

**BIGGEST TEAM TITLE IN BADMINTON**

# Team India scales the peak with first ever Thomas Cup

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

**SHIVANI NAIK**  
MUMBAI, MAY 15

THE VAGUE whiff of a dream turned to reality as the week wore on, and India inched closer to the impossible — Thomas Cup, the ultimate team title in badminton. A dozen players in Bangkok and their coaches, there and in India, believed through-out. It's a little secret that they've known for a month now: they were going to win the Thomas Cup. This was a date with destiny, meticulously envisioned and executed by India's most underrated and talented sportspersons — the men's badminton players. Kidambi Srikanth, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy. They have travelled

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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

FULL COVERAGE, [PAGE 13](#)

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



**PULLELA GOPICHAND**  
SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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

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

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
MUMBAI, MAY 15

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

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**CONG BRAINSTORMING SESSION ENDS**

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

**MANOJ CG**  
UDAIPUR, MAY 15

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

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

BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY UNNY



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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**EXPLAINED** **E** Action remains to be seen

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

**CHINTAN SHIVIR: MORE REPORTS** [PAGE 5](#)

## Split in BKU, new outfit leaders say will be 'apolitical'

**LALMANI VERMA**  
LUCKNOW, MAY 15

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**PM VISITS LUMBINI TODAY**

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

**YUBRAJ GHIMIRE & DIVYAA**  
KATHMANDU, NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

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

The construction of the 'India



The site for India's Buddhist cultural centre. *Yubraj Ghimire*

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Says Rakesh Tikait made political remarks



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

**BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA**  
CONGRESS LEADER  
[PAGE 10](#)

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

**PAGE 1 ANCHOR****SANDIP G**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

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



**ANDREW SYMONDS**  
1975-2022

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

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

he had admitted.

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

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

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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Later in the evening, BKU said that it has dismissed seven leaders from the outfit, accusing them of indulging in fake propaganda against the organisation. In a statement issued by BKU's national general secretary, Anil Kumar Singh, the outfit said that seven leaders, including Rajesh Singh Chauhan, Anil Kumar, Harinam Verma, Chandramalla Mallik (all office bearers in the new outfit), have been dismissed from the organisation.


Rakesh Tikait, in a tweet, said that the seven dismissed leaders were "hurting" the interests of farmers by forming a separate outfit.

"The new outfit has been formed under the pressure of the BJP government. BKU will not be weakened by it. Instead, it will become stronger and the movement will continue," Rakesh Tikait said.









**U.P. JAL VIDYUT NIGAM LIMITED**  
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**e-Tender Notice No. 01/EE(Design)/2022-23**  
Online e-Tenders in two parts are invited from manufacturers or accredited representatives for Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 02 No. 132 KV SF6 Circuit Breaker at Obra Hydro-electric Project, Obra, Sonbhadra (U.P.) as detailed below.  
1. Cost of Tender inclusive of GST @ 18% (Rs.): Rs. 3540/-  
2. Earnest Money (Rs.): Rs. 21,000/-  
3. Date of Opening (Part-I): 13.06.2022 (at 14.30 hrs.)  
4. Last date for submission of e-bids online :10.06.2022 (upto 14.00 hrs.)  
Part-I of the e-bid shall contain uploaded techno-commercial bid along with documents in support of deposition of tender fee & earnest money (EMD). If EMD is submitted in form of BG then the original copy of same shall be submitted along with hard copy of techno-commercial bid documents. Part-II shall contain price bid. Tender can be downloaded from and uploaded on e-procurement website: [www.etender.up.nic.in](http://www.etender.up.nic.in). Last date for submission of hard copy of techno-commercial bids shall be 13.06.2022 (upto 12.00 hrs.). Date of opening of price bid shall be intimated later. Undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the bids without assigning any reason thereof. Bidders should keep themselves updated in regard to publication of corrigendum (if any) by visiting e-procurement portal regularly. If the date of opening will be a holiday, the tender shall be opened on next working day at the same time.  
**EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (DESIGN)**  
Website : [www.upjvn.org](http://www.upjvn.org) "Save Electricity in the interest of Nation"

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

New Delhi: Truth about Gyanvapi mosque, Taj Mahal and Krishna Janmabhoomi in UP and all other disputed places in the country should come out before the people, senior RSS leader Indresh Kumar said on Sunday. Speaking to reporters here, he said the people want to know the truth about these places as they feel that it will help the country get "a right direction".

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

**Corrigendum**  
**निरस्तीकरण (Cancellation) सूचना**  
इस खण्ड के अन्तर्गत आमंत्रित की गयी अति अल्पकालीन निविदा सूचना संख्या 06/WED/KNP/2022-2023 के लाट संख्या 01, 02 तथा 03 को अपरिहार्य कारणों से निरस्त किया जाता है। लाट संख्या-04 को निरस्तीकरण से मुक्त समझा जाये।  
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**कार्यशाला स्थापन खण्ड, कानपुर**  
UPID-176296 Date-14.05.2022  
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UPID-176295 Date-14.05.2022  
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## Gyanvapi survey conducted amid heavy security, to continue today

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
VARANASI, MAY 15

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

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

The inspection of the complex began at 8 am Sunday and ended around noon. Shops and roads were shut down near the complex during the survey.

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



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

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

"The Commission after completing its work today decided that it will

continue the action on Monday from 8 am. All concerned people have been told to be present on Monday at 8 am," the statement added.

On Thursday, the court had appointed two additional advocate commissioners – Vishal Singh and Ajay Pratap Singh – after Advocate Commissioner Ajay Kumar Mishra was accused of being "biased" by the Muslim side.

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

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

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

**NABARD playing catalytic role in making UP self-reliant**  
Uttar Pradesh Regional Office of NABARD has been playing a pivotal role in facilitating the overall development of the State through its various refinance, infrastructural and development products. SK Dora, Chief General Manager of NABARD apprised that NABARD provided financial assistance of Rs. 16,854 crore for agriculture and rural development in Uttar Pradesh during FY 2021-22, which is 26 per cent higher than FY 2020-21. NABARD UP Chief also stated that besides refinance assistance to financial institutions and loan assistance to state governments for rural infrastructure, it has been supporting the rural economy through various promotional and developmental interventions with grant assistance. The developmental interventions by NABARD also marked a quantum leap from total grant support of Rs 47 crore during 2020-21 to Rs 71 crore during 2021-22, recording a phenomenal 50 per cent growth. Looking ahead, NABARD has projected a ground-level credit flow target of Rs 3.48 lakh crore for 2022-23 for financing by banks under priority sectors such as agriculture, SMEs and others in Uttar Pradesh, which is 11.98 per cent higher than the projections of Rs. 3.10 lakh crore for 2021-22.



**Aryavart Bank reduces home loan and vehicle loan interest rates**  
Aryavart Bank, sponsored by the Bank of India, has decided to reduce the interest rates on its home and vehicle loans. The Regional Manager of Aryavart Bank, Lucknow Sanjeev Kumar informed that after a 0.40 percent increase in the Repo rate by the Reserve bank of India, other nationalised as well as private banks are pondering over increasing the interest rates. "Now at Aryavart Bank, home loans will be available at an interest rate of 6.5 per cent, vehicle loans at 6.85 per cent and personal loans at 12.35 per cent. Additionally, the interest rates on fixed deposits have been increased to 5.15 per cent, which is greater than the rates in any other commercial bank," he said. Anand Tiwari, District coordinator of Aryavart Bank said that the bank was recognised with a certificate of appreciation by the Chief Development Officer of the region for the Financial Year under the PMEGP, ODOP and NRLM schemes, for granting the maximum number of loans. The Marketing officer of the bank, Piyush Kumar said that through the advertisement of these schemes, all the branches have been advised to ensure that all the customers interested in taking loans should, after submitting all the relevant documents, be granted the loan amount within three working days.



