



## Will launch party, may ally with BJP, Akali factions: Amarinder



BJP welcomes move, calls Captain 'tallest leader'

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 19

OUSTED FORMER Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said on Tuesday that he will launch his own political party and announced that he may ally with the BJP if the farmers' protest is resolved, along with factions of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD).

In a series of tweets, Amarinder's media adviser wrote on behalf of the former Congress CM, who has been in Delhi for the past few days, "The battle for Punjab's future is on. Will soon announce the launch of my own political party to serve the interests of Punjab & its people, including our farmers who've been fighting for their survival for over a year."

He added: "Hopeful of a seat  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## AT LEAST 35 KILLED, KUMAON WORST HIT

# Uttarakhand rain toll rises, landslides cut off Nainital

Thousands feared stranded as rain pounds hills; rescue mission on

**AVANEESH MISHRA**  
DEHRADUN, OCTOBER 19

AT LEAST 25 deaths were confirmed in Nainital district on Tuesday as incessant rain continued to batter Uttarakhand, leading to floods, landslides, and massive destruction of property especially in the hills of Kumaon.

The India Meteorological Department's (IMD's) Dehradun centre said two weather stations in Kumaon division had received the heaviest rainfall for any 24-hour period since records began to be kept.

Aggregate data provided by district administrations showed the statewide death toll from incidents related to the rain that began on Sunday had reached 35.  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



Debris being cleared in Bhimtal on Tuesday. PTI

## Worst likely over for state, rains to now shift east: IMD

**ANJALI MARAR**  
PUNE, OCTOBER 19

THE RECORD-BREAKING rainfall that has led to widespread destruction in Uttarakhand over the last couple of days is expected to reduce significantly from

Wednesday, with the state likely to stay dry for the rest of the week, the India Meteorological Department has predicted.

Uttarakhand, as a whole, received about 122 mm rainfall during the 24-hour period between Monday and Tuesday.  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## UTTAR PRADESH



### MODI TO UNVEIL KUSHINAGAR AIRPORT TODAY

**SIT RELEASES 6 PHOTOS FOR LEADS ON SUSPECTS 'PART OF KHERI VIOLENCE'**  
**PAGE 3**

## India sticking to LAC protocols, but can review: top officer

**KRISHN KAUSHIK**  
RUPA (ARUNACHAL PRADESH), OCTOBER 19

WHILE INDIA is sticking to the mutually agreed protocols and agreements with China regarding the management of troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), this may be reviewed at the strategic level for the future, Eastern Army Commander Lt Gen Manoj Pande said on Tuesday.

"In terms of our larger guidance, strategic guidance in terms of dealing with the situation on the LAC, is to respect the mutually agreed protocols and agreements, and that has been our effort, notwithstanding what has been the action or response from the other side," Lt Gen Pande said.

"Consequent to what happened and what we need to do in the future, is something I reckon is being looked at at the larger level," he added. "It is being looked as to how should be our  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## Cong to reserve 40% tickets for women in UP polls, says Priyanka

**MAULSHREE SETH**  
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 19

STRESSING THAT the prevailing "politics of hate" can be changed by women in politics, AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Tuesday made her first big move in the run-up to the UP polls and announced that 40 per cent of Congress tickets will be reserved for women this time.

"UP mein Congress party 40 per cent ticket mahilaon ko degi. Humari pratigya hai ki mahilayen UP ki rajneeti mein puri tarah bhagidar hongy (Congress will reserve 40 per cent tickets for women in UP. It is our pledge that women will participate fully in UP's politics)," Priyanka said.

However, responding to a question, the Congress leader said she is yet to take a decision on whether she would herself contest the assembly elections slated to be held in a few months.  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNAY



worried administration had corralled them into government schools and colleges in vulnerable districts. By Tuesday all of them had either left the Valley or joined work in secure locations.

"Police have been asking labourers to leave for the past few days, but many were not leaving as their payments were stuck. On Sunday night over a hundred labourers were brought here and housed in the government school. They all left by Monday evening," a shop-owner in Baramulla's Chooria tehsil said.  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## Kin held for drink-driving, Cong MLA protests in police station

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
JAIPUR, OCTOBER 19

POLICE IN Jodhpur have ordered a probe into the circumstances behind a dharna staged by a Congress MLA and her husband inside a police station in the city, demanding the release of a relative who was among those rounded up for alleged drink-driving.

In a purported video clip of the incident, which took place Sunday at the Ratanada police station, Shergarh MLA Meena Kanwar is heard saying: "Baccha mera ghar ka baccha hai... Bacche sabke peete hain, koi baat nahi bacche hain thoda bahut le liya (The child is from my house... Everyone's children drink, it's not a big thing if the child had consumed a little)."

The video clip, which has gone viral on social media,  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



Priyanka at the UP Congress office Tuesday. Vishal Srivastav

**EXPLAINED**

### The challenge

THE CONGRESS'S is a calculated move but also a challenge. In the 2017 elections to the 403-member UP assembly, the party put up 114 candidates, including 12 women. It won seven seats, including two by women.

## Techies, real estate agents, bank staff held for bid to steal Rs 5 cr from NRI account

**PAGE 1**  
**ANCHOR**

**MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL**  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19

A TEAM OF techies, a group of real estate operators, three bank employees, a travel agency owner, a mastermind who described himself as a "doctor" — and a senior banker who succumbed to Covid a few months ago.

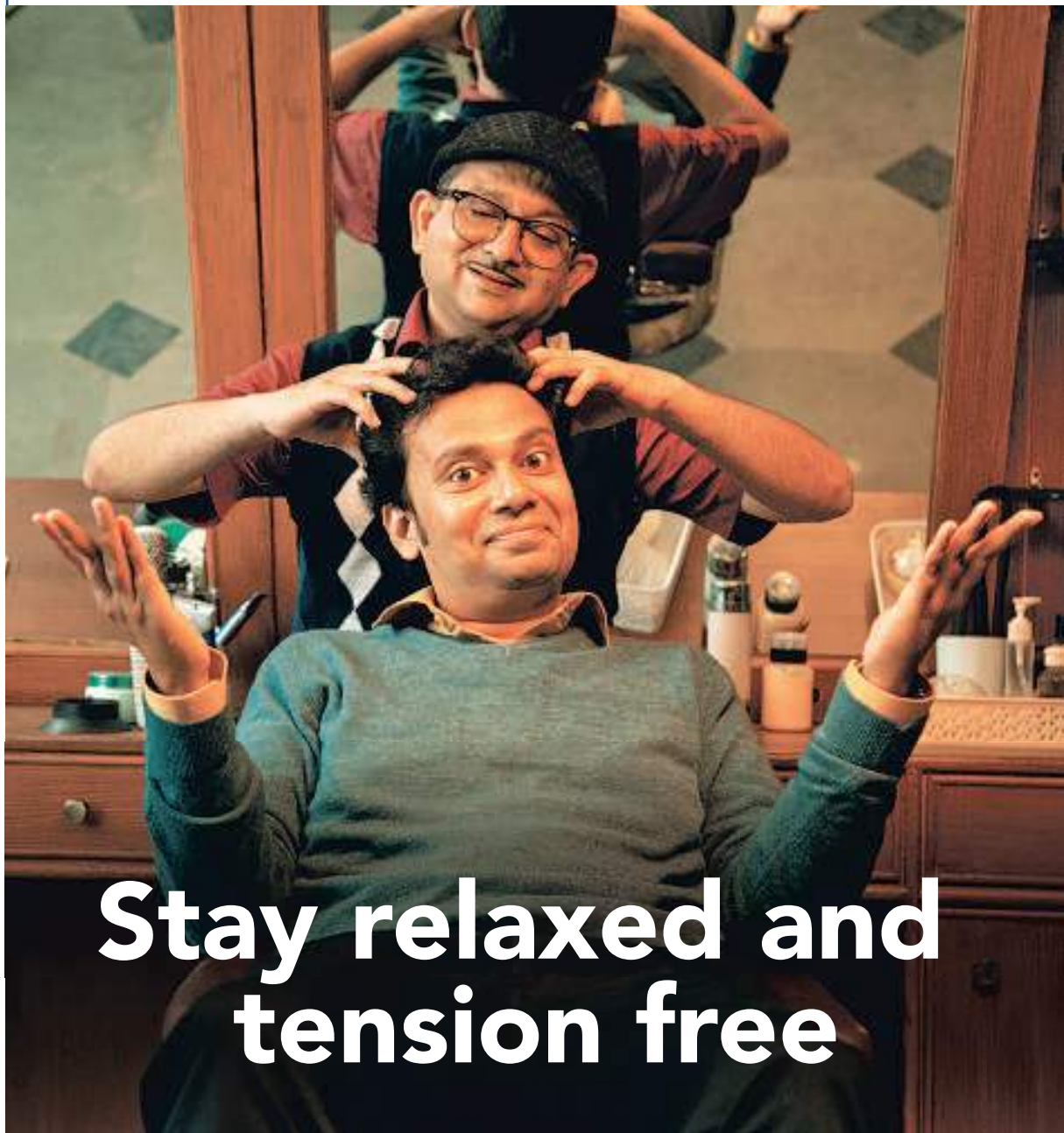
These are the key players at



Fraud came to light after Rs 2 crore was withdrawn from the businessman's account. Express

the centre of a complex plan to allegedly steal Rs 5 crore from a prominent NRI businessman's bank account, which had Rs 200 crore in all, according to investigations by the cyber cell of Delhi Police.

Following up on a complaint from HDFC Bank after a sum of around Rs 2 crore was withdrawn fraudulently from the account through cheques in Punjab's Mohali and UP's Ghaziabad, police have arrested three of the bank's own employees and nine others in the case.  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



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# FROM PAGE ONE

Amarinder

arrangement with @BJP4India in 2022 Punjab Assembly polls if #FarmersProtest is resolved in farmers' interest. Also looking at alliance with like-minded parties such as breakaway Akali groups, particularly Dhindsa & Brahmputra factions."

The BJP welcomed the announcement, calling Amarinder "the tallest leader of Punjab". Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, president of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Sanyukt), said Amarinder was yet to approach them.

Sources said that the Punjab Congress is working on Amarinder's MP wife Preetneet Kaur to not quit the party.

Amarinder said his actions would be dictated by the fact that "Punjab needs political stability and protection from internal & external threats". "I promise my people I will do what it takes to ensure its peace and security, which is today at stake."

Asked about Amarinder's statement, Pargat Singh, Punjab Cabinet minister and a loyalist of the former CM's bete noire Navjot Singh Sidhu, said, "The cat is out of the bag. I have always been saying that he (Amarinder) was in cahoots with the BJP and SAD. His quid pro quo with the BJP is out in the open. Soon his (arrangement) with SAD will be out also."

Dhindsa said he had seen Amarinder's statement, "but so far he has not come with any proposal before party leaders". "Let him talk to us, only then will we be able to decide. I alone cannot make any decision, rather all the office-bearers of the party have to decide."

Dhindsa was expelled from SAD in February last year, and formed the SAD (Sanyukt) along with Ranjit Singh Brahmputra. Dhindsa and Brahmputra had expressed unhappiness over the SAD government's handling of the sacrilege cases and the pardon to Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim, which was later rescinded. Dhindsa had also objected to Sukhbir Badal's style of leadership.

Subhash Verma, the general secretary of the Punjab BJP, said Amarinder joining hands with them would be good for the party. "As of now, he is the tallest leader in Punjab. There is no one else close to him. If he wishes to float a new party and extend support to the BJP, it will be good for the Punjab BJP."

Dinesh Kumar, organisational secretary of the Punjab BJP, said: "He (Amarinder) is a senior leader and he was humiliated by his party. We welcome his decision. Leaders like him have a mass following and parties should know how to give them due respect. It is sad that the Congress insulted such a tall leader who was the face of the 2017 polls in Punjab, and because of whom the Congress

got a thumping majority."

Amarinder had earlier said that he was humiliated at the way he was ousted from the Congress, and that he would quit the party but was keeping his options open. He had also said he was preparing the constitution of his outfit and finalising its name.

## Migrants leave

His shop is opposite the government school where labourers were sheltered on Sunday.

The Sopore Superintendent of Police, Sudhanshu Verma, however, denied anyone was being asked to leave. "We tried to provide in situ security. We increased patrolling in areas where labourers were working, and increased police presence. We gave them our numbers so that they can call us in case of an emergency," he said.

Mohammed Salman, a barber from Bijnor in Uttar Pradesh, runs a saloon in the Chhokra market. "Police were rounding up only casual labourers. We have been here for over a decade and live here with our families. We don't plan to leave. But yes police have asked us to shut shop by 5.30 pm," said Salman.

His brother Abad, who arrived in Kashmir this year, said this new deadline was bad for business. "During the day people are busy with work. They either come to the saloon in the morning or evening," he said.

In Sopore town, locals said, they saw hundreds of labourers being brought to the Government Degree College carrying their belongings on their heads till late into Sunday night.

"In the morning when I saw so many people there -- at least a thousand -- I carried a few cartons of biscuits to them. They tore open the cartons as if they hadn't eaten for days. They kept asking when they would get food. They were in a really pitiable condition. Later locals provided some food to them," Junaid, who runs a grocery store opposite the college, said.

Another shop-owner, who runs a photocopier shop in the market opposite the college, said the administration got Aadhaar cards of the labourers photocopied and then let them leave.

"The labourers had been brought there only for the night as there was some risk. It was not meant to be a permanent accommodation. Not all of them left for home. A lot of them went back to where they work. Only those who had already booked tickets left for home. On Sunday, because of a spate of incidents, the security situation was a bit more sensitive," SP Verma said.

An official in the district administration admitted the situation became a bit chaotic because of the rapidly unfolding situation. "The entire thing was managed by police on Sunday night. But you must understand that even in a wedding, which is pre-planned, if 500 guests arrive, there is chaos. Add to that the problem of not having data on how many labourers are working where. We only have detailed data on labourers in the organised sector, which is much smaller," he said.

Javed Bhatt, President of the Sopore Industrial Estate, said locals have been trying to provide whatever help possible to the labourers. "Those kept in the government college must have suffered. Imagine, I sleep under two blankets, they must have slept on a cold floor. But it is only casual labour who are leaving. It is also the onset of winter, so many leave at this time anyway. Not a single labourer engaged in the industrial estate here has left. Those working in homes as domestic help or in shops are also staying back," he said.

governments are not taking any action. They are just waiting for the situation to worsen. They are just waiting for the situation to worsen. They are just waiting for the situation to worsen."

## Uttarakhand rain toll rises, landslides cut off Nainital

(A late-night PTI report put the toll at 42, and said many people were trapped under rubble and debris. The report quoted DIG Nilesch Anand Bhame as saying "the number of casualties in Kumaon region alone has crossed 40".)

The hill station of Nainital lay cut off on Tuesday, with all three roads leading to the town washed away by landslides.

Rain and mudslides have damaged homes and roads across town. The Mall Road that skirts the Naini lake, and the area around the famous Naina Devi temple were reported to be flooded.

Dehradun Meteorological Centre Director Bikram Singh told *The Indian Express* on Tuesday evening that IMD's Mukteshwar and Pantnagar stations had got 340.8 mm and 403.2 mm of rain respectively over the preceding 24 hours.

The previous record for rain over a 24-hour period at the Mukteshwar station -- established 124 years ago in 1897 -- was 254.5 mm, recorded on September 18, 1914, Singh said.

The Pantnagar station was set up in 1962, and its record so far had been 228 mm on July 10, 1990, the Director said.

The time around Dussehra is peak tourist season in Nainital and the surrounding area, and is especially popular with visitors from Gujarat and West Bengal.

Information on the numbers and situation of tourists in the area was sketchy on Tuesday. A PTI report from Chhattisgarh quoted a state official as saying 55 people from Durg, including 44 women and four children, were stranded. A report from Bengaluru said the Karnataka government had established a help desk to assist visitors from the state in Uttarakhand.

Around 100 people were reported to be stranded at a resort on the Ramnagar-Ranikhet Road after the overflowing Kosi cut the area off.

Heavy rain was reported in the Ramgarh area on Tuesday morning following a cloud-burst. Roads were blocked and some neighbourhoods were reported to have been cut off.

In Chaukhuta village of Nainital, at least five labourers were buried alive after their *kuchcha* house collapsed. Officials involved in the rescue operation, which continued for

over four hours, said they belonged to UP and Bihar.

Multiple teams of the national and state disaster response forces were carrying out rescue operations. Two teams of the NDRF were stationed in Uttarakashi; one each in Dehradun, Chamoli, Almora, Pithoragarh, Haridwar and Gadarpur.

Around 25-30 trekkers stranded near Gomukh were rescued by the SDRF late on Monday night, PTI reported.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami by phone on Tuesday to take stock of the damage, and relief and rescue work. The Prime Minister has promised all required help and assistance from the Centre, the state government said in a release.

On Twitter, Modi said, "I am anguished by the loss of lives due to heavy rainfall in parts of Uttarakhand. May the injured recover soon. Rescue operations are underway to help those affected. I pray for everyone's safety and well-being."

Dhami met with officials at the state disaster control room. The Chief Minister, accompa-

nied by his ministerial colleague Dhan Singh Rawat and state DGP Ashok Kumar, also conducted an aerial survey of the areas affected by heavy rainfall. Directions have been issued to provide financial help to the affected people.

"The CM has directed all District Magistrates to complete the assessment of crop damage to farmers and send a report at the earliest. He has informed that three helicopters from the Army are being deployed in the areas affected by rainfall. DM Chamoli and DM Rudraprayag have been directed to ensure safety of tourists stranded on the tourist roads," the government said in a statement.

According to reports, two of the helicopters will be sent to Nainital, and one to the Garhwal region.

Dhami has asked people not to panic. The Char Dham Yatris have been advised to stop where they are, and not go ahead until the situation is brought under control.

The CM has announced a compensation of Rs 4 lakh for the families of those who had lost their lives in the disaster.

# Woman stabbed to death near Dwarka residence by man she had turned down

JIGNASA SINHA  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19

A 23-YEAR-OLD woman was assaulted and stabbed to death near her Dwarka home by a man whose advances she had rejected earlier. According to police, Dolly Babbar was stabbed at least six times and was found lying in a pool of blood on Monday night.

Her family said the main accused had threatened her with a pistol earlier too. CCTV footage showed three men standing with the woman; one of them then began stabbing her while the others watched. The family alleged many residents heard the woman's screams but none helped her.

No arrest has been made so far and police are conducting raids.

Babbar worked as a free-lancer with event management companies and told her family on Monday night that she was going out to a birthday party.

Around 2 am, a delivery executive was passing through the colony when he saw the injured woman and called the police.

"We received a call about a woman lying on the road. We reached the spot and found her with multiple stab wounds. The men had fled. We informed the family and rushed her to a hospital, where she was declared dead. We spoke to neighbours who said they had seen a man, identified as Ankit Gaba (25), attacking her with a knife. We were told he had proposed to her earlier," said a senior police officer.

Lakshay, her younger brother, said, "I wish we had reached earlier. We were sleeping when the police informed us. I saw her lying on the road. There were many people but nobody helped. Dolly didi wanted to start her event management work again. She was friendly and treated the accused like brothers."

Her cousin Sanjana said Ankit had approached Babbar several times in the past, but she "wasn't interested". "They have known each other since childhood. He is involved with local gangs and had been threatening her," she said.

Her mother, Meena, said, "I wish I had stopped her from going outside. She was young and bright. Due to the lockdown, she had lost contracts but was starting to get work again. I was happy and hopeful; she was running this house. Her father drives an autorickshaw; who will help us now? I just want justice for my daughter."

Shankar Chaudhary, DCP (Dwarka), said, "We have sent multiple teams to arrest the three accused. A case of murder has been registered. We are questioning her family and neighbours."

At the locality, Om Vihar in Dwarka's Bindapur, residents alleged that there is no police deployment. "We have complained to the police several times but nobody listens. Last night, I heard the woman's screams and saw the three boys but they fled by the time police came," said Anita, who lives in an apartment next to the spot.

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## IIT-Delhi launches B.Tech in Energy Engineering

New Delhi: The Indian Institute of Technology Delhi has launched a new 'B.Tech in Energy Engineering' programme for the upcoming academic session. Students who qualified the JEE (Advanced) 2021 will be eligible for admission to the UG programme to be offered by the institute's Department of Energy Science and Engineering (DESE).

The new programme will start in the academic session 2021-2022 with 40 students.

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Army (PLA), there has been "no noticeable change in their patrolling pattern talking of the entire eastern sector", he said.

The Eastern Army Commander is responsible for 1,346 km of the LAC from Sikkim to Arunachal Pradesh.

