



Shootout in Delhi court, gangster killed; gunmen posed as lawyers



A video grab of the shootout on Friday. RELATED REPORTS, P4

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24**Jitender Maan alias Gogi**

TWO ARMED men opened fire inside Delhi's Rohini court on Friday, killing dreaded jailed gangster Jitender Maan alias Gogi. Members of the Delhi Police Special Cell's Counter Intelligence team, who were accompanying Gogi, shot dead the assailants, with 27 bullets in all fired inside the courtroom.

In a major security lapse, the men — believed to belong to a rival gang headed by Sunil, alias Tilly Tajpuria -- managed to sneak into the courtroom with a .38 bore pistol and another of .30 bore posing as lawyers. Gogi received five-six bullet injuries, and was taken to a nearby hospital, where he was declared dead. Just half an hour earlier, Tilly's

lieutenant Sunil Maan had been produced in the same courtroom — No. 207 — in connection with the same attempt to murder case. Initial investigation indicates Gogi's rivals were aware he would come and they decided to eliminate him during the court hearing. Police have also found the men were in the courtroom for around three hours.

According to police, Gogi and Tilly have been running extortion rackets in Alipur and Sonapat for years, and the constant strife between the two gangs often ended in bloodshed. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

FIRST MEETING AFTER BIDEN BECAME PRESIDENT

India-US ties about democratic values, diversity: Biden to Modi

Modi: Next decade will be transformative for bilateral ties

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

UNDERLINING THAT the relationship between India and the US is "destined to be stronger, closer and tighter", US President Joe Biden said during his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House Friday that the partnership is about a "shared responsibility to uphold democratic values" and their "joint commitment to diversity".

Pointing out that Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary will be marked next week, the US President said his message of "non-violence, respect, tolerance matters today maybe



PM Narendra Modi with US President Joe Biden on Friday. PTI

more than ever".

Modi, who spoke after Biden at the Oval Office, said the next decade will be a

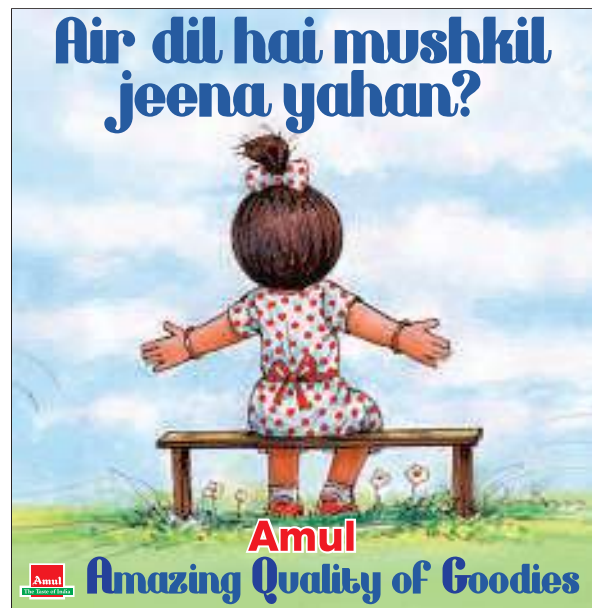
"transformative period" in India-US relations, and referred to "democratic values, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Modi and Harris discuss Pak support for terror

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

IN HER first meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US Vice-President Kamala Harris on Friday suo motu referred to terrorist groups operating in Pakistan and asked India's neighbour to ensure that these groups do not impact the security of the US and India, said Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla.

The Foreign Secretary, who was part of the talks between Modi and Harris, said she also agreed with the Prime Minister on the "need to rein in and **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



DAY AFTER TWO KILLED IN ASSAM

33-yr-old's family in dark on video; 12-yr-old died on way to get Aadhaar

CM says don't go by 30-sec video, evictions will go on

TORA AGARWALA
DHOLPUR (ASSAM), SEPTEMBER 24

A DAY after an Assam eviction drive against "encroachers" on government land left two dead and several injured, including policemen, the authorities were yet to officially release details of the deceased.

Darrang Superintendent of Police Sushanta Biswa Sarma confirmed to *The Indian Express* that the two included a 33-year-old, the video of whose shooting went viral on Thursday, and a 12-



Sheikh Farid; Moinul Hoque

year-old child, both of this area in Sipajhar. Asked how the 12-year-old died, Sarma said he could not comment. "All this will come out in the inquiry."

Speaking to the local media, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

RELATED REPORT
[PAGE 8](#)

Powered by retail investors, Sensex races from 50,000 to 60,000 in eight months

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

RIDING ON hopes of a pick-up in consumption-led growth, and enthused by faster vaccinations and the possibility of a mild third wave of Covid, if at all, the Sensex breached the 60,000 mark on Friday — continuing the strong rally of the past two months.

The benchmark index at the Bombay Stock Exchange hit a high of 60,333 before closing at 60,048, a gain of 163 points. The broader Nifty at the National Stock Exchange rose 30 points to 17,853.2.

While the Sensex has risen from 50,000 to 60,000 over eight months — with retail investors, mutual funds, and foreign portfolio investors leading a sustained stock market rally as the

economy recovered from the ravages of the pandemic — the bull run has been especially aggressive over the last two months.

Between August 1 and September 24 when it crossed 60,000, the Sensex has risen 7,462 points, or 14.2 per cent. Besides the pick-up in vaccinations and hope of an economic revival, the rally during this **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

BHABANIPUR BYPOLL CAMPAIGN

Where are the lakhs of crores donated to PM-CARES, asks Mamata

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 24

CHIEF MINISTER Mamata Banerjee on Friday lashed out at the Centre for claiming that PM-CARES was not a government fund, and asked how the "lakhs of crores of rupees" donated had been used. Banerjee said complete transparency should be maintained in the transactions made with the money collected by the trust.

Hitting out at the Centre while campaigning for the Bhabanipur by-poll in which she is a candidate, the Trinamool Congress chief pointed out at the PM-CARES Fund bore the national emblem. She added that the Union government's statement had left everyone confused.

"The Chief Minister Relief Fund is regularly audited. PM CARES FUND was formed for Covid-19, but yesterday they [Centre] told the court that it is **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Channi elevation, state elections test Punjabiyyat with politics of caste, religion

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 24**Charanjit Singh Channi being sworn in as CM. File**

IN THE run-up to the 2017 Assembly elections in Punjab, an opinion poll on the suitability of AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal as Chief Minister threw up an interesting finding. The majority respondents rejected the idea for just one reason: He was not a Punjabi. His religion, they made it clear, was inconsequential.

Five years on, as Punjab braces for the 2022 Assembly elections, it's witnessing an unusual focus on

EXPLAINED

caste and religious identity after the elevation of Charanjit Singh Channi as the new Chief Minister, and the rejection of former PPCC chief Sunil Kumar Jakhar.

Modi's image in SC mails raises eyebrows; apex court objects, Govt rushes to remove

PAGE 1 ANCHOR**APURVA VISHWANATH**
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

SINCE IT'S launch six months ago, the Central Government has been going all out to promote the showpiece initiative, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, to mark 75 years of Independence next year.

But this has now led to questions being raised over the inclusion of ads for the event with images of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in emails sent to



The Prime Minister's image with an SC email

advocates by the Registry of the Supreme Court.

Several advocates confirmed to *The Indian Express* that the images were included as part of email signatures — and said this blurred the line separating the judiciary and executive.

Late Friday, the Registry said in a statement that the National

Informatics Centre (NIC), "which provides the email services to the apex court, was directed to drop that image from the footer of the emails originating from the Supreme Court".

"It was further directed to use the picture of the Supreme Court of India, instead. NIC has since complied with the directions.,,"

it said.

The statement was issued hours after a lawyer red-flagged the ads in a message on the WhatsApp group of the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association.

"Sir, I have received this notice from the Registry with a snapshot of the Prime Minister. The same does not seem to be in order of the Supreme Court's position as an independent organ and not a part of the government. Request you to kindly take up the same with the Hon'ble Chief Justice with a note of protest if you deem appropriate," the message said. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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3 WEST BENGAL

BENGAL ASSEMBLY POLLS

FIR filed against BJP leaders over scuffle near CM's home

Oppn party accuses senior cop of molesting its Bhabanipur bypoll candidate

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 24

THE KOLKATA Police on Friday registered a suo motu FIR against BJP leaders, including state BJP president Sukanta Majumdar, for trying to hold a protest the day before near Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's residence in the city's Kalighat area with the body of a party leader. In the evening, the BJP filed a complaint with the Election Commission (EC) against a senior police official, accusing him of molesting its Bhabanipur by-poll candidate Priyanka Tibrewal during a scuffle during the demonstration on Thursday.

The saffron party got into the scuffle with the police while trying to hold a protest with the body of Dhurjati Saha who unsuccessfully contested the Magrahat

Paschim seat in South 24 Parganas. Saha was grievously injured in an alleged attack by Trinamool Congress (TMC) workers on May 2, the day poll results were declared, and died of his injuries on Wednesday.

The police claimed that the Opposition party's leaders turned up near the chief minister's residence without any prior intimation, and caused a melee near Banerjee's home. They registered the case at the Kalighat police station against BJP state chief Sukanta Majumdar, MPs Arjun Singh and Jyotirmoy Singh Mahato, and Priyanka Tibrewal, among others. The BJP leaders have been charged with, among other things, unlawful assembly, rioting, and assaulting public servants to stop them from doing their duty.

Dismissing the police's accusations, Majumdar said, "The police

are acting at the behest of the TMC. We are surprised by their move. They pushed us yesterday and used force. But BJP will not be stopped by lodging cases against us."

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra, who was in the city to campaign for Tibrewal, said, "Sukanta Majumdar is fighting for justice for our deceased party leader. Are we not allowed to protest against death?"

Lashing out at the BJP, chief minister Mamata Banerjee said, "You are coming in front of my house with a dead body. If I send a dead body of a dog in front of your house then, what will happen? We can teach them a lesson in the language they understand."

TMC leader and state minister Firhad Hakim said, "The BJP wants to do politics with dead bodies. But we believe in doing politics to secure the rights of those who are

alive. By doing this kind of politics, the BJP cannot win the election."

Meanwhile, the BJP alleged in a complaint to the EC that Deputy Commissioner of Police (South Division) Akash Magharia molested and physically assaulted Tibrewal and other women during the scuffle on Thursday. The party demanded that Magharia be removed from election duty.

"To our utter disbelief and shock, the police force led by DCP South Division, Akash Magharia, Kolkata Police, took it upon him to break the peaceful procession and physically started to drag, push, shove and everything within his physical prowess at Dr Sukanta Majumdar. The same officer molested and inappropriately manhandled Smt. Priyanka Tibrewal and some women [who were] present..." read the complaint letter.

Calcutta HC refuses to accept EC affidavit, reserves judgment

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 24

THE CALCUTTA High Court on Friday refused to accept an affidavit filed by the Election Commission of India (ECI), pointing out that the poll panel "did not clarify the reason behind the constitutional crisis behind the bypoll".

The court also reserved its judgment on a public interest litigation (PIL) plea questioning the Election Commission's contention of a "constitutional exigency" for holding by-election to Bhabanipur Assembly seat here.

On Thursday, the court had allowed the Election Commission to file an affidavit regarding the contents of a notification issued by it dated September 6 in view of the arguments raised by the petitioner.

Recently, Chief Secretary Hari Krishna Dwivedi, in a letter to the ECI, said there would be a "constitutional crisis" if the elections in Bhabanipur were not held

as soon as possible. Based on the letter, the poll panel submitted a report before the court elaborating on why they had decided to hold the polls.

A Bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Justice Rajarshi Bharadwaj on Friday came down heavily on the Election Commission for filing the affidavit in an "incorrect format" and also observed that the affidavit "did not contain any specific averments pertaining to the issues raised."

The Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petition filed challenging the decision of the Election Commission to prioritise the September 30 by-elections in Bhabanipur Assembly constituency from where Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is contesting.

"Nothing is mentioned in the affidavit, who filed it? We cannot take this on record," ACJ Bindal remarked. He added, "Enough opportunity has been given. You are taking this very casually."

While hinting at the resigna-

tion of the TMC MLA from Bhabanipur constituency, Sovande Chattopadhyay, the court said, "In this seat, someone has resigned to make way for someone to win the seat and you are claiming there would be a constitutional crisis if bypoll is not held immediately. Why waste public money on that? We are not afraid to examine your decision."

Senior advocate Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya, appearing for the petitioner, also contended before the Bench that such an affidavit must not be taken on record and pointed out to the Court that vital averments had not been affirmed in the affidavit.

"Is this the kind of affidavit that the highest constitutional authority should submit?" senior counsel Bhattacharya remarked.

Accordingly, the Bench reserved its order on the issue as to whether the Election Commission can act on a representation made by the Chief Secretary to expedite bypoll of a particular constituency.

4 helipads to be set up in S 24 Parganas

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 24

THE WEST Bengal government has decided to set up four permanent helipads in remote places of Sundarban areas in South 24 Parganas district to tackle any natural calamity and carry out relief operations.

The state transport department has sought expression of interest to build the four helipads. A senior district official said, "During disasters, evacuating people to relief centres and transporting pregnant women and aged people with health emergencies get very difficult. Helipads will help us respond immediately."

State officials said that in the past four-five years South 24 Parganas faced severe cyclones such as Fani, Amphan and Yaas.

After Yaas hit the coastal pockets and islands of the Sundarbans, district officials did a survey to find locations where helipads could be set up. A committee was formed, which earmarked four plots in Gosaba, Patharpratima, Kakdwip and Diamond Harbour.

Patra slams Mamata, says Bengal No.1 in post-poll violence

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 24



CM only concerned about her chair: BJP leader

BJP NATIONAL spokesperson Sambit Patra on Friday hit out at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and alleged that her party, the Trinamool Congress (TMC), had targeted the saffron party's workers during the alleged post-poll violence. Such incidents had led to a humanitarian crisis in the state, he added.

Patra was in the city to participate in a door-to-door campaign for BJP's Bhabanipur by-poll candidate Priyanka Tibrewal. Addressing a news conference at the BJP office in the city's Hastings area, Patra said, "Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is free to take credit for one thing, West Bengal has occupied the number one position in the country for perpetuating post-poll violence. I thank the judiciary for trying to ensure justice for the families of BJP workers who were killed, beaten up or raped by TMC goons. In a democracy, violence has no place. If you win an election, will you unleash violence on your political rivals? Can this happen in a democracy? Mamata Banerjee should first stop this violence before talking about democracy."

He also lauded the courage of BJP workers for fighting the TMC against all odds. "BJP workers should be appreciated for valiantly fighting the TMC terror. Our Bhabanipur by-poll candidate Priyanka Tibrewal has fought for justice in the court of

law and ensured a CBI probe in such incidents. Hats off to her for fighting against the state government," he added.

Targeting Banerjee, the BJP leader said, "The chief minister only wants to fulfil her ambitions. She is only concerned about her chair. This was evident after she forced the winning Trinamool Congress candidate in Bhabanipur to step down so that she could contest the bypoll."

Meanwhile, Patra alleged that local councillors in Bhabanipur had warned people that they would face consequences if they did not vote for Banerjee. "Today, I went for campaigning there and people told me that local councillors are threatening people. Is this a democracy? The people are being threatened so that the TMC wins the election."

Dismissing Patra's allegations, senior TMC leader and state minister Firhad Hakim said, "Sensing their defeat, Sambit Patra is making baseless allegations against the TMC. People of Bhabanipur love their daughter Mamata Banerjee and will definitely vote for her in large numbers. The BJP is looking for excuses to cover up their defeat."



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POSSESSION NOTICE (for Immovable Property)

(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002) Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of Baroda under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice dated 04.05.2021, calling upon the Borrower Shri Asit Kumar Mukherjee (borrower), Prop. M/s Bijay Enterprise and Mr. Partha Pratim Mitra (Guarantor) to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs.98,29,365.37 (Rupees Ninety Eight Lakh Twenty Nine Thousand Three Hundred Sixty Five and Thirty Seven Paise only) as on 26.04.2021 together with further interest thereon at the contractual rate plus costs, charges and expenses till date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower and the Public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on this the 23rd day of September of the year 2021.

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Annexure 1 of Memo No. 1047/DCPS/HOW dt. 24.09.2021
Information Wanted

Soham (Boy child),
Age: About 10 days, **Built:** Nirmal, **Height:** 45cm. **Complexion:** Wheatish **Contact Address:** D.C.P.U, Social Welfare Section (Ground floor), Old Collectorate, Annex Building, Howrah-1. **Phone No:-** 033-2638-0587. or, Karuna W.B.W.C. & W.S 234, Shi Ram Dhang Road, Salkia, Howrah, **Phone No:-** 033-2655-0002.
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Sl. No.	Name of the Branch & Account	Details of property & Name of the owner of the property	Reserve Price	Date of Inspection	Date/ Time of e-Auction
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1.	Branch: Balurghat (0954) Account Name: Bimal Kundu A/C No(s): 09540610004289	All that piece and parcel of Land and Building in the name of Mr. Bimal Kundu situated at Vill-Sahabkachari (Manimela School Para), PO & PS-Balurghat, Dist-Dakshin Dinajpur, Pin-733101. Plot No-RS1291, LR 3102, Khatian No-3433, Present LR 5885, JL No-109, Mouza-Balurghat. Area of land-0.876 Decimal. Gift Deed No-L- 2187 dated 21.01.2006. Boundaries of the property: North-Jaba Ghosh, South-Shibkali Kundu, East-Temple & Road, West-Buddhabad Kundu. (The property is under Bank's Symbolic Possession)	A. Rs.6,75,203.67 (Rupees Six Lakh Seventy Five Thousand Two Hundred Three and Paise Sixty Seven Only) plus unapplied intt., charges, expenses & costs. B. 14.09.2020 C. 18.08.2021	25.10.2021 from 11:00 am -04:00 pm.	27.10.2021 from 01:00 PM to 05:00 PM with Unlimited 10 Minutes Auto Extension for each Bid.
2.	Branch: Kanupur (2682) Account Name: M/S Saha Egg Center Prop-Anil Kr Saha A/C No(s): 26820510000397	All that piece and parcel of Land and Building in the name of Mr. Anil Kr Saha, situated at Vill-Banipur, PO-Miapur, PS-Raghunathganj, Dist-Murshidabad, Pin-742224. Mouza-Srikantabati, JL No-114, Plot No-LR 358, Khatian No- LR 3424. Area of Land-3.71 Decimal. Deed No-247/1998 dated 04.02.1998 registered at ADSR Jangipur. Boundaries of the property: North-H/O Nimai Das & there after Road South-L/O Ranjit Das, East- H/O Chandan Saha, West-H/O Ashis Kr Das. (The property is under Bank's Symbolic Possession)	A. Rs.9,23,888.71 (Rupees Nine Lakh Twenty Three Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Eight & Paise Seventy One Only) plus unapplied intt., charges, expenses & costs. B. 02.11.2017 C. 06.03.2018	25.10.2021 from 11:00 am -04:00 pm.	27.10.2021 from 01:00 PM to 05:00 PM with Unlimited 10 Minutes Auto Extension for each Bid.