**NASERP organisation appoints Neelam Banshal as Delhi State Vice President**  
The National Association of Special Educators Rehab Professional Free-thought (NASERP), with the consent of the National President of the organisation Rajneesh Pandey and National General Secretary Abhay Srivastava, have nominated Neelam Banshal as State Vice President of the Delhi Unit. Neelam Banshal, who is currently serving as a special teacher in Delhi Government High School, is a native of Lucknow and is a role model for students with disabilities. P. Mishra, Samvart Mishra, Ambrish Bhadauria, Apoorva, Amit Awasthi, Mukesh Bajpai and the office bearers of all the states congratulated her.



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



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



**Graphic Era makes record by preparing 624 types of momos in 1.45 hours**  
On May 6, the hotel management team of Graphic Era's Department of Hotel Management, the 'Incredible-26', set a new record by preparing 624 types of dim sums (momos) in just one hour and 45 minutes. Of these, 416 were vegetarian dim sums, while 208 were non-vegetarian. This team was led by the institute's HOD of Hotel Management Amar Dabral. President Graphic Era Group, Prof (Dr) Kamal Ghanshala inaugurated the event. Dean Department of Hotel Management Dr RC Pandey and Head of the Department Amar Dabral said that this world record is the result of hard work and research which was carried out for months.

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



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

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



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



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



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

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



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



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



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

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



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

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

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

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



## 5 GOVT &amp; POLITICS



## KASHMIR TRIP

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

## MISSING OUT

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

## LANGUAGE GAP

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

## DISCORDANT NOTE

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

## MP: Khargone Collector, SP transferred

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BHOPAL, MAY 15

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

Stone-pelting had taken place during the Ram Navami procession in Khargone on April 10, leading to clashes and arson. The district administration also imposed curfew partially for 24 days. As per a government order issued late Saturday night, Khargone Collector Anugraha P has been transferred as officer on special duty at the Madhya Pradesh Bhawan in New Delhi. Ratlam's Collector Kumar Purushottam will be the new collector of Khargone.

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

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

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

## AHEAD OF GUJARAT POLLS

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

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
RAJKOT, MAY 15

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

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

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

## CONGRESS CHINTAN SHIVIR

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

MANOJ CG  
UDAIPUR, MAY 15

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

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

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

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



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

the next two-three days," she said.

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

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

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

erence to the elders sitting there".

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

In his speech, Rahul Gandhi said the idea that certain number of positions should be for younger people is a very important. "I am not saying there should be no older people. But I am saying when it comes to PCCs, block Congress committees... when it comes to our leadership we should have a healthy mix of youngsters and seniors," he said. Importantly, he said, "We must ensure the idea that one person per family should get one ticket."

FULL REPORT ON  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)



## NEW CEC TAKES CHARGE

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

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

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
AHMEDABAD, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

MANOJ CG  
UDAIPUR, MAY 15

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

Arguing that the political battle in India is between the ideologies of the Congress and BJP/RSS, he said this battle cannot be fought by a regional party.

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

"Regional parties belong to some caste. They don't represent

everyone. This battle cannot be fought by a regional party. Because this is a battle of ideology. The ideology of the RSS is fighting against the ideology of the Congress. The BJP will talk about the Congress, its leaders and workers but will not talk about regional parties. Because they know that regional parties have a space but they cannot defeat the BJP because they don't have an ideology. They have different approaches. We have a centralised approach..." he said.

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

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

DEBRAJ DEB  
AGARTALA, MAY 15

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## AAP, Twenty20 announce new political front in Kerala

SHAJU PHILIP  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 15

AAM AADMI Party and Kerala-based Twenty20, the CSR wing of garment major KITEK Group, on Sunday announced a new political front, People's Welfare Alliance (PWA), in Kerala.

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

Addressing the convention, Kejriwal said there are two options for the people of Kerala to select — "political parties which indulge in criminal activities and riots or honest parties such as AAP and Twenty20, which work for the welfare of the people"

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



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

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

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

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

liance PWA, is ruling four village panchayats in Ernakulam district. Twenty20 coordinator Sabu M Jacob said the PWA would make a situation conducive for peaceful life of people.

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



Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu meets new UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. *PTI*

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ABU DHABI, MAY 15

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

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

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

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









# The Ideas Page

## Steering the ship

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



ARUN PRAKASH

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

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

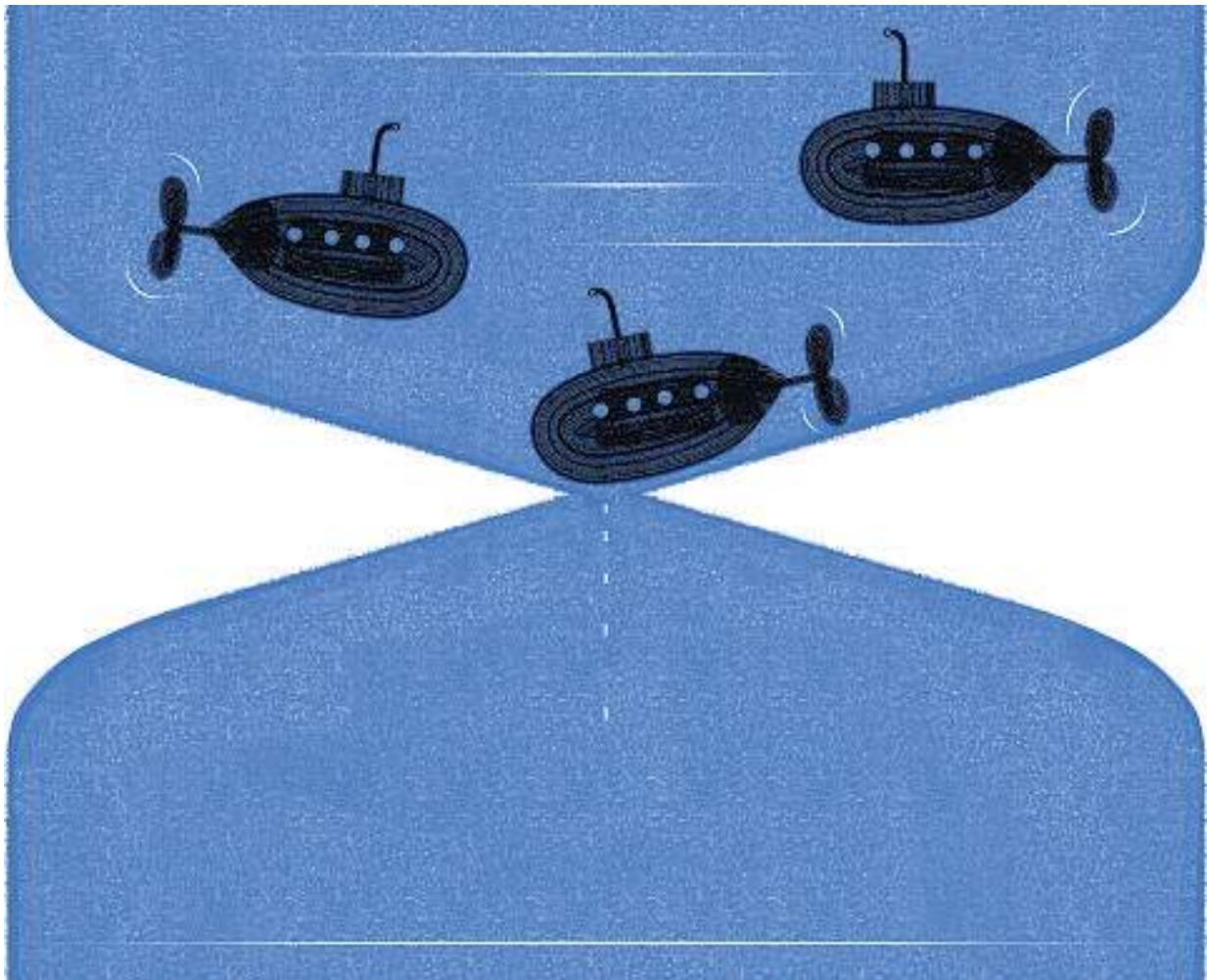
While protracted negotiations between the MoD and the French Naval Group were underway, none of the AIP systems had been fully proven. The contract for license-production of six Scorpenes was thus signed in 2005 without including this system. The Pakistan Navy (PN), obviously less risk-averse, acquired an untried French AIP system and installed it on three Agosta 90B submarines in 2008. What invests the P-751 programme with urgency is the fact that with the addition of eight Yuan Class Chinese submarines, the PN may field up to 11 AIP-equipped boats by 2028.

