JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

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#### **BIGGEST TEAM TITLE IN BADMINTON**

## **Team India scales the peak** with first ever Thomas Cup

Sen, Satwik-Chirag duo & Srikanth stun Indonesia in final

**SHIVANI NAIK** MUMBAI, MAY 15

THE VAGUE whiff of a dream turned to reality as the week wore on, and India inched closer to the impossible – Thomas Cup, the ultimate team title in badminton. A dozen players in Bangkok and their coaches, there and in India, believed throughout. It's a little secret that they've known for a month now: they were going to win the Thomas Cup. This was a date with destiny, meticulously envisioned and executed by India's most underrated and talented sportspersons - the men's badminton players.

Kidambi Srikanth, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy. They have travelled CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Kidambi Srikanth (centre) celebrates with teammates after winning his decisive Thomas Cup match against Indonesia's FULL COVERAGE, PAGE 11 Jonatan Christie on Sunday. AP

'This is the real World Cup... proud of this team win'



PULLELA GOPICHAND SPECIAL TO THE **EXPRESS** 

THE MOST heartening aspect of India's Thomas Cup team today was watching Chirag Shetty-Satwiksairaj Rankireddy beat Mohammad Ahsan-Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo. All the previous times that our boys faced CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Gautam Adani with Holcim CEO Jan Jenisch in Ahmedabad, Sunday. PTI

#### Biggest infra materials deal: Holcim's India biz is Adani's for \$10.5 billion

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** MUMBAI, MAY 15

THE ADANI group has acquired Zurich-based Holcim's cement business in India for \$10.5 billion (about Rs 81,000 crore) in action in the infrastructure and materials space.

Through its subsidiaries, Holcim holds 63.19% in Ambuja Cements Ltd and 54.53% in ACC Ltd (of which 50.05% is held through Ambuja Cements). This is the largest ever acquisition by Adani, which beat the JSW and

Aditya Birla groups to the deal. Holcim's exit from India follows several high-profile departures of multinational companies, including Ford, General Motors, Harley Davidson, MAN Truck, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**WORLD** 

**U.S.: GUNMAN KILLS 10 IN LIVESTREAMED RACIST ATTACK** 

**PAKISTAN: TWO SIKH BUSINESSMEN SHOT DEAD PAGE 9** 

#### CONG BRAINSTORMING SESSION ENDS

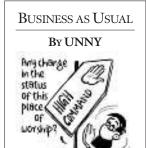
## Rahul admits people connect lost, Sonia announces all-India yatra

MANOJCG

UDAIPUR, MAY 15

HAVING SUFFERED staggering election defeats since 2014 under his leadership and that of his mother Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi on Sunday admitted that the Congress's "connection" with the people is "broken", and needs to be repaired urgently.

To reestablish that connection, Sonia announced the party will undertake a Bharat yatra from October 2 this year. The party also announced a series of organisational reforms at the end of its three-day chintan



shivir here to bring new and young faces into leadership roles.

Action remains to be seen

ADMISSION OF a "broken connection" and announcement of a Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir Yatra is acknowledgment of the need to go back to the people. But as always, the question of implementation remains.

**CHINTAN SHIVIR:** MORE REPORTS PAGE 3 CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

#### **BID TO CHECK REPEAT OF REET PAPER LEAK EXPRESS NETWORK**

## On prohibited list for Rajasthan police test: phones to mehndi

**DEEP MUKHERJEE** JAIPUR, MAY 15

"THEY DIDN'T even let me take this into the examination hall," says Manish Regar, pointing to a metal buckle on his black baseball cap.

Waiting at the Vidhyadhar Nagar stadium for a bus home, the 23-year-old talks incredulously about the strict security measures in place for the constable recruitment exam that began

"They didn't allow this fullsleeved shirt I was wearing either," Regar says, as lathi-wielding policemen from the Rajasthan Armed Constabulary



Manish Regar says he wasn't allowed to take his cap **inside.** Deep Mukherjee

This year, the test conducted by the Raiasthan Police has been held at 470 centres across the CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



**INDIA LOOKS TO BOLSTER CULTURAL TIES WITH NEPAL** PAGE 4



'The only way out is to fight for the cause of the people; a leader then emerges automatically'

BHUPINDER SINGH

HOODA CONGRESS LEADER PAGE 8

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## Entertainer & enigma, life was so much more than cricket for this reluctant star

#### PAGE 1 **ANCHOR**

SANDIPG

NEW DELHI, MAY 15

TWO DAYS before the 2009 World Cup, Andrew Symonds. after months of abstinence from the bottle, snuck out of the hotel room and drank deep into the night. The next morning, Australia's then captain Ricky Ponting confronted him and conveyed the message that he was flying back home.

Symonds was far from being hurt. "Once I had got home from England, and everything had settled down, it was a relief," he



Andrew Symonds 1975-2022

would later say. By that time, playing for his country had become a burden. "I felt like I was

in a cage. Always under the microscope. I wasn't having fun anymore. I wasn't enjoying it,'

he had admitted.

However, world cricket could never get enough of the entertaining all-rounder who was the spine of the Aussie team that intimidated every side they played in the late 90s and early 2000.

Late on Saturday night, Symonds, 46, died in a car crash outside of Townsville in his home state of Oueensland. He played 26 Tests and featured in 198 ODIs scoring six centuries, while also contributing 133 wickets. The ultimate all-purpose player, the IPL champion was on the wish list of all T20 teams.

For Symonds, an unabashed hitter of the cricket ball, playing the game was all about finding joy. But somewhere in his time, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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complaint online with SEBI and subsequently view its status.

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'I ASKED SHAHID KAPOOR, TUM NAACHTE HO KI UDTE HO?:' SUKHWINDER SINGH ON THE GOOSEBUMP-INDUCING HAIDER SONG | SCENE STEALER

In this edition of Scene Stealer, we speak to acclaimed singer Sukhwinder Singh, who won a national Award for his work in Haider song Bismil.

#### **ENTERTAINMENT**



**MARVEL AND THE MADNESS OF CAMEOS** 

Doctor Strange is like a badly done SNL sketch multiverse

#### **TECH**



**REVIEW OF ONEPLUS** 

OnePlus goes out of its skin with a budget flagship

### Dr Bhramar Mukherjee **NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY**

Covid death toll, with

Estimating India's real

**EXPRESS Q** 

In this episode, host Sandip Roy talks to data scientist Bhramar Mukherjee, a professor of epidemiology, biostatistics, and global public health at the University of Michigan

### **FROM PAGE ONE**

#### 'This is the real World Cup... proud of team

Kevin Sanjaya, they lost 11-0. It was as individuals. Today, they had Team India backing their efforts, planning and rooting for them. It made a difference, and this was a first where India played as a unit. Earlier, if Saina was playing, Sindhu wouldn't be there. And if Sindhu played, Saina wasn't around. If the doubles team played, the singles players weren't really invested. This was truly Team India's victory and I was so happy that Satwik-Chirag gave it back to the Indonesians.

In my mind, I knew this was possible, when you do the calculations. But whether it would actually be possible depended on the individual players, and today they pulled it off perfectly, which was wonderful to watch. When we speak of Indian team sport at the highest level, this is the real World Cup that India has won in a game spread globally and with fancied powerhouses. I am proud of being a badminton player today. This was coming for years, but things fell into place now. I might even believe

in the magic of our players. Indonesia, Malaysia, China and Denmark will be in shock tonight, wondering how India won. This will be reported for years. In Malaysia, they still recall stories of how they won a title in 1991 with the Sidek brothers, and they earned Datukhoods (similar to knighthoods) and acres of land. Legends were born. Mind you, the Indonesian and Malaysian teams, the moment they lost, are going to be wondering 'Can I go back home?'. You'll hear 'change the coach, change the association' calls in the aftermath. That's how much the Thomas Cup means to those badminton-crazy nations. Coaches fear for their jobs, and players get shredded. If you had told half the guys in my association the day before that India is winning the Thomas Cup, even they wouldn't believe it.

But the players did. In my time, we've lost 1-5 to Sri Lanka and 2-5 to Pakistan even. For us to qualify for the 16-team elite event used to be mighty, and when we beat Korea and Japan to qualify for that Thomas Cup and Uber Cup (for women) in 1999 Delhi, we thought that's great. Both Prakash (Padukone) sir and I used to play both singles and doubles, we didn't even have doubles specialists then. We would be given two Yonex Tshirts and we would be on our way to these events. So you can understand where we started

and the enormity of this. India's depth has been outstanding. And if there were five more singles, India would have still won. You shouldn't keep fretting about the big gold medal not coming in the Olympics, instead keep pushing in team events. Badminton Association of India, Sports Authority of India and the Government helped us in plans to push 10 players in Top 25 to build more depth. We didn't build this depth in the women's team. The women players would play their own matches and not care for the rest of the team. Saina and Sindhu didn't take the team along, we should have built that culture in the Uber Cup. That's the difference between bronze and gold.

This win comes from H S Prannoy and Kidambi Srikanth not taking their places for granted, also Srikanth and Lakshya Sen fighting for that one spot. But credit to the boys. they competed while helping each other. That's a huge gen-

erous quality. They've each had debacles -- lost at Olympics, not qualified for Olympics, not been centrestage, lost big matches. That fire to prove a point has baked them a little more, which showed in their

Opponents have begun to read Lakshya, and make life difficult for him. He was struggling at the corners, but he stood there and fought like a gladiator. That's character. Srikanth put incredible pressure on Jonatan Christie. It was the same in doubles. Our guys were fighting to be heroes; they were avoiding being labelled as "villains" in their countries.

It's been tough for India's parisons with Saina and raised the bar so much that a barely registers now -- getting subsided. Lakshya made the All-England finals, but only winning it will put him on the same pedestal as Sindhu or Saina. So it's been tough.

There are players who get the chance and pounce on it, like Saina, Sindhu, Jwala (Gutta), and there are those that are not brave enough to make the most of the opportunity. Prannoy, Satwik Chirag, Srikanth, Lajshya proved they are brave enough to take that chance. Winning a final is be-

I will celebrate this win with my family tonight, but the real party will be at the academy tomorrow. But I'm going to wake up, and wonder 'What next?' These boys showing they can win the biggest title means I have to start thinking about the next difficult target.

I remember, Satwik's mother had come to me when he was young, she spoke of how she always dreamt of playing singles. Convincing the likes of Satwik, Dhruv, Krishna or even Gayatri that you can be a decent player in singles but a great one in doubles took effort. This title is validation that big things can happen in doubles. If these men don't clutter their minds with thoughts of money or count medals or becoming celebrities on social media, stay in the moment, play smart and aggressive, then great things will happen. It's not a dream India dreamt actively, but now the country will live the dream with these amazing players.

(The writer is a Sydney Games badminton head coach. He

### Entertainer & enigma, life was so much more than cricket for

as cricket stepped into a more

Along with the sport, the culture around Australian cricket was rapidly changing. Gone was the matey-ship of the Mark Taylor-Steve Waugh era, replaced by a regimented and structured environment of gnarled pros, wherein he felt as imprisoned as suffocated.

He belonged to that in-between generation of cricket, wherein the game had not shed its rustic charm yet not fully embraced modernism. He felt

summed up Symonds perfectly. "In a way he was a bit of an old-fashioned cricketer, who

male players with unfair com-Sindhu. The Indian women Super 500 win for the men into the Top 10, semis, quarters will never be big headlines. If they had lost the final today, all the excitement would have

my life. I like the outdoors, and I like having a good time," he once told the press. As the calendar got busier and restrictions tighter, he craved that me-time. He hated all that new-age jazz -- advertisements, sponsors, interview requests, endless team meetings -- and in the rare time he got, he ravenously took to the bottle, "I would let nothing get in the way of it, and drank as though alcohol were to disappear from the face of the earth.' said the cricketer whose only dream in cricket was to share a drink with his hero Keith Miller, who was as charismatic as he was colourful. Inevitably, Symonds got

Olympian, All England branded a rebel, worse a trouchampion and national

#### Another era, another time, spoke to Shivani Naik) his rogue fishing trip to Darwin would have embellished his cult; the Brendon McCullum rant would have been applauded as a show of Aussie vigour; and him punching someone at the bar or shoulder-charging a streaker would have the world affectionately this reluctant star calling him "one of those char-

cut-throat, professional realm, he became a misfit.

Former captain Mark Taylor

## Team India scales the peak with first ever Thomas Cup

to different outposts of the world, collecting experiences like globetrotters collect magnets for the fridge door. Thomas Cup 2022 was within reach. They knew. they said as much, they hoped the country would believe, they didn't mind if it didn't. They were due this date -- no matter what others reckoned.

On Sunday, India invited history for an elegant cup of tea, demolishing Thomas Cup royalty, Indonesia 3-0 in the finals. Denying them their 15th crown, while winning their first ever. Against all expectations. The reason why India's badminton fraternity read the tea leaves right was because it has closely watched and shepherded India's bunch of excellently proficient singles players, and built from scratch the doubles pairing of Chirag and Satwik.

There are parallels in India's sporting history. India's myriad gold-winning hockey teams. The 1983 World Cup cricket team. The 1971 men from West Indies who copped bouncers on helmet grilles. The 2001 Kolkata Test side that beat back a follow-on. It would be wrong to say the country,

He was a cavalier in an era

of confused roundheads. "I'm

passionate about cricket, but it

is not the be all and end all of

Even the monkeygate inci-

dent, which would follow him

everywhere, would have been

perceived differently, or at least

would not have spiralled into

the melodrama it turned out to

be. "I didn't realise the politics,

the power, the money until this

moment in my career. I didn't

realise how powerful one

player, one incident could be,

how much money was at stake

and the ramifications," he said,

referring to the incident during

India's tour of Australia in 2008.

2009, he was at the heart of al-

most every cricketing scandal

that brewed in Australia. He

was projected as the metaphor

of the decadence that had crept

into Australia's cricket culture.

Between January 2008 and

busy in getting by, was waiting for these. If anything, a minority of two dozen at best nurtured and believed in these dreams.

Lakshva Sen shrugged off a week of being pummelled by a host of top names, to rally from a set down to beat Anthony Ginting 8-21, 21-17, 21-16 on the back of resolute confidence in his defence that ballooned into attacking swagger in the kills. Then, the Satwik-Chirag

doubles duo pulled out the most audacious win of the tie, beating the hallowed Md Sanjaya Ahsan-Kevin Sukamuljo combo 18-21, 23-21, 21-19. Guilty through this season of flubbing 20-18 leads, Satwik-Chirag reversed the trend, winning from four match points away from defeat. This was patiently fought back, as big man Satwiksairaj brought on his big powergame, to support the hopping energiser bunny Chirag Shetty, who has believed more than anyone else. Keeping their nerve, playing fearless badminton, backing their incredible talent, the young Indians gave

India the 2-0 lead. Nothing oozes more class than Kidambi Srikanth playing the match of his lifetime

that if found drunk, he would

immediately be axed from the

team, before the 2009 T20

World Cup. As it turned out, he

no regrets. "The only real regret

I have in cricket was signing

that contract. If I had my time

again I would have said, 'You

know what? There is no way

I'm signing that'," he later said.

Symonds was just being

Symonds. True to himself, his

instincts and values, those that

would have endeared him to

the masses in a different era, he

found himself judged by an era

that was at odds with his spirit,

like a bird imprisoned in a

golden cage. He loved cricket,

but perhaps he loved himself

cricketer was his own tussle

with the changing times, a bat-

tle he was doomed to lose.

people connect

all-India Yatra

the brainstorming session,

there were indications that

Rahul is likely to return as

Congress president later this

year. While Sonia delivered a

short speech, Rahul spoke at

dent attacked the BJP govern-

ment at the Centre, accusing it

of spreading hatred, pressuring

the judiciary, arm-twisting the

Election Commission, destroy-

ing institutions, and muzzling

But his focus was more on

preparing the party to "go back

to the people"; he told the chin-

tan shivir there were no "short-

cept that its "connection" with

The party will have to ac-

the media.

cuts" to revival.

The former Congress presi-

Rahul admits

lost, Sonia

announces

The crux of Symonds the

even more.

Here, as well in the past,

But Symonds, typically, had

did, and was axed forever.

would not have been out of He was fined and sacked sev-

place playing in the '70s or '80s. eral times, made to apologise

He just wanted to entertain." and made to sign an agreement

though he would later wisely refuse to compare his various wins ever since he beat Lin Dan in China. This time, he stamped his sheer class against Jonatan Christie, winning 21-15, 23-21. There were audacious reflex returns at the net. There was resistance from Christie in the second. And then there was the signature Srikanth shot, an NFT that will stay priceless in traditional currency or bitcoin: the set-up smash and then the charging follow-up as he ran to the net for the matchpoint.

There have been fewer things more inevitable in Indian sport than the Srikanth crosscourt smash that sealed the deal, though this one will get tattooed in millions of memories. It wasn't just a smash, it was a crosscourt smash, a dipping, history demanding, dominating, crosscourt, jump smash as he leapt in the air, and time stopped, to bring India its unforgettable Thomas Cup triumph. No one could stop jumping thereafter. No one could stop tears from flowing down.

Srikanth was asked why it mattered in a day and age when the Thomas Cup didn't carry any prize money.

reestablishing that connection.

Rahul said. The entire focus of

the Congress currently is on

"internal matters" such as who

is getting what post, he said,

and asked the leaders to turn

their attention towards the

discussion, our conversation...is

matters...who is getting which

post. Internally that is our fo-

cus. In today's time this inter-

nal focus will not work. Our fo-

cus should be external. We will

have to turn our gaze to the

people and we will have to go

to the people. Not just for

us...for the country... Be it our

senior leaders, junior leaders,

or workers, we should go to the

people and sit with them with-

out thinking about anything...,'

sues...we should understand.

And the connection that we

used to have with the

people...jo Congress party ka

connection janta se toota hai

usko hame accept karna

padega... We will have to

connection...the people want

that... They understand that

only the Congress can take the

The party will take out a ya-

"That is the only way...

tra in October to strengthen the

connection with the people,

Shortcuts will not help. It can-

not be done through any short-

cuts. It can only happen by

shedding sweat. We can do it.

You can do it. We have the abil-

ity and that is our DNA. This or-

ganisation has come out of the

people and we will have to go

tional Kanyakumari to Kashmir

Bharat Jodo Yatra beginning on

Gandhi Jayanti this year". "All

of us will participate in it," she

said. "The Yatra is to strengthen

the bonds of social harmony

that are under stress, to pre-

serve the foundational values

of our Constitution that are un-

Sonia announced a "na-

to the people again," he said.

"Their (the people's) is-

Rahul said.

reestablish

Rahul said.

country forward....'

"It is a complaint, Our entire

us, they said 'India won the Thomas Cup'. Not that Srikanth won or Prannoy won. But India won. Not everyone has the privilege to experience this feeling," said the man with solid old-world ethics, unblemished by the pulls-and-pushes of commerce all around him. Both Lakshya Sen in this tournament, and Satwik-

"Today after people watched

Chirag over the last few months have copped some narrow losses that can break spirits. But on this day, all three fought from the brink, trailing a set each, clawing back from the valley of doom, to scale an ascent unprecedented in India's history. "Our record against the Indonesians was poor. But when it mattered, Satwik-Chirag delivered," coach Vimal Kumar said. This was true of young

Lakshya Sen, too. He braved a storm of losses -- literally copping some big bruising losses, and then flew fast enough for the sand to fill up his nostrils against Ginting. Ginting is the circuit's fastest. Sen out-blitzed him.

India. Thomas Cup champs. Who'd've thunk? The players and their coaches sure did.

the people has been snapped, der assault and to highlight the and it should work towards day-to-day concerns of crores

> Concluding her short address, Sonia said the party would surely overcome the challenges it faces. "We will overcome. We will overcome. We will overcome. That is our determination. That is our nav sankalp (new resolve). The Congress will have a new uday (rise). That is our nav sankalp,

Rahul said his fight was against the ideology of the RSS-BIP and the "hatred and violence that they spread".

"For me it is the fight for my life... I cannot accept that hatred, violence and anger can be spread in our dear nation. We are up against some big forces. RSS and the BJP organisation, all the institutions... Don't think we are fighting against a political party. We are not fighting against a political party...the political party is just a part. We are fighting against every institution of India. We are fighting against the biggest crony capitalists... That is the fact," he said.

He was not afraid, Rahul said. "I am not scared of these forces. I don't care. I have not done corruption in my entire life. I haven't taken a single penny from Bharat mata. I am not scared of speaking the truth... Together we will defeat the BJP and the RSS organisa-

tion and their ideology," he said. Some senior leaders and workers of the party sometimes feel depressed, Rahul said. "It is normal. The fight is not easy. Don't think the fight

Regional parties cannot take on the RSS-BJP, he said, "because this is a battle of ideologies". "You have seen the ideology of the RSS is fighting against the ideology of the Congress. BJP will talk about the Congress, its leaders and workers but will not talk about regional parties. Because they know that regional parties have a space but they cannot defeat the BIP. Because they don't have an ideology. They have different approaches. We have a cenis about ideology."

tralized approach. And our fight

"This is not a political fight. This is a fight for the future of the country and to save the country... It is our responsibility to go to the people and say you are being divided...and the country will be weakened because of that. No one will benefit. The country will suffer because of that," he said.

#### Adani picks up Holcim's India business, will be 2nd largest cement maker

Hutchison, Etisalat, Fidelity, and Citibank, which sold its retail business recently, and some investment banks. Holcim said the correspon-

ding offer share prices of Rs 385 for Ambuja Cement and Rs 2,300 for ACC translate into cash proceeds of CHF 6.4 billion.

Ambuja Cements and ACC currently have a combined installed production capacity of 70 MTPA. "The two companies are among the strongest brands in India with immense depth of manufacturing and supply chain infrastructure, represented by their 23 cement plants, 14 grinding stations, 80 ready-mix concrete plants and over 50,000 channel partners across India," Adani said.

With this acquisition, Adani is now India's second largest cement manufacturer after Ultratech Cement of the Aditya Birla group.

Gautam Adani, chairman, Adani group, said: "With Holcim's global leadership in sustainability, we are acquiring some of the most efficient building materials operations in India, powered with clean technologies like heat recovery systems."

The Adani group last year set up two cement subsidiaries Adani Cementation Ltd, which was planning to set up two cement units at Dahej in Gujarat and Raigarh in Maharashtra; and Adani

"We recognize that Ambuja and ACC operations are energy intensive and therefore when combined with our renewable power generation capabilities we gain a big head start in the decarbonisation journey that is a must for Indian industry, Adani said.

Shares of Ambuja Cements which has a market capitalisation of Rs 71,244 crore, closed 3.79% down at Rs 358.80 on Friday. ACC closed with a loss of 3.02% at Rs 2.113.70 and a market capitalisation of Rs 39,692 crore.

Holcim CEO Jan Jenisch said: "In the last twelve months, we have invested CHF 5 billion in Solutions & Products as a new growth engine for the company, while continuously pursuing bolt-ons in aggregates and ready-mix concrete. Holcim is ready to seize further opportunities, in line with our 'Strategy 2025 – Accelerating Green Growth', to become the global leader in innovative and sustainable building solutions.'

Holcim bought Ambuia Cement for \$800 million in 2005. ACC was bought by Ambuja in three tranches from the Tata group for Rs 370 per share between 1999 and 2001.

With India's cement consumption at just 242 kg per capita, compared to the global average of 525 kg per capita, there is significant potential for the growth of the cement sector in the country.

While India continues to be the world's second largest cement market, it has less than half the global average per capita cement consumption,

"In statistical comparison,

China's cement consumption is over seven times that of India's. When these factors are combined with the several adjacencies of our existing businesses that include the Adani Group's ports and logistics business, energy business, and real estate business, we believe that we will be able to build a uniquely integrated and differentiated

business model and set our-

selves up for significant capac-

ity expansion," Adani said.

#### Phone jammers in place, mehandi a no-no: Rajasthan hopes to avoid another paper leak

state. Spread over four days. the test will see around 19 lakh candidates, like Regar, vying for jobs.

And with the sting of last year's Rajasthan Eligibility Examination for Teachers exam or REET still fresh, security has been stepped up as the government desperately hopes to avoid a REET-like situation.

Apart from the usual screening for prohibited items, candidates have to go through a biometric identification system and jammers block mobile phone signals in and around the venue.

Held last September, the REET exam was nullified after it was found that the question paper had been leaked just two days before the test and sold for Rs 1 crore. This happened despite the government suspending internet services in several parts of the state to prevent cheating - a move that earned the government severe flak.

The REET scandal had come as a major embarrassment for the ruling Congress, with Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot removing the chairman of the Raiasthan Board of Secondary Education (RBSE) which conducted the test.

What was more embarrassing was that those arrested for leaking the paper included officials deputed by the RBSE to oversee the test.

