



EXPRESS NETWORK

IF ELECTED, DHANKHAR MAY BE SECOND VICE PRESIDENT FROM RAJASTHAN

NEET-UG 2022: HINDI, ENGLISH QUESTION PAPERS INTERCHANGED **P 3**

"In anti-cancer therapy, there is (another) pillar: using diet as a drug"

DR SIDDHARTHA MUKHERJEE
ONCOLOGIST
PAGE 9

Violence in TN town over student's death; buses torched, DIG injured



Buses set on fire by protesters in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi on Sunday. *PTI*

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, JULY 17

PROHIBITORY ORDERS were imposed at several places in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi district after protesters clashed with police and indulged in arson at a residential school on Sunday to protest against alleged inaction following the death of a 17-year-old student earlier this week.

Several people, including senior police officers, were injured in the violence at the residential school in Kaniyamoor, near Chinnasalem. Later in the day, the school principal and two school officials were arrested and the government transferred the suicide case to the CB-CID.

The protesters set on fire at least 15 buses, including three police buses. Following the violence, Kallakurichi Collector P.N. Sridhar issued prohibitory orders under Section 144 until July 31 in Kallakurichi taluk and several places in Chinnasalem.

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WORLD



RUSSIAN MISSILES HIT KEY CITY IN SOUTHERN UKRAINE IN FIRST POLL AFTER HIS OUSTER, IMRAN KHAN'S PTI WINS BY A LANDSLIDE
PAGE 8

PAGE 1 ANCHOR



SHUBHAJIT ROY
COLOMBO, JULY 17

■ An official who worked at former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's office says she's been trying her luck in the fuel queue for the past three days, without success.

PRESIDENTIAL POLLS TODAY

Monsoon session begins today; Govt, Opposition brace for a stormy start

32 Bills likely to be introduced; all-party meet on Lanka tomorrow

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE GOVERNMENT Sunday accused the Opposition of trying to "belittle the image" of Parliament by insisting that "non-issues" such as the updated list of unparliamentary words be taken up for discussion, setting the stage for a stormy Monsoon Session that is set to begin on Monday.

At an all-party-meeting ahead of the session, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Opposition leaders demanded that the alleged misuse of investigation agencies, the Agnipath scheme for recruitment in the defence forces, price rise, alleged attacks on the federal structure and the "Chinese incursion", be taken up for discussion.

With the session scheduled

to end on August 12 — during which 32 Bills are likely to be introduced — the Opposition said it anticipates that key Bills would "bulldozed" through. Congress MP and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said that with the session "leaving us effectively with only 14 days", the government did not offer them clear answers on how it plans to discuss the proposed legislation in such a short time.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi later told reporters that while the government was ready to "discuss any issue" under the rules and procedure of the House, the Opposition "is raising non-issues as it does not have anything against the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which has wide acceptance among the people of India and abroad".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



NDA Presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu with BJP leaders in New Delhi on Sunday. *PTI*

Murmu thanks NDA MPs, says tribal community is 'excited'

LIZ MATHEW

NEW DELHI, JULY 17

A DAY before the election for President, which she is expected to win as the ruling NDA's candidate, former Jharkhand Governor Droupadi Murmu described her nomination as a historic moment that has made the

tribal community, especially its women, "utsaahit" (excited), *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Sources said that in a meeting with NDA MPs in the Parliament complex, Murmu also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP for nominating her, adding that around 10 crore tribals, from more than 700 communities, "are all delighted".

The sources quoted Murmu as saying that she hails "from a small village" and has "struggled a lot" to "come up in life". They also quoted her as telling the MPs that it was "an honour to get all your support".

Before Murmu's arrival, a mock voting drill for the poll on Monday was carried out, as BJP

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V-P polls: Opp picks Alva; TMC, AAP skip meeting

MANOJ CG & HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

SENIOR CONGRESS leader and former Union minister Margaret Alva was on Sunday pulled out of virtual retirement and nominated as the Opposition's candidate for the vice-presidential election scheduled to be held



Congress leader Margaret Alva

next month.

Sources said the Opposition had initially considered former chief election commissioner

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RBI'S STATE OF THE ECONOMY REPORT

Commodity prices' fall can help India escape global inflation trap

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has said that the Indian economy can escape the global inflation trap if the moderation in commodity prices witnessed in recent weeks endures, alongside an easing of supply-chain pressures.

"The biggest source of relief is from inflation coming off its recent peak, albeit at an elevated

EXPLAINED
E Moderating inflation

WHILE US inflation shot up to a 41-year high of 9.1 per cent in June, India reported a retail inflation of 7.01 per cent, down from 7.04 per cent in May and 7.79 per cent in April.

level still," the central bank has said in its latest 'State of the economy' report. Nonetheless, the signs of its generalisation and the potential unhinging of inflation expectations have elicited a pre-emptive and frontloaded monetary policy response, the RBI said.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had recently said that inflation was likely to "ease gradually in the second half of 2022-23, precluding the chances of a hard

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INSIDE



CLOUDBURSTS MAY BE FOREIGN PLOT TO DESTABILISE INDIA, SAYS KCR

INDIA, CHINA ARMIES HOLD NEW ROUND OF TALKS IN E LADAKH

BJP SET TO GOVERN 100 OF 133 MP LOCAL BODIES
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121 tribals, arrested for 2017 Maoist ambush in Chhattisgarh, acquitted after five years in jail

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

A SPECIAL court in Chhattisgarh has acquitted all 121 people who were arrested in connection with the 2017 Burkapal Maoist ambush in Sukma in which 25 CRPF personnel were killed. The accused had spent nearly five years behind bars.

The NIA special court, which pronounced the judgment on Friday, said the prosecution could not prove that the accused — all of them from the tribal community — were either on



A video grab of the accused who were released from prison after a special court acquitted them in the case

the spot of the incident, in possession of any arms or explosives or even members of the CPI (Maoist). "Thus it is clear that the prosecution has failed to prove its case against the accused beyond reasonable doubt," the court of Justice Dipak Kumar Deshlahare said.

The ambush had occurred when a team of 70 soldiers of the CRPF's 74th Battalion had gone to provide security cover for road building in Sukma's Burkapal on April 24, 2017. The CRPF contingent had been surrounded and attacked by a group of 150 Maoists.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

From hospital gate to upmarket store, fuel squeeze chokes Colombo

■ Another official at former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office says he has "just enough" to get to the market. He used to get fuel from government sheds earlier but not after Rajapaksa fled.

■ A senior Sri Lankan diplomat has been working from home for the past week. "I walk to the stores nearby for daily needs," the diplomat said.

■ A former diplomat, down with Covid, has saved up enough fuel to reach the hospital, if needed.

THE FUEL shortage in Sri Lanka has hit the elite as well as common people.

On the streets of Colombo, fewer private cars are plying, serpentine queues outside petrol stations are a common sight and most residents have been walking long distances, keeping the little fuel they have for an "emergency".

Facing the brunt of this shortage are the capital's hospitals. At 7 pm on Friday, when *The Indian Express* reached National Hospital of Sri Lanka, one of the largest government hospitals, doctors and nurses said many of them can't turn up for work due to the shortage.

They said the government has allowed priority access for medical professionals at fuel stations



A patient is brought in a grocery delivery van to the National Hospital of Sri Lanka in Colombo on Friday night. *Shubhajit Roy*

but it is too little for too many.

A senior doctor, who did not wish to be identified, said she has to change two buses to get to the hospital, and it is "extremely difficult". "Many patients have been calling the free ambulance service to reach the hospital," she said.

Outside, there were hardly any private vehicles, only ambulances arriving every 5-10 minutes and three-wheelers. One man drove up in a pick-up van, with his uncle lying on a mattress on the floor in the back. "I use the vehicle for bread and grocery deliveries, but today there was an emergency," the driver said.

Dr Ananda Wijewickrama, a senior consultant at National Institute of Infectious Diseases in Colombo who was part of Lanka's Covid task force, said, "The fuel crisis has had a significant impact, preventing doctors and nursing staff from coming to hospitals... The number of patients coming for regular check-ups, and elective surgeries and treatments, has also been impacted."

In Colombo, the crisis has hit schools, too. Sanka, a 32-year-old housewife with two children, said, "The schools had been closed off and on for the past three months. Now they are saying that schools will open after

the President's election...because of power cuts, online classes are also difficult."

Due to the shortage, fuel prices have risen nearly four-fold from last year. Despite marginal cuts announced on Sunday, diesel is up from SL Rs 106 last year to 440 per litre while petrol prices have risen from SL Rs 130 to 450 per litre. In the black market, petrol is being sold at about SL Rs 2,000 per litre — an Indian rupee is about SL Rs 4.50.

This has also led to a sharp rise in prices of household goods. At Keells, an upmarket store in Colombo's Union Place,

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THE INDIAN EXPRESS

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

TECH

APPLE HEALTH VP
DR SUMBUL DESAI

'Privacy dictates a lot of
our decisions on
product availability'

ENTERTAINMENT

REVISITING LIPSTICK
UNDER MY BURKHA

'Elderly people believe
they don't have any
sense of sexuality'

EXPRESS AUDIO

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a gold at the World
Championships?

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FROM PAGE ONE

Covid milestone

India's vaccination drive — the world's largest — was rolled out on January 16, 2021, and coverage was progressively expanded in seven phases based on the principle of prioritisation of vulnerable population groups.

Among the priority population, 1 crore healthcare workers have received two doses and 60.21 lakh have received their precaution dose; 1.76 crore frontline workers have received two doses and 1.14 crore have received the precaution dose; 12.15 crore elderly recipients above the age of 60 have got their two doses and 2.81 crores have got the precaution shot as well.

Delhi tops the list of cities that have administered the most double doses with 1.53 crore jabs, followed by Mumbai (97.30 lakh), Bengaluru Urban (93.46 lakh), Pune (83.69 lakh), and the Ahmedabad Corporation area (49.73 lakh).

On January 3 this year, India also started administering Covid-19 vaccines to children: 5.01 crore teens in the age group 15-18 years, and 2.62 crore adolescents ages 12-14 are now fully vaccinated. The drugs regulator has approved vaccines for children younger than 12 as well; however, the expert body of the government is yet to take a decision on rolling out jabs for this age group.

The list of states that have administered the most doses (cumulative) to children is headed by Uttar Pradesh (1.94 crore), followed by Bihar (63.42 lakh), West Bengal (48.39 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (46.24 lakh), and Gujarat (43.49 lakh).

The precautionary dose is currently being administered only to adults, and has been given predominantly in the large metros. The cities that have administered the most precaution doses are Delhi (19.34 lakh), Mumbai (10.33 lakh), Bengaluru Urban (9.30 lakh), Kolkata (7.40 lakh), and Pune (7.08 lakh).

The vaccination drive has made use of the strong child immunisation infrastructure that was already in place in the country. Some 2.6 lakh vaccinators and 4.7 lakh vaccination team members were involved in the drive, and a record 213.51 crore syringes were mobilised.

The drive witnessed augmentation of the existing cold chain for storage and transportation of vaccines: an additional 13,626 ice line refrigerators and 12,461 deep freezers were made available.

"Greater Goals, Bigger Victories! Overcoming all the odds, India under PM @NarendraModi Ji's leadership has achieved the new milestone of 9200 crore vaccinations. A moment to remember forever! The world's largest vaccination drive has been consistently creating new records," Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said in a tweet.

Monsoon session

PM Modi's absence in the meeting also drew criticism from the Opposition camp, with Congress general secretary (communication) Jairam Ramesh tweeting, "Isn't this 'unparliamentary'?"

"Because of some reason, the PM did not come. In fact, before 2014, the PM never used to attend these meetings. A senior Cabinet member like Rajnath Singh presided over the meeting, unlike the Congress, which used to send the chief whip to take the meeting during its rule. How many times did (former prime minister) Manmohan Singh attend all-party meetings?" Joshi said.

At the meeting, attended by 36 parties, the Congress made it clear that it plans to raise issues such as the "DHFL bank fraud, rising unemployment, fiscal and rupee value crisis, hate speech, rising crimes in Jammu and Kashmir and attacks on Kashmiri Pandits,

Aviation upturn sees new trends: tourism routes popular; curbs in China boost India

1.66 lakh in June 2019.

This year's summer schedule also saw the addition of direct connections to Srinagar from non-metro cities such as Ahmedabad and Hyderabad. The seat capacity data includes numbers for both sectors on a given route.

Another emerging trend is the increasing direct connectivity to smaller airports. "...in 2019, just over one-third of capacity growth between 2016 and 2019 in India's domestic market came from new routes that were not previously operating. OAG's capacity data also shows that there are 24 domestic routes operating in March 2022 to and from Delhi that were not operating before 2017," OAG's Regional Sales Director — JAPAC Mayur Patel said.

At the same time, some hub routes are yet to recover to pre-Covid levels. For example, the Delhi-Mumbai route saw 6.18 lakh seats in June this year, lower from 6.66 lakh in June 2019.

The third highest route with the most seats in June 2019 — the Mumbai-Bengaluru route — had airlines deploying 3.28 lakh seats last month, almost as much as Delhi-Srinagar, compared to 3.94 lakh three years ago.

Domestic passenger traffic continues to inch closer to 2019 levels. According to the latest available data provided by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), 120.81 lakh passengers flew domestically in May this year, compared to 121.87 lakh in May 2019.

In October 2021, the Ministry of Civil Aviation fully lifted the Covid-related capacity restrictions that were imposed on domestic flights in May 2020.

On the international front, India reverted to the pre-Covid scheduled operations and bilateral capacity agreements from March 27 this year. As per ICRA, since then, international passenger traffic for Indian carriers surged to around 21 lakh in June this year, compared to approximately 18 lakh in June 2019.

Foreign airlines that were dependent on China and the far-east for a meaningful portion of their traffic are now looking at other geographies, such as India and the US, to deploy surplus capacities. This strategy has been further intensified with the various airspace closures and restrictions in light of the Ukraine crisis.

Singapore Airlines, for example, is witnessing strong load factors on all of its India flights and is looking to add to its number of India flights over the next two schedules. Similarly, Helsinki-based Finnair is adding capacity to

Route	June 2019 (Seats)	June 2022 (Seats)	Percentage Change
Delhi-Mumbai	6,66,188	6,18,178	-7.2%
Delhi-Srinagar	1,68,411	3,27,808	94.6%
Mumbai-Bengaluru	3,93,514	3,27,926	-16.6%
Delhi-Goa	1,66,690	2,07,676	24.5%
Delhi-Chennai	2,24,670	1,85,658	-17.3%
Mumbai-Goa	2,13,716	2,25,168	5.3%

Source: OAG

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tended by Chirag Paswan, who had distanced himself from the NDA when the BJP split and several senior members formed another party to partner the BJP.

While BJP leaders pointed out it was for the first time that Chirag had attended an NDA meeting after the Bihar assembly elections in 2020, Paswan said he came only to support Murmu, sources said.

National People's Party MP Agatha Sangma was also present in the meeting, sources said.

Violence in TN

Chief Minister M K Stalin expressed regret over the violence and assured punishment for all those involved in the girl's death. Appealing for peace, the CM said he has ordered the Home Secretary and the DGP to visit the site of the violence.

Sources said that on Sunday morning, around 2,000 people gathered at the school — where the Class 12 student was found dead on Wednesday — in response to a protest call on social media by youth groups in the area.

The student is suspected to have jumped to her death from the third floor of the school building. The autopsy report confirmed injuries on the girl's body.

Police said that a suicide note purportedly written by the girl mentioned that she struggled in several of her school subjects. The letter allegedly blamed some of her teachers for putting her under pressure over her poor scores and also asked the school to refund her annual school fee to her parents.

The girl's family has refused to accept the body until those allegedly responsible for her death are arrested.

Sources said that shortly after the girl's death, when her family and local residents protested, they were promised strict action against the school. With no action even after three days, the protesters returned to the school in large numbers around 10 am Sunday.

Soon, the protest turned violent, with the mob pelting stones and ransacking the school building, classrooms and the principal's cabin. They also set fire to school buses parked on the campus besides attacking at least three police vehicles.

"DIG M Pandian and the district Superintendent of Police were among those who were injured in the stone-pelting before a police team was able to manage the situation," said an official. The situation was brought under control after additional police forces were called in from neighbouring districts, including Villupuram, Cuddalore and Salem.

Minister CV Ganesan and (ruling DMK ally and VCK leader) Thol Thirumavalavan were among those who visited the victim's family and promised to take up the case with the Chief Minister's Office, said a senior police officer who was at the spot.

After the violence broke out, DGP C Sylendra Babu appealed to the people to maintain calm and warned strictly against those resorting to violence.

Inflation trap

landing in India". Prior to that, Deputy Governor Michael Patra had noted that there were signs of inflation peaking, and harsh policy may not be needed to contain price pressures.

If the commodity-price moderation seen in recent weeks continues, along with an easing of supply-chain pressures, the worst of the recent inflation surge will be left behind, and the economy can escape the global inflation trap and enjoy the fruits of the ebullient supply response that is taking place, the RBI report said.

While the US inflation rate shot up to a 41-year high of 9.1 per cent in June, India reported a retail inflation of 7.01 per cent in June, down marginally from 7.04 per cent in May and 7.79 per cent in April.

"The international environment is hostile and hence, close and continuous monitoring of the widening trade deficit and portfolio outflows is warranted, notwithstanding strong reserve

buffers, moderating external debt, and a fairly valued exchange rate that has wilted less in the face of the monotonic strengthening of the US dollar than many peers," the report said.

The recent revival of the south-west monsoon and rejuvenation of sowing activity has raised hopes of another bountiful year for agricultural activity, raising expectations that rural demand will soon catch up with urban spending and consolidate the recovery, it said.

Amidst these developments, India's financial sector remains sound and stable, the RBI said.

Knock-on effects of geopolitical spillovers are visible in several sectors, tapering the pace of recovery. However, there are sparks in the wind that ignite the innate strength of the economy and set it on course to becoming the fastest growing economy in the world, the fears of inflation notwithstanding, it said.

In another report on Fed taper and Indian financial markets, the RBI said the mild response of Indian financial markets to the "Taper 2" announcement can be linked to the country's strong external sector position during the announcement period. "However, there is evidence of large volatility spillovers from the US to Indian equity and bond markets," the RBI said.

This emphasizes the need for readiness among EMEs in terms of adequate buffers, pre-emptive and calibrated state contingent and data dependent policy responses to withstand future volatility spillovers, it said.

Food inflation is a major component of headline inflation, and has a tendency to spill over to core components. Food inflation was at an elevated level in 2013 as compared to 2021.

The report said the Taper 2 announcement was somewhat anticipated by the financial markets, given the past experience with Taper 1, and the Fed's communication that hinted at chances of taper before the announcement.

Another potential explanation for the resilience in the Indian markets post Taper 2 could be the backing of stronger economic fundamentals in India as opposed to the period before the Taper 1 announcement, the RBI said.

Lower current account deficit as a percentage of GDP, larger foreign exchange reserves, and stronger economic growth in Taper 2 vis-à-vis the Taper 1 period, imply that the Indian economy is in better shape to withstand the Fed's tightening, and manage any associated change in volatility in the financial markets, it said.

Maoist ambush

Following the incident, which was the biggest ambush on the CRPF since the 2010 Chintalnar massacre in which 76 CRPF soldiers were killed, the Chhattisgarh Police had arrested 121 tribal people from various villages in the region. All of them were arrested in 2017 and remained in jail till Friday. One accused turned out to be a minor, while another died in detention.

The Chhattisgarh Police registered a case in the matter under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and even invoked provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) at the time of the charge sheet. As many as 120 people were arrested in the initial phase with one more arrest being made later. Accused Dodi Mangalu of Patel Para in Sukma died in jail.

According to the judgment, 20 prosecution witnesses turned hostile during the trial, refusing to recognise the accused. They also did not support the prosecution's claims of recovery of explosives from the accused. Fifteen of them said their statements were never recorded by police.

In May-June 2017, the Chhattisgarh Police first arrested some half a dozen people in connection with the case. Based on their statements, it claimed to have made recoveries of some arms and explosives from other accused — including a bow and an arrow, a metre of codex wire, a non-electric detonator, a crude bomb and so on.

