

## Our languages soul of Bharatiyata... some are trying to poison: PM

HAMZAKHAN  
JAIPUR, MAY 20

LINKING "THE diversity of our cultures and languages with national pride," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Friday that prioritising local languages under the new National Education Policy "shows our commitment to every regional language" because the "BJP considers Indian languages as the soul of *Bharatiyata* (Indianness) and the link to a better future for the nation."

In a virtual address to BJP national officer-bearers meeting in Jaipur, Modi said he wanted "to especially mention it today because for the past some time, there has been an attempt to create new controversies on the basis of language. We have to con-



Narendra Modi addresses the BJP meeting, Rohit Jain Paras

tinuously warn the nation and society against this. BJP sees the reflection of Indian culture in every Indian language and considers each language sacred."

Targeting rival political parties who "for selfish reasons... search for *chhote mote tanaav* (tension) within society, add

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## SC panel says book 10 cops for killing 4 accused in Hyderabad rape & murder

Commission says police deliberately fired at accused with intent to kill

SREENIVAS JANYALA  
& ANANTHAKRISHNANG  
HYDERABAD, NEW DELHI,  
MAY 20

THE JUSTICE V S Sirpurkar Commission, set up by the Supreme Court to probe the killing in an alleged encounter of four accused in the gangrape and murder of a veterinarian on the outskirts of Hyderabad in 2019, has submitted a report stating that it believes the police deliberately fired on the accused "with an intent to cause their death" — and recommended action against ten police officers and personnel under various charges, including murder.

On Friday, the Supreme Court

**EXPLAINED**  
**E** Message is clear

THE SUPREME Court panel's report on the Hyderabad encounter sends a clear message to law enforcement agencies across the country: due process of law has to be followed even in the gravest of offences.

ordered that the report submitted in a sealed cover be shared, and transferred the matter to the Telangana High Court for further

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## 'Truth is out' for family of accused, victim's kin say they back police

SREENIVAS JANYALA  
HYDERABAD, MAY 20

FOR ONE side, it's closure of sorts. For the other, the wounds from three years ago have reopened.

With a Supreme Court panel finding that the accused in the gangrape and murder of a 26-year-old veterinarian in 2019 were allegedly killed by the police in Hyderabad on the pretext of an encounter, the refrain from their families was this: "The truth is out... the government should now support us with compensation."



Police at the site of the encounter on Dec 6, 2019. PTI

But for the family of the veterinarian, the report has come as a bitter leftover. "We are not yet

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Outside the Gyanvapi mosque on Friday. Anand Singh

## MUSLIM PANEL FLAGS WORRY

## Finding religious nature not barred by 1991 law: SC

Bench sends Gyanvapi suit to district judge, says order to secure site stands

ANANTHAKRISHNANG  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

UNDERLINING THE "complexity of the issues involved in the civil suit" pending before the Civil Judge (Senior Division), Varanasi, on the Gyanvapi dispute "and their sensitivity", the Supreme Court Friday ordered transfer of the pending proceedings to the District Judge, Varanasi, for "trial and all interlocutory and ancillary proceedings". It said the suit "should be tried before a senior and experienced judicial officer of the Uttar Pradesh Higher Judicial Service".

Responding to the argument of Senior Advocate Huzefa Ahmadi — he appeared for the Committee of Management of Anjuman Intezamia Masjid,

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNAY



EXPLAINED

**SIMPLY PUT**  
**THE KRISHNA JAMASTHAN CASE**  
PAGE 5

## Probe: RTI used as weapon to fudge answer sheets in Bengal SSC scam

ATRI MITRA,  
RAVIK BHATTACHARYA  
& SWEETY KUMARI  
KOLKATA, MAY 20

Partha Chatterjee and Paresh Adhikary are under the CBI scanner

School Service Commission (WBSSC), according to a probe committee headed by Justice (retired) Ranjit Bag Committee that submitted its report to the

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## HC orders dismissal of Bengal minister's daughter from govt job, tells her to return salary

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, MAY 20

THE CALCUTTA High Court on Friday ordered dismissal of West Bengal minister Paresh Chandra Adhikary's daughter Ankita Adhikary as an assistant teacher in a government-aided school and asked her to return the entire salary since the date of her joining.



Ankita Adhikary

It was alleged that the appointment of the minister's daughter was illegal as it was made by changing the merit list.

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## MEA: China has built two bridges in Pangong area it occupied illegally

KRISHN KAUSHIK  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

CONFIRMING REPORTS of a second bridge being built by China across the Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday that "both these bridges are in areas that have continued to be under the illegal occupation of China since the 1960s".

The bridge being referred to is

a second structure that China is building, right next to the bridge it constructed earlier this year, in an area that lies along India's claim line. It is more than 20 km east of the point which India says marks the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

"We have seen reports of a bridge being constructed by China on Pangong Lake alongside its earlier bridge. Both these bridges are in areas that have continued to be under the illegal occupation of China since the 1960s. We have never accepted such illegal occupation of our territory, nor have we accepted the

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## Probe: RTI used as weapon to fudge answer sheets in Bengal SSC scam

Calcutta High Court on May 12. A Division Bench of Justices Harish Tandon and Rabindranath Samanta set up the Committee on February 22 to look into the alleged irregularities in the recruitment process. Based on its report, a Division Bench of Justices Subrata Talukdar and Justice Ananda Kumar Mukherjee on Wednesday upheld High Court judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay's directive for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into alleged irregularities in appointments in Group C and Group D posts in the School Education Department — the entire recruitment process started in 2016. While Group C includes all clerical posts, with a starting salary of Rs 22,700 per month, attendants are hired as Group D staff for a monthly salary of Rs 17,000. The rules were allegedly bent to favour 381 candidates in the Group Category, of whom almost 250 were not on the merit list at all, while 609 unsuccessful Group D candidates allegedly received recommendation letters.

Following the Division Bench's orders, the road was paved for the CBI questioning of current Industries minister Partha Chatterjee, who held the education portfolio at the time of the alleged irregularities, and current Minister of State for Education Paresh Adhikary, whose daughter Ankita allegedly benefited from the scam. On Friday, the High Court ordered Ankita's dismissal as an assistant teacher in a government-aided school and asked her to return the entire salary since the date of her joining. The court also turned down Chatterjee's plea for immunity from arrest by the CBI. The central agency had questioned him on Wednesday. It has also quizzed several WBSSC officers.

The Committee report is learnt to have said that the officers behind the alleged scam allowed select candidates to file RTI applications seeking their OMR answer sheets and apply for re-evaluation "in violation of the provisions of School Service Commission Rules, 2009 by which the Central Commission is governed". The officers then allegedly manipulated the OMR sheets by increasing the marks of some candidates to give them a higher rank. They also allegedly forged marks to bring unsuccessful candidates into the appointment list. After the marks were changed, the OMR sheets were allegedly destroyed.

The Committee document reportedly mentions that the upshot of its findings was that recommendation letters were given to "undeserving and unsuccessful candidates in Group C posts "in the garb of reevaluation of OMR sheet or rechecking or review of typing or proficiency test in computer of the candidates for Group C posts for increase of marks and upgradation of ranks in the panel on basis of filing of application under RTI Act".

Committee member and HC advocate Arunava Banerjee said, "Basically, RTI was used as a weapon to increase the scores of some candidates, and after it was done, they destroyed the OMR sheets." The Commission, according to him, does not have the authority to either re-evaluate, review, or recheck the OMR sheets or answer scripts to increase marks and upgrade ranks of candidates "on the basis of consideration under the RTI Act for bringing unsuccessful candidates within the zone of consideration either during the period of validity of the panel or after the expiry of the panel".

The report is learnt have said that recommendation letters were forged by "using the data from the server of the central commission and by generating the memo number of the regional commission by using the serial order of the previous memo number of the concerned regional commission and by using scanned signatures of the chairpersons of the regional commissions..."

As questions started to be raised about the delay in the recruitment process, Partha Chatterjee constituted a supervisory committee on November 1, 2019, to "supervise, monitor and guide" the WBSSC. Former WBSSC advisor Santi Prasad Sinha, the minis-

## FROM PAGE ONE

ter's officers on special duty (OSDs) Prabir Kumar Bandyopadhyay and Sukanta Acharya, Deputy Director of School Education Directorate Alok Kumar Sarkar, and the School Education Department's senior Law Officer Tapas Kumar Panja made up this panel.

But, the Bag Committee reportedly said the supervisory panel was not legally valid and it was evident that the panel's every decision had the "approval of the MIC (minister in charge) Partha Chatterjee".

The Committee's other members were SSC Board member Ashutosh Ghosh and West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBSE) Deputy Secretary Paromita Roy.

### Calcutta HC sacks Bengal education minister's daughter from govt job

The single-judge bench of Justice Avijit Gangopadhyay directed Ankita to return her salary since November 2018 in two instalments. Also, he ordered her to submit the first instalment to the High Court Registrar on June 7.

Paresh Adhikary, the Minister of State for School Education, and Ankita were booked on Thursday by the CBI under Sections 420 (cheating and dishonesty) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and under the Prevention of Corruption Act in connection with her appointment on the HC orders.

Ankita has been teaching political science to classes 11 and 12 at Mekhliganj Indira Girls High School Indira Girls High School.

Firdous Shamim, the lawyer of petitioner Babita Sarkar, said, "Ankita Adhikary has to deposit 41-month salary in two instalments to the HC registrar on June 7 and July 7. Ankita or any of her relatives will not be allowed to enter the school premises till the court issues fresh order. Ankita can't even introduce herself as an assistant teacher."

The court has even "earmarked" the post held by Ankita for Babita Sarkar, he claimed.

Babita Sarkar had filed a plea alleging that she was deprived of the assistant teacher's job despite having secured higher marks than Ankita in the recruitment test. She had secured 77 marks in the test, while the minister's daughter had 61, it was claimed.

Babita said, "It is a victory of truth. It stands proved that she had not got the job on merit. It has been a long fight. When the merit list was changed first, I didn't know who she was but I had written to the School Service Commission (SSC) about it."

Senior Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said, "The High Court is infusing a new hope among people by returning them their rights. Now it has been proved that the minister used his influence to secure a government job for his daughter. You will find such cases in every house of Trinamool Congress leaders."

Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said the party doesn't support any unethical practices. "I would not like to comment on the court's order. But if something is right is right. The TMC doesn't support anything wrong or unethical," he added.

Earlier in the day, the minister reached the CBI office for questioning for the second time at the agency's Nizam Palace office in Kolkata. On Thursday, he was questioned by the agency officials for more than 5 hours.

### SC panel says book 10 cops for killing 4 accused in Hyderabad rape & murder

The bench led by Chief Justice of India N V Ramana, and comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli, rejected submissions by Senior Advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for Telangana, that the report be kept in the sealed cover.

In its report, the three-member commission stated that it does not believe the police version of events that led to the killing of the four accused when they were taken to the crime scene in the early hours of December 6, 2019, nine days

after the gangrape and murder. The commission also noted in the report that two of the accused, Jollu Shiva and C Chennakeshavulu, were minors at the time of the incident, based on their school records.

The Commission recommended that ten police officers and personnel be tried under IPC sections 302 (murder) read with 34 (common intent), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence, providing false information) read with 302, and 34. The ten are: V Surender, K Narasimha Reddy, Shaik Lal Madhar, Mohammed Sirajuddin, Kocherla Ravi, K Venkateswarlu, S Arvind Goud, D Janakiram, R Balu Rathod and D Srikanth.

The police had alleged that the four accused -- cousins Jollu Shiva and Jollu Naveen, C Chennakeshavulu and Mohammed Arif -- assaulted the accompanying police personnel, and tried to snatch their weapons and fire at them.

Referring to the police's argument in the case, the report stated that "there did not arise any occasion for exercising the right of private defence".

"After considering the entire material on record, we conclude that the deceased have not committed any offence in connection with the incident on 06.12.2019, like snatching the weapons, attempting to escape from custody, assaulting and firing at the police party," it said.

"In view of the fact that the Commission has disbelieved that the deceased suspects assaulted the policemen and attempted to escape, the actions of the police officers in deliberately firing at the deceased suspects, is not justified in light of Sections 46 Cr.P.C. r/w 60 Cr.P.C," it stated.

"In view of the fact that the Commission has disbelieved that the deceased suspects fired upon the policemen, the actions of the police officers in deliberately firing at the deceased suspects, is not justified in light of Section 149 Cr.P.C," the report stated.

While Section 46 of CrPc details how an arrest is made, Section 60 speaks about the power to pursue and retake a person who has escaped from custody. Section 149 says police officers have to prevent cognizable offences.

The Commission's report stated that the police officers accompanying the accused to the crime scene were responsible for their safekeeping. "If either by acts or omissions they failed to fulfil their responsibility, then their common intention to cause the deaths of the deceased suspects is established," it stated.

"Their conduct subsequent to the deaths of the deceased suspects in falsifying the record would indicate that not only did they act in furtherance of common intention to give false information in order to screen the offenders but also that they all acted with the common intention to cause the deaths of the four deceased suspects. Res Ipsa Loquitur (the principle that the mere occurrence of some types of accident is sufficient to imply negligence)," it stated.

"In our considered opinion, the accused were deliberately fired upon with an intent to cause their death and with the knowledge that the firing would invariably result in the death of the deceased suspects," it stated.

"These officers cannot take shelter under Section 76 IPC and Exception 3 to Section 300 IPC because their contention that they fired in good faith at the deceased suspects has been disbelieved. Good faith, which is an essential prerequisite of Section 76 IPC and Exception 3 to Section 300 IPC, is found to be clearly absent," it stated.

Section 76 IPC deals with a situation where an act is committed by a person due to a mistake of fact and not due to a mistake of law, believing in good faith that he is bound by law to do it. Exception 3 to Section 300 IPC says that culpable homicide will not amount to murder if it is done with the intention of causing bodily injury, which is sufficient in the ordinary course of nature to cause death.

According to the police, the 26-year-old veterinarian was kidnapped, gangraped and murdered by the accused on November 27, 2019, at Chattanpally in Shadnagar on the outskirts of Hyderabad. They said the accused later burned her body.

On December 12, 2019, staying proceedings on the case in the Telangana High Court, the Supreme Court constituted the

three-member Commission to probe the incident and submit a report within six months -- it later extended the deadline.

Apart from retired Supreme Court judge, Justice Sirpurkar, the Commission included former Bombay High Court judge Justice Rekha Sondur Baldota and former CBI director D R Karthikeyan.

According to the police, the accused were taken to the spot to recover articles belonging to the victim. While at the site, the four attacked the police with sticks and stones and tried to snatch their guns, the police claimed. The officers opened fire in self defence killing all four, they claimed.

The Supreme Court's intervention came on two petitions seeking an independent investigation against the police officers allegedly involved.

### ‘Truth is out’ for family of accused, victim’s kin say they back police

fully aware of all the recommendations of the Commission but we support the police officials," said a close relative.

All the others who hailed the "encounter" three years ago -- from Ministers to youth organisations in Telangana -- reacted on Friday with silence. Telangana Home Minister M Mahmood Ali, who had backed the police in 2019 and even questioned the victim's failure to dial 100, said: "I do not want to comment on the issue, let the courts handle it."

The four accused were cousins Jollu Shiva and Jollu Naveen, C Chennakeshavulu and Mohammed Arif. "It is difficult to accept that my son committed such a heinous crime. What if he had not?" Jollu Rajaiah, the father of Shiva, said.

"If my son committed the crime, he should have been brought to justice legally. He was a minor. This Commission's recommendation to punish the officials at least proves that the boys did not attack the police and they were shot dead without any chance of going to court. The truth is out. I hope the courts also recommend that the four families receive some compensation because we have lost our breadwinners," said Rajaiah, a daily wage labourer.

V Narasimhalu, headmaster of Mandal Parishad Primary School at Gudigandla village in Telangana's Narayanpet district who submitted the school register with dates of birth to show that Shiva and Chennakeshavulu were minors, thanked the Commission for setting the record straight.

"Whether they were involved in the crime or not, they were minors at the time. That is what I wanted to convince the Commission. The families of the youths should get justice," he said.

C Jayamma, mother of Chennakeshavulu, said the police officials will now be held accountable for their actions. "But my son will not come back. We need help from the government, some financial assistance... that would help us a lot," she said.

In March last year, Jayamma lost her husband, CKurumappa, to injuries sustained in a road accident. In the same month, she said, Chennakeshavulu's minor wife gave birth to a girl. "After the four were arrested, we were not allowed to meet them even for a minute," Jayamma, who is also a daily wage labourer, said.

According to the families, Shiva was working as a helper in the truck that was allegedly used in the crime. Chennakeshavulu and Naveen were jobless at the time. "Without my son, I don't have much income now," said Rajaiah. "All of us are appealing to the Commission to provide us with financial help."

On the morning of December 6, 2019, hours after the alleged encounter took place, the family of the victim had hailed the police, with her father saying that they got "relief" and "closure" with the death of the accused.

As news spread of the alleged encounter, a crowd gathered on the flyover overlooking the site on the Hyderabad-Bengaluru highway, and showered rose petals and flowers on the police officials below.

Members of the youth organisation of the ruling TRS, and others such as NSUI and ABVP from the Shadnagar area who had organised the flowers,



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## EXPRESS AUDIO

### The Places of Worship Act; Cong brainstorms; crimes against women

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Discussing the Places of Worship Act in the context of the Gyanvapi case, the outcome of Cong's brainstorming session, and what NFHS reveals on violence against women

## Finding religious nature not barred by 1991 law: SC

Varanasi — that the process initiated by the Varanasi court was in violation of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, the bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud, Surya Kant and P S Narasimha, also said that "ascertainment of the religious character of a place is not barred by... the Act".

The bench said the application filed by the mosque committee, challenging the maintainability of the suit by five Hindu women seeking the right to worship at Maa Shringar Gauri Sthal on the outer wall of the mosque complex, "shall be decided on priority by the District Judge upon the transfer of the suit".

It said its May 17 interim order -- when it declined to stay proceedings before the Varanasi court, and asked the District Magistrate to secure the area where a Shiving was claimed to have been found during the videographic survey of the mosque area without impeding or restricting the rights of Muslims to access and offer namaz at the mosque -- "shall continue to remain in operation pending the disposal of the application" challenging the maintainability and for eight weeks thereafter "so as to enable any party which is aggrieved by the order of District Judge to pursue its rights and remedies in accordance with law".

"Unless adequate arrangements for ensuring the due observance of wazu have already been made by the District Magistrate, we request the Magistrate, in consultation

with the parties, to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for the religious observance," the bench said.

Ahmadi contended that the very order of sealing sought to alter the status quo that existed "for 500 years" and to change the religious character of the mosque, something prohibited by the 1991 Act. He said if the proceedings are to be sent to the District Judge, then the status quo, as existing before the suit was filed, too must be restored.

"You are changing the status quo of that particular area. This was a pond... change of religious character of a place is expressly barred. Now I ask myself this question. Why did you appoint a commission? You appointed a commission to see what existed on site -- whether there were deities there, whether there were any symbols relating to another religion which were present at the site. That is precisely an extension of what was sought to be prohibited by Parliament," Ahmadi said.

Justice Chandrachud said a five-judge Constitution Bench had "tried to interpret it in our judgment in Ayodhya... there are various nuances of the Act which will also fall for consideration, which we need not go into today at all... ascertainment of the religious character of a place is not barred by... the Act."

"Suppose there is an agiary (fire temple). Suppose there is a cross in another segment of the agiary in the same complex... Act applies to it. Does the

presence of the agiary make the cross an agiary? Does the presence of a cross make the agiary a place of Christian worship? Therefore, this hybrid character, forget this arena of contestation, is not unknown in India. What does the Act therefore recognise? That the presence of a cross will not make an article of Christian faith into an article of Zoroastrian faith, nor does the presence of an article of Zoroastrian faith make it an article of Christian faith."

"But the ascertainment of a religious character of a place, as a processual instrument, may not necessarily fall foul of the provisions of Sections 3 and 4 (of the Act)... These are matters which we will not hazard an opinion in our order at all," Justice Chandrachud said, adding "all the more reason why, on the basis of evidence... let's allow" the proceedings.

On concerns expressed by Ahmadi about the leak of the Advocate Commissioner's report, Justice Chandrachud said "that we can tell the other side that selective leaks of the report must stop. Once there is a commission report, it must be presented to the court. Nobody should leak things to the press... there is an order in judicial proceedings."

Ahmadi contended that "so far as existence of this particular property as a mosque is concerned for a period of 500 years and the religious character of that mosque, as on August 15, 1947, is very apparently not in dispute. It is precisely that religious character

that is sought to be protected. Otherwise the Places of Worship Act and the object behind it will become a dead letter. Because there are a large number of places in India where you have had these sorts of multiple religions, a temple, a mosque, a Buddhist temple earlier, a different temple later, a Jain temple earlier, a Vaishnavite temple later. It is precisely this sort of controversy which the Act wanted to interdict and the object that it should not be allowed to fester."

He said the continuation of the proceedings before the Varanasi court had the potential for "grave mischief" which "has to be nipped in the bud". He said "all the orders, right from the appointment of commission, are illegal and are to be declared as void".

During the hearing, the bench also drew attention to the need for fraternity and sense of balance within the nation. "We hold the balance and we have created a sense. The need for fraternity is crucial in our minds as well and there is a need to balance. Our interim order will preserve that sense on the ground... That the Supreme Court is seized of proceedings brings a certain degree of calm... It also sort of calms some frayed nerves on both sides because very important, at this point of time, a certain degree of healing touch with our interim order," Justice Chandrachud said.

The court will hear the matter next in the second week of July.

declined to speak on record on Friday.

"Justice was delivered and done in the encounter. No one protested then and no one is protesting even now, except the families of the four accused," said the youth leader of a leading political party.

"The police have already given CCTV proof of how the four youths approached the victim after deflating the tyres of her vehicle, took her two-wheeler after promising to fix the tyres, and after committing the crime, purchased petrol to set her body on fire. Everything is on CCTV," the leader said.

"That proof was enough to convict them in court but the police were under intense pressure to ensure instant justice because people were angered by the brazen crime. We are disappointed that the Commission recommended murder charges against the police. All of us believe that those police officials did what the public wanted them to do," he said.

### Our languages soul of Bharatiyata... some are trying to poison: PM

poison to it and keep playing with those weaknesses," he said "we see how the ecosystem of some parties, with all its power, is busy in trying to divert the nation's focus from major issues."

Without taking names, Modi hit out at the politics of dynasty and nepotism and said the BJP is not a "thehra hua paani (stagnant pool)".

"The BJP is continuously flowing. As a party, we have continuously evolved. Even in the mud of dynasty and nepotism (of rival parties), we have made the lotus (BJP's poll symbol) bloom."

"We have to remember that the trust of youth betrayed by the politics of nepotism can

only be restored by the BJP. We all know how much damage vanshavad (dynasty) and parivarvad (family politics) has done since independence," he said.

Charging "parivarvadi" parties with corruption, irregularities and "bhai-bhatijavad (nepotism)", he said, "Even today, such parties are bent on pushing the nation back. Their public life begins with family and only works for family. BJP has to continuously challenge these parivarvadi families. This is the most fatal tradition for a democracy. If you want to save democracy, then we have to continuously struggle against the politics of dynasty and nepotism."

He said there might be a BJP government in 18 states and the party may have over 1300 MLAs and over 400 MPs, yet "as a BJP worker, we have no right to sit and rest". Exhorting party leaders to work harder, he said, "We are still impatient, restless and eager" to take India to "heights as dreamt by those who laid down their lives for our independence".

"I keep talking of 'saturation' (of schemes) with government officials and state governments. It is not just a figure for perfection... it is a means to bring the nation out of discrimination, nepotism, appeasement and corruption... We can proudly say that it is the BJP which has made vikasvaad (development) politics the mainstream of politics in India," he said.

### Two bridges built by China in Pangong area occupied illegally: MEA

unjustified Chinese claim or such construction activities," MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said in a statement on Friday.

On Thursday, Bagchi had referred to it as a "so-called bridge". Responding to questions, he had referred to media reports "on the so-called bridge or I don't know if it's another

bridge -- somebody said it's a second bridge, or if it's an expansion or widening of the current bridge." "From a military perspective, I would not be in a position to comment. That I think the Ministry of Defence would be in better position to tell and also the implications of that. But as I said, we monitor such developments and if there's any update on this, we will share with you," he had said.

In his statement on Friday, he reiterated that the government "keeps a constant watch on all developments that have a bearing on India's security and takes all necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity."

India has "made it clear on several occasions that the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are an integral part of India and we expect other countries to respect India's sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said.

In order to "ensure that the nation's security interests are fully protected, the government has stepped up development of border infrastructure especially since 2014, including construction of roads, bridges, etc", he said, adding that it remains committed to "the objective of creating infrastructure along the border areas to not only meet India's strategic and security requirements but also facilitate the economic development of these areas."

According to senior defence establishment officials, the second bridge is a wider structure that China is building right next to the bridge it had constructed earlier this year. Work on the second bridge has been on for a few months, said sources.

A senior defence establishment officer said it was earlier thought that the second bridge was a temporary structure built for facilitating work on the first bridge. He said they thought the "first one was the permanent bridge, and the second one was a temporary structure for facilitation." But, he said, "it is the other way round now". "This is

the permanent bridge" and the first one seems to have been built to help in building this, he said.

The officer said he was not sure about the dimensions of the second bridge. But the first bridge that was visible in satellite images was about 400 metres long and 8 metres wide; it was believed to be built for movement of security forces between the north and south banks of Pangong Tso. These were two of the most contentious friction points during the over two-year-long ongoing standoff in eastern Ladakh. In February 2021, both sides pulled back troops from some of these friction points.

With the second bridge being built right next to the first structure, "we can safely assume it is meant for the forces to move between the north and south banks of the lake," the officer said. He said the bridge would likely allow for movement of all types of military vehicles, including tanks. "Why else will they make it," he said, adding that it will facilitate early response and deployment of mechanised forces.

Asked when the construction work had started, the officer said though the area was being monitored, they "didn't keep the timelines" for the second bridge as it was assumed to be a temporary structure. However, he said, work has been going on for a few months now.

The bridge is located around 20 km east of Finger 8 on the north bank of the lake, where India says is the point that marks the LAC. But by road, it would be over 35 km from Finger 8. The area has been under Chinese control since 1958, although it is just west of India's claim line, which, according to India, is its international boundary.

