

Kolkata

3 WEST BENGAL

ASANSOL LOK SABHA BYPOLL

Ensure BJP is rooted out of Bengal: Abhishek to voters

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 9

TMCMP and the party's national general secretary, Abhishek Banerjee, on Saturday called on the people of Asansol to root out the BJP in the April 12 Lok Sabha bypoll.

Addressing a public meeting after leading a roadshow in favour of the TMC's Asansol candidate Shatrughan Sinha on Saturday, Banerjee said, "This election is not just to elect a candidate but also to protest against divisive forces. We have ensure that the BJP is washed out of the state. If the people who walked with us today also vote for our candidate, the BJP will be rooted out of Asansol."

In a direct message to voters, the Diamond Harbour MP added, "I am grateful for the way the people of Asansol have always stood up against separatist forces and divisive politics. The one you chose with hope (two-time Asansol MP Babul Supriyo,



MP Abhishek Banerjee campaigns for TMC candidate Shatrughan Sinha in Asansol on Saturday. *Twitter*

who joined the TMC last year and is the party's candidate for the Ballygunge Assembly bypoll) could not work for you despite trying. The reason is that outsiders don't know how to respect the people of Bengal. Having come to this realisation, Babul Supriyo resigned (as an MP) and joined the TMC."

Lashing out at the Narendra

the price of cooking gas. People across the country are keenly awaiting a chance to teach the BJP a lesson. You (people of Asansol) have an opportunity. So teach the BJP a lesson."

Attending a similar roadshow earlier for Supriyo in Ballygunge, Banerjee had claimed many more BJP leaders want to join the TMC. "Many more leaders want to quit the BJP and join our party. If we open our doors to these leaders, the BJP will be finished," the TMC MP had said.

Also accusing the saffron party of using central agencies such as the CBI and ED to harass Opposition leaders, he claimed that the BJP cannot contest elections in a democratic manner. He further alleged that the CPM and the Congress had sold themselves to the BJP in Bengal.

The TMC all-India general secretary also claimed that the former Asansol MP decided to shun the "Jai Shri Ram" politics of the BJP and embrace the "Jai Bangla politics" of the TMC.

TMC govt creating atmosphere of fear in Bengal: Prasad

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PURULIA, APRIL 9

BJP LEADER and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Saturday slammed the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC) government for allegedly creating "an atmosphere of fear" in West Bengal, saying people of the state have lost their faith in the police force since every incident of crime was being investigated by the CBI.

Addressing a press conference in Asansol where he was campaigning for party candidate Agnimitra Paul for the April 12 Lok Sabha bypoll, Prasad said, "In Birbhum, two groups are fighting over tolazabi (extortion). The court had to intervene. Questions are being raised on the investigation carried out by the state police. That's why people are moving the courts knowing well that the police cannot conduct a fair probe."

He added, "What kind of a police force Mamata Banerjee government has created in Bengal? For how long will the innocent people keep dying here? It is now



People have lost faith in the police: BJP leader

a test for the police to hold a free and fair election in Asansol."

On the demand for imposition of Article 355 in the state, Prasad said that was the prerogative of the state government. "Now, even Congress leader Adhir Chowdhury is demanding it," he said. The ex-Union minister attributed the rising prices of petrol and diesel to the Russia-Ukraine war that led to a spike in the prices of crude oil. "There is a 50 per cent hike in the prices of petroleum products in the US, Canada, France, UK and other European countries. But in India, the increase was 5%," he claimed.

Prasad wondered whether TMC's Asansol bypoll candidate Shatrughan Sinha will remain with his new party till the 2024 Lok Sabha election, if he wins. "He was a BJP MP for 22 years. He has changed three parties in three years," he added.

Civic volunteer and friend shot dead in Magrahat, kin protest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 9

A CIVIC volunteer and his friend were shot after their throats were slit in the Magurpukur area of Magrahat in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district on Saturday, police said.

Tension prevailed in the area as the families and relatives of the victims, Varun Chakraborty (35) and Malay Makhal (31), along with local residents protested and allegedly ransacked many shops, apart from setting two cars on fire.

A large number of police personnel were deployed in the area to bring the situation under control.

The bullet-riddled bodies of the victims, both residents of Magurpukur, were recovered from the premises of Jane Alam & Company that makes various items from cattle bones and is allegedly involved in the chit-fund business.

The victims' families said the two had invested in a scheme with the firm and were demanding their money back for some time.

Diamond Harbour superintendent of police (SP) Abhijit Banerjee said the victims' throats were slit after being shot to ensure they were dead. "The two were called to the factory with the promise of giving back their money. No one was present there when the bodies were recovered," another official said.

As soon as the news of their death spread, protesting residents of the area allegedly set two cars on fire.

A team from the Diamond Harbour police station rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. "The situation is normal now," sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Mitun said.

The main accused has been identified and the police sent the bodies for autopsy.

BIRBHUM VIOLENCE

CBI books 10 people in TMC leader's murder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAMPURHAT, APRIL 9

THE CBI on Saturday registered an FIR against 10 people in connection with the murder of Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Bhadu Sheikh, which led to the killing of nine people at Bogtui village in West Bengal's Birbhum district, a senior official said.

Among those named in the FIR are Palash Shiekh, Sanju Shiekh, Sona Shiekh and Choto Shiekh who have been arrested, the official said.

The case was filed under Sections 302 (murder) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of the

Indian Penal Code and relevant sections of the Explosive Substances Act.

The CBI visited Rampurhat police station on Saturday and collected the case diary and documents linked to Sheikh's murder investigation, the official said.

The CBI officers spoke to the police personnel there. They also spoke to witnesses of the murder and took stock of the situation," he said.

The agency officers also visited Bogtui Mor where Bhadu was killed, he added.

The CBI took over the investigation of murder from the police, following an order of the Calcutta High Court.

NCB busts illegal drug supply chain in Kolkata, 4 held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 9

THE NARCOTICS Control Bureau (NCB) busted an illegal drug supply chain in Kolkata and seized psychotropic substances after a three-day operation. Four persons have so far been arrested in connection with the case, the NCB said.

According to the NCB, it received a complaint regarding the retail sale of psychotropic and narcotic substances to local addicts. It was alleged that Minagar Rahaman, the owner of a premise called TS Agency, which is used as a godown or storage space for a shop in Kolkata, was involved in the retail sale of psychotropic substances.

Acting on the complaint, an NCB team raided the godown and seized large quantities of drugs and psychotropic substances in the form of tablets, injections, cough syrups and capsules.

"M Rahaman (the retailer) used to purchase drugs illegally from Pintu (a middleman). This was done for further retailing purposes to local addicts who frequently visited his store. Pintu identified his supplier as Tapas Roy, an employee of JK Pharma, a wholesaler of NRX drugs at Burrabazar in central Kolkata. Roy used to purchase supplies

An NCB team raided a godown and seized drugs and psychotropic substances in the form of tablets, injections, cough syrups and capsules

from Mahesh Parikh, the owner of JK Pharma," an officer from the NCB's Kolkata unit said.

"During a scrutiny of stock at JK Pharma NRX, Parekh was unable to provide the sale and purchase records and disclosed that he and Roy had sold the seized drug to Pintu in lieu of cash without any invoice," the officer added.

According to the NCB, one of the seized drugs, Buprenorphine, is used to treat addiction/dependence to opioids while another seized substance, Diazepam, is used to relieve anxiety and control agitation. Pentazocine, another drug that was also seized, is used to relieve moderate to severe pain.

"All seized drugs are injected separately or in combination with other drugs to treat addictions. Further investigation is underway," added another NCB official.

CONGRESS COUNCILLOR'S MURDER

CBI team questions six policemen

SANTANU CHOWDHURY
PURULIA, APRIL 9

THE CENTRAL Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday questioned Jhalda sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Subrata Deb and five other cops in connection with the murder of Congress councillor Tapan Kandu who was shot dead by unidentified assailants on March 13.

While the SDPO was questioned for over an hour, the five, who were deployed at a check post (naka) near the scene of crime, were interrogated for over 5 hours by the CBI team led by deputy inspector general (DIG) Akhilesh Kumar Singh, it is learnt.

The central agency recorded the statements of the five policemen who were taken off duty following the murder.

"They (CBI) asked me some questions to which I replied. I cannot comment further," said the SDPO after being questioned at the CBI's camp office in Jhalda.



The spot in Jhalda where Congress councillor Tapan Kandu was shot dead. *Partha Paul*

The CBI has also seized mobile phones of Tapan Kandu and his nephew Mithun Kandu. The devices will be sent for forensic examination.

On Friday, the CBI team had questioned Mithun Kandu and three eyewitnesses — Pradeep Chaurasia, Khokon Rajak and Subhas Gorai — for hours.

The CBI has summoned Jhalda police station in-charge

Sanjib Ghosh for questioning in the case. Ghosh, however, is yet to appear before the agency which has also questioned Tapan Kandu's wife Purnima Kandu on two occasions.

Kandu was shot dead on March 13 when he was out for an evening walk near his residence. The police had arrested four persons in connection with the murder. The CBI took over

the investigation in the case following the order of the Calcutta High Court.

Meanwhile, Purnima Kandu has lodged a complaint with Purulia superintendent of police (SP) S Selvamurugan against local police officers for allegedly manhandling her and other Congress workers on April 5 when they were protesting against the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) over forming the Jhalda civic board with the help of two Independent councillors.

The police stopped us from entering the municipality that day. Being a councillor even I was stopped. The police manhandled me and others. I have sent an email to the SP narrating the incident," said Purnima.

The move came after the Jhalda police on Thursday started a suo motu case against four Congress workers, including party councillor Biplab Kayal, for allegedly attacking on-duty cops and blocking roads the day Jhalda municipal board was formed.

State logs 28 new Covid-19 cases, no death

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 9

WEST BENGAL recorded 28 new Covid-19 cases and no deaths in the last 24 hours, a state health department bulletin said on Saturday.

With this, the state's infection tally has gone up to 20,17 lakh while the death toll stands at 21,200. On Saturday, 11,704 samples were tested. The state reported 37 recoveries in the last 24 hours, taking the number of people cured of the infection to 19.95 lakh, the bulletin said.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients in West Bengal now is 98.93 percent.

On Friday, the state had logged 26 new Covid-19 cases and zero fatalities. The recovery rate was at 98.92 per cent with 40 more patients cured of the virus.

CHANGE OF NAME

My previous name was Jhuma Paul, after Barasat First Class Judicial Magistrate as on 06.12.2021 my current name is Kaya Paul. Now Jhuma Paul and Kaya Paul is same person as per Affidavit No. 18779.

SECTION 144 IN PARTS OF RAJASTHAN

BJP MP claims 'exodus from Karauli', cops deny

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, APRIL 9

BJP RAJYA Sabha MP Kirodi Lal Meena Saturday said there was an "exodus" of Hindus from Karauli in Rajasthan following the violence on April 2 — a claim police have termed "totally incorrect".

Meanwhile, with parts of the state still on edge after the violence, several districts, including Jaipur, have imposed prohibitory orders under CrPC Section 144 ahead of Ram Navami on Sunday. Ajmer, Alwar, Sawai Madhopur and Hanumangarh are also among these districts, with police taking out flag marches in some of them.

On Saturday, Meena sat on a protest at the Karauli district collectorate demanding arrests in the Karauli incident. Karauli SP Shailendra Singh Indoliya told *The Indian Express*: "Meena's claims are incorrect, we verified the claims." He said the administration had constituted a committee with police and administrative officials. "The committee submitted

Communal tension had erupted in Karauli following stone-pelting at a motorcycle rally passing through a Muslim-dominated area on Nav Samvatsar

in its report that no such thing has happened. We have verified it and found it to be totally incorrect."

Communal tension had erupted in Karauli following stone-pelting at a motorcycle rally passing through a Muslim-dominated area on Nav Samvatsar, the Hindu New Year, leading to arson.

In a letter to CM Ashok Gehlot, Meena has shared a list of 195 persons who have allegedly fled the place, along with their fathers' name. The list mentions no address. In the letter, he said the exodus had taken place from "Muslim majority Dholikhar locality" and mainly constitutes Dalits such as Jatavs, Khatiks, Kahars, Dhobis and Kumhars (OBCs). Meena has claimed that

the main accused have not been arrested while "hundreds of" innocent people are being questioned. On Saturday, the MP claimed he was arrested from outside the collectorate while protesting. The Karauli SP said the MP was "dispersed" under CrPC Section 129 (Dispersal of assembly by use of civil force) since he was flouting the curfew.

Congress spokesman Swarnim Chaturvedi said: "Nothing like what he has claimed has happened. A person may have left to earn their livelihood, but no one has left Karauli due to communal reasons."

He said: "No one pays heed to Meena in BJP. He has become irrelevant and hopes to re-establish himself by trying to gain mileage by bringing up new 'facts'."

BJP MLA and party spokesman Ramlal Sharma said. "It is true that there are several places where exodus of Hindus has begun. This includes Karauli, Kota, Jaipur, Chittorgarh, where people are selling their properties for very little... If the government is denying it, it is lying."

LeT chief Hafiz Saeed's son designated terrorist

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

THE CENTRE Friday designated Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief Hafiz Saeed's son Talha as a terrorist under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

"Central Government believes that Hafiz Talha Saeed is involved in terrorism and Hafiz Talha Saeed should be notified as a terrorist under the said Act... therefore, the Central Government hereby makes the following amendment in the Fourth Schedule to the said Act, namely: In the Fourth Schedule to the said Act, after serial number 31 and the entries relating thereto, the following serial number and entries shall be inserted, namely: 32. Hafiz Talha Saeed," a notification read.

Saeed's son Talha Saeed, 47, serves as the LeT's second-in-command and controls the finances of the organisation. In 2019, he had escaped an assassination attempt when a bomb inside a refrigerator shop exploded in Lahore. According to the notification, Talha is the head of the cleric wing of LeT, which is a proscribed organisation under UAPA.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, MINISTRY OF FINANCE
INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE TAX RECOVERY OFFICER 3,
Room No.420, 4th Floor, Main Building, 121, M.G. Road,
Aayakar Bhavan, Chennai-34 TEL: 044-28338543 / Mob: 9384636708
Email : chennai.tro3@incometax.gov.in

AUCTION SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY SITUATED AT AYANAVARAM

Notice is hereby given that the office of the undersigned has proposed to conduct an auction as per the provisions laid down in the 2nd Schedule of the Income Tax Act, 1961 and sale of immovable property, which belongs to **M/s.Delta Projects (Partners of Shri. J. Annamalai & Smt.A.Priya Annapoorani), No.48/19,Rajamangalam Main Road, Villivakkam, Chennai - 600 049**, being income tax defaulter for the purpose of recovery of income tax arrears.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTIES
"An apartment bearing Flat No. C-156 on the Fifteenth Floor in Block 'C' together car parking space in the basement of the multistoried building complex known as "SUNNNYVALE", No.351, K.H. Road, Ayanavaram, Chennai. Flat measuring on extent of 1599 Sq.ft (plinth area of flat inclusive of share in common area) together with 485.99 Sq.ft undivided share of land described in the schedule D above within the registration Sub district of Anna Nagar and Registration District of Central Chennai".
Reserve price in Rupees : Rs.95,99,000/- plus poundage fee & costs
E.M.D in Rupees : Rs.1,00,000/-
DATE AND TIME OF AUCTION
18.04.2022 @ 11.00 AM
VENUE OF AUCTION
Income Tax Auditorium (Vaigai Hall) in the Income Tax Main Building Campus, Aayakar Bhavan, 121, M.G. Road, Nungambakkam, Chennai - 600034.

- CONDITIONS:**
- The intending bidders are requested to deposit **Rs.1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Only)** as Earnest Money Deposit for the above property by means of Demand Draft in favour of **"Tax Recovery Officer-3, Income tax Dept., Chennai"** drawn on any schedule bank payable at Chennai before the beginning of actual auction proceedings, which is refundable to the parties except successful. The successful bidder shall pay immediately after such declaration, deposit of 25 % on the amount of his purchase money to the officer conducting sale, and in default of such deposit the property shall forthwith be put up again and resold. The full amount of purchase money payable should be paid by the purchaser to the undersigned on or before 15th day from the date of sale of property, exclusive of such day, or if the 15th day being a Sunday or other holiday, then on first office day after the fifteenth day. In default of payment within the period mentioned above, the property shall be resold after issue of fresh proclamation of sale.
 - The Property will be auctioned on "as is where is and what is there is basis".
 - The details of the property and the copy of the Encumbrance Certificate can be perused at the office of the undersigned on any working day prior to auction, after fixing an appointment with the undersigned during office hours.
 - Detailed terms and conditions of the auction sale may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours.
 - The aforesaid property will not be sold below the Reserve Price of **Rs.95,99,000/-** (C.D.Vejayalakshme)

Date: 01.04.2022 Tax Recovery Officer-3
Place : Chennai O/o. Pr.Commissioner of Income Tax-3, Chennai.



Kolkata

5 GOVT & POLITICS

ED moves SC against HC bail order to Kerala CPM leader's son in money laundering case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate has moved the Supreme Court, challenging the bail granted by the Karnataka High Court to Bineesh Kodiyeri, son of Kerala CPI(M) state secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, facing charges under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act-2002.

The agency in its plea said that "avermments made in the complaints, statements of the accused, the affidavit filed by the officials of the Enforcement Directorate clearly disclose that there are sufficient material to contend that the accused committed the offence of money laundering".

"Documents clearly disclose that there are shady transactions under which huge amounts were deposited, transferred and withdrawn...", the probe agency said in its appeal against the HC order dated October 28, 2021.

It said the HC had failed to appreciate that he had filed five bail applications, all of which were rejected and "there is no change of circumstances in the present case".

Bineesh was arrested on October 29, 2020, in the course of the investigation after 60 grams MDMA pills, Rs 2.2 lakh cash and other documents were recovered from one Mohammed Anoop, who is the accused number 1 in the case, by the Narcotics Control Bureau from Bengaluru.

The agency said Anoop, in his statement made under Section 50(3) of the PMLA Act, admitted that he dealt in narcotics and was "closely linked with Bineesh".

It added that Bineesh's driver Anikuttan, "deposited lakhs of rupees in Bengaluru and then withdrew the money in Kerala... The respondent herein has also not explained as to how his driver could deposit so much money in the bank account".