"In the context of the incident, the prosecution witnesses have not made any statement with regard to the identity or presence of the accused at the spot of the incident. No recovery of any arms or explosives from the custody of the accused has been proven. Thus, on the basis of statements of prosecution witnesses recorded before this court no charge can be proven against the accused," said the court.

According to the court, there was no believable fact in the statements of witnesses that could prove that the accused were members of the CPI (Maoist).

Colombo

The Indian Express compared the prices of different items — with the help of customers and the store manager — and found that they have increased almost five-fold over the past year, with some items being rationed.

Posters on shelves limit each customer to one packet of milk powder, 2 kg of rice and 12 bottles of water. Essential products like milk powder, one of the highest selling items, are in short supply.

According to the manager and customers, the price list has changed dramatically over the past year: Potatoes (SL Rs 110/kg last year to SL Rs 520/kg now); onions (SL Rs 65 to 280), sugar (SL Rs 65 to 451), flour (SL Rs 160 to 350), rice (SL Rs 95-110 to 480) and eggs (SL Rs 13 to 55/egg).

There's more: Toilet roll (SL Rs 30-40/roll last year to SL Rs 215/roll now), Surf Excel detergent powder (SL Rs 350 to 980), Coca-Cola (SL Rs 110 to 390/litre), Maggi noodles (SL Rs 110 to 360/pack) and Lux soap (SL Rs 80 to 225/piece).

Rohana Hettiarachchi, an executive director at an election advocacy group, said his family has reduced consumption of fruits and fish. "My 17-year-old son loves apples and bananas, so we buy just enough fruits for him. If we are denying ourselves these basic needs, imagine the situation of the more vulnerable," he said.

In its latest situation report on Sri Lanka, issued on Friday, the World Food Programme said: "Skyrocketing food costs are making it harder... About 6.7 million people are not consuming adequate diets and 5.3 million people are reducing the number of meals eaten. To cope with the lack of food, 5 million people are using crisis or emergency livelihood coping strategies."

Prof Lalithasiri Gunaruwan, professor of public transport planning and economics at Colombo University, blamed the fuel crisis on lack of foreign exchange. "The real cancer is the shortage of foreign exchange, and the fuel crisis is a symptom, which is visible on the surface," he said, blaming successive governments for the current situation.

Bhavani Fonseka, a lawyer and senior researcher at Centre for Policy Alternatives, said, "While the price rise has hit everyone, it has hit the vulnerable the most. Ambulances cannot reach some places due to lack of fuel."

On Saturday, the Sri Lankan government said a fuel pact will soon be introduced to allocate "a guaranteed weekly fuel quota" with QR codes for each vehicle. "We have made requests (for fuel) to different countries. So, any country that comes to help us, we appreciate that. Right now, the Indian government is the only country that has provided us with a credit line," Energy Minister Kanachana Wijesekara said.

So far, India has extended USD 3.8 billion in economic assistance to Sri Lanka — including fuel.

Jaipur

EXPRESS NETWORK

BRIEFLY



Former minister dies at 87

Jaipur: Former Rajasthan minister Indira Mayaram died here due to cardiac arrest on Saturday night, family sources said. She was 87. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot condoled the death of Mayaram, who was a state minister during his first tenure from 1998-2003. Her son Arvind Mayaram, a former IAS officer, is the Economic Adviser to the Chief Minister. She was admitted to a private hospital last night where she passed away. **PTI**

Gehlot flays anti-Patel rant

Jaipur: Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot on Sunday condemned the allegations against late Congress leader Ahmed Patel by the Gujarat Police's Special Investigating Team and called it a symbol of political malice. He said the BJP leaders had levelled allegations against Patel even before the last Gujarat elections, but he was not alive to present his side of the story. The Gujarat Police claimed that civil rights activist Teesta Setalvad was part of a "larger conspiracy" carried out at the behest of Patel to dismiss the then BJP government in the state after the 2002 riots. He also slammed the BJP for allegedly trying to implicate Sonia Gandhi and Hamid Ansari. **PTI**

MLA opposes quota in schools

Jaipur: Former Rajasthan education minister and BJP MLA Vasudev Devnani on Sunday demanded withdrawal of an order to reserve seats in the Mahatma Gandhi English Medium schools for donors who sponsor works worth Rs 50 lakh or more. Devnani shared the education department order on Twitter, claiming it was a violation of the Right to Education Act. Dated July 16, the order states a quota of two seats per class and a maximum of 10 in the entire school per year has been fixed in addition to the existing number of seats. **PTI**

ERCP: Woman seeks new report

Jaipur: A woman allegedly had a heated argument with Rajasthan minister Parsadi Lal Meena over the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) at his residence on Sunday following which she was whisked away by police, sources said. Rajeshwari Meena was part of a delegation that had visited the minister's house in Dausa to submit a memorandum demanding that the government send a revised detailed project report of the ERCP. The police, however, said the group had a "normal conversation" with the minister and left after submitting the memorandum. **PTI**

RLP MLA's car stolen in Jaipur

Jaipur: An SUV of Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) MLA Narayan Beniwal was stolen from outside his apartment building in Vivek Vihar area of Jaipur on Saturday night. "Beniwal had parked his Scorpio outside the building but it was missing this morning," SHO Shyam Nagar Shreemohan Meena said, adding the footage of CCTVs installed in the building and nearby areas are being examined. **PTI**

NEET-UG 2022: MIX-UP AT ARMY PUBLIC SCHOOL, SRIGANGANAGAR

Hindi, English question papers interchanged

Students allege forced to rewrite exam; NTA says aspirants got extra time; superintendent for re-test

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR, JULY 17

STUDENTS WHO appeared for the National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) at an examination centre in Rajasthan's Sriganganagar district on Sunday alleged that they were forced to write the exam twice on account of a question paper mix-up.

Students said question papers meant for Hindi and English medium students were interchanged mistakenly. A National Testing Agency (NTA) official confirmed the mix-up to this news-

paper, but said students were given extra time to complete the paper once the mistake was spotted. However, the exam centre superintendent, in a factual report submitted on Sunday evening, recommended a re-test to NTA.

The incident, earlier in the day, had resulted in students and parents protesting in front of the Army Public School, Sriganganagar, the exam centre.

"The examination started at 2 pm. Around 4:30 pm, people from the exam centre came to us and said we have been mistakenly given the bilingual question paper meant for Hindi medium

students and those studying in Hindi medium have received the question paper meant for English medium students," said Akshita Garg, a NEET aspirant.

Garg added that officials at the examination centre first gave the students another question paper, but subsequently said that they will have to write the examination once again.

"We completed our exam by 6 pm. But then, they said our exam has been cancelled and we will have to write it again in another time slot," she said.

Sriganganagar SDO Manoj Kumar Meena had reached the

spot after the incident to maintain law and order.

In a factual report sent by centre superintendent Raja Sharma to the observers for the NEET exam, it was recommended that the examination should be conducted again for this centre.

"It was informed to the control room that some students are facing the issue of the booklets being in English medium and we found out that the students who opted for Hindi medium received the English-medium booklet. The problem was looked into and reported to the city coordinator, who on the directions of the NTA,

tried to solve the problem. Out of 936 students, 238 opted Hindi medium," says the factual report. The report adds that following the mistake, some booklets were also exchanged with photocopied OMR sheets.

"The instructions received by the city coordinator after consultation with NTA as they told me, was to exchange the questions papers of Hindi and English medium and restart the exam with photostat of OMR sheets. We talked to students, but they refused to do so. It was informed to the city coordinator," says the report.

Dhankhar may be second Vice President from Rajasthan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR, JULY 17

WEST BENGAL Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar will be the second leader from Rajasthan to reach the high office of Vice President, if he is elected in the August 6 Vice Presidential poll.

Dhankhar, whose name was announced as the ruling National Democratic Alliance's (NDA) vice-presidential candidate on Saturday, belongs to the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan.

Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, who was also from the Shekhawati region, held the office as the 11th Vice President of the country from August 2002 to July 2007. The Shekhawati region comprises Sikar, Jhunjhunu and nearby areas in north-east Rajasthan. While Shekhawat, a stalwart Rajput leader and former Rajasthan Chief Minister, was from Sikar, Jat leader Dhankhar is from Jhunjhunu.

Dhankhar's election as the Vice President is almost a certainty as the BJP has a majority in the electoral college comprising the members of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

BJP, JD(U) seek Tejashwi apology

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PATNA, MAY 17

A DAY ahead of the polling to decide the next President, the BJP and JD(U) on Sunday demanded an apology from Leader of Opposition in Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav for calling NDA presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu a "murti (statue)".

On Saturday, Tejashwi said: "We do not want a murti (statue) as President of India. Has anyone heard the RSS's backing for President speak? Has she held any press conference? On the other hand, Opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha has held several press conferences."

On Sunday, BJP national spokesperson Guru Prakash Paswan said, "Tejashwi Yadav has insulted not only Droupadi Murmu ji but millions of youngsters from tribal and Dalit communities by saying that she will be a murti in Rashtrapati Bhawan. This is nothing but a reflection of feudal politics in the name of social justice."

A QUICK GUIDE TO PRESIDENT POLLS

KEY DATES: Election is on July 18 and counting on July 21. President to take oath on July 25

VOTERS: There are 4,809 electors in the electoral college whose votes have a value of 10,86,431

THE RACE: NDA's Droupadi Murmu is leading with support of 44 parties. Opp's Yashwant Sinha has the support of 34 parties.

VALUE OF VOTE: The value of a vote of each MLA varies from state to state. In UP, the value is 208, followed by 176 in Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu. In Sikkim it is just 7 and in Nagaland 9

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

RAJYA SABHA Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu, who will chair his last session of the House from Monday, has sought a meaningful and productive session from leaders of political parties as a farewell gift.

Naidu will demit office as Vice President on August 10. He made the remarks at a meeting of floor leaders of Rajya Sabha on Sunday. The meeting saw a record 41 leaders attending.

"I am making one last request for upholding the dignity and decorum of the House of Elders," he said at the meeting. Naidu has presided over 13 sessions.

"It was an emotional evening for all political party leaders with Venkaiah Naidu-garu. They expressed their regret at his departure and praised his many contri-



Venkaiah Naidu greets leaders of political parties at his residence on Sunday. Prem Nath Pandey

butions as Rajya Sabha Chairman. He will be a very tough act to follow," said Congress chief whip Jairam Ramesh.

The meeting saw the Opposition seeking discussions on 16 issues. These are among them — federalism, Agnipath, in-

flation, declining labour force participation rate, EPFO interest rates, "declining credibility" of central institutions, external threats, hate speech, undemocratic actions against opposition leaders, increasing crime in Jammu & Kashmir and attacks



PARTY MEET

Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Anurag Thakur with BJP MP Anil Baluni during an NDA meeting in Parliament Sunday. **PTI**

Once-powerful Alva who retreated into shadows

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, JULY 17

AT THE start of the year, veteran Congress politician Margaret Alva, 80, wrote a letter to PM Narendra Modi, expressing her angst over a move by the BJP government in Karnataka to bring in a law on religious conversions.

"We Christians are a disciplined, non-violent, service-oriented community. If we were involved in mass conversions, why is our number under three per cent? 200 years of rule by Christian colonial powers and work by so-called 'missionaries' involved in forced conversions' should have shown in our numbers, which have been declining. Why this false propaganda and violence against us?" she wrote.

The letter to the PM and participation in protests against the Karnataka Protection of Right of Freedom of Religion Bill in the latter half of 2021 saw Alva, once a political force to be reckoned with in Karnataka, returning to the political stage in the state after a long hiatus. Now the Opposition's 'consensus' candidate for the vice-president's post, Alva finds



Congress politician Margaret Alva

herself in the spotlight once again.

Despite hailing from coastal Karnataka and representing the current Uttara Kannada (then known as Kanara) Lok Sabha constituency in Parliament in 1999, Margaret Alva has largely been identified as a national politician.

A lawyer, Alva entered Rajya Sabha at age 32 and was a member of the Upper House for four terms, and 24 years at a stretch, from 1974. She has been a minister in several Congress governments at the Centre — under Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, and P V Narasimha Rao. Around two decades ago, her connection with the high command was formidable enough for speculation in the Karnataka unit of the party of Alva being a contender for the CM post.

Alva has a strong political lineage — much before she got into politics, her late husband Niranjana Thomas Alva's parents were the first couple to be in Parliament.

Behind Dhankhar pick: Tussle with Mamata

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

HIS PERSISTENT wrangles with the Trinamool Congress — seen as a strong pushback to the "confrontational politics" of the ruling party in West Bengal — combined with the RSS's backing for him led to the BJP choosing Jagdeep Dhankhar as its candidate for the August 6 vice-presidential election.

Sources said Dhankhar — a lawyer by training and the national convener of the BJP's law and legal affairs department in 2016 — has in the past "extended solid support both politically and through legal advice and assistance" to the BJP, RSS and its affiliates.

The nomination of Dhankhar, who is from the socially and politically dominant Jat community of Rajasthan, could placate a section in the Sangh Parivar that has been increasingly uncomfortable with the BJP leadership's aggressive outreach to Dalits, OBCs and other backward communities. "Several leaders from the Parivar have conveyed to the party leaders that it's the time for the party to pitch for an *agada* (member of a forward



NDA V-P nominee Jagdeep Dhankhar

caste)," said a party source.

Sources said the party was aware of an increasing disquiet among Brahmin leaders over the community being allegedly ignored in the power-sharing formula. "The nomination of Dhankhar for the vice-president post may take care of such complaints for a while," said party leader from Uttar Pradesh.

Sources said Dhankhar's tenure as Governor — marked by confrontation with West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee and the TMC — pleased the RSS cadre too. In one of his letters to the CM, he had accused the TMC government of "minority appeasement". When the state witnessed violence after the return of the TMC government in the 2021 polls, Dhankhar had once again locked horns with the state government, alleging that the post-poll violence witnessed by the state was the "worst since Independence".

BJP wins 100 out of 133 local bodies, but loses four mayor posts to Cong, AAP

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, JULY 17

MADHYA PRADESH's ruling BJP is poised to rule over 100 of 133 local bodies, the poll results for which were announced Sunday. But the victory was dampened by the party losing its hold over four mayoral posts after winning seven of the 11 Nagar Nigams and scraping through in the other two by a slim margin.

The results for the 133 local bodies — including 11 municipal corporations, 36 municipal councils and 86 town councils — were announced Sunday during the first phase of counting. The second phase of counting will be held on July 20.

Mayors for 11 municipal councils are being elected directly while the chairperson of the local body will be elected by councilors indirectly in municipal councils. Of the 11 municipal corporations, the BJP won the mayor's seat in seven. Congress got three mayor's posts and Aam Aadmi Party one.

With the counting underway until late Sunday evening, the BJP was comfortably headed towards establishing its rule in 10 of the 11 municipal corporations, 31 of the 36 municipal councils and 67 of the 86 town councils. With BJP having the majority of councilors in most local bodies, it is set to appoint a chairperson in them.

Assaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM also debuted with a four of its four councilors winning. Of these, two are in Jabalpur, one each in Burhanpur and Khandwa corporations. Similarly, 14 of AAP's candidates emerged victorious while Rani Aggarwal bagged the mayoral seat in Singrauli municipal corporation.

Congress candidates were

elected as mayors in Gwalior, Chhindwara and Jabalpur. But even with that, the party will only be establish its rule in Chhindwara municipal corporation, with its elected councilors falling short of the majority mark in the corporation. CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan held a press meet and reasoned that even though Congress won three Municipal Corporations and AAP won in Singrauli, the saffron party holds the majority of wards which is the true picture. "Despite AAP victory in Singrauli municipal corporation, out of the 45 wards, 23 went to the BJP, Congress got 12 and AAP won on five," said Chouhan.

He continued, "In the local body polls, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged victorious on 80 percent of the seats unlike the earlier trend where vote share was always between 45-55 percent."

Calling the mandate clear and decisive, Chouhan said that out of the 36 municipal councils, the BJP's councilors secured a clear majority on 27 while Congress had majority in four councils while five other councils had other parties. "We will not only form councils in these 27 but also in the five councils that have other parties," said Chouhan.

BJP State President, VD Sharma explained that out of the 37 municipal councils BJP has a clear mandate in 27, similarly in 64 of the 86 town council BJP has majority which shows that people have given BJP the mandate. "Even in Jabalpur where Congress won the mayoral post, BJP won on 44 wards and will rule. Our loss on mayoral seats are due to other reasons," said Sharma.

By winning three of the 11 mayoral seats, the Congress has improved on its tally from the previous civic polls — zero.

Goa ex-CM removed as permanent CWC invitee

MAYURA JANWALKAR
PANAJI, JULY 17

SENIOR GOA Congress leader Digambar Kamat, accused of conspiring with the BJP to engineer defections of legislators, was Sunday removed as a permanent invitee to the party's top decision-making body.

The move by Congress president Sonia Gandhi comes a week after the party's Goa in-charge, Dinesh Gundu Rao, accused Kamat, a former chief minister, and MLA Michael Lobo of being involved in an attempt to split the legislative wing.

In a statement issued Sunday, K C Venugopal, National General Secretary in-charge of organisation, said: "Hon'ble Congress President has removed Shri

Digambar Kamat from his current position as Permanent Invitee to Congress Working Committee with immediate effect".

Kamat and Lobo both face a disqualification petition filed by the Goa Congress before the Speaker of the legislative assembly for "anti-party activities".

On July 10, only five of 11 Congress MLAs turned up at a press conference called by Rao amid speculation of defections to the BJP. Rao then accused the two senior leaders of working with the BJP to get at least eight of 11 MLAs to defect. At least two-thirds of a party's MLAs have to be on board for its merger with another legislature party to dodge the anti-defection law. Kamat was made a permanent invitee to the CWC, the party's top decision-making body, in April.

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EVERYDAY POLITICS

HOW VICE-PRESIDENT IS ELECTED, HOW CONSTITUTION DEFINES HIS OR HER ROLE

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE OPPOSITION on Sunday named former Governor and former Union minister Margaret Alva as its candidate for Vice President. The ruling NDA has announced West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar as its candidate. The election, scheduled for August 6, is likely to be only symbolic, with the NDA's clear majority in Parliament expected to carry Dhankhar through.

Office of the Vice-President

Under Article 64 of the Constitution, the Vice-President "shall be ex officio Chairman of the Council of the States" (Rajya Sabha). Article 65 says that "in the event of the occurrence of any vacancy in the office of the President by reason of his death, resignation or removal, or otherwise, the Vice-President shall act as President until the date on which a new President... enters upon his office".

The Vice-President shall also discharge the functions of the President when the latter is unable to do so "owing to absence, illness or any other cause".

Article 66 lays down the process of the election: the Vice-President "shall be elected by the members of an electoral college consisting of the members of both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote and the voting at such election shall be by secret ballot".

For the 2022 Vice-Presidential Election, the electoral college consists of 233 elected members of Rajya Sabha, 12 nominated members of Rajya Sabha, and 543 elected members of Lok Sabha, adding up to 788 members. Each elector has to mark preferences against the names of the candidates.

"The elector can mark as many preferences as the number of candidates. While the marking of the first preference is compulsory for the ballot paper to be valid, other preferences are optional," the Election Commission of India said in a release issued on June 29.

Eligibility

Under the Constitution, the Vice-President "shall not be a member of either

House of Parliament or of a House of the Legislature of any State". If a member of any of these Houses is elected, "he shall be deemed to have vacated his seat in that House on the date on which he enters upon his office as Vice-President".

Article 66(3) says "No person shall be eligible for election as Vice-President unless he — (a) is a citizen of India; (b) has completed the age of thirty-five years; and (c) is qualified for election as a member of the Council of States".

Under Article 66(4), "A person shall not be eligible for election as Vice-President if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State or under any local or other authority subject to the control of any of the said Governments."

Article 67 lays down that the "Vice-President shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office". However, the Vice-President "shall, notwithstanding the expiration of his term, continue to hold office until his successor enters upon his office".