This time around, as free bus services ferried candidates to and from their respective exam centres, caution remains high. ADG (recruitment and promotion board) Binita Thakur says only police personnel and invigilators have been allowed to be present inside the exam centres.

With a digital biometric system in place too, she says, candidates, particularly women, have been instructed not to have mehandi or ink on their

With REET scheduled to be held again this year, the Rajasthan Assembly in March passed The Rajasthan Public Examination (Measures for Prevention of Unfair Means in Recruitment) Bill, 2022, which allows for a 10-year jail besides Rs 10 crore fine for those caught cheating in government recruitment exams.

However, incidents of gangs indulging in unfair means during examinations have contin-

On Friday, as the constable recruitment exam began, police in Bhiwandi arrested two people for allegedly duping candidates by offering to show them the question paper for Rs 15 lakh.

Back at the bus stand near Vidhyadhar Nagar stadium, a candidate has lost his wallet and an announcer makes a fervent appeal. "There was nothing much in the wallet but family photos. Please return it. Bhawnaaon ke samman karein (please respect sentiments)."

## Sonia announces task force to drive reforms, advisory group

AT THE end of the three-day chintan shivir here, the Congress on Sunday announced a raft of organisational reform measures to bring in new and young faces to leadership levels at all levels. Buried in the Udaipur declaration adopted by the shivir was a suggestion by the youth panel that a "retirement age" should be fixed for all "elected posts" and

All the other proposals which the party had been talking about over the past three days – one family, one ticket rule with a caveat; one person, one post; 50 per cent representation for those below 50 years of age at all levels, including the CWC and five-year term limit for those holding positions at all levels - were also

over the last three days"

These reforms with a focus on the 2024 Lok Sabha polls will cover all aspects of the organisation, including structure, rules for appointments to party posts, communications and publicity, outreach, finances and election management. The composition of the task force will be notified in

cided to set up an "advisory group"



Sonia Gandhi with Mallikarjun Kharge, P Chidambaram, Bhupinder Hooda and other party leaders on Sunday, PTI

meet regularly to discuss and deliberate upon political issues and challenges before the party.

The BIP has a Margdarshak Mandal mechanism where it has parked some of its seniors.

Sonia said the new group will not be a collective decision-making body "but will help me get the benefit of the vast experience of senior colleagues". Her stress was interesting as the G 23 leaders of the party had been seeking a revival of the parliamentary board mechanism for collective thinking and decision making. The proposal was not accepted by the CWC.

Asked about enforcing an age-ceiling, a veteran leader told The Indian Express "that will also come". Age ceiling, he said, was suggested in the meeting of the CWC, which approved the declaration "but not announced in deference to the elders sitting there".

The declaration also includes

Regional parties can't fight BJP,

aged under 50 and the same criteria will be applied while selecting candidates beginning the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. In his speech, Rahul Gandhi

ments will be reserved for those

mentioned the one family, one ticket rule. He argued it was time to transform the nature of the Congress party.

"Not the nature in terms of its

thinking, not the nature in terms of its ideology but the nature in terms of the way we do our work. The 21st century is about communication. And there is one area where our opponents outdo us is in communication. They have much more than us and they are better at communication than we are. So we must think about communication... completely reform our communication systems and communicate with the people of India, with the young-

number of positions should be

to save democracy...and keep the

options open for alliances wher-

ever necessary according to the

tablish contact and engage with

all social, cultural, NGOs, trade

unions, think-tanks and civil so-

The shivir saw leaders ex-

pressing divergent opinions on

the question of alliances. While

many favoured it, some argued

the party should go alone as al-

pled the organisation in many

states. This contradiction and

confusion perhaps reflected in

Rahul's speech and the declara-

Sonebhadra (U.P.) as detailed below.

Earnest Money (Rs.): Rs. 21,000/-

Website: www.upjvn.org

of time available, to redeem the secured assets

Account

9000006349

Name of Obligor(s)/

Legal Heir(s)/Legal

Representative(s)

Mr. Mohammad Harun &

Mrs. Reshama Bano

It also said the party will es-

political situation".

ciety groups.

tion as well.

"I am not saying there should be no older people. But I am saying when it comes to PCCs, block Congress committees... when it comes to our leadership we should have a healthy mix of voungsters and seniors. And l think the time has come where we aggressively do this... Where we aggressively put new DCCs,

new PCCs...." he said. Importantly, he said, "We must ensure the idea that one person per family should get a

"I know (AICC general secretary in charge of organisation) Venugopal has made a caveat to that but I do think that it is very important that we limit the number of family members that are involved in our organisation. Let them work, let them develop and then let them join the organisation but we must not have a situation where 5 or 6 or 7 members of a family are in the organisation," he said.

The caveat is that the sons, daughters, and other relatives of Congress leaders who aspire to contest elections should have worked for the party for at least five years. This rule will in effect exempt many of the families.

The other decisions include setting up an in-house mechanism - a public insight department - to conduct surveys to gauge the mood of the people, a separate election management department and an assessment wing to to monitor and evaluate performance of office-bearers at all levels were also announced.

**FULL REPORT ON** www.indianexpress.com

Muslim group

wants Cong to

field one from

Jaipur: A Muslim group has

urged Congress President Sonia

Gandhi to field at least one can-

didate of the community from

Rajasthan for the Rajya Sabha

elections, to be held next month.

gave a copy of its letter to Chief

Minister Ashok Gehlot as well as

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi

from Rajasthan, four are falling

vacant in June 2022. Going by the

number of Congress MLAs in

Rajasthan, of the four vacant seats

from the state, at least three party

candidates are likely to win the

polls for the Upper House. PTI

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e-Tender Notice No. 01/EE(Design)/2022-23

Online e-Tenders in two parts are invited from manufacturers or accredited

representatives for Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 02 No

132 KV SF6 Circuit Breaker at Obra Hydro-electric Project, Obra

Last date for submission of e-bids online: 10.06.2022 (upto 14.00 hrs.)

Part-I of the e-bid shall contain uploaded techno-commercial bid along

vith documents in support of deposition of tender fee & earnest money

(EMD). If EMD is submitted in form of BG then the original copy of same

hall be submitted along with hard copy of techno-commercial bid

documents. Part-II shall contain price bid. Tender can be downloaded from

and uploaded on e-procurement website: www.etender.up.nic.in. Last

date for submission of hard copy of techno-commercial bids shall be

13.06.2022 (upto 12.00 hrs.). Date of opening of price bid shall be

ntimated later. Undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all

he bids without assigning any reason thereof. Bidders should keep

hemselves updated in regard to publication of corrigendum (if any) by

visiting e-procurement portal regularly. If the date of opening will be a

Regd. Office: 09, Community Centre, Basant Lok, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi - 110057
Phone: 011 49267000, Toll Free Number: 1800 212 8800, Email: customer.care@herohfl.com
Website: www.herohousingfinance.com | CINI: U65192DL2016PLC30148
Contact Address: Building No. 07, 2nd Floor, Community Center,
Basant Lok, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi- 110057.

POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Hero Housing Finance Limited, unde

the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13/12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued a demand notices as mentioned below calling upon the

Borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of the said notice

The borrower, having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower, in particular

and the public, in general, that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule

The borrower, in particular, and the public in general, are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Hero Housing Finance

Limited, for an amount referred to below along with interest thereon and penal interest, charges, costs

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respec

Description of Secured Assets/Immovable Properties: All That piece and parcel of Residential Plot Bearing No. D-224, Situated at Block-D, Sector-8, Vidhyadhar Nagar, Area Admeasuring 50

**Date of Demand** 

Notice/Amount as

per Demand Notice

as on date 22/02/2022

22/02/2022, Rs.28,40,267

Date of Possessio

Physical)

Constructive

**HERO HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED** 

noliday, the tender shall be opened on next working day at the same time.

. Cost of Tender inclusive of GST @ 18% (Rs.): Rs. 3540/-

B. Date of Opening (Part-I):13.06.2022 (at 14.30 hrs.)

Out of 10 Rajya Sabha seats

and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

The Rajasthan Muslim Alliance

community

**RS POLLS** 

### Cong deputy chief whip among 8 booked for trader's murder

**PRESSTRUST OF INDIA** 

THE RAJASTHAN government's deputy chief whip in the state assembly Mahendra Choudhary and seven others have been booked for their alleged involvement in the murder of a trader in Nagaur district, officials said

Jaipal Poonia, a salt trader, was shot dead by around six  $men\,in\,broad\,daylight\,in\,Nawan$ town in Nagaur district on Saturday. Poonia's family has accused Choudhary and his associates of being involved in the attack. Choudhary termed the allegation baseless and politically motivated.

A case against Choudhary and seven others was lodged at Nawan Police Station under Indian Penal Code sections 302 (murder) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) following a complaint by the family of Poonia, police said.

In the FIR lodged by the victim's wife, she alleged that on the directions of Choudhary, who is the ruling Congress MLA from Nawan, his brother Moti Singh, Moolchand Saini, Virendra Saini and others killed her husband. "My husband left home at 10.30 am for court on Saturday but returned at 11 am, saying the hearing would be held at 12.30 pm. While having lunch, he told me that the MLA and others are trying to implicate him in a false case. He said he was getting threats and

According to police, Poonia has several criminal cases registered against him.

may be killed," she alleged.

Reacting to the allegation, Choudhary said, "All the charges are baseless, politically motivated."

Meanwhile, Nagaur MP and Rashtriya Loktantrik Party leader Hanuman Beniwal has demanded a CBI probe in the case. saying the incident shows that there is no fear of police among criminals.

#### RAPE CASE AGAINST PHED MINISTER'S SON

## Delhi cops reach Jaipur, Joshi says will cooperate

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** JAIPUR, MAY 15

A DELHI Police team arrived in Jaipur Sunday to arrest state minister Mahesh Joshi's son Rohit Joshi, nearly a week after he was booked on charges of rape, but could not find him, officials said.

Police officials said Rohit was not home when the team reached there. Later, they declared Rohit as having absconded.

Rohit's father Mahesh Joshi, who holds the PHED portfolio in the Gehlot-led Congress government, said he will cooperate with the investigation into the case. But he urged that a "media trial" should not be held.

"No police official has contacted me so far. I have said before as well that I am a law abiding man, and am with justice and truth. Whenever the Delhi Police contacts me, whatever they ask me, I will give appropriate answers and will cooperate in the investigation," he told reporters in Jaipur.

> at Khasra No.525 & 526 Adm. Area 13642 Sq. Mtr.

> > 2022

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6,26,58,124.17/-Rupees Six Crore

Twenty Six Lakh

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**Hundred Twenty** 

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Seventeen

Only) as

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with future interest

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01.04.2021, less

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Rupees Two Crore

Eighty One Lakh

Eighty One

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interest and

incidental

charges w.e.f.

01.04.2021, Less

Credit thereafter, if

any

A 23-year-old Jaipur-based woman has accused Rohit of raping her on multiple occasions between January 8, 2021, and April 17 this year.

The FIR, lodged by the woman in Delhi, says she had had a miscarriage and was abducted by Rohit to force her into marriage. The woman has said she registered the case in Delhi because she feared she would not get justice as Joshi wields sig-

nificant influence in Rajasthan. The charges against Rohit include drug use, criminal intimidation, molestation, and unnatural offences. He has now been summoned to appear before the

Delhi Police by May 18. Asked whether Rohit will appear before the Delhi Police, Joshi said: "Legal opinion will have to be taken." He declined to comment further.

Meanwhile, civil rights and women's groups including the PUCL, AIDWA, NFIW and AIPWA wrote a letter to CM Ashok Gehlot, demanding Rohit's arrest

#### punjab national bank ...the name you can BANK upon!

(Under Rule 8(1) Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule 2002)

The Authorized Officer of Punjab National Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of

edeem the secured assets. The borrowers/guarantors not to deal with the property . Any dealing with the property nd interest thereon. Details of the mortgaged Properties of Properties on

e, Rajasthan-343041. Adm ad, South: Other Agriculture 114.08.2014 a Rajasthan-343041, Adm ed, South: Other Agriculture

est: Other Agriculture Land d 14.08.2814, in the name of at Khasra 524, Badsam ea 56364.43 Sq. Mtr. Norti

e Land, East: Property of est: Other Agriculture Land d 13.10.2017, in the name :

& 1/141/1, Old No: 67 elhi Gate, Tehsil & District Smt. Meena Agarwal & Sh Serial No.: 3345, Date: 18,07,2005, Bounded: On the North by : Gallery Then House of Sanat Kumar Jain, On the South by : Stairs & Flat No: A-4. On the

2. Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor- EM of Land & Building Situated at Khasra No: 532, Village M/s Redefined Cardboard Badsam, Tehsi – Sanchore, Jalore-343841, (Rajasthan), Area Private Limited, Sh. Naveen 6162.69 sq. mtrs., (in the name of M/s Redefined Cardboard Bansal (Director & Guarantor) & Private Limited), Sale Deed No: 2014001157, Dated 26.02.2014 Sh. Arpit Agarwal (Director & Bounded: On the North by: Property of Puraram Koli & Others, On the South by : Road On the East by : Other's Property, On the West by: Remaining Part of Khasra No: 532.

3. Borrower / Mortgagor / Guarantor- 1,EM of Commercial Space Gaumata Bhawan, Basement-1 M/s Parthvimeda Panchgavya Medicare Centre, Behind MJ Library, Elisbridge, Ashram Road Utpad Pvt. Ltd., Sh. Manish Ahmedabad, (Gujarat), Area 509 sq. ft., (In the name of Mis Agarwal (Director & Guarantor), Partvimeda Panchgavya Utpad Pvt. Ltd.), Sale Deed No: 5078 Sh. Rajeev Agarwal (Director & Dated 04.09.2012 Bounded: On the North by : Road, On the South Guarantor), Sh. Anoop Kumar by Road, On the East by Basement - II, Wall, On the West by Agarwal (Director & Guarantor), Common Passage & Shop No. 15 & 16

Mis. Parthumeda, Gay Energy 2, EM of Commercial Property Situated at Shop No. LG-23 M/s Parthvimeda Gau Energy Shawna Multiplex (On Plot No: C-1/20 & C-1/1), Sector- 13. Pvt. Ltd., (Mortgagor & Skandra, Near Kargl Petrol Pump, Agra 282007, (UP), Ares Vidhya Pvt. Ltd., (Mortgagor & On the Westby: Shop of LG-22.

Guarantor), M/s Navya 100.33 sq. mtrs., (in the name of M/s Dev Woodzone Pvt. Ltd.) Education Pvt Ltd (Mortgagor & Sale Deed 8593, Dated 07.08.2014, Bounded; On the North by Guarantor), M/s Sachetan Parking, On the South by : Corridor, On the East by : Land Others Guarantor), Sh. Praveen Kumar 3. EM of Flat No: 207, Second Floor, Prateek Tower, Block No Purohit s/o Sh. Samta Ram Ji 54/4, Sanjay Palace, Hari Parwat Ward, Agra, (UP), Area 102.15

(Mortgagor & Guarantor) & M/s sq. mtrs., (in the name of M/s Navya Education Pvt. Ltd.), Salt Deed No: 5079, Dated 04:09:2013. Bounded: On the North by (Mortgagor & Guarantor), Sh. to Sky, On the West by: Common Passage.

Ajay Kumar S/o Shri Ram 4, EM of Flat No: 208, Second Floor, Prateek Tower, Block No: Charan (Guarantor), Shri Shiv 54/4, Sanjay Palace, Hari Parwat Ward, Agra. (UP), Area 76.45 sq

Sky, On the South by : Flat No: 207, On the East by : Open to Sky On the West by : Passage. EM of Commercial Land & Building Situated at Khata No: 532 & 541, Village – Badsam, Tehsil – Sanchore District – Jalore – 343041, (Rajasthan), Area 38100-6163 = 31937 sq. mtrs., (In the name of M/s Parthvimed: Gau Energy Pvt Ltd) sale Deed No. 2013002433 Dated 22.03.2013. Bounded: On the North by : 4 Meter Read

e West by : Other Agriculture Land. (A) Hypothecation of all the Plant & Machinery Purchased/to be purchased Situated at Khata No: 532 & 541

Badsam, Khasra 778/541 Godham, Mahatirth, Pathmeda, Sanchore. (B) Hypothecation of Stocks of Raw Materials, Stock in Progress, Finished Goods of Materials of Cow Milk Sugar and Other Raw Materials/Chemicals/Consumable Stores & Packing Materials Used or to be Used for Manufacturing of Milk Products, Sundry Debtors and all Present & Future other Chargeable Current Assets o

6. EM of Factory Land & Building Situated at Village - Badsam, Khasra No: 778/541, Godham, Mahalirth athmeda, Sanchore, Area 9600 sq. mtrs., (In the name of M/s Partvimeda Panchgavya Utpad Pvt Ltd), Sal Deed No: 2010000937, Dated 16.03.2010 Bounded: On the North by : Road, On the South by : Land of Khasr No. 541, On the East by : Land of Khasra No. 541. On the West by : Remaining Part of Khasra No. 778/541. (A) Hypothecation of Stocks of Raw Materials, Stock in Progress, Finished Goods of Materials of Cow Milk Sugar and Other Raw Materials/Chemicals/Consumable Stores & Packing Materials Used or to be Used fo

#### 😊 Oriental Bank of Commerce 🚳 United Bank of India Circle Office, 1-2, Raghunath Nagar, M.G Raod, Agra POSSESSION NOTICE For Movable/Immovable Properties

Security Interest Act , 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule - 3 of the Security interest ( Enforcement ) Rules , 2002, issued demand notice on the date mentioned against account and stated here under calling upon the borrowers/guarantors/ mortgagors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being together with future interest at contractual rate on the aforesaid amount and incidental expenses, costs, charges etc. within (50) sixty days from the date of receipt of said notice. The borrower/guarantor/mortgagor having failed to repay the amount notice is hereby given to the borrower/guarantors/ mortgagors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken the Symbolic possession of the properties described herein below in exercise to powers conferred on him / her under section 13 (4) of the said act read with the Rule 8 of the said Rules on the date mentioned hereunder. The borrower's / guarantor's / Mortgagor's attention is invited to the provision of Sub - Section

Si No		Details of the Morigaged which possession
1.	M/s Parthvimeda Gau Pharma Pvt. Ltd., Sh. Madan Gopal Agarwal (Director, Mortgagor & Guarantor), Sh. Arpit Agarwal (Director & Guarantor) & Smt. Meena Agarwal (Mortgagor & Guarantor) Branch-Surya Nagar, Agra	1. EM of Industrial Property Situated Badsam, Sanchore, Rajasthan-343041/ (A) Khasra No.526, Badsam, Sanchore Area 7204.08 Sq., Mtr. North Public Roaland, East: Other Agriculture Land, Well Original Perpetual Lease No. 2564 dated (B) Khasra No.525, Badsam, Sanchore Area 6438.00 Sq., Mtr. North Public Roaland, East: Other Agriculture Land, Wellington Perpetual Lease No. 2563 dated Mts Parthyimeda Gau Pharma Private Linder Property Situated Sanchore Rajasthan-343041, Adm. Are Public Road, South: Other Agriculture Parthyimeda Gau Pharma Private Linder Road, South: Other Agriculture Parthyimeda Gau Pharma Private Linder State (Mts Parthyimeda Gau Pharma Private Linder

Guarantor) Branch-Surya Nagar, Agra

Nath Sengar S/o Shri Ram Pall mtrs., (In the name of M/s Sachetan Vidhya Pvt. Ltd.), Sale Dee Singh Senger (Guarantor),

Branch-Surya Nagar, Agra

Dev Woodzone Pvt. Ltd. Flat No: 208 On the South by : Flat No: 206, On the East by : Ope

No: 5078, Dated 04:09:2013. Bounded: On the North by : Open to

& Other Agriculture Land, On the South by ; Other Agriculture Land, On the East by ; Other Agriculture Land, On filage - Badsam, Tehsil - Sanchore, District - Jalore - 343041, (Rajasthan) & also situated at Village

Manufacturing of Milk Products, Sundry Debtors and all Present & Future other Chargeable Current Assets of

(B) Hypothecation of all the Plant & Machinery Purchased to be purchased Situated at Khata No: 532 & 541 Village-Badsam, Tehsil-Sanchore, District-Jalore-343041, (Rajasthan) & also situated at Village Badsar

Place: Agra, Date: 13.05.2022

Jaipur

Authorised Office

#### भवदीय (राहुल शर्मा) क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी

UDAIPUR, MAY 15

in Parliament, assemblies and legislative councils.

announced by the party. Party president Sonia Gandhi announced that a "Compact Task Force" will be set up to drive the process of internal reforms "that are essential and that have been discussed in different groups

the next two-three days," she said.

drawn from the CWC that would

sters in a new way." he said. He said the idea that certain Besides. Sonia said she has dea suggestion by the youth panel that in the future, 50 per cent of all posts in Congress govern-

Declaration says party will keep doors open for alliances

have no ideology, says Rahul

MANOJCG

UDAIPUR, MAY 15

FORMER CONGRESS president Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said his party alone can fight the BJP as regional parties neither have an ideology nor a centralised approach. The declaration adopted at the end of the three-day chintan shivir of the party, on the other hand, said the party will keep the doors open for alliances depend-

ng on the political situat Arguing that the political battle in India is between the ideologies of the Congress and BJP/RSS, he said this battle can-

not be fought by a regional party. Rahul said it was the Congress's responsibility to protect the institutions and restart the conversation between different religions and castes and between the states which the BIP government is trying to subvert and break. "No regional party will do this. The BJP or the RSS

will not do it," he said. "Regional parties belong to some caste. They don't represent

everyone," he said. This battle cannot be fought by a regional party. Because this is a battle of ideology. The ideology of the RSS is fighting against

#### NAME CHANGE

Kuldeep Kumar s/o Laxmi Narayan R/o Agra, UP has changed my name from Kuldeep Kumar to KULDEEF SINGH vide affidavit No IN-UP79930195000107U dt 02 May 22. Henceforth, I will be known as Kuldeep Singh.

Rahul speaks during Chintan Shivir, Sunday. PTI

the ideology of the Congress. The BJP will talk about the Congress, not talk about regional parties. Because they know that regional parties have a space but they cannot defeat the BJP because they don't have an ideology. They have different approaches. We have a centralised approach. And our

fight is about ideology," he said. The Udaipur declaration adopted by the party, at the same time, said that while the party on its own and through its organisational strength can make inroads and create ground, it was "committed to establish contact and have dialogue with all like-minded parties in the national interest and

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

Mrs. Munni Sharma W/o Mr. Prahlad Sharma proposed the mortgage of Part of Ward No. 02. (New Ward 04) Village Kuchaman City, Tehsil-Kuchaman City & District-Nagaur, Rajasthan; admeasuring area 233.66 Sq. Yds. to our client LICHFL Kishangarh Ajmer, and Anyone having any objections regarding Loss Doument/ Ownership of Mrs. Munni Sharma so, may contact with us within 15 days of this notice.

