



BIGGEST TEAM TITLE IN BADMINTON

Team India scales the peak with first ever Thomas Cup

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

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, MAY 15

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Kidambi Srikanth (centre) celebrates with teammates after winning his decisive Thomas Cup match against Indonesia's Jonatan Christie on Sunday. *AP* FULL COVERAGE, [PAGE 11](#)

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



PULLELA GOPICHAND
SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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

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

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 15

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

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

Holcim's exit from India follows several high-profile departures of multinational companies, including Ford, General Motors, Harley Davidson, MAN Truck,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

WORLD

U.S.: GUNMAN KILLS 10 IN LIVESTREAMED RACIST ATTACK

PAKISTAN: TWO SIKH BUSINESSMEN SHOT DEAD [PAGE 9](#)

CONG BRAINSTORMING SESSION ENDS

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

MANOJ CG
UDAIPUR, MAY 15

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

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

BUSINESS AS USUAL
By UNNY



shivir here to bring new and young faces into leadership roles. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED
Action remains to be seen

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

CHINTAN SHIVIR: MORE REPORTS [PAGE 3](#)

EXPRESS NETWORK



INDIA LOOKS TO BOLSTER CULTURAL TIES WITH NEPAL [PAGE 4](#)



‘The only way out is to fight for the cause of the people; a leader then emerges automatically’
BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA
CONGRESS LEADER
[PAGE 8](#)

BID TO CHECK REPEAT OF REET PAPER LEAK

On prohibited list for Rajasthan police test: phones to mehndi

DEEP MUKHERJEE
JAIPUR, MAY 15

“THEY DIDN'T even let me take this into the examination hall,” says Manish Regar, pointing to a metal buckle on his black baseball cap.

Waiting at the Vidhyadhar Nagar stadium for a bus home, the 23-year-old talks incredulously about the strict security measures in place for the constable recruitment exam that began Friday.

“They didn't allow this full-sleeved shirt I was wearing either,” Regar says, as lathi-wielding policemen from the Rajasthan Armed Constabulary stand guard.



Manish Regar says he wasn't allowed to take his cap inside. *Deep Mukherjee*

This year, the test conducted by the Rajasthan Police has been held at 470 centres across the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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

PAGE 1
ANCHOR

SANDIPIG
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

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



ANDREW SYMONDS
1975-2022

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

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

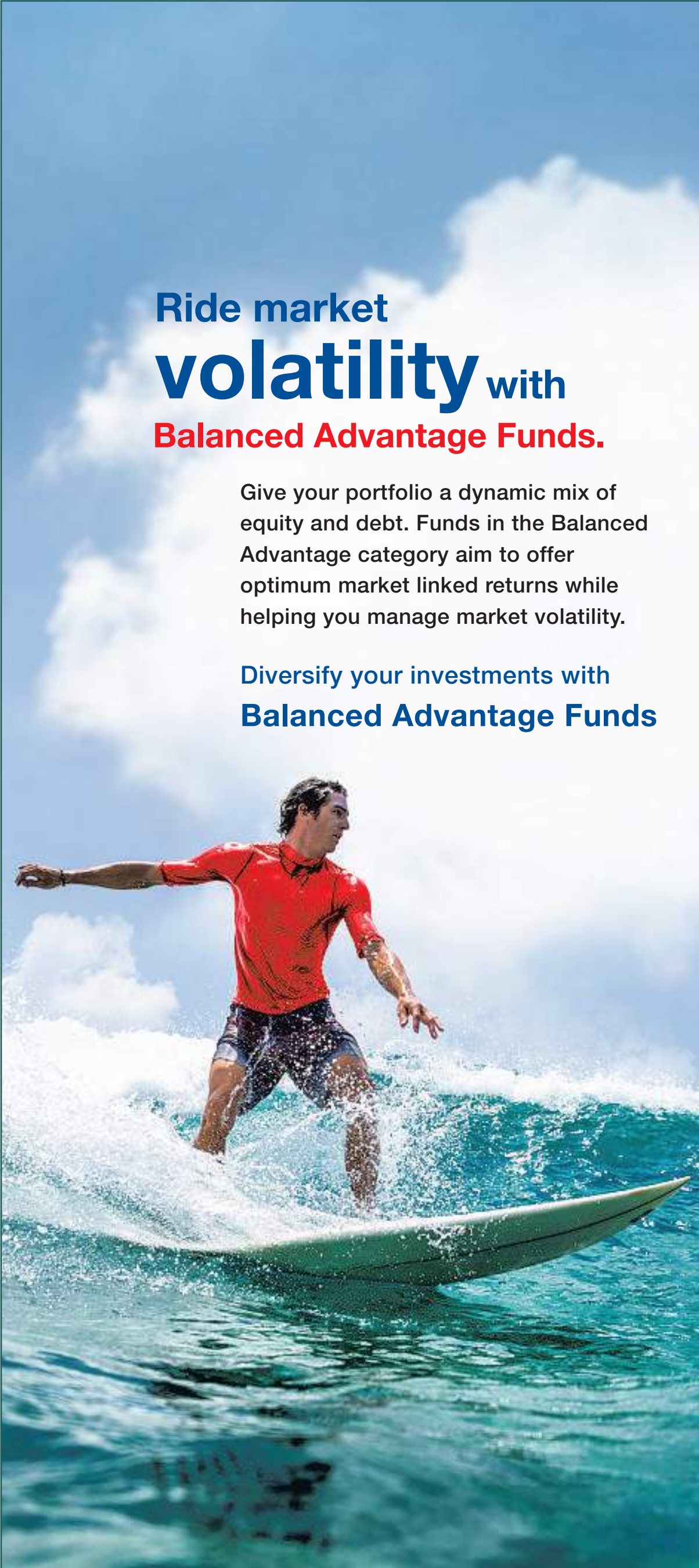
he had admitted.

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

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

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


CONTINUED ON PAGE 2




Ride market volatility with Balanced Advantage Funds.

Give your portfolio a dynamic mix of equity and debt. Funds in the Balanced Advantage category aim to offer optimum market linked returns while helping you manage market volatility.

Diversify your investments with
Balanced Advantage Funds



Contact your MFD/RIA.



HDFC
MUTUAL FUND
BHAROSA APNO KA

An Investor Education Initiative by HDFC Mutual Fund

Visit <https://www.hdfcfund.com/information/key-know-how> to know more about the process to complete a one-time Know Your Customer (KYC) requirement to invest in Mutual Funds. Investors should only deal with registered Mutual Funds, details of which can be verified on the SEBI website (www.sebi.gov.in/intermediaries.html). For any queries, complaints & grievance redressal, investors may reach out to the AMCs and/or Investor Relations Officers. Additionally, investors may also lodge complaints on <https://scores.gov.in> if they are unsatisfied with the resolutions given by AMCs. SCORES portal facilitates investors to lodge complaint online with SEBI and subsequently view its status.

