



Yati Narsinghanand (centre) attends the 'Hindu Mahapanchayat' in Delhi on Sunday. *Praveen Khanna*

Out on bail in hate speech case, Yati at it again: tells Hindus to take up arms

ABHINAV RAJPUT & MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL

NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

IN A mahapanchayat held in Delhi on Sunday for which police said they hadn't granted permission, Yati Narsinghanand, arrested in the Haridwar hate speech case and out on bail after weeks in custody, delivered a speech exhorting Hindus to pick up arms claiming they faced the threat of conversion and violence if a "Muslim is made prime minister."

Late Sunday night, Delhi Police issued a statement saying an FIR has been lodged over the inflammatory speeches. "Some of the speakers including Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati... and Suresh Chauhanke, Chief Editor of Sudarshan News, uttered words promoting disharmony, feelings of enmity, hatred or ill will between two communities," the FIR registered at the Mukharjee

Nagar police station said.

The event was organised by Preet Singh, founder of the Save India Foundation and one of the organisers of an event held at Jantar Mantar last year where anti-Muslim slogans were raised. Singh was arrested by the Delhi Police in connection with the case and is currently out on bail. According to his Twitter account, Sunday's mahapanchayat event was planned as far back as January 2 this year.

Narsinghanand, head priest of Ghaziabad's Dasna Devi temple, too, is out on bail in connection with a speech he made at a three-day 'Dharam Sansad' held in Haridwar last December. His bail condition had said he would not be part of any event or gathering "which aims towards creating difference between communities".

Speaking at Delhi's Burari ground, where around 500 people had gathered on Sunday to participate in a 'Hindu mahapanchayat', Narsinghanand said

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DISSOLVED, SC TAKES UP MATTER

Imran Khan ducks no-confidence vote in Pak, calls for early election



Imran Khan's party workers outside parliament building in Islamabad. *Reuters*

Dy Speaker rejects Opp motion; Army says nothing to do with us

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
CHENNAI, APRIL 3

WITH SOME help from Deputy Speaker Qasim Khan Suri, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday snatched a reprieve from what seemed like a sure ouster from office ahead of the scheduled vote on the combined Opposition's no-confidence motion against him.

Had the voting taken place, it would have been the first time that a prime minister of the country had been removed through a parliamentary process,

as the Opposition had collected 197 parliamentarians in favour of the motion, including more than 20 rebels from Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), and 25 more than the 172 required for winning the vote in the 342-member house.

But the vote was not held as Suri dismissed it as "unconstitutional" and prorogued the National Assembly.

Minutes later, Khan blindsided the Opposition once again by dissolving the National Assembly and asking people to "prepare for another election". He also congratulated the nation on their victory against an alleged

"foreign conspiracy for regime change" in Pakistan. On Khan's advice, President Arif Alvi dissolved the National Assembly.

Information Minister Fawad Chaudhary said on Twitter that the Cabinet had been dissolved as well and that Prime Minister Imran Khan would continue in office. The Constitution requires elections to be held within 90 days of the Assembly being dissolved.

"Prepare for elections. No corrupt forces will decide what the future of the country will be. When the assemblies will be dissolved, the procedure for the next elections and the caretaker

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



EXPLAINED

All bets are off

PAKISTAN IS headed for prolonged political uncertainty. Khan's foreign conspiracy claim can win him sympathy but may not be enough to win polls — he no longer has Army backing.

INSIDE

IMRAN SACKS GOVERNOR OF PAK'S PUNJAB; CM ELECTION DEFERRED

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House panel calls in CAG officials: Explain audit report delays

LIZ MATHEW

NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

A COMMITTEE of Parliament tasked with examining all papers laid on the table of the House has for the first time summoned the national auditor to explain the "unreasonable delays" in submitting annual reports and audited accounts.

Officials of the Comptroller & Auditor General of India (CAG) will appear before the Committee on Papers Laid (Lok Sabha) on the Table on Monday to discuss ways to ensure compliance from the more than 1,000 autonomous bodies, Public Sector Units (PSUs) under various ministries, which have not submitted their accounts in time.

"We have called the CAG, and it is sending its officials to find ways to facilitate various au-

tonomous bodies that are availing grants from the consolidated fund of the Government of India to have their accounts audited in time so that the people of this country know how their money is spent by these bodies," Ritesh Pandey, Committee chairman, told *The Indian Express*.

"As per records, there is no precedent regarding the working of this Committee (on Papers Laid) when the CAG has been called to inquire into the delays by ministries/ PSUs/ autonomous bodies etc., while clarifying audit objections. I do not think any other Parliamentary Committee other than the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has ever summoned the CAG," Pandey, the BSP MP from Ambedkar Nagar, said.

The PAC is the oldest Parliamentary Committee, and

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Blockchain system in Gadchiroli to weed out fake caste certificates

JAYPRAKASH S NAIDU

MUMBAI, APRIL 3

THE MAHARASHTRA government is in the process of implementing a system to authenticate government-issued caste certificates through a blockchain system. The system, to be put in place in the Maoism-affected Gadchiroli district, will allow instant, 10-second verification that will rule out any duplication or forgery of caste certificates. It will also help protect the rights of the tribals, say

GOVERNANCE

AN EXPRESS SERIES
MAHARASHTRA

government officials.

The project is the first of its kind in the country and assumes significance as Gadchiroli is one of the most backward districts in Maharashtra with a tribal population of around 70 per cent. Once the project is implemented,

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IDEA EXCHANGE

'Need open climate within institutions so that artists can practise their art'

GULAMMOHAMMED SHEIKH
ARTIST

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THE WORLD



AFTER BAN, SOCIAL MEDIA RESTORED IN SRI LANKA

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INSIDE

BIRBHUM KILLINGS: BOMBS FOUND BURIED NEAR ACCUSED HOUSE

KASHMIRI PANDIT'S CLOSER TO RETURN: BHAGWAT

PAGES 3 & 4

Congress faces a shrinking RS footprint: No MPs in 17 states

MANOJ CG

NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

THE CONGRESS'S tally in Rajya Sabha will dip after the forthcoming biennial elections to the Upper House, but more worrying for the party is the shrinking of its geographical footprint. The Congress will not have representation in Rajya Sabha from as many as 17 states and Union Territories.

The Congress's tally in the

Rajya Sabha was 33 at the end of March. While four members have already retired, nine more will retire in June and July.

After the elections, its tally will go down to 30, its lowest ever in Rajya Sabha. The Congress hopes the DMK will give it one of the six seats that are falling vacant. Its tally in that case will be 31.

But the party will have no Rajya Sabha representation from Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha,

Delhi and Goa.

And, for the first time, it will have no representation from the eight states in the Northeast either. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had been a MP from Assam till he moved to Rajasthan in 2019.

Of the 30 or 31 seats that the Congress will have after the biennial elections, the maximum will be from the party-ruled states of Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, and Karnataka,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Friends off field, rivals on it: Gold for one, new India record for other

ANDREW AMSAN

KOZHIKODE, APRIL 3

ONE IS the grandson of the man who introduced the famous "Muscoto halwa" to Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu. The other, from Palakkad in Kerala, is one of the country's brightest track-and-field stars. The two are "really good friends".

But on Sunday evening, Jeswin Aldrin (21) and Murali



Murali Sreeshankar (left), Jeswin Aldrin. *Andrew Amsan*

Sreeshankar (23) were engaged in a dramatic face-off in a long jump competition of lengths never reached before on Indian soil.

Result: Nine 8-plus-metre jumps, two jumps better than the previous national record, two berths for India at the World Athletics Championships in the US later this year — and of course, plenty of drama.

If Neeraj Chopra's gold at Tokyo made javelin-throwing a

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In Birbhum, stir against coal project smoulders: 'Won't give up way of life'

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA & ATRI MITRA

DEUCHA (BIRBHUM), APRIL 3

AT A field near the village of Baromashia in Birbhum district, a woman with a microphone in her hand spoke in Santhali as a group of about 100 men and women with lathis, bows and arrows listened.

Rows of concrete rooms at an abandoned stone crushing plant lay at one end of the field. These rooms, recently turned into rest-rooms, had freshly painted graffiti and slogans on the outer



At a protest in Birbhum district. *Partha Paul*

walls — "Koyla khoni hote debo na (We won't let the coal mine proj-

ect go ahead)" and "Koyla khadan nahi chalega (Coal mining won't

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Jai Jawan **Jai Kisan**

Lal Bahadur Shastri National Memorial Trust
in collaboration with
Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Management, Delhi
cordially invites you to the
28th Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial Lecture
on
"Spiritual Values for Peace and Sustainability"
to be delivered by
Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar
Spiritual Leader and Founder of Art of Living

Bharat Ratna
Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri
(1904-1966)

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar
Spiritual Leader and Founder of Art of Living

Date : Tuesday, April 5, 2022
Time : 6:15 pm

Venue :
Auditorium, National Museum,
Janpath, New Delhi-110011

The memorial lecture can also be viewed on following links:

YouTube <http://ytube.lbsim.ac.in>

YouTube <https://youtube.com/srisri>

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Prof. A.K. Das
Director,
Lal Bahadur Shastri National Memorial Trust

for Invitation, please contact :

Col (Retd.) Ajay Sood (CAO, LBSIM) : 9958137595
Kundan Singh (Curator, LBSM) : 9891617765
Sachin Khara (AO, LBSIM) : 9811320320
Email: cao@lbsim.ac.in, shastrimemorial2016@gmail.com



AUSPICIOUS OCCASION

AFTER THE spectacular success of his mission in Uttar Pradesh, Union Education Minister and senior BJP leader Dharmendra Pradhan organised a special puja at his residence on Saturday. In the puja – on the first day of Navratri – there was a special recitation of Sunderkand from Ramayan. Although the minister's office said it was a family affair, top ministers visited Pradhan's residence to have prasad. Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Commerce and Industry Minister and Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha Piyush Goyal, Rural Development Minister Giriraj Singh and J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha were among those who visited on the auspicious occasion.

CAMEL RIDE

IT WAS perhaps a memorable Sunday for Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who was in Rajasthan to attend an official function organised for distribution of crop insurance policies to farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. Amid the official engagements, Tomar took some time out and visited the famous Mallinath Animal Fair in Barmer district. Once there, the minister took a camel ride. His deputy, Kailash Choudhary, who represents the Barmer parliamentary constituency, was seated behind him.

MAKING AMENDS

THAT THE Congress does not prepare in advance for the Assembly elections has been a criticism which is often heard in the party after every Assembly election defeat. It appears the leadership is finally trying to make some amends. Rahul Gandhi last month had a meeting with top leaders from Haryana, where Assembly polls are slotted more than two years later in 2024. Last week, he was in Karnataka, which goes to polls next year, to sound the poll bugle. And this week, he will have a meeting with Telangana leaders to review the preparations for next year's Assembly elections. The Telangana Congress is roping in poll strategist Sunil Kanugolu to design its strategy and campaign..

Complainant’s statement recorded as he seeks to drop name of Gehlot’s son

SAGAR RAJPUT
MUMBAI, APRIL 3

A NASHIK court on Friday recorded the statement of a 33-year-old businessman, who is the complainant in a case of cheating, breach of trust and intimidation, which was registered in the city against 14 persons, including Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's son Vaibhav Gehlot. His statement was recorded under Section 164 of CrPc, days after he told Nashik police that he wants to withdraw his case against the Rajasthan CM's son.

Speaking with *The Indian Express*, the complainant, Sushil Patil, said that he was not pressured by any political party to retract his complaint against Gehlot. "Instead, days after I lodged a complaint against a Gujarat-based Congress worker and the mastermind, Sachin Valera, Gehlot and 12 others, I came to know that Gehlot was not involved and Valera was just misusing his name



Vaibhav Gehlot

to gain my trust, due to which I went to the Gangapur police station and withdrew my complaint against Gehlot," he said.

On the directions of the local court in Nashik, the Gangapur police on March 17 had registered a case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code. Subsequently, the investigation of the case was transferred to the EOW.

"The statement to police does not hold significance, due to which we wrote to the court.. following which his statement was recorded by the magistrate on Friday," said an investigator, adding, "We are yet to receive a copy of it but the process of recording the statement went on for about an hour." The investigators have said that they will not remove Gehlot's name from the FIR.

OBC Kushwaha votes on mind, BJP to mark Ashoka’s birth anniv

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, APRIL 3

WITH OBC Kushwaha votes on mind, the Bihar BJP is all set to celebrate 2327th birth anniversary of emperor Ashoka, who is said to have ruled most part of the Indian subcontinent between 268 BCE and 232 BCE. It is the BJP that first started organising birth anniversary of the Mauryan king in 2015. This year, the party will mark his anniversary on April 8 – the eighth day of Hindi month of Chaitra. It is organised as per Hindi calendar. UP Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya and Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav will attend the function. Though historians differ on the exact date or year of Ashoka's birth, BJP claims it is going to be the Mauryan king's 2327th birth anniversary.

Ratnesh Kushwaha, BJP state working committee member and coordinator of the function,

EXPLAINED
Luv-Kush factor

KOERI AND Kushwaha, often called Luv-Kush in political lexicon, are about nine per cent (three per cent Kurmis and six per cent Koeris or Kushwaha) and dubbed core constituency of Bihar CM Nitish Kumar. With former MP Upendra Kushwaha merging his Rashtriya Lok Samata Party with JD(U) in March 2021, JD(U), and in turn NDA, looks for Luv-Kush votes consolidation. JD(U) would celebrate Ashoka's anniversary on April 9.

told *The Indian Express* that Bihar Panchayati Raj Minister Samrat Choudhary (a Kushwaha)

Time to return home: Bhagwat to displaced Kashmiri Pandits

ARUN SHARMA
JAMMU, APRIL 3

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said the time for return of Kashmiri Pandits to their native places in the Valley had come closer, but also cautioned them against haste as they shall go there in a way that they do not have to face the same migration again.

Referring to *The Kashmir Files* movie, he said: "Some support it, while some call it half-truth... But common man is of the opinion that by presenting the devastating truth, this film has not only presented pain and agony of the displaced Kashmiris, but shaken us as well. Such feeling is there in the country today and if it is so then next year, we will be in our home...our own land."

He said this while referring to the pledge taken by migrants



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat

during Navreh (new year) celebrations for returning home next year.

Addressing the migrants at a virtual conference, the RSS chief said: "*Jahan par humara ghar baar tha, wahan par humara ghar baar phir se hoga. Yeh jo apna sankalp hai us ki purti ke liye ab bahut din baki nahi hain* (It will not take long in fulfillment of our pledge to have our houses again in our native land)."

Referring to their pain and agony of getting displaced, he

said it was not new, but it had been going on for the past three-four decades.

"Though we have scattered all over the world, Kashmir remains an integral part of India," he said, adding that the situation was changing.

Recalling his earlier address to the migrants on Shivratri in Delhi in 2011, he said: "You had pledged to return home then, but that was not the right time. I had then told you that the problem would be solved only through public awakening. Due to the efforts from all of us in the past 11 years, the path for your return has brightened as the hurdles like Article 370 are not there today."

Cautioning them against taking hasty decisions, he said they should go in an environment that they do not get uprooted again.

Pointing out that people with

whom they used to live in peace in Kashmir were still there, Bhagwat said the number of those who had ill will or hatred had perhaps decreased.

"This feeling that they have to migrate and live in pain and despair has to go," he said, adding: "We all have to live together."

"We have to create a system that such a thing is not tolerated and if one has any evil design, one faces the dire consequences," he said, adding that "all this takes time". However, one has to continue making efforts in this direction and results come at the right time, he added.

"All types of situations come and go in one's life and after overcoming them, one enhances one's capacities and capabilities. However, determination plays an important role in it," he added.

Nepal PM offers prayers at Kashi Vishwanath, thanks Modi, Adityanath

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, APRIL 3

NEPAL PRIME Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who arrived in Varanasi with wife Arzu Rana Deuba on Sunday, offered prayers at Kashi Vishwanath temple and Kal Bhairav temple. Deuba also performed bhumi puja of an old age home at Nepali Pashupatinath temple located at Lalita Ghat near the Kashi Vishwanath temple.

The Nepalese Prime Minister was accompanied by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who received him at Varanasi airport. Deuba arrived in New Delhi on Friday in his first bilateral visit abroad after becoming prime minister for the fifth time in July last year.

Deuba was given a warm welcome on reaching Varanasi as Adityanath and ministers of his cabinet from Varanasi received him at the airport.

At the Kashi Vishwanth temple, Deuba took a walk in the newly developed Kashi Vishwanath Corridor that was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year.

According to a release from Varanasi administration, Deuba said that he felt blessed and expressed gratitude to Modi and Adityanath.

Adityanath offered him a rudraksh mala and a replica of the Kashi Vishwanath temple as souvenir. Adityanath also gave a Banarasi silk saree to Deuba's wife.

Later, Deuba and Adityanath held a meeting at a hotel in the presence of the visiting delegates.

Addressing the delegation, Adityanath said, "I have personal attachment with Nepal, and our citizens have a feeling of respect and attachment towards Nepalese citizens. There should be talks between the two countries, and it should be related to cultural and spiritual heritage and development...".

WITHPTI



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his wife Arzu Rana Deuba in Varanasi on Sunday. Anand Singh

Deuba back after ‘successful’ trip, says will consolidate India bond

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, APRIL 3

NEPAL'S PRIME Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba returned home on Sunday after a three-day official visit – one of the shortest by any Nepal PM – to India, and asserted that the trip had been very successful, and would help to consolidate the Nepal-India bond.

Of the nearly 50 hours of the visit – including travel times from Kathmandu to New Delhi, and from there to Varanasi and back to Kathmandu – however, Deuba spent only about two and a half hours in meetings to discuss bilateral issues.

He had lunch with PM Narendra Modi and high-level officials from both sides on Saturday, and called on External Affairs

Minister S Jaishankar soon after landing in New Delhi on Friday. The two Prime Ministers remotely flagged off the railway service between Jainagar in Bihar and Kurtha in Janakpur (Nepal), released a joint vision statement on harnessing Nepal's rich water resources for "mutual benefit", and discussed the "border dispute" between the two countries.

What was discussed the most in Nepal, however, was the PM's visit to the headquarters of the BJP to meet party chief J P Nadda – which has been criticised as a "breach of protocol" – even as he avoided meeting with any opposition leader in India.

Once the formal part of the visit was over, Deuba spent Sunday mostly in Varanasi as a pilgrim with his wife Arzu by his side. They had an elaborate puja

at the Kashi Vishwanath temple, where the visiting dignitaries were received by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. As the mahant of the Gorakhnath peeth in Gorakhpur, Yogi has a large following in Nepal. Guru Gorakhnath was recognised as the presiding deity of Nepal and of the Shah kings until it was declared a "secular" country in 2006, and a republic in 2018.

"Nepal's relationship with India is multi-faceted, and spirituality is one of its aspects," Foreign Minister Narayan Khadka, who accompanied Prime Minister Deuba, said. Yogi hosted lunch for Deuba, had two rounds of talks with him, and promised to help build a dharmashala for Nepali pilgrims and elderly Nepalis living in Varanasi. Deuba did the bhumi poojan for the dharmashala.

Goa CM allots portfolios, keeps Home, Finance

MAYURA JANWALKAR
PANAJI, APRIL 3



Goa CM Pramod Sawant

GOA CHIEF Minister Pramod Sawant on Sunday assigned portfolios to eight ministers in his cabinet, while retaining the key Home and Finance ministries that he held in his previous tenure.

The CM has also retained the Personnel, Vigilance and Official Language departments. In the previous government, Sawant was also the minister for education and Mines and Geology that are yet to be assigned.

Vishwajit Rane, who was the Health and Women and Child Development minister in the previous government, will continue to hold both the portfolios and other key departments including Town and Country Planning, Urban Development and Forests.

New entrant in Sawant's cabinet, former Chief Minister Ravi Naik, who quit the Congress to join the BJP ahead of the legislative assembly polls held in February, has been assigned Agriculture, Handicrafts and Civil Supplies portfolios. Formerly with the Congress, Subhash Shirodkar, who left the party to join the BJP in 2018, will be the minister for Water Resources, Co-operation and Provedoria (Institute Of Public Assistance).

Former independent MLA from Porvorim Rohan Khaunte, who also joined the BJP ahead of the election, has been assigned the tourism portfolio along with Information Technology and

Printing and Stationary.

Panaji MLA Atanasio 'Babush' Monserrate will be the minister for Revenue along with Labour and Waste Management.

Former transport minister Mauvin Godinho will continue with the Transport Department along with Industries, Panchayat and Protocol departments.

Nilesh Cabral, who was also a minister in the previous government has been allotted the sought-after PWD along with law and judiciary, legislative affairs and environment.