It is just east of a ruin named Khurnak Fort, where China has major frontier defence bases. The region is called Rutong County by China. China has a frontier defence company at the Khurnak Fort, and a water squadron further east at Bammozhang.

Kolkata



# 3 WEST BENGAL

## HC orders release of state govt staff's DA

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, MAY 20

UPHOLDING THE order of the State Administrative Tribunal (SAT), the Calcutta High Court on Friday directed the West Bengal government to release dearness allowance (DA) and corresponding arrears of its employees.

A bench of Justices Harish Tandon and Rabindranath Samanta said the allowance be released within three months.

The order said, "The petitioner is directed to release the dearness allowance and arrears DA to its employees at the rate to be calculated on the basis of All India Consumer Price Index average of 536 (1982=100) commensurate with their pay as per the ROPA rules, 2009, as directed by the Tribunal."

The court also said to get DA is a legally enforceable right of the state government employees. "Such right of the employees to sustain their livelihood with dignity has been fructified or elevated as

### The court also said to get DA is a legally enforceable right of the state government employees

a fundamental right as enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution," the ruling noted.

The division bench further dismissed the state government's argument that it does not have financial capacity to pay the due DA. The court also dismissed the government's policy of giving DA to employees posted at different places.

The state government, however, is mulling over to move the Supreme Court to challenge the bench order. Apprehending the same, petitioner on behalf of the state government employees also decided to file a caveat in the apex court.

General Secretary of State Government Employees Organisation Malay Mukhopadhyay said, "The confederation of state gov-

ernment employees affiliated to INTUC, a trade organisation of the Congress, is fighting the case for years on behalf of the state government of employees. It is a big win for us. For years, the state government had been refusing to meet our legitimate demand."

The opposition parties also slammed the state government on its stance on DA. BJP leader Samik Bhattacharya said, "It is obvious that the state government has to pay DA of state government employees. But this government was not doing this."

CPIM leader Sujan Chakraborty said, "The government can spend money on many unnecessary things but cannot meet a legitimate demand of the employees."

Ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Joyprakash Majumder said that the state government has no funds to pay DA because the Centre is not clearing the state's due of Rs 92,000 crore rupees. If the Centre clears the dues, the state government has no problem in meeting the demand of its employees."

## Daughter's teaching job: CBI questions Paresh Adhikary for over 9 hours

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, MAY 19

AFTER NINE and a half hours of marathon grilling in connection with the appointment of his daughter as an assistant teacher in a government-aided school, West Bengal Minister of State for School Education Paresh Adhikary came out of the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) office in Kolkata's Nizam Palace on Friday night. The minister, however, remained tight-lipped.

CBI sources said the minister was mainly asked how his daughter got the teacher's job and on what conditions he had joined the Trinamool Congress leaving the Forward Bloc in 2018.

Incidentally, the Calcutta High Court on Friday ordered dismissal of Adhikary's daughter Ankita as an assistant teacher and asked her to return the entire salary she earned since the date of her joining.

Adhikary and his daughter were booked under IPC sections 420 (cheating and dishonesty) and 120B (criminal conspiracy), besides sections under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

### SSC RECRUITMENT 'SCAM'

## High Court rejects minister Partha's plea seeking legal immunity from CBI arrest

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, MAY 20

IN A setback to West Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee, a division bench of the Calcutta High Court on Friday turned down his plea seeking legal immunity from the CBI arrest in connection with the ongoing investigation into the alleged SSC recruitment scam.

Chatterjee, the minister for Industries and Parliamentary Affairs, on Wednesday evening appeared before the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with the alleged illegal appointments of teachers in government schools after failing to get relief from the High Court and was questioned for over three and a half hours. A Division bench of the High Court on Wednesday upheld the April 12 order of a single judge bench that had directed the CBI to probe into the alleged illegal appointments made by the School Service Commission (SSC) between 2014 to 2021. Chatterjee was then the state Education Minister.

With the Division Bench upholding its order, the single bench of Justice Abhijit



The CBI on Friday sent a fresh notice to Chatterjee asking him to be present at its office for a second round of questioning next week. *Express*

Gangopadhyay on Wednesday again directed Chatterjee to appear before the CBI at the agency's Nizam Palace office before 6 pm and said that he expected the minister to "step down in the interest of justice". Justice Gangopadhyay also authorised the central agency to take the former state education minister into custody, if necessary. Challenging the single bench order, Chatterjee on Friday moved the division bench

of Justices Subrata Talukdar and Ananda Kumar Mukherjee, seeking legal immunity from being arrested by the central agency. However, the division bench refused to grant him immunity.

In his appeal, Chatterjee also pleaded before the division bench for the deletion of Justice Gangopadhyay's observation from his order that said "either Chatterjee should himself relinquish his ministerial chair or

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar must relieve him of all government posts to ensure a free and fair investigation".

To which the division bench made it clear that Justice Gangopadhyay's observation was just a recommendation and not binding on the state government or the probe agency.

Chatterjee then moved the single bench of Justice Gangopadhyay with the same appeal through his counsel senior TMC leader and advocate Kalyan Banerjee. However, Justice Gangopadhyay, too, turned down his appeal and directed Chatterjee to be made a party to the SSC recruitment irregularities case.

Meanwhile, the CBI on Friday sent a fresh notice to Chatterjee asking him to be present at its office for a second round of questioning next week. Sources said the date and time of the next round of questioning would be conveyed to the minister.

Notably, seeking legal immunity from being arrested by the CBI, Chatterjee had also moved to the Supreme Court on Thursday. The apex court is, however, yet to hear his plea.

## Court order & CBI probe give us hope: Protesting teaching job aspirants

**SWEETY KUMARI**  
KOLKATA, MAY 20

ON FRIDAY, it was a slightly different sight at the two sites where teaching job aspirants have been protesting for days now. Protesters were seen clapping and exchanging smiles with the Calcutta High Court ordering dismissal of Ankita Adhikary as an assistant teacher in a government-aided school and the CBI grilling her father and West Bengal MoS for School Education Paresh Adhikary as it was alleged that Ankita's appointment was illegal since it was done by changing the merit list. They are now hopeful of getting their much-deserved job that was "denied despite securing ranks on the merit list". "Original ranks were not followed and failed candidates were given jobs," they alleged.

"The merit list was published without the marks. That's where the corruption started. The commission violated the gazette by not publishing the full merit list — along with scores of written, academic and personality tests" post-interview. Second and third list candidates were called in for interviews without interviewing the first list candidates. The corruption in the recruitment of teachers by

the West Bengal Central School Service Commission has been at every stage," said Ilias Biswas, a protester. "We are happy that the faces behind this corruption are finally being exposed. We will be fully satisfied after joining schools," he added.

Soma Das, a blood cancer patient, who is known among her friends for her fighter spirit, too, welcomed the court's order. "Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay has called me after hearing that I am suffering from blood cancer and has been fighting to get a job. My father is unemployed, and my mother is an Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) worker. She somehow runs the family. When I had cleared this examination, there was hope in my family that things would now change for the better. But people with influential backgrounds and money took away our much-deserved jobs. I will fight till the last breath," said Das. "CM Mamata Banerjee and then education minister Partha Chatterjee had visited us and assured no one from the merit list would be deprived of a job, but that turned out to be just hollow words. We are still without jobs and have been protesting on the footpath for the past six years," says Shibani Kuitiy Roy.

## Political outfits protest, demand ministers' resignation

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, MAY 20

AMID THE CBI grilling of West Bengal ministers, various political outfits on Friday held agitations across the state demanding the resignation and arrest of the ministers for their alleged involvement in the SSC recruitment "irregularities".

Members of the All India Democratic Students' Organisation (AIDSO), an affiliate of the Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist), held an agitation near Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's residence in Kalighat, demanding the resignation of ministers Partha Chatterjee and Paresh Adhikary.



BJYM activists protest near the SSC office in Kolkata. *Express*

Police, however, removed the protesters from the area.

Chatterjee, now the

while Adhikary, Minister of State for Education, was quizzed by the CBI over his daughter Ankita's alleged illegal appointment as a teacher in a government-aided school. Both Adhikary and his daughter were booked under IPC sections 420 (cheating and dishonesty) and 120B (criminal conspiracy), besides sections under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Staging a protest near the SSC office in Salt Lake, BJP Yuva Morcha members raised slogans against the state ministers and demanded their immediate arrest.

In north Bengal's Cooch Behar district, Left workers took out a rally demanding the arrest of Adhikary.

On the other hand, BJP workers led by Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Suwendu Adhikari took out a 'Sankalpa Yatra' in Hooghly's Serampore, seeking to "establish democracy" in the state.

Speaking with reporters, Adhikari said, "I will not comment on the court proceedings or the ongoing investigations. But it is clear from the recent developments that the TMC government is corrupt from top to bottom. They denied people jobs and played with their lives. They must be brought to the book."

TMC workers, meanwhile, took out an 'Abhinandan Yatra' in Behala Paschim constituency, represented by state minister Partha Chatterjee, who is cur-

rently in a spot over the alleged scam, in the afternoon congratulating the Mamata Banerjee government for completing 11 years in office.

The rally was earlier supposed to be held as a protest rally against "targeting" the state ministers. But, following Chatterjee's appeal through a Facebook post, the rally was taken out to congratulate the state government instead. "Some people have made social media posts terming it a protest rally. I would request everyone to remove such posts immediately. Today's rally celebrates the 11 years of Maa, Mati, and Manush (mother, land, humans) government. No other issue should come up," he wrote on Facebook.

## Centre opposes ex-Bengal chief secy review plea concerning CAT proceedings

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

THE CENTRE has opposed before the Delhi High Court a plea by former West Bengal chief secretary

Alapan Bandyopadhyay seeking a review of the dismissal of his challenge to the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) transferring his application concerning the proceedings against him from Kolkata to New Delhi. In its reply, the Centre said that the review petition is not maintainable as there are no lawful grounds for review of the judgement passed in March and emphasized that the present proceedings are "nothing but an appeal in disguise to get the matter re-heard on merits".

Last month, Bandyopadhyay (petitioner) had urged a bench of Justices Rajiv Shakdher and Jyoti Singh to re-consider the dismissal order on the ground that he did not receive a fair opportunity to present his case before it was reserved for orders by the bench of then Chief Justice DN Patel and Justice Singh. He had argued that he did not get a "full crack of the whip" as a request to grant a "passover" i.e. to take up the case after some time.

SML ISUZU LIMITED					
Regd. Office : Village Aaron, Distt. Shahid Bhagat Singh Nagar (Nawanshahr) - 144 533, Punjab. CIN : L50101PB1903PLC005514, Website: www.smlisuzu.com, Email id : investors@smlisuzu.com, T: 91 1881 270255, F: 91 1881 270223					
EXTRACT OF AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022					
Particulars	Quarter Ended		Year Ended		
	31.03.2022	31.12.2021	31.03.2021	31.03.2022	31.03.2021
	Audited (Refer note 2)	Unaudited	Audited (Refer note 2)	Audited	
Total income	343.25	250.13	258.43	930.13	595.97
Net profit / (loss) for the period (before tax and exceptional items)	(11.41)	(25.79)	(20.00)	(100.27)	(133.37)
Net profit/(loss) for the period before tax (after exceptional items)	(11.41)	(25.79)	(20.00)	(100.27)	(133.37)
Net profit/(loss) for the period after tax (after exceptional items)	(11.42)	(25.79)	(20.12)	(89.76)	(133.49)
Total comprehensive income / (loss) for the period (comprising Profit / (loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)	(7.44)	(25.11)	(14.59)	(84.08)	(129.30)
Equity Share Capital	14.48	14.48	14.48	14.48	14.48
Other equity (excluding revaluation reserves)	-	-	-	147.01	241.09
Earnings Per Share (of Rs.10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations)					
1. Basic (Rs.)	(7.50)	(17.82)	(13.90)	(68.94)	(92.24)
2. Diluted (Rs.)	(7.50)	(17.82)	(13.90)	(68.94)	(92.24)
Notes:					
1. The above is an extract of the detailed format of Annual/Quarterly Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Annual/Quarterly Financial Results are available on the websites of Stock Exchange(s) (www.bseindia.com, www.nseindia.com) and on Company's website (www.smlisuzu.com).					
2. The figures for the quarter ended 31 March 2022 and the corresponding quarter ended in the previous year, as reported in these financial results, are the balancing figures between audited figures in respect of the full financial year and the published year to date figures upto the end of third quarter of the relevant financial year. Also, the figures upto the end of the third quarter had only been reviewed and not subjected to audit.					
For and on behalf of the Board of Directors				(Junya Yamashita)	
Place: Chandigarh				Managing Director & CEO	
Date : 20 May 2022				DIN: 09174162	

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**NATIONAL BOARD FOR HIGHER MATHEMATICS (NBHM)**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY**  
**MUMBAI-400 001**

Advt. No. 01-A/IMSC/2022 May 19, 2022

NBHM invites applications exclusively online for its Doctoral Scholarship Written Test to be held on Saturday, 18 June 2022. The test scores are also used by several institutions to screen candidates for admission to their PhD and Integrated PhD programmes. For details, visit <https://www.imsc.res.in/~nbhm/>

Sd/-  
**REGISTRAR**  
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**CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN**  
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Advt.: R/F.136/2022/355 Date: 02.05.2022

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online applications are invited from eligible Indian Citizens and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs) in the prescribed format through Website: [www.curaj.ac.in](http://www.curaj.ac.in) for recruitment on the posts of **Professor (07), Associate Professor (13) and Assistant Professor (08)** in various Academic Departments. Minimum Qualification, Experience, Reservation, Relaxation in Age, Service Conditions, Emoluments, Age of Superannuation, etc. will be as prescribed by the University/ UGC/ Gol, which are available at university website [www.curaj.ac.in](http://www.curaj.ac.in).

davp 21316/12/0002/2223 **Registrar**

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Electronics and Communication Engg.		•	•	•	•
Electronics and Instrumentation Engg.		•	•	•	•
Mechanical Engg.		•	•	•	•
Manufacturing Engg.		•	•	•	•
Biotechnology		•	•	•	•
<b>B.Pharm.</b>					
<b>M.Sc.</b>					
Biological Sciences		•	•	•	•
Chemistry		•	•	•	•
Economics		•	•	•	•
Mathematics		•	•	•	•
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General Studies		•	•	•	•

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- For admission to B.Pharm, the eligibility criteria is Physics, Chemistry and Biology or PCM.
- The student should have obtained a minimum of 75% aggregate marks in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics/Biology subjects in the 12<sup>th</sup> class examination, with at least 60% marks in each of the subjects and possess adequate proficiency in English.
- Only students appearing for 12<sup>th</sup> class examinations in 2022 or who have already passed in 2021 are eligible to appear for BITSAT 2022.
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Admissions will be made based on the merit position of the student's BITSAT 2022 score.

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- Students with a foreign passport and valid SAT scores are also eligible to apply for admissions to Pilani, Goa and Hyderabad campuses under the International Student Admission Scheme. For more details, visit: [www.bitsadmission.com/ois](http://www.bitsadmission.com/ois)

**Dean, Academic - Undergraduate Studies, BITS Pilani.**



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SS-37818M Lieutenant Kanad Bhattacharya, Sena Medal laid down his life while fighting against intruders during "OPERATION VIJAY (KARGIL)" in North Eastern Ridge near Tiger Hill while on attachment with 8 SIKH. In the truest tradition of the Indian Army, Lieutenant Kanad Bhattacharya displayed exemplary bravery, courage and leadership of highest quality in the presence of enemy while leading a patrol. In the ensuing fire fight number of patrol members including Lieutenant Kanad Bhattacharya received multiple gun shot wounds to which he succumbed. He will always be remembered and missed by all of us in the Army Ordnance Corps for his supreme sacrifice and gallant act.

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## Notice Inviting E-Tender

[ABRIDGED]

WBMD/JM/NIT-02(e)/2022-23

Memo No:- 1230/4PW - 15

Date:-20.05.2022

Tender Id:-2022\_MAD\_381525\_1

E-Tenders are being invited by the undersigned from Bonafide outsiders / others for supply of school benches (56 Nos.) in 07 different schools under Jhargram Municipality. Last date of submission of Bid 30.05.2022 through online up to 4.00P.M. The details of above tender may be seen at the office Notice board, Notice Board of D.M. Office, S.D.O. Office, SDIC. Office & Govt. e-Tender Portal <https://www.wbtenders.gov.in>

sd/-

Chairperson,  
Jhargram Municipality

## MANIPUR STATE POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED

Secured Office Building, 3rd Floor, A.T. Line, North A.O.C., Imphal West, Manipur-795001

## NOTICE INVITING TENDER

(e-Tender)

Imphal, the 20th May, 2022

No. 2/207 (3ph-PPM)/2022-MSPDCL-TECH/1960-66

Manipur State Power Distribution Company Limited (MSPDCL), a Government of Manipur enterprise, invites Sealed Tender for supply of 3-Phase Pre-Paid Energy Meter (complete set) with Pilfer Proof Box from Original Equipment Manufacturers through on-line submission of price bid.

Last date & time for submission of Techno-commercial Bids & Financial Bids (on line) and also submission of Techno-commercial Bids in Hard Copy (for Verification):	03.06.2022 upto 11.00 A.M.
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For details interested bidders may visit website [www.manipur.tenders.gov.in](http://www.manipur.tenders.gov.in) / [www.manipur.gov.in](http://www.manipur.gov.in)

Interested bidders may visit the website regularly and remain updated for any amendments/ modifications /Corrigendum etc on the above mentioned Tender. No separate notifications will be given for such amendments/ modifications /corrigendum etc. in the print media (Press) or intimated to the bidders separately.

Sd/-

(Ng. Subhachandra Singh)

Managing Director, MSPDCL

AXIS BANK	AXIS BANK LTD.	POSSESSION NOTICE
	A. C. Market Building, 3rd Floor 1, Shakespear Sarani, Kolkata - 700071	(For Immovable Property)

(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8 (1) of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002) Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Axis Bank Ltd., under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon the Borrower (s) / Guarantor (s) to repay the amount mentioned in the notice along with contractual rate of interest plus penal interest, charges, costs etc. within 60 days from the date of the said notice. The Borrower (s) / Guarantor (s), having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower (s) / Guarantor (s), in particular and the public, in general, that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said Rules on the date mentioned herein after.

The Borrower (s) / Guarantor (s), in particular, and the public, in general, are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Axis Bank Ltd., for an amount mentioned in the notice along with interest and penal interest, charges, costs etc. from date of demand notice.

The Borrower's attention is invited to the provisions of Sub Section (8) of Section 13 of the SARFAESI Act, 2002 in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name & Address of Borrower / Guarantor	Description of the Immovable Property (Secured Assets)	A) Amount Due as of Notice date B) Date of Demand Notice C) Date of Possession
1. Mr. Palash Mondal S/o. Madan Mohan Mondal S/o. Late Panchikar Mondal S/o. Late Panchikar Mondal S/o. Late Panchikar Mondal All of : Village - Harihar P.O. & P.S. - Pursurah District - Hooghly Pin - 712401	All that piece and parcel of land measuring about 3 Decimals, situated under Mouza - Harihar, J. L. No. 23, Khatian No. 1020, Dag No. 1118, P.S. - Pursurah, District - Hooghly, together with the building constructed upon the said land.	A) Rs. 53,886.74 (Rupees Fifty Three Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Six and Seventy Four Paise only) under the Loan A/c. No. 91730046706902, due as on 28.04.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 02.07.2020) and Rs. 8,05,248.11 (Rupees Eight Lakhs Five Thousand Two Hundred Forty Eight and Eleven Paise only) under the Loan A/c. No. 91730046706928, due as on 28.04.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 02.07.2020).

