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O-761

No. Tender Online RCK-20/21 Letter No.- Date:-

**E-Procurement NOTICE**

The Chief Construction Engineer, R. W. Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur on behalf of Odisha State Rural Road Agency invites the **percentage rate** bids in electronic tendering system for construction of roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in the districts of **Kendrapara for 6 (Six)** numbers of packages with estimated cost totaling to Rs. 29.87 Cr (Approximately) including their maintenance for five years from the eligible contractors registered with **State PWD / CPWD / MES / Railways**. The registered bidder of outside Odisha, can also participate in this process, but shall have to subsequently undergo registration with the appropriate authority of the State Govt. preferably within a month of the deadline for bid submission, but prior to signing of the contract. **Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: dtd 28.09.21**

**Availability of Bid Documents and mode of submission:** The bid document is available online and should be submitted online in [www.pmsgsynders.gov.in](http://www.pmsgsynders.gov.in). The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have a valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities. The bidders are required to submit (a) original Demand Draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security declaration and(c) original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4B (a) (ii) of ITB with **Chief Construction Engineer, R. W. Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur** on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the Bid, either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids shall be declared non-responsive.

**Summary for key dates is provided below:**

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur	Tender Online RCK-20/21	28.09.2021 at 11.00 A.M.	18.10.2021 to 5.00 P.M.	18.10.2021 up to 1.00 P.M.	21.10.2021 at 11.30 A.M	Will be intimated later

**Date of Submission of original documents such as Bid Security Declaration, Cost of Bid document and Affidavit: Dt 21.10.2021 at 11.30 A.M. to 26.10.2021 at 3.00 P.M.**  
Further details can be seen from the website [www.pmsgsynders.gov.in](http://www.pmsgsynders.gov.in)

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JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

Kolkata



**UP, PUNJAB REJIG CABINETS**

## Election coming, UP expands Cabinet: 7 new Ministers in BJP 'social balance'

Jitin Prasada made Cabinet Minister; three OBC names among six MoS

**MAULSHREE SETH**  
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 26

WITH BARELY months to go for Assembly elections to be notified in UP, the BJP Sunday expanded its state government by naming seven new Ministers in an exercise that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said reflects "social balance" and "gives representation to all sections".

The party's move comes in UP barely 10 days after it revamped the entire Cabinet in

Gujarat, which goes to polls later next year.

Topping the list in UP's expansion is former Union MoS Jitin Prasada, who had recently switched to the BJP from the Congress.

While Prasada, a Brahmin representative, took oath as a Cabinet Minister, the other six are Ministers of State, including a woman: Chhatrapal Gangwar, Sangita Balwant Bind and Dharamveer Prajapati (OBC), Paltu Ram and Dinesh Khatik

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

**EXPLAINED**  
**Signal before state polls**

WITH STATE polls around the corner, the emphasis in the UP Cabinet expansion is on political signalling to the non-Yadav OBC community and non-Jatav Dalit community. The BJP has also tried to woo Brahmins by inducting Jitin Prasada given how opposition parties are courting the community vote.

## Seven new faces in Channi ministry; Amarinder critics get berths, 8 ministers stay

**KANCHAN VASDEV**  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

ALMOST A week after the successor to Capt Amarinder Singh took oath, the new Punjab Cabinet was sworn in by Governor Banwari Lal Purohit in the presence of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and Deputy Chief Ministers Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and

O P Soni at Raj Bhawan around 4.30 pm on Sunday evening.

There are seven new faces in the Channi ministry: Raja Warring, the two-time MLA from Gidderbaha; Dr Raj Kumar Verka, three-time legislator from Amritsar; three-time MLA Sangat Singh Gilzian; two-time MLA from Jalandhar Cantt, Pargat Singh; four-time MLA Randeep Nabha; Gurkirat Kotli,

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

## Development push is key, Shah tells states in meeting on Naxals

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, RANCHI, BHUBANESWAR, BHOPAL, SEPTEMBER 26

THE LACK of development is the main reason for dissatisfaction in the districts where Maoists are active, and it is important to have uninterrupted development to wean the youth away from the movement, Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday.

Shah met with top officials from nine states affected by Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) to review the security situation and progress of development projects.

Six chief ministers were present; four states were represented only by their chief secretaries and directors general of police.

"The root cause of dissatisfaction is that development has not reached there...since independence and...it is very essential to ensure accessibility to fast-paced development so that common and innocent people do not join



Amit Shah at the meeting in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

them," the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) quoted Shah as having said during the meeting.

Without that, "neither we will be able to spread democracy to the bottom nor will we be able to develop the underdeveloped areas", he said, according to the MHA statement.

Chief Ministers Uddhav Thackeray of Maharashtra, Hemant Soren of Jharkhand, K Chandrashekar Rao of Telangana, Nitish Kumar of Bihar, Shivraj Singh Chouhan of Madhya Pradesh, and Naveen

Patnaik of Odisha attended the meeting.

West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala were represented by top officials.

Several states asked for security-related expenditure and development funds for LWE districts to be increased.

Invoking "cooperative federalism", Soren said it "did not seem pragmatic" for the Centre to "demand money" from states for the deployment of central forces in LWE-affected areas.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

## Work with no fear of contempt of court, says Tripura CM



Opp attacks Biplab Kumar Deb

**DEBRAJ DEB**  
AGARTALA, SEPTEMBER 26

TRIPURA CHIEF Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has appeared in a video asking officials and executives to work for the people without fear of committing contempt of court, because "we are a by-the-people government, not by-the-court government".

The Trinamool Congress attacked Deb as a "disgrace to the entire nation" and asked whether the Supreme Court would take cognizance of his statements.

The media adviser to the chief minister retorted that critics should listen to the full speech before spreading "fake" news.

The BJP said it was "wrong" to interpret the CM's comments as an endorsement of contempt of court. Deb himself did not respond to the video that went viral on social media on Sunday.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**



## SPOT INSPECTION

On Sunday night, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the construction site of the new Parliament building in New Delhi. ANI

## Envoy on hurdles in India-China ties: Shifting goalposts, blame game

**SHUBHAJIT ROY**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

IN WHAT is being seen as a candid assessment of the challenges in India-China ties, India's ambassador to Beijing Vikram Misri has listed "avoid shifting goalposts", "take a one-sided view of concerns and sensitivities", and "viewing bilateral relations



Needn't be win or loss for either side: Misri

through the prism of relations with other countries" as "obstacles which could block progress" in the relationship.

Misri, who spoke at the IDSA-Sichuan University Virtual Dialogue earlier this week, said, "I remain convinced that we can resolve our current difficulties without the outcome necessarily appearing to be a win or loss for either side."

This is the most frank analysis of the problem in the bilateral relationship by the Indian envoy.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

### WORLD



**GERMANS VOTE TO DECIDE MERKEL SUCCESSOR**

**TALIBAN ASK AIRLINES TO RESUME INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS** [PAGE 12](#)

## Cyclonic storm Gulab crosses coast, Andhra fisherman dies

**ENS & PTI**  
VISAKHAPATNAM, BHUBANESWAR, SEPT 26

A FISHERMAN from Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh died and another went missing as the cyclonic storm Gulab crossed the Bay of Bengal coast Sunday evening.

Gulab's landfall process started at around 6 pm on Sunday. The cyclone is likely to attain a maximum gusting speed of 95 kmph. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Gulab crossed the coast about 20 km north of Kalingapatnam, Andhra Pradesh as a cyclonic storm.

In Odisha, people from low-lying areas of Ganjam, Gajapati and



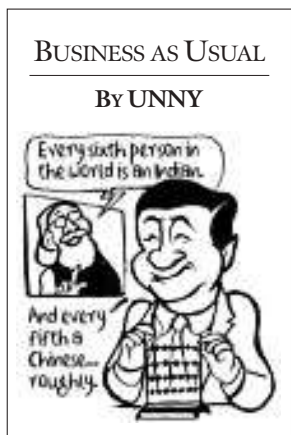
Fishermen bring their boats on to the Puri beach on Sunday hours before cyclonic storm Gulab made landfall. PTI

Koraput districts were evacuated to safe locations. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced that schools in 11 districts that are likely to be affected by Gulab will remain closed Monday. He also emphasised on a zero-casualty target in the vulnerable parts.

42 Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force, 24 National Disaster Response Force and 103 fire

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

**STORM ALERT IN BENGAL** [PAGE 5](#)



## Afghan universities draw up segregation plan: shifts for women, curtains with jaali

**SOURAV ROY BARMAN & RITIKA CHOPRA**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

CURTAINS BISECTING rooms "like in hospitals", cubicles with curtains fitted with jaalis, and separate shifts for women and men. More than a month after the Taliban took over Afghanistan, these are among

the elaborate plans drawn up by prominent public universities to implement the new regime's gender segregation policy.

In the absence of any clear roadmap from the Taliban regime on the future of women's higher education, public universities in the country such as Kabul University, established in 1932, or the three-decade-old Kandahar University -- with

26,000 and 10,000 students respectively -- face an anxious wait. There are nearly 12,000 women studying in Kabul University and 1,000 in Kandahar University, including 300 from other provinces accommodated in the dormitories.

Many private universities with fewer students have resumed classes.

"Public universities can only

reopen once they have the money. We also have to remember that public universities have many more students in one class than private universities. In private universities, there are only about 10 to 20 students in each class and hence separating men and women in such classes is much simpler. We have about 100 to 150 students in one class.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

### PAGE 1 ANCHOR

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
JAIPUR, SEPTEMBER 26

INTERNET SERVICES remained suspended in most of Rajasthan on Sunday with nearly 16 lakh people appearing for the Rajasthan Eligibility Examination for Teachers (REET), even as the opposition BJP attacked the Congress government for causing inconvenience to citizens with suspension of internet services.

Barring Jaisalmer, where Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu and his wife Usha Naidu arrived on Sunday, internet services remained suspended for different durations across the state, depending on orders by concerned divisional commissioners.

According to the Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education (RBSE), the organising agency for

the examination, 16.51 lakh persons were eligible to appear for the exam at 4,019 centres across the state. On Sunday evening, RBSE spokesperson Rajendra Gupta said that about 95 per cent of the eligible examinees had appeared for the exam -- held in two sessions: 10:00 am to 12:30 pm and from 2:30 pm to 5 pm.

"As per my information, since the Vice President was visiting Jaisalmer, it (internet restrictions) weren't imposed there," said Principal Secretary, Home, Abhay Kumar.

On Friday, Kumar had written to the state, divisional and district officials to take a call on suspending internet services, wherever required. "About 16 lakh students will participate in NEET 2021 and will travel from one district to another. In such a situation, there is a possibility of deteriorating law

and order situation due to fake news, rumours of accidents, paper leak, etc." Thus, keeping in mind the Central government's 2017 notification concerning "public safety" and "public emergency," Kumar had asked the divisional commissioners to decide on internet suspensions in their jurisdictions.

Hitting out at the government over the move, BJP state president Satish Poonia said, "There is a stark difference between the words and deeds of the Congress party. So they raise issues as per their convenience. Shutting down the internet on such a scale caused inconvenience to the public and suspending the internet to hide their failure is not a solution," he said. "And, even after suspending there were several irregularities. Suspending the internet to pre-



At an exam centre in Jaipur, Sunday. Rohit Jain Paras

vent cheating is not a permanent solution. The government will have to come up with a strategy," Poonia added.

Incidentally, the Congress

had opposed the suspension of internet during the police constable recruitment examination in 2018, during the tenure of Vasundhara Raje as Chief

Minister. Criticising the move, Sachin Pilot, who was the state Congress president then, had said: "Banning internet from morning till evening for two days shows a mirror to BJP government's Digital India campaign. The government failed to catch those indulged in cheating and hence it decided to cause inconvenience to citizens of the entire state by banning internet."

For REET 2021, in Jaipur division, divisional commissioner Dinesh Kumar Yadav issued orders for suspension of internet services in Alwar, Dausa, Jaipur, Jhunjhunu and Sikar. In his orders, citing the same reasons as Abhay Kumar, he had said that it has become necessary to suspend, "2G/3G/4G/ Data (mobile internet), internet services, bulk SMS/MMS, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and other

Social Media Services through Internet Service Providers (except voice calls and broadband internet)."

In Jaipur urban, orders were issued for suspension of internet for ten hours -- 7 am to 5 pm; in Jaipur rural, it was between 7:30 am to 5:30 pm.

As per Yadav's orders, the internet was also suspended for 12 hours -- between 6 am and 6 pm -- in Alwar, Dausa, and Jhunjhunu, while it was suspended for nine hours between 8 am and 5 pm in Sikar.

Apart from local businesses, mobile utility services, such as Zomato, also remained offline.

Jaipur Vyapar Mahasangh president Subhash Goyal said that about 80,000-90,000 shops, businesses, establishments, etc. remained shut in Jaipur on Sunday. "Business worth around

Rs 100 crore was affected in Jaipur today due to suspension of internet services," Goyal said.

Earlier, the district administration had held meetings with trade association representatives and requested them to shut the establishments on Sunday. "It was a voluntary decision following the administration's request. Bar essential services such as shops selling food items, restaurants, juice shops, medical stores, etc. everything else remained shut," Goyal said.

"However, the internet should not have been suspended. If we are voluntarily shutting our shops for the day, at least the internet services should continue because everything is connected with the internet now, and because our business for subsequent days is also dependent on it," Goyal said.





# Cyclonic storm

Sangat Singh Gilzian, 67, who is also working president of the PPCC, had resigned from all posts after he was denied a berth by

## India-China ties

BRICS, and RIC are some examples – and these dialogues have continued even during the difficult phase that the bilateral relationship is passing through.

“India-China relations therefore must be judged and managed on their own merits. They are substantial enough and sufficiently complex that they require their own approach and appropriate handling, without imagi-

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

alities in Bihar have a high population and political mobilisation. And yet, their writings are yet to attain 'mainstream' popularity, with both causes and consequences linked to caste.

## WHAT THE SURFACE DUO SAYS

## strategy for Microsoft is to create a new type of mobile device'

## FILMS DEV MADE WITH BROTHER VIJAY ANAND

**The pair has given Indian cinema some of its finest work**

He asked chief ministers to prioritise the LWE problem for the next one year, so that a "permanent solution" could be found. "He said that it requires building pressure, increasing speed, and better coordination," the MHA said. "Shah said that those who want to give up arms and join mainstream are heartily welcome, but those who take up arms and hurt innocent people and the police, will be given the same response," the statement said.



# 5 WEST BENGAL

**TMC and BJP trade barbs over 2019 vandalism of Vidyasagar bust in Kolkata**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 26

ON THE 201st birth anniversary of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the BJP on Sunday blamed each other for the vandalism of a Vidyasagar bust in Kolkata in 2019 during a rally of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee paid homage to Vidyasagar, and tweeted, "Homage to Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar on his birth anniversary. He was one of the greatest social reformers who tirelessly fought for justice and equality. We remain indebted to his teachings."

Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly and BJP MLA Suwendu Adhikari also paid tributes to the social reformer in a tweet. "A great man with many worthy contributions that have enriched our history forever. My homage to #IshwarChandraBandopadhyay on his Birth Anniversary," wrote Adhikari.

Senior TMC leader and state minister Firhad Hakim lashed out at the BJP without naming it, saying that the saffron party was behind the vandalism of Vidyasagar's bust.

"Those who had vandalised Vidyasagar's bust two years ago have no right to talk about him. We don't insult great sons of Bengal like the way they do. We believe in taking their ideal forward and working for the people," he said.

BJP national vice president Dilip Ghosh retorted, saying, "Their goons destroyed the bust of Vidyasagar but the party held us responsible for it. They don't know how to show respect to such persons. Otherwise, why would they unleash a reign of terror on our workers and their family members after the election?"

Meanwhile, programmes were held across the state to mark the occasion. State Education Minister Bratya Basu garlanded the social reformer's rebuilt bust at Vidyasagar College and recalled his contributions to society.



**Political strategist Prashant Kishor**

**Prashant Kishor is Bhabanipur voter, says BJP**

**Kolkata:** In a jibe at the ruling TMC, the BJP on Saturday said Prashant Kishor, who was the poll adviser of the Mamata Banerjee-led party in the recent West Bengal elections, can be called a "bohiringato" being enrolled as a voter in the Bhabanipur constituency.

Banerjee is contesting the by-poll from the Bhabanipur seat to retain her chief minister's chair. Long before the by-election was announced, a person with the name Prashant Kishor was included in the list of the electorate in Bhabanipur during the addition process in January-April, according to the Election Commission website.

Claiming that PK (poll strategist Prashant Kishor) is in the list, who is the founder of I-PAC, BJP media cell in-charge Saptarshi Choudhury tweeted in Bengali, "At last Prashant Kishor becomes the voter of Bhabanipur. So, we are not sure if the daughter of Bengal is now in favour of a bahiragato (outsider) voter." **PTI**

**ODISHA, ANDHRA TO BE HIT BY CYCLONIC STORM**

## No direct impact of Cyclone 'Gulab' in Bengal, says Met, but govt wary

Weather department issues heavy rainfall alert for most south Bengal districts till Wednesday

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 26

THE REGIONAL Met department on Sunday ruled out any significant impact of cyclonic storm Gulab in Kolkata, but added that Gangetic West Bengal, including the capital city and its adjoining areas, was likely to receive heavy rains till Wednesday while strong south-easterly winds were likely to prevail. Wary after widespread floods in the region last week, the government has started alerting people in the deltaic and coastal areas.

As of Sunday morning, the storm lay over northwest and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal, said the weather office. It is likely to start making land-fall between north Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha from late Wednesday evening.

"Cyclonic Storm 'Gulab' lay centred at 0830 hrs IST of 26th September 2021, over north-west and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal near Lat. 18.4°N and Long. 86.4°E, about 180 km east-southeast of Gopalpur (Odisha) and 240 km east-northeast of Kalingapatnam (Andhra Pradesh). It is likely to



The weather department said the storm is likely to start making landfall between north Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha from late Wednesday evening. **PTI file**

move nearly westwards and cross north Andhra Pradesh-south Odisha coasts between Kalingapatnam & Gopalpur, as a Cyclonic Storm with maximum sustained wind speed of 75-85 kmph gusting to 95 kmph, around midnight of today, the 26th September, 2021. The land-fall process will commence from late evening of today. Strong South Easterly wind will prevail over the districts of Gangetic West Bengal on 28 & 29th Sept '2021," read a statement issued by Indian Meteorological Department.

Regional Meteorological Centre, Calcutta, director GK Das ruled out any significant impact

here. The department forecast that there would be no direct impact of the storm in the state, but added that rains were expected on Tuesday and Wednesday. Heavy rainfall early last week had inundated several areas in the metropolis, its adjoining areas, and in other districts of south Bengal, throwing normal life out of gear.

The weather department said heavy rains and thunder-showers with lightning were "very likely to occur at many places in south Bengal on Sunday and Monday, and at most places the following two days.

**BHABANIPUR ASSEMBLY BYPOLL**



CM Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata on Sunday. **CMO**

**CM says BJP has only lies and hatred to offer, backs protesting farmers**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 26

CHIEF MINISTER Mamata Banerjee on Sunday described the BJP as a "jumla [rhetoric] party", vowing to defeat the saffron camp across India, and expressed solidarity with protesting farmers who have called an all-India strike on Monday.

Addressing a public meeting for the Bhabanipur Assembly by-poll in which she is the Trinamool Congress' (TMC) candidate, Banerjee said, "The BJP is the biggest jumla party in the country. It is the party that offers only lies and hatred to the people. If you speak against them, they will unleash central agencies against you. They are the party of a dancing dragon who will remove your name from the list of citizenship in the name of CAA, NRC and NPR."

The TMC chairperson said that although her party does not support bandhs she supports the Samyukt Kisan Morcha's demand for the withdrawal of three Central farm laws. The farmers' outfit has called a "Bharat Bandh" on Monday to mark the first anniversary of the controversial farm laws receiving presidential assent.

Backing the protesting farmers, Banerjee said, "Tomorrow, there is a call for Bharat Bandh. Our party does not support

bandhs. But we support their issue. We also want the three farm Bills to be withdrawn. If needed, then we will go to Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh to support their protest."

The chief minister alleged that the BJP was bringing outsiders to Bhabanipur to create disturbances during the September 30 bypoll.

"The BJP thinks it can do whatever it wants just because it is in power. They don't follow human rights and democratic rights in the states where they are in power like Uttar Pradesh, Assam or Tripura. So many people died in Covid in Uttar Pradesh but they did not allow cremation of those bodies and threw them in the Ganga. Human rights are regularly violated in their states but Human Rights Commission won't visit these states," the chief minister alleged.

Taking a swipe at the Centre for not allowing her to visit Rome for a global peace meeting, Banerjee pointed out that the BJP-led Union government had refused to give her permission for previous international trips too.

"I was supposed to visit China, Chicago, and California but the Central government didn't give me permission. The BJP government is jealous of me. From Bhabanipur I am saying that everyone should stay together and believe in brotherhood," said the TMC chief.

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 26

TRINAMOOL CONGRESS (TMC) national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Sunday claimed that the Centre had denied Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, his aunt, permission for a trip to Rome because she was now more popular than Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Diamond Harbour MP made the comment at a public meeting organised at Jadu Babur Bazar as part of the chief minister's Bhabanipur by-poll campaign. The election is scheduled for September 30.

"Mamata Banerjee was invited to attend a global peace meet in Rome. Just because Mamata Banerjee has become more popular than Prime Minister Narendra Modi, they [Centre] did not allow her to go. But one cannot stop her by denying her foreign trips," said Abhishek.

On Saturday, the chief minister told reporters that the Centre did not give her permission to attend a global peace meeting in the Italian capital, where she was the only invitee from India, "out of jealousy". The Ministry of External Affairs, in a one-line communicate, said the "event is not commensurate for [attendance at] the level of chief minister."