Pande did not comment on the incident in which some 200 PLA troops transgressed across the LAC near Yangtse in Tawang in late August. But he said that "in terms of the number of patrols coming close to the LAC from the other side, there has been only a marginal increase in last couple of years".

The officer said that "some infrastructure development" had been observed on the Chinese side, "in terms of essentially habitat". And "that has led to correspondingly more number of troops that are now located or placed there", he said.

"Both sides are attempting to develop infrastructure closer to the LAC", which, "again leads to certain issues at times", Pande said. "Since this infrastructure has come up close to the LAC, there has been a marginal increase in border defence troops" on the Chinese side, he said.

"Some reserve formations that were mobilised continue to remain in the training areas, but that again is in the depth", Pande said. Across the Eastern Command, "their traditional training areas, exercises have been happening", he said -- even though "this year the scale has maybe increased and they're going in for a longer duration".

Asked about the border villages being built by China, Pande said: "It is a concern how it will have dual civil and military use".

Pande said the standoff has pushed India to increase its surveillance capabilities along the LAC. The surveillance centre at Rupa analyses the information it gets from unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), radar, and ground-based cameras with night vision and satellite imagery.

The Army has taken a "number of steps and measures", and "foremost would be enhancing our surveillance, both close to the LAC as well as the depth areas", Pande said.

Infrastructure, including forward logistical bases and aviation bases, is being developed across the Eastern Command.

"If there is any need, we have to be adequately prepared, and our contingency plans are ready. If the situation gets worse, to say whether we are aggressive or defensive, when we make plans, both are taken care of."

On Doklam, where India and China were involved in a standoff in 2017, Pande said "both sides are

aware of the sensitivities of each other" -- and "in terms of increase in troop levels, there hasn't been a major increase".

## Congress MLA

shows the MLA sitting in protest on the floor of the station along with her husband Umair Singh, who is also a Congress leader, and confronting the police.

Singh is heard telling the policemen that while they are seated on chairs, the MLA is sitting on the floor. The MLA described the relative as her brother-in-law's son.

Police sources said the MLA's relative was not a minor and that he was released later.

The BJP has targeted the ruling Congress over the incident. Sharing the video clip, the party's state unit tweeted: "The Shergarh MLA is threatening the police in the police station itself and is saying that they are only kids, if they have drunk a little, what's the big deal? If Congress representatives themselves make a mockery of the legal system, then what can one hope from the government system?"

DCP (Jodhpur East) Bhuvan Bhusan said: "We have ordered an inquiry and ACP East will be conducting it. We can say more after the inquiry is done."

"After requesting the police over the phone, my husband and I went to the police station and again said he is a child, please release him. They said they would punish the child and keep him overnight at the police station. They didn't give us a chair and misbehaved with me, a woman MLA. We sat on the floor while they abused us," Kanwar told reporters in Jodhpur.

"I want strong action against the police. The child is my brother-in-law's son. He was not drunk. The children were returning from a function in a small car and he was with two of his friends," the MLA said.

Later, responding to a question from ANI on contesting from Rae Bareilly or Amethi, Priyanka said: "*Ek-na-ek din toh ladna hi hai, na* (I will have to contest one day, isn't it)?" She reiterated, however, that the "decision has not yet been taken". "We will see as things develop," she said.

Asked earlier if Tuesday's move would lead to party leaders fielding their wives, daughters and other women members of the family, Priyanka said: "I don't feel there is anything wrong in this." She said the Congress decision is "just the start of empowerment of women", and selection would be done "purely on merit".

Priyanka said she had initially

wanted to reserve 50 per cent of tickets for women but decided on 40 per cent after consultations.

Priyanka said the party has extended the deadline for submission of applications for tickets -- it had ended on October 15 -- only for women, to November 15. "If you want change, don't wait," she said.

The Congress has failed to make a mark in UP over the last three decades. The party won just seven seats in the 2017 Assembly polls. Two years later, Priyanka was made AICC general secretary in charge of the state in the run-up to the general elections. The party went on to win one Lok Sabha seat -- one less than 2014 -- with Rahul Gandhi losing from Amethi.

On Tuesday, referring to meetings she has had with women during her visits to UP over the last two years, Priyanka said that the party's latest decision is for "common women".

Priyanka spoke about a student in Allahabad University who told her of alleged bias against girls in ruling; a woman she met during her Ganga Yatra in Prayagraj who wanted to become a politician; the girl in Chandauli whose pilot brother had become martyr; a girl in Lakhimpur Kheri who wanted to become Prime Minister; and a woman named Laxmi Valmiki in Lucknow.

"My fight is for a new kind of politics. It is for those who cannot raise their voices... so that change can come here and bring with it the politics of service instead of politics done with a feeling of being beaten or trampled," Priyanka said.

BSP chief Mayawati slammed the Congress decision, and described it as "a mere drama".


"When the Congress is in power and it has good days, they do not remember Dalits or women or backward. But when they are unable to recover from their bad days, they remember Dalits in Punjab and women in Uttar Pradesh," she said.


(WITH MANOJ CG/DLHI)


Bank staff held


Police sources told *The Indian Express* that details of the case were shared by the Union Finance Ministry with Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana who directed a team to "unearth the conspiracy".


According to police, the plan was two-pronged. The techies tried to illegally access the account. According to DCP (Cyber Cell) K P S Malhotra, HDFC Bank stated in "their complaint that in all 66 attempts were made to access the account through internet banking". At the same time, the other accused tried to withdraw













# 3 UTTAR PRADESH

## Former MP & son latest to quit Cong

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 19

THE EXODUS of senior Uttar Pradesh Congress leaders continued on Tuesday as former MP Harendra Malik and his son Pankaj, a former MLA and current vice-president of the state Congress Committee, quit the party on Tuesday. The father and son are prominent faces in western Uttar Pradesh.

Claiming that they resigned because of "karyakarta ki andekhi [neglect of party workers]", Pankaj told *The Indian Express*, "We have just resigned. We have been with the party in the worst of times but it was becoming difficult as grassroots workers were not being heard. Leadership is very good, but because of some issues workers are being neglected. Thus, we decided to resign and give up the membership of the party."

Pankaj Malik was one of the Congress' young faces and was part of the team set to lead the party in the 2022 Assembly elections. He was elected to the state Assembly from Shamli in 2007 and 2012. Asked if he and his father would join another party, Pankaj said they had not yet decided on the matter and added that a decision would be announced soon.

In the past few months, several senior Congress leaders have left the party, including former Union minister Jitin Prasada (now a minister in the state BJP government), former MP Raja Ram Pal (he has joined the Samajwadi Party), and former MLAs Lalitesh Pati Tripathi, Gayadeen Anuragi and Vinod Chaturvedi.

## Eight booked for burning effigies of PM and CM

**Budaun:** An FIR was lodged on Tuesday against seven people for burning effigies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, police said.

The action was taken after some videos went viral on social media in which some persons were seen burning effigies of the PM and the CM, they said.

Taking note of the videos, the police have lodged an FIR against seven people have been lodged under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code for violating official orders. The police are trying to trace the offenders. Budaun's ASP (Rural) Praveen Singh Chauhan said the video is of Gidhaul village in Musajhag area apparently shot on October 16. **PTI**



## EID CELEBRATION

An Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi procession to mark the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad in Varanasi on Tuesday. *Anand Singh*

## Cops save man hanging from noose after call from daughter

**Noida:** A 45-year-old man hanging from a noose inside his house was saved by policemen in Kaushambi district who promptly reached the location following a call from his daughter, officials said on Tuesday.

Police were alerted by the Class 11 girl who called up the emergency number 112 on the instructions of her elder brother who was away from home but

# Lakhimpur Kheri: SIT releases 6 photos for leads on suspects

Photographs are related to subsequent violence in which three men were killed

MANISH SAHU  
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 19

THE UTTAR Pradesh Police's Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing the Lakhimpur Kheri deaths case, on Tuesday released six photographs of the violence that erupted in the district's Tikonja village on October 3 after three SUVs, including one linked to Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Ajay Mishra, drove over protesting farmers, killing four farmers and a journalist.

The photographs are from the immediate aftermath of the in-

cident. A mob retaliated and allegedly killed Hari Om Mishra, Shubham Mishra and Shyam Sunder Nishad, and set ablaze two of the SUVs.

The police said the faces of suspects involved in the violence were visible in photographs. "To collect information about the suspects, we have released six photographs of the incident. We have also released four cellphone numbers at which people can give information, including names and addresses, about them," said an officer who is a part of the SIT.

Sources said the SIT released

the photographs after failing to ascertain the identities of the suspects. The local intelligence unit has also been tasked with gathering information about them. The police have also promised rewards for people who provide information about the suspects. "The name of the person who provides the details will be kept secret," the SIT officer said. He refused to rule out the possibility of the suspects being from outside the district.

Sources said the SIT had also received around 100 videos, days after releasing a cellphone number and urging the public to sub-

mit videos and photographs of the incident. All the videos have been sent to the forensic science laboratory for examination.

Meanwhile, investigators on Tuesday recorded the statements of seven more people who were present at the site of the incident. The day before they had recorded the statements of eight farmers about the sequence of events. All 15 were also asked to identify people seen in the videos of the incident. Last Saturday, the SIT had issued notices to 37 people, ordering them to record their statements.

## KILLED IN PULWAMA

# Neighbours of carpenter rush back home

MANISH SAHU  
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 19

AS THE 55-year-old Sageer Ahmad, a carpenter killed by militants in Pulwama in Kashmir, was buried by his family at Sarai Hisamuddin in Saharanpur, relatives of other residents from the area employed in Kashmir are urging them to return.

Ahmad is survived by five children. His wife Nafisa died of Covid six months ago, said local corporator and his neighbour Mansoor Badar.

Residents said many of them had gone to the Valley in the past two years as earnings at home plunged following the pandemic and lockdown. Ahmad had gone to Pulwama around two years back, after a friend convinced him about a job.



Migrant workers in Jammu on Tuesday. Fear has gripped migrant workers in Kashmir after the targeted killings. *PTI*

Ahmad was killed on Saturday by militants at his rented accommodation. Two people from Sarai Hisamuddin went to get his body.

At least five of Ahmad's neighbours work in South Kashmir. Alam, 22, said: "My father Mohammad Mumtaz, 50, works as a tailor in south Kashmir. He went around three months ago,

after our tailoring business got hit because of the coronavirus." On frequent requests by his mother, Mumtaz was finally returning, Alam, who runs the family's tailoring shop, said.

With a large family to support, Alam said Mumtaz, who has seven sons and five daughters, had few options. "With the help of a few locals, he went to Kashmir."

Shazia said her brother Mohammad Amir, 27, had returned to the Valley less than two months ago after coming on leave, and is rushing back now.

Amir has been employed in Kashmir at a shop making wood products for two years. "When he was home, he told us the atmosphere and weather in Kashmir are good. He stayed two weeks here," said Shazia, adding that after Ahmad's killing, their mother had pleaded with him to

return home.

Also on his way back is Mohammad Saleem, 55, another of Ahmad's neighbours who works in south Kashmir. Another neighbour, Mohammad Naeem, said Saleem had gone to the Valley around two months back, as his wood business had been hit because of the pandemic. "Saleem's wife has informed us he has left his job and is returning," said Naeem.

Badar said another youth, Faisal, 28, will not be going back to the Valley to join work, and will look for something to do in Saharanpur. After working in Kashmir for the last year, he had returned home around a week back. Faisal, who lives a couple of houses down from Ahmad's, also worked at a shop making wood products in Kashmir.

Faisal or his family could not be contacted.

PRESENTS

REIMAGINING SCHOOLS

# NEP 2020:

## INDIA'S FOUNDATION TO BECOME A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

**Shri Dharmendra Pradhan**  
Hon'ble Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship  
Government of India

**PANELISTS**

**Madhav Chavan**  
Co-Founder & CEO  
Pratham

**Asyia Kazmi**  
Global Education Policy Lead  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

**Dr. Dhir Jhingran**  
Founder Director  
Language & Learning Foundation

**Merlia Shaukath**  
Founder & CEO  
Madhi Foundation

**MODERATOR**

**Ritika Chopra**  
National Education Editor  
The Indian Express

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

**Shaveta Sharma-Kukreja**  
Co-Managing Director  
Central Square Foundation

**21 OCT THURSDAY**

**6:30 PM**

**ZOOM JOIN US**

**SCAN TO REGISTER**

NEP 2020 is a huge step forward to transforming India's school education system, with a focus on acquiring 21st century skills of critical thinking and problem solving. The policy accords the highest priority to foundational literacy and numeracy. But the policy was drafted before the pandemic and, unfortunately, the context in which it is being implemented has changed. We need to adapt the policy to our current situation — adopt a blended learning approach so that children continue learning at home and build on some of the innovative learning models implemented during the lockdown.

This edition of IE Thinc will discuss the direction school education has to take to achieve NEP's vision and the role of technology in enabling this change, besides unpacking the impact this might have on the future economy.

JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

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Online applications are invited by the Maharashtra Agricultural Universities Examination Board, Pune for admission to Ph.D. degree courses starting during Academic Year, 2021-22 in various agricultural streams in the Maharashtra State Agricultural Universities. The online process will commence from Dt. 20/10/2021 and the last date for submission of online applications is Dt. 08/11/2021. For further details regarding Ph.D. Common Entrance Test-2021 candidates may visit the website www.mcaer.org

**Place:** Pune **Sd/-**  
**Date:** 20/10/2021 **- CONTROLLER**  
Maharashtra Agricultural Universities Examination Board, Pune

**PTI**



# EXPRESS NETWORK

## UP DySP held for abetment of suicide sacked from service

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, OCTOBER 19

THE UTTAR Pradesh government on Tuesday dismissed Deputy Superintendent of Police Amresh Kumar Singh Baghel from service. He was arrested last month on various charges, including abetment of suicide of a rape survivor and her friend, who had set themselves on fire outside the Supreme Court on August 6 and succumbed to their burns subsequently.

The 24-year-old woman had accused BSP MP Atul Rai of raping her in 2018.

In a Facebook Live just moments before setting themselves on fire, the two had alleged that some officers of UP Police were supporting the BSP MP, who is currently in jail, and harassing them.

Police said, Baghel, who was then the circle officer of Bhelupur in Varanasi, had submitted an inquiry report in the rape case which favoured the accused BSP MP.

Further, according to sources, Baghel had stated in his report that the woman had conspired with others to frame Rai in a false case.

The woman had named the officer on Facebook Live video before setting herself on fire.

"The state government has dismissed Amresh Kumar Singh Baghel from his services," said Additional Chief Secretary (Home), Awaneesh Kumar Awasthi. A native of Deoria, Baghel was promoted to the rank of DySP last year. However, months later, he was suspended

for "dereliction of duty".

On September 30, Varanasi police arrested Baghel after filing a case against him on abetment and other charges at Lanka police station.

The state government formed a two-member panel in August to look into the allegations levelled by the woman in the video. On August 26, Lucknow police registered an FIR against former IPS officer Amitabh Thakur and Rai for abetment to suicide and other charges. Thakur was arrested the same day.

On May 1, 2019, the woman got an FIR lodged against Rai for allegedly raping her at his residence in Varanasi in March 2018. She also alleged that Rai had filmed the assault and threatened to circulate the video clip on social media.

In November last year, an FIR was filed in Varanasi against the woman for allegedly forging documents. The complainant, Pawan Kumar, who is the brother of Rai, alleged that the high school which the woman produced before the police had some discrepancies with regard to her date of birth.

Kumar alleged that in 2015, the woman lodged a molestation complaint against a student leader and high school marksheet which she produced then showed her date of birth as March 10, 1997. However, four years later (in 2019), when she got a rape case registered against Rai, the marksheet that she submitted mentioned her date of birth was mentioned as June 10, 1997.

## YSRCP workers vandalise TDP offices in Andhra

Naidu calls up Shah, seeks President's rule, central security for party leaders

REENIVAS JANYALA  
HYDERABAD, OCTOBER 19

IN WHAT appeared to be coordinated attacks, ruling YSRCP workers and supporters, armed with iron rods and sticks, on Tuesday targeted TDP offices across Andhra Pradesh Tuesday evening, damaging property and assaulting workers of the opposition party.

Several TDP workers were injured in the attacks at the party offices in state capital Amaravati, Mangalagiri, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and all the 13 district offices.

Terming the attacks as an attempt to stifle the voice of the main opposition party, TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu said law and order has collapsed in the state, and demanded President's rule. He announced a statewide bandh on Wednesday.

Shortly after the attacks, Naidu also spoke to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan, informing them about the attacks by the ruling party workers. He sought from Shah security cover by central forces for TDP offices and leaders and called for President's rule in the state.

YSRCP spokesperson Ambati Rambabu said the attacks were party workers' reaction to "wild allegations against YSRCP leaders and the Chief Minister".

Over the past few days, the TDP has been building pressure on the Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy government over two issues — mishandling of the severe energy crisis in the state arising out of coal shortage for power plants, and alleged rampant cultivation and smuggling of ganja in the state.

TDP leaders, including Naidu, raised questions relating to Telangana Police's operation in



A video grab of YSRCP workers barging into a TDP office.

Araku Valley of Visakhapatnam district against alleged ganja smugglers. They accused YSRCP leaders of being hand in glove with narcotic smugglers in facilitating cultivation and sale of ganja.

Senior TDP leader and MLC Nara Lokesh, son of party chief Naidu, said, "Our demand for a white paper on the coal and power crisis in the state, and questioning why Telangana Police was conducting an opera-

tion in Andhra Pradesh over narcotics supply, has angered the YSRCP leadership. They ordered these attacks on our offices to silence us."

While the TDP accused the police of inaction, DGP D Gautam Sawang said anyone indulging in inciting violence against any party or leader would be dealt with strictly according to the law.

"We are warning political workers of all parties not to indulge in violence. If anyone says

**EXPLAINED**  
**A first in Andhra**

WHILE MINOR and localised clashes between workers of YSRCP and TDP have been reported from urban and rural areas of the state earlier over statements made by the opposition party, this is the first time that such a coordinated attack across the state has taken place. The TDP accused police of inaction as the mobs vandalised their offices and called it an example of collapse of law and order in the state.

anything that incites violence against a particular party of their leaders, they will be dealt with severely," he said. "We will take strict action against those who were involved in today's attacks on the TDP offices. I have de-

played additional forces across the state to prevent such attacks."

In his conversation over the phone with Shah, Naidu requested the Union Home Minister for central forces' security for party offices and workers. He said the attacks were premeditated and politically motivated. He alleged that law and order in the state has collapsed under the present regime.

Shah assured Naidu to look into the matter. He also assured him of central security cover to TDP offices and leaders.

After the conversation, Naidu in a letter to Shah described the attacks as "state-sponsored terrorism" on democracy. He accused the police of not acting against the mob that targeted the TDP central office although it is not far from the state police headquarters. "I called the DGP at 5:03 pm but he did not pick the phone. Our party office staff called local police station but in vain. The attack finally took place at 5:16 pm. This was a result of the collusion of the government and Andhra Pradesh police," he wrote.

## Odisha teacher's belongings found; charred remains sent for DNA test

AISHWARYA MOHANTY  
BHUBANESWAR, OCTOBER 19

ELEVEN DAYS after a 24-year-old school teacher went missing, police recovered her ornaments and other belongings along with charred remains from an under-construction stadium in Kalahandi district of Odisha on Tuesday. The main accused was arrested from a sugarcane field later in the day, hours after the police released his posters declaring him wanted, and announced a Rs 1 lakh reward for information on him. They also detained the driver of an earth-mover machine which was allegedly used to dig the pit to bury the body.

While the woman's family identified her belongings, the charred remains have been sent for DNA testing, police said. They zeroed in on the site after the associates of the suspect, rounded up for questioning, revealed that he was last spotted with the deceased near the under-construction stadium.

"The skeletal remains have been sent for DNA testing... The suspect is being interrogated and we will file a murder case after confirmation [of the identity]," DIG, North Deepak Kumar said.

The accused is the president of the managing committee of the school where the teacher was employed. According to the police, the teacher went missing on October 8 after she left home to allegedly meet the accused. Her family filed an abduction complaint against him on October 13. "We approached the police after failing to find her ourselves. My sister knew of his wrongdoings and wanted to expose him. We suspect he abducted her and did something to her. He was the last person she spoke to over the phone and had gone to meet him," the brother of the deceased, also the complainant, alleged.

The incident has snowballed into a political slugfest with the Opposition demanding the ouster of Minister of State for Home Dibya Shankar Mishra. The Opposition has alleged that Mishra is shielding the accused.

