

## BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNNY



## JAHANGIRPURI

## Court: Cops accompanied illegal rally, probe if any complicity

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

NOTING THAT there was "utter failure" on the part of Delhi Police in stopping the unauthorised Hanuman Jayanti procession in Jahangirpuri last month that triggered communal clashes in the locality, a local court said the issue "seems to have been simply brushed aside" by senior officers — and complicity "if any" of police personnel needs to be investigated.

"The liability on the part of the concerned officials needs to be fixed so that in future no such incident takes place and the police is not complacent in preventing the illegal activities," said Additional Sessions Judge Gagandeep Singh in an order, while referring to the third procession in the area on April 16.

A copy of the order, which was issued on May 7 rejecting a clutch of bail pleas, has been directed to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Worried India rating may turn junk, govt pushed 'narrative management' strategy

ANISHA DUTTA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

AS THE country fought the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in mid-2020, the Ministry of Finance's economic division was drafting a strategy to counter the "negative commentary" on India by global think-tanks, indices, and media, amidst worries that this could lead to downgrading of sovereign rating to "junk".

## SOVEREIGN RATINGS: DOWN AND UP

## MOODY'S

**Nov '19:** Sovereign rating affirmed at Baa2; outlook changed to negative from stable

**June '20:** Rating down to Baa3, negative outlook

**Oct '21:** Affirms Baa3 rating; outlook changed to stable

## FITCH RATINGS

**Dec '19:** BBB-, stable outlook

**June '20:** BBB-, negative outlook

**Nov '21:** BBB-, negative outlook, but notes "rating balances still-strong medium-term growth outlook and external resilience"

In June 2020, then Principal Economic Advisor in the Ministry of Finance, Sanjeev Sanyal, prepared a presentation — "Subjective Factors that impact India's Sovereign Ratings: What can we do about it?" — for internal circulation within the government. Sanyal is now a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council.

The 36-page presentation, seen by *The Indian Express*, noted

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Security outside the entrance to Kashi Vishwanath temple and Gyanvapi mosque on Sunday. Anand Singh

## IndiGo 'denies' boarding to child with special needs

PRANAV MUKUL & ABHISHEK ANGAD  
NEW DELHI, RANCHI, MAY 8

IN AN incident that raises questions over the handling of air travellers with special needs, budget airline IndiGo allegedly denied boarding to a specially abled child on a Hyderabad-bound flight at the Ranchi airport on Saturday.

A senior official of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) told *The Indian Express* that the aviation safety regulator is probing the incident, and that a report has been sought from the airline. IndiGo said in a statement that the child "could not board the flight...as he was in a state of panic".

The incident was brought to light in a Facebook post by a passenger at the airport who was waiting to board another flight. The author of the post, Manisha Gupta, told *The Indian Express* that the IndiGo staff "did not show any compassion".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## AT HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE JAN 2010

## Demand up, output down: Atta prices at record high

Bakery bread prices up as well with 8.39% inflation in Mar

HARIKISHAN SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

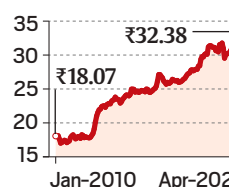
THE ALL-INDIA monthly average retail price of wheat flour (atta) was Rs 32.38 per kg in April, the highest since January 2010, the earliest month for which data are available.

Atta prices have been rising as both production and stocks of wheat have fallen in India, and demand has risen outside the country.

Data reported by State Civil Supplies Departments to the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution show the all-India average retail price of wheat flour was Rs 32.78/ kg on Saturday (May 7) — 9.15 per cent higher than the price (Rs 30.03

## FLOUR PRICE RISE

Retail prices of wheat flour (₹/kg)



Note: All-India monthly avg

per kg) a year ago.

Among the 156 centres for which data are available, the price on Saturday was the highest in Port Blair (Rs 59/ kg) and lowest (Rs 22/ kg) in West Bengal's Purulia.

Among the four metros, the

average wheat flour retail price was the highest in Mumbai (Rs 49/ per), followed by Chennai (Rs 34/ kg), Kolkata (Rs 29/ kg) and Delhi (Rs 27/ kg).

All-India average daily retail prices of wheat flour have been rising since the beginning of the calendar year, having increased by 5.81 per cent since January 1, the data show. The record high in April was significantly higher than the average retail price of Rs 31/ kg recorded in April 2021.

Sources said that the steady increase in the price of flour is due to the rise in wheat prices amid the fall in production due to the war in Ukraine, and a higher overseas demand for Indian wheat. The high domestic price of diesel has added to the logistics cost of both wheat and flour.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## US moves can push Indo-Pacific over edge of abyss, warns China

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

PUSHING FORWARD Chinese President Xi Jinping's concept of a "Global Security Initiative", an important Chinese official has said that the Indo-Pacific strategy of the United States, "if left unchecked", would bring "horrible consequences and push the Asia-Pacific over the edge of an abyss".

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng, who is one of the top

### EXPLAINED The Chinese point of view

BEIJING IS trying to clear the air on its intent on the Indo-Pacific, Russia, and possible consequences for the region. Le is an influential official — his words carry the weight of the party and government.

contenders to succeed Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also said, "Rather than learning the painful lessons of conflict and suffering in Europe, they seek to create a "second theatre" and bring the conflict to the Asia-Pacific."

Beijing refers to the Indo-Pacific as Asia-Pacific, and Vice Foreign Minister Le has been one of the voices presenting the Chinese government's view on developments in the region. Le, a former Chinese ambassador to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## WORLD



**JILL BIDEN, TRUDEAU MAKE SURPRISE VISIT TO UKRAINE**

**RUSSIA BOMBS UKRAINE SCHOOL, MANY FEARED DEAD**

PAGE 12

TOREX



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TORQUE

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Court-ordered video survey was held on Saturday after the Anjanam Intezamia Masjid Committee (Gyanvapi) filed an application in the Varanasi court seeking the replacement of Advocate Commissioner Ajai Kumar, accusing him of being "biased". The matter is scheduled to be heard on Monday.

On April 8, while hearing the petitioners, Civil Judge (Senior Division), Varanasi, Ravi Kumar Diwakar, had appointed Kumar to carry out a survey of the Maa Shringar Gauri Sthal at the disputed site — and directed him to "prepare videography of the action" and submit a report.

On April 21, the Allahabad High Court dismissed a petition filed by the masjid committee challenging the local court's order. On April 26, the Varanasi court again ordered videography of the disputed site, which began

about. We had asked the Advocate Commissioner to identify plot No. 9130 before they began the survey, but he did not listen to us. They should first clarify where this plot is," said a mosque official.

Meanwhile, the local police said they are trying to identify five people who raised "objectionable slogans" at the site when the team of surveyors visited on Saturday. Police have so far arrested one person in this regard, identifying him as Abdul Salam (47).

Salam, a resident of Chandauli district who works in Varanasi, was booked under IPC sections for rioting, creating obstruction in government work, and under section 7 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act for loitering and preventing access to a site. He has been sent to judicial custody. "We will soon

The court further said the contents of the FIR itself show that the local staff of the police station in Jahangirpuri, led by Inspector Rajiv Ranjan, as well as other officials were "accompanying the said illegal procession" on its route instead of stopping it.

"It appears that local police, instead of performing their duty in stopping the said illegal procession in the beginning itself and dispersing the crowd, was accompanying them to the entire route which later on led to unfortunate riots between the two communities," said ASJ Singh.

The court has made the observations in an order dismissing the bail applications of seven accused — Imteyaz, Noor Alam, Sheikh Hamid, Ahmad Ali, Sheikh Hamid, S K Sahahada, Sheikh Zahir and Aahir. The ac-

negations are serious against the accused/applicant," said the court.

## IndiGo

"He (the staff on duty) had made up his mind and that was it," said Gupta, adding that she "works in the social sector" and "has the experience in dealing with matters of disability rights". She took a flight on another airline to Delhi.

Gupta also posted a video of the incident, along with her Facebook post, showing several passengers at the airport arguing with the IndiGo ground employee, seeking to speak with a senior supervisor. It shows the child seated on a wheelchair.

In the post, Gupta wrote that there was a delegation of doctors on the same flight who asked the ground staff to get the airport doctor to take a call on the fitness

The court has made the observations in an order dismissing the bail applications of seven accused — Imteyaz, Noor Alam, Sheikh Hamid, Ahmad Ali, Sheikh Hamid, S K Sahahada, Sheikh Zahir and Ahir. The ac-



THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, MAY 9, 2022

# 3-lane flyover to connect ITO to Ashram in the pipeline

**GAYATHRI MANI**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

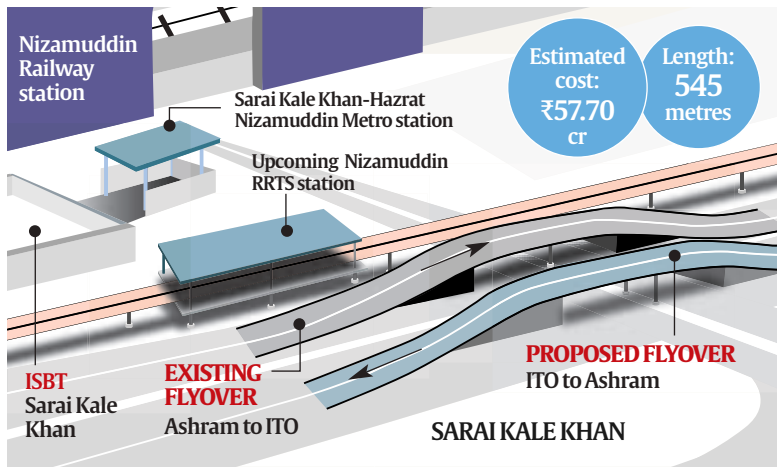
TO ENSURE a smooth commute between Central, East and Southeast Delhi, the Public Works Department (PWD) is planning to construct a three-lane flyover for vehicles travelling from ITO towards Ashram at the Sarai Kale Khan T-junction. This will come up alongside the existing flyover, which provides connectivity from Ashram to ITO.

Officials said the new flyover will also help decongest the Sarai Khan ISBT and T-junction where several other projects, such as the Rapid Rail Transit System (RRTS), are coming up.

“Sarai Kale Khan is going to become the city’s transport hub, with the RRTS, Delhi Metro, Nizamuddin Railway station and ISBT merging at one place. There is also a plan to integrate these... Once the RRTS station, which is under construction, is ready, the area is expected to become more congested. To avoid this, the PWD has decided to construct this additional flyover which will take the load of surface traffic coming from ITO and provide space for buses and local traffic below,” said an official.

The 545-metre-long flyover will have three lanes and two ramps. The ramp that goes up will be approximately 90 metres long and the down ramp will be 95 metres long. The PWD will also provide two U-turns and one intersection at the grade level. The still portion below will be approximately around 360 metres long and will have footpaths, said officials.

Officials added that it will also help decongest traffic at the Delhi-Meerut Expressway T-junction. “Presently, vehicles coming from Akshardham, Mayur



Vihar, Noida via the expressway also merge at Sarai Kale Khan bus stand and take the existing flyover towards ITO or to reach Sarai Kale ISBT, Ashram or to go to parts of Southeast Delhi. Now, the upcoming flyover will bear this load,” said the official.

Experts said the flyover, if planned well, will help decongest the area.

Sewa Ram, senior professor of transport planning at the School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), said, “There are three points where vehicles merge below the road at the T-junction — vehicles coming from ITO towards Sarai Kale Khan, from Akshardham as well as Noida via Delhi-Meerut Expressway T-junction. From here, traffic goes in different directions which creates congestion. There is a diverging point towards Barapullah flyover. Traffic either goes towards ISBT, ITO, Ashram or Barapullah. So, if the PWD addresses these issues, then the flyover will bring relief from traffic congestion and improve con-

nectivity. Else, it will be a uni-directional flyover from ITO to Ashram.”

Citing the example of RTR flyover, he added: “The PWD first constructed a one-way flyover on RTR Marg and constructed another flyover for traffic coming from the opposite direction several years later. Commuters had faced problems during the construction of the other flyover.”

Besides building a new flyover, the department has also decided to widen the service road along the existing flyover on the ISBT side and two other service roads across the flyover on the Yamuna side.

The department will also improve the existing footpath, drainage system, landscaping, road signages, road safety fixtures etc. Tenders for construction of the new flyover have been floated and the estimated cost is Rs 57.70 crore. Officials said processing the tender will take one-two months and once the work is awarded, the flyover will be constructed in a year.

## Lady Hardinge’s new OPD block to open today

**ANONNA DUTT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

AFTER REMAINING under construction for nearly a decade, the new block for outpatient clinics at Lady Hardinge Medical College will be inaugurated on Monday. Soon after, the “unsafe,” old building will be vacated.

“All our clinical departments such as medicine, surgery and gynaecology will shift there after the inauguration on Monday. The old building is not in a good condition and other buildings will come up in its place once a finance approval happens,” said the hospital’s medical director Dr Ram Chander.

The building is a long time coming. The redevelopment plan for the hospital — which was established as an 80-bed centre in 1916, and grew to become the current 877-bed Sucheta Kriplani hospital and 377-bed Kalawati Saran Children’s hospital — was approved by the government 13 years ago.

The first phase of the construction, which focused on an alternative outpatient department that had been constructed in 1956, began in 2011.

The project, however, remained in limbo for years after the private contractor abandoned it citing a lack of funds. The half-con-

structed buildings for years remained a breeding ground for dengue-transmitting mosquitoes.

The situation became dire in 2018 when the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) in a report said the structure had become “unsafe”.

The report said the roof was in a derelict state. OPD services continued to be provided from the same building to over 2,000 patients daily, including young children and neonates. Citing safety concerns, the doctors in the hospital went on a strike and withdrew it only on the assurance that construction would restart soon.

The space for the old block is likely to be utilised for a 1,300-bed paediatric and neonatal care facility in the second phase of redevelopment, which will make Kalawati Saran the largest children’s hospital in Asia — a title currently held by the 837-bed Institute of Child Health and Hospital for Children in Chennai.

“This building will be dismantled once approval for new blocks comes in. There is a proposal to create the Kalawati Saran Institute of Medical Sciences for Children — it will be a three-block Centre with state-of-the-art facilities for care of children and mothers,” said Dr Ram Chander.


## BJP asks police chief to not let bars stay open till 3 am

**New Delhi:** The Delhi BJP requested the Police Commissioner to not allow bars to stay open till 3 am as the AAP government’s move can lead to law and order problems. State BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor wrote a letter in this regard. **ENS**

**RAVI KANOJIA**  
(07 JUNE 1982 - 09 MAY 2016)



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POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVEABLE PROPERTY)

Notice is hereby given under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement(Security) Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) and 13(12) read with Rules 8 & 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer issued a Demand Notice on the dates noted against each Account as mentioned hereinafter, calling upon them to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the under noted borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Sec 13(4) of the said Act read with Rules 8 of the said Rules on the dates mentioned against each Account.

The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealing with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of Indian Bank for the amounts and interests thereon mentioned against each account herein below:

The attention of borrowers detailed hereunder is invited to the provision of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Sr. No.	Name of the Branch	Name of the Account	Name of The Borrower/ Guarantor (owner of the property)	Description of the charged/ Mortgaged property (all the part & parcel of the property consisting of)	Date of Demand Notice Date of possession Notice Amount outstanding as on the date of demand Notice
1.	Kankar-bagh Branch	Shri Mukesh Kumar & others (A/c-6642406190)	Shri Mukesh Kumar, Smt. Sugani Devi, Shri Prabhat Kumar, Shri Dilip Kumar & Shri Rajeev Kumar	All Part and parcel of Land & Building vide Sale Deed No-22764 dated 27.11.2009 in the name of Smt. Sugani Devi W/o Late Mohan Singh situated at Mauza- Khemni chak, Thana- Phulwari sharif, Bad thana- P.S No-177 Chowk by T/MN thana, P.S No-177 developed by T/MN Aditya	09.12.2021 04.05.2022 Rs.2511943.00 (Rs. Twenty Five Lakhs Eleven hundred forty three only) as on 09-12-2021 with interest, cost & charges till the date of realization.
				Gaurichak, present thana- Ramkrishna nagar, Sub & Sadar registry office and District- Patna, Taazi No-370, Thana No-112, Khata No-74 and survey khesra Plot No-10 (part), Kanhaiy nagar, Hira path, East of Shiv Nagar, Patna-800027, Area-900 sqft (2.0664 Decimal). <b>Boundary (As per Deed) North:</b> 10 feet wide Road in which 5 feet Road has been left by Samiti & 5 feet Road has been left by the front Digar Kharidar, <b>South:</b> Hal Kharidar Digar, <b>East:</b> Hal Kharidar Digar, <b>West:</b> Imroja Kharidar Smt. Shanti Devi	10.12.2021 07.05.2022 Rs.2994355.03 (Rupees Twenty Nine Lakhs ninety four thousand three hundred fifty five and three paise only) as on 10-12-2021 with interest, cost & charges till the date of realization.
2.	Hajipur Main Branch	Smt. Ranju Kumari & Shri Punit Kumar (A/c- 50312697471)	Smt. Ranju Kumari & Shri Punit Kumar	All Part and parcel of Land & Building situated at Aditya Shankar Apartment having Flat No-306, 3rd floor, Area-900 sqft (Build up area), Mauza- Nakhash Chowk, P.S- Town thana, P.S No-177 developed by T/MN Aditya	10.12.2021 07.05.2022 Rs.2994355.03 (Rupees Twenty Nine Lakhs ninety four thousand three hundred fifty five and three paise only) as on 10-12-2021 with interest, cost & charges till the date of realization.
Unique construction Pvt Ltd on Khata No-481, 518 & 55, Khesra No-22, 25, 27, 29 and a part of 33 vide Sale Deed No-8903 dated 17.12.2015 in Book No-01, Volume No-156 page no-561 to 564 in CD No-24/year 2015 registered with District Registry Office Hajipur in the name of Smt Ranju Kumari. <b>Boundary of Flat No-306 (As per Sale Deed No8903 dated 17-12-2015) North:</b> Flat No-304 & Boundary of the Plot, <b>South:</b> Flat No-305, <b>East:</b> Flat No-304 & corridor, <b>West:</b> Boundary of the Plot & land Owner niz					
<b>Date : 07.05.2022</b> <b>Place : Patna</b>					<b>(Authorized Officer)</b> <b>Indian Bank</b>

## Public Auction Notice DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL AT PATNA (Government of India, Ministry of Finance) A, B & F Wings, Karpuri Thakur Sadan, Ashiana Digha Road, Patna-800 025 Bank of India, Sowan Branch, Buxar Vs M/s Vidyadaan & Others (In R.P. Case No. 323/2016 arising out of Certificate No. OA. 243/2015) E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

As per order dated 30/03/2022, under mentioned property will be sold by public online e-Auction on the date and time mentioned herein for recovery of **Rs.7,03,44,437/- + interest/cost and other expenses from M/s Vidyadaan & Others**, the sum is recoverable together with interest, cost, charges, as per the certificate. The auction sale will be by way of online e-Auction.

Description of Property:

Details of scheme of Property				Reserve Price	EMD	Date and Time of Auction
<b>Schedule 'A'</b>				<b>Rs. 9,20,00,000/- (Rupees Nine Crores and Twenty Lacs Only)</b>	<b>Rs. 92,00,000/- (Rupees Ninety Two Lacs Only)</b> on or before <b>08/06/2022</b> upto 4.00 P.M.	<b>10/06/2022</b> between 12.30 P.M. to 4.00 P.M. with auto extension clause in case of bid in last 5 minutes before closing, if required. The amount by which the Biddings are to increased shall be Rs. 20,000/-
Equitable Mortgage of land and building in the name of Vidyadaan Society bearing Registration No. S/62558/2008 vide Registered Deed of Absolute Sale bearing No. 9663 dated 08.11.2008 at Mauza - Arriyaon, Thana No. 323, area measuring altogether 7 Acres 27 Decimals (in 10 Lots), District - Buxar, details of each lot along with their respective boundary is given below: -						
Khata No.	Khesra No.	Area	Boundary			
987 (old) & 21 (new)	5651 (old) & 3047 (new)	64 Decimals	North : Raj Narayan Singh; South: Banke Bihari Singh; East: Ram Bahadur Singh; and West Govt of Bihar			
	3046 (new)	56 Decimals	North: Ajain; South: Ajain; East: Ajain; and West: Alain			
1480 (old) & 43 (new)	324 and 325 (old) & 390 (new)	1 Acre 48 Decimals	North: Shree Kamal Singh; South: Govt. of Bihar; East: Ramadhar Pathak; and West: Govt. of Bihar			
1478 (old) & 43 (new)	323 (old) & 392 (new)	24 Decimals	North: Ajain; South: Ajain; East: Ajain; and West: Ajain			
379 (old) & 869 (new)	339 (old) & 397 (new)	67 Decimals	North: Shree Kant Singh; South: Dina Kurmi; East: Dinesh Singh Kabaledar; and West: Govt. of Bihar			
379 (old) & 1154 (new)	339 (old) & 397 (new)	69 Decimals	North: Sona Kunwari; South: Parmanand Singh; East: Ajain; and West: Alain			
707 (old) & 1098 (new)	371 & 372 (old) & 440 (new)	81 Decimals	North: Ram Bahadur Singh & Others; South: Govt. of Bihar & Prem Nath Singh; East: Ramakant Singh and West: Ajain.			
707 (old) & 1098 (new)	371 & 372 (old) & 440 (new)	1 Acre 5 Decimals	North: Ram Bahadur Singh & Others; South: Govt. of Bihar & Prem Nath Singh; East: Ramakant Singh and West: Ajain.			
707 (old) & 1098 (new)	5361 (old) & 444 (new)	36 Decimals	North: Ajain; South: Ajain; East: Ajain and West: Ajain			
707 (old) & 1098 (new)	373 (old) & 437 (new)	77 Decimals	North: Ajain; South: Ajain; East: Ajain; and West: Ajain			
<b>Total Area</b>		<b>7 Acres 27 Decimals</b>				

Equitable Mortgage of land and building in the name of Vidyadaan Society bearing Registration No. S/62558/2008 vide Registered Deed of Absolute Sale bearing No. 10762 dated 16.12.2008 at Mauza - Arriyaon, Buxar, Thana No. 323, Khata No. 43, area measuring altogether 3 Acres 48.5 Decimals (in 8 Lots), District - Buxar, details of each lot along with their respective boundary is given below:-

Khata No.	Khesra No.	Area	Boundary
43	3037 & 3038	74.5 Decimals	North: Judge Yadav; South: Degree Yadav; East: Judge Yadav; and West: Sri Kamal Singh
43	3037	62.5 Decimals	North: Judge Yadav & Ram Parpan Singh; South: Ajab Dayal Singh; East Judge Yadav; and West: Sri Kamal Singh
379	2953	57 Decimals	North: Ajab Dayal Singh; South: Govt. of Bihar; East: Tulsi Yadav; and West: Ajab Daval Singh
1056	388	28 Decimals	North: Ram Bahadur Singh & Others; South: Vidyadaan Society; East: Vidyadaan Society; and West: Chhavar
91	2950	56 Decimals	North: Degree Yadav; South: Nagendre Yadav; East: Nagendre Yadav; and West: Ramadhar Pathak
791	2954	24 Decimals	North: Ajab Dayal Singh; South: Tulsi Yadav; East: Judge Yadav; and West: Ramadhar Pathak
516	3040	10.5 Decimals	North: Karha; South: Ajab Dayal Singh; East: Vidyadaan Society; and West: Diwakar Singh
516	3039	36 Decimals	North: Karha; South: Ajain; East: Divakar Singh; West: Vidyadaan Society.
<b>Total Area</b>		<b>3 Acres 48.5 Decimals</b>	