Govind Gaude, who was the art and culture minister in the previous Sawant government, will also be the minister for sports along with his erstwhile portfolio.

Ministers for the important departments like Education, Mines and Geology and Power are expected to be appointed after the BJP's central leadership's approval, sources said. Till then, Sawant is expected to oversee these three key departments. It is likely that the BJP will accommodate leaders of the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party and at least one independent MLA who supported the party to form the government in the cabinet.

BJP won the recently concluded election bagging 20 out of 40 assembly seats.

Not interested in UPA chairman’s post, says Pawar

MANOJ MORE
PUNE, APRIL 3



NCP chief Sharad Pawar

DAYS AFTER NCP Youth wing proposed his name for UPA chairmanship, NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday clarified that he was not interested in holding the post but backed the Congress for the role. The NCP youth wing, however, said they will persuade him to take up the post so as to unite the Opposition and take on the BJP in the 2024 elections.

"I am not interested in holding the UPA chairman's post. Parties which have a mandate should come together and offer an alternative," Pawar said, adding, "I will support and extend all my possible help to bring the opposition together," at a press conference in Kolhapur. He said, "I am not going to take the responsibility of leadership. A few days ago, our party's youth wing passed a resolution mooting my name for UPA chairman's post. But I am not interested...but if the Opposition parties are ready to come together and provide an alternative, I will support them."

Underlining the role of Congress, Pawar said, "Political

parties have power centres in different states but Congress is one such party which has presence in varying degree in every state. It might be away from power in Delhi, but a Congress worker is present in every district and village of the country. Therefore, if an alternative is being sought, the party which has more reach should be kept in mind," he said.

Reacting to Pawar's decision, Ravikant Varpe, working president of NCP youth wing, said, "Though our party chief might have said no, we will persuade him to accept the post in the larger interest of the opposition unity as he the only leader who is capable of bringing everyone together. All non-BJP parties are looking up to him to opposition charge in the 2024 elections." At its national executive held in New Delhi, the NCP youth wing had passed a resolution recommending Pawar's name for UPA chairmanship. Pawar was present at meeting. He did not oppose the resolution.

India stand on Ukraine-Russia war appreciated by all: Rajnath

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, APRIL 3

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh on Sunday said that India's stand on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war was being appreciated by the political opponents and people of other countries, including Pakistan.

Addressing BJP workers at a Holi Milan programme in his Lok Sabha constituency of Lucknow, Singh said the approach and stand of the other countries on the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine were landing them in disputes. "...You will be happy to know that our political opponents in India and people of other countries are also appreciating our stand. You saw on TV that Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran saab too appreciated India's role and our stand on the war between Russia and Ukraine. This is a matter of pride for all of us," Singh said.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during a 'Holi Milan Samaroh' in Lucknow on Sunday, PTI

Singh also said that the support of the common people for the BJP has been growing continuously.

Singh, who was on a two-day visit to Lucknow, held meetings with BJP workers and residents to take stock of the infrastructure

development projects in his constituency.

Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, Lucknow Mayor Sanyukta Bhatiya and other party leaders accompanied the Defence Minister at these events.

4 West Bengal

Halal meat a non-issue, being raised to disturb peace: Siddaramaiah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, APRIL 3

THE ISSUE of whether people should consume halal meat or any other form of meat is a non-issue but is being made out to be a major issue by right-wing groups to sow the seeds of division in society, Congress leader and former Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah said in a joint press conference with state Congress president D K Shivakumar on Sunday.

“Unnecessarily they are raising issues that affect relationships and ties between people and communities. These are not issues that are relevant to people or the lives of people. They are raising these issues and disturbing the peace in society,” Siddaramaiah said, during the course of criticising the economic policies of the BJP governments in the state and Centre. The joint press conference by Siddaramaiah and the KPCC chief was the first since senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on April 1 called for unity among top party leaders in Karnataka while going into the Assembly polls scheduled for April 2023.

The former CM's remarks also came amid unease in the Karnataka Congress on taking on the BJP directly on issues being pushed by pro-Hindutva groups with the tacit support of the ruling BJP like the hijab controversy, the issue of allowing Muslim traders in temples, and a call for the boycott of halal meat by Hindus by linking it to the Muslim community. “For how many cen-



Karnataka former CM Siddaramaiah speaks at a press meet, in Bengaluru. PTI

turies, the practice of halal has been in existence. It is their practice, let them do it, what is your practice you do it. Do we not cut goats during temple festivals? The blood is strewn around. For regular festivals we kill goats. They believe meat with blood is not good for health. It is their belief, let them do it,” Siddaramaiah said.

“Do we not buy halal meat and eat it? We eat it often,” he said. By raising divisive issues the BJP and its affiliates are disturbing peace in the state which will have ripple effects on the economic growth in the state, Siddaramaiah said.

“There is a connection between law and order and economic development. If there is no law and order there will not be investments, without investments there will be no development of industries, without investments jobs cannot be created, if there are no jobs then people do not have money in their hands, if there is no money then there is no GDP growth—the development of the state and the country will suffer as a consequence. These things are all linked,” he added.

BIRBHUM KILLINGS

Police recover crude bombs buried near house of accused

Palash Sheikh is one of the 6 held for murder of Bhadu Sheikh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 3

BIRBHUM POLICE on Sunday recovered crude bombs from a spot very close to one of the accused in the murder of TMC leader Bhadu Sheikh at Bogtui village in Rampurhat area of Birbhum district.

Bhadu Sheikh's murder had allegedly led to retaliatory attacks in which eight people, including women and children, were burnt to death last month. One more person died of burn injuries later. Sheikh was deputy chief of Barashal gram panchayat.

On Sunday, a team of police officers, accompanied by a bomb squad, unearthed the explosives that were kept in a plastic drum and buried beside the house of Palash Sheikh, who is one of the six persons arrested for the murder of Bhadu Sheikh.

The squad then defused the bombs in a controlled manner in an open field, a senior police officer said.

According to police, they received a tip-off on Saturday that a huge cache of bombs were buried near the house of Palash Sheikh. On Sunday, police cordoned off the area and started searching for bombs.

“After retrieving the bombs hidden in the ground, it was defused in an open field at Chandankuntha village. We are checking whether the bombs have been hidden anywhere else



A bomb squad personnel carries the bombs recovered in Birbhum's Bogtui village, Sunday. PTI

in the village,” said an official.

While Bhadu Sheikh's murder is being investigated by West Bengal Police, the killing of eight persons is being probed by the CBI on the direction of the Calcutta High Court.

So far, 22 people have been held for the killing of the villagers, while four have been arrested for Sheikh's murder.

Meanwhile, CBI officials questioned the family members of the victims of the Bogtui killings.

The two were asked about the villager's allegations that petrol bombs were brought in a van, sources said, adding that CBI officials also questioned two residents of Bogtui village.

A team of CBI officials also visited Kumadha village and conducted a forensic examination of a van and a motorbike.

Artists voice concern over violence, ask CM: ‘Why police weren’t proactive?’

ENS & PTI
KOLKATA, APRIL 3

VOICING CONCERN over the recent spate of clashes and attacks in West Bengal, a group of prominent personalities has written to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, seeking her intervention for putting an end to the “long despicable tradition of political violence” in the state.

In a letter written in Bengali, more than 20 actors, poets and intellectuals, including director-activist Aparna Sen, national award-winning actor Riddhi Sen, director Suman Mukhopadhyay, actor-director Parambrata Chatterjee, poet-lyricist Sriyato Bandopadhyay and singer-composer Anupam Roy, said the CM, “who had been able to counter the threat of majoritarian divisive politics in 2021 assembly polls

and raised hope and expectation among people” should be able to find a solution to stop the recurrence of such incidents.

On Bogtui violence, they wrote, “...the question remains unanswered about how such an incident could have happened... why weren't the police proactive..?”

They also condemned the murder of Congress councillor in Jhalda and Trinamool Congress councillor in Panihati. Questions were also raised on the death of Amta student leader Anis Khan. Apama Sen told reporters that the letter was written to the CM “on behalf of those who believe in democracy.” “We believe it is our duty to voice our anguish, worry and concern over some of the recent incidents in the state, including the brutal violence in Bogtui.”

TMC's Sukhendu Sekhar Roy said “the concern expressed by a section of intellectuals is natural. We assure them that our government is committed to ensuring justice for the victims' families.”

Expelled student leader arrested for ‘assaulting’ V-C of Aliah University

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 3

A FORMER student of Aliah University, who was expelled in 2018, was arrested in Kolkata on Sunday for allegedly abusing and assaulting the varsity's vice-chancellor Mohammed Ali.

According to the police, the incident took place on Friday when Ghiasuddin Mondal along with 20-odd supporters barged into the vice-chancellor's room and assaulted him.

A purported video of the incident showing Mondal threatening Ali with dire consequences and abusing him also went viral on Saturday. In the purported video, Mondal is heard threatening to kill Ali, who is seated on a chair in his office.

A university official said that the incident took place when Mondal along with a few others went to the V-C's office and threatened him with dire consequences if the PhD list was not immediately changed and those recommended by him included in it. “They stayed in the VC's chamber for hours and before leaving, and threatened to return if the list was not revised. They alleged manipulation on the part of the university administration,” the official said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Headquarters) Surya Pratap Yadav said that Technocity police received a complaint from an Aliah University student Asifur Rahman on Friday who alleged that Mondal and his supporters assaulted the vice-chancellor. “When the complainant reached the scene, he saw Mondal and his supporters abusing, assaulting and threatening Ali with dire consequences. It was only after the complainant and a few other students intervened that they were able to rescue the vice-chancellor. Based on the complaint, Technocity Police Station registered a case on Sunday,” Yadav said.

The former student leader

was arrested from one of the messes of the university.

Mondal was also a former district unit president of the Trinamool Congress Chhatra Parishad — the ruling TMC's student wing.

University officials said that Mondal was expelled from the varsity in 2018 for allegedly indulging in ‘unethical activities’. Incidentally, the university administration had recently announced that Ali's tenure as the vice-chancellor would be extended.


Governor Dhankhar, who is the ex-officio chancellor of the university, has sought an update of the incident from Chief Secretary H K Dwivedi. “Chief Secretary has been called upon to send full update by 1 pm tomorrow on worrisome scenario reflected in video in viral circulation. Such state of affairs where law violator rogue elements have their way with no fear of law is certainly fearful scenario for law abiders,” Dhankhar stated in a tweet on Sunday.

The incident has evoked a sharp response from opposition parties like the BJP and the CPI(M). “Such hooliganism of student leaders inside campus which I have also experienced can't be tolerated. As a teacher, I feel ashamed to see how a vice chancellor has been abused. He appears to be sober and nice human being, hence remained calm and silent. If I was there I would have slapped him right away,” said BJP's state president Sukanta Banerjee.

CPI (M) leader Sujan Chakraborty said, “They cannot be called students. They are hooligans. There can't be any mercy to such an act.”

Trinamool Congress Chhatra Parishad president Trinankur Bhattacharya, who had earlier denied the party's association with the accused, said, “The accused, Ghiasuddin Mondal has no connection with us. As per my information, some outsiders are responsible for the extremely unfortunate and unprecedented incident.”

(WITH PTI INPUTS)



**Directorate of Mines
Steel & Mines Department**

Government of Odisha

Email: directormines1@orissaminerals.gov.in

RFP No. 01/UNCHABALI-FC/FDC/DM Date: 04.04.2022

NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL TO PREPARE FOREST DIVERSION PROPOSAL INCLUDING ALL RELATED ACTIVITIES THEREOF LEADING TO IN PRINCIPLE (STAGE-I) APPROVAL OF FOREST CLEARANCE UNDER SECTION-2 OF FOREST (CONSERVATION) ACT, 1980.

Directorate of Mines, Govt. of Odisha invites sealed Proposals from specialised Consultants/ Agencies for “Undertaking complete assignment on turnkey basis to prepare the Forest Diversion Proposal including all related activities thereof leading to Forest Clearance & to facilitate obtaining in principle (Stage-I) approval of Forest land measuring 78.829 Ha. involved within total 80.553 ha of Unchabali Iron & Manganese Block, comprised in four villages (Balda, Jagannathpur, Kundaposhi & Unchabali) under Barbil Tehsil of Keonjhar District, Odisha from Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF & CC), Govt. of India, under Section-2 of Forest (Conservation) Act-1980” through registered post/ courier service or in person.

The specialized Consultants/Agencies having experience in similar works and having capability for providing such services need only to apply for the above services. The consultant/ agencies whose EMD has been forfeited for failure to complete the assignment in time or some other reasons, shall not apply. The tender will have 2(Two) parts- Technical Bid & Financial Bid. The tender document including addendum/corrigendum, if any, comprising of eligibility criteria, Instruction to Bidders, Scope of the Work etc. will be available at website-www.orissaminerals.gov.in.

Bidders may download the tender document from the website and the cost of tender document may be submitted along with the technical bid documents.

Interested firms who may like to visit the site may request the Director of Mines, Head of Department Building, Unit-V, Bhubaneswar - 751001.


2-part Bid for the above-mentioned work should be submitted to the Director of Mines, Odisha on or before 16:00 Hours of Dt. 19.04.2022. The Technical Bid should consist of Conceptual Proposal, Credentials of the firm, Turnover, PAN, GST Registration Number and all other documents as mentioned in the bid document, Cost of Bid Document amounting to Rs. 3600/- (Rupees Three Thousand Six Hundred) only including GST 18%, Non- Refundable and EMD/ Bid Security amounting to Rs.1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lakh) only in shape of Demand Drafts issued by any Nationalized Bank in favour of “The Director of Mines, Odisha,” and payable at Bhubaneswar to be sent by registered post/courier services or in person only.

The Financial bid is to be kept in a separate sealed envelope. Both bids are to be sealed in a single outer envelope and addressed to “The Director of Mines, Odisha,” clearly written on top as **Bid Document for "Undertaking complete assignment on turnkey basis to prepare the Forest Diversion Proposal including all related activities thereof leading to Forest Clearance & to facilitate obtaining in principle (Stage-I) approval of Forest land measuring 78.829 Ha. involved within total 80.553 ha of Unchabali Iron & Manganese Block, comprised in four villages (Balda, Jagannathpur, Kundaposhi & Unchabali) under Barbil Tehsil of Keonjhar District, Odisha from Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF & CC), Govt. of India under Section-2 of Forest (Conservation) Act-1980” RFP No.----dated----** of the Directorate of Mines, Govt. of Odisha with name and address of the firm on the same envelope.

The **Technical Bid will be opened on Dt. 22.04.2022 at 3:30 Hours** at Directorate of Mines, Head of Department Building, Unit - V, Bhubaneswar 751001 in presence of the bidder or their authorized representative who choose to be present. After evaluation of the Technical Bids, the date of opening of the Financial Bid will be intimated to the agencies through Registered post/e-mail in due Course.

The Director of Mines, Odisha has the right to accept or reject any or all the RFP without assigning any reasons thereof.

Sd/-
(Director of Mines, Odisha)
OIPR- 30004/11/0005/2223



**Directorate of Mines
Steel & Mines Department**

Government of Odisha

E-mail: directormines1@orissaminerals.gov.in

RFP No. 02/UNCHABALI-EC/FDC/DM Date: 04.04.2022

NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL TO PREPARE ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE PROPOSAL INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY AND ALL RELATED ACTIVITIES THEREOF LEADING TO ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCES FROM MOEF&CC, GOI AND OTHER STATUTORY CLEARANCES FROM STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD, ODISHA IN RESPECT OF UNCHABALI IRON & MANGANESE BLOCK, KEONJHAR, ODISHA.

Directorate of Mines, Govt. of Odisha invites sealed Proposals from specialized Consultants/ Agencies for “Undertaking complete assignment on turnkey basis to prepare Environmental Clearance proposal including Environmental Impact Assessment Study and all related activities thereof leading to Environmental Clearances from Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF & CC), Govt. of India and other statutory clearances from State Pollution Control Board, Odisha in respect of Unchabali Iron & Manganese Block, comprised in four villages (Balda, Jagannathpur, Kundaposhi & Unchabali) under Barbil Tehsil of Keonjhar District, Odisha” through registered post/ courier service or in person.

The specialized Consultants/Agencies having NABET/MoEF & CC accreditation who have completed similar type of works in past 5 years, having experiences in successfully conducting Environment Impact Assessment Studies / preparation of EIA and EMP reports/ supporting technical reports etc. for obtaining EC / amendment orders thereof of existing Environmental Clearances / fresh clearances from MOEF&CC, GOI and other Statutory Clearances and amendments from OSPCB etc. need only to apply for the above services. The consultant/ agencies whose EMI has been forfeited for failure to complete the assignment in time or some other reasons, shall not apply.

The tender will have 2(Two) parts- Technical Bid & Financial Bid. The tender document including addendum/corrigendum, if any, comprising of eligibility criteria, Instruction to Bidders, Scope of the Work etc. will be available at websites- www.orissaminerals.gov.in. Bidders may download the tender document from the website and the cost of tender document may be submitted along with the technical bid documents.

Interested firms who may like to visit the site may request the Director of Mines, Head of Department Building, Unit - V, Bhubaneswar 751001.

2-part Bid for the above-mentioned work should be submitted to the Director of Mines, Odisha on or before 16:00 Hours of Dt. 19.04.2022. The Technical Bid should consist of Conceptual Proposal, Credentials of the firm, Turnover, PAN, GST Registration Number and all other documents as mentioned in the bid document, Cost of Bid Document amounting to Rs. 3600/- (Rupees Three Thousand Six Hundred) only including GST @ 18% Non- Refundable and EMD/ Bid Security amounting to Rs.1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lakhs) only in shape of Demand Drafts issued by any Nationalized Bank in favour of “The Director of Mines, Odisha” and payable at Bhubaneswar to be sent by registered post/courier services or in person only.

The Financial bid is to be kept in a separate sealed envelope. Both bids are to be sealed in a single outer envelope and addressed to “The Director of Mines, Odisha,” clearly written on top as Bid Document for “Undertaking complete assignment on turnkey basis to prepare Environmental Clearance proposal including Environmental Impact Assessment Study and all related activities thereof leading to Environmental Clearances from Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF & CC), Govt. of India and other statutory clearances from State Pollution Control Board, Odisha in respect of Unchabali Iron & Manganese Block comprised in four villages (Balda, Jagannathpur, Kundaposhi & Unchabali) under Barbil Tehsil of Keonjhar District, Odisha” RFP No. dated ---- of the Directorate of Mines, Govt. of Odisha with name and address of the firm on the same envelope.

The **Technical Bid will be opened on Dt. 22.04.2022 at 3:30 Hours** at Directorate of Mines, Head of Department Building, Unit - V, Bhubaneswar 751001 in presence of the bidder or their authorized representative who choose to be present. After evaluation of the Technical Bids, the date of opening of the Financial Bid will be intimated to the agencies through Registered post/e-mail in due course.

The Director of Mines, Odisha has the right to accept or reject any or all the RFP without assigning any reasons thereof.

Sd/-
(Director of Mines, Odisha)
OIPR- 30004/11/0004/2223

Form No. 3
[See Regulation-15 (1)(a)] / 16(3)
**DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
KOLKATA (DRT 1)**

9th Floor, Jeevan Sudha Building,
42-C, J.L.Nehru Road, Kolkata-700071

Case No.: OA/299/2012
Summons under sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, read with sub-rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debt Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993.
Exh. No.: 1460
IDBI BANK
VS
MACKWELL SUPPLIERS PVT. LTD. & ORS.
To,
(1) MACKWELL SUPPLIERS PVT. LTD.
P- 56/1, STRAND PARK ROAD, GROUND FLOOR, Kolkata, WEST BENGAL-700006
(2) SHRI SIRAJ MUKHERJEE
S/O SHRI S.N. MUKHERJEE, RESIDING AT 16C BROAD STREET, KOLKATA, WEST BENGAL-700019
(3) SHRI SUBODH CHANDRA HAZRA S/O LATE SASHI BHUSAN HAZRA, RESIDING AT 5, RAKSHIT PARAROAD, 127, THAKURPUKUR, SOUTH 24 PRGNS, WEST BENGAL-700061
(4) (A) SMT. SHYAMALI MONDAL, W/O LATE BHOPAL CHANDRA MONDAL, RESIDING AT HALDERPARA, N. HARI, PO- MAHESHTALA, KOLKATA, (WB)
(B) SMT. HAMATA MONDAL, D/O LATE BHOPAL CHANDRA MONDAL, RESIDING AT HALDERPARA, N. HARI, PO- MAHESHTALA, KOLKATA, (WB)
(C) SMT. JHUMA MONDAL, D/O LATE BHOPAL CHANDRA MONDAL, RESIDING AT HALDERPARA, N. HARI, PO- MAHESHTALA, KOLKATA, (WB)
(5) SHRI TARAPADA MONDAL, S/O SHRI HARAN CHANDRA MONDAL, RESIDING AT PURBA BARISHA, SUKANTA SARANI, P.S- THAKURPUKUR, KOLKATA-700008, (WB)
SUMMONS

Whereas this Honble Tribunal is Pleased to issue summons/ notice on the said Application under section 19(4) of the Act, (CA) filed against you for recovery of debts of Rs. 120656216/- (Application along with copies of documents etc. annexed) In accordance with sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, you, the defendants are directed as under:-
(i) to show cause within thirty days of the service of summons as to why relief prayed for should not be granted.
(ii) to disclose particulars of properties or assets other than properties and assets specified by the applicant under serial number 3A of the original application;
(iii) you are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other assets and properties disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application, pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties;
(iv) you shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and/or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the Tribunal;
(v) you shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realised by sale of secured assets or other assets and properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institutions holding security interest over such assets.
(vi) you are also directed to file the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before Registrar on 06.04.2022 at 10:30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.
Given under my hand and the seal of this Tribunal on this date: 06/01/2022.
Note: Strike out whichever is not applicable.
Signature of the Officer Authorised to issue summons.

