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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 13 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

Action

to be seen



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 India's largest ever M&A transmaterials 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. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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

CONGRESS LEADER PAGE 10

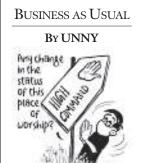
#### **CONG BRAINSTORMING SESSION ENDS**

## 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. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

#### ADMISSION OF a "broken connection" and announcement of a Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir Yatra is acknowl-

**CHINTAN SHIVIR:** MORE REPORTS PAGE 5

edgment of the need to go

back to the people. But as

always, the question of im-

plementation remains.

#### **PM VISITS LUMBINI TODAY**

## With Buddhist centre. India looks to bolster cultural ties to Nepal

**YUBRAJ GHIMIRE** & DIVYA A

KATHMANDU, NEW DELHI, MAY15

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



The site for India's Buddhist

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



cultural centre. Yubaraj Ghimire

International Centre for Buddhist Culture & Heritage' — to be undertaken by the International

## new outfit be 'apolitical'

THE BHARATIYA Kisan Union (BKU), which had spearheaded the 13-month-long farmers'

farm laws, on Sunday witnessed a split as a section of

formed a separate outfit -(Apolitical). led by Rajesh Singh Chauhan. The

BKU, later, said

that it has dis-CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Split in BKU, leaders say will

**LALMANI VERMA** LUCKNOW, MAY 15

protest against the Centre's three

leaders

Says Rakesh

Tikait made political remarks

missed seven leaders of its outfit, calling them "anti-farmers".

## 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 Queensland. 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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'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

## **EXPRESS** AUDIO

#### Estimating India's real Covid death toll, with Dr Bhramar Mukherjee

**NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY** 

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**

#### 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 followon. It would be wrong to say the country, busy in getting by, was waiting for these. If anything, a minority of two dozen at best nurtured and believed in these dreams.

Lakshya 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 Ahsan-Kevin sanjaya 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 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 Ionatan 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. "Today after people watched 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-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.

#### '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 tne nignest 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 16team 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 nottaking 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 generous 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 grit.

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.

Ilt's been tough for India's male players with unfair comparisons with Saina and Sindhu. The Indian women raised the bar so much that a Super 500 win for the men barely registers now—getting into the Top 10, semis, quarters will never be big headlines. If they had lost the final today, all the excitement would have 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 being brave.

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 amaz-

(The writer is a Sydney Games Olympian, All England champion and national badminton head coach. He spoke to Shivani Naik)

#### Reluctant star

as cricket stepped into a more cut-throat, professional realm, he became a misfit.

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 vul-

aced modernism. He felt vulrable. Former captain Mark Taylor summed up Symonds perfectly. "In a way he was a bit of an old-fashioned cricketer, who would not have been out of place playing in the '70s or '80s. He just wanted to entertain."

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 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 branded a rebel, worse a trouble-maker.

Another era, another time, 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 calling him "one of those characters".

Even the monkeygate incident, 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.

Between January 2008 and 2009, he was at the heart of almost every cricketing scandal that brewed in Australia. He was projected as the metaphor of the decadence that had crept into Australia's cricket culture. He was fined and sacked several times, made to apologise and made to sign an agreement that if found drunk, he would immediately be axed from the team, before the 2009 T20 World Cup. As it turned out, he did, and was axed forever.

But Symonds, typically, had 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.

ing that'," he later said.

Here, as well in the past,
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 even
more.

The crux of Symonds the cricketer was his own tussle with the changing times, a battle he was doomed to lose.

#### Rahul

As curtains came down on 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 length.

The former Congress president attacked the BJP government at the Centre, accusing it of spreading hatred, pressuring the judiciary, arm-twisting the Election Commission, destroying institutions, and muzzling the media.

But his focus was more on preparing the party to "go back

to the people"; he told the chintan shivir there were no "short-cuts" to revival.

The party will have to accept that its "connection" with the people has been snapped, and it should work towards 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 people.

"It is a complaint. Our entire discussion, our conversation...is about our internal matters...who is getting which post. Internally that is our focus. In today's time this internal focus will not work. Our focus 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 without thinking about anything...," Rahul said.

"Their (the people's) issues...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 reestablish that connection...the people want that...They understand that only the Congress can take the country forward...."

The party will take out a yatra in October to strengthen the connection with the people, Rahul said. "That is the only way... Shortcuts will not help. It cannot be done through any shortcuts. It can only happen by shedding sweat. We can do it. You can do it. We have the ability and that is our DNA. This organisation has come out of the people and we will have to go to the people again," he said.

Sonia announced a "national

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 preserve the foundational values of our Constitution that are under assault and to highlight the day-to-day concerns of crores of our people."

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," she said.

Rahul said his fight was against the ideology of the RSS-BJP 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 partyijust 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 organisation and their ideology," he

Some senior leaders and workers of the party sometimes feel depressed, Rahul said. "It is normal. The fight is not easy."

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 BJP. Because they don't have an ideology. They have different approaches. We have a centralized approach. And our fight is about ideology."

"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.

#### Nepal

Buddhist 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 philosophy.

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 Bahadur Deuba, "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 snared understanding to expand cooperation in multiple areas, including in hydropower, 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 communique.

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.

#### Adani

Holcim's exit from India follows several high-profile departures of multinational companies, including Ford, General Motors, Harley Davidson, MAN Truck, Hutchison, Etisalat, Fidelity, and Citibank, which sold its retail business recently, and some investment banks.

Holcim said the corresponding 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 Cement Ltd.

"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 sustain-

able building solutions."

Holcim bought Ambuja
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

While India continues to be the world's second largest cement market, it has less than half the global average per capita cement consumption, Adani said. "In statistical comparison,

"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 ourselves up for significant capacity expansion," Adani said.

#### BKU outfit

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 Assembly 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
Tikait had emerged as the face of
the farmers' movement across

the country.

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 spokesper-

son Dharmendra Mallik said. Later in the evening, BKU said that it has dismissed seven leaders from the outfit, accusing them of indulging in fake prop-

aganda 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 organ-

isation.
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," Rakesh Tikait said.

# UTTAR PRADESH

#### SIDDHARTHNAGAR

# police raid, cops booked

**MANISH SAHU** 

LUCKNOW, MAY 15

A MURDER FIR was registered Sunday against unidentified policemen after a 53-year-old woman was allegedly shot dead following a police raid in Siddharthnagar's Kodara Grant village in connection with a suspected case of cow slaughter on Saturday night.

Roshni was allegedly shot dead while her son was being taken for questioning, said police.

"The residents of the area attacked the police team and opened fire. The woman suffered a bullet injury during the attack and died during treatment at a hospital," said the police.

The woman's family and neighbours, however, alleged that the police team had opened fire - a charge denied by Siddharthnagar police.

A video-graphed autopsy was conducted on Sunday, after which the body was handed over to her family. "The autopsy stated there is an exit and entry wound. We are investigating how the woman was shot," said Superintendent of been deployed in the village to

#### Police (Siddharthnagar) Yesh Veer Singh. Heavy police force has avoid any untoward incident. **DGP removal:**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LUCKNOW, MAY 15

Akhilesh slams

govt, says cops'

morale lowered

SAMAJWADI PARTY president Akhilesh Yadav on Sundav accused the Adityanath government of lowering the morale of the Uttar Pradesh police by removing its chief Mukul Goel.

Goel was, on May 11, removed from the post of DGP on charge of inefficiency and neglecting his work and appointed as Director General (DG) of the Civil Defence department, Later, DS Chauhan was made the acting UP DGP.

"Removing the DGP of UP on ne allegation that he used to disregard government work, did not take interest in departmental work and was inefficient is a very childish excuse. It has lowered the morale of the police force," Yadav said in a tweet in Hindi.

Goel, a 1987-batch IPS officer, was appointed the Uttar Pradesh Police chief in June last year. Before that, he had served as an additional director general of the Border Security Force.

"Was his eligibility (of Goel) not checked at the time of his appointment, so those who selected him are also guilty," the SP president and former chief min-

The woman's family and neighbours alleged that a team of cops had opened fire — a charge that was denied by Siddharthnagar police

According to the police, Saturday's raid came after four persons from Kodara Grant village were arrested in a case of cow slaughter around four days ago. "During interrogation, the accused told us the names of a few residents of the area who were allegedly involved in cow slaughtering," said a police officer.

Circle Officer, Siddharthnagar, Pradeep Kumar Yadav said, "After receiving the information, a police team reached Kodara Grant village and decided to take Roshni's son, Abdul Rehman, to the police station for questioning."

"While they were taking him, villagers surrounded them. Roshni, Abdul's brother Ubai-Ur-Rehman and the villagers started arguing with the police team. The situation took an ugly turn when they attacked the police team and started pelting stones. In the meantime, Abdul managed to escape. The residents

"Meanwhile, a resident of the area informed the police that Roshni had suffered a bullet injury in the firing. She was rushed to a hospital but was declared brought dead. After getting to know about her death, the villagers blocked a road and demanded action against the police team that was involved in the raid," he added.

then opened fire at the police,"

police said.

The police officer said that Abdul later returned after hearing his mother's death and filed a complaint. "Following the complaint, an FIR was lodged against unidentified policemen on charges of murder at Sadar police station," he said.

In his complaint, Abdul alleged that "someone or police had opened fire that caused his mother's death," said the SP.

Roshni's neighbour, Afzal Ali, said, "The police searched the houses of several people but did not find anything suspicious. They were forcibly taking Abdul at gunpoint when his mother arrived. She tried to stop the policemen from taking her son when someone fired and the

"Abdul works as a labourer in Mumbai and he had recently come to Siddharthnagar to attend his sister's wedding," Ali added.

## PM halts in Lucknow today, all fingers Woman 'shot dead' after crossed over dinner with Yogi Cabinet

**LALMANI VERMA** LUCKNOW, MAY 15

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's halt in Lucknow on Monday for a meeting with the Yogi Adityanath cabinet over a dinner has everyone guessing as what message their top leader will convey to them with the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh just a few weeks into its second term.

On his way back to Delhi from Nepal, the PM will land in Lucknow and visit the Chief Minister's residence where all the members of the council of ministers have been invited for

The visit is being seen as important from various aspects, especially keeping the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in mind, sources

A senior state BIP leader said, "In the first tenure, the BJP government kept blaming the previous Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) regimes. The party sought second term to put everything in order. The government will have to

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh reeled

under intense heatwave with

Banda district in Bundelkhand

region recording the maximum

day temperature of 49 degrees

Celsius on Sunday, the highest in



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a Janta Darshan programme in Gorakhpur on Sunday. PTI

At 49 degrees Celsius, Banda breaks 28-year-old heat record

showcase its works, particularly on the employment front. It is for the first time in 37 years that a party got full majority in UP for second consecutive term. PM Modi can guide in this situation since he has the experience of

the state. As per the India

Meteorological Department

data, this was the highest-ever

temperature recorded in Banda

in May. The previous maximum

temperature in the district was

running government in Gujarat

Another concern among a section of leaders is about the party's declining number of seats in the state in the Lok Sabha and assembly elections. "Anti-incum-

48.8 deg C on May 31, 1994.

The MeT department has

warned of heat wave conditions

at isolated places over West

Uttar Pradesh in the next 48

hours. Rain and thunder show-

bency could be stronger in 2024 than in 2019. So it is essential for the governments at the Centre and in the state to deliver and execute the schemes on the ground. That requires pro-active participation of all the ministries of the state government. The PM's tips may be helpful on this," said the party leader.

Modi himself is an MP from Varanasi. The BJP had said that the 2022 Assembly polls will lay the foundation of the 2024 parliamentary elections.