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SHOOTOUT AT DELHI COURT

Courtroom bloodbath

‘Staff ducked for cover, judge ran to chambers’: Witnesses recall horror

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

THE TWO assailants were dressed like lawyers in black blazers, trousers, shoes, and a white collar. But they stood out like a sore thumb as they walked into Rohini district court's room number 207 — they didn't bow before the judge, carried empty files, and hand their hands tucked in their pockets.

Next to them was advocate Tushar Mann, who was busy making mental notes for bail arguments. "Something was off about them. They carried empty files and had their hands inside their pockets. Which lawyer carries an empty file into a courtroom?" he told *The Indian Express*.

Additional Sessions Judge Gagandeep Singh had just started hearing regular matters in his courtroom, which had 30 matters listed.

Around 1.15 pm, gangster Jitender Maan alias Gogi entered

the courtroom, accompanied by members of the counter intelligence team. A handful of lawyers were inside at the time.

"We all stood for the judge, but these two men did not. I was thinking they have no respect for the law. Then, they opened fire. Court staff ducked for cover, the judge ran towards his chamber. We all ran out of the courtroom. It was chaos," Mann recalled.

Eyewitnesses recalled that while some hid behind almirahs containing case files as the shooting started, others froze. Some litigants, meanwhile, rushed out with their children.

"I just ducked under my seat. I could not react," said a court staff.

On August 28, ASJ Gagandeep had issued production warrants for Gogi and a co-accused from the rival gang, Sunil Mann. They were among six accused in an attempt to murder case registered at Alipur police station in 2010.

One of the co-accused in the case, Arun, was out on bail. His main counsel could not come to

court, so junior advocate Nitin was sent instead. He reached the courtroom early in the morning; this was the first case on the cause list. "The judge said this was a high security case and he would take up the matter later," Nitin said.

He marked his attendance at the court and stood outside as he saw Gogi being produced. The next date of hearing had been decided for December, and all that was left was for Gogi to sign the production warrant. He came accompanied by the security detail, his hands tightly clasped by an officer to ensure he does not flee. "As I was waiting, I heard a lot of firing. Police took litigants out of the courtroom first and lawyers were evacuated later," Nitin said.

Right across ASJ Gagandeep's courtroom is Additional Sessions Judge Shivaji Anand's courtroom. A crowd of litigants and lawyers stood outside. Among them was advocate Yogesh Pandey, who had caught a glimpse of Gogi before he stepped into the courtroom.



Gangster Jitender Maan alias Gogi and two assailants were shot dead inside the court on Friday. Amit Mehra

Gogi vs Tillu: Capital's killer rivalry

MAHENDERSINGH
MANRAL
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

IT WAS in 2016 that gangster Jitender Maan alias Gogi managed to escape from police custody and, in the hopes of killing his rival

Sunil alias Tillu Tajpuriya, formed a gang with two key lieutenants — Kuldeep alias Fajja and Rohit Moi.

But the balance of power shifted against him when the trio were arrested from a flat in Gurgaon even as Tillu joined hands with other prominent gangsters — Neeraj Bawana, Naveen Bali, Sunil Rath and Cheenu.

Earlier this year, Gogi was booked under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) for hatching a conspiracy to aid Fajja's escape — a last ditch attempt to revive his gang.

"Gogi had a 'signature move' — of shooting his victims in the face. But after his arrest last year, his rivals joined hands and started targeting his associates. Plus, police arrested 16 of his gang members and six months ago, Fajja was killed in a police encounter," said a senior officer.

Around four months ago, Gogi was shifted to solitary confinement and was further disconnected from his associates. "His rivals were looking for an opportunity to kill him, and they found one when they discovered that he and Tillu's associate Sunil Mann had to appear before a Delhi

court in the same case. Two of Tillu's associates, Rahul Tyagi and Jagdeep Jagga, were asked to execute the murder. Tyagi was wanted in a murder case and Jagga had killed Gogi's associate earlier," said the officer.

Police said Gogi's most high-profile victim was Haryanvi singer Harshita, who was shot dead on October 17 last year by four men, led by Gogi, in Panipat. He committed the murder at the behest of Karala, her brother-in-law who he had befriended in jail.

Gogi's mother Padmeshwari had earlier told *Express*, "He had won medals in volleyball..."

13 more die of Covid in Bengal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 24

WEST BENGAL'S Covid-19 tally rose to 15,64,883 on Friday as 744 more people tested positive for the infection, while 13 fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 18,716 a health bulletin said. North 24 Parganas district registered the highest number of new cases, followed by Darjeeling and Kolkata.

North 24 Parganas and Kolkata recorded highest fresh fatalities at four and three each, followed by Nadia at two. The total number of active cases came down by 15

to 7,689 while 746 more people were cured of the infection, taking the total number of recoveries to 15,38,478, it said.

The recovery rate among the coronavirus patients in the state stands at 98.31 per cent. The state has thus far tested over 1,79,17,743 samples for Covid-19, including 42,113 in the past 24 hours, the bulletin said, adding that the positivity rate stands at 1.77 per cent.


West Bengal has vaccinated over 5.02 crore people till date. The discharge rate went up to 98.31 per cent. West Bengal now has 7,704 active cases. The state has so far conducted over 1.78 crore sample tests.

Medicine for SMA patients: Peerless Hospital gets approval

Kolkata: Peerless Hospital in Kolkata has become the first hospital in eastern India to receive the approval to use a medicine to treat Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) patients.

So far, SMA patients were managed through physiotherapy diet, etc. SMA being a neuromuscular disorder, children with it have limited mobility. Spinraza (Nusinersen) is an effective drug to treat this condition that has to be administered intrathecally. It was given under the Compassionate Use Programme (CUP) for the first time in eastern India at Peerless Hospital on September 7.

"The whole initiative spearheaded by Dr Sanjukta De, has added a paradigm elevation to the core values of the Peerless family towards clinical excellence," said Dr Sujit Kar Purkayastha, the hospital's managing director, under whose leadership the SMA Clinic has been commissioned with Cure SMA Foundation of India. ENS

**Pawan Hans Limited**
(A Government of India Enterprise)

Notice Inviting E-Tender no: PHL/CO/GED/2021-22/3
Name of the work: Supply & Placement of Crash Fire Tenders for Heliports under development under RCS UDAN II
Estimated cost - Rs. 19.12 Crores
Mode - Through e-tender under item rate single stage two bid system.
Last date for submission of techno-commercial bid – 16/10/2021
Eligible bidders may download the bid document on payment of tender cost of Rs. 12,390/- through RTGS / NEFT mode from 24/9/2021 & for complete details visit website: www.tenderwizard.com/PAWANHANS & www.pawanhans.co.in.
Addendum / Corrigendum if any shall only be hosted on website.
HoD (GED)


JHARGRAM MUNICIPALITY
Sadhu Ramchand Murmu Sarani
Bachurdoba: Jhargram
Ph: 03221-255098, Email: jhargram.municipality@gmail.com
Notice Inviting Tender
(ABRIDGED)
JM/01/2021-2022
Memo No- 2022/4PW-15 Date:- 24.09.2021

Tenders are being invited by the undersigned from Bonafide Running/ others contractors/ Agency for 01 (One) No. works below 4.00 Lakh for Submersible work at Nahar Khal Samsan. Last date of submission of Application 01.10.2021 up to 3.00 P.M. The details of above tender may be seen at the office Notice board, Notice Board of D.M. Office, S.D.O. Office.
N.B. Payments will be made after receiving of funds.

Sd/-
Executive Officer,
Jhargram Municipality

**महाराष्ट्र रेल इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर डेवलपमेंट कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड**
MAHARASHTRA RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED
(महाराष्ट्र शासन आणि रेल्वे मंत्रालय यांचा संयुक्त उपक्रम)
(A Joint Venture of Govt. of Maharashtra and Ministry of Railways)

Notice Inviting E-Tender
E-Tender No. MRIDC/PROJ/e-TENDER/CSB/TILAK/2021/134
MRIDC is inviting E-bids from the eligible bidders for the work mentioned below:
a. Name of Work: Construction of Cable Stayed Road Over Bridge (Tilak Bridge) Near Dadar Railway Station, connecting Dr. N.C. Kelkar Road & Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Road (in between Railway Km. EP/9/108 to EPDR 8002) in Mumbai Suburban. **b. Estimated Cost:** ₹ 216,16,04,767/- **c. Completion Period:** 640 Days. **d. Last Date and time for Submission of Bid:** 19/10/2021 up to 15:00 Hrs.
Interested bidders who wish to participate should visit MRIDC's official website www.maharail.com or e-bidding portal www.tenderwizard.in/MAHARAIL to bid their offer.
Any Addendum / Corrigendum to this notice will be uploaded on the above-mentioned websites only.
MANAGING DIRECTOR

**Asansol Municipal Corporation**
Asansol

Notice Inviting Tender
Tender Notice No. T-270/PW/Eng/2021 dated 24.09.2021
Memo No. 574/PW/Eng/2021 dated 24.09.2021
Name of the work:- (a) Construction of concrete Road from Binod Dey House to Mahabir House to Mahabir house of ward no-04 under A.M.C. (WBD20210021), (b) Construction of RCC drain at Jamuria Gram near Milani Samity Math at ward no-5 under A.M.C. (WBD20210023), (c) Construction of C.C. road & Drain repairing at Dhibar Para ward No-69 under A.M.C. (WBD20210278), (d) Construction of drain at village Punuri, Kulti near Punuri Primary School at ward no-62 under A.M.C. (WBD20210350) etc.
Please visit to website www.asansolmunicipalcorporation.com or www.wbtenders.gov.in
For details, intending contractors may also contact Eng. Dept. of this office and office notice Board.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer
Asansol Municipal Corporation

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Managing Director, West Bengal Livestock Development Corporation Limited, LB-2, Sector-III, Salt Lake City, Kolkata-700106 invites online bids in two bid system from the intending bona fide Bidder/ Contractor etc. for "Design, supply, installation, commissioning and test run of Poultry Feed Plant (output of 10 TPH) (200 TPD) expandable upto 400 TPD at Siliguri, Dist.-Darjeeling on turnkey basis." Interested bidders may submit their bids at e-Tender portal of Govt. of West Bengal at <https://wbtenders.gov.in> from **24.09.2021, 06.55 PM to 16.10.2021 upto 11.30 AM**. In case of any ambiguity arises regarding tender submission process, the concerned bidder may contact at the office of the undersigned on any working days within that period from **10.00 AM to 5.00 PM**.
Sd/-
Managing Director
W.B.L.D.C. Ltd.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Managing Director, West Bengal Livestock Development Corporation Limited, LB-2, Sector-III, Salt Lake City, Kolkata-700106 invites online bids in two bid system from the intending bona fide Bidder/ Contractor etc. for "Setting up of Laboratory Animal House on turnkey basis for state central for Laboratory Animals Breeding, Buddha Park, Kalyani, Dist.-Nadia-741235." Interested bidders may submit their bids at e-Tender portal of Govt. of West Bengal at <https://wbtenders.gov.in> from **24.09.2021, 06.55 PM to 16.10.2021 upto 12.30 PM**. In case of any ambiguity arises regarding tender submission process, the concerned bidder may contact at the office of the undersigned on any working days within that period from **10.00 AM to 5.00 PM**.
Sd/-
Managing Director
W.B.L.D.C. Ltd.

CHENNAI BENGALURU INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR-TUMAKURU INDUSTRIAL TOWNSHIP LTD (CBIC-TITL)
5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan, Race Course Road, Bengaluru – 560 001.
Phone No. 22267900, Fax : 22267901 website : www.kiadb.in
email: mdbcic23@gmail.com

No. CBICITL/ENGG/ETND-EP-01/7816/2021-22 **Date: 24.09.2021**

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through GOK e – Procurement Portal Only)

Request For Qualification cum Request For Proposal (RFQ cum RFP) under two cover bid system is invited for the work mentioned below as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 and other relevant Acts through electronic procurement, Government of Karnataka from eligible Agencies, firm, companies, etc who have got adequate financial resources, state of the art technology, suitable construction equipments, technical man power & sufficient past experience for the following work as per the schedule given below:




Sl. No	Name of the Work	Approx cost put to tender (Rs.in Crores) (Including all Taxes and GST)	Bid Security (Rs. in Crores)	Time for completion Including Monsoon
1	Design, Construction, Testing, Commissioning and Operation & Maintenance of Infrastructure Works at Activation Area Phase-A of Tumakuru Industrial Node under CBIC Scheme, Vasanthanarasapura Industrial Area 4th Phase, Tumakuru Taluk & District including Roads, Cross Drainage Structures, Bridges, Utilities, Area Landscaping, Potable & recycle Water Supply Network, Firefighting System, Storm Water Drainage, Residential/Industrial Sewage Network, Industrial Effluent Collection Network, Power infrastructure work including Substation, Sewage/Effluent Pumping Stations, Rising Mains, Water Treatment Plant (WTP), Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP), Administrative Building on EPC Basis including 4 year Operation and Maintenance.(2nd Call)	840.00	16.80	36 Months

The salient features of the project, eligibility criteria and prescribed formats for submission can be accessed in the RFQ cum RFP document uploaded on the website from Government of Karnataka Procurement Portal www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in after **27.09.2021**.

Sd/-
Managing Director, CBICITL, Bengaluru

DIPR/DDU/Zen.R.O:1684/2021-22

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.



**National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development**
Telangana Regional Office
1-1-61, RTC X Road, P.B. No. 989, Hyderabad - 500 020.
email: hyderabad@nabard.org / www.nabard.org

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
NABARD, Telangana Regional Office, Hyderabad intends to invite e-tender under two-bid system for External and Internal Repair/Renovation Works in NABARD Staff Quarters, Krishi Vihar, 7-1-58, Ameerpet, Hyderabad-500016. Last date and time for submission of e-tender: **21st October 2021 (Thursday) by 2:00 PM**. For tender documents and more details, please visit <https://www.nabard.org/> and <https://nabard.eproc.in/>.
Date: 25-09-2021
Chief General Manager
NABARD, Telangana R.O., Hyderabad

BUDGE BUDGE MUNICIPALITY
71, M.G. ROAD, BUDGE BUDGE, KOLKATA-700137
NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER
Tender Id- 2021_MAD_345346_1 under DMWR Fund. For details, interested bidder may visit www.wbtenders.gov.in.
Last Date: 04.10.2021 up-to: 6:00 PM.
Executive Officer
Budge Budge Municipality

**कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता**
सातवां वृत्त, लो. नि. वि., गोपेश्वर
Office of The Superintending Engineer, 7th Circle Gopeshwar
Email : sepwdgope@rediffmail.com

S.N. 5680/544 याता-7/21 **Date 23.09.2021**

Short- Term E-Tendering
Superintending Engineer, 7th Circle, Public Works Department, Gopeshwar on behalf of "Governor of Uttarakhand" invites through E- tendering Two Bid System Anticipation of Administrative & Financial Approval). for the following works. Information regarding bid will be available from Dated **01-10-2021** on <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>.

S. No.	Name of Work	Amount of Security (Rs. Cr.)	Validity of tender	Cost of Tender Document	Completion Period (in Months)	Contractor's Category of Registration
1.	Construction of Civic Amenity Building under Shri Badrinath Dham Master Plan.	2.7	45 Days	5000+ G.S.T	09	Category A and above for Building / Road Work in any State / Central Government of India
2.	Construction of One Way Loop Road Facade enhancement work under Shri Badrinath Dham Master Plan.					
3.	Lake Front Development work (B+C) (Badrish Lake, linear park) under Shri Badrinath Dham Master Plan.					
4.	Refurbishment of ISBT Building & parking Development / Construction work under Shri Badrinath Dham Master Plan.					
5.	Lake Front Development work (A) (Shesh Netra) under Shri Badrinath Dham Master Plan.					
6.	Construction of Hospital Extension Building work under Shri Badrinath Dham Master Plan.					
7.	Construction of B.R.O Bypass Road under Shri Badrinath Dham Master Plan.					
8.	Construction of tourist arrival plaza and tourist management centre (interpretation center + command control centre) under PRASAD Scheme for spritual smart hill town Badrinath Project.					

Bid will be submitted online at website www.uktenders.gov.in.
Before opening of bid upto 1.00 Pm following documents to be submitted physically to this office of Superintending Engineer, 7th Circle Gopeshwar and Executive Engineer, P.I.U P.W.D Badrinath (HQ-Joshimath) along with online submission-
1- FDR of earnest money. 2- DD of Tender Cost. 3- Rs. 100.00 non-judicial stamp with Rs. 1.00 signed Revenue ticket for bid validity. 4- Required category Registration-copy.