Meanwhile, Abhishek shared his party's plans to put up a fight against the BJP in other states. "There are many political parties in the country but the TMC is the only party which has shown the courage to fight against outsiders. After failing to counter us with outside leaders, now the BJP is sending outside agencies to stop us. Send as many agencies as possible. We are not scared of your agencies. We have reached

With another spell of rainfall being forecast, the state administration has instructed people living along the banks of the Haldia river to evacuate safely. The local police and district officials are alerting local people using loudspeakers. An alert has also been issued for tourist spots such as Digha, Mandarmani, and Bakkhali. The Lalbazar police headquarters here has instructed all police stations in the region to inspect lampposts in their areas to prevent electrocution deaths. During the last spell of heavy rainfall, at least 14 people were reported to have died of electrocution.

The weather department said gale-force winds reaching 70-80 km per hour gusting to 90 km per hour were likely to prevail over northwest and west-central Bay of Bengal on Sunday, and increase further up to 95 km per hour between Sunday afternoon and night.

"Squally wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph very likely along and off West Bengal coast. Squally wind speed reaching 30-40 kmph gusting to 50 kmph likely over East Midnapore district today,"

said the Met office.

The department issued a yellow warning till Monday in the districts of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas, and predicted heavy rain (7-11 cm) at one or two places. An orange warning for heavy rain (7-11 cm) has been issued for the districts of Kolkata, Purba and Paschim Medinipur, North and South 24 Parganas, Purba and Paschim Bardhaman, Howrah, Jhargram, Bankura and Purulia.

The Met department said the sea condition would be between rough and very rough in east-central and northeast Bay of Bengal on Sunday with high waves expected in northwest and westcentral Bay of Bengal along the coasts of Odisha, West Bengal and north Andhra Pradesh till late on Sunday night or early Monday morning. It is expected to improve gradually thereafter.

"Fishermen have been advised not to venture deep into the sea till further notice," said an official.



CM Mamata Banerjee and Trinamool MP Abhishek Banerjee, her nephew, at a campaign event in Kolkata's Bhabanipur Assembly constituency on Sunday. **PTI**

Tripura and Assam. Soon, we will go to Goa as well. Be prepared to face the TMC. We will go to every state where the BJP has a government," said the MP.

Abhishek also lashed out at Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Deb for his comments about the judiciary. "@BjpBiplab is a DISGRACE to the entire nation! He shamelessly mocks Democracy, MOCKS the Hon'ble JUDICIARY and seemingly gets away with it! Will the SUPREME COURT take cognizance of his comments that reflect such grave disrespect?" he tweeted.

In a video clip, Deb was heard

telling government officers to follow the directions of public representatives, and not the court, while implementing development projects.

"What kind of problem will this create in the system? They [government officers] say can't take the risk, sir. This will be a contempt of court order. I want to know who has been sent to jail on contempt of court charges. This is not so easy to take someone to jail on contempt charges. Taking someone to jail required police but mind it police are under the chief minister," said the Tripura chief minister.

this age people have been reminded that Sujana da is there."

The Bhabanipur by-poll is scheduled to be held on Thursday along with the elections in Murshidabad district's Samserganj and Jangipur areas that were countermanded during the Assembly polls in March-April.

**ZSI signs MoU with London's Natural History Museum**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 26

THE ZOOLOGICAL Survey of India (ZSI) has signed an MoU with the Natural History Museum (NHM), London, to work together to collect, study and conserve faunal specimens for science and to create and exchange associated data and images.

The MoU will be for five years, the ZSI said in a statement on Saturday. The MoU was signed on a virtual platform on September 24 between Dr Dhriti Banerjee, Director of ZSI, and Dr Douglas Gurr, Director, Natural History Museum London, the statement said.

The ZSI director said that this MoU was long overdue and the NHM, London, and ZSI, Kolkata, were going to mutually benefit from faunal diversity research through scientific exchange.

She said the ZSI was the umbrella institute for Biodiversity studies in India. "We have our headquarters in Kolkata and we have 16 Regional Centres instituted to cater to the faunal diversity of the various biogeographic areas of India. We have around 5 million animal collection holding, 20,000 type collections and around 450 scientists and scientific staff towards curatorial and research on the vast animal collections present in ZSI," she said.

Gurr, while thanking the Government of India for agreeing to the MoU, expressed his gratitude to the ZSI and said the ZSI and the NHM, London, look forward to joint research activities since they share a joint passion for natural history collections, and accelerate towards better science.

"This collaboration will not only benefit both institutions, the millions of vital collections present in NHM, London, and ZSI including type materials are important nationally and across the



The pact is for five years, Survey officials said on Saturday. **File**

world for understanding and conserving the biodiversity, curing natural resource loss and sustainable management of bio-resources as well as impact of climate change," he said.

Through this MoU, both the institutions are committed to implementing the 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Fauna (CITES), the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and relevant national and regional laws and regulations concerning biodiversity including laws relating to access to faunal specimens, associated benefit sharing and traditional knowledge.

The NHM, London and ZSI will be working together to collect, study and conserve faunal specimens for science and to create and exchange associated data and images, the ZSI director said.

There are plans for conducting joint fieldwork expeditions, transfer of duplicate animal material and associated data and images by ZSI, Kolkata, to NHM, London, and vice versa, capacity-building in the areas of Systematic Zoology and Conservation to ensure greater long-term conservation of animal genetic resources in India.

Nevertheless, all faunal material and information exchange would be subject to all relevant extant domestic regulations of the participants as well as international laws to which either of the participants is a party.

**748 new Covid-19 cases, nine more deaths in a day**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, SEPTEMBER 26

NORTH 24 Parganas and Kolkata continue to record the highest number of new Covid-19 cases in Bengal. In the past 24 hours, Kolkata recorded 139 cases while North 24 Parganas recorded 118 new cases. With one more death, the total fatalities in Kolkata reached 5,054 while North 24 Parganas 4,707 deaths, including two in the past 24 hours. So far, state has recorded 18,736 deaths, including nine in the past 24 hours. The fatality rate stands at 1.20 per cent.

West Bengal recorded 748 new cases of the coronavirus dis-

ease (Covid-19) in the past 24 hours. With this latest rise, the state's Covid-19 infection tally has gone up to 15,66,393 cases.

West Bengal recorded 730 Covid-19 recoveries in the past 24 hours. The number of people cured of the disease in the state has now gone up to 15,39,974, the health department bulletin said. The recovery rate among coronavirus patients in West Bengal now stands at 98.31 per cent. West Bengal now has 7,683 active Covid-19 cases. On Sunday, 40,117 samples were tested, of which 1,86 per cent were positive. The total number of samples till Wednesday stands at 1,79,98,906. Till date, 5,54,91,021 people have been vaccinated in Bengal.

**EXPRESS**

# Careers

Government of India  
Public Enterprises Selection Board  
invites applications for the post of  
**Director (Manufacturing Business)**  
in  
**Balmer Lawrie & Co. Limited**  
Last date of receipt of applications in  
PESB is by 15.00 hours on  
**15<sup>th</sup> November, 2021**  
For details login to website  
<http://www.pesb.gov.in>

<b>RITES LIMITED</b> (A Government of India Enterprise) RITES Bhawan, Plot No.1, Sector-29, Gurgaon-122001 CIN No: L74899DL1974GOI007227		
Requires qualified professionals in following position(s)/ discipline(s) on regular and contractual basis:		
VC No.	Post	No of vacancies
10/21	Assistant Manager (SAP PS)	1
11/21	Assistant Manager (SAP SD)	1
12/21	Assistant Manager (SAP MM)	1
13/21	Engineer (Dot Net)	1
14/21	Engineer (JAVA)	1
15/21	Manager (Social)	1
16/21	Assistant Manager (Social) on contract	2
17/21	Assistant Manager (Environment) on contract	2
For details regarding Position, pay scale, qualification, age, date & venue, selection process etc., candidates may see the detailed advertisement posted on RITES website <a href="http://www.rites.com">www.rites.com</a> under Career Section.		



# 6 EXPRESS NETWORK

## PM: Ensure all get Covid jabs, no one should be left out of circle of safety

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday greeted the people ahead of the upcoming festival season even as he cautioned them to maintain Covid protocols and to ensure that those who are yet to receive their vaccinations are also inoculated.

In his monthly Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast, recorded before he left for the US for an official visit, Modi said everyone should get the vaccine administered when his or her turn comes and should also ensure that no one is left out of this "circle of safety".

"With regards to vaccination, the country has made many such records which are being talked about the world over," he said. "Those around you who have not gotten vaccinated also have to be taken to the vaccine centre. Even after getting vaccinated, the necessary protocol has to be followed."

The Prime Minister also gave a call to mark this year's Gandhi Jayanti by achieving record sales at Khadi Gramodyog outlets across the country.

"Bapu connected cleanliness with independence; the same way he made khadi the identity of freedom. Today in the 75th year of freedom, when we are celebrating the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, we can say with satisfaction today that our young

generation today is giving khadi the place of pride that khadi had during freedom struggle...

"On October 2, on revered Bapu's birth anniversary, let us aim for another new record... For the festive season, every khadi, handloom, cottage industry purchase of yours should strengthen the campaign for 'Vocal for Local', it should break all old records," said the Prime Minister.

Modi dedicated this month's Mann Ki Baat to World Rivers Day, which is marked on Sunday. The Prime Minister said in India, we revere rivers, but on the other hand, we pollute them. Pointing out that great progress was being made through the government's Namami Gange programme, Modi said the money collected through the e-auction of gifts which he has received (launched on September 17 and to continue till October 8), will be given to Namami Gange.

The Prime Minister also mentioned the feat of the team of eight specially-abled persons setting a world record by hoisting the Indian flag on the Kumar Post at Siachen Glacier, at an altitude of more than 15,000 feet.

He pointed to the 'One Teacher, One Call' campaign in Uttar Pradesh for specially-abled children. Spearheaded by the principal of a school in Dabhaura Gangapur, Deepmala Pandey, more than 350 teachers have been making house calls to ensure the admission of specially-abled children in the school.

### GOA POLLS

## Senior Cong leader may join TMC ranks

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
PANAJI, SEPTEMBER 26

AMID SPECULATION of a senior Congress leader being "in talks" with the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC), MLA and former Goa chief minister Luizinho Faleiro is expected to join the Mamata Banerjee-led party, it is learnt. The TMC has said that it is "very serious" about contesting legislative Assembly polls in Goa, scheduled for early 2022.

According to political sources in the state, TMC is aiming at contesting all 40 seats in the state. Senior TMC leaders Derek O'Brien and Prasun Banerjee arrived in the state last week and have been holding discussions with politicians and civil society members, the sources said.

Earlier, Goa Congress president Girish Chodankar had dismissed speculation over Faleiro joining Trinamool as "rumours".

Seventy-one year old Faleiro, who is the sitting MLA from south Goa's Navelim, served as chief minister of the state in

1998-99. A Congress veteran, Faleiro has also served as AICC general secretary in-charge of Northeast states.

His imminent exit from Congress may come at a time that the party has five MLAs in the 40-member house. In 2019, ten MLAs from the Congress defected to the BJP in 2019.

A team from the Prashant Kishore-led Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), a political advocacy group, has been assessing the political situation in Goa from three months. IPAC, that advised Banerjee in the West Bengal Assembly polls earlier this year, will continue to work with the TMC.

Amid talk of Faleiro's exit, Chodankar and Congress legislative party leader Digambar Kamat had met Rahul Gandhi in Delhi on Saturday. AICC Goa in-charge Dinesh Gundu Rao had said that Gandhi had chaired the meeting and senior election observer for Goa P Chidambaram, general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal also attended it.

## ATS arrests 3 aides of UP cleric in 'illegal conversion' racket

*Lucknow:* The Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) on Sunday arrested three people for their alleged involvement in a suspected illegal conversion racket. The three were identified

as Mohammad Saleem and Mohammad Idrish Qureshi — both residents of Muzaffarnagar — and Kunal Ashok Chaudhary alias Atif from Nasik in Maharashtra. **ENS**

## Govt to weed out old files as PM directs clearance of all pending grievances, assurances by Oct 31

**AVISHEK G DASTIDAR**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

THE STEREOTYPE of a government office—full of archaic cabinets with dusty old files—may soon be a thing of the past.

The Government of India, on directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will in October dispose of all pending public grievances and complaints, along with all pending assurances given to Parliament, MPs and state governments as well as conclude all inter-ministerial consultations. As part of this exercise, the government will be weeding out old, unwanted files

along with all obsolete material. Starting September 13, all ministries, departments and subordinate offices of the government, as per instructions from Cabinet Secretariat, have been preparing the material and identifying the scope of the work to be done.

While doing this, ministries are also to review the existing rules and old orders that increase paperwork in government working. "...The existing processes may be reviewed with a view to reducing compliance burden and unnecessary paperwork done away with, wherever feasible," says the letter to all ministries from Cabinet



## PM's US TRIP: 20 MEETINGS IN 65 HRS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who returned from the US trip on Sunday, was welcomed by BJP leaders at the airport in Delhi. During his three-day trip to the US, Modi's schedule was packed with a series of meetings with top political and business leaders. He met US President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, Japan PM Yoshihide Suga, Australian PM Scott Morrison and five CEOs, including Blackstone CEO Stephen Schwarzman. Besides attending the Quad leaders' summit in the White House, he also addressed the UN General Assembly for the fourth time as India's Prime Minister. **PTI**

### PUNJAB CABINET EXPANSION

## Before oath-taking, last-minute drama of additions, omissions

**KANCHAN VASDEV**  
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 26

IT TOOK six days, three physical meetings and two V-Cs for the Congress party to decide on a final Cabinet list—and even that was tweaked at the last minute on Sunday.

The party was barely able to decide on all the names of ministers till a few hours before the oath-taking ceremony. It had not submitted the list till afternoon. At the last minute, PPCC working president and Fatehgarh Sahib MLA, Kuljit Nagra's name was dropped. Amloh MLA, Kaka Randeep Singh Nabha was included instead.

While the list was finalised by senior party leaders including Rahul Gandhi, K C Venugopal, Harish Chaudhary, Harish Rawat and Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi Wednesday, they had to tweak it further late Friday. After a protest by Nabha, Channi had two V-Cs with Rahul Gandhi. They had deliberated on dropping Gurkirat Singh Kotli from the list, but later changed their minds as he was former chief minister Beant Singh's grandson. His grandfather was associated with routing of the militancy from the state and was well-



Controversial MLA Rana Gurjit Singh takes oath at the Raj Bhawan in Chandigarh on Sunday. *Express*

liked in Punjab.

Sources said they finally decided to drop Nagra, who said he was never on the list. "I had resigned from the Vidhan Sabha on farm laws. I am not even an MLA. How can I be a minister?" he asked. His resignation was never accepted by the Speaker.

Congress general secretary in-charge Harish Rawat defended the party after the swearing-in: "There was no flip-flop. Our list was final. The media created an issue out of nowhere."

Defending the induction of Rana Gurjit Singh, Rawat said, "Where is the controversy? He was exonerated by a departmen-

tal inquiry against him. Where is the taint?" Rana Gurjit Singh, his families and his companies was allegedly involved in a mining scandal in 2017 in which even his former cook won a mine contract.

On two former ministers, Balbir Singh Sidhu and Gurepreet Kangar, protesting over being dropped, he said, "The party will accommodate everyone. We have roles for everyone. We will not let anyone be upset with us."

Brahm Mohindra, who was the second-most senior minister in Amarinder's Cabinet, has been demoted to no. 4 after Channi took oath with two other ministers.

## 2 militants involved in murder of BJP leader killed in J&K encounter

**BASHAARAT MASOOD**  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 26

ALASHKAR-E-TOIBA (LeT) commander was among the two militants killed in a gunfight in north Kashmir's Bandipore on Sunday. Police said the slain Lashkar militants were involved in the killing of BJP leader Waseem Bari and his family members last year.

On Saturday evening, a joint team of police, Army and the CRPF cordoned off Watrina village of Bandipore after specific inputs about the presence of mil-

itants there. On Sunday morning as the joint team of forces tightened the cordon, they established contact with the militants trapped in the village.

"During the operation the holed-up terrorists were given repeated opportunities to surrender. However, they refused to surrender," the police said in an official release. "[They] instead fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party, which was retaliated leading to an encounter."

The police said that two militants were killed in the gunfight. The two were identified as Abid Rashid Dar alias Haqqani and

Azad Ahmad Shah, both residents of Pakistan.

Haqqani, the police said, was a top Lashkar commander, who travelled to Pakistan on visa through Wagah border in 2018. The police said Haqqani infiltrated back into the valley in 2019 after receiving arms training in Pakistan.

They said the slain militants, together with a Pakistani militiaman, were involved in the killing of BJP leader Sheikh Waseem Bari and his family members. Bari, his brother and father—who were also associated with the BJP—were killed in July last year.

## Bharat Bandh by farmers today, Opp parties back it

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
CHANDIGARH, LUDHIANA, NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

AHEAD OF the Bharat Bandh called on Monday by farmers' unions protesting against the three contentious farm laws, several Opposition parties on Sunday extended support to the 10-hour nationwide strike.

The Congress, SAD, SP, BSP, TMC, AAP, YSRCP and Left parties announced that they would support the bandh, with some of these parties asking their workers to join the strike.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of more than 40 farmer unions, which is spearheading the protests, said in a statement, "It was on September 27, 2020 that President Shri Ram Nath Kovind assented to and brought into force the three anti-farmer black laws last year. Tomorrow, there will be a total Bharat Bandh observed around the country from 6 am to 4 pm."

It, however, stated that all emergency establishments and essential services—including hospitals, medical stores and people attending to personal emergencies—will be exempted from the bandh.

The SKM said although all political parties have been asked to support Monday's strike, none of them, or their representatives, will be given space on the farmers' stage. They, however, can set up their own stages in support of the farmers.

Calling for a peaceful bandh, SKM member Dr Darshan Pal said, "We appeal to everyone to support our bandh. We will, however, ensure that no markets or shops are closed forcibly. There is no place for violence in our movement. Sunday also marked the completion of 10 months of farm agitation against farm laws at Delhi borders."

"The SKM has appealed to all

government and private offices, all educational and other institutions, all shops, industries, and commercial establishments to remain shut on Monday," he said.

Farmers on Sunday also held a mahapanchayat in Panipat, which was addressed by senior farmer leaders, including Rakesh Tikait and Gurnam Singh Chaduni. "We urge all sections of society to join the Bharat Bandh as the ongoing agitation is not only for a particular section of society but for all."

Extending support to the bandh, Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal tweeted, "We believe in the right of our farmers and we will stand by them in their fight against the black farm laws."

"All PCC presidents, chiefs of frontal organisations are requested to go out in front with our Annadatas in their peaceful Bharat Bandh across the country," Venugopal said.

In a tweet in Hindi, BSP chief Mayawati said, "The farmers of the country do not endorse the three farm laws brought in a hurry by the Centre, and are sad about it." She said her party supports their call for a peaceful bandh and asked the Centre to hold consultations with farmers and bring a new law with their agreement.

In Kolkata, TMC chief and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she supports the farmers. Addressing a public meeting for the Bhabanipur Assembly by-poll, she said, "Tomorrow, there is a call for Bharat Bandh. Our party does not support bandhs. But we support their issue. We also want the three farm Bills to be withdrawn. If needed, we will go to Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh to support their protest."

In Kerala, both the ruling LDF and the Congress-led UDF have supported the nationwide farmers' strike.

**WITH PTI INPUTS**

## Farmers booked over black flags to Varun

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 26

AN FIR was filed against 36 farmers on Saturday for allegedly trying to show black flags to BJP MP Varun Gandhi while he was on his way to attend a public meeting in his constituency, Pilibhit, two days ago.

The accused were booked for flouting Covid protocol by not wearing masks or maintaining social distance. Police said the ac-



Varun Gandhi

cusced farmers also tried to stop vehicles in Varun's cavalcade which resulted in a heated argument between them and the police.

Harish Vardhan Singh Rathore, station house officer of Pooranpur police station, said the

## Ramana bats for 50% reservation for women in judiciary

## Demand reservation, you are entitled to it, Chief Justice tells women lawyers

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

WOMEN LAWYERS Should raise their voices "with anger" for 50 per cent reservation in the judiciary, which they are entitled to, Chief Justice of India NV Ramana said Sunday as he called for "urgent correction" of the gender imbalance.

"...With anger you have to shout, demand that you need 50 percent reservation. It's not a small issue. It's (an) issue of thousands of years of suppression. You are entitled. It's a matter of right. Nobody is going to give charity. It's unfortunate. Some things we realise very late. With the help of all of you, after some time, we may realise and reach this goal in the apex court as well as other courts," the CJI said at a felicitation ceremony organised by the Lady Advocates of Supreme Court of India.

Invoking Karl Marx's "workers of the world" call, the CJI said: "Women of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains."

CJI Ramana said women constitute only about 30 per cent of the lower judiciary, 11.5 per cent of the High Courts, and 12 per cent of the Supreme Court. Of



CJI N V Ramana

India's 1.7 million advocates, only 15 per cent are women, they make up only 2 per cent of the elected representatives in the State Bar Councils, and there are no women members in the Bar Council of India, he said.

"This needs urgent correction," he added.

The CJI spoke about the difficulties women face while entering the legal profession, including gender stereotypes that force them to bear the responsibilities of the family, the preference of clients for male advocates and an uncomfortable environment within courts—including a lack of infrastructure and washrooms, and crowded courtrooms. On infrastructural issues, CJI Ramana said out of 6,000 trial courts, nearly 22% have no toilet for women.

## UP hikes cane purchase price to Rs 350/quintal

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
LUCKNOW, SEPTEMBER 26

AHEAD OF the next year's Assembly elections, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday announced an increase in the state-administered price (SAP) of sugarcane by Rs 25 per quintal, taking the revised price to Rs 350 per quintal.

Addressing the Kisan Sammelan organised in Lucknow, the chief minister also announced to waive interest on pending electric bills of farmers.

Announcing that the hike would come into effect from the 2021-22 sugarcane crushing season, Adityanath said, "The purchase price of the early variety of sugarcane will be raised from Rs 325 per quintal to Rs 350 per quintal. The SAP for the general variety has been raised to Rs 340 per quintal from Rs 315 per quintal earlier."

The government has also decided to buy the rejected variety of sugarcane, of which barely one per cent is left, at an increased price of Rs 335 per quintal from Rs 310 per quintal.

According to a statement issued by the state government, the hike will boost the income of 45.44 lakh sugarcane farmers in the state and will result in an additional annual payment to the tune of Rs 4,000 crore.

