**

PM IN MUNICH

PM Narendra Modi addresses the Indian diaspora in Munich, Germany, where he arrived on Sunday to take part in the G7 summit. At the community event, the PM said the Emergency, announced on June 25, 1975, was a 'black spot' in India's history. **P 11**



EXPRESS NETWORK

YOUTUBE REMOVES NEW MOOSEWALA SONG AFTER GOVT COMPLAINT **PAGE 4**

GTA polls pass off peacefully, 59% turnout recorded

SWEETY KUMARI
DARJEELING, JUNE 26

THE ELECTIONS to the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) in north Bengal's Darjeeling Hills were held peacefully with 59.05% voter turnout on Sunday, officials said.

People queue up to vote in Darjeeling on Sunday. *Partha Paul*

"The polls were overall peaceful, except for a few minor incidents," Darjeeling District Magistrate S Ponnambalam said. The final voting figures may slightly vary as reports were yet to be received from some polling stations, officials said.

Polling for the GTA, the semi-autonomous council that gov-

erns the Darjeeling Hills, began on a slow note in the morning on Sunday, said election officials. The voting, held after 10 years, began at 7am with 9.98% voters casting their franchise till 9am, it **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

RELATED REPORTS **PAGE 3**

MP toasts its first Ranji title: 'Moment of a lifetime'

MP coach Chandrakant Pandit and captain Aditya Shrivastava on Sunday. *PTI*ABHISHEK PUROHIT
BENGALURU, JUNE 26

MADHYA PRADESH captain Aditya Shrivastava was waiting for his turn to speak after Mumbai skipper Prithvi Shaw at the post-match presentation of the Ranji Trophy final. But Shrivastava's team had walked over to the board reading "Champions", ready to pose for photographs.

Earlier, in another glimpse of what this maiden Ranji Trophy crown means to a state formed in 1956, Shrivastava was already in his official dark blue MP blazer as he stood a few metres from his impatient teammates just moments after the six-wicket victory over 41-time champions Mumbai.

"Completely ecstatic," the 28-year-old captain began when it was his turn to talk to the presenter, Anjum Chopra, the former India captain.

"A generation...of time has gone by and MP has won the Ranji Trophy for the first time **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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3 WEST BENGAL



Local residents on their way to cast vote at the Thurbo Prathamik Pathshala in Mirik. Partha Paul

GORKHALAND TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION ELECTION

First-time voters want jobs and development, vote for a change

Villagers accuse local administration & government of indifferent treatment

SWEETY KUMARI
DARJEELING, JUNE 26

AFTER WALKING hilly terrain for about 45 minutes and climbing 200 steps by Thurbo Tea garden, 18-year-old Swadiksha, a first-time voter, cast her vote at Thurbo Prathamik Pathshala in Mirik to elect a candidate of her choice for the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), the voting for which took place on Sunday.

Swadiksha is voting for a regular supply of potable water and electricity and a road to her village, among other things, she told The Indian Express. "Can you imagine, at a time when people are thinking of buying land on Mars and the moon, we don't have proper electricity and water supply to our village," said Swadiksha, a Class 12 student who lives in the Thurbo Tea Estate area, located at an altitude varying from 3,220 to 8,010 feet, in Mirik town of Darjeeling district. "Moreover, no government thinks about the youths. There is no job opportunity for them. Tourism is there, but our village is too far from tourist spots. People come here for sightseeing and return after a few hours," she rued. This polling station has recorded a 54 per cent turnout till 2:48 pm. "There are 819 voters registered at this polling booth and 443 have, so far, cast their vote," said Arvind Rai, the Presiding Officer.

When the GTA polling was underway, The Indian Express travelled to several villages and gram panchayats and interacted with a wide range of voters.

Another first-time voter 18-year-old Sukaj Tamang, a student at a local school in Simana village, too complained that "no political party is serious about the problems faced by the youths". "I haven't come across any GTA candidate with a vision for the welfare and growth of the youths, like creating job opportunities for them and providing better education infrastructure. After completing education here, youths move out in search of a better opportunity or loiter here and there with no job in hand," said Tamang.



Gorkha Janmukti Morcha chief Bimal Gurung, who boycotted the GTA poll, at the Singmari party office in Darjeeling as the polling goes on. Partha Paul

Soon, a few local youths from Simana village, located at the edge of the Indian territory bordering Nepal, joined Tamang. "We are tired of being fooled by politicians in the name of separate statehood. Tourism is restricted to and around Darjeeling city. A few tourists pass through our village on their way to Mirik, that too for a few minutes. There is no development at all in our village. There is no proper water supply, no dispensary and just a few teachers at the primary school. Even mobile networks do not work properly. We want a change and development in the true sense," said Minju Serpa and Kundan Khaws, both first-time voters.

Several polling stations in Darjeeling and Kurseong were located in isolated areas with limited facilities, some of them even lacking mobile connectivity. A few were located in the forest or semi-forest areas.

Balasan Forest village, located in the middle of a forest area at an altitude of nearly 6,000 feet and about 5 kilometres from Ghum station, has a total of 507 registered voters, but only 178 had cast their vote till 11 am. "Till 11 am, 178 people cast their vote. It is relatively low. If the weather remains clear we hope the turnout will improve," said Presiding Officer Binay Deep Tamang at the Balasan

Bhanjyang Forest Village Primary School polling station.

Most of the people in this village are labours and survive on agriculture. The villagers accused the administration and the government of indifferent treatment. Angry over the non-fulfilment of promises made by the government and local politicians, Rajni Bhutiya chose not to vote.

"I won't vote. What's the benefit of voting when no one even comes to see in which condition we live here," said Bhutiya.

Usha Bhutiya, 52, too, slammed the local administration and the government for their lackadaisical attitude toward villages in the district. "Darjeeling and Kurseong are tourist spots, so we developed homestay but people hardly visit. Why would they visit here? There is no sightseeing area here. We have a 'Hawaghar' of the British Era, but it is destroyed due to the apathy of the government. If the government restores it and declares it a heritage site, and creates some sight-seeing spots in our village to attract tourists, our lives will be a little easy. Even during the peak season when no hotel is available in Darjeeling, we get only 40-45 tourists," said 60-year-old Subhash Lopchang.

Though voting remained peaceful, many chose not to vote.

TMC accused of rigging in Siliguri rural elections, municipal bypolls

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JUNE 26

SOME CANDIDATES on Sunday accused the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) of rigging and fake voting in the rural elections of the Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad in Darjeeling district and bypolls to six wards of different municipalities in other districts of West Bengal.

There were reports of tension in the Chaterhat area of ?? Siliguri's Fansidewa block. It was alleged that an agent of Akhtar Ali, an independent candidate, was prevented from entering a booth by the TMC workers.

Besides, allegations were also levelled against the party for preventing the Independent candidate's supporters and other voters from exercising their franchise. It was also claimed that the Trinamool supporters attacked independent candidates.

At least one person was injured. A video of such an incident went viral. In the video, some people were running with a group chasing them from behind with sticks. The police reached the spot after getting the news of the clash.

Independent candidate Akhtar claimed that the miscreants attacked them without provocation at the behest of the ruling party.

CPM leader Gargi Chatterjee alleged rigging in the bypoll for a ward of the Bhatpara Municipality. She said, "In a booth, unauthorised people entered the booth. We complained to the police but they did not take any action."

Partha Bhowmik, a TMC leader from North 24 Parganas, denied the allegations. He said, "In one booth we got a complaint that the media was stopped from entering a booth and we protested against it. Overall, the polling was peaceful. In the initial hours, polling percentage was low but it increased later."

Trinamool Congress debunks report that it proposed Murmu for president in 2017

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, JUNE 26

THE TRINAMOL Congress did not propose the name of Droupadi Murmu as president in 2017, say the party's spokespersons, debunking a media report that it had backed the tribal leader for the post five years ago.

Murmu is now the BJP-led NDA's nominee for president. With the numbers in her favour, she is set to become the country's first tribal president and the second woman in the post.

Quoting TMC leader Kunal

Ghosh, a prominent Hindi daily reported earlier this week that the party was the first to have proposed the name of the former Jharkhand governor as president in 2017.

That is incorrect, said party spokesperson Ghosh. Setting the record straight, he said the TMC along with several other opposition parties had endorsed former speaker Meira Kumar for the top job in 2017 — when Ram Nath Kovind was elected as president. However, he had written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his personal capacity, suggesting that a con-

sensus candidate be considered and forwarded three names — Najma Heptullah, then president Pranab Mukherjee (for re-election) and Murmu.

At the time, Ghosh was suspended from the TMC.

"I had written it as a citizen of the country. I had suggested the names in my individual capacity at that time and not on behalf of TMC," Ghosh told PTI.

TMC Rajya Sabha MP and national spokesperson Sukhendu Sekhar Roy added that Ghosh's 2017 letter was sent in his private capacity. The party was not privy to his missive and had not en-

dorsed it, Roy said.

A copy of the June 24, 2017 letter resurfaced two days ago after West Bengal's ruling party supported the candidature of Yashwant Sinha as the joint opposition candidate and several party leaders, including Ghosh, called for electing him to the Rashtrapati Bhavan to defeat the "undemocratic, fascist BJP".

The report in the Hindi daily followed.

Ghosh said he was not belittling Murmu by pledging support to opposition consensus candidate Sinha, who resigned from TMC recently.

Left parties protest arrest of Setalvad and Sreekumar, demand their release

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JUNE 26

LEFT FRONT leaders and workers took to the streets in the state on Sunday protesting the arrest of civil rights activist Teesta Setalvad and former Gujarat DGP R.B. Sreekumar. Led by CPIM, they held a massive protest rally from Park Circus to Entally market here, demanding their immediate release and withdrawal of all "false charges" against them.

In a statement issued here, Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) general secretary Himagnaraj Bhattacharya said, "Renowned human rights activist Teesta Setalvad and former DGP R.B. Sreekumar, who dared to expose the acts of the Sangh Parivar and the BJP government during the 2002 Gujarat riots, are now being targeted by the state machinery. False charges were imposed on them and they were taken into custody. This is nothing but revenge politics being

waged by the Sanghparivar against its opponents. The example of Sanjeev Bhatt, a civil servant, a whistle-blower, is right in front of us. The arrests are in continuation with repressive actions."

"DYFI Central Executive Committee condemns the arrest and demands their immediate release and withdrawal of all false charges imposed on them. We stand against the use of state machinery for political gains and seeking revenge. We also request the people of the country, who believe in democratic values, to come together against this sheer injustice and rise in protest," added Bhattacharya.

Revolutionary Socialist Party (India) general secretary Manoj Bhattacharya said, "The RSS-BJP combine has once again demonstrated that the state, as on this day, is abominably intolerant and aggressive in avenging anyone they doubt to disagree with their nefarious designs. The Revolutionary Socialist Party is shocked and expresses its condemnation of the

fascistic act of arresting the noted social worker Teesta Setalvad since she advanced the years-long fight for justice to the victims of the state-sponsored genocide in 2002 in Gujarat." The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) also protested the arrests across the state.

The CPIML Central Committee said, "We salute the courage of Zakia Jafri, Teesta Setalvad, R.B. Shree Kumar and others who did not falter in their pursuit of justice even when Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister. It does not augur well for a democracy when the Supreme Court inexplicably criminalises this pursuit of justice and calls for every person involved need to be in the dock and proceeded in accordance with the law. Their arrest is a product of the vindictiveness of PM Modi and Home Minister (Amit) Shah, enabled by the apex court of India."

A day after the Supreme Court upheld the SIT's clean chit in the 2002 riots to the then

Gujarat government led by Chief Minister Narendra Modi, the Ahmedabad Detection of Crime Branch (DCB) arrested retired state DGP R.B. Sreekumar, whose role had been called into question by the Court, and Mumbai-based activist Teesta Setalvad, who supported the petitioner, Zakia Jafri.

The two were held on charges of criminal conspiracy, forgery and other Sections of the IPC based on an FIR lodged in the DCB by Inspector Darshansinh Barad, which quotes extensively from the Supreme Court order. Also named in the nine-page FIR, filed on behalf of the Gujarat state, is former IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt, who also faced strictures in the Supreme Court order. Bhatt is already in jail in connection with another case.

While a DCB team detained Sreekumar after serving summons at his residence in Gandhinagar on Saturday afternoon, Setalvad was detained around the same time from her Mumbai residence.

Bengal logs 493 new Covid cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, JUNE 26

THE STATE reported fresh 493 fresh Covid-19 cases on Sunday, pushing the tally to 20,24,972, a health department bulletin said. The Covid-19 toll remained at 21,216 as there was no report of any fatality due to the disease in the last 24 hours, it said.

West Bengal currently has 3,777 active Covid-19 cases, while 19,99,979 people have recovered from the disease, including 212 people on Sunday, the bulletin said.

The Covid-19 recovery rate now is 98.77 per cent while the daily positivity count was 5.11 per cent.

The state had reported 235 new Covid-19 cases and two fatalities on Saturday.

A total of 2,55,18,831 samples have been tested for Covid-19 so far, it added.

Man dies as boundary wall collapses on him

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, JUNE 26

A MAN was killed when the boundary wall of a dilapidated house collapsed and fell on him during rains in central Kolkata on Sunday, police said.

Jaan Alam (45), a resident of the Entally area, died when the wall fell on him as he was walking on the pavement adjacent to the dilapidated house in the Taltala area of the city, the police said.

Alam was declared dead when rescuers took him to a nearby hospital.

Police and Kolkata Municipal Corporation officials rushed to the spot and cordoned off the stretch to remove the debris.

Empanelled candidates allege irregularities in appointment of assistant professors by WBCSC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JUNE 26

COLLEGE SERVICE Commission's 2018 empanelled candidates on Sunday alleged that there were irregularities in the selection of assistant professors by the West Bengal College Service Commission (WBCSC) (2018).

Holding a press conference presided over by Binoy Krishna Pal, Kshudiram Chakraborty and Palash Mandal at the Kolkata Press Club, they claimed that they were the "victims of the corruption in the recruitment by the Commission in 2018".

Pal accused the Commission of following an "illegitimate" grading process and "recruiting ineligible candidates" as assistant professors in colleges across

the state.

"We have with us proofs in the form of mark sheets and certificates to prove the ineligibility of those who were preferred over the legitimate candidates. We have already produced them in the court and will continue providing more proofs until everything is brought out in the open," claimed Pal. "Half of those who have been given jobs belong to political families or are otherwise influential. They made it to the list despite scoring as low as 30-40%," alleged Pal.

"We have filed an RTI and collected all requisite information. We will now present them in the court," said Kshudiram Chakraborty. "A single bench of the Calcutta High Court gave a decision in our favour. Now, we

want the Commission to give us the marks percentage of those who have been recruited," added Chakraborty.

"I am a PhD and a victim of the corruption in the recruitment process. When I saw MA pass-outs were being recruited, I approached the Commission but they said that everything was being done following the rule. However, the truth is that they moulded the rules as per their convenience," alleged Mandal.

"It's not about taking revenge. It is about seeking justice for those who send their children to colleges where these corrupt assistant professors have been recruited," said Pal.

WBCSC officials, however, refused to comment on the issue, saying the matter is sub judice.

TMC MP Prasun Banerjee expresses surprise over return of turncoats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, JUNE 26

TRINAMOL CONGRESS MP Prasun Banerjee on Sunday expressed surprise as to why turncoats who had deserted the TMC to join the BJP ahead of the 2021 West Bengal Assembly election were allowed re-entry to its fold.

The MP did not name anyone in particular.

Speaking at a function in his Howrah Lok Sabha constituency, the former footballer-turned-politician said he was at a loss to understand the induction of some turncoats, who had even campaigned against TMC

supremo Mamata Banerjee and others, into the ruling party.