The Vice-President may leave office before the end of his term by resigning to the President, or he "may be removed... by a resolution of the Council of States passed by a majority of all the then members of the Council and agreed to by the House of the People".

In case of dispute...

Article 71 of the Constitution deals with "Matters relating to, or connected with, the election of a President or Vice-President". It says that "all doubts and disputes arising out of or in connection with the election of a President or Vice-President shall be inquired into and decided by the Supreme Court whose decision shall be final".

Should the Supreme Court declare the election of the President or Vice-President void however, "acts done by him in the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of the office of President or Vice-President... on or before the date of the decision of the Supreme Court shall not be invalidated by reason of that declaration".

Also, "Parliament may by law regulate any matter relating to or connected with the election of a President or Vice-President".

What women should eat to control high rates of illness

WOMEN TEND to live longer than men, but typically have higher rates of illness. Now, research from University of Georgia (UGA) suggests these higher rates of illness can be improved by a better diet — one that is high in pigmented carotenoids such as yams, kale, spinach, watermelon, bell peppers, tomatoes, oranges and carrots. These bright-coloured fruits and vegetables are particularly important in preventing visual and cognitive loss, UGA said in a press release on the study, published in Nutritional Neuroscience. The study reviewed and analysed data from previous studies.

Women have, on average, more body fat than men. Body fat serves as a significant sink for many dietary vitamins and minerals, which creates a useful reservoir for women during pregnancy. This availability, however, means less is available for the retina and the brain, putting women at more risk for degenerative problems.

Dietary intake of pigmented carotenoids act as antioxidants. Two specific carotenoids, lutein and zeaxanthin, are found in specific tissues of the eye and brain and have been shown to directly improve central nervous system degeneration.

"Men and women eat about the same amount of these carotenoids, but the requirements for women are much higher... recommendations need to be changed so that women are aware that they have these vulnerabilities that they have to proactively address, so they don't have these problems later in life," the release quoted co-author Professor Billy R Hammond as saying.

Source: University of Georgia



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SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Is there a crisis in rice?

While overall crop coverage has risen since last year, that of rice is down. Deficient rainfall in key areas is among the reasons. But adequate stocks and cultivation over a wider area suggest there should be no cause for worry.

HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE SOUTHWEST monsoon's revival this month has resulted in the total area sown under kharif crops not only recovering, but even surpassing last year's coverage for the same period from June to mid-July. However, paddy (rice) acreage, at 128.50 lakh hectares (lh) as of July 15, was 17.4% down from last year's 155.53 lh.

Should that be cause for worry?

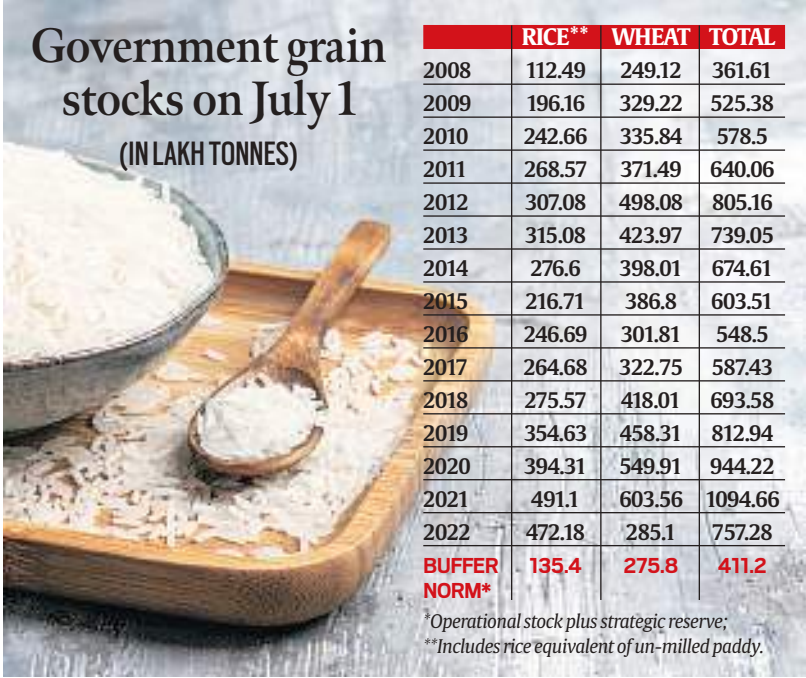
On the face of it, not much, as government godowns had over 47.2 million tonnes (mt) of rice on July 1. These were nearly three-and-a-half times the minimum level of stocks, to meet both "operational" (public distribution system) and "strategic reserve" (exigency) requirements for the quarter. Rice stocks are still close to their peaks scaled last year.

That comfort doesn't extend, though, to wheat — where public stocks have plunged from all-time highs to 14-year lows within the space of a year (see table). Inflation-haunted policymakers would dread the wheat story getting repeated in rice. In wheat, it was a single bad crop — the one sined by the March-April 2022 heat wave — that did all the damage and brought down stocks to just above the minimum buffer.

In rice, the stakes are higher: It is India's largest agricultural crop (accounting for over 40% of the total foodgrain output), with the country also being the world's biggest exporter (a record 21.21 mt valued at \$9.66 billion got shipped out during the fiscal ended March 2022). Unlike with wheat, the options for import in rice — due to any production shortfall — are limited, when India's own share in the global trade of the cereal is 40% plus.

Why has acreage fallen?

Farmers first sow paddy seeds in nurseries, where they are raised into young plants. These seedlings are then uprooted and replanted 25-35 days later in the main field that is usually 10 times the size of the nursery seed bed. Nursery sowing generally happens before the monsoon rains. Farmers wait for their arrival to undertake transplantation, which requires the field to be "puddled" or tilled in standing water. For the first three weeks or so after transplanting, the water depth has to be maintained at 4-5 cm, in order to control weed growth in the early stage of the crop.



lled" or tilled in standing water. For the first three weeks or so after transplanting, the water depth has to be maintained at 4-5 cm, in order to control weed growth in the early stage of the crop.

All this isn't possible without the monsoon, which has overall been good this time. The country has received 353.7 mm of rainfall during June 1 to July 17, 12.7% more than the "normal" historical average for this period.

Yet, a vast paddy-growing belt, from Uttar Pradesh to West Bengal, has had very little rains. Cumulative rainfall has been 55.5% below the long period average in West UP, and 70%, 45.8%, 48.9% and 45.1% respectively for East UP, Bihar, Jharkhand and Gangetic West Bengal.

Deficient rainfall has meant that farmers in UP had transplanted only 26.98 lh under paddy until July 15, as against 35.29 lh during the same time last season. Farmers in Bihar (from 8.77 lh to 6.06 lh), West Bengal (4.68 lh to 3.94 lh) and Jharkhand (2.93 lh to 1.02 lh) too have reported lower acreages. So have those in Odisha, Chhattisgarh and eastern Madhya Pradesh, although that gap should

reduce with the monsoon turning the corner in these parts.

How serious is the situation?

In UP — where the western and eastern subdivisions have so far recorded a mere 90 mm and 79.6 mm of rainfall, respectively — it certainly seems so.

Ajay Kumar Singh, a farmer from Emiliya village in Chandauli district of eastern UP bordering Bihar, said paddy nursery sowing in his area is normally done from June 1 to June 10 and transplanting from July 1 to July 10. This time, there was some rain towards June-end, but hardly any thereafter. "The seedlings should leave the nurseries in 25-35 days, beyond which they will age and not have enough time to grow in the main field. But when there's no water, how will farmers transplant?" he said.

Bal Mukund Lohia, from Magardaha village in Ghorawal tehsil of neighbouring Sonbhadra district, echoed the same: "Forget transplanting, most farmers with limited irrigation facilities have seen even their nurseries drying up".

According to Dr A K Singh, director of the

TOTAL RECALL

Rubaiya Sayeed's abduction, Yasin Malik's role

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, JULY 17

RUBAIYA SAYEED, daughter of former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Friday identified Yasin Malik, the jailed Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chief, and three others as her abductors in a 1989 kidnapping case. Malik is currently undergoing a life sentence at Delhi's Tihar jail after being convicted in a terror funding case in May.

The abduction & release

On December 8, 1989, Rubaiya, 23, was abducted from a mini-bus in Srinagar, when she was returning home from the Lal Ded Memorial Hospital where she was an intern. This was just six days after her father had been sworn in as Union Home Minister in the V P Singh government.

The bus was intercepted by four armed men, a few hundred metres from her father's home on the outskirts of Srinagar. She was taken away in a car. Hours later, the JKLF — then headed by Ishfaq Majeed Wani — claimed responsibility for the abduction in a call to a local newspaper. Rubaiya had been abducted to demand the release of five JKLF militants from prison — Abdul Hameed Sheikh (Wani's deputy), Gulam Nabi Bhat



(brother of JKLF founder Maqbool Bhat), Noor Mohammad Kalwal, Mohammad Altaf and Javed Ahmad Zargar.

Then Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah rushed back to J&K, cutting short a London visit. Senior officials from the Centre, including the then IB chief, were sent to Srinagar to start negotiations with the JKLF through a local journalist. On December 13, 1989, Union ministers Inder Kumar Gujral and Arif Mohammad Khan too were sent to the Valley.

A deal was struck and the five JKLF militants were freed. A few hours later, Rubaiya was released after spending five days in captivity.



Rubaiya Sayeed with her father, late Mufti Mohammad Sayeed (left) after her release in 1989; and Yasin Malik in Srinagar in 2016. Express Archive

The politics

Reports at that time attributed the delay in Rubaiya's release to Farooq Abdullah's reluctance to release the jailed militants. A decade later, Abdullah confirmed he had been against the exchange, adding that the Centre had even threatened to sack him.

"A senior minister in V P Singh Cabinet specially flew to Srinagar with the threat. I didn't deter from my stand and refused to release any militant... Mufti Sayeed, however, ensured the militants were released, which hastened my resignation from the office of Chief Minister," Abdullah said on February 14, 2000. He had resigned 37 days after Rubaiya's release, and after Jagmohan was

New Delhi-based Indian Agricultural Research Institute, farmers may well end up raising nurseries afresh. "But they will now have to plant shorter duration varieties of about 125 days (seed-to-grain maturity), instead of 155 days. That would translate into 1-2 tonnes less yield per hectare," he said.

Interestingly, in eastern UP, farmers with access to basic irrigation also practise the 'Sanda' double-transplanting method of paddy cultivation under conditions of delayed rainfall. In this case, the seedlings are uprooted after 25 days in the nursery and replanted in a puddled field that is only about twice the former's area. The plants after establishment begin tillering and are, thus, rejuvenated for the next 10-15 days. When the rains come, they are again uprooted and replanted in the main field 10 times the size of the original nursery.

Paddy yields from Sanda are said to be better than from the regular one-step transplanting. The reason for it is that the Sanda plants have already tillered and their establishment in the main field would be near 100% with little mortality. "Yields are 15-20% more, but that is offset by higher costs because of transplanting labour having to be paid twice. Sanda makes sense only in today's delayed monsoon situation," Lohia said.

So, is there a crisis ahead in rice?

Not for now. To start with, the India Meteorological Department has forecast that the current monsoon trough, which is active and south of its normal position, is "very likely to shift gradually northwards from tonight (Sunday)". That should, hopefully, provide much-needed relief to farmers in the Gangetic plains within the next few days.

Secondly, paddy cultivation takes place across a wider geography, unlike wheat that is grown only in a few states north of the Vindhya. Also, rice is both a kharif (monsoon) and rabi (winter-spring) season crop. So, the losses in one area or season can potentially be recouped from the other. In wheat, everyone — from farmers and traders to policymakers — was caught off-guard by the sudden surge in temperatures after mid-March that cut grain yields by a fifth or more. Rice is less likely to throw up huge negative surprises. And with the present stocks, it should be manageable.

appointed J&K Governor.

The aftermath

Following the release of the five JKLF men, a massive victory procession was taken out in old Srinagar city — the first time locals were seen expressing support for militancy.

The release of militants triggered a series of further kidnappings. Those abducted included Vice Chancellor of Kashmir University Professor Mashir-ul-Haq, his personal secretary Abdul Gani, and General Manager of Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT) H L Khara. All three were killed by their abductors as the government turned down their demands for release of militants. Indian Oil Executive Director K Doraiswamy, too, was abducted; he was set free after nearly two months in a swap involving nine militants.

The present case

A case on Rubaiya Sayeed's abduction was first registered at Srinagar's Sadar Police station on December 8, 1989 under Section 364 of the Ranbir Penal Code (RPC), Section 3 of TADA and Section 3/25 of the Arms Act. The CBI took over the probe in the early 1990s. In January last year, the court framed charges against 10, including Malik. These included the four identified by Rubaiya Sayeed on Friday: Malik, Zaman Mir, Mehraj-Din Sheikh and Manzoor Ahmed Sofi.

Flavour & history of South India's filter coffee, now on Starbucks menu

POOJA PILLAI
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE TATA Starbucks menu will now feature South Indian filter coffee — one of the "regional favourites" that the chain is introducing, along with masala chai and small bites, as it seeks to expand its reach in India. The fan base of this style of coffee — served milky and hot, usually, in the stainless steel or brass combination of "tumbler" and "*davara*" — has grown in the last couple of decades. Now, its inclusion on the menu of a brand with a pan-India presence might give it a mainstream status.

What it means

Whether in Mylapore, Chennai or Matunga, Mumbai, the fragrance of freshly roasted beans, with their promise of a bracing

shot of the sweet, milky coffee, has long defined a certain, typically South Indian style of coffee.

The "filter" pot used to make it is of metal and with two cylindrical parts: coarsely-ground coffee powder is put in the top cylinder, which has fine holes in its base, and pressed down using a metal disc. Hot water is poured over this and the coffee is allowed to brew for about 10 minutes, the decoction slowly dripping and collecting in the bottom cylinder. This is mixed with milk — cow milk, strictly, if one wishes to make the famous Kumbakonam "degree" coffee — and sugar, and served in the tumbler and *davara*.

The coffee itself is ideally made using freshly roasted and ground coffee beans, with purists insisting that no chicory be added. Many commercially available blends, however, do contain some chicory.

Its history

While tea established pan-Indian dominance — in large part due to a marketing push in the 1930s by the British who were seeking a wider consumer base for the colonial tea industry, consumption of coffee has been far more limited. The coffee-drinking habit really took hold in Tamil society in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Coffee cultivation may have been established in the Mysore region by the 18th century, but most of it was being sent to Europe. As documented by historian A R Venkatachalapathy in *In Those Days There Was No Coffee*, by the turn of the 20th century, an enthusiasm for coffee gripped the emerging Tamil middle class.

Cultural anxiety accompanied the enthusiasm, with criticism that connected it to "every conceivable and inconceivable malady". It was deemed more addictive than al-



Foamy filter coffee in tumblers. Wikimedia Commons

cohol, and Venkatachalapathy notes that women, in particular, were seen as having succumbed to its "dangers". Despite this, coffee became the preeminent beverage in Tamil society, prestigious enough that not offering it to guests indicated a lack of social grace.

Coffee, or *kaapi*, had become a "cultural marker" and symbol of modernity, particularly for the Brahmin middle-class, distinguished from tea that was viewed as the beverage of the "urban working class".

'Breaking Brahmin orthodoxy'

Venkatachalapathy's book records a tongue-in-cheek description from 1926 of "coffee hotels" (also known as "coffee clubs"): "A public tavern instituted by Brahmins. A messenger from God to break Brahmin orthodoxy." Although coffee hotels were frequented by all kinds of people, they were

mostly owned and run by Brahmins and almost always had segregated sections for Brahmins and non-Brahmins.

While the caste-based segregation is mostly gone, the influence of Brahmins on filter *kaapi* culture remains visible in the design of the utensils: the tumbler and *davara* were designed with outward-facing rims so that the drinker could pour the coffee into his mouth without letting it touch the utensils.

As coffee-drinking became common in other regions of South India, "Udupi" hotels elsewhere — particularly Mumbai and Delhi — introduced filter coffee to newer populations. Even now, however, the use of specialised equipment, as well as a certain degree of patience and skill, means only devoted fans will make the effort to prepare filter coffee at home — despite the wider availability of filter pots and even packaged decoctions.



Jaipur



The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BEYOND CAATSA

NDA government emphasises producing more weapons at home. That demands more urgent and purposeful policy action

LAST WEEK THE House of Representatives, the lower House of the US Congress, passed an amendment with a significant majority that called for an India-specific waiver from sanctions for the purchase of advanced Russian weapons. This sets the stage for Delhi and Washington to find a way around the problem of India's continuing dependence on Russian weapons. It is an issue that has acquired greater salience since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act in 2017 demanded sanctions on states that buy Russian weapons. The US imposed these sanctions in 2020 on Turkey, a NATO ally, for purchasing the S-400 missile system from Russia. With India, too, committed to the purchase of the S-400 from Moscow, it seemed inevitable that Washington would impose sanctions on Delhi and undermine a budding strategic partnership. US and India have been steadily building up the bilateral defence and security cooperation, are partners in the Indo-Pacific and members of the Quad along with Australia and Japan.

To be sure, the CAATSA authorised the US President to waive the sanctions provided there was an overriding national security interest. Both the Trump and Biden administrations had avoided imposing the sanctions but were hesitant to offer a waiver. Both were worried about the overwhelming anti-Russian sentiment in the US Congress. The House amendment now offers solid political support for the waiver. This, of course, is only the first step that needs to be matched by the US Senate and jointly approved by the two Houses at a later sitting. But the House amendment acknowledges the danger to the US interests from a mechanical application of CAATSA sanctions on India. It notes the special military challenges that India confronts from an assertive China in the Himalayas. While calling for a waiver, the House amendment calls for a deeper defence collaboration with India, and stronger high technology cooperation, and active encouragement to reduce Delhi's current dependence on Russian military supplies.

Although a rapid diversification away from Russian supplies can't be done overnight, it is a good moment for the Indian security establishment to review the changing context of Delhi's defence ties to Moscow. Indo-Russian defence ties emerged at a moment when Moscow was fighting Beijing in the 1960s. Russia and China are now close partners, while Beijing remains the main source of Delhi's security problems. Russia and China are also aligned against the West, which has become a major partner for India. After invading Ukraine, Russia is locked in a deep confrontation with the US and Europe. Although India can work on the margins to reduce the impact of Western sanctions on Russia, dealing with Moscow will only become trickier for Delhi in the days ahead. If and when the Ukraine war ends, Russia's focus will be on rearming itself rather than exports to other countries. Delhi, however, has no reason to jump from dependence on Russia to total reliance on the West. The NDA government has emphasised the importance of producing more weapons at home. It also wants domestic and foreign private capital to invest in India's arms production. Translating that laudable goal into reality demands more urgent and purposeful policy action in Delhi than we have seen so far.

A LIGHTER TOUCH

Data localisation norms may need easing, but startups should compete without relying on heavy handholding of state

THE STARTUP ECOSYSTEM in India, in overdrive for the past few years, is now undergoing a slow churn. After a period of frenzied fund-raising and deal-making, when unicorns (startups with a valuation of \$1 billion or more) were growing at a fast rate, fund-raising has begun to dry up. As per a report by PwC, after three consecutive quarters of more than \$10 billion, funding in Indian startups fell by 40 per cent to \$6.8 billion during April-June this year. This decline can be traced to a combination of factors — end of the era of cheap money with central banks across the world tightening policy to tackle inflation, fears of a global slowdown, and a decline in tech valuations as investors become more circumspect. During such testing times, when many startups have begun to lay off workers as they seek to conserve cash, Indian startups have also been voicing concerns over the "compliance intensive" nature of regulations in the current draft of the personal data protection Bill.

The concerns stem from regulations which mandate that users' personal data be kept within India. Many fear that these rules will restrict operations of startups. While the justification for data localisation is fairly uncomplicated — regulation will address concerns over data privacy and security, and will make it easier for government to access critical information — worldwide, in the designing of localisation rules, a careful balance needs to be struck between privacy and innovation. However, the Indian government seems to be sympathetic to the concerns of startups — as reported in this paper, the Ministry of Electronics and IT is examining the possibility of easing the data localisation requirements as laid out in the current draft of the data protection bill for startups. Considering that such concerns have also been voiced by others in the past, especially by global technology firms, carving out exemptions for startups, even as what constitutes a startup, the terms of its definition, remains difficult to ascertain, may not be a prudent approach.