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

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

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

Unfortunately, allegations of corruption



C R Sasikumar

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

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

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

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

However, policy flip-flops and sluggish

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a retired Chief of Naval Staff

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

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

— THE GUARDIAN

## Gods aren't crazy, mobs are

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



G N DEVY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a cultural activist



N S GUNDUR

## A rasa yatra

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

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

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

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

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

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

Like any other children born to celebrities, junior Mansur had to struggle with the

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

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

Though Rajshekhar could not carve a niche for himself as a litterateur in Dharwad, he composed some poems and short stories in Kannada. Moreover, he was a great teacher

of literature and influenced generations of students like me to pursue literary studies seriously. While he looked thoroughly Indian in his music concerts, in our class his British RP marvellled us. The way he taught us Aristotle's *Poetics* made us inquisitive scholars; he was so erudite that he presented different translations of Aristotle and a variety of commentaries. And the way he read literary texts, for example, G B Shaw's *Saint Joan* (1924) enthralled us; he brought music into the dialogues he read aloud. When he taught American Literature, especially Emily Dickinson and Eugene O'Neill, he moved us to tears. He was a charming teacher and we boys were jealous of him as girls admired his personality. He also had the possibility of being a great critic, and his article on Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), published in a research journal, is one of the best critical pieces I have ever read.

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

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### THE RIGHT CODE

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

Aditi Pangarkar, Pune

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

H Upadhyay, via email

### CHANGE THE LAW

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

Saumya Shukla, Munger

### SECURITY CONCERNS

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

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur



# Shopian: Civilian killed in crossfire, probe ordered

BASHAARAT MASOOD  
SRINAGAR, MAY 15

POLICE ON Sunday said a civilian was killed in crossfire between militants and a joint team of police and Central Reserve Police Force in south Kashmir. The relatives of the civilian, however, contest police's claim. The Shopian administration has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the killing. Shoib Ahmad Ganie (22), a resident of Turkwangam village, Shopian, was killed in crossfire during the "chance encounter", police said.

"Terrorists fired upon joint patrol party of RPF 182 Bn (and) SOG of Pulwama near the bridge connecting Litter (village of) Pulwama with Turkwangam, Shopian. During the exchange of fire, 01 civilian namely Shoib Ah Ganie S/O Gh Mohd R/O Turkwangam Shopian got injured... He (the civilian) was referred to District Hospital Pulwama for treatment where he succumbed to injuries. Terrorists after brief chance encounter managed to slip into nearby orchards... A case has been registered and investigations taken up," Kashmir Zone Police tweeted. However, the relatives of Shoib contested police's claims. "He (Shoib) was in his shop wearing an olive shirt. When the forces reached there, he came down from his shop. The forces asked him to put his hands up and then, fired at him. They are now making up the stories to save the personnel behind the cold-blooded murder," said a relative. However, a senior police officer said: "It will be clear in police investigation and magisterial inquiry". Later in the day, Shopian DC Sachin Kumar Vaishya ordered a magisterial inquiry into the killing. The inquiry would be conducted by the Additional District Magistrate, Shopian.



Kashmiri Pandits protest in Srinagar, Sunday. Shuaib Masoodi

## PAGD seeks safe working environment for Pandits

BASHAARAT MASOOD  
SRINAGAR, MAY 15

THE LEADERS of People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration and a BJP delegation on Sunday met Lt Governor Manoj Sinha to seek safe working environment for the Kashmiri Pandit employees posted in the Valley. On Sunday morning, PAGD leaders led by its president Farooq Abdullah called on Lt Governor Sinha at Raj Bhawan in Srinagar. Abdullah was accompanied by ex-CM and Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti, Communist Party leader M Y Tarigami, Awami National Conference senior vice-president Muzaffar Shah and National Conference parliamentarian Hasnain Masoodi. "The meeting was positive. We met him (Sinha). We had only one issue to discuss and that was of Kashmiri Pandits. We sought safe and secure working environment for the [Kashmiri] Pandit employees," Tarigami told

The Indian Express. On Saturday, a delegation of the Kashmiri Pandit employees posted in Valley met the alliance partners decided to meet the Lt Governor. After the killing of Rahul Bhat, a clerk in the revenue department, by militants in Budgam district's Chadoora on Thursday, the Kashmiri Pandit employees have been demanding posting at secure locations. Tarigami said Lt Governor Sinha ruled out shifting of these employees to Jammu. "He said we can't agree to this demand (transfer to Jammu). He said they have been appointed under the PM's Package and there is no scope for that," Tarigami said, adding: "We told him to post them at suitable and secure places." Earlier in the day, a BJP delegation led by its J&K in charge Ravinder Raina also met LG Sinha. While the official statement from Raj Bhawan mentioned about the meeting between LG and the BJP delegation, it remained silent on the one with PAGD leaders.

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

ARUN SHARMA  
JAMMU, MAY 15

NATIONAL CONFERENCE (NC) vice-president Omar Abdullah on Sunday said Article 370 had been a "temporary" provision in the Constitution, but it could not have been removed as it formed the basis for accession of J&K to India. "At that time, the resolution was taken to the United Nations Security Council. On the basis of that resolution, Article 370 was not given a permanent status," he said, while addressing reporters at Surankote on the second day of his tour to Poonch district. "But thereafter when you say that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and it cannot be disintegrated from it, then you cannot remove that basis on which it had become an integral part of the country," he added. However, he refused to enter a debate over the issue, saying the matter was pending before the court. Pointing out that the



Article a temporary provision: Omar Abdullah

CJI had agreed to hear the matter after summer vacation, he said: "Let them start hearing and we will place our case before them." The statement assumes significance as it has come when the Supreme Court has agreed to consider listing after summer vacation the petitions challenging Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370, which gave special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. Of the nearly two dozen petitions pending before the Supreme Court, one has been filed by NC Lok Sabha members Mohammad Akbar Lone and Hasnain Masoodi, a retired High Court judge. Describing bifurcation of erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state

into two Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, the NC leader said there had never been such an example of a state being downgraded to a UT. Though UP, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh were bifurcated in the past, those were not made UTs, he added. "This is for the first time that a state was divided into two and both were made UTs," Omar said, adding: "No one can explain as to why it was done as elections were also not contested over this issue. I would have understood if BJP had said anything about it in its manifesto." Omar has been on tour of Pir Panjal region comprising Poonch and Rajouri districts to mobilise support for the NC, especially after the delimitation commission submitted its final report to the Central Government regarding new geographical boundaries of Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies in J&K. PM Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have already said that Assembly elections in J&K will follow the delimitation of constituencies.