Also, the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections are likely to be another point of discussion during the PM's meeting with the CM and his cabinet. With 11 Raiva Sabha seats from the state headed for elections on June 10, the BJP has to pick candidates keeping in mind the 2024 polls.

A minister said, "All the senior ministers have toured different districts at least twice in the second term. They interacted with the public, party cadre and offshoots of the RSS. The PM may ask some ministers about the feedback they received on the ground about the government."

ers are very likely over places in

East Uttar Pradesh while the

weather is most likely to remain

dry in the western part of the

state, the weather department

#### 2 dead as bike hits stray bull in Mathura

Mathura: A couple was killed when the motorbike they were riding hit a stray bull near a factory in Mathura district, police said on Sunday. The accident took place on Saturday night when a bull suddenly came in front of the speeding motorcycle, which hit the animal, police said. The couple - Narendra (35) and his wife Sandhya (32) was rushed to the nearby community health centre, but were declared brought dead, Deputy SP Varun Kumar Singh

#### Four drown in Ganga while bathing: Cops

Bhadohi: Four people, including three minor boys, drowned in the Ganga near here on Sunday while bathing in the river, police said. Circle Officer Bhuvneshwar Kumar Pandey said the four youths, identified as Prabhat Mishra, 24, Ankit Kumar Chaturvedi and Pravesh Mishra, both 19, and Lucky Mishra, 15. PTI

**E-Auction Date: 17-06-2022** 

Present

Outstanding

Amount

Current

outstanding

1,37,55,858

(Rs. One

Crore Thirty

Fifty Five

Thousand

Eight Hundred

Fifty Eight

only)

E-Auction

date &

Time

17-06-2022

between 11

am to 4 pm

(with 10 min

unlimited

extensions)

E-auction

website:

www.mstcecc

mmerce.com

Type of

Possession:

Symbolic

**EMD** 

₹5,01,400.00

(Rs. Five

Lack One

Thousand

Four

Hundred

only)

Reserve

₹ 50,14,000.00

(Rs. Fifty Lack

Fourteen

Thousand

only)

## Ex-legislator, his wife booked for 'conspiring to kill' Gyanpur MLA

**MANISH SAHU** LUCKNOW, MAY 15

BHADOHI POLICE on Sunday registered an FIR against former MLA Vijay Mishra, his wife and daughter and three others for allegedly hatching a conspiracy to kill Gyanpur MLA Vipul Dubey.

Mishra, a four-time MLA from Gyanpur, lost to Dubey in the recently concluded Assembly elections in the state. While Mishra contested from iail on Pragatisheel Manav Samaj Party ticket, Dubey contested as NISHAD Party nominee.

Police said that they registered the FIR after an inquiry into a viral video in which some people were purportedly heard planning to kill Dubey. "Two accused, identified as

Saddam Hussain and Shiv Kumar Tiwari alias Sonu –both residents of Bhadohi - have been arrested. The role of other accused, including Vijay Mishra's wife Ramlali Mishra, is being probed," Superintendent of Police (Bhadohi) Anil Kumar

He added that the video would be sent to a forensic laboratory for examination. Vijay Mishra is currently

lodged in jail following his arrest in a land grabbing case in 2020. The land grabbing case was filed by his relative Krishna Mohan Tiwari who alleged that Vijay Mishra had occupied his Bhadohi home since 2001 and was pressuring him to register the property in his son's name. After Mishra's arrest, the house was handed over to Tiwari.

According to police, Krishna Mohan's son Rajkamal Tiwari told them that two persons. who identified themselves as Saddam Hussain and Shiv Kumar, came to his residence on May 11 thinking it to be Mishra's residence and wanted to meet Ramlali Mishra.

"When Tiwari asked about their visit, the accused told him that Ramlali Mishra had promised them money. They told Tiwari that they had been asked to kill MLA Vipul Dubey and his close aide Manoj Mishra. They claimed that after the murder, by-election will be held and Vijay Mishra will emerge victorious," said a police officer, adding that Tiwari recorded the conversation and





#### **REGIONAL OFFICE:**

466/2/3, Pt. Harihar Prasad Dubey Marg, Daudpur, Gorakhpur-273001 Phone: 0551-2200582, 2202397

#### **Appexidix-IV-A (Provision to Rule 8 (6) SALE NOTICE FOR SALE IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provide to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to public in general and in particular to the borrowers and guarantors that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the secured creditor Union Bank of India, the Symbolic Possession of which has been taken by the Authorized officer of the Union Bank of India (Secured Creditor), will be sold on "As is what is" and "What ever there is" as per below mentioned details given in tabular form.

Last date for submission of EMD - On or before the commencement of e-Auction					
SI.	Name of the Borrower/	Details & Description of			
No.	Guarantor & Branch	Mortgaged Immovable Property			

Branch: Union Bank of India, Gorakhpur- Main Description of immovable secured branch at Golghar, Gorakhpur, Cinema Road, Dist. Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh

Borrower: M/s National Sales Corporation Address:- 0-90, Vidyawati Sadan, Near Champa | Mauza-Rasoolpur (Indira Nagar, Devi Park, East indira Nagar, Dist-Gorakhpu

Partner- (1) Sri Shailesh Kumar Tripathi S/o Nageshwar Tripathi Address:- H.No.- 0-96, Vidyawati Sadan, Near Champa devi park, East Indira nagar, Dist-Gorakhpur

Partner- (2) Sri Ashok Kumar Tripathi S/o Nageshwar Tripathi Address:- H No.- 0-96, Vidyawati Sadan, Near Champa Devi Park, East Indira Nagar, Dist-

Gorakhpur Guarantor- (1) Sri Shailesh Kumar Tripathi S/o Nageshwar Tripathi

Address:- H.No.- 0-96, Vidyawati Sadan, Near Champa devi park, East Indira nagar, Dist-Gorakhpur Guarantor- (2) Sri Ashok Kumar Tripathi S/o Nageshwar Tripathi

Address:- H.No.- 0-96, Vidyawati Sadan, Near Champa devi park, East Indira nagar, Dist-Gorakhpur Guarantor- (3) Smt Sunita Tripathi W/o Ashok Kumar Tripathi S/o Nageshwar Tripathi Address:- H.No.- 0-96, Vidyawati Sadan, Near

Champa devi park, East Indira nagar, Dist-Gorakhpur Guarantor- (4) Smt Sunita Tripathi W/o Shailesh Kumar Tripathi S/o Nageshwar Tripathi Address:- H.No.- 0-96, Vidyawati Sadan, Near

Champa devi park, East Indira nagar, Dist-Gorakhpur

Branch: Union Bank Of India, Bhawapar Branch, at E.M of Residential / Commercial land ₹ 1,21,95,000/-₹ 12,19,500 /-Village Bansipura Post Bhawapar Gorakhpur. Borrower: M/s Aryan Plywood and Hardware Centre (Prop. Sri Upendra Sharma)

Address: Near Nausadh Police Chowki Beside HP Petrol Pump, Nausadh Gorakhpur Gorakhpur. Guarantor: (1) Sri Upendra Sharma (Proprietor- M/s Aryan Plywood and Hardware Centre)

Address: Village-Charpan Suadda, Post- Dawarpar,

District-Gorakhpur, PIN-273401 Guarantor: (2) Sri Ganesh Dutt Sharma S/o Late Gunraj Sharma

District-Gorakhpur, PIN-273401 Guarantor: (3) Sri Bhupendra Sharma S/o Late Gunrai Sharma Address: Village-Charpan Suadda, Post- Dawarpar,

Address: Village-Charpan Suadda, Post- Dawarpar,

Guarantor: (4) Sri Ishwar Chandra Sharma S/o Late Gunrai Sharma Address: Village:- Charpan Suadda, Post – Dawarpar,

District-Gorakhpur, PIN-273401

District-Gorakhpur, PIN-273401 North- Land of other person South- Main Road Transport Police

assets to be Sold All that piece and parcel of EM of Residential plot at Arazi no 8MI, 9MI, 10/1MI at Nai shivpuri colony), Tappa- Kasba, Pargana- Haveli, Tehsil- Sadar, District- Gorakhpur standing in the name of Smt Sunita Tripathi W/o Ashok Kumar Tripathi admeasuring 2180 sq feet as per sale deed no 6465 dated 13.06.2013 with the

Boundaries (As per sale deed):-East- House of Mall Ji West- Road

North- Land of Mathura Yadav and Urmila Devi **South-** House of other person

Boundaries (As per Actual):-**East-** House of Mall Ji

West- Road North- Land of Mathura Yadav and Urmila Devi

South- House of Vindrawati Devi (H No- 74 B)

Haveli, Tehsil Sadar District

Gorakhpur standing in the name of Sri

Ganesh dutt Sharma, Sri Ishwar Chandra

Sharma, Sri Upendra Sharma and Sri

Bhupendra Sharma, admeasuring

3040. sqft as per Sale deed No 6163

South- Main Road Transport Police

West- House and shop building of Sri

Chowki to Nausarh Chowki

dated 28-10-2006 with the following

**Boundaries:** (As per Sale Deed)

East- House of other person

North- Land of other person

Boundaries: (As per actual)

Jai Singh

East- Building of Sri Afi Ahmad

West- House of Jai singh

& building at Arazai No. 30 KhaMi, (Rs. One Crore twenty one lacs Mauza Nausarh, Tappa- Ret, Pargana-

Ninety five

thousand only)

17-06-2022 between 11 (Rs. Twelve am to 4 pm nineteen (with 10 min unlimited thousand five hundred

extensions) E-auction website: www.mstceco mmerce.com

auto

Type of

hundred twenty eight and forty two paise)

Current

outstanding

₹ 38,10,128.42

(Rs. Thirty

eight lakh ten

thousand one

Possession: Symbolic

Lucknow

Note:- The online E-Auction will be held through web portal/website www.mstcecommerce.com on the date and time mentioned above with unilimited extension of 10 minutes. The intending bidders/purchasers required to register through https://www.mstcemmerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp by using their mobile number and valid email-id. They are further required to upload KYC documents and Bank Details.

Date: 15-05-2022 Place: Gorakhpur Authorised Officer:- Union Bank of India, Gorakhpur

Chowki to Nausarh Chowki

#### 170 properties belonging to former BSP MLC, family and aides seized

Lucknow: Saharanpur Police have seized 170 properties of former BSP MLC and history-sheeter Haji Iqbal alias Bala, his family and associates under the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act as they were allegedly amassed through "illegal means".

"We identified 170 properties of Haji Iqbal and his gang members. The seized properties cost Rs 128 crore. We are still identifying other properties of Iqbal and his gang members," said SSP, Saharanpur, Akash Tomar. Police said they have seized around 1600

bigha and are sending a letter to the Enforcement Directorate with details of the seized properties. As per police, Iqbal has 28 cases registered against him, while his sons Abdul Wajid, Afzal and Alishan have 12, two and seven cases registered against them respectively.

The police have also the opened history-sheet of Iqbal.

According to the police, in April 2022, an FIR against Haji Iqbal and six others – including his four sons was registered under Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act at Mirzapur police station.



Notice is hereby given that the Branch Office of the Company at 127/454, W-2 Juhi Kala, Anand Vihar, Hamirpur Road, Naubasta Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh - 208011, will be closed operationally w.e.f. the close of office hours on 16th August 2022 for the want of some better opportunities. However, Company shall continue to render its services to its customers from other Branch(es) nearest to the location. Should any member of public has further query(ies) in the matter hereof he/she may please contact us at our customer care, details whereof can be accessed at www.shubham.co

For and on behalf of the Shubham Housing Development Finance Company Ltd.