Equitable Mortgage of land and building in the name of Vidyadaan Society bearing Registration No. S/62558/2008 vide Registered Deed of Absolute Sale bearing No. 10655 dated 12.12.2008 at Mauza - Arriyaon, Buxar, Thana No. 323, Khata No. 43, P.S. - Dumraon, area measuring altogether 1 Acres 82 Decimals (in 4 Lots), District - Buxar, details of each lot along with their respective boundary is given below:-

Khata No.	Khesra No.	Area	Boundary
24 (old) & 765 (new)	318 and 319 (old) & 389 (new)	1 Acre 23 Decimals	North: Diwakar Singh; South: Ajab Dayal Singh; East: Ajab Dayal Singh; and West: Govt. of Bihar.
2024 (old) & 763 (new)	347 (old) & 417 (new)	31 Decimals	North: Karha; South: Videshi Kurmi; East: Videshi Kurmi and West: Karha.
1799 (new)	397 & 8670	23 Decimals	North: Govt of Bihar; South: Ramadhar Singh; East: Ram Uchit Singh and West: Dudh Nath Singh.
1799 (new)	400 (new)	5 Decimals	North: Govt of Bihar; South: Ramadhar Singh; East: Dudh Nath Singh and West: Dudh Nath Singh.
<b>Total Area</b>		<b>1 Acres 82 Decimals</b>	

Equitable Mortgage of land and building in the name of Vidyadaan Society bearing Registration No. S/62558/2008 vide Registered Deed of Absolute Sale bearing No. 10464 dated 03.12.2008 at Mauza - Arriyaon, Buxar, Thana No. 323, area measuring altogether 4 Acres 51 Decimals (in 8 Lots), District - Buxar, details of each lot along with their respective boundary is given below:-

Khata No.	Khesra No.	Area	Boundary
216 (old) & 1631 (new)	336 (old) & 398 (new)	15 Decimals	North: Govt of Bihar; South: Rudra Pratap Singh; East: Shrikant Singh; and West: Chhavar.
216 (old) & 1631 (new)	336 (old) & 405 (new)	20 Decimals	North: Govt of Bihar; South: Rudra Pratap Singh; East: Shrikant Singh; and West: Chhavar.
833 (old) & 935 (new)	5650 (old) & 3044 (new)	1 Acre 44 Decimals	North: Ram Bahadur Singh; South: Shivyash Singh; East: Vijay Bahadur Singh; and West: Chhavar.
	3045	1 Acre 15 Decimals	North: Ajain; South: Ajain; East: Ajain; and West: Ajain.
972 (old) & 79 (new)	5653 (old) & 3050 (new)	36 Decimals	North: Chhavar; South: Shiv Nath Yadav; East: Chhavar; and West: Chhavar.
1944 (old) & 516 (new)	317 (old) & 3043 (new)	42 Decimals	North: Bankey Bihar Singh; South: Diwakar Singh; East: Nij; and West: Chhavar.
	3042	35 Decimals	North: Ajain; South: Ajain; East: Ajain; and West: Ajain.
1944 (old) & 516 (new)	5648 (old) & 3040 & 3039 (new)	44 Decimals	North: Karha, South: Sri Awadh Bihari Singh; East: Sri Vijay Bahadur Singh; and West: Sri Kamal Singh
<b>Total Area</b>		<b>4 Acres 51 Decimals</b>	

**Schedule 'B'**  
Equitable Mortgage of land in the name of certificate debtor no. 2 namely Sri Surya Kumar Singh, S/o Sri Bindeshwari Singh vide Registered Deed of Absolute Sale bearing No. 4182 dated 22.08.1997 bearing Khesra No. 284, Area 195 square metre and situated at Village - Kanwali; Kendriyadood, District - Dehra Doon. Bounded and butted as follows - North Rukmani Garh; South: Dr. Arun Kumar Verma: East: Rukmani Gargh; and West: Road.

**Schedule 'C'**  
Equitable Mortgage of land in the name of certificate debtor no. 3 namely Dr. Arun Kumar Verma, S/o Chandradeep Prasad Verma vide Registered Deed of Absolute Sale bearing No. 4181 dated 22.08.1997 bearing Khesra No. 284, Area 250.83 square metre and situated at Village - Kanwali; Kendriyadood, District - Dehra Doon. Bounded and butted as follows - North: Rukmani Gargh; South 25 ft. wide Road; East: Rukmani Gargh; and West: K.R. Uniyal,

**Schedule 'D'**  
Equitable Mortgage of Flat belonging to the certificate debtor no. 3 namely Dr. Arun Kumar Verma, S/o Chandradeep Prasad Verma bearing G-303 on 3rd Floor of Jaipuria Sunrise Greens measuring 1198 sq. ft. vide Registered Deed of Absolute Sale bearing No. 15945 dated 04.07.2009 at Housing Plot No. 12A, Ahinsa Khand, Indirapuram, Town and District - Ghaziabad. Bounded and butted as follows - North: Road 100' ft. wide; South: Road 120' ft. wide; East: Road 150' ft. wide; and West: Road 80' ft. wide.

### Details of e-auction Agency:

**Company Name/address:-** M/s E-Procurement Technologies Limited, B-704, Wall Street-II, Opp. - Orient Club, Near Gujarat College, Ellis Bridge, Ahmedabad- 380 006, Gujarat, India, **Help Number:** 079-68136854/55/51 & 079-68136800, Mobile No. 926556821, **Contact Person:** Mr. Praveen Kumar Thever, **E-mail Address:-praveen.thever@auctiontiger.net**, **Website add:** <https://drtauctiontiger.net>.

**Details of the facilitation Center:-** (i) Office of Recovery Officer, A, B & F Wings, 2nd Floor, Karpuri Thakur Sadan, Ashiyana Digha Road, Rajiv Nagar, Patna - 25, (ii) Bank of India, Zonal Office, Chanakya Palace, First Floor, Beer Chand Patel Marg, Patna, Bihar-800001 - Mr. Subodh Kumar, Chief Manager Mobile No. 8788748220, 9454293998, E-mail: Patna.ARD@bankofindia.co.in and Recovery.patna@bankofindia.co.in

**Facilitation Centre and property inspection -** Bank of India, Zonal Office, Chanakya Palace, First Floor, Beer Chand Patel Marg, Patna, Bihar-800001 - Mr. Subodh Kumar, Chief Manager Mobile No. 8788748220, 9454293998, E-mail: Patna.ARD@bankofindia.co.in and Recovery.patna@bankofindia.co.in

### ACCOUNT DETAIL FOR ONLINE MONEY TRANSFER

ACCOUNT NO. & NAME	NAME	IFSC CODE
441020110000195	BANK OF INDIA, ARB, Patna	BKID0004410

### TERMS & CONDITIONS OF SALE:-

- The property shall be sold "as is where is basis".
- The intending bidders should register the participation with the service provider well in advance and get user ID and password for participating in E-auction. It can be procured only when the requisite Earnest Money Deposit is paid by prescribed mode.
- To take part in Auction, each bidder shall deposit Earnest Money (EMD) @ of 10% of the Reserve Price which shall be paid by electronic transfer to the concerned Bank's EMD account or through DD/Pay order drawn in favour of Recovery Officer, DRT, Patna alongwith copy of PAN Card, Address Proof and Identity proof with E-mail ID, Mobile no of bidder. The Envelop containing EMD along with details of documents should be superscribed **R.P. No. 323/2016** and in case of the company copy of resolution by the Board members of the company or any other document confirming representation/attorney of the company should reach on or before 4.00 P.M. of **08/06/2022** in the office of Recovery Officer, DRT, Patna or should credit the amount in respective Bank's/Financial Institution's account. EMD received thereafter shall not be considered.
- The successful bidder shall have to pay 25% of the sale proceeds (including EMD) on the next working day of sale through the mode as stated above.
- The purchaser shall deposit the balance 75% of the sale proceeds before the undersigned on or before 15th day from the date of sale of the property, exclusive of such day or if the 15th day be Sunday or other Holiday, then on the first day after the 15th day alongwith the poundage fee @ 2% upto Rs. 1000/- and @ 1% on the excess of such gross amount over Rs. 1000/- by prescribed mode as stated above.
- In case of default of payment within the prescribed period, the property shall be resold, after the issue of fresh proclamation of sale. The deposit, after defraying the expenses of the sale, may, if the undersigned thinks fit, be forfeited to the Government and the defaulting purchaser shall forfeit all claims to the property or to any part of the sum for which it may subsequently be sold.
- The Recovery Officer has the absolute right to accept or reject any bid or bids or to postpone or cancel the e-auction without assigning any reasons.
- EMD of unsuccessful bidder shall be returned the same day of auction by DRT/ Bank by credit to the account of bidder mentioned in bid form.
- Prospective bidder may avail online training from service provider.
- Prospective bidders are advised to go through the website for details terms & conditions of sale before submitting their bids or contact Branch Manager of the concerned Branch.

**Dated : 30/04/2022**

New Delhi

**(Nandan Kumar)**  
Recovery Officer



CORONAVIRUS  
IN THE CAPITALVACCINATIONS IN  
LAST 24 HOURS  
**51,761**PATIENTS IN HOSPITAL: **186**  
OXYGEN SUPPORT **65**  
VENTILATOR SUPPORT **3**DELHI TOTAL  
CASES **18,94,254**Total **9,590**  
Hospital Beds **2,239**  
ICU Beds **2,186**

	Cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
May 7	1,407	1,546	2	29,821
May 8	1,422	1,438	0	26,647
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,939*</b>	<b>18,62,136</b>	<b>26,179</b>	<b>3,80,51,835</b>

\*Total active cases in Delhi

Noida		
	May 7	May 8
Cases	134	N/A
Deaths	0	N/A

Gurgaon		
	May 7	May 8
Cases	355	390
Deaths	0	0

## Govt-aided schools get edu dept respite

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

OBSERVING THAT teachers of many government-aided schools are not being paid on time due to the inability of these schools to timely pay their dues, the Directorate of Education has given them more breathing room to fulfil their obligations.

According to provisions of the Delhi School Education and Act and Rules, the managing committee of all government-aided schools have to deposit 5% of the pay and allowances of their employees monthly to enable salaries to be disbursed in the first week of every month. The Delhi government covers 95% of these expenses.

"It has been observed that the payment of salary of quite a large number of employees of government-aided schools does not get credited in their accounts on time, primarily due to the reason that some of the managing committees are unable to deposit their share of 5% into government account in advance within the prescribed time limit on the pretext of financial problems," the DoE has stated in a recent order. It also said it has received complaints from employees that the managing committees of some schools force employees to hand over 5% of their salary, and deposit the management's share in the government's account after that.

To prevent delays in salaries being paid to teachers and other employees, the DoE has decided to give relaxation to these schools from having to deposit their share every month, and has allowed them to prepare salary bills and submit these to the government with an undertaking that they will deposit their share by the end of the quarter — by June 30, September 30, December 31 or March 31 as the case may be.



## COOLING OFF

A worker finds a way to beat the heat in the capital, Sunday. The maximum temperature was recorded at 40 degrees Celsius. *Praveen Khanna*

## BJP MLA IN ATTENDANCE

# At Nuh, guns and threats in show of strength by cow vigilantes

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA  
NUH, MAY 8

DAYS AFTER Nuh Police registered an FIR following viral videos of purported 'gau rakshaks' forcing a man into an SUV at gunpoint, cow vigilante groups held a mahapanchayat at a cow shelter in the district's Sangel village Sunday.

The groups said they had given the call for the gathering on social media in response to statements made by politicians in Nuh suggesting that "gau rakshaks will not be allowed to enter". They also issued an ultimatum to the state government to end cow smuggling in Nuh within a month.

"Seven demands were raised. It was decided that a district-level committee should be formed to look into the matter. The administration should confiscate property and vehicles of people accused of cow smuggling and auction them. The amount should be given to cow shelters. Fast-track courts should be set up to hear these cases. Further, arms licences for gau rakshaks should be given and FIRs against gau rakshaks should be withdrawn. If there is no action on these demands, we are ready for a 'jail bharo' andolan. We have started a movement and will not stop till cow slaughter is completely stopped," said Bharat



At the mahapanchayat in Sangel village, Sunday. *Express*

Bushan, a gau rakshak and one of the organisers.

In the days leading up to the panchayat, security had been stepped up in the district with three additional companies deployed.

Deputy Commissioner (Nuh) Ajay Kumar said organisers had sought permission for the panchayat and it was granted on Saturday afternoon. "Permission was granted subject to enforcement of certain law and order conditions. We held a meeting with the organisers and informed them that law and order has to be maintained," he said.

Addressing the panchayat, Sohna MLA Sanjay Singh said he extended

his "full support" to the gathering: "Today, I am an MLA due to blessings of gau mata and that is why I have come here. It was my duty."

Singh added that the panchayat was held to ensure cow slaughter does not take place in Nuh: "Haryana was the first state in the country to bring a law to ban cattle slaughter. Whatever decision is taken, you have my support. I will take the memorandum of demands to the CM."

Kulbhushan Bhardwaj, legal adviser, Sanyukt Hindu Sangharsh Samiti, told the gathering that if FIRs are lodged against "gau bhakts", then they will ensure that the cur-

rent leaders are not voted to power again.

"It is being asked why people are waving weapons. I want to tell the administration that today these gau bhakts have only come to mark their attendance, but if required, we would not let these arms rust. We will fight," he said.

Members of Bajrang Dal and VHP from across the state also attended the mahapanchayat. At the panchayat, at least three men were seen carrying guns and several were carrying swords and axes. The men claimed they had licences for the guns.

Sources said one of the conditions laid down by the administration was that no weapons are allowed. On some people carrying swords and guns at the panchayat, the DC said, "We will verify it and take action accordingly."

On reports of some people allegedly vandalising a religious structure near the venue, the DC said, "As per a preliminary report, the structure is a Hindu pitir (shrine), dedicated to an ancestor in the village. It has been reported that some people damaged it. The situation was brought under control. No complaint has been received so far. We will look into it."

SP (Nuh) Varun Singla added, "No complaint has been received in this regard."

# Capital's anganwadi workers resume protest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

MONTHS AFTER their 39-day sit-in protest was stopped, anganwadi workers Sunday took out a rally and marched towards the Delhi Chief Minister's residence in Civil Lines, demanding that all terminated workers be given their jobs back and that the state pay pending salaries to other workers.

Earlier in January, anganwadi workers took to the streets demanding an increase in their honorarium among other things. The protest, outside the CM's residence, lasted

over a month. Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal had then imposed the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) against the workers, which meant they had to return to work.

On Sunday, the workers said they are unhappy with the state and Centre's reaction to their demands. They tried reaching the CM's residence, but Delhi Police stopped them.

Usha Das (41), who has been working as an anganwadi worker for 16 years, said she received a show-cause notice and a termination letter on WhatsApp on March 12. The letters read that she has been "absent" from her duties and "disrupted the

functioning of ICDS schemes". Usha said she has lost her job.

According to the Delhi State Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union (DSAWHU), more than 884 such workers have been terminated without a reason. "The notice says I was absent and was in the dharna. Is protesting a crime? I was only earning around Rs 4,500. I have four children, and my husband doesn't have a job. After we suspended the protest, we were called back, and I went to Mehrauli and other areas for vaccination drives. How can they send a notice? I have been working for the state for years. I haven't taken leaves. Now, I want my job back and

my pending salary from January..." said Usha.

Shakuntala (48), who lives in Harsh Vihar, said her family has been suffering because she lost her job. "I haven't received my payment since January this year. I have been working as an anganwadi worker since 2006... We will continue our protests and 'gherao' other houses to talk to politicians," she said.

Government officials said they met a delegation from the union (DSAWHU) and received their memorandum. They will look into the complaints and a meeting will be fixed with the members, said the officials.



The case against Bagga is based on a complaint by Dr Sunny Singh Ahluwalia, AAP Punjab spokesperson. *Praveen Khanna*

## STRUCTURAL ENGINEER KNOWN FOR SEVERAL ICONIC BUILDINGS

# Mahendra Raj, man behind Hall of Nations in Pragati Maidan and Salarjung Museum in Hyderabad, dies at 97

SHINY VARGHESE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER Mahendra Raj, known for some of the iconic buildings in modern India, including the Hall of Nations in Pragati Maidan, New Delhi; Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad; Municipal Stadium and Sports Complex, Ahmedabad, passed away Sunday morning at his residence in Delhi. He was 97.

One who worked with all leading architects across the country to create some wall-bending innovations, Raj brought poetic beauty to concrete. Be it the floral relief on the roof of the flower market in Chennai (1985-97); the structural

lightness he achieved on the ground with the Hall of Nations (1971-72); or the paper clip-like inclined folded legs of the Ahmedabad Stadium (1962-65). Many of the buildings were India's first on the world architectural map because of Raj's innovations. In his career spanning over six decades, he brought engineering finesse to over 180 structures across India.

"He was a mentor and a guide all through my life. My career's best buildings, I owe to Raj. These days, there is really not much to talk about in terms of innovations in the profession. The quality and grace of life come only when there is a creative mind behind it. And Raj was such that any mundane thing would become graceful. He was a gardener for



Mahendra Raj. *Archive*

all architects, he created beautiful things for us. He never saw problems, he found solutions..." says

Pritzker Prize winner architect B V Doshi, who worked with Raj on many projects, including the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, and Tagore Hall, Ahmedabad.

After his civil engineering from Lahore in 1946, Raj joined the Punjab Works Department Buildings and Roads, and was later the executive engineer working on Le Corbusier's buildings in Chandigarh.

His work with Corbusier inspired him to go abroad for further studies, after which he moved to New York and worked at Ammann Whitney Consulting Engineers till 1959. He began Mahendra Raj Consultants in Mumbai in 1960. By then, he had met late architect Charles Correa, with whom he built the Hindustan Unilever Pavilion in

Pragati Maidan in 1961. Quite like a crumpled sheet of paper, it was a maze of ramps and platforms enclosed by walls, some caving in, some slanting out. Ten years later, he would open his Delhi office.

"Almost every building of architectural importance in the country, from the seventies to the nineties, has Mahendra Raj's stamp on it. He knew how to articulate an architect's vision through his structural expression. He was a balanced human being, and it showed in his life and buildings. All his work has structural robustness and he would bring to shape any building any architect wanted," says architect and urban designer K T Ravindran.

Ravindran also mentions that Raj was a model for Brylcreem in

the early years and was a marathon runner even until his late seventies.

"His going is a deep loss. He carried modern Indian architecture on his shoulders. Ours was a jugalbandi. We did many projects together. He had a deep understanding of the architect's intent, and helped to carry forward the idea. His rigour and skill in drawing details are unmatched," says Raj Rewal, with whom he designed the Hall of Nations.

Raj also helped frame the legislation for the regulation of the profession of engineers, which resulted in the government establishing the Engineering Council of India in 2002. An active member of the International Federation of Consulting Engineers, he has many awards and recognitions to his credit.

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AAP, Twenty20 not to contest Kerala bypoll

Thiruvananthapuram: AAP and KITEK Group's CSR wing Twenty-20 on Sunday announced that they would not field candidates for the by-election at Thrikkalkara assembly seat in Kerala.

The by-election, which would be held on May 31, was necessitated by the death of Congress legislator P T Thomas.

Earlier, KITEK MD and chief co-ordinator of Twenty-20 Sabu M Jacob had announced that Twenty-20 and AAP would have a common candidate in the by-election.

Jacob on Sunday said the bypoll has no political significance and its outcome would not make any impact. "This by-election is not going to influence or impact the state government. The decision not to field a common candidate was taken after discussions with AAP. We would concentrate on organisational activities," he said.

AAP state co-ordinator P C Cyriac said his party does not have the habit of contesting by-elections in states where it is not in power. "By winning a by-election, AAP cannot influence the present government. We would focus on strengthening the organisation with an aim to contest the coming general elections," ENS

‘BJP-RSS turning Ram into Rambo, Hanuman into a symbol of anger’

Period of ‘aggressive nationalism’ India is passing through will end, says Baghel

MANOJ CG  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

CHHATTISGARH CHIEF Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday hit out at the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), accusing them of turning "gentle and benign Lord Ram" into a Rambo-like figure and Hanuman into a symbol of anger.

In an interview, the Congress leader told *The Indian Express* that India was passing through a phase of "provocative and aggressive nationalism" — communal strife was reported from across India in April — with no space for "dissent and disagreement". He added that this would pass and the Congress would make a comeback.

"Ram is embedded in our culture. Ram is both sakaar and nirakaar (form and formless)... We have accepted Ram in various manifestations. We know Kabir's Ram, Tulsi's Ram and Shabari's Ram..." Baghel said.

He went on to add, "Mahatma Gandhi also saw Ram. His last words were 'Hey Ram' and he used to recite Raghupati Raghav



The Chhattisgarh Chief Minister said the Congress will make a comeback

Raja Ram. But today, the way the BJP and the RSS see Ram and the agenda they are setting, the Ram who was 'Maryada Purushottam'... they have turned him into a fighter. *Rambo bana diya jaraha hain* (They are turning him into Rambo). *Akramak* (aggressive). Hanuman is the epitome of humility, devotion and knowledge. But the posters of him today. If you look at Hanuman's old pictures, the Lord was so beautiful, *bhakti se dhiyan mudra main* (meditative and devotional). And today, angry and aggressive. The way they are setting the mindset of the society ... they did it with

Ram earlier and are doing it with Hanuman now."

One of the Baghel government's ambitious projects is the Ram Van Gaman Paryatan Paripath or a tourism circuit envisaged to map the route that devotees believe the deity took during his exile from Ayodhya.

The CM also took a dig at the BJP, saying that its idea of nationalism was imported. "Who met Mussolini? It was BS Moonje ... the drums, caps, everything is imported. Their model of nationalism has no place for dissent and disagreement. Our nationalism is different. Ours is rooted in traditions from the beginning, evolved by the likes of Shankaracharya, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Ramakrishna Paramahansa..."

Asked why his party had not been able to convey this message to the electorate, Baghel said that it took the RSS 75 years to make the country understand its version of nationalism. "Remember, it was rejected during Gandhi's time. (VD) Savarkar and his ideas were rejected. But it is like bubbles in the water. A time will come when they will burst. This period

will also end."

Asked what, in his view, the Congress was not doing, Baghel said, "See, the society is facing a period of provocative nationalism and aggressive nationalism. There is no respect for dissent... The Congress will not be able to do that. It has never done that, is not doing it, and will never do that. But people are supporting it... In the end, love and brotherhood will emerge victorious..." "The violence that is taking place in different states, I don't want to take the names of any state. Is anybody leading this violence? Nobody is leading, it is headless. And if headless people set the country's agenda, then it is very unfortunate for the country..." he added.

The CM said former Congress president Rahul Gandhi was the only leader fighting the BJP without holding back. "He is the only person who attacks the BJP directly. He is not scared. He is the only leader who has been talking about people's issues..." Asked why the Congress was losing despite Gandhi raising people's issues, Baghel said, "It is up to the people to accept it or not."

7 councillors quit Cong, join BJP in Gujarat

Rajkot: Around six months after the administration of the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu suspended the president of Congress-ruled Diu Municipal Council, seven of the nine Congress councillors defected to the BJP Saturday and brought an end to the 15-year-long Congress rule in the civic body.

At a public meeting organised at Ghoghla in Diu, the seven councillors—Hareesh Kapadiya, Dinesh Kapadiya, Ravindra Solanki, Ranjan Raju Vankar, Bhagyavanti Solanki, Bhavnaga Dudhmal and Nikita Shah—formally joined the BJP. They were welcomed by Vijaya Rahatkar, BJP national secretary who is the principal incharge in DNH& Daman and Diu.