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

DEEP MUKHERJEE  
JAIPUR, MAY 15

"THEY DIDN'T even let me take this into the examination hall," says Manish Regar, pointing to a metal buckle on his black baseball cap. Waiting at the Vidhyadhar Nagar stadium for a bus home, the 23-year-old talks incredulously about the strict security measures in place for the constable recruitment exam that began Friday. "They didn't allow this full-sleeved shirt I was wearing either," Regar says, as lathi-wielding policemen from the Rajasthan Armed Constabulary stand guard. This year, the test conducted by the Rajasthan Police has been held at 470 centres across the state. Spread over four days, the test will see around 19 lakh candidates, like Regar, vying for jobs. And with the sting of last year's Rajasthan Eligibility Examination for Teachers exam or REET still fresh, security has

been stepped up as the government desperately hopes to avoid a REET-like situation. Apart from the usual screening for prohibited items, candidates have to go through a biometric identification system and jammers block mobile phone signals in and around the venue. The REET scandal had come as a major embarrassment for the Congress, with CM Ashok Gehlot removing the chairman of the Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education. This time around, as free bus services ferried candidates to and from their respective exam centres, caution remains high. ADG (recruitment and promotion board) Binita Thakur says only police personnel and investigators have been allowed to be present inside the exam centres. With a digital biometric system in place too, she says, candidates, particularly women, have been instructed not to have mehendi or ink on their hands.

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

SOURAV ROY BARMAN  
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

IN A major push to scale up collaborations between Indian and foreign institutions in higher education, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has reached out to nearly 500 foreign universities, located across the US, UK, Europe and East Asia. The commission now plans to hold a meeting with the heads of foreign missions in India to discuss the possibilities of tie-ups in step with the recently notified regulations on twinning programmes, joint degree and dual degree programmes that will be applicable from the academic year 2022-23. The University Grants Commission (Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Education Institutions to offer Joint Degree, Dual Degree, and Twinning Programmes) Regulations, 2022 were notified in April. "We have also sent them



Written to 500 foreign universities: UGC chief M Jagadeesh Kumar

(foreign institutions) a list of eligible Indian universities with whom MoUs can be signed. We have not written to any universities in China although some of their universities fulfill the eligibility criteria," UGC chairperson M Jagadeesh Kumar told The Indian Express on Sunday. Under the regulations, foreign institutions willing to collaborate must rank in the top 1000 in either the Times Higher Education or QS rankings. The Indian universities meeting the same standard or placed among the top 100 in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), or having a minimum score of 3.01 from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

are eligible. Academic collaborations between Indian and foreign institutions in the higher education sector is among the key recommendations of the National Education Policy, 2020. Work is also underway to pave the way for reputed Indian institutes such as IIT Delhi to set up campuses abroad. A committee under IIT council chairman Dr K Radhakrishnan formed last December recently submitted its recommendations for opening offshore campuses of Indian higher educational institutions. Deliberations of another expert panel to get prestigious foreign universities to set up campuses in India have also reached the "final stage", Prof Kumar said. "It will also reduce a part of the outflow of foreign exchange which stands at about \$US 25 billion currently." According to official estimates, about 50,000 international students are currently enrolled in courses offered by Indian universities.

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

TORA AGARWALA  
GUWAHATI, MAY 15

AT LEAST three people have died and thousands have been affected as heavy rainfall continued to lash parts of Assam since Friday. On Sunday, as rail connectivity in the hill district of Dima Hasao snapped, the Air Force was called in to rescue stranded passengers. According to a bulletin from the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (AS-DMA), 56,000 people across seven districts (Cachar, Dhemaji, Hojai, Karbi Anglong West, Nagaon, Nalbari and Kamrup) have been affected. More than 41,000 people have been affected in Cachar alone, followed by 13,523 in Hojai district. The ASDMA release said that landslides, erosion and infrastructural damage, including those to bridges, were reported in Hojai, Dima Hasao, and Karimganj, among others. A landslide in Dima Hasao's



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

Haflong revenue circle led to the death of a family of three. Three more went missing on Sunday in Cachar district. Earlier on Sunday, as Silchar-Guwahati Express and Guwahati-Silchar Express remained stranded at Ditokcherra and New Haflong stations in Dima Hasao, respectively, the Air Force airlifted 100-odd passengers from Ditokcherra. **Monsoon to hit Andaman Sea today** Pune: The southwest monsoon is most likely to hit the South Andaman Sea, Nicobar islands and Southeast Bay of Bengal on Monday, the India Meteorological Department said. Once realised, the monsoon will arrive over the islands nearly a week ahead of its normal schedule. **ENS**

# In \$60-million UN scandal, a \$2.5-million housing investment in Goa — and no house to show for it

KRISHN KAUSHIK & MAYURA JANWALKAR  
NEW DELHI, PANAJI, MAY 15

A \$60-MILLION scandal involving loans and grants by a little-known UN agency also included a \$2.5 million investment to build affordable houses in India in 2019 — none of which has materialised yet. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which deals with operational projects, had entrusted the entire sum to a single British businessman and now faces \$22 million in bad debts, as per a New York Times report earlier this month. The head of UNOPS, Grete

A Singapore-based firm, owned by the businessman, David Kendrick, was in charge of getting at least 50,000 houses built in Goa for \$2.5 million, UN documents show. A couple in Delhi, Amit Gupta and Arti Jain, are the directors of this firm — Sustainable Housing Solutions (SHS) Holdings Pvt Ltd — that registered zero revenue and Rs 27,289 in losses in 2020-21. The project was under the Sustainable Infrastructure Impact Investments (S3I) initiative, launched in 2018, which is now being probed by the UN for allocating all its funding to companies linked to Kendrick. The head of UNOPS, Grete

Faremo, also stepped down earlier this month over the issue. Gupta, who is the CEO of SHS, told The Indian Express that the project had been shelved. A senior Goa government official confirmed to The Indian Express that a presentation was made to officials by SHS Holdings for the construction of the proposed housing units in Goa. However, officials had questioned how supporting infrastructure like power and roads would be made available for the housing units also. They also had reservations about how the government could award such a large housing project to a private firm without a tendering project, said this official, requesting anonymity. "No land was identified for the project. In fact, the discussions did not even reach the stage where the fund-sharing pattern for the project was discussed," the official said. Gupta claimed it was the Goa government that had approached UNOPS. "There was an agreement with the Goa government in February 2019 and then there was a supplementary agreement signed in March 2019. We sent some follow-up mails after that because the state was supposed to allot land to us. We followed up till August-September 2019. When we did not get a response, we were told by UNOPS that it was Goa that wanted these

requesting anonymity. "No land was identified for the project. In fact, the discussions did not even reach the stage where the fund-sharing pattern for the project was discussed," the official said. Gupta claimed it was the Goa government that had approached UNOPS. "There was an agreement with the Goa government in February 2019 and then there was a supplementary agreement signed in March 2019. We sent some follow-up mails after that because the state was supposed to allot land to us. We followed up till August-September 2019. When we did not get a response, we were told by UNOPS that it was Goa that wanted these