1. Mrs. Soma Jana S/o. Sunil Kumar Mandal S/o. Rabindranath Mandal S/o. Kedar Mandal 1. Mrs. Rabindranath Mandal S/o. Kedar Mandal All are residing at : Village - Raulara P.O. - Sodepur P.S. - Pursurah District - Hooghly Pin - 712415	All that piece and parcel of land measuring an area of about 4 Decimals, situated under Mouza - Stirampur, J. L. No. 24, R. Plot No. 3330, L. R. Plot No. 1967, P. S. & A. D. S. R. O. - Pursurah, District - Hooghly, together with the building constructed upon the said land. Boundaries : North - Pond, South - 5 feet wide Panchayat Road, East - Agri land of Amit Chakraborty, West - Agri Land of Manik Mohan Goswami	A) Rs. 10,69,703.63 under Loan A/c. No. 91503003128258 due as on 24.04.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.11.2020) and Rs. 12,94,217.11 under Loan A/c. No. 91503003128232 due as on 24.04.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.11.2020).
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1. Mrs. Mohua Ghosh W/o. Late Anindya Ghosh & the natural guardian of the minor son 59/6 Kantapukur 3rd Bye Lane, Ward No. 23, Howrah - 711011. Also at : 18/4, P.K. Roychowdhury 2nd Bye Lane, Howrah Corpn, P.S. - Shiphur B Garden, Howrah, Pin - 711013	1. All that one Flat being No. 102, on the 1st floor, measuring about 766 Sq. Ft. a little more or less super built up area, comprised in Premises No. 59/6, Kantapukur, 3rd Bye Lane, P.O. & P.S. Bantra, Howrah, under the right of user of the common areas. 2. All that complete covered floor space being No. 5, measuring about 548 Sq. Ft. a little more or less covered area, at the back portion of the ground floor of the building, named and called as "Partha Apartment", comprised within Premises No. 59/6, Kantapukur, 3rd Bye Lane, P.O. & P.S. - Bantra, Howrah, under Howrah Municipal Corporation, Ward No. 23, together with the right to use the common areas. 3. All that one covered space on the front side of the ground floor, measuring about 1080 Sq. Ft. a little more or less super built up area, comprised within Premises No. 59/6, Kantapukur, 3rd Bye Lane, P.O. & P.S. - Bantra, Howrah, under Howrah Municipal Corporation, Ward No. 23, together with the right of user of the common areas.	A) Rs. 2,04,97,648.38 due as on 24.01.2022 under Loan A/c. No. 91603006912281 (this amount includes interest applied till 31.05.2021) and Rs. 19,35,685.00 due as on 24.01.2022 under Loan A/c. No. 916030064077970 (this amount includes interest applied till 31.05.2021).
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1. M/s. S. B. Enterprise Jhnpura, Ward No. 14, P.O. & P.S. - Dinhat, Dinhat - 1, Coochbehar, Pin - 736135. Partner of M/s. S. B. Enterprise Jhnpura Road, Ward No. 14, P.O. & P.S. - Dinhat, Dinhat - 1, Coochbehar, Pin - 736135. Mrs. Anita Saha Partner of M/s. S. B. Enterprise Jhnpura Road, Ward No. 14, P.O. & P.S. - Dinhat, Dinhat - 1, Coochbehar, Pin - 736135.	All that piece and parcel of land measuring about 0.06 Acres, situated under Mouza - Jhnpura, J. L. No. 113, L. R. Plot No. 1549, L. R. Khatian No. 72471, and land measuring about 0.010 Acres, under Mouza - Dinhat, J. L. No. 108, Plot No. 9159, under Khatian No. 320891, under P. S. - Dinhat, District - Coochbehar, within Dinhat Municipality, together with the building constructed upon the said land.	A) Rs. 1,39,55,598.20 only under Loan A/c. No. 918030084960347, due as on 21.04.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 30.11.2020) and Rs. 21,04,2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 30.11.2020).
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1. Mr. Sk. Muktar Ali S/o. Sk. Israel S/o. Minu Bibi W/o. Sk. Israel S/o. Lirika Muktar W/o. Sk. Muktar Ali All are at : Village - Panchgachhiya P.O. - Fuleswar P.S. - Contai District - Purba Medinipur Pin - 721401.	All that piece and parcel of land measuring an area of about 4 Decimal, approx., situated under Mouza - Panchgachhiya, J. L. No. 469, Khatian No. 748, Plot No. 277, P. S. - Contai & District - Purba Medinipur, together with the building constructed upon the said land.	A) Rs. 21,82,689.69 only under Loan A/c. No. 917030072973226 due as on 23.12.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.05.2021) and Rs. 60,46,503 only under Loan A/c. No. 917030072973239 due as on 23.12.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.05.2021).
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1. Mr. Sek Saiddudin Ali @ Sek Saiddudin Ali S/o. Sek Arjind Ali S/o. Sek Saiddudin Ali S/o. Sek Arjind Ali Both of : Village - Panchgachhiya P.O. - Fuleswar P.S. - Contai District - Purba Medinipur Pin - 721401.	All that piece and parcel of land measuring about 10 Decimals, situated under Mouza - Purosoatampur, J. L. No. 68, L. R. Khatian No. 440, Dag No. 106, P. S. - Chandipur, A. D. S. R. - Hanchand, District - Purba Medinipur, together with the building constructed upon the said land.	A) Rs. 28,55,169.89 under Loan A/c. No. 91803009733489 due as on 23.04.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.11.2020) and Rs. 53,935.30 under Loan A/c. No. 91803009733502 due as on 23.04.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.11.2020).
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1. Mr. Rajiuk Uli Gazi S/o. Golan Gazi S/o. Aklima Gazi D/o. Kaachar Gazi Mrs. Fajila Gazi/Fajilabibi Gazi W/o. Kaachar Gazi Mr. Golan Gazi, S/o. Achir Gazi All are at : 61, Bansharimalkpur P.O. - Soladana, P.S. - Basihat District - North 24 Parganas Pin - 743429	All that piece and parcel of land measuring about 0.0300 Acre, situated under Mouza - Gulachandi, J. L. No. 99, Touzi Hat No. (20), L. R. Khatian No. 585 (New), 302 (Old) Plot No. 186, P. S. - Basihat, District - North 24 Parganas, together with the building constructed upon the said land.	A) Rs. 15,74,124.99 under loan A/c. No. 918030026047314 due as on 19.04.2021 (this amount includes interest till 01.11.2020) and Rs. 49,457.10 under Loan A/c. No. 918030026047327 due as on 19.04.2021 (this amount includes interest till 01.07.2020).
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1. Mr. Abdul Hamid Molla S/o. Karim Bob Molla Mrs. Amena Bibi Molla W/o. Abdul Hamid Molla S/o. Mr. Abdul Rashid Molla S/o. Karim Bob Molla All are at : Village - Devaghat P.O. - Kathur, P.S. - Basihat North Devote Bazar District - North 24 Parganas Pin - 743422	All that piece and parcel of land measuring an area of about 3.55 Decimal, situated under Mouza - Devoghat, J. L. No. 74, L. R. Khatian No. 283, R. S. and L. R. Dag No. 630, P. S. - Basihat & District - North 24 Parganas, together with the building constructed upon the said land. Boundaries : North - Property of Azgar Ali Molla, South - 4 feet wide common kaccha road, East - Property of Abdul Rashid Molla, West - Pond and property of Abdul Hakim.	A) Rs. 13,49,197.00 only under the Loan A/c. No. 919030077155682, due as on 23.12.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.05.2021) and Rs. 3,497.20 only under the Loan A/c. No. 919030077155618, due as on 23.12.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.05.2021).
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1. Mr. Subrata Kumar Bhunia S/o. Aswini Bhunia 2. Mrs. Minu Rani Bhunia W/o. Subrata Kumar Bhunia Both are at : Village - Durgachak Ward No. 8, P.O. & P.S. - Haldia, District - Purba Medinipur, Pin - 721602	All that piece and parcel of bastu land measuring about 10 Decimal, situated at Mouza - Hanubhunia, J. L. No. 133, Khatian No. 1619, Dag No. 3161, in the District of Purba Medinipur, P. S. - Nandigram, together with the building constructed upon the said land. Boundaries : North - 5 feet wide Moran Road, South - Dag No. 3161, East - Dag No. 2801, West - Dag No. 2603	A) Rs. 24,27,044.64 under Loan A/c. No. 918030091720170, due as on 27.10.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.05.2021) and Rs. 2,04,760.24 under Loan A/c. No. 918030091720206, due as on 27.10.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.05.2021).
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1. Mr. Moslem Haque S/o. Mojammel Haque @ Mojammel Haque 2. Jamirun Bibi W/o. Mojammel Haque @ Mojammel Haque Both are at : Village - Khatla Kalibari Marichbari, P.O. Khatla P.S. - Kotowali, Jalpaiguri, Pin - 736121	All that piece and parcel of land measuring an area of about 0.11 Acre, situated under Mouza - Khatla, J. L. No. 3990, L. R. Dag No. 4524, P. S. - Kotowali, District - Coochbehar, together with the building constructed upon the said land.	A) Rs. 82,27,089.46 under Loan A/c. No. 917030023182011 due as on 28.04.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.11.2020) and Rs. 72,42,831.81 under Loan A/c. No. 917030023182008 due as on 28.04.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.11.2020).
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1. Mrs. Baljit Niyogi W/o. Abhijit Niyogi 253, Block-B, Ground Floor, Lake Town P.O. & P.S. - Lake Town, District - Kolkata, Pin-700089 Also at PATIPUKUR TOWNSHIP, Ground Floor, Block No. A, 919, Lake Town, P.O. & P.S. - Lake Town, Ward No. 30, Kolkata - 700089.	All that complete finished self contained residential flat on the north-east side on the ground floor of the G+3 storied building having super built up area 830 Sq. Ft. more or less lying and situated at Patlipukur township of the Government being Plot No. 681, Block No. A, Sub-Division - Barrackpore, North 24 Parganas, P. S. - Lake Town, A. D. S. R. O. - Bidhanagar (Salt Lake City) being known, numbered and distinguished as Premises / Holding No. 470/54, at present 919, Lake Town, within the limits of South Dum Dum Municipality in Ward No. 22, at present Ward No. 30, Kolkata - 700089.	A) Rs. 8,62,828.00 (Rupees Eight Lakhs Sixty Two Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Four) only under Loan A/c. No. LTR031902042634 due as on 21.05.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 21.05.2021).
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1. Mrs. Baljit Niyogi W/o. Abhijit Niyogi 253, Block-B, Ground Floor, Lake Town P.O. & P.S. - Lake Town, District - Kolkata, Pin-700089 Also at : PATIPUKUR TOWNSHIP, Ground Floor, Block No. A, 919, Lake Town, P.O. & P.S. - Lake Town, Ward No. 30, Kolkata - 700089 Also at : P-681, Block - A Lake Town, South Dum Dum, North 24 Parganas, Pin - 700089.	All that complete finished self contained residential flat on the north-east side on the ground floor of the G+3 storied building having super built up area 830 Sq. Ft. more or less lying and situated at Patlipukur township of the Government being Plot No. 681, Block No. A, Sub-Division - Barrackpore, North 24 Parganas, P. S. - Lake Town, A. D. S. R. O. - Bidhanagar (Salt Lake City) being known, numbered and distinguished as Premises / Holding No. 470/54, at present 919, Lake Town, within the limits of South Dum Dum Municipality in Ward No. 22, at present Ward No. 30, Kolkata - 700089.	A) Rs. 98,242.00 (Rupees Nine Lakhs Eighty Nine Thousand Two Hundred Forty Two) only under Loan A/c. No. LTR031902629200 due as on 07.07.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 07.07.2021).
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1. Mr. Biplab Roy S/o. Kalipada Roy 2. Mrs. Ramarani Bain W/o. Biplab Roy Both are at : Gouranga Nagar P.O. - Aswini Nagar P.O. - New Town Kolkata - 700159 Also at Holding No. AS/407/B/L - E/10-11 Flat No. B, 2nd Floor, Bagdia Canal Side Road P.S. - New Town Kolkata - 700157	All that one residential flat being Flat No. B at on the Second Floor, measuring 1014 Sq. Ft. super built up area more or less situated at Mouza - Chandberia, J. L. No. 15, R. S. No. 176, Touzi No. 1072, R. S. J. L. R. Dag No. 15, R. S. No. 171, R. S. Khatian No. 276, P. S. Rajarhat, District - North 24 Parganas, Ward No. 29, Holding No. AS/407/B/L - E/10-11, under Rajarhat Gopaliur Municipality, (now Bidhanagar Municipal Corporation) Bagdia Canal Side Road, P. S. New Town (Formerly Rajarhat), Kolkata - 700157, District North 24 Parganas.	A) Rs. 20,27,561.00 (Rupees Twenty Lakhs Twenty Seven Thousand Five Hundred Sixty One) only under Loan A/c. No. LPR00050437179 due as on 21.05.2021 (this amount includes interest applied till 21.05.2021).
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1. M/s. Shree Jagannath Enterprises (Partnership firm) 147 Ukalmoni Gopabandhu Sarani, 2nd Floor, Barabazar Kolkata - 700007. 2. Mrs. Suman Agarwal W/o. Brajesh Kumar Agarwal BF - 28, Saltlake, Sector - 1 Bidhannagar CC Block North 24 Parganas Pin - 700064. 3. Sharda Retail Pvt. Ltd. Represented by one of its Mr. Brajesh Kumar Agarwal 147 Cotton Street Kolkata - 700007	All that apartment No. 7, at Block No. 1, on the 2nd floor, measuring about 86.10. Sq. mt. approx. plinth area, in HIGA-1 type, along with a car parking space No. BL-1/C-1, measuring about 12.50 Sq. mt. approx. situated at G-IV storied block at MATHKAL NIMTA PHASE-II HOUSING PROJECT, under Mouza - Dakshin Nimta, P. S. - Dum Dum, North 24 Parganas, under North Dum Dum Municipality.	A) Rs. 30,82,612.05 due as on 28.02.2022 under Loan A/c. No. 916030018314572 (this amount includes interest applied till 30.06.2021) only Rs. 76,15,317.73 due as on 28.02.2022 under Loan A/c. No. 9150300153648 (this amount includes interest applied till 30.06.2021) and Rs. 8,18,626.00 due as on 28.02.2022 under Loan A/c. No. 920060051716599 (this amount includes interest applied till 30.06.2021).
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1. M/s. Ashish Electric Co. 11, Ezra Street, Ground Floor, Near Poddar Court, Kolkata - 700001 2. Mrs. Sneha Lata Bansal Partner of M/s. Ashish Electric Co. W/o. Anand Kumar Bansal 3. Mrs. Anita Bansal Partner of M/s. Ashish Electric Co. W/o. Mohan Lal Bansal 4. Mr. Anand Kumar Bansal S/o. Shiv Charan Bansal 5. Mr. Shiv Charan Bansal S/o. Ratan Lal Bansal All are residing at : 39/12, G. T. Road (Uttar), P.O. - Bamungachi Dist - Howrah, Pin - 7111067 Also at : 114, Kavi Guro Sarani, Ward No. 17, P.O. & P.S. Sonarpur, Kolkata - 700149.	All that apartment No. 7, at Block No. 1, on the 2nd floor, measuring about 86.10. Sq. mt. approx. plinth area, in HIGA-1 type, along with a car parking space No. BL-1/C-1, measuring about 12.50 Sq. mt. approx. situated at G-IV storied block at MATHKAL NIMTA PHASE-II HOUSING PROJECT, under Mouza - Dakshin Nimta, P. S. - Dum Dum, North 24 Parganas, under North Dum Dum Municipality.	A) Rs. 60,51,918.72 only under Loan A/c. No. 916030013217146 (this amount includes interest applied till 01.12.2020).
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1. Mr. Arvind Singh S/o. Mr. Narendra Singh 77, Sultan Alam Road Ground Floor, Flat No. 002 Kolkata - 700033. Also at : 11B, Hans Pukur Lane Barabazar, Kolkata - 700007 2. Mrs. Anita Singh W/o. Arvind Singh 77, Sultan Alam Road Ground Floor, Flat No. 002 Kolkata - 700033. Also at : 11B, Hans Pukur Lane Barabazar, Kolkata - 700007 3. Mr. Rajkumar Ghosh S/o. Gobinda Chandra Ghosh W/o. Raji Kumar Ghosh Both are at : C-28 Kanungoye Tank No. 10, Salt Lake, Bidhanagar (M), C. K. Market North 24 Parganas Pin - 700091. Also at : Eastern Hari Mati Apartment, 1st floor, Flat No. 1, 463, N.S. Road, Ward No. 24, Rajpur Sonarpur Municipality, Kolkata - 743391.	All that Flat No. 002, on the Ground floor, North-East side of the building measuring more or less 700 Sq. Ft. super built up area, situated at Premises No. 77, Sultan Alam Road, Kolkata - 700033. P. S. - Sonarpur, District - South 24 Parganas, under South 24 Parganas, under Ward No. 89, within the limits of KMC, together with all the proportionate undivided impleable share in the land alongwith all easement, rights, liberties, attached with the said building.	A) Rs. 19,98,205.00 due as on 15.01.2022 under Loan A/c. No. PHR000502623823 (this amount includes interest applied till 21.03.2022) and Rs. 4,78,575.00 due as on 15.01.2022 under Loan A/c. No. LTR000502748520 (this amount includes interest applied till 15.01.2022).
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1. Mr. Rajkumar Ghosh S/o. Gobinda Chandra Ghosh W/o. Raji Kumar Ghosh Both are at : C-28 Kanungoye Tank No. 10, Salt Lake, Bidhanagar (M), C. K. Market North 24 Parganas Pin - 700091. Also at : Eastern Hari Mati Apartment, 1st floor, Flat No. 1, 463, N.S. Road, Ward No. 24, Rajpur Sonarpur Municipality, Kolkata - 743391.	All that Flat No. 002, on the Ground floor, North-East side of the building measuring more or less 700 Sq. Ft. super built up area, situated at Premises No. 77, Sultan Alam Road, Kolkata - 700033. P. S. - Sonarpur, District - South 24 Parganas, under South 24 Parganas, under Ward No. 89, within the limits of KMC, together with all the proportionate undivided impleable share in the land alongwith all easement, rights, liberties, attached with the said building.	A) Rs. 3,182,361.00 due as on 15.01.2022 under Loan A/c. No. PHR000504872569 as on 21.03.2022 (this amount includes interest applied till 21.03.2022).
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1. Rejjak Hossain (Borrower) S/o. Late Khaybar Ali Miah Village & P.O. - Bara Altabari P.S. - Dinhat District - Cooch Behar Pin - 736135. 2. Sahidul Haque (Guarantor) S/o. Ahmammad Ali Miah Village & P.O. - Bara Altabari P.S. - Dinhat District - Cooch Behar Pin - 736135.	All that piece and parcel of land measuring about 0.19 acres out of 0.27 Acres alongwith building constructed thereon and situated at Thak No. 608, J. L. No. 116, R. S. Khatian Nos. 1091, 906, R.S. Dag Nos. (Hail) 1143, 623, L. R. Khatian No. 3362, L. R. Dag No. 1340, under Mouza - Bara Altabari, P. S. - Dinhat District - Cooch Behar.	A) Rs. 15,79,329.50 (Rupees Fifteen Lacs Seventy Nine Thousand Three Hundred Twenty Nine & Fifty Paise Only) only under Loan account No. 911030017287748, due as on 28.11.2014 (this amount includes interest applied till 30.09.2014).
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Date : 21.05.2022 Place : Kolkata	Authorised Officer Axis Bank Ltd.
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## HC rejects TMC leader's plea on Assembly poll result

## EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, MAY 20

THE CALCUTTA High Court on Friday rejected the election petition of TMC leader Alorani Sarkar challenging the Bangaon Dakshin Assembly result in the 2021 Assembly elections on the grounds she has dual citizenship and cannot declare herself as Indian as the country's law does not allow it.

The single bench of Justice Bibek Chaudhuri said Sarkar cannot declare herself as a citizen of this country as she has her name on the voters' list in Bangladesh.

Rejecting the petition, Justice Chaudhuri also directed the Election Commission to take

e-Tender Notice		
P.O-cum-DWO, BCW & TD, Purulia invites e-tender of 2022-23, Bid closing time 6.00 PM.		
NIT NO.	Tender Id	Closing date
NIT-1(e)	2022_DM_381355_1	03/06/2022
NIT-2(e)	2022_DM_381357_1	27/05/2022

Details may be seen on website <http://wbtenders.gov.in>

Sd/- P.O-cum-D.W.O.

B.C.W, Purulia

## S. E. RAILWAY TENDER

E-Tender Notice Nos.:- (1) CKP/WEST/22-23-24, (2) CKP/WEST-22-23-25, dated 15.05.2022. Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.), South Eastern Railway, Chhatrapur for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tenders against open tenders for the following works. Manual offers are not allowed against the tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Sl. No. Name of work : (1) Hiring of one non-AC (four wheeler) Tata Sumo or similar diesel driven for the use of Sr. DEN/West/CKP with fuel and driver round the clock for 3 years. (2) Track maintenance work between JSSG-Sardagrah (Ch. On Ch. 50 km for the year 2022 under the jurisdiction of AGENT/SS Tender Value : ₹ 14,20,495.20 (for Sl. No. 1), ₹ 2,20,73,041.84 (for Sl. No. 2). EMD : ₹ 28,480/- (for Sl. No. 1), ₹ 28,480/- (for Sl. No. 2). Cost of tender : ₹ 0/- for each. Date of opening : 23.05.2022 at 11.00 AM. The tender can be viewed at website : <http://www.wbtenders.gov.in>. The tender/bidders must have Class-II Digital Signature Certificate & must be registered under on IREPS Portal. Only registered tender/bidders can participate in e-tendering. [PR-144]

## DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, SILIGURI&lt;/





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THIS WORD MEANS

INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

An idea the US is seeking to push among countries of the region. What’s in it, and where does India stand?

UNITED STATES President Joe Biden, who embarked Friday on an East Asia trip ahead of the May 24 Quad summit, is expected to launch his Administration’s Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) in Tokyo along with Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio. Biden first spoke about the IPEF at the October 2021 East Asia Summit, saying the “United States will explore with partners the development of an Indo-Pacific economic framework that will define our shared objectives around trade facilitation, standards for the digital economy and technology, supply chain resiliency, decarbonization and clean energy, infrastructure, worker standards, and other areas of shared interest”.

According to an “insight” paper put out by the US Congressional Research Service in February, the IPEF is not a traditional trade agreement. Rather, it would include different modules covering “fair and resilient trade, supply chain resilience, infrastructure and decarbonization, and tax and anticorruption”.

Countries would have to sign up to all of the components within a module, but do not have to participate in all modules. The IPEF will not include market access commitments, as the agreement is “more of an Administrative arrangement”. Congressional approval is not mandatory for this, unlike for trade agreements.

The IPEF is also seen as a means by which the US is trying to regain credibility in the region after former President Donald Trump pulled out of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). Since then, there has been concern over the absence of a credible US economic and trade strategy to counter China’s economic influence. China, a member of the TPP, has sought membership of its successor agreement Comprehensive

and Progressive Agreement on Trans Pacific Partnership. It is also in the 14-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, of which the US is not a member (India withdrew from RCEP).

The Biden Administration is projecting IPEF as the new US vehicle for re-engagement with East Asia and South East Asia. But IPEF may not enthruse all countries in the region equally as it comes with binding trade rules but no guarantees on market access. Japan has welcomed the IPEF, and Thailand has announced it would join the negotiations. Australia and New Zealand may also join. South Korea, Philippines and Singapore have expressed cautious interest.

Biden is expected to invite India to join negotiations for the IPEF when he meets Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the Quad summit. India is the only Quad member that has said nothing about it. On Thursday, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesman Arindam Bagchi said in response to a question: “This [IPEF] is an initiative of the United States. We have received details of this. And we are examining it.”

In a paper titled ‘Deciphering the IPEF’ in March this year, Prabir De of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries, a think tank of the MEA, wrote that India “may also be uncomfortable with the US high standards, and would like to avoid risks” and “may take time to consider joining, should an invite to join the IPEF be extended by the Biden Administration”. According to De, “some areas proposed in the IPEF do not appear to serve India’s interests”.

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

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US baby food crisis, and an old Act and a new operation to address it

RAHEL PHILOPOSE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

AMID A nationwide shortage of baby formula, US President Joe Biden has invoked a Korean War-era law to ramp up domestic production and announced that commercial planes would be deployed to import supplies as part of ‘Operation Fly Formula’.

The shortage

The US has been grappling with the shortage for the last few months. At a time when the pandemic had already disrupted supply, the crisis was exacerbated by the recall of baby formula by a major manufacturer, Abbott Laboratories, in the wake of reports of babies falling ill after being fed powdered formula from one of its plants. Almost half the baby formula in the country is bought under a government programme called WIC, and Abbott provides for about half the babies registered under this programme.

In February, Abbott announced it was shutting down its Michigan plant after a federal investigation was launched to assess why four babies fed the formula developed bacterial infections, two of whom died. Abbott says there is no link between the formula and the illnesses, *The Guardian* reported. Recently, the government began working closely with Abbott to reopen the plant. According to Abbott, it will take over a month before its

products are available again at stores.

The Act

The Biden Administration has invoked the Defense Production Act, enacted in 1950, and first implemented during the Korean War to help meet the demand for defence equipment. It allows the President to direct companies to prioritise supplying products for defence. Following its invocation, suppliers will have to prioritise the delivery of formula ingredients to manufacturers.

Both Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump had invoked the law also during the pandemic to ramp up the production of medical supplies and vaccines.

Operation Fly Formula

Under the new operation, cargo aircraft under contract with the Defense Department will be authorised to fly formula supplies from overseas to the US, the Associated Press reported. “Bypassing regular air freighting routes will speed up the importation and distribution of formula and serve as an immediate support as manufacturers continue to ramp up production,” a statement from the White House read. The directive came hours before the Congress approved a bill to expand access to baby formula among low-income Americans, *The Washington Post* reported.

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APURVA VISHWANATH  
MATHURA, MAY 20

ON THURSDAY, the same day when it emerged that a court-ordered videography survey of the Gyanvapi mosque complex in Varanasi had found debris of old temples and Hindu motifs on pillars, a district judge in Mathura allowed the reopening of a lawsuit on the ownership of a plot of land on which stands another mosque, built in the 17th century.

The Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura was built on the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb adjacent to the Krishna Janmasthan — believed to be the place where Lord Krishna was born — after demolishing a temple.

What has the Mathura court ruled?

District and Sessions Judge Rajiv Bharti allowed an appeal by the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Trust and other parties seeking ownership of the land on which the mosque is built. The dispute involves ownership of 13.37 acres, which the petitioners claim belongs to the deity Lord Shri Krishna Virajman.

The plea was dismissed by a lower court earlier, and subsequently a revision petition was filed before the district judge. The civil suit will now be heard by a lower court.

Apart from looking into revenue records, the court will also have to decide the validity of a 1968 “compromise agreement” between the Shri Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sansthan — the temple management authority, a registered society under law — and the Trust Shahi Masjid Idgah. It was under this agreement that the temple authority had conceded the contentious portion of land to the Idgah on which the mosque stands (*see box*).

What is the litigation so far?

At least a dozen cases have been filed in courts in Mathura by different petitioners. A common thread in all the petitions is a prayer for the removal of the mosque from the 13.77-acre complex, which it shares with the Katra Keshav Dev Temple.

Other pleas include a video survey of the mosque (which would be on the lines of the survey allowed by the Varanasi court at the Gyanvapi mosque), and the right to offer prayers on the premises.

The Allahabad High Court is hearing a public interest litigation by advocate Mehek Maheshwari demanding that the mosque be acquired by the government. Initially, the PIL was dismissed as the lawyer did not turn up for the hearing, but a Bench comprising Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Justice Prakash Padia revived it. It is expected to be heard on July 25.

In a separate case, the High Court on May 12 directed the Civil Judge (Senior Division), Mathura, to decide within four months cases on the Krishna Janmabhoomi issue, Justice Salil

AANCHAL MAGAZINE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

THE SUPREME Court ruled on Thursday that recommendations of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council only have persuasive value, and are not binding on the Centre and states.

The case before SC

A three-judge Bench led by Justice D Y Chandrachud upheld a Gujarat High Court order that quashed the levy of Integrated GST (IGST) on the component of ocean freight paid by a foreign seller to a foreign shipping line, on a reverse charge basis. The SC dismissed the Revenue Department’s special leave petition challenging the HC order that had gone in favour of taxpayers. (*Union of India and Anr versus M/s Mohit Minerals Through Director*)

Mohit Minerals had filed a writ petition before the HC challenging notifications levying IGST on the ground that customs duty is

levied on the component of ocean freight, and the levy of IGST on the freight element in the course of transportation would amount to double taxation.

The Centre argued before the HC that this is not unconstitutional as the tax is on two different aspects of the transaction, namely, the supply of service and import of goods.

On January 23, 2020, Gujarat HC quashed the Central notification levying IGST on importers for ocean freight.

IGST is paid by the supplier, but if the shipping line is located in a non-taxable territory, then GST is payable by the importer, the recipient of service. Ocean freight is a method of transport by which goods and cargo is transported by ships through shipping lines.

SC on federal structure

Federalism in India is “a dialogue in which the states and the Centre constantly engage in conversations”, the court said — and although the Constitution confers “the Union with a



The Shri Krishna Janmasthan-Shahi Idgah complex in Mathura. *Apurva Vishwanath*

WHAT THE 1968 COMPROMISE SAYS

ACCORDING TO court records, prior to 1968, several hutments stood on the 13.77-acre plot. Following the

settlement, tenants of the Idgah were asked to vacate so a new temple could come up. Boundaries were redrawn so both places of worship could operate simultaneously. A wall separated them; it was agreed that the mosque would have no window, door, or open drain facing the temple.

The petitioners say the agreement was made fraudulently, and is invalid in law. In any case, the deity was not part of the proceedings, and His rights cannot be extinguished by the agreement.

**THERE** was a dispute between Shri Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sangh and Trust Shahi Masjid Idgah and certain Muslims who claimed to be tenants of the Trust, or licensees. Many civil and criminal cases were pending.

**NORTHERN** and southern wall of Idgah’s “Kachchi Kursi” will be extended by Trust to the East up to railway line.

**TRUST** shall get vacated inhabitant Muslim Ghosis, etc. outside the wall on the North and South sides, and deliver the land to Sangh. It will have no concern with its ownership thereafter, and the Sangh will have no concern with the ownership of the land within the Northern walls.

**LAND ON** the West-North corner of Kachchi Kursi is of the Sangh. Trust

will rectangularise Kachchi Kursi; it will be deemed to be its property.

**BY 15 OCT 1968**, Trust will remove the rubble of stairs on Southern side which is subject of the litigation, and Sangh will have possession over that land.

**LAND OUTSIDE** the North and South walls will be delivered to Sangh by the Trust by 15 Oct 1968, before walls etc. are constructed. Trust will not affix any door, window, or grill in these walls or walls of Kachchi Kursi towards the Sangh, or open any drain or water outlet in that direction.

**SANGH WILL** at its own cost divert the water of Idgah outlets by fixing pipes and subsequently constructing a masonry drain. Trust will not object to fixing pipes in the walls of Masjid Idgah.

**SANGH WILL** deliver to Trust the land in front of the Idgah inside the North and South walls, from the railway land which Sangh is getting acquired.

**BOTH** parties shall file compromise in accordance with the Agreement in all pending cases, after fulfilment of all conditions.

**IN CASE** any party does not adhere to the conditions, both parties will have right to have it enforced through court of law or whatever manner it may be possible.

(SHORTENED AND EDITED)

Kumar Rai was hearing a case filed by Manish Yadav, who claims to be next of kin to the deity, seeking a temporary injunction against the Shahi Idgah from entering the premises.

Who owns the land in question?

The mosque was built by Aurangzeb in 1670 on the site of an earlier temple. The area was regarded as *nazul* land — non-agricultural state land owned by the Marathas, and then the British. Before the mosque was built, Raja Veer Singh Bundela of Orchha had also built a temple on the same premises in 1618.

In 1815, Raja Patni Mal of Benaras bought the 13.77 acres in an auction from the East India Company. The Raja’s descendants — Rai Kishan Das and Rai Anand Das — sold the land to Jugal Kishore Birla for Rs 13,400, and it was registered in the names of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Goswami Ganesh Dutt, and Bhiken Lalji Aattrey.

The Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Trust was set up by Birla, and it acquired the ownership rights over the Katra Keshav Dev temple. In 1951, the 13.77 acres were placed in the trust, with the condition that the “trust property will never be sold or pledged.”

In 1956, the Shri Krishna Janmasthan Sewa Sangh was set up to manage the affairs of the temple. In 1977, the word ‘Sangh’ in the registered society’s name was replaced with ‘Sansthan.’

What is the petition on which Thursday’s order was issued?