DAY AFTER RIOTING OUTSIDE SHARAD PAWAR'S HOUSE

109 arrested protesters sent to jail, their lawyer in police custody

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 9

A MAGISTRATE court on Saturday sent 109 protesters, mostly striking employees of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), to judicial custody till they are granted bail and their legal counsel Gunaratna Sadavarte to police custody for two days.

This comes a day after they were arrested by the Gamdevi police for rioting outside NCP chief Sharad Pawar's residence Silver Oak in Mumbai.

The day also witnessed DCP (Detection) Neelotpal being given full-time charge as the DCP of Zone II, under whose jurisdiction Silver Oak falls. Neelotpal re-

From MVA fulcrum to meeting Modi, Pawar plays in all seasons

ZEESHAN SHAIKH & VISHWAS WAGHMODE
MUMBAI, APRIL 9

"I AM neither the head master nor the remote controller of this (MVA) government. In evolved democracies governments can't be run through remote controls," said NCP chief Sharad Pawar in an interview last year when asked whether he was the power behind the throne in Maharashtra.

While Pawar has been vociferous in denying any role in the day-to-day functioning of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, the 83-year-old Maratha stalwart remains the fulcrum of this coalition government. The NCP supremo's residence, 2 Silver Oak, a two-storey bungalow located on a cul-de-sac at Bhulabhai Desai Road in South Mumbai, is the place where a few politicians, bureaucrats, top police officials, industry doyens, among others, make a beeline these days, which is a testament to the influence ex-

Pinarayi, Stalin take on Centre: Destroying our federal system

SHAJU PHILIP
KANNUR, APRIL 9

TAMIL NADU Chief Minister MK Stalin and his Kerala counterpart, Pinarayi Vijayan, on Saturday blamed the BJP-led government at the Centre for destroying India's federal system.

Addressing a seminar on "Centre-station relations", held as part of the ongoing CPI(M) congress here, they alleged that unity in diversity is the nation's culture but Hindutva forces want to do away with that and convert India into a unitary state.

Pointing out several instances in which the Centre failed to meet Kerala's demands, Vijayan said: "What is most important is to democratise relations between the Centre and states. Instead of strengthening the federal system, the Union government is thwarting mega-projects; NITI Aayog is directly dealing with local self-governing bodies, keeping the state government in the dark."

Under the guise of developing backward districts, the Centre is directly funding projects and monitoring them,



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and his Kerala counterpart Pinarayi Vijayan at a seminar conducted as part of the 23rd CPI(M) party congress in Kannur, Kerala, Saturday. PTI

Vijayan said. "The Centre is not ready to seek the state's opinion when they are entering into deals, which would have far-reaching consequences in a state," he said.

Not sparing the Congress, main opposition to the CPI(M)-led LDF government in Kerala, Vijayan said, "The Congress does not help the state win fair share of projects and funds from the Centre. The Congress-led UDF has 18 MPs in Lok Sabha, (but) we have not seen these MPs in-

tervening for Kerala."

Referring to Union Home Minister and BJP leader Amit Shah's statement on Thursday that people from different states should speak in Hindi, and not English, Vijayan said an attempt to foist Hindi will not be allowed.

"The Sangh Parivar feels if different languages are destroyed, the diversity of the nation can be eliminated. Our democracy involves diverse cultures and languages. The Constitution has given due importance to differ-

ent languages. Any bid to foist Hindi would eliminate local languages and cultures," he said.

Indirectly slamming the BJP-led NDA, Stalin said efforts are on to eliminate diversity in the country. Stating that unity in diversity is India's culture, the DMK chief said, "If India has to be protected, states should be first guarded. The nation can be safeguarded only if states are shielded."

Stalin said architects of the Constitution did not envisage a unitary structure of power but stood for division of powers, as reflected in features such as the state, the Centre and concurrent lists. The Panchayati Raj Act bestowed local bodies with rights, he said, and emphasised that states and the nation will witness development only if villages grow.

He said Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the CPI(M) and the DMK, have every right to speak about the Centre-state relations. "An elected Communist government in Kerala was dismissed by the Centre in 1959. In Tamil Nadu, DMK governments were dismissed twice in similar manner, first in 1976 and then in 1991, using that Constitutional provision," he pointed out.



Congress leader KV Thomas

Thomas praises Kerala CM at CPM event; Congress's state unit seeks action

SHAJU PHILIP
KANNUR, APRIL 9

DEFYING PARTY directive, five-time Congress MP and former Union minister K V Thomas on Saturday attended a seminar at the venue of CPI(M) party congress here and praised Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, prompting state Congress chief K Sudhakaran to write to party president Sonia Gandhi, recommending strict and befitting disciplinary action against Thomas.

Thomas, who has had a strained relation with Congress, attended a seminar on "Centre-state relations" and backed the state government's proposed semi-high-speed rail corridor, which the Congress has opposed.

Addressing Vijayan and CPI(M) state secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan as "comrades", Thomas called the CM an able administrator. Stating his support for the rail corridor, he said, "Why should I oppose K-rail? If the project is beneficial for Kerala, all should stand united. Land has to be acquired for all projects. That Pinarayi Vijayan introduced the project should not be a reason for objecting to it — Vijayan is one of the best CMs and the pride of Kerala."

He kept a major part of his speech on demonstrating his purportedly changing political loyalty.

Sudhakaran told the media that Thomas had betrayed the party and action would be taken against him. "The party now regrets having given Thomas many positions over the years," Sudhakaran said.

some of the world's largest economies," the source said.

"The year under our G20 Presidency will require us to organise around 190 meetings, including 1-2 Leaders' Summit and several ministerial-level meetings," the source said.

Hosting an in-person G20 Summit would involve around 37 delegations — including P-5 and seven international organisations and five special invitees, 10,000 international delegates, 5,000 international media, requirement of approximately 15,000 hotel rooms and 10,000-12,000 vehicles, and nearly 30,000 police or security personnel.

dency is India's chance to do the same and to put ourselves on the global stage and take initiatives on issues relevant for us," the source said.

The G20 summit in 2023 will be the biggest-ever multilateral event to be hosted in India in recent years. "It will be a tremendous opportunity for India to showcase its infrastructure, rich culture and diversity, and hospitality at the global stage," the source said.

"We have not hosted any multilateral event on this scale before. It will entail the P5 delegations being together in India for the first time ever, as well as

Rahul loyalist Raja Warring named Punjab Congress chief

New Delhi: Congress president Sonia Gandhi Saturday appointed Amrinder Singh Brar, alias Raja Warring, 44, as the party's new Punjab chief, and former Rajya Sabha member Pratap Singh Bajwa as the new legislature party leader.



Raja Warring

The appointments bear the stamp of Rahul Gandhi who had named Raja Warring as Indian Youth Congress president and

Pratap Singh Bajwa as Punjab Congress chief a few years ago. Sonia has also appointed former minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu as the working president of the Punjab Congress, and SC leader Raj Kumar Chhabewal as deputy CLP leader in the state Assembly.

Warring, who was the Transport minister in the Charanjit Singh Channi-led government, replaces Navjot Singh Sidhu, who had resigned on Sonia's direction last month. **ENS**

NATIONAL JUDICIAL CONFERENCE ON MEDIATION AND IT

President, CJI bat for mediation to check case pendency

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, APRIL 9

PRESIDENT Ram Nath Kovind on Saturday said the concept of mediation is yet to find widespread acceptance, and bottlenecks such as lack of domain experts and suitable infrastructure need to be addressed on priority to help a wider population benefit from the tool of mediation. All stakeholders should display a positive attitude towards the subject in order to achieve the desired results, Kovind said.

He was speaking at the inaugural event of the two-day National Judicial Conference on Mediation and Information



President Ram Nath Kovind, Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijju, and CJI NV Ramana inaugurate the conference at Kevadia on Saturday. Express

Technology near the Statue of Unity at Kevadia in Gujarat's Narmada district on Saturday, in the presence of Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijju,

Chief Justice of India NV Ramana and other dignitaries.

The President also said that the topmost objective of switching the justice delivery system to information and communication

ECI to SC: No power to check parties, governments from promising freebies

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

AMID A debate over financial viability of freebies and populist schemes announced by political parties vying for power, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has told the Supreme Court that it is not within its powers to stop this.

In an affidavit filed in the top court, the ECI said: "...offering/distribution of any freebies either before or after election is a policy decision of the party concerned, and whether such policies are financially viable or its adverse effect on the economic health over the state is a question that has to be considered and decided by the voters... The Election Commission of India cannot regulate state policies and decisions which may be taken by the winning party when they form the government."

"Such an action, without enabling provisions in the law, would be an overreach or powers," the poll panel submitted.

The affidavit was filed in response to a petition by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay. Among others, the plea urged the court to direct and declare that promise of irrational freebies from public fund before election unduly influences voters, disturbs the level-playing field, shakes the roots of free and fair election, and vitiates purity of election process.

The petitioner urged the top court to direct and declare that such promise or distribution is analogous to bribery and undue influence under the Indian Penal Code.

The EC's affidavit referred to the SC's 2013 ruling in the S Subramaniam Balaji vs Government of Tamil Nadu and others case, wherein it was said that a promise contained in an election manifesto cannot in it-

self constitute a bribe or corrupt practice as per Section 123 of the Representation of People's Act, 1951.

The apex court had in that case also said that the ECI can intervene only where there is no express legislation covering the subject matter and asked it to frame guidelines governing the contents of the manifesto, as it noted that there is no enactment covering this. The court also recognised that the ECI's authority to regulate such matters commences only upon the announcement of elections and the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

The Commission said that it had accordingly, after consultation with recognised political parties, "issued guidelines, incorporated as Part VIII of the MCC, to be adhered to by the political parties and candidates while releasing their election manifesto..."

The ECI stated that although promises in a manifesto are not enforceable under election law, it had on December 27, 2016, advised all recognised political parties to submit a declaration along with copies of manifestos to see that the promises made therein are in consonance with Part VIII of the MCC.

On Upadhyay's prayer that ECI be directed to seize election symbol/deregister the political party which promises/distributes irrational freebies from public fund, the affidavit said the SC has in the past ordered that the Commission has no power to cancel registration of a political party, except on three grounds which does not include promise or distribution of freebies.

The ECI had taken a similar stand in January 2020 in another pending petition filed by Pentapati Pulla Rao, who was a Janasena Party candidate from Eluru in Andhra Pradesh in 2019 General Election, questioning direct cash transfer and freebies.

Over 58% drop in Cong income in FY21; expenses also see steep fall

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

THE CONGRESS'S income dropped to Rs 285.7 crore in 2020-21, a decline of over 58 per cent from Rs 682.2 crore the previous fiscal, according to its audit report submitted to the Election Commission on March 30.

Its expenditure, too, dipped to Rs 209 crore from Rs 998.15 crore the previous fiscal.

The party's income in 2018-19 stood at Rs 918 crore and it continued to decline rapidly since then.

Major part of its income comes from "issuing coupons", according to the report. The party says it received from Rs 156.9 crore from it, while "grants and donations" contributed Rs 95.4 crore and Rs 20.7 crore came from "fees and subscriptions".

The last year's data submitted by electoral trusts to the Election Commission also revealed a dip in contribution to other political parties, while their share of the ruling BJP grew.

technology (ICT) should be "improvement of access to justice".

In his address, Rijju emphasised the need for "teamwork" between the executive and the judiciary, while CJI Ramana advocated for "active effort" by courts to "make negotiations and mediation mandatory as part of case management".

"As long as justice is being served, it does not matter whether it is delivered by courts or under the aegis of the executive through mediation," Rijju said, adding that the Mediation Bill was now before the Parliament's Standing Committee of Law and Justice for deliberations, and is taking a very good shape.

The Law Minister added the government's goal was "to ensure

that people should not wait for formal litigation to get justice. Let us explore other means to provide quick justice... I also feel that the existing system will burden us more and more unless we reform ourselves internally."

CJI Ramana said lok adalats, gram adalats and mediation centres have the "potential to transform the legal landscape of India by providing millions of people a platform to settle their grievances" and that "imbibing effective alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms into the judicial process can reduce pendency, and allow the litigants a degree of control over the dispute resolution process and its outcome".

THE SUNDAY PROFILE

Ministering Bommai

He came to the CM chair with little baggage, as the socialist who was expected to find his way around the BJP's ideological priorities. Yet, six months later, with right-wing groups enjoying a seemingly long rope under his watch, and a government in paralysis, Bommai remains an outsider seeking a way in. BY JOHNSON T A



Illustration: Shyam Kumar

FOR AN UNLIKELY Chief Minister, Basavaraj Bommai, 61, got off to a good start. In the second month of his tenure, on September 2, 2021, he got a leg-up when Union Home Minister Amit Shah — on his first visit to Karnataka after Bommai took over — endorsed him as the man to lead the BJP into the 2023 Assembly elections in Karnataka. "Bommai has focused on small things. He has not embraced the VVIP culture... In Delhi, those who observe Karnataka closely are of the view that the BJP has strengthened itself after making Basavaraj Bommai the Chief Minister," Shah had said.

But that honeymoon period barely lasted six months with a gradual piling up of woes against Bommai — within the party, the central leadership, the state government and public at large. There have been complaints of a lack of will in tackling corruption and large-scale indecisiveness on pending and new projects.

The biggest criticism, however, is that Bommai and his leadership have given a free pass to the Hindutva right-wing to execute its agenda — from a string of comments that have kept the hijab row simmering, to the issue of banning Muslims from temple festivals to the halal meat controversy.

While Bommai, eager to earn his stripes in the BJP given that he was in the JD(S) as late as 2008, was expected to be soft on Hindutva radicals, no one expected the CM — given his socialist background — to roll over and play dead.



Bommai's roots in the socialist and secular politics of the Janata Dal can be traced to his lineage — his father and former CM S R Bommai was an ardent follower of the radical humanist movement of Leftist leader MN Roy.

Though Bommai made his foray into politics in 1996-97, when he was appointed political secretary to then CM J H Patel of the Janata Dal, it wasn't until 2008, after his father's death in 2007, that he contested elections. This was because the senior Bommai didn't want to use his credentials to promote his son.

It's a discipline that has continued in his family, with neither of his two children — son Bharath, an industrialist and businessman, and daughter Aditi, an architecture student — displaying any political inclinations. His wife Chenamma is a homemaker.

"Basavaraj wanted to serve people but had to wait for his time," says J H Patel's son Mahima Patel, the JD(U) Karnataka president.

Following his father's death in October 2007, with Bommai's political career at the crossroads, he was invited to join the BJP by the party's biggest face then and Lingayat leader B S Yediyurappa. Bommai adopted Shiggaon, a constituency bordering the Dharwad region, which did not have a BJP leader, and won the seat in 2008, and in 2013 and 2018 as well.

One of the hallmarks of Bommai's time in the BJP, including two tenures as minister, was his ability to stay away from controversies while also emerging as a leader with knack for governance. He was the water resources minister between 2008-2013 and was most recently (2019-2021) minister for home, law and parliamentary affairs for Yediyurappa. "He is hardworking and has the passion to become a big political leader," says Bommai's former JD(U) colleague M P Nadagouda.

Despite tracing his roots to Hubli — where he grew up before graduating with an engineering degree from BV Bhoomaraddi college — and his father representing the region for

many years in the Assembly, Bommai has stayed away from the politics of the region since it is controlled by Union minister Pralhad Joshi and former CM Jagadish Shettar, with the RSS also being an important force.

A former Hubli journalist describes Bommai as a "shrewd, tactful politician" who is aware of his limitations within the BJP.

As home minister, Bommai toed the Centre's line on issues like the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. "He is a good listener on matters that are of interest to the BJP. If high command wants something, he is unlikely to say no," says Bommai's friend and ex-Congress MP V S Ugrappa.



When Bommai became the fourth BJP chief minister of Karnataka in July 2021, he was expected to have a tough time balancing the diverse political interests at play in the state. There were the pulls and pressures of being loyal to both his benefactor Yediyurappa — who had by then fallen out of favour in the BJP — and the dominant BJP central leadership. There was also going to be that inherent tussle between his socialist moorings and the right-wing ideology of the BJP and RSS.

Despite the tough outlook for his tenure, Bommai was expected to do well as CM. His sharp and resilient political mind was expected to carry the day for him until the 2023 polls.

However, that is coming under test as, besides his inability or reluctance to stop the di-

visive agenda of the Hindutva fringe, he is also being questioned in matters of governance.

"As home minister of Karnataka, Bommai had done well during the pandemic years. The positivity that reflected in his initial months as CM seems to have disappeared," a government official said.

A senior BJP legislator spoke of a governance paralysis. "Dozens of files pertaining to projects in the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike have not been cleared by the CMO. There has been no decision because of inter-ministerial disputes, vested interests."

Bommai's indecision is also being blamed on the fact that he leans on the national leadership before taking a call on crucial issues.

A senior official at a key educational insti-

tution in the state recently narrated their experience in getting the government to allot additional land for an expansion project. "We have been running behind them for months. An official told us that a decision will be taken if there is any kind of recommendation from top officials in Delhi," the official says.

According to sources, Bommai has in recent weeks stopped acceding to requests from Yediyurappa as well. "Even when he meets the former CM, he does not commit to anything," says the aide of a senior minister.

Bommai has also been making frequent trips to New Delhi for clearances. His visit to Delhi on April 6 and 7 for talks on Cabinet changes did not get a favourable response from the BJP leadership. Besides, Bommai was not able to meet Shah, ostensibly because the latter was caught up with Parliament.

A few hours after Bommai left Delhi, BJP leader Shettar — a Lingayat leader like Bommai and considered to be a possible challenger to the CM — posted a picture on social media of his meeting with Shah.

As CM, a leader points out, Bommai spends a lot of his time on private events. He attended many events around the wedding of his friend and Union minister Pralhad Joshi's daughter in September 2021 in Karnataka and New Delhi. His critics also point to his habit of spending evenings with a few Cabinet colleagues at a five-star hotel in Bengaluru. Bommai's inner circle mostly has new entrants to the BJP like himself — K Sudhakar, Byrathi Basavaraj and S T Somashekhar, among others.

Many point to the Bitcoin controversy of October 2021 as the period when his confidence began wavering. "He became somewhat passive then," a government official says.

The Bitcoin scam pertains to the arrest of an alleged international hacker, Srikrishna Ramesh alias Sriki, in November 2020 by the Bengaluru Police. The Opposition has alleged that many police and government officials received kickbacks in the form of Bitcoins from the hacker gang after the arrest. Bommai was home minister when the arrest occurred.