Sd-
Er. Mukesh Parmar
Superintending Engineer
7th Circle, P.W.D. Gopeshwar

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE FOR SIGNALING WORKS
Sr. No. (1) E-Tender No.: 84-ST-TENDER-2021, Date: 20.09.2021.
Work: 'Improvement of passenger's information system by provision of linking arrival/departure of train from data logger with CCA at RRC, KRRA and ARCC Stations of Baleswar Division of South East Central Railway'.
Tender Value: ₹ 33,47,600/- (₹ Thirty Three Lakhs Forty Seven Thousand Six Hundred Only).
Earnest Money Deposited: 0.
Submission of Tender: Upto 15.00 hours on 14.10.2021.
The complete information of above e-Tender Notice is available over websites: <http://www.reps.gov.in>
Bids other than e-bids shall not be accepted against above tender.
Sr. Divt. Signal & Telecom. Engrg./ CPRI/101/185 Line&B&L&S&P
South East Central Railway, Gwalior

"IMPORTANT"

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**Government of the Jammu & Kashmir**
Directorate of Information & Public Relations
E-mail dirinf17jk@gmail.com; Website: www.jkdirinf.in

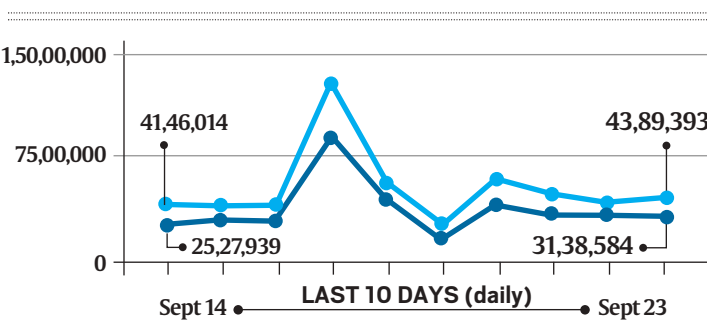
Notice
Applications on prescribed format are invited from the eligible Video producers of different categories for empanelment with Directorate of Information & Public Relations, J&K. The Video producers/production houses shall apply along with requisite details with supported documents by or before 15.10.2021.
The detailed guidelines along with application format can be downloaded from the www.jkdirinf.in or obtained from the office of the Directorate of Information & PR, Polo view, Srinagar during office hours.

Sd/-
Deputy Director
(Audio-Visual)

No: INF/AV/88/2020/
Dated: 24/09/2021
DIPK-9372

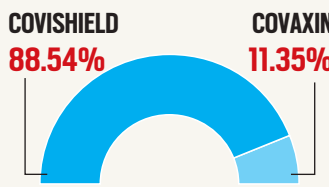
CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

TOTAL VACCINATED IN INDIA (at least one dose)
62,29,02,393



TOTAL DOSES
84,15,18,026

(Sputnik V's 9,09,188 doses not represented in pie)



DOSES ON SEPT 23 **75,27,977**

SEPT 22: 74,74,295 (1st doses: 41,22,774; 2nd: 33,51,521)

*Note: The Sept 23 figures in these graphs are based on the government updates on Sept 24
Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on September 24*

What samples brought back by China mission tell us about Moon

ON DECEMBER 16, 2020, China's Chang'e-5 lunar mission delivered to Earth nearly 2 kg of rocky fragments and dust from the Moon. At the ongoing Europlanet Science Congress (EPSC) 2021 virtual meeting, Yuqi Qian, a PhD student at the China University of Geosciences, presented early-stage findings that use geological mapping to link 'exotic' fragments in the collected samples to features near the landing site, the Europlanet Society said in a press release.

Chang'e-5 landed on an area of the Moon (the 'far side') not sampled by the American or Soviet missions nearly 50 years ago, and thus retrieved fragments of the youngest lunar rocks ever brought back for analysis in laboratories on Earth. The rocks are also different to those returned decades ago.

THE FINDINGS: According to the Europlanet Society, the study presented by Qian suggests that 90% of the materials collected by Chang'e-5 likely derive from the landing site and its immediate surroundings, which are of a type termed 'mare basalts'. These volcanic rocks are visible to us as the darker grey areas that spilled over much of the nearside of the Moon as ancient eruptions of lava. Yet 10% percent of the fragments have distinctly different, 'exotic' chemical compositions.

WHY IT MATTERS: The distinct 10% fragments may preserve records of other parts of the lunar surface as well as hints of the types of space rocks that have impacted the Moon's surface. Qian and colleagues from Brown University and the University of Münster have looked at the potential sources of beads of rapidly cooled glassy material. They have traced these glassy droplets to extinct volcanic vents known as 'Rima Mairan' and 'Rima Sharp'. These fragments could give in-



The Chang'e-5 sample 'CE5C0400' from the Moon's surface; it weighs nearly 35 grams and was collected by a robotic arm. CNSA/CLEP via Europlanet Society

sights into past episodes of energetic, fountain-like volcanic activity on the Moon, the release said.

The team has also looked at the potential sources of impact-related fragments. The young geological age of the rocks at the landing site narrows the search, as only craters with ages less than 2 billion years can be responsible, and these are relatively rare on the side of the Moon that faces Earth. The team has modelled the potential contributions from specific craters: Aristarchus, Kepler, Copernicus, Harding, and Harpalus. Qian's findings show that Harpalus is a significant contributor of many exotic fragments among Chang'e-5's sample haul, and these pieces of rock could offer a way to address persisting uncertainty about this crater's age, the release said.

Source: Europlanet Society

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What's new in Arjun Mark-1A, and why its acquisition is significant

SUSHANT KULKARNI
PUNE, SEPTEMBER 24

THE MINISTRY of Defence said on Thursday that it has placed an order worth Rs 7,523 crore to Heavy Vehicles Factory (HVF), Chennai for supply of 118 units of the Main Battle Tank Arjun's Mark-1A variant for the Army.

What's new in Arjun Mark-1A?

The development of Arjun was started by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in the late 1980s, primarily to augment the predominantly Russian-made armoured fleet until then.

Trials of the earliest Arjun variant began in the early 1990s and the tank was inducted in 2004. Work on the variant Mark-1A, or Mk-1A, began in June 2010 and the tank was fielded for trials in June 2012. For the next three years, extensive trial evaluations were conducted by both the DRDO and the Army,

followed by more trials, including field trials, in subsequent years.

The Mark-1A variant adds 72 new features — 14 major and 58 minor — to the previous variant Mark-1. These additions have resulted in better all-terrain mobility and manoeuvrability in different modes of operation, better target acquisition, and precision firing during both day and night with a 360° view, and a multi-layered robust protective armour named 'Kanchan'. The additions, along with its robust 120 mm rifled gun, have contributed to its categorisation as the 'hunter-killer'. The DRDO is currently conducting trials of firing guided missiles from Arjun.

The Defence Ministry has said Mk-1A has more indigenous content than Mk-1, thus reducing dependence on foreign vendors. The new variant is also said to have added some comfort features for the four-member crew, who operate in tough conditions when deployed, and has a better transmission system. Some of the features also prepare the tank



The Defence Ministry has placed an order worth Rs 7,523 crore for 118 Arjun Mark-1A tanks. PIB

better for network-centric warfare — or effective use of information technology and computer networking in the battlefield.

What is the significance of the acquisition?

The acquisition of 118 tanks would equip three armoured regiments, as one regiment comprises 40 to 50 tanks. This acquisition holds significance in light of the Pakistan Army's latest acquisition of two tanks, T-4

Within the SAD, a senior leader quit in protest. With the new CM representing it, Chamkaur Sahib and its history are again in focus.

What is this history?

The coalition forces of Mughals and hill rajas led by Wazir Khan, the Nawab of Sirhind, had laid siege to Anandpur Sahib in the hope of capturing Guru Gobind Singh in May 1704. After seven months of fighting and heavy losses, the coalition forces offered a safe passage to the Guru and his followers. The heads of the coalition pledged they would not harm the Guru, his family, or his soldiers. Col Jaibans Singh, a military historian, writes that the peace treaty was sent in the name of Emperor Aurangzeb himself. But when Gobind Singh and his followers stepped out of the Anandpur Sahib fort on the night of December 20, they were attacked. They fled towards Ropar and the swollen Sarsa river. It was while crossing the river on their horses that Gobind Singh was separated from his wife Mata Gujri who was with their two younger sons.

What happened at Chamkaur Sahib?

Amarjit Singh, director of Guru Granth Sahib Studies at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, said the Guru, accompanied by *panj piaras* (the five Sikhs he had initially baptised), his elder sons Ajit Singh (18) and Jujhar Singh (14), and around 40 soldiers, regrouped in a fortress-like two-storey house, with high compound walls made of mud. They were surrounded by an army commanded by Wazir Khan and Sher Mohammed Khan, the younger brother of Malerkotla's chieftain.

The Guru sent out soldiers in small squads for hand-to-hand combat. Two such attacks were led by his sons, both of whom died fighting. Three of the *panj piaras* — Mohkam Singh, Himmat Singh and Sahib Singh — too died fighting.

Bir Devinder Singh, former Deputy Speaker of the Punjab Assembly and a keen student of history, said Guru Gobind Singh gave an account of the battle in Zafarnama, his letter to Aurangzeb.

How did the battle conclude?

When very few soldiers were left, they decided the Guru should leave so that he could

Tangkhul from Manipur, for whom it is difficult to abandon the demand for a Greater Nagalim. But India cannot accept that demand, and a middle path has to be found, which may take some time," a senior officer said.

Sources said there was no way the government would accept a separate constitution for Nagaland. "This was never under discussion. There was, indeed, an opinion that the flag could be given. But that went off the table after the decisions of August 5, 2019 in Kashmir, when the region's flag was taken away," another official said.

Ravi's open criticism made the NSCN(IM) publicly harden its position, officials said. "There was already pressure on the NSCN(IM) because of NIA cases against its members... There was no need to openly chide them. You can't be the good cop as well as the bad cop as a negotiator," a Home Ministry official said.

The move to appoint Ravi as Governor too, did not go down well with the IM. And Ravi's enthusiasm in matters of governance was taken by the state government as interference.

What is the way forward?

The government has roped in former IB officer Mishra as the new pointsperson for talks. Mishra met some representatives of IM this week, after Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Rio met Muivah and others. Mishra, who sources say could be formally appointed the new interlocutor, is known to be a quiet worker, and has been talking to Naga groups since January 2020.

"It is important to understand that there cannot be an accord without the NSCN(IM). It continues to get young recruits and wields considerable influence in the region. The idea is to slowly bring them to accept what India can give," a senior officer said.

One of Mishra's tasks would also be to delicately close the gap between the IM and NNPGs, which shared a good relationship with Ravi. Sources in the NNPGs have said they are not averse to working with Mishra; however, they have pointed to the 'ambiguity' of his role since, they argue, following the conclusion of the talks on October 31, 2019, "there is no longer a need for an interlocutor".

Some demands that need ironing out include one for a bicameral Assembly with at least 40 nominated members representing different tribes; absorption of cadres as local armed forces or in the Indian paramilitary; setting up of autonomous councils in Naga-dominated areas of neighbouring states; and the use of the Naga flag for at least customary events.

carry on his mission. "It was at the Chamkaur *ki garhi* (fort) on December 22 that *panj piaras* issued an edict (*hukumnama*) ordering the Guru to leave. This was the first edict issued by *panj piaras* after the formation of the Khalsa on April 13, 1699. They told the Guru, 'You can get many like us, but we won't be able to get the like of you,'" says Bir Devinder.

Before leaving, the Guru gave his attire and distinguishing *kalgi* to Sangat Singh, a Mazhabi Sikh who resembled him. Three other soldiers too left the fort, and went in separate directions. The following day, the enemy forced their way inside to find only two soldiers who fought till their last breath.

Five days later, Guru Gobind Singh's two younger sons, aged nine and seven, were bricked alive for refusing to convert.

How is the battle remembered?

Col Jaibans Singh writes that the battle infused the peasantry with military zeal. Every year, a *shaheed* jor mela, marked by prayers and *langar*, is held to commemorate the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh's young sons and his soldiers.

production order to the Heavy Vehicles Factory opens up a large avenue in defence manufacturing for over 200 Indian vendors including MSMEs, with employment opportunities to around 8,000 people. This will be a flagship project showcasing the indigenous capability in cutting-edge defence technologies."

Senior DRDO officials have said that from their perspective, Arjun Mark-1A was ready for induction into the Army by 2018-19. The development of the tank was led by the Chennai-based DRDO facility Combat Vehicles Research and Development Establishment (CVRDE) along with the other DRDO laboratories.

In February, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had handed over the prototype Arjun Mk-1A to Chief of Army Staff General M M Naravane at a ceremony in Chennai. Officials from the Ordnance factories have said it will take at least two-and-a-half to three years till the first batch of the tank is delivered to the Army.

6



THE INDIAN EXPRESS, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

THERE ARE NO Surer GUARANTEES OF EQUALITY
AMONG MEN THAN POVERTY AND MISFORTUNE.

— ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

PLUG THE LEAK

Bihar government must correct systemic flaws in its flagship water supply scheme, remove cronyism

FOR THE BETTER part of his long stint as Bihar Chief Minister, the sobriquet Sushasan Babu seemed well-earned for Nitish Kumar. Women's welfare schemes, better roads, improvement in law and order and increased access to electricity are testaments to his governance successes. In the past five years, however, shelter home abuse cases, encephalitis deaths and mishandling of the problems of the flood-affected have taken away much of the sheen of Kumar's record. The state's recent success in providing tap water to the poor — the "Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal" project, which has covered 95 per cent of its target — could have gone a long way in repositioning good governance as the Bihar administration's centrepiece. However, a four-month long investigation by this newspaper has revealed glaring irregularities in the implementation of the scheme — the Nitish Kumar government's largest welfare initiative in terms of scale and reach. The beneficiaries of political patronage involved in the scheme are long. Amongst those who have manipulated due procedures to corner contracts for infrastructural facilities under the project are members of Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad's family, a nephew of an ex-minister and a long list of VIP contractors. What makes this unseemly spectacle even more sordid is that Prasad has chosen to brazen out the charges of cronyism. "We are in business, should we not do it," he told this paper.

Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal started out as a poll promise by Janata Dal (U) in 2015. Launched a year later, the scheme has provided more than 150 lakh tap water connections, changing lives for the better in villages that were dependent on the declining water table. But a tap water connection hasn't always ensured supplies. Last mile delivery failures — such as the lack of an electricity connection to pump water from borewells to tanks — have deprived the project from reaching all its intended beneficiaries. This, of course, is a familiar failing of several social sector projects in the country, especially water supply schemes. But in Bihar, the possibilities of corruption were built into the bidding process of the state's flagship water supply project. The system did not have a way to check dummy competitors and gave ample opportunities to privileged players to game the bidding process. Given that contracts have been given for five years, the possibility of issues related to infrastructure maintenance dogging the scheme in the future cannot be ruled out.

Bihar has a history of people's health being affected because of using groundwater contaminated with arsenic and fluoride. The state can ill-afford the Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal project to go wrong. The Bihar government has promised an investigation in the wake of this newspaper's investigation. It must hold the culprits to account; more importantly, the Nitish Kumar government must also address the systemic failures that fostered corruption in the first place.

THE DANGEROUS SLIDE

The violence during an eviction drive in Assam is born out of a divisive politics. Government must step back and reach out

AN EVICTION DRIVE that ends in the death of two people — one a 12-year-old — injuries to policemen, and macabre footage of a photographer embedded with the state police stamping on a dying man is not just a breakdown of order; it warns of a dangerous slide into sectarianism. How the Assam government's action in Darrang district against alleged encroachers, largely drawn from the Bengali Muslim community, escalated into a situation in which the police opened fire, allegedly in "self-defence", is now the subject of an inquiry by a retired judge of the Gauhati High Court. But this much is undeniable: Nowhere was the moderating hand of the state government, whose responsibility is to engage with people and assuage their disgruntlement, visible in Darrang. Despite the dissatisfaction of the several hundred families served eviction notices with rehabilitation options, the district administration did not stop to accommodate their concerns. Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma cast it as a way to free up land for the "indigenous" by ousting "illegal settlers".

While the government is within its rights to remove encroachers, the fact remains that the BJP's consistent anti-immigrant and anti-minority narrative has resulted in a gulf of suspicion between the state and the Bengali Muslim community. This echoes a history of insider-outsider antagonism in the state. Land is at the centre of this mistrust. Beginning in the late 19th century, British colonial interests had settled peasants from adjoining East Bengal in the fertile fields of Assam, creating an anxiety about the Bengali immigrant that persists to this day. In recent times, the BJP's bruising CAA-NRC politics has deepened those fault lines and overlaid it with a distinct Hindutva agenda. Sarma fought and won the BJP's second stint in power in Assam by framing it as a contest between "65 per cent (Hindus) and 35 per cent (Muslims)" and stoking the antagonism towards the "Miya Muslim". A rhetoric that dehumanises people as "illegals" or "termites" or "Bangladeshi immigrants" also sets them up as targets for violence; legitimises social prejudice and hate.

Governance does not call for polarising rhetoric, but the will to take along the whole electorate, whatever their identity. Those responsible for Darrang's shameful descent into violence must be held to account. Instead of coming down with a heavy hand on a destitute population that has been turned homeless, the state must reach out to them in a language of humane accommodation. Assam's people have paid the cost of uncompromising identity politics with bloodshed before. It must walk away from that path of confrontation.

TAP TWICE FOR SRK

Shah Rukh Khan is now in the Indian Sign Language dictionary, but not how you would expect

BRING THE MIDDLE and index fingers of your right hand together and tap the left side of your chest twice. You've just said "Shah Rukh Khan" in the Indian Sign Language (ISL). The actor's name is among this year's inclusions in the ISL dictionary, a signal honour and — to many fans — a slightly puzzling one given that SRK already has one physical gesture that is so universally identified with him that it's even been the subject of parodies by comedians and other actors, not to mention Khan himself — even the Assam Police had jumped in last year with a poster that showed SRK performing this gesture in order to illustrate the pandemic's social distancing protocol.