The development comes at the fag end of the current general board of the Diu Municipal Council and the general election is due in around a month's time.

While Congress's Praful Patel could not be reached for comment, Rahatkar said the six councillors joined the BJP to support the "politics of development" practised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Today, six Congress councillors joined the BJP... Now, the Congress has almost no councillor left..." the BJP leader told media persons. ENS

MP Navneet Rana challenges Uddhav to enter poll fray

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, MAY 8

PARLIAMENTARIAN NAVNEET Rana on Sunday challenged chief minister Uddhav Thackeray to contest elections from "anywhere in Maharashtra", adding she was "willing to contest against him and show him the empowerment of women in electoral politics."

After being discharged from Lilavati hospital, where she was admitted for treatment of spondylosis, the Amaravati MP, who was arrested last month, alleged that she was harassed and tortured in the lockup.

Stating that she was jailed along with her husband for "taking lord Ram's name", Rana said the "people of the state will give a befitting reply to them (the state's ruling MVA government) as they have misused their power".

Addressing CM Thackeray, she said, "If you have guts, then contest election from any of the districts in state. I will contest against you and then see who the people of the state choose. You have got the CM's position because of your forefathers' name. I challenge you to enter the electoral process, contest and win the elections. I will contest against you." Rana said she would come up against Shiv Sena in the upcoming civic body election, accusing the party of "massive corruption in the BMC in the past few decades".

"If reciting Hanuman Chalisa is a crime then I am willing to stay in jail not only for 14 days but for 14 years too... The Shiv Sena-led government will pay the price for



Navneet Rana

victimising me," MP said.

Rana and her MLA husband Ravi Rana were arrested under sedition charges after they had announced that they will recite Hanuman Chalisa in front of Matoshri, the personal residence of CM Uddhav Thackeray.

Though they withdrew their decision, they faced protest from ruling Sena's activists.

The couple was released from jail on Friday after Mumbai session court granted them bail on certain conditions and observed that sedition charges were not made out against the couple.

Rana said she would be visiting Delhi to complain against the state government for "misusing the power" and "committing atrocities on her". She also accused Sena leader Sanjay Raut of giving death threats to her and her husband Ravi Rana.

Earlier, responding to Navneet Rana's statements, Shiv Sena spokesperson Manisha Kayade said, "We don't give much importance to her threats... We dismiss them as inconsequential... Circulating the videos of her hospitalisation amounts to violation of secrecy act. This leads to a question whether the hospital was working under pressure. How could a VIP patient like Navneet Rana make her videos public? It is clear they are good at staging drama in public."

A fourth-generation lawyer, Justice Pardiwala set for SC step-up

SOHINI GHOSH  
AHMEDABAD, MAY 8

HIS REMARKS on reservation may have invited the ire of several Rajya Sabha MPs in 2015, but during the Covid-19 lockdown and the pandemic's second wave his injunctions and observations were a big reason why the Gujarat government was compelled to submit reports on action taken to help migrant labourers and patients.

On Monday, Justice Jamshed Burjor Pardiwala of the Gujarat High Court is set to take oath as a Supreme Court judge along with Gauhati High Court Chief Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia. The Union

Ministry of Law and Justice confirmed both their appointments on Saturday following the SC Collegium's recommendation earlier in the week.

Justice Pardiwala was born on August 12, 1965, in Mumbai to a family of lawyers and grew up in the town of Valsad in south Gujarat. He completed his schooling in the town's St Joseph's Convent and graduated from JP Arts College there in 1985. A source close to the judge said, "He studied in Gujarati medium throughout college and later gained proficiency in English."

Justice Pardiwala studied law in the town's KM Law College till 1988 and received his Sanad (a charter that lawyers need to prac-



Justice Jamshed Burjor Pardiwala. Gujarat HC

tise law) on November 18, 1988.

At 56 years, Justice Pardiwala is among the youngest judges to be elevated to the Supreme Court. Senior Congress leader Gaurav Pandya said, "His father Burjorji Pardiwala was a Congress MLA and served as the Speaker of the seventh Gujarat Assembly (1989-1990) during the chief ministerships of Madhavsinh Solanki and Amarsinh Chaudhary."

Justice Pardiwala's great

grandfather Navroji Bhikhaji Pardiwala, his grandfather Cawasji Navroji Pardiwala and his father, all practised law in Valsad.

Justice Pardiwala shifted to the Gujarat High Court in September 1990 and began practising all the branches of law. He became a member of the Gujarat High Court Legal Services Authority and in 2002, he was appointed the standing counsel for the High Court and its subordinate courts.

He was elevated as an Additional Judge of the High Court on February 17, 2011, and was confirmed as a permanent judge on January 28, 2013. He also adjudicated environmental matters and took up the Sabarmati pollution issue suo motu. A source close to

Justice Pardiwala described him as a "judge of the masses" who is "soft-spoken, gentle, and upright".

In 2015, 58 Rajya Sabha members petitioned Vice President of India and Rajya Sabha Chairperson Mohammad Hamid Ansari to initiate impeachment proceedings against Justice Pardiwala for his "unconstitutional" remarks on reservation while hearing a petition by Patidar leader Hardik Patel and others to quash sedition charges against them. The judge initially observed that in his opinion "reservation and corruption are two things that have not allowed the country to progress in the right direction". Following the petition by the members of the

Upper House of Parliament, he expunged his remarks and later deleted them through a "speaking to minutes" order.

The judge, in May 2020, headed a Division Bench that heard a PIL plea on the Gujarat government's handling of the Covid-19 crisis. The Bench compared the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital to a "dungeon" and did not agree with the state government's narrative that all was well. Days later, following a roster change on the last working day of the week, Justice Pardiwala was shuffled out of the Bench.

The judge will serve in the Supreme Court till his retirement in 2030.

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e-Tender no. **IRCON/3026/MAHSR-T2/e-Tender/Vehicle/1** Dt. **09.05.2022**  
Hiring of Light vehicles for IRCON's officers & Staff in connection to the project of "Design, Supply and Construction of Track and Track related Works including Testing and Commissioning on Design-Build Lump Sum Price basis for Double Line High Speed Railway between Zaroli Village at Maharashtra-Gujarat Border (MAHSR km 156.800) and Vadodara (MAHSR km 393.700) in the State of Gujarat and the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli in connection with the Construction of Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Project" (MAHSR T2 Project)  

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# Victory Day

## Russia

M E S S A G E  
**Denis Alipov, Russian Ambassador to India**



Dear friends,  
Today, on May 9, we celebrate the 77th anniversary of the Victory over Nazi Germany in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945).

The events preceding WWII are well known. Lack of collective responsibility, predominance of narrow-minded and geopolitically motivated approaches became a fertile soil for unilateral aggressive actions. The British conservatives, rather than joining hands for peace with the USSR to thwart Nazi aggressive plans in Europe, adopted a policy of appeasing Adolf Hitler. The aim was to channel the German aggression to the East, against the Soviet Union. In 1938, these sordid intentions resulted in signing by London and Paris of the infamous Munich agreement, triggering the countdown to the war.

The Victory in WWII is a great common heritage of all countries of the anti-Hitler coalition. By rising above the differences and joining hands they managed to crush Nazism, a misanthropic ideology of racial superiority that threatened the very existence of entire nations and the human civilization as such. Today we bow our heads in veneration to the courage of all who fought shoulder to shoulder against the Nazis.

These days the crucial role of the Soviet Union in defeating the Nazi invaders and liberating Europe and the world from slavery and the horrors of the Holocaust is often glossed over. An egregious injustice to 27 million of Soviet lives lost in the most brutal war ever! Multiple times more than even those who themselves suffered tremendously can imagine. No wonder that 77 years on even these countries tend to diminish the utter unacceptability of Nazi ideology and its derivatives. But we shall never forget. Our memory of heroism and sacrifice shall ever remain strong in our minds and hearts. This memory will never leave space to acquiescence of Nazi ideology in any form and manifestation and attempts to rehabilitate and even glorify Nazi criminals and their

supporters.  
Russians will always remember with gratitude the Indian contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany. We proudly recall that in 1941 and 1942 friendship societies were set up in India in support of the USSR. Brave Indian contingents were engaged in

providing supplies to the Red Army through Persia. In 1944, two sons of India were decorated with the highest military award of the Soviet Union – the Order of the Red Star.

To commemorate these heroic deeds a memorial monument was unveiled at the premises of the Indian Army Headquarters in New Delhi in 2021. It became one of the symbols of historically strong bonds of friendship

between our nations, which form a solid base for the Russian-Indian special and privileged strategic partnership. Atrocities of the Second World War teach a good lesson of how to maintain international relations. Today, the main goal of the global community is to preserve peace and security, with the United Nations playing a key role in this endeavour. In order to prevent deliberate distortions and falsifications of the WWII events Russia initiated the UN GA resolution against glorification of Nazism, which is supported and co-sponsored by the majority of countries, including India.

Russia stands ready to respond to any threat to its national security. Our foreign policy remains focused on maintaining the central role of the UN, its Charter and international law emphasizing the principles of resolution of conflicts by peaceful means, mutual respect, non-interference in domestic affairs, collective approach and dialogue.

We invite all countries to stay united against double standards, hypocrisy in international relations and hidden geopolitical agendas. Cooperation in global affairs is the only way forward, while attempts to undermine the WWII lessons are detrimental to global security.

Order of Red Star for Indian soldiers

RUSSIA HONoured soldiers of the British-Indian armies for distinguished services in the transportation of arms, material and food during the Second World War. According to the bulletin of the Information Service of the Government of India, *Indian Information*, dated September 1, 1944: "The Order of the Red Star was presented to Subedar Narayan Rao Nikkam, village Nerala Hathi, Tehsil Kankanhalli, District Bangalore; and Havildar Gajendra Singh, of village Baraloo, Tehsil Shor, District Almorah, who were serving in General Purpose Transport Companies of the Royal Indian Army Supply Corps."

During an impressive ceremony at the Soviet embassy in Tehran, the then Soviet Ambassador, M. Maximov, on behalf of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR, presented Russian decorations to officers and men of the British and Indian armies. Congratulating the recipients of the honour, the Soviet Ambassador acknowledged their help to the Red Army. "It again emphasises the military cooperation of our peoples not only in the field of battle, but also in those areas which influence the success of operations in the field against our common enemy, Hitlerite Germany," he said.

One of the first reports in the Indian Press on the British intention to lay the road for the supply of war material to Russia appeared in *The Tribune* of Lahore, September 13, 1941. The report quoted Benter's special correspondent in Tehran, who wired: "With Iran's oil wells now safely under British control and with British and Russian forces occupying strategic points on its communications lines as well as blocking the path eastward through the Caucasus, the British and Russian Governments are now intensely studying the problems of sending war material to Russia through Iran. With only one railway and very few roads traversing the country, which is three times the size of France, great difficulties have to be overcome."



Russian President Vladimir Putin greeting the Great Patriotic War veterans, May 9, 2021



The Immortal Regiment

A stretch of this road, known as the East Persia Route, was completed in eight months, an average of three miles a day, by a pick-and-shovel army of 30,000 men, women and children, supervised by a staff representing 15 different nationalities. The road was complementary to the West Persia routes for British and American supplies. "The quantity of supplies of jute, rubber, hessian, copper, tin and mercury that India can send to Russia is limited only by the transport facilities available", said an Indian representative of one of the supply organisations according to the *Indian Information* (January 1944). "Already 1,000 lorries, mostly provided by India, are employed to full capacity. We expect a substantial increase in this number shortly," it said.

The scope of the supplies was vast. As *Indian Information* said, "Over 5,000 tons of vital war materials per month have been sent from India to Russia during the past six months along the East Persia route, which follows the age-old caravan track now converted into a modern motor highway. Russia has received quantities of gunny bags, tossa canvas, jute ropes, tea, pepper, tin, wolfram and silk. Two special consignments consisted of 1,000 tons of nickel and 1,000 tons of harvest yarn, both of which reached Russia in record time. The harvest yarn was made to a very exacting specification by the Calcutta Jute Mills. It had to reach before the Russian harvest began and the average timing from Calcutta to the handing-over point was 28 days. Tin, mercury, wolfram and silk were flown from China to Assam in American aircraft, and railed to Zahidan for transport by truck. Hundreds of lorries have been used to reach the consignments to our allies in the north, and the road surface from Zahidan right up to the Russian border has been kept in excellent repair."







Drainage system, jewellery, toys among Rakhigarhi excavation finds

DIVYAA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE LATEST round of excavations at the 5,000-years-old Harappan site of Rakhigarhi in Haryana's Hisar district have revealed the structure of some houses, lanes and drainage system, and what could possibly be a jewellery-making unit, say officials from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), while announcing the completion of the three-month-long phase of excavations.

The digging, which has been going on at three of the seven mounds, has also revealed pieces of copper and gold jewellery, terracotta toys, besides thousands of earthen pots and seals.

"The idea of this phase of excavation is to make the archaeological site of Rakhigarhi accessible to people by exposing the structural remains and conserving them for future viewing, along with providing amenities to the visitors," said Ajay Yadav, Additional Director-General, ASI.

"In addition, the objective is



(Left) An excavation site at Rakhigarhi in Haryana's Hisar district. A figurine excavated at the site. PTI/ASI

also to understand the settlement of Rakhigarhi and to identify the individuality and interrelationship of the seven mounds," added Sanjay Manjul, Joint D-G, ASI, who is leading the excavation team.

Situated around 150 km from Delhi, Rakhigarhi is among the five iconic sites announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during her Budget Speech in February 2020.

The other sites are Hastinapur in Uttar Pradesh, Sivasagar in Assam, Dholavira in Gujarat and Adichanallur in Tamil Nadu.

The site was first excavated by the ASI in 1998-2001. Later, Deccan College, Pune, excavated

the site from 2013 to 2016.

Manjul added that this is the first time excavations have been done on Mound No. 3, which has revealed "an aristocratic settlement", but said that more rounds of excavation will be needed to ascertain the structure and nature of this elite settlement.

A total 13 trenches are open across three mounds: Mound No 1, Mound No 3 and Mound No 7.

At Mound 1, a huge quantity of debris/waste of semi-precious stones such as agate and carnelian have been found, along with evidence of street planning with a general width of 2.6m.

At Mound 3, a burnt-brick

wall has been traced, conveying the possibility of a walled settlement. The noteworthy antiquity found at both the mounds include steatite seals, terracotta unbaked sealing with relief of elephants and Harappan script.

In this field season, at Mound 7, two female skeletons, who were buried with a plethora of pottery and adorned jewellery like jasper, agate beads and shell bangles, have been excavated. The DNA samples from the skeletons have been sent for further analysis, say officials.

The new field season will commence by September 2022, the ASI said.

J&K LG joins pooja at ruins of ASI-protected temple

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN  
CHENNAI, MAY 8

JAMMU AND Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha participated Sunday in a religious ceremony held in the ruins of the 8th century Martand Sun temple, a protected monument under the charge of the central government's Archaeological Survey of India.

This is the second religious ceremony in three days at the site, which the ASI has tagged as a "site of national importance". The ASI does not permit prayers at a protected site unless it was a functioning place of worship at the time the body took charge of it.

A press release issued by Sinha's office said he took part in a "navagraha ashtamangalm pooja" at the temple, which was "held in the presence of saints, members of Kashmiri Pandit community and local residents".

It is unclear if the administration took permission from the ASI for the event. The press release did not mention if ASI clearance was obtained for the pooja. ASI officials were unavailable for comment.

The leader of the group that conducted a pooja on May 6 told *The Indian Express* they had not taken permission from the ASI, as it was a Hindu temple and worshippers should be allowed to conduct religious ceremonies and offer prayers.

According to the press release, the LG "reiterated the government's commitment to protect and develop ancient sites of cultural and spiritual significance". He was quoted as saying that the administration was "making dedicated efforts to transform historical spiritual places of J&K into vibrant centres that will guide us on the path of righteousness..."

The priests for the ceremony



J&K LG Manoj Sinha

were flown in from Kerala, *The Indian Express* has learnt. As the LG took part in the rituals, several of his security personnel ringed the area where the pooja was being held. The site was turned into a fortress for most part of the day.

A contingent of Kashmiri Pandits affiliated to the Panun Kashmir group were in attendance, as was the former BJP Assembly member Surinder Ambardar. Kashmiri Divisional Commissioner Pandurang K Pole, IGP K Vijay Kumar, Deputy Commissioner Piyush Singla and other officials accompanied Sinha.

There have been periodic demands by Hindu groups for opening the temple for worship, but no religious ceremonies have been previously allowed at the site, although individual worshippers have not been prevented from offering prayers, local sources said. Mostly, it has been a picnic site for people of the area.

Since the August 2019 constitutional changes to the status of J&K, there have been demands from Hindu groups, including the Kashmiri Pandit community, for restoration of Hindu temples in Kashmir. Mostly the demands have centred on temples that were functional until the 1990s, when most Kashmiri Pandits fled the Valley in the face of militancy.

Such demands have increased over the past three months, and have been expanded to include

protected sites such as the Martand temple. On May 6, a group of over a 100 people led by the mahant of a Hindu peeth based in Karauli in Rajasthan, recited the Bhagvad Gita and the Hanuman Chalisa at Martand.

In November 2021, the National Monuments Authority, headed by Tarun Vijay, former editor of the RSS journal *Panchajanya* and former Rajya Sabha MP, said in a statement that it was planning to make a bid for the UNESCO World Heritage Site status for Martand among other sites in J&K.

Across the country, religious worship at protected monuments has been a fraught issue over the years. According to Rule 7 (1) of the 1959 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Rules, meetings, receptions, party, entertainment or conferences cannot be held at a protected monument without permission in writing from the central government. Rule 7 (2) says this shall not apply to any event held "in pursuance of a recognised religious usage or custom". However, every government, including the present government, has stuck by the practice of not permitting religious activities or events at sites that were not "live" places of worship at the time of being designated as a protected monument by the ASI.

As such, prayers are not allowed at the mosque in the precincts of Qutub Minar despite demands by Muslims of the area. Similarly, religious worship and rituals are banned in the 12th century Sidhpur Mahalaya temple in Gujarat's Pattan district, and at Shore temple in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu. But they are allowed at Shri Jagannath Temple in Puri and at Jama Masjid in Delhi because these were "live" monuments, functional temples at the time the ASI took them over.

PoJK oustees hold 'sankalp' rally in Jammu, seek justice

ARUN SHARMA  
JAMMU, MAY 8

CUTTING ACROSS party lines, thousands of displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied areas of Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) gathered at a sankalp (pledge) rally here from across the country and reiterated their demand for getting back their native areas falling across the Line of Control, which are illegally occupied by Pakistan.

The first-ever mega rally of this kind was organised by the Jammu Kashmir People's Forum headed by Romesh Sabbarwal, a prominent RSS activist, at the Padamshri Padma Sachdeva PG College for Women Gandhi Nagar here.

According to political observers, the rally appeared to be aimed at setting the tone to make Centre agree to the Delimitation Commission's recommendation for nomination of some representatives of displaced persons from PoJK to the Assembly, apart from two Kashmiri migrants, including a woman. These nominated MLAs, as per the Delimitation Commission's recommendations, will have all voting rights in the House as has been the case in Puducherry Legislative Assembly, they pointed out.

"Twenty-four seats have been kept vacant in the Legislative Assembly for people of PoJK," Sabbarwal said, adding the Commission had not touched them while redrawing the boundaries of Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies. "Since one-third of the people had got displaced from areas of PoJK in 1947, eight of those seats shall be put to elections," he said, appealing to all PoJK displaced people to apply for domicile certificate.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Maoists boxed into 2 divisions after losing ground: DGP

SREENIVAS JANYALA  
HYDERABAD, MAY 8

THERE HAS been a significant decline in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in Andhra Pradesh in the last one year, both in terms of incidents and its geographical spread, according to the Andhra Pradesh Police.

The LWE-related activities in the state have largely been confined to Alluri Sitharama Raju, the new district carved out of Paderu

division of Visakhapatnam district and Rampachodavaram division of East Godavari district, with the Maoist cadre operating in the belt declining from 100 to 48 now, said AP Director General of Police (DGP) KV Rajendranath Reddy.

The Maoist military formations responsible for their guerrilla actions saw a sharp reduction from 2 companies comprising a total of 50 members to a mere platoon with 10 members in the last one year, as per information gathered by the state police's Special

Intelligence Branch.

The DGP said that while there used to be 8 Maoist Area Committees — in Kalimela, Narayanpatna, Nandapur, Coffee Dalam, Galikonda, Pedabayalu, Gumma and Boipariguda — in early 2019, their tally has now dropped to 4 Area Committees along the Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB).

According to the AP Police officials, only 2 Divisional Committees — Visakha East and Malkangiri-Koraput Border — 4

Area Committees — Galikonda, Pedabayalu, Gumma, and Boipariguda — and 1 military platoon of left extremists are active in the AOB region now. They said Central Committee member Gajjala Ravi alias Uday is the lone highest-ranking Maoist member operating in the AOB's Special Zonal Committee (SZC).

The DGP said that public perception towards Maoists has been changing and they are fast losing their local support due to their "violent activities".

Driver kills US-returned TN couple, flees with car, jewellery; held from Andhra

ARUN JANARDHANAN  
CHENNAI, MAY 8

A COUPLE who reached Chennai from California early on Saturday were murdered allegedly by their driver and his friend, police said, adding that they arrested the duo—who had fled in the former's car with 9 kg of gold and 60 kg of silver jewellery—from Ongole in Andhra Pradesh, 300km north, by the evening.

According to the police, after Srikanth, 60, and Anuradha, 53, who had been in the US with their children for the past 10 months, reached Chennai airport around 3.30am, driver Krishna took them to their home at Dwaraka Colony in Mylapore's Brindavan Nagar.

Additional commissioner of police (south) N Kannan, said the murders happened around 1pm.

"After they went to the US, Srikanth came to Chennai for a brief visit two months ago and went back. During that period, Krishna overheard a phone conversation made by Srikanth about a big property sale worth Rs 40 crore. He assumed the cash had been kept in the house. Even though Krishna was staying there, he did not have the keys. So he decided to wait for their arrival and committed the crime along with a friend, Ravi Rai from Darjeeling," said Kannan.

Krishna, who is from Nepal, had worked for Srikanth for about seven years. It was their US-based daughter Sunantha who raised the first alarm as she could not contact her parents. She asked a family friend to visit the couple, but the door of the house was found locked and the car was missing, according to the police.

When a police team reached the house around noon and broke open the door, it found remains of bloodstains and emptied shelves. The police accessed the call data records of Srikanth's phone, which had received FastTag messages showing that their car had passed through toll booths on the Chennai-Kolkata national highway. The police then informed their counterparts in Andhra Pradesh. The police said they found evidence of suspicious activity also at the family's farmhouse on Chennai's outskirts.

Meanwhile, the police traced Krishna's phone to Ongole and alerted the Andhra police, who arrested both the accused. "If the police probe were delayed for a few more hours, they would have crossed the border and entered Nepal," said Kannan.



## Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran

### Offers e-Auction of

### Schools, Creche, Nursing Home and Clinic Sites in all Zones

On 21th May, 2022



School Sites in All Zones										Clinic Sites and Nursing Home Sites in All Zones				
Sr. No.	Sector/ Urban Estate	Category	Area in Sq.Mtr	No. of Plots	Sr. No.	Sector/ Urban Estate	Category	Area in Sq.Mtr	No. of Plots	Sr. No.	Sector/ Urban Estate	Category	Area in Sq.Mtr	No. of Plots
1	1, Ambala	Nursery School (near Tube Well)	1321.89	1	21	55, Gurugram II	Nursery School	870	1	1	18, Kaithal	Clinic Site No.7	300	1
2	8, Ambala	Nursery-cum Primary School Near Dispensary	4532.00	1	22	19, Rewari	Nursery School – 1 (Near Plot No-431P) (Corner Site)	1436.00	1	2	19-I & II, Kaithal	Nursing Home (Near Plot No.1214P)	588	1
3	10, Ambala	Creche Near Plot No-1377	610.50	1	23	55, Faridabad	Primary School Site (Near Plot no. 1223)	3960.00	1	3	19-I & II, Kaithal	Clinic Site (Near Plot No.1241)	210	1
4	4, Karnal	Nursery School Site (in front of plot no.227p & 228)	1080.00	1	24	56A, Faridabad	Primary School Site (Near Plot no. 230)	3279.08	1	4	19-I & II, Kaithal	Clinic Site (Near Plot No.383F)	300	1
5	3, Kurukshetra	Nursery School Site opp. Plot no. 128 P	671.80	1	25	62, Faridabad	Nursery School Site (Near Plot No. 2764)	1000.00	1	5	20, Kaithal	Clinic Site No.1 (Near Plot No.609P & 606)	390.10	1
6	4, Kurukshetra	Nursery School Site opp. Plot no. 1127	892.00	1	26	65, Faridabad	Nursery School Site (Near Plot No. 2718P)	803.28	1	6	20, Kaithal	Clinic Site No.2 (Near Plot No.609P & 603P)	390.10	1
7	8, Kurukshetra	Nursery School Site opp. Plot no. 354	6676.00	1	27	2P, Palwal	Nursery School Site (Near Plot No. 1990)	704.00	1	7	5, Kurukshetra	Clinic Site (Opp. Plot No.1393)	255.50	1
8	4, Rohtak	Nursery School Site No. II In front of H.No. 290P	1050.00	1						8	5, Kurukshetra	Clinic Site (Opp. Plot No.977)	353.62	1
9	13, Bahadurgarh	Nursery School (Corner Site)Adjoining Plot No. 360GP and 319	2016.00	1						9	30, Kurukshetra	Clinic Site (Opp. Plot No.10)	411.00	1
10	7, Jind	Creche-cum-Nursery School Site	2160.00	1						10	18, Jagadhri	Clinic Site (Near Plot No.325P)	500.00	1
11	11 Extn. , Jind	Nursery School Site	1392.00	1						11	18, Jagadhri	Diagnostic Centre (Near Office Bay)	407.50	1
12	9, Gurugram - I	Nursery School Adjoining plot no. 716 & 717	774.00	1						12	7, Panipat	Nursing Home Site No.1, Nursing Home Site No.2	214.06	2
13	9A, Gurugram - I	Nursery School Near plot no. 114P to 116	828.00	1						13	7, Panipat	Clinic Site No.1, Clinic Site No.2	214.06	2
14	9A, Gurugram - I	Nursery school Nursery school site Adjoining plot no. 170 & 171	1012.00	1						14	1 (Part-1), Narnaul	Clinic Site No.3	209.00	1
15	10A, Gurugram - I	Nursery School Adjoining plot no. 1013 & 1036	792.00	1						15	1 (Part-1), Narnaul	Clinic Site No.4 (Corner site)	209.00	1
16	42, Gurugram-II	Primary School in front of Plot No. 70 P	3441.16	1						16	6, Dharuhera	Nursing Home Site No.1	587.50	1
17	42, Gurugram-II	Nursery School adjoining R.B. Site	1292.76	1						17	6, Dharuhera	Nursing Home Site No.2 (Corner site)	587.50	1
18	47, Gurugram - II	Nursery School Near Plot No. 306P	2145.44	1						18	19, Rewari	Nursing Home Site (Near Plot No.374P) (Corner Site)	467.30	1
19	52, Gurugram - II	Primary School Near Plot No.430	3766.35	1						19	19, Rewari	Clinic Site (Near Plot No.383)	566.55	1
20	52, Gurugram - II	Nursery School Near Plot No. 31P	2805.19	1						20	18 Def. Rewari	Clinic Site (Near Plot No.955P) (Corner Site)	256.69	1

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## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## Who's COUNTING

WHO's excess mortality data stretches credulity. Yet, there's no need to be prickly, India has its task cut out

THE WORLD HEALTH Organisation's (WHO) report on excess mortality due to Covid-19 has pegged the India figure at nearly 10 times the official toll at 47.4 lakh. As an analysis in this newspaper showed, this raises several questions. India's death toll of 5.23 lakh so far is, most possibly an undercount, but the WHO's data suggests that over 90 per cent of deaths in India have gone unreported. Even the base number of expected deaths (in a no-Covid scenario) for the year 2020 which the WHO has used in its report is almost nine lakh more than the average number of deaths recorded each year in India for the last 15 years. Still, the WHO estimates reflect similar numbers by many other agencies and are based on well-established mathematical models. How effective are these in getting close to what actually happened, capturing the several variables of a pandemic given India's size and diversity — from high urban population-density Kerala to rural settings in other states — will always be open to question.

Counting the Covid dead is not a mere academic exercise. This effort is crucial to addressing the shortcomings of public health facilities and framing responses to future medical emergencies. It is also a vital part of the endeavour to heal the wounds of those who have suffered in the past two years. The Covid compensation exercise, under the watchful gaze of the Supreme Court, will, hopefully, encourage families to report their loss. Accurate information is paramount to the process, especially when, in a sharply polarised discourse, even science is contested. In the first month of the first pandemic year, an oft-quoted study said up to three million Indians could die by mid-April 2020. The author has since then back-tracked and acknowledged that his assumption of mortality rate was a little off the mark. The WHO's record on Covid hasn't been much to write home about. Its own study concluded that crucial time was lost in the fight against the virus because the global health agency delayed the announcement of an international emergency. It spent weeks persuading China to allow a team of international scientists to visit Wuhan after the outbreak. It then swung to the other extreme late last year after the relatively-less virulent Omicron began to infect people worldwide. Instead of educating the world about the nature of this new variant, it rang needless alarm bells.

That said, it would be, well, unscientific, to be prickly and attribute sinister motives to the WHO. Barely days ago, its Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus and Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in Jamnagar, that will play a key role as a "global repository" of traditional medicine practices across the world. What the WHO's Covid death estimates underline is the need for India to further strengthen its death recording system, finetune its accuracy and transparency. In fact, the success of India's vaccination programme has been facilitated by distribution and supply-chain processes on the ground, from the shop-floor to the primary health care centre, backed by a robust digital architecture of reporting and recording. Given the rapid digitalisation of social systems, this should translate to strengthening the Civil Registration System and Sample Registration System as well, the two main tools for recording births and deaths. Let the WHO and experts do their job, the Centre and state governments should do theirs.

## EYE ON THE PLATE

Food inflation has not started to hurt India yet. Stepping up domestic production can help country duck global trend

A CONSIDERABLE PART of the RBI's statement accompanying its last week's exceptional monetary tightening measures focused on the challenges arising from food inflation. That problem, till recently, was largely confined to edible oils (from soaring international prices even prior to the Russia-Ukraine war) and the likes of onion and tomato (due to unseasonal heavy rains). But now there is fear of food inflation getting "generalised". The Food and Agriculture Organisation's food price index has shown a 29.8 per cent year-on-year increase for April. Moreover, all commodity group price indices have posted huge jumps: Cereals (34.3 per cent), vegetable oils (46.5 per cent), dairy (23.5 per cent), sugar (21.8 per cent) and meat (16.8 per cent). Simply put, food inflation is already rising across-the-board globally — because of supply disruptions from the war, dry weather in South America, high crude prices inducing greater diversion of corn, sugar, palm and soyabean oil for bio-fuel, and so on.

The transmission of the above global inflation to domestic food prices basically depends on how much of a country's consumption/production is imported/exported. Such transmission is evident in edible oils and cotton, where up to two-thirds of India's consumption and a fifth of its production are imported and exported, respectively. The same is starting to happen in wheat. Till two months ago, the country seemed set to harvest a bumper crop and also surpass last year's all-time-high exports. But with the heat wave from mid-March severely impacting yields, both public stocks and overall domestic availability are under pressure, even as open market prices have risen to export parity levels. Not surprisingly, the Centre has decided to slash wheat allocations and offer more rice under its flagship free-grains scheme. Export demand is, likewise, helping maize trade well above its minimum support price (MSP). But that, alongside higher oil meal prices, will also push up livestock feed costs and, in turn, translate into inflation in milk, egg and meat.

For now, though, the consolation is that there is little to no inflation in pulses, sugar, onion, potato and most summer vegetables. To that extent, food inflation isn't yet "generalised" in India. Sugar is one commodity where retail prices haven't gone up much, despite record exports by mills. The reason for it is production also hitting a historic high. In short, while global food inflation is a reality, the only way to contain the effects of it getting "imported" is to step up domestic production. That would call for early announcement of kharif MSPs with credible procurement plans for oilseeds and pulses; ensuring timely availability of seed, fertiliser, crop protection chemicals and credit by actively engaging the industry; and not resorting to knee-jerk export bans or stocking controls, which will only disincentivise producers.

## FREEZE FRAME

## E P UNNY



RAJESWARI SENGUPTA

THE RESERVE BANK of India normally makes policy announcements in line with a well-defined schedule. But on May 4, it unexpectedly tightened monetary policy, increasing its policy interest rate and reducing liquidity in the banking system. Markets were taken aback by the announcement with the 10-year government bond yield jumping by 25 basis points to reach 7.38 per cent. Why did the RBI do this? Even after the governor's careful explanations, the answers remain unclear.

At one level, the answer is obvious: Inflation pressures are rising. Since the last MPC meeting of April 8, headline CPI (consumer price index) inflation has gone up from 6.1 per cent to 7 per cent, and the forthcoming inflation numbers are expected to be even worse. Clearly, the RBI had to respond. So, it raised the policy repo rate by 40 basis points to 4.4 per cent and increased the cash reserve ratio by 50 basis points to 4.5 per cent.

This explanation, however, does not seem entirely adequate because nothing fundamental has changed since the last policy meeting. Even back then, it was obvious that inflation pressures were rising — the wholesale price index (WPI) was already in double digits, inflation in the US and Europe was increasing, commodity prices were spiking due to the Russia-Ukraine war, and supply chain constraints were tightening as China imposed severe lockdowns to deal with a resurgence of the Covid-19 pandemic. But the RBI did not think that these pressures warranted policy tightening.

What made the RBI change its mind? Under the inflation-targeting framework, the central bank's thinking is typically revealed by its inflation forecast. If it projects that inflation will be above target for some time, it implies that the central bank is concerned about rising prices and will be taking action to bring inflation down. In the last policy review, the RBI projected that inflation would



AAKASH JOSHI

JUST FOR A minute, let's forget about his name. A leader of the Congress went to a party as part of a friend's wedding celebration. The BJP — which has six times the number of Lok Sabha MPs than the Congress, and rules in several more states — and its social media warriors went into overdrive. The wedding guest's morality was questioned, and many accused him of working against the national interest by attending a social function with the Chinese envoy. The latter accusation, like much of what is said on the internet, turned out to be false.

The reason for the overreaction is not just that a politician went to a nightclub. It makes sense only because that politician is Rahul Gandhi.

The images from the club came at a bad time for the Congress: The party's eight-year-long crisis was underlined once more with Prashant Kishor deciding not to help with its revival late last month. And at pivotal political moments in recent times — when the Punjab Assembly election campaign kicked off in December 2021 or when the Congress took out a peace march during the 2020 Delhi riots — Rahul Gandhi has been missing in action, often on trips abroad.

Yet, his style of working is not, in essence, the business of either the BJP or the government. Rahul holds no public office of concern to anyone but the voters of Wayanad constituency. Why, then, has India's most dominant political force been obsessed with a diminished leader from the Opposition?

For the Hindutva Right's political juggernaut, the obsessive demonisation of Rahul Gandhi yields dividends. Yet, this constant targeting isn't just a matter of tactics and political convenience. For all his faults, the

## Question of timing

Surprise interest rate hike raises questions over RBI's aims. Its mandate is to target inflation, not shore up rupee

So what made the RBI change its mind? Under the inflation-targeting framework, the central bank's thinking is typically revealed by its inflation forecast. If it projects that inflation will be above target for some time, it implies that the central bank is concerned about rising prices and will be taking action to bring inflation down. In the last policy review, the RBI projected that inflation would moderate to 5 per cent by the end of the fiscal year, somewhat higher than the 4 per cent objective, but not unduly so, thereby explaining why the central bank saw no need to tighten at that time.

moderate at 5 per cent by the end of the fiscal year, somewhat higher than the 4 per cent objective, but not unduly so, thereby explaining why it saw no need to tighten at that time.

Presumably, the RBI now thinks that the inflation pressures will either be more intense or more durable than it had earlier expected. And the RBI felt that its policy stance was now "behind the curve", meaning that urgent action was needed to quell these pressures. Otherwise, it would have waited till the next MPC meeting on June 8 to increase the repo rate. But it is impossible to know whether this was really the motivation as the RBI didn't release a revised inflation forecast — and because other explanations are also possible.

One possibility relates to the exchange rate. The US Federal Reserve was expected to announce a 50 basis point increase in interest rates later that day. So, it is possible that the RBI wanted to jump ahead of this announcement by announcing its own 40 basis point rate increase, maintaining (more or less) the interest differential against the US dollar and thereby keeping the dollar-rupee exchange rate relatively stable.

It's not obvious why exchange rate stability would be a priority for the RBI. After all, its legal mandate is to achieve an inflation target, not an exchange rate. But the RBI does seem determined to limit the rupee's depreciation. The April 8 statement highlighted that India's foreign exchange reserves had increased to \$607 billion at the end of 2021-22. In contrast, the May 4 statement mentioned that India's foreign exchange reserves now amount to \$600 billion — a decline of \$7 billion. Clearly, the RBI has been intervening in the foreign exchange market to stem the rupee depreciation. So, it appears plausible that the unexpected increase in the policy rate was done to defend the currency against further depreciation pressures.

There are, then, two potential explanations

for the RBI's sudden move. Both have rationales, but both also have costs. Consider the first possibility that the RBI has now radically revised its inflation forecast (without, of course, releasing the same). Inflation targeting works best if monetary policy is predictable, with interest rate actions being announced on a regular schedule, based on clearly-explained inflation forecasts. On the contrary, sudden moves convey the message that the RBI is getting worried that it is no longer in control of the inflation situation, which is hardly a reassuring signal to send to the markets.

Next, consider the possibility that the RBI wanted to keep the exchange rate stable. The problem is that India is facing an adverse terms of trade shock in the form of rising oil prices, which is putting pressure on the current account deficit. If the RBI allowed the exchange rate to depreciate in response, this would alleviate the current account deficit. Perhaps more importantly, depreciation would help the nascent recovery by ensuring that exports can continue to grow, despite the difficult international circumstances. And there is the additional problem that targeting the exchange rate violates the RBI's legal mandate.

The RBI now faces a difficult task in the months ahead. At the broadest level, it needs to address the costs of its surprise announcement by reinforcing the credibility of the inflation-targeting framework. Specifically, it will need to focus — and be seen to be doing so — squarely on its inflation target, rather than the exchange rate or any other objectives. And it will need to convince the public that it is actually trying to get inflation under control.

To do this, it will need to continue to tighten policy, but in a gradual, predictable and transparent manner.

*The writer is associate professor of Economics, IGIDR*

## WHY BJP NEEDS RAHUL GANDHI

A wedding function to a party adrift, shrinking him suits its politics

leader represents — in however shrunkened a manner — a significant ideological and political challenge to the RSS-BJP.

Rahul Gandhi's denigration taps into popular discontent. That many political leaders — including a substantial number from the BJP — are dynasts does not detract from the fact that the descendants of Nehru appear to have a stranglehold on the party of the freedom struggle. Just as the House of Windsor is the lynchpin of Britain's ossified, regressive class structure, the Nehru-Gandhis have come to signify a lack of social mobility for the youth — the fact that descent, not achievement is enough to guarantee a career in politics.

For the BJP, especially since the ascent of Narendra Modi, Rahul Gandhi provides the most convenient juxtaposition to further a cult of personality. The PM is self-made, hard-working, openly and almost militantly Hindu, always present, a nationalist. Rahul (in the Right's view) is a dilettante politician, a descendant, eschews responsibility, is of mixed heritage, holds up "pseudo-secularism". Despite the fall in Rahul Gandhi's popularity, it is useful for the BJP to present him as the alternative on the national stage to strengthen the TINA factor. Would the BJP leadership compare as favourably with Mamata Banerjee — a politician risen from the streets — or even M K Stalin or Jagan Reddy, who are both sons of leaders but do not have either the 'elite' or 'outsider' tag? Rahul Gandhi's demonisation by the ruling forces has as much, if not more, to do with his background as it does with his political failures.

And that background — and Rahul himself — still carries with it an alternative idea that can challenge the BJP's "New India".

On the ideological front, it appears at first glance that the RSS-BJP's dominance is verging on the hegemonic. Regional parties and leaders that challenge the BJP electorally in the states have competing interests and lack coherence at the level of ideas. The Congress too appears ill-equipped to battle the BJP. After all, senior leaders have jumped ship, and its "soft Hindutva" tactics show a poverty of ideas. Yet, the Congress remains — in however vestigial a form — the only party with a national presence that can rival the BJP. As Suhas Palshikar argued (IE, April 30), the "Congress space" is still relevant, even if the Congress seems to be less so. It is the centrism of the "Congress space" that can act as an ideological glue to sustain a national coalition of non-BJP parties.

Unfortunately, that space — a liberal, federal idea of India — seems to be of no concern to many Congress leaders. Too many are willing to back the BJP line on issues like the Ram Mandir and J&K's constitutional status. Not enough have either national name recognition or a mass base. It is in this regard that Rahul Gandhi presents a potent challenge.

Unlike, say, a Jyotiraditya Scindia, he cannot be poached. He cannot abandon the Congress and the ideals it once represented — Rahul cannot abandon Nehru's secularism or Indira Gandhi's "garibi hatao" because to do so would be to deny his *raison d'être* as a politician. In that sense, he is perhaps one of the few significant implacable foes for the BJP that stands in the way of a "Congress-mukt Bharat". Best, then, to keep the focus on the name.

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## MAY 9, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

### PM ATTACKS CPM

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi ended her two-day election tour of West Bengal with an attack on the Marxist idea of "one-party rule" to the exclusion of other non-communist parties. Addressing rallies in North Bengal, she said the CPM-led government's highhanded approach should be seen from this perspective. The Marxist Party branded her as "authoritarian" only to hide its "anti-democratic character". In which communist country was there in existence a multiparty system as in India, she asked and then observed: "Marxism and democracy cannot go together." The Prime Minister said that the

Marxists commended certain countries as models for India. But, now these very nations were beset with insoluble problems providing the relevance of the "Congress pattern of development", free from communist and capitalist systems. She accused the CPM of "wrecking democracy in West Bengal under the guise of protecting it".

### BRITAIN'S MESSAGE

BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER to India, Sir John Thomson, met Foreign Secretary M K Rasgotra in New Delhi on Saturday and delivered to him a message from the British Government on the Falkland Islands crisis. In

the message, Britain is believed to have underscored its stand that implementation of any ceasefire must be unambiguously linked to Argentine withdrawal from the Islands.

### ZIA'S OFFER

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT GENERAL Ziaul Haq on Saturday offered to lift the nearly three-year-old curbs on political activities if the number of political parties was reduced to two or three major ones, Radio Pakistan reported. Speaking to journalists at Rawalpindi, General Zia said the future political setup of the country would be based on Islamic tenets.



# THE IDEAS PAGE

## The cereal wonder

Fear mongering over wheat production must not push government towards an export ban, especially on cereals, the prices of which are at an all-time high



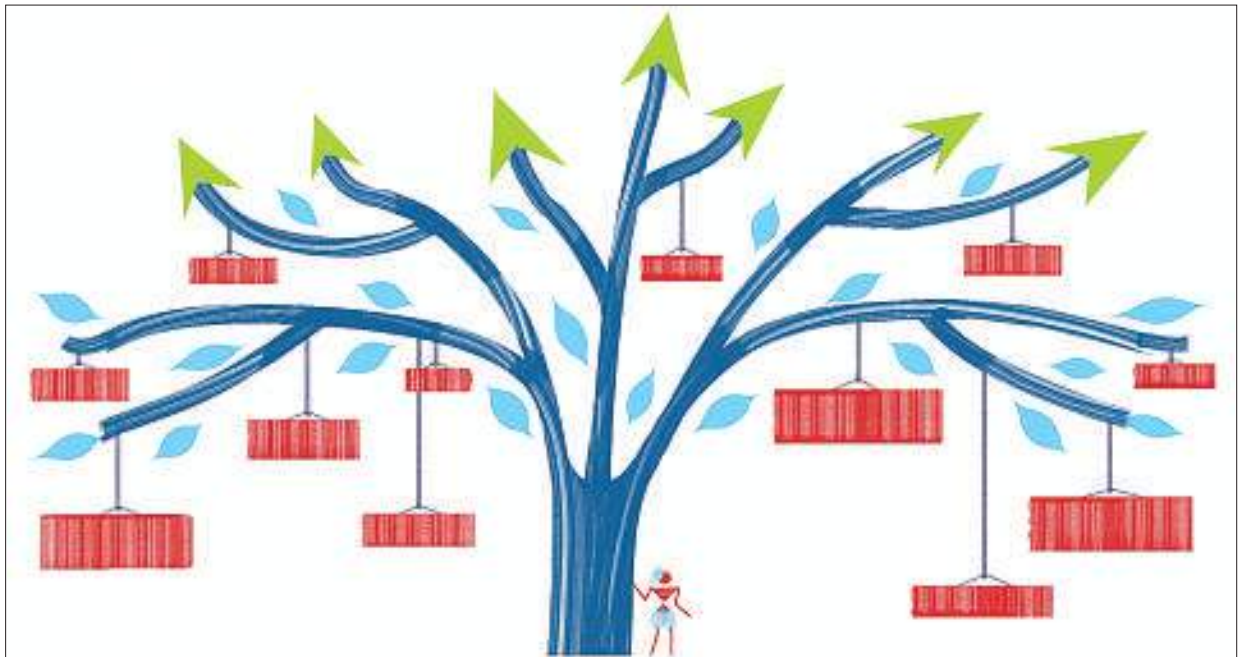
FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

BY ASHOK GULATI AND  
RITIKA JUNEJA

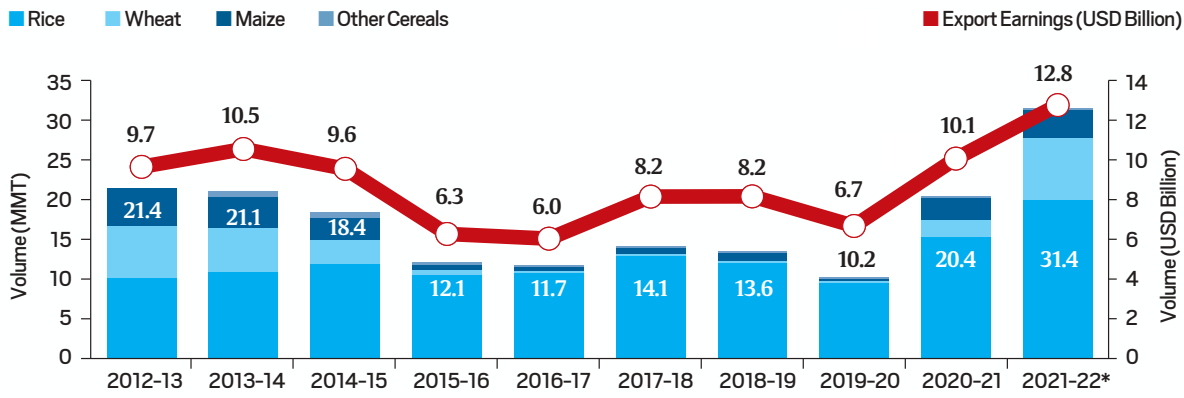
THE RBI TEAM led by Governor Shaktikanta Das must be complimented for raising the repo rate by 40 basis points (bps) and the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 50 bps with a view to tame inflation. High inflation is always an implicit tax on the poor and those who keep their savings in banks. The real value of their savings gets depreciated with every round of inflation as interest on deposits is often far below the inflation rate. So, controlling inflation is an important mandate of the RBI. The question that arises is: Will the increases in the repo rate and CRR control inflation, especially food inflation? The short answer is, “not yet”. Our assessment of the situation is that the RBI has been behind the curve by at least 4 to 5 months, and its optimism in controlling inflation in the earlier meetings of the Monetary Policy Committee was somewhat misplaced. If the RBI has to make up for lost time, it will have to repeat this feat of raising repo rates and CRR by at least three more times in this fiscal year (FY23) to mop up excess liquidity in the system. Even then, it may be difficult to rein in food inflation, which is surging faster than the overall consumer price index (CPI).