In November 2021, Bommai met the Prime Minister. Though Bommai said the PM made light of the Bitcoin issue, his visit came amid speculation that the BJP was considering a change of guard in Karnataka following the Opposition's demands for an investigation.

In December 2021, on a visit to his constituency, Bommai turned tearful as he lamented the temporary nature of all positions of power — then interpreted as a sign that he may have to make way for a new CM. "...This life is not permanent, we do not know how long we will live. In such a situation all posts of power are also not permanent," Bommai said.

Yet, what has defined Bommai's eight months as CM is his failure to speak out against right-wing Hindutva groups in the state.

Over the last few months, police officers, including K Ramarajan, a young IPS officer who dared to stand up to right-wing groups, have found themselves transferred. BJP leaders too have been at the receiving end of right-wing groups. On April 6, Sanjeev Matandoor, party MLA from Puttur region, was heckled by Bajrang Dal activists for failing to obtain release of men held for moral policing in Uppinangady.

Recently, speaking in the wake of the halal meat controversy, Bommai said, "Where it is required, we will respond. We won't (respond) when it is not required."

It seemed like a rare moment of assertion. Yet, as he has so often done in recent months, Bommai had only dodged the issue — for now.

TAKE 5
STRANGER THINGS

SMITA SHRIKANT
DHONGADE, 37,
RESIDENT, LADBOLI VILLAGE,
MAHARASHTRA



Dhongade at the site where the 'burning object' fell. Express

'Felt like an earthquake. Stars fall from sky, but it was round...'

On April 2, "burning objects" were seen falling from the sky in several parts of Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, including a metal ring of 8-10 ft diameter that was spotted by residents of Ladboli village in Chandrapur district. While some on social media said it was a meteor, astronomy experts believed it to be part of a satellite that got destroyed once it got into the Earth's atmosphere with its parts falling across different regions

VALLABH OZARKAR

1 What did you see exactly on April 2?

That night, I was cooking outside my house for Gudi Padwa (the Marathi new year) along with other members of the self-help group that I am a part of. It was the foundation day of our group as well. Around 8.15 pm, we heard a noise and saw a burning object in the sky. It fell a few metres from us. It was red and white smoke was emanating from it.

2 What was your initial reaction?

I thought they were firecrackers... But then there was a noise. We were terrified. When it fell on the ground, there was a lot of vibration. We thought it's some kind of explosive and rushed inside our homes. When nothing happened, we stepped out and saw a red ring. Some people touched it and said it was very hot. The whole village was awake that night.

3 Was any property damaged?

Fortunately, it fell in an open space. There was some damage to the house near which it landed. I think we escaped a major tragedy. But the impact of the fall was a lot, it shook our house and felt like an earthquake.

4 What do you think the ring was?

I only know that sometimes stars fall from the sky; I thought it may be something like that. But when I looked at the object, I realised it wasn't a star because it was round in shape. Some even said it was a part of an airplane. I really have no idea what it was. This has never happened before.

5 What is the situation in the village now?

The authorities have taken our statements, and a lot of people are visiting our village now. We are all very scared, we keep looking at the sky because we have heard that more such objects have been found in the area.

NUMBER PLATE

97.32 MILLION
HECTARES

Area under food grains in India during 1950-51, which increased to 127.59 million hectares in 2019-20, as per Agricultural Statistics at a Glance 2020

50.82 million
tonnes

The total production of food grains in the country during 1950-51, which increased to 296.65 million tonnes during 2019-20.

522 kg

The yield of food grains in the country in 1950-51, which increased to 2,325 kg in 2019-20

18.10 %

The proportion of area under irrigation in the country during 1950-51, which increased to 52.16 per cent in 2016-17

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

'Clearly these are different times. How long do we protest?'

After a food cart was vandalised for allegedly selling non-veg dishes during Navratri — which coincides with Ramzan this year — apprehensive vendors in this Western UP town have abandoned biryani for dal-roti, even if it means loss of business

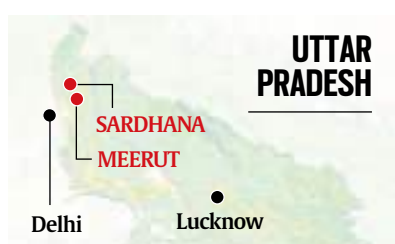
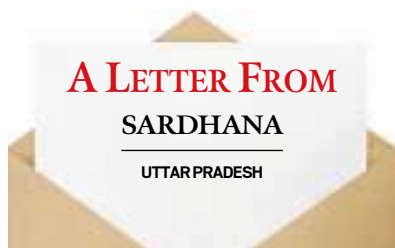
AMIL BHATNAGAR

TASNEEM AHMAD'S non-vegetarian food outlet near the bus stand on Meerut Road in Uttar Pradesh's Sardhana had been doing brisk business for many years, serving *nihari*, *korma* and *biryani*, among other specialties. However, since April 2, the day the Navratri festival began, the 43-year-old has been selling only *dal-roti* to "prevent being targeted".

"Things have changed so rapidly. Earlier there would be oral instructions to not sell non-vegetarian dishes, but it wasn't set in stone. We would still have non-veg items. But now they are going around beating up people. It is scary and that's why I am selling vegetarian food. Most of us are doing the same since the politician's aides can come for anyone," he says.

Ahmad is referring to the Sangeet Som Sena, the outfit formed by the supporters of former BJP MLA Sangeet Som, who had earlier called for a ban on the sale of meat and non-vegetarian food in Sardhana during the Navratri festival that began on Saturday. Later, the Sardhana police had booked the outfit's UP chief Sachin Khatik, and six others for trying to disturb communal peace after they allegedly vandalised a food cart, claiming that its vendor was selling mutton biryani.

But despite the police action, fear prevails among restaurant owners such as Ahmad. While the area around the 43-year-old's eatery is lined with about 40 food stalls, most



of them are either shut or are not selling meat dishes, hitting their businesses hard.

Most food stall owners in Sardhana complain about "severe losses" in the past two years because of the Covid waves, "and now this unofficial meat ban is costing us further".

Ahmad, who made between Rs 4,000-5,000 from sales earlier, says he now earns "far less" selling *dal-roti*.

During Ramzan, which started on the



One of the food carts. "Sale of meat will hurt sentiments," says Som Sena. Amil Bhatnagar

same day as Navratri this time, many of the stalls would deliver food parcels to homes, but that service has stopped this year.

Some locals claim that even butchers are now refusing to supply meat to their homes.

"This is perhaps the first time in my life that I am keeping roza without eating non-veg food. Everyone is afraid to sell meat," says Shahid Anzar, 70, a resident.

On a Wednesday afternoon, many cus-

tomers were seen flanking biryani stalls in the area to get food packed for iftari, but were told that non-veg items would be available post-Navratri.

"It is a crucial time for us, we would get bulk orders during Ramzan. Now, I have to show customers my vessel to convince them that I only have vegetarian items... It is to ensure that we are not approached by a certain group of people. We hope this is resolved

soon," says a biryani-seller whose stall is next to the town's police booth.

The vendors say they don't want their food carts to be attacked like the Saturday incident. Despite the action by the police, they say, members of the Som Sena continue to carry out vigils in the area to check if non-vegetarian food is being sold.

"We are ready to compromise for the sake of peace. These things have never taken this form but clearly these are different times. There is only so much we can protest," says Altaf, a biryani-seller, turning away a customer.

While there is no written order banning the sale of meat and non-vegetarian dishes, Laxman Verma, SHO Sardhana Police Station had confirmed that there was an "oral communication that meat should not be sold during Navratri". "For general information purposes, the message was communicated through oral instructions," he had said.

The Som Sena's Khatik says "we will continue to raise the issue". "Sale of meat in the area will hurt sentiments. We have communicated this to the police and it is up to them now to ensure peace in the area."

Meanwhile, Hindu residents of the town have remained largely indifferent to the controversy, with some insisting that "we do not want peace in the area to be disturbed". "It is an unsaid rule that meat should not be sold during this period and an issue around it should not be created. It is a matter of a few days and if it is complied with, there will be no problems," says Satish Singh, a resident.



Across
THE AISLE



PCHIDAMBARAM

Website: pchidambaram.in
Twitter @Pchidambaram_IN

The Home Minister verbally assured the Rajya Sabha that the techniques prohibited in *Selvi* will not be employed, but refused to incorporate the assurance in the Bill... The government resorted to the usual binary arguments: If prisoners have human rights, so do victims. The Bill is not about victims but about arrestees, detenues and prisoners

Dagger in the heart of liberty

IN *SELVI* vs *State of Karnataka* (a judgement of three judges on May 5, 2010), the Supreme Court considered the Constitutional validity of three tests conducted against the will of a person: **Narcoanalysis, polygraph test and Brain Electrical Activation Profile (BEAP).**

The Court came to the following conclusions:

1. “Hence our conclusion is that the results obtained through the involuntary administration of either of the impugned tests come within the scope of ‘testimonial compulsion’, thereby attracting the protective shield of Article 20(3).”

2. “Therefore, it is our considered opinion that subjecting a person to the impugned techniques in an involuntary manner violates the prescribed bounds of privacy.”

3. “In light of these conclusions, we hold that no individual should be subjected to any of the techniques in question, whether in the context of investigation in criminal cases or otherwise.”

In *K S Puttaswamy vs Union of India* (a judgement of a 9-judge Bench), the Supreme Court held:

“An invasion of life or personal liberty must meet the threefold requirement of (i) legality, which postulates the existence of law; (ii) need, defined in terms of a legitimate State aim; and (iii) proportionality, which ensures a rational nexus between the objects and the means adopted to achieve them.”

LIBERTY & PRIVACY

In delivering the historic judge-

ments, the Court was performing its paramount duty of being the ‘sentinel on the qui vive’.

The judgements in *Selvi* and *K S Puttaswamy* are still good law. Not, it appears, for the present government of India. If it had realised that the judgements were binding on the government, based on non-derogable constitutional rights (Articles 20 and 21), the government would not have introduced and passed the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022. The Bill is a brazen attempt to overreach the Supreme Court and to deny the fundamental rights to **liberty** and **privacy**, two of the most precious rights in a democracy.

The purpose of the Bill was to expand the ambit of persons covered under the law; use of modern techniques for taking body ‘measurements’; and provide legal sanction thereto. The purpose is unexceptionable, the mischief lies in the provisions. There are many legal infirmities in the Bill, but let me focus on four sections which violate the two precious rights of liberty and privacy.

FOUR QUESTIONABLE SECTIONS

S2: There is a definition of ‘measurements’. It includes biological samples and their analysis, behavioural attributes or such other examination/tests (referred to in Ss. 53, 53A and 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure). There are no exclusions.

Question: Does ‘measurements’ include narcoanalysis, polygraph test, BEAP and psychiatric examination?

S.3: Measurements can be taken from ‘any person’ that includes a person convicted of an offence punishable under *any* law, a person ordered to give security for keeping the peace, a person arrested under *any* law and a person detained under *any* preventive detention law. It is shocking that every law is covered and it is more shocking that an arrestee and detenu are clubbed with a convicted person. The section undoubtedly includes any protester who may attempt to cross a police barrier where S. 144, CrPC has been promulgated! **Questions:** Is there any MP, MLA, political worker, trade unionist, student leader, social activist or progressive writer or poet who has never been arrested and who can claim that he will never be arrested? (On the day I joined the Youth Congress I was arrested, along with others, for demonstrating near the statue of Minto in Chennai!).

S.4: The measurements will be stored, preserved for 75 years and can be shared with any ‘law enforcement agency’. Mark the words, it is not an agency investigating a crime. An authority such as a panchayat or municipal officer, a health inspector, a traffic constable, a tax collector and numerous others enforce some law or other — and they will be entitled to demand and be given the measurements. **Question:** In the absence of a definition, who are the law enforcement agencies mentioned in the section?

S.5 read with S.2: A person is obliged to give his measurements. A magistrate can direct a person to give his measurements and the person shall obey the order. If he refused, a police officer (definition: head constable and above) is empowered to take the measurements and, if the person resisted, he will be punished under S. 186, Indian Penal Code. **Question:** Will measurements be taken against will and without the consent of the person concerned?

NON-DEROGABLE RIGHT

The Home Minister verbally assured the Rajya Sabha that the techniques prohibited in *Selvi* will not be employed, but refused to incorporate the assurance in the Bill. The other three questions remained unanswered. The government resorted to the usual binary arguments: If prisoners have human rights, so do victims. The Bill is not about victims but about arrestees, detenues and prisoners. The other argument was, look at our low conviction rates. Of course, look at them, but the low rate is because of negligent investigating officers, poor quality prosecutors, shoddy record-keeping and overburdened judges. These constraints will not go away by violating the human rights of arrestees, detenues and prisoners.

Liberty is a non-derogable human right. Erosion of a human right is the starting point of its extinguishment. The Bill is a dagger plunged into the heart of Liberty.

Fifth
COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

Twitter @tavleen_singh



Fanatics become fashionable

FANATICS BORE me. I have never met one I could describe as remarkable, intelligent, or attractive. So, it has begun to worry me that in ‘new’ India throngs of fanatics seem to be popping up everywhere. Last week alone we had more sightings of fanatics than can be listed here, but let me give you a short list. One fanatic in Delhi decided that meat shops must remain closed during Navratri out of respect for Hindu religious sentiments. The man who said this was a municipal official, and he was able to shut down meat shops in his limited jurisdiction. This caused huge disruption and loss of business but instead of being reprimanded firmly by his BJP bosses, he was applauded by an MP from his party who said that meat shops should close across India during Navratri.

My second fanatic sighting happened in a video that appeared on social media of a Mahant in Sitapur declaring that he planned to go into Muslim homes and bring out their women so he could personally rape them in public. This monstrous creature made his announcement outside a mosque and was immediately surrounded by a mob that cheered him with cries of ‘Jai Shri Ram’. There were policemen present. They made no effort to arrest this Hindu priest.

My third fanatic sighting was in a video that came from Gujarat of an event organised by the Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad where the aide of an illustrious member of the Sangh Parivar used very coarse language to describe Muslim men. He then proceeded to declare that Muslim women were now in search of Hindu men so that they could produce sons like Luv and Kush. My distaste for fanatics increases when extreme religiosity robs them of their boringness and turns them into raving and ranting lunatics.

There was a time in India when fanatics and crazy religiosity were rare. I remember returning to the motherland from reporting trips to Pakistan and feeling an overwhelming sense of relief. In the Islamist Republic next door, religiosity and fanaticism are things you notice from the moment you land at the airport. Bottles of liquor, in long ago days when I could bring them for friends, often got seized at the airport when they were revealed by the x-ray machines.

It was hard to interview almost anyone without encountering religiosity. Sometimes I encountered it from total strangers. I remember being told by women walking by me in a Lahore street to dress more appropriately. I wore *salwar-kameez* but had forgotten that long sleeves were religiously ordained. On another occasion I remember having words with a mullah who ordered me to cover my head. You do not need to be an alcoholic or heavy drinker to observe the absence of bars in Pakistan, which was a complete contrast to the old India. But, in the ‘new’ India, the Chief Minister of Bihar recently declared that people who drank liquor should not be called Indians.

Fanaticism and religiosity go together, so it is difficult to say whether it has been the extreme religiosity of the past few years that has created this deluge of fanatics, or something else. Perhaps, they always existed in dark corners somewhere and have been emboldened to come out of the shadows because fanaticism has become fashionable in the ‘new’ India? Whatever the reason, it is time for sane Indians to speak out against fanaticism and religiosity, because if there is something that is truly against India’s ‘national interest’, it is these two things. Incidentally, it is also against the fundamental principles of the Sanatan Dharma.

The thing that always made Indic religions superior to the Semitic religions was that none of our religions include such fanatical ideas as apostasy and blasphemy. Is it possible, though, for us to still say proudly that our religions are superior to the Semitic ones? As a Sikh I have been horrified by those incidents of people being beaten to death in gurdwaras on charges of sacrilege. Guru Nanak would have been appalled. Legend has it that he went to Mecca and fell asleep with his feet pointed in the direction of the Kaaba. When he was told off by a mullah, he is believed to have asked in which direction did God not exist so he could point his feet that way.

These are the fundamental traditions and ideas on which India’s religions have been founded. Of course, we had our share of fanatics but usually these were people we treated with contempt and usually they remained hidden away in their own gloomy corners. They did not show up at public events to declare their intentions to defile women. They were never in a position to hand out certificates of good conduct to vegetarians and teetotalers. And it was because of this that religiosity and fanaticism were never India’s defining traits. It is deeply disturbing that these traits have come to loom so large because of political patronage of fanaticism.

What is as worrying is that those who have become more fanatical in recent times justify their idiocy on the grounds that it is a valid and appropriate reaction to secularism. The secularism as practised by the Congress party was flawed, but the answer cannot be extreme religiosity. All that this idea of religion does is to breed fanatics, and fanaticism turns the best people into bores.

inside
TRACK

COOMI KAPOOR



VIRTUAL MEETS

THE BJP’S highest decision-making body is the parliamentary board, responsible for broad policy in Parliament and state legislatures. Surprisingly, in the elite 11-member panel there are four vacancies. No appointments were made to fill vacancies due to deaths of Arun Jaitley and Sushma Swaraj, elevation of Venkaiah Naidu as vice-president and retirement of Thaaarchand Gehlot as leader of the Rajya Sabha. The seven remaining members are Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, JP Nadda, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Shivraj Singh Chouhan and B L Santhosh. In fact, after Covid, formal physical meetings are rare. Instead, the general practice is for an exchange of ideas only among the big three, Modi, Shah and Nadda. And the decision is communicated over the phone to other members. Although most members get little say in the running of the party, nevertheless a position on the board is much coveted. Followers of Yogi Adityanath have long speculated that he will soon join the prestigious body, but the UP CM, despite his spectacular victory, is still waiting.

FLAGGING CONCERN

The rules of the Archeological Survey of India are very rigid. No structure is permitted within 100 metres of the outer boundaries of its monuments. So when the entrance roundabout at Nizamuddin East was dug up to erect a 115-feet-high flagpole next to the 16th century Khan-i-Khanan tomb, the PWDD was sent a notice to desist. They, however, refused to fall in line, even after a complaint was filed with the police. Apart from obstructing the view of the historic monument, the disproportionate flag post is an eyesore in the residential colony, particularly as it towers over a striking art installation by Anjolie Ela Menon. The ungainly flagpole is, however, unlikely to be removed since the Delhi CM wants to compete with the BJP in a wasteful xenophobic campaign. The Capital has budgeted Rs 104 crore for its *deshbhakti* programme which calls for putting up 500 flagpoles to counter the BJP’s *rastravaadi* campaign.