During the 2007-2012 BSP government, the SAP for sugarcane was raised from Rs 125 per quintal for general and Rs 130 per quintal for early-maturing varieties to Rs 240-250 per quintal in the 2011-12 crushing season (October-September), marking an overall increase of Rs 115-120 per quintal.

farmers were holding a protest demanding rollback of the three agricultural laws brought by the central government.

The Pilibhit MP has not only tweeted support for the agitating farmers, but also wrote to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath a few days back seeking a substantial increase in sugarcane prices, bonus on wheat and paddy, doubling of grants under PM-KISAN scheme and subsidy on diesel, among other relief measures.

## Panchjanya: Amazon is like East India Company

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

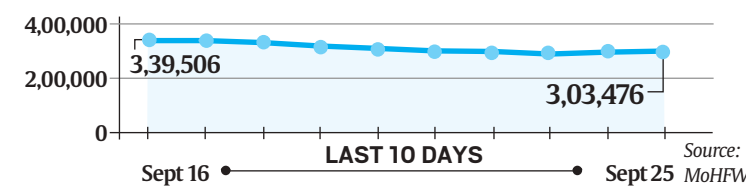
WEEKS AFTER it carried a cover story on Infosys, in which it accused the company of supporting "tukde-tukde gangs", RSS-affiliate magazine Panchjanya in its latest issue has carried a cover story on Amazon, equating the retail giant with East India Company, and accusing it of corrupt practices.

It also accused Amazon for allegedly assaulting Hindu values through Prime Videos.

Titled "East India Company 2.0", the cover story, written by Panchjanya Bureau, says, "Actually, Amazon too wants to have sole rights on the Indian market. For this it has started taking steps to encircle the political, economic and individual freedom of people here. It is accused of floating shell companies to capture the e-market platform, of bribing to have policies in its favor, and of airing programmes opposed to Indian culture through Prime Videos." It alleged that while Amazon invested in India with a promise to help small traders get a larger platform to sell products, it actually floated its own companies to do the same. "The company floated supplier entities such as Cloudtail and Apiria in which it had significant stake and indirect control," it said.

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

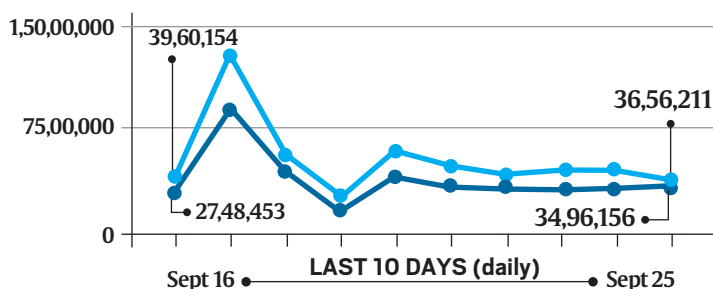




## CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

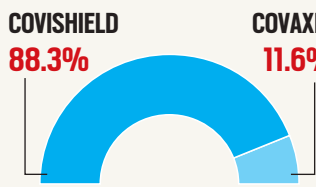
**TOTAL VACCINATED IN INDIA** (at least one dose)  
**63,08,31,085**

First dose Second dose



**TOTAL DOSES**  
**85,60,81,527**

(Sputnik V's 9,24,468 doses not represented in pie)



**DOSES ON SEPT 25 71,52,367**

**SEPT 24: 74,11,134** (1st doses: 42,72,481; 2nd: 31,38,653)

Note: The Sept 25 figures in these graphs are based on the government updates on Sept 26  
Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on September 26

## TELLING NUMBERS

### US Presidents' ratings in their first year: Biden's numbers slip

A Pew Research Center report released last week has found that US President Joe Biden's approval ratings have fallen sharply in the last two months. This is the first time his ratings have gone down since he became President, Pew said.

The survey was conducted among 10,371 adults between September 13-19. It found less than 44% of US adults now approve of Biden's way of handling his presidency and 53% disapprove. In July, 55% had approved of his performance and 43% disapproved.

During the first year in office, among recent Presidents, George W Bush (2001) had the highest approval ratings at 78%. Donald Trump, who became President in 2017, had the lowest approval ratings at 38%. Significantly, among recent Presidents, Biden has lower ratings than most at similar points, the survey notes.

#### BIDEN'S RATINGS SINCE MARCH 2021 (FOR SELECT MONTHS)

Month (2021)	Approval ratings	Disapproval ratings
March	54	42
April	59	39
July	55	43
September	53	44

#### OTHER PRESIDENTS' RATINGS DURING FIRST YEAR

President	March	February
Reagan (1981)	60	47
G H W Bush (1989)	54-59	73
Clinton (1993)	54	51
GW Bush (2001)	54	78
Obama (2009)	59	49
Trump (2017)	44	38

Source: Pew Research Center



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## SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# Assam's conflict over land

A video of a protester being shot by police, then stomped on by a civilian, has thrown the spotlight on an eviction drive in Assam. But the state's conflict over land, with ethnic faultlines, goes back decades.

TORA AGARWALA

GUWAHATI, SEPTEMBER 26

LAST WEEK, an eviction drive in Sipajhar in Assam's Darrang district took a violent turn, leaving two dead and several injured, after clashes broke out between the police and protesters. A horrifying video showed a protester armed with a lathi being shot by a policeman, then jumped on and stomped on by a civilian. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has instituted a judicial probe into the deaths, and the civilian has been arrested.

In Assam, ethnic conflict over land goes back decades, and such eviction drives predate the current regime.

#### What was the Sipajhar drive about?

The eviction drive in Dholpur of Sipajhar, where primarily Bengali-speaking Muslims live, was aimed at removing "illegal encroachers" to free up government land for "landless indigenous communities". According to authorities, the drive on Monday and Thursday evicted 1,200-1,300 families who had "illegally" occupied roughly 10,000 bighas of government land. The drive is rooted in the CM's visit to the area in June, when he "promised" local communities that the encroached land would be recovered and that the Dholpur Shiva Mandir in the vicinity would get a *manikut*, a guest house and a boundary wall.

Later, the state Budget earmarked Rs 9.6 crore for an "agriculture project", called the Garukhuti project, on the cleared land. The project would promote afforestation and agriculture activities, involving indigenous youth. On the request of the Agriculture Department, the district administration declared the area "community agricultural land". In June, a smaller drive evicted some seven families who lived near the temple.

#### Who were the people being evicted?

Primarily Bengali-speaking Muslims, they are mostly peasants and daily wage earners. While the government alleged they have "illegally encroached" on the land, most families *The Indian Express* met said they moved there at least 40 years ago, from districts such as Barpeta and Goalpara, after losing their homes to river erosion. Many claimed they had bought the land from locals at the time. However, most transactions happened without documents, and hold little legal validity.

On Saturday, CM Sarma accused the settlers of using two things like a "mantra": floods and erosion. "The Assam government cannot cow down. We (the Assamese) are getting outnumbered every day," he said. He said the landless among those evicted will be given 2 acres.

Sipajhar, incidentally, is part of the Mangaldoi Lok Sabha seat, from where the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) had launched its anti-foreigner movement of 1979-85. A revision of rolls had shown a large number of new voters — the trigger for the agitation.

#### What do indigenous locals say?

Portions of the land in Dholpur — as well as the larger Garukhuti area — have been a site



Evicted villagers inspect the remains of their homes in Dholpur.  
Sadiq Naqvi

of conflict for decades, with indigenous residents claiming their land has been usurped by migrants. Conflicts from time to time have often led to spurts of eviction. Organisations such as Prabajan Virodhi Manch (PVM) and Sangrami Satirtha Sammelan, which speak for indigenous communities, have been demanding that encroached land be freed up. In 2015, some Assamese residents led by Kobad Ali, president of Dakhsin Mangaldai GOWALA Santha (an organisation of milk producers), filed a case under the Assam Land Grabbing (Prohibition) Act, 2010, seeking a Mangaldoi court's intervention in evicting encroachers from Village Grazing Reserve and Professional Grazing Reserve in a number of villages in Sipajhar. In 2013, an RTI response said around 77,000 bighas of government land in the area remained encroached for years. The BJP promised to clear it after it came to power.

Upamanyu Hazarika, convenor of PVM, said in a press statement on September 20 that there had been five earlier eviction drives in the area, but it was the "local indigenous" who were made to suffer as their lands were acquired for the agriculture project, and the encroachers remained "undisturbed".

#### Did anyone among those targeted for eviction seek legal recourse?

According to activists, 200 families from Dholpur 3 moved the High Court against the eviction late last month. In response, the government had filed an affidavit saying the settlers were on government land. The evictions on Thursday came before the petitioners could file a reply. "Propriety demands that they should wait for the final outcome of the case," said Santanu Borthakur, an advocate representing the families.

#### How did the eviction turn violent?

Last Monday, about 800 families were evicted from Dholpur 1 and 3 villages. While it happened without resistance, locals and activists were unhappy because it was done without a "proper rehabilitation plan".

On Thursday, organisations such as the All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU), along with the public, carried out a demonstration, demanding rehabilitation. Thereafter,

the authorities held a discussion with them and a settlement was agreed upon.

Those evicted alleged that the eviction was carried out despite the agreement, in which the authorities reportedly said they would put the eviction on hold till facilities as demanded were arranged. "This is when the situation became tense, and then spiralled into violence," said AAMSU member Ainuddin Ahmed of Mangaldai, near Sipajhar. The authorities, on the other hand, alleged that even after the agreement, the locals "suddenly" began to attack the police with sticks, stones and spears. Darrang SP Susanta Biswa Sarma said police "did what they had to do" in "self-defence".

On Saturday, Chief Minister Sarma claimed the involvement of the Popular Front of India (PFI), the Muslim outfit.

#### What is the extent of encroachment of land in Assam?

Land has long been at the centre of ethnic contestations in Assam, with the common belief that the "indigenous" Assamese were losing its land to "migrants from Bangladesh". Often, it is alleged that government lands, lands around *xattras* (monasteries) and forest lands around national parks and sanctuaries have been encroached upon.

The Brahma Committee, formed by the previous Sarbananda Sonowal government to make recommendations on land rights, said in its interim report in 2017 that 63 lakh bighas of government land was under "illegal occupation". The same year, then MoS for Revenue Pallab Lochan Das (now Tezpur MP) told the Assembly that 6,652 sq km government land was encroached upon; in 2019, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said 22% of forest land was under encroachment.

However, officials will agree such figures are ambiguous. Das, the MP, told *The Indian Express*: "The figure keeps varying. After we evict, new areas are encroached upon. Some areas are not reported. So, it is never a static number," he said.

#### Is it limited to migrant communities?

No, not all of it. Some government land is often occupied by people considered indigenous to the state, especially in districts such as

Tinsukia, Dibrugarh etc. The Brahma Committee's report suggested that many natives do not own land documents.

"Many people — including indigenous people — have settled in these lands. Since no one has legal titles in principle they can all be evicted. But the vulnerability to eviction is largely determined by political circumstances," said political scientist Dr Sanjib Baruah, Professor, Bard College, New York. He referred to the Assam Accord of 1985: "The first AGP government learned this lesson the hard way. One of the promises of the Assam Accord was evictions from protected public lands. Clearly when the Assam Movement leaders negotiated this they only had so-called 'foreigners' in mind. They ignored the fact that some of Assam's most indigenous people like Bodos that were shifting cultivators had also found their way into these lands."

#### What about eviction drives?

Evictions are common in Assam but critics allege they have increased after BJP came to power. Drives were carried out by the Sonowal government including in Darrang, Sonitpur, Amchang (near Guwahati) and Kaziranga, where violence left two dead in 2016.

One of the BJP's promises in the May 2021 Assembly elections was to free government land from "encroachers", and allot them to "indigenous landless people". Since then, drives have evicted 70 families in Hojai's Lanka and 25 families in Sonitpur's Jamugurihat.

According to Baruah, the eviction in Sipajhar was "planned to an unprecedented degree". "Even the Finance Minister in her Budget speech referred to 'one experiment of our government was to remove encroachers from more than 77,420 bighas of land in Garukhuti under Sipajhar Block in Darrang district'," he said. "One can only infer that who would be evicted during this eviction drive had featured in the planning of the project."

Abdul Kalam Azad, a human rights researcher, said the difference between eviction drives aimed at indigenous communities and minority communities is that in eviction in places like Sipajhar, one will see "dehumanisation" of those who are being evicted. "It had political and communal intentions," he said.

## EXPLAINED THE PANDEMIC

# Why vaccine efficacy is declining, and the implications of a third dose

## EXPERT EXPLAINS

TUSHAR GORE

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight



RECENT DATA suggest that the effectiveness of Covid-19 vaccines has been declining. This article explores the possible reasons, and the implications of a third dose.

The table alongside shows some summary findings from Israel, the UK, and the US for vaccine effectiveness (VE) in preventing Covid infections. The data indicate that while protection against infection (as shown by effectiveness against symptomatic Covid) has declined (especially in Israel and USA), protection against hospitalisation remains high. The Israel study also showed individuals vaccinated in early 2021 are more susceptible to infection compared to those vaccinated later.

#### Is this a cause for alarm?

No, because protection against hospitalisation is still high. Ideally, a public vaccination programme should protect the population from infection, transmission, and hospitalisation (and subsequent mortality). Initial vaccine data showed high efficacy versus infection and hospitalisation. (The correlation between infection and transmission is not automatic and has to be proven. Some post-clinical trial data showed this for the current vac-

cines.) Even if protection against infection decreases, vaccines highly protective against hospitalisation are still beneficial because hospitalisations place the maximum burden on healthcare capacity. As long as the disease can be managed at home (and there are no lingering effects such as long Covid) then it is any worse than flu-like discomfort?

The data do show protection versus hospitalisation remains high.

#### What could be the explanation for the differences in effectiveness?

The statement "The immune system is incredibly complex" is a woefully minimal description of the intricate set of interconnected reactions collectively called the immune system that protects us from disease-causing agents. The explanation below is a basic outline, and as with any simplification some inaccuracies creep in, but these do not distort the overall message.

The virus, as it 'infects' the body, is primarily found in two locations. One is the circulation system that it uses to travel around the body. The second is the cells that the virus invades and uses to multiply. The immune system has two main 'arms' to confront the virus in these two locations. One is the antibody arm. Antibodies 'lock in' on certain surface proteins of the circulating virus, thereby preventing it from invading our cells. Further, they 'tag' the virus for destruction. Thus, antibodies can be thought as a first line of defence, but they become ineffective once the virus enters the cells. At this point, the second arm becomes relevant.

This arm is aptly named the Killer T cell arm. These cells target our own bodies' cells

that harbour the virus and within which it replicates. The T cells kill such cells, thereby eliminating the virus within them.

Vaccination establishes the two arms of the immune response, which can mature differently with time and in response to variants. Circulating antibody levels decline with time. Even though there is "memory" to produce antibodies on demand, jumpstarting this memory at a subsequent en-

## THE EXPERT

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counter can take time. A weak and delayed antibody response would result in infection but if the T-cell response is intact, the individual would be protected from severe disease.

Additionally, vaccine effectiveness can reduce because the immune system primed by one variant has to counter a new variant. Even here, the differences in response of the two arms to a variant are crucial.

The antibody arm reacts to the viral surface proteins (primarily the shape, or the 3D configuration), and thus changes in this surface protein can reduce the effectiveness of the antibody response. T cells, however, react to smaller fragments of the surface and other viral proteins. Since T cells respond to a broader set of targets — more proteins (surface and non-surface) and more sites on the proteins (multiple fragments) as compared to antibodies that respond to a specific site controlled by the local "shape" at the site, the T-cell response can be more resistant to variants.

So, the table can be explained by a decline in antibody effectiveness caused by time and variants that reduces VE versus symptomatic disease. Continuing effectiveness of the T-cell response explains the ongoing protection against hospitalisation. An important note is that at present, this explanation is conjecture based on the general principles of immune system function. Recent studies tracking a few individuals have reported that the T-cell response to vaccines is durable and effective versus the variants. More data will be required to confirm and perfect this basic explanation.

The simplified picture also indicates that circulating antibodies are not the entirety of the available protective resources. Antibody tests are easier to implement at large scale as compared to T-cell measurements and are therefore widely available. Individuals, however, should not base lifestyle decisions on such tests. The best practice is to get vaccinated and follow the local guidance on appropriate behaviour.

#### Will a third dose help?

Given that a two-dose regimen is still

highly protective against hospitalisation, the principal benefit of a third dose would be in improving effectiveness versus infection. Current limited data shows improvement in antibody levels and increase in effectiveness after a third dose. Consequently, some countries are considering a targeted roll-out of the third dose — in high-risk populations.

Nevertheless, there are other questions to consider. Since the vaccine is still based on the original 'Wuhan strain', the longer-term effectiveness is one concern. If immunity wanes after two doses, how long will the third dose remain effective? Will it protect against potential new variants? Another vital topic is the balance between reducing infection in an already vaccinated population via a third dose weighed against denying a first or second dose — one that protects from hospitalisation — to the partially or completely unvaccinated. An imperfect analogy is the choice between giving a lifejacket to an individual already wearing one versus to a person without one. The analogy also highlights the conflicting interests of the individual versus the collective.

In India, the majority of the population is not fully vaccinated and is therefore susceptible to hospitalisation. Furthermore, there is no data in the Indian population assessing possible reduction in two-dose effectiveness and benefits of a third. With such lingering questions and continued supply constraints, the priority should remain full vaccination of the eligible population (including approval of a vaccine for children) to control hospitalisation. The basic precautions to control the spread such as masking, distancing, basic hygiene, and ensuring appropriate ventilation in crowded indoor spaces should continue.





The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## IN STEP WITH US

PM Modi's visit sets the stage for transcending differences between the two nations on bilateral, regional, global issues

ALTHOUGH THERE WERE no major announcements made during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States last week, the stage has been set for transforming India's partnership with America, advancing Delhi's Quadrilateral partnership with Canberra, Tokyo, and Washington, and boosting India's global impact. The three levels of Indian engagement with the US — bilateral, regional, and multilateral — are no longer in separate compartments, reinforce each other. Having transcended some of their traditional differences on bilateral, regional, and global issues during the last two decades, Delhi and Washington are now free to frame their bilateral relations in more ambitious terms — as a partnership for regional stability and global good. Bilateral defence cooperation, Indo-Pacific regional balance, vaccine development, and mitigating climate change now cut across bilateral, regional, and global domains.

This does not mean Modi and the US President Joe Biden are neglecting urgent bilateral agenda on conventional issues such as trade — in the end the sinews of any partnership. Although the politics of trade have become a lot more complex in both countries, the two leaders have agreed to resume their trade dialogue. Beyond trade, Modi and Biden addressed several other areas ripe for deeper cooperation — homeland security, energy, higher education, and technological cooperation. The bilateral discussion on terrorism inevitably brings in the enduring challenges of cross-border terrorism promoted by the Pakistan army. Modi and Biden have also to come to terms with the consequences of Pakistan's success in bringing the medieval Taliban back to power in Afghanistan. The interests of India and the US appear to be in convergence on both the issues, but Delhi should not underestimate the continuing leverage of the Pakistan army, backed by China, as a "regional spoiler" if nothing else.

Although Afghanistan remains a key area of continuing concern for both India and the US, both sides are now looking at the bigger challenges emerging in the Indo-Pacific, driven by the rise and assertion of China. That is where the first in-person summit of the Quadrilateral forum comes in. Delhi and Washington have found a new comfort level in the shared understanding that the Quad will not be a military coalition. That has allowed them to focus on a very expansive and consequential non-military agenda of providing public goods across the Indo-Pacific. This allows the Quad to offer a credible alternative to China on a range of issues — from health to telecommunications and infrastructure development. It also undercuts Beijing's propaganda branding the Quad as "Asian Nato" and enhances the forum's acceptability and sustainability in the region. The issues to be taken up in the Quad — pandemic management and climate change are not merely regional issues, but global and inevitably figured prominently in Modi's address to the United Nations General Assembly along with the question of terrorism. To be sure, there is much distance to be covered in building a global consensus on these issues. But India's own emergence as a major economic power makes it a critical player in shaping the outcomes on these issues. Delhi's closer partnership with Washington will in turn boost India's global strategic salience.

## GRAIN DIPLOMACY

It can be symbolic of a new India — that Delhi, with its food abundance, will not let anyone starve in South Asia

THERE WAS A time when the US used food aid as a powerful diplomacy tool to contain hunger-induced discontent that, it feared, could trigger communist revolutions in underdeveloped countries. Successive post-World War II administrations made the Food for Peace programme, better known as PL-480, a cornerstone of US foreign assistance. India alone imported nearly 24 million tonnes (mt) of wheat under PL-480 during 1964-66. The US even supplied some 9.1 mt of subsidised wheat and corn to the Soviet Union in 1973, whose ideological significance wasn't lost on anybody. For the US, food shipments, on concessional or outright grant terms, served both as a bulwark against communism and a means to relieve its massive farm surpluses. John F Kennedy estimated that it cost 20 cents a year to store a bushel of wheat and 38 cents to ship the same grain to India. Exporting grain free, then, was cheaper than stocking beyond two years.

The same opportunity — what Kennedy called "turning our great agricultural abundance into a blessing, for ourselves and for all the world" — presents itself, albeit in a smaller manner, to India today. At 90.41 mt as on September 1, the country's public stocks of wheat and rice were the highest ever for this date, with the new paddy arrivals from October only going to add to these. Moreover, the stock pileup has taken place, despite a record 93 mt-plus grain offtake from the Central pool during 2020-21, much of it given out free/near-free post the pandemic. With government agencies procuring over 103 mt last year, the quantities flowing into the Food Corporation of India's warehouses are far in excess of that going out. The "carrying cost" — interest, storage and other expenses — of the excess buffer has been estimated at Rs 5,589 per tonne for 2021-22. Clearly, there is economic as well as diplomatic sense in donating or bartering this surplus grain abroad. And where better to do it than in our immediate neighbourhood?