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

Jaipur



PM VISITS LUMBINI TODAY

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

YUBRAJ GHIMIRE & DIVYAA KATHMANDU, NEW DELHI, MAY 15

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will Monday travel to Lumbini in Nepal to participate in a ceremony to lay the foundation stone for a Buddhist cultural centre to coincide with Buddha Purnima. Sources said PM Modi's brief visit to Lumbini — he is expected to be here between 10.30 am and 3.30 pm — is focused on bringing soft power to the centrestage of India-Nepal relations while also marking India's formal presence at the holy site that's barely 10 km away from the border. The construction of the 'India International Centre for Buddhist Culture & Heritage' — to be undertaken by the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), India, with financial support from the Ministry of Culture -- comes decades after most foreign nations, including US, China, Canada, France, Germany and Thailand, among others, built their centres in Lumbini as an instrument of promoting Buddhist philosophy. Officials in India's Ministry of Culture said that the PM, besides offering prayers at the Mayadevi temple in Lumbini, will also deliver an address at a Buddha Jayanti event organised by the Lumbini Development Trust. A statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office on Sunday said the PM will be visiting Lumbini at the invitation of Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. "I am honoured to follow in the footsteps of millions of Indians to pay reverence at the sacred site of Lord Buddha's birth. I also look forward to meeting Prime Minister Deuba again after our productive discussions during his visit to India last month. We will continue to build on our shared understanding to expand cooperation in multiple areas, including in hy-



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

dropower, development and connectivity." The PM's visit to Lumbini comes amidst China's evident interest in Lumbini. Almost a decade ago, China had offered to build Lumbini as a world peace centre at a cost of three billion dollars, besides holding talks on bringing China's railway right up to Lumbini. Modi's visit and his laying the foundation stone for the Buddhist Culture Centre -- estimated to cost INR 1 billion and take three years to complete -- will mark India's first attempt to develop strong linkages with Nepal's Buddhist heritage sites. Modi's helicopter ride from Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh, where Buddha is said to have attained Nirvana, will terminate at a newly built helipad in Lumbini, from where he is expected to go to the Maya Devi temple, before laying the foundation stone for the Buddhist centre. PM Modi and PM Deuba are also scheduled to jointly address a congregation of people, including lamas. Though there has been no official word yet, indications are that "developmental issues" are likely to be discussed when the two prime ministers, joined by officials from two sides, hold a meeting before Deuba hosts a lunch in Modi's honour. India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra recently stated that the two countries will pick up from where they left during Deuba's

three-day visit to India last month. The two sides had discussed the need to sort out border disputes, especially the Lipulekh dispute that flared up in 2018-19, but Deuba's three-day visit had ended without a joint communiqué. Sources in Kathmandu said the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) will sign two Memoranda of Understanding with authorities in Nepal -- one on setting up the Dr B R Ambedkar Chair for Studies on Buddhism at Lumbini University and another on a Chair Professor at Kathmandu University. India's Ministry of Tourism has collaborated with Nepal to build a trans-national Buddhist Tourist Circuit to trace the footsteps of Buddha, starting from Lumbini and concluding at Kushinagar. An international airport was recently inaugurated at Kushinagar. Sources said the two PMs will discuss the proposed Buddhist circuit linking Lumbini with Kushinagar, Bodhgaya, Rajgir, Nalanda and Sarnath, among other centres linked to Buddha's legacy. This will be in addition to the project to build the Ramayana circuit linking various sites in the two countries. "It's likely that the two PMs will also discuss ways to explore harnessing of the West Seti River that flows through western Nepal," a senior government official in Kathmandu said.

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

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

A \$60-MILLION scandal involving loans and grants by a little-known UN agency also included a \$2.5 million investment to build affordable houses in India in 2019 -- none of which have materialised yet. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which deals with operational projects, had entrusted the entire sum to a single British businessman and

now faces \$22 million in bad debts, as per a *New York Times* report earlier this month. A Singapore-based firm, owned by the businessman, David Kendrick, was in charge of getting at least 50,000 houses built in Goa for \$2.5 million, UN documents show. A couple in Delhi, Amit Gupta and Arti Jain, are the directors of this firm -- Sustainable Housing Solutions (SHS) Holdings Pvt Ltd -- that has little to show in its books, registering zero revenue and Rs 27,289 in losses in 2020-21.

The project was under the Sustainable Infrastructure Impact Investments (S3I) initiative, launched in 2018, which is now being probed by the UN for allocating all its funding to companies linked to Kendrick. The head of UNOPS, Grete Faremo, also stepped down earlier this month over the issue that has embarrassed the world body. Gupta, who is the CEO of SHS, told *The Indian Express* that the project had been shelved. A senior Goa government official confirmed to *The Indian*

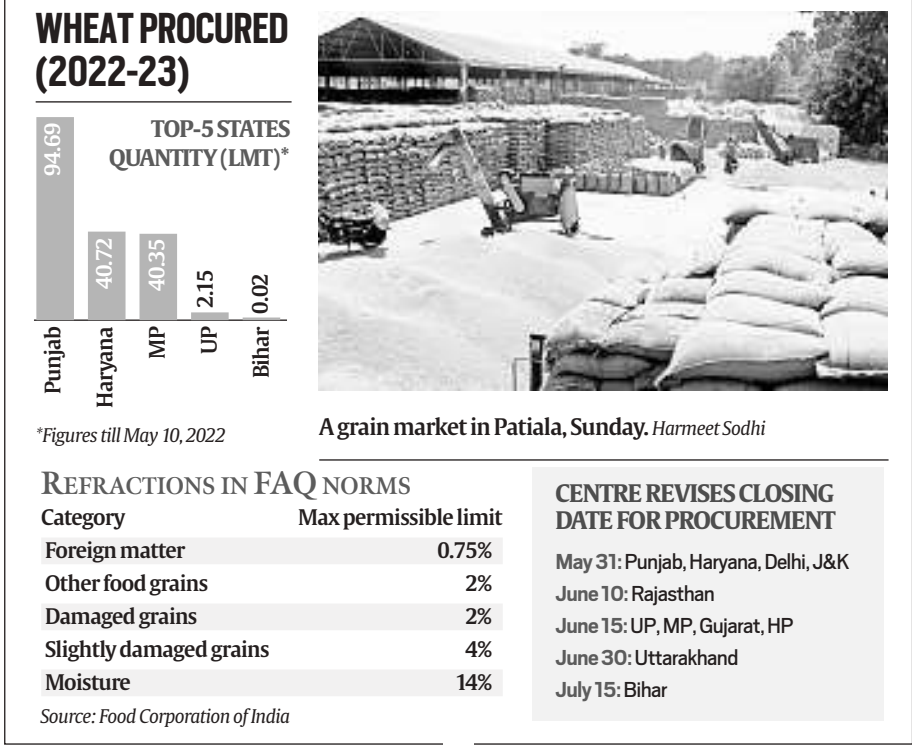
Express that a presentation was made to officials by SHS Holdings for the construction of the proposed housing units in Goa. However, officials had questioned how supporting infrastructure like power and roads would be made available for the housing units also. They also had reservations about how the government could award such a large housing project to a private firm without a tendering project, said this official, requesting anonymity. "No land was identified for

the project. In fact, the discussions did not even reach the stage where the fund-sharing pattern for the project was discussed," the official said. Gupta claimed that it was the Goa government that had approached UNOPS, but that it did not respond when an agreement for land allotment was followed up. State government officials, however, said no such proposal had been made to UNOPS and had that been the case, the project would not have been shelved. **FULL REPORT ON** www.indianexpress.com

Centre relaxes procurement norms for shrivelled, broken wheat grains

HARIKISHAN SHARMA NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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



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

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

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

BKU splits, new outfit says will be ‘apolitical’