LOSING ENTHUSIASM



SANDIP ROY

GAUTAM NAVLAKHA, the veteran human rights activist accused in the Elgaar Parishad case, had requested a copy of *The World of Jeeves and Wooster*. It was initially denied as a “security risk” by Talaja Jail authorities, a decision the Bombay HC termed “comical”.

What’s truly comical is that it’s Wodehouse. Even Indian fairy tales like *Thakurmar Jhuli* pack more subversion in them than the fading world of unflappable British valets, battle-axe aunts, and prize pigs. Even more ironic is that Wodehouse liked to claim he was apolitical. He was interned in a prison camp because he hap-

pened to be living in France when Germans invaded. When the Nazis released him, they asked him to broadcast some amusing stories about prison life. Wodehouse thought that was a plum idea and was baffled why the English were not amused.

Wodehouse remains a jolly good fellow even if the world he depicted feels archaic. Some might be surprised that Navlakha even wanted to read him in 2022. But as writer Evelyn Waugh presciently told the BBC in 1961, Wodehouse’s “idyllic world can never stale” because he continues to “re-lease future generations from captivity that may be more irksome than our own”. Little did Waugh realise, in Navlakha’s case that captivity would be literal not metaphorical.

His enduring appeal to Indians can feel like a mysterious colonial hangover. Shashi Tharoor, who founded the PG Wodehouse Society at St. Stephen’s College and has read

history
HEADLINE

VIVEK KATJU



IN HIS ruminations on India’s engagement with the world, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar states, “India must reach out in as many directions as possible and maximise its gains. This is not just about greater ambition; it is also about not living in yesterday.” (p.42, *The India Way*). Today, as he advises PM Modi in crafting policy to protect India’s interests in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Jaishankar would feel himself surrounded by the echoes of the past six-and-a-half decades. Indian positions and statements on Russia’s predecessor state, the Soviet Union, and its armed interventions — euphemisms for invasions — in Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), Afghanistan (1979) are largely similar to its current, albeit evolving, stand on Russia’s action. On the other hand, India’s responses to the Israeli-British-French invasion of Egypt (1956), the long years of the US’s armed involvement in Vietnam and its Iraq war (2003) followed a different trajectory.

The unfolding of India’s stand on the Russian invasion of Ukraine is best illustrated by its statements at the UNSC. While it has refrained from any direct criticism of Russia and abstained from voting in any resolutions against it, India has dropped any reference to security concerns of states. It now focuses on the need to abide by the UN Charter, respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and to resolve issues through dialogue and negotiations.

Russia is happy with India’s abstentions, for that is important for perceptions, but it would have noted the shift in India’s position. Jaishankar said in Parliament on April 6: “If India has chosen a side, it is the side of peace and it is for an immediate end to violence.” This is of course ‘motherhood and apple pie’, but Jaishankar would be aware that it was Jawaharlal Nehru who was called *shantidoot*, the messenger of peace. The past creeps in, if subconsciously!

India’s 1956 predicament lay inter alia in deciding its approaches to two separate crises. One sprang from the British and French reaction to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s decision in July 1956 to nationalise the Suez Canal. Till then, the canal was controlled by an Anglo-French company. After a period of desultory talks, both countries, along with Israel, decided to launch a war against Egypt in October. India was outraged by this action of the colonial powers. Nehru condemned the ac-

In India’s balancing act, echoes from the past



Foreign Ministers Sergey Lavrov and S Jaishankar during Lavrov’s India visit. File

tion and remained in contact with the US, which insisted that its allies — Britain, France and Israel — withdraw their forces. They did so but not before the UN General Assembly too sought the same and the US threatened Britain with destabilising its currency.

The Hungarian crisis came to a boil at the same time as Egypt was being invaded. A strong section of the Hungarian political class supported by students and others sought to break away from Soviet domination. It wanted to chart its own socialist path and withdrew from the Warsaw pact. The situation was confused in what became a general uprising. Ultimately, the Soviet Union invaded Hungary and the anti-Soviet forces were brutally suppressed. Unlike his position on Egypt, Nehru initially did not openly speak against the Soviets. The Indian representative abstained in a UNGA motion which was critical of Soviets. Public opinion in India was unhappy with Soviet action and criticised Nehru, who belatedly and publicly acknowledged Hungary’s desire for autonomy despite Soviet threats of diluting their support on the J&K issue which then was an active matter in the UNSC.

Twelve years later, beginning January 1968, Czechoslovakia witnessed a period of socialist liberalisation under a reformist leader. The Soviet Union with other Warsaw Pact nations finally decided that they could not allow this deviation from the accepted Soviet model. Hence, in August 1968, their armies invaded Czechoslovakia. Resistance was limited and the country’s political elite came to heel. The Soviet-led action was criticised in India. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was sympathetic to the plight of Czechs but

refused to be swayed by emotion. India abstained from voting on a resolution at the UNSC seeking to condemn the Soviet Union.

In 1979, Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Gandhi returned to power a few days after that. India supported the Soviets at the UNGA. It blamed outside powers for interfering in Afghan affairs, accepted that Soviet forces had entered at Afghan request and India had been assured that they would leave whenever Afghans wanted them to. The Soviet occupation went on for a decade. Through this period, India was unhappy with the Soviet presence but it never really publicly embarrassed it, though privately it advised them to leave Afghanistan.

The Vietnam war was one of the defining struggles of Cold War, which India viewed in anti-colonial and ideological terms. Its sympathies lay with the North, especially after US combat troops arrived in the South in 1965. US armed action, often brutal, using weapons such as napalm bombs, outraged public opinion in India and the government did not restrain it, nor did it cushion its antipathy towards US actions. The 2003 US invasion of Iraq was based on false premises. The government expressed anguish and Parliament deplored it. India also refused a US request to send peace-keeping forces to the country. These were wise decisions and did not impact the growth of India-US ties.

Despite this government’s full antipathy for Nehru and only a little less for his daughter, in responding to the current Ukraine situation, it is following the matrix set by them.

The writer is a former diplomat

Wodehouse runs into Heavy Weather

all 95 of his books, has written about how shocked he was when at a panel in England, the young moderator asked: “So how do you pronounce it — Wood-house or Wodehouse?” But in India he has never gone out of fashion. However it’s not just nostalgia for the times of *sahibs* and *memsahibs*. Wodehouse’s appeal is that he appears untainted by colonial condescension, nor affected by post-colonial guilt. He is a guiltless pleasure. His books still serve as a masterclass in wordplay, effortless marrying the hifalutin with the silly as he tells us someone looks careworn “like a Borgias who suddenly remembered that he has forgotten to shove cyanide in the consommé, and the dinner gong is due any moment”.

That soufflé silliness that permeates Wodehouse has prevented him from being taken seriously by scholars. Inadvertently, the Maharashtra jail authorities might have

given him a gravitas that eluded him in life. But it’s also true that the mischievous wit of Wodehouse feels out-of-sync in a country where stand-up comics can be picked up by the police for jokes they might crack. As comedian Anuvab Pal once said, in India, “the first question in a comedy panel is ‘what will you get in trouble for?’”. So it’s hardly surprising that a book by a humorist raised red flags with prison authorities.

Yet this flap about Wodehouse should not distract us from the real issue at hand. Navlakha, a man in his seventies, was also denied his spectacles and a chair for a bad back. Father Stan Swamy, a Parkinson’s patient, had to fight for a straw and sipper because he could not hold a glass. Lawyer Sudha Bharadwaj had to get a special NIA court order to be allowed five books a month. All of them, guilty or innocent, are entitled to their day in court. Until then, the

larger issue is their treatment under incarceration and that, unlike Wodehouse, is no laughing matter.

In 1921, Gandhi’s follower Madeleine Slade aka Mira Behn was incarcerated in Bombay’s Arthur Road Jail. As recounted by Ramachandra Guha in *Rebels Against the Raj*, she wrote that the sum total of treatment of women prisoners in British jails is “obviously designed to try and crush our spirit”.

In light of that, this exchange between Wooster and Jeeves is more grim than droll.

‘Good evening, Jeeves.’
‘Good morning, sir.’
‘This surprised me. Is it morning?’
‘Yes, sir.’
‘Are you sure? It seems very dark outside.’

The writer is a novelist and the author of Don’t Let Him Know

Car In, Cube Out

The Maruti Suzuki-Toyota Tsusho Group's new MSTI plant in Noida is a step in the direction of a government-led initiative to institute a circular economy in auto sector. While the economics of the process is still evolving, tax incentives are a draw

PRANAV MUKUL
& ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

THE OPERATOR of the baler, a hydraulic press that crushes and shapes the body frame of a car into a metallic cube, says a small prayer as he switches on the machine. In less than a minute, the baler crushes the frame and converts the body shell into a crumpled metal cube — marking the final stage in the process of dismantling end-of-life vehicles (ELVs) at Maruti Suzuki and Toyota Tsusho Group's new MSTI plant in Noida, on the outskirts of Delhi.

The crushed frame is then sent to steel mills, which process it in a smelter to eventually extract the steel and turn it into billets for use as construction inputs. But steel is not the only material that comes out of a scrapped car. Other major components include aluminium and copper, in addition to parts such as batteries and electronic systems that the company sells to recyclers as is.

The plant is a step in the direction of a government-led initiative to institute a circular economy in the auto sector, primarily with the aim of moving the end-of-life disposal of cars from a largely unorganised set-up to the organised side to ensure environment-friendly dismantling of these ELVs. The Noida-Greater Noida belt is emerging as a hub, with the 10,993-sq m Maruti Suzuki-Toyota Tsusho facility that has a capacity to scrap and recycle over 24,000 ELVs annually falling within 10 km of MMRLPL, a joint venture between Mahindra and state-owned MSTC Limited, which set up one of India's first auto-shredded plant operating out of Greater Noida in a campus spread across five acres.

Under the government policy, automated testing stations and scrapping facilities such as the MSTI and MMRLPL are to be set up in phases, with plans to set up 50-70 facilities for scrapping vehicles in the next 4-5 years. The policy proposes a number of incentives for vehicle scrapping including a 5 per cent rebate on new vehicle purchase, an up to 25 per cent discount on road tax and a waiver of vehicle registration fee.

Effective April 1, the government has notified the concession on motor vehicle tax for the vehicle registered against submission of "certificate of deposit".



Bodyframes of two Maruti Suzuki cars (right) after being stripped off their parts and components sitting adjacent to the hydraulic baler. On the left, three metallic cubes of car frames after being compressed in the baler. *Pranav Mukul*

While the remaining incentives are yet to be announced, they are expected to be among the key drivers initially leading owners of ELVs to organised scrapping units instead of simply discarding the cars by parking them on the streets of a city or taking them to unorganised vehicle scrapers — who typically have better economics on the process than their formalised counterparts.

From a sentimental point of view, a car being torn down and then crushed into a cube of metal is generally perceived as a painful visual experience for owners.

But the first car that rolled into the MSTI facility — a red WagonR — was driven in by Atul Jain, a Noida-based legal professional, quite enthusiastically, replete with dhool players to add to the atmosphere. Stories of both Jain and the MSTI baler operator are proofs that Indians attach an emotional value to their vehicles, particularly those they owned for more than a decade.

The incentives in the form of tax waivers is a big draw, but some of this still is in the process of being worked out in practical terms.

THE PROCESS

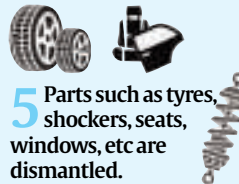


1 End-of-life vehicle is procured from dealerships and individuals.

2 Vehicle is transferred to MSTI campus.

3 Documentation & inspection of vehicle is conducted.

4 Pre-treatment and depollution (oils, airbags, lithium ion batteries, lead acid batteries) ensuring zero discharge.



5 Parts such as tyres, shockers, seats, windows, etc are dismantled.

6 Scrap metal is processed and segregated.

7 ELV shell is compressed into a bale.



8 Steel bales are sold to steel mills and smelters.

There are four main processes:

Vehicle collection: These end-of-life vehicles are either collected from the customer's house and brought to the scrapping facility in Noida, like Jain's WagonR, or sourced through dealers.

Depollution: After the re-

moval of battery, engine oil, transmission oil, brake oil, coolant are drained with zero waste; freon AC gas is recovered from the vehicle without any discharge to the atmosphere. That's where the scrapping facilities in the organised sector are markedly different

from the ones operating in the unorganised sector, where much of these oils and gases are largely released into the open.

Dismantling: All parts except body shell are progressively removed: the engine, transmission, and all body parts, panels, plastic components, glasses suspension parts, muffler etc. The chassis number is cut and preserved as per government guidelines.

Extraction of recycled materials: Materials are segregated into ferrous, non-ferrous, plastic and disposed to authorised recyclers. The body frame, once crushed by the baler, is then dispatched to steel mills.

The economics of the process is still evolving, and would need policy support to bridge the pricing advantage that the unorganised segment enjoys. While the price varies between Rs 25,000 to Rs 80,000 per vehicle that MSTI pays to owners, the unorganised sector tends to pay more. But the catch is the incentive on the new vehicle, which, according to MSTI managing director Masaru Akaishi, is a bigger draw for customers. Apart from owners get-

EXPLAINED Hurdles remain

AMONG THE biggest challenges that formalised vehicle scrapping units face is the competition from their informal counterparts, who derive better economics by deploying a less meticulous process. For formal units to be sustainable in the long-run, MSTI officials said, a minimum scale of operation will be necessary. And for more people to bring their vehicles to these units, several different stakeholders — including the Centre, state governments and auto manufacturers — will have to come to an agreement over the incentives being provided. Recycling of end-of-life vehicles also promises a greater contribution to the circular economy, and potential recycling of high value goods like semiconductors raw materials in the future.

MARKET WATCH

OIL SEES SECOND WEEKLY FALL

Houston: Oil prices notched their second straight weekly decline after countries announced plans to release crude from their strategic stocks. For the week, Brent dropped 1.5% to \$102.78 a barrel, while US WTI slid 1% to \$98.26. **REUTERS**

RBI: Households expect inflation to cross 10%; consumer confidence moves up

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 9

INFLATION EXPECTATIONS of households across various cities for three months and one year ahead have crossed the 10-per cent level, showed a survey by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

However, consumer confidence for the current period continued on its recovery path, witnessed since mid-2021, though the assessment compared to a year ago remained in negative zone, another RBI survey said.

"Households' median inflation perceptions for the current period remained unchanged at 9.7 per cent in the latest survey round, while the expectations for both three months and one year ahead rose by 10 basis points each to 10.7% and 10.8%, respectively, as compared to January 2022 round. It was based on responses from 6,033 urban households

The inflation survey was conducted during March 2-11, 2022 in 19 major cities and the results are based on responses from 6,033 urban households, the survey further said.

On Friday, while unveiling the bi-monthly monetary policy, the Reserve Bank said it has hiked its inflation forecast from 4.5 per cent projected earlier to 5.7 per cent — below the upper band of 6 per cent of the RBI's target — in 2022-23 and slashed the growth rate from 7.8 per cent to 7.2 per cent.

According to the RBI survey, for a majority of population and age groups, uncertainty in inflation expectations increased for both three months and one year horizons, as compared to the previous survey round.

Three months ahead expectations for overall prices and inflation were generally aligned to those for food and non-food products, while one year ahead expectations were more aligned to those for non-food products and services, the RBI survey said.

According to the central bank's Consumer Confidence Survey (CCS), consumer confidence for the current period continued on its recovery path.

The current situation index (CSI) improved further in March 2022, on the back of improved sentiments on general economic situation, employment and

SURVEY RESULTS

■ As per the March 2-11 round of the Reserve Bank of India's Inflation Expectations Survey of Households, median expectations for both three months and one year ahead rose by 10 basis points each to 10.7% and 10.8%, respectively, as compared to January 2022 round. It was based on responses from 6,033 urban households

■ As per the central bank's Consumer Confidence Survey, conducted among 5,984 households, consumer confidence for the March 2022 period continued on its recovery path

household income, from 64.4 to 71.7, the survey said.

One year ahead outlook, as measured by the future expectations index (FEI), also continued on its recovery path which was interrupted by a dip in the January 2022 round at the peak of Omicron variant impact of Covid-19. The future index also rose from 103.3 from 115.2, the RBI survey said.

Households' opinion about current and future spending remained in positive territory and was bolstered by a rise in both essential and discretionary spending, it said. The CCS was conducted among 5,984 households across 19 cities.

Real gross domestic product (GDP) growth projection for 2021-22 has been revised down by 40 basis points (bps) from the last survey round to 8.8 per cent, the RBI's Survey of Professional Forecasters on Macroeconomic Indicators said. It is expected to grow by 7.5 per cent in 2022-23.

Panellists have placed GDP growth forecasts in the range of 8.4-9.8 per cent for 2021-22 and the range for 2022-23 is wider at 5.4-8.2 per cent. Forecasters have assigned highest probability to real GDP growth lying between 8.5-8.9 per cent in 2021-22. For 2022-23, highest probability has been assigned to two neighbouring ranges: 7.0-7.4 per cent and 7.5-7.9 per cent.

BRIEFLY

Agriexports

New Delhi: Agricultural exports rose about 20% in FY22 to \$50.21 billion despite logistical challenges posed by Covid-19, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said. Exports of rice were the top forex earner at \$9.65 billion among agri commodities in 2021-22, growing 9.35% from the previous year. **PTI**

Russia, BRICS

Moscow: Russia, hit by Western sanctions, has called on the BRICS group of emerging economies to extend the use of national currencies and integrate payment systems, the Finance Ministry said on Saturday. On Friday, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov told a ministerial meeting with BRICS the global economic situation had worsened substantially due to the sanctions.

VW disclosures

Berlin: Volkswagen has rejected a shareholder proposal for it to explain how its lobbying activities align with its climate goals — something two of the carmaker's leading competitors have already promised to do, one of the investors said.