Afghanistan is now facing an acute food crisis from a combination of prolonged drought, regime change and associated instability. Sri Lanka, too, is grappling with food shortages, worsened by dwindling foreign currency reserves. What stops India from offering, say, 2 mt of wheat to Afghanistan as humanitarian aid and one mt of rice to Sri Lanka against payment in local currency similar to that under PL-480? Wheat can only be eaten or, at worst, diverted as animal feed. There should be no moral compunction, hence, in supplying it even to a regime that India cannot recognise. Grain diplomacy — a simple message that nobody in South Asia shall starve while we are here — can be symbolic of the New India: One that cares and matters to the world.

## FREEZE FRAME

## E P UNNY



TEJASHWI PRASAD YADAV

I WRITE THIS IN the context of the affidavit submitted by the Union government on September 23 in the Supreme Court stating that the caste census in 2021 would not be "feasible". This excuse stonewalls the collective demand from across India for data that would have provided a context for a new paradigm for inclusive development based on contemporary realities. Further, the government's argument that their stance follows from the "conscious" decision taken since 1951 to not have such an enumeration is bad in both reasoning and intent. It is bad in reasoning because such granular data will allow the government an opportunity for targeted policy-making. Why would it let such an opportunity pass? It is bad in intent as well because the government need not go back to 1951 — just a few years ago several of its incumbent ministers explicitly promised a caste census. It is not "feasible" for the government because, like many other promises, the promise to conduct a caste census was also a jumla, just empty rhetoric.

The demand for a caste census or updated numerical status of castes has been strongly raised by several leaders and civil society activists committed to the philosophy and ideology of social justice for over three decades. My father, Lalu Prasad Yadav, together with colleagues from other political parties raised the need for such data inside as well as outside Parliament. The objective behind this demand was to bring out the unseen aspects of various caste groups and their share in resources. Such data would tell us not only the exact population of various caste groups but also help assess the so-called inclusive development since independence. In the light of these important concerns, and despite opposition by some mainstream political parties, in 2011 the then UPA government decided to conduct a caste census under pressure from subaltern voices.

For more than 70 years, we have heard from all governments about poverty allevia-

Real casteist politics is to protect the privilege of a few, and not address injustice of the many

The ruling elite as well as some members of the mainstream media have been suggesting that the demand for making the caste census public may lead to casteism in every sphere. Such fear-mongering needs to be dealt with objectively. Who are the people carrying out occupations that offer neither dignity nor adequate livelihood? Who are the workers who have absolutely no social security and are always one crisis away from destitution? Who are the people migrating from our villages for uncertain futures in cities? Why does the welfare state or at least the government — which is otherwise very inquisitive — not seem interested in knowing who these people are?

tion, ending unemployment, and equitable distribution of resources. While absolute poverty has increased manifold, the inequality between castes and classes is widening day by day. Several national and international pieces of research have revealed the bitter truth about the precarious life situation of Dalits, backward classes, and minority groups on the parameters of education, health, and employment, and their further marginalisation is a tragedy of our times. Numerous studies have shown that the dominant elite, comprising less than 10 per cent of the population, corners 90 per cent of the resources and a large section of these groups has been preventing the policies of the state from becoming pro-people. Each and every voice against these dominant groups have been suppressed by successive governments under one pretext or another.

If inclusive development is the constitutional priority of our country, then we must demand the socio-economic caste enumeration and make it publicly available so that our development policies and programmes can be accordingly shaped with an avowed commitment to empowering the people and communities on the margins. Development indeed is a very important constituent of empowerment, so the decision to prioritise it cannot be left to those who own 90 per cent of the resources. In contemporary discussions, it does not seem right or appropriate that the meaning of growth should be determined only by the fluctuations of the Sensex, which more often than not lacks the human face and touch.

The ruling elite as well as some members of the mainstream media have been suggesting that the demand for making the caste census public may lead to casteism in every sphere. Such fear-mongering needs to be dealt with objectively. We shall counter the misleading propaganda around this issue with facts and well-grounded arguments. Let us ask some valid questions with regards to the

contemporary development paradigm, which goes with the rhetoric of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas. Who are the people carrying out occupations that offer neither dignity nor adequate livelihood? Who are the workers who have absolutely no social security and are always one crisis away from destitution? Who are the people migrating from our villages for uncertain futures in cities? Why does the welfare state or at least the government — which is otherwise very inquisitive — not seem interested in knowing who these people are? Does their caste determine their economic status or their agency to speak for what is fair?

We were also told that an alarmingly high percentage of the people in rural India are landless. Today, there is a need to make public the figures of caste and land ownership so that we can deal with this dire situation by developing sensitive and inclusive intervention plans. Is it spreading casteism if we ask who is homeless in urban areas or what is the social background of the daily wage worker? Just querying the caste character of poverty, backwardness, and marginalisation cannot be and should not be dubbed an attempt at promoting casteism. In fact, going by the spirit of the Preamble of the Constitution, we must ensure that our public policy is in sync with the critical realities of our times.

Many friends claim that poverty has no caste. But all studies and research conducted around inequality show that poverty is entrenched among the subordinate castes. How does questioning the participation and lack of engagement of these groups in our development story become speaking for casteist politics? The bitter truth is that real casteist politics is the one that takes a "conscious" decision to cover up the privileges of a handful of people and does not find it "feasible" to redress the dire condition of crores of its citizens.

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## LEARNING WITHOUT BARRIERS

Developments in online education open up access for disabled children



FEZA T AZMI

GLOBALLY, ABOUT 15 per cent of the population lives with some form of disability. Of this, 80 per cent lives in developing countries. Persons with disabilities (PwDs) are among the most marginalised groups. They encounter a range of barriers and are more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes. Limited support infrastructure can have a significant debilitating impact on everyday life. WHO now considers disability a human rights issue. It emphasises that people are disabled by society and not by their bodies.

Over the last 65 years, the overall global literacy rate has increased by 4 per cent every five years — from 42 per cent in 1960 to 86 per cent in 2019. However, the global literacy rate for the disabled is as low as 3 per cent with just 1 per cent for females. Ninety per cent of disabled children in developing countries do not attend school, says UNESCO. The school drop-out rate is also high due to the lack of adequate infrastructure, inaccessible reading material and untrained teachers. An insignificant number make it to institutes of higher learning.

Lack of education has a trickle-down effect. Most disabled children are not equipped with foundational skills for employability. According to the UN, in developing countries, 80 to 90 per cent of PwDs are unemployed, whereas in industrialised countries, it is between 50 to 70 per cent. In most countries, the unemployment rate for PwDs is at least twice that of those who have no disability.

The pandemic has made us realise how technology is reshaping education.

Online education has the potential to make learning more accessible for persons with disabilities. It takes care of physical barriers created by transportation and mobility issues. Children have the advantage of accessing learning from the safety and comfort of their homes. It saves them from unnecessary inhibitions in attending physical schools.

Lockdowns made schools rapidly migrate to online education. This metamorphosis of education systems has far-reaching implications for disabled children. Online education has the potential to make learning more accessible for PwDs. It takes care of physical barriers created by transportation and mobility issues. Children have the advantage of accessing learning from the safety and comfort of their homes. It saves them from unnecessary inhibitions in attending physical schools. Disabled students in higher education too can have access to lectures, libraries and resources without the need to physically navigate remote campuses.

Online learning, both in the synchronous and asynchronous modes, offers added flexibility and the advantage of self-paced learning. With technological aids and assistive devices, it is possible to train disabled children in various skills. E-learning allows the review of materials and repeated viewing of video lectures. Various assistive technologies like screen readers, text magnifiers, speech recognition software, braille keyboards, sign language interpreters, videos with subtitles, audio recordings, etc, can be used.

Internet penetration is increasing fast. As of January 2021, there were 4.66 billion active internet users worldwide — almost 60 per cent of the global population. In 104 countries, more than 80 per cent of the youth population is online. Out of the 830 million young people who are online, 320 million (39 per cent) are in China and India, which are among the countries with the highest incidence of disability.

Prices of internet services have dropped by 50 per cent on average over the last three years and broadband and mobile services are available at much higher speeds. This augurs well for online education. Children are quick learners and adapt fast. With adequate support, adopting e-learning may not be a huge challenge.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals focus on "inclusive and quality education for all". With barely nine years left for the target, greater strides have to be made. Governments and educational bodies have an important role to play in making ICT accessible to disabled students. Those at the forefront of education administration can facilitate designing online courses and learning modules in easy-to-deliver formats. Initial challenges do exist, but students who did not attend schools due to physical limitations at least have an alternative now. This can be a good starting point to bring in students who have been denied access to schools.

Advances in the digital economy are creating unprecedented work opportunities for the disabled, a report by ILO says. With the rise of the gig economy, most work is being done from homes, creating new job opportunities for physically restricted PwDs. Online education could prove to be a turn of the wheel in the quest of PwDs to gain a meaningful life.

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## SEPTEMBER 27, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

### DHAKA PROTESTS

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT has brushed aside reports from Dhaka that 18 Bangladesh citizens had been killed within Bangladesh borders in an attack by Indian security personnel earlier this week. No Indian security person was involved in the reported incident, a spokesperson of the Union external affairs ministry said. The spokesperson said that there has been no request from the Bangladeshi government in response to the request from local Indian officials for a meeting to sort out the problem. He said about 5,000 people belonging to tribal communities had crossed into India from Bangladesh in the last few days. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh government had lodged a

strong protest with India alleging border violations by 500 miscreants in the Chittagong Hill Tract Areas.

### CM DENIES CHARGES

DENYING THE CHARGES of corruption levelled against him, Bihar Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra launched a counteroffensive against Karpoori Thakur who he alleged was attempting "to give authenticity to his fabricated lies basing his information on an imaginary home ministry report". In his lengthy rejoinder, Mishra accused Thakur of earning more than Rs 2 crore from contracts given by the Bihar Electricity Board. Denying that he had a hand in the raising of the price of spirit

from 75 paise to Rs 1.80 per litre, the price had been settled by the excise department after negotiations with the manufacturers. He also said that Union Home Minister Giani Zail Singh had told him that no inquiry had been initiated into the charges against him.

### STORM WARNING

MOVEMENT OF SHIPS to and from the Calcutta port and Haldia dock complex and normal work in these dock systems were disrupted by severe cyclonic storms. A danger signal was hoisted at the Calcutta ports and the Haldia dock complex warning ships, fishing boats and trawlers of a severe cyclonic storm.





# Not the MSP route

Augmenting farmers' income will require investment in animal husbandry, fisheries and fruit and vegetable cultivation. Private sector needs to be incentivised to create value chains

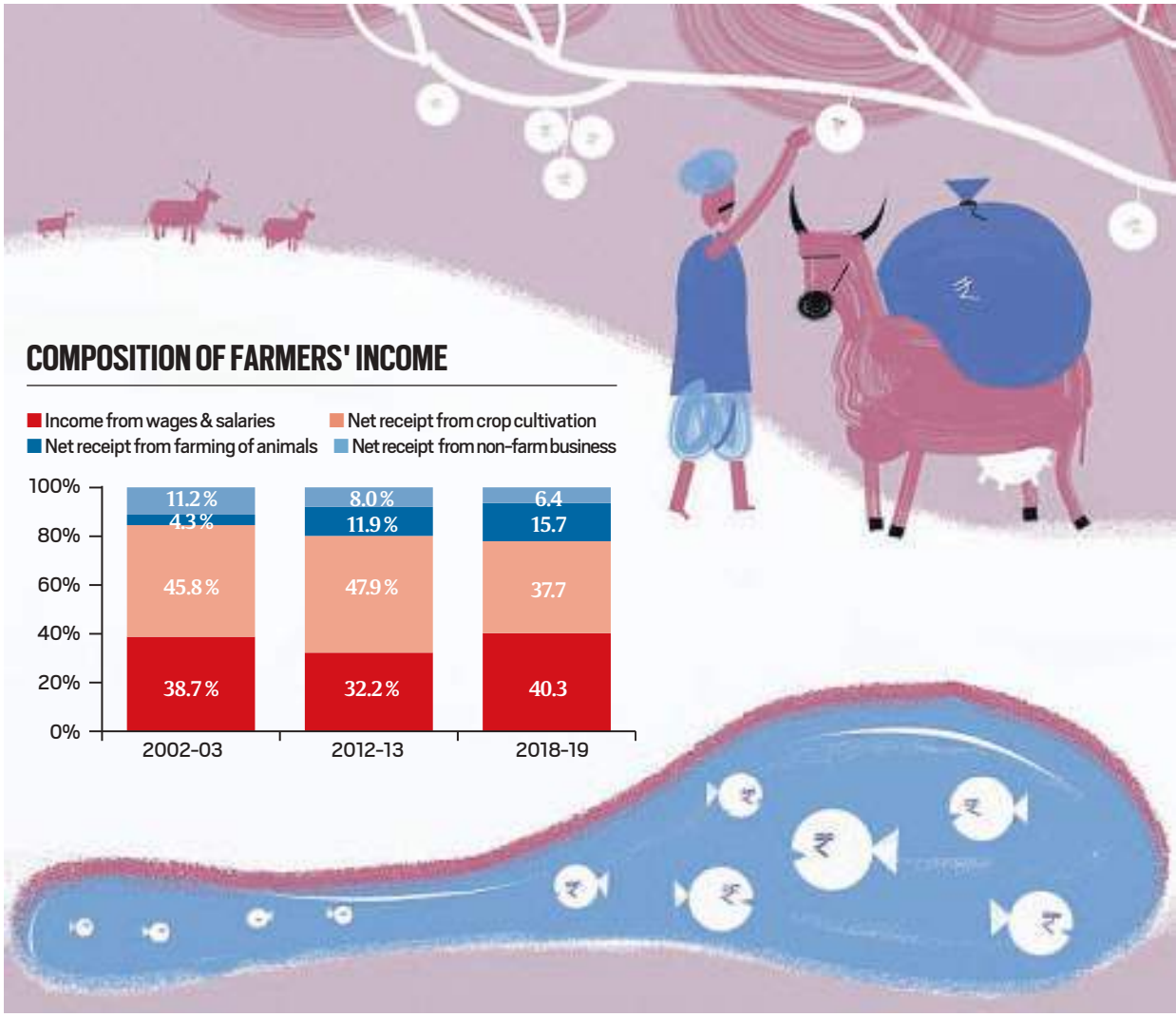


FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH  
BY ASHOK GULATI AND  
RANJANA ROY

AFTER TWO SUCCESSIVE droughts in 2014-15 and 2015-16, Prime Minister Narendra Modi set out an ambitious target to double farmers' incomes by 2022-23. Many analysts thought he was talking about nominal incomes. But the Ashok Dalwai Committee, which was set up to chalk out a strategy to achieve this, made it clear that the target of doubling farmers' incomes was in real terms and the goal was to be achieved over seven years with the base year of 2015-16. It clearly stated that a growth rate of 10.4 per cent per annum would be required to double farmers' real income by 2022-23. According to an estimate of farmers' income for 2015-16 by NABARD in 2016-17, the average monthly income of farmers for 2015-16 was Rs 8,931. However, unless a similar survey is conducted in 2022-23, we won't really know what happened to the target of doubling farmers' real income.

We do have the recently released data for 2018-19 based on the Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of agricultural households conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO). As per this survey, an average agricultural household earned a monthly income of Rs 10,218 in 2018-19 (July-June) in nominal terms. We have a similar SAS for 2012-13, when the nominal income was Rs 6,426. In nominal terms, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) turns out to be 8 per cent between 2012-13 to 2018-19. But we need to know the growth rate of real incomes. For that, the choice of deflator becomes critical. If one deflates nominal incomes by using CPI-AL (consumer price index for agricultural labour), which should be the logical choice, then the CAGR turns out to be just 3 per cent. If one uses WPI (wholesale price index of all commodities), the CAGR in real incomes turns out to be 6.1 per cent. This vast difference is just due to the choice of deflator. However, there is another SAS that the NSO conducted for 2002-03. Although the definition of agricultural household in that SAS was based on some area operated during the last year of the survey — replaced by minimum income earned from agriculture in the SAS of 2012-13 and 2018-19 — when one compares CAGR in farmers' real income (deflated by CPI-AL) over 2002-03 to 2018-19, it turns out to be 3.4 per cent (and 5.3 per cent if deflated by WPI). Obviously, in such point-to-point comparisons, the situation in the base year and terminal year influences the growth rates dramatically.

A better method would have been to look at average annual growth rates (AAGR), if yearly data was available. The AAGR for agri-GDP is available and at an all-India level, between 2002-03 to 2018-19, it turns out to be 3.3 per cent — this is very close to the real income growth (CAGR) of 3.4 per cent for the same period. However, at the state level, the variation is much more as state agri-GDP growth is volatile and depends on the monsoon — this is especially true for states that



have a much lower level of irrigation. For example, Punjab with almost 99 per cent irrigation cover, will have a much more stable income than say Maharashtra with just 19 per cent irrigation cover.

A disaggregated state-level analysis shows a huge gap between agriculture GDP and farmers' income growth in many states — Kerala, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh. But a closer look at individual states indicates that the Gujarat region had a 27 per cent deficient rainfall than its Long Period Average (LPA) and Saurashtra, Kutch and Diu were 38 per cent rainfall deficient in 2018-19. Jharkhand had 31 per cent deficient rainfall, while Kerala experienced a major flood in 2018-19. No wonder, the agricultural GDP growth of Gujarat was negative (-8.7 per cent) in 2018-19. This would surely depress the farmers' incomes in the state for 2018-19. But overall, for the period 2002-03 to 2018-19, Gujarat's agri-GDP growth is 6.5 per cent — one of the highest in India. The upshot of this analysis is that at the state level, it is important to consider both the indicators (growth in agri-GDP as well as farmers' incomes based on a survey of the specific year) to get a clearer picture of the state of affairs at the farmer level.

What is the policy message that one can derive from comparing these three rounds of SAS — 2002-03, 2012-13 and 2018-19? The figure gives the changing composition of farmers' real income.

What is clear from this comparison is the following: One, the share of income from rearing animals (this includes fish) has gone up dramatically from 4.3 per cent in 2002-03 to 15.7 per cent. Two, the share of income from

What these survey results indicate is that the scope for augmenting farmers' incomes is going to be more, and from rearing animals (including fisheries). It is worth noting that there is no minimum support price (MSP) for products of animal husbandry or fisheries and no procurement by the government. It is demand-driven, and much of its marketing takes place outside APMC mandis. This is the trend that will get reinforced in the years to come as incomes rise and diets diversify.

the cultivation of crops has decreased from 45.8 per cent to 37.7 per cent. Three, the share of wages and salaries has gone up from 38.7 per cent to 40.3 per cent. Four, the share of income coming from non-farm business has come down from 11.2 per cent to 6.4 per cent.

What these survey results indicate is that the scope for augmenting farmers' incomes is going to be more, and from rearing animals (including fisheries). It is worth noting that there is no minimum support price (MSP) for products of animal husbandry or fisheries and no procurement by the government. It is demand-driven, and much of its marketing takes place outside APMC mandis. This is the trend that will get reinforced in the years to come as incomes rise and diets diversify. Those who believe that farmers' income can be increased by continuously raising the MSP of grains and government procurement, irrespective of the fact that grain stocks with the government are already overflowing and more than double the buffer stocking norms, are living in the past — and advocating a very expensive food system. That will fail sooner or later. Wisdom lies in investing more in animal husbandry (including fisheries) and fruits and vegetables, which are more nutritious. The best way to invest is to incentivise the private sector to build efficient value chains based on a cluster approach. The Narendra Modi government has started working in this direction, but much more needs to be done.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture and Roy is a Research Fellow at ICRIER

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“While Mr [Imran] Khan may be sincere in urging the international community to lend a hand, the Taliban government is doing itself no favours by refusing to accommodate any demands of the international community, including Pakistan.”  
—DAWN, PAKISTAN

## Singing like a feminist

With her unusual weapons — laughter, songs, slogans and art — Kamla Bhasin built institutions and solidarities, made South Asian feminism a force



URVASHI BUTALIA

AT KAMLA BHASIN'S funeral on Saturday, people stood silently as her sister, Bina, performed the last rites. Shortly after, a young woman began a “conversation” with Kamla, addressing her as if she were still alive. Words turned into song and soon the entire gathering of feminist activists — working-class, elite, religious, non-religious, old, young and others whose lives Kamla had touched, broke into song.

As Kamla's favourite songs, many that have become anthems for the women's movement, rang out across the cremation ground, people tapped their feet, clapped their hands, swayed to the rhythm and then, gradually, fell silent. A group of women — her close friends, her beloved relatives — then lifted her and took her in for her last departure. Inside they raised slogans, those she had shouted in so many feminist gatherings, and once again they sang songs of farewell and love.

Ever since her aggressive cancer was diagnosed three months ago, Kamla knew she did not have long to live and joked often of the *bulawa* that was imminent. In hospital, on what was to be her last day, she fought energetically to live, and demanded that her hair be blow-dried, her toenails painted. Back home the next day, the life now gone out of her, her face still held her characteristic smile, mischief lurking at its edges.

It was some 40 years ago that Kamla Bhasin arrived on the feminist scene in Delhi. In one of our early encounters at an anti-dowry protest, she brought along her husband and daughter — at the time an infant — and they soon became a constant feature of our marches.

Later, in our street play, *Om Swaha*, she became the *sutradhar*, energetically sounding the *damru*, laughingly making up nonsense rhymes to invite bystanders and curious onlookers into the play, disarmingly making spontaneous comments on now a shirt, now a dupatta, making them feel special. I think it was perhaps that moment that turned her into the ace communicator she was to become later in life, talking with equal ease to a grassroots worker or an international official.

At the time, she had a day job with the Food and Agricultural Organisation, and her offices were located inside the UN building in Delhi, an unlikely locale for a woman who was much more at home spinning and rocking on her feet in the streets. But it was the South Asian regional remit of that job that Kamla would return to in her activist years, to build enduring solidarities and friendships across the South Asian region, and to make South Asian feminism a force.

She did this through her formidable and

unusual “arsenal” of feminist weapons: Laughter, joy, friendship, songs, slogans, art, dance, books and so much more. She organised — often with the dancer Chandralekha — some of the early feminist poster-making workshops. In one of these was created the iconic poster that announced the arrival of her particular brand of feminist math: One-plus-one equals 11.