In 2020, Lucknow-based advocate Ranjana Agnihotri, along with six others, filed a plea before the Civil Judge (Senior Division) seeking the removal of the Shahi Idgah mosque from the temple complex. Agnihotri — who, incidentally, wrote a book called *SriRam Janmabhoomi Ayodhya Unpunished Conspiracy: Brutal Killing, Mischief and Interpolation in 2017* — claimed to be suing on behalf of Shri Krishna Virajman as “next of kin” to the deity.

The petitioners argued that the original *kaaraagar* (prison) where Lord Krishna is believed to have been born “lies beneath the construction raised by Committee of Management Trust Masjid Idgah” and that the “true fact will come out before the Court after excavation”. (According to legend, Lord Krishna’s parents Devaki and Vasudev had been imprisoned by the evil king Kansa, after it was prophesied that Devaki’s child would be his nemesis.)

In September 2020, Judge Chaya Sharma dismissed the plea on grounds of maintainability, holding that Agnihotri and the other petitioners did not have locus, and could not be “next of kin” of the deity when a temple management authority already exists.

The court also said that the temple and the Shahi Idgah had entered into a compromise in 1968, which had been subsequently formalised through a decree of the court.

GST and federalism: What the SC has ruled

higher share of power in certain situations to prevent chaos and provide security”, states “can still resist the mandates of the Union by using different forms of political contestation”.

“It is not imperative that one of the federal units (Centre or states) must always possess a higher share of power over the other units,” the Bench said. It pointed out that Article 246A stipulates that both Parliament and state legislatures have “simultaneous” power to legislate on GST — and recommendations of the Council “are the product of a collaborative dialogue involving the Union and States”.

Centre, states reactions

Union Revenue Secretary Tarun Bajaj said the GST law provides for recommendation, not a mandate. “It is a constitutional body... which consists of Centre and states which will recommend and based on its recommendations we have created our laws on GST”, he said.

Bajaj said that Section 9 of the CGST Act states that the tax rate decision should be

based on the recommendation of the Council, and problems could get compounded if a state decides not to accept the recommendation of the Council.

A Finance Ministry official said: “This judgment does not in any way lay down anything new insofar as the GST institutional mechanism is concerned, does not have any bearing on the way GST has been functioning, nor lays down anything fundamentally different to the existing framework.”

Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Palanivel Thiagarajan said he had highlighted the “rubber stamp” nature of the Council in his first remarks at the GST Council meeting in May 2021. Kerala’s former Finance Minister Thomas Isaac said the SC judgment “sets the stage for a fundamental revision of GST implementation and functioning of GST Council from the perspective of cooperative federalism”.

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Why textile and garment industries have sought a ban on cotton exports

HARISH DAMODARAN &  
GOPAL KATESHIYA  
NEW DELHI, RAJKOT, MAY 20

ON WEDNESDAY, Union Textiles Minister Piyush Goyal convened a meeting of cotton traders, millers and garment manufacturers. The topic: Spiraling prices of cotton, resulting in demands by the textile and garment industries to ban exports of the fibre. This comes days after the government on May 13 banned wheat shipments in response to rising prices due to a heat wave-induced production shortfall. Is there a case for similar restrictions on cotton exports?

How much have cotton prices gone up?

They have nearly doubled compared to last year. The average modal or most-quoted price of *kapas* (raw un-ginned cotton) at Rajkot APMC (Agricultural Produce

Market Committee) *mandi* was Rs 12,250 per quintal on Thursday, as against around Rs 6,300 this time last year. This was also way above the government’s minimum support price of Rs 6,025 per quintal for long-staple cotton varieties.

Prices have been rallying since November, when they crossed Rs 8,000 per quintal before scaling the Rs 10,000 mark for the first ever time in many markets by early-January. The marketing season for cotton extends from October to September, with more than 90% of crop arrivals already taking place by May end.

Why have prices risen so much?

Basically three reasons. The first is lower production. In 2020-21, India’s total cotton lint fibre output was 353 lakh bales (lb) of 170 kg each. For the current year, the Cotton Association of India (CAI), a Mumbai-based trade body, has estimated production at

323.63 lb. This figure, released on May 14, is lower than its previous estimates of 335.13 lb (made on April 9), 343.13 lb (February 25), 348.13 lb (January 18) and 360.13 lb (October 30).

The second reason is international prices. The Cotlook ‘A’ Index price — an average of representative quotes in the Far East destination markets — is currently ruling at 167 cents per pound, up from 92 cents a year ago. India is the world’s second largest cotton producer (after China) and third largest exporter (after the US and Brazil). High global prices have made exports attractive. Also, they have pushed up domestic prices closer to export parity levels, while simultaneously making imports more expensive.

The third reason is consumption. The state-owned Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), in March, projected total domestic consumption for 2021-22 at 345 lb, compared to 334.87 lb, 269.19 lb and 311.21 lb

in the preceding three marketing years. “Demand has significantly increased, as mills and other users were operating at sub-optimal levels in the past few years. Even during the pandemic, demand for bed-sheets and towels had zoomed, translating into higher consumption of cotton and yarn,” said SK Panigrahi, chief general manager (marketing) of CCI.

But the pressure on availability from lower production has already led CAI to revise downwards its estimates of domestic consumption to 320 lb, from its earlier January 18 estimate of 345 lb. CCI is expected to follow suit soon.

Why has production fallen so much?

The area sown under cotton in India has reduced from 134.77 lakh hectares (lh) in 2019-20 to 132.85 lh in 2020-21 and 123.5 lh in 2021-22. This has been largely due to the diminishing benefits from the genet-

cally-modified Bt cotton, which helped almost treble the country’s production from 136 lb to 398 lb between 2002-03 and 2013-14. Over a period, Bt cotton has become increasingly susceptible to pink bollworm and white-fly insect pest attacks, making it riskier for farmers to grow the crop. Besides, the government does not permit testing or commercialisation of next-generation transgenic breeding technologies.

This time, the crop was also affected by unseasonal rains in November-December, which affected yields as well as quality of the bolls from the second and third “flushes” (cotton is generally harvested over three or even four pickings, with the first one in October-November and the subsequent ones every following 20-30 days).

How justified is the demand for a ban on exports?

India’s cotton exports are actually pro-

jected at 40 lb this year, down from the 78 lb of 2020-21. At the same time, imports are likely to be higher, at 15 lb, from last year’s 10 lb. Moreover, on April 13, the Centre slashed the import duty on cotton from 11% to nil. Given the anyway lower exports and duty-free imports — which have for now been allowed until September 30, before the next marketing season — there may be no strong case for an outright ban on shipments.

Further, with domestic prices already rising to international parity levels, exports would slow down in the natural course. Advocates of an export ban say it would not impact farmers, as they have already sold their crop. However, a ban can also send wrong signals ahead of the planting season, which will take off next month with the arrival of the southwest monsoon rains.

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WORDLY WISE  
AN EGG IS ALWAYS AN ADVENTURE; THE NEXT ONE  
MAY BE DIFFERENT.  
— OSCAR WILDE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## UNWORKABLE

Jobs scheme will not offer a long-term solution to urban unemployment. Safety nets need to better conceived

AFEW DAYS ago, the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister released a report on the state of inequality in India. The report, prepared by the Institute of Competitiveness, provides a detailed examination of the existing disparities in society. Based on wage data from the periodic labour force surveys, it has pegged the share of the top 1 per cent at around 6-7 per cent in total income, with the top 10 per cent estimated to earn around 30 per cent. In comparison, the report has pegged the bottom 50 per cent to hold only 22 per cent of income. Alongside, it has also explored inequities in access to health and education facilities. While this is rather commonplace, the more concrete suggestions of the report to tackle the issue of rising inequality in India — these range from putting in place an urban equivalent of MGNREGA to introducing universal basic income — require careful consideration.

The proposal to introduce an urban employment guarantee scheme comes in the backdrop of the pandemic exposing the precarious position of workers, especially those employed in the informal sector in urban areas. Proponents of this idea have argued that not only would this provide employment during times of distress, but this would also serve as a channel to push funds through quickly in periods of stress. Several states have in fact been experimenting with this concept. Recently, the Rajasthan government announced a scheme for urban areas — the Indira Gandhi Shahri Rozgar Guarantee Yojana — on the lines of MGNREGA. However, there are several problems with replicating the rural employment guarantee programme in urban areas. First, such a scheme may simply encourage migration, which without the creation of the attending infrastructure, will only exert further pressure on the crumbling facilities of these cities. Second, demand for work under MGNREGA tends to move in line with the agricultural cycle. As such it is seasonal in nature. However, in urban areas, there is no such seasonality in either work demanded or unemployment, complicating the design of such a scheme. And moreover, many of the migrant workers are unlikely to have the requisite skills needed for regular jobs in cities. Third, it is also debatable whether the educated but unemployed workers will take up these jobs. Fourth, there are capacity constraints with the urban local bodies, which are likely to be the implementing agencies. More critically, what are the kinds of public works in urban areas? Lastly, there is also the question of financing such a scheme at the national level.

The proposal seeks to address the continuing employment and inequality crisis that plagues India. However, India's job challenge is structural in nature, owing in part to the absence of a labour-intensive manufacturing sector. A more prudent approach would be for economic policy to focus on boosting growth, lowering inequalities in opportunities, improving access to education and health, and providing pathways for upward mobility.

## SHIFTING GOALPOST

SC appoints a panel to run Indian football, but a turnaround in the field will take much more

AFTER DODGING ELECTIONS for almost two years, citing a pending court case, Praful Patel, the president of the All India Football Federation, has been red-carded by the Supreme Court. The apex court, on Wednesday, appointed a three-member Committee of Administrators (CoA) comprising retired SC judge A R Dave, ex-Chief Election Commissioner S Y Quraishi and former India captain Bhaskar Ganguly to run the federation's day-to-day affairs and finalise a constitution which will enable them to conduct fresh elections. The move effectively ends Patel's stint as the head of Indian football, which lasted for more than 10 years.

Two politicians, Priya Ranjan Dasmuni and Patel, have ruled Indian football for the last 34 years and neither can claim to have taken the sport forward. During his high-flying yet controversial tenure, Patel's personal stature in world football grew — he rose to become a member of world football's highest decision-making committee, the FIFA Council — but Indian football fell behind. The national team still huffs and puffs its way to beat the South Asian rivals, struggles to qualify for the Asian Cup, let alone the World Cup, and the domestic league for women and men isn't as robust as one would like it to be. Indeed, the football infrastructure has improved during the last 10 years and the sport doesn't depend solely on government grants but on most other counts, precious little has been achieved.

While it is expected that the CoA will set AIFF's house in order, the recent instances do not inspire confidence. The courts, in the recent years, have appointed administrators for multiple sports federations, including cricket, archery, table tennis and equestrian while the Indian Olympic Association, which is battling a similar case over tenure of elected officials, could go the same way as well. Despite this, there has been no marked improvement in the governance of any of these federations. Patel might no longer be the football chief but any hopes of an immediate change must be tempered.

## NOT EGGXACTLY

Kangana Ranaut's remark against Bollywood's nepotism is well-taken. But she needs to look for better similes

WHO CAN QUARREL with Kangana Ranaut over nepotism. Even her worst detractor, who is revolted by her pushing the victim card beyond its snapping point, would agree that Bollywood's enfant terrible does the right thing by excoriating the industry's hallowed circle for its casting choices and discriminating against outsiders. So, when Ranaut pitched into the recent debate on the north-south contest in the country's tinseldom with a dig at Hindi cinema's star kids, it seemed par for the course. "*Dekhne me ajeeb se lagte hain jaise uble hue ande,*" (they look weird, like boiled eggs) she reportedly said. Now that's no way to refer to your colleagues — however, untalented. Body shaming aside, Ranaut also seems to have got her ande ka funda wrong — the charms of the boiled egg seem to have eluded her.

Agreed, it's easy to go wrong with a boiled egg. From Julia Child to the newest cooking counsellor on the internet, advice — often conflicting — abounds on how to avoid rubbery whites, stuck-on shells or overcooked yolks. But ask those vendors with a pushcart or a tripod stand who are usually to be found close to bus stops, railways stations or even booze shops. For decades they have been getting the yolks buttery and sweet and the casing, pearly white. Sliced and tossed with chopped onions, coriander leaves, a dash of salt and pepper, and a bit of cumin powder, it makes for a snack that has revived the spirits of countless students, weary travellers and officer goers across generations.

Who can resist the pull of a hard-boiled egg with a spicy deep-fried coating of minced meat, dusted in flour and deep-fried till crispy? Call it by any name — Dimer Devil or Scotch Egg or the rich-gravy-laden Nargisi kofta. Or simply cook it in a pot with onions fried till brown, add tomatoes and your choice of spice and have them with appams, rotis, or parathas. Trust us, Kangana next time, you will look for a better simile for "weird" Bollywood babas and babies.



MANISH SABHARWAL

A SENIOR RAJASTHAN ruling party worker reacted to my asking about handling the unsustainable borrowing burden of their recent civil servant pension decision with, "that bill is only due in 25 years". My follow-up question about the injustice of 60 per cent of the Rajasthan government's budget going to 5 per cent of the state's population got "you don't understand politics". I guess questions about electricity in Punjab would get similar answers. The recent decision to deduct off-budget borrowings from state borrowing limits reminds chief ministers to be good policy ancestors by replacing steroids, painkillers, or placebos with sustainable medicine — five structural interventions that create high-paying jobs.

A modern state is a welfare state. Human lives were "nasty, brutish, and short" before there were democratic governments that could tax and borrow. In A Brief History of Equality, economist Thomas Piketty suggests that "the world of the early 2020s, no matter how unjust it may seem, is more egalitarian than that of 1950 or 1900, which were... more egalitarian than those of 1850 or 1780". But how the welfare state is financed matters. Angela Merkel warned about the unsustainability of Europe being 8 per cent of the world's population, 25 per cent of its GDP, and 50 per cent of its social spending. If Indian state governments could limitlessly print or borrow money, some would have finances resembling Sri Lanka's.

Adjusting state borrowing limits for their off-budget borrowings leads to transparency because they are routinely breached through vehicles for schemes whose bill comes due far in the future. The confiscation of future spending — interest payments crowd out expenditure and revenue expenditure crowd out capex — matters because our prosperity problem is productivity, wages, not jobs. Unemployment is a poor labour market metric because self-exploitation is baked into our three low-wage shock absorbers — farming, informal wage employment, and self-employment. But five structural interventions by state governments can create higher-wage jobs:

*Reduce regulatory cholesterol:* States control 80 per cent of India's employers' compliance ecosystem of 67,000+ compliances,



ARUN CHAWLA

THE ONGOING DISCORDS between the Centre and states over issues ranging from the allocation of financial resources to fixing of GST rates has once again brought to the fore issues pertaining to our federal structure, the resolution of which is essential for the country's growth.

The traditional approach to federalism that sees competition and cooperation at loggerheads is no longer relevant in the post-1990s scenario. Indian federalism today enables the Centre and states to function with both exclusivity and mutualism. The new approach has shown that a combination of co-operative and competitive spirit ensures the economic prosperity and welfare of the nation in an equal and equitable manner. It is undeniable that cooperation is key to the smooth functioning of federal design. However, if it is coupled with positive competition among the states, then the overall result would be large-scale economic development across the country.

Cooperation between the Centre and states is required at both vertical (between Centre and states) and horizontal (among states) levels and on various fronts. This includes fine-tuning of developmental measures for desired outcomes, development-related policy decisions, welfare measures, administrative reforms, strategic decisions, etc. Recent efforts in this direction, such as according greater leeway to states in the functioning of the NITI Aayog, frequent meetings

Chief Ministers ought to create high wage jobs rather than borrow money due to future generations

Only a fool would suggest that our chief ministers don't work hard in difficult jobs — elections are won on a complex cocktail of factors that I don't appreciate. But Nobel Laureate James Buchanan said any state had three versions — the protective state (police, rule of law, defence, courts), the productive state (common goods like roads, power, health, education, etc.), and the redistributive state. Too many state governments accept the status quo in the first two and 'innovate' in the third version. It's time to shift resources to the first two.

6,500+ filings and 26,000+ criminal provisions. Raising wages needs raising the population of high productivity firms that access capital, value talent, use technology, and care about corruption (transmission losses between how the law is written, interpreted, practised, and enforced). State governments that rationalise, decriminalise, and digitise their compliance ecosystem will reap lower corruption and higher formality.

*Fix government schools:* State government skill missions have learned that we can't teach kids in three months or three years what they should have learned in 12 years. The most powerful tool for social mobility and employability is free and quality school education. Interventions to fix government schools have primarily involved smaller class sizes, teacher salaries, teacher qualifications, and toilets. These are useful but not sufficient. State governments that undertake a significant overhaul of school performance management (the fear of falling and hope of rising for teachers) and governance (the allocation of decision rights around resources and hiring) will create an unfair advantage in human capital.

*Converge education and employability:* State governments have often extended and reinforced India's traditional walls between degrees and skills. This partition is meaningless for the new world of work, organisations, and education. States should set up skill universities that create qualification modularity (between certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas, and degrees), delivery flexibility (equate online, apprenticeships, on-site and on-campus classrooms), and pray to the one god of employers. Degree apprentices innovate at the intersection of employment, employability and education. State governments that remove barriers in their path will see their population of employed learners exceed full-time learners.

*Devolve money and power:* Cities drive productive job creation — New York City's GDP is higher than Russia's. Cities deliver social justice — the father of an IAS friend travelled from his village to Jodhpur for haircuts because the village barber refused to serve his caste. It took 70 years after 1947 for the budget of 28 states to cross the central gov-

ernment's budget. The combined budget of state governments now exceeds Rs 45 lakh crore, but 2.5 lakh municipalities and panchayats have a budget of only Rs 3.7 lakh crore. Governments that devolve money and power from state capitals to their towns will avoid the curse of megacities and create the competition that drove China's growth (they have 375 cities with more than a million people versus our 52).

*Civil services reform:* The infrastructure of opportunity needs better government schools, primary healthcare, policing, and infrastructure. State governments must sell their 1,500+ loss-making public sector units, cut civil service compensation to less than 40 per cent of budget spending, and replace expenditure with capex. Moving from outlays to outcomes needs a new human capital regime for civil servants via seven interventions; structure, staffing, training, performance management, compensation, culture, and HR capabilities. A tone from the top of "do less so we can do better" signals the will to create high-paying jobs more than ads.

Only a fool would suggest that our chief ministers don't work hard in difficult jobs — elections are won on a complex cocktail of factors that I don't appreciate. But Nobel Laureate James Buchanan said any state had three versions — the protective state (police, rule of law, defence, courts), the productive state (common goods like roads, power, health, education, etc.), and the redistributive state. Too many state governments accept the status quo in the first two and "innovate" in the third version. It's time to shift resources to the first two.

In a recent visit to my birthplace of J&K — my first after I got my domicile certificate — an ageing but wise resident suggested the political dynasties of J&K had forgotten the distinction between a jagir (ownership that allows you to do whatever you want) and an amanat (a temporary duty to hand over what you got to the next generation in better condition). He also suggested that nothing can make anybody's future better than a high-wage job. Irshaad, Haji Sahib.

The writer is with Teamlease Services

## THE BUSINESS OF FEDERALISM

It calls for states, Centre to cooperate and compete at the same time

of the prime minister with chief ministers as well as with chief secretaries and district magistrates, periodic meetings of the President of India with governors, and the functioning of "PRAGATI" to review the progress of developmental efforts have generated the requisite synergy between the Centre and states. The Covid-19 pandemic has served as a vital reminder that individual efforts are not enough to tackle national contingencies and there is a constant need to strengthen and renew the cooperative spirit in Indian federalism.

On the other hand, the competitive aspect of federalism can positively be harnessed by encouraging states to adopt each other's best practices. This positive competition can be ensured vertically as well as horizontally. Positive efforts of states towards attracting investment can create a conducive environment for economic activities in urban and backward regions alike. Healthy competition coupled with a transparent ranking system would ensure the full materialisation of the vast but least utilised potential of the federal framework. In this direction, NITI Aayog's initiatives such as launching sector-specific indices like the School Education Quality Index, Sustainable Development Goals Index, State Health Index, India Innovation Index, Composite Water Management Index, Export Competitiveness Index, etc. could prove to be a great contribution.

Healthy competition among states would

also help them innovate and generate the requisite synergies for local businesses. Adoption of best practices as well as implementation of reforms at the ground level would positively impact the ease of doing business for MSMEs. This would raise India's manufacturing capacity to the next level and radically transform India's growth story. The rise in economic activities would result in higher GST collection and thereby boost the government's welfare measures. Competition among states along with hand-holding by the Centre has the potential to enable the realisation of the goal of a five-trillion economy by 2024.

Central efforts toward synchronisation of cooperation and competition can be observed in the implementation of the 14th and 15th Finance Commission reports, which have greatly contributed to resource devolution. Recent reform measures in the form of the New Labour Code and other amendments/enactments by the legislature also exhibit this trend. The rising stature of the Indian economy on the world stage can only be strengthened by a tailored approach to cooperation and competition. The mandate to marry the two would inevitably be the collective responsibility of the Centre and the states. Any ideological differences between them will have to be inevitably put on the backburner for the great Indian federal structure to succeed and prosper.

The writer is director-general, FICCI

## MAY 21, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

### POLL TRENDS

THE CONGRESS (I) which wrested power in Kerala along with its allies appeared to be in for a jolt at the hands of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Himachal Pradesh, while trailing behind the CP(M)-led Left Front in Bengal. As counting progressed in the mini general elections covering four states and 22 assemblies, a struggle for supremacy was on in Haryana with the Congress (I) and the Lok Dal-BJP alliance sharing the honours. None of them had secured the lead. In Kerala, the Congress-led United Democratic Front notched up a tally of 77 in the 140 member house while the Left Front secured the remaining seats.

### INDO-CHINA IMPASSE

THE SECOND ROUND of talks between India and China came to an end in Delhi without the two sides arriving at an agreed plan for resolving the tangled boundary question. The officials have, however, agreed to meet in Beijing in a few months. An Indian government spokesperson almost conceded at the end that the two countries were at the "outer fringes of a maze" in looking for a solution to the boundary.

### EX-SPEAKER OPENS FIRE

THE SPEAKER OF the dissolved Haryana

Assembly Colonel Rao Ram Singh opened fire on a crowd that had gheraoed his house in Malina village in the Rewari assembly constituency while counting of the election results was on. A score of persons were injured. While details of the incident are awaited, the declaration of the results there have been withheld.

### UK'S AGGRESSION

BRITAIN HAS TOLD the commander of its navy task force to begin a series of landings and hit and runs in the Falkland Islands. The country's Defence Ministry has confirmed this report.





7 THE IDEAS PAGE

Nothing sacred about it

Now that an argument against the marital rape exception in the law has been raised, it may only be a matter of time before it is scrapped



SARASU ESTHER THOMAS

“SEXUAL INTERCOURSE BY a man with his own adult wife is not rape.” This proposition reflected in Exception 2 to Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code is also referred to as the marital rape exception (MRE) as it removes marital rape from punishable rape law. This was challenged in a petition before the Delhi High Court before a two-judge bench with Justice Rajiv Shakdher and Justice CHari Shankar. Both judges took very different stands — Justice Shakdher holding the exception to be unconstitutional and Justice Shankar upholding the exception, thus leading to a stalemate, which may be broken by a decision by the Supreme Court on appeal, or a law reform by Parliament. Until then the law may stand.

Both judges felt that the sexual autonomy of women cannot be compromised. Both found the idea of forcing the wife to have sex abhorrent. However, they differed on whether all non-consensual sex between a man and a woman would be rape. Justice Shakdher felt that one category of offenders would be immune to punishment if they committed an act, which has been clearly defined as rape in the rest of the section. He felt that, therefore, every woman subject to rape should be able to file a criminal case, regardless of the identity of the perpetrator. Justice Shankar, on the other hand, laid this open for debate on the basis that marriage is a unique relationship that may justify differential treatment, carrying with it a “legitimate expectation of sex”. He considered sex between husband and wife as sacred and immune from interference by allegations of rape, especially as denial of sex without reason could amount to cruelty under family law. He felt that it would adversely affect the institution of marriage if the husband were to be considered the wife’s rapist.

Both judges spoke about the difference in treatment between married and unmarried women and whether it would be constitutional. The test for whether there is intelligible differentia with the object sought to be achieved was variously answered with Justice Shakdher holding it to be unreasonable classification which is arbitrary and thus violative of Article 14. Article 14 guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the law. The Exception takes this away from a large chunk of women.

Justice Shankar, on the other hand, sees viable intelligible differentia between a married couple and two people who are not married. He reiterates, time and again, that the Exception clearly says that sexual acts between a husband and wife are not rape.

“My body, my right” is an integral part of the right to personal liberty for every woman. Not protecting personal liberty by refusing to punish a serious infringement violates a wife’s rights under Article 21. Right to life, dignity and bodily privacy are also arguments raised by the petitioners.

Preservation of the institution of marriage has been used in the past to turn a blind eye to violations of women’s rights in the private sphere. Justice Shakdher was firm that

the state does not have an interest in saving a tyrannical marriage. On the other hand, Justice Shankar felt that there was an obligation on the judiciary to preserve the marriage and to make all efforts to save the matrimonial bond. Family relations have been put on a pedestal.

In an analogy, Justice Shankar stated that “a father slapping a son is not a criminal offence, whereas a stranger who slaps a child may well be committing a crime.” However, assault and battery have no Exceptions in the Indian Penal Code. Violence against children is a crime regardless of the perpetrator. This is true for women as well. Seen against this, Exception 2 would be an anachronism.

National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data cited in Justice Shakdher’s judgment shows that married women face sexual violence in large numbers. They are 17 times more likely to face sexual violence from their husbands rather than from outsiders. Very few complain. This is true of domestic violence in general. When the problem is so widespread, not addressing this would be an omission violative of constitutional guarantees of equality to women as well as a violation of India’s obligations under The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

If marital rape is not considered rape, what remedy would a wife have? Justice Shankar acknowledges that she would have criminal remedies under various provisions including 498A. However, this is not “fair labelling” according to the petitioners. A rape

Family relations have been put on a pedestal. In an analogy, Justice Shankar stated that ‘a father slapping a son is not a criminal offence, whereas a stranger who slaps a child may well be committing a crime.’ However, assault and battery have no Exceptions in the Indian Penal Code. Violence against children is a crime regardless of the perpetrator.



CR Sasikumar

is after all a rape.