Nio output

Shanghai: Chinese electric vehicle maker Nio said it has suspended production after China's measures to contain the recent surge of Covid-19 cases disrupted operations at its suppliers. **REUTERS**

SPREAD OVER 27 DISTRICTS IN FIVE STATES

City gas licences: 21 bids received for 5 areas

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

SEVEN COMPANIES have submitted 21 bids for licence to retail supply of CNG for automobiles and piped cooking gas for households in five areas in states including Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) said.

As part of the 11A city gas distribution (CGD) bid round, the oil regulator had offered five geographical areas (GAs) spread over 27 districts in five states.

Bids for the five GAs were received on April 6, PNGRB said in

BIDDERS NOT NAMED

■ Bids for the five GAs were received on April 6, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) said in a statement. However, it did not name the bidders

■ As part of the 11A city gas distribution (CGD) bid round, the oil regulator had offered five geographical areas (GAs) spread over 27 districts in five states

a statement. However, it did not name the bidders. "21 bids have been received from 7 bidders with no single bid in any GA."

A sixth GA of Yanam in Puducherry has been added to the bid round and bids for this area are due on May 10, it added.

In Uttar Pradesh, the five GAs of Lakhimpur Kheri, Sitapur, Siddharth Nagar and Maharajganj districts have been rolled into one GA for the 11A bid round.

Banka in Bihar, and Dumka, Godda and Sahibganj districts of Jharkhand have been combined

into another GA. In West Bengal, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Malda and Dakshin Dinajpur districts form third of the five GAs.

From Chhattisgarh, Koriya, Surajpur, Balarampur and Surguja districts have been clubbed into one GA, while Kondagaon, Bastar, Sukma, Narayanpur, Bijapur and Dantewada districts form part of the final GA. "Upon finalization of bids under this bidding round, approximately 88 per cent of the country's area would be authorized for development of CGD Network to provide access to natural gas to approximately 98 per cent of the country's population," the PNGRB said. **WITHTPTI**

SAYS 'ELECTION RESULT TAINTED', LISTS 25 OBJECTIONS

Amazon seeks to overturn NY union win

HALELUYA HADERO
NEW YORK, APRIL 9

AMAZON IS seeking to overturn the historic union victory at one of its New York City warehouses, arguing in a legal filing Friday that union organizers and the National Labor Relations Board acted in a way that tainted the results. It now wants to redo the election.

The e-commerce giant listed 25 objections in the filing obtained by *The Associated Press*, accusing organizers with the nascent Amazon Labor Union of intimidating workers to vote for the union, a claim an attorney representing the union called "patently absurd." "The employ-



Amazon's JFK8 distribution centre in Staten Island, New York, US. *Reuters file*

ees have spoken," Eric Milner, the attorney, said Thursday after Amazon's initial planned objections were made public in another legal filing.

"Amazon is choosing to ignore that, and instead engage in stalling tactics to avoid the inevitable — coming to the bargain-

ing table and negotiating for a contract" on behalf of the workers, he said. Warehouse workers in Staten Island cast 2,654 votes, or about 55 per cent, in favor of a union, giving the fledgling group enough support to pull off a win last Friday.

In one objection, Amazon said organizers "intentionally created hostile confrontations in front of eligible voters," by interrupting the mandatory meetings the company held to persuade its employees to reject the union drive. In a filing released earlier this month, the company disclosed it spent about \$4.2 million last year on labor consultants.

In another objection, Amazon targeted organizers' distribution of cannabis to workers, saying the

labor board "cannot condone such a practice as a legitimate method of obtaining support for a labor organization."

New York legalized the recreational use of marijuana last year for those over 21.

Milner said Amazon is grasping at straws. Distributing cannabis "is no different than distributing free t-shirts and it certainly did not act to interfere with the election," he said.

Amazon also accused organizers of improperly polling workers. It had first signalled it planned to challenge the election results because of a lawsuit the NLRB filed in March, in which the board sought to force Amazon to reinstate a fired employee who was involved in the union drive. **AP**

POINT OF VIEW

Why We Like What We Like

The work of architect-theorist Christopher Alexander, who passed on last month, has been a touchstone for design thinking, in both India and abroad

BOOKS

- Review of Saeed Naqvi's *The Muslim Vanishes*
- Review of Makarand R Paranjape's *JNU: Nationalism & India's Uncivil War*
- Review of Muzaffarnagar Diaries

A LIFE IN MUSIC

From a boy who ran away from home to become Hindustani classical music's gold standard, Pt Bhimsen Joshi, who would have turned 100 this year, had an extraordinary journey

Suanshu Khurana

SOMETIME IN the early '60s, at a musical *baithak* in Calcutta's Dixon Lane, in Pandit Jnan Prakash Ghosh's living room, a bright and upcoming musician, Bhimsen Joshi, then in his early 40s, took his audience by surprise with his breath control during *taans*, immaculate hold over ragas, and near-breathless iterations of phrases. All this while his grip remained strong on the distinct imprint of the Kirana *gharana*, known for its impassioned renditions in the higher octaves. And yet, his was a different style, with shades from other *gharanas* infused as well. It was brilliant and yet unheard of until then.

Sitting among his audience, engrossed in Joshi's music and giving his *daad* (appreciation) in chaste Urdu at regular intervals, was the ageing Bengali actor-singer Pahari Sanyal.

Sanyal was taken aback when, at the end of the performance, Joshi touched his feet, and, with a toothy smile, said: "I don't think you've recognised me, *saheb*. I'm Joshi. I used to work in your house."

A stunned Sanyal was immediately

transported 30 years ago, to his house on Raja Basant Roy Road, when he was at the peak of his career. A 12-year-old boy from Gadag in Karnataka's Dharwad, whom he called "Joshi", had been employed as a domestic worker at his home. Eager to learn music, he would sit in at Sanyal's song rehearsals in the evenings.

Later that day, after the *baithak*, once Joshi left, Sanyal turned to his friend Kumar Prasad Mukherji, commercial director of Coal India Limited and son of the well-known sociologist and economist DP Mukherji, and said, "Good lord! I can't believe it is the same boy... He had a voice like a buffalo calf with a cold. I told him he had no future as a singer but I might be able to find him a petty job in the New Theatres Studio... he suddenly disappeared one day. Good heavens! How can this man be the same Bhimsen?" wrote Mukherji in his book *The Lost World of Hindustani Music* (Penguin, 2006).

"Since I had no earning, I'd ask around for food to eat or work as domestic help. Pahari Sanyal needed a servant... when he came to hear me at a music conference, I reminded him that I am the same 'Joshi' who worked in his house," Joshi recalls in filmmaker-lyricist Gulzar's documentary *Pandit Bhimsen Joshi* (1992), produced by Films Division.



EXPRESS ARCHIVE

It's often said in Indian classical music circles that 'if God ever decided to sing, he'd choose Pt Bhimsen Joshi's voice'

It's often said in Indian classical music circles that "if God ever decided to sing, he'd choose Pt Bhimsen Joshi's voice". Joshi, who would have turned 100 in February this year, remains, perhaps, the only musician to have the cultural high ground in his heyday as well as his later years. With his ability to mine spiritual profundity from the seven notes of *sargam*, there was also the high voltage, large and resonant voice tied in with a formidable technique.

Prabha Aatre, 89, the seniormost torch-bearer of the Kirana *gharana*, who knew Joshi closely for years, believes that a singer's ingenuity relies heavily on his voice. "It does not suffice to have music in the head," she says. "It must be projected successfully through the voice... Bhimsenji had been fortunate in this regard. His voice, even at an advanced age, engulfed the listener like a flood of bright light pervading the whole environment... Kirana (*gharana*) artists have voices that are thin, sharp and high-pitched. But Bhimsenji's voice was quite the opposite — broad, dense, wide-ranging, capable of prolonged spans. And yet it could lay claim to sweetness and melodiousness," she adds.

Bengaluru-based vocalist Nagaraj Rao Havaladar, who learnt music from Joshi's seniormost disciple Pandit Madhav Gudi, says, Joshi became the gold standard. "Panditji's music reached the common man, music lovers, scholars and musicians. It was a voice that belonged to everybody," says Havaladar, who wrote *Bharata Ratna Pt Bhimsen Joshi: The Voice of the People* (2016).

» CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

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Leh Nubra Pangong (7D/9D Kargil) 51K-68K	Leh Ladakh Nubra Pangong (7D) May 1 - 51000	Kashmir (6D) 47000 - 50000	Kashmir (6D) May 9 - 50000
All of Kashmir (11D) June 12 - 73000	Kashmir (6D) May 3 - 48000	Shimla Manali (6D/8D) 37000-48000	Shimla Manali (8D) May 2 - 46000
Kashmir (5D/6D/8D) 43000 - 63000	D'shala D'house Palampur Pragpur (8D) May 6-50K	D'shala D'house Palampur Pragpur (8D) 52K-54K	D'shala D'house Palampur Pragpur (8D) Jun 13-50K
All of Himachal (15D) 84000 - 86000	Amritsar with Attari Wagah Border (4D) May 9-28K	Assam Meghalaya (8D) 63000 - 65000	Dalhousie D'shala Amritsar (8D) May 2 - 48000
Dalhousie D'shala Amritsar Shimla Manali (13D) 72K-75K	Nainital Mussoorie Corbett Park (9D) May 23-55K	Sikkim Gangtok (6D) 53000 - 55000	Nainital Mussoorie Corbett Park (9D) May 23 - 55K
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Shimla Manali (6D/8D) 36000 - 48000	Jaipur Udaipur Pushkar (6D) May 8 - 32000		Gujarat+Statue of Unity (10D) May 4 - 47000
Nainital Mussoorie Corbett Park (9D) 51K-57K	Kerala (6D) May 8 - 35000		Nepal Pokhara Chitwan (8D) May 6 - 60000
Nainital Corbett Park (6D) 39000 - 42000	Nepal Pokhara Chitwan (8D) May 17 - 60K		
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Sikkim Darjeeling Gangtok (7D) 58000 - 60000			
Assam Arunachal Meghalaya (12D) 82K - 84K			
Assam Arunachal Pradesh (10D) 72K - 75K			
All of Meghalaya (8D) 64000 - 66000			
Madhya Pradesh Magic (9D) 51000 - 55000			
Rajasthan (6D) 31000-34000			
Gujarat+Statue of Unity (10D) 46000-50000			
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DOWN IN JUNGLELAND



Ranjit Lal

Ranjit Lal is an author, environmentalist and bird watcher

The Terror of Their Giggles

Sometimes, when they are not exceptionally quiet, their bark is worse than their bite

HOW FAR do the sounds animals make — their calls, growls, screams, shrieks — reflect their characters and personalities? Here we'll take wide-spectrum sampling of animals and see if their vocalisations match; happy listening!

Lions: "King" of the beasts and rightly so — their roars can roll across the grasslands for up to 8 km; it can make anyone's tummy rumble. However, many roaring lions sound extremely hoarse and some (along with their cousins) end the roar with a sound like wood being sawed. Automobile and motorcycle manufacturers have long tried imitating the low, rumbling growl and snarl of an angry carnivore (lion, leopard, tiger) in their vehicles' exhaust systems.

Wild Dogs: For all their merciless reputation, they have almost friendly sounding whistles and clicks, which they emit while chasing prey, as a team, to keep in touch and coordinate the chase.

Hyenas: Their terrifying liquid giggles and squeals indicate that they have it in for their victims. They match perfectly with their cringing, wheedling side-on approach. Heads down, shoulders drooping, they dart and slither, ingratiatingly enjoying the fate of the prey they have trapped. Theirs is one giggle that horrifies and is not infectious.

Bears: Angry, berserk bears emit raucous, crazed roars. However, they are not intelligent enough to be taught how to do a ballet in a tutu.

Wild Hog/Pigs: Perfectly matched in shape and size for their environment, they grunt and snort deliciously as they root about in the muck, snuffling up tubers with zero table manners. But can squeal like a soprano having her throat slit in slow motion when in the grip of any of the carnivores.

Elephants: For all their bulk and dignified presence, elephants sound awfully petulant when they throw a tantrum and trumpet in frustration or anger. But dignity is restored by their deep-bass belly rumbles which can make your own tummy rumble uneasily, and which



SOUND ENERGY

Pied Starlings (mynas) deep in conversation

transmit through the ground and travel over grassland and forest to be picked up by the feet and ears of other herds, miles away.

Buffaloes: Will snort and bellow belligerently when confronted by predators, but once brought down, they emit pathetic and desperate moans for help — which are often heeded and followed by the impressive thunder of hooves of the back-up cavalry.

Deer (most species): Being prey, it makes more sense for them to keep silent — and listen for predators on the prowl. But when they do pick up a threat, they will emit a bark (the sambar goes, *dhonk!*) or sharp cry of warning and stomp their feet hard before fleeing. While in the rut, macho stags emit demented roars/bellows unbecoming of their lordly profiles.

Horses: Their whinnying hysterical neighs are perfect for animals that are so borderline close to having panic attacks and bolting every second of the day, but don't quite square up with their noble profiles.

Donkeys: Their long-drawn lugubrious bray can make you want to laugh and cry at the same time, besides startling you considerably until you home in to the source of the sound and laugh some more.

Eagles: These lords of the sky — and other raptors — have extraordinarily inappropriate high-pitched squealing calls. I once mistook the call of a Pallas's Fish-Eagle for a puppy having its bottom smacked!

Crows: Their hoarse caws go perfectly with their raucous mob mentality.

Mynas: They can sound and look as civilised as any sophisticated gathering of genteel intellectuals debating a delicate point on fine art on the BBC, or equally sound and look as rowdy as a bunch of politicians in full flow in an unruly democracy.

Jungle Babblers: Their disheveled khaki get-up matches perfectly with the cacophony they so love to produce while searching your premises — and that can still make you laugh.

Parakeets: Loquacious and colourful as a collection of fisherwomen with a *joie de vivre*, their squawking can be ear-piercing and goes well with their earnest, bulging eyes and domed foreheads. They will maintain strict radio silence while raiding a mango or guava orchard.

Sperm Whales: The loudest animals in the world, the recordings of their clicking, I've heard, sound like an old rusty clock being wound up but, apparently, is powerful enough (at 236 decibels) to blow your eardrums off.

» FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

THEN THERE was the morning of August 15, 1988, when India watched the first visuals of an amber sun, sea and the splatter of a waterfall segueing into a sombre Joshi singing *Mile sur mera tumhara*. The raga was the majestic Bhairavi, whose infectious melody whirled out of television sets and into our hearts.

Born in a Brahmin family, to a Sanskrit-teacher father and a homemaker mother in Gadag, Joshi was one of 16 children. He was 11 when an HMV LP featuring a *bandish* by Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, founding father of the Kirana *gharana*, would change his life. The record was being advertised and would constantly be played on the streets. As Khan sang a three-minute *Piya bin naahi aaot chain in raag* Basant, he'd plumb the depths of the spring raga; and in turn a young Joshi's soul. He wondered, "what does one have to do to sing like this?," he says, in the Films Division documentary.

The answer was going to Gwalior, the only place that he'd heard was synonymous with classical music. So, empty-handed, with only the clothes on his back, armed with music he'd learned by listening to his mother's *abhangs* and a few stray records, Joshi got on a train from Gadag, without any ticket, and began his quest. His family, for a long time, thought that he left because his mother refused him a spoonful of *ghee*.

It took the young boy more than two months to reach Gwalior, where he landed at the doorstep of sarod maestro Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan's father. There, the state provided a free meal to those who learned music. A young Bhimsen would eat lunch in the day and learn from Hafiz Ali in the evening. He gave him two ragas — the contemplative Marwa and the intense raga of dusk, Puriya Dhanashree. However, a well-known musician, Hafiz Ali's travels kept him away from his students. A restive Joshi then left for Kolkata.

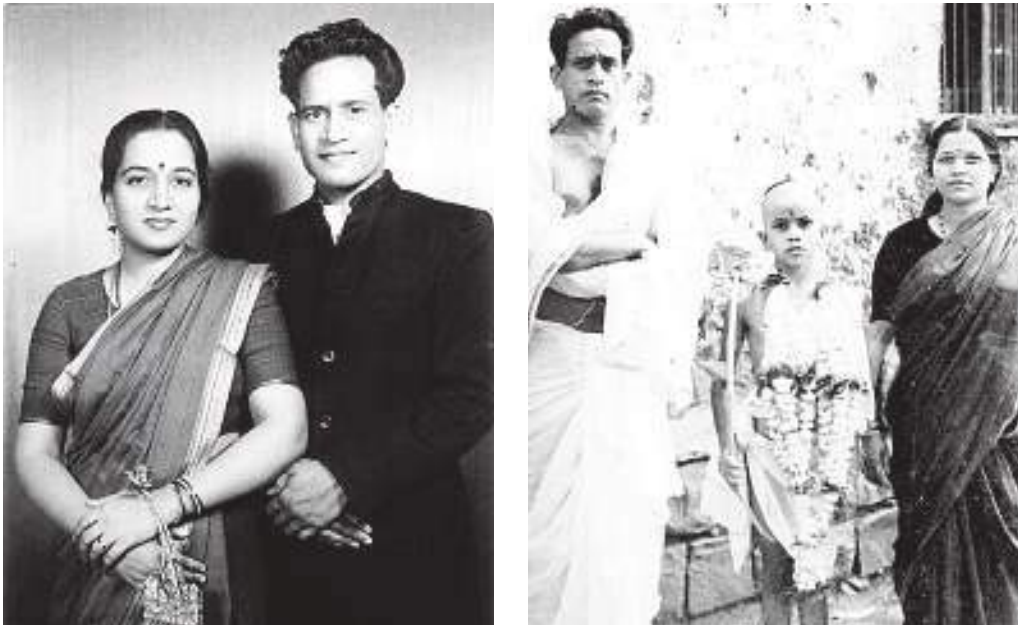
After his stint at Pahari Sanyal's place as a domestic worker, Joshi visited Delhi briefly before he left for Jalandhar for the famed Harballabh Sangeet Sammelan, the oldest music conference in the country. There, he met Gwalior *gharana* vocalist Pandit Vinayakrao Patwardhan, who told him to head back to Maharashtra where Sawai Gandharva, the disciple of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, lived.

Once again, life came full circle. It was Karim's music that had prompted Joshi to make the journey in the first place. For the next four years, Joshi lived in Kundgol after Gandharva accepted him as a student, where he washed his *gum's* clothes, filled water from the well, and cleaned the house. It was only after a year of testing his resolve to learn that Gandharva began to teach Joshi. His first live performance was at the age of 19. An album of his *abhangs* and *bhajans* was released by HMV the next year in 1942. A year later, Joshi moved to Mumbai.