The reason for this is simple. Food prices globally are scaling new peaks as per the FAO’s food price index. The disruptions caused by the pandemic and now the Russia-Ukraine war are contributing to this escalation in food prices. India cannot remain insulated from this phenomenon. While on the one hand, it has opened opportunities for Indian farm exports, on the other hand, it has posed challenges as import prices of edible oils and fertilisers surge.

Let us focus here on cereals, which have the greatest weight in India’s food CPI. For the first time in the history of Indian agriculture, cereal exports have already crossed a record high of 31 million metric tonnes (MMT) at \$13 billion (FY22), and the same cereal wonder may be repeated this fiscal (FY23). Among cereals, wheat exports have witnessed an unprecedented growth of more than 273 per cent, jumping nearly four-fold from \$0.56 billion (or 2 MMT) in FY21 to \$2.1 billion (or 7.8 MMT) in FY22 (see figure). Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is upbeat on agri-farm exports, which overall have crossed \$50 billion for the first time in FY22. On wheat, while the government has set a target of 10 MMT for exports in FY23, Goyal in a recent interview said that it may go even up to 15 MMT. This has raised fears amongst many about whether India can export 10 to 15 MMT in the face of the scaling down of the production estimate of the current crop from 111 MMT to 105 MMT due to the heatwave, and the massive drop in procurement in the ongoing season due to higher market rates compared to MSP. However, there is very little talk about rice exports, which have crossed 20 MMT in FY22 in a global market of 50 MMT. That’s a much



### INDIA’S CEREAL WONDER



\*Provisional

Source: DGCI, 2022

bigger wonder than wheat. (See figure)

Some of the concerns on the wheat front are genuine, and we need to realise that climate change is already knocking on our doors. With every one degree Celsius rise in temperatures, wheat yields are likely to suffer by about 5 MMT, as per earlier IPCC reports. This calls for massive investments in agri-R&D to find heat-resistant varieties of wheat and also create models for “climate-smart” agriculture. We are way behind the curve on this. But we are way ahead of the curve in distributing free food to 800 million Indians, with a food subsidy bill that is likely to cross Rs 2.8 lakh crore this fiscal out of the Centre’s net tax revenue of about Rs 20 lakh crore in FY23. Can Goyal, who is rightly upbeat on agri-exports also rationalise the public distribution system and PMGKAY, as food minister, targeting only those below the poverty line for free or subsidised food and charging a reasonable price, say 90 per cent of MSP, from those who are above the poverty line. The bottom line is: He has to effectively target the massive food subsidy and save resources for the higher import bill on edible oils and fertilisers. Inflation in edible oils has been running amok — to double digits — for a long time, and there has been no relief for consumers on that front.

In the wake of likely lower production

In the wake of likely lower production and procurement of wheat this year, Goyal has done well to substitute more rice in the PMGKAY, and may also do so in NFSA allocations. We would suggest giving an option to beneficiaries to receive cash in their Jan Dhan accounts (equivalent to MSP plus 20 per cent) in lieu of grains. This is permitted under NFSA and by doing so, he can save on the burgeoning food subsidy bill.

Illustration: C R Sasikumar; Graphics: Ritesh Kumar and procurement of wheat this year, Goyal has done well to substitute more rice in the PMGKAY, and may also do so in NFSA allocations. We would suggest giving an option to beneficiaries to receive cash in their Jan Dhan accounts (equivalent to MSP plus 20 per cent) in lieu of grains. This is permitted under NFSA and by doing so, he can save on the burgeoning food subsidy bill.

Goyal also needs to ward off any fear-mongering over wheat that can push him towards an export ban. That would be the worst thing he could do. It would be an anti-farmer move. The problem with our earlier policymaking has been that it is heavily biased towards protecting the consumers in the name of the poor by suppressing prices for farmers through choking markets — through imposing stock limits on traders, putting minimum export prices or outright bans on exports. He must avoid that route, and let agri-exports flourish. Indian farmers need access to global markets to augment their incomes, and the government must facilitate Indian farmers to develop more efficient export value chains by minimising marketing costs and investing in efficient logistics for exports.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor and Juneja is consultant at ICRIER

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The Ukraine crisis and the geopolitical tragedy it has triggered are not enough to kill the hunger of the US and some Western countries to reap political profits from the situation.”  
—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

## Welfare that changed lives

A pro-poor thrust in government programmes that involved building trust through community mobilisation led to a decline in rural poverty



AMARJEET SINHA

A RECENT WORLD Bank Report has shown that extreme poverty in India more than halved between 2011 and 2019 — from 22.5 per cent to 10.2 per cent. The reduction was higher in rural areas, from 26.3 per cent to 11.6 per cent. The rate of poverty decline between 2015 and 2019 was faster compared to 2011-2015.

In an earlier article (‘A greater ease of living’, IE, November 20, 2019), I had argued that poverty has reduced significantly because of the current government’s thrust on improving the ease of living of ordinary Indians through schemes such as the Ujjwala Yojana, PM Awas Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission, Jan Dhan and Mission Indradhanush in addition to the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission and improved coverage under the National Food Security Act.

While debates on the World Bank’s methodology continue to rage, it is important to understand how poverty in rural areas was reduced at a faster pace. Much of the success can be credited to all government departments, especially their *janbhagidari*-based thrust on pro-poor public welfare that ensured social support for the endeavour. It will nevertheless be useful to delineate the key factors that contributed to the success.

First, the identification of deprived households on the basis of the Socioeconomic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 across welfare programmes helped in creating a constituency for the well-being of the poor, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. The much-delayed SECC 2011 data was released in July 2015. This was critical in accomplishing the objectives of “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas”. Since deprivation was the key criterion in identifying beneficiaries, SC and ST communities got higher coverage and the erstwhile backward regions in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Rajasthan and rural Maharashtra got a larger share of the benefits. This was a game-changer in the efforts to ensure balanced development, socially as well as across regions. Social groups that often used to be left out of government programmes were included and gram sabha validation was taken to ensure that the project reached these groups.

Second, the coverage of women under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana and Self Help Groups (SHG) increased from 2.5 crore in 2014 to over 8 crore in 2018 as a result of more than 75 lakh SHGs working closely with over 31 lakh elected panchayati raj representatives, 40 per cent of whom are women. This provided a robust framework to connect with communities and created a social capital that helped every programme. The PRI-SHG partnership catalysed changes that increased the pace of poverty reduction and the use of Aadhaar cleaned up corruption at several levels and ensured that the funds reached those whom it was meant for.

Third, Finance Commission transfers were made directly to gram panchayats leading to the creation of basic infrastructure like pucca village roads and drains at a much faster pace in rural areas. The high speed of road construction under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana created greater opportunities for employment in nearby larger villages/census towns/kasbas by improving connectivity and enhancing mobility.

Fourth, the social capital of SHGs ensured the availability of credit through banks, micro-finance institutions and MUDRA loans. The NRLM prioritised livelihood diversification and implemented detailed plans for credit disbursement. New businesses, both farm and non-farm livelihoods, were taken up by women’s collectives on a large scale with community resource persons playing crucial handholding roles, especially with respect to skill development. Fifth, in the two phases of the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan in 2018, benefits such as gas and electricity connections, LED bulbs, accident insurance, life insurance, bank accounts and immunisation were provided to 6,39,74 villages that were selected because of their high SC and ST populations. The implementation of these schemes was monitored assiduously. The performance of line departments went up manifold due to community-led action. The gains are reflected in the findings of the National Family Health Survey V, 2019-2021.

Sixth, the thrust on universal coverage for individual household latrines, LPG connections and pucca houses for those who lived in kuccha houses ensured that no one was left behind. This created the Labarthi Varg. Seventh, this was also a period in which a high amount of public funds were transferred to rural areas, including from the share of states and, in some programmes, through extra-budgetary resources.

Eighth, the thrust on a people’s plan campaign, “Sabka Yojana Sabka Vikas” for preparing the Gram Panchayat Development Plans and for ranking villages and panchayats on human development, economic activity and infrastructure, from 2017-18 onwards, laid the foundation for robust community participation involving panchayats and SHGs, especially in ensuring accountability.

Ninth, through processes like social and concurrent audits, efforts were made to ensure that resources were fully utilised. Several changes were brought about in programmes like the MGNREGS to create durable and productive assets. This helped marginal and small farmers in improving their homesteads, and diversifying livelihoods.

Tenth, the competition among states to improve performance on rural development helped. Irrespective of the party in power, nearly all states and UTs focussed on improving livelihood diversification in rural areas and on improving infrastructure significantly.

All these factors contributed to improved ease of living of deprived households and improving their asset base. A lot has been achieved, much remains to be done. The pandemic and the negative terms of trade shock from the Ukraine crisis pose challenges to the gains made in poverty reduction up to 2019.

The writer is a retired civil servant with 38 years in the social sector. Views are personal



M Y TARIGAMI

## Dividing lines

Delimitation Commission’s recommendations will deepen divides in J&K

THE DELIMITATION COMMISSION formed to remap the electoral constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir submitted its final report after two years. The Commission’s recommendations clearly reflect that the panel has gerrymandered the territorial constituencies to advance the electoral aspirations of the ruling party.

In the first place, the exercise was carried out under the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 and not in accordance with the Delimitation Act, 2002, which called for the 2001 census to be used as the basis for remapping poll constituencies.

This is not the only anomaly. In 2002, the Constitution of India was amended, deferring the delimitation of the constituencies until the first population Census is undertaken after 2026. Accordingly, the J&K Assembly amended the state constitution through the 29th Amendment deferring the delimitation process till 2026. The Delimitation Commission was set up under the Delimitation Act of 2002 — however, it has redrawn the constituencies in accordance with the provisions of the J&K Reorganisation Act 2019, which increased the number of seats by seven without any basis and criteria.

The Commission considered the 2011 Census for delimiting the territorial constituencies. However, there was scant regard for the population, a cardinal parameter for any delimitation process.

According to the 2011 Census, the population of the Kashmir region is 68,88,475; Jammu

has a population of 53,78,538; and Ladakh, which is now a separate Union territory, has 2,74,289 people. The Commission has allocated six extra seats to Jammu and only one to Kashmir. With this, Jammu will have 43 seats and Kashmir 47 in the assembly of 116 seats.

In effect, this means that with 44 per cent of the population, Jammu will get 48 per cent of the seat share, while Kashmir, with 56 per cent of the population, will get only 52 per cent share in seats. This arrangement is designed to create a disparity in regional representation.

The people as well as the political leaders in the region are unable to comprehend what, if any, objective criteria were employed by the Commission for this bizarre apportioning of seats. Despite the objections of various political parties, including the associate members, the panel went ahead with its pre-determined plans, riding roughshod over the aspirations of the people.

In 2002, when the J&K government placed a moratorium on the delimitation of assembly constituencies until 2026, it was accepted that the process must take place in step with the rest of the country. The freeze was also upheld by the Supreme Court. But the BJP, which toms that it has “integrated” J&K with India, has done the opposite by using a different yardstick for the delimitation of seats in J&K.

Thus, a malodour hangs over the entire exercise. Ever since the central dispensation read down the special constitutional provisions of J&K and broke the region into two Union territories, it has been making unceasing efforts to

change the electoral demography of the region.

The BJP government went ahead with the delimitation process despite a clutch of writ petitions challenging the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, pending before the Supreme Court, under which the entire delimitation exercise was carried out.

The BJP’s dismal electoral performance in the region has spurred it to go for an early readjustment of poll boundaries. Despite fielding its candidates on multiple seats, the party has never been able to bag a single seat from the Valley. During the 2020 district development elections, the party took a drubbing in the Valley.

The recommendations of the Delimitation Commission are completely in line with the BJP’s policy of creating an electoral autocracy in J&K as most of the seats were carved out in Hindu-dominated areas. The overhauling of the existing territorial boundaries of the constituencies has significantly brought down the electoral representation of Muslims in the Jammu region. For example, Doda was allotted an additional seat, taking the number of total assembly segments in this Chenab Valley district to three. But of them, two seats are carved out of Hindu-dominated areas despite the district having a Muslim population of over 53 per cent.

The Commission’s assertions that it had taken the topography terrain and accessibility into account are without reason. The panel has recommended the merging of the Jammu division’s Rajouri and Poonch districts with the

Anantnag Lok Sabha seat, thus carving out an Anantnag-Rajouri parliamentary constituency. But there is almost no geographical connectivity between the two regions as they are separated by the Pir Panjal mountains.

The historic Mughal road, which is the shortest route connecting Poonch and Rajouri districts via Shopian to the Valley, remains shut for at least six months a year. Shopian, on the other hand, which is comparatively nearer Rajouri has been made part of the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency. Moreover, these separate regions do not share common aspirations, as they are culturally and linguistically distinct. This peculiar readjustment of poll boundaries is beyond comprehension.

The BJP government has pursued divisive politics in J&K by pitting one region against the other and creating cleavages between communities. It has been manipulating and manoeuvring the situation to its advantage since August 5, 2019. The J&K Reorganisation Act modified the law of enfranchisement of J&K. Voting rights for the state assembly, which were restricted to only permanent residents, have been extended to non-state subjects. The redrawing of poll constituencies is of a piece with all this. It will deepen the communal and regional divide in J&K and is bound to disempower the people and will have deleterious effects on the political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir.

The writer is the former CPI(M) MLA from J&K. He is the Convenor and Spokesperson of the People’s Alliance for Gupkar Declaration

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### BAGGA BAGGAGE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Driving Mr Bagga’ (IE, May 7). The arrest, interception and now subsequent release of Tajinder Pal Singh Bagga had all the ludicrous action, straight out of a comic Bollywood scene. On a serious note, the police, doing the bidding of their political bosses was again on display. It is unfortunate that political vendetta, which the BJP as a dominant force in the country seems to be associated with, is now being picked up by fledgling parties like the AAP. The bottom line is that no matter how different their ideology, the police-political nexus is the common denominator binding all the political parties.

Kamna Chhabra, Gurgaon

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Driving Mr Bagga’ (IE, May 07). It appears that we are happy just with the fact that we are the biggest democracy in the world and hence do not notice that the powers that be — irrespective of their political spread in the country or their ideology — have no qualms in undermining it for their vested interests. The Bagga episode clearly shows that our Constitution, which frames our democracy, has been compromised both by the all-powerful BJP and the two-state AAP by misusing police, worse by positioning them face to face when their job is to go after criminals. This is antithetical to democracy.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

### BAD DECISION

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Lanka govt defends move, as Opp envoys criticise it over emergency declaration’ (IE, May 8). Hit hard by the pandemic, rising oil prices and government tax cuts, Sri Lanka has been left with as little as \$50 million in usable foreign reserves. There is a grave shortage of food, fuel and electricity. The government’s declaration of a state of emergency that gives greater powers to the president to deploy the military, detain people without charge and break up protests seems to be imprudent.

SS Paul, Nadia

### PROUD MOMENT

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Right man at the right place’ (IE, May 8). The Bombay Engineering Group & Centre (BEG&C), better known as the Bombay Sappers, the Indian Army’s youngest sappers after Madras and Bengal sappers of the Corps of Engineers, could have celebrated the success of its officer reaching the top rank in the Army way back in 1973. However, it had to wait for almost five decades for the moment, which came when the Central government announced that General Manoj Pande will be the next Chief of Army Staff. Pande’s appointment should be a proud moment for the defence forces and particularly for engineers across the country.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali



THIS WORD MEANS

MONKEYPOX

A zoonotic cousin of smallpox, found in Central and West Africa

HEALTH AUTHORITIES in the United Kingdom have confirmed a case of monkeypox, a rare viral infection similar to smallpox, in an individual who recently travelled to that country from Nigeria.

Monkeypox virus

The monkeypox virus is an orthopoxvirus, which is a genus of viruses that also includes the variola virus, which causes smallpox, and vaccinia virus, which was used in the smallpox vaccine. Monkeypox causes symptoms similar to smallpox, although they are less severe.

While vaccination eradicated smallpox worldwide in 1980, monkeypox continues to occur in a swathe of countries in Central and West Africa, and has on occasion showed up elsewhere. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), two distinct clade are identified: the West African clade and the Congo Basin clade, also known as the Central African clade.

Zoonotic disease

Monkeypox is a zoonosis: It is transmitted from animals to humans. According to the WHO, cases occur close to tropical rainforests inhabited by animals that carry the virus. Monkeypox virus infection has been detected in squirrels, Gambian poached rats, dormice, and some species of monkeys.

Human-to-human transmission is limited — the longest documented chain of transmission is six generations, the WHO says. “It is important to emphasise that monkeypox does not spread easily between people and the overall risk to the general public is very low,” Dr Colin Brown, Director of Clinical and Emerging Infections at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said on Saturday.

Transmission can be through contact with bodily fluids, lesions on the skin or on internal mucosal surfaces, such as in the mouth or throat, respiratory droplets and contaminated objects, the WHO says.



Monkeypox's symptoms are similar to smallpox's, but less severe. WHO

Symptoms and treatment

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), monkeypox begins with a fever, headache, muscle aches, back ache, and exhaustion. It also causes the lymph nodes to swell, which smallpox does not. The WHO underlines that it is not to be confused with chickenpox, measles, bacterial skin infections, scabies, syphilis and medication-associated allergies.

The incubation period (from infection to symptoms) for monkeypox is usually 7-14 days but can range from 5-21 days. Usually within a day to 3 days of the onset of fever, the patient develops a rash that begins on the face and spreads to other parts of the body. The skin eruption stage can last between 2 and 4 weeks, during which the lesions harden and become painful, fill up with a clear fluid and then pus, and develop scabs or crusts.

According to the WHO, the proportion of deaths has varied between 0 and 11%, and been higher among young children.

There is no safe, proven treatment for monkeypox yet. The WHO recommends supportive treatment depending on the symptoms. Awareness is important for prevention and control of the infection.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

## Working away from office does not affect productivity: study

A STUDY in the United States has suggested that working remotely does not affect productivity. The study was published in *IOS Press* back in February, and was described on Friday in a press release from Texas A&M University.

The team has found that employee and company resiliency may be enhanced through the opportunity for employees to work remotely during natural disasters and other events that cause workplace displacement. The researchers worked with a large oil and gas company in Houston, Texas, to analyse software data from 264 employees. During the study period, the company was forced to close its offices because

of flooding from Hurricane Harvey, which required employees to work remotely for an extended period. Employee data before, during and after Hurricane Harvey showed that although total computer use declined during the hurricane, employees' work behaviours during the seven-month period of working remotely returned to pre-hurricane levels.

“This is a huge message right now for employers because we're having national debates about whether or not employees should be able to work remotely or in a hybrid schedule,” the release quoted researcher Mark Benden as saying.

Source: *Texas A&M University*



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AMITABH SINHA  
PUNE, MAY 8

THE WORLD Health Organization (WHO) report on excess mortality due to Covid-19 is the latest in a series of exercises in the last over a year that tend to suggest India's official death toll is an undercount. The WHO report has pegged India's excess mortality (people who probably would not have died if there was no pandemic) for 2020 and 2021 at 47.4 lakh. Several other studies have shown India's Covid-related death count at anywhere between 25 lakh to 60 lakh. In fact, the upper bound for the WHO study is even higher.

While these figures are being debated, many important nuances are being missed.

The official count

Any discussion on the undercount as of now is premature because India has not yet stopped counting its Covid deaths. The 5.24 lakh deaths counted until now is not the final official toll. The number is under constant revision, almost daily, and is likely to remain so for several months, if not years. Kerala, for example, is updating its death toll almost every day, and many other states have been doing it periodically. Last week, Assam added 1,300 deaths on a single day. Other states have made similar adjustments in the past.

Even the death numbers reported in 2020 and 2021 are not final. The more than 21,000 deaths Kerala has reported in the last four months have not all happened this year. Most of them pertain to last year. The 1,300 deaths Assam added on April 25 did not all happen that day, or that month, or this year. They most likely happened the previous year. Several hundreds, possibly thousands, of deaths that states adjusted in 2021 would have actually happened in 2020. The additions to the overall tally are being made on the day these deaths are being confirmed, and not the day these might have happened.

That would mean that even though the death count for 2020 still shows up as 1.49 lakh, chances are that it has already been substantially corrected, and may be revised even further at a later stage. Many of the deaths that would have happened in 2020 but are not included in the 1.49 lakh tally would have been accounted for at a later stage. Those deaths have not been missed; they will reflect in the

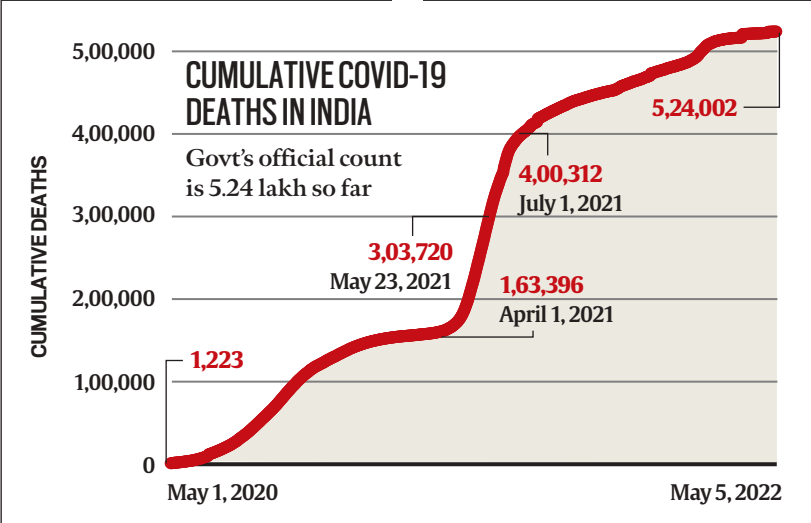
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

IN ALL the Mother's Day WhatsApp forwards and social media posts that you sent or were sent on Sunday, the name Anna Jarvis probably never figured. Jarvis founded Mother's Day in the US and worked to have it officially recognised — but eventually came to hate its commercialisation, and spent the last of her energies and money to campaign against it.

Memory of her mother

Jarvis (1864-1948) was an American activist who founded Mother's Day to honour her mother and “all mothers” in 1908.

Her mother had spent her life working for causes centred on motherhood, and a young Anna once heard her say that she hoped a mothers' day would be founded to commemorate mothers “matchless service”. After Mrs Jarvis died in 1905, Anna wrote to



statistics. The same is true for 2021.

It is difficult to measure the scale of the undercount in a situation like this, particularly when the counting exercise is still on. A physical count, and verification, of the dead in a country as vast as India during such chaotic times is bound to take a little more time than running some equations in a computer model.