LALMANI VERMA LUCKNOW, MAY 15

THE BHARATIYA Kisan Union (BKU), which had spearheaded the 13-month-long farmers' protest against the Centre's three farm laws, on Sunday witnessed a split as a section of its leaders formed a separate outfit -- BKU (Apolitical), led by Rajesh Singh Chauhan. The BKU, later, said that it has dismissed seven leaders of its outfit, calling them "anti-farmers". Announcing the new outfit at Ganna Sansthan in Lucknow on the death anniversary of BKU founder Chaudhary Mahendra Singh Tikait, the leaders of BKU (Apolitical) alleged that they were upset with the "political" statements made by BKU spokesperson Rakesh Tikait during the farm law protests and the recent state elections in Uttar Pradesh. "BKU (Apolitical) has been formed because of the disagreements with BKU... Mahendra Singh Tikait was of the view that when we go to the government with 10 demands and even if four of them are accepted, the agitation should be withdrawn. But what is the situation today? The agitation continued for 13 months (against the three farm laws) and the laws were repealed after that. And yet people are not satisfied. It is a big issue," Harinam Singh, the UP chief of the newly formed outfit, said. Mahendra Singh Tikait had founded BKU in 1986. After his death in 2011, his sons -- Naresh Tikait and Rakesh Tikait -- led the outfit. While Naresh is the BKU president, Rakesh is the outfit's spokesperson. During the 13-month long agitation against three farm laws -- which were later withdrawn by Narendra Modi government -- Rakesh



Rakesh Tikait. File

Tikait had emerged as the face of the farmers' movement across the country. A couple of days ago, Rakesh Tikait had met the rebel leaders in Lucknow and tried to convince them to stay with the BKU. "But no consensus was achieved in the meeting. Our outfit is completely apolitical so that we can speak with every government on farmers' issues. There will be no political activities and remarks from our new outfit... The BKU formed by Mahendra Singh Tikait is no more apolitical," BKU (Apolitical) national spokesperson Dharmendra Mallik said. Later in the evening, BKU said that it has dismissed seven leaders from the outfit, accusing them of indulging in fake propaganda against the organisation. In a statement issued by BKU national general secretary Yudhveer Singh, the outfit said that seven leaders, including Rajesh Singh Chauhan, Anil Talan, Harinam Verma, Dharmendra Mallik (all office bearers in the new outfit), have been dismissed from the organisation. Rakesh Tikait, in a tweet, said that the seven dismissed leaders were "hurting" the interests of farmers by forming a separate outfit. "The new outfit has been formed under the pressure of the BJP government. BKU will not be weakened by it. Instead, it will become stronger and the movement will continue," he said.

Kashmir civilian killed in crossfire, govt orders probe

BASHAARAT MASOOD SRINAGAR, MAY 15

POLICE ON Sunday said a civilian was killed in crossfire between militants and a joint team of police and Central Reserve Police Force in south Kashmir. The relatives of the civilian, however, contest police's claim. The Shopian district administration has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the killing. On Sunday afternoon, militants fired on a joint patrol of J&K Police's Special Operations Group (SOG) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) near

a bridge that connects Pulwama and Shopian districts in south Kashmir, police said. Twenty-two-year old Shoib Ahmad Ganie, a resident of Turkwangam village, Shopian was killed in crossfire during the "chance encounter", they said. "Terrorists fired upon joint patrol party of RPF 182 Bn (and) SOG of Pulwama near the bridge connecting Litter (village) of Pulwama with Turkwangam, Shopian. During the exchange of fire between terrorists and our joint team, 01 civilian namely Shoib Ah Ganie S/O Gh Mohd R/O Turkwangam Shopian got injured... He (the civilian) was re-

ferred to District Hospital Pulwama for treatment where he succumbed to injuries. Terrorists after brief chance encounter managed to slip into nearby orchards... A case has been registered and investigations taken up," Kashmir Zone Police tweeted. However, the relatives of Shoib contested police's claims. "He (Shoib) was in his shop wearing an olive shirt. When the forces reached there, he came down from his shop. The forces asked him to put his hands up and then, fired at him. They are now making up the stories to save the personnel behind the

cold-blooded murder," said a relative. When asked about the allegations of the relatives, a senior police officer told The Indian Express that "It will be clear in police investigation and magisterial inquiry". Later in the day, the Deputy Commissioner Shopian Sachin Kumar Vaishya ordered a magisterial inquiry into the killing. The inquiry would be conducted by the Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Shopian. "Regarding today's (Sunday) incident at Turkwangam village of Chitragam tehsil of Shopian district, a magisterial inquiry by

ADM Shopian has been ordered," Deputy Commissioner Vaishya said in an audio statement posted on his official handle. "Once the inquiry report comes, suitable action would be taken under the law," he added. This is the second civilian killed in south Kashmir in a week. On May 10, a civilian was killed and another injured allegedly during a gunfight between militants and a joint team of J&K Police, army and paramilitary personnel in south Kashmir's Shopian. The police had said that the militants managed to escape after the gunfight.

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

SOURAV ROY BARMAN NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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



UGC chief M Jagadeesh Kumar

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

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

Assam: Three killed as heavy rain, landslides wreak havoc

TORA AGARWALA GUWAHATI, MAY 15

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



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

landslide in Dima Hasao's Haflong revenue circle led to the death of a family of three. Three more went missing on Sunday in Cachar district. Earlier on Sunday, as Silchar-Guwahati Express and Guwahati-Silchar Express remained stranded at Ditokcherra and New Haflong stations in Dima Hasao, respectively, the Air

Force airlifted 100-odd passengers from Ditokcherra. "At Ditokcherra, about 1,000 people were guided across a broken railway bridge on foot to reach a special evacuation train. The older passengers who were not able to cross the bridge by themselves were airlifted," said Sabyasachi De, chief PRO, Northeast Frontier Railways.



@ieExplained
#ExpressExplained

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

EXPLAINED HEALTH

How to protect yourself from heat-related illness

EXPERT EXPLAINS



DR SURANJIT CHATTERJEE

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight

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

What is heat-related illness and how can one protect oneself from it?
We mostly see cases of heat exhaustion,

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

person's health.

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

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

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

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

Which section is most vulnerable in this season?

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

THE EXPERT

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

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

Should people exercise in this season?

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

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

Dr Chatterjee spoke to Anoma Dutt

SIMPLY PUT

The impact of price volatility

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

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

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

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

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

Life and death

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

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

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

Sainthood road

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



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

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

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

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

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

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Vaccine against 3 encephalitis viruses found safe, effective

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

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



PAPER CLIP

NEW RESEARCH

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

Researchers designed a virus-like particle (VLP) vaccine candidate that uses proteins from the outer shells of the viruses, the US National Institutes of Health said in a media release. VLPs do not contain the genetic material that the viruses need to replicate inside cells, so VLPs cannot cause infection. In trials on 30 candidates, the vaccine was safe, well-tolerated and induced durable immune responses against all three viruses, the release said.

SOURCE: NIH, US

HARISH DAMODARAN

NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

Assessing the hikes

These are massive hikes, aren't they?

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

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

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

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

TABLE 1
ALL-INDIA MODAL RETAIL PRICE OF EDIBLE OILS (Rs/kg)

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

All prices as on May 13 in that year. Source: Department of Consumer Affairs

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

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

Milk vs oil

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

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

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

The wheat effect

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

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

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

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

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

THIS WORD MEANS: MONK SKIN TONE SCALE

Google's innovation aimed at inclusiveness

SRIDHAR V

NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

What is the MST Scale?

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

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

How will it work?