Place:- Gurugram,

Sanjay Chaturvedi, CEO

#### RECRUITMENT SITUATION / VACANT

MULTIPLE/VACANCIES

Citizen Girls College

Balram Kagar Naini Prayagra REQUIRED 1 - Principal - 01 Post - 01 Post FACULTY OF B.Ed. Assistant Professor-15 Post

01 Perspectives in 02 Pedagogy Subjects 08 Post (Math, Science, Social

Science, Language) 03 Health and Physical Education - 01 Post 04 Fine Art - 08 Post 03 Health and Physica

Education - 01 Post 05 Performing Art (Music, Dance Theatre--01 Post नोट- महिला अभ्यर्थी को

प्राथमिकता दी जायेथी।

योग्पताः UGC/MCTE/PRSU/ उप्राप्त शासन के मानकानुसार। अध्यक्षी अपना बायोडाटा एवं समस्त प्रपत्नों सहित विद्यापन तिथि। के 07 कार्यदिवस के भीतर निम पते गर मेषित करें।

Administrative Office 19, C Elgin Road Civil Lines, Prayagra 9140550439, 7310229222

**U.P. JAL VIDYUT NIGAM LIMITED** (A Govt. of Uttar Pradesh Enterprise)
Shakti Bhawan Extn., 12<sup>th</sup> Floor, Ashok Marg, Lucknow-226001

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

representatives for Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 02 No. 132 KV SF6 Circuit Breaker at Obra Hydro-electric Project, Obra Sonebhadra (U.P.) as detailed below.

- . Cost of Tender inclusive of GST @ 18% (Rs.): Rs. 3540/-
- 2. Earnest Money (Rs.): Rs. 21,000/-3. Date of Opening (Part-I):13.06.2022 (at 14.30 hrs.)

4. 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 with documents in support of deposition of tender fee & earnest mone (EMD). If EMD is submitted in form of BG then the original copy of same shall 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 intimated 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 risiting e-procurement portal regularly. If the date of opening will be a noliday, the tender shall be opened on next working day at the same time.

**EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (DESIGN)** 

#### Truth about Gyanvapi, Taj Mahal, Krishna Ianmabhoomi should come out: RSS leader

New Delhi: Truth about Gyanvapi mosque, Taj Mahal and Krishna Janmabhoomi in UP and all other disputed places in the country should come out before the people, senior RSS leader Indresh Kumar said on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters here, he said the people want to know the truth about these places as they feel that it will help the country get "a right direction".

It's not out of any grudge against anybody or due to some politics that people want to know the truth of these places, he added, "A discussion is going on about the Gyanvapi, Taj Mahal, Krishna Janmabhoomi and various other places in the country. Everyone wants to know the truth (about them). It is not out of any grudge against anyone or due to some politics," the RSS leader said. PTI

#### Corrigendum Corrigendum

निरस्तीकरण (Cancellation) सूचना निरस्तीकरण (Cancellation) सूचना इस खण्ड के अन्तर्गत आमंत्रित की गयी इस खण्ड के अन्तर्गत आमंत्रित अति अल्पकालीन निविदा सूचना संख्या अति अल्पकालीन 06/WED/KNP/2022-2023 के लाट सूचना संख्या 01, 02 तथा 03 को अपरिहार 04/WED/KNP/2022-2023 कारणों से निरस्त किया जाता है। लाट अपरिहार्य कारणों से निरस्त की संख्या–04 को निरस्तीकरण से मुक्त जाती है।

अधिशासी अभियन्ता

UPID-176295 Date-14.05.2022 www.upgov.nic.in

कार्यशाला स्थापन खण्ड, कानपुर

## Gyanvapi survey conducted amid heavy security, to continue today

#### **EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** VARANASI, MAY 15

THE COURT-ORDERED videographic survey of the Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque complex in Varanasi continued for the second day on Sunday amid heavy police force deployment. Officials said that the survey would continue on Monday.

On Thursday, a Varanasi court had ordered the resumption of the video survey of the complex – that was halted last week following allegations of bias against the official in charge even if it meant getting "locks opened/ broken". The survey report should be submitted on Tuesday, it had said. The inspection of the complex be-

gan at 8 am Sunday and ended around noon. Shops and roads were shut down near the complex during the survey. In a statement, Varanasi District

Kaushal Raj Sharma said, "In presence of all parties and three court commis-



Police deployed near the complex in Varanasi, Sunday. Anand Singh

sioners, the action of Commission happened from 8 am till noon... All the parties followed the court's orders today. As per directions from the Commission, the administration made arrangements for lighting equipment, photographer and videographer from the Information Department, Revenue officials from

tehsil, labourers and other things,' "The Commission after completing its work today decided that it will continue the action on Monday from 8 am. All concerned people have been told to be present on Monday at 8 am,"

the statement added. On Thursday, the court had appointed two additional advocate commissioners — Vishal Singh and Ajay Pratap Singh - after Advocate Commissioner Ajay Kumar Mishra

was accused of being "biased" by the

Muslim side. Civil Judge (Senior Division) Ravi Kumar Diwakar had on Thursday said that the top district officials "have the responsibility" to complete the survey by the court-appointed Commission, and directed the DGP and chief secretary to supervise the "related action".

On April 8, while hearing the petitioners, the Varanasi court had appointed Mishra to carry out a survey of the Maa Shringar Gauri Sthal at the disputed site. The court's direction came on a petition filed by five women in August 2021 seeking an order to allow them to worship at the site.

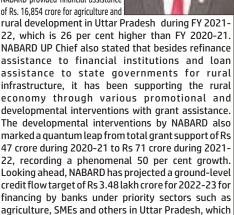
अधिशासी अभियन्ता

कार्यशाला स्थापन खण्ड, कानपुर

#### CORPORATE ASSOCIATE DIARY APPOINTMENTS, MOVEMENTS, CELEBRATIONS, HONOR

#### NABARD playing catalytic role in making UP self-reliant

Uttar Pradesh Regional Office of NABARD has been playing a pivotal role in facilitating the overall development of the State through its various refinance, infrastructural and development products. SK Dora, Chief General Manager of NABARD apprised that NABARD provided financial assistance



is 11.98 per cent higher than the projections of Rs.

#### Aryavart Bank reduces home loan and vehicle loan interest rates

3.10 lakh crore for 2021-22.

Aryavart Bank, sponsored by the Bank of India, has decided to reduce the interest rates on its home and vehicle loans. The Regional Manager of Aryavart Bank, Lucknow Sanjeev Kumar informed that after a 0.40 percent increase in the Repo rate by the Reserve bank of India, other



at an interest rate of 6.5 per cent, vehicle loans at 6.85 per cent and personal loans at 12.35 per cent Additionally, the interest rates on fixed deposits have been increased to 5.15 per cent, which is greater than the rates in any other commercial bank," he said. Anand Tiwari, District coordinator of Aryavart Bank said that the bank was recognised with a certificate of appreciation by the Chief Development Officer of the region for the Financial Year under the PMEGP, ODOP and NRLM schemes, for granting the maximum number of loans. The Marketing officer of the bank, Piyush Kumar said that through the advertisement of these schemes, all the branches have been advised to ensure that all the customers interested in taking loans should, after submitting all the relevant documents, be granted the loan amount within three

#### NASERP organisation appoints Neelam Banshal as Delhi State **Vice President**

The National Association of Special Educators Rehab Professional Freethopus (NASERP), with the consent of the National President of the organisation Rajneesh Pandey and National General Secretary Abhay Srivastava, have nominated Neelam Banshal as State Vice President of the Delhi Unit.



Neelam Banshal, who is currently serving as a special teacher in Delhi Government High School, is a native of Lucknow and is a role model for students with disabilities. P. Mishra, Samvart Mishra, Ambrish Bhadauria, Apoorva, Amit Awasthi, Mukesh Bajpai and the office bearers of all the states congratulated her.

#### Japanese delegation visits GLA University, explores

joint possibilities A delegation from Japan which was helmed by Nirendra Upadhayay, M & A Advisor-Financia Institutions, Government of Hiroshima. Japan recently visited GLA University, Mathura. The university apprised the visiting delegation of the various achievements and accomplishments of the university and mentioned all the 18 international MoUs as well as the national MoUs that the university has signed with various industry partners and academic institutions. The GLA Management said that GLA University, Mathura is known for its pathbreaking approach to professional education. As ar HEI, it has carved a niche for itself thanks to state-ofthe-art infrastructure and a modern take on education. Its students are making a name for themselves by becoming self-reliant and coming up with research-driven prototypes which would be beneficial to the Indian populace. On this occasion, Chancellor Narayan Das Agrawal expressed his gratitude to the delegation from Japan for their visit and for appreciating the efforts of GLA. The CEO of the University and President, NHRDN-Mathura Chapter, Neeraj Agrawal; Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof Anoop Kumar Gupta, Registrar Ashok Kumar Singh, along with various heads of departments and faculty members were present on the occasion.



UPID-176296 Date-14.05.2022

Indian Bank provides RO filter, water cooler to Khandari campus of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkaı

In view of the scorching weather, Indian Bank (erstwhile Allahabad Bank) Agra provided an RO filter and water cooler to the Khandari campus of Dr Bhin Rao Ambedkar University, Agra which was naugurated by Zonal Head, Agra Rajesh Kumar. The Finance Officer of the University Arun Kumar and Pro-Vice-Chancellor Ajay Taneja also graced the occasion.



#### Graphic Era makes record by preparing 624 types of

On May 6, the hotel management team of Graphic Era's Department of Hotel Management, the 'Incredible-26', set a new record by preparing 624 types of dim sums (momos) In just one hour and 45 minutes. Of these, 416 were vegetarian dim sums, while 208 were non-vegetarian. This team was led by the institute's HOD of Hotel Management Amai Dabral. President Graphic Era Group, Prof (Dr) Kamal Ghanshala inaugurated the event. Dean Department of Hotel Management Dr RC Pandey and Head of the Department Amar Dabral said that this world record is the result of hard work and research which was carried out for months.

PNB Zonal Manager-Varanasi visits Kanpur The Zonal Head of Punjab National Bank (PNB). Zonal Office - Varanasi during his two-day visi



talks with customers of the bank on May 4. He patiently heard their grievances and assured them of immediate redressal On May 5, Kumar reviewed the business of branch MCC, CBB, Mall Road and Circle Office. During the review, he asserted an increase in business and fresh loans according to commercial requirements disclosed at the corporate level. On this occasion Circle Head - Kanpur Shyam Sundar Singh stressed the fulfilment of corporate wishes and targets and cent per cent achievements of the targets assigned to the circle. Singh also assured Kumar of providing better customer services for all the plans run by the bank Deputy head of circle Sudheer Bhasker expressed gratitude to the customers present.

#### Kanpur Development Authority organises lottery for parking

Allottees of the Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) Signature Greens Scheme took part in a lottery for the parking constructed under the said scheme at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Auditorium, Authority premises, or May 10. Allottees of Signature Greens had participated in the lottery. The authority has created five types of parking — open parking, covered parking, stilt parking, twin parking at the basement and twin parking at stilt — for which different prices are fixed. There was an atmosphere of enthusiasm among the allottees who came to participate in the ottery organised for parking. Before starting the ottery organised under the said scheme, Chief Engineer Rohit Khanna and Officer on Special Duty Avnish Kumar Singh welcomed Vice-Chairman Kanpui Development Authority Arvind Singh by presenting a

#### Lucknow University among top rankers In EduRank

**University Ranking** The University of Lucknow has been ranked 29th ir India in the recently released EduRank University Rankings and got the 1,773rd spot in the World 2022 overall rankings. Last year, Lucknow University was ranked 58th among universities across the country ir the list. The ranking is determined on the basis of three key parameters — leading performance in esearch (5,764 publications and 72,746 citations) non-academic reputation, and quality of alumni's outstanding performance. It is the only state university in Uttar Pradesh to be ranked in the top 50 ndian universities. Lucknow University has got fourth place in the combined ranking of all educationa institutions in Uttar Pradesh. Lucknow University has secured 16th position exclusively in the list of universities included in the ranking.