Policies as critical as data protection should not be tweaked to accommodate the business plans of a few startups, corporate strategies should not be drawn up solely on the basis of the ability to influence policy. Should similar exemptions be also carved out for startups whose applications to become payment aggregators have been rejected by the RBI? The startup ecosystem is vibrant, in part, because it allows for easy entry and exit of firms — some startups will succeed handsomely, while many others will fail. That's the nature of business. Firms should compete without having to rely on government intervention.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



NEERJA CHOWDHURY

MONSOON SESSIONS OF Parliament are usually turbulent and the one starting Monday, July 18, is unlikely to be an exception. This session will also be dominated by the presidential and vice-presidential polls. It will start on a historic note, with MPs voting on opening day to choose the country's next rashtrapati. Droupadi Murmu is certain to be elected president.

Her elevation to the high office may or may not improve the lot of Adivasis. But it will signal that a member of a tribal group, who is also a woman, can occupy the highest position in the country.

It is the nomination of the NDA's vice-presidential candidate which has, however, grabbed eyeballs. In a surprise move — though, by now, we should not be surprised by any move of the prime minister — the BJP announced that Jagdeep Dhankhar would be the NDA's candidate for VP. The BJP's choice may come to have a bearing on how the Rajya Sabha functions.

Dhankhar was an active MoS, parliamentary affairs, in the Chandra Shekhar government in 1990. He is from the Jat community, belongs to Rajasthan and came into prominence as governor of West Bengal for the confrontational bouts he had with Mamata Banerjee's government. His three attributes — being a Jat, belonging to Rajasthan and acting "tough" as a governor — point to the BJP's thinking, and the strategy it could adopt in the months to come.

That the BJP wants to get back into its fold the farming community of Jats who inhabit western UP, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan, is obvious. Unhappy with the farm bills, the Jats were the mainstay of the year-long agitation the farmers mounted outside Delhi last year, compelling the central government to take back the laws. Rajasthan, where elections are due in 2023, is clearly on the party's radar.

More importantly, Dhankhar, as the chairman of the Rajya Sabha, responsible for its proceedings, could be tougher on the Opposition. He is likely to win given the arithmetic of both the Houses which elect the VP. Going by his track record in West Bengal — he was not shy of run-ins with the state government — it could lead to greater contention



RAKESH KACKER AND NIDHI SRIVASTAVA

SINCE THE ONSET of the pandemic and over the past few months, after the Ukraine-Russia war, commodity prices, especially that of energy, have surged worldwide. With inflation at unprecedented levels in many countries, concerns over energy security have gained centre stage.

Recently, there have been several policy initiatives in the coal sector in India. One which has gone largely unnoticed is the introduction of the national coal index (NCI). This index was created to provide a benchmark for revenue-sharing contracts being executed after the auctions for commercial mining of coal.

The NCI had to be introduced as the wholesale price index (WPI) for coal has no component of imported coal. For the last six months, the WPI for Coal has been stable at around 131. Over the same period, the NCI has jumped from about 165 to about 238 reflecting the sharp increase in international coal prices. The domestic coal industry has responded to this situation with an increase of over 30 per cent in coal production from April to June this year. This has helped reduce inflationary pressures in the economy.

This development shows the importance of increasing domestic coal production to reduce the exposure of the domestic economy to the price volatility of international markets. Anticipating these problems, a big effort toward permitting commercial mining



Drawing harder lines

As Parliament reopens, votes are cast for new president, Opposition diminution, BJP aggression

The Lok Sabha issued a new

booklet adding more words that are to be deemed unparliamentary to the existing list, and they are words of common usage like 'corrupt', 'ashamed', 'tanashah' (dictator), which the Opposition leaders use against those in power. If the word 'tanashah' had been declared unparliamentary 50 years ago, Indira Gandhi might not have lost the 1977 elections. If the word 'corrupt' had been banned in 1987, Rajiv Gandhi might not have been ousted in 1989, nor the UPA swamped in scams like 2-G, Coalgate, and attacked day after day in Parliament.

with the Opposition in the Upper House.

Dhankhar's nomination came within days of moves that have created a sense of disquiet amongst the Opposition and may have a bearing on MPs' free speech and freedom to assemble. The Rajya Sabha put out an advisory that MPs will no longer be allowed to hold dharmas within the precincts of Parliament; earlier such "requests" used to be made to MPs to desist from protesting in Parliament. The Lok Sabha issued a new booklet adding more words that are to be deemed unparliamentary to the existing list, and they are words of common usage like "corrupt", "ashamed", "tanashah" (dictator), which the Opposition leaders use against those in power. If the word "tanashah" had been declared unparliamentary 50 years ago, Indira Gandhi might not have lost the 1977 elections. If the word "corrupt" had been banned in 1987, Rajiv Gandhi might not have been ousted in 1989, nor the UPA swamped in scams like 2-G, Coalgate, and attacked day after day in Parliament.

Om Birla, the Lok Sabha Speaker, tried to reassure MPs that they will have the freedom to speak and the expunction of words would be done by the Speaker depending on the context. What was the need, then, to publish a booklet? That power vests in the Speaker anyway. These moves show a growing toughness adopted by the BJP towards the Opposition.

But it is mystifying why the BJP, which is increasing its footprint in the country, winning election after election, should want to be seen to be stifling the free speech of parliamentarians, or be worried about a dhama or two in Parliament. Particularly as the prime minister loses no opportunity to emphasise India's democratic credentials in world capitals. It is even more curious at a time when the Opposition is weakening.

As for the Opposition, the disarray in its ranks has been growing, evident even in the way it handled the presidential contest. Nobody expected Yashwant Sinha to win, only to present a dignified counter narrative. After all, in the past too, the Opposition fielded candidates who had no chance to win — Lakshmi Sahgal against APJ Abdul Kalam in 2002, or PA Sangma in 2012

against Pranab Mukherjee.

Having projected Sinha as the candidate of the Opposition, Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena and Hemant Soren's JMM have decided to support Murmu. Mamata Banerjee, who had proposed Sinha's name for rashtrapati, found herself in a difficult situation, and had to ask Sinha not to come to West Bengal to campaign. Given this state of affairs, few will want to stand as candidates of the unified Opposition against the BJP, for any post.

Undoubtedly, the BJP caught the Opposition on the wrong foot by fielding Murmu. It hopes to augment the support of tribals in states in the Hindi heartland and west India where there's a concentration of these groups, and it may have to offset disaffection after being in power for 10 years. Its stakes are the highest in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Orissa and West Bengal in the run-up to 2024. It may also hope that Murmu, being a Santhal — the group has sizeable numbers in West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand — may help it breach the support base of its opponents in these states.

While the BJP knew what it was doing by projecting Murmu, the Opposition did not think through its political messaging with its candidate.

The Opposition will try to raise the issues agitating it to corner the government in the forthcoming session of Parliament — Agnipath, price rise, intrusions by China, the latest move to regulate digital media, among others — provided the din does not drown out debate.

Events of the last few days have shown that an already assertive BJP has decided to become even more aggressive in taking on the Opposition, which is anyway weakening — addressing an event in the Rajasthan assembly on Saturday. Chief Justice of India NV Ramana has also pointed to the "diminishing" space of the Opposition. That space may become smaller still, both within Parliament and outside it.

That is neither good for the ruling party, or for the Opposition, or the country.

The writer is a senior journalist

AN ORDERLY TRANSITION

The switchover from coal to renewables needs to be gradual and careful

has been made to get the private sector to produce more coal. After taking preparatory action, about 50 contracts have been finalised in the last two years. Several other steps have been taken to increase domestic coal production.

However, much more needs to be done to make these measures more effective. First, and most importantly, the financial community has to be sensitised to the need of increasing domestic coal production to meet the growing energy demand. The Ministry of Power recognised the need to increase coal-based generation in the country in its draft National Electricity Policy released in May 2021, before the present crisis erupted. This policy has not yet been finalised. It should clearly articulate the importance of domestic coal-based generation. Apart from the government, the industry should also take up this issue with the financial community in adopting a more holistic approach toward environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria.

Second, is the need for a regulator to address the issues arising from a greater role of the private sector. The current arrangements were put in place at a time when the public sector dominated. There are several issues where new private commercial miners would need help. A single point of contact for the industry in the form of a dedicated regulator would give great comfort to private

players and would help to overcome problems that could arise in due course.

Third, increasing domestic production of coal and diversifying the production base are both needed. This must be complemented with efforts to improve the quality of the coal produced. And fourth, the undue financial burden on the coal sector due to various cross subsidies needs attention. The regime needs to be reformed. High prices of coal and coal-based generation will only encourage imported coal and expose the country to price risks from international energy prices.

Looking at coal from a singular focus on GHG emissions will give a myopic view of energy requirements for a growing economy like India. The path to achieving 500 GW of renewables needs to be gradual, ensuring an orderly transition as coal is unavoidable in the near future. Reducing coal imports and increasing domestic production of coal needs focused attention. The changes in the coal industry in the last few years are in the right direction. These were long overdue. Action on the issues discussed above will only help to deepen and strengthen these reforms which are needed to overcome the challenges that have resurfaced over the past few months.

Kacker is a former secretary, Government of India, and Srivastava is a PhD scholar at Energy Studies Programme, JNU

JULY 18, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

MISHRA ELECTED CM

SRIPAT MISHRA, THE 58-year-old Speaker of the Vidhan Sabha, will be sworn in as the 13th Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh after his unanimous election by the Congress (I) legislature party, according to reliable sources in Lucknow. According to a UNI report quoting sources in New Delhi, Mishra has been chosen by the Congress (I) high command to succeed V P Singh. Singh is believed to have made it known that he would abide by any decision taken by the party high command in this regard. Half of the ministers of the outgoing 48-members three-tier ministry of Singh are expected to be dropped. There is a

panic among the 16 cabinet ministers, 23 ministers of state and six deputy ministers. Most of them may lose their jobs.

MOSCOW IRE AT CPI

THE LEADERSHIP OF the Communist Party of India, which is already facing the anger of the rank and file over its latest stand on the Bharatiya Janata Party, is believed to have earned Moscow's ire also on the question, according to sources close to the CPI. During the party's general secretary Rajeswar Rao's visit to Moscow recently, senior leaders of the Soviet Communist Party, according to CPI sources, had clearly attacked the recent de-

cision of the CPI leadership to join hands with the BJP. Rajeswar Rao is reported to have met the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, Yuri Andropov and the alternate member of the politburo, Boris Ponomarev.

INDIANS RELEASED

ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN completed for receiving the 10 Indian nationals being released after eight years' detention in a Pakistani jail without a trial. The Indians will be handed over to India's consul general in Karachi. They will be flown out from Karachi to Delhi by Indian airlines on July 20.

7 THE IDEAS PAGE

A prosperity lesson for India

As it prepares to become most populous by 2023, it must remember: Improvement of human development index hinges on providing quality education to girl child



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

THE UNITED NATIONS' latest report, "Population Prospects" forecasts that India will surpass China's population by 2023, reaching 1.5 billion by 2030 and 1.66 billion by 2050. It was only three years ago that the UN Population Prospects (2019) projected that India will surpass China's population by 2027. But it seems that the rate of growth of India's population is faster than that of China, and the global agencies had to change their forecast significantly in three years.

Every country intends for its people to be prosperous and frames policies to attain this goal. China's story since 1978 is unique — the country has achieved the fastest decline in poverty and is today a superpower, perhaps, second only to the US. Its experiences hold some important lessons for India, especially because in 1978, when China embarked on its economic reforms, its per capita income at \$156.4 was way below that of India at \$205.7. Both countries were saddled with humongous poverty. Today, China is more than six times ahead of India in terms of per capita income — China's per capita income in 2021 was \$12,556, while that of India was \$1,933 in 2020. It is this economic prosperity that has enabled China to spend large amounts on building its military might.

How did China do all this? It is well known that China started its economic reforms in 1978 with a primary focus on agriculture. It broke away from the commune system and liberated agri-markets from myriad controls. As a result, during 1978-84, China's agri-GDP grew by 7.1 per cent per annum and farmers' real incomes grew by 14 per cent per annum with the liberalisation of agri-prices. As people gained prosperity and farmers' real incomes doubled, poverty fell by half in just six years. Enhanced incomes of rural people created a huge demand for industrial products, and also gave political legitimacy for pushing further the reform agenda. The aim of China's manufacturing through Town and Village Enterprises (TVEs) was basically to meet the surging demand from the hinterlands. The rest is history.

But one important policy during this period that is not talked about much was the one-child policy. China introduced the one-child per family policy in September 1980, which lasted till early 2016. It is this strict control on population growth, coupled with booming growth in overall GDP over these years, that led to a rapid increase in per capita incomes. Chinese population growth today is just 0.1 per cent per annum compared to India's 1.1 per cent per annum. India's overall growth story — though one of reasonable success — has not been as impressive as that of China, certainly not in agriculture. Over a 40-year period, 1978-2018, China's agriculture has grown at 4.5 per cent per annum while India's agri-GDP growth ever since reforms began in 1991 has hovered at around 3 per cent per annum. Market and price liberalisation in agriculture still remains a major issue, and at the drop of any hint of food price rise, the government clamps down exports, im-



C R Sasikumar

poses stock limits on traders, suspends futures markets, and pushes other measures that strangle markets. The net result of all this is reflected in the "implicit taxation" of farmers to favour the vocal lobby of consumers, especially the urban middle class.

Let's get back to the population story, and try to understand what India can do at this juncture. There is no way India can impose the one-child norm that China did in 1980. After Sanjay Gandhi's forceful attempts to control population through sterilisation methods in the early 1970s, and the people's discontent against it, no government is going to attempt it. The only way is through effective education, especially that of the girl child, open discussion and dialogue about family planning methods and conversations about the benefits of small family size in society. The record on that front is not very good.

As per the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21), of all the girls and women above the age of 6 years, only 16.6 per cent were educated for 12 years or more. If one talks of the quality of education, several ASER reports point to the poor quality of education. In our earlier research, based on unit-level data of NFHS, we found that women's education is the most critical determinant of the status of malnutrition amongst children below the age of five. The NFHS-5 data shows that more than 35 per cent of our children below the age of five are stunted, which means their earning capac-

Unless a focused and aggressive campaign is launched to educate the girl child and provide her with more than 12 years of good quality education, India's performance in terms of the prosperity of its masses, and the human development index may not improve significantly for many more years to come. From a policy perspective, if there is any subsidy that deserves priority, it should be for the education of the girl child.

ity will remain hampered throughout life. They will remain stuck in a low-level income trap. Moreover, 57 per cent of women in the reproductive age group of 15-49, are anaemic, as per NFHS-5 (2019-21), up from 53 per cent in NFHS-4 (2015-16). With this dismal status of women's health and education, the future of children in India is a serious issue to ponder over.

Biofortification of staples, supplying clean and safe drinking water to every household (nal se jal) and mid-day meals are all steps in the right direction to improve the well-being of people. But unless a focused and aggressive campaign is launched to educate the girl child and provide her with more than 12 years of good quality education, India's performance in terms of the prosperity of its masses, and the human development index may not improve significantly for many more years to come. From a policy perspective, if there is any subsidy that deserves priority, it should be for the education of the girl child. If the Modi government can take up this cause in sync with state governments, this will significantly boost the labour participation rate of women, which is currently at a meagre 25 per cent, and lead to "double engine" growth. This policy focus can surely bring a rich harvest, politically and economically, for many years to come.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIR

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Like unscrupulous populists and nationalists everywhere, the Rajapaksa exploited divisions stemming from economic insecurity, prejudice and plain ignorance, setting the Sinhalese Buddhist majority against the mostly Hindu Tamil and Muslim minorities."
— THE OBSERVER

The power of goodness

In the late Jagat Mehta's vision lies a lesson for the India of today



ABHIJIT V BANERJEE

I HAD NO reason to get to know Jagat Mehta. He was one of those who came of age during India's transition to Independence. Had he been with us he would be one hundred this month.

I knew of him of course. From the newspapers. He was the foreign secretary when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the External Affairs Minister in the Janata government of the late 1970s — a committed Nehruvian (he worked as Nehru's private secretary in his early years in the IAS) who made such a success of his partnership with Vajpayee that Indira Gandhi felt compelled to fire him when she returned to power. These were years of unusual cordiality between India and Pakistan, and key water-sharing agreements were negotiated. Jagatsaheb, as he was widely known, was justly proud of the achievements of those years. He gave a lot of credit to Vajpayee, who despite being ideologically close to the RSS, was capable of genuine warmth and empathy, which goes a long way in diplomacy. But I imagine Jagatsaheb, with his commitment to finding mutually acceptable solutions and above all, an effortless graciousness that extended to one and all, must have played a central role.

That graciousness touched me even before I met him. This was in the mid-1990s. I was trying to start my first randomised controlled trial (RCT). I had contacted Ajay Mehta, one of Jagatsaheb's four remarkable children through his brother, Uday, who taught political philosophy at MIT. Ajay headed Seva Mandir, a Udaipur-based NGO with a deep commitment to Gandhian ideals and community building. I was going to visit Udaipur to explore working with them. Ajay told me that Jagatsaheb had invited me to stay with them. I demurred, worried about imposing. He insisted. I didn't resist too much, and it was one of the best decisions I ever took.

I remember very clearly the morning I arrived in Udaipur for the first time and was taken to Jeevan Niwas, Jagatsaheb's beautiful house just outside the old city in Udaipur. He was waiting for me to have breakfast, and as soon as we sat down at the enormous table in the dining room — as I was to many, many, times more — he began to quiz me about what I was there to do. I noticed immediately there was an intellectual intensity to his queries, barely masked by the slightly old-fashioned politesse that was his second nature, that took it beyond the usual table talk. This was also Jagatsaheb — some of the leading minds of the time, people like Daniel Moynihan and John Kenneth Galbraith, were his close friends — but he offered his full attention to all comers, including young professors with strange ideas. When he asked me about the subject of

my study, I remember saying that I didn't really have one — if there was an intervention that Seva Mandir felt was important enough to test out, that was good for me. He probably found that odd but was too polite to say so.

Eventually, we started what would be a long sequence of RCTs across health and education, and for the next decade and more, I was in and out of Udaipur every few months and almost always, unless there was a large family gathering, I got to stay in Jeevan Niwas. Often, it was just the two of us. I would come back from a day in the field, shower and settle down in his enormous living room with its walls chock-a-block in Rajasthani miniatures with a glass of whiskey soda. And after some small-talk, Jagatsaheb would lean forward, furrow his brows and ask, "So how is Ind-ia doing?". Ind-ia, with an emphasis on the "d". Never Indiya.

This was the late 1990s and early 2000s, the economy was speeding up, poverty was falling, and I was mostly optimistic. Jagatsaheb didn't disagree, but his stance was always that we can and must do better. Because we are Ind-ia. Because we are the children of Gandhi and Nehru, who for him were the greatest idealists of the 20th century. Because we pledged ourselves to the ideals of equality of all, of universal adult suffrage, of tolerance and brotherhood, already in the 1920s, right from when our national movement became a peoples' movement. This was roughly the time when America only recognised the rights of white (men) and most of Europe was obsessed with race and religion, he would tell me.

It was not because he didn't see our flaws. Having spent his life working in government, he knew all about the rigidity and high-handedness of our bureaucracy, the venality of our politicians, the greed and cynicism among our leaders of industry. He would often quiz me in great detail about the implementation of various programmes and policies — about what might be going wrong, and how to fix it.

He was particularly harsh about the foreign policy establishment, especially during the years when he was active there. He thought we made a huge mistake by not supporting our Afghan friends during the Russian invasion in 1979, which, he believed, pushed them into the hands of Pakistan and contributed to the disastrous dynamic that led to 9/11 and beyond. He blamed himself, among others, for being too unwilling to read the warning signs to an uncomprehending Nehru, which ultimately led to our Chinese catastrophe. Protocol and blind love (for Nehru) make a bad combination, he once told me.