Sd/-
(Director of Mines, Odisha)
OIPR- 30004/11/0004/2223

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

SASHASTRA SEEMA BAL (4th April, 2011)




Constable (GD) Subhash Constable (GD) Bharat Prasad

Sashastra Seema Bal fondly remembers and cherishes the valiant act of bravehearts Constable (GD) Subhash and Constable (GD) Bharat Prasad, who made supreme sacrifice of their life in the line of duty on this day in the year 2011. Constable (GD) Subhash and Constable (GD) Bharat Prasad attained martyrdom fighting bravely in an operation against an ambush laid by NDFB militants. In recognition of supreme sacrifice, Constable Subhash was posthumously awarded Police Medal for Gallantry on Independence Day 2012. Their gallant act will continue to inspire us all. We salute the valour and supreme sacrifice of our brave soldiers.



संत लॉंगोवाल अभियांत्रिकी एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान
Sant Longowal Institute of Engineering and Technology
(Deemed to be University under MoE)
Longowal-148106, Distt. Sangrur, Punjab

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

e-Tenders in two Bid System, i.e. Technical and Financial Bid are invited for the work “Provision of LAN/Internet facility in newly constructed EDP & EIE Block & other Departments”.

For detailed, terms & conditions, please visit www.sliet.ac.in

(भारत सरकार के अधीन सम विश्वविद्यालय)



BRIDGE & ROOF CO. (INDIA) LTD.
(A GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ENTERPRISES)
CIN No. U27310WB1920GOI003601
Web: www.bridgeroof.co.in, Email: bridge@bridgeroof.com

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

EOI No. B&R / BD / DESIGN / EOI / 2022-23 / 02 Date: 01/04/2022

Bridge and Roof Co.(India) Ltd. Invites Expression of Interest from eligible Engineering Firms/Consultants And Design Architect Firm For Engineering Activities Of Various Sector Such as Infrastructure, Industrial, Railway, Airport, Water Resources, Power Etc. for existing/upcoming projects across pan India and willing to associate with B&R for upcoming Projects across pan-india.

Last Date & Time for EOI Submission	25.04.2022 at 14:00 Hrs
Opening Date and Time for EOI	26.04.2022 at 15:00 Hrs

For further details / information regarding EOI please visit <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> or <https://www.bridgeroof.co.in/tenders>

Interested Bidder(s) for submission of EOI will have to be enrolled & registered with the Government e-Procurement System; through logging on to <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>

Addendum / Corrigendum if any shall be hosted in Company's website <https://www.bridgeroof.co.in/tenders> and CPP portal: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> only.

Rs 113-crore heroin seized from 3 foreign nationals at Kolkata airport

Kolkata: Directorate of Revenue Intelligence officials allegedly seized heroin worth over Rs 113 crore from three foreign nationals who were intercepted at the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata.

As per sources, after receiving a tip-off, DRI officials intercepted two Kenyan passengers – a man and a woman – and one Malawi woman passenger at the airport on March 30 (Wednesday). The passengers were coming to India from Dubai, they said.

“They told DRI officials that they were in India for medical purposes but the officials got suspicious and searched them. They found 14 packets of contraband carefully hidden inside the false bottom partition of their four trolley suitcases,” said an official. “The field drug identification kit of FSL confirmed the presence of heroin,” the official added. According to sources, two of the three passengers had come on a medical visa while the third one had come on a business visa. ENS

36 new cases as virus claims 2 more lives

Kolkata: Even as the number of new cases dropped to almost half of Saturday's figures in the state, West Bengal recorded two more deaths due to Covid-19 on Sunday. As per government data, 36 new infections were reported in the state on Sunday against Saturday's 70. The new infections took the state's tally to 20,17,495 cases. The state's toll due to Covid-19 stands at 21,199. As per a health department bulletin, 49 Covid-19 patients recovered in the state over the past 24 hours, ENS



@ieExplained

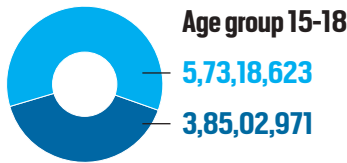
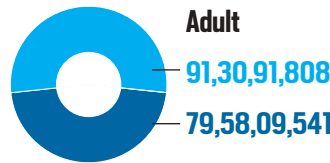
#ExpressExplained

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

DASHBOARD, As on April 2

TOTAL DOSES 184,66,86,260

First dose Second dose

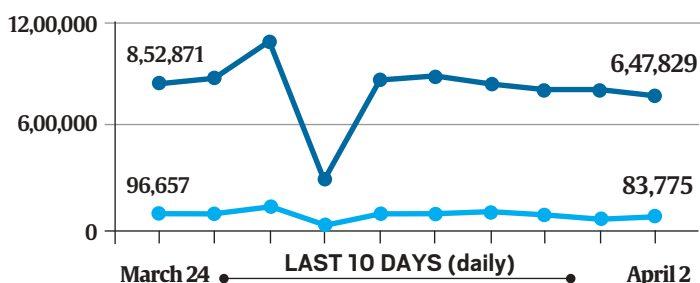


AGE GROUP 12-14 1st dose 1,85,44,700

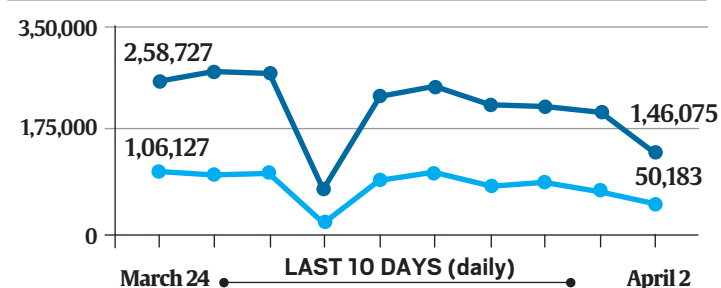
PRECAUTIONARY doses 2,34,18,617

Doses On April 2 14,41,404

ADULTS



AGE GROUP 15-18



EVERYDAY EXPLAINERS

TECHNOLOGY

TATA GROUP'S SUPER APP WILL GO LIVE THIS WEEK. WHAT ARE SUPER APPS?

THE TATA Group will launch its super app Tata Neu on April 7.

SUPER APPS: A super app brings all digital services and apps developed by a company on a single platform, so users need not use separate apps for different requirements. The super app is like a mall that houses various brands and shops across businesses and verticals under one roof.

China's WeChat started out as a messaging app, then expanded into payments, shopping, and cab services to become a super app. The Tata app's description on Play Store says: "Consume cutting-edge digital content, make payments, manage your finances, plan your next holiday or perhaps just your next meal — there's lots to explore and experience in the world of Tata Neu."

A country or region becomes super app-ready when a large percentage of digital users prefer smartphones to desktop computers, and an ecosystem of apps customised to local needs is not yet evolved. In India, the majority of those experiencing the Internet for the first time are doing so on their smartphones.

OTHERS IN INDIA: Reliance Industries

has consolidated various services and offerings such as shopping, content streaming, groceries, payments, cloud storage services, ticket bookings, etc. under its Jio umbrella. Paytm has also brought together services like payments, ticket bookings, games, online shopping, banking, consumer finance, etc. into one app. Payments app PhonePe has tied up with companies such as Ola Cabs, Swiggy, Grofers, Ajio, Decathlon, Delhi Metro, booking.com, etc to offer these services within its app.

SOME CONCERNS: The very concept of a conglomerate trying to keep a customer within its own ecosystem for most services increases the possibility of a monopoly. There are concerns of privacy in cases where a super app has onboarded third-party service providers. Experts say data collected by the master app could be used to train machines in artificial intelligence and predict consumer behaviour even more accurately. This is a reason why super apps have not grown in markets like the US and EU.

PRANAV MUKUL

EXPLAINED LAW & JUSTICE

Reforming death penalty

Examining issues raised in a specific case, the Supreme Court has suo motu opened a review of the process by which courts award the death penalty. What is the procedure by which judges get the relevant information for the sentencing process, and why has the top court felt it necessary to intervene?

EXPERT EXPLAINS



ANUP SURENDRANATH

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight

WHILE HEARING death sentence appeals since September 2021, the Supreme Court has repeatedly expressed concern over the manner in which trial courts and High Courts have carried out sentencing with very little (relevant) information.

While the Bench headed by Justice L. Nageswara Rao has commuted death sentences citing errors committed by courts below, the Bench headed by Justice U U Lalit has called for reports from probation officers, prison superintendents, and independent mental health experts in an attempt to correct the errors. This week, the Bench headed by Justice Lalit agreed to comprehensively examine procedures in death penalty cases to ensure that judges who have to choose between life imprisonment and the death sentence have comprehensive sentencing information.

What has caused the SC to examine practices in death penalty sentencing?

The court is undertaking an exercise to reform the procedures by which information necessary in a death penalty case is brought before courts. In so doing, the Supreme Court is acknowledging concerns with the manner in which death penalty sentencing is being carried out. While the death penalty has been held to be constitutional, the manner in which it has been administered has triggered accusations of unfairness and arbitrariness.

How are judges supposed to choose between life and death sentences?

In May 1980, when the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the death penalty in Bachan Singh's case, a framework was developed for future judges to follow when they had to choose between life imprisonment and the death penalty. At the heart of that framework was the recognition that the legislature in the Criminal Procedure Code had made it clear that life imprisonment would be the default punishment and judges would

need to give "special reasons" if they wanted to impose the death sentence. Through the 1980 framework — popularly but inaccurately known as the "rarest of rare" framework — the Supreme Court said that judges must consider both aggravating and mitigating factors concerning the crime and the accused when deciding if the death penalty is to be imposed.

The judgment also made it clear that life imprisonment as a sentence would have to be "unquestionably foreclosed" before judges imposed the death sentence. There was an indicative list of factors that the judgment identified as being relevant, but it was clear that it was not meant to be an exhaustive list.

What has happened to this framework in the four decades since Bachan Singh?

The Supreme Court has repeatedly lamented the inconsistency in application of the Bachan Singh framework. Similar concerns have been expressed by the Law Commission of India (262nd Report). One of the main concerns has been the crime-centred approach to sentencing, often in violation of the mandate in Bachan Singh that factors relating to both the crime and the accused have to be considered. There has been widespread concern that the imposition of death sentences has been arbitrary. A study by Project 39A looking at 15 years of death penalty sentencing in trial courts has shown that the Bachan Singh framework has broken down, with judges attributing to it multiple and inconsistent meanings. A study of the 595 death sentences imposed in the last five years shows that this concern is intensifying.

What is the reason for this?

One of the main reasons is that very sparse sentencing information about the accused is brought before the judges. While the judgment in Bachan Singh did develop a framework, it was a framework that depended on the relevant information brought before the court. But the framework did not have any mechanisms to ensure the actual collection of such information and its presentation before judges.

This has resulted in a situation where there is barely any meaningful information about

the accused that enters the sentencing process. It is an empirical reality that the vast majority of death row prisoners are economically vulnerable and very often receive poor legal representation (see Project 39A's Death Penalty India Report 2016). As a result, they do not have access to professionals and experts with the necessary training and skill sets to undertake the complex exercise of collecting mitigation information.

Also, sentencing judges have often dismissed the consideration of mitigating factors depending on their perception of the crime despite there being no basis in the law for dismissing the relevance of such factors. It points to a deeper gap — that there has been no real guidance on how judges must go about assigning weight to aggravating and mitigating factors, and how they should approach weighing one factor against another.

What is mitigation, and what are mitigating factors?

A criminal trial has two stages — the guilt stage and the sentencing stage. Sentencing happens after the accused has been found guilty of the crime; this is the stage where punishment is determined. Therefore, anything presented or said during sentencing cannot be used to reverse or

change the finding of guilt.

It is a fundamental tenet of criminal law that sentencing must be individualised, i.e. in the process of determining punishment, the judge must take into account individual circumstances of the accused. It speaks to a very intuitive sense of justice that all our decisions and actions result from a complex interplay of various factors concerning our lives, and the emphasis is that such interplay is different for each individual.

The idea of mitigation is to give practical application to considerations of culpability and deservedness that are crucial to the moral idea of punishment. Justice would be an incomplete idea if criminal law was incapable of considering an individual in all their complexity and the various factors that contributed to a set of decisions and actions in their lives.

Who can collect all this information?

The Supreme Court has recognised that it is important to collect this complex interplay of information sentencing is to be done in a proper manner. The judgments in Santa Singh (1976) and Mohd Mannan (2019) have recognised the interdisciplinary nature of such an exercise, and that it requires professionals other than lawyers to collect such information.

The task is not something lawyers are trained to do — that is the reason the American Bar Association's 2003 Guidelines for the Appointment and Performance of Defence Counsel in Death Penalty recognises the role of a mitigation specialist with a clearly defined role that goes beyond what lawyers can do.

Is this practical in India's justice system?

There must be a very high degree of fairness in a system that is interested in subjecting individuals to the experience of death row, and ultimately taking lives through the instrumentality of law. With that as the starting point, the criminal justice system needs to do all it can to ensure that systems are created for procedural fairness.

The question we need to start with is: "What does fairness and individualised justice require in death penalty cases?" We cannot start by asking the "practicality" question and then define the requirements of fairness/individualised justice accordingly.

Can procedural reforms address the broader concerns with the death penalty?

Justice Harry Blackmun who served on the United States Supreme Court for 24 years (1970-94) started out being a strong votary of the death penalty, and was part of decisions to restore the death penalty in the US. For most of his time on the Bench, Justice Blackmun tried to bring in procedural reforms to make the American death penalty system fairer.

But ultimately, in his last year in the court, he declared that efforts to reform the death penalty had failed, and that it was impossible to achieve the required fairness. "I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death," he famously declared.

The paths of reforming the death penalty on the one hand and abolishing it on the other, go alongside each other for a very long distance. Every instance of engagement on reforming the death penalty throws light on the inherent unfairness of using the death penalty, especially in a system like ours.

THIS WORD MEANS: ART 5 OF PAK CONSTITUTION

Provision used to kill Imran no-trust vote

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

CHENNAI, APRIL 3

PAKISTAN WAS plunged into a constitutional crisis on Sunday after the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Qasim Suri, dismissed the opposition's no-confidence motion before it could be taken up, setting in motion a chain of events that included the dissolution of the House and provincial assemblies by President Arif Alvi on the recommendation of Prime Minister Imran Khan, and an announcement by the Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial that all their actions would be subject to the orders of the court.

ARTICLE 5: As the National Assembly met, Minister for Information & Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhary requested the Chair to first decide on the constitutionality of the opposition's motion, which was submitted to the Speaker in the first week of March, and tabled last week. The motion, he argued, went against clause (1) of Article 5 of the constitution.

Under the heading 'Loyalty to the State



Supporters of Pakistan's opposition parties protest the dissolution of the National Assembly in Islamabad on Sunday. AP

and Obedience to the Constitution', Article 5 has two clauses.

Clause (1) states that "Loyalty to the State is the basic duty of every citizen"; Clause 2 states that "obedience to the Constitution and law is the inviolable obligation of every citizen wherever he may be and every other person for the time being within Pakistan".

Fawad Chaudhary cited Clause 1 to reiterate Imran's allegation of a "foreign conspiracy"

against the government. He said the no-confidence motion was a conspiracy hatched by a "powerful country" that did not want Pakistan to have an independent foreign policy. During another address to the nation on Friday, Khan had named the United States as the country behind the conspiracy, prompting a swift denial from Washington.

Suri agreed. "No foreign power shall be allowed to topple an elected government

through a conspiracy," he ruled. The points raised by the minister were "valid", he announced.

OPPOSITION VIEW: Opposition leaders argued that while quoting Clause 1, Chaudhary had missed out Clause 2, which demands obedience to the Constitution of every citizen. They alleged that both the Prime Minister and the Speaker had violated this provision by invalidating the no-trust motion.

They demanded that Imran, members of his government, and the Speaker be tried under Article 6, also known as the "treason" Article.

This article states that any person who abrogates or subverts or conspires to subvert the Constitution by force or by unconstitutional means shall be guilty of treason.

Also, Imran has called fresh elections under Article 58 of the Constitution, but as per this provision, a Prime Minister facing a vote of no-confidence cannot call an election. That is another questionable action, according to the opposition.

What Nepal PM Deuba's visit to BJP headquarters means for his party

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

KATHMANDU, APRIL 3

IN A deviation from practice, Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba began his just-ended tour of India by visiting the BJP headquarters, triggering criticism back home, although some have defended him too.

According to Nepal Foreign Ministry sources, during any official or state visit by a Prime Minister at the invitation of their Indian counterpart, the standard practice is to pay courtesy visits to the President and Vice President, hold talks with the Prime Minister, and then meet dignitaries including ministers, officials and politicians from the ruling as well as the opposition parties.

Deuba visited the BJP headquarters at the invitation of party chief J P Nadda. "Has Deuba gone to New Delhi in his capacity as the President of the Nepali Congress, or as Prime Minister" said Bhim Rawal, a former deputy PM and leader of the opposition Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist.

Nepal Foreign Minister Narayan Khadka said Deuba's visit to the BJP office was in his capacity as Nepali Congress chief.

Nepali Congress & India

The Nepali Congress was founded 76 years ago in India by some Nepali students, most of them involved in India's freedom struggle. After India became independent, Indian socialists including Jayaprakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia participated in the Nepali Congress-led struggle for multi-party democracy, which was achieved with India's mediation in February 1951.

In December 1960, King Mahendra dissolved the elected Parliament and introduced a panchayat system under his direct supervision. With Indian socialists going through a series of splits, the Congress remained the only informal ally of the Nepali Congress.

In 1990, when Chandra Shekhar led an all-party Indian delegation to Nepal to extend moral support to the revived movement for democracy, the BJP was not part of it. In 1992, the BJP was the only Indian party to send del-

egates under the leadership of ideologue K R Malkani for the national convention of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, which was not comfortable with a multi-party democracy and reduced role of the monarchy.

Maoist insurgency, which aimed to transform Nepal into a republic, got the endorsement of political parties including the Nepali Congress and major communist groups with the mediation of Indian establishment in 2005. Nepal not only became a republic but was also declared secular.

In India, many BJP leaders favoured Nepal remaining a Hindu kingdom and a monarchy. Between the 2006 change and now, various ruling parties in Nepal have continued to interact with the Congress in India, even after the BJP came to power.

Hindu agenda

In Nepal, there are over six dozen organisations that occasionally come to the streets, but rarely together, demanding restoration of Nepal's status as a Hindu kingdom. There is also a sizeable presence of the Hindu



BJP chief J P Nadda welcomes Deuba to the party office on Friday. AP

Swayamsevak Sangh, the Nepal chapter of the RSS. Among the parties in Parliament, Rastriya Prajatantra Party was the only one demanding restoration of Hindu nation and monarchy, but chose to join the communist parties' government led by K P Oli.

Yet no party can afford to ignore the Hindu agenda in a country that has an over 86% Hindu population and was once the world's "only Hindu country". Oli, for example, has been campaigning on the plank of the "actual Ayodhya" in Nepal's Madi, claiming this was where Lord Ram was born.

New equations

Oli's two tenures as PM were marked by confrontation with India's BJP government, first leading to India's economic blockade, and then over the boundary issue. He moved closer to China, signing framework agreements on trade, transit and infrastructure. China also played a role in bringing the major communist parties — Maoists and UML — together to form the Nepal Communist Party.

