

**VIDEOGRAPHY SURVEY COMPLETED, REPORT IN COURT TODAY**

Varanasi court orders sealing of Gyanvapi mosque spot after Shivling discovery claim

Masjid panel says object is part of fountain, will challenge sealing order in top court

ASAD REHMAN
LUCKNOW, MAY 16

RETURNING THE spotlight to the Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque controversy, a Varanasi court Monday directed the district administration to seal the spot in the mosque complex where a Shivling was claimed to have been found during a court-mandated videography survey



Security personnel at the site in Varanasi Monday. *Anand Singh*

that just concluded. The Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee said it would

challenge the order in the Supreme Court where it had

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SC's Ayodhya verdict faces Kashi test: Mosque plea hearing today

Survey violates Places of Worship Act, says petition

ANANTHAKRISHNAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

THE SUPREME Court is likely to hear Tuesday a plea by the Committee of Management of Anjuman Intezamia Masjid, Varanasi, challenging the videography survey ordered by a local court of the Maa Shringar Gauri Sthal in the Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque complex. The Muslim

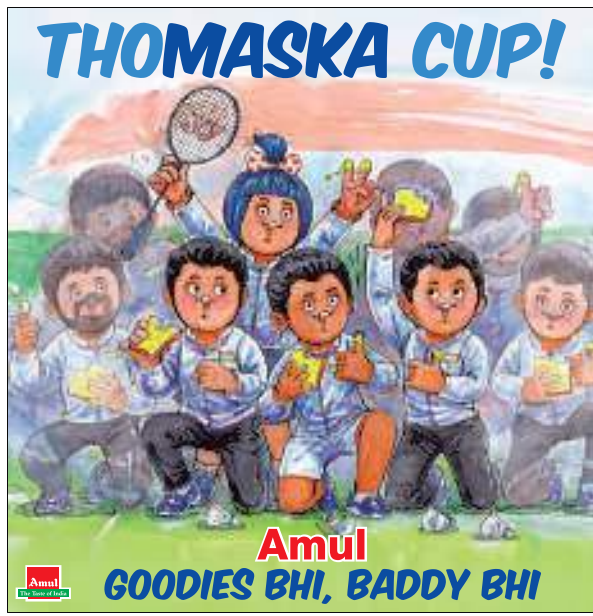
INSIDE**PLEA IN MATHURA COURT FOR SURVEY OF SHAHI IDGAH****PAGE 4**

body contends that it is contrary to provisions of the Places of Worship Act (Special Provisions) Act 1991.

The Act states that the nature

of all places of worship, except Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, shall be maintained as it was on August 15, 1947 and that no suit shall lie in any court with respect to the conversion of the religious character of a place of worship, as existing on that date.

Incidentally, the Act itself is under challenge before the top court with at least two pending petitions questioning its

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**DOMESTIC PRICES DROP SHARPLY**

Export ban shakes world markets, wheat prices up 6%

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

INDIA'S BAN on wheat exports Saturday fuelled international prices by almost 6 per cent a bushel (60 pounds or one million kernels or 27.21 kg) when global markets opened Monday. Locally, prices dropped sharply by 4-8 per cent in different states — Rs 200-250 a quintal in Rajasthan, Rs 100-150 a quintal in Punjab, and about Rs 100 a quintal in Uttar Pradesh.

With the February 24 invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the supply disruption that followed, global wheat prices jumped over 60 per cent in 2022; just Russia and Ukraine together account for almost a third of world wheat exports.

The unexpected ban by India, which accounts for about 5 per cent of world wheat exports, stoked prices further. In Chicago, futures rose 5.9 per cent to \$12.47 a bushel on Monday, the

BUSINESS AS USUAL**INDIA'S WHEAT EXPORTS**

Year	Wheat Export (lakh tonnes)
2020-21	21.55
2021-22	72.15

Source: Government of India

highest in two months. The closing price in the previous trading

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**BUDDHIST CULTURE CENTRE TO COME UP**

India-Nepal ties are as stable as the Himalayas, says Modi in Lumbini

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
LUMBINI, MAY 16

MARKING HIS first official visit to the birthplace of the Buddha, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday marked Buddha Purnima by laying the foundation stone of a centre for Buddhist culture and heritage in Nepal's Lumbini — the first such facility to be set up by India there.

Modi later said the two countries of "Buddha's birth and enlightenment together have an obligation to work for the entire humanity" — and said that rela-

tions between India and Nepal are "as ancient as the ocean and as stable as the Himalayas".

"The growing and strengthening friendship between India and Nepal will work for the benefit of the entire humanity amid the kind of global situation that is emerging today. The devotion to Lord Buddha binds us together, and makes us members of one family," Modi said, referring to Nepal and India as "the countries of Buddha's birth and enlightenment".

"The energy of the place, where Lord Buddha was born,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Prime Minister Modi with Nepal counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba at the Lumbini site that marks Buddha's birthplace. *PTI*

Probe into J&K bus fire looks at use of 'sticky bomb'

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

THE INVESTIGATION into the fire in a passenger bus near Katra town, in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), on May 13 that claimed four lives and left over 20 injured is veering towards a terror probe, sources said.

According to sources, circumstantial evidence suggests that the fire was an act of sabotage and the use of an IED to trigger an explosion in the bus's fuel tank cannot be ruled out. Investigating officials suspect that a "sticky bomb", which can be stuck to a vehicle using magnets, was used.

The bus, mostly carrying pilgrims, had just left for Jammu when it caught fire near Khanak, about 1.5 km from Katra town. Katra is the base camp for pilgrims going to the Vaishno Devi shrine.

According to preliminary investigations, the fire started in the engine of the bus, and soon engulfed the vehicle. The initial police probe termed it as a case of the engine catching fire due to a technical fault. However,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NCLT ruling in way, so Govt takes another look at sale of Pawan Hans

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

THE CENTRE is taking a relook at the Pawan Hans disinvestment process on account that Almas Global Opportunity Fund, one of the three entities part of the winning consortium, has a court order passed against it by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), government sources told *The Indian Express*. The government is studying whether the NCLT verdict amounts to an "adverse order"

— something that may lead to disqualification of the bid, as per guidelines on strategic disinvestment.

The consortium entity that placed and won the bid for the state-owned helicopter service provider is Star9 Mobility Pvt Ltd. Cayman Islands-based Almas Global Opportunity Fund, which is managed by Dubai-based Almas Capital owns 49% of Star9 Mobility, with the remaining held by Mumbai-based Big Charter Pvt Ltd and Delhi-based Maharaja Aviation.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

India looks at reopening mission in Kabul minus senior diplomats

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

INDIA IS exploring the possibility of reopening its embassy in Afghanistan soon, but without top level diplomatic representation, according to sources.

The Indian Express has learnt that a team of security officials flew to Kabul in February to assess the ground situation.

The plan for reopening does not include sending diplomats at senior levels — the embassy will likely function only with personnel for liaison purposes that may

EXPLAINED
Much at stake

WHILE IT has not granted recognition to the Taliban regime, Delhi has been calling for an inclusive government in Afghanistan, one that ensures that Afghan soil is not used for any terror activity. India has much at stake in Afghanistan, having participated in a range of development projects.

extend to consular services, the sources said. It would not mean a recognition of the Taliban regime.

India shut down its embassy in Kabul on August 17, two days after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. Since then, Delhi has debated whether that was the right decision. Some sections of the security establishment and Ministry of External Affairs have maintained that continuing there would have put the lives of Indian personnel at risk, pointing to the 1998 incident in which Iranian diplomats at Iran's Mazar-i-Sharif consulate were

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Trucks loaded with wheat at Kandla port. *Express*

Chaos in Kandla after ban: 4,000 wheat trucks in queue, 4 ships half-full

GOPAL KATESHIYA & AVINASH NAIR
RAJKOT, AHMEDABAD, MAY 16

OUTSIDE, THERE are over 4,000 wheat-laden trucks stuck in a queue to nowhere. Inside, there are four ships, half loaded with wheat and no order to sail.

The snap announcement of the ban on wheat exports has led to chaos at the Deendayal port in Gujarat's Kutch district, with exporters and traders unsure of the fate of their cargo.

According to officials, close to 4 lakh metric tonnes (MT) of wheat stranded outside the port

belong to merchants from Madhya Pradesh alone — some still in trucks, some in godowns already overflowing with wheat. Among the held-up cargo is 60,000 MT of wheat to Egypt — the first ever consignment that was to leave the port after the Ukraine-Russia conflict began.

Last Friday, a day before the ban was announced, the port was humming with loading activity.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**RELATED REPORT**
PAGE 4**PAGE 1**
ANCHOR**ADITIRAJA**
VADODARA, MAY 16

FIRST CAME the metal balls, five of them, one after the other. Then came bits and pieces of metal, one that looked like a "ruler".

Across a clutch of villages in central Gujarat, the sky is falling — literally.

It started with three metal balls that fell on Bhalej, Khambholaj and Rampura villages on Thursday evening. They were followed by fragments of metal, one of which apparently

fell on a sheep pen in a farm, killing a lamb.

No one's yet got a grip on what's been happening. Gujarat officials said an ISRO team has collected samples but the premier space organisation declined comment.

The only possible clue so far has come from an astronomer at the Harvard Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics who tweeted this could possibly be debris from the "re-entry of the third stage" of a Chinese launch rocket.

It was around 4.45 pm on May 12 that the first chunk — a large, black ball weighing around

5kg — fell in Bhalej followed by two more in Khambholaj and Rampura — all located within 15 km from each other in Anand district.

Even as the local police were called in, a similar ball fell in Chaklasi village in neighbouring Kheda district, followed by another in Vadodara's Savli taluka on May 13. A day later, villagers from Kasor in Sojitra taluka of Anand reported that a fragment "resembling a ruler" fell on a farm, killing a lamb. And on Monday, the police received a similar call from Khodiyarpura in the same taluka.



'Metal balls' fell on Bhalej, Khambholaj and Rampura villages on Thursday evening

According to police, the objects fell mostly in empty areas — some on heaps of mud. And in all cases, they have begun probes, roping in forensic experts.

On May 12, astronomer Jonathan McDowell tweeted that the debris could possibly be the "re-entry of the third stage from the Chang Zheng 3B serial Y86 launch rocket". The rocket had lifted off on September 9, 2021, carrying a 5,500-kg communication satellite to geostationary transit orbit.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, McDowell said he was

identifying the debris based on tracking data, which showed that this object was "the only reentry that day (May 12) that went anywhere near India".

He said "the predicted path was a few 100 km north of the villages in question, but that's within the uncertainties for this particular object since its orbit was more uncertain than usual". The orbit was rapidly changing due to atmospheric drag, which may cause a change in the predicted ground location, he said.

Anand District Collector, M Y Daxini, said: "We have sent all the items, including the metal

spheres that fell last week, to the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) of ISRO. They have collected all the parts and are examining it."

When contacted, ISRO PRL director Anil Bhardwaj said he was out of station and would be able to comment on Tuesday. ISRO Space Applications Centre (SAC) director Nilesh Desai was not available for comment.

But in the villages where the "debris" have fallen, local residents have a lot to say — even though police suspect there could be more to it than space debris.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Kolkata

Gyanvapi

"In 1937, the court had established in the Din Mohd vs Secretary of State case matter that the premises is a property of Muslim Waqf and Muslims have a right to offer namaz there. The court had also determined how much of the disputed land is mosque's and temple's... Then, the Parliament passed the Paces of Worship Act, 1991 which says that the status of religious places as in 1947 will remain. Then in 2019, the Supreme Court in the Babri mosque matter also said (Parliament's) law making power" as it has "frustrated" the principle of law "ubi jus ibi remedium" (where there is a right, there is a remedy), "thus violating the concept of justice and Rule of Law, which is core of Article 14".

Besides, Article 13(2) also prohibits State from making any law which takes away or abridges fundamental rights conferred under Part-III of the Constitution and any law made in contravention to basic rights is void, it

Besides, Article 13(2) also prohibits State from making any law which takes away or abridges fundamental rights conferred under Part-III of the Constitution and any law made in contravention to basic rights is void, it

Deuba also hosted a luncheon in honour of Modi. "Today's visit has provided further momentum to the multifaceted partnership between the two countries

'The SRA has been pussyfoot-

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The data also show that three items – pulses/beans; fruits; and green, leafy vegetables – were consumed daily, weekly or occasionally by almost all men and women during 2019-20.

Also, 96.2 per cent of men and

Rabari told them the lamb's carcass was taken away by dogs and could not be found.

"We have registered a note case based on information re-

Why Kashmiri Pandits are protesting in the valley, why India's overall fertility rate has gone down, and why the BJP has decided to change the Chief Minister in Tripura

Nomura further said the impact on India's domestic food inflation would be muted. "This export ban is a pre-emptive step and may prevent local wheat

FULL REPORTS ON
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3 WEST BENGAL

2 INJURED IN FIRING

Kolkata: Two persons were grievously injured in a shooting at a biryani outlet at Barrackpore on Monday, a police officer said. Three bike-borne miscreants randomly fired at the shop and injured a customer and a worker of the well known outlet at Barrackpore wireless gate in neighbouring North 24 Parganas district on Monday afternoon, the officer at Barrackpore police commissionerate said. The two were taken to a nearby hospital, he said. A probe is on, he added. **ENS**

Mamata set to begin tour of districts today, inaugurate 123 projects during two-day trip to Paschim Medinipur

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 16

CHIEF MINISTER Mamata Banerjee will on Tuesday begin a two-day visit to Paschim Medinipur district. The CM will attend multiple programmes during the tour that was scheduled earlier but put off due to Cyclone Asani. Mamata will leave for Medinipur on Tuesday at 2 pm. She is scheduled to hold an administrative meeting at Shaheed Pradyot Smriti Bhavan



CM to meet panchayat, booth-level workers

at 3 pm. The CM will hand over appointment letters of 100 special home guards to surrendered Maoists or one member of each family who was killed in Maoist attacks, sources said.

She will lay the foundation stone of six projects and inaugurate 123 projects. She will also lay

the foundation stone and inaugurate a bunch of projects in Jhargram during her visit, the sources added.

In a move aimed at strengthening discipline at the grassroots, apart from reining in errant leaders and violence, the TMC is preparing for party chief Mamata's visit to districts where she will directly hold meetings with panchayat and booth-level workers. This comes as the panchayat polls are scheduled for next year. Banerjee, according to party insiders, does not want any

violence in the coming polls and will send the message to local leaders and workers at these meetings.

The CM was initially scheduled to kick-start the tour of districts with visits to Medinipur and Jhargram from May 10 but rescheduled it to May 17-19 because of Cyclone Asani. The decision to tour the districts – something Banerjee has been doing regularly since 2011 – was taken at a meeting of the party's national working committee.

In the 2018 panchayat polls,

the TMC won 35 per cent of the seats uncontested, facing allegations of large-scale violence and rigging.

TMC sources said Banerjee is concerned about violence in the panchayat poll further denting the party's image that has already taken a hit because of recent incidents of violence such as the Anis Khan death, the intra-TMC conflict in Birbhum that left 10 people dead, and an alleged gangrape case in Nadia over which a local TMC leader's son was arrested.

BJP WORKER'S DEATH

CBI summons Trinamool MLA, BJP says 'more are involved'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 16

THE CENTRAL Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has summoned TMC MLA Paresh Pal in connection with the death of a BJP worker in Kankurgachhi as part of an ongoing probe into a post-poll violence case.

Kin of the deceased, Abhijit Sarkar, recently expressed dissatisfaction over the investigation in the case. The family organised a protest on Saturday, alleging that the CBI submitted a chargesheet in the Calcutta High Court without questioning the accused. The CBI has now summoned MLA Pal asking him to appear before them on Wednesday at its office in CGO complex. Pal declined to comment on the matter.

Meanwhile, a war of words began between the TMC and the BJP over the fresh summons.

BJP leader Locket Chatterjee accused TMC of creating an "environment of post poll violence" in the state.

"Some of TMC's big names are involved in post-poll violence related incidents. Many have been killed, beaten up or harassed by them. It is natural that the CBI will summon these people," said Locket Chatterjee.

However, State Minister and TMC leader Firhad Hakim alleged, "The Centre is using CBI for political vendetta. Paresh Pal is so senior... he is a respected person and they [BJP] want to claim that he is involved in a murder."

The CBI has already filed a chargesheet against 20 accused persons in connection with the alleged murder of BJP worker Abhijit Sarkar in northeast



Paresh Pal is MLA from Bailgate

Kolkata's Kankurgachhi. The agency filed an FIR in the Kankurgachhi 'murder' on August 25 last year and took over the case, which had been initially registered on a complaint against seven to eight unidentified persons, at Kolkata's Narkeldanga police station on May 2.

It was alleged that the accused attacked the BJP worker with sticks and also damaged household items at his residence. Sarkar was taken to a hospital where he succumbed to injuries.

Local sources claimed that the accused are all TMC supporters.

The alleged incident took place on May 2, the day the Assembly poll results were declared. Sarkar was found dead at Kankurgachhi in the Narkeldanga police station area after being allegedly beaten up by a mob. His brother, Biswajit, claimed that local Trinamool leaders had threatened him and his sibling with dire consequences during the polls. The BJP worker's family also demanded strict action against the local police for allegedly acting at the behest of local Trinamool leaders.

The victim's brother had levelled serious allegations against officers at the local police station. However, none of them were named in the CBI chargesheet.

The high court, on August 19, ordered a court-monitored CBI probe into alleged post-poll violence incident.

Governor seeks report from govt over 'police raid' at Suwendu office

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 16

GOVERNOR JADGEEP Dhankhar on Sunday sought an urgent report from state chief secretary H K Dwivedi over an "attack by the police" on the MLA office of Leader of Opposition in state Assembly Suwendu Adhikari.

Dhankhar said such action by police is a matter of "deep concern."

"In view of worrisome inputs from Leader of Opposition West Bengal Legislative Assembly @SuwenduWB that his MLA office of Nandigram has been attacked by police, sought an urgent report [from] Chief Secretary," he tweeted.

"CS @chief_west to render status report by 10 pm today indicating full details of heavy police and rapid action force posse & senior officials @WBP Police present in & outside MLA office of LOP @SuwenduWB. Such an action in the MLA office of LOP is a matter of deep concern," he added.

Taking to Twitter, Adhikari

claimed that the police entered his office by force. "Without giving any prior information, without showing a search warrant, and without the presence of a magistrate, the 'Mamata' police (West Bengal Police) forcefully entered my Nandigram MLA's office unnecessarily. This is a lousy and cruel act on the part of the Mamata Banerjee government. It is a conspiracy against the Leader of the Opposition," he wrote, attaching three videos to substantiate the claim.

However, police said the raid was conducted after receiving information on corruption allegations against Mohua Pal, wife of Meghnad Pal who is the Purba Medinipur district general secretary of the BJP. There are allegations that she was promoted to the managerial post from a Group D staff in a cooperative bank by forging documents.

After the police could not find Mohua Pal at her residence, the police went to Adhikari's office.

"It is my residence-and-office. This has been done intentionally by the police... to malign my image. But they will not be able to

do anything against me," said Adhikari.

Reacting to the development, local TMC leader Sheikh Sufiyan said, "If there are some concrete allegations against BJP leaders and their family members then there is no way the police won't take any action. Law will take its own course. Maybe there was some information regarding the accused person being present at the MLA office and that's why the police went there."

TMC MLA Tapas Roy criticised the Governor for commenting on the action taken by the state police. "He has no right to comment on police action based on videos shared by the Leader of the Opposition. He should let the law take its own course," said Roy.

Sub-divisional Police Officer (SDPO) of Haldia, Rahul Pande, said an FIR was registered against the wife of BJP leader Meghnad Pal and the police went to the MLA office as part of its investigation. "No one was harassed during the raid. There was no attempt to ransack the office. These are baseless allegations," said Pande.



Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and his wife Sudesh Dhankhar (extreme right) with Ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg Her Excellency Peggy Frantzen (second from left) in Kolkata on Monday. The Ambassador is accompanied by Rajat Dalmia, Honorary Consul of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Jean Marc Reding (extreme left), Senior Consul of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Express

JUTE SECTOR CRISIS

Will explain views to central leaders: BJP MP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, MAY 16

BJP MP Arjun Singh, who has been critical of the Centre's policy towards the jute sector and the party's state unit, on Monday said he is ready to explain his views about the issues raised by them to the BJP central leadership. While

talking to mediapersons before leaving for Delhi to meet BJP top brass on being summoned, Singh claimed that what he had said was not against the party.

"The policy of the Centre is bleeding the already sick jute sector. The Centre is not listening to our suggestion about fixing the jute problem. I have no hesitation to speak the truth in the interest

of industry," he said.

Singh is MP of Barrackpore, an industrial area where several jute mills are facing raw jute crisis.

On his assertion that leaders having no touch with ground-level workers and active only on social media are getting prominence in the state BJP, he said he had not done anything against the party since he joined it.

EAST-WEST METRO CORRIDOR

Demolition of Bowbazar houses begin, residents demand clarity



Demolition work began on one of the houses that developed cracks, in Kolkata on Monday. Partha Paul

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 16

THE KOLKATA Metro Rail Corporation Limited (KMRL) on Monday started demolishing a portion of one of the houses in Bowbazar's Durga Pituri lane after they developed cracks following the tunneling work in the East-West Metro Corridor.

According to KMRL sources, initially, only a portion of the house will be demolished. But if further cracks are developed in the remaining portion of the house or there is a danger to its structure, then the entire building will be demolished, they added. The KMRL has decided to

demolish only a portion of two houses – 16 and 16/1 Durga Pituri Lane – after they developed cracks. A total of 14 houses in the area have developed cracks and fissures. The decision on the status of remaining houses will be taken in consultation with the opinion of an expert group of Kolkata Municipality, sources said.

A team of experts from Jadavpur University on Monday visited the area and tested the soil condition to ascertain the structural viability of the houses in the area as well as the safety of the Metro construction work.

According to the sources, another house – 15, Durga Pituri Lane – has been declared dilap-

idated, and following KMC's approval, it too will be demolished. Meanwhile, the demolition of a portion of the second house – 16/1 Durga Pituri Lane – could not head forward as the authorities did not receive the building owner's consent.

"I am now at the mercy of God. They asked me to take out my stuff. I wish I wasn't alive to see all this. If they ask me to sit here I will do it. What option do I have other than this," said teary-eyed Rajlakshmi Sen, a resident of 16, Durga Pituri Lane.

Local MLA Nayna Bandopadhyay and councillor blamed the Metro authorities for creating "uncertainty" over the demolition of the house.

"Metro is confused. A section of people says that houses will be demolished, others say they will not be demolished. In this situation, will the damaged houses be demolished or not? If the houses were demolished, then where will the displaced residents go? Where will they be rehabilitated or what will be the compensation," asked Bandopadhyay.

Last Thursday, water leakage from inside the shaft, built for retrieval of the two tunnel boring machines (TBMs) commissioned to dig the twin East-West Metro tunnels, had caused cracks in the buildings. Several residents were evacuated and sent to hotels for safe stay.

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Shri Bhupender Yadav

Minister of Labour & Employment and Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Eighth Edition

Migrant workers and the promise of e-Shram

The reverse migration that India experienced as the nation went into lockdown mode in 2020 brought out an overwhelming overlap between the most vulnerable migrant workers and those that worked in the country's informal sector. As such, any policy that aims to alleviate the economic hardships among informal sector workers would also have a significant bearing on India's most vulnerable migrant workers.

The e-Shram portal, which was launched with a far-reaching mandate of registering millions of unorganised workers, is one such policy.

But can the e-Shram portal be leveraged to help India's internal migrants? Can it be used to provide social security to migrant workers? What are the kind of policy enhancements required to get around the issues of bridging the digital divide and gender divide? What can be done to reduce possible exclusions?

Join us as we delve into these questions and more.

Scan to register

Panelists

Ashif Shaikh

Founder & CEO Jan Sahas

Chandan Kumar

National Organising Secretary Working Peoples' Coalition

Divya Varma

Programme Manager, Centre for Migration & Labour Solutions Aajeevika Bureau

Govindraj Ethiraj

Senior Journalist & Founder, IndiaSpend

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3	Fire Officer in Grade 'A'	01

2. For all other details such as eligibility criteria, reservation of vacancies, scheme of selection, submission of on-line application and other instructions, please refer to the detailed advertisement to be published on the Bank's website (www.rbi.org.in) on May 23, 2022 and in the Employment News/Rozgar Samachar issue dated May 21, 2022/ Subsequent issue. Candidates can apply for these posts only by online mode through the Bank's website.

3. IMPORTANT DATES:

Online Application Link:	Opening of website link for online application submission by the applicants	May 23, 2022
Closing date of online application submission		June 13, 2022
Online Examination for Fire Officer in Grade 'A'		July 09, 2022

NOTE: Corrigendum, if any, issued on the above advertisement, will be published only on the Bank's website. (Hindi version of this advertisement will be available in Dainik Jagran, Dainik Bhaskar, Rajasthan Patrika and Navbharat Times)

Kolkata

Plea in court for survey of Mathura mosque

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, MAY 16

WHILE ALL eyes are on the Kashi Vishwanath Temple-Gyanvapi Mosque complex in Varanasi, a similar petition seeking videography of the Shahi Idgah Masjid adjacent to Krishnajanmabhoomi was recently moved in a local Mathura court.

The application seeks an advocate commissioner for assessment of the site “on the lines of (the) Gyanvapi mosque”, to determine “existence of Hindu artefacts and ancient religious inscriptions on the mosque premises”.

The application was filed in the court of Civil Judge (Senior Division), Mathura, a day after the Allahabad High Court directed it to dispose of all cases related to the

Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah Masjid dispute within four months.

On May 12, while disposing of a petition filed by Bhagwan Shri Krishna Virajman And Another, the High Court said: “The Civil Judge (Senior Division), Mathura, is directed to decide the aforesaid applications expeditiously, preferably within a period of four months from the date a certified copy of this order is produced before him, and after giving an opportunity of hearing to the affected parties....”

The High Court also stated in its order: “It is clarified that the court has not expressed any opinion either regarding the maintainability of the case or the merits of claim made by the petitioner.”

The next day, May 13, an application was moved in the court



The Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah Masjid complex in Mathura. Express Archive

of Civil Judge (Senior Division), Mathura, seeking appointment of an advocate commissioner to carry out inspection of the Shahi Idgah Masjid.

Petitioner Manish Yadav, who had earlier filed an application in the High Court for early disposal of petitions connected with the disputed Mathura site, told The Indian Express: “I requested the

fit called the Narayani Sena, Yadav said he had moved the high court as petitions were pending, including ones seeking a survey of the site by the Archeological Survey of India and a direction to stop any construction at the site.

Earlier, an advocate named Mahendra Pratap Singh had filed an application in the same civil court seeking that a commission be appointed to survey the mosque.

Advocate Tanveer Khan, who is representing the Shahi Idgah Masjid, said they were waiting for the July 1 hearing of the four petitions pending in connection with the disputed site.

Meanwhile, the District Judge Court, Mathura, is likely to soon pronounce its judgment on the maintainability of a civil suit seeking removal of the mosque, claim-

ing it was built on Krishna Janmabhoomi, the birthplace of Lord Krishna. The suit was filed two years ago by the ‘Deity and the Janmasthan (birthplace)’ and ‘next friend’ Ranjana Agnihotri, a Lucknow resident, and others.

The petitioners have also sought cancellation of a compromise decree between the governing body of the temple complex and the management trust of the mosque in 1968. The petitioners claim that the agreement between the Shree Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sangh, Mathura, and the mosque trust was “illegal and void ab initio (not legally binding)” as the land was vested in another trust, Shree Krishna Janmabhoomi Trust, and the Seva Sangh was not authorised to act on its behalf.

NEWS MAKER

Out of sight, but not out of mind: Buddhadeb still the go-to person for Bengal CPM



Former CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee campaigning for CPM during the 2016 West Bengal Assembly polls. Express Archive

Bereft of leaders with popular appeal, the CPM recently relayed the ailing former CM’s message to youth workers

ATRI MITRA
KOLKATA, MAY 16

“ONLY LEFTISTS can resist the anti-people, repressive, and undemocratic governments at the Centre and in our state,” read the message. “Our DYFI workers are fighting every day against all odds in this state. I salute you and wish you the best in your fight. Best wishes to all the delegates in this conference.”

This was former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee’s statement to the delegates of the 11th All India Conference of the CPI(M)’s youth wing DYFI, or the Democratic Youth Federation of India, on Saturday. The four-day conference began in Kolkata on May 12.

For a party that is now looking to gain a foothold in the state after over a decade of continuous electoral reverses, getting Bhattacharjee to address its youth workers is an interesting choice, given that the 78-year-old former chief minister has been ailing for the past few years and mostly stayed away from public limelight since leaving office in 2011. This is not the first time the party has relayed Bhattacharjee’s message to its cadre. It had played his audio message at the Brigade Parade Ground rally before the Assembly elections last year.

The party has been trying to push young leaders to the fore but without much success. In the Assembly elections last year, the youth comprised 60 per cent of the party’s candidates — including DYFI state secretary Minakshi Mukherjee in Nandigram against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari — but the party was trounced. The Left failed to win a single seat.

During the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the youth workers of the Left formed a group called “Red Volunteers” to help people facing emergencies. The group earned praise all over, especially on social media, but its efforts were not enough to translate into substantial votes for the Left in the civic polls that followed in the following months. According to a section of the CPI(M) leadership, this happened because the party does not have a popular and credible face in the state.

A youth leader said it was not enough to bring in fresh faces when there is no leader with the stature of someone like Bhattacharjee. “To increase the party’s credibility, we still need to show Buddha babu. After he refused the Padma Bhushan, his credibility as a Communist leader increased.”

The newly elected DYFI all-India general secretary Himagnaraj Bhattacharya said, “We never forgot our heritage. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee is our first all-India general secretary. In 1967, when four youth organisations merged to form the DYFI, he was our leader. So, we cannot forget him. He also made us see the vision of industrialisation and employment. No doubt that his message will give us extra power.”

For the Left’s rivals, bringing back the former CM to the political stage, if even through an audio message, is a sign of the CPI(M)’s political bankruptcy and shows they have no young leader who can take the party forward.

Senior Trinamool Congress leader and state minister Firhad Hakim said, “The CPI(M) has no iconic leader right now. Since its defeat in 2011, it has not had such a leader. The last iconic leader in the CPI(M) is Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. So, the CPI(M) thought if they could show Buddha babu’s message that will make a difference to their workers.”

BJP leader Samik Bhattacharya accused the CPI(M) of “playing a desperate partisan and communal role since the past year to capture the minority vote bank”. He added, “To suppress that image, they are using Buddha babu, who has a comparatively clean image and had an acceptance among middle-class, educated Bengalis. But, this has exposed their political bankruptcy.”

GPS to demarcate boundaries for K-Rail survey: Kerala govt

Thiruvananthapuram: After clashes with people and Opposition parties over the past few months, CPI(M)-led LDF government in Kerala on Monday abandoned laying of boundary stones using concave measures for social impact assessment (SIA) survey for the

proposed semi-high-speed corridor. Instead, Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited was told to demarcate the boundaries using GPS survey, erect stones only with land owners’ consent or fix the alignment by marking on permanent structures. **ENS**

BJP dividing India: Rahul

Jaipur: In his first public address after the three-day Chintan Shivir in Udaipur, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday reiterated that it is a fight between two ideologies with BJP working to divide India while Congress takes everyone along. “It is a fight between two ideologies. On one hand, there is Congress ideology, which says that you have to take everyone along, to respect everyone, and to protect everyone’s history and culture. On the other hand, BJP divides people, and crushes and stifles; and it stifles and erases adivasi’ history and culture. This battle is going on in India,” Rahul said at a rally in Rajasthan. **ENS**



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi offers prayers at Hari Mandir in Beneshwar Dham as (right) Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot looks on, near Banswara district on Monday. PTI

ROW OVER ‘IDEOLOGY’ REMARK

Regional leaders hit back at Rahul Gandhi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

IT IS TIME the Congress reconciled with the reality that it no longer dominates the Opposition space, political parties said Monday in a sharp reaction to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s statement, at the party Chintan Shivir the day before, that regional counterparts “lack the ideology” to take on the BJP and RSS.

At a time when regional parties have held the BJP back in several states, even as the Congress has failed, one of its own allies, the JMM, said: “It is Rahul Gandhi’s self-assessment and he is entitled to his opinion, but who gave him the authority to comment on ideology? How are we running the

party without any ideology?”

The JMM and Congress run a coalition government in Jharkhand. Party spokesperson Supriyo Bhattacharya said: “The fact remains that it is these regional parties on which the Congress is dependent for a fight or a win, be it the JMM in Jharkhand or the RJD in Bihar.”

Speaking at the Chintan Shivir, Rahul said the Congress was mounting an ideological resistance to the onslaught of the RSS, unlike regional parties which “lack an ideology” and “have different approaches”.

The RJD, another Congress ally, also called Rahul’s statement “unfortunate”. RJD MP Manoj Jha said that had the former Congress president been mindful of the outcome of poll fights against the

BJP, he would have realised “the ideological and electoral commitment that is brought by such regional outfits, which he said do not have the capacity”. Jha also repeated RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav’s advice for the Congress: “There are 220–225 seats where the BJP and Congress are in a direct fight. The TMC congress should leave the other spaces to regional parties...”

In West Bengal the ruling Trinamool Congress’s (TMC) mouthpiece ‘Jago Bangla’, in an editorial on Monday, also targeted Rahul.

In the editorial titled ‘Chintaner Chinta’ (Thoughts on Chintan), the TMC mouthpiece said the Congress was trying to hide its failures (in taking on the BJP) by holding others responsi-

ble. “When your own house is in disorder, you are trying to look into those of others to find their faults. The intention is clear, which is to hide your failures and hold others responsible. This is what Rahul Gandhi has tried to do during its so-called Chintan Shivir after attending several brainstorming sessions,” the editorial said.

Leaders of Congress ally DMK preferred not to comment on the issue. Several indicated they were waiting for the party leadership’s stand to speak. Recently, another ally, CPM, had said it was the Congress that had a crisis of ideology as it was flirting with “soft Hindutva” and was unable to take on the challenges posed by BJP. **—WITH INPUTS FROM ENS, KOLKATA**

Hit by wheat export ban, traders call mandi strike

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, MAY 16

REELING UNDER the impact of a ban on wheat export imposed by the Centre, traders’ associations in Madhya Pradesh have called a two-day bandh of mandis, during which traders across the state will not participate in the auctioning process of wheat.

This comes a day after Gopaldas Aggarwal, president of Sakhal Anaj Dalhan Tilhan Vyapari Mahasangh Samittee, stated in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi that around 7,000 trucks loaded with wheat had lined up outside the Kandla and Mumbai ports over the past 10 days.

Aggarwal pointed out that

from these 7,000 trucks, at least 4,000 trucks belonged to traders from MP who have been hit badly by the ban.

Madhya Pradesh is the only state where wheat production has not been affected by the heat-wave, which has left farmers with shrivelled grains in other states.

The Centre, through a notification on May 13, had banned export of wheat, moving all kinds of wheat from “free” to “prohibited” category. It has only allowed two kinds of export: those granted permission for export to countries to meet their food security needs, and contracted exports against which irrevocable letter of credits were issued on or before May 13.

Aggarwal said many traders whose trucks were stuck at

Kandla port in Gujarat were meeting demands raised by exporters. “The traders had no knowledge whether the exporter concerned had the Letter of Credit,” he said. “This sudden ban will be a crushing blow to them. We want the government to make arrangements for such traders.” A delegation of traders’ association headed by Aggarwal, met state Agriculture Minister Kamal Patel on Monday and raised their demands.

Nimish Aggarwal, president of traders’ association at Ujjain mandi, said: “No trader across the state will participate in auctioning for the next two days. We want farmers to realise that the sudden ban is a crushing blow to traders, as a result of which we can’t afford to give them high

rates. We will face losses to the tune of nearly Rs 1 lakh per truck.”

Farmers, meanwhile, are bracing for a steep drop in wheat rates once mandis start operations. Rates dropping much below MSP will leave farmers with little options but to sell their produce to the state government at MSP of Rs 2,015. Mukesh Bangdwa, who had sown wheat over 20 acres, is still left with 200 quintals of the 400 quintals from his total production this year. Bangdwa had sold 200 quintals at Rs 2,125 per quintal at the mandi soon after harvest. But after the ban imposed by the government, he said the rate is Rs 1,850 per quintal for the same type of wheat.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

TMC mouthpiece alleges CPI(M) garnered ‘cut money’ through publishing house

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 16

THE TMC mouthpiece “Jago Bangla” on Monday accused the CPI(M) of “earning more than thousand crore rupees” through the publication house, National Book Agency (NBA), during the 34-year rule of the Left Front in West Bengal.

“The CPI(M) always questioned on cut money. During its regime, the party earned thousand crore of rupees through this publication house. This is also cut money. This source of income should be investigated,” the TMC mouthpiece said.

The National Book Agency is a renowned publication house of West Bengal which publishes the write-ups of veteran CPI(M) leaders such as Pramod Dasgupta, Mujaffar Ahmed, Jyoti Basu, Buddhadev Bhattacharya, Saroj Mukherjee and others.

Jago Bangla claimed that the Left Front government forced school libraries and local libraries to buy NBA books.

CPI(M) leaders rejected the TMC mouthpiece charge, saying the TMC mouthpiece can investigate and publish it.

CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty said, “I would not comment on a mouthpiece of a political party. If they find any illegal practice, they can investigate and publish that. If not, stop lying unnecessarily.”

Another senior CPI(M) leader said, “In Bengal, Left parties always have a different tradition of literature practice. We stress on political education to our cadres, and that was implemented through this publication. So, the publication house always had a specific readers’ circle and they bought books from NBA. There was no corruption or illegal practice there.”

Biological E cuts price for Covid-19 vaccine from Rs 990 to Rs 400 per dose

New Delhi: After Covaxin and Covishield, the Hyderabad-based vaccine manufacturer Biological E dropped the prices of its Covid-19 vaccine to Rs 250 per dose (including GST). After accounting for Rs 150 to be charged by the health centres for their services, the end users will pay Rs 400 per dose of Corbevax, the company said. The market price (including GST and hospital charges) stood

at 990 pper dose.

“BE has lowered the price of its vaccine with the aim of making it more affordable and help increase the reach to protect maximum number of children against the virus. The decision comes within weeks of Biological E. Limited received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for children between 5 and 12 years of age,” the company said in a statement. **ENS**

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

Shri Rohini Chandra Roy, SFA (Vety) 17.05.2010

Sashastra Seema Bal fondly remembers and cherishes the valiant act of brave heart Shri Rohini Chandra Roy, SFA (Vety) who made supreme sacrifice of his life on the line of duty for Nation. Shri Rohini Chandra Roy, SFA (Vety) was deployed at E coy, Dronapal of 41st Battalion, SSB in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh. Shri Rohini Chandra Roy, SFA (Vety) attained martyrdom in an IED blast triggered by the Naxals on Dantewada-Sukma highway Chhattisgarh on 17.05.2010. We salute the supreme sacrifice of the brave soldier.