And yet he remained an idealist; unwavering in his belief that we must try to do the right things for the right reason, internally and externally, while accepting that it won't always happen. At a time when we seem to be wavering between trying to be powerful and wanting to be good, I dearly miss his voice telling us that we, Ind-ia, can only be powerful if we are good.

The writer, a Nobel laureate in economics, is professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology



AAKASH JOSHI

The Agniveer's journey

There is need for a deeper conversation about potential social fallout of Agnipath

"Back there I could fly a gunship, I could drive a tank, I was in charge of million-dollar equipment, back here I can't even hold a job parking cars."

— Sylvester Stallone, in 'Rambo: First Blood'

THANKS TO THE pervasive power of Hollywood, even those who have never been to America are likely to have some idea of the country's attitude towards armed forces personnel after they have completed their "tour(s) of duty". A strong sense of nationalism is tied up with their sacrifice and often promoted by the military-industrial complex. "Supporting the troops" and "thanking them for their service" is an integral part of the political identity of many Americans. Conversely, veterans suffer disproportionately from homelessness and mental health issues compared to the rest of the population — almost 20 per cent of them, according to the US National Institute for Drug Abuse. The prevalence of addiction, a disease of despair, is understandable. Violence is, by definition, traumatic and war — even when it is necessary — wounds entire generations.

Things get worse. As Kathleen Belew points out in *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, after every major conflict, many veterans who are unable to readjust well to civilian life have been involved in violent, organised crime and even terrorist activities. World War II veterans formed the Hells Angels (an "outlaw" motorcycle club) and there is an increasing

amount of scholarship on how veterans have fed the cadres of the White Power movement. Louis Beam, for example, was a decorated pilot in the Vietnam War. On his return, he joined the Ku Klux Klan and is now one of the leading ideologues for racist organisations. His conception of a "leaderless resistance" continues to be an inspiration for violent, anti-state, anti-minority groups and individuals. Unfortunately, Beam is a notable exception only in his notoriety.

The model for the Indian armed forces — a colonial legacy in some ways, to be sure — is different. Until now, short-term recruits formed a negligible part of the non-commissioned personnel. Soldiers are expected to die and kill for their country and are offered, in return, job security, pensions and health benefits. The military, by and large, has taken care of its own.

The economic and strategic imperative for reform in the armed forces is undeniable. The time for better technology, hardware and a more adaptable, efficient and versatile fighting force has long been here, and we are already late to the party. Continuing with the current structure of employment and benefits at the same scale is also an economically untenable proposition: More than half of India's defence budget is spent on pensions, while just around 5 per cent is earmarked for research and development.

The question, then, is not whether the armed forces need reform and restructuring. It is about the limited conversation

around the potential social upheaval the scheme could well lead to. As the protests around the Agnipath scheme die down, is India ready for the inevitable influx of thousands of young men, Agniveers, who are likely to have seen conflict and must now adjust to civilian life?

The protests — and the government's response — have been centred on the lack of job security (Agniveers will serve for four years, including 6 months of training) and benefits. A significant number will be employed in paramilitary forces, and their service and training will be recognised as a degree. Yet, many — if not most — Agniveers will have to make their own way. And the value of a "degree" for employers, more often than not, is only significant if it is a marker for skills that they can use.

The first lesson from America in this regard, then, is: The cold logic of the free market may pay lip service to patriotic sentiments, but it does not give salaries or jobs based on them.

Another issue, perhaps even more important, with creating thousands of armed forces gig workers is the social and psychological readjustment that Agniveers will need assistance with. And dealing with it in any meaningful manner requires facing the more uncomfortable weaves of India's social fabric.

The fact remains that ours is a society permeated by violence and hierarchy, as much as it is by compassion, decency and frater-

nity. Our political conversation continues to be dominated by wounds — real and imagined — of history. Caste animosity — including violence to protect its boundaries — is stoked at regular intervals. A camera on every phone means acts of brutality are recorded and shared, as boastful messages from diseased minds as well as for disturbing ideological ends. When men who have seen death at close quarters, and are trained in violence, are added to this already volatile mix, serious consideration and resources must be put in place to help them readjust. Mental health, community and vocational therapy — and less obvious initiatives — would be a good first step. India does not need — and cannot afford — its own version of the KKK and White Power.

The final lesson from America is a tangential one. Most of the sub-genres of its mainstream cinema have been replicated by Hollywood's Indian counterparts — the romantic comedy, the action movie and even the slick nationalist war film, a la *Uri: The Surgical Strike*. What we haven't had yet is the "war vet" genre — stories of soldiers who come back to a world that does not, cannot understand them. The first *Rambo*, for example, isn't just an action movie, it is a tragedy about irrelevance and loneliness. Let's hope a home-grown version of that tale never has any resonance.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DIPLOMATIC BRIDGES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bridge to the gulf' (IE, July 16). The I2U2 grouping and the summit of its leaders offer a sneak peek into the future. India has reaffirmed its plan to open itself up for international capital and technologies to address its issues, especially in the key markets of food and energy. The four leaders have also called for strengthening of peace, especially between Israel and the UAE. This is bound to result in more economic opportunities for all.

SS Paul, Chakdaha

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bridge to the gulf' (IE, July 16). After QUAD, the new formation of I2U2, which has taken UAE and Israel on board, has extended the outreach of India in the gulf region even further. Admittedly, this is a step in the right direction. However, India should ensure that the platform not seem hostile to any nation, especially Iran, keeping the historical animosity of the other three partners in mind. Moreover, Biden's recent visit to Israel and their open stance against Iran's purported plan to become a "nuclear power" will surely make Iran doubtful about the intentions of this nascent organisation. We should make our diplomatic intentions clear.

Devendra Awasthi, Lucknow

LAGGING BEHIND

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Maths without Pythagoras' (IE, July 15). Dropping mathematical concepts like linear equations and Pythagoras' theorem from the Class X CBSE curriculum is like removing the middle rungs of the ladder. Mathematical concepts are heavily interrelated. Since other boards are not cutting their syllabus, CBSE students will lose the opportunity of a level playing field. The CBSE board should have consulted concerned subject teachers regarding revisions, if needed. Moving forward, they must abide by the aims and objectives of NEP 2020.

Ravindra Zinjurke, Ahmednagar

DOUBLE STANDARD

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Need to ask some questions', (IE, July 16). Gaurav Bhatia exhorts the duty of the then ruling party to be answerable, but he forgets the same lacuna in the current regime. There is an iron curtain over the current government's work - from Pegasus to PM CARES. Additionally, there is no official data on child labour or employment. There must be a proper investigation of the allegations on the Vice President of India if circumstances demand so. However, the same metric must also be applied to matters concerning the current ruling government.

Abhishek Kumar Anshu, Patna



POPE FRANCIS EXPRESSES PAIN
CANADA TRIP ‘PILGRIMAGE OF PENANCE’

Pope Francis has he hopes his coming trip to Canada from July 24 to 30 can help heal the wrongs done to indigenous people by Roman Catholic priests and nuns who ran abusive residential schools.

TOPOF THE
WORLD



French President
Emmanuel Macron

FRANCE
Anti-Semitism
still rampant,
says Macron

President Emmanuel Macron warned against anti-Semitism and historical revisionism on Sunday as he commemorated victims of the Holocaust on the 80th anniversary of the Vel d'Hiv roundup of Jewish families. On July 16-17, 1942, around 13,000 people were taken to the Winter Velodrome, the Vel d'Hiv, in Paris before being sent on to concentration camps across Europe. It was the largest mass detention of Jewish people by French police. "We have not finished with anti-Semitism, it is still there - stronger and more rampant," said Macron at the inauguration of a memorial in the central town of Pithiviers. **REUTERS**

SUDAN
Death toll from
tribal clashes
at 65: minister

THE DEATH toll from days of tribal clashes in a southern Sudanese province climbed to at least 65 people, a senior health official said on Sunday. The fighting between the Hausa and Birta ethnic groups in the Blue Nile province also injured around 150 others, said Gamal Nasser al-Sayed, the province's health minister, adding that most of the dead were young men who were either shot or stabbed. The fighting in the Blue Nile grew out of the killing of a farmer earlier last week and continued through Saturday, according to the local government. **AP**

SOUTH AFRICA
Police hunt for
suspects after 9
killed in attacks

Police are on the hunt for suspects after nine people were fatally shot in separate shooting incidents in two provinces of South Africa on Saturday night, police said. The latest shootings come on the heels of an uptick in violent deaths in a country with one of the world's highest murder rates. The shootings took place in the Gauteng and also in Thembelihle. Police said it was not yet clear whether the suspects were involved in an earlier shooting in Alexandra. **REUTERS**

BANGLADESH: FEARFUL RESIDENTS LEAVE VILLAGE

Temple, homes vandalised over Facebook post

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DHAKA, JULY 17

A TEMPLE, shops and several houses of the Hindu community have been vandalised in south-western Bangladesh by some unidentified persons over a Facebook post allegedly belittling Islam, in the latest spate of violence targeting the religious minority in the country, according to media reports on Sunday. Police fired warning shots to disperse a mob that vandalised several homes and torched one

of them in Sahapara village in Narail district on Friday evening, *bdnews24.com*, an online newspaper quoted Haran Chandra Paul, an inspector at the local police station, as saying.

The attackers also threw bricks at a temple in the village during the attack around 7:30pm, he said. They also broke the furniture inside the temple. Haran said a young man posted something offensive on Facebook, triggering anger among Muslims. Police took his father to the police station after a search for the young man failed to trace him.

The situation was normal at night, said the police inspector. Narail Superintendent of Police Prabir Kumar Roy said the law enforcers were working to keep the situation under control. "We're investigating the incident. Those responsible for the violence will face action. The situation is normal for now," Roy said. Police were deployed in the area to prevent further violence, *The Daily Star* reported. "After one group looted all our valuables, another group came and found our door open. As there was nothing left to loot,

they set our home on fire," the paper quoted Deepali Rani Saha, a resident of Sahapara village, as saying. A former Dighalia Union Parishad said most of the able-bodied people have left the village after the attack. "Almost all houses are locked. Only the elders of some families are home. They too are scared," she said. "Police are on guard in the village, but we cannot trust them," the newspaper quoted Shibnath Saha, president of the village's Radha-Govinda temple, as saying.

SPAIN
360 dead so far
■ 45.7° Celsius in recent days
■ Wildfires rage across regions

PORTUGAL
659 dead in one week
■ 47° Celsius recorded
■ Extreme drought

FRANCE
27,000 acres burnt
■ Over 14,000 people evacuated
■ 1,200 firefighters trying to douse blaze

SWATHES ON FIRE ➤
■ Hungary, Croatia and the Greece have also fought wildfires this week, as have Morocco and California

■ Fire season has hit parts of Europe earlier than usual this year after a hot spring that EU attributed to climate change

AP

Europe battles to control wildfires

AGENCIES
PARIS, JERTE (SPAIN), JULY 17

FIREFIGHTERS CONTINUED to battle wildfires raging out of control in France and Spain on Sunday as Europe sweltered under an unusually extreme heat wave that authorities in Madrid blamed for hundreds of deaths. In Spain, firefighters supported by military brigades tried to stamp out over 30 fires consuming forests spread across the country. According to Carlos III Institute, which records temperature-related fatalities daily, 360 deaths were attributed to high temperatures from July 10 to 15.

Fires were raging in several other regions including Castille and Leon in central Spain and Galicia in the north on Sunday.

In Malagaprovince in southern Spain, wildfires raged into the night, affecting local residents near Mijas, a town popular with northern European tourists.

In Portugal, a pilot of a firefighting plane died when his aircraft crashed on Friday.

Two huge blazes, which have consumed pine forests for six days in southwestern France, have forced the evacuation of some 14,000 people.

Italy is in the midst of an early summer heat wave, coupled with the worst drought in its north in 70 years.

Scorching temperatures have even reached northern Europe.

Britain's weather agency has issued its first-ever "red warning" of extreme heat for Monday and Tuesday, when temperatures in southern England may reach 40 C (104 F) for the first time.

24 dead in floods in China, Sudan

Beijing, Cairo: Flash floods in southwest and northwest China have left at least a dozen dead and put thousands of others in harm's way, state media reported Sunday. More than 4,000 people have been evacuated, the report said.

The rains come amid a heat wave in parts of the country including eastern Zhejiang province and Shanghai, with temperatures soaring as high as 42 degrees Celsius last week.

In Sudan's western Darfur region, 12 people, including children, were killed in floods, the UN and an aid group said Sunday. According to the UN, at least 9,336 people have been affected by heavy rains and flooding since June. **AP**

Tory voters feel Sunak will be a good PM

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, JULY 17

ALMOST HALF of the voters for the UK's governing Conservative Party believe Rishi Sunak will make a good Prime Minister, according to the results of a new opinion poll on Sunday.

The *Sunday Telegraph* reported that the JL Partners poll of more than 4,400 people found that 48 per cent of those who backed the Tories in the 2019 general election felt the British Indian former Chancellor would be a good Prime Minister.

This is also the first poll that puts Foreign Secretary Liz Truss in second place, with 39 per cent backing her for Prime Minister and 33 per cent in favour of



In the survey of over 4,400 people, who had backed the Conservative party in 2019, 48 per cent felt Sunak will be a good PM, while 39 per cent were in favour of Liz Truss. *File*



Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt. The survey comes as the race to elect Boris Johnson's successor as the next Conservative Party leader is narrowing down to these three main contenders.

James Johnson, co-founder of JL Partners and a ex-Downing Street pollster, told the newspaper: "Sunak invites strong opin-

ions. One-third of voters think he would be good in the top job, one third do not. But in an unpopular field where every other candidate is in net-negative territory, this score draw makes him the public's favourite. He is particularly popular with the all-important 2019 Conservative voter, as the only candidate to have half

approve of him," he said.

Among all voters, the most popular policy priority was to "turn the economy around", with addressing the National Health Service (NHS) backlog and restoring trust and integrity in public life coming second and third respectively.

Cutting taxes, which has emerged as a central focus of all the debates so far, was the fourth priority, selected by 38 per cent of voters overall and 40 per cent of Conservative voters.

"While the public chew over the economy, the NHS and public trust, Conservative MPs may have a much simpler question: who is the best candidate to hold their seat? On this evidence, the answer is Mr Sunak," added James Johnson.

ATTACKS INTENSIFY IN DONBAS

Russian missiles hit key city in southern Ukraine

HANNA ARHIROVA
& CARA ANNA
VINNYTSIA (UKRAINE)

RUSSIAN MISSILES hit industrial facilities at a strategic city in southern Ukraine Sunday as a funeral was held for a 4-year-old girl killed in an earlier deadly strike elsewhere in the country. Liza, who had Down syndrome, was en route to see a speech therapist with her mother when a Russian missile struck the city of Vinnytsia in central Ukraine on Thursday. At least 24 people were killed, including Liza and two boys aged 7 and 8.

On Sunday, more Russian missiles struck industrial facilities in the strategic southern city of Mykolaiv, a key shipbuilding center in the estuary of the Southern Bug river. There was no immediate information about casualties.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Sunday that Russian missiles destroyed a depot for anti-ship Harpoon missiles delivered to Ukraine by NATO allies, a claim that couldn't be independently confirmed.

The British Defense Ministry said Sunday that Russia is moving manpower and equipment between Kherson, Mariupol and Zaporizhzhia. It said the Russians also are increasing their security measures around Melitopol.

It added: "Given the pressures on Russian manpower, the reinforcement of the south



A damaged building in Chuhuiv town in Kharkiv. Reuters

whilst the fight for the Donbas continues indicates the seriousness with which Russian commanders view the threat."

The bombings in south apart. Russia has so far focused its efforts on trying to take control of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas, where the most capable and well-equipped Ukrainian forces are located.

Ukraine says it still controls two small villages in Luhansk region, one of the two provinces that make up Donbas, and are successfully fending off Russian attempts to advance deeper into Donetsk.

The Ukrainian military's General Staff said that Ukrainian troops thwarted Russian attempts to advance toward a key stronghold in Donetsk. **AP**

CALLS FOR EARLY GENERAL ELECTIONS

In first poll after his ouster, Imran's PTI wins by a landslide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE, JULY 17

OUSTED PM Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Sunday made a 'clean sweep' in the crucial Punjab assembly by-polls, in a major setback to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif whose Chief Minister son Hamza Shehbaz is all set to lose his post.

The election for the CM will be held on July 22 on the Supreme Court's order and PTI-PMLQ joint candidate Chaudhary Parvez Elahi is likely to the new chief minister of politically crucial province Punjab.

The ruling PML-N of the Sharifs has accepted its defeat and even congratulation PTI Chairman Khan for 'landslide victory' in the by-polls.



Thanking the people, Imran Khan's party called the victory a historic decision 'in this struggle for true freedom' @PTIofficial

EXPLAINED
A strategic war goal

THE RUSSIAN military has declared a goal to cut off Ukraine's entire Black Sea coast all the way to the Romanian border. If successful, such an effort would deal a crushing blow to the Ukrainian economy and trade and allow Moscow to secure a land bridge to Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria, which hosts a Russian military base.

GREECE CRASH

8 killed, experts comb site for explosives

REUTERS
ATHENS, JULY 17

A UKRAINIAN cargo plane carrying munitions from Serbia to Bangladesh crashed near the city of Kavala in northern Greece late on Saturday, killing the crew members on board, Serbian authorities and Meridian airline said on Sunday.

Drone images from the scene showed smouldering debris from the Antonov An-12 aircraft strewn in fields. Greek authorities said there were eight crew members on board and a Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesman said they were all Ukrainian citizens.

Ukrainian-based airline Meridian, which operated the aircraft, said all the crew members were killed in the crash.

Serbia's defence minister said the plane was carrying 11.5 tonnes of products, including mortar and training shells, made by its defence industry. The buyer of the cargo was the defence ministry of Bangladesh, he said.

Denys Bogdanovych, Meridian's general director, confirmed Serbia's account of events. "This is not related to Ukraine or Russia," Bogdanovych said.

A senior source at Jordan's civil aviation regulatory commission denied initial reports that the plane was headed to Jordan. The source said that its flight itinerary included a stopover in Jordan's Queen Alia international airport.

It was also due to stop in Riyadh and Ahmedabad in India.

DISPUTE HAS DIVIDED dos SANTOS's FAMILY, COULD DECIDE FATE OF HIS PARTY

Dead but not buried, ex-President's body sparks cross-continental fight

GILBERTONETO,
JOSEBAUTISTA
& LYNSEYCHUTEL
LUANDA, JULY 17

EVEN IN death, Angola's long-time ruler, José Eduardo dos Santos, is at the center of political infighting.

The former president died in Barcelona on July 8 at the age of 79, but when and where he will be buried has set off a cross-continental fight that has pitted the Angolan government and his widow against some of his adult children.

José Eduardo dos Santos's death came just weeks before a

crucial election. Angola's governing party and current president, João Lourenço, along with dos Santos's widow, want to bring his body home for a state funeral and burial in a Soviet-style mausoleum — the kind of spectacle that could rally support for a party struggling to stay in power.

But his daughter Welwitschia dos Santos is pushing for a private funeral and a discreet grave site in Spain, where his children can visit. She says she has the support of some of her siblings who, like her, face accusations of corruption in Angola and could be arrested if they return. They could also be

trying to parlay the return of their father's body to regain their place in Angola's political elite.

With both sides fighting it out in a Spanish court, it is now up to a judge in Barcelona to decide the feud.

The outcome could sway the August election in Angola, a country rich in oil and minerals on the west coast of southern Africa.

"People are just trying to use the body and all these related issues to advance their own personal agendas," said Augusto Santana, a political analyst in Angola. He added that the incumbent president wants to use the death "for electoral purposes,"



With his body still in Spain, dos Santos's portrait was the official focus of mourning in Luanda last week. AP

poses," and the children to negotiate "the dropping of accusations related to corruption."

dos Santos, one of Africa's longest-serving leaders, was a towering figure in Angola for nearly four decades.