#### TMU organises Annual Lecture Series-2022

Feerthanker Mahaveer University (TMU) conducted its Annual Lecture Series- 2022 on the 'Future of Jobs & Fechnology Platforms'. The university organised the lecture series as it understands automation, artificial intelligence (AI), and other technologies have transformed the fundamental nature of work and these shifts can aid students in making informed decisions. The session was presided over by two industry stalwarts — Zutshi, Director (Policy & Strategy), UL India Pvt. Ltd. and Dhiraj Gyani, Director (Government & Education Engagement), GitHub. The event commenced with the opening remarks by Dr RK Dwivedi, Principal and Director, FoE and CCSIT. A panel discussion along with the Q&A round was held in which the students asked their gueries. TMU Vice-Chancellor (Prof) Dr Raghuvir Singh moderated this section. Dignitaries like Akshat Jain, a member of the governing body of TMU, and Dr Aditya Kr. Sharma, Registrar and others graced this event. Altogether, it was an illuminating session for all the techies who were a part of the audience.



#### NCR General Manager confers award on five railway staff for their commitment to safety

On May 10, General Manager, North Central Railway (NCR). Pramod Kumar conferred awards to NCR's staff for their alertness and contribution towards safety in train operations in the presence of PHODs. Five Railway staff received the safety awards — Akhilesh Verma, Helper/Kanpur, Prayagraj Division; Dhirendra Pratap, Track Maintainer-II Bharwari, Prayagraj; Harkesh Meena, Pointsman, Kotra Jhansi Circle; Mohar Singh, Track Maintainer-I, Agra City/Agra Division; and Neeraj, Technician-I/C & W/Agra Cantt, Agra Division. Neeraj was announced the NCR employee of the month for April. Neeraj had noticed a crack in the frame of the leading trolley in coach No. SR 03246 of train no. 16788 at Agra Cantt Station on April 1. He averted a serious accident by informing all the concerned authorities. The General Manager expressed his gratitude to Neerai's entire family by sending a congratulatory message to Neeraj's wife.



#### CGST Lucknow organises cycle rally

IGST Lucknow organised a cycle rally under the guidance of Sanjay Rathi, Pr. Commissioner, CGST ∟ucknow. This rally was part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav programme, which is organised to remember the unsung heroes of India's first organised struggle for Independence in 1857. The ally started at 6 am from GST Bhawan, 7A, Ashok Marg, Lucknow. The route of the cycle rally was from GST Bhawan to Atal chowk, Civil Hospital, 1090, Ambedkar Park, Janeshwar Mishra Park and back to GST Bhawan. Almost 150 cyclists participated in the

#### CMS School felicitates its teachers for their achievements

A grand 'Teachers Thanksgiving Function' was organised on May 10 by City Montessori School (CMS) in the honour of its teachers, at CMS Gomti Nagar Extension auditorium. Chief Guest of the occasion, Smt Gulab Devi, Minister for Secondary Education (Independent charge), Uttar Pradesh, formally inaugurated the function by lighting the lamp. President and Managing Director of CMS, Prof. Geeta Kingdon, and principals of all CMS campuses were also present on this grand occasion. CMS Founder and renowned educationist Dr Jagdish Gandhi apprised about the various unprecedented achievements of the teachers. Chief Public Relations Officer of CMS, Hari Om Sharma informed that more than 3,000 teachers and non-teaching staff of CMS took out a huge 'Character Building March' in the morning from Makhdumpur Police station to CMS Gomti Nagar extension auditorium, and raised a strong appeal for character development and moral upliftment of the future generation.



#### UPMRC MD Kumar Keshav inaugurates food court-

cum-lounge at CCS Airport Metro Station Kumar Keshav MD, UPMRC inaugurated a food court cum-waiting lounge at CCS Airport Metro Station Lucknow. This food court-cum-waiting lounge shares close proximity with the CCS Airport. It will cater to the needs of all those passengers whose arrival and departure are scheduled for a particular day. This food court is aesthetically constructed to provide a space for the passengers where they can rest and dine with their friends or family members. Spread over a vast area in the Chaudhary Charan Singh Airport Metro Station's concourse region, this air-conditioned food court houses five eatery joints where the commuters can relish different varieties of delicacies. Expressing happiness over the inauguration of the food courtcum-waiting lounge, Keshav said, "We are firm in our commitment to provide world services to the passengers who travel via metro every day. The opening of a food court at CCS Airport Metro Station is indeed one of the initiatives in this direction which will surely offer a memorable experience to the



#### NEDA sets up 102-kW solar power plant at Government Engineering College, Kannauj

Minister of State (Independent Charge) Social Welfare Department, UP Aseem Arun inaugurated a 102-kW solar plant at the Government Engineering College, Kannauj, on May 7, under the leadership of Prof. Manoj Kumar Shukla, the Director of the Institute, Jttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (NEDA), Vibhutikhand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow by the Center for Alternative and Renewable Energy. The Minister also met all the teaching and non-teaching staff of the institute. The Director of the institute thanked the Minister and all the people present at the programme. He thanked Dr Ravish Singh Rajput, Registrar of the Institute, heads of the Department and all the teachers.



#### Central Bank of India honors Police Officers

On May 12, 2022, under the aegis of Central Bank of India Zonal Office a honor ceremony was organized for Aparna Gautam DCP, IPS of Lucknow Police Raghavendra Kumar Mishra, ADC, Akhilesh Singh ACP, Devendra Vikram Singh SHO Hussain Ganj, Thana, Dhirendra Pratap Singh old outpost in-charge. S.K. Gupta, Circle Chief while welcoming the police officers praised the functioning of Lucknow Police. Aparna Gautam DCP said that both the bank and the police are connected with public service and the bank should take immediate action on the customer's complaint for cyber crime by cooperating with each other Detailed guidance was given by the police officers to avoid cyber crime and other frauds. On this occasion Ajay Kumar Khanna, Regional Head, Ajit Singh, Deputy Circle Head and other staff members of the bank were

#### CM appreciate KGMU's Goonj community radio

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister (CM) Yogi Adityanath appreciated the 'Goonj' community radio initiative of the King George's Medical University and said it was yet another achievement of the KGMU. "KGMU is a prestigious institution not only of Uttar Pradesh but also a prestigious institution of the country. Many doctors who graduated from the institute have increased the pride of the institute and the country because of the talent they have. The KGMU is not only fulfilling the medical requirements of the states but also of the people from the adjoining states," he said. Adityanath said everyone had learnt that it was important to prevent oneself from disease due to the Covid-19 pandemic and for this, it was necessary that people should be made aware of cleanliness and hygiene. "I am happy that the Goonj radio station has been established with this purpose," he said. The CM congratulated the KGMU vice-chancellor, Vipin Puri and all those connected with the Goonj radio station.



#### BIRD expands capacity-building outreach despite

Bankers' Institute of Rural Development (BIRD), Lucknow, touched an all-time high by conducting 254 training programmes during the financial year 2021 22. This remarkable feat was achieved despite disruptions caused due to restrictions imposed in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. A record 12,900 trainee participants benefited from training programmes conducted by BIRD on a wide variety of themes relevant to the commercial banks, regional rural banks, cooperative banks and their training institutes, small finance banks, MFIs, NGOs, and government officials, FPOs, international agencies, etc.BIRD conducted eight thematic conferences/ webinars and seven workshops, with participation from eminent experts and several delegates. Sharing the vision for 2022-23, Shankar A. Pande, Director BIRD informed that the institute shall intensively work on developing a variety of resource materials for the capacity-building of FPOs, encouraging agristartups to work closely with FPOs and farmers transforming rural cooperatives into multi-service centres for farmers, promoting climate-resilient investments through bank finance, computerisation of rural cooperative credit societies, strengthening businesses and regulatory compliance by rural and cooperative banks, enhancing outreach by MFIs for rural livelihoods promotion, improving HR practices in rural credit institutions, NGOs and MFIs in India and developing countries.

#### IIT (BHU) Varanasi, Australian National University joins hand for academic and research collaboration

IIT (BHU) Varanasi and Australian National University recently discussed various avenues of joint collaboration, and student and faculty exchange between the two institutes. A high-level delegation led by Prof. Jagadish Chennupati, professor of physics at Australian National University (ANU) Research School of Physics and Engineering and accompanied by Prof. Alexander Mikheyevand Jay Poria, visited IIT (BHU). A meeting was chaired by Prof. Pramod Kuma Jain, Director, IIT(BHU) where the long-term goal ir terms of a joint PhD degree was also discussed between both the institutes. The meeting was also attended by Prof. Shyam Bihari Dwivedi, Prof. Rajnesh Tyagi, Prof. Lal Pratap Singh, Prof. Rajeev Srivastava, Dr Santosh Kumar Singh, Dr Sanjeev Kumar Mahato and Dr Pranjal Chandra. Prof. Pramod Jain thanked the Australian delegation for their visit to IIT (BHU) and ensured to extend all possible help in terms of student nomination and strengthen the academic relationships between ANU and IIT(BHU).

## NCL's financial performance in resonance with excellent production and dispatch

Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), under the leadership of CMD Shri Bhola Singh and Functional Directors, produced 36.07 million tonnes (MT) of coal, with a splendid growth of 17 per cent in the Q4 of FY 2021-22. The company also sent over 33.5 MT of coal in Q4 with a 15.5 per cent Y-o-Y growth. NCL is fulfilling the growing energy aspiration of the country with uninterrupted coal production and dispatch. Strengthening the balance sheet, the Profit Before Tax (PBT) of NCL in the fourth quarter of 2021-22 stands at Rs 2255.69 crore, registering a growth of 49 per cent. In the fiscal ending on March 31 2022, the company receivables reduced drastically by 62 per cent when compared to March 2021 numbers. NCL is eyeing 122 MT coal production and dispatch in the current financial year (2022-23). NCL started the FY 2022-23 with a bang and recorded a growth of 26 per cent in coal production and 18 per cent in coal dispatch in April 2022. NCL produced 10.81 MT of coal while it dispatched 11.14 MT of coal in the first month of FY 2021-22. NCL is the flagship company of Coal India Limited operating 10 highly mechanised opencast coal mines located in Singrauli and Sonbhadra District of MP and UP states.

#### **UPES School of Health Sciences and Technology** achieves 100 per cent placement

UPES School of Health Sciences and Technology in Dehradun has achieved 100 per cent campus placements for its first graduating batches and summer internships for 2022 with prominent industry giants. This significant milestone for UPES is the result of industry-aligned collaborations, focus on research, world-class infrastructure, excellent faculty and in-house training on soft skills. With the rapid transformation of health sciences, there is a crucial need for health science education to be more research and technological oriented. UPES School of Health Sciences morphed into the School of Health Sciences and Technology, nurturing a culture of research and education through experiential learning that prepares students for tomorrow.

# GOVT & POLITICS





#### KASHMIR TRIP

CHIEF JUSTICE of India NV Ramana was in Srinagar this weekend to lay the foundation stone for the new court complex in the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. He began his address invoking Urdu poet Ali Jawad Zaidi and read out a couplet in Urdu. The CJI said that although he has visited Kashmir several times, he is always moved by the hospitality and kindness of the people there. Incidentally, the petitions challenging the dilution of special stratus to Kashmir is pending before a bench headed by CJI Ramana.