The WHO report does not get into calculating the scale of the undercount, for India or any other country. It has done a more straightforward exercise of calculating excess mortality. It has estimated the total number of people who likely died in India in 2020 due to all causes and, from that, has subtracted the expected number of all-cause deaths if there was no Covid. These ‘excess’ deaths are considered to be a direct or indirect result of Covid-19.

Multiple studies and estimates

It is often argued that, because multiple studies have been pointing to similar estimates, they must be reflective of the true death toll in the country. What is being overlooked is that these studies have been throwing up similar estimates probably because they have all been using similar mathematical models and statistical methods. The researchers, and those doing peer reviews, belong to an overlapping set of people.

What these studies certainly show is that there is a general agreement in academic circles on the usefulness of these models in the

current situation, possibly based on their ability to simulate the reality in some earlier situations. That, however, is no guarantee that these models have an unquestionable capability to accurately mimic the dynamics of the current pandemic, whose nature and behaviour is far from fully understood.

Computer modelling is routinely used by academics to simulate real-life situations. The accuracy of their results depend on the underlying quality of data and assumptions. Because of multiple layers of extrapolations involved, slight changes in assumptions or input data can significantly alter results.

To estimate India's Covid toll, the WHO study has relied, among various sources, on death registration data from the Civil Registration System (CRS). Several media houses had published monthly CRS data for a few states last year, and these numbers did not always match. Depending on which publication was selected to pick these numbers from, the output of the mathematical model would have been different.

Also, the monthly CRS death data, even if obtained through an RTI applications, was only ‘provisional’ and subject to change. Only the numbers mentioned in the annual CRS report, released last week, are final.

The quality of assumptions can also induce large uncertainties in the final result. In March 2020, a widely quoted computer modelling study led by Ramanan Laxminarayan had pre-

## Why Mother’s Day founder Anna Jarvis later hated it



Jarvis founded Mother's Day in 1908

Definition, celebration

There were others before Jarvis — including author and suffragist Julia Ward Howe, who had started a Mothers' Day (note the placement of the apostrophe) celebration in June 1873. Historians note that Jarvis narrowed the definition of ‘mother’ to one who puts her children's needs first — in choosing the singular over Howe's “Mothers' Day”, she wanted people to honour their own mothers who cared for them at home.

Jarvis' version was eagerly taken up by the greeting card industry, the flower industry, etc, and Mother's Day was heavily commercialised. A report in *The New York Times* from 1964, said: “According to the National Committee on the Observance of Mother's Day, Inc., the day has become a gift-giving occasion second only to Christmas.”

Jarvis' disillusionment

Jarvis hated it. She threw her energies into arresting this commercialisation through

campaigns, litigation, and direct action. She had copyrighted the phrase “Second Sunday in May, Mother's Day” early on, and sued people for using it for marketing campaigns.

In a press release, she demanded, “What will you do to rout charlatans, bandits, pirates, racketeers, kidnappers and other termites that would undermine with their greed one of the finest, noblest and truest movements and celebrations?” according to a BBC report.

She attacked First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt for using Mother's Day to raise funds for charity, and was arrested in 1925 after crashing a convention of American War Mothers, who sold carnations on Mother's Day to raise funds.

In 1948, Jarvis died, almost penniless and alone. According to the BBC, one of her final public activities before being admitted to a sanatorium was “to go door-to-door in Philadelphia asking for signatures to back an appeal for Mother's Day to be rescinded”.

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EXPLAINED CLIMATE

## Heatwaves and the role humidity plays in making them deadly

EXPERT EXPLAINS

JOY MERWIN MONTEIRO



THE CONSECUTIVE heatwaves over South Asia since March 2022 have continued the disturbing tradition of breaking historical temperature records. Mercifully, these record temperatures were not accompanied by the high mortality burden observed in previous heatwaves such as the one during 2015. Why those heatwaves were so deadly is a puzzle that we are yet to resolve.

The recent IPCC report AR6 has emphasised that humidity is also very important while estimating the physiological stress that extreme heat puts on the human body. Instead of the “dry bulb” temperature that is usually measured using a regular thermometer, an alternative metric known as the “wet bulb temperature” has been used to measure exposure to extreme heat. The report men-

tions that sustained exposures to wet bulb temperatures above 35°C are fatal, while sustained exposures to wet bulb temperatures above 32°C are dangerous for intense physical activity. The critical word here is “sustained”, which we will come back to later.

These projections are very welcome and are the outcome of more than a decade of work put in by the climate science community. The public health community was, of course, aware of the implications of humidity for a much longer time. Furthermore, a number of recent articles in the media have helped make the public aware of this. However, there has been a growing concern about the 35°C threshold and whether parts of South Asia will become “unsurvivable” in the coming years.

Humidity and temperature

Why is humidity such a critical factor while measuring heat exposure? Humans lose heat generated within their body by producing sweat that evaporates on the skin. The cooling effect of this evaporation is essential in maintaining a stable body temperature. As humidity rises, sweat does not evaporate — just like clothes take a long time to dry in hu-

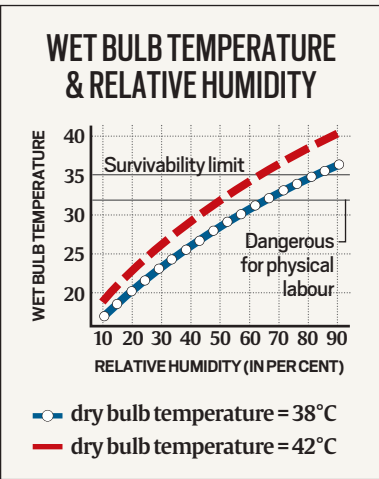
mid locations — and makes it difficult to regulate body temperature. This is why we feel more discomfort in humid places.

The wet bulb temperature is usually lower than the dry bulb temperature, and the difference between the two increases dramatically as the air becomes dry. The variation of wet bulb temperature for a fixed dry bulb temperature is shown in the figure.

The humidity required to reach wet bulb temperatures in excess of 35°C over land is exceedingly difficult to achieve for a variety of reasons, which this article will not go into. This is the reason the AR6 says that such conditions are rarely observed nowadays. Wet bulb temperatures in excess of 35°C have been observed in Sindh in Pakistan, but such conditions occur once every three to four years, and probably for a few hours. This fails to meet the criteria of “sustained exposure”.

Just because we don't observe such conditions in the current climate does not mean that they will be as rare in future climates. However, the research that backs the AR6 also suggests we are unlikely to experience sustained exposure to wet bulb temperatures beyond the threshold of survivability.

The hype around survivability thresholds



and wet bulb temperatures obscures deeper issues, both physiological and political. Firstly, the inability of the body to stabilise its core temperature can have multiple reasons. For instance, increased strain on the heart during periods of elevated temperature could be fatal for those with pre-existing cardiac conditions and is in fact the leading cause of deaths

during heatwaves. Pre-existing respiratory problems and diabetes too are potential causes of death. Such conditions impair the body's ability to efficiently transfer heat to the environment.

A less obvious issue is that of dehydration. Many labourers, especially women, intentionally keep themselves dehydrated due to the lack of toilets in workplaces. Dehydration can lead to decreased sweat production and therefore increased vulnerability to heat stroke during heatwaves. Such public health factors can dramatically reduce the survivability thresholds and underestimate the actual vulnerability of the population.

Global and local

There is also a political issue here that often goes unnoticed. A singular focus on increasing wet bulb temperatures subtly shifts the responsibility of action from the local to the transnational arena. Increasing wet bulb temperatures are the byproduct of global climate change, and therefore keeping our population safe becomes the responsibility of international negotiators at conferences such as COP26. Very little can be done at the local level to keep wet bulb temperatures from ris-

ing if the factors controlling them are global. On the other hand, understanding the factors that increase vulnerability to heatwaves puts the onus on local actors, who have to provide better sanitation facilities, protect the elderly and those with cardiac conditions, and reduce the incidence of diabetes in the population. Such a focus will increase the pressure to improve our national health infrastructure, whose fragility has become increasingly clear to everyone over the past two years.

In summary, the recent focus on increasing temperature and humidity is a welcome step in building awareness about the impacts of climate change. However, it is important to realise that our vulnerability to heatwaves is a systemic problem that has existed for a very long time, and is not dependent only on increasing greenhouse gas emissions. Refocusing our priorities to highlight critical gaps in our urban and health infrastructure that repeatedly fail to protect the most vulnerable among us will allow us to build a more climate-resilient nation.

Joy Merwin Monteiro is a Climate Scientist working at the Department of Earth and Climate Science at IISER, Pune.



11

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

UGO ASTUTO/EU AMBASSADOR TO INDIA

“Russian aggression, not sanctions, is affecting global food security and prices”

EU Ambassador Ugo Astuto shares how Europe has a renewed interest in India and both can work together to deepen strategic partnerships on climate, green energy and connectivity while ensuring a rule-based order. The session was moderated by Deputy Chief of National Bureau, SHUBHAJIT ROY

**Shubhajit Roy: As India-EU relations are getting stronger by the day, what is your assessment of this partnership?**

We are at an extremely positive juncture. That's based on a number of reasons but for sure, it's about shared values as open societies, democracy and convergence of interests. Both India and EU are good global citizens who believe in a rules-based system of international governance and have a cooperative approach. That's the basis of our strategic partnership, which has been gaining momentum over the past couple of years or so. When it comes to trade, last year's decision to resume negotiations for free trade agreements (FTAs) was a very significant moment in launching our strategic partnership. This has been emphasised by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during her recent visit. Both India and EU have set ambitious targets for meeting climate change challenges and we can exchange best practices to address them. On green energy, India has invested massively in solar grids and cleaner sources of energy. The EU, with its Green Deal and 55 programmes, has vowed to become carbon-neutral by 2050.

Digital transition is the next area where our interests converge. As democratic and open societies, we want the digital revolution to be human-centric, consistent with our values and beneficial to our citizens, which means it must be underpinned by respect for their fundamental freedoms. We want to create an environment which is not only conducive to innovation and competition but is also respectful of individual rights and data protection. So, we will be working together on issues such as the security of networks. We want connectivity with quality infrastructure. We want to develop links, not dependencies. As our President recently said, connectivity and infrastructure development must be based on fiscal, social and environmental sustainability. We have seen some of your neighbours being ensnared by debt traps because of unsustainable infrastructure projects. Global Gateway is a major policy initiative that will build on the bilateral connectivity partnership agreed upon in 2021. The EU vision of the Indo-Pacific is pretty similar to India's advocacy of a rule-based order. Forty per cent of the trade with Europe passes through the Indo-Pacific and we want to contribute to the success story here. In Europe, there's a renewed interest in India and we can work together as like-minded democracies.

**Shubhajit Roy: Europe has been outrightly critical of the Russian invasion of Ukraine compared to India. What conversations have happened between EU and the Indian leadership?**

The unprovoked and unjustified aggression of Russia against Ukraine is a blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter. Russia itself subscribed to these agreements. Our response has to be robust and Europe is united in helping Ukraine defend itself, its future and its right to choose the future of its citizens. Apart from political and humanitarian support, for the first time, EU has supplied weapons to Ukraine. We have five packages of sanctions against Russia to disable Kremlin's war machine, to affect Russia's capacity to continue its aggression and bring to account those responsible for this aggression. Unfortunately, there's also evidence of human rights violations and war crimes. We have seen the indiscriminate shelling of cities and urban centres, and the targeting of civilians in places like Bucha. We cannot simply accept that might is right as it can have consequences not just in Europe but in the Indo-Pacific. We shall continue to support Ukraine and isolate Russia.

**Nirupama Subramanian: What does a weakened Russia mean for Europe given its historical context and the present reality? What is the specific outcome that you are looking for?**

What we need is the immediate cessation of hostilities and a Russian withdrawal. For four years, we've been trying to engage with Russia and establish mutually beneficial relations. The Kremlin narrative about an expansionist NATO being the cause of the current aggression is totally false. NATO has been expanded to respect the free will of east European countries that have emerged from the terrible experience of the Soviet occupation. NATO has never had aggressive intentions vis-a-vis Russia, quite the contrary. Russia was included in the G7, which then became G8. NATO and Russia



WHY  
UGO ASTUTO

As Ambassador of the European Union (EU) in India and Bhutan, Ugo Astuto is overseeing a transformative change in its strategic partnership with India. There's a broad spectrum of issues — from trade to environment, technology to Indo-Pacific — that both are collaborating on, which is underpinned by shared values of democracy, individual freedom, pluralism and multilateralism

established a mechanism for a conversation with the EU. Ukraine has never caused any threat to Russia, for sure.

**Nirupama Subramanian: Right now, Europe is united on sanctions. If this war drags on, how long do you think this consensus will hold?**

I would say look at how fast the EU has come together and how effectively we have been coordinating with our friends and allies around the world, including the US, UK, Japan, Australia and Singapore, which are also implementing sanctions. When facing such an existential threat to the rules-based system of governance, the EU can and does come together to defend its values. Europe will stay united.

**Rakesh Sinha: We've seen the Chinese aligning themselves with the Russians on Ukraine. What has been the EU's engagement with China on this?**

We had a virtual summit with China on April 1. We have been telling China

that it is also in its interest to speak up and contribute to the international community's efforts to stop the Russian aggression. Speaking in broader terms, we have a complex relation with China, which is a negotiating partner in addressing global challenges like climate. It's a competitor in trade. And then our ask is for China to abide by the rules when it advocates a system of governance which doesn't align with our principles of democracy. So, all these different strands come together. Our relationship with China is important but complex. What we are doing is to address this relationship with clarity, pushing back when necessary.

**Rakesh Sinha: Do you see a post-war order in which the Russians and the Chinese will stick together?**

I can't speculate, I can only look at facts and at the statement of intent, which was issued right before the Olympics when Russian President Vladimir Putin visited China. And we see pretty robust expressions, limitless friendship and so on. This came right before the aggression in Ukraine.

**P Vaidyanathan Iyer: It seems that the EU and the individual big countries within it are at cross purposes with each other as far as India is concerned. For instance, Germany and France push bilateral deals with India on defence or big acquisitions. Yet when it comes to trade agreements, the EU supersedes interests of individual countries. How can we reconcile this divergence?**

I don't see that in practice. What I see is a remarkable convergence among all member states. We are all on the same page. In the EU, some competencies have been devolved to European institutions, notably trade. So when it comes, for instance, to the FTAs, that's an exclusive competency for the EU to negotiate. But then again, I'm happy to note that there is consensus among all member states that we should proceed in earnest. We all realise the interest we have and the potential which lies in the conclusion of an FTA. This is largely true overall in our approach to India. The EU coordinates, complements and reinforces the policies of individual member states. I do not foresee any issue in terms of divergent perspectives, quite the opposite.

**P Vaidyanathan Iyer: What about security concerns, be it of India or the EU. India is wary of China as EU is of Russia. So how does one factor in individual concerns?**

The response must be multidimensional. It also depends on how you look at security. If you look at security holistically, it's not just about the weapons system. We're talking about the digital dimension, the security of networks is becoming more and more important. Our strategy for the Indo-Pacific and its convergence with the vision of India is relevant. It's also about fostering trade and creating conditions so that the next health emergency can be dealt with by an additional level of solidarity. These are also important elements of security. The EU has a strategic compass. We have decided to take measures to address this challenge in terms of working together better and integrating our procurement. We have decided to set up a rapid intervention force of 5,000 troops. Then, you have the efforts undertaken by individual member states, many of whom are partnering with India in security and defence.

**Shubhajit Roy: There's a perception that China's rise has been enabled by the West. Europe, too, has helped it weaponise its growing left despite**

**India flagging concerns about its belligerence. Could something have been done differently?**

I don't know about the past. But what I see is a clear sense of purpose now. Yes, the EU is ready to engage with China but will push back when necessary. You mentioned trade. China cannot simply reap the benefits of belonging to a system of open trade without respecting the same ground rules. We want a level playing field for all. There is the EU legislation on investment, which has been enacted at the national level but follows a framework set at the EU level. We have taken measures for the security of networks.

**Harish Damodaran: The sanctions seem to have inflicted much more collateral damage on other countries than Russia. We know that the Russian rouble has strengthened and Russia is merrily selling its oil. But the global prices of crude, fertilisers and commodities have risen. Should this strategy be re-looked at?**

Sanctions are needed to stop the invasion and dent Russia's military capability. Europe is ready to pay a price although we are realising the war's cascading effects on food security and prices. But let me be very clear, the cause is not the sanctions, it's Russian aggression. As long as Ukraine is a battlefield, obviously the production of wheat will be limited. So early peace is in everybody's interest. We've also seen Russia stopping wheat-laden ships in the Black Sea. That's not the consequence of sanctions. That's a deliberate decision taken by Russia. You can see the plundering of agricultural equipment by Russia in Ukraine. Again, this has nothing to do with sanctions. It's the decision of the Russian occupiers. Let's not forget the origin of these issues.

**Karunjit Singh: Will the proposed India-EU FTA envisage a stricter IPR regime or include a clause on Government procurement? Has the Indian side showed flexibility from its position in 2013 when the agreement was stalled?**

We'll have to discuss all issues at the negotiating table. I'm happy to say that we have set the framework and roadmap for the resumption of talks, which will start possibly next month. Both sides are aiming at an ambitious and comprehensive trade agreement that can deliver on market access for goods and services. Governments should address procurement, include provisions on trade and sustainable development as well as digital trade. It's too early to comment.

**Karunjit Singh: How has India's procurement of discounted crude oil from Russia impacted its perception in Europe?**

Europe, as of today, is the largest importer of oil and gas from Russia. So, we understand the compulsions of our partners. What we are trying to do is wean ourselves away from this dependency. We have started the process and we are determined to do that in a short span of time. We are currently discussing six packages of sanctions that will also af-

We cannot simply accept that might is right as it can have consequences not just in Europe but in the Indo-Pacific. We shall continue to support Ukraine and isolate Russia

2030. In the EU, this is a legal obligation. The role of India has also been instrumental in COP 26 as your Prime Minister announced solar energy and zero carbon targets.

The discussion on climate finance is important. COP 26 has achieved the objective of making the target of the \$100-billion finance achievable. We are not yet there, so I understand your frustration. But I'm glad to say that the EU is the first provider in climate finance. Can we do more? Mitigation and adaptation are equally important.

**Harikishan Sharma: How has the India-EU Water Partnership progressed?**

It has worked well so far and it brings together the expertise from Europe and best

practices from India on management of water resources. India will have an increased population in cities and towns requiring access to clean water in a sustainable way. It needs a non-polluting waste water system. We have started work on the Tapi river and want to replicate this experience in other places. We also have Twinning Programmes of European and Indian cities to see how we can address water issues.

**Ananthakrishnan G: At the recent Raisina Dialogue, the Indian Foreign Minister raised questions about how a rules-based order can justify whatever happened in Afghanistan.**

The EU has pretty similar views on Afghanistan as India. We would like to see a peaceful Afghanistan posing no threat to neighbours and where citizens can enjoy their rights, particularly women and girls. We know the dangers of a humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan. That's why the EU and its member states have been at the forefront of providing humanitarian assistance. We pledged a significant amount at a pledging conference in March. We are ready to help the Afghan population, irrespective of the dispensation in power. Our help does not mean the recognition of Taliban rule. We want to help people survive. Our engagement is based on a principle of solidarity with the Afghan people. We will need clear engagement or respect for human rights. And those Afghans who want to leave Afghanistan should be free to. From our side in Europe, we will welcome them.

**Ananthakrishnan G: But isn't the war against Putin impacting ordinary Russians? Yet you want to support Afghans despite Taliban rule. Isn't there a dichotomy here?**

In Afghanistan, we are talking about basic survival needs that are not met by the ruling establishment. Sanctions are not directed against the Russian population, they are directed towards those responsible for the decision to attack Ukraine. They are directed towards the tools that the Kremlin used to attack Ukraine. For instance, there's a blacklist of Russian government officials, making it impossible for them to travel to Europe. We are blocking their financial institutions in Europe because they are used by the Kremlin to fund the war effort. The distinction is there.

**Deeptiman Tiwary: While it talks of battling global terrorism, Europe's focus on India-centric terror groups, operating with Pakistan's support, has been less than satisfactory. How is the EU going to address this, considering the West needs Pakistan again to engage with Afghanistan?**

Counter-terrorism cooperation is part and parcel of the various dialogues we have in place with India, at the EU level and also at the level of individual EU member states. Europe is also a victim of terror and it requires a cohesive and consistent response from the international community, which we are doing, including at Financial Action Task Force (FATF). No country should be harbouring terrorists or allow its territory to be used for targeting other countries.

**Nirupama Subramanian: Can there be a negotiated end to this war? Prime Minister Modi, during his recent visit to Europe, called for an immediate ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine. Is there a role that India can play here?**

I certainly hope there can be a negotiated end to the war. I'm also cognisant of the fact that Ukrainians themselves have signed the terms of this negotiation as a free country, a country which has the right to determine its future. There is a high level of distrust vis-a-vis President Putin. Actually, India does play a role. I understand the Prime Minister has spoken to President Putin as well as President Zelenskyy and I hope that the voice of reason can be heard.

Illustration: Suvajit Dey



TOPOF THE  
WORLD

Bashar Assad with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran on Sunday. AP

## WEST ASIA

## Syria's Assad in Iran for meetings in rare foreign trip

SYRIAN PRESIDENT Bashar Assad met Iranian leaders in Tehran on Sunday, Iranian and Syrian media reported, marking his second trip to major wartime ally Iran since Syria's civil war erupted in 2011. Nour News, a website close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council, reported that Assad met Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi. It said the leaders praised the strong ties between their nations and vowed to boost relations further. "Everybody now looks at Syria as a power," Khamenei told Assad in the meeting, according to Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency. **AP**

## THE GULF

## Saudi king admitted to hospital

SAUDI ARABIA'S octogenarian monarch underwent medical tests on Sunday, state-run media reported, just weeks after he had the battery of his pacemaker changed. The report in the official Saudi Press Agency did not provide further details about King Salman's condition or the nature of the medical examinations. It said that the king, 86, was admitted to King Faisal Specialist Hospital in the Saudi port city of Jiddah. The monarch's health is closely watched because he holds absolute power in the kingdom. **AP**

## CUBA

## Search on as hotel blast toll rises to 30

SEARCH CREWS with dogs hunted through the ruins of a luxury hotel in Cuba's capital Sunday for survivors of an apparent gas explosion and officials raised the number of known dead to 30. The Hotel Saratoga, a five-star 96-room hotel in Old Havana, was preparing to reopen after being closed for two years when an apparent gas leak caused a massive explosion on Friday. Cuban officials on Sunday raised the known death toll to 30 from 27 even as crews continued to search for dozens still believed to be trapped under the rubble. **AP**

## Dozens feared dead after Russian bomb levels school sheltering 90 in Ukraine

ELENA BECATOROS & JONG GAMBRELL  
ZAPORIZHZHIA (UKRAINE), MAY 8

DOZENS OF Ukrainians were feared dead Sunday after a Russian bomb flattened a school sheltering about 90 people in its basement, while Ukrainian troops refused to surrender at a besieged steel plant that Moscow's invading forces sped to seize before Russia's Victory Day holiday.

The governor of Luhansk province, one of two areas that make up the eastern industrial heartland known as the Donbas, said the school in the village of Bilohorivka caught fire after Saturday's bombing. Emergency crews found two bodies and rescued 30 people, he said.

"Most likely, all 60 people who remain under the rubble are now dead," Gov. Serhiy Haidai wrote on the Telegram messaging app. Russian shelling also killed two boys, ages 11 and 14, in the nearby town of Pryvillia, he said.

The largest European conflict since World War II has developed into a punishing war of attrition due to the Ukrainian military's unexpectedly effective defense. Since failing to capture Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, Moscow's forces have attacked cities, towns and villages in eastern and southern Ukraine but not gained much ground, according to Western military analysts.