Months after the Oli government collapsed leading to Deuba taking over in June 2021, the BJP's foreign affairs in-charge Vijay Chauthaiwale found a *rakhi* sister in the Nepal PM's wife, Arzu Deuba, who is seen as wielding influence in the party, administration and an NGO. Now, Deuba's visit to the BJP head-

quarters is being seen as an initial success for the BJP in bringing the "secular" Nepali Congress closer to it. This comes in the wake of a distance growing between Nepal and China as the former signed a deal with the US for a \$500 million grant from the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

Also, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath hosted Deuba to an elaborate puja and lunch in Varanasi before his return to Kathmandu. Public opinion on Adityanath is divided in Nepal. While he has substantial followers — more in his capacity as the *mahant* of Gorakhnath Peeth than as a political leader — pro-change activists and leaders, including former deputy PM and Nepali Congress vice president Bimalendra Nidhi, have been critical about what he stands for.

Before 2006, Nepal in general and the monarchs in particular used to revere Gorakhnath as their presiding deity. The Gorakhnath peeth owns substantial property in Nepal, and Adityanath has been openly in favour of Nepal's continuance as a Hindu monarchy.



Goodbye AFSPA

It's only prudent to repeal this Act now. Study its record to strengthen foundation of Indian democracy



SANJIB BARUAH

DODGY DECLARATION

Pakistan slips into political uncertainty as Imran Khan ducks trust vote and bats for fresh elections

PRIME MINISTER IMRAN Khan said in the run-up to the no-confidence motion against him that he was not the type to throw in the towel early and dug deep into his days as a cricketer to declare that the game was not over until the last ball had been bowled. That last ball turned out to be the National Assembly's ruling on Sunday that the no-confidence motion, submitted early in March, went against a provision of the constitution demanding all citizens' loyalty to the state. After this ruling, Khan pulled up stumps by dissolving the National Assembly and the four provincial assemblies, and declaring that he would seek a fresh mandate from the people at elections. He now equates the political moves against his government as a conspiracy against Pakistan itself.

South Asia has been here before. Several embattled leaders in the Subcontinent have used the foreign hand card to stay on in power. In Prime Minister Khan's telling, the story is that a "powerful foreign country", which he also identified as the United States, is behind the Opposition's moves to remove him from office, because this foreign power does not want Pakistan to have an independent foreign policy. Khan was sure to go if the no-confidence vote had been permitted. The Opposition was present in the National Assembly in strength, and would have been able to muster the numbers required to win the motion. However, it is doubtful if even after all this, Khan can stay on. There is a question mark over the legality of his decisions today. The Supreme Court of Pakistan has taken suo motu cognisance of the matter, including if a prime minister already facing a no-confidence motion can dissolve Parliament and call an election.

Whichever way the verdict goes, it seems as if the ultimate resolution of this political showdown does lie in an election. Until then, Pakistan seems set for a prolonged period of political uncertainty. In the midst of all this, it is yet too early to arrive at definite conclusions about the significance of the remarks of the Pakistan Army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, that Islamabad wants to resolve the Kashmir issue through dialogue and diplomacy, particularly as his outreach seemed to indicate that the India-China border dispute and the Kashmir issue are linked. However, as he pointed out, and as has been stated by Indian Army chief General M M Naravane as well, the Line of Control is quiet after the two armies arrived at an agreement last year reaffirming their commitment to the 2003 ceasefire. This gives hope that once matters settle down in Pakistan, there can be some forward movement in a relationship that has been frozen for far too long.

COUNTING THE RUBLES

National interest has shaped India's response to sanctions against Russia. Proposed rupee-ruble payment mechanism is welcome

FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA Sitharaman has confirmed that India has already received "3-4 days" worth of crude oil supply from Russia at hugely discounted prices, amid Western warnings on trade with Moscow. If fuel is available at a discount, why mustn't India buy, she has said, while putting the country's "national interest" and "energy security" first. Her statement reinforces what External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar earlier pointed out: Countries importing much of their energy requirement from Russia shouldn't harangue others. Russia supplies over a quarter of the European Union's petroleum crude and 38 per cent of natural gas imports, which has hardly changed even with the war in Ukraine. India, by contrast, imported only 1.5 per cent of its entire crude from Russia in 2020-21, while marginally going up to 2.3 per cent during April-January 2021-22.

It's possible the Russian share in India's imports may significantly rise in the coming months, especially with the sanctions-hit nation reportedly offering its crude at up to \$35-per-barrel discounts. The discount is, moreover, on prices before the war, implying an even larger reduction over current levels. With Brent crude continuing to trade at nearly \$105/barrel — above the pre-war level, although down from the March 8 peak closing of \$127.98 — why shouldn't India take the Russian offer? This is more so when the countries that unilaterally imposed sanctions, ostensibly to diminish Russia's war chest, are continuing to source from it. India's bilateral trade with Russia is quite small: some \$7 billion of imports and \$3 billion exports annually. That can potentially increase with India purchasing more Russian crude, and the proposed rupee-ruble trade-cum-dedicated payment mechanism to bypass Western sanctions. Since India has to "earn" the rubles in order to pay for higher fuel, fertiliser and other imports from Russia, it also opens up the scope for greater exports — be it pharmaceuticals, tea and textiles or buffalo meat, sugar, rice and dairy products — to the latter. Russia, after all, requires many of these items that it cannot currently import due to the sweeping financial sanctions.

By placing upfront its economic interests, India has clearly signalled non-acceptance of any sanctions regime unilaterally imposed by nations that are themselves opportunistically violating — for instance, access to the SWIFT messaging network has not been cut off for Russian banks specifically designated for energy trades. US sanctions in the past had forced India to curtail Iranian oil imports, which plunged from 24 million tonnes in 2018-19 to zero by 2020-21. The Russian aggression against Ukraine deserves to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. But neither India nor the world can afford oil prices staying elevated at \$100-plus per barrel. And sanctions, apart from inflicting unnecessary costs, cannot substitute for diplomacy and dialogue.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



AS FAR BACK as 1776, Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* reflected on the harmful effects of laws that "often continue in force long after the end of the circumstances that first gave rise to them and once made them reasonable". In that passage, however, Smith didn't consider laws that were not reasonable even in the circumstances in which they were made.

The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) is one such law. Since the full force of this onerous law comes into play only in "disturbed areas", one must welcome the government's announcement to reduce the number of such areas. But not to consider the repeal of this anachronistic law, which is now almost as old as the Republic, is a missed opportunity to reflect on why this law has or has not been successful, and to learn from this history and strengthen the foundation of our democracy.

AFSPA allows civilian authorities to call on the armed forces to come to the assistance of civil powers. Once a state — or a part of a state — is declared "disturbed" under this law, the armed forces can make preventive arrests, search premises without warrants, and even shoot and kill civilians. Legal action against those abusing these powers requires the prior approval of the central government — a feature that functions as de facto immunity from prosecution.

A disturbed area proclamation under AFSPA has uncanny similarities with emergencies or states of exception — including martial law and states of siege. Critics charge that it effectively suspends fundamental freedoms and creates a de facto emergency regime.

AFSPA was adopted in 1958 during the early days of the Naga uprising to apply to what was then the state of Assam and the union territory of Manipur. It is hard to believe that to contend with a small group of armed rebels in a remote infrastructure-poor region it was found necessary to have a law modelled on a colonial ordinance devised to tackle the Quit India Movement — the most serious challenge faced by British colonial rule since the rebellion of 1857, as the then

Over the past six decades, AFSPA's use has extended well beyond the actual conduct of counterinsurgency operations. Multiple state and non-state armed actors have operated under its shadow. For instance, in Assam in the 1990s, death squads — or 'secret killers' as they were called — carried out a wave of extrajudicial killings. These could not have occurred without the cover provided by AFSPA's disturbed area designation.



RANJANA DAS

THE FEMALE LABOUR Force Participation Rate, already low in India, received a further setback with the pandemic. Women were the first to lose their jobs once the lockdown was announced, two years ago, and they are yet to get back into the labour force. The female labour force participation rate was at 9.4 per cent for the period between September-December 2021, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). This is the lowest female labour force participation rate since 2016 when the data was first compiled.

In understanding the all-time low female labour force participation rate, there is a need to factor in a longstanding problem — the safety of women in workplaces. All women deserve a non-discriminatory and safe working space. But those in the informal and unorganised sector deserve particular attention. The pandemic aggravated the situation for women in the informal economy.

The informal economy in India encompasses a variety of activities. The agricultural sector has the highest level of informal employment, followed by manufacturing, trade and construction. In terms of rural-urban differentials, informal employment constituted 96 per cent of total jobs in rural areas, where female informal employment was 98 per cent compared to 95 per cent of male informal employment. Seventy-nine per cent of the jobs in urban India were of an informal nature, with 82 per cent of total female workers engaged in informal employment compared to 78 per cent among urban male workers.

EMPLOYMENT WITH DIGNITY

Post-pandemic recovery should catalyse efforts to make workplaces safer for women

Difficult working conditions are aggravated in the absence of proper redressal mechanisms and women's access to them. It's well-known that laws such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013, Criminal Amendment Act 2013, and Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 are not implemented well and do not take the difficulties faced by women in the informal sector into account.

Statistics show that women are more likely to be engaged in the informal sector in both rural and urban areas. They are also more likely than men to be working as informal workers in the formal sector. However, not much has been done in terms of understanding the violence faced by women in the informal sector which can range from harassment to sexual assault and rape. Such violence can be tied up with several aspects ranging from a male-dominated workplace to harassment by labour contractors to a lack of basic amenities for women in the workplace. A few studies also indicate that women in the informal sector face sexual harassment in workplaces. A recent study by Oxfam India on tea plantation workers reveals that the extremely hierarchical nature of their jobs, the migrant status of workers and the lack of other job opportunities for women tea pluckers contribute to the normalisation of workplace violence. Facilities such as canteens and toilets — generally available in factories where workers are predominantly men — are lacking in the fields. Because of the presence of the mostly male "sardars" (supervisors), women try to seek privacy far away from where their colleagues are working. This makes them vulnerable to sexual abuse or attacks by wild animals. It is now quite well known that women sugarcane cutters undergo forceful hysterec-tomies. These workers also face domestic violence and verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. Difficult working conditions are aggravated in the absence of proper redressal mechanisms and women's access to them.

It's well-known that laws such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013, Criminal Amendment Act 2013, and Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 are not implemented well and do not take the difficulties faced by women in the informal sector into account. An effective body for this purpose could have been the Local Complaints Committee structure under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013. But such bodies are almost non-functional.

The quest for inclusive growth in the post-pandemic should catalyse endeavours to make workplaces in the informal sector safe for women. Some measures that can be implemented immediately include sensitising informal sector workers on gender-based violence and informing them in simple language about the laws that deal with such violence; employers must ensure that complaints committees are functional; sensitising local labour contractors on how to deal with cases of sexual harassment at workplaces. These bare minimum measures can be implemented with technical support from local women's rights organisations. The government should also step in to improve the implementation of existing laws and increase budgetary provisions for workplace safety.

The writer leads the informal sector work at Oxfam India

APRIL 4, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

FALKLAND CONFLICT

AMIDST CRIES OF "resign, resign" Margaret Thatcher faced a hostile House of Commons as she condemned what she called Argentina's "unprovoked invasion" of the Falkland Islands and announced that she was asking the country's task force to sail towards the Argentinian coast to see how the islanders could be liberated. Opposition leader Michael Foot questioned British intelligence and diplomacy, which he said had been outsmarted by the Argentinians.

ZIA'S PLANS

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT ZIA-UL-HAQ has an-

nounced that the military government was considering a new political strategy for the country, Radio Pakistan reported, indicating that he has set his face against holding elections. The real problem for the government is not the transfer of power, he told the nominated Majlis-E-Bhoora, the Federal Advisory Council which opened its second session in Islamabad on Saturday. The problem was setting up of "a true Islamic democratic system" with the "maximum association of people" in running the affairs of the country.

STATE POLLS

THE HARYANA AND Kerala governments have

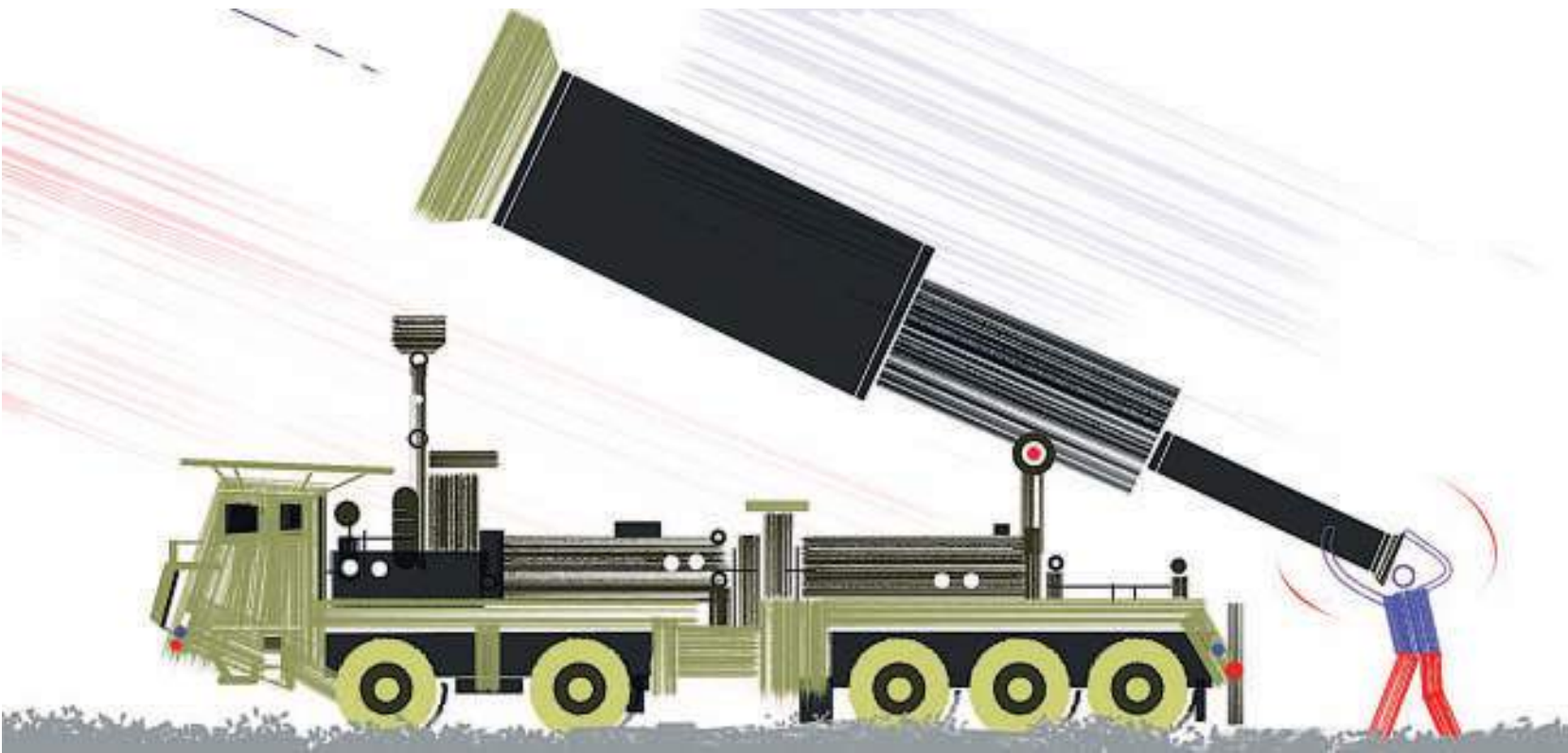
asked the Election Commission to hold assembly elections. The two states are expected to go to the polls next month along with West Bengal. While Kerala is under President's Rule, the term of the Haryana Vidhan Sabha expires in June. The EC is expected to announce its decision in a day or two.

TN HOUSE FRACAS

PAPER WEIGHTS FLEW as DMK and AIADMK members came close to blows following a heated exchange in the Tamil Nadu Assembly between Law Minister C Ponnaiyan and leader of the Opposition, M Karunanidhi.



7 THE IDEAS PAGE



C R Sasikumar

Reading his mind

Vladimir Putin sees the West through an ultranationalist lens and is convinced that they are looking to leverage economic and military superiority to forestall Russia from regaining its place in international order



OVER THE BARREL
VIKRAM SINGH MEHTA

OTTO VON BISMARCK, the Iron Chancellor of Germany, told the German parliament in 1876 that it would have been the height of folly to have invaded a weakened France the year before for fear that a resurgent and militarised France might attack Germany in the future. “Preventive wars,” he said, “are like committing suicide for fear of death”. I was reminded of this observation a few weeks back when I read that President Vladimir Putin had placed the Russian nuclear force on high alert in response to what he called the “aggressive statements by leading NATO powers”. It continues to reverberate in my head as the daily reports from Ukraine confirm that Putin has made a massive miscalculation and blunder.

I am of the view that continued discussions on the genesis of the crisis and the extenuating circumstances behind what is undoubtedly an egregious breach of the territorial integrity of a sovereign independent nation has limited value. What is now required are conversations on how to prevent a further escalation of this conflict. I am also of the view that India can and should play a role in driving such conversations. Its decision to abstain from the UN resolutions condemning Russia should give it negotiating heft with Putin; also, our PM is on friendly terms with him; and as the forthcoming chair of the G20 in 2023, India can claim locus standi.

President Putin has failed to achieve any of his objectives. That is an indubitable fact. He has not succeeded in overrunning Ukraine through a blitzkrieg military operation, in changing the Zelenskyy regime,

nor in securing “imperia Rus” — a Russian sphere of influence comparable to what the 10th century Prince Vladimir of Kiev had created and which territorially extended even beyond the boundaries of the former Soviet Union. In fact, on the contrary, Russian forces have got bogged down by the fierce resistance of the Ukrainian military and Zelenskyy has emerged as the exemplar of the soft power of moral rectitude and communication. His retort to the Americans who offered to help him leave the country, “I want ammunition, not a ride” will mark his epitaph; and most former members of the Soviet Union which are today independent sovereign states are scrambling to shelter under the security umbrella provided by Article 5 of the NATO agreement. Moreover, NATO countries have not fallen over themselves in disagreement over their response to the invasion but instead have conjointly imposed the severest of economic sanctions, which according to economists will knock between 10-20 per cent off Russia’s GDP and in the words of Raghuram Rajan, should be likened to “weapons of mass destruction” for the misery it will bring to the Russian public.

In the face of such a massive setback, the question has to be asked: What will President Putin do next? Will he look for a face-saving way out of the corner? Or might he compound his original sin by escalating the nature of the conflict? Might he, for instance, do what he did in Grozny and raze the Ukrainian cities to rubble? Might he unleash chemical weapons? Or in extremis, might he even cross the nuclear Rubicon?

I do not think anyone has an answer to these questions other than perhaps the psychiatrists who have had a chance to peer into Putin’s brain. But his biographers do provide useful guideposts and in the absence of alternative signage, these posts should be kept in sight whilst navigating the crisis. Putin grew up in straitened circumstances and lived in a communitarian establishment. He was short in stature and constantly set upon by the stronger boys in the neighbourhood. But instead of skirting confrontation, he took up martial arts and trained to give back as good as he received. He was determined not

Many argue that it would be a mistake to appease Putin and that given time and opportunity, he will return to the fray with the intent to secure his unrealised objectives. They refer to the Munich Pact of 1938 that did not bring “peace in our time” but triggered World War II. This is, I believe, a misleading equivalence. World War II was catastrophic but there was a victor. A nuclear conflict will be existential. There will be no victors. And, therefore, even though fraught with uncertainty and risk, the effort must be to crack this conundrum.

to allow his seemingly more powerful adversaries to cow him down.

This may be a leap too far but it is my view that these teenage experiences provide insight into the reasons for President Putin’s confrontational attitude towards the Western powers. He sees their actions through an ultranationalist lens and is convinced that they are looking to lever their economic and military superiority to check Russian nationalism and forestall Russia from regaining its rightful place in the pantheon of the international order. He may be bluffing but he has signalled that he is prepared to take the world to the brink of a nuclear Armageddon to counter these efforts.

The contemporary conundrum is how to get him to look at the world through a different lens. How to accept “defeat” without having to concede he has been defeated. Many argue that it would be a mistake to appease Putin and that given time and opportunity, he will return to the fray with the intent to secure his unrealised objectives. They refer to the Munich Pact of 1938 that did not bring “peace in our time” but triggered World War II. This is, I believe, a misleading equivalence. World War II was catastrophic but there was a victor. A nuclear conflict will be existential. There will be no victors. And, therefore, even though fraught with uncertainty and risk, the effort must be to crack this conundrum.