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

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

Why such a scale?

According to Dr Courtney Heldreth, a so-

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

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

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

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

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

Are there similar projects elsewhere?

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

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



The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

CAUGHT WITH CHAFF

Government ban on wheat exports hurts farmers and traders, dents India's image as a reliable global supplier

LAST JULY, THE Narendra Modi government imposed stockholding limits on pulses, going against the farm reform laws it had enacted only in September 2020 and before their formal repeal in November 2021. That move, and the latest decision banning wheat exports, constitutes not just knee-jerk reaction to inflationary pressures. Of more concern is their long-term impact on the farm trade and policy credibility. Building export markets, establishing warehousing infrastructure and creating supply chains takes both time and money. Investments in these — whose necessity for Indian farmers and consumers alike is not in doubt — are predicated on a stable policy framework. Which agri-business will have the confidence to put up large processing and storage facilities or search for new buyers for Indian produce if the government does abrupt policy about-turns — by telling them they cannot stock more than 200 tonnes of pulses or contract fresh exports?

The flip-flops in government actions is evident from the department of commerce, on May 12, issuing a statement about the Centre sending trade delegations to nine countries “for exploring possibilities of boosting wheat exports from India” and, a day later, prohibiting shipments “with immediate effect”. True, the country's wheat production has fallen due to the sudden spike in temperatures from mid-March, resulting in premature ripening and shrivelling of the grains. But this was known by early-April, when most ground reports pointed to farmers harvesting 15-20 per cent less yields compared to last year. How was the Minister of Commerce Piyush Goyal, then, talking about Indian farmers “feeding the world” and projecting exports of 10-15 million tonnes (mt) in 2022-23, breaking last year's record 7 mt, even in mid-April? This was indicative of either poor crop intelligence — inability to gauge yield losses from the heat wave — or refusal to admit that production has been significantly lower than the “record” 111.32 mt estimate made in mid-February.

The ban on exports has apparently been prompted by wheat procurement plunging to around 18 mt, from last year's all-time-high 43.3 mt, and the resultant depletion in public stocks seen as threatening “food security”. But if that was so, what stopped the government to pay a bonus above the minimum support price, incentivising farmers to sell to it rather than private traders and exporters? Nor was there any need to continue with supplying free wheat, apart from the regular quota of ration cardholders. If at all exports were to be discouraged in order to contain inflation, a better way would have been to impose a tariff or a minimum price below which shipments aren't permitted. A blanket ban is like breaking the knees of farmers and traders, from which they will find it difficult to recover — leave alone helping India's emergence as a reliable global supplier.

BLAME IT ON PUTIN

Russia's Ukraine invasion is driving NATO expansion. Moves by Sweden and Finland to abandon neutrality are evidence

PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S invasion of Ukraine is not only turning out to be a military blunder, but also a political disaster for Russia. It is producing strategic outcomes that Putin's war apparently aimed to prevent — the further expansion of Western military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The decision by Finland and Sweden — two countries that steadfastly remained neutral in the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the West during the second half of the 20th century — to join NATO marks an important moment in the strategic evolution of Europe since the Ukraine crisis began.

The smaller countries on Moscow's western periphery are afraid —very afraid — of Russian military power. For them, membership of NATO is about protection from the Russian threat. NATO membership is a defensive measure for these countries and not aimed as a challenge to Russia. Russia, with its massive army and thousands of nuclear weapons, is well positioned to deter and defend against attack on its territory. Its neighbours don't have that luxury. Putin's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine has reinforced the fears of the smaller countries and raised their incentives for seeking NATO membership. Equally important, Moscow might not have attacked Ukraine if it was already a member of NATO. Gaining membership of NATO has become a matter of greater urgency for Russia's western neighbours. NATO's principle of collective defence — that attack on any member will rally the rest — has now become even more valuable for Russia's eastern neighbours.

Finland and Sweden remained neutral after the Second World War despite the fact that two of their two immediate neighbours —Denmark and Norway — were founding members of NATO that was set up in 1949. They also chose to stay away from NATO, when three neighbours and former members of the Soviet Union — Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania — joined NATO in 2004. But Putin's muscular policies of recent years and Russia's aggression against Ukraine have tilted the scales. Moscow's ill-considered threats against joining NATO have only helped steel the resolve of Finland and Sweden to end their traditional neutrality. Finland and Sweden are important partners for India. Their neutrality during the Cold War had much in common with India's tradition of non-alignment. India had worked with Sweden closely on many global peace and security issues in the past. Delhi and Stockholm were active members of a coalition between neutral and non-aligned nations in the multilateral fora. They joined hands to promote nuclear arms control between Washington and Moscow. The strategic parallel seems to endure. Much in the manner that India has tilted to the US to secure itself against a growing Chinese military threat, the much smaller Finland and Sweden are embracing NATO to save themselves from their aggressive Russian neighbour.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



K SRINATH REDDY

THE INDIAN COUNT of Covid infected persons, as identified by tests, has risen since April. The actual numbers infected or reinfected would be much higher, as many who were asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic would not have gotten tested. However, it was reassuring that most of those who were infected by a member of Omicron's extended family experienced mild illness. This variant clan's inability to penetrate deeper into the lungs and blood vessels may be partly responsible for this feature. Prior immunity, acquired from earlier infection or recent vaccination, may also have been protective against adverse outcomes.

Despite its mild reputation, Omicron infected a very large number globally and claimed many lives. Most of those who became severely ill were either unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated. Even the definition of who is adequately vaccinated is shifting with one or more boosters being added to the earlier two doses and the interval between vaccine doses being reduced as new variants exhibit their enhanced prowess at infection and immune evasion. Mask mandates, withdrawn when Covid appeared to recede, were reintroduced as case counts started a fresh ascent.

In this ongoing match of wits with the virus, will we reach a state of equilibrium where the virus becomes endemic, with manageable seasonal outbreaks that do not steal lives and seal society? Though some commentators have declared that the virus has already become endemic, it is not yet fully predictable in its evolution, behaviour and impact as new variants keep arising. There is presently no global steady state that can be confidently called “endemic”. All we can say is that the virus is here to stay and appears to be moving in the direction of endemicity. However, the possibility of new recombinant viruses birthing from the womb of global vaccine inequity and a worrisome potential for recycled animal to human transmission creates uncertainty about whether and when a steady-state will be reached.

Even as we keep vigil, restrictions have to be withdrawn in stages. The lifting of mask mandates cannot be whimsically hasty, while the imposition of travel bans and school closures should not be knee-jerk responses. A cal-

India needs to shift from a heightened pandemic reaction to a steady-state response

While flood prevention and control require planning and action at multiple levels of government and society, much of the responsibility lies at the municipal level and involves the active engagement of the community. In endemic Covid too, urban local bodies, panchayats, community-based organisations and citizen volunteers must form a coalition that conducts situational analyses and responds with context-relevant prevention, control and relief measures. Health communication must be effective through community networks to prevent panic and protect against misinformation. Community based mental health services will help to allay anxiety and prevent illness.

ibrated response is needed, which provides the right balance of confidence and caution, both in policy measures and personal protection at each stage of an undulating pandemic. Situationally adaptive responses must be dynamically enacted against the constant backdrop of health system capacity buildup for prevention, surveillance and patient care.