## Hindi row: Zomato sacks staff, then reinstates him

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CHENNAI, OCTOBER 19

RESTAURANT AGGREGATOR and food delivery company Zomato on Tuesday apologised to a person, who alleged that he was de-

## Classifieds

### PERSONAL

I Mohammad Rehman Beg S/O, Usman Beg R/o 98, Qazipura North, Near Nazar Beauty Parlour, Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh. 271801 have changed my name to Rahman Beg for all purposes. 0040588423-1

I Nipuna Barman W/o Army No. 4369804x L/hav Sananta Barman. R/o Village - Thaipu Nagar Po. Kanakpur (east) District- Cachar State- Assam Pin-788107. Do Hereby Solemnly Affirm And Declare That My Actual And Correct Name Is Nipuna Barman In My Adhar Card And All Documents. That Due To Mistake My Name Has Been Wrongly Recorded Nipuna Barman My Husband's Service Record. That Nipuna Barman And Nipuna Barman Is Same And One Single Identical Person Ie Myself. vide Affidavit Before The Ld Notary Public As Lucknow On 12 Oct 2021.

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As the borrower 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/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICIICI Home Finance Company Limited.

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**Date :** October 20, 2021  
**Place:** Agra (Uttar Pradesh)

**Authorized Officer**  
ICIICI Home Finance Company Limited

Police fire teargas shells during clashes at an Eid-e-Milad un Nabi procession in Jabalpur. PTI

## Clashes during Eid processions in MP, cops use teargas, lathicharge

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE  
BHOPAL, OCTOBER 19

MADHYA PRADESH Police used mild lathicharge and lobbed teargas shells to control crowds during Eid Milad-un-Nabi processions in three districts of the state on Tuesday.

In Dhar, police said a group was allowed to take out a procession via a particular route.

However, on Tuesday, they tried to break through police barricades, demanding permission to use an alternate route. Dhar Additional Collector Saloni Sidhana said they resorted to mild lathicharge. In Barwani district, two communities pelted stones at each other. Police said members of a community objected to allegedly provocative music played during a procession. The police got the music stopped. However, it

was allegedly played again, leading to tension. Barwani SP Deepak Shukla said, "Our teams used mild lathicharge to disperse the crowd." In Jabalpur, firecrackers and stones were allegedly hurled at police while devotees were gathering for prayers to mark Milad-un-Nabi. Jabalpur SP Siddharth Bahuguna said, "We had to lob teargas shells.. Action will be taken on the basis of video evidence of the incident."

## Namaz impasse: Gurgaon residents meet Dy Commissioner, defer protest for 2 weeks

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE  
GURGAON, OCTOBER 19

RESIDENTS OF Gurgaon's Sector 47, who have been protesting against the offering of namaz in the open for at least a month, have deferred their protest for at least two weeks after a meeting with the deputy commissioner on Monday.

Members of the resident welfare association met the DC who, they said, had assured them that the matter would be discussed and a possible solution would be found. Yash Garg, the Gurgaon DC, said, "I have discussed the matter with the residents. In the coming days, we will have a dialogue with all community members to resolve the issue."

Sunil Yadav, president of the Sector 47 RWA, said, "We met



Namaz was disrupted for the fourth time last week due to residents' protests

the DC to discuss our concerns. The DC has asked us to stop the protests for two weeks till Diwali to discuss and resolve the issue. We have requested the officials to shift the location of Friday na-

maz prayers to an alternative site or a community centre. We will see if the matter is resolved."

For the past four weeks, namaz has been offered at the site in sector 47 under police protection, amid protests by residents objecting to prayers being offered at a public place. On two occasions, the police had to shift the prayer site by a few metres after residents gathered at the site, raising slogans and singing bhajans using a mic and a portable speaker.

Residents have alleged security and traffic concerns, claiming that the permission granted for namaz in the past at the sector 47 site, as part of a negotiated settlement with all the representatives, was only for a day.

Members of the Gurgaon Nagrik Ekta Manch (GNEM), a citizen's forum, also submitted a

letter to the DC on Tuesday urging the administration to initiate a dialogue with people and resident associations.

The letter stated that people and RVAs were "being misled into becoming a part of a malicious campaign to create a wedge between residents of Gurgaon, which is threatening the peace of the city".

"GNEM has always collaborated with the administration in times of distress and we will be happy to assist in resolving the current Friday namaz issue through dialogue in order to ensure that the dignity and rights of people are not compromised," the letter read. Last week, the issue was discussed between members of both communities, residents, police officials and a sub divisional magistrate, but it had reached an impasse.

## Kerala braces for more rain, alert sounded

SHAJU PHILIP  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCTOBER 19

RAIN-BATTERED KERALA is set to receive more rain starting Wednesday, IMD has predicted. As per IMD's prediction, the Western Ghats belt and eastern hills of the state will receive heavy to extremely heavy rains.

Keeping in mind last week's devastating landslides in Idukki and Kottayam districts, the Kerala government for the first time has begun evacuating people residing in landslide-prone areas in the eastern hills of the state, while district administrations have readied

fishermen with boats to evacuate people from low-lying areas.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan called on those residing in river basins and hilly regions to be extremely vigilant. "Chances for landslide and river overflowing are very high as we have reached the fog end of southwest monsoon. People who are residing at houses, which have been earlier identified as unfit by the state disaster management authority, should immediately move to safer locations. Necessary directions have been given to district administrations to compulsorily shift people from unfit houses and those living very close to riversides," he said.

The state disaster management authority has sounded an alert in landslide-prone areas in the state. In many districts, the revenue department has urged people to voluntarily move out from the hill slopes prone to landslides.

In Kottayam district, which was badly hit by landslides and flash flood last week, the administration has identified 33 landslide-prone areas. District Collector Dr P K Jayasree said that people in such landslide prone areas, identified by Geological Survey of India, should move to safer places. "If they don't move out voluntarily, we would take steps to evacuate to camps," she said.



Three shutters of Idukki reservoir were opened Tuesday. PTI



# 5 GOVT & POLITICS



## DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



### THANK YOU GESTURE

IN ITS fight against Covid-19, India is expected to achieve the milestone of 100 crore cumulative vaccinations soon. Ahead of that, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Bharati Pravin Pawar on Tuesday visited Pune-based Serum Institute of India, which manufactures the Covishield vaccine. The visit was specially to convey her gratitude to Adar Poonawalla and his team for playing a crucial role in the Covid-19 vaccination drive in the country.

### WIDENING GAP

THE RIFT between the RJD and Congress in Bihar is widening. And AICC in-charge of Bihar Bhakta Charan Das's outbursts is only making it worse. Das's recent remarks that the RJD has an understanding with the BJP for the two seats where bypolls are scheduled on October 30 has not only left the RJD fuming but also surprised even Congress leaders. Some Congress leaders felt that Das's remarks were misplaced as the RJD has always taken a strong stand against the BJP. They pointed out that it was a fact that the RJD and Left parties have never aligned with the BJP. Many Congress leaders are wondering whether Das has the mandate of the party leadership to make such remarks.

### BACK IN ACTION

IN THE run-up to the elections in West Bengal, a team of young volunteers worked intensely on the ground to mobilise support for the BJP outside the state. The Save Bengal team, which worked in coordination with the RSS and BJP, had been inactive since the party's defeat in the March-April polls. But it has sprung back to life again — to raise the Bangladesh violence issue. The Save Bengal group on Tuesday joined a protest by Bengali Hindu Bachao Samiti at Jantar Mantar against the "organised assault" on Durga Puja pandals in Bangladesh. The group is planning to hold more protests to raise the issue.

### Police send fresh summons to CM Ashok Gehlot's OSD

**HAMZA KHAN**  
JAIPUR, OCTOBER 19

THE DELHI Police has sent another summons to Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's Officer on Special Duty, Lokesh Sharma, in connection with the phone tapping case.

Sharma has been asked by the Delhi Police to appear at its office at 11 am on October 22, in connection with the FIR lodged by Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on March 25 this year, where Sharma is an accused. In his complaint, Singh had accused Sharma and others of criminal conspiracy and "unlawfully intercepting telegraphic signals (telephonic conversation)".

Earlier, Sharma had been summoned by Delhi Police's Crime Branch on July 24 but had skipped it saying he can't travel for "personal reasons" for the next two weeks but can appear subsequently. However, the Delhi Police did not issue a summons until now. Sharma is yet to take a call on whether he'll go to Delhi this time.

Meanwhile, the matter is also pending in the Delhi High Court, where Sharma prayed for the quashing of FIR; the High Court had stayed any coercive action until further orders. The next hearing is on January 13.

### Goa: 200 Cong workers join TMC

**Panaji:** As many as 200 Congress workers who quit the party on Monday joined the Goa unit of TMC on Tuesday. Workers of the Valpoi Block Congress Committee, including their former president Dashrath Mandrekar, joined the TMC as did former General Secretary of the Congress's Mahila Wing, Priya Rathore.

In a statement, the TMC said, "As over 200 Congress workers and several office bearers and grassroots leaders join the Goa TMC and pledge their support, it is confirmed that the Congress under (PCC president) Girish Chodankar and (AICC election observer for Goa) P Chidambaram has completely collapsed in Goa. People are now fast moving in the direction of the 'New Dawn'." **ENS**

### Gujarat BJP chief calls for votes: 'Repay Covid debt' to govt

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
SURAT, OCTOBER 19

THE PEOPLE were saved from coronavirus due to the "timely and free vaccination", and it is time "to repay this debt", Gujarat BJP President C R Paatil said in Silvassa on Tuesday while asking people to vote for the BJP in the October 30 bye-election for Dadra and Nagar Haveli (DNH).

The bypolls to the seat were necessitated by the death of the local MP, Mohan Delkar, who allegedly died by suicide in Mumbai on February 22.

Delkar's wife Kalaben is contesting the bypolls on a Shiv Sena ticket. The seat is expected to see a triangular contest, with BJP's Mahesh Gavit, a retired police sub-inspector, and Congress's Mahesh Dhodi, a retired head constable, as the other main candidates.

Taking on the Sena, Paatil, speaking in Gujarati, said: "In Maharashtra, Shiv Sena had formed a government in coalition with the NCP and the Congress. (Sena founder) Balasaheb Thackeray had once said that he would like to die instead of sitting with NCP or Congress.... His Sena has now become a compromising party..."

**KANCHAN VASDEV**  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 19

HOURS BEFORE a function related to his son's wedding, Charanjit Singh Channi accompanied senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to Lakhimpur Kheri. He returned to Chandigarh hours before the wedding, and a few hours to go for the reception function, was at his office chairing a Cabinet meeting. Later the same day, he joined PPCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu's march to Lakhimpur Kheri.

Welcome to a typical day in the life of Channi, who has set a blistering pace for himself as he completes a month in office on Wednesday. The contrast couldn't be more stark given the vir-

## Poonch: Army to go for final assault to flush out militants

**ARUN SHARMA**  
JAMMU, OCTOBER 19

BARELY A few hours after Chief of Army Staff General M M Naravane concluded his two-day visit of Jammu and returned to Delhi, Army troops on Tuesday evening started preparing for a final assault on militants suspected to be hiding inside the forests at Nar in Bhata Durian area in Poonch district's Mendhar tehsil.

A senior Army officer said they have appealed to local villagers to return to their homes and stay indoors in order to avoid any collateral damage to civilians during the ongoing operation against militants.

Villagers said the appeals, made from loudspeakers of mosques, asked them to drop whatever work they were doing and immediately return to their homes along with their children and cattle.

The operation to hunt down the militants has so far met with little success, with the Army deploying illuminating bombs to light up the forest terrain, as well as para commandos, drones and a helicopter. Police and the Army have cordoned off the area to ensure the militants don't escape.



Army Chief Gen M M Naravane visited the forward areas of Poonch on Tuesday. *PTI*

Sources said there has been no contact with militants since Saturday morning and that troops have been engaging in "speculative fire" while making tactical advances inside the forests. They admitted that they have not been able to see the militants despite aerial surveillance.

Nine soldiers, including two Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) have been killed in action against militants in the forests of Poonch district since October 11, making it the deadliest encounter in the area in the past 17 years and the longest in J&K since the abrogation of Article

370 in August 2019.

Earlier on Tuesday morning, Army Chief General M M Naravane visited forward areas of Poonch, including Bhimber Gali, from where the militants are suspected to have escaped into the forests of Bhata Durian. Four soldiers were killed on October 14 in an exchange of fire with the militants, who, security forces believes may have been present in the area for as many as two months, after infiltrating across the border.

General Naravane, who was briefed on the security situation and operational preparedness by

General Officer Commanding, White Knight Corps, also interacted with the troops and commanders on the ground in the forward areas.

Police have so far detained eight villagers in the Bhata Durian area, including a 45-year-old woman and her son on suspicion of providing logistical support to the militants.

While Army sources said it was not clear if the incidents of October 11 and 14 involved the same group, a senior police officer said they believe that the militants were acting in tandem, and had changed locations.

In August-September, forces were involved in three encounters in the general area of Rajouri. On August 6, two militants were killed in the Pangai forest of Thanamandi; on August 19, in the same area, two soldiers, including a JCO, were killed in an encounter; and on September 13, one militant was killed in Manjakote in Rajouri. Police sources now believe all these encounters were part of a chain of events.

Additional Director General of Police for Jammu, Mukesh Singh, visited Bhimber Gali on Sunday, and officers expressed confidence about zeroing in on the militants.

### Goa minister: Tourists who consume drugs not welcome

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
PORVORIM, OCTOBER 19

STATING THAT tourists who consume drugs are not welcome in Goa, state Tourism Minister Manohar Ajaonkar on Tuesday said that the coastal state wants the "richest tourists", and those who respect the local culture.

"We don't want tourists who consume drugs. We don't want tourists who spoil Goa. We don't want tourists who come to Goa and cook food inside a bus. We want the richest tourists. We welcome all tourists, but they should enjoy themselves while respecting Goa's culture," he said.

Speaking with journalists after the final session of the Assembly, Ports Minister Micheal Lobo said he will write to the Mormugao Port Trust, which comes under the Centre, to not allow cruise ships found with 'drugs' to dock in Goa.

The *Indian Express* reported on Tuesday that the Centre has prepared a comprehensive 60-point action plan following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with secretaries of all departments and ministries on September 18.

According to the plan, government organisations need to create capacity for GIS-based planning and leveraging the potential of satellite-based imagery. This, the document states, may be taken up as a campaign under its mission, "Karamyogi".

Saying that data is not being utilised "efficiently", it recommends the appointment of special monitoring officers across departments.

The action plan also emphasises the government's push for digitising all land records by 2023 under the central database called 'Matribhumi'.

"Each parcel of land will have a Unique ID

## Tomar photo with Nihang sect head triggers row

**KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR**  
AMRITSAR, OCTOBER 19

A PURPORTED photograph of Nihang sect head Baba Aman Singh with Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Tomar triggered a controversy on Tuesday, with the Sikh religious leader alleging that the Centre offered money to the Nihangs to leave the farmers' protest site at Singhu.

The photograph — which includes former Punjab Police officer Gurmeet Singh Pinky, who was dismissed from service and convicted in a murder case, and BJP leader Harwinder Garewal — is believed to be from a meeting about two months back.

A member of Aman Singh's sect is the prime accused in the Singhu lynching of a Dalit Sikh. Aman Singh had justified the killing in his remarks after the incident.

"I was offered Rs 10 lakh for leaving the farmers' protest site;



Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar

Rs 1 lakh was offered to my organisation also. But we can't be bought," Aman Singh alleged on Tuesday. He said the Nihang organisations would take a call on October 27, on whether to stay in Singhu or not.

The Agriculture Ministry did not respond to questions on the matter.

When contacted, Gurmeet Singh said: "It is true that I know Baba Aman, and we went to the minister's house in August. But the purpose of visit was differ-

ent. I went for some personal work. The Nihang sect head was talking about farm Bills. But there was no offer of money made to him in front of me. I don't know what happened between him and Tomar."

Tomar has been meeting farmer protest leaders to negotiate a solution to the deadlock over the farm laws.

Meanwhile, citing the photograph, the Congress has sought a probe to find out if there was a conspiracy to defame the farmers' stir. "In view of the recent disclosures about one of the Nihang leaders having already been in touch with the Government of India, Minister for Agriculture NS Tomar in particular, the lynching incident has now taken an entirely different turn... There appeared to be a deep-rooted conspiracy to defame the farmers' stir," Punjab Deputy CM Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa said in a statement.

— WITH PTI INPUTS

## Goa CM: Bhumiputra Bill won't be sent to Governor

**MAYURA JANWALKAR**  
PORVORIM, OCTOBER 19

A DAY after Goa Revenue Minister Jennifer Monserrate stated that the Goa Bhumiputra Adhikarini Bill, 2021 had been referred to the Governor for his assent, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Tuesday said the Bill will not be sent to the Governor.

In a written reply to a question, Monserrate on Monday had said the Bill, which was passed by the Goa Assembly on July 30 amid a walkout by the Opposition, had been sent to the Governor.

On Tuesday, Goa Forward Party MLA Vijai Sardesai brought up the issue, saying Monserrate's reply was in conflict with what

was discussed in the Business Advisory Committee before the two-day session began. "The government needs to give a clear reply whether it is with the Law Department and will be sent to the Governor for assent," he said.

In response, Monserrate clarified that her reply stands corrected and the Bill was with the state Law Department. Subsequently, CM Sawant said, "As said, it (the Bill) is with the Law Department and will not be sent for (Governor's) assent."

The Bhumiputra Bill aims at giving those residing in Goa for at least 30 years the status of 'Bhumiputras' and to enable them to stake claim to ownership of their house of up to 250 sq m built before April 1, 2019. However, it

has been at the centre of a political storm since it was introduced in the assembly on July 29.

An RTI application by *The Indian Express* had revealed that a day before the Bill was passed by the House, Monserrate had flagged eight issues in it.

Soon after being passed, Sawant announced that the Bill would be renamed the Goa Bhumiputra Adhikarini Bill after the BJP's ST Morcha took exception to the name and said that it had hurt the sentiments of the state's tribal population. Meanwhile, the Opposition alleged the Bill, under the garb of giving ownership rights to 'Bhumiputras', sought to regularise unauthorised constructions occupied by migrants and not original Goans.

### EXPLAINED Govt to allow Bill to lapse

THE GOA government has decided to allow the Bhumiputra Bill to lapse. The government had faced flak from many sections of the society, including from state ministers and the bureaucracy. In the past too, Bills have gone to the Law Department but haven't been sent for the Governor's assent. "This is a full stop," Sawant told *The Indian Express*.



Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi during an event in Chamkaur Sahib town on Tuesday. *Courtesy: Twitter*

in all directions since taking over, including doing rounds of Delhi to meet the high command, and

handling Sidhu," the leader said, adding that it in the midst of all this, the CM has managed to work



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar at Israel's Ovda Airbase to meet an IAF contingent taking part in the Blue Flag exercise. *PTI*

## India to be part of 4-country forum on economic cooperation

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19

INDIA, UNITED STATES, Israel and the UAE have decided to form a forum for future economic cooperation and to explore possibilities of joint infrastructure projects in the fields of transportation, technology, maritime security, and economics and trade.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who is on a five-day visit of Israel, accompanied his Israeli counterpart Yair Lapid in a virtual meeting on Monday with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in which the four leaders also exchanged views on shared issues of concern in the region, an official statement said.

"A fruitful first meeting with

Israeli APM and FM Yair Lapid, UAE FM Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken this evening. Discussed working together more closely on economic growth and global issues. Agreed on expeditious follow-up," Jaishankar said in a tweet after the meeting.

"The ministers decided to establish an international forum for economic cooperation," said a statement issued by the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

At the end of the meeting, it was decided that each minister will appoint senior-level professionals to a joint working group that will formulate options for cooperation in the areas identified by the ministers, it said.

The intention is to hold an in-person meeting of the ministers in the coming months at 'Expo 2020' in Dubai, the statement said.

## Govt's action plan: More information & technology officers, GIS-based planning

**ANISHA DUTTA**  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19

THE APPOINTMENT of more Chief Information Officers (CIOs) and Chief Technology Officers (CTOs) as data is not being used efficiently; using Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping for decision making to increase the country's GDP; setting up a national mentoring platform for start-ups — these are part of an action plan prepared by the Centre.

The *Indian Express* reported on Tuesday that the Centre has prepared a comprehensive 60-point action plan following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with secretaries of all departments and ministries on September 18.

According to the plan, government organisations need to create capacity for GIS-based planning and leveraging the potential of satellite-based imagery. This, the document states, may be taken up as a campaign under its mission, "Karamyogi".

Saying that data is not being utilised "efficiently", it recommends the appointment of special monitoring officers across departments.

The action plan also emphasises the government's push for digitising all land records by 2023 under the central database called 'Matribhumi'.