#### MISSING OUT

BY NOW it is evident that the BJP's decision to appoint Manik Saha as Biplab Deb's successor in Tripura has not gone down well with a section of the party's state leadership. On Sunday, as Saha took oath as the new CM, Union minister Pratima Bhoumik made a cryptic remark while speaking to reporters. Bhoumik said she became emotional on Saturday as "I am not mechanical". Pressed further, she said she would leave it to the interpretation of others on whether she let her emotions show out of joy or sadness. "Aapko jo samajhna hai aap samajhlo," she said. It is believed that Bhoumik was among the names the BJP considered before picking Saha.

#### LANGUAGE GAP

THAT THE Congress has to regain lost ground in the Hindi heartland to give a challenge to the BJP is accepted by party leaders across the country. But the absence of an English version of the declaration adopted at the end of the three-day Udaipur chintan shivir has annoyed leaders from other regions, especially the delegates from the South and North-East. The declaration in Hindi was read out by Ajay Maken but no English version was circulated to the delegates. Many leaders said it was a departure from the past and wondered what the reason was. Incidentally, out of the 53 Lok Sabha MPs of the party, half are from the southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana. The party has as many as 15 MPs from Kerala alone..

#### DISCORDANT NOTE

THE STATEMENT by Rahul Gandhi that regional parties don't have an ideology, that they belong to some caste and that have different approaches was interesting given the fact that the Congress is part of the JMM-led government in Jharkhand and a partner in the Maha Vikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra of which the NCP and Shiv Sena are partners. Moreover, the Congress fought the Lok Sabha elections and Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu in alliance with the DMK and the 2020 Assembly elections in Bihar in alliance with the RID. The LIDE mechanism in Kerala has always been pro jected as a shining example of the party's coalition skills. Wonder what all these parties would make out of Rahul's

#### **CONGRESS CHINTAN SHIVIR**

# Task force to drive party reforms, advisory body of seniors soon: Sonia

MANOJCG UDAIPUR, MAY 15

ATTHE 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 in Parliament, assemblies and legislative councils.

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 announced.

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 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



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at the 'Nav Sankalp Shivir' in Udaipur on Sunday. PTI

the next two-three days," she said. Besides, Sonia said she has decided to set up an "advisory group" drawn from the CWC that would meet regularly to deliberate upon political issues and challenges before the party.

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 ageceiling, 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 declaerence to the elders sitting there". The declaration also includes a suggestion by the youth panel that in the future, 50 per cent of all posts in Congress governments will be reserved for those aged under 50 and the same criteria will be applied while selecting candidates from the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

In his speech, Rahul Gandhi said the idea that certain number of positions should be for younger people is a very important. "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 youngsters and seniors," he said.

ensure the idea that one person per family should get one ticket." **FULL REPORT ON** 

Importantly, he said, "We must

# Regional parties have no ideology, can't fight BJP: Rahul Regional parties have no ideology,

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 depending on the political situation.

Arguing that the political battle in India is between the ideologies of the Congress and BJP/RSS, he said this battle cannot 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 BJP 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

everyone. This battle cannot be fought by a regional party. Because this is a battle of ideology. The ideology of the RSS is fighting against the ideology of the Congress. The 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 BJP because they don't have an ideology. They have different approaches. We have a

centralised approach...," he said.

The Udaipur declaration adopted by the party, at the same time, said while the party on its own and through its organisational strength can make inroads, it was "committed to establish contact and have dialogue with all like-minded parties in the national interest and to save democracy... and keep the options open for alliances wherever necessary according to the political situation". It also said the party will engage with all social, cultural, NGOs, trade unions, think-tanks and civil society groups.

Naidu meets new UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. PTI

#### In UAE, V-P offers India's condolences over death of president

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ABU DHABI, MAY 15

VICE PRESIDENT M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday visited the UAE and offered condolences to the UAE leadership on the demise of late President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and reaffirmed that India and its people stand by the UAE at this difficult time.

Sheikh Khalifa passed away on Friday after battling illness for several years. He was 73.

Vice President Naidu on landing here at noon, went straight to Mushrif Palace and offered his condolences to Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, newlyelected President of the UAE, the royal family and the entire leadership of the UAE, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement.

He conveyed the condolences of President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. and reiterated that India and its people stand by the UAE at this



#### New CEC Takes Charge

Raiiv Kumar takes charge as the 25th CEC at the Election Commission office in New Delhi on Sunday. Kumar will oversee the upcoming Assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and J&K, and the 2024 general elections during his tenure. PTI

## Saha takes oath as CM, says law & order, development top priority

**DEBRAJ DEB** AGARTALA, MAY 15

MANIK SAHA on Sunday said his main focus as Tripura's new Chief Minister would be to further developmental activities started by the BJP-led state government and strengthen the law and order situation in the state.

Saha made the comments after being administered the oath of office by Governor Satyadeo Narain Arya at Raj Bhavan. The 69year-old was named as the chief turn of events on Saturday after Biplab Kumar Deb was made to step down from the top post in the state just a year ahead of the Tripura Assembly elections.

While not explaining why he felt the law and order situation in Tripura needed strengthening, especially when his predecessor Deb boasted of reducing severe and political crimes, the new Chief Minister said he would work under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to develop the state. "Our government under Biplab Deb ji has taken the state ahead. We shall work to con-



Newly sworn-in Tripura CM Manik Saha with former CM Biplab Kumar Deb in Agartala on Sunday. Abhishek Saha

tinue this work and bring in development under the leadership of Modi... Development, development, development, I shall take these works ahead. I shall work to ensure a strong law and order situation," said Saha. The dental surgeon-turned-politician also said his experience of running the BJP's party organisation would help him in his role as the CM.

The appointment of Saha, the state party president and a Rajya Sabha member, as the CM came as a surprise to everyone, including state ministers and leaders in

the BJP. There were a series of protests against Deb during his four-year stint as the CM, including the 'Biplab Hatao, Tripura Bachao' slogan and rebellions from his cabinet colleague Sudip Roy Barman, who after being dropped from the cabinet exited the party.

Union Minister of State for Social Empowerment and Justice Pratima Bhoumik on Sunday said the decision to replace Deb was taken by the BJP's central leadership "to strengthen the party and win in 2023".

## Collector, SP transferred

MP: Khargone

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA** BHOPAL, MAY 15

MORE THAN a month after violence during Ram Navami celebration in Khargone, the Madhya Pradesh government has transferred the district's collector and superintendent of police. Stone-pelting had taken place

during the Ram Navami procession in Khargone city on April 10, leading to clashes and arson. The district administration also imposed curfew partially for 24 days. As per a government order is-

sued late Saturday night, Khargone Collector Anugraha P has been transferred as officer on special duty at the Madhya Pradesh Bhawan in New Delhi. Ratlam's Collector Kumar Purushottam will be the new collector of Khargone.

Khargone's Besides, Superintendent of Police (SP) Siddharth Choudhary, who was shot in leg by a rioter, was also transferred as Assistant Inspector General at the police headquarters in state capital Bhopal. Satna district Superintendent of Police Dharmveer Singh will now be the SP of Khargone.

The government also transferred Jhabua's SP Ashutosh Gupta to Satna in the same capacity, while Deputy Commissioner of Police, Indore, Arvind Tiwari has been transferred as Jhabua's SP.

Niwari Collector Narendra Kumar Suryavanshi has now been appointed as the collector of Ratlam, while Jabalpur's Additional Commissioner (revenue) Tarun Bhatnagar has been made the district collector of Niwari, as per the order.

### **AHEAD OF GUJARAT POLLS**

## Hardik, PAAS leaders meet Naresh Patel, urge him to join politics

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** RAJKOT, MAY 15

PATIDAR OUOTA stir leaders in tow, Hardik Patel, the sulking working president of Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC), met Patidar leader Naresh Patel and discussed "politics" among other things, at Khodaldham in Rajkot on Sunday.

The Congress leader and the quota stir leaders said that they urged Naresh Patel to join politics at the earliest and that they were ready to work under him.

Accompanied by Alpesh Katheriya, the incumbent convener of Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti (PAAS) and Dinesh

Bambhaniya, a senior PAAS functionary, Hardik held a closed-door meeting with Naresh Patel, at Khodaldham, a grand temple built by Leuva Patel sub-caste group of the Patidar community

at Kagvad village.

It was Hardik who launched the PAAS and launched an agitation in 2015, demanding Patidars, the politically and economically influential community, be recognised as an OBC and be given attendant benefits of reservation. However, he stepped down as PAAS convener in early 2019 to join the Congress. The meeting comes in the backdrop of Naresh Patel, chairman of Shree Khodaldham Trust (SKT), the re-

ligious trust of Leuva Patel com-

Khodaldham, reportedly meeting 'Congress high-command' and Hardik Patel complaining publicly that he is not happy in the Congress. It is also for the first time that the PAAS leaders and Hardik met Naresh Patel at Khodaldham since Hardik took

the political plunge. tice," Katheriya said.

"We have been meeting Naresh Patel often but we three met him together to discuss two important issues — to press for our demand that cases filed against Patidar youths during the quota stir be withdrawn immediately and that families of those who were martyred during the agitation be given jus-

## 'Centre not consulting states on policies of national significance'

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** MUMBAI, MAY 15

THE CENTRE is not taking state governments into confidence or holding consultations with them while drafting policies of national Maharashtra Industries Minister Subhash Desai has said. The "constant friction

significance. and political turf war" between the BJP and states ruled by opposition parties has had a detrimental effect on the federal structure of the country, he added.

"The government of India needs to take states into confidence while drafting new policies



Maharashtra **Industries** Minister Subhash

of national significance. It must hear the views of the states. That is what is lacking at this point of time. The dialogue that is needed between the two is not happening. If you take our views, we are not going to mislead you. We may, however, protect our state's interest. This exchange of ideas that is needed is not taking place," Desai said at an Express Townhall here.

Desai further said that despite Maharashtra's importance as a leading industrial state in the country. he has, since the formation of the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in 2019, not got a chance to physically hold a one-on-one meeting with either the central industries minister or the finance minister.

He also said that the Centre was not taking into consideration the views of states while planning important infrastructure projects such as the bullet train. "While creating infrastructure which is important for the entire country, you need to connect with all stakeholders...," Desai said.

#### **Guiarat: Folk singer** booked for 'using casteist slur' during performance

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** AHMEDABAD, MAY 15

POPI II AR FOLK and devotional singer Yogesh Gadhvi, also known as Yogesh Boxa, was booked for allegedly using a casteist slur against the Dalit community during his performance at a public event, police said. Yogesh was performing at the inauguration of a girl students' hostel in Bhuj town in Kutch that was built under the Gujarat Samras Chhatralay Society under Social Justice and Empowerment Department of the state government.

According to police, an FIR was lodged against Gadhvi under sections of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act at the behest of a complaint lodged by Vishal Garva, a Bhuj-based Dalit rights activist.

According to Vishal, Boxa and other artists such as Umesh Barot and Sonal Sandhar were invited to perform at the inauguration of Bhimratna Samras Kanya Vidyalaya atRadhakridshnanagar.

"Around 4 pm, Boxa started performing and during his sermons, he used casteiest slurs against the Dalit community. Our society leaders immediately reached the stage and reprimanded him saying how can he use a casteist slur against us when he has come at the inauguration of a hostel for our community daughters," said Vishal in his complaint.

BJP state president CR Paatil was the chief guest of the event while MP Vinod Chavda and Gujarat assembly speaker Nimaben Acharya were also

## AAP, Twenty20 announce new political front in Kerala

**SHAJU PHILIP** THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,

MAY15

AAM AADMI Party and Keralabased Twenty 20, the CSR wing of garment major KITEX Group, on Sunday announced a new political front, People's Welfare Alliance (PWA), in Kerala.