We are, obviously, referring to the actor's signature arms-wide-open pose, with a slight bend in the right knee and a come-hither smile (he was masked in the Assam Police poster, but the smile may be taken as read). As would be evident to anyone who's watched his films, not one of them is complete without the actor striking this pose, usually in a song. And if it has been synonymous with Khan for over two decades, surely it's good enough for inclusion in the ISL dictionary?

To that, one could argue that there is no debate about the appeal of the signature SRK pose: Those wide open arms coupled with the dimpled smile are an invitation to romance and excitement like no other. But the gesture itself, in all its grandiosity, is one that belongs to the language of the silver screen, capturing in one sweeping move the movie star we love, who brings his irresistible charm to even the deadest of cinematic duds. For an everyday language such as the ISL, what is needed is a smaller, more intimate gesture of what SRK means, especially to his fans. Two taps on the heart? What could be more appropriate than that to say, "Shah Rukh Khan, Bollywood's King of Romance"?



JAHANGIR AZIZ

IN EVALUATING THE 2017 19th Communist Party (CCP) conference, we had stated that it would turn out to be China's watershed moment (IE, November 3, 2017). While media and market attention was focused on the elimination of the 10-year term limit for Party leadership and the presidency, we viewed the restating of the "principal contradiction" facing China by the CCP as being more important.

The notion of principal contradiction is central to how the Party sees the economy, politics, and society. Given the dominance of the Party, this, in turn, sets out the overarching framework for policies at all levels of government. After the economic destruction resulting from the Cultural Revolution, the 1981 Congress under Deng Xiaoping restated the "principal contradiction" as the tension "between the ever-growing material needs of the people and backward social productivity" instead of the "class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie" as identified by Mao Zedong. To resolve this contradiction, policies were changed and the economy reformed to deliver and sustain a stunning 10 per cent average growth over the next three decades. But the growth also brought with it extensive collateral damage, ranging from high leverage to severe environmental degradation. While in 2010 the central government initiated a process to rebalance the economy, progress on the ground was slow; often circumvented by local administrations still operating under the Party objective of focusing on growth and employment.

To align the objectives of the Party and that of all levels of government, the 2017 Congress restated the principal contradiction as the tension between "unbalanced and inadequate development" and the "peoples' ever-growing need for a better life". This radically altered how the Party saw China: No longer a low-income economy needing to generate millions of new jobs every year to maintain social stability, but a rising middle-income nation aspiring for a better quality of life. The new CCP framework, we assessed, would have as dramatic an impact as the

Chinese government's decision not to intervene to save Evergrande signals that no corporate is 'too big to fail'

1981 restatement did — growth would be slowed, regulations tightened, and leverage reined in.

This scenario has broadly played out since 2018, despite two large shocks — heightened tensions with the US and the pandemic. We view the relatively tight fiscal and monetary policies; the persistent tightening in the housing market; the re-designation of private tutorials as non-profit; the economy-wide push to de-carbonise; and letting corporates with weak balance sheets to default, as elements of the regime change foretold at the 19th Party Congress. In its latest version, the policy changes are couched in terms of the "Common Prosperity" objectives.

So where does the credit stress in Evergrande fit into all this? It is another manifestation of the regime change underway, albeit with one big difference. The market would have taken the stress in its stride (as it has the increasing frequency of defaults over the last three years) if this was a run-of-the-mill property company or a mid-sized bank. But Evergrande is the biggest property developer in China and among the largest in the world. Given the size, it is not unreasonable to fear that the direct impact or the financial contagion can be large. However, such fears are overstated. First, while still a substantial part of the economy, the real estate sector's contribution to the post-pandemic recovery has been modest. In addition, there was no expectation of a significant turnaround in this sector to buoy the recovery in 2022. Consequently, the impact on growth is likely to be limited. Second, the financial liabilities of the company, while large in absolute terms, make up about 0.65 per cent of China's corporate and government debt combined (the stock of total social financing) and bank loans per se just 0.25 per cent of total bank credit. Linkages to offshore banks and financial institutions are even smaller.

That said, all is not well with the property sector. Balance sheets of many property developers have also weakened in the past few years because of the policy-induced slowdown in sales and prices. Stress tests suggest

that the banking sector can be challenged if default rates reach historical highs. However, China's banks, on average, are well provisioned and capitalised. And importantly, authorities are unlikely to allow a large-scale credit event to unfold. Despite China's very high debt stock (close to 300 per cent of GDP), the government and central bank still retain sufficient policy space to ensure that such system-wide stress is avoided.

So why did the authorities not intervene to prevent the collapse of Evergrande? Because not doing so is the strongest signal yet that no corporate is "too big to fail" and that there are no state guarantees for them. For years, investors and analysts (including multilateral institutions) have exhorted China to allow defaults as a way of eliminating the market's presumption of implicit state guarantees, which has obfuscated any meaningful distinction between good and bad credit leading to a distorted allocation of capital and substantial loss of efficiency. While there could be short-term pains and even some spillover into the wider financial system, over the medium term this "inaction" is likely to improve the pricing of credit and efficiency of capital.

While we expect the Chinese economy to recover in the coming quarters from likely near-zero sequential growth in 3Q (on a year-on-year basis, growth should remain above 6 per cent), over the medium term, growth is headed to the 4-5 per cent range, with significant rebalancing of the growth drivers, including sectoral shifts, redistribution of income towards households and away from corporates, and a rotation towards more services consumption. To implement these changes, China's policy and regulatory regime will be altered radically. That process is already underway. And in the cross-hairs are also countries with strong trade and financial ties with China. If China changes, so will these linkages. The world needs to ready itself for China 3.0.

The writer is Chief Emerging Markets Economist, J.P. Morgan. These are his personal views



ARPAN TULSYAN

EARLIER THIS MONTH, while speaking at the Shiksha Parv conclave, the prime minister emphasised the need for inclusive and equitable education. In the same week, the Kerala High Court brought attention to medical textbooks that described non-binary gender identities as "offensive perversions" and "mental disorders". This had continued despite Kerala becoming the first state to adopt a transgender policy six years ago. A similar concern over "queerphobia" in medical education was raised by the Madras HC earlier this year.

The transgender community is arguably the most marginalised in India — including educationally. As per the 2011 Census, there are 4.8 million transgender persons in India, with a literacy rate of just 46 per cent, compared to 74 per cent of the general population. In 2020, there were only 19 transgender candidates among the 18 lakh students appearing for the class 10 board exams. A study by the National Human Rights Commission in 2017 found that over two-thirds of transgender children drop out of school before completing class 10 in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

The educational experience of transgender children who do make it to school and several others who do not conform to the gender binary are marked by bullying, labelling, rejection and humiliation. In my study of primary schools, I found that gender conformity was imperative for both teachers and peers. Students could be pulled up if they showed the slightest traits of alternative sexuality. For instance, a girl in class 5 was mocked by teachers and students for using a handkerchief that

FOR A RAINBOW CLASSROOM

For LGBTQ+-inclusive schools, system must go beyond removing barriers to access

A survey done by UNESCO in 2018 in India revealed that 60 per cent of those who identified as transgender reported experiencing physical harassment in high school, where 43 per cent even stated being sexually harassed in elementary school. Only 18 per cent reported incidents of abuse and harassment to school authorities. The consequences of such bullying and intimidation were often severe in terms of mental health as well as academic outcomes. These included reduced interactions with peers (73 per cent), depression and anxiety (70 per cent), decreased academic concentration (63 per cent) and school absenteeism (53 per cent).

The National Education Policy 2020 recognises transgender children as educationally disadvantaged and recommends widening their educational access through a Gender Inclusion Fund. However, the NEP and Shiksha Parv concept note on nurturing inclusive classrooms do not go beyond conditional cash transfers, distribution of bicycles, provision for sanitation and toilets and countering barriers of access. Access is only the first step. Focus must also be accorded to enhancing awareness and acceptability of the LGBTQ+ community through education. Schools must become a site for contestation of homophobic ideas, a

looked like a boy's. Teachers often interpreted gender-atypical behaviour as deviant and actively resorted to negative reinforcement tactics like identifying it with displeasure or even resorting to punishment to "correct" it. A reputed Kolkata school forcing 10 of its female students to write a confession letter stating "I am a lesbian" in 2018 is a case in point.

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space where battles of acceptance and inclusion are won. India can learn from Scotland, which became the first country to have an LGBTQ+ inclusive school curriculum in 2021.

Beyond infrastructure and process revamp, reforms are needed in curriculum and teacher education. Stories like *Heather had Two Mommies* or notable people who identified themselves as LGBTQ+ can be included in the curriculum. Focus must also be on inclusive language like using "partner" instead of "husband/wife" or "them" instead of "him/her". Teachers can be allies who model inclusive behaviour and confirm that schools are safe, supporting places for LGBTQ+ students.

Safe space signage in schools, like anti-ragging messages, can be helpful too. Comprehensive sex education must support young lives in exploring sexualities rather than viewing homosexuality as a disease or disorder, with age appropriate-learning to reduce high-risk behaviours. Through the parent-teacher associations and school management committees, attempts can be made to find queer students support in families and communities. Besides inclusiveness and equity in access, integration of themes like identity, diversity and social justice is the most urgent need of the modern Indian classroom. As they go back to school after more than a year's break in a context of widespread anxiety and uncertainty, we owe all Indian children an improved, safer and affirming environment in our schools.

The writer is an independent researcher

SEPTEMBER 25, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

KAMPUCHEA QUESTION

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi strongly defended the decision to recognise the Heng Samrin government in Kampuchea. Addressing a press conference in Jakarta, she recalled that her party had decided to recognise the Heng Samrin government even before the general elections of January 1980. Sharply reacting to a correspondent's question on what India had gained from it, she said, "We do not take these decisions on the basis of deriving any benefit". "The general applied by India was that any government that was operating de facto should be recognised". Asked whether Kampuchean ques-

tion figured in here discussions with President Suharto, and if there were differences with him, Mrs Gandhi said with a smile, "We both agreed that the situation should be resolved. There are bound to be differences between nations and leaders".

ANTULAY PETITION

JUSTICE SC Pratap of the Bombay High Court admitted the writ petition against A R Antulay and the state of Maharashtra by P B Sawant, Mrinal Gore and Kamal Desai challenging the allocation and distribution of cement. Justice Pratap said that the petition succeeded in making a prima facie case. The

court also directed that a show cause notice be issued to Umesh Balachandra Tipnis, secretary food and civil supplies, Maharashtra government, who had filed an affidavit against the admission of the petition. It asked why a case against contempt of court shouldn't be made against him.

US-USSR TALKS

US SECRETARY OF State, Alexander Haig and the foreign minister of the Soviet Union, Andrei Gromyko, agreed that the two countries should begin negotiations on November 30 in Geneva to reduce medium range nuclear forces in Europe.



Kolkata



7 THE IDEAS PAGE

The strategic public sector

Privatisation compromises India's sovereignty and economic freedom, threatening its energy security and strategic posture



AJAY SHANKAR AND
SUSHIL KHANNA

A SPECTRE HAUNTS the Western world. The spectre of Chinese State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and their control over the “commanding heights” of the global economy.

The strategic establishments were started when the *Fortune* Global 500 list 2020 revealed that Chinese large firms had overtaken US-based firms. China today has 124 firms in the *Fortune* list, of which 95 are SOEs, compared to 118 from the US. Many so-called private Chinese firms like ZTE and Lenovo are known to be controlled by SOEs.

The next group of 26 SOEs are from the OECD countries, while emerging market countries like Brazil, India, Mexico add another 17 to make a total of 135 SOEs in the list. This may be compared to a mere 45 SOEs in the 2005 list (figure 1). Today, 28 per cent of the world's largest and most powerful economic entities are state-owned, dominated largely by the Chinese SOEs.

The rise of Chinese SOEs in the global economy can be traced to the strategic vision and plan articulated in 1998 at the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The Congress approved a radical restructuring of the state sector with the policy of “grasp the large and let go of the small”. China had more than one lakh SOEs, covering all services, retail, construction, industrial and agricultural sectors. It quickly let go of the small and shut down or privatised 90,000 enterprises, with little impact on the share of SOEs in total output. The reforms launched by the 15th Congress were to restructure larger SOEs, “corporatise” them and list several on the stock market, making them profitable and competitive in global markets. Simultaneously, China set up 37 new SOEs in new emerging industries and technologies.

The last two decades have witnessed Chinese SOEs acquiring several American and European technology companies, from IT to oil fields, coal to strategic minerals, telecom to mobile phones and solar wafer to computer chips. By 2010, Chinese SOEs controlled overseas assets worth a whopping \$586 billion. According to the US Centre for Strategic Studies, in 2019, China's investment in the US was \$2.7 trillion, while Europe received another trillion dollars. Compare this to India's current GDP of \$2.8 trillion.

The rise of Chinese SOEs has far-reaching consequences for global competition and control over strategic technologies and resources. China's rise to seek its “legitimate” place in the sun, long dominated by the West with its multinationals and military power, has more to do with the power of its SOEs than its guns or warships. This has alarmed global observers but has strangely bypassed Indian policymakers embarking on a frenzied privatisation drive.

In 1998, under prime minister A B Vajpayee, India too embarked on public sector enterprises (PSEs) reforms with the Navratna Scheme. The large profit-making PSEs were granted autonomy in strategic and operational decisions, including investment, acquisitions, and borrowings. The Vajpayee government

FIG 1: SOEs IN THE FORTUNE GLOBAL 500 LIST

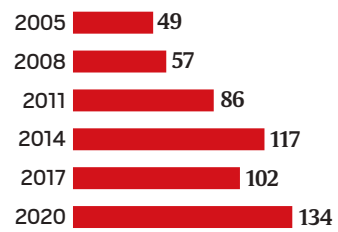


FIG 2: NET PROFIT/LOSS OF INDIAN CENTRAL PSES -1995-96 TO 2018-19 (in Rs. Crores)

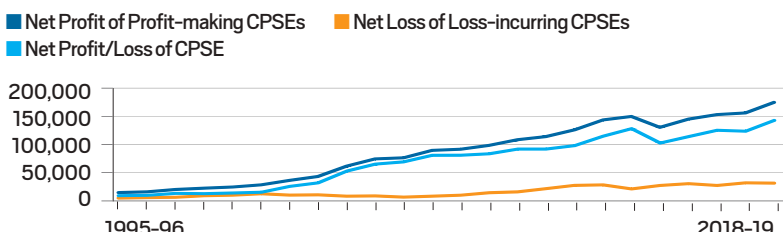
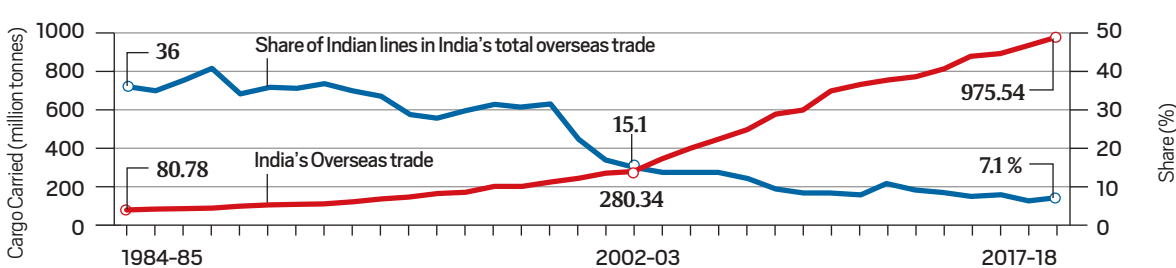


FIG 3: INDIA'S OVERSEAS TRADE AND THE SHARE OF INDIAN SHIPS IN INDIA'S OVERSEAS TRADE



Source: Ministry of Shipping

Graphics: Ritesh Kumar

also encouraged these PSEs to become “global” and acquire assets and strategic minerals abroad. However, the PSEs were denied any fiscal support, rather the government insisted on taking large dividends. This is in stark contrast to China where SOEs are liberally funded to grow and become global.

The Vajpayee government promoted the private sector in areas that were dominated by the public sector and privatised many PSEs. It undertook a series of sectoral price reforms where PSEs were dominant such as in power, petroleum, fertiliser and chemicals. Low prices of PSE products had made private entry unattractive. The PSEs were encouraged to charge full-market prices or even global prices to facilitate private entry.

The UPA in 2004 deepened the Navratna policy by including several more PSEs, and in an Indian version of “let go the small and weak”, set up the Board for Reconstruction of PSEs (BRPSE) to turn around or shut down loss-making companies.

An unintended consequence of NDA's price reforms was that the inherent strength and efficiency of PSEs became apparent. They had long attracted the best engineering and management talent in the country. The profits of Central PSEs by 2018 stood at Rs 1,75,000 crore, up from Rs 43,000 crore in 2003-04 (figure 2).

The rising profitability meant that Indian PSEs were investing more and expanded rapidly to become darlings of the stock market. As the Indian economy accelerated under UPA-I, with its total domestic investment rising to almost 40 per cent of GDP by 2010 from 26 per cent in 2002-03, the PSEs played a major role in increasing capital formation and accelerating growth. ONGC even acquired a private Indian refinery. With government encouragement but negligible financial support, PSEs were acquiring assets and resources abroad, often clashing with Chinese SOEs vying for the same assets. Till 2007, the PSEs were the largest outward investors from India. As the private sector has cut back its investment over the last several years, PSEs have become important drivers of industrial investment.