Banerjee had made similar comments in Nov last

"After the spectacular victory of the TMC in the 2021 Assembly polls in the face of an aggressive campaign by the BJP, we find some of those who had deserted us and spoke against us at such a crucial time is being taken back in the party, one after another. Don't know, why," Banerjee said.

In November last year, Banerjee had made similar comments, saying he had reservations about allowing the former

minister and a TMC turncoat, Rajib Banerjee, to participate in political programmes in the Howrah Lok Sabha constituency in the coming days.

Rajib Banerjee had returned to the TMC from the saffron camp in October last year.

BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar said Banerjee's comments show there are "dissatisfied souls within the TMC."

"Everything is not well within the TMC. It is not a happy family." TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh had earlier said the MP's comments were his personal views.

"We are sure he will understand and appreciate the TMC stand on the issue," Ghosh had said.

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The General Public is hereby informed that my client is intending to purchase the below mentioned schedule property from Hemlata Patel, Jaswanti Patel, Bhaskar Patel, Vandana Patel and Mini Patel all wife, sons and daughters of Late Jayanti Lal Patel of 912, Pran Krishna Mukherjee Road, Kolkata - 700002. If anybody is having any objection, claim interest, dispute, for the above intended sale transaction, he/she may contact the undersigned with documents substantiating his/her objections/claims/disputes within seven days from date hereof failing my client shall proceed to complete the sale transaction with above owners as if there are no third party claim/objections in respect of the schedule property and thereafter no claims/objections will be entertained.

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Among 4,016 institutions listed by the Rajasthan BoIP are also JSW Future Energy Limited (Rs 40,000 crore), Sterlite Power Technologies Private Limited of the Vedanta Group (Rs 40,000 crore), Hindustan Zinc Cairn, also of Vedanta Group (Rs 33,350 crore), Axis Energy Ventures Private Limited (Rs 30,000 crore), Axis Energy (Rs 30,000 crore), Eden-Renewables (Rs 20,000 crore) and Tata Power (Rs 15,000 crore).



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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

IN SC’S NAME

Had it not been for Court, justice would be elusive for Gujarat 2002. That’s why its latest order, its use by police, is disturbing

IN THE LONG, tortuous and still unfolding process of justice after the communal violence in Gujarat 2002, the Supreme Court of India has played a commendable role. Its several interventions have ensured that the process stays on course, that it was insulated from pressure by the powerful, and that victims and survivors could hope for a fair and just closure. This is why the two arrests on Saturday, of activist Teesta Setalvad and former Gujarat DGP RB Sreekumar, are disquieting — the FIR is based on extensive quotes from the SC verdict and its annexures the day before. On Friday, the SC upheld the SIT’s clean chit in the 2002 riots to the then Gujarat government led by Chief Minister Narendra Modi, discarding allegations of a larger conspiracy by high state functionaries. The collapse of that particular case was, arguably, foretold — connecting the dots right up to the chief minister’s office was a tall order to begin with, and the case may have been propelled more by the anguish of those devastated by the violence, less by evidence that could hold up in a court of law. In the same order, however, the Court went a worrying step further. Its verdict said, and the FIR lodged the next day faithfully quoted: “At the end of the day, it appears to us that a coalesced effort of disgruntled officials of the state of Gujarat along with others was to create sensation ... to keep the pot boiling, obviously for ulterior design ... all those involved in such abuse of process, need to be in the dock and proceeded with in accordance with law”. The day after, the question is: Surely the court would not countenance a witch-hunt that borrows its lines from the court?

The law must take its course on Sreekumar and Setalvad. But there is a problem with an FIR that draws so heavily upon what the court says, and a court verdict that lends itself to such immediate police action against those standing with the petitioners in cases of 2002. What the court said on Friday and the police taking its cue from it on Saturday also appears to turn on its head the story so far — after all, it was the same court that, down the years, took a number of unprecedented steps to ensure justice for 2002. The SC stayed the trials in certain cases in response to allegations that there had been serious lapses in investigation. It set up an SIT and supervised designated fast track courts for hearing sensitive cases. It ensured that cases were shifted outside Gujarat so that justice could be done. Its interventions resulted in the reopening of nearly 2,000 post-Godhra riots cases. The SC, in fact, became the centrepiece of a larger effort in which individual activists, NGOs and the NHRC, among others, contributed towards bringing justice closer to victims and survivors of the communal violence that took place in Gujarat a little over two decades ago.

The cases stemming from Gujarat 2002 raise serious questions about a range of abdications by institutions and actors. The collapse of one case should not become the pre-text for a sweeping indictment of the whole struggle for justice and accountability. The SC must also reflect on whether it behoves its status and role as the wise custodian of constitutional processes and values to be seen to be turning on those who were stricken by the violence and knocked on its doors, even if, as it turns out in this particular case, their plea failed to hold.

BALANCING ON BRICS

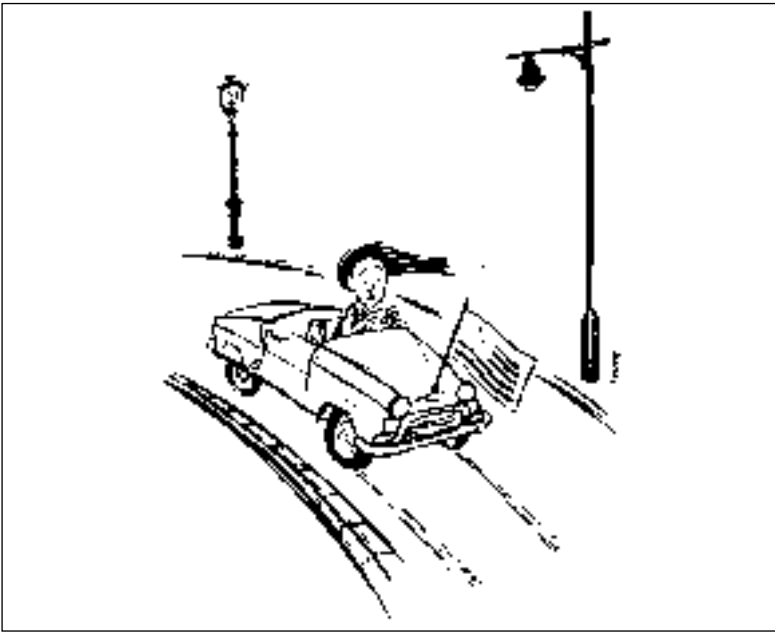
Its latest outing navigated tightrope on Ukraine. It is yet to live up to its promise of an alternative economic or trading bloc

THE MOST REMARKABLE thing about the BRICS summit last week was that its five members managed to negotiate their way through the meeting in a way that sent no ripples of surprise through the post-February 24 world. This was the 14th summit of the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa grouping set up in 2009. It was hosted by China this year and was its opportunity to showcase multi-lateralism, Beijing’s big foreign policy slogan, and to hit out once again at US “hegemony”. Aside from the members, China had invited 13 nations from across continents, signalling its desire to expand the group. Getting Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend despite the tensions owing to China’s military incursions in Ladakh was a bonus. For India, BRICS was always about its commitment to building non-western alliances, but this time it was, more, an international balancing act. Ditto for Brazil. It voted for the UN Security Council resolution “deploring” the invasion of Ukraine and the General Assembly resolution condemning Russia, but President Jair Bolsonaro went to Moscow on a “solidarity trip” a week before the invasion and has insisted his country stands for “peace”. South Africa too has been walking the neutrality tightrope on Ukraine. As for Russia, the summit gave President Vladimir Putin his first multilateral outing since February 24. The joint statement was able to find common ground on the invasion of Ukraine by asserting the sanctity of sovereignty and territorial integrity and the need to find a peaceful solution.

President Putin’s proposal for an alternative reserve currency was received with caution. The Western sanctions on Russia have had a fall-out on economies around the world, but a post-dollar world is an idea whose time has not yet arrived. Barring Russia now, the other BRICS members are well-integrated members of the US currency-led, digitised global financial market. But in a nod to the concept, a BRICS Think Tank Network for Finance is to be set up, to “work independently and provide intellectual support, as and when tasked, for knowledge sharing, exchange of experiences and practices and cooperation on finance issues amongst BRICS countries, aiming at addressing global challenges and serving the interests of the EMDCs (Emerging Markets and Developing Countries)”. The wording is suitably vague.

BRICS has yet to live up to its promise of an economic or trading bloc that can offer alternatives to developing countries. The New Development Bank, or the BRICS bank, is yet to catch speed as a multilateral lender of standing. China’s push to dominate BRICS, and Russia’s being in economic limbo, have set limits on what the grouping can hope to achieve.

FREEZE FRAME



E P UNNY



ASHUTOSH VARSHNEY

IN A DEMOCRACY, can a right once granted be taken away? In the current international debate, this question has become part of the rising intellectual and political concern over “democratic backsliding”, a concept that depicts how democracies weaken and decline without collapsing fully.

As the world’s oldest surviving democracy, the United States has figured prominently in this debate, especially since Donald Trump rose to the presidency in 2016, engaged in a lot of anti-minority politics, and finally sought to overturn his 2020 election defeat. But after all is said and done, the American debate thus far has been about whether it is legitimate to put some restrictions on the exercise of franchise by racial minorities, who vote markedly less for the Republican party and considerably more for the Democrats. Strictly speaking, the debate has not been about the right to vote per se.

With the US Supreme Court’s decision on June 24 to overturn a half-century-old right to abortion, granted by a 1973 Supreme Court decision in the Roe vs Wade case, the debate has now become wider, as it moves from how to engineer voter suppression to the larger realm of rights. With a 5-4 majority, the court has said that American women have no nationwide right to abortion. Rather, state legislatures should decide whether women can have that right in their respective states. In several states, within hours of the court’s decision, abortion was banned, for prior legislation existed. Though Democratic states would steadfastly protect the right to abortion, nearly half of the 50 states are likely to go the other way. In the new field of democratic backsliding, comprising the retraction of rights, the floodgates have opened up.

In poll after poll, a majority of Americans, bordering sometimes on three-fourths of the population, support women’s right to abortion. So, what the court has done is against popular will. But that cannot be the principal criticism against the decision. Courts are not fundamentally governed by popular passion or will, which can fluctuate from election to election, but by constitutional propriety. The key question is whether the right to abortion was constitutionally justified.

The 1973 court decision allowing the



RUCHI GUPTA

THE POLITICAL crisis in Maharashtra has brought the focus back to the anti-defection law. By all accounts, the law has failed to shore up the stability of elected governments. Many governments have fallen due to defections and the defectors have not suffered any cautionary consequences. To thwart the provisions of the law, the Speaker can keep defection pleas pending and the beneficiary party can use money and investigative agencies to engineer enough defections to hit the two-thirds threshold. Voters, too, don’t penalise defections, with defectors routinely winning re-elections. Some have thus mooted amendments to the anti-defection law to mandate time-bound decisions by the Speaker and disqualify defectors from the next election.

The practice of politics is too wide for any institutional process to fully capture. Politicians are adept at subverting institutional processes and there are many possibilities for payoff for defectors outside of elected office alone. Moreover, politics has a history of the exercise of power by proxy and the disqualified representative can have a family member stand in their stead. It is thus unlikely that these amendments will stop defections in any substantive manner. The anti-defection law and proposed amendments approach the issue of defections from the prism of denying power to the defector, a framing which repeatedly comes up short in the face of a bigger and/or more punitive power.

It is obvious that if political parties want to resist defections, they must be able to project



Backsliding in America

Arc of rights must broaden further, instead of retreating. Overturning of Roe v Wade outlines democratic challenge

Men don’t have to deal physically with pregnancy, whereas the foetus grows inside a woman’s body for nine months. If men have the right over their bodies, which can’t be taken away by the government, why can’t women have autonomy over their bodies as well? Why should they be subjected to the government’s authority and supervision any more than men’s bodies? That men are free, but women must forcibly be chained to maternity, is an idea whose time surely has gone. Maternity must be a voluntary choice. There is no going back to the notion of rights as they were viewed in the 18th century — unequal, unneutral, unbalanced.

right to abortion was based on the 14th Constitutional Amendment (1868). This Amendment, the court said, allowed protection of liberty and privacy, something the state could not impinge upon. Thus, even though abortion was not mentioned in the 1787 US Constitution, abortion’s defence was derived from the 1868 Amendment — via its protection of citizens’ liberty about matters as intimate as a decision to have a child. The 1973 court also argued that this right was not absolute, limited as it would be by considerations of “protecting potential life”. This line of reasoning led to a trimester-based court ruling, which more or less forbade the government from interfering in the first trimester of pregnancy but the state could ban abortions in the third trimester, when “the viability of the fetus” was beyond doubt.

This whole structure of judicial reasoning has now collapsed. In the court’s opinion, the right to privacy stemming from the 14th Amendment is not relevant, for abortion concerns not only the pregnant woman but also the life of the unborn. Moreover, the court said, abortion is neither “enumerated” as a right in the original 1787 constitution nor is it consistent with American history and tradition. In short, it is a political and legislative, not a constitutional, matter. State legislatures should decide what is permissible.

How should a political analyst comment on this tussle? Hard as we might wish otherwise, constitutional decisions are inevitably tied up with politics. There is no escape from political reasoning.

First of all, no constitution can fully anticipate how the arc of rights would bend in the future. Abortion was not mentioned in the 1787 constitution, nor explicitly in the 1868 amendment. That is because women were not autonomous political agents at that time. Until they were given the right to vote in 1920, they were not a constitutional category in the US, as was true virtually everywhere in the world. Women are autonomous agents today. Norms change; rights evolve.

Second, as the court’s dissent note puts it, how can this majority decision ignore rape and incest? Why should women carry the child of a rapist, a father or an uncle? If abortion as a right is dissolved, women can be

forced to give such unwanted births. The majority decision of the court is silent on this important matter.

Third, having a child is not simply a deeply moral obligation to the unborn. It is also a decision that affects “the ability of women to participate equally in (the nation’s) economic and social life”. These words are from a later decision, known as Casey (1992), when the US Supreme Court added the concept of “undue burdens” to support the idea of abortion. As more and more women become scientists, professors, journalists, lawyers, managers, executives, politicians and sportspersons, these considerations cannot simply be brushed aside. If a woman chooses to terminate a pregnancy now but has a child later, that may be more consistent with her dreams and desires, to which she has a rightful claim.

Finally, men don’t have to deal physically with pregnancy, whereas the foetus grows inside a woman’s body for nine months. If men have the right over their bodies, which can’t be taken away by the government, why can’t women have autonomy over their bodies as well? Why should they be subjected to the government’s authority and supervision any more than men’s bodies? That men are free, but women must forcibly be chained to maternity, is an idea whose time surely has gone. Maternity must be a voluntary choice. There is no going back to the notion of rights as they were viewed in the 18th century — unequal, unneutral, unbalanced.

With the Supreme Court’s overturning of abortion as a constitutionally guaranteed right, America has taken another step towards democratic backsliding. Now, democratic renewal not only means fighting for more easily accessible voting procedures but also a push for a legislative codification of the right to abortion. Typically, as they evolve and deepen, democracies allow the arc of rights to broaden further, not retreat. After this judgment in the US, the stakes have become much higher and the democratic challenges bigger.

The writer is Sol Goldman Professor of International Studies and the Social Sciences at Brown University

A LESSON FROM MAHARASHTRA

Political crisis shows that anti-defection law is ineffective, even counterproductive

Multiple analyses have attributed the political crisis in Maharashtra in part to Shiv Sena’s inability to accommodate the aspirations of its dissident MLAs. The rebel MLAs on their part have spoken of the chief minister’s inaccessibility. The MLAs may be opportunistic but there is no question that political parties are failing to create intra-party forums where differences can be expressed and resolved on an ongoing basis.