For LEGAL ASSOCIATES SANDEEP TAK (Advocate) Add.: Plot No. 57, Sarvodaya Colony, Near Vishnu Temple, Jawahar Nagar, Police Line, Ajmer -305001, Rajasthan Contact: 9785397883/0145-2627883

क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय राजस्थान राज्य प्रदूषण नियंत्रण मण्डल, एस-ए-6, मण्डिया रोड, औद्योगिक क्षेत्र, पाली Ph. 02932-231616 क्रमांक राप्रनिम/क्षै.का./पी.एम.–890/502 पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति समूह खनन परियोजना हेतु लोक सुनवाई के लिए आम सूचना ण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मैसर्स पी.एम. इन्टरनेशनल (प्रो. श्री पृथ्वीसिंह पुत्र १ खित है आटी ), प्लाट नं, 14, खानन क्षेत्रफल 3,00 हैक्टेयर व उत्पादन क्षमता 336000 टन प्रति वर्ष (रोम (बोनाईट का उत्पादन 201600 टीपीए एवं वेस्ट 134400 टीपीए), खसरा सं, 3428 एवं 3401, बाग नाडा द्वारा बोनाईट कलस्टर खनन परियोजना (मैसर्स पी एम. इन्टरनेशनल, प्लाट नं, 14, खनन क्षेत्रफल 3.0 हैवटेयर व उत्पादन क्षामता 336000 टन प्रति वर्ष (रोम), श्री केतुशाई पुत्र श्री नरसिंह शाई पटेल, प्लाट नं, 2 खनन क्षेत्रफल 3.00 उत्पादन क्षमता 364829 टीपीए (आर.ओम.एम.) कुल वलस्टर क्षेत्रफल 6.0 हैक्टर कुल वलस्टर उत्पादन क्षमता 700829 टीपीए (आर.ओ.एम.) ग्राम नाडोल तहसील देसुरी जिला- पाली स सम्बंधित प्रस्तातित समूह बोनाईट कलस्टर खनल परियोजना खनक परियोजना बावा बाद्म पार्डाना पास सर सम्बंधित प्रस्तातित समूह बोनाईट कलस्टर खनल परियोजना खनक परियोजना बावान्त्र पार्डाना प्रवादस्था दस्तावेज पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु स्टेट इनवायरमेन्द्र इम्पेवट एसेसमेन्ट ऑधीरिटी, पर्यावरण विभाग,

ाजस्थान सरकार, जयपुर के समक्ष<sup>े</sup> प्रस्तृत किया गया है। , और चुंकि मैसर्स पी एँम, इन्टरनेशनल ने उक्त परियोजना के लिये पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति के संबंध ट. जार यू.फ स्तरत प.सून. इन्टरन्स्नाल न उपरा पारवणना का तथा पवापरणाय स्वाकृत क तथा म प्रयविराणीय लोक सुनवाई हैं। जावेदन मय दस्तावेजों के राजस्थान राज्य प्रदूषण नियंत्रण मण्डल (यहां तथा बाद में मण्डल के नाम से अभिलिखित) के समक्षा प्रस्तुत किया गया है।

3. चूंकि मण्डल को उत्तत परियोजना हेतु पर्यावरण, बन एवं जनवाय परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली द्धारा जारी अधिसूचना संख्या एस.ओ. 1533 दिनांक 14/09/2006 के प्रावधानों के अनुसरण में लोक सुनवार हेतु इस आश्रय की सूचना जारी कर 30 दिनस का नोटिस दिया जाना अनिवार्य हैं। . . उक्त परियोजना से सम्बन्धित पर्यावरणीय प्रभाव आंकलन रिपोर्ट एवं संक्षिप्त कार्यपालक सार निम

क्रपालन ने प्रचानक्ष्य (1) कार्यालय किला क्लेस्टर, पाली। (2) कार्यालय जिला उद्योग केन्द्र, पाली। (3)कार्यालय खानिक अभियंता, सोजत सिटी जिला पाली। (4) उपखण्ड कार्यालय, तहसील देसुरी, जिला पाली। (5) जन सम्पर्क अधिकारी, पाली। (6) पर्यादरण विभाग, राजस्थान सरकार, शासन सचिवालय, जयपुर। (7 राजस्थान राज्य प्रदूषण नियंत्रण मण्डल-4 पर्यादरण मार्ग, संस्थानिक क्षेत्र, झालाना डूलरी, जयपुर। (ह क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, पर्यादरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, जयपुर राजस्थान। (9) कार्यालय खा पंचायत, बाम नाडोल, तहसील देसुरी, जिला-पाली।

लोक सुनवाई हेतु दिनांक 21.06.2022 (मंगलवार) को पटवार घर ग्राम नाडोल, तहसील देसुरी जिला पाली, में समय प्रात: 11.00 बजे उपस्थित होक्क अपने म्हणत प्रक्रीण एटवर कर करने करने होती हो सुरी जिला पाली, में समय प्रात: 11.00 बजे उपस्थित होक्क अपने म्हणत प्रक्रीण एटवर कर करने हैं लान्य दुनाधारु हत्यु (ब्लाग्ट २). 10:, 2022 (भगानवार) का परवार घर बाम नाडान, तहसील दुसी राजना पानी, में समय प्रताः 11.00 वर्ज वर्षास्थत होकर अपने सुझान्। ज्ञानी प्रतास्थत करका है। इस संबंध में निर्वाहत आहोप/ सुझाव इस सूचना के प्रकाशन की तिथि से 30 दिवस के अन्दर राजस्थान राज्य प्रदूषण ालाबात आबार। पुरुषा व इस सूर्यका ७ अवाराव जाताचार उठ व्यक्त कर कर कि है। यह आम सूचना वैश्विक महामारं कोविड-19 से सम्बंधित केन्द्रीय/राज्य सरकार द्धारा समय-समय पर पारित निर्वेशों के अनुरूप ए अधीन रहेगी तथा सभी प्रावधानों / सावधानियों की पालना सुनिश्चित करनी होगी।

अतः सर्व साधारण को सुचित किया जाता है कि आप उक्त परियोजना की पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति से संबंधि

Sq. Yards, Jaipur, Rajasthan-302023. with common amenities written in Title Document Bounded By-North-Plot No. D-223; West-20 Feet Wide Road; East-Other Property; South-Plot No. D-225; Sd/- Authorised Officer, For Hero Housing Finance Limite

Punjab National Bank

# EXPRESS NETWORK

KRISHN KAUSHIK&

**MAYURA JANWALKAR** 

**PM VISITS LUMBINI TODAY** 

## With Buddhist centre, **India looks to bolster** cultural ties to Nepal

**YUBRAJ GHIMIRE** & DIVYA A

KATHMANDU, NEW DELHI,

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will Monday travel to Lumbini in Nepal to participate in a ceremony to lay the foundation stone for a Buddhist cultural centre to coincide with Buddha Purnima.

Sources said PM Modi's brief visit to Lumbini - he is expected to be here between 10.30 am and 3.30 pm — is focused on bringing soft power to the centrestage of India-Nepal relations while also marking India's formal presence at the holy site that's barely 10 km away from the border.

The construction of the 'India International Centre for Buddhist Culture & Heritage' to be undertaken by the Buddhist International Confederation (IBC), India, with financial support from the Ministry of Culture -- comes decades after most foreign nations, including US, China, Canada, France, Germany and Thailand, among others, built their centres in Lumbini as an instrument of promoting Buddhist

Officials in India's Ministry of Culture said that the PM, besides offering prayers at the Mayadevi temple in Lumbini, will also deliver an address at a Buddha Jayanti event organised by the Lumbini Development Trust.

A statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office on Sunday said the PM will be visiting Lumbini at the invitation of Nepal Prime Minister Sher

"I am honoured to follow in the footsteps of millions of Indians to pay reverence at the sacred site of Lord Buddha's birth. I also look forward to meeting Prime Minister Deuba again after our productive discussions during his visit to India last month. We will continue to build on our shared understanding to expand cooperation in multiple areas, including in hy-



The site for India's Buddhist cultural centre. Yubaraj Ghimire

dropower, development and connectivity."

The PM's visit to Lumbini comes amidst China's evident interest in Lumbini. Almost a decade ago. China had offered to build Lumbini as a world peace centre at a cost of three billion dollars, besides holding talks on bringing China's railway right up to Lumbini.

Modi's visit and his laying the foundation stone for the Buddhist Culture Centre -- estimated to cost INR 1 billion and take three years to complete -will mark India's first attempt to develop strong linkages with Nepal's Buddhist heritage sites.

Modi's helicopter ride from Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh, where Buddha is said to have attained Nirvana, will terminate at a newly built helipad in Lumbini, from where he is expected to go to the Maya Devi temple, before laying the foundation stone for the Buddhist centre.

PM Modi and PM Deuba are also scheduled to jointly address a congregation of people, including lamas.

Though there has been no official word yet, indications are that "developmental issues" are likely to be discussed when the two prime ministers, joined by officials from two sides, hold a meeting before Deuba hosts a lunch in Modi's honour. India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra recently stated that the two countries will pick up from where they left during Deuba's three-day visit to India last month.

The two sides had discussed the need to sort out border disputes, especially the Lipulekh dispute that flared up in 2018-19, but Deuba's three-day visit had ended without a joint commu-

Sources in Kathmandu said the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) will sign two Memoranda of Understanding with authorities in Nepal -- one on setting up the Dr B R Ambedkar Chair for Studies on Buddhism at Lumbini University and another on a Chair Professor at Kathmandu University.

India's Ministry of Tourism has collaborated with Nepal to build a trans-national Buddhist Tourist Circuit to trace the footsteps of Buddha, starting from Lumbini and concluding at Kushinagar. An international airport was recently inaugurated at Kushinagar.

 $Sources\, said\, the\, two\, PMs\, will$ discuss the proposed Buddhist circuit linking Lumbini with Kushinagar, Bodhgaya, Rajgir, Nalanda and Sarnath, among other centres linked to Buddha's legacy. This will be in addition to the project to build the Ramayana circuit linking various sites in the two countries.

"It's likely that the two PMs will also discuss ways to explore harnessing of the West Seti River that flows through western Nepal," a senior government official in Kathmandu said.

### port earlier this month.

A \$60-MILLION scandal involving loans and grants by a littleknown UN agency also included a \$2.5 million investment to build affordable houses in India in 2019 — none of which have

materialised yet. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which deals with operational projects, had entrusted the entire sum to a single British businessman and

now faces \$22 million in bad debts, as per a *New York Times* re-

A Singapore-based firm, owned by the businessman, David Kendrick, was in charge of getting at least 50,000 houses built in Goa for \$2.5 million, UN documents show.

A couple in Delhi, Amit Gupta and Arti Jain, are the directors of this firm **Sustainable Housing Solutions** (SHS) Holdings Pvt Ltd — that has little to show in its books, registering zero revenue and Rs 27,289 in losses in 2020-21.

The project was under the Sustainable Infrastructure Impact Investments (S3I) initiative, launched in 2018, which is now being probed by the UN for allocating all its funding to companies linked to Kendrick.

In \$60-million UN scandal, a \$2.5-million housing

investment in Goa — with no house to show for it

The head of UNOPS, Grete Faremo, also stepped down earlier this month over the issue that has embarrassed the world

Gupta, who is the CEO of SHS, told The Indian Express that the project had been shelved.

A senior Goa government official confirmed to The Indian Express that a presentation was the project. In fact, the discusmade to officials by SHS Holdings for the construction of the proposed housing units in

However, officials had questioned how supporting infrastructure like power and roads would be made available for the housing units also.

They also had reservations about how the government could award such a large housing project to a private firm without a tendering project, said this

official, requesting anonymity. "No land was identified for Gupta claimed that it was the

## Centre relaxes procurement norms for shrivelled, broken wheat grains

**HARIKISHAN SHARMA** NEW DELHI MAY 15

THE CENTRE on Sunday announced a major relaxation in the Fair and Average Ouality (FAQ) norms of wheat by raising the maximum permissible limit of "shrivelled and broken grains' to 18 per cent from the existing 6 per cent. The move is aimed at providing relief to Punjab and Haryana farmers during the ongoing rabi marketing season.

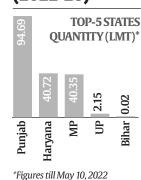
A statement issued by the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution said: "The Centre has decided to allow FCI to procure wheat in Punjab and Haryana, including UT of Chandigarh, for central pool by relaxing the FAQ of shrivelled and broken grains up to 18 per cent without any value cut. This decision will reduce the hardships of farmers and avoid distress sale of wheat."

The move comes after the two states wrote to the Centre, seeking relaxation in the Uniform Specifications of Wheat for RMS 2022-23. They had urged the Centre to raise the maximum permissible limit of shrivelled and broken grains to 20 per cent.

According to the Food Ministry, Central teams were deputed in Punjab and Haryana in April-May to collect samples from mandis, which were later analysed in FCI labs. "The results indicated presence of shrivelled and broken grains beyond FAQ norms," the statement said.

"The emergence of shrivelled

### **WHEAT PROCURED** (2022-23)



REFRACTIONS IN FA	QNORMS
Category	Max permissible limit
Foreign matter	0.75%
Other food grains	2%
Damaged grains	2%
Slightly damaged grains	4%
Moisture	14%

A grain market in Patiala, Sunday. Harmeet Sodhi

REFRACTIONS IN FA	Q NORMS
Category	Max permissible limit
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Moisture	14%
Source: Food Corporation of India	

CENTRE REVISES CLOSING **DATE FOR PROCUREMENT** 

May 31: Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, J&K June 10: Rajasthan June 15: UP, MP, Gujarat, HP June 30: Uttarakhand July 15: Bihar

grains is a natural phenomenon appearing as a result of extreme heat wave in March. These adverse weather conditions are beyond the control of farmers and hence, they should not be penalised for such natural occurrence," it said, adding: "Accordingly, the change in texture of the grain deserves to be sympathetically considered. Thus, relaxation in FAQ norms would protect farmers' interests.'

**FULL REPORT ON** www.indianexpress.com

#### Why govt relaxed quality norms?

THE MOVE to relax the FAQ norms is significant in view of the expected fall in the procurement of wheat during the current year. According to the Food Ministry, 195 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of wheat is expected to be procured during the current rabi season, which is less than half as compared to 433 LMT procured last year. According to the ministry, 180 LMT wheat has been procured till May 14, much lower than 367 LMT procured during the corresponding period in 2021-22.

## BKU splits, new outfit Kashmir civilian killed in crossfire, govt orders probe says will be 'apolitical'

**LALMANI VERMA** LUCKNOW, MAY 15

THE BHARATIYA Kisan Union (BKU), which had spearheaded the 13-month-long farmers' protest against the Centre's three farm laws, on Sunday witnessed a split as a section of its leaders formed a separate outfit - BKU (Apolitical), led by Rajesh Singh Chauhan. The BKU, later, said that it has dismissed seven leaders of its outfit, calling them "anti-farmers".

Announcing the new outfit at Ganna Sansthan in Lucknow on the death anniversary of BKU founder Chaudhary Mahendra Singh Tikait, the leaders of BKU (Apolitical) alleged that they were upset with the "political" statements made by BKU spokesperson Rakesh Tikait during the farm law protests and the recent state elections in Uttar Pradesh.

"BKU (Apolitical) has been formed because of the disagreements with BKU... Mahendra Singh Tikait was of the view that when we go to the government with 10 demands and even if four of them are accepted, the agitation should be withdrawn. But what is the situation today? The agitation continued for 13 months (against the three farm laws) and the laws were repealed after that. And yet people are not satisfied. It is a big issue," Harinam Singh, the UP chief of the newly formed outfit, said.

Mahendra Singh Tikait had founded BKU in 1986. After his death in 2011, his sons - Naresh Tikait and Rakesh Tikait - led the outfit. While Naresh is the BKU president, Rakesh is the outfit's spokesperson. During the 13month long agitation against three farm laws—which were later withdrawn by Narendra Modi government – Rakesh



Rakesh Tikait. File

Tikait had emerged as the face of the farmers' movement across A couple of days ago, Rakesh

Tikait had met the rebel leaders in Lucknow and tried to convince them to stay with the BKU.

"But no consensus was achieved in the meeting. Our outfit is completely apolitical so that we can speak with every government on farmers' issues.

There will be no political activities and remarks from our new outfit... The BKU formed by Mahendra Singh Tikait is no more apolitical," BKU (Apolitical) national spokesperson Dharmendra Mallik said.

Later in the evening, BKU said that it has dismissed seven leaders from the outfit, accusing them of indulging in fake propaganda against the organisation.

In a statement issued by BKU national general secretary Yudhveer Singh, the outfit said that seven leaders, including Rajesh Singh Chauhan, Anil Talan, Harinam Verma, Dharmendra Mallik (all office bearers in the new outfit), have been dismissed from the organisation.

Rakesh Tikait, in a tweet, said that the seven dismissed leaders were "hurting" the interests of farmers by forming a separate outfit. "The new outfit has been formed under the pressure of the BJP government. BKU will not be weakened by it. Instead, it will become stronger and the movement will continue," he said.

#### **BASHAARAT MASOOD** SRINAGAR, MAY 15

POLICE ON Sunday said a civilian was killed in crossfire between militants and a joint team of police and Central Reserve Police Force in south Kashmir. The relatives of the civilian, however, contest police's claim. The Shopian district administration has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the killing.

On Sunday afternoon, militants fired on a joint patrol of J&K Police's Special Operations Group (SOG) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) near

a bridge that connects Pulwama and Shopian districts in south Kashmir, police said. Twentytwo-year old Shoib Ahmad Ganie, a resident Turkwangam village, Shopian was killed in crossfire during the "chance encounter", they said.

"Terrorists fired upon joint patrol party of RPF 182 Bn (and) SOG of Pulwama near the bridge connecting Litter (village of) Pulwama with Turkwangam, Shopian, During the exchange of fire between terrorists and our joint team, 01 civilian namely Shoib Ah Ganie S/O Gh Mohd R/O Turkwangam Shopian got injured...He(the civilian)was referred to District Hospital Pulwama for treatment where he succumbed to injuries. Terrorists after brief chance encounter managed to slip into nearby orchards... A case has been registered and investigations taken up," Kashmir Zone Police tweeted.

However, the relatives of Shoib contested police's claims. "He (Shoib) was in his shop wearing an olive shirt. When the forces reached there, he came down from his shop. The forces asked him to put his hands up and then, fired at him. They are now making up the stories to save the personnel behind the

cold-blooded murder," said a rel-When asked about the alle-

gations of the relatives, a senior police officer told The Indian Express that "It will be clear in police investigation and magisterial inquiry".

Later in the day, the Deputy Commissioner Shopian Sachin Kumar Vaishya ordered a magisterial inquiry into the killing. The inquiry would be conducted by the Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Shopian.

"Regarding today's (Sunday) incident at Turkwangam village of Chitragam tehsil of Shopian district, a magisterial inquiry by

ADM Shopian has been ordered," Deputy Commissioner Vaishya said in an audio statement posted on his official han-

"Once the inquiry report comes, suitable action would be taken under the law," he added.

This is the second civilian killed in south Kashmir in a week. On May 10, a civilian was killed and another injured allegedly during a gunfight between militants and a joint team of J&K Police, army and paramilitary personnel in south Kashmir's Shopian. The police had said that the militants managed to escape after the gunfight.

Assam: Three killed as heavy

rain, landslides wreak havoc

sions did not even reach the stage where the fund-sharing pattern for the project was discussed," the official said.

Goa government that had approached UNOPS, but that it did not respond when an agreement for land allotment was followed up. State government officials. however, said no such proposa had been made to UNOPS and had that been the case, the project would not have been **FULL REPORT ON** shelved. www.indianexpress.com

#### Food inflation spirals, but prices of dal stay off the boil

**PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS** PUNE, MAY 15

ROTI (WHEAT) is becoming dearer on the back of soaring global prices and a heat wave-affected domestic crop - but that isn't the case with dal (pulses), whose retail prices are lower than a year ago despite the rising food inflation.

One major reason for this, according to dal millers and traders, is the fear of a government crackdown on any activity remotely suggestive of speculative hoarding. They specifically cite an order issued last July by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), that imposed stock-holding limits on all pulses, barring moong (green gram). This, ironically, came after the Union government enacted the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, one of the three farm reform laws, in September 2020.

'It was totally unexpected and had a chilling effect on the trade," said a leading pulses trader in Indore. The July 2 order imposed

stock limits ("on all pulses put together, except moong") of 200 tonnes for wholesalers, 5 tonnes for retailers, and last three months' production or 25% of annual installed capacity (whichever was higher) for millers. On July 19, these limits were raised to 500 tonnes for wholesalers and last six months' production or 50 per cent of aninstalled capacity (whichever was higher) for millers. Further, importers were exempted from any limits, but had to mandatorily declare their stocks of pulses on the DCA's portal

Speculative trade normally takes place when production is low and traders start accumulating stocks, sensing opportunities from price rise ahead.

But fear of punitive action meant nobody attempted to play up the market.

DCA data shows all-India average modal (most-quoted) retail price of chana dal was Rs 70 per kg on Friday, as against Rs 75 one year back, Prices have similarly fallen for tur (from Rs 110 to Rs 98.5), urad (Rs 107.5 to Rs 98) and moong (Rs 105 to Rs 95).

## Tie-ups between Indian, foreign varsities: UGC begins outreach

**SOURAV ROY BARMAN** NEW DELHI, MAY 15

IN A major push to scale up collaborations between Indian and foreign institutions in higher education, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has reached out to nearly 500 foreign universities, located across the US, UK,

Europe and East Asia. The commission now plans to hold a meeting with the heads of foreign missions in India to discuss the possibilities of tieups in step with the recently notified regulations on twinning programmes, joint degree and dual degree programmes that will be applicable from the academic year 2022-23.

The University Grants Commission (Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Education Institutions to offer Joint Degree, Dual Degree, and Twinning Programmes) Regulations, 2022 were notified in April.



**UGC** chief M Jagadesh Kumar

"We have also sent them (foreign institutions) a list of eligible Indian universities with whom MoUs can be signed. We have not written to any universities in China although some of their universities fulfill the eligihility criteria." UGC chairperson M Jagadesh Kumar told The Indian Express on Sunday.

Under the regulations, foreign institutes willing to collaborate must rank in the top 1000 in either the Times Higher Education or QS rankings. The Indian universities meeting the same standard or placed among the top 100 in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), or having a minimum score of 3.01 from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) are eligible.

tween Indian and foreign institutions in the higher education sector is among the key recommendations of the National Education Policy, 2020.

Work is also underway to pave the way for reputed Indian institutes such as IIT Delhi to set up campuses abroad. A committee under IIT council chairman Dr K Radhakrishnan formed last December recently submitted its recommendations for opening offshore campuses of Indian higher educational institutions.

Deliberations of another expert panel to get prestigious foreign universities to set up campuses in India have also reached the "final stage", Prof Kumar said. "It will also reduce a part of the outflow of foreign exchange which stands at about \$US 25 billion currently."

According to official estimates, about 50,000 international students are currently enrolled in courses offered by Indian universities.

#### **TORA AGARWALA** GUWAHATI, MAY 15

AT LEAST three people have died and thousands have been affected as heavy rainfall continued to lash parts of Assam since Friday. On Sunday, as rail connectivity in the hill district of Dima Hasao snapped, the Air Force was called in to rescue stranded passengers.

According to a bulletin from the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (AS-DMA), 56,000 people across seven districts (Cachar, Dhemaji, Hojai, Karbi Anglong West, Nagaon, Nalbari and Kamrup) have been affected. More than 41,000 people have been affected in Cachar alone, followed by 13,523 in Hojai district.

The ASDMA release said that landslides, erosion and infrastructural damage, including those to bridges, were reported in Hojai, Dima Hasao, and Karimganj, among others. A



Stranded passengers being evacuated from the railway station in Dima Hasao. Northeast Frontier Railways

landslide in Dima Hasao's Haflong revenue circle led to the death of a family of three. Three more went missing on

Sunday in Cachar district.

Earlier on Sunday, as Silchar-Guwahati Express and Guwahati-Silchar Express remained stranded at Ditokcherra and New Haflong stations in Dima Hasao, respectively, the Air

"At Ditokcherra, about 1,000 people were guided across a broken railway bridge on foot to reach a special evacuation train. The older passengers who were not able to cross the bridge by themselves were airlifted," said

Sabyasachi De, chief PRO,

Northeast Frontier Railways

Force airlifted 100-odd passen-

gers from Ditokcherra.

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

#### **EXPLAINED HEALTH**

## How to protect yourself from heat-related illness





Dr Suranjit Chatterjee From The Indian Express panel

of specialists, exclusive insight

WITH TEMPERATURES crossing 40°C in several parts of the country, and states such as Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra experiencing a heat wave, doctors have been treating a number of patients with complaints of heat exhaustion and other heat-related illnesses

What is heat-related illness and how can one protect oneself from it?

We mostly see cases of heat exhaustion,

stepping out during the day. But the high temperatures may also lead to a heat stroke, where the body overheats to more than 104°F, resulting in damage to the organs and neurological dysfunctions. It can result in fainting, rashes etc.

The most important thing is to stay well hydrated, especially when out in the heat. Hydration can be in the form of water or something with electrolytes, such as shikanji. Also, thirst is not the only good indicator of whether you need to have more fluids. So, people must keep track of how much water they are consuming. The thing that one should keep an eye on is the urine output, which goes down when a person is dehydrated.

Other than that, people must not wear dark-coloured, tight fitting, synthetic clothes when it is as hot as this. Light-coloured, cotton clothes are the best. Covering the head also helps.

As much as possible, people should stay indoors during extremely hot hours.



Protection from the heat in Delhi on Sunday. Shivam Kumar Jho

How much water or fluids should one consume? Can people overdo it?

Yes, people can certainly overdo it. I have heard people talking about drinking water every 20 minutes. That's not how it works. The amount of water intake depends on a

An apparently healthy, young person should drink between 2.5 to 3 litres of water a day. Perhaps, an additional 0.5 to 1 litre of water can be had if they are out in the sun. Anything more may overload the kidneys, which have to work harder to flush out the extra water. Excess water may also lead to electrolyte imbalance, which can cause its own set

Then, there are persons living with a kidney or a heart disease, and they should not overload themselves with water as it may result in accumulation of fluid in the legs, abdomen, and chest, which can in turn lead to breathing difficulties. People with such chronic conditions have to drink between 1 to 1.5 litres of water throughout the day. However, this would depend on the condition of their organs. Anyone who is on fluid restriction should definitely get in touch with their physician to check how much water they should have.