Meanwhile, other high courts have also considered this issue. In Gujarat, in the case of Nimeshbhai Bharatbhai Desai (2018) the court held that the MRE did not make the offence rape, but held that a woman could prosecute her husband for unnatural offences (Section 377). In Karnataka, in the case of Hrishikesh Sahoo earlier this year, the court said that the MRE was an unequal provision and that marital status should not be an excuse in cases of sexual assault. It did not interfere with the framing of charges of rape of the wife against the husband.

There is definitely a lot of chum as far as marital rape is concerned. The ideal situation is to have law reforms spearheaded by the legislature. This would address issues that have arisen such as penalties for marital rape. As of now, there is a lower punishment for separated couples and the incongruity of having a higher punishment for married men and a lower one for separated men has been pointed out. However, in the absence of legislative intervention, courts must step in and a decision from the Supreme Court on this important issue is hoped for.

The importance of challenging the MRE cannot be downplayed. Now that an argument to scrap the Exception has been raised, let us hope it is only a matter of time before we can call a spade, a spade and a rapist, a rapist.

The writer is professor of law, National Law School of India University, Bengaluru

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The lockdown breaches show just how out of touch the prime minister (Boris Johnson) has become. Tory MPs ought to remove him for their party’s — and the country’s — sake.”

— THE GUARDIAN

Everybody desecrates the past

We are all divided and engaged in a blame game. How long can this go on?



VAMSEE JULURI

FORGET IDENTITY. Forget grievances, sentiments, duties, rights. Forget pain, and then learn to look at pain again. It is naked and it is masked. It is in you and me, in rage and fear, in aggression and passivity, in truth, and lies.

Everybody is desecrating the past. Everybody is endangering the future. Somebody must change. But who?

Another storm front of images approaches through our phones. They spew contempt and violence. Till one day ago, the past, in each of our minds, was free of this fear. Till one day ago, the past contained one understanding, one memory, one anchor of truth. *Brahma murari surarchita lingam. Nirmala bhasita sobhita lingam.*

Today, that past is already gone, swallowed by memes of madness and hate. Poison rain by pixels. Hate speech is hate, not just speech, they say. Words are violence, they say. Yet, all it takes is one more pretext. You can hide your gods where you want, but we will get them; and you. That’s what the hydrant jokes said, really.

One day before that, another storm. This time, images of a drained out well. We fear a repeat of 1992. You call our wuzu fountain your shiva lingam. You steal the ground from beneath where we walk, kneel, wash and pray.

That too is a fear of a past being desecrated.

Historians! Cosmopolitans! Your turn now. But everybody desecrated the past. Ten thousand Buddhist temples that Hindus must pay for. Forty thousand is an exaggeration. More temples were “protected” (not even “spared”) by the temple-breaker than were broken by him. He even gave jobs to your measly ancestors, you ingrates!

Denial. Distortion. That too is a desecration of the past.

Meanwhile, the solution, for some: Our past came before yours. That statement is perhaps true. We see our present not as what your book says but as the love and labour of our elders who came before.

The so-called subaltern sings of his ancestors who made the sculptures and wove the garlands. The so-called savarna sings of his forebears who begged for alms and lived on the mercy of others. And both sing more and more these days of how their ancestors stood by the temples and the gods when the past-breakers came. And of how the gods were hidden behind the walls or under the soil or in the waters of rivers and lakes and wells. And how those that weren’t, became mere “idols,” smashed and studded into steps and pathways by celebrated *butshikans* (idol breakers).

That sense of the past is now strong, and getting stronger than ever.

Does it endanger the future? Perhaps. But does it have to? That is the question.

Divided memories, divided sensibilities, and divided fears for the future. Us or them. Is that really the only way?

You were so divided, never a nation. We united you. 1991 Act. Status Quo. If your god was in the rubble as old war booty on August 15, 1947, so it shall be forever.

That’s one way to preach unity. But we were always one! We fought not as Hindus versus Muslims but as Indians versus... um, Foreigners.

That’s another way to preach unity. *Sabka saath, sabka vikas!*

Even our pleas for unity are divided. That is the truth.

The past is desecrated. The present is divided. But the future is neither.

Look at how united we are in where we are taking this planet. Look at how united we are in thinking, and behaving, apocalyptically, like the End of the World didn’t happen as God planned it so we will all play God now and destroy it anyway.

We will unleash bioterrorist weapons in the form of bulldozers and lorries and cars on the planet. We will send forth swarms of invisible viruses to destroy you. We will devour anything alive that isn’t protected by human rights laws (and some of those too). We will build towers of communication infrastructure to wreck your minds and your relationships with your families, friends and communities, indeed, with reality itself.

We will still call You the Infinite One but work as if finitude is our religion and way of life.

Poison and propaganda. Everybody is endangered in the end. We argue merely over who’s to blame.

Somebody must change. But who? How?

We will not know the answers as long as we continue to dwell in our own limited, divided, divisive ideas of the past and the present. We will not know if we sequester our past into arbitrarily relevant and irrelevant zones as if all that was *jahil* (uncivilised) anyway and needn’t be considered a part of others’ living memories anymore.

We will not know as long as we remain mere bodies programmed to “own” the planet rather than live for a while on it as children among mothers.

We will not know a thing, the longer our schools and media and political systems make us forget what it is to know others as elders and children, as custodians of duties existing in time and time alone. We are being mistaught every day.

The past is desecrated because we don’t see there are a trillion memories all around us, and even inside us. We don’t see our parents when they are here as ourselves in the future till it’s too late. We don’t see our children when we are still here as our chance to learn from our ancestors suddenly again, a second chance. We forget time, and live only in space, in the present. We see Hindus and Muslims, Indians and foreigners, us and them. And we see not one of these things with truth or love because we have lost our way with both, in seeing even me and you as me and you. *Tat pranamami sadashiva lingam.*

The writer is professor of media studies, University of San Francisco

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BLIND CONGRESS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Exit Lounge’ (IE, May 20). The reasons given by Hardik Patel for leaving the Congress are all too familiar. Everyone knows what ails the grand old party and yet, the leadership persists with an ostrich-like attitude. State leaders are hardly given a free hand and the high command, aloof decides the course of things. Hardik Patel’s exit will have repercussions for the Congress in the coming state elections, but on a losing spree for a long long time, the once formidable party, hardly seems to be bothered.

Vijai Pant, Hampur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Exit Lounge’ (IE, May 20). The response, or its lack, of Congress leadership in event of exits such as that of Hardik Patel from the party, carries the ring of the words of a sports officer in a university in the capital to defaulting players. He would warn them with comeuppance, “Play, play, not play; what goes your goes, not my father’s pocket goes”. One can imagine Rahul Gandhi would have mumbled similar words. The leadership of the party know better than anyone else the craft of governance in a professional manner, in an NGO framework.

G Javaid Rasool, Lucknow

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Exit

Lounge’ (IE, May 20). Hardik Patel and Sunil Jakhar jumping the Congress’s sinking ship is not a bolt from the blue. Both had been overtly voicing their displeasure on the party’s sorry state of affairs for some time. Every desertion is rationalised as “good riddance” by the Congress instead of leading to introspection. The key criterion for the Congress central leadership is that for a party member is sycophancy.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

FIX THE LAW

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘A regressive exception’ (IE, May 20). Traditionally, marriages were considered a social institution and sacrosanct union of two individuals coming of age, that comes with its own set of moral obligations. Notable among them is the reasonable expectation of sex in a marriage and an obligation to fulfil that expectation. Marriage as an institution has evolved over the centuries as per the needs and convenience of the people and society. The notion of consent in perpetuity is inconsistent with an era where individual agency is considered somewhat paramount. The abuse of a legal provision that criminalises marital rape could be a possibility, but that cannot be a ground for not acknowledging the crime and denying justice to its victims.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Barasat



THOMAS MATHEW

Avoidable gambit

The West must desist from waging a proxy war against Russia

IN THE history of the world, the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis was the closest mankind came to Armageddon. Today, the unpredictability of the Ukraine war may take the world closer than ever to doomsday. It may still appear to be an unlikely scenario, but the world could be edging towards it.

In 1962, the two superpowers, the USSR and the US, were led by leaders who, in retrospect, make the present bunch look like pygmies. They de-escalated the crisis in 13 days with both sides showing restraint. To avoid risking direct confrontation, the Soviets even diverted their ships when the US quarantined the zone and later shipped home their offensive weapons from Cuba. In return, the US promised not to invade the island nation and quietly withdrew the nuclear-armed missiles that it had installed in Turkey.

Today, the danger is that Russia, a nuclear superpower, is at war and the US has pulled all stops in a much-publicised attempt to “inflict pain” as its president, Joe Biden, said in his first State of the Union Address. The West has also employed a repertoire of crippling economic sanctions that the Vladimir Putin said was akin to “an act of war”. Putin’s warning that if any nation tries to “hinder” Russia or threaten it, Moscow’s “response will be immediate”, leading to consequences “never faced” by the intervener, has been largely ignored. Putting his nuclear forces on “special combat readiness” also had little effect. Recognising the effective-

ness of the Western arms supply, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov declared that any cargo carrying weapons to Ukraine could become its “legitimate targets”.

Biden and the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson have become dangerously confrontational. The former’s public call for a regime change in Moscow was at best an ill-advised provocation. Calling Putin a “criminal” has earned the US nothing except exposing many US presidents to being similarly described. Further, it has strengthened the Kremlin and pushed the Russian people to rally around their embattled president. As French President Emmanuel Macron remarked, “personal insults” can only inflame the situation.

It appears that the US is intent on delivering Russia the same blow it landed on its predecessor, the USSR, after its intervention in Afghanistan in 1979. This policy is dangerous. It may lead to the situation spinning out of control.

The US, Canada, Australia, France, Netherlands and a host of other nations are shipping large quantities of sophisticated and heavy weapons capable of seriously degrading Russia’s less sophisticated large artillery guns, their mainstay in the war. The guns supplied could become more lethal as the US is directing their fire. In addition, they are providing real-time intelligence and engaging in several secret ways to wreak maximum destruction of Russian forces. London on its part

is provoking Ukraine to strike inside Russia.

If the Russian military suffers heavy damage, Moscow could have a closer look at the US policy undergirding the “National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2002”. It reasons that it would be an act of “self-defence,” to “act against” “emerging threats before they are fully formed.”

George W Bush justified the invasion of Iraq in 2003 asserting that it has the right of pre-emptive military action and declared, “We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.” If Moscow adopts this doctrine, then it could claim the right to take out weapons arriving from neighbouring NATO countries using its hypersonic missiles. It could even use tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

The Western alliance is taking a grave risk in assuming that Russia will not use such weapons and will continue to suffer and eventually withdraw. To anyone who knows the Russian psyche, that is a fanciful hope. Moscow had dropped its no-first-use policy in 1993 to counter groupings deploying large conventional forces against it. Moscow could be pushed to use the same logic that the US did in dropping nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and that it seriously contemplated using at least on two occasions when

it was staring at defeat — during the Korean War and in Vietnam.

Many have got Putin wrong many times. Many believed that his pleas for NATO to stop expanding further east and Lavrov’s pleas that Moscow was reaching “boiling” point contained no threat. It had and Putin went to war.

Tactical nuclear weapons with a yield of 0.1 to 1 kiloton were first developed by the US and NATO deployed it in the 1950s. Deceptively named rockets like Honest John carried these weapons that had varying yield up to 20 kilotons (the bomb dropped in Hiroshima had a 16-kiloton yield).

Scholars like Henry Kissinger, former US secretary of state, and Robert Osgood, professor and adviser to US president Ronald Reagan, argued that the West could take on the Soviet Union using these weapons in “limited nuclear wars” without resorting to the “threats of massive retaliation”.

The effectiveness of this doctrine has, however, not been tested. It would be unwise on the part of Biden and the Western alliance to escalate the Ukrainian crisis by waging a proxy war with a nuclear superpower that suffers conventional arms asymmetry. It would not be prudent to test the limits of Putin’s resolve.

Thomas Mathew is a retired civil servant who has served in the Indian Defence Ministry, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis and writes on security issues









DHAAKAD ★★★★★

Director: Razneesh Ghai Cast: Kangana Ranaut, Arjun Rampal, Divya Dutta, Sharib Hashmi, Saswata Chatterjee

# Throwing the Perfect Punch

SHALINI LANGER

A SLICK action film, that is also coherent, is a hard nut to crack for even Hollywood. *Dhaakad* then is an achievement, in getting those two things right, in chucking the melodrama for spare blood-letting, in heading for the relatively new location of Bhopal and its surroundings, in getting the mood right by dipping into the coal mines there, and even giving us a glimpse of the life in that city with its mixed communities, which seamlessly live together. It should not be this rare, but it is.

And while much has been said about *Dhaakad* (a formidable name indeed) being India's rare woman-centric action film, there are actually two women who do most of the heavy-lifting here, and pretty effortlessly at that — Kangana Ranaut, as the protagonist Agent Agni, and Divya Dutta as Rohini, the brain, financial mind, emotional support and much more of a criminal ring dealing in coal and trafficking of women.

The two confrontations between Agni and Rohini are the film's highlights, even though *Dhaakad* makers are clearly going for Agni's fighting abilities, and Rudraveer's villainy, played to hamming over-effect by Arjun Rampal. We are getting used to this off-kilter Rampal now, covered in tattoos, rings, fur-lined long coats and experimental hair styles.

But the surprise here is Ranaut, who is very sombre and very understated as the agent running from a tortured past — unlike how the film promotions might have suggested, and unlike how the actor seems to see herself lately. Dutta, of course, is just good, period. And her Rohini is no exception — her role of a former prostitute, who now runs the business with an iron hand, with little mercy and lot of cunning, suggesting layers and layers which deserve a

film of their own. Now here is a *kothewali* who gets her hands dirty, talks dirty, and knows dirty, unlike the pristine purity of a Kathiawadi.

The simple, uncomplicated storyline is that Agni became an agent after a shocking incident from childhood, when her parents were shot by a man whom she has a faint memory of. Now, she is leading the agency's investigation of a trafficking ring running out of central India, and reaching up to Budapest (that keeps popping up almost like a backdoor to Bhopal) and a Sheikh with origins in the Middle East.

Agni leads the search from Budapest to Bhopal and beyond, helped along by a local Bhopal resident Fazal (Sharib Hashmi, of *The Family Man* fame), Agni immediately finds herself pulled to his mother-less daughter Zaira, for obvious reasons.

However, what seemed like a quick extraction and termination operation turns out to be not so simple, as Rudraveer and Rohini unleash carnage, helped by informers of their own.

When the film gets into twists-and-turns territory, and becomes a one-woman revenge saga, *Dhaakad* offers no surprises. We know that whatever you might throw at Agni, she will bounce back, however improbable or incredible that is.

If the film's first 20-odd minutes are rip-offs of Hollywood's assembly line action thrillers, where people kill and die before you have even settled down for your popcorn, *Dhaakad*'s last 20 are an exercise in overkill.

That the middle holds so well is a tribute to its actors, its efforts at giving us some human characters, and its story that trots along nicely (credit to debutant director and co-screenwriter Razneesh Ghai). At one place we come to know of a medical condition where a person's heart being a bit more to the right than normal saves their life. *Dhaakad* has its in the right place.

## STREAMING WATCH LIST



AHED'S KNEE

MUBI

*Ahed's Knee* is director Nadav Lapid's fourth feature and has been called his "most radical film yet". An Israeli filmmaker in his mid-40s arrives in a remote village to present one of his films. There, he meets an officer from the Ministry of Culture and finds himself fighting for his freedom and his mother's life. Tel-Aviv-born Lapid wrote the story soon after the death of his own mother. It offers a sharp critique of the censorship and violence instigated by Israel and repressive governments across the world. The film received the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival last year.



EMMA

NETFLIX

If you are a Jane Austen fan, this screen adaptation of her 1815 novel can prove to be a lovely weekend watch. This 2020 version of the popular novel *Emma*, directed by American photographer Autumn De Wilde, has Anya Taylor-Joy (of *The Queen's Gambit* fame) play the titular role. The romantic movie recreates the fascinating Georgian society in England, as Emma goes about matchmaking and meddling in others' affairs with charming naivety and confidence.

LOVE DEATH+ROBOTS: VOLUME 3

NETFLIX

This animated anthology, based on the 1981 Gerald Potterton film *Heavy Metal*, features stand-alone episodes of less than 20 minutes each. The Netflix synopsis announces that "terrifying creatures, wicked surprises and dark comedy converge in this NSFV anthology of animated stories presented by Tim Miller and David Fincher". The series has previously told fascinating stories, such as a home-cleaning unit turning lethal and three robots touring a post-apocalyptic city.



ESCAPEE LIVE

DISNEY+HOTSTAR

Directed by Siddharth Kumar, *Escapee Live* is a fictional story that is likely to seem true. It features a bunch of content creators with one goal — to emerge victorious in a life-changing competition announced by the hottest new app in the country called Escapee Live.



NIGHT SKY

AMAZON PRIME VIDEO

*Night Sky* is a story about a couple who discover a chamber buried in their backyard that leads to a strange planet. When a young man arrives, their quiet existence is upended and the mysterious chamber turns out to be much more than they imagined. The cast features JK Simmons, Sissy Spacek, Chai Hensen and Kiah McKittrick.

COMPILED BY ALAKA SAHANI

## Comfort of Familiarity

PANCHAYAT 2

Director: Deepak Kumar Mishra Cast: Jitendra Kumar, Neena Gupta, Raghubir Yadav, Faisal Malik, Chandan Roy Streaming on: Amazon Prime Video

ALAKA SAHANI

WHAT MAKES a place home? The easiest answer, of course, is that home is where the heart is. What endears a heart enough to convert a stand-alone house with dusty files stacked around and a makeshift kitchen, into a 'home' are the people who touch your life with their warmth and become part of your life.

The first season of *Panchayat* ended with Abhishek Tripathi (Jitendra Kumar) — who reluctantly moves to Phulera village as the secretary to the local Pradhan Manju Devi (Neena Gupta) — trying to fall in love with the place by taking a top-angle view of it from a water tank. Just when he thinks there is nothing spectacular about it, he meets the Pradhan's young daughter Rinky (Sanvikaa), sipping tea from a flask as she admires the view. The second season opens with Tripathi following suit.

This time, Tripathi seems to have settled into the humdrum of village life, even though he still dreams of doing MBA. But he is more sure-footed as he navigates village politics, rivalries and sticky situations. Manju Devi,



too, is more assured of her position as the Pradhan even though her husband, Brij Bhushan Dubey (Yadav), still runs the show on her behalf.

What makes Tripathi's life in Phulera easier and gives the show its emotional core is the friendship that he shares with his assistant Vikas (Roy), the deputy Pradhan Prahlaad (Faisal Malik) and Dubey, forming a merry quartet. This lends a certain fuzziness to the show. There is also the promise of a budding romance between Tripathi and Rinky.

The performances remain the show's selling point. That apart, the strength of the series lies in the writing. *Panchayat* gained popularity with its astute perception of rural life, with all its eccentricities. This season (with eight episodes) digs deeper by adding more details and subtle humour to the narrative.

The season has scaled up the show's concerns. The seemingly idyllic life in Phulera is shaken when a tragedy strikes. This makes the show shed its signature feel-good vibe, unexpectedly, even as it brings the community closer.

But there are a few other incipent, such as the local MLA taking umbrage to Tripathi calling his bluff, that shakes the village out of its complacent and, at times, naive ways.

Looks like, in the upcoming season, *Panchayat*'s storyline might veer into some unfamiliar territories. This shouldn't compromise its positive tenor and spirit.

## No Dark Secrets Unravelling

BHOOL BHULAIYAA 2

★★

Director: Anees Bazmee Cast: Kartik Aaryan, Tabu, Kiara Advani, Rajpal Yadav, Sanjay Mishra, Ashwini Kalsekar

THERE IS a maze in *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2*, and one that is never satisfactorily resolved. How are the many, many people who inhabit it, young and old, and those rendered of indeterminate age, courtesy the get-ups, related to each other? Even Monjulika, the ghost, back after 15-reel years — who picks up right up from where she left off, skulking un-lost through a monstrous and dimly lit *haveli* — may struggle to sort that puzzle.

Not that director Anees Bazmee wants you to stress your mind too much. The patriarch, *chacha*, *bhatija*, *bhabhi*, *behen*, etc etc, are just really around to murder some spoken Rajasthani and an impressive amount of Bengali between them — when they are not being terrorised by Monjulika themselves, that is.

Tabu is the pivot of the family, and an impressive pivot she makes, towering regally over others and sundry. Even a blood-curdling encounter with the ghost doesn't stop her from appearing in yet another immaculate sari. The Rajasthan heat doesn't seem to affect her many velvety choices.

Where do Kartik Aaryan and Kiara Advani feature, you ask? Since you ask, well he, a.k.a Roohan, is the kind of son of a Delhi tycoon, educated in Doon School, who, sans a job, takes off to fly kites in Gujarat and eat *paan* in Benaras as the fancy takes him. Such gallivanting one day brings him to her, a.k.a Reet. She is the kind of rich girl who rebels against

her traditional family to study medicine, and then never gives her "four years of hard work" any more thought.

Roohan and Reet meet at some snow-clad tourist place, and after a brief detour to a music festival populated almost exclusively by white men and women, are such good friends that when she decides to play dead — so that the man selected for her as her fiancé would marry her sister instead — he plays along.

Roohan, in fact, doesn't just land up at Reet's large, Monjulika-haunted *haveli*, with her in tow in secret as she is officially "dead", but also takes on not just Monjulika but the souls of all dead villagers. The reason being that the villagers fall unquestioningly for his lie that he is a medium with extraordinary sensory powers.



The biggest laughs come from the kind of slight swipes that you wouldn't expect in a Bazmee film. A *pandit* calling out for customers pleading "acheche din aane vale hair", and later, while running up and down the *haveli* in one of those headless-chicken searches, throwing in: "Hum leker henge". He stops, right there, but everyone gets the joke. If only the film got it: less is more. SL

## MUSIC THIS WEEK

## No Emotional Heft



SUANSHU KHURANA

THE MUMBAI version of *Modern Love* — John Carney's American series based on *The York Times* columns — is a six-part series that has its characters navigating their worlds in the

maximum city instead of New York. To support the six stories in the anthology — the makers got six composers into different studios and the result is a seven-track album that could have hit it out of the park. After all, there are names like Vishal Bhardwaj, Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy and Ram Sampath on

the list. But barring a couple of tracks, such a vast team — six composers, all of them giants in their specific genres — is unable to pull off brilliance. It does show some flair and talent but doesn't seem to stem from the recesses of the heart. It does not reach the other side either.

The only songs in the series that make some impact aren't a part of the album. *Baai*, Hansal Mehta's story that merges too much — communal riots, a gay love story and generation gap into a small capsule — comes to life only for a few moments. Pakistani musician Ali Sethi took Majrooh Sultanpuri and Kamal Amrohi's one line — *Chandni raat badi der ke baad aayi hai* — from Amrohi's seminal film, *Pakeezah* (1972), and wrote another ghazal that merged splendidly with the original. But this and the fabulous C Ramachandra dadra, *Lakho ke bol sahe*, made extremely popular by Patiala gharana vocalist Nirmala Devi (also actor Govinda's mother), aren't a part of the original album.

In the latter, there is a rare outing by Sonu Nigam, who sings a Jeet Ganguly composition here. *Kaisi baatein* begins quite well with a gentle piano piece and swelling strings finding each other amid Nigam's start in the low notes. *Kyun zamane ke gham uthaate ho*, *Ishq ko apne kyun gavaate ho*, lyrics by Sameer Rahat, make an impact. But as for Ganguly's melody, it seems like a faux attempt at being

delicate. The tenderness of the relationship it is trying to portray, of loss and longing, comes through only sporadically and mostly through the lyrics. Nigam throws his voice gently but with intermittent effect.

One song that did allow itself to be noticed a bit more is *Raat bhar*, which has been written and composed by Bhardwaj. Interestingly, the Arabic word *Hijr* (meaning separation), cherished most in ghazal, makes an appearance with more contemporary concepts such as inbox, tweet and text. Startlingly, it is not cringe-worthy at all. The nylon string guitars by Debarpito Saha, along with a tender melody from the typical Bhardwaj arsenal, are both noteworthy. Meiyang Chang sings it in his basic, endearing style. Another piece that works is the title song — *Mausam hai pyar*, composed and sung by Nikhil D'souza, who sounds absolutely in command.

A surprise comes from London-based tabla player Karsh Kale, who sings for a change, in a bright Neel Adhikari composition titled *The Same*. Kale is good enough, alright, but the one voice that makes

itself heard here is that of 22-year-old singer-songwriter Karshni Nair, a phenomenal singer from Pune, who we should look out for in the days to come.

*Raat rani*, sung by Nikhita Gandhi, comes with energetic arrangements from Sampath. It's sung well but the composition does not move above being basic (we are mostly used to extremely intelligent music from Sampath) until it reaches a lovely hook. Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy's *Shuru se shuru* falls somewhat in a similar category. The tune just doesn't manage to lift up. It's even missing the vibrancy of *Raat rani*.

*Yaadein* by Gaurav Raina (one half of the folk electronica outfit Midival Punditz) and singer Kamakshi Khanna, is a reminder of the disco of the '80s. It's definitely interesting and fresh in a nostalgic sort of way but doesn't manage to do much for the soul. And that is where most of the album's issue rests.

Listenable tracks that do not stick. My heart goes back to *Chandni raat* and *Lakho ke bol* and wants to stay there, outside of this original album.

MUMBAI LOVE STORIES

★★★

COMPOSERS:

SHANKAR-EHSAAN-LOY, VISHAL BHARDWAJ, RAM SAMPATH, JEET GANGULY, GAURAV RAINA, NIKHIL D'SOUSA, NEEL ADHIKARI



# 10 GOVT & POLITICS

## DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



### ACTING SKILLS

JUSTICE L. Nageswara Rao's acting skills were the flavour of the day in legal circles on Friday as it came to light that the Supreme Court judge had played a role in a 1989 Hindi movie, 'Kanoon Apna Apna', starring Dilip Kumar, Nutan, Sanjay Dutt and Kadar Khan among others. This came to light at a farewell organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) for Justice Rao, who is retiring on June 7. Speaking at the event, SCBA vice-president Senior Advocate Pradeep Rai said Justice Rao was multifaceted and besides being a Ranji-level cricket player had also acted in the movie. Later in his address, Justice Rao said he was into theatre in college and had a cousin who was a director and wanted him to do a role. "It was a short role and that ended the matter. I did not want to become an actor to start with," he said. "All of you know that lawyers act in court. Judges also do. When there is some heat in the court, we try to control the lawyers by bringing in a truce between two lawyers who are at the neck of each other, by acting sometimes, telling them to please slow down, sometimes by raising voice. So, acting is a part of the profession."