SASHASTRA SEEMA BAL

Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE)

James Connection Trust (JCT)

(Implementing Agency for Lanka Spices & Oleoresin Cluster)

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TENDER NOTICE

Ref: NIT/1/LAMKA/2022 Date: 16.05.2022

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TELLING NUMBERS

Alcohol consumption in India: trends across states, age groups

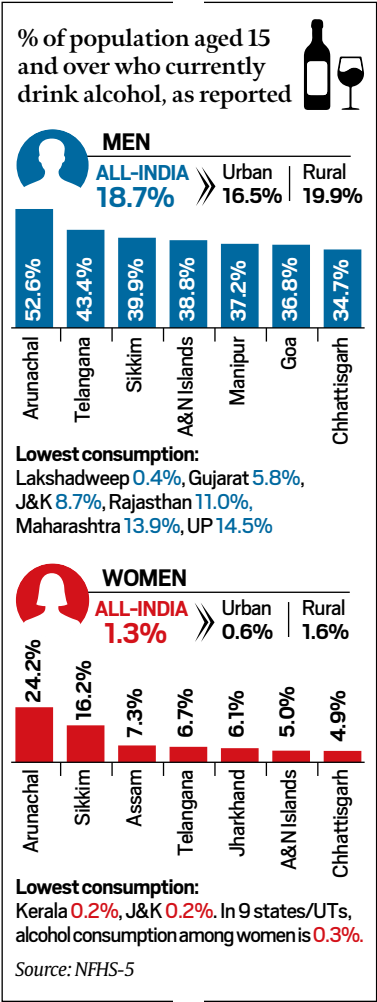
ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION among both men and women is higher in rural India than in urban India, the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), 2019-21 has found. Overall, 1% of women aged 15 and over drink alcohol, compared to 19% of men in the same age group. This breaks up into 1.6% (rural) and 0.6% (urban) among women, and 19.9% and 16.5% respectively among men.

Of all states, Arunachal Pradesh has the highest proportion of both men (53%) and women (24%) who drink alcohol. Among women, Arunachal Pradesh is followed by Sikkim (16%); among men, it is followed by Telangana (43%). Besides Arunachal and Telangana, alcohol consumption among men is higher (40% and above) in upper Brahmaputra region of Assam, districts in Jharkhand and Bastar region of Chhattisgarh, and the Chhota Nagpur region of Jharkhand and Odisha.

The level of alcohol consumption among men is 30-40% in parts of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, and a few districts of Odisha. It is below 30% in the remaining parts of India, and the lowest in Lakshadweep (0.4%).

Alcohol consumption is more common among those from the Scheduled Tribes than from any other caste/tribe groups; this is true of both women (6% consumption among STs) and men (33%). Among religious groups, the proportion of men who drink alcohol is higher among those belonging to "other religions" (47%) than among those belonging to the Hindu (20%), Muslim (5%), Christian (28%), Sikh (23.5%), Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist (24.5%) and Jain (5.9%) religions.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE



THIS WORD MEANS

PROTECTED MOBILITY VEHICLES

Army has floated an RFI for such vehicles. What protection do they provide, and where will they be deployed?

THE ARMY last floated a request for information (RFI) to purchase Protected Mobility Vehicles (PMV) for high-altitude areas above 4,000 m, and for deserts and plains. After getting responses, it is expected to float a request for proposal (RFP) in November, followed by trials.

PURPOSE: The PMV is a wheeled armoured personnel carrier. It provides troops protection from mine blasts and sudden attacks with small arms.

WHAT ARMY WANTS: The RFI specifies that the RMVs should be able to carry ten personnel in addition to the driver and co-driver with each person carrying a combat load of not less than 30 kg. The PMVs should have ballistic protection and provide protection from grenade and mine blasts. They should have a maximum speed of 90 kph on road and 40 kph on cross-country terrain, and be able to operate in temperature range of 40°C to -15°C in high-altitude areas, and be able to ford in water at a depth of 1,000 mm, it said. The Army wants the RMVs to have a weapon mount to enable a 7.62 mm Light Machine Gun (LMG) to be fitted, and 11 firing ports — five on either side and one at the rear.



An Infantry Protected Mobility Vehicle jointly developed by TASL and DRDO. Indian Army

WHERE IT'S MADE: India has the capability of producing PMVs. Last month, the Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) handed over the first Infantry Protected Mobility Vehicle (IPMV) to then Chief of Army Staff, Gen MM Naravane. TASL, the first Indian private sector company to produce such carriers, has developed the IPMV in collaboration with the DRDO. These are produced at the TASL's Pune establishment.

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SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

The Places of Worship Act

Today, the Supreme Court will hear an appeal against the video survey of Varanasi's Gyanvapi mosque. A Muslim body says the survey violates a 1991 law. What is this law, and what has the SC said about it earlier?

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G.

NEW DELHI, MAY 16

THE SUPREME Court will on Tuesday hear a challenge to the order of a civil court in Varanasi directing a videographic survey of the Maa Shringar Gauri Sthal in the Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque complex.

The principal contention of the Committee of Management of Anjuman Intezamia Masjid, the organisation that has filed the appeal, is that the order of the Varanasi court — which was upheld by Allahabad High Court on April 21 — is "clearly interdicted" by The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.

What is the Places of Worship Act, and what are its provisions?

The long title describes it as "An Act to prohibit conversion of any place of worship and to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on the 15th day of August, 1947, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."

Section 3 of the Act bars the conversion, in full or part, of a place of worship of any religious denomination into a place of worship of a different religious denomination — or even a different segment of the same religious denomination.

Section 4(1) declares that the religious character of a place of worship "shall continue to be the same as it existed" on August 15, 1947. Section 4(2) says any suit or legal proceeding with respect to the conversion of the religious character of any place of worship existing on August 15, 1947, pending before any court, shall abate — and no fresh suit or legal proceedings shall be instituted.

The proviso to this subsection saves suits, appeals and legal proceedings that are pending on the date of commencement of the Act, if they pertain to the conversion of the religious character of a place of worship after the cut-off date.

Section 5 stipulates that the Act shall not apply to the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case, and to any suit, appeal or proceeding relating to it.

At least two petitions challenging the Act — filed by Lucknow-based Vishwa Bhadra



The Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi. In the foreground is the shikhar of the Kashi Vishwanath temple. Renuka Puri/Express Archive

Pujari Purohit Mahasangh and some followers of Sanatan Vedic Religion, and advocate Ashwini Upadhyay — are pending before the Supreme Court. The law has been challenged on the ground that it bars judicial review, which is a basic feature of the Constitution, imposes an "arbitrary irrational retrospective cutoff date", and abridges the right to religion of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs.

The court issued notice on Upadhyay's petition in March 2021, but the Centre is yet to file its reply.

Under what circumstances was the 1991 law enacted, and how did the government justify it?

The Act was brought by the Congress government of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao at a time when the Ram temple movement was at its peak. The Babri Masjid was still standing, but L K Advani's rath yatra, his arrest in Bihar, and the firing on kar sevaks in Uttar Pradesh had raised communal tensions.

Moving the Bill in Parliament, then Home Minister S B Chavan said: "It is considered necessary to adopt these measures in view of the controversies arising from time to time with regard to conversion of places of worship which tend to vitiate the communal atmosphere... Adoption of this Bill will effectively prevent any new controversies from arising in respect of conversion of any place of worship..."

tively prevent any new controversies from arising in respect of conversion of any place of worship..."

What has the BJP said about the Places of Worship Act and the Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque dispute?

The main opposition BJP opposed the Bill. Then MP Uma Bharti said "maintenance of status quo as in 1947 in respect of religious places is like closing eyes similar to that of pigeons against advancement of cats. This...will mean preservation of tensions for the coming generations". She referred to the Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque dispute: "Was not the intention of Aurangzeb behind leaving remnants of the temple (he destroyed) at the site of mosque, to keep reminding Hindus of their historical fate and to remind coming generations of Muslims of their past glory and power?"

During the movement for the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the VHP-BJP often spoke of "liberating" the temples at Varanasi and Mathura as well. A popular slogan of the time was, "Ayodhya toh bas jhaanki hai, Kashi Mathura baaki hai (Ayodhya is just a preview, Kashi and Mathura are yet to come)."

After the Supreme Court's unanimous 2019 verdict giving the disputed land in

EVERYDAY AGRICULTURE

Fair & average quality wheat: norms, relaxation

taining up to 0.75% foreign matter, 2% damaged grain, 4% slightly damaged grain, 6% shrivelled and broken grain, and 12% moisture was cleared for procurement.

The specifications are implemented at the time of procurement by personnel from the quality control wing of the Food Corporation of India (FCI).

Grain that looks good

FAQ wheat is fully developed, and has a proper lustre. The main varieties are golden or pale yellow, the grain is not dark, and it does not have any streaks. It is properly dry, and meets all nutritional conditions, the values of which are tested in the lab in case of doubt.

"If a layman takes a handful of wheat and finds the grain is shiny and beautiful, it would usually mean that the wheat meets FAQ," an FCI quality control inspector said. The QC wing conducts physical and chemical analyses during the procurement process, and on the stored crop, the inspector said.



FAQ specifies texture, colour and content of wheat grain. Express Archive

Previous relaxations

The government has in the past relaxed norms for moisture content and loss of lustre following heavy rain during the harvesting season, when ripe crops were flattened, and the grain turned blackish. This is the first time, however, that such a major relaxation has been

allowed for shrivelled grain, FCI officials said. They could not recall a previous relaxation for shrivelled grain of more than perhaps 1-2%.

Is the wheat bad?

The relaxation of procurement parameters to "reduce the hardship of farmers and avoid distress sale of wheat" does not mean the quality of the grain is bad. "The grains are smaller in size, but there is no loss of quality. The quality control wings of both FCI and the government have carried out several tests on the shrivelled grain, and found only weight loss, not a loss of quality," a senior FCI officer said, adding that this wheat will now be called "Under Relaxed Specifications (URS) wheat" instead of FAQ.

Several senior scientists at Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, also said the shrivelling has caused only loss of yield and lower milling recovery, not deterioration of quality or nutritional value, and the protein content of the grain remains intact.

What Bilawal's US visit means for Pakistan's relations with the West

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

NEW DELHI, MAY 16

BILAWAL BHUTTO ZARDARI, Foreign Minister of Pakistan in the new "unity government" of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, is scheduled Monday to leave on a visit to the United States. It is expected that the visit will repair ties between the two countries, which have been in limbo for over a year, and which reached a low with former Prime Minister Imran Khan's accusations that the Biden Administration was behind his ouster.

Pakistan and US

Given the military-security establishment's stakes in Pakistan's foreign relations, the spadework for the 33-year-old's first solo official visit abroad as Foreign Minister was done by ISI Director-General Lt General Nadeem Anjum, who was in Washington last week and held meetings with US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and CIA head William J Burns.

The two visits are the first high-level contact between the two sides since last

September, when Pakistan's then National Security Adviser Moed Yusuf and ISI chief Faiz Hameed got a cold reception while visiting Washington following Imran Khan's rhetoric, especially his description of US troops' departure from Afghanistan as Afghans "breaking the shackles of slavery".

An urgent reset in the ties is important from Pakistan's point of view. The military-security establishment has deep historical ties with its counterparts in the US. It does not want to lose this. Also, repairing ties with the US could help Pakistan regain influence over the Taliban in Afghanistan as its interlocutor with the West.

The new civilian regime needs assistance from Western-led lenders as it looks to repair a crumbling economy. Pakistan has now seen that money is no longer on tap from the Gulf countries. The Chinese too have been reluctant to lend any more to Pakistan for fear that it will not be able to repay, reportedly refusing a \$6-bn loan for a CPEC power project recently.

For the US, the new government in Islamabad provides an opportunity to get back into a region that it exited in August 2021 after handing over Afghanistan to the

Taliban. Concern has grown that IS-K is now established in the mix of terror groups operating in Afghanistan, and the term "Afpak" is back in vogue in the US. Pakistan's hold over the Taliban was never complete, and is less so now. But the US believes that Pakistan could still provide essential help to stabilise the country, which in turn would help the US secure its interests at a time when Washington's focus is on Ukraine.

After four years without one, the US named an Ambassador in Islamabad in February this year. Pakistan's controversial appointee, Sardar Masood Khan, took charge only a couple of months ago when the Biden Administration greenlighted the appointment after a four-month wait.

Coming of age

Butto is travelling to New York at the invitation of Secretary of State Anthony Blinken for a foreign ministers' meeting on world food security being hosted by the US and UN in the context of the war in Ukraine, but the two are expected to hold bilateral

discussions on the sidelines.

While the Pakistan establishment expects the young Oxford-educated foreign minister to make an impression in Washington, the visit is also an opportunity for Bhutto, who has to lead the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) into a general election within months, to demonstrate to both the jiyalas (as loyal PPP workers are called) and the sceptics that he can wear the mantle of Benazir Bhutto and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Ever since Zulfikar Ali Bhutto turned his stints as foreign minister (to President Ayub Khan, and later, from 1971 to 1977) into grand international theatre tuned to domestic political constituencies, the Foreign Ministry is where ambitious politicians have hoped to grow as they cut their teeth on Pakistan's tricky civil-military equations.

Bhutto's charge as Foreign Minister comes at a time when Pakistan's diplomacy, not just with the US, but with the entire Western world, is in disarray.

Imran Khan's ill-timed visit to Moscow on the day Russian President Vladimir



IN FACT

The China equation

Even as it gets on with resetting ties with the US, Pakistan is keen not to give any wrong signals to China. Bhutto has pledged not to allow anyone to harm Pakistan's "iron-clad friendship" with China, and promised that those behind the suicide attack at Karachi University, which killed three Chinese nationals and their Pakistani assistant, would be brought to book.

According to a report in Dawn, quoting a statement from the Prime Minister's Office, PM Sharif held a "comprehensive" telephone call with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Monday during which he affirmed the government's "firm resolve" to fast-track China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. "He also reiterated that Pakistan attached the highest importance to the safety, security and protection of all Chinese nationals working in Pakistan on economic projects and institutions..." Dawn said.

Some reports suggest that immediately after returning from his US trip, Bhutto will travel to Beijing on the invitation of Wang Yi, with whom he has already held a virtual meeting.



The IndianEXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

WALK THE CHINTAN

Chintan Shivir focussed on structural changes in Congress but ignored the key question of leadership

THE THREE-DAY CHINTAN Shivir of the Congress in Udaipur didn't offer any surprises. It plotted a path to give a youthful makeover to the party and promises have been made that tickets will be restricted to one person in a family, with exceptions, of course, that help most existing families. These proposed structural changes in the organisation are necessary for the Congress, which has been in a free fall since the 2014 general election. Successive electoral defeats have turned many leaders restive. The emergence of the G-23, an informal group of dissidents, has put the spotlight on the leadership record of the Gandhi family. The Udaipur conclave, an admission of the crisis in the party, saw the invited crowd of senior leaders, parliamentarians and legislators deliberating on organisational and policy issues, but decidedly steering clear of questions concerning leadership. A clear takeaway from the conclave is that the Gandhis continue to exercise total control over the party. The G-23 fell silent.

Rahul Gandhi spoke at length in Udaipur and admitted that the party has lost its connect with the masses. This plain truth, self-evident to most people, has manifested repeatedly in the party's inability to win elections but seems to have eluded the Gandhis all this while. Rahul Gandhi blamed a poor communication strategy for the disconnect and promised a revamp. However, the loss of touch with the masses may not necessarily be the outcome of strategy. The problem also lies with the message and the messenger. Despite being out of office at the Centre for over eight years, the Congress is yet to reinvent itself as a party of the Opposition. Its politics has been more reactive than a proactive one of setting the agenda or building its own narrative. The incapacity to articulate in a coherent manner what the party stands for is curious since there is no dearth of articulate leaders in that party. While the party's message is incoherent and often contradictory, the messenger has been a failure in amplifying it or bringing clarity to the message. Rahul Gandhi, the party face for some years, will need to shoulder more than a little blame for this. The party has now announced two campaigns — a Bharat Jodo Yatra and Rozgar Do Yatra — to rebuild its ties with the people. The institutional arrangements proposed — a Social Justice Advisory Council to update the party chief on issues pertinent to the backward classes and disadvantaged social groups, a Public Insight Committee to conduct surveys on various issues and generate feedback from the public, a National Training Institute for ideological training, and an Election Management Committee — will be tested on the ground.

However, at a time when elections have also become about leaders and their image as much as their message, a party's prospects will be shaped more by the commitment and vision of its leadership than bullet points from its committees. Ideological clarity would help, but a leadership that can work 24x7 and remain accessible is necessary to inspire workers and revive the Congress. The Udaipur conclave kicked this crucial can down the party's bumpy, lonely road.

DOUSE THE FIRE

Mundka accident drives home the need to create safe working conditions in factories, end the culture of impunity

LAST WEEK'S BLAZE at a factory in outer Delhi's Mundka area that snuffed out at least 27 lives, 21 of them women, adds to the long list of avoidable fire tragedies that show the country's urbanisation story in poor light. The failings that have come to light in the four days since the incident evoke a sense of deja vu: The building did not have a no objection certificate from the fire department — more worryingly, the owners had not even applied for one — and it had only one escape route. The manufacturing unit's licence had lapsed. Though the North Delhi Municipality had cancelled the permission after it was found that the building did not meet the required criteria, the industrial activities went on with impunity even after a Supreme Court monitoring committee raised red flags. Such omissions invite questions about the municipality's enforcement mechanisms. It's also apparent that the authorities have not learnt any lesson from the Anaj Mandi fire that killed more than 40 people in December 2019 — as well as several other mishaps dating back to the Uphaar Cinema Tragedy of 1997.

Localities such as Mundka and Anaj Mandi have become a prominent feature of Delhi's economic landscape — and that of several other parts of the country — in the aftermath of liberalisation. Factories exist cheek-by-jowl with warehouses, shops selling construction materials, banquet halls, and other multi-floor establishments. Largely unregulated, they are sources of livelihood for a substantial section of the city's population, many of whom live at its margins. At a time the pandemic-induced economic downturn has shrunk household incomes and the absence of social security has aggravated the difficulties of the working and lower-middle classes, many such manufacturing units offer hope of a semblance of relief from poverty. They also seem to buck the post-pandemic trend of a large number of women falling out of the labour force — as revealed by the CMIE data. However, with employers playing short shrift to basic safety codes, these workplaces turn out to be not only exploitative, they also add to the hardships faced by their employees — and their dear ones. Several families, for instance, lost their sole breadwinner in last week's fire tragedy.

Delhi's Lt Governor Anil Bajjal has ordered a magisterial investigation into the accident. The probe must, of course, fix accountability at multiple levels. But much more needs to be done. For far too long, a network of complicity has led to safety codes being flouted and building by-laws being infringed. It's time such networks are taken apart.

1983 IN BADMINTON

Thomas Cup win is testimony to Indias rise as a power in the sport. The challenge is to build on this triumph

NOT THE ONE for hyperbole, Pullela Gopichand, the national coach and the man largely responsible for India's rise as a badminton power, called Sunday's Thomas Cup triumph the country's greatest team sport achievement outside cricket. Vimal Kumar, the soft-spoken player-turned-coach, was quick to proclaim that this moment can be to Indian badminton what the 1983 World Cup was to Indian cricket. It's hard to dispute both claims. There are shades of '83 in '22: The stories of personal struggles and redemptions, the underdog element, and beating the most successful nation in the tournament's history, 14-time champions Indonesia, to reach the top.

Writing in these pages, Gopichand recalled how during his playing days, India lost to the likes of Sri Lanka and Pakistan, and were happy merely by qualifying for the Thomas Cup. To go on and win it then — only the sixth nation to do so, showing how competitive the tournament is — is special. And this is no fluke. The title comes on the back of years of relentless hard work and an outcome of a system that has constantly churned out players who, on their day, could upset the best in the world. That even players like B Sai Praneeth, a 2019 World Championship medalist, could not even make the team, coupled with the fact that India has seven players in the world's top 50, points to the depth in men's badminton right now.

The challenge going ahead is to build on this triumph and not let the momentum slip. Badminton is one of the few mass sports that's played almost in every corner of the country. So, even though Hyderabad and Bangalore will continue to remain the hubs, it's important to establish academies that can spot and harness players from other regions in the country. Like 1983, this title isn't a culmination of a journey. It should be the beginning of a new chapter.