Today, as the Indian government readies

The government's refusal to support PSEs at critical moments has left wide gaps in key industrial capabilities. With the collapse of HMT, India is forced to import 80 per cent of its machine tools, the bedrock of manufacturing. The undermining of the pharmaceutical PSEs like IDPL and HAL, once India's pride, make them dependent on active ingredients from China. The government's reluctance to support BHEL has flooded the Indian power sector with Chinese equipment. Moreover, India is largely absent in emerging technologies like solar wafers, computer chips or EV batteries. India needs to imitate China in establishing new PSEs in strategic and emerging industries which require patient capital and greater risk.

to privatise India's most vital and significant PSEs — Bharat Petroleum (a Fortune 500 company) BEML, and the Shipping Corporation — and dismember ONGC, the Chinese may be happy to acquire these firms and their assets, through a chain of firms they would control. Yet, these firms are important strategic assets to confront a rising China, more valuable than Rafale jets or leased Russian submarines. Bharat Petroleum has assets in 17 countries and holds part of India's strategic oil reserves. Declining support to SCI and Indian shipping has meant that the share of India's maritime trade carried by Indian ships is today a minuscule 6 per cent, down from 40 per cent in 1989 (figure 3). No prizes for guessing whose ships transport India's trade.

The government's refusal to support PSEs at critical moments has left wide gaps in key industrial capabilities. With the collapse of HMT, India is forced to import 80 per cent of its machine tools, the bedrock of manufacturing. The undermining of the pharmaceutical PSEs like IDPL and HAL, once India's pride, make them dependent on active ingredients from China. The government's reluctance to support BHEL has flooded the Indian power sector with Chinese equipment. Moreover, India is largely absent in emerging technologies like solar wafers, computer chips or EV batteries. India needs to imitate China in establishing new PSEs in strategic and emerging industries, which require patient capital and greater risk. In the development of a civilian aircraft, India has lost a decade due to the ideological reservation about spending public money for developing anything outside defence.

At this critical juncture, the sale of giants like BPCL, BEML or SCI would undermine India's “Atmanirbhar” goal. Privatisation compromises India's sovereignty and economic freedom, threatening its energy security and strategic posture. If India is not to hide behind the tailcoats of Western powers as it confronts a rising China, it must strengthen its public sector enterprises.

Shankar is former Union secretary, DIIP and Khanna taught at Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“We must warn solemnly Japan, India and Australia not to follow the US too far in confronting China. Once they step on the red line of China's core interests, China will not care about their relations with the US, and China will not hesitate to punish them.”
—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Why Mohan Bhagwat is right about the Raj

British did indeed create Hindu-Muslim division for their own ends. RSS chief should prevent ruling forces from exacerbating this colonial policy



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

THE RSS CHIEF has once again made a positive statement about Indian Muslims while addressing some Muslim intellectuals in Mumbai. This author has consistently maintained that only Mohan Bhagwat can tame hardcore Hindutva foot soldiers and initiate Hindutva's perestroika. Liberal scholars are not yet impressed because of the inconsistency in Bhagwat's statements and because some BJP leaders continue to make highly provocative statements. The recent reference to “abba jaan” by the UP CM regarding food distribution was not only factually wrong but was also a clear case of hate speech.

Bhagwat himself is receiving brickbats from Hindutva groups and activists. Bhagwat was also criticised for his statement about Hindus and Muslims having the same DNA.

In his latest address, Bhagwat rightly blamed the British for sowing the seeds of communalism in India. He said that the British told Muslims that in a Hindu majority state, they would be at a receiving end with no power, position or influence. They similarly convinced Hindus about the dangers of staying with Muslims, who they claimed are by nature extremists. After 1857, the British adopted the systematic policy of divide and rule. Lord Elphinstone famously said that “*divide et impera* was the old Roman motto, and it should be ours.”

The British realised that despite the exploitation of peasants by the Mughals, people still saw them as their own. So, they encouraged enmity first between Muslims and Sikhs and underplayed the cordial relationship between Akbar and Guru Amar Das. Second, the British distorted history to demonstrate how Muslim rulers always discriminated against Hindus. To weaken the freedom movement, after 1870 and particularly after the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, the British changed their attitude of distrust towards Muslims and tried to emerge as their saviours.

Modern Hindu-Muslim identities were a British creation and the 1871 census greatly contributed to this. The British partitioned Bengal in 1905 to divide Bengali nationalism and brought the communal MacDonald Award with separate electorates, which eventually led to Partition. British officers pulled strings from behind the scenes to facilitate the Aga Khan-led Simla deputation of 35 prominent Muslims and the formation of the Muslim League in 1906. Lady Mary Minto's diary referred to the statement of a top official who attended this meeting: “A very big thing has happened today. A work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian history for many a long year. It is nothing less than the pulling back of sixty-two millions of people from

joining the ranks of seditious opposition.”

Unlike the British and Taliban, India's Muslim rulers had demonstrated tolerance and contributed to creating the country's composite, syncretic culture. Shariah was not strictly enforced by Muslim rulers. The king's sovereignty, rather than God's, was the central concept of their statecraft.

After the conquest of Sindh in 712, Arab rulers treated Hindus at par with “people of the book” — Jews and Christians. Hindu places of worship were protected, grants made to Brahmins by the earlier Hindu kings were continued and the Hindu priests were given a share in the taxation. Similarly, there is no authentic evidence of large-scale forced conversions through the proselytising activities by the state. No authoritative source tells us even about the mass voluntary conversions by the Sufi saints, as is commonly believed by Muslims.

Though Islam prohibits idol worship, the Delhi Sultanate did not hesitate in constructing Hindu temples. In 1353, Firoz Tughlaq built a sun temple at Gaya. Its Sanskrit inscription mentions the sultan's name twice. During the Tughlaqs' reign (1320-1413), several Hindus were appointed as provincial governors. During the Delhi Sultanate, the extremely important revenue department was largely in the hands of Hindu Khatri officers.

Akbar's attitude towards non-Muslims may be gathered from the following decree issued by him that “If a Hindu woman fell in love with a Muhammadan and changed her religion, she should be taken from him by force and be given back to her family. People should not be molested if they wish to build churches and prayer rooms or idol temples or fire temples.”

My teacher Athar Ali's remarkable work on the composition of Mughal nobility has authoritatively proved that in 1595, out of 279 Mansabdar, 47 (16.8 per cent) were Hindus and as many as 75 were Shias. During Jahangir's reign, out of 172 high holders of mansabs in 1621, 17.4 per cent were Hindus. During Aurangzeb's rule, the figure reached 31.06 per cent. Even Marathas comprised some one-sixth of Aurangzeb's nobles of 1,000 zat (horsemen) and above.

In 1584, Akbar issued a farman ordering his officials not to allow the slaughter of animals during the 12 days of the Jain Paryushan festival in the vicinity of Jains. Jahangir, out of respect for Jain subjects, used to abstain from non-vegetarian food on these days.

The ruling elite of all religions oppressed peasants, indulged in plunder and at times, for purely political reasons, destroyed religious places. But there was no state policy to promote hatred and hostility between ordinary Hindus and Muslims. Bhagwat is right. The British created this hostility. If the RSS is interested in true nation-building, it has to lead the battle against communalism and prevent today's ruling dispensation from continuing the British policy of divide and rule.

The writer is vice-chancellor, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad. Views are personal



BINOY VISWAM

The new united front

Call for Bharat Bandh expresses farmer-worker unity against Centre's policies

ABOUT 100 YEARS ago, the Champaran farmers' agitation ignited the fighting spirit of the Indian freedom movement. Though it took place in a remote village in Bihar, its vibrancy reached every nook and corner of the country. Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Champaran and his words to the peasants there travelled swiftly and penetrated the heart of every freedom-loving Indian. Thus, Champaran became a milestone in the saga of the freedom struggle.

The indigo cultivators, ignorant and ignored, were suddenly elevated as the makers of a new history. Their struggle was a natural outburst of anger against the foreign rulers who imposed unjust conditions on them. It marked an awakening among Indian peasants, who constitute a major chunk of society. Now, 100 years later independent India is witnessing a new awakening of farmers as the 75th anniversary of our freedom draws closer. To give an impetus to the ongoing farmers' agitation, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha is preparing for a Bharat Bandh on September 27. The call was supported by the joint platform of trade unions. Various political parties have also supported the call.

About a year ago, when the farmers announced a march to the national capital, no one expected the movement to become so massive. At the borders of the national capital, the farmers were hindered by the gov-

ernment. The “annadatas” of the country were denied entry into its capital. They were forced to sit at the places where they were stopped. That is how Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur and Shahjahanpur became the symbols of peasant resistance. The RSS-BJP government converted these places into battlefields. Thousands of security personnel were deployed. Concrete barricades, thorny iron fences, water cannons, and all other arms and ammunition were set ready for action. Along with these, the government and its propaganda army unleashed a vicious campaign depicting the farmers and their supporters as “Khalistanis” and “urban Naxals”. Braving all these oppressive measures, the farmers continued their peaceful agitation. The severity of the changing weather did not affect their determination. The historic farmers' struggle is undoubtedly the longest and largest in India since Independence.

The class content of the farmers' struggle also makes it different. It is a resistance raised by those farmers who contributed significantly to the economic growth of the country. The peasants and workers in the agrarian sector constitute the biggest segment of the working masses of the country. Hypocritically, the government often calls them “annadatas”. But when talking about the wealth creators, they are always neglected. Middle and marginal farmers

and agricultural labourers are not even allowed to raise their concerns. India's rural economy is built upon their sweat and labour. But they never get remunerative prices for their produce and labour. Even the Swaminathan Commission Report was adopted partially and halfheartedly by the government. For the meaningful growth of the rural economy, the productive forces in agriculture should be liberated from the clutches of corporate looters. The politics and economics of agrarian relations were never taken seriously by the policymakers of free India. The peasantry, due to several reasons, were scattered and remained helpless before this discrimination. The ongoing farmers' strike marks a distinctive shift in these conditions. Farmers have begun to react and resist.

The three farm laws enacted by the government were not for the betterment of agriculture. None of the concerns of the farming community was addressed in those dark laws. The government of “Atmanirbhar Bharat” has betrayed self-reliance and national interest. The laws were aimed at the corporatisation of Indian farming. They throw the farmers, 86 per cent of whom hold less than two hectares of land, to the mercy of contract farming and FDI. The government's rhetoric on MSP is also a lie. The recent proclamation of support price for Rabi crops proved this. When

compared to the inflationary trends in the economy, the new support prices are un-supportive — they are 4 per cent less than before in real terms.

Peasants understood the hidden danger in the laws and came forward to oppose the government's onslaught. The slogan to repeal the dark laws acted as a clarion call for rural India. The lessons from this struggle have to be analysed by Left and democratic forces to understand the emerging dynamics in rural India.

The farmers' agitation, together with the workers' support, has great political significance. It challenges the anti-people, anti-national policies of the government. The Bharat Bandh call will have resonance with the political churn underway in India. The emerging worker-peasant unity would give a new direction to protest movements. Agitating farmers have concluded that the Modi government is not for the peasants and workers. During elections, they raised a one-point agenda — “defeat BJP”. If this slogan starts reverberating among all the working masses, such a change is possible. The question, however, is whether the forces that oppose the government on policy matters will rise to the occasion.

The writer is secretary of the Communist Party of India, National Council and leader of the CPI in Parliament

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WELCOME PROBE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Court is watching’ (IE, September 24). It is heartening to see the Supreme Court's active intervention in the Pegasus Project, notwithstanding the Centre's flimsy excuses. Since the Court has declared privacy as a fundamental right, the matter assumes more importance. Fears that an authoritarian government has used such spyware to target dissidents and “trouble makers” has been mounting. The state's efforts to block investigations only add fuel to the fire. It is hoped that the Court appointed panel reveals the truth and renders justice at the earliest.

Ila Railkar, Mumbai

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Court is watching’ (IE, September 24). The move by the Supreme Court to appoint an experts committee to probe the Pegasus matter is welcome considering that basic liberties of people are at stake and also because the government has not provided convincing reasons for not probing the matter itself. Several countries similarly affected have initiated inquiries, and the government's hesitation in doing so is surprising. The choice of experts will be critical to a fair probe and should avoid any controversy.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

PROCEDURE EXCUSE

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Govt to SC: No caste census, conscious policy deci-

sion’ (IE, September 24). As such, the government and courts have justified the need for accurate and quantifiable data for making evidence-based caste-based welfare policy initiatives. It is intriguing that Centre is dithering on caste census when all political parties have supported the Constitution 127th Amendment Bill to restore power of the states and Union Territories to draw their own OBC list. The difficulties of “operational feasibility” cited before the Supreme Court may not be too arduous for a Government committed to implementation of the CAA-NRC, which is far more complex and complicated logistic process. Or does the BJP want the judiciary to take a call on contentious issue of caste census, and save itself from the backlash of the upper castes, its core constituency of Hindutva?

L.R. Murmu, Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Af-Pak Ambush’ (IE, September 23). Though the cancellation of the SAARC foreign ministers' meeting is not a happy event, it was bound to occur. Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan is indeed an ominous development in the region, posing a threat to world peace and Pakistan's stark support to it further exacerbates the threat perception. The cancellation of the meeting signifies the collective will of the member nations to snub Taliban in a most effective and civilised way.

Ravi Mathur, Noida

Speaker: Need discussion, not obstruction, in the House

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, SEPTEMBER 24

THERE SHOULD be discussions and not obstruction or ruckus in the House, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said while addressing a joint session of Karnataka legislature on Friday.

In his address on 'Democracy - Safeguarding Parliamentary Values', Birla said: "We as legislators should make an effort to have more active participation while framing laws. There should be discussions and there should be no obstruction or ruckus in the House."

Birla's comments came in the wake of repeated disruptions by the Opposition during the Monsoon Session of Parliament. During the session, Bills were passed with minimal discussions amid ruckus and disruptions by the Opposition. The Winter Session of Parliament is expected in the third week of November.

"When the Constitution was drafted, the sentiment was to make our legislature more aware, dutiful, honest and responsible so that a path could be paved for the social and economic betterment of people," Birla said.

He emphasised that disciplined and dignified behaviour of legislators, in both personal and public life, is needed to earn the respect of the people.

"There is a need to maintain discipline, honour and dignity in Parliament and legislatures across the country. It is expected of the members of the legislatures and Parliament to behave in a dignified manner in their public and personal life so that people draw inspiration from them," Birla said.

He said democracy is considered the best form of governance as people are at the centre of governance and the participation of the electorate shows the commitment of the nation towards democracy.

"There was a need to discuss how to make the democratic institutions more answerable to the people. Parliament and legislatures are the souls of Indian democracy and it will strengthen when people's welfare is given priority," he said.

The opposition Congress party boycotted Birla's address.

Pilot meets Rahul again, Priyanka joins deliberations

MANOJ C G
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

AFTER HAVING replaced its Chief Minister in Punjab, the Congress leadership has now turned its attention towards Rajasthan to set its faction-ridden house in order in the state. The immediate outcome of the meeting could be expansion and reshuffle of the Ashok Gehlot Cabinet to include several loyalists of Pilot.

For the second time in a week, Gandhi met Pilot on Friday. AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra too joined in the deliberations. While some of the leaders in the Pilot camp said the meeting was "very positive", the key question is whether the Congress leadership, if not immediately, was looking at a leadership change in Rajasthan as well.

A senior Congress leader said "things are moving in the right direction" in Rajasthan, signalling that a Cabinet reshuffle would be the first of the many changes that will take place in the state. While Assembly elections are still a little over two years away, the party has signalled that it has already started applying its mind on how to retain power in the state.

Pilot, who waged a revolt against Gehlot last year, is eager to take over as Chief Minister but the central leadership is said to be not in a hurry. But sources said all issues, including a succession plan, were on the discussion table. But unlike in Punjab where the Congress MLAs deserted Amarinder Singh, Gehlot enjoys the support of the majority of the MLAs.

"Punjab has shown that MLAs are ultimately with high command. The leadership has to take a call. Let's see what happens and how it happens," a senior AICC functionary said.

While there was speculation that Pilot could be made an AICC general secretary and given charge of an Assembly election-bound state, sources close to the former Deputy Chief Minister said he is not really keen to move out of Rajasthan. Neither is he agreeable to any proposal to re-instate him as the state Congress president.

Pilot was sacked as Rajasthan



A file photograph of Rahul Gandhi with Sachin Pilot

Gandhi and Pilot had met on September 17 too. According to sources, the Gandhis had given an indication to Pilot last year that he would be made CM

Congress president after he revolted against Gehlot last year. He was stripped of the post of Deputy Chief Minister too. "Returning to these posts is not on his agenda. He had been PCC president for seven years," a leader close to him said.

Interestingly, Pilot had a meeting with Rajasthan Assembly Speaker and veteran Congress leader CP Joshi too earlier this week, which spawned all sorts of speculation. The meeting came days after the Speaker had a tiff with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shanti Dharwal in the Assembly after which he announced adjournment of the House sine die surprising everyone. Joshi later relented and agreed to reconvene the session.

Gandhi and Pilot had met on September 17 too. According to sources, the Gandhis had given an indication to Pilot last year that he would be made Chief Minister at least a year before the Assembly elections.

Forcing Gehlot to include some of his loyalists in his cabinet thus would be the first victory for Pilot after his disastrous revolt last year which saw him lose both the deputy chief minister and PCC president post.

ASSAM EVICTION DRIVE

Under tin sheets, belongings strewn, families say: 'As good as being dead'

TORA AGARWALA
DHOLPUR (ASSAM),
SEPTEMBER 24

UTENSILS, A bundle of clothes, a few packets of *moori* (puffed rice), a rickety bench and a tin sheet overhead — since Thursday, that's what makes up Harmuz Ali and Shahana Khatun's home for their family of five. "If you can call it a home," says Khatun quietly, her four-year-old on her lap, sweating in the scorching heat.

On Wednesday night, when the notice came from the district administration, Harmuz and Khatun, and their neighbours, had immediately begun gathering their things. By morning, the JCBs arrived, and families, including theirs, carried what they could to the patch of land allotted by the government to them across the small tributary of the Brahmaputra that runs across Dholpur 3 village.

Since then, it has been, in Harmuz's words, "as good as being dead". "We have barely eaten or slept," Under tin sheet after tin sheet, lie similar remnants of home, with an occasional Godrej steel almirah a sign of relative prosperity.

Where the families lived till Thursday morning — for 40 years, they claim — now stretches vast barren ground, barring pieces of



The parents of Moinul Haque, 33, whose death was captured in a viral video, at the shelter they have moved to with his wife and children. Tora Agarwala

broken roofs and tin sheets.