Having electrolyte-rich fluids is a better option when people are out in the sun. Around shikanji wouldn't be a problem for a healthy person, Again, those with any comorbidities should keep an eye on what they are having; for example, diabetics should avoid ORS solutions because they are high in sugar content.

#### Which section is most vulnerable in this season?

Children below the age of 5 and people above

65 are more vulnerable to the impact of heat. They must avoid stepping out during the hot hours, and if they have to, they must be extremely careful and stay well hydrated. However, young healthy people are not completely safe either. They mostly constitute the working population and are more likely to step out in the sun.

#### THE EXPERT

#### **Dr SURANJIT**

**CHATTERJEE** is Senior Consultant, Internal Medicine, at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, Delhi. He has worked in the field of general medicine for over 25 years, treating both communicable and noncommunicable diseases.

in this season? Exercising is not a

with comorbidities such

as cardiac diseases, dia-

betes, or thyroid is likely

to feel the effect of sun

Should people exercise

exposure more.

problem; exercising when it is hot is. If people want to go out for a walk or a jog, they should either do it early in the morning between 5-6

should not do any physical activity between 10 am and 6pm when it is this hot. And, if people can exercise indoors - at

am or in the evening after 7 pm. People

home if they have enough space, or at the gym - then that is better than outdoor exercise.

Dr Chatterjee spoke to Anonna Dutt

SIMPLY PUT

## The impact of price volatility

Normal food inflation does not hurt as much as sudden price increases, as has been the case with edible oils in the last few years. This is not good either for consumers or for producers.

Palm | Vanaspati | Mustard | Groundnut | Soyabean | Sunflower

ALL-INDIA MODAL RETAIL PRICE OF EDIBLE OILS (Rs/kg)

## Who is Devasahayam Pillai, first Indian layman to be

declared a saint by Vatican?

VAJIRAM & RAVI

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DEVASAHAYAM PILLAI, who was born a Hindu in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu and converted to Christianity in the 18th century, became the first Indian layman to be declared a saint by the Vatican on Sunday.

Pope Francis canonised Blessed Devasahayam during the Canonisation Mass in St Peter's Basilica, which was attended by over 50,000 faithful from all over the world, as well as government delegations honouring him and nine other new saints, PTI reported.

Besides Devasahayam, the Pope proclaimed five other men — Titus Brandsma, Cesar de Bus, Luigi Maria Palazzolo, Giustino Maria Russolillo, and Charles de Foucauld – and four women – Maria Rivier, Maria Francesca of Jesus Rubatto, Maria of Jesus Santocanale, and Maria Domenica Mantovani – as saints.

#### Life and death

Devasahayam was born on April 23, 1712 in Nattalam village in Kanyakumari district, and went on to serve in the court of Marthanda Varma of Travancore. After meeting a Dutch naval commander at the court, Devasahayam was baptised in 1745, and assumed the name 'Lazarus', meaning 'God is my help'.

"His conversion did not go well with the heads of his native religion. False charges of treason and espionage were brought against him and he was divested of his post in the royal administration," the Vatican said in a note in February 2020. According to the Vatican, "while preaching, he particularly insisted on the equality of all people, despite caste differences", which "aroused the hatred of the higher classes, and he was arrested in 1749".

On January 14, 1752, Devasahayam was shot dead in the Aralvaimozhy forest. He is widely considered a martyr, and his mortal remains were interred inside what is now Saint Francis Xavier's Cathedral in Kottar, Nagercoil.

#### Sainthood road

In 2004, the diocese of Kottar along with Tamil Nadu Bishops' Council and Conference of Catholic Bishops of India recommended Devasahayam for beatifi-

A VACCINE for eastern equine

encephalitis virus (EEEV),

western equine encephalitis

virus (WEEV), and Venezuelan

equine encephalitis virus



The tapestry depicting Titus Brandsma (1881-1942; top), and Lazarus a.k.a. Devasahayam (1712-1752) at the Vatican on Sunday, during their canonisation mass, AP

cation. He was declared blessed by the Kottar diocese in 2012, 300 years after his

During the midday 'Angelus' prayer in the Vatican that day, Pope Benedict XVI described Devasahayam as a "faithful layman", and urged Christians to "join in the joy of the Church in India and pray that the new Blessed may sustain the faith of the Christians of that large and noble country", the note from the Vatican said.

In 2014, Pope Francis recognised a miracle attributed to Devasahayam, clearing the path to his canonisation. He was approved for sainthood in February 2020 for "enduring increasing hardships" after he decided to embrace Christianity, according to the Vatican, which last November announced May 15, 2022 as the date for the ceremony.

While clearing Devasahayam for sainthood in 2020, the Vatican dropped 'Pillai' from his name, and referred to him as "Blessed Devasahayam".

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** 

toms and, in some cases,

severe neurological damage

tain the genetic material that

Researchers designed a

#### HARISH DAMODARAN

BETWEEN MAY 13, 2014 and May 13, 2022 the average "modal" (most-quoted) retail price of palm oil in India rose over 2.3 times, from Rs 68.5 to Rs 160 per kg. So did the consumer prices of packed sunflower (2.1 times; from Rs 90 to Rs 190.75/kg) and soyabean (2.2 times; from Rs 77 to Rs 170/kg) oil.

#### Assessing the hikes

NEW DELHI, MAY 15

These are massive hikes, aren't they? Well, not quite. It can be seen from Table 1 that more than 90% of the price increases in palm, sunflower, soyabean and even mustard oil over the eight-year period - roughly coinciding with the Narendra Modi government assuming office — has happened just during the last three years. In vanaspati (hydrogenated vegetable oil), the entire increase has taken place within the last three years. while well over two-thirds for groundnut oil

Simply put, edible oil is a commodity that actually saw very little inflation during the first five years of the Modi government — in fact, going back further to 2011, Plentiful supplies of cheap imported oil — palm from Indonesia and Malaysia, soyabean from Argentina and Brazil, and sunflower from Ukraine and Russia — ensured access to a product that virtually defied food inflation.

It is only the period after mid- to late-2019 — the Modi government's second term - that has witnessed a doubling of consumer prices of imported vegetable oils. That includes vanaspati, which is largely made from imported palm oil (the process involves hydrogenation or adding hydrogen to harden and raise the melting point of the oil, yielding a product mimicking desi ghee). Prices of indigenous oils, especially mustard and groundnut, have also gone up disproportionately only in the last three years.

When inflation is low, people think of other things. That was precisely the case with edible oils for an extended period from 2011 till mid-/late-2019. It's when prices suddenly shoot up that they take notice and the government, too, starts talking about the need for achieving "atmanirbharta (self-reliance)". India consumes 22.5-23 million tonnes (mt) of vegetable oils annually, out of which 13.5-

2014	68.5	70	91.5	116.5	77	90	
2015	60	75	87	121.25	81	100	
2016	67	71.33	90	135	80	92	
2017	67	75	100	130	80	92.5	
2018	75	70	100	115	85	91	
2019	76	70	100	140	85	100	
2020	90	100	120	142.5	90	110	
2021	140	140	160	180	155	145	
2022	160	170	187.5	188.5	170	190.75	

All prices as on May 13 in that year.

Source: Department of Consumer Affairs

#### MRP OF AMUL POUCH MILK IN DELHI-NCR (Rs/litre)

	Full cream	Toned	Cow
May 9, 2014	48	38	-
June 3, 2016	50	40	42
March 11, 2017	52	42	44
May 21, 2019	54	44	46
Dec 15, 2019	56	46	48
July 1, 2021	58	48	50
March 1, 2022	60	50	52
			a

**Full cream:** 6% fat, 9% SNF; **Toned:** 3% Fat, 8.5% SNF; Cow milk: 3.5% Fat, 8.5% SNF

Source: Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation

14.5 mt is imported and the balance 8.5-9.0 mt produced from domestic sources. A sudden spurt in prices (volatility) is dif-

ferent from normal inflation. Steep price increases within short periods hurts consumers more than when the same is spread over time. Take vanaspati. Had retail prices risen by Rs 12.5/kg every year after 2014, consumers would have felt it less than the average annual increase of Rs 33.33 over the last three years and almost nil during the previous five years. Volatility — both prices crashing and excessively soaring — isn't good for producers either. These create distortions, leading to their sharply slashing or expanding acreages, further augmenting volatility.

#### Milk vs oil

The contrast between volatility and normal inflation is clearer when one looks at another essential item of consumption: branded liquid milk. The Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation has been raising the maximum retail price of its Amul milk by Rs 2 per litre every two years or so, with other brands mostly following the market leader. The cumulative price increase over the last eight years has been Rs 12 per litre (Table 2). It translates into a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 2.83% for fullcream milk with 6% fat and 9% SNF or solidsnot-fat content. Paying Rs 1.5/litre more every year for milk wouldn't have pinched

tard, palm or soyabean oil price in a single

the way the sudden Rs 40-60/kg rise in mus-

It isn't milk alone. Inflation has been low for sugar and rice, too. According to data from the department of consumer affairs, between May 13, 2014 and May 13, 2022, the modal retail price of sugar has gone up from Rs 36 to Rs 42 per kg (CAGR of 1.95%) and from Rs 24 to Rs 31.5 per kg (3.46%) for rice. Even wheat and atta (whole flour) have recorded relatively low inflation during this period – from Rs 18.5 to Rs 22/kg and Rs 20 to Rs 28/kg, respectively, corresponding to CAGRs of 2.19% and 4.3%.

#### The wheat effect

The situation could, of course, change for wheat in the coming months. A poor crop (courtesy of the post mid-March heat wave), depleted public stocks (due to 15-year-low government procurement) and skyrocketing global prices (following the Russian invasion of Ukraine) can well do to wheat what the last three years have done for edi-

The impact of price volatility is already being felt, especially in products where both wheat and vegetable fats are key ingredients: bread, biscuit, cookies, cakes and noodles. Biscuit typically contains up to 58% maida (refined wheat flour), 12% fat and 15% sugar. Ordinary white bread will have 85-

90% maida and 4-5% fats, which act as a lubricant and impart necessary softness, texture and mouth-feel. Vegetable oil and wheat getting simultaneously expensive sugar hasn't so far – would make it difficult for a whole host of food and bakery product To sum up, food inflation is a problem

when concentrated within a relatively short period (such as in edible oils) and spread across commodities (wheat is the latest addition). Also, the probability of price volatility is more in commodities with high import dependence. Indian consumers benefited when global edible oil prices were low through much of the last decade. The tide turned first with drought in Ukraine in 2020 and Covid-19-induced shortages of migrant labourers in Malaysia's oil palm plantations. The Russia-Ukraine war, Indonesia's palm oil export ban and dry weather in South America's soyabean-growing belts have worsened matters.

In wheat, where prices at the Chicago Board of Trade futures exchange are ruling around 62% higher than a year ago, the likelihood of volatility would still be lower in India. The only reason is the country's atmanirbharta in the cereal, making it less vulnerable to international price fluctuations. The ban on exports — similar to what Indonesia did in palm oil – will provide fur-

#### — THIS WORD MEANS: MONK SKIN TONE SCALE

## Google's innovation aimed at inclusiveness

#### **SRIDHAR V** NEW DELHI, MAY 15

AMONG THE various artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) initiatives announced by Google last week at its annual I/O developer conference, one was a 10-shade Monk Skin Tone (MST) Scale something that could have a broader sociological significance. In Google's words, the MST Scale will "support inclusive product and research across the industry".

#### What is the MST Scale?

Developed in partnership with Dr Ellis Monk, associate professor of sociology at Harvard University, the MST Scale is a tool that will be primarily incorporated by Google into computer vision, which is a type of AI that allows computers to see and understand images. It has been found that computer vision systems often do not function as efficiently for people with darker skin as they do for those with fairer skin. Using the MST Scale, Google and the tech industry

are aiming to build more representative datasets so that such AI models can be trained to identify a wider range of skin tones in images.

#### How will it work?

According to Google, the scale will "make it easier for people of all backgrounds to find more relevant and helpful" search results. For instance, users who search for makeup or beauty tutorials in Google Images will see an option to refine search results further by their skin tone. Going ahead, Google will utilise the MST Scale to better detect and categorise images to give a larger range of results.

The tech giant plans to expand the use of this database created based on different skin tones, so that creators and online businesses may label their content or products based on other attributes, such as hair colour and hair texture. Google has openly released the scale so that anyone can use it for research and product development.

Why such a scale?

According to Dr Courtney Heldreth, a so-

cial psychologist and user experience (UX) researcher at Google's Responsible AI Human-Centered Technology UX department, "persistent inequities exist globally due to prejudice or discrimination against individuals with darker skin tones, also known as colourism".

And AI not accurately seeing skin tone, which could further lead to existing inequities, is a type of colourism.

To bridge this gap, a Google research team including Heldreth and Xango Eyeé, a product manager working on Responsible AI, focused on bringing more skin tone equity to AI development. The team last year partnered with Monk, whose research has centred on how factors like skin tone, race and ethnicity affect inequality.

The MST scale builds on the foundation of on the existing Fitzpatrick scale, developed by American dermatologist Thomas B Fitzpatrick in 1975, which classified human skin type into seven broad colours. The Google team and Monk arrived at a scale composed of 10 shades – a range pegged to be not too limiting but also not too complex - and surveyed thousands of adults in the US who felt more represented with the new methodology

#### Are there similar projects elsewhere?

Several large corporations stepped up their efforts towards colour-based inclusiveness in light of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, which had happened in aftermath of police brutality and the killing of African American George Floyd. In 2020, Johnson & Johnson-owned Band-Aid launched a new range of adhesive bandages in different shades of black and brown to make its products more inclusive for people of colour.

In India, amid a backlash and strong public feedback over discrimination against people with darker skin tones, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) in 2014 released guidelines for the advertising of skin lightening and fairness products. More recently, in 2020, Hindustan Unilever-owned cosmetic brand Fair & Lovely was renamed Glow & Lovely, after criticism for promoting colourism in its advertisements and marketing campaigns.

#### mosquitoes. Horses are also susceptible to infection, but horses cannot transmit the viruses directly to humans. Infections in humans are rare but can lead to flu-like symp-





Vaccine against 3 encephalitis

viruses found safe, effective

virus-like particle (VLP) vaccine candidate that uses proteins from the outer shells of the viruses, the US National Institutes of Health said in a media release. VLPs do not con-

the viruses need to replicate inside cells, so VLPs cannot cause infection. In trials on 30 candidates, the vaccine was safe, well-tolerated and induced durable immune responses against all three viruses,

SOURCE: NIH, US





WORDLY WISE WE DID NOT DOMESTICATE WHEAT. IT DOMESTICATED US.

— YUVAL NOAH HARARI

## The Indian **EXPRESS**

∞ FOUNDED By ∞ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## **Endemic Covid**

India needs to shift from a heightened pandemic reaction to a steady-state response

### CAUGHT WITH CHAFF

Government ban on wheat exports hurts farmers and traders, dents India's image as a reliable global supplier

AST JULY, THE Narendra Modi government imposed stockholding limits on pulses, going against the farm reform laws it had enacted only in September 2020 and before their formal repeal in November 2021. That move, and the latest decision banning wheat exports, constitutes not just knee-jerk reaction to inflationary pressures. Of more concern is their long-term impact on the farm trade and policy credibility. Building export markets, establishing warehousing infrastructure and creating supply chains takes both time and money. Investments in these — whose necessity for Indian farmers and consumers alike is not in doubt — are predicated on a stable policy framework. Which agri-business will have the confidence to put up large processing and storage facilities or search for new buyers for Indian produce if the government  $does\,abrupt\,policy\,about-turns\,-\,by\,telling\,them\,they\,cannot\,stock\,more\,than\,200\,tonnes$ of pulses or contract fresh exports?

The flip-flops in government actions is evident from the department of commerce, on May 12, issuing a statement about the Centre sending trade delegations to nine countries "for exploring possibilities of boosting wheat exports from India" and, a day later, prohibiting shipments "with immediate effect". True, the country's wheat production has  $fallen\,due\,to\,the\,sudden\,spike\,in\,temperatures\,from\,mid-March, resulting\,in\,premature$ ripening and shrivelling of the grains. But this was known by early-April, when most ground reports pointed to farmers harvesting 15-20 per cent less yields compared to last year. How was the Minister of Commerce Piyush Goyal, then, talking about Indian farmers "feeding the world" and projecting exports of 10-15 million tonnes (mt) in 2022-23, breaking last year's record 7 mt, even in mid-April? This was indicative of either poor crop intelligence - inability to gauge yield losses from the heat wave - or refusal to admit that production has been significantly lower than the "record" 111.32 mt estimate

The ban on exports has apparently been prompted by wheat procurement plunging to around 18 mt, from last year's all-time-high 43.3 mt, and the resultant depletion in public stocks seen as threatening "food security". But if that was so, what stopped the government to pay a bonus above the minimum support price, incentivising farmers to sell to it rather than private traders and exporters? Nor was there any need to continue with supplying free wheat, apart from the regular quota of ration cardholders. If at all exports were to be discouraged in order to contain inflation, a better way would have been to impose a tariff or a minimum price below which shipments aren't permitted. A blanket ban is like breaking the knees of farmers and traders, from which they will find it difficult to recover — leave alone helping India's emergence as a reliable global supplier.

### BLAME IT ON PUTIN

Russia's Ukraine invasion is driving NATO expansion. Moves by Sweden and Finland to abandon neutrality are evidence

RESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S invasion of Ukraine is not only turning out to be a military blunder, but also a political disaster for Russia. It is producing strategic outcomes that Putin's war apparently aimed to prevent — the further expansion of Western military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The decision by Finland and Sweden — two countries that steadfastly remained neutral in the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the West during the second half of the 20th century - to join NATO marks an important moment in the strategic evolution of Europe since the Ukraine crisis began.

The smaller countries on Moscow's western periphery are afraid –very afraid – of Russian military power. For them, membership of NATO is about protection from the Russian threat, NATO membership is a defensive measure for these countries and not aimed as a challenge to Russia. Russia, with its massive army and thousands of nuclear weapons, is well positioned to deter and defend against attack on its territory. Its neighbours don't have that luxury. Putin's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine has reinforced the fears of the smaller countries and raised their incentives for seeking NATO membership. Equally important. Moscow might not have attacked Ukraine if it was already a member of NATO. Gaining membership of NATO has become a matter of greater urgency for Russia's western neighbours. NATO's principle of collective defence — that attack on any member will rally the rest — has now become even more valuable for Russia's eastern neighbours.

Finland and Sweden remained neutral after the Second World War despite the fact that two of their two immediate neighbours —Denmark and Norway — were founding members of NATO that was set up in 1949. They also chose to stay away from NATO, when three neighbours and former members of the Soviet Union — Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania joined NATO in 2004. But Putin's muscular policies of recent years and Russia's aggression against Ukraine have tilted the scales. Moscow's ill-considered threats against joining NATO have only helped steel the resolve of Finland and Sweden to end their traditional neutrality. Finland and Sweden are important partners for India. Their neutrality during the Cold War had much in common with India's tradition of non-alignment. India had worked with Sweden closely on many global peace and security issues in the past. Delhi and Stockholm were active members of a coalition between neutral and non-aligned nations in the multilateral fora. They joined hands to promote nuclear arms control between Washington and Moscow. The strategic parallel seems to endure. Much in the manner that India has tilted to the US to secure itself against a growing Chinese military threat, the much smaller Finland and Sweden are embracing NATO to save themselves from their aggressive Russian neighbour.

Freeze Frame

**EPUNNY** 



### K SRINATH REDDY

THE INDIAN COUNT of Covid infected persons, as identified by tests, has risen since April. The actual numbers infected or reinfected would be much higher, as many who were asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic would not have gotten tested. However, it was reassuring that most of those who were infected by a member of Omicron's extended family experienced mild illness. This variant clan's inability to penetrate deeper into the lungs and blood vessels may be partly responsible for this feature. Prior immunity, acquired from earlier infection or recent vaccination, may also have been protective against adverse outcomes.

Despite its mild reputation, Omicron infected a very large number globally and claimed many lives. Most of those who became severely ill were either unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated. Even the definition of who is adequately vaccinated is shifting with one or more boosters being added to the earlier two doses and the interval between vaccine doses being reduced as new variants exhibit their enhanced prowess at infection and immune evasion. Mask mandates, withdrawn when Covid appeared to recede, were reintroduced as case counts started a fresh ascent.

In this ongoing match of wits with the virus, will we reach a state of equilibrium where the virus becomes endemic, with manageable seasonal outbreaks that do not steal lives and seal society? Though some commentators have declared that the virus has already become endemic, it is not yet fully predictable in its evolution, behaviour and impact as new variants keep arising. There is presently no global steady state that can be confidently called "endemic". All we can say is that the virus is here to stay and appears to be moving in the direction of endemicity. However, the possibility of new recombinant viruses birthing from the womb of global vaccine inequity and a worrisome potential for recycled animal to human transmission creates uncertainty about whether and when a steady-state will be reached.

Even as we keep vigil, restrictions have to be withdrawn in stages. The lifting of mask mandates cannot be whimsically hasty, while the imposition of travel bans and school closures should not be knee-jerk responses. A calWhile flood prevention and control require planning and action at multiple levels of government and society, much of the responsibility lies at the municipal level and involves the active engagement of the community. In endemic Covid too, urban local bodies, panchayats, communitybased organisations and citizen volunteers must form a coalition that conducts situational analyses and responds with contextrelevant prevention, control and relief measures. Health communication must be effective through community networks to prevent panic and protect against misinformation. Community based mental health services will help to allay anxiety and

prevent illness.

ibrated response is needed, which provides the right balance of confidence and caution, both in policy measures and personal protection at each stage of an undulating pandemic. Situationally adaptive responses must be dynamically enacted against the constant backdrop of health system capacity buildup for prevention, surveillance and patient care.

Perhaps flood protection measures can provide a model of endemic preparedness. We get rains seasonally every year but don't experience floods annually. When there is a threat of recurrent floods, we raise the level of our embankments to prevent the surge of floodwaters into our cities. We build dams upstream to control downstream water levels in rivers. We create efficient drainage systems to prevent waterlogging in the streets.

We monitor weather patterns to anticipate the threat of floods during extreme weather events. If such events are forecast, vulnerable groups of people are evacuated to safety and people's mobility is restricted to essential services. If not, life proceeds without disruption even when rains arrive. We leave it to routine municipal services to deal with rainwater clearance and sanitation. Even then, we use umbrellas to protect ourselves from getting wet when we are exposed to rain.

Such adaptability is needed when we move from a heightened pandemic response to a steady-state endemic response, while being ready to shift gears when needed. We need to get early alerts of new virus variants, much like warnings of changing weather patterns. When there is a threat of a surge in serious cases, we restrict mobility, continue essential services and pay special attention to the safety of the elderly and those with comorbidities. A multisectoral response to a public health emergency prioritising public safety, would be in order.

In an endemic state, routine health services will suffice for testing and treating cases while maintaining a watch on case counts, clusters and clinical profile of cases. People's mobility will not be restricted but masking in public and crowded indoor locations may be advised when seasonal outbreaks occur. Vulnerable groups of people will be specially protected with vaccine boosters. The general public will be advised of personal protection measures but life will be near normal during times of seasonal spikes which do not become dangerous waves.

Cities will get flooded even without storms if rainwater drainage and sanitation services are poor. Even a seasonal spike in endemic Covid can pose a serious threat if our health services are inadequately resourced and poorly managed. We need greater investments for strengthening our health services through better infrastructure, workforce, public health expertise, information systems and management. This requires constant attention, not just a crisis response.

While flood prevention and control require planning and action at multiple levels of government and society, much of the responsibility lies at the municipal level and involves the active engagement of the community. In endemic Covid too, urban local bodies, panchayats, community-based organisations and citizen volunteers must form a coalition that conducts situational analyses and responds with context-relevant prevention, control and relief measures. Health communication must be effective through community networks to prevent panic and protect against misinformation. Community based mental health services will help to allay anxiety, prevent illness.

Timely vaccine protection must be provided to all who need it without coercion but by building confidence. Still, there will be some who will be highly vulnerable to serious illness during a seasonal outbreak. Civic sensibility must be fostered so that all persons who have any symptoms suggestive of a respiratory illness voluntarily mask up during a seasonal outbreak to protect others. Infected persons must isolate, with the assurance of medical and social support during the period of illness.

If cases build-up, masking outside home must be mandated, so that asymptomatically infected persons do not pose a threat. As we walk in the rain, we take care not to splash water on others. Likewise, in endemic Covid, it will be our civic duty not to infect others.

The writer, a cardiologist and epidemiologist, is president, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI). Views are personal



## The Party Is Over

To stall price spiral, RBI is likely to respond with aggressive hikes

RADHIKA PANDEY

DATA RELEASED BY the National Statistical Office showed that retail inflation had surged to an eight-year high of 7.79 per cent in April, driven by higher food and fuel prices. The former rose to 8.38 per cent driven by doubledigit inflation in edible oils and vegetables, while inflation in cereals surged in April because of higher wheat prices. Inflation has now remained above the RBI's upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent for four months in a row.