Perhaps flood protection measures can provide a model of endemic preparedness. We get rains seasonally every year but don't experience floods annually. When there is a threat of recurrent floods, we raise the level of our embankments to prevent the surge of floodwaters into our cities. We build dams upstream to control downstream water levels in rivers. We create efficient drainage systems to prevent waterlogging in the streets.

We monitor weather patterns to anticipate the threat of floods during extreme weather events. If such events are forecast, vulnerable groups of people are evacuated to safety and people's mobility is restricted to essential services. If not, life proceeds without disruption even when rains arrive. We leave it to routine municipal services to deal with rainwater clearance and sanitation. Even then, we use umbrellas to protect ourselves from getting wet when we are exposed to rain.

Such adaptability is needed when we move from a heightened pandemic response to a steady-state endemic response, while being ready to shift gears when needed. We need to get early alerts of new virus variants, much like warnings of changing weather patterns. When there is a threat of a surge in serious cases, we restrict mobility, continue essential services and pay special attention to the safety of the elderly and those with comorbidities. A multi-sectoral response to a public health emergency, prioritising public safety, would be in order.

In an endemic state, routine health services will suffice for testing and treating cases while maintaining a watch on case counts, clusters and clinical profile of cases. People's mobility will not be restricted but masking in public and crowded indoor locations may be advised when seasonal outbreaks occur. Vulnerable groups of people will be specially protected with vaccine boosters. The general public will be ad-

vised of personal protection measures but life will be near normal during times of seasonal spikes which do not become dangerous waves.

Cities will get flooded even without storms if rainwater drainage and sanitation services are poor. Even a seasonal spike in endemic Covid can pose a serious threat if our health services are inadequately resourced and poorly managed. We need greater investments for strengthening our health services through better infrastructure, workforce, public health expertise, information systems and management. This requires constant attention, not just a crisis response.

While flood prevention and control require planning and action at multiple levels of government and society, much of the responsibility lies at the municipal level and involves the active engagement of the community. In endemic Covid too, urban local bodies, panchayats, community-based organisations and citizen volunteers must form a coalition that conducts situational analyses and responds with context-relevant prevention, control and relief measures. Health communication must be effective through community networks to prevent panic and protect against misinformation. Community based mental health services will help to allay anxiety, prevent illness.

Timely vaccine protection must be provided to all who need it without coercion but by building confidence. Still, there will be some who will be highly vulnerable to serious illness during a seasonal outbreak. Civic sensibility must be fostered so that all persons who have any symptoms suggestive of a respiratory illness voluntarily mask up during a seasonal outbreak to protect others. Infected persons must isolate, with the assurance of medical and social support during the period of illness.

If cases build-up, masking outside home must be mandated, so that asymptotically infected persons do not pose a threat. As we walk in the rain, we take care not to splash water on others. Likewise, in endemic Covid, it will be our civic duty not to infect others.

The writer, a cardiologist and epidemiologist, is president, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI). Views are personal

THE PARTY IS OVER

To stall price spiral, RBI is likely to respond with aggressive hikes



RADHIKA PANDEY

DATA RELEASED BY the National Statistical Office showed that retail inflation had surged to an eight-year high of 7.79 per cent in April, driven by higher food and fuel prices. The former rose to 8.38 per cent driven by double-digit inflation in edible oils and vegetables, while inflation in cereals surged in April because of higher wheat prices. Inflation has now remained above the RBI's upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent for four months in a row.

The second-order impact of higher fuel prices is also visible as inflation in transport and communication surged to nearly 11 per cent, from 8 per cent in the previous month. The April data again showed that rural inflation outpaced urban inflation as the rural consumption basket gives more weightage to food. This is not good news for rural demand, which is yet to show a sustained pick-up.

The latest data also indicates that inflation is becoming broad-based. With the lifting of Covid restrictions and a pick-up in demand, services sector inflation captured by the “miscellaneous” category has surged to 8.03 per cent. And with demand rebounding, the pass-through of higher input costs is also gaining momentum. Considering that demand for goods recovered faster than services, goods producers passed on input costs to consumers. But as services recover, there will be greater pass-through of prices to consumers in the coming months. Concerns about rising services inflation were also reflected in the April S&P Global Purchasing Managers' Index survey for India's services sector. The surveyed service providers highlighted a sharp surge in

The expectation of a sharp spike in inflation led it to announce an off-cycle 40 basis points hike in the policy repo rate. The RBI is now likely to respond with aggressive rate hikes to prevent the price spiral from getting entrenched. By committing to bring down inflation through rate hikes, the central bank can anchor inflationary expectations. Unanchored expectations will further fuel inflationary pressures.

their operating expenses from March to April prompting them to pass the impact of rising input costs to consumers.

While there may be a slight moderation, inflation is expected to remain above the RBI's threshold of 6 per cent in the coming months. While global food prices measured by the FAO's Food Price Index eased marginally in April, they are still 30 per cent above that in April 2021. The Ukraine conflict continues to impact markets for foodgrains and vegetable oils. Rising fertiliser prices are likely to push up farmers' production costs, leading to high food prices. While the government has extended price support through higher subsidies, if this will be enough to cool prices needs to be seen.

With sticky crude oil prices and continuing supply-side disruptions amplified by the Covid-induced lockdowns in China, the RBI has rightly reverted its focus on inflation targeting. This is needed as central banks around the world are pursuing tight monetary policies to counter inflation. The US Fed followed its 25 basis points hike by another 50 basis points rise in May. These will be followed by hikes of similar magnitude in the coming months. The Bank of England has raised the policy rate by 25 basis points, its highest in 13 years to tackle inflation. Other countries' central banks are also contemplating rate hikes.

In its April policy, the RBI announced the withdrawal of excess liquidity but did not raise the policy rate. The expectation of a sharp spike in inflation led it to announce an off-cycle 40 basis points hike in the policy repo rate. The

RBI is now likely to respond with aggressive rate hikes to prevent the price spiral from getting entrenched. By committing to bring down inflation through rate hikes, it bank can anchor inflationary expectations. Unanchored expectations will further fuel inflationary pressures. The continued strength of the dollar index and sharp rupee depreciation in the last few days could impose further pressure on prices through higher imported inflation. This reinforces the need for interest rate hikes.

In addition to calibrated rate hikes, the RBI needs to fast-track the withdrawal of the ultra-accommodative liquidity support provided during the pandemic. It needs to present a revised projection of inflation for the current year and its views on the possible trajectory of interest rates. Rising inflation will cut back discretionary spending and adversely impact consumption that had only just started picking up. There are concerns about a recession in advanced economies as rising prices have started manifesting in a decline in purchasing power and a fall in consumer sentiments. The demand destruction could trigger a moderation in prices. Base metals prices have eased from the peak seen in the last few months.

Monetary policy support needs to be accompanied by fiscal support measures. The policy response will have to be tailored to the evolving geopolitical situation and the paths of commodity and food prices while balancing the imperatives of fiscal consolidation.

The writer is senior fellow, NIPFP. Views are personal

MAY 16, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

FALKLANDS ATTACK

BRITISH JETS BOMBED Port Stanley airfield and naval commandos carried a night raid into a West Falkland airstrip destroying a number of aircraft and blowing up an ammunition dump. The attacks were reported by the Defence Ministry on Saturday as British diplomats in the US met Margaret Thatcher to report the progress of talks at the UN. British Sea Harrier jets renewed bombing on the airfield outside Port Stanley, capital of the Falklands, in the first military action in the area in two days. In Buenos Aires, the Argentine military junta said its forces repelled the attack.