Most families claim they had bought land at the plot. Many transactions though happened without documents, and hold little legal validity.

Zamiron Nessa, 25, says her husband moved here after his home was "eaten up by the river" in Goalpara. Harmuz Ali claims he shifted back in 1979 from Barpeta, following erosion by the Brahmaputra. "My father bought the land for Rs 10,000," he says.

Khaleque Ali says it doesn't matter whether they have papers

or not. "It's just that we are Miyas (Bengali-speaking Muslims), and they think we are Bangladeshis."

On Friday, with police gone, many were trying to retrieve what they could from their old homes — pressure cookers, cupboards.

About Thursday's violence, people insist they had organised a "peaceful protest". "We requested better rehabilitation and other facilities. The administration agreed and said they will put the eviction on hold, till they arrange it," says Idur Ali.

However, a short while later,

GANGS OF DINDIGUL: 3 DECADES AND A DOZEN MURDERS

2 days after woman beheaded in 'revenge murder', 3 held

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, SEPTEMBER 24

TWO DAYS after a 70-year-old woman, accused in the murder of Dalit leader CP Sasupathy Pandian in 2012, was hacked to death in Dindigul, near Madurai, was beheaded, and her head placed outside Pandian's house as an offering, three of eight men suspected to have killed her were arrested on Friday.

The woman killed on Wednesday — P Nirmala Devi — was the fifth victim since Pandian's murder nine years ago. All five murders are suspected to be result of a rivalry between the



Pasupathy Pandian, Nirmala

gangs of Pandian and Subash Pannaiyar that began nearly three decades ago, with the murder of an elderly relative of Pannaiyar in January 1993.

Pannaiyar believed Pandian was behind that killing, and allegedly retaliated, sparking off a

series of revenge killings by both sides which has claimed at least 12 lives, including Nirmala Devi's, since 1993, according to police. Pannaiyar was among the 18 people accused of Pandian's murder in 2012 — the case is still at trial stage in a Dindigul court.

On Wednesday's murder, a senior police officer in Chennai who is monitoring the case said the accused escaped after placing Nirmala Devi's head at the gate of Pandian's house but met with an accident soon after. "Preliminary investigation reveals at least eight people were directly involved in Devi's murder. Three of them were arrested on Friday... others will be nabbed soon," the officer said.

Jamiat faction writes to Shah on 'brutality'

New Delhi: The Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind (Mahmood Madani faction) on Friday wrote to Home Minister Amit Shah condemning the "police brutality" during the eviction in Assam, and demanded that action be taken against police officers responsible. It also demanded a high-level judicial probe, compensation to the next of kin of victims and rehabilitation of those displaced. Madani also wrote to Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, the National Minorities Commission and the Human Rights Watch. **ENS**

the JCBs were at work. "One young girl was trying to hold on to a part of her home, when police started hitting her. That's when everyone got angry. We never attacked, police opened fire on us," he says.

SP Sarma told *The Indian Express* Thursday that the locals started the attack.

Haryana farmers plan to block highways for 10 hrs on Sept 27

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 24

ON THE call of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), Haryana farmers have resolved to block all state and national highways for ten hours (6 am to 4 pm) on September 27 as part of the Bharat Bandh to demand repealing of three farm laws.

The call of bandh has been given on the completion of ten months of farmers' agitation against the contentious laws. In the recent past, Haryana has emerged as epicentre of the agitation with thousands of farmers participating in the protests against BJP-JJP leaders in the state.

Haryana BKU leader Gurnam Singh Chaduni said ambulance

and other emergency services will be exempted from the bandh call.

He said: "We are expressing our resentment against government policies but don't want to cause any inconvenience to the public. We have also urged shopkeepers, workers and employees to join and support the bandh call."

In a statement, the SKM said: "From 6 am to 4 pm on September 27, everything would be closed throughout the country like all government and private offices, all educational and other institutions, all shops, industries and commercial establishments, all public events and functions. Public and private transport will also come to a halt during this period."

Rape accused IIT-Guwahati student expelled

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

IIT-GUWAHATI has expelled a student accused of raping a female student on the campus, observing that it was "necessary to confer exemplary punishment on the offender".

It is learnt that the decision was taken earlier this month by the Senate, which is the highest decision making body of the institute on academic matters.

When contacted, an IIT-Guwahati spokesperson said "the student from IIT-G has been expelled" adding that the "institute cannot comment further on the matter as subjudice".

The student was arrested in connection with the incident which allegedly took place on March 28. However, on August 13, the Gauhati High Court had granted him bail, observing that while there is a "clear prima facie case" against the accused, both the victim and the accused were "talented students" and the "state's future assets". The court had also ruled out any possibility of the accused tampering with evidence.

Sources said that at the senate meeting, IIT-Guwahati's director said that the institute, which suspended the student on April 4, was deeply concerned about such untoward incidents. Subsequently, the associate dean of students informed the senate members about the sequence of events on the night of March 28.

Referring to the court order, the dean of student affairs is learnt to have told the senate that the "court has said that there was a clear prima facie case against the accused and the investigation in the case is also complete".

UPSC: Two from Bengal in top 200

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 16

TWO CANDIDATES who were students of Satyendranath Tagore Civil Service Study Centre — run by the Bengal government — have bagged ranks in top 200 in the UPSC civil service exam result. Ricky Agarwal from Siliguri ranked 87 while Mayuri Mukherjee secured 159th rank.

Mayuri Mukherjee, completed 10+2 from Belghoria Mahakali Girls High School and graduated in botany from Presidency college, 2013. She did her M.Sc in Botany from University of Delhi, 2015 and submitted her PhD thesis in August 2021 from CSIR Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Jadavpur, Kolkata

Rickey Agarwal has a B.Tech in Instrumentation engineering, from IIT Kharagpur

This was her third attempt. Rickey Agarwal has a B.Tech in Instrumentation engineering, from IIT Kharagpur and was currently posted in Indian Civil Account Service.

The Bengal government took this initiative to train and guide civil service aspirants from West Bengal appearing for the examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission. The Civil Service Study Centre was inaugurated in 2014. In 2019, a total of 12 students from this centre had cleared the examination.

IAA honours for Express Chief Editor Jha, Amul MD Sodhi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 24

RAJ KAMAL Jha, Chief Editor of *The Indian Express*, was conferred the Editor of the Year award by the International Advertising Association (IAA) at a ceremony in Mumbai Friday.

The IAA leadership awards, which honour individuals in the fields of marketing, advertising and media every year, were presented by Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari, chief guest at the function, and IAA India chapter president Megha Tata, and The Indian Express Executive Director Anant Goenka who is also a committee member of the IAA India chapter.

In his acceptance speech, Jha said: "For the health of a democracy, there is no more powerful advertisement than the state of the news media. Your freedom of reach and our freedom of speech is one and the same thing."

"I am up here because of the work of many who are not," he said. "That is why I take this award on behalf of the families of the six colleagues who we lost to Covid; my colleagues, reporters, editors and photographers who never lose sight, even for a moment, even in the most testing times, that the story we need to tell is bigger than our own; and the Chairman of the Express Group, Mr Viveck Goenka, who is custodian of the space that we protect."

Jha also thanked Express readers and advertisers for being discerning, demanding of the

newspaper.

"(They) push us to find stories that others do not do or will not do. They know the search for truth is not about blue ticks or about hashtags, but it's about the painstaking work of hard journalism. It needs the generosity of anonymity and not a rant or rave at 9 o'clock in the night. I would like to thank the advertisers who value these audiences, who know the difference between a newsroom that is up for sale and a newsroom that has value," he said.

R S Sodhi, Managing Director, Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (Amul), received the award for Business Leader of the Year.

Accepting the award, Sodhi presented insights into the Amul campaign. "There are four Ps. First is product where the customer must say it was better than his expectations, it should be pure and unchanged like our butter. Pricing should be affordable and farmers must get the best price. For promotion, we used umbrella branding to cut cost. Consistency in communication was the main pillar for Amul advertising and marketing strategy," he said, mentioning creative advertising in the language of a particular place as the fourth P.

N P Singh, CEO, Sony Pictures Network India, was honoured with the Mediaperson of the Year award. Film actor Anil Kapoor was awarded Brand Endorser for the Year. Raj Nayak was inducted into the IAA Hall of Fame. Palki Sharma Upadhyay was awarded TV Anchor of the Year.

CBI resigsters FIR in Narendra Giri death case

Lucknow: Two days after the Uttar Pradesh government recommended a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the death of Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad (ABAP) president Mahant Narendra Giri, the agency's special crime branch in Delhi took over the inquiry on Friday. A CBI team arrived in Prayagraj in the evening, and asked the police for case files.

The agency has invoked IPC Section 306 (abetment of suicide) in the FIR. Three people, including two disciples of the Hindu ascetic, are in judicial custody at present.

Meanwhile, earlier in the day, the Prayagraj police visited Naini Central Jail to question the accused. "On court's permission, a police team came to the jail and questioned the persons arrested in connection with the death of Narendra Giri," said police. **ENS**

ODISHA

Reporter covering elephant rescue drowns

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT 24

A TELEVISION journalist accompanying an elephant rescue team died after their boat capsized in the Mahanadi river at the Mundali bridge in Odisha's Cuttack district, officials said.

The boat was carrying personnel of the Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) which was attempting to rescue the tusker trapped in the river. One of its members, Sitaram Murmu, is missing. A search is underway for him.

The boat overturned owing to the strong current in the river. The journalist, Arindam Das,



Arindam Das

died after falling into the river. His colleague, Prabhat Sinha, a video journalist, was hospitalised and is in critical condition. Das worked for the Odia TV news channel 'OTV'.

He is survived by his wife and a two-year-old son.

The emergency officer of Cuttack's SCB Hospital, Bhubanananda Maharana, said Das had died before admission. "The doctors tried to revive him for an hour but failed," he said.

A team of 80 forest officials

from two divisions of Odisha and members of ODRAF were part of the elephant rescue operation..

The Odisha State Disaster Management Authority has initiated an investigation into how two mediapersons were allowed to accompany the rescue team. "The incident is unfortunate and the matter will be investigated. Even in normal conditions it is not advisable for anyone to accompany a rescue team under such harsh conditions," a senior OSDMA official said, requesting anonymity.

According to the forest officials, the trapped elephant, a sub-adult male, was a part of a 17-member herd which was trying to cross the Mahanadi river

from Chandaka to Banki late Thursday night. Around 10 elephants were stuck due to the strong currents in the water. According to onlookers, by Friday morning, three elephants could be seen in the river. Two of them struggled and managed to cross the river together while the lone tusker was stuck close to the bridge. The elephant has been stuck at one spot for over six hours and has to cover 20 metres to reach the riverbank.

"The other elephants have safely crossed the river. The water current was strong because of which the elephant got tired," said assistant conservator of forest of Chandaka division Sangram Mohanty.

GOLD	RUPEE	OIL	SILVER
₹45,141	₹73.68	\$74.73	₹59,429
Crude oil (Indian basket) as of September 23			

CORPORATE WATCH COMPETITION

‘Beer cartelisation’: United Breweries, Carlsberg, others fined over ₹873 cr

ENSECONOMICBUREAU NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

THE COMPETITION Commission of India (CCI) has imposed penalties totalling over Rs 873 crore on United Breweries Ltd (UBL), Carlsberg India Pvt Ltd (CIPL), All India Brewers Association (AIBA) and 11 individuals for cartelisation in the sale and supply of beer in 10 states and Union Territories, including Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Delhi and Maharashtra. The regulator concluded United Breweries, Carlsberg India and Anheuser Busch InBev India colluded to fix beer prices from 2009 to at least October 2018.

A government release said the CCI had passed orders against UBL, AB InBev and CIPL “for indulging in cartelisation in the sale and supply of beer ... including through the platform of AIBA.” The Commission decided to give a 100 per cent penalty reduction to AB Inbev as the company explained the nature of the cartel and submitted evidence of email communications between key managerial personnel at the companies being investigated. The final penalty of Rs 751.8 crore on UBL and Rs 120.6 crore CIPL also included reductions in penalties of 40 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, for cooperation with the probe by the CCI.

The search and seizures conducted by the Director General of the CCI found regular communications between the three companies.

Key managerial personnel

The CCI concluded that United Breweries, Carlsberg India and Anheuser Busch InBev India colluded to fix beer prices from 2009 to at least Oct 2018

cited the need to seek approvals from state authorities for any price revisions as a key reason for the need for coordination. In one case, a UBL executive said due to the fact that price changes were only permitted on three specific dates in a year, competitors would exchange notes and price main products similarly to “ensure that we do not suffer huge losses as a result of this policy.”

Emails recovered during the investigation showed executives sharing proposed price changes and coordinating the timing for applying to state authorities for price changes. The CCI noted that such state policies “cannot be taken as an excuse for entering into price co-ordination by parties.” In case of Maharashtra, the CCI found price revisions by UBL and AB Inbev since 2011 showed an “uncanny closeness” in timing, with Carlsberg India also joining the two companies in making revisions around the same time since April 2014.

UBL, AB InBev and CIPL did not respond to emailed requests for comments as of press time on Friday.

RATE RATIONALISATION, EXEMPTIONS TO BE TAKEN UP

GST revenue buoyancy a worry, GoM panels to reassess slabs

AANCHAL MAGAZINE NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

AS BUOYANCY in Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues poses a concern, the ministerial panels to be constituted under the GST Council is likely to also carry out a review the key tax slabs under the indirect tax regime. This will be in addition to rate rationalisation, correction of inverted duty structure, relook at exemptions, e-way bill systems, e-invoices, FASTag data and other technological measures, which would be reviewed by the ministerial panels as part of its broader revenue augmentation mandate.

The lower-than-expected revenue buoyancy and the slipping of the revenue neutral rate under GST is being seen as one of the major concerns for sustenance of the revenue trend going ahead, especially after the legally mandated compensation to states for revenue shortfall from the GST implementation comes

Complete GST probes in a year: CBIC to taxmen

New Delhi: The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs has asked field offices to draw up an action plan so that no case of GST evasion is pending investigation beyond one year. In an instruction to field formations, the CBIC has also asked GST officers to speed up investigation and issue show-cause notices in evasion cases, so that enough time is left with adjudicating authority to pass orders. PTI

to an end in June 2022.

“Revenue (under GST) is a concern. Next two-three months will be focused on steps such as rate rationalisation. The GoM will relook at tax slabs and look at the possibility of merger of some slabs. They may look into it now and recommend changes, which

may get implemented later, depending on other factors such as market and economic conditions at that point of time,” a senior government official told *The Indian Express*.

Any such recommendation of tweaks in rates or tax slabs by the GoM would then require final approval of the GST Council. The GST has five key tax slabs: zero, 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent. A compensation cess, ranging between 1 per cent to 290 per cent, is levied on demerit and luxury goods over and above the topmost rate of 28 per cent. A merger of 5 per cent and 12 per cent slabs or 12 per cent and 18 per cent slabs has been deliberated upon earlier as well but has not been taken up formally for a decision.

The GST Council in its 45th meeting held in Lucknow had deliberated upon the revenue situation and the revenue neutral rate having fallen to 11.6 per cent from 15.5 per cent. The Council had then decided to form two GoMs to look at inverted duty

structure and compliance measures through e-way bills, composition schemes. The constitution of the two GoMs is expected to be announced soon.

“The Revenue Neutral Rate of 15.5 per cent coming down to 11.6 per cent is because of course, the Council in its wisdom probably over the years had reduced the rate of many many items and not just the reduction, but the resultant refund due to the inversion have resulted, net net, in the collection coming down from the revenue neutral levels. As a result we feel that the overall collection has come down. We also feel why it has come down. But if we all put together we can all see that we are far below the revenue neutral rate,” Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said after the Council meeting.

The mandate announced for the GoMs after the Council meeting last week did not include a review of tax slabs. Sitharaman had said the terms of reference would relate to correction of inversion and rate rationalisation.

AT ₹5.7 LAKH CRORE TILL SEPT 22

Net direct tax mop-up rises 74% so far this fiscal

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

GROSS DIRECT tax collections have risen 47 per cent year-on-year to Rs 6.45 lakh crore during April 1-September 22 this year with net direct tax collections growing 74.4 per cent year-on-year to Rs 5.7 lakh crore, the Finance Ministry said in a statement on Friday. Advance tax mop-up also registered a 56.4 per cent growth to Rs 2.53 lakh crore during the same period, indicating a pickup in economic recovery after the impact of the first wave of Covid-19 pandemic last year and a greater compliance by bigger businesses.

Advance tax collection in the July-September quarter of 2021-22 financial year is Rs 1,72,071 crore, up 51.5 per cent over the corresponding period last fiscal.

Net direct tax collections, which are the tax collections after adjusting for refunds, stood at Rs 5,70,568 crore in the current fiscal so far (till September 22). This includes Corporation Tax (CIT) at Rs 3.02 lakh crore and Personal Income Tax (PIT) at Rs 2.67 lakh crore.

“The net collection (as on 22.09.2021) in FY 2021-22 has registered a growth of 27 per cent over FY 2019-20 when the net collection was Rs 4,48,976 crore,” the ministry said. In the 2020-21 financial year, the net collection was over Rs 3.27 lakh crore.

The gross collection was 16.75 per cent higher than Rs 5.53 lakh crore collected in 2019-20 fiscal (April-September 22). Gross corporate income tax mop-up was Rs 3.58 lakh crore and personal income tax collection was over Rs 2.86 lakh crore. Refunds amounting to Rs 75,111 crore have also been issued so far this fiscal year.

ADVANCE TAX TO RISE FURTHER

■ The advance tax collection of Rs 2.53 lakh crore till September consists of Corporation Tax at Rs 1,96,964 crore and Personal Income Tax at Rs 56,389 crore. This amount is expected to increase as further information is awaited from banks, the Finance Ministry said.