She set up institutions and campaigns: Jagori, of which she was an integral part, Sangat, through which she shared feminist concepts with less privileged women, One Billion Rising, a campaign that attempted to show that the numbers of women demanding their rights ran into billions.

Her enthusiasm and commitment to the women's movement — her home and her belonging — meant that even personal tragedies, the loss of her young daughter, the lifelong illness of her son, did not deter her and she bounced back from each one, the laughter intact on her face, the hurt hidden in her heart. One of her favourite coinages was: “One does not fall in love, one rises in love” — something that was the truth of her life. Many such were shared privately with her feminist comrades amid much laughter: “Mary conceived without sinning, oh Lord let me sin without conceiving”, “We don't want copper-T, we want proper T” and a song, “*Amma dekh, amma dekh, tera movement bigda jaye*”!

Kamla's life was also a testament to that most precious of things that feminism across the world has given us: The strength of female friendships. When a powerful critique was mounted against her on social media for statements she made on trans issues, it was her close group of friends that rallied round her and helped her understand the harm her words could do.

It was these same friends, spread across different cities and countries, who came together when her illness was diagnosed to help her sort out her affairs — the most important of which was the care of her son — and who created a roster of weekly support, putting their lives on hold to be with her full time as carers for that period. To be able to so generously give of the immense store of love that you have, and to be its recipient in equal measure, was something that came effortlessly to Kamla.

In our patriarchal world, the passing of a feminist life is rarely seen as a loss to society. In the last few months, we have seen several such departures: Gail Omvedt without whose writings and activism our understanding of caste would have been so much poorer; Sonal Shukla, who, like Kamla, made fun, reading, song, dance, and learning the central plank of her work; Rati Bartholomew, who gave her life to theatre. And Kamla herself.

They leave behind a world, more specifically the world of the women's movement, both enriched and impoverished. Enriched by the lives they fully and generously gave to it and impoverished by the loss of so much more that they had to give.

The writer is publisher, Zubaan



MICHAEL PINTO

IN OUR PRESENT polarised atmosphere, negative reactions from those on opposite sides of the political divide are only to be expected. Parties that supported certain policies when they were in power have now become their bitter opponents when in opposition. Of course, those now advocating them were equally vocal in their opposition when they were out of government. Whether it is the farm laws, monetisation or a host of other initiatives, we have seen the same drama play out each time.

Faced with a slowing economy that only became worse after the pandemic and a huge shortage of funds for investment, the government looked to monetise brownfield assets by unlocking their potential value. The proceeds are to be used for fresh investment in infrastructure. So, the right to collect toll on existing highways would be offered for 30 years or so to private investors in return for an upfront payment. Oil and gas pipelines would similarly be leased to private players as would seaports and airports. Assets proposed for monetisation include airports, terminals in seaports, railway lines, railway stations, stadiums, warehouses and a host of other government assets with unutilised potential.

One of the earliest salvos against this scheme was fired by a former Chief Economic Advisor. His main thrust was that leasing was not the best option because outright sale would bring in greater value and avoid the

## The choice to monetise

Critics of asset monetisation overstate pitfalls, hold it to unreasonable standards

ticklish questions of asset stripping and maintenance of the leased assets. There is no doubt that an outright sale would bring in higher returns but given the cries of “sellout” by opposition parties when even leasing is mooted, it is unlikely that sale would have been feasible. Potential buyers would be wary of the consequences of an unpopular sale. It may well have led to the kind of stalemate we have seen in the implementation of the agricultural reforms.

Critics also raise the valid point that leased assets would not be properly maintained. After all, no one washes a hired car. But the agreement to lease could contain clauses that mandate the return of assets in the same condition in which they were offered, normal wear and tear excepted. There could be differing views on what constitutes normal wear and tear but an independent authority whose decision on this would be final, could be part of the agreement to lease. Government undertakings like ONGC routinely lease their offshore vessels (OSVs) for operation and management to outsiders. Ports do the same for their vessels like tugs or pilot launches. In each case, there is a protocol for maintenance and return. In the case of the lease, the protocol would only have to cover the return and could address both maintenance and asset stripping.

Other objections relate to whether monetisation is intended to substitute the skill and efficiency of the private sector for the supposed

lethargy of government control. If leasing out a government asset brings improved efficiency in management that would be an additional bonus. But it is not the purpose of the exercise. So, we need not debate whether the private sector is innately more efficient (the jury is out on this one) or has fewer constraints (it definitely does) because these are neutral to the worth of this scheme.

Similarly, fears expressed that the move would bring greater concentration of power in the hands of the private sector are not relevant. Every time the government cedes some ground by opening sectors hitherto reserved exclusively for itself, it runs this risk. This has not prevented them from allowing private operators to operate freight trains or terminals in seaports. It has not even stood in the way of allowing private operators to run airports.

One criticism is that when the private sector bids for these projects, they would probably require institutional finance for at least part of their outlay and this would result in a “crowding out” of other investments. Surely this would apply to any investment, private or public? Public sector undertakings (PSUs) raise funds from banks and even the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) resorts to public funding. We do not ban PSUs or the NHAI from raising funds in the market. In fact, we actively encourage it since it reduces the burden on governmental outlays. So why quibble if it is done here?

Could this programme lead to the concentration of economic power in a few hands? Certain distressing trends have been seen recently in areas like telecom, airports and seaports but this trend pre-dated the current proposal. It does, however, sound a note of caution that policymakers should guard against. Necessary checks can easily be built into the offer documents that will ensure that the scheme does not create or reinforce monopolies of any sort.

The fact is that our expectations from this scheme have been much too high. When it was first mooted, it had the limited aim of unlocking the intrinsic value of brownfield assets by leasing them out and using the proceeds to finance infrastructure projects. From that, we have raised the bar so high that the programme is now faulted for not improving the performance of PSUs, for risking crowding out of other investments and even for not meeting the government's entire infrastructure outlay. Out of a total of Rs 111 trillion for the government's ambitious infrastructure plan, monetisation is likely to net less than 5 per cent. Does that mean that we should abandon it? Can any one scheme finance such a humungous plan? Different schemes and sources will bring their own offerings to swell the total kitty. Let us not belittle their size.

The writer is a former secretary (shipping), Government of India

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A BLOT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Plug the leak’ (IE 25 September). It is distressing to see that a state, which has performed relatively better than others in welfare implementation, should find itself in the midst of a corruption scandal in its most prestigious scheme. The manner in which the beneficiary minister in the Bihar government has shrugged off the expose shows blatant disregard for propriety and is deplorable. The CM must get to the bottom of the scandal and take corrective action against all responsible if his image is not to be sullied. For a start, he must get the water scheme and all such schemes audited to find out if there are more skeletons in the closet.

Hemant Contractor, Pune

### PUBLIC VS PRIVATE

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The strategic public sector’ (IE, September 25). The problem of poor performance and losses of PSEs is largely due to political and bureaucratic interference in their functioning. Left to their managements, PSEs would earn reasonable returns, as NTPC has done. Another facet of the issue is that the privatisation will lead to monopolies for few capitalists, who will dominate market with high prices for their products and services.

Gangadhar Karalay, Nagpur

### RSS TOKENISM

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Why Mohan Bhagwat is right about the Raj’

(IE, September 25). I believe RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's words are mere tokenism. The larger project that he is a part of is to preserve and safeguard the social order and oligarchy of caste in Hindu society. How, otherwise, would he advocate for a Hindutva that repulses and excludes the larger interests of the Muslim community, which has been forced to fend for itself ever since the inauguration of this regime in 2014? Where was he when Muslims were being brutally maimed, lynched and assaulted on one or another pretext?

Ritwik Trivedi, Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Why Mohan Bhagwat is right about the Raj’ (IE, September 25). While certainly welcome, the article is likely to fall on deaf years. The Hindutva project is fundamentally opposed to fraternity.

Biswadeep Chatterjee, via email

### VP'S SIGNAL

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Modi and Harris discuss Pak support for terror’ (IE, September 25). In the joint press conference, the US and India's common concern with regard to Pakistan's role in spreading cross-border terrorism was expressed along standard lines, in a proforma manner. But US Vice-President Kamala Harris confabulating about necessary measures to strengthen democracy in their own countries is a surprising and unsolicited counsel to PM, who represents the most populous democracy.

I R Murmu, Delhi





10

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

RAJIV RANJAN SINGH, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, JD(U)

Caste census will help formulate policy for poor. No one has anything to lose... Nitish raised demand earlier too...

JD(U) leader Rajiv Ranjan Singh asserts the 2020 poll results were not anti-Nitish, denies charges of political patronage in state water scheme contracts, and talks about why Prashant Kishor was let go. The session was moderated by Chief of Bureau and Political Editor RAVISH TIWARI

RAVISH TIWARI: Can you elaborate on the churn that is underway within the JD(U)? Upendra Kushwaha was inducted into the party and appointed chairman of the JD(U)'s National Parliamentary Board. Also, the JD(U) joined the NDA government, which it was unsure about earlier. Is there confusion within the party?

No, there is no confusion. These are just efforts to expand the party. (Kushwaha's) Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) merged with the JD(U). (Kushwaha) should not be considered new to the party, he was part of the creation of the Samta Party in 1994 by George Fernandes and Nitish Kumar.

As far as the decision to join the government goes, there has been no confusion about it... As president of the party, Nitish Kumar had taken a decision in 2019, and then a decision was taken in 2021. So it is the party's decision.

RAVISH TIWARI: The Bihar BJP has the same number of MPs as your party. There are two Cabinet ministers and two Ministers of State from the Bihar BJP in the Union government, while you settled for just one Cabinet minister. There would have been some compulsions from within the party to join the government?

There were no compulsions. The BJP has a majority, and there is a fixed number of Cabinet ministers that the government can have. It is their prerogative to decide how many people they choose to make ministers from each state.

RAVISH TIWARI: How do you read the results of the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections?

The Vidhan Sabha results of 2020 were messed up because of many reasons. In many places we may have faulted in candidate selection. There may have been some sabotage within. We believe that there was a conspiracy against Nitish Kumar from all quarters and the results were a reflection of that. But even in that adverse situation we managed to get seats and that shows that people support us.

RAVISH TIWARI: So did the BJP conspire against the JD(U)?

There were many sections... But let bygones be bygones. We are focusing on the future... Chirag Paswan put up candidates against ours. They also put up candidates against the BJP. There were some people who were possible BJP candidates, they became (Paswan's) Lok Janshakti Party candidates. All this added up.

RAVISH TIWARI: So it wasn't a vote against Nitish Kumar's governance?

No. In the 2019 general elections, (the NDA) got 39 of the state's 40 seats. If the 2020 vote was against Nitish Kumar's governance, then the 2019 results should have also reflected that. Nitish Kumar has people's support now, he had it in the 2020 Assembly polls, and it has increased.

RAVISH TIWARI: But 2019 was a vote for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The 2020 vote was for Nitish Kumar...

So the NDA got the votes. Who is leading the NDA (in Bihar)? During the 2020 polls, it was clear that Nitish Kumar would continue as Chief Minister. So if people did not want Nitish Kumar, the NDA would not have got a majority... There were some circumstances (that led to the 2020 results) and our party was unaware of them.

RAVISH TIWARI: Why has the JD(U)

backed the demand for a caste census, putting the BJP in a spot?

The demand for a caste census is not new. Nitish Kumar had raised the issue when V P Singh was the prime minister. But Singh said that work on the (main) Census had already begun and so it could not be done. Now that a Census is about to be conducted, we raised the issue. The last caste census was conducted in 1931 during British rule... If we consider the claims made by communities, then the total population of the country should be 390 crore instead of the stated 130 crore! That is why it is important to know the exact number of people from each community based on a caste census. It will also help in formulating policy to help the country's downtrodden sections. So no one has anything to lose from it.

LIZ MATHEW: Compared to your peers in the JD(U), you have always been considered much closer to the BJP. But since you have taken charge as party president, the JD(U) has been talking on the ruling party over caste census, flood relief, Jal Jeevan Mission. Is this a sign of any future political realignment?

No, that is not correct. I have always had good relations with everyone. We took on Lalu Prasad over the fodder scam, but that did not ruin my personal relationship with him. There was no bitterness. My commitment is to the JD(U)... I have good relationships with everyone in the BJP. But it is about the policies and views of my party. I move ahead with that in mind... There is no question of any future realignment, we are a strong partner of the NDA. But that does not mean we will not have our own views on policy matters. We had opposed the triple talaq Bill in the Lok Sabha, Article 370... But we have been with the NDA, and now we are a part of the government too. It is hypothetical to assume any future realignment.

LIZ MATHEW: The JD(U) has always been opposed to Chirag Paswan. But now he is cosying up to the Opposition, which may hurt the NDA. Are you ready to forgive him?

It is not for us to forgive him. They have no MLA in the Bihar NDA, so where is the question of including him in the Bihar NDA? In the Lok Sabha also, he is alone in his party, five of his people have left. We believe they left because of his stubbornness during the Bihar elections. They say he behaved that way because of certain advisors. His father Ram Vilas Paswan was a grassroots leader. Chirag Paswan did not face any struggle. He was airdropped, and then he became an MP. He had no understanding of the ground realities.

HARIKISHAN SHARMA: Has the JD(U) given up on its demand for special status for Bihar? Also, in Uttar Pradesh elections next year, will the JD(U) contest polls in eastern UP, and will it do so under the NDA umbrella?

The Finance Commission report said that instead of special status, the backward states should be given a package. We are discussing the package. There is no issue of special status, no state is getting it now. We are focusing on the backwardness of our state now... Since 2005, our growth rate has been in double digits. If you see pre-2005 Bihar, there was no electricity, no law, poor education, the business of abductions was flourishing, and there were no roads. Today, we have roads, electricity... Now we are saying that if we could manage all this with our own re-



WHY RAJIV RANJAN SINGH

A Bhumihar leader in a party that largely derives its base from among extremely backward classes, four-time MP Rajiv Ranjan Singh was recently made JD(U) national president. With Shiv Sena and Akali Dal exits, the JD(U)'s voice is now the weightiest among BJP allies. And as Bihar CM, JD(U) anchor Nitish Kumar tries to leverage that to project an 'autonomous' image, it is upon his confidant Singh to make it stick

sources, then imagine the growth that can happen in the state with a (financial) package.

As far as elections go, we have decided that if there is consensus on seats in UP and Manipur under the NDA, we will fight polls from the two states... But if there is no consensus, then we will identify seats and contest polls on our own in these two states.

VANDITA MISHRA: Some time ago, the JD(U) had talked about a coordination committee in the NDA. You talked about the issues your party has, its convictions, but is there any hearing given to them — Article 370, CAA or farm laws?

Which coalition has a coordination committee... except maybe in Atal Bihari Vajpayee's time? There can be informal discussions too... there is not much of a difference... About the farm laws, we think that the legislation that has been enacted is for the benefit of farmers... they have the freedom to sell their produce anywhere. Bihar too had APMCs (Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees), and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar abolished the same in 2006. Both the production of our farmers and the money they get it for it

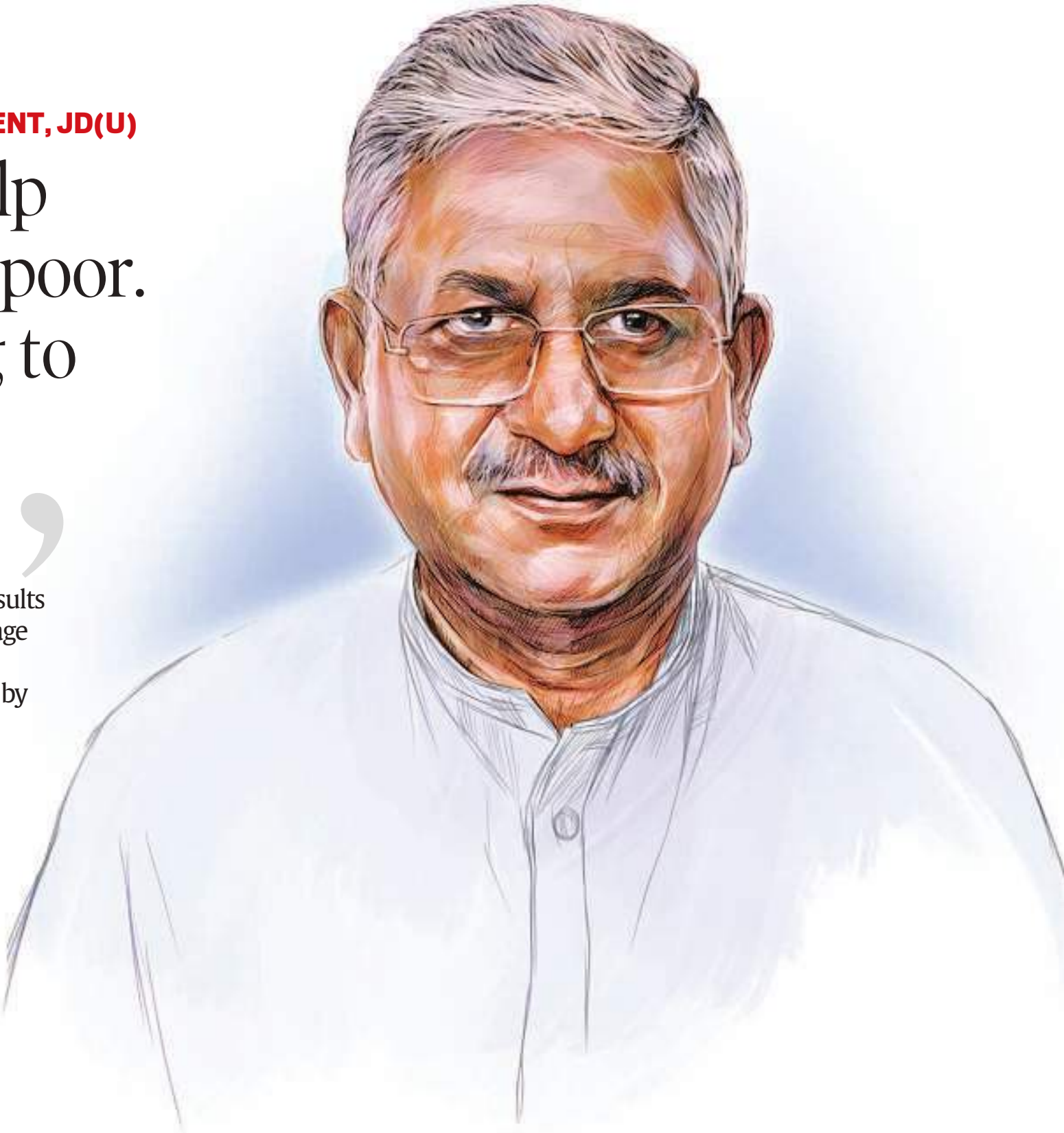


Illustration: Suvajit Dey

has gone up...

As for the rest of the issues, we had concerns, we have registered the same.

RITIKA CHOPRA: In several states in which your ally BJP has a government, people have been arrested, faced sedition charges, for differing with it, including activists, journalists etc. One doesn't hear of such arrests from Bihar.

Bihar doesn't have any such issue, people have full freedom to say what they want against the government... How can I talk about other states and the situation there?... This is an issue of democratic rights... We emerged from the 1974 agitation, we hit the streets for the freedom of the country, against the Emergency, took physical blows, went to jail even. So we are firmly of the belief that the press is the fourth pillar of a democracy.

RAVISH TIWARI: But you just said you would have no issues fighting under Yogi Adityanath's leadership in Uttar Pradesh, which proudly proclaims its strong-arm tactics.

It's up to the janata of UP to decide who it wants as its leader, not you or me.

RINKU GHOSH: Your party leader K C Tyagi recently called Nitish Kumar prime minister material.

Tyagi's statement should be seen in the right light. He said Nitishji is PM 'material', as in he has the abilities needed to run the country. There is a world of difference between being able to be PM and laying claim to be PM or being a PM contender... There are many examples to show why Tyagiji or other JD(U) leaders talk of him being PM-worthy. In 2015, the Nitish Kumar government launched the Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal scheme, under which we have spent Rs 27,000 crore to get drinking water to wards; the Centre adopted this as Jal Jeevan Mission in 2019. It was Nitishji's vision that the Centre adopted. Then, providing electricity to every household... it was a promise by Nitishji during the Bihar elections of 2015. By October 2018, power connection had reached every home, and now even rural areas have 20-22 hours of electricity a day. Similarly, the Centre adopted this in 2017... So when we say Nitishji is PM material, we are talking about his vision.

SANTOSH SINGH: The Indian Express has carried a series of investigative reports on the political patronage in contract allotments for Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal.

Our party has a big structure, we have nothing to do with the business of party leaders and workers. In any case, there is a system of e-tendering which cannot be managed. It cannot be known which person is taking part in the tendering process from where. But we have a business cell in the party. There is nothing wrong in

party workers doing business.

SANTOSH SINGH: Among those who got the contracts were BJP leader and Deputy CM Tarkishore Prasad's kin and aides.

He (Prasad) has explained his position.

LIZ MATHEW: You worked with the BJP under Vajpayee too. What's the difference compared to the Modi-led BJP? And does the current BJP take its allies along in significant decisions?

Yes, there are consultations, with leaders of the party, and there are agreements as well as disagreements, for example on Article 370 or triple talaq. But they got in touch with us on both. We express our opinion based on our stand.

There is a crucial difference from the time of Vajpayeeji. The BJP did not have a majority on its own then. Now, it has. So it takes the decisions and then consults its allies.

RAVISH TIWARI: When do these consultations take place, half-an-hour earlier or a week earlier?

In several matters, the talks take place one day, two days earlier.

RAVISH TIWARI: You have listed the achievements of the JD(U) government. But many of these were in Nitish Kumar's previous term, and despite this, in 2020, he performed worse. What is his vision for this new term?

We have been working continuously... During the pandemic, around 24-25 lakh migrants working in other states came back. Nitish Kumar did a lot of work for them — set up centres, quarantined those who tested positive... But governance was never affected... whether selecting school headmasters, building roads, medical colleges, infrastructure for nurses... Work hasn't stopped.

RAVISH TIWARI: The BJP seems to be the dominant partner in the alliance. Has there ever been an instance when the JD(U) has stood firm on something and the BJP has agreed to it?