(imminent) power themselves. At the same time, out-of-power political parties must address organisational and ideological infirmities which have made them susceptible to mass defections. There are only about 4,000 MLAs in a country with a population of almost 1.4 billion people. However, political parties tasked with representing the aspirations of crores of people are unable to find candidates who take themselves seriously enough to not cross over to political opponents. The bar is so low that the MLAs have to be physically corralled and phones confiscated to ensure continuation with the party. This is not idealistic outrage but instead has pragmatic and organisational value. It is one thing for a few individuals to be susceptible to threats and inducement, another for the organisation to be vulnerable to mass defections. Individuals can be faulted in the former but the latter calls for urgent introspective and corrective measures at the level of the leadership.

Two measures with both short-term and long-term implications come to mind. First, political parties need ideological clarity and the ability to attract individuals with a sense of purpose and not the love of power alone. This ideological depth if reflected in the party organisation and its political programmes will give members the ability to withstand lean periods of power. Every party has committed individuals; internal party processes must be geared to identify and promote them into leadership positions. This ties into the second issue.

Multiple analyses have attributed the political crisis in Maharashtra in part to Shiv Sena’s inability to accommodate the aspirations of its dissident MLAs. The rebel MLAs on their part have spoken of the chief minister’s inaccessibility. The MLAs may be opportunistic but there is no question that political parties are failing to create intra-party forums where differences can be expressed and resolved on an ongoing basis. Internal mechanisms for inner-party democracy — from elections to deliberative forums — are ultimately at the discretion of the party leadership. Scrapping the anti-defection law would provide some institutional leverage to express intra-party dissidence and while it may be more chaotic in the short term, can lead to greater stability and political strength in the long term.

Finally, two fundamental questions. In trying to legislate political affiliation — a key freedom in democracy — political parties are ending up as supplicants in the court. This repeated ceding of political power to the judiciary is a deviation from the democratic paradigm and must be checked. Second, the anti-defection law has undermined not just the principle of representation but is also contributing to polarisation in our country by making it impossible to construct a majority on any issue outside of party affiliation. Instead of providing stability, the law is undermining our democracy. It is time to scrap the anti-defection law.

The writer is executive director of the Future of India Foundation

JUNE 27, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

ISRAEL’S INVASION

GUNS STAYED SILENT in Beirut while new diplomatic moves raised cautious hopes of a breakthrough in efforts to end the Lebanese conflict. The ceasefire proclaimed by Israel after three days of bombarding Beirut seemed to be holding. During the lull, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation studied new American proposals for neutralising the Palestinian military presence in Lebanon. No details were given but the former Lebanese Prime Minister Saeb Salam, who has played a go-between role in negotiations, told reporters, “There has been a new development. I believe things are looking better.”

PM MEETS ABDULLAH

PRIME MINISTER Indira Gandhi, and J&K Chief Minister Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah met for the second time to remove “misunderstandings”, if any, between them. Mrs Gandhi, accompanied by Governor B K Nehru, had a closed-door meeting for over 40 minutes with the ailing Kashmir leader at the latter’s residence in Srinagar. Farooq Abdullah, the Sheikh’s son and president of the ruling National Conference, said the two had a “cordial meeting”. Asked if the misunderstanding between them was removed by this meeting, he replied, “There was, in fact, no misunderstanding” and added “but most

of the things were sorted out”.

HAIG RESIGNS

US SECRETARY OF State Alexander Haig said he had resigned as he felt the Reagan administration’s foreign policy had strayed from its goal of “consistency, clarity and steadiness of purpose.” Haig, appearing in the State Department auditorium, read his letter of resignation, which said he and the President had agreed on the three aims at the start of the administration. “In recent months,” he said, “it has become clear to me that the foreign policy on which we embarked together was shifting from that careful course.”

THE IDEAS PAGE

West steps back, India shows way

While West curtails abortion rights, India empowers women through Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, Surrogacy Regulation Act and Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021



SMRITI IRANI

AT A TIME of distressing furore on social media and the streets against the near-total bans on abortion in the West, India's generous stance on the termination of pregnancy is a comfort-ing sanctum. Coupled with the moratorium on commercial surrogacy and the proposal to equalise men's and women's ages at marriage, India is positioned securely in the highest echelons of countries that safeguard reproductive autonomy.

India's constitutional ethos commits to the protection of personal liberty through Article 21. Abortion or termination of pregnancy is a woman's prerogative. While women are exclusively fated to withstand child-bearing — purely on account of their biological predisposition — sociocultural constructs also subject them to a disproportionate share of child-rearing.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021, is a step in the right direction. It ensures that expectant mothers exercise self-determination in welcoming new life to their homes. Under the aegis of the Act, abortions may be performed up to 24 gestational weeks on grounds of risk to the mother's life, mental anguish, rape, incest, contraception failure or the diagnosis of foetal abnormalities. The Act navigates the 20 weeks challenge posed by the MTP Act, 1971 and is a nod to advances in the field of health and reproductive science. It is a liberal achievement over countries where abortions are disallowed since conception, even in the most traumatising of circumstances of sexual abuse or incest.

The MTP Act, 2021, attests to the intuition and farsightedness of its crafters. Readiness for and desirability of children decisively shape the life trajectories of mothers, families and children alike. Unwanted pregnancies unexpectedly curtail the life choices of parents, especially mothers, and may limit their mental well-being and personal growth. Further, children born unwanted may suffer reduced opportunities. Illustratively, the WHO links the likelihood of children being born "wanted" to greater parental investments in their education.

Incumbent law and policy-makers have skillfully given reproductive choice a life-cycle twist. Since fertility, child-bearing and child-rearing are unmistakably associated with marriage, by proposing to raise the legal marriageable age for women, policymakers are heralding welcome changes that delay pregnancy. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021 seeks to push the marriage age for women from 18 years to 21 years. The Bill is well-founded in the face of scholarship and evidence cited by the WHO, which holds that adolescent mothers aged 10 to 19 years are prone to higher risks of eclampsia, puerperal endometritis, and systemic infections in comparison to women aged 20 to 24 years. Children born to such mothers additionally face higher risks of low birth weight, preterm delivery and severe neonatal conditions.

It is noteworthy that the unmet need for family planning in terms of limiting or spacing child-bearing decreased from 12.9 per cent



C R Sasikumar

to 9.4 per cent between NFHS-4 (2014-15) to NFHS-5 (2019-21). However, on a standalone basis, nearly 7 per cent of females aged 15-19 years were already mothers or pregnant at the time of NFHS-5, a marginal decline over NFHS-4's 7.8 per cent. Such young mothers are poorly aware of feeding practices and baby care, making them more likely to have stunted or wasted children. Together the MTP Act, 2021 and the PCMA Bill, 2021 — if enacted — can axe the vicious cycle of early marriages, consequent early pregnancies and poor maternal and child health outcomes.

Another underrated policy innovation that the government curated was the decimation of surrogacy bazaars that allowed "renting a womb". Given global inequalities, India became a lucrative "biomarket" for surrogate mothers. The bodies of poor Indian women became "bioavailable" to the residents of the Global North, spurring commercialisation of motherhood, the commodification of women and their reduction to their reproductive capacity. In a country with a long-standing cultural lineage of revering mothers, careless commercial surrogacy appeared to be in stark contrast with the cultural ethos. Responding to this dissonance, the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, replaced commercial surrogacy with ethical, altruistic surrogacy. The Act prohibits couples who are not of Indian origin from availing surrogacy in the country and allows only locals with certified, medical reasons necessitating gestational surrogacy to avail of it. The MTP Act, the Surrogacy Act and the PCMA (Amendment) Bill, 2021, collectively give new meaning to nari shakti.

Within this enabling politico-legal apparatus, the government has framed policies that readily coalesce to respect the choices and decisions made by women. Under the aegis of Ayushman Bharat-Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), a health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per annum is provided and a wide range of packages pertaining to obstetrics and gynaecology are offered. While the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) partially compensates wage loss before and after pregnancy, the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyaan (PMSMA) provides free antenatal care to pregnant women on every 9th day of the month, easing the financial burden of pregnant women.

Not only is the government making a con-

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021, is a step in the right direction. It ensures that expectant mothers exercise self-determination in welcoming new life to their homes. Under the aegis of the Act, abortions may be performed up to 24 gestational weeks on grounds of risk to the mother's life, mental anguish, rape, incest, contraception failure or the diagnosis of foetal abnormalities.

corted effort for reproductive choices to be easier on the pockets of women, it is also promoting safe motherhood through institutional deliveries under Janani Suraksha Yojana and quality, respectful care in labour rooms during deliveries under schemes like LaQshya. These efforts have culminated in a manifold increase in institutional deliveries from 79 per cent in NFHS-4 to nearly 89 per cent in NFHS-5. The ultimate reward to the nation is the greater longevity of mothers as evidenced by the declining Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) from 167 per lakh live births in 2011-13 to 103 per lakh live births as of 2019.

The present government evinces the highest regard for its *bahuroopi* daughters who act — at various points in their life — not only as loving mothers but as sincere students, valuable employees and valourous entrepreneurs. The Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign's call to ensure that girls are born and nurtured bore fruit in the form of an improved sex ratio of 1,020 females per 1,000 males. Yojanas such as Ujjwala and Jal Jeevan Mission gave many women much needed respite from the drudgery of collecting fuelwood or water so they could partake in other gainful activities. The Mudra Yojana has provided aspiring women entrepreneurs with loans sans collateral and yet another scheme, the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme, has advocated for higher subsidies for women.

While the West is curtailing abortion rights, India is extending the ceiling of permissible abortions. While menstrual hygiene remains a conversation hushed in whispered tones in parts of the world, PM Modi addressed the issue from the ramparts of the Red Fort with 1.3 billion Indians listening intently. By outlawing triple talaq, the government has addressed the constant state of insecurity faced by Muslim women. By proposing to revise the permissible marriageable age, the government has held men and women to the same, unbiased standards. The present government has instilled conscientiousness into the calculus of policymaking with a fervent hope that it will better the lives of the mothers and daughters of India for generations to come. Even as the West retrogresses, India shows the path to a progressive society.

The writer is Union Minister for Women and Child Development

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The Taliban are warming up to India faster than expected. Whether we like it or not, the Taliban are a reality now. To deal with them successfully, we have to re-evaluate our approach towards them..." — DAWN

Using past to oppress future

Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid judgment makes it clear that revanchist claims to religious sites, post 1947, have no basis in law



CHANDER UDAY SINGH

NOVEMBER 9, 2019, was a historic day for the Supreme Court of India. On this day, five justices pronounced a unanimous verdict in *M. Siddiq v. Mahant Suresh Das*, better known as the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid judgment. In what was hailed by many as a masterful act of judicial statesmanship, the Bench speaking as one through a judgment ascribed to no individual judge, held that the Hindu parties had illegally planted idols in the central courtyard of the Babri mosque on the night between December 22-23, 1949, thereby desecrating it and that Hindu zealots committed a grave crime by demolishing the mosque on December 6, 1992. It also held that nevertheless, the title to the underlying land must be declared in favour of Ram Lalla Virajman, the deity of infant Lord Ram that had made out the best case of continuous possession and worship. The Sunni Central Waqf Board, as compensation for the illegal desecration and complete destruction of their structure, were to be given five acres of land elsewhere in Ayodhya.

Unprecedented too, even if not historic, was the celebration organised by then Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, who constituted and headed the five-judge bench. This triumphalism would be worth it if the judgment succeeds in closing the door on revanchist claims upon other mosques that were already in the crosshairs of zealots long before it was pronounced: Gyanvapi and Shahi Idgah in Varanasi and Mathura, and as many as 3,000 others scattered around the nation.

Indeed, one of their strongest claims to judicial statesmanship lies in the manner in which the Bench explained The Places of Worship Act, 1991, and its effect. In para 97 the justices hold that this law "imposes two unwavering and mandatory norms": The first is an absolute bar on the conversion of a place of worship of one religious denomination to that of any other religion. Second, to preserve the religious character of every place of worship as it existed at Independence, on August 15, 1947. The only exceptions, carved out in the 1991 Act itself, were the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute that was pending in the courts, any cases that had become final by judicial verdict or concluded settlements prior to September 18, 1991, and any monuments governed by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.

What is one to make then of the spate of suits being filed across the country, court orders directing entry into ancient mosques, videography by court commissioners, searches for religious artefacts or symbolism, and claims for the right of one denomination to worship in the place of worship of another? More importantly, what does one make of the timorousness of constitutional courts when faced with such claims? And what of the throwaway comments or remarks during hearings, which to the media and general public might suggest new av-

enues to use history and its wrongs to oppress the present and the future? And lastly, does the exclusion of ancient monuments and archaeological sites from the purview of Section 4 of the Places of Worship Act make a material difference to these suits?

The first question is easily answered, and not only because of The Places of Worship Act. Insofar as the Act is concerned, the Bench in *M. Siddiq* (supra) expressly quashed the findings of the Allahabad High Court to the effect that certain types of disputes could be kept alive, or subsequently raised. The five justices elevated non-retrogression to a basic feature of the Constitution. These findings were rendered after noting that many ancient places of worship were built upon the ruins of others, and sometimes even after destroying those that stood before, and that consequently religious artefacts, pillars, stones, carvings, and even idols might have been subsumed within the later place of worship.

Apart from the 1991 Act, it appears from the nature of these suits that they are barred by limitation and are untenable. Judging by press reports, the claims in these suits are based not on title, ownership and continuous possession, but on the right to worship at particular sites. The foundation of these claims is a belief that a sacred temple was destroyed centuries ago, and a mosque was built on the ruins. Such claims, as held by the Bench in *M. Siddiq*, are clearly time-barred under the Limitation Act, 1963.

My second question is clearly rhetorical, and the reader can fill in the answers.

As for the third, it must be said that queries and open-ended discussions during court hearings are par for the course. But when issues as fraught as this one are met with the Supreme Court musing on the possibility of discoveries by a court commissioner — and their significance — and hypothesising about a Parsi Agyari in which a Christian cross might be found, and the "hybrid" nature of such Agyari, some clarifications become necessary.

The Places of Worship Act, 1991, is concerned with one principal question: What was the religious character of a place of worship on August 15, 1947? The Act is not concerned with what existed before the construction of the place of worship, what materials were used to build it, or whether it stands upon religious symbols or icons or artefacts of any other religious denomination.

That brings me to the last question, on the Ancient Monuments Act, 1958. The mosques that are the subject matter of most of these suits are not covered by the 1958 Act, so this is essentially a red herring. However, other monuments like the Qutub Minar and Taj Mahal are certainly covered by the 1958 Act. Occasionally, there are places of worship within ancient monuments, and in such cases, section 16 of the 1958 Act grants them protection that is broadly on par with that which is available under The Places of Worship Act. This Act bars civil suits in respect of any matters falling within the purview of the National Monuments Authority, so it is unlikely that the 1958 Act will spring to the rescue of these revanchist actions.

The writer is a senior advocate. The full version of this article is available on the indianexpress.com

Avoiding a GSTexit

At root of GST imbroglio is a deficit of trust and revenues that must be addressed



PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTY

INDIA'S GOODS and services tax (GST) will be five years old on July 1. The GST Council, comprising minister representatives from all states and union territories, will be meeting over the next few days. There will likely be celebrations, commiserations and contestations.

Three significant issues — the breakdown of trust and cooperative federalism between states and the Union government, the expiry of the revenue guarantee that protected states' revenues and the recent Supreme Court's judgment highlighting that the GST Council's recommendations are not binding on the states — form the backdrop to this Council meeting.