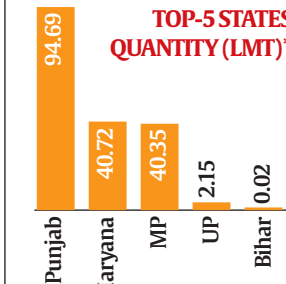
houses to be built and that if they don't want to follow up, we don't have to either. Whenever they want to come in, they can. We left it there at that point in time." Government officials, however, said no such proposal had been made to UNOPS and had that been the case, the project would not have been shelved. Sources said discussions last took place with SHS Holdings in February 2019, and that the file was shelved after then CM Manohar Parrikar died. A couple of meetings were held with SHS India officials but nobody from UNOPS had met government officials, they said. **FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com**

# Centre relaxes procurement norms for shrivelled, broken wheat grains

HARIKISHAN SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

THE CENTRE on Sunday announced a major relaxation in the Fair and Average Quality (FAQ) norms of wheat by raising the maximum permissible limit of "shrivelled and broken grains" to 18 per cent from the existing 6 per cent. The move is aimed at providing relief to Punjab and Haryana farmers during the ongoing rabi marketing season. A statement issued by the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution said: "The Centre has decided to allow FCI to procure wheat in Punjab and Haryana, including UT of Chandigarh, for central pool by relaxing the FAQ of shrivelled and broken grains up to 18 per cent without any value cut. This decision will reduce the hardships of farmers and avoid distress sale of wheat." The move comes after the two states wrote to the Centre, seeking relaxation in the Uniform Specifications of Wheat for RMS 2022-23. They had urged the Centre to raise the maximum permissible limit of shrivelled and broken grains to 20 per cent. According to the Food Ministry, Central teams were deputed in Punjab and Haryana in April-May to collect samples from mandis, which were later analysed in FCI labs. "The results indicated presence of shrivelled and broken grains beyond FAQ norms," the statement said. "The emergence of shrivelled

## WHEAT PROCURED (2022-23)



\*Figures till May 10, 2022



A grain market in Patiala, Sunday. Harmeet Sodhi

## REFRATIONS IN FAQ NORMS

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

Source: Food Corporation of India

## CENTRE REVISES CLOSING DATE FOR PROCUREMENT

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

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

# EXPLAINED Why quality norms have been relaxed

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

# Bengali TV actor found dead in her flat, kin say murder

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, MAY 15

BENGALI TELEVISION actor Pallavi Dey was found dead in her rented flat in Kolkata's Garfa area on Sunday morning, police said. Dey (25), who was playing the female lead in the TV show 'Mon Mane Na', was found hanging from a ceiling fan, with the investigators claiming that prima facie it appeared to be a case of suicide. Dey's family, however, raised the suspicion that she may have

been murdered. An official said, "Dey was rushed to the MR Bangur Hospital where she was declared dead. We are investigating the circumstances that led to her death. The actor's body has been sent for post-mortem examination." The police in an official statement said, "The actor was found hanging from a ceiling fan with the help of a bedsheet. The incident took place at about 9:30am. A case of unnatural death has been registered." Dey was reportedly in a live-in relationship with her boyfriend

Shagnik Chakraborty, officials said, adding that he was being questioned at the Garfa police station. Shagnik, who works in a private company, told the police that he found the door locked from inside when he returned after going out for a smoke in the morning. He broke open the door and found Pallavi's body hanging, he claimed, adding that he informed the police. Sources said she shifted to a rented flat only last month. Her father Nilu Dey said, "Her partner had a registered marriage with someone else two years ago and

we came to know about this six months back. There was another girl who he was close to and it would often create trouble in their relationship. We don't know who saw her hanging." Shagnik's mother Sandhya Chakraborty said, "We were not happy with the live-in concept but they are adults and the girl side had no issue. We wanted them to stay together after marriage only. She was short-tempered and would talk rudely to us. So we did not speak to her very often."



# 9 ECONOMY

## SECTOR WATCH INSURANCE

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

GEORGE MATHEW  
MUMBAI, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

#### WHAT IS THIS COST

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

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

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

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

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

## EXPLORATORY TALKS WITH SINGAPORE AIRLINES

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

PRANAV MUKUL  
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

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

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



An Air India aircraft at Chandigarh airport. File

nalised its intention to merge," the source added.

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

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

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

"...There are other mountains to climb, and I am humbled to have been selected by Air India's board as the airline's new CEO. It is a fantastic opportunity to lead a historic airline, now owned by the Tata Group, to new heights, and I am grateful to embark on that exciting challenge with the full blessings of the SIA management team." The Tata Group won the bid to acquire Air India in October 2021, and the airline was transferred to its new owner in January. Vistara was launched in 2015.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## '84% of staff feel organisation culture improved since Covid'

Around 84 per cent of employees globally say the organisation's culture has improved since the start of the pandemic, an EY Survey said



**As employers shifted gears** providing more flexible work options, there is more that they will need to invest in — that includes higher pay and overall brand building of the organisation

#### Methodology

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

**36% OF EMPLOYER RESPONDENTS SAY THEY WANT EMPLOYEES TO COME BACK TO THE OFFICE FIVE DAYS A WEEK**

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

Source: EY/PTI

## SBI hikes MCLR again, second in 1 month

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
MUMBAI, MAY 15

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



SBI branch, New Delhi. File

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

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

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

SBI's hike follows the Monetary Policy Committee decision to jack up repo rate by 40 basis points to 4.4 per cent. In April, SBI had increased its MCLR by 10 bps before the MPC hiked its benchmark rate by 40 basis points.

## RBI to review asset quality of PSBs tomorrow

BANIKINKAR PATTANAYAK  
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

DAYS AFTER the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) hiked the repo rate for the first time in almost four years, governor Shaktikanta Das will meet chiefs of public sector banks (PSBs) on May 17 to review credit flow and assess the outlook on asset quality, sources told FE.

Das may also take stock of state-run banks' strategy to deal with the rising interest rate sce-

### Ashima Goyal on rate hikes

New Delhi: The RBI is not "behind the curve" in hiking interest rate to tackle rising inflation, Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Ashima Goyal has said.

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

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

nario without upsetting growth dynamics, they added.

The Governor will also review

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

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

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

## 'RIL to buy dozens of brands in \$6.5-bn play'

Mumbai: Reliance will acquire dozens of small grocery and non-food brands as it targets building its own \$6.5 billion consumer goods business, sources said.

Reliance plans to build a portfolio of 50 to 60 grocery, household and personal care brands within six months and is hiring distributors to take them to mom-and-pop stores and bigger retail outlets across the nation.

The consumer goods push under a vertical named Reliance Retail Consumer Brands will come on top of the brick-and-mortar store network of more than 2,000



A superstore of RIL, Mumbai. Reuters

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

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

REUTERS  
BEIJING, MAY 15

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

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

#### FIRST SINCE 2016

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

Beijing's efforts to internationalise its currency. The IMF raised the US currency's weighting to 43.38 per cent from 41.73 per cent and the yuan to 12.28 per cent from 10.92 per cent. The euro's weighting de-

clined to 29.31 per cent from 30.93 per cent, the yen's fell to 7.59 per cent from 8.33 per cent and the British pound fell to 7.44 per cent from 8.09 per cent.