“Despite extremely challenging initial months of the fiscal year 2021-22, the Advance Tax collection in the second quarter (1st July, 2021 to 22nd September, 2021) of FY 2021-22 is Rs 1,72,071 crore which shows a growth of 51.50 per cent over the corresponding period in FY 2020-21 when the Advance Tax collection was Rs 1,13,571 crore,” the ministry said. Compared with FY 2019-20, the advance tax collections have grown 14.62 per cent, it said.

The advance tax collection of Rs 2.53 lakh crore till September consists of Corporation Tax at Rs 1,96,964 crore and Personal Income Tax at Rs 56,389 crore. This amount is expected to increase as further information is awaited from banks, the ministry said.

Sandeep Jhunjhunwala, Partner, Nangia Andersen LLP said businesses, although not unscathed, were better prepared to ride this wave. “The 27 per cent improvement in tax collection from FY 2019-20, when the economy was more stable than it is today, may be more reassuring than the 74.4 per cent improvement from FY 2020-21 when businesses experienced a significant dip.”

BRIEFLY

Anti-dumping

New Delhi: The Commerce Ministry has recommended imposition of anti-dumping duty on a pharma raw material, Ceftriaxone Sodium Sterile, from China.

CAG Murmu

New Delhi: Comptroller and Auditor General G C Murmu was on Friday selected as the external auditor of International Atomic Energy Agency.

Drone operations

New Delhi: The government on Friday released an interactive digital airspace map for drone operations that demarcates areas into zones, including yellow and red, across the country for flying drones.

Sebi, Kotak Bank

New Delhi: Sebi disposed of proceedings against Kotak Mahindra Bank in a matter pertaining to breach of investment limit in the scrip of Sathavahana Ispat Ltd by two foreign portfolio investors.

Tehri Dam

New Delhi: The Tehri reservoir touched the level of 830 m, its full-reservoir level, for the first time on Friday. **ENS**

Oil near 3-yr high

New York: Oil prices rose to a near three-year high on Friday as they headed for a third straight week of gains, supported by global output disruptions and inventory draws. Brent futures was up 88 cents, or 1.1 per cent, to \$78.13 by 1:15 pm EDT.

Uber UK pension

London: Uber Technologies said it would start rolling out its pension plan to all eligible drivers in the UK. **REUTERS**

Google plea attempt to frustrate probe: CCI Why has Google approached the court?

SOFIAHSAN NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

THE COMPETITION Commission of India (CCI) on Friday told the Delhi High Court that Google had threatened to sue the competition regulator and its petition, accusing the Commission of leaking the confidential report, and it was only an attempt to frustrate the ongoing probe against it.

“Advise your client. Just because he is there (in California) ... he has to know that if he wants to function in a country, he has to know the law. This I don’t appreciate,” observed Justice Rekha Palli during the hearing of Google’s petition seeking protection of the confidential information contained in the DG’s probe report about the company’s Android smartphone agreements.

While opposing the petition, ASG N Venkatraman said: “It will send a completely wrong signal. This is just to frustrate proceedings. Please dismiss it...”

Labour codes: 15 states release draft regulation

ENSECONOMICBUREAU NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

AS MANY as 15 states have prepared draft rules under the four labour codes passed by Parliament between 2019 and 2020.

As per the Labour Ministry’s Cabinet note, the Centre has finalised rules for the 3 codes other than social security code, the rules under which are yet to be vetted by the legislative department. As per the note, 15 major states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat have already ‘pre-published’ draft rules under code on wages and code on industrial relations. Nine states including Odisha, UP, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have prepared rules under both social security and occupational safety & health code. **FE**

KARUNJIT SINGH NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

GOOGLE HAS moved the Delhi High Court against the Competition Commission of India (CCI) over the leak of a report entailing allegations of abuse of dominance in the Android smartphone market.

The probe by the investigative arm of the CCI had concluded that Google had “restricted” the ability of manufacturers to develop and reportedly sell alternative versions of its Android operating system.

Why has Google moved the high court?

Google has moved to the high court protesting against the leak of the report, claiming that the leak impairs the com-

The CCI, in April 2019, ordered a probe into the conduct of Google in the smartphone market

pany’s ability to defend itself. An investigative report by the Director General of the CCI does not constitute final orders by the CCI and is reviewed by members of the CCI before the regulator passes any final orders which could include penalties.

Google said in a statement it was “protesting against the breach of confidence which impairs Google’s ability to defend itself and harms Google and its partners.”

The company added that it had “cooperated fully and maintained confidentiality through-

out the investigative process,” and expected the “same level of confidentiality” from the CCI.

What are the allegations against Google?

The CCI had in April 2019 ordered an investigation into the conduct of Google in the smartphone market over allegations that agreements that the firm required smartphone manufacturers to sign to pre-install google play store restricted the ability of manufacturers to develop and sell alternative versions of Android.

The commission had also noted that a requirement by Google that any manufacturer pre-installing the google play store on their devices also pre-install the entire suite of google apps was also prima facie a violation of competition law.

Google is also facing a similar antitrust probe for its conduct in the smart television market.

Master direction: Banks can now sell fraud loans to ARCs

ENSECONOMICBUREAU MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 24

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) on Friday allowed banks to sell fraud loan exposures to asset reconstruction companies (ARCs). Banks will now be able to transfer to ARCs loan exposures classified as fraud as on the date of transfer, provided that the responsibilities of the bank with respect to continuous reporting, monitoring, filing of complaints with law enforcement agencies and proceedings related to such complaints shall also be transferred to the ARC.

“The transfer of such loan exposures to an ARC, however, does not absolve the transferor from fixing the staff accountability as required under the extant instructions on frauds,” the RBI said in its



The RBI guidelines said lenders must put in place a board-approved policy for transfer and acquisition of all loan exposures. File

master direction on transfer of loan exposures.

The guidelines said lenders must put in place a comprehensive board-approved policy for transfer and acquisition of all loan expo-

To give growth a push, FinMin pulls back spending restrictions

ENSECONOMICBUREAU NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 24

WITH GOVERNMENT revenues picking up, alongside the economic recovery, the Finance Ministry on Friday removed the expenditure curbs imposed on various ministries for the July-September quarter. As a cash management exercise, the government had earlier asked various ministries and departments (in category B) to “restrict the overall expenditure within 20 per cent of BE 2020-21 in Quarter 2 (July to September, 2021)”.

The government did not impose any spending restrictions on the Ministries of health, rural development, railways, agriculture, MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) — the ministries and department in the Category A specified by the Finance Ministry. Expenditure curbs were imposed on demands/appropriations re-

PICK UP IN ECONOMY

■ As economic recovery picks up, the government has a better handle on its finances and revenues. Plus spending by the government, especially capital expenditure, is needed to sustain the recovery.

lated to ministries and departments such as civil aviation, home, labour, mines, power, telecom and post, consumer affairs, fisheries, revenue, economic affairs, financial services and heavy industries, among others, in Category B.

The Finance Ministry has now removed the restriction on limiting the expenditure to 20 per cent of Budget Estimates 2020-21 in July-September quarter. Ministries

and departments are now permitted to spend as per their approved monthly and quarterly expenditure plans. Also, restrictions imposed on bulk expenditure items of Rs 200 crore and above have also been removed for Budgeted capital expenditure for remaining part of the year.

As economic recovery picks up, the government has a better handle on its finances and revenues. Plus spending by the government, especially capital expenditure, is needed to sustain the recovery. “The government’s spending had contracted by 5 per cent in April-July 2021 on a YoY basis, and stood at 29 per cent of the Budget Estimates. With the withdrawal of the expenditure management guidelines, we anticipate that spending will gather pace in the second half of this year, which will be critical to unleash animal spirits and drive a faster recovery in economic activity,” said Aditi Nayar, chief economist, Icra.

Relentless reforms by Centre since 2014: FM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 24

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman said on Friday “relentless reforms were brought by the Central government since 2014 to shift the economy from being fragile to the fastest growing economy”.

“... Since 2014, relentless reforms are brought by the Central government. From legislative corrections to administrative corrections, every possible effort was made to take India on the *atmanirbharta* track and shifting the country’s economy from being fragile to fastest growing economy,” she said, according to a release issued by the Haryana government.

Sitharaman was in Panchkula on Friday.



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. File

The Minister added various digital and economic reforms have been brought in every sector.

“I can see very clearly signs of revival and good signs of revival. Otherwise my revenue collection would not be where it is, both the GST and direct taxation,” Sitharaman was quoted by *PTI* as saying while addressing a separate press conference in Chandigarh.

10 THE WORLD

TOPOF THE WORLD



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

UNITED NATIONS

Tedros poised for reelection at WHO as support grows

TEDROS ADHANOM Ghebreyesus has gained wide support for a second term as head of the World Health Organisation, formally nominated by at least 17 European Union members and backed by countries in other regions, diplomats said on Thursday. As the deadline for nominations elapsed, diplomats said they were unaware of any other names being put forward to lead the UN agency, suggesting that Tedros will stand unopposed in the May election. Tedros, a former health and foreign minister of Ethiopia, elected as WHO's first African director-general in May 2017, has led the global fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. He has steered WHO through attacks on its handling of the crisis. **REUTERS**

AUSTRIA

CIA Vienna station chief removed amid 'Havana syndrome' criticism: report

THE CIA has removed its Vienna station chief following criticism of his management, including what some considered an inadequate response to reports of "Havana syndrome" incidents at the US embassy there, the *Washington Post* reported on Thursday. The *Post*, which cited unnamed current and former US officials, reported the action would send a message that leaders must take seriously the Havana syndrome, a mysterious set of ailments that include migraines, nausea, memory lapses and dizziness. A CIA spokesperson said the agency does not comment on specific officers. **REUTERS**

USA

Gunman kills 1, wounds 12 in Tennessee store

A GUNMAN opened fire inside a grocery store in Collierville, Tennessee, on Thursday, killing one person and injuring at least 12 others as panicked employees and customers ran for safety, hiding in freezers and locked offices, the authorities said. Police found the gunman in the back of the store, and was believed to have been killed by a self-inflicted gunshot wound, Dale Lane, the Collierville police chief, said at a news conference. One worker who was on the roof was brought to safety. **NYT**

Afghan Taliban defence minister orders crackdown on misconduct by fighters

REUTERS
PESHAWAR, SEPTEMBER 24

THE TALIBAN'S new defence minister has issued a rebuke over misconduct by some commanders and fighters following the movement's victory over the Western-backed government in Afghanistan last month, saying abuses would not be tolerated.

Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob said in an audio message that some "miscreants and notorious former soldiers" had been allowed to join Taliban units where they had committed a range of sometimes violent abuses.

"We direct you keep them out of your ranks, otherwise strict action will be taken against you," he stated. "We don't want such people in our ranks."



Some Kabul residents have complained of abusive treatment at the hands of Taliban fighters. Reuters

The message from one of the Taliban's most senior ministers underlines the problems Afghanistan's new rulers have sometimes had in controlling fighting forces as they transition from an insurgency to a peacetime administration.

Some Kabul residents have

complained of abusive treatment at the hands of Taliban fighters who have appeared on the streets of the capital, often from other regions and unused to big cities.

There have also been reports of reprisals against members of the former government and military or civil society activists, despite promises of an amnesty by the Taliban.

Yaqoob said there had been isolated reports of unauthorised executions, and he repeated that such actions would not be tolerated. "As you all are aware, under the general amnesty announced in Afghanistan, no mujahid has the right to take revenge on anyone," he said.

It was not clear precisely which incidents he was referring to, nor what prompted the message, which was published on

Taliban Twitter accounts and widely shared on social media.

There have been reports of tensions within the movement between hardline battlefield commanders and political leaders more willing to seek compromise with governments outside Afghanistan.

Yaqoob also said patrols should be restricted to areas where they were assigned and criticised the fondness of some fighters for going into government offices where they had no business and taking selfies. "This is highly objectionable as everyone is taking out mobile phones and taking snaps in the important and sensitive ministries without any reason," he said. "Such hanging out and taking snaps and videos will not help you in this world, and also in the hereafter."



YOUTH RETURN TO STREETS IN CLIMATE FIGHT

Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg at a Global Climate Strike event in Berlin on Friday. Young people around the world began taking to the streets on Friday to demand urgent action to avert disastrous climate change, in their largest protest since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. The strike takes place five weeks before the UN COP26 summit, which aims to secure more ambitious climate action from world leaders to drastically cut the greenhouse gas emissions heating the planet. **Reuters**

'Death sentence': Low-lying nations implore faster climate action at UN

DAPHNE PSALEDAKIS & MICHELLE NICHOLS
UNITED NATIONS, SEPT 24

FACED WITH what they see as an existential threat, leaders from low-lying island nations implored rich countries at the United Nations General Assembly this week to act more forcefully against a warming planet.

The failure by developed economies to effectively curb their greenhouse gas emissions contributes to rising sea levels and especially imperils island and low-lying nations at the mercy of water.

"We simply have no higher ground to cede," Marshall Islands President David Kabua told leaders in a pre-recorded speech at the high-level gathering on Wednesday. "The world simply cannot delay climate ambition any further."

Countries agreed under the



Palau's President Surangel Whipps at the UN General Assembly. Reuters

2015 Paris Agreement on climate change mitigation to attempt to limit the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the threshold scientists say would head off the worst impacts of warming. To do that, scientists say, the world needs to cut global emissions in half by 2030, and to net-zero by 2050.

"The difference between 1.5 degrees and 2 degrees is a death sentence for the Maldives,"

President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih told world leaders on Tuesday.

Guyana President Irfaan Ali criticised large polluters for not delivering on promises to curb emissions, accusing them of "deception" and "failure" and warning that climate change will kill far more people than the Covid pandemic.

"We hold out similar hope that the world's worst emitters of greenhouse gases that are affecting the welfare of all mankind will also come to the realisation that, in the end, it will profit them little to emerge king over a world of dust," Ali told world leaders on Thursday.

He said small island states and countries with low-lying coastlines, like Guyana, will bear the full brunt of the impending disaster despite being among the lowest emitters of greenhouse gases.

"This is not only unfair, it is unjust," he said. **REUTERS**

N Korea offers talks, likely trying to get sanctions relief

Seoul: The influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Friday her country is willing to resume talks with South Korea if conditions are met, indicating it wants Seoul to persuade Washington to relax crippling economic sanctions.

Kim Yo Jong's statement came days after North Korea performed its first missile tests in six months, which some experts said were intended to show it will keep boosting its weapons arsenal if the US-led sanctions continue while nuclear diplomacy remains stalled.

She offered the talks while mentioning South Korean President Moon Jae-in's call, issued in a speech at the UN General Assembly, for a political declaration to end the 1950-53 Korean War as a way to bring peace to the peninsula. **AP**

MEANWHILE

'VIEW' HOSTS TEST POSITIVE, HARRIS INTERVIEW DELAYED

A live TV interview with US Vice President Kamala Harris was delayed Friday after two hosts of the 'The View' learned they tested positive for Covid moments before they were to interview her. Hosts Sunny Hostin and Ana Navarro both learned they tested positive for breakthrough cases ahead of the interview. Both were at the table for the start of the show, but then were pulled from the set.

China cracks down on cryptocurrency, bans all transactions

Price of Bitcoin falls over 9%, to \$41,085, after announcement

AP & NYT
BEIJING, SEPTEMBER 24

CHINA'S CENTRAL bank on Friday declared all transactions involving Bitcoin and other virtual currencies illegal, stepping up a campaign to block use of unofficial digital money.

Friday's notice complained Bitcoin, Ethereum and other digital currencies disrupt the financial system and are used in money-laundering and other crimes.

"Virtual currency derivative transactions are all illegal financial activities and are strictly prohibited," the People's Bank of China said on its website.

The price of Bitcoin fell more than 9%, to \$41,085, in the hours after the announcement, as did most other crypto tokens. Ethereum skidded almost 10%, falling from \$3,100 to around \$2,800.

Chinese banks were banned from handling cryptocurrencies in 2013, but the government issued a reminder this year. That reflected official concern cryptocurrency mining and trading might still be going on or the



Regulators in other countries have increasingly warned that cryptocurrencies need greater oversight. AP file

state-run financial system might be indirectly exposed to risks.

Promoters of cryptocurrencies say they allow anonymity and flexibility, but Chinese regulators worry they might weaken the ruling Communist Party's control over the financial system and say they might help to conceal criminal activity.

The People's Bank of China is developing an electronic version of the country's yuan for cashless transactions that can be tracked and controlled by Beijing.

Regulators in other countries have increasingly warned that cryptocurrencies need greater

CDC endorses Covid booster for millions of older Americans, people with risky jobs

LAURAN NEERGAARD & MIKE STOBBE
SEPTEMBER 24

THE US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday endorsed booster shots for millions of older or otherwise vulnerable Americans, opening a major new phase in the US vaccination drive against Covid-19.

CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky signed off on a series of recommendations from a panel of advisers late Thursday.

The advisers said boosters should be offered to people 65 and older, nursing home residents and those ages 50 to 64 who have risky underlying health problems. The extra dose would be given once they are at least six months past their last Pfizer shot.

However, Walensky decided to make one recommendation that the panel had rejected.

The panel on Thursday voted against saying that people can get a booster if they are ages 18 to 64 years and are health-care workers or have another job that puts them at increased risk of being exposed to the virus.

But Walensky disagreed and put that recommendation back in, noting that such a move aligns with an FDA booster authorization decision earlier this week. The category she included covers people who live in institutional settings that increase their risk of exposure, such as prisons or homeless shelters, as well as health care workers. **AP**



At a vaccination site in Santa Ana, California. AP

The panel had offered the option of a booster for those ages 18 to 49 who have chronic health problems and want one. But the advisers refused to go further and open boosters to otherwise healthy front-line health care workers who aren't at risk of severe illness but want to avoid even a mild infection.

The panel voted 9 to 6 to reject that proposal. But Walensky decided to disregard the advisory committee's counsel on that issue. In a decision several hours after the panel adjourned, Walensky issued a statement saying she had restored the recommendation.