Maharashtra, the highest contributor to GST revenues (20 per cent) may not be represented in today's meeting because its government is on the verge of collapse, aided in part by the BJP governments of the Union, Gujarat and Assam. Surely, these egregious political developments in Maharashtra will play in the minds of the non-BJP representatives in the GST Council meeting from Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Delhi, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Jharkhand and Orissa, that together contribute 36 per cent of overall GST revenues.

Cooperation between states and the Union cannot just be an economic compact, but a broader political ethic. It is foolhardy to expect states to indulge in a harmonious spirit of economic cooperative federalism inside the GST Council when their governments, leaders and

institutions are being politically attacked and destroyed outside.

The SC recently observed that it is in the national interest to have both cooperative and competitive federalism, and hence, the GST Council's decisions are not binding on the states. This means that states had and continue to have the right to either comply fully with the Council's recommendations or modify them as they deem necessary. This has opened the window for states to override the fundamental GST premise of a "one nation one tax". If pushed to a corner, states may now use the SC ruling as a shield.

The other fulcrum of GST was the tangible mechanism of guaranteed revenues for states. When GST was mooted amid lofty promises in 2017, sceptical state governments extracted a five-year insurance from the Centre of a minimum revenue guarantee, without which GST may not have been possible. It turned out to be prescient as GST failed to live up to its economic promises and states' revenues were protected through this guarantee, despite Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's attempt to wriggle out of this commitment during the pandemic under the alibi of an "act of God". The Union government's proclivity to levy and appropriate cess revenues for itself without sharing them with the states has lent credence to the wisdom of guaranteed compensation for states. This guarantee is now set to expire.

GST is too precariously perched to yank away the compensation guarantee for states.

The ideal solution to salvage and fix GST is to extend the compensation guarantee. The tenure of extension and the guaranteed rate of revenue growth can be mutually agreed upon by states and the Union.

However, the Union government is not desirous of extending the compensation guarantee. Its apprehension and reluctance are understandable, given its deteriorating fiscal situation, foisted by high global crude oil prices, rising fertiliser imports and expanding welfare expenditure. But in the larger and longer term interest of GST, it is prudent to extend the compensation guarantee, which will assuage states' concerns and buy time to re-visit GST. It is no secret that nearly all states, irrespective of their political affiliations, want an extension of the compensation guarantee. At this juncture of the GST regime, it is perhaps wiser to extend the compensation guarantee and hope to obviate its need through buoyant GST revenues than to further erode states' confidence. Sacrificing a percentage point or half of the fiscal deficit next year by extending the compensation guarantee is worth the potential benefits of a well-functioning GST.

At the root of the current GST, imbroglio is a deficit of trust and revenues. Technical fixes such as rationalisation of rates and ease of GST compliance are necessary but not sufficient to bridge the revenue deficit since GST revenues are a function of the performance of the larger economy, which in turn depends on

various other factors. The trust deficit can be bridged only through acts of good faith. The Union government should commit to the states that it will not resort to cesses and surcharges that are outside the shareable pool of revenues. It must resolve to honour the revenue guarantee commitment to the states. It must respect and uphold the true spirit of not just fiscal federalism but political and constitutional federalism too.

Democratically elected state governments in India do not have sole powers for both direct and indirect taxation, which is unheard of in any other federal democracy. GST centralised India's indirect taxation. It is time to start a national discussion on reversing the course, moving towards decentralisation by giving states powers for direct taxation. A commitment to initiate such discussions by the Union government will be a healthy signal for states' confidence and fiscal freedom.

After five years, it is now well established that GST has failed to deliver on its economic promises. Contrary to the technocratic rhetoric, it is not just the flawed implementation that is responsible for GST's economic failure. GST was always an economic square peg in India's federal round hole. Regardless, we are now far down the GST path and must strive to make it work, to avoid a "GSTexit", a la Brexit.

Chakravarty is chairman of the data analytics department of the Congress Party

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INFORMATION AGE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Let there be data' (IE, 25 June). Managing a country as diverse as India calls for availability of good quality, reliable and regular data. In our age of information, data and facts are everything, and their absence, a recipe for failure. There must, therefore, be a constant stream of data forthcoming on important national objectives, for use by policymakers, researchers and analysts. The proposed resumption of the Consumer Expenditure Survey, after a long hiatus, is welcome news, and one which hopefully marks a new beginning in the availability of comprehensive and regular official data in the country.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

NATION FIRST?

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Penny wise, security foolish' (IE, June 26). The government seems to be aware that despite its ill-conceived "Agnipath" recruitment scheme, the youth of the country will come forward to join it, due to compelling unemployment. Faced by the question of bread and butter, the youngsters have no time and energy to resist and compel the Centre to roll back the scheme. The most insidious facet of "Agnipath" is that only one-fourth of

the soldiers would be absorbed into the force. This will create a deep rift amongst them at the cost of camaraderie and the principle of "nation first" as every "Agniveer" would like to overshadow the other in sycophancy for senior officers. Besides, a fancy name and a "mercenary" like arrangement cannot be an alternative for motivated, dedicated and fulfilled soldiers ready to die for the nation and each other.

Devendra Awasthi, Lucknow

FOOD SECURITY

THIS REFERS TO the article 'Preparing soil for the future' (IE, June 24). Soil is an essential natural resource that supports various ecosystem services. Proper management of soil health is crucial, as it involves the survival of any species that directly depend on soil for their existence, including humans. Improper agricultural practices have impacted the soil health in many regions of the world. Monoculture and plantation-based farming has changed the natural character of local ecosystems, resulting in the degradation of soil quality. Aggressive and unsustainable farming cannot be justified on grounds of ensuring food security, as these practices, in the long run, will lead to a food-insecure world for future generations.

Sudip Kumar Dey, via email

8 Govt & Politics

100 days after Punjab sweep, a reality check for AAP in CM's bastion

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, JUNE 26

BARELY THREE days after the Bhagwant Mann-led AAP government in Punjab marked its 100 days, the Sangrur bypoll outcome has come as a sobering reminder that a record poll sweep can be followed by a humiliating electoral defeat.

Sangrur, the pocket borough of Chief Minister Mann, had catapulted him into the political stage by electing him with a record margin of over 2 lakh votes in the 2014 general elections. Mann had got re-elected from Sangrur in 2019 Lok Sabha polls by over 1 lakh votes. The bypoll was necessitated when he resigned from the seat after taking over as the CM on March 16.

The defeat of the AAP candidate Gurmel Singh at the hands of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) president, Simranjit Singh Mann, with a margin of 5,822 votes in a neck-and-neck contest — which comes at a time when the Mann government is seen to have acted against the corrupt — is a wake-up call for the AAP dispensation. The AAP's leaders have been facing the charge of being "inaccessible", which used to be once the bugbear of the previous Capt Amarinder Singh-led Congress government.

Evidently, the ruling party seems to have failed to neutralise the public anger against the killing of popular Punjabi rapper Sidhu Moosewala, even as it fielded a relatively unknown candidate in a fiercely-contested five-cornered battle in Sangrur.

The AAP was certainly not expecting to lose to the SAD(A),



Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann

which has not won an election since 1999, when Simranjit won from the Sangrur parliamentary seat. The AAP, on the other hand, had bagged all nine Assembly seats in this constituency four months ago. It also deployed its top brass for campaigning, with both Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and CM Mann hitting the Sangrur trail ahead of the election.

A former IPS officer, the SAD(A) chief had resigned from his job in 1984 in protest against Operation Blue Star. A two-time MP, Simranjit was first elected to the Lok Sabha in 1989 when he was in jail. He has been seeking a UN-monitored inquiry into the killing of Moosewala, who was gunned down on May 29, days after his security was withdrawn by the Mann government. Although the singer had contested the Assembly poll from Mansa on the Congress ticket, it was no secret that he had decided to support Simranjit in the Sangrur bypoll — a point that the latter highlighted in his electioneering and campaign ads.

Mann, who has been in political wilderness for years and was often dismissed as a relic of militancy who continued to harp on "a separate State", sprang back into the spotlight when a "Sarbat Khalsa" meeting called by him

against the sacrilege of Guru Granth Sahib in 2015 got a significant public response. He gained further traction during the 2020-21 farmers' agitation when "influencers" like late Deep Sidhu aligned with him. The bids mounted by some ruling quarters to paint the farm stir as "anti-national" gave ammunition to leaders like Simranjit, who have spent a lifetime highlighting the alleged "excesses" of the central dispensation against the minorities.

In the run-up to the Sangrur bypoll, Mann said his win would be a "victory of the secular people and minorities against the ultra-right parties such as BJP, AAP, and Congress". The AAP candidate, Gurmel Singh, a sarpanch, could not deal with such growing rage or match the rhetoric of his rival.

As the AAP failed to address the anger among voters due to the inaccessibility of local leaders, its choice of nominees for the Rajya Sabha also led to some rumblings as it did not include anyone from the Malwa region that gave AAP 66 of its total 92-seat haul in Assembly elections.

With the Sangrur bypoll coming close on the heels of the AAP's Assembly poll landslide, it was contested hotly by other parties, including the BJP. While the Congress fielded Dalvir Goldy, who had contested against Bhagwant Mann from Dhuri in the Assembly poll, the BJP nominated Kewal Dhillon, an industrialist and former Congress legislator, in the fray, with the Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) giving its ticket to Kamaldeep Kaur, sister of Balwant Singh Rajoana, a death row convict in the ex-CM Beant Singh assassination case.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com



Simranjit Mann's supporters take out a victory rally to celebrate his win in Sangrur on Sunday. Gurmeet Singh

The comeback Mann: SAD(A) chief who had the last laugh on Punjab CM

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR
AMRITSAR, JUNE 26

DEALING A severe blow to the ruling AAP in Punjab, the Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) president, Simranjit Singh Mann, emerged as the victor Sunday in the crucial bypoll in the Sangrur Lok Sabha constituency, the bastion of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, defeating AAP candidate Gurmel Singh in a neck-and-neck fight.

The bypoll was necessitated when the incumbent Sangrur MP Bhagwant Mann resigned from the seat after becoming the CM in March following the AAP's landslide victory in the state Assembly elections. It was considered to be the first test of the fledgling Mann-led AAP government's popularity.

Pushed to the margins of Punjab's mainstream politics for over two-and-half decades, the 77-year-old pro-Khalistan leader



Simranjit Singh Mann in Sangrur, Sunday. Gurmeet Singh

and ex-IPS officer Simranjit Singh Mann's stunning win is likely to boost the Panthic politics in the border state.

In its campaign for the Sangrur bypoll, the Sukhbir Badal-led Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) had also played the Panthic card and fielded Kamaldeep Kaur, sister of Balwant Singh Rajoana, the ex-CM Beant Singh's assassination convict lodged in jail, while making the release of the Sikh pris-

oners its plank. The principal Opposition Congress also campaigned vigorously for its candidate in the Sangrur fray. However, it was Mann who eventually won the race.

Significantly, an effort was mounted in the run-up to the Sangrur bypoll to get various SAD factions united with Sukhbir even visiting Mann's house to persuade him to withdraw in favour of Kamaldeep's candidature, but the SAD (Amritsar) chief turned it down and went ahead with his campaign.

It used to be said in Punjab political circles that Mann would contest all parliamentary and Assembly polls only to get defeated. A two-time Lok Sabha MP, he had last won from the Sangrur parliamentary constituency in 1999.

According to the Lok Sabha website, "Mann remained in jail from 1984 to 1989 for the devolu-

tion of powers to the Sikhs and although elected to 9th Lok Sabha, did not take oath. He was elected to 13th Lok Sabha from 1999 to 2004 and remained Member, Consultative Committee, Ministry of External Affairs. He was committed to the protection of social, cultural, civil, economic, and political rights as enshrined in the UN charter. Protection of human rights and rights of minority were his special interests as MP."

Although he has been a pro-Khalistan leader, Mann had focused on constructing cow shelters during his term as an MP during 1999-2004. He was then also declared "outstanding parliamentarian" by the Lok Sabha Speaker. He is a relative of former CM Captain Amarinder Singh.

Mann had resigned from the IPS in 1984 in protest against the Operation Blue Star.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com



Vikram Reddy with Andhra Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy. Twitter/@MekapatiVikram

Low-profile construction magnate retains YSRCP seat

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, JUNE 26

THE YSR Congress Party scored a huge victory in the bypoll for the Atmakur Assembly constituency in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district on Sunday as its candidate Mekapati Vikram Reddy defeated the BJP candidate by 82,888 votes.

The 49-year-old is the younger brother of Mekapati Goutham Reddy, the previous MLA from the constituency and the state industries minister who died of a heart attack on February 21. Their father was the four-time Lok Sabha MP from Nellore, Mekapati Rajmohan Reddy.

Vikram is the managing director of the family's company KMC Constructions Ltd that his father had founded.

When Rajmohan launched his Goutham in politics ahead of the 2014 elections, Vikram took care of the family business. An IIT-Chennai graduate, he has a master's degree in construction management from the US. It is said that Vikram was initially reluctant to contest the election and instead wanted his sister-in-law to contest. But after several rounds of discussions, it fell on him to take his brother's place.

The YSRCP leader in charge of the district, Balineni Srinivas Reddy, described Vikram as a soft-spoken person. "He is extremely polite and gentle and has maintained a very low profile," he said.

Tripura: Cong demands probe into attack on its Agartala office

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, JUNE 26

A CONGRESS supporter was stabbed in front of the party state headquarters in Agartala, leading to a clash between BJP and Congress workers after bypoll results were announced Sunday.

Police fired teargas shells to bring the situation under control. Around 20 people, including state Congress chief Birajit Sinha, were injured.

Sinha sustained head injuries when stones were pelted at him. A makeshift camp set up in front of the Congress Bhawan destroyed and several two-wheelers were damaged in the clash.

Soon after, the residence of a BJP corporator of Agartala municipality, Shilpi Sen, was allegedly targeted by Congress activists. Sen's daughter suffered minor injuries after being hit by an object hurled at the house. A BJP supporter, who came to Sen's rescue, was also injured when he was assaulted by the mob.

In Delhi, the Congress demanded an investigation into the attack on the party office and imposition of President's Rule if the "state government is unable to handle law and order".

The party decided to send a three-member delegation led by Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury to Tripura to take stock of the situation and "make a report on the heinous attack".

"The Indian National Congress strongly condemns the mindless attack on Congress Bhawan and brutal assault on Tripura PCC president Birajit Sinha and other Congress workers by BJP goons, after the thumping victory of Congress party candidate Sudip Roy Barman in the Agartala bypoll," AICC general secretary K C Venugopal said. "It is utterly shameful that the police stood as mute and complicit spectators while the goons stormed the office and attacked our office bearers... We demand an apology from BJP president J P Nadda and an investigation by Home Minister Amit Shah into why these attacks occurred."

WITH ENS, DELHI

And the winners are...