How can this be done? Again, there are no simple answers. But a good start would be to set out what should not be done. Putin must not be squeezed into a corner from which there is no escape. President Joe Biden’s obiter dicta that Putin must not be allowed to stay in power was in this context, therefore particularly injudicious. As also the comments that countries that buy Russian crude oil will find themselves on the “wrong side of history”. The effort now should be to create avenues for a face-saving backdown. India has the credibility and international clout and PM Modi has a personal equation with Putin. These should be leveraged to end this humanitarian tragedy.

The writer is Chairman, Centre for Social and Economic Progress



SOMIT DASGUPTA

POWER GENERATION TARIFFS in India comprise two parts. The first part is a fixed component — the cost that a generator incurs. This is not linked to the amount of power generated. The second part varies with the quantum of generation. The two-part tariff has been in vogue since 1992. It applies to thermal and hydro generation. It does not apply to renewable generation — solar, wind, and also nuclear. Under the two-part formula, the variable cost is calculated on the basis prescribed by the regulatory commissions. This is based on the cost of fuel — coal or gas or lignite — as the case may be. The fixed cost is also determined by regulatory commissions and it has a graded payment system depending on the extent to which the plant would be in a position to generate. The point here is that when a generator is in a position to generate, it gets to recover the fixed cost (or some part of it), irrespective of whether it actually generates power.

In the case of hydropower generation, the fact is that we don’t have any valuation for water as we have for coal or gas and hence, hydro generators do not have any variable cost of generation. The entire cost of a hydro station is fixed cost and notionally half of this cost is treated as variable cost.

In contrast, solar and wind generation and also nuclear are still governed by a single-part

tariff. The single-part tariff applies to nuclear power stations for various reasons including the fact that given the technology, a nuclear generator does not usually increase/decrease the generation at a quick tempo, but maintains a steady stream. In any case, nuclear power accounts for only about two per cent of the entire generation, so let’s leave it aside. On the other hand, solar and wind generation account for about 10 per cent of the generation today and going by the statement delivered during COP26 in Glasgow, we want to ramp it up to 50 per cent by 2030.

A few issues that need to be considered here. The renewable sector has been given a “must run” status. This means that any generation from renewables needs to be dispatched first. The logic is that if we do not use the sun’s rays or for that matter the wind velocity, it is lost forever. The state load dispatch centres (SLDCs) are under instructions to adhere to this principle. The problem is that “must run” runs counter to the basic economic theory that in order to minimise total cost, dispatch should commence from the source offering the cheapest variable cost and then move upwards. Here lies the problem.

With a single part tariff for renewable generation, the entire cost is variable and at Rs 2.5 per unit for solar generation, it is not

the cheapest source. There are several NTPC coal-fired pit head plants whose variable costs are far lower, for example, Simhadri (Rs 1.36), Korba (Rs 1.36), Sipat (Rs 1.43), Vindhyachal (Rs 1.70), and Talcher (Rs 2.00). This list is only indicative and not exhaustive. In fact, Rs 2.5 per unit is only for those solar generators that are of recent origin. For the older solar plants, the tariff could be well above Rs 3 per unit and for wind-based generation, it is even higher, averaging around Rs 4.5 per unit. It is no surprise, therefore, that the SLDCs often flout the principle of “must run”, since the distribution companies would save money by asking the renewable generator to back down while keeping the tap on for a coal-based generation.

The solution to this problem is to apply a two-part tariff for solar and wind generators as we do for hydro plants today. But while in the case of hydro, 50 per cent of the total cost is attributed as a variable cost, what should be the principle for renewable generators?

The overriding principle is that the percentage allocated as variable cost should ensure that renewable generation has the lowest variable cost so that there is no violation of the “must-run” principle. At the same time, the fixed cost component should not be kept so high that it hurts the consumers.

A fine balance between the proportion of the fixed and variable costs will have to be maintained. There are other benefits of introducing a two-part tariff for renewable generation. It would ensure a certain minimum return to developers even if they are not generating during certain hours, as in the case of coal and hydro plants.

With a single-part tariff, whenever the renewable generator is asked to back down for maintaining grid balance, it is paid nothing. If we are serious about having a renewable generating capacity of 450-500 GW by 2030, we need to create a proper environment and ensure adequate returns to invite fresh investments into renewable generation. One must remember that while the government may fix targets, implementation has to be done by private players and therefore, market signals are important.

The switch from a single to a two-part tariff structure for renewables has to be made right now as we are at the cusp of ramping up our renewable generation and it takes time for matters to get streamlined as we have seen in the past.

The writer is senior visiting fellow, ICRIER and former, Member (Economic & Commercial), CEA

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Making cruel, inhumane and inflexible bureaucracy an integral aspect of government policy in order to try to drive down immigration and asylum numbers has had dreadful consequences.”

— THE OBSERVER

Looking for a good leader

People will follow one who uses power as a tool for empowerment of unheard and unseen, celebrates courage and compassion, chooses peace over war



IN GOOD FAITH
NANDITESH NILAY

DAYS AFTER THE Russian invasion of Ukraine, I found myself in a classroom on the wrong side of the chairs and desks. My audience was a group of officers, women and men, from a small, picture-postcard island nation. My brief was to talk about leadership in a time of uncertainty. At a time when there is no dearth of wisdom on such a subject — from courses in Ivy League universities to 15-second videos on YouTube by your neighbourhood uncle — I thought a good opening would be to ask the officers the same question they had posed to me: Who is a good leader? I focused the question more sharply by asking: Which of the two is a better leader, the man in Moscow or the man in Kyiv? Much of the world has already framed one as David and the other as Goliath. I didn’t expect much debate, but I was surprised to hear silence. It spoke volumes.

Under their breath, I could hear some references to the Ukrainian leader but, for the record, when it was time to take a call for the whole house, the consensus was that if we have to choose between the two, there is no one.

The officers from the island nation were as emotional as the blue sea that surrounds their country. And equally deep. I asked, “Why do you say so?” They again chose silence. Maybe they were expecting the teacher in me to answer this, maybe they were waiting for me to recall stories of the Kalinga war and Emperor Ashoka and his Dhamma, advocating peace. I am not sure. What I am sure of is how few in the room saw in either of the two — the attacked and the attacker — an exemplary model of leadership.

In *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy writes that the “strongest of all warriors” are time and patience. As we mark exactly two years of the lockdown, we know that these two warriors were the only ones fighting on our side as we remained locked down in our homes. And yet, for all the talk of a new normal, of a world knit together by technology, where truth and entertainment stream to unite us all, a large country still thought of the old means of achieving its devastating end: War. The death of innocent children, women and men and the devastation of cities and destruction of lives so beautifully constructed with time and patience. Another large country found an opportunity to sell and supply arms. Where was the sensitivity that emerged from battling a pandemic? Forget that; it was back

to the stone age where might is right.

Perhaps that’s why my audience wasn’t sure of who is a good leader. Because even the one who was attacked showed a very self-promotional idea of leadership, but more about that later.

Aristotle has an answer: A good leader is nobody but a follower and following is nothing but understanding the needs and wants of the people. Today, “to follow” means Meta and blue ticks. But this is purely self-referential. “I have so many followers”: This becomes the end-all and be-all. Who these followers are, what they want, what they say — that’s not my problem. So the Ukrainian leader’s televised bravery helped him become a living-room hero, while his country and citizens bore the pain.

No wonder, Aristotle concludes that it’s a good follower who qualifies as a good leader.

In other words, when everyone is fighting to mark their own space, flaunt their number of followers, whether on social media or the Election Commission dashboard, can we find a leader who follows the people, tracks their tears, defeats, struggles, fears? Who sees people falling into a sewer or waiting for a job interview or crying over injustice and knows what they want from their leader? A person who promotes peace rather than war, healing rather than anger? In other words, a good leader is, first of all, a good person. For Aristotle, a good person acts and lives their virtues. People are led only by virtue, not by persuasion or rhetoric or self-praise or fear. A good leader communicates her values to citizens, that’s why parents and teachers are our first leaders. They are the most powerful communicators of the principles of leadership because a child, whether at home or in class, needs to be cared for, and then taught. Good parenting or teaching is about being sensitive to the child’s needs and aspirations.

So why not construct, in the safety and warmth of the home and the school, our heroes with ethics, human values, and later, with competencies and efficiencies? For, nothing is more powerful, emotionally and intellectually, than qualifying as a good human being in the eyes of our parents and teachers. Extending this to politics and the public space, a good leader is one who listens to and addresses the questions of the most vulnerable — the children among his followers. Who uses power as a tool for the empowerment of the unheard and unseen, celebrates courage and compassion, chooses peace over war, doesn’t stoke in one group of people fears about another. A good leader puts “what am I” above “who am I”, where being good is the one and only benchmark of leadership.

No wonder my friends from that beautiful island country found it hard to choose a leader from among those in the news.

The writer is the author of *Being Good, Aaiye, Insaan Banaen and Ethikos: Stories Searching Happiness. He teaches and trains courses on ethics, values and behaviour*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A BETTER SYSTEM

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Losers all? Time to rethink first past the post system’ (IE, April 3). The FPTP system is clearly unsuited for a large and diverse country such as India, where tiny majorities in elections enable winners to take all. This is problematic because of the vast powers that the executive enjoys, which allow it to push through questionable policies and laws without much opposition. An enfeebled legislature, as we are witnessing now both at the Centre and in states does not help matters. A government that is more representative of the diversity of the country is required, whether based on proportionality or other methods. The question, however, is whether those in power will subordinate their interests for the greater good.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

WISE MOVE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘After AFSPA’ (IE, April 2). It was natural that every government at the Centre has been all along resisting fiercely the removal of the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), despite stiff opposition from human rights organisations. But the Jana Sangh, the forerunner of the BJP, often accused the Congress of going soft on Nagaland insurgents. Now, to expand its own footprints in the Northeast, its stalwarts have realised the necessity of accommodation and understanding. This development will be good for the country.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

STANDING FIRM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘No sermons please’ (IE, April 2). US Deputy NSA Daleep Singh and British Foreign secretary Liz Truss’s attempt to persuade India to have no truck with Russia was an unwarranted and unfriendly attempt to browbeat India to toe the West’s line in this crisis. Incidentally, Singh’s churlish remarks that in the event of China ever violating the LAC, Russia would not come to India’s rescue were particularly inadvisable: America didn’t come to India’s rescue in the recent confrontations on the LAC and the latter fought its own battles. India’s refusal to heed this unsavoury sermon displayed its adherence to an independent and non-aligned policy foreign policy. In the prevailing circumstances, India’s stand is politically correct, strategically sound and economically profitable.

Ravi Mathur, Noida

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘No sermons please’ (IE, April 2). The neutral stance taken by India in the Ukraine crisis, very much in keeping with its long-standing policy of non-alignment, has not gone down well with the US. The veiled threat of “consequences” for not toeing the American line against Russia smacks of immaturity on the part of a nation that claims to be the world leader. India has categorically stated that dialogue between the two warring nations is the way forward. India is doing well to safeguard its interests while calling for a cessation of hostilities.

Kamna Chhabra, Gurgaon

GULAMMOHAMMED SHEIKH, ARTIST

What we need is an open climate within our institutions to allow artists to practise their art

Gulammohammed Sheikh speaks on the idea of multiplicity in life, art education in India, interference in institutions and how the world of art remains free of divides. This session was moderated by VANDANA KALRA, Senior Assistant Editor, *The Indian Express*

Vandana Kalra: In 1981, you had said that living in India means living simultaneously in several times and cultures. Do you think the relevance of your statement has only increased over time? Also, how do you look at the works that you made during that period, for example, *City for Sale*?

Among these works, the first one was *About Waiting and Wandering*, the other was *Speaking Street*, the third *Revolving Routes* and the fourth *City for Sale*. They relate to actual situations and are connected. *Speaking Street* was a re-creation of the kind of street that I lived in during my childhood. Born in 1937, I spent about 18 years in Surendranagar, which was then a small town, before I came to Baroda to study. We lived in a little lane, which had a little mosque whose walls were painted green with enamel colours, but it didn't have a dome. There would be people sitting on the street selling fish, or somebody pulling a little cart. In the lower half of the painting there are several events taking place simultaneously in different houses or rooms, as would happen with people living in *chawls*. *Speaking Street* also carries a personal portrait — a young boy looking out of a window. Thinking of the childhood spent in a street like that, I remember having learnt to recite the Quran in Arabic at a *madarsa*, while studying Sanskrit at school. It gave me the idea of multiplicity in life, connected by multiple belief systems.

This work connects with the much larger *City for Sale*, based in the city in which I continue to live; the city of Baroda, now Vadodara. I came to Baroda first in 1955 as a student, and after finishing my studies at the Faculty of Fine Arts, I taught there for three years. I was then in London on a scholarship for three years and returned home in 1966. When I first came to Baroda, it opened for me not just the world of art, but also the art of the world. But in 1969 this city produced another image. Some of the worst communal riots took place here between 1969 and 1970. People began to look at me with my name in mind. So, it gave me an identity which was different from the identity that I had acquired when I had reached Baroda, then — open, liberal, multifaceted. In 1969, suddenly the situation changed. These four paintings, in some ways, reflect upon the times that I had gone through. *City for Sale* is large and has multiple figures, so many characters. There are three men meeting on the pretext of lighting a matchstick. Would that provoke incendiary connotations? There is also a woman who has a big vegetable cart, which literally flows into the town. Then there is, in the centre, a film being shown called *Silsila* (1981). And on the top, the scene of a communal riot. It brought together multiple parts of a city, depicting how riots are raging in one part, but a film is being shown in another. In a way, it was confessional, it was also some kind of a release for me.

Vandana Kalra: In more recent years, you've taken this thought forward and you seem to have turned to Kabir and Mahatma Gandhi to call for peace, call for intermingling. If you could talk a bit about that.

Gandhi came to me right from the time I was in school. I read *My Experiments with Truth* (1927), in Gujarati it's *Satyā Na Prayog*. It has remained with me ever since. During the years of 1969 and 1970, Gandhi kept coming to me, in different forms, different guises. But I didn't know how to paint Gandhiji, I had never seen him in person. I saw lots of photographs. Then I devised something. The first painting that I made of him was of Gandhi in South Africa, in the image of a young lawyer. But the second one, which I have used twice or thrice since, was the image of Gandhi returning to India, quoted from a painting by Abanindranath Tagore.

Kabir came in a different way. I was familiar with his poetry from my school days but he began to become more and more relevant in the context of the conflicting situations that I saw around myself. I thought, perhaps, I should try to paint Kabir. But how to paint Kabir? My mentor KG Subramanyan's mentor Benodebehari Mukherjee had painted a large mural in Santiniketan on the saint-poets of India, which included Kabir. Benode *babu* knew that Kabir was a weaver, so he went to the weavers' colony to search for his image of a weaver and



WHY
GULAMMOHAMMED SHEIKH

Eminent artist, poet and critic Gulammohammed Sheikh has been a key figure in Indian art. Reflecting on contemporary sociopolitical conditions in his work, he has trained generations of artists at MSU Baroda

made his Kabir. I found a Kabir image in a late Mughal painting in the British Museum collection and devised a Kabir-like persona from that image. As Kabir began to recur in my mind, I began to read Kabir but it was difficult to find a visual equivalent. It was when I heard Kumar Gandharva singing Kabir that I thought, why can I not illustrate his poetry? Within histories of art, a great number of paintings illustrate poetry.

Vandana Kalra: How do you look at the dialogue between your poetry and painting?

When I started writing poetry while I was in school, it was very traditional, using Sanskrit meters or in the form of songs. When I came to Baroda, I met a new mentor, Suresh Joshi, the writer who pioneered a modern idiom in Gujarati. He introduced us to Baudelaire, Rilke, Lorca, etc. After reading these great poets, I felt what I was writing was not worthwhile, so I threw away much of it, and began to write poetry without verse, without any meter. I felt I should use spoken language. I had to find my voice from within the spoken word. In some ways, I had to find something which was not only modern but also personal, which was mine. Similarly, in painting, I had to struggle hard. Every student feels that he is under the shadow of his teacher, so he wants to get out of that shadow. I started to look outside of Baroda. I looked at MF Husain and began using the image of a horse. But there was a difference between Husain's horses and mine. Husain's horses are to be regarded as timeless. Charged with energy, they were larger than life. My lonely creature

came from my life experiences, perhaps it came from the tonga, the *ghoda-gaadi* that I knew from my childhood. This horse was harnessed and was trying to unshackle itself.

Devyani Onial: What do you think about art education in India? Also, you started teaching when you were very young. Can you talk a bit about those days?

Art education should begin at school and children should be taken to art galleries and museums. I've seen not just in the West, but also in places like Indonesia, tiny tots are taken to museums, they have their little notebooks with them in which they write about the paintings that they see.

The Faculty of Fine Arts (MS University), set up around 1950, was the first institution in India where university education included fine arts. It offered not a diploma, but a degree. What the pioneers visualised was an artist who was literate and educated, a new citizen of modern India, because it coincided with the independence of the country. It was a small institution, the teacher student ratio was one to 10, or one to 15. The studios were huge, they were like warehouses and were open throughout the day and night. For somebody like me, coming from a small town, it was a great experience to learn from your teachers who were working alongside you. We saw NS Bendre working, we saw our seniors like Jyoti Bhatt, Shanti Dave and GR Santosh working. Despite the fact that I had some financial difficulties, I managed to sail through those four years of under-graduation, and then even did my master's. I got a job to teach while I was in my second-year master's course and some of my classmates also became my students for a brief while. But art education, even to this day, is a neglected discipline. We have to think of a holistic way of devising a new art education system for our country. An art education system that is not standardised. It should leave

room for each region, each culture in a diverse and multifarious country like ours.

Leena Misra: Vadodara was recently in the news because Chandra Mohan was not allowed to display his artwork. It was also in the news because they have booked the first case of interfaith marriage, which violates the freedom of religion. So what do you think went wrong in the city and why are people not speaking up? Has the space for expression, even for artists, shrunk?

It's not that people were not speaking. Prof Shivaji Panikkar, the then in-charge Dean of the Faculty, stood firm defending the student against a controversy engineered by external elements. A spate of protests by students against the assault on the institution continued for almost a year. Several of us spoke. Ganesh Devy (literary critic) had also spoken up. But the issue that you're talking about is larger. What we need is an open climate within our institutions of art and art education, to allow artists to practise their art. External issues have been brought to institutions, which then have been victims of unhealthy controversies and conflicts. I think artists should and would articulate their ideas through their art and there are artists who have done that. I will quote the German playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht: "Will there be singing in the dark times?" To which the answer is, "Yes, there will be singing about the dark times".

External interferences are mostly politically motivated, we got to stand against them but while continuing to practise. If

you stop practising, if you do not paint, that is more dangerous. Baroda had a liberal foundation and to an extent it still exists. The world of art and artists in India is still free of divides. Let me give you example of five of my teachers from the Faculty of Fine Arts. The first dean Markand Bhatt, a Gujarati, was married to Perin, a Parsi. NS Bendre, a Maharashtrian, married Mona, a Tamilian. Sankho Chaudhuri, a Bengali, married a Parsi fellow artist Ira, and KG Subramanyan married Sushila, a Punjabi, the last two couples had met in Santiniketan. For us it was a mini India, a multiple India; it was not straitjacketed into the singular. Many of us found our life partners from within the Faculty we taught and studied at. A Kashmiri Ratan Parimoo found Naina, a

Yes, there are problems that beset our institutions. Government museums and academies are out of touch with what's going on in the world of art, and directors are often appointed rather arbitrarily, often not from the art world at all

times. Then, there are so many young artists. We have a young artist called BR Shailesh, who was trained in a *gurukul*, he speaks Sanskrit, he came to study painting, and he ventured into digital art, then into installation. He is using his *gurukul* background and devising a way where there is both critique as well as celebration.

Rinku Ghosh: On the one hand you say art is about hope, on the other you choose to stay away from rescuing institutions like the National

Gallery of Modern Art and Lalit Kala Akademi from decay. How will young artists express themselves freely if greats like you don't act?

It is not correct. Artists have always spoken out in one way or another. A long time back, in the 1960s, J Swaminathan published *Contra* (1966-67) to take on the Akademis, we (Bhupen Khakhar and I) brought out a journal called *Vrishchik* (1969-73) and through that, amongst other things, mounted a campaign to reform the Lalit Kala Akademi. We fought for three years, as a result of which the government appointed the Khosla Commission. Some of the reforms that we were fighting for were included. So, it's not that artists have not driven change. Yes, there are problems that beset our institutions. Government museums and academies are out of touch with what's going on in the wider world of art, and directors are often appointed rather arbitrarily, often not from the art world at all. Are we to become activists then? When KG Subramanyan was asked the question, he said tellingly that yes, he would, but as an artist activist, not as an activist artist. The younger generations of artists too have their own modes of articulating the need for change, their own activism.