NEETHA N

THE FIRE at Delhi's Mundka, with a death toll of 27 persons so far — a majority of whom are women workers in informal manufacturing units — underscores yet again the invisibilities and insecurities of informal workers in the city. The fact that the antecedents of those who died are still unknown points to the invisibility and lack of identity of informal sector workers.

Reports on buildings catching fire leading to fatalities, followed by discussions on illegal constructions and unplanned infrastructural development in urban centres, have become a somewhat repetitive subject. With every such mishap, reports on how these buildings do not have required fire clearance and no-objection certificates from concerned authorities surface. Yet, such incidents keep on repeating; the harrowing stories of those who lost their dear ones are matters of public attention only for a few days, till the headlines shift.

Incidents of this sort are also opportunities for political leaders to display their concern for those who lost their dear ones with compensation and promises coming one after the other. Enquiry commissions and assurances of tightening procedures are all part of a larger script, with no substantial change at the ground level.

By now, it is understood that the root cause of the Mundka mishap is a serious lapse in following the norms in construction as the whole building had only one staircase. While this accident shares similarities with earlier incidents, the site and the victims this time deserve special mention. Of the 27 who lost their lives to this massive fire, 21 were women workers, employed in a company that manufactured and assembled CCTVs and WiFi routers. As per reports, the manufacturing unit at Mundka employed about 100 people, half of them women. Many of them are young women and the sole or primary earners in their households. The predicament of women workers here has similarities to those in the garment units of Bangladesh — including disturbing parallels with the victims of the Rana Plaza collapse.

There are thousands of unregistered/informal industrial units in cities like Delhi without any data on the number of workers employed

Capital fire

Without accountability for employers, improving working conditions, tragedies like Mundka fire will recur

Exposure to such employment provides limited opportunities for personal or economic advancement, with monotonous repetitive work filling the day. The large turnover and women's withdrawal from the labour market are signs of extremely poor working conditions that many women cannot sustain for long. Absence of leave, including maternity leave and long working hours, are important concerns for women workers who also have to shoulder the housework and care responsibilities of their families, forcing them to eventually leave such workplaces.

and the conditions of their employment. These workplaces are known to violate all norms, including basic labour laws. Informality and precarity define such workplaces where the quality of jobs is not a concern for those who are looking for employment. Women's work participation rates have declined sharply over time, with Delhi having one of the lowest (14.5 per cent for age 15 and above as compared to 28.7 per cent all-India in 2019-20). The pandemic has added to women's difficulties in finding jobs and such workplaces reveal the conditions under which women workers get employed. The profile of workers shows that many are young in their 20s or 30s — the age categories that suffice our discourse on women's development and empowerment. They are forced to join the labour market in low-paid and highly-informal jobs because of their migrant status and poor economic conditions. There is often a clear separation of tasks for men and women. Women workers are mostly into packing or are helpers — categories that are the lowest skilled as per the job classifications in such units.

Owing to the perception that workers employed in packing or as helpers undertake jobs that do not require much skill, wages are kept very low while the labour pool remains massive. With the pandemic and the resultant decline in work opportunities and household income, women are compelled to join employment to compensate for the loss of employment or declined income of male household members. Many of the workers who died joined the factory after the pandemic, pointing to the desperation that many poor households are facing. Working conditions, in general, are not often defined in such units with low and varying wages, long working hours, absence of any leave, including maternity leave and a lack of other basic facilities. In a city where living expenses have soared, with a monthly wage of Rs 6,500-7,500, a dignified life is beyond imagination. It is important to note that many women workers are often the sole earners or primary earners of their households. Working in contested spaces in

dusty, shady and stingy rooms, without any safety precautions, gloves or masks is a common scene in these sweatshops. Basic workplace requirements such as the provision of drinking water and toilet facilities are often denied to workers.

Exposure to such employment provides limited opportunities for personal or economic advancement, with monotonous repetitive work filling the day. The large turnover and women's withdrawal from the labour market are signs of extremely poor working conditions that many women cannot sustain for long. Absence of leave, including maternity leave and long working hours, are important concerns for women workers who also have to shoulder the housework and care responsibilities of their families, forcing them to eventually leave such workplaces.

Poorly ventilated workplaces, operating from dilapidated buildings are aplenty in the city and even by basic norms of occupational safety requirements, these workplaces are not to be "operational". Such workplaces are often a source of additional income for the enforcement machinery, with employers and the administration least bothered about the lives of workers. There are anxieties about how the new labour codes will add to the vulnerability of informal workers. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 (OSHWCC) would replace existing regulations soon and this would worsen the conditions of informal workers as many of these small units would be left to themselves to follow prescribed safety conditions and can go unaccountable.

These sweatshops, which are part of our understanding of economic development are traps for women workers. The fact that it offers some respite from poverty and also from cultural restrictions on women also needs to be understood. But without any accountability of employers and a lack of political will to improve working conditions, we might end up allowing many more such horrific accidents.

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BRIDGE To THE BUDDHA

PM Modi's Lumbini visit attempts to make up for Delhi's past indifference to Nepal



YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

FOR LONG, Lumbini and its people felt uncomfortable, even angry, over the projection of the Buddha as Indian. There was also the feeling that it was being treated unfairly by Indian tour handlers. Package deals for tourists and pilgrims from across the world would only make a fleeting visit to the Buddha's birth place, before being herded back to Buddhist shrines in India, denying Nepal its due economic gain.

Nearly eight years ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tried to address this issue when he told Nepal's Constituent Assembly that the Buddha was born in Nepal. On Buddha Poomima on Monday, Modi made a trip to Lumbini, becoming the first Indian PM to do so. He offered prayers at the Mayadevi temple, believed to be the Buddha's birthplace, in the company of highly-respected Buddhist masters, and then laid the foundation for the International Buddhist Conference and Meditation Centre.

The trip, a month after Nepali Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba visited India, is being projected as a "cultural visit" but there are many who call it India's late awakening from a deep diplomatic slumber. Delhi has been indifferent to the deep inroads China has been making in Nepal. Modi landed at a newly-built helipad close to the Mayadevi temple, avoiding the Gautam Buddha International Airport, built with a soft loan from China and co-incidentally inaugurated by his host earlier in the morning on the auspicious day.

China first offered to spend \$3 billion to

build up Lumbini as the world peace city under the aegis of its NGO — Asia Pacific Exchange and Foundation — co-opting Maoist leader Prachanda as its vice chairman. China has also built a monastery in the core area of the Lumbini Development Project. China's offer to develop it as the World Peace Centre and construct a railway line connecting Tibet and Kathmandu is as yet in abeyance, but not completely given up.

The increased presence and influence of the US and the European Union, along with India, has become more pronounced in Nepal's domestic politics — especially following the political changes of 2005-06. China retaliated with a matching presence and economic investments. This has had an impact on internal politics and policy-making in Nepal. But unlike its competitors, China's outlook had depth and took into account multiple dimensions. Lumbini, thanks largely to China, has now become sort of a microcosm of the competing international forces in the country.

India first reacted to the Chinese presence in Lumbini on November 8, 2011, in the wake of enthusiastic publicity by the Chinese about the World City initiative. At a dinner table, Dr Karan Singh's discomfort was palpable. The senior Congress leader was then in Nepal. "How far is Lumbini from the Indian border?" he asked. "Not even 10 km away," former King Gyanendra Shah had responded. Singh, apparently under instructions from the government in Delhi, told the media the next day that India was keen to

undertake the project with the promise of bestowing upon Lumbini the status it deserved.

How much Modi's visit to Lumbini will make up for Delhi's indifference is yet to be gauged. The two sides agreed to develop a Buddhist circuit, linking shrines located in the two countries with Lumbini occupying a prime position. India also agreed to set up the Dr B R Ambedkar Chair in Lumbini University, with around 1,000 students, including from China, enrolled.

Modi, by befriending Deuba, has made an effective attempt to repair the damage in bilateral ties that took place between 2016 and 2021 when he and his then Nepali counterpart K P Oli fell out. India not only refused to welcome Nepal's constitution promulgated in September 2015, but also launched an economic blockade for 134 days. Deuba, who is also the chairman of the Nepali Congress, recently accepted Modi's invitation for his party and the BJP to establish fraternal relations — something the Chinese Communist Party tried with the unified Communist party of Nepal. Modi's visit to Lumbini and the laying of the monastery's foundation may give India a foothold and cultural space. But that provides zero guarantee that it will be able to outdo its competitors, including the West and China, who are already deeply entrenched in Nepal.

The writer is a senior journalist based in Kathmandu

MAY 17, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

PRELIMINARY TALKS

A 30-MINUTE PRELIMINARY exchange of views between the leader of the Indian delegation, Eric Gonsalves, and the leader of the Chinese delegation, Fu Hao, and the conciliatory speeches they made at the dinner Gonsalves hosted in honour of the visitors set the tone for the tone for the Sino-Indian talks opening the next day. Both Gonsalves and Fu, in their carefully prepared speeches warmly expressed their governments' desire to improve relations. And significantly, both of them underscored the understanding the two governments have already arrived at that the border dispute is the central issue the resolution of which is important for the normalisation of relations between India and China. The problems that

India and China faced in today's world can be better faced if they devised a basis for co-operation and fully normal relations, Gonsalves said.

MINISTRY GUIDELINES

THE UNION HOME Ministry has asked ministers of state governments not to make statements on communal disturbances in their areas. The Home Ministry has recently sent "exhaustive guidelines" on prevention and control of communal disturbances and for promotion of communal harmony to the states and union territory administration." It has suggested that ministers should not comment on any agitation likely to lead to communal dissatisfaction. Once distur-

bances start, ministers should not express their views on the cause of the disturbances and they way they were being dealt with because this was bound to affect steps taken by the local administration.

MISSING CANDIDATES

WEST BENGAL CHIEF minister Jyoti Basu has asked police to intensify the search for the two election candidates and an agent who have been missing since May 14. Kashi Kanto Moitra, a Janata candidate, Gopal Chandra Sarkar, a Congress (I) nominee and Moitra's election agent, Shibui Choudhury, did not return home after election campaigns. Police have meanwhile found the car in which Sarkar was reportedly abducted.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Bound by geography

Developments in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan underline need for India to reframe regional ties, work with its neighbourhood



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS — in Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan — underline the geographic imperative that binds India to its neighbours in the Subcontinent. Together, they should remind the region's leaders that working with the logic of geography has become an unavoidable necessity amidst the deepening regional and global crises accentuated by Russia's war in Ukraine.

As higher oil and food prices trigger inflation and popular unrest across the region, more intensive regional cooperation is one of the tools for managing the new dangers. The last few weeks have seen some positive trends in that direction as well as enduring negative policies that defy the logic of geography.

Last week, the Indian High Commission in Colombo was quick to scotch wild speculation that the former strongman prime minister of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaksa was fleeing to India. We don't know if Mahinda Rajapaksa, a target of the people's outrage for the terrible mismanagement of the economy, was actually planning to take a short flight out of Lanka. If he did, India would be the natural first destination given the geographic proximity.

Now put on the exit control list in Colombo, Mahinda might not be travelling any time soon to India and pay his regular obeisance to his favourite deity, Lord Venkateswara in the Tirumala hills. But India has had a long tradition of hosting political exiles from the region. Whether it was the Dalai Lama from Tibet or Prachanda from Nepal, Delhi has welcomed leaders from the neighbourhood taking shelter in India.

There is a dangerous flip side to this positive tradition in the Subcontinent. India has paid a high price for the decision in the early 1980s to train and arm Sri Lankan Tamil rebels. That, hopefully, is an exception rather than the rule in India's emerging neighbourhood policy.

While India's muscular meddling in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka did not succeed in realising the Tamil demands, it unfortunately contributed to the deep distrust between Delhi and the Sinhala nationalists. As a consequence, the geographic imperative became a casualty in Colombo.

But the current crisis in Sri Lanka raised hopes for transcending the internal ethnic divide in the island nation and rebuilding political confidence between Colombo and Delhi. To be sure, positive sentiments driven by crises do not always last. But Delhi's unstinting support — both material and financial — for Colombo during this unprecedented economic and political crisis has generated much goodwill in Sri Lanka. This offers a major opportunity to reframe Delhi's ties with Colombo.

If India's relations with Sri Lanka underline the importance of continuous tending of political geography, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit this week to Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha in Nepal, highlights the immense possibilities of cultural geography in reshaping the Subcontinent's regional relations.

The idea of a "Buddhist circuit" connecting the various pilgrimage sites across the India-Nepal border has been around for a long time. Given the massive size of the global Buddhist



C R Sasikumar

population — estimated to be more than 500 million — and the wider international interest in the historic sites, it is surprising how long it has taken Delhi and Kathmandu to come together in developing the Buddhist circuit.

That China has built a new airport near Lumbini and Modi is avoiding it points to the turbulent triangular dynamic between Delhi, Kathmandu, and Beijing. Even more consequential has been the deep discomfort of a large section of Nepal's political class — especially the communists that have dominated Kathmandu in the last two decades — with the India relationship.

The return of the Nepal Congress to the helm and its readiness to deepen ties with India has also opened the door for a recalibration of Delhi's ties with Kathmandu. Revitalising the shared cultural geography inevitably involves better management of economic geography. The last few years have seen the Modi government step up on infrastructure development on the Indian side and accelerate transborder transport and energy connectivity in the eastern subcontinent.

Religion and culture are deeply interconnected in South Asia. Developing all religious pilgrimage sites across the region, and improving the transborder access to them could not only improve tourist revenues of all the South Asian nations, but could also have a calming effect on the troubled political relations between nations.

Despite their frozen bilateral political relationship, Delhi and Islamabad had agreed to open the Kartarpur corridor at the end of 2019 across their militarised Punjab border. The corridor makes it easier for Sikh pilgrims to visit the shrine in Kartarpur in Pakistan, where Guru Nanak founded the Sikh faith. There is much more to be done on reconnecting the Subcontinent's sacred geographies — including the Ramayana trail and Sufi shrines.

While parts of the region are aligning their policies with the geographic imperative, Pakistan would seem to be an exception. Some would say, Islamabad's policies are deliberately anti-geographic. Consider, for example, the recent controversy in Pakistan over the routine appointment of a "trade officer" in its high commission in Delhi.

Facing a barrage of media criticism, the new government led by Shehbaz Sharif had to clarify that it was not planning to improve trade ties with India. Given the depth of its macro economic crisis and massive inflation, one

Religion and culture are deeply interconnected in South Asia. Developing all religious pilgrimage sites across the region, and improving the transborder access to them could not only improve tourist revenues of all the South Asian nations, but could also have a calming effect on the troubled political relations between nations.

might have thought Pakistan would want to expand trade ties with India in its own economic interest. But Pakistan's politics are hard-wired against the logic of geography.

An attempt at limited trade liberalisation with India after the two countries signed a ceasefire agreement in February last year was overruled at the last moment by Prime Minister Imran Khan. The Muslim League's Nawaz Sharif and the Pakistan People's Party's Asif Ali Zardari — who back the present government in Islamabad — have, in the past, supported normal trade relations with India, but could not get the army's consent.

While General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the current Chief of Army Staff, had called for a reset of relations with India, Imran Khan pulled the plug on trade liberalisation. His argument was that Pakistan can't trade with India unless Delhi reversed its 2019 constitutional changes in Kashmir.

Now Imran is on the streets campaigning against the "imported government" (from the US which, according to the former PM, conspired to oust him from power). He could chew the government up if it opens up to trade with India. The army, long viewed as a decisive arbiter in Pakistan's political and policy disputes, seems divided on how best to manage the current crisis.

This leaves Shehbaz little room for creative policy making that can ease some of Pakistan's current economic problems. Meanwhile, the young Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who has taken charge of Pakistan's Foreign Office, is tied down by his bureaucracy's staple of Kashmir clichés.

Delhi had little reason to believe that Pakistan's new government can alter its self-defeating policy towards India. But it must continue to bet that the geographic imperative will eventually prevail over Islamabad's policies. Pessimists in Delhi will say the word "eventually" means nothing for policy-making today. But optimists would say India must continue to find ways to work with Pakistan.

Realists might want to argue that current trends in the Subcontinent point to India's growing agency in shaping its neighbourhood and that Pakistan will not forever remain an exception. For Delhi, the policy question is whether India can do something to hasten the inevitable change in Pakistan.

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On sedition, a beginning

Centre has done well to display leadership in a matter that has divided the country in recent years



RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD

IT IS rare that the prime minister himself conveys, in a pending proceeding before the apex court, his clear and unequivocal views about respecting human rights, protecting civil liberties and further respecting the freedoms granted to the people of India. It was refreshing to find the categorical assertion by the PM in an affidavit: "One of India's strengths is the diverse thought streams that beautifully flourished in our country." In the 75th year of our Independence, as our nation is marking "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav", PM Modi has appealed to Indians to work harder to shed our colonial baggage, which includes colonial laws and practices.

These are not empty words only for an affidavit. Under his leadership, nearly 1,500 old colonial-era laws have been scrapped. About 25,000 compliance rules which were creating hurdles, have been removed and many offences that were a hindrance to development have been decriminalised. There was also in the affidavit a profound statement of great intent: "Laws and compliances which reeked of a colonial mindset have no place in today's India."

With this background, it was conveyed, that the Government of India has decided to re-examine and reconsider the provisions of Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code which deals with sedition. The history of the sedition law in India is in many ways unique. During the British Raj, it was part of the penal law from the very beginning. The British government in India not only framed the law, defining various offences, but also made sedition a very serious offence, punishable with imprisonment for life and a fine. The definition of sedition was a little vague, whereby any attempt to bring hatred or contempt or attempt to excite disaffection towards the government constituted sedition. Disaffection includes disloyalty and feeling of enmity. Sedition was designed to perpetuate the hold of the British on the people of India, and any attempt at disloyalty was enough for the offence.

Great leaders of the freedom movement became the targets of the law. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was the first person to be convicted of sedition in colonial India because the British government thought that his writings in his celebrated Marathi newspaper, *Kesari*, were causing disaffection against the British Raj. He was imprisoned for 18 months. Even Gandhiji, in 1922, was sentenced to six years for his article in *Young India* on the charge of "attempting to excite disaffection towards his majesty's Government established by law in British India". Many others were also prosecuted and convicted.

Significantly, during the making of the

Constitution, December 1, 1948, K M Munshi moved an amendment in the Constituent Assembly proposing sedition be dropped "as constituting a restriction on right to freedom of speech and expression particularly in the context of the painful experience to punish Indians by the British authorities for even innocuous expressions and criticism of colonial government." Article 19(1)(a)(g) provides for various freedoms including freedom of speech and expression while clause 19(2) to (6) enumerates provisions for constituting reasonable restrictions on the exercise of such rights.

It must be noted that in none of the said clauses is the offence of sedition mentioned as grounds for "reasonable restriction". There are expressions like "interest of sovereignty and integrity of India", and security of state public order but not sedition. Sedition simply means "deshdroh". Yet, it has continued in the IPC. There have been judgments from various high courts in this regard but a constitution bench of the Supreme Court delivered a judgment in 1962 (*Kedarnath Singh vs The State of Bihar*) where it held that "unless accompanied by incitement or call for violence criticism of government cannot be labelled Sedition".

There has been genuine criticism about why this colonial-era provision should be a part of our statute. The Congress party, which claims to be the inheritor of the freedom movement, never tried to scrap this law though it ruled India for nearly 60 years. Certain freedoms are fundamental under our constitutional scheme.