"Each parcel of land will have a Unique ID

for ease of tracking of transactions. Integration with e-Courts system will provide transparency on title/possession related issues," it states.

According to senior officials, these action points will be assessed periodically — ministries and departments have been asked to appoint nodal officers to review the progress.

While the 60-point plan is targeted at specific ministries and departments, it can be broadly categorised under three heads: leveraging IT and technology for governance; improving business climate; and up-grading the civil services.

"National mentoring platform for start-ups may be set up. Mentors could be a single point of contact for start-ups and entrepreneurs. They may also support in organising initial funding. There are many technical institutions, which could assist such a platform," says the document in its action plan for the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

The plan also directs the culture and tourism ministries to identify and develop 100-200 iconic structures and sites. It says "centres of excellence" may be set up in rural areas through PPP, taking a cue from such centres in Singapore.

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## FLOOD AND FURY

Devastation in coasts and hills underlines ecological fragility, calls for revisiting development paradigms

THIS MONSOON SEASON has given ample evidence of extreme weather events, long foretold by climate science experts. In July, a fortnight of torrential rain left a trail of destruction in the mountains of north India and the coastal parts of Western India. The elements have continued to behave chaotically even as the southwest monsoon retreats from the country and the easterlies are replacing the westerlies. At least 20 people are feared to have lost their lives in another bout of floods in Uttarakhand. In Kerala, incessant downpour in the past four days has swelled rivers and caused landslides, sweeping away homes, bridges and claiming at least 38 lives — worse is feared with the IMD predicting another spurt of rainfall from Wednesday. Both states have issued flood alerts and begun to evacuate people from flood-prone areas. But these states require much more than emergency measures to address and mitigate their climate-related vulnerabilities. Whether in the Western Ghats or the Himalayas, there are pressing reasons for states to rethink development paradigms.

The topography of most hilly regions makes them prone to landslides. Deforestation, quarrying, road construction and other land-use changes that pay short shrift to ecology increase vulnerabilities of such areas during episodes of heavy rainfall. That's why several expert committees have counseled utmost caution in implementing infrastructure projects in both the Himalayas and the Western Ghats. In 2011, for example, the Madhav Gadgil committee recommended that a roughly 1,30,000 sq km stretch spanning Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu be declared an environmentally sensitive zone. The panel headed by one of the country's top ecologists called for strict regulation of developmental activities in this stretch. None of the six states agreed with its recommendations. Kerala, in particular, objected to the proposed ban on mining, restrictions on construction activities and embargoes on hydroelectricity projects. The substantially diluted recommendations of another committee headed by K Kasturirangan — it proposed to whittle down the Western Ghats' eco-sensitive zone by about half of what was earmarked by the Gadgil panel — also did not get much traction in the Western Ghat states.

The Kerala government has opened the shutters of the Idukki dam as the state's largest reservoir is rapidly filling up with heavy rainfall. In recent years, state governments in most parts of the country have been criticised for leaving such decisions till it's too late. Dam operators blame the delay on not being alerted about extreme weather events in time. There's surely a case for greater coordination amongst forecasting agencies and reservoir management authorities. This would ensure the timely opening of dam spillways and create holding capacity in the reservoirs to absorb excess rainfall. With studies and IPCC reports warning about more destructive floods caused by sea-level rise and high-intensity rainfall, the country can ill-afford to delay investments in such disaster management systems.

## THE DHAKA CHALLENGE

Anti-Hindu violence requires Sheikh Hasina government to act firmly. A lot more than India-Bangla ties is at stake

THE VIOLENCE TARGETING the Hindu minority in Bangladesh is a disturbing sign of the continuing influence of Islamist groups that have threatened the secular consensus in that country since its birth 50 years ago. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has promised to crack down on individuals and groups behind last week's communal clashes. At least six people died in clashes and temples, residences and businesses of members of the Hindu community, which constitutes over 10 per cent of Bangladesh's population, were damaged. Clearly, the Hasina government needs to act firmly to punish the guilty and restore peace. New Delhi has expressed concern since events in its neighbourhood can potentially resonate at home but any response should be tempered by the understanding that this is a problem, primarily, for Dhaka to address. For, any attempt to step into a matter that involves citizens of Bangladesh is fraught with risk and unintended consequences.

Like most countries in the Subcontinent, Bangladesh has been rolled by communal violence, with Hindus, the single-largest religious minority, facing the brunt — there have been at least 3,600 incidents of violence against Hindus since January 2013. Yet, evidence suggests that the anti-Hindu mobilisations in Bangladesh are more of an aberration. A secular linguistic identity has been the foundational principle of Bangladesh, but a powerful Islamist strand, a leftover of pre-Partition Muslim politics in the Subcontinent, has survived through organisations such as Jamaat-e-Islami in alliance with military dictators and pro-Pakistan forces. The rise of al Qaeda and ISIS has provided additional impetus and new ideological inspiration for the emergence of new radical groups, which have attacked artists, bloggers, Awami League and Communist Party workers, LGBT activists. In 2016, an al Qaeda affiliate bombed a bakery in upscale Dhaka killing 22 people. The current anti-Hindu violence may also bear the imprint of forces that oppose Sheikh Hasina in a political eco-system where there are few spaces for the opposition. Indeed, anti-India slogans have accompanied the targeting of Hindus during Durga Puja.

The fact remains that almost 75 years since Partition, religious polarisation in any part of the Subcontinent has cross-border implications. Governments will have to be vigilant against forces that seek to exploit communal fault lines and stoke minority insecurities to further their own electoral and ideological goals. The violence during Durga Puja, a social event that draws in all religious communities in Bangladesh, set off by the now all-too familiar rumour and and social media fury, is ominous and must be stanchd urgently.

## IT TAKES A PARTY-STATE

Chinese authoritarianism seems set on raising children by punishing parents

S PARE A THOUGHT FOR China's adolescents. In the Middle Kingdom, run as it is by a coterie of communists, post-pubescent "acting out" will no longer be considered a step in young people's journeys towards finding themselves. Their acts of rebellion — often manifested in "bad behaviour" — are to be seen as a failure on the part of parents, who will be punished for the misdemeanours of their offspring, according to the draft Family Education Promotion law. In essence, the state is telling young people that their individuality and agency is a myth.

There is a charitable explanation for this paternalism. China, after all, is still ostensibly communist and Karl Marx did say "social being determines consciousness". Perhaps, in a conservative, authoritarian society, punishing parents for their children's misdeeds is the only way for an all-powerful state to force its way into the familial dialectic. It is more likely, though, that a task as important as raising future acolytes for the party-state is too important to be left to parents. It may take a village to raise a child, but in Xi's China, it takes the state to make a citizen.

The proposed law is just the latest in a series of interventions that have seen the state countering what it appears to view as the cultural and political (which are, historically, dangerously synonymous in China) degradation of young people. In the last few months, the education ministry has limited the number of hours children can play computer and online games and the government has been urging young men to "be less feminine". Last year, it issued the "Proposal to Prevent the Feminisation of Male Adolescents" to schools, seemingly to counter the influence of South Korean music and television in the country. Being an adolescent is hard enough. But in China, it looks like young men and women have a harder time of it than most.

# Single garment of destiny

Fundamentalists, ironically, recognise South Asia's connectedness: They bank on it to achieve their ends



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

THE VIOLENCE AGAINST the Hindu minority in Bangladesh is an ominous development. But it is also a reminder of one cardinal truth: All of South Asia is "tied together in a single garment of destiny," to borrow Martin Luther King's phrase from a different context. Violence in one place will spill over to another; freedom endangered in one place will inevitably corrode the freedom of others. We have tried to act as if this was not true. But that modus vivendi has been unravelling for a while.

Anti-Hindu violence in Bangladesh is not new. The current violence is strategically timed. It is surely not a coincidence that the violence coincides with targeted attacks on Hindus in Kashmir. The intent is not just local ethnic terror, but a deepening of the communal divide in India. It is tempting to say that this violence is a strategic act by particular organised groups, perhaps with transnational links. It is not organically embedded in society. This is a comforting thought, and can empower us to the extent that it is still important to recognise forces that do not condone such violence. But in South Asia the link between strategic communal violence and organic embeddedness is always a tricky one. Such violence inevitably transforms the fabric of social relationships itself. It is fanciful to think that Kashmiriyat survived terrorism, or that remnants of Bangladeshi pluralism will survive this violence, or that blasphemy laws in Punjab will not play into hands of violent reactionaries, any more than Indian secularism survived the violence of so-called fringe groups. Over time, everywhere in South Asia, violence has fundamentally transformed politics. It is a tiger you ride at your own peril.

The Partition of India could work as a modus vivendi, if three conditions were in place. The first is that the internal conflicts in each of the states would not radically spill over into the other states. This assumption was never literally true. But it was shaken to its core by 1971. Pakistan's horrendous internal conflicts spilled over, and Indian intervention helped the breaking up of Pakistan, creating a syndrome of deep Pakistani insecurity that still haunts the subcontinent. The second assumption was that the successor states behaved, as much as possible, like normal states in relation

Anti-Hindu violence in Bangladesh is not new. The current violence is strategically timed. It is surely not a coincidence that the violence coincides with targeted attacks on Hindus in Kashmir. The intent is not just local ethnic terror, but a deepening of the communal divide in India. It is tempting to say that this violence is a strategic act by particular organised groups, perhaps with transnational links. It is not organically embedded in society. This is a comforting thought, and can empower us to the extent that it is still important to recognise forces that do not condone such violence. But in South Asia, the link between strategic communal violence and organic embeddedness is always a tricky one.

to each other: Pacifying violence, trading with each other, leveraging the advantages of their geographical proximity. They would, like all states, worry about the power of their neighbours. But the fact that they were states would give them enough confidence to deal with each other. Most states in South Asia, however, want to run away from each other. In Pakistan we got a state whose elites were ready to cut off its nose to spite its face, becoming an epicentre of transnational violence from Afghanistan to Bangladesh, and changing its own social character in the process.

But even the absence of these two conditions could, with some difficulty, be managed, if India remained a bulwark against spillover effects. Spillover effects don't just work through retaliatory violence. They work by transforming the ideological climate in other states. The persecution of Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh is a pivotal strand in the mentality that India must be, if not a Hindu state, at least a "Hindus First" state. India could also remain a bulwark against these effects if in response to communalism elsewhere, it reaffirmed its own secularism more deeply. The assumption was that India is large enough to absorb a few pin pricks. Throwing cold water domestically over what our neighbours were doing, even as we tried to contain them internationally, was not a sign of weakness, it was smart strategy. The fact that Hindus are being targeted is not a creation of Hindu nationalism. The targeting of Hindus also has elements of *sui generis* logic. But the ascendancy of Hindu nationalism has profoundly changed how the dynamics of attacks play out. Hindu nationalism looks for pretexts to target Muslims, deepen internal divisions, and construct a seamless spectre of Muslim threat. The official response of the government of India to the violence in Bangladesh may be conventional. But this incident will have deep communal effects. Even if there is no immediate retaliatory violence, the cumulative communal undertones in India will erupt. Which is exactly what those groups who foment violence in Afghanistan, Pakistan or Bangladesh would like.

The spillover effects cannot be contained because, despite differences in political cultures, the ethnic fundamentalisms of these

countries now feed off each other. They will give each other victories. All of these countries, including India, now have hegemonic ideologies at the level of civil society that revel in a vicious coarsening of discourse, are deeply committed to violence, and frankly don't mind disorder if it increases support for society's authoritarian instincts.

This is also of great strategic consequence. Some of Delhi's macho strategic mandarins used to loudly thump their chests and say India can do without South Asia: It was too big and had too much legitimacy capital to have to worry about its neighbours. India's legitimacy capital is slowly eroding as its democracy and secularism corrode. But, strategically, not placing South Asia front and centre was always a myopic view. It was also a mistake in a much deeper sense. The geopolitics of South Asia is not a conventional international relations problem; it is a deep, and increasingly traumatic, psychodrama in a long civilisational history. The international de-hyphenation of India and Pakistan may be considered a big diplomatic victory. But the de-hyphenation we are proud of is practically meaningless when even the ideological currents in most South Asian countries are now so deeply hyphenated.

In a twisted dialectic, fundamentalists, even as they create walls between communities, seem to recognise that South Asia has a connected ideological destiny: They are banking on it to achieve their ends. There are three ways of thinking about that destiny. The first is the current modus vivendi. But the historical conditions for its success are increasingly doubtful. What is replacing it is an intensification of the logic of 1947: Attempts at a deepening communal divide, ethnic cleansing and subordination in different keys, and a cult of violence. Is there a third option — a South Asia with states that reimagine the region not as joined by a murderous competition over community identity but as a new zone of freedom? This is a pie in the sky. But the thought that the only political language that unites South Asia is the deepening of the violence of 1947 is too dreadful to contemplate.

The writer is Contributing Editor, The Indian Express

## THE CREDIBILITY REVOLUTION

This year's Nobel winning economists help us intervene more rigorously on poverty



PRANAV PATIL

THIS YEAR'S Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences (the Nobel prize) has been awarded to David Card for his empirical contribution to labour economics and to Joshua Angrist and Guido Imbens for pioneering new methods to analyse causal relationships. The trio invented methods that have led to the so-called "credibility revolution" in empirical economics.

The scope of issues that economists examine has widened over the last three decades as the discipline began exploring answers beyond mathematical models and ideological discourse. Although neoclassical theories are elegant, questions were raised about their real-life evidence. Do economists have credible evidence such that policymakers and the public can take them seriously? Nobel laureates Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo point out that the lack of evidence is one of the reasons economists were considered less credible.

For an evidence-based approach, understanding the causal relationship between different factors, therefore, becomes imperative. A classic example of a causal relationship is the impact of education on lifetime earnings — would one extra year of education increase earnings and by what magnitude? Economists embraced the experimental approach to tackle the credibility crisis and to assess the precise causal effect of policies. Like in medical science, development economists launched smaller randomised controlled trials in the hope of establishing causality between different variables and to investigate which policy interventions were effective. In a randomised control trial, Duflo, along with others tested how monitor-

For an evidence-based approach, understanding the causal relationship between different factors becomes imperative. A classic example is the impact of education on lifetime earnings — would one extra year of education increase earnings and by what magnitude? Economists embraced the experimental approach to tackle the credibility crisis and to assess the precise causal effect of policies. Development economists launched smaller randomised controlled trials to investigate which policy interventions were effective.

ing and financial incentives reduced teacher absenteeism and improved learning in India. Based on experimentally derived causal inferences, economists can recommend more rigorous, objective and rational interventions to solve larger problems like poverty.

However, it is dreadfully challenging to conduct field experiments in many cases. They are expensive, time-consuming and ethically tricky. That is where the idea of "natural experiments" becomes illuminating which rely on random variation without any manipulation by researchers. Card and Alan Krueger designed their famous natural experiment based on the changes in the minimum wage in New Jersey and compared it with Pennsylvania, which has not experienced similar changes. They studied employment in the fast-food industry in the two states before and after the wage changes in New Jersey. Contrary to the predictions of standard economic theory, they found a slight increase in employment in New Jersey compared to Pennsylvania. This finding was a massive blow to conventional supply and demand models. Angrist and Imbens have also designed many natural (quasi) experiments and have been developing a statistical toolkit to precisely estimate the causal effects of policies.

The study of causality is not novel to the research community. However, causal relations were not extensively studied with empirical methods in social sciences. Newton's second law proposes that an object in uniform motion will continue its motion unless some external force is applied. Credibility revolutionists use this very principle to explain economic dynam-

ics. Nonetheless, "causality is no correlation" is the most common catchphrase for these revolutionaries. To distinguish causal links from correlation, economists rely on counterfactuals. For example, in the Card and Krueger study, they show that employment in two states had been evolving in parallel fashion before changes in the minimum wage. Based on that, they assume that employment would evolve similarly in both states without any intervention. Even if they did not observe what would have happened in New Jersey if there was not any intervention, they could observe the counterfactual situation in Pennsylvania.

Since economics closely deals with politics and the market, it is critical to identify which policy interventions are best (and cost-effective). It is worth considering two studies based on two flagship programmes of the Government of India — the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and the Rajiv Gandhi Gramteen Vidyutikaran Yojana. The general assumption that policymakers make is that rural infrastructure programmes would increase farm and off-farm economic activities and reduce poverty. However, recent studies by Sam Asher, Paul Novosad, Fiona Burlig and Louis Preatas point out that while such programmes increase road and electricity connectivity, they do not cause significant economic development even four to five years after completion. It is thus meaningful to examine whether such interventions cause development, to what extent they increase welfare and where they fail.

The writer is a PhD student, Universität Hohenheim, Germany

## OCTOBER 20, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

### TANK BURST TOLL

AT LEAST 110 PEOPLE have been killed and hundreds marooned when an irrigation tank at Gopinathapuram, 150 km from Mysore, burst following heavy rains. The entire area in the Male Mahadeswara range of hills on the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border has been cut off due to collapse of several bridges. The tragedy occurred at 2 am when people in a village of 1,500 were asleep. Standing crops in hundreds of acres of land and livestock were swept away. Rescue teams have been sent but damage to roads have hampered relief measures. According to reports, a tank was under construction and labourers were at work in the

area. The possibility of many more deaths has not been ruled out.

### ZIA'S OVERTURE

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT ZIA-UL-HAQ offered to send a written proposal for a no-war pact with India. Addressing a press conference in Peshawar, he said that the proposals made so far have been through diplomatic channels. He said Pakistan would now send a written offer. He said that his country wanted good relations with India but the initiative must come from India. Zia said he was confident that the Indian people and the country's leadership would respond positively.

### INDIA-ROMANIA TALKS

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi and Romanian President Nicolai Ceausescu shared the view that there was need for political settlement in Afghanistan and Kampuchea. They expressed concern over the growing militarisation of the Indian Ocean and favoured early end to Iran-Iraq hostilities.

### MP OFFICIAL SACKED

THE MADHYA PRADESH government sacked the chief of town and country planning department, K Kaplish, on the charge of "financial irregularities" and "inefficiency".



# THE IDEAS PAGE

## The foreign policy reset

All signs point towards a recalibration of India's diplomatic compass, since the tumultuous events in Kabul two months ago



M K BHADRAKUMAR

THERE IS SOMETHING odd about the revelation regarding an international conference on Afghanistan in the second week of November that India plans to host. An unconventional route is being taken, with priority on optics. The conference date remains indeterminate and participation uncertain. Key participants reportedly include the country's two irredentist neighbours with whom India's ties remain frozen in cold peace. For the first time, India's National Security Council is wading into regional diplomacy.

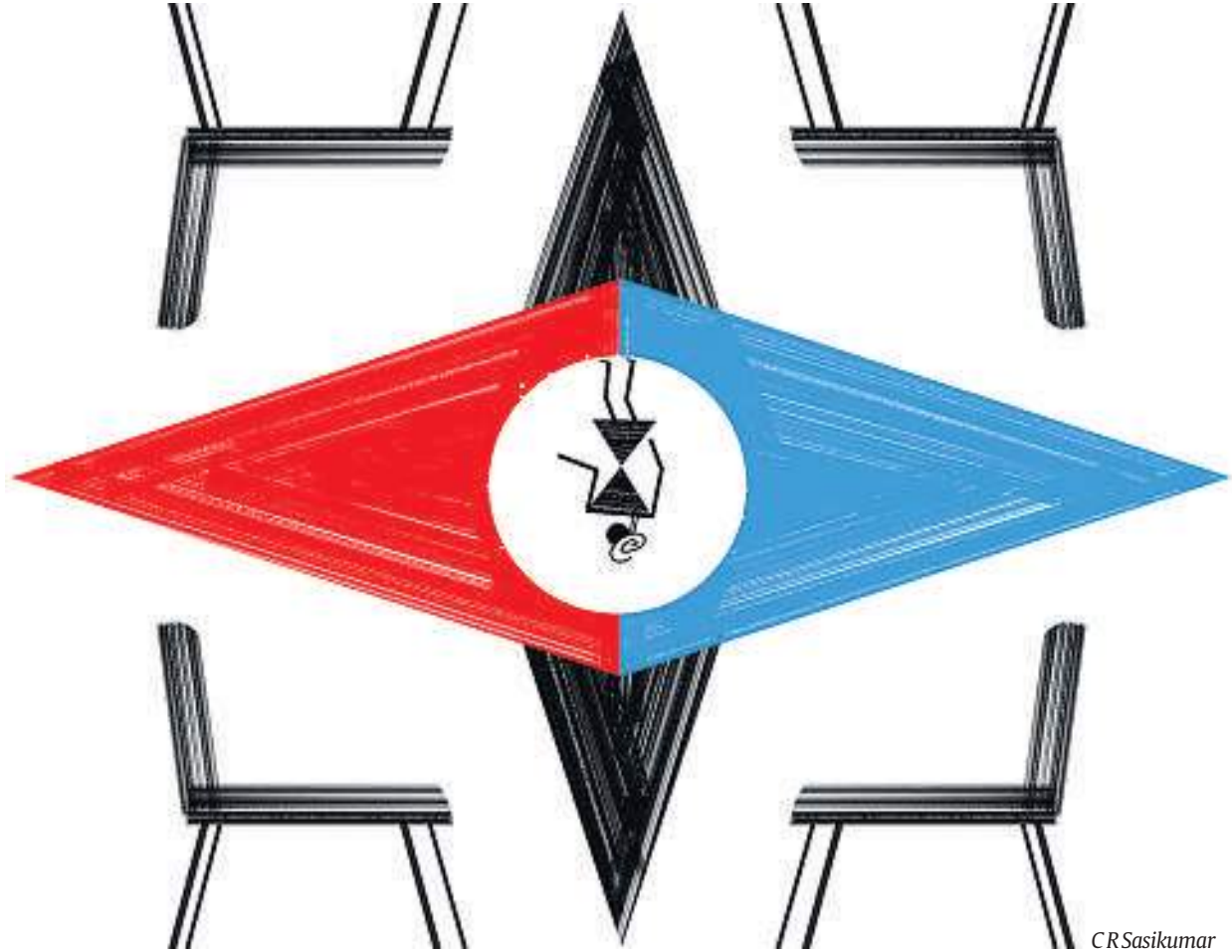
The compass that the Indian organiser is holding and his final destination through the uncertain voyage ahead remains unclear. Indeed, is this conference going to be about Afghanistan at all or about a reset of relations with China and Pakistan? Nor is there any clarity yet whether Taliban officials would be invited, although sans the Taliban, the event risks becoming something of a "Hamlet without the prince".