Shrinivas Joshi, his youngest son, says, "As a musician, his life is a miracle. He was born in an area with Kannada as his mother tongue. There, no one knew of classical music. He heard that one record and gambled his entire life for this pursuit. The miracle is that he came up victorious and sits among the giants. He was born for this."

Once Joshi began to make a little money,

A LIFE IN MUSIC



his mother arranged a match for him with Sunanda Katti, the daughter of her brother. They married in 1944 and had four children — Raghavendra, Usha, Sumangala and Anand. In 1951, he married Vatsala Mudholkar, his co-actor in a Kannada play. The marriage happened before the Hindu Marriage Act was codified. But bigamous marriages were prohibited in Bombay Presidency, so Joshi moved to Nagpur where this was permitted. He never divorced his first wife, who passed away in 1992. He had three children with Mudholkar — Jayant, Shubhada and Shrinivas.

In the beginning, both the families lived together, but a few years later his first wife moved out with her children and began to live separately. Joshi continued to provide for them and visit them. Katti and Joshi's son Anand was born in 1962, 11 years after Bhimsen married Mudholkar. According to Anand, the money was limited and the family lived modestly, away from Joshi's glamorous world. "I would go every month to take money to the other house and sometimes hear him do his *riyaaz*. I would think that here is this great artiste, a musical genius, who is also my father. My mother (Sunanda) would always ask us to learn from his great

CIRCLE OF LIFE

(Clockwise from above left) Bhimsen Joshi with Ustad Zakir Hussain (left) and Ustad Amjad Ali Khan; with second wife Vatsala Mudholkar in 1951; with first wife Sunanda Katti at his eldest son Raghavendra Joshi's thread ceremony; with Ustad Bismillah Khan



PHOTOS: EXPRESS ARCHIVE

art," says Anand, who is also a vocalist.

While Jayant is a photographer and painter, Shrinivas, a classical vocalist, is currently president, Arya Sangeet Prasarak Mandal, Pune, which organises the annual Sawai Gandharva Festival.

Did his relationship with the first family divide the two families? Shrinivas says, "We are the first family. We did not have any relationship with them... Whatever problems my father faced, he didn't expose me to it." The matter of Joshi's will remains in the Bombay High Court, where the two families continue to contend over his property.

Joshi also had a long tryst with alcohol, which he overcame in his later years. According to his son Raghavendra's book, *Bhimsen Joshi, My Father* (Oxford University Press, 2016), he would sometimes be inebriated on stage, too.

Nana Mule, 84, who accompanied Joshi on the tabla during the '70s and '80s, says "He was an orthodox Brahmin who had never seen alcohol. Some jealous people at the time got him into it. One time, we met actor Dharmendra at Hyderabad airport. He was a great fan of Panditji. Since the flight was delayed the two decided to go for a drink. And I saw Panditji finish a full bottle of rum. It was a problem but

In Pursuit of Truth and Beauty

British-American architect-theorist Christopher Alexander, who passed away recently, left a lifetime of work which has been a touchstone for design thinking, globally and in India

Narendra Dengle

CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER, architect-writer, mathematician, and scientist, who passed away on March 17, at the age of 85, at his Sussex home, symbolised a life of conviction that architecture was not obsessive, indulgent form-making but could bring wholeness of life, full of beauty, through its act.

Today, many architects across the world are disillusioned with the institutional training and glamorous practices and have been searching for alternative ways of practising this beautiful and ancient discipline. Ancient societies, too, had devised diagrams and theories for their architecture to connect the phe-

nominal world with cosmology, using empirical knowledge of the forces of nature. The scientist in Alexander was serious in his pursuit to resolve this tough riddle of how to make architecture a living structure that echoes the deeper principles of the universe itself.

Alexander studied mathematics at Cambridge, cognition at Harvard, the US transportation theory at MIT, and taught at Berkeley for about 40 years. His first book *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* (Harvard University Press; 1964) made a huge impact in academia all over the world. In the preface to the paperback edition in 1971, however, he says, "...I have been held as one of the leading exponents of the so-called design methods. I am sorry that this has happened, and want to state, publicly, that I reject the whole idea of design methods as a subject of study since I

think it is absurd to separate the study of designing from the practice of design."

Alexander's writings continued to fascinate and inspire generations of architects, sociologists, anthropologists, musicians and software designers. His books are a testimony to his deep sense of observation and passion to unfold the truth of timeless beauty in architecture. Some of his important books include *The Timeless Way of Building* (Oxford University Press, 1979), *The Pattern Language* (Oxford, 1979), and the magnum opus of four volumes of *The Nature of Order* (The Center for Environmental Structure, 1980).

This was a result of years of studying life in ordinary events and the interconnectedness between individuals, communities, and nature. He believed that with a deeper understanding of space, the relation between architecture and physical sciences would alter, and with it, the former would "play a revolutionary role in the way we see the world". The post-Industrial Revolution architecture had significantly deviated from the much-valued trio of ethics, philosophy, and technique, and had become mechanistic. He called it "theoretically bankrupt". Alexander's views prompted heated debates and he had to face harsh opposition in practice as well as academia. His theories were considered "prescriptive", which Alexander patiently denied.

If the scientist in Alexander was deeply concerned about the state of this planet, the artist in him wanted to make the world beautiful for living. He found beauty in the simple but knowledgeable way in which tradi-



COURTESY THE CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STRUCTURE

HEALING SPACES

(Left) Christopher Alexander; his shelter for the homeless, Julian Street Inn, California

tional communities built their habitat. He noticed that their deep design sense permeated through all forms of art and craft, from clothing, pottery, weaving carpets, ornaments, carpentry, and elegant construction processes, to conceiving public spaces. These he analysed as much as to understand the geometric principles that were embedded in them as to follow why they evoked a deeper feeling as experienced in organisms and ecological systems.

To test and connect the theory to practice, Alexander became a builder. He built his projects in different parts of the world. After obtaining his PhD from Harvard in 1961,

he overcame it some years later."

While Joshi's personal life was going through turmoil, his professional career was buzzing with high praise and honour. His approach to music was intuitive, reflective and exploratory. It was the presentation of his favourite raga, the poignant Todi, at the first Sawai Gandharva music festival after his *guru's* death in 1952, that turned him into a legend. It was Gandharva's training in the performance but the soul was all his own.

Gandharva was an exacting *guru* and extremely strict, imparting different *bandishes* to different students and not allowing them to discuss among themselves. He didn't want them to be replicas of each other. Legendary vocalist Gangubai Hangal was also learning from Gandharva then. Since Hangal took the 9pm train back to Hubli every day, Joshi would offer to drop her at the railway station. "On the way, he'd ask her about the *bandish* she had learnt and share with her what he'd learnt," says Havaladar.

"*Ek achhe kalakar ko ek achha chor hona chahiye* (a good artiste should also be a good thief)," Joshi would say often to his students. Tabla player Bharat Kamat, who accompanied Joshi on the tabla from 1989 till the musician's last days, says, "Once he messed up a piece in front of Kesarbai Kerkar to prompt her to sing it and give him her knowledge of the subject."

In a documentary on Joshi, made by Jamia Millia Islamia Center and James Beveridge Associates Ltd Canada in 1971, is a presentation of the rain raga, Miyan Malhar. In the film, he's accompanied by tabla player and Kamat's father Pt Chandrakant Kamat. It garnered much attention with its near-perfect animated rendition of the raga, and even today, the recording is considered a masterpiece. Kamat says that this music is now the stuff of lore. In his trance, Joshi would forget that he'd opened the buttons to his kurta and was singing looking a tad dishevelled. "He had what we call *swar siddhi* — the embodied spirit of the raga — in his being," he says.

This was a time when musicians such as Ustad Bismillah Khan, Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Vilayat Khan were at the height of their careers. While Mallikarjun Mansur, 10 years Bhimsen's senior, was also another name to reckon with among the *rasikas*, Joshi acquired popularity in every part of the country. "Because he spoke Kannada, the Carnatic element in his Hindustani music helped," says Atre.

He sang in Hindi films too, including *Ketaki gulab juhi* in *Basant Bahar* (1956) and the famed *bhajans*, *Raghuvar tumko meri laaj* and *Thumak thumak pag* in Amol Palekar's *Ankahee* (1985). He received a National Award for the latter. He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1999 and Bharat Ratna in 2008. "So many musicians are worldly minded, stay in touch with the right people to get certain honours. Not only did he not care, but the beauty is also that he got it all still. He would have been the same person, had he not received anything," says Shrinivas.

No conversation about Joshi is complete without discussing his humility. People speak of the simple man, who needed only music and food to survive. The only luxury he cherished in his later life was his fondness for cars; he could also repair them.

Over the years, his music mellowed and became less robust as age and illness — brain tumour and tail-bone issues caught up — in the '80s and '90s, but his voice never lost its sheen. Joshi passed away on January 24, 2011, leaving behind a legacy that almost seems like a fable if one had not heard him live or seen his recordings.

Alexander spent seven months in India building a village school in Bavra, Gujarat, involving villagers in the construction. He writes about his experience with the village folk: "I felt I must be useful and discussing with the villagers, we decided that a school would help the most." This was the "start in his architecture" and the "first building I ever made and the first time I invented anything in construction. I had Rs 5,000 to build the school." He worked closely with the village potter who was used to making the conical *guna* roof tile. This experience of the benefit of community participation stayed with him forever. Alexander's learning from India are evident in his writings. In a chapter in "Living Room of Society" (*The Nature of Order*, Book Three) he narrates how he was inspired by what happens in traditional societies, and in contrast to urban societies, "the space that existed between buildings was like the living room of society... where people did things, got together, felt comfortable." He witnessed the sense of belonging to one's place brought "dignity and joy" to one's living.

His close inspection of the phenomenon of nature made him think of resonating it in architecture. He would ask his students "Have you given your soul to the work?" And, devised a brilliant test which he called "The Mirror of the Self". He observed, "When a place is lifeless, or unreal, there is almost always a mastermind behind it. It is so filled with the will of its maker that there is no room for its own nature". He knew that there was a common language that appeared in the patterns which people followed repeatedly that shaped the character of a place.

His close associates have started a teaching programme called "Building Beauty" in 2017, based on Alexander's theories, in Sorrento, Italy, opening it up to architects and non-architects, from all over the world, to engage in conceiving and building their habitat with wholeness and beauty.

The writer is a Pune-based architect and educator. He is the Chair of Asian Advisory Board of Building Beauty



EXPRESS ARCHIVE

And Then There Were None

Saeed Naqvi’s dystopic play imagines India without its Muslim population and heritage while making a case for empathy

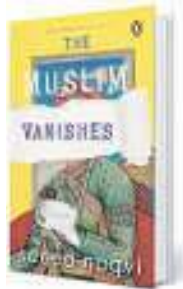
Shah Alam Khan

IMAGINE WHAT will happen if one fine morning India wakes up to its 200 million Muslims having vanished. Not only Muslim people, but their sculptures, their literature, their culture, their language—all gone—poof, into thin air! Saeed Naqvi’s new play, *The Muslim Vanishes*, explores just that. Fiction is the most beautiful and yet the cruellest form of reality. Dystopian fiction is even crueler. I still remember my first read of Ray Bradbury’s 1953 dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451*. Imagining a world where all books are burnt was like imagining a sky without the sun and the moon. Guy Montag, the protagonist of the book, gave me a weird hollow but hopeful feeling. That’s what good dystopian novels do to us—they are akin to a surgical procedure where controlled violence cures a disease. Drama, as dystopia, is a rare breed but always makes for an interesting read. The Irish playwright Samuel Beckett was once asked by a friend why he couldn’t write something happy. In response, Beckett wrote *Happy Days* (1961), one of the best dystopic dramas one can read. *The Vanishing Muslim* is the dystopian metaphor we never want to live. But Naqvi’s play is not a classical drama. Even though it is written as a play, it lacks the technical essentialities of one. But that doesn’t make it less enjoyable. It is an interesting con-

cept in a country struggling to take off its secular outfit and sneak into a theological apparel, a country where the narrative of identity is carved out of the blood of the minorities. I presume you can take a journalist out of the world of news but you cannot take the world of news out of a journalist. Naqvi is a veteran journalist, little wonder then that the play begins in a television newsroom where hyperventilating anchors are breaking the news that the country’s 200 million Muslims have disappeared. The two protagonists of the book—Brajesh and Anand—are characters with interesting shades of grey. Their conversations are punctuated with threads of everyday biases of the Indian society. Reading the play one concludes that Naqvi is a reductionist. The sudden disappearance of Muslims from India is in itself a very complicated idea but Naqvi simplifies it. He magnifies a very tiny aspect of the “post-Muslim” India in the book. His premise is political. He postulates the emergence of new electoral equations following the disappearance of Muslims in the country. He concludes that such a scenario will embolden those who are at the lowest rung of the caste system in society. In the book, following the disappearance of the Muslims, Dalits begin to occupy their abandoned properties. The election commission, the political class, the media and common people are worried by this “revolution” of the Dalits. Interestingly, the contempt for Muslims depicted in the book can only be

HALF A WORLD

Muslims offering *namaz* at the Fatehpuri mosque in Chandni Chowk, Old Delhi



THE MUSLIM VANISHES BY SAEED NAQVI Vintage Books 256 pages ₹499

surpassed by the contempt for Dalits. In India, the competition for abhorring identities is indeed very tough! Naqvi’s invented world is interesting but scary. It is as simple as it is convoluted. The convolutions of Naqvi’s play are knotted at many levels of the Indian society. It very subtly ensnares in its pages patriarchy, individual and collective communalism, morality, caste, judiciary, police and gender biases. The pages of *The Muslim Vanishes* have scattered remnants of the now-ridiculed Ganga-Jamuni *tezbeeb*, a tradition to which Naqvi belongs. Like dry autumn leaves, they induce a wave of nostalgia in readers for a time that no longer exists. But like all good dystopian novels, *The Muslim Vanishes* also induces hope. The most interesting part of the book is when a special jury is set up by the Supreme Court to look into the sudden disappearance of the Muslims. This 11-member jury has stalwarts of India’s composite culture. It’s celestial in the true sense of the word. Its convenor is the Urdu poet Hasrat Mohani and includes others such as Amir Khusrav Dehlavi, Mahatma Phule and the likes. The court exchanges between these members and the right-wing representative are simple. Without much literary eloquence, Naqvi tries to draw our attention to the now-dying syncretic culture of the country. These are the pages which induce hope and joy. The book ironically reminded me of a

joke which made the rounds just before the start of Gulf War II in 2003. The joke went that since there was severe criticism of then US president George W Bush’s plans to invade Iraq, he held a closed-door, one-to-one meeting with the then British PM Tony Blair. The meeting went on for hours till the President’s attaché decided to intervene and went inside the meeting room. On seeing him, Bush said, “We are done. We have decided to kill one million Muslims and a goldfish.” The confused attaché asked, “But why the goldfish, sir?” Bush turned to Blair and said, “Look, I told you Tony, no one will ask about the Muslims.” I am not sure if anyone will even ask about the vanished Muslims if Naqvi’s fable comes true. In New India, the silence of the unsaid is better than the chaos of the said words. As for a solution to the problem Naqvi poses, I have nothing better to conclude with than these couplets by Mohani, the convenor of Naqvi’s all-important imaginary celestial jury: *Gandhi ki tarah baith ke kaatenge kyun charkha, Lenin ki tarah denge duniya ko hila hum* (Why should we sit and spin yarn like Gandhi, Rather, like Lenin, we will shake the world) Dr Shah Alam Khan is professor, department of orthopaedics, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi

Rebuilding Lives

Showing the way to responsive rehabilitation for riot victims

Lakshmi Krishnaswamy

MUZAFFARNAGAR DIARIES outlines its aim to foreground ways in which responsive rehabilitation could be served, with Muzaffarnagar as a template. In 2013, a riot in the area displaced several individuals and they were struck with a choice to return to their devastated homes with memories of violence or resettle elsewhere. The comprehensive resettlement process began in the district of Shamli, as a multi-institutional effort. It has been a partnership between communities and institutions like Hunnarshala, through an owner-driven process. The physical reconstruction of new homes is based on local constructional, artisanal, architectural sensibilities, which is possible when architects establish partnerships with displaced communities. The Joint Citizens’ Initiative (JCI) group, created after the riot, included the Vanangana and Sadhbhavana Trusts, responsible for much of the community-based work on the ground. The rehabilitation project was generously supported by Misereor, Germany. Hunnarshala Foundation (Bhuj) was invited to lead the design and construction effort of shelters for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Hunnarshala specialises in post-disaster, owner-driven housing, combining local design and engineering practices with its expertise in eco-friendly design and construction that seeks to “uplift and empower” society.

The first part of the book documents the design of the home as it existed with a glossary of terms corresponding to living spaces, with vivid descriptions of their use and the underlying cultural and climatic origins. The writing captures the multivalent use of spaces, objects and furniture. The documentation recorded the colour schemes, proportions, elemental parts of the built form and decorative motifs. The high-plinths mitigated heavy flooding as the gallery came alive as a gathering point, connecting interior to exterior. The ceilings were high and enabled rooms to remain cool despite shared walls. It captures the lifestyle of the community, as it visually documents facets of design sensibilities evidenced in the built form. The book has a keen oral and dialogical quality as it often recounts words casually spoken by the stakeholders. In a deep hearing by the community workers, these words or what may seem as lay everyday statements, valiantly informed design directions.

The second part documents the collaborative design spirit that engaged the community, developing a common understanding. The first draft of plans was reviewed by them and suggestions were incorporated on the location of the toilets such that it does not compromise the privacy of the women. Community members were encouraged to buy plots close together. The book documents seven distinct plans that emerged based on the unique requirements of the users. Their previous lifestyle was invoked and understood, with many of the gestures remaining intact in the new scheme. The architects took care to leave room for incremental growth and were mindful of the community’s vision for their *mohalla*; the street-focused neighbourhoods they were used to living in. Some homes demarcated a sizeable proportion of the plot for domesticated animals like buffaloes, building ramps for their ease of access. The design process culminated in an agreement, Sahamati Patra, between the beneficiary and the JCI, with every single owner’s participatory plan attached, detailing the kind of engagement expected from stakeholders, including the state government. The women of the community took on leadership roles while also forming the majority of the staff. The Sadbhavana and Vanangana Trusts were led by women, so was the housing team’s coordinator; she was an engineer supported by women site-engineers and architects. The region is notorious for the abject condition of the sanitation infrastructure. However, the community sought ways to access clean water and waste disposal. The community found strength in each other and at times in the local bodies to re-integrate into a semblance of the life they were used to, only with renewed ties with each other. On August 12, 2016, the homes were inaugurated and a Lucknowi artist performed *qawwali*, with faith slowly being restored in the rights of citizenship. This book is of value to universities, students, social organisations and academicians involved in rehabilitation and in articulating a rehabilitation project that is humane.