Paromita Chakrabarti: Could you speak about the time when you met your wife? You mentioned how it was commonplace in the artistic community to find partners from other communities. In the larger city, for instance, was there the ghost of love jihad at that time, which has become so prominent now?

I have already made some remarks about the issues earlier. I have tried to answer these through the paintings that I have done, including *City for Sale*, which is about the city and which deals with the kind of conflicting situation you are talking about.

It is difficult to tell you the personal story, but it was, and is not uncommon among artists to get acquainted with each other, and eventually to become not only friends but partners. The pursuit of our vocation brought us together. Several of my friends and students have married outside their communities. The kind of divide, that you belong to this belief system or you belong to that belief system, or that you come from Kerala or Bihar, is denounced in our community of artists. Art actually binds, art brings us together, art gives us a new world to live in. When I say that art spells hope, what I mean is that hope is the essence of the creative act. I still believe that a creative life also makes you a slightly better human being, because it allows you to keep the divide out, it allows you to share, it allows you to meet people, it allows you to connect with as many people as possible.

Suanshu Khurana: You mentioned Kumar Gandharva and the impact his Kabir bhajans had on your work. Are there any other musicians who've been a significant part of your consciousness while creating your art?

I listen to a lot of music. Even now, during the pandemic, we have a little bluetooth speaker and I listen to music every morning or while working. I listen to Mallikarjun Mansur, I love Bhimsen Joshi, I enjoy Kishori Amonkar's singing. I have not known many musicians, but I had some connection with Kumar Gandharva because of the opportunities of meeting during the programmes at Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal during the 1980s, where I would listen to him. Among the series of Kabir paintings I made, two were companion pieces: a largish painting called *Ek Achambha Dekha Re Bhai* has the companion piece called *Heerna*. It is my tribute to *Heerna* sung by Kumar Gandharva.

Illustration: Suvajit Dey

Gujarati; a Maharashtrian PD Dhumal, married Rini, who was a Bengali. So there was nothing unusual in a Gujarati like me marrying a Punjabi Nilima. That has been the culture of the Faculty of Fine Arts. We lived a life which was not just a life lived, but a life shared.

Shiny Varghese: What do you think are the values that we should support today that will determine what our future will be like tomorrow?

I would answer your question in a different way. Frankly, my own view is that contemporary Indian art is still very vibrant. We have three to four generations of artists working. We have 97-year-old Krishen Khanna, of the generation of Husain. You have my generation, and you have those that come after us, like Atul Dodiya, Sudarshan Shetty and several others.

Then there is a still younger generation working. I'm not painting a rosy picture. What I am trying to say is that within art, among artists, there is still a dialogue, and they are working steadfastly. I'm also very happy that we have many women artists. We also have several couple-artists, doing different things in their own way. Like Manu and Madhvi Parekh, Arpita and Paramjit Singh, Reena and Jitish Kallat, Atul and Anju Dodiya, Bharti Kher and Subodh Gupta among others. I wonder if such a situation prevails in other countries. I am putting it in a somewhat simplistic manner but the values our artists seem to pursue are the values of a free and creative practice. Most of us are engaged in finding a visual language for contemporary issues, often referring to problematics of our

The world of art in India is still free of divides... For us it was a mini India, a multiple India; it was not straitjacketed into the singular. Many of us found our life partners from within the Faculty we taught and studied at

RURAL INTERNET CONNECTIVITY SCHEME

BharatNet likely to miss deadline as shifting goalposts slow roll out

AASHISHARYAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

THE IMPLEMENTATION of the Central government's flagship rural internet connectivity scheme, BharatNet, has slowed and is likely to miss the 2025 completion deadline owing to a number of factors, sources in the know of the development said.

Consider this: as of February 2022, only about 1.72 lakh of the initially targeted 2.5 lakh gram panchayats had been connected to the central grid under BharatNet. Of these, 1.5 lakh gram panchayats had been connected by 2017, within first the three years of the project being re-christened 'BharatNet'.

In the next five years, only about 22,360 gram panchayats have been connected. In August 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expanded the scope of the project when he announced that BharatNet would aim to connect all 6 lakh villages over the next 1,000 days instead of just the 2.5 lakh gram panchayats.

DoT officials said though the target under BharatNet has now

been revised to connect all villages instead of just the gram panchayats, work at even the gram panchayat level has slowed down considerably.

On an average, only about 3,500 km of optical fibre is being laid every month while roughly 1,600 gram panchayats are being connected, a senior DoT official said. Though there are no "official targets" as such, the aim is to lay up to 5,000 km of optical fibre and connect up to 2,500 gram panchayats under BharatNet per month.

"Of the 1.72 lakh gram panchayats that have been connected so far, the aim always is to ensure upkeep and maintenance so that at least 1 lakh gram panchayats are in up mode. That number over the past three-four months has fallen down to 60,000," the official said.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) considers a gram panchayat connected to BharatNet in the "up mode" if there is continuous usage of internet in these places. To ensure the same, most of these connections are given to gram panchayat buildings or schools in the area where the internet can be used. To ensure the same, regular



WiFi tower in an Uttarakhand village. File

checks of the optical fibre laid in the area are conducted.

This task is going to be harder when the project starts connecting all the villages as well, the official said. Apart from this, DoT officials also pointed out that the "multiple shifts in targets provided to the agencies which were executing the project".

"Take for example BBNL (Bharat Broadband Network Limited). In the initial year of BharatNet, the focus was on operation of the project. Later, the agency was asked to also take over the maintenance of BharatNet.

During the two years of pandemic, when the optical fibre cable laying work was slow, the focus shifted to ensuring utilisation," one official said, asking not to be named.

Another issue, officials said, is that the public-private-partnership (PPP) mode for implementation of BharatNet, which was approved by the Union Cabinet in June 2021, is yet to take off.

The first request for proposal (RFP) for implementation of the project, which was floated in July 2021, failed to get any response from private players. Even as late as February 2022, there was no interest shown by private players to partner with the government for implementation of the scheme, the officials said.

A new RFP is now being prepared by the DoT with several terms and conditions likely to be relaxed. The government is also likely to assume some of the risks associated with the project to envisage more interest from private players, one of the officials said.

"Consultations with private players are going on right now, after which the new RFP will be floated. This entire process will take about 2-3 months, following

which bids will be opened. We hope to start PPP implementation by the end of this year," one of the officials quoted above said.

Under the PPP mode implementation of BharatNet approved by the Union Cabinet in June last year, a concessionaire selected through a competitive international bidding process will be responsible for creation, upgradation, operation, maintenance and utilisation of BharatNet.

As per the proposal approved then, the total cost of the project was estimated at Rs Rs 29,432 crore, of which the government had to spend Rs 19,041 crore as viability gap funding.

The Indian Express had in January 2020 reported that with the panchayat internet connectivity scheme floundering at the last mile due to the failure of the implementation agencies, the DoT had been looking to bring in the private sector to complete the pending projects under Phases 1 and 2 of BharatNet.

The PPP model had then been suggested by government think-tank NITI Aayog as well as the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

'Demographic dividend may turn into liability sans enough jobs'

The country's demographic dividend may turn into a liability in the absence of enough jobs and the required skilled workforce, a CII report has said

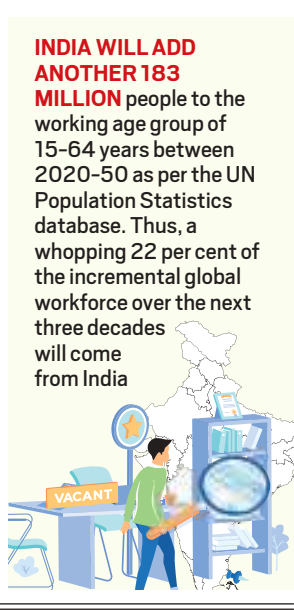
NOT ONLY IS THERE A SHORTAGE OF TIME, but also that the rise in India's working age population is necessary but not sufficient for it to sustain the economic growth, the report on India's Demographic Dividend released by the Confederation of Indian Industry said

workers are not adequately prepared for those jobs, its demographic dividend may turn into a liability

ALTHOUGH INVESTMENT, reforms and infrastructure are likely drivers of India's economic growth, no growth driver is as certain as the availability of people in India's working age group

IF INDIA DOES NOT CREATE ENOUGH JOBS and its

Source: CII/PTI



How high coal prices impact the power sector

KARUNJIT SINGH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

A SHARP uptick in both international and domestic coal prices due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict is set to increase input prices for independent power producers and power distribution companies. Higher coal prices have also pushed up spot power tariffs on the India Energy Exchange.

How are high coal prices set to impact the power sector?

Indian power producers and discoms are facing high international coal prices while domestic coal supply has already been struggling to meet demand in the past six months, according to experts. High demand for domestic coal amid high international prices

had led to rolling power cuts in a number of states in October 2021 as a number of thermal power plants ran out of coal stock.

"Given the continued tight domestic coal supply position over the last six-month period, coal import dependency for the power sector is expected to increase moderately in the near term" said Girishkumar Kadam, said senior vice president & co-group head-corporate ratings at ICRA.

Why are global and domestic coal prices rising?

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has led to a disruption in the supply of coal by Russia, which is unlikely to be fully replaced by other suppliers. ICRA has estimated that imported coal prices are set to rise 45-55 per cent in the first quarter of FY23.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

TO IDENTIFY SITES

■ The Sunday Telegraph said ministers have agreed to set up a new development vehicle, called Great British Nuclear, to identify sites, cut through red tape to speed up the planning process, and bring together private firms to run each site.

speed up the planning process, and bring together private firms to run each site.

POLICY WATCH
GREEN ENERGY

India-Netherlands ties: Climate, water initiatives likely to take centre stage

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

CLIMATE COOPERATION and water security initiatives are likely to be the key focus areas for the future ties between the Netherlands and India. These are also likely to be discussed between the countries as part of the upcoming state visit of President Ram Nath Kovind to the European nation next week.

The visit will coincide with the publication of the latest round of the global climate report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is likely to highlight climate change mitigation, action and development pathways. Scalable techniques of renewable and solar energy seen in countries like India and also techniques where there are institutional barriers like nuclear energy are likely to be the core focus of the report, Netherlands government officials said. The report will be published Monday.

India and the Netherlands will also be working on preparing a model for a global water pact, taking cues from various water security initiatives from across the world including India's Jal Jeevan Mission, Henk Ovink, Netherlands' special envoy for international water affairs said in an interaction in The Hague with Indian journalists. Global water initiatives including India's Jal Jeevan

Mission will set the path for global action on water, Ovink said. Jal Jeevan Mission envisions to provide safe and adequate drinking water through individual household tap connections by 2024 to all households in rural India

"...water is very organised, fragmented, it means often the solution is at a very small scale, so on one local level it might make a difference, but outside the community nothing changes. India is a continent in itself. If India changes, the world changes for the good or better and better for the good," Ovink said. He highlighted the importance to focus on water as a means for hygiene especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. "We say 'wash your hands', but if there is no water, there is no hand washing. Your government has a big focus on issues of water, sanitation and hygiene, which are of critical importance in the context of the pandemic...but we still know that billions of people around the world lack that access to water. India's water security programme is inspirational and we can bring that learning to other places around the world," he said.

The Netherlands will be co-hosting a 3-day UN conference on March 22, 2023 for taking action on sustainable water management with Tajikistan.

(The correspondent was in The Hague on an invitation from the Netherlands government)

BRIEFLY

Ficci on GDP

New Delhi: India's GDP is estimated to grow at 7.4 per cent in the financial year 2022-23, Ficci said.

Maruti, CNG

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki aims to sell 4-6 lakh CNG units in the current fiscal, said a senior official. PTI

'Adani bids nixed'

New Delhi: Andhra Pradesh has cancelled bids for 2 tenders by Adani Enterprises to supply imported coal as the prices quoted were too high, officials said. REUTERS

MARKET WATCH

FPIs WITHDRAW ₹41,000 CR IN MAR

New Delhi: Continuing their selling spree for the sixth consecutive month, foreign investors pulled out a massive Rs 41,000 crore from the domestic equity market in March on anticipation of rate hikes by the US Fed amid the Russia-Ukraine war. PTI

AT \$417.8 BILLION

FY22: Higher petroleum products, gem shipments take exports to record high

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

INDIA'S EXPORTS of goods surged to a record high of \$417.8 billion in FY22, boosted by higher shipments of petroleum products, engineering goods, gems and jewellery and textile products, according to the data released by the Commerce Ministry on Sunday. Exports for the year were 43.2 per cent higher than shipments of \$291.8 billion in FY21 and 26.6 per cent higher than exports of \$330.1 billion in FY19, which saw India's previous record high.

FY22 is also expected to mark record high imports and trade deficit for India, with imports for the first 11 months of the fiscal having grown by 59.2 per cent to \$550.1 billion and almost doubling India's trade deficit to \$176.1 billion in the period. The government had not released data on imports for March at the time of publishing.

"In March alone, exports exceeded \$40 billion which we have never achieved before. There were exports of over \$30 billion in each



JNPT, near Mumbai. Exports for the year were 43.2 per cent higher than exports of \$291.8 billion in FY21. File

month of this fiscal," Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said.

Merchandise exports in March were up 14.5 per cent, compared to the previous fiscal year, with a significant jump in exports to developed countries such as the US, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, Singapore, the UK, Belgium and Germany. India's engineering goods exports grew by 45.5 per cent to hit an all time high of \$111 billion with shipments to the US alone accounting for \$16 billion of

engineering goods exports. The total value of petroleum product exports grew by 152.1 per cent boosted by elevated crude oil prices. The UAE was the top destination for petroleum product export in FY22. Gems and jewellery exports grew by 49.6 per cent with China emerging as the top destinations for such shipments.

Goyal has previously said that while higher global commodity prices have boosted the value of India's exports, a majority of exports have seen an increase in both volume and value of outbound shipments. Officials said India exported 7 million tonnes of wheat in the fiscal, with its shipments rising to \$2.05 billion up from about \$530 million in the previous fiscal.

"We will continue to export wheat in a big way to meet needs in countries who are not getting supplies from conflict areas," Goyal said, adding India's wheat exports were likely to cross 10 million tonnes in the next fiscal.

India is exploring the possibility of exporting wheat to countries like Turkey and Egypt, which rely on supply from Russia and Ukraine to meet their requirements.

Banks violate Irdai norms, sell insurance policies above ₹5 cr, claim brokers

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, APRIL 3

INSURANCE BROKERS have come out against the practice of banks soliciting insurance policies for sums assured of above Rs 5 crore, violating the guidelines issued by the insurance regulator.

Banks, which work as corporate agents of insurance companies, are allowed to solicit insurance cover only for policies where sum assured is not more than Rs 5 crore per policy as per the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India's (Irdai's) corporate agent regulations. "However, we observe that banks are not following these regulations of the Irdai and sell policies for Rs 100 crore and Rs 1,000 crore... even Rs 2,000 crore," said Sohanlal Kadel, managing director, Kadel Insurance Brokers.

Banks are clandestinely selling high-value policies without taking the broking licence from the Irdai, said an insurance broker.

According to the Insurance Brokers Association of India (IBAI), banks as lenders and sellers of insurance should be ideally kept at arm's length. This is necessary to ensure that the assets that are hypothecated to the bank are properly insured with optimal coverage, relying on the advice of full-time insurance professionals.

In the case of a loss, if assets are not properly insured, then the bank may lose out, insurance officials said.

The mixing of the two functions of the bank can create avoidable conflict of interest and lead to poor risk management, they said. The quality of insurance covers can be compromised due to commercial pressure from

THE RULES

■ Banks, which work as corporate agents of insurance companies, are allowed to solicit insurance cover only for policies where sum assured is not more than Rs 5 crore per policy as per the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India's (Irdai's) corporate agent regulations

customers, the IBAI said in a letter to the RBI and Irdai, opposing the practice of banks selling high-value policies.

Banks often arrange for insurance that only addresses their loan exposure on an account.

For example, the loan exposure of a bank may be Rs 10 crore whereas the total asset size at risk may be Rs 20 crore. Insurance is arranged by the bank for only Rs 10 crore, which leads to under-insurance of 50 per cent and leaves the customer not fully protected when a calamity happens. This defeats the very purpose of insurance protection for both the bank as well as the customer, said a broker.

"Banks are not geared to understand the various coverage options available under commercial policies as they lack the necessary in-house expertise. They are not in a position to explain to the customers the terms, conditions and obligations the customers are expected to fulfil as part of the policy," the IBAI said. This results in customers getting the wrong coverage, leading to non-payment for under-

payment of claims.

The RBI and the Irdai did not respond to queries from The Indian Express.

"If there is a violation of Irdai regulations, the regulator should certainly examine it and take action. Maybe the regulations require modification if Irdai is convinced that it is in policyholders' interests to modify the regulations. Ultimately it is the policyholders' interests and convenience that matter more than that of insurance intermediaries like brokers or corporate agents," said K K Srinivasan, former member, Irdai.

"But banks cannot stand in the way of policyholders' option of choosing their own intermediaries and compel them to use the banking channels only for insurance. Or compel policy holders to use only insurance companies promoted by them," Srinivasan added.

"In many cases we observe that banks are buying the policies themselves without involving the customers and the premium is debited to the customer's account. The policy copies are never shared with the customers so they don't understand or are aware of what is covered and what is not," insurance brokers said. This non-participative and opaque insurance buying process results in poor risk transfer outcomes for the customer when there are claims.

If asked for proof, the same will not be available as the banks do not book the same in the code to bypass the guidelines of Irdai, thereby raising a very pertinent question that if banks are not getting any commission, then why do they solicit the business? It means some wrong practices are being adopted by the insurance and the banks for mutual benefits, they alleged.

Post another hike, petrol above ₹100 in major cities

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

PETROL PRICES on Sunday were above Rs 100 a litre mark in all major cities across the country after its rates and that of diesel were hiked by 80 paise a litre each — the 11th increase in less than two weeks that took the total to a record Rs 8 per litre.

Petrol in Delhi will now cost Rs 103.41 per litre as against Rs 102.61 previously while diesel rates have gone up from Rs 93.87 per litre to Rs 94.67, according to a price notification of state fuel retailers.

Rates have been increased across the country and vary from



Petrol pump, New Delhi. File

state to state, depending upon the incidence of local taxation.

This is the 11th increase in prices since the ending of a four-and-half-month long hiatus in rate revision on March 22. In all, petrol prices have gone up by Rs 8 per litre. WITHPTI

TOP OF THE WORLD



Kim Yo Jong

NORTH KOREA

Kim's sister enraged by Seoul preemptive strike comments

THE INFLUENTIAL sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called the South Korean defence minister a "scum-like guy" for talking about preemptive strikes on the North, warning Sunday that the South may face "a serious threat". Kim Yo Jong's statement came amid heightened tensions over the North's spate of weapons tests this year. On Friday, South Korean Defence Minister Suh Wook had said his country has the ability and readiness to launch strikes on North Korea if it detects the North intends to fire missiles at South Korea. In response, Kim Yo Jong said: "The senseless and scum-like guy dare mention a 'preemptive strike' at a nuclear weapons state." **AP**

BRAZIL

Mudslides kill 14 in Rio de Janeiro state

HEAVY RAIN caused mudslides that killed at least 14 people in southern coastal cities and the Baixada Fluminense area of Rio de Janeiro state, according to state and local authorities on Saturday. Rescuers answered 850 calls in the last 24 hours and were able to bring 144 people to safety in the affected regions, state authorities said. Rio de Janeiro has been hit by inclement weather over the past few weeks. Authorities said mudslides blocked streets and isolated parts of the city, and entire areas were without electricity. **REUTERS**

AFGHANISTAN

1 dead, dozens injured in Kabul explosion

AN EXPLOSION in the centre of the Afghan capital of Kabul on Sunday killed one person and wounded at least 59 others, hospital officials said. In a tweet, Kabul's Emergency Hospital said one body was received at the hospital and 59 people were treated, with 30 of the wounded being admitted for further treatment. It did not specify the injuries. A spokesman for the Taliban's Kabul police, Khalid Zadran, said the blast was caused by a hand grenade thrown by a man who wanted to rob money changers in the area. **AP**

RISING ANGER OVER SHORTAGES AMID ECONOMIC CRISIS

Protests roil Sri Lanka despite curfew; social media restored

Opp lawmakers march in Colombo; protesters met with teargas, water cannon

AP & PTI

COLOMBO, APRIL 3

OPPOSITION LAWMAKERS and people angered by the government's handling of Sri Lanka's worst economic crisis on Sunday marched to denounce the President's move to impose a nationwide curfew and state of emergency, as protests over food and fuel shortages swelled.