We objected to the NRC (National Register of Citizens). When they said there would be such a survey, we objected... Work on the NRC may have been paused because of the pandemic, but whenever it happens, our stand will remain the same.

HARIKISHAN SHARMA: In his Independence Day speech, the PM said the Centre's Jal Jeevan Mission

has taken water connections to 4.5 crore households, most of them in Bihar. Sanjay Jha, a minister in your government, said only 8.5 lakh connections in Bihar are under Jal Jeevan Mission and the rest are part of your Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal. What does this tell you about the current level of political discourse, where governments exaggerate their work to look good?

Sanjay Jha said the right thing, Nitish Kumar started the scheme in 2015... Anyone can make claims... we can only tell you the truth.

RAVISH TIWARI: How do you see the Centre's handling of the second Covid wave?

Nobody imagined the second wave to hit the way it did. And because nobody anticipated it, nobody was prepared for it. But when the crisis hit and there was a shortage of several things like oxygen, remdesivir etc, the Central government worked on a war-footing to ensure that these essentials reached people.

RAVISH TIWARI: Why was Prashant Kishor let go from the JD(U)?

He was saying different things, was associated with different parties. It's curious that the day before the House session, Pegasus comes out... Where is the evidence? The Congress has no agenda and finds itself taking up unnecessary issues. This is not politics... That's why the Congress is shrinking. Look at what's happening in Punjab.

SANDEEP SINGH: The JD(U) has been in and out of the NDA. With Opposition parties attempting to come together, has anyone got in touch with you?

We are not in touch with anyone. We are in the NDA... there's no confusion.

HARIKISHAN SHARMA: The Pegasus issue stalled the Monsoon Session of Parliament. What is your party's stand on it? Are you in favour of a parliamentary committee or a Supreme Court-monitored probe?

The matter is in the Supreme Court... But no fact has come out on Pegasus. It's curious that the day before the House session, Pegasus comes out... Where is the evidence? The Congress has no agenda and finds itself taking up unnecessary issues. This is not politics... That's why the Congress is shrinking. Look at what's happening in Punjab.

RAVISH TIWARI: What turn do you see Opposition politics taking by 2024?

Like I said, the Congress is shrinking. It will shrink even more.



# ECONOMY

## TWO GROUPS OF MINISTERS FORMED FOR GOODS AND SERVICES TAX REFORMS

# GST panels constituted: Focus on tax slab review, data analytics to shore up revenue

**AANCHAL MAGAZINE**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

A “REVIEW” of the current rate slab structure of Goods and Services Tax (GST) has been explicitly incorporated in the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the two ministerial panels formed for spelling out a blueprint for GST reforms.

The panels’ brief incorporates an overarching mandate: an evaluation of “special rates” within the tax structure, rationalisation measures that include “a merger of tax rate slabs for simplifying the rate structure”, alongside a review of instances of inverted duty structure and an identification of potential sources of evasion to shore up revenues.

The Finance Ministry has constituted a seven-member Group of Ministers (GoM) under Kamataka Chief Minister Basavaraj S Bommai for “rate rationalisation” and another eight-member GoM

under Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar for “GST system reforms”, orders issued on September 24 stated.

Incidentally, the mandate announced for the GoMs after the GST Council meeting on September 17 did not include a review of tax slabs. Finance Minister Nimmala Sitharaman had then said the ToR would relate to correction of inversion and rate rationalisation. The *Indian Express* had reported on Saturday that amid concerns of revenue buoyancy under GST, the GoMs will reassess the current tax slabs including a possible merger of some tax slabs.

The ToR for the GoM on rate rationalisation stated that it shall review inverted duty structure other than where the Council has already taken a decision to correct the inverted structure and recommend suitable rates to eliminate it so as to minimise instances of refunds due to inverted structure, and review the current tax slab

### ORDERS ISSUED ON SEPTEMBER 24

■ The Finance Ministry has constituted a seven-member GoM under Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj S Bommai and another eight-member GoM under Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, orders issued on September 24 stated

rates and recommend changes needed to garner required resources. It shall also “review the current rate slab structure of GST, including special rates, and recommend rationalisation measures, including merger of tax rate slabs, required for a simpler rate structure in GST”.

“The GoM may suggest chan-

ges that may be implemented immediately and the roadmap for implementation for the changes that should be implemented in the short and medium term,” the order said. The Group may submit an interim report for such immediate measures as it may deem fit and will have to submit its report in two months, it added.

Members of the GoM on rate rationalisation include Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad; Goa’s Minister for Transport and Panchayati Raj, Housing, Protocol and Legislative Affairs Mauvin Godinho; Kerala Finance Minister KN Balagopal; Rajasthan’s Minister for Local Self Government, Urban Development and Housing, Law and Legal Affairs Shanti Kumar Dhariwal; Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna and West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra.

The other GoM on GST system reforms will review IT tools and interface available with tax offi-

cers and suggest measures to make the system more efficient and effective, identify potential sources of evasion, identify possible use of data analysis towards better compliance and revenue augmentation and suggest use of such data analysis and identify mechanisms for better coordination between Central and State tax administration. This GoM will give its recommendation to the Council from time to time and will review the implementation of reform measures approved by the Council, the order said.

Members of this GoM include Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, Haryana Deputy CM Dushyant Chautala, Andhra Pradesh Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath, Assam Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, Chhattisgarh Commercial Taxes Minister TS Singh Deo, Odisha Finance and Excise Minister Niranjan Pujari and Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Palanivel Thiagarajan.

## PANDEMIC IMPACT

### ‘Biz leaders feel Covid pressed need to improve crisis management’

Over 90% of the Indian business leaders opined that the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to improve crisis management capabilities, says a survey by consultancy firm PwC India

**Investment in technology:** Over 80% of India’s business leaders have already invested in technology in the aftermath of the pandemic

**Evaluating pandemic lessons:** In India, business leaders were substantially more confident than global leaders about their ability to evaluate the lessons of the pandemic and put them into



action, with 92% of Indian organisations saying they were ‘confident’, against just 75% of global leaders

**ADVERSE IMPACT OF COVID:** About 59% of Indian business admitted having adversely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic

**Top priorities for business leaders:** Top priorities cited by business leaders include: accelerate transformations in organisational areas identified during the crisis (99%); adapt strategy to respond nimbly to major interruptions and implement changes (96%); and implement after-action review process to assess response to future incidents and crisis (89%)

**Survey details:** As part of PwC’s Global Crisis Survey 2021– India Insights, the consultancy said more than 2,800 business leaders around the world shared company data and personal insights into the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the future of enterprise resilience

Source: PwC India/PTI

## Beer companies penalised for ‘cartelisation’: What were the findings of CCI investigation

**KARUNJIT SINGH**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

THE COMPETITION Commission of India (CCI) has imposed penalties of Rs 873 crore on United Breweries Ltd (UBL), Carlsberg India Pvt Ltd (CIPL), All India Brewers Association (AIBA) and 11 individuals for cartelisation in the sale and supply of beer. Anheuser-Busch InBev India was also found to be part of the cartel fixing beer prices but did not face a fine as it was the first company to provide key evidence in the probe.

**Why have beer companies been penalised?**

The search and seizures conducted by the Director General of the CCI during an investigation found regular communications between the three companies to coordinate price hikes submitted to state authorities for approval.

The investigation found that key managerial personnel emailed competitors about the price hikes they were planning to propose to state authorities in var-

ious states and sought to coordinate price hikes.

Representatives of the beer companies held discussions among themselves about prospective quotes and the way forward with state excise departments and used to meet with the excise authority under the umbrella of the AIBA so that they would have a better chance of getting proposed price increases approved.

The AIBA was also fined for its role in arranging discussions between beer companies on various issues including pricing. The CCI cited multiple instances of the companies making identical price revisions for competing products.

In the case of Maharashtra, the CCI found that price revisions by UBL and AB InBev since 2011 showed an “uncanny closeness” in timing, with CIPL also joining the two companies in making price revisions around the same time since April 2014.

The CCI found that the beer

companies also coordinated cuts in supply of beer in Odisha, Maharashtra and West Bengal to oppose moves by state governments to hike excise duties or reduce the price of beer. It also found that UBL and AB InBev had agreements on the price at which they would procure used bottles from bottle collectors for reuse at their breweries.

**What was the rationale of the beer companies?**

Key managerial personnel from the beer companies who were also penalised by the CCI cited the need to seek approvals from state authorities for any price revisions as a key reason for the need for coordination among competitors. In one case, an executive at UBL said that as price changes were only permitted on three specific dates in a year in Karnataka, competitors would exchange notes and price main products similarly to “ensure that we do not suffer huge losses as a result of this policy.”

EXPLAINED

## POLICY WATCH

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

## SOP for IT Rules: Clarity on sections 69 (A), 79 of IT Act, liability of cos likely

**AASHISH ARYAN**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

THE MINISTRY of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is likely to soon come out with detailed guidelines or standard operating procedure (SOP) for proper implementation of IT Rules, which will provide clarity on the powers to authorities, especially under Section 69 (A) and Section 79 of the IT Act, senior government officials said.

The SOP is also likely to outline the civil and criminal liabilities of the nodal contact person, resident grievances officer and chief compliance officer in case of non-compliance of any of the rules prescribed under the Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code Rules, better known as the Information Technology (IT) Rules, a senior MeitY official said.

“We have received representations from the industry and are aware of the fact that there has been some confusion, especially on the criminal liabilities part and which government agencies have the power to send takedown notices. The SOPs will lay down the guidelines very clearly and demarcate powers,” one of the officials said.

Section 69 (A) of the IT Act gives the Centre the power to “block for access by the public or cause to be blocked for access by the public any information generated, transmitted, received, stored or hosted in any computer resource”.

Meanwhile, under Section 79, any intermediary shall not be held legally or otherwise liable for any third party information, data, or communica-

tion link made available or hosted on their platform.

This protection, the Act says, shall be applicable if the said intermediary does not in any way, initiate the transmission of the message in question, select the receiver of the transmitted message and does not modify any information contained in the transmission.

Over the last month, executives from several social media intermediaries met senior officials from the MeitY and explained the need for urgent release of the SOP. The need was felt by the intermediaries once again in August, following controversy over Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s post across social media platforms, wherein he had posted a photo of the parents of a nine-year-old Dalit girl who was allegedly raped.

The photo stoked controversy and was subsequently taken down by Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Simultaneously, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) sent legal notices to the platforms as well as Gandhi. Though all three platforms removed Gandhi’s tweet and post, they claimed it was done based on their internal guidelines on posting and not on the notices sent by the NCPCR.

Twitter was the first to lock Gandhi out of his account, allowing him access only to delete the tweet. Though Gandhi had later submitted a consent letter of the parents of the girl on Twitter, the platform had still not allowed general public access to the tweet and said it would remain hidden as it is against rules under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

### BRIEFLY

#### Diesel price hike

*New Delhi:* Diesel price was hiked by 25 paise per litre, rising to Rs 89.07 in Delhi.

#### e-Shram portal

*New Delhi:* Over 1.71 crore unorganised sector workers are registered on e-Shram.

#### IEC deactivation

*New Delhi:* The Commerce Ministry will deactivate all importer-exporter codes (IECs) that have not been updated after January 2005 from October 6. **PTI**

**REUTERS**  
BEIJING, SEPTEMBER 26

SEVERAL LOCAL governments in China have set up special custodian accounts for property projects of its most indebted developer, Evergrande, to protect funds earmarked for housing projects from being diverted, media outlet *Caixin* said on Sunday.

Reeling under \$305 billion of debt, Evergrande missed a payment deadline on a dollar bond last week, and its silence on the



Headquarters of Evergrande Group in Shenzhen, Guangdong province in China. *Reuters*

matter has set global investors wondering if they will have to swallow large losses when a 30-day grace period ends.

The special accounts have been set up since late August in at least eight provinces where Evergrande has the most unfinished projects, the Chinese outlet said, citing a source close to the developer’s management team.

These include Anhui, Guizhou, Henan, Jiangsu and cities in the southern Pearl River Delta, it added.

The custodian accounts aim

### MARKET WATCH

#### M-CAP OF TOP-10 VALUED COS JUMPS

*New Delhi:* The top 10 valued firms added a total Rs 1,56,317.17 crore to their market capitalisation (m-cap) last week, helped by across-the-board rally which catapulted the benchmark index Sensex to the record 60,000 mark for the first time. **PTI**

## SITHARAMAN STRESSES NEED FOR FOUR OR FIVE BIG BANKS LIKE SBI

# FM: Not just more, but bigger banks needed; future to be driven by digitised processes

**ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 26

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said India would need four or five more big banks like State Bank of India (SBI) to scale up banking and meet the changing requirements of the economy and industry.

“The way in which the economy is shifting to a different plane altogether, the way in which industry is adapting, so many new challenges keep arising. To address these challenges, we need not just more, but bigger banks,” she said while addressing the Annual General Meeting of the Indian Banks’ Association (IBA).

The FM asked the industry to imagine how Indian banking has to be in the immediate and long-term future. “If we look at post-Covid scenario, India’s banking contour will have to be very unique to India, where there has been an extremely successful adoption of digitisation,” she said.

While banks in many countries could not reach out to their clients during the pandemic, the level of digitisation of Indian banks helped us to transfer money to small, medium and big account holders through DBT and digital mechanisms, she added.

Sitharaman underlined the importance of seamless and interconnected digital systems in creating a sustainable future for Indian banking industry. “Long-term future of Indian banking is going to be largely driven by digitised processes.”

The benefits of digitisation notwithstanding, the Finance Minister observed that there are wide disparities as well in access to financial services. “There are parts of our country where brick-and-mortar banks are necessary,” she said.

The FM asked the IBA to improve access of banking in every district through a rationalised approach and optimal utilisation of digital technologies. To achieve this, she advised the IBA to carry out digitised location-wise mapping of all bank branches for every district of the nation. “Almost two-thirds of nearly



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the Annual General Meeting of Indian Banks’ Association, in Mumbai, Sunday. *PTI*

7.5 lakh panchayats have optical fibre connection, IBA should consider this and conduct an exercise and decide where banks should have a physical presence and where we are able to serve customers even without physical branch,” she said. IBA should take the initiative and complement the government’s efforts for financial inclusion and enhancing access to financial services, especially in unserved and underserved areas, Sitharaman added.

The FM reminded bankers of the need to adapt in line with fast changes in technology. “What we think is latest today will be outdated in a year or so, we have to thus acquire resources to constantly update ourselves.”

“Such nimbleness and agility are especially important in India being able to achieve the ambitious export targets we have set for ourselves,” she said.

The government has given an export target of \$2 trillion by 2030, \$1 trillion in merchandise exports and \$1 trillion in service exports. “In an age of rapid change post the pandemic, there are going to be a lot of challenges in how we look at customers. These challenges cannot be addressed unless banks are going to be nimble, with sound understanding of various businesses and sectors,” the Finance Minister said.

Hence, the banking industry needs specialists to understand the unique business requirements of diverse sectors and the many businesses who are rapidly

relocating to India, she said.

Sitharaman also spoke of the high potential for banking outreach in the eastern region.

“The eastern region of this country has more than adequate CASA (current account savings account), but there are no takers for credit. You need to address this issue and see how you can lend in those regions, in states such as Bihar,” she said.

The Finance Minister said the UPI needs to be strengthened. “In the payment world today, Indian UPI has actually made a very big impression. A RuPay card which was not as glamorous as a foreign card is now accepted in so many different parts of the world, symbolic of India’s futuristic digital payment intentions.

“Fintech understands that UPI is its backbone, you have to give it its flesh and blood, you have to strengthen UPI,” she told bankers.

She stressed that the National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd is not a bad bank. “It is a formulation intended to clean up bank assets and dispose of NPAs in a speedy manner. Banks are now able to raise money from the market, hence the burden on government to recapitalise banks will be less, this is how we want banks to function — a lot more professional, with a changed mindset.”

Sitharaman said this is absolutely the right time to become professional, adding, “Bank valuations should be razor-sharp, enabling you to raise the right kinds of amount at the right cost.”

## Recovery to gather pace, but worries over jobs, capex remain

**ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 26

THE FAIRLY swift recovery following the second wave of the pandemic will likely gain momentum in the festive season ahead.

However, even as tax collections exceed expectations and high-frequency indicators show a pick-up, employment numbers remain worrisome. Headline unemployment has fallen in September to just 5.89 percent but urban joblessness is hovering around 8 percent; CMIE estimates the net cumulative increase in employment in the past 12 months at just 44,483. That’s just 0.044 million on a base of 400 million jobs.

Hopefully, the recovery process won’t lose steam and the supply-side issues will be sorted out.

While exports are surging, an analysis by HSBC shows high-skilled exports — mobile phones, machinery, pharmaceutical products, and IT services — have gained glo-

**Even as high-frequency indicators are rising, employment numbers remain worrisome**

bal market share, while low-skill and labour-intensive exports — textiles and agriculture — have been weak.

It is good news curbs on expenditure have been lifted and that several central government departments can now spend from their allocated budgets starting October; the curbs had limited spending by some departments to just a fifth of the FY22 outlay.

The other big concern is the capex cycle: An analysis by Nomura shows that while FY23 may see some impact of deferred investments, originally planned during FY22, the phasing profile of envisaged capex reveals persisting near-term risks to the private investment outlook. **FE**

## HDFC Bank to double rural presence, hire 2,500

**ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 26

HDFC BANK on Sunday said it is planning to double its reach to two lakh villages in the next 18–24 months and hire 2,500 people more in the next 6 months.

“The bank plans this expansion through a combination of branch network, business correspondents, business facilitators, CSC partners, virtual relationship management and digital outreach platforms,” the bank said. This will increase its rural outreach to about a third of the country’s villages.

HDFC Bank currently offers its products and services to MSMEs in over 550 districts. Its rural banking services extend to 1,00,000 villages. The private sector lender said it aims to double this to 2,00,000 villages and as part of this plan, it plans to hire 2,500 people more in the next 6 months.

On the rural expansion strategy, Rahul Shukla, group head—commercial and rural banking, HDFC Bank, said, “India’s rural and semi-urban markets are underserved in credit extension. They present sustainable long-term growth opportunities for the Indian banking system.”

## New York court pauses tax suit to allow Cairn to settle dispute

*New Delhi:* A New York court has paused Cairn Energy’s pursuit of US assets of Air India for the recovery of \$1.2 billion arbitral award, so as to allow the British firm to reach a settlement with the Indian government on the long drawn dispute.

The New York district court delayed the tax suit to November 18, according to court documents reviewed by *PTI*. This follows Cairn Energy and Air India jointly asking the court to stay further proceedings. **PTI**



Kolkata



TOPOF THE WORLD



Walter Scott

USA Billionaire, philanthropist Walter Scott dies at 90

BILLIONAIRE WALTER Scott, the past top executive of Peter Kiewit Sons Inc. construction firm who helped oversee Warren Buffett's conglomerate and donated to various causes, particularly construction projects around Omaha, has died. He was 90. The Suzanne and Walter Scott Foundation that Scott founded said Scott died Saturday. The foundation did not mention a cause of death. Scott served as a board member of Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway conglomerate from 1988 until his death, and even invested alongside Berkshire in the company's utility and energy unit. Scott held about 8% of Berkshire Hathaway Energy's stock and 105 Class A Berkshire shares in the company's utility and energy unit. Scott held about 8% of Berkshire Hathaway Energy's stock and 105 Class A Berkshire shares in the company's utility and energy unit. Scott held about 8% of Berkshire Hathaway Energy's stock and 105 Class A Berkshire shares in the company's utility and energy unit. **AP**

WEST ASIA

Israeli troops kill 4 Palestinians in shootout

AT LEAST four Palestinian gunmen were killed in shootouts with Israeli security forces during a sweeping West Bank arrest operation cracking down on the Islamic militant group Hamas on Sunday, the Israeli military said. It was the deadliest violence between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants in the occupied West Bank in recent weeks and came amid heightened tensions following this year's 11-day war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. **AP**

USA

Thousands traverse Panama on way to US

UP TO 4,000 migrants, most of them Haitians, have passed through the treacherous jungles of the Darien Gap in Panama on the Colombian border as they make their way north to the US, two Panamanian government sources said. An impromptu camp arose in recent weeks on the US-Mexican border that included Haitians, adding to President Joe Biden's migration policy headaches. At its peak on Sept 18 there were some 15,000 people there as Haitians flee economic, political and social chaos in their homeland. **REUTERS**

Canada lifts ban on direct flights from India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 26

CANADA WILL allow direct flights from India from Monday, lifting the ban on them after a gap of more than five months. Announcing the decision, Transport Canada on Saturday in a tweet said: "Beginning at 00:01 EDT on September 27, direct flights from India can land in Canada with additional public health measures in place." "Travellers must have proof of a negative Covid-19 molecular test from the approved Genestrings Laboratory at the Delhi airport taken within 18 hours of the scheduled departure of their direct flight to Canada," it added. In April, Canada had banned all direct flights to and from India.

Swiss approve same-sex marriage by wide margin

ASSOCIATED PRESS GENEVA, SEPTEMBER 26

SWITZERLAND VOTED by a wide margin to allow same-sex couples to marry in a referendum on Sunday, bringing the Alpine nation into line with many others in western Europe. Official results showed the measure passed with 64.1% of voters in favour and won a majority in all of Switzerland's 26 cantons, or states. Switzerland has authorised same-sex civil partnerships since 2007. Supporters said passage would put same-sex partners on equal legal footing with heterosexual couples by allowing them to adopt children and facilitating citizenship for same-sex spouses.