To demonstrate success in time for Victory Day on Monday, the Russian military worked to complete its takeover of Mariupol, which has been under relentless assault since the start of the war. The sprawling seaside steel mill where an estimated 2,000 Ukrainian fighters made a last stand is the only part of the city not under Russian control.

All the remaining women, children and older civilians who were sheltering with the fighters in the Azovstal plant were evacuated Saturday. The Ukrainian troops rejected deadlines given by the Russians who said the defenders could leave with their lives if they laid down their arms. **AP**



US First Lady Jill Biden with Ukrainian First Lady Olena Zelenskyy outside a school in Uzhhorod, Ukraine, Sunday. AP

## Jill Biden pays surprise visit to Ukraine, meets First Lady Canada's Trudeau makes unannounced visit to Irpin

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
UZHGOROD, MAY 8

JILL BIDEN made an unannounced visit to western Ukraine on Sunday, holding a surprise Mother's Day meeting with First Lady Olena Zelenska to show US support for the embattled nation as Russia presses its punishing war in the eastern regions.

She travelled under the cloak of secrecy, becoming the latest high-profile American to enter Ukraine during its 10-week-old conflict with Russia.

"I wanted to come on Mother's Day," the US First Lady told Zelenska. "I thought it was important to show the Ukrainian people that this war has to stop and this war has been brutal and that the people of the United States stand with the people of Ukraine."

Biden spent about two hours in Ukraine, travelling by vehicle to the town of Uzhhorod, about a 10-minute drive from a Slovakian border village where she had toured

## Bono performs in Kyiv metro

IRISH ROCK group U2's frontman Bono and his bandmate The Edge performed a 40-minute concert in a metro station in Ukraine's capital of Kyiv on Sunday and praised Ukrainians fighting for their freedom from Russia. "Your President leads the world in the cause of freedom right now... The people of Ukraine are not just fighting for your own free-



Bono with a Ukrainian soldier in Kyiv, Sunday. Reuters

dom, you're fighting for all of us who love freedom," Bono said. **REUTERS**

a border processing facility.

Zelenska thanked Biden for her "courageous act" and said, "We understand what it takes for the US First Lady to come here during a war when military actions are taking place every day, where the air sirens are happening every day — even today."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also made a surprise visit to Ukraine on Sunday. He was in Irpin, which had been

damaged by Russia's attempt to take Kyiv at the start of the war.

Canadian officials said the PM would meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and "reaffirm Canada's unwavering support for the Ukrainian people."

Zelenskyy also met on Sunday with the German Parliament Speaker, Bärbel Bas, in Kyiv to discuss further defence assistance, according to Zelenskyy's press office.

## Beijing loyalist John Lee elected as Hong Kong's next leader

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
HONG KONG, MAY 8

JOHN LEE, a hard-line security chief who oversaw a crackdown on Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, was elected as the city's next leader on Sunday in a vote cast by a largely pro-Beijing committee.

Lee was the only candidate and won with over 99% of the vote in which nearly all 1,500 committee members were carefully vetted by the central government in Beijing.

He will replace current leader Carrie Lam on July 1. Her five-term was marked by huge pro-democracy protests calling for her resignation, a security crackdown that has quashed virtually all dissent, the recent Covid-19 wave that had overwhelmed the health system — events that



John Lee with his wife after winning the vote to be Hong Kong leader. He, however, was the only candidate in the fray. AP

have undermined Hong Kong's reputation as an international business hub with Western-style freedoms.

"I look forward to all of us starting a new chapter together, building a Hong Kong that is caring, open and vibrant, and a Hong Kong that is full of oppor-

## BRAZIL

## AMAZON DEFORESTATION HITS APRIL RECORD

Deforestation detected in the Brazilian Amazon broke all records for the month of April, and that followed similar new records set in January and February, reflecting a worrisome uptick in destruction in a state deep within the rainforest. Satellite alerts of deforestation for April corresponded to more than 1,000 square km, the highest figure for that month in seven years of record-keeping.



## Sri Lanka Opp rejects President's offer to form interim govt Leaves of security personnel cancelled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
COLOMBO, MAY 8

SRI LANKA'S main Opposition party, Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), said on Sunday that it rejected an offer by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to its leader Sajith Premadasa to head an interim government, amid continued political uncertainty in the country which is now under a state of emergency.

The Gotabaya-led government has come under massive pressure amid mass protests triggered by an unprecedented economic crisis in the country. The Defence Ministry has requested the public to assist the government in dealing with the crisis with "utmost intelligence and patience". The ministry also cancelled the leaves of all security personnel.

Regarding Gotabaya's offer for an interim government, SJB national organiser Tissa Attanayake said: "Our leader refused to accept the President's offer."

Gotabaya had talked over the telephone with both Premadasa and Harsha de Silva, the SJB's economic guru, on the prospect of forming an interim government which had been a demand endorsed by the powerful Buddhist clergy as well as the group which had broken away from the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) coalition.

The SJB announced on Saturday that they would back the proposal from the lawyers' body, BASL, which had called for the setting up of an interim government for a period of 18 months with a

move to abolish the presidential system of government.

They had also called for the repeal of the 20th Amendment of the Constitution, which conferred sweeping powers to Gotabaya in 2020.

Former Sri Lankan president Maithripala Sirisena also met Premadasa on Saturday to ask the SJB to take over the interim government.

Premadasa, 55, has already announced that he would not be a party to any government headed by the two Rajapaksas — Gotabaya and Prime Minister Mahinda.

The SJB, which has moved motions of no-confidence against the SLPP coalition government and Gotabaya, is putting pressure on Parliament Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena to advance the date of debate on the no-trust motions.

The government, hemmed in by a month of street protests, has imposed a state of emergency, which gives the security forces sweeping powers to crack down on dissent.

Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence on Saturday announced that due to the declaration of emergency, the leaves of security forces personnel are cancelled, the *Daily Mirror* reported.

All military personnel are to report to duty with immediate effect, the ministry said.

In a separate statement, the ministry requested all citizens to "assist in managing the current economic and social crisis and unrest in the country with the utmost intelligence and patience".



Sri Lankans demanding cooking gas sit with their empty gas cylinders blocking a busy intersection for a second day, in Colombo on Sunday. AP

## Senior Pak lawmaker: China's faith in Pak security system shaken

SAJJAD HUSSAIN  
ISLAMABAD, MAY 8

CHINA'S CONFIDENCE in Pakistan's security system's ability to protect its citizens and projects is seriously shaken after the Karachi University attack last month, a senior lawmaker said.

Three Chinese teachers were killed when a blast triggered by a woman suicide bomber from the Baluchistan Liberation Army ripped through a van of the Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi on April 26.

This was the latest targeted attack against Chinese citizens in Pakistan.

Sharing the mood of the Chinese side after the attack to *Dawn* newspaper on Friday,

Senator Mushahid Hussain, who is also the chairman of the Senate Defence Committee, said: "It has caused serious concern and understandable indignation in China."

Hussain led a Senate delegation to the Chinese embassy last week to express his condolences over the loss of Chinese lives.

"The Chinese confidence in Pakistan's security system's ability to protect their citizens and their projects is seriously shaken," said Hussain.

"The pattern of attacks is recurring and it's clear that Pakistani promises of 'foolproof security' are mere words...," he said. "If such attacks continue, not just Chinese but other foreign investors will also be forced to review their role in Pakistan," he said. **PTI**

## FOR MANY AFGHANS, THE HOLIDAY SERVED AS A REMINDER OF DISSONANCE BETWEEN PROMISE OF PEACE AND REALITIES OF THE WAR'S END

## Marking Eid under Taliban rule shows a changed Afghanistan

CHRISTINA GOLDBAUM, YAQOOB AKBARY & SAFIULLAH PADSHAH  
KABUL, MAY 8

THOUSANDS OF Afghans had piled into buses and set out down the country's once perilous highways bound for relatives they had not seen in years. Afghanistan's only national park was filled with tourists who had only dreamed of travelling to its intensely blue lakes and jagged mountains when fighting raged across the country. And Zulhijjah Mirzadah, a mother of five, packed a small picnic of dried fruit, gathered her family in a minibus and wove for

two hours through the congested streets of the capital, Kabul, to a bustling amusement park.

From the entrance, she could hear the low whoosh of a roller coaster and the chorus of joyous screams from Afghans inside celebrating Eid al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan. But she could not go further. Women, she was told at the gate, were barred by the Taliban from entering the park on Eid.

"We're facing economic problems, things are expensive, we can't find work, our daughters can't go to school — but we hoped to have a picnic in the park today," said Mirzadah, 25.

As Afghans endured the constant and random violence of the last two decades of war, many held hopes that when peace finally came to the country, Eid al-Fitr would be its high-water mark, a day where families long separated by fighting would finally be able to celebrate together.

Now that war is over. People can travel freely down highways devoid of gunfire, roadside bombs and attempts at extortion. The terrifying drone of warplanes overhead is long gone. But for many, the holiday that began last Sunday in Afghanistan served as a reminder of the dissonance between the promise of peace many Afghans had imagined and



On the day of Eid, many chose to pray outside of the Shir Shah Mina Mosque in Kabul, fearing another attack. NYT

the realities of the end of the war.

A crippling economic crisis that has slashed incomes and sent the prices of basic goods soaring forced many families to

forgo for the first time the Eid traditions of new clothes or dried fruit. Mosques were emptier than usual after a recent string of explosions stoked fears of the re-

turn of terrorist attacks.

And many women in urban areas, who have been devastated by the Taliban government's restrictions, found little reason to celebrate. On Saturday, the Taliban decreed that Afghan women must cover themselves from head to toe, expanding a series of onerous restrictions on women that dictate nearly every aspect of public life.

"To be honest, we don't have Eid this year," said Mirzadah, who spent the afternoon with her family sitting across the street from the park on a strip of grass.

Most people in Kabul learned that the Taliban had announced the start of the holiday after a roar

of celebratory gunfire thundered across the city last Saturday night. Afghanistan was the first Muslim country to officially declare a sighting of a full crescent Moon, kicking off the start of the holiday.

The following morning, hundreds of men with prayer rugs tucked under their arms filed into the Sher Shah Suri Mosque, a large Sunni mosque in the west of Kabul. Across the courtyard, they laid out the rugs in the shade of twisted tree branches while armed Taliban intelligence agents clad in camouflage pants and bulletproof vests patrolled the mosque's grounds for threats — a stark reminder of the threat of violence that persists despite

the end of 20 years of war.

In the two weeks leading up to the start of Eid this year, a bloody spate of terrorist attacks on mosques, schools and public gatherings killed at least 100 people, mostly Afghan Shiites, and stirred fears that the large prayers on the first day of Eid would be the next target.

At the Seyyed Abad Mosque, the largest Shiite mosque in the city of Kunduz in the country's north, only around 50 worshippers arrived for prayers on Sunday morning — compared to 400 to 500 people in previous years, attendees said. Many people, terrified of another blast, steered clear of the mosque altogether. **NYT**



# 13 ECONOMY

**DIESEL ENGINES' SHARE IN PVs DOWN, BUT ACCOUNT FOR 50% OF SUV SALES**

## In the SUV sweepstakes, a petrol vs diesel face-off

Korean cos relying on 'engine downsizing' in petrol segment; Japanese counter focussed on petrol-only

**PRANAV MUKUL & ANIL SASI**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE MID-RANGE sports utility vehicle (SUV) space, the fastest growing segment in the country's car market, is bracing for a technological face-off. The South Koreans currently dominate this space, with Hyundai Motor — India's second largest carmaker — and its sister concern Kia Motor, between them, packing in multiple models that run on both diesel and petrol mills.

The Japanese counter, led by passenger vehicle (PV) market leader Maruti Suzuki India and Toyota Motor, is focussed on a petrol-only strategy, riding purely on petrol-powered engines mated with hybrid systems. Two new Suzuki-Toyota SUVs, both powered by petrol engines with hybrid drive units, promise to deliver higher power and considerably better fuel economy to stay in the fight with the diesel options offered by the others.

Both the Maruti-Toyota SUVs — code named 'D22' for the Toyota version and 'YFG' for the Suzuki version — are likely off the blocks later this year and could take on the diesel advantage that the South Korean duo, and others like homegrown carmakers Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors and the Europeans including Germany's Volkswagen and it's Czech sister concern Skoda alongside France's Renault enjoy.

While the share of diesel engines in India's PV segment has dropped from over 60 per cent in FY14 to around 16 per cent, the diesel option still accounts for 50 per cent of the sales in the SUV segment, where Maruti Suzuki and Toyota are intent on cancelling out the diesel advantage enjoyed by others with their petrol-hybrid offerings.

The Japanese strategy is focussed on jettisoning the diesel option for this segment by overcoming the obvious advantages of the diesel mill through their focus on petrol engines combined with hybrid powertrains. What helps

### SOUTH KOREAN, JAPANESE PLAYERS LAYING OUT PLANS

■ South Koreans currently dominate this space, with Hyundai Motor — India's second largest carmaker — and its sister concern Kia Motor, between them, packing in multiple models that run on both diesel and petrol mills

■ The Japanese strategy, led by Maruti Suzuki and Toyota, is focussed on jettisoning the diesel option for this segment by overcoming the obvious advantages of the diesel mill through their focus on petrol engines combined with hybrid powertrains



File

in this game plan is that Toyota is a global leader in hybrid technology, with Maruti Suzuki expected to pitch in with its supplier base to increase localisation and thereby make the hybrid offerings more cost-effective.

The localisation effort is being seen as a counter to the tax relief on hybrids, which Toyota has been lobbying hard for, albeit unsuccessfully so far. The bet is also that as the BS-VI emission norms get tighter, the diesel mill will progressively get even priced out.

Both the Japanese players are in the process of attempting to bring hybrids down from the pricier, more premium segments of the car market to lower down the price points. For Maruti Suzuki, this comes at a time when it has seen its market share drop to around 43 per cent in FY22 from nearly 48 per cent in FY21, and well over 50 per cent in the previous two years. The plan to bring in multiple petrol-powered SUV products mated to hybrid powertrains in order to enhance fuel efficiency heralds the clear intent of not making a comeback in the diesel segment. The company is also focussing on increasing its play in the CNG segment to bring in additional volumes. Incidentally, in the non-SUV segment, Maruti Suzuki's market share continues to be at over 65 per cent, with leadership positions in both the hatchback and MPV (multi-pur-

pose vehicle) segments. The lack of products in the fast growing SUV segment, however, had impacted its overall market share.

The extent of reversal of the Maruti stance is evident from the fact that its two primary offerings in the SUV segment — the Vitara Brezza and the S-Cross — were only offered with diesel engines for over four years into their launch, without a petrol option. The automaker's plan to wean away from diesel came after the new BS-VI emission norms were rolled out two years ago and the company has ruled out getting back into the diesel segment as it feels the sale of such vehicles would further come down with the onset of the next phase of emission norms in 2023 that would further jack up the cost of diesel vehicles.

Incidentally, carmakers such as the Koreans, alongside their diesel push, are also increasingly relying on "engine downsizing" in the petrol segment, with a turbocharged petrol engine option among the variants.

These engines use a turbine that is powered by the engine's exhaust gas to subsequently force that extra compressed air into the combustion chamber, leading to more efficient combustion of the air-fuel mixture.

The result is these smaller turbocharged engines produce more power than a bigger engine, while consuming less fuel.

The primary difference be-

tween the petrol and diesel engines is that petrol engines use spark plugs to ignite the air-fuel mixture, while diesel engines rely on heavily compressed air without any spark plugs.

Diesel engines are thereby more efficient and use 15-20 per cent less fuel translating into lower running costs, and also boast of higher low-end torque that provides for a better driving experience with higher loads or on inclines, thereby making them the primary choice for SUVs.

However, they usually cost more than petrol vehicles as diesel technology is more expensive and their servicing and maintenance costs are higher.

A hybrid system typically comprises a petrol engine that is paired to an electric motor and a NiMH (Nickel-metal Hydride) battery pack that enables the vehicle to be driven on a pure electric mode for short distances. The battery pack is recharged by the engine or through regenerative braking. Cars with the hybrid system can be driven for stretches on electric power alone, using the internal combustion engine to top up the battery while running. With this hybrid set-up, the powertrain can deliver a 40-80 per cent jump in fuel efficiency over its non-electrified counterpart, thereby obviating range anxiety typically associated with EVs. But this comes at a higher price, given that they incorporate the electric motor and

battery pack, alongside the combustion engine. This hybrid system being deployed by the Maruti Suzuki-Toyota combine would be similar to the one used in the recently unveiled Honda City e:HEV hybrid or the Toyota Camry, but will come in at a lower price point.

Alongside the hybrid powertrain partnership, Maruti Suzuki and Toyota are already working on a pure-play battery electric vehicle (EV). Suzuki Motor Corp, the parent of Maruti Suzuki, has said it would invest Rs 10,440 crore to build a new EV factory and a battery facility in India.

The announcement by Suzuki marked the first concrete commitment on electrification by Maruti, which has maintained that the Indian car market is not yet prepared for a mass shift towards BEVs (battery electric vehicles) and that the pace of development of the supporting infrastructure such as charging points is less than adequate.

Tata Motors and Hyundai Motor have taken a lead in this segment, with strong plans for an electrification of their product offering, at a time when passenger EVs have seen a sharp jump of well over 50 per cent in sales in 2020-21, albeit over a relatively small base.

While Maruti Suzuki has been treading cautiously on the EV track, there was an expectation that the EV version of the WagonR would have been the company's first battery-electric model for India. A prototype of the WagonR EV was showcased in September 2018 and road testing of some 40-odd prototypes was also underway. But pricing seems to have been a deciding factor in the WagonR EV project being put on the backburner.

Instead, an SUV is being readied in partnership with Toyota, which with Suzuki has a global partnership agreement, and the product is targeted to hit the markets in three years from now. The vehicle is likely to be produced under both the Suzuki and Toyota badging, with the Maruti Suzuki version reported to be code-named 'Y8'.

### MARKET WATCH

#### TOP-10 VALUED COS' M-CAP DIVES

*New Delhi:* The top-10 most valued firms suffered a combined erosion of Rs 2,85,251.65 crore from their market capitalisation (m-cap) last week, mirroring an overall weak broader market trend, with Reliance Industries emerging as the worst-hit. **PTI**

### INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL TRADE, AMAZON

## 'Mission is to help transform buying & selling; look forward to engaging with ONDC'

FOR DOMESTIC exporters enrolled with Amazon's worldwide selling programme Global Selling, the opportunity to cash in on festive sales comes more than just from Diwali. It is one of the reasons why the e-commerce conglomerate has doubled its target of exports from India to \$20 billion instead of \$10 billion by 2025, said ABHIJIT KAMRA, the Director of Global Trade at Amazon in an interview with AASHISH ARYAN. Edited excerpts:

**Amazon has doubled its export target from India. Are you not worried that the target could put pressure and lead to fall in quality?**

\$20 billion is a very large number. It will have to be all the categories adding up and then the new categories that entrepreneurs are experimenting with. On the geography side, what we do is that the moment a new marketplace opens, we open that for Indian exporters also so that they can benefit from it.

The seller community has evolved significantly over the last few years and now they understand the value of good customer experience. It is also linked to the brand identity. If you put a good product in the customers' hands, they are going to reward you with good sales. The second thing is that there are very transparent mechanisms which encourage good behaviour. And one of the simplest examples of that is customer reviews. If you are doing bad quality product, the customer is going to give you a bad review so the next buyer knows not to buy from you.



Abhijit Kamra via LinkedIn

We are on track this year to hit \$5 billion cumulative exports from India. In 2020, when Jeff Bezos was here, we had taken a pledge of \$10 billion by 2025 and are now doubling it to \$20 billion in the same time frame."

**categories and cities that have seen growth since the Global Selling programme began?**

We are on track this year to hit \$5 billion cumulative exports from India. In 2020, when Jeff Bezos was here, we had taken a pledge of \$10 billion by 2025 and are now doubling it to \$20 billion in the same time frame.

So if you think about north India, we have Delhi which is doing well. But we also have Jaipur, Noida, Jodhpur where a lot of exporters are coming from. And the typical categories include pet products, toys, office products and accessories, and leather bags.

In southern India, again the usual Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad are there. But then there is also a lot of action from Coimbatore, Trichy, and Madurai. The products that are doing well here are home apparel, kitchen products and others. Home entertainment and sports products are also starting to do well.

**What are the key product**

**How much of a challenge will the Open Network for Digital Commerce prove to be?**

Our mission is to help transform buying and selling in India and digitise local mom-and-pop stores, micro, small & medium enterprises, and small & medium enterprises. Any initiative which helps in digitising these stores across India, either by simplifying technology adoption or otherwise, is an important initiative. We look forward to engaging with the ONDC to see what role we can play in serving Indian customers.

## Poonawalla woos Musk to invest in making Tesla cars locally

*New Delhi:* Serum Institute of India (SII) CEO Adar Poonawalla on Sunday wooed Elon Musk to invest in India to manufacture Tesla electric cars, saying it will be the best investment he would have ever made. Musk, who has made a successful \$44 billion acquisition bid for Twitter, had in the past asked India to reduce import duties to sell Tesla electric cars but the government has insisted on local manufacturing.

In a post on Twitter, tagging Musk, Poonawalla said, "... just in case you don't end up buying @Twitter, do look at investing some of that capital in INDIA for high-quality large-scale manufacturing of @Tesla cars." He further said, "I assure you this will be the best investment you'll ever make." Last month, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari had said if Tesla was ready to manufacture its electric vehi-

cles in India then there was 'no problem' but the company must not import cars from China.

Last August, Musk had said that American electric vehicle maker Tesla may set up manufacturing unit in India if it first succeeds with imported vehicles in the country. He had said Tesla wanted to launch its vehicles her "but import duties are the highest in the world by far of any large country!" **PTI**

## DoT axes NOCC levy for telecom licence holders; satellite broadband cos to benefit

**ENSECONOMICBUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE DEPARTMENT of Telecommunications (DoT) has abolished the network operation and control centre (NOCC) charges that are levied on use of space segments by telecom service providers for satellite telephony, broadband, etc. This is expected to provide a fillip to upcoming satellite broadband companies.

The NOCC levy regime was introduced in 2003, and the DoT levied Rs 21 lakh per transponder every year for 36 MHz of spectrum on a pro-rata basis. Additionally, the government also

**EXPLAINED**  
**Sector to be more viable**

WITH THE removal of the NOCC charges for telecom service providers, the Indian satellite broadband space — which is attracting foreign entrants as well as established domestic players — could increase in viability.

charged Rs 6,000 for every trial of antenna that is used for receiving and transmitting signals.

"There shall be no NOCC charges for use of space segment for all DoT licensees for commercial and captive VSAT services, GMPCS (satellite phone service), NLD (national long distance) and other telecom licensees having unified licence or standalone licence. This order shall be effective from April 1, 2022," DoT said in an order dated May 6.

The Network Operations & Control Center was created under the DoT to control the transmissions from ground segment, or satellite earth stations, along with the master control facility under Department of Space to manage the operation of satellites in orbit.

Responding to the move, AK Bhatt, Director General, Indian

Space Association, said: "We believe that these progressive policy steps are in the right direction and showcase the government's commitment in supporting the growth of digital communication by leveraging the potential and capability of satellite communication industry".

Currently, Sunil Bharti Mittal's OneWeb and Elon Musk's Starlink are the providers planning to launch satellite broadband services in India using low-earth orbit satellites. In February, Reliance Jio had announced that it has formed a joint-venture with Luxembourgish satellite-based content connectivity solutions provider SES, and plans to deliver satellite broadband services across India.