Internet users were unable to access Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp and other social media platforms for nearly 15 hours on Sunday after authorities blocked access.

Apparently due to the growing criticism, access to social media was later restored. The platforms have been used to organise protests calling for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign, saying he is responsible for the country's deepening economic woes.

Namal Rajapaksa, the sports minister and Gotabaya's nephew, told reporters that the social media blockade was useless as many people would use Virtual Private Network (VPN) to access social media sites.

The move was aimed at preventing masses from gathering in Colombo to protest the government's failure to provide relief to the public suffering from shortages of food, essentials, fuel and medicine amidst hours-long power cuts, the *Colombo Page* newspaper reported.

Sri Lanka is under a nationwide curfew until Monday morning after Gotabaya assumed emergency powers at midnight Friday. More protests were taking place throughout the country on Sunday as anger over people waiting in long lines for essential foods, fuel and hourslong rotating power cuts boiled over.

Facebook posts showed



At a protest in a residential area of Colombo on Sunday. Reuters



Sri Lankan soldiers at Independence Square in Colombo. AP

crowds of young people shouting anti-government slogans and singing songs.

The emergency declaration by Gotabaya gives him wide powers to preserve public order, suppress mutiny, riot or civil disturbances or for the maintenance of essential supplies. Under the decree, the President can authorise detentions, seizure of property and search of premises. He can

also change or suspend any law except the constitution.

In the capital, the lawmakers marched toward Colombo's main square, shouting slogans and carrying placards that read "Stop Suppression" and "Gota go home". Gota is a shortened version of the president's first name.

Armed soldiers and police officers set up barricades on the road leading to the square.

"This is unconstitutional," opposition leader Sajith Premadasa told troops who prevented the lawmakers from walking to the square. "You are violating the law. Please think of the people who are suffering. Why are you protecting a government like this?"

In Central Province, hundreds of students from the University of Peradeniya took to streets to protest against the present state of affairs in the country. However, police installed barricades close to the university.

University students, accompanied by teachers, proceeded towards the Galaha Junction, and tensions boiled over when they attempted to remove the barricades set up by the police, News 1st channel reported.

Police used water cannons to disperse the crowd and thereafter fired teargas, it said, adding that the situation is tense in the region.

In Western Province, a total of 664 people were arrested for violating the curfew and trying to stage an anti-government rally.

AFGHANISTAN

Taliban clamp down on drugs, announce ban on poppy harvest

KATHY GANNON & MOHAMMAD SHOAB AMIN

KABUL, APRIL 3

AFGHANISTAN'S RULING Taliban on Sunday announced a ban on harvesting poppies, even as farmers in some parts of the country began extracting the opium from the plant that is needed for making heroin.

The Taliban warned farmers that their crops would be burned and that they could be jailed if they proceeded with the harvest. The harvest and planting seasons vary across Afghanistan. In the Taliban heartland of southern Kandahar, the harvesting has begun but in the east of the country, some farmers are just beginning to plant their crop.

In desperately poor Afghanistan, the ban seems certain to further impoverish its poorest citizens at a time when the country is in economic free fall.

The decree was announced by Taliban spokesman



Afghan farmers harvest poppy in Nad Ali district of Helmand province on Friday. AP

Zabihullah Mujahid at a news conference in the capital of Kabul. The order also outlawed the manufacturing of narcotics and the transportation, trade, export and import of heroin, hashish and alcohol.

The ban is reminiscent of the previous Taliban rule in the late 1990s when the movement espousing a harsh interpretation of

USA

'SEINFELD' ACTOR ESTELLE HARRIS DIES AT 93

Estelle Harris, who hollered her way into TV history as George Costanza's short-fused mother on 'Seinfeld' and voiced Mrs Potato Head in the 'Toy Story' franchise, has died. She was 93. As middle-class matron Estelle Costanza, Harris put a memorable stamp on her recurring role in the smash 1990s sitcom.



Ukraine accuses retreating Russians of civilian massacre

SIMON GARDNER

BUCHA (UKRAINE), APRIL 3

UKRAINE'S FOREIGN minister on Sunday accused Russian forces of carrying out a "massacre" in the town of Bucha, while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken described images of dead bodies there as "a punch in the gut".

Russia's defence ministry denied the Ukrainian allegations, saying footage and photographs showing dead bodies in Bucha were "yet another provocation" by Kyiv.

On Saturday, Reuters saw bodies in a mass grave and still lying on the streets, while on Sunday the mayor of Bucha, Anatoliy Fedoruk, showed reporters corpses with white cloth tied around their arms.

After Ukraine said on Saturday its forces had reclaimed control of the whole Kyiv region, images of corpses in civilian clothes left behind by retreating Russian troops prompted calls from officials in Ukraine and Europe for tougher sanctions on Russia.

"We are still gathering and looking for bodies, but the num-



Ukrainian troops climb onto a vehicle outside Kyiv. AP

ber has already gone into the hundreds," Ukraine Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said, according to his ministry.

"Dead bodies lie on the streets. They killed civilians while staying there and when they were leaving these villages and towns," Kuleba said.

He called on G7 nations to impose "devastating" new sanctions on Moscow and urged the International Criminal Court to collect evidence of what he called Russian war crimes.

The foreign ministers of

Germany, France and Britain and the European Union's foreign policy chief were among those expressing outrage over the reports from Bucha.

An aide to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukrainian troops had found the bodies of women who were raped and set alight as well as bodies of local officials and children.

In Bucha, 37 km from Kyiv city centre, mayor Fedoruk said 300 residents had been killed during the month-long occupation by the Russian army. **REUTERS**

Imran sacks governor of Pak's Punjab; CM election deferred

M ZULQERNAIN

LAHORE, APRIL 3

PAKISTAN PRIME Minister Imran Khan on Sunday sacked Punjab province's Governor Chaudhry Sarwar while the election of the new provincial chief minister has been deferred.

Following in the footsteps of the National Assembly, Punjab Assembly's Deputy Speaker Sardar Dost Muhammad Mazari, citing the "international conspiracy" to topple the Imran Khan government, refused to conduct election of the chief minister and deferred the session until April 6.

Later, the Speaker's office said that since there was ruckus in



Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan

the House, it deferred the proceedings to conduct the election of the chief minister.

Chaudhry Parvez Elahi was the candidate of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) coalition while the joint Opposition's candidate was Hamza Shehbaz, who is the son of PML-N president and Opposition leader in National Assembly Shehbaz Sharif.

The Punjab Assembly session took place at the same time as

the National Assembly session.

Earlier on Sunday morning, Khan sacked Punjab governor Sarwar and replaced him with Umar Sarfraz.

Sarwar, in a press conference, claimed to be in possession of "many secrets of Imran Khan", saying the Prime Minister should not force him to reveal them.

He said that Khan had selected an "inept chief minister Usman Buzdar" despite opposition from his party.

Sarwar said Khan had asked him to convene the Punjab Assembly session at midnight in violation of the constitution.

He also claimed that he had tendered his resignation two days ago. **PTI**

Prince Hamzah of Jordan relinquishes title a year after 'plot'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

AMMAN, APRIL 3

THE HALF-BROTHER of Jordan's king relinquished his princely title on Sunday, a year after a rare palace feud saw him placed under house arrest.

Prince Hamzah posted the letter on his official Twitter account, saying he gave up his title because his values "are not in line with the approaches, trends and modern methods of our institutions".

King Abdullah II and Hamzah are both sons of King Hussein, who ruled Jordan for nearly a half-century before his death in 1999. Abdullah had appointed Hamzah as crown prince upon his succession but stripped him of the title in 2004.

The prince apologised last month for his role in the alleged plot, the Royal Palace said. He was accused last year of involvement in a plot to destabilise the Western-allied kingdom and



Hamzah was placed under house arrest last year

was placed under house arrest last April. In a video statement at the time he denied the allegations, saying he was being punished for speaking out against official corruption.

The Royal Court had no immediate comment.

Last year's feud between Abdullah and his half-brother was a rare case of infighting within the Hashemite royal family going public. At one point Jordan imposed a gag order on reporting about the events, reflecting the sensitivity of issues surrounding the royal family.

Jordan is a close Western ally and has long been seen as an island of stability in a turbulent region.

Shanghai tells entire city to self-test as frustration grows

REUTERS

SHANGHAI, APRIL 3

SHANGHAI ON Sunday ordered its 26 million residents to undergo two more rounds of tests for Covid-19 as public anger grows over how authorities in China's most populous city are tackling a record coronavirus surge.

Residents should self-test on Sunday using antigen kits and report any positive results, Shanghai government officials told a news conference, while a nucleic acid test would be conducted citywide on Monday.

"The main task is to completely eliminate risk points and to cut off the chain of transmission so that we can curb the spread of the epidemic as soon as possible," said Wu Qianyu, an inspector from Shanghai



A person in PPE walks a dog in Shanghai. Reuters

Municipal Health Commission. Essentially all of China's financial capital is locked down after the city began curbing movement in its eastern districts last Monday, extending the restric-

tions to the entire city days later. Healthcare workers and volunteers have been working round the clock trying to test the entire population and supply residents with groceries.

EXPLAINED 'Dynamic clearance' approach

THE SHANGHAI lockdown, which has resulted in major disruptions to daily life and business, comes despite the city's vast majority of Covid-19 cases being asymptomatic. Under China's "dynamic clearance" approach, every positive case must undergo multiple tests, contact tracing and central quarantining.

China's Covid caseload remains low by international standards, but spikes in places like Shanghai are testing its previously successful approach of stamping out the virus through

strict curbs and aggressive testing and tracing.

Shanghai on Sunday reported 7,788 daily locally transmitted asymptomatic cases, up from 6,501 the day before, while symptomatic cases rose to 438.

The city accounted for the bulk of mainland China's 11,781 daily locally transmitted asymptomatic cases and nearly one-third of its 1,506 symptomatic cases.

Stories of how Shanghai separates Covid-positive children from their parents have gone viral in the country and triggered widespread public anger.

In a rare instance of grassroots lobbying, several residents posted on social media platforms saying they wanted asymptomatic or mild cases to be allowed to isolate at home, after reports of unsanitary and crowded conditions at quarantine facilities.

60-year-old German gets 90 Covid vaccine shots to sell forged passes

KIRSTEN GRIESHABER

BERLIN, APRIL 3

A 60-YEAR-OLD man allegedly had himself vaccinated against Covid-19 dozens of times in Germany in order to sell forged vaccination cards with real vaccine batch numbers to people not wanting to get vaccinated themselves.

The man from the eastern Germany city of Magdeburg, whose name was not released in line with German privacy rules, is said to have received up to 90 shots against Covid-19 at vaccination centres in the eastern state of Saxony for months until criminal police caught him earlier this month, the German news agency

dpa reported Sunday.

The suspect was not detained but is under investigation for unauthorised issuance of vaccination cards and document forgery, dpa reported.

He was caught at a vaccination centre in Eilenburg in Saxony when he showed up for a Covid-19 shot for the second day in a row. Police confiscated several blank vaccination cards from him and initiated criminal proceedings.

It was not immediately clear what kind of impact the approximately 90 shots of Covid-19 vaccines, which were from different brands, had on the man's personal health.

German police have conducted many raids in connection

with forgery of vaccination passports in recent months. Many Covid-19 deniers refuse to get vaccinated in Germany, but at the same want to have the coveted Covid-19 passports that make access to public life and many venues such as restaurants, theaters, swimming pools or work places much easier.

Germany has seen high infection numbers for weeks, yet many measures to reign in the pandemic ended on Friday. Donning masks is no longer compulsory in grocery stores and most theatres, but it is still mandatory on public transportation.

In schools across the country, students no longer have to wear masks, leading teachers to warn of possible conflicts in class. **AP**

Harmanpreet scores hat-trick in India's 4-3 win over England

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 3

ACE DRAG-FLICKER Harmanpreet Singh scored a hat-trick as the Indian men's hockey team eked out a narrow 4-3 win over England in the second match of the double-leg FIH Pro League tie here on Sunday. Harmanpreet (26th, 26th, 43rd) sounded the board thrice while Olympic bronze medal-winning skipper Manpreet Singh (15th) scored a goal to help India extend their lead at the top of the standings.

England's goals came from the sticks of Liam Sanford (7th), David Condon (39th) and Sam Ward (44th). Interestingly, all the seven goals in the match were scored from penalty corner opportunities.

England had the better share of possession in the match, but it was India who had the last laugh. India converted four of the eight penalty corners they secured in the match, while England scored from three of their six short corners. Despite inferior ball possession, India had more circle penetrations. The hosts penetrated England's circle 24 times as against their rivals' 17. In terms of shots on goal, India were the better side as they hit their rival goal 10 times, while England had just five shots on the home team's citadel.

After conceding an early goal, India bounced back soon and equalised at the stroke of the first quarter through Manpreet. Harmanpreet scored two goals in succession in the 26th minute to go into the breather with a comfortable 3-1 lead. England did enjoy possession but it was India who controlled the proceedings with more circle penetrations and penalty corners in the first two quarters. The Indians continued to play high pressure hockey after the change of ends but failed to make any further inroads. England pulled a goal back in the 39th minute through a penalty corner conversion by Condon before Harmanpreet scored his second goal of the day with a low dragkick to the right of the English goalkeeper James Mazarello to make it 4-2 in favour of India. A minute later England reduced the margin when Ward scored from a set piece, in what has been an exhibition of penalty corner conversions.

Down by a goal, a desperate England came all out attacking in the final quarter and created a few openings but failed to breach the Indian defence. Four minutes from the final hooter, England pulled out their goalkeeper Mazarello for an extra player but the Indians held firm to pocket full three points from the match. By virtue of this win, India are sitting pretty at the top of the standings with 21 points from 10 games, while England continued to reel at the seventh spot with seven points from six games.

JUNIOR WORLD CUP

India pass German test

Goalkeeper Kharibam thwarts Germany to take India into last eight

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
APRIL 3

EVERY TWO minutes, on average, a ram-paging German under-21 team entered the Indian 'D' in a desperate attempt to reduce the deficit. They took 22 shots in all at the Indian goal.

On most days, this kind of dominance would have been enough for Germany to not just erase the two-goal advantage India enjoyed but perhaps even pump in a few more. Not on Sunday, though. And the reason was largely one – India's goalkeeper, **Bichu Devi Kharibam**.

The 21-year-old made nearly a dozen saves, pulled off a blinder to thwart a German penalty stroke – diving low to her right and flinging her stick to stop the ball from going in – and, along with a stubborn defence, made sure the European heavy-weights could not convert any of their eight penalty corners.

Kharibam's stellar performance in goal helped India record a thrilling 2-1 win over Germany in the Under-21 World Cup in Potchefstroom and secure a place in the quarterfinals with a match in hand. India currently top Pool D, having already defeated Wales on Saturday. They will take on Malaysia in their final group-stage match on Tuesday and are on course to meet South Korea in the last eight. Although they were solid defensively, it'll be unfair to label India's performance as defensive.

The team, coached by Eric Wonink, surprised Germany by coming aggressively off the blocks and earned a penalty corner inside the opening two minutes. Drag-flicker Deepika unleashed a powerful strike, which was saved by German goalkeeper Mali Wichmann but experienced Lalremisiami, one of the stars of India's Tokyo Olympics campaign, picked up the rebound and used the space to find the target.

Stung by the early setback, Germany – who had pumped in 10 goals against Malaysia in their opening match – stepped up the pressure immediately, using their tactical expertise and composure to bypass the Indian midfield and push the Indian defence deep.

Germany's incessant pressure seemed to have paid off in the 22nd minute, when they forced an error from an Indian defender, resulting in the umpire awarding a penalty stroke. But Kharibam pulled off a



The Indian hockey team celebrates after beating Germany 2-1. Hockey India

stunning save, diving low to her right and managing to get her stick to stop the ball from going in. To add insult to injury for Germany, Mumtaz Khan doubled India's lead two minutes later, through a brilliantly executed penalty corner variation.

Rearguard action

After that goal, it was virtually a match between India's goalkeeper and Germany's attackers. India did try to break through the counterattack, using their speed and creativity to push forward but it did not result in more goals.

Germany, on the other hand, were continuously frustrated by Kharibam, who showed why she is rated as one of India's brightest young talents.

The custodian from Manipur has risen rapidly through the ranks in the last few years, beginning with some fine performances at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Argentina, where India won the silver medal. The following year, she was named the best goalkeeper in a four-nation junior invitational tournament in Dublin, which resulted in her being fast-tracked into the

senior setup.

Earlier this year, Kharibam made her senior national team debut during the FIH Pro League, sharing the space with one of her inspirations, Savita Punia. The current India captain has bailed out of the team dozens of times in the past, including at the Olympics. Punia's advice, Kharibam had earlier said, elevated her game to 'the next level' and that was evident on Sunday.

While she was well supported by the defence, comprising vice-captain Ishika Chaudhary, Akshata Dhekale, Baljeet Kaur and Lalramnghaki Marina, especially during penalty corners, Kharibam stood like a rock every time the Indian goal was exposed. Her citadel was finally breached in the 57th minute. Throwing in the proverbial kitchen sink, Germany removed their goalkeeper to field an extra outfield player and the move worked immediately as Jule Bleuel unleashed a powerful back-handed strike from the top of the 'D', which Kharibam could not save.

At that moment, it looked like India would wilt under the pressure but Kharibam's saves kept the players' spirits up as they survived some tense moments over the final three minutes to hold on to the lead and seal the quarterfinal berth.

Woods headed for Masters, yet to decide on playing

ASSOCIATED PRESS
AUGUSTA, APRIL 3

A COMEBACK unlike any other for Tiger Woods might start at the Masters.

Just over 13 months since Woods damaged his right leg so badly he said doctors considered amputation, he tweeted he was headed to Augusta National on Sunday without yet deciding whether to play.

"I will be heading up to Augusta today to continue my preparation and practice. It will be a game-time decision on whether I compete," Woods wrote.

The Masters does not have a firm deadline to commit like regular tour events. It is an invitation tournament, and players typically notify the club only if they do not plan to play. Tee times are published Tuesday.

If Woods decides to play – he played 18 holes at Augusta National five days ago – it would be his first competition against the world's best players since Nov. 15, 2020, when the Masters was moved to autumn because of the pandemic.

Woods was recovering from a fifth back surgery in early 2021 when on Feb. 23, two days after he presented the trophy at the Genesis Invitational that he hosts at Riviera, he crashed his SUV on a median on a suburban coastal road in Los Angeles and the car tumbled down the side of a hill.

Police estimated he was going at least 84 mph in a 45 mph zone.

Doctors said Woods shattered tibia and fibula bones in his right leg in multiple locations. Those were stabilized by a rod in the tibia, while a combination of screws and pins were used to stabilize additional injuries in the ankle and foot.

Woods said he spent three months immobilized in a makeshift hospital bed set up in his Florida home. Only then he could start moving around on crutches, and eventually he was able to walk on his own.

Woods won the U.S. Open at Torrey Pines in 2008 with a double stress fracture and torn knee ligaments in his left leg. He made it back from a scandal in his personal life to become No. 1 in the world again.

Nothing was more amazing than three years ago at Augusta National when he won a fifth green jacket after four back surgeries that made him fear he might never walk again. That he is even contemplating playing in this Masters is remarkable in its own right. If he can, questions are sure to shift to whether he can win.

A week before Thanksgiving, he posted a three-second video hitting one shot with two words: Making progress. Two weeks later at the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas, a holiday event Woods hosts, he was on the back end of the range at Albany hitting drivers. The first big surprise came two weeks later when he played the PNC



Tiger Woods suffered leg injuries in a car accident last year. AP

Woods has played the Masters 21 times as a pro, and it's the only major where he has never missed the cut.

Challenge, a 36-hole scramble on a flat Florida course. Woods was allowed to ride in a cart, a point he made when there were gushing observations about the state of his game. He and his son finished second when John Daly and his son birdied the last hole.

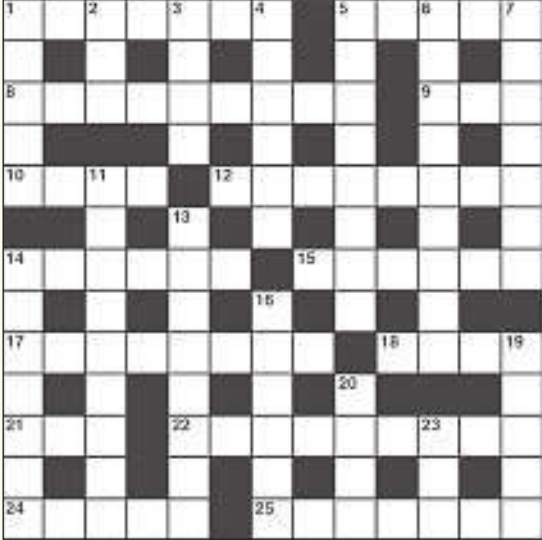
"It's going to take a lot of work to get to where I feel I can complete against these guys and be at a high level," Woods said that day.