Results of bypolls held on June 23 for 3 LS seats and 7 Assembly seats



Ghanshyam Singh Lodhi (centre, left) after winning the Rampur Lok Sabha bypoll. PTI

LOK SABHA SEATS

AZAMGARH, UTTAR PRADESH
WINNER: DINESH LAL YADAV "NIRAHUA", BJP
■ **PREVIOUS WINNER:** Akhilesh Yadav, Samajwadi Party
■ **WINNING MARGIN:** 8679 votes over SP's Dharmendra Yadav

RAMPUR, UTTAR PRADESH
WINNER: GHANSHYAM SINGH LODHI, BJP
■ **PREVIOUS WINNER:** Azam Khan, Samajwadi Party
■ **WINNING MARGIN:** 42,192 votes over SP's Mohd. Asim Raja

SANGRUR, PUNJAB
WINNER: SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN, SHIROMANI AKALI DAL
■ **PREVIOUS WINNER:** Bhagwant Mann, AAP
■ **WINNING MARGIN:** 5,822 votes over AAP's Gurmil Singh

ASSEMBLY SEATS

ATMAKUR, ANDHRA PRADESH
WINNER: MEKAPATI VIKRAM REDDY, YSRCP
DEFEATED BJP's Bharat Kumar Gundlapalli by 82,888 votes
MANDAR, JHARKHAND
WINNER: SHILPI NEHA TIRKEY, CONGRESS
DEFEATED BJP's Gangotri Kujur by 23,690 votes

RAJINDER NAGAR, DELHI
WINNING CANDIDATE: DURGESH PATHAK, AAP
DEFEATED BJP's Rajesh Bhatia by 11,468 votes

AGARTALA
WINNER: SUDIP ROY BARMAN, CONGRESS
DEFEATED BJP's Ashok Sinha by 3163 votes
JUBARAJNAGAR
WINNER: MALINI DEBNATH, BJP
DEFEATED CPM's Sailendra Chandra Nath by 4572 votes



BJP supporters celebrate in Agartala on Sunday. PTI

Source: Election Commission

Absent Akhilesh, strong BJP campaign & BSP: Why SP sank

LALMANI VERMA
LUCKNOW, JUNE 26

WITHOUT AKHILESH Yadav at the helm of its campaign and facing an aggressive campaign by the BJP, the Samajwadi Party (SP) lost the Lok Sabha by-elections in Rampur and Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh that were once considered its strongholds. The Bahujan Samaj Party's (BSP) strong performance in Azamgarh heavily damaged the SP.

By winning both the bypolls, the BJP on Sunday strengthened its already dominant position in the state ahead of the urban local body elections that are due later this year and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The elections are also likely to raise questions about Akhilesh Yadav's absence from campaigning in both Azamgarh, where his cousin Dharmendra Yadav was the contestant, and in Rampur the once bastion of senior SP leader Azam Khan now in the hands of the BJP. He leader is also likely to face questions about

his position in the party following this defeat as he had to negotiate hard with Akhilesh to give the candidature to his longtime associate Asim Raja.

Though the BSP could not win Azamgarh — it did not contest Rampur — its candidate Shah Alam, popularly known as Guddu Jamali, got 2.66 lakh votes and effectively ended Dharmendra Yadav's chances. Reacting to the results, BSP president Mayawati said they had "shown that only the BSP has theoretical and ground strength to defeat the BJP".

For the BJP, putting its entire might into the campaign paid off as Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and almost his entire Cabinet canvassed for the party's candidates.

Azamgarh

The SP won the constituency in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections despite a wave of support across the country for the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Even in the state elections earlier this year, it won all the five

Assembly segments in Azamgarh. But this time, the parliamentary constituency fell to the BJP as its candidate Dinesh Lal Yadav "Nirahua".

Nirahua managed to take advantage of the BSP eroding away the SP's support base. The SP's alleged silence on Muslim issues also seemed to not go down well with Muslim voters.

Rampur

Considered the citadel of Azam Khan, the SP left campaigning in Rampur to the veteran leader and his supporters. But the BJP did not throw in the towel and mobilised its entire top leadership to storm Azam's bastion.

Azam campaigned for Raja and tried to garner sympathy by narrating the hardships he and his family faced in prison. But the strategy failed in front of the BJP juggernaut and the SP leader could not benefit from the decision of the BSP and the Congress to not contest the election. Political observers said several Dalit voters also chose the BJP.

‘Got lotus to bloom in Azam bastion’: BJP’s Rampur winner

JIGNASA SINHA
RAMPUR, JUNE 26

"Azam Khan ke gadh mei kamal khilaye hain (we have got the lotus to bloom in Azam Khan's bastion)," says Ghanshyam Singh Lodhi. The BJP candidate from Rampur is celebrating his bypoll victory at his farmhouse, filled with party workers chanting his name.

The victory is doubly sweet for Lodhi — he recently left the Samajwadi Party for the BJP and has reaped the rewards. Though the voter turnout was less than 50 per cent, Lodhi won the Lok Sabha seat with over 40,000 votes more than SP's Asim Raja.

"This is an achievement for all the party workers who worked hard for months. I felt the Samajwadi Party didn't deserve the win because they have no vision and no ambition. I left the party because I wanted to

change things. Today, I have support from everyone" he says. At the Samajwadi Party office, meanwhile, the disappointment of the loss is hard to shake off.

"I don't want to say much but it is sad to lose in Rampur. We had hopes and it's a bad loss. We did push for more votes but everything was hay-wire. The nomination was filed at the last moment and there wasn't much support from the leaders. We have the potential and will work towards the next elections," said an SP spokesperson at the office, one of the few people present there. The other workers alleged that BJP fought the elections with unfair means.

The most disappointed, understandably, was the veteran Azam Khan himself, who refused to accept the result. "Why would you call this an election? My workers were detained and beaten up. Our supporters were

threatened and abused by the police. Lodhi is lucky he has a party that can bend rules and be happy. I can't do all that. I have spent months in jail. I run schools here and am a chancellor of the university. My aim has always been to help people. But can one fight with police and the goondagardi against us? We were called names and people were stopped from voting. There were only 6 votes from a place where 900 votes could come. I refuse to believe this was a fair election," he said.

In the town itself, the streets were quiet after the results were announced and many refused to talk about the elections. Many local residents said they were happy with the results but didn't expect much. One resident said: "I saw the results on TV. We hope they do make some changes here. Power cuts and roads are a huge issue. This is a developing city and we want change."

U.P. RESULTS: LEADERS REACT



"The bypoll wins in Azamgarh and

Rampur are historic. It indicates wide-scale acceptance and support for the double engine governments at the Centre and in UP..."

NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER



"Today's victory has given this message

very clearly in front of everyone that in 2024, the Bharatiya Janata Party is going to win 80 out of 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh"

YOGI ADITYANATH
U.P. CHIEF MINISTER



"This victory of BJP is the victory of

dishonesty, disregard for democracy... the 'Dhritarashtra' vision of the Election Commission, and hijacking of public mandate... Democracy is bleeding and the public mandate lost"

AKHILESH YADAV
SP CHIEF



"The UP by-election results have once again proved that only BSP has the ideological and ground force to defeat the BJP here..."

MAYAWATI
BSP CHIEF

9

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

Nihal Koshie: You played back-to-back events in Poland and Norway and are scheduled to play in Lyon and Dortmund. So is Vishy Anand, at 52, planning to make a full-fledged comeback?

Well, I will play as often as I can, but select tournaments. I will not play tournaments that require huge commitment — like the World Championship cycle. But events that I can somehow fit into my schedule and I find interesting. It will be less chess than I used to play, but nonetheless, I still enjoy it very much.

Nihal Koshie: Can you talk about beating Magnus Carlsen, and also the ninth round against Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, where you made an error and videos showed a lot of emotion from you?

So, against Carlsen, I had a winning position in the Classical, which would have been worth much more. I would've got the full three points, it would've been a three-point lead in the tournament, and that was a huge missed opportunity. (Against Mamedyarov, I simply missed a certain thread, and after I made it, I saw it. And I was so disgusted with myself that I just decided to resign. And the worst thing is when he came and sat down, at first, he seemed very confused. By then, I felt really stupid, because I understood I had resigned prematurely, and I could have at least had the sense to go to the other room and wait for him to see. Maybe, he would have played instantly and I would have gotten away with it. I was so shaken by it that I resigned and this was quite emotional.

Nihal Koshie: You are calm and collected in public, but does Vishy Anand vent? And do you ever identify say with tennis players who throw their racquets?

I feel like doing those things, it's just that I restrain myself. And I was quite angry and I knew I would have a bad night's sleep (after resigning against Mamedyarov). I knew the next day I would be irritable. But you know you still have a game, and if you lose that as well, you will feel even worse. So, there are times when I mentally break a racquet but I haven't physically done it yet.

Nihal Koshie: Have you thrown things, ever?

In my room, sure. But nothing that really breaks. I mean nothing exciting. I can throw a pen on the bed or fling a key across the room. And nowadays, they don't even give you those keys. They give these key cards. What can you do with a key card? It's like the joke goes: in the old days, you could slam a phone on the receiver, but now what can you do with a mobile phone? Just punch the keypad!

Mihir Vasavda: Chess players sit quietly most of the time, but we saw Carlsen's reaction when Nepo (Ian Nepomniachtchi) blundered in the 2021 World Championship match and the famous Garry Kasparov blunder against you in 1996. Do you have a favourite meltdown of a chess player during a match?

There are times in games when I make a blunder and open my eyes. I shake my head and am furious with myself. That's as much as you permit yourself. I have seen some spectacular expressions from Kasparov, for instance. Famously, the Rapid game that I played against him in 1996, the fact that we still have it on video is very nice. Carlsen will sometimes fall and look up, there are people who look disgusted with themselves, they shake their head, you can see they are cursing themselves. They fidget, they do all these things, but it has never gotten violent so far.

Sandip G: What are the challenges of playing chess at 52?

As is the case with many things in life, some things happen gradually. It's not like some things change from the age of 49 to the age of 50. It had been happening over time. So you get used to it, but over the years I noticed that certain kind of mistakes recur more often. Your calculation is not so exact. But you notice that over time you cut yourself more slack; you overcompensate in other areas that you can. If you keep working on chess, you are able to learn new things and that compensates for a lot of other things. So, if you are able to work on new areas, your brain remains fresh and it still works.

Sandip G: Is it becoming more emotional with experience?

I don't think I have become more emotional as I have aged. The only thing I can say is that I continue to keep it inside. I have always been irritated, even when I was 22-23, and ridiculous when I blundered. Nowadays I just shake my head, do those small gestures that are permitted. You are cursing yourself inside and know that night's sleep is going to go. You know a certain amount of pain you are going to go through. But the thing is, once you play another game, the previous one goes away very fast. So you are also experienced. And it's true that if something has happened many, many times in your life, you

The best way to cure a bad game is to play a good one. And once you play a good one, it allows you to settle down emotionally and get on with it. Like maths... if you develop a fear, then it becomes much more deep-rooted and never goes away

Illustration: Shyam Kumar Prasad

stop overreacting.

Sandip G: You will mentor the Indian team at the Chess Olympiad and you are also a mentor at the Westbridge Anand Chess Academy, with Praggananandhaa, Gukesh and Vaishali, all of whom started playing in the post-computer era with powerful engines. How fast are these kids and what are the major changes?

I would say it's fairly similar to how I work and how they work. The only thing is that the younger generation soaks it up much more easily because there's nothing that they had to relearn or unlearn. And also, when a new idea contradicts a lot of chess knowledge and theory, it takes a while for me to accept it. I think it's easier for them to accept these things because they are not so steeped in old knowledge.

Sandeep Dwivedi: Normal people have fear of writing a math paper and the paper is blank and we don't know any of these questions... What are your nightmares like?

I do get nightmares. You learn to avoid painful memories. You put them away. After a while, you find your brain is trying to forget them. The most painful ones, when I look at them again, it hurts just as much, even after many years. But you get on with it. Somehow the best way to cure a bad game is to play a good one. And once you play a good one, then it allows you to emotionally settle down and get on with it. Like you mentioned maths as a subject, if you develop a fear, you feel something like 'I'm not good at this', then it becomes much more deep-

rooted and it never goes away.

Nihal Koshie: You are in the running for the post of deputy president of FIDE. Do you believe a sports person can be a good administrator?

Yes, I do. The assumption that sports people can't be good at running the sport and or the only people who can run a sport are sportspeople — those two assumptions are flawed. It's good to have sportspeople and their opinions, but by no means should they be the only people who should be heard. You should listen to other people, even if it seems to violate your dogma or things you deeply believe in because it's outsiders' perspective. If you are talking to a fan or an outsider with a remote perspective on the game, then you have to understand what is it that attracts them to the game. So, it's good to get perspective.

Nihal Koshie: The current president, Arkady (Dvorkovich), is the former deputy Prime Minister of Russia and has close links with the Kremlin. Also,

WHY VISWANATHAN ANAND



at the upcoming Chess Olympiad, an extension of what he does at his academy

VISWANATHAN ANAND

INDIA'S FIRST GRANDMASTER & FIVE-TIME WORLD CHAMPION

‘We are no longer chess players from mythology; someone bespectacled who is slightly old. Now chess is seen as a fairly young sport’

Chess legend Viswanathan Anand on keeping it together as a chess player despite wanting to throw keys and pens around after a bad day's play, chess shrugging out of its Cold War garb and how he quietly hit back at Anatoly Karpov's casual snide of the Indian being too nice to win – by winning. A lot. The session was moderated by Senior Editor NIHAL KOSHIE



Every journalist who was sent to cover chess during the Cold War, even if he couldn't follow chess, could write a few lines about the KGB... everyone loved it. Once that was removed, it kind of left a certain vacuum but new storylines have emerged

and I had so many good results after that. I played my own career. Karpov hardly played for anything after that.

Sriram Veera: Is the pendulum still loaded so much against the challenger rather than the champion?

A champion can still nudge his way into a few choices first. But the challenger will be offered a pretty fair deal. There is no more a privilege of making a draw. If you make a draw, you play tiebreaks. Many of these changes happened because of previous results. So, I can say that the era when Karpov could do what he did, has disappeared. In fact, if I have to explain to someone what privileges Karpov got, I'll have to explain that those privileges existed first of all to these youngsters. And then 'can you believe that Karpov could get all these privileges' and they'll still give me a baffled look. It's like telling people that once upon a time you would book your telephone, wait six months and then they would give it to you. Can you believe it? That era passed. But a lot of things of that era have passed — the Soviet domination passed, the Soviet Union disappeared. So many things that I thought were permanent features in my childhood, just disappeared.

Shamik Chakrabarty: Your emergence coincided with the tail-end of the Cold War. Has the lack of political punch taken the sheen out of high-profile chess rivalries?

Yes, (Bobby) Fischer-(Boris) Spassky was the pinnacle of chess' Cold War rivalry. And there was some echo of that even in a match between a Soviet defector and a Soviet champion or someone like Kasparov who doesn't fit in and a Karpov who fits in completely... you were still able to take sides. Every journalist who was sent to cover chess, even if he couldn't follow chess, he could write a few lines about the KGB, mention that some spies are standing here, some standing there and mention bugs and microphones and a few conspiracy theories and he could finish his article and send it to the paper and everyone loved it. Once that was removed, it kind of left a certain vacuum but new storylines have emerged. We are no longer chess players from mythology; which is someone bespectacled sitting in front of a computer who is slightly old. Now chess is seen as a fairly young sport with all sorts of talented youngsters. Each one is an interesting charismatic character. Just to mention, the last two world champions have been Indian and Norwegian, neither possible even 30 years back. The sport has moved on and we don't need the Cold War thing anymore but it took a while because some new storyline had to emerge.

Shivani Nailk: Does the writing of the sport need a fresh vocabulary?

The vocabulary we have is good enough but new forms of describing the game have already emerged. The streaming revolution has thrown in a new way of looking at chess. Streamers sound very different to what I am used to hearing about chess. And clearly every new fan base we are able to connect with will bring its own way of describing the game. I would say evolution is already happening. Now we are often compared to gamers, we are often seen on Twitch and YouTube. All these areas didn't even exist five years ago for us. The formats, time controls and all those things are changing very fast. One big difference now is that journalists have the best information about the game because as long as they are sitting with the computer they know, at least, what the best moves were and the mistakes the players made. So inevitably it will change the way they describe the game as well.

Shivani Nailk: Have you ever played sentimentally, like thinking, today I don't feel like sacrificing a pawn or being attached to particular pieces?

There are moves that make me uncomfortable and there are moves that are comfortable. The uncomfortable ones I have to force myself to make. Unfortunately, if the computer says something is good, it is probably right and it is your job to understand why. One of the things of modern chess is that you are forced to understand what the computer is saying. Still, your personal preferences play a huge role.