To his supporters, many of whom entered Angola's money elite, he shepherded the country out of violent turmoil to make it one of the world's largest oil producers, its coastal capital dotted with skyscrapers.

But to his many detractors, he was a ruthless dictator who suppressed democracy and oversaw an economy choked by corruption, with most Angolans living

on less than \$2 a day.

dos Santos had been living in self-imposed exile in Barcelona for three years. According to Welwitschia dos Santos, popularly known as Tchizé, he had said he wanted to be buried there.

His handpicked successor, Lourenço, who came to power in 2017, had turned on him, blaming the dos Santos administration for Angola's economic malaise. Lourenço and dos Santos attempted a rapprochement last year. dos Santos returned to Angola and was set to appear at the party's conference. But then he learned that his son José Filomeno dos Santos would

be sentenced to five years in prison for embezzling the state's sovereign fund.

Angola held a seven-day mourning period for its former leader. In lieu of a casket, a large portrait of dos Santos was erected in a government plaza, with a red carpet leading up to it while uniformed soldiers stood guard.

But the fight over dos Santos's remains is of little concern to ordinary Angolans.

"Do you know how much my husband and I earn?" asked Avenina de Vasco, 37, a street cleaner. "I don't care whether he is buried here or in Europe or America." **NYT**

9

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

The effectiveness of CAR-T therapy in children has been 90 per cent. In other words, five to seven years of survival in 80 to 90 per cent of patients. And remember, these patients were initially refractory or relapsed

Kaunain Sheriff: Can you take us through the breakthrough therapy that you are introducing in India and the science behind it?

Let's begin with immunotherapy against cancer. It comes in many variations but there are three main ones. First are monoclonal antibodies (MABs) which have been in use for a long time. The second is T-cell therapy. This does not involve transfer of T-cells but uses your own native cells. In order to prevent your own T-cells from attacking themselves, you inactivate them so that you don't get autoimmunity. Some examples of autoimmunity would be Type 1 diabetes, lupus and arthritis. So, your body basically keeps a check on these T-cells and inhibits them. These drugs are called checkpoint inhibitors, some of which are available in India. Obviously, if you activate your T-cells against cancer, they can also be activated against your normal cells. So, checkpoint inhibitors are necessary. The third variant is the CAR T-cell therapy, where we extract T-cells from a cancer patient's body and we use a virus, which is a modified and inactivated version of the HIV virus but doesn't cause HIV, to deliver genes into them. These genes then weaponise the T-cells to attack cancerous cells. In other words, we remove the T-cells from the body through apheresis, they go into an extremely sterile laboratory, are activated with gene therapy and harvested in incubators until they expand to a very large number and are frozen. This process usually takes about 10 to 14 days before the cultured cells are transfused back into patients. Originally, when this was done in the US by several people, including Michel Sadelain at Memorial Sloan Kettering and very successfully by the UPenn group, led by Carl June and Bruce Levine, there was scepticism about whether these highly activated T-cells would attack the tumour which had spread considerably. The results were quite remarkable and almost miraculous. These patients were on the verge of death and mostly had liquid cancers or leukaemia as their tumours had stopped responding to multiple cycles of chemotherapy. We also tried to ensure that the activated T-cells, that would release cytokines or chemicals that T-cells use to communicate with each other and with the immune system, wouldn't generate a cytokine storm. We controlled it with medicines. Since then, we've already dosed several patients. A group in IIT is also dosing patients using the same formula. Theirs is a phase one trial, ours is a phase two trial. Theirs is a new product, ours is a clinically exposed product that has already been proven to be successful in humans. We have in-licensed it from Barcelona, it has already completed trials in Spain and has been proven to be both safe and extremely effective. We are giving the doses of T-cells in not one shot but in three or four shots, depending on how we do at the trial.

Uniquely in India, we've been able to reduce the cost, which is a very difficult process because the input costs are already very high. You need an army of scientists, a specialised facility, several machines, manipulations and so on. In India, we have the innovative capacity to administer the dose to patients at a much earlier stage of the disease. If successful, it will be a great contribution to medicine internationally because we will be able to show that we can actually keep longer remissions and keep patients better for a longer period of time.

Kaunain Sheriff: This treatment has been there for almost a decade in the US, parts of the UK and now also in China. What does the global data tell us about its efficacy?

The global data looks very good. The tumours that respond are lymphoma, leukaemia and myeloma, all refractory tumours. I also have another company in the US called Vor Biopharma, which is one of the first companies to attempt this in myeloid leukaemia. This occurs mostly in children though some adults do get it, too. The effectiveness of CAR-T therapy in children has been 90 per cent. In other words, five to seven years of survival in 80 to 90 per cent of patients. Remember, these patients were initially refractory or relapsed. It was a very difficult population to treat, the only other treatment available to them being a bone-marrow transplant. But there the effectiveness is much lower, there's a much more toxic regimen and the side effects could go on for four decades. In contrast, this would be a 14-day process, followed by two or three days of infusion, and the cure rates could be 80 to 90 per cent, depending upon the kind and intensity of leukaemia. In myeloma, the cure rates are 80 to 90 per cent, too.

We have many strategies at Immuneel, which is the Bengaluru-based company, through which we are trying to determine if we can prolong the remissions, increase



WHY SIDDHARTHA MUKHERJEE

Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee is an eminent oncologist and Pulitzer award-winning author. He's rolling out a significant clinical trial on treatment of cancer, called the Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy, which has already been used in several countries. If his phase II clinical trials at Immuneel, the Bengaluru-based company

he's founded with Biocon chairperson Kiran Mazumdar Shaw and Dr Kush Parmar, are successful, then this therapy would be India's contribution to the rest of the world. He's also developed an independent pillar of treatment. Not chemotherapy, radiation, surgery or immunotherapy but using customised diet as drug.



Scientists here are of the highest calibre. Clinical, manufacturing and scientific teams are world-class. They work with my lab at Columbia University. There's no difference in the quality of conversation or innovation

'In anti-cancer therapy, there is (another) pillar: using diet as a drug'

Oncologist Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee on the crisis in the health economic system in India, attempting to cure blood cancer through sophisticated cell therapy, deploying strategies to prolong remissions and keeping costs down



Special Correspondent Kaunain Sheriff in conversation with Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee. Abhinav Saha

the percentage of remissions, and potentially even cure myeloma, using novel strategies. And again, this would be a contribution from Indian medicine to the rest of the world. Once we've completed clinical tests, we will start working on the product for a clinical trial, which will be a phase two trial.

Safety is paramount at Immuneel. We're following international standards, DGCI and other appropriate guidelines of the Indian ecosystem. So far, there have been very mild adverse effects, nothing to stop the phase two trial.

Kaunain Sheriff: The first participant was a child. How was the experience? Can this be used as a first line of treatment for children?

It was a very big learning experience. A huge amount of training and quality control protocol was involved. We don't want to just throw the drug at someone, we want a full ecosystem, a partnership, and the achievement of that was the first child was appropriately treated.

Part of the protocol involves infusing chemotherapy into the spinal cord, part of the therapy for some high-risk patients involves giving radiation, which causes all sorts of downstream effects. When they grow older, they have cognitive, post-traumatic, psychiatric and psychological disorders. They are growth-limited at times because of the chemotherapy. Who would not like their child to receive one-day therapy, after 14 days of growing T-cells, without being first battered by two years of chemotherapy? But it's impossible to do that in the US if the cost is going to be \$400,000, plus all the associated care. Remember that \$400,000 is coming after two or three years of chemotherapy, which itself is another \$400,000- \$500,000. So, that child is being treated now with nearly a million dollars of chemo plus CAR-T therapy. This is why innovation and tech transfers are very important in this field to lower costs and deliver this therapy upfront.

Kaunain Sheriff: In the US, the cost is around Rs 3-4 crore and that's just the drug itself. Then you have hospitalisation and medicine. How will you bring this cost down in India?

We are attacking every potential pinch point. We are now ramping up the production of our own virus facilities, which will again be of international standards. We have decreased the labour costs enormously, partly because they are intrinsically cheaper. Hospitalisation costs are also intrinsically cheaper. All the associated drug costs are cheaper. We are using all the innovation that is available to decrease the costs dramatically. We cannot change the intrinsic costs of certain goods because the patient's safety comes first. We've already lowered the costs dramatically but are aiming

to lower them further, partly by producing some of these products or goods in India, partly by identifying 10 pinch points.

Kaunain Sheriff: Are you thinking of collaborating with the IIT Bombay team, which is working with Tata Memorial, to bring the cost down?

We've been in touch with the IIT team. But again, the entire ecosystem has to be appropriately deployed such that these are not competitive products but collaborative products. It's fair to say that this industry needs to be appropriately regulated. This is a very sophisticated therapy and the last thing we want is to contaminate the field with actors who don't have the sophistication and the knowledge to develop CAR-T therapies.

Kaunain Sheriff: How was it working with scientists here?

Scientists here are of the highest calibre. There are clinical, manufacturing and scientific teams and they are world-class. The research team works with my laboratory at Columbia University. There's no difference in the quality or the level of conversation and innovation.

Kaunain Sheriff: You're very close to bringing at least two potentially very significant drugs. One is related to untreatable leukaemia and the other addresses stem cells linked to arthritis, which is very common among women in India. When can these be rolled out?

The first one has started its clinical trials. It's a very complex twist on cellular therapy. My lab discovered it, we patented it and we've now sent it off to Vor Biopharma. We are waiting for an outcome signal. In osteoarthritis, we were the first, along with another group, to identify the stem cells or the progenitor cells that form cartilage. In animal models, these cells can be stimulated to grow using a drug. Potentially, they can also be transplanted. So we're using a variety of mechanisms to

grow these cells. This is a regenerative medicine study and if the cells are already dead, then you can't bring them alive. You have to intervene at a stage where you're seeing damage or injury but the cells haven't completely died. The challenge in regenerative medicine is to find the Goldilocks spot, don't go in too early or too late.

We have a third study, which is probably one of the most interesting studies in cancer, which is combining diets with drugs. This is not voodoo nutritional science but is based on extremely rigorous scientific experiments in which we've shown that particular diets, which lack certain substances, or have the addition of other substances, are synergistic with drugs. Targeted therapies make them much more effective. Our last study was published in *Nature* and trials will begin. That's what we call the independent pillar. Not chemotherapy, not radiation, not surgery, not immunotherapy — the four pillars of anti-cancer therapy — but a fifth pillar, where we treat diet as a drug.

Kaunain Sheriff: In India, we are looking at 30 million cases by 2025. Global data says that around 30 to 50 per cent of cancers are preventable. Do these figures worry you?

It worries me a lot. Cancers being treated by CAR-T don't seem to be preventable. Lymphoma has certain carcinogens that are preventable. But childhood leukaemia is a genetic accident. There's a pyramid-like basis for cancer therapy. At the bottom, where you get the most effect for the least cost, is prevention. Preventable carcinogens include tobacco, triggers include obesity while some cancers are caused by viruses. The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) causes cervical cancer and there's a very effective vaccine against it. We are in the process of discovering new carcinogens. Large studies are on to find the link between industrial and particulate pollution and cancer. The centre of the pyramid is early detection and screening.

In the early days of cancer therapeutics, risk assessment was basically clinical. Now, we use the patient's own genetic data. In other words, we study how they will metabolise or change responses to drugs



Finally, there's the top of the pyramid and the most expensive: treatment.

Anonna Dutt: What would cancer therapy look like in 10-20 years and why did you choose to work in India?

Each cancer is treated differently. We haven't been able to be very successful with cellular therapy against solid tumours, such as ovarian cancer and colorectal cancer. For such cancers, we'll have to use some other inventive mechanisms or new drugs. You can't imagine how complicated Vor Biopharma is in terms of delivering its therapy for myeloid leukaemia. I have made a series of other inventions that are also going on trial. Those will be for solid tumours. So, it will be a mix. Some parts of it will be personalised for a patient. In the early days of cancer therapeutics, risk assessment was basically clinical. Now, the risk assessment is clinico-pharmacogenetics, which means that we use the patient's own genetic data. In other words, we study how they will metabolise or change responses to drugs, and track the genetic data from the cancer. Our risk assessment is far more sophisticated than it was 50 or 60 years ago. Then there are the five pillars I talked about. But the emphasis on prevention will continue.

I chose India because the clinical and the scientific ecosystem, particularly in tech hubs like Bengaluru, were sufficient and sophisticated enough to develop this.

Harish Damodaran: So much is happening in cell therapy in human biology. Why is there so much resistance to plant biology, be it in gene editing or modification?

In medicine, we're treating sick people. In the entire genetically-modified (GM) food industry, we're giving products to healthy people, so the regulatory concerns are totally different. In one case, the patient would die if you didn't give them the therapy. In the other, you are exposing someone who is physically healthy to unknown GM foods. That said, I'm perfectly sanguine with GM foods as long as they have passed safety paradigms and have been ecologically evaluated. Some of them have also led to monoculture of plants, which is a big problem because evolutionary and ecological diversity are important. If a plant species goes extinct, you can't revive it from the dead. Besides, all species, plants and animals, are mutating all the time which is also genetic modification. The other alternative is to chemically modify plants, which is more harmful.

Liz Mathew: During the African Genome Project, there was one finding that established race as a social construction and not a genetic reality. Any scope for such a study in India?

There's a very large Indian genomic study, which is being conducted to figure

out what the diversity of the Indian genome, broadly speaking, is. I can't tell you what the answer is going to be. There has been a lot of endogamy in India and that will have genetic consequences.

Rinku Ghosh: Can your new therapy arrest the aggressive Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML)? Also, how rigorous should we be about self-screening?

AML is really a tough disease to treat. In fact, we are still treating AML as we used to about 10 or 15 years ago, with standard chemotherapy followed by, in some patients, bone marrow transplantation, which is very toxic and difficult to administer. Vor Biopharma is one of my companies, which arises from the work done at Columbia University. It is a completely new way of treating AML and potentially a curative way, but it's on trial. I'm very hopeful.

Everybody should be aware of screening guidelines as they are available on highly regarded public websites and are constantly upgraded. The WHO, the National Cancer Institute and the European Cancer Institute have very clear guidelines. The epidemiology of India and many countries like India is shifting away from death as a result of infectious diseases towards death from chronic non-infectious diseases. For countries like India, it's like dividing mammals into cows and non-cows because there are now so many non-communicable diseases that are responsible for death, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and, of course, cancer. It's advisable to keep up with the new epidemiology. Appropriate screening, including colonoscopies, should be performed at the right age at the right time for the at-risk population. Upper endoscopy must be performed at the right age at the right time for at-risk people. Don't miss mammography.

Aakash Joshi: How does the cost of a life-saving drug for children, like the one that's being developed, pan out in a country like India?

In India, we will probably end up with a triple-hybrid model, with some cost displacement through the government, some cost assessment through private insurance and some through individuals. This is a health economics problem. I think the health economic system in India is in a crisis. It is a mishmash. Even within a single colony, you have a private hospital, a government hospital, you have a partially government hospital, someone's privately insured, someone's half-insured. It's a complete mishmash.

We need to create a system. My father was ill, and unfortunately passed away. He was in a hospital but the hospital didn't have a pharmacy. I had to go across the street to a private pharmacy to buy the medicines that had been prescribed for him. This is an absurd system.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, JULY 18, 2022

10 ECONOMY

HUSSAIN HAQQANI, APARNA PANDE IN OPINION PIECE

US ‘must be alarmed’ by foreign cos exiting India: Hudson Institute dirs

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE IMPACT of multiple major global corporations pulling out from India on the country's foreign investment climate could be amplified by the broader geopolitical implications of these exits, given that several of these companies are based in the US. From automobile companies such as Ford, General Motors and Harley Davidson to Citibank, Holcim, Carrefour, and Metro AG, a string of global companies have either exited, scaled down or are working on pulling out of India.

Notably, while some of these companies have either cited poor competitive position or global business strategies, others have had long-running tiffs with law enforcement and tax authorities.

In an opinion piece published by *The Hill*, Washington-based Hudson Institute directors Hussain Haqqani and Aparna Pande have posited that the Joe

Biden administration “must be alarmed” by the decisions of several foreign corporations to either pull out of the Indian market or put their long-term plans on hold. This assumes significance, particularly, because for years the US has hoped to enable India's rise “as a way of checking China's growing power,” they wrote.

The authors also argued that Western democracies, which see India as a natural ally, believe that India would be able to deliver on its economic and military potential only if it attains higher growth rates — something that would only be possible “with larger inflows of foreign investment and further opening of India's markets”. In the year ending March 2022, India saw foreign direct investment inflows of \$58.77 billion, marginally down from \$59.64 billion a year ago.

Last year, the Indian government took steps to address some of the long-standing tax disputes with foreign companies in an effort to repair its damaged repu-

FDI FLOWS

■ In the year ending March 2022, India saw foreign direct investment inflows of \$58.77 billion, marginally down from \$59.64 billion a year ago.

tation as an investment destination. The government had announced rules, which when adhered to, will lead to the Centre withdrawing tax demands raised using the 2012 retrospective tax law and any tax collected in the enforcement of such demand being paid back. The retrospective tax law had an impact on corporations such as UK telecom giant Vodafone Plc, energy company Cairn Energy Plc, pharmaceuticals company Sanofi and brewer SABMiller, now owned by AB InBev.

However, a number of disputes still fester. As per a *Reuters*

report last week, French spirits group Pernod Ricard, in a letter to the Prime Minister's Office, has noted that three-decade old tax disputes with authorities on valuing liquor imports has inhibited fresh investment and its current business.

The sale of Swiss cement-maker Holcim's India assets to the Adani Group was also preceded by fines amounting to over Rs 2,300 crore by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Holcim's India companies — ACC and Ambuja Cements. The fines will be paid by the new owner.

Further, in May, Ford, which had already announced that it will stop selling its cars in India, retracted its plans to manufacture and export electric vehicles from India — a plan it had announced only a few months earlier.

In a 2021 report on India's investment climate, the US State Department noted that India remained a challenging place to do business. “New protectionist

measures, including increased tariffs, procurement rules that limit competitive choices, sanitary and phytosanitary measures not based on science, and Indian-specific standards not aligned with international standards, effectively closed off producers from global supply chains and restricted the expansion in bilateral trade,” the report said.

Authors of *The Hill* piece also said despite the challenges, India's large size and location continue to make it an attractive market for foreign businesses. “Access to the large Indian consumer market is a dream, as is the hope for a stake in the upgradation of India's civilian and military infrastructure ... India's current rate of economic growth is woefully inadequate for India's domestic goals as well as the objective of becoming a serious rival to global economic juggernaut, China. The latter makes India's economic policies a strategic concern for US policymakers,” they wrote.

INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL MANAGER INDIA AT FINNAIR

‘Own operations a priority, there may be opportunity to have partner in India’

HELSINKI-BASED LEGACY airline Finnair is set to expand its services in India by adding a flight to Mumbai next month, as it also continues to look beyond Delhi and Mumbai for other destinations in the country, SAKARI ROMU, general manager India for Finnair, told PRANAV MUKUL in an interview. Romu also spoke about the airline's plans to look for a local partner in India, and on the potential re-emergence of low-cost long-haul travel. Edited excerpts:

You mentioned that your flights to China have reduced from 40 per week to just one. Where is this surplus capacity being deployed?

If you look at the time before Covid, we had around 370 daily departures, and this year, we are flying about 70 per cent of that on our own, 10 per cent we have been able to wet-lease to British Airways and Lufthansa Group. And by winter of 2023, we will be above 80 per cent but not 100 per cent.

Within India, are you looking at destinations other than Delhi and Mumbai?

We are looking but nothing concrete yet. But certainly, we are making the calculations, but that's normal business for an airline.

Are you looking at destinations from where you're getting traffic from into hubs like Delhi and Mumbai?

At the moment, we do not have a local airline partner in India. I think we have been successful, and I would like to see a good airline partner in India that would help in any way. But that's not something we can't live without. Demand just from Delhi and surrounding areas is taking up our capacity, and it's picking up. If you look at the other end, there was a strong trend before Covid, the travel to Scandinavian destinations, Helsinki and Baltic destinations from India was increasing strongly — by about 40 per cent every year. That's something, which will recur. About 15 per cent of our customers are



Sakari Romu

Finnish visiting India, and if we look only Finland as the destination, about 10 per cent of our customers are Indians visiting only Finland, and all the others are transfer, where the most important destination is the US.