The author is an academic in the field of architecture and design

Bringing Up Baby

DISCLAIMERS FIRST: Like many south Delhi parents, I shored up at Dr Saroja Balan’s chamber 10 days after giving birth, bleary-eyed from lack of sleep and panicky at the rapid weight loss that my nearly-4-kg-at-birth baby seemed to be undergoing. The clutter of information on the internet and from older parents were adding to our bewilderment—a little bit of weight loss was par for the course it seemed, but how much was just enough and not too much? And, more worryingly, was a “big” baby actually a sign of neonatal diabetes, as some had pointed out? An examination later, the neonatolo-

gist and paediatrician turned to us with a prognosis that would come to mean a lot to frayed parental nerves in the years since: “Nothing! Your baby is doing just fine!” Apparently, the developmental milestones were on course, the weight loss, though considerable, was within the parameters and all we needed to do was keep calm and carry on. Reading *It’s Your Baby*, her crisp and concise parenting guide, is quite like having Dr Balan on speed dial. Self-assured and full of practical advice, this is a book that has answers to a range of questions that bewildered new parents might have



IT’S YOUR BABY: THE INDIAN PARENT’S GUIDE TO THE FIRST TWO YEARS BY DR SAROJA BALAN HarperCollins 428 pages: ₹499

about their child’s early years, in particular, though not limited to, the first disconcerting year after birth. In quite the same way that she handholds her patients’ parents towards a more relaxed parenting experience, *It’s Your Baby* breaks down the milestones and red flags of the first two years with lucidity. From birthing to breast feeding to potty training and disciplining, the book explains the parenting journey with the same thoroughness and alacrity that is Dr Balan’s hallmark. The chapter, Common Childhood Disorders and Diseases, lists out possible illnesses, their causes and how best to meet the challenges they pose. The compositions of frequently used medications are explained and why blind

reliance on antibiotics might not always be the best course of treatment. Each chapter comes with a list of references and tackles frequently asked questions. From compulsory vaccination and their utility to the optional ones available and how and when they become essential; from how to read a child’s growth chart to interpreting a child’s sleep cycle; from tackling acid reflux to how best to make your newborn burp, the book touches upon all important aspects of the nascent years and should be essential reading for every new parent in quite the same way as Dr Spock or *What to Expect When You Are Expecting* were for generations of parents earlier.

PAROMITA CHAKRABARTI

Seat of Learning

In his book as in his time there, professor Makarand R Paranjape fails to understand the essential irreverence and democratic principles that characterise JNU

Ashutosh

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU University is an idea which is dreamy and irreverent, challenges the stereotypes, breaks traditional moorings, is Leninist in its thought process but Gandhian in ethos and that makes it mystical and intriguing, and, in certain ways, spiritual. For an outsider, JNU is intimidating but for someone who has lived on the campus as a student, not as a teacher, JNU is endearing. I know this because I spent eight glorious years on campus as a student and I was not a communist. And, of course, neither was I

an anti-national.

I joined JNU in 1986, when communism was fading the world over and I exited JNU when the Soviet Union was no more. So, while reading this book written by professor of English, Makarand R Paranjape, I was not surprised that he failed to understand JNU. He seems intimidated by the idea called JNU despite being a professor for more than two decades in the campus. I dare not say that he wrote this book out of hate, rather, while writing, he believed that like the Communist Manifesto, his book would trigger a “revolution” and JNU would be wiped clean of the “malaise” that makes

it the best university in the country. Before I joined JNU, I studied at Allahabad University, which then was called the Cambridge of the East, but it was JNU which transformed non-entities, many like me, from small town, lower middle-class boys into men ready to fight for universal values. Of course, JNU even then was a citadel for communist ideas but it was an intellectualism of a very high order, refreshed by democratic values and egalitarianism, which abhorred any kind of sectarianism, communalism and casteism, and was not intimidated by the all-powerful establishment. That is why it invited the wrath of Mrs Indira Gandhi. So, if the Narendra Modi administration is angry with JNU, I am not surprised. I would have been surprised if it had surrendered to the hegemonic right-wing ideology. I can understand professor Paranjape’s



JNU: NATIONALISM AND INDIA’S UNCIVIL WAR BY MAKARAND R PARANJAPE Rupa Publications 304 pages ₹595

anguish when he writes “Everything is political. Or politicised. Anti-government activists thriving at the government’s expense. This was what JNU socialism seemed to boil down to.” I was aghast to read that a professor of his calibre equates “anti-government-ism” with “anti-National-ism”. He writes, “...I challenged the overwhelmingly anti-government, one might also say anti-national, stance of the JNU student union.” When a professor borrows a phrase like “*tukde tukde*”, I am sure he has his reason but I was rather surprised when he relates Gandhi with violence. While lecturing students after the Kanhaiya Kumar episode, he says, “Gandhi was forced to settle for the violence of the state in maintaining law and order. That to him, was preferable to indiscriminate mass violence.” Non-violence was the basic essence of Gandhi, the reason

for his existence, and to even tangentially read otherwise will be a wrong reading of Gandhi. It was this reason that he was iconised by Albert Einstein, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. If there is one university which imbibed the basic essence of Gandhi, it is JNU where disputes were/are not sorted out by the use of violence but by constitutionally mandated means. I am not denying that there were, and are, no exceptions but to deride students for peaceful protests and paint a different picture smacks of an ideological bias and personal prejudice. I am glad he did not hide his liking for PM Modi. He writes, “At his best, Modi can be inspiring and visionary ... A master political strategist, he is also determined, driven, even, a visionary leader...” To praise Modi, he coins a new phrase for nationalism. He writes, “NaMo nationalism, this is the chant of the *mantra* of unity, not division.” I will definitely not call this book a rant of a professor seeking endorsement from the left liberal and, in its absence, finds them “degenerate” and his friends wonder, “how

the dominant, left liberal, Congress-sponsored narrative about India is so durable.” I can understand his pain when he writes, “I realised that even after teaching diligently, faithfully, and one might even say inspiringly for over twenty years, I found no recognition, let alone affirmation in JNU ... here being the most published professor did not count for anything at all.” He very honestly poured his heart out. His angst is justified but then that is what JNU is. Even recognition to academic stalwarts like Romila Thapar, Bipan Chandra, Namvar Singh, Kedarnath Singh did not come easy. That is JNU. There is no doubt that at times his language is lucid, turn of phrases are beautiful, throws some thought-provoking ideas too but he limits his scholarship to only one kind of narrative that makes the book attractive to his right-wing friends and ugly to left-liberals. That is ironic. But such is the time when objectivity is insane and subjectivity is a virtue.

The writer is editor, *SatyaHindi.com*, and author of *Hindu Rashtra*

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TOP OF THE WORLD



Will Smith said he accepts the decision.

US Will Smith gets 10-year Oscars ban over slap

Los Angeles: The motion picture academy on Friday banned Will Smith from attending the Oscars or any other academy event for 10 years following his slap of Chris Rock at the Academy Awards. The move comes after a meeting of the academy's Board of Governors to discuss a response to Smith's actions. "The 94th Oscars were meant to be a celebration of the many individuals in our community who did incredible work this past year; however, those moments were overshadowed by the unacceptable and harmful behavior we saw Smith exhibit on stage," the academy said. "I accept and respect the Academy's decision," Smith said in response. **AP**

IRAN Sanctions on 24 US officials as nuclear talks stall

Dubai: Iran said on Saturday that it had imposed sanctions on 24 more US officials, including former Army Chief of Staff George Casey and former President Donald Trump's attorney Rudy Giuliani, as months of talks to revive a 2015 nuclear deal have stalled. In a statement carried by local media, the Iranian foreign ministry accused the US officials of supporting "terrorist groups and acts" against Iran, and Israel's "repressive acts" in the region and against the Palestinian people. **REUTERS**

CHINA Shanghai to start easing lockdown

Beijing: China's largest city of Shanghai will begin lifting lockdown in communities that report no positive cases within 14 days after another round of Covid-19 testing, authorities said Saturday. The fresh round of testing comes as the city reported about 23,000 cases on Saturday, most of them asymptomatic. On Saturday, Shanghai vice-mayor Zong Ming said the lockdown could soon be lifted or eased in communities that report no positive cases within 14 days, after another round of citywide Covid testing. **AP**

SHOW OF SOLIDARITY, SAYS UK PM, PROMISES MORE AID

Johnson meets Zelenskyy in Kyiv as more civilians flee east Ukraine

**AGENCIES
KYIV, APRIL 9**

UK PRIME Minister Boris Johnson has travelled to Ukraine to meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in show of solidarity. The two leaders meeting Saturday will discuss the UK's long-term support to Ukraine, including a new package of financial and military aid, the Prime Minister's office said. The visit comes a day after Johnson pledged another 100 million pounds (\$130 million) in high grade military equipment to Ukraine, saying Britain wants to help Ukraine defend itself from continuing Russian assaults.

"Ukraine has defied the odds and pushed back Russian forces from the gates of Kyiv, achieving the greatest feat of arms of the 21st century," said Johnson.

Britain will provide 120 armored vehicles as well as new anti-ship missile systems to the Ukrainian military. Downing Street said in a statement. It has also sent Next Generation Light Anti-Tank Weapons, which have proved useful for mobile Ukrainian fighters to use against Russia's armored vehicle.

Meanwhile, civilian evacuations moved forward in patches of battle-scarred eastern Ukraine a day after a missile strike killed at least 52 people at a train station where thousands were waiting to leave the increasingly vulnerable region before an expected Russian onslaught.

More people need to evacuate from the Luhansk region in eastern Ukraine as shelling has increased in recent days and more Russian forces have been arriving, Luhansk Governor Serhiy Gaidai said on Saturday. He said that some 30% of residents still remain in cities and villages across the region and have been asked to evacuate.

Zelenskyy demanded a tough global response to Friday's train station attack in Kramatorsk, calling it the latest sign of war crimes by Russian forces and hoping to prod Western backers to step up their response to help his country defend itself.



Volodymyr Zelenskyy with Boris Johnson during a meeting in Kyiv on Saturday. **AP**

Russia taps General with Syria experience to lead campaign

**THE NEW YORK TIMES
APRIL 9**

RUSSIA HAS reorganised the command of its flagging operations in Ukraine, selecting a general with extensive combat experience in Syria to lead the mission as the war enters a crucial new phase, a senior US official said on Saturday.

Moscow has assigned Gen. Aleksandr V. Dvornikov, the commander of its southern military district, to oversee its overall operations in Ukraine, the official said. The change was reported earlier by the **BBC**.

Russia had been running its military campaign against Ukraine out of Moscow, with no central war commander on the ground to call the shots, American officials said. That approach went a long way to ex-



Gen. Dvornikov, right, with President Putin of Russia. **NYT File**

plain why the Russian war effort has struggled in the face of stiffer-than-expected Ukrainian resistance, the officials said. The lack of a unifying military leader in Ukraine has meant that

Russian air, ground and sea units are not in sync. Their disjointed battlefield campaigns have been plagued by poor logistics, flagging morale and 7,000 to 15,000 military deaths, senior US officials and independent analysts say.

It has also contributed to the deaths of at least seven Russian generals as high-ranking officers are pushed to the front lines to untangle tactical problems that Western militaries would leave to more junior officers or senior enlisted personnel.

Assigning General Dvornikov as the top battlefield commander aims to enhance coordination between various Russian units that previously were organised and commanded separately. It comes at a time when Russia has withdrawn thousands of forces from northern parts of Ukraine and is focusing on the country's east and south, according to US officials.

EU: Moscow's actions look like war crimes

Medykya: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Saturday that Russian forces appeared to have committed war crimes by targeting civilians in Ukraine, but she said lawyers must investigate the incidents. "My instinct says: If this is not a war crime, what is a war crime, but I am a medical doctor by training and lawyers have to investigate carefully," Von Der Leyen told reporters on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the perpetrators of civilian killings in the Bucha were guilty of war crimes and must be held accountable, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Saturday. "This is something we cannot forget," Scholz said, referring to the deaths of civilians in the town to the northwest of Kyiv. "We cannot overlook that this is a crime. These are war crimes we will not accept... those who did this must be held accountable." **REUTERS**

Indian-origin man jailed for rape dies in UK prison

London: An Indian-origin man who ran a secretive extremist Maoist 'cult' in London and was sentenced to 23 years in jail by a UK court for a string of sexual assaults six years ago has died in jail.

Aravindan Balakrishnan, known to his followers as Comrade Bala, was sentenced for six counts of indecent assault, four counts of rape and two counts of actual bodily harm back in 2016. The 81-year-old found guilty of "brutal" violence died in custody at HMP Dartmoor prison in south-west England on Friday, the UK Prison Service said.

Balakrishnan had been convicted following a jury trial in December 2015, where it emerged that he had kept his daughter in captivity for over 30 years of her life. The daughter described her situation in court as "horrible and dehumanising". **PTI**

Go to India if you like it so much: Maryam to Imran

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 9**

PAKISTAN'S OPPOSITION leader Maryam Nawaz on Saturday lashed out at PM Imran Khan for lavishing praise on India, saying he should go to the neighbouring country if he likes it so much.

The remarks of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) vice-president Maryam, who is the daughter of deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif, came after Khan called India a "nation with a great sense of honour".

PM Khan, in an address to the nation on Friday night ahead of the no-trust motion where he has little chances of surviving unless some miracle takes place, said that he was not against India and had a lot of following in the neighbouring country.

"No superpower can force India to do anything against its interests. They (India) are buying oil from Russia despite sanctions. Nobody can dictate India. What the EU ambassadors said here, could they say that to India also?" he asked and added that they could not because India is a sovereign nation. Responding to his remarks, Maryam said that Khan has "gone mad".

Meanwhile, Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said in the National Assembly on Saturday Khan is the "first captain who is running from the pitch with wickets because he fears that he will lose the match, and asked the the PM to "show some sportsman spirit." "Imran Khan is not present in the Parliament because he cannot defend himself. Conspiracies against the constitution will not succeed," he said.



Police stand guard outside the Parliament building in Islamabad on Saturday. **Reuters**

Akshata Murthy says will pay all taxes in UK to avoid 'distraction'

**ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, APRIL 9**

AKSHATA MURTHY, the daughter of Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy, has announced that she will pay UK taxes on all her income, including from India, to avoid the issue being a "distraction" for her husband - Chancellor Rishi Sunak.

Murthy owns around 0.9 per cent of Infosys stake and therefore receives millions in dividends from the Indian software services major. "My decision to pay UK tax on all my worldwide income will not change the fact that India remains the country

of my birth, citizenship, parents' home and place of domicile. But I love the UK too," Murthy said in a Twitter statement on Saturday.

"In my time here I have invested in British businesses and supported British causes. My daughters are British. They are growing up in the UK. I am so proud to be here," she said.

In her lengthy message posted on Twitter, Murthy noted that she had tried to keep her professional life and that of her husband's political career entirely separate and that her "long-standing shareholding" in Infosys is not just a financial investment but also testament to her father's work, "of which I am incredibly proud". **PTI**

AS PER LATEST POLLS, MACRON, A CENTRIST, HOLDS A SLIGHT LEAD OVER LE PEN, A FAR-RIGHT NATIONALIST

In France, a nail-biting election as Macron's contender Le Pen surges

**AP & REUTERS
POISSY, APRIL 9**

FROM THE market stall outside Paris that she's run for 40 years, Yvette Robert can see first-hand how soaring prices are weighing on France's presidential election and turning the first round of voting on Sunday into a nail-biter for incumbent President Emmanuel Macron.

Shoppers, increasingly worried about how to make ends meet, are buying ever-smaller quantities of Robert's neatly stacked fruits and vegetables, she says. And some of her clients no longer come at all to the mar-

ket for its baguettes, cheeses and other tasty offerings. Robert suspects that with fuel prices so high, some can no longer afford to take their vehicles to shop.

"People are scared — with everything that's going up, with prices for fuel going up," she said Friday as campaigning concluded for act one of the two-part French election drama, held against the backdrop of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Macron, a political centrist, for months looked like a shoo-in to become France's first president in 20 years to win a second term. But that scenario blurred in the campaign's closing stages. The pain of inflation and of pump,

food and energy prices that are hitting low-income households particularly hard subsequently roared back as dominant election themes. They could drive many voters Sunday into the arms of far-right leader Marine Le Pen, Macron's political nemesis.

In his last scheduled interview before Sunday's vote, Macron on Friday appealed to younger, progressive-leaning voters, "When it comes to correcting social inequalities at their root, we have begun the work, but we are very far from having succeeded," pledging also to do more to fight climate change.

Macron, now 44, trounced Le Pen by a landslide to become



Electoral posters displaying the Presidential candidates is put up in Aubers, northern France. **AP**

France's youngest president in 2017. The win for the former banker who, unlike Le Pen, is a fer-

vent proponent of European collaboration was seen as a victory against populist, nationalist poli-

tics, coming in the wake of Donald Trump's election to the White House and Britain's vote to leave the European Union, both in 2016.

In courting voters, Macron has economic successes to point to: The French economy is rebounding faster than expected from the battering of Covid-19, with a 2021 growth rate of 7%, the highest since 1969. Unemployment is down to levels not seen since the 2008 financial crisis. When Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, sparking Europe's worst security crisis since World War II, Macron also got a polling bump, with people rallying around the wartime leader.

But the 53-year-old Le Pen is a now a more polished, formidable and savvy political foe as she makes her third attempt to become France's first woman president. And she has campaigned particularly hard and for months on cost of living concerns, capitalizing on the issue that pollsters say is foremost on voters' minds.

Secondly, and also stunning: Le Pen has adroitly sidestepped any significant blowback for her previous perceived closeness with Russian President Vladimir Putin. She went to the Kremlin to meet him during her last presidential campaign in 2017. But in the wake of the war in Ukraine, that potential embarrassment

doesn't appear to have turned Le Pen's supporters against her. She has called the invasion "absolutely indefensible" and said Putin's behaviour cannot be excused "in any way."