### CANDIDATE SEARCH

THE CHINTAN Shivir had been keeping the Congress leadership engaged for some days. The shivir over, the party has started reaching out to allies and like-minded parties to decide the joint opposition candidate for the upcoming elections for the posts of President and Vice-President. A senior Congress leader said informal talks have begun and the possibility of a formal meeting of all opposition parties will be worked out soon. In 2017, the opposition had fielded former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar for the post of President and Gopal Krishna Gandhi for the Vice-Presidential election.

## Govt exempts central varsities in NE, Uttarakhand from CUET

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

The Union government has exempted eight Central Universities in the Northeast and one in Uttarakhand from conducting the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for admissions to undergraduate programmes.

The Centre, in a letter to the registrars of the exempted universities, attributed the decision to "operational difficulties". The Northeastern states had approached the Centre in this regard, suggests the letter sent out on May 19.

"Considering the operational difficulties in conducting the exam of CUET i.e. the issue of geographical conditions, hilly terrain, far-flung location, limited digital connectivity, infrastructure etc, it has been decided that Central Universities of North Eastern Region...as well as HNB Garhwal University Uttarakhand may take admission in the affiliated colleges to the Central Universities as per the past practice instead of CUET for the year 2022-23 only," the Ministry of Education said in its letter.

In Northeast, Sikkim University, Rajiv Gandhi University in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur University, Assam University, Nagaland University, Tripura University, Mizoram University and North-Eastern Hill University in Meghalaya have been exempted from CUET.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, MAY 20

POLICE HAS arrested All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM)'s state secretary for allegedly attempting to incite people through an objectionable social media post on the Gyanvapi mosque.

A case under Section 505 (statements conducing public mischief) of the Indian Penal Code was registered against Hakeem Abdul Salam Khan (40) at the Keertarpur police station. Salam, a quack, runs a clinic in Bijnor, it is learnt.

"We have arrested Hakeem Abdul Salam Khan. Investigation in the case is underway," said Keertarpur station house officer (SHO) Manoj Kumar.

The police said Salam put a Facebook post written in Hindi on Thursday that went viral. In the post, he said that of the 36 Muslim MLAs of the Samajwadi Party no one reacted over the Gyanvapi mosque controversy. "This is because slaves have no right to raise objection," he added.

AIMIM's state president Showkat Ali said that Abdul Salam's post was for the Samajwadi party leaders and they got a case lodged against him since they got upset with it. "The post is not objectionable," he claimed.

## NRC coordinator files complaint: Hajela put national security at risk

TORA AGARWALA  
GUWAHATI, MAY 20

THE ASSAM National Register of Citizens (NRC) coordinator HD Sarma Thursday filed a police complaint against his predecessor Prateek Hajela for allegedly endangering "national security" while heading the NRC updation process in the state.

Sarma, who took over as state coordinator after Hajela was transferred to Madhya Pradesh following an order of the Supreme Court in October 2019, alleged that the latter "facilitated entry of names of ineligible persons into the NRC" by intentionally avoiding "mandatory quality checks".

In his complaint addressed to



Prateek Hajela was transferred from Assam in 2019

the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Assam Police and copied to Home and Political Department, Sarma said that Hajela's actions can be "treated as not only a dereliction of duty but an act of treason for doing such an activity which is likely to threaten the national security."

The *Indian Express* could not confirm if the complaint was registered by the police. Calls to A Y V Krishna, ADGP, CID, Assam went unanswered. Senior Home and Political Department officials said that they were not aware of

Sarma's complaint letter.

In his complaint, Sarma alleged that Hajela had ordered use of a software during the 'family tree' verification process of the exercise "which prevented quality check and facilitated entry of names of ineligible persons into the NRC".

To be included in the NRC — which left out 19 lakh people — a person had to trace their ancestry to someone who lived in Assam before 1971. The 'family tree' verification process ensured that those tracing their ancestry to one particular person were related to each other.

Sarma has alleged that the process was flawed and there were loopholes in the software that could be manipulated. The complaint also appended a list of

data entry operators who Sarma said had been involved in "fraudulent activities" during the updation process.

Another allegation in the letter said that Hajela included a number of people in the 'Original Inhabitant' (OI) category, and thus protected them from a second round of verification during the exercise. Being categorised OI was a fast-track route to be included in NRC, and was essentially accorded to people who had surnames which were 'indigenous' to be Assam. Sarma alleged that Hajela "willfully avoided the reverification" of many names who were not actually 'OI', thereby facilitating their entry into the list.

Hajela was not available for comment.

### EC curtails perks, privileges as part of austerity drive

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

THE ELECTION Commission has decided to let go of certain perks and privileges available to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs).

The decision was taken after CEC Rajiv Kumar held his first meeting on Friday along with fellow EC Anup Chandra

Pandey.

"Among other things, the commission reviewed the perks and privileges available to the CEC and ECs, including the income tax exemptions given to them on sumptuary allowance, CEC and ECs draw salary perks and perquisites as per Section 3 of the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991," the EC said in a statement.

The CEC and ECs are currently entitled to a monthly sumptuary allowance of Rs 34,000.

"The commission felt the need of observing austerity in personal entitlements... It was decided to send the proposal to the Central Government for appropriate action," the EC said.

## Land for railway jobs: CBI books Lalu, kin in fresh corruption case

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

THE CENTRAL Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed a corruption case against former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad and his family members for allegedly accepting plots of land in exchange for jobs during his stint as Union Railways Minister.

The agency Friday carried out searches at 16 locations associated with Prasad and his family members, including his daughter Misa Bharti.

CBI sources said the locations were spread across Delhi, Patna and Gopalganj (Bihar). The agency has alleged that as many as 12 people from Patna were appointed to Group D posts in the Railways when Prasad was the Union minister. In lieu of these appointments, the family got seven plots of land in the city and elsewhere for a pittance, said officials. The plots belonged to the families of those 12 people.

According to the CBI, the Rashtriya Janata Dal chief's family acquired over 1 lakh sq. ft. of land for Rs 26 lakh — the circle rate of that time puts the land's cumulative value at more than Rs 4.39 crore. Sixteen people have been accused in the FIR. They are Prasad, his wife Rabri Devi, and his daughters Misa Bharti and Hema Yadav, besides the 12 people who got jobs in the Railway zones of Mumbai, Jabalpur, Kolkata, Jaipur and Hajipur.

The CBI began a preliminary inquiry into these allegations in September last year.

The development comes



RJD leader Lalu Prasad's daughter Misa Bharti at her Delhi residence during the CBI searches on Friday. Prem Nath Pandey

weeks after Yadav got bail in one of the fodder scam cases. He stands convicted in four fodder scam cases and is facing trial in another. Yadav and his family members are also facing trial in another matter of alleged corruption dating back to his tenure as Railway Minister — he is accused of favouring a private company in awarding operation and maintenance contracts for two IRCTC hotels in lieu of prime land in Patna. The CBI chargesheeted Prasad, Rabri and their son Tejashwi in the case, known as the IRCTC scam, in 2018.

The CBI FIR in the fresh case says: "Enquiry has revealed that some individuals although resident of Patna, Bihar but were appointed as Substitutes in group D post during the period 2004-2009 in different zones of Railway located at Mumbai, Jabalpur,

Kolkata, Jaipur, Hajipur and in lieu thereof the individuals themselves or their family members transferred their land in the name of family members of Lalu Prasad Yadav, then Minister of Railway, Govt of India and a Company M/s AK Infosystems Private Limited."

The RJD called the case "political vendetta of the worst order". RJD spokesperson Mrityunjay Tewari added: "The timing of the raids smacks of political vendetta. Whenever there has been any hint of RJD and JD(U) getting closer, BJP resorts to such tactics."

BJP spokesperson and Bihar Industry Minister Syed Shahnawaz Hussain said: "Allegations of CBI being misused stem from the RJD's frustration."

WITH INPUTS FROM  
SANTOSH SINGH IN PATNA

## Azam thanks courts, says my own people played a role in my destruction

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, MAY 20

SENIOR SAMAJWADI Party (SP) leader Azam Khan said on Friday that it was his own people who "contributed to his destruction" and he prayed that good sense prevailed in them.

Addressing a press conference in Rampur, the 10-time MLA, who walked out of the Sitapur jail a day after the Supreme Court granted him interim bail, said,

"The BJP, BSP or the Congress are not a big question for me at this time. Thousands of cases have been lodged against me, my family and my people. I can only say that I have a role in my destruction and my own people contributed to it."

He thanked the courts for "ensuring justice" in granting him bail.

Whether SP president Akhilesh Yadav "backstabbed" him or didn't lend extend enough support to a senior

leader like him, Khan said, "Who were the people who got cases lodged against me? Initially, eight cases were lodged against me and they said that I took away their land forcefully. Those eight people were paid by cheques by me." ... When I got bail, the judge wondered as how a person against whom there is no evidence was kept in jail for two years," Azam said.

The SP MLA, however, didn't share details on what his future course of action will be.



THE EXPRESS  
INTERVIEW

WITH  
QASIM RASOOL  
ILYAS  
EXECUTIVE MEMBER,  
AIMPLB

Idgah in Mathura, and now even the Jama Masjid in New Delhi, where surveys are being demanded. The BJP-RSS commune has alleged that there are 30,000 mosques in the country that have been built by razing temples... such issues can be carried on for perpetuity, creating anarchy... The BJP wants to distract people from rising prices, unemployment, and the health issues brought to light by the pandemic...

The AIMPLB has questioned the stance that secular parties have taken on the matter or the lack of it. What were your expectations from them?

It is very unfortunate that the so-called secular parties have not

come out and said anything, in particular in defence of the Places of Worship Act... And yet, when the elections roll up, they expect Muslims to vote for them...

What is the recourse for the Muslim community under the circumstances?

This is not just about the Muslim community but the Constitution of India and the future of the country... a majority of India's population has not voted for the BJP... In the meeting held on Tuesday, we decided that AIMPLB, for the first time, will reach out to leaders of all non-Muslim bodies...

FULL INTERVIEW ON  
www.indianexpress.com



Former Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu surrenders before Patiala district court on Friday. Harmeet Sidhi

## Sidhu surrenders; sent to Patiala jail

NAVJEEVAN GOPAL  
CHANDIGARH, MAY 20

FORMER PUNJAB Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu on Friday evening surrendered before a Patiala court at around 4 pm to start serving a one-year rigorous imprisonment that was awarded to him by the Supreme Court a day earlier in a 1988 road rage case, in which a 65-year-old man, Gurnam Singh, was killed.

Sidhu was sent to Patiala Central Jail after his surrender.

Earlier in the day, Sidhu's lawyers had approached the Supreme Court seeking time before the Congress leader's surrender saying he had some medical issues to settle.

Senior advocate AM Singhvi mentioned the request before a bench headed by Justice AM Khanwilkar on Friday. "He will surrender but wants a few weeks to settle his medical

health issues," Singhvi told the court, praying for more time.

Justice Khanwilkar, in turn, asked Singhvi to file a formal application and make the request before Chief Justice of India NV Ramana. "File a formal application... and mention before the Chief Justice's court, then we will see," said the court.

Sidhu then arrived at Patiala court at 4 pm to surrender and at about 5 pm taken to Mata Kaushalya Hospital in Patiala for a medical examination, following which he was taken to Patiala Central Jail, where he was lodged in barack number 10, as per Patiala Jail Superintendent Manjit Singh Tiwana.

Incidentally, Sidhu's arch political rival Bikram Singh Majithia is also lodged in same jail in a drugs case.

On Friday, Navtej Singh Cheema, who contested unsuccessfully from Sultanpur Lodhi seat, drove Sidhu to Patiala courts.

## Mevani slams Hardik for 'below the belt' remarks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
AHMEDABAD, MAY 20

VADGAM MLA Jignesh Mevani hit out against former Gujarat Congress working president Hardik Patel, who recently quit the party, for making "below the belt" comments, especially the chicken sandwich reference against the top leadership.

"Hardik has been a comrade from an agitation. He could have shown his ideological differences while leaving the party but the manner in which he tried to hit the senior leaders below the belt and used words that under-



Jignesh Mevani

mine the grace and decency in politics was really unbecoming of him. He said the Congress hates Gujarat but the truth is that despite being in the opposition for the past 27 years in Gujarat, every single worker of the party has been putting their life at stake to keep the Congress alive and take Gujarat forward," Mevani said during a press conference here on Friday.

## Review or repeal? SC ruling on GST sparks debate within Cong

MANOJ CG  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

THE SUPREME Court ruling that the Goods and Services Tax Council's recommendations are not binding and that states can "resist the mandates of the Union by using different forms of political contestation" has rekindled a debate within the Congress on seeking a review of the GST mechanism — or even demanding the repeal of the Act itself.

A section of the Congress leaders believe that the party should have demanded a review of the GST mechanism or repeal of the GST Act in its Udaipur chintan shivir declaration and that it lost an opportunity by not doing so.

Sources in the Congress said some senior leaders, including former Union Ministers Anand Sharma, Manish Tewari and Mani Shankar Aiyar, besides AICC Data Analytics head Praveen Chakravarty, had raised these views during the extensive deliberations of the P Chidambaram-led group on economic affairs during the conclave.

Chidambaram, the sources, was not in favour. When contacted, Chidambaram said no such demands were made in his presence. He did not elaborate.

The Supreme Court ruled on Thursday that recommendations of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council only have persuasive value. While the Centre has said that the decision does not bring any change to the already existing framework, some Opposition-ruled states have stated that it would give them

greater space to take decisions in the federal structure.

The Congress's declaration, issued at the end of the shivir, said "a high-handed and arbitrary GST brought small and medium industries to the brink of disaster". Talking about the "sharp deterioration of the Centre-State fiscal relations", it said "the Indian National Congress is of the view that it is the need of the hour for a comprehensive review of Centre-State fiscal relations and to protect and preserve the rights of the states".

During the discussions, Chakravarty is learnt to have forcefully argued that state governments have lost their independent taxation powers after the introduction of GST and that the promised economic gains have remained elusive. Sources said he argued that the party should demand the repeal of the GST Act.

Tewari, too, strongly argued on similar lines. He is learnt to have said that the GST has "bartered away" the rights of states. Moreover, the Union government has repeatedly reneged on its GST commitments. In that light, he is learnt to have argued that the time has come to review whether the GST itself should be repealed. He felt such a view must be incorporated in the declaration.

Sharma said the GST mechanism should be reviewed.

Sources said Chidambaram felt a repeal was too radical an idea which needed to be discussed and considered at a different level in the party as it was outside the mandate of the group.

FULL REPORT ON  
www.indianexpress.com



## ECONOMY

SENSEX: 54,326.39 ▲ 1,534.16 (2.91%) NIFTY: 16,266.15 ▲ 456.75 (2.89%) NIKKEI: 26,739.03 ▲ 336.19 HANG SENG: 20,717.24 ▲ 596.56 FTSE: 7,443.26 ▲ 140.52 DAX: 14,150.87 ▲ 268.57

International market data till 1900 IST

POLICY WATCH  
STATE OF INEQUALITY

## 'EAC-PM report independent task, may not be taken higher up in govt'

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK  
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

## KEY SUGGESTIONS

■ The report recommended that the government launch a guaranteed employment programme for the urban unemployed and roll out a universal basic income scheme

THE REPORT released by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) on the state of inequality of India caught senior government officials in Niti Bhavan by surprise, a number of whom were unaware that the advisory body had commissioned such a report or that the findings had been released Wednesday. The report recommended that the government launch a guaranteed employment programme for the urban unemployed and roll out a universal basic income (UBI) scheme to reduce income gaps, among other things.

While the report, titled 'The State of Inequality in India' was released by EAC-PM's Chairperson Bibek Debroy on Wednesday, sources said senior officials who work closely with the government's policy advisory body had not received a copy until late after its launch. "I learnt that there was a media article, said an official who works closely with the EAC-PM, on condition of anonymity. Niti Bhavan in central Delhi houses the EAC-PM. Officials who work closely with the EAC-PM also distanced themselves and the advisory body from the report and its contents, which was prepared by the Gurgaon-based Institute for Competitiveness (IFC). "This is not the EAC-PM's report, but just submitted to them. EAC-PM does not necessarily endorse the recommendations made in the report," said an official. The report may not be officially presented to the upper ranks of the Central government, it is learnt.

While sources close to the EAC-PM, including those involved in the formulation of the report, reiterated that the report was an "independent" task with no involvement or agenda setting by the EAC-PM, senior government officials questioned why the report carried the official logo of the EAC-PM on its cover and that its release by Debroy was communicated by a Press Information Bureau (PIB) release, which is typically used for official government-related updates. "We were surprised that the report had EAC-PM's logo and that its release was done through PIB," said a senior government official.

Queries sent to Debroy remained unanswered until publication. Queries sent to the Finance Ministry on the issue did not elicit a response.

IFC provides advisory services to corporates and governments, and is the Indian chapter of the global network of the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness at Harvard Business School. It has previously worked closely with the Niti Aayog in preparing the government think tank's recent export preparedness index, the

second edition of which was released in March 2022, and India innovation index, which was last released in 2021. These indices were launched by Niti Aayog chief Amitabh Kant and the think tank endorsed them. IFC is headed by Amit Kapoor, who, as per his website, sits on the board of competitiveness initiatives in Mexico, the Netherlands, Italy and France.

The timing of the report and some of its recommendations are also crucial — for instance, one of its key recommendations calls for introducing UBI. This is not a novel idea, and a similar policy was, in fact, a key part of the Indian National Congress' campaign in the run up to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. In its manifesto, the party had promised Rs 72,000 per year to the poorest 20 per cent of India's households, which the then Congress president Rahul Gandhi had called a "final assault" on poverty. Even before that, the idea was endorsed by former Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian in the Economic Survey for FY17 in place of subsidy transfer, which the then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had said might not be politically feasible in India despite being supportive of it.

While launching the report on Wednesday, Debroy also said it was difficult to gauge income inequality in India, owing to the lack of comprehensive data, adding "what we do have and what we should have is data on distribution of consumption expenditure". "Unfortunately, it's the case that the last comprehensive NSS data on consumption and expenditure is for 2011-12. And we have had nothing after that," Debroy had said.

Incidentally, in 2019, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation had decided not to release the results of the all-India Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) during 2017-2018, citing "data quality issues", for which it was severely criticised. A media report at the time released leaked findings from the 2017-18 which showed that inflation-adjusted average monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) declined by 3.7 per cent in India between 2011-12 and 2017-18, which was a first in four decades. The decline was led by an 8.8 per cent decline in rural MPCE.

## IN 2021-22 AGAINST ₹99,126 CR FOR 9 MTHS ENDED MAR 2021

## RBI surplus transfer to govt falls 69% to ₹30,307 crore

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, MAY 20

THE RESERVE Bank of India's (RBI's) contribution to the government's finances has fallen steeply with the board of the central bank approving a surplus transfer of Rs 30,307 crore to the government for 2021-22, sharply down by 69.42 per cent from Rs 99,126 crore for the accounting period of nine-months ended March 2021. The dividend was paid for that nine-month period as the central bank aligned its financial year with the government's fiscal year.

The steep decline in surplus was due to the absorption of liquidity by the central bank under the reverse repo window. "In FY22, due to heavy investment of the RBI in reverse repo auctions which at an average of Rs 6-7 lakh crore a day at a cost of even 3.5 per cent (average) would mean a cost of Rs 21,000-24,500 crore. This would have accrued

EXPLAINED  
What is this surplus

THE RBI'S "surplus" is the excess of income over expenditure in accordance with Section 47 (Allocation of Surplus Profits) of the RBI Act, 1934.

to the government and the surplus would have been higher," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, Bank of Baroda.

"For the year, the government is targeting Rs 74,000 crore as dividend/surplus from the RBI, PSBs and other public financial institutions. This will mean that a large part of profit of PSBs will have to be transferred to make good this number or else there will be a slippage," Sabnavis said. In the reverse repo, banks make a short-term, guaranteed loan to the central bank.

## Forex reserves fall \$2.67 billion

Mumbai: Foreign exchange reserves declined \$2.67 billion to \$593.279 billion in the week ended May 13, RBI data showed. In the previous week, reserves had declined \$1.774 billion to \$595.954 billion. PTI

The RBI board has decided to maintain the Contingency Risk Buffer at 5.5 per cent. The RBI board also discussed the working of the RBI during the year April 2021 – March 2022 and approved the Annual Report and accounts for the accounting year 2021-22. In 2018-19, the RBI Board approved a transfer of Rs 1,76,051 crore to the government, including a surplus or dividend of Rs 1,23,414 crore, and a one-time transfer of excess provisions amounting to Rs 52,637 crore.

The RBI's "surplus" is the ex-

cess of income over expenditure in accordance with Section 47 (Allocation of Surplus Profits) of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. The RBI is also supposed to manage the borrowings of the Central and state governments, supervise or regulate banks and non-banking finance companies and manage the currency and payment systems. The central bank's income comes from the returns it earns on its foreign currency assets, which could be in the form of bonds and treasury bills of other central banks or top-rated securities, and deposits with other central banks.

When Urjit Patel was the RBI Governor, there was a spat between the Centre and the central bank over a proposal by the Finance Ministry seeking to transfer a surplus of Rs 3.6 lakh crore — over a third of total reserves — to the government. The RBI then formed a committee to work out a formal structure to decide the quantum of surplus to be transferred to the government.

## Zilingo fires CEO Bose

Singapore: Zilingo said on Friday it had fired Chief Executive Ankit Bose after an independent investigation into complaints about what the fashion technology startup described as "serious financial irregularities".

"The board has wrongfully terminated me today for 'insubordination' without giving me a chance to address concerns," she said in an emailed statement.

Zilingo did not give details on the probe but said an independent forensics firm led it. REUTERS

## FDI inflow hits all-time high of \$83.57 bn in FY22

India recorded the "highest ever" annual FDI inflow of \$83.57 billion in FY22, as per Commerce Ministry data



Share of top 3 nations in total FDI  
Singapore: 27%  
US: 18%  
Mauritius: 16%

**\$21.34 billion:** FDI equity inflow in manufacturing sectors in 2021-22, rising by 76% compared to \$12.09 billion in FY21

Sectors that attracted maximum inflows:  
■ Computer software and hardware  
■ Services  
■ Automobiles

Source: Commerce Ministry/PTI

## IDBI Bank to sell stake in insurance JV for ₹580 cr

New Delhi: IDBI Bank has decided to sell its entire stake in Ageas Federal Life Insurance Company Ltd to its joint venture partner Ageas Insurance International NV for about Rs 580 crore.

"We hereby inform you that IDBI Bank has entered a share purchase agreement with Ageas Insurance International NV (Buyer) on May 19, 2022 to sell IDBI Bank's entire stake of 20,00,00,000 equity shares in Ageas Federal Life Insurance Company Ltd (AFLI) pursuant to exercise of call option by Ageas," IDBI Bank said in a filing Friday.

The bank said the transaction would be concluded subject to regulatory approvals. As of March 31, LIC-owned IDBI Bank holds 25 per cent stake in AFLI.

IDBI Bank said the deal is expected to be completed in the second quarter of the current financial year, subject to regulatory approvals and satisfaction of the terms and conditions. The lender is likely to receive up to Rs 580.20 crore from the sale. AFLI is a three-party joint-venture between IDBI Bank, Federal Bank and Ageas Insurance International NV. ENS, WITH PTI

## 'Metro scouts for a partner for India business, to sell stake'

New Delhi: German retailer Metro AG is scouting for a partner to sell its stake in its Indian subsidiary Metro Cash & Carry India, according to a source.

The parent company after reviewing the progress of its Indian unit is now looking for strategic external alliances for profitable growth of the business, said the industry source. "This is at the discussion stage which has happened," he said, adding some discussion with the bankers has happened regarding it.

According to a media report, several leading companies oper-

## A Metro AG spokesperson said the company is reviewing the strategic options

ating in the online and offline business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) retail space have been approached, including Amazon, Thailand's Charoen Pokphand (CP) Group, Reliance Retail, Avenue Supermarts (D-Mart), Tata Group, Lulu Group, and PE fund

Samara Capital.

When contacted a Metro AG spokesperson said the company is reviewing the strategic options.

"... We are reviewing strategic options with potential partners to enhance Metro's existing wholesale capabilities and accelerate the business development in India. Please understand we will not comment on rumours or speculations in the media," said Metro AG Senior vice president-corporate communications Gerd Koslowski. Metro Cash & Carry India currently operates 31 stores in the country. PTI

**KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice**

Tender No.: 106/2021-22/KWA/PHC/D1/TVM(RT2)

Jail Jeevan Mission 2021-24 - Thiruvananthapuram District - Pothencode Grama Panchayath - Providing pipeline extension & FHTCs to all households and package-II - Providing distribution network in Pothencode Grama Panchayath.

EMD: ₹5,00,000. Tender fee: ₹15,000.

Last date for submitting tender: 10-06-2022 03:00 pm

Phone: 0471-2322303. Website: www.kwa.kerala.gov.in, www.etenders.kerala.gov.in

KWA-JB-GL-6-233-2022-23 Superintending Engineer, PH Circle, Thiruvananthapuram

**RAIL WHEEL FACTORY**

Yelahanka, BANGALORE - 560 064

Website: www.nwt.indianrailways.gov.in

**Tender Notice No. RWF/S/P/1/003/2022-23 Dated 19/05/2022**

On behalf of the President of India, Principal Chief Materials Manager invites electronic Tenders from Interested Vendors for supply of the following items on the Indian Railways E-Portal - www.irops.gov.in. The Tender documents and the Corrigenda to the Tenders, if any, will be available on the Portal only.