The announcement was jointly made by Delhi Chief Minister Aravind Kejriwal and Twenty20 chief co-ordinator Sabu M Jacob, who is also MD of KITEX, at a mass convention held at Kizhakkambalam near Kochi.

Addressing the convention, Keiriwal said there are two options for the people of Kerala to select - "political parties which indulge in criminal activities and riots or honest parties such as AAP and Twentv20, which work for the welfare of the people'

"It is your duty to make the correct choice. If you want development and a better standard of living, you select the parties like AAP and Twenty20." the AAP leader said. Narrating the achievements and welfare measures of the AAP government in Delhi, Kejriwal said such work is possi-



AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and Twenty20 party coordinator Sabu M Jacob in Kochi on Sunday. PTI

ble in Kerala as well. "We have to make an alliance of 130 crore people in the country," he said.

He said political parties, which are filled with criminals, have made life miserable for the ordinary people. These parties and their leaders have become a liability for the people, he said.

He also said that the developmental work undertaken by Twenty20 in Kerala are inspiring. Twenty20, which is AAP's partner in the newly formed al-

liance PWA, is ruling four village panchayats in Ernakulam district. Twenty20 coordinator Sabu M Iacob said the PWA would

make a situation conducive for peaceful life of people. Targeting the CPI(M) govern-

ment in Kerala, Jacob said the proposed K-Rail project would kill Kerala. "The state has a government, which does not run a transport bus profitably. How can such a government run the Rs 62,000crore K-Rail project," he said.

#### WORDLY WISE

WE DID NOT DOMESTICATE WHEAT. IT DOMESTICATED US.

— YUVAL NOAH HARARI

## **The Indian EXPRESS**

Sounded 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 made in mid-February.

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

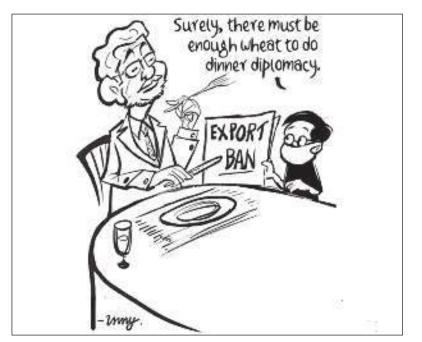
RESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S invasion of Ukraine is not only turning out to be a military blunder, but also a political disaster for Russia. It is producing strategic outcomes that Putin's war apparently aimed to prevent — the further expansion of Western military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (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

E P Unny



#### 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 ad-

vised 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 double-digit 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 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

The expectation of a sharp

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 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, 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.

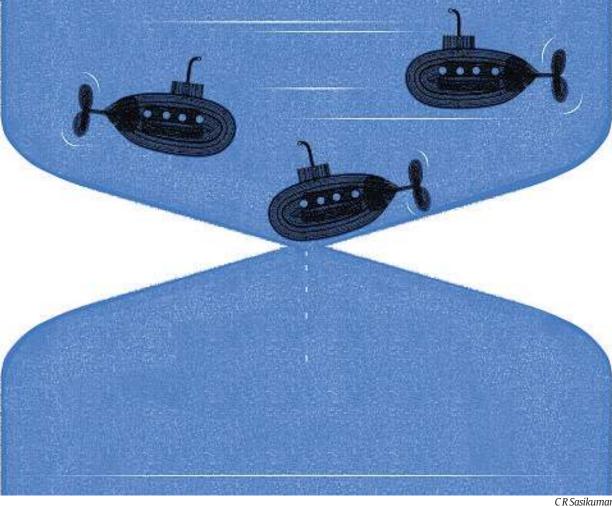
While protracted negotiations between the MoD and the French Naval Group were underway, none of the AIP systems had been fully proven. The contract for license-production of six Scorpenes was thus signed in 2005 without including this system. The Pakistan Navy (PN), obviously less riskaverse, acquired 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

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

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



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## too bleak to contemplate.

## 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, Mallikarjun 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 father 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 GS Amur, 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 Raishekhar 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

#### 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

Saumya Shukla, Munger

#### SECURITY CONCERNS

to make and implement laws.

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

# 8 EXPRESS NETWORK

KRISHNKAUSHIK&

**MAYURA JANWALKAR** 

NEW DELHI, PANAJI, MAY 15

A \$60-MILLION scandal involv-

ing loans and grants by a little-

known UN agency also included

a \$2.5 million investment to

build affordable houses in India

in 2019 - none of which has ma-

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-

The United Nations Office for

terialised yet

## **Shopian: Civilian killed in** crossfire, probe ordered

**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 administration has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the killing.

Shoib Ahmad Ganie (22), a resident of Turkwangam village, Shopian, was killed in crossfire during the "chance encounter", police 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, 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 relative.

However, a senior police officer said: "It will be clear in police investigation and magisterial inquiry". Later in the day, Shopian DC Sachin Kumar Vaishya ordered a magisterial inquiry into the killing. The inquiry would be conducted by the Additional District

**ARUN SHARMA** 

NATIONAL CONFERENCE (NC)

vice-president Omar Abdullah on

Sunday said Article 370 had been

Constitution, but it could not have

been removed as it formed the ba-

was taken to the United Nations

Security Council. On the basis of

that resolution, Article 370 was

not given a permanent status," he

said, while addressing reporters

at Surankote on the second day of

that Jammu and Kashmir is an in-

tegral part of India and it cannot

be disintegrated from it, then you

cannot remove that basis on

which it had become an integral

a debate over the issue, saving

the matter was pending before

the court. Pointing out that the

However, he refused to enter

part of the country." he added.

"But thereafter when you say

his tour to Poonch district.

"At that time, the resolution

sis for accession of J&K to India.

JAMMU, MAY 15



Kashmiri Pandits protest in Srinagar, Sunday. Shuaib Masoodi

## PAGD seeks safe working environment for Pandits

**BASHAARAT MASOOD** SRINAGAR MAY 15

THE LEADERS of People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration and a BIP delegation on Sunday met Lt Governor Manoj Sinha to seek safe working environment for the Kashmiri Pandit employees posted in the Valley.

On Sunday morning, PAGD leaders led by its president Farooq Abdullah called on Lt Governor Sinha at Raj Bhawan in Srinagar. Abdullah was accompanied by ex-CM and Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti, Communist Party leader M Y Tarigami, Awami National Conference senior vice-president Muzaffar Shah and National Conference parliamentarian Hasnain Masoodi.

"The meeting was positive. We met him (Sinha). We had only one issue to discuss and that was of Kashmiri Pandits. We sought safe and secure working environment for the [Kashmiri] Pandit employees," Tarigami told

Article a

temporary

Abdullah

CJI had agreed to hear the matter

after summer vacation, he said:

"Let them start hearing and we

The statement assumes signif-

will place our case before them."

icance as it has come when the

Supreme Court has agreed to con-

sider listing after summer vaca-

tion the petitions challenging

Centre's decision to abrogate

Article 370, which gave special sta-

tus to the erstwhile state of

Jammu and Kashmir. Of the nearly

two dozen petitions pending be-

fore the Supreme Court, one has

been filed by NCLok Sabha mem-

bers Mohammad Akbar Lone and

Hasnain Masoodi, a retired High

while Jammu and Kashmir state

Describing bifurcation of erst-

The Indian Express.

On Saturday, a delegation of the Kashmiri Pandit employees posted in Valley met the PAGD leaders after which the alliance partners decided to meet the Lt. Governor, After the killing of Rahul Bhat, a clerk in the revenue department, by militants in Budgam district's Chadoora on Thursday, the Kashmiri Pandit employees have been demanding posting at secure locations.

Tarigami said Lt Governor Sinha ruled out shifting of these employees to Jammu. "He said we can't agree to this demand (transfer to Jammu). He said they have been appointed under the PM's Package and there is no scope for that," Tarigami said, adding: "We told him to post them at suitable and secure places.'

Earlier in the day, a BJP delagation led by its J&K in charge Ravinder Raina also met LG Sinha. While the official statement from Raj Bhawan mentioned about the meeting between LG and the BIP delegation, it remained silent on

into two Union Territories of I&K

and Ladakh, the NC leader said

there had never been such an ex-

ample of a state being down-

graded to a UT. Though UP, Bihar

and Andhra Pradesh were bifur-

cated in the past, those were not

made UTs he added. "This is for the

first time that a state was divided

into two and both were made

UTs," Omar said, adding: "No one

can explain as to why it was done

as elections were also not con-

tested over this issue. I would have

understood if BIP had said anv-

Panjal region comprising Poonch

and Rajouri districts to mobilise

support for the NC, especially after

the delimitation commission sub-

mitted its final report to the Central

Government regarding new geo-

graphical boundaries of Assembly

and Lok Sabha constituencies in

I&K. PM Narendra Modi and

Home Minister Amit Shah have al-

ready said that Assembly elections

in J&K will follow the delimitation

Omar has been on tour of Pir

thing about it in its manifesto."

Art 370 basis for accession of J&K to India, could not be removed: Omar

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 norms," the statement said.

"The emergence of shrivelled

#### now being probed by the UN for tions about how the government allocating all its funding to comcould award such a large housing panies linked to Kendrick. project to a private firm without a The head of UNOPS, Grete tendering project, said this official, Centre relaxes procurement norms

for shrivelled, broken wheat grains

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

investment in Goa — and no house to show for it

lier this month over the issue.

Faremo, also stepped down ear-

told The Indian Express that the

project had been shelved. A sen-

ior Goa government official con-

firmed to The Indian Express that

a presentation was made to offi-

cials by SHS Holdings for the

construction of the proposed

tioned how supporting infrastruc-

ture like power and roads would be made available for the housing

units also. They also had reserva-

However, officials had ques-

housing units in Goa.

Gupta, who is the CEO of SHS,

requesting anonymity.

"No land was identified for the

project. In fact, the discussions did

not even reach the stage where the

fund-sharing pattern for the proi-

ect was discussed," the official said.

Gupta claimed it was the Goa

overnment that had approached

UNOPS. "There was an agreement

with the Goa government in

February 2019 and then there was

a supplementary agreement

signed in March 2019. We sent

some follow-up mails after that

because the state was supposed

to allot land to us. We followed up

till August-September 2019.

When we did not get a response,

we were told by UNOPS that it

was Goa that wanted these

HARIKISHAN SHARMA NEW DELHI, MAY 15

THE CENTRE on Sunday announced a major relaxation in the Fair and Average Quality (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.

WHEAT PROCURED (2022-23)

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

and Arti Jain, are the directors of

this firm — Sustainable Housing

Solutions (SHS) Holdings Pvt Ltd

- that registered zero revenue

and Rs 27,289 in losses in 2020-21.

Sustainable Infrastructure

Impact Investments (S3I) initia-

tive, launched in 2018, which is

The project was under the

A couple in Delhi, Amit Gupta

documents show.



\*Figures till May 10, 2022

REFRACTIONS IN FAO NORMS Max permissible limit Category Foreign matter Other food grains 2% Damaged grains Slightly damaged grains Moisture

Source: Food Corporation of India 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

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



A grain market in Patiala, Sunday. Harmeet Sodhi

Why quality norms have been relaxed

July 15: Bihar

THE MOVE to relax the FAO 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 is been procured till May 14 much lower than 367 I MT procured during the corresponding period in 2021-22.

#### Bengali TV actor found dead in her flat, kin say murder we came to know about this six

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** KOLKATA, MAY15

BENGALI TELEVISION actor Pallavi Dey was found dead in her rented flat in Kolkata's Garfa area on Sunday morning, police said.

Dey (25), who was playing the female lead in the TV show 'Mon Mane Na', was found hanging from a ceiling fan, with the investigators claiming that prima facie it appeared to be a case of suicide.