That brings us to the big question: Is the Indian ship changing course? The answer is yes and no. All signs point towards a major calibration of the foreign-policy compass in recent weeks since the tumultuous events in Kabul two months ago culminated in the formation of an interim government by the Taliban. To connect the incipient signs so far, as regards the way forward in Afghanistan, India has opted to align with the Anglo-American camp in the international line-up arrayed against the Eurasian axis of Russia, China and Iran.

While the US has an attitude of "You're either with us, or against us", vis-a-vis the Taliban, Russia, China, Iran and other neighbouring states give primacy to stability and security of Afghanistan and the region and would prefer to constructively engage with the present authorities in Kabul to ensure that they fulfil their promises and earn their international legitimacy. Being a discontented party, unsurprisingly, India would have more in common with the revisionist powers — the US and the UK.

In reality, all protagonists, of course, know that while the signpost is marking Afghanistan, it is the journey ahead that matters, being an epochal one that would transform the geopolitics of the region. Thus, Delhi has moved up to the centrestage of the Quad. In turn, Washington accepts that the Quad ought to be "inclusive". Global Britain is knocking at the door.

On its part, Delhi has displayed its comfort level in no mistaken terms with the AUKUS. Broadly, the historical Western experience of the EU and NATO moving in tandem — each with an independent identity notionally but with a shared purposive geopolitical objective to weaken a common enemy — is being replicated with Asian characteristics. A dual containment strategy is unfolding against China and Russia. All this entails India shedding its "Chanakyan" ambivalence. Thus, its short-lived dalliance with Iran is losing its gravi-



CR Sasikumar

tas and India has swung to the other extreme to identify with a new quadrilateral platform in West Asia, with Israel, UAE and the US.

Therefore, when it comes to Afghanistan, it doesn't really matter anymore whether Russia accommodates India in the "Moscow format" or the privileged grouping known as the "Troika Plus" (comprising US, China and Pakistan). Delhi shrugs its shoulders as its "time-tested" friend, Moscow, bemoans the Quad and AUKUS as deliberate attempts "to undermine the existing mechanisms of interstate interaction, with narrow-format exclusive groups and Cold War- and containment policy-style military blocs... (that) contribute to the destabilisation of the situation in Asia."

This astonishing zigzagging in India's regional policy takes the breath away. Perhaps, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar needs to write another book to admit that, verbiage apart, Indian foreign policies are variations on the fundamental theme of countering the rise of China. In the near term, though, this wild swing of the pendulum is going to be keenly felt in the situation surrounding Afghanistan. India lives in its region and the Quad and AUKUS are of no help when it comes to Afghanistan. Pakistan and China are riding high in the Hindu Kush; Moscow and Beijing have erected a Maginot Line in Central Asia which Washington is having a hard time in breaching; Delhi's much-touted "influence" in Kabul has turned out to be delusional. Its own capacity to shape future events is virtually nil. These are the hard realities.

Meanwhile, another crucial vector has appeared — the impact of the ascendancy of

The historical Western experience of the EU and NATO moving in tandem — each with an independent identity notionally but with a shared purposive geopolitical objective to weaken a common enemy — is being replicated with Asian characteristics. A dual containment strategy is unfolding against China and Russia. All this entails India shedding its 'Chanakyan' ambivalence. Thus, its short-lived dalliance with Iran is losing its gravitas and India has swung to the other extreme to identify with a new quadrilateral platform in West Asia, with Israel, UAE and the US.

political Islam in India's immediate neighbourhood. This affects India's internal dynamics on the security front and also the election cycle looming ahead.

Enter Pakistan. Suffice to say, Pakistan's National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf faces a Hobson's choice. He's damned if he accepts Ajit Doval's invite and goes to India at a time when Kashmiris reject the abrogation of J&K's special status and when Delhi has not even cared to hide its toxic hostility towards Pakistan. And, equally, Yusuf's damned if he turns down what the international community would only perceive as an Indian overture to turn a new leaf with its difficult neighbour.

It must be National Security Advisor Ajit Doval's brainwave to invite his Pakistani counterpart Yusuf to the conference where Delhi hopes to create an equivalent of the *vajrayudha* of the ancient Vedas which would allow India — like it allowed Indra, the ancient deity in Hinduism — to reclaim its rightful place in the Afghan pantheon of gods and demi-gods. Now, make no mistake, there is a divinity in all this as India is fighting Islamic terrorism also to save *dharma* and the universe.

It makes eminent sense that Doval will be chairing the conference. For Doval, the stunning setback in Afghanistan ought to be temporary. And he harbours no illusions, having lived in the real world with life red in tooth and claw. Certainly, he doesn't have the luxury of intellectualising and writing a book. This is a battle that must be won — either outright or by denying the fruits of victory to the opponent.

*The writer is a former diplomat who worked on the Iran-Pakistan-Afghanistan desk in the Ministry of External Affairs*

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Whether pre-meditated by provocateurs to destroy our communal harmony, or whether it is a failure of our law enforcement agencies to protect our Hindu and other minority populations, one thing is clear: This has to stop, and it has to stop now."

— THE DHAKA TRIBUNE

## Reading the EU fine print

India does not figure prominently in its Indo-Pacific strategy. The Chinese challenge might change that



CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT

LAST MONTH, THE making of AUKUS eclipsed another Indo-Pacific-related announcement: The release of the "EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific". This is rather unfair because this document is very rich and needs to be analysed in the context of the rapprochement between the EU and India, which culminated in the June EU-India summit, a "turning point" according to some analysts.

Unsurprisingly, the EU strategy in the Indo-Pacific appears to be over-determined by China's expansionism. "The display of force and increasing tensions in regional hotspots such as in the South and East China Sea and in the Taiwan Strait may have a direct impact on European security and prosperity," the document says. At the same time, it points out that the EU, "while pushing back where fundamental disagreements exist with China, such as on human rights", will also "pursue its multifaceted engagement with China", "engaging bilaterally to promote solutions to common challenges, cooperating on issues of common interest and encouraging China to play its part in a peaceful and thriving Indo-Pacific region".

If security interests are highlighted in the beginning, they are rather low in the list of the objectives of the EU Indo-Pacific strategy, which are listed as: "Sustainable and inclusive prosperity; green transition; ocean governance; digital governance and partnerships; connectivity; security and defence; human security". Many paragraphs of the document are dedicated to values, including human rights. One of them says: "The EU will continue to use its restrictive measures (sanctions) regime against individuals, entities and bodies responsible for, involved in, or associated with serious human rights violations and abuses worldwide. In international fora, the EU will work with like-minded Indo-Pacific partners to push back any initiative that undermines the human rights enshrined in customary international law and in international human rights instruments."

In terms of partnerships, India does not figure very prominently. By contrast, ASEAN is presented as "an increasingly important partner for the EU". One full section entitled "the centrality of ASEAN" is dedicated to the "strategic partnership" that the EU and the ASEAN have developed over the last 40 years. New Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) are announced with Thailand and Malaysia. However, India appears in the list of the countries which already have an Indo-Pacific strategy and with which the EU is interested in a deeper "engagement", a list made of ASEAN, Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the UK and US.

However, the document does not mention the role India could play in value-chain diversification, a top priority of the EU since the Covid-19 pandemic in particular. The

"pharmacy of the world" could have appeared as a useful partner of the EU to free Europeans from their dependence on China in that field. The only example of diversification that the document mentions pertains to semiconductors. In this domain, the EU intends to diversify "with partners such as Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan". Yet, India is mentioned few pages later in a similar perspective when it is said that the EU will help "low and middle-income Indo-Pacific partners to secure access to the Covid-19 vaccine through the Covax facility and through other means" and that, in this context, "India will be a focus for cooperation, including on the quality of active pharmaceutical ingredients".

By and large, the Indo-Pacific strategy of the EU remains driven by economic considerations and India, whose main asset is geopolitical and even geostrategic, does not figure prominently in it. The document, released in September 2021, emphasises, for instance, that "particular attention will be paid to implementing and enforcing the comprehensive trade agreements with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Vietnam, and the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the Pacific States, as well as the EU investment protection agreements with Singapore and Vietnam that are expected to enter into force in the coming years".

What the French see as India's main asset, its strategic dimension, is not central in the EU document. Surprisingly, the recent military cooperation between Europeans and India is even put on par with their cooperation with Pakistan: "Over the past year, EU Naval Force Somalia (EU NAVFOR) and Operation Atlanta conducted successful joint naval activities with Indo-Pacific partners, including Japan, Pakistan, India and Djibouti". And ASEAN also remains the main partner of the EU from the military point of view: "The EU will seek to play a stronger role in the ASEAN security architecture and participate in the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+) structures and the East Asia Summit". India is listed as the EU's first partner only in one area: "under the project Enhancing Security Cooperation in and with Asia (ESIWA), which covers counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, maritime security and crisis management. The pilot partners are India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Vietnam, with EU military experts already operating in Indonesia and in Vietnam."

Thus, the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific is more in tune with the German vision of the Indo-Pacific than with the French one. For Berlin, trade, economic cooperation, human rights and engaging China at the same time — and the ASEAN — matter more than security and India, the two pillars of the French Indo-Pacific strategy. The fact that the German approach prevails in the EU document is a reflection of the influence of Berlin's *weltanschauung* (worldview) in Europe — something Brexit has accentuated, Great Britain's Indo-Pacific strategy being similar to France's. But China's attitude may force Germany — and the EU — to change their mind in the near future.

*The writer is senior research fellow at CERIS-Sciences Po/CNRS, Paris*



RAMYA SUBRAMANIAM

IN A HISTORIC first for India, three women judges have taken oath at the Supreme Court of India. The Chief Justice lauded this, while observing that at least 50 per cent women should be found at all levels of the judiciary. While the bench is making slow yet definitive progress in this regard, what about the bar?

There is an abysmal lack of data or literature on women in litigation, especially commercial litigation. According to a Vidhi Survey conducted in 2020, the number of women in litigation was maximum in Kerala, at 28.57 per cent, while other cities such as Madras (10.5 per cent), Delhi (22.47 per cent), Bombay (21.51 per cent) showed appalling levels of representation. Therefore, it becomes crucial to examine the representation of women across the bar.

Justice D Y Chandrachud, in a speech in 2012, noted that, as of 2012, only five out of the 294 senior advocates in the Supreme Court of India were women, an abysmal 2 per cent. However, he noted that women in corporate offices and law firms fared better in terms of equality, owing to the gender-neutral trajectories in elite law firms.

While equality in any space calls for celebration, this compels us to examine why this hasn't been replicated in the courtroom. A definitive reason is a pre-decided pay scale. For a woman fresher entering a corporate office, the pay scale would be more or less decided/demanded based on the male coun-

## Bar and bias

Prejudice, discrimination push women lawyers out of litigation. This must change

terpart's salary as a guiding factor.

However, the stories in corporate offices and courtrooms are like chalk and cheese. The factors deciding pay in litigation are varied, especially in the junior to the middle level of the profession. In a study conducted by Sonal Makhija and Swagata Raha, it was found that clients choose female lawyers so that they can pay lesser amounts in fees. Therefore, with no law governing the pay scale, independent women legal practitioners are strong-armed into accepting a much lower remuneration, thereby making it a difficult profession to sustain in.

Secondly, the common conception is that litigation offers greater flexibility, as one need not clock in a particular number of hours, and can take advantage of court vacations. Further, there is also the option to take on fewer clients. However, this "flexibility" results in a woman's litigation career being trivialised. This trivialisation, cloaked as flexibility, further pushes women out of the litigation space. They are rarely seen in the courtrooms, and "out of sight, out of mind" is an adage the courtroom swears by.

Further, while there is reservation for women across several public offices, colleges, there is no such requirement for the positions of government pleader, or a public prosecutor, thereby rendering women government pleaders extremely rare.

When "run-of-the-mill" problems such as lack of creches in courts, unusable rest-rooms, non-recognition of maternity leaves are added to the mix, the slightest chance of a woman litigator's thriving career evaporates ever so quickly.

If one overcomes the above, the story is no better. Most women practising in the courtroom are pigeonholed into practising family law or women's rights law. At the outset, I must clarify that as noble and important as these areas of practice are, the point to be made is that women are pigeonholed into certain practice areas.

Women are generally seen to be non-confrontational "care-oriented lawyers", who will be better at understanding the client from an emotional standpoint, but never from an economic or financial standpoint. This also explains the hoard of articles that say women are better mediators — yet another example of sexism neatly packaged as psychology. This presumed character trait is found to be undesirable in litigation, especially a commercial one, in which only a "steely" man can take the reins and make a convincing argument in the courtroom "with his bellowing voice". The message is clear — women don't belong in the highly remunerative commercial dispute resolution space. It is a boys' club.

This perception is only further fortified by the fact that most women who are quoted as "super lawyers" or featured in the

coveted "30 under 30" lists are never commercial litigators. They are often women who have fought for women's rights or women in corporate law offices. In comparison, there are several men featured in these awards and magazines, who haven't espoused the cause of social justice, who purely practice commercial law in courts.

Recently, I came across an article featuring three women, Shally Bhasin, Ruby Ahuja and Misha, who were the legal wire-pullers in the protracted court battle between Essar Steel India Ltd and ArcelorMittal. These stories are rarely publicised, rarely spoken about and even rarer to find.

The above situation calls for urgent changes. On a high-priority basis, surveys have to be undertaken by the government across courts to understand and improve the representation of women across the bench. Media houses need to feature, acknowledge and appreciate women in the commercial litigation space. Needless to state, elevating more women to the bench will definitely lead to more women in the bar. Improving facilities for women, especially mothers, will keep in check the attrition rate. While progress might be slow, it is crucial to take one step forward at a time in this direction.

*The writer is a dispute resolution lawyer practising in the Madras High Court*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CASTE, TOO

THIS REFERS TO the article 'Jim Crow Hindutva' (IE, October 19). The historical narrative of 'Jim Crow' illustrates the culture of white supremacy and subjugation of Blacks as slaves in the United States, till three Constitutional Amendments gave them freedom and citizen's rights. However, the author while comparing this with present-day Hindutva politics and consequent exclusion and discrimination of Muslims to virtual second-class status, has glossed over the oppression and marginalisation of lower castes in the Hindu caste hierarchy, duly sanctioned by some scriptures which are not yet denounced despite constitutional provisions against caste discrimination. It is worth recalling that Jyotiba Phule way back in 1873 drew a parallel between American racism and Indian casteism in his book *Gulamgiri*. He dedicated the book to American abolitionists with the remark: "in an earnest desire that my countrymen may take their example as their guide in the emancipation of their Sudra brethren from the trammels of Brahmin thralldom."

LR Murmu, Delhi

### SPIRITUAL INPUT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A new Quad in West Asia' (IE, October 19). The Abrahamic accords signed last year between various Arab states to normalise relations with Israel, brokered by the US, have been a remarkable development in the historical and geopolitical context of

the Middle East. The political recognition of the need to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue between three Abrahamic religions would go a long way to build global solidarity. As the spiritual home of various eastern religions, India could further widen the scope of the Abrahamic accords.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Barasat

### RAHUL'S WISDOM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Coach dependable' (IE, October 19). Former Team India's captain Rahul Dravid, consenting to become Team India's new head coach, must delight the Indian cricket buff. One expects the Bengalurean to get a two-year contract with a salary package on a par with Ravi Shastri. The Indian side will stand to gain much from his wisdom.

SS Paul, Nadia

### GREEN POWER

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Lessons from the shortage' (IE, October 19). Instead of blaming the lack of investment in the supply-side management of coal, one should look forward to alternative sources of energy. Obligated entities are required to meet the Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPOs) while shifting to greener alternatives. An effort should be made by the government to impose stringent RPO targets, backed by strict penalties rather than raking the coal companies over supply shortages.

Aerika Singh, Chandigarh



TOPOF THE  
WORLD

Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. AP file

## AFRICA

Climate report:  
Africa's rare  
glaciers soon  
to disappear

AFRICA'S RARE glaciers will disappear in the next two decades because of climate change, a new report warned Tuesday amid sweeping forecasts of pain for the continent that contributes least to global warming but will suffer from it most. The report from the World Meteorological Organisation and other agencies, released ahead of the UN climate conference in Scotland that starts Oct 31, is a grim reminder that Africa's 1.3 billion people remain "extremely vulnerable" as the continent warms more than the global average. Yet Africa's 54 countries are responsible for less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions. **AP**

## ASIA

China, Russia navy  
ships jointly sail  
through Japan strait

A GROUP of 10 naval vessels from China and Russia sailed through a strait separating Japan's main island and its northern island of Hokkaido on Monday, the Japanese government said, adding that it is closely watching such activities. It was the first time Japan has confirmed the passage of Chinese and Russian naval vessels sailing together through the Tsugaru Strait, which separates the Sea of Japan from the Pacific. **REUTERS**

## USA

FB to pay up to  
\$14.25 mn to settle  
employment  
discrimination claims

FACEBOOK WILL pay up to \$14.25 million to settle civil claims brought by the US government that the social media company discriminated against workers and violated other federal recruitment rules, US officials said on Tuesday. The two related settlements were announced by the US Justice Department and Labor Department. The Justice Department announced last December that it was filing a lawsuit that accused Facebook of giving hiring preferences to temporary workers, including those who hold H-1B visas that let companies temporarily employ foreign workers in certain specialty occupations. Such visas are widely used by tech companies. **REUTERS**

On eve of Moscow  
talks, Taliban get  
promise of aid  
but not recognitionGABRIELLE  
TÉTRAULT-FARBER  
MOSCOW, OCTOBER 19

RUSSIA, CHINA and Pakistan are willing to provide aid to Afghanistan, the Russian foreign ministry said on Tuesday, but Moscow said it was not yet ready to recognise the Taliban government.

The promise of humanitarian aid and economic support came after talks between Russian, Chinese and Pakistani officials, who will be joined by representatives of Afghanistan's Islamist rulers at a meeting in Moscow Wednesday.

But Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia was withholding recognition from the Taliban while waiting for them to fulfil promises they made when they took power, including on the political and ethnic inclusivity of the new government.

Critics say the former rebel movement is backtracking on pledges not to sideline women and minorities, or persecute foes.

"Official recognition of the Taliban is not under discussion for now," Lavrov told reporters. "Like most of other influential countries in the region, we are in contact with them. We are prodding them to fulfil the promises they made when they

EXPLAINED  
Russia seeks  
to take  
initiative

WITH THE Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan following the US' chaotic troop withdrawal, analysts say Russia has concerns about instability in the region that could damage its interests. It has been trying to take the initiative to avoid such a scenario, with Russia particularly worried about the possibility of Islamist militants getting a foothold in former Soviet states in Central Asia.

came to power."

In mid-August, the Afghan government collapsed as the United States and allies withdrew troops after 20 years on the ground, leading the Taliban to seize power in a lightning offensive.

Russian officials have tempered expectations for Wednesday's talks. The United States said it would not join this round but planned to do so in the future.