So in the medium term, what would be the priority for Finnair to go to other destinations in India — having an airline partner or flying directly?

In my opinion, we should look for help or have a good co-operation with a partner. But first come our own operations. At a certain point, there might be an opportunity to have a partner in India.

Because of the higher oil prices and the longer flying time for Finnair, how are you dealing with the fare part of business?

We are trying to effect our prices but finally it is the Indian customer who decides what is the correct price for Finnair and we really have to ensure our

prices are set according to the market.

Finnair has a business class fare with no baggage allowance. That is quite unusual...

That is something I have had lot of discussions about. Especially in China and also India, probably the market has not experienced that kind of product, where the customer is only looking for a comfortable in-flight experience. In Europe, and the US, it is very common — no luggage, no change fees, but you're travelling on business class. But the market in India is not ready for that. It is not something very new. We've had such products in Europe for years.

But how has the Indian customer responded to this fare offering?

We will do a study and make changes to this product, and we have faced the same cases in other markets and in some markets, we have taken out the product totally. But I think, India will be also ready in the near future, where people are buying the cheapest possible business class fare. Maybe it is too new for India right now”

where people are buying the cheapest possible business class fare. Maybe it is too new for India right now”

The Airbus A321XLR is coming out soon and it is expected to change the dynamics of medium to long-haul low-cost travel. How does a full-service airline respond to this scenario?

I think especially now, if we think about making an airline profitable or making a certain route profitable, you can count on passengers but cargo also has a very big role. All those light version of flying impacts opportunities for cargo revenues. Cargo has always played a big role in our business, from India as well.

MARKETS WATCH
FOREIGN PORTFOLIO INVESTORS

FPIs in selling mode, pull out ₹7.4K cr from equities in July so far

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

FOREIGN INVESTORS continue to be cautious about the Indian equity market and have pulled out over Rs 7,400 crore this month so far amid sustained strengthening of the dollar and increasing concerns over a recession in the US.

This comes following a net withdrawal of Rs 50,203 crore from equities in June.

While foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have slowed down their pace of selling, this does not indicate a change in trend as there has not been any significant improvement in the underlying drivers, said Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India.

There has been an exodus of foreign funds from the Indian equity market over the last nine months.

“Given the uncertainty in the forex market and the sustained strengthening of the dollar, FPIs are unlikely to turn aggressive buyers in the Indian market and at higher levels they may again turn sellers,” said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

Going forward, FPI flows will remain volatile in the emerging markets on account of rising geopolitical risks, rising inflation and tightening of monetary policy by central banks, Shrikant Chouhan, Head-Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities, said.

According to data with depositories, FPIs pulled out a net



The BSE, Mumbai File

amount of Rs 7,432 crore from Indian equities during July 1-15. While there have been sporadic net inflows by FPIs last week, the broader trend continues to be cautious, Srivastava added.

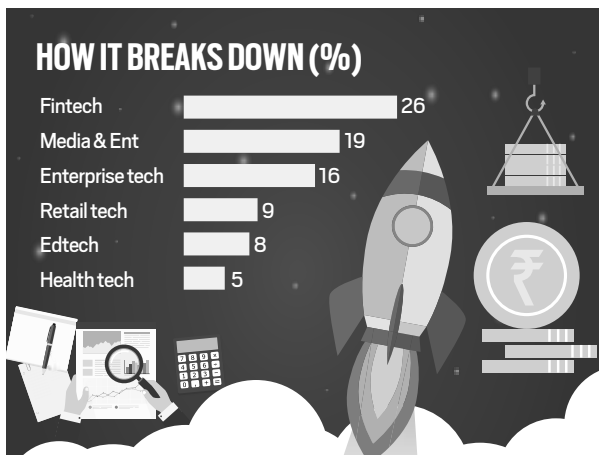
FPIs withdrew a net Rs 50,203 crore from equities in June. This was the highest net outflow since March 2020, when they had pulled out Rs 61,973 crore. With the latest pull out, net outflow by FPIs from equities this year so far has reached around Rs 2.25 lakh crore — a record high. Before this, they withdrew Rs 52,987 crore in the entire 2008, data showed.

According to Chouhan, Indian equities witnessed weakness as global inflation prints remained elevated, concerns of US recession increased, dollar index continued its sharp rally and Q1 results of large IT companies were weaker than expected.

Rupee has touched 80 per dollar mark briefly during the week, highlighting the trouble RBI faces on controlling the currency, said Vijay Singhania, chairman of TradeSmart. **WITHPTI**

‘Sequoia, Tiger Global lead startup funding in Apr-Jun’

Sequoia Capital and Tiger Global led funding in Indian startups during April-June, Nasscom said in a report



April-June quarter saw only four unicorns — neobanking firm Open, SaaS platform LeadSquared, edtech start-up PhysicsWallah and online beauty products marketplace Purple

January-March period had witnessed creation of 16 new unicorns, which dropped to only four in the reporting quarter due to decline in fund inflows into the Indian startup space

About 17% drop in investment into Indian tech startups, to \$6 billion, in April-June 2022 owing to macroeconomic slowdown

60% of the investments by Tiger Global and Sequoia were made in the growth stage of the startups

Of Tiger Global's investments, 40% were in the fintech sector and 20% in the enterprise technology domain. For Sequoia, enterprise technology accounted for about 25% of the funding

MAJOR INVESTORS

- Sequoia Capital
- Tiger Global
- Alpha wave
- Accel

Source: Nasscom/PTI

CURRENTLY HOLDS MD-CEO POST AT BSE

Chauhan to be NSE MD & CEO

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has approved the appointment of Ashishkumar Chauhan as the next Managing Director and CEO of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), the country's largest stock exchange.

Chauhan is currently the MD and CEO of the BSE and his tenure will end in November this year. He will join in place of Vikram Limaye whose five-year tenure ended on July 15.

Chauhan is one of the founders of the NSE where he worked from 1992 to 2000. At the NSE, he was involved in setting up India's first fully automated screen-based trading system and first commercial satellite communications network.

This is Chauhan's second



Ashishkumar Chauhan File

tenure in the BSE and under SEBI guidelines, a candidate cannot be appointed as MD & CEO for more than two tenures. BSE is also searching for a new CEO in place of Chauhan.

As per Sebi norm, the MD and CEO of a stock exchange has to apply and compete with other candidates for the top job after the completion of the five-year term. Limaye was appointed the NSE chief in July 2017 following the

exit of Chitra Ramkrishna amid the probe into co-location scam.

According to market observers, the priority of Chauhan will be to implement fair and ethical corporate and market governing practices at the NSE, which was hit by a series of scandals. He will also have to prepare the exchange for the much-delayed IPO.

Market regulator had earlier penalised Limaye's predecessors Ravi Narain and Chitra Ramkrishna for alleged lapses in corporate governance during the appointment of its group operating officer Anand Subramanian. In 2019, NSE was also penalised for giving preferential access to some stock brokers between 2012-2014 through their co-location facility.

Earlier in March, NSE, the largest derivatives exchange in the world, invited applications for the MD & CEO position.

BRIEFLY

Fuel demand

New Delhi: India's demand for petrol and diesel fell in the first half of July over the previous month as the onset of monsoon chipped away consumption in some sectors and restricted mobility, preliminary data showed.

Gulf remittance

Mumbai: The share of inward remittances from Gulf nations dipped sharply during 2020-21 on account of the economic stress created by the Covid pandemic, said an RBI article. On the other hand, advanced economies like the US, the UK and Singapore emerged as important sources for the country for remittances. **PTI**

FROM TODAY

Prepacked, labelled cereal, pulses, flour weighing up to 25 kg to attract 5% GST

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE CENTRAL Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) on Sunday said single packages of food items like cereals, pulses and flour weighing up to 25 kg will be considered as 'prepackaged and labelled', and liable to five per cent GST from July 18.

It also clarified that if a retail shopkeeper supplies in loose quantity the item bought from a manufacturer or a distributor in a 25-kg pack, such sale to consumers will not attract GST.

The CBIC on Sunday night issued a set of frequently asked

The CBIC said GST will apply on a package that contains multiple retail packages

questions (FAQs) on GST applicability on 'pre-packaged and labelled' goods, just a day before the five per cent GST on such items becomes applicable.

In the context of food items (such as pulses, cereals like rice, wheat, flour etc), the supply of specified pre-packaged food articles would fall within the purview of the definition of 'pre-packaged commodity' un-

der the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, if such pre-packaged and labelled packages contained a quantity up to 25 kilogram (or 25 litres).

"It is clarified that a single package of these items (cereals, pulses, flour etc.) containing a quantity of more than 25 Kg/25 litre would not fall in the category of pre-packaged and labelled commodity for the purposes of GST and would therefore not attract GST," it said.

The CBIC said the supply of pre-packed atta meant for retail sale to ultimate consumer of 25 Kg shall be liable to GST. However, supply of such a 30-kg pack thereof shall be exempt

from levy of GST.

The board also said that GST would apply on a package that contains multiple retail packages, for example a package containing 10 retail packs of flour of 10 kg each, the CBIC said.

It said for the purpose of GST, "pre-packaged commodity" would mean a commodity which, without the purchaser being present, is placed in a package of whatever nature, whether sealed or not, so that the product contained therein has a pre-determined quantity.

Any such supply which requires declaration under the Legal Metrology act would attract GST, it said. **WITHPTI**

GEORGE MATHEW

MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE INSURANCE regulator has proposed the involvement of insurance companies at the state level and a big hike in the premium collection target in the next five years to deepen insurance penetration in the country.

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) Chairman Debasish Panda said insurance companies should become members of the State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) and boost the growth of the sector. "States and insurers will benefit from the inclusion of insurers in the SLBC. Quite a bit of AUM (assets under management) is going into the developments in the state," Panda said at a conclave of insurance CEOs in Hyderabad recently.

"I'm going to request the RBI and the ministry to include insurance in the SLBC Forum," he said, adding that each state will be assigned to one or two insurance companies for close coordination.

Irdai Chairman also proposed a steep hike in premium collection in the next five years. The regulator has proposed that the premium collection which was at Rs 2.20 lakh crore in the year FY2022 could be increased to Rs 2.98 lakh crore in FY2023. This is expected to rise to Rs 11.73 lakh crore in FY2027, a rise of 433 per cent, it said.

It has also proposed a company-wise target for premium collection in the next five years.

STEEP HIKE

■ The regulator has proposed that the premium collection, which was at Rs 2.2 lakh crore in FY22, could be increased to Rs 2.98 lakh crore in FY23. This is expected to rise to Rs 11.73 lakh crore in FY27

New India Assurance's premium collection target is Rs 99,430 crore for FY2027 as against Rs 32,569 crore in FY2022. The steepest hike is in the case of Go Digit General Insurance which is being given a target of Rs 150,610 crore in FY27 as against Rs 4,674 crore now, a growth of 3,122 per cent.

Panda said the insurance sector needs more players. "It can be small, medium or niche players. General insurance penetration in India is just one per cent as against the world average of 4.16 per cent," Panda said, adding that this needs to be changed.

"Of around 29.5 crore vehicles in the country, nearly 50 per cent are uninsured. Over 40 crore individuals are devoid of a health insurance policy," Panda said. Irdai has proposed a 45 per cent growth in the health insurance segment to Rs 106,689 crore in FY2023 and a 37.30 per cent rise in the motor segment to Rs 96,6789 crore.

Panda also proposed a long-term insurance policy for 15 years in the case of motor vehicles. "This is something which

EXPLAINED
Raising coverage

WITH AN eye on deeper insurance penetration in the country, Irdai has pitched a company-wise target for premium collection in the next five years.

can be looked into by insurance companies," he said.

Irdai Chairman also hinted that the regulator is working on a proposal for a salary band for CEOs of insurance companies. "You can decide on the salary based on the band," he said.

Responding to Irdai Chairman's proposals, Star Health and Allied Insurance MD S Prakash said mis-selling in the health segment is creating a trust deficit. "We need to enhance penetration in the health insurance segment," he said.

On crop insurance, many insurance CEOs complained about the lack of adequate reinsurance support. Regarding long-term motor policy, Madhulika Bhaskar, Chairman-in-charge of New India Assurance, said the issue of solvency margin needs to be sorted out and the focus is now more on bottom-line. "How do you account for it in the investment guidelines?" she said.

Irdai has also set up two task forces to suggest steps to sort out the issues between insurers and reinsurers and other problems facing the industry.

COMMONWEALTH
GAMES, 2022

BIRMINGHAM
28 JULY-8 AUG

Commonwealth of emotions: Breaking stereotypes, a novice's dare, a desire to end poverty, a mother's struggle and curious origins.

The Commonwealth of Irony

The Games were pioneered by a Canadian sports journalist due to perceived American arrogance, but now seem a relic from a bygone era

SRIRAM VEERA
JULY 17

THE GREAT irony about the Commonwealth Games is that Britain nearly didn't participate in the first-ever edition, called the British Empire Games, in 1930. Now, its existence itself is an irony in the post-colonial world of 2022, with a stale stench of a relic about it.

But the story of its origin is a fascinating tale of perceived American arrogance; one man's, a Canadian's, hurt that transformed it into a grand vision; persistence during the Great Depression; jugaad; grace; and pride.

It was all kickstarted by a sports journalist but before we get to that remarkable man, the Canadian scribe and athletics coach Melville Marks Robinson (popularly known as Bobby Robinson), let's play potential scenes from the trailer if a movie was ever made on the Games.

Perhaps, three scenes might play out. An overhead drone shot might whizz over a statue in Vancouver that captures the dramatic moment from the 1954 Games, famously known as The Miracle Mile, when the leader John Landy looked over his left shoulder at the same instant when Roger Bannister overtook him on his right, just a few yards out from the finish.

Both finished under 4 minutes, once thought improbable. A photographer, Charlie Warner, who instinctively positioned himself at that exact spot to capture one of sport's great pictures, would become a legend. A statue based on that photo still stands in Vancouver. Landy would mine into biblical myths to say, "When Lot's wife looked back, she was turned into a pillar of salt. When I looked back, I was turned into a pillar of bronze!" Incidentally, it was the first race that had two athletes finish the mile-run under four minutes.

The second scene could well be a gruesome sight. A grim close-up of bare-chested high-jumper Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Nigeria's first international sporting hero at the 1954 Olympics, facing a death squad.

After quitting sport, he co-led a military coup and according to the official version though disputed, killed the country's first

prime minister, then tried to end a civil war, but would die, shot dead at close range.

With his head slumped to his chest, with hundreds of hysterical watchers shouting 'shoot them, shoot them', Ifeajuna reportedly kept muttering that his death would not stop his fear that the federal troops would enter the city of Enugu, and they should still fight for a ceasefire. He was shot, and he was right, in a couple of hours, the federal troops had invaded, and his name, till date, remains controversial in Nigeria.

The third, at least for the Indian release of the movie, could be a visual of a man driving an ambulance during the Second World War in the UK. A close-up would reveal him to be wrestler Rashid Anwar, who won India's first medal in the event, a bronze at the 1934 Games, the first time India participated. A railways worker from Lucknow, and known for his 'swinging Boston Crab move', he shifted to the UK after the 1936 Olympics, wrestling professionally and died at Camden, London in 1983, a few months before India would win the cricket World Cup in that city.

But without Bobby Robinson and his annoyance at 'American arrogance', none of this would have happened.

The Empire Strikes Back

Bobby's annoyance began at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam. Robinson was covering the Games as a journalist for Hamilton Spectator from the city in Canada which would subsequently host the first British Empire Games. He had served in the First World War, was the manager of the national athletics team, and was known as an 'aggressive campaigner of agriculture' in Canada where he fought for the rights of individual vegetable and fruits sellers against the price-cuts enforced by wholesale buyers.

Robinson had his reasons to be frustrated with the Americans at the 1928 Olympics where Canada even lodged an official complaint. When Canada's great runner Percy Williams, who would decades later blow his own head with a shotgun, received his 100m medal, they didn't have the Canadian flag.

Then, the Americans were allowed to train on the track but the Canadians weren't. A disputed judges' decision in the women's



Perry, the 2022 CWG mascot, at the gates of the Buckingham Palace

. Reuters

100m that went in the favour of an American when the Canadians thought there was no doubt that their lady had won it. And to top it all off, a direct insult by Avery Brundage, the then influential American in the Olympic movement, to a Canadian team official. All hell broke loose.

In his delightful book 'The Commonwealth Games: Extraordinary Stories Behind the Medals', Brian Oliver notes that the newspaper Toronto Star wrote of 'serious trouble brewing between the Canadian and US teams, between the Canadian representatives and the IOC'. At one point, Robinson vented his anger at Sigfrid Edstrom, the IOC official who would bridge the presidency between Henri de Baillet-Latour and Brundage. "We know the Canadians are getting the run-around here and we don't like it!"

Not long after, a more serious fallout occurred between the two countries. With the economy crumbling during the Great Depression, America would announce tariffs on Canadian goods, triggering a trade war and strengthening Canada's ties with the Empire.

A loyalist to the Union Flag, Robinson de-

cided enough was enough. Made aware of the Englishman J Astley Cooper's unexecuted plan to stage a 'Pan-Britannic Festival' of culture and sport in the 1890s, Robinson decided the time was ripe to put that into action.

Britain too needed it at that point. As sports historian Katharine Moore put it: 'Political domination in the world by Great Britain was a rapidly fading memory and it was no longer the premier sporting power either. The Empire needed the Games in 1930 to reconfirm and redefine its unity. They could be seen as one step towards re-establishing its sagging prestige ... as the various Empire countries matured and blossomed in their own right.'

Teething problems

With economies in a downward spiral everywhere, funding proved to be an issue. Robinson asked the leaders of host city Hamilton for \$25000 to run the Games and a whopping \$160,000 to construct a stadium. Things turned worse when the American stock market crashed.

Other countries began to drag their feet.

ONLY @ CWG



EX COLONY BUT NOT A MEMBER

The US question

They were once a British colony but unlike most others, they aren't a part of the Commonwealth Games.

THE NON-participation of the US, unlike their neighbours Canada who are a Commonwealth Games powerhouse, has often attracted a few curious questions. One of the reasons, according to the Birmingham Mail, is war.

The Commonwealth is a group of 54 nations that were once part of the British Empire. The US became independent from the UK in 1776, after 13 American colonies broke away and declared themselves a republic, refusing to recognise the British monarch as their head of state.

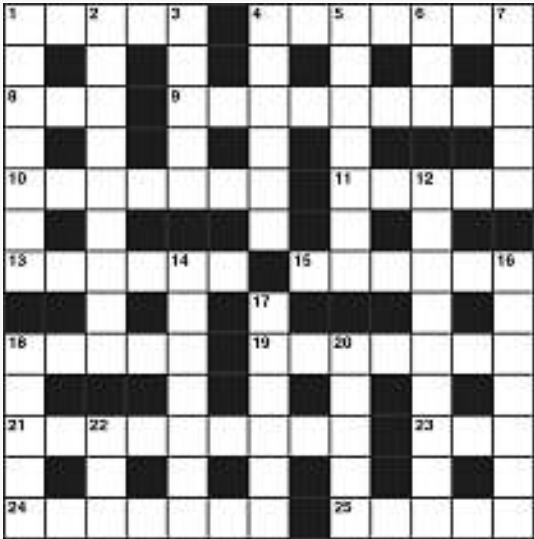
This – the need to recognise the king or queen as the head of state – was a prerequisite to remaining a part of the Commonwealth. However, after India became independent in 1947, it wanted to continue being a part of the Commonwealth while also becoming a republic. This prompted the London Declaration of 1949, which stated that 'republics and other countries could be part of the Commonwealth.'

Standing their ground

So, India continued to be a part of the Commonwealth – and thus, the CWG – even though it does not recognise the Queen as its head of state. In the case of the US, it was seen as a different case. "Since the USA practically battled against a foreign ruling monarch, their re-entry into the Commonwealth was unlikely," the Birmingham Mail reported.