Dey's family, however, raised the suspicion that she may have

been murdered. An official said, "Dey was rushed to the MR Bangur Hospital where she was declared dead. We are investigating the circumstances that led to her death. The actor's body has been sent for post-mortem examination."

The police in an official statement said, "The actor was found hanging from a ceiling fan with the help of a bedsheet. The incident took place at about 9:30am. A case of unnatural death has been registered."

Dey was reportedly in a live-in relationship with her boyfriend Shagnik Chakraborty, officials said, adding that he was being questioned at the Garfa police station. Shagnik, who works in a private company, told the police that he found the door locked from inside when he returned after going out for a smoke in the morning. He broke open the door and found Pallavi's body hanging, he claimed,

adding that he informed the police. Sources said she shifted to a rented flat only last month. Her father Nilu Dey said, "Her partner had a registered marriage with someone else two years ago and months back. There was another girl who he was close to and it would often create trouble in their relationship. We don't know who saw her hanging."

Shagnik's mother Sandhya Chakraborty said, "We were not happy with the live-in concept but they are adults and the girl side had no issue. We wanted them to stay together after marriage only. She was short-tempered and would talk rudely to us. So we did not speak to her very

don't want to follow up, we don't have to either. Whenever they want to come in, they can. We left it there at that point in time."

Government officials, however, said no such proposal had been made to UNOPS and had that been the case, the project would not have been shelved. Sources said discussions last took place with SHS Holdings in February 2019, and that the file was shelved after then CM Manohar Parrikar died. A couple of meetings were held with SHS India officials but nobody from UNOPS had met government officials, they said.

**FULL REPORT ON** 

www.indianexpress.com

#### Forensic probe on to identify cause of bus fire in Reasi: NIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA JAMMU. MAY 15

NATIONAL INVESTIGATION Agency (NIA) on Sunday said a detailed forensic probe is continuing to identify the reason for the recent cause of a fire in a passenger bus near Katra town, the base camp for the pilgrims visiting Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir.

 $Four persons \, were \, killed \, and \,$ 24 others injured on Friday when a fire ripped apart the moving bus, mostly carrying devotees, near Nomai, about 3 kilometers from Katra, shortly after it left for Jammu from the base camp.

A team of NIA inspected the wreckage of the bus on Saturday and collected samples during their one-and-a-half hour stay at the scene.

"NIA has extended all requisite assistance to J-K Police in the investigation of the case of passenger bus catching fire near Katra on Friday. Detailed forensic probe is continuing to identify the reasons for the cause of

fire," the agency said in a tweet. Though the survivors and the people residing in the vicinity of the incident spoke about hearing a sound of an explosion in the bus, Additional Director General (ADG) of Police, Jammu zone, Mukesh Singh on Friday said initial probe does not point to use

of any explosive. The bus caught fire on its way from Katra to Jammu. The cause of fire is not confirmed yet", Singh had told reporters at the scene of the incident, adding a forensic team is looking into

the cause of fire. Meanwhile, BJP's J&K unit chief Ravinder Raina on Sunday said Pakistan would try to instigate people in the name of religion but its attempts to spread terror and propaganda would be foiled. 'The NIA investigation has pointed at the use of a sticky bomb." he said, adding: "Pakistan attempts to make peo-

ple fight in the name of religion,

but we will foil every such plan,

be it terrorism or Pakistan's

propaganda.'

## Jammers, biometrics, mehendi ban: Rajasthan tries to avoid paper leak

**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 Friday. "They didn't allow this full-

sleeved shirt I was wearing either," Regar says, as lathi-wielding policemen from the Rajasthan Armed Constabulary stand guard.

This year, the test conducted by the Rajasthan Police has been held at 470 centres across the 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 screen-

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

The REET scandal had come as a major embarrassment for the Congress, with CM Ashok Gehlot removing the chairman of the Raiasthan Board of Secondary Education.

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 mehendi or ink on their hands.

## 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 aca-

demic 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. "We have also sent them



Written to 500 foreign universities: UGC chief M Jagadesh

(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 eligibility 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)

Academic collaborations between 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.

## Assam: Three killed as heavy rain, landslides wreak havoc

**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 landslide in Dima Hasao's



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

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 Force airlifted 100-odd passengers from Ditokcherra.

Monsoon to hit Andaman Sea today

Pune: The southwest monsoon is most likely to hit the South Andaman Sea, Nicobar islands and Southeast Bay of Bengal on Monday, the India Meteorological Department said. Once realised.

the monsoon will arrive over the islands nearly a week ahead of its normal schedule.

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

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** 

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 repo rate 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

MUMBAI MAY15

#### 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 minimum 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 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

SBI hikes MCLR again, second in 1 month

RBI to review asset quality of PSBs tomorrow

#### **EXPLORATORY TALKS WITH SINGAPORE AIRLINES**

# Vistara could merge with AI, 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 anonymity

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 eq-

uity Singapore Airlines will hold in Air India will be held once it has fi-



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-

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".

ferred to its new owner in January.

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 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 Air Asia 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.

## 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 constraints 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 facing headwinds 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-



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.

#### culture improved since Covid' fallacy as it ignores all kinds of Around 84 per cent of employees globally say the exposures for the insurers and organisation's culture has improved since the always the price needs to be start of the pandemic, an EY Survey said greater than burning cost for



'84% of staff feel organisation

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 organisation

#### Methodology

The survey canvassed the views of over 1,500 business leaders and more than 17,000 employees across 22 countries and 26 industry sectors. In India, the responses are captured by more than 100 business leaders and more than 500 employees

#### **EMPLOYEES TO COME BACK TO THE OFFICE FIVE DAYS A WEEK**

SAY THEY WANT

36% OF EMPLOYER RESPONDENTS

As many countries emerge from the pandemic, employees have gained significant influence over their employers and that their 'wish list' from potential employers is changing

Source: EY/PTI

## **Govt: Constraints** in availability of domestic coal

**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 im-

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

ports, according to the Coal



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

#### 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 compared 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 Vvas 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

Shaktikanta Das, clearly expressed

their apprehensions about cryp-

tocurrencies and said these pose

challenges to the stability of the fi-

nancial system, sources told *PTI*.

the RBI's capacity to determine

"It will seriously undermine

#### **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

#### HCLTech, jobs

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

#### Ashima Goyal on rate hikes New Delhi: The RBI is not "be-

SBI branch, New Delhi. File

hind the curve" in hiking interest rate to tackle rising inflation, Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Ashima Goyal has said.

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

its own \$6.5 billion consumer

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

The consumer goods push un-

retail outlets across the nation.

#### Frauds in PSBs dip 51% to ₹40,295 cr

This is SBI's second hike in MCLR

three-month MCLR now stands at

6.85 per cent as against 6.75 per

cent earlier. Similarly, the six-

month MCLR stands at 7.15 per

cent, one-year MCLR stands at 7.2

per cent, two-year MCLR stands at

SBI's overnight, one-month,

in the last one month.

New Delhi: Public sector banks reported over 51 per cent dip in the amount involved in frauds to Rs 40,295.25 crore during the fiscal ended March 2022, the RBI has said. PTI

PSBs' collection efficiencies, consumer grievance redress mechanism, digital banking units, lend-

ing to government entities, IT infrastructure and cyber security framework and any issue that the lenders may like to present, said sources.

7.4 per cent, and three-year MCLR

SBI's hike follows the

Monetary Policy Committee deci-

sion to jack up reporate by 40 ba-

sis 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.

stands at 7.5 per cent.

"PSBs are preparing presentations on various aspects of their operations. 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

## 49% stake in Quintillion Business Media

Adani to buy

New Delhi: AMG Media Networks, a unit of Gautam Adani's conglomerate Adani Enterprises, will pick a 49 per cent stake in Raghav Bahlcurated digital business news platform Quintillion Business Media Pvt Ltd for an undisclosed sum, according to a regulatory filing.

Earlier in March, Adani Enterprises announced its foray into the media business by acquiring an unspecified minority stake in Quintillion Business Media Ltd

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

IMF lifts weighting of dollar,

Chinese yuan in SDR basket

for the power sector. The inter-ministerial panel

clined to 29.31 per cent from 30.93

#### **RBI OFFICIALS TO PARLIAMENTARY PANEL**

## 'Cryptos can lead to dollarisation of economy'

#### **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 parlia-

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

mentary panel, according to

monetary policy and regulate the monetary system of the country," a member of the panel quoted RBI officials as saying. Central bank officials 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 Lucknow

## store network of more than 2,000

#### 'RIL to buy dozens of brands in \$6.5-bn play' Mumbai: Reliance will acquire dozens of small grocery and nonfood brands as it targets building

goods business, sources said. Reliance plans to build a portfolio of 50 to 60 grocery, household and personal care brands A superstore of RIL

> grocery outlets and ongoing expansion of "JioMart" e-commerce operations in India's nearly \$900 billion retail market, one of world's biggest, Reliance did not respond to request for comment, **REUTERS**

#### **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 de-

#### 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 from 2017 to 2021 "Directors concurred that nei-

ther 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.

# 10 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 privati-sation, 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?

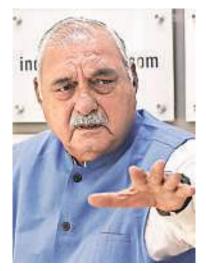
She did good work too. But this is a process. I was also PCC president. What I did or didn't do isn't the question, but I was changed.

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

#### WHY BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA

One of the tallest Congress leaders, and leader of Opposition in the Haryana 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

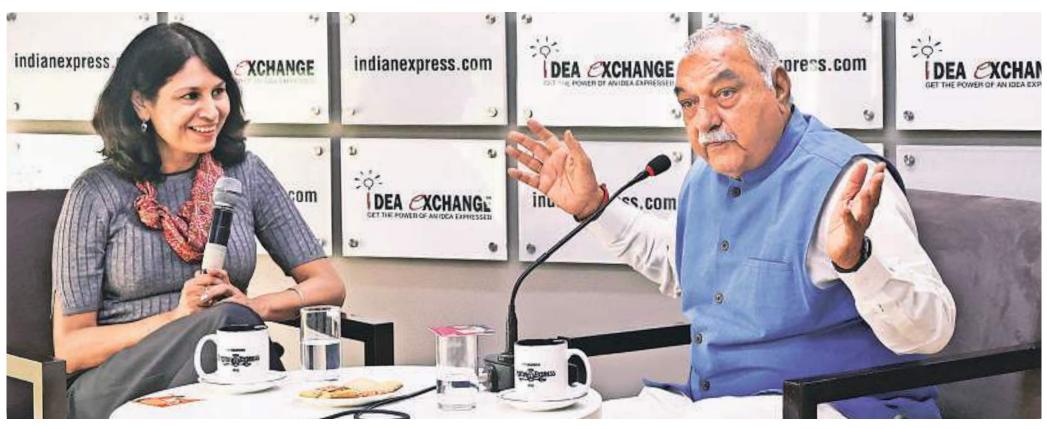
factions to emerge the undisputed leader in the run-up to the assembly elections in 2024 when the state will face a new contestant in the Aam Aadmi Party. Hooda, who has considerable support among farmers, was also recently entrusted with preparing an agenda paper on farmers and agriculture for the Congress' 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 BIP, 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 Punjab 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 ou are a politician vour son can 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 Harvana, 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 Gandhi's policies

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

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

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

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.

it an attempt to present a united face?



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,

in which people feel extremely lethargic after 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

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



Protection from the heat in Delhi on

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

HARISH DAMODARAN NEW DELHI, MAY 15

Assessing the hikes

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 con-

sumer prices of packed sunflower (2.1 times;

from Rs 90 to Rs 190.75/kg) and soyabean

These are massive hikes, aren't they?