Sl. No	Tender No	Due date	Short Description	Qty
1	P1221501	06-06-2022	Pressure Tank Cover as per RWF drawing	2 Nos
2	P1221458	09-06-2022	Magnesium Wet Ramming Mass as per RWF Specification	1154900 kgs
3	P1221465	20-06-2022	Graphite Mould Blanks 1097 mm dia X 575 mm height (43.2" X 22.6") to RWF specification	18 Nos

Principal Chief Materials Manager

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER EXTERNALLY AIDED PROJECTS UTTAR PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT LUCKNOW (U.P.)**

**NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (CIVIL WORKS)**

Tender Id 2022. PWDEA-672981\_1

**Addendum for Extension of Bid Submission date**

The deadline date for submission of the following bid has been extended upto 02nd June 2022. 17:50 Hrs (IST) and bid opening will be on the same day at 17:30 Hrs (IST).

Sl. No.	Name of work	Contract Package	Cost of Document (Rs.)	Period of Completion (Days)
1	2	3	4	5
1	Up-gradation and Maintenance of Bansi - Mohandawati - Khalilabad section of SH-88, from Km 0.000 to Km 28.870.	UPCRNDP/UPG/05/2022	500/- including GST	Construction Period - 730 + Maintenance Period - 1826

The details of Addendums and Bid document with detailed terms and conditions are available online one-tendering portal of MCHttp://tenderup.nic.in. CHIEF ENGINEER Telephone No. (431) (522) 2236496 Fax No. (431) (522) 2236356 E-mail: cesappw@rediffmail.com

**HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

M.S. Building, Bangalore

**E-No: ED/272/UBV/2022 Date: 20.05.2022**

**Selection of Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University**

- The Government of Karnataka invites applications for the selection of Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University, Bengaluru, Karnataka as per sec. 14(2) of Karnataka State University Act, 2000 from eligible and distinguished Academicians/Professors with following credentials:
  - A person of the highest level of competence, integrity, morals and institutional commitment;
  - A distinguished academician, with a minimum of ten years' of experience as Professor in a University or ten years' of experience in a reputed research and / or academic administrative organization with proof of having demonstrated academic leadership;
  - As provided in the sec 14(5) and 14(6) of Karnataka State University Act, 2000, the Vice-Chancellor shall, subject to the pleasure of the Chancellor, hold the office for a maximum period of 4 years or until he attains the age of Sixty Seven years whichever is earlier. Consequently, a person to be appointed as Vice Chancellor shall have clear four years of tenure
- Persons interested in submitting their candidacy for the Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University, should make hard copies of the application in triplicate duly filled along with the academic, research credentials and administrative experience, achievements & other details in the proforma prescribed by the UGC within 15 days (including general holidays) at the latest from the date of publication of this advertisement, to:- **Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Higher Education Department, 6th Floor, M.S. Building, Bangalore-560 001**
- Single soft copy of the application in PDF format should be mailed to e-mail: **kgsheduni2020@gmail.com**
- In support of unblemished career and undoubted integrity, the applicant who is retired from service, should file a self attested certificate to the effect that no departmental/criminal enquiry is instituted/pending against him or no enquiry is culminated in penalties and he is neither having the tainted service history nor the appointment dispute. Whereas, in case of applicant in service, he should file a certificate of his employer in this regard. The concerned will be subjected to stringent action if certificates are found to be false. Further, the applications not accompanying the above mentioned certificates will not be considered and processed
- The application proforma is available on the website of Bangalore University, Bengaluru.
- Incomplete applications and applications not made in prescribed proforma and applications received after the stipulated time limit will not be entertained. This office is not responsible for postal or other kinds of delays.
- The candidature of those who indulge in undue influencing on the selection process through unethical means will stand cancelled.

**Sd/-**  
**Additional Chief Secretary to Government Higher Education Department**

DIPRC/CP/Jagadale Advertising/591/2022-23

**COVID-19 - DON'T SPREAD RUMOURS. ACT RESPONSIBLY, AVOID INFECTION-NOT THE INFECTED.**

Wear Mask | Follow Physical Distancing | Maintain Hand Hygiene

BRIEFLY  
CCPA notices

New Delhi: The CCPA sent notices to Ola and Uber for "unfair practices and violation of consumer rights."

## USCEOs, T20

New York: Microsoft's Satya Nadella & Adobe's Shantanu Narayen invested \$120 million for T20 league in the US.

## Axis AMC case

New Delhi: Axis AMC sacked fund manager Deepak Agrawal over 'front-running'.

## EPFO payroll

New Delhi: EPFO added 15.3 lakh subscribers in March, 19% more than February. PTI

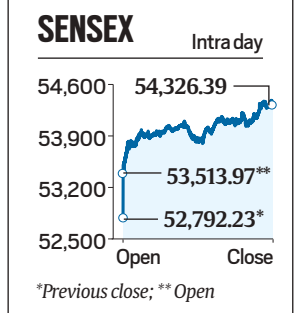
## Sensex rebounds 2.9%

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, MAY 20

DOMESTIC STOCK markets on Friday rallied by 2.9 per cent aided by strong global cues. Led by RIL, the benchmark Sensex soared 1,534 points to 54,326.39 and the NSE Nifty index rose 457 points to 16,266.15 amid across the board buying support.

However, LIC shares fell by another 1.72 per cent to Rs 826.25. RIL shot up by 5.77 per cent to Rs 2,622.15.

"The market displayed a confident yet calm rally throughout the day, supported by fortified global markets, especially the Asian market. The Chinese Central bank cut a key interest rate to support growth, injecting optimism into emerging markets," said Vinod Nair, head of re-



search at Geojit Financial Services. On Thursday, the Sensex fell 1,416 points. Broader markets rose as well.

On Wall Street, the S&P fell 20 per cent from its January 3 record high on Friday. At 2:48 pm ET, the Dow fell 434.20 points, or 1.39 per cent, to 30,818.93 while the S&P was down 79.44 points, or 2.04 per cent, at 3,821.35.

## Fiscal prudence, less litigation, reforms for Economy 2.0: CEA

LIZ MATHEW  
BENGALURU, MAY 20

FOR ITS next economic stage — Economy 2.0 — India needs to be a "responsible economy" with fiscal prudence, power and education sector reforms, and less government litigation to make up for losses during the pandemic year, as well as a different approach to public health, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran said.

"Technology can be the icing on the cake," he said, addressing the inaugural session of the 7th India Ideas Conclave on 'India-2.0 Rebooting to Meta Era', organised by India Foundation, a think tank backed by the RSS.

While accepting the appreciation for India's growth story, he said, "There's more to achieve, to deliver the kind of growth rate to take us to a middle-income economy from a lower-income economy. We have to have a vibrant financial system which provides funds for growth."

He said the Ukraine crisis has proved that technology as it is at its best can give partial answers to the challenges India faces, but the turmoil created in the financial sector and fluctuations in the cryptocurrency market during this time have proved that "humans are driven by fear and greed" and "sometimes technology can accentuate them."

"Manufacturing complexes

Chief Economic Adviser  
V Anantha Nageswaran File

have to be increased, private sector has to ensure that MSMEs are paid on time and the attitude towards public health should be changed," Nageswaran said, adding that the recent National Family Health Survey found that obesity level in the country is on the rise. "India should not be unhealthy when it gets economic growth... correct food labelling is very important."

Stating that the Centre had to spend time clearing the balance sheet by paying dues as India had to build the system, he said fiscal prudence is the only way out. The country had a difficult last decade as banks had over-extended and the corporate sector over borrowed, the CEA added.

He said the Centre's move to re-embark on privatisation and asset monetisation have however improved the balance sheet.

Full report on  
www.indianexpress.com

## With air operator certificate, Jet gets its wings back



A Jet Airways aircraft at Delhi airport. via @jetairways Twitter

RAJESH KURUP  
MUMBAI, MAY 20

THREE YEARS after it was grounded following a financial crunch, Jet Airways is set to take to the skies once again, with the carrier getting the aviation regulator's nod to restart operations.

The full-service carrier is slated to start commercial oper-

ations in the third quarter of this calendar year.

Jet Airways received a revalidated Air Operator Certificate (AOC), the final step in the compliance process to check an airline's operational readiness, from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The AOC enables Jet Airways to resume its scheduled commercial operations in India, it said in a statement on Friday. FE



# 12 THE WORLD

## TOP OF THE WORLD



U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Reuters file

### UNITED STATES Pelosi warns Britain on N Ireland deal

HOUSE OF Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi told Britain there could be no U.S.-UK trade deal if it proceeds with plans to unilaterally scrap some of the rules governing trade with Northern Ireland. Pelosi said she viewed the existing agreement as essential to maintaining the 1998 Good Friday peace deal, brokered by the United States to end three decades of conflict in Northern Ireland between Catholic nationalist militants and pro-British Protestant paramilitaries in which around 3,600 people were killed. **AP**

### BRAZIL

### Musk meets Bolsonaro over Amazon plan

TESLA AND SPACEX CEO Elon Musk met with Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro on Friday to discuss projects in the Amazon rainforest. Brazil's Communications Minister Fábio Faria has said he is seeking partnerships with Musk to bring or improve internet in schools and health facilities in rural areas, and also to preserve the rainforest. "Super excited to be in Brazil for launch of Starlink for 19,000 unconnected schools in rural areas & environmental monitoring of Amazon," Musk tweeted Friday morning. **AP**

### ETHIOPIA

### Tigray forces to release 4,000 army POWs

The Tigray rebel forces fighting Ethiopia's federal army say they will release over 4,000 prisoners of war as part of an amnesty. The Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front announced the release on Twitter Friday, amid an escalating war of words between Ethiopian and Tigray region officials over preparations for another round of full-blown war. Birhane Kebede, co-ordinator of the prisoners' center, said those with disabilities, and women who gave birth in detention were given priority for release. **AP**

## MOSCOW TO STOP GAS FLOW TO FINLAND TODAY

# Donbas 'turned into hell' as Russia intensifies strikes from land and air

Luhansk governor says residential quarters targeted by Russian forces

### REUTERS

KYIV, HELSINKI, MAY 20

RUSSIAN TROOPS bombarded a riverside city on Friday in what appeared to herald a major assault to seize the last remaining Ukrainian-held territory in a province it claims on behalf of separatists.

Ukrainian officials said Russian forces had launched massive artillery bombardment against Sievierodonetsk, one of the last Ukrainian-held bastions in Luhansk, one of two south-eastern provinces Moscow and its proxies proclaim as independent states.

"The Russian army has started very intensive destruction of the town of Sievierodonetsk, the intensity of shelling doubled, they are shelling residential quarters, destroying house by house," Luhansk governor Serhiy Gaidai said via his Telegram channel.

In Moscow, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said the "liberation of the Luhansk People's Republic" would be completed soon.

In an overnight address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the conditions in the Donbas, which includes Luhansk and neighbour-



Rescuers after an air strike in Bakhmut, Donetsk region on Thursday. Reuters

ing Donetsk province, as "hell" and said the region had been "completely destroyed" by Russia's invasion.

Meanwhile, Russia's Gazprom has informed Finland it will halt flows of natural gas from Saturday morning, Gasum said on Friday, after the Finnish state-owned gas wholesaler refused to pay its Russian supplier in roubles.

The past week has seen Sweden and Finland apply to join NATO, the biggest shakeup in European security for decades.

Turkey has so far said it will block the move, accusing the Nordic countries of harbouring Kurdish militants.

## G7 to pledge \$19.8 bn aid in new lifeline for Ukraine

Koenigswinter, Germany: The Group of Seven leading economies and global financial institutions are providing \$19.8 billion in aid to bolster Ukraine's public finances, Germany's finance minister said Friday.

Christian Lindner told reporters that \$9.5 billion of the total was mobilised at meetings of the G-7 finance ministers in Koenigswinter, Germany, this week. He said the goal is to ensure that Ukraine's financial situation does not affect its ability to defend

itself from Russia's invasion.

"We agreed on concrete actions to deepen multilateral economic cooperation and underlined our commitment to our united response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and to our unwavering support to Ukraine," a G-7 statement reads.

As the finance ministers were meeting in Germany, the U.S. overwhelmingly approved its own \$40 billion infusion of military and economic aid for Ukraine and its allies. **AP**

## Wary of Biden's Asia visit, Beijing launches drills in South China Sea

### ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING, MAY 20

CHINA IS holding military exercises in the disputed South China Sea coinciding with U.S. President Joe Biden's visits to South Korea and Japan that are largely focused on countering the perceived threat from Beijing.

China's Maritime Safety Administration office in the southern island province of Hainan said the drills began Thursday and will continue through Monday.

China claims the South China Sea virtually in its entirety and the crucial waterway has become a potential flashpoint for conflict in



Joe Biden with South Korea President Yoon Suk-yeol in Pyeongtaek, Friday. Reuters

Asia. The U.S. does not take a position on the sovereignty issue but insists on the right to operate freely in the sea and frequently sails warships close to militarized Chinese-held islands in the area in what are termed freedom of

navigation operations.

China routinely protests such missions, labeling them deliberate provocations that endanger peace and stability. To assert its claim, it has built airstrips and other military infrastructure atop human-made islands built on coral reefs and atolls.

While in Japan, Biden will meet Tuesday with fellow leaders of the Indo-Pacific strategic alliance known as the Quad, a group that includes Australia, India and Japan. China views the grouping as a part of a U.S.-led push to impede its economic and political rise and frustrate attempts to intimidate self-governing Taiwan into unifying with the mainland.

## Economy, China, climate change in focus as Australia set for polls today

### ASSOCIATED PRESS

CANBERRA, MAY 20

AUSTRALIANS WILL go to the polls on Saturday following a six-week campaign that has focused on pandemic-fueled inflation, climate change and fears of a Chinese military outpost being established less than 2,000 kilometers off Australia's shore.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison's conservative coalition is seeking a rare fourth

three-year term. He began the campaign in April by urging voters to stick with a government that delivered one of the lowest pandemic death tolls of any advanced economy rather than risk the opposition center-left Labor Party. But his nickname "ScoMo" was changed by critics to "SloMo" a year ago when Australia's vaccine rollout fell months behind schedule.

The pandemic and the war in Ukraine have pushed up costs of living and cast doubt on the con-

servatives' boast of being better economic managers than Labour. Labour has also taken aim at the government's foreign policy credentials after China and the Solomon Islands confirmed during the election campaign they had finalised a bilateral security pact.

Morrison's conservative Liberal Party is also fighting off a new challenge from so-called teal independent candidates, who want stronger action on reducing greenhouse emissions.

### AS COVID RESTRICTIONS END

## THAILAND TO LIFT NIGHTLIFE CURBS

Thailand will allow night clubs and karaoke bars to resume regular hours starting in June, a senior official said on Friday, as daily Covid infections decline. The country is targeting 5 to 15 million arrivals this year.



People sit on empty cylinders as they wait in a queue to buy gas in Colombo on Friday. Reuters

## Sri Lanka shuts down schools, limits work as fuel crisis sees no ease

### AGENCIES

COLOMBO, MAY 20

SRI LANKAN authorities on Friday closed schools and asked public officials not to come to work in a desperate move to prepare for an acute fuel shortage that is expected to last days amid the nation's worst economic crisis in decades.

The Public Administration Ministry asked the public officials — except for those in essential services — not to come to work "in a view of current fuel shortage and issues in transport facilities" across the country.

State- and government-approved private schools also closed Friday as thousands of people have waited in queues at fuel stations across the country for days at a time.

Sri Lanka is now almost without gasoline and faces an acute shortage of other fuels as well.

The country has defaulted on its debt for the first time in its history. **NYT**

Central bank governor P Nandalal Weerasinghe said on Thursday the country had fallen into a "pre-emptive default" on its debts after the expiry of a 30-day grace period for missed interest payments on two of its sovereign bonds.

The Group of Seven (G7) nations have, however, announced that they will assist Sri Lanka in securing debt relief.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on Friday welcomed the G7 announcement.

"The continued engagement by the international community with Sri Lanka is key to overcoming the economic crisis," Wickremesinghe tweeted on Friday.

Meanwhile, Japan on Friday announced USD 1.5 million funding to help Sri Lanka respond to the ongoing economic crisis.

The funds will be used by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) to provide food assistance to children and families in need of support.

## Gray mesmerises with thoughtful film memoir 'Armageddon Time'



### EXPRESS IN CANNES

SHUBHRA GUPTA

MAY 20

I THINK I've seen my favourite Cannes 2022 film till now. James Gray, a frequent visitor to the film festival (this is his fifth film here) proves with his thoughtful memoir 'Armageddon Time' that the personal, irradiated with the political, is the most powerful of genres.

'Armageddon Time' is set in the early 80s, when Reagan was up for election. A Jewish family in Queens, modelled on Gray's own, is like a microcosm of the America of that time, trying to assimilate as well as holding on to their traditions at the same time.

At the centre of the narrative are two boys, Paul (Banks Repeta) and Johnny (Jaylin Webb), who are instantly drawn to each other despite their differences. Because at heart, they are similar: both are rebels, pushing back at the strictures laid down by family and the larger world outside.

Paul wants to be an artist, but his parents, both products of Jewish immigrants — her (Anne Hathaway) a homemaker and the president of the PTA in Paul's neighbourhood school, and him (Jeremy Strong) a low-grade engineer from a humble background — will have none of it. Johnny, the lone Black kid in school, lives with his sick grandmother, and is buffeted by the New world every waking moment.

The performances are excellent. The actors playing the two boys are alive to each moment, as are the adults, and the terrific Hopkins shows how it is done, with kindness and compassion.

### Like a retro squid game

Two South Korean agents at loggerheads. Bloody killings. Black sedans chasing each other. And the search for a mole. Squid Game star Lee-jung Jae's directorial debut 'Hunt' is a full-blooded, full-throttle espionage thriller set in the 80's. The film gets a trifle muddled as the body count piles up, but even in the mayhem, you get a sense of what lives were like in S Korea in the 80's, in the shadow of one of the most repressive regimes. In that sense 'Hunt' feels like a retro squid game: one way or another, you get shot.

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

## Macron unveils new-look Cabinet ahead of June polls

### REUTERS

PARIS, MAY 20

EMMANUEL MACRON retained his finance and interior ministers while appointing only the second woman to head France's foreign ministry, as the president reshuffled his cabinet ahead of parliamentary elections next month.

After his re-election in April, when the far right came its closest yet to taking the presidency, centrist Macron pledged to govern France "in a different way" from a first term during which his focus on economic reforms left much of the electorate discontented.

The three nominations - plus Macron loyalist Marc Fesneau as the new agriculture minister - would suggest the president has not opted for a wholesale over-

haul of his leadership - though with women playing a more prominent role.

Retaining their respective finance and interior ministry portfolios, Bruno Le Maire and Gerald Darmanin, will be joined in the cabinet by Catherine Colonna as foreign minister, the presidency announced. Colonna is currently France's ambassador to Britain.

Macron - busy with crisis diplomacy abroad and tough political bargaining ahead of the parliamentary vote at home - has taken nearly a month to appoint a new cabinet.

On Monday he named Elisabeth Borne as prime minister. The left-leaning career technocrat served in his earlier governments, most recently as labour minister, when she stared down trade unions over unemployment benefit reform.

## WHILE QUEEN ELIZABETH, 96, MAY BE POPULAR, THE PICTURE FOR THE MONARCHY IS LESS CLEAR

# Britons party for the Queen — but not the monarchy

LUCY MARKS & NATALIE THOMAS

LONDON, MAY 20

PRACTISING BOLLYWOOD dance moves at his school gym in central England, 12-year-old Momin Rashid is excited to be one of the 10,000 performers who will take part in a pageant to honour Queen Elizabeth's 70 years on the throne.

The event will conclude four days of national celebrations next month to mark the queen's Platinum Jubilee, bringing together military bands, dancers and well-known figures from sport and entertainment.

While Rashid, who is of Pakistani heritage and born in

Birmingham, is looking forward to dancing in front of Buckingham Palace, and says the queen loves her people, the monarchy itself is a somewhat distant concept. Asked if he felt close to the royal family, he immediately replied: "No".

Polls suggest such an attitude should not be a surprise. Elizabeth, 96, the longest-reigning monarch in British history, enjoys widespread popularity according to surveys, with many of her subjects, particularly the more elderly, holding her in deep affection.

But the picture for the monarchy as a whole is less clear. Research by think tank British Future found that 58% of people thought the country should keep the institution for the foreseeable



Students rehearse a Bollywood-themed dance for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pageant, in Birmingham. Reuters

future, but 25% thought the end of the queen's reign was the time for Britain to become a republic.

In Scotland, less than half supported the monarchy, younger people were also far more am-

bivalent, and only 37% of ethnic minorities backed the royals compared to 33% who would prefer a republic after the queen.

While Elizabeth has remained above the fray, the insti-

tution's reputation has taken a battering in the last year, with her son Prince Andrew settling a U.S. lawsuit, in which he was accused of sexually abusing a teenage girl, in February.

That followed the exodus of her grandson Prince Harry who quit royal duties to move to Los Angeles with his American wife Meghan and son Archie, from where they have accused Buckingham Palace of racism and being uncaring.

16-year-old Milen Champaneri's mother Anita said her feeling of connection to the monarchy had soured in recent years, leaving her feeling uneasy about celebrating the Platinum Jubilee and also questioning the longevity of the monarchy. **REUTERS**



## PLAYING TONIGHT

Indian Premier League  
MI vs DC; 7:30 PM  
Live on Star Sports Network

## BRIEFLY

## Mixed compound team in contention for bronze

**Gwangju:** India's mixed team of compound archers will be fighting for a bronze medal after its semi-final defeat while the recurve team put up yet another dismal show at the World Cup (Stage Two) here. The mixed pair of Abhishek Verma and Avneet Kaur ousted Denmark (157-155), fancied Mexico (156-153) before going down to 10th seed Estonia (156-158) in a close semi-final to end up in the bronze medal play-off round. The Indian mixed team will take on fourth-seeded Turkey in its bid to win country's third bronze medal from the meet. In absence of Olympians Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari, who have been axed, India fielded a new-look mixed team of Tarundeep Rai and Ridhi Phor. The seventh seed Indian duo, who got a bye into the pre-quarters, defeated 10th seed Japan 5-3 (33-38, 36-36, 38-32, 38-36), but in the next round they lost to Germany 1-5 (37-37, 32-35, 36-37). The two-time Olympic team gold medallist first ousted Rai 2-6 (27-29, 29-28, 28-29, 27-30) in the pre-quarters. **PTI**

## Focus on triple jump in Indian GP

**Bhubaneswar:** In the absence of the country's top athletes, who are currently training abroad, the men's triple jump and the women's throws events are expected to be the top draws in the Indian GP 3 on Saturday. The spotlight will be on the women's throws where Abha Khatua and Manpreet Kaur (shot put), Navjeet Kaur Dhillion (discus throw) and Sarita Ramit Singh (hammer throw) will vie for top honours. In the triple jump, a quality competition can be expected with Eldhose Paul, Abdulla Aboobacker, Karthik Unnikrishnan and Gaulty Venister Devasahayam likely to push one another. Eldhose Paul (16.99m) and Karthik Unnikrishnan (16.81), season leaders in India, will seek consistency. **PTI**

## Anand leads with 11 points after Rd 6

**Warsaw:** Viswanathan Anand continued his superb form on the second day of the rapid event of the Superbet Rapid and Blitz Poland tournament here by posting victories in rounds four and five before local hero Jan-Krzysztof Duda halted the winning streak in the sixth. Anand is ahead of the field with five wins and a draw, tallying 11 points after six rounds. After jumping the lead on day one with three impressive wins, the veteran Indian Grandmaster, got the better of Ukraine's Kirill Shevchenko in the first match of the day. He followed it up with a brilliant victory over the highly-rated Lev Aronian. In the sixth round, Anand took on Polish star Jan-Krzysztof Duda in a French Paulsen Attack game and the duo settled for a draw in 51 moves. The Indian ace had on Thursday defeated Radoslaw Wojtaszek of Poland in the first round, before getting the better of American Wesley So and Anton Korobov. **PTI**



## PACK A BAG

Rajya Sabha MP and six-time world boxing champion Mary Kom with daughter Merilyn during house shifting from her official residence on Humayun Road. *Renuka Puri*

# Ashwin lets bat do the talking

Rajasthan ensure they get two chances to make final after ending CSK's season with another defeat

**SYNOPSIS:** CSK sign off with a Moeen masterclass. Royals ride Ashwin's pyrotechnics to seal win and second spot

**SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY**  
MAY 20

PROMOTING RAVICHANDRAN Ashwin up the order turned out to be a tactical masterstroke for Rajasthan Royals. When the game became tight, his 40 not out off 23 balls became the decisive factor. Not often does Ashwin score his runs at a 173-plus strike rate. On Friday, he bossed an inexperienced Chennai Super Kings bowling attack.

No way does it belittle the all-rounder's effort, a match-winning contribution despite Royals chasing a very gettable 151 for victory. His knock was the most effective on the night, with Royals winning by five wickets and two balls to spare to cement their place in the top-two of the points table, thereby getting two chances of making the final. The best innings of the match, though, came from Moeen Ali.

### Moeen masterclass

A loud cheer greeted MS Dhoni's announcement at the toss that he would be back next year. CSK carried the positive vibe, batting first. But Ruturaj Gaikwad got out in the first over. In came Moeen and started to play an innings of such brilliance that the fans temporarily shed the Dhoni ditty and serenaded the left-hander with 'Moeen, Moeen' chants.

With their season done and dusted, CSK played this game for entertainment. And the spectators were entertained by arguably the best white-ball batting of the summer yet, as Moeen made run-scoring feel like music with the lightness of touch. Going beyond



Ravichandran Ashwin made an unbeaten 40 off 23 to seal a second spot for Rajasthan Royals. *Sportzpics*

trophies and milestones, sport is basically about savouring moments. Moeen's Powerplay batting was something to savour.

He used the bat like a magic wand and picked the gaps with precision. Not a single shot was played in anger. Moeen made room, opened up the offside and gently lofted an Ashwin delivery over cover for a six. His treatment of Trent Boult was a cultured decimation of the fast bowler.

Boult bowled full on the legs. Moeen's pick-up shot for six oozed lazy elegance. The next five balls went for five fours to complete a 26-run over. Intelligence and timing were the hallmarks of Moeen's hitting – all proper cricket shots. The merry hitting took the batsman to a 19-ball half-century. Boult shook his head in disbelief.

Devon Conway at the other end had the box seat. He was purely Moeen's support cast during that phase, but his presence to complement his partner was important for CSK. As it turned out, Conway's dismissal – leg-

before to Ashwin, missing a sweep – seriously hampered his team's batting rhythm.