The second-order impact of higher fuel prices is also visible as inflation in transport and communication surged to nearly 11 per cent, from 8 per cent in the previous month. The April data again showed that rural inflation outpaced urban inflation as the rural consumption basket gives more weightage to food. This is not good news for rural demand, which is yet to show a sustained pick-up.

The latest data also indicates that inflation is becoming broad-based. With the lifting of Covid restrictions and a pick-up in demand, services sector inflation captured by the "miscellaneous" category has surged to 8.03 per cent. And with demand rebounding, the passthrough of higher input costs is also gaining momentum. Considering that demand for goods recovered faster than services, goods producers passed on input costs to consumers But as services recover, there will be greater pass-through of prices to consumers in the coming months. Concerns about rising services inflation were also reflected in the April S&P Global Purchasing Managers' Index survey for India's services sector. The surveyed service providers highlighted a sharp surge in

The expectation of a sharp spike in inflation led it to announce an off-cycle 40 basis points hike in the policy repo rate. The RBI is now likely to respond with aggressive rate hikes to prevent the price spiral from getting entrenched. By committing to bring down inflation through rate hikes, the central bank can anchor inflationary expectations. Unanchored expectations will further fuel

their operating expenses from March to April prompting them to pass the impact of rising input costs to consumers.

While there may be a slight moderation, inflation is expected to remain above the RBI's threshold of 6 per cent in the coming months. While global food prices measured by the FAO's Food Price Index eased marginally in April, they are still 30 per cent above that in April 2021. The Ukraine conflict continues to impact markets for foodgrains and vegetable oils. Rising fertiliser prices are likely to push up farmers' production costs, leading to high food prices. While the government has extended price support through higher subsidies, if this will be enough to cool prices needs to be seen

With sticky crude oil prices and continuing supply-side disruptions amplified by the Covid-induced lockdowns in China, the RBI has rightly reverted its focus on inflation targeting. This is needed as central banks around the world are pursuing tight monetary policies to counter inflation. The US Fed followed its 25 basis points hike by another 50 basis points rise in May. These will be followed by hikes of similar magnitude in the coming months. The Bank of England has raised the policy rate by 25 basis points, its highest in 13 years to tackle inflation. Other countries' central banks are also contemplating rate hikes.

In its April policy, the RBI announced the withdrawal of excess liquidity but did not raise the policy rate. The expectation of a sharp spike in inflation led it to announce an off-cycle 40 basis points hike in the policy reporate. The

RBI is now likely to respond with aggressive rate hikes to prevent the price spiral from getting entrenched. By committing to bring down inflation through rate hikes, it bank can anchor inflationary expectations. Unanchored expectations will further fuel inflationary pressures. The continued strength of the dollar index and sharp rupee depreciation in the last few days could impose further pressure on prices through higher imported inflation. This reinforces the need for interest rate hikes.

In addition to calibrated rate hikes, the RBI needs to fast-track the withdrawal of the ultra-accommodative liquidity support provided during the pandemic. It needs to present a revised projection of inflation for the current year and its views on the possible trajectory of interest rates. Rising inflation will cut back discretionary spending and adversely impact consumption that had only just started picking up. There are concerns about a recession in advanced economies as rising prices have started manifesting in a decline in purchasing power and a fall in consumer sentiments. The demand destruction could trigger a moderation in prices. Base metals prices have eased from the peak seen in the last few months.

Monetary policy support needs to be accompanied by fiscal support measures. The policy response will have to be tailored to the evolving geopolitical situation and the paths of commodity and food prices while balancing the imperatives of fiscal consolidation.

The writer is senior fellow, NIPFP. Views are



#### May 16, 1982, Forty Years Ago

#### FALKLANDS ATTACK

inflationary pressures.

BRITISH JETS BOMBED Port Stanley airfield and naval commandos carried a night raid into a West Falkland airstrip destroying a number of aircraft and blowing up an ammunition dump. The attacks were reported by the Defence Ministry on Saturday as British diplomats in the US met Margaret Thatcher to report the progress of talks at the UN. British Sea Harrier jets renewed bombing on the airfield outside Port Stanley, capital of the Falklands, in the first military action in the area in two days,. In Buenos Aires, the Argentine military junta said its forces repelled the attack.

#### PM ON PAKISTAN

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi said that Pakistan had not been adhering to the Simla accord since its present military rulers came to power. Pakistan, she said, had been adopting "dubious standards". On the one hand, that country was talking of friendship with India, on the other, it had been acquiring sophisticated weapons.

#### CHINESE DELEGATION

AN 11-MEMBER OFFICIAL-LEVEL Chinese team led by Fu Hao has arrived to hold the second round of talks on the border question and other bilateral matters. Fu, a former Vice-Foreign Minister who has come here as a special envoy of the Chinese government, was received at Delhi airport by Eric Gonsalves, Secretary to the External Affairs Ministry.

#### EVMs IN KERALA

THE CHIEF ELECTION Commissioner is competent under the law to issue such orders as are necessary to rectify any inadequacy in the existent laws to ensure the holding of elections. This also covers the use of electronic voting machine. The machines will be used in the May 19 Assembly elections in the Parur constituency in Kerala.

-THE GUARDIAN

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, MAY 16, 2022

## THE IDEAS PAGE

## Steering the ship

To ensure quick induction of submarines, India should seek a foreign collaborator to make necessary adjustments, conduct collaborative trials



Arun Prakash

A DAY BEFORE Prime Minister Narendra Modi was due to visit Paris to meet President Macron, the French defence major, Naval Group, announced its inability to participate in India's Project 75-I, under which conventional (non-nuclear or diesel-electric) submarines are to be built domestically. Coming on the heels of similar withdrawals from this competition by Russian and German submarine builders, this is bad news for the crucial project. Some also see it as a coercive tactic by the group to persuade India to buy more of its Scorpene class subs, of which six have been built under licence by Mazagon Docks Ltd

A major issue of contention in Project 75-I appears to be the installation of an air independent propulsion system (AIP) on these vessels. Since conventional submarines are propelled underwater by electric-power, battery endurance remains a major limitation. The submarine has to periodically expose itself to draw air for running generators that charge their battery-banks. It was to overcome this major vulnerability that several types of propulsion systems were evolved in Europe using "air independent," closed-cycle diesel or steam engines which would endow conventional submarines with much longer underwater endurance.

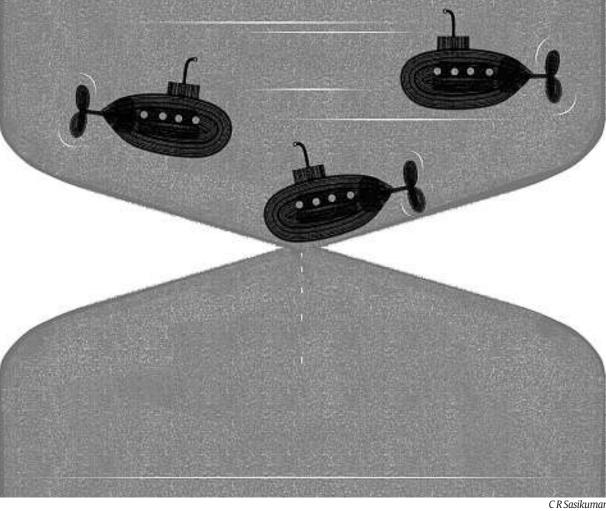
While protracted negotiations between the MoD and the French Naval Group were underway, none of the AIP systems had been fully proven. The contract for license-production of six Scorpenes was thus signed in 2005 without including this system. The Pakistan Navy (PN), obviously less riskaverse, acquired an untried French AIP system and installed it on three Agosta 90B submarines in 2008. What invests the P-75I programme with urgency is the fact that with the addition of eight Yuan Class Chinese submarines, the PN may field up to 11 AIPequipped boats by 2028.

Project 75-I is also the first programme to be progressed under the MoD's new Strategic Partnership concept which ostensibly offers a "level-playing field" to the private sector. In this model, MDL and Larsen & Toubro will choose a foreign submarine-builder for collaboration and offer competing bids to build six modern conventional submarines.

Here a quick look at the genesis and growth of our young submarine arm is useful. While Pakistan had acquired its first submarine from the US in 1963, it was only two years later that the Naval HQ revived an old proposal for creating a submarine arm. Since the USA and UK were offering only surplus WWII vintage submarines, we turned to the Soviets and between 1967 and 1974 acquired eight Foxtrot class boats of contemporary design along with a submarine depot ship.

The Foxtrots, having trained a whole generation of Indian submariners, a timely step for upgradation of capabilities was initiated by contracting for the modern Type-209 hunter-killer submarines built by HDW of Germany. Between 1986 and 1994, four of the Type 209 boats entered service; two built in Germany and two in MDL.

Unfortunately, allegations of corruption



in this deal scuttled plans for further indigenous construction. MDL closed its production line, representing a huge loss in terms of wasted skills/expertise and delays in capability accretion for the Indian Navy. However, concurrent negotiations with the USSR had resulted in the induction of 10 improved boats of the Kilo Class between 1986 nd 2000.

By now, the Naval HQ had projected the need for a standing force of 24 subs in order to meet the growing threats to India's maritime interests. In 1999, the government accorded approval to a "30-Year Submarine Building Plan," which envisaged the simultaneous serial production of two types of submarines in separate shipyards. One of the two types was to be an advanced submarine of imported design, and it was hoped that the second line would, in due course, deliver a home-grown product, designed by our own naval architects with foreign assistance.

Delays in decision-making stalled the 30year plan, and since 1999, the navy's submarine fleet has been seeing rapid obsolescence and steady depletion of force-levels. The 2005 contract for building six French Scorpene Class submarines under license from MDL served merely as a palliative measure, but even this programme saw huge delays over contractual issues. The sixth and last submarine was launched in April 2022, a full 17 years after signing of the contract.

With force-levels down to 17 ageing conventional submarines, the Indian Navy looked with hope at the Rs 43,000 crore Project 75-I. Commenced on time, this would have been the seamless follow-on to the Scorpene project; ensuring serial-production, and eventual indigenisation of this vital weapon-platform.

However, policy flip-flops and sluggish

decision-making have kept this project in limbo for over a decade. MDL, having  $launched\,the\,last\,of\,the\,Scorpenes, will\,start$ running down its state-of-the-art submarine-building facility, losing expertise and highly-skilled workers.

An added complication has arisen from the otherwise welcome development by DRDO of an indigenous AIP system. Based on electrolytic fuel cells, this system produces energy by combining hydrogen and oxygen with only water as the waste product. It has no moving parts and is safer and more efficient than others

The drawback, however, is that the 8-10 metre-long AIP module has to be installed on a submarine and subjected to stringent underwater trials before the Indian Navy can accept it as "operationally proven" for induction into service. Since installation and trials of this module will be a complex and timeconsuming process, three major issues are likely to arise: (a) Who will provide a submarine for trials? (b) who will undertake installation and conduct trials? (c) and most crucially, (d) who in our system will take such crucial decisions in a timely manner?

This long-neglected project brooks no further delay and is important enough to attract the time and attention of our highest decision-makers. A practical way forward is for one of the strategic partners and DRDO to jointly seek a foreign collaborator for P-75I who will install the indigenous AIP on the selected submarine and conduct collaborative trials. Once proven at sea, the indigenous AIP could be installed in all new subs and retrofitted in the old ones.

There will certainly be a price to pay, but the alternative is too bleak to contemplate.

The writer is a retired Chief of Naval Staff

## Gods aren't crazy, mobs are

"Support for membership in Finland and Sweden shows the Russian president's assault on Ukraine has only strengthened the alliance (NATO)Support for NATO membership in Sweden and Finland shows Putin's assault on Ukraine

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

has only strengthened the alliance."

#### Listening to self-appointed interpreters of divine moods will lead us back to the Dark Ages



**GN** DEVY

IN THE 5TH century BC, the Greek dramatist Euripides understood that there was much at the heart of Tragedy that was comic in essence and much in Comedy that was close to Tragedy. He demonstrated this in Cyclops, a satyr-play, "satyrs" being a kind of second-class gods with the ears and tails of horses. One of the characters Euripides created was Polyphemus, a Cyclops, known for his shrill songs, weird stories and fondness for younger men. However, in Greek mythology, Polyphemus was the son of Poseidon, the god of the seas. Three centuries before Euripides, the poet Homer had shown Poseidon getting violently angry when the epic hero Odysseus makes

the one-eyed Polyphemus blind.
Poseidon's rage, which makes Odysseus' voyage home dangerous, raises some intriguing questions: One, do the gods ever get angry? And two, how do mortals know when the gods are angry? The answer, as provided in the Greek myths, was that Hermes, the interpreter, alone knows when the gods are angry. Hermes is the herald of the gods as well as a trickster – somewhat like the Narada figure in Indian myths. He is also considered the god of travellers, thieves, orators and merchants. The institution of interpreters of gods' moods was not an original Greek fancy. In the 33rd century BCE, the Egyptian dynasts known as pharaohs had founded their authority on the claim of

their ability to interpret the gods' moods. A similar echo of "theological hermeneutics" can be seen in India's history in the institution of the Vedic purohit, phonetically close to the Egyptian pharaoh (pronounced "phe-ro-aa"). Not much is known about how the Indus Valley people thought about the gods' wrath. Though their civilisation disintegrated around the 19th century BCE, the Harappans have not left behind archaeological signs about this. Perhaps, the Indus Valley civilisation had no interpreters, no orators and no figure that anticipated Hermes or the Vedic purohit. In sharp contrast to the Vedic purohit, Buddhism had no concept of an interpreter of the gods. Homer was a near-contemporary of Gautama Buddha. The Buddha located misery and grief in the minds of human beings, in their inadequate understanding of reality, and not in the whims of the gods.

Sadly, the purohits managed to oust Buddhism, and soon after, metaphysics rife with superstition came to be seen as "knowledge". The nobler parts of the Vedic and Upanishadic traditions describe anger as a self-destructive emotion. The Bhagavad Gita speaks of anger as a cause of delusion, memory loss and destruction. Yet, when the interpreters of God's mind assume the form of a coercive social institution. God himself becomes the loser. During the second millennium, the Bhakti

movement rebelled against the self-assumed role of the purohits as God's interpreters. During the 19th century, the resurgence of Hinduism rested on widening access to the divine for all sections of society. The greatest among our national leaders, Tagore, Aurobindo and Gandhi, accepted the idea of God but made humans the centre of spirituality. B R Ambedkar bravely rebelled against the social domination of the purohits and, in works like Annihilation of Caste and Revolution and Counter Revolution in Ancient India, tried to establish how repressive the idea of the superiority of purohits has been in India's social history. In Europe, Friedrich Nietzsche could speak of the death of God, and after Stalin's coercive policies started hurting people, Louis Fischer, Andre Gide, Arthur Koestler and Stephen Spender used the bold phrase "the God that failed" as the title of a book. In the light of this history of gods and their interpreters, it is absurd in the 21st century to invoke the gods to justify anger among humans.

The ethnography of the interpreters of God's anger should be of interest to those of us who believe in the ideas of justice and the rule of law as upheld by the Constitution. There is a small town called Madhi in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. Every year, thousands of people from nomadic communities get together there and express their devotion to the deity at the shrine. In recent years, the advocates of purohit raj have been gradually blocking the devotees' access to the shrine. When asked if this would make their God angry, many of those nomads replied, "No, our God is not angry, we are angry". They were honest and had not surrendered their ability to think.

Some four decades ago, I used to teach at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. There was a small temple inside the campus. When communal riots broke out in the 1990s, one of my colleagues remarked that if the faculty does not side with the majority community, the God on the campus would feel betrayed and angry. This reminded me of a poem by Aurobindo. Eight decades before my time, he had taught on the same campus. Explaining a sudden and unjustified burst of anger, he wrote, apologetically, "It was not me, but my belly's hungry god that was angry."

One knows that it is humans who get angry when there are no jobs and prices continue to go up, or bulldozers raze their houses. In an attempt to divert the people's attention from the hunger in their bellies, clever interpreters point to some trivial gesture or expression as an insult to the gods. Credulous mobs take the cue and attack the misconstrued expression in the work of painters, artists, singers, writers, cartoonists, protesters, critics, opponents, minorities, meek and mild people — all in the name of the gods. Hermes wins; the journey home for Odysseus gets longer; Buddha has to remain in exile. If we continue to be led by the interpreters of the gods' moods, we may as well find ourselves sliding back to the eras before science replaced myth. Historians describe those eras as the Dark Ages.

The writer is a cultural activist

This long-neglected project brooks no further delay, and is important enough to attract the time and attention of our highest decisionmakers. A practical way forward is for one of the strategic partners and DRDO to jointly seek a foreign collaborator for P-75I who will install the indigenous AIP on the selected submarine and conduct collaborative trials. Once proven at sea, the indigenous AIP could be installed in all new subs and

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## A rasa yatra

Rajshekhar Mansur saw himself as a 'saadhak', in music and literature

N S Gundur

PANDIT RAJSHEKHAR MANSUR (1942-2022), son and disciple of legendary vocalist Pt. Mallikarjun Mansur, passed away in Bengaluru on May 1. He embodied in himself the spirit of the 20th-century Dharwad, which was home to Hindustani classical music and modern Kannada literary culture.

Born in a musical family, Rajshekhar grew up in North Karnataka, the region which boasts a great tradition of Hindustani classical music — Sawai Gandharva, Mallikarjun Mansur, Kumar Gandharva, Gangubai Hangal, Bhimsen Joshi, Basavaraj Rajguru and others. Rajshekhar, the only son of the Mansur family, was brought up with seven sisters. Because of the hardships he himself had experienced as a professional musician, Mallikariun Mansur did not want his son to pursue a career in music. But the musical milieu was so strong at home and in Dharwad that Rajshekhar was destined to be a maestro. It came as a surprise to senior Mansur when he heard of 16-year-old Rajshekhar singing Malkauns at an annual class day in college. His father started teaching him formally when he turned 19, and before that, a lot of informal training had gone into the making of a musician in Rajshekhar by way of his familiarity with ragas as tunes and listening to his father's riyaaz at home. Thus, Mallikarjun Mansur became a father-Guru.

As Rajshekhar mentions in a write up that is posted on his website, "There was no fa-

ther in this Guru when he began teaching a particular raga. There was neither a son when I was learning from him. It would be a purely guru-shishya relationship." The musical journey of the father and the son contributed immensely to the Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana, pioneered by the late Ustad Alladiya Khan (1855-1946) also known as Bade Khan Saheb, and his two illustrious sons – Ustad Manji Khan (1888-1937) and Ustad Burji Khan (1890-1950). The Mansurs, following the tradition of the Khans, kept the Gharana alive by refashioning its core values.

For 30 years, Rajshekhar accompanied his father in several concerts and committed himself to the Jaipur-Atrauli tradition of aprachalith(not familiar) and durlabh (rare) ragas. Later, he trained several disciples in India and abroad. His student, both in English literature and music, Mithun once said, "Sir was a true classicist in the pedagogy of music, and he was averse to superficially mixing certain ragas." In his interview with eminent cultural critic Manu Chakravarthy, Rajshekhar said that the jod raga was not simply putting any two ragas together, and the notion of a jod raga had a deep philosophical conception and a profound sense of harmony. For him, music was vidya, something to be learnt by hard work and discipline under the direct tutelage of a Guru.

Like any other children born to celebrities, junior Mansur had to struggle with the larger than life personality of his father. It enabled him to grow as a musician as much as it constrained him by putting him under pressure, both socially and professionally. In his memoir, Nanna Rasayatre (1983), Mallikarjun Mansur candidly mentions the conflict between the son and the father. As the memoir describes, Rajshekhar, who preferred to be all alone at home, was an introvert, moody and emotional. As a student, he was bright, and his father wanted him to be a doctor, but he chose to teach English literature. The late bilingual critic GSAmur, who was his teacher at Karnatak University, used to recall that Rajshekhar was a brilliant student. He did especially well in European Classics, the course Amur taught. Later, he studied Linguistics at the University of Wales.

As his literature student at Karnatak University, I saw Rajshekhar struggling to strike a balance between being a professor of English and a musician. When he joined the department, he was cautioned by his scholar-teacher and the then head of the department about riding the two horses, music and literature. But for Rajshekhar music was not a horse to ride but a unicorn to be understood and explored, and thus he always saw himself as saadhak, a seeker.

Though Rajshekhar could not carve a niche for himself as a litterateur in Dharwad, he composed some poems and short stories in Kannada. Moreover, he was a great teacher of literature and influenced generations of students like me to pursue literary studies seriously. While he looked thoroughly Indian in his music concerts, in our class his British RP marvelled us. The way he taught us Aristotle's Poetics made us inquisitive scholars; he was so erudite that he presented different translations of Aristotle and a variety of commentaries. And the way he read literary texts, for example, G B Shaw's Saint Joan (1924) enthralled us; he brought music into the dialogues he read aloud. When he taught American Literature, especially Emily Dickinson and Eugene O'Neill, he moved us to tears. He was a charming teacher and we boys were jealous of him as girls admired his personality. He also had the possibility of being a great critic, and his article on Raja Rao's Kanthapura (1938), published in a research journal, is one of the best critical pieces I have

Rajshekhar could also have been a musicologist. Apart from demonstrating ragas as a pedagogue, he deeply reflected on the practice of music. He used to advocate that when we learn any art form, we should keep in mind three components — *manan*, *chintan* and manthan. A great takeaway from the teacher who taught us music and literature.

> The writer is professor, Department of Studies and Research in English, Tumkur University

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### THE RIGHT CODE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'How to frame the Uniform Civil Code' (IE, May 14). India is a country with people practising many different religions. The framing of the UCC falls within the purview of Article 44, which is a directive principle. As the writer aptly said, before framing UCC, there is a need to make a preliminary review of all the existing acts. The loopholes in the existing acts should be removed first.

Aditi Pangarkar, Pune

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'How to frame the Uniform Civil Code' (IE, May 14). Modern democracy is established through a social contract between the state and citizens. The UCC would make civil rights equal for every citizen irrespective of religion, caste, gender, or region. The author has rightly pointed out the need to shun all regressive laws in the formation of UCC. According to the Constitution, UCC should be countrywide. State-level UCCs, as recently debated in the country, would create more discrepancies among citizens. The government law department needs to study various norms followed by different religious communities in India and outside and bring out the best suited for its citizens in matters of civil rights just like the Constitution was tailor-made for Indians.

H Upadhyay, via email

#### CHANGE THE LAW

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A question of consent'(IE, 14th May). The debate around marital rape has indeed led to questioning the "foundation" of marriages. There are often two issues around the subject of marital rape – first, it will challenge the institution of marriage. To this, the pillars of marriage should be mutual respect and not the submission of the wife's authority over her body to her husband. Second is the concern of proving "fake" marital rape cases. While the matter might be a little complex, we have a robust system to make and implement laws.

Saumya Shukla, Munger

#### SECURITY CONCERNS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Soft target' (IE, May 13). It is painful that the Kashmiri pandits continue to be an easy target for terrorists. That our security forces are failing to gain the upper hand in their fight against them shows that there are flaws and gaps in our strategy  $put in \, place \, for \, this \, purpose. \, It \, is \, not \, out \,$ of place to mention that targeted killings are not possible without local support. While we must hit our targets the hardest, we must also be accommodative and flexible to those caught in the crossfire. We must not be seen to be caught in a cleft stick.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

# IDEA EXCHANGE NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

We should make a law that makes purchasing less than MSP punishable. If you don't give the farmer remunerative price, and allow private players to have their own way, he will go for distress sale

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: How is $Congress\ preparing\ for\ the\ 2024$ elections? As a veteran leader, what do you think the Congress needs to do to give BIP a good fight?

As far as policies are concerned, the Congress is for the poor, farmers and labourers. But the present NDA government has made a shift in its policies, and the result you can see - the rich are getting richer and the poor are becoming poorer.

As for me, I'll talk about farmers and farm workers. What is the need of the hour? The farmer gets minimum support price (MSP), not maximum retail price, but sometimes he doesn't get even that. Before these three farm laws were passed, there were three ordinances. At that time, I had said that the government should come forth with a fourth ordinance. In these ordinances, they were going for private mandis. I have no problem with private mandis but in private mandis, MSP was not mandatory. In APMCs, MSP is mandatory. So I said there should be a fourth ordinance so that if anybody, private or government, purchases less than MSP, it is punishable by law. So the farmer will get his due. Till now, farmers are not getting their due.

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: Experts feel that market forces will help not only in diversification but also in giving the farmer better remuneration. For instance, this year, some farmers managed to sell their wheat for more than the MSP in Haryana as well.