1 that more than 90% of the price increases in

palm, sunflower, soyabean and even mus-

tard oil over the eight-year period - roughly

coinciding with the Narendra Modi govern-

ment assuming office - has happened just

during the last three years. In vanaspati (hy-

drogenated vegetable oil), the entire increase

has taken place within the last three years,

while well over two-thirds for groundnut oil

actually saw very little inflation during the

first five years of the Modi government — in

fact, going back further to 2011. Plentiful sup-

plies of cheap imported oil — palm from

Indonesia and Malaysia, soyabean from

Argentina and Brazil, and sunflower from

Ukraine and Russia — ensured access to a

It is only the period after mid- to late-

product that virtually defied food inflation.

2019 — the Modi government's second term

— that has witnessed a doubling of consumer

prices of imported vegetable oils. That in-

cludes vanaspati, which is largely made from

imported palm oil (the process involves hy-

drogenation or adding hydrogen to harden

and raise the melting point of the oil, yield-

ing a product mimicking desi ghee). Prices

of indigenous oils, especially mustard and

groundnut, have also gone up disproportion-

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 gov-

ernment, 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-

When inflation is low, people think of

ately only in the last three years.

Simply put, edible oil is a commodity that

Well, not quite. It can be seen from Table

(2.2 times; from Rs 77 to Rs 170/kg) oil.

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

two to three glasses of 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**

CHATTERIEE 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.

or a jog, they should either do it early in the morning between 5-6 am or in the evening after 7 pm. People

Also, anyone living

with comorbidities such

as cardiac diseases, dia-

betes, or thyroid is likely

to feel the effect of sun

Should people exercise

problem; exercising

when it is hot is. If people

want to go out for a walk

Exercising is not a

exposure more.

in this season?

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

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

Dr Chatterjee spoke to Anonna Dutt

## VAJIRAM & RAVI Online & Classroom Programmes General Studies • Optional Subjects • CSAT

## Who is Devasahayam Pillai, first Indian layman to be declared a saint by Vatican?

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-



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** 

## Vaccine against 3 encephalitis viruses found safe, effective

A VACCINE for eastern equine encephalitis virus (EEEV), western equine encephalitis virus (WEEV), and Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus (VEEV) was found to be safe, well-tolerated and induced a neutralising antibody response in adult volunteers, according to results from a phase 1 clinical trial, published in *The* Lancet Infectious Diseases.

EEEV, WEEV and VEEV are spread to hu-

mans through the bites of infected

mosquitoes. Horses are also susceptible to

infection, but horses cannot transmit the

viruses directly to humans. Infections in hu-

mans are rare but can lead to flu-like symp-



toms and, in some cases, severe neurological damage or death.

Researchers designed a 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 contain the genetic material that the viruses need to replicate in-

side 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, the release said.

SOURCE: NIH, US

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

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
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

14.5 mt is imported and the balance 8.5-9.0 mt produced from domestic sources.

All prices as on May 13 in that year.

A sudden spurt in prices (volatility) is different 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 the way the sudden Rs 40-60/kg rise in mustard, palm or soyabean oil price in a single

Source: Department of Consumer Affairs

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-

Source: Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation 90% maida and 4-5% fats, which act as a lubricant and impart necessary softness, texture and mouth-feel. Vegetable oil and

MRP OF AMUL POUCH MILK

Full cream

48

50

52

54

56

60

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

**Toned** 

38

42

46

50

Cow

48

IN DELHI-NCR (Rs/litre)

May 9, 2014

June 3, 2016

March 11, 2017

May 21, 2019

Dec 15, 2019

March 1, 2022

Cow milk: 3.5% Fat, 8.5% SNF

July 1, 2021

wheat getting simultaneously expensive sugar hasn't so far – would make it difficult for a whole host of food and bakery product industries. 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

#### 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.





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

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

UAE on Monday.

THE US 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 lapanese cult Shinrikyo, the radical Jewish group Kahane Kach and two Islamic groups that were active in Israel, the Palestinian territories and

#### **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-WINNING

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.

### 18-YR-OLD GUNMAN DROVE HOURS TO 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

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 neighbourhood 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 centre 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 wrote, '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

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 "Jo bole so 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



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

Wickremesinghe said on 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.

worst-ever economic crisis.

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.

## 'swift measures', reports more Covid deaths

N Korea taking

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.

## says Russians losing momentum Finland, Sweden take a step closer to joining NATO

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 offensives 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





Ukrainian service members celebrate (left) the victory of the Kalush Orchestra (right), a band from Ukraine, during the final

have a victory in Ukraine- military medic, standing in the

of the 2022 Eurovision Song Contest. Reuters

Eurovision, but soon we will Russian war," said Tetyana, a

basement decorated with children's paintings of Ukraine flag

and "Glory to Ukraine" signs

The tired-looking but happy 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 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

baseless and that the war is an unprovoked act of aggression. The southern port city of

West say the fascist allegation is

Mariupol has suffered the heaviest fighting, and while it is now in Russian hands there hundreds of Ukrainian fighters still holding out at the Azovstal steel works despite weeks of heavy 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.

# 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

PK

SRH

**CSK** 

TEAM | M | W | L | PT | NRR

20 0.391

16 0.262

12 0.210

12 0.160

12 0.023

6 -0.613

-0.323

-0.270

-0.206

16 0.304

14

8

6

7

6

7 10

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)

13 10 3

13 8 5

13 8

13 7

13 6

12 6

12 5

13 4 9

12 3 9

**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).

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

**ANDREW SYMONDS 1975-2022** 

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 coulc 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, Waqar Younis and Shoaib Akhtar.

It gives you a sense of what he was capable 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,

New Delhi: Asian Championships

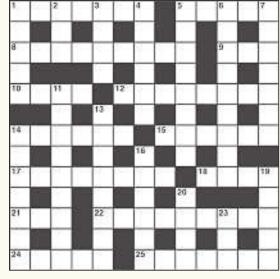
### Parveen enter quarterfinals

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

#### Diokovic 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

#### CROSSWORD 4741



#### ACROSS

- Punishment for lying in the
- sun?(7) 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

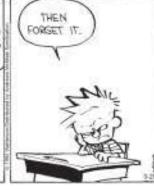


AM I GETTING THE SKILLS I'LL NEED TO EFFECTIVELY COMPETE IN A TOUGH GLOBAL FOONDMY ? T WANT A HIGH PAYING JOB WHEN I GET OUT OF HERE! I WANT OPPORTUNITY!





IN THAT CASE, YOUNG MAN



#### **MARVIN** by Tom Armstrong

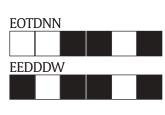




## JUMBLED WORDS

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 horizonta rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

S

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

8

SOLUTION SUDOKU 483 2 6 5 9 3 1 8 7 4 9 6 5 2 4 8 5 4 6 3 4 3 6 8 7 2 5 9 1 2 9 6 8 5 4 3 7 6 5 4 3 2 7 1 8 9 7 8 3 1 9 4 2 5 6

9 4 8 7 5 6 3 1 2

#### **DAY TODAY**

BY PETER VIDAL

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 your qualities

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 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 your chart, inspiring dreams, strange imaginings and mysteries of the most colourful kind. You will relish any intrigues or uncertainty

more pleasure. VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23) Nobody can really

that cloud your vision

today. After all, a mystery

could be the cause of much

put you on the spot

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.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23) Your personal affairs will be highlighted

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



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

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20) Even though you

required. You see, if you're to

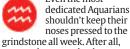
be a proper gambler you have

to know the outcome before

may be convinced that some kind of major career or professional change is 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) Even the most



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 mportant today, though, is the Moon, which is reinforcing and stiffening your emotions.

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. **Rs1 cr**: Amount the Indian players to get from BAI

Rs1cr: Cash award announced by Sports Minister Anurag Thakur.

Indian badminton takes 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 him to the 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-Chiragwere 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 se-

lection 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 Ginting.

#### SRIKANTH'S DUBSTEP AT 22-21

 $Asked \ his favour ite shot, as ide of the$ 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

#### 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.

## Coach Boe basks in reflected glory after guiding Indian doubles pair

**SHIVANI NAIK** MAY 15

MATHIAS BOE had been going through withdrawal symptoms. His chosen poison turned



ailment: top-grade badminton. The former Thomas Cup winner and Olympic silver medallist, who retired two seasons ago, had not really come to grips with being away from the circuit. He im-

mersed himself in his business, and his personal life. "But I missed winning like this at the top events. I'm happy India gave me the chance to experience this once again," said India's doubles coach (in pic), who helped the newly-minted Thomas Cup champions pull off a sensational 3-0 win against all-time lead ers Indonesia in the final.

Boe has always shared a great equation with Chirag Shetty. And was guiding him along with video analysis online at the All England even when he wasn't formally the India coach. India's efforts to bring Malaysian Tan Kim Her as specialist doubles coach had fallen through, and India's top pairing was looking and feeling rudderless. Playing at the

topmost level, but without an experienced brain ticking behind on the coach's chair.

'The Malaysian appointment almost came through and then it didn't. And Chirag contacted me and asked if I was available for a short term. I've always had a good equation with Gopi, so we spoke. But these things need higher-ups involved. It was also a good offer for them to sign me. And now here I am in Bangkok, having won the Thomas Cup again," Boe said, happy and amazed.

He would guide the Indians through wins against Malaysia and his home nation Denmark - two highly-tactical battles against mercurial opponents that needed clarity of strategy. And his typically belief-inducing pep talks. At the Tokyo Olympics, the Indians beat the eventual champions, but went out in the group stage - leaving a whiff of unfinished business.

"Since the Olympics, it's really something I've missed doing. It's what I like. But my body grew old, and I couldn't play on the circuit any longer. I missed competing deeply. So, I was happy to be back and help in this capacity. It comes naturally to me to inspire others to win," Boe said.

#### Second coming

He would return to Mumbai and imme-



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (L) and Chirag Shetty celebrate after their win. AP

diately change a few things in the training regimen. "As players, they need sparring partners. But I also changed a bit of their style of play and how they communicate." The Indians had gotten into a rut, losing narrow

matches, and flubbing 20-18 advantages on match points. "As a recent player, I had an idea of what's running through their minds. They also needed someone to scream at them," he added.

It was an unreal team effort. And India will now realise how big this result is given only 6-7 countries have won Thomas Cup before. This will count as one of the biggest moments of Indian sport... I hope India really move away from the underdog tag and push forward and defend this crown like favourites."

**MATHIAS BOE** 

DOUBLES COACH, INDIA

While the group games ended with India going down to the Chinese Taipei pair a day before the quarters, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag had the last laugh. Their belief in the process never dipped. "Quarters was tremendous pressure because losing would mean no medal," he says. India pipped Malaysia 3-2.

Denmark was a challenge not because Boe had to plot against his former teammates. But because Indians needed the confidence bolstered in their gameplan. "Finals was also that one sole shot at glory. And I didn't want us to miss it. I'm happy for myself and I'm happy I got the chance to feel this," he reiterated.

He would watch in awe as the team spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for 10 minutes, "It was an unreal team effort, And India will now realise how big this result is given only 6-7 countries have won the Thomas Cup before. This will count as one of the biggest moments of Indian sport," Boe said, adding his favourite moment will always be 'the Srikanth projectile coming down.' "Lakshya and my boys also fought, of course."

His day-after wish? "I hope India really move away from the underdog tag and push forward and defend this crown like favourites.'

#### Vimal refers to 1983 moment

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. "We always had hopes but the way the players played, they just put up a performance out of the blue," Kumar said. 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."

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