In 2017, the Telegraph reported that the US could become an associate member of the Commonwealth but no step has been taken in that direction since.

CROSSWORD 4796



ACROSS

- 1 Worm cuffs (5)
- 4 A cleric angered about being questioned (7)
- 8 Confess one's love at two points (3)
- 9 Audible cheering is produced in a flash (9)
- 10 He is sorry for one who is late (7)
- 11 She's in a fine state (5)
- 13 Observe the water has now thawed? (6)
- 15 Be relevant to grizzly performing (4,2)
- 18 Vehicle to travel as freight (5)
- 19 Small article produced by an erratic knitter? (7)
- 21 Want to try? Only too willing (4,1,4)
- 23 Dad is right on the level (3)
- 24 Dead set about being relaxed (7)
- 25 Return to deposit gold sovereign (5)

DOWN

- 1 He will run away when the sun comes out (7)
- 2 Musical livewire (9)
- 3 Fresh loans required for a hairdressing business (5)
- 4 Consider changing gear on the road (6)
- 5 An improvement in relations (7)
- 6 Rumanian money that is left over (3)
- 7 Sort of lead mother will follow in principle (5)
- 12 Uneared income? (6,3)
- 14 To prevent overheating use this – not coal anyway (7)
- 16 It's expected to be unaffected (7)
- 17 Attacked the copper with acid (6)
- 18 Shouts out names (5)
- 20 In the meantime I'm after it (5)
- 22 Deceive a child (3)

Solutions Crossword 4795: Across: 1 Maintained, 8 Sheer, 9 Open-air, 10 Abelard, 11 Issue, 12 Easter, 14 Eraser, 17 Revue, 19 Orchard, 21 Wonders, 22 Ruler, 23 Settle down. Down: 2 Ageless, 3 Norma, 4 Avoids, 5 Needler, 6 Draws, 7 Free trader, 8 Scarecrows, 13 Element, 15 Shallow, 16 Morsel, 18 Vends, 20 Cured.

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.

is organized

–Edgard Varese (5, 5)

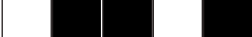
RRIOS



DEGLCU



DFNSU



ILLYDM



–Edgard Varese
Answer: Music is organized, MILDLY, PUNOS

SUDOKU 4899

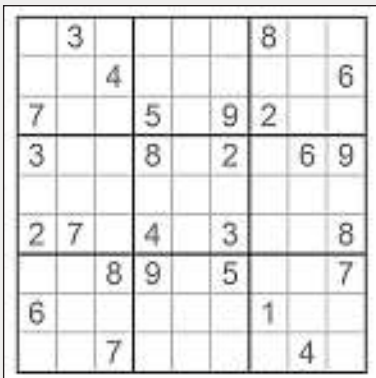
Difficulty Level 4s

Instructions

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

Difficulty Level

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4898



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Today's Mercury-Uranus pattern is one of those magical planetary alignments that favours dreams and imagination, but lays out banana skins for those who allow confusion to creep in. Poetic aspirations come first and practical goals may have to wait.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Venus, your ruling planet, is teaming up with Saturn in a pattern which gives all sentimental, self-indulgent and creative Taureans a welcome shove in the right direction. But you may have to voluntarily renounce one commitment, if you are to make the space for a much better one.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

We'll start off with the good news: your stars are extremely prosperous. But here's the downside: romantic chaos and inspired confusion may be great fun but could result in costly mistakes. That's precisely why your main priority should be extra self-control.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

The typical Cancerian is a peace-loving creature, but you can still be easily provoked. Looking at the week as a whole, you may move from an idyllic illusion of perpetual harmony towards a realisation that a battle must be joined. And, when it comes, the struggle will be one of ideas rather than emotions.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Sometimes life is just not what it seems. Yet you have a huge amount going for you. This might be more obvious to other people than it is to you. That's why you have to trust in the future, and have faith that you are indeed on the right track.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Everything that takes place this week will be encouraged by the fact that Mercury, your ruling planet, is now in an increasingly lively condition. Your smart ideas will help you pick your way through a rapidly approaching emotional minefield.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

If the past few weeks have been free from disagreements then you're lucky. However, although, the nature of the game is changing, I don't think any of you will be unaware of the turbulent undercurrents building up this week. Keep your eye on the ball, Libra.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

You'll soon have a new and brighter perspective on the immediate future.

In fact, if you're a typical mainstream Scorpio, you may rub your hands with glee at what is just around the corner. If you've spoken out against certain practical arrangements and restrictive obligations, you may soon be vindicated.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

You have little understanding of other people's intense feelings. You may even be rather bemused by this week's emotional events and general air of hysteria. Unless, that is, you have been here, done that and got the tee shirt. Experience counts for a lot.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Your emotional and romantic stars could not be better, so, if you're in difficulties, the key lies in your own complicated expectations and too high standards. Take other people at face value and assume that they are being straight with you, at least for now.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

The winds of change will be blowing, gently at first but then with great force. By all means relax, but retain a guarded approach to all developments, not just those which are obviously dodgy. If other people do end up putting pressure on you, then it's probably because you need them to give you a shove in the right direction.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You should be in your element this week, at least until Thursday or Friday. A series of major planetary patterns decrees that this is a week when Piscean qualities, imagination, intuition, romance and compassion, are dominant for everyone. And especially, of course, for you.

BRIEFLY

Smith rides back-nine charge to win the British Open

St Andrews: Cameron Smith staged one of the greatest back-nine charges ever witnessed at a major championship coming from four shots behind to win the 150th British Open on Sunday as Rory McIlroy's major drought continued. Smith, winner of golf's unofficial fifth major, The Players Championship, earlier this year, carded a sensational final round eight-under 64 that included a spectacular run of five birdies from the turn to become the first Australian to hoist the Claret Jug since Greg Norman in 1993. The 28-year-old also became the first Australian man to claim one of golf's four majors since Jason Day's victory at the 2015 PGA Championship. **REUTERS**

India bow out of FIBA Asia Cup after 3rd loss

Jakarta: The Indian men's basketball team suffered a huge defeat against Lebanon, its third consecutive in the competition, to end its campaign in the FIBA Asia Cup on a disappointing note here on Sunday. India lost 63-104 in its final Group D match at the Istora Gelora Bung Karno Stadium. Winless India finished last in the four-team group. The top team from each group advanced to the quarterfinals, while the second and third placed sides will feature in the playoffs. India had earlier lost 47-100 against New Zealand before suffering a 59-101 defeat at the hands of Philippines. India's best performance in the FIBA Asia Cup was a fourth-place finish in the 1975 edition. **PTI**

TT players rue lack of psychologist at CWG

New Delhi: The absence of sports psychologist Gayatri Vartak from India's 14-member table tennis contingent for the upcoming CWG has not gone down well with the players. Vartak, a former badminton player, was on the list of players and support staff for the Birmingham Games but has not made the final squad. Sharath Kamal, reigning national champion Sreeja Akula and Reeth Rishya said that Vartak's presence in the contingent would have made a big difference. **PTI**

Moudgil wins bronze at ISSF World Cup

Changwon: India's Anjum Moudgil won a bronze medal in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the ISSF Shooting World Cup here on Sunday. Anjum shot 402.9 in the final round to finish third. She had 100.7 in kneeling, 101.6 in prone and 200.6 in standing position. She had qualified for the finals after finishing sixth in the ranking round on Saturday. Germany's Anna Janssen won the gold while Italy's Barbara Gambaro took the silver medal. Anjum had won a silver in the 2018 Changwon World Cup. **PTI**

Pandya provides balance, breathing space for Virat

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
JULY 17

OFF THE last ball of his sixth over, Hardik Pandya bounced Jos Buttler and the England white-ball captain accepted the bait. Buttler swung the ball high in front of square from outside off, but Ravindra Jadeja's elite athleticism ensured that he not only sprinted to the ball from deep square leg, but also held onto it after impact with the turf.

Jadeja's spectacular take had given Pandya his fourth wicket in the third ODI in Manchester - the first time the all-rounder has taken a four-for in ODIs, after which he proceeded to rescue India from 72 for 4 with his 71 off 55. Last week, Pandya had taken only his second T20I four-for in Southampton, right after hitting 51 off 33.

Balancing the combination

Since his comeback to the national team in June, against South Africa, Pandya has instantly shown just how much India were missing him, especially in his fit-and-firing avatar. He provides just the right balance to this unit, the value of which goes well beyond the crucial breakthroughs he regularly provides or the runs he scores. And no other all-rounder that India possess has been able to calibrate the team-combination scales in white-ball cricket with such finesse; about that, there remains absolutely no doubt.

Pandya's presence has allowed India a decent amount of cushion if one of the bowlers goes on to be expensive. It also did not let them feel the absence of their pre-



Hardik Pandya took four wickets and scored 71 runs to help India to victory in the third ODI against England. **AP**

mier pacer Jasprit Bumrah too much at Old Trafford. Even if it is something as basic, but critical, as putting in a reliable second-change spell after the opening bursts from Bumrah and Mohammed Shami, Pandya has stepped up to that role too.

Similarly, on the batting front, his name - and Jadeja's - on the team sheet means that much more buffer for the preceding specialists, and that much more breathing space if one or more of them is out of form, like Virat Kohli is at the moment. With genuine all-rounders around instead of a

Shardul Thakur or Bhuvaneshwar Kumar, the specialists can bat with more freedom and take more risks at the top, in keeping with how the white-ball game is evolving around the world.

And most importantly, a fit Pandya means India's T20 World Cup build-up is ticking along. India will keep hoping that this hard-fought fitness holds going into Australia. Pandya had bowled just four overs in five games in the 2021 T20 World Cup, effectively playing as a specialist batsman; that is not what they want him to be, as has been made clear.

White-ball craft

In that regard, it was heartening that Pandya sent down as many as seven overs in Manchester. The last time he bowled more was March 2021 and the last time he bowled his full quota in an ODI was in the 2019 World Cup semi-final. His workload's been steadily building up since he bowled a solitary over in his comeback match against South Africa in Delhi last month.

At Old Trafford, a majority of Pandya's deliveries were either short or just short of a good length. Only Mohammed Siraj had found some movement with the new ball; Mohammed Shami had gone for plenty with his full lengths, in search of early swing. Pandya saw that and altered his strategy. Not that Pandya cannot move the ball around - he has a Test five-for in England - but he uses his varied short balls smartly in white-ball cricket.

Pandya played on Liam Livingstone's ego in Manchester. His first spell of four overs had gone for a mere two runs, so he could afford to concede a few for another wicket. He had Livingstone swinging and missing, ducking and fending his bounc-

ers. In between, Livingstone also connected, depositing two over the boundary. But Pandya had the last laugh, revealing after the match that he was fine being hit for a few sixes if it increased the chances of getting his wicket.

Rescue act

Pandya's batting on Sunday was as switched-on as his bowling was. When England went short into his body, he did not hold back on the pull. When they pitched up, he was ready to take advantage of the vast vacant spaces at deep extra cover.

When Craig Overton zipped a lifter past his outside edge, Pandya gave the bowler a thumbs-up, and calmly played the next one late past backward point for a single. After Reece Topley appeared unsuccessfully for caught-behind down the leg side, Pandya replied with a rocket of a straight drive for four. He has this ability to constrain the previous delivery to history in an instant, and then immediately hit back hard.

There was an incredible reflex back-foot punch off Livingstone that hurtled past extra cover and had such good timing it beat the sweeper's dive into the rope; it also left the bowler scratching his head in disbelief.

By the time he fell to Brydon Carse, Pandya had gone at a strike rate of nearly 130 and had outscored and outpaced Rishabh Pant. That rarely happens, and when it does, it requires something special.

BRIEF SCORES: England 259 all out in 45.5 overs (Jos Buttler 60, Jason Roy 41; Hardik Pandya 4/24, Yuzvendra Chahal 3/60) lost to India 261 for 5 in 42.1 overs (Rishabh Pant 125 not out, Hardik Pandya 71; Reece Topley 3/35) by five wickets.



Murali Sreeshankar during the long jump final at the World Athletics Championships. **Reuters**

But Sreeshankar and his father were adamant. They continued their training in Pallakad, Kerala after a month-long rehab at the JSW facilities in Bellary. AFI's removal of Murali as an official coach meant that he could no longer avail paid leave from Indian Railways, his employer, to train Sreeshankar. "I always felt hurt when I was told that I don't know anything. I studied in a sports college, studied under several coaches, and was

Sindhu roars in Lion City

Singapore Open 500 title 'just the start' as Indian double Olympic medallist fine-tunes her game ahead of the BWF World Championships

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, JULY 17

WHEN PV SINDHU grinned brightly post winning the Singapore Open defeating Chinese Zhi Yi Wang, and refrained from gushing, calling the Super 500 title "just the start", it signalled the most realistic perspective from an athlete aware of belonging to the higher echelons and firmly on the up-swing in confidence.

The onset of July and August has historically proven a harbinger of the former World Champion's peaking at the biggest tournaments - whether the Olympics or Worlds. And for someone who's been in three World Championship finals and one at the Olympics, an easy Singapore Open Super 500 victory could only count as a good injection of confidence, a five-match-week paced perfectly, before the real battles fetch up - this time at the Tokyo Worlds.

VIP congratulatory tweets cannot discern between a Sunday spent downing a pugna-cious 22-year-old Chinese in a fisticuff final after a week of negotiating past pesky unseeded opponents and a Sunday battle-hardened, scar-riven and ice bath-soaked from taking out fellow Top Tenners. She might not have won a big title for three years now - not that Sindhu craved the smaller ones ever - but the swag of the World Champion from Basel, the muscle memory of rising to the pinnacle scything stacked fields, is firmly intact in the towering Indian.

A 21-9, 11-21, 21-15 victory with two lopsided games, and a decider that the World No. 7 cleverly controlled at the clutch, pointed to settled nerves and a calmer court presence, that sets her up nicely for bigger battles that'll demand she keep her head during tricky phases of play. Not that Sindhu needs reminding, but the title restores belief she can lord over opponents, after some bruising losses in the past few months.

Metaphorically and literally, Sindhu read the winds, gauged the backline judg-



PV Sindhu managed to stay strong in the key moments to come up trumps 21-9 11-21 21-15. **AP**

ments, trained her peripheral vision to the flying bird's whimsy idiosyncrasies better than at any tournament in 2022, at Singapore where she picked her first Super 500 title. The decorated Indian has traversed global arenas all these years, and not once complained about the a/c- induced drift ever costing her a match. As such, Sindhu is India's best all-court, all-conditions player over the years, unfazed by shuttle speeds. Perhaps from an itchy lack of confidence, the last few tournaments since the Asian Championship had seen her wrestle and wrangle uncharacteristically

with line calls and Hawk-Eye judgments, impacting her poise on court, and costing her matches even.

At Singapore, Sindhu was spot on with her referrals through the week, and solidly aware of shuttle flight. Even more impressive was how her crosscourt game was neatly curated to neutralise the drift. She eschewed the straight, floating, baseline-kissing tosses and wildly transgressing smashes, and smartly deployed the short cross, angled drops from the forecourt to allow the shuttle to fall within bounds and not unnecessarily tempt fate, playing to the tramlines.

Smart gameplan

Zhi Yi Wang can beat the top names on her day (and their bad ones), but isn't quite pickled in the craft of deception. Ratchanok Intanon has drilled holes in her game for a while now, and Sindhu used canny deception on her strokes to get her to fall short in the forecourt as she was often found stranded at the back.

The drift dictated not just the lopsided individual game scores. It also nipped extravagances of hard hitting, as given half a whiff, the shuttle would gladly stray along the lines, such was the drift from left to

right and from the near side of the court. It was in grappling with that wild bird that Sindhu displayed her seasoned skill. The diagonal is always the longest leeway on a shuttle court, and playing across made sense to keep the shuttle on a plausible leash.

So, the power hitter Sindhu would fold away her unfettered attack and play the soft touches - angled drops from mid-court with a veiled racquet face, pinpoint net exchanges - not one shot more than required, pushing Wang back one step at a time.

Matters level at 1-1, and twice with the Chinese threatening to close down gaps at 11-12 and 14-16 in the decider, Sindhu would show precise shot selection and use more of the tempered drops and pushes to widen the gap once more. Prone to getting agitated if gaps narrowed earlier, Sindhu would stay cool as a cat, and then stamp her authority in closing out. That composure has been lacking against bigger players, but that seemed down to confidence, and nothing inherently in her game. Against Wang, the Indian looked well in control.

Titles like in Singapore have always been in Sindhu's reach, though she has prioritised the big stage, high-intensity, mounting-pressure tournaments like Worlds and Olympics over the circuit rigmarole. Three weeks back-to-back in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore helped her err and figure out corrections in her closing-out game, and the title is best seen as a smoothening of rough edges.

Granting it any more importance would be a disservice to Sindhu's calibre and potential of winning the big ones of the season. Even the Commonwealth Games ought to be seen, relative to the competition on offer, as a box to be ticked for the champion athlete, without going over the top once that happens. A five-time Worlds medallist knows her stomping ground is the World Championship. Singapore was a pitstop, albeit a validating one. "Just a start", as Sindhu offered.

Kerley wins men's world 100m final

Eugene (USA): Fred Kerley led an American clean sweep in the 100 metres final on Saturday, the first since 1991, to send the home fans wild and give the sport's dominant nation a night to remember as they hosted the World Championships for the first time.

Kerley timed his dip perfectly to clock 9.86 seconds as Marvin Bracy took silver and Trayvon Bromell bronze, both with 9.88 seconds, but Bracy edging it by two thousandths of a second. There was nothing between the medallists once they were into their running, and with Bromell out in lane eight and the other two side-by-side in three and four it was an impossible finish to call. **REUTERS**

Pant paces his way to first ton, leads India to win

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
JULY 17

UNTIL HIS 24th delivery, Rishabh Pant had not hit a single boundary. And the first one was an indication that he had had enough of reining it in. He charged out to Craig Overton, had a heave, and outside-edged the ball past the wicketkeeper for four. Off his 27th delivery, he would provide England a much bigger opening.

He jumped down the track to Moeen Ali and swung with all his might, so much so that he was off the ground for an instant before completing the bat-swing and falling back on the pitch to try and make his ground. Fortunately for him, and unfortunately for England, Jos Buttler had failed to collect the ball. He was on 18 then.

It has been somewhat incongruous that Pant had already scored five Test hundreds, and had managed none across ODIs and T20Is. After the reprieve from Buttler, he would go on to correct that anomaly in Manchester on Sunday, hammering an unbeaten 125 off 113 deliveries that gave India the ODI series over England 2-1. In an indication of how well he paced his innings, Pant took 71 balls for his fifty, and just 35 to move to the hundred thereafter.

Pant first revived India from 72 for 4 in a 133-run partnership with Hardik Pandya. After the all-rounder fell with another 55 needed, Pant proceeded to absolutely flatten England. Having played the situation - as Pandya would say later - all along and turned it around for his team, Pant decided to have fun; he carved David Willey for five suc-

In an indication of how well he paced his innings, Pant took 71 balls for his fifty, and just 35 to move to the hundred thereafter.

cessive fours to bring India to the brink of victory, and then teased everyone present at Old Trafford by tapping a single off the last ball of the over. He reverted to typical Pant style, ending the game with a reverse-swept four off Joe Root.

He has cracked the big-innings puzzle in Test cricket long ago. But the fine line between attack and self-destruction that he straddles in the longer format has proved to be finer, and harder to sustain, in white-ball cricket. We see this a lot in T20, where he can go into a bit of a shell and then suddenly try to break the shackles, only to give it away. Not that it couldn't have happened on Sunday, but he put that Buttler chance behind him and applied himself to the task at hand. Not as eye-catching as the late volley of boundaries, but perhaps more important, were the calm dabs square of the wicket and the hard running between the wickets with Pandya. Even when he was squeezed for width, he found a way to rotate the strike, like when he hit the ball hard into the ground and got it to bounce over point.

A maiden white-ball hundred in a chase to seal an away series; as Pant said after the game, "Hopefully I remember (this century) for the rest of my life."