The IMF said in a statement its executive board had determined the weighting based on trade and financial market developments from 2017 to 2021.

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

## Govt: Constraints in availability of domestic coal

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

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

The inter-ministerial panel



A thermal plant, Punjab. File

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

## RBI OFFICIALS TO PARLIAMENTARY PANEL 'Cryptos can lead to dollarisation of economy'

JATIN TAKKAR  
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

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

Shaktikanta Das, clearly expressed their apprehensions about cryptocurrencies and said these pose challenges to the stability of the financial system, sources told PTI.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## India adds 8.8 mn jobs in Apr: CMIE

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

However, the jobs that became available were inadequate compared to the demand, it said.

India's labour force increased by 8.8 million to 437.2 million in April, one of the largest monthly increases since the beginning of the pandemic, CMIE managing director and CEO Mahesh Vyas said.

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



10

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

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

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

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

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

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

**Harish Damodaran: Won't this drive away the private players?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

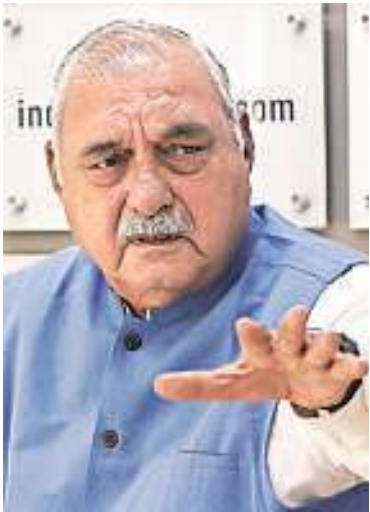
**Manraj Grewal Sharma: Uday Bhan reportedly said Congress will do away with the quota system in ticket distribution.**



WHY **BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA**

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Shubhajit Roy: Gandhi was in favour of prohibition (of alcohol). Haryana has one of the most liberal policies.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





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## EXPLAINED HEALTH

## How to protect yourself from heat-related illness

## EXPERT EXPLAINS



DR SURANJIT CHATTERJEE

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight

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

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

We mostly see cases of heat exhaustion,

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

person's health.

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

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

Having electrolyte-rich fluids is a better option when people are out in the sun. Around

two to three glasses of shikanji wouldn't be a problem for a healthy person. Again, those with any comorbidities should keep an eye on what they are having; for example, diabetics should avoid ORS solutions because they are high in sugar content.

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

Children below the age of 5 and people above 65 are more vulnerable to the impact of heat. They must avoid stepping out during the hot hours, and if they have to, they must be extremely careful and stay well hydrated. However, young healthy people are not completely safe either. They mostly constitute the working population and are more likely to step out in the sun.

## THE EXPERT

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

Also, anyone living with comorbidities such as cardiac diseases, diabetes, or thyroid is likely to feel the effect of sun exposure more.

**Should people exercise in this season?**

Exercising is not a problem; exercising when it is hot is. If people want to go out for a walk or a jog, they should either do it early in the morning between 5-6 am or in the evening after 7 pm. People should not do any physical activity between 10 am and 6 pm when it is this hot.

And, if people can exercise indoors – at home if they have enough space, or at the gym – then that is better than outdoor exercise.

Dr Chatterjee spoke to Anonna Dutt

## SIMPLY PUT

## The impact of price volatility

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

HARISH DAMODARAN

NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

## Assessing the hikes

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

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

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

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

TABLE 1

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

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

All prices as on May 13 in that year.

Source: Department of Consumer Affairs

TABLE 2

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

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

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

Source: Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation.

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

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

## Milk vs oil

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

the way the sudden Rs 40-60/kg rise in mustard, palm or soyabean oil price in a single year has.

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

## The wheat effect

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Life and death

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

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

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

## Sainthood road

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



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

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

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

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

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

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

## Vaccine against 3 encephalitis viruses found safe, effective

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

EEEV, WEEV and VEEV are spread to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes. Horses are also susceptible to infection, but horses cannot transmit the viruses directly to humans. Infections in humans are rare but can lead to flu-like symp-



PAPER CLIP

NEW RESEARCH

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

Researchers designed a virus-like particle (VLP) vaccine candidate that uses proteins from the outer shells of the viruses, the US National Institutes of Health said in a media release. VLPs do not contain the genetic material that the viruses need to replicate in-

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

SOURCE: NIH, US

## THIS WORD MEANS: MONK SKIN TONE SCALE

## Google's innovation aimed at inclusiveness

SRIDHAR V

NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

## What is the MST Scale?

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

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

## How will it work?

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

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

## Why such a scale?

According to Dr Courtney Heldreth, a so-

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

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

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

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

– and surveyed thousands of adults in the US who felt more represented with the new methodology.

## Are there similar projects elsewhere?

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

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



Lucknow





The Japanese island chain of Okinawa marked the 50th anniversary on Sunday of the end of US occupation and its return to Japan with calls for more economic growth and fewer US bases despite growing worries over its proximity to an increasingly assertive China.

## TOPOF THE WORLD



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

### THE GULF

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

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

### USA

## US to remove 5 from foreign terror blacklist

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

### LEBANON

## Mired in collapse, country to choose new parliament

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

### IRAN

## Filmmaker: Many movie industry workers arrested

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

## 18-YR-OLD GUNMAN DROVE HOURS TO BLACK-MAJORITY AREA: POLICE

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

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

### REUTERS

BUFFALO (NEW YORK), MAY 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

## A grisly inspiration for racist attacks

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

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

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



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

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

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

The New York Times

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

### REUTERS

SEOUL, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

## Small wins buoy Ukraine; West says Russians losing momentum

Finland, Sweden take a step closer to joining NATO

### OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKIY & CIARAN MCQUILLAN

KYIV, MAY 15

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Ukraine said it held off Russian offensives Sunday in the

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

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

## THE KALUSH ORCHESTRA WON EUROVISION WITH THEIR ENTRY 'STEFANIA'

# For Ukrainian fighters, Eurovision heralds coming victory over Russia

### SERGIY KARAZY

MAY 15

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

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

"We had a victory: today in



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

Eurovision, but soon we will have a victory in Ukraine—

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

basement decorated with children's paintings of Ukraine flag

and "Glory to Ukraine" signs on them.



The tired-looking but happy servicemen had sat around a screen, some tapping rhythmically on their knees when Kalush performed, and when the winner was announced they clapped and cheered with delight.

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

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

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

West say the fascist allegation is baseless and that the war is an unprovoked act of aggression.

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

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

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



# Royals' big stride forward

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

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

**ABHISHEK PUROHIT**  
MUMBAI, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

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

## Padikkal presses on

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

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



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

IPL TABLE						
TEAM	M	W	L	PT	NRR	
GT	13	10	3	20	0.391	
RR	13	8	5	16	0.304	
LSG	13	8	5	16	0.262	
RCB	13	7	6	14	-0.323	
DC	12	6	6	12	0.210	
KKR	13	6	7	12	0.160	
PK	12	6	6	12	0.023	
SRH	12	5	7	10	-0.270	
CSK	13	4	9	8	-0.206	
MI	12	3	9	6	-0.613	

## Gujarat Titans secure top-2 finish

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

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

the second and third deliveries he faced, the latter of which zoomed into the sight screen. When Stoinis pulled the length back, Padikkal stood tall and creamed it through the covers. Later, even if he was a bit late on the ball, he made sure he hacked it safely over midwicket. However, he would become one of three RR batters who failed to clear the long CCI square boundaries.