Mihir Vasavda: Magnus Carlsen has already said that he may opt-out of defending his world championship title. If that happens, what kind of impact will it have on the Classical format?

We have not had a situation like this since Bobby Fischer. Fischer quit the game and ran away. Carlsen, as I understand it, still wants to play other events but he won't play this one. My tendency is to believe him and that he is serious. But also when the moment comes to actually doing it, he will hesitate because it is a big step. It will hurt the game for a while because after all you are losing a champion and it is a very strange transition. But eventually, people will move on and the game will go on.

For a longer transcript, go to indianexpress.com



DEEPEST WRECK DISCOVERED

EXPLORERS FIND WWII NAVY DESTROYER

The USS Samuel B Roberts, popularly known as the “Sammy B,” was identified on Wednesday broken into two pieces at a depth of 6,985 metres. “We have the chance to retell her story of heroism and duty...” said American explorer Victor Vescovo.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi shakes hands with Iraqi PM Mustafa al-Kadhimi in Tehran, Sunday. Reuters

IRAN

Iraqi PM in Tehran after Saudi visit

IRAQI PM Mustafa al-Kadhimi arrived in Iran on Sunday, Iranian state TV reported, a day after he travelled to Saudi Arabia in a bid to revive talks between the regional rivals to ease years of hostility. An Iranian official said that “the resumption of talks between Tehran and Riyadh will be discussed during Khadimi’s trip to Iran”. On Saturday, Kadhimi held talks with Saudi de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Jeddah and discusses bilateral relations and “boosting security and stability in the region”. **REUTERS**

ECUADOR

Emergency lifted amid protests

ECUADOR PRESIDENT Guillermo Lasso on Saturday lifted a state of emergency he had imposed in six provinces amid an Indigenous-led strike, a surprise move that came as lawmakers in the National Assembly heard an opposition petition to remove him from office. The decision followed an initial meeting between officials and Ecuador’s largest Indigenous organisation, which began the strike two weeks ago to demand gasoline prices be cut, price controls on agricultural products and a larger budget be set for education. **AP**

MEXICO

8 bodies found, likely to be of missing workers

EIGHT BODIES were found Saturday on Mexico’s Yucatan peninsula, and they appear to be those of eight men apparently kidnapped from a resort on the Caribbean coast. At least seven men, and possibly eight, had been reported abducted Friday from the beach town of Xcalak. The bodies were found by a farmer in a field just over the border. Prosecutors said the men do not appear to have been killed where they were found, and were probably dumped there. **AP**

Roe v. Wade overturned, White House seeks to take on states over abortion pill

LAWRENCE HURLEY
WASHINGTON, JUNE 26

PRESIDENT JOE Biden’s administration indicated it will seek to prevent states from banning a pill used for medication abortion in light of the Supreme Court ruling overturning the landmark Roe v. Wade ruling, signaling a major new legal fight.

The administration could argue in court that the US Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) approval of mifepristone, one of the pills used for medication abortions, pre-empted state restrictions, meaning federal authority outweighs any state action.

Over a dozen states plan to almost totally ban abortion with the Roe precedent upended. The conservative majority Supreme Court overturned Roe on Friday, saying there is no right to abortion in the US Constitution.

Mifepristone was approved for abortions by FDA in 2000. The pill, also known as RU 486, blocks the pregnancy-sustaining hormone progesterone. **REUTERS**



Abortion rights protesters demonstrate after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, in Boston. Reuters

No smooth passage

WHILE REPRODUCTIVE rights experts have lauded the Biden administration’s stance on the pill, Mifepristone, legal experts say the law on pre-emption is murky. The Congress has never said ex-

EXPLAINED

PLICITLY that FDA approval trumps state law as it has done in the context of medical devices.

Therefore it would be left to courts to decide the question under a theory known as “implied preemption”.

Vatican: Activists can’t be selective on pro-life issues

ANTI-ABORTION activists should be concerned with other issues that can threaten life, such as easy access to guns, poverty and rising maternity mortality rates, the Vatican’s editorial director said on Saturday.

In a media editorial on the US Supreme Court’s ruling to end the right to abortion, Andrea Tomielli said those who oppose abortion could not pick and choose pro-life issues. “Being for life, always, for example, means being concerned if the mortality rates of women due to motherhood increase,” he wrote. “Being for life, always, also means defending it against the threat of firearms, which unfortunately have become a leading cause of death of children and adolescents in the US”.

The Roman Catholic church teaches that abortion is murder because life begins at the moment of conception. **REUTERS**

BARBARISM, SAYS JOE BIDEN

Russian missiles pound Kyiv as G7 leaders meet

Homes, kindergarten hit in first such attack since early June

TOM BALMFORTH & MARKO DJURICA

KYIV, POKROVSK (UKRAINE), JUNE 26

RUSSIAN MISSILES hit an apartment block and kindergarten in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on Sunday, in strikes US President Joe Biden condemned as “barbarism” as world leaders gathered in Europe to discuss further sanctions against Moscow.

Up to four explosions shook central Kyiv in the early hours, in the first such attack on the city in weeks. Two more blasts were heard on the southern outskirts of the city later in the day, a Reuters reporter said.

“The Russians hit Kyiv again. Missiles damaged an apartment building and a kindergarten,” said Andriy Yermak, head of the president’s administration.

Ukraine’s police chief, Ihor Klymenko, said on national television that five people had been wounded, and police later said one person was killed.

Russia has stepped up air strikes on Ukraine this weekend, which has also seen the fall of a strategic eastern city to pro-Russian forces.

“It’s more of their barbarism,” said Biden, referring to the mis-



A damaged residential building in Kyiv. Reuters

sile strikes on Kyiv, as leaders from the Group of Seven (G7) rich democracies gathered for a summit in Germany.

Gold sanctions

During the summit, Biden told allies “we have to stay together” against Russia. At the start of the meeting, four members of the Group of Seven rich nations moved to ban imports of

Russian gold as part of efforts to tighten the sanctions squeeze on Moscow and cut off its means of financing the invasion of Ukraine.

However, it was not immediately clear whether there was consensus on the move, with European Council President Charles Michel saying the issue would need to be handled carefully or risk backfiring. **REUTERS**

G7 plan to counter China influence

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ELMAU (GERMANY), JUNE 26

THE GROUP of Seven leading democratic economies or G7 Sunday formally launched a global infrastructure and investment partnership aimed at pushing back China’s influence in the developing world. The G7 programme responds to China’s so-called Belt and Road Initiative, which Western officials have long argued traps receiving

countries in debt and with investments that benefit China more than their hosts.

The White House says the initiative seeks to leverage USD 200 billion in US investment over the next five years, along with a similar amount from G7 allies, to boost infrastructure development in lower- and middle-income nations.

It adds that most of the funding will come from the private sector, sovereign wealth and global development funds, rather

than direct taxpayer dollars.

Among the first initiatives are a USD 2 billion solar farm investment in Angola in Southwest Africa, USD 320 million for hospital construction in Ivory Coast, in West Africa, and USD 40 million to promote regional energy trade in Southeast Asia.

In a jab at China, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the G-7 is offering “sustainable, quality infrastructure” and will be “listening closely to the recipient countries.”

No, NATO, No

Demonstrators take part in an anti-NATO protest ahead of the NATO summit on June 28 and June 30, in Madrid, Spain, on Sunday. The protesters said an increase in defence spending in Europe urged by NATO is ‘a threat to peace’. **Reuters**

Prince Charles got suitcase of cash from Qatar, says report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, JUNE 26

PRINCE CHARLES, the heir to Britain’s throne, allegedly accepted a suitcase full of cash as a charitable donation from the former PM of Qatar, according to a UK media report on Sunday.

The Sunday Times says the suitcase was one of three bundles of cash given as charitable donations which the 73-year-old received from Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani. The three lots, which reportedly totalled Euro 3 million, were handed to the prince personally between 2011 and 2015. “Charitable donations received from Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim were passed immediately to one of the Prince’s charities who carried out the appropriate governance and have assured us that all the correct processes were followed,” Prince Charles’ office said in a statement.

AHEAD OF NUCLEAR TALKS

Tehran launches rocket into space as US fumes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEHRAN, JUNE 26

IRANIAN STATE television said Sunday that Tehran had launched a solid-fueled rocket into space, drawing a rebuke from Washington ahead of the expected resumption of stalled talks over Tehran’s tattered nuclear deal with world powers.

It’s unclear when or where the rocket, christened Zuljanah, was launched, but the announcement came after satellite photos showed preparations at Imam Khomeini Spaceport in Iran’s rural Semnan province, the site of Iran’s frequent failed attempts to put a satellite into orbit.

The White House said it was aware of Iran’s announcement and criticised the move as “unhelpful and destabilising.” It said it was committed to using sanctions and other measures to prevent further advances in Iran’s



Footage released by Iran’s state TV, IRINN, shows the rocket blasting off. AP

ballistic missile program.

The launch comes just a day after the EU’s foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, traveled to Tehran to resuscitate negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program that have stalemated for months. Borrell said on Saturday talks over the nuclear deal would resume in an unnamed Persian Gulf country in coming days, with Iranian media reporting that Qatar would likely host the negotiations.

Lanka struggling to secure fresh fuel supplies, energy minister says

UDITHA JAYASINGHE

COLOMBO, JUNE 26

SRI LANKA is struggling to secure fresh fuel supplies, a top government minister said on Sunday, as the crisis-hit country of 22 million people is down to just 15,000 tons of petrol and diesel to keep essential services running in the coming days.

“We are struggling to find suppliers. They are reluctant to accept letters of credit from our banks. There are over \$700 million in overdue payments so now suppliers want advance payments,” Power and Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera told reporters.

In the past two months Sri Lanka largely received fuel via a \$500 million Indian credit line, which ran out in mid-June. A petrol shipment due last Thursday failed to arrive and no fresh shipments are yet scheduled, Wijesekera said. “We have about 9,000 metric tons of diesel



A daily wage labourer waits for work in Colombo, Sunday. AP

and 6,000 metric tons of petrol left. We are doing everything we can to get new stocks but we don’t know when that will be.”

The government on Sunday asked public employees to work from home until further notice.

US delegation visits

A top delegation from the US Treasury and State Departments arrived in Colombo on Sunday

for a three-day visit to assess the situation. The US delegation will hold talks with the country’s top leadership and explore the “most effective ways” to help the island nation resolve its unprecedented economic crisis.

A team from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is already in Sri Lanka for talks on a possible \$3 billion bailout package. **REUTERS**

SOUTH AFRICA

22 youths found dead in tavern, cause not yet known: police

AGENCIES

JOHANNESBURG, JUNE 26

SOUTH AFRICAN police are investigating the deaths of at least 22 people at a nightclub in the coastal town of East London early Sunday morning.

It is unclear what led to the deaths of the young people, who were reportedly attending a party to celebrate the end of winter school exams.

Local newspaper Daily Dispatch reported that bodies were strewn across tables and chairs without any visible signs of injuries.

“At this point we cannot confirm the cause of death,” said health department spokesperson Siyanda Manana.

“We are going to conduct autopsies as soon as possible to establish the probable cause of death,” Manana said.

“We are talking 22 bodies right now,” Manana added.

Police Minister Bheki Cele was on Sunday morning expected to visit the scene.

The owner of the club, Siyakhangelana Ndevu, told local broadcaster eNCA that he had been called to the scene early Sunday morning.

“I am still uncertain about what really happened, but when I was called in the morning I was told the place was too full and that some people were trying to force their way into the tavern,” he said.

Earlier Brigadier Tembinkosi Kinana said police were alerted by members of the public to the incident at Scenery Park, about three kms from the city centre. “The circumstances under which they died are under investigation,” Kinana said.

Brigadier Kinana added it was too early to determine the cause of death of the youngsters aged between 18-20 years.

POPULARISED KATHAK, BHARATANATYAM AND ODISSI IN THE COUNTRY

New fans pay tribute to China’s legendary Indian classical dancer

K J M VARMA
BEIJING, JUNE 26

THE INDIA-CHINA frictions took a backseat for a while here as a large number of Chinese flocked to a scintillating show of Indian classical dance performances to pay emotional tribute to Zhang Jun, China’s legendary dancer of Bharatanatyam, Kathak and Odissi.

Over 300 Chinese fans of Zhang thronged the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) auditorium on Friday night to watch sterling performances from young Chinese children as well as highly talented profession-

als who devoted their lives practicing and performing Indian classical dance forms in this country.

It was a dream come true for Jin Shan Shan, Zhang’s ardent student and widely acclaimed Bharatanatyam dancer both in India and China who took to her Guru’s footsteps and devoted her life in popularising the Indian classical art form.

The audience included India’s Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat and former Vice Minister of Finance of China and President of AIIB Jin Lique who cheered the meticulous dances to classical Tamil and Hindi music.

Zhang Jun (1933-2012) has inspired generations of Chinese



India’s ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat with performers at the show to pay tribute to Zhang Jun (right) in Beijing on Friday. PTI

and Indians with her relentless passion to learn Bharatanatyam, Kathak and Odissi and make

them popular in China.

Encouraged by the then Chinese premier Zhu Enlai at the



height of India-China bonhomie, she first visited India in the early 1950s during which she was

captivated by the Indian dance and art forms.

Barring Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution (1966-76) during which millions of intellectuals were persecuted, she travelled to India seven more times mastering the dance forms studying under maestros like Birju Maharaj, Uday Shankar and later at the Kalakshetra, a revered institution of Bharatanatyam in then Madras, now Chennai.

She later helped to form China’s famous dance troupes, the Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble. “She wanted to bring the beauty of the Indian dance to more people. I hope that she will continue to enjoy, on the other side

of heaven, the joy and beauty that Indian dance has brought to her,” Zhang’s son Han Xiao Xia said.

Rawat, who during his earlier stints here met Zhang, said she was one of the greatest teachers of Indian classical dances in China. “I always wondered what attracted her towards Indian dance forms as the attraction was very deep, almost like soul touching. To us it appeared that probably in her earlier birth she was born in India and carried that bond to this birth in China. “The energy radiated out of her devotion attracted many students even during a phase when our bilateral relations were undergoing some turbulence,” Rawat said. **PTI**



Kolkata

ECONOMY

SECTOR WATCH ELECTRIC VEHICLES

‘Loose wheels’ behind EV recall: What next in Toyota’s journey



WHERE THE PROBLEM LIES

2,700 CARS: Recall of new electric vehicle, bZ4X

BETWEEN MAR-JUNE: Period of production

SRIDHAR V
NEW DELHI, JUNE 26

LESS THAN three months after it launched the bZ4X SUV globally, Toyota Motor Corporation has issued a recall of nearly 2,700 units of the new electric vehicle (EV) following concerns that its “loose wheels” may fall off. The Japanese auto manufacturer, in a recall notice issued to owners of the bZ4X on Friday through various channels, said the action is for all vehicles “in North America, Europe and Asia Pacific”.

What is the issue?

According to a spokesperson for Toyota, the hub bolts on the wheels of the concerned bZ4X battery EVs run the risk of loosening “to the point where the wheel can detach from the vehicle” after “low-mileage use”. In case one of the wheels detaches from the car while driving, it could result in the vehicle veering off, increasing the risk of a crash.

Even though the cause of the defect is “still under investigation”, Toyota said it had alerted Japanese safety regulators about the issue. “No one should drive these vehicles until the remedy is performed,” the company added. The recalled vehicles include nearly 2,200 in Europe, about 270 in North America, over 110 in Japan and 60-odd in the rest of Asia, Toyota said Thursday. All these vehicles were produced between March and June. Moreover, nearly 400 units of the Solterra all-electric SUV by Subaru, developed in collaboration with Toyota, have been recalled for the same issue.

How will it affect Toyota?