There have been cases of rampant abuse and the latest is a hilarious instance from a particular state where singing the Hanuman Chalisa amounted to sedition. Surely, there is a need for a review of the law. India, in the 75th year of its independence, is strong and stable enough to decide in a free, fair and objective manner whether the offence of sedition is needed or not, and if so under what form with strong guidelines to prevent its misuse, and clearly enunciate the circumstances in which it can be invoked. The PM has trusted the process by which so many old laws have been repealed, offences decriminalised and thousands of compliance burdens removed. All this was done in a peaceful manner with due consultation. This is the institutional strength of India. I am quite sure the same process will entail a relook at the whole issue of sedition to the satisfaction of all concerned where a healthy balance is maintained between respect for human rights and civil liberties and the compelling need to fight terrorism, and separatism and whose clear agenda is to break India.

I must conclude with a word of gratitude for the PM for demonstrating extraordinary leadership in a matter that has divided the country for the last few years. Let's hope the inner strength of the country will help us arrive at a healthy conclusion. Equally, the Supreme Court has shown judicial statesmanship by agreeing with the government's request to give time for the review and by passing appropriate interim protections in the meantime.

The writer is a BJP MP and former Union Law Minister

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LOSING THE WAR

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Blame it on Putin' (IE, May 16). With no swift end to the Russia-Ukraine War as Putin, the aggressor, expected, alliances are being drawn and redrawn. Russia's aggressive posturing is making the hitherto neutral nations like Sweden and Finland worried for their safety. The two countries are thinking of joining NATO, which may not strengthen the organisation, but will, definitely, help in protecting it, and, in consequence, the US, as a force to be reckoned with. Russia may be winning the battles in the ongoing crisis, but it is losing the war.

Vijai Pant, Hempur

DATA QUALITY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'What number hide' (IE, May 14). The availability of reliable and transparent data has been a serious issue in India for a long time. Well before the Covid data controversy, there were questions raised over GDP calculation accuracy, expenditure survey data quality and others. These disputes over the accuracy of numbers arise largely on account of a paucity of quality and reliable information, which results in widely differing estimates and measurements. Unless a credible and consistent quality data infrastructure is built, these unseemly debates will keep recurring, and worse still, lead to

wrong inferences and policies.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

KNEE-JERK RESPONSE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Caught with chaff' (IE, May 16). Strangely unaware of ground reality, Minister of Commerce Piyush Goyal came up with sweeping statements painting a rosy picture of wheat output in the current season, despite indications to the contrary. Now, taking food security as the reason, a blanket ban on wheat exports has been hurriedly imposed, adversely affecting not only the exporters and grain traders but also the farmers. A better solution could have been to gradually cap the exports so that the global supply chain does not get abruptly disrupted. Such knee-jerk reactions speak of a government not willing to take the arduous route of assuredly managing farm production and hurting its own image as a global supplier of grains.

Kamna Chhabra, Gurgaon

A GREAT WIN

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'India Thomas Cup champs: Who would have thought?' The Team (IE, May 16). Our badminton team's winning of the Thomas Cup is in a class by itself. It was the result of laudable teamwork and coordination.

Y G Chouksey, Pune



SUBIMAL BHATTACHARJEE

ON APRIL 28, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) issued "directions" under Section 70-B(6) of the Information Technology Act 2000 (IT Act) relating to information security practices, procedure, prevention, response and reporting of cyber incidents. These directions have brought about a wide-ranging expansion in the scope of obligations of the above requirements compared to the Information Technology (The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team and Manner of performing functions and duties) Rules, 2013 (Rules). Among the activities in which compliance is sought by service providers, intermediaries, data centres and body corporates are the synchronisation of computer clocks to the network time protocol set at the National Physical Laboratory and National Informatics Centre (NIC), mandatory reporting of all cyber incidents within six hours of noticing or being brought to their notice in the prescribed format, designating point of contact and notifying CERT-In and undertaking to perform such actions for cyber security mitigation when notified by CERT-IN, maintaining all logs of all ICT systems up to 180 days within Indian jurisdiction and for data centres, virtual private network service providers, cloud service providers and virtual private server providers to maintain all records of their users and usage for a minimum of five years.

While the overall thrust towards a robust

cyber incident reporting and security regime is prudent, some of the provisions in the absence of clarification from CERT-In have raised concerns amongst industry observers and cyber security experts. For some time now, CERT-IN has been struggling to get information and incident reporting from service providers, intermediaries as well as body corporates as per the rules and its mandate under section 70B(4) of the IT Act. This was impacting its responsibility as a collector, analyser and disseminator of information on cyber incidents as well as coordinating incident responses and emergency measures. So, it took recourse to the directions, which strangely do not differentiate between the scales and nature of the incident. Some cyber incidents are far more common and occur regularly. An organisation might receive hundreds of phishing emails and the effort to notify each would drastically increase their compliance cost. It would also be interesting to know what CERT-In's strategy will be for dealing with commonplace cyber incidents and its own capacity enhancement in terms of handling the compliance sought.

A window of 60 days has been provided before implementation of these compliances begins. Given the scale of the revamp, this might be too short a window. The government must look at the concerns that arise from such directions and work out a realistic time scale. The ugly episode of the Twitter incident

around compliance with the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, last year is a stark reminder of the pitfalls of rushing in compliances without factoring in concerns. In this case, there will be multiple companies even from the MSME sector that will take time to set up systems for compliances.

All covered entities also have to mandatorily enable logs and maintain them for 180 days within the Indian jurisdiction. At present, most entities maintain logs for around 30 days, and in order to maintain logs for 180 days, the additional data storage device cost would be huge. Similarly, data centres, virtual private server providers, cloud service providers and virtual private network service providers will need to retain additional information for five years or more after the cancellation or withdrawal of registration. The virtual asset industry too will have to maintain all KYC records and details of all financial transactions for five years. The compliance cost in each case is going to rise substantially.

Many of the entities will have to shift their servers geographically as well as add excess storage capacity. Most importantly, the recruitment of additional manpower for compliance may take far longer. A realistic timeline would be six months, which would allow the entities to effectively migrate to the new regime. The penalty for non-compliance is stiff (including

up to one year of imprisonment and monetary fines). But it is also unfair to create unrealistic deadlines for industry.

This is also going to significantly affect organisations that have maintained their servers offshore, although the move is in line with the government's stated objective of localising data storage. But what cannot be denied are privacy concerns. With VPNs and virtual asset wallets being asked to store and share KYC and transaction data, these concerns become evident. VPNs have been successful for corporates as well as individuals because they address privacy concerns. There have been very few instances where these tunnels have been used for criminal activities and support from the providers was not obtained by law enforcement authorities. In the absence of legislative backing for data protection, which has been on the anvil for more than two years, the question is: How will the user have any say on which information can be held back or how his sensitive personal information is being protected?

While CERT-In has been proactive in recognising the changing frontiers of technology and trying to deal with hitherto unknown cyber threats, it is wanting in terms of a graded approach to ensuring compliance.

The writer is a defence and cybersecurity analyst

BRIEFLY

MAHARASHTRA
Actor booked again for FB post on Pawar

Pune: Yet another FIR has been registered against actress Ketaki Chitale for allegedly misusing the name of Saint Tukaram in the "objectionable" post on NCP's Sharad Pawar on her Facebook page. Nitin More (57), an office-bearer of the Sant Tukaram Dehu Sansthan, lodged FIR on Saturday. The post mentions words "Tuka Mhane (says Tukaram)". More said "Tuka Mhane" was the "naam mudra" (signature) of Saint Tukaram and using it in a defamatory post hurt sentiments of Warkaris. **ENS**

NEW DELHI
SJVN to develop Rs 4,900 crore project in Nepal

New Delhi: State-owned Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN) Ltd will develop another hydro power project Arun-4 worth Rs 4,900 crore in Nepal. A MoU for the 490-MW project was signed in Lumbini, Nepal, in the presence of PM Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba, the company said in a statement on Monday. SJVN Chairman and Managing Director Nand Lal Sharma said it will be company's third mega project in Nepal. The construction of 900 MW Arun-3 project is in progress and the 669-MW Lower Arun project is at the survey and investigation stage, he said. **PTI**

KARNATAKA
Man flees with car on pretext of test drive, held

Bengaluru: Debt-ridden 36-year-old businessman, who stole a car to maintain his "social status", has been arrested after 100 days of police hunt. MG Venkatesh Naik of Amruth Nagar in Bengaluru approached Ravindra Elluri (47) after the latter placed an advertisement on OLX in January to sell his Maruti Brezza. Venkatesh said he would take a test drive before buying the car and never returned. Elluri had filed a cheating case against him. **ENS**

RAJASTHAN
Ramgarh sanctuary now a tiger reserve

New Delhi: The Ramgarh Vishdhari Sanctuary in Rajasthan was notified as India's 52nd tiger reserve on Monday, Environment Minister Bhopender Yadav said. This is Rajasthan's fourth tiger reserve after Ranthambore, Sariska and Mukundra. "It will conserve biodiversity and bring in ecotourism and development to the area," Yadav tweeted. **PTI**



CALL OF FAITH

Devotees wait for their turn to offer prayers at a monastery in Leh on the occasion of Buddha Purnima on Monday. **UNI**

Central officials raise red flag as Bengal allots medical seats to Ukraine returnees

ANONNA DUTT & SANTANU CHOWDHURY
NEW DELHI, KOLKATA, MAY 16

IN WHAT could become another Centre-State flashpoint, the West Bengal government has allotted seats to second- and third-year medical students from Ukraine even as the country's apex medical education regulator maintained that it is not allowed.

Students who complete their education in such a manner cannot apply for the screening test that every foreign medical graduate has to take before practising in India, officials from the National Medical Commission (NMC) and the Health Ministry told *The Indian Express*.

On April 28, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had announced that her government would accommodate 412 students who were forced to return to the state from Ukraine following the Russian invasion. She also lashed out at the Centre for "not taking any responsibility" for these students.

Of the 412 returnees, 172 students, who were in second and third year of their medical education in Ukraine, have been allowed to attend practical classes at different government medical colleges in the state.

This announcement, Union

ON BOARD IN BENGAL		
YEAR	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	WHAT HAS HAPPENED
Sixth	23	Internship at government medical colleges
Fourth and Fifth	135	Observing seats allotted so that the students can continue their classes online from respective colleges in Ukraine while receiving practical training in India
Second and Third	172	Have been allowed to attend practical classes in government medical colleges
First	78	Those who have qualified NEET were allowed to undergo counselling for the management quota seats in private medical colleges. Colleges have been requested to offer concession on fees

government officials said, is not in line with the current guidelines of NMC, which state that foreign medical graduates should have completed their theory and practical medical education and a 12-month internship at the same college.

NMC is India's apex regulatory authority for medical education.

"Any decision about medical students from Ukraine has to come from NMC. The current guidelines are very clear. These students (from Bengal who choose to attend practical classes in government colleges) will not be eligible for FMGE (Foreign Medical Graduates Exam)," an

NMC official said.

A senior Health Ministry official agreed: "We have asked states not to make any irresponsible comments about the situation with Ukraine students. The (Union) government is looking at ways to get the students admitted to equivalent courses in other European countries."

The NMC official said Bengal had sought no permission for this.

Asked whether the announcement on accommodating medical students from Ukraine went against the NMC guidelines, West Bengal's director of medical education (DME), Debasis Bhattacharyya, argued, "We first

increased the number of seats in our medical colleges and then decided to accommodate the students. So there should not be a problem (in them attending practical classes) once we have increased the (number of) seats."

On May 10, Bhattacharyya had promised to get back on the specifics of violation of NMC guidelines. He had not responded until late Monday evening.

In addition to the 172 students in Bengal, another 135 students in fourth and fifth year have been allotted "observing seats" in government colleges to complete practical training.

Dr Rohan Krishnan, president

of the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), said: "There is nothing called observing seats in India. Sometimes MBBS doctors work under various specialists for training in that particular area, which is referred to as observership. But that certainly cannot happen for someone who hasn't even completed MBBS."

Nearly 18,000 medical students were forced to leave their education midway and flee after Russia invaded Ukraine. NMC officials had earlier told *The Indian Express* that there was no way of incorporating such a large number of people in India, which has around 90,000 MBBS seats available for 2021, with around 16 lakh applicants.

"Apart from the students from Ukraine, there are nearly 65,000 others who are enrolled in countries such as China, the Philippines, and Georgia who haven't been able to receive practical education due to travel restrictions. We have to think about those students, too," the Health Ministry official said.

Meanwhile, at the behest of a student from China, the Supreme Court has directed NMC to formulate a policy over the next two months to grant temporary registration to those who have completed medical education in other countries but haven't been able to do practical training.

RANCHI AIRPORT ROW

DGCA notice to IndiGo for 'inappropriate handling'

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

SAYING THAT the findings of its three-member committee "prima facie indicate inappropriate handling of passengers" and "non-conformances with the applicable regulations", the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued a showcause notice to IndiGo for denying boarding to a specially-abled child at the Ranchi airport on May 7.

The proceedings of the committee were partly held in the open and partly in camera as per the request of the affected family. The findings of the committee prima facie indicate inappropriate handling of passengers by the IndiGo staff thereby resulting in certain non-conformances with the applicable regulations," the DGCA said on Monday.

"In view of this, it has been decided to issue a showcause notice to the concerned airline through its authorised representative to explain as to why suitable enforcement action should not be taken against them for the non-conformances," it said. The DGCA has given IndiGo time till May 26 to respond to the showcause notice. "After hearing their submissions, appropriate action as per law would be taken," it said.

"We have received the communication from DGCA on the matter and will respond in due course," IndiGo said on Monday.

On May 7, an IndiGo staffer denied boarding to a specially-abled child for a Ranchi-Hyderabad flight. Two days after the incident, the airline's CEO, Ronjoy Dutta, had said the company was of the view "that we made the best possible decision under difficult circumstances". "Throughout the check-in and boarding process our intent of course was to carry the

family. However, at the boarding area the teenager was visibly in panic," he had said.

The national aviation safety regulator had set up a three-member team, comprising members from the DGCA's departments of air safety, aircraft engineering and legal, to probe the incident. The committee, which looked at the airport video footage, and spoke to passengers and airport staff as part of its probe, has submitted its report to the DGCA.

The Indian Express reported last week that the team would look into the operational and legal aspects, including the applicability of the "regulations for carriage of persons with disabilities and reduced mobility".

The regulation being referred to is part of the Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) (Section 3, Series 'M', Part I), which lays "regulations for carriage of persons with disabilities and reduced mobility by air to protect them against discrimination and to ensure that they receive all assistance during their travel".

"No airline shall refuse to carry persons with disability or reduced mobility and their assistive aids/devices, escorts and guide dogs including their presence in the cabin, provided such persons or their representatives, at the time of booking, inform the airline of their requirement(s)," it states.

However, it also states that "before refusing carriage to any person on the basis of disability, the airline shall specify in writing the basis of such refusal indicating its opinion that transportation of such persons would or might be inimical to the safety of flight". This CAR defines a person with disability as "any individual who has a physical or mental impairment" on a permanent or temporary basis that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Monsoon reaches Andamans

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, MAY 16

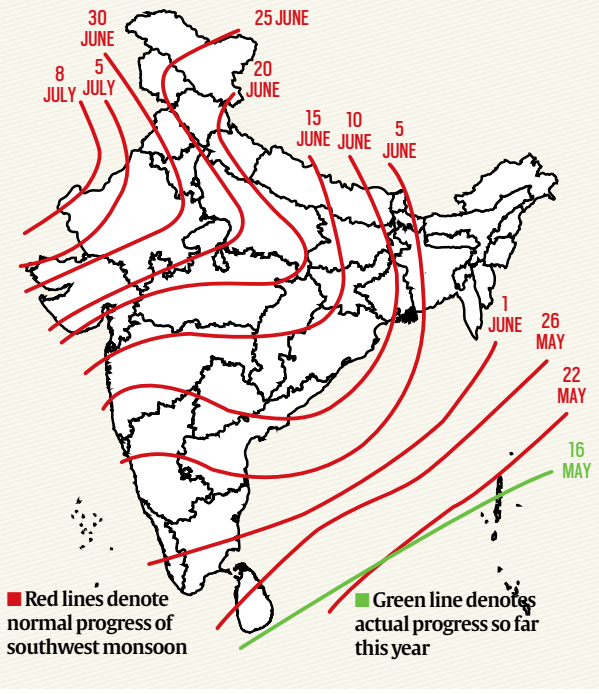
THE IMD on Monday announced the onset of monsoon over the Andaman Sea, six days ahead of its normal schedule.

This year, the early monsoon has been attributed to Cyclone Asani, which brought in moisture over the region in plenty. Recently, the cross-equatorial flow too had picked up, aiding the monsoon currents to progress over the Andaman Sea.

The IMD has said the Southwest monsoon on Monday advanced into the south Bay of Bengal, most part of Andaman Nicobar Islands and Andaman Sea. "Conditions are favourable for further advance of southwest monsoon into some more parts of south Bay of Bengal, entire Andaman Sea & Andaman Islands and some parts of east-central Bay of Bengal during next 2-3 days," the IMD said in a statement.

WITH PTI INPUTS

COURSE OF THE RAIN CLOUDS



Rain: Five killed in Arunachal landslide, two drown in Assam

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, MAY 16

INCESSANT RAINS since Friday have ravaged parts of Assam, triggering floods and landslides in 20 out of the state's 35 districts. According to a bulletin issued by Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) on Monday, two persons drowned in Cachar district. Five persons in neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh were killed in a landslide.

In Assam, 1,97,248 people across 652 villages in 20 districts (Bajali, Baksa, Biswanath, Cachar, Charaideo, Darrang, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Dima Hasao, Hojai, Kamrup, Karbi Anglong West, Kokrajhar, Lakhimpur, Majuli, Nagaon, Nalbari, Sonitpur, Tamulpur, Udalguri) have been affected by floods and landslides.

Dima Hasao, in particular, has been ravaged by flash floods and



A woman at Garukhunda village, Assam, Monday. **PTI**

landslides at several places. On Monday, connectivity to district headquarters Haflong was snapped as a major road caved in along the Guwahati-Haflong link. "It has been raining relentlessly since May 12. A cave-in was reported in the main highway that links Guwahati Haflong, as well as the other linking Haflong to Silchar," said a district administration official. On Monday, Jogen Mohan, state Revenue and Disaster Management Minister, visited Dima Hasao to take stock

of the situation. Earlier, a family of three was buried alive after an RCC building collapsed in a landslide in Haflong.

On Monday, several coaches of the Guwahati-Silchar Express, which had been stationed at the New Haflong station, derailed, owing to water-logging and landslides, said an official from the Northeast Frontier Railways. The train was stuck at the New Haflong station, and passengers were evacuated earlier on Sunday. Apart from that, huge damages to railway tracks and bridges along the Lumding-Badarpur hill section of the Lumding division have been damaged.

A district administration official said repair work had begun, but the continuous rains, frequent power cuts and lack of network connectivity stalled progress.

Meanwhile, five persons died in landslides in neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh on Sunday.

Row over Bajrang Dal using airguns at workshop

Bengaluru: A row has erupted after photos of youths with airguns and tridents from a workshop organised recently by Bajrang Dal surfaced on social media.

According to information, 116 activists from across Karnataka participated in the free workshop — Shaurya Prashikshana Varga — organised between May 5 and 11 at a school in Ponnampet town of communally-sensitive Kodagu district. Kodagu SP MA Aiyappa said, "Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad organise the camp every year and no permission was sought this year. We got to know of the workshop only from social media. No complaint has been filed. According to the Arms Act, airguns don't require licence, but we are looking into the matter."

Kodagu Deputy Director of Public Instruction Vedhamurthy said, "No permission was sought. Usually workshops are held in schools and colleges, but not to teach shooting. An explanation has been sought from the authorities." Bajrang Dal's regional convenor Raghu Sakleshpur said there was no need for permission as only airguns were used. **ENS**

‘Death during demolition’: Kin say 50 of them tried to get man out of debris

AMIL BHATNAGAR
BULANDSHAHR, MAY 16

FORTY-YEAR-OLD KAMLESH sits under the shade of a tree in the scorching sun looking at three plastic tents on an uneven muddy ground in Bulandshahr's Awas Vikas 2 colony. Adjacent to a water tank, the plot had nearly eight houses belonging to different family members of Rohtas (45), Kamlesh's husband.