**BRIEF SCORES: Rajasthan Royals:** 178 for 6 in 20 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 41, Devdutt Padikkal 39; Ravi Bishnoi 2/31) bt Lucknow Super Giants: 154 for 8 in 20 overs (Deepak Hooda 59; Trent Boult 2/18, Obed McCoy 2/35, Prasidh Krishna 2/32)

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

**ABHISHEK PUROHIT**  
MUMBAI, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

against the country of his birth. Or come in at 86 for 4 in a World Cup and crack 143 not out in 125 balls against Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis and Shoaib Akhtar.

It gives you a sense of what he was capable of if he could play almost 200 ODIs and still the consensus would remain that justice hadn't been fully done to the rare talent he possessed.

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

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

## BRIEFLY

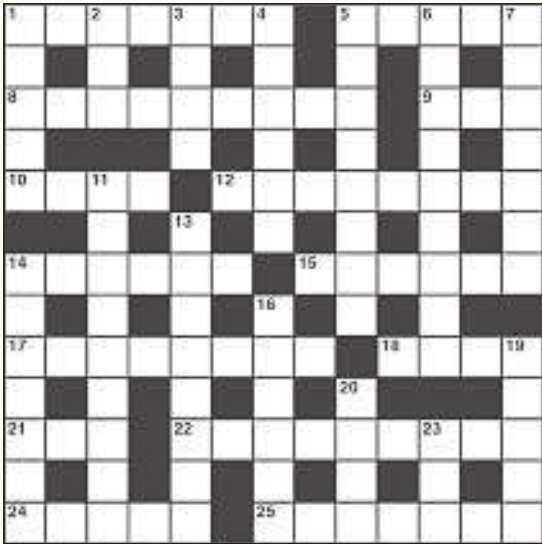
### Zareen, Anamika, Parveen enter quarterfinals

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

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

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

## CROSSWORD 4741



- ACROSS**

1 Punishment for lying in the sun? (7)

5 A question of choice (5)

8 New net cord starts tight (9)

9 In traffic a repeatedly seen vehicle (3)

10 Every one in teaching (4)

12 Such a net may become loose (8)

14 Many admit to being inexperienced (6)

15 Sarah's crazy to worry (6)

17 Mention a new name (8)

18 Cause a storm in a teacup (4)

21 Not conscious one is in error? (3)

22 Gave effortless recital and staggered away (6,3)

24 Entertained without a thought (5)

25 Gleeman's new medley (7)
- DOWN**

1 Give an oral test (5)

2 This man invaded England (3)

3 In extremities they can be accommodating (4)

4 They're for putting on vegetables (6)

5 He's paid to mind someone else's business (8)

6 An insect's uninterrupted development (9)

7 Gear to make use of horsepower (7)

11 They will spend their time together (9)

13 Rounded up but not rounded off (8)

14 Many on past record seem to agree (7)

16 Master switch for the current (6)

19 Strip a firearm (5)

20 Close up of a swimmer (4)

23 Have something to confess (3)

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

## JUMBLED WORDS

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

A somebody was once a nobody who \_\_\_\_\_ - John Burroughs (6,2,3,3)

**NRAAE**

■■■■■

**EOTDNN**

■■■■■

**DIOTT**

■■■■■

**EEDDDW**

■■■■■

stgnihw - John Burroughs - somebody was once a nobody who \_\_\_\_\_ - John Burroughs (6,2,3,3)

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson

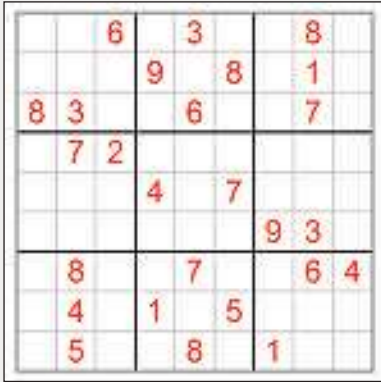


## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



**Difficulty Level 4s**  
**Instructions**  
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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



## SOLUTION SUDOKU 4835



## DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

### ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

No matter how relaxed the pace of life today, the end of the week could be rather hectic. There will also be a certain amount of emotional tension. You may therefore come to be grateful for your foresight and refusal to put off tasks that should be done as soon as possible.

### TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

You may have a conservative reputation but, if allowed to express yourself, you have a wonderfully understated eccentric way of working. Now that Venus is aligned with a publicity-minded region of your chart, partners and associates will begin to notice your qualities.

### GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

The Moon makes a number of very sharp moves today, which means that domestic affairs should now be sorted out and family relationships resolved, at least until the end of the week. Older relations could be the most helpful, you know who you can rely on.

### CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

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

### LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

The Moon eases its way through a private sector of your chart, inspiring dreams, strange imaginings and mysteries of the most colourful kind. You will relish any intrigues or uncertainty that cloud your vision today. After all, a mystery could be the cause of much more pleasure.

### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Nobody can really put you on the spot or undermine your confidence. You are so full of self-doubt that you are skilled at sabotaging your own interests. Make it your goal to boost your self-esteem and inspire respect. But don't feel that you need to rush into anything hasty.

### LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Your personal affairs will be highlighted in a rather special and even spectacular way this week. Yet another full seven days may pass before you can genuinely get to grips with outstanding domestic differences and family hopes. That gives you every reason to wait until your mind is made up.

### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Pluto is a volatile planet, though often a force for good. This week you can be fully confident that this wonderful planet's healing and restorative powers will be used utterly in your favour, even if at first it looks as if the opposite is true. Things are not always what they seem.

### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

Because Jupiter, your planetary ruler, is still so powerful, you have all the protection you need. However, I would not say that this is a time for taking risks. On the contrary, great presence is required. You see, if you're to be a proper gambler you have to know the outcome before you start.

### CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Even though you may be convinced that some kind of major career or professional change is unavoidable, you may hold things up for a while if you wish. However, it is certain that you can trust partners' generosity. Think now about what you might offer in return.

### AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Even the most dedicated Aquarians shouldn't keep their noses pressed to the grindstone all week. After all, you need a rest and a chance to get on with your own intensely personal interests. A word of advice, treat all amazing financial offers with a huge pinch of salt.

### PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Mercury is moving through your chart at a fair old pace, an indication that you only have a limited period of time, probably about two weeks, to arrange interviews, attend meetings and make proposals. What is most important today, though, is the Moon, which is reinforcing and stiffening your emotions.



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

# Feather floats in the sky



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

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

SHIVANI NAIK  
MAY 15

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

Like the World Championships in December, young Lakshya Sen led the way.

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

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

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

The Indonesian is a speed fiend, and does-

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING

### FIRST RUBBER: LAKSHYA'S SENSATIONAL COMEBACK

Sen beats Ginting 8-21, 21-17, 21-16

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

### SECOND RUBBER: DOUBLES DELIGHT TO GO 2-0 UP

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

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

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

### THIRD RUBBER: SEALING IT WITH A STRAIGHT-GAMES WIN

Srikanth beats Christie 21-15 23-22

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

had dialled back his days of romping across the All England and World Championships courts. India took a 1-0 lead laced with hope.