Narayan Jagadeesan couldn't rotate strike and got out for 1. Ambati Rayudu was done in by a Yuzvendra Chahal leg-break and CSK lost the momentum, going boundary-less for 45 balls at one stage. The pitch became a tad sluggish and the older ball made free-scoring difficult for Moeen even. CSK were 94/3 after 10 overs. They added only 56 runs in the next 10. Moeen scored an exquisite 93 off 57 balls, but middle-overs batting yet again hurt the four-time champions. Going ahead, they also need a back-end marauder, as Dhoni's career is gradually heading towards a golden sunset.

Credit must be given to Royals bowlers for pulling things back. Chahal (2/26) was excellent and Obed McCoy miserly (2/20). Ashwin came back well to claim 1/28.

### Ashwin's pyrotechnics

Royals were aiming for a top-two finish and two bites at making the final. Thanks to Yashasvi Jaiswal, they were off to a flyer. The first two balls from Mukesh Choudhary went for fours. Jaiswal driving on the up and through extra cover was top class. But Jos Buttler's dismissal for two to a fine catch from Moeen at slip off Simarjeet Singh was setback. For three innings on the spin now, the Royals talisman has fallen for single-digit scores, the law of averages probably catching up with him. But his team marched ahead, through a fine partnership between Jaiswal and Sanju Samson.

A superb return catch from Mitchell Santner nipped Samson's promising innings in the bud and Devdutt Padikkal was done in by Moeen's flight. Ashwin came at No. 5 and showed intent with a six against the off-spinner. Jaiswal at the other end had reached a 39-ball half-century, but the challenge for the 20-year-old was to show maturity beyond his years. Little wonder then that he was upset with himself after getting out to a

### IPL TABLE

TEAM	M	W	L	PT	NRR
GT	14	10	4	20	0.316
RR	14	9	5	18	0.298
LSG	14	9	5	18	0.251
RCB	14	8	6	16	-0.253
DC	13	7	6	14	0.255
KKR	14	6	8	12	0.146
PK	13	6	7	12	-0.043
SRH	13	6	7	12	-0.230
CSK	14	4	10	8	-0.203
MI	13	3	10	6	-0.577

Prashant Solanki half-tracker. He tried to hit the delivery a little too hard, mistimed it and holed out to Matheesha Pathirana at deep backward square. At 104/4 after 15 overs, it was anybody's game.

A depleted CSK had a callow Solanki, Pathirana's unorthodox action and the uncapped Choudhary to fall back on at the death. Royals boasted Shimron Hetmyer's power-hitting pedigree and Ashwin's innovations and intelligence. Solanki got rid of Hetmyer, but Ashwin was in fine hitting form and the asking rate was always under control. Pathirana in particular didn't bowl to his field, making things easier for the batsmen and Ashwin saw things off to take Royals to a second-placed finish. The chest thumping added spice to his celebration.

**BRIEF SCORES:** CSKs: 150 for 6 in 20 overs (Moeen Ali 93, MS Dhoni 26; Obed McCoy 2/20, Yuzvendra Chahal 2/26) lost to **RR:** 151 for 5 in 19.4 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 59, Ravichandran Ashwin 40 not out; Prashant Solanki 2/20).

# Kohli open to taking a break, to consult Dravid

**SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY**  
KOLKATA, MAY 20

THERE WAS one shot in Virat Kohli's innings against Gujarat Titans on Thursday; a supremely elegant lofted drive off Rashid Khan for a six. It oozed sublimity and also, supreme confidence. Kohli's 54-ball 73 also revelled in its emotional overload. Mental fatigue never looked to be an issue.

A match-winning knock against Titans notwithstanding, Kohli has been going through an elongated form slump and pundits have waded into it, offering contrasting opinions. Sunil Gavaskar didn't see anything wrong in Kohli's batting and said that the player needed a bit of luck to get a big score. As it happens during a lean patch, rub off the green deserted Kohli.

Former India head coach Ravi Shastri, on the other hand, suggested that an "over-cooked" Kohli needed a break. A relentless bubble life has its downside and like Shastri had said after the last year's T20 World Cup: "I don't care who you are, if your name is Bradman, if you're in a bubble as well, your average will come down because you're human."

Kohli is not averse to taking a break to allow himself a "mental reset". "There's one person precisely who has mentioned it which is Ravi bhai and that's because he has seen from close quarters over the last six-seven years the reality of the situation that I have been in. The amount of cricket that I have played and the ups and downs and the



Virat Kohli scored 73 off 54 balls, his highest score in IPL 2022.

toll that it takes on you to play three formats of the game plus the IPL for 10-11 years non-stop with the seven years of captaincy in between," he told *Star Sports* in an interview.

Kohli added: "So to take a break and when to take a break is obviously something that I need to take a call on, but it is only a

"There's one person precisely who has mentioned it which is Ravi bhai and that's because he has seen from close quarters over the last six-seven years the reality of the situation that I have been in."

### VIRAT KOHLI

healthy decision for anyone to take some time off and just rejuvenate yourself mentally and physically.

"It's only a matter of creating a balance and finding that balance which is right for you as an individual moving forward and I will definitely discuss this with all the people involved – Rahul bhai, the Indian team management – everyone to chart out whatever is best for myself and for the team definitely."

Operating from a bio-secure environment can affect mental health.

Ben Stokes fell prey to the pressure last year and took an indefinite break from cricket to prioritise mental well-being. Kohli had backed the England all-rounder, saying: "Periodic breaks are important for the players. I'm sure more players will take breaks like Ben Stokes has, just to cope with this tough bubble life."

As regards to his form, the former India captain hasn't scored a century in any format since November 2019.

This IPL, where he has scored 309 runs in 14 matches, has been underwhelming by his lofty standards. Along the way, he suffered the ignominy of having golden ducks in suc-

cessive matches. Trying to draw a 2014 analogy, when he had become James Anderson's bunny in England and finished with 134 runs from 10 Test innings, could be tempting. Kohli begs to differ.

"What happened in England was a pattern so something that I could work on, something that I had to overcome. Right now, there's nothing that you can point out saying there's a problem here. So that for me is an easier thing to process because I know that I'm batting well and at times when I start feeling that rhythm back then I know I'm batting well, which wasn't the case in England (where) I didn't feel like I was batting well at all. So I had to work hard on one thing that I could be exposed to again and again which I overcame," he said. At the same time, however, he spoke about not putting the current phase behind him.

India's assignments after the IPL are a white-ball home series against South Africa and another T20I series in Ireland followed by a one-off Test in Manchester.

If the Chetan Sharma-led selection committee picks two different teams for the two different formats, Kohli, along with the current India captain Rohit Sharma and fast bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami, is expected to have downtime before the squad assemblies for the England tour.

Coming back to Kohli's innings against Titans, the bearhug from Royal Challengers Bangalore head coach Sanjay Bangar and skipper Faf du Plessis attested happiness and showed how eagerly they were waiting for the turnaround.

# I will be back next year, want to thank fans: Dhoni

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, MAY 20

MS DHONI, on Friday, put an end to his retirement speculations, saying that he would come back strong next year. The Chennai Super Kings captain also spoke about how it would be unfair not to thank the fans in Chennai. Ahead of CSK's final game in this IPL, against Rajasthan Royals, toss presenter Ian Bishop asked Dhoni whether he would be returning next year.

"Definitely. It's a simple reason; it will be unfair to not play in Chennai and say thank you. Mumbai is one place, whereas a team and as an individual I have got a lot of love and affection. But it wouldn't be nice to the CSK fans. And also, hopefully, next year there will be an opportunity where the teams will be travelling so it will be a like thank you to all the different places where we will be playing games at different venues," the CSK skipper replied.

The IPL would return to its traditional home and away mode next year and from Dhoni's comment, it felt like that next season would be his swansong as a player, through a pan-India thanksgiving. Dhoni preferred to keep a bit of mystery though. "Whether it will be my last year or not that's a big question because you know we can't really predict about something two years down the line, but definitely I will be work-

# Wimbledon loses ranking points over Russia ban

**REUTERS**  
MAY 20

WIMBLEDON WILL be stripped of ranking points over its decision to exclude players from Russia and Belarus from competing at the 2022 Championships due to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, the men's ATP Tour said on Friday. Tennis governing bodies have banned Russia and Belarus from international team competitions following the invasion, but allowed players from the two countries to continue competing as neutrals.

"The ability for players of any nationality to enter tournaments based on merit, and without discrimination, is fundamental to our Tour," the ATP said in a statement.

"The decision by Wimbledon to ban Russian and Belarusian players from competing in the UK this summer undermines this principle and the integrity of the ATP Ranking system. It is also inconsistent with our Rankings agreement. Absent a change in circumstances, it is with great regret and reluctance that we see no option but to remove ATP Ranking points from Wimbledon for 2022."

The move by the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) is the first time players have been banned on grounds of nationality since the immediate post-World War Two era when German and Japanese players were excluded.

### Always in contention: Djokovic

World No.1 Novak Djokovic said his Italian Open victory was the perfect time to find form as he looks to retain his French Open crown after mixed results earlier in the clay-court swing. The 20-times Grand Slam winner was toppled by Alejandro Davidovich Fokina early in Monte Carlo and Andrey Rublev in the Belgrade final in April, before he fell to teenager Carlos Alcaraz in the Madrid semi-finals this month.

Unable to defend his Australian Open title due to his refusal to be vaccinated against COVID-19, Djokovic clinched his first title in more than six months when he won in Rome last week without dropping a set.

"This surface is the most demanding one... it requires a lot of effort mentally, emotionally, physically," Djokovic told reporters on Friday. "For me, historically it has required some time and several tournaments to really feel comfortable playing on clay."

"Rarely did I feel my best on clay in the first or second tournament in the season. That was the case this season again. It took me two tournaments to really feel that I'm getting closer to the desired level."

"Rome has been a very successful tournament for me in my career, and it was really coming at the right time. I always managed to get to the later stages of that tournament in just the week before Paris, perfect time to really find form."

Hoping to put his turbulent start to the season behind him, Djokovic said 13-times Roland Garros champion Rafa Nadal and the in-form Alcaraz were among the favourites to win at Roland Garros but added he was confident of replicating his success from last year. "I feel that I am always in contention to fight for any Grand Slam trophy. I believe in my own abilities. I believe in my own abilities to get far and to fight for one of the most prestigious trophies in the world of tennis. As a defending champion of course more so, (I) believe I can do it again. Reliving the memories from last year is something that obviously gives me goosebumps and motivation to try to replicate that."



MS Dhoni said he would like to travel to different venues during the IPL to express his gratitude to fans. *File*

ing hard to come back strong next year."

The *Indian Express* had earlier reported that the CSK management expected their captain fantastic to be back as a player and leading the team next year.

Ravindra Jadeja was the franchise's preferred transition route, which didn't work out. Dhoni had to return as captain mid-season. The player himself had dropped a hint last week that he would be back next term.

"... we have a few positives that we will take into the next season. But what is important is that whatever gaps are there, to try to fill in those gaps so that leakages don't happen," he had said at the post-match presentation, after CSK's return-leg fixture against Mumbai Indians. Today, Dhoni confirmed it.



Calvert-Lewin stars as Everton secure EPL status

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON, MAY 20

WHEN **DOMINIC Calvert-Lewin** headed the ball into the net, Everton fans were ready to start celebrating their team's Premier League status being preserved.

A combination of astonishment and relief sent supporters flooding onto the Goodison Park field on Thursday night. From two goals down to Crystal Palace, Everton was leading 3-2. But there were still at least five minutes remaining. The field had to be cleared before the fans could spill back on at the final whistle, sure the Merseyside club's stay in the top division will extend to 69 years.

The outpouring of joy saw the grass covered in blue-shirted fans carrying smoke grenades as the players remained pitchside behind security. In the mayhem, Palace manager Patrick Vieira looked to be goaded by an Everton fan before he kicked out. While Everton is safe, it will be only Burnley and Leeds trying to avoid being the third and final team relegated in the final round of the season on Sunday.

"At halftime, we are not dead and buried," Everton manager Frank Lampard said. "But anyone on the outside would say that and it is the character of this club, the fans and the players that dragged us through," he added. The Everton fans made their presence felt outside Goodison Park with blue smoke shrouding the streets as the teams arrived. There wasn't anything to celebrate inside after the 21st minute when Jean-Philippe Mateta got in front of defender Vitalii Mykolenko to head in from Eberechi Eze's free kick. Everton was enraged that Jordan Ayew was only booked for a scissor tackle on Anthony Gordon before he scored Palace's second. Mateta's cross was punched by goalkeeper Jordan Pickford only as far as Wilfried Zaha. The follow-up was parried and Everton midfielder Abdoulaye Doucoure failed to clear the danger before Ayew poked into the net. Everton made a comeback that began in the 54th minute. Mason Holgate nodded down a free kick and Michael Keane netted with his weaker left foot. Pickford's one-handed save from Mateta kept Everton in the game. Richardson leveled in the 75th minute and Calvert-Lewin headed Everton in front in the 85th from Demarai Gray's free kick.



PRAFUL PATEL

The artful dribbler shown the red card

The career politician made a reluctant entry into football administration and was at the helm for over a decade

MIHIR VASAVDA  
MUMBAI, MAY 20

FOR SOMEONE not interested in football administration, Praful Patel has done well for himself.

The career politician has been at the helm of the All India Football Federation (AIFF) for more than a decade, was named the Vice-President of the Asian Football Council in 2015 and, four years later, got promoted to the all-powerful FIFA Council, enjoying perks including a net annual compensation of \$250,000, daily allowances of up to \$250 on duty and having access to the best seats at any game at the World Cups.

Away from home, Patel has sailed smoothly. At home, however, he has often had to wade through troubled waters, be it the issue of the shrinking map of domestic football, the stagnation of the national team, or the delay in holding elections for the next AIFF president.

On May 18, his 13-year stint as the president of the AIFF effectively ended after the Supreme Court appointed a three-member Committee of Administrators to run the federation's day-to-day affairs and finalise a constitution that would pave the way for electing Patel's successor. His term ended as abruptly as it began.

For 34 years, two politicians have governed Indian football. From 1988 to 2009, Congressman Priya Ranjan Dasmuni headed the federation. When he got bed-ridden, Patel, who was the president of the Western India Football Association and an AIFF vice-president at the time, took over.

Reluctantly, he underlines. "I had nothing to do with Indian football," he had told *The Indian Express* in an interview two years ago. "I was only a vice-president and happy to do my thing in Maharashtra. It's only when Mr Dasmuni got unwell that I got in. Otherwise, I was not coming into Indian football."

Reluctant he might have been, but for a decade after that, Patel continued to stay in the position of power. During this period, India touched its lowest-ever world ranking of 173, climbing up to the top 100 for the first time in 21 years in March 2015; some of the traditional football pockets lost their zing while new centres sprang up; youth development plans remained on paper even as the country hosted some of the biggest international age-group tournaments; the domestic game for men remained in a state of flux while women's football continued to be severely neglected.



By appointing a CoA, the Supreme Court ended Praful Patel's reign over AIFF.

Patel, federation officials hasten to say, never meddled with the everyday affairs of the AIFF, giving each department the space to do their own thing. But he guided and gave shape to major policy decisions that have had lasting ramifications on Indian football.

The commercial partnership with what was back then known as IMG-Reliance, now Reliance Sports, was one such decision. While the Rs 700-crore, 15-year-deal, signed in December 2010, gave the cash-strapped federation some financial reprieve, Indian football paid a price.

The AIFF spent a major part of the last decade trying to restructure club football, as the Reliance-backed Indian Super League – a 'disrupter', in Patel's words – with new clubs and new owners, overtook the I-League as the premier division. It was in the I-League that some of India's oldest teams took part.

The confusion that prevailed during the time helped no one. The players' salaries skyrocketed but the number of matches they play in a year remained among the lowest in

the world, a situation that prevails even today. Some of the iconic teams, like Dempo and Shillong Lajong, scaled down their operations while the new teams struggled to find the same level of local connection. Grassroots development took a back seat as a consequence, which forced Patel and the AIFF to take a direction that was criticised by many – adopting a top-down approach to football. In Patel's early years as the president, the AIFF started a number of academies across the country but as each demanded a high level of maintenance, most were shut down. Around the same time, a master plan was drafted by the then technical director, Rob Baan, to develop the grassroots and give some direction to football activities across India. Once again, it never saw the light of day. With the clubs not producing players and the overall lack of patience and resources to develop an ecosystem organically, the AIFF decided to approach the development activities in an unconventional manner. They did so by bidding for major international events,

hoping it would increase the appetite for domestic football, result in more investment and eventually trickle down to the grassroots.

It helped that FIFA, which sees India's billion-plus population as a market for its commercial activities, was willing to invest in India. During Patel's period, FIFA put money into infrastructure projects in India and awarded the country the rights to host the under-17 men's World Cup in 2017 and the women's edition later this year.

It's hard to dispute that the infrastructure developed for those tournaments, with investment from state and Central government, means the country now has better football grounds and training facilities compared to the situation 10 years ago.

But the top-down approach has not really worked out as Patel would have planned. This was evident when the Sports Ministry advised the AIFF in March to focus strictly on developing grassroots while slashing its annual budget to a mere Rs 5 crore, down almost 84% in the previous four years, citing poor performance. The government's perceived vote of no-confidence was the latest in a series of setbacks Patel has suffered in the last few months. While cutting its budget, the Sports Ministry also told the Supreme Court that the federation should hold elections without further delay. Then, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India reportedly decided to conduct an audit of the AIFF for the last four financial years. And the state federations began to speak up as well – be the heads of Kerala, Karnataka or Delhi, whose president Shaji Prabhakaran requested intervention from FIFA. On the political sphere, Patel, whose family has several business interests, remains a Rajya Sabha MP, with his tenure ending in July. When his party NCP was part of the UPA government at the Centre, Patel headed the prestigious Civil Aviation Ministry. The prospect of a similar high-profile job seems unlikely for the near future, with the NCP fortunes for now confined to Maharashtra.

His critics argue that Patel's rise in world football has been faster than the Indian national team's. It's an allegation that makes him "sad". "I am happy that at the world stage, first AFC (Asian Football Confederation) and now FIFA, there is so much optimism outside India. Sometimes I feel sad there is so much pessimism within India. They don't know anything and they are optimistic. We know everything and we are pessimistic," he had said.

Whether a change in guard turns the pessimism into optimism remains to be seen.

English FA investigating pitch invasions

REUTERS  
LONDON, MAY 20

THE ENGLISH Football Association is investigating all incidents of fans invading the field and has condemned their "anti-social behaviour" as completely unacceptable.

The FA's statement comes after Everton fans invaded the pitch at Goodison Park following Dominic Calvert-Lewin's 85th-minute winner and at the final whistle of Thursday's 3-2 victory over Crystal Palace, which secured their spot in the Premier League next season. Palace manager Patrick Vieira was also involved in an altercation with a fan when he was walking towards the away dressing room after the final whistle. The fan appeared to provoke Vieira with hand gestures, after which Vieira kicked him to the ground and had to be led away by other supporters.

"We are very concerned about the rise in anti-social behaviour from fans as we reach the end of the season," the FA said on Friday. "Football stadiums should always be a safe and enjoyable space for everyone, and these incidents are completely unacceptable and have no place in our game. It is illegal to enter the pitch area in any stadium and these actions are putting players, fans and people who run the game at great risk. This simply cannot continue and we can confirm that we are investigating all of the incidences." The FA said clubs needed to prevent pitch invasions from occurring and urged them to take their own action against those that break the rules and the law.

"The FA will be seeking to do all that it can to work with clubs as well as addressing the issues from a disciplinary perspective," the statement added. West Ham United manager David Moyes said such incidents have been an "issue", while Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said pitch invaders pose a danger to players and staff.

Situation same in lower leagues

There have also been a number of incidents of pitch invasions in England's lower leagues. Nottinghamshire Police said that a man had been arrested and interviewed on suspicion of assault as part of an investigation into video footage showing an incident during Tuesday's Championship playoff semi-final between Nottingham Forest and Sheffield United.

Police did not provide details of the incident but a video on social media showed United striker Oli McBurnie, wearing a surgical boot, appearing to stamp on a fan on the ground during a pitch invasion after Forest won on penalties at the City Ground.

ADVERTORIAL

trustea leads the way for a sustainable Indian tea industry



**THESE WOMEN** pluck tea leaves at a tea estate in the Nilgiris. When asked what they wanted for themselves, they spoke of wanting their children to be educated, to have a house of their own and enhance the livelihood of their family.

Across the tea supply chain, livelihood is an important factor in determining the health of the industry and its future sustainability. It is one of the three pillars of *trustea*, a certification program created to augment the sustainability journey of the Indian tea industry.

*trustea* is a sustainability program conceived by and created for the Indian tea industry. A certified *trustea* tea Producers complies with all the laws in India, including but not limited to worker rights, workplace safety, rights, protection and empowerment of women at the workplace, preservation of bio diversity and food safety. *trustea* partners with the tea industry to jointly address the myriad challenges and complexities in its efforts to create a sustainable tea supply chain in India.

About 80 - 90% of the tea produced in India is consumed within the country. *trustea* has established a sustainability certification based on global best practices that can be adopted by any tea producing facility, either a large tea estate or a bought leaf factory. The af-

filiated small tea growers are also brought into the ambit of sustainable farming with focussed training and handholding. By drawing in the estate, the bought leaf factory and the small holder farmers into a single certification system, *trustea* has been able to bring in a standard against which all tea can be validated for sustainable practices. Aiding its acceptance is the multi-stakeholder involvement in conception and governance of the program. Further, the program has been sustained by support from international organisations like IDH - the sustainable trade initiative from Netherlands and local partners, Tata Consumer Products Ltd., Hindustan Uniliver Ltd and "Gujarat Tea Processors and Packers Limited."

With livelihood, environment and safety form the other two pillars of *trustea*. Preservation of the biodiversity where tea is grown has become increasingly urgent. Besides implementing effluent treatment and waste segregation, *trustea* has been nudging farmers in the use of authorised agro-chemicals and adoption of a biodiversity action plan that prioritises conservation of the environment. *trustea*'s protocols on traceability and environmental protection have verifiable criteria for a deforestation-free supply chain.

**SAFETY HAS** had a more far-reaching aspect, from workplace safety to food safety. Plenty of training and awareness has gone into this aspect of *trustea*'s focus, revealing the gaps and triggering actions. Every day, *trustea*'s implementation partners are on the ground, handholding the members through the changes and improvements in policies and practices.

In Tinsukia, small farmer Bijet Goswami has adopted the recommendations by creating a buffer zone between the tea bushes and the residential or public areas. No chemicals are sprayed or applied in the buffer zone, preventing chemicals from affecting residents and public. In Golaghat, Tankeshwar Orang makes sure that he wears his PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) while working with chemicals. "I am now handling all the waste generated in my small tea garden in a systematic way. The organic and inorganic waste is segregated and managed based on the training received from *trustea*," he says.

A notable innovation is the proprietary traceability app –Users will be able to demonstrate the traceability of their farm produce in a transparent way. This will bring Indian tea production at par with global best practices in tracing the origin and movement of agri-commodities. With verifiable and credible traceability data, farmers will be able to gain the full confidence of the market while selling the tea leaves. Consequently, this will assure consumers on the authenticity of the tea they buy. Over time, this app is expected to play a key role in establishing a fully traceable tea supply chain.

**Rajesh Bhuyan, Director, Trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation** says "*trustea* is working with innovative technology-based solutions to create a world class sustainable supply chain. Our operations are



managed by an enterprise solution, the *trustea* Code Management System, that brings together the program constituents - tea producers, implementation partners, third party certification bodies and the *trustea* program - onto one technology platform. This enables transparent and real time services and data, backed by a secure cloud storage capability. In fact, during Covid when field interventions were restricted this system enabled us to provide seamless front-end services like assessments and audits to our stakeholders. We have developed multilingual animated videos to foster an easy learning environment accessible through a dedicated *trustea* YouTube channel. More significantly, we have pioneered the first dedicated digital traceability app for the Indian tea industry, *tracetea* to bring the benefits of technology to small tea growers. We have taken up an ambi-

tious project for capturing GIS-based locational database of *trustea*-affiliated small tea growers towards creating a digital map of the program's footprint."

INDCOSERVE is Asia's largest cooperative of small tea growers. All of INDCOSERVE factories are *trustea* certified or in the process of certification. Supriya Sahu, CEO of INDCOSERVE when they became a *trustea* member, has said, "I have personally witnessed 3 significant improvements due to *trustea* certification:

1. Changes in the perception of the buyers
2. An awareness within the organisation to change towards betterment.
3. Significant awareness has been created among our growers; they are cautious about not just the quantity of leaves but also the quality/ value addition.



**ISEAL's Executive Director Karin Kreider** said, "I am very excited to have *trustea* join ISEAL as a Community Member. Not only are they our first member based in India, but they are also a nationally applicable standard that has been developed with and by Indian tea industry stakeholders. I look forward to working together in the coming months and years."

*trustea* has brought innovative interventions in engaging with farmer bodies, small tea growers, women pluckers, and factory workers so that true capacity building can be achieved.

It has also put in place a structured and defined Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (ME&L) programme, in line with global best practices in sustainability. This ensures that outcome and impact are scientifically analysed to take action.

In 2021, *trustea* became a member of the prestigious ISEAL alliance, the global membership organisation for ambitious, collaborative, and transparent sustainability systems.

**RECENTLY**, *trustea* was awarded the 4th edition of the "ICC Social Impact Award" for its on-ground impact towards sustainability. This validates the work done by *trustea* towards achieving its sustainability goals.

In the pipeline is the *trustea* seal on retail tea packs, offering Indian tea consumers the choice of sustainably produced tea. The seal will be a mark of assurance that the tea was produced according to "agreed, credible, transparent, and measurable criteria". It carries the promise of safe tea with minimal adverse impacts on bio diversity and encouraging the



wellbeing and livelihoods of tea farmers and workers. It is expected to give a huge impetus to all the constituents of the sustainable tea supply chain in India that *trustea* has been nurturing in its 8-year long journey.

**trustea's Reach:** *trustea* has so far engaged with 81,841 small tea growers (of an estimated 250,000), 640,000 tea workers (out of 3,500,000) and certified a total of 695 estates and Bought Leaf Factories.

As of December 2021, *trustea* has verified approximately 60% of the total tea produced in India for that year (*source: trustea*).

Please scan the QR code to know details about *trustea*