Every few minutes, Kamlesh breaks down, recalling how she lost her husband and her house during an anti-encroachment drive earlier this month.

As per the family, and their neighbours, Rohtas was not allowed to move out of the house as the bulldozer moved in on May 2. The daily wageer succumbed to his injuries 10 days later.



The contractor who carried out the demolition and his aides have been booked. **Express**

"When the wall collapsed, more than 50 people rushed to remove the debris from atop him. We took him to the nearest



government hospital, and it asked us to take care of him at home. He never got up and eventually succumbed to his in-

juries," a family member says, adding that Rohtas had been hurt on the leg and spine.

Officials deny this, saying Rohtas had been ailing and the family came up with the claim of his injuries later. The contractor who carried out the demolition and his aides have been booked, for culpable homicide not amounting to murder. No case has been brought against any official as of now.

"The contractor came and told us 'Samadhi banane aaya hoon (I am here to prepare your tomb)'. I told him my husband was sleeping inside the house and to give us a few minutes to wake him up. The driver didn't listen and ploughed into a wall, which collapsed onto Rohtas," says Kamlesh. The family says since the hospital didn't admit him, they don't have any med-

ical papers to show.

The extended family of Rohtas and his brothers say they have been living on the approximately 4,000 sq ft land, in eight separate half-pucca huts for decades, much before the nearby Awas Vikas 2 colony was developed.

"This is probably our sixth generation living here. We have seen the city come up. They are saying we don't belong here, when in fact we have been living here for years. If they have an issue, they should discuss it with us. Getting bulldozers is no solution," says one of the relatives, Sumit Kumar Lodhi.

Another relative, Deepak, says the women of the family went down on their knees before the contractor, Mohit Chaudhary, who was hired for the demolition. "He kept saying we will end up on pyres. They

even broke a nearby hand pump out of spite. In this heat, we are sleeping under a plastic sheet. We have been left with nothing."

Locals in the area back the family, saying the bulldozer broke a wall and Rohtas did not get enough time to escape.

The Nagar Palika, which owns the land where the family lived, says that far from causing any injury or death, the demolition exercise had been carried out amicably.

Officials said some portions of the houses had been brought down on April 14, and the action on May 2 was carried out with the family's consent. "In April, walls had been brought down and the debris was removed. On May 2, the family themselves said we should get a bulldozer and bring down the remaining structure," says Manoj Garg,

Chairman, Nagar Palika.

He also claims that in the 'Jan Sunwai' session held after the demolition, the family never talked about a person being injured and rather insisted that a route for movement be opened up. "The family never gave anything in writing about the demolition," Garg says.

District administration officials claim Rohtas had been ailing and claims of injuries were wrong. Muzaffarnagar District Magistrate Chandra Bhushan Singh said: "We have filed an FIR and an investigation is taking place. As per initial fact-finding, we were informed that no person was injured during the anti encroachment. Further details will be ascertained during the probe and action will be taken accordingly."

As the matter is under probe, there is status quo on the land.

Goa panchayat polls may be deferred: minister

Panaji: With the state government seeking legal opinion over the implementation of the triple test criteria mandated by the Supreme Court for OBC reservation in election wards, election to 186 village panchayats may be deferred, minister for Panchayat said.

Mauvin Godinho, state minister for Panchayat, said, "There is an SC ruling saying we have to follow the triple test. OBC seats have to be identified, (it) has to be done by the OBC Commission. Once they undergo the triple test, then only the (State) EC or the government can declare the election." **ENS**

9 ECONOMY

SENSEX: 52,973.84 ▲ 180.22 (0.34%) NIFTY: 15,842.30 ▲ 60.15 (0.38%) NIKKEI: 26,547.05 ▲ 119.40 HANG SENG: 19,950.21 ▲ 51.44 FTSE: 7,410.64 ▼ 7.51 DAX: 13,926.59 ▼ 101.34

Note: Rupee figure as of Friday since forex market was shut on Monday on account of Buddha Purnima; international market data till 1900 IST

SECTOR WATCH
INSURANCE

Disclosure norms eased for foreign reinsurance branches, Lloyd's

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, MAY 16EXPLAINED
Where do they invest

IN A surprise move, the insurance regulator has relaxed the disclosure requirements of foreign reinsurance branches (FRBs) and Lloyd's India as part of "rationalisation of compliance" standards.

The regulator said FRBs and Lloyd's India are now exempted from disclosing financial details and underwriting performance through NIL40 format. However, according to experts, the latest measures will lead to opaqueness in the functioning of reinsurance branches in India.

Irdai said FRBs and Lloyd's India need not publish the half-yearly and annual revenue account, profit & loss account, balance sheet and analytical ratios as mandated in the captioned circular in the newspapers. "However, they may continue to publish a true and accurate abstract of the various returns for the purpose of publicity on a voluntary basis pursuant to provisions of Section 25 of the Insurance Act, 1938," it said. FRBs and Lloyd's India provide reinsurance support to the direct insurers and the insurers do conduct their due diligence on the FRBs while entering reinsurance contracts with them, Irdai said. "The necessary information on financials is also made available through public disclosures on the respective website of the FRBs. Reinsurance business is B2B segment and the policyholders do not deal with the reinsurers," it said in a circular to the CEOs of insurance companies.

"Transparency is equally important. Discontinuing uploading NIL40 appears to be a retrograde step in this era of transparency. Whether the FRBs in India have provided any significant advantage to the market as compared to the services rendered by international reinsurers who do not have a branch in India is a matter that requires frank study and analysis," said former Irdai Whole-time Member KK Srinivasan.

Traditionally, the FRBs and Lloyd's India do not invest in equity instruments and they mainly invest in government securities and debt markets. Based on the investment exposures of the branches of foreign reinsurers and Lloyd's India, Irdai has granted exemption to entities, whose investment policy does not permit the investment in equity, from the application of common stewardship code, disclosure requirements and returns.

The entities, whose investment policy allows equity investment but have not made any investment in equity, the code is applicable. However, a NIL return will be a sufficient compliance for the same, Irdai said. "Other entities have to comply with the prescribed requirements."

Irdai has dispensed with the Form NIL 40 on disclosure of underwriting performance but advised insurers to file the said format to the Authority.

"In any case FRBs do not bring in any significant FDI in India unlike joint venture insurance or reinsurance companies incorporated in India. If the Ukraine war escalates, the threat of FRBs clamping up if India does not yield to the pressure of joining America and the western powers against Russia, is quite high. The role played by FRBs and the extent of our market dependence on them requires study and more critical monitoring," Srinivasan said.

"NIL 40 gives some important ratios line of business wise. For FRBs preparation and uploading of NIL 40 in their website is simple and easy. In this era of disclosure and transparency exempting FRBs from uploading NIL40 seems a hasty step," he said.

"The Authority has received representations on the rationalization of compliance requirements of FRBs as they are not directly dealing with the retail customers," Irdai said.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

Source: UBS Securities India/PTI

Source: UBS Securities India/PTI

Source: UBS Securities India/PTI

Source: UBS Securities India/PTI

Source: UBS Securities India/PTI

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BROADLY, SOUTHERN STATES, EXCEPT TELANGANA, SEE LOWER-THAN-NATIONAL LEVEL RATE

Rural pinches more in high inflation states

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

AS RETAIL inflation surged to an 8-year high of 7.79 per cent in April, individual states recorded a divergent trend with southern states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Telangana, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Assam trending mostly above the national level.

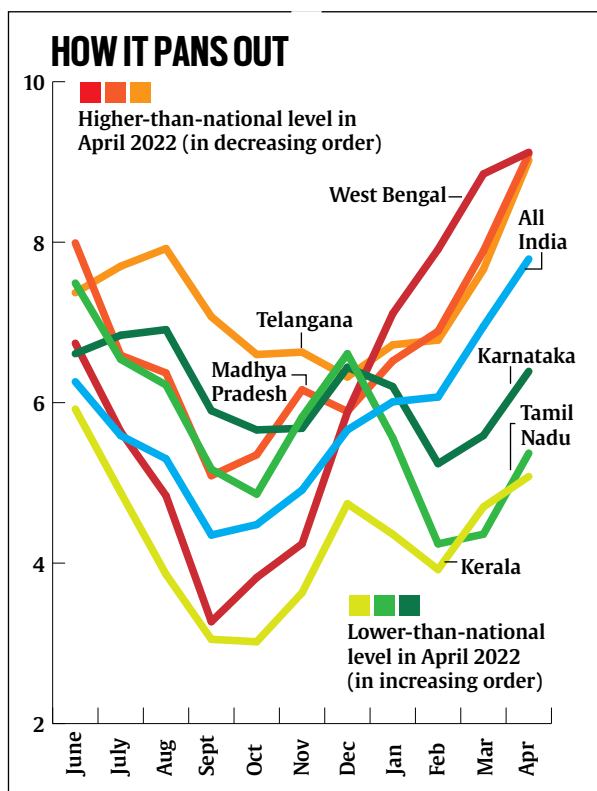
Retail inflation has persisted above the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) inflation target for the fourth straight month, with price levels rising to an 8-year high of 8.38 per cent in rural areas in April while urban inflation was at a 18-month high of 7.09 per cent. Incidentally, a number of states recording higher inflation rate over the national level are displaying a higher inflation trend in rural areas as against the urban areas.

Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation data for the last 11 months shows Kerala as the only state that has consistently remained below the all-India inflation level, while Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Jammu & Kashmir have stayed above the national level all

throughout. States/UT such as Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Punjab and Delhi, which had remained above the national inflation level in at least five out of the last eleven months have now trended below the national level at least for the last three months. States such as West Bengal, Assam, Jharkhand, Rajasthan which had remained below the all-India inflation till December 2021 have now picked up pace to rise above the national level in the last three months (four months for Jharkhand).

Possible reasons include the cushion of subsidies routed through the public distribution system across income levels in some of the southern states. Also, states with lower urbanisation rates end up spending more on food and fuel, while those with more urban areas end up spending a higher share on services.

The disaggregated data reveals that most of these states, which have a higher inflation rate over the national level, are displaying a higher inflation trend in rural areas as against the urban areas. West Bengal has seen double-digit rural inflation over the last two months while rural inflation in Assam has also topped the national level over the last three months even as urban inflation remains below the national level.



Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Jammu & Kashmir too have recorded a higher rural than urban inflation in last 3 months at least.

Inflation rates for April-May 2021 were not considered, as the

government only provided state-wise indices and not inflation rates since all-India indices for these two months were imputed in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Among states, the highest weight in CPI is of Maharashtra (13.18 per

cent), followed by Uttar Pradesh (12.37 per cent), Tamil Nadu (7.25 per cent) and West Bengal (7.09 per cent). "The first set of shocks to inflation have been broadly felt through food and fuel. Typically, poorer parts have a higher proportionate spending on food. About 60-80 per cent of the total spending in states with less urban areas or lower incomes would be on food, fuel, health and education. At the margin, there could also have been logistics-related shocks. Southern India, which has a higher per capita income than the national average could be spending more on services," Rahul Bajoria, chief economist, Barclays, said.

The decision to not reduce Value Added Tax on fuel in some of these states could also be an additional factor for higher fuel inflation. Services, as per the latest CPI data, have gained sharply with miscellaneous goods and services jumping to a 115-month high of 8.03 per cent in April and household goods and services rising to a 105-month high of 7.97 per cent.

There could also be the cushion of subsidies routed through the public distribution system seen across income levels in some of the southern states, especially on food items that constitute a big chunk of CPI inflation weightage. "States such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu have a strong public distribution

system, wherein subsidised food may be helping cushion the impact of higher food prices," Devendra Kumar Pant, chief economist, India Ratings, said.

"Items which have price sensitivities to substitutes are gaining such as ghee prices that have been moving up, with upward movement in prices of cooking oil. Also, chicken prices have gained as feedstock prices have gone up globally and after a supply-scare was seen in Andhra Pradesh, which is the hub for meat, poultry and pisciculture. Fruit prices also gained to 8.4 per cent in April as against our expectation of 7.4 per cent, which could be seen as a result of the heat wave," Bajoria said.

Wheat, protein items (chicken in particular), milk, lemon, cooked meal, chillies, refined oil, potato, chillies, kerosene, firewood, gold and LPG are contributing to overall inflation in a substantive manner, an SBI Research report said.

"Kerosene has seen a sharp spike, almost 35-40 per cent month-on-month increase. Household use is limited and mainly used for industrial purposes. There has been a massive drop in kerosene consumption over last 10 years but since it is not subsidised in most parts, any price movement gets reflected substantially in inflation," Bajoria said. Full report on www.indianexpress.com

LIC to list today: GMP in negative

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 16

SHARES OF Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) will be listed on the stock exchanges on Tuesday, slated to be the country's largest, amid worries about market volatility and listing performance of the corporation.

Despite gloomy sentiment, the offer got better-than-expected subscriptions figures. "Unofficial grey market premium (GMP) is trading down into the negative territory mainly on the back of depressed global markets which are in the bearish zone since Russia-Ukraine war," said Prashanth Tapse, vice president (research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

"Everything depends on market conditions... market discount indicates that the stock may be listed at a moderate to discounted price. However, we expect a listing with a 7 per cent discount to a 3 per cent premium," said Ravi Singhal, vice chairman, GCL securities Ltd.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

Source: UBS Securities India/PTI

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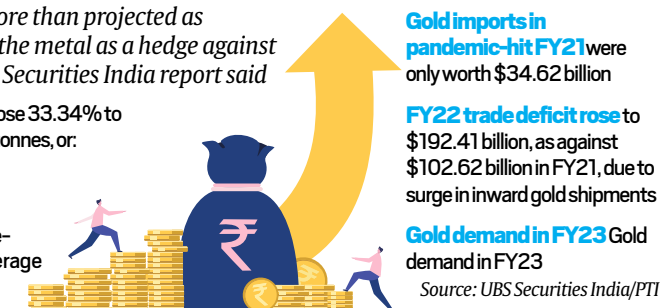
'Spiraling inflation may boost gold demand among households as a hedge'

Gold demand may rise more than projected as households may snap up the metal as a hedge against spiralling inflation, a UBS Securities India report said

GOLD IMPORTS IN FY22 rose 33.34% to \$46.14 billion in FY22 to 837 tonnes, or:

1.5 times above pandemic low in FY21

12% more than pre-pandemic average of FY16-20



Holcim CEO rules out capital gains tax on sale proceeds

RAJESH KURUP
MUMBAI, MAY 16

HOLCIM CEO Jan Jenisch on Monday said the company's \$10.5-billion sale of its stakes in Ambuja Cements and ACC to the Adani group will not attract any capital gains tax. "According to our analysis, it is a tax-free transaction... there is no capital gains or any other tax for this transaction. I don't know if any complication arises, but we assume that we will get this 6.4 billion (Swiss francs) as net proceeds," Jenisch said in an analysts' call on Monday.

Tax experts said Holcim may not have to pay capital gains tax for the bulk, if not all, of the \$10.5-billion

proceeds from the sale as it will sell the shares in the Indian companies to the Adani family's offshore special purpose vehicle (SPV) through a Mauritius-incorporated entity. This will likely give the Swiss company the cover of India's tax treaty with the island nation. The India-Mauritius double taxation avoidance agreement (DTAA) was revised bilaterally in May 2016 to remove the tax waivers prospectively, make it on a par with other DTAs and check its rampant use for tax avoidance in India. However, a carve-out is still available for investments made prior to April 1, 2017. Holcim acquired the cement assets in India 17 years ago.

Holcim and its subsidiaries ex-

ecuted the share purchase agreement with Adani's SPV Endeavour Trade and Investments for the sale of its shareholding in Mauritius-based Holderind Investments, which in turn holds 63.19% stake in Ambuja Cements. The Holcim entity also agreed to sell 54.53% stake in ACC, of which 50.05% is held through Ambuja Cements. Capital gains from the sale of these stakes to the overseas SPV won't be taxed in India. However, it is not clear if the sale of 4.5% stake will also be routed through Holderind Investments or any other entity based in either Mauritius or Singapore. The benefit is now available only for investors from these two countries, subject to the cut-off date of April 1, 2017. FE

Adani makes open offer for 26% each in Ambuja Cements, ACC

Mumbai: Adani group on Monday made an open offer to acquire a 26 per cent stake each in Ambuja Cements and ACC Ltd from public shareholders after announcing a \$10.5-billion deal to acquire Holcim's India business.

Through its Mauritius-based subsidiary Endeavour Trade and Investment, the group has made an open offer at Rs 385 per share for Ambuja Cements Ltd and Rs

2,300 per share for ACC Ltd.

For Ambuja Cements, the open offer to its public shareholders is for acquiring up to 51.63 crore equity shares, representing 26 per cent of the expanded share capital, aggregating to a total consideration of Rs 19,879.57 crore. While for ACC, the offer is to acquire up to 4.89 crore shares held by public shareholders, representing 26 per cent of the expanded

share capital, aggregating to a total consideration of Rs 11,259.97 crore. This would be "subject to the receipt of the Required Statutory Approval," Adani group said.

The open offer has been triggered after the execution of the share purchase agreement between Adani group and Holcim to buy controlling stake in the latter's India business. Full report on www.indianexpress.com

Bose proposes to repay Zilingo's \$40-mn debt

SALMAN SH
BENGALURU, MAY 16

ZILINGO'S CO-FOUNDER Ankita Bose, who was recently suspended from her position at the B2B e-commerce start-up, is exploring recompensing the company's entire outstanding debt worth \$40 million. This would provide her with an option to gain more equity in the firm, two people aware of the discussions said.

However, according to an investor in a venture debt firm based in Asia, Bose's endeavour to acquire more shares in the company could be met with a pushback from the board, and eventually lead to a legal tussle if the warrants were to be sold to her.

Sources said Bose had already reached out to Varde Partners and Indies Capital with a term sheet to pay back the entire pending loan amount. Varde and Indies provided a \$40 million loan to Zilingo under her leadership in July 2021, which is valid till July 2023. FE

Terra backer to compensate some users

Hong Kong: Luna Foundation Guard (LFG), a Singapore-based non-profit organisation designed to maintain TerraUSD's price, said Monday it spent the bulk of its reserves trying to defend its dollar peg last week and would use what little remained to compensate some users who had lost out.

The token's crash last week sent cryptocurrencies crashing, as bitcoin traded below \$30,000 on Monday. REUTERS

TO TAKE UP NEW ROLE WITHIN GROUP, SAYS CO

Srinivasan quits as MD of Aditya Birla Capital

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 16

ADITYA BIRLA Capital Ltd (ABCL) on Monday said Ajay Srinivasan has decided to step down as MD and CEO of the company as he had "expressed his desire to take on a new role within the group".

According to a media report, serious allegations of corruption and mismanagement, including front-running and insider trading, have been levelled by a whistleblower against ABCL and Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC. In an exchange filing, ABCL said, "The company received a complaint in which certain allegations were made about Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC and its employees. As per the Aditya Birla group policy, an independent Committee was formed to investigate the allegations."

"The committee did not find any merit in the allegations. There was no allegation whatsoever, made against Ajay Srinivasan, by the said employee," a company spokesperson said.

"In so far as Srinivasan stepping down is concerned, it is clarified that he had expressed his desire to take on a new role within the group, after having served as chief executive for over 14 years," the person said, adding, "A role is being crafted at the group level in consultation with him."

"A story has appeared, this morning, based on insinuations of vested interests. These insinuations/allegations are bereft of facts," the company said. The board of ABCL recently appointed Vishakha Mulye as the next CEO.

ABCL is the holding company



Ajay Srinivasan has stepped down amid reported whistle-blower allegations of corruption. via company</

TOP OF THE WORLD



US President Joe Biden.