Despite being a long-standing giant in the automotive game, Toyota is a rather late entrant in the EV arena. Announced in early 2021, the bZ4X — the first in Toyota’s ‘bZ’ (beyond Zero) series of battery EVs — is touted to be its flagship EV offering in the crossover SUV segment. Starting at \$42,000 (over Rs 32.86,000) and available in

limited markets, the bZ4X has not really set the roads on fire. Following its launch in Japan earlier this year, Toyota had said the model was only available on lease as concerns remained over maintenance, residual battery performance and residual value.

According to experts, the bZ4X recall comes early in its lifecycle, and as the defect pertains to a mechanical component rather than the vehicle’s electric drivetrain, Toyota is likely to resolve it quickly. However, the fact that the recall affected its first mass-market electric car may pull Toyota back a bit in the global EV race — a competition where Tesla has a significant lead.

The US EV maker made a name for itself back in 2012 with the market-topping Model S sedan. Tesla cemented its status in 2015 with the launch of the mid-size crossover SUV Model X, now among the world’s best plug-in cars. Adding to Toyota’s car while driving, it could result in the vehicle veering off, increasing the risk of a crash.

Even though the cause of the defect is “still under investigation”, Toyota said it had alerted Japanese safety regulators about the issue. “No one should drive these vehicles until the remedy is performed,” the company added. The recalled vehicles include nearly 2,200 in Europe, about 270 in North America, over 110 in Japan and 60-odd in the rest of Asia, Toyota said Thursday. All these vehicles were produced between March and June. Moreover, nearly 400 units of the Solterra all-electric SUV by Subaru, developed in collaboration with Toyota, have been recalled for the same issue.

Road ahead for Toyota

Vehicle recall is not a new trend; in one of the biggest recalls in recent times, Toyota and other automakers had flagged several millions of car models manufactured since 2013 due to faulty airbags manufactured by Japan’s Takata Corporation, which subsequently went bankrupt. The bZ4X recall may turn out to be just a minor setback for Toyota, given its large plans across the globe.

In India, Toyota and Suzuki Motor Corporation signed a memorandum of understanding in 2017, to bring together their strengths and promote mutual supply of vehicles. On Friday, the Japanese majors announced that work will start on production of a new SUV developed by Suzuki at Toyota Kirloskar Motor — Toyota’s India arm — in August. The companies plan to export the upcoming model to markets beyond India, including Africa.

ON THE TABLE: 28% GST ON ONLINE GAMING, CASINOS, HORSE RACING

GST Council to vet verification plan for high-risk taxpayers

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 26

VERIFICATION AFTER registration for high-risk taxpayers under Goods and Services Tax (GST), along with use of geo-tagging and physical verification, are some of the measures suggested by a Group of Ministers (GoM) on system reforms. These steps, along with another ministerial panel’s recommendation to levy 28 per cent GST on online gaming, casinos and horse racing, are expected to be discussed in the upcoming GST Council meeting on June 28-29.

The GoM on system reforms, chaired by Maharashtra Finance Minister Ajit Pawar, has also recommended mandatory biometric authentication for high-risk taxpayers along with use of artificial intelligence to prepare reports detailing risky behaviour of such taxpayers. Verification of electricity bill details and bank accounts will also be used as a source for identifying these high-risk taxpayers, sources said.

The other ministerial panel on gaming and casinos, headed by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, has recommended that no distinction should be made in these activities merely on the

SOME SUGGESTIONS BY GoMs

■ The GoM on system reforms, chaired by Maharashtra FM Ajit Pawar, has also recommended mandatory biometric authentication for high-risk taxpayers along with use of artificial intelligence to prepare reports detailing risky behaviour

■ The other ministerial panel on gaming and casinos, headed by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, has recommended that no distinction should be made in these activities merely on the ground that an activity is a game of skill or of chance or both

ground that an activity is a game of skill or of chance or both. As per the estimates shared by Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports to the GoM, the online gaming sector’s market size is around Rs 34,600 crore. It has also suggested that online gaming should be taxed at full value of the consideration, including contest entry fee paid by the player on participating in the game. In case of race courses, the GoM has suggested that GST be levied on the full value of bets pooled in the totalisators and placed with the bookmakers.

For casinos, the GoM is learnt to have recommended that the tax would be levied on the full face value of the chips/coins purchased from the casino by a player. No further GST would apply on the value

of bets placed in each round of betting, including those placed with winnings in previous rounds, sources said.

The GoM is also learnt to have suggested that 28 per cent GST be levied on entry/access fees into casinos, which compulsorily includes foods/beverages etc. But, optional supplies, made independently of the entry tickets, would be taxed at the rate applicable on such supplies, sources said. At present, online gaming (without betting) attracts 18 per cent GST. Now, all categories are likely to attract a higher levy of 28 per cent. The Council will also discuss rate hike suggestions from the fitment committee for items such as cut and polished diamonds and tetra packs; and rate cut for rope-

way cable and ostomy appliances, including waterproof pouch for collecting waste from the body. Also, a clarification would be issued on GST rates on electric vehicles, to state that EVs, whether fitted with batteries or not, would attract 5 per cent tax. The fitment committee had also clarified that Nicotine Polacrilex Gum, which is commonly used to aid in smoking cessation in adults, attracts 18 per cent GST. On the issue of taxation of virtual digital assets including cryptocurrency, the fitment committee has recommended deferring the decision and suggested that states of Haryana and Karnataka shall study all aspects and submit a paper in due course.

The committee, which includes officials from both states and Centre, gives its recommendation regarding tax rates, after receiving demands from stakeholders, in almost every meeting of the Council. This time around it has suggested the status quo for over 215 goods and services.

Rate rationalisation measures under GST are being considered as the compensation regime — under which states were offered compensation for revenue loss below the guaranteed compounded 14 per cent rate — comes to an end in June after five years of the rollout of the indirect tax regime.

423 infra projects show cost overruns of ₹4.95 lakh cr

As many as 423 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than Rs 4.95 lakh crore, as per a Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation report



563: Number of delayed projects decreased if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion

OF 1,568 PROJECTS, 423 reported cost overruns and as many as 721 projects were delayed

TOTAL ORIGINAL COST OF IMPLEMENTATION of the 1,568 projects was Rs 21,59,802.67 crore and their anticipated completion cost is...Rs 26,54,818.05 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,95,015.38 crore (22.92 per cent of original cost)

EXPENDITURE incurred on these projects till May 2022 is Rs 13,42,535.22 crore, which is 50.57 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects

43.34 MONTHS: The average time overrun in these 721 delayed projects

OF THE 721 DELAYED PROJECTS

| NO. OF PROJECTS | DELAY SPAN |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 113 | 1-12 months |
| 121 | 13-24 months |
| 350 | 25-60 months |
| 137 | 61 months |

REASONS

- Delay in land acquisition
- Delay in obtaining forest and environment clearances
- Lack of infrastructure support and linkages

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation/PTI

For 569 projects, neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported

‘Should ensure no intolerable growth sacrifice to tame inflation’

New Delhi: The economy has barely recovered from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and it should be ensured that there is no “intolerable growth sacrifice” in attempts to tame inflation “too abruptly”, according to RBI’s Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Jayanth R Varma. With a cautiously optimistic outlook for the country’s economy, Varma on Sunday said growth prospects for 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years are “reasonable” even after taking into consideration the possibility of a long-drawn-out period of geopolitical tensions and elevated commodity prices.

In an interview with *PTI*,



‘Inflation will be brought down ... in medium term’

JAYANTH R VARMA
Member, MPC via IIM-A

Varma, an external member of the MPC, said the pandemic was

the biggest test to the system so far. “The inflationary episode has lasted longer than we would have liked and will continue to last longer than we would like, but, I have no doubt in my mind that inflation will be brought down to the target level in the medium term.” “The Indian economy has barely recovered from the pandemic, and we have to be careful not to impose an intolerable growth sacrifice in our attempt to tame inflation too abruptly,” Varma said.

Amid inflationary pressures remaining high in recent times, the Reserve Bank of India’s MPC is moving towards a hawkish stance. **PTI**

SBI, other PSBs commit ₹6,071 crore to Adani Group for copper biz

New Delhi: Adani Group has forayed into copper manufacturing with tying up of finances from public sector lenders for a 1 million tonnes a year unit at Mundra in Gujarat.

“Kutch Copper Ltd (KCL), a subsidiary of Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL), is setting up a greenfield copper refinery project for production of refined copper with 1 million tonnes per annum in two phases,” the company said in a statement.

For the phase-1 capacity of 0.5 million tonnes, KCL has achieved financial closure through a syn-

dedicated club loan for the greenfield copper refinery project at Mundra, Gujarat. It has executed “financing documents with the consortium of banks led by State Bank of India (SBI). The other consortium members are Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank, EXIM Bank of India, Indian Bank, Punjab National Bank, and Bank of Maharashtra,” the statement said. The consortium of banks has sanctioned and signed an agreement for the entire debt requirement of Rs 6,071 crore for the Phase-1 of the KCL Project. **PTI**

Robin Fretwell Wilson, a law professor at the University of Illinois and expert on healthcare law.

Amazon, Citigroup, Lyft, Conde Nast and several other companies that have announced reimbursement policies did not respond to requests for comment.

For many large companies that fund their own health plans, the federal law regulating employee benefits will provide crucial cover in civil lawsuits over their reimbursement policies, several lawyers and other legal experts said.

The Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) prohibits states from adopting requirements that “relate to” employer-sponsored health plans. Courts have for decades interpreted that language to bar state laws that dictate what health plans can and cannot cover.

MARKET WATCH M-CAP OF 9 MOST VALUED COS JUMPS

New Delhi: Nine of the 10 most valued firms added Rs 2.51 lakh crore to their market valuation last week, with Tata Consultancy Services emerging as the biggest gainer. Last week, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,367 points or 2.66 per cent. **PTI**

Volatility no bar: DIIs cushion FPI exit impact over last 8 months

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
MUMBAI, JUNE 26

UNDAUNTED BY the massive sell-off by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) from the Indian stock markets, domestic institutional investors (DIIs), led by mutual funds and insurance companies, have invested Rs 2,88,167 crore in the stock market (excluding debt and IPOs) since November 2021.

According to stock exchange data, FPIs have pulled out Rs 3,54,285 crore in the last eight months. The FPI sell-off has been absorbed by DIIs to a great extent, preventing a major crash in the markets. While DIIs made net investments of Rs 41,983 crore in June so far, FPIs withdrew Rs 53,600 crore from Indian stocks during the month. “A global risk-off sentiment amidst increased risks to global growth have contributed to the decline in global equities including India. There are domestic factors at play as well, including high inflation and rising interest rates. Inflows into mutual funds have however remained robust, as investors turn risk-averse,” said Aditi Gupta, Economist, Bank of Baroda.

Despite huge volatility in stock markets and sustained selling by FPIs, equity mutual funds have been attracting inflows. MFs attracted net inflows of Rs 18,529 crore in May as against Rs 15,890 crore inflow in April.

Significantly, inflow through SIP (systematic investment plan) rose to Rs 12,286 crore in May from Rs 11,863 crore in April, indicating that retail investors continue to hold confidence on equity investments. This is the ninth consecutive month of SIP inflow being greater than Rs 10,000 crore, a trend which started in September 2021 with Rs 10,351 crore inflow. MF equity schemes have been witnessing net inflow since March 2021, highlighting the positive sentiment among investors. Prior to this, such schemes had consistently witnessed outflows for eight months from July 2020 to February 2021 losing Rs 46,791 crore.

The RBI’s tightening of the monetary policy and inflated global commodity prices have primarily led the domestic markets to bleed in terms of substantial cash outflows from the equity markets during the last few months. The pace of such withdrawals was last seen when the pandemic spurred in the first quarter of 2020. Globally, the ongoing military conflict between Ukraine and Russia, rising fed rates and the return of the pandemic outbreak have further added fuel to the fire, according to Manoj Purohit, partner & leader—Financial Services Tax, BDO India.

This short-term pace of negative volatility is likely to slow down in the coming weeks if not reversed completely. “India is still on a better footing as compared to other global markets primarily on account of sustained growth patterns, better GDP numbers, recovering forex reserves, consistent demand from consumers and good financial numbers by large corporates, Purohit said.

The FPI sell-off has been on the back of a global risk-off sentiment amidst increased expectations of a slowdown in global growth and surging inflation globally. This has prompted central banks across the world to hike rates. Fed has been at the forefront, hiking policy rate to 150-175 bps this year and expectations are that this can go up to 300-350 bps. This has further exacerbated FPI outflows from EMs, including India.

Meanwhile, foreign investors pulled out close to Rs 43,837 crore (including stocks, debt and hybrid) so far this month following monetary policy tightening by the Reserve Bank and US Federal Reserve, high oil prices and volatile rupee.



The BSE, Mumbai. File

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Govt to invite power bids from 8K MW thermal capacities without PPAs



RK SINGH
Power Minister File

New Delhi: The government will invite bids from states to sell electricity generated from 8,000 megawatt (MW) thermal capacities without PPAs, Power Minister RK Singh has said.

A total of 8,000 MW of thermal capacities in India are without any power purchase agreements, Singh, who is also the Minister for New and Renewable Energy, told *PTI*. Replying to a question related to capacities without PPAs in India, the minister said, “There are 8,000 MW of capacities which don’t have PPAs in thermal”. Sharing the government’s plan to resolve the issue, the minister informed that states have been asked to send their electricity requirement, and accordingly bids will be invited.

“We will aggregate (their demand) and call on for bids and based on the bids, whoever puts in the lowest bids, PPAs will be signed. Once PPAs are signed, the (states) will get the power,” he said.

Speaking further, the minister said there are also some thermal capacities undergoing the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) proceedings, and the government has already taken several steps to resolve the issue at the earliest. **PTI**

BRIEFLY

SAIL Ex-Chairman

New Delhi: V Krishnamurthy, a former chairman of steel PSU SAIL and Maruti Udyog Ltd (now Maruti Suzuki), passed away Sunday at age of 97 in Chennai.

Goyal, economy

New Delhi: India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world and it is expected to reach \$30 trillion in the coming 30 years, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday.

TKAP, e-parts

New Delhi: Toyota Kirloskar auto parts unit TKAP announced inauguration of its new electrified components line, E-Drive. **PTI**

REUTERS

NEW YORK, JUNE 26

A GROWING number of large US companies have said they will cover travel costs for employees who must leave their home states to get abortions, but these new policies could expose businesses to lawsuits and even potential criminal liability, legal experts said.

Amazon.com, Apple Inc, Lyft Inc, Microsoft and JPMorgan Chase & Co were among companies that announced plans to provide those benefits through their health insurance plans in anticipation of Friday’s US Supreme Court decision overturning the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling that had legalized abortion nationwide.

Within an hour of the decision being released, Conde Nast chief executive Roger Lynch sent a

memo to staff announcing a travel reimbursement policy and calling the court’s ruling “a crushing blow to reproductive rights.” Walt Disney Co unveiled a similar policy on Friday, telling employees that it recognizes the impact of the abortion ruling but remains committed to providing comprehensive access to quality healthcare, according to a spokesman.

Companies including health insurer Cigna Corp, Paypal Holdings Inc, Alaska Airlines Inc and Dick’s Sporting Goods also announced reimbursement policies on Friday. Abortion restrictions that were already on the books in 13 states went into effect as a result of Friday’s ruling and at least a dozen other Republican-led states are expected to ban abortion. The court’s decision, driven by its conservative majority, upheld a Mississippi law that



The United States Supreme Court, Washington. Reuters

bans abortion after 15 weeks. Meanwhile, some Democratic-led states are moving to bolster access to abortion.