Sometimes it happens. This time, due to the Russia-Ukraine war, even farmers in Punjab got Rs 5-10 more (than the MSP) for wheat, but that is not a remunerative price. The NDA government promised to double the income of farmers. It is 2022 and their income has actually fallen due to the rising cost of inputs such as diesel and fertilisers. During the 10 years of the UPA government, the average increase in MSP was 12-22 per cent. In the last seven years, MSP has increased by only 5.5-7.5 per cent. There is no problem in privatisation, but anybody purchasing less than MSP, whether private or APMC, should be punishable by law.

#### Harish Damodaran: Won't this drive

Fifty per cent of the total employment is given by the agriculture sector. People from rural areas are migrating to cities because of unemployment. If you don't give them remunerative price, and allow private players to have their own way, the farmer will go for distress sale. You can't strangle farmers like that. You have to balance things so both farmers and private players earn.

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: You mentioned that the shrinking land holdings are making farming unsustainable. Shouldn't we think out of the box instead of just focussing on MSP?

Unless MSP is there, farming won't be sustainable. There are other things also that need an increase in income, for example, dairy, fisheries and poultry. There are not only farmers but landless farm workers too who don't get finance from the banking sector. They should be given finance for piggery and poultry etc. The farm agitation took place because farmers thought the government was abolish-

#### Manoj CG: You were one of the signatories of the letter that 23 partymen wrote to Sonia Gandhi in 2020. Recently, you said the party should introduce collective and inclusive decision-making at all levels. After that, Uday Bhan, considered close to you, was made Haryana Congress president. Are you

still miffed with the party? I was never miffed with the party. Every Congressman is close to me. But, we had some suggestions. And in future also, if I think it is in the interest of the party, I'll keep on suggesting. That was the basis of the letter. It was not against or in favour of anybody. Those were some suggestions on how to turn the party around, because Sonia Gandhi said that the base of the party was weakening.

#### Manoj CG: What was Kumari Selja not doing that Uday Bhan will be doing?

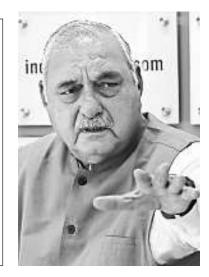
She did good work too. But this is a process. I was also PCC president. What I did or didn't do isn't the question, but I was changed.

Manraj Grewal Sharma: Uday Bhan reportedly said Congress will do away with the quota system in ticket distribution.



One of the tallest Congress leaders, and leader of Opposition in the Harvana Assembly, Bhupinder Singh Hooda was chief minister of Haryana from 2005 to 2014. With the recent revamp of the party unit in the state, and the appointment of his loyalist as the Haryana Congress chief, the former CM has cut through the party

factions to emerge the undisputed leader in the run-up to the assembly elections in 2024 when the state will face a new contestant in the Aam Aadmi Party. Hooda, who has considerable support among farmers, was also recently entrusted with preparing an agenda paper on farmers and agriculture for the Congress' Chintan Shivir



Everybody has said that there cannot be any alliance without Congress. Which party leads depends on the nature of the alliance — if it is a state or Central alliance. For 2024, we will decide accordingly

## The only way out is to fight for the cause of the people; a leader then emerges automatically'

Bhupinder Singh Hooda talks about what the Congress needs to do to give a good fight to the BJP, preparing for the 2024 elections and giving farmers their due. This session was moderated by Manraj Grewal Sharma, Resident Editor (Chandigarh), The Indian Express



Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda in conversation with Manraj Grewal Sharma at the Idea Exchange. Renuka Puri

Tickets should be decided on winnability. In a democracy, the number of seats you can win depends on the candidate, as now, along with the party, the given to the person's winnability regardless of his affiliation.

#### Liz Mathew: Everyone feels that this is one of the worst times the Congress is facing. What do you think the Congress should do immediately to make itself a formidable alternative to BJP, at least in some states?

Any party in a democracy should fight for the aspiration of the people; they should go with what the people aspire for, and what people expect from them. So, we should fight for their causes. Today, in Haryana, whether it is farmer, labourer, trader or government servant, nobody is satisfied with the present government. We have to take up their cause.

#### Liz Mathew: BJP has emerged as the ultimate ruling party without any major opposing forces. We are also $seeing\,the\,emergence\,of\,AAP.\,What$ should Congress have done from 2004 to 2014 to prevent this oblivion?

Democracy comprises a ruling party and an Opposition. The Opposition comes to power only when it is able to give the promise or power to people. We failed in that. In 2009, LK Advani was a stalwart but he was not able to promise the people that he'll form the government. But in 2014, Narendra Modi gave this promise and he won. In politics, even one event can change the whole story. Let's see what happens.

#### Liz Mathew: We have seen AAP recently taking up the nationalism cause, in line with BJP. They took some steps to please the majority, while keeping a distance from certain issues hurting a minority community. We have read in history that Congress leaders, be it Indira Gandhi or Rajiv Gandhi, had taken certain steps that were seen as pleasing a particular community. What is your view on this kind of politics?

In a democracy, every party has the right to do that. So AAP is also doing it. The reason it succeeded in Puniab is obvious: it was the main Opposition party. If the Congress would have made some changes some two years ago, it would have been better. But leave that aside. AAP has no presence in Haryana. In Haryana, people look at only Congress as an alternative.

Manraj Grewal Sharma: Do you think the AAP sweep in Punjab will have an impact on Haryana?

Haryana has Delhi on three sides and despite being in power for so many years in Delhi, AAP couldn't make their presence felt in Haryana. Punjab is different. Every

#### Harikishan Sharma: You said Haryana is looking towards Congress for an alternative but trends show that your vote share has been steadily falling since 2005 when you were the CM even though Congress' slide nationally began in 2014. Your vote share in Haryana fell from 43 per cent in 2005 to 35 per cent in 2009 to 24-25 per cent in the 2019 assembly polls. How can you convince people to view your party as an alternative when your base is steadily eroding?

What was the result in 1996? The Congress had only six -seven seats out of 90. In Lok Sabha, we got only two seats one was mine, the other was of Kumari Selja. But slowly, in 2000, we got 24 seats. These things happen and will continue to happen. The present government in Haryana has failed completely. It has proved to be a non-performing government, just an event-management government. People have realised this and that's why, they are looking towards Congress.

#### Shyamlal Yadav: We have seen how BJP made parivarvaad (nepotism) a big issue in UP and succeeded. In Haryana, your third generation is in politics. You became the CM with 81 seats and now you're at 31 seats. To safeguard yourself from this BJP attack, don't you think Congress should give an opportunity to new people?

It's not the third but fourth generation; my grandfather contested in 1923, he was a towering leader. My father was a member of seven different Houses. Nobody in the world is a member of seven different Houses, except my father. I have been to the Lok Sabha four times and five times to Vidhan Sabha. Deepender has also been

in the Lok Sabha thrice, and is now in the Rajya Sabha. The question is how you behave with people — whether they accept you or not. There is no such thing that is politics. Or if you are a journalist, your son can't become a journalist. If he's a good journalist, he will carve his own position.

#### Manoj CG: You're a grassroots leader. What is the political counter to this aggressive Hindutva run by the BJP

Follow Mahatma Gandhi's policy and his thoughts. He was a staunch Hindu but had respect for every religion. The Congress has always followed Gandhi's policies.

#### Liz Mathew: During his trial on Babri Masjid, LK Advani said he had learnt to use religion in politics from Mahatma Gandhi.

This is what I'm saying. We will always follow Mahatma Gandhi. What is bad about it, when he was able to take everyone along with him. Be it Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian, everybody took part in the freedom struggle under his leadership. The idea should be how to use it to build our nation. If you make a road, can you make a road for a particular religion or a caste? It has to be for all.

#### Shyamlal Yadav: Your government was in power for 10 years from 2004 to 2014. Since then, it seems Congress has done little for the party even though Rahul and Sonia Gandhi were free. You too must be wondering why Congress is shrinking.

This is why we have organised the Chintan Shivir. We are holding party elections. We will start from the block level. In Haryana, there were no ground-level block Congress committees or district Congress committees for the last seven years. For any organisation to be strong, the subordinate organisations are a must. So, this time we are having elections for

Follow Mahatma Gandhi's policy and his thoughts. He was a staunch Hindu but had respect for every religion. The Congress has always followed

block, district and state Congress committees. We will build a strong organisation.

#### Shubhajit Roy: Gandhi was in favour has one of the most liberal policies.

Gandhi's disciple Nitish Kumar is enforcing prohibition, right? What's the result? You have to realise what social changes are happening. Bansi Lal had tried prohibition, but what is its result today? There were several shortcomings in that. In Nitish Kumar's Bihar, so many people are locked up in jails.

#### Shubhajit Roy: There's a debate at the national level that UPA allies should take the lead and Congress should take the backseat. What is your take?

Everybody has issued statements that there cannot be any alliance without  $Congress.\ Which\ party\ leads\ depends\ on$ the nature of the alliance — if it is a state or Central alliance. For 2024, we will decide accordingly. In the state elections, the major party that should take the lead has to be accommodated by everyone.

Congress has to be in the mainstream in the national alliance. In 1977, when the Janata Party was formed, who was leading? Even Morarji Desai's name was not declared for the Prime Minister's post. So, that depends upon the political situation. If everybody in the alliance thinks about the interest of the country, they will decide accordingly.

#### Manoj CG: What has changed since 2014 in the relationship between Hindus and Muslims? What should be the political response to communal

In Haryana, the government, to hide its failures, distracts the people. These are not real issues. We have been living together for so many years. Everybody knows that everybody has to live together. We have respect for every religion. We carry everyone along with us. We don't get involved in hate politics. The Congress is highlighting the real issues. People will realise slowly. It takes time in a democracy.

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: Recently, both the Akali Dal and the Congress celebrated their centenaries. Both parties are on the decline. And one grouse against both is nepotism; there, they ask to change Badal, here, they talk of replacing Rahul.

If someone says in a democracy that their party will never decline, that is not true. I have seen when there were only two members of Parliament from BJP. I've seen more than two-thirds majority of Congress. It happens. And it is good for

Jaipur

democracy. Nobody should monopolise power. Nobody should think they are immune. People see everything, they are very intelligent. They decide at the right time.

#### Manoj CG: Congress president elections will happen in August-September and Lok Sabha elections in two years. Do you think Sonia Gandhi should continue till the LS elections are over?

The party is holding elections, and whoever is elected should be the president. The party holds democratic elections. If Sonia Gandhi is accepted by all, she'll be there.

#### Varinder Bhatia: In the current scenario when your party is sliding, do you think a change of face can revive it?

Nowadays, along with the party, the face also matters — whether it is the Congress or the BJP. Can you ask any BJP person, what will be your position minus Narendra Modi? In 2004, we assisted Sonia Gandhi (to become the Prime Minister), I was in Parliament, but she refused. In our party, we think about the people. The only way out is to fight for the cause of the people, for their problems. A leader then emerges automatically.

#### Sourav Roy Barman: Over the next few months, Arvind Kejriwal is going to travel to Haryana and hammer home the point that all parties are tried and tested, give us a chance. With Haryana sandwiched between two AAP-ruled states, can you afford to dismiss AAP? Also, why do you think the talks fell through with Prashant Kishor?

I can't say anything about him (Kishor), but as far as AAP is concerned, every party has got to come and convince the people. But in Haryana people see an alternative only in the Congress. And I am saying this because I know the ground realities.

#### Varinder Bhatia: You've been holding Vipaksh Aapke Samaksh programmes but we never saw the state Congress President participate. But the newly appointed president was there with you at the recent programme. Is it an attempt to present a united face?

There's no question of factionalism. Our next programme is in Fatehabad and the Congress state president will be there too. These programmes are organised by the legislature party. Because the MLAs have to know (the problems), they have to be on the ground so that they can raise these issues in the Assembly. That was the idea of that programme.



Gandhi's policies

# THE WORLD

#### TOPOFTHE WORLD



Macron with UAE's Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. AP

THE GULF

#### World leaders descend on UAE to pay respects to late ruler

AN ARRAY of presidents and prime ministers continued to descend on the UAE on Sunday to pay their respects to the federation's late ruler. They also came to praise his successor, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan – a vivid sign of Abu Dhabi's influence in Western and Arab capitals. The first Western leader to jet to the oil-rich emirate was French President Emmanuel Macron. He met Sunday with Sheikh Mohammed to pay tribute to Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the long-ailing ruler who died Friday at the age of 73. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was expected to arrive later, along with other leaders including Israel's president after the two countries opened formal relations in 2020. A US delegation led by Vice President Kamala Harris is due to visit the UAE on Monday.

#### US to remove 5 from foreign terror blacklist

THEUS is poised to remove five extremist groups, all believed to be defunct, from its list of foreign terrorist organisations, including several that once posed significant threats. Although the groups are inactive, the decision is politically sensitive for the Biden administration and the countries in which the organisations operated. The organisations include the Basque separatist group ETA, the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo, the radical Jewish group Kahane Kach and two Islamic groups that were active in Israel, the Palestinian territories and Egypt.

**LEBANON** 

#### Mired in collapse. country to choose new parliament

THE PEOPLE of Lebanon voted for a new parliament Sunday against the backdrop of an economic meltdown that is transforming the country and low expectations that the election would significantly alter the political landscape. A new crop of candidates from the 2019 protest movement are running against the country's entrenched ruling class that is blamed for the collapse, hoping to unseat them. But they are divided and lack the money, experience and other advantages held by traditional political rulers with a decades-long grip on power.

#### Filmmaker: Many movie industry workers arrested

AN AWARD-WINING Iranian filmmaker said authorities raided the offices and homes of several filmmakers and other industry professionals and arrested some them. Mohammad Rasoulof said in a statement signed by dozens of movie industry professionals on Instagram late Saturday that security forces made some arrests and confiscated film production equipment during some recent raids.

**GUNMAN, 18, DROVE HOURS TO STORE AT BLACK-MAJORITY AREA: POLICE** 

## 10 shot dead in live-streamed 'racially motivated' attack at US supermarket

Suspect surrenders to cops; 'manifesto' reportedly written by him says attack inspired by 2019 Christchurch shooting

**REUTERS** 

BUFFALO (NEW YORK), MAY 15

AN 18-YEAR-OLD white gunman shot 10 people to death and wounded three on Saturday at a grocery store in a Black neighborhood of upstate New York, before surrendering after what authorities called an act of "racially motivated violent extremism".

Authorities said the suspect, who was armed with an assaultstyle rifle and appeared to have acted alone, drove to Buffalo from his home several hours away to launch the afternoon attack that he broadcast in real time on social media platform Twitch, a live video service owned by Amazon.com.

Eleven of the 13 people struck by gunfire were Black, officials said. The two others were white. The racial breakdown of the dead was not made clear.

Court papers named the suspect as Payton Gendron of Conklin in New York state.

He was arraigned hours after the shooting in state court on first-degree murder charges, which carry a maximum penalty of life in prison without parole, said Erie County District Attorney John Flynn. New York has no capital punishment.

According to local media reports, the teenager was a student at State University of New York's Broome Community College near Binghamton.

When confronted by officers at the store, the suspect held a gun to his own neck, but they talked him into dropping the weapon and surrendering, Buffalo police commissioner Joseph Gramaglia told a

Gramaglia said the gunman shot and killed three people in the parking lot of the Tops Friendly Markets outlet before exchanging fire with a retired police officer working as a security guard for the store, but the suspect was protected by his body armour.

Stephen Belongia, the FBI special agent in charge of the bureau's Buffalo field office, said the attack would be investigated both as a hate crime and as an act of "racially motivated violent extremism" under federal law.

Erie County Sheriff John Garcia said: "It was a straight-up racially motivated hate crime from somebody outside of our community."

US President Biden decried the shooting as "abhorrent to the very fabric of this nation" in a statement issued late Saturday. "Hate must have no safe harbour. We must do everything in our power to end hate-fuelled domestic terrorism."

New York Governor Kathy Hochul told a late-evening news conference she was dismayed that the killer managed to livestream his attack on social media, which she blamed for hosting a "feeding frenzy" of violent extremist ideology.

Twitch said in a statement that it removed the livestream less than two minutes after it started.

In addition, a 180-page manifesto outlining 'The Great Replacement Theory' - the idea that white people are being replaced by minorities - also circulated online, reportedly authored by Gendron. It said he drew inspiration from the man who killed 51 people at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019, Police declined to comment on the document.



Near the site of the shooting in Buffalo, New York, on Saturday. AP

### A grisly inspiration for racist attacks

A gunman who had professed racist views attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, on March 15, 2019, killing 51. This seems to have inspired several others to commit similar acts, including the Buffalo gunman. A look at some of them:

**APRIL 2019: Prosecutors** said a man who killed one person and injured three in an attack on a synagogue near San Diego during the Jewish holiday of Passover was inspired by the shootings in New Zealand.

AUGUST 2019: A gunman who killed 23 people in a crowded shopping center in El Paso, Texas, posted a long note minutes before the



The suspect is detained after Saturday's shooting in **Buffalo. New York.** Reuters

attack. In it, he mentioned, 'In general, I support the Christchurch shooter and his manifesto.

AUGUST 2019: A 22-yearold Norwegian man who was sentenced to 21 years in prison for killing his stepsister and opening fire on a mosque said during his trial that he was inspired by the New Zealand massacre. The New York Times

## Two Sikh men shot dead in Pakistan

2nd incident against Sikh community in Peshawar in the last eight months

DIVYA GOYAL GOPAL LUDHIANA, MAY 15

TWO SIKH men were shot dead in Peshawar city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan Sunday, local sources said.

The local Sikh community identified the deceased as shopkeepers Ranjit Singh, 42, and Kuljeet Singh, 38. They were sitting at their shops at Batta Tal Chowk in Sarband area when two men arrived on a motorbike and opened fire, the sources said.

Satwant Singh, member of Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (PS-GPC), said it appeared to be a case of "targeted killings".

The Islamic State's Khorasan unit claimed via its propaganda news service 'Amaaq' that it carried out the attack

This is the second incident against the minority community in Peshawar in the last eight months. In September last year, a Sikh shopkeeper, Satwant Singh, was shot dead at his dawakhana (traditional medicine shop) in Peshawar. The Islamic State Khorasan or ISIS-K, had claimed responsibility for that killing, too.

After the killings on Sunday, the local Sikh community in Peshawar blocked Grand Trunk Road and took out a march demanding justice and protection from the government. They also demanded adequate compensation for the families of both deceased. The slogans of ``Joboleso'nihaal.. Sat Sri Akal", "Stop targeted killings" and "We want justice" reverberated during the protest march.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Balbir Singh, a local gurdwara sewadar-cum-school teacher, said that "enough was enough and now local Sikh community settled in Peshawar had no patience left to tolerate more of such targeted killings".

Small wins buoy Ukraine; West

says Russians losing momentum



community protest in Peshawar on Sunday. Express

"No Sikh family here in Peshawar has any personal enmity or grudge against anyone. We all are poor people who just go for work every morning but we and our families live in this constant fear if we will return home alive in the evening or not, Killers come, barge into our shops, put guns to our heads and simply shoot. There is no fear of any law and order. Sikhs are shot dead simply because they are religious minorities. This persecution of Sikhs has to stop. Each Sikh living in Pakistan loves their country very much, we are proud of being Pakistanis but then our people are being shot dead every other day without any fear. Humein Pakistan se mohabbat hai par hum yahaan aman se rehna chahte hain (We love Pakistan but we want to live here in peace)," said Balbir, adding that there were around 500 Sikh families settled in Peshawar who mostly run spices, grocery and medicines shops.

Local Sikh community members said that since 2014, there have been at least 10 such incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province when unidentified accused came and targeted Sikhs. While some of them were injured, others lost their lives. "Dr Soran Singh in 2016, Charanjit Singh in 2018, Ravinder Singh in 2020 and Satwant Singh in 2021... the list is endless. Sikh minority group members are being persecuted in Pakistan but there's no action and no fear," said a local resident.

## Sri Lanka PM extends support to protesters telling President to quit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COLOMBO, MAY 15

SRI LANKA'S new Prime Minister. Ranil Wickremesinghe, has extended public support to the protesters who have been camping at a popular beachfront here for over a month calling for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's resignation with the country facing its worst-ever economic crisis.

Saturday that he appointed a committee to look after the interests of the 'Gota Go Home' village protesters who have been camping at Colombo's Galle Face Green since April 9. It was President Gotabaya

Rajapaksa who appointed Wickremesinghe as PM after asking his elder brother Mahinda Rajapaksa to quit.

Wickremesinghe said the young protesters in the village would be safeguarded and their views would be sought for the shaping of future policy.

In an interview with the BBC Sinhala Service, the Prime Minister said the 'Gota Go Gama' protest should be continued to



A protester hangs decorative lanterns to mark Buddha Poornima or Vesak at an ongoing protest site outside the President's office in Colombo on Sunday. AP

bring a change in the political system in the country and let the country's youth take the responsibility to lead.

Wickremesinghe, the 73year-old United National Party (UNP) leader, was appointed as Sri Lanka's 26th prime minister on Thursday as the country was without a government since Monday when Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned after violence erupted following an attack on the anti-government

protesters by his supporters. Talks with World

Bank, ADB

Meanwhile, on Sunday, Wickremesinghe held discussions with representatives of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank on the current economic crisis in the country, as India delivered the 12th shipment of diesel containing over 400,000 metric tonnes of fuel to the island nation.

#### N Korea taking 'swift measures', reports more Covid deaths

SEOUL, MAY 15

NORTH KOREA said on Sunday a total of 42 people had died as the country began its fourth day under a nationwide lockdown aimed at stopping the impoverished country's first confirmed Covid-19 outbreak.

North Korea's admission on Thursday that it is battling an "explosive" Covid-19 outbreak has raised concerns that the virus could devastate a country with an under-resourced health system, limited testing capabilities and no vaccine programme.

State news agency KCNA said the country was taking "swift state emergency measures" to control the epidemic.

"All provinces, cities and counties of the country have been totally locked down and working units, production units and residential units closed from each other since the morning of May 12 and strict and intensive examination of all the people is being conducted," KCNA reported on Sunday.

### Finland, Sweden take a step closer to joining NATO **OLEKSANDR**

STASHEVSKYI& **CIARAN MCQUILLAN** KYIV, MAY 15

ALMOST THREE months after Russia shocked the world by invading Ukraine, its military faced a bogged-down war, the prospect of a bigger NATO and an opponent buoyed Sunday by its wins on and off the battlefield.

Finland decided to seek NATO membership as top diplomats from the Western alliance met in Berlin. The leaders of the militarily neutral country said the invasion had changed Europe's security landscape — though NATO's chief declared that "Russia's war in Ukraine is not going as

Moscow had planned. "Ukraine can win this war," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said, adding that the alliance must continue to give the country military support.

Several hours later, Sweden's governing party also endorsed joining NATO, a move that could lead to the country's application within days.



Ukrainian servicemen walk amidst rubble at a damaged area in Kharkiv, Reuters

The two nonaligned Nordic nations becoming part of the alliance would represent an affront to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has cited NATO's post-Cold War expansion in Eastern Europe as a threat to Russia, NATO says it is a purely defensive alliance.

While Moscow lost ground on the diplomatic front, Russian forces failed to make territorial gains in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine said it held off  $Russian\,of fensives\,Sunday\,in\,the$ 

country's east, and Western military officials said the campaign Moscow launched there after its forces failed to seize Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, had slowed to a snail's pace.

Ukraine, meanwhile, celebrated a morale-boosting victory in the Eurovision Song Contest. The folk-rap ensemble Kalush Orchestra won the glitzy pan-European competition with its song "Stefania," which has become a popular anthem among Ukrainians during the war. AP

THE KALUSH ORCHESTRA WON EUROVISION WITH THEIR ENTRY 'STEFANIA'

## For Ukrainian fighters, Eurovision heralds coming victory over Russia

**SERGIY KARAZY** MAY15

GATHERED IN a basement used as safe quarters north of Kviv a small group of Ukrainian soldiers joyfully watched their country win the Eurovision Song Contest, saying it heralded their coming victory in the war to evict Russian forces from Ukraine.

The Kalush Orchestra won the Eurovision with their entry Stefania, surfing a wave of popular support from all around Europe to claim an emotional victory that was welcomed by the country's president. "We had a victory: today in

have a victory in Ukraine-





Ukrainian service members celebrate (left) the victory of the Kalush Orchestra (right), a band from Ukraine, during the final of the 2022 Eurovision Song Contest. Reuters

Eurovision, but soon we will

Russian war," said Tetyana, a military medic, standing in the

basement decorated with children's paintings of Ukraine flag

and "Glory to Ukraine" signs on them.

servicemen had sat around a screen, some tapping rhythmically on their knees when Kalush performed, and when the winner was announced they clapped and cheered with delight. "We will also win," said

The tired-looking but happy

Vitaliy, a soldier. "We have shown that we can not only fight, but we can also sing very nice."