## 'FPI ownership in equities falls to lowest since Mar 2019'

*FPI ownership in Indian equities fell to pre-Covid level to a multi-year low of 19.5% this March in NSE500 companies valued at \$619 billion, as per BofA Securities India report*



**21.4%** Foreign funds' peak ownership in domestic equities, in December 2021

**Of the \$619 billion of FPI ownership**, highest incremental allocation were in energy stocks with 16.2%, followed by IT at 14.8%, and

communication services at 4%

**Share loss of FPIs** has been well corrected by rising ownership of the stocks by domestic funds, who put in \$6 billion in March and \$14.6 billion in FY22

Source: BofA Securities India/PTI

## Amid policy rate hikes, FPIs remain net sellers in equities in May so far

**ENSECONOMICBUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

IN A month that saw the Reserve Bank of India and the United States Federal Reserve raised interest rates, foreign investors pulled over Rs 6,400 crore from domestic equity markets in the first four trading sessions of May.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) remained net sellers for the seventh straight month till April, as they withdrew more than Rs 1.65 lakh crore from equities.

This was mainly on account of the anticipation of a rate hike by the US Fed and the deteriorating

geopolitical environment following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

After six months of selling spree, FPIs turned net investors in the first week of April amid correction in the markets and invested Rs 7,707 crore in equities. However, after a short break, they again turned net sellers during the holiday-shortened April 11-13 week, and the sell-off continued in the succeeding weeks too.

In May till date, FPI flows continue to remain negative as they sold nearly Rs 6,417 crore during May 2-6, data released by depositors showed. The trading in market was closed on May 3 on account of Eid. **WITHPTI**

### BRIEFLY

#### 'SCI sale bids'

*New Delhi:* The Centre is likely to invite financial bids for Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) by September, after the process of demerger of non-core assets is completed, an official said. As part of the strategic sale, the Centre is hiving off Shipping House and the training institute in Pune and some other non-core SCI assets.

#### LIC IPO day 5

*New Delhi:* Life Insurance Corporation's (LIC) IPO was subscribed 1.79 times on the penultimate day of the offer on Sunday. As per data on bourses posted at 7 pm, for 16,20,78,067 shares on offer, 29,08,27,860 bids were received. **PTI**

## Joshi takes over as CMD of Hindustan Petroleum

*New Delhi:* Pushp Kumar Joshi on Sunday took over as the new Chairman and Managing Director of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), the country's third largest oil refining and fuel marketing company.

"Prior to this Dr Joshi was Director-HR of the Corporation from August 01, 2012," the company said in a statement. Joshi, the senior-most director on the HPCL board, was in January picked by the government headed Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) to replace Mukesh Kumar Surana. Surana superannuated from services on April 30, 2022, but in absence of a formal order from the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) headed by the Prime Minister, Joshi was named interim head.



Pushp Kumar Joshi, the new Chairman & Managing Director of Hindustan Petroleum. via Twitter @HPCL

The ACC confirmation of his appointment has now come and he has formally taken over as the chairman and managing director of HPCL. Joshi is also holding the additional charge of Director—Marketing of HPCL. **PTI**

## Chaos at Apple supplier Quanta shows strains of Shanghai Covid lockdown

**REUTERS**  
SHANGHAI, MAY 8

QUANTA SHANGHAI Manufacturing City would seem like an ideal site to implement China's "closed-loop" management system to prevent the spread of Covid-19 that requires staff to live and work on-site in a secure bubble.

Sprawled over land the size of 20 football fields, the campus houses factories, living quarters for 40,000 workers, some living 12 per room, and even a supermarket. But as Covid breached Quanta's defences, the system broke down into chaos Thursday.

Videos posted online showed more than a hundred Quanta workers physically overwhelm-



Workers take Covid rapid antigen tests in Shanghai. Reuters file

ing security guards in hazmat suits and vaulting over factory gates to escape being trapped inside the factory amid rumours that workers on the floor that day tested positive for Covid.

The turmoil at Quanta under-

scores the struggles Shanghai faces to get its factories, many of them key links in global supply chains, back up to speed even as much of the city of 25 million remains locked down under China's "dynamic-zero" Covid policy.

Taiwan-based Quanta puts together about three-quarters of Apple's global MacBook production and also manufactures computer circuit boards for Tesla.

Quanta did not respond to a request for comment on the videos that appeared on Chinese social media platforms before being taken down. Apple declined to comment and Tesla did not respond to a request for comment.

Quanta set up its closed-loop to restart work at the factory on April 18 with about 5 per cent of its workforce, or 2,000 employees, with plans to triple that by April 22. Chinese state media touted the restart as an example of how Shanghai was keeping business open in the country's biggest economic hub, while adhering to stringent Covid measures.

## 'April: Overall biz confidence of India Inc improves'

*New Delhi:* The latest round of industry body FICCI's Business Confidence Survey reported an improvement in the confidence level of India Inc, with the Overall Business Confidence Index at 67.6 in the recently conducted April 2022 round against 63.9 earlier.

The survey by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) found an improvement in both current conditions and expectations of Indian companies in its latest round. The Current Condition Index improved to 66.1 from 62.6 in the last survey, while the Expectations Index improved to 68.4 from 64.5.

The survey gauges the respondents' expectations for the period April to September 2022. **ENS**







PLAYING TONIGHT

Indian Premier League  
MI vs KKR, 730pm, *Live on Star Sports Network*  
Badminton: **Thomas Cup**  
India vs Canada, 12.30pm, *Live on Sports 18*

BRIEFLY

India start with win in Thomas & Uber Cup

**Bangkok:** The Indian badminton teams began their Thomas and Uber Cup campaigns in emphatic fashion, thrashing Germany and Canada respectively here on Sunday. While the men's team won its 5-0 Group C Thomas Cup encounter, the women counterparts emerged 4-1 victorious in Group D Uber Cup face-off.

Tough draws for Indian boxers

**Istanbul:** Indian pugilists were handed tough draws for the Women's World Boxing Championships, to be held in Istanbul from May 8 to 20. Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain (70kg) will kickstart India's campaign on Monday but she got a tough draw as she will be up against the former world champion Chen Nien-Chin who she beat in the quarter-finals of the Tokyo Olympic Games. Two-time Asian Champion Pooja Rani (81kg), Nandini and Nikhat Zareen have also been handed tough draws in their respective categories.

EPL: Man City open up three-point lead

**Manchester:** Manchester City reclaimed top spot in the Premier League with a 5-0 drubbing of Newcastle United that allowed the reigning champions to open up a three-point lead over Liverpool at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday. Raheem Sterling scored twice for the hosts with Aymeric Laporte, Rodri and Phil Foden also on target. City have 86 points to Liverpool's 83 with both sides having three games remaining and City now have a superior goal difference. Liverpool face Aston Villa on Tuesday with City up against Wolverhampton Wanderers a day later.

Indians continue to shine at Deaflympics

**New Delhi:** Dhanush Srikanth teamed up with Priyasha Deshmukh to win the 10m air rifle mixed team competition and extend Indian shooters' gold rush at the 24th Deaflympics in Caxais do Sul, Brazil. Shooting on competition day six, Dhanush and Priyasha beat Germany's Sebastian Herrmann and Sabrina Eckert 16-10 in the gold medal match. This was Dhanush's second gold of the Games after having won the individual men's 10m air rifle.

Indian GP shifted to Bhubaneswar

**Bhubaneswar:** The Indian Grand Prix 3 and 4, which were originally scheduled to be held in Madurai, will now be organised here on May 21 and 24, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) said on Sunday. This is the second time the venue of the two one-day events has been changed. "Earlier these meets were to be held at Madurai. The Grand Prix Meets have been shifted to provide better facilities to the athletes," the AFI said in a release."

PTI, REUTERS & AP

Royal revenge

Dismissed by SRH for 68 in an earlier match, Bangalore turn the tables to win by 67 runs in the reverse fixture

**SYNOPSIS:** A century stand between Faf du Plessis and Rajat Patidar followed by another strong finish from Dinesh Karthik set up RCB's massive win as Wanindu Hasaranga ran through Sunrisers with 5 for 18

ABHISHEK PUROHIT  
MUMBAI, MAY 8

AFTER DISMISSING Royal Challengers Bangalore for 68 at Brabourne Stadium for a nine-wicket win a fortnight ago, Sunrisers Hyderabad have been on a losing streak. And RCB extended Sunrisers' winless phase to four games as they handed them a 67-run hammering at Wankhede Stadium. The win took RCB to 14 points with two games left, and Sunrisers are stuck on 10 with three matches to play.

Another stirring DK finish

In the 19th over of the RCB innings, the DJ exhorted the Wankhede crowd to shout 'Tyagi, Tyagi.' The Sunrisers pacer had just bowled successive dot balls to new batsman Dinesh Karthik. He was keeping the ball outside off and taking the pace off, and Karthik had just tried a reverse-hit and failed to connect. But after a moment or two of silence, as if they were considering what to do, the fans began chanting 'DK, DK' instead. And Karthik, who'd walked out to those shouts moments ago, proceeded to spoil what had been an excellent over; he moved across, stood outside off behind the line where Tyagi had been operating and slog-swept him over deep midwicket.

Fazalhaq Farooqi, the left-arm seamer from Afghanistan, had bowled three steady overs for only 22 runs on his IPL debut. He'd taken treatment for a leg issue at the start of his third over, and been hit on his leg the very next ball by a strike from Faf du Plessis. Through the pain, Farooqi had even managed to smile at his misfortune. He'd have had reason to feel genuine happiness if Rahul Tripathi had caught Karthik on the deep square-leg boundary.

Karthik had just come back on strike with four balls left in the last over, and had swung Farooqi straight to Tripathi. The white ball came flat at an awkward time; the setting sun was straight in Tripathi's eyes. It burst through his hands and fell on the rope. Karthik took the remaining three balls of the innings for six, six and four, making it 25 runs off the over and ruining Farooqi's figures too. Farooqi alternated between full and short lengths; Karthik just cleared a jumping long-on, walloped the next over midwicket and ended the RCB innings with a straight hit.

He had taken 30 off only eight balls, and had given RCB the big over that hadn't arrived until then during the death phase. It was his eighth unbeaten effort out of 12 innings this IPL, and his season strike-rate is back at 200.

Sunrisers' disaster start

Karthik's surge had propelled RCB to 192 for 3 but Rajasthan Royals had comfortably chased down 190 at Wankhede the previous afternoon against Punjab Kings. An opening stand of 46 in four overs had

IPL TABLE

TEAM	M	W	L	PT	NRR
LSG	11	8	3	16	0.703
GT	11	8	3	16	0.120
RR	11	7	4	14	0.326
RCB	12	7	5	14	-0.115
DC	11	5	6	10	0.150
SRH	11	5	6	10	-0.031
PBKS	11	5	6	10	-0.231
CSK	11	4	7	8	0.028
KKR	11	4	7	8	-0.304
MI	10	2	8	4	-0.725

set RR on their way. But Sunrisers would lose both their openers before the first over was done. Skipper Kane Williamson, going for a pretty tight single, was run out for a diamond duck with a direct hit from short extra cover by Shahbaz Ahmed. Four balls later, Abhishek Sharma swung all over an utterly normal delivery from Glenn Maxwell and was bowled for a duck. So in the space of nine deliveries, RCB had wrested the momentum completely.

Hasaranga runs through 'em

On a surface where it hadn't been easy to swing pitched-up deliveries across the line, Sunrisers had served up extra pacer through Tyagi and Umran Malik to make it more straightforward for RCB. The duo conceded 67 off a combined six overs, and Malik was restricted to just two overs after his opening one was taken for 20 by du Plessis and Rajat Patidar. On the other hand, six overs of spin from J Suchith and Abhishek went for only 43.

RCB saw that and used as many as nine overs of spin. Four of those were from the leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga, and he ran through a line-up way behind on the asking rate with 5 for 18. He broke a 50-run third-wicket stand by having Aiden Markram caught at deep midwicket by Virat Kohli, who'd gone first ball of the match, popping Suchith straight to midwicket for his third golden duck of the season, and second against Sunrisers.

In his second over, Hasaranga took out the dangerous Nicholas Pooran, luring the West Indies captain into a slog-sweep with a tossed-up googly that took the edge to short third man. It was an excellent diving-forward take by Shahbaz.

Two drops in three balls

Malik had put down a similar chance at the same position off Patidar, two balls after Tripathi failed to hang on to a difficult opportunity at midwicket off du Plessis. The second-wicket RCB stand was worth 67 then, it would cost Sunrisers 38 more, and du Plessis would go on to anchor the innings until the very end.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Royal Challengers Bangalore 192/3 in 20 overs (Faf du Plessis 73 not out, Rajat Patidar 48, Dinesh Karthik 30 not out; J Suchith 2/30) bt Sunrisers Hyderabad 125 all out in 19.2 overs (Rahul Tripathi 58; Wanindu Hasaranga 5/18) by 67 runs



RCB spinner Wanindu Hasaranga ran through the SRH batting line-up by taking five wickets. Sportzpics for IPL

Delhi Capitals lose to Chennai Super Kings by 91 runs, playoff chances take a hit

**SYNOPSIS:** Conway, Gaikwad play connoisseur's cricket. Moeen does bowling star turn

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY  
MAY 8

DAVID WARNER glared at Nitin Menon as he walked past him, livid that the umpire's call didn't go his way. Maheesh Theekshana's leg-before appeal was very confident and the DRS showed that Menon was right. Delhi Capitals desperately needed two points from this game to keep their playoffs hopes alive and against Chennai Super Kings' 208/6, Warner was the team's best bet. The batsman's anger captured the frustration of a failed reverse sweep attempt.

In the end, DC folded up for 117 to lose by 91 runs, a serious blow for them with just three group matches remaining. For CSK, they will take this win and hope against hope.

Connoisseur's cricket

Ruturaj Gaikwad and Devon Conway batting in a partnership is connoisseur's cricket. CSK missed a trick by not allowing the partnership to bed in during the early phase of the tournament. Conway was given a game upfront before being dropped. Belatedly, when he was brought back to the fold, he instantly got into the groove and added meat to the CSK top-order in conjunction with Gaikwad.

This has been an underwhelming season for the four-time champions. But a successful franchise like CSK will deal with one bad year. The Conway-Gaikwad opening combination offers hope for the future. They score runs playing orthodox cricket. Conway, an established Test batsman for New Zealand, has every shot in the book. Also, he is excellent against spin. Gaikwad, who has a future India



MS Dhoni's cameo ensured CSK crossed the 200-run mark. Sportzpics for IPL

Test batsman written all over him, revels in the bucketload of time against pace, which speaks volumes for his quality. And when they press the accelerator in the shortest format without compromising on their batting principles, cricket becomes very enjoyable.

CSK by and large have failed to make the Powerplays count this term, which also muddled their middle-overs batting. Today, they raced to 57 for no loss after six overs. The release shot came from Gaikwad in the third over against Anrich Nortje, when the batsman danced down the track and treated the tear-away quick like a spinner. Gaikwad's balance, head position, the straightness of the bat – everything was copybook. The ball sailed over the long-on boundary for a six. Gaikwad had a slow start to the season. But now he has regained his touch and from that perspective, he would rue his dismissals in the 30s and 40s. A Nortje bouncer got the better of him. It was a 152.6kph delivery all right, but a well-set Gaikwad, batting on 41 off 33 balls, was expected to neutral it.

Conway made light work of Kuldeep Yadav. He used his feet to hit a six off a length

ball before sweeping the next one to clear the deep square leg boundary. When a batsman is using his feet and at the same time, sweeping with aplomb, it becomes very difficult for the bowler. Before taking Kuldeep to the cleaners, Conway had accounted for back-to-back sixes against Axar Patel. The two openers complemented each other; Conway taking on spin and Gaikwad attacking the fast bowlers. Their 110-run partnership came in 11 overs. They now have two 100-plus associations in three games. Conway departed for a 49-ball 87. Shivam Dube and MS Dhoni's cameos ensured that CSK would cross the 200-run mark.

Nortje was DC's most successful bowler with 3/42, including the wickets of Moeen Ali and Robin Uthappa in successive deliveries in the final over. Khaleel Ahmed was the most economical, 2/28. Kuldeep conceded 43 runs in his three overs.

Bowling star turn

Rishabh Pant's response to Warner's dismissal was spectacular. He hit Theekshana for three consecutive fours, the first one being a falling lofted straight drive. The DC captain and Mitchell Marsh were going great guns until Moeen intervened.

Marsh was his first victim, a mistimed slog-sweep finding Gaikwad at long-on. Pant was done in by a skidder, the batsman chopping it on to the stumps. Three balls later, Ripal Patel was beaten in the air and was holed out to deep mid-wicket. Moeen's figures after two overs read: 2-0-9-3. DC slumped to 81/5 and soon they were 85/7 after Rovman Powell's dismissal. The game was done and dusted.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Chennai Super Kings (Devon Conway 87, Ruturaj Gaikwad 41, Shivam Dube 32, MS Dhoni 21 not out; Anrich Nortje 3/42) bt Delhi Capitals 117 all out in 17.4 overs (Mitchell Marsh 25; Moeen Ali 3/13) by 91 runs

The future is here: Alcaraz beats Zverev in straight sets to win Madrid Open

REUTERS & AP  
MAY 8

SPANISH TEENAGER Carlos Alcaraz won his second ATP Masters 1000 title at the Madrid Open after defeating defending champion Alexander Zverev 6-3 6-1 in front of his home crowd on Sunday.

Alcaraz looked dangerous throughout his run at the claycourt tournament, where he stunned world number one Novak Djokovic and 21-times major winner Rafa Nadal before cruising past world number three Zverev in the title clash. The 19-year-old is the youngest player since start of the ATP Tour in 1990 to defeat three top-five players at the same event. Alcaraz, who win his first Masters 1000 title in Miami last month, made the first move as he broke Zverev to love for a 4-2 lead before comfortably closing out the set on his own serve.

The home favourite broke to love again for a 2-1 lead in the second set as Zverev began to grow frustrated, failing to find ways to stop Alcaraz. Cheered on by the home fans, the sublime Alcaraz found the double break at 4-1 and won the next two games to wrap up the match in just about an hour. The Spaniard got the crowd at the Manolo Santana Stadium on their feet with his variety of shots and relentless hitting as he earned a seventh straight top-10 win



Carlos Alcaraz reacts after beating Alexander Zverev in Sunday's final.

and tour-leading fourth title of the year.

Ranked 120 in the world just a year ago, Alcaraz will rise to a career-high no. 6 in the new rankings on Monday.

Djokovic optimistic

Novak Djokovic is optimistic about his game going into the French Open despite going another week without a title.

The top-ranked Djokovic is yet to win a

The 19-year-old is the youngest player since start of the ATP Tour in 1990 to defeat three top-five players at the same event

trophy this season while trying to regain his best form after not being allowed to play in the Australian Open because he was not vaccinated for COVID-19. Djokovic lost to Alcaraz in three sets in the semifinals of the Madrid Open on Saturday, when he was trying to make it to his second consecutive final after losing to Andrey Rublev in Serbia last month.

Despite the loss, Djokovic said he leaves Madrid feeling good about his preparations for the upcoming French Open, where he will defend his title. "I definitely played very good tennis, I mean, the best that I have played this year," Djokovic said. "Probably when the disappointment of losing this match passes, I will have a lot of positives to take away from this week." Djokovic said he felt he could have come away with the victory against the 19-year-old Alcaraz – one the hottest players on tour this season – if he had been "able to capitalize when it mattered" during the match of more than 3 1/2 hours at the "Caja Mágica" center court.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MAY 8

SEASONED THROWER Anu Rani lit up the Javelin Nationals in Jamshedpur with a national record-breaking effort of 63.82m on her very first attempt. The Uttar Pradesh athlete has been India's best woman thrower by a distance for almost a decade now. Sunday was the ninth time she broke the national record as she improved on her previous mark of 63.24m set last year at the Federation Cup in Patiala. Annu's next three throws yielded 60.10m, 56.60m and 58.13m before she passed on the last two attempts.

The gulf between Annu and her competitors in Jamshedpur was quite large. The silver medal went to Sanjana Choudhary for 53.87m - almost 10m behind Annu's gold-winning attempt. Annu has been consistently improving on her own national mark since first breaching it in 2014 with 58.83m.

Annu had had a quiet season until now after the disappointment at the Tokyo Olympics where she finished 14th in the qualification round. Despite another record-breaking throw, Annu's hunger to go further won't be satisfied. The 30-year-old thrower



Annu Rani recorded a 58cm improvement on her own mark. File

had worked closely with German biomechanics expert and Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra's coach Klaus Bartonietz in the run-up to the Tokyo Games.

In the men's U-18 (700g javelin) category, Yash Saini of Haryana finished on top with a best attempt of 67.42m. Saini, taking part in his first national-level meet, produced a string of consistent throws of 65.21, 63.24, 64.05, and 65.46m on Sunday. The 17-year-

old was, however, not pleased with his results as he feels he belongs in the 70m club.

"I was hoping to throw with an international javelin. I have thrown 72m in training and would have been happy if I had matched that, but considering the slight wind blowing towards us and my niggles, I am happy that I won gold on debut. I have been training for three years, but it is only now that my coaches Arvind Kumar and Dharmender believed I was ready," the youngster said.

In the men's U-20 category, which had only five participants, Vivek Kumar of Madhya Pradesh took top spot with a best throw of 68.67m. The results don't augur well with the U20 World Championships just three months away. India is yet to see another javelin thrower on the podium in the Junior Worlds since Chopra's gold in 2016. The performance level at the U20 men's event can be gauged by the fact that the gold-winning throw was more than 17m short of Neeraj's age-group national record of 86.48m.

The results in the women's U-16 (500g javelin) event was uninspiring with the gold going to Disha of Delhi for just 34.87m - about 15m less than the age-group national record of 49.31m set by Deepika of Haryana last year. The U-16 women's event had just four entries.



**SHIVANI NAIK**  
MUMBAI, MAY 8

A Bollywood buff all her life, she would be delirious if any movie of the 90s and noughties, referenced the sport she loves India's best at. "I was a huge Shah Rukh fan after Kuch Kuch Hota Hai." Geethu even named her children with filmstar-kid names.



She married a former state-level tennis player and now dentist, Rahul, who told her she'd had enough years sitting at home being a mother. And that she should get out of the house and resume playing basketball since she had been so good at it and loved it to bits. "His name being Rahul, like in the movie, might or might not have firmed up my decision to marry him!" she giggles, "but he's the reason I seriously considered returning to the sport. I was a little hesitant. As someone who played sport he understood how hard it must be to have reached that top level and then suddenly quit." Quit on a dream she indeed had, when she met Rahul circa 2011 after India had defeated China for a gold medal in 3x3 at Qatar. "See, marriage and kid, everything is blissful. My jersey number was 14 and I became a mother in 2014 and I was content. But whenever I saw girls playing on the court, I'd get this very bad urge to play. The game never leaves you", she says. Post-childbirth, she needed to lose weight though it seriously only started to happen when Aryan, 7, started packing her gym bag and told her, "Don't you have to go to the office? Why are you being so lazy? Come let's go. They have become my strictest trainers. They once heard their father and now lecture me about how I need to go to the gym so I can be fit to play on court. They look

Geethu stresses that 3x3 doesn't lend itself to rewinding and threadbaring. "It's all over in 10 minutes or first to 21 points, so you don't sit and dwell. If you ask me exactly what happened, I won't be able to tell you! But I felt like I was back on my court. I'd think of Aryan and Aradhna as soon as I stepped out. But in those 10 minutes it was just like old times," she says. For someone who followed rules assiduously and rarely got into foul trouble, she returned home to her children in Kochi, with plenty of tales of flapping arms, that might or might not have struck an opponent, all told with a wink and a wicked smile.

**MARUTI SUZUKI**

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