Market-goer Marie-Helene Hirel, a 64-year-old retired tax collector, voted Macron in 2017 but said she's too angry with him to do so again. Struggling on her pension with rising prices, Hirel said she is thinking of switching her vote to Le Pen, who has promised fuel and energy tax cuts that Macron says would be ruinous. "Now I'm also part of the 'all against Macron camp,'" she said. "He is making fools of us all." **AP**

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
MUMBAI, APRIL 9

AHEAD of the ongoing Indian Premier League, Shubman Gill had a query for his national captain Rohit Sharma. “I asked Rohit bhai a tactical question about the pull shot, about how he reads the bowler’s mind when he hits the ball in the air.”

Gill likes to play the pull, and people like to see him play the pull; it is a shot he’s practised since he was a kid. Formative years of facing short balls on cement wickets have made the pull and the upper-cut part of his nature. But that has also meant he pulls as a reflex response to the short ball, which is partly why a lot of his pulls are off the lower part of the bat than a bit further up the blade, go straighter rather than squarer, and are hit more into the ground instead of in the air.

It is something he wants to tweak for the shortest format, along with cutting down on the dot balls. Having showcased his potential in the longest format – most notably with the 91 in the historic Brisbane chase of 2021 – one of India’s most exciting young batting talents now seeks to take his T20 game to the next level.

“I react mostly (to the short ball). I do not anticipate that much personally. But T20 is a game in which you have to anticipate a bit,” the Gujarat Titans opener told *The Indian Express* days before IPL 2022 started. “I was working on a couple of things at the NCA (National Cricket Academy) and once the IPL starts, hopefully you will get to see them.”

There are few better than the India skipper to seek advice from on anticipating when looking to pull aerially. Getting on top of the ball and keeping it down while pulling is one thing, but Rohit is able to ride the bounce and send the ball soaring with plenty of distance, as the bat-swing comes from slightly underneath the trajectory of the delivery. That probably requires at least some amount of anticipation, in addition to the ability to pick the length early. It has helped Rohit hit a six every 17.5 deliveries over a long career in T20s; until the start of this IPL, Gill had managed one six every 30 balls.

During his 84 against Delhi Capitals in Pune, he sent four over the boundary in 46 balls, of which only six were dots. “That was the plan,” Gill said after that knock. “To keep rotating the strike and take the singles whenever possible.”

After the 96 against Punjab Kings, his highest T20 score yet, his dot-ball percentage this season stands at 18.5. The last time the IPL was played entirely in India, in 2019, it was 32. In 2021, across India and the UAE, it had climbed to 38.

Gill spent four IPL seasons at Kolkata Knight Riders, where an average of 31.48 and a strike-rate of 123 indicated a solid player not quite able to break the shackles. It was

Sportline : Having showcased his potential in the longest format, India’s most exciting young batsman seeks to take his T20 game to the next level.

Inside Shubman’s beautiful mind



Facing short balls on cement wickets in his early years has made the pull and the upper-cut a natural shot for Gill.

somewhat confounding too, in that Gill, according to Cricviz, has maintained an uncommonly high control percentage over his strokes in a fickle format. But then, little is achieved if the most silken of shots finds the fielder in the ring during the powerplay. There has been a perception that Gill, not unlike the older version of Shikhar Dhawan, is good for chases in the range of 140-150, but can be a bit of a liability for larger pursuits.

This perception does not affect me much as I know that as a batsman, I should know how to play in every situation. If the target is 200 and I go in knowing we need 10 an over, I should be confident to deliver for my team. It is the same if the target is 150 or if we are chasing 120-130 on a difficult wicket.”

need ten an over, I should be confident enough to deliver for my team. It is the same if the target is 150 or if we are chasing 120-130 on a difficult wicket.”

‘Has all the answers’

For someone still only 22, Gill is a rare new-age cricketer about whom there have never been any doubts, be it over his talent or

his temperament on the field or his attitude off it. After Gill had spent a couple of seasons in the KKR set-up, assistant coach Abhishek Nayar had told this correspondent that he’d never seen someone so sorted at such a tender age.

After the Brisbane Test win, India batting coach Vikram Rathour had remarked how clear Gill had been in his approach against the Australian attack. “The clarity of his plans surprised me. ‘If somebody bowls the short ball at this line and height, this is what I am going to do. If they bowl it from the end where the boundary was shorter, I will pull it for a boundary,’” Rathour had said on R Ashwin’s Youtube channel. “He had all the answers, he knew what he was going to do. I had nothing to say to him. I said, ‘boss, just carry on, you are sorted.’”

Ashwin had responded with more praise for the youngster: “I was blown away thinking somebody was able to pick length, height, line and then also have plans covered for it. That was unreal.”

Gill elaborated on his thought process while facing the short ball during the Brisbane chase. “They were bowling short at the body from both ends. The boundary was very long on one side, around 90-95 metres, and the other side was around 80 metres. So as a batsman obviously you think I will have

to time it really well on the longer side for it to get to the boundary,” Gill told this paper.

“But from the other side, you knew that even if you didn’t time it all that well, it still had a chance to go to the boundary as they were bowling at a very good pace. So my mindset was that whenever I get a short ball and the shorter boundary is in play, I’ll try to go for it. But from the other end, I thought that I should leave the bouncers.”

Almost every kid who took guard against the leather ball for the first time would have felt the question popping up in his mind, ‘what if I get hit?’ Gill was no different; he’d stagger outside leg stump and swing hard.

The fear was overcome with time, and some inevitable blows to the body, but the habit of staying inside the line of the ball remained. Fearlessness allied with the back-foot technique honed on cement has, over the years, aided in sculpting that signature short-arm pull.

“Whenever a batsman faces fast bowling,

especially express bowlers who bowl 140-150kph, he has that extra fraction of a second – even if he is not that good a player – if

When I was around 5, I was afraid of fast bowling. I would back away and play my shots. Then when I was 7 or 8 and began to play with the leather ball, I had the fear of getting hit. But when I got hit once or twice, I thought it was okay. Once that fear goes away, your game changes a lot.”

ally not as painful as what I had made up in my mind it would be. Once that fear goes away, your game changes a lot. You start playing much better than earlier.”

To shuffle or not

Going back to the Brisbane 91, Gill had made an initial back-and-across shuffle that helped him get in a better position against

the extra bounce in Australia, especially to the left-arm angle of Mitchell Starc. When he returned to the side after a shin injury for the New Zealand home Tests last November, Gill went back to more or less staying still and inside the line in his stance. He is aware that can leave him vulnerable; Kyle Jamieson bowled him with incoming deliveries in both innings in the Kanpur Test.

As a predominantly back-foot player, Gill can be a reluctant shifter onto the front foot; the stride is still in motion at times when the ball reaches him.

The front foot and the bat also come down at a steeper angle as they start from further inside the line in the absence of a sizeable shuffle.

While Gill has shown he is flexible to adopt the conventional shuffle when he feels conditions demand it, he backs his minimalist approach that also allows him to play those on-the-rise slaps in front of point.

“I don’t make any big change to my technique without talking to my father... In cricket, there is no technique that can be termed ‘out-proof’. Any batsman can get out with any technique. There are one or two important elements.

“Like your shoulder should be aligned towards the ball, you should be a little side-on while playing, you should be in a good position even if your feet are not moving that well. If you are positioned well in relation to the ball, you will manage. As a player you should know what things you need to work on, and where the opposition is looking to get you out. If you know that, it becomes easier to tackle.

“When we play in India, there isn’t that much bounce. Most deliveries stay low. That (reducing the shuffle) was one adjustment I made after talking to our batting coach. I felt I should restrict my initial movement a bit. The ball doesn’t swing much in India either, so the lesser the movement in your body, the better it will be for you.”

Gill has been rated so highly since his junior days that he made his senior Punjab debut when he was only 17.

A year later, he was Player of the Tournament in the Under-19 World Cup, and two months after that triumph, he made his T20 debut right away in the IPL for KKR. At 19, he’d already debuted for the senior national side and at 21, he was opening the batting for his country in the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne. Many consider him the torch-bearer for the next generation in Indian cricket. Do all the expectations drive him or are they a drag?

“It doesn’t put pressure nor does it push me more. That is all external talk. Until I perform consistently for a few years at the international level and in the IPL, that perception won’t be justified. So it doesn’t bother me, what is important is to give my 100 per cent in whatever opportunity I get for my country and my IPL team. When a batsman goes out to bat, I don’t think he thinks about things such as added responsibility. He thinks about what match situation he has to bat in and what he needs to do.”

As Rathour had said after Brisbane, Shubman Gill does sound sorted for sure.

BRIDGE

Dealer: South Vulnerable: East/West

NORTH					
♠ KQ72					
♥ 83					
♦ 93					
♣ KJ972					
SOUTH					
♠ A9843					
♥ Q94					
♦ AQ6					
♣ Q10					

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1S	Pass	
Pass	1S	Pass	4S
Pass	Pass	Pass	

South opens 1S and North makes a limit raise. Is the South hand worth bidding game? South did do that and when dummy came down he was not so sure of his choice. West leads the jack of hearts to East’s king. Do you like your chances now?

The West Hand: S-J1065H-J106D-J52C-A43
The East Hand: S-H-AK752D-K10874C-865
You should be indifferent to your chances. If East leads a diamond back you have to finesse, but if he does not, you can draw trump and set up the clubs. What should you play at trick one?

Play the nine of hearts. You know East has the ace and your nine may look to him like you have the doubleton Q of hearts. Just a little fishing here that might get a bite. If East does catch the ace, you do not have to worry about the diamond finesse any more. But East is clever. He switches to a diamond at trick two. You finesse because the finesse has to be onside for you to make 4S. It wins. What now?

Play the ace of spades. This is one of the basic safety plays that you need to learn. If East has four spades to the J1065, you must lose a spade trick. If West has them you can negate them by leading the ace. You will see the bad break and can play in a way to draw them without losing a trick. When East shows out you lead a spade to the ten and queen. Start setting up the clubs. This will let you get back to your hand to take the spade finesse again. Dealer East Vulnerable: East/West

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ KJ3		♠ A82	
♥ Q10987		♥ AK542	
♦ Q92		♦ A4	
♣ 83		♣ 962	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	1NT		
Pass	2D	Pass	3H
Pass	4H		

The opening lead by West is the ace of clubs, followed by the king of clubs. East plays the queen of clubs and then discards the seven of diamonds. West then plays the jack of clubs and you must take stock of a potentially dangerous situation. If you ruff West’s club in dummy with the seven of hearts, East might overruff with the jack of hearts. The odds of East having the jack of hearts are 50/50. If you ruff with the queen of hearts in dummy, East won’t be able to overruff but there will be three outstanding hearts to the jack. The odds of the hearts splitting 3-0 are only 22%. So, ruff with your queen since that is your best chance for success. You have lost two club tricks and can see a potential loser in each of diamonds and spades. Oh-oh, the contract appears to be in some danger. How do you proceed?

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2368

QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- Common analgesic (7)
- Telling trivial lies (7)
- Advancing or making progress? (7,2)
- Bass instrument like very large violin (5)
- Place from which to view the landscape (7)
- Betrayal or treachery (4,3)
- What a philatelist may even pay a fortune for? (4,5)
- Dealt successfully (5)
- Performing (5)
- Hanging around (9)
- Categorising, classifying or assorting (7)
- City in North Africa? (7)
- Aggregate (5)
- Marsupial (9)
- Withdraws from a confederacy (7)
- Ralph Waldo _____: famous U.S. essayist and poet? (7)

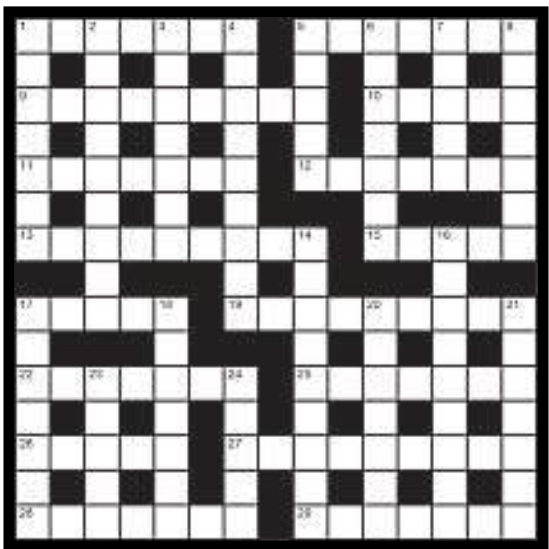
DOWN

- Sharp-cornered (7)
- Mixture of dried flower petals (9)
- Calamitous, catastrophic or disastrous (7)
- Dusk (9)
- Discovers (5)
- Pastoral, or rustic life? (7)
- Esquimo’s hut (5)
- Crowded (7)
- Contrition (9)
- Venomous (9)
- Delegates task to a person? (7)
- Questioned thoroughly (7)
- Building; structure (7)
- Twinkle, shine or glimmer (7)
- Topmost room (5)
- Scoffs or jeers (5)

CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- Exclude a possible cause of faulty measurement? (4,3)
- Timber producers of very high standing? (7)
- Bill of fare (3,6)
- Game bird beheaded in stir (5)
- Female Russian artisan in trouble (7)
- He conveys rubbishish with little hesitation (7)
- Uzbek city may be just a spot in the desert (9)
- Were the first, for instance, to outlaw caging (5)
- Squandered asset which belong to the Orient (5)
- Confusion over front for book-jacket



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Solutions to 2367

QUICK CLUES Across: 1 Gastric, 5 Assault, 8 Ocean, 9 Dramatist, 11 Bismillah Khan, 13 Ennead, 16 Disrupts, 18 Hierarch, 19 Cymbal, 24 Machiavellian, 26 Honey-moon, 27 NAAPL, 28 Disobey, 29 Shindig, Down: 1 Goodbye, 2 Stetson, 3 Ranji, 4 Outkiss, 5 Anarchist, 6 Union, 7 Totem, 10 Ash-tray, 12 Atta, 14 Nail, 15 Anarchy, 22 Events, 23 Ached, 24 Mends, 25 Lariat. **CRYPTIC CLUES Across:** 1 Tacitus, 5 Cape Cod, 8 Colin, 9 Limburger, 11 To be continued, 13 Yields, 16 Demented, 18 Talk-show, 19 Peeler, 24 Sitting target, 26 Antipasti, 27 Drunk, 28 Kingpin, 29 Meddler, Down: 1 Tacitly, 2 Calline, 3 Tonic, 4 Solano, 5 Combined, 6 Caged, 7 Derry, 10 Ukulele, 12 Fetta, 14 Ida’s, 15 Desktop, 17 Robinson, 20 Lag-pull, 21 Retaker, 22 Ageism, 23 Quack, 24 Sit-in, 25 Aided.

If it’s your Birthday

Sunday April 10

You’ll be happiest when you’re active and busy, and even if you’re taking time off you’ll want to pursue worthwhile activities, the sort which add to your reputation and experience.

Monday April 11

You should be in your element today, happy that the world is on your side, and that your sensitivity and intuition are qualities to be admired.

Tuesday April 12

Your current planetary movements are imaginative, inspired and confident on the one hand, down-to-earth and practical on the other. That’s a good combination.

Wednesday April 13

Your stars are still sociable but over the next month several changes take place which lead me to think that you will be cutting down on commitments, and changing their nature.

Thursday April 14

In matters of the heart you need a little variety and interest. There is every reason to hope that you will do well in competitive activities.

Friday April 15


Skilful organisation is the answer if there are conflicting calls on your time. Today’s events will encourage changes.

Saturday April 16


Options will begin to appear, and you will have to decide which path to take. There is no right or wrong answer so you can weigh up the evidence and still listen to your gut instincts.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD


ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

 This may be a profoundly restless week, one which lays the ground for a series of deep changes in the most intimate and secret realms of your life. By the end of the month you will be on a dramatic new emotional course. And when partners realise what’s going on, they’ll see you in an entirely new light.


TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

 In spite of what close companions may believe, you must realise that business considerations are relevant to your romantic life. The confidence bred by success will encourage you to expect more of other people socially, no longer settling for second best.


GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

 You must make a choice affecting a person who touches you on emotional levels. You know now that an unsatisfactory situation can carry on no longer and that it is up to you to call a halt. You also know in your heart that once you have made a decision the storm clouds will disappear.


CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

 A powerful consortium of planets is urging you to play it safe and tuck yourself away in your shell for a while. What this means is that you must choose very carefully how and when you act, particularly if other people are involved. Remember that the whole world is bound to move your way.


LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

 The source of any trouble will be people who don’t know you well. Why they make such unjustified assumptions about your plans and intentions is not clear, but may be due to your typical Leonine refusal to explain yourself.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

 You have been faced with a number of important decisions, as is right and proper for any wise and thoughtful person, which have brought in their train a degree of self-criticism and self-doubt. Now is the time for a boost in your confidence.


LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

 Those who have planned holidays or time off are well placed. Those who have not, will be champing at the bit, eager for a spot of adventure. On a more down-to-earth note, you should seize this opportunity to resolve any questions with legal overtones. And don’t bend the rules.


SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

 As the days pass you will begin to feel happier about the state of play in your associations with both friends and lovers. Venus’ passionate relationship with Pluto brings matters to a head one way or the other, and you will decide to stick with your current situation.


SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

 If you learn how to handle opposition from partners and rivalry from colleagues, you will gain in experience to the point where you’ll be in an ideal position to handle the next phase of growth. In the meantime, all you can really do is offer suggestions, provide advice and assistance and generally play second fiddle.


CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

 You will be called to account for your financial goals. It is not possible to say for sure whether the outcome will be favourable or not, although I would guess that it will be. What is certain is that there will be a flurry of activity which will drive other, more personal concerns underground for a while.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

 Mercury, god of communication will give you the wit and speed of mind to overcome any difficulties following on from the influence of belligerent Mars in your house of relationships. If partners give in to the demands of unreason and anger, you can do no worse than present them with the facts.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

 The pressure to implement further changes will reach a peak and from there on will begin to die down, finally fading out at the end of July. This period will be ideal for reaching agreements where property transactions are underway, or if the matters bothering you are intensely personal.

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 clue.
Man is a creative ____ of nature upon itself - Schlegel (13)

FREER



IJWNNT



GLIOO



HIYCPS



SUDOKU 4800

Difficulty Level 3s

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 4799