The Russian invasion, now in its third month, has claimed thousands of civilian lives, sent millions of Ukrainians fleeing and reduced cities to rubble.

Moscow calls its actions a "special military operation" to disarm Ukraine and protect it from fascists. Ukraine and the

in Russian hands there hundreds of Ukrainian fighters still holding out at the Azovstal steel works despite weeks of heavy

West say the fascist allegation is

baseless and that the war is an

The southern port city of

unprovoked act of aggression.

Mariupol has suffered the heav-

iest fighting, and while it is now

hombardment. Stationed far to the north, closer to the border with Belarus, soldiers in the basement paid homage to the bravery of their comrades in the south.

"The next Eurovision we will host in liberated Mariupol,' Vitaliy, the serviceman, said.

# 10 ECONOMY

Market Watch

#### FPIs pull out ₹25,200 cr in May so far

New Delhi: The relentless selling of Indian stocks by foreign investors continued, as they pulled out a little over Rs 25,200 crore from the Indian equity market in the first fortnight of this month, on hike in interest rate globally and concerns over rising Covid cases. PTI

#### SECTOR WATCH **INSURANCE**

## Irdai douses 'Burning Cost', premiums may fall for India Inc

**GEORGE MATHEW** MUMBAI, MAY 15

PAVING THE way for lower insurance premiums for India Inc, insurance regulator Irdai has said that 'Burning Cost' can't be quoted by general insurers as a 'mandated minimum rate' to charge premiums to customers.

The new notification by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) on the role of 'Burning Cost' — which is a reversal of its earlier stand — will now help insurers to lower the premiums for customers, insurance sources said. However, whether it will lead to undercutting of prices leading to cutthroat competition and underwriting losses remains to be seen. The new situation will be detrimental for the reinsurers who had seen their fire premium going up in the last two years, industry analysts said.

Burning Cost is defined as a kind of break-even cost where the higher claims in the portfolio will automatically lead to higher premiums to be collected in the subsequent year. In a bid to bring in underwriting discipline and checking rampant under-pricing, leading to large underwriting losses in the Indian general insurance industry, Irdai had earlier asked the general insurers to stick to the 'Burning Cost' as prepared by the Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIBI), a data mining body for the Indian insurance industry set up by Irdai, to price any product. The regulator said it has been receiving several complaints from policyholders, both directly and through various platforms such as industry associations, that insurers are referring to the 'Burning Cost' as a 'mandated minimum rate'.

As a result, in FY2019-20, ate-owned GIC Re and other reinsurers, foreign reinsurance

WHAT IS THIS COST

■Burning Cost is defined as a kind of break-even cost where the higher claims in the portfolio will automatically lead to higher premiums to be collected in the subsequent year

branches (FRBs), had increased its fire premium by almost 30 per cent on the basis of higher 'Burning Cost', which, in turn, was passed on to India Inc by the general insurers.

However, the latest Irdai move will allow general insurers to extend appropriate discounts once again. "The objective of the IIBI publishing details of Burning Costs occupancy-wise is only to give information to insurers with regard to industry-level experience for appropriate use while rating risks. By no means does this even remotely imply that this is a 'mandated mini-

mum rate," Irdai said.

The regulator said it expects insurers to consider all applicable risk factors for rating a risk and give appropriate discounts or charge loading as warranted. The rating approach shall be part of the technical note filed under the Use and File/File and Use procedure as the case may be, Irdai said. Insurance sources said burning cost itself was a fallacy as it ignores all kinds of exposures for the insurers and always the price needs to be greater than burning cost for long-term viability. If this can't be followed either driven by reinsurers or underwriting discipline of insurers, we will be returning to the anarchic days of pricing and be back soon to the difficult days of pre-2019," said a reinsurance official.

www.indianexpress.com

**EXPLORATORY TALKS WITH SINGAPORE AIRLINES** 

## Vistara could merge with Al, decision likely by end of 2023

**PRANAV MUKUL** NEW DELHI, MAY 15

TATA SONS has held exploratory talks with Singapore Airlines (SIA), its joint-venture partner in Vistara, for a potential merger of the airline with Air India, multiple sources told The Indian Express.

SIA is learnt to have asked for time until the end of next year to decide whether it wants to go ahead. Tata Sons is the holding company of the Tata Group, which took over Air India from the government earlier this year. Vistara is the only other full-service carrier in India.

"The Tatas and Singapore Airlines have discussed the merger possibility earlier this year. SIA had even agreed to join the Tata bid for Air India but because of the pandemic, it decided to back out given its poor financial condition," one of the persons aware of the development said on condition of

SIA had waived the non-compete clause in Vistara's contract to allow the Tata Group to bid for the national carrier. Air India is now fully owned by the Tata Group, while Vistara is a 51:49 joint venture between the Tatas and SIA.

"SIA has asked for time till the end of 2023 to decide whether it wants to go ahead with the merger or not. What they're looking for is some stability in their financial condition, and that of Air India's operations post the disinvestment," the source said.

"Discussions on how much equity Singapore Airlines will hold in Air India will be held once it has fi-

'84% of staff feel organisation

culture improved since Covid'

Around 84 per cent of employees globally say the

organisation's culture has improved since the

start of the pandemic, an EY Survey said



An Air India aircraft at Chandigarh airport. File

nalised its intention to merge," the source added.

According to this person, the appointment of Air India's new chief executive is a step in the direction of the possible merger. The Tata Group on Thursday announced the onboarding of Campbell Wilson, a Singapore Airlines veteran and CEO of its lowcost unit Scoot Wilson's appointment as Air

India's CEO & MD was made with the "full blessings" of Singapore Airlines. "The two groups sat together and took the call to appoint Wilson at Air India. The decision has been taken with a long-term perspective. Wilson has global aviation experience and comes with long-term commitment to lead Air India's turnaround," another source said. Singapore Airlines CEO Goh Choong Phong had said on Thursday: "Campbell is one of our most experienced senior executives who has made many important contributions in key management roles within the SIA Group. While we are sad to lose him, he goes to Air India with our

On Friday, in his farewell note to Scoot employees, Wilson wrote:

"...There are other mountains to climb, and Lam humbled to have been selected by Air India's board as the airline's new CEO. It is a fantastic opportunity to lead a historic airline, now owned by the Tata Group, to new heights, and I am grateful to embark on that exciting challenge with the full blessings of the SIA management

team."The Tata Group won the bid

to acquire Air India in October

2021, and the airline was trans-

ferred to its new owner in January

Vistara was launched in 2015. Responding to a question from The Indian Express on the possible merger of Air India and Vistara, a Singapore Airlines spokesperson said: "We do not comment on any confidential discussions that we may or may not be having with our partners".

Tata Sons had not responded to an email seeking comments by the time of publication of this report on Sunday.

The Singapore Airlines Group reported a loss of SGD 4.3 billion (approximately Rs 23,851 crore) for the financial year ended March 2021 as passenger volumes fell 97.9% during the period. The group posted its first quarterly profit

As employers shifted gears

providing more flexible work

options, there is more that

they will need to invest in -

that includes higher pay and

overall brand building of the

The survey canvassed the

employees across 22

than 500 employees

countries and 26 industry

views of over 1,500 business

leaders and more than 17,000

sectors. In India, the responses

are captured by more than 100

business leaders and more

Adani to buy

49% stake in

**Business Media** 

a unit of Gautam Adani's conglom-

erate Adani Enterprises, will pick

a 49 per cent stake in Raghav Bahl-

curated digital business news platform Quintillion Business Media

Quintillion

organisation

Methodology

since the onset of the pandemic during October-December 2021.

Air India posted a net loss of Rs 5,422.60 crore for the first half of 2021-22. The Tata Group has laid out a roadmap for the recovery of Air India, and to turn it around financially and operationally.

In Vistara, the JV partners have built a premium airline brand. During the January-March period, the two airlines together had a domestic passenger traffic market share of 18.7%

The Tata Group also owns a majority stake in the low-cost airline AirAsia India, which could be merged with Air India's budget subsidiary Air India Express. Last month, Air India sought approval from the antitrust regulator Competition Commission of India to acquire AirAsia India.

A merger of Air India and Vistara would articulate Tata Sons chairman N Chandrasekaran's philosophy of "synergise", given that the two airlines complement each other in some ways.

They have identical fleets with Airbus A320 family aircraft in the narrow-bodied fleet meant for domestic and short-haul international routes, and Boeing 787 aircraft for medium to long-haul international routes. Air India also has Boeing 777 aircraft for its flights to the United States.

While Vistara has been established as a premium airline brand in the domestic segment, Air India's strength lies in the international markets, especially the US and Europe, Currently, Air India is the only Indian carrier that flies to the US; Air India and Vistara are the only ones that fly to Europe.

36% OF EMPLOYER RESPONDENTS

**EMPLOYEES TO COME** 

As many countries emerge

**BACK TO THE OFFICE** 

**FIVE DAYS A WEEK** 

from the pandemic,

employees have gained

significant influence over

'wish list' from potential

employers is changing

their employers and that their

**SAY THEY WANT** 

## Logistics overhang: Rupee fall unlikely to boost exports

Fall in value of other currencies to not give India competitive edge

KARUNJITSINGH& **AANCHAL MAGAZINE** NEW DELHI, MAY 15

THE RUPEE'S depreciation against the US dollar may hold little upside for India as exports seem unlikely to benefit, amid global supply chain constrains and fall in currency values of competitors, even as imports are set to become more costlier.

The rupee has depreciated by 4.18 per cent since the beginning of the year and closed Friday's trading session at 77.44 against the greenback.

Experts said the depreciation in the value of the rupee was likely to add to India's burgeoning import bill but may not have the traditionally expected impact of making exports more competitive as high commodity prices and global supply chain issues are impacting global trade.

"Global supply chains are fac $inghead winds \, \overline{due} \, to \, problems \, in$ China. All this is adding to pressures on the cost side, so I don't think we can expect an impact on exports because of the currency depreciation that is going on," said Biswajit Dhar, trade expert and professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Lockdowns in China aimed at containing the Covid spread have slowed operations at key ports and affected global supply chains.

"There is an acute shortage of containers and the supply chain is completely stretched," said Sumit Goyal, president of Kolkata-based Patton International, which exports engineering goods. Goyal added international buyers often included expected price reductions in line with currency depreciation in contracts. Inflation was also putting upward pressure on the cost of inputs, he noted.

Experts said since there was a secular strengthening of the dollar against most currencies, the depreciation would not offer an advantage to most exporters relative to competitor countries.

"It is not only the rupee that has depreciated, almost every currency including the pound and the euro have depreciated against the dollar. Most of our competing export nations are in South Asia or Southeast Asia and their curren-

Impact on imports

Imports are likely to be impacted significantly by the rupee's depreciation, with India's import requirements growing rapidly.

cies have also depreciated," said Sunil Kumar Sinha, principal economist at India Ratings, adding this may mean that exports do not become more competitive as a result of currency depreciation.

Imports, on the other hand, are likely to be impacted significantly by the rupee's depreciation, with India's import requirements growing rapidly — including increased demand for imported coal despite high international prices as thermal power plants are facing low coal inventories.

India's merchandise trade deficit hit an all-time high of \$192.4 billion in FY22 on the back of record high imports worth \$610.2 billion and exports worth \$417.8 billion, High growth in exports and imports has continued in this fiscal, with inbound shipments growing about 31 per cent year-on-year in April, boosted by high prices of commodities such as crude oil and coal.

The depreciation of the rupee is also set to make outward remittances, including those to students in the US, more expensive. Experts said the depreciation might impact the decision of students planning to study in the US going forward.

Experts noted that the rupee was unlikely to see further depreciation against the dollar for a sustained period in the first half of this fiscal. "As far as the rupee is concerned, we believe that with foreign exchange reserves still being large, it's unlikely to be a situation of disorderly depreciation. So, we now feel that for the rest of this half would be Rs 75-79 (against the dollar),' said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at Icra, adding that she expected that the rupee might fall below its recent low but was unlikely to remain there for a long period.

## SBI hikes MCLR again, second in 1 month

RBI to review asset quality of PSBs tomorrow

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** MUMBAI MAY15

STATE BANK of India (SBI), India's largest bank, has hiked its marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) by 10 basis points across tenures with effect from May 15.

**BANIKINKAR PATTANAYAK** 

DAYS AFTER the Reserve Bank of

India (RBI) hiked the reporate for

the first time in almost four years,

governor Shaktikanta Das will

meet chiefs of public sector banks

(PSBs) on May 17 to review credit

flow and assess the outlook on as-

state-run banks' strategy to deal

with the rising interest rate sce-

Das may also take stock of

set quality, sources told FE.

NEW DELHI, MAY 15



SBI branch, New Delhi. File

Ashima Goyal

New Delhi: The RBI is not "be-

hind the curve" in hiking in-

terest rate to tackle rising in-

flation, Monetary Policy

Committee (MPC) member

Mumbai: Reliance will acquire

dozens of small grocery and non-

food brands as it targets building

its own \$6.5 billion consumer

folio of 50 to 60 grocery, house-

hold and personal care brands

within six months and is hiring

distributors to take them to

mom-and-pop stores and bigger

der a vertical named Reliance

Retail Consumer Brands will come

on top of the brick-and-mortar

store network of more than 2,000

The consumer goods push un-

retail outlets across the nation.

Reliance plans to build a port-

goods business, sources said.

Ashima Goyal has said.

on rate hikes

This is SBI's second hike in MCLR in the last one month.

SBI's overnight, one-month, three-month MCLR now stands at 6.85 per cent as against 6.75 per cent earlier. Similarly, the sixmonth MCLR stands at 7.15 per cent, one-year MCLR stands at 7.2 percent, two-year MCLR stands at

Frauds in PSBs dip

New Delhi: Public sector banks

reported over 51 per cent dip

51% to ₹40,295 cr

7.4 per cent, and three-year MCLR stands at 7.5 per cent.

SBI's hike follows the Monetary Policy Committee deci-

sion to jack up reporate by 40 basis points to 4.4 per cent. In April, SBI had increased its MCLR by 10 bps before the MPC hiked its benchmark rate by 40 basis points.

Pvt Ltd for an undisclosed sum, according to a regulatory filing. Earlier in March, Adani Enterprises announced its foray ing to government entities, IT infrastructure and cyber security frameinto the media business by acquirwork and any issue that the lenders ing an unspecified minority stake in Quintillion Business Media Ltd

> (QBML). It has signed a Shareholders" Agreement with Quintillion Media Ltd (QML) and QBML and a share purchase agreement with QML, QBMLand Quint Digital Media Ltd (QDML) in connection with its proposed acquisition of a 49 per cent stake in QBML, said Adani Enterprises in a late-night regulatory filing on May 13. PTI

### **Govt: Constraints** in availability of domestic coal New Delhi: AMG Media Networks,

Source: EY/PTI

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** NEW DELHI, MAY 15

THE COUNTRY is facing constraints in the domestic coal availability and the rest of the dry fuel demand needs to be met with imports, according to the Coal Ministry.

The ministry has also emphasised that coal block holders – both captive and commercial have a major role to play in mitigating the coal shortfall situation. Domestic coal production is about 800 million tonnes, according to the coal additional secretary, who is also the chairperson of an interministerial panel on coal linkages for the power sector.

The inter-ministerial panel



A thermal plant, Punjab. File

met recently to consider the requests for coal linkages to central/state sector power plants and to review the status of existing coal linkages. "... rest of the coal demand has to be met through imports from other countries", according to the minutes of the meeting on fuel linkages. WITHPTI

**RBI OFFICIALS TO PARLIAMENTARY PANEL** 

dollarisation of economy'

'Cryptos can lead to

#### in Apr: CMIE Kolkata: As many as 8.8 million people joined the workforce in April, as per data provided by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

**India** adds

8.8 mn jobs

However, the jobs that became available were inadequate com-

pared to the demand, it said. India's labour force increased by 8.8 million to 437.2 million in

April, one of the largest monthly increases since the beginning of the pandemic, CMIE managing director and CEO Mahesh Vyas said. The country's labour market

was at 428.4 million in March, he added. In 2021-22, the average monthly increase in the country's labour force was 0.2 million, as per the data. The report said that an 8.8 million increase in labour force participation was only possible if some working-age people who were out of jobs joined the working population in April. pti

#### BRIEFLY —

#### Paytm, insurance New Delhi: Paytm said it will

seek a nod for a new general insurance licence with a fresh application.

#### Maruti capex

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki India has lined up Rs 5,000 crore capex for various initiatives, said a senior official.

#### HCL Tech, jobs

New Delhi: HCLTech plans to double headcount in nearshore locations in 3-5 years, CEO CVijayakumar said. PTI

#### nario without upsetting growth dynamics, they added. The Governor will also review

PSBs' collection efficiencies, con-

'RIL to buy dozens of

brands in \$6.5-bn play'

sumer grievance redress mechanism, digital banking units, lend-

A superstore of RIL

grocery outlets and ongoing ex-

pansion of "JioMart" e-commerce

operations in India's nearly \$900

billion retail market, one of world's

biggest, Reliance did not respond

to a request for comment.

Mumbai. Reuter:

2022, the RBI has said. PTI

in the amount involved in frauds to Rs 40,295.25 crore during the fiscal ended March

erations. The governor would probably like to have bankers' feedback as to how they are planning to cope with the new reality of elevated rates and tight liquidity conditions, and what could be the impact on banks' lending, asset quality and the broader operating environment." a source said. FE

may like to present, said sources.

tions on various aspects of their op-

"PSBs are preparing presenta-

## IMF lifts weighting of dollar, Chinese yuan in SDR basket

#### **REUTERS** BEIJING, MAY 15

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund said on Saturday it has increased the weighting of the dollar and Chinese yuan in its review of the currencies that make up the valuation of its Special Drawing Rights (SDR), an international reserve asset.

The review is the first since the yuan, also known as the renminbi, joined the basket of currencies in 2016 in what was a milestone in

#### FIRST SINCE 2016

■The review is the first since the yuan, also known as the renminbi, joined the basket of currencies in 2016

Beijing's efforts to internationalise its currency. The IMF raised the US currency's weighting to 43.38 per cent from 41.73 per cent and the yuan to 12.28 per cent from 10.92 per cent. The euro's weighting declined to 29.31 per cent from 30.93 per cent, the yen's fell to 7.59 per cent from 8.33 per cent and the British pound fell to 7.44 per cent from 8.09 per cent.

The IMF said in a statement its executive board had determined the weighting based on trade and financial market developments

"Directors concurred that neither the COVID-19 pandemic nor advances in Fintech have had any major impact on the relative role of currencies in the SDR basket so far," the IMF said.

**JATINTAKKAR** NEW DELHI, MAY 15

CRYPTOCURRENCIES CAN lead to "dollarisation" of a part of the  $economy\,which\,would\,be\,against$ India's sovereign interest, top officials of the RBI have told a parliamentary panel, according to

Briefing the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance chaired by former minister of state for finance Jayant Sinha, top officials of the RBI, including Governor

tocurrencies and said these pose challenges to the stability of the financial system, sources told PTI. "It will seriously undermine the RBI's capacity to determine

Shaktikanta Das, clearly expressed

their apprehensions about cryp-

monetary policy and regulate the monetary system of the country,' a member of the panel quoted RBI officials as saying. Central bank of ficials said these currencies "can replace a part of monetary system it will also undermine the RBI's capacity to regulate the flow of money in the system". PTI

## Royals' big stride forward

Rajasthan beat Lucknow by 24 runs to move to second, inch closer to play-offs

**IPL TABLE** 

RR

LSG

**RCB** 

KKR

SRH

13

13 8 5

13

13

12

13

12

12 5 7 10 -0.270

13

12

M W L PT NRR

20 0.391

16 0.262

14 -0.323

12 0.210

12 0.160

12 0.023

6 -0.613

8

-0.206

16 0.304

10 3

8 5

6 6

6 6

4 9

3 9

the second and third deliveries he faced, the

latter of which zoomed into the sightscreen.

When Stoinis pulled the length back,

Padikkal stood tall and creamed it through

the covers. Later, even if he was a bit late on

the ball, he made sure he hacked it safely

over midwicket. However, he would become

one of three RR batters who failed to clear

BRIEF SCORES: Rajasthan Royals: 178 for 6

in 20 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 41, Devdutt

Padikkal 39; Ravi Bishnoi 2/31) bt Lucknow

**Super Giants:** 154 for 8 in 20 overs (Deepak

Hooda 59; Trent Boult 2/18, Obed McCoy

the long CCI square boundaries.

2/35, Prasidh Krishna 2/32)

6

7

**SYNOPSIS:** Rajasthan Royals move to 16 points, second only to Lucknow Super Giants, after their strong attack comfortably defends what appeared to be a par

#### **ABHISHEK PUROHIT**

MUMBAI, MAY 15

IT WAS a strange sort of Powerplay from Lucknow Super Giants. Even if the ball was coming on to the bat, the Brabourne Stadium pitch wasn't an outright belter. Still, Quinton de Kock tried to force Trent Boult on the up through a cordon of backward point, point and cover, and found the middle fielder. Ayush Badoni was sent at No.3 for some quick runs but Boult trapped him plumb in front first ball with an inswinger.

After seeing two wickets falling in two deliveries, KL Rahul went into a shell for a couple of overs, even leaving regulation length balls outside off.

Was it because Yashasvi Jaiswal had taken 20 off the last over of RR's Powerplay, or was it because LSG were 23 for 2 after five overs? Suddenly, Rahul, on 4 off 16, switched to hyper-attack mode; he lofted Prasidh Krishna for a gorgeous six over extra cover, but then sliced a short ball into point's hands two balls later.

From 29 for 3, it was going to take some chasing against the likes of Yuzvendra Chahal and Ravichandran Ashwin. Chahal went for a few, unlike the unhittable Ashwin, but also had Deepak Hooda stumped for 59 off 39 in the 16th.

If the spin duo wasn't enough, left-arm seamer Obed McCoy, in just his third IPL game, was hard to get away with his slowerball variations, from dipping full deliveries to sticky bouncers.

#### Padikkal presses on

Since he almost messed up RR's chase against Punjab Kings with a 32-ball 31 last week at Wankhede Stadium - where he was mishitting even wide balls to fielders -Devdutt Padikkal has been a transformed batsman. On a difficult DY Patil Stadium surface where the ball was holding up, he began to play attacking strokes as soon as he came in against Delhi Capitals. It was not a pitch where he would get everything off the middle of the blade, but the intent was unmistakable. To that 48 off 30, he added 39 off 18 at the Cricket Club of India on Sunday.

These were much better batting conditions, of course, but Padikkal is usually someone who likes to get at least some feel of the wicket before opening up. Here he timed two lovely straight hits off Marcus Stoinis off



Trent Boult struck early to remove Quinton de Kock and Ayush Badoni. sportszpics

#### **Gujarat Titans** secure top-2 finish

Mumbai: Wriddhiman Saha's solid 67 not out after a top-class bowling performance set up Gujarat Titans' sevenwicket win over Chennai Super Kings in the IPL securing a top-two finish in the team standings. Gujarat bowlers put up a clinical show to restrict CSK to a below-par 133/5 despite a fine half-century by Ruturaj Gaikwad. Saha, who struck eight boundaries and a six in his 57-ball knock, anchored the chase nicely to get Gujarat home. While CSK were already out of the play-off race, the win for Gujarat guarantees them a top-two finish on the points table in their debut season, providing them with two opportunities to reach the final. Saha first added 59 runs in just 7.1 overs with Shubman Gill (18; 3x4) to lay the foundation of the win. CSK tried to make a mini comeback by grabbing two quick wickets in the middle overs.

BRIEFSCORES: CSK 133 for 5 in 20 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 53, N Jagadeesan 39 not out; Mohammad Shami 2/19, Rashid Khan 1/31) lost to GT 137/3 in 19.1 overs (Wriddhiman Saha 67 not out; Matheesha Pathirana 2/24).

**ANDREW SYMONDS 1975-2022** 

## Villain or Victim?: The world couldn't make up its mind about Symonds

ABHISHEK PUROHIT MUMBAI, MAY 15

THE INITIAL reaction was a wrenchingly hollow sense of an emptiness that felt like it had been coming for a while - the gnawing feeling that some lives are almost destined to remain unfulfilled.

Former Australia allrounder Andrew Symonds, who died following a single vehicle car crash in Townsville, was both brutal and beautiful in a manner that was almost primal, and even if you were rooting for the opposition and willing him to get out every next ball, you just couldn't take your eyes off him. The bat always appeared too small in his massive gloves. It was as if the casual, rapid tapping of the bat in the crease was telling the bowler to just get on with it, as he did not have too much time for the frivolity of a long run-up.