Zamir Kabulov, President Vladimir Putin's special representative on Afghanistan, said last week he did not expect any major breakthrough at the talks.

Taliban promise  
cash, land to families  
of suicide bombersSAMYA KULLAB  
KABUL, OCTOBER 19

THE TALIBAN have promised plots of land to relatives of suicide bombers who attacked US and Afghan soldiers, in a provocative gesture that seems to run counter to their efforts to court international support.

The Taliban's acting interior minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani, offered the reward to dozens of family members of bombers gathered at a Kabul hotel, Interior Ministry spokesman Saeed Khosty tweeted on Tuesday.

Addressing the gathering Monday evening, Haqqani praised the sacrifices of "martyrs and fedayeen," referring to fighters killed in suicide attacks, Khosty tweeted. Haqqani called them "heroes of Islam and the country," according to the spokesman. At the end of the meeting, he distributed 10,000 afghanis (\$112) per family and promised each a plot of land.

Khosty posted photos of Haqqani, his face blurred, embracing the relatives in a packed auditorium.

The event comes as the Taliban attempt to open diplomatic channels with an international community largely reluctant to formally recognise their rule in Afghanistan. High-profile Taliban meetings with foreign officials have focused on obtaining aid to impoverished Afghans as the United Nations predicts virtually the entire population will slide into poverty because of a severe economic crisis. **AP**



Zalmay Khalilzad

Khalilzad, top  
US envoy to  
Afghanistan,  
stepping down

## REUTERS

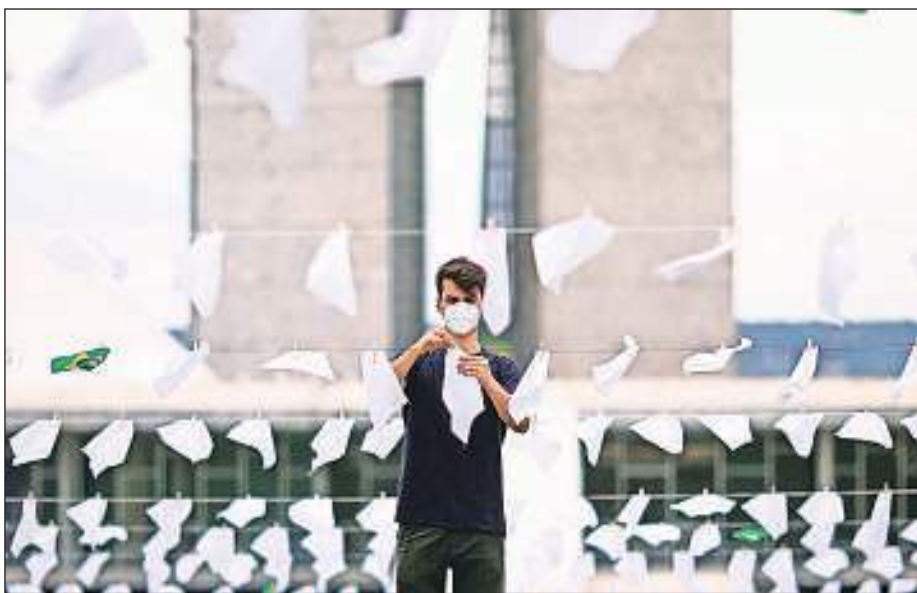
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 19

TOP US envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad is stepping down, the State Department said on Monday, less than two months after the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover of the country.

Khalilzad will be replaced by his deputy, Tom West, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement, noting that West will work closely with the US embassy, which is now based in Doha, on US interests in Afghanistan.

A person familiar with the matter said on condition of anonymity that Khalilzad submitted his resignation on Friday.

His departure follows his exclusion from the Biden administration's first formal talks with the Taliban after the US pullout, held in Doha earlier in October.



White handkerchiefs are tied next to the National Congress in Brasilia, Brazil, on Monday to pay tribute to the country's 600,000 Covid victims. Reuters

New cases in children fuel Covid  
rise in UK after slow vaccine start

## ALISTAIR SMOUT

LONDON, OCTOBER 19

THE SPREAD of Covid-19 among children in England is fuelling a rise in cases nationally and causing concern among some scientists that vaccines are being rolled out in schools too slowly, risking the welfare of children and adults alike.

Covid-19 cases in Britain as a whole are much higher than in other European countries and are rising. On Friday one survey suggested prevalence was at its highest level since January, with 8 per cent of secondary school children infected.

Vaccination rates for the age group in England are lagging those in many European countries and even Scotland, which some scientists have attributed to mixed messaging around shots for children, a later start and inflexibility with the rollout.

"The worry at the moment is it is clear that the vaccination programme in 12- to 15-year-olds is not going very well," Lawrence Young, virologist at University of Warwick, told Reuters, adding that the spread



At a school in Cheshire, England. Reuters

of other viruses could lead to a "perfect storm" in the winter for the National Health Service if cases spread to older, more vulnerable adults.

"With all of what that means not only again for schools, but also for overwhelming the NHS... then the worry is that autumn and winter are going to get very, very messy."

Last month, Britain's chief medical officers recommended that children aged 12 to 15 should be offered a Covid-19 vaccine to help reduce disruption to their education.

Data released on Tuesday showed 209,000 children in state-funded schools were off for Covid-related reasons on Oct 14, with 12.4% of secondary school students absent on the day. **REUTERS**

Powerful German  
newspaper ousts  
editor after report  
on conduct at workBEN SMITH &  
MELISSA EDDY  
OCTOBER 19

GERMANY'S MOST powerful newspaper removed its top editor Monday after months of defending his sexual relationships with women in the workplace as the scandal began to envelop the paper's globally ambitious parent company, Axel Springer.

*Bild*, a centre-right tabloid that has fed popular anger at Chancellor Angela Merkel and her Covid-19 restrictions, dismissed the editor in chief, Julian Reichelt, after *The New York Times* reported on details of Reichelt's relationship with a trainee, who testified during an independent legal investigation that in 2018 he had summoned her to a hotel near the office for sex and asked her to keep a payment secret. Hours after Reichelt was ousted, the newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* published allegations that Reichelt had abused his position to pursue relationships with several women on his staff. **NYT**

Pak Navy claims it blocked Indian  
submarine from entering its watersSAJJAD HUSSAIN  
ISLAMABAD, OCTOBER 19

PAKISTAN'S MILITARY on Tuesday claimed that its navy blocked an Indian submarine from entering into the country's waters last week.

There was no immediate response from the Indian Navy to the Pakistani claim.

The incident occurred on October 16 when an Indian submarine was detected by a Pakistan

Navy patrol aircraft, the Pakistan military said in a statement.

The navy "detected and blocked the Indian submarine on 16 Oct 21 from entering into Pakistani waters", according to the statement.

It said that during the prevailing security milieu, a strict monitoring watch has been kept by the Pakistan Navy to safeguard maritime frontiers of the country.

The Pakistani military also shared video footage of the purported incident.

Xinjiang official facing US sanctions to  
head Communist Party unit in TibetKJM VARMA  
BEIJING, OCTOBER 19

CHINA'S RULING Communist Party has appointed Wang Junzheng, sanctioned by the US, Britain, EU and Canada for his alleged role in the human rights violations against Uygur Muslims in Xinjiang, as the head of its party unit in the sensitive

Himalayan region of Tibet.

Wang Junzheng has been appointed as secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee, replacing Wu Yingjie, state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Tuesday.

Wang, 58, became China's highest-ranking official to be sanctioned in March over accusations of rights violations dur-

## AMID COMMUNAL UNREST

Hundreds held  
in Bangladesh  
over violence

## Hasina tells minister to take action

REUTERS & PTI  
DHAKA, OCTOBER 19

BANGLADESHI POLICE said on Tuesday that 450 people had been arrested in the country after attacks against minorities in some of the worst such unrest for over a decade.

At least six people have died, local media reported, as police have fought to restrain angry mobs.

The violence began on Friday when hundreds of Muslims protested in the southeastern Noakhali district accusing Hindus of a blasphemous incident.

Several Hindu religious sites have been vandalised, and homes attacked.

Authorities have filed 71 cases in connection with the violence during the Hindu festival of Durga Puja, a Bangladesh police spokesman said. Investigations were ongoing after the arrest of 450 suspected culprits, he added.

On Tuesday, thousands of members of Bangladesh's ruling party rallied in support of Hindus following the communal violence.

"Stop this communal evil, Bangladesh," read one banner held by women supporters.

Elsewhere in Dhaka, several hundred writers gathered, holding up handwritten messages and small posters. "Teach your children to love, not to kill," one said.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina instructed her home minister to initiate immediate action against those who incited violence in the name of religion, and asked people not to trust anything on social media without fact-checking. **AP**



Bangladeshi activists take part in a human chain demanding an end to the communal violence, in Dhaka on Tuesday. Reuters

Hasina instructed Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan to remain vigilant and take steps to prevent such incidents from recurring. Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam was quoted as saying by the *Dhaka Tribune* newspaper.

The foreign ministry said in a statement that domestic elements that opposed Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan 50 year ago were still propagating their "toxic narratives to instigate violence, hatred and bigotry".

Communal tensions have long simmered in Bangladesh, whose constitution designates Islam as the state religion but also upholds the principle of secularism.

Hindus make up around 10 per cent of the population.

The unrest is among the worst in Bangladesh since Hasina's Awami League party came to power in 2009.

"Recent attacks on Hindus of Bangladesh, fuelled by hate speech on social media, are against the values of the Constitution and need to stop," tweeted Mia Seppo, the UN's resident coordinator in Bangladesh.



The Christian Aid Ministries compound in Titenyen, Haiti, houses missionaries working in the country. NYT

Kidnappers in  
Haiti demand  
\$17 mn to free US  
missionary groupANDRE PAULTRE &  
MARIA ABI-HABIB  
PORT-AU-PRINCE, OCTOBER 19

THE GANG that kidnapped 17 people with a US-based Christian aid group in Haiti on Saturday is demanding a ransom of \$1 million for each person they are holding, the country's justice minister, Liszt Quitel, said on Tuesday.

Local authorities said the people kidnapped — 16 Americans and one Canadian, including five children — were captured in a suburb of Port-au-Prince, the capital.

"The demand was made to the country chief of the Christian Aid Ministries — they asked for \$1 million per person," Quitel said in a phone interview, referring to the aid group. "Often these gangs know these demands cannot be met and they will consider a counter offer from the families, and the negotiations can take a couple of days sometimes, or a couple of weeks."

As far as he knows, he said, the gang has not issued a deadline for payment.

Haiti has been in a state of political upheaval for years, and kidnappings of the rich and poor alike are alarmingly common. But even in a country accustomed to widespread lawlessness, the abduction of such a large group of Americans shocked officials for its brazenness.

Gangs have plagued Port-au-Prince over the past two decades, but were often used for political purposes — such as voter suppression — by powerful politicians. **NYT**

North Korea tests sub-launched  
ballistic missile, says SouthREUTERS  
SEOUL, OCTOBER 19

NORTH KOREA fired a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) off its east coast on Tuesday, South Korea's military said, pulling Japan's new prime minister off the campaign trail and overshadowing the opening of a major arms fair in Seoul.

The US military's Indo-Pacific Command condemned the launch as destabilising, but judged it did not pose an immediate threat to the United States or its allies.

South Korean and US officials were investigating if the missile was a smaller, previously unseen version displayed last week at an exhibit in Pyongyang, a South



People in Seoul, South Korea, watch news about the North Korea missile test. Reuters

Korean military source told Reuters, citing ongoing analysis.

They were also examining whether the missile was fired from North Korea's experimental Gora-class submarine, he

added. The launch is the latest weapons test by North Korea, which has persisted with arms development despite international sanctions over its nuclear weapons and missile programmes.

ZEKE MILLER  
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 19

FEDERAL REGULATORS in the US are expected to authorise the mixing and matching of Covid-19 booster doses this week in an effort to provide flexibility as the campaign for extra shots expands.

The upcoming announcement by the Food and Drug Administration is likely to come along with authorisation for boosters of the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson shots and follows the OK for a third dose for the Pfizer vaccine for many Americans last month. The move was previewed Tuesday by a US



A booster shot of Covid vaccine being prepared in Jackson, Alabama. NYT

health official familiar with the matter who was not authorised to speak publicly ahead of the announcement.

The FDA was expected to say that using the same brand for a

booster was still preferable, especially for the mRNA vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna that have proved most effective against the coronavirus. The agency was still finalising guidance for the single-shot J&J vaccine.

Preliminary results from a government study of different booster combinations found an extra dose of any type revs up levels of virus-fighting antibodies regardless of the brand people first received. But recipients of the single-dose J&J vaccination had the most dramatic response — a 76-fold and 35-fold jump in antibody levels, respectively, shortly after either a Moderna or Pfizer booster, compared to a four-fold

rise after a second J&J shot.

One confusing decision is what Moderna dose to recommend in combination with other brands. Moderna has applied for its booster to be half the original dose, saying that's plenty for people who already received two full-strength shots. But the mix-and-match study used full-strength extra doses, and there's no way to know if a half-dose Moderna booster would trigger as strong a reaction in J&J recipients.

Allowing mixing and matching could make the task of getting a booster simpler for Americans and allow people who may have had adverse reactions to the initial dose to try a different shot. **AP**





GOLD

₹46,580



RUPEE

₹75.35



OIL

\$84.22



SILVER

₹62,328

Note: Domestic currency market was closed on Tuesday on account of Id-E-Milad; gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Brent crude price as of 10:25 AM EDT

SENSEX: 61,716.05 ▼ 49.54 (-0.09%) NIFTY: 18,418.75 ▼ 58.30 (-0.32%) NIKKEI: 29,215.52 ▲ 190.06 HANG SENG: 25,787.21 ▲ 37746 FTSE: 7,208.40 ▲ 4.57 DAX: 15,498.42 ▲ 23.95

International market data till 1900 IST

## FALLING INTEREST RATES OVER LAST 4 DECADES IN ADVANCED ECONOMIES

## Investing forex reserves in equities can fetch higher returns: RBI report

GEORGE MATHEW  
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 19

INVESTMENT OF India's rising foreign exchange reserves in equity funds, especially index funds, can fetch higher returns as interest rates which have been on a declining trajectory over the last four decades in advanced economies, have touched their historic lows, a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) report has said.

"Investment in equities is considered to be risky, especially for a central bank, which is responsible for safeguarding the reserves. However, investment of a small portion of the reserves in an index fund has the potential to augment the return of the portfolio," said an RBI report on "The low yield environment and Forex Reserves management". Total forex reserves were \$639.51 billion as on October 8, 2021. Investment in S&P 500 across various business cycles and financial booms and busts reveal that the CAGR return in 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, 25 years

and 30 years would have been 13.3 per cent, 11.1 per cent, 7.3 per cent, 5.4 per cent, 7.4 per cent and 8.5 per cent, respectively, it said.

"This implies that if held for a long to very long period of time, despite volatility in the interim, it can not only preserve the capital but also fetch a return much higher than most of the investments," the report said. Incidentally, in May, the RBI had raised the red flag over the question of a "bubble" in the stock markets. "This order of asset price inflation in the context of the estimated 8 per cent contraction in GDP in 2020-21 poses the risk of a bubble," the RBI said in its Annual Report for 2020-21. On August 22, 2020, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said there was a clear disconnect between the sharp surge in markets and the state of real economy, as surplus global liquidity was driving up asset prices worldwide.

In a recent interaction with *The Indian Express* and *Financial Times*, Das had said, "Globally, there is a surplus liquidity and stock prices are very high, and are booming in

## GLOBAL TREND



File

■ A number of central banks are making investment in equities in some form or the other.

almost every market, including India... But I wanted to mention is that there is no evidence of high asset prices, namely the high stock prices, feeding into general inflation or general prices."

"There is no evidence to show that the high liquidity is feeding into general prices," Das said. The Sensex has been hitting new peaks and crossed the 62,000 level in intra-day trading on Tuesday. The EME (emerging market economies) stock markets got buff-

feted in August with China's regulatory crackdown and continued to fall in September on concerns relating to China and change in monetary policy stance of several AEs. Stock markets in EMs such as India and Russia, however, notched all-time highs in September and continued to rise in October.

As at end-March 2021, out of the total foreign currency assets of \$536.69 billion, \$359.88 billion was invested in securities, \$153.39 billion was deposited with other central banks and the BIS and the balance \$23.43 billion comprised deposits with commercial banks overseas. All these avenues carry very low interest rates. Gold reserves were worth \$38 billion.

"The return on the S&P 500 equity index funds is comparable to that on gold over a long period of time," it said. A number of central banks are increasingly making investment in equities in some form or the other. Swiss National Bank, for example, has an investment of 20 per cent of its reserves in equities. Further, the regional governments of the major advanced

economies issue bonds which, in many countries, carry the implicit guarantee of the sovereign, the RBI report said.

"They also yield better return than the sovereigns. Reserve managers could invest a small percentage of their reserves in such sub-national debt securities across the developed countries like Germany, Australia, Canada, etc and US agency bonds," it said. Similarly, even the best rated supranational agencies yield better than sovereigns in most of the cases. If reserve managers can go further down the credit curve, then they can earn even higher yield.

Reserve managers usually invest in highly rated sovereigns like G10 countries as they have deep bond markets and meet safety and liquidity criteria of the reserve managers. However, there are some countries which are relatively stable financially, are highly rated and offer better yields than some of the G7 countries, the RBI report said.

Full report on [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## FinMin to PSBs: Festive season ahead, start credit outreach

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19

THE FINANCE Ministry has urged public sector banks to start a nationwide credit outreach programme to take advantage of the potential loan demand during the festive season ahead of Diwali.

As the economy "bounces back", banks have been asked to set targets of loans to be sanctioned during the district-wise outreach programme, according to a communication by the Ministry to the banks on Monday.

The move follows Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's instruction in August to state-run lenders to initiate the outreach programme. Over Rs 4.94 lakh crore was disbursed by banks between October 2019 and March 2021 through outreach initiatives undertaken by them. This year, too, sometime in October, there will be a credit outreach in every district of the country. Sitharaman had said in Mumbai in August after a review meeting with state-owned banks.

## PRESIDENT, PV BUSINESS UNIT, TATA MOTORS

## 'Chip shortage global issue, prioritisation to industry key'



Shailesh Chandra with recently launched 'Punch'. Credit: company

TATA MOTORS launched its sub-compact SUV at a starting price of Rs 5.49 lakh. While the company has been witnessing growth in demand for its vehicles, SHAILESH CHANDRA, president, PV business unit, Tata Motors, told SANDEEP SINGH that the challenge will remain on the supply side because of the semiconductor shortage. Stating that the company is considering and actively looking into Punch EV, Chandra said electric vehicles will have a double-digit penetration over the next 5-6 years. Edited excerpts:

## the short and long term?

While we are in close coordination with our semiconductor suppliers, we are also trying to see if we can get semiconductors from stockists. We are also seeing if we can create alternate designs where there is use of standard semiconductor chips and also looking to optimise the use of semiconductors ... To some extent we may be able to do this, but we will have to live with structural issue for some time.

**There has been growth in demand for your EVs. When do you see EVs achieving meaningful scale and what is the critical factor that could determine its offtake?**

One big indicator is what is the penetration in the segment where we have launched the product. If I take Nexon's example, the penetration of Nexon EV is between 15 and 20 per cent. It indicates the promise of this segment and this is at a time when you still have certain barriers to overcome in the electrification journey. We have opened it to a limited number of cities and are getting around 20 per cent penetration. So, there is a huge potential going forward, as you open to more cities and have a country-wide charging network.

There are multiple factors in favour of EVs. I see double-digit penetration of EVs across multiple products in the next 5-6 years.

## How do you see the growth of auto industry?

If you see the fundamentals of the passenger vehicle industry, it should deliver growth of 7-8 per cent with normalisation of Covid and semiconductor issues. That should be a healthy growth rate that we should expect over 5 years.

## With demand growing, do you feel the need for capacity expansion may arise soon?

We have been seeing consistent growth and saturation of our capacities. There is capacity to support volumes over the coming months. Beyond that, there will be a time when we might have to go for capacity expansion and we will trigger the action at the right time.

Full interview on [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

SECTOR WATCH  
ELECTRIC VEHICLES

## From iPhone to EV: How Foxconn is diversifying

PRANAV MUKUL  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19

FOXCONN UNVEILED 3 white label electric vehicles in an effort to showcase its capabilities at a time when global smartphone makers like Apple and Xiaomi, which are Foxconn's customers, have been working on coming out with their own EV models.

## 3 prototype EVs

Foxconn Technology Group, the world's biggest contract manufacturer for electronics, unveiled three prototype EVs Monday. The unveiling is being pegged as Foxconn's pitch to invite global vehicle OEMs showcasing the Taiwanese company's manufacturing capabilities in the EV segment.

## What are Foxconn's vehicle manufacturing plans?

On Monday, the company announced that Taiwan's Yulon

Motors will be its first customer for electric vehicles manufacturing but Foxconn's plans to enter vehicle manufacturing have been in the works. Last month, the firm agreed to an automotive manufacturing plant in Ohio from Lordstown Motors for \$230 million — giving it a booster shot in the areas of automobile assembly capacity, equipment and talent.

## Why is the timing significant?

Apple has been secretly working on an autonomous automotive project codenamed Project Titan. While Apple is yet to formally announce the project or even decide on a manufacturing partner, CEO Tim Cook had hinted earlier the company has been working on autonomy as a core technology. Xiaomi Corp CEO Lei Jun announced Tuesday the company will mass produce its own cars in the first half of 2024. Full report on [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## 'Gross NPAs of banks likely to rise to 8-9% this fiscal'

Gross NPAs of banks may rise to 8-9% in FY22, well below the peak of 11.2% seen at the end of fiscal 2018, a Crisil report said



**Around 2% of bank credit** is expected to be under restructuring by the end of this financial year, causing stressed assets — comprising gross NPAs and loan book under restructuring — to touch 10-11% this fiscal

**Covid-19 relief measures** like the restructuring dispensation, and the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) will help limit rise in banks' gross non-performing assets (NPAs)

Source: Crisil Ratings/PTI

## Moody's raises banking sector outlook to 'stable'

Mumbai: Moody's Investors Services has upgraded the outlook on India's banking system from 'negative' to 'stable', amid moderate deterioration of asset quality since the onset of Covid and likely pick-up in credit growth with the economic recovery. Earlier, it had raised India's sovereign rating outlook to 'stable' from 'negative' and affirmed sovereign rating at 'Baa3'.

"The pick-up in economic activity will drive credit growth, which we expect to be 10-13 per

## It comes amid moderate deterioration of asset quality and likely pick-up in credit growth

cent annually. Weak corporate financials and funding constraints at finance companies have been key negative factors for banks but these risks have receded," Moody's said in its 'Banking system outlook-India' report. ENS

## BRIEFLY

## Policybazaar IPO

New Delhi: PB Fintech Ltd, which operates online insurance platform Policybazaar, got Sebi's approval to raise Rs 6,017.50 crore via an IPO. PTI

## Russia-Google

Moscow: Russia will seek to fine Google 5-20% of its annual Russian turnover for failing to delete content deemed illegal. REUTERS

## RRVL, Ritika deal

Mumbai: Reliance Retail Ventures Limited (RRVL), a Reliance Industries arm, has acquired 52 per cent stake in Ritika Pvt Ltd, that owns various Ritu Kumar brands. ENS

## Bitcoin ETF

New York: The first US bitcoin futures-based exchange-traded fund began trading Tuesday, sending bitcoin to a six-month high of \$63,337.54. REUTERS

## Karad at LIC office

Mumbai: Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad visited the LIC of India central office here. ENS

## 'Two Ola executives to exit ahead of potential IPO'

## REUTERS

BENGALURU, OCTOBER 19

SOFTBANK GROUP-BACKED Ola is set to lose two top executives, according to an internal memo seen by Reuters, ahead of a potential \$1 billion initial public offering.

Chief financial officer Swayam Saurabh and chief operating officer Gaurav Porwal are leaving the company, according to a memo sent to employees by chief executive officer Bhavish Aggarwal.

## SEPTEMBER QUARTER

## HUL profit rises 8.86%, interim dividend of ₹15

Mumbai: Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) has reported an 8.86 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 2,187 crore in the September quarter of FY22 as against Rs 2,009 crore in the same period a year ago.

Total income rose to Rs 12,837 crore for the quarter as against Rs 11,593 crore in the same period of last year. The board of directors has declared an interim dividend of Rs 15 per share for year ending March

## THE EXITS

■ CFO Swayam Saurabh and COO Gaurav Porwal are leaving the firm, according to a memo

Ola did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. Aggarwal in the memo also announced several management changes across its mobility, vehicle commerce, and delivery and fi-

nanial services units.

Saurabh, a former CFO of Hindustan Zinc, has been with Ola for seven months while Porwal, who has run the mobility business over the last year, joined the company in 2019. Porwal will be leaving Ola to "pursue other interests", while Saurabh will be pursuing other opportunities, according to the memo.

Ola plans to raise up to \$1 billion through an initial public offering in the next few months, according to recent media reports.

**RAJASTHAN URJA VIKAS NIGAM LIMITED**  
(A Government of Rajasthan Undertaking)  
Corporate Identity Number (CIN) - U40104RJ2018SC0048738  
Regd. Office - Vidhyut Bhawan, Janpath, Jyoti Nagar, Jaipur-302005  
Work Office at: Shed No. 5/4, Vidhyut Bhawan, Janpath, Jaipur- 302005  
E-mail: SE.PP.RUVNL@RAJASTHAN.GOV.IN; Website: www.energyrajasthan.gov.in/rvnl  
No. RUVNL/ISE(PVP)/F- TN-04(FY2021-22) /D. 811 Dated 18-10-2021

## NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Online bids are invited to procure short term power during day hours from December 2021 to February 2022 on short term basis from various Generators/ State Utilities / CPPs / Distribution Licensees / SEBs/ Trading Licensees as per specification under TN-04/RUVNL/FY 2021-22. May visit website [www.msstcecommerce.com/](http://www.msstcecommerce.com/www.energyrajasthan.gov.in/rvnl/) for further details.

[www.energyrajasthan.gov.in/rvnl/](http://www.energyrajasthan.gov.in/rvnl/) for further details.

Raj. Samwad/C/21/7337

Superintending Engineer (PP)

**ओएनजीसी ONGC**  
**EASTERN OFFSHORE ASSET, KAKINADA (A.P.)**  
**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)**  
ONGC, EOA, Kakinada Invites Pre-Qualification documents from reputed and interested vendors for providing Consultancy Services for undertaking pre-FEED studies for Cluster III of KG-DWN-98-2 Block. Last Date for Submission of experience documents for Pre-Qualification: 10-11-2021. PQC meet: 25-10-2021 through Microsoft Teams. For further details, please login to our website: <https://tenders.ongc.co.in>

HAR EK KAAM DESH KE NAMM

**RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY (KARNATAKA) LIMITED**  
(A Joint Venture of Govt. of Karnataka & Ministry of Railways)  
Regd. office: 1 Floor, Samparka Soudha, Opp. Orion Mall, Rajajinagar, Bengaluru-10  
Tel - +91 6364890842 CIN: U60100KA2000PLC028171 Email: jgmelec@kride.in

DIPR/DDU/1900/SPAN/2021-22

**OSBI**  
Stressed Assets Resolution Group(SARG), Corporate Centre, 2nd Floor, The Arcade, World Trade Centre, Cuffe Parade, Mumbai - 400005  
**REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)**  
EOIs are invited from Insolvency Professionals registered with IBBI for empanelment with SBI for handling IBC matters. For details on eligibility, other terms & conditions, please visit our website <https://bank.sbi> under "sbi in the news-empanelment of vendors." Interested Insolvency Professional may apply in prescribed format on or before date: 29.10.2021. (IPs already empanelled with SBI need not to apply again)  
Place: Mumbai  
Date: 20.10.2021  
Sd/-  
Deputy General Manager (NCLT)

**MUNICIPAL BOARD NATHDWARA DIST.-RAJSAMAND (RAJ.)**  
Sukhadiya Nagar, Nathdwara Dist.-Rajsamand-313301  
Email:- np\_ntd@yahoo.co.in Ph. 02953-233526  
No./M.B.Nath/EOI/2021/6310 Date: 17/10/2021  
**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST - NIT 29**  
Tender Notice for Selection of Firm/Agency, Experienced Individuals for Following work:-  
Sl. No. Name of Work Estimated Cost (In Lakh) Earnest Money in Rs. Duration of Operation Bid Validity  
1. Adventure sports activities at municipal board land near Girdhar Sagar, Nathdwara 25.00 25,000/- 15 Years 180 days  
For more details you may visit <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> Websites.  
UBN DLB2122SL0B16638  
Raj. Samwad/C/7268/2021-2022  
Chairman & Commissioner  
Municipal Board, Nathdwara

**OSBI**  
UAT&PM Department, State Bank of India, Global IT Centre, Sector-11, CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai - 400614  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
RFP No.: SBI/GITC/IT-UAT&PM/2021/2022/796 Dated: 20.10.2021  
Bids are invited by State Bank of India from the eligible bidders for Procurement of 'PROVIDING MANPOWER RESOURCES FOR USER EXPERIENCE DESIGNING OF DIGITAL APPLICATIONS OF SBI ON TIME AND MATERIAL (T&M) BASIS. For details, please visit 'Procurement news' at <https://www.sbi.co.in> and e-Procurement agency portal <https://etender.sbi/sbi/>  
Commencement of submission of RFP: From 20.10.2021.  
Last date and time for submission of bids: 20.11.2021 up to 16:00 hrs.  
Place: Navi Mumbai  
Date: 20.10.2021  
UAT&PM Department



SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# IMF outlook & status of jobs

The IMF's latest World Economic Outlook has underlined that employment growth is likely to lag output recovery after the pandemic. Why has job growth been slow, and what are the concerns for India?

UDIT MISRA  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19

LAST WEEK, the IMF unveiled its 2nd World Economic Outlook (WEO). The IMO comes out with the report twice every year — April and October — the and also provides regular “updates” to it on other occasions. The WEO reports are significant because they are based on a wide set of assumptions about a host of parameters — such as the international price of crude oil — and set the benchmark for all economies to compare one another with.

## What were the main takeaways from the WEO in October?

The central message was that the global economic recovery momentum had weakened a tad, thanks largely to the pandemic-induced supply disruptions. But more than just the marginal headline numbers for global growth, it is the increasing inequality among nations that IMF was most concerned about.

“The dangerous divergence in economic prospects across countries remains a major concern. Aggregate output for the advanced economy group is expected to regain its pre-pandemic trend path in 2022 and exceed it by 0.9 per cent in 2024. By contrast, aggregate output for the emerging market and developing economy group (excluding China) is expected to remain 5.5 per cent below the pre-pandemic forecast in 2024, resulting in a larger setback to improvements in their living standards,” it stated.

There are two key reasons for the economic divergences: large disparities in vaccine access, and differences in policy support.

But possibly the most important takeaway from the WEO this time is about the employment growth likely to lag the output recovery (Chart 1).

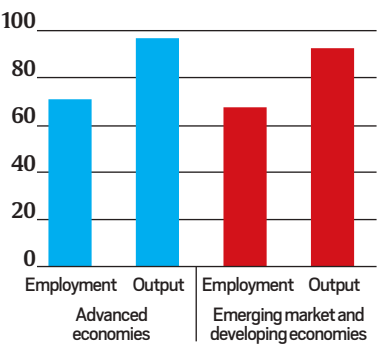
“Employment around the world remains below its pre-pandemic levels, reflecting a mix of negative output gaps, worker fears of on-the-job infection in contact-intensive occupations, childcare constraints, labor demand changes as automation picks up in some sectors, replacement income through furlough schemes or unemployment benefits helping to cushion income losses, and frictions in job searches and matching,” the IMF stated.

Within this overall theme, what is particularly worrisome is that this gap between recovery in output and employment is likely to be larger in emerging markets and developing economies than in advanced economies. Further, young and low-skilled workers are likely to be worse off than prime-age and high-skilled workers, respectively.

## What does this mean for India?

As far as GDP is concerned, India's growth

CHART 1  
SHARE OF ECONOMIES EXPECTED TO REGAIN PRE-PANDEMIC EMPLOYMENT AND OUTPUT LEVELS BY 2022



Note: For employment, the bars measure the fraction of countries expected to regain 019 employment by 2022. For output, the comparison is of real GDP between 2019–Q4 and 2022–Q4. Source: IMF

TABLE 3  
HOW INFORMAL ARE DIFFERENT SECTORS

Sector	Share in GVA (%)	Share of unorganised/informal sector (%)
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	17.2	97.1
Mining and quarrying	2.3	22.5
Manufacturing	16.4	22.7
Utility services (gas, electricity etc)	2.7	5.3
Construction	7.8	74.5
Trade, repair, food services, accommodation	11.8	86.6
Transport, storage, communication & services related to broadcasting	6.4	47.7
Financial services	5.4	11.9
Real estate, ownership of dwellings & professional services	15.6	52.8
Public administration, defence	6.2	0
Other services	8.1	47.9
Total	100	52.4

Source: Computed from National Accounts Statistics, 2019

TABLE 1  
INDIA'S EMPLOYMENT LEVELS

Period	Total employed* (in mn)
May-Aug 2019	405
Sep-Dec 2019	407
Jan-Apr 2020	381
May-Aug 2020	372
Sep-Dec 2020	397
Jan-Apr 2021	399
May-Aug 2021	394

\* above age 15 Source: CMIE

TABLE 2  
HOW INFORMAL IS INDIA (%) (2017-18)

Worker	Unorganised	Organised	Total
Informal	84.5	5.2	90.1
Formal	1.3	7.9	9.3
Total	86.8	13.2	100

Source: Computed from NSS 68th unit level data on employment unemployment, 2011-12 and Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2017-18

Sector	Share in GVA (%)	Share of unorganised/informal sector (%)
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	17.2	97.1
Mining and quarrying	2.3	22.5
Manufacturing	16.4	22.7
Utility services (gas, electricity etc)	2.7	5.3
Construction	7.8	74.5
Trade, repair, food services, accommodation	11.8	86.6
Transport, storage, communication & services related to broadcasting	6.4	47.7
Financial services	5.4	11.9
Real estate, ownership of dwellings & professional services	15.6	52.8
Public administration, defence	6.2	0
Other services	8.1	47.9
Total	100	52.4

Source: Computed from National Accounts Statistics, 2019

rate hasn't been tweaked for the worse. In fact, beyond the IMF, several high-frequency indicators have suggested that India's economic recovery is gaining ground.

But what the IMF has projected on employment — that the recovery in unemployment is lagging the recovery in output (or GDP) — matters immensely for India.

To begin with, according to the data available with the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the total number of employed people in the Indian economy as of May-August 2021 was 394 million — 11 mil-

lion below the level set in May-August 2019. To puts these numbers in a larger perspective, in May-August 2016 the number of employed people was 408 million. In other words, India was already facing a deep employment crisis before the Covid crisis, and it became much worse after it.

As such, projections of an employment recovery lagging behind output recovery could mean large swathes of the population being excluded from the GDP growth and its benefits. Lack of adequate employment levels would drag down overall demand and

thus stifle India's growth momentum.

## Why could employment lag output growth in India?

There are several possible reasons. For one, as mentioned above, India already had a massive unemployment crisis. Labour economists such as Santosh Mehrotra, who is Visiting Professor at the Centre for Development Studies, University of Bath (UK), cite a number of additional issues.

“The first thing to understand is that India is witnessing a K-shaped recovery. That means different sectors are recovering at significantly different rates. And this holds not just for the divergence between the organised sector and unorganised sector, but also within the organised sector,” Mehrotra said. He pointed out that some sectors such as the IT-services sectors have been practically unaffected by Covid, while e-commerce industry is doing “brilliantly”. But at the same time, many contact-based services, which can create many more jobs, are not seeing a similar bounce-back. Similarly, listed firms have recovered much better than unlisted firms.

The second big reason for worry is that the bulk of India's employment is in the informal or unorganised sectors (Table 2). The informal worker is defined as “a worker with no written contract, paid leave, health benefits or social security”. The organised sector refers to firms that are registered. Typically, it is expected that organised sector firms will provide formal employment.

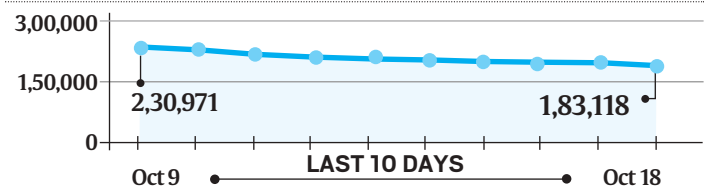
So, a weak recovery for the informal/unorganised sectors implies a drag on the economy's ability to create new jobs or revive old ones.

Last week, IMF Chief Economist Gita Gopinath pointed out that the number of people using the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act provisions was still 50-60% above pre-pandemic level. This suggests that the informal economy is struggling to recover at the same pace as some of the more visible sectors.

## How informal is India's economy?

Table 3, sourced from the 2019 paper ‘Measuring Informal Economy in India’ (S V Ramana Murthy, National Statistical Office), gives a detailed breakup. It shows two things. One, the share of different sectors of the economy in the overall Gross Value Added (GVA) or a measure of overall output from the supply side just as GDP is from the demand side. Two, the share of the unorganised sector therein. The share of informal/unorganised sector GVA is more than 50% at the all-India level, and is even higher in certain sectors, notably those that create a lot of low-skilled jobs such as construction and trade, repair, accommodation, and food services. This is why India is more vulnerable.

## INDIA ACTIVE COVID CASES 1,83,118



# Why global fuel prices are up, how India is impacted

KARUNJIT SINGH  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19

AS THE global recovery strengthens, the price of crude oil is at its highest level since 2018, and the prices of natural gas and coal are hitting record highs amid an intensifying energy shortage.

## Why are fuel prices rising?

Brent crude breached the \$85 per barrel mark earlier this week on the back of a sharp increase in global demand as the world economy recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key oil producing countries have kept crude supplies on a gradually increasing production schedule despite a sharp increase in global prices. Brent crude has nearly doubled compared to the price of \$42.5 per barrel a year ago. In its latest round of meetings, the OPEC+ grouping reaffirmed that they would increase total crude oil supply by only 400,000 barrels per day in November despite the sharp increase in prices.

The output of the top oil producers — Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, the UAE, and Kuwait would still be about 14 per cent lower than reference levels of production post the increase in November.

OPEC+ had agreed to sharp cuts in supply last year in response to the global travel restrictions, but the organisation has been slow to boost production as demand has recovered. India and other oil importing nations have called on OPEC+ to boost oil supply faster, arguing that elevated crude oil prices could undermine the recovery of the global economy.

Natural gas deliveries to Asia hit an all-time high of \$56.3 per mmbtu (metric million British Thermal Unit) for November according to S&P Global Platts. Supply side issues in the US, including disruptions caused by hurricane Ida and lower than expected natural gas supplies from Russia amid rising demand in Europe, have raised the prospect of natural gas shortages in the winter.

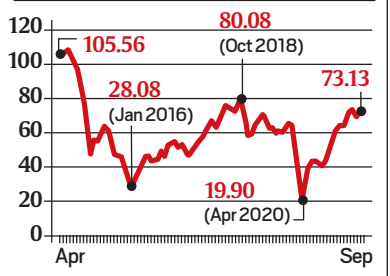
International coal prices too have reached all-time highs as China faces a coal shortage that has led to factories across that country facing power outages. A faster than expected recovery in global demand has pushed the price of Indonesian coal up from about \$60 per tonne in March to about \$200 per tonne in October.

## What is the impact on India?

High crude oil prices have contributed to the prices of petrol and diesel hitting new highs across the country in 2021. The price of petrol in the national capital is Rs 105.84 per litre, up Rs 4.65/l over the last three weeks, while the price of diesel is Rs 94.6/l, up Rs 5.75/l over the same period.

India has seen a faster recovery in consumption of petrol than of diesel — petrol con-

## CRUDE OIL FOB PRICE (\$/BARREL) FOR INDIAN BASKET



sumption was up 9 per cent in September compared to a year ago; diesel consumption remained 6.5 per cent below 2020 levels.

Diesel accounts for about 38 per cent of petroleum product consumption in India, and is a key fuel used in industry and agriculture.

S&P Global Platts Analytics noted in a report that demand for diesel in India was expected to go up in the next few months as the economic recovery accelerates. However, Platts Analytics predicted that India's total demand for crude oil would surpass pre-pandemic levels only in 2022.

High international gas prices have led to an upward revision in the price of domestic natural gas.

The Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) set the price of gas produced by state-owned ONGC and Oil India under the nomination regime to \$2.9 per mmbtu, up from \$1.79 per mmbtu in the previous six-month period.

The PPAC also increased the ceiling price of \$6.13 per mmbtu for gas extracted from ultra-deep water, and high-pressure, high-temperature discoveries from \$3.62 per mmbtu in the previous six-month period.

The increase in gas prices has put upward pressure on the price of both Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), which is used as a transport fuel, and Piped Natural Gas (PNG), which is used as a cooking fuel.

CNG was hiked twice by a total Rs 4.56 per kg this month to Rs 49.8 in the national capital; PNG rose by Rs 4.2 per SCM (standard cubic metre) to Rs 35.11 per SCM.

High international prices of coal have contributed to the crisis at India's thermal power plants by forcing plants using imported coal that could not pass on the higher price to procurers, to stop supplying power.

Low coal stocks at a number of coal-fired thermal power plants have led to power outages in states including Punjab and Rajasthan, and have forced states to buy power at above-normal prices on the power exchange.

# In spotlight for lynching, the Nihang Sikhs: their history in Punjab, and current status

NAVJEEVANGOPAL  
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 19

A GROUP of Nihangs has claimed responsibility for the brutal murder of a 35-year-old man at the Singhu border farmers' protest site on Friday, allegedly because he had disrespected the Sikh holy book. In April 2020, Nihangs had attacked a Punjab Police party in Patiala and chopped off the hand of an assistant sub-inspector when stopped for a curfew pass in the midst of the lockdown.

## Who is a Nihang?

Nihang is an order of Sikh warriors, characterised by blue robes, antiquated arms such as swords and spears, and decorated turbans surmounted by steel quoits. The order can be traced back to the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699, according to Sikh historian Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon. “Etymologically the word *nihang* in Persian means an alligator, sword and pen, but the characteristics of Nihangs seem to stem more from the Sanskrit word *nihshank* which means without fear, unblemished, pure, carefree and indifferent to worldly gains and comfort,” he said.

## Is there a count of Nihangs in Punjab?

Scholars say it is difficult to give a specific count, given that Nihang Sikhs are divided into many factions. Broadly, there are three factions: Baba Budha Dal, Tama Dal, and Baba Bidhi Chand Dal. The Budha Dal (basically considered a faction of the elderly) and the Tama Dal (formed as a band of the young) are divided into further factions, including around a dozen factions in the Tama Dal.

Bhai Pritpal Singh, head granthi of the gurdwara Dukh Nivaran Sahib, Patiala, said there are more than 30 factions of Nihangs in Punjab, big and small. According to Rajinder Kaur, Assistant Professor of



Two Nihang Sikhs in a mock sword fight in Ludhiana. Gurmeet Singh

Religious Studies at Guru Nanak College, Budhlada, “Because of a large number of factions and their dynamic nature — they keep moving from one place to another (*chakravarti* or *chalda vaheer*) — it is very difficult to have a specific count of the Nihangs”.

Dr Dhillon said the Nihangs today constitute a small community. In the absence of a central command or leadership, they are loosely organised. They are stationed at their *deras* all year round, but set out on an annual pilgrimage of Anandpur Sahib, Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo, and Amritsar, and take part in religious events and exhibit their martial skills and horsemanship.

## Why have Punjab politicians not been very vocal on the Singhu lynching?

“The lynching can never be justified but the issue of desecration of sacred scripture of Sikhs is a very sensitive issue, so politicians have avoided getting into it,” a Sikh scholar said.

“Another factor was that politicians did not want to have confrontation with Nihangs, who leave their homes and have no fear of death.”

## What is Nihang Sikhs' role in history?

Nihangs played a major role in defending the Sikh *panth* against attacks and persecution by Mughal governors in the early decades of the 18th century, and then during the invasions of the Afghan Ahmad Shah Durrani between 1748 and 1767. When the Khalsa army was divided into five battalions in 1734, a Nihang or Akali battalion was led by Baba Deep Singh Shahid.

Nihangs also took control of the religious affairs of the Sikhs at the Akal Bunga (now known as Akal Takht) in Amritsar, where they held the grand council (Sarbat Khalsa) and passed the Gurmata (resolution). Their clout came to an end after the fall of the Sikh Empire in 1849; the British appointed a manager (sarbrah) for the administration of the Golden Temple in 1859.

During the militancy years, the then Baba Budha Dal chief Nihang chief, late Baba Santa Singh, fell afoul of the mainstream Sikhs when he, at the instance of Indian government, went on to rebuild the Akal Takht that had been damaged during Operation Bluestar in June 1984. “Some Nihangs, including Ajit Singh Poohla, collaborated with

the Punjab police to eliminate Sikh militants,” Dr Dhillon said.

There were others who supported the militants. Dr Gurmeet Singh Sidhu, professor and Guru Gobind Singh Chair at Punjabi University, Patiala, recounts an instance where a Nihang misled a police party about the movement of alleged terrorists in an area.

## What is their source of income today?

The major Nihang factions have under their control a number of gurdwaras, where devotees make offerings. The major factions also have agricultural land, and earn income by renting out shops in their properties. The Budha Dal also runs three schools. “Admission in the schools is purely on merit,” Budha Dal secretary Diljit Singh Bedi said. Asked about income and expenditure, Bedi said, “There are a number of cantonments of Budha Dal in different parts of the state, where the in-charges maintain records of income and expenditure.”

## How are Nihangs different from other Sikhs, and other Sikh warriors?

“Nihangs observe the Khalsa code of conduct in its strictest sense. They do not profess allegiance to any earthly master. Instead of saffron, they hoist a blue Nishan Sahib (flag) atop their shrines,” Dr Dhillon said. Nihangs use the slogans ‘*chhardi kala*’ (forever in high spirits) and ‘*tiar bar tiar*’ (state of ever-preparedness) for unforeseen events.

“The Nihangs are fond of a drink called *shardai* or *sharbat deg*h (sacrament drink) which contains ground almonds, cardamom seeds, poppy seeds, black pepper, rose petals and melon seeds. When a small measure of cannabis is added to it, it is termed *sukhnidhan* (treasure of comfort). A higher dose of cannabis in it was known as *shahedi deg*, or sacrament of martyrdom. It was taken (while) battling enemies,” Dr Dhillon said.

Note: The October 18 figures in these graphs are based on the government updates on Oct 19  
Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on October 19



# Djokovic could miss Australian Open due to anti-vaxx stance

## ‘All areas are a problem’

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
OCTOBER 19

NOVAK DJOKOVIC'S Australian Open title defence is in doubt after a government official said that it is unlikely that unvaccinated players will get visas to enter the country.

"I don't think an unvaccinated tennis player is going to get a visa to come into this country and if they did get a visa, they'd probably have to quarantine for a couple of weeks," Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews was quoted as saying by Reuters. "I don't think that the person you indicated (Djokovic) or any other tennis player, let's not personalise it ... or golfer or Formula One driver will even get a visa to get here. If I'm wrong, I'm sure the federal government will let you know."

On Monday, Djokovic declined to reveal his vaccination status and said he was unsure if he would compete at Melbourne Park in January due to the Covid-19 related restrictions. "Things being as they are, I still don't know if I will go to Melbourne," the world No.1 told Serbian daily Blic.

"I will not reveal my status whether I have been vaccinated or not. It is a private matter and an inappropriate inquiry. People go too far these days in taking the liberty to ask questions and judge a person. Whatever you say 'yes, no, maybe, I am thinking about it', they will take advantage."

The 34-year-old — who is tied with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal on 20 Grand Slam singles titles — has won the Australian Open a record nine times, including the past three editions.

"Of course, I want to go. Australia is my most successful Grand Slam tournament," he said. "I want to compete, I love this sport and I am still motivated. I am following the situation regarding the Australian Open and I understand the final decision (on restrictions) will be made in two weeks. I believe there will be a lot of restrictions just like this year, but I doubt there will be too many changes. My manager, who is in contact with the Australian tennis federation, tells me they are trying to improve the conditions for everyone, both for those who have been vaccinated and those who have not."

### No special arrangements

Andrews, however, said that he opposed special arrangements to let unvaccinated athletes compete in the state.

"On the question of vaccination, no," Andrews told a media briefing. "(The virus) doesn't care what your tennis ranking is, or how many Grand Slams you've won. It's completely irrelevant. You need to be vaccinated to keep yourself safe and to keep others safe."

Melbourne, Australia's second-largest city, has been under a lockdown since August



Novak Djokovic has won the Australian Open nine times, including the past three editions.

to control the spread of the highly infectious Delta variant. Restrictions for the city's five million people will be eased from Friday when 70 per cent of the adult population in Victoria is expected to be fully vaccinated.

Victoria recently included professional athletes in a vaccine mandate covering millions of "authorised workers", without clarifying whether it applied to athletes from overseas or other Australian states. According to the mandate, authorised workers must have their first vaccine shot by October 15 and their second by November 26 or face being banned from their workplaces. "Professional sport is part of those (items on the) authorised worker list and they have to be double-dose vaccinated," Andrews said, adding that Victoria's stance could be a "moot point", given the federal government might not issue visas to unvaccinated athletes.

According to *The Age*, Tennis Australia chief Craig Tiley urged the Victorian government to hold off on a vaccine mandate for athletes, before dropping his opposition to what two government sources said was the strong likelihood that Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton would only permit vaccinated players. "They said we won't get star players and the state government effectively said 'suck it up'. They capitulated," *The Age* quoted a source claiming direct knowledge of the negotiations.

There's also speculation on Djokovic's vaccination status. Earlier this month, pictures emerged of the Serb at a concert in New York's Central Park, which required all atten-

"Things being as they are, I still don't know if I will go to Melbourne. I will not reveal my status whether I have been vaccinated or not. It is a private matter and an inappropriate inquiry."

### NOVAK DJOKOVIC

dees to be vaccinated.

Last April, Djokovic made his stance on vaccines known: "Personally I'm opposed to vaccination, and I wouldn't want to be forced by someone to take a vaccine in order to be able to travel."

Former World No.1 Andy Roddick recently questioned whether players would be willing to let go of their personal beliefs in order to play.

"There are some people who are like - 'I have like these beliefs but I could put those to the side if it means I could play in a tennis tournament,'" Roddick told the Tennis Channel. "If we start to look at the timelines... it's October 15th (the date for authorised workers to get the first shot). You figure, at least three weeks between shots, if you're Pfizer, four weeks between shots, if you're Moderna then two weeks. After that you are considered fully vaccinated. So, players are gonna have to start making that decision now."

### Tsitsipas' U-turn

In August, World No.3 Stefanos Tsitsipas said that he would only get the vaccination if ATP Tour made it mandatory.

"I don't see any reason for someone of my age to do it - it hasn't been tested enough and it has side effects — as long as it's not mandatory, everyone can decide for themselves," said Tsitsipas, who was the focal point of Greece's 'Stay Home' campaign at the peak of the pandemic last year.

After criticism from the Greek government — "He does not have the knowledge and studies to assess the need for vaccinations" — Tsitsipas revealed his plans to get vaccinated by the end of the year.

"I will get vaccinated this year," he told Antenna TV. "So I can go to restaurants and shops. I support all those who get vaccinated. I am not a doctor; I am a tennis player, so I may not have the most substantiated opinion when it comes to medical issues."

Women's World No.2 Aryna Sabalenka missed the Indian Wells tournament this month after testing positive for Covid-19. The 23-year-old publicly expressed hesitation about the vaccine earlier this year.

"So far I don't really trust it," Sabalenka told reporters in March. "It's tough to say, but I don't really want it yet and I don't want my family to take it. If I have to do it, then of course I have to do it because our life is a travel life."

MIHIR VASAVDA  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19

IGOR STIMAC sounded optimistic, as he always does. But it felt more like an SOS call to those in charge of Indian football.

The chief coach was asked if the national team lacked a quality central defender to partner Sandesh Jhingan, who is playing club football in Stimac's homeland, Croatia. Stimac didn't miss an open goal.

"Not only central defence, all areas are a problem for us," he said. "With pandemic going around, we have a season that won't last for eight-nine months. That's the biggest problem for Indian football. Working like this, where players come to the national team during off-season, it's terrible."

Stimac was spot on with his diagnosis of the main problem facing Indian football — the flawed domestic structure. But it isn't just because of the pandemic. The outbreak of Covid-19 last year might have delayed the All India Football Federation's (AIFF) plans to have a longer season, but it's not a recent problem.

For almost a decade, the unnaturally short domestic season has hindered player development, which has had a cascading impact on the national team.

The Indian Super League (ISL), the country's premier division, lasts for only four months, making it one of the shortest in the world. This is due to multiple factors but primarily commercial. The new season, for instance, will start next month and end in March 2022 and then until the next season begins — in November, going by the recent trend — the players will have nothing to do apart from playing in an odd match in between.

This has put India's footballers at a massive disadvantage compared to the others, so much so that even the countries from South Asia, like Bangladesh who have a proper full season, are starting to trouble the world's 107th-ranked team. At the recently-concluded South Asian Football Championship, which India won after huffing and puffing their way through the initial matches, this was glaring.

Stimac said he did not consider the SAFF title to be a 'special success' but praised the players for their 'togetherness, energy, positive attitude and great mindset.' But wasn't too pleased that the few days he got with the team before the Cup were spent working on their fitness, rather than the tactical aspects of the game.

"We had certain problems in the beginning because we did not have enough preparation compared to other teams. Nepal had two-and-a-half months to prepare. We had only 7-8 days prior to the tournament. Half of the team was without proper competition mode and fitness... Soon, we will have a



Indian football coach Igor Stimac wants the country's premier division the ISL, which lasts four months, to be held over a longer period.

"Not only central defence, all areas are a problem for us."

### IGOR STIMAC

normal season like in other countries. We want to get to top 10 in Asia and (for that) we need to have the same quality of league as in the other countries," Stimac said in a media interaction.

The Asian Football Confederation, it is learnt, has given the AIFF time till next year to increase the number of matches clubs play each season, which would automatically increase the length of the season. If the federation fails to do so, India could lose its Asian Champions League spot.

### If China can't can India?

Stimac cited the example of China to demonstrate how tough the path will be for India to match other Asian nations before dreaming about qualifying for the World Cup. "China has been spending more than a billion dollars per year in football development. Millions of children in academies, thousands and thousands of foreign coaches, getting foreign players to play for their national team, and still, it's not enough (for them to qualify for the World Cup)," he said. "We are dreaming about going to World Cup one day. It's a huge, massive process because we are not the only ones dreaming about it. Other countries are doing more (than us) in terms of quantity of investments, grassroots, foreign coaches at academies, coaching licensing..."

India's record under Stimac hasn't been particularly impressive but the Croat wasn't too concerned about it. His task, Stimac said,

was to 'reconstruct' the national team by making the players play technically solid football and improve the bench strength.

The process, he underlined, would involve 'suffering', in terms of results but he was satisfied with the progress the team has made under him.

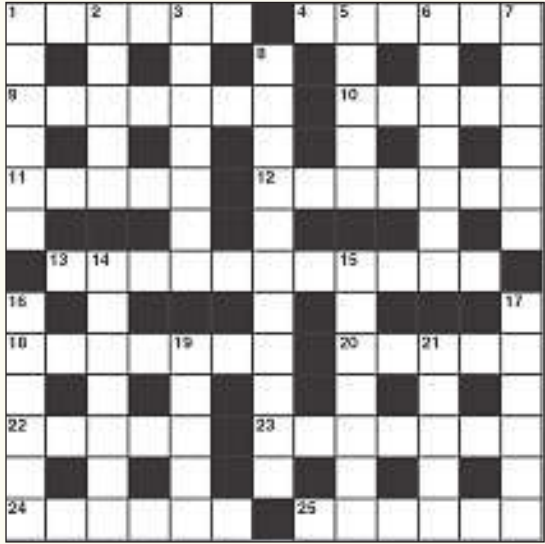
"The only result in which we did not fulfill expectations was against Bangladesh at Salt Lake (1-1 draw). But then, apart from two matches, we could not play our other qualifying matches at home and still, we qualified for the third round," he said. "From this stage now on, we can go one step further which will be playing good football in the third round of qualifiers and making sure India qualifies for Asian Cup."

That, again, will be tricky. The third round of qualifiers, which will be India's final chance to qualify for the 2023 Asian Cup in China, begins in February 2022.

According to FIFA rules, clubs have to release their players for four days for national team duties on dates earmarked for such games. The Asian Cup qualifiers, however, will be played outside the usual FIFA window, which could lead to a tussle between the club and a national team. Stimac said it was important to make sure the dates of the qualifying matches are considered 'a part of the ISL calendar so that the players are released for national team duty.'

"If we are going to succeed in this qualifier which are games to play outside FIFA window, we need to sit down with other stakeholders in domestic competitions (read ISL), how much time the national team players will get for preparation," he said. "Otherwise, we are going to gamble, as simple as that."

### CROSSWORD 4565



#### ACROSS

- Left one extremely out of sorts (6)
- Composer of unusual drive (5)
- He has no choice, poor man (6)
- Sort out the middle of a tune with the composer (7)
- Study I'm making of fabric (5)
- Produce straight lines say (5)
- Speech written on an envelope? (7)
- An engagement in the main (5,6)
- Secret serviceman (7)
- A habit socially acceptable and wise (5)
- French scrip issue (5)
- Try to make a little yarn go a long way? (4,3)
- One motor on fire perhaps (6)
- Mean to overcharge youth leader (6)

#### DOWN

- Ventilator in a gallery (6)
- Composer of unusual drive (5)
- I arrive all dishevelled in the South of France (7)
- Concluded that many are in need maybe (5)
- Polite man goes to fish (7)
- Concerning a girl that's careless (6)
- To tell the truth one may make it (5,6)
- Stemming from a rebellion (7)
- He may go to an ancient city and sit in ruins (7)
- In pain father is brave (6)
- Extremely good man in church (6)
- It has a shaky reputation as a writer (5)
- A cupful of fruit (5)

Solutions Crossword 4564: Across: 1 Uncouth, 8 Funny business, 9 Times, 10 Traders, 11 Potash, 12 Varies, 15 Angered, 17 Cramp, 19 Transgression, 20 Ethos, 21 Strings. Down: 1 Unfit, 2 Cinematograph, 3 Ulysses, 4 Haunts, 5 China, 6 Premeditation, 7 Desists, 11 Prattle, 13 Accuser, 14 Adores, 16 Roses, 18 Pines.

### JUMBLED WORDS

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

\_\_\_ are just clouds passing over. - Duke Ellington (4,5)

FREAK



GILRSY



KMPIS



HIINGK



Answer: FREAK, SKIMP, CLOUDS, HIKING

### OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



### CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



### MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



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

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4629



### DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

#### ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Erratic and argumentative alignments are replaced by greater certainty, represented by the restraining grip of Saturn, the celestial school master. You may therefore be subject to a major dose of reality, forcing you to reconsider a number of recent arrangements.

#### TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Travel plans should now move along a little more easily. Perhaps it is thanks to Mercury's changing location that you now appear able to make your voice heard above the general din that seems to surround you. You might even come across a cache of secret cash.

#### GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Money matters are still to the fore, but now is the time to recognise that enough is enough. Get a grip on your affairs and realise that tradition is more important than strange modern ways of doing things. Also, necessities are a better buy than luxuries.

#### CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

In many ways it's still a stable, sensible sort of a time. Everything that is most conservative about your character should stand you in good stead today. Emphasise practical solutions and don't give way to anger or resentment over any recent hurts or slights.

#### LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

The Sun is still in an intense mood, and could encourage an indication of simmering family tensions. But your first step is to get on and finish worthwhile activities, rather than complaining about why nothing ever seems to work out. Optimistic Leos should set about domestic repairs without delay.

#### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Social contacts should again be emphasised today, but with a difference. The significant relationships will be those with people who are older, more experienced or more secure than you. Wild spending and extravagance will solve nothing, unless having too much money is a problem.

#### LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

The costs of a recent responsibility, perhaps a social obligation, may have alarmed you. However, it looks as if you may have very little alternative but to smile and settle up. But perhaps what's really important is the emotional cost, and all that's needed are a few soothing words.

#### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Even though your life recently has been all about maintaining balance and following the middle way, you may now feel able to swing to extremes. If you take a risk and abandon your normal belief in harmony, then you'll soon see what happens to your chosen long-term plans.

#### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

Today's intriguing developments favour a solution to your business cares and financial woes. The answer lies in long-term investments and savings, not in making a fast buck, going for a quick fix or indulging in any risky enterprise. An older acquaintance could have the best advice.

#### CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Even those of you whose life is moving at break-neck speed should slow down today, or at least consolidate the gains you've made so far. Anything that is not secure may be swept away by the long-running dispute between macho Mars and electrifying Uranus.

#### AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Risk a confrontation only if you are perfectly happy to incur certain losses. These may be financial or professional but are more likely to relate to a family partnership. Otherwise keep your head down and avoid trouble, while people around you calm down.

#### PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You're in exactly the right mood to take up the cudgels on behalf of some noble or idealistic cause. I have two words of advice, though: get your facts straight and don't go behind anybody's back. If you jump in without due consideration, you'll risk massive embarrassment.