At the scene of the Amtrak train derailment in north-central Montana on Saturday. **AP**

Three dead after Amtrak train derails in Montana

AMY BETH HANSON & TAREK HAMADA JOPLIN, SEPTEMBER 26

AT LEAST three people were killed Saturday afternoon when an Amtrak train that runs between Seattle and Chicago derailed in north-central Montana, toppling several cars onto their sides, authorities said. The train had about 141 passengers and 16 crew members onboard, Abrams said. The train had two locomotives and 10 cars, eight of which derailed, he said. "We are deeply saddened to learn local authorities are now confirming that three people have lost their lives as a result of this accident," Abrams said. The train had about 141 passengers and 16 crew members onboard, Abrams said. The train had two locomotives and 10 cars, eight of which derailed, he said. "We are deeply saddened to learn local authorities are now confirming that three people have lost their lives as a result of this accident," Abrams said. The accident scene is about 241 km northeast of Helena and about 48 km from the border with Canada. Liberty County sheriff's dispatcher Starr Tyler told The Associated Press that three people died in the derailment. She did not have more details. Amtrak

VOTING ENDS IN TIGHT GERMAN ELECTION



Conservatives, Social Dems tied in vote to decide Merkel's successor

THOMAS ESCRITT & PAUL CARREL BERLIN, SEPTEMBER 26

GERMANY'S CDU/CSU conservatives and their Social Democrat rivals were virtually tied in Sunday's national election, exit polls showed, leaving open which of them will lead the next government as Angela Merkel prepares to stand down after 16 years in power. The CDU/CSU bloc won 25% of the vote, their weakest result in a post-war federal election and on a par with the centre-left Social Democrat (SPD), the in-fratist poll for broadcaster ARD showed. A Forschungsgruppe Wahlen poll for broadcaster ZDF put the SPD and its chancellor candidate Olaf Scholz on 26% and the CDU/CSU on 24%. "The SPD is back. We are where we belong," SPD Secretary General Lars Klingbeil said shortly after first exit polls. He said the polls showed the SPD and its



chancellor candidate Olaf Scholz had the mandate to govern. CDU General Secretary Paul Ziemiak told ARD after the publication of their poll: "That hurts". Attention will now shift to informal discussions — likely with the Greens, on 15%, and liberal Free Democrats (FDP), on 11% — followed by more formal coalition negotiations, which could take months, leaving Merkel in charge in a caretaker role. The election pitted Armin Laschet, of the CDU, against Scholz, the finance minister in Merkel's "grand coalition" who won all three televised debates between the leading candidates for Chancellor. **REUTERS**

Behave normally, transport minister tells Britons as many queue up for fuel

WILLIAM JAMES BRIGHTON, SEPTEMBER 26

TRANSPORT MINISTER Grant Shapps on Sunday called on Britons to behave normally when buying petrol, saying there was no shortage of fuel and the government was stepping in to ease a shortage of drivers bringing it to petrol stations. In recent days long lines of vehicles have formed at petrol stations as motorists waited, some for hours, to fill up with fuel after oil firms reported a lack of drivers was causing transport problems from refineries to forecourts. Some operators have had to ration supplies and others to close gas stations. "There's plenty of fuel, there's



no shortage of the fuel within the country," he told Sky News. "So the most important thing is actually that people carry on as they normally would and fill up their cars when they normally would, then you won't have queues and you won't have shortages at the pump either." Shapps said the shortage of drivers was down to Covid-19 disrupting the qualification process for drivers, preventing new labour from entering the market. Others pinned the blame on Brexit and poor working conditions forcing out foreign drivers. The government on Sunday announced a plan to issue temporary visas for 5,000 foreign truck drivers. read more But business leaders have warned the government's plan is short-term fix and will not solve an acute labour shortage that risks major disruption beyond fuel deliveries, including for retailers in the run-up to Christmas. Shapps called the panic over fuel a 'manufactured situation'. "They're desperate to have more European drivers undercutting British salaries," he said. **REUTERS**

House panel clears \$3.5-tn Bill, crunch time for Biden agenda

ALAN FRAM WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 26

DEMOCRATS PUSHED a \$3.5 trillion, 10-year Bill strengthening social safety net and climate programs through the House Budget Committee, but one Democrat voted "no," illustrating the challenges party leaders face in winning the near unanimity they'll need to push the sprawling package through Congress. The Democratic-dominated panel, meeting virtually Saturday, approved the measure on a near party-line vote, 20-17. Passage marked a necessary but minor checking of a procedural box for Democrats by edging it a step closer to debate by the full House. Under budget rules, the committee wasn't allowed to significantly amend the 2,465-page measure, the product of 13 other House committees. More important work has

been happening in an opaque procession of mostly unannounced phone calls, meetings and other bargaining sessions among party leaders and rank-and-file lawmakers. President Joe Biden, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY, have led a behind-the-scenes hunt for compromises to resolve internal divisions and, they hope, allow approval of the mammoth bill soon. Pelosi told fellow Democrats

Taliban ask airlines to resume international flights to Afghanistan

REUTERS SEPTEMBER 26

THE TALIBAN government in Afghanistan appealed on Sunday for international flights to be resumed, promising full cooperation with airlines and saying that problems at Kabul airport had been resolved. The statement from the foreign affairs ministry comes as the new administration has stepped up efforts to open up the country and gain international acceptance following the collapse of the Western-backed government last month. A limited number of aid and passenger flights have been operating from the airport. But normal commercial services have yet to resume since it was closed in the wake of the chaotic evacuation of tens of thousands of foreigners and vulnerable Afghans that followed the Taliban's seizure of the capital. The airport, which was damaged during the evacuation, has since been reopened with the assistance of technical teams from Qatar and Turkey. While some airlines including Pakistan International Airlines have been offering limited services and some people have been able to get places on flights, prices have been reported to be many times higher than normal.



At the international airport in Kabul. A limited number of aid and passenger flights have been operating from the airport. **Reuters**

Foreign ministry spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi said the suspension of international flights had left many Afghans stranded abroad and also prevented people from travelling for work or study. "As the problems at Kabul International Airport have been resolved and the airport is fully operational for domestic and international flights, the IEA assures all airlines of its full cooperation," he said, using an abbreviation for Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Taliban's term for their new government. Since taking power, the Taliban have grappled with a severe economic crisis and have faced pressure on issues ranging from girls' education to allegations of reprisals against former officials and others associated with the previous government.

Women candidates win majority of seats in Icelandic election

EGILL BJARNASON REYKJAVIK, SEPTEMBER 26

ICELAND HAS elected a female-majority parliament, a landmark for gender equality in the North Atlantic island nation, in a vote that saw centrist parties make the biggest gains. After all votes were counted Sunday, female candidates held 33 seats in Iceland's 63-seat parliament, the Althing. The three parties in the outgoing coalition government led by Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir won a total of 37 seats in Saturday's vote, two more than in the last election, and appeared likely to continue in power. The milestone for women comes despite a poor outcome for parties on the left, where female candidates are more often frontrunners. Politics professor Silja Bara Omarsdottir said the gender quotas implemented by left-leaning parties for the past



Iceland's Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir

decade had managed to create a new norm across Iceland's political spectrum. "It is no longer acceptable to ignore gender equality when selecting candidates," she said. Opinion polls had suggested a victory for left-leaning parties in the unpredictable election, which saw 10 parties competing for seats. But the centre-right Independence Party took the largest share of votes, winning 16 seats, seven of them held by women. The centrist Progressive Party celebrated the biggest gain, winning 13 seats, five more than last time. **AP**

THE US MARINE CORPS ALMOST NEVER ALLOWS DEVIATIONS FROM ITS DRESSING STANDARDS

Marines reluctantly let a Sikh officer wear a turban; he says it's not enough

DAVE PHILIPPS SEPTEMBER 26

ALMOST EVERY morning for five years, 1st Lt. Sukhbir Toor has pulled on the uniform of the US Marine Corps. On Thursday, he also got to put on the turban of a faithful Sikh.

It was a first for the Marine Corps, which almost never allows deviations from its halloved image, and it was a long-awaited chance for the officer to combine two of the things he holds most dear. "I finally don't have to pick which life I want to commit to, my faith or my country," Toor, 26,

said in an interview. "I can be who I am and honour both sides." His case is the latest in a long-running conflict between two fundamental traditions in the US military: the tradition of discipline and uniformity, and the constitutional liberties the armed forces were created to defend. While Sikh troops in Britain, Australia and Canada have long worn turbans in uniform, and scores of Sikhs do so now in other branches of the military, Toor's turban is the first in the 246-year history of the Marine Corps. For generations, the Marine Corps has fought any change to its strict appearance standards. The Marine Corps has made

the allowance only to a point. Toor can wear a turban in daily dress at normal duty stations, but he cannot do so while deployed to a conflict zone, or when in dress uniform in a ceremonial unit, where the public could see it. Toor has appealed the restrictive decision to the Marine Corps commandant, and he says that if he does not get a full accommodation, he will sue the Marines. "We've come a long way, but there is still more to go," he said. "The Marine Corps needs to show it really means what it has been saying about strength in diversity — that it doesn't matter what you look like, it just matters that you can do your job."



For the Marine Corps leadership, an exception as small as one man's turban was seen as so potentially dangerous that Toor's request went all the way to top

Marine Corps authorities. Their initial reaction in June was largely a denial. In a stern response, one Marine Corps general warned that individual expression of that kind

could fray the fabric of discipline and commitment that binds the Marines. It could erode the nation's trust in the Marines. It could undermine combat effectiveness. Toor appealed to the commandant of the Marine Corps, which retreated a bit in August, allowing him to wear a beard and turban in limited circumstances. The Marine Corps' argument, time after time, has been that change could hobble its ability to fight. "In order to build squads that will move forward in a combat environment where people are dying, a strong team bond is required," Col. Kelly Frushour, a spokesperson for Marine Headquarters, said in written responses to questions from *The New York Times* about Toor's case. "Uniformity is one of the tools the Corps uses to forge that bond. What the Corps is protecting is its ability to win on the battlefield, so that the Constitution can remain the law of the land." Toor grew up in Washington, DC, and Ohio, the son of Indian immigrants. He joined the Marines after college in 2017, knowing he would initially have to forgo the physical symbols of his faith, but he was willing to make the sacrifice. Believing it was wrong to ask for anything before he had given of himself, he shaved daily and wore a Marine Corps utility cap for years without complaint. When

he was selected this spring for promotion to captain, he decided it was time. He wrote his formal request for a religious accommodation in April. Two months later, he got a letter that granted the accommodation — but with so many caveats that it amounted to a denial. Toor would be allowed wear a beard and turban whenever he wanted, as long as it was not while he was deployed, serving in a combat unit that might deploy or doing ceremonial duties in dress uniform. How often might those circumstances occur? "Like, every day," Toor said with a laugh. "That is just what I do. I'm a combat arms officer." **NYT**



# Yastika strikes the right chord in India women's record chase

21-year-old's 64 off 69 against Australia is the bedrock of team's highest-ever chase in ODIs; Australia win ODI series 2-1; one Test, three 3T20Is to follow

SHAHID JUDGE  
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 26

WHEN YASTIKA Bhatia was in quarantine for a fortnight in Australia before the One-day International series began, she forwarded videos of her playing the guitar to her father. She had picked up the instrument when in lockdown during the second Covid wave.



On Sunday, Harish remembered one such video he had received on his phone. "She sent one of an old Bollywood song, 'Papa kehnte hai bada naam karega,'" he says, laughing as he describes it. "And now she has."

Harish woke up at 4 am, a good 90 minutes before Yastika was to play her third-ever match for the national team.

When she came out to bat in the second innings, Yastika scored 64 runs off 69 deliveries in the Indian women team's highest-ever successful ODI chase. The win snapped Australia's world record of 26 ODI wins on the trot, a streak which comprised wins over the likes of New Zealand, South Africa, and world champions England. Though the Indians had already lost the three-match series, the win in the final game on Sunday would give them a much-needed boost. There is a Test match next week and three T20 Internationals to follow.

Opener Shefali Verma had chipped in with a steady 56 off 91, and so did Deepti Sharma and Sneha Rana with 31 and 30 respectively. But Yastika played a central role and laid the foundation for a famous win.

## More's help

In Sunday's innings, Harish saw the result of the thousands of throw downs he and her personal coach Santosh Chaugule would launch at the makeshift-nets at home. Former India wicketkeeper Kiran More



Yastika Bhatia (R) with her father Harish, elder sister Josita and mother Garima.

## 'Lots of soreness after back-to-back games'

New Delhi: Veteran Indian women's team pacer Jhulan Goswami on Sunday said she was glad to have stood up for the side after the narrow loss in the second ODI against Australia by being a major contributor to the consolation win in the final match here. For Goswami, it was like exorcising the ghosts of the accidental no-ball in the second match which India lost on Friday. It was also a poetic justice that India's second senior-most player hit the winning boundary in the final over after figures of 3/37 that

earned her the Player of the Match award.

"I knew I could get breakthroughs. That was what I did. It's important to give your best in the field, take positives and that's what I want to do as a senior. Lots of soreness in my body having played back-to-back games, need time to recover, but we're looking forward to be a part of the first-ever pink-ball Test. I have no experience of playing with pink ball and I would like to know what it does under lights before I quit the game," she added. **PTI**

helped her develop power-hitting.

"She's a very complete player, the approach and technique are very good," explains More, who worked with Yastika for two months ahead of the Australia tour. "There's a long way to go and she's just played three games. It's a good start though."

Former national team coach WV Raman had contacted More and asked him to meet with Yastika in April. "We did some work on her technique and some drills on power-hitting. Indian girls need power, compared to the foreign girls who are generally stronger," he adds. "But she's a very good student and she had the talent. The areas she wanted to work on we did, like hook shots, square cut, hitting long as well. I told her what she needs to do on the international stage."

For those aggressive strokes on Sunday – she notched up nine boundaries – Harish credits More's work. At the same time, he remembers the early morning sessions with his daughter when the pandemic struck last year. "The society we live in was very helpful.

They moved a few vehicles around in the parking area to help us set up a makeshift batting net," he recalls. "We couldn't use the hard leather ball because it could get noisy and a lot of residents are elderly, so we practiced with tennis balls. The bounce was sudden and unpredictable, but that's what Australian pitches can be like. And you need to have quick wrists to work in those conditions. Training with Chaugule sir really sharpened her batting reflexes, and then Kiran More's help polished it further."

Apart from working on her batting and wicket-keeping skills, she also upped her fitness levels. "She had a fitness trainer as well who would conduct early morning sessions over Zoom calls," says Rajkumardevi Gaekwad, chairman of the women's selection committee at the Baroda Cricket Association (BCA).

"She'd spend an hour every morning locked in her room doing her fitness drills. And she'd do all this without the need to prod her. She's been a very self-driven person. Like how she'd finish a match while on tour, head back to her

## NUMBER PLATE

**265** This was India Women's highest chase in ODIs. Their previous best was 248 against South Africa two years ago.

**26** Number of consecutive games Australia women won before losing the game on Sunday. This is the longest winning streak for men or women in the history of ODIs.

**"She's a very complete player, the approach and technique are very good. There's a long way to go and she's just played three games. It's a good start though."**

**KIRAN MORE**  
FORMER INDIA WICKETKEEPER

room, freshen up and start studying without anybody telling her to."

The young left-hander has been an A-grade student all her life. She'd get only 15 days to prepare for her Class 12 Board exams but scored 89 percent.

It was a surprise at the time, but when Harish looks back, it wasn't unexpected.

"She's always been fond of learning. Either it's something in cricket, or something else. She learnt the guitar recently because of the second lockdown. During the first lockdown last year, she signed up for online classes and learnt French," he says.

Her journey in cricket started when she was five. She and her elder sister Josita would train together and eventually played for the Baroda U-19 team. Josita, however, decided she wanted to pursue a career in medicine. Yastika though was certain about cricket.

She'd go on to captain state Under-19 and Under-23 teams before getting the call-up to the national team. She's played three matches for India so far, but Sunday's knock in a record run chase was her best.

"She's quite a jovial character when she's not playing. No doubt the win today would spark something in her, but I'm sure there might be a few celebratory guitar sessions in the team hotel tonight," Gaekwad adds **BRIEF SCORES:** Australia women: 264/9 in 50 overs (Ashleigh Gardner 67, Beth Mooney 52; Jhulan Goswami 3/37, Pooja Vastrakar 3/46) lost to India women: 266 for 8 in 49.3 overs (Yastika Bhatia 64, Shafali Verma 56; Annabel Sutherland 3/30).

# Oleksandr stuns Joshua to claim four belts

MORGAN CAMPBELL  
SEPTEMBER 26

ANTHONY JOSHUA needed a knockout.

Entering the final round of his heavy-weight title defense against Oleksandr Usyk, Joshua, a power-punching 31-year-old from London, and one of boxing's largest global stars, trailed on the judges' scorecards, losing rounds early to a smaller, craftier challenger. When the bell sounded, he pressed forward. But Usyk closed the show.

Usyk, an undefeated 34-year-old from Ukraine, landed a left and right early, quieting the crowd at a sold-out Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London.

Late in the 12th, Usyk wobbled Joshua with a left hand, and a two-handed flurry of punches sent Joshua to the ropes as the final bell approached. That emphatic last round carried Usyk to a unanimous decision win in a fight most observers expected him to lose. The judges scored the bout 117-112, 116-112, and 115-113, all for Usyk.

The outcome quieted the roughly 70,000 spectators present, most of whom supported Joshua by singing in unison through the early rounds. But it didn't surprise Usyk, a former undisputed cruiserweight champion who moved up to heavyweight in 2019.

"The fight went exactly the way I expected it to go," said Usyk, who is now 19-0. "There were a couple of moments where Anthony pushed me, but nothing special."

Joshua entered the bout with natural advantages in size — he stands 6-foot-6, compared with 6-foot-3 for Usyk, and at 240 pounds he outweighed the challenger by more than 18 pounds. He also held heavyweight championships from four different boxing governing bodies: the World Boxing



Usyk (L) seized the WBA, WBO, IBF and IBO belts with the three judges scoring it 117-112, 116-112, 115-113.

Association, the World Boxing Organization, the International Boxing Federation, and the International Boxing Organization.

But Usyk, a calculating southpaw, showed up with superior footwork and won the first three rounds by finding the best angles and then landing punches: A straight left that grabbed Joshua's attention in Round 1; a left to the head that buckled Joshua's knees in the third. Usyk said his early success tempted him to apply more pressure, but then he remembered his game plan.

"In the beginning I hit him hard and tried to knock him out," Usyk said. "But then my trainers said stop and do your job."

Joshua won rounds mid-fight by relying on his jab and body punching, dialing back his power to increase his accuracy, and wearing Usyk down. By the 10th, Usyk had red marks under each eye, and a divot in his right eyebrow. Joshua's right eye had also swollen, making him an easier target for Usyk's overhand lefts. Leading up to the fight, Joshua and his backers framed the event as a celebration — the first stadium show and most-attended boxing event in England since the coronavirus pandemic began. **NYT**

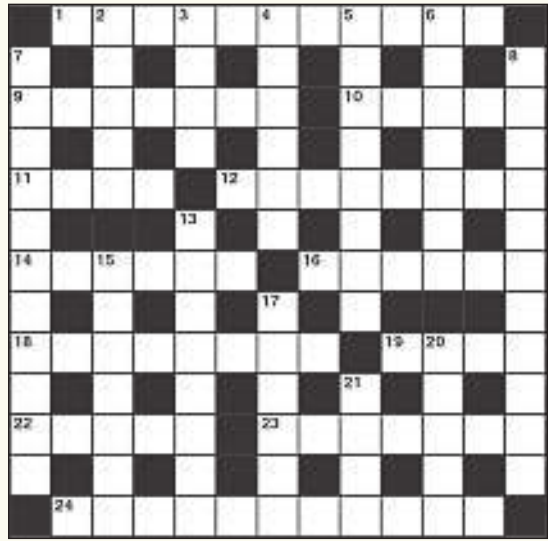
## EXPLAINED

## Heavyweight division wide open

Oleksandr Usyk's world-title win over Anthony Joshua means the latter's long-anticipated clash with fellow Brit Tyson Fury is back on hold. Earlier this year, the Joshua-Fury superfight for the WBA, WBO, IBF and WBC championships looked closer than ever. In May, an arbitration hearing, however, ruled that Fury had to fight American Deontay Wilder for the third time, prompting Joshua to prepare for mandatory challenger Usyk. Minutes after the defeat on Sunday, Joshua was talking about evoking the rematch clause. He had done so against Andy Ruiz Jr, when he lost his belts to the Mexican in 2019 but reclaimed them six months later. Fury defends his WBC title against Wilder on October 9. The first fight between the two ended in a draw, the second was a one-sided, seventh-round stoppage for Fury. The 33-year-old is the favourite to retain, and if he does, a fight with a title-less Joshua wouldn't make sense. The quest, then, will be to pit Usyk against Fury to give the four-belt boxing era its first undisputed heavyweight champion.

However, if Fury loses to Wilder, a fight with Joshua (without any titles on the line) could be back on, for 'Britain's best' bragging rights. Usyk, Fury, Wilder and Joshua are the top four players in the mix. But there are others in the fray. Briton Dillian Whyte holds the WBC interim heavyweight belt and could get his first world title shot against the winner of Fury-Wilder. American Trevor Bryan holds the WBA regular title. Ruiz Jr, too, is looking to rejoin the title race.