PM ON PAKISTAN

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi said that Pakistan had not been adhering to the Simla accord since its present military rulers came to power. Pakistan, she said, had been adopting “dubious standards”. On the one hand, that country was talking of friendship with India, on the other, it had been acquiring sophisticated weapons.

CHINESE DELEGATION

AN 11-MEMBER OFFICIAL-LEVEL Chinese team led by Fu Hao has arrived to hold the second round of talks on the border question

and other bilateral matters. Fu, a former Vice-Foreign Minister who has come here as a special envoy of the Chinese government, was received at Delhi airport by Eric Gonsalves, Secretary to the External Affairs Ministry.

EVMs IN KERALA

THE CHIEF ELECTION Commissioner is competent under the law to issue such orders as are necessary to rectify any inadequacy in the existent laws to ensure the holding of elections. This also covers the use of electronic voting machine. The machines will be used in the May 19 Assembly elections in the Parur constituency in Kerala.

The IDEAS PAGE

Steering the ship

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



ARUN PRAKASH

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

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

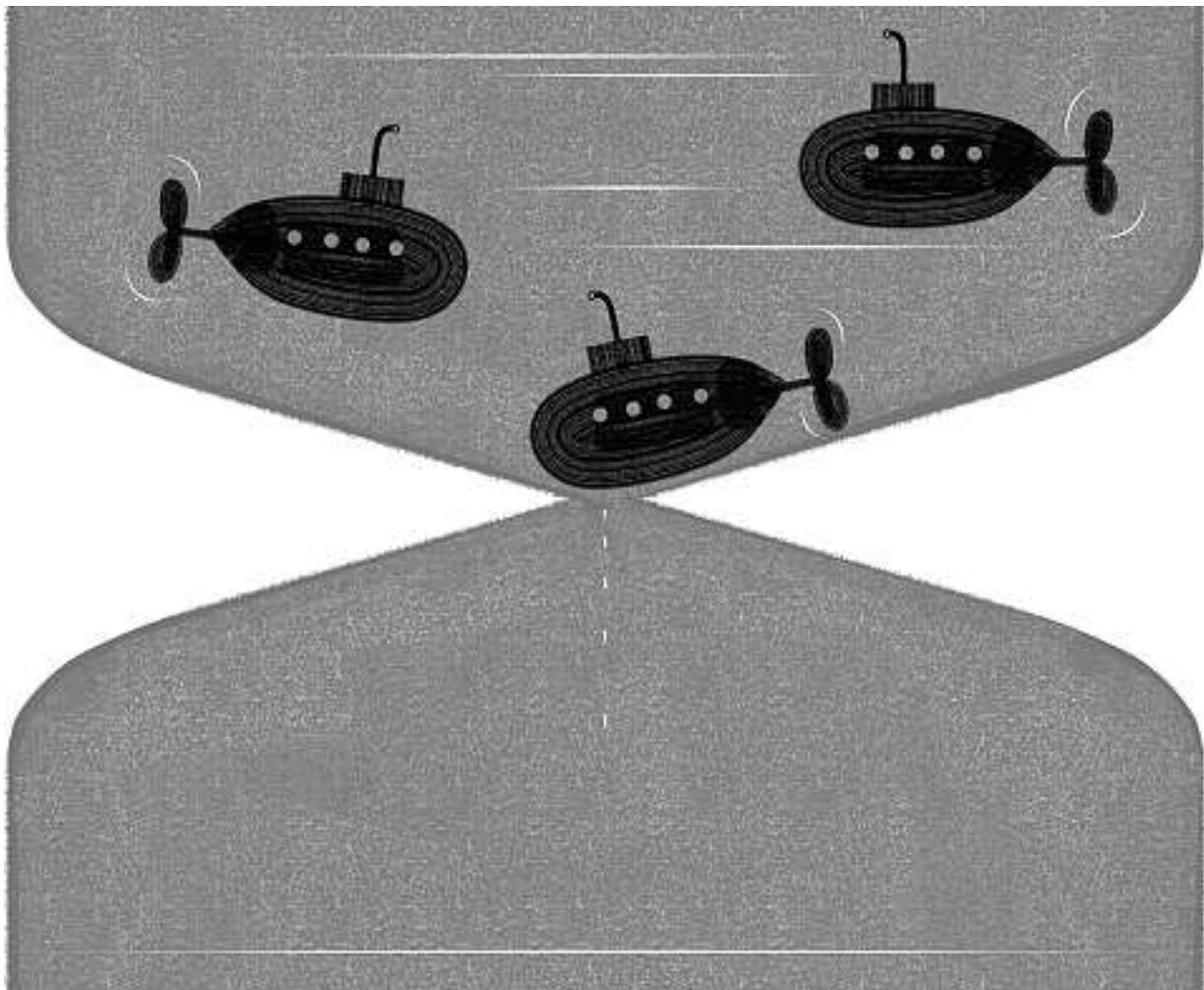
While protracted negotiations between the MoD and the French Naval Group were underway, none of the AIP systems had been fully proven. The contract for license-production of six Scorpenes was thus signed in 2005 without including this system. The Pakistan Navy (PN), obviously less risk-averse, acquired an untried French AIP system and installed it on three Agosta 90B submarines in 2008. What invests the P-75I programme with urgency is the fact that with the addition of eight Yuan Class Chinese submarines, the PN may field up to 11 AIP-equipped boats by 2028.

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

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

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

Unfortunately, allegations of corruption



C R Sasikumar

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

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

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

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

However, policy flip-flops and sluggish

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

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

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

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

The writer is a retired Chief of Naval Staff

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a retired Chief of Naval Staff

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

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

— THE GUARDIAN

Gods aren't crazy, mobs are

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



G N DEVY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a cultural activist



N S GUNDUR

A rasa yatra

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE RIGHT CODE

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

Aditi Pangarkar, Pune

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

H Upadhyay, via email

CHANGE THE LAW

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

Saumya Shukla, Munger

SECURITY CONCERNS

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

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

TOPOF THE WORLD



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

THE GULF

World leaders descend on UAE to pay respects to late ruler

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

USA

US to remove 5 from foreign terror blacklist

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

LEBANON

Mired in collapse, country to choose new parliament

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

IRAN

Filmmaker: Many movie industry workers arrested

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

GUNMAN, 18, DROVE HOURS TO STORE AT BLACK-MAJORITY AREA: POLICE

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

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

REUTERS

BUFFALO (NEW YORK), MAY 15

AN 18-YEAR-OLD white gunman shot 10 people to death and wounded three on Saturday at a grocery store in a Black neighborhood of upstate New York, before surrendering after what authorities called an act of "racially motivated violent extremism". Authorities said the suspect, who was armed with an assault-style rifle and appeared to have acted alone, drove to Buffalo from his home several hours away to launch the afternoon attack that he broadcast in real time on social media platform Twitch, a live video service owned by Amazon.com.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

A grisly inspiration for racist attacks

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

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

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



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

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

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

The New York Times

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

REUTERS

SEOUL, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

Small wins buoy Ukraine; West says Russians losing momentum

Finland, Sweden take a step closer to joining NATO

OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI & CIARAN MCQUILLAN
KYIV, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

TWO SIKH men were shot dead in Peshawar city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan Sunday, local sources said.

The local Sikh community identified the deceased as shopkeepers Ranjit Singh, 42, and Kuljeet Singh, 38. They were sitting at their shops at Batta Tal Chowk in Sarband area when two men arrived on a motorbike and opened fire, the sources said.