### Doubles magnifique

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

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

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

The Indians had taken more than giant-killing reputation into this tie after disposing of Malaysia and Denmark. In winning all doubles against the top nations, Satwik Chirag had announced their whistling return to winning ways. The two can bully on the court, and the fact that they don't often make it even more menacing when they do. Kevin-Ahsan flubbed four match points. It was surreal, as the Indians went 20-all, 20-21, 21-all, 22-21 to finally have Satwik bisect the Indonesians with his steep smash to level 23-21.

The Indians have lost so many from 20-18, it was a delicious sight to watch them turn the tables on opponents. In the decider, leafs were traded, but 13-16 didn't look dire. Piling on the pressure with Satwik belting away his smashes, the Indians easily turned 17-19 to 20-19. Their audacity in not giving too much respect to Indonesia's big names, brought India 2-0 up.

Comeback 2. Check. Srikanth's case has been a protracted period of three long years in the wilderness, hearing broken tape of how he had wasted his talent from random strangers on Twitter to coming into contention again. The World Championship silver medallist had waited for his body to patch up all the niggles so he could freely express his game. Yet the December event had ended in a lost final against Loh Kean Yew. In Bangkok, Srikanth's comeback was 6 out of 6 matches played and won. He had been parrying off second singles till quarters, but in Anders Antonsen and Jonatan Christie, he had two bonafide Top Tens. He made mincemeat of the rankings, of all history, of their gnashing resistance on the day, with mere great shot selection and an error-free game.

All he touched was marked gold, though Christie attempted comebacks and stayed calm. But Srikanth's class was far too much for the Asian Games gold medallist to find any rhythm when he was left scrambling to return the Indian's delectable bouquet of racquet work.

Reflexive backhand returns in response to tight spinning net dribbles, saw him sticking his hand out for the most defensive of winners at 8-7 in the second. The iconic net charging follow-up to a smash brought him match point, and the crosscourt smash set fire to the curtains of the dramatic day.

3-0 ain't dramatic as a whole. But every moment was for a pulsating nation back home, giddy with anticipation of a historic Sunday.

## PM INVITES TEAM, AWARDS POUR IN

Calling India's Thomas Cup triumph as one of the country's finest sporting wins, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited the shuttlers to his residence on returning from Bangkok.

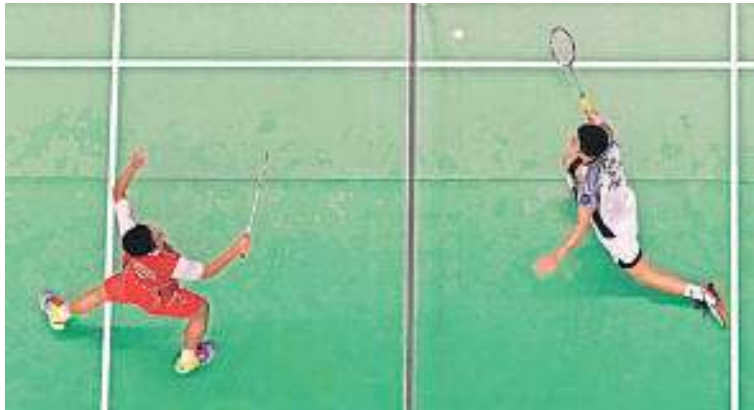
\$1 million: Prize money for winning the tournament.

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

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

## Three shot stories

Lakshya Sen's relentless retrieving abilities, Srikanth's silken strokes and Chirag-Satwik flexing their muscles: the points that defined the matches



Lakshya Sen (R) in action against Indonesia's Anthony Ginting. AP

### AT 14-13, LAKSHYA SMASH THAT HELPED HIM NOSE AHEAD

The shuttle clipped the tape and fell on Anthony Ginting's side to give Lakshya Sen a slight edge at 14-13 in the decider. Luck ought to favour the brave, goes the saying. Sen had earned his luck with a relentless defense that prolonged rallies and punctured Ginting's hopes in a way the defending champion wasn't prepared for. Sen had done the hard work of defending from four corners, and for a player like Ginting, this cancelling of

his attack with such bullheadedness was beginning to grate.

Sen started again the next point, maintaining a medium rhythm in his retrieves before he let rip the kill against the run of play. It was an accelerated down smash that hurried the pace mid-rally and gave him the 15-13 to nose ahead. The explosive attack on the back of a harp of defense was too much for the speed at top gear Ginting.

### SRIKANTH'S DUBSTEP AT 22-21

Asked his favourite shot, aside of the winning point that is, Srikanth picked the penultimate one. "Because that brought me match point," he would say.

But 22-21 in the second had indeed been the signature Srikanth Dubstep. In a sparse rally, Srikanth amped up the pace for a near-kill which could've sufficed on its own. But the likes of Jojo Christie get under the smash invariably. It's in the follow up charge to the net that the opponent is far too spent to raise arms for yet another incoming bamboozler. It is Srikanth's confidence shot, it's regal in its execution, and stomping in its aftereffect.

On the day, it brought Srikanth the match point after being 19-20 down and a decider looming. A third set is always fraught with energy reserves



dipping and in a team event. Srikanth has never been a dawdler, and finishing in 2, asserting his class is his nature. Jonatan Christie doesn't get frazzled much. But the setup that fetched him the championship point left him deflated. A crosscourt smash that followed didn't need even the driving in of the knife. A poke drew blood, and India had a maiden Thomas Cup travelling on a flight back home.

### DOWN 4 MATCH POINTS, CHIRAG-SATWIK UNLEASH POWER GAME

Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo, half of the legendary Minions, losing a Thomas Cup final rubber from four match points is unheard of.

That the Indians, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty chipped away at Indonesian confidence, at their self-image even, at what is at the core of their strength, and superbly executed with the building of pressure by the Indians, was the turning point of the final which ended in a disbelieving 3-0 result. The clutch of points were all about finding the right nuanced placement and not bullying speed as such.



At 17-18 Kevin Sanjaya had the most confident smash grazing the line pointing to accuracy and control. In the next few minutes, Indians incited anarchy. Satwik left shyness behind, and uncoiled his powergame.

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

SHIVANI NAIK  
MAY 15

MATHIAS BOE had been going through withdrawal symptoms. His chosen poison turned ailment: top-grade badminton. The former Thomas Cup winner and Olympic silver medallist, who retired two seasons ago, had not really come to grips with being away from the circuit. He immersed himself in his business, and his personal life. "But I missed winning like this at the top events. I'm happy India gave me the chance to experience this once again," said India's doubles coach (inpic), who helped the newly-minted Thomas Cup champions pull off a sensational 3-0 win against all-time leaders Indonesia in the final.

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



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

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

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

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

### Second coming

He would return to Mumbai and imme-



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

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

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

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

MATHIAS BOE  
DOUBLES COACH, INDIA

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

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

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

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

### Vimal refers to 1983 moment

PTI adds: Coach Vimal Kumar on Sunday hoped the triumph would do the same to the country's shuttle sport what the 1983 World Cup win did to cricket. "We always had hopes but the way the players played, they just put up a performance out of the blue," Kumar said. "In 1983, when India won the cricket World Cup, the euphoria was something else but cricket was always a very popular sport and I hope with this performance, now badminton can also become so popular. It has always been about individual achievements but this was a team performance and I hope the popularity of the sports goes up from here on."