Companies will have to navi-

gate that patchwork of state laws and are likely to draw the ire of anti-abortion groups and Republican-led states if they adopt policies supportive of em-



McLaughlin breaks own 400m hurdles world record

REUTERS
EUGENE, JUNE 26

FOCUS, SKILL and a little bit of “Track Town, USA” magic propelled Sydney McLaughlin to break her own world record - again - in the 400 meters hurdles on Saturday.

The Olympic gold medalist won the U.S. championships final in 51.41 seconds at Hayward Field, improving upon her own benchmark time at the American track haven of Eugene, Oregon.

The 22-year-old wrestled the lead early and never gave the rest of the field a fighting chance, clinching her spot in the world championships in front of an adoring crowd.

“It’s Track Town, USA, what can you expect?” said McLaughlin. “Any time I come here I can just feel something amazing is going to happen.”

She previously set the record with a 51.90-second performance at the U.S. Olympic trials in Eugene almost a year ago to the day, only to shatter that figure in Tokyo, collecting gold in 51.46.

“I don’t anything compares to the first time you do it, just crossing that line in awe,” she told reporters, when asked to compare which of her record-breaking efforts meant the most.

“This is just a great indicator of where we are and hopefully (we’re) going to go home and work on some things.”

Running out of lane five, McLaughlin put on a flawless performance with her opponents offering little in the way of pressure to push her toward the finish line.

McLaughlin, who also collected a relay gold in Tokyo, offered a subdued smile and double thumbs up as her accomplishment became clear. Britton Wilson finished 1.67 seconds behind with Shamier Little taking third in 53.92.

“Zoning in on what I have to focus on puts me in a headspace to really not worry about anyone else and focus on 10 my hurdles,” she said after the race, adding that she planned to celebrate by eating some “real food - beside vegetables.”

McLaughlin faces a potential showdown at the world championships with chief rival and reigning champion Dalilah Muhammad, who was absent from the national championships due to injury.

She finished second to Muhammad by seven hundredths of a second at the 2019 Doha world championships.

The top three finishers in Eugene, Oregon, who meet certain qualifying standards, and reigning global title-holders will compete at the world championships, which will be held in the United States for the first time from July 15 at the same track.

Ashwin stakes claim with restrained but probing spell

Decision on spinner’s spot would hinge on extent of off-spinner’s recovery, right/left handedness of England squad and how Jadeja and him bowl in the nets

SANDIP G
JUNE 26

THREE DAYS after he landed in Leicestershire, his arrival delayed due to COVID-19 infection and subsequent isolation at home, he produced a spell that allayed fears on both his fitness and readiness. In an unchanged 11-over-spell, where he was restrained yet menacing, he looked the most potent of India’s bowlers on a sun-baked placid surface, where most batters found run-scoring a less challenging exercise than it was on the first three days.

The swing on the surface had dissipated, but it had yet deteriorated to encourage spin. In the morning, the seamers, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami bowled with venom and vim, pounding the deck hard, but a breakthrough eluded.

So strolled in Ashwin to bowl the 20th over of the final day. From the outset, his intentions were obvious, he was not looking to marvel batsmen with outrageous turn or twinkling variations. In fact, he hardly unpacked his full bag of variations. He wanted to work his rhythm into the game, stifle the batsmen, get a measure of the conditions and then spread his wings.

The lengths thus were fuller, trajectory a fraction flatter and line on off-and-middle stump. He seemed in no mood for a battle of wits with batsmen. Sam Evans, the Leicestershire batsman who averages a shade under 30, bestowed him with respect, studiously blocking every ball. But his partner Shubman Gill, conversely, decided to draw Ashwin into a challenge. So in the next over, he dragged Ashwin from a country mile outside the off stump—a rare instance he bowled wide in the early part of the spell—and swept him powerfully through square-leg.

On cue, Ashwin corrected his line and went around the stumps to angle the ball across him. But Gill would still not spare him. He stepped out and powered him through mid-wicket, picking the ball, slower through the air but harmlessly, from the off-stump.

The stroke roused Ashwin. The contest intensified. He reverted to bowl from over the stumps, alternating between a good-length on off-stump and middle-stump, mixing up his pace. He couldn’t harness a dangerous degree of drift, the wind blowing into him worked against him as well, but now he was making the ball drop. So many variegated skills has he that he could sum-



It was R Ashwin's first appearance following his recovery from COVID-19.

mon whatever he wants whenever he wants. He gradually pulled the length back, bringing Gill, who prefers the back-foot perch, forward. Gill probably read too much into Ashwin’s ploys. Ashwin, sometimes, tends to over-complicate himself, but these days, batsmen over-complicate themselves when tussling him.

Anyway, Gill was brought out of his comforts. He chalked out an escape route—to sweep himself out of misery and reclaim the early ascendancy. This is what Ashwin does at his best—to sow self-doubts in batsmen’s mind. Until then, Gill was batting with an air of authority. Now, though, he felt both insecure and inadequate. He unfurled the sweep. But Ashwin, ever a psychoanalyst of batsmen, floated one on the leg-stump. Gill failed to control the shot and holed out in the deep.

Thereafter, he began to work over Evans. As tempting as it might have been to bamboozle him with a deceptive variation of his, he was in no mood for quick kill. Rather, he induced a suicide. Evans was keen to use his feet, but Ashwin’s pace and trajectory kept him crease-tied. He knew it was only a matter of time before the restless Evans would step out. The batsmen’s feet telegraphed his plan and Ashwin bowled a shortish ball outside the leg-stump. Evans was beaten and stumped. One more over, and Ashwin walked back gingerly into the pavilion, wearing a content smile.

Shortly, Ravindra Jadeja replaced him. Louis Kimber welcomed him with a four before Hanuma Vihari, hitherto in wretched

form, walloped him for a six and four off successive balls. Jadeja bounced back, suffocated the batsmen with tight lengths and grabbed a brace of wickets to the three he had snaffled in the first innings. That would lay another layer to the Jadeja-Ashwin debate for the Edgbaston Test.

A stray warm-up game, though, would not have the final word on the debate. The decision would hinge on several factors—the extent of Ashwin’s recovery, the nature of the surface (Edgbaston has a spin-friendly reputation), the combination that India would seek, the right/left handedness of the England squad, and how they bowl in the nets in the days preceding to the Test that begins on July 1. But Ashwin, to his credit, has emphasised that he is in fine fettle, having been benched for the first four Tests of this series last year.

Overall, the visitors would leave East Midlands satisfied with their bowlers’ rhythm, but dissatisfied with most of their batsmen’s touch. Only Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant and KS Bharat were fluent. Both Shreyas Iyer and Hanuma Vihari spent considerable time in the middle, without exuding any assurance. Cheteshwar Pujara was scratchy rather than steady in the second innings, after the first-innings duck. The brightest spark of the sleepy day, though, was Ashwin.

Brief scores: Indians 246 for 8 dec (Bharat 70, Walker 5-24) and 364 for 9 (Kohli 67, Jadeja 56*) drew Leicestershire 244 (Pant 76, Jadeja 3-28, Shami 3-42) and 219 for 4 (Gill 62, Kimber 56, Ashwin 2-31).

England 113 runs away from series sweep against New Zealand

REUTERS
LEEDS, JUNE 26

ENGLAND ARE 113 runs away from completing a series whitewash against New Zealand after the hosts put themselves in a commanding position with eight wickets in hand in the final innings of the third test on Sunday.

Chasing 296 for victory, Ollie Pope and Joe Root were at the crease at stumps after the pair made light work of a competitive target as England finished day four on 183-2.

The pair set up what promises to be an intriguing final day, with Headingley hopeful of having a packed house as they look to replicate the Trent Bridge test’s atmosphere by offering free tickets.

England lost Alex Lees to a run-out after a mix-up in the fifth over while his opening partner Zak Crawley (25) was caught in the covers off Michael Bracewell, with skipper Kane Williamson involved in both dismissals.

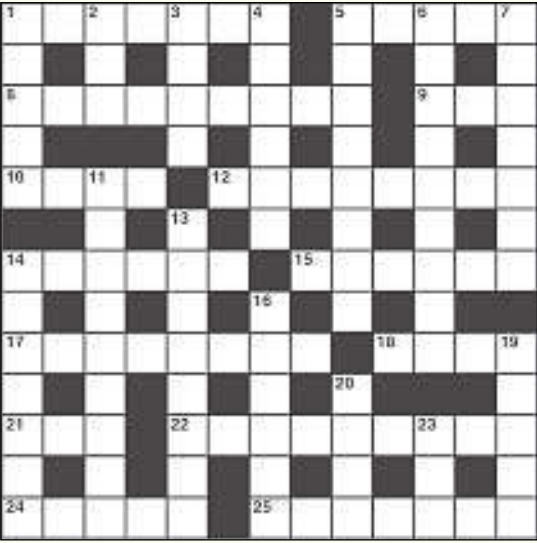
But Pope (81) and Root (55) steadied the ship with an unbeaten 132-run partnership as they saw off the fast bowlers and targeted spinner Bracewell, who went for over six per over. New Zealand also lost two reviews in successive balls when Root was rapped on the pads. The former England skipper survived on both occasions, giving Williamson a lot to ponder every time there was a shout for leg-before wicket.

Earlier, New Zealand were dismissed for 326 after the in-form Daryl Mitchell and Tom Blundell had again frustrated the hosts.



Pope (81) and Root (55) steadied the ship with an unbroken 132-run partnership.

CROSSWORD 4778



ACROSS

- 1 Has second thoughts about a hundred workers (7)
- 5 Approaches a listener in two directions (5)
- 8 Dead Roman exchanged for wife of Perseus (9)
- 9 Left with a thousand to beat (3)
- 10 They take turns on and off (4)
- 12 Plant it in haste (8)
- 14 Display by top-class band (6)
- 15 Published and is prosecuted (6)
- 17 Sticking together he said no changes are needed (8)
- 18 Ring maker (4)
- 21 A religious palindrome (3)
- 22 It may help to rescue a country from mad policy (9)
- 24 Cask Edward put into good order (5)
- 25 He has something to say on the radio (7)

DOWN

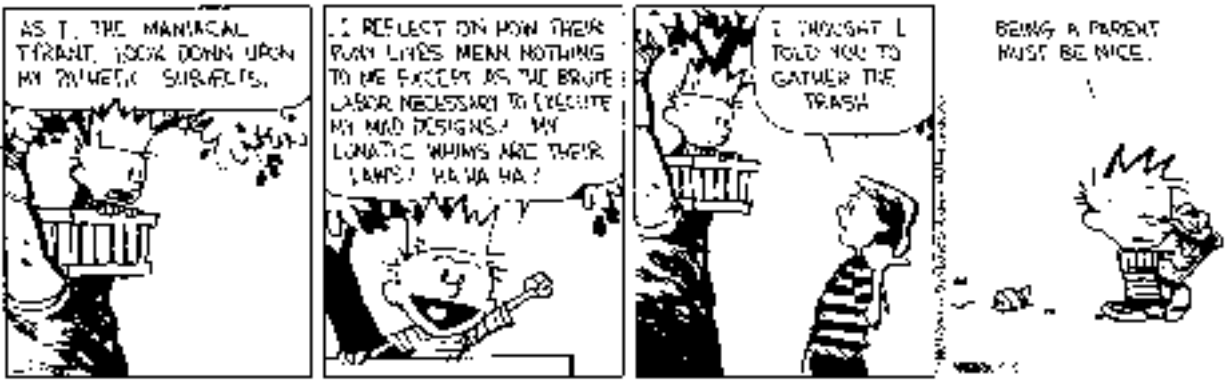
- 1 Respond - to an encore call? (5)
- 2 Fish paid for at the door (3)
- 3 Either way it's high time (4)
- 4 Embarrassing moments in parts of the play (6)
- 5 Possibly ten areas mostly in southwest Asia (4,4)
- 6 Not occupied? There's no hurry (2,7)
- 7 Breed of dog that will change some day (7)
- 11 Separate layer on ruined temple (9)
- 13 It could be indeed so unfair (3-5)
- 14 Opposed to making a profit. Good man! (7)
- 16 Manages adequately round a bend in two-door cars (6)
- 19 A better bed (5)
- 20 Knows the sound of an organ (4)
- 23 Put a question like 'the capital of Kenya?' (3)

Solutions Crossword 4777: Across: 1 Tenement, 5 Ford, 9 Arras, 10 Tension, 11 Supernatural, 13 Hyenas, 14 Turban, 17 Installation, 20 Minimum, 21 Orate, 22 Nice, 23 Ministers. Down: 1 Trap, 2 Nurture, 3 Master-at-arms, 4 Noting, 6 Osier, 7 Dangling, 8 Instructions, 12 Chairman, 15 Brocade, 16 Alumnai, 18 Sonic, 19 Mess.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip. There are 350 varieties of shark, not counting __ and __ - LM Boyd (4, 4)

LNZAO



DNSOO



EPUYLL



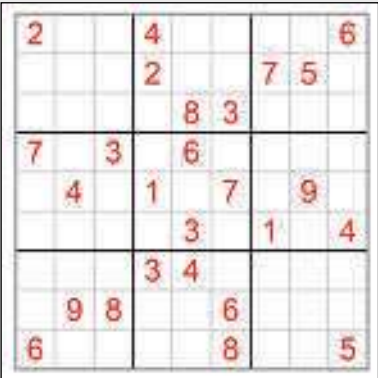
NAPPED



SUDOKU 4878

Difficulty Level 4s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4877



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Lunar alignments are very much to your taste today, but you'll only confer their promised benefits if you are happy to go along with all adventurous suggestions and invitations. Remember to check up on your rights, lest someone takes advantage of you.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

As the days pass, it will become much easier for you to relax and enjoy yourself. On the other hand, if you imagine domestic responsibilities are becoming lighter, you might be in for a shock! If people you live with begin to think that you're slacking, then they may soon play a trick on you.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Good communication is of the essence. Over the next few days you must say what needs to be said. You should have got something important off your chest by now, but there are still one or two hidden resentments. These can be left until later.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

The Sun is now preparing to reduce its romantic presence, a poetic indication that you must draw the veil over several difficult situations, and make sure that a number of promising opportunities are of lasting value. Hang on to the past by all means, but not on to people and places that are no good for you.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Sometimes planetary cycles just refuse to be convenient. Your stars are out of tune with the working week, and ideally you should extend your personal activities until Wednesday, at least. If there is serious business to conduct today, make sure you concentrate on the financial aspects.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Secrets are all very well, but the fact that you're still not letting on about something important could eventually cause a spot of aggravation. You must pick your time carefully - next week might bring the best moment to reveal all. Can you wait? I think so.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Like many other people, your mood will change on Wednesday and Thursday. So, if you have social arrangements to confirm, do so as soon as possible, because by the end of the week partners will be showing an increasing tendency to misunderstand the simplest instruction.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

There's still a lot to happen at work, and you are by no means at the end of a period of professional adjustment. A complete change of direction is likely for many Scorpios, and even if you're not in paid employment, a long-term ambition is about to crystallize.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

The Moon is in an intense relationship with your sign, an indication that while you may be a little more emotional than usual, you have the advantage in most dealings with other people, both at work and at home. You must use your talents and energy wisely.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

If financial decisions are pending, don't mess around or prevaricate. There is a great deal to be gained from exerting your monetary muscle to get your own way. Dazzle people with the facts, and you may just find that they come round to your way of thinking.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

You'll have to clarify the issues in all personal relationships now. Although you are about to enter a phase in which the emotional situation should be generally satisfying, you'll be guided by your instincts and hence liable to make one or two false moves.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

If conditions at work need to be improved, or if your daily burden is to be lightened, then talk to the people who can help. You have everything to gain by opting for dialogue and debate, everything to lose by keeping yourself to yourself. Stay close to the folk who matter.

Kolkata