Satwant Singh, member of Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (PS-GPC), said it appeared to be a case of "targeted killings".

The Islamic State's Khorasan unit claimed via its propaganda news service 'Amaaq' that it carried out the attack

This is the second incident against the minority community in Peshawar in the last eight months. In September last year, a Sikh shopkeeper, Satwant Singh, was shot dead at his dawkhana (traditional medicine shop) in Peshawar. The Islamic State Khorasan or ISIS-K, had claimed responsibility for that killing, too.

After the killings on Sunday, the local Sikh community in Peshawar blocked Grand Trunk Road and took out a march demanding justice and protection from the government. They also demanded adequate compensation for the families of both deceased. The slogans of "Jo bole so nihaal... Sat Sri Akal", "Stop targeted killings" and "We want justice" reverberated during the protest march.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Balbir Singh, a local gurdwara sewadar-cum-school teacher, said that "enough was enough and now local Sikh community settled in Peshawar had no patience left to tolerate more of such targeted killings".



Members of the Sikh community protest in Peshawar on Sunday. Express

"No Sikh family here in Peshawar has any personal enmity or grudge against anyone. We all are poor people who just go for work every morning but we and our families live in this constant fear if we will return home alive in the evening or not. Killers come, barge into our shops, put guns to our heads and simply shoot. There is no fear of any law and order. Sikhs are shot dead simply because they are religious minorities. This persecution of Sikhs has to stop. Each Sikh living in Pakistan loves their country very much, we are proud of being Pakistanis but then our people are being shot dead every other day without any fear. *Humein Pakistan se mohabbat hai par hum yahaan aman se rehna chahte hain* (We love Pakistan but we want to live here in peace)," said Balbir, adding that there were around 500 Sikh families settled in Peshawar who mostly run spices, grocery and medicines shops.

Local Sikh community members said that since 2014, there have been at least 10 such incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province when unidentified accused came and targeted Sikhs. While some of them were injured, others lost their lives. "Dr Soran Singh in 2016, Charanjit Singh in 2018, Ravinder Singh in 2020 and Satwant Singh in 2021... the list is endless. Sikh minority group members are being persecuted in Pakistan but there's no action and no fear," said a local resident.

— WITH PTI INPUTS

Sri Lanka PM extends support to protesters telling President to quit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, MAY 15

SRI LANKA'S new Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, has extended public support to the protesters who have been camping at a popular beachfront here for over a month calling for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's resignation with the country facing its worst-ever economic crisis.

Wickremesinghe said on Saturday that he appointed a committee to look after the interests of the 'Gota Go Home' village protesters who have been camping at Colombo's Galle Face Green since April 9.

It was President Gotabaya Rajapaksa who appointed Wickremesinghe as PM after asking his elder brother Mahinda Rajapaksa to quit.

Wickremesinghe said the young protesters in the village would be safeguarded and their views would be sought for the shaping of future policy.

In an interview with the BBC Sinhala Service, the Prime Minister said the 'Gota Go Gama' protest should be continued to



A protester hangs decorative lanterns to mark Buddha Poornima or Vesak at an ongoing protest site outside the President's office in Colombo on Sunday. AP

bring a change in the political system in the country and let the country's youth take the responsibility to lead.

Wickremesinghe, the 73-year-old United National Party (UNP) leader, was appointed as Sri Lanka's 26th prime minister on Thursday as the country was without a government since Monday when Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned after violence erupted following an attack on the anti-government

protesters by his supporters.

Talks with World Bank, ADB

Meanwhile, on Sunday, Wickremesinghe held discussions with representatives of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank on the current economic crisis in the country, as India delivered the 12th shipment of diesel containing over 400,000 metric tonnes of fuel to the island nation.

THE KALUSH ORCHESTRA WON EUROVISION WITH THEIR ENTRY 'STEFANIA'

For Ukrainian fighters, Eurovision heralds coming victory over Russia

SERGIY KARAZY

MAY 15

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

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

"We had a victory: today in



Reuters

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

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

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

basement decorated with children's paintings of Ukraine flag

and "Glory to Ukraine" signs on them.



AP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 ECONOMY

SECTOR WATCH
INSURANCEIrdai douses
'Burning Cost',
premiums may
fall for India IncGEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

WHAT IS THIS COST

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

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

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

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

Full report on
www.indianexpress.com

EXPLORATORY TALKS WITH SINGAPORE AIRLINES

Vistara could merge with AI,
decision likely by end of 2023PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

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

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



An Air India aircraft at Chandigarh airport. File

nalised its intention to merge," the source added.

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

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

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

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

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

Tata Sons had not responded to the time of publication of this report on Sunday.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Source: EY/PTI

SBI hikes MCLR again, second in 1 month

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 15

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



SBI branch, New Delhi. File

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

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

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

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

RBI to review asset quality of PSBs tomorrow

BANIKINKAR PATTANAYAK
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

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

Ashima Goyal
on rate hikes

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

nario without upsetting growth dynamics, they added. The Governor will also review

Frauds in PSBs dip
51% to ₹40,295 cr

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



A superstore of RIL, Mumbai. Reuters

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

IMF lifts weighting of dollar,
Chinese yuan in SDR basketREUTERS
BEIJING, MAY 15

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

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

FIRST SINCE 2016

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

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

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

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

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

MARKET WATCH

FPIs PULL OUT ₹25,200 CR IN MAY SO FAR

New Delhi: The relentless selling of Indian stocks by foreign investors continued, as they pulled out a little over Rs 25,200 crore from the Indian equity market in the first fortnight of this month, on hike in interest rate globally and concerns over rising Covid cases. **PTI**

Logistics overhang:
Rupee fall unlikely
to boost exports

Fall in value of other currencies
to not give India competitive edge

KARUNJITSINGH &
AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

THE RUPEE'S depreciation against the US dollar may hold little upside for India as exports seem unlikely to benefit, amid global supply chain constraints and fall in currency values of competitors, even as imports are set to become more costlier.

The rupee has depreciated by 4.18 per cent since the beginning of the year and closed Friday's trading session at 77.44 against the greenback.

Experts said the depreciation in the value of the rupee was likely to add to India's burgeoning import bill but may not have the traditionally expected impact of making exports more competitive as high commodity prices and global supply chain issues are impacting global trade.

"Global supply chains are facing headwinds due to problems in China. All this is adding to pressures on the cost side, so I don't think we can expect an impact on exports because of the currency depreciation that is going on," said Biswajit Dhar, trade expert and professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Lockdowns in China aimed at containing the Covid spread have slowed operations at key ports and affected global supply chains.

"There is an acute shortage of containers and the supply chain is completely stretched," said Sumit Goyal, president of Kolkata-based Patton International, which exports engineering goods. Goyal added international buyers often included expected price reductions in line with currency depreciation in contracts. Inflation was also putting upward pressure on the cost of inputs, he noted.

Experts said since there was a secular strengthening of the dollar against most currencies, the depreciation would not offer an advantage to most exporters relative to competitor countries.

"It is not only the rupee that has depreciated, almost every currency including the pound and the euro have depreciated against the dollar. Most of our competing export nations are in South Asia or Southeast Asia and their curren-

EXPLAINED
Impact on
imports

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

cies have also depreciated," said Sunil Kumar Sinha, principal economist at India Ratings, adding this may mean that exports do not become more competitive as a result of currency depreciation.