Addressing the condition of his right leg in February, Woods said it's "altered" and that "my right leg doesn't look like my left, put it that way." The importance of the practice round last week was for Woods to make sure he could walk 18 holes on the undulating terrain of Augusta National and still be able to recover in the days that followed. That he was returning Sunday was a good sign. Can he win again? That would be considered more improbable than his last Masters victory.

Woods has played the Masters 21 times as a pro, and it's the only major where he has never missed the cut.

In his last competitive round at Augusta National, he made the highest score of his career -- a 10 on the par-3 12th hole by hitting three balls in Rae's Creek -- only to birdie five of the last six, including the last four in a row.

CROSSWORD 4705



ACROSS

- 1 Member of the seal family (7)
- 5 Prepares a gift and cards (5)
- 8 I can mix in fruit with such a kitchen aid (9)
- 9 Born in unending need (3)
- 10 Such a location makes sound sense (4)
- 12 Possibly made sure it's regular in movement (8)
- 14 Still it could affect one's reception (6)
- 15 His job is to transfer stock (6)
- 17 Militant seen to work on arranged visit (8)
- 18 Border we'd get trimmed at either end (4)
- 21 Love of French poetry (3)
- 22 One shrugs off such coarseness (9)
- 24 Thought a great many were employed (5)
- 25 National shopkeepers' home (7)

DOWN

- 1 They may slow an aircraft in times of panic (5)
- 2 He's around when there's some madcap mischief (3)
- 3 Father is not out to cause distress (4)
- 4 Deliver plaster (6)
- 5 Request with certain satisfaction (8)
- 6 Managed to be somewhat unnatural (9)
- 7 Slight point to one who makes advances (7)
- 11 Possibly it arrests one guilty of treason (9)
- 13 Erroneously delivers a description of mirrors (8)
- 14 Space for some oar movement (3,4)
- 16 Put it on without being told? (6)
- 19 Stopped losing head and relaxed (5)
- 20 His victim got it in the neck (4)
- 23 Men always embrace her (3)

Solutions Crossword 4704: Across: 1 Curtains, 5 Fret, 9 Lodge, 10 Tremble, 11 Heads or tails, 13 Adrift, 14 Affair, 17 Beat the count, 20 Animate, 21 Oasis, 22 Diet, 23 Fair game. Down: 1 Colt, 2 Red deer, 3 A head of steam, 4 Notion, 6 Rabbi, 7 Treasure, 8 Seat of honour, 12 Larboard, 15 Amnesia, 16 Geneva, 18 Alive, 19 Isle.

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.

To point is a ____ rather than a picturing. - Philip Guston (10)

DVEIO



AGLYNS



AYSSS



CINOGP

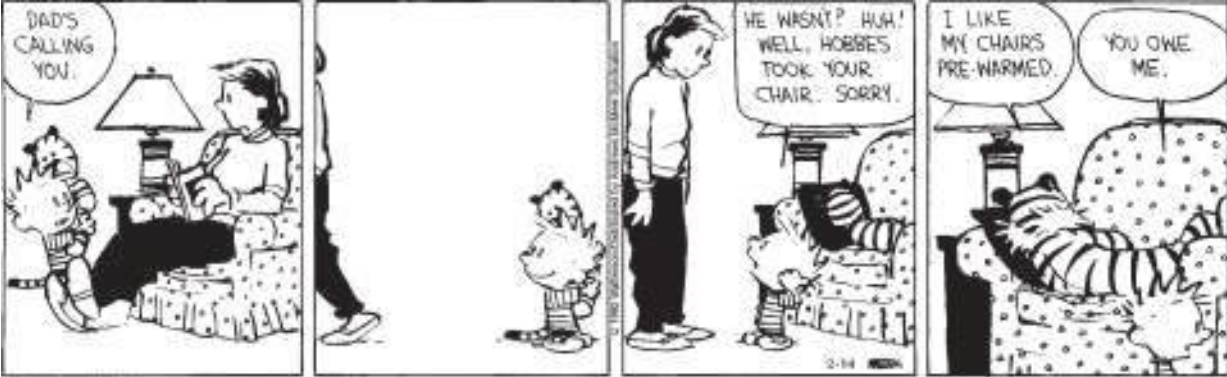


ANSWERS: TO POINT IS A VIDEO, SASSY, SLANGY, COPING rather than a picturing. - Philip Guston

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4794

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 4793



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Not everything is as it should be. Could it be that sharp words at home will result from differing opinions as to your prospects at work? Or perhaps it's another ambition which is coming between you? All your questions will be answered in good time.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

One of your great unsung qualities is your generosity. You are not the person to hang on to your money while close friends and loved ones go short: now is the time to part with some of your hard-won cash. It's also, by the way, quite the perfect moment for a trip back to your childhood.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

If you are tiring of an emotional conflict, surely the message is that it is time to give in to your better nature and make amends for past hurts and insults. Be sure that there is no going back to former mistakes and problems unless, that is, you are determined to resolve them.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Venus is bound to bring out the more delicate side of your nature, perhaps making it more difficult than usual to deal with the ups and downs of fate and fortune. Where your score is on your own kindness and goodwill, and your willingness to release somebody else from a promise.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Fiery Mars offers you just the tonic you need. The important consideration now is that it's not too late to take a decision that you put off days, or even weeks, ago. Work hard to catch up, even though you may feel that you're not getting a suitable financial pay-back.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Because Mars is now occupying a rather discreet sector of your horoscope, you may be unwilling to act in the full glare of public attention. Yet this is an ambitious time for you, one in which you may have to overcome certain reservations. In particular, you need to look again at your dogged devotion to duty, even when other people have backed out.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Your desire for peace and stability tends to extend beyond your immediate circle to encompass people you scarcely know. So, on days like today, when everyone is a little jumpy, you may feel personally responsible for maintaining a cordial environment.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

A financial crisis may blow up but, as the dust settles, you see just how little there was to worry about. You are still receiving a fair amount of monetary protection from Venus, the traditional planet of prosperity. But basically it's reminding you that money is not always as important as it seems.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

You'll be turning the corner in a number of activities which closely involve other people. You might not say that this is the beginning of the end, but at least it's the end of the beginning. Every astrological ending is accompanied by a new beginning.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Today's lunar aspects should bring you to the close of a phase which has been over-concerned with work and routine chores, perhaps to the detriment of a number of seductive social developments. In love, may I offer you one piece of advice? While aiming for the best, don't be too pushy.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Your mood will change rapidly from being relatively outgoing and sociable, to being rather quiet and moody. People who you had been prepared to take at face value may now arouse a degree of suspicion. You might also now be considering the fruits of a romantic adventure.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Today's sensitive relationship between a series of planets brings your home and family ambitions to a turning point. You are now approaching a phase from which you know it will be impossible to return. That's good though, isn't it? For you can only go one way, forward.

BRIEFLY

Kenya's Jeptum breaks women's WR

Paris: Judith Jeptum of Kenya broke the Paris marathon record while Deso Gelmisa of Ethiopia won the men's race on Sunday. Jeptum finished the 42.2-kilometer (26.2-mile) race in 2 hours, 19 minutes and 48 seconds in chilly conditions with a temperature of 2 degrees Celsius (36 degrees Fahrenheit) at the start of the event. The 2021 Abu Dhabi marathon winner pulled away in the 28th kilometer to run a personal best and break the course record of 2:20:55 set by Purity Rionoripo of Kenya in 2017.

Shuttler Mithun enters final

Orleans: Mithun Manjunath made it to his maiden Super 100 final with a straight-game win over Indonesia's Christian Adinata at the Orleans Masters badminton tournament here. The 23-year-old, a product of the Prakash Padukone Badminton academy, Manjunath prevailed 21-18 21-14 over Adinata in a 47-minute show-down at the Palais des Sports here late on Saturday night. The world No. 79 will next face fourth seeded local hope Toma Junior Popov, who is ranked world No. 32, in the summit clash.

National basketball: Punjab start with a win

Chennai: Defending champions Punjab got off their campaign in the men's section in the 71st Senior National Basketball Championship with a 105-69 win over Gujarat in Group A of the preliminary round here on Sunday. For Punjab, Amyjot Singh led the way with 27 points while Princepal Singh had 15 points and Kanwar GS Sandhu contributed 14 points. Host Tamil Nadu started with a 85-47 win over Delhi in Group C with captain Muin Beik (15 points) leading the way.

India to host Asian junior, cadet fencing

Dubai: India will host the Asian Junior U-20 Men & Women and Cadet U-17 Boys & Girls Fencing Championships in Ahmedabad next year, Fencing Association of India (FAI) said on Sunday. The championships, which will witness the participation of approximately 1200 fencers from 20 to 25 countries, will take place in March or April, 2023. The president of the FAI, Rajeev Mehta, said India was unanimously chosen as the host for the two championships.

Minakshi bows out of Thailand Open

New Delhi: India's Minakshi bowed out of the Thailand Open after a close first-round defeat to local boxer Jutamas Jitpong in the women's 51kg event in Phuket on Sunday. Minakshi fell short in a hard-fought bout as the boxer from Thailand won by a 3-2 split verdict. In the first round, both the boxers gauged each other's strategy before upping the ante in the second, which saw a lot of clinching and exchange of punches. The final round, Minakshi landed some clear punches but that was not enough in the end. Six Indian boxers, including five women, will be in action on Monday.

PTI & AP

From tragedy to triumph

Australia's World Cup hero Alyssa Healy has had to deal with her sister's death and misogyny on way to a big hundred in the final

SRIRAM VEERA
APRIL 3

"CRICKET HAS given me an escape from the grief and sadness of losing someone in your family."

When a 12-year-old Alyssa Healy was watching television at her home after school, her mother, hit by a premonition, told her she was going to see her sister Kareen play footy. Usually, Kareen, four years older, would be dropped home by a friend's mom or the mother would go fetch her late so that young Alyssa wasn't alone. That day, though, she told Alyssa. "I just feel like I need to go watch Kareen play."

Sometime later, a friend of her mom landed up at home, told Alyssa to spend the night at their house as the mother would be late, "I remember having the best night of my life." No one told her that life at the Healy household would never be the same again. Next morning, her mom told her, "Kareen collapsed at touch footy and she is in hospital on life support. And it's not looking good".

Alyssa wasn't sure how to react, thought the sister would be back home safe soon, but the look on her mother's face told her otherwise. She had suffered an anaphylactic reaction, gone into cardiac arrest, and slipped into a coma.

Couple of days later, Alyssa walked out of a cricket ground after hitting a hundred to see her father waiting. "They'd just switched off the life-support and if you want to go and say your last goodbyes, you could go and do that". At this point in a remarkable chat on the Sam Squirers show 'On her game', Alyssa chokes up. She collects herself to add: "it was a surreal day of a nice memory turned into a horrible one and interestingly enough, it's always sort of on that day we play a game of cricket and funnily enough I seem to make a hundred every year, which is, um, kind of bizarre. It's a bizarre feeling but a nice one as well."



Alyssa backs away outside leg-stump and smashes the English spinners over the off-side. Repeatedly. On the biggest stage of 'em all, the World Cup final, on her way to a match-winning 170. It's a shot that has almost disappeared from the men's game. Pakistan's Salim Malik was a master of it, but now not many have the dare to do it. Alyssa has. Australia were jogging at 90 in 20 overs but with a combination of that shot and the lap-shot, she seized the World Cup in the middle overs.

Some of the leg-side shots came after Australia's loss to India in the last World Cup. Soon after Matthew Mott, Australia's coach, told her that he wants her to open the batting instead of trying to be the finisher. Alyssa realised the consistency of success would depend on her leg-side play to spinners in the middle overs. She teamed up with friend Ash Squire, who was her husband Mitchell Starc's best man at the wedding, and went to work on her sweep shots. In a game against England in the last World Cup, she was out LBW trying to flick the ball to the untenanted square-leg region. Now, post the work on the sweep, oppositions have to pack that side for her, allowing her the room to back away and smash the ball over cover. In the lead-up to this World Cup, she again worked with Squire, this time on the lap shots that she would unfurl so effectively in the biggest game of her life.



One of her big games earlier in life had come tagged with a terrible smear. At her high school at Bakers College when she was 17, she was picked for the first eleven. The only girl to be picked to play with the boys in



Alyssa Healy poses with the trophy. (L) Australian players celebrate defeating England in the final of the Women's Cricket World Cup in Christchurch on Sunday. AP



an upcoming tournament.

Next morning at 6 am, a reporter from Channel Nine news landed up at her home. Her parents were away, and she was living with her grandmother when the reporter thrust a newspaper at her and asked if she had seen the news?

Alyssa stared at a headline about Osama Bin Laden with a photo of her in her school jersey holding a bat. It turned out that one of the Old Boys, alumni of her school, had sent a letter in disgust at the inclusion of a girl in the boys' team, of how it was a disgrace and such. The media had got hold of it and ran with it. She didn't take the train that day to school, and had someone drop her at school, where the media were milling around the gate. She slid through a side entrance and for the rest of the day watched her principal handle the spectacle at the gates.

"That was probably the first time that I really felt supported by the whole community. I think that, you know, a lot of the time there is a lot of that scrutiny, ah, about females playing sport and, you know, and whether or not they can handle that... it was weird, um, I probably didn't fully understand it. I think now I'm a little bit older and I probably see what happens, probably in society a little bit more than I did back then. I was, I always just thought growing up playing with the boys, I was one of the boys, I never thought any different... Yeah, but being a young female, being put under that much pressure, on the front page of the newspa-

per with a fairly nasty headline underneath," she tells 'On her Game'.

From the death of her sister to misogyny, cricket has been Alyssa's healer. It would also offer love. From 9 to 15, she would play with Starc, who was trying to be a wicketkeeper in those days. He was yet to shoot up in height, then. "He's stretched big time around the 15." They were just friends then, with Alyssa preferring to hang around with the other guys in the team as Starc would be pretty quiet. "I

on, they would focus on T20s.

"Belinda Clarke stands up at the front and says, 'this is the way that we're going to take women's cricket, we're going to play T20, we're only really going to play that format, and this is how we're going to market the game.' And I remember sitting there feeling so disappointed at the time. I thought, 'I just want to play Test cricket, that's what Uncle Ian did, it's what all the boys do, I just want that Baggy Green and I just want to play Test cricket'. Now, years later, I can see what an amazing step that was from them to say 'this is how we're going to do it' and how much it's opened up the game to the rest of the country and I guess the rest of the world as well."

When the World-Cup winning catch was taken at mid-off, one of the cameras zoomed on Alyssa's face. The muscles are wound up in expectation, eyes on the ball, and she leaps up once it's nestled in the palms of her

friend Ashleigh Gardner, Alyssa aka 'Midge' as her teammates call her, leaped and clapped her gloved palms together and ran to her team-mates. "I am 32 and I have seen it all. Our team sets out to win events like these. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I'd do something like that [the big hundred at the top] so it is pretty cool," she would say later.

When Squires asks her in the podcast what she would tell a 10-year-old version of herself if she could rewind the clock, Alyssa, the self-confessed pest and trickster, turns solemn: "I wish I had hugged my sister a little bit more, that's what I would have told my 10-year-old self to enjoy those family times together, not fight so much, hug her a little bit more."

Even though cricket was in her veins, with her father who played for Queensland and her uncle Ian Healy, it wasn't until her first game for Australia, she says, that it turned serious for her

Even though cricket was in her veins, with her father who played for Queensland and her uncle Ian Healy, it wasn't until her first game for Australia, she says, that it turned serious for her. That first game wasn't particularly memorable. She dropped a catch on the first ball and off the last ball of the game, when they needed three runs to win, she nicked it behind. But the cricket buzz had begun to hum in her ears. She remembers being puzzled and even disappointed when Belinda Clark gathered that team around and announced that from now



IPL: Punjab ensure Chennai's slide continues

SYNOPSIS: Livingstone finally brings his big hitting to IPL before Punjab pacers find swing to consign CSK to third successive defeat.

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
MUMBAI, APRIL 3

PUNJAB KINGS became the first team to successfully defend a total in seven night games in Mumbai this Indian Premier League season. Liam Livingstone's maiden IPL half-century hauled a slowing line-up to 180, before Chennai Super Kings lost half their side to Punjab's seamers in no time to suffer a third consecutive defeat, this time by a massive margin of 54 runs.

Swinging them out

The white ball barely moves for more than a couple of overs usually, but Punjab got it to swing throughout the Powerplay, especially debutant Vaibhav Arora from Himachal Pradesh. By the eighth over of the chase, CSK were reduced to 36 for 5.

Kagiso Rabada found just enough shape to get Ruturaj Gaikwad edging to slip. Arora, who was bending it both ways, created enough uncertainty to induce a leading

edge from Robin Uthappa. The hesitation provoked in the batsmen's minds generated fatal inside edges for Moeen Ali and Ravindra Jadeja. After a Powerplay worth 27 for 4 compared to Punjab's 72 for 2, along came Odean Smith to bounce one into Ambati Rayudu's chest and force a fend to the wicketkeeper.

Shivam Dube struck 57 off 30 but with Mahendra Singh Dhoni stuck at the other end, the asking rate was always ballooning. Livingstone's spin delivered the formal knockout blows in the 15th over, removing Dube and Dwayne Bravo in two balls.

Livingstone arrives

Livingstone has wowed the cricket world with his six-hitting prowess, which brought him Rs 11.5 crore at this year's IPL auction. But he hadn't exactly set the IPL on fire in his limited opportunities, until Sunday night. Walking in at 14 for 2, the Englishman continued Punjab's play this season of at least one middle-order batsman going after everything. Bhanuka Rajapaksa had performed that role in their first two games, but against CSK, the Sri Lankan was run out early.

Livingstone walked down the track to his second ball to flick Chris Jordan for three. He pummelled the left-arm angle of Mukesh



Liam Livingstone scored a 32-ball 60. PTI

Choudhary for seven of his 10 boundaries. He stepped out and powered the ball over mid-off, or stood firm on off stump, cleared his front leg and walloped sixes on the leg-side; one of them went 108 metres, the biggest so far this season. Livingstone was

dropped twice on 45, first by Rayudu at short third man off Jadeja and then by Dhoni off Dwayne Pretorius. Rayudu did pouch him off Jadeja eventually, by which time he'd moved to 60 off 32.

Punjab slow down again

Even CSK's 210 wasn't safe in the previous game at Brabourne Stadium. So, one couldn't really fault Punjab for hitting regardless of losing wickets. But they'd lost steam against KKR in trying to set a huge target, and did so once again. From a Powerplay of 72 for 2, and 109 for 2 in the 10th over, they managed 180 for 8. The fall of Shikhar Dhawan and Livingstone in successive overs brought the wheels off, and Punjab scraped just 33 off the last five overs.

Jordan's inclusion gave CSK much more depth at the death. Shahrukh Khan and Odean Smith could not get the distance off Jordan's full lengths. One factor was the relative paucity of dew, as the chemical to keep the moisture away had been sprayed a bit later. Jordan said a bit of dew began to appear only towards the end of the first innings.

BRIEF SCORES: Punjab Kings 180/8 in 20 overs (Liam Livingstone 60; Chris Jordan 2/23, Dwayne Pretorius 2/30) bt Chennai Super Kings 126 all out in 18 overs (Shivam Dube 57; Rahul Chahar 3/25) by 54 runs

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER



Hot heads, calm minds and everything in between at the game

Ballerina by the boundary ropes

The momentum when he collected the ball seems to drag Dwayne Bravo towards the boundary ropes, careening the long-on-midwicket bend. But Bravo shifts his weight from the left-foot that was almost hugging the cushion to the right. He then shuffles to his left-foot, then to his right. At one moment, he feels like he could stumble and is almost ready to fling the ball away, but with feline expertise, he keeps his body abreast the dreaded ropes, like running beside an abyss of dragons in Temple Run. Remarkably, it was all feet, no flapping or the arms or contorting the body for the elusive balance. Seems like he had put on his dancing shoes and spent hours choreographing for the ballerina by the boundary ropes.



Dhawan destructs Carib-style

Unlike his trusted 50-over associate Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan is not six-savvy (332 to 889 in competitive cricket).



Even when he plans to go over the ropes, he usually shimmies down the track to generate momentum and swings through the line, or sometimes makes room to hit over covers. There, mostly, is an amount of pre-meditation. But against Dwayne Bravo, he just stood in his crease, took a firm forward stride when he judged the ball was on the fuller side and just thumped him over long-on without any visible strain on his body or an exaggerated flourish, a six straight from the Caribbean manual of six-hitting.