## CROSSWORD 4545



### ACROSS

- Dictatorial soldiers in khaki for example (11)
- Gapes at spectacles (7)
- A pie is turned a fine shade of brown (5)
- Record a piece of music (4)
- I drag gun out for protection (8)
- Plant one hundred and fifty too many (6)
- Cold tart (6)
- Make a suit? (8)
- Temperature in the freezer ordinarily (4)
- A poisonous creeper (5)
- This is irritating for sightseers, naturally (7)
- Way that is perfectly clear (5,6)

### DOWN

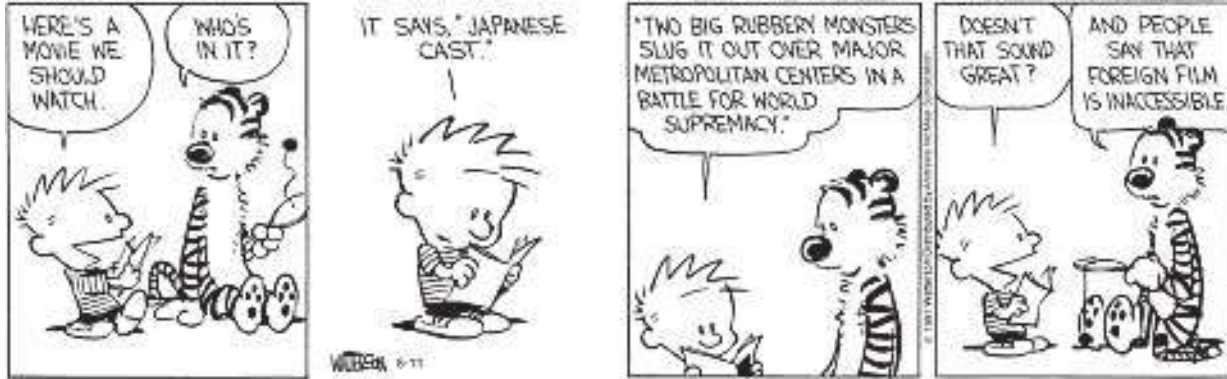
- Sense of anxiety possibly nags the third mate (5)
- Do nothing in mid Lent (4)
- An even chance the matador will try to avoid (4-2)
- Stop and relax with a shower (8)
- Fix a quiet spot (7)
- Most appealing feature of a newspaper perhaps (5,6)
- Supplementary benefit for workers lacking security (6,5)
- Cloth worker; one in a mess (8)
- Choose one mother - the best (7)
- A problem for the bridge-builder to emphasise (6)

**Solutions Crossword 4544:** Across: 1 Stifle, 4 Acrimony, 9 Ordain, 10 Estrange, 12 Digs, 13 Relay, 14 Arid, 17 Wonderstruck, 20 Numismatists, 23 Noon, 24 Cairo, 25 Loaf, 28 Insomnia, 29 Senior, 30 Gremlins, 31 Pounce. Down: 1 Slow down, 2 Indigent, 3 Laid, 5 Casual remark, 6 In re, 7 Owners, 8 Yields, 11 Perspiration, 15 Het up, 16 Scott, 18 Estonian, 19 Use force, 21 Ending, 22 Mousse, 26 Emil, 27 Veto.

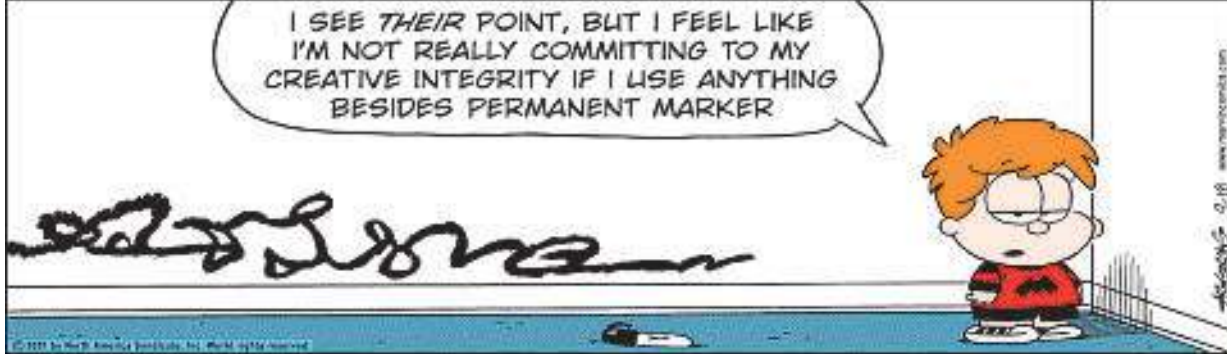
## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip. It takes a wise man to \_\_\_ a wise man. - Xenophanes (9)

DOEER



EEHTCN



APTIO



ELUZGZ



ANSWER: It takes a wise man to recognize a wise man. - Xenophanes

## SUDOKU 4607

Difficulty Level 5s

### Instructions

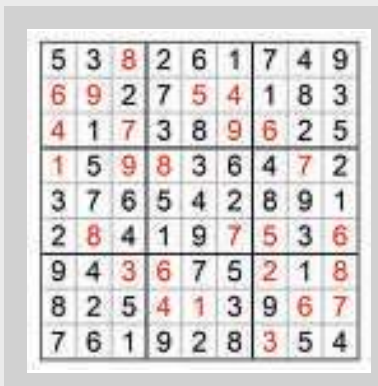
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

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



## SOLUTION SUDOKU 4606



## DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

### ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

The Moon ups the stakes, and should give you the emotional energy and determination to get off to a good start. This is necessary if you are now to take decisions relating to a long-term partnership. All you need is the staying power to survive until a rival backs down.

### TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Look inward for the answers today, for the key to your hopes and the solution to your fears lies with you rather than with friends, lovers or employers. True, they may have a role to play, but they also depend on your imaginative lead. Do your bit.

### GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Go for teamwork today. You have a strong individualist streak, but you're not being asked to subordinate your interests to those of other people. You may have the chance, if you wish, to call on them to serve you. Of course, you can't make them agree, but if you don't try, you'll never know.

### CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Professional affairs must take first place today. Even if you're not at work, it's time to promote yourself in the community, accepting responsibility and attracting praise and applause. Don't be afraid to take an unusual approach as the element of surprise could work in your favour.

### LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

The broad, far-reaching connection between Mercury and Venus is increasing your charm level. There will be moments over the next fortnight when you are grievously provoked, but you'll be foolish to respond in kind. You'll do much better to react to a snarl with a smile.

### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept 23)

There is a case to be made for spending time on business matters. In point of fact you'll be in a rather charitable mood, and could be a soft touch for deserving causes. It's all a question of making sure they're genuine. Mind you, that might be easier said than done.

### LIBRA (Sept 24 - Oct 23)

You have to pay more attention to partners' hopes and desires, if only because that's the best way to keep them quiet. There is a great deal to be said for making a few confessions of your own, but pick your time. If you catch partners at the wrong moment you might give completely the wrong impression.

### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

Harmonious connections link a region of your solar chart representing the daily work routine to that signifying professional ambitions. Your desire for status amongst your peers could be achieved, but only with extra effort on your part. Luck doesn't come into it.

### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

The broad planetary alignment is profoundly helpful. It doesn't take much imagination to see that, with confidence, you could leave planet earth, fly to the clouds and soar with the birds over the next two days - at least in your dreams. In other words, it's good to try to take an overview of all your daily activities and pressures.

### CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Your attention will be drawn to domestic affairs, probably because of what partners say or do, rather than because of what you want. The answers could be financial, and it may be sufficient to throw extra money at discontented people. At least, you can hope that this will do the trick.

### AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

You're not always known for your willingness to think things through, but today's decisions and choices should be given a little extra consideration. Above all, be practical, especially where children are concerned. And if a younger relation comes to you for advice, try to see the world through their eyes.

### PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You can be surprisingly resolute where money is involved, and it looks as if you will be determined to see that an investment is returned. You may, however, be required to put in just a little extra effort. But then, it might be an emotional favour that needs to be repaid.



# Glenn’s Max Impact

Royal Challengers Bangalore hand Mumbai Indians a 54-run defeat as Maxwell comes good

**SYNOPSIS:** Maxwell’s perfect night, Patel’s hat-trick conjure a nightmare for MI

**SANDIP G**  
SEPTEMBER 26

GLENN MAXWELL scripted one of the most unforgettable nights for Royal Challengers Bangalore—he shellacked 56 runs off 37 balls, took two wickets for 23 runs and snatched a terrific catch to furnish Virat Kohli’s side a memorable win over Mumbai Indians. He had two canny accomplices too—hat-trick hero Harshal Patel and comeback man Yuzvendra Chahal.

## Maxwell’s perfect night

To the assortment of conventional strokes Glenn Maxwell has reversed—the sweep, pull, slog—you could add the ramp too, as though he is planning to publish a cricket lexicon of his own. As if pulling off the usual ramp is not complicated enough—though a T20 staple, few accomplish it with a high success percentage—he does it the opposite way to his own utter amusement and without any eye-shirking contortions of the body.

Twice he unfurled the stroke against Adam Milne. The first came as a shock when no one was expecting daredevilry. Pirouetting like a gymnast, he opened himself up, and dinked the ball past the third man. The next arrived in Milne’s 17-run over — after reverse-sweeping (or was it reverse slog?) him — dabbing him fine of the short third-man fielder, with another nimble flip.

The Victorian seemed to relish his battles with Milne, who he had creamed for a couple of boundaries, of more conventional hue, to kickstart his innings. To the spinners, he employed the more straightforward switch-hit over mid-wicket, as he illustrated to Krunal Pandya and Rahul Chahar. His knock injected momentum to RCB’s innings, which was flailing as Kohli struggled for timing. It was an uncharacteristic knock by the captain—he stormed off to a start, ransacking 28 runs off the first 15 balls, but in the next 27 balls, he hoarded just 23 runs, soaking up more dot balls than usual (18). But fortunately for him, he had Maxwell in (reverse) swinging for the fences.

It was not the last time, Maxwell came back to torment his old team. He grabbed the opening-partnership breaking catch to eject a rampaging Quinton de Kock, before snaffling the wickets of Rohit Sharma and Krunal, all the while conceding just 23 runs. So much fuss is made whenever he underperforms, but on Sunday, he was worth every penny RCB had spent to acquire him.

## Patel’s dream night

Harshal Patel is already the highest wicket-taker in this edition, unprecedentedly so. To this already rich haul, and burgeoning reputation, he added a hat-trick to stub the last flickering embers of Mumbai victory. When he strode in to bowl the 17th over, Mumbai had already lost half their crew, at 105. However, Hardik Pandya and Kieron Pollard were still in the middle and were capable of hunting down 61 off 24 balls.

But the unsung Patel knocked the wind out of their sails. He foxed Hardik with a full, slower ball. Pollard then wanted to break free and shuffled across the stumps to pulverise him over long-on. Instead, another slower ball, this time dipping into him, beat his bat and clipped his leg-stump. Patel, seeing Pollard shuffle, had smartly floated one on his legs, next nailed Rahul Chahar in front of the stumps to embellish a heart-warming story of a forgotten cricketer parachuting to fame.

**BRIEF SCORES:** RCB 165 for 6 (Maxwell 56, Kohli 51; Bumrah 3-36) beat MI 111 all out (Rohit 43; Patel 4-17, Chahal 3-11) by 54 runs



Harshal Patel took four wickets for 17 runs, including a hat-trick to dismiss Hardik Pandya, Kieron Pollard and Rahul Chahar. He is currently the leading wicket-taker this season with 23. [iplt20.com](#)

# Jadeja stars in cameo role as CSK beat KKR in last-ball thriller

**SYNOPSIS:** Glorious drivers set up Super Kings’ win. Jadeja oozes all-round brilliance

**SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY**  
SEPTEMBER 26

TWO WICKETS inside three balls, and suddenly Chennai Super Kings’ chase threatened to fall apart. Until the 17th over, they were in control, chasing 172 for victory. But Suresh Raina and MS Dhoni departed in quick succession and CSK required 26 runs from the last two overs.

Ravindra Jadeja found shots which released the pressure. Kolkata Knight Riders had lost Andre Russell to a hamstring pull and Prasad Krishna bowled the penultimate over. Jadeja took him to the cleaners, hitting two sixes and two fours. Four runs required off the final over and Sunil Narine upped his game to almost force a super-over. The KKR spinner dismissed Sam Curran and Jadeja, but Deepak Chahar kept calm in the final ball of the match to take his team over the line. CSK won the thriller by two wickets.

## Glorious drivers

Amid the bludgeoning of T20 cricket, such glorious driving from CSK openers was so easy on the eye. Ruturaj Gaikwad and Faf du Plessis have a lot in common. At the same time, they complement each other. Gaikwad set the ‘drive’ rolling, stand-

POINTS TABLE					
	M	W	L	NRR	Pts
CSK	10	8	2	+1.069	16
DC	10	8	2	+0.711	16
RCB	10	6	4	-0.359	12
KKR	10	4	6	+0.322	8
PBKS	10	4	6	-0.271	8
RR	9	4	5	-0.319	8
MI	10	4	5	-0.551	8
SRH	9	1	8	-0.637	2

ing on his toes and driving off the back foot past cover-point to a Krishna delivery. Du Plessis got into the act through an on-drive against Krishna followed by a lofted one straight over the bowler’s head.

Eoin Morgan brought on Varun Chakravathy, his trump card. But unlike the majority of modern-day batsmen, du Plessis and Gaikwad didn’t play the length. They picked it from the hand and their stance and backlift allowed them to stay light on their feet. Du Plessis drove a full delivery from Varun with princely elegance. The spinner dragged his length back but the South African responded with another rasping drive off the back foot.

Gaikwad attacked Narine at the other end. He danced down the track and played a lofted drive over mid-off. When he came out of the crease again, it was a six. Through their decisive footwork, the CSK openers had managed to upset the spinners’ length.

Narine dropped one short and Gaikwad effortlessly pulled it over the wide long-on boundary. Coming down to Andre Russell and lofting him over the sightscreen was contemptuous. Gaikwad got out next ball, a leading edge that went to Morgan at cover. But the way he has been playing, an India career beckons for the 24-year-old. A 74-run opening partnership in 8.2 overs allowed CSK to keep pace with the required run rate. And when the going got tough at the death, Jadeja’s eight-ball 22 did the job.

## Jadeja’s allround brilliance

There’s a refreshing change in KKR’s approach in this leg of the tournament. Morgan’s team is now playing fearless cricket. The defeat notwithstanding, they were very good.

After Shubman Gill perished to a direct hit from Ambati Rayudu, Venkatesh Iyer and Rahul Tripathi took KKR to 50/1 after five overs. Then Shardul Thakur came and dismissed Iyer in his very first ball. A wicket-keeper was what CSK required at that stage. Jadeja from the other end tightened the noose.

The left-arm spinner went on to bowl a game-turning spell – 21 runs from four overs, including Tripathi’s wicket. Thakur smacked him over deep square-leg. Chahar was furious, with himself and the world. But the very next ball, he undid Bharat with a clever change of pace, and he vented out all his anger. Eyeballs jumping out of the socket, veins popping on his neck, he frenziedly kept punching the air and even punched at the gloves of wicket-keeper Quinton de Kock. He almost charged toward Bharat for a send-off, before he was whisked away by Rohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah. A stormy petrel so to say.

**BRIEF SCORES:** CSK 172 for 8 (du Plessis 43, Gaikwad 40; Narine 3-41) beat KKR 171 for 6 (Tripathi 45, Rana 37; Thakur 2-20) by two wickets

## EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER



Hot heads, calm minds and everything in between at the game

## Sir-Lord guarding Kings’ galaxy



‘Lord Shardul’ and ‘Sir Jadeja’ bowled four overs in the middle in tandem and gave away just 20 runs. [iplt20.com](#)

AGAINST A team of knights, Chennai Super Kings needed a Lord and a Sir to pull things back. Anointed Lord Shardul and Sir Jadeja, they bowled four overs in the middle in tandem and gave away just 20 runs. Lady luck was smiling on Kolkata Knight Riders.

A leading edge from Venkatesh Iyer fell inches short of a diving Faf du Plessis. MS Dhoni took a sharp catch of Rahul Tripathi off Sam Curran, but it was a no-ball for height.

Only in T20 cricket, can a perfectly well-directed bouncer be called a no-ball, not for overstepping. Riding their luck and some lively hitting, KKR were 50/1 in five overs. Shardul Thakur came and induced an edge behind the stumps from Iyer in his very first ball. Why the batsman asked for a review was anybody’s guess and Iyer walked

**Riding their luck and some lively hitting, KKR were 50/1 in five overs. Thakur came and induced an edge behind the stumps from Iyer in his very first ball. Jadeja bowled his overs through, out-guessing Tripathi in the process.**

back admonishing himself.

Ravindra Jadeja bowled his overs through, out-guessing Tripathi in the process.

By the time the latter realised that his attempted reverse sweep was a little too pre-meditated, he was clean bowled. Tripathi was livid with himself. Jadeja had spun CSK into ascendency.

## Mighty Angry Rahul Chahar

With his braided locks, eye-piercing stare, and penchant for snarls and verbals, Rahul Chahar has all the requisites of a pantomime villain. He clearly was one on Sunday evening. He didn’t take kindly to KS Bharat slog-sweeping him after he had beaten him with his first ball and then induced a leading edge. In his next over of an intense game, Virat Kohli played him for a four before Hardik Pandya dropped a difficult catch at point. Compounding his woes, Bharat smacked him over deep square-leg. Chahar was furious, with himself and the world. But the very next ball, he undid Bharat with a clever change of pace, and he vented out all his anger. Eyeballs jumping out of the socket, veins popping on his neck, he frenziedly kept punching the air and even punched at the gloves of wicket-keeper Quinton de Kock. He almost charged toward Bharat for a send-off, before he was whisked away by Rohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah. A stormy petrel so to say.

## Gill-Dhoni play Tom & Jerry

A cat-and-mouse game eventually weighed heavy on Subhman Gill. The Kolkata Knight Riders opener targeted the extra cover and mid-off region against Deepak Chahar, but MS Dhoni was one step ahead.

In the mid-day desert heat, Chahar barely had any swing to his assistance, a breeze notwithstanding. Dhoni took out second slip after the very first ball and put Moeen Ali at short extra cover. Gill accepted the challenge. He danced down the track and cleared Faf du Plessis at mid-off.

Then he drove uppishly past Moeen for another four. Chahar responded with an incutter and trapped Gill in front. DRS overturned the on-field LBW decision and Gill looked relieved, but Dhoni’s game was putting him under pressure.

Rotating the strike was a good option, but he erred in his judgement. A 36-year-old Ambati Rayudu knocking down the stumps with a direct hit from mid-wicket added to his misery. Gill returned to the dug-out disappointed.

# Arsenal’s fast start secures derby delight

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
LONDON, SEPTEMBER 26

ARSENAL	3-1	TOTTENHAM
Smith-Rowe 21'		Son 79'
Aubameyang 27'		
Saka 34'		

ARSENAL STRUCK three times inside 35 minutes to beat Tottenham 3-1 on Sunday and move above their north London rivals in the Premier League table.

Just three weeks ago Spurs sat top and Arsenal bottom after their worst start to a league season for 67 years.

However, the Gunners have been rejuvenated by six summer signings and the return to fitness of a number of key players.

Emile Smith Rowe opened the floodgates by taking advantage of some awful Tottenham defending on 12 minutes.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang then rounded off a brilliant team move before Bukayo Saka rolled home the third 11 minutes before half-time. Son Heung-min pulled a goal back for the visitors 11 minutes from time, but it was too little, too late for Nuno Espirito Santo’s men. Arsenal climb to 10th ahead of Spurs on goal difference with both sides on nine points from six games.

However, they are going in opposite directions with Tottenham losing their last three league games by a combined score of 9-1. The last time north London derby took place in front of a full crowd, Unai Emery and Mauricio Pochettino were still in charge of the sides. Both

clubs have had little reason to celebrate in the two years since.

But there are encouraging signs for Arsenal that the decision to invest heavily in youth during the transfer window is beginning to pay off. The Gunners spent more than any other Premier League club over the summer, investing £150 million in players aged between 21 and 23, despite failing to qualify for European football for the first time in 25 years. Four of the new faces started with all 11 of the starting line-up either signed in the two years since Mikel Arteta was appointed or handed a contract extension in that time.

Saka and Smith Rowe are two of those to have committed their long-term future to the club where they came through the ranks and where the stars of a first 45 minutes that sent the Emirates into raptures.

Smith Rowe was allowed a huge amount of space to amble into the box and slot home Saka’s cross. The hosts rampaged through Spurs with ease for a brilliant second goal in a

move reminiscent of Arsenal’s glory days under Arsene Wenger.


Tottenham claimed in vain for a foul on Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg as Granit Xhaka turned onto Aaron Ramsdale’s pass out from the back. Aubameyang then flicked the ball through for Smith Rowe to charge in on the Spurs goal before having the presence to turn back and pick out his captain for a cool finish.

The Tottenham Hotspur stadium played host to Anthony Joshua losing his world heavyweight boxing titles to Oleksandr Usyk on Saturday. And Nuno’s men were dealt a knock-out blow before the break.

Harry Kane found himself back in his own box trying to make a tackle, but the ball broke kindly for Saka to sweep the ball past Lloris.

Kane’s frustrating day continued into the second-half as he prodded wide with just Ramsdale to beat before seeing strong appeals for a penalty waived away for a challenge by Ben White. The England captain is still to score in the Premier League this season after Tottenham refused to relent to Manchester City’s interest. Spurs have scored four goals in total in their opening six games, but Son has three of them as his shot from Sergio Reguilon’s cross had too much power for Ramsdale.

But the England international goalkeeper ensured there was not a grandstand finish with a stunning save to turn Lucas Moura’s dipping effort onto the bar.



GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

RC. NO.61024/TSIIC/E-AUCTION/PH-II/2021    DATE: 26.09.2021

ADDENDUM

POSTPONEMENT OF E-AUCTION OF GOVT. LAND PARCELS AT PUPPALAGUDA AND KHANAMET VILLAGES OF RANGAREDDY DISTRICT

Notification issued vide 61024/TSIIC/E-Auction/Ph-II/2021, dt. 30.08.2021, certain Govt. Land parcels of Khanamet Village of Serilingampally Mandal and Puppallaguda village of Gandipet Mandal of Rangareddy District were put for sale through e-Auction on 27.09.2021 and 28.09.2021 respectively.

That, certain frivolous claims are made by Third Parties on the Govt. Lands put for e-Auction by approaching various Courts.

In order to provide complete assurance to prospective buyers, Government will ensure speedy disposal of all pending cases before the process of auction is resumed.

Thereby, the notification issued vide reference No. 61024/TSIIC/E-Auction/Ph-II/2021, dt. 30.08.2021 for sale of the Government land parcels (9) Plots to an extent of Acs. 22.79 cts at Khanamet Village, Serilingampally Mandal and (26) plots to an extent of Acs. 94.56 cts of Puppallaguda Village, Gandipet Mandal, Ranga Reddy District through e-Auction stands **postponed**.

For further clarification call on +91 95738 14737 | +91 88844 06412 or log on to [TSIIC.TELANGANA.GOV.IN](http://TSIIC.TELANGANA.GOV.IN)

Vice Chairman & Managing Director, TSIIC On behalf of Government of Telangana

Issued By: Commissioner, I & PR Department, Government of Telangana