For he just wanted to uncoil in deceptively quick fashion from that ungainly stance and bash the ball as hard as he could before he could wind down in the evening.

He was ahead of the curve in the limitedovers game, and way ahead of his time in T20, where even today, more than a decade after he played his last game, his international strike-rate of almost 170 remains eyepopping. It won't be unfair to say that for most Indian cricket fans in 2008, Symonds was one of the starring villains of the Monkeygate controversy, if not the most central figure at the heart of one of the game's biggest scandals. And yet, as it turned out, he became, more and more, the central victim of its fallout.

A few years later, Ricky Ponting would say that the incident and its aftermath had finished Symonds' career.

He lost trust in those who were supposed to stand by him, and no matter how strong you may appear to the world from the outside, being let down when you are at your most vulnerable can break the very best.

Villain or victim? That could well be the question that defined Symonds, and how the world perceived him.

It was hard to remain perched on the fence when it came to him. Out fishing when he was supposed to be at a team meeting. Drinking in public during a T20 World Cup, that too in England, when he had promised he wouldn't. Calling Brendon McCullum a lump of shit in a radio interview.

And then he would walk in at 84 for 5 in a Boxing Day Ashes Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and bash an immortal 156



After the Monkeygate scandal, Andrew Symonds felt let down and his career went into decline.

He was ahead of the curve in the limited-overs game, and way ahead of his time in T20, where even today, more than a decade after he played his last game, his international strike-rate of almost 170 remains eyepopping.

against the country of his birth. Or come in at 86 for 4 in a World Cup and crack 143 not out in 125 balls against Wasim Akram, Wagar Younis and Shoaib Akhtar. It gives you a sense of what he was capa-

ble of if he could play almost 200 ODIs and still the consensus would remain that justice hadn't been fully done to the rare talent he possessed. On the other hand, the bar brawls and the

binge drinking would never quite go away. "I go out and drink hard all in one hit. Too fast, too much," he'd said once.

He was right. The rollercoaster he was on was going too fast, too much. All along, it had felt like something had to give. That it did at the age of just 46 adds the final full stop to a lifetime of sudden starts-and-stops. And it is probably fitting that he played his last match in India for an Indian team, Mumbai Indians, against an Australian team. New South Wales, in the 2011 Champions League. The villain and victim were both somehow conjoined to this land.

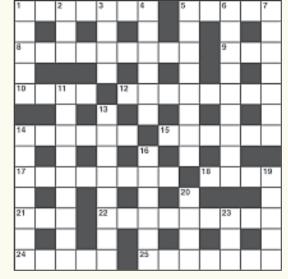
#### Zareen, Anamika, Parveen enter quarterfinals

New Delhi: Asian Championships bronze medallist Nikhat Zareen (52kg) continued her splendid run as she stormed into the quarterfinals alongside Anamika (50kg) and Parveen (63kg) in the World Boxing Championships in Istanbul on Sunday. Nikhat made light work of Mongolia's Lutsaikhan Altantsetseg to win by a 5-0 unanimous verdict. Parveen then displayed her attacking prowess to out-punch former Youth Olympic champion Jajaira Gonzalez of USA 5-0, while Anamika dispatched world championships bronze medallist Kristy Lee Harris of Australia with a similar margin. But, it was curtains for Shiksha (54kg), who went down by a 2-3 split decision to Youth Asian bronze medallist Yesugen Oyuntsetseg of Mongolia. Nikhat was the first Indian in action on Sunday and she completely dominated from start to finish in her round of 16 bout. The Telangana boxer used her quick hands to great effect and landed a flurry of straight punches on her rival's face in all the three rounds. The highlight of Nikhat's display was her immaculate footwork and speed, which the Mongolian found difficult to handle. PTI

#### Djokovic beats Tsitsipas for first title of the year

Rome: Novak Djokovic raised his first trophy of the year at the Italian Open on Sunday and showed that he's back in top form exactly a week before the French Open starts. After missing a large portion of the season because he wasn't vaccinated against the coronavirus, the top-ranked Djokovic beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-0, 7-6 (5) for his sixth Rome title. "I've been building my form the last few weeks," Djokovic said. "It couldn't be better timing coming into Roland Garros." "Perfect scenario for me," Djokovic added later. Earlier on the red clay, Iga Swiatek defended the women's title by overwhelming Ons Jabeur 6-2, 6-2 to extend her winning streak to 28 matches. Djokovic didn't drop a set all week, having won his 1,000th career match over Casper Ruud in the semifinals. Djokovic, who was deported because of his un-vaccinated status ahead of the Australian Open, hadn't won a tournament since raising the Paris Masters trophy in November. AP

#### **CROSSWORD 4741**



- ACROSS 1 Punishment for lying in the
- A question of choice
- New net cord starts tight In traffic a repeatedly seen
- 10 Every one in teaching (4)
- 12 Such a net may become loose 14 Many admit to being
- inexperienced (6) 15 Sarah's crazy to worry
- 17 Mention a new name (8)
- Cause a storm in a teacup (4) 21 Not conscious one is in error?
- 22 Gave effortless recital and staggered away (6,3)
- 24 Entertained without a thought(5)
- 25 Gleeman's new medley (7)

- Give an oral test (5) This man invaded England (3)
- In extremities they can be accommodating (4)
- They're for putting on vegetables (6) He's paid to mind someone
- else's business (8)
- An insect's uninterrupted
- development (9) Gear to make use of
- horsepower(7)11 They will spend their time
- 13 Rounded up but not rounded
- off(8)14 Many on past record seem to
- agree (7) 16 Master switch for the current
- 19 Strip a firearm (5) 20 Close up of a swimmer

- 23 Have something to confess (3)

Solutions Crossword 4740: Across: 1 Tropical, 5 Stop. 9 Unfit, 10 Crouton, 11 Cool Customer, 13 Remain, 14 Bedlam, 17 Maiden speech, 20 Officer, 21 Trice, 22 Earl, 23 Hydrogen. **Down**: 1 Taut, 2 Offform, 3 Intelligence, 4 Accrue, 6 Totem, 7 Panorama, 8 For the better, 12 Primrose, 15 Licking, 16 Osprey, 18 Infer, 19 Seen.

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









#### **CALVIN & HOBBES** by Bill Watterson



AM I GETTING THE SKILLS I'LL NEED TO EFFECTIVELY COMPETE IN A TOUGH, GLOBAL ECONOMY ? I WANT A HIGH PAYING JOB WHEN I GET OUT OF HERE! I WANT OPPORTUNITY!





IN THAT CASE, YOUNG MAN

E SUGGEST YOU START



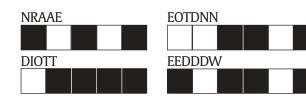
#### MARVIN by Tom Armstrong





### **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 - John Burroughs (6,2,3,3)



Answer: A somebody was once a nobody who wanted to and did - John Burroughs SOLUTION: ARENA, DITTO, TENDON, WEDDED

#### Difficulty Level 4s Instructions To solve a Sudoku puzzle.

every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

SUDOKU

U	1			V			100	
	7.	2	4		7	9	3	
П	8	Г		7			6	4
	4		1		5			
	5			8		1		

3

8

1

SOLUTION SUDOKU 483

#### 9 4 8 7 5 6 3 1 2 2 6 5 9 3 1 8 7 4 9 6 5 3 1 7 2 4 8 5 4 6 3 4 3 6 8 7 2 5 9 1 2 9 6 8 5 6 5 4 3 2 7 189 7 8 3 1 9 4 2 5 6

#### **DAY TODAY**

Your personal affairs will be highlighted

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20) No matter how relaxed the pace of life today, the end of the week could be rather hectic. There will also be a certain amount of emotional come to be grateful for your

foresight and refusal to put off tasks that should be done as soon as possible. TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

You may have a conservative reputation but, if allowed to express vourself, vou have a

wonderfully understated eccentric way of working. Now that Venus is aligned with a publicity-minded region of your chart, partners and associates will begin to notice

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21) The Moon makes a number of very sharp moves today, which means that domestic affairs should now be sorted out and family relationships resolved, at least

until the end of the week

Older relations could be the

most helpful, you know who

CANCER (June 22 - July 23) Everything that has happened recently

you can rely on.

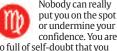
has conspired to change the rules of the game. Don't blame other people though, after all it's you who has moved the goal posts, possibly for the very good reason that it seemed the right thing to do at the time.

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

way through a private sector of dreams, strange imaginings

and mysteries of the most colourful kind. You will relish any intrigues or uncertainty that cloud your vision today. After all, a mystery could be the cause of much more pleasure.

#### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23) Nobody can really



Jaipur

confidence. You are so full of self-doubt that you are skilled at sabotaging your own interests. Make it your goal to boost your self-esteem and inspire respect. But don't feel that you need to rush into anything hasty.

#### BY PETER VIDAL

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

and even spectacular way this week. Yet another full seven days may get to grips with outstanding domestic differences and family hopes. That gives you every reason to wait until your mind is made up.

#### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23) Pluto is a volatile



wonderful planet's healing and restorative powers will be used utterly in your favour, even if at first it looks as if the opposite is true. Things are not always what they seem. SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

### Because Jupiter.

your planetary ruler, is still so powerful, you have all the protection you need. However, I would not say that this is a time for taking risks. On the contrary, great prudence is

required. You see, if you're to

be a proper gambler you have

to know the outcome before

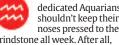
you start.

#### CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20) Even though you



unavoidable, you may hold things up for a while if you wish. However, it is certain that you can trust partners' generosity. Think now about what you might offer in return.

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



grindstone all week. After all. you need a rest and a chance to get on with your own intensely personal interests. A word of advice, treat all amazing financial offers with a huge pinch of salt.

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



weeks, to arrange interviews, attend meetings and make proposals. What is most important today, though, is the Moon, which is reinforcing and stiffening your emotions.

#### PM INVITES TEAM, AWARDS POUR IN

Calling India's Thomas Cup triumph as one of the country's finest sporting wins, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited the shuttlers to his residence on returning from Bangkok. \$1 million: Prize money for winning the tournament.

Rs 1 cr: Amount the Indian players to get from BAI

Rs 1 cr: Cash award announced by Sports Minister Anurag Thakur.

BADMINTON'S GIANT LEAP: FROM THE SEMI-FINAL SPOT IN 1979 TO TOP OF THE WORLD IN 2022

# Feather floats in the sky



Indian players and coaching staff with their medals and trophy after winning the Thomas Cup in Bangkok on Sunday. AP

#### Dreamy day of drama for Indian badminton, great depth takes team to new high at Thomas Cup

#### **SHIVANI NAIK**

WHEN WAS India last able to boast about 'killer instinct' in its sportspersons while simultaneously triggering meltdowns and chokes in three massive powerhouses? India's Thomas Cup final triumph was all about comebacks - Lakshya Sen and Satwik-Chirag's in their matches, and Kidambi Srikanth's from three years in the oblivion. Also, HS Prannoy's from wondering whether all his big scalps without titles amounted to much.

Like the World Championships in December, young Lakshya Sen led the way. India's not too familiar with the American collegiate idea of sophomore blues, but various versions of impending doom have been buzzing about Lakshya Sen, and his imminent struggles after being figured out on the international circuit. An unprecedented Thomas Cup final, where he had been battered in quarters and semis, was to test his mettle when he took to the court. Losing the opener 21-8 against Anthony Ginting, the damning prophecy began buffering. Then, Sen snapped.

Taking a 7-3 and 11-7 lead playing at a faster clip, Sen would parry Ginting's attempts by retrieving relentlessly. Sen's defense is an addictive watch, an assured pulse-metre spike as he scurries around the court chasing down the bird from all manners of balanced and imbalanced positions. It's vertiginous from an eye level because the quality big his strokes rises as the rally goes on. Ginting had him trapped in the corners in the opener, but lost confidence in his masterstroke the moment Sen sent back the shuttle.

He then played into Sen's hands. Rather into his body, frustrated at being retrieved at the far lines. Anyone who knows Sen knows that is an invitation in bold and underlined to trouble. Any shuttle close to his body with his torquing torso is Sen's strength and he happily started winning the longer rallies - including a 46-shot

one, which annoyed Ginting even more. The Indonesian is a speed fiend, and does-

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING

#### FIRST RUBBER: LAKSHYA'S SENSATIONAL COMEBACK

Sen beats Ginting 8-21, 21-17, 21-16 Game 1: Sen struggles with the drift as the Indonesian dictates play to open up a four-point lead at the interval. After restart, Ginting wins 12 straight points. Game 2: A stunning 46-shot rally is the highlight of the game, with the Indian retrieving everything that Ginting throws at him to win the point. Sen grows in confidence and levels the tie with a brilliant cross-court winner. Game 3: A subdued Sen trails by four points behind at the interval. After the change of sides, Sen drags Ginting into longer rallies, tests his patience and begins to claw his way back to win the match rather comfortably in the end. SECOND RUBBER: DOUBLES DELIGHT TO GO 2-0 UP

Satwik-Chirag beat Ahsan-Sukamuljo 18-21, 23-21, 21-19

Game 1: The Indonesians race to a 17-11 lead with consistent attacking play. Chirag-Satwik try to stage a fightback with some attacking play but service errors cost them dear.

fense, which earned him the right to kill at unexpected junctures within a frenetic rally. There was a gorgeous looking round the head smash from his little hop-step after all that blur of sweaty retrieving. He even treated himself to a cute long serve, and finally watched Ginting deflated while dumping a return into the net for a 21-17 set score.

Into the decider, Ginting looked like he'd seen a ghost. Sen was now sending the crosscourt smashes with aplomb, but looking unfussed if a long rally was needed to bide his time. Ginting's smashes landed in the net now. At 16-14 Sen was galloping the breadth of the net now - a clear sign that scores were irrelevant, his attack was a juicy steak on a green, leafy, crunchy bed of defense now.

Sophomore blues might well be on the horizon, but on Thomas Cup finals day, Sen

Game 2: After taking a five-point lead, Chirag-Satwik make uncharacteristic errors and are unable to deal with their opponent's tempo. Ahsan-Sukamuljo get four match points but the Indian duo saves all four to force a decider. Game 3: Nothing separates the two pairs throughout the decider but Chirag-Satwik play fearlessly throughout to earn two match points. The Indonesian save the first. Then, Chirag produces a cross-court smash to convert the other and give India a 2-0 lead. THIRD RUBBER: SEALING IT

#### WITH A STRAIGHT-GAMES WIN

Srikanth beats Christie 21-15 23-22 Game 1: Srikanth wastes little time in getting into the groove. He constructs his points beautifully to stay ahead despite Christie constantly finding ways to fight back. But Srikanth controls the pace of the game and pockets the game. Game 2: The Indian begins sharply but makes three back-to-back errors, which gives his opponent some confidence. Tense exchanges followed the change of ends, with momentum swinging both ways right till the end. But Srikanth shows no nerves to win the match.

n't like those speed breakers. At 18-15, while had dialled back his days of romping across courts. India took a 1-0 lead laced with hope.

#### **Doubles magnifique**

Satwik-Chirag were alert and moving well, but had still gone down 0-1 on set score to Indonesia's legendary Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo and Mohd Ahsan. They took a 12-8 lead in the second, but then allowed the Indonesians to pick 12 of 14 points to hike up to 14-19. At 17-20, the Indians were staring at 3 match points.

But through the course of the second set, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy had roused from his strictly steady zone to begin to put a lot of shoulder on his downward strokes. Chirag Shetty has been pulling this team like a yellow headband-rimmed steam engine all week. But the gentle giant Satwiksairaj had woken up. He would muscle up the smashes with such a rip, that Ahsan and Kevin were

beginning to get rattled. At 20-18, Ahsan dumped a nervous smash into the net.

The Indians had taken more than giantkilling reputation into this tie after disposing of Malaysia and Denmark. In winning all doubles against the top nations, Satwik Chirag had announced their whistling return to winning ways. The two can bully on the court, and the fact that they don't often make it even more menacing when they do. Kevin-Ahsan flubbed four match points. It was surreal, as the Indians went 20-all, 20-21, 21-all, 22-21 to finally have Satwik bisect the Indonesians with his steep smash to level 23-21.

The Indians have lost so many from 20-18, it was a delicious sight to watch them turn the tables on opponents. In the decider, leafs were traded, but 13-16 didn't look dire. Piling on the pressure with Satwik belting away his smashes, the Indians easily turned 17-19 to 20-19. Their audacity in not giving too much respect to Indonesia's big names, brought India 2-0 up.

Comeback 2. Check.

Srikanth's case has been a protracted period of three long years in the wilderness, hearing broken tape of how he had wasted his talent from random strangers on Twitter to coming into contention again. The World Championship silver medallist had waited for his body to patch up all the niggles so he could freely express his game. Yet the December event had ended in a lost final against Loh Kean Yew. In Bangkok, Srikanth's comeback was 6 out of 6 matches played and won. He had been parrying off second singles till quarters, but in Anders Antonsen and Jonatan Christie, he had two bonafide Top Tens. He made mincemeat resistance on the day, with mere great shot selection and an error-free game

All he touched was marked gold, though Christie attempted comebacks and stayed calm. But Srikanth's class was far too much for the Asian Games gold medallist to find any rhythm when he was left scrambling to return the Indian's delectable bouquet of racquet work.

Reflexive backhand returns in response to tight spinning net dribbles, saw him sticking his hand out for the most defensive of winners at 8-7 in the second. The iconic net charging follow-up to a smash brought him match point, and the crosscourt smash set fire to the curtains of the dramatic day.

3-0 ain't dramatic as a whole. But every moment was for a pulsating nation back home, giddy with anticipation of a historic

### Three shot stories

Lakshya Sen's relentless retrieving abilities, Srikanth's silken strokes and Chirag-Satwik flexing their muscles: the points that defined the matches



Lakshya Sen (R) in action against Indonesia's Anthony Ginting. AP

#### AT 14-13, LAKSHYA SMASH THAT HELPED HIM NOSE AHEAD

The shuttle clipped the tape and fell on Anthony Ginting's side to give Lakshya Sen a slight edge at 14-13 in the decider. Luck ought to favour the brave, goes the saying. Sen had earned his luck with a relentless defense that prolonged rallies and punctured Ginting's hopes in a way the defending champion wasn't prepared for. Sen had done the hard work of defending from four corners, and for a player like Ginting, this cancelling of

his attack with such bullheadedness was beginning to grate.

Sen started again the next point, maintaining a medium rhythm in his retrieves before he let rip the kill against the run of play. It was an accelerated down smash that hurried the pace mid-rally and gave him the 15-13 to nose ahead. The explosive attack on the back of a harp of defense was too much for the speed at top gear

#### SRIKANTH'S DUBSTEP AT 22-21

Asked his favourite shot, aside of the winning point that is, Srikanth picked the penultimate one. "Because that brought me match point," he would say. But 22-21 in the second had indeed

been the signature Srikanth Dubstep. In a sparse rally, Srikanth amped up the pace for a near-kill which could've sufficed on its own. But the likes of Jojo Christie get under the smash invariably. It's in the follow up charge to the net that the opponent is far too spent to raise arms for yet another incoming bamboozler. It is Srikanth's confidence shot, it's regal in its execution, and stomping in its aftereffect.

On the day, it brought Srikanth the match point after being 19-20 down and a decider looming. A third set is always fraught with energy reserves



dipping and in a team event. Srikanth has never been a dawdler, and finishing in 2, asserting his class is his nature. Jonatan Christie doesn't get frazzled much. But the setup that fetched him the championship point left him deflated. A crosscourt smash that followed didn't need even the driving in of the knife. A poke drew blood, and India had a maiden Thomas Cup travelling on a flight back home.

#### DOWN 4 MATCH POINTS, CHIRAG-SATWIK UNLEASH POWER GAME

Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo, half of the legendary Minions, losing a Thomas Cup final rubber from four match points is unheard of.

That the Indians, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty chipped away at Indonesian confidence, at their self-image even, at what is at the core of their strength, and superbly executed with the building of pressure by the Indians, was the turning point of the final which ended in a disbelieving 3-0 result. The clutch of points were all about finding the right nuanced placement and not bullying speed as such.



At 17-18 Kevin Sanjaya had the most confident smash grazing the line pointing to accuracy and control. In the next few minutes, Indians incited anarchy. Satwik left shyness behind, and uncoiled his powergame.

## In badminton, giving back to the sport is not just lip service

#### **TUSHAR BHADURI**

FOR A long time, badminton in India revolved around two names - Saina Nehwal and PV Sindhu. The two female protagonists shone on the world stage, also getting on the Olympic podium. But with precious little backup. India often came up short in team competitions.

The male shuttlers, in contrast, have been much less heralded. That is, till Sunday, when they achieved the almost-unthinkable by winning the Thomas Cup – the World Cup of men's team badminton. Not just any medal, but gold! Beating badminton royalty Malaysia,

Denmark and Indonesia in successive rounds cannot be termed a flash in the pan, but a result of years of hard work and planning, often away from the media spotlight. It could take the shuttle sport, especially the men's side, to another level and raise the level of expectations for the current and future generation of players.

Names such as HS Prannoy and Kidambi Srikanth have often been in the slipstream of the women stalwarts, even though the latter was once ranked No.1 in the world during a stellar 2017. The arrival of young gun Lakshya Sen - who reached the All England final and had a podium finish at the World Championship - and the doubles pairing of

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty has rounded the squad as there are no weak links.

But from where did this all-conquering combination emerge? Lot has been said and written about the proliferation of academies around the country once badminton became a fashionable sport. Chief national coach Pullela Gopichand's academy in Hyderabad has been a conveyor belt of high-quality talent despite the occasional noise about conflict of interest. Add to it, the establishment in Bengaluru with Prakash Padukone at the helm, and also Vimal Kumar, and one has several legends of the sport giving back in a tangible, and measurable, manner.

There have been several retired or semi-retired players across sports promising to scout and groom talent through their academies, but one is still waiting for their wards to make their first big splash. As far as the current glory-winning group is concerned, Srikanth and Prannoy have been around long enough to experience the ups and downs of the circuit, suffering and recovering from their fair share of injuries. While the spotlight has been on Sindhu and Saina, they have grinded out results, occasion-

ally dealing with early exits from tournaments. When it came to prospects at big events, the men have often been an afterthought, at least in terms of star power. But coming into the



Indian players celebrate after their win against Indonesia.

Thomas Cup, the young and the old Indian male shuttlers were quietly confident about their chances. All the teams they faced in the latter stages of the tournament had players ranked higher than them, but that hardly fazed them.

In the final, names like Jonatan Christie (2018 Asian Games gold medallist) and Anthony Ginting were put to the sword, as was the acclaimed doubles combination of Mohammad Ahsan and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo. Indonesia have been perennial Thomas Cup champions, and take a lot of pride in being the numero uno country in the sport that arouses so much passion in the South-East Asian nation.

But at least till the next edition, it will be a new country with the bragging rights in the men's game. It is one of the most unexpected achievements but nonetheless one of the most heart-warming ones in Indian sport.

#### Hope badminton becomes popular, says coach Vimal

PTI adds: Coach Vimal Kumar on Sunday hoped the triumph would do the same to the country's shuttle sport what the 1983 World Cup win did to cricket.

It was no surprise that Kumar was unable to describe the historic victory.

"I have no words to describe it, we always had hopes but the way the players played, they just put up a performance out of the blue. It was really fantastic. We had such a poor record against indonesia and to win 3-0 is incredible," Kumar told PTI from Bangkok. The unassuming coach, who goes about his job quietly, added, "In 1983, when India won the cricket World Cup, the euphoria was something else but cricket was always a very popular sport and I hope with this performance, now badminton can also become so popular.

"It has always been about individual achievements but this was a team performance and I hope the popularity of the sports goes up from here on." Kumar rated this as Indian badminton's biggest ever achievement. "I will rate this the biggest ever. Of course, Prakash and Gopi winning All England, Sindhu winning, all great

Jaipur

achievements but as a team what we have done, we couldn't deliver as a team (earlier). You call one a badminton nation when you win a team championships, so I will rate it as the best." India, who has never reached the last-four stage since 1979, ended up getting the better of formidable Malaysia and Denmark en route to the summit clash in this edition of the tournament. Needless to say, the triumph on the day when it mattered the most sparked off wild celebrations in the Indian camp, less than 48 hours after they rejoiced their win over Denmark.

"I have never seen them so enthusiastic it is a achievement of pure team spirit which I haven't seen in the past. We always had good players but priority was on individual players and tournaments. We have a balanced team and it did the trick.

"In each match what the doubles players have done is amazing, earlier we were dependent on singles but Satwik and Chirag pulled out all the pressure matches, so lot of credit to Lakhsya, Srikanth and Prannoy, for they delivered when it mattered. I am fortunate, lucky coach to be here with them,' Kumar said. "It is the best achievement of Indian badminton, and I feel so proud to be part of this historic team. It is a fantastic bunch of players."

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