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

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

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

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

India adds
8.8 mn jobs
in Apr: CMIE

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

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

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

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



A thermal plant, Punjab. File

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

RBI OFFICIALS TO PARLIAMENTARY PANEL
'Cryptos can lead to
dollarisation of economy'JATINTAKKAR
NEW DELHI, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

Royals’ big stride forward

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

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

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
MUMBAI, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

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

Padikkal presses on

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

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



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

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

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

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

Gujarat Titans secure top-2 finish

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

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

ANDREW SYMONDS 1975-2022

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

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
MUMBAI, MAY 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

BRIEFLY

Zareen, Anamika, Parveen enter quarterfinals

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

Djokovic beats Tsitsipas for first title of the year

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

CROSSWORD 4741



ACROSS

- Punishment for lying in the sun? (7)
- A question of choice (5)
- New net cord starts tight (6)
- In traffic a repeatedly seen vehicle (3)
- Every one in teaching (4)
- Such a net may become loose (8)
- Many admit to being inexperienced (6)
- Sarah's crazy to worry (6)
- Mention a new name (8)
- Cause a storm in a teacup (4)
- Not conscious one is in error? (3)
- Gave effortless recital and staggered away (6,3)
- Entertained without a thought (5)
- Gleeman's new medley (7)

DOWN

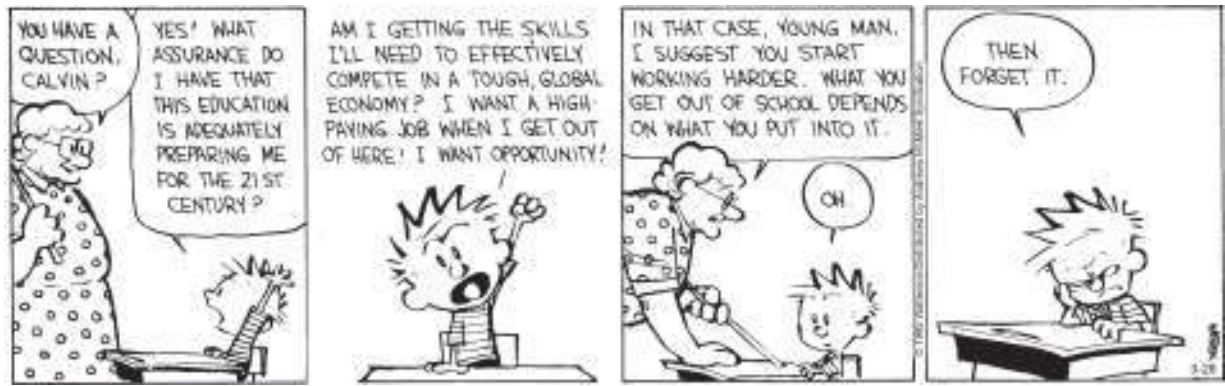
- Give an oral test (5)
- This man invaded England (3)
- In extremities they can be accommodating (4)
- They're for putting on vegetables (6)
- He's paid to mind someone else's business (8)
- An insect's uninterrupted development (9)
- Gear to make use of horsepower (7)
- They will spend their time together (9)
- Rounded up but not rounded off (8)
- Many on past record seem to agree (7)
- Master switch for the current (6)
- Strip a firearm (5)
- Close up of a swimmer (4)
- Have something to confess (3)

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

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

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

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

NRAAE

EOTDNN

DIOTT

EEDDDW

SOLUTION: ARENA, DITTO, EENDON, WEDDED
Answer: A somebody was once a nobody who wanted and hid - John Burroughs

SUDOKU 4836

Difficulty Level 4s

Instructions

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

Difficulty Level

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4835



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

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

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

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

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

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

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

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

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

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

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

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

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

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

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

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

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

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

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

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

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

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

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

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

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

Feather floats in the sky



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

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

SHIVANI NAIK
MAY 15

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

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

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

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

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

The Indonesian is a speed fiend, and does-

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

FIRST RUBBER: LAKSHYA'S SENSATIONAL COMEBACK

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

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

SECOND RUBBER: DOUBLES DELIGHT TO GO 2-0 UP

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

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

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

THIRD RUBBER: SEALING IT WITH A STRAIGHT-GAMES WIN

Srikanth beats Christie 21-15 23-22

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

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

Doubles magnifique

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PM INVITES TEAM, AWARDS POUR IN

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

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

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

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

Three shot stories

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



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

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

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

his attack with such bullheadedness was beginning to grate.

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

SRIKANTH'S DUBSTEP AT 22-21

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

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

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



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

DOWN 4 MATCH POINTS, CHIRAG-SATWIK UNLEASH POWER GAME

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

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



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

In badminton, giving back to the sport is not just lip service

TUSHAR BHADURI

FOR A long time, badminton in India revolved around two names – Saina Nehwal and PV Sindhu. The two female protagonists shone on the world stage, also getting on the Olympic podium. But with precious little backup, India often came up short in team competitions.

The male shuttlers, in contrast, have been much less heralded. That is, till Sunday, when they achieved the almost-unthinkable by winning the Thomas Cup – the World Cup of men's team badminton. Not just any medal, but gold! Beating badminton royalty Malaysia, Denmark and Indonesia in successive rounds cannot be termed a flash in the pan, but a result of years of hard work and planning, often away from the media spotlight. It could take the shuttle sport, especially the men's side, to another level and raise the level of expectations for the current and future generation of players.

Names such as HS Prannoy and Kidambi Srikanth have often been in the slipstream of the women stalwarts, even though the latter was once ranked No.1 in the world during a stellar 2017. The arrival of young gun Lakshya Sen – who reached the All England final and had a podium finish at the World Championship – and the doubles pairing of

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty has rounded the squad as there are no weak links.

But from where did this all-conquering combination emerge? Lot has been said and written about the proliferation of academies around the country once badminton became a fashionable sport. Chief national coach Pullela Gopichand's academy in Hyderabad has been a conveyor belt of high-quality talent despite the occasional noise about conflict of interest. Add to it, the establishment in Bengaluru with Prakash Padukone at the helm, and also Vimal Kumar, and one has several legends of the sport giving back in a tangible, and measurable, manner.

There have been several retired or semi-retired players across sports promising to scout and groom talent through their academies, but one is still waiting for their wards to make their first big splash. As far as the current glory-winning group is concerned, Srikanth and Prannoy have been around long enough to experience the ups and downs of the circuit, suffering and recovering from their fair share of injuries. While the spotlight has been on Sindhu and Saina, they have grinded out results, occasionally dealing with early exits from tournaments.

When it came to prospects at big events, the men have often been an afterthought, at least in terms of star power. But coming into the



Indian players celebrate after their win against Indonesia.

Thomas Cup, the young and the old Indian male shuttlers were quietly confident about their chances. All the teams they faced in the latter stages of the tournament had players ranked higher than them, but that hardly fazed them.

In the final, names like Jonatan Christie (2018 Asian Games gold medallist) and Anthony Ginting were put to the sword, as was the acclaimed doubles combination of Mohammad Ahsan and Kevin Sanjaya

Sukamuljo. Indonesia have been perennial Thomas Cup champions, and take a lot of pride in being the numero uno country in the sport that arouses so much passion in the South-East Asian nation.

But at least till the next edition, it will be a new country with the bragging rights in the men's game. It is one of the most unexpected achievements but nonetheless one of the most heart-warming ones in Indian sport.