"As CDC Director, it is my job to recognise where our actions can have the greatest impact," Walensky said in a statement late Thursday night. "At CDC, we are tasked with analysing complex, often imperfect data to make concrete recommendations that optimise health. In a pandemic, even with uncertainty, we must take actions that we anticipate will do the greatest good." **AP**

oversight. In the US, Gary Gensler, the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, has said that investors need more protection in the cryptocurrency market, which he called "rife with fraud, scams and abuse" and compared to the "Wild West."

The SEC has won dozens of cases against crypto fraudsters, but Gensler says the agency needs US Congress to give it more authority and funding to adequately regulate the market.

In some smaller nations, like El Salvador, which adopted Bitcoin as legal tender, the open, global financial system fuelled by cryptocurrencies is being promoted as a tool to foster financial inclusion that will attract capital and create new industries and jobs.

Questions have been raised about cryptocurrency's adoption in El Salvador, but some tech and human rights advocates say the project has great promise.

"Bitcoin has a strange mechanism," said Alex Gladstein of the Human Rights Foundation. "It turns people's greed and self-interest into greater human freedom."



CNN anchor Chris Cuomo

Chris Cuomo accused of sexual harassment by his former boss

REUTERS
NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 24

A FORMER ABC News executive accused CNN anchor Chris Cuomo of sexually harassing her, describing in an essay published on Friday in the *New York Times* how he grabbed her buttocks at a colleague's farewell party in 2005.

Shelley Ross had been Cuomo's boss when he worked at ABC, a role she had just left when Cuomo embraced her at the party in New York City, according to the essay.

"I can do this now that you're no longer my boss," Ross quotes Cuomo as telling her after he gripped her in a bear hug and moved one hand down to "firmly grab and squeeze the cheek of my buttock," Ross wrote that she pushed him away, and Cuomo then noticed her husband was behind her, watching.

Earlier this year, Cuomo was forced to apologise to CNN viewers for giving advice to the staff of his brother, Andrew Cuomo, who at the time was facing calls to resign as governor of New York after multiple women accused the powerful politician of sexual harassment. Chris Cuomo said it was inappropriate for him to advise on the scandal while working as a CNN journalist.

In a statement, Cuomo acknowledged the 2005 episode, saying it was not sexual in nature.

"It happened 16 years ago in a public setting when she was a top executive at ABC," Cuomo's statement said. "I apologised to her then, and I meant it."

Ross's essay reproduced an apologetic email from Cuomo sent within hours of the party in 2005 in which he wrote "I am ashamed...though my hearty greeting was a function of being glad to see you..." In the email, he also apologised to her husband, writing that as a married man he could empathise with "not liking to see my wife patted as such..."

Ross wrote in her essay that she does not want Cuomo fired, but asked instead that he "journalistically repent" by devoting airtime to reporting on sexual harassment in workplaces.

A CNN spokesperson said the network had no comment beyond that issued by Cuomo.

DEAL TO RELEASE MENG COULD SIGNAL A MORE CONCILIATORY APPROACH IN WASHINGTON'S STANCE TOWARD BEIJING

US reaches agreement to release Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou

KATIE BENNER & DAN BILEFSKY
SEPTEMBER 24

THE US Justice Department has reached an agreement that will allow Huawei Technologies' chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, to return to China in exchange for admitting some wrongdoing in a sanctions violation case, a person familiar with the deal said on Friday.

Meng, who has been detained in Canada since 2018, has agreed to a deferred prosecution agreement that is expected to be entered in federal court in Brooklyn on Friday afternoon.

She will admit to some wrongdoing, and federal prosecutors will defer and then ultimately drop the charges against her, the person said. As part of the agreement, she will not enter a guilty plea.

The case has become a symbol of the tumultuous relationship between two global superpowers, the United States and China, which is at its lowest level in decades. And it has created a diplomatic challenge that has put Canada in the middle.

The deal to release Meng could signal a more conciliatory approach in Washington's stance toward Beijing under the Biden administration.



Meng, 49, is the chief financial officer of Huawei, and the daughter of the tech giant's founder Ren Zhengfei. AP

Meng appeared by video-conference for Friday's hearing. The Canadian authorities ar-

rested Meng, 49, the technology giant's chief financial officer, in December 2018 at Vancouver

International Airport, at the request of the United States. Meng, the daughter of Huawei's founder and chief executive, Ren Zhengfei, instantly became one of the world's most famous detainees.

The Justice Department indicted Meng and Huawei, the telecom company founded by her father, Ren Zhengfei, in January 2018. It accused the firm and its chief financial officer of a decade-long effort to steal trade secrets, obstruct a criminal investigation and evade economic sanctions on Iran.

The charges underscored efforts by the Trump administration to directly link Huawei

with the Chinese government, after long suspecting that the company worked to advance Beijing's economic and political ambitions and undermine American interests.

The release of Meng could play into the fate of two Canadians imprisoned in China.

China detained the former diplomat Michael Kovrig and the businessman Michael Spavor, soon after Meng's arrest, in what has been widely viewed in Canada as hostage diplomacy. China has denied they were connected. In August, a court in northeastern China, where Spavor has lived, sentenced him to 11 years in

prison after declaring him guilty of spying.

If the two men are released, it could provide a lift to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada, who was re-elected this week with a minority government after calling an unpopular snap election. Trudeau's inability to secure their freedom has cast a shadow over his premiership.

Throughout her extradition hearing in Canada, Meng's defence team professed her innocence. They argued that former US President Donald Trump politicised her case and that her rights had been breached when she was arrested in Vancouver. **NYT**

Kolkata

Bravo Chennai

A sharp spell by all-rounder & solid batting set up CSK’s 6 wicket-win over RCB; Dhoni’s side goes atop table



Dwayne Bravo pulls out the ‘Champions’ dance after dismissing RCB skipper Virat Kohli. [iplt20.com](#)

SYNOPSIS: CSK’s man for all seasons sets up easy chase as RCB’s conservative approach backfires

TUSHAR BHADURI
SEPTEMBER 24

IT WAS a captaincy contest between the mentor and his protégé, and M S Dhoni won it hands down. Sharjah is known as a graveyard for bowlers, but not only did the Chennai Super Kings skipper keep Royal Challengers Bangalore to a modest score – despite an opening century partnership – his batsmen then showed how to keep the foot on the accelerator throughout. CSK reclaimed top spot on the points table as RCB suffered a second straight loss after the restart.

Man for all seasons

Ruturaj Gaikwad saved CSK from embarrassment in their previous match, and showed that he can adjust admirably to a different match situation. Chasing a moderate total, Gaikwad and Faf du Plessis made good use of the new ball, which seemed the easier time to bat, to put their team well on its way.

Their stand of 71 in little more than eight overs dashed any realistic RCB hopes of successfully defending a score of 156. Both got out at the same score, and despite the pitch offering decent assistance to leg-spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Wanindu Hasaranga, the chase was always in control and completed with 11 balls to spare.

The veteran South African showed his intent early by engineering a daring scoop shot off speedster Navdeep Saini, before Gaikwad took charge against the spinners using his feet to hit straight and also bringing out both versions of the sweep.

Gaikwad showed an aggressive streak walking down to Harshal Patel and slamming

POINTS TABLE					
	M	W	L	NRR	Pts
CSK	9	7	2	+1.185	14
DC	9	7	2	+0.613	14
RCB	8	5	4	-0.720	10
KKR	9	4	5	+0.363	8
RR	8	4	4	-0.154	8
MI	9	4	5	-0.310	8
PK	9	3	6	-0.345	6
SRH	8	1	7	-0.689	2

him past mid-off while du Plessis ended the Powerplay by taking Saini to the cleaners, ensuring that the likes of Moen Ali, Ambati Rayudu and Suresh Raina didn’t face much pressure.

Conservatism backfires

With a first over bringing 13 runs, RCB fans would have been looking at a 200+ score. But the openers took the conventional route, setting the platform for an onslaught later on. Kohli and Devdutt Padikkal were steady and consistent, rather than electric, an approach probably more suited to conditions in Dubai or Abu Dhabi.

With AB de Villiers and Glenn Maxwell to follow, an opening partnership of 111 in just over 13 overs was a two-edged sword. Kohli and Padikkal looked in control for the most part, but in hindsight, needed to push the pedal a bit more after settling in. If anything, the stand went the other direction.

Being 55/0 after the Powerplay should have allowed a more aggressive approach. Even at 90/0 at the halfway stage, there was hardly an inkling that the subsequent 10 overs would yield just 66 runs. The openers got their individual half-centuries, but once the stand was broken, RCB slumped to 45/6 in 6.5 overs.



CSK’s Ruturaj Gaikwad scored 38 off 26 balls to forge a 71-run opening partnership with Faf du Plessis. [iplt20.com](#)

The subsequent batsmen struggled to come to terms with a slower-than-expected surface. They knew the history of the venue where 220-plus has not always been a safe score, but in the quest for a bigger score surrendered the initiative altogether.

Both De Villiers and Maxwell hadn’t had any competitive cricket since the IPL was suspended in early May, and even for pedigreed performers like them, it may have been too much to expect them to hit the ground running against bowlers who executed their skills admirably at the death. They managed the odd big hit, but it wasn’t enough for the team’s cause. RCB batting is usually top-heavy and there was precious little contribution from those following them.

Banker leaks runs

Deepak Chahar has often been Dhoni’s banker in the Poweplays, getting vital wickets with a swinging ball as batsmen falter while taking the game to him. He is not the quickest, but movement either way frustrates those going for the big hit. Often, the skipper would use him for three of the first six overs and sometimes even bowl him out in one go.

But on a postage-size ground with a flat pitch, Chahar’s Plan A was found wanting. When he tried to extract swing by bowling it full, he found little joy as he was spanked for three boundaries by Kohli and Padikkal in the first over. The first ball drifted into Kohli’s pads and was tickled to the fine-leg fence. Next ball, the RCB skipper flicked an incoming delivery over midwicket for another four. The last ball of the over was a long half-volley which Padikkal creamed through the covers.

Things didn’t look up for Chahar in his second over either. A wide offering to the left-handed opener got what it deserved. That forced the bowler to go his variation of a knuckleball, but Kohli came down the pitch and used a tennis forehand-style shot for another boundary.

His first two overs went for 23 and forced Dhoni to bowl Josh Hazlewood for three overs in the Powerplay. When Chahar returned in the 12th over, it didn’t start well for him again. A short and wide cutter from round the stumps was clobbered by Padikkal through the off-side.

But with the other CSK bowlers rising to the challenge, and using pace off the ball and pulling their length back – Dwayne Bravo and Shardul Thakur were the chief protagonists – RCB were kept well below what would have been a par score at Sharjah.

BRIEF SCORES: *Chennai Super Kings 157 for 4 (Gaikwad 38, Rayudu 32, Harshal 2-25) beat Royal Challengers Bangalore 156 for 6 (Padikkal 70, Kohli 53, Bravo 3-24, Thakur 2-29) by six wickets*

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER



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

The first scoop of delight



Faf du Plessis scored 31 off 26 balls against RCB. [iplt20.com](#)

Even as Faf du Plessis shuffled across to lap-scoop a pacy delivery from Navdeep Saini to the fine-leg boundary, Simon Doull and Murali Kartik on air started to discuss who was the inventor of that shot. Doull reckoned Zimbabwe’s Flower brothers, Andy and Grant, and Guy Whittall had attempted these. Murali Kartik plumped for Douglas Marillier, who swatted Glenn McGrath in a thrilling last over in 2001 (he lapped two fours off attempted yorkers but Zimbabwe lost by a run). Doull cued up Australia’s Ryan Campbell who played the closest to the modern-day lap in 2002 against Sri Lanka’s Nuwan Zoysa. “I am just wondering someone in 90s played that shot,” went Doull. Hey Doullie, perhaps you are remembering your countryman Dion Nash in 1998. Another last over thriller it was. Shaun Pollock

had the ball with New Zealand needing 7 off 2. Nash shuffled a touch towards off, bent down and paddled Pollock to fine-leg. The exhilaration at the choice of shot (Tony Greig on air would manage “what a beautiful little paddle shot!”) was brutally cut short as the commentators, players, and umpire started to sweat whether it was a six or a four as it had landed on the rope. Rope meant four then. There were two ropes adjacent to each other which overlapped at one point and after replays, it was judged to be a four. Nash would hole out to deep mid-wicket next ball when Lance Klusener took a good running catch and a distraught Nash trudged off. History would perhaps be kinder to him as that “beautiful little paddle shot” was perhaps the real progenitor of the modern-day version of the lap.

To yawn is human...Davidine

Tim David let out a yawn on the sprawling sofa inside the dressing room. In full gear, barring the helmet.



He stretched his limbs, slumped back over the sofa, tilted his head, and kept yawning, his mouth agape. The moment, funny or embarrassing, was caught on the camera. In the dug-out that hugged the pitch, Simon Doull was mining info on the latest IPL debutant, who turns up for Singapore, from Sanjay Bangar, and the smart producer might have thought it was the appropriate time to introduce David to the world. The timing was incredible—he was yawning just when Bangar was waxing lyrical on David’s energy and intensity. Maybe, he was still jet-lagged, maybe the action that was unfolding in the middle wasn’t thrilling enough (Virat Kohli and Devdutt Padikkal were dealing at a strike rate of 130-135 thereabouts, while our hero belts at 154), or maybe it was his way of dealing with nerves (yawning, some neuroscientists believe, is a stress-buster), or maybe it was the sheer restlessness of sitting geared-up for his IPL debut. His wait only stretched longer, as the openers ate up 13.2 overs. And instead of him, they sent AB de Villiers next. You could imagine how he would have reacted to the decision. With a yawn obviously! To yawn, after all, is human.

Oi! goes Kohli, Jads like that



The exclamation escaped Virat Kohli’s lips after he was stunned by how much Ravindra Jadeja spun the ball. It had landed outside leg stump and broke right across his startled jab and went past the off stump. Oi! went Kohli. He let out a chuckle. So did Jadeja. Only man who didn’t show much surprise was of course MS Dhoni who had his right gloves in the right place to pouch it. Where did that turn come from, though? In fact the top soil came off a touch on that occasion – a puff of dust flew up as the ball gripped and spun. This pitch isn’t known for much turn. Perhaps, it’s down to the newly-relaid surface after the last IPL which is yet to settle down, maybe. Kohli fell next over, swat-flicking Dwayne Bravo straight to the deep midwicket fielder. And Kohli had a wry smile at the missed six.

How Chakravarthy can be India’s main weapon at T20 World Cup



Spinner Varun Chakravarthy prefers flat tracks where he can hustle with his pace and slight turn. [iplt20.com](#)

SRIRAM VEERA
SEPTEMBER 24

DURING THE last year’s IPL, not long after he took out MS Dhoni twice among others, Varun Chakravarthy has been inked as the main weapon in Virat Kohli’s T20 World Cup plans. It’s learnt that the team management had apprised him of their plans and told him to get his fitness sorted. As it turned out, he would fail a fitness test a couple of months later but clearly, he will be India’s main spinner in the next month’s ICC event. He has sparkled in the couple of games, this IPL as well.

How did he take out Dhoni last year?

The first dismissal had shown his character. A short of a length ball outside off had been skewered to the extra cover boundary but he bounced back with a slightly slower, fuller slider that landed on the off and pegged back the middle and leg stump, beating a hoick. The dismissal in the next encounter between the two was more memorable. It revealed his guile and the ability to surprise even a veteran like Dhoni. This time,

it was a pacy 107 kmph snorter that skidded on towards the middle to beat Dhoni’s hurried stab and knocked out the leg stump. Almost immediately Dhoni looked across at Chakravarthy with a bemused look. Chakravarthy of course was busy wiping off any possible emotion from spilling out of him and walked away slowly. The two would later have a chat at the end of the game.

Do we know why he doesn’t celebrate more?

In a recent televised chat with his team-mate Andre Russell, he explained his ‘yeah whatever shrug’ after taking wickets. It’s because he “doesn’t want to get off from my process. If I end up celebrating too much, I can forget what I have to do next ball. But later on, I do celebrate!”

How did he go against Mumbai Indians on Thursday night and in his first game against RCB?

Very economical. He finished his four overs within the first 11 overs, giving away just 22 runs. Mumbai were going hammer

and tongs at the start but it was Chakravarthy and Sunil Narine who applied the brakes in some style. With his combination of finger-flicking sliders and googlies, he kept the batsmen quiet.

Against RCB, he was rewarded with three wickets. He got two in two, taking out Glenn Maxwell and Hazaranga with googlies. Maxwell had lined up for his big swipe but it broke in and went past the bat to fall on the leg stump. Hazaranga prodded forward without much clue and was taken out lbw.

What sort of pitches does he prefer?

He says he prefers the flat tracks where he can hustle with his pace and slight turn. “For my style of bowling, turning wickets don’t suit much. Like in Chennai (turners). But flat tracks suit me.” With the T20 world cup to be played in UAE, it would be perfect for him and India.

Is he good against the left-handed batsmen too?

Yes, the wickets of David Warner and Nicolas Pooran are reminders of his ability. He took out Warner last year with a googly from the middle stump line. Warner shaped to defend to the on side but got a leading edge back to the bowler. “I wanted Warner’s wicket. I was preparing for him,” he would say later. He has taken out Pooran and Rishabh Pant too.

What did Kohli say when Chakravarthy failed the ‘yo-yo’ test last March?

“Look individuals need to understand the systems that have been created for the Indian cricket team. We should operate at the very high levels of fitness and skills and that’s why this (India team) is top of the ladder when playing cricket, in our country. We would expect players to abide by what’s required to be a part of Team India. There shouldn’t be space for any compromise, in that regard,” Kohli said on March 12. Just a day earlier, the KKR CEO Venky Mysore had tweeted about Chakravarthy: “he has more skills than most we have seen, but maybe a few seconds slower in a sprint...I wonder how many greats of yesteryears, cricket would have lost, based on the current “standards”!”