USA

Biden acts to deploy troops to Somalia

Washington: President Joe Biden signed an order on Monday to redeploy hundreds of US troops to Somalia to counter the Islamic extremist rebel group al-Shabab. US troops will be repositioned from elsewhere in Africa to train and provide other support to Somali forces in their fight against al-Shabab, which is considered the largest and wealthiest affiliate of the al-Qaida extremist organisation. The decision to station forces again in Somalia, rather than rotate them in and out, is intended “to maximise the safety and effectiveness of our forces and enable them to provide more efficient support to our partners,” National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said in announcing the redeployment. **AP**

LEBANON

Early results: Hezbollah sees election losses

Beirut: Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group and its allies appear to have suffered losses in this weekend's parliamentary elections with preliminary results Monday showing their strongest opponents picking up more seats and some of their traditional partners routed out of the legislature. Despite the apparent setback, Hezbollah and its main Shia ally, the Amal group of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, are likely to retain the 27 seats allocated to the sect. It was not clear, however, whether the Iran-backed group and its allies would hang on to the majority they have held since 2018. **AP**

UK

4 men infected with monkeypox in London

London: British health authorities say they have identified four “rare and unusual” cases of the disease monkeypox among men who appear to have been infected in London and had no history of travel to the African countries where the smallpox-like disease is endemic. In a statement Monday, the UK's Health Security Agency said an investigation had begun into how the men became infected and whether they had any links to each other. Three of the men are in London and one is in northeast England. Last week, Britain reported three earlier cases of monkeypox. **AP**

NEPAL

In a first, Britisher scales Everest for 16th time

Kathmandu: Kenton Cool, a 48-year-old British national, has scaled the world's highest peak Mount Everest for the 16th time, becoming the first non-Nepalese to do so, a media report said on Monday. Cool, who hails from Gloucestershire, a county in South West England, reached the top of Mount Everest for the 16th time early on Sunday morning, *The Guardian* reported, citing the Instagram page of Cool. **PTI**

ERDOGAN OPPOSES NORDIC MOVE, MACRON SHOWS SUPPORT

Putin appears to back off threats as Sweden decides to join NATO

AGENCIES STOCKHOLM/KYIV, MAY 16

VLADIMIR PUTIN appeared to climb down on Monday from Russia's objections to Sweden and Finland joining NATO, saying Moscow had no issues with them entering the US-led military alliance they now aim to join in reaction to his invasion of Ukraine.

Though the Russian leader said Moscow would take action if NATO were to move more troops or hardware onto the territory of its new members - steps Finland and Sweden have both already ruled out - he said NATO's expansion itself was not a threat.

“As far as expansion goes, including new members Finland and Sweden, Russia has no problems with these states - none. And so in this sense there is no immediate threat to Russia from an expansion to include these countries,” Putin said.

The comments came after Sweden on Monday decided to join Finland in seeking NATO membership. “Russia has said that that it will take countermeasures if we join NATO,” she said. “We cannot rule out that Sweden will be exposed to, for instance, disinformation and attempts to intimidate and divide us,” the PM said.

Putin, however, had stated that, “The expansion of military infrastructure into this territory would certainly provoke our response. What that (response) will be - we will see what threats are created for us.” “Problems are being created for no reason at all. We shall react accordingly.”

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday that Swedish and Finnish delegations should not bother coming to Ankara to convince it to approve their NATO bid. President Emmanuel Macron of France welcomed Finland and Sweden's decision to apply for NATO membership, saying in a statement that their accession would reinforce security for “Europe as a whole.”



A resident next to a flooded area after Ukrainian military forces opened a dam to flood an residential area to stop advance of Russian forces to Kyiv on Sunday. *Reuters*

MCDONALD'S RETREATS FROM MOSCOW

Russian forces fall back in northeast Ukraine

REUTERS RUSKA LOZOVA, MAY 16

UKRAINIAN TROOPS have pushed Russian forces back from the northeastern city of Kharkiv and some have advanced as far as the border with Russia, Ukrainian officials said on Monday.

The developments, if confirmed, would signal a further shift in momentum in favour of Ukraine. And in another setback for Putin, McDonald's Corp , the world's largest fast food chain, said it was pulling out of Russia because of the conflict. The world's largest burger chain, which owns about 84% of its nearly 850 restaurants in Russia, will take a related non-cash charge of up to \$1.4 billion following its sale.

On the battlefields near Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, interior ministry adviser Vadym Denisenko said

Ukrainian troops were mounting a counter-offensive. “It can no longer be stopped.. Thanks to this, we can go to the rear of the Russian group of forces,” he said.

Ukraine's defence ministry said on Monday the 227th Battalion of the 127th Brigade of Ukraine's Territorial Defence Forces had reached the border with Russia. The governor of the Luhansk region in Donbas, Serhiy Gaidai, said the situation “remains difficult”, with Russian forces trying to capture the town of Sieverodonetsk.

Russia said on Monday that it had agreed to evacuate wounded Ukrainian soldiers from the bunkers below the besieged Azovstal steel works in Mariupol to a medical facility in the Russian-controlled town of Novoazovsk. “An agreement has been reached on the removal of the wounded,” the Moscow defence ministry said in a statement.

EU to offer Kyiv new loans to plug urgent needs

FRANCESCO GUARASCIO BRUSSELS, MAY 16

THE EUROPEAN Commission is set to propose on Wednesday a new package of financial aid to Ukraine, including new loans to provide immediate liquidity to Kyiv and commitments for the long-term financing of the country's reconstruction, officials said.

The size of the short-term financial support is still being defined but two officials familiar with the discussions told *Reuters* they expected it to roughly cover Ukraine's financial needs for two months, largely through loans.

A third official said the money would come from the EU budget and from EU governments, dismissing earlier talk that the funds could be raised in the market with the issuance of joint bonds backed by the EU budget.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated in April that Ukraine needed around \$5 billion dollars a month for at least three months to plug the immediate financial shortfall caused by Russia's invasion.

The Fund's chief, Kristalina Georgieva, has called for this support to come in the form of grants rather than loans.

The scale of EU support will depend also on how much G7 countries are willing to contribute. A meeting of finance ministers of the Group of Seven major economies is scheduled in the second half of this week, just after the Commission is expected to unveil its proposals.

A spokesperson for the EU declined to comment on the new package. **REUTERS**



FRANCE

MACRON PICKS ELISABETH BORNE AS PM

French President Emmanuel Macron picked Labour Minister Elisabeth Borne as his new prime minister on Monday as he prepares for legislative elections in June -only the second time in 30 years that a woman has got the job. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Jean Castex handed in his resignation, paving the way for a cabinet overhaul after Macron's re-election in April.



People wait in a queue to buy petrol at a closed fuel station in Colombo on Monday. *Reuters*

Sri Lanka down to last day of petrol, says PM

In first televised address, he says nation needs \$75 million forex to pay for imports

REUTERS & AP COLOMBO, MAY 16

SRI LANKA'S new prime minister said on Monday the crisis-hit nation was down to its last day of petrol, as the country's power minister told citizens not to join the lengthy fuel queues that have galvanised weeks of anti-government protests.

Ranil Wickremesinghe said in his first televised address to the nation the country urgently needed \$75 million in foreign exchange to pay for essential imports. “At the moment, we only have petrol stocks for a single day. The next couple of months will be the most difficult ones of our lives,” he said. “We must prepare ourselves to make some sacrifices and face the challenges of this period.”

Two shipments of petrol and two of diesel using an Indian credit line could provide relief in the next few days, he added, but the country is also facing a shortage of 14 essential medicines.

“Request the public not to queue up or top up in the next three days until the 1,190 fuel station deliveries have been completed,” Power Minister Kanchana

EXPLAINED Crisis in nation

IN HIS ADDRESS, the PM said the country's financial health is so poor that the government has been forced to print money to pay the salaries. He said about \$75 billion is needed urgently to help provide people with essential items, but the country's treasury is struggling to find even \$1 billion.

Wijesekera said on Monday.

Wickremesinghe said “I have no desire to hide the truth and to lie to the public. Although these facts are unpleasant and terrifying, this is the true situation. For a short period, our future will be even more difficult than the tough times that we have passed.” “We will face considerable challenges and adversity. However, this period will not be long,” he said, adding that countries with which he has spoken have pledged to help in the next few months.

POLICE SAY WOULD-BE BOMBER ARRESTED

Pak: Foiled suicide attack against Chinese nationals along CPEC

ASIF SHAHZAD ISLAMABAD, MAY 16

PAKISTANI POLICE arrested a would-be suicide bomber who planned to blow herself up near a convoy of Chinese nationals along the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a police statement said.

Monday's arrest came two weeks after a woman suicide bomber blew herself up on a university campus in the southern port city of Karachi, killing three Chinese teachers and their Pakistani driver. Police arrested the militant in south-western Balochistan province that borders Afghanistan and Iran, the statement said.

She belongs to the separatist Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), which has started using women militants as suicide bombers, police said, a new phenomenon for counter-terrorism police who are more used to dealing with such attacks by Islamist militants. “The woman wanted

Shehbaz assures more security for Chinese citizens

Islamabad: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday assured China that his government is determined to take all necessary measures for the enhanced security and safety of Chinese nationals in Pakistan and affirmed his “firm resolve” to fast track projects under the \$60 billion CPEC. **PTI**

to target a convoy of Chinese nationals,” police said, adding the attack was planned along a route of China Pakistan Economic-Corridor (CPEC).

Police recovered explosives and detonators from the woman and investigated her, revealing her plans to target Chinese nationals. No other evidence was produced to support their accusation. **REUTERS**

N Korea's Kim orders military to stabilise supply of Covid drugs

Seoul: Leader Kim Jong Un has ordered North Korea's military to stabilise distribution of Covid-19 medicine in the capital, Pyongyang, state media said.

Drugs procured by the state were not reaching people quickly, Kim told an emergency politburo meeting on Sunday, before visiting pharmacies near the capital's Taedong River, state news agency KCNA said.

Kim ordered immediate deployment of the “powerful forces” of the army's medical corps to “stabilise the supply of medicines in Pyongyang City”, it added.

Among shortcomings were a lack of adequate drug storage, salespeople unequipped with the proper sanitary clothing and hygiene falling short of standards, Kim said. He criticised the “irresponsible” work attitude, organisation and execution by the cabinet and the public health sector, it added. **REUTERS**

US deaths from Covid hit 1 mn

CORONAVIRUS CASES are spreading at an alarming rate across the US, particularly in the Northeast and the Midwest, as the country's death toll nears the one million mark.

An average of over 90,000 new cases are now being identified each day in the US, a 60 per cent increase from two weeks ago. And in much of the Northeast and Midwest, daily new-case reports have already surpassed the peak of last summer's Delta surge.

Hospitalisations are increasing across the country, though more slowly than new cases. The number of patients with coronavirus in American hospitals surpassed 21,000 over the past week, but still a 23 per cent rise from two weeks ago. Health officials across the Midwest are beginning to warn high-risk people to once again wear masks indoors and to get booster shots, as counties in several states move to higher-risk Covid-19 community levels. **NYT**

Imran's security beefed up after ‘assassination’ plot claims

Islamabad: The Pakistan government on Monday beefed up security for former PM Imran Khan, two days after he claimed that there was a plot to assassinate him, according to a media report.

Khan claimed on Saturday that a “conspiracy” to assassinate him was being hatched in Pakistan and abroad, warning that if anything happens to him, the people will come to know about the perpetrators through a video message he has recently recorded and placed in a safe place.

At Khan's residence in Bani Gala, 94 security officers will be deployed, of which, 22 men will be from the Islamabad police and 72 from the Frontier Constabulary, the report said, quoting the spokesperson of the interior ministry. **PTI**

PLAN REPRESENTS STEP TOWARD COUNTRY'S GOAL OF ACHIEVING NET-ZERO CARBON EMISSIONS BY 2050

New Zealand to help pay for cleaner cars to reduce emissions

NICK PERRY WELLINGTON, MAY 16

NEW ZEALAND'S government said on Monday it will help pay for lower-income families to scrap their old gas guzzlers and replace them with cleaner hybrid or electric cars as part of a sweeping plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The government said it plans to spend 569 million New Zealand dollars (\$357 million) on the trial programme as part of a larger plan that includes subsidies for businesses to reduce emissions, a switch to an entirely green bus fleet by 2035 and curbside

food-waste collection for most homes by the end of the decade.

“This is a landmark day in our transition to a low emissions future,” Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said in a statement. “We've all seen the recent reports on sea level rise and its impact right here in New Zealand. We cannot leave the issue of climate change until it's too late to fix.”

The plan represents a step toward the pledges the nation made under the 2016 Paris Agreement on climate change and New Zealand's stated goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Ardern, who was scheduled to launch the plan but cancelled



An electric vehicle charging station and car share parking in Auckland. *AP*

after testing positive for Covid-19 late last week, said every community and sector had a role to play and that reducing reliance on fossil fuels would help shield households from volatile price hikes.

The plan also sets a target of reducing total car travel by 20% over the next 13 years by offering better transportation options in cities as well as improved options for cyclists and walkers.

The programmes will be paid for from a 4.5 billion New Zealand dollar (\$2.8 billion) climate emergency response fund. Officials said over time, money collected from polluters would pay for the programmes rather than taxes from households.

The most significant emissions reductions for the period ending December 31, 2025 will come in the energy, industrial and transport sectors, government documents said, adding every sector will have to play a role.

But the plan remained short on some details, including for the gas guzzler replacement plan which the government said would be finalised over the coming months. And some critics said it continued to give an easy ride to the nation's huge agriculture industry, which creates about half of the nation's total greenhouse gas emissions but is also vital to the economy as the nation's biggest export earner.

“Some of the policies announced, like the cash-for-clunkers system, are proven to be dogs and have been tried and failed overseas,” said David Seymour, leader of the libertarian ACT Party. Seymour said consumers should be able to choose how they reduce emissions through the market-based emissions trading scheme.

According to Reuters report, the new Emissions Reduction Plan “delivers the greatest opportunity we've had in decades to address climate change but also move to a high wage, low emissions economy that provides greater economic security by creating jobs,” Ardern said. **AP**



Tiger Woods will be teeing off in his second Major championships of the year.

Woods back in spotlight, Mickelson still in shadows

REUTERS
TULSA (USA), MAY 16

TIGER WOODS will be back in the global golf spotlight when the PGA Championship gets underway this week but defending champion Phil Mickelson, his great rival and the player he has been tethered to throughout much of his career, will not. Woods and Mickelson are to golf what Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal are to tennis, athletes in the twilight of their careers but still the most compelling figures in their sport and guaranteed ratings grabbers. The PGA Championship, which begins on Thursday in Tulsa, Oklahoma, had all the makings of one of those special sporting occasions when old rivals collide. After nearly losing his right leg in a car crash 15 months ago, Woods made his return to competition at the Masters in April and will take the next step in his extraordinary comeback at Southern Hills Country Club. Mickelson, who has kept a low profile since his controversial comments about a Saudi-backed global golf circuit, has not played anywhere since February but looked like he might return in Tulsa when his name appeared on the field list. But Mickelson, who became golf's oldest major winner last year when he won the PGA Championship just shy of his 51st birthday, said on Friday he would not play, becoming just the third PGA champion not to defend his title after Woods in 2008 and Ben Hogan in 1949, both of whom bowed out due to injury. There will be plenty of other storylines and great golf played at Southern Hills, most of it from a pack of hard-charging twenty-somethings, including Masters champion and world number one Scottie Scheffler, but Woods is unlikely to be pushed from the

spotlight. The 46-year-old won the PGA Championship the last time it was staged at Southern Hills, hoisting the Wanamaker trophy for a fourth time in 2007. While Woods always plays to win, few expect him to add to his tally of 15 majors this week. Woods worked the golf world into a frenzy at the Masters when he carded a one-under par 71 in his first round of competitive golf since his horror car crash. He would make the cut but four rounds on Augusta National's undulating layout proved too much as the 15-times major winner closed with six-over 78s on Saturday and Sunday, his worst-ever scores at the Masters. Woods will hog much of the spotlight but will not carry the same pressure as the likes of world number one Scheffler and Jordan Spieth, who has an opportunity to complete the career Grand Slam. Spieth missed the cut at the Masters for the first time in his career but has been golf's hottest player since, winning at Hilton Head Island and finishing second at his PGA tune-up. If the 28-year-old can triumph at the PGA Championship, where his best result was runner-up in 2015, he would join Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus and Woods in golf's elite club of Grand Slam winners. The pressure is also building on Scheffler, who heads to a layout he has touted as his favourite course. When the year began Scheffler was still chasing a first PGA Tour win. He now has four, a Green Jacket, the world number one ranking. A win at the PGA would saddle him with talk of a rare Grand Slam sweeping all four majors in a single season. "For Jordan to win the career Grand Slam at still a young age, he's got to throttle that back," said twice US Open champion Curtis Strange

WORLD BOXING CHAMPIONSHIP

Famous victory for the secretive boxer

Family came to know about Manisha's boxing talent only after she got gold at district meet

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, MAY 16

AS A youngster, Manisha Moun would accompany her elder brother to the volleyball ground at the RKSD College Stadium in Kaithal without telling father Krishan Moun. While her father only knew about her practising judo at the venue apart from playing volleyball, Manisha would be training under boxing coach Rajinder Singh. It was around this time that Krishan suffered the first of his heart attacks and the farmer-cum-tractor mechanic had to worry about the medical expenses apart from the needs of his three children. Those tough times were recalled on Monday when 24-year-old Manisha secured her maiden world championship medal with a 4:1 split decision win over Mongolia's Namuun Mankhor in the 57 Kg category at the IBA Women's World Boxing Championship in Istanbul, Turkey. "Our family wanted Manisha to go outside so she would often accompany her brother to the volleyball stadium. But we did not know that she was approached by coach Rajinder Singh, who got her enrolled into boxing. When she became district champion within two years, we got to know about her feat, and I praised her in front of all my relatives and neighbours. So far, she has won more than 40 medals but this one, whatever colour she brings home, will be special for us. She told me that a medal in Turkey will be no less than an Olympics for us and I am glad that she has proved herself," an emotional Krishan told *The Indian Express*. While her father owned a 1.5-acre farm apart from working as a tractor mechanic in their village, Manisha's interest in boxing meant that the family had to look for funds to support her training. While a young Manisha would often bring some prize money from local boxing tournaments to mother Usha Rani, the family faced a tough time in those years when Krishan suffered his first heart attack and spent more than a month at the PGIMER in Chandigarh. "She was a child at that time and would not understand my condition. She would tell us that she is going to training but would always ask her mother about my health. Whatever prize money she won, she would give to her mother," remembers Krishan. Coach Gurmeet Singh, a trainee of



Manisha, 24, secured her maiden world championship medal in the 57 kg class.

While Manisha would often bring some prize money from local tournaments to mother Usha Rani, the family faced tough times when her father suffered a heart attack.

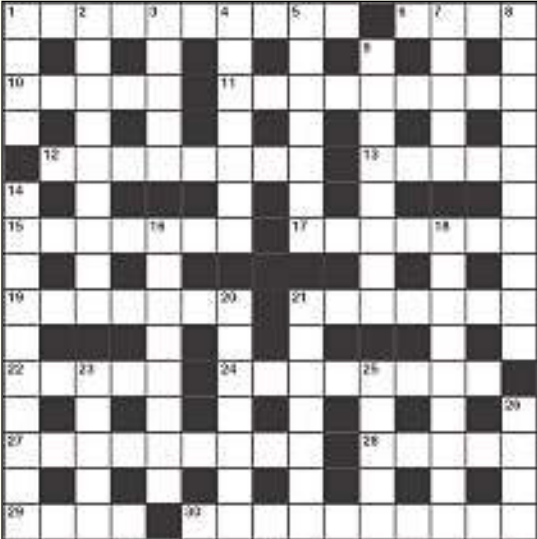
Rajinder Singh, who has been training Manisha since 2014 remembers her early days in boxing. "Is ladki main zumeen hai kuch seekhne ka (This girl has the passion to learn). At that time, we had fewer female boxers at the academy and would train her with boys. It also meant that she would take part in cross-country runs every week in which she would finish in the top three in the 21-km country run. It helped her build stamina and she maintains the habit of running cross-country events even now. She has always been a fan of 2006 Commonwealth Games champion Akhil Kumar and her left punch is just like Akhil with a bit of an open guard," says Singh.

Steady progress

A silver at the junior Haryana boxing championships in 2013 was followed by successive All India Inter-University titles in 2016 and 2017 before Manisha won three international medals in 2018. It was the year when she would win the trials for the 2018 World Championships in Delhi, where she would reach the quarter-finals before losing to 2016 world championship silver medalist Stoyko Petrova of Bulgaria. During her campaign, Manisha would score wins over two-time world championship medalist

Christina Cruz of USA and 2017 world champion Dina Zhalaman of Kazakhstan. She would win a bronze at the Asian Boxing Championships in 2019. Then came the setback of an elbow injury in 2019 before she decided to shift to the 57 Kg category, where she would compete against the likes of former world youth champion Sakshi Chaudhary, former world medalist Sonia Lather and Sonia Chahal. "She would start her career in the 50 kg category and once she felt confident, she chose 54 Kg as her best weight. The 2018 Nationals silver medal gave her confidence ahead of the world championship trials in 2018 and she could have won a medal in Delhi. She often watches videos of her bouts against Christina and Dina and would observe her mistakes during the rehabilitation period after her elbow injury. When she was dropped from the TOPS scheme recently, she was a bit disappointed as her family's financial condition is not that good but this medal will hopefully ensure that she gets back into the scheme," says coach Satvir Kaur, who has been in several national camps with Manisha. The pugilist will now face Irma Testa of Italy in the World Championship semi-finals and her father will be watching the bout with the family at their village. "Sometimes, I would spend extra hours at the tractor shop to earn more money even though Manisha would often ask me to come home early. But then we had loans to repay. She always hands her prize money to me or her mother till now but for us the biggest prize is her medals. The only thing she is fond of while at home is cleaning the house and making space for her medals. This medal will be the brightest of all of her medals till date," her father says.

CROSSWORD 4742



- ACROSS**
- Game for an old school get-together (5,5)
 - Items given for storage in a bank (4)
 - Lie about showing true grit (5)
 - They work with a will (9)
 - Instrument puts old man in confusion (8)
 - Unusual Roman dwelling house (5)
 - It's near breaking up and showing distress (2,5)
 - Hide at one time found in California (7)
 - They're told to go to blazes (7)
 - Wine forced on some Irishmen (7)
 - One who gets up part of the stairs (5)
 - Determined to give poor Rose an instrument (8)
 - After work, quiet or music is timely (9)
 - Got an order to dance (5)
 - How Beethoven finished a set of four notes (4)
 - Prettiness in a constantly recurring form (10)
- DOWN**
- Bird making harsh sound (4)
 - Tribal rag turns out to be rock (9)
 - Return and surrender (5)
 - With one point each, one more becomes redundant (7)
 - Cocaine distilled from the sea (7)
 - Lend beauty to part of a head ornament (5)
 - Pacific islander (10)
 - Asked to appear at court? (8)
 - Seek earthly riches? (3,3,4)
 - Errs amid wayward lovers (8)
 - Being in the wrong scene, exit (9)
 - Foster may run true to form (7)
 - Gets better of teachers (7)
 - Brown monkeys climb all around one (5)
 - A deal with America for planet (5)
 - Place appointed for a picket (4)

Solutions Crossword 4741: Across: 1 Tanning, 5 Which, 8 Stringent, 9 Car, 10 Each, 12 Unchaste, 14 Callow, 15 Harass, 17 Nominate, 18 Stir, 21 Out, 22 Reeled off, 24 Mused, 25 Melange. Down: 1 Taste, 2 Nor, 3 Inns, 4 Greens, 5 Watchman, 6 Incessant, 7 Harness, 11 Callimates, 13 Cornered, 14 Conform, 16 Stream, 19 Rifle, 20 Seal, 23 Own.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

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

If men could only know each other, they would neither ___ nor ___
-Elbert Hubbard (7, 4)

MNAEE EEEDLT
DTIIO AILYHZ

SOLUTION: ENMATE, LOVE, EELITE, HAZILY
Answer: If men could only know each other, they would neither love nor hate

SUDOKU 4837

Difficulty Level 5s
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 4836



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)
Please don't sit around thinking how unfair life can be. Mars, the planet of excess energy, has passed on, and that imaginative and awkward squad, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, will now leave you in peace for a little longer. Meanwhile, Saturn will continue to keep you in your place.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)
The Sun is still maintaining your social profile, reminding you that it is important to get other people to see that your way of doing things is best. With a charm like yours, how can you fail? Only by not taking care of every single detail, that's how.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
The first thing to say is that there is a shortage of epoch-making planetary aspects at the moment. The result is that you may begin to see yourself as more in control of your life than you have been for quite some time. If you do, that's a sign that you may come unstuck very soon.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
There's one thing you want more than anything else in your life, and recently it has seemed that you have been about to achieve it. However, if you have fallen at the last hurdle, can you wait for another two months? Current developments may open your eyes to the broader picture.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)
Don't back away from problems at work. People in all areas of your life are waiting for you to make yourself clear and demonstrate that you are able to cope with any amount of practical difficulty. People you live with could get intense, so don't let anything surprise you.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
You seem to be quite preoccupied with personnel changes on the work front. Seeing as that radical sign Aquarius is involved, you may be concerned to increase your independence and sense of personal responsibility. And it means you may have to strike out on your own.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)
A series of powerful planetary aspects has been keeping your personal affairs in a state of flux. However, Venus, the planet of love is bringing help from near at hand. And that help may be more practical than you think. In the meantime, sort out cash questions while you can.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)
If you are absolutely determined to assert your authority, there seems to be little to stand in your way. The Moon combines with the Sun to strengthen an already solid personal position, much to your relief. The best advice is to take a creative approach, but keep other people on your side.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)
The Sun and Mercury are casting their benevolent rays over your family affairs. You are never certain about your foundations – emotional and otherwise. Yet, really, you have little to worry about. Probably the best area to focus on is the effect your public commitments have on your private affairs.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)
Have you realised that the obstacle you faced last week was a hurdle to leap over, not a brick wall to stop your progress? By now, you must be well on your way to establishing your life on an entirely fresh footing. Today's Venusian alignments should help balance your emotions.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)
This may well be a challenging and upsetting time, but graceful Venus will bring support and sympathy from close friends. The best thing you can be told is that your fears and worries are illusory. And the best thing you can do is wait until you have a clearer picture.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
Pisceans have a reputation for being too sensitive by half. The only way to get the most out of your current situation is to lay yourself on the line and learn to accept criticism in the spirit in which it is meant. In other words, there may be something genuine for you to learn.

Shock, anger and grudging respect for Indian shuttlers

Watching the unheralded team lift the Thomas Cup, badminton powerhouses Indonesians, Malaysians and Danes wonder what went wrong for their men

SHIVANI NAIK
MAY 16

INDIA'S THOMAS Cup victory sent some seismic waves through South-East Asian powerhouses and European big daddies of badminton. India can chuckle a tad and wink a bit this week, or have the proverbial last laugh. But there was a hint of a scoff and grudging respect as Malaysia, Denmark and Indonesia came to terms with being handed losses by the first-time finalists in the 2022 edition.

Here are some snapshots of the fallout that erupted in two proud shuttle nations from the straits, and the Scandinavian behemoth boasting of Olympic champ Viktor Axelsen.

Taufik lets it rip

Indonesian legend and universal favourite Taufik Hidayat, couldn't hold back an almighty rant when he took to *Instagram* to post his thoughts under a video of a glum looking team clutching their silvers on the podium.

The 2000 & 2002 Thomas Cup champ had found a scapegoat in the singles coach - with the classic gripe: 'Where is the coach!?' His post read (translated): "Team Thomas Cup. Thank you for reaching the best possible position of a final. Surely, they are disappointed with this defeat, but one thing is to be noted always: it's a mental, physical battle... and where is the Indonesian men's singles coach? Does Indonesia not have a better and more qualified coach? How long do you want this to last, PBS?!" Addressing the federation, Indonesia's last Olympic singles champion tore into the incumbent, after Anthony Ginting and Jonatan Christie had lost their matches.

This soon turned into a 'Who's wiser?' scrap as a social media follower compared his bruising tone to the more restrained reaction from Malaysian Lee Chong Wei, who basically urged patience while the Malaysians rebuilt their side. Not unlike India and Pakistan who both lose and then snipe at each other while a third country wins at cricket, Indonesian and Malaysian fans started venting against each other, much



As Indians savoured the historic win, Indonesian and Malaysian fans started venting against each other, much like the famous rivalry of the 1970s.

like the famous rivalry of the 1970s.

Indonesia coach under fire

Indonesia's singles coach Irwansyah did cop criticism the day after, though moving images of him consoling Ginting and Christie, and his efforts to help make the finals seemed to have earned him a longer rope. *Detik Sport* quoted him as saying, "The players in the future will be given more opportunities to appear in international championships. This is part of the regeneration process."

Doubles coach Herry Iman had a more rous-

ing defence of his troops: "We have to accept this defeat as part of the learning process. Last year we won, we are happy. This time we lost, so we have to accept it," *Detik* quoted the coach nicknamed the Fire Dragon. "Defeat should not make us dissolve in sadness. But we must rise again to look to the future. Whatever the result, India deserve to be congratulated," said Herry.

The King mourns

Liem Swie King, a contemporary of Prakash Padukone with many storied battles, lamented the loss to India, in what was a dis-

believing tone. *Detik* quoted him wondering: "Three Indonesian players were ranked below Anthony Ginting & Co. In fact, based on the track record of the two countries' meetings, Indonesia was supposed to have been quite dominating. But that advantage was not utilised by the defending champions. Yes, it must be evaluated why we lost. The performance until the final was extraordinary. I didn't think that I would lose to India!" the 1976, '79 and '84 Thomas Cup champ exclaimed. "Yes, that's right, India is also good, I just didn't think it was... with this history, that they can

Chirag Shetty, who was a thorn in the flesh of Mohammad Ahsan and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo, found himself on the dartboard of Indonesian netizens, after his pumped-up face was captured in a photograph, staring at the sole Minion.

win in the Thomas Cup. Physically (Indonesian players must) improve (because) every time they play three games, they lose a lot," said Liem. "(So) you can't just have skills, it must be complete play," he stressed.

Nasty nickname

Chirag Shetty, who was a thorn in the flesh of Mohammad Ahsan and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo, found himself on the dartboard of Indonesian netizens, after his pumped-up face was captured in a photograph, staring at the sole Minion. Manning the net with aggressive energy, Shetty had clearly rattled the fancied pairing as it wilted - or so Indonesian fans were convinced.

His swivel serve came in for more carping: they nicknamed him 'Kang Delay', the serve delayer. A loss in doubles for a country that boasts three pairings in the Top 10, including Nos. 1 and 2, was a whiplash on dazed Indonesian faces. Kevin had earlier remarked about those tense moments: "In the second game, when they were leading 19-13, Indians played like they had nothing to lose. They were so hard to put down."

Malaysia in soul-searching mode

Lee Chong Wei did ask for accountability though, speaking to *Straits Times*. But first was a compliment for Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy, who handed Malaysia a 3-2 loss in the quarters. "I don't think we would have stood a chance even if we fielded Daren (Liew). Srikanth was oozing with confidence, he was untouchable. Neither (Ng) Tze Yong or Daren could beat him.

"Jun Hao fared poorly against a more-experienced Prannoy. To win the Thomas Cup, it takes a collective effort from everyone in the team. We certainly need to improve our

singles depth if we want to challenge for the title. Having been the singles coaching director for a few years now, (Wong) Choong Hann has to be held accountable and explain," Lee told ST.

He proceeded to suggest an Indian style trial: "Perhaps, it's time we looked into having a selection trial for the men's singles in order to make it fair to all, especially with many independent players outside the national team." Malaysia's team event specialist Chong Wei Feng added to ST: "India developed a huge pool of singles players, you got to give them credit. They have five singles in the world top 30 and more than 10 in the top 100."

Boe hero; Hoi on backfoot

Denmark's only bright spot in the finals was India's doubles coach Mathias Boe, who told TV2 Sport: "I have to find my dance shoes and see if I can show them how to make a quiet and calm charming Viennese waltz." Clearly the Dane couldn't match step with the wild *Bhangra* and freestyle moves of Chirag & Co.

Elsewhere, national coach Jakob Høi, was left defending his decision to field Rasmus Gemke ahead of seasoned HK Vittinghus. "We've been in dreamland, and when you are, and it's bursting, it's hard to get up again. Respect for the boys on and off the field, but we were not good enough today," he was quoted by TV2 Sport, adding that India had negotiated conditions better. "No, I do not regret anything," he stressed.

Gemke spoke of feeling wretched as Indians rushed onto the court to hug Prannoy. "It was hard to stand in there when the Indians stormed onto the field, and I knew it was over," he said.

Late charge by Delhi Capitals takes them to the top four

SYNOPSIS: Mitchell Marsh steers his side to a competitive score, and Shardul Thakur's slower ones hold off a fighting PK to take DC to No 4 in the table

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
MUMBAI, MAY 16

Shardul Thakur's four strikes first brought Delhi Capitals back into the game and then cut short a late fightback by Punjab Kings to deliver a crucial 17-run win that took his team to fourth position on the table, with 14 points and the fourth-best net run-rate so far.

Marsh carries DC again

In DC's previous match at the same ground four nights ago against Rajasthan Royals, Mitchell Marsh had powered seven sixes in a match-winning 89 off 62. That knock, though, had come in the chase with the ball coming on better than it had in the first innings. Against PK, Marsh had to come in the second ball of the match after David Warner's golden duck.

With a 6-3 field set to protect the shorter boundary, Marsh still took on the longer side when the bowling became too predictable, seeking to force the bigger hit. He first lofted Kagiso Rabada over the farther cow-corner rope. Later when the spinners too continued to bowl wider to the longer off side, he rocked back, waited and made sure he beat the sweeper with his cut. And when Marsh gets the power and timing right, the size of the boundary rarely matters. Marsh can get tied down by spin, but to his credit, he didn't let the dot balls pile up, running 23 singles, and hence, didn't have to take large risks to break free.

He had his couple of moments of good fortune, though. A mishit off Arshdeep Singh just cleared a jumping long-on, and another off the left-armers tickled into the wide long-off boundary despite a valiant dash-and-dive to attempt to catch it from Shikhar Dhawan.

How difficult it could be, and how well Marsh had played, was evident when he failed to clear deep midwicket on the shorter side off a Rabada slot delivery in the 19th over. So short Marsh had fallen that the fielder had to run in to complete the catch.

Marsh's exit meant DC took just ten off the last two overs, but they'd still managed to set a competitive target of 160.

Panic after powerplay

Courtesy swift bursts from Sarfaraz Khan - opening for the first time in the IPL - and Jonny Bairstow, the powerplay had gone almost equivalent for both sides. DC had scored 59 for 2, PK were on 53 for 1 with three deliveries remaining in their

IPL TABLE						
TEAM	M	W	L	PT	NRR	
GT	13	10	3	20	0.391	
RR	13	8	5	16	0.304	
LSG	13	8	5	16	0.262	
DC	13	7	6	14	-0.255	
RCB	13	7	6	14	-0.323	
KKR	13	6	7	12	0.160	
PK	13	6	7	12	0.043	
SRH	12	5	7	10	-0.270	
CSK	13	4	9	8	-0.206	
MI	12	3	9	6	-0.613	

powerplay. However, Shardul Thakur first sent back Bhanuka Rajapaksa; two balls later, he bowled one that was close to cut, but Shikhar Dhawan tried to and went caught behind.

Three balls later, the DC spinners struck with their tricks. On a dry pitch where turn was available, Axar Patel foxed Mayank Agarwal with a straighter one; the line was on the stumps, Mayank Agarwal still went for a late steer and had his stumps rattled.

In the next over, Kuldeep Yadav slid it straight past an advancing Liam Livingstone to have him stumped by a long way.

Thakur intervenes decisively

At 61 for 5, the bulk of the PK batting was gone but the asking rate wasn't steep, and wicketkeeper Jitesh Sharma would take his side close with a 34-ball 44.

With 39 needed off the last three overs, Rowman Powell made a critical save on the straight boundary.

He leaped to catch what was an otherwise certain six from Jitesh and hurled it back in time as he went over the rope to keep the damage to just a single.

Jitesh went for another six in the over but this time, Thakur had got the knuckle ball right, and Warner surged forward from long-off to take a sharp, low catch.

PK would go down swinging. Now Rabada mowed Thakur over the shorter deep-midwicket rope. Next ball, Thakur sent the wide bouncer wider towards the longer side, and Rabada swatted it straight to long-off. Down to 131 for 9 after 18, PK were finally out of the game.

BRIEF SCORES: Delhi Capitals 159 for 7 (Marsh 63, Sarfaraz 32, Livingstone 3-27) beat Punjab Kings 142 for 9 (Jitesh 44, Thakur 4-36, Axar 2-14, Kuldeep 2-14) by 17 runs

Road gets tough for Bangalore

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY

ONE PLAYOFF spot is officially taken by Gujarat Titans. The next two positions are Rajasthan Royals and Lucknow Super Giants' to lose. Battle is intense for the one remaining place.

RAJASTHAN ROYALS
M: 13, PTS: 16, NRR: 0.304

A win against LSG have all but secured a playoff place for Royals. Only two more teams can now get to 16 points. One of them, RCB, have a negative net run rate.

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS
M: 13, PTS: 16, NRR: 0.262

Successive losses by big margins have pulled Super Giants' net run rate down to 0.262 from 0.703. And yet, KL Rahul's troops sit pretty because of their far superior net run rate.

DELHI CAPITALS
M: 13, PTS: 14, NRR: 0.255

On the face of it, DC now are in a straight fight with RCB. If they win their last game against Mumbai Indians, they will be through, thanks to their very impressive net run rate. If they lose and RCB win against Titans, DC will be knocked out.

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE
M: 13, PTS: 14, NRR: -0.323

Despite being on 14 points, the final group league fixture is a win-or-bust for RCB. Still, they will not get there if DC secure a victory. In the playoffs scrap, RCB have the worst net run rate among all the aspirants.

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS
M: 13, PTS: 12, NRR: 0.160

KKR will have to hope that no other team reaches 16 points.

PUNJAB KINGS
M: 13, PTS: 12, NRR: -0.043

Defeat to DC sort of put paid to their play-offs hopes. Punjab Kings' chance now lies in DC, RCB and KKR losing their respective final league fixtures, while they beating SRH.

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD
M: 12, PTS: 10, NRR: -0.270

Sunrisers are hoping against hope that no other team gets to 16 points and they win massive against MI and Punjab Kings. For example, even if they beat the two by 30 runs each, they won't have a positive net run rate.

Inflation: How bad is it for you, and India's growth story?

In conversation with

Neelkanth Mishra
Part-time Member Economic Advisory Council to PM and Co-Head of Equity Strategy, Asia Pacific and India Equity Strategist, Securities Research, Credit Suisse

Anil Sasi
National Business Editor The Indian Express

In the growth-inflation trade-off, the focus has clearly shifted to reining in prices.

A fortnight ago, the RBI hiked the key policy rate by 40 basis points, the first in four years.

Given the worries about domestic food prices, India has already banned wheat exports.

With the Russia-Ukraine war still unravelling, fuel prices may remain elevated.

Tough measures like more interest rate hikes and liquidity absorption in coming months will kill whatever little demand India is seeing now.

Is stagflation - low growth, high inflation - looming large?

20 MAY 2022

06:00 PM

To register, SCAN

To register, SMS - IIEEXP <space> "IE" <space> "Your name and email ID" to 56161

Confirmation SMS will be your